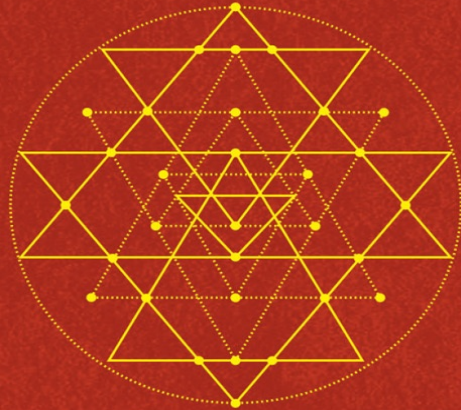


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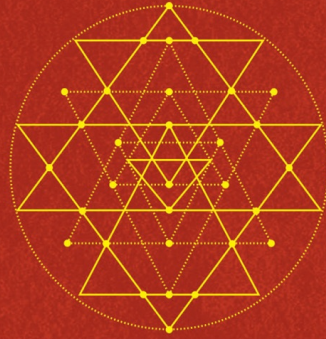
The Path of Initiatic Wisdom

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JULIUS EVOLA  
AND THE UR GROUP

TRANSLATED BY JOSCELYN GODWIN

VOLUME II



INTRODUCTION  
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*The Path of Initiatic Wisdom*

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INTRODUCTION  
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VOLUME II

The Path of Initiatic Wisdom

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Inner Traditions  
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# Contents

[Cover Image](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Epigraph](#)

[Foreword. The “Magical” Gruppo di UR in Its Historical and Esoteric Context by Hans Thomas Hakl](#)

[PREHISTORY](#)

[GIULIANO KREMMERZ, ARTURO REGHINI, AND THEIR GROUPS](#)

[RECENT RESEARCH ON THE UR GROUP](#)

[UR-INSPIRED GROUPS AFTER 1930](#)

[Introduction to the Second Volume](#)

## **Part I**

[Chapter 1. Pythagoras: The Golden Verses](#)

[NOTES](#)

[Chapter 2. Arvo and Ea: The Esoteric Doctrine of the “Centers” in a Christian Mystic](#)

[Chapter 3. Abraxa: Ritual Magic](#)

## **Part II**

[Chapter 1. Instructions for Magical Chains](#)

[INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION](#)

*FIRST INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CHAIN*  
*INSTRUCTIONS FOR A LATER PHASE*

Chapter 2. Iagla: Subterranean Logic

Chapter 3. Pietro Negri: On the Western Tradition

*1. DEVALUATION OF THE PAGAN TRADITION*

*2. EAST, WEST, AND CHRISTIANITY*

*3. THE INITIATIC TRADITION IN THE WEST*

*4. THE ROMAN TRADITION*

*5. ROMAN INITIATIC WISDOM*

*6. THE LEGEND OF SATURNUS*

*7. ETYMOLOGY OF SATURN*

*8. ADDENDA*

*9. AGRICULTURAL SYMBOLISM IN ROME*

**Part III**

Chapter 1. Havismat: Tradition and Realization

Chapter 2. Oso: A Solar Will

I

II

III

Chapter 3. Pietro Negri: The Secret Language of the Fedeli  
d'Amore

Chapter 4. Abraxa: Solutions of Rhythm and Liberation

Chapter 5. Luce: *Opus Magicum*: The Diaphanous Body



## **Part IV**

Chapter 1. Arvo: Vitalizing the “Signs” and “Grips

Chapter 2. Ea: Initiatic Consciousness beyond the Grave

Chapter 3. Various Commentaries

*THE MAGIC, THE MASTER, THE SONG*

## **Part V**

Chapter 1. Iagla: On the “Corrosive Waters

Chapter 2. Arvo: Ethnology and the “Perils of the Soul”

Chapter 3. On the Art of the Hermetic Philosophers

Chapter 4. Various Commentaries

*DESIRE IN MAGIC*

*MEANING OF THE RITUAL*

*FEELING AND REALIZATION*

*ANTICIPATIONS OF PHYSICAL ALCHEMY*

*ON SHAMANIC INITIATION*

## **Part VI**

Chapter 1. Experiences: The “Double” and Solar  
Consciousness

Chapter 2. Ea: On the Metaphysics of Pain and Illness

Chapter 3. Leo: Notes for the Animation of the “Centers”

II

III

IV–VII

Chapter 4. Arvo: Kirillov and Initiation

**Part VII**

Chapter 1. Havismat: Notes on Asceticism and on Anti-Europe

Chapter 2. Milarepa: Excerpts from the *Life of Milarepa*

*THE DEMON OF THE SNOWS*

*The Song of Joy*

*The Song of the Essence of Things*

Chapter 3. Arvo: The Magic of Effigies

**Part VIII**

Chapter 1. Ea: Esotericism and Morality

Chapter 2. Nilius: Medicine and Poison

Chapter 3. *Turba Philosophorum*: The Assembly of the Wise

Chapter 4. Various Commentaries

*CORPOREALIZING CONSCIOUSNESS*

*ON “MORTIFICATION”*

*ON POWER*

**Part IX**

Chapter 1. Abraxa: The Magic of Creation

NOTE BY UR

Chapter 2. Pietro Negri: On the Opposition Contingent on  
Spiritual Development

Chapter 3. Some Effects of Magical Discipline: The  
“Dissociation of the Mixed”

**Part X**

Chapter 1. The Contrast between Positive Science and  
Magic: Positions and Solutions

Chapter 2. Abraxa: The Magic of Conjunctions

Chapter 3. Otakar Březina: Perspectives

Chapter 4. Various Commentaries

*PRODIGIES AND FORMER TIMES*

*SEXUAL MAGIC*

**Part XI**

Chapter 1. Breno: Notes on Occult Morphology and Spiritual  
Corporeality

Chapter 2. Zam: A Pagan Magical Spell

Chapter 3. Arvo: On the Hyperborean Tradition

Chapter 4. The Golden Flower of the Great One

Chapter 5. Various Commentaries

*WOMAN AND INITIATION*

*EX ORIENTE LUX*

[Footnotes](#)

[About the Author](#)

[About Inner Traditions • Bear & Company](#)

[Books of Related Interest](#)

[Copyright & Permissions](#)

[Index](#)

## FOREWORD

# The “Magical” Gruppo di UR in Its Historical and Esoteric Context<sup>1</sup>

By Hans Thomas Hakl

At last the second volume of writings by the Gruppo di UR—or UR Group, as we shall henceforth refer to it—has been completely translated. The first volume<sup>2</sup> immediately met with great interest, because of the high quality of its contents, but at the same time it raised a whole series of questions: From what tradition did the UR Group derive its extraordinary knowledge? What was its goal? Who were the leading figures, and what is known about them? Why did the group only last for three years? Are (or were) there organizations that descended from it, perhaps still working to this day?

Professor Renato del Ponte, in his preface to the first volume, has already described the essentials of the group, and provided many answers that we will take for granted here. His work was the very first to shed a brighter light on the background of the UR Group.<sup>3</sup> Even in Italy there had been only a few writings, aside from Julius Evola’s own memoir,<sup>4</sup> that discussed the subject up to a point, and they did so much less thoroughly. Del Ponte’s expanded essay appeared in Italian in 1989,<sup>5</sup> and assumed its final form in a book published in 1994.<sup>6</sup>

His investigation, however, focused only on the UR Group itself, not on the traditional strands preceding it or on the post-1929 groups that claimed a connection to it. Therefore, we will specifically address such matters here. Since these strands and groups span several centuries, we can only provide an overview of them, like a series of snapshots. But there is quite a comprehensive literature for readers of Italian, if not always easily accessible, which treats the

various aspects of this history in detail. The only exception concerns the post-1929 groups, about which little has been published up to now.

## PREHISTORY

Here we will concentrate on the “Italian” component, leaving aside the thread that goes back to Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy. Much has been written on the history of Anthroposophy and Theosophy, which has nothing directly to do with UR.<sup>7</sup> Nor will we treat the era before the eighteenth century, since specific derivations from Pythagoras, for example via Neoplatonism and the Renaissance, are practically impossible to pin down historically. This does not mean, however, that we deny the esoteric and/or intellectual connections that reach back to these earlier times—quite the contrary.

Instead we will begin with a central figure, who, together with the dubiously renowned Cagliostro (Giuseppe Balsamo, 1743/49–1795), was presumably the modern starting point of magical-chemical efforts in Italy. This is Raimondo di Sangro, Prince of San Severo and Duke of Torremaggiore (1710–1771), a multifaceted personality around whom countless legends swirled, and continue to do so. He was the first regular Grand Master of Neapolitan Freemasonry, and united all the local lodges under his leadership. He was intensively occupied with magical and alchemical experiments, which finally led to his excommunication by the pope.

The enigmatic nature of Raimondo di Sangro’s life continued right up to his death, because he died under mysterious circumstances, probably from poisoning, reputedly caused by his own alchemical experiments.<sup>8</sup> Massimo Introvigne assumes that Cagliostro, who was living in Naples at the time and certainly associated with the prince, bestowed on him not only the more or less public “Egyptian” degrees of initiation, but also secret ones, the so-called *Arcana Arcanorum* (Secret of Secrets).<sup>9</sup> These presumably contained a sort of “inner alchemy” for the construction of a “glorious body” or “resurrection body,” hence for the achievement of immortality.<sup>10</sup>

The so-called Egyptian Rites later enjoyed wide distribution, right up to the most well-known modern magical order, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn; this leads one to suspect a common descent from the Gold and Rose Cross. There are even visible influences in the “Egyptian” lodge of Anthroposophical leanings in Hamburg, called *Zu den drei Rosen an der Elbe* (At the three roses on the river Elbe). Theosophy, too, had an “Egyptian Rite”

founded by Charles Leadbeater; see Introvigne, *La sfida magica*, 110–15, and also Carlo Gentile, *Il mistero di Cagliostro e il sistema “egiziano”* (Foggia: Bastogi, 1980), and Serge Caillet, *Arcanes & Rituels de la Maçonnerie Egyptienne* (Paris: Trédaniel, 1994).

In 1983, after a long search, Professor Clara Miccinelli discovered in a house in Naples a locked chest containing Raimondo di Sangro’s “Testament,” along with a medallion of him; it also contained several writings, including prophecies, and objects that he had owned.<sup>11</sup> A magnificent temple with rich symbolism is located near the di Sangros’ house: it had once been the site of Raimondo di Sangro’s devotions, and also of his laboratory.<sup>12</sup> It can still be visited and is today one of the most important museums of Naples, containing many artistic treasures.

From Naples, a line of tradition leads to France, settling in the purely Masonic “Egyptian Rite of Misraim and Memphis.”<sup>13</sup> A second line, more interesting to us,<sup>14</sup> leads to Baron Nicola Giuseppe Spedalieri, who had a copious correspondence with the famous French occultist Éliphas Lévi;<sup>15</sup> also to the advocate Giustiniano Lebano and to Pasquale de Servis. Giustiniano Lebano (1832–1909) was an officer in regular Masonry (the “Grand Orient”), a member of the Egyptian Rites united under the Italian revolutionary hero Garibaldi, and was also active in the Theosophical Society. He received occultists from all over Europe, and collected a comprehensive library.

A cholera epidemic tragically took the lives of Lebano’s four sons, which sent his wife into a state of mental instability. During a depressive crisis, and presumably to atone for her husband’s magical activity, she set fire to herself and died, deliberately destroying a large quantity of magical manuscripts and documents in the process.

In any event, Lebano must have been an important figure in the occult milieu, otherwise the extremely elitist “Ottaviano” would not have referred to him as such in a famous letter to the Kremmerzian periodical *Commentarium*, even taking issue with the famous magus Giuliano Kremmerz in this context.<sup>16</sup> This Ottaviano was a personality who had a decisive influence over the magical orders of his time. The pseudonym most likely concealed Leone Caetani, Prince of Teano and later Duke of Sermoneta (1869–1935),<sup>17</sup> whose forbears included Pope Boniface VIII. Important Italian esotericists think that he was the famous “Ekatlos,” who authored a widely discussed article titled “The ‘Great Track’—the Stage and the Wings” in volume III of the UR

papers.<sup>18</sup> Other equally important esotericists identify Ekatlos with a female follower of Giuliano Kremmerz.<sup>19</sup>

Renato del Ponte has already explained the importance of this “Ekatlos” in his historical-critical preface to the first volume of the UR papers: the intention was nothing less than to bring about a resurrection of the ancient Roman Empire, with all its sacrality, in the twentieth century. Rites were performed day after day in the attempt to influence incipient Fascism in this direction, and especially Mussolini, who was far from averse to such ideas. But it soon became clear that this attempt must fail in the face of Fascist realpolitik. Instead of putting himself under the protection of the ancient Roman gods, Mussolini signed the Lateran Accords with the mighty Catholic Church.

A woman who had participated in these magical rites had already prophesied to Mussolini in 1919, when the first Fascist combat groups had just been formed, that he would become (Roman) “Consul.” In 1923, when Mussolini was in fact head of the government, the same person approached him again and handed him a lictor’s bundle of rods with an antique bronze Etruscan ax, which had been obtained in a mysterious way. In ancient Rome, the lictors’ bundles were the symbol of the high magistracy. Mussolini was thoroughly familiar with this symbolism, and had “passionately” supported the performance of a mystery play on the sacred origins of Rome.<sup>20</sup> This is even known from a surviving letter of his.

Leone Caetani was a famous orientalist and Islamicist, whose writings included the ten-volume *Annals of Islam*. In 1894 he had visited the notorious Yezidis, which would later cause him to be suspected of Satanism.<sup>21</sup> At the same time he was a representative of the Socialist Party in Rome, and thus had easy access to Mussolini, who had originally also been member of this party. With the aforementioned Giustiniano Lebano and Pasquale de Servis, Caetani was a member of the “Egyptian Order,” which represented the innermost circle of the traditional line supposedly going back to the Prince of San Severo and Cagliostro. Caetani’s central position is clear from this. He had a decisive influence on the Egyptian Order, and also on Giuliano Kremmerz, to whom we will return, and likewise on the latter’s initiatic group of Myriam (or Miriam).<sup>22</sup>

## **GIULIANO KREMMERZ, ARTURO REGHINI, AND THEIR GROUPS**



Around the turn of the century, Pasquale de Servis lived in Portici, near Naples, in the house of Giuliano Kremmerz's mother. The birth name of Kremmerz (also written Kremm-Erz) was Ciro Formisano (1861–1930). From his earliest childhood he had thus been acquainted with a man who possessed ancient secret knowledge. Kremmerz also came into contact with Lebano and Caetani. After a few years spent abroad—having become rich through stock-market speculations, as Daffi confirms—he rapidly published a series of important esoteric periodicals, including the abovementioned *Commentarium*.

In 1896 or slightly earlier, he founded the Fr+ Tm+ di Miriam (or Myriam), the Therapeutic Magical Fraternity of Miriam, referring to the Egyptian Isis priestesses of antiquity. Its exclusive purpose was the healing or alleviation of illnesses. This was attempted through magnetic processes, accompanied by ritual prayers and calls to angels, ancient gods, and various daimons (in the positive sense). It is hardly surprising that Myriam arose under the explicit protection of the “Great Egyptian Orient,” which in turn traced back to the Egyptian Order, mentioned above in connection with Caetani, Lebano, and de Servis.

It is not entirely clear why Kremmerz moved to the Côte d'Azur, while most of his students were in Bari and Rome. Perhaps it was because of his son's sickness, or possibly due to legal difficulties caused by his irregular paramedical activity. He died in 1930 in Beausoleil, France. Before his death, his secretary had several forebodings and monitory dreams.

There immediately ensued the first split of the fraternity, through the director of the Myriam academy in Naples. Despite difficulties during the Fascist period—for Mussolini had prohibited all Masonic and quasi-Masonic associations—several academies continued. The Roman one, after a series of quarrels and “astral” instructions from the “Superiors,” came under the direction of Vinci Verginelli (died 1987).<sup>23</sup> Verginelli was also an important collector of alchemical treatises. His collection has been assimilated with that of the famous composer Nino Rota, who also belonged to this esoteric circle: among other things, Rota wrote the music for all the familiar Fellini films, and also for the Mafia film *The Godfather* and for Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*. Nino Rota owned about 450 of the most beautiful and the rarest alchemical manuscripts, and with this acquisition his collection became one of the most important in the world of such material.<sup>24</sup> In 1985 he donated it to the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in Rome. The group in Rome formerly led by Verginelli seems to have had a close relationship with the late Florentine publisher Bruno Nardini. Meetings following certain principles of the Myriam fraternity were

also held in Florence.<sup>25</sup>

Marco Daffi (pseudonym of Count Libero Ricciardelli) led another somewhat heterodox Kremmerz group and published several texts based on the Myriam material. Before his death he handed on the most important ritual to Giammaria Gonella, a lawyer from Genoa. The latter published supplementary material with Kemi-Hathor, based in Lainate, near Milan, where an alchemical periodical appeared, likewise named *Kemi Hathor*.

Giammaria Gonella, for his part, founded the Corpo dei Pari (Body of Peers), another rather heterodox group based on Myriam's principles but, as the name indicates, one without a hierarchical structure. At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, it posted its proclamations on the house walls of Genoa, in the style of the Rosicrucian manifestos over three centuries earlier. In 1978 the internal teachings and more detailed documentation about this group, which never numbered more than twelve, were published by the members themselves.<sup>26</sup> It is interesting that some of the principles thus published concerned "operations with two vessels," that is, instructions for sexual magic.

The Order of Mantos, which had an even more secret and aristocratic structure, should certainly be listed as a later Kremmerzian association, though it was not a direct descendant of the original lineage. In addition to the Order of Mantos, there is a host of larger or smaller groups, especially in southern Italy, of which some continue ritual and magical work to this day. One of them, the Schola Philosophica Hermetica Classica Italica, Fratellanza Terapeutico-Magica di Miriam (S.P.H.C.I. Fr+ Tm+ di Miriam), under its president Anna Maria Piscitelli, claims to be the only true successor of the Kremmerzian heritage.<sup>27</sup> This claim is rejected by other Kremmerzian associations.

There is also a Christian variation of these initiations, founded by Count Alberti di Catenaiia (pseudonym Erim) whose student was Paolo Virio. Virio's teachings are easily accessible, since many of his books are still available and are continually being reissued.<sup>28</sup>

A branch in France is also worth mentioning: the Souverain et Hermétique Ordre d'Atoum (Sovereign and Hermetic order of Atoum), whose teachings are mostly represented in the work of Jean-Pierre Giudicelli, Count of Cressac-Bachelerie.<sup>29</sup> Their center of gravity lies in "inner" alchemy, which Giudicelli connects closely with Chinese alchemy. He repeatedly refers to the Arcana Arcanorum. It is remarkable that in all these Kremmerzian lodges, orders, and so forth there are multiple personal intersections and connections with the Masonry of Misraim and Memphis. Some of their high degrees are even supposed to

possess the Arcana Arcanorum.<sup>30</sup> There are similar intersections with certain Martinist currents.<sup>31</sup>

In 1987 there suddenly appeared a tiny numbered edition of internal writings of Myriam and the Osiridian Egyptian Order, which brought to light mostly sexual magical rituals and practices of these groups that had hitherto been entirely unknown.<sup>32</sup> These were published by the Milan group Prometeo-Agape, led by Paolo Fogagnolo, who was a member of the communist Red Brigade.<sup>33</sup> An explosion followed: there were rumors of betrayal, theft, and so forth, and it must have led to the dissolution of some Kremmerzian groups. Why were there such dramatic consequences? It was because these writings disclosed that, besides the “Isis” teachings, which were purely concerned with healing the sick, there was an “Osiris” magic that consisted of certain sexual magical practices, although these were only conducted in a few, very restricted gatherings. They also told of techniques for separating the “solar” part from the physical body, the construction of a “glorious body,” and even the appropriation of another person’s body by the “soul” of an initiate or by a purely spiritual being. In other words, here was everything that allowed the group’s opponents to accuse it of the blackest magic. The documents published by Prometeo-Agape are mostly concerned with the organization associated with the C.E.U.R. (Casa Editrice Universale di Roma),<sup>34</sup> which, for its part, developed out of the A.N.K.H. Lodge (Accademia Neo-Kremmerziana Hermetica); they do not seem to apply to all Kremmerzian associations.<sup>35</sup>

It is not known how far back such practices go. Introvigne writes, however, that they must be closely connected with the Arcana Arcanorum already mentioned by Cagliostro.<sup>36</sup> The persons responsible for publishing the strictly internal documents (Prometeo-Agape and “Alexandre de Dánaan”), give as their reason for doing so a desire to warn against the anti-Christian aims contained in them. It is impossible to know whether this was, in fact, the real motivation, or whether it had more to do with internal quarrels between competing groups of the order.

Nor can one tell how far “Abraxa” (Ercle Quadrelli), a member of both the UR Group and the Kremmerzian movement, was initiated into these practices. In any case, Quadrelli’s approach to sexual magic seems different, as his essay in this volume shows. He was apparently not concerned with a “physical” immortality, which is the aim of the practices mentioned, but rather with access to transcendence. On the other hand, access to transcendence is also the basis for immortality.

A further traditionalist current in the UR Group was centered around Dr. Arturo Reghini (1878–1946), though his collaboration ended after only two years. Along with Kremmerz, Reghini was one of the most outstanding figures of Italian esotericism in the twentieth century. It was he who introduced Julius Evola, the leader of the UR Group, to the founder of the “integral tradition,” René Guénon, and he also helped to shape Evola’s early political views.

Reghini saw himself in the line of Pythagoras, Dante, and Machiavelli, as well as Napoleon (who, as a Corsican, Reghini considered to be Italian), and the Masonic founders of Italian unification, Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi.<sup>37</sup> Reghini belongs, with Decio Calvari, to the founders of the Italian Theosophical Society; he was a high-degree Mason, and apparently admitted Aleister Crowley in 1913 as an honorary member of the Rito Filosofico Italiano, with which Reghini was affiliated.<sup>38</sup> His most important master and friend was Amedeo Armentano (1886–1966), who among other things was the owner of the famous stone tower in Scalea, where Reghini performed so many magical rituals, and which he also mentions in this volume.<sup>39</sup>

Reghini’s periodicals *Atanòr* (1924) and *Ignis* (1925) could qualify as actual precursors to the UR publications translated here, with the difference, however, that in the framework of UR so-called “chains” were established that worked with ritual magic, even if not all the members did participate. Reghini wrote very important essays for UR under the pseudonym of Pietro Negri. Furthermore, he was active in the revival of Pythagorean number mysticism, and in continuing Gabriele Rossetti’s researches on the esoteric teachings of the Cathars and the Fedeli d’Amore, as one of his essays in this volume demonstrates.

Like Evola and Caetani, Reghini wanted to influence Fascism toward a reconstruction of the sacral imperial tradition of Rome, and he also expressed this in his publications. However, he was extremely vehement, even offensive, in his choice of words, which once even prompted Mussolini to respond (under a pseudonym). The very fact that Mussolini, as head of state, felt moved to answer an attack in a journal that carried no political weight whatsoever and was only aimed at a tiny, specialized readership, is evidence enough of his basically positive attitude toward ancient Rome. On the other hand, as we now know, Mussolini obstructed such pagan sacral-imperial plans not only by allying himself with the Catholic Church through a concordat, but also through a law targeting secret societies of one sort or another, and Freemasonry especially. Yet it was with the latter’s help that Reghini thought he could further his plans, which shows the ambiguity of the relationship between Fascism and

Freemasonry.

These Masonic views, together with a certain incompatibility between two extremely self-willed characters, were the cause of the schism between Evola and Reghini in the UR Group.<sup>40</sup> Evola accused Reghini of misusing UR for his own Masonic ends, and Reghini countered with the charge that Evola wanted to censor all his contributions in an intolerable fashion. This came to a head with Reghini's claim that Evola's book *Imperialismo Pagano*, published in 1928, had stolen both title and contents from him, which Evola naturally denied with equal vehemence. The quarrel escalated and even led to legal proceedings, although these did not amount to anything.

Finally, in 1929, Reghini failed in his attempt to revive his former journal *Ignis* as a polemical vehicle against UR, following the first issue (nearly the entire contents of which was aimed at attacking Evola). His most important student, the magically very gifted Giulio Parise (pseudonym "Luce"), quit UR together with Reghini.<sup>41</sup> In his autobiography, Evola himself writes that people connected with Masonry tried to wrest the leadership of UR from him.<sup>42</sup> The historian Giovanni Vannoni, in his work on *Masonry, Fascism and the Catholic Church*,<sup>43</sup> seems to confirm Evola's position. Reghini, however, was badly hurt after all these blows, and finally retreated to the province of Emilia as a mathematics teacher. His work first found successors in Giulio Parise, already mentioned, and later in the periodical *Il Ghibellino* (Messina, 1979–1982). Reghini's influence is also evident in the periodical *Hygieia* in Reggio di Calabria, connected with the Associazione Pitagorica, which in 1984 arose under the leadership of Gennaro d'Uva, assisted by Sebastiano Recupero, who sadly died of cancer at a young age. In 1990, after a sixty-year "interval," there came an astonishing revival and continuation of *Ignis* under the direction of Roberto Sestito (who had previously been the editor responsible for the contents of *Hygieia*) and the granddaughter of Amedeo Armentano, Emirene. Unfortunately, this initiative ended in 1992 after only six issues. Unpleasant rumors ensued. The last attempt in this direction was the Roman periodical *Politica Romana*, which published ten issues from 1998–2018.

The salient characteristic of this Pythagorean "Italic school" is its polemical stance toward the purely "Roman" line, to which we will return. This is especially evident in its emphasis on the Greek and Etruscan elements, as well as its rejection of the excessive Germanic influence, blamed chiefly on Evola. This polemic already began in *Il Ghibellino* (nos. 4, 5, and 6) and reached an intellectual high point in Piero Fenili's article about "Evola's Errors."<sup>44</sup> There,

with rich documentation and some justification, Evola is accused of having viewed the Germanic and German element in too exclusively positive a fashion.<sup>45</sup>

## RECENT RESEARCH ON THE UR GROUP

Since Renato del Ponte's 1985 introduction to the first volume of the UR writings, research into the individual members has naturally progressed, and some of it is worth mentioning here.<sup>46</sup>

I would start with the writing of Guido de Giorgio (pseudonym "Havismat," 1890–1957).<sup>47</sup> Not only did Evola admit to the great influence that de Giorgio had on him, but Guénon also writes in a letter (see footnote) that no one but de Giorgio could treat Evola as he did, and expect him to take the criticism seriously.

After his philosophy studies, de Giorgio went to Tunisia as a teacher, and there became acquainted with Sufism. He encountered Guénon right after the First World War, and the two men developed a close friendship. He returned to Italy, married a second time, and worked as professor at a *liceo*<sup>48</sup> in Piedmont. Later he retired to the Piedmontese Alps and lived in an abandoned presbytery as a hermit and, in Evola's words, a "wild initiate." De Giorgio tried to combine the Roman tradition with Christianity and Vedanta, and included some Islamic influences as well. His teachings, only published after his death, address not the intellect but much deeper spiritual centers. There are examples of this in the present volume.

Since the publication of the first volume, it has been discovered that the anonymous article "Le message de l'étoile polaire" (The Message of the Pole Star), originally published in French,<sup>49</sup> was, astonishingly enough, written by the Russian-Polish-French author and occultist Maria de Naglowska, who led an occult group in Paris during the 1930s and became known for her teachings on sexual magic. However, much of her occult "fame" rests on her translation of the notorious *Magia Sexualis* of P. B. Randolph (though whether at least part of it is written by her is unstated). Naglowska had to move from country to country; in the 1920s she lived in Rome, where she got to know Evola and very likely had an affair with him.<sup>50</sup>

An even greater surprise was that the "father" of Italian psychoanalysis, Professor Emilio Servadio, who was a cousin of the Nobel Prize-winning

physicist Emilio Segré, also worked with both UR and KRUR. He used the pseudonyms “ES” and probably “APRO.” By his own account, he helped Evola with translations from English, among other things, but did not take part in the magical rituals. He was able, however, to report that the inner working circle of the UR Group did not number more than twelve to fifteen persons.<sup>51</sup>

In June 1994, at a commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Evola’s death, Servadio spoke movingly of his long friendship with Evola, and this was even reported in the Italian national newspapers. Servadio had suffered badly in the later Fascist period from the racial laws (his sister had died in Auschwitz). Unfortunately, he himself died shortly after this appearance in Rome. A very interesting testimony was published by Emilio Servadio in the newspaper *Il popolo di Lombardia* (28 April 1928), describing his first encounter with Evola and how the latter’s magical reputation had literally terrified him beforehand.<sup>52</sup>

Domenico Rudatis (pseudonym “RUD”; born 1898) died in New York in 1994; he was a friend of the mountaineer Reinhold Messner and coauthor of accounts of the formidable “Sixth Grade” of Alpine climbing.

Corallo Reginelli (pseudonym “Taurulus”; born 1905) was another member of the original UR Group. We know a little more about him, for example, that he wrote several articles (under the pseudonyms of “C. R. Alone” and “C. E. Zero”), especially in *Vie della Tradizione* and *Cittadella*, which bear witness to his continued esoteric involvement. During the 2017 Naples conference (see note 46, page xxv) a hitherto unknown recorded interview with Reginelli was played to the public, showing his dissent with Evola. There is also an article about Reginelli on the Internet, published by the Zen practitioner Leonardo Alfolsi.<sup>53</sup>

“Otokar Březina,” who contributed one essay to this volume without actually being a member of UR, is the pseudonym of the Czech poet Václav Jevavý, born in 1868 in southern Bohemia. He lived as a teacher in a small Moravian town. In addition to a collection of philosophical essays, he mainly published small volumes of his lyric poetry. In his poems he unites the style of Symbolism with a deeply mystical inclination.<sup>54</sup>

A detail that seems to have been overlooked until now is that Gustav Meyrink, whom Evola greatly valued and whose work he cited extensively in vol. I, mentions UR in his 1921 novel *The White Dominican*: “He who has become the treetop and consciously carries the root ‘Ur’ in himself, enters consciously into this society (of those—as he says—who have crossed the boundary) through experience of the Mystery known as ‘liberation with corpse

and sword.” This is a clear allusion to the Taoist practice of fully conscious transition from life to immortality, in which the physical body disappears and a sword remains in its place. It represents the culminating sign of the Taoist initiate and is also the aim of the UR initiations. It is especially interesting that Evola himself translated this novel by Meyrink into Italian in 1944, and wrote an expert introduction to it. Curiously enough, the Italian version leaves out the word “Ur.”<sup>55</sup>

We cannot pass judgment on the report by Jean Parvulesco, the Rumanian-French author well known in occult circles, that he had in his hands an extraordinary unsigned manuscript from the innermost circles of UR. Parvulesco hints in enigmatic words that the UR Group and Evola worked under higher “approval,” by which he seems to mean a spiritual leader. He even speaks of Evola’s “occult mission.”<sup>56</sup>

## UR-INSPIRED GROUPS AFTER 1930

After the UR Group had ceased its activity in 1929, and Evola was turning more and more to the political field, there was no direct continuation of magical-initiatic activity. Evola himself has confirmed this. However, in a very informative article in *La loggia*, the official bulletin of the Italian Federation of Freemasons, a person writing as “Tergestum” affirms that a friend of his, “F. C.,” joined UR in 1935 in Rome.<sup>57</sup> The group was led by Arturo Reghini. “F. C.” had obtained the address from a man to whom Evola had personally referred him.

After the dissolution of the UR Group, Evola did receive repeated requests, especially from younger persons, to found a new order that would work traditionally and ritually. While he declined to do so, he did prepare guidelines for it.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, he suggested it be called the “Order of the Iron Crown,” thus connecting it to the order of the same name which had been first founded by Napoleon in 1805, and later reestablished by the Habsburg Emperor Franz I on January 1, 1816. The iron crown is supposed to go back to Constantine the Great, and is preserved in the cathedral of Monza.

The goal of the Order of the Iron Crown is initiatic in nature and therefore possesses both an outer and an inner aspect. The inner circle is divided into three degrees. The order as a whole is led by a seven-person council of Masters, with a Grand Master. It is unknown whether there was ever an attempt to put these



principles into practice, though rumors have circulated to that effect.

Within the predominantly political association Ordine Nuovo (New Order), which also looked to Evola for inspiration, at the end of the 1960s a small subgroup formed that again intended to undertake ceremonial magical work in “chains,” based on the prescriptions of UR. It called itself the Gruppo dei Dioscuri (Group of the Dioscuri, “Zeus’s sons”), devoted itself to magical practices and rituals, and soon spread from Rome to independent filiations in Naples and Messina. Among others, Evola’s personal physician, Dr. Placido Procesi, is said to have been behind the Roman foundation. Four brochures were published, but these are fairly uninformative. In the periodical *Europae Imperium*, which was closely associated with other Evolian circles, there were soon polemics both for and against the value of this initiative, in which Renato del Ponte expressed a negative judgment.<sup>59</sup> It is noteworthy in this context that the cover of *Europae Imperium* features the Ur-rune.

In any case, not all the members of the Dioscuri Group seem to have withstood the energies aroused by the rituals. This led to severe internal quarrels, and even to members committing suicide by jumping out of windows and inhaling automobile exhaust. The Roman group, at least, was finished by 1975. In Messina, however, where the late director of the Roman traditionalist monthly *Cittadella*, Professor Salvatore Ruta, is said to have been a member, they apparently continued working ritually until the mid-1980s. In 1984 there grew out of this the Centro Studi Tradizionali Arx, whose outward activity was the aforementioned periodical *Cittadella*. A very small group within Arx must have been again active in magical ritual practices, which basically stemmed from the UR writings and from Kremmerzian instructions. In 1975, also in Messina, there appeared the purely internal text *La Via Romana degli Dei* (The Roman Way to the Gods), which contains magical exercises and meditation techniques, and is connected to the Dioscuri. It was published by a so-called Institute for Higher Operative Psychology.<sup>60</sup>

In the traditionalist periodical *Convivium*, a former member of the Dioscuri Group, L. Moretti, reports about the breathing practices that he followed there, and warns individuals and groups against emulating them.<sup>61</sup> In the third volume of the UR writings, not yet translated, “Taurulus” also writes about some negative effects and even an accident in the context of his magical experiments. It is here that natural growth is necessary and excessive zeal harmful. We cannot tell how long the Delta Lodge, connected with the publishing house Arktos in Carmagnola, was magically active. In any case, it too belonged to circles

influenced by UR and Evola.

The groups that have been mentioned here also show a repeated intersection with the Masonry of Misraim and Memphis, as also with the Martinists, whose best-known leaders were Gastone Ventura and Francesco Brunelli. Gaspare Canizzo, who in 1971 was already publishing the extremely interesting magical-traditionalist periodical *Vie della Tradizione* in Palermo, also belonged to this group of ritually working Martinists, which possesses an impressive temple in that city.

The axis of UR–Dioscuri–Arx has already provided a path to follow for many traditionalists today who feel allegiance to the ideals of UR: it is the so-called “Roman” way, in contrast to the “Pythagorean” or “Italic” school described above. Those who feel called to it have mostly oriented themselves around three periodicals: *Arthos*, directed by Renato del Ponte; the Roman *Mos Maiorum* (unfortunately now defunct); and *Cittadella*, originally headed by Salvatore Ruta and later continued by Sandro Consolato (but also now defunct); as well as in three study groups dispersed around Italy. However, these groups are less concerned with “magical” teachings and are mainly focused on the ceremonial and ritual restoration of a sacred unity with the Roman tradition.<sup>62</sup>

Most prominent among the groups active today is the Movimento Tradizionale Romano (formerly Movimento Tradizionalista Romano), the Roman Traditional Movement, which is divided into separate “families” (*gentes*, presently five in all of Italy) and led by a *princeps* and a *promagister*. Members try to live according to the ancient Roman calendar and the sacred prescriptions that it contains for days and festivals. Contrary to what one might assume, the orientation of the MTR is principally monotheistic: Janus is regarded as the *deus deorum* (God of Gods) and the other gods are simply further expressions of the highest unity. The MTR celebrates the great milestones of life such as birth, marriage, and death, following the ancient rites. For instance, it even performs the ancient Roman marriage through the rite of *confarreatio*, which implies absolute indissolubility. This movement regards as its forerunners the poet Ugo Foscolo, the archaeologist Giacomo Boni, and the eminent historian of religion Angelo Brelich. It even acknowledges non-Italians, such as the German classical historian Franz Altheim.<sup>63</sup>

The Associazione Romània Quirites, led by Loris Viola in Forlì, which issues an internal newsletter *Saturnia Regna*, goes a step further. The members have banded together and live in a common household that strictly observes ancient Roman regulations regarding eating, clothing, and relations between the

sexes, so that they stand in complete opposition to the modern world.

The international reader may be surprised at the nature of these multiple magical and ceremonial “scenes” active in Italy today, since practically nothing of the kind is known outside Italy. Perhaps even more surprising is the fact that these groups chiefly involve the intellectual and social upper class. One of the reasons for this must lie in the strong position of the Catholic Church in Italy, which with its time-honored rituals replete with mysteries (at least until the recent liturgical reform) has created the foundation for a deep appreciation of ceremony and symbolism.

HANS THOMAS HAKL received a Doctor of Law degree in 1970 and, together with partners, created a large international trading company as well as the publishing house Ansata in Switzerland, which specializes in the esoteric. After having sold his shares in both companies in 1996, he founded and is still editor of *Gnostika*, the most widely acknowledged German publication dealing with esotericism in an academic way. Hakl has collaborated in several international journals and dictionaries on the occult and religion and is the author of *Unknown Sources: National Socialism and the Occult* and *Eranos: An Alternative Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*. His writings have been translated into English, French, Italian, Czech, and Russian.

## Introduction to the Second Volume

The introduction to the first volume of this collection mentioned a possible existential crisis which, invading all the supports, values, and justifications of normal life, may be leading humankind to ruin, or else forcing it to open a path toward a new condition of being and consciousness. Such a path is spoken of in certain instructions and disciplines of an unchanging character, which are in fact the initiatic sciences.

The person who follows the impulse from his depths that has already made him burn all his bridges, and applies himself seriously and fervently to these disciplines, acquires first the presentiment and then the ever-more precise and experiential knowledge of another order of reality, which we call *metaphysical reality*. He is destined to be a participant in this reality, step-by-step, until he acquires a strength that is beyond strength, a consciousness beyond consciousness, a life beyond life.

Metaphysical reality exists and works in transcendent mode, in utter independence from the world of men. Nonetheless, he who is established in that mode and casts his glance downward can draw from it reference-points for a system of values and principles, which may confer earthly and temporal life with an order and a meaning that would otherwise be wholly lacking. And when this order and this meaning come to saturate a whole historical collectivity, in all its strata, then we have what may be called in the highest sense *Tradition*, or *Traditional Civilization*.

It goes without saying that today's Western world represents the most complete antithesis of this type of civilization. Today as never before, human life both individual and collective has lost contact with the metaphysical order. It has thrown itself into the void, driven on by false myths; into an insane activism dominated by evil myths, bewitched by the promise of a miserable well-being. The result is a crisis that will close the circuits of the modern world, ending either in ruination or in a clean leap that marks the start of a total renovation.

This is how serious application to this initiatic knowledge, which may also be called traditional, can also serve the purpose of orientation today. Beside the

inner and purely spiritual aspect, it can enable one to glimpse the “terra firma” underlying the present chaos, offering the image of a normal, legitimate and sacred order which is the same yesterday, now, and forever.

For this reason, the present volume not only continues to give instructions in initiatic science, but also gives some room to the study of various forms of Tradition over history, so as to present not only the principles themselves but also witnesses to them and their continual validity in the human world. This will have a further consequence. Gradually the sense will dawn of the proper “place” of initiatic wisdom—the true sort—in contrast to that of its various imitations. This wisdom is not something “marginal”; it is not what goes on in the dubious conventicles of spiritualists, Theosophists, devotees of the occult or of Americanized yoga. It is the wisdom of the ages, and he who effectively possesses it is not on the sidelines but in the *center*. Whatever his condition today, his is the dignity of those who, in every traditional (hence normal) civilization, by possessing knowledge also had the right to power, as visible or invisible representatives of the dominant *élite*.

JULIUS EVOLA  
ROME, ITALY  
1971

# **PART I**

# I.1

## PYTHAGORAS

### The Golden Verses<sup>1</sup>

The precepts contained in the *Golden Verses*, seen in relation to what we will expound in the present volume, may find their sense and placement as a helpful initial *rite* (Galen is said to have recited them at the start and end of the day), while not excluding any other. There are two ways to achieve that *detachment* which allows the perception of subtle reality and contact with the occult forces of things: the way of *harmony* and the way of *force*. The perfect equilibrium of body and soul, the state of *rightness*, feeling at peace with oneself and with others, allows one to turn in another direction: to the subtle forces of the soul, which stay dormant while one is taken up with the actions, reactions, and impacts of an agitated and preoccupied existence. But it is equally true that one can reach the same goal through *imposition*, acting directly on the inner limits of the soul. This way is free from moral precepts in the strict sense (whatever domesticated human animals may wish), and requires only energy, courage, the ability of domination and renunciation. The *Golden Verses* apply to the first of these ways. For those who choose it, they can be a useful preparation, and as such we place them at the head of this, our second volume.

- 1 *First honor the immortal Gods, according to their hierarchy;  
Then reverence Orcus, and then the godlike heroes;  
Then venerate the subterranean daimons, due rites  
performing;  
Then honor your parents, and your closer kindred.*

- 5 *Among others make the most virtuous thy friend!*  
*Imitate his soft speeches and useful deeds;*  
*But in anger over trifling offences, do not use power over him,*  
*For power lives side by side with Necessity.*  
*Take this well to heart: you must gain control of your habits;*
- 10 *First over stomach, then sleep, then lust, and anger.*  
*What brings you shame, do not unto others, nor by yourself.*  
*The highest of duties is honor of self.*  
*Let justice be practiced in words as in deeds;*  
*Then make the habit, never to act inconsiderately;*
- 15 *Neither forget that death is appointed to all;*  
*That possessions here gladly gathered, here must be left;*  
*Whatever sorrows daimonic fate may send to mortals,*  
*Bear whatever may strike you, calmly and without anger;*  
*To relieve it, so far as you can, is permitted,*
- 20 *But reflect that not much misfortune has Fate given to the good.*  
*The speech of the people is various, now good, and now evil;*  
*So let them not frighten you, nor keep you from your purpose.*  
*If false calumnies come to your ears, calmly resist;*  
*Yet that which I now am declaring, fulfill it faithfully;*
- 25 *Let no one with speech or with deeds e'er deceive you*  
*To do or to say what is not the best.*  
*Think before you act, that nothing stupid results;*  
*To act or speak inconsiderately is the part of a fool;*  
*Yet whatever later will not bring you repentance, that you should carry through.*
- 30 *Do nothing beyond what you know,*  
*Yet learn what you may need: thus shall your life grow happy.*  
*Do not neglect the health of the body;*  
*Keep measure in eating and drinking, and every exercise of*



*the body.*

*By measure, I mean what later will not induce pain.*

35 *Follow clean habits of life, but not the luxurious;*

*Avoid all things which will arouse envy.*

*Do not be prodigal, as if you did not know what was proper,*

*Nor show yourself stingy, for a due measure is ever the best.*

*Do only those things which will not harm thee, and deliberate  
before you act.*

40 *[Immediately you awake from sleep, however sweet,*

*Think carefully of what you will do that day.]*

*Never let slumber approach your weary eyelids,*

*Ere thrice you review what this day you did:*

*Where have I been? What did I? What duty is neglected?*

45 *All, from the first to the last, review,*

*And if you have erred, grieve in your spirit, rejoicing for all  
that was good.*

*Regret the former, hold fast to the latter and love it:*

*Thus you will tread on the paths of heavenly virtue.*

*Surely, I swear it by him who into our souls has transmitted  
the Tetraktys,*

50 *The spring of eternal Nature. But you, gird up for the task,*

*And pray the Gods for its fulfilment: and, strengthened by  
these,*

*You will know the essence of the immortal Gods and of mortal  
men,*

*By which one passes away, while the other turns and rules.*

*Then will you know what Themis is; how Nature in all is most  
equal,*

55 *So that you hope not for what has no hope, nor leave  
anything unexamined.*

*Know that men bear trials that they themselves have accepted,*

*Wretches who see not the Good that is too near, nothing they*

*hear;*  
*Few know how to help themselves in misfortune.*  
*That is the Fate that blinds humanity; and it drives them*  
 60 *To and fro, as though rolling on wheels, by endless blows.*  
*A hidden and malignant anger is their evil companion:*  
*Ne'er rouse him, and fly from before him!*  
*Father Zeus, you would free them all from sufferings so great,*  
*If you showed unto each what daimon works in him!*  
 65 *Yet do not fear, for these mortals are divine by race,*  
*To whom holy Nature everything will reveal and demonstrate;*  
*Whereof if there is something in you, so keep what I teach*  
*you,*  
*Whole and silent, your soul immune to evil.*  
*Avoid foods forbidden on days dedicated to the purification*  
 70 *And freeing of your soul. Consider all things well:*  
*Let sovereign intelligence be your charioteer to the heights.*  
*Then when you are separated from the body, and soar in the*  
*aether,*  
*You will be an immortal spiritual being, vulnerable no more.*

## NOTES

Verse 1. Ἀθανάτους . . . θεοῦς. As Éliphas Lévi strove, only yesterday, to reconcile Magic and Catholicism, Pythagoras took care not to upset the various local cults, wherever he sojourned or where one of his schools was founded. He even took over the names of the most important ones, naturally giving them new meanings in his secret instructions. Thus the immortal Deities with which he begins seem to be those which, just as in Dante, could be called the celestial Intelligences. First is the Sun—Apollo to the profane—then those of the planets, νόμῳ ὡς διάκεινται: *according to their rank*, following a hierarchy of dignities, powers, and positions, analogous to the steps of the musical scale which Pythagoras assiduously studied.

The word “honor,” which some translators render as “adore,” serves for the

degrees of spiritual deference and observances due to gods, genii, and daimons. Greek has no concept of “adoration,” which derives from touching *ad orem* (to the mouth) the hem of the imperial purple robe in Rome and Byzantium. The same word in the text, τίμα, is used soon after for ancestors and relatives. Pythagorean “adoration” was not human abasement before inaccessible superiority, so much as an affectionate veneration, *filial and cordial*, by minor spirits immersed in dense *matter* toward brotherly and fatherly superiors in *godlike forms*, immortally mobile and vibrant in abyssal immensities of light and aether. [We might add that we are here in an essentially practical field, in which the elements are taken *exclusively* in their capacity for “working” on the soul. The metaphysical question of the nature of the gods is therefore not touched upon here. The same can be said, once and for all, of everything to do with the order of ceremonial magic.]<sup>2</sup>

2. ὄρκον. Not the *oath* of some translators, but the continuation of the astral hierarchy. *Orcus* is in fact the cone of shadow which the earth projects, always rotating opposite to the Sun. It had as its most splendid and mutable star the Moon, and served as the dwelling place of the *Genii* and *Heroes*. It was then commonly confused with the subterranean Tartarus, and replaced by Elysium. As for ἠρώας ἀγαυούς, *scintillating and rejoicing*, I have added “godlike” to include an essential idea not present in today’s “hero.” On the one hand, they were the tutelary demigods of various cities, buildings, or families, such as Theseus or Quirinus, or the Lares and Penates. On the other hand, they were the Masters of Magic who, in life or after death, came to be Immortal Adepts. The hierarchy then passes to the subterranean energies of Mother Earth, in their various forms of maturation, growth, and movement.

6. A verse universally misunderstood as “yield to soft speeches, and noble deeds.” To whose? And why “yield”? Or why just to those of one’s friend? And if he is so perfect, why not rather to his *hard* speeches?

17. δαμονίησι τύχαις, “by daimonic fates.” This should be referred, via verse 56 (where it says that men bear trials that they themselves have accepted), to the state in which it is men themselves, daimons among daimons, who determine their earthly fates. [We recall that in the classical world the term δαίμων, “daimon,” had none of the significance of an evil entity that it acquired as the “demon” of Christianity. Every man has his “daimon,” and the distinction

between mortal and daimon is to an extent that between *individuum individuum* (formed individual) and *individuum individuans* (forming individual). In a certain prenatal state, the consciousness has already determined and *willed* all that it will go on to live through in temporal sequence. And this causal entity, which remains as substratum of the human psycho-physical being and invisibly directs and sustains it here below, is the *daimon*.

One should keep in mind that the point of view of the “forming individual” is very different from that of the human individual. The first cannot have as its criterion pleasure or displeasure, happiness, good, etc., as is the case for the second. Trying to permeate one’s whole life, no matter how it is, with the sense that *we ourselves* have willed it, leads to a sensation of incomparable security; it harmonizes us with the most profound and transcendent will, to the point where, regaining contact with it—with the “daimon”—one becomes able even in the present body to dominate the meaning and direction of what for others would be a “destiny.” The voice of the “daimon” in moments of doubt and abandonment is like a reminder and an emergence of a deeper being (or state), which sets us upright and sends us unhesitatingly on the path to be followed. This refers to the superior meaning of the “daimon.” There is however another, inferior meaning, in which the “daimon” is identical to the “samsaric entity” that was discussed in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 147.<sup>3</sup>

23. Some texts give εἶκ’ (“yield”—again!) in place of ἵσχυ’, “hold firm,” “resist.” Very Pythagorean advice, this, to *yield* to calumnies!

39 and following. I add in brackets the translation of two verses that Mullach gives in a note, but which without a doubt belong to a text of the *Golden Verses* owned by Porphyry.

44. “πῆ παρέβην?” All translate it as “In what have I sinned?” That is an exaggeration: the words simply mean “Where have I been?” with the implication of “in the company of others.” To assume that it means “transgressed” would require the addition, also in Greek, of a corresponding object, such as the law, an order, or a commission.

48. I translate ἀρετῆς with the Latin *virtus*: a compound of valor and power, benevolence and magnificence, lordliness and refinement, similar to the word “regal” in *Ars regia*, in all its better meanings.

49. This undefined and undefinable παραδόντα Τετρακτὸν (the Transmitting the Tetrad) corresponds to the the esoterically understood Ζεῦ πάτηρ (Zeus, father) of verse 63, He and the Tetrad being the source of the eternal and endless Becoming of the everywhere identical One-All (verse 52). Concerning the *Tetraktys* in particular—the Tetrad, the Quaternary, the Four-in-action—I cannot go here into all its interpretations and applications, both thought-of and thinkable, except that it also means 10 (= 1 + 2 + 3 + 4, the Lesser Tetrad), and 36 (= 1 + 3 + 5 + 7 + 2 + 4 + 6 + 8, the Greater Tetrad). Here it is better understood as the *Fourfold*, pure and simple, in the static and dynamic senses. In the former sense, 1 is the point; 2 the line; 3 the surface, especially triangular; 4 the solid in general, the *Pyramid* in the special, well-known, and traditional symbol of Fire. In the latter sense, 1 is the active principle; 2 the passive receptacle; 3 the emergent product; 4 the individual constituted as self-conscious, self-integrated, self-active, which expands itself to 1 and recommences the series. It is then a matter of the firstborn *Fire* of the universal *Life*, which is also the magic fire of individual *Reintegration*. That must suffice for us, even though the ancient Hierocles—whose famous commentary on these Verses unfortunately has no great esoteric value, theoretically, critically, or even practically—adds that the Pythagoreans, with that oath “Ναί, μὰ τὸν ἄμετέρῃ ψυχῇ παραδόντα τετρακτὸν” (“Yes, by the Transmitter to our soul of the Tetraktys”) understood it to refer to Pythagoras himself. If in fact every Master who kindles the occult magic fire in others could be called the *transmission of Fire*, few had or have a better right to that name than Pythagoras. But it is obvious that in a comprehensively Pythagorean conception, the chain from one transmitter to another should conclude either with something analogous to the Platonic Demiurge, or indeed the cosmic Fire of Heraclitus.

52. τούτων δέ κρατήσας. All have understood this as “mastering or *observing these precepts*,” but the more immediately literal sense is also the more esoteric: “*having made yourself strong from these*,” namely, strong from the Gods just mentioned; strong, certainly, from the precepts fulfilled now and in the future: and both through the observation of them. Three senses in all, of which I prefer to give the literal and most occult one. [One will recall that the “Mithraic Ritual” of the great Magical Papyrus of Paris (see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. 1, 98–128) speaks of a *fortification*, created during initiation into the “Power of the Right Hand.” In Buddhist doctrine, too, is found the concept that *illumination* (*prajñā*) produces a suspension of what habitually “flees” (*santāna*), and induces in the various “roots” of man an essentially virile force (*vīrya*) which enables him to

develop and act in the “countercurrent” direction of the realization that we call initiatic.]

53. From the κρατεῖται of the most authoritative editions, and from a mysterious τρατεῖναι in my older edition, I obtain a conjectural double meaning of turning oneself and ruling.

56. ἀυθαίρετα τήματα self-accepted (or *self-assumed*) trials. An evident allusion to *voluntary* incarnations. The acceptances and assumptions are then forgotten, so that he can no longer discern his own benefit in his own tribulations, as it says right afterward.

59–60. Here again I prefer the reading of my own, older source, “οἱ δὲ κυλίνδροι” (*who as though on cylinders*: moving rollers) to the more accepted “ὡς δὲ κυλίνδροι” (like *cylinders* themselves: as though they were rollers for compression and flattening, or maybe discuses for throwing), because this first reading still allows those on unstable supports to respond actively to blows and loss of balance. Those who prefer to reduce them to heavy but passive cylinders rolling on pebbles or sand, or else to discuses thrown at a target, need only substitute for verse 60 “To and fro like discuses, hurled at endless targets.”

64. οἷῳ δαίμονι χρωῖνται: “by which daimon they are tainted.” This is essentially an internal daimon, though in exceptional cases it can manifest outwardly, like the so-called Socratic daimon. The inner daimon is itself twofold, due to the different zones of action between the world of Essences and the world of phenomena: the deeper, transcendent I, immediately present yet abyssally remote; then also and more especially the nucleus of the shallower and more personal, historical I. The latter daimon may be good or bad, and is usually neither one nor the other. Hence it is generally the most immediate basis for Magic, and also the biggest obstacle to success. This personal Ego is frequently Freudian, and generally unknown to ourselves. Education and studies, habits and environment have often given it a varnish, or rather a thick crust of polite *superiority*, more or less impenetrable by the trivialities of life. But if, as unfortunately often happens, this dormant but unextinguished original Ego had been greedy or lustful or irate, arrogant or violent or contentious, envious or mean or malignant, inconsiderate or gossipy or vain, lazy or cowardly or servile, argumentative or fanciful or mystical, then lo and behold! *At the first magical*

*development* it suddenly escapes and surges up, to disorient or discourage and irritate the person who thinks he is already nearing the heavens. Hence Pythagoras's long and detailed warnings *to the elect disciple* might seem to aim merely at a banal *good sense* of the *well-adjusted* profane, but they are in fact essential, even in their minutiae, to a *firm and lasting* success in high Magic.

68. Ἐξακέσας: two meanings, one from ἄκέω, to *heal*, the other from another ἄκέω, to *be silent*. Given the traditional importance of silence, I have included both meanings as “*whole* (healed, restored) *and silent*,” even though the lexicons do not record this form of the second meaning.

69–70. As is well known, the forbidden *foods* were animal, of any species and in any amount. Which are the days *prescribed* for purifications? Considering verse 1, they were probably those on which the Sun (and some particular, more personal planet) enters the various constellations. Even more likely, given the original environment, they were the days of the Moon's phases of waxing and waning.

71. Ἡνίοχον γνώμεν στήσας καθύπερθεν ἀρίστην: Does “Charioteer intelligence mounting up to the ultimate height” mean *the* intelligence, or *an* intelligence? I have left the verse with its intentional ambiguity between one's own Intelligence, the supreme Intelligence, and one of the *personally* more *suitable* beings and Gods of the first verse. The ambiguity is fully intended if all of these, and also all other forms of Intelligence, are metaphysically and esoterically an *unum identicum* (identical one): an *ideal* unity that is also to be realized in the *phenomenal* world, which is the active goal, final and complete, of high Magic.

72. Even during life, or, as nearly all translators have understood it, only after death? The same doubt applies to two analogous passages in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (The Dream of Scipio), in the middle and at the end. “*Imo vero, inquit, ii vivunt, qui e corporum vinculis, tamquam e carcere, evolaverunt* (Yea, they truly live who have fled from bodily chains as from a prison).—*Idque ocyus faciet, si, jam tum cum erit inclusis in corpore, eminebit foras; et, ea quae extra erunt contemplans, quam maxime se a corpore abstrahet* (And he will do so [return to his own celestial place] all the quicker if *when still enclosed in the body, he emerges from it*: and if while contemplating the things outside, he goes

further and further from the body).” This second passage is esoterically as explicit as can be, and so is the first, according to Macrobius’s commentary (*In somn. Scip.*, I, 10): “*Totum tractatum, quem veterum Sapientia de investigatione hujus quaestionis agitavit, in hac latentem verborum paucitate reperies* (You will find the whole discussion that the Wisdom of the ancient [Theologians] devoted to this question, *hidden in these few words*).” Equally explicit is Pseudo-Iamblichus in *Περί μυστηρίων* (On the Mysteries), I, 12, where the gifts of the kindly Gods to their theurgists include that of training their souls, “*while they are still within the body* (καὶ ἔτι ἐν σώματι οὐσας) *to separate from their bodies, so as to return to their immortal Principle.*” But neither this returning to the νοητὴν Ἀρχήν, nor the second condition mentioned by Cicero—that in contemplating eternal matters in those astral excursions, one becomes ever freer from the body—would be practicable ideals if one had not already established that inner equilibrium for which the *Golden Verses* prepare. Lacking that preparation, the specific *liberation that few know* would be an enormous risk of multiple evils: temptations to vile abuses, violent encounters with hostile entities who are astrally stronger, accidents while traveling through unknown regions, and returning to the still more painful bonds of a body that may have physically deteriorated. In any case, it goes without saying that all this demands the formation, development, and consolidation of a “subtle body.” Its embryo may develop more or less speedily, depending on the individual’s makeup and enthusiasm, but whereas the physical embryo needs seven to nine months, there is no telling whether this other embryo will take seven weeks, nine years, or maybe the whole life. Some say that the period lasts from a *new moon* to a *full moon*; but perhaps this refers precisely to the conception and liberation of that future “*naked and unclothed Diana*,” that is destined to act “*pure and freed*” from the bodily vestment. Now the similarly misunderstood verse 67 warned “*ἔῶν ἴ σοι . . . whereof* (referring to men of divine origin) *if there is something in you,*” i.e., if a first germ of deification is already present. But if this were still to be created, the task could not be anything but long. However that may be, obviously the formation of the new garment is greatly affected by the favorable or unfavorable influences that it receives, or calls forth, from the occult virtues of the planets, especially the Sun.

75. Ἐσσεαι ἀθάνατος θεὸς, *You will be an immortal god*, having obeyed all the instructions of the Verses, beginning with the humble but useful *rite* of imitating Galen. But if you have not obeyed them all, you will either achieve next to nothing, or become only a lowly daimon, subject to falling back into desire and



vice, pain and mortality. Then follows ἄμβροτος, again meaning *immortal* but with the specific meaning of living “without need of *blood* or *food*,” which I have tried to render by “spiritual.” And it concludes with οὐκ ἔτι θνητός, also *no longer mortal*, but in sense of *unable to be slain*. What was, and is, most liable to be slain is the game or wild animal: the *beast*—but “*bestial* no more” would, I think, have overdone even the occult meaning of the text. The purpose of Magic may well be the quest for immortality, but this does not seem to be a natural quality of every soul or an automatic gift to all. The anonymous author of the *Chymica Vannus* and *De Pharmaco Catholico*, when he comes to certain first symptoms of magical initiation, exclaims in utmost joy: *Immortalis ero, si modo pergat ita*: “I will be immortal, if only I continue thus” (*Chym. Vann.*, 239). It remains only to offer my collaborators and readers, in Pythagorean style, the most auspicious greetings.

## I.2

### ARVO AND EA


# The Esoteric Doctrine of the “Centers” in a Christian Mystic


We believe that the *Theosophia Practica* of Johann Georg Gichtel is the only work of Christian mystical literature to feature the esoteric doctrine of the secret centers of the human body. Gichtel was in fact a disciple of Jacob Boehme, and there is no doubt that Boehme was influenced by esoteric teachings. Nonetheless, the basis of the “Practical Theosophy” remains Christian, soaked in the pathos of the devotional “humid way,” so that its elements of effective knowledge are overlaid by the usual interpretations and personifications based on “fall” and “redemption,” “Christ” and “Satan,” *etc.* Thus with Gichtel the trunk of the Christian religion was grafted with teachings that even the Western esotericists only gave out sporadically and in veiled form. In the following notes we will try to give a synthetic scheme, clarifying it with some comparisons.


The first edition of the *Theosophia* is from 1696 and contains an appendix of five colored plates by Johann Georg Graber of Ringenhausen. The first, second, fourth, and fifth relate directly to our subject, so it is best to begin by describing them.<sup>1</sup>

The common title of the first two figures is *The Living Perfect Man thoroughly Sanctified and Illuminated after All Three Principles of Divine Being.*<sup>2</sup> The first figure [see below] shows a man with a radiant golden center in his forehead inscribed *Holy Ghost*; then a second, silver center near the larynx with the words *Sophia, Mirror of the Godhead*; a third and brightest center in the heart with the word *Jesus*; a fourth center at the spleen, blue inside with white


flames outside it and the word *Jehova*. Lastly, there is a large dark circular zone centered on the genitals with the words *Dark World, Root of the Soul at the Center of Nature*. While the parts above this sphere are light, those below, namely the legs, are dark.


Gichtel's second figure shows the same man viewed from behind [see below]. The head and the circular zone corresponding to Sophia are scattered with golden stars in this formation: . There is a general title, *Intellect*; then


*Sense* on the head  and *Complexion* and *Sidereal Soul* corresponding to


Sophia's center, here superimposed on the . The lower, dark zone is


inscribed *Hell, Satan*, and now contains four dragons who breathe spirals of white smoke toward the soul.

Gichtel's fourth figure is titled *The Completely Earthly, Natural, Dark Man according to the Stars and Elements*. He is entirely black [see below]. A spiral starts at the top of his head, where there is a center with the sign . It goes


down to a center between the bladder and the solar plexus with , rises to a



center in the middle of the forehead with , goes back down to a center at

the spleen with ,

and then continues to wind inward, touching a center at the base of the neck with ,


and another near the liver with , ending in the heart, where we see a snake encircling a sun . The centers



 are red inside, the others white-golden. Beneath is written:


"*Region of the Elements: Fire*  *in the heart; Water*  *in the liver; Earth*

 *in the lungs; Air*  *in the bladder."*

Gichtel's fifth figure is titled *The Regenerated Man in His Inner Birth in*

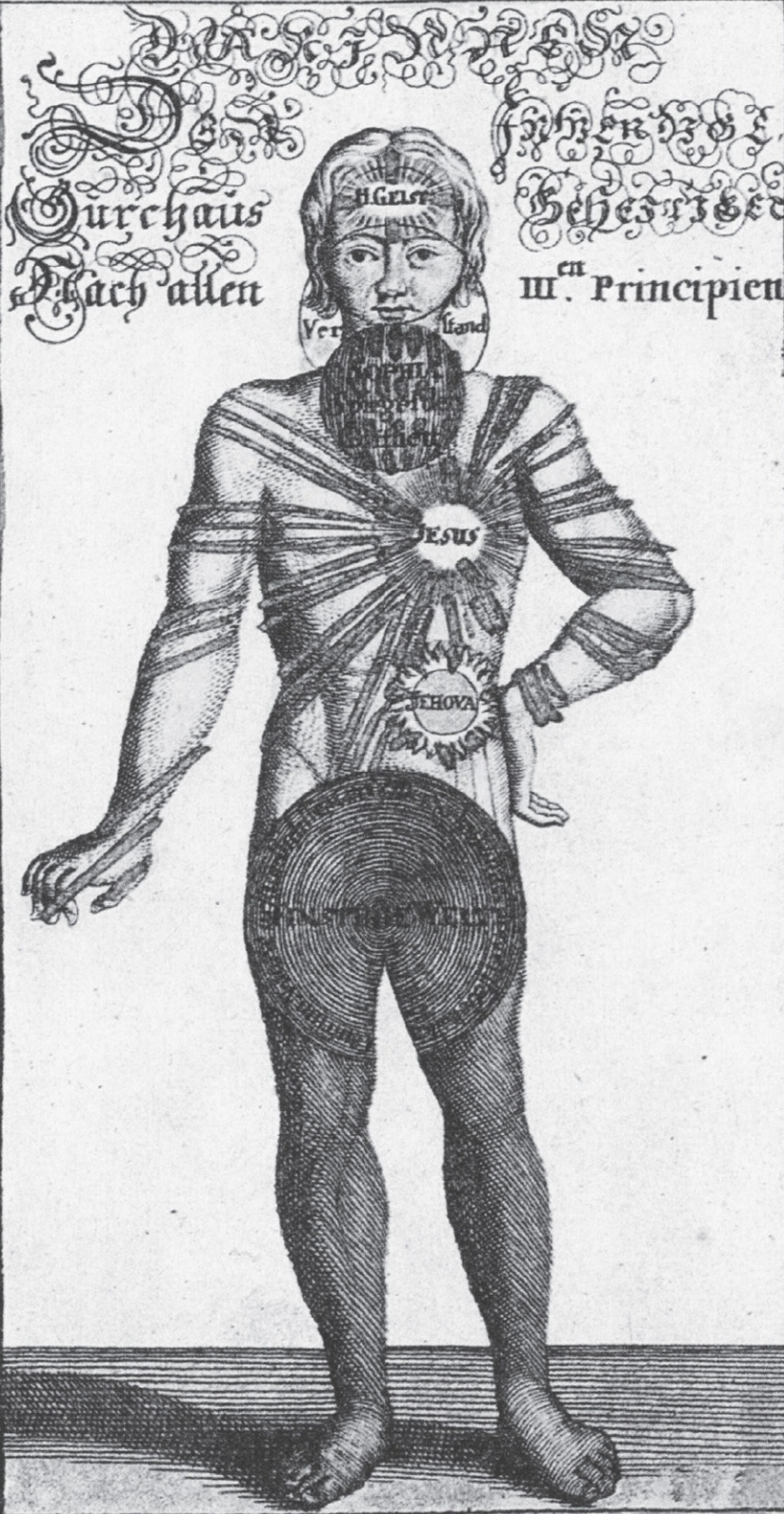
*Christ in the Heart, which Completely Crushes the Serpent.* This man is divided by a line going from his right shoulder, through the middle of his chest, then curving to the left and ending beneath the left thigh [see below]. His right side is black; his left, containing his head and left arm, is white. There are only four centers, all on the white side: on the top of the head, red, with ;

in the middle of the forehead, white-gold, with ; at the heart, a red triangle 

dripping blood and shining in a larger white light. This center has a dove above it with its wings spread (so that it makes the shape  ) and contains the word

*Jesus.* Lastly is a red-brown globe corresponding to the spleen, without sign or aureole.

# THEOSOPHIA



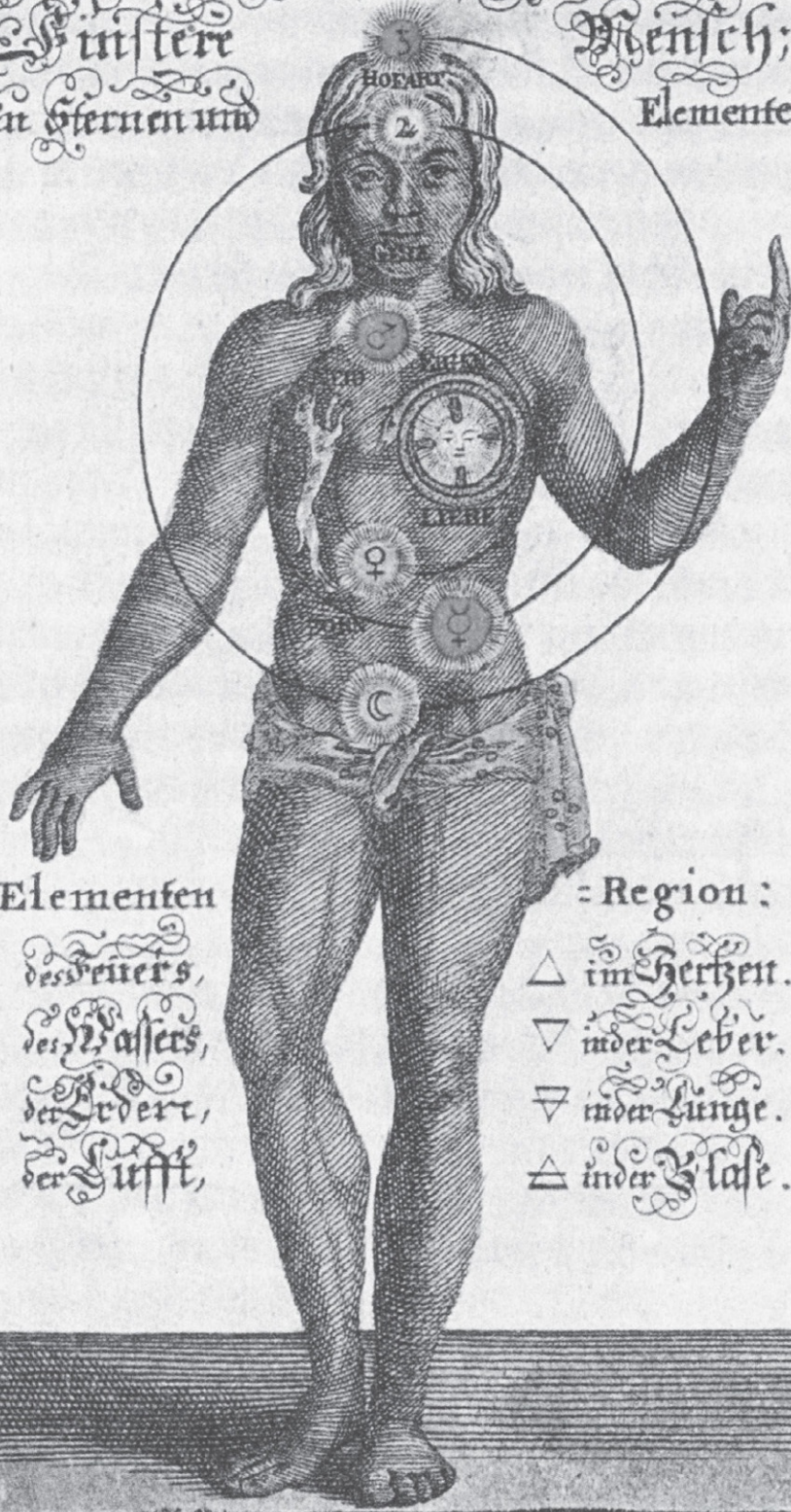
*Fig. 1. "The Interior [Man], thoroughly Sanctified in All Three Principles." From Johann Georg Gichtel, Eine kurze Eröffnung und Anweisung der dreyen Principien und Welten im Menschen (Amsterdam, 1696).*



*Fig. 2. "The Perfect and Illuminated Man of Divine Being." From Johann Georg Gichtel, Eine kurze Eröffnung und Anweisung der dreyen Principien und Welten im Menschen (Amsterdam, 1696).*



Der gantz Erdische, Natürliche,  
 Mensch;  
 in Sternenn und  
 Elementen



Elementen  
 des Feuers,  
 des Wassers,  
 der Erdert,  
 der Luft,

= Region :  
 △ im Herzen.  
 ▽ inder Leber.  
 ▽ inder Lunge.  
 △ inder Blase.

Fig. 3.<sup>\*1</sup> “The Completely Earthly, Natural, Dark Man according to the Stars and Elements.” From Johann Georg Gichtel, *Eine kurze Eröffnung und Anweisung der dreyen Principien und Welten im Menschen* (Amsterdam, 1696).

We will now see how to orient ourselves amongst all these symbols. They refer to the process of *palingenesis* in its esoteric sense, and the general symbolism more or less corresponds to that of various traditions, particularly the Hindu. The starting point is a “black man made of sin,” who through regeneration will transform himself into a “man of light.” Gichtel follows the mystic’s path, but not so as to miss the fact that transformation cannot be limited to the “soul” alone, but also infuses the *body*. This is what he says: “We do not receive a new soul with Regeneration, but a new body; and the soul thus has no need for a new birth, but only a renewal and conversion of the outward to the inward, so that there is Renovation by means of pure divinity” (*Theoria Practica*, chap. III, 25).<sup>3</sup> The new and redeemed man is the one who passes from one degree and element in his body to another, working a certain transformation to the point of fully developing a new body (III, 24). Gichtel adds (III, 5): “It differs from the first as the splendid sun from the dark earth; and although it dwells in the old body, it remains inconceivable to it; even if sometimes sensible.” And later (III, 13): “This body is drawn from the Word of God or the heavenly Sophia, who appears issuing from the sacred interior fire of Love, and whom desire or faith renders present and conceivable. And all this is spiritual, more subtle than air, resembling the sun’s rays as they penetrate all BODIES.”

In other words, it is a new bodily state that evades common sensation, conceivable through a new kind of sensibility awakened by the initiatic fire. Its nature is airy and radiant, that is, free and *active*, unlike the sluggish and heavy body of flesh, which opens up to it (compare the state of “porosity” and the symbol of the “dew of life” in Hermetism). It may even shine through it, enabling phenomena such as Jesus’s Transfiguration. We hardly need to relate the string of associations that come to mind: the “Vestment of Liberty” of the Gnostics, the *vajra-rūpa* (the lightning or incorruptible form) of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the “radiant body” of the Neoplatonists, the *sekhem* of the Egyptians, *etc.* But it is interesting to see that Gichtel recognizes in the development of such a body the essence of the sacred work. “Only through this new vestment can it (the soul) arrive at the Holy Trinity and serve Most Holy God in spirit and truth, in homage and adoration, like Melchizedek, priest of the Most High” (I, 18). The

condition for extracting and developing the luminous body is an initial illumination in the spirit, or rather in the heart, of which we will say more later. But the body constitutes the condition sine qua non for integral palingenesis and for the effective participation in Divinity.<sup>4</sup>

Der Mensch  
in seiner  
in Götzen  
Welcher die  
in stehenden Gebärt  
im Hertzen  
Schlange ganz vermahnet

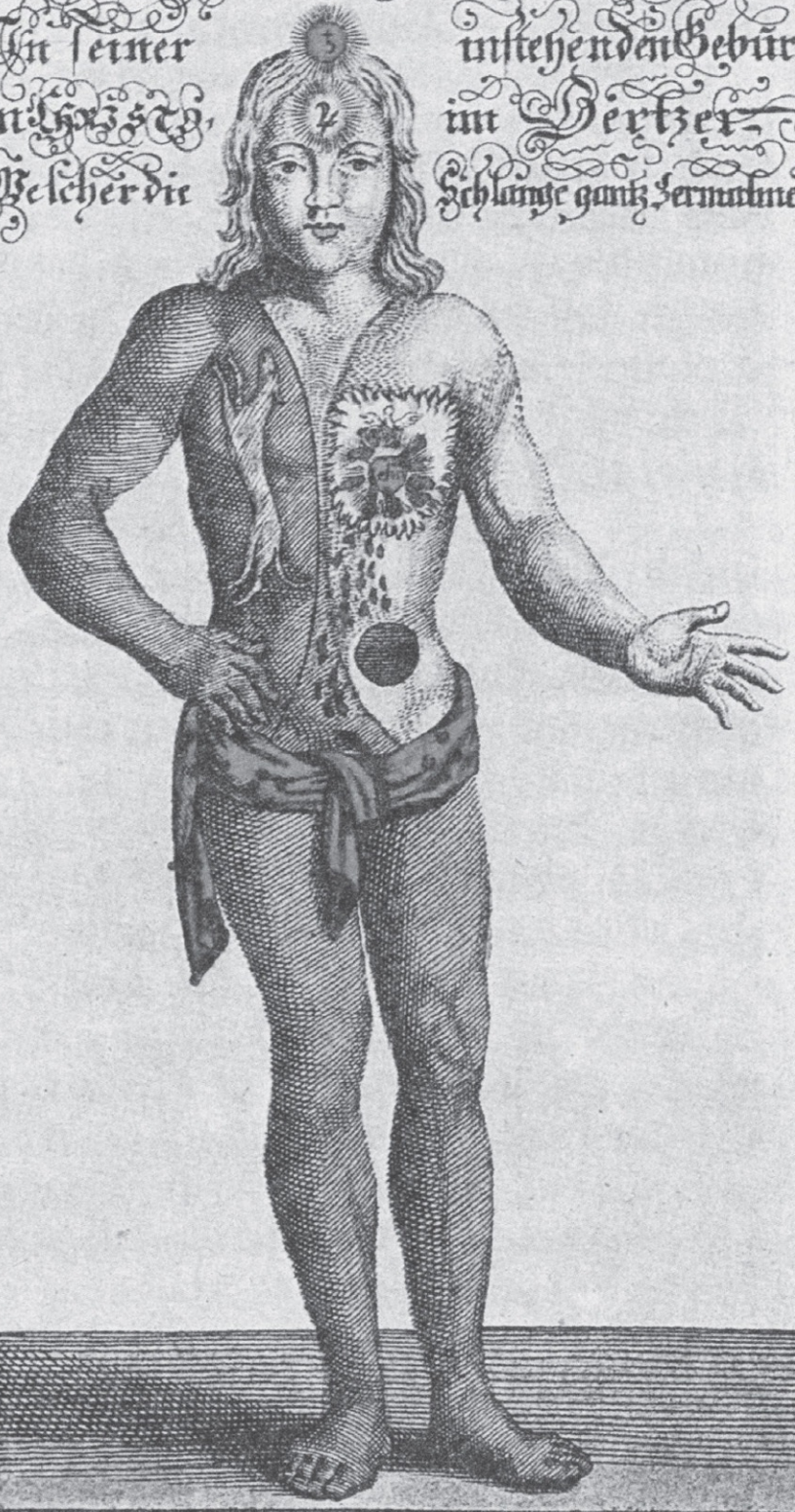





Fig. 4.<sup>\*2</sup> “*The Regenerated Man in His Inner Birth in Christ in the Heart, which Completely Crushes the Serpent.*” From Johann Georg Gichtel, *Eine kurze Eröffnung und Anweisung der dreyen Principien und Welten im Menschen* (Amsterdam, 1696).

Readers will know that in alchemy there is talk of a gold  that needs to be immersed in “our water”  in order to be “dissolved” (freed), then “fixed”

(attaining initiatic stability), and to produce the Medicine. Perhaps they also know that in Hindu esotericism it is said that the divine principle of man (Shiva) must seek its feminine counterpart (Shakti) and conjoin with it, otherwise it “remains as incapable of action as a corpse.” This evidently refers to the same thing. Sophia, the “Virgin,” is “our water” of Hermetism, like the “upper water,” superior to the world of individuation. It is the “water of life” that the goddess Ishtar, in Babylonian symbolism, goes to seek in the depths of “Hell” so as to revive Tammuz with it; thus it is a “water of resurrection.” He who is consecrated by it obtains the “second birth” which is a “birth from above,” and a birth in the “Land of the Living.”<sup>5</sup>

But in order to analyze the process of palingenesis, we need to see how Gichtel’s “natural, dark body” was produced and how it is constituted. Our author follows Boehme closely, teaching that the Divinity comprises, so to speak, both himself and his contrary: he is not only Yes but also No; not only Love, but also Wrath; not only Light, but also Darkness (Fire, heat). At the beginning these two divine potencies tempered, harmonized, and balanced each other (II, 17). By “falling,” man ruptures this state, giving preponderance to the second potency, so that it detaches itself and becomes independent. Instead of being tempered by the first potency, it turns against it and tries to consume it. The Fire, once separate, becomes *desire*, which with its heat devours the oily humidity, so that the light goes out and the fire leaves a *black* deposit (II, 50). Thus are produced the separation from the matrix of Light or living Water, and the corruption of the luminous, paradisaical body, replaced in sleep by the black, earthly body. The latter is the seat of an insatiable appetite, sickness, and death (II, 18); inwardly dead, the soul has become the hell where eternal corruption does its work (II, Pref., sect. 3).

Gichtel refers here to his fourth figure [page 21]: “The signs of the elements represent the wheel of outward Nature, the SIDEREAL body which winds round

it (= the principle of Fire) as far as the Sun itself. Within the heart there is a serpent, which is the Devil in the SPIRITUS MUNDI (i.e, in the original Matrix), which insinuates itself into our forms of earthly life as far as the Sun. The circle or globe around the Sun represents the world of Light, which is hidden. And the dark GLOBE drawn below (here the author refers not to his fourth but to his fifth figure [page 23], whose globe corresponds to the “center” of the Mercury  of figure 4) represents the soul of the Fire, or God’s wrath”

(II, 51, 52, 53). The Sun, which the serpent finally penetrates, is man’s central principle, namely his *personality* or I-principle—to which the presence of Christ will correspond in [the reintegrated body](#). The serpent squeezing the Sun of the heart is the avid, contractive, desirous form of the divine Fire, which usurps the central place of the Father of the perfect and living Man (figure 1). And the coils of the serpent are the knot of personality, the attachment to the I, which confirms the union of consciousness with the corruptible animal body.

We will quote another passage from Gichtel about the mysterious “globe”: “The soul’s life issues from the eternal inner fire which has its CENTER in the heart, but deeper; it is depicted as a dark globe placed below the heart. It is the fiery Dragon or Spirit-of-this-World, and is united to the first life *as the man is to the woman*; its root is in the Abyss (in the original potency of God). It generates seven states, which are the seven seals that prevent the unregenerated from perceiving the divine fire” (II, 6, 7). And again: “Below the heart, where the divine Light of the world is (in the Living Man), there is the divine MAGICAL eye of Marvels, and the Fire that for the regenerated is the place where the Father (Jehova) begets his Son (Christ), which is in the heart. For the others, it is (only) the Fire of divine Wrath. . . . It is the ground of Heaven and of Hell and the visible world, whence good and evil are born as light and darkness, life and death, beatitude and damnation. . . . It is called the GREAT MYSTERY because it contains two essences and two wills” (IV, 18, 19, 20).

This Globe, placed on figure 4 [page 23] near the spleen, thus corresponds to “Hell” in two senses: in the sense of substratum and original potency, anterior and superior to any individuation and polarity and even to the divine person of Christ, which is a “production” from it; and in the negative sense of an insatiable and consuming fire (hence related to the Christian symbol of hell), which is the way the same principle appears and acts in fallen beings. In both cases it is a power within the individual that goes beyond the individual, and can therefore form the basis of the Work.

In Gichtel’s conception, the secret of regeneration consists of “touching” the

lower center, the globe or magical eye, so as to produce a certain transformation that can restore the original temperament, with Light or Sophia newly awakened and wedded to the Fire. Gichtel says that the fiery desire has not altogether destroyed the luminous principle, but has caused *separation* from it; that it is occulted, and in the natural man remains hidden and inactive, unusable and latent. It is still in the heart, but deeper than personal consciousness can reach (II, 12, 13). He speaks of a fire of divine Love that can kindle the Globe and reawaken a clear light from the depths of the heart, which can deliver the Sun from the Serpent (II, 54); and it is the heavenly presence of Christ that also generates seven spiritual forms in place of the natural ones (II, 14). Thus the palingenesis of the body and the formation of the perfect, angelic Man are accomplished.

Gichtel's method is basically the same as that of the Hermetic Caduceus, which is the harmony of the two antagonistic serpents (white and black). In the second key of Basil Valentine, this Caduceus is a crowned Mercury who mediates between the two combatants. One is solar, armed with a serpent: it is the infernal fire, the Wrath of God, but also the common Sulfur which is the ardor, also "heroic," of the individual. The other is lunar, with a bird, which refers to Air and the upper Waters and may correspond to Sophia, who Gichtel says withdraws, offended by the *desire* of her husband (III, 66–68, 70, 71). The Sons of the Art again refer to this composition when they say that the Fire needed for the Work is a tempered Fire, a soft Fire, a luminous Fire that "does not burn the hands," a double and androgynous Fire; while the Water is a dry and burning Water that "does not wet the hands."

An analogy to this entire symbolic system can be found, for example, in the Hindu doctrine according to which the body is governed by seven occult centers, which are the natural correspondences to seven cosmic principles (*tattva*, or, in Gichtel, the Planets). Furthermore, it is interesting that the basal center (*mūlādhāra*), which in Tantra is related to the genitals (or situated in that occult zone, called "infernal" in Gichtel's first and second figures), carries a symbolism similar to what Gichtel gives to the heart: there is a *phallus* corresponding to the Shiva principle, and thus to the solar element ("transcendent virility"), around which a serpent winds, which is the *kundalinī* representing Shakti.

It is taught that in ordinary man *kundalinī* is "asleep," a sleep to which corresponds its manifestation as desire, ardent yearning, and especially *libido* or sexuality. But it can also be "awakened," whereupon a transformation ensues through which its fire becomes the instrument for the reawakening of all the centers, hence for the renovation and transfiguration of the body. One might

perhaps equate the sleeping *kundalinī* to Gichtel’s serpent coiled around the Sun in the center of the heart. Likewise, that light of Christ or Sophia, by means of which the fiery, magical Eye that the Devil destroyed in Adam and consigned to “Wrath” is rekindled, so as to penetrate the soul and totally inflame it (IV, 93), could be related to the awakened and transformed state of the *kundalinī*.

The “center” in which the serpent appears is differently placed in Tantra and in Gichtel. For the former, it is the *mūlādhāra*, which is at the root of the genitals; for the latter, in the heart. In both cases it is conceived of as the basis of the septenary, but this requires some explanation.

There are two septenaries: one refers to the human soul, the other to the deep powers of things. As we have seen, Gichtel says that the Serpent generates “seven states, which are the seven seals that prevent the unregenerated from perceiving the divine fire.” This is a septenary of *passion*. Its elements, corresponding to the planetary beings, are emanations from them into the soul, which, having become external, experiences only passions and individual emotions. The septenary in Gichtel’s fourth figure, having its center in the heart, is exactly this septenary (indeed, in his figure of “Dark Man,” passions are indicated at some of the centers: pride at



envy at , self-love at  circled by the serpent;  and  have no

captions In contrast, the septenary in Tantra, placed at the *mūlādhāra*, the “infernal” place of Gichtel’s restored body (figures 1 and 2), is the superior septenary, aeonic and elementary. The Sun of the heart is only the center of the psychological person, whereas the *mūlādhāra* is the center of the occult and truly elementary energies of the body. In Gichtel it would correspond to the mysterious “globe” that is even “below” (i.e., more interior than) the heart, in which alone one comes into contact with the original power and thereby reaches the Planets, up to the full reintegration of the cosmic and celestial body. To pass from one plane to another, one must cut off the seven heads of the Dragon, i.e., liberate the mind from the seven passions—starting with pride and ending with self-love, rooted in the heart itself—which are in effect the coils with which the serpent grips it, obstructing spiritual generation. In esotericism this preliminary operation of catharsis is symbolized as “denudation” and “washing.”

That this is the correct way of seeing things is confirmed by the following passage from Gichtel: “The soul tries to retrieve its will from the external constellation in order to turn to God, in its CENTER, to abandon all that is



visible and pass through the *eighth* form of the Fire—and this demands a violent effort, sweating blood, because the soul has to fight against both God and men, etc.” (intr., sect. 8). The *eighth* form of the Fire is where one emerges after overcoming the external septenary, and is the threshold for the “descent into hell,” to be followed by “resurrection.”

The most difficult part of the work of “denudation” is cutting the chains by which the heart is infected by the I-disease. Gichtel calls it “self-love,” but in initiatic science one can dispense with any moral coloration and speak simply of the spirit that identifies itself with the qualification that it receives from the connection with a certain body. This is the *ahamkāra* of Hindu doctrine, which is said to rule precisely from the heart, in the *ānāhāta* chakra, like a “smoke of ignorance” (equivalent to the serpent) that “hides the pure flame of the *ātmā*” (equivalent to the Sun). The anonymous author of *De Pharmaco Catholico* (see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 207, n. 87), speaking of a “niter” with which one must attack and calcine the gates of the solar fortress, alludes to this very conquest, which is in effect a *mortification*, a break with what one believed to be the very center of one’s life.<sup>6</sup> Here the procedures vary according to the different paths.

Gichtel, following the mystic’s path, gives as its method radical humility (IV, 92), dedication to Christ, yearning for God. This method does not work by *extinguishing* desire, but by *converting* it, so that desire for earthly things becomes desire for God. Gichtel says that the endless hunger of the former body serves as manure. In vain it consumes everything to the point of disgust and anguish, until it is forced to turn to the Father and give in to a strong desire for prayer (III, 26, 27). “It is all a matter of converting our soul, directing our desire inward and ceaselessly desiring God, so that dear Sophia, together with the Holy Spirit, meets the desire of our soul and leads it step-by-step” (I, 25). And again: “The operation takes place in the heart; prayers draw it forcibly out of the infernal abyss, knocking violently on the gate of Heaven and holding it fast by faith” (II, Pref., sect. 5). Here as elsewhere, Gichtel seems to know more than is to be expected of a simple mystic: “The vegetative force controls growth, with the aid of the rain and the soil; but if there were no MAGNETIC desire in the seed, it would be dead and unable to grow. Likewise the MAGICAL or MAGNETIC desire of the soul’s will is the creator and generator of what the soul has conceived in its IMAGINATION, namely, the noble and gentle Light of God” (VI, 42–43). “The Fire absorbs this celestial presence—that of Light, which the soul IMAGINES with desire, attracts to itself and renders present—then burns intensely and produces a clear and beautiful light in the heart” (IV, 8).

One feels a sensible movement in this center (III, 36) and a breath of enlivening air. This is the Holy Spirit, who gives the sweet water of Life to refresh the fire of the soul and turn its anguish to rejoicing (II, 14). The Love of God appears to the imprisoned soul as a breath of the inner BEING, which is brought to life as from an influx of divine unity and repose. Life quells its pain and disquietude in the CENTER of its constitution and its sensibility; with his senses and temperament regenerated, man can now see with three eyes: he sees his own body *luminously* and thereby feels an inner joy (V, 51, 52, 65; VI, 44).

Turning to the concept of the “eighth form of Fire,” Gichtel sees it as the borderline between outer, temporal nature and inner, eternal nature (I, 53). For the passage from one to the other he uses the traditional initiatic symbolism of navigation: the crossing of the “Great Sea” or the “Red Sea.” He gives two conditions for achieving this:

(a) By repeatedly passing through the forms of Fire, the soul must become FIXED (I, 28, 19). This means that at a certain crucial point (also the most important in the “humid way”), if this is really to lead to an initiatic realization, the soul must possess the quality at which the “dry way” has aimed all along.

(b) The soul must successfully identify itself with the consciousness or image<sup>7</sup> that has served as basis for the process (I, 28), and which has a recognized “magnetic” virtue. Here it is Christ; in another aspect it is Sophia, the divine light. Gichtel says explicitly that Sophia is the bride *who draws the soul altogether out of the body* (IV, 98) and then immerses it in a sea of fiery water (IV, 99): the eighth form of Fire, or the MAGICAL fire, with which the soul is baptized (IV, 100).

This “sea” corresponds to the “Red Sea” that is to be crossed. (The symbolic relation of the “exodus from Egypt” to the “exit from the *body*” is found, for example, in the Gnostic doctrines reported by Hippolytus, *Philos.* V, 1, 16.) It also corresponds to the “Celestial Nile,” or the “primordial Waters of the Great Green” (mentioned in the prayer to Ptah in the Harris Papyrus), which in the oldest Egyptian tradition is traversed by the Sun’s boat, steered by Horus, the God of the regenerated. There is analogous symbolism in the *Green Dream* of Bernardo Trevisano, in which an Old Man, calling himself the Genius of the Wise, takes the author in a vision across the airy, fiery, and sidereal regions, wraps him up in a whirlwind, and delivers him to an island surrounded by a sea of blood, hence a *red* sea.<sup>8</sup> In this island are seven realms (the superior septenary), and he finds himself in the central one, where the King of the whole island resides.

It is interesting to see in Gichtel's work a change of the soul's sex, or of the passive function into the active one. He first (I, 19) speaks of the soul as a bride who sighs for a long time for the bridegroom Jesus (this being the feminine attitude typical of the mystic's method: the soul offers itself and waits to be married and fecundated). But then it takes up the masculine position in relation to Sophia. This is the consequence of the preceding "fixation" and confirms the change of polarity already mentioned by Abraxa (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 48, 58) as the requirement if the humid way is not to be one of devotion alone, but to lead to an effective realization. Still, if the I takes on the masculine role, it must maintain "purity" as the condition for possessing Sophia and not betraying her as Adam did (I, 20, 22). Gichtel underlines the special character of the "magical marriage."

When the Virgin appears in a soul that is not fully mortified, its former nature may reawaken and break out in a fierce desire of possession, a MAGNETIC hunger that wants to devour her, in an act of black magic dominated by pride (VI, 45; III, 66–68). The Virgin then retreats into her principle and again darkens the soul, which falls into worse sins and rejects everything that is not fiery like itself. This may set in motion the deviation belonging to so-called red Magic. What is needed is a subtle possession, motionless and without contact—which incidentally may go beyond the symbolic plane and refer literally to the *magical embrace* of the "practice with two vessels" described by Abraxa in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 218–27.

Beyond the Red Sea and with this danger overcome, there should come the phase of reintegration of the body. But in Gichtel there is no more than the hint of this, already mentioned, where he says that the dark and ardent energy of the center that lies at a deeper level than the heart, nourished by the celestial presence of Christ, generates seven spiritual forms (II, 13, 14). Then there is his [fifth figure](#), in which regenerated man is enigmatically divided into a black part on the right and a white part on the left (one may think of the *Rebis*, the dual-natured being, or an image of the *Mysterium Magnum* itself). Figure 1 shows not the seven principles of the divine Essence, but three: Jesus, Sophia, and the Holy Spirit, who return as distinct beings located in distinct centers (heart, throat, and forehead)—apart from Jehova, reestablished in the dark globe of the spleen and in the "infernal, Dark World." Figure 2 is interesting because it seems to answer to the general sense of bodily reintegration. There we see serpentine curls of fire coming out of this Dark World, which rise toward the constellations that constitute the living intellect in the sidereal soul. Perhaps Gichtel intended to encapsulate in these symbols the notion of the seven sidereal centers, fecundated

and awakened by the serpentine fire in forms of illumination and transfiguration. There is no further clarification in his text, perhaps because he himself stopped at a stage short of the *absolute* completion of the so-called *immortal body* (on which, see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 196–202).

If space allowed, it would be worth tracing a parallel between the methods of the “dry way” and the “humid way” regarding this “mortification” that is the prerequisite for everything. However, the reader who has followed attentively the previous essays in this collection will be sufficiently informed about it. In both cases a *fire* has to be awakened, a state of intense vibration or emotion which transports one outside oneself, as it were, and makes it possible for a force emanating from the personality to *shatter* the personality itself. The mystics achieve this through disgust with the world, anguish, prayer, self-loathing, faith in Christ and ardent dedication to God. They characteristically endow all this with a religious and moral significance, rather than a pragmatic and technical one. What is lacking, in other words, is the *scientific* attitude and the sense of an operator who directs the operation (the “regime of Fire”), perfectly aware of why he is doing what he does, as is the case in the “dry way.” Considering that the positive goal is to produce this state of exaltation that enables the “leap” and “exit” (for destroying “self-love” is futile unless accompanied by the *objective* removal of the connection between consciousness and the physical body), all methods can be seen as equally legitimate so long as they succeed.

Gichtel’s is an interesting case, because it shows that an individual without any regular link with an initiatic organization can arrive at many things that are usually known only through a tradition of esoteric science. He says: “God has revealed to me the constitution of man, introducing my spirit into all the CENTERS. . . . As I have seen them in the spirit, thus have I drawn them” (I, Pref., sect. 12). It was “an opening of Heaven to me, a conversation between God and my soul, speaking face to face according to the ENS (being) and the MENS (mind)” (I, 5). After a tremendous crisis, while singing a Lutheran psalm he was “unexpectedly struck in the spirit,” fell to the ground, and in that condition there flashed before him “the vision of the center in the heart,” as shown here in figure 3 (III, 50, 51). Thus since we have seen how closely the *Theosophia Practica* agrees with traditional and even oriental doctrine, we can conclude that this work is one of the proofs that the initiatic *Corpus* is invariant as to time and place.

I.3

ABRAXA<sup>1</sup>

# Ritual Magic

Awakening kindles awakening. As it retrieves things fallen into space in the primal flashes of “signs” and “signatures,” thus it arouses action and forms it into the “Ritual.”

Know that Ritual magic is like a natural extension of the magic of the Image. There the “signs” are subtle captures of the invisible and lucent forms that objectify themselves in physical things and move and sustain them (see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 266–72); and you may be able, with timeless rapidity, to catch the form of their movement before it translates into the language of your physical senses. In the ritual, however, you join yourself to this same movement, you animate it and prolong it in its own action, either by transferring to it the light of your own liberation, or by forming a new cause within you, to act on the currents and vortices of the “signs” to bring about the proper reactions.

The first requirement is knowledge of the ethereal Light, the soul and psyche of nature, light-life, spirit-matter, inner-outer. Exalted by intoxication, by violence, by desperation or by absolute superiority, this Light must have appeared to you amongst all the web of “dead” things and beings, so that you can evoke it in your spirit. And if the ritual act takes fire and form within that Light and is saturated by it, then living symbols, gods, and glorious powers without number will invisibly move and intertwine above you, forming one equilibrium after another, in strict rhythm with the form and the power of the act itself.

Éliphas Lévi says that signs and rituals are the operative Word of the magical will. The will must be expressed in the ritual action as though in a perfect Word. Thus the slightest negligence, the unnecessary word, uncertainty, inattention, or doubt will make the whole operation false or impotent, and it can even turn you against the forces that you have summoned.

*When the gesture is “realized,” it is reality.* That is the law. And the key to “realization” is the ethereal Light, as I will explain.

When your desire or will attain an extreme degree, they are linked to an intense image representing their realization or motion, which is also an outline and an effective beginning of this very movement that it strives to actuate. The magus releases himself and, rising higher, suspending the sense of his surroundings and isolating himself in active ecstasy from the body, hence from all externals, he *sees light*. Upon contact with that light, the image is saturated through and through by the dynamic impulse, joined to an absolute, irrefutable, and fateful sense of certitude. Then in the ritual gesture the impulse becomes action, projects itself in action, and seals, signs, and perfects this certitude, inserting and stamping it on the exterior. It flings an energy outward via a mediator that knows no law of space or resistance, material force or mass. Then the realization takes place: you will see how the exterior moves in silent and invisible obedience, and the reaction is done.

Know that in ritual action, as with magic of the image, the key point is *similarity*. The ritual, using the vehicle of more complex knots of fluidic energies, expresses the same act of the spirit as in mental magic acts on the “sign” of the elements or on the analogical image of the event. Therefore you must above all evoke and sympathetically mold in your exalted mind the form of what you want to act upon, until brought by *induction* to a state of rapport with its astral spirit, you can impose your command.

Think by analogy of those electromagnetic experiments in which a sudden current is induced in a suitably arranged and uncharged circuit at the same instant as a different and distant circuit closes. You can visualize the main current which drives this circuit as the desire which gradually saturates the imagination, until in the ritual gesture the spark comes and liberates the act; and in that instant of conscious light the energy is projected into that other, synchronized circuit, which here is the actual occult “sign” of the thing. Therefore when the command flashes there, not just in your mind, a corresponding action occurs on the real and objective plane.

In order to master the forms that become subject to your own will, you must know how to penetrate the “thought” that produces them, and master it. Éliphas Lévi says that to evoke a spirit signifies *to enter* into the dominant thought of that spirit, fixed by the “signs,” the “signatures,” and the pentacles. And if, on the same lines, you know how to rise higher, you will draw that spirit up with you and it will serve you. In the contrary case, it will be the spirit that draws you into its circle, and you will serve it, even without realizing the fact.

“Like produces like.” “Evoke.” “To produce an effect, imitate it.” Now you understand why there are countless types of ritual among primitive peoples,

obeying these principles of “homeopathic” and “sympathetic” magic. Then you begin to realize how often there is no superstition involved, except among those who can only talk of superstition. You see that in the state of magical exaltation, intoxication, or violent desire, the laws of separation between the I and the not-I are broken, imitation produces a real *communication*, and the act, the sensation, the movement are projected and work like lightning, just like the forces of reality itself, or the forces of those whom your magic strikes. The image gives life to the ritual, which in turn reacts on the image, fires it, expresses it, multiplies its light and occult power. Thus the *rituals of imitation* are the supporting-points for evocation and fixation in the mental fire, and like limbs for projecting them.

You hear of people in archaic times, and even today among remote populations, who untie knots and blow on them to let loose the wind; who spill water to make it rain, or bathe themselves, as the arid earth begs water from above; who artistically imitate thunder and lightning to attract a storm. You find exterior ascents—of trees, pillars, or stairs—as a basis for transcendent rising. By wearing masks, they *identify* with the beings represented and make contact with their energies. Then there is the savage women’s dance, to send vigor and irresistible strength to their menfolk far off in war; and through the great arches of the seasons, orgies and rapes to unleash and excite the dark powers of growth, so that plentiful harvests will burst forth. In blood sacrifice they invoke the mystical power stolen from animal life and consecrated to immortality. You can still see sorcerers or witches making wax models of those they wish to affect, and ritually working their act of death, life, or enchantment on them. Or people will dramatize what others do through magical power. They throw stones or spit to relieve weariness, fear, or sickness. They thrust a sword into the invisible, which no point can reach; they slowly bend a stick of wood until it breaks, to express their destructive will, fixed in the mental fire on persons or things.

There is the voice, too, which as *expression* is already and eminently ritualistic. You will hear the magic of the Word: sacred words that will give you power; occult names to which is bound the very soul of one who bears them, like the flame to the wood. In all of this there is a single idea: the evocatory, expressive gesture which forms and magnetizes the image in the Light—and projects it into the outer world.




You see, then, how a background appears, on which the little figure of man throws gigantic shadows. Look at his laughable little stageplay, in which he imitates the grand phenomena of nature in a forest clearing, an empty plain, a windswept beach, in alpine clarity or underground cavern: from such a comedy come irresistible powers of sympathy which make it a center and axis of a



cosmic drama. The ritual draws the act out of the infinite, and sends it back into the infinite: in the ethereal Light which resurrects it, it becomes free of the human, shudders serpentlike through the members of the Cosmic Man, and sets them in motion.

All this is conditional on your experiencing exaltation to the point of the ecstasy of light. Until then, the Ritual is dormant. If you put your hopes in it, and do not know that it is only magical when it is the expressive vehicle of a *state of truth* (or of faith, if you prefer); if you do not feel a sense of your own power of achievement, wherein there is no question of what “must” be, only of what *IS*; if you hope and work without knowing that, without *realizing* that—and for realization, *contact* is necessary—you will be no more than the dupe of a ridiculous superstition.

In the primitive psyche there is a far less “fixed” relationship of the soul and its powers to the physical body, with a correspondingly greater ease in isolating the latter; an almost exclusive predominance of the imagination over cerebration, with a natural overlapping of inner and outer, of I and nature; there is suggestibility, and a deep savage violence of desire and emotion—more elemental than human. Thanks to these elements in the primitive psyche, the rituals seem spontaneously to open paths and irradiate them with magical power. But in the pallid life of modern “civilization,” such a power merely recedes into myth.



Yet the other way is as close to you today—or as far—as it ever was: the way, I say, in which only the dry force from above, the initiatic  , can kindle the  and animate in  the ritual and all its parts.


# **PART II**


## II.1

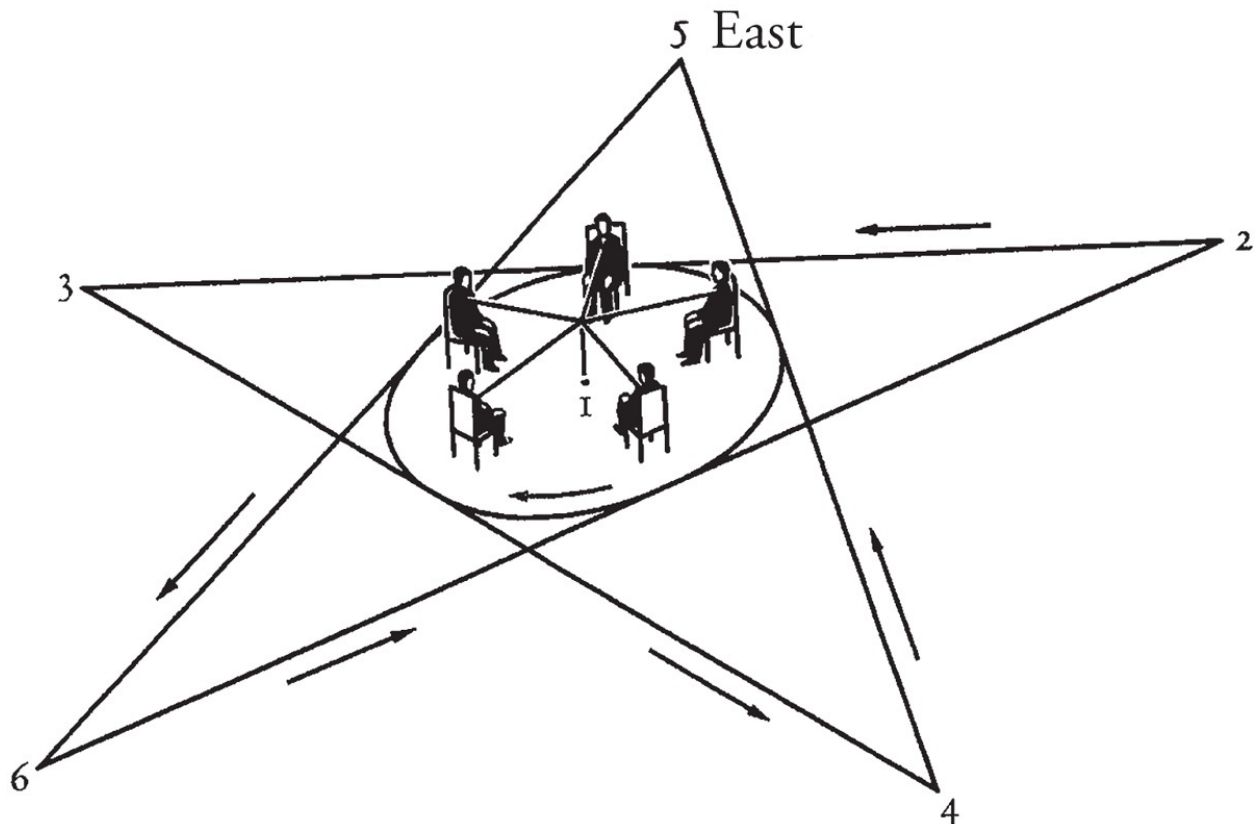
# Instructions for Magical Chains

The following instructions concern those students of esoteric science who, having found among themselves sufficient spiritual affinity and seriousness of intention, wish to organize a chain that will eventually be able to contact other chains, created on the same principles by other groups and in other places.

We presume that a chain set up in this manner has an essentially initiatic purpose. Thus above all else and any incidental intention, it aims to promote and develop realization of a spiritual type suitable to each member. Such a chain will be marked by particular types of activity, awareness, and individuality. In some kinds of chain the individuals are simply thrown together, and the polarity of masculine  and feminine  necessary for operations is not reflected

harmoniously in every member. Instead, they separate into the opposition of the fluid, passive mass formed by the majority = , and the active role of a leader

= . But in the type of chain proposed here, every member must distinctly and firmly possess self-awareness, control, and mastery: thus both aspects of the Hermetic complementarity. Each must participate in the chain as an *individual*, as a distinct force. The chain formed by such *individuals* will become compact and positive in every way when, through repeated meetings, the various distinct elements become attuned and form a unity.



Following this intention, every group will cohere by means of an essentially dynamic symbol such as the *pentagram*, which will be cast *projectively*, i.e., from right to left, as shown in the figure above. The *emissive* way of drawing (from left to right) is limited to the symbol of the circle, to be drawn before the pentagram not so much for insulation as for accumulating the individuals' energies.

For the same reason, unlike what might suit a purely ceremonial magic, one does not rely simply on the strength of the collective ritual and of quasi-automatic elements (*ex opere operato*). On the contrary, this requires that for a good while, both before and during the meetings, the members should work energetically on themselves, with their own energies, so that they can contribute actively to the firm structure of the chain.

We will begin by outlining the discipline that the members chosen by the group leaders must observe individually, uninterruptedly, with firmness, intelligence, and zeal. These are mostly exercises already described in the first volume of this collection, but which we will now organize as a daily program. One must persevere at them until one feels their result in an abandonment of the usual, lethargic attitude toward things and toward oneself, which is the chief

obstacle to initiatic realization.

## INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION

Aimed at the following goals:

1. Awakening a greater *intelligence toward natural phenomena*, so that the sense of life extends rhythmically beyond oneself. We will dwell for now on the basic phenomenon of the *succession of day and night*.
2. Training the mind in *dynamic concentration*, consisting in the tracing and projection of figures and symbols inside oneself.
3. Training the spirit in *fixity*.
4. Strengthening in the course of daily life the sense of the *continuity and presence* of oneself.

1. For the first point, practice the contemplations before sleeping and immediately on waking, with the symbols of the “sun” and the “mountain” already given in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 55–56. Where the outer light declines, the inner light arises. In the evening, before sleep, in a calm mood, not exhausted in body and especially not in mind (the habit of taking a bath before bed is a useful restorative), visualize a slow sunrise while you see and feel yourself climbing a mountain, up to an imaginary midday peak corresponding to the depth of night in the physical world. Then fix this idea: “I AM THE LIGHT.” Accustom yourself to sinking into sleep with the mind on the one idea of the nocturnal sun at its zenith, calmly refusing every other thought or image that may arise.

In the morning, free the mind from any residual sleepiness, then reevoke the nocturnal sun at the zenith where you left it, and imagine that it is going down, while you yourself descend from the peak. The dawning of the physical sun and the awakening in the physical body mark the moment of return to this world of darkness, from which you took leave last night, with the nocturnal light. Nonetheless, evoke the sense of this nonphysical and invisible light, and while trying to retain it, say: “THE LIGHT IS IN ME.” Carry that as the very meaning of being awake, aware, and active as an individual among external things. Feel that the light in your own soul *is stronger than the external light*. This sense

increases until midday, then declines in the evening, when you retreat from that battle position which is our life as humans, and reenter the world of light.

These contemplations must become *alive*. If not, *they are fruitless*. They should lead to an *awareness* of day and night; to a sort of *subtle sensitivity to the various hours*; to perceiving a rhythm in which the inner and the outer meet. Do not suppose that this demands a special kind of life, removed from normal occupations. The purpose is all the better served when the discipline is not kept separate from those, but succeeds in affirming itself in the thick of everyday life. No one, however busy during the day, lacks moments of pause when his thoughts wander at random or dwell on his concerns. These moments can be used instead for recollection to higher consciousness: for example, for *feeling* the present time of day and paying attention to the sense of the “hour,” to the degree of light of one’s own consciousness and one’s own energy.

2. Everyone should train himself to trace mentally, several times a day, the principal symbols of the chain: the circle and the pentagram. These tracings require three distinct actions:

- a. A moment of recollection in which you place and feel yourself at the *center* of the figure; then as though this center frees itself and *projects* another point external to you.
- b. Imagine this point moving and starting to trace the figure.
- c. Fix the figure in its entirety, then leave it and return to feeling yourself in the center, and as the center.

However slight your progress, by listening to your own inwardness you will notice that upon returning to the center there is a subtle sensation that was not there before. It is the *magical value* of the traced figure that has been added.

The difficulty in these exercises lies in not simply drawing the figures in front of yourself, as one is spontaneously prone to do, but in drawing them *around* yourself, horizontally, with part of them passing behind you. At the beginning it may help to imagine that you are turning around to watch the lines or curves that go behind your back.

As we have said, the circle is drawn from left to right (clockwise), and the pentagram from right to left, first fixing the center 1, then projecting as far as possible the right-hand point 2, then drawing the lines 2–3, 3–4, 4–5, 5–6, 6–2, and returning to the center (see the illustration). You can also draw the circle

first, then draw the pentacle around it so that its lines are tangential to the zone included in the circle, in which you are placed.

You should also try to infuse these exercises with a sense of light and life. In doing them, we are in fact projecting subtle energies around ourselves; we are positively *creating* these figures of energy in etheric space. It can be useful to see, with eyes open or closed, the lines and curves as faint luminous traces that gradually light up—but the best thing is when you can conceive of them as pure elements of energy. You can choose moments of calm and lucidity for this discipline, but even in moments of pause, as we mentioned—such as being kept waiting, or going from one place to another, or simply walking along and so forth—practice it for a few moments with force and flexibility.

3. To train the spirit in *fixity*, use a practice which is best done at midday, before lunch. The invisible light that man carries is then at its *maximum*, and the subtle body is in perfect correspondence with the physical body, aligned on a common axis that corresponds to the vertical ray of the noonday sun.

It is a matter of immobilizing the body in some position that causes no fatigue and gives you enough stability (e.g., like the Egyptian figures, hieratically seated on a sort of throne with arms and a back). The abandoning thought to go wherever it will, you simply watch, and *know* that you have just thought this or that, and so on. You continue in this way in the spirit of an experimenter who follows with calm attention the development of a chemical process. The mental flux will cease, and the sense of *standing*, of *permanence*, will ensue. It is like someone carried by a current, who at a certain moment touches a solid support and, holding onto it, has the feeling that he has now “come to ground.” In the first volume of this work, we mentioned several times a discipline of this kind, as easy as it is essential. It is also mentioned elsewhere in the present part.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, we return to it once more, copying fragments of a document entitled *The Practice of Philosophical Ecstasy*, published as an appendix to the edition of Tommaso Campanella’s works by A. D’Ancora (Turin, 1854), vol. I, cccxxiii.

One should choose a place wherein one hears no sound, in the dark or with a faint light placed behind one, out of sight, or with eyes closed. It should be a time of quietude, when a man feels himself free from every passion of body and mind. The body feels neither cold nor hot, nor pain in any part; the head free from catarrh, from the odors of food, and from any humor. The body should not be bloated with food, nor feel any desire to eat or drink, to void itself or anything of the sort. It remains in its place . . . in the most comfortable manner. . . . The

mind is free from the slightest passion or thought; untroubled by melancholy or sorrow, by joy, fear, or hope; without amorous thoughts, cares for one's family, for oneself, or for another. Neither should it remember past events or present objects. Once the body is thus disposed, one should proceed to chase from the mind, one by one, all the thoughts that begin to go round in one's head. As soon as a thought arises, repel it, and when another arises, repel that too, until no more thoughts come and one is thinking of nothing at all. Then one rests entirely insensible, both within and without, and becomes as immobile, as though one were a natural plant or a stone.

This method is partly different from the other one mentioned, since it is not a matter of letting thought run until it exhausts itself, but of gradually eliminating its formation. In the first case especially, it is essential to be able to “*hold firm without contact*,” to which Iagla has alluded. Otherwise either thought runs away, or one falls into a state of somnolence, of semi-hypnosis. If the practice is well done it does not bring obscuration, but a growing sense of calm illumination.

4. Finally, for the presence to continue throughout the day, the discipline consists in predetermining the content of the coming day, in its principal points, on the previous evening—calmly and firmly *seeing it*—then taking it up again the following morning; and when the day is over, running over what you have done and considering whether you have stuck to what you had determined to do, or not. For present purposes there is no need for rigidity, or for antagonism toward the innumerable unforeseen events that happen in ordinary life, especially in the city. It is enough to ensure that whatever depends on us, and as far as it is predictable, should be unchanged and strictly coherent. In the evening, when you review the day, run through it *in reverse*, trying to consider all that you have done, felt, or thought: in sum, all that has happened, with the same indifference and serenity as if it were another person of no interest to you. However, when you review the content of the new day in the morning, you should bring a sense of strength and affirmation to your imagining (and you must always *see*, never merely “think” it).

With serious persistence, this predetermination creates a continuous thread and an inner consolidation, by virtue of which one's whole life acquires a greater autonomy and certainty. Instead of being thrown hither and thither by accidents, impulses, and disorderly thoughts, it opens up the possibility of conducting ourselves in everything as “lords.”

To sum up, the individual member of the chain can organize his day as follows:



*In the evening:* (1) Evaluation of the past day; (2) visualized predetermination of the next day; (3) contemplation of the rising sun, before sleeping.

*On waking:* Contemplation of the setting sun; active representation of the content of the coming day.

*At midday* (if possible): Exercise of “fixation.”

*From time to time during the day:* Tracing the figures of the chain.

After these exercises have been internalized, one will find that they work together to awaken a unique, solar, and central quality that the participant in the chain needs to possess. We repeat that those who ask for “initiation” as they might ask to have a tooth pulled—or for “visions” such as (*mutatis mutandis*) they might see at the cinema—are on the wrong track. With a few exceptions, we are only indicating here the ways and means for serious and willing people. Those who rest on their neediness and wait for others to do what they themselves should be doing, we prefer to leave to the care of the religions and their innumerable substitutes. Moreover, in developing the chain it is better not to introduce rituals that could attract higher and transcendent forces until the system of the individuals composing it offers a sufficiently firm *structure* and circuit, so as always to maintain an active attitude.

Therefore the group leaders will insist on the strict observance of these preliminary and individual disciplines, and also on continuing them after the sessions have begun.

## FIRST INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CHAIN

The members are arranged in a circle, seated with their hands on their knees. The director faces east. The sessions should be held as long as possible after meals. An odd number, at first preferably *five* people, take their places at the five points of the pentagram. Perfumes: incense, myrrh, eucalyptus berries. The director indicates the different phases with appropriate words or knocks.

1. Calmness, concentration, and “silence.” Each *feels* himself, arousing in himself a state of tranquil anticipation.

2. Making contact with each other. A state of sympathy, of “being together.” Each one confirms and underlines this sensation by imagining leaving himself, putting himself at a point at the center of the circle at chest-height; from that center he goes to his left-hand neighbor, returns to the center, then to the next


person (always imagining *lines*) and so forth, finally returning from the center to himself. He contemplates the complex traces (shown in the figure inside the circle), then places his mind at the central point.




3. On a signal, he projects an external point to the left, and visualizes himself traveling round in a circle that encloses all the members, passing behind each one. A state of being included, enclosed. *Feel* the world divided into two parts: one *central, living*, contained by the circle; the other empty, stretching to infinity. Imagine the ascent of the nocturnal sun, which remains above the circle and irradiates the group.

4. Tracing the pentagram. Circumscribing the circle, always horizontal. The stages marked by soft knocks. At the first knock, place oneself at the center (1), at the second, project the vertex (2), at the third, draw the side 2–3, and so on; at the seventh knock, return to 1 and fix the entire image. A sense of being enclosed in this web of force-lines. As the sessions develop, the tracing will be done ever more rapidly, until synthesized in a single “gesture.”

Each member traces these mental lines, in time, as if throwing out energy, cutting through space from one vertex to another, perhaps feeling the lines as coming from afar and projecting to infinity. Once the pentagram is drawn, the group’s “closure” is complete and combat-ready, so to speak. Five cones of force are projected into ethereal space.

In the case where the chain consists of five elements, the vertices are made to fall behind each person’s back, as in the figure.

5. Creation and animation of a fluidic current. Each one imagines a current going out of himself at head level, to the left, and passing to the others in turn. Imagine a circulating movement, at first very slow then gradually accelerating. At the same time, an attitude of reception, of opening oneself =  and of

activity, pressing, guiding, energizing =  + , or  Feel it

penetrating from the right and departing to the left, and do it as though what leaves you is *more* powerful and *faster* than what arrives.

Then let the current run down.

Reevoke the center.

Reevoke the circle and the pentagram, and imagine that these figures are dilating and retreating bit by bit, until they lose themselves in the dark

distance . . .

Only the Sun remains, on high, in the center.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR A LATER PHASE

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### *Part One*

1. As the above, but at stage 5, instead of letting the current run down, once it has reached the *maximum* force and speed, oppose it individually with *resistance*, creating an obstacle in oneself that interrupts it, and *absorb* the force that one has stopped.

#### *2. Vivification of the "Vital Points"*

You arouse the current as in stage 5, and once it is at the *maximum*, imagine it passing at the level of your forehead, above the eyebrows; concentrate in that place, keeping the circulation going. Then move your mind to the level of the larynx (momentarily holding your breath) and create the imagined sensation of the current gently descending to that level. Bring the current down successively to the heart and to the solar plexus, reducing it as it goes. Notice the special sensations that may arise at each point.

Last, imagine the current as a whirling spiral or whirlwind that gathers all the members, simultaneously bathing and animating them. Open your soul to a sense of the infinite, of liberation, of breathing, as if escaping from prison into the open air. Visualize a vertical ray of light traversing the body and all the points, and project into this the sense of the I, normally limited to the head.

All this is done in time, following the commands and, if necessary, images given by the director.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR A LATER PHASE

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### *Part Two: Motility of the Subtle Body*

Once the complete current is aroused, as described above, join your hands, "ascertaining" your own, seated physical body, and imagine that while it is motionless, your subtle body is slowly revolving inside you around the axis of light. It turns clockwise several times. Then bring the image to the point of

departure, in exact correspondence with the physical body.

## II.2

IAGLA

### Subterranean Logic

There is an experiment in hypnosis called “post-hypnotic suggestion,” which almost always succeeds. A hypnotized subject is given the order: “On such-and-such a day and hour *do* this or that!” The subject wakes up and remembers nothing at all. Time passes, then the day and hour arrive, and bang! he obeys the command to the last detail.

In some cases, as the appointed moment approaches he feels a sort of uneasiness, a disturbance, even a crisis. In other cases there is no interruption: consciousness remains lucid and awake, but a train of thoughts arises which lead to the prescribed action. The action is performed, while the ego believes that it is perfectly free. Charles Richet somewhere cites a typical case. The command was to throw a book into the fire: a book deliberately left near the fireplace.

The moment arrives. The subject’s eye alights—by mere chance, of course—on the book. He concentrates his attention on it. The thought arises: “Here’s the book that X gave me. Now it’s mine. And I treasure it.” Various memories and associations follow. Then, without warning: “Treasure it. . . . But perhaps I’m a slave to things I treasure?” Other thoughts, interrupted by: “Certainly *not*. I’m *free* to do whatever I like, I am.” His eyes move “distractedly” to the fire. “Why, if I chose, I could even throw this book *in the fire*, for example.” A pause. “If I chose . . . *and why ever not?* Resolution: “Hell, I’ll throw it in just *because* I treasure it!” And he throws it in the fire. He feels a sense of complacency, as from an action that has proved the “strength” of his “free personality.” His “reasoning,” fully conscious and transparent, comes only from his “free will,” does it not? But the ego has been *fooled*.

This experiment in itself is nothing. Not so the warning and the *suspicion* which it creates if you think it over. You find that you have to admit that consciousness has a double bottom, which you cannot get at; you must admit that certain trains of thought that guide your conduct could be determined by elusive subterranean causes.

If this begins to alarm you, it is with good reason; but you have made a *start*: you are learning to look where you should: *behind* you. *The backstage of consciousness is populated by forces and beings*, who hold the strings of much of the action of “free egos.” There is no thought that does not contain a precise *intention*. There is no logic that does not obey another “logic,” to which the first is often a mere sophism, pretext, or mask. Little by little you start noticing that things you have not accepted, judging them irrational, have really seemed irrational only because you did not want them. *Someone* inside you didn’t want them. Your consciousness is like a flashlight that sheds light in front, but not behind you. It’s not you, and you don’t know who it is that makes it light up *only* what it lights; in order to cause one thing to be seen but another not, certain resolutions are taken, others not.

Very well: the occult influence on humans operates in this twilight zone, along paths that run deeper than your consciousness. Beings who stay in the wings act by using your own thoughts, and thus let you believe that you are perfectly free. The desired notion is determined, refined, fleshed out, then planted inside you, waiting for the seed to develop and spontaneously produce those “reasonings,” those ideal, moral, or sentimental justifications—even experimental ones—that are best suited to lead you to the predetermined thing.

Think how much “chance” there is in the lives of you humans! How much “spontaneity”! Look inside, and you find sudden whims, likes and dislikes, waves of prostration and exaltation, strange attentions and odd distractions, and those “values,” interests, thoughts, and symbols that start speaking to you now, but didn’t speak to you before—or vice versa. Look outside, and you find that *very* person you “happen” to know or meet, those very reactions that pop up in your mind, that very book or magazine that comes to hand—and they may change the course of your life. No serious person wastes time thinking about this vast world of “causality.” So there is an unlimited world in which you are defenseless. *The empty places of “chance” are filled by “causes.”* The “demons” and “entities” are all around.

You are very naïve if you expect to find magic in the tracks of some extraordinary, public, and noisy event. You should look close at hand, not far away: pay attention to the things that seem most “natural,” “spontaneous,” least

in need of explanation—or rather those too easily explained, in the life of your soul and in the spectacle of the outside world.

First point: even in the outer world, *mistrust is the mother of wisdom*. The strict coherence of natural laws is exactly equivalent to the mask and sophism of “reasoning” with which the post-hypnotic suggestion planted in the depths creates its own “alibi” for the ego. The more contented someone is with the “explanations” diligently offered by certain physical laws, and tries to solve the problems of reality with them, the more he falls into the trap; the more distant is the *magical key*, and he is intoxicated with blindness and impotence. And what about history? Moderns have come to know, for example, that diseases are not self-generated, but caused by the presence and action of certain bacteria. Yet they still believe in all seriousness that revolutions, subversive movements, decisive turns in history could have been spontaneous, self-born, or (which is more or less the same thing) explicable by “natural” causes: social, economic, political. History is not explicable by itself, but rather by another secret history that is still to be written; and when it is, it will give people and peoples the feeling that they have been acting up to now in a state of hypnosis. The old Jew was quite right: “The world is governed by very different forces from what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes.”<sup>1</sup> Thus wrote Disraeli.

Be vigilant: the principle is to *feel* eyes and hands and fascinations everywhere. *Turn halfway around and look behind you*: and I’ve said it all. As for your inner life, which is the starting point for all the rest, an extremely subtle and serpentine intelligence needs to be created for all thoughts and at all moments: realize what it is that they *want* from the fact that you think or accept them. Attune your ear to their language. The thoughts that present themselves most self-evidently are the ones you should most distrust. Once this sensitivity is awakened, you will see that every thought proffers an ambiguous and wordless fascination to which your mind is attracted—*like the female to the male*. It is a hard path, and there is no help on it. The enemy does not like to be seen. He vanishes. At the threshold of the mental “void” you are “distracted” or hesitate. The mists of drowsiness descend, the inward-turned attention abdicates. That is *their* magic circle. And you must fight it. Hold firm without contact. Keep upright without support. In the spirit of an energetic simplicity; with the inner eye alert, like the hunter waiting for birds to flush—but without knowing from where.<sup>2</sup>

Until you can manage this *ambulare ab intra* (moving from within), you can purify, exorcise, and consecrate the place. There is a clear light that descends in what was night to you, and makes the phantasms, the larvae, the “influences”

retreat; or it suddenly makes you see those who as friends *were there waiting for you*, as close as can be.

To the same extent, you gain the possibility of acting on those inhabiting the “surface,” led by the logic of “their” thoughts and their “spontaneity.” And at dead of night, with eyes wide open, there is your refuge, your sun, and *purity*. What now runs around you is your own magic circle of light.

Here is another signpost on the path: *mistrust of pleasure*. As you have already been told: “The habitual pleasure of humans has definite laws and purposes: it is a bait for accomplishing certain actions in which a person is played by ‘nature’ and ever more held by the net of its intentions. And while the trap is obvious in the forms of animal life, such as sexual pleasure, the same can be said of many other types of pleasure that mortals consider ‘superior.’”<sup>3</sup>

From the point of view of high magic, pleasure is a state of *nonconsciousness*. It pulls a veil over the eyes; it causes a tumult that allows a gap to open, and something *other* descends, penetrates, acts; and you are living in *passion*. “Perhaps it was to signify this self-dissolution, this loss of solidarity, this pouring-out of the personality, that the Latins spoke of *liquida voluptas* [liquid pleasure].”<sup>4</sup> Or as Evola says: “An *enjoyable suffering* is what men know as [sexual] pleasure,”<sup>5</sup> and, referring to the discipline of “purification” for preparation of the “Virgin,” it brings you to the very point of rupture—or defense. There, as in the case described above, it is the appearance of “pure liberty” that toys with you. You “feel” yourself perfectly free, “indifferent”: yet you decide and act. How could you know at that moment, having picked this *very* alternative out of “nothingness” and none other, that “your” action is really *yours*? And that the “nothingness” was really that, and not a land populated by *expectations*, subtle and imperceptible causes?

You need to pay extreme attention to your mind, your “body of sensation”: freeze it in an EQUILIBRIUM and be ready to catch the moment of alteration, its “sense” and its “direction.” The principle is that as an action conforms, or does not conform, to an unconscious inclination (i.e., to the dominant will of the *others*, deep inside you), you will feel corresponding pleasure or displeasure. “Thus it is not enough to *believe* that the choice is indifferent: instead you must set aside your own will and let ‘chance’ decide, as for example if a coin will fall heads or tails. If you repeat this practice and apply it to matters that concern you ever more intimately, the *feeling* that results [from altering the state of ‘equilibrium’] as a reaction, will provide you with an excellent instrument . . . for verifying when this sense of indifference preceding a choice is real, and



when it is illusory.”<sup>6</sup>

Again, difficult paths stretch ahead of you. You must be harsh and feline with your little soul, which scuttles innocently and busily to wherever joy, peace, or satisfaction are beckoning. You must detach yourself and know how to stop it, coolly and calmly (I am thinking of certain Nordic eyes, gray or metallic blue), when for shame it least wants to be seen, when it suggests giving up so as to allow contact—and where it submits, accepts, suffers. *You* must be its male, not others. Therefore tempt it, experiment in every way, drag it down and down on every path until the reaction finally appears; and in the reaction the fetters appear; and from those you can rise to whatever is holding it fettered, and seize it from that *other thing* and substitute yourself, so that it will be *your* soul, unconditionally, with no further possibility of reaction or reservation.

You cannot allow yourself purity, joy, and *simplicity* before then, as a “Son of Hermes.”

## II.3

PIETRO NEGRI

# On the Western Tradition

## 1. DEVALUATION OF THE PAGAN TRADITION

A French masonic writer, Jean-Marie Ragon, who still enjoys considerable authority in some circles, has written that “Rome never possessed any but the *Lesser Mysteries*,” and stated that in the year 241 U.C.<sup>1</sup> (sic) Pythagoras went to be initiated by the druids in Alesia,<sup>2</sup> the city that would later be destroyed, along with the druidic initiation, by Caesar, “*that barbarian worthy of Rome.*”<sup>3</sup> An equally malevolent appreciation comes from Stanislas de Guaita, one of the most quoted of French occultists:

Rome, so fertile in abominable necromancies, did not yield a single disciple of Hermes. Do not bring up Ovid’s name. His *Metamorphoses*, charming in every way, attest to a most erroneous, not to say a naïve esotericism. Virgil, who was at least an initiate, was preoccupied with giving Italy an epic masterpiece, and lets the rays of his wisdom appear only between the lines and as though by chance.”<sup>4</sup>

These statements by Ragon and Guaita are not alone: quite the contrary. They are found, for example, in the otherwise serious and reliable works of another French writer, Marco Saunier, author of a very popular book in the occultist field which is also widely read in Italian. Saunier, after saying that Rome was founded by a college of Etruscan initiates, adds that “the initiates were quickly expelled, for the Roman people wanted to govern themselves, following their gross appetites and the impulses of their inborn brutality.” He writes further:

The city of the seven sacred hills . . . had become the vile den of a horde of brutes who wanted to impose their force on the world. The cult of Rome was force, its dream was carnage. There was nothing great or noble about the Roman. His heart was nonexistent. Force alone spoke in him, and his intelligence resided in the muscles of his fist. Being so busy fighting, he used slaves to do his thinking.<sup>5</sup>

We forbear from comment on the seriousness and serenity of this vision, noting only that we find in this implacable animosity not only the hatred of Brennus (the great thinker of Gaul!), but also the partisan hostility against Rome on the part of Saint Paul<sup>6</sup> and Christians in general. In fact, according to Saunier it was Christianity that brought the remedy for all those evils and infamies: “To renovate the world, a middle term was needed that would attract both Force and Intelligence, prepare their alliance, and bring an end to their conflict. And it was Jesus who found it, in Sentimentality.” All praise to Jesus with his Sentimentality, with a capital S! After the Empire was shattered and the Pax Romana (Roman peace) destroyed, neighborly love and Christian charity were instituted, by whose grace the Christian peoples have lived, longing for a better world; and all carnage has ceased, except of course a few trivial and recent exceptions.

This systematic denigration of Romanity and rabid devaluation of any wisdom and initiatic capacity among the Romans (as if the very word *initia* were not purely and classically Latin) accords ill with the attitude and statements on the subject of another French occultist, though he too was a Freemason, a Christian, and averse to paganism. In fact, according to Dr. Gerard Encausse (better known by the pseudonym of Papus) pagan initiation must have lasted to our own day, since Providence (still quoting Papus) had to take the considerable trouble of coming down and entering the lists to defeat it. It seems to follow that if there are residues even today, there must once have been much more. Here is Papus, writing as Grand Master of Martinism: “Martines de Pasqually, then Claude de Saint-Martin, wanted to found a *Christian chivalry*, essentially laic, charged to diffuse and spread the initiatic tradition of the West and prepare as far as possible the great work of human Reintegration. Providence wanted to oppose a Christian current to the pagan current of Pythagorean origin, which had centralized part of the work of initiatic diffusion.”<sup>7</sup>

It is not clear whether Papus meant to refer to pagan currents of his own time, or of Saint-Martin’s time, or even of both epochs. In France, the

Pythagorean movement of Fabre d'Olivet (1768–1825) began in 1813 with the publication of his *Vers dorés de Pythagore*. A few years earlier, the reestablishment of paganism had been preached by the pagan hierophant Quintus-Nantius Aucler, wearing the toga of the Roman pontiffs. But Papus cannot have been alluding to these currents, for the first edition of Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin's works goes back to 1782, before the writings of Fabre d'Olivet or Aucler's work.<sup>8</sup> With the exception of these two pagan and Pythagorean currents, we cannot tell what other movement Papus was referring to, unless he was simply speaking about Masonry, in which among other things one can trace a Pythagorean influence and a connection with the builders' guilds of ancient Roman and post-Roman times.

This is not the place to dwell on Papus's very questionable coupling of Martinès de Pasqually and Saint-Martin, nor on the absence in the latter's works of any mention of this antipagan intervention on the part of Providence. Besides, the letters of Saint-Martin to Kirchberger, baron of Liebisdorf, show him concerned above all with what he called the *School of the North*, and much alarmed by the magical operations in Lyon at the Masonic lodge of the Egyptian Rite founded there by Cagliostro.<sup>9</sup> It is enough to point out that if Papus and Providence were not tilting at windmills, there must have existed in Saint-Martin's day, or in Papus's, a "pagan and Pythagorean current which had centralized part of the work of initiatic diffusion." In this way, the persistence of a Western pagan initiatic tradition is admitted even by its enemies. That is why we cannot think much of the coherence and good faith of those Martinists for whom *the* Western initiatic tradition is necessarily and only Christian. It is true that sometimes the problem is one of pure and simple illiteracy. For example, the current (1929) Grand Master of the Martinist Order in Italy demonstrates his wisdom and his feeling for things Italian by denigrating Romanity to the utmost: "The numbering, or *better put*, the counting of the Romans paid no regard to the functions of zero, i.e., of *spatial infinity*, because the Romans stayed with secondary causes, and did not care to rise *too high* toward the first cause."<sup>10</sup> We could cite other passages from this Grand Master, but the foregoing slice of prose should be more than enough to show how naturally such people renounce and denigrate Romanity, compensating by flaunting their own affinity for those "illiterates and idiots" of which the Acts of the Apostles speak.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. EAST, WEST, AND CHRISTIANITY

If he did not invent it, Papus certainly helped to reinforce and propagate the prejudice of talking about *the* Western Christian initiatic tradition as if it were not only orthodox, authentic, and faithful, but as though it were indubitably Western, hence the only Western tradition.

After, and due to, the dissension between Papus and H. P. Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society, he set up Martinism against her as an “order of illuminates who place the name of Christ at the head of all their official acts.”<sup>12</sup> Its purpose was “to propagate and spread *the* initiatic tradition of the West.” And because the Martinist Order and the Theosophical Society are two pseudo-initiatic organizations that make a lot of propaganda, the antagonism between them appears to the profane eye of the majority to reflect or manifest a rivalry between *the* Eastern tradition, represented by the Theosophical Society, and *the* Western tradition, personified by Martinism. Naturally this is far from the truth of the matter, and besides, it is absurd to think that that two orthodox traditions, hence linked to the unique initiatic hierarchy, should conflict with each other.

In recent years the antagonism between the two movements has steadily faded, thanks to the progressive christianization of the Theosophical Society due to Besant, and still more to Steiner. The latter came into open conflict with Besant and founded his own Anthroposophical Society, presenting himself as heir and representative of the Rose-Cross, or, according to him, of the Western initiatic tradition—Christian, of course. In this way the Anthroposophists have come closer to the Martinist position; and we have in fact seen an issue of a French Steinerian journal almost entirely dedicated to the personality and writings of the Unknown Philosopher, exalted there as the true precursor of Goethe and of Rudolf Steiner.

The outcome of this attempt of Anthroposophy to absorb Martinism matters little to us. Whether or not they go hand in hand, Martinists and Anthroposophists agree with each other and disagree with us when they make Jesus the central figure not only of initiation but of history and of the universe, and when they equate the Christian tradition with the Western initiatic tradition. For now we leave unprejudiced the question of the correct position of the figure of Jesus in the history of the earth and of the universe, contesting only the following:

- (1) *the Western character of Christianity;*
- (2) *the Christian character of the Western initiatic tradition.*

We must agree from the start on the significance and range to be assigned to the terms *Eastern* and *Western*. If one defines them from a purely geographical criterion, then strictly speaking they become empty words, because any point on the globe apart from the two poles is simultaneously East of points to the West of it, and West of points to the East of it. We therefore need to use different criteria to define what we mean by East and West, and to draw the line of geographical and historical separation, avoiding as far as possible everything vague and conventional.

Given that the unification of the West took place due to and under the Roman empire; that the modern world, our civilization, derives (deviations apart) from classic culture; and that even Christianity, the foreign element in classical culture, sought to validate its universality in Rome and to have its center there: given all this, it seems natural to us to recognize Rome, if not as *Roma Caput Mundi* (Rome, head of the world), at least as the center of the West. Then from the Roman point of view, the East comprises all of Asia from Anatolia (the “Levant”) to the Far East, and the West comprises Greece, Rome, and nowadays all the peoples in Europe and beyond who feel powerfully and prevalently the direct or indirect influence of the civilization of which Rome was the center.

This division leaves out ancient Egypt, which finds itself across the East-West divide. The meridian that passes through Cheops’s pyramid could be considered as the line of separation between East and West, thereby including in the latter the Hellenized coasts of Anatolia. Even in the current sense of East, Egypt is considered on its own, distinct from it. The pharaoh’s regal, divine, and sacerdotal character recalls the union of the highest political and priestly authority in the divine Julius, simultaneously Emperor and Pontifex Maximus. The Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece much resemble the Mysteries of Isis; the Alexandrian period saw the blending and interpenetration of Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean elements with purely Egyptian ones; and it was in Egypt that the Hermetic tradition of the “sacred and divine art” developed. That tradition was transmitted via the Arabs to Italy, Spain, and the West in general, to become the Western medieval Hermetic tradition of the “royal art.” Lastly, we note that this division of East and West leaves all of North Africa in the West, so that the latter includes the initiatic schools of Morocco. On the other hand, with this division Judaism and its derivations remain even geographically extraneous to the West.

In determining the border between East and West, as generally with all frontiers, a certain margin of uncertainty remains, which leaves doubts or allows

solutions in which preferences or arbitrary decisions can influence their displacement in one direction or the other. In such a case it seems that one should take into account, when including or excluding a region or a people in the East or the West, their kinship or difference with one side or the other. If, for instance, the Hungarians are rightly included in the West, despite their origins, it is surely not the case with the Jews, whether settled or nomadic in Europe. Likewise one cannot ignore the differences between Christianity and all of Western classical civilization, given that the Romans and pagans considered Christianity an Eastern sect issuing from the margins of the Empire, alien to Greco-Roman life, customs, and mentality. While not forgetting or denying the pagan elements grafted onto Christianity and especially in Catholicism, one cannot fail to recognize the Asiatic character of this movement founded by a Jew who was born, lived, and died in Palestine, and was certainly not Hellenized. Religious intolerance, by which heterodox thinking becomes a crime punishable by law, was certainly not a Greco-Roman characteristic. Nor was the holy zeal of propaganda; nor the subordination of the citizen's duties to those of the believer, and of the interests of the earthly homeland to those of the heavenly homeland; nor the claim to enshrine truth in the articles of a creed, and to make the soul's salvation depend on professing a specific belief and observing a specific morality; nor the anarchic and democratic spirit of universal and obligatory brotherhood and of similitude and equality to one's neighbor. Don't the Christians themselves exalt their religion because the preaching of Jesus's doctrine has overturned the whole table of pagan values, giving the poor precedence over the rich, the last the place of the first, awarding victory to the folly of the cross and to what is low and despised in the world<sup>13</sup> over the wisdom of the philosophers, and putting the maximum value on the salvation of souls, the minimum on the defence and interests of the empire?<sup>14</sup> When the apostles and disciples opposed their doctrine and worldview to those of the gentiles or *ethnics* as they called them, were they not the first to recognize and establish the difference and indeed the contrast between Christianity and paganism, between ethnics and Christians; were they not affirming themselves as ethnically alien to the West?

If one prefers to take no account of this fundamental Judaism and this radical difference, and insists that original, primitive Judaism has been transcended, that Christianity is what Saint Paul preached, and that the Gospel is addressed equally to all the peoples of the earth, we cannot see why it should be considered Western any more than Eastern, Northern, or Southern. Obviously, to define Christianity as Western is equivalent to negating or forgetting its universality,

while to assert the latter denies its Western identity. The cavils of casuistry cannot get out of this dilemma. In any case, supposing—though not admitting—this acquired universalist character, its original character always remains what it is. Perhaps macaroni, now eaten and enjoyed worldwide, has thereby ceased to be a Neapolitan dish?

Hence neither its historical origin, nor any preference or precedence deliberately given to the West over peoples of other parts of the earth, gives Christianity the right to boast a Western character. What then supports its proclaimed Western nature? The only possible justification of this commonplace is the fact that the West has been Christianized, in a certain sense and to a certain extent. It is not that Christianity is or has become Western, but in a certain way the West has become Christian. That may sound like a play on words, but in reality it is a matter of two profoundly different things. And the confusion and illusion are favored by the fact that it is largely only the West that has become Christian. In the Far and Middle East, Christian preaching has not taken hold, while in the Near East and North Africa, formerly Christian, the religion of Jesus has lost ground to Islam. Despite all the missionary efforts and all the pretensions to universality, today only a minority of the human race is even nominally Christian, and Christianity is largely identified with the West alone. Thus to call Christianity Western is an improper and suspect way of indicating the christianization of the West.

In all of the above, we do not think we have made a great discovery; nor does that bother us, because we do not share the modern enthusiasm for discoveries. In a way we are almost embarrassed at having had to say such obvious things, except that they had to be said, to dispel the deceptions that beguile this subject. The confusion that we have revealed, clarified, and deplored dominates Western thinking; and it has seemed all the more timely to insist on such an evident truth while some have a vested interest in reinforcing, propagating, and perpetuating the contrary.

### **3. THE INITIATIC TRADITION IN THE WEST**

Let us pass on to the second point of contention: the pretended Christian character of the Western tradition, or more precisely, the presumption that a Western initiatic tradition has and must have a Christian character.

Such assertions implicitly presuppose others. They are:



1. That the West has been effectively Christianized.
2. That Christianity has possessed and kept intact the deposit of sacred tradition, as well as the full spiritual understanding of the mysteries of faith on the part of a priesthood worthy of the name.
3. That the Christianization of the West has been so general and profound as to extinguish any residue of paganism, and so thorough as to exclude, in particular, any continuity and derivation of the Mysteries and of pagan initiation.
4. That from the beginning of the Christian era onward, the West has remained impenetrable by any other influence.

The thesis that we are contesting contains a negative part, which excludes the existence of any non-Christian center or tradition in the modern West, and a positive part that affirms the existence of an esoteric Christian tradition. We will examine them both, first observing that it is one thing not to know whether something exists or not, and another thing to know that it does not and cannot exist. Moreover, if this is generally true, all the more caution is needed when making this distinction in the case of something which, if it does exist, is likely to be hidden. That is our case exactly, since it concerns esotericism, which by definition is secret and mysterious. And in the specific and particular case of a possible modern and pagan initiatic tradition, which would normally share the hidden quality of every esotericism, we need to add the special and contingent character due to past and present conditions in the West.

A Christian initiatic tradition, if it existed, could have affirmed itself and acted freely and unhindered, and could still do so, conforming to the missionary spirit of Christianity. The position of a pagan tradition would have been very different, and still would be, so that it would not be surprising to find no trace of it, even if had existed and still does. For a pagan tradition, the concealment of its own existence would have been prudent, to say the least. It is enough to think of the deep and inveterate hatred of paganism on the part of the West's dominant religion. Even when the various Christian sects attack each other, they accuse one another of paganism, as though in their mentality they can find no worse accusation. The Protestants, to affirm the excellence and genuineness of their Christianity, reproach the Catholics for their paganism; and the Catholic Church recently based its condemnation of the Action Française movement on the latter's supposedly pagan character.

For one thing, this antipagan obsession proves out of the Christians' own

mouth that, for all their efforts, they have not succeeded in extinguishing paganism. It also shows that the deep hatred and rancor of the dominant religion toward paganism is still very much alive and virulent. One may well agree that this broad and obstinate animosity is hardly conducive or encouraging to an opportune and fruitful affirmation of the existence of a pagan initiatic center. So even if its silence has remained absolute, it could be a case of Hermetic or Pythagorean silence, and would not prove that it necessarily or likely denoted the silence of the tomb.

We maintain therefore that before the Galilean's victory, in the last glorious centuries of the pagan world, the existence and work of Apollonius, Plotinus, Maximus, or Julian is sufficient evidence to prove that pagan initiatic centers did exist in Roman times. That said, it seems natural to admit that when the attempts to keep the pagan religion alive failed after the violent destruction of its initiatic centers, and after the persecutions and pyres of Alexandria, these pagan initiates, facing the unstoppable spread of the folly of the cross and the instauration of the Common Era, would have had to adopt one of two lines of action (though choosing one would not absolutely exclude the other): (1) They would have retreated and wrapped themselves in ever deeper mystery, similarly to what the Eastern initiatic centers have done today in the face of the Western invasion, though the latter has not been motivated by the deliberate and ferocious hatred of those centers *to strike at the heretic race* in its notorious manner. (2) They would have disguised themselves in Christian vestments, infiltrating the Church itself, inserting esoteric elements in the doctrine and perpetuating the integral tradition under cover. In any case, under such circumstances the first priority of the pagan initiates must obviously have been to ensure the continuity of the tradition at any cost, keeping the deposit of sacred science pure and whole, its understanding complete and conscious, and its center alive, though secret.

We realize that this theoretical possibility of a pagan initiatic center being able to survive and last for fifteen centuries without a break seems most unlikely to the profane mind. Such a continuous existence in the most profound mystery would seem utterly useless, condemned by its need of secrecy to absolute inaction, and equivalent in effect to nonexistence. However, to those who have some idea of the methods and levels of action and of the possibilities at the disposal of the initiatic hierarchy, it does not seem incredible that an initiatic center might have maintained its continuity, even physically and under the most unfavorable conditions, for fifteen centuries. For this and other reasons we find it far from impossible and incredible that a pagan initiatic center should have survived the fall of the Empire and the destruction of ancient civilization,

maintaining a continuous and even physical transmission to our own day

For us, then, the question is not posed in vain. If one chooses to consider it from an exterior, historical, and cultural point of view, one can only research and evaluate the traces of existence and action of such a center and tradition, both outside Christianity and within it, which could confirm the hypothesis, demonstrating the likelihood and probability of the effective existence, both in the past and the present, of a pagan initiatic tradition in the West. But external considerations and proofs of a historical nature cannot suffice to ascertain, beyond likelihood and probability, the truth and reality of this effective existence. That could only be the result of direct experience and participation. This much is obvious, so the reader will not suppose or expect that we could possibly resolve in writing such a difficult and important question.

## **4. THE ROMAN TRADITION**

What we have said is generally valid for the whole pagan initiatic tradition. But since we are treating the Western tradition, and since Rome is indubitably the center of the West, from which all of Western civilization draws its origins, the question of the existence of a Roman initiatic tradition and of a pagan initiatic center in Rome, both past and present, takes on particular importance.

Those who currently claim to be the heirs and bearers of the Western initiatic tradition do so by attaching themselves to a Celtic tradition, to Christianity, or to both at once. Recently some “Friends of Atlantis” have burst on the scene, aspiring to reconnect themselves with the Atlantean tradition.<sup>15</sup> We would not be surprised some day to see the “Friends of Glozel” appear with a Glozelian tradition, for what can’t be done with the help of sacred clairvoyance? Yet no one remembers the existence of Rome. Anthroposophists, Martinists, Jesuits all pose as heirs to the true Rose-Cross, or try to appropriate the Hermetic tradition. While seeing everything through Christian-colored spectacles and professing unlimited veneration for the prophet of Bethlehem, they insist that theirs is the one and only Western tradition. Could Gaul, Atlantis, and Palestine possibly have anything to do with the Western initiatic tradition, while Rome itself, and Rome alone, has nothing to say and nothing to do with the matter? Is it possible that Ragon was right in saying that Rome never possessed the Great Mysteries, and if logic is worth anything, implying that a Roman initiatic tradition possessing the Great Mysteries, having never existed, could not have perpetuated itself?

In order to devalue the Romans intellectually and initiatically, they are depicted as a crude people, brutal, warlike, alien to philosophy, preoccupied with the material and practical problems of life, and incapable of any abstraction or idealism. Furthermore, according to Theosophical, Martinist, common Christian and profane prejudice, the true initiate must be incapable of hurting a fly. He must melt with love for his neighbor, disdain or even hate this lower world, and attend to saving his soul from sin, from God's anger, from weeping and gnashing of teeth. Given that, it is obvious that having a social life based not on love and charity but on *ius* (human law),<sup>16</sup> *fas* (divine law), and *mos* (ancestral custom), a habit of fighting *virtute praediti* (armed with manly virtue) rather than turning the right cheek when struck on the left and vice versa, an ability to build roads over all the continents and bridges over all the rivers, and an indifference to philosophy proves that one is devoid of initiation.

It will be objected that Rome never had a Mystery institution comparable to the Greek or Egyptian ones, and that it repressed and forbade the Bacchanalia with the famous resolution of 186 BC, the *Senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* (senatorial decree on the Bacchanalia), which prohibited all the mysteries of Dionysus in Rome and Italy *with the exception of certain particular cases*. Rome expelled the philosophers, opposed the Pythagoreans, issued edicts such as those of Claudius and Diocletian against the mathematicians and Chaldeans, i.e., the soothsayers, astrologers, and alchemists. How could one possibly talk about Roman initiation?

We reply to these objections, first, that although initiatic knowledge is unique, the ways it manifests are adapted according to time and place. No one has said that the initiatic hierarchy must needs use the form of the classical Mysteries for its expression and action. Indians, Chinese, and Jews have never had anything similar, but no one thinks that a reason to deny the existence of an Indian, Chinese, or Jewish initiation. Therefore the fact that there were no Roman Mysteries of the Eleusinian or Isiac type does not preclude the existence of a Roman initiatic center, with its own wisdom and tradition.

Furthermore, there is no reason to take literally such absence of the Mysteries, since it was a purely Italic god, Janus, who was the god of initiation into them, He guarded doorways, specifically opening and closing the *janua* (doors) of the initiatic temple, and also had power over the entrance to the heavens (Ovid, *Fasti*, I, 125). Janus's attributes and symbols are the key and the boat. We do not see why, as such, they should be deemed unimportant and their significance only material and profane, whereas when Christianity appropriates them (evidently for some reason) and turns them into Saint Peter's keys and

boat, they acquire a shining significance and symbolic value.

Concerning Janus, we also note that according to Guénon,<sup>17</sup> he was simultaneously the god of initiation into the Mysteries and of the guilds of artisans (*collegia fabrorum*), first among them being the builders. This is enough to show the initiatic character of those guilds; and in fact the art of building, particularly of temples, was a sacred art, based on a sacred and secret science whose traditional echo is found in the art and science of the English Freemasons. The symbolism of building is found elsewhere, e.g., in the Gospels, but the title of Pontifex Maximus to designate the chief priest predates them: it is a Roman term based on architectural symbolism, and well chosen because his office is to establish communication between one bank and the other.<sup>18</sup> The Roman Mysteries therefore did exist; guilds existed which possessed an initiatic science, and their prestige was so high that they survived the ruin of the Empire, placing themselves under the protection of the four Crowned Saints, who in turn call to mind the figure of Janus Quadrifrons (four-faced Janus). They reappeared in the guild of the Comacine Masters, and in that of the Free Masons of the Middle Ages.

To continue in the purely technical field of “operative masonry,” the knowledge of the ancient Roman builders commands the admiration of modern engineers and architects. The Romans knew how to drill tunnels through mountains with the utmost precision, both in alignment and in the inclination for water flow. Some secrets of their art have come down to our times, and modern Roman expertise still builds the most daring “Roman arches,” which seem to defy the laws of statics.

As for the edict against the Bacchanalia and those against soothsayers, magi, and astrologers, they were not at all incompatible with the existence of an initiatic center in Rome. If it existed, we cannot imagine it opposing or obstructing those edicts through a sense of solidarity with such corruptions of the Mysteries and of Sacred Science. On the contrary! The expulsion of the Greek philosophers and the Romans’ scarce appetite for philosophy prove nothing against our point, because there is no affinity between sacred science and profane philosophy. Besides, it is true that even without initiatic illumination, Roman good sense was enough to discern the dangers of empty verbiage and philosophical nitpicking.

Among all the facts brought forward as incompatible with the existence of an initiatic center in Rome, the only one worth the trouble of detailed examination is the Romans’ aversion to Pythagoreanism, which resulted, for

example, in the destruction of the Pythagorean Basilica at Porta Maggiore in Rome. But that would take too long a digression, and since the fortunes of Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism among the Romans have already been studied in an excellent book by Alberto Gianola, we refer the reader to that.<sup>19</sup> For now we will only recall the legend of the ties between Numa and Pythagoreanism. Gianola considers this legend as plausible, and that Pythagoreanism could certainly not have persisted in the tenacious way that Cicero deplored if it had not found at least an apparent confirmation in the Pythagorean character of Numa's own institutions. Thus the prejudices aroused against the very possibility that an initiatic center existed in ancient Rome have no real foundation. Consequently, undeterred by the difficulty of the question and by prejudices of any kind about it, we will pass in rapid review the traces of Roman initiatic wisdom that are still visible.

## 5. ROMAN INITIATIC WISDOM

Before examining the history, myths, and legends of Rome and Italy in order to seek out and summarize the traces of ancient Italic wisdom, we should give some brief caveats. The first is that the vexed questions of historical criticism concerning ancient Roman history, which have been debated for about a century with strong feelings and various exchanges by the two sides, critical and traditionalist, cannot be of more than secondary importance to us, hence of minor interest. In any case, and without going into questions relatively foreign to our theme, we believe that Niebuhr, Mommsen, and German or German-inspired criticism in general have gone much too far in denying the credibility of Roman tradition for the whole regal period and the first phase of the republic. Instead of declaring Roman tradition false with a systematic, irate, and very *curious* animosity, it would have been better to limit themselves to simply stating their reservations. A sceptical attitude would have been more scholarly than their hostile, arbitrary, and authoritarian denial. In any case, time is beginning to judge this anti-Roman bias, especially since the discovery in the Roman Forum of the *lapis niger* (black stone) of which the ancient and derided tradition spoke, and the archaic stela beneath it. These proofs of the veracity and reliability of the ancient Roman tradition, transmitted by the Latin writers, have gained ground and continue to do so.<sup>20</sup> We are not denying the rights and value of historical criticism: only saying that criticism itself can and should be criticized. This, of course, is from the purely historical point of view. To us, it is not of vital interest whether the account of an event is historical or legendary; we are interested in

seeing whether, in either case, the account includes elements or aspects in which one can discern an initiatic or esoteric value or significance, evident or concealed. Thus for our purposes, history and legend are almost equally valid as sources and material.

The other caveat that we must issue is as follows. We have no reason to accept the dogmas and hypotheses of the creation and evolution of the earth and the human race, nor those of “primitive” peoples regarded as savages from whom civilization has “progressed.” In general we feel no obligation to accept the myths of religion, philosophy, or contemporary science. Consequently, we also reject the corollaries of these postulates, according to which the “savants” see in the myths and legends of ancient peoples, necessarily primitive and savage, nothing but a constant, poetic, and wonderfully naïve personification of natural forces. We know that wisdom is a very different thing from culture (and from theories, beliefs, and devotional, hysterical, and sentimental yearnings). The possibility of attaining wisdom is inherent in man, and not at all tied, as is usually believed, to human evolution from “primitive” (nomadic, pastoral, or agricultural) forms of life and social organization to the more recent forms miscalled “civilized.” We think, or rather we know from experience that the demands, complexity, agitation, and encroachment of modern civilization are not leading humanity toward wisdom, but taking it ever further from the sheer ability to conceive what wisdom is, and making it more and more difficult for the individual, raising artificial obstacles over and above the natural difficulties that face anyone who aspires toward wisdom. Hence we do not feel obliged to explain myths and legends with resort to naturalistic, solar, meteorological, totemistic and suchlike interpretations, and we maintain that it is possible to find in them elements and traces of traditional initiatic wisdom. Tradition, as the word itself denotes, is by nature *oral*, even today. The readers of these essays are educated enough about the hows and whys of this character of tradition, so we will not insist on them. Starting from the assumptions that the presence of traditional wisdom is not incompatible with the pastoral and agricultural social state of the ancient Italic and Latin peoples, and that traditional wisdom can only be transmitted “orally” and only expressed allegorically, we intend to trace the symbolic expression of traditional wisdom in the myths and legends of ancient Rome, and more generally in the “fables of paganism.”

## **6. THE LEGEND OF SATURNUS**

Everyone knows the Greco-Latin tradition of the four ages: in chronological

order the ages of gold, silver, bronze, and iron. The most ancient, the golden age, was the most beautiful, the blessed age mourned and extolled by the poets, since when the world has become steadily worse.

Latin tradition identified this happy time with the *Saturnia regna* (Saturnian regions) (Virgil, *Eclogues*,<sup>21</sup> IV, 6; VI, 41; *Aeneid*, XI, 252), because tradition related that Saturnus, dispossessed by Jupiter and expelled from heaven (Ovid, *Fasti*, I, 292) had landed in Italy, taking refuge and hiding in Latium, where Janus, king of Italy, welcomed him and reigned with him during the golden age. He gave Italy its name, none other than *Saturnia Tellus* (Saturnian earth) (Virgil, *Aeneid*, VIII, 329; I, 573; *Georgics*, II, 173; Ovid, *Fasti*, I, 235; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, I, 7, 19–24; Festus, XVII, Teubner ed., 430). Dionysius of Halicarnassus says that “all of Italy was sacred to this divinity and was called by its inhabitants (*incolis*) Saturnia, as we see in the Sibylline poems and also in other oracles given by the gods” (*Antiq. Rom.*, I, 34, 5).

The ancients said that Latium was thus called because Saturnus had hidden there (*latere*, “to hide”; see Virgil, *Aeneid*, VIII, 322; Ovid, *Fasti*, I, 238). The correct etymology is probably from *latum*, meaning “broad” or “wide.” However, the false etymologies of the ancients are always of great importance because they are not arbitrary, but intended to establish events and facts connected with the subject. We will return to this later. As for Saturnus, he settled at the foot of the Campidoglio, called for that reason *Saturnius mons* (Saturnian mountain) (Festus, XVII), and his temple, one of the oldest in Rome, was in fact built there. The first modest sanctuary was dedicated to him by Tullus Hostilius on the occasion of founding the “Saturnalia.” Tarquin planned to replace it with a temple, and two or four years after the fall of that tyrant, the republic erected one in the chosen place, dedicating it to Saturnus. It was restored in the Augustan period, and its eight imposing Ionic columns remain to this day. Legend tells that this *ara* (altar) on the Capitoline hill had been dedicated to him before the Trojan War (Festus, XVII), and that a city of Saturnus rose on the Capitoline under the Sabians (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, I, 34, 1–2; VI, 1, 4).

Saturnus taught the inhabitants of Latium agriculture and the art of navigation. Legend tells that at the end, he suddenly *vanished* from the earth (Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, I, 7, 24). In Rome there was also talk of an ancient Saturnian population that had inhabited the region and the city; and those who, faithful to ancient customs, lived from tilling the fields, were said to be the last remnants of King Saturnus’s race (Varro, *De re rustica*, III, 1, 5). These in brief were the main points of the legend of Saturnus’s arrival in Italy, his refuge,



reign, apotheosis, and teaching.

This Latin legend of Saturnus is connected with the traditional doctrine of cycles. Only the existence of an archaic traditional doctrine can plausibly explain the obvious agreement between the four ages of the classical tradition and the four yugas of the Hindu tradition.

The legend associating “golden” Saturnus (Virgil, *Georgics*, II, 538) with the golden age dates his teaching to the same archaic era, and says that he and his teaching *hid* in Latium. Saturnus’s teaching thus connects with the primordial tradition; having found a refuge in Latium, it was *occultly* transmitted there.

The moral of the fable, from our point of view, is this: *The tradition of Roman Wisdom derives from the primordial wisdom of the golden age, and exists concealed in Latium.*

The legend acquires a precise significance for those who have reason to recognize the existence on or *under* the earth of a supreme initiatic center, both in the past and today. This connection and derivation from the supreme initiatic center is clearly stated and confirmed by Virgil: “*primus ab aethereo venit Saturnus Olympo*” (first Saturnus came from ethereal Olympus) (*Aeneid*, VIII, 319) and by Ovid: “*Saturnus regnis a Iove pulsus est*” (Saturn was expelled from his realms by Jupiter) (*Fasti*, III, 796). Saturnus gives mankind riches, prosperity, and liberty; his festivals, the Saturnalia, were celebrated in December, the month sacred to him, while the following month was sacred to his host Janus. They were festivals of abundance, of license and unbounded joy, which even gave liberty (the “December liberty”) to the slaves. This orgiastic and popular character of the Saturnalia is well known, and they are not usually thought have had any other character. However, the analogy with Orphism and the Bacchanalia should lead one to suspect otherwise. What we have said about the initiatic character of Saturnus and his links with the “primordial tradition” and Olympus make it logically likely and probable that the Saturnalia *must* have had that character. And this is indeed the case. A Latin writer, Macrobius tells us so, saying that he “is not permitted to unveil the origin of Saturnus, which refers to the *arcane nature of the divinity*, but only that which is mixed with fabulous features, or which the natural philosophers teach the common folk. For in the initiatic ceremonies themselves (*in ipsis quidem sacris*) it is not permitted to reveal the occult meanings and those that emanate from the source of pure truth (*ex meri veri fonte*); and if anyone attains them, he is ordered to keep them safe within his heart” (*Saturnalia*, I, 7, 18).

Macrobius says in the same place that by the agency of Saturnus, “*hoc*

*principe* (this ruler), and by knowledge of the goodly arts, we have been made to issue from an uncultured and darksome life as though to the light.”<sup>22</sup> In recognition of Saturnus’s merits, “Janus ordered that he be honored *majestate religionis, quasi vitae melioris auctorem*” (with the majesty of religion, as being the author of a better life) (*Saturnalia*, I, 7, 24).

We note furthermore that the Italic Saturnus is a god of the depths, a subterranean god: a detail that fully agrees with the tradition of the *subterranean world* where the initiatic hierarchy conceals itself and remains, as Saint-Yves d’Alveydre and Ferdinand Ossendowski have reported from different sources.

Since the earliest times, from Saturnus’s landing in Italy, tradition ascribes an occult character to his sojourn in Latium and, with what Macrobius says, shows that this initiatic center and its teaching have ever since had such a character. And since tradition affirms that Saturn taught the inhabitants of Latium agriculture, the *peritiam ruris* (rural skill) (*Saturnalia*, I, 7, 21), and the art of navigation in which he excelled (Virgil, *Aeneid*, V, 799), it naturally suggests that such a doctrine or teaching should be sought under the symbols of agriculture and navigation.

## 7. ETYMOLOGY OF SATURN

Saturn’s prevalently agricultural character was confirmed by the ancients through the etymology of his name. Saturn is a very ancient name and already occurs in the song of the Salii: *qui deus in saliaribus Sateurnus nominatur* (who is called in the rites of the Salii the Saturnine god) (Festus, XVIII, Teubner ed., 432). The suffix *-urnus*, found in *di-urnus*, *noct-urnus*, *Volt-urnus*, makes one think immediately of a similar formation and derivation of Saturn from a root-word *sat* or *sate*. As in “diurnal” and “nocturnal,” it would be a sort of adjective or characteristic attribute of Saturn the god or king, serving as his special designation and then becoming his name.

For Varro (*De lingua latina*, V, 64), Saturn was so called *ab satu* (from sowing). *Satus* is the action of sowing or planting, a word often used in the figurative sense (cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, II, 13). Saturn would therefore be the *sator* (sower), the cultivator par excellence.

This etymology was accepted until a few decades ago. Now it no longer is. Schwegler (*Röm. Gesch.*, 223) has Saturn derive from *satur* (sated, rich) = πληρωτής πάση εὐδαιμονίας, the fount of all felicity.

The *Dictionnaire étymologique du latin* of Regnaud (1908) derives Saturnus

instead from a hypothetical archaic word: *svaurn-us*, from which comes another equally hypothetical word (s)-*veter-nus*, cognate with *vetus* (old). Saturn is then the “veteran” of the gods, hence the father, the creator of the universe. Regnaud supports this etymology by analogy with the Greek κρ-όνοϛ, the creator, the antecedent of all things. Kronos (Κρόνοϛ) was in fact confused with Chronos (Χρόνοϛ); and this was one reason that Kronos, then his Latin equivalent Saturn, turned from an agricultural divinity into the god of time; consequently, Saturn’s agricultural attribute, the scythe, became that of Time.

The *Pauly Real-Encyclopedia* (1923 ed., 188) says on the other hand that the name of the subterranean god Saturn, of whom the ancient form of *Sateurnus* also existed, is without doubt identical to *Satre*, the name of the corresponding Etruscan divinity, and reports Herbig’s opinion that the kinship of the Latin and Etruscan forms points to a common root *Sav* (from the name Σάβαϛ) in a language of Asia Minor.

These modern etymologies are not very satisfactory, and allow us to propose another one. The similarity with the Etruscan *Satre* already makes it plausible to seek the etymology of Saturn outside Latin, and all the more so if we take account of the similarity with the Anglo-Saxon *Saeter* (sower). Now the name of Saturn is also that of the planet which, for the ancients, was the furthest from the earth. Because of its distance, Saturn is the first planet, followed by Jupiter, just as Saturn’s was the earliest reign and preceded Jupiter’s. Old High German called the planet Saturn *Satjâr*; and when the week was introduced at the end of the Roman republic, the days were named after the planets and their divinities. Similar names were given to the days of the Anglo-Saxon week, and comparison shows that the Anglo-Saxon *Saeter* was considered as a god equivalent to Saturn, to whom was dedicated the planet Saturn (*Saturni stella* [star of Saturn]); (Virgil, *Georgics*, I, 336, and II, 406) and Saturday, the *Saturni dies* (Saturn’s day) of Tibullus (I, 3, 18).

If we count the days of the week alternately, taking odd numbers, they present the same order as the planetary system of the ancients: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. *Moon-day* corresponds to *Lunae-dies*; *Wednesday*, which is the day of *Woden* (*Wotan*) or *Odin*, to *Mercuri-dies*; *Friday* which is *Frigedaege*, day of the goddess *Freya*, to *Veneris-dies*; *Sun-day*, the day of the Sun, to *Domini-dies*; *Tuesday*, the day of *Tyr* (genitive *Tys*) who is etymologically related to the *div* of *diovis*, to *Martis-dies*; *Thursday* or *thorsday*, German *Donnerstag*, day of the god *Thor*, day of (Jupiter) *tonante* (English *thunder*, German *Donner*) to *Jovis-dies*; *Saturday*, Anglo-Saxon *saeter-tag*, to *Saturni-dies*. The correspondence, if not perfect, is

still enough to identify the Latin *Sate urnus* with the German *Saeter*, and to indicate a common derivation.

We have seen that the four ages of Greco-Latin antiquity correspond to the four yugas of Hinduism. An analogous correspondence is possible with the name of Saturnus. It does not involve the planet's name, which in Sanskrit is *shani* and signifies "low," being the lowest or most distant planet. Much more important to us is the correspondence with the Sanskrit designation of the golden age. The first of the four yugas happens to have two names, both interesting for our investigation. They are *krta-yuga* and *satya-yuga*. *Krta-yuga* is the perfect age (*per-fectum*, "made through and through"), from the root *kra*, "to make or complete," from which, according to Curtius, the Greek name Kronos for Saturnus also derives. *Satya-yuga* is the "good age," the "true age." The adjective *satya*, "true," is connected to *sat*, "being," and therefore "the real," "the true." *Satya-yuga* is the age of *Sat*, the age of "Being."

The affinity between *satya* and the German *Satyar* is evident; *Saeter-tag* is the day of the *true* god, just as *Donnerstag* is the day of the thunder god. The Latin *sate-urnus*, the German *saeter*, and the Etruscan *satre* must all indicate the true god, the most real one. The derivations of these three names from the *sat* of *satya-yuga*, and that of the Greek *Kronos* from the *kr* of *krta-yuga* correspond and verify each other reciprocally. And as the Sanskrit suffix *ya* joined to *sat* gives the name of the golden age, so the Latin suffix *urnus* united to *Sat* gives the name of the golden Saturnus, king of the golden age.

With this etymology, the doctrine of Saturnus becomes the *true* doctrine, the doctrine of *sat*, the doctrine of "being." Once again we find the liaison between this archaic Latin tradition and the primordial tradition confirmed; in other words, from the very start of this difficult investigation, we find the title-deeds of the "spiritual orthodoxy" of the Roman tradition.

The presence of this archaic IndoEuropean word *sat* in Latin and in the ancient Italic languages may seem to some a strange and isolated fact. But it is not. Another example is given by the word *Acca*, the name of *Acca Larentia*, the nurse of Romulus and Remus and the mother of the first twelve Arval brothers, while in Sanskrit *okkā* signifies mother (as Preller notes in *Les Dieux de l'ancienne Rome* [Paris, 1865], 291). Yet another example unnoticed hitherto is given by the word *anna* (root *ad*, Latin *edo*), meaning "food" in Sanskrit, which appears as such in *anna perenna*, the mythical Roman food of immortality equivalent to the *ambrosia* of the Greeks.

## 8. ADDENDA

There are many other things to report and comment on concerning Saturn and Kronos. Indeed one must distinguish between the Greek Kronos and the Latin Saturnus, but as we have seen they both ruled during the golden age, and both are etymologically connected to the two Sanskrit names for the golden age. That shows us that the identification of Saturnus with Kronos made later by the Romans had its deep rationale in their common connection with the archaic *sat* and with the Satya-yuga. In any case, we can observe the following concerning their significance and esoteric importance:

1. Kronos is the son of Uranos and Gea (heaven and earth). This ancestry also distinguishes the twelve Titans (Hesiod, *Theogony*,133), the cyclopes (beings endowed with third sight, cyclical sight), as well as the Orphic initiates, who boast of their genealogy to claim the right to drink at Mnemosyne's spring, pass over that of Lethe, and by that means turn from mortals into immortals. And in Roman tradition Saturn, son of heaven and earth, does not die: he suddenly vanishes, like Enoch and Elijah in the Hebrew tradition.
2. Plutarch mentions a legend according to which the dethroned Kronos sleeps on an island in the North seas (*De def. orac.*, 18). Hence according to the geographer Dionysius, the sea north of Asia was called the glacial or Saturnian sea. This legend connects Saturnus with the tradition of the Hyperborean initiatic center, equivalent to the primordial tradition itself.
3. The legend of the "betyl" that Kronos was made to swallow, with all its developments.

But since we are most interested in the archaic Italic character of Saturnus, we prefer not to call on Greece to prove its esoteric nature. Nor are we concerned with the dedication to Saturnus of the planet Saturn in astrology, with the days of the week in the calendar, or with lead in the Hermetic tradition.

On the other hand, we find it interesting to see other traditions also attributing to Saturnus the teaching of agriculture, understood allegorically. This is the case in an ancient tradition contained in *Nabatean Agriculture*, an archaic poem translated into German by Daniele Chwolsohn from an ancient Arab version of the Chaldean text. The author or scribe Qu-tâmi says on the first page of his revelation that the doctrines contained in the text were originally taught by Saturnus . . . to the Moon, which communicated them to its idol, and the idol to

its devotee Qu-tâmi, the writer, the adept-scribe of the work (cf. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 474).

Chwolsohn dates the first Arabic translation to 1300 BC. We cannot say what Chaldean word was translated as Saturnus, but it seems to have concerned the planet. In any case, it is curious to find Saturnus's agricultural character appearing also in this ancient Semitic tribe.

As for the distinctively agricultural character of the archaic Italic Saturnus, it is indisputable. All the agricultural inventions are attributed to him; that of grafting, for example, and manuring, the *laetamen* that gladdens the earth and makes it fruitful. Saturnus's symbol is the scythe, which serves to purge the earth of weeds, prune the trees, and reap the harvest. Festus says that Saturnus presided over the culture of fields, *quo etiam falx est ei insigne* (hence the scythe is his emblem), and Macrobius (*Saturnalia*, I, 7, 24) makes the scythe the emblem of harvest. Yet associated with his agricultural character is his occult character, a combination also found in other Italic agricultural and chthonic divinities. Among these we mention the Musa Tacita (silent muse) of Numa (Plutarch, *Numa*, VIII, 6), the goddess Muta (mute) of Tatius (Ovid, *Fasti*, II, 583), and the goddess Angeronia of the Velabrum, represented with a finger to her lips and a gesture of silence, *ore obligato signatoque* (with mouth bandaged and sealed).

The association of Saturnus's agricultural with his maritime character also occurs in other Italic divinities. André Piganiol (*Essai sur les origines de Rome* [Paris, 1917], 112), writes: "Very often the earth goddesses of Italy are also the goddesses of sailors. Fortune holds a rudder, and Venus, as Aphrodite, protects the ports."

## 9. AGRICULTURAL SYMBOLISM IN ROME

Virgil, the initiate poet, calls the earth *magna parens frugum*, *Saturnia tellus* (great parent of crops, Saturnian earth) (*Georgics*, II, 173; *Aeneid*, VIII, 329), and calls the fields *Saturnia arva* (Saturnian fields) (*Aeneid*, I, 573). *Arvum quod aratum necdum satum est* (field that is neither sown nor reaped) (Varro, *De re rustica*, I, 29, 1) is the plowed soil, *ar-ato*. The root *ar*, whose oldest meaning is difficult to determine, simply denotes working; the plow (*aratus*) is the tool of this work, which has the effect of opening the viscera of the earth and exposing the clods to the action of the sun.

The deep connection between agriculture and the religious cult arises from

the fact that the archaic *ara* (altar; from the Old Latin *asa*), the altar in its first sense of *ara* intended for the sacred fire to be lit upon it (*ara turaria* [altar of incense]), was made from a simple clod of earth and was called *altaria*, when it was above the ground. Festus reports that *altaria ab altitudine dicta sunt* (altaria is named for altitude), because the ancients sacrificed to the upper gods in buildings *a terra excitatis* (erected above the ground), to the terrestrial gods on the ground, and to the lower gods in *effosa terra* (in excavated ground).

The altar was also often a simple *ara graminacea* (grassy altar) (e.g., in Virgil, *Aeneid*, XII, 118; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VII, 241, etc.); but originally it was a clod of earth and, as Giambattista Vico says, “plowed lands were the world’s first altars” (*Principi di Scienza Nova*, II). And since Varro attests that Saturnus is the fire (*De lingua latina*, V, 64; Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, I, 7, 31), an identity that accounts for the usage during the Saturnalia of sending wax candles to the “senior Saturnalians,” the altar is connected to Saturn in two senses: because it is made from a simple clod of earth, and because it is used for lighting the sacred fire.

The word *ara* is not the only one elevated from its primitive agricultural significance to a term of religious observance. The traces of agricultural allegory and symbolism still appear today in neo-Latin languages. Thus the cultivation of the fields, the culture of the soul, and the religious cult are all named by closely similar words derived from the Latin *colere*. Vico (*Principi di Scienza Nova*, II) writes: “The first *colere* born in the pagan world was the cultivation of the soil; and the first cult was to raise altars, light them with the first fire, and, as we have said, to sacrifice on them impious men (*Saturni hostiae* [victims of Saturnus]).” The same word, *cult*, was applied both to the fields and to the gods. Virgil sings at the same time of the *arvorum cultus et sidera coeli* (cult of the fields and stars of heaven) (*Georgics*, II, 1), and invites farmers to learn *proprios cultus* (their own cults) (*Georgics*, II, 35). Horace admits he is *parcus deorum cultor* (a poor worshipper of the gods). Today, “uncultivated” means both land not under cultivation and a man without culture. For just as it is necessary to cultivate the earth to obtain the fruits which it does not give of itself, so it is necessary to cultivate man to obtain the fruits which do not mature of themselves.

This assimilation of man, and more particularly the human body, to the earth is very ancient and widespread. According to Bréal and Bailly’s dictionary,<sup>23</sup> it is not impossible that the very word *homo* designates man as inhabitant of the earth. From *homo* (*hominis*), *humanus* is usually derived. In such a case, *humanus* would be indirectly connected with the earth, but not with the word that is so close phonetically, *humus*, a word that means the damp earth (*humor*,

Italian *umore*) and hence cultivable, in contrast to the dry, arid, and burnt earth (*tersa* = *terra*, by rhotacization).

Despite this, the connection between *humus* and *humanus* seems to us undeniable; its likelihood is proven by the existence, important in its own right, of an analogous parallel in other languages and traditions, and from the existence in IndoEuropean languages of vocables etymologically connected to these Latin words and having similar meanings. The *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* of E. Boisacq (1923, 104) connects the Homeric dative χαμαί (to earth) to a hypothetical *ghmmi*, whence come the Latin *humi* (dative = to earth) and the hypothetical word *homo-s*, also *humus* (soil), *humilis* (lowly), the Old Latin *hemonem*, the Oscian *humuns* (men), the Umbrian *homones*, etc. From this IndoEuropean root he also derives the other root *ghom* or *ghem*, which minus its aspirate appears as *gam* in the German *Bräutigam* and the English *bridegroom* (formerly *bruidegom*). All these are remnants and residues, scattered through the IndoEuropean languages, of an archaic assimilation of “man” and “earth.” It also has a parallel in Hebrew, where *adamah* means earth as a material element, and *adam* means man and is the name of the first man, formed by God from the mud of the earth (Genesis 2:7).

Two ancient Latin writers, Ennius and Varro, make explicit the identification between body and earth. Varro says “*Haec duo, Caelum et Terra, quod anima et corpus. Humidum et frigidum terra eaque corpus, caldor coeli et inde anima*” (*De lingua latina*, V, 59), in other words: “Heaven and earth are the same as the soul and the body. The body has as elements the moist and the cold, which are the earth, and the soul has for essence heat and the heavens.”<sup>24</sup> Varro continues: “*humores frigidae sunt humi*” (cold humors are of the ground); and “Pacuvius is correct when he says *Animam aether adjugat* (the aether adds the soul), and Ennius: *Terram corpus quae dederit, ipsam capere, neque dispendi facere hilum* (The earth itself, or the body, takes that which the soul gives it, nor does it lose anything thereby). The separation of soul from body is for living beings an exit from life, *exitus*; thus death is called *exitum*, while birth is called *initia* because body and soul *in unum ineunt* (they go into one)” (*De lingua latina*, V, 60).

According to Ennius and Varro, then, as the earth opens thanks to the plow, so as to receive the seed sown by the cultivator and make it bear fruit, so the body opens to receive the soul, and *materia* (matter) becomes in a way the *mater* (mother) of the soul. The evident and far from casual reference to the Mysteries (*initia*) convinces us that the comparison is valid, and that it refers not only to the case of human birth, but also to the case of initiatic rebirth (palingenesis), the birth into the “new life.”



Varro and Ennius are therefore using the symbolism of agriculture in a spiritual and even initiatic sense. Now let us place that passage from Varro beside the one reported by Macrobius about the character and esoteric significance of the Saturnalia, and see if the two passages do not complement and reciprocally clarify each other. Taken together, do they not confirm the existence and persistence in classical times of a Roman initiatic tradition linked to, and derived from the primordial tradition of the golden age? Let us see whether it is legitimate, even keeping to a simple cultural investigation, to see in the cultivation of the fields over which Saturnus presided the symbol of culture in the spiritual “field”; and in the “rural skill,” the art of cultivation taught by Saturnus to the Latins, the traditional and primordial doctrine that Saturnus, the true god, the *satya-deva*, brought from aethereal Olympus and concealed in Latium during the golden age.

Naturally we do not expect that what we have discovered, clarified, and framed here will persuade all our readers. To the hardline skeptics we honestly admit to not having documented on film Saturnus’s landing on the shore of Latium. We have nothing to say to those who mock *our* pagan myths because they believe in the exotic “good news,” because we are not allowed to tell them what they deserve. To those, however, who at least partly accept what we have written, we *must* point out that the present work is the *very first* exposition of this vision of Roman esotericism; and we *must* ask them not to alter, object to, or reinterpret it, and to be good enough to *remember*, without reservations or misrepresentations, to cite the source. We are saying that not because of pitiful human ambition, nor even in the name of courtesy or morality, but rather to avoid any possible misunderstanding. Our own corresponding duty is to recognize and declare that while we have been allowed *pandere res alta terra et caligine mersas* (to disclose matters sunk in deep earth and darkness) (Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 267), it is not only thanks to our own labor and merits, but also to a certain important indication transmitted to us opportunely and “hierarchically.”

# **PART III**

## III.1

### HAVISMAT

## Tradition and Realization

**D**evelopment and integration, restoration of the fragment into the unique body of Reality. Resurrection—and also return. Return, as overcoming the spatial and temporal limitation which is the condition of human existence, reducing this limitation to the symbol of the horizontal and the vertical, whose point of intersection and confluence, concretely, is man. Prolonging the two directions, the vertex becomes the center; the meeting point of the horizontal and vertical as end, fall, limitation, becomes a living point, a radiant center—man, Universal Man. This is the symbolism of the Cross—the Cross of the elements: Fire above, Earth below, Air to the right, Water to the left. At the center, the ineffable Name. He who embraces all embraces himself: by dismembering himself, he integrates himself; by integration he conquers himself; by conquering he realizes himself; by realization he *is*.

The sign is a fixation of all this, a skeleton in whose marrow there dwells unthinkably that which cannot and should not be said. The one mystery is that of which the various traditions give a foretaste, presenting the degrees of realization by agitating the Forms, so that in their folds the Rhythms are perceived, with pauses inserted so that between their weft the Silence can *be*. Then the spoken word unveils the Forms, reveals the Rhythms, and preserves the Silence. From the point of view of integral Ascesis, this is the symbolism of the Word.

The traditions are and can only be the symbol of the one Tradition which is beyond them, without which they would not exist, and thanks to which they veil and unveil that which cannot be spoken of, that which in man is beyond man, that which in form is beyond form, that which in existence is beyond existence.

Thus via the degrees of Realization, eliminating the shadows, the symbols, and the *signamina* (signs), attaining Reality, dwelling in it, and being it, traditions lead to the Tradition. Here at the zenith even the condition of “being” is surpassed, and there follows integration *in toto*: this, of course, from the point of view of the integral Ascesis, which is both summit and center, arrival point and central axis of vision: all the other points on the various planes or stages having a purely relative value, that of transition, *transitio* (crossing), passage, and in a certain sense vehicle.

That which at a certain level in the various traditions may appear as a restriction is really a support or a complex of supports, so that in the chaos one finds a channel to contain the tumult of waters, through whose flux it may be possible, if only intermittently, to glimpse the depths. Tradition here is *scientia*, *ars*, θεωρία (science, art, theory), and their complement, *usus*, ἄσκησις (exercise, training, practice). But here we are only dealing with two aspects, θεωρία καὶ ἄσκησις (theory and practice), *ars* and *usus* (art and application), which in the integral Ascesis converge in a single point. Their division is only possible from a purely human and relative point of view, in which vision allows distance and realization signifies conquest. But in the order of Reality there is no point of arrival or of departure, no *terminus ad quem* (end point) or *terminus a quo* (starting point), because that which *is*, is absolutely beyond time, beyond space, and above all beyond man. Neither can one speak of completion, but rather of an abolition of limitation, of a destruction of sleep. However, in practice there is θεωρία and there is ἄσκησις, *scientia* and *usus*, to the degree that the integration, the return to the normal state, implies an effort; and thus it appears as a conquest.

For several centuries the modern world has not only been ignorant of the contingency of this aspect, but with misplaced thirst and misplaced seeking has projected its phantom into the myth of the temporal condition: into the future. Having falsified the axis of Knowledge, the inability to go beyond the limits that condition human existence drives man to project Realization, which is the sole and effective conquest, into the indefinity of a darkness unknown to him. Thus genuine development, which is nothing other than integration, appears to him as a succession—History—or a coagulation—Philosophy—or an aspiration—Religion. The first arrests the mobility that cannot be reduced to succession. The second crystallizes the immutability that cannot be reduced to immobility. The third parodies the certitude that cannot be reduced to a promise. Thus by turning to that which will never be, man cuts himself off and is lost. To an illusory knowledge he adds an illusory action; to an uncentered vertigo he adds a purposeless agitation. What is lost in the domain of life is crystallized and given

artificial reality in the domain of knowledge. Man is a baby born at midnight—so says a Taoist text—and he believes that yesterday never existed; empty within, his breath has been taken away from him. Driven from the outside, he has turned to the outside. Thus modern man surrenders to the beacon of the future, unsuspecting in his poverty of what he does not see, of what surpasses him, of what is *before* him or *behind* him, as a deep and invisible vein. Once the rhythm of Contemplation is exhausted, the rhythm of Action remains, artificially densified. History, Art, Philosophy, Belief—among these four corpses the man-corpse lives the myth of the future, namely, of the unrealizable, and makes it the crown and mask for his own death. Dead before he is born, he affirms a life to come; rotten before he is alive, he plays in his death-throes with the future resurrection; in an empty present, he turns to an illusory future.

But if a reintegration is still possible, this reintegration implies a correlative collapse. Man must realize all the sterility of false knowledge and false action, and from a radical catastrophe must arise the impetus that will radically restore equilibrium. Deny first and always; affirm only when everything has been denied; when man, facing what he does not know and does not possess, is truly like a corpse in the hands of the corpse-washer—as Islamic tradition says. Only an absolute passivity can generate an absolute activity: only when one gives up everything can one recover everything and reabsorb everything, through the radiation of *caritas* (love).

The attitude of *purity* toward traditions, despite their differentiation into various types according to the special tendencies of those to whom they are addressed, implies the total absence of prejudice of any sort, for him whose *forma mentis* (state of mind) is truly what it should be, a *mens informalis* (formless mind). Then it is none other than the pure metaphysical attitude and that of the integral Ascesis. All points of view are relative in the face of this ultimate one, which is final and resolves all others, and thanks to which vision is cleansed of all impurities.

The ways of Realization are infinite, but the Center is unique and the integral Ascesis is what makes Realization possible. The Body of Tradition, with the separate and visible traditions as its members, is a hierarchical ordering in view of the final goal. It is not a matter here of *recta ratio* (right understanding), but of the *recta via* (right way) whereby the *whole* man vibrates in tune with Truth: the *whole* man, and not just a part of him which when isolated, crystallizes, and when crystallized, collapses.

With Realization, all that was becomes what is and what will be. The nature of the Self is eternal presence, says Shankaracharya; and in its deepest meaning

*Usu vetera novant* (by use, old things are renewed). That is to say, with Realization that which was, through becoming that which is, passes from the apparent domain of temporality into the real domain of eternity.

## III.2

**OSO**

### **A Solar Will<sup>1</sup>**

#### **I**

The impulse from above that stirs up every blockage from the past, so as to restore contact with the will, and that commands new phases to come on earth, suddenly strikes the vain, black resistances of will.

Man's will is only a movement toward his own immortal rebirth; and its cessation is death, and the spent fire of ancient gods in the mineral body, where man is unreal fetish and humus.

From the cherubic face of Michael, man shines ceaselessly into worldliness, creating divine affinities between his future and the vanished beings who were himself, but lacking his will.

There radiates from this divine image the fire of the god-word, which slays the monster that survives in our feeble blood; and in that face there revives the omnipotent help that we have already received, now our own.

Our human reawakening is the action, now a mighty sword, that forces the blockages of the past so as to recover contact with our will, which stirs up other phases to come on earth. And this is a holy war.

#### **II**

The oppressive ring that tightens around your unworthy life gives form to the doubt that made you a sphinx, releasing the impulse needed for victory.

The squeezing iron is, rather, that which impels the darkness of all your

detritus to express itself through your larynx: releasing it to perish through the power of fire.

The more you conquer, the more will be the world's resistance which molds you, fashioning you in fire while still on earth.

Now that your will no longer afflicts you, but binds and sculpts a god out of your phantasm, your victory is eternal constancy.

### **III**

The grass, ensouled with lucent breaths, trills with birdsong in iridescent foam. Every clod of earth is a star without light, which steals from our breast wings and songs, giving a fourfold flight to man who is threefold and also one.

A tidal wave of magnetic harmony sends its sonorities of deaf instincts into the stellar creatures, whose memories wander the earth, from herd to herd, until with us it no longer tolerates the penalty decreed for them.

It decrees animals on land and water, dividing them into numbered groups; but in appearing embodied, they are the sins of man, who in his prodigal fantasies gave them power that he himself refuses.

If with good will you recover within yourself, sparkling with my timeless blood, the power that you have always been pouring into soil, flowers, and animals, so that a brief personality might be molded for you out of that immense life.

You redeem failures that you have strewn into animal flesh and gilded desires, poured out in flowery seasons; and hardened errors, whereby the mineral that was the fire of the world has been starved of life.

Reintegrate your undivided spirit, which has strewn high stars into beasts on the earth, and the sun into the stalks and leaves of plants, and the soil (which was yourself in Paradise) into the flameless stone, the theater of your drama.

Your drama is what returns with you to the heights, your blood that of a man



reborn, while in the kingdom of the earth, the primordial fire that you now remember lies dead in its earthly narcosis of dissolution.

Your cosmic memory, solidified in skeleton form, is released with the will of resurrection, and again offers to the Lord of Life the Universal Body, freed from every ill.

### III.3

**PIETRO NEGRI**

## **The Secret Language of the Fedeli d'Amore**

It is some years since Luigi Valli published *La Chiave della Divina Commedia* (The Key to the *Divine Comedy*) in which he profitably pursued the interpretative line discovered by Foscolo and followed by Gabriele Rossetti, Perez, Pascoli, and others. Valli succeeded in showing thirty cases of coincidence of the Eagle and the Cross in the sacred poem, and at least partly tracing the doctrine hidden under the veil of the “strange verses.” The idea that Dante simultaneously revealed and concealed is very briefly this: The Cross has shown itself incapable of redeeming humanity, and cannot do so alone. It needs the collaboration of the “Eagle”: imperial authority and justice; the Empire needs to be reestablished, taking back the unfortunate gift that Constantine made to the Church. This will put an end to the Church’s corruption, and, thanks to the double virtue of the Cross and the Eagle, humanity will really be able to be saved. Dante openly proclaimed that unworthy usurpers were occupying Saint Peter’s throne: “preachers of nonsense” who lack the “true understanding” given by Christ to his “first assembly.” In veiled language Dante added that on the chariot of the Church sits the apocalyptic whore; he recognized the failure of preaching the Cross and the need for the imperial Eagle to intervene for humanity’s salvation. This bold idea, certainly not very orthodox in Catholic terms, inspired not only Dante’s writings but also his actions, intended to realize his program through the arms, first of the Templars, then of the Emperor.

Luigi Valli, logically following the thread of these studies, has published an extremely important and interesting volume entitled *Il linguaggio segreto di*

*Dante e dei fedeli d'amore* (The Secret Language of Dante and of the Fedeli d'Amore). Its subject was the earliest centuries of Italian literature and the whole history and conflicts of those times, presented in a light and from an angle that, for most readers, was entirely unsuspected and unanticipated. Valli took up Rossetti's neglected and uncomprehended work, and with impressively patient, methodical, and scholarly effort he verified and demonstrated the existence, from the very beginnings of Italian literature, of a secret language, the "jargon" of the Fedeli d'Amore. He decoded its meaning, the complexity of doctrinal, sectarian, and political allegory, and brought to light a whole grandiose movement, inspired by the "initiatic tradition" and a bitter enemy of the Roman Church.

Being unable even to summarize the events of this stupendous conflict, we will only say that according to Valli's interpretation, the love poets, writers in the "sweet new style," who seem strangely vague in their singing of an absurd, mannered, and inconsistent love, are transfigured into formidable warriors, ardent paladins of their Holy Faith. Above all there rise dramatically the noble figures of Cecco d'Ascoli and of Dante Alighieri, all the greater for being understood. We owe Luigi Valli our admiration and gratitude; his work is, as we have heard it described, a "charge of dynamite," and despite the coalition against him of a lazy and myopic hatred of new ideas, of "positive criticism," of the devotees of pure aestheticism and those with a vested interest, the light has been lit and will eventually triumph.

The love which burned in the hearts of the Fedeli d'Amore is akin to the mystic love of Persian literature and of the Song of Solomon. Gabriele Rossetti naturally associated it with Platonic love, which gave the movement a pagan character. Valli shows that the "rose," the "flower," the "lady,"<sup>1</sup> who under various names are the one object of this love, is the *active intelligence*, which makes the *possible intellect* fall in love with it.<sup>2</sup> As Dino Compagni writes:

The amorous Lady Intelligence

Who makes her home in the soul

Who with her beauty has made me fall in love.

We could add many more examples to the mass of relevant ones discovered or reported by Valli. For example, Dante at the beginning of the *Divine Comedy*

speaks of the

Divine power

The highest wisdom and the first love,

putting his “love” in a triad that corresponds perfectly—in the Kabbalah—with the triad of the highest Sephiroth: Kether, Chokmah, Binah, or Crown, Wisdom, and Intelligence.

If this is the lady, the *domina*, of the Fedeli d’Amore, it is perfectly logical that Francesco da Barberino, in his *Documenti d’Amore* (Documents of Love), places *docilitas* (docility, derived from *docere*, to teach) first among the *twelve* virtues that Love should awaken in novices. The tradition that places this docility among the first requirements of the initiate has been transmitted up to our own time, as we see, for instance, in what Arturo Reghini writes in his *Parole sacre e di Passo* (Sacred Words and Passwords), pages 106–8. The word *disciplina* also has the double sense of knowledge and constriction; and the German *gelehrig* (“tractable,” from *lehren*, “to teach”) corresponds in its dual meaning to the Latin *docilis* (“docile,” “teachable”).

The transmission of the secret language of the Fedeli d’Amore into that of later sects and movements has been noticed by Valli, and before him by Rossetti and Aroux, who went too far in this direction and were sometimes misled by wanting to find concordances between the various sectarian jargons. But concordance certainly exists, in part, and leads to the question of transmission, not only of these vocabularies, but of the traditional doctrine itself.

We agree with Valli that Rossetti, as the first systematic discoverer of the sectarian jargon of the Fedeli d’Amore, was led to his interpretation by knowledge of ancient secret traditions. If memory does not deceive us, his *Mistero dell’Amor platonico nel Medio Evo* (Mystery of Platonic Love in the Middle Ages) is dedicated to a “B. L.,” who is very likely Bulwer-Lytton, the author of *Zanoni*, who besides having a deep esoteric erudition had an expert knowledge of Italian language and literature. One may well suspect that Rossetti was led and directed by Bulwer-Lytton to the systematic study of medieval sectarian jargon, a study profitably continued by Valli, who succeeded in correcting, extending, and completing what Rossetti had achieved in the previous century.

We have seen that Love is the “active Intelligence” to which Dante alludes

in the last line of the *Divine Comedy*: “The Love that moves the Sun and the other stars.” In the “possible intellect” of the Fedele<sup>3</sup> d’Amore, this intelligence is awakened and active, whereas among the profane it is dormant and inoperative. Likewise Valli (p. 172) says that in the sectarian jargon *dormire* (to sleep) means to be in error, to be far from the truth, and especially to belong to the Church of Rome. It is the symbolism that Dante uses in the last cantos of the *Purgatorio*, in which immersion in the river Lethe, the river of sleep and forgetfulness, is succeeded by that in the Eunoe; as a result, Dante becomes like a new plant (*neo-fita*) restored with new leaves, “pure and fit to rise to the stars,” and able to ascend to the “kingdom of the heavens.” This is a well-known pagan symbolism used by Virgil and Plato, and found as far back as the oldest Orphism and the Eleusinian Mysteries. There, the river Lethe, which wipes out men’s consciousness, is opposed to the fresh spring of Memory, or the mnemonic virtue of the pomegranate, which grants awakening and immortality. Platonic anamnesis or memory is identified with knowledge; and correspondingly truth, *a-letheia*, is the negation and overcoming of Lethe. The pursuit of truth is a victory of consciousness over sleep and death; it is necessary to attain and maintain the continuity of consciousness even through sleep and death.

Love in the initiatic sense thus has the capacity to save one from sleep and death, giving to the Fedele d’Amore a “new life.” This is achieved through successive degrees of perfection.

In Francesco da Barberino’s *Documenti d’Amore*, the Fedele is represented in the first grades as pierced by Love’s *dart*, and in the final grades as holding roses in his hand (Valli, p. 249). The symbolism of the arrow is also found in one of the twelve figures of Basil Valentine’s *Azoth*. But the affinity between the symbolism of love and that of Hermetism, and the link between the two traditions is even more evident through the presence of the Hermetic *Rebis* in one of the drawings that illustrate Barberino’s work. The *Rebis*, or Hermetic androgyne, is a characteristic and most important Hermetic symbol and term, which we have briefly treated in our article on “An Italian Alchemical Text on Lead Tablets” (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 273–94). The figure of the *Rebis* reproduced by Valli (p. 247) dates from the time of Dante, and is several centuries older than those we have traced in the Hermetic books.

Other concordances with Hermetic symbolism and terminology occur in the verses of an obscure love-poet, Nicolò dei Rossi, who in one of his canzones enumerates “the degrees and virtues of true love.” These are four in number: the first is called “liquefaction,” which Dei Rossi says is opposed to “congelation.” The second degree is called “langor,” the third “zeal,” and in the fourth love

attains the highest point through ecstasy or *excessus mentis* (projection of the mind) (Valli, pp. 97, 191). We can see, then, how one of the most important works of amorous literature, the *Romance of the Rose* (of which the *Fiore* [flowers] is the Italian version, attributed to a Florentine named Durante, who is almost certainly Dante) treats explicitly of alchemy and is catalogued among alchemical literature. This rose celebrated with such enthusiastic accord by all these poets, beginning with Ciullo d'Alcamo, Dante's white rose, is evidently related if not identical to the Hermetic rose of the Rosicrucians.

An important confirmation of this assimilation and affinity between Hermetism and the Fedeli d'Amore is found in the fourth of the so-called "Templar degrees" of Freemasonry, which appeared in France or Germany toward the middle of the eighteenth century. It concerns the "Princes of Mercy," also known as the "Knights of the Sacred Delta" and under other names. The ritual states that their duty is to "faithfully guard the treasure of traditional wisdom, always veiling it from those who cannot penetrate to the third heaven." "Third heaven" is the name of their temple, and is well known to be the heaven of Venus. We note, by the way, that in Orphism and Pythagoreanism the third heaven is the final one. Philolaus says that there are three heavens: Uranus, the cosmos, and Olympus, the third being the home of the Gods. Saint Paul refers to this Orphic-Pythagorean classification when he says that he was caught up into the third heaven (II Corinthians, 12:2).

Now the "Intelligence" of Dino Compagni, according to Valli (p. 186), "dwells in a palace whose various spaces probably represent degrees of initiation, and in this palace the 'third place is the reception room' . . . recalling the frequent allusions to the third heaven and the third degree, which in the material heavens is that of Venus, but very probably symbolizes the seventh or a higher degree of his initiation."

The Princes of Mercy "succeed through their triple virtue in raising the veil of truth," and are therefore called *beni émeth*, the sons of Truth. Among the characteristic symbols of the degree is the Palladium of the Order, or the "statue of Truth, naked and covered with a three-colored veil." These three colors, which recur in the decoration of the Temple and in other symbols of the degree, are green, white, and red: the three Hermetic colors, and the three colors with which Dante adorns his Beatrice (*Purgatorio*, XXX, 31–33).

The numerical symbolism of the degree is based on the number three and its powers: the sacred or luminous Delta is one of its principal symbols. The word *émeth*, truth, consists of three letters: the first, middle, and last of the Hebrew alphabet. Its numerical value is 441, or *nine*. On the throne are nine lights. In the

temple there are nine columns, each bearing a nine-light candelabrum, so there are 81 lights in all. The age of 81 is the ritual age. We recall the importance that Dante attaches to 3 and 9, and how frequently the number 9 occurs in the *Vita nuova*. Valli (p. 273) cites lines in which Jacopo da Lentini proposes that “the Mercies are strict . . . nor are they summoned by their lovers before nine years have passed.” As for the number 81, Valli quotes a strange and difficult passage from Dante’s *Convivio* which runs: “. . . Plato, of whom one can certainly say that he was matured, . . . lived 81 years . . . and I believe that if Christ had not been crucified, and had lived as long as his natural life would have allowed, he would have passed in his eighty-first year from mortal to eternal body” (IV, xxiv). In other words, he would have reached the ritual age of the Knights of the sacred Delta. Naturally in the *Vita nuova* Dante has Beatrice die on the 9th day of June, 1281; and he is careful to specify that in Syria June is the ninth month, and that Beatrice died when “the perfect number 9 was completed” in the thirteenth century, i.e., in 1281.

Among the symbols of this degree that connect with the symbolism of the Fedeli d’Amore, we also note the arrow placed on the throne of the “Most Excellent” (the president of the chamber), which is evidently the dart that Francesco da Barberino puts in Love’s hand in the first figure of his *Documenti d’Amore* (see Valli, pp. 237–49). This arrow is of white wood, with the feathers colored half green and half red, and the point is gold.

Another symbol of the degree is formed by two arrows, Love’s traditional pair of darts (see Valli, p. 362), one of gold and the other of lead. They are the two darts of the Dantesque poem *Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute* (Three Ladies Came to Me within My Heart). For more on this subject, see the *Manuale* of Andres Cassard (New York, 1871), 6th ed., 381ff. And lastly we hardly need mention that the “unique Phoenix” constantly spoken of in the poetry of the Fedeli d’Amore, and which as Valli shows represents the organization and initiatic tradition that is always reborn, is none other than one of the primary symbols of Hermetism, namely of the Red Work. The purple Phoenix is reborn and lives in the flames of the “philosophic fire,” just as the Fedele d’Amore, burning with holy zeal (the *zelus* of Nicolò dei Rossi) is reborn to the new life through *excessus mentis*.

We could demonstrate many other correspondences between the sectarian jargon deciphered by Valli and the symbolic language of the Hermetists; between the symbolism of the doctrine of love and of the movements akin to and derived from it. These correspondences are an indication, even a proof, of the existence and continuity of an initiatic tradition that goes back to the Middle

Ages. Unlike Valli, we have strong reservations about the purity of the Christian character of such a tradition. When one begins to recognize the existence of a “False semblance” in a secret organization, proceeding through degrees, one may well wonder whether in saying *amor e cor gentil sono una cosa* (love and the gentle heart are one thing), the word *gentile* could also have the meaning it has in *latin sangue gentile* (gentile Latin blood); and that if Dante took his “beautiful style” from Virgil, the latter could also represent pagan initiation. We will have occasion to return to these problems; for now we will only note that Boccaccio, the author of a *Genealogy of the Gods*, whom Valli shows as a praiser of the Templars, ridicules the resurrection of the flesh (*Decameron*, 10th tale), just as the Athenians had ridiculed it, saying to Saint Paul “We’ll hear this another day” (Acts 17:32). Boccaccio also, in his third tale, has Melchizedek say that between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, “no one knows which is the true faith.” That Boccaccio should put such words into the mouth of Melchizedek, who occupies a prime position in tradition and in the esoteric hierarchy, is ground for reflection; and also for suspicion as to what is meant by “the unique Phoenix that joins the Appenines to Sion,” as mentioned in a sonnet attributed to Cino da Pistoia.

One last observation. In an earlier article of ours, called “Knowledge of the Symbol” (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 83–96), we happened to cite a passage from the *Convivio* which showed that according to Dante, there are four senses to be considered in allegorical language—perhaps corresponding to four degrees of the ritual and of the organization. The most important sense to us is the last: the “anagogical” sense. Naturally this spiritual sense, which refers to the technique of spiritual perfection, cannot be understood, or sometimes even intuited, without personal technical experience: “He cannot understand it who has not proved it,” says Dante. And for this reason it has almost always escaped those who have hitherto concerned themselves with the secret language of the Fedeli d’Amore, unlike the sense we could call “synagogic.” For example, “to sleep,” taken *allegorically*, means to live in ignorance, in the inertia of the intellect; *morally*, it means not to participate in the organization’s work; *anagogically*, it means the opposite state to that of initiatic Awakening. Valli maintains that while the *Vita nuova* is written in code, Dante abandoned sectarian jargon in the *Commedia*. But if this is partially true for the moral or political sense, because in the sacred poem the hostility toward the Church is explicit and even violent, it is not true for the anagogical sense. This sense is necessarily hidden under the veil of symbolism, and to interpret it one needs experience of the states of consciousness to which it refers, and knowledge of



the symbols traditionally adopted to indicate them. For this reason, the true and supreme significance of Dante's secret language and that of the Fedeli d'Amore remains, and will ever remain, a mystery for all those who are "sleeping" and will continue to sleep.

## III.4

### ABRAXA

## Solutions of Rhythm and Liberation

While man in mortal life is “one who has departed from Being” or “one who is outside Being,” he who freezes the “waters”<sup>1</sup> in himself and banishes the ghosts of fog, thirst, and fever of his human existence is returning to “Being.”

The *healing solution* is as follows: by “Being,” you become both liberated and liberator, and the *magic of Identity* begins within you. That which is above and that which is below move to conjoin in a single thing, which comes from the infinite and, luminously freeing itself, goes to the infinite.

You become a participant in this process: you perceive its rhythm within your senses, your members, and your gestures, which can now support it, and you *express* it. At every moment you now feel like the commander of innumerable forces, present and yet invisible, as in a calm, heroic enthusiasm. You continue and complete and free their essence, and this fire that inflames every act of your new life as a Liberated One is the very fire of *sacrificial Magic*: a sacrifice in which “he who sacrifices, that to which he sacrifices, the thing sacrificed, and the sacrificial act are one and the same.”<sup>2</sup>

Limitation here falls away; the radiance is absolute. Whatever I have told you hitherto about magic, know it as leading to this supreme state. It should not seem remote to you, nor in vain to establish it in the spirit: for I assure you that distant things must overshadow things close by, if the beginning is to arise in them.

The quantity or degree is of no importance: it is the sense of *light* and *sacrificial liberation*, for “the energy of the divine Fire itself shines forth spontaneously in all directions, and being both self-called and self-operating, is

active in like manner through all things” (Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, IV, 3).<sup>3</sup> You should anticipate it and let it penetrate your waking soul in the first operations of detachment, of “Silence”—and in the fixed exaltation of the Mirror, or fecundating with the hard masculinity of the sulfurous Fire the sympathetic, fluid, and mercurial feminine—then in animating or projecting symbols and images and signatures and names of Power—and finally in preparing for the ritual, in the evocation, the invocation, the magic of conjuration, of salvation, of transgression.<sup>4</sup>

Know this: the spirit must shatter your self-image that the being of space has petrified. High magic only works when fecundated by the infinite, the breath of “that which is,” through the spiral shudders of *communication*. Forgetting the “human,” you act as the wind blows, as fire burns, as light shines, as pure, naked power; then the desert silence, the ocean calm, and the telluric stirring of the elements are all *one* in the spirit.

Think, by way of analogy, of independent rhythmic patterns that run, intersect, succeed, or overtake on the same line, yet without meeting or interfering, because their tempi or periods are different. But according to their laws, there are points at which a *syntony* is created: for an instant, the two rhythms become identical, and then in a flash something new results, a new series is revealed as their synthesis. These are the “solutions of rhythm.”

Now consider your human consciousness as one of those rhythmic series. It develops inside a far bigger pattern, the pattern of the rhythm of Reality. But you cannot perceive this because your “tempo” is different. Although in the very bosom of Being, you are living in the world of the “other”: the world of specters, the world that is not the world of men—until at a certain point of your life a correspondence may occur, whether through a near-fatal event, or through Art or Ritual. For an instant, your eyes open in the miracle of awakening: it is absolute vision—or absolute action. You are no longer yourself, the world no longer the world—everything is *something else*. Unless your ever-vigilant animal nature intervenes to draw your attention elsewhere, for a moment the mist clears: you know *Knowledge*—and in that knowledge, the nature of *Realization* and *Liberation*.

And if you have not chosen blind Fortuna as your Goddess, it is a matter of your inner refinement, through subtle listening to the rhythm of your consciousness, through Hermetic work and the ceaseless vigil of wisdom, patience, and instinct—all this to prepare the state in which the rhythms may meet. Likewise, it depends partly on you whether the vault closes again after the

fleeting miracle, and the regimen of “sleep” returns, or whether you can establish yourself in participation in the Real.

I can tell you no more. Gather in your intellect all the symptoms and anticipations that will not fail to manifest sporadically, if you continue to practice constantly and attentively. For every glimpse, turn within to catch the state of consciousness that accompanies it, so as to discover the rhythm, and with the subtle art of *love* to attract and adapt your spirit to it.

The first echoes of “unison” will come from the people around you. You will think of something, and then without any intention on your part, someone else will think of it simultaneously, and unmotivated. He will be amazed, and say that you or he has “mind-read.” It is not mind-reading, much less chance: it is a new, subtle power of thought, “volatile” and sympathetic, because the chains are loosening that have kept it vibrating only in the closed prison of your ego. Now and then symptoms of telepathy, telesthesia, and intuition will emerge; fragments of distant worlds and scenes, sudden openings to an inwardness suffused with a gentle, immaterial light. And it will also happen that your states of soul, scarcely touching you, suddenly escape from you to glide into others and unexpectedly but irresistibly penetrate them.

“Alienations”: you suddenly *find yourself* inside the person before you. *You are he*. You follow his train of thought and see clearly within him, as if into a room that is suddenly filled with light: and you also “see” his consciousness, *feeling how he knows nothing of himself*, how he looks outward, how he is outside and cannot discern himself. Nor does he know you, in this moment when you are in him. Just a flash, then you are back in yourself. The curtain closes. The law of space returns.

All this happens at first in an unexpected way and without your will. You know it as a peripheral resonance of your effort, of the action of the rituals on the substance in which you are to awaken your sidereal senses. But as your *whole* being becomes hermetically habituated and harmonizes and unifies deep down, the “solutions of rhythm” will become less fortuitous and discontinuous.

They will be accompanied by fringe experiences of proximity and closure—more of the nature of clarity than flashes—and at the same time the circle will enlarge; new series, more distant and occulted, will approach the nodes of interference.

For example, in an instant of inner light, when opening your eyes you may see the thick clouds open for a moment on a free and clear sky. Abyssal forces are released inside you: with a start such as you have never felt before, you will

see your half-darkened room invaded by the red glow of a fire raging in the distance. The pace of something you are doing will accelerate and then stop—and your attention will turn to the voices of frightened people in the street, around a tram that at this moment has unexpectedly stopped. In your thought or your desire there suddenly arises “Let this happen”—and instantly it happens. You may be ignorant of many things that happen in the wider world, but when you learn of them afterward, the *certainty* of the correspondence arises in you, together with a strange and profound sense, indefinable, indelible, and disturbing, that *it is no chance*. The tempi of the two rhythms have met at a single and fateful point of unison, becoming simultaneously symbol, reality, significance; interiority and exteriority, will and reality.

It is a small step from there to the spontaneous awakening of the intellect in your spirit, through the miracle of transformation latent in the symbols, correspondences, and analogies of our Science. The confluence of multiple meanings, multiple orders, in a single symbol, which confuses the unknowing, is the potential for a synthesis that can lead you to “solutions of rhythm”: to peaks of absolute vision or absolute magic. For example, there are the Three—the Seven—the Twelve: signs which recur, return, and coincide analogically in the inner and the outer, in nature and the soul, in the above and the below, in space and time, in elements and in the body, in individual events and historical events, preparing circuits of unison and fulgurations that conclude in your being, in the Liberation of your being.

Moreover, in the sensation of your own body and its powers, through “unisons” and more radical resolutions, forms of cosmic consciousness begin to flash. In the oldest Tradition you learn that the Word, freed from death, becomes knowledge of the Fire; the sense of smell, freed from death, becomes the Wind; the Eye, freed from death, becomes the Sun; the Ear, freed from death, becomes Space; the Intellect, freed from death, becomes the splendor of the Moon; Blood and Sperm, freed from death, become Water.<sup>5</sup> Others will show you new ways of communication in the Metals: they tell of the Man of Copper, the Man of Iron, the Man of Mercury, the Man of Gold sleeping inside your body as elemental and planetary powers.

While the series converge, separating and reuniting, repelling and attracting each other as in a respiration of light, you will also see the same unity beginning to reproduce itself in your gestures, so that they spontaneously assume a *ritual structure*. In a given instant you surprise yourself in a certain position, *and in a flash you perceive that it corresponds exactly to a symbol*: like a shuddering wind it passes through your bones, and again the curtain moves aside, the

lighting flashes: *you see and you are.*<sup>6</sup>

Thereafter you will begin to understand the meaning of the sacred postures whose traces are still remembered in the statuary of the ancient Western priesthood, or indicated by Indian yoga, and you will learn their science. New things emerge from the shadows and shed light on a broader background. Nature and history themselves begin to speak to you in the language of ritual and symbol. The signatures that are Wisdoms and seal the being of Man glow silently through geographical situations and zoological structures, and also express themselves in dramatic form in social and temporal events and institutions. And the zodiacal Twelve that you find in the centers of life and death of your mortal body are also twelve cities, twelve disciples, twelve nations. The “black pole” at the base of the sidereal axis of initiation in the East is the Kabbalistic *luz* at the base of the *sacral* bone and of the spinal column, called “germ of resurrection”—and it is the “black stone” placed in the Forum at the beginning of the pagan *sacred* way. The Virgin birth, the Passion, the Ascent of the mountain, the Walking on the waters, the Crucifixion on the elements, and the Resurrection actually become visible episodes of a historical and lived life. Through those and innumerable other significant points that you will gradually discover, reality near or far becomes symbolic again, and the symbol becomes reality; the physical becomes metaphysical, and the metaphysical physical. Through the *fixation* of the frozen “waters” the depth gradually becomes transparent, though invisible through the tumult of agitation or the fever of intoxication.

In this way you progress from the magical knowledge of the Ritual which I have already taught you (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. II, chap. I.3) to the knowledge of the Ritual as *sacrificial action*. Once reintegration is achieved and the paths are opened, contact is integral and identity perfect. The force of things passes into man, while the light and the liberation of man transfuse into the world of the Real—and *these are the flames of the Cosmic Fire, the “assignments of immortality” according to the magical Alliance.*

The Supreme Mystery of the Initiations—that is what you now hear: *in man is the liberation and the immortality of the gods.* The god *realizes* the man—the man *liberates* the god.

Kremmerz says: you who undertake magical awakening are the center of a great multitude of invisible beings *desirous of immortality*—because they are all *beings of fire, they are thirsty, and you have the water to quench their thirst.* In the sacrificial action your consecration as one Detached, Unchained, Escaped—

as I told you—arrests the blind course of the elemental forces composed of desire, of spontaneity all exhausted in the act that constitutes them—and produces the transformation of light, through which all the invisible worlds rejoice. *The two rhythms coincide and the whole series is then one illumination.*

The course of the seasons, of the Sun by day and the Moon by month, the burning of Fire, the motion of the Wind, the growth of vegetation, the consistence of the things that are—they are born in you, and you join and disjoin them in the sacrificial rituals, which in the archaic priesthood actually accompanied the great phases of natural phenomena, sustained them, strengthened them, and transposed them into light by solutions of rhythm and of liberation.

Thus it was written: “In the beginning Prajapāti, having created together men and the sacrifice, said: ‘With this sustain the gods, and the gods will sustain you, so that together you will attain the supreme good.’”<sup>7</sup>

And also: “When he sacrifices, the *ātmā* is the seat of the gods, and Supreme Wisdom.”

## III.5

LUCE

### *Opus Magicum*

#### The Diaphanous Body

Those who have followed the ritual practices described in earlier parts and gained from them new experiences and new capacities, new observations of the inner mechanism of their own lives and their own being, will have noticed certain states in which the single entity making up the individual seems to split into four forms of being, each with its special characteristics.

The doctrine of the fourfold body has been transmitted from deepest antiquity in the secret of initiations, and traces are readily found in the mysteriographers of every period. It teaches that man is composed of *body, soul, spirit, and mind*.

Avoiding any unnecessary logical elaboration, I will limit the explanation to some hints on practical realization and suggestions for direct experience.

Consciousness of the four human elements, or “bodies,” takes place in ritual *silence*.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, I must add that what we mean and express by the term “consciousness” has nothing to do with the common usage, which normally refers to brain activity and thinking. Our consciousness is not thought, nor any cerebral act; it is not the “intelligence” already mentioned (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 41), nor should it be referred to other special functions of the diaphragm and solar plexus. It is the act of the free spirit *that knows him who knows*, absolutely autonomous and impossible to realize except



in the condition mentioned: indefinable, inconceivable, undetermined, occult. There are some who, after completing the Ritual and having realized in it such a state of consciousness, think back and *recall* it in a way that is both lucid and vague, without being able to express it. That is exactly how it is.

After the first act, in which consciousness realizes the fourfold reality of being, there follows the Ritual, performed calmly and unhurriedly, with a “slow fire.” The gradual, more perfect and complete experience of the slow separation of each “body” from the others leads to the perception of four elements as absolutely distinct from one another, and each with its special function. At the same time, consciousness *observes* (and that term should be rightly understood) the various modalities of the body’s existence, and *learns* to recognize them.

The advice I have given here and elsewhere to “act slowly” should be normative in theurgical and magical practices (except in those circumstances where a lighting-like speed of projection or affirmation is *vitally* important). One of its main justifications is in the fact known to anyone with even a few experiences of this kind: that excessive haste causes a reversed reaction, immediately dispelling the state of the experience, disturbing the subtle equilibrium that permits it. The experimenter can even be flung back to the starting-point, in conditions that almost always block any immediate attempt to make good the loss by “rekindling”—unless he is permitted this by knowledge of the elements on which he is acting. The procedure, which by its nature is impossible to describe, will be known to each on completion of the Ritual, and also how to succeed in repeating it, so as to allow the state of consciousness, once achieved, to persist, and consequently its perfect recall.

The consciousness of the elements can be described in these words: the physical body is like a heavy and immobile mass that thoroughly realizes the element of Earth or stone; the soul, in relation to the *diaphanous* body, is like a mobile and diffused corporeality, milky, liquid = element of Water; the spirit is like an airy and vibrant luminosity = element of Air; the mind is like an incorporeal and unburning fire, subtle, invisible, but perceptible, identical, conscious = element of Fire.

Soul, astral body, diaphanous, translucent, magical agent, plastic medium: these terms are all equivalent, but note that each also has other meanings, determined by the degree of the operation and the measures of equilibrium.

I have mentioned some functions of the astral body. It should first be studied ritually, because on the one hand it is the primary, most immediate, and easiest to perceive and penetrate when the theurgist in Silence leaves the physical body,

and on the other hand because of its decisive importance in every sort of operation.

First I will give the exact meaning of the equivalent terms listed above. Soul = sense of nature; astral = determined by the stars; diaphanous or translucent = allowing to be seen through; magical agent = means of projection (not he who acts); plastic medium = imagination. To avoid causing errors, I will omit the other almost innumerable meanings which vary from one writer to another, and often from one page to another of the same work.

The diaphanous body is realized first of all as the conscious medium of perception and sensation, understood in its deepest reality, not as the simple reaction of a physiological mechanism. Certain aspects of its activity will be noticed, manifesting as intellect, reason, imagination, and feeling, especially when one has achieved the permanence of higher consciousness in one's everyday life.

The astral is essentially a motive force, and it is mobile in adapting the impulses it receives from outside, whether from the physical body or from the spirit. As a motive force it is reflexive and inert (lunar).

The astral functions can be listed as follows:

1. receptive, under the impulse of vibrations from (a) the physical body, (b) the spirit, (c) subtle actions outside the individual.
2. motive: (a) presiding over the development of organic, vegetative life; (b) as the principle of physical reaction and excitation; (c) through an impulse determined by the will.
3. vital, as a means of absorption and transmission of the life energy.

Experience will teach how the four elements that make up man are fused together and react together. But it is good to keep in mind and try to penetrate the essence of movement in each of them.

Movement is life; to understand movement is to understand life.

Nothing is in absolute quietude.

By quietude we simply mean the normal order of vibrations belonging to a body or an element. For example, when the body is still it is in a state of

quietude, of “fixity,” but this does not mean that its motion has absolutely ceased: the whole being is still in movement. Even in death, the body has not reached absolute quietude, for transformation, however different, continues incessantly, and in death is at last realized the true, constant, and immortal LIFE.

Regarding the diaphanous body, what concerns us is to realize the following: motion is the universal manifestation of life; motion is the consequence of an active force; plurality of motion and plurality of forces. If any bodies in motion come into contact, one observes the motion of one influencing the other, depending on the density of the bodies, their elasticity, the form, volume, quality, and direction of the forces acting on them (friction being the dispersion of the motivity of bodies in contact); perception of the vibrations and their amplitude.

With gradual practice and observation, one achieves complete mastery over the way in which the diaphanous body acts, and also places it in relation to its universal form; a relation which, while remaining constant, is normally unnoticed and unknown. This needs to be organized, known, and controlled.

One should remember *never to use force* when one is beginning to observe something, not even when one is aware of a superior inner force that might bring faster results. Such a force should be restrained and never entirely loosed. The operator needs to maintain a state of *active equilibrium*, so as to exercise full and perfect control of the particular state of equilibrium of the forces he is working with, and the bodies they are working on, in order not to exhaust himself in the operative impulse, but to reserve energy for whatever action might be required by interferences that are unforeseen or caused by exterior agents.

You must do this so long as you are not a god, so long as you yourself do not perfectly possess the principle of the force. Remember that the action of the force is governed by equilibrium, obeying laws that have not been determined by the common man. He who is worthy of them may come to know and use them, combine them in various ways, realize, compel, and free them, but *never* destroy them.

# **PART IV**

## IV.1

### ARVO

# Vitalizing the “Signs” and “Grips”<sup>1</sup>

There is no esotericist who has not sometimes wondered about our views on the value of Freemasonry. Of course modern masonry is not in question here, meaning that organized since the creation of the Grand Lodge of London in 1717. Yet there are indeed various symbols, rituals, and signs that masonry has taken from earlier traditions of undeniably initiatic character. The first degrees of masonry—let us say the first three—doubtless reproduce those of an ancient guild tradition, regular and initiatic, usually known as “operative masonry” to distinguish it from the “speculative” type. The latter is the more recent, bound to the ideology of the Enlightenment and to political and social goals. But to what extent has the body of symbols and rituals simply been borrowed, and organized into a more or less syncretic system (as seems to be the case with many so-called high degrees of Scottish Rite masonry), and how far has there been a real continuity, even if only partial and limited to a certain period?<sup>2</sup> These questions are not easily answered. My intention here is only to show how some rituals and symbols which have become empty and stereotyped in modern lodge practice seem to have had a close connection with a special method of spiritual realization.

We are dealing principally with the “signs” and “grips” that figure in the ritual of the first masonic degrees: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. They seem to be survivals of elements of an initiatic science corresponding to the Indian doctrine of the *mudrā* and *mantrā*: magical-ritual postures and “names of power.” And the goal seems to be the same: to render the body magically alive, and thereby to integrate human consciousness and lead it

to awakening.

The suspicion that masonic rituals could contain elements of this kind, like glacial deposits and extinct forms, first occurred to me through reading a German mason, J. B. Kerning (pseudonym of Johann Baptist Krebs, 1774–1851). Originally a Catholic theologian, Kerning tried to revive the masonic organization in Württemberg. It was said of him (cf. Lennhoff-Posner, *Internationales Freimaurerlexikon*, 876) that “for thirty years, all his energies went to seeking the deepest meaning of masonic symbolism, through a revival of the prophetic faculty in man.” I have his *Lettre sull’Arte Regia* (Letters on the Royal Art), a manuscript published by G. Buchner, and a testament of his (Kerning’s *Testament*, published in Leipzig, 2nd ed., 1907). My first impression from these was merely of a researcher who sought to erect a system through his own efforts alone, in which many things looked like purely personal constructs rather than derived from an authentic and regular tradition. Kerning’s views and intuitions seem to have served as the basis for later attempts to raise masonry to the initiatic level. For instance, there is a book called *Der brennende Busch* (The Burning Bush) published in Prague, also of a very uneven character, which largely reproduces Kerning’s teachings and mentions a lodge founded in Prague at the beginning of this century. The famous novelist and esotericist Gustav Meyrink was a member, and in his novel *The White Dominican*<sup>3</sup> he speaks more or less in Kerning’s terms of the masonic “signs” and “grips” as magical methods for enlivening the body.

The incentive to consider such theories as more than merely individual attempts to give a higher meaning to rituals and symbols, hardly to be expected in masonry, came from my reading of a short and quite rare book by Rudolf von Sebottendorf (*Die Praxis der alten türkischen Freimaurerei* [The Practice of Ancient Turkish Freemasonry], Leipzig, undated).<sup>4</sup> Von Sebottendorf simply sets out to “report” teachings of esoteric Muslim circles with which he came into contact, and what he expounds gives an impression of seriousness, authenticity, and impersonality. The correspondence of various doctrines of these oriental circles of esoteric masonry with those of Kerning is in many points undeniable. That has to give cause for reflection, and for at least partially dispelling the mistrust aroused by the writings of the Württemberg mason and mystic when taken on their own. Thus I think it will be interesting to summarize the relevant doctrines and practical instructions, referring mainly to the Muslim source. Sebottendorf says of this that oriental masonry has faithfully preserved ancient sapiential doctrines, essentially intended for achieving a higher consciousness, whereas the masonic constitutions of 1717 (with which “speculative” masonry

was born) “was a detour from the right way.”

In both Sebottendorf’s exposition and Kerning’s *Testament*, the practice of signs, grips, and syllables seems to be preceded by a preparation, which in the Muslim version lasts for a cycle of 22 lunar months (825 days in all).<sup>5</sup> In each of these, or rather in each group of these, one is to recite a given verse of the Quran. In each chapter or *sura* of the Quran, a certain letter or formula is given, whose interpretation has made more than one profane scholar lose his head. According to the secret teaching, this number or formula (fourteen in all) indicates the number of days during which the corresponding verse must be recited.

Kerning, on the other hand, gives as preparation exercises in breathing, more or less dematerialized. For example, one must form the habit of breathing with the throat, then with mouth closed and through one or another organ of the body, whereby a purer breath mixes with the air of common breathing, preparing the body to perceive more subtle influxes. Kerning also speaks of a practice consisting of directing the breath to one or another organ or member, to potentize it and galvanize the life force enclosed in it. He says that this, “however strange it may seem, constitutes the beginning of inspiration of the living soul.” There is a curious correspondence between such instructions and those of Hindu yoga: curious, because in Kerning’s lifetime almost nothing was known about yoga. Either he had arrived at this knowledge on his own, or he obtained it from some little-known Western tradition. Kerning distinguishes three “seats”: seat A, where the breath is drawn; seat B, functioning, so to speak, as the breath center (lungs and heart); seat C, from which the breath is absorbed (evidently in subtle form), and which corresponds in Kerning’s teaching to the sexual organs. The practice he describes has a dual purpose: first, that of directing the breath to other parts of the body, rather than to these organs. It is a matter of moving seat C: for example, to the soles of the feet, or to the legs, thighs, sides, arms, fingers, neck, or wherever else one chooses, and to “breathe in” from there. Secondly, one has to try to move seat A, the place where the breath enters, so as to breathe not only with the mouth or nose, but with other parts of the body. This instruction also corresponds to that of *hatha-yoga*, which speaks of two opposite breath currents, called *prāna* and *āpana*. The first is connected to the lungs, the second related to the sexual organs. These currents are opposed (as in Kerning the inbreathing movement A–B–C is opposed to that of taking in human breath from the environment, as it were, through A and B). The prime object of secret yogic teaching is to unite them in a single current.

We come now to the practice with signs and grips, according to the Islamic teachings reported by Sebottendorf. Every degree of masonry has its “signs,”

“grips,” and “words,” but their value is not the simple purpose of recognition or symbols. It is more a matter of magical instruments, to be used to attract special occult influences into the body and to induce initiatic awakening. Islamic masonry here knows of a methodical practice comprising three phases. First there is a preparatory phase intended to vitalize the signs I, A, and O, first through their corresponding vowels and then through the syllables *si*, *sa*, *so*. This practice should be done first thing in the morning, after rising; it requires no more than ten minutes per day. It can be repeated briefly during the day, when one finds oneself alone, and also in the evening.

1. Standing upright, close the right hand and raise it, letting only the index finger extend and point upward, as though warning or calling for silence. This is the I-sign. Concentrate entirely on this finger, thinking of nothing but the corresponding vowel *i*. After a short time one will feel the finger getting strangely warm; once this symptom is felt, let the hand fall and go on to vitalize sign A. Kerning’s version is to repeat the exercise until the corresponding vowel is seen or sensed in the finger.

2. The raised hand is stretched out with the fingers together, while the thumb extends squarely to the index finger, i.e., at an angle of 45 degrees with the conjoined fingers.<sup>6</sup> This is sign A. While making it, concentrate on the vowel *a*. Success in this exercise is shown by a sensation of dry warmth in the thumb (according to Kerning, by seeing or sensing the vowel in it). Vitalizing of sign O follows.

3. This sign is made by closing the hand as though holding something, i.e., leaving a space between the fingers, which should not touch the palm, except that the index finger and the thumb should form a sort of O. And one should concentrate on the vowel *o*.

One now proceeds to the following exercise. Make the I-sign and vitalize it with the syllable *si*, *si*, *si*, until the finger feels warm, then let the hand fall and immediately make the A-sign and vitalize it with the syllables *sa*, *sa*, *sa*. After a while, make the “throat grip,” which consists of holding the hand, still in square position, horizontally against the throat, so that the thumb touches the right artery, and quickly pull it to the right, making the index finger stroke the throat (as though cutting it) until the hand is at the height of the right shoulder. Then let it drop. Lastly, form the O-sign and animate it with *so*, *so*, *so*, and make the so-called Master’s grip: the hand passes rapidly and horizontally from left to right of the body at the level of the solar plexus.

This preparatory work takes a period of ten days: three for vitalizing the



signs with the vowels and seven for animating them with the syllables with “S.”

Next comes the principal practice, with exercises lasting from five to ten minutes. First one repeats the preparatory exercises for seven days. After the sixth day, the squared hand with the syllable *sa* is vitalized and the index finger raised to the nose. If you smell a slight odor of sulfur, you can continue; otherwise you need to practice for another seven days. Next comes a two-week cycle. Form the I-sign and animate it with *si* until the warmth is felt, then drop the hand and form the A-sign, animating it with the syllable *alam*. Raise the hand to the neck, and after a while execute the neck-grip, always repeating the animating syllable. Then form the O-sign, as in the previous exercise.

After fourteen days, if you raise the index finger of the hand in square position to touch the tongue, you will notice a bitter taste like that of sublimate of mercury; that is the sign that the exercise has succeeded. A third cycle takes another two weeks. First form the I-sign, animating it with *si*, then the A-sign, animated for two days with *alam*, two days with *alams*, seven days with *alar*, and three days with *alamar*, doing the neck-grip at the same time. After the first four days, on touching the index finger to the tongue you should taste salt. Then it is time to sharpen one’s vision, and at the moment when the disciple sees a black shadow, this part of the work is complete. From this point, a new life begins for the disciple, and he receives a secret name in the lodge.

A new phase follows, its duration varying with the individual but always with a minimum of three lunar months, and comprising three more cycles. In the first of them, after animating the I-sign, one makes the chest-grip; the hand square as in the A-sign, with the palm parallel to the body, is passed from left to right (at breast height). For animating the A, the following formula is given: *alar, kaha, ja, taha, tasam, tas, tasam*; the same procedure with the syllables *alam, jas, sa, cham* (pronounced between *k* and the German *ch*) with the “middle grip.” This is another pass over the body from left to right, at a height to be found by placing the left hand in angled position vertically above the right hand in chest-grip position, so that the left thumb touches the right index finger. Lastly the procedure is repeated with the letters *cham, cham, asak, and ka* at the height of the solar plexus (the “Master’s grip”).

These later cycles must be controlled by a Master. The disciple relates the experiences to him as he goes, and receives suitable instructions for the next work. According to Sebottendorf the experiences are mainly of an azure color which turns to a pale red, then a whitish green that gradually intensifies. When one sees a vivid green, the cycle connected with the neck-grip is finished. In the cycle of the “middle grip” one sees a phantasmagoria of colors that finally

resolve into a yellowish white. In the last cycle with the Master's grip (at the solar plexus) this color clarifies until it attains a brilliant white, which denotes that this part of the work is perfected.

The last part, also called "integrative," consists of a pass of the squared hand animated by the syllable A, more or less as in the Master's grip, exactly at the level of the navel; it is really called an "abbreviated Master's grip."<sup>2</sup> The color white should turn to a dirty gray, then to yellow, and finally a lively red. This is the end.

The procedure as a whole is also called the work of *Fire* and *Water*. The divine water must penetrate the body, to dissolve it, to destroy its inertia, to make it alive. But for this a breach must be opened in the body itself, and one needs to produce a certain state of exaltation in the "matter." This is done through the letter I, which awakens the element of "fire." When the heat begins to be perceived in the finger, it means that the contact has begun, that the corresponding influence has been captured. With suitable concentration one can induce this current into the whole body, taking care to exclude the head, to avoid a dangerous state of intoxication. The neck grip blocks access to the head center, which must remain free. The A-sign, with its dry heat, expresses a fire composed of the dry quality of the earth element. Through the action of such a fire the "matter is cooked" and produces a "porosity" through which the body is enabled to receive the vitalizing water and the fructifying seed. Already in the first phases of the central work, the body literally begins to breathe and seems to become lighter. The condensation of the fire through the I-sign intensifies ever more in the successive phases (smell of sulfur); however, in the A-sign it is again tempered with the earth (and also with the air brought through the O-sign into the solar plexus) into a quality that becomes infused in the body.

Summing up, the work consists of the following phases:

## Preparation

1. Animation of the signs of I, A, and O with the vowels *i*, *a*, *o*.
2. Animation of the same signs with the syllables *si*, *sa*, *so*.

## Fundamental Work

1. Neck grip, with *alam*, *alamas*, *alar*, and *alamar* until the blackish shadow

appears.

2. Breast grip, with *alar, kaha, ja, taha, tasam, tas, tasam* (until green appears).
3. Middle grip, with *alam, jas, sa, cham* (until yellow-white).
4. Master's grip, with *cham, cham, asak, ka* (until luminous white).

## Integrative Work

- (1) Abbreviated Master's grip, with *na* (until the red color).

Two correspondences of these Muslim initiatic-masonic disciplines with general esoteric teaching are quite obvious and were noticed by Sebottendorf himself. The first refers to the doctrine of the body's occult "centers" (the chakras of Hindu yoga). The various grips surely act on a group of those centers, in the sense of awakening, or inducing awakening forces. The centers of the head and of the "lower parts" seem altogether excluded from this action, except for the solar plexus.<sup>8</sup> The second correspondence refers to alchemical Hermetism. The colors that are to be seen in real visions in the various phases of the discipline certainly make one think of the colors that the Hermetic texts correlate with the states of the "matter": the black color of the "putrefaction," the green of the first magical growth, the *albedo* (whitening) and finally the *rubedo* (reddening).

Moreover, it is interesting to note that a high degree of the Islamic initiatic hierarchy is called the "*Red Sulfur*." Certain magical powers are associated with this degree, which, as in Kabbalism, are based on the science of letters and numbers.

In this way, Sebottendorf was even led to suppose that the secret of the alchemical work is connected to practices such as he refers to, based on the animation of signs and grips. This is certainly arbitrary. Sebottendorf falls into the same error as those who think, the moment they have found a key fitting one door, that it works for every other door. The ways of realization are many, and these Muslim masonic-esoteric circles are following only one of them. We should not think that things are as simple as they seem to be there, namely, that there is some sort of automatic procedure, as if the rituals worked by themselves. In these practices, too, the principle holds good that "he who has no gold cannot make gold" and that "only awakening can kindle awakening." Moreover, as with

many practices of *hatha-yoga*, a certain fluidic-corporeal sensibility seems to be required, which may be favored by the exercises with Quranic formulas (in Islamic masonry) or by breathing (in Kerning), but which is certainly absent in practically all Westerners today.

## IV.2

EA

# Initiatic Consciousness beyond the Grave

(Remarks on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*)

The *Bardo Thödol*, a text which goes under the name of the “Tibetan Book of the Dead,” is already known in our environment through an English translation by W. Y. Evans-Wentz and the lama Kazi Dawa-Samdub, published by Oxford University Press (first edition, 1925), or through a more recent Italian translation by the orientalist Giuseppe Tucci (Bocca, Milan, 1949, reprinted by UTET).

In previous editions of this volume there was a monograph dedicated to this text, which we have decided to omit, because its contents were almost wholly contained in an appendix in Julius Evola’s book *The Yoga of Power*.<sup>1</sup> Here we will simply highlight some fundamental and characteristic points, to complement what these pages have already said about the after-death state.

1. First of all, the Tibetan text emphasizes that what unfolds after death is not an inevitable event, but that actions are possible on the part of a spirit of someone physically dead that can be decisive for its future destiny. This view is seldom met with in explicit form in other traditions, especially those of a religious character. There are perhaps exceptions in the ancient Egyptian tradition, which also has a *Book of the Dead*, and partially in Greek Orphism and in Gnostic and Gnostic-Kabbalistic mysteriosophy.

2. The second point to be made is that these possibilities of action after death are not available to everyone. The Tibetan text refers to one who has followed

the Way while alive and attained at least a certain degree of “knowledge,” if not a complete initiation. Great emphasis is placed on the attitude at the moment of death (if the type of death allows sufficient lucidity). In the environment where this text was written, its teachings about the experiences to be expected after death, their true nature, their meaning, and the attitude that one should take toward them are recalled to the dying person by a Master or a lama.

3. The fundamental qualities required for action in the beyond, which should have been developed through adequate disciplines during life, are the yogic power of concentration and fixing the mind, especially the imagination; fearlessness, the ability to master anguish, terror, desire or aversion; and the ability to “freeze” every instinctive reaction that comes from below. The text says that lacking these, all the “devotions” practiced during life are useless. The yogic focus of the mind in a dimensionless point (*ekāgra*) is also presupposed for maintaining the continuity of consciousness through the changes of state that take place immediately after the collapse of the physical body.

4. The basis of the text is the esoteric doctrine of the Supreme Identity, according to its special formulation in the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. According to this doctrine, man in his essence or deepest dimension is altogether one with the Principle, and in the structure of his being is also one with the various divine powers. But he is unaware of it. This is the well-known doctrine of metaphysical ignorance, *avidyā*, which alone determines finite and contingent existence, tangles man in a world of illusion and a game of actions and reactions, and causes the conditionings of fate. “Knowledge” is understood as knowledge of his true identity, as something lived or deeply suspected.

5. We might say that in the after-death experience the veil of illusion is ripped away. If the conscious principle can sustain it, it finds itself discovering what it is and what it has always been, metaphysically: first directly, then in the form of visions of beings, gods, and unearthly worlds. The essential thing in all these after-death trials is the degree of “knowledge,” i.e., the ability to avoid the illusion of any duality.

6. In this text, the order of experiences is somewhat contrary to that of other instructions for the usual after-death destiny. As mentioned, the latter consider that there are two deaths. The first is that of the physical body; the second, somewhat later, is the death of the psychic and subtle complex inherited from the human individuality, to which the dead person’s soul has remained attached and which finally also dissolves. This is the point at which the great alternative presents itself: either an obscuration, or else the liberation of the naked spiritual nucleus and its transfiguration into Light. In the latter case, this principle has

already been partially awakened, consolidated, and generally become the center of the person's existence.

The Tibetan text says that after a short period of unconsciousness (about three and a half days) there comes the "passage through the elements" ("Earth dissolves into Water, Water dissolves into Fire, Fire dissolves into Air"—as inner experiences). Then suddenly the supreme test occurs, the experience of the pure state of Being, dazzling, annihilating, with terrifying radiance and the "sound of a thousand thunders." If the soul has the ability to identify with it, as though hurling itself out of itself, incinerating everything in itself that is "other" or "ignorance," in an instant it will have attained the Great Liberation. But if it is unable, through fear or through the action of the roots that "ignorance" has grown in the course of finite existence, the highest opportunity offered beyond the grave is lost.

7. The text speaks of further experiences offered to one who has failed. It is the same supreme reality, metaphysically identical to the Self, that appears to them, no longer in the pure and formless state but in the shape of divine figures. It may be a matter of "projections," dramatized as visions of the divinities that were worshiped during life (thus varying according to the different religions but metaphysically equivalent). Here again the essential ability is to overcome the appearance of a duality: the capacity of "identification," which evidently depends on the intensity and depth of a previous religion that was not simply devotional. If these transcendent projections impose themselves on the soul as separate entities, the test is failed. But if one succeeds in identification with them, the soul is assured of a certain condition of "divine" survival as surrogate for the Great Liberation. One first sees glorious divinities, powerful, radiant, and benevolent, but if the new test fails they transform like shapes in a kaleidoscope into terrifying divinities, wrathful, destructive, incarnating the soul's own fears. This obviously makes identification still more difficult, unless in life one has practiced the cult of such divinities and already carries their image in oneself.<sup>2</sup>

8. The text uses the image of an elastic ball thrown to earth, which rises less high each time it bounces, to picture this sequence of experiences in their descending course. If these alternatives and tests are failed, it is because tendencies and complexes predominate in the soul that work against its complete deconditioning. The text describes successive phantasmagoria, explicable through the action of these tendencies, with fatal consequences. But it also urges one not to abandon oneself to them, to wrench oneself out of them, remembering the teachings one has received, not giving in to the illusion, and restraining the imagination and the mind, because the whole sequence of visions is never more

than projections, with no reality of their own. The phantasmagoria of shapes and landscapes, pursuing demons and all the rest are nothing but a play of the imagination that has magically become free. The inability to restrain the corresponding reactions of the terrified or ecstatic soul, the urges to seek refuge or to indulge in delicious sensations, etc., lead the unknowing soul directly downward to a specific place or “birth” in a conditioned world. Thus the text exhorts the soul, even here, to “remember itself,” to overcome the illusion, to realize that it has to do with itself alone and with what it has determined in itself, and that it alone will be the maker of its destiny.

9. Under such circumstances, which represent a fall and the loss of the higher possibilities offered after death, there are still actions to be taken, as it were in extremis, to avoid the worst outcome. It is possible to collect oneself and use conjurations (formulae for “closing the womb of a given birth”), and even if one is caught in a movement that can no longer be stopped, to “steer” it to some degree. Even in these crises, within these ultimate possibilities, the decisive factor is to restrain the mind, and not to give in to the irresistible emotions of attraction or repulsion that make play with the soul.

10. If one fails again, it means that “desire,” the thirst for life and for earthly incarnation are prevailing in the soul. One last chance of liberty remains for avoiding specific births. The final scene, in every case, is linked to a somewhat Freudian situation: due to a blind and turbulent desire, the still discarnate soul sees the couple who will generate it united in sexual embrace. If the soul was male in its former existence, it is attracted to its mother-to-be; if female, to its father-to-be. It feels their orgasmic ecstasy and thereby is drawn into the womb. Consciousness is then extinguished, the “waters” reclose on the fallen being, which “dies through rebirth” until its next death, whereupon with the possibilities gained by the new causes it will have created, it will face the same trials again.

Our text agrees partially with the Hindu teaching of the two post mortem paths: the divine path of him who “returns no more” and the so-called way of the fathers with rebirth in a specific family line. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is characterized by an uncommon clarity and logic. It reveals the common and popular religious images of the after-death state, with their divine judgments and all the rest, as bugbears and opiates, and also demythologizes whatever sense may exist in the ideas of paradise, purgatory, and hell.

One notes the special emphasis on qualities that need to be obtained in one’s lifetime, through suitable disciplines and control of one’s own mind; they are not only of use in this existence and for progress along the Way, but also beyond the



grave, in the battle for one's own destiny.

## IV.3

# Various Commentaries

## THE MAGIC, THE MASTER, THE SONG

Metaphysically speaking, the “practical” and the “concrete” are nonexistent.

The “concrete” does exist in magic; there, yes: but we must understand that it is *seriously* concrete (*Oriens docet* [the East teaches]): there one must demonstrate, act. But strangely, he who truly does magic:

1. Is unknown to anyone, for he is so careful to hide himself, and he *must* (absolutely) hide himself;
2. *He dissuades others from doing magic* (absolutely);
3. If he limits himself to that (very rarely), he shuts himself away, and *must* shut himself away, beneath the icecap;
4. If he uses it for “something else,” *he says no more about it.*

Therefore: this is *absolute*. The “occultist” is said to be dangerous: quite right. It’s with a wry smile that I restate this: in Europe, the occultist is generally something dirty—his tracks go from the braggart to the *filou* (cheat),<sup>1</sup> the low-down *filou*, and straight to the con man. If he were a brigand, he would be a *voleur des grands chemins* (highwayman). Quite right. That is why I must tell you that for *Magic in writings accessible to all*, the *true* Magic, I mean a *true* Mage (think of certain Chinese types of the poetmage, always depicted in solitude) would stone you. So much for magic, which is interesting on its own level: not to devalue or denigrate it, because it takes much courage, persistence, and above all, much *modesty*. What I have said, I believe to be absolute. But if you said to me: “What if we pull your chair away?”—All right, let’s take the extreme hypothesis—I’d die of fear and cry out “*Averte gladium*” (put away thy sword<sup>2</sup>)—and tell me, *qu’est-ce que ça prouve?* (what does that prove?) That there is someone who *can* act *behind* the phenomena? Very well, and what next? That you have taken trips into the subtle world, that unbeknownst to me, you are

*rôdeurs de nuit* (night prowlers): very well: and then? You are still only *in the theater*. And if you poor things stay there, you'll be putting on puppet shows for ever. Frankly, this little game can go on for a bit, then you usually quit, as you should know better than I. Magic, as Magic, *est sans issu* (is without exit/result) (*absolutely*): if it exits, it is from itself; *hic*, I insist, *incipit recta via* (here the right way begins): the *polar* way . . . . While writings such as Iagla's on Lao-tze (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 318–23) can unloose more than one serpentine vibration, encircling, biting, then vanishing—the Tao is untouched, naturally, even by him, because one does not speak of the Tao. Nor does one *moralize* about the abyss or the path of the abyss, strewing it with deceptive spikes to fix a halo of fear and confusion around the blessed “occultist”—which then has absolutely nothing to do with Tao, given that the Tao is outside the theater, while the occultist (assuming that he is a real mage) is only in the *wings*.

Now, that being said, while you offer possibilities, others offer different ones: *in practice*, an affirmation of a *contemplative* order can immediately reveal the path bit by bit (and that is *something*) or lead to realization. I tell you this: so long as the affirmation proceeds with certainty, *ne visant à rien* (aiming for nothing), especially not for him who is making it. This and no other is the value of the traditional writing; or of the lonely song which *carries* . . .<sup>3</sup>

. . . A true Master always puts himself at a point where *all the possibilities are offered* such that each can then develop separately: these possibilities as a whole form a divergent and radiating bundle, tentacular and many-limbed, which emanates from a single block. Following the metaphorical line, that could be called “tradition.” To concretize it, we can start from Al-Ghazali's affirmation, that “there are as many ways as there are Sufis” and that the true Master is he who shows each one his own path: one thus obtains a sort of *κοσμοποιγία* (world creation), whose analogical reference is the starry heaven.

This and naught else is what the *great* tradition needs. The *jīvanmukti*<sup>4</sup> is outside it, but he *holds its strings*: you can see exactly how, by passing from the *lesser* Buddhism to the *greater*,<sup>5</sup> particularly if the need to which I allude is felt. Tibet has known it, China has known it, and they *cannot* accept the lesser Buddhism.

What is needed is to impose a direction in the *traditional* sense, meaning a radical, effective *mutation of mentality*. One cannot work with forms that can still coexist with the *current state*, because that is precisely what must be demolished. For example, it is the current state that hinders any possibility of magic, because the magical art requires special conditions that are almost

inaccessible in modern civilization. It has lost almost all contact with elemental natures, which are not just hidden but may have utterly vanished; the nymphs and fauns have disappeared, and all that once leapt forth from the element as a myth of becoming. (I hope I am speaking to an intuitive reader, given the absolute impossibility of putting this into words.)

As for *practice*: it is not the description, i.e., the aesthetics (etymologically) of the *state*. Authentic practice aiming at realization consists in giving *peremptorily* a *brief, absolute*, clear means: in saying for example (of the thousand methods, one that I know): “Recite this word until the CESSATION OF BREATH, and it is enough.” But to do this requires:

1. the Master;
2. the fluidic environment;
3. the effluvium—*baraka*, as it is known in Islam;
4. the inner-outer linkage, for which, to be precise, I take one of many points of reference: *visio spiritualis non solum requirit ut anima recipiat ab extra, scilicet a Deo, gratiam et virtutes, sed cooperetur per virtutem proriam*<sup>6</sup> (spiritual vision does not only require the soul to receive grace and virtues from outside, that is, from God, but it must cooperate through its own virtue).

*All of that is now missing.* Practically, what is to be done? Enlarge the horizon. What I call *purity* toward all the traditions. Let each one give what it knows, so that each one (the reader) can draw his thread from this *variety* of gifts. This, and nothing else, is the *good* to be done *in this domain*. . . .

The Master has his hands “full of gifts” and attracts; *he does not reject*. His solitude is not *against* the tumult, but the solitude that tames the tumult, sunlike, as the light engulfs the dark fog, *dissolving it, resolving it*. But you ask: where are the *pure in heart*? Very well, *be one of them!* If you believe that an *action* can do that, then act. If not, it is perfectly useless. The torchbearers—in today’s Europe—have sunk to the level of flashlights, and there is no need for that: one should look to the torch, not to him who carries it—unless the bearer can *shine brighter than the flame and attract more than the torch* (an exceptional thing, but I know something of it through *just one* whom I have known down there). Then it is an immense benefit for all: for those who can do much, for those who can do little, and even for those who can do nothing. But then the voice *sings*

(not idyllically!), even when it roars. Remember how Milarepa sings, and as they sing in Maenadic violence before the empty cup of the abyss? (Think of Bacchic relief-sculptures and especially, in Greece, the vase paintings.)

The Master is he who opens the doors and lets the light *sing*. Not only the Upanishads and the Sufis sing, but also certain terrible isolated Masters who smash everything and then—*le Néant est un miracle* (Nothingness is a miracle).

• • •

We will make a few points about these considerations sent at the time by one of our collaborators (“Havismat”).

First, what he says about the limits of magic in the strict sense can only serve *for us* as useful clarifications. Readers are well aware that we give the term “magic” a special meaning, more or less equivalent to the theurgical and initiatic path. Besides, at that time (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, chap. IX.2) enough reference points had already been given in that regard, so that anyone could easily orient himself.

It is quite true that magic in the strict sense, if it is not to be a blind alley, must surpass itself at a certain point, “and then the true path begins, the *polar*.” But it is not quite right to say that “the Tao is outside the theater, while the occultist (assuming that he is a real mage) is only in the *wings*.” According to the ultimate truth, which is not that of a unilateral transcendence (and since our friend quotes the Mahāyāna, he must know that), the Tao is simultaneously outside the theater and *inside* the theater, and the same applies, to a greater or lesser degree, to the adept who has truly realized the law of the Tao. The proper way to define the Tao is “immanent transcendence.”

We also recognize that the true practice is based on a simple and peremptory method which, once it seems congenial and one has chosen it, should be followed to the depths without seeking other things and dispersing one’s energies. Still, a “description” in the sense of indicating a phenomenon can also be justifiable, so that the practitioner can know, when a certain state manifests itself, how to conduct himself and how to judge it. Since specific results may give rise to different reactions on which the further course of the process depends, one cannot simply say “Do this and no more.” This is why, for

practical purposes, even the initiatic teaching about the after-death experiences has a certain descriptive quality (see the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*). As for the method indicated, one of many, it corresponds to the repetition of a “divine name” or a certain formula (*dhikr*) used mainly in Islam, which has already been mentioned (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 79–82). Insofar as a Master and a “spiritual influence” (*baraka*) are essential conditions in the current state of things, we will discuss them in a later essay on the “Limits of Initiatic Regularity.”<sup>7</sup>

Concerning “letting the light sing,” one should use caution because of the possible wrong turning into an inconclusive lyricism, on a plane very different from that of the “dry way.” We know that for the latter, the “language of silence” is far more appropriate. It may be different when the light is not subterranean but borne by a whole great, living tradition, so as to animate every type of sensibility and human activity. However, this is a state that can only be revived in very special circumstances today, if it is not to remain mere “poetry.” It belongs to what Vico called the “heroic age.”

Finally, as for the relative absurdity of speaking of magic (or initiation) in writings “accessible to all,” it really is relative, because even with the best will in the world, writings of this type will *never* be accessible to all. If it is a matter of revealing the methods of an applied magic, the question that some have asked concerns the suitability and the danger to a few (because in this field, too, there are only a few) who can truly activate it without having known of it before. But this belongs to the field of simple personal responsibility, neither more nor less than in the use anyone may make of firearms or poison.

# **PART V**



## V.1

### IAGLA

## On the “Corrosive Waters”

In the secret language of the Hermetic philosophers we frequently find the expression “*Solvent*”: “Universal solvent,” “*Menstruum*,” “Water that washes,” “Divine water,” “Water that opens the pores.” But beside them you also find more Luciferic terms: “Poison,” “Corrosive Water,” “Water of Tartarus,” “Philosophic vinegar,” “Strong waters.” Here the philosophers redouble their ambiguous veil and mask. They advise the greatest caution in using these waters. Others advise against them altogether, because, as they say, these waters dissolve the body without preserving the spirits; they do not wash, but burn; they do not work with nature’s slow fire but with the “devil’s own haste.” Yet they still mention them; and this half-recognition that reveals and conceals fascinates by its very prohibition, as of a more dangerous and even fatal secret in the symbolic labyrinth of this strange art of metals and spirits.

What are the “corrosive waters”? What is their virtue? A quality of *surprise*, perhaps? A *liminal* virtue? Remember Éliphas Lévi’s image of magical persistence: “Like the wave that keeps returning and ends by corroding even iron.” But this cannot be the action of the corrosive water, the poison-water. Subtle as the former may be, it is the *frontal* action of normal waters, an action that knows no haste: rhythmic, penetrating, sympathetic. Poison or venom has a different effect altogether: it strikes and kills without rhythm, as a direct act. It *sunders*, slices apart. It is the viper’s bite. So it must be another way.

Let us start with the symbols and try to understand them. It is not easy, because everything is connected as a whole behind this symbology, which leaves no breathing space. “Disconnect the spirit”—that stands at the center, say the

Hermetic philosophers, and they speak of it as of a “resurrection.” An incorporeal essence has been immersed in the body as in a dense medium, and thenceforth moves in a world of darkness.

This density must be *dissolved*, subtilized, through the soul’s own power. It is a mysterious power, because the agent of resurrection is said to need resurrecting: a certain “new quality” has to appear in the soul itself. How one *induces* this “new quality” is the philosophers’ secret. I think it is secret not because of some artificial monopoly, but in truth because rational analysis can no longer grasp the type of law that is working here.

You have read that a Master can transmit this “new quality.” That presupposes an organization, a “chain.” And the necessary qualification.

Or else: long labor of the individual, in the dark, like boring a tunnel. The blows (practices, rituals, intentions) accumulate like the rhythmic return of Éliphas Lévi’s waters, yet you notice nothing, you register no results, no tangible fruit. Suddenly the last wall collapses: a flood of fresh air and light rushes in. Your soul is no longer the same. Was it self-transformation, or *contact?* with states of intelligence that are present, yet hidden, identical or different from your own consciousness, *deeper?* I do not know, neither would it help you much to know.

These are not the only methods, but along with others that you may be aware of, they form a single class, a uniform method: *from within to without*. The light has to be acquired in the soul; an “astral fire” must be lit there, a magical and philosophical fire, as they say. This is the first thing. Then the soul reacts on what envelops it, loosening the dense fabric, and a new *vibrational* capacity arises until a perfectly *diaphanous* quality is produced. It is the *visio spiritualis* (spiritual vision) within the *speculum* (mirror) of the re-illuminated body.

Invert the method, and stop at the beginning of this inverse direction. Then the strange symbols of the “poisonous water,” the “philosophic corrosives” may begin to speak to you. This is authentic *alchemy*: the Hermetic manipulation of “double” agents, i.e., physical and tangible substances that at the same time carry psychic influences. To invert the method signifies this: *instead releasing the body by means of the preliminary awakening of the soul, force the soul to awaken by means of special agents, which cause sudden reactions at the deepest level of the body’s energies, like abrupt transitions to abnormal states of vibration and fluidic instability*. This is the viper’s bite, which suddenly pulls the ground from under your feet. What happens then? Either you are quicker than lightning, or you are caught by surprise and collapse as though from a hammer

blow. It is a fine risk to take, a game for gamblers in the grand style.

I am dealing here with the extreme ways of using the “corrosive waters,” the *decisive* and all-encompassing ways. It is very difficult for you to discover what substances have such powers, and the science of their dosage and immediate practice. This knowledge was already such a deep secret in archaic and sacerdotal times, and the gift of the “draught of immortality” so seldom given, even in response to an ardent thirst, rather than to the heedless curiosity and contempt for patient discipline that might make you desire such adventures today.

There are, however, diluted forms about which we can say a little—and more than has generally been said about them up to now.

First let us analyze the cause of the risk. It comes primarily from the fact that the so-called immortal and immutable soul is a fantasy. From the moment it “descends” into the fleshly body, it is “compromised.” It is in fact transformed into the individuated consciousness of the individual being that you are. We will call this qualified state A. If as things stand, you—or rather not “you” but a certain power X—tears away the body and toxically *corrodes* the link with the body, this causes the *destruction* of A, for the simple reason that the qualification or individuation is given by the body, just as one could say that a liquid has a certain “form” given it by a vessel, but only so far and so long as the vessel contains it. Therefore the *destruction* of A—or its death, dissolution of quality A *into a zero quality*, which we will call Z. Unless . . . unless the soul itself intervenes to bridge *by its own act* the leap from A to Z, simultaneously making this transformation from A to Z its own, from the formed to the formless state. You have already read about this: it is *dying actively*, initiatically.

The following image may help: you are standing here, on this crag. In front of you is another crag, and between the two, emptiness. If a sudden blow takes you unawares, in 99 percent of cases you will end up down there. But if you have the presence of mind to absorb the blow, to act almost before you are surprised; in other words, if you can include in your own impetus the unexpected external impulse—you *leap*—and find yourself on the opposite side. This crag beyond is the reconquest of a liberated consciousness. The first crag was consciousness burdened by the individual condition, subject to all that one is subjected to by way of a body.

You may find another analogy in this image. The blow that flings you out is understood as the action of the sudden “corrosives.” *This action will always be a surprise, by its nature and because there is discontinuity in man between body*

*and soul.* As though the soul could see in front of itself, but not behind itself *by turning round.* In that “behind” the body begins, and the paths open that come from its depths, its occulted parts. Now, the explicit action of the “corrosive waters” comes from outside, works through the body, *thus from behind.* Here the situation is exactly like standing on the edge of the crag and not being able to predict the moment or the *quality* of the blow that hits you from behind. Without presence of mind as quick as lightning, the experience of this type of “corrosive waters” or “poisons” leads to ruin.

After that, I will pass on to milder cases. You see why the risk is minimized in the other method, the one starting from within, where the soul acts on itself with a “gentle fire” that accustoms it to detachment step-by-step, leading by degrees to the transformation from A (individuated state) to Z (non-individuated state), whereas in the other case decision and realization are instantaneous.<sup>1</sup> We can also seek to actualize this gradual process, with “dosings” of the force, with a method that starts from the body, using different substances or using the same ones in a different way or a different quantity. The image would then be of a leap divided into smaller, less dangerous leaps, taken such that a fall would not be fatal, though it would still incur unpleasant consequences, except for the final leap, which is more serious and decisive.

Beside the preceding image, another one may help—from Evola, if I remember rightly—of the growth, rise, and rapid movement of a wave, on which one allows oneself to be carried without fear, by always staying on the crest. By keeping oneself there, intoxication is transformed into illumination, falling into rising, fire into light. If one does not succeed, consciousness quickly darkens, and a sort of dull syncope occurs which often has pathological repercussions on the organic functions; at any rate, a dismantling of what may be the person’s internal unity and energy. In this case the corrosion of the compound does not liberate, but dissolves.

From a certain point of view, such pathological reactions may be considered as blockages or discharges bouncing back onto the physical body, due to awakened forces that have not found the way to transform themselves into states and liberations of consciousness. *But one should consider that the same often applies to what manifests in people as illnesses and pain, commonly, “naturally,” and without special practices. There are illnesses and pains that represent a blockage or excessive discharge in the psychophysical system, by certain forces to which the consciousness has been unwilling or unable to open itself.* It is a matter (to use Novalis’s precise expression, already cited in these pages), of the methods of an exalted force which strives to pass into transcendent



sensations.

Furthermore, when through passivity the initiatic goal of the experience is missed, it can increase the power of entities to which the self has already offered a foothold, and also of others from whose action one would otherwise have been safe. It is then a case of *obsession* in the literal sense<sup>2</sup> or of being involuntarily transported by forces emerging from the unconscious. Noting that alcohol itself is one of the “strong waters” of low efficiency, it is not difficult, thinking of its common effects, to conceive of the danger by analogy.<sup>3</sup>

On this basis, you can also guess what typically happens when the experience takes a degenerative course. The forces of corrosion and liberation, in order to operate spiritually and cathartically, must be able to act, transformed, into forces of the pure self. If they do not do so, nor even discharge themselves in the physical body, but emerge in some other faculty of the self, the process is equally aborted. In two typical cases, this pathological course of events concerns the respective faculties of imagination and “sensation” (the latter understood as desire, appetite, pleasure).

When the imagination is seized and transported on the wings of the “dragon,” there breaks forth the fantastic world of visionaries, the orgy of forms and colors of false clairvoyants, the dreams filled with subtle and seductive sensations of opium and hashish users.

When it is the faculty of sensation that is seized—alone, or together with the former—the force gives rise to a world of strange pleasures, indefinable, intoxicating, which gradually become a necessity for the soul. It creates *vice*. All those in ordinary life who abandon themselves to drug use are precisely on this plane, almost without exception.

In both cases the corrosion does not liberate, but destroys. The self sinks down, as fatally as the peak of a mountain when its base is gradually eroded. You can therefore see the necessity of , of the centrality of : the self, perfectly conscious at its center, ready to attract all reactions to itself alone, with instantaneous force—and silence all around.

As the process develops and the inner light increases, the bodily envelope lessens its grip, passes the gap, comes into direct contact with the central and spiritual force, and rests upon it. Then you know from experience that in the *literal* sense the self *rules* your own body. In this state the instinctive automatisms are suspended, and you have—and *must* have—an absolute lucidity and control: you guide every movement *directly with the mind* in a sense of

presence and power impossible to describe.<sup>4</sup> It becomes obvious in the first phases, whereas others would deflate, falling into trance or into an orgy of visions and “artificial paradises.”

In contrast, here is a memory that I will never lose: that of a night in the war. I was *very* far away, in lucent detachment. The alarm suddenly sounds. I come to and get to my feet. I am on the artillery line. I will never be able to say what then broke out from the abyss, what supported me, what bore me miraculously through hours of hell, what acted in the supernatural lucidity of every gesture, every thought of any kind, of senses that grasped every perception almost *before* it was perceived. (And by “chance” I remained on my feet, unhurt—I *knew* that I *could* stand there, with grenades exploding around me.) Whatever Homer’s immortal gods could have been, who descended among the epic destinies of men, I certainly had a notion of it then; and I knew what men do not know in their petty talk about idols.

ARVO

## Ethnology and the “Perils of the Soul”

Sometimes today one comes across scholars who venture into the supersensible field, coming to it from the profane point of view and thus lacking any authentic principle, yet here and there they arrive at insights that are not totally banal, although they themselves are unable to coordinate and develop them adequately. To use an image from Aristotle, they are like someone trying to wrestle who succeeds with some lucky hold, even though he is ignorant of the art of wrestling.

Ernesto De Martino’s book *Il mondo magico* (Turin, 1st ed., 1948) is a case in point. I think it will be interesting to review the arguments it contains, and to see how they might be considered from the esoteric point of view.

De Martino is an “ethnologist,” i.e., one who collects data gathered by explorers and observers among savage peoples. This particular case treats everything of such peoples that concerns the “extra-normal” and that De Martino simply identifies as the “magical world.” Beside being an ethnologist, he is a follower of “historicism”: the philosophy that reduces all truth to that which gradually takes shape in the historical development of the human spirit (known in the jargon as “spirit’s becoming”).

This already shows the limitations of De Martino’s conception. In the first place, he speaks of a “magical world,” whereas he should really be speaking of a “sorcerous world.” Secondly, he assumes, like many of his colleagues, that savage peoples are “primitive” peoples, i.e., remainders of what all humanity

was at its origins, left behind by the progress of “civilization.” Our readers know that the truth is otherwise: most of the presumed “primitives” are nothing but extreme forms of involution and degeneration of prior civilizations and races, sometimes so ancient that any trace of their memory is lost. The “material” on which De Martino’s work is based comes almost exclusively from that twilight zone lying under a sort of anathema, where one finds only degraded fragments, faint echoes and distortions of structures that, in themselves, once belonged to a very different plane. De Martino deliberately ignores everything to do with the sacred sciences of antiquity, the heritage of the greatest traditional civilizations of East and West, and which alone could provide a proper orientation to what is not just ordinary human experience. Likewise, he does not suspect that any milieu could exist today which possesses these sciences on the basis of an uninterrupted transmission. He only seems to know about the “scanty troop of sensitives, mediums, dowsers, pendulum users, etc., which forms the little archaic republic within the great republic of our civilization” (p. 262). Thus he only knows about one order of things, whose level is even lower than that of the savage world.

Despite such limited horizons, De Martino arrives at views that are partially correct. Here is his basic thesis: Nowadays we possess a concept of the Self, the non-Self, nature, space, and reality that we tend to consider as absolute, never suspecting that it is “historically conditioned,” that it has arisen and become evident only within modern Western civilization, whence we extend it to every possible civilization, including what De Martino calls “magical civilization” (p. 190). On the contrary, the latter has completely different concepts of a Self, a non-Self, a type of relationship between them, an environment, and a spiritual condition.

Thus when one raises the question of the reality of certain abnormal phenomena, it is wrongly put: they are *real*, but their reality is not what is understood by that word today (p. 192). The common modern concept of reality is a historical formation; outside or prior to today’s civilization and humanity it is meaningless.

So long as the argument is expressed thus, we can accept it. These pages have repeatedly pointed out the error of those who claim to understand something of ancient or non-Western civilization by applying concepts which are only valid for modern man. Also from the practical point of view, it has often been emphasized that to obtain results in the field of initiation and magic, one must know *another* Self, *another* nature, and in general another modality of experience that have been almost entirely lost. Magical and traditional man lived



and moved in a world essentially different from our own.

De Martino writes specifically: “The experimental science of nature is built upon the idea of a nature purified of all the psychic projections of magic; yet paranormal phenomena bear witness precisely to a nature still interwoven by these projections, and not only at the level of mere belief, but in *reality* itself. . . . Science was born from removing the psychic quality from nature, first gradually, then ever more deliberately. The possibility of paranormal phenomena signified for science a veritable ‘sign of contradiction,’ a ‘scandal,’ inasmuch as the paranormal generally represents a psychic quality that returns to nature, and a nature recharged with psychic qualities” (p. 69). This observation is equally true. One can also formulate it as follows: reality, or “nature,” is not indifferent to man’s attitude and interpretation; both have an effective power over it. The so-called scientific knowledge of nature has been an active process of disensouling and petrifying it. There is an intimate solidarity between the spiritual condition and the way in which nature or reality appears. It is through the materialization of the spirit that a nature has become *real* in which materialism can be true, and the methods of materialistic and positivist science very largely applicable. But this petrification has not been sufficiently complete to exclude residues or traces of a different condition; hence the zones where paranormal phenomena still occur, which are like spoilsports in the orderly world of materialistic science. Naturally these phenomena have become ever more insignificant and infrequent, the more that the collective milieu is completely dominated by the views of science and technology, while this milieu reacts objectively on reality in a deterministic sense.

One of De Martino’s true deductions is as follows: “The naturalistic procedure falls into a strange contradiction: the very attitude that most closely follows the rules of (scientific) observation can influence the phenomena observed and make them vanish, while on the other hand, the phenomena can easily appear if the observer somehow abandons this attitude” (p. 160). The phenomena in question are of a lower order, but the principle is valid. There is an attitude that by itself paralyzes everything to do with the subtle and spiritual aspect of reality.<sup>1</sup>

Returning to the principal point, we see how De Martino understands the difference between today’s experience and that which he calls “magical.” In the former, the sense of Self appears as something given, guaranteed, and defined, and confronting it is a non-Self, a nature with the attributes of a given and defined reality completely independent of us. This character of “being given” (De Martino uses the term *datità* [givenness]) is not found in the magical world.

There the duality of I and non-I is not yet so definite; an independent objective world does not exist, the frontiers between soul and nature are labile, so that irruptions can occur from the one to the other. "Reality as independence of the given, as the presentation of an observable world as decisive and guaranteed alterity, is a historical<sup>2</sup> formation specific to our civilization, hence correlative to the decisive and guaranteed presence [of the Self to itself]<sup>3</sup> which characterizes it" (p. 155).

But from this point on, De Martino's views call for reservations. According to him, the magical experience stems from the anguish of a Self that cannot maintain itself in the face of a nature experienced as a world of psychic forces; in this situation, the soul finds itself exposed "to an extreme and definitive risk, in comparison to which all life's other hazards lose their significance and importance" (p. 141). Sir James Frazer, also referring to the world of savages, already spoke of "*perils of the soul*," due to a permanent possibility of the soul's losing itself, being dissolved, possessed, invaded; and he interpreted a series of primitive magical rituals as techniques for defence against such dangers, substantial dangers no longer known to the Self of today's man.

But this is not all. "Necessarily connected to the magical risk of *losing the soul* is the other magical risk of *losing the world*." When one feels the secret forces acting behind things, a certain sensible and tangible horizon enters into crisis, and one actually feels the risk of every limit collapsing. "But magic, which in a sense signals the risk, intervenes at the same time to stem the insurgent chaos and restore it to order" (p. 149), which is that of nature resubjugated to the given laws and brought back within its limits.

The first point to be made here is that the labile state of soul, unindividuated and exposed to a fundamental risk, does not correspond at all to the "magical world," or to whatever one could truly consider as the world of origins. On the contrary, it corresponds to a sorcerous world, to a human type at the extreme of decadence and degradation, where indeed it is possible for the spiritual unity to break apart and easy for "psychic" influences of every sort to break in. As said, this is the case for most savage peoples, whose rituals are, so to speak, intended to save what can be saved. But it is not the case for vast zones of ancient civilizations, although they were very much aware of the "paranormal."

De Martino, with his "historicism," believes in an imaginary process of emancipation that supposedly consolidated and guaranteed the "soul," leading to a stable and definitive form, safe and established, which is common property today. He is deluding himself. In regard to modern humanity, one should not

speak of evolution, but of involution and regression; of a process of spiritual barbarization, even though it took a different direction from the involution of savage peoples. In fact, if a man was ever internally unstable and inconsistent, it is certainly the man of today. Without exaggerating, one can say that the human personality has never been so threatened as it is today, and never so vulnerable to “perils of the soul”—for the very fact that it takes no account of these perils. Whereas primitive man felt invisible forces and demons in a quasi-physical way and was thus able to arm himself against them, modern man is subject to similar influences that now act in more subtle ways, such as thoughts, suggestions, ideologies, and collective psychic currents that enslave him without his ever noticing the constraint. It is very different from the “discovery of the autonomy of the spirit” and “man’s freedom of creation and action,” that the development of Western civilization is supposed to have brought about! (pp. 186, 121). It is astonishing that a so-called critical spirit can be *fooled* by such “historicist” fancies.

Things are a little different regarding the unstable world order in primordial consciousness. This cannot concern only the experiences of savages, but reflects a far higher level. The traditional world recognized in man the function of a “center,” of a “third power beside Heaven and Earth.” This function qualified him for helping to maintain the universal order, and even controlling natural phenomena up to a point. A whole complex of rituals and sacrifices, not only among savages but also in great civilizations such as the Chinese and Hindu, had no other purpose. Our readers may know the particular case of Far Eastern views on the action attributed to the Sovereign’s presence, not only on the order of his realm but also on natural phenomena. Of course to modern man, for whom all such contact is broken and who feels himself nothing more than an insignificant phenomenon on one of the infinite bodies populating cosmic space, this all appears as mere superstition; but that matters little to us.

We find in De Martino a similar confusion between degraded elements of the savages and elements of a higher order, when he speaks of those who take on the role of magus. The latter, through various procedures, entering into trance, and so forth, seems to intensify the state of peril and risk felt by primitive man. He deliberately weakens the sense of self-presence and provokes an upsurge of psychic realities that seem to submerge it, yet he is not lost. The ultimate purpose is a reaffirmation of the self, a mastery of the forces of this supersensible world which he has thus penetrated. He maintains the trance without falling into possession or uncontrolled ecstasy (pp. 113–15). “The shaman is the hero who can go to the very brink of chaos and make a pact with

it, while others find themselves in an unstable condition [of self] that is vulnerable at any moment” (p. 118). “Loss of self, which for others can be permanent, is transformed by the magus into a moment of process leading to salvation . . . . There is only one way to arrest the dissolution: to bring oneself deliberately to the limit of one’s own presence [of self-awareness as a person], and through a special vocation and initiation to put off one’s own Self in order to remake it in a second birth, descending to the limit of one’s own presence in order to return in a newly defined form” (p. 121). In brief: the being “is unmade to be remade.” “The magus is the one who *can go beyond himself* not just in the ideal sense, but in the existential sense” (p. 122).

I hardly need to highlight everything here that refers to the scheme of authentic initiation, well known to our readers, and not to the twilight world of savages. Again, we need only to discard all De Martino’s “historicist” fancies and to say that initiatic realization, integration, and the supernatural consolidation of the Self were the same yesterday as they are today, and have nothing whatever to do with any historical epoch—though the task may meet with greater or lesser difficulties and require different methods according to the predominant type of civilization. Being a “person” in the higher sense today is hardly a given condition; it is essentially a task and a problem—almost as much as in De Martino’s presumed “magical world.”

I would point out, moreover, that with his historicism De Martino pulls the ground from under his own feet. He is forced to admit that according to the historiographical point of view, it is absurd to pretend to understand “what magic is in itself” as a former historical state; one can only know how it *appears* “according to our modern perspective, or what it is for *our* consciousness” (p. 198). That creates a vicious circle from which there is no exit. The only material available for study is the “residues” of “marginal situations of our civilization,” where “existential states that characterized the magical epoch persist or are reproduced more or less authentically.”<sup>4</sup> I have already mentioned that beside savages, the author only knows about spiritualists, mediums, dowsers, and the like, supplemented by neurotics and schizophrenics<sup>5</sup> who belong more or less in the same spiritual bag. Is this not an explicit confession of incompetence in the matter he is supposed to be treating? With a superior air he mentions “the romantic yearnings of the arcane wisdom of the ancients” (p. 210). He might have done better not to mention things of which he is fundamentally ignorant.

I will not go into detailed objections. One could, for example, ask whether the phenomena testified in the lives of many saints are also due to “regression” to the state of an unstable soul that has not yet acquired the definitive self-

awareness claimed for modern man; or whether that is how to explain the body of rituals of positive religions that still exist, including Catholicism, which always have a “magical” presupposition. Lastly, how blind does one have to be not to notice all those figures of the traditional world, the world of true origins, whose unequalled spiritual superiority and integrity certainly did not await the “evolution of modern critical consciousness”?

Yet we have seen that despite all De Martino’s prejudices and his use of very dubious material, some benign spirit has led him, here and there, to recognize the truth of things. The most interesting point is his recognition of a magic unique to modern man: a veritable sorcery by which he has given *real* existence to a soulless, “objective” nature, following mechanical laws: *a nature that was nonexistent in former epochs*. It is true up to a point that, as a counterpart, this has resulted in a bastion against the “perils of the soul” and a consolidation of the Self’s consciousness. The perils still exist, as we have said, only clothed in other forms.<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, we must recognize the existence of a sort of barrier that encloses the modern soul with respect to the “psychic,” to a perhaps unprecedented degree. But within this enclosure, which is in one sense protective, the spiritual substance is more inconsistent and formless today than it ever was. For this very reason, anyone who, despite the unfavorable conditions of the environment, reestablishes psychic contacts and reawakens states that are not a “past” but a permanent possibility of the spirit should also consider that the risks are greater than they have ever been.

## V.3

# On the Art of the Hermetic Philosophers

In the present study we intend to shed light on the principles of the system of spiritual science contained in the Hermetic Tradition—in the limited sense of this term by which we refer to *alchemical Hermetism*. Its currents are various, but they stem from a single trunk, ramifying here and there through the half-light of the Middle Ages, then descending more resolutely to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Some “cultivated” people will surely be taken aback by this simple statement, in which we join the concept of alchemy with that of a “spiritual science.” Nowadays, they will say, we know very well what alchemy is: modern chemistry in its infantile and mythological state. Certainly it had its value in preparing the experimental method. It also arrived at a certain knowledge of chemistry, obtained fortuitously through all sorts of experiments made in pursuit of the chimera of “transmutation.” Through some happy intuition it even anticipated certain truths that our modern science seems to confirm. But that is all. It is inconceivable that “spiritual science” could have anything in common with alchemy, and that any serious person could be interested in the latter from anything but a historical point of view, regarding it as the old and now dead trunk from which modern chemistry has “evolved.”

Such, more or less, is the current opinion of alchemy: an opinion that flagrantly displays the progressivist mentality, which has no doubt that the light of true knowledge only began to shine today, with modern European civilization. All the rest remains an uncertain twilight, an “evolutionary stage” now surpassed, with no value beyond having contributed to the advent of that light. We do not intend to dwell here on the naïvety and bias of this way of thinking. It

would take too long to explain it, and there would be little hope of any result. One would need the staunch faith of someone who thought that a person wearing red lenses, and refusing to take them off, could be made to see green.

It is only natural that the modern mentality, which knows nothing and wants to know nothing of a knowledge different from its own, finds it difficult to conceive of a traditional spiritual science behind the strange remnants of alchemy. The same applies to astrology, magic, and other “obsolete” sciences. What is less natural, and much less “scientific,” is to take no account of the precise statements of the texts, which should at least make one consider the matter to be more complex than one had supposed. Keeping only to our present subject, which is alchemy, the old authors never tired of repeating, in every key, that their expressions were not to be taken literally; the metals and other substances they spoke of were not the visible ones known to the profane; their “fire,” for example, is a “fire that does not burn,” nor does their “water” wet the hands—and so on, in an endless stream of such sayings. Braccesco says it outright: “Do not be deceived, nor believe literally what the Philosophers say in this science, because where they have spoken most openly, there they have spoken most obscurely, either in enigmas or by analogy.”<sup>1</sup> He adds that “what the Wise have said by similitude or analogy, many take literally and find themselves deceived.”<sup>2</sup>

Schroeder says the same: “When the philosophers speak frankly, I mistrust their words; when they explain themselves through enigmas, I reflect.” Artefio is positively drastic in addressing the reader: “Poor idiot!” he exclaims, “are you so simple as to believe that we are teaching you the most important secrets openly and clearly, and to take our words literally? I assure you that anyone who tries to explain what the Philosophers write through the ordinary and literal sense of the words will find himself caught in a labyrinth with no way out . . . and all the money he spends on experiments will be thrown away.”<sup>3</sup>

We could fill pages and pages with such declarations, embarrassed only by the choice. We doubt that they would comfort the opinion of those who, holding on to appearances, reduce alchemy to the infancy of chemistry. And suspicion would only increase when in the middle of an alchemical treatise, it is said, for example, that the subtle substance to be extracted from the “earth” is the *soul*; when what has to be heated in the “stone” to complete the operation is the “occult spirit of the world”;<sup>4</sup> when someone does not hesitate to relate the alchemical world to the “magical world of the Heroes”;<sup>5</sup> when one suddenly reads that by “Sulfur of the Wise” or “living Gold” one should understand the

will;<sup>6</sup> when it called a “true resurrection of the glorified body” when a purified “metallic soul” is returned to its body;<sup>7</sup> when, miracle of miracles! among the gifts of the stinking “Sulfur” to him who can liberate it are the cosmic vision, immortality, and prophetic knowledge;<sup>8</sup> when we come across alchemical terms spontaneously occurring in mystical-metaphysical systems, like Jacob Boehme’s, or therapeutic-magical ones, like Paracelsus’s and Agrippa’s; or find those terms mixed up with Templar and Rosicrucian elements and persisting in the symbolism and rituals of secret societies whose original initiatic character is beyond doubt; lastly, when we discover that the descriptions of operations that should be simply chemical are continually interspersed with references to divinities, to inner illumination, to spiritual dignity.

It seems all too convenient, considering the quantity of elements in the Hermetic-alchemical literature that are manifestly unintelligible through the chemical interpretation, to dispose of them by the simple recourse to mystification, to camouflage, or to the “mystical mentality.” Admittedly, this literature contains passages when one least expects them in which the jargon of chemical formulae and manipulations, complete with figures and dosages, surrounds a perfect void, for the evident purpose of disconcerting and disorienting the unknowing reader. But if we consider that from the moment when it was preached to Western peoples that “the Wisdom of this world is folly,” a holy zeal stopped at nothing to save the Wise from their folly, even by means of the flames of a fire more consuming than the “philosophic fire,” and less gentle than those that Christians picturesquely show around the heart of Jesus! When we consider that, we can understand why those guardians of a science, secret by its very nature, took pains to multiply their ruses and expedients, the better to misdirect those zealous for their “salvation.”

However, even when this element is taken into account, there remains in the alchemical literature a very wide margin of nonsense, of absurdities and loose ends. It may be useful here to employ a method similar to that which Valli applied to the secret language of the so-called “Fedeli d’Amore”:<sup>9</sup> to try assuming a different standpoint from the usual one, even merely as a working hypothesis, and to see if things appear in a different mode: in this case, to see if a different conception from that of historians of chemistry succeeds in shedding some gleam of intelligibility on the inextricable and impracticable forest of alchemical terminology.

In questions of this kind we have little trust in the efficacy of arguments when the listener lacks a certain openness to points of view differing from his



preconceptions, yet we believe that the preceding may already induce him to entertain the possibility that alchemy is not *only* what modern historians of science think of it. We are not denying that alchemy *also* contains that chemical aspect, and that in that regard—though there alone—the contemporary opinion of it and of its relationship to modern chemistry is approximately correct. But what entirely escapes the moderns is the *sense* of that aspect in relation to the *whole* of alchemy, to *genuine* alchemy.

When this “sense” is understood, one also realizes that the truth is the opposite to the evolutionists’ conception: namely, that modern chemistry is not the “evolution” of ancient alchemy, but a monstrous excrescence from it, which has “proceeded” from it not through “evolution” but through *degeneration*. This is the proper term for any unilateral development (no matter how perfect in its own quality) of a part separated from its whole, which acts as though it were the whole and absorbs or obscures the rest. Guénon is absolutely right when he says:

Genuine alchemy was essentially a science belonging to the cosmological order, and at the same time it was also applicable to the human order, by virtue of the analogy between the “macrocosm” and the “microcosm”; furthermore, it was constituted particularly with a view to allowing of a transposition into the purely spiritual realm, which lent a symbolical value and a higher significance to its teaching, placing it among the most complete types of “traditional sciences.” It is not from this alchemy, with which, as a matter of fact, it has nothing in common, that modern chemistry has sprung; modern chemistry is a corruption and, in the strictest sense of the word, a deviation having its origin, perhaps as early as the Middle Ages, in a lack of understanding on the part of persons who, from incapacity to penetrate the true meaning of the symbols used, took everything literally and launched out into a more or less confused experimentalism on the supposition that alchemy was purely and simply a question of material manipulations. These people, sarcastically referred to by the alchemist as “blowers” and “charcoal burners,” were the real forerunners of the chemists of today.<sup>10</sup>

One may retort that this is a big leap. In fact, it can be nothing else. Even if it were possible to persuade the historian of chemistry that there is a region in alchemy before which he must hold back—if only out of methodological prudence—to demonstrate that this empty region is in fact filled by spiritual

science, and to explain what this science is about, implies an utter discontinuity that we honestly admit, and which corresponds exactly to the hiatus separating the profane mentality from the initiatic mentality.

We have said that the very notion of a traditional science as a holistic entity has been lost today. To avoid complications, let us keep to our subject. On the margins of “official culture” there are some milieus in which alchemy is interpreted in a purely moral, ideal, and lately even a psychoanalytic sense. They think that Hermetic-chemical terminology has none but a symbolic value, not suspecting that a *real* aspect can coexist with it. Thus they reduce it all to complicated transcriptions of certain doctrines of regeneration and salvation. If this is so, its use of such difficult jargon is as inexplicable as it was when treating purely chemical operations, given that we find analogous doctrines expounded at the same time and place without any veil of mystery and even within an orthodox Catholic context.

In another sense, such an interpretation is as unilateral as the chemical one, and misses the essential character of every initiatic teaching, which is to have a *real* aspect and a *symbolic* aspect at the same time, sympathetically and “magically.” An initiatic teaching in its highest aspect has a metaphysical and “formless” character, with a value beyond any particular application. At the same time it indicates points at which, thanks to analogous correspondences, meanings and laws from different planes come together. The realization of such a teaching in a spiritual act gathers these planes into a synthesis from which one can arrive at distinct systems relative to each particular domain, whether from the point of view of knowledge or of action.

We have no more to say about the alchemy that is nothing but the caprices of “charcoal burners.” However, beyond that, a *physical alchemy* does exist, in the sense of the physical application of alchemy. In other words, traditional science can be adapted to furnish an effective and determinative knowledge of the forces at work behind physiochemical phenomena, giving rise to a special art applied to this or that combination or transformation of substances. Thus alchemy can arrive at the place where the world of modern chemistry begins, *but it arrives from elsewhere*, and even while it treats the same phenomena, they have another meaning and value altogether. The method of this science is the contrary of empirical observation: it works by *identification*, by the meeting of inner and outer, of the intellectual and the real.<sup>11</sup> Thus we can say that while modern chemistry is merely “physics,” alchemy is simultaneously “physics” and metaphysics. And in speaking of “physics,” we mean something that also contains the possibility of apprehending forces and influences which also act in

man's psychic and organic reality: a knowledge susceptible in its turn of various practical applications. Hermetism is in essence this transposition of the *re[g]al*<sup>12</sup> alchemical science of combinations and transmutatations that enables the latter to work on the equally *re[g]al* plane of the integrative work, of the initiatic transmutation of the human being, based on the ontological and magical analogies and correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm. And it is on this plane that alchemy is one with the *Royal Art*.

Given this, it is natural that explanations such as those of alchemical Hermetism may, and also *must* be taken in diverse senses; but these senses are not contradictory or mutually exclusive. They tend rather to lead the spirit to something that transcends language and signs, and constitutes a wholeness of knowledge, a *re[g]al* and *essential* knowledge. The substances, operations, and transmutations mentioned in alchemy are then interpreted in the *literal* sense as referring to natural substances and forces, yet also in the *magical* sense, and in the *symbolic-initiatic* sense.

Concerning the principles that make it possible to frame the expressions of the Hermetic philosophers and give them a sufficiently precise meaning, one may well ask how far we are imagining them, and how far they were known to the various authors while compiling the texts. There are arguments to dispel such doubts, but we fear that they are not likely to convince so-called "critical spirits."

One of these is *direct evidence*. If someone does not merely read the texts, but undertakes what is needed to start the initiatic mutation of his own consciousness, he will find that on encountering traditional symbolic expressions he *sees* instantly that their meaning is *such*, and can be nothing else. From that moment, the words and signs speak to him in a language that leaves no possible doubt.<sup>13</sup> And others who have trodden the same path will arrive at the same evidence, just as all who study algebra find themselves understanding algebraic symbols in the same way. But let us not be under any illusions: such arguments are only valid for those who have made the "leap," or at least are disposed to do so.

For their part, the alchemical authors are unanimous in asserting the impenetrability of their science, whose expositions, some say, are as though written for themselves alone; consequently they are only intelligible by those who have received illumination from God or from a Master. For example, Nicolas Flamel (chap. II), explaining the symbolic figures in the Cemetery of the Innocents, says precisely: "The philosophers have written their ideas solely for

those who already know the principles, which are not to be found in any book, because they leave it to God who only reveals it to whom it pleases him, or has it taught by the voice of a Master through cabbalistic tradition [i.e., orally].” It is an understanding of principles, moreover, whose secret is a transformation of consciousness, and whose way is therefore essentially practical. Thus the alchemist Synesius, after repeating that the Hermetic philosophers speak so as to be understood only by those who have the knowledge, says:<sup>14</sup> “Still, in their works they have pointed out a certain way and prescribed certain rules with which a wise one can understand what they have written occultly, and attain the goal that they propose, even if after falling into certain errors, as happened in my own case.”<sup>15</sup> This is generally valid for any transcendent knowledge and any initiatic “mystery.” In this context, we will move on to two special considerations, one regarding the general technical value of symbols, the other the meaning of the Hermetic-alchemical form taken by the esoteric tradition in the West.

Concerning the first point, one of the principal causes of the disconcerting aspect of symbolism, especially ideographic, is the obstinate insistence on a way of understanding that, far from being the only possible one, is completely unsuited to this domain: the presumption of reducing everything to rational understanding, whereas esoteric teaching always calls on faculties other than pure rationality, and neither can nor should express itself in terms that satisfy the rationalist.

The symbol has the same place in esoteric knowledge as the concept in rational and logical knowledge. The basic technical justification for using symbols (and especially graphic ones) can be stated thus: to train the spirit to understand through *seeing* rather than through *thinking*, bypassing the intermediary of the brain (which for integral knowledge is not so much an intermediary as a *neutralizer*) and the discursive, rational formulation to which today’s “educated man” is habituated.

Oswald Wirth has rightly called Hermetic philosophy a *philosophy of silence*. “Our ambition,” he writes, “is to train the reader to connect his thought not to words, in the scholastic manner, but to silent figures, graphic emblems, symbols and ideograms. All the initiatic schools combine meditation on the elements of a symbolism rich in meaning with a philosophy of silence,”<sup>16</sup> as a way to escape the tyranny of words—whether pronounced or thought of—which have become the only currency accepted by modern intellectuality.

The symbol offers no footholds to reason (no one is further from

*understanding* it than he who complicates it with labored philosophizing). If comprehension is to occur, other faculties must come into play: faculties in which, to a certain extent, understanding is simultaneously seeing and “realizing.” If one cannot block the path by which knowledge rushes in as a series of thoughts formulated by the brain into words, hence having a merely discursive and communicative value, one will certainly get nothing from the treasury of esoteric wisdom. The symbolism in which this wisdom has always been clothed thus preserves its purity, at the same time as it guarantees the *liberty* of the individual.

In this regard, it is important to note that the symbol, unlike an argument that seeks to convince or “constrictive” reasoning, *does not impose itself*. It allows the individual his independence. It does not speak, except when one wants to make it speak with an internal act, in silence, in an active rapport, so to speak, of the “alone with the alone.” The very sense that the word “hermetic” still has in common parlance (hermetic style, a hermetic person, etc.) shows how this general law of every initiatic teaching has been followed by the expositions of those who call themselves the “Sons of Hermes.”

In connection with that, one should consider the role that *traditional myth* plays in alchemical Hermetism. The point of view here is that it is one form in which esoteric teaching has been preserved and secretly transmitted, even in its operative aspects.

Braccesco, for example, also says: “The Ancients have concealed this science [of resurrecting the ‘Wood of Life’] under poetic fables, and have spoken by similitude”;<sup>17</sup> and even more explicitly: “He who has no knowledge of this science cannot know the intention of the Ancients, and what they chose to signify by the many names of gods and by their generation, loves, and metamorphoses; nor even think that they have hidden moral matters in those fables.”<sup>18</sup> This point of view is corroborated by a host of Hermetic authors, notably Pernety and Della Riviera. Apart from a sporadic and secondary use of Christian mythology, they refer essentially to classical pagan mythology.

## V.4

# Various Commentaries

## DESIRE IN MAGIC

One point in Abraxa's article on "Ritual Magic" (chap. I.3 of this volume) may seem, to some, to contradict the principle that we have repeatedly emphasized: *Desire kills magical possibilities*. That article mentioned "a deep savage violence of desire" as that which in primitive peoples, unlike civilized ones, animates the rituals and often enables them to act magically. It said that in general, the ritual is a prolongation of this impulse toward *self-expression* and translation into *action*, possessed by the images connected to an emotion or a violent desire.

The truth is that when speaking of *Hermetic complementarity* (see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, III.2),<sup>1</sup> we have said enough to avoid such an apparent contradiction. But since clarifications are always useful in this field, we return to it.

Barring reference to the exceptional type of the Adept, who alone has an absolute superiority of action, *desire* is a necessary element in magic, though only as an instrument directed by Art, without which it leads to nothing. The center of every operation of high magic resides, rather, in that projective *intellectuality* which we normally designate as ☉.

Desire can serve for the exaltation that leads to ecstasy, for the "excess" needed to make contact with the "astral Light"—but the *act* in that ecstasy, given that it must be magical, is done by ☉.

The principle that "desire kills magical possibilities" is to be understood precisely with reference to ☉, because the solar and dry nature of ☉ is the opposite of the lunar and watery nature of desire. All the same, the presence of

both these contraries—the most vehement power of desire exactly balanced by an equally high virtue of domination by the ☉ principle—is the Hermetic complementarity, the key to any high magic.

If the operator is incapable of a moment of absolute domination—of *detachment*—through which he can *command desire and use it as an entity* as the Art requires—he will certainly have no success at all.

## MEANING OF THE RITUAL

We call attention to Abraxa's notes again, because they contain elements leading to the gradual *comprehension* of the symbolic bases of ritual in general.

It is to the East, where the physical sun rises, that the operator also turns when evoking the metaphysical Light. Likewise, the use of ablutions and bathing in the course of inner purification; precise correspondence with the purity of the new moon, or with the start of the winter or spring season, for the rites that unveil “Diana,” for operations attuned to the individual (winter) or to a *co-gnissance*<sup>2</sup> of the universal (summer). When the mind is concentrated on the invisible, the hood ritually hides the face. For the same analogical reason, the *underground* chamber in certain temples devoted to the Mysteries, and other correspondences dictating their orientation, their division into rooms, their architectural form and proportions. From the “ritual positions” of which Abraxa speaks, we pass to ceremonies in the proper sense, to the sacred spectacles of the Mysteries, to the imitation of the physical death, burial, and resurrection of the person led to rebirth. One could go on to give precise analogical reasons for the clothing, colors, ornaments, metals, objects, etc., prescribed in magical and hieratic traditions.

The goal, therefore, is to *render the real symbolic and the symbolic real*: to render the intention objectively, to associate various series of rhythms so as to unite them in a single node, and to produce those points of unity and sympathy that bring about *awakening*—of Light or of Power. Every ritual has simultaneously a symbolic, analogical, and magical meaning—both ideal and real, as intention (of signification) and as realization (pragmatic).

## FEELING AND REALIZATION

In the practical domain of initiation it is important to distinguish between *feeling*

and that which is *realization and communication*.

Feeling is a subjective, emotional resonance of the individual, conditioned by his sensitivity, by his more or less defined tendencies, by his temperament. In itself, it is a *perturbation* of the soul, which does no more for knowledge than stirring up water helps one to see the depths. In feeling, a man does not look at things themselves, but only looks at himself and at the impression felt by his soul.

Even when feeling becomes *aesthetic* or “poetic”—as in art—the basis though sublimated remains the same: it is still a human world, excluded from the order of Reality. It is typical of the level of modern civilization that “aesthetic” emotions are often mistaken for spirituality; one thinks one is having some kind of “cosmic” experience when caught up in the *pathos* of Beethoven or Wagner, for example.

To reach genuine realization, on the contrary, it is necessary for feeling to be silenced.<sup>3</sup> It needs a *neutrality*, a state of complete inner equilibrium where nothing in the soul’s being is expectant, joyful or fearful. One must realize an inner detachment, a freedom and an “emptiness” like that of air. Then the impressions that come from beings and things are no longer caught and turned into emotions by subjective feeling: they enter in their pure state. The I begins to feel something other than its own resonance, and to perceive subtle states that are *contacts*, apperceptions, actual communications with “reality.” These perceptions—like flickerings of light on still water—have an indescribable character of reality, simplicity, lightness, and self-evidence: they introduce new qualities, *they open paths*. Someone who has had the experience knows very well that this sensibility has nothing to do with the perturbation that belongs to feelings and emotions.

One must be careful to remain firm even when experiencing these states of soul: let nothing be added to them, nothing that can appropriate them on behalf of the I. It is enough to *accept them without looking*, as though one were standing in profile, which would instantly vanish if one gave in to the temptation to look at one’s own shadow.

## ANTICIPATIONS OF PHYSICAL ALCHEMY

Concerning what Iagla says, not specifically about the “corrosive waters” as generally about how physical substances can be made to act on the organism, thus setting in motion the process leading to inner realizations, we have come



across a short work by a contemporary Hindu alchemist, C. S. Narayānaswami Aiyar, that mentions things of this kind.<sup>4</sup> We will extract a passage from it, having to do with a reintegration that involves the actual regeneration of the physical body, not only through internal action but with the help of special physicochemical processes, thus with alchemy in the true sense.<sup>5</sup>

[M]an's frail frame, as without which, Soul in him cannot exist, after dissipated and waning life of *Grahasthāśrama* had to be resuscitated and rejuvenated and the matter-side of man has to be replenished with such chemico-metallurgical medicines, made and manufactured by himself to become absorbed and assimilated in the very cells and tissues, to fossilise his physique and turn out into a mercurial body, to resist the attacks of age and time. This was called the *Kāyasiddhi*-process,<sup>6</sup> without which one cannot attain either *Jñāna* or *Moksa-Siddhis*, an exceedingly costly course of 12 years, within which time, the *Prānā-yama* practice has to be practised incessantly, until the internal concentric vision becomes a refulgent centre, ever self-acting with no effort, and co-existing, which is called the *Ānandamaya-stage* of a *Jīvan-Mukta*. (p. 598)

The elaborate course of *Kāyasiddhi* (*Kāya* means body and *siddhi* means making sure) has to be undergone by an ambitious soul for 12 years or 2 cycles of 6 years each, within which period not only the tissues with which we are born from the mothers' wombs is being changed but also the very nerves are transformed tendinous and the bones converted and fossilised like ivory . . . for which or within which time the human frame is turned out into mercurial bodies by the chemico-metallurgical medicines, indestructible by the five *Bhūtas* of Earth water, etc., as a *finis* (p. 606).

The practice has a twofold character, because it does not concern only the physicochemical properties of the substances. This is evident from the continuation of the quoted passage:

To attain all these potential powers with the double-fold object as said

below, they have taken mercury which is a thing of the mineral kingdom called otherwise *rasa*, the essence or Hara-bindu which is the essence or the semen of Hara, who is the presiding deity among the Trinity of functionary deities of the universe, which was taken to be of the order of male procreative agency, treated the same, changed the inherent nature in it (p. 606)

Special processes follow which allow it to be assimilated by the tissues, just as salt can penetrate and permeate the human cellular system. More precise information will be given in a future chapter.<sup>7</sup>

## ON SHAMANIC INITIATION

In De Martino's book, treated by Arvo in chapter V.2, there are some data about initiation among the shamans which we think will be interesting to offer, together with references to another work on the same subject: Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*.

The aspirant to initiation uses an interesting formula in requesting it: "I come to you because I want to *see*." The preliminary ritual is called "*removal of obstacles*"; whatever prevents the aspirant from becoming a good shaman has to be removed from his soul and body. More concretely, it is said that this operation, performed by the initiator, frees the novice's soul "from the eyes, the brain, and the viscera," whose symbolic significance is obvious. That is the negative side of the ritual; the positive side is the transfusion into the soul thus freed of the so-called *qaumenq*, meaning *luminosity* or *illumination*. It is "a mysterious light that the shaman suddenly feels inside his head or brain, an inexplicable light that makes perception possible, a luminous fire that enables him to see in the dark, both literally and metaphorically,<sup>8</sup> because the shaman can now see in the dark even with his eyes closed, and perceive things and events that are in the future, or hidden from others, and also know others' secrets." It is also mentioned that the first time the neophyte has such an experience of light, he has the sense of himself and his surroundings suddenly levitating.<sup>9</sup>

Initiation, however, is not yet complete. It becomes so by virtue of contact with further "influences," conceived of as assisting spirits which must be united with the neophyte's soul. It is not in his power to choose such spirits; they come on their own initiative once he has submitted to certain long and severe

disciplines, in a solitary place and in touch with nature. In this respect it is a matter of acquiring, through effort and mental concentration, a new and inexplicable power: *being able to see oneself as a skeleton*. This is understood as sloughing off the material flesh and blood, so that all that remains is the bones, which the new initiate can see and name, not in usual language but in the sacred shamanic language learned from his instructor. The same language is used for his final consecration. In this context we recall that in esoteric doctrine the human skeleton corresponds to his primordial form, in the same way that the kingdom of nature to which it belongs (the mineral) is anterior to all the others. These facts about shamanic initiation have been taken from K. Rasmussen, “Intellectual Culture of the Iglutik Eskimos” (*Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition, 1921–1924*, VII, no. 1 [Copenhagen], 111–14).

We also report some testimony referring to an initiation obtained through the so-called *wàiyuwen*. This is conceived of as the force which was incarnated in a now dead initiate, and which, in the state of deep trance, takes the place of the initiate’s normal personality, manifesting as exceptional powers of which he gradually takes command. One of these powers is called *yauategn*: it is a faculty of active or commanding vision. It consists of supernormal knowledge of some object or being, even far away, through a force imagined as an eye. This “eye” leaves one’s own body and travels in a straight line toward the chosen goal, with the power of modifying what it sees, as it wishes, more or less profoundly. This causes a telepathic alteration of the image, which is translated into corresponding physical or psychic reality. In these reports, which refer to the shamans of Tierra del Fuego (De Martino, pp. 83–85), we readily recognize the scheme of visualization techniques often used in various magical operations.

# **PART VI**

# VI.1

# Experiences

## The “Double” and Solar Consciousness

*[Editorial preface] We recommend this account of experiences to those who are practically involved with the instructions for “chains,” or who are following the relevant rituals as individuals, to give a more complete idea of the goals and opportunities of certain exercises (e.g., those of ascending and descending a mountain with the setting and rising of the Sun, at evening and morning; see chap. II.1). They also serve students of Hermetism in general, who may recognize in these experiences operations and phenomena that are alluded to in the symbolism of the old texts.*

*We have sometimes taken the opportunity to suggest to the writer some contextualizations of a doctrinal nature, to make the account more useful to the reader.*

The beginning and end consist in this: *to be aware that man comprises two distinct men* (meaning by “man” the entire human, body and all).

These two men correspond to two states that alternate as radiant activity, and a shadow that is receptive passivity. When one shines, the other passes into a twilight life and light.

The law of variations is directly connected to the succession of day and night, hence to the *Sun* and *Moon*.

The waking state of consciousness is objective; it thinks clearly and determinedly about the persons and things around it and the impressions it receives, such as is usual while awake. This constitutes the solar state of the first

man, whom I will call *exterior*, and who normally remains all day in relation to the Sun. Thus by day we are related to the Sun via this man. But with the other, the interior man, we are in relation to the Moon. By day he has no life of his own. His is the lunar receptive and *reflective* function. He stays in the shadow and limits himself to producing the images of things and ideas.<sup>1</sup>

So much for the day. *At night, the polarity reverses.* The Sun takes its place in the inner man and the interior world, the Moon in the outer man and the exterior world. An internal focus of activity is awakened.

Day ☾

Night ☉

Light in exterior reality.

Light in interior reality.

Shadow in interior reality.

Shadow in exterior reality.

Visible light: Nature.

Invisible light: I.

The external dominates the internal:  
centripetal direction: sensorial *perception*.

The internal dominates the external:  
centrifugal direction: *radiation*.

This knowledge arises from practice. *Long years of persistent waiting on the steep mountain paths of sleep and of the night.* On this path one comes to surprise the two which are in the one. *Petrified* consciousness sees how an “other” is formed and released—*like mist rising from water*.

The deep sensations, unlike anything else, which precede this phenomenon can be described as follows:

Calmly waiting, patiently, attentive to my body, in my body, I began first to notice something like a liquefaction-fluidity-lightness which rose from my legs and arms, but was interrupted by sudden discharges or starts (especially a little above the knees, and in a later phase, in the kidneys): just as though a force or a violent will, *not my own*, was acting. The phenomenon then ceased and I had to give in to sleep.

All this went on for a long period. When it reached chest height, I lost consciousness. It was often accompanied by sensations of flashes between the eyes. Sometimes I had the impression of actual flashes, real enough to light up the room for an instant.<sup>2</sup>

Someone who is approaching these experiences may understand what Pernety means (*Dict. mytho-herm.* [Paris, 1758], 175) by speaking of that

*fulmination* that accompanies a gradual purification of the metals: “It is called thus because the metals become luminous and from time to time emit a light like lightning flashes while they are being purified [purify, in Hermetic language, being often synonymous with *separate*]; and it forms a reddish film on the surface that, as it disappears, sporadically shows small dazzling lights.” (Note by UR)

With increased firmness, calm and concentration, without losing energy, I finally reached a new state. The sense of “fluidity” turned into a sort of light vertigo or tipsiness, like the impression one gets from long staring at a rapid current. The starts were also modified, taking on an emotional character as sudden states of anxiety and distress, similar to what many people feel when suddenly woken in the middle of the night. These states, coming without warning, again interrupted the phenomenon. I had to postpone the experiment and the attempt at a fresh conquest to the next evening. This went on for a long time.

But suddenly, in the disconcerting sensation of an instant, *I saw the “other” that was slipping catlike out of my body, while I straightway plunged into the leaden unconsciousness of sleep.* I have reason to believe that I had seen this apparition at other times, but without a definite memory of it remaining. A curious detail: a quite insignificant phrase that I had read in an alchemical book suddenly came into my memory and began to repeat again and again, without any reason, like an obsessive idea: “HAPPY ARE THE ACTAEONS WHO SUCCEED IN SEEING DIANA STARK NAKED.” This phrase now gave me a strange and disquieting sensation, not without a certain sensuality, which greatly puzzled me. Then on the morning when I recalled the apparition I have mentioned, a meaning struck me which I can put into two words: “*I’ve understood.*” But the strange thing is that *what* I had understood totally escaped me. . . .

In any case, very soon after—indeed almost straightaway—another experience forced me to suspend the exercise, despite my firmest intentions. It was a fear *that seized me bodily* and against which my will could do nothing at all. Worse yet, I passed a period of sleepless nights between exhaustion, terror, and longing to sleep. These were the sensations: *finding myself suddenly hanging over the VOID—falling—then a sense of being carried through space like a rocket, without being able to do anything.*

The person who invited me to write these notes introduced me to a book containing things that agreed with my experiences, and helped me to understand



them better.<sup>3</sup> The last experience, for instance, is very well described there as a state in which there is neither ground, nor feet to walk with—but not yet wings to fly with or steer oneself. Thus I felt swept away into space.

I will stop here, with apologies to those hoping for sensational visions à la Swedenborg, Leadbeater, & Co. For I was truly *swept away to a “sabbath”*: to a phantasmagoric and hallucinatory world, abyssal and orgiastic. . . .

In the book just mentioned it says that this is the wrong way, that of nebulous mysticism and demonology, of mediums and witches, of those who are dominated in astral sleep by the elementary and deathly forces of the pale moon. For my part, these experiences soon gave me a growing sense of discomfort and deception. Since my soul was feeling quite shaken, and various disturbances, far from trivial, were affecting my waking life, I stopped the practice.

With its resumption, I can continue with what I was saying about the “two men.” The man who appears at the edge of sleep “like a beast of prey,” detaches himself and flees, is the lunar man, the one enclosed in our visible and conscious being, dominated all day and during the relevant waking state by the invisible forces of the moon.

Ordinary consciousness does not follow this man in his nightly detachment: we sleep, that is all. But if one should take him by surprise, as it were, and succeed in following him without the necessary preparation, i.e., without changing one’s typical attitude of daytime consciousness (which was my case, in the beginning), one falls under the elemental influences of the moon, and escapes the change of polarity from solar and lunar influence over the two men, which normally happens in the sleeping state.

Why does this happen? Precisely because our habitual consciousness is that of the exterior man, directed at the exterior world. Thus if in the sleeping state consciousness remains there out of habit, instead of the solar influence, to which is linked the sense of *self-consciousness* and of *reality*, it receives the lethal, larval, lunar influence, with the consequences I have described. *For at night the Sun sets for the exterior man, and rises instead for the interior man, while the former passes under the influences of the Moon.*

I could then understand why Kremmerz’s school insists on the necessity of *isolating* the lunar body from the material body in the waking state, so that one can live and move in the former, without needing the latter. Logically, the person who can do that experiences the nightly change of polarity in *solar* mode, in the sense of an *inner birth*, instead of taking the false path of specters and sorcerers.<sup>4</sup>

Since I did not know these disciplines, my only guides were intuition and a feeling for certain instinctive reactions in myself, of which I had learned a considerable amount thanks to these experiences. All this persuaded me *to focus all my strength on holding firmly, within the recumbent physical body, the other being that I felt emerging, forming, and freeing itself.* Effort after effort followed, with failures, prudence, and anticipation. Finally one night the marvelous phenomenon occurred, the indescribable reversal: it was the “solar vision,” fulgurating and scintillating, in the center of myself *who was the center of all*; it was the *central* and transporting sense of absolute spiritual and immortal reality, which submerged so-called “real” things as mere *reflections of translucent shadows* <sup>5</sup>

But it would be useless to try to describe all that. I have little to add about an experience of which I do not yet know where it could lead me.

I will say only this. When either the temperature or a calmness of spirit make it possible, and the night is clear, I sit and immerse myself in the evening sky. I rest my gaze on it calmly and gently, until I feel myself making contact—now familiar—with an *other force*. Thereupon the nocturnal azure undergoes a kind of transformation in my eyes: it becomes intense, *living*, ethereal, illuminated. *From the exterior I am led to the interior.* The state of light arises slowly in me, and becomes fixed in a radiant center. In a certain way space and time then cease to exist.

Like a slow descent of strata depositing themselves on the seabed, when the first physical rays of the morning light reach my eyes I return to the world of objects. They accompany the break of day, which echoes in my being with a sensation of power and glory. I would need to be a poet to describe it.

I will add that during the day I sometimes have the vague and fugitive sense of visions, but have not yet succeeded in fixing them in consciousness: anyway, they feel altogether different from the nocturnal visions of the past period. At other times, while I am standing calmly and nothing abnormal is going on around me, it suddenly seems as though something like a cyclone has erupted, I don't know where, and it gives me a start because I had not noticed it.

## VI.2

EA

# On the Metaphysics of Pain and Illness

Iagla's essay in the previous part (V.1) mentioned the significance of pain: a topic that merits some further development. In Iagla's words, "There are illnesses and pains that represent a blockage or excessive discharge in the psychophysical system, by certain forces to which consciousness has been unwilling or unable to open itself."

We can complete this idea with another, expressed by Nietzsche in his *Will to Power* (sect. 304), where he connects pain to *fear*, seeing there the repercussion of a shock caused by fear on the central seat (he adds: "of the nervous system"—but it is better just to say "central seat"), with a lasting sensation that is then projected onto the seat of a specific organ.

From an esoteric point of view, here is what is involved. There is a *fixity* that characterizes living beings as individuals: a fixity that should be understood both in the general sense of a tendency to maintain one's own state, and in the special sense of a consciousness that has a fixed relationship with a determined organic structure. This fixity works such that whenever there is a contact with a transcendent force, it causes something comparable to a lesion—an interior lesion. In that moment consciousness, taken by surprise, is thrown into a state of agitation and fear for its own individuality, feeling its foundations shaking. This reaction or emotional backlash is like a contraction, an anguished shrinking of consciousness into itself in the face of the intervening force. The reaction, which naturally supplants the *perception* of that force in itself, is the deepest sense of the experience of pain and suffering.

Pain as such does not exist in an open consciousness, free in regard to its own individuality (technically called “airy” or “void”). Instead, it produces the transition to another form of consciousness corresponding to the intervening force, and places itself in the body on a different organ from that on which the sense of self habitually rests. But the I that is afraid, that retreats in agitation and reacts by clutching itself and thus obstructing the communication, feels *pain*. Objectively speaking, pain can be considered as a purely negative experience of the action of the extra-individual forces that are manifesting.

When the discharge is not exhausted in the equivalent emotion of pain, or more generally of suffering, or when it encounters a more *subtle* reaction of the individual, then it descends to deeper levels of the being. There it gives rise to abnormal saturations that likewise take the form of blockages or nonsolutions, caused by the individual’s elements and functions which resist the change of state; and these constitute the true essence of certain *illnesses*.

In such a case, all that modern medical science can say is often based on the reversal of cause and effect, given that the plane on which the true causes are found is inaccessible to either physical eye or microscope.

An explanation can only come from an occult type of investigation, such as was often at the basis of ancient medicine, which was indeed considered a sacred and priestly art. Through such an investigation one could learn the subtle action of certain substances when used medically: specifically, in the sense of forces which, following certain laws of symmetry, could balance or upset those agents that were in the body and polarized toward causing illness.<sup>1</sup> Naturally this presupposed a knowledge of occult physiology, together with the various correspondences between organic structures and natural elements. From this point of view, one might also have recognized that some modern remedies can cause new illnesses, different from those that they cure, for reasons of which the average doctor has not the slightest notion.

What has been said about pain in general may extend to the special case of pain due to external causes, such as injuries and lesions in the proper sense, albeit only within certain limits. Here it is not a matter of intervention by nonindividual forces that are somehow distinct from man, but of forces that man carries within himself, in his depths, beneath the zone where ordinary life unfolds. When the very condition of that life—its organic unity—is wounded or damaged, those latent forces are obliged to intervene, to come up as a reserve to repair and reintegrate the endangered organism. They now rise to consciousness, but cannot present themselves except in some transcendent guise, thus causing

the same state of anguish and suffering as already mentioned. (Note that in the other case, too, the forces always come *from within*: the body is the final station; the psyche is a closer zone, but not the point of departure.) This state is then projected and fixed on the affected part and on the functions concerned with reintegration, which likewise enter an abnormal state of saturation. The latter takes the visible form of *fever*, together with pain or on its own.

In such a case, if the individual's fear could be eliminated, the unblocked irruption of deep forces would bring about an *ecstatic state*. On that basis it would even be possible to make these forces act in *direct* form, magically and thaumaturgically, causing "miraculous" phenomena such as wounds that suddenly close, leaving no trace; poisons completely neutralized in their powers, which can be extracted from the body and discharged elsewhere, *etc.*<sup>2</sup> In these cases, and even in far more modest ones, the secret always lies in a supreme and subtle attention to one's own interiority, and in an attitude of absolute activity, boldness, impulsiveness, and mastery of the moment in which the alteration occurs. The healing forces then flow directly to the I and consequently remain in the pure state, avoiding the fall that would bring them into the physiological system. Then they can act in an extra-normal manner.

This significance of pain and illness is implicit in what we have said repeatedly about the ultimate case of illness and suffering, namely *death*. It is a central teaching of our traditions that the potential of death and that of *initiation* are one and the same thing. *Hūm*, the mantra of awakening the kundalinī, is also the mantra of *Mrtyu* (death). "The soul of man," says Plutarch, "feels at the moment of death the same *passion* as those who are initiated into the Great Mysteries; and as word corresponds to word, so fact to fact: τελευτᾶν (to die) and τελεῖσθαι (to be perfected/initiated)."<sup>3</sup> It is a moment of *crisis* for the individuality, which is either victorious and is reborn transformed in a transcendent state (initiation), or succumbs, broken in its rigid structure that it could not overcome (death). The adept has used for this initiation the same forces that in others produce death; and he is an adept because he was not afraid of it (not in the sense of ordinary "courage" but in a superior sense), because his consciousness was able to remain *active* in respect to it, and to *unite itself* with the power of death.

Thus by analogy and on a smaller scale, one can understand the statement that certain forms of illness can bring forth moments of illumination. Likewise, we know of schools and also traditions in savage peoples, in which suffering has been considered as a means of attaining ecstasy, as in the cases of shamans, flagellants, *etc.* We might make many other suggestions: for example, explaining

why sometimes *prayer* in states of intense pain can cause extraordinary effects, facilitating a state of transcendence and thus the *conversion* of the forces we have mentioned. Many people may have been struck by the special sense of a *beauty*, as it were nonhuman and *luminous*, which sometimes passes over even common, deformed, and distorted faces, right after they recover from a mortal suffering, such as after an operation. It is like a reflection and trace of that greater thing that has taken place in them, and which they have only experienced passively.

## VI.3

LEO

### Notes for the Animation of the “Centers”

The awakening of the subtle centers involves a whole complex of special activities, demanding the use of all one’s faculties. It is not enough just to apply direct methods and magical practices; everything that one thinks, feels, and does must be harmonized with the goal of awakening. Otherwise what has been gained through sporadic occult practices is lost in daily life.

The first problem that arises is that of cultivating the interior life in the midst of sense-impressions. It would be a mistake to begin by setting up a strict dualism, because it is not a question here of contrary and irreducible polarities. Instead, one lives the inner fullness of the path of awakening in parallel with the impressions of the material world. We must remember that the sense of the I comes from the contrast with the world of the non-I. The metaphysical problem of the world’s reality is not under consideration here: we live daily with certain givens of consciousness, and we have to start from there.

How then should we receive these external impressions? In a *clear* and *active* way. We should take, rather than receive, the sensations of the external world; we should not be a field on which actions and reactions simply play themselves out. Nothing is more dangerous and banal than a certain naturalness and spontaneity. Passive witness of what is happening to us induces a semi-dreamlike state in the midst of waking life. Often when something interests us deeply we are totally absorbed in it, and it takes over the field of consciousness, causing emotive states and impulses in which our I has no part. Instead, we need to act as if saying to oneself: “I take this inside me and make it *mine*—now I

have become different from what I was, and I compare myself with what I was before.” The resulting change will show us the true meaning of what we have received. The impulse to act should be accompanied by the declaration: “I will it thus.” In this way one may see no difference between the line of conduct of one who “receives and reacts” and he who “takes and *wills*.” But internally, the difference is enormous: the latter is keeping the consciousness of the I awake in the face of the world.

One of the difficulties of the practice of concentration, which is an indispensable condition of development, comes from the fact that, being habitually passive, we cannot suddenly become active at a given moment. The object of concentration possesses and transports us, imposing unwanted associations, so that the initial theme is superimposed with a kaleidoscope of images, and the exercise dissolves in a sense of failure and emptiness.

It follows from this that to master the power of concentration, one needs a definite content on which to fix one’s attention. Those who believe that they can simply create the necessary void within themselves to become receptive to impressions from the spiritual sphere are deluded. At most they may reach a state of inner rigidity and emptiness to produce a state of inhibition, which is merely cerebral tension and will never give any experience of a higher order. For if they try to apply it to the subtle centers, it will go by way of the nerves and muscles. Only when the training has reached the point of being able to hold prolonged attention on a definite content, will one be able to let the latter drop and realize the void in one’s consciousness. Above all, one will need to have already become sensitive to the spiritual influences and to the tone of supersensible perceptions, in order to be able to recognize them and grasp them in consciousness.

In order to undertake a serious preparation, one must take account of the modes of action and the nature of the subtle centers, and of what they represent not only in relation to occult powers, but also in connection with ordinary consciousness. It would be an error to believe that these centers are only active in the development of higher powers: they have, so to speak, two faces, one turned inward, the other outward. The former develops in an occult direction, consciously applied; the other indirectly, with certain modes of activity that we can experience in relation to everyday life. We will see both aspects as we examine the centers and their modalities of awakening, one by one.

First, we must bear in mind that under the influence of today’s civilization—



given the importance that the brain has assumed—the subtle centers have suffered a sort of involution close to atrophy, due to the materialism with which we are imbued. However, self-animation is still possible. The activity of the centers currently survives among mediums and involuntary clairvoyants, but only self-development can give complete mastery of them. In telepathy and precognitive phenomena they have a brief and momentary reawakening; but it is a sporadic and isolated reactivation, not attained through the current from above that carries with it lucid consciousness and volition. At most, when a current is present it is coming up from below; it does not grant either full possession nor permanent activity, and always depends on an order of stimuli which could not be maintained without a destructive physical reaction.

## I

The first center is at the pituitary gland, at a point which corresponds externally to where the nose meets the forehead. In earlier times it was more external; in modern man it has been internalized, producing a sort of dent at the root of the nose, as can be seen by comparing an Egyptian or Greek profile with one of our time. When it was more external, supersensible perceptions were possible, felt as forming part of the outer world. Now everything spiritual takes place on the inside, and all its development has to start from an introversion of the soul, so to speak, which perceives the images of the spiritual world reflected mirrorlike in itself. Thus the attitude required for higher vision is the opposite of the receptive attitude of the extroverted senses.

This center serves as the basis for the I-sense and is the conscious awakener of the other centers, beside being the starting point of the downward current. Through its relations with the two vital centers of the pituitary and the pineal glands (which, in turn, are connected with two orders of other endocrine glands), it influences bodily changes and changes in the physical type of the individual. Through other subtle centers, it also has a transformative action on the seventh center, that of creative and sexual energy.

Its development depends on disciplines that reinforce the I, and those which sharpen the awareness of inner states. A useful practice is to withdraw into oneself and separate the sensory perceptions from the inner changes that they have produced, comparing them with the content of other perceptions. One thus develops a special type of memory, containing not the materials of perception itself, but a series of states and changes of consciousness that have their own independent life. Transference to the other centers often takes place

automatically, following the content, as we will see in connection with the different functions of those centers.

Another important consequence of awakening this center is a change in the sense one has of one's body, which follows the bloodstream rather than the nerves. It is impossible to describe this state to someone who has not experienced it; the best one can say is that the habitual sense of the body is perceived through *irradiation*, whereas this is perceived as a *diffusion*. In this condition it is possible to attain a deep isolation from the external world and a rich and concentrated interiority. One feels different qualities of blood in the various regions of the body, and also variations according to the hours of the day and differing bodily conditions. But all this has to appear spontaneously; going to look for these sensations exposes one to autosuggestions, beside producing local hypersensitivities that can become harmful.

What I have explained so far can already lead to a certain degree of development, and should be followed in the given order. The interior refinement cultivated through developing these centers is a long and patient task. A golden rule in this, as in other cases, is not to accept any inner experience unless it is marked by evidence as direct as that of sense-perceptions. The stricter we are with ourselves, the more persuasive the results will be. When one is too easily satisfied, the process of refinement is halted, whereas the more satisfaction is delayed, the greater the possibility of progress.

## II

The second center in descending order is behind the larynx. What I have said about the first center applies to this and the other centers, especially regarding concentration. What has been experienced through concentration on the first center, one should be able to carry over to the second; but it requires a certain transformation in the content of concentration itself to enable it to change its position.

We choose a theme for concentration; it does not matter here whether the content is more or less true and "proven" in the scientific, positivist sense. What is important is the movement deriving from it, and that it should be felt in the soul. For example, the phrase "*The Light is within me—I am the Light*" contains a thought that suits the first center and activates it. If we now change to another theme, "*Light is Life—the Life of the Light is within me,*" this formula, with the transposition it contains, will be suitable for concentration on the second center.

Naturally, the imagination also helps in bringing down the transformed thought. Imagination is a potent force when there is concord and harmony, as in the case of this formula.

Here, too, one needs to remove the obstacles, and above all coordinate all our activities with our aspirations. Many things that we do in daily life are such that this center, too, remains stifled or deformed.

The sense of “voluntariness,” mentioned in connection with the first center, is now transformed into a sense of *deliberation*, not only active but motivated: seeing clearly the value of our actions and also our words, both for ourselves and for others. Talking for its own sake is as fatal for this second center as automatic thinking for the first. Verbal automatism, speaking without control or purpose, must therefore be eliminated.

One must also attend to the precision and sufficiency of expression in what one wants to say, and not deform or falsify it, consciously or otherwise. The larynx center has a subtle relationship with the inner images present in memory, and also with words that are thought, while with sounds it creates external forms corresponding to these images. Thus if the inner image and that expressed in words do not exactly correspond or are even contrary, it produces a sort of trauma in the larynx center, paralyzing its development.

However, when this development occurs and the center begins to be rhythmically active, it becomes a new organ, acquiring a special sensitivity to people’s thoughts. This can happen in different ways, depending on the individual. In some, depending on an influence from certain characteristics of the fifth center (the solar plexus), it awakens psychic sensations of “color,” of a kind of *symbolic* character. To explain it, we recall what often happens in dream: the consciousness of the subtle body has certain experiences that, to be retrieved in waking consciousness, need to be translated into the material of images, recollections, etc., contained in the memory. Therefore they choose sensory images that have the closest resemblance and analogy with the supersensible images, and these constitute the material of the dream that is “remembered.”

In the same way, the perceptions of the larynx center choose the closest corresponding sensations of “color,” because the perception of colors is accompanied by certain reactions in the subtle body, related to the reactions that certain orders of thought provoke in us. Thus the perception of others’ thoughts is accompanied by a sort of colored, psychic vision. But for the great majority of people, who are creatures of modern culture and civilization, development does not begin like this. Vision comes in an entirely different way, or at a later time,

as support for another kind of vision that I will try to describe. Usually the communication of other people's thoughts, beside the spoken words, comes through the vocal intonation and all the tiny facial expressions that give an all-round impression, revealing far more to us than the words alone can, or intend to convey. Sometimes we notice the signs that transmit the meaning of a thought, sometimes not—but the impression is there whether or not we grasp it. Now, the development of the larynx center multiplies and refines the sensitivity to impressions of this kind. If we learn to put ourselves in the necessary state of receptivity, we find the thoughts in our mind as though we have perceived them through the senses. A special and recognizable state of mind develops through the consciousness of this center, and after a while one becomes able to sustain it, and thus to use the larynx center as a new organ. Curiosity and secondary, personal goals are unfavorable to its development, because then the imagination goes free and can deceive us by creating false images. The favorable conditions are impersonality and sympathy.

Another result is the sense of the *mantric value* of word and sounds. One hears certain phrases with a certain word-order with revulsion, others with satisfaction, irrespective of their meaning. We learn how certain sounds and formulae have a deleterious effect on us, while others give us strength and harmony. Variations in the tone of voice also come into play, recognizable by anyone with the same degree of development; and one acquires the ability to transmit with one's voice more than is in the words, which the listeners are well able to understand. Even when talking about the simplest things, one can give the sense of a strong personality, knowing and capable.

### III

There is a third center, corresponding to the heart, or to be exact *in* the heart itself. It has entirely different characteristics, partly because the thorax and abdomen are a different bodily environment. It is more mobile, and is regulated almost entirely by energies that do not enter the field of ordinary consciousness, whereas mobility in the head and larynx areas requires conscious intervention. In the thorax we are in a world of rhythms that correspond to extra-human rhythms: breathing and the heartbeat follow rhythmic laws that reflect the macrocosm.

The breath influences this center, and conversely, concentration on it modifies the breath and makes it rhythmical. It also slows down, because the blood requires less oxydization, and because carbonic acid no longer has the function of a toxic product, and can be used for magical purposes. Thus the

sense of the I is transferred to the blood itself (cf. page 196, above<sup>1</sup>).

Self-possession of one's body strengthens, and the possibilities of self-transformation increase.

The emotional life is very important to this center; everything with a sense of emotional heat is related to it, while everything that is mentally arid has no effect on it.

In passing from the second center to this one, the theme of concentration can be altered as follows: "*The Light is heat—The heat becomes Love in me.*"

Once enlivened, this center makes it possible to perceive directly the tendencies, impulses, and possibilities of other beings, and even their feelings, so long as one is capable of sufficient "impersonality." Here we must repeat what was said about the larynx center, concerning the two forms of subtle perception: via color-vision, and direct.

The obstacles to developing the heart center are uncontrolled feelings, automatic emotional reactions, and passions. This does not mean that one should become arid (aridity being basically an emotional polarity: the fear of emotion): one can surrender fully to a feeling or an emotion while *willing them*. Then the feeling capacity will be increased and also enriched by a content of consciousness, so long as one retains the power to stop and collect oneself. It also requires an inner justification of our feelings and a concord between thinking, feeling, and acting. If the outer form of our action is different from the internal, it produces a disorganization of the heart center, for the same reason as was given concerning the larynx center.

Another result of the development is a kind of serene courage—a word whose etymology [from Latin *cor* = heart] carries an occult justification. It is a form of physical courage, and in our moral life, it is a constant certainty that neither emotions nor events can overwhelm us.

At a higher level, the life of feeling seems to surpass the limits of the body and come into intimate relationship with the world around us. Even natural phenomena reveal themselves as emotional states and living forces, and the fullness and reality of such a feeling can in no way be compared to the common sort.

Much more could be said about these centers, but we must treat details that have a personal value for everyone, because the paths of development are as diverse in their details as the individuals concerned, and personal instructions can only be given individually. For this reason we will only give general

indications concerning the remaining centers, below the thorax.

## IV–VII

The fourth center is found behind the stomach; the fifth corresponds to the solar plexus; the sixth is between the kidneys; the seventh corresponds to the reproductive organs. The latter two are also connected to minor centers.

When one tries to move one's consciousness toward the lower centers, one finds an obstacle that at first seems insurmountable. One has the sensation of facing a dark and rather hostile world. One feels forms at work that do not belong to us, which come from outside us. They are the planetary rhythms, the primitive cosmic forces which preside over the transformation of matter: semi-dormant faculties that, with the increasing surrender of man to the sensory world, have become buried in the unconscious. From these come the mediumistic faculty, the protoplasmic substance described by Gustav Geley, spontaneous clairvoyance, the world of the lowest magic. But there, too, is the crown of human development: union with the cosmic forces and conscious contact with the spiritual beings that are currently operating in and through us without an encounter. There, too, are the possibilities of high alchemy, and of the creative power that in human reintegration achieves the union of the microcosm with the macrocosm.

He who enters this lower world unprepared and unguided may lose himself, pulled *backward* by the primitive forces—even when they reveal an artificial paradise of illusions and mirages: he may lose the sense of what he is, being deceived by what he imagines himself to be. Only maturity of the first three centers can guarantee his safety. Anyone who knows what forces one is dealing with here can only be amazed by the levity with which some schools of magic pursue certain experiences, for the sake of some slight immediate and visible result.

The kingdom of heaven is for the patient and the persevering. Knowing how to wait and knowing how to dare are the two poles of occult development. One must proceed calmly and firmly, without excessive force and without discouragement, relying on the integrity and harmony of one's own body. Besides, since most physical disturbances have their root in a state of inner disharmony, inner calm and harmony preserve the body and allow one to proceed on the path of higher development.

From what I have said, both explicitly and between the lines, for the

comprehension of those who already know, one can gain enough to begin and to go a long way. The spiritual world puts strong pressure on the dam of illusion of the senses and of the intellect; when we begin to demolish them, it will break powerfully in on us.

## VI.4

ARVO

### Kirillov and Initiation

The similarities between some of the ideas in these pages and Kirillov's theory seem interesting enough to be worth examining here. Kirillov is a character in Dostoevsky's novel *The Possessed*,<sup>1</sup> but more than just a character, he is the personification of a "moment" which Dostoevsky must have actually lived through himself.

I hasten to say that these similarities should not be taken to imply that our teachings have anything like a "demonic" taint. On the contrary, they serve precisely to free Kirillov's views from these demonic and apocalyptic taints, and to bring to light some esoteric intuitions hidden therein. The reader will appreciate the point of such an exercise, because it fits with what has been said in this chapter about the metaphysics of pain.

Kirillov's principal thesis can be summarized in his own words: "Up to now, man has been poor and unhappy because he has been afraid to exercise his free will on the crucial point and has only exercised it in marginal matters, like a schoolboy. He is unhappy because he is afraid. We are given life for fear and pain, and that's where the swindle lies. Today man is not a real man. One day there will be free, proud men to whom it will make no difference whether they live or not. That'll be the new man. He who conquers pain and fear will be a god himself. And the other God will disappear. Then there'll be a new life, a new man—a new everything. Then history will be divided into two parts: from the gorilla to the destruction of God and from the destruction of God to the physical transformation of man and the earth. Man will be a god and he'll change physically and the whole world will change; so will his thoughts and feelings."<sup>2</sup>



The apparently sacrilegious tone of these expressions of Kirillov's should be taken with a grain of salt, and above all "de-dramatized." The God that Kirillov is speaking of is the theistic, personal God of the devotional religions, who, as the idealist philosophers would say, is simply an "object," an exterior reality like a great shadow looming over mankind. But God conceived of not in personified, moral, and devotional terms but metaphysically, as a reality in which one can even participate (as the Gospels themselves say: "Ye are Gods," and "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you")—this God has no place in Kirillov's argument, and is certainly not what he can think of "slaying." Kirillov's God is only the substantialized counterpart of a state of emptiness and fear in men, who need a support, a center, something that has value in itself. Not finding it in themselves, haunted by terror of the void, being what they are they project it outside, *believing* in "God" and *saying* "God exists."

Kirillov sees this clearly. He states: "God is necessary (he means necessary to us), therefore he *must* exist." Obviously we should not interpret this "must" in an absurdly magical sense, as one might say "I am hungry, *therefore* there is a delicious pudding before me." The "must" is understood in the sense of an exigence, a problem, an existential need to which the object may well *not correspond*. Kirillov seems to be somewhat sceptical regarding those who have "met" God strolling on some mountain or other; at least he thinks that such cases are so rare that humanity has mostly had to resort to *invention*: it has *supposed* that the needed object actually exists, so as to tranquilize itself and be able to go on living as best it can.

Kirillov says: "The whole history of mankind is on my side. Man has kept inventing God in order to live, so as not to have to kill himself. To this day, the history of mankind consists of just that." It is clear, then, that this first part of world history, lasting until the annullment of God, is equivalent to the epoch dominated, as I have said, by the Godhallucination, the God-invention: it is the epoch of "belief." Dostoevsky projects this epoch realistically into history and applies it to humanity as a collective being. This seems to me rather excessive, and much more reasonable to consider the two epochs as two internal situations, not tied to any time or place. Against Dostoevsky's assertion, we know that the theistic religions only arrived in a relatively recent period, when the primordial spirituality was obscured, or else they belonged to lower social strata.

Yet, however illusory it is, "believing" offers a solution. Then the theologians will think that their theodicean philosophizing can excuse the contradictions between the blatant irrationality of life and the supposedly real existence of a supreme, dominant, providential rationality: contradictions that

get worse on descending to practical life, for there are those who are not content with the mere assurance that what they hunger for *exists*, but want to *eat* it here and now.

But faith can give out, and then things are more complicated: hands grasp in the void. Kirillov himself wakes up and declares: “I do not want to believe. I know that God does *not* exist and that he *cannot* exist.” But then he is forced to the contrary, to the peremptory and disconcerting conclusion: “If God does not exist, I am God. . . . To recognize that there’s no God without recognizing at the same time that you yourself have become God makes no sense, for if it did, you’d have to kill yourself.” Leaving out Kirillov’s obsession with suicide, let us say instead: One would have to collapse, to shatter—like a wheel whose hub is removed—because our being needs a center with an absolute value that holds it together physically and spiritually. Kirillov has discovered the fraud: the place is empty—the center, *outside*, does not exist. There is no other way of escape, therefore, than to seek it in oneself and occupy the empty place oneself: *to make oneself God*.

Here the state of terror and suffering intervenes. People dodge it; they dare not take on the burden. “It would be like a pauper inheriting a bag full of money and not daring to put his hand into it, thinking himself too weak to own it.” Kirillov himself declares: “Still, I’m a reluctant god—I’m unhappy because I must prove my divinity. . . . Fear is the curse of man.”

To dispel it, Kirillov thinks up an argument of the Pascalian, probabilistic type, and admittedly quite diabolical in its strict logic. Fear has no reason to exist, he says, because one of two things must be true: either God exists, or he does not. If he exists, you cannot escape him: everything obeys his will, and even you who want to make yourself God are obeying it right now. Or else he does not exist, and then you have nothing to fear: go ahead and take the risk. In both cases fear is irrational and stupid.

The truth is that the question treated here is far from being merely intellectual. Dostoevsky must have had an intuition that goes much further when he says that “with his present *physical* makeup man can never manage without the old God.” In fact, this idea agrees with the initiatic teaching, according to which it requires a certain essential transformation to enable one to receive and sustain the relevant transcendent experiences.

In any case, Kirillov draws in the net and indicates the act by which man can create a principle, demonstrating his own divinity to himself: by *killing himself*—understood as the act which shows at its highest degree the absolute

affirmation of his own will and his own freedom; therefore as the act that destroys fear, the original terror before the divine heritage that is to be taken on. “He who wants to have supreme freedom must dare to kill himself. He who dares has broken the secret of deception. There’s no freedom beyond that: that’s all there is; beyond it there’s nothing. Anyone can make it so that there will be no God nor anything else. He who dares to take his life is a god. He who kills himself just to kill fear will become a god immediately.”

But here, unfortunately, a lot of “literary” and macabre exaltation cloaks and distorts whatever truth there is in these assertions. I find that at this point Kirillov shows himself obsessed with the ancient God even worse than a believer: pursued by his shadow, he wants to prove that he can escape him, and takes a leap into nothingness. He says literally that he will kill himself “to affirm his own disobedience,” thinking that the freedom of a rebellious slave could have anything to do with that of a Lord, with the freedom of the man who knows that there *cannot* be anyone above him to be obeyed. Kirillov confuses the state of inner freedom with the contradictory and hysterical state of one who still believes, yet tries to believe that he does not believe and wants to prove it to himself.

It is indeed a matter of overcoming fear—the expression “Lord of Fear” is very frequent in initiation. It is indeed a matter of killing oneself to give life to the god, but that is not something that can be resolved with a simple pistol shot. And the freedom that is truly to be gained in this case is not that which, in a childish tantrum, vents itself in negation and whim. Rather it is the real freedom of a consciousness able to sever its connection with the trunk of mortal life, and still survive. It is a case of *mortification*, but only in this positive sense, experiential and initiatic, about which the reader should by now be sufficiently informed; a mortification that requires no bloodshed and least of all signifies a leap into nothingness. At the beginning I referred to the article on “The Metaphysics of Pain” because it contains the very ideas that help one understand, even in a concrete domain, the correct meaning and inner sense of what Kirillov says about suffering and fear as obstacles to the advent of the man-god and as causes of human misery.

What Kirillov expounds in the form of a delirious theory is to be found in a whole group of myths from the Mysteries that speak of a god who is killed, dismembered or devoured; of the rise of a new race or a new being who takes possession of the ancient kingdom; and we have also indicated the relation of this vision to the magical vision of life. What is deplorable here, although it is very natural, is that people usually only appreciate in Kirillov what resembles

the nightmare of one “possessed,” and consequently only admire Dostoevsky as the artist able to “*create*” him and arouse the corresponding emotions in the reader.

The nightmare, the terrifying dream, is really there in Dostoevsky-Kirillov: it is due to the fact that the point of departure is still the Christian mentality. It is the expression of the Christian world of faith that is heading for its crisis, yet still hangs over him as he is driven to a desperate effort to overcome it, to the point of glimpsing through rents in the apocalyptic backdrop something of that which in calm, Olympian form was, and still is, the truth of initiations.

# **PART VII**

## VII.1

### HAVISMAT

# Notes on Ascesis and on Anti-Europe<sup>1</sup>

*C*oncerning the expression “*ascesis*”: There is the traditional, the doctrinal, and the personal. The first is integral, complete, being of a pure intuitive order (Upanishad); the second is strict, defined, but presupposes the first; the third is poetic, strong, *poignant*, as in the Sufis, for example. These three forms, despite their enormous differences, are all complete and definitive: in a word, they are orthodox, in the strictly etymological and therefore true meaning of the term. These three forms of expression have the advantage of *adhering* to the inexpressible, eliminating everything that, being individual, falsifies and obscures that very adherence. These three forms of expression are absolutely innocuous: for him who neither knows nor intuits, they are like water through the fingers; for him who intuits they are like fleeting and revelatory *coulées* (streams); for him who knows, they are like magisterial river bends, they are supports, discoveries, and stellar nodes in his ascent.

• • •

Beyond all the fumbings, the attempts, the breakthroughs, the headlong falls or serpentine vortices of the personal labor of resolution and culmination, the metaphysical realm of the great Tradition presents an absolute transparency and purity. One can deceive and be deceived everywhere—and the more one knows, the more one realizes that—except on that level which can be fleetingly intuited or “integrated” but does not cease to be what it is: a point, a node of points of

continual reference which, for the intuitive, remains the abyssal and intangible heaven—but still only heaven—and for him who knows, that-of-which-one-cannot-speak.

If poetry is the marginal game that opens the cracks of Illusion, then the Poet is to be preferred to a minor authority or a false magus: the Poet who opens and closes his eyes, it is true—in flashes, depths grasped and lost—but always along the right *axis*, the axis of truth. This is why a tradition (in the integral sense) admits both the knowing and the unknowing and justifies them—without disdain—*so long as there is one single axis*, so long as there is no deviation, so long as the unknowing and the merely intuitive can say: “It is here, it is absolutely here; and moreover and *above all* (and that is the enormity of the Orient) if I shall not have it myself, blessed are they who have it and go there.”

India has realized this integrally, formidably: see especially the *Dharmāṅga* and the *Ashrama*, i.e., the integral tradition in the totality of its fulfilments and in their resolution. The West does not know that: there can be no true resolution there, no “asceticism” or fulfilment, unless the Illusion is put in its proper place, that is, unless its members are recomposed such that everything converges in that which is the Root of the Illusion.

*Elite*, certainly: these are provisional means. The *martyrs* of the West have not moved the decline of the West by one millimeter: the meager thread of Tradition in the West has not upset this corpse that plays at resurrection. An *elite* is not the tradition: an *elite* is a vein, a precious vein but only a vein: it also needs the rock, it needs *other* veins, and all the veins need to converge, although the one central vein, the most hidden of all, goes its royal way and from its deep concealment, rules.

• • •

If there is no environment, there is no echo; if no silence, there is no Voice; if no unanimity, no song. Create adaptations—and what else has the West been doing for centuries? Things need to sing: the rocks, metals, woods, thoughts, and stars. All things must sing, from the blade of grass to Brahman.

But in the West it is a masquerade: masks that come and go: thrilling enthusiasm—“he’s a genius!”—*vu, connu, enterré* (seen, known, buried): and he’s gone, while the West sinks down and down. Think of the *value* of a thing, of an object: what is a thing worth today? Nothing. A bucket, a book, a statue, a house, a city, the world: what are they worth? Nothing. What is it to give birth? Nothing. What is it to die? Nothing. What is it to think? Nothing. Man now

*steals* life: he sticks it in his pocket, feels it fearfully: it slips away from him. He lives for nothing, dies for nothing. There is no sense to it. He plays with ghosts: a phantasmal epoch: individual, humanity, society, family, science. They don't exist. They're outside the Tradition: Tradition knows no spooks. This is why it is not just a matter of showing and proposing a single higher *type*, but of building the conditions under which a tradition can exist that embraces all activities, variously ordered yet aligned on a single axis. It is absurd and dangerous to offer the thrills of absolute freedom to people who do not even know how plain human existence should behave in the field of action, always with reference to a center that is its essence. *Either life is a ritual*, or it is nothing: either everything regains a symbolic character, under the general type of an offering, or nothing remains.

• • •

*The tragic sense of life*, for which the moderns have such sympathy, is really the element of dissolution, and especially of irresolution. Life is *not* tragic: tragedy has created the desperate man. Life is what it is, and what is has to be. Pessimism does more harm than optimism. The modern idea of “value” is as much a construct as, in another field, the idea of *will* and *power*. Neither optimism nor pessimism—but *give action a meaning*, aim it as accurately as possible, make it give *all*, to the utmost: *in all men*, not just a few. A few there will be: but they will be those who are detached—not the grim mockers, but those who watch from above, in utter calmness, the tumult of the waters.

Today people are making “constructs” at every level: this tragic sense overwhelms things, it is the Rembrandtesque sense of the shadow that overwhelms the truth, the *white*, the *neutral*—it is a bludgeon, the psychological bludgeon that smashes the tender grass of the meadow.

• • •

Ascesis is not asceticism. Asceticism is a deviation of ascesis. To transcend means to surpass that which is called reality, and to see this reality under a different aspect: one cannot realize the one without automatically acquiring the other. Thus the one who transcends changes his vision, and by changing his vision, everything is changed. The relation Ascesis-Reality is the true one: supposing that Fulfilment is achieved, i.e., that the individual re-solves himself, reality is a game; it is tentacles that extrude or vanish according to whether the eye is open or closed. The concept of Ascesis—*tapas*—is exactly this:



elimination of everything that makes the I what it is: one denies it, burns it up, dissolves it, until at the very end the resolution is complete. Then it is absolutely correct to say: “*Quicumque Deum intelligit Deus fit*” (Whoever understands God becomes God)—but this *quicumque* (whoever) is no longer *quicumque* when the translation of *intelligere* to *fieri* (understanding to becoming) is accomplished.

• • •

And now more than ever I would like to say: “*Secretum tegendum, secretum tegendum*” (The secret must be kept). I know of one who went to a Sufi and blurted out in typical European fashion: “*Initiez-moi au soufisme*” (Initiate me into Sufism). The Sufi looked at me—I smiled—and replied: “*Mais mon cher Monsieur, si vous n’êtes pas même un Soufi, comment comptez-vous de le devenir?*” (But my dear Sir, if you’re not even a Sufi, how can you expect to become one?). The European: “*Mais, enfin, et l’initiation?*” (But how about initiation?). “Initiation!” said the Sufi, looking at the sea with merry eyes. And I answered for him, brusquely: “*Il n’y a pas d’initiation: ou hors de vous, ou rien*” (There’s no initiation, either [get] outside yourself, or nothing).

This man, who is still searching, will never find it, however lyrical his conversation. It’s curious that having found himself with a Master, he did not believe that he should do what this method demands of those seeking initiation: close his eyes and let himself fall. Do you know the corpse game? It needs strong hands and a stiff body, then maybe *it’s a fool’s game*. “*Parietes non faciunt Christianum*” (Walls do not make a Christian), said Victorinus in pagan mood.<sup>2</sup> Then he realized that he was wrong and became a Christian.

• • •

Another point: I do not like the term *will*. If you mean what the West understands by it, we will say no more: the Orientals know nothing of that. For Westerners the will is a rigid weapon, a rock, a “construction”: and if one does not mean that, it is useless to call it will: useless and dangerous, because he who *wills* is really willing nothing: to will is to construct connections (a ready example in today’s Northern races: the will-obsessed). As for the will that is also knowledge, it is no longer “will.”

*Resolution* is the proper term to express the superrational and ascetic reality.

• • •

Some years ago. Down in Africa. Frightful afternoon, hellish heat. I had fallen on my bed, naked and immobile. All at once, in the hurricane of the scirocco, I heard in my sleep a rhythm, dull, dark, and visceral. I jump out of bed, put on some clothes, I'm on the terrace: dazzle, sun, clouds of sand, the wind searing my eyes; three Negroes were there facing me, *des yeux chavirants* (eyes rolling), the slow powerful rhythm, the belly turned inside-out, the *escape of something elemental*, and the sea, oh! the sea, dark, gloomy, restless.

Again. One evening. Jasmines. An Arab courtyard. Arabs lying around, *reptilian* eyes and a dancing girl, belly dance and dance-song. The rhythm gouged out the abyss and the voice filled it in; the rhythm furrowed the darkness and the voice summoned the abyss. And the eyes, oh! that woman's eyes, a Virgin's smile, the cosmic dance, the game of creation, the rhythmic game rising in the voice, the voice curving on the rhythm like a flowering whirlpool.

• • •

It is perilous to *control the TRUE breaths*—those, empty or full, *which have a hidden root*. If anything is still to be saved, the act will come simply, like chaos re-solving itself into the clearest of skies. As the nodes of the seasons are loosed—just like that. But that will entail something very different from those pseudo-actions polluted by “will,” by poor human and even “superhuman” finalism. Order requires, nay demands, absolute disinterest, the *absence of that which causes change in that which changes*.

Atheism consists *in not having a human god* who busies himself with colds and such ailments, a pharmacist god.

*Be distant* (look at the Chinese), do not approach: let the heaven stand above the solid grain: as high as can be. Only then will one see what *true* immensity is. Away with the little god at hand's reach, or at soul's reach, for the soul can go no further than the hand. Do not *open* to all and thus *give one and the same thing to all*—but place yourself as high as possible, at an absolute position, on the outlines of peaks like those inviolable seats above the panorama, from which the end of the world can be seen as it approaches—of this world *and the other*.

Or else—this can be said, *to men*: “You must *adore God with your face to the ground*.”

## VII.2

### MILAREPA

## Excerpts from the *Life of Milarepa*

**M**ilarepa (or Milaraspa, or just Mila) was a rare type of Tibetan magus, ascetic, and poet who lived around 1100. We owe to him one of the principal restatements of the Mahayana doctrine in a tradition that still exists. His teachings were given in the form of songs, set in narratives of his life. Jacques Bacot has produced an excellent translation: *Milarépa: Ses crimes, ses épreuves, son nirvâna* (Paris: Bossard, 1925).<sup>1</sup> See also Graham Sandberg, *Tibet and the Tibetans*; Berthold Laufer, *Zwei Legenden des Milaraspa*, 1901; *Aus den Geschichten und Liedern des Milaraspa*, 1902; *Milaraspa* (Hagen and Darmstadt: Folkwang, 1922).

The present translation has been made on the basis of Laufer's German version, cited above and now quite rare.<sup>2</sup>

The narrative part has been paraphrased.

### THE DEMON OF THE SNOWS

*Six months had passed since the yogi Milarepa had retreated with scanty provisions into the high mountains, and been surprised by a snowstorm that had cut the peaks off from all human contact.*

*Convinced that Milarepa must have died, his disciples made the customary sacrificial offerings for the dead. When spring approached they set out and made a path through the snowfields, so that they could at least find the Master's bones. At one halt on their march they met a snow leopard. The disciples*

*followed it, marveling, and it suddenly turned into a tiger. At the mouth of the “Demons’ Cave” they finally heard a voice and a song which they recognized as coming from Milarepa. They hurried up to the Master and embraced him. He himself had taken on the forms of a tiger and a leopard with the help of the magical body that yogis can use. The splendor of this body triumphs over the roots of sense-impressions and allows the yogis to assume any apparent form.*

*Milarepa told the disciples how he was sunk in meditation and not only ate almost nothing, but felt no need for it. On feast days, the airy spirits of the peaks brought him part of the sacrificial gifts which men had offered to them; and when the disciples, thinking him dead, also made sacrifices, he sensed this so strongly as to feel satisfied and needing no more.*

*At the disciples’ insistence, Milarepa consented to interrupt his state of concentration and to come down to the high plains, where crowds of believers, hearing the unexpected news of his return, hastened joyfully.*

*Then Milarepa, at everyone’s request, told the story of his stay on the icy peaks and how he had withstood the rage of the elements, of ice and wind, and thus overcome the demons hidden behind the mask of snow. After that he expounded the Doctrine.*

*Where I found the solitude I yearned for,  
Heaven and Earth took counsel together  
And sent the whirlwind as messenger.  
The elements of water and wind were released.  
The dark clouds of the South assembled.  
Both Sun and Moon were imprisoned.  
The twenty-eight mansions of the Moon were chained.  
On command, the eight planets were put in irons.  
The Milky Way became invisible.  
The little stars disappeared in the fog.  
When at last everything was shrouded in mist,  
Snow fell for nine days and nine nights.  
It fell steadily for eighteen day-nights.  
There was a great snowfall, with flakes like flocks of wool,*

*Floating down like birds;  
There was a smaller snowfall, like spiders' webs,  
Circling like a swarm of bees.  
Then came another, like peas and mustard-seeds,  
Like spindles whirling around.  
The greater and lesser snows together grew to an immense  
depth.  
The white top of the snowy mountain reached the sky.  
The lower trees and forests lay bent to the ground.  
The black mountains were clothed in white.  
An icy covering formed over the rippling lake.  
The blue Brahmaputra was shut up as though in a cave.  
Every rise in the ground was smoothed over . . .  
Between the snowstorms sweeping down from above,  
The icy winds of the winter New Year,  
And Milarepa's cotton garment—between these three  
A battle began on the white snowy mountain peak.  
The snow melted to water in the beard;  
For all its howling, the tempest subsided.  
The cotton garment was consumed as though by fire.  
Imagining myself as a warrior, I fought for my life.  
Victorious blades crossed each other:  
Despite the enemy's strength, I won this battle.  
All spiritual men are given a measure of strength,  
Of which the great ascetics possess double,  
And in me, the magical heat awakened by contemplation  
Made the simple cotton garment suffice.<sup>3</sup>*

*The four groups of sicknesses I weighed on a balance.  
And when the storm calmed down both inside and outside, a  
pact was made.<sup>4</sup>*

*I became insensitive to cold and warm winds alike.  
Then the enemy promised to obey my every word.  
I had beaten the demon who had taken on the mask of the  
snow.  
The host of demons had lost their pleasure in action.<sup>5</sup>*

*This time the yogi had won the battle. . . .  
I am of the Lion race, the king of beasts;  
My dwelling shall always be the high snows;  
Therefore any precautions are now unnecessary.  
If you listen to me, an old man,  
The Doctrine will be transmitted to future generations. . . .*

## **The Song of Joy**

*Thanks to the liberation of the heart, the disciples' virtue  
bears fruit.*

*In the senses, applied to contemplation, the Void <sup>6</sup> arises.  
The principle and base of contemplation is the simple,  
dimensionless point,<sup>7</sup>*

*And the disappearance of the contemplator in the  
contemplated.*

*However, the method of contemplation is known through the  
liberation of the heart.*

*The illumination that comes from meditation is like the  
rushing of a river.<sup>8</sup>*

*It is unnecessary to stay awake at night for the purpose of  
meditation.*

*Rather, this would destroy the higher consciousness of  
meditation.<sup>9</sup>*

*Thus the stability of meditation is consequent on the  
liberation of the heart.*

*The disciple's success is based on illumination;  
Through the realization of the unreality of the nidāna.<sup>10</sup>  
The discipline is purified by the intention of the discipline:  
Thus the method of success of the discipline is known  
through the liberation of the heart.  
The turmoil that arises from attachment to temporal things  
vanishes altogether.  
The eight false doctrines about the world arouse neither  
hope nor fear in me.  
That which wants to save what is to be saved is done with.  
Thus the way the vow<sup>11</sup> can be fulfilled is known through the  
liberation of the heart.  
Having realized the unreality of one's own "I,"  
There is no more striving for one's own or for others'  
salvation.  
Thus the way of striving for results is known through the  
liberation of the heart.  
This song of mine is an old man's song of joy.  
The snow had cut me off from the world.  
The airy spirits of the heights brought me food.  
The water falling from the peaks became the finest drink. . . .  
Contemplating my own soul, I saw all.  
Seated on the bare ground, I was enthroned.  
Now I sing of the seven basic principles.  
Taking for analogy the six realms of the senses,<sup>12</sup>  
I will speak in order of the six inner deficiencies.  
For each of the six bonds of non-liberation  
I see six ways of liberation through different methods.  
From the six immensities that give confidence  
Arise the sixfold modes of spiritual well-being. . . .  
If an obstacle intervenes, there is no sky;*

*If they can be counted, the little stars do not exist;  
If there is movement and instability, the mountains do not exist;  
If there is growth and shrinking, the Ocean does not exist.  
If one can cross bridges, the river does not exist.  
If it can be grasped, the rainbow does not exist.  
These are the six analogies with external things.  
As long as you enjoy an exuberant life, there is no contemplation;  
As long as there is distraction, there is no meditation;  
As long as there is uncertainty, there is no discipline;  
As long as there is skepticism, there is no yoga;  
Where there are beginning and end, there is no Wisdom;  
Where there are birth and death, there are no Buddhas;  
These are the six external deficiencies.  
Where great hatred reigns is the bond of hell;  
Where great avarice reigns is the bond of ghosts (preta);  
Where great ignorance reigns is the bond of brutes;  
Where great passion reigns is the bond of men;  
Where great envy reigns is the bond of titans (asura);  
Where great pride reigns is the bond of gods;  
These are the six binding ties of non-liberation.  
To have great faith is a way to liberation;  
To have confidence in wise Masters is a way to liberation;  
To follow a pure vow is a way to liberation;  
To go to the wild mountains is a way to liberation;  
To live in solitude is a way to liberation;  
To work exorcisms is a way to liberation;  
These are the six ways to liberation, followed by various means.  
Inborn wisdom<sup>13</sup> is the natural immensity;*



*The coinciding of inner and outer is the immensity of knowing;*

*The coinciding of light and darkness is the immensity of wisdom;*

*The great comprehension is the immensity of religion;*

*The invariable is the immensity of contemplation;*

*Continuity is the immensity of the soul;*

*These are the six immensities that bestow confidence.*<sup>14</sup>

*When the inner warmth develops in the body, the yogi feels well;*

*He feels well when the right and left arteries of the heart unite in the middle one;*

*He feels well in the upper part of the body at the descent of illumination;*

*He feels well in the lower part of the body at the expansion of the chyle seed;*

*He feels well in the middle for love of the grace when the white sperm of the right artery and the red sperm of the left artery meet;*<sup>15</sup>

*He feels well in the whole body in the satisfaction given by the blessed state of guiltlessness.*

*This is the sixfold way of the yogi's spiritual well-being;*

*This is my song on the meaning of the six fundamental points.*

*This is the song of the soul that I have meditated for six months. . . .*

*The anguish of heart derived from believing existence to be real is gone;*

*The darkness of the illusion rooted in unknowing is dissolved;*<sup>16</sup>

*The white lotus flower of intellectual vision unfolds its*

*corolla;*

*The torch of clear self-knowledge is lit;*

*The wisdom proper to awareness<sup>17</sup> awakens distinctly;*

*Is consciousness truly awake?*

*When I look up to the azure sky,*

*The “void” of existence presents itself distinctly to  
consciousness;*

*And I do not fear the doctrine of the reality of things.*

*When I turn my gaze to the Sun and Moon,*

*Illumination is distinctly present to my consciousness;*

*And I do not fear obtuseness or torpidity.*

*When I turn my gaze to the mountain peaks,*

*Immutable contemplation presents itself distinctly to  
consciousness;*

*And I do not fear the incessant changing of opinion.*

*When I look down, to the middle of the river,*

*Continuity presents itself distinctly to consciousness;*

*And I do not fear the unpredictability of events.*

*When I see the image of the rainbow,*

*The “emptiness” of phenomena presents itself distinctly to  
consciousness in zungjug;<sup>18</sup>*

*And I do not fear that which persists, or that which passes.*

*When I see the image of the Moon reflected in water,*

*Self-illumination freed from any inclination presents itself  
distinctly to consciousness;*

*And the voice of self-interest has no more power over me.*

*When I look into my soul,*

*The Light within the container presents itself distinctly to  
consciousness,*

*And I do not fear foolishness and stupidity. . . .*

# ***The Song of the Essence of Things***

*Thunder, lightning, and southern clouds:*

*When they arise, they arise from the sky itself.*

*When they vanish, they vanish in the same sky.*

*Rainbows, fog, and mist:*

*When they arise, they arise from the air itself.*

*When they vanish, they vanish in the same air. Sap, harvest,  
and fruit:*

*When they arise, they arise from the ground itself.*

*When they vanish, they vanish in the same ground. Rivers,  
foam, waves:*

*When they arise, they arise from the sea itself.*

*When they vanish, they vanish in the same sea.*

*Passion, desire, greed:*

*When they arise, they arise from the soul itself.*

*When they vanish, they vanish in the same soul.*

*Self-knowledge, self-illumination, self-liberation:*

*When they arise, they arise from the spirit itself.*

*When they vanish, they vanish in the same spirit.*

*The free-from-rebirth, the unconditioned, the inexpressible:*

*When they arise, they arise from being itself.*

*When they vanish, they vanish in the same being.*

*What appears as a demon, what passes as a demon, what is  
recognized as a demon:*

*When it arises, it arises from the yogi himself.*

*When it vanishes, it vanishes in the same yogi.<sup>19</sup>*

*Since the demons are only a deceptive game of the inner  
essence,*

*The yogi remains in error who, not realizing the “void” of  
his own thought,*

*Sees the demons in his own soul. . . .*

*There are an infinite number of demons of perception,*

*When one does not realize that the soul itself is “void.” . . .*

*Realizing the true nature of the soul,*

*One recognizes that the state of illumination neither comes  
nor goes.<sup>20</sup>*

*When the soul, deceived by the apparitions of the outside  
world,*

*Has recognized the doctrine of apparitions,*

*Then it experiences no difference between the apparitions  
and the “void.”*

*When, through knowing contemplation,*

*One comes to know what non-contemplation is,*

*Then one realizes that there is no difference between  
contemplation and non-contemplation.<sup>21</sup>*

*The cause of error is the sense of difference.*

*(Because) then the thoughts cease to turn to realization of  
the final goal.*

*When the nature of the soul*

*Is compared to that of the Aether,*

*It is then that one rightly knows the essence of truth.*

## VII.3

ARVO

### The Magic of Effigies

In addressing the use of effigies in magic, I will show how certain practices that seem to belong to the realm of pure superstition have their own logic, and that if one accepts certain general presuppositions, nothing prevents their working.

Everyone knows what effigy magic is. If one desires to act on another person, one makes a statuette that represents that person, including in it something that belongs to him or her, if not some bodily substance. One draws certain mysterious signs on it, makes invocations or conjurations, and finally goes to work on the effigy itself. If the operation is done correctly, this action should have real effects on the person concerned.

The possibility of such a practice is based on the following laws:

1. *Law of the power of the imagination*, formulated in these terms: *When an image is realized, it becomes real*—i.e., it becomes a force that tends to transfer itself to the corresponding reality. This first law has been verified insofar as it applies to the individual, for the power of the imagination is now an established fact. The data of hypnosis and what are called “psychosomatic” phenomena are there to bear witness, and likewise all that suggestion and autosuggestion can do in ordinary life. In order for this law to reach maximum efficacy, to the point of acting on bodily functions and organs that usually evade voluntary control and command, two conditions are necessary:

- a. One must form a *single idea, saturated with emotion*—i.e., the mind must be occupied with the image alone, and not impassively: it must be united to an emotional charge, a vehement desire, a high degree of vibration.

- b. One must neutralize the inhibiting function of the rational and discriminating faculties, together with the control that they wield on the basis of the images of external reality. Hypnotic or quasi-hypnotic states provide the optimum condition, for the highest and most objective states of imagination are to be found there. Apart from those states, one can say that this condition is often included in the first one. Passion, as the saying goes, *is beyond reason*; in other words, the vehement desire linked to the picture of its object acts by itself against the control of reason and the senses, to the point of leaving the imaginative faculty almost completely free.

2. *Law of the ubiquity of the idea, which can also be called law of transference and projection.* This is based on a very simple consideration: that since an image has nothing corporeal about it, it is free from the spatial conditions that apply essentially to bodies. In the experimental field, the validity of this law can be deduced from many phenomena whose reality is no longer denied by today's positive research in thought-transmission, spontaneous telepathy, psychic radiation, *etc.* As for their explanation, Dr. Osty and other researchers accept as the best "working hypothesis" the existence of a species of incorporeal medium common to the minds of various beings, in which physical distance and spatial separation no longer exist. This seems to me just another way of stating the law of ubiquity. Following this law, then, we cannot say that I can only realize an image *for myself alone*: on the contrary, I can *also realize it for someone else*. In other words, one can raise the image from the corporeal plane on which beings are separated in space, and having thus objectivized it, drop it into another consciousness. Thus the second law would imply two distinct things:

- a. To know how to "objectivize" the idea or image, releasing it from one's own I.
- b. To know the method of transmitting it from this state into the mind of another person.

As for the first condition, it is partly satisfied by the previous law (1a) concerning emotional saturation and impetus. In common parlance one doesn't simply say of someone driven by a passion "He's irrational," but also "He's lost his head," "He's not himself any more," "He's beside himself." A great passion can almost be said to *depersonalize* one, by allowing only the driving idea to exist. In a strange paradox, the self-interest and the very life of one thus

possessed often count for nothing and are no longer considered. That is why he sometimes does not hesitate to satisfy his passion in the face of ruin and even death.

In magic, of course, we are not dealing with that. We have said in a previous commentary (this volume, V.2, p. 173) what one should think of the relations between desire and magic. Here it is enough to mention that emotional impetuosity—which however, in magic, is directed and regulated by the Art—contains a *depersonalizing* and quasi-*ecstatic virtue*. It can even serve to realize the idea *objectively*, as if it were a distinct entity independent of the person who conceives and nurtures it: and this is exactly the condition for taking on that modality to which the virtue of ubiquity belongs.

As regards the second point, where the idea is reincarnated in the sense of *placing it* in another consciousness, we must proceed from this second law to a third one, the last required to understand the ritual of effigies.

3. The third law can be called the *law of sympathy* or *law of symbolic realization*. Of the three laws, this one may require the greatest effort to be admitted by today's mentality. It can be expressed thus: *When the mind takes the "form" of another mind, it communicates with it in an effective way, so that in special conditions it can act through it and think through it.*

"Taking the form" is the capital point: it can be a simple thing, and also a more complex one. It is simple when nature comes to one's aid through a spontaneous faculty of empathy, based on the equally spontaneous *intuition* of the "being" of the person to be acted upon; and when that suffices for the goal of the operation.

But the matter is complex if one proceeds ceremonially, not wanting to act on the merely subjective part, but on the entirety of the deep forces that constitute the person. Then a veritable project of magical, theurgical, and astrological science begins. The law of sympathy, here, consists in the power of certain characters, figures, or signs to attract the virtue of the forces to which they traditionally correspond, when they are drawn or impressed at the right time, in the right way, and with ceremonies for matching them to the ruling influences.<sup>1</sup> The "sympathy" produced through analogy and through natural and symbolic resemblance operates like an echo reflecting against an opposite wall; like a lyre set vibrating by the sound of a similar one; or by two strings of the same length and perfectly tuned, which both sound when one is plucked.<sup>2</sup> On this basis the magi try to find the person's "ascendant," his ruling "genius," and the group of special elemental, planetary, and zodiacal influences, with

particular regard to the quality of the intended goal; and they ascertain the signs, names, and numbers corresponding to all of that, according to their tradition.

Thereafter, analysis gives way to synthesis: the magus “reconstructs” the person, starting from all these elements, which are realized and awakened with a simultaneously mental and ceremonial procedure. Out of this comes the actual effigy, modeled on the person’s image, impressed with signs, ciphers, and names.<sup>3</sup> The statuette *represents* the person; it is like his double, made from the same components, the same “virtues” that the magus’s energy transfuses into it, both sacramentally and actually.<sup>4</sup> By means of this image, a creature that the magus has awakened, the magus himself has the person in his power by *homeopathy*: a terrible power because, if we accept the principles of magic, the person would be under the very same supra-individual forces that profoundly condition his being and his life.

In addition, the magus may carefully choose the day and hour in which forces in harmony with his goal are dominant, and combine the corresponding signs with those referring to the person. The image can be prepared in previous and repeated sessions: day after day the magus returns to enliven it, to coddle it, to wrap it up, so as to have it ready at the opportune moment. When the magus’s force is extraordinarily strong, able to kindle in his creation a psychic energy *superior* to the person’s own, the substitution can be complete and permanent. The person is reduced to an automaton, a creature of the magus. His soul and his life are *in the accursed effigy, shut up in the magus’s chamber*—he belongs to himself no more.

While the modern mentality may accept the law of sympathy as a simple proposition, given the analogies offered by physical phenomena, these applications that lead us into the heart of the magical realm may offer great obstacles to belief. It is not a matter of accepting or rejecting the law in itself, but of the very idea that the magus has of the world, with his hierarchies of invisible forces and subtle correspondences. The modern scientific conception is entirely different, and there is no point of contact between them.

Be that as it may, we are now finished with the *anatomy* of effigy magic, and it is easy to pass on from there to the *physiology*. Setting aside the outward apparatus, we need to understand that the true operation develops invisibly; what is seen and done has only the value of a symbol and a ritual, to reinforce through outward expression the workings of the internal procedure.

The magus, then, makes the effigy as described, and vitalizes it. As a tangible support for the mental picture, it puts him in touch with the other



person, following the third law, that of sympathy. I have mentioned that he sometimes includes substances taken from the person, preferably those connected to the vegetative energy under lunar influence: nails, hair, bodily secretions, menstrual blood. It is because the Moon is considered as the natural intermediary of magic,<sup>5</sup> being the passive principle of transformations. The substances work by adding a sort of physical, fluidic connection to the participation through sympathy and the signatures of corresponding forces. For the fluidic body of an individual obeys a certain law of ubiquity, of extra-spatial self-reference: any part which it has penetrated stays in contact with the person, even when separated.

Up to now, the law of sympathy applies. Once the *vision* is realized in the imagination, one creates the mental image of the goal, reinforces its reality and lifelikeness, and by fixation on it, “objectifies” it and releases it from oneself. At this point all three laws come into play simultaneously: the law of sympathy, the law of projection, and the law of the power of the imagination. The *passion* or alteration realized in the image transfers itself to the subject for whom the image has been prepared.

Often a material action, which proclaims sacramentally and symbolically the formulation of the will, completes the synthesizing realization. We know of the classic sticking of a pin in the heart of a waxen doll; it can also be thrown into boiling water or into fire (with a twofold intention: to consume and destroy it—or else to dissolve an obstacle or an evil, for the sake of the subject’s inner freedom); turned upside down, buried, exposed to wind or smoke, *etc.* Naturally the action should always be the *body* of a significance or a state that the operator has aroused and realized (see Abraxa, “Magic of the Image,” in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 266–72). At other times he may have recourse to the expressive power contained in spells, curses or commands, or he may combine both methods.

One can also aim at precise physical effects, such as the cure or cause of some disease, or things like stigmata and small wounds which are marked on the effigy. On the other hand, Paracelsus is reported to have healed people at a distance, by acting on models of the corresponding members. Another possible goal of the operation is to make a person perform specific actions.

When it is only a matter of transferring feelings or passions, the procedure described by Agrippa for “fascination”<sup>6</sup> may suffice, described as follows: First one arouses the feeling or passion *in oneself: loving*, increasing, and fixing it in one’s own heart. After that, one can work with the “Magic of the Image.” One

thinks of the flash and the white puff of smoke that rises when one sets a pinch of gunpowder alight. Then, on reaching the requisite degree of concentration, one sees the flash in *one's own* heart, the cloud of smoke rapidly rising and *fixing* itself between the eyebrows. From there it "exits": in a straight line, precise and resolute, aiming between the eyebrows of the image. It concentrates there, then falls heavily into the place where the image's heart would be. A flash goes off, corresponding to the first one in one's own heart. Thereupon comes a diffusion from the heart, like a *fire* going through the whole body of the person represented in the effigy. All these images must obviously *carry* the emotional state, on which one must not cease to concentrate. And the vision, as Abraxa says, must be a vision-command, decisive but without any kind of effort. Moreover, in certain cases one can do an operation of this kind directly on the person, face-to-face.

With my intention of showing analytically the anatomy or physiology of effigy magic, I have naturally distinguished parts and laws that, for success, need to be fused in a single blend of *ability* and *intuition*. For this reason, the peasant who applies himself to this sort of practice, known to him through tradition, with all the dark and potent power of superstition and with a wealth of emotional energy, can achieve practical results. On the other hand, for someone who at first smiled at this, but now, persuaded by what I have said about the logical and positive foundations of the ritual, tried to put into practice what he understands analytically, it would probably remain a mere pipe dream.

# **PART VIII**

## VIII.1

EA

# Esotericism and Morality

In these pages it has often been stated that *esoteric* teaching, like the tradition itself, has a nonhuman character, and that it is justified solely from the point of view of *reality*, not from that of beliefs, values, and human feelings. Despite this, in today's currents and groups that make some claim to esotericism there are almost always confusions that obscure the very fact that this teaching is transcendent in character. One of the most flagrant is due to those who resort to moralism, trying to validate moralistic demands in the domain of pure spirituality. Hence the talk of various "colors" of magic (black, white, or gray) and of egotism and altruism on the initiatic path; notions of "progress" and "evolution" introduced into the esoteric field; and the purposeful creation of the "true initiate," who must be a humanitarian, an apostle of universal brotherhood, hopefully a vegetarian, a feminist, a pacifist, perhaps a member of the "Society for the Protection of Animals" and the "League for the Protection of the Young," and naturally also of the so-called hypothetical "White Lodge."

But even without going so far, and when it is not a question of moralism but of ethics, we must point out some persistent confusions. In general, we have here a typical inversion: the claim to judge esotericism by morality, whereas if anything is to be judged, only the reverse is legitimate: it is esotericism, as a higher standpoint, that should judge morality, specify its importance, and set the limits of its validity.

The first thing to note is that in the ancient traditional world, which was always centered in esotericism, "morality" as conceived of today was nonexistent. Even today's secular historiography knows that ancient law was not

observed because it was “good” or “useful,” but for the sole reason that it was divine law. The foundation of the law, and what gave it its binding character, was not simply its good or ill, help or harm, in relation to social life, but its being given from above. And as traditional law came “from above,” it also looked “upward”; its purpose was a certain attachment of the individual to a transcendent and, by that very fact, a nonhuman order. It has been rightly said that “The precept of doing or not doing a certain thing, which some obey for moral reasons, can be equally observed by others for quite different reasons,” hence also with a different intention. This intention, in general, was to confer a *ritual* character on action and on life.<sup>1</sup> On a higher plane, precise technical reasons applied, of which we will say more.

All this has been lost in later times because of the *humanization* that characterizes the recent course of history. Thus “morals” were set up as their own domain, though devoid as such of any profound justification; and this involution was even confirmed in the positive religions, especially Christianity, to the point of inverting the relationship: the moral point of view predominated there, while religion was seen as a mere support for morality. Meanwhile the profane world inevitably ended up in relativism and sentimentalism, basing the individual’s conduct on the sheer practical convenience of his respecting the particular norms prevalent in a given society and a given historical climate: hence the endpoint of conformism and utilitarianism.

After this brief survey, we will see how things look from the esoteric point of view. The basis of esotericism is *knowledge*, which refers in the present case to the so-called law of actions and concordant reactions, i.e., on a complex of causal relations. The fact that they also concern a subtle domain, and do not always act tangibly and simply in space and time, does not prevent them from having the same impersonal character as the laws of physical phenomena. Given that, from our point of view man is treated as man: as a being capable of guiding himself with his own judgment and taking responsibility for what he does, without the need for scare tactics, precepts, and suggestions. Once the laws are stated according to which if one does this, that follows, and when one does something else, one must expect something else to follow, everyone can regulate himself as he believes best; he will reap only the fruit of his actions—understanding by that not only the material action but also every act of the spirit, every feeling, every identification.

Getting burned is not a “punishment” for the “wickedness” of putting one’s hand in a flame, but the foreseeable consequence of a natural law; a being is free to burn his hand or not, and burning himself certainly does not make him more

“bad.” Likewise, he can choose whether or not to provoke certain reactions that, by acting in a given way, he can arouse either on the human level (individual and collective) or on the occult level. In either case, an esotericist will avoid using the words “good” or “bad,” and will regard beings equally, whether their action lifts them toward the higher regions, or whether it leads them to the lower ones of the manifested world. For him, the “moral” sphere is only a special case of the natural sphere (in the broadest sense), and he—we must repeat—will consider it with the same impersonality as the latter.

Only thus does one acquire a clear view, and only thus does one treat the individual as an adult, not as a child who, having neither knowledge nor discernment, needs outside guidance through various expedients, corresponding in the moral field to “good” and “bad,” to various precepts and “values” set up as things that demand absolute recognition in themselves. An esotericist, on the contrary, will always respect another’s sphere of freedom, no matter how this freedom is used, so long as the person takes responsibility for it. Nor does he follow a different criterion with regard to himself. He does not preach, and avoids uttering “Thou shalt . . .”

Those are the general principles. Naturally these considerations of rules of conduct also apply to those derived from and integrated in the traditional laws, whose character, as we said, is neither human nor in any way “social,” but comes from and looks to the above. But in that regard, one point must be emphasized: traditional law always had a differentiated character, in that it did not recognize one single rule, but diverse rules corresponding to the differences of beings. The rule of life that is right and allowable for one person might not be so for another, as appears with particular clarity where the caste system prevails, the system most in conformity with a traditional order from above. Thus the democratic and leveling character of modern morality, which claims to be “universally valid,” is already enough to deprive it of any legitimacy. In fact, the most immediate goal of traditional norms of behavior was to enable each one to be himself, to realize himself and his own nature. Such is the Hindu idea of *svādharmā*;<sup>2</sup> the meaning of the Hellenic maxim “Become what you are”; in Taoism, following one’s own inner law, one’s own “path,” without intrusion from external precepts and stereotypical norms, reflecting the “Way of Heaven” itself which knows neither “good” nor “evil.”<sup>3</sup> In contrast, morality as understood today aims to achieve the opposite: not realizing one’s own nature and path but subjecting them to something collective, social, and faceless. We must emphasize this point and keep it in mind when considering the law of actions and reactions: the reactions accord with the nature of the person who acts

and are not the same in all cases. And when one betrays one's own law one must expect consequences, most of them unfavorable to inner development.

On the esoteric and supra-individual level, traditional law in the above sense is justified as follows: by perfectly realizing one's own nature, one also realizes a central position in relation to oneself, because the individual's will then coincides with the general will corresponding to one's incarnation, i.e., to the will of the transcendent I which intends to actualize certain possibilities on this plane of manifestation. If it is clearer to state it in terms of the theological myth, we could say that the individual, in realizing his own nature, realizes the divine will which wanted it thus, and has placed his own center in that divine will. Through realization of his own form, a path opens toward that which is beyond form, hence toward liberation.

Here, however, we need to reject the views of those who like to talk about conforming to a universal order, in terms that more or less allow them to reintroduce "moral" views. First of all, as we will show, we are dealing here with a specific perspective, though not the only one (there is also that of the "Left-Hand Path"). Secondly, there are multiple paths, leading both upward and downward. Only an unconsidered and empty rationalism would presume to reduce such complexity to a single thing, just to make it accessible to the human mind.

After sketching the meaning and possibilities of what, in Tradition, corresponds to modern morality, we can go on to consider the initiatic field itself. Obviously morality in the current sense cannot apply to the initiatic path: so much is obvious to anyone who reflects on the fact that this is a *science*. A science, as such, knows nothing of "good" or "evil"; it only knows laws, which are what they are: neither good nor bad, but simply real. It develops through a *technique* whose value and possibilities are measured solely by success, through constant and determinable relations of cause to effect. This applies all the more rigorously if we are dealing with magic in a specific and practical sense.

As for a sort of "moralization" that some claim to be indispensable as a preliminary condition for any transcendental development of the personality, it is pure nonsense, or another confusion of distinct things. Certainly in initiatic science, unlike physical science, the conditions that produce certain effects are not external determinations which anyone can verify, without having to perform an action on himself. This can happen only in supporting or contingent elements (e.g., in ceremonial magic, *hatha-yoga*, etc.), but the essential and really decisive conditions relate to states and transformations that must be brought about in the spirit and in the deep regions of the human entity, either directly or indirectly.

Thus if by “morals” one simply means asceticism—discipline, exercise, action of spirit upon spirit—then one may well say that initiatic science implies “morals,” and not merely as a preparation but as an essential part of it. But we repeat that the term “morals” can only confuse matters, because two quite distinct points of view are evidently meeting here: the moral one, stating that certain things absolutely must be done and others not, due to a law of good and evil supposedly valid in itself; and the initiatic point of view that considers a group of rules whose only value is as technical conditions and tools for realization. Even when such rules partly align with those of current morality, it is for entirely different reasons—as we said at the outset—that he who follows the initiatic path may adopt them. This is not a matter of “moralization” but rather of *divinification*. Plotinus’s words are to the point: “Not to be a good man, but to become a god—this is the goal.”

As an example, from the moral point of view one may say: “You mustn’t lie, because lying is bad, and telling the truth is good.” From the initiatic point of view one is simply aware that lying causes a sort of lesion and contradiction in the unity of the being, which is a condition contrary to that of an initiatic qualification. As another example, one would not say that to make free use of young women is a “sin,” but only point out that, at most, it dissipates the vital energy, and gives it a polarity not very compatible with the methods of supra-individual development, which require the concentration and transformation of that energy. Thus if one has that knowledge, it is solely a matter of knowing what one truly wants. That is all.

If one were to formulate a general initiatic principle, it might be to master everything that is *passion* and irrationality in the soul. This refers not only to “evil” dispositions, but even to “good” ones if they are likewise rooted in feelings. Objectively, it is a case of “changing levels”: not controlling irrational and impulsive urges by others which, though opposite, are the same in kind, but letting the pure intellectual principle, the *νοῦς*, the “Zeus in us” prevail, which is beyond both of them, beyond the good and the bad. The ancient Hellenic world understood all this quite clearly: its views on the “good” were less “ethical” than ontological in character, akin to the point of view just put forth. We know, in fact, that the Greek concept of the good referred to the state of reality and perfection, and consequently evil to the unreal: to a confused, chaotic state, incapable of realizing itself in an action or a form; to that which is “altered,” passive, and infected by the “passional” element.<sup>4</sup> A meaning of *virtue* (*virtus*) follows from this, totally opposed to the moralistic one: a meaning that persisted, incidentally, up to the Renaissance period: virtue as strength, as that



completeness and virility of strength (*virtus* and *vir*, man in the specific sense, have the same root), which is the preeminent quality of “those who *are*,” of those Completed, the *Siddha*. If initiatic ascesis must include a “morality,” its only point of reference could be views of this kind.

We would add the following considerations. There are two distinct phases in initiatic development. The meaning of the first phase is movement from the periphery to the center, realizing that state of centrality in regard to oneself of which we have already spoken, and which through initiation allows one to relink oneself with the transcendent principle that manifests in the human personality. From that point onward, realization proceeds in a purely vertical direction, ascending, which implies effective changes of state, passages to other modes of being. In contrast, what can be achieved in the human state may be considered as a movement or change of place on a horizontal plane. The two directions, horizontal and vertical, remain discontinuous. It makes no difference vertically (the direction of initiation that gives authentic realization) where one finds oneself on the horizontal plane as such;<sup>5</sup> and vice versa, since vertical motion does not cause horizontal displacement, but projects an unmoving point on it. Thus the qualities acquired in the purely initiatic realm may even determine or represent nothing in terms of common human values, and particularly “moral” ones. Initiation in itself—as we have recalled on other occasions—was always conceived of as a fact independent of any human merit, and having such a concrete character that it was sometimes spoken of as a physical and material fact, almost like human birth. Once such a fact has occurred, without needing any justifying or demonstrable reasons to accompany it, one has passed from one level to another, from one way of being to a different way of being, unrelated to the first.<sup>6</sup>

For the same reason, when actions take a downward direction on the vertical axis, they also transcend human values. Naturally, this is not to say that they necessarily subvert human laws. But they can certainly not be understood on the basis of those laws, unless “transposed” to another plane—and not always then. The action of initiates follows neither altruism nor egotism, neither good nor ill in the accepted sense of the terms. It proceeds from the “Way of Heaven” to which the Far East, especially, attributes the sort of nonhuman and elemental purity that belongs to the great forces of nature, and which may reveal itself where the superficial eye and the restricted mind see only disaster. One may also see its partial reflection in the great dominators of history, those beings who pass like the forces of fate, considering men and peoples merely as means beside their obscure sensation of having a higher mission, to which their own person, peace,

and happiness are the first things to be sacrificed.

We will close this analysis of morality and esotericism with some observations pertinent to the practical and psychological field. We have spoken of the relations between causes and effects as *necessary*, but obviously necessity in this far broader field cannot have the same character as in the physical world. No one seeks a foundation for this necessity in the physical world: it is enough to establish empirically that when A occurs, B follows, because that is how it has happened in every case that could be observed. In the spiritual world, however, where the process of self-realization and magical action unfolds, to suffer a certain effect may mean the interference with one's own will and one's own path by a force whose law, without any intentionality, reasserts its power over me every time I try to transgress it. Such cases entail an encounter of intensity, when the chosen path goes against the "Rulers of Fate," as some traditions call them, who were also considered in the teaching about the initiate's journey through the hierarchy of the Seven or the Twelve. Here, too, all moralistic interpretations fall away, reaffirming the purely ontological point of view which always treats necessity as a fact, not as a right; likewise not "forbidden" things but only dangerous things, before which everyone must first be sure about what he can demand of himself. That suggests, in a general context, what patent absurdity Éliphas Lévi falls into when he chooses as the magus's motto the dogma of the most flagrant rationalism: "A thing is not good because God wills it, but God wills it because it is good"—whereas Al-Ghazali, though not talking of magic, more sensibly recognizes that it is only due to the *will* of God that a certain cause is followed by a certain effect.

However, what we are discussing in the present case is a plane where there is no question of domination by God (in the singular), but of some other entity or collective entities that are always bound to the natural order.

We would say, then, that there is a certain path that differs from the one mentioned when we spoke of liberation through willingly following a traditional law; a path that, in Hindu terms, is not under the sign of Vishnu, the preserving aspect of divinity, but of Shiva, the aspect of its active and destructive transcendence.<sup>7</sup> He who follows such a path, even only its preliminary disciplines, must understand the true meaning of the reactions that will often occur in the soul. Many reactions<sup>8</sup> such as satisfaction, anxiety, or torment of conscience should be interpreted subtly, to discover *who* is acting in them, instead of following the habit of the average man who thinks they are nothing but his natural reactions, coming from his own soul.

In fact, if one acts from the *pure* I, no emotional reaction should be felt regarding what one does or does not do. But it is seldom thus: the moralistic interpretation intervenes, eager to recognize in such reactions the “voice of conscience” and the proof that a sense of good and evil exists naturally in the human soul, as the basis of the happiness of the virtuous, the torment of the wicked.

Esoterically, things appear very differently. We will take a concrete case. If I react to something that offends my own family or my own nation, it is really a reaction provoked in me by the “Manes” of my family, by the “entity” of my nation. And if on the contrary I am the offender—and the offense can go further, reaching deeper levels and bordering on what is ordinarily classed as a crime—the reaction usually comes equally, but in myself, against myself. Hence the psychological phenomena of the “bad conscience,” anxiety, a remorse that can even act as a curse and lead to disaster, to the “expiation of guilt.”

The ancients said of this: “It is the Erinnyes who persecute the criminal; it is the offended Manes and Gods having revenge.” The moderns, who accuse the ancients of mythmaking, are the ones doing that, and worse, giving a “moral” significance to those internal phenomena, which should be explained by the quasi-physical action of forces with which one has interfered, even if their power resides in deeper zones than the being who has stirred them up.

Thus in initiatic ascesis one needs to pay particular attention to a phenomenology of this kind, so as to shed light on one’s own inner life and calmly take note of how things really stand. Either through adjustment and release, or through direct action, the I must take on the task of freeing itself from the tangle of forces that have formed the samsaric personality, which is variously controlled by the entities of planets, heavens, races, beliefs, and institutions. Until this task of “stripping bare” is done, and one cannot yet do without the support provided by those forces, one needs to recognize a specific “law” and reflect carefully before setting oneself against it. Apart from any external consequences, in such a case one would only be acting against a part of oneself (a part from which one is not yet able to disidentify), and the inevitable consequence will be a state of disorganization and internal laceration, equivalent to a backsliding of the individual in the hierarchy of beings, which is marked by an ever-higher degree of unity and wholeness. All this should be considered by one who takes the “Left-Hand Path,” feeling that it suits his own nature; at the same time, he needs to be clear about the basis of the law of concordant actions and reactions, even in the field of initiatic ascesis.

With that, we think we have explained clearly enough everything that can be

said about the relations between esotericism and morality. We will just add that their independence is greater today than in previous civilizations, for two reasons. First, because what still exists as “morals” has none of the characteristics of a sacred, traditional norm, but only a human and social range. Secondly, because modern man is becoming ever more “rootless,” his connections with the deeper forces of life have become minimal, yet not in the direction of freedom but of degeneracy, in passing from the reign of quality to that of quantity and number. On the one hand, this minimizes many of the abovementioned internal reactions that the individual’s unruly behavior could cause. The disadvantage is that he cannot make the slightest use of such a situation from the initiatic point of view, due to the fearful decline in spiritual level that, in modern man, nullifies this detachment. In any case, given the different situation, the rationale for some rules of conduct recommended in civilizations of another type, even in the initiatic domain, no longer holds. Thus today it is more ineffectual than ever to introduce moralistic and moralizing considerations into the initiatic field.

## VIII.2

NILIUS

### Medicine and Poison

I believe that the ideas treated in chapter VI.2 on the “Metaphysical Significance of Pain and Illness” also open practical perspectives which, among other things, could shed light on a special branch of therapeutics. After at first being opposed by the representatives of official medicine, it has been validated in our own time.

That essay basically affirmed that in some cases of illness, forces are at work that have a transcendent character vis-à-vis the normal course of an individual’s life. In such cases the pathological fact accompanies a kind of super-saturation, unparalleled by any active, conscious process. There is something like an insoluble blockage, and, as the author of that essay said, the phenomenon of suffering, considered psychically and subtly, also reflects this peculiar situation.

Such a view inevitably leads to the general idea of “ambivalent processes” and of those forces that have a dual effect of healing or harming, according to their “sign” and the course they take. The great Paracelsus referred to them when he said “The power of poison is similar to that of medicine.” Part of his therapeutic method is based on this very principle, referring to the theory of *signatures* and correspondences.

Clarifying this may be of interest to our readers. First I need to dispel a misunderstanding that is common in current diagnostics. When a person is ill, there is a complex of symptoms and changes in the normal physio-biological processes. This complex has a character of its own, an individuality that we could call by the medieval term of a *signature*. Knowing, or rather *intuiting* this signature would be the first task of true diagnostics: gathering into a unity the

various elements observed in the illness, almost in the way that one grasps from a facial expression the whole complex of a person's traits. The aforementioned misunderstanding occurs when this picture is referred to the illness, for it is not a question of the illness in itself, but of the signature of a force from the person's depths that is intervening and reacting to eliminate the cause that has produced the change of the state of health. It is a force that fights as long as there is illness, and while unseen, the symptoms indicate its appearance.

Paracelsus's theory, largely deduced from esoteric knowledge, is that healing can succeed when one has discerned the signature of the force in us that reacts to the disease, and strengthens its efficacy by means of a *similar* power. To discover what substances have this property and could thus serve as medicines, one refers to the aforementioned principle of correspondences: the substance to be used should present a signature analogous to what is usually interpreted as a syndrome and tangible symptom of disease. Thus one arrives at the principle that the power of medicine is similar to that of poison, because for the reasons mentioned, medicine is a substance or a procedure that would provoke in a healthy person phenomena similar to those of the disease.

This of course is also the principle of *homeopathy*—that like acts on like, like is cured by like—and the principle of Hermetic medicine, too. Very little remains today of what was once accessible to Paracelsus and other lesser-known initiated physicians. Their presupposition was a science of *signaturae rerum* (signatures of things), a faculty of seeing into what they called the “Light of Nature,” so as to recognize the “seals” carried by elements or beings in the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. Today it is only the sensible qualities that are perceived, the intuitive penetration of a discerning eye having been replaced by the microscope and chemical analysis.

Nonetheless, in this degraded sphere it was to the credit of Samuel Hahnemann that he sought to save something of the ancient therapeutic method based on the principle of correspondences, proceeding by the inductive-experimental method. The relation between the science of medicines and that of poisons remains the essential basis of the methods defended by Hahnemann, because its point of departure is precisely the identification of toxic substances: those that in a healthy person would produce symptoms similar to those of the disease to be fought. This research has progressed considerably up to the present day; the medicine that goes back to Hahnemann now has a whole repertory of substances gathered from the three kingdoms of nature that have the requisite properties and serve that purpose, as experiment has proved.

The novel aspect of the modern method concerns the principle of dilution.

The substances that would have a toxic effect serve as medicines in diseases whose symptoms reproduce the same signature as they, when they are used in extreme dilution. It is a matter of doses that are so diluted—to one part in a million or several million—that virtually none of the original substance can be found in them through chemical analysis.

From the esoteric point of view, the phenomenon remains quite enigmatic. Some might be led to think that an extremely rarefied physical substance is closer to *energy* than to matter, closer to the “subtle” than the “gross” state, and try to explain the medicine’s effect in those terms. But that would be a blatantly materialistic way of seeing it, just as some spiritualists today mix up scientific and esoteric points of view. The “subtle” (understood as “rarefied”) aspect of a material substance still remains in the corporeal sphere, whereas in the esoteric sense, “subtle” is thought of as a different dimension of reality, neither physical nor corporeal. Thus in another field, the same force that emerges when the most basic atomic or nuclear energies of matter are dissolved, and the mass, according to Einstein’s formula, is converted into energy, still remains a uniquely physical force and has nothing to do with the supersensible.

While insisting on this point, there is still a certain power of “solution” in the infinitesimal doses of the medicines used in homeopathy, a power that eliminates the illness. The process that takes place in such cases cannot be fully understood. But one cannot avoid the idea that there is something in the material field approximating to the processes of truly magical resolution of the illness. If the metaphysical interpretation of illness is true, the task would be to liberate a force from a state of blockage; breaking through a limit, joining with its action and opening its path. This could well be understood in terms of a *subtilization*. The “poison” (the cause of the disease) would then become medicine.

I think, therefore, that in such cases, through a certain intangible correspondence, the material subtilization itself reflects the power of that higher subtilization that is not to be conceived of in material terms. The result here is in the cure, namely, the simple return to the state of normality. Staying with the metaphysical interpretation of illness, its true resolution must give rise to what Novalis called “modes of a transcendent sensation,” in other words, to a supernormal condition. This is also what happens in cases of the direct transformation of the power of special substances, which ordinarily would be toxic (the Hermetic use of the “corrosive waters”).

## VIII.3

### ***Turba Philosophorum***



## The Assembly of the Wise

*He who has ears, let him open them and listen;  
He who has a mouth, let him keep it closed.*

The *Turba Philosophorum* is one of the most quoted texts of the ancient Hermetic-chemical authors. While its dating is uncertain, it is definitely among the most ancient alchemical manuscripts to have entered circulation in Europe during the period when classical culture returned via the Arabs. Part of the text, in fact, consists of sayings from Arab and Hellenistic alchemists.

Various editions of the *Turba* exist, somewhat different from one another. We have consulted the two contained in Manget's *Bibliotheca Chemica Curiosa* (Geneva, 1702): *Turba Philosophorum ex antiquo Manuscripto Codice excerpta, qualis nulla hactenus visa est Editio* (vol. I, 445–65) and *Turba Philosophorum, aliud exemplar* (vol. I, 480–94). However, we have preferred the one contained in vol. II of the *Bibliothèque des Philosophes Chimiques* (Paris, 1741), as being much more concise, and for a colorful and lively quality that the others lack. The best work on these texts and their sources is Ruska, *Die Turba Philosophorum* (Berlin: Springer, 1931).<sup>1</sup>

The commentary will necessarily be very limited. Among the most variegated forms of symbolism, enigmatic games and traps set for the inexpert reader alternate with things given out in quite an explicit way. The reader will be helped by what has already been said in our preceding volume, or else he may return to the text after having gained further elements of Hermetic exegesis as the present series of essays proceeds. The italics are ours.

ARISTEUS said: I tell you that our Master Pythagoras is the foot of the Prophets and the head of the Wise, and that he has had more gifts of wisdom from God than any other since Hermes. Thus he wished to gather his Disciples—sent from all lands and regions to treat this precious Art—so that their word

could serve as a rule for those who came after. And he ordered IXIMANDRUS to speak first, being the best in council, who said:

All things have a beginning and a nature, which of itself, without help from any other, can multiply itself to infinity; else all would be lost and corrupted.

The TURBA said: Master, if you begin, we will follow your words.

And PYTHAGORAS said: Know, all you who seek this Art, that a true Tincture will never be made except with our red Stone;<sup>2</sup> thus do not lose your souls or your money, nor let sorrow enter your hearts. Be sure of this, and receive this teaching from me, as your Master. If you do not transmute this red Stone into white, and then make it red again, thus making a Tincture of the Tincture, you will achieve nothing.<sup>3</sup> Therefore cook this Stone, break it, remove its blackness by cooking and washing until it becomes white. Then raise it up again, as is fitting.

ARISTEUS said: The Key to this Work is the Art of whitening. Therefore take the body that I have shown you and of which your Master has spoken, make from it thin tablets and put them into our Sea Water, a Water that is permanent and the governess of our Body;<sup>4</sup> then place it all on a slow fire,<sup>5</sup> until the tablets break up and dissolve in the Water. Mix and cook it continuously with a mild fire, until a pigmented fat appears, to be cooked and converted in its Water until it congeals and makes the eyes (of the fat) appear like the flowers we call Sunflowers. Cook it until there is no more black, and the whiteness appears; then treat it and cook it with the soul of Gold, and mix it all by means of the Fire, *without touching it*, until it has all become red. Have patience and do not fret: have it drink its Water, which came out of it [from the body], a Water that is permanent, until it is red. This is the burnt Copper, the Flower and Yeast of Gold, which you cook together with the permanent Water that always remains with it; digest and cook it until it is dry.<sup>6</sup> Do this continuously until there is no more humidity, and it all becomes an extremely fine powder.<sup>7</sup>

PARMENIDES said: Know that envious people have spoken in different ways of Water, Fats, Stones, and Metals in order to deceive you who are seeking this secret Science. Leave all that, and make the red white and the white red. First know and examine what Lead and Tin represent, first one then the other; and know that if you do not take the Natures, and if you do not join the Kindred with their own closest Kindred, those which are of the same blood, you will succeed at nothing.<sup>8</sup> For the Natures meet each other and follow one another, in putrefaction and generation; and Nature is dominated by Nature, by whom it is

destroyed, reduced to dust, turned to nothing. Then it renews and regenerates it many times. Study and read, so as to penetrate the truth and know what it is that putrefies and renovates; what things are involved; how they love one another and how, after their love, hostility and corruption ensue; and how (in the end) they embrace until they become One. Knowing this, set your hand to this Art; if not, do not undertake this divine Work, for it will bring you nothing but misfortune, sorrow and despair. Consider, then, the words of the Wise, and how they have summarized the whole Work in these words, saying: “*Nature rejoices in Nature, Nature dominates Nature, Nature contains Nature.*” The entire Work is contained in these words. Therefore abandon all superfluous things, take the living Water and congeal it in its Body and in its incombustible Sulfur,<sup>9</sup> make its nature white and thus all will become white. By cooking it still more, the red will arise, the Sea Water will become blood-colored—this being a sign of God’s time, the final sign of His advent, He who comes to glorify the righteous. But first, the Sun will lose its Light and the Moon will assume the function of the Sun; then the Moon itself will be darkened and turned to blood, and Sea and Earth will open up, *and the Bodies of those who were dead will arise from the tombs and be glorified*, and they will have a more glorious and splendid face than a thousand Suns. And the Body, the Spirit, and the Soul will be glorified in unity and will render thanks to God, that after such torments, pains, and tribulations they have come to such goodness and perfection as to be no more subject to separation nor corruption. If you [plural. —*Trans.*] do not understand me, study no more and do not try to mingle with us, because you are not numbered with the Wise. I could not speak more clearly.<sup>10</sup> If you [singular. —*Trans.*] do not understand me the first time, study a second, third, or fourth time, and so on, until you do understand. For in this Image everything is contained, from the beginning to the end, explained in the best way possible to man. Break your head to understand it, so that you can work and feed on it.

LUCAS said: Know that Body and Spirit help one another. At first the Spirit breaks the Body, so as to be helped by it later [in the Red Work]. When the Body is dead, feed it with its Milk, with what it has within it, taking care that the Spirit does not escape but always remains connected to the Body. And if one flees the Fire, but the other bears it, when they are joined together they support one another. Know, moreover, that one part of the Body contains more power than ten parts of the Spirit, and that it fortifies the Spirit. And know that our Sulfur burns everything, and that it is self-made from beginning to end, helping itself according to Nature.

The VICAR said: Know that without the Fire, nothing was ever generated.

Put your Compound into its vessel and light a moderate fire all around it, not a strong and violent fire, otherwise the parts will not move with respect to each other [that is the true separation]. Take care that the Fire be slow, for should it be too strong, the red would appear prematurely.<sup>11</sup> Instead, we want first the black, then the white, then the red, because Nature works only through stages and transformations. I have told you enough about the Art, if you have sense; for you do not have to work with many things, but only with one, which alters<sup>12</sup> step-by-step until its perfection.

PYTHAGORAS said: Let us add another thing, which is not really another because only the names are different. Know that the thing we allude to, which the Philosophers speak of in so many ways, pursues and reaches its Companion without fire, as the magnet attracts iron. And this thing, in its embrace, gives forth various colors, and is found everywhere. It is Stone, and yet not Stone; dear and cheap, bright and precious, dark and known to all, it has only one name and it has many names; and it is the spittle of the Moon.<sup>13</sup> Split the black Hen and give it milk to drink and gum to eat, so as to cure it; save the blood in its belly and feed it with milk till it loses its black feathers, loses its wings, and no longer flies. Then you will see it in its beauty, and its feathers will become white and shiny. Give it saffron and iron rust to eat,<sup>14</sup> *then give it blood to drink*. Feed it thus for a long time. Finally let it go: for there is no poison that could harm it (more) and which it cannot overcome. And it stares at the Sun without blinking.<sup>15</sup>

ACSUBOFOS said: Master, you have said without envy what you had to say. May God reward you.

PYTHAGORAS said: And you, Acsubofos, what do you make of it? And he said: Know that Sulfur contains Sulfur and that the one Humidity contains the other.<sup>16</sup>

The TURBA said: Is that all? You are saying nothing new. And he said:

Humidity is a poison which, when it penetrates the Bodies, tinctures them with an immutable color. For when one thing flees, the other flees too; (but when) one catches the other, it flees no more, for Nature has made its likeness into its Enemy, and the two have slain each other. This is how you work; this is the regimen. Treat it before it is colored with a child's Urine,<sup>17</sup> with Sea Water,<sup>18</sup> and with pure permanent Water;<sup>19</sup> and cook it with a small fire until the black appears: for then it is certain that the Body has dissolved and putrefied. Then cook it with its humor<sup>20</sup> until it puts on a red Robe, and keep cooking it

until you see the serpentine color that you are seeking.

SIZIUS said: Know, all you investigators of the Art, that the foundation of this Art, of which everyone thinks, is one thing alone, which the Wise esteem as the highest of Natures, but which the Fools believe to be the vilest of all things.<sup>21</sup> You Fools are well accursed. I swear that if Kings knew of such a thing, no one would ever have it.

PYTHAGORAS said: Name it.—And he replied:

It is the sharpest Vinegar, which makes the Body black, white, red, and all colors, and converts the Body to Spirit.<sup>22</sup> And know that if you put the Body to the fire without Vinegar, it will burn and break up. Know that the first humor is cold. Therefore, avoid using too violent a fire at the outset, because it is the enemy of what is cold; and if you cook (our body) well and remove its blackness, it will become Stone, similar to pure white marble. And know that the whole intention and beginning of the Work is blanching, after which comes the red that is the perfection of the Work. I swear by my God that I have long searched in books, wishing to attain this Science, and I have prayed God to teach me what it is. And when God heard me, he showed me a purified Water that I recognized as Vinegar, *and from then on, the more I read the Books, the more I understood.*<sup>23</sup>

SOCRATES said: Know that our Work is done with the Male and the Female; cook until the blackness, then until the whiteness. Cook it all for 150 days, and I assure you that if you know the Matters needed for our Work, and the Regimens, you will find that their Regimens are nothing but women's work and child's play. The Philosophers have told you of many Regimens in order to mislead you, but what of that? *Understand all according to Nature and her Regimen.* And believe me, without so much searching. I order you only to cook: cook at the beginning, cook in the middle, cook at the end without doing anything else; for Nature will bring herself to completion.

ZENON said: Know that the year is divided into four seasons. Winter has a cold, rainy and watery complexion. Spring is slightly warm. The third is hot, namely Summer. The fourth, Autumn, is very dry and one gathers fruits then, for they are ripe. Govern your Natures in this way and in no other, otherwise you can blame only yourselves, not us.

The TURBA said: You speak well: tell us something else. And he said: It is enough.

PLATO said: Our Gum opens our Milk and our Milk dissolves our Gum—

and they grow inside the Stone of Paradise, which is the Wood of Life. In this Stone are two contraries, Fire and Water. One enlivens the other and one kills the other; and the two, being conjoined, (thus) remain forever: from which appear an Orient Red and a Blood Red. Our Man is old, our Dragon young, who eats his head with his tail, head and tail being Soul and Spirit.<sup>24</sup> And the Soul and Spirit are created by him, and one comes from the East, namely the Child, and the old man from the West. The Crow flying in the air in August changes its plumage inside a cleft of an Oak,<sup>25</sup> first the yellow, which falls away through eating Serpents, while his head becomes red like a poppy. That is the Spring of the Torrent; it runs in two veins that begin in a channel, one salt and the other sweet.<sup>26</sup> The Crow washes himself—it cleanses him—and will say: He who has cleansed me will make me red; otherwise I will kill him and fly away. Whoever has seen this can speak of it and bear witness; otherwise he will not believe it. Wake the wild Beast, put it among tame Birds<sup>27</sup> who grasp it and prevent it from flying; then, when it is caught, feed the Birds—to reward their efforts—with its liver and give them its blood to drink, so as to animate them. And for the white Horse that you mount, make a beautiful covering; and the Horse will become a strong Lion covered with fur. Beneath the two of them there is a Griffin.

This thing has three angles in its substance, four in its virtues, two in its matter, and one in its root.<sup>28</sup> I have passed by many paths, always with my Dog beside me. A Wolf comes from East, and I with my Dog come from the West. The Wolf bites the Dog, and the Dog bites the Wolf, and they both become enraged and kill one another, whereupon a great Poison is made from them, then a Theriac.<sup>29</sup> There is the Stone, hidden both from men and from demons. What everyone had concealed, I (now) have expounded and told you.

THEOPHILUS said: You have spoken very obscurely. And PLATO said: Expound what I have said. And he [Theophilus] said:

Know, all you Sons of the Doctrine, that the secret of all is a dark covering, of which the Philosophers have so often spoken; and this clothing or covering is made as follows: Make with your body tiny tablets, and cook them with the Poison, two to seven and two: that is all. Cook them in this permanent Water for forty days; on removing your vessel, you will find the garment you desire.<sup>30</sup> Wash it and cook it until it has no more blackness, then congeal it;<sup>31</sup> for when congealed, it is a great Mystery—and from it a Stone is made, called *Dasuma*, that is, fat. But first of all, after (the substance) is putrefied, put in a little white salt to dry it, so that it will not stink; and then you will find what I have said. Cook it until it is like a white Manna; then resume, until the different

colors appear.

The TURBA said: You have spoken very well.

NOTIUS said: I would also like to say something. There are two sorts of digestion in Man. The first happens in his stomach and is white. The second happens in the liver and is red.<sup>32</sup> For when I rise in the morning and see that my urine is white, I go back to bed and stay there for three or four more hours. When I examine my urine at noon, it is blood-red, because it is well cooked.<sup>33</sup> The first would have had only three hours' cooking, hence was still white and raw; but after four hours it is very well cooked and the color of blood. I have told you what I have done. He who has ears, open them and listen; he who has a mouth, keep it shut.

BELE said: You have spoken very well and without envy. May God aid you and give the Disciples the grace to hear and understand you. If no Philosopher had ever said more, people would not err as they do now, because it is only the many words and different names that make them err. But I say that all the Metals are imperfect while they are in the black state; hence Lead, being black, is imperfect. But he who removes the blackness *will be in himself*,<sup>34</sup> and it will make him white. Hence seeking elsewhere will not help you. Therefore render the Lead white, take the red away from Latona and redden the Moon—that is all. However, understand by this that our Lead is a different metal from the *common* one, because it comes from our Mine, as does the Silver and the whole Composition.

BOCOSTUS said: You have spoken well for those who will come after us, and I would like to support you. Know, O you who seek this precious Art, that if you do not remove the Spirit from the dead Body, if you do not hide it in another spirit and then make from both of them one Soul, you will have no success. *Therefore kill the Body, make it putrefy and draw from it the white Spirit; then the Soul will glorify it.* Know, too, that the Spirit does not come from the Body, but comes from the Spirit, and the Soul comes from both. The Body is Spirit, but the Spirit is not Body: the one has the other, but the other does not contain it. Keep this in mind, otherwise you will achieve nothing.<sup>35</sup>

MELOZIUS said: The whole thing must be putrefied for forty days,<sup>36</sup> then sublimate it nine times in its vessel; then putrefy it again and congeal it. Know that from that moment it will tincture everything that it enters, and infinitely. You have heard this said often enough, but no one believes it until God wills it. It is through God's just counsel that it happens thus.

GREGORIUS said: Our Stone is called *Efodebuts*, that is, Vestment of Purple, *and is none other than to kill the Living and revive the Dead; by reviving the Dead, you kill the Living, and by killing the Living you revive the Dead. And know that this is a single thing, and nothing strange: for it kills itself, and gives life to itself.*

The VICAR said: You speak all too clearly.

BELLUS replied: You are truly envious. And he said: I order you to take what you have been told of, do what you should with it without erring, and you will have a good example. If you do not know how to proceed, do as Nature does: only help her. When the Moon is in conjunction, it has no light;<sup>37</sup> but when it faces the Sun, it shines. And if it were not for the Air that stands between us and the Fire, the Fire would consume everything.<sup>38</sup>

The TURBA said: Vicar, you speak little and carelessly. And he said: The first time I speak to you, I shall speak of the Weight, the Regimen, the Colors, and the time and places of our Poison. Each of you may speak at his pleasure. I have said my say.

BOMELIUS said: Take the royal *Corsustus*, which is red, and give it Cow's urine<sup>39</sup> until its nature is converted; for Nature converts Nature and transmutes it. And Nature is hidden in the belly of the *Corsustus*. Feed it until it becomes adult and can walk on its own.

BRINELIUS said: Take the Matter that everyone knows, remove the blackness and then fortify the Fire at the right time, when it can bear it; and it will take on various colors. The first day it will be saffron colored, the second, like rust; the third, like the desert poppy; the fourth, like strongly burnt blood. *At this point the Body is spiritual, tincturing and purifying all imperfect things. This is the whole secret.*

ARISTEUS said: The Stone<sup>40</sup> is a Mother who conceives her own Son and kills him and puts him in her belly. He then becomes more perfect than he was before, and feeds from her. Then he kills his Mother, puts her in his belly and lets her putrefy; and the Son becomes his Mother's persecutor and for a time they both have tribulations in common. *This is one of the greatest miracles ever heard spoken of, and it is true, because the Mother generates the Son and the Son generates his own Mother and kills her.*

The TURBA said: Know, Sons of the Doctrine, that our Stone is made from two things. Yet the envious say that it is from one alone, because the Root is one and it is all one Matter. Other envious ones say that there are four things, being



the four qualities—Cold, Hot, Dry and Humid; but they are reduced to two,<sup>41</sup> which subsist to the end.

PYTHAGORAS said: You speak well, my Sons, and are not envious. The whole TURBA said: We spoke clearly enough; but you have ordered us not to speak too clearly, otherwise the Fools would know as much of this Science as the Wise. And PYTHAGORAS said: If you spoke clearly, I would not want your words to be written in any book. But I also order you not to be too obscure.

BALEUS said: I tell you that the Mother is in mourning for the death of her Son, and the Son wears a joyous robe the color of blood for the death of his Mother; and thus they recompense each other. The Mother is always more compassionate toward the Son than he is toward her.

STYKOS said: If you do not remove the Fire that is enclosed in the Body and add it to the Water, you will achieve nothing.<sup>42</sup> Hence I tell you to wash your Matter with the Fire and cook it with the Water; for our Water cooks and burns it, our Fire washes and denudes it. Understand my words well, without breaking your heads and imagining all sorts of things. Know that nothing is born from nothing and that like makes like. And you will not find what you are seeking in the thing, if it is not there—whatever you do.<sup>43</sup>

BONELLUS said: Know that our Water is not the common Water, but a permanent Water that ceaselessly seeks its Companion. And when it finds it, it seizes it and the two of them make a single thing. Each perfects the other, without any other thing (intervening); and it all becomes Water, a Water at first covered with blackness; and when you see it (the Companion) become black, know that this will last only forty days or at most forty-two. Then you will see it white and dense, which is the sign that the Fixed is beginning to dominate the Humid, that the Dry is drinking the Cold, and the Hot is congealing by itself.<sup>44</sup>

SISTOCUS said: You who seek this Art, I pray you to abandon all these obscure names, because our Matter is only one, and that is Water. But what then? When the blind leads the blind, both fall into the ditch. You can do everything, but it is for Nature to complete it. Cook the Black, cook the Milk, cook the Flower of Salt, cook the Marble, cook the Tin, the Silver, the Bronze, the Iron, the Sun, and you will have it all. You see that I tell you only to cook, for the *slow Fire* is everything.

EPHISTUS said: Know that the mild Fire is the cause of perfection, and the contrary [i.e., violent] is always the cause of corruption. Therefore cook first at a slow fire, until it can all bear a strong fire; because if you make your fire strong,

(the Matter) will not dissolve, and if it does not dissolve it will never reach congelation. For the Body cannot cook the Water in all of its parts, nor entirely; *and the Fire that is enclosed within the Body will not be awakened and aroused before the Body is dissolved.*

MORIENUS said: Water tinctures Water, and one Humor tinctures the other, and one Sulfur the other, and the White little by little whitens the Red,<sup>45</sup> just as the latter little by little reddens the White; and one makes the other volatile, then it fixes it; then they are One, in a middle substance more perfect than either of the two when they were separate. *Understand me, leave these Herbs, these Stones, these Metals and these strange species, and pray God with all your heart that he may make you one of us.*

BASEM said: *You cannot achieve the end without illumination, without patience and without the courage to wait;* for he who lacks patience will not enter into this Art. How can you believe that you will understand our Matter the first, second, or third time? Do not cease to read so long as you are in doubt; let this Book be like a light to your eyes, and have the patience to wait. Once I knew a great Philosopher who knew as much of it as I and anyone else. But because of his impatience, being too hasty and too keen, by God's justice, as I believe, he lost everything due to the strength of the Fire, and could not see what he desired. Hence our Master Pythagoras says that whoever will read our Books, dwell on them without distraction, and pray to God—*will command in all the World.* You seek a great secret—and do not want to take pains? Do you not see that a man will kill another, and even kill himself, for money? What would you not do, and what pains would you not take to achieve this high Science, to such great profit? When you plant and sow, do you not wait for the fruits until the time of ripening? How then can you expect the fruit of this Art in such a short time?

I tell you this so that you will not curse me: *In this Art, all haste comes from the devil,* who tries to deflect men from their good intentions. Be firm and have confidence in your Master, as we have in ours. For having believed in him and having known, we have profited. Likewise, if you believe, you will profit.

BELUS said: You have given good counsel to the Disciples. But I tell you that God has created the world with four Elements, and the Sun is its Lord and Master. Yet one sees only two: Earth and Water. And there is an Air enclosed in the Water and another in the Earth; and the Air is drawn from the Fire, which holds the Earth in the Air; and the Earth holds the Water and the Fire above the Air.<sup>46</sup> The Earth and the Fire are friends; the Air and the Water are friends. The Fire is a friend of the Water, with the help of the Air, and the Air is a friend of

the Earth, with the help of the Water. And the Water holds the Air above and below, and the Earth holds the Air and also the Air holds the Earth. The Fire is held in the Earth and the Air opens it and encloses it in the Water; and the Water opens it by means of the Air and puts it in the Air, which is enclosed in the Earth by means of the Fire that is also enclosed there. The Air opens, and the Fire arrests the Water in the Air, and the Air opens the Fire in the Earth. Blessed is he who understands these words of mine; for no man has ever spoken more clearly. They are the words of our master Pythagoras.

AZARMUS said: When God made the world, he made it round so as to have the greatest capacity. And the Father of all is the Son of his Uncle, and his Uncle is son of this Father. The Son is Brother of the Uncle, and the Father is his Sister. The Son is Father of the Uncle, and the Uncle is Son of the Father, and the Father is Son of his Uncle, who is his Son. And he who does not understand me does not believe it. His Sister is Father of the Son, and the Father is the Granduncle of his Sister, who is Father of the Son. The Son is the Mother of the Granduncle of his Sister, who is his Father, and his Son is his Uncle and his Sister is his Mother and his Daughter. And the Daughter is Niece of the Father, who is her Son, and he is her Father, who is his Son. Understand us two, who speak well; for God has willed that we speak thus with His justice and his judgment.

The VICAR said: You are speaking quite obscurely, and overmuch. But I will declare the Matter completely, without so many obscure discourses. I command you, Sons of the Doctrine: congeal the Quicksilver. Of many things make two, three, and of three one. One with three is four; 4, 3, 2, 1, from 4 to 3 there is 1, from 3 to 4 there is 1, therefore 1 and 1, 3 and 4. From 3 to 1 there are 2, from 2 to 3 there is 1, from 3 to 2, 1—1, 2 and 3 and 1, 2 of 2 and 1, 1. From 1 to 2, 1, therefore 1. I have said it all.

SYRIUS said: You are all envious. Know, O Sons of the Doctrine, that the Child is generated from Man and Woman, and if the two Sperms are not joined together, you will make nothing. But when the Woman's Sperm reaches the door of the Womb and meets the Man's Sperm, they unite. One is hot and dry, the other cold and humid. As soon as they have entered there, they mingle.

Nature, who governs by God's will, closes the door of the Womb—and they are enclosed in a skin inside the Womb, which is one of its chambers. This door and the cell of the said skin, where the Sperms are, are so well closed that the Woman no longer has her purgations and nothing more comes out. Then the natural heat is maintained gently all around the womb, digesting the two Sperms together; and the Man's Sperm only converts itself and dies in the

Woman's,<sup>47</sup> and then little by little the substance emitted by the Woman increases the Sperm, nourishes and enlarges it, and converts itself by means of the work of the Man's Sperm and the natural heat, with the help of the complex Compound; and it cooks, digests, subtilizes and purifies it until the Spirit moves in this Compound. In the first forty days there is movement, in the following days it makes milk, then blood, then the principal members, the formation of the heart, the liver, and the other organs. And then the purgations, which were dirty, bloody, and black with putrefaction become white through decoction and are carried, white, to the breasts, from which the child then feeds until it is grown. And then one gives it all sorts of beverages, and food of all kinds to eat; and it increases and grows stronger in its bones, nerves, veins, and blood.

It is the same with our Work, for him who understands it. And know that although we say in several places: put in this, put in that—*still we mean that one only has to put it in once and for all, and close it until the end*, though we say: open and put it in. Truly we have said all that so as to mislead a good many.

But the Wise, who understand our words, know our intentions and how Nature behaves. In fact, we do nothing but provide Nature with a matter to work with according to her intention, as you see happening in every generation. When we want to make a Tree grow, first we sow the perfect seed that has come from it, because every seed makes a fruit similar to that of which it is the seed; once sown, we leave it in the ground. Then it putrefies and puts forth a white sprout that the Earth nourishes, and in virtue of the active seed, which is in the putrefied seed, it grows to produce a tree like that from which the seed came. And from this Tree comes another seed, which can again multiply to infinity.<sup>48</sup> As for us, we do nothing but help the Matter along, and Nature completes it.

Likewise, if a Woman goes with several Men she will never conceive; and if by chance she does, it will be a stillbirth. For if you mix raw things with cooked, bad digestion will result. Thus we need only the two Sperms of like root. Through cooking they will change; but you will help them in the proper way up to the end. Do this, then: put away all those words and regimens, watch how Nature works, and try to imitate her regimen. Do not be so bold as to think of doing more with your regimens than she: for if she does not do it, you will certainly not do it with means of your own invention. No one can make our Stone except with our sole Matter<sup>49</sup> and through our one Regimen. So abandon all these strange words and act in conformity with Nature: for I tell you that the only thing that will make you fail is the strange words and various expressions, and the regimens and all the doses that are talked of. But take note that whatever

they (the Philosophers) have said, Nature is one single thing, *they are all in accord and all say the same*. The Fools take our words literally, without understanding the why and wherefore. (Instead) they should consider whether our words are reasonable and natural, and then take them (as they are): *but if they are not reasonable, they must refer to our intention, and not to the literal words*. But know that we are all in agreement, whatever we say. Thus attune one by means of another, and consider us; for one clarifies what another conceals, and he who really seeks can find it all. And whoever sees our Books and understands them has no need to seek here or there, nor to waste his own money [in operations of vulgar alchemy].

BASEN said: You are too bold. Our Master did not intend us to speak so clearly. And he said:

I do not want to be envious, like you others. Know, all you who seek this Art, that certain Philosophers, wishing to hide this Science, have said that you need to work at certain hours and have expressed themselves in images. But I tell you that this is unnecessary, it neither helps nor hinders; for the Matter is always ready to receive the virtue that one gives it. And our Master expresses it more clearly, saying: Our Medicine can be made in any place, at any time, at any hour, by any person; it is found everywhere and there is no need to do anything [in the external sense]. But those who say this<sup>50</sup> are aiming to hide the Science. *Therefore I say that you yourself, when you know it, will conceal it*. Hence do not be surprised if they conceal it, that being God's will.

LANUS said: Know that our Work is made from 3, from 4, from 2, and from 1—and the Fire is 1 and 2, and the Colors are 3 and the Days 7 and 3 and 4 and 1—and understand me.<sup>51</sup> And know that if you make too much fire, the Vinegar will fly away and you will find it beneath the House as little black knots; for the Vinegar is spiritual and flies away. Therefore I order you to proceed wisely and with a small fire; for only the small fire can collect the heat of the dissolved Sulfur. Otherwise you will achieve nothing. And know that God created one Mass and seven Planets and four Elements and two Poles, *where everything is its own support*, and nine orders of Angels and two Principles—Matter and Form.<sup>52</sup> Understand what I have said, because I have revealed Miracles to you.

ACSUBOFUS said: Put the red Man together with the white Woman in a round house<sup>53</sup> surrounded by a slow and continuous fire, and leave them there until everything is converted to Water—*not the common, but the philosophical*. Then if you have worked well, you will see a blackness in the upper part, which is the sign of putrefaction and lasts forty or forty-two days. Leave them both

there for a long time, until there is no more blackness, and at the end do as at the beginning. *And know that the end is no other than the beginning and that death is the cause of life, and the beginning is the cause of the end.* (You should proceed until) you see black, you see white, you see red—that is all; *because this death is eternal life after the glorious and perfect death.*<sup>54</sup>

The TURBA said: Know that you have heard truths. Take them as they are, and separate them as one separates the good plants from the weeds. And know that in our Work one must cook seven times,<sup>55</sup> and in each of the seven (cookings) a color is to be produced to perfection. And when it is perfect, one has a *live* Tincture, so excellent that the mind of man cannot comprehend it, and which is no more, neither the Matter nor the Regimen. And if you know the true Regimen and tell it to the Fools, they will say that it is impossible to make something so precious with such a little Regimen. But leave them to their notions and do not frequent them, believing who knows what; but understand us *and know the Roots from which everything multiplies.*

THEOPHILUS said: Know that the whole Assembly has concluded well.

PYTHAGORAS said: Let me speak—and you, be silent. I want each of you to speak again. For the envious have so spoiled this Science that now hardly anyone has faith in it, and such a gift of God is reputed to be a lie. But I tell you that there is one thing I know, that I have seen and touched. And I know the reason, which is everywhere: in Plants and Trees and Men and Angels and in all of Nature.

THEOPHILUS said: Our Master, it seems to me that Serpents have a venom in their belly, which if one ate it, one would die. But if you take the venom of a paste called the Theriac, one poison consumes the other and prevents death.<sup>56</sup>

SOCRATES said: Know that the Philosophers have called our Water the “Water of Life,” and have well said of it that although at first it kills the Body, afterward it brings it to life and rejuvenates it.

SEVERILIUS said: You are envious! And he said: Say what you like. Know that our Matter is an Egg, the shell is the container and there are white and red inside. Let its Mother brood on it for seven weeks, or 9 days, or 3 days; or once, or twice; or sublimate it as you choose in a small bath, for 280 days; and there will come a Chick with a red comb, white feathers, and black feet. I have told you what my Brethren had hidden from you. Understand me.

ARISTOTLE said: Know that many have spoken in different ways; but the truth is one thing, it is in the dunghill and is known by itself.

PYTHAGORAS said: How dare you speak, Aristotle? You are not yet wise enough to be able to speak with us. You should listen. All the same, what you have said is true. Listen to the Masters and to Plato.

LUCAS said: I have marveled much about the Sun, for when I look at it through a strong, dense cloud it appears yellow, green, red, and blue, and these are our various Colors which the Sulfur causes to appear.

NOSTRIUS said: Take the stone called *Benibel*, because all its Water is the color of purple and serpentine red.<sup>57</sup> Then wash the Sand of the Sea<sup>58</sup> until it is white, leave it to dry in the Sun and various Winds will arise from the West, then the Sun will come to its kingdom in the South, then the East winds will arise. But the Moon (again) raises the West winds. In the end, all becomes calm again.

ARCHIMIUS said: Know that Mercury is hidden under the Sun's rays, and the Moon causes them to be lost, and absorbs and dominates them.<sup>59</sup> However, the Sun only allows her to dominate for two days. After that, (the Moon) returns them to the Sun and wanes. And Venus is the Sun's messenger, and puts him under her rule; and (after that) Mars presents himself. And when the Sun has resumed his Reign, he gives beautiful garments from his livery to his six companions, in return for the pains they have taken. Thus know, O Children, that the Sun as you can see is not ungrateful to his Servants.<sup>60</sup> And he who has seen this speaks of it with certainty and understands it with clarity.

The PHILOSOPHER said: Our Matter is called Egg, Serpent, Gum, Water of Life, Male, Female, Benabel, Corsuflus, Theriac, Bird, Plant, Tree, Water. But all these are but a single thing, namely Water; and there is only one Regimen, namely Cooking.

DANAUS spoke: Know that some envious persons have said that this Work is done in three days, others in seven, others in one. They all tell the truth, according to their intentions. But know that each of our months lasts twenty-three days, and two days. And the week of each month has seven days, and each day forty hours. *For this concerns our times and hours.*<sup>61</sup>

EXIMIGANUS said: Bathe, dry, blacken, whiten, pulverize and redden—there in a few words is the whole secret of the Art. The 1 is black, the 2 white, and the 3 red. 80, 120, 280, two make them and they make 120. Gum, Milk, Marble, Moon, 280. Bronze, Iron, Saffron, Blood, 80. Peach, Pepper, Nut. If you understand me you are fortunate; if not, seek no more, for everything is in my words.

NOSTRIUS said: Know that Man can only produce Man; Bird, only Bird;

Beast, only Beast. And know that nothing can be corrected except by means of its nature and seed.<sup>62</sup> And know that whatever we may say, we are all in accord. But the ignorant believe us to be discordant. Know, though, that all is one, that it needs only a little Fire to dissolve, otherwise the Water's coldness would be a hindrance when we want it to dominate its Body. (But) how could the cold dominate, if it were consumed (because of a strong Fire)? This is why we have often spoken to you about the little Fire: by its means, the nigredo appears, which is the Spirit altering the other Spirit.<sup>63</sup> After the darkness comes light, after sadness great joy—and to set it on a marble Stone is our intention, of which we continually speak.

IXIMANDRUS said: Know that our first Spirit is altered, the second is mingled, the third burns. First put Vinegar on nine ounces of our Matter, and twice as much as before in the act of applying our Fire; and cook Bembel, Yeldic, Salmich, Zarnech, Zenic, white Orpiment, red Sulfur—*ours*, not the common sort. Bembel is black, and so is Yeldic: they dominate in winter during the rains, when the nights are long. And at that time the Sun descends 80 or 82 degrees from the sign of the Virgin to that of the Scales and the Scorpion—which are cold and humid. Then come Zarnech and whitest Zenic, and Orpiment which intervenes when the Moon ascends another three signs, some semi-cold and humid, the others semi-warm and humid, each sign lasting for 23 points of their number. And our Sulfur is red when the heat of the fire passes through the clouds and joins with the rays of the Sun and Moon. And Venus has already conquered Saturn and Jupiter by means of her complexion. Then Mercury, who has no more to help him, descends because all the celestial influences are against him, and the Fire, and Venus; and the Sun burns his cold and humid rays. And then, because of the great opposition existing between heat and cold, Mercury sparkles and throws impalpable spiritual sparks, and in this crisis he descends through the three hot and dry signs, and remains in each for  $43 \times 24$ ths of a degree, and a third. Whoever does not understand me should reread: for I call God to witness that this is the clearest word ever heard in learning this Science. I myself have done it thus.

EXIMIGAMUS said: Know that our very first goal is to obtain the true dark vestment; for you must know that without the black, you cannot make white. Take, then, the red Stone, *blanch it with blackness and redden it with whiteness*. And know that whiteness is hidden in the belly of blackness; draw it out as you know how, and then draw the redness from the belly of this whiteness, as you wish, for everything rests on these three points.

The TURBA said: Master, all that we say is no other than *make the fixed*



*volatile and the volatile fixed*; then make of it all something that is neither dry nor humid, neither cold nor hot, neither hard nor soft, neither fixed nor too volatile—something intermediate between the two: for it has two Natures united in itself. And know that this is done in a good seven days,<sup>64</sup> not in a moment. For every alteration happens by means of continuous activity and passivity. Take note of this.<sup>65</sup>

ARCHIMUS said: Take *Arzent*: they are black Worms with a horrible stare and venom from old tiles, the color of marine red; cook them in a fire neither too hot nor too cold: for if it is too cold they will not alter, but if too hot, conjunction will not occur by true love of themselves. *Continue your Fire for three days*, like a broody hen, *and like an enveloping feverish heat*:<sup>66</sup> guard them well in their shell. And know that by their alteration, they complete and beautify themselves. Know (however) that if you proceed without the correct weight, there will be a great delay and a great danger of fire; by which delay you will think that you have failed. I once saw a man who knew as much as me and more than all others, and by working with great haste, greed, and desire he could not see the end: thinking that he had failed, he abandoned the Work. *Be firm, not flighty of mind so as to believe now this, now that, now doubting and now trusting. Before undertaking it, consider well what we have said, and think often of our words.*

MINDIUS said: Know, all you Investigators of this Art, *that the Spirit is all, and that if there is not hidden in this Spirit another similar Spirit*,<sup>67</sup> *it will profit you nothing. And know that when the Magnesium is white after the nigredo, that has occurred.* Know, too, that it exits from the Body and thereby amends itself. You are done with searching for it, so long as you (then) take precaution in controlling it. Those who ignore the Regimen are indeed acting like blind men, or like an ass trying to play the harp. Do not bother yourself with all the names and various Regimens, because *the Truth of Nature is one, hidden in its belly*; and then our Master's words will be accomplished, which say: *Nature rejoices in Nature, Nature dominates Nature, Nature contains Nature.*

PYTHAGORAS said: You have all spoken very well. But know that some have spoken more clearly than others. And I tell you that in our Work, one must deal from the beginning with two Natures, which are of the same Substance. One is precious, the other vile; one hard, the other watery; one red, the other white; one fixed, the other volatile; *one Body, the other Spirit*; one hot, the other dry; one male, the other female, of great weight and the lightest matter. And one kills the other; and they are none other than Magnesium and Sulfur.<sup>68</sup> And know that from the beginning one dominates the three parts; and the other, which has been

killed, begins to dominate and to kill its Companion in four parts; and from the three parts arise black Kuhul, white Milk, dissolved Salt, white Marble, Tin, and Moon; from the four parts arise Copper, Rust, and Iron and Saffron, Gold and Blood, and Poppy, and the venomous Spirit that has devoured its Companion. And know that the one needs the other, because without the Spirit you cannot render the hard Body spiritual or penetrating. Likewise, you cannot make the Spirit corporeal, fixed, or permanent without the Body. This Body is red and ripe, while the Spirit is frigid and crude inside its Mine.<sup>69</sup> And know that there is no proximity between living Water and white, pure Tin, except in community—the living Water having a certain Body of its own, to which it joins itself. And know that he who does not grasp what I have now said is just an ass, and should never apply himself to this Art, being predestined never to attain it. Leave Man and human Nature; leave the Volatile and the marine Stone, the Coal and the Beasts, *and take our metallic Matter*. And know that if there are 24 ounces of it ( $12 \times 2$ ), we only need a third, namely 8 ounces ( $7 + 1$ ). Cook three of them to whiteness, and with the Sun, and the blackness will come in forty days. And know that the first Work is done more quickly than the second; and the second is done from the tenth of September until the first of February, with the great heat of Summer: and once the Winters and the Springs have passed, the fruits are already ripe and ready to gather from the Trees. The same happens here.<sup>70</sup>

The TURBA said: Despite the reverence we owe you, it seems to us, Master, that you have spoken too clearly. And he said: It seems thus to you; but the Ignorant would scarcely understand it even if one spoke more clearly still.

The TURBA said: It must be hidden from Fools and revealed to the Wise—and not otherwise; else the result of it all would be a catastrophe.

FLORUS said: Two natures are mingled in the Water of Sulfur; and it congeals and dries, it alters, whitens, and reddens with the aid of the Fire, if precisely and properly administered.

BRACCUS said: Take the 100-year-old white Tree, surrounded by a round House of humid warmth, closed from the rain, the cold and the wind. Put in it your Man, who is 100 years old.<sup>71</sup> And I tell you that if you leave him there for 180 days, this Old Man will eat all the fruits of the Tree, until he dies and turns to ashes. And he will remain as long again,<sup>72</sup> neither more nor less.

ZENO said: Know that the white Tree comes from the black Mine of 80 years: 10 more years make it white and fair; the others, various degrees of red. Know also that if you do not tincture the Moon preserved in your Vessel until it is resplendent like the Sun, you will achieve nothing. For I tell you that the

Moon—and not the Lead and the Tin—is the median term required for concordance.

LUCAS said: Know that the Fire contains the Water in its belly, a Water to be drawn out with an appropriate Fire, and then by means of hot and tepid Water (where the Fire is continually bathed).<sup>73</sup> And the servant takes the blackness of the night and puts it outside against the chimney. You must ensure that the Fire is *clear* and not too impetuous and aggressive in its action. Know that I myself sought long before achieving as much; but thanks to God, after great pains I attained what I desired: because he who does not work the Earth will not eat, nor have repose in his old age.

ISINDRIUS said: Mix the Water with the Water, the Gum with the Gum, the Lead with the Lead, the Marble with the Marble, the Milk with the Milk, the Moon with the Moon, the Iron with the Iron, the Copper with the Copper, or Sun.<sup>74</sup> Cook it all for 150 days, then as long as you wish, as you know, so that it all becomes impalpable. Read and reread our books in order to know the truth; our Science consists of nothing but transmuting hot into cold and cold into hot, so that out of it all comes a median substance that is neither hot nor cold, neither hard nor soft, but moderate in its entire complexion. And know that 180 days suffice after that.<sup>75</sup> *Surround the surrounded from inside to outside, containing the contained, and all is conquered;*<sup>76</sup> one white, one black, one red: fortify the two; make good the first—and it will multiply so as to satisfy ten assaying tests, the other only one of them. Return by returning, make it perfect by holding the content firmly in line. And note my line of containment:<sup>77</sup> the *watcher* is contained, and I teach you what no one else has told you. Understand my words.

The TURBA said: Know that the more our Stone is digested, the more its Fire is active and takes on a more *igneous* nature with respect to the other Elements, capable of more tincturing. Know, too, that he who understands the venerable words of Isindrius will understand one degree higher than the others, and two and three and four, up to infinity, through augmented and *igneous* virtue.

PYTHAGORAS said: Isindrius, God reward you for what you have said. For this is certainly the detail of which none of us has spoken. Go, Sons, note these last words relating to the *glorious action* and the *instantaneous transmutation*. Know that at the beginning of the World it lived for 280 years; but the time came when the Son of that time lasted only 3 years; finally he is so much more evil as ten is to three, and the Father has 280; and he does as much in 1 year as the Father does in 40 plus 40, and it is thus everywhere. And know that he who

knows how to cure himself takes a laxative medicine for the inside and another solidifying one for the outside, so that the one does not harm the other. Understand us and take note.

The PHILOSOPHER said: Our Composition is made from two things, which are made from one thing, and is called, when all are One, white Bronze; then, when everything is overcome, Quicksilver, *not the common sort*, and it is the *living Tincture* that the Philosophers have hidden under so many names. And I tell you that this Science is a gift that God only gives where He will; *and it consists of nothing but to dissolve and kill the Living, revive the Dead, and make of all a life that allows no (more) separation.*

The TURBA said: Know that our Work has multiple names, which we would now like to list: Magnesia, Kukul, Sulfur, Vinegar, citrine Stone, Gum, Milk, Marble, Flower of Salt, Saffron, Rust, Blood, Poppy, and Gold that is sublimated, vivified, and multiplied; living Tincture, Elixir, Medicine, Bembel, Corsufus, Lead, Tin, dark Vesture, blanched Worms, Iron, Copper, Gold, Silver, sanguine Red and very noble Red, Sea, Dew, fresh Water, salt Water, Dazuma, a Substance, Crow, Camel, Trees, Birds, Men, Weddings, Generations, Resurrections, Mortifications, Stars, Planets, and endless other names. Be aware that they all refer *to the colors that appear in the Work*, and their names have been given because of their similarity to our thing. Take care not to be misled by these names: *stay firm and immutable of heart, and be certain that the Metal is not tintured by anything except by itself.* Know that *no Nature brings improvement unless by its own Nature*; otherwise there will be no (true) improvement.<sup>78</sup> After I have spoken to you of the Fire, you will be able to take everything into account and have no reason to reproach us; thus the book will be complete in all and for all, without any diminution. And whoever has this book will have the words of Pythagoras, who was the wisest Man who ever existed, to whom God gave the whole Science—to him and to his Disciples. Know that in this Book the Art has been given in its entirety and without envy, namely, *the Matter and the Days and the Colors and the Regimens and the method and the weight, without omitting anything.*

Now I will tell you how the Fire must be. Know that I have seen Fire made in many ways: one makes it with little sticks, another with small coals mixed with ashes, for a slow fire; others make it with hot cinders; yet others without a flame, with hot vapors; others with tiny or medium blazes. But to attain the perfection of all and the accomplishment of your Work, I order you to use only *a slow fire, continuous and hot*, digesting and cooking, as Nature requires AND AS EXPERIENCE WILL SHOW YOU IN ACTION. Know that this Science is

easier than any other thing—but the names and the regimens render it obscure: thus *the ignorant take our words without understanding us*. Know also that whoever has this Art is henceforth beyond poverty, misery, tribulation, and bodily ill. Think not that our Art is untruthful. The end is hidden, in this precious Art of ours. And you must hide it from all those who ask you for it. Disciples, cherish our Books, our Colors, our Matter, our Regimens—all this being but one and the same thing.

## VIII.4

# Various Commentaries

## CORPOREALIZING CONSCIOUSNESS

From time to time it is useful to discuss some technical details. It has often been said that on the initiatic path, consciousness should be “brought down into the body.” The process may have distinct phases. One begins with the mind, which sets the theme (when it is not a matter of an already present state that only needs to be “absorbed”), recalls it, or remembers it—and holds it fixedly. Secondly, the thought is translated into an image, on which one concentrates until a corresponding emotional state arises. (The process can be facilitated if one chooses images that are not fantastic, but relate to scenes, moments, or situations that one has actually and intensely lived.) In the third stage, one abandons the image but retains its resonance, intensifies it and *induces it into the body*. At the same time one feels in one’s whole body *the state of bodily heat*, and blends this general deep sensation with the specific one that has been aroused, until one obtains a unique “tone” which should be sustained and *listened to* for a while.

A further phase, more difficult to realize than the preceding, consists in localizing oneself in the body’s seats of action—the legs and arms—and arousing a special resonance that comes, so to speak, from a sensation of *affirmation* or confirmation.

All this can also be applied to the formulae to be used by every participant in the work of magical “chains.”

## ON “MORTIFICATION”

We have already said that in some unforeseen situations, one cannot expect to be able to summon up the necessary forces unless one has already begun to

*organize* a certain base through past or current patient, methodical, and daily work. One must absolutely avoid the sort of intolerance that spurns methodical and subtle labor, as if it were not “noble” enough for spiritual work. One must avoid it, because such an allergy is often merely that of the animal that refuses to be tamed. It is difficult to recognize all the sophistries that the “animal” uses in its own defense, as soon as it notices that one is starting serious work.

Since Hermetic “mortification” was mentioned again in the previous chapter, we can say, for instance, that *killing the Bull* is a difficult undertaking when not prepared for by meticulous control, in which little by little, without seeming to do so, one begins to catch and restrain the animal as though in a net, whose meshes tighten insensibly until it bursts out—and at that very point the total and decisive act takes place.

This control, in a word, is the control of *instinct* at every moment and in every deed. We are not interested in how instinct acts in us—it is the *generic* quality, instinct as such, that is to be overcome. It would be useful here to reread what Abraxa has said, speaking of the “Knowledge of the Waters” (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 15–20), and also the extracts from the Buddhist canon regarding the construction of clear awareness, of *presence* in every action, state, thought, and sentiment (see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 173–80).

When one is startled by a sudden noise—and even spinning round when someone calls one’s name; in instinctively replacing something accidentally bumped into; in the gestures that accompany an exciting conversation; in the instinctive reactions to danger, beginning with regaining balance after tripping up; in the little sensations of irritation if a clumsy person jostles us—and everyone knows that there is no end to such a list: all of these are fragmentary manifestations of the force of the Bull, which has to be subdued. Therefore in all these situations one must anticipate, affirm oneself, halt, until one reaches a state where any instinctive reaction of this kind *spontaneously* ceases to manifest. Of course, one must still be capable of the same reaction in cases where it is useful and opportune, but it must no longer have an instinctive character—it must be an act as rapid as instinct itself, but *lucid* and voluntary.

The “Bull” then begins to find that the outer regions, in which it was browsing undisturbed, are now closed to it. The action of the discipline, occult in the true sense, is redoubled and forces it to take refuge at the center (Mithras dragging the Bull back into the “cavern”), until the moment when it fully manifests itself, with a total reaction. At this point, for the “mortification,” one must face it with the supreme affirmation of the force that has been created bit by bit, tenaciously, by resisting the various partial manifestations of instinct in

ordinary life.

Naturally all this applies when the Work is undertaken essentially with one's own forces alone.

## ON POWER

“I consider the *sense of power* the fourth characteristic of the modern spirit; it is felt in the consciousness of superiority over others. But in reality it is only an unintentional and unconscious expression of weakness; hence its importance in the child's world. For, after all, anyone gifted with true greatness, which is usually inward, will be hardly likely to estimate the outward semblance of power at all highly. Power has no temptation for Siegfried; only a Mime thirsts for it. Bismarck in all probability did not bother much about power, because he exercised it naturally. A king possesses power; it is therefore of small moment in his sight. But a merchant on the Polish frontier who keeps a king waiting in his antechamber, because the latter needs money from him, rejoices in his external power because he has none within. An entrepreneur who employs 10,000 men and experiences a sense of power in consequence is like a little boy who likes to see his dog obey the slightest command. Moreover, when neither by money nor any other outward force, power over mankind is given us, we pride ourselves in the conquest of nature. That is why our age is so childishly delighted with the ‘great’ inventions and discoveries. The man endowed with deep and elevated sentiments, a truly great generation concerned with the deepest problems of the human soul, will not be enraptured because it has made some discoveries in technical science. Power of this sort it will assuredly regard as superficial. Our own age lacks true greatness; accordingly, it only appreciates this external power, and like a child it rejoices and dedicates a veritable cult to those who possess it. Hence the high esteem in which the populace holds inventors and millionaires.”<sup>1</sup>

These observations come from a simple book on the history of economics, *Der Bourgeois* by Werner Sombart. But they are worth repeating here as a useful object for reflection, for those who are led into doubt concerning the concept of *true* power. Psychoanalysis has a term for the situation that Sombart describes: *overcompensation*. In our case, overcompensation is every *need* for power that serves to hide our actual weakness from ourselves, and to distract us from the task of really overcoming it.




# **PART IX**

## IX.1

### ABRAXA

# The Magic of Creation


Fortified and restored to life by the sacred power of the ritual, man participates in the higher virtue of *creating*.

But know that for us, to create is no metaphor. For us it signifies to give life to distinct and real beings as an act of the mind , which infuses a soul into an objective fluid form outside our material sphere.

You will understand this mystery when you cease knowing only the thinking that is dead, and casts the pale shadows of concepts and verbal abstractions, or flickers in the sterile fireworks of polemic and speculation. Then you will know the *profound* thinking that rises out of the whole body like something weighty and vibrant, plastic and elementary: the *expiration* from the body and the bones—the breath of the Stone.

Spurn the illusory idealisms, jealous guardians of the incorporeality of thought. Instead, know thinking as something concrete, as it were material and corporeal, and alive, like a reality *in space* if not actually subject to *all* the laws of space.

They truly do not know that every spiritual sublimation causes a corresponding material “precipitate”: they must consider thinking as incorporeal, because they are ignorant of the higher power that can be extracted as incorporeal from the corporeal; thus, they believe they can accuse you, who understand thinking in this way, of “materialism.” But I tell you that once you are unfettered, you come to feel thinking no longer as *you*, but as something of *yours*—and just as a strong man can stretch out his arm and retract it, thus you

feel you can dominate it. Thereupon it passes into bodily form, it transforms itself into a plastic precipitate, self-acting and self-reacting under the impulse of . And then you can begin the *magic of creation*.

*Concentration* here is not the cerebral effort of the mind intent on rejecting images and keeping still: it is creating a current, an energy flow, a vibration that takes a single direction, giving the form of a rhythmic body to the mass of thought-force that you feel coming from the depths of your body. You fix images in the inner light, and they serve as a skeleton: the thought-force saturates it with living substance; the mind kindles a soul in it. You have then created an *entity*.

I call it “entity,” i.e., a being that exists in itself, with a life of its own, a force of its own, which can act in space, outside you. It consists of a “charge” attached to an idea and accumulated by concentration; thus its intensity varies with the status of the operator, the power of the formula that gave it a body and of the concentration itself, as well as the latter’s duration.

Under certain conditions you can attach such an entity to an object, which becomes saturated by it: its own energy can “charge” a thing, just as you can saturate a condenser with electrical energy.

Thus to begin with, the way is open to understanding *amulets*: objects to which the magical ritual has bound a body of influences, oriented toward a special quality. But you can also see how amulets are merely superstitious objects that can act only through suggestion, when they lack someone with the necessary power of consecration, concentration, and projection of force.

The idea that gives the entity its quality can also be that of a motion. *You can create an entity whose soul is the impulse to a given motion*. I will explain.

Suppose that a magus wants a person to kill, or kill himself. He forms the image of a violent action, and in the fire of concentration that can last for months, saturates it with force, makes it plastic and animated. A body develops around it as a current of energy. At some point he takes an suitable weapon, say a dagger, and *binds* his creation to the object. It is enough for the destined person to pick it up by chance. No sooner has he done so than it discharges instantly on him, like the energy contained in an electric condenser. At the instant of contact the chosen person is possessed by the impulse to perform that motion: he may even go so far as to kill, or kill himself.

The truly independent character of the forces objectified and fixed in such magical works shows in the fact that if you yourself, having “charged” the

object, happen to touch it, you will be seized by the impulse to perform the intended motion, and may even obey it.

Instead of a motion, you can induce a feeling, an emotion, or a passion as the soul of an entity. The procedure is the same. Upon contact with the object, saturated by long concentration on the theme of a passion first created in oneself, the predestined person is instantly possessed by that feeling or passion: love, hate, fear, exaltation, *etc.*

You should also consider the special case of illuminating influences that are attached to a certain book, for example, and work as a force for awakening that gradually enables you, as you read, to comprehend it and to realize its secret. This power is as real as the other one, whose discharge can strike the profaners of consecrated places and tombs.

The work of creation can also be performed by several people together (in a chain), so that the current that results, spontaneously or by virtue of the ritual, has the same direction, the same vibration, and the same intention as though it were *one* single thought.

In the East it is told of a trader whose mother, an extraordinarily religious lady, insistently begged him to bring her some relic from a holy land to which he was going. In the end, to save embarrassment, he pulled a tooth from a dead dog and gave it to his mother, assuring her that it was from a famous bodhisattva. The news got around: people flocked from all parts to adore the new relic, for which they built a tabernacle. Now, it happens that at a certain moment, phenomena occur of light rays shining from the dog's tooth. You understand that this cannot be explained by the sacred nature of the object: but the concentration of minds animated by faith deposited and *created* a previously nonexistent virtue in it, as an independent objective quality.

In the same way, following natural causes and denying nothing but pious superstition, you can understand the real nature and possibility of certain miracles that happen in famous sanctuaries, and which cannot be reduced to the simple power of suggestion. There are actual places in which the uninterrupted faith of generations has created an entity that is really present and resident, whose power can manifest and work "miraculously" on those who are able to enter into rapport with it.

The same can be said of symbols and signs which were the souls of nations and traditions: the objects of great psychic currents that saturated them over generations. And thus, analogously and *positively*, you could explain the extraordinary power over people's spirits that some of these signs and symbols

have had at certain moments, and still have: the power of exaltation, enthusiasm, animation, through which crowds sometimes become a single being, in which the very thing that is invisibly bound to those symbols, signs, or images comes to life. One step further and you are able to penetrate the essence of the power enclosed in the pentacles and sigla used in magic: the conscious, constant, and fruitful practice of traditions by magi has bound them to entities of power, and saturated them with a virtue which, under the right conditions, can produce marvelous effects.

Keep in mind that once you have reached the degree at which thought takes on the nature that I mentioned, the creative power may even manifest spontaneously in external phenomena, without involving your will. In other words, if you have been deeply concerned with a thought and meditated on it for a while, it may take the form of an apparition perceptible to more sensitive subjects, almost like a phantasm beside you, yet of which, in principle, you are unaware.

By exalting this virtue to the maximum, you may attain the supreme form of creation: the *creation of a god*—a god who becomes your instrument, the magical arm of your will.

But the practice for attaining that requires an extreme discipline and concentration. I will explain it as taught in the traditions that have cultivated it.

The magus retires into a sort of niche, just sufficient for his movements, absolutely isolated, with only a hole for air and for passing him a minimum of food, without his seeing the bearer. He takes up a special posture—one of those that combine occult methods of connecting and closing certain fluidic currents with forms of equilibrium that allow the body to stand effortlessly, like an object placed on the ground. His movements are in fact reduced to a minimum—and from this magical immobility there arise forces that saturate the environment, and a certain aura propitious to the operation is formed. Sleep is reduced to a brief interruption: then comes a stage in which the difference between day and night is almost unnoticed: an undifferentiated, continuous consciousness.

Having satisfied these conditions, the magus fixes a god as though it were really before him, like a statue. He fixes it in all its attributes, tirelessly, uninterruptedly, with an intensity that grows with the great quantity of force unleashed through magical immobility, excluding every other thought—and *this practice lasts for months, sometimes even for years.*

Little by little, brief apparitions begin to appear, until the moment when the god becomes *visible*—and from then on it remains as such for the magus. A


special phase of concentration follows, aimed at *animating* the image already present. In fact it suddenly *acquires movement*. It stirs, its eyes *look*, its mouth opens and it speaks—you hear its voice, feel the contact of its hands when it touches you, vibrate with the radiation that comes out of it.

When this point is reached, the magus no longer needs to be enclosed. He is born from his retreat with the creature he has generated, and which can be exteriorized and made visible to other people. It is an invisible instrument of the magus's will: not limited, as he is, by matter, space, and place, it can do much that men cannot do because of these conditions.

The initiates in this art assert, however, that an entity formed through magical action can behave like a son who emancipates himself from the father who gave him life, to the point of rebelling and turning against him. The god tries to detach itself from its creator, to escape his power. It is said that some of them, sent away, never return, becoming wandering forces like terrible automata (remember here the Kabbalistic legend of the *Golem*). And they also tell of battles between the magus and his creature, sometimes with tragic consequences for the magus himself.<sup>1</sup>

All this shows that it is not a simple hallucination imposed on the mind during the terrifying isolation. And this is similarly proved by the fact that *you cannot destroy a god at a stroke*, once it has reached animation. To *dissolve* it, you need to undertake another work of months, in reverse, devitalizing both the image and its attributes. And you feel a life that resists tenaciously, like a man battling against dissolution from an illness.

When the god is not simply an instrument of common magic, it may be an image highly potentialized by the spirituality and perfection of a superior nature: a real god. Consider the saints and ascetics, who in their meditations, concentrations, and “imitations” of the divinities in which they believe—Christ, Buddha, etc.—are unconsciously performing an analogous work of *creation* of a god. In such cases there is a further phase: the magus's self-identification with his own creature, so that he absorbs its virtue and it becomes a second body, which he can take on when he wishes to *go forth and act*.

The whole scheme works as follows: the unformed in you  objectivizes itself and coagulates around an image, *realizing* its virtues; the form then descends into the formless, on which it reacts until it communicates its own formation, thus becoming the magical body “free from any superfluous humidity



.” The magus works with it directly with works of action, contemplation, and communication, ascending beyond the surface of the Waters and again descending, possessing in himself the power of the two natures.

## NOTE BY UR

The present essay by Abraxa partly repeats and paraphrases facts told by Alexandra David-Néel in Paris, on the basis of long and direct contacts with Tibetan initiatic circles (see A. David-Néel, “Psychische Schulung in Tibet,” in *Die Christliche Welt*, nos. 1–2–3 of 1928). [See the final chapter of her book *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (New York: Kendall, 1932). The page references below are to the German article cited by UR. —*Trans.*]

It may be interesting to add what David-Néel reports, namely that in the oldest Tibetan tradition the magical procedures are not considered so much in view of practical applications, as proof of a metaphysical teaching.

“We should not forget that these magical productions, in the majority of cases, are only a counterpart of the mystical instructions, to show the disciple how the entire universe, from the highest god down to the speck of dust, is nothing but a creation of his spirit.” (p. 136, n. 3)

“The supreme goal of this practice [of creating a god] consists in making clear to the disciple that the gods are solely creatures of his own thought. ‘You take this image, this feeling, this god—says the Master to the disciple—and think them real, but now I give you the means by which you can bring forth forms by your own power, which have the same objective appearance. Yet they are magical apparitions that have nothing substantial. You then know that the images, thoughts, passions, and the gods in which you habitually believe are of the same nature. You know that it is a magical power (*māyā-shakti* or *māyā* has the double meaning of “unreality” and “magic”) that forms the actual substance of all manifested things.” (p. 127)

In other words, through magic one would be led to immaterialism, to the doctrine of the supreme unity conceived as immanent (or, according to point of view, transcendent).

David-Néel also states that one who is able to produce phenomena like those mentioned above avoids displaying himself, has no interest in convincing anyone of their reality, and would never communicate his teaching to anyone

who wanted to make it a simple object of critical or scientific research in the Western sense. They only show them to disciples from time to time, for the sole purpose of proof, as we have said, of a metaphysical teaching and of a corresponding realization of it, far from any immediate advantage of curiosity, personal utility, or sensationalism.



## IX.2

PIETRO NEGRI

# On the Opposition Contingent on Spiritual Development

In the previous part (VIII.1),<sup>1</sup> Ea wrote: “One of the prejudices which has facilitated the intrusion of moralism into esotericism is the belief that initiatic development is a kind of natural prolongation of so-called human values, whereas it is a matter of two discontinuous directions, like horizontal and vertical.”

It might have been more appropriate to speak of “diversity,” in the etymological sense, than of discontinuity of directions. Moreover, we would observe that the example of these two directions is none too exact, since every point of space on the earth’s surface has only one vertical direction, whereas the same point has infinite horizontal directions.

If one puts heaven or the spirit above, and earth, matter, and the body below, then uses the symbolism of the vertical line to express the *modus vivendi* (way of life), there is no need or help in resorting to other lines to distinguish the common *modus vivendi* from the initiatic. It is enough to distinguish the two directions on this one vertical line: the descending one of “fall” and the ascending one of ascesis. The symbol thereby shows immediately that there is no discontinuity or diversity of directions, but simply opposition, inversion, and contrast. The discordance of which Ea speaks is nothing but a derivation and a particular case of the radical antagonism between the two tendencies and attitudes of life. We propose examining this argument a little more deeply, both in its generality and with particular regard to the difficulties that arise between the demands of the “Great Work” and everyday life.

We do not, of course, intend to devalue Ea's essay, which has every right to combat the profane concept that makes of esotericism the simple, natural, and destined development of human life and values, as well as reproving the consequent intolerant claim to impose "morality," "culture," "devotion," and similar nostrums as specifics for asceticism. The Western tradition has long insisted that it is not enough to rely on nature for achieving the Great Work; it is necessary, at least in general, to resort to *art*, an art variously called pastoral, divine, regal, sacerdotal, or royal; and whilst the Hermetic writers say that there is nothing to be done beside following and imitating nature, they also add that one must help her with *ritual* and with *art*.

In antiquity, no one thought of a universal law of evolution by virtue of which *everyone must* perfect himself, nor was the development of the individual made to depend on an exaltation of human values; nor did such development consist of changing the common man into a good or better man. The concern was not with prolonging the human phase of life, but with putting an end to it. "Perfected," in the etymological sense, means precisely he who has "completed" and reached the end: namely, the end of the human phase. Initiation endows the initiate with a new life, and consequently the end of the old life, not its continuation or improvement. Thus the perfected and initiated man cannot possibly be identified with the upright man, whose prerogative is not wisdom but righteousness.<sup>2</sup>

The modern idea and belief in spiritual evolution, to which the whole of humanity and every individual is supposedly subject, differs in many respects from the doctrine of human weakness and initiatic stability.<sup>3</sup> However, they are historically connected, having passed through various phases, starting from a deformation of the esoteric doctrine of salvation. The belief in the "similarity" and "brotherhood" of *all* men, all equal in the sight of God because all equally sons of God; the despicable attribution of an anthropocentric and anthropomorphic character to God's justice; the simplistic, egoistic, mercantile, and consolatory faith in *rewards* in present and future life—these lead to the profanation of the doctrine of salvation through democratization, imagining that the initiate's prerogative can be put within reach of every believer. *Art* and catharsis are reduced to devotion and morality, so that faith, morality, and devotion are all that the pious believer needs to get salvation at a bargain price. It only remains to apply this concept not just to all believers but to everyone, substituting for faith in Jesus faith in evolution, downplaying devotion and desperately hanging onto morality, to arrive at the modern theory of man's spiritual evolution through moral agency.

We must say in passing, and so as to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, that the responsibility for this profanation does not fall entirely or directly on Jesus. He did not say, in fact, that all were called to the Kingdom of Heaven: he said that *many* (i.e., a lesser or greater part of *all*) are called, but (of these) few are chosen (Matt. 22:14); also that "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). And not only were some not even called, but Jesus exhorted his disciples to be careful not to give that which is holy to the dogs, neither to cast pearls before swine; though at the same time he did tell them to preach the gospel to all people and to every creature (Mark 16:15), presumably including the swine. Reason, if permitted here, must conclude that in the preaching of the Gospel, the pearls should not exactly be on show, and that this preaching, addressed to all, is not the same as that which was only addressed to "many."

It was none too easy a business if one relied on Jesus' teachings. But the democratic germ inside the new religion, the demands of individuals, the tactical opportunities of proselytism, and the spirit of brotherhood were all in the ascendant; and salvation, or at least the possibility of salvation, was applied, one might say, to everyone. To attain it, it was enough to *believe* in the Father,<sup>4</sup> or the Son,<sup>5</sup> or both, paying scant attention to the passages from Matthew cited above, and reducing to mere ceremonies the birth of Water and of the Spirit necessary for entry into the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:5). The belief in the "similitude" and consequently the natural parity of the destiny of all men, once rooted in the Christian mind, has remained as an accepted and unconscious postulate even in many who are distanced from Christianity, or believe they are, whether they are spiritualists or not. A good number of today's movements and sects seem to have made a splendid business by grafting the "scientific" theory of evolution onto this belief of theirs, and giving a scientific gloss to their doctrine of spiritual evolution, obligatory and guaranteed, and of assured salvation for all.<sup>6</sup>

Among these are movements and organizations with initiatic pretensions, which proclaim their pious desires as esoteric doctrines; and it is these very movements that consider initiatic development as a sort of natural extension of so-called human values. Having guaranteed that spiritual evolution is inevitable, we cannot see why they exhort one to cling to morality like a limpet to its rock. For the Theosophists, for many spiritualists, and for others whom we leave unnamed, this life is a kind of school which one attends to learn a specific lesson. After that, if one has not learnt it, or not learnt it well enough, one comes back into incarnation; and although in this way the school has become mostly

populated with recidivists and dullards, thanks to the power of evolution they all progress, more or less speedily but with certainty, allowing them to enter other cheerful and successive phases of the same kind in the “planetary chains,” until by hook or crook they arrive at initiation and beyond.

Like sour fruits ripened in straw, souls mature through karma and reincarnation (says Theosophical doctrine) to the great consolation . . . of the fruits. Hence the initiatic warning *ars longa, vita brevis* (art is long, life short) is meaningless; there is plenty of time, and he who has not succeeded in this incarnation can wait for the next, and the next, and so on. Although he has no memory of his own past or his own identity through the various incarnations, even the most recidivist of laggards ends up arriving in Paradise, thanks to the providential escalator of reincarnation!

Enough of these rosy illusions! Let us face reality, as Romans should.

The possibility of living in the material world as individuated consciousness is bound, at least ordinarily, to the possibility of the individual bodily organism’s existing and subsisting. To realize this possibility generally requires conformity to the conditions of the physical world and to its laws. In theory, and in strict logic, it would seem that only the bodily organism should be bound in this way, but in practice, given the relationship of consciousness to the body, the necessities of material life indirectly influence consciousness, too.

We observe, first, that if the organism subsists, it is only thanks to a continual exchange, a continual assimilation of outside elements accompanied by continual elimination. This happens partly without any difficulty, as in breathing, but it very often requires attention, labor and conflict, as with the food needed to restore animal organisms, not least man’s. Neither is the provision of food enough to assure the organism’s survival: it has to defend itself against all the forces that could destroy it. In a world ruled by the iron law of *mors tua vita mea* (your death [is] my life), it is not enough to get one’s own food, but one has to avoid becoming prey and food for someone else.

Now, every living organism, as an expression in definite form of the universal life, wants above all to live and survive. There is a deep desire for life that manifests as the survival instinct and spurs on consciousness to occupy and preoccupy itself with the organism’s needs. In moments of danger it emerges, lucid and irresistible, supressing all in the desperation of its supreme self-defense.<sup>7</sup> Of the very few voices capable of overcoming its voice are love in all its forms, the instinct of preservation of the species, the fanaticism of beliefs, and the inner impulse to a metamorphosis.

Consciousness is continually driven and spurred on by this deep desire to earn its existence in a life made from labor and struggle, whether in earth, sea, or air. The happy times of the earthly paradise are long past, and the idyllic times have not yet arrived, as prophesied in the kitschy representations of gentle Jesus with the usual innocent lambkin and a tender, vegetarian lion. Today, as in Heraclitus's time, the law of life is war, πόλεμος, the *struggle for life*,<sup>8</sup> and one is lucky if the sweat of one's brow is enough to earn one's bread. As for emulating the lilies of the field, it would be inadvisable in these hard times; it can be done, especially with the help of certain organizations that satisfy *la voja da capa' senza fatica* (the wish to live without work), as Belli says,<sup>9</sup> but that has its disadvantages. Besides, not everyone can be such an egoist as to put up with living at others' expense.

The truth is that despite all efforts, toils, and struggles, the individual is destined to succumb in the end. But even when one is conscious of it and remembers it, reasoning is certainly not going to persuade the instinct of self-preservation to give up its appeals and demands. Hence the individual persists in his attitude and keeps his attention on the endless daily struggle until the end of his life-cycle, which generally means until death and rarely until a rebirth.

What we want to emphasize is that the inexorable law that makes life a mortal struggle has the effect of a perennial and tyrannical claim on the attention of consciousness, thus binding it to the conditions and material plane of life. That determines, or at least contributes to determining the identification and limitation of consciousness to individual, organic consciousness, whose attention is polarized toward the external world. The food needed by an organism is in fact found outside it; and it is also outside, in the external world, that are found dangers and enemies who menace its integrity and its life; the senses and experience make one perpetually aware of them. Thus dominated and sustained by the instinct of self-preservation, with the senses sharpened by experience, the individual concentrates attention on this exterior world, keeping vigilant toward every event and always ready to act or intervene.

Because of the very conditions of bodily life, consciousness *must* maintain its outwardly watchful attention; consequently it concentrates, fixes, and polarizes itself in external perceptions, and the habit of living in and through ordinary, sensible reality becomes its second nature.

Given this intensification of bodily sensibility, this concentration on the material order of perceptions, sensibility for perceptions of other and higher orders naturally tends to be partially or totally lacking. Every attention is

accompanied, we might even say made possible, by a concomitant distraction. Attention turned toward the senses, to the life and world outside, is accompanied by distraction from the life and world within; the habit of attending to whatever is happening in the outer world incurs the habit of not paying attention to the voices of the inner world: thus the inner sensations, rare and feeble, pass unnoticed, spiritual deafness is reinforced and becomes a *normal* condition, and consciousness, unmindful and ignorant of its own deafness, ends not only unaware of the very existence of an inner reality, but denying its possibility and being unable even to conceive of it.

Finally, the demands of physical life develop and sharpen the senses and organs of defense and offense, hence also the intelligence, but they do not develop spirituality. The supposed law of spiritual progress is not at all inherent in the conditions of material life—quite the contrary. The iron necessity of adaptation to the environment thus entails the waning and loss of spiritual sensitivity, veiled in the myth of the “Fall.” And by the law of inertia, valid both in physics and in metaphysics (*quod est superius est sicut quod est inferius*—what is above is like that which is below) consciousness remains in that state unless another force, a new force, enters the field to balance, conquer, or combine with the instinct of individual preservation.<sup>10</sup> We have already mentioned some of these forces. Among them we are concerned with the will to preserve individual consciousness, not to be confused with the instinct to preserve the bodily organism: an intelligent will quite distinct from that brutal and imperious instinct.

Intelligent will, because vague and blind aspirations alone cannot rediscover Ariadne’s thread in the labyrinth.

One must first take stock of the situation, and understand that one must retrieve consciousness from its slavery to instinct, and free oneself from the habit of feeling life *sub specie exterioritatis* (in exterior mode). It is no use whatever to abandon oneself to a creed, to trust in the rules of morality, to sit back in the omnibus of reincarnation, to melt with devotion, or to stick out one’s neck in the hope of a spoonful of grace.

It seems a simple thing, yet it is not. Whatever one does or says, one comes up against incomprehension. It is painful to see the crude notions of many so-called spiritual people, infected with materialism and anthropomorphism. One could cite many examples of this inability to grasp the sense of spiritual reality; for present purposes, the typical example offered by Jesus’s disciples will suffice.

The chief goal of this Asiatic prophet was to preach the “Gospel of the Kingdom.” When speaking to the masses, he resorted to parables, “that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand” (Luke 8:10). But with the disciples, whom he thought capable of understanding the *mystery* of the Kingdom of Heaven, he tried to make them understand what it meant. Time and effort thrown to the winds! Those Levantines persisted in conceiving of it materialistically and expecting the imminent advent of a new political regime. Despite the explicit declarations in Mark (12:34) and Luke (9:62; 16:16), and the categorical statement “Neither shall they say, lo here, or lo there; for behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21), Jesus’s disciples “thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear” (Luke 19:11), because Jesus was nearing Jerusalem. They persisted in their incomprehension to the end, because we see them asking Jesus, appearing to them after his death: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). After that, their honest declaration (Acts 4:13) that they were illiterates and idiots seems superfluous.

There was similar incomprehension concerning the doctrine of the resurrection, and naturally so because the two doctrines are linked to one another. In the Gospels it is spoken of in vacillating and ambiguous terms: sometimes it is resurrection *from* (ἀπὸ) the dead (e.g., Matt. 14:2); more often expressed with ἐχ (e.g., Luke 20:35, Mark 12:25, John 20:9); and at other times it mentions resurrection *of* the dead (e.g., Matt. 22:31). Paul uses the two expressions indifferently (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:12). Finally, the gross and popular Jewish idea of the resurrection of the flesh emerges in the Acts of the Apostles (2:26) with a citation of Psalm 16. The same process of materialization is always at work. Nor is that all. Whereas Jesus made it clear enough (Matt. 22:23–32; Mark 12:25–27) that the resurrection is not made for the “dead” but on the contrary reserved only for the “living” (in the Kingdom of Heaven, where they naturally survive), this resurrection of the flesh ended by being extended without distinction to all, including the damned (Acts 24:15).

It would be very instructive to follow the phases of this progressive obfuscation of spiritual understanding. Paul himself scolds his devotees for having become “dull of hearing” (Heb. 5:11), and he states categorically that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50). When he tells of his rapture to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2), he cannot say whether it was in or out of the body, and thus admits implicitly that one could go to the third heaven with one’s body, as to anywhere else. And this happened soon after the death of Jesus! We will refrain from comment on how things are going today, except for saying that Jesus’s invectives (Matt. 23:13–15) against the priests and

the Church of his time do not seem to have become outdated!

After recognizing the radical antithesis between the conditions and demands of physical life and those of spiritual life, we must resolutely go in reverse. It is no longer a question of resolving the nagging *problem* of everyday life, but of confronting the immanent *mystery* of eternal life; the problem of existence must give way to the mystery of being. One must cease living *sub specie exterioritatis* (in exterior mode) and begin living *sub specie interioritatis* (in interior mode). The beginning of initiatic life consists of interiorizing oneself, of *inire*.<sup>11</sup> “*Visita interiora terrae, rectificando invenies occultum lapidem veram medicinam.*” (Visit the interior of the earth; by rectification you will find the hidden stone, the true medicine.) If instead of the terms *interior* and *exterior* one uses those of *above* and *below*, *superior* and *inferior*, or the symbolism of the vertical line, this symbol immediately suggests which way to go: stop descending and falling, and begin to climb, to rise, *re-surgere* (to “resurge” or resurrect). Many of the symbols used in initiatic ceremonies, and much of traditional terminology, goes back to this simple and fundamental concept. To the human “fall” they oppose *anastasis* (arising), *egersis* (arousal), and the resurrection of the initiate; to human caducity, initiatic stability.

A first perception of the inner reality can sometimes flower spontaneously and unexpectedly: we have already spoken of it, relating an experience of our own, in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 8–9. But such experiences are rare, their duration brief, and the person concerned, surprised by the unexpected advent of the new state of consciousness and entirely absorbed by it, lets it escape without being able to *fix* it. Just as transitory are the similar results that can be achieved through the “corrosive waters” (see Iagla’s essay in this volume, pp. 146–52), which can also cause a host of troubles, either from the shock or wear and tear to the organism, or from the danger of burning the Sulfur with an excessive and sudden Fire; or again because one may give in to the temptation of letting oneself go, deliberately and permanently indulging in the pleasure of detachment. *Experto crede Ruperto* (Trust in the experienced one). The *via regia* (royal way), the magistral path, is different. It is the traditional one of art and ritual.

But even the Royal Art cannot abolish the contrast between the conditions and demands of the two attitudes of life: a contrast that necessarily increases in any ritual operations requiring isolation and a very special tranquility. Even for sleeping, one feels the need for a retreat and protection; one must abandon the habitual position of attention and defense and rely on the residual perceptions of



the ear. The individual who feels exposed to dangers and disturbances tries to provide for the inevitable helplessness of sleep before letting go of his consciousness, by finding an artificial shelter, isolating and hiding himself in it. One can see how isolation and tranquility are also necessary when one wants to attain the inner state of *silence*.

We also observe that in the case of sleep, fatigue ends by dulling all sensibility, so that it is possible to sleep despite the nuisance of insects and even in the midst of the inferno set off by an air raid. In contrast, when consciousness sinks into ritual silence with the body totally relaxed and immobile, sensibility is not lessened but refined and sensitized to the utmost. If the attention is allowed to wander through some call from the outer world, one can obviously not simultaneously maintain silence. However, once it is attained, the disturbance of noises is no longer so serious, because as in sleep, sounds are not even perceived, or do not disturb consciousness, which is not interested in them and does not respond to the instinctive call.

This nuisance of noises is felt especially by someone living in a big city, where there is no respite from the infernal tempest of sudden and searing noises, expressly designed to force attention: horns, whistles, bells, chimes, sirens, and such devilries. Even this is nothing to the aggravation of music: beside its noise there is the magical action of tone and rhythm which intervenes to disturb the regular rhythm of breathing, based on that of the pulse. It is even worse for someone unfortunate enough to have a musical temperament: imagine having got the better of the street noise and being absorbed in the ritual, or almost so, and then suddenly hearing from the next-door apartment the mindless rhythms of a radio or disc player; there is little to be done, and it does not help to fume with the thought that one's neighbor's prime fault is that of existing. And even if one finally gets over the rhythm and the seductive melody, how much effort and how many Ave Marias!

In the countryside, things go somewhat better in this respect, but even there you can't stop dogs howling at the moon, or the night bird that settles under your window to punctuate the nocturnal peace with the lonely sorrow of its intermittent cry. These are the endless and incessant manifestations of physical life, whose very nature is to disturb and recall someone who is trying to retract his own consciousness from this form of life.

Another curse is insects. With the acute sensibility of the ritual, the fly strolling on one's linen robe seems like a grasshopper, and one distinctly hears the noise of the jumping flea that hits the robe or the wall. Years ago we were doing the ritual in an inner room of an isolated old tower by the sea, with

enormously thick walls. The conditions were ideal: the only biped around was the falcon that now and again took flight with its strident cry. The only opening was a tiny window in the thick wall; but between its weatherworn frame and the wall there was a little gap, through which a hornet once entered, probably attracted by the smell of incense. We noticed it at the beginning of the ritual because of the noise it made with its claws, walking on the paving! And unfortunately insects are not content with making noise: they also touch and sting you. Habit and instinct compel one to chase them away and scratch the affected part; but one cannot do that during the ritual without interrupting it. One must keep still, overcoming the unbearable itch and the pressing desire to combine prudence with scratching. These are some of the obstacles, small but very annoying, that everyday life interposes in ritual practice, and which it is difficult to eliminate. For the same reason the *otium religiosorum* (leisure of the religious) requires or would require an oasis of peace and silence, and the hermits, monks, and all those who love their neighbor best when he is distant, enjoy privileged conditions in this respect. But the benefit bestowed by this external condition is not enough, and we are not at all sure that the contemplative Orders know how to profit from it today.

These obstacles occur suddenly, and their origin in the outer world is clear and evident. There are others in which this connection is less direct, though they are always the result of the instinct of self-preservation. For example, during the ritual one sometimes feels brusque and unexpected sensations like slipping; subtle and hitherto unknown sensations and experiences occur in the depths; and one cannot always control oneself promptly and surely enough to prevent disturbance from surprise and instinctive fear that freeze and halt the ritual's course.

But the labor of achieving the Great Work is by no means exhausted by the special practices of the ritual, of which we have spoken up to now. The stages that are attained must also be *fixed* and held present throughout the day. One must remain always fully conscious and in charge, without letting oneself be taken over by the occupations of life, without being caught and upset by events. In many situations it is necessary to intervene promptly and energetically, and through long habit the normal tendency in such cases is to concentrate all one's attention on them, forgetting the rest and forgetting oneself. One must be on guard against this tendency, master it, and, while acting consciously and according to the demands of the moment, neither fall from the spiritual level achieved, nor hem oneself in or polarize oneself in a particular contingency or direction. Here, too, the obstacle to be overcome has the same nature and origin

as we have met with before.

Spiritual development, far from being a natural product of life, is not in the least favored by ordinary outer circumstances or by acquired tendencies. It is the fruit of work and of art: it is the work par excellence, the Great Work at which all the builders and all the true alchemists work *ritually* according to the rules of the *Royal Art*.

## IX.3

# Some Effects of Magical Discipline

## The “Dissociation of the Mixed”

What follows should be taken with the general reservation that reactions differ, according to individuals and to the methods used. We are not saying that the phenomena to be described necessarily occur in everyone, or in the same manner.

We have often stated that the principles and essential experiences relating to the metaphysical plane are invariable. But one first has to *arrive* at that plane. This implies a preliminary work, a work that, given the diversity of individuals and the variety of possible methods, must be expected to yield different phenomena even though the cause remains constant, which is what happens to the human complex as it begins to transcend the individual condition. As long as one is traversing the “Waters,” ascending the vertical stem that crosses them until the lotus opens into the free air, such invariability is out of the question, for it refers to the purely metaphysical field. Until then the environment, the epoch, the personality, heredity, etc., may all influence the process.

We must also mention that only certain elementary reactions are treated here, chosen from those which have a *negative* aspect. This is in order that one should not be alarmed if they occur, but having been warned, will know their significance and persist in one’s practice.

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A first reaction may be an awakening of instinctivity and automatism. This surprises many people, although it is natural and predictable.

We know that the individual is not a *united* being (and a long way from becoming one), but a “compound.” We have identified ourselves with the various components, which appear in each of our *faculties*. In practice this “sympathy” tends to loosen, with the result that the I sets itself up in quasi

independence. It is natural that while this is happening, the other faculties acquire a corresponding autonomy, producing this phenomenon of accentuated automatism and instinctivity.

Knowing what is happening, one should stay calm when phenomena of this kind occur. They can sometimes produce a sort of inability to organize one's mental life. In time a higher form of unity prevails, replacing the purely aggregative and contingent unity of the ordinary state. For instance, there may be spontaneous motions, or words that keep breaking out repetitiously, often closely linked to certain trains of thought; or other forms of thought that keep repeating themselves, becoming one-track ideas of a somewhat obsessive type.

Another phenomenon derived from automatism is that mental connections based on *association* may prevail over those based on rational thought. One thought leads automatically to another by virtue of contiguity and analogy, rather than through a reasoned and controlled connection. Someone who does not maintain the calmness of an observer, but identifies himself with these internal transformations, is also exposed to dangers in the doctrinal field: he is led to see the most extravagant connections between unconnected things and events. This is the *positive* origin of a series of confusions, arbitrary associations and comparisons, and fantastic deductions that certain occultists attribute in good faith to having reached a higher illumination and comprehension, whereas they are nothing but divagations and fantasies.

Understanding this, one must always remember that internal phenomena have no principle and significance in themselves; one must resist accepting them at face value, and search instead for what is behind them, once they have been reduced to the status of *symptoms*.

Once the dissociation is noticed, each single element acts automatically and adapts its own physiognomy to the occult forces, impulses, and thoughts that are manifesting. These states can also serve as a favorable condition for effective self-knowledge. Indeed, the psychoanalytic method works with spontaneous associations and automatic manifestations of the psyche, in order to unearth contents that usually remain unconscious. We would only point out that such contents are not the I, but rather that within the I which is the not-I. The I, on the contrary, is that which distinguishes itself from the not-I, and in so doing, makes it appear before it, so to speak, so as to know it objectively.

In some cases this is not just a manner of speaking, but a literal expression: when in these phases of dissociation the imagination finds itself in the free state, *visions* in the true sense may be produced. We have already insisted that these

visions should be recognized as symbolic projections of the psyche's contents (being distinct from the latter) and of the forces stirring in the body.<sup>1</sup> It is true that at a deeper level these contents and these forces manifest as real nonhuman beings. But for such beings to appear in vision, the I must be completely *void*, the capacity for subjective reactions must be absolutely neutralized: and this is a stage far beyond the phases under consideration here.

All the same, it is true that as an ancient Kabbalistic manuscript has it, "in the purified faculties, rendered transparent as crystal, first the demons appear [subjective phase], then the gods [objective phase]."

It is enough here to mention, beside doctrinal confusion, the illusion of a visionary pseudo-clairvoyance as one of the effects found in those who have not understood what their practice has provoked, and let themselves be fooled by the reactions.

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At a more advanced stage, a more profound dissolution takes place. It now concerns the faculties whose intertwining constitutes the very nucleus of the personality: thinking-feeling-willing. The natural bond that usually joins these three elements is loosened to an extent, so that they appear to consciousness as three independent powers. In general (referring here to ordinary life) there is no thought that is not linked to some sensation and which has no significance for action; no action (will) that does not stem from some emotion or sensation and is unconnected to any mental representation; no pure emotional state unrelated to images and to impulses for the will. These forms are ordinarily mixed together, and for most people of the same race and time period their connections are not arbitrary but quite uniformly fixed. But now comes the experience of these three fundamental energies manifesting in the pure and independent state. And the *impetuous* character of such manifestations makes them appear as though they no longer depend on the individual subject.

It is difficult to describe the nature of these experiences to those who have not been through them. There are apparitions of thoughts that present themselves rather as absolute entities, icy and sharp as crystals, absolutely detached from any kind of life. There are unconditioned determinations of the will, which asserts itself simply for the sake of its own assertion, passing above any imagination, motive, or sentiment. There are also emotional states, both exalted and debased, which occur without cause and penetrate to the depths of the soul, with a sort of *immensity* that overwhelms any mental content.

We must realize that the very thing that originates these phenomena simultaneously offers a basis for defending oneself against them. Through detachment one progressively realizes an I that *is not* what thinks, wills, or feels, because it possesses a simplicity that rests solely on itself. The chief principle is *not to hold on to* these reactions. Becoming scared and trying to repel them only opens a door to them. It is best to leave them alone without the slightest participation, until they exhaust themselves—as though one were dealing with animals that go calmly about their business so long as they stay tranquil; but one still observes every phase of their conduct and intervenes only when one sees them going too far, with possible consequences for the external world.

What we have said offers an understanding of the psychogenesis of the three attitudes toward the spiritual world: mystical (devotional), magical in the strict sense, and intellectual. They arise precisely from identifying oneself with whichever of the three energies—feeling, will, and thought—has taken the upper hand. And when the identification does not have the value of a conscious and free act, the verdict cannot be in doubt: *it is a case of obsession* in the strict sense. When those energies manifest in the pure state, considered as properties of the I, they appear as three “spirits” or cosmic, nonhuman forces that need not be named here: the I which seeks to detach itself and to be its own self, by committing to one of these directions enters instead into its orbit. The process of “asceticism” is interrupted, and, while development may continue, it will be under the ascendancy of one of these three “spirits.”

We have set out to consider situations actively determined by the But similar processes can happen in a seemingly spontaneous way, through remote causes, without any initiatic intention. The difficulty of *knowing* is then all the greater, and hence of orienting oneself and being active.

When one stays at the center, unbending, one gains as the positive counterpart the faculty of “*opening and closing*.” When used freely, each faculty displays a power that one would never suspect in the mixed state. Only then is it possible to know certain cosmic forces. One can also completely neutralize the reactions that arise from feeling, or control those reactions other than in the ordinary way, even on a more or less naturalistic plane.

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Beside the phenomena just discussed, we should address those due to “potentiation.” One must realize that the action of rituals and disciplines, once it has become effective, opens a crack in the closed doors of the individual



condition, such that all the energies are potentiated by a new influx that penetrates through the gap.

On this basis one can appreciate the necessity, insisted on by every serious esotericist, of creating an effective, not merely an apparent, state of equilibrium between the various components of the personality, before adventuring into practices of a decisive nature, such as may cause the reactions described above. The reason is that differences and imbalances which at first are easily controllable are no longer so when potentiation occurs, unless one can rise to a power of domination far different from what one usually commands.

An example will explain this. Two psychic factors in me have the respective powers of 5 and 8, thus there is an imbalance of  $8 - 5$ , or 3, between them. If I possess a power of 5, I can dominate the imbalance, because of the difference  $5 - 3 = 2$ . Now imagine that potentiation occurs, which we can express as squaring. What was 5 becomes  $5^2 = 25$ , and 8 becomes  $8^2 = 64$ , so that the imbalance which was formerly only 3 is now  $64 - 25 = 39$ . Think of what becomes of my original power of domination (5, which could master a difference of 2) under these conditions! Thus you will understand why some speak of stages in which the soul's phenomena develop with the same sort of fatal necessity as a physical or mechanical phenomenon. Unfortunately, they seldom fail to add their one-sided and fantastic interpretations.

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As a last point, we will consider what happens in some cases when the potentiation affects the central power, the general tendency of the I. Processes then occur similar to those deliberately brought about by someone aspiring to initiation, but aroused unknowingly, because the mind is still turned toward the usual objects of human existence.

We have already mentioned what occurs in commenting on the Mithraic Ritual (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 113–14). The I is invaded by a transcendent force, which discharges itself on the tendencies and feelings it finds there, raising them to a condition in which no object can satisfy them. The result is a state of anguish, of *thirst*, of dissatisfaction that searches everywhere without being able to find anything adequate. It tries to exhaust itself by intensifying or pushing every sort of sensation to the limit, but in vain. In the end it *yearns for destruction*, and a *passion* for destruction is born, together with a sense of emptiness and total disgust. There are cases in which the epilogue is suicide: we all know of the relationship between death and initiation. We must however add

that such cases are usually accompanied by ignorance of what has really *willed* the tragic act: they believe that they are killing themselves for some reason—practical, passionate, philosophical, etc.—whereas it is all a pretext and an alibi for the true cause, which can only be defined in the terms of occult physiology. For us, this explains the suicides of Michelstaedter and Weininger.

To give the reader a *feeling* for this subject, through a tragically lived experience, we extract some passages from a private journal, left to us by an acquaintance who is no more. Unknowingly and under very precise circumstances he had awakened the force of initiations, which reacted on his whole life.

6 March 1921. “Oh, the sense of life which goes on, irremediably poisoned at its roots, and which falls away insensibly like dry clay that abrades bit by bit and ends in dust: the disgust with the life of all these days, the sadness in all these joys with which I still fool myself. Life, love, art! Useless trash, vain pretexts of this poor incurable soul, thirsting for the void and for death . . .

I have a horror of the time that I must fill.”

2 May. “Every time I think, the motive returns: ‘Die, die.’ The very fact of thinking makes me suffer; sensation and perception are a torment in themselves, an unspeakable pain, a need for dissolution. I can no longer bear images, I am living with a nameless impulse to tear myself apart, to explode and disperse like the fragments of a grenade: to be myself no more, to lose and dissolve myself.

I do not know how much longer this will go on: it is already hard work to use my memory.”<sup>2</sup>

17 May. “Everything causes a sort of passion in me, a tense pleasure which contains a negative gravity, a destruction. The wish for fulfilment seeks its own destruction: it wants to become wind.”

This state of mind created at the same time a special vision of life as its symbol:

“Throw everything into the dark, show the silent movement of the darkness behind every thing, strip ourselves of the faiths and illusions of the passions, to show a disarticulated skeleton, inexplicable, nameless and senseless. Life is incomprehensible: understanding something means staying on the surface. It is incomprehensible not through its complexity, or our defective means of knowing, but because it does not express or signify anything. There is nothing but a silent, dark gravitation upon which anyone can hallucinate. And then they will find a pretext: love, knowledge, truth, science, morality, art. . . .

Light is a superficial aspect, an illusion of the dark.”

Until at one point there seemed to be a transfiguration, a radical transformation:

*14 July.* “Today I felt this impression: that everything contains a sort of ether, a shadow that follows its form; and that these mystic contents of bodies have detached themselves and risen, weightless, forming another plane and leaving the dark remnants intact below.

I actually feel as though a grace has taken me out of the body, out of thought, out of the sickness of being.

Inexplicable and ineffably beautiful things are happening to me. I don’t have the courage to touch them, to explain them even to myself. Now I know how Rimbaud must have died!

*They have caressed me, and I have forgotten the last  
grimace of torment and anger.*

*The darkness becomes light.*

*Today I know what the solar joy is.*

*I bless all that I have suffered.”*

Despite this, he still fell, if “fall” is the right word here. Remember that it was an unconscious process, happening to a person who knew nothing of esotericism and was even hostile to it. Still, we have dwelt on this case because, rare as it is, something similar can manifest in the course of esoteric development. One should know, therefore, that the causes of the negative nature of the reaction are almost the same as the general causes of illness and suffering, as indicated earlier (see pp. 189–92). It is the closure of the I that impedes the transformation of the forces that have been awakened, so that they must discharge themselves in structures and tendencies that cannot contain them.

# **PART X**

## X.1

# **The Contrast between Positive Science and Magic**

## Positions and Solutions

One of our correspondents has asked us to address the problem of the relationship between natural science and magic, posed in the following terms:

There exists today a positive science of nature, which *produces results*. Its predictions are fulfilled. It shows that natural phenomena do in fact obey regular laws, enabling them to be predicted or activated with mathematical exactness. Uniformity, constancy, necessity—same causes, same effects—this is the law of nature, whose reality is attested by the fact that modern positive science is possible, that it progresses, and that it produces results.

In contrast, magic affirms the possibility of an experience that is real, but different from that on which natural science is based: an experience in the light of which that complex of phenomena ruled by constant and necessary laws, as nature is understood today, is only an appearance. Behind “dead” nature, magic posits a world of living beings, “spirits,” gods and psychic forces.

However, one cannot speak of life and spirit without thinking of a principle of spontaneity and free movement. A spiritual world, a “psychic” world of gods would be a world of spontaneity and free movement, entailing the possibility of extra-normal phenomena and magical action; yet that would at the same time render any science in the modern sense impossible or precarious.

Our correspondent, who signs himself “Bruto,” continues: “There is therefore a contradiction between the certainty of the positive sciences and that of the spiritual sciences, which seems impossible to resolve. And if it is not resolved, either positive science goes up in smoke, or else spiritual science is revealed as an illusion. And just as positive science, strong in its experimental method and the undeniable success of its results, does not feel the need of further demonstrations and simply denies the affirmations of spiritual science—even when conceding the good faith of its believers—it is up to the latter to demonstrate that despite appearances there is no insoluble contradiction between the two opposing parties, but only a difference that is perfectly explicable.”

This, then, is the problem. Bruto himself mentions some points of view that

he thinks could resolve it; other points of view have been put forward by other collaborators, whom we will call “Nir” and “Val.” We will take due note of them.

At first glance it is easy to see what ways are open to resolve the difficulties in question:

1. Limit the significance and range of necessity in natural laws;
2. Limit the significance and range of liberty attributed to the spiritual world;
3. Declare the relativity of the two concepts of “liberty” and “necessity,” hence the nonexistence of the problem from a higher point of view.

1. Bruto and Val take the first of these options. Bruto begins by saying that “while the natural laws in the world of physicochemical forces seem to have an indisputable certainty and rigor, when physicochemical forces are joined by vital forces, psychic forces, moral, historical and social forces, such certainty may appear disputable and leave a wide margin of indeterminacy.” And he concludes, therefore, that the problem can only be posed “in the ambitus of physical nature in the strict sense.”

Secondly, Bruto says that in science “necessity” does not have a logical and normative sense, nor a sense of “inconceivability of the contrary,” but only that of “constancy” deduced from a very large but finite number of observations. “Nothing outside our criterion of generalization authorizes us to consider that the constancy of a phenomenon that repeats many but not infinite times must persist to infinity. In fact, cases have often been reported in which the laws of natural forces appear to have been broken. Many of these cases, when examined by positive science, have turned out to be nonexistent; but most of them have never been made the object of investigation, either because they were observed in historic times or were denied a priori through simple incredulity. There are finally some cases for which positive science, while confirming their reality, has not been able to find an explanation. It then either entrenches itself behind the possibility that other laws exist, not yet known and determined, whose intervention would legitimately alter the otherwise constant conduct of phenomena. With reference to these other laws, the extra-normal of today would reappear within a broader order as normal, subject to laws and therefore assimilable to the scientific system of necessity, or at least constancy.” However, no such assumption can be made a priori. In fact (we add) until science attains such knowledge and determination that it can explain the *complete* system of

causes necessary and sufficient for any phenomenon, it is not in any position to say that *a new law* (unknown at the present time) *and not a liberty*, is the true cause of these extra-normal phenomena, whose reality positive observation has not been able to deny.

The considerations of “Val” aspire to be even more radical. He takes the point of view of Leibniz, Émile Boutroux, and Kant himself, according to whom natural laws have an exterior and regulatory character, not a determinative one. They would no more deny the existence of a substratum of spiritual liberty *behind* natural necessity than “the laws of musical harmony or grammar deny the creative liberty of a composer or a writer, who, while respecting them, expresses himself through them.” “Natural determinism is indifferent to the qualitative and intentional aspects of phenomena, in which we find the domain of freedom. . . . For example, the determinations may be identical when I switch on an electrical circuit to set a factory in motion, or to cause a terrible catastrophe. Physical determinism cannot explain this initial act: it only explains everything that follows as a chain of consequences, and only applies to that field. . . . The world of technical applications of science (machines, instruments, inventions, etc.) shows fateful laws operating in obedience to man’s will and free choices. From this analogy, as I see it, one must understand what happens in the much wider world, in the endless richness and variety of phenomena that manifest through the *same* laws.”

Even aside from the domain of historical and social events (e.g., revolutions, epidemics, currents of ideas, etc.) a large zone undeniably exists, including such things as seismic and meteorological phenomena, in which physical science will always be quick to explain the *how*, or the general laws these phenomena follow once they have occurred; but as for *why* they occur, it is incapable of predicting them or determining them through laws. The scientist, as we know, will insist that this would be possible if he knew all the causes influencing the events. We repeat that until this knowledge is complete, he has no right to say that those causes are laws, and not, or not also, *freedoms* or *intentions*. In philosophical terms, final causes are not material causes. For the time being, we will say that even if science has reached a system of unification and global deduction of physical laws, it is still forced to admit at the base of everything certain primordial facts before which all explanation and posterior deduction has to stop. In Einstein it is the parameters of curved space; in Planck’s theory, the discontinuity of numbers expressing *quanta*; in the interpretation of thermodynamics and the relevant law of entropy via the law of large numbers, it is the presupposition of an initial “state of improbability.” In more recent



subatomic physics there has even been talk of indeterminism.

With these considerations, the difficulty is still only half resolved. We may well ask what the difference is between a magical operation and what happens when one uses some machine—an automobile, a telephone, and so forth—to bend a certain group of natural determinisms to one's own ends.

Clearly there is no noteworthy difference if “magic” is simply understood as a will that is believed to respect certain laws, not widely known but all the same existing (using rituals, ceremonies, formulae, etc.), for its purposes. On the basis of what Val has explained, showing the void *behind* natural determinism, the contrast between the magical and the positivist vision of the world no longer exists.<sup>1</sup>

Thus one can understand how active magic of this kind can exist without affecting the “explanations” of those who do not know how to look behind the wings.

However, if by magic one understands an *unconditioned* realization, it would contradict every practical application of science, in which the necessity of given laws is not only recognized but presupposed. A realization of this kind would be seen as a direct and devastating irruption in the scheme of natural laws, without passing through those laws. And if the *whole* supersensible realm was conceived of in this way and one could generalize about it, the contradiction would stand: a magical world in this absolute sense would not allow the scheme of natural determinism to exist, even as an exterior aspect of things and as a working system. Every law, every consistent relation between cause and effect would have to be contingent—a mere moment of stasis in the dynamism of the aeonic forces of men and gods.

That is why there are some who, on the one hand, recognize that a coherent magic must *logically* postulate an unconditioned realization, but, on the other hand, consider this as *practically* impossible. As a compromise, in a situation analogous to that accepted by scientific technology, they have recognized the impassable limits of any magic.<sup>2</sup>

Even setting aside this “impassable” aspect, one can say that such a possibility is confined to some of those cases mentioned by Bruto, in which science *hopes* for an explanation even though not yet able to provide one. Instead, in the case of a “conditioned magic” there is no real incompatibility with the existence of a natural determinism, which could be the *medium* through which magic manifests.

2–3. While Bruto and Val argue to loosen the chains of physical determinism, or to reinterpret them so as to remove the contradiction with a coexistent spiritual freedom, Nir instead seeks to resolve this contradiction by limiting the direction and reach of freedom in favor of determinism. His opinion is that the concept of “pure freedom” is an “abstract invention of modern philosophers” which has nothing to do with reality, or (as he says) with the “teachings of traditional esotericism.”

He begins by saying that the success of the “laws of large numbers” applied to social and moral phenomena by probabilistic calculation shows “how relative the domain of freedom is, even in this field.” He then finds the transition from the concept of “life” to that of “liberty,” made by the person posing the problem, “sophistic and specious.” “It is not true that life is distinguished from ‘dead matter’ by an arbitrary absence of laws—if anything, it is by a different quality of laws: and to speak of living forces and of free forces is not the same thing.” And as life, in all the forms known to us, is subject to determined laws “even if finalistic rather than mechanical, immanent rather than external,” we must assume the same of the life that, according to esotericism, is behind all natural things. And if it is thus (Nir goes on), the terms of the contradiction vanish: science can find deterministic laws in the external world, by the very fact that they reflect inner and spiritual laws. Knowing them until one grasps the unity of the universal law (still according to Nir) should be “the true goal of the esoteric path.”

As a supplementary argument, Nir mentions the phenomena of supra-normal precognition, which prove the absolute predetermination of future situations and acts, supposed to be the realm of man’s free initiative, or at least of “chance.” He concludes with a speculative consideration: To grant importance to the “problem” of freedom (he says) means to take time as a reality, thus absolutizing what is only a mode of human consciousness. “Where change no longer has a place, freedom loses its meaning. But change refers exclusively to what is temporal.” “Metaphysical reality,” which by hypothesis transcends the temporal condition, allows no change, so that one cannot apply the concept of freedom to it, nor the correlative one of necessity. The opposition between these two concepts only has significance for humans, and none from the higher point of view that the esotericist should hold.

This argument of Nir’s offers many contestable points. In an earlier essay (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 310–14) we addressed the problem of the phenomena of precognition and the relativity of time, and indicated the reasons that positively convinced us that to draw an absolutely deterministic conclusion

from such phenomena is hasty and one-sided.

Secondly, from the point of view of the Absolute, the distinction between freedom and necessity—and therefore the problem that follows it—can also have no reason for being. However, we are not concerned here with a “philosophy of God,” but considering the question as presented to one who knows “the eagle that soars above” in metaphysical space, but is not thereby led to ignore the “toad crawling on the ground.” Therefore, putting aside assumptions of the Vedantic type, we seek a point of view that includes both the human and that which is superior to the human. Nir cannot be unaware of how many texts and traditions that are surely esoteric do not think it “profane” to introduce the concept of freedom into the metaphysical world. Plotinus says of Being itself: ὡς ἄρα ἐβούλετο, οὕτω καὶ ἔστιν (“as he *willed* to be so he is”) and asserted the full freedom (τὸ ἀυτεξούσιον) of the gods.<sup>3</sup> In the East there is a well-known saying: “Nature is the law (*dharma*) of the living (*jīva*); that of the Gods is play (*līlā*).” Another set of references is found in two works of H. Gomperz, *Die indische Theosophie* and *Die Lebensauffassung der griechischen Philosophen* (Jena: Diederichs, 1924 and 1927).

On the other hand, if one can concede that the form of time depends on the human mode of consciousness, it is possible to conceive of something intermediate between this form and the plane of absolute immobility (maybe what Hinduism calls “subtle time”—*sūkshma-kāla*), which while not being the time of common human experience can still allow for change and a certain freedom. Lacking that—and we must stress the fact—the continual references not only to the “action” but also to the “passion” of the gods, and consequently to affecting the course of things that depend on them through magic, sacrifice, invocation, etc.—references found everywhere in the texts of ancient traditions—lose all meaning.

Where Nir is correct is in saying that to speak of life and to speak of free life are not the same thing, and we will use this point to explain an aspect of the necessity of nature which Bruto’s and Val’s arguments have not been able to resolve. Laws of uniformity effectively exist both in vital and moral affairs—but here we must avoid making the same leap as the positivist scientist when he substitutes the idea of *necessity* for that of simple *constancy*. Psychological and social laws, like those of physics, rest on a calculation of probabilities, on statistics whose generalizations are justified by the “law of large numbers.” But behind this uniformity from what we could call an “aggregative” point of view, there hides a host of particular elements whose variation and individuality are not considered, either because they cancel each other out or because the

calculation of averages levels them, or because there are no experimental means or methodological interest in noticing them, just as someone trying to track the direction of a moving crowd ignores the separate and spontaneous movements of the individuals who comprise it. The *statistical*—that is, empirical-inductive—character of not only social laws but physical ones, too, according to recent developments in physics, even when they do not presuppose the idea of active spontaneity at the basis of the great currents of phenomena, do not contain anything prejudicial to it.

To use Boutroux's apt and well-known image, laws are like a riverbed: the mass of water follows it, but it was the water itself that carved it out. From the point of view of positivist science, every prediction, however rigorous, does not indicate fixed structures but a field of probability. In physiochemical phenomena the range of this field is minimal and practically negligible, but outside those phenomena it increases, and a factor of improbability and contingency appears alongside that of probability and constancy. For all its statistical uniformity, we are not authorized to deduce, as Nir does, that there is an internal necessity, an inner law binding the various elements. On the contrary, it is their reciprocal and collective action that constructs the path that they then follow, which will seem to be their "law."

Bruto observes correctly that "When one begins to observe the manifestations of life, first in plants, then in animals, and lastly in man where it acquires self-awareness, one notices an increasing and intelligent autonomy of action, which contrasts with the determinism of the material world. One sees an intelligence, at first collective, guiding the life of beings in the form of instinct, then rising, step-by-step, one sees this intelligence individuating and becoming reason, and finally will. This should be enough to make one suspect, beside the cosmic process revealed in the material world, the existence of another cosmic process of liberation and release. The contrast between the two worlds begins with vital phenomena [properly so-called], and since it is even evident to the senses, positivist science takes it into consideration—without recognizing it for what it is—and studies it especially in its sensible manifestations [i.e., limiting itself to that aspect, in which it is still possible to find fairly uniform laws]. But the positivist natural sciences can go no further: they cannot follow the pure spirit, the pure will, the processes of the pure I. They cannot do so, because in the spiritual sphere the concept of science cannot be the same as is valid to sensible observation," i.e., constructed on the basis of external sense-data.

In this way Bruto believes that one can arrive at the idea of "a process in which divinity, already manifested in the world of necessity, is released from

necessity in man and reaffirms itself as free and re-creative.”<sup>4</sup> He continues:

“Two consequences follow: the first is that the actualization of the science of the spirit [in the sense of initiatic science] incurs a suspension of precisely those natural laws that positivist science holds to be necessarily immutable.

“The second is this: it is in man that the two worlds of necessity and freedom attain the point of equilibrium; in him, either necessity or liberty may prevail, according to the degree of will and spirituality that he has been able to develop in himself.”

In one case, man is a being who continues to confirm “nature” and to belong to it. In the other, a real dominator of nature would be born.

Bruto brings up another fundamental point: the prejudice that holds natural things to be as they are, and that man’s attitude toward them counts for nothing. On the contrary, he holds that this attitude influences the result of knowledge and in some sense determines it. If man stands before nature (says Bruto) with the attitude of simply regarding it, as positivist science demands, it is only natural that “he will discover only necessity, which the success of his innumerable experiments will never fail to confirm, and thus be continually reassured that the teachings of positivist natural science are true.” He will be able to find freedom in nature in exactly the measure that he himself introduces and adds to it, but that cannot happen while he reduces himself to a mere observing eye.

In other words, every scientific observation of necessity entails a vicious circle, because the very fact of “scientific observation” would prevent one from being able to find anything but necessity. “It is this inner attitude of the positivist scientist that explains and necessitates the ‘success’ of science. But it is precisely man’s ‘human’ nature that allows him to demonstrate that natural laws are as they are for the simple reason that he *wants* them to be thus and not otherwise.” The transition to a different attitude to nature would begin to enliven it by a different truth from the former one, which was the only truth that science could observe.<sup>5</sup>

This means that the contradiction can be resolved, not by making freedom and necessity coexist but by relating them to two distinct realms or degrees. One must still acknowledge a necessity *sui generis* (of its own kind) in broad zones of the “psychic,” supersensible world. Nir is right in saying that “life” and “free life” are two distinct things. The physical world itself certainly conceals a life—that of “entities,” “genii,” “daimons,” elementary “intelligences”—but we must think of this life as focused in a single direction, lost in a given idea, goal, or

function. Think of what it means to us to have some all-absorbing passion or intention; think of our innate character, our blind tendencies, our instinct; of whatever in us is “habitual”: there we have the approximate experience of a form of psychic life ruled by a law of necessity (the “law of the Waters,” according to our terminology). Taking this experience to the limit, we can understand what sort of life constitutes the “spirits” existing behind natural laws. The “spirit” of water thinks water, lives water, wills water, there is nothing outside that meaning and that act, which appears to outer physical perception as water and the laws of water. On the basis of the *fixity* of that single idea, such laws are constant. A free spontaneity may have carved the channel in which the current of facts now flows uniformly: but this spontaneity can only be found in a state of identification with what willed it, a state that virtually excludes the power of carving a different channel—unless the power of the magus is led to reawaken it.

Such views can also be found in some magical instructions. Kremmerz, for example, defines the “elementals” as fluidic condensations whose determination of life is *fixed*, whose intelligence is limited to their function, whose will is an inexorable tendency toward their goal. They are infinite, he adds (in Book D of *Myriam*), in their desire for immortality. “Made from fire, they thirst” and envelop in a “mighty throng” one who has awakened to magical or Hermetic power, because “he has the water that quenches them,” the power that liberates them and “immortalizes them, creating gods of them by infusing them with volitive and negative freedom, which take a more precise and a freer form than “what is possible in one who is still incarnate” (ibid.).

This agrees with the Buddhist teaching, according to which if a “god” wants to “be liberated,” he must pass through the human state of existence. The supernatural dignity of man is thus not only able to rise above any other visible and invisible force of nature: when it is initiatically realized, it can make him not only liberated, but a liberator and a fashioner of gods.<sup>6</sup>

As a corollary, this confirms what was said on another occasion (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 240): that compared to a fully initiatic direction of development, the substratum of the occult psychism of things represents a mode of being from which one must increasingly keep one’s distance, if one does not want to be swept into the maelstrom of the “lower Waters” and betray one’s own supernatural destiny.

## X.2

### ABRAXA

# The Magic of Conjunctions

I have already told you (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, chap. VIII.1, 218–27) about the use of Eros in magic through the operation with “two Vessels,” which is the Hermetic conjunction of a Sulfur and a Mercury prepared in two persons of opposite sex, but without physical intercourse. Now I will tell you about the magic use of woman in general and of the Magic that operates through sexual union itself.

You should know that these are the most secret teachings of our Art, because they tell you of a path that, though dangerous, is still open.

Ancient mythology already hints at its secret. Remember Plato: the beings in their original state, who were each “both male and female,” were such as to scare even the Gods, who therefore “split” them in two. Thus sex appeared, the male and the female condition, the law of sex; also the demon of sex, in the impulsive mirage that mortals have of not dying, of becoming immortal through love. Thus you can grasp what the Mystery means when it speaks of the generation of the Androgyne, which is also the Baphomet of the Templars and the crowned Hermetic *Rebis*: the “double thing” that is both male and female. It is the goal of those who want to reopen the way to the Tree of Life and to the perilous domination over the Tree of Life.

What you have heard elsewhere in symbols, hear it now *also* in magical connection with reality: a Work that uses man and woman conjoined to attain the Original, which uses sex for transcending sex and reconquering the power over Life.

Remember first what I have already told you (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I,

chap. I.3, 15–20): Life is , the Waters, the force or current from the depths

that carries all beings along with it. Men know nothing of it, for it is at the center, whereas they stand outside it. The world of their “consciousness” moves above this deep force like a world of echoes, sensations, and “phenomena.”

But I also told you of moments in which this force is stripped bare, and you can catch it in a flash. The orgasm of physical intercourse is one of those moments, so that *if you know how*, this force will reveal itself to you in its radical nature: in that which transcends you—*and slays you*.

Consider this, mortal man! You *are not* life. Life was given to you—then you were ensouled and came to birth, and now you exist through it—but you do not *possess* it; it will escape from you as though from a withered stalk, to pass on to other beings, ephemeral lights of the same kind. Like a fatal torch, the living hand it on to others as they are consumed in the cycle of animal generation.

This destiny is fulfilled by means of the fascination of woman and the potency of sex in you.

In the mystery of sex, both the God of Life and the God of Death are active in you.

It is through sexuality that men receive existence, but at the same time it is through it that they are emptied out, giving life to other beings, creating the cause of their end with their own hands. As a bearer of the force of generation, *you are joined in it to your own poison*. That is why in the oldest tradition the same symbols and names of power designated the demon of generation, that of love, and that which strikes men at the moment of death.

The first experience of *love* is often accompanied by an indefinable sense of consternation. It is because at that moment, behind your consciousness and your “emotions,” the force stronger than you is beginning to act. Its body is not the life of the individual, but that of the species and what reaches beyond you toward the future.


And in the *longing*, the ardor of sex, pungent and untamed, there swells the greater wave, which at the peak of orgasm shatters the individual.

But having understood that instant, you are close to knowing the *other* possibility that it offers you: *the magic of sex consists in controlling bodily intercourse so that by means of erotic orgasm, the power of Life in its pure state is forced to reveal itself to your consciousness, by blending with it and taking it to the limit; but at the very point or state in which its naked transcendence is*



*fully revealed, you produce a transformation and closure of the circuit that “slays.”* If you succeed, you will have forced the limit of mortal nature in another way, cheated the demon of sex, and known the lightning of the One, of the Androgyne.

This, in brief, is the essence of the sexual Work if it is not to be of lower regions, but High Magic and initiatic Art.



And now I will tell you some details. It is said in our Tradition that Gold  is as though dead until its Sulfur unites with the Female who devours it, and that the Work consists in first making the Female mount the Male and dissolve him, then the Male mounts the Female to reduce her to his own nature. This transformation is also indicated as the Female who kills the Male, and is in turn killed and possessed by the Son to whom she has given birth. These are all symbols which you can also apply to the secret operation that is achieved through actual union of the sexes.



*First you must understand that the woman, the female, alchemically and magically has the nature and virtue of corrosive Waters.* Do not count it as the superstitious prejudice of crude asceticism that a demonic force is active in the depths of woman’s nature, a hostile force that perpetuates the fall of the being banished from the Tree of Life, binding him to the cycle of generation and misdirecting the secret desire for the One which is obscurely active in love. I assure you that this is true on the plane of nature, and that he who spoke of “*a sucking death that comes from woman*” was alluding to the deepest mystery of sex. There is in man a principle of *magic virility* that is struck, hurt, and absorbed when he gives in to desire and mindlessly pours himself into the female substance. And where he most thinks himself a man, and that he is possessing a woman by embracing and losing himself in her, it is there, I tell you, that he surrenders his occult virility and gives in to the current of the Waters.

Thus it is our teaching—and you must understand it clearly—that in common sexual relations the real polarity is the opposite of the apparent polarity: *occultly, the man is passive, while the woman is active.* More precisely, it has been said: “*The Sulfur is passively active, while the Mercury is actively passive*”—and these are not “attitudes” or symbols, but structures of occult corporeality. In any case, understand that the phallic male is passive when he is attracted and absorbed by the subtle power, “actively passive,” of the woman who embraces him and eggs him on. You must know how to completely invert this polarity, as I will explain, if you are to undertake this Work.


I now return to what I have told you: that it is the dangerous quality of corrosive and dissolving Water, but at the same time its exalting and vivifying virtue, that intensifies and unveils itself in magically performed intercourse; and that woman is used on account of this virtue, connected to her deep and occult nature, for turning the poison against itself and transforming it into the Remedy. You can see the risk. Measure it, and measure yourself against it. It is for you to seek the power of dissolution, to awaken it, and to defy it in its most insidious form.

The first phase is therefore the dissolution of the Male in the Female, who absorbs him in the euphoric vortex; here the quality of common Sulfur is lost in the Mercury that penetrates, *opens*, and dominates it to the point of a perfect amalgam. Such is the regimen of the Waters.<sup>1</sup> At this point—which is also that of maximum pleasure for both and the extreme limit of orgasm—the power of *Fire against nature*, or *our Iron* must intervene, drive the current upward and produce the transformation, beginning the second phase, restoring power to the Male who reacts, inverts the polarity, assumes the active part and then fills the Water with the fiery quality, whereby it is purified and made arid and ardent as the true Water of Life.

The work of blending the I in the alluring, exalting, and dissolving fluid of the woman, used magically, should therefore carry a euphoric vortex to a point of interruption, revulsion, and transition into an active ecstasy. A Hermetic-Kabbalistic text speaks eloquently of this: the *Asch Mezareph* (chap. 5, cited by Éliphas Lévi), using the symbolism of Phineas’s lance stroke, which “transfixed them, at the moment of conjunction and *in locis genitalibus*, both the solar Israelite  and the lunar Midianite 

continues: “The tooth or force of the Iron acting on the Matter purges it of every impurity. The Israelite  here is none other than  the masculine Sulfur,

and by  the Midianite one must understand  the dry Water duly mixed

with Ore or red Marcasite.” And again: “Phineas’s lance not only pierces 

the masculine Sulfur, but also slays his woman; and they die together, mingling their blood in one and the same generation. Then the wonders of Phineas begin.”

If you can understand this symbolism, you will recognize all the elements of

the Operation.

In practical terms, the point at which the inversion should happen is the moment of erotic crisis or climax, accompanied in common intercourse by seminal ejaculation, but which occultly also corresponds to the unveiling of the power of Life, of which I have told you. At that point the intervention of your force through an interior act will suspend the process of seminal descent and provoke a fluidic blockage, stopping and fixing the state at its height, although the woman's embrace continues in the dissolving identification of intercourse. Then the two die, the transfiguration takes place, the magic of the One begins. I cannot tell you more; it is for you to discover the secret of the regimen of the Fire, *lighting it and experiencing it for yourself* in accordance with your own nature. You must seize the exact moment, which is also that in which all the conditions for actual impregnation must be present: the radical dedication, the total and ardent blending of the two complementary and sympathetic forces, in soul and body, the wave rising to the limit, to a unified ecstasy of pleasure that in the natural way would certainly cause conception, through the simultaneous pouring of male substance into the female womb. And you must also discover how to achieve Phineas's spear thrust: whether inhibiting ejaculation can bring about the trauma in the fluid state and the change of state, or whether, on the contrary, it is the internal act of the spirit that has as its consequence the stoppage of the semen; or again, whether both may collaborate so as to realize *the love that slays*. In any case, keep firmly in mind what the operation requires: that the mutation which prevents the force of Life from pouring into the woman<sup>2</sup> must finally be produced *organically*, integrally, and not in the form of an outside intervention which would drag you back to the material plane and your ordinary consciousness. And when it happens as I have described, and the state of ecstasy transfigured and fixed at its climax is separated from seminal ejaculation (which would interrupt it and make you fall back, emptied like an animal), then the vortex is produced and in that instant the limit vanishes. In our art this is called the magical conception, or birth. And while remaining within the woman, from that point begins the regimen of the Male who slays the Mother and now dominates the Female, freeing the humid substance from its impurity. The female force, dissolving, changes its own nature, feeds and swells the principle that has passed beyond, joins it ardently and indissolubly, and becomes its water of life.

What follows must be kept firmly in your mind. In this Work you will face two great tests and temptations. First, during the phase of amalgamation or the Regimen of the Waters you may let yourself be swamped by the wave and

*wounded by the spear of desire.* It is the most dangerous consequence, because the fire of desire could then infect your deepest essence, the path to which you have unwisely opened—perhaps like the burning wound of Amfortas, which would not heal. Then your life will be taken over by a sexual obsession, difficult to slake or exhaust; your vital substance will be poisoned by it, your mind burnt up. You will become a tool of the demon that you wanted to subdue, a slave of the Woman.


You must consider lust and the expectation of pleasure as the enemy within you, which must be conquered. You must create a special, *active* attitude with regard to pleasure, especially that of sexual climax: a pleasure that is generally a state of *passion*. It is again difficult to teach you this. I can only say: do not arrest the pleasure by simply *suppressing it*: keep yourself active without the avid attachment to sensation of the animal I. Reduce it to its quintessence, strip it down, absorb it. This is one of the secrets of the Art<sup>3</sup> which you need to learn in order not to abort the practice.

The second test is met at the end of the first phase, and you will not pass it unless your magical vocation is crystal clear. When the two die in unity and the spasmodic crisis resolves in a *continuous* state, what you experience could be called a kind of cosmically exalted beatitude, a pleasure released from material sensation and no longer individual.<sup>4</sup>—*Listen! This is not the supreme state*, however irresistible the impulse to stay and lose yourself in it. If you do that, you will not be freed from the cosmic bond, and your path will end where erotic mysticism ends. You must be able to renounce this quasi-nirvanic beatitude by using the *power of Iron*, if the regimen of the Waters is truly to cease, the Woman utterly vanquished, and the Matter purified from all its humidity.<sup>5</sup> Know, however, that the way to absolute realization that you have opened is for you alone to tread, for no woman can follow you. The limit of the woman's participation, I mean the limit of her realization when she follows in conjunction with you, is the ecstasy into which the orgasmic climax passes and unfolds. Woman can go no further, by the irrevocable law of her own nature.

In practical terms, keep in mind that the operation of sexual magic almost always requires you to have reached the goal of the previous state: the fluidic embrace without bodily contact, on which I have already instructed you. It is difficult to obtain the result described if you have not practiced this correctly and frequently enough to have become adept at it, which aims to bring about a magical ecstatic state solely through Eros, conserved and nurtured in the fluidic body. Only later can you make *love and desire without contact* descend to the

depths of sex, through bodily intercourse.

There are two reasons why these operations that I have described should be preceded by a long apprenticeship in “Platonic love.” The first is that your ordinary consciousness is not sensitive enough to perceive the *energies* themselves, but only their bodily repercussions which are sensations and emotions. To arrive at a *relationship* with them—and this is what you must aim at, because our elements are the *magical*, not the common ones—you need a new mode of perception, which functions in the fluidic state. Only then can you surprise *naked Diana*, the force that acts in the woman and in sex, *in herself*, without the vesture with which she hides from mortal sight.

You can achieve this through a proper regimen of the Fire, by degrees. Reread what I have told you about the “ignification of the astral light” (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, chap. VI.3, 160–66), and you will already have a key, knowing what is meant by the symbolism of the “dry Water  duly

mingled with the Ore and the red Marcasite.” Red is the color of *blood*, and, as you will have noticed, even the common language of lovers speaks of “having you in my blood,” of “thirst for you in my blood.” On the inward path, at a deeper stage, one finds the Cave in which the Green Dragon is hidden.

I will now tell you the second reason, which is the increase and control of the Fire itself. The contactless embrace is especially useful as a discipline because it also recommends a long period of being together, even cohabiting with the young woman you are using. During this you will make her the center and object of your desire, without touching her but creating and multiplying suitable situations—like gradual undressing, contemplation of nudity and seminudity—in which her fascination increasingly dominates you, obsesses you, and would drive any other man to the mindless and greedy intercourse that would be his fall. This restraint must be such as not to dampen the Fire but to exacerbate it, in a way that others would find unbearable, in exact correspondence to your restraint. Only thus, when you finally arrive at physical intercourse with the woman, will you be sufficiently sure of maintaining your control and not being overwhelmed by yourself. There is a similar preliminary discipline that also prepares for the change of occult polarity, as mentioned above: the man changes the passivity connected to his physical masculinity into activity; he is no longer one whom the ambiguous passivity of female charm seduces, dulls, and captures.

There are ancillary practices of a special sexual magic for acquiring this active, subtle quality, but they use women other than the one chosen for the

Work. Some will tell you to use them and unite with them, but abstaining from pleasure, only giving pleasure of the most extreme kind to the one involved. You are then the impassive witness of her pleasure, which is awakened and satisfied without ever affecting you. But I do not recommend this path, because it almost inevitably saps you of energy for the principal intention. I assure you that the truly active, masculine quality is that which your initial consecration and your membership in an initiatic chain, even a virtual one, can create. That alone will make you a *Man* in the occult sense. And it is for this reason—so as not to send you insufficiently prepared and armed into great risks—that the teachings of sexual magic have always been hidden and restricted to groups of adepts.

Now I will speak briefly about the woman whom you will use. The conditions do not apply here, as they did in the contactless operation, but it is always essential that the chosen woman should *never have given birth*. While a woman loses physical virginity with her first sexual intercourse, with motherhood she loses her *magical virginity*, and is penetrated to the depths of her being by influences of a different order from those that favor this operation. Nor should you think that any woman is suited for the purpose; you can only use one with whom you feel—and you find this even in common speech—that a special *fluid* exists; and more than that, a woman who, if you were only a man, would have had a decisive and even fatal effect on your life.<sup>6</sup> But can one speak like this in the present day, when the “diva,” the “vamp,” and the femme fatale are the dream of every secretary? Even so, I know that in the women used in sexual magic one recognizes consistent traits, even physical ones, which make them almost reproductions of a unique type. You may be able to recognize the type in certain images and statues of goddesses: something virginal and inaccessible that is ambiguously united to fascination and the promise of a radical sensuality, the virtue of the “passively active” which endows her with an enthralling and consuming aura, somewhat like a divine, insidious impassibility.

I do not give you this advice lightly, because you will have misunderstood everything I have been saying if you do not realize that within the earthly woman is the occult woman, the Virgin and the Demon-Goddess, whom you must evoke, violate, and possess. Take care that my doctrinal and technical instructions, given their inevitably dry nature, do not suggest a procedure lacking in mystery, in dedication, and in the profound transport which even the profane man anticipates in his vulgar passion. You must actually *worship* the woman to whom your life has led you, adore her magically: that means to vivify her with a saturated imagination, surround her with an ardent fluid which acts as an *evocation* and draws forth the archetype in the woman, the magical force of the

feminine substance, entire and naked. And the time for this work will be the phase of “Platonic” apprenticeship that I have recommended. This evocation is achieved by virtue of the process of fluidic saturation that should be simultaneously desire and adoration. Not only that, but I recommend that you choose a place, a private place which only you and she frequent, using appropriate magical perfumes and sigils to saturate it, so that it becomes a “fatal” place—the profane would say *demon-haunted*—in which you will notice a sort of change in the woman’s personality. As soon as you enter, you will feel the beginning of the vortex and rapture that your dual operation of psychic and bodily intercourse will set alight. Take care that when you meet, you are always the first to look at her: between the eyebrows.

In the Orient, the women used in the magic of conjunctions also possess knowledge of erotic techniques that assist the process. I do not think that you will find any of that kind here. The woman’s regimen may be limited to intensifying her natural action, which, however, runs on the same knife-edge as yours, because she too must not succumb to the pleasure of merely animal satisfaction, which would exhaust her. She too must be able to continue up to the limit, of which you are aware, and in the state of unitive climax, through the blending of feeling to feeling, body to body, unite in the act that brings you to the state of ecstasy and exaltation. Without thinking of those techniques, there is more than enough to challenge the capacities of a young woman, even one who is neither common nor ordinary. You should know, in any case, that possible shortfalls on her part do not always abort the operation, which need not necessarily be interrupted by you. Nor does the woman have to worry about the consequences that would affect you in such a case, because she does not have that which can be hurt by the force aroused, which is always none other than her own deepest and truest nature. The woman is only exposed, if at all, to dangers of a human order, physical and psychic but not supersensible, if she turns out to be too weak for the path of magical intercourse.

A last point is that what I have told you refers essentially to the *initiatic* use of the technique of conjunctions. There is, however, another use, purely magical in the narrow sense, which takes various forms, either as varieties within its own field or as the application and use of powers once the principal goal is reached. I do not want to dwell on these; you yourself, *if you have the understanding*, can find the way, because the procedure repeats what I have taught you about *projections* made during blending with the woman without contact. In simple sexual magic there are also procedures in which the principle of retaining the semen is no longer required, and applies only to the preliminary work of

saturation. Then the projection-command may parallel the physical projection of the semen and take advantage of its current.

On the plane of high Magic, the operation with two vessels should always preserve an interim character, and it is unlikely that one who has worked unwaveringly at it would stop there. If, however, you feel that inclination, *mistrust it*. It means that there is still a residue of Water in you, not yet completely absorbed and transformed. Understand that someone whom sex has enabled to go beyond the ecstasy of unity is also the dominator of sex; it is he who has conquered the Woman, and not only on this plane of manifestation, but on every other one. Once his conquest is accomplished, he receives the Scepter and discards the method; he has no more need for the woman, because he himself is the Lord of the Two Natures.



## X.3

### OTAKAR BŘEZINA

## Perspectives<sup>1</sup>

The fire of life, kindled from another union than that which is given mortal men to know, if it is not to be extinguished but intensified, requires impetuous gusts of wind that come from the infinite. Only then may it pass from the blood-red tones to those of the purest, resplendent white, expanding in wide circles of light. It matters not that the dialogue of the dancing flames attracts the insects which fly in the twilight of our nights, or that hissing vipers, wise enemies of the flames, approach the fire! The strong one does not fear their venom; he grasps them with his bare hands and thus purifies his ground with their wisdom. The blood of the strong is immune to every venom, for even that dissolves in this sublime juice. The strong have prepared for their mission by knowing and absorbing both that which exalts life, and that which slays it.

The soul of him who rises toward the light knows only one danger: that which is attainable without danger. The promised land of the soul has only impassable paths. And even when the soul halts exhausted, its eyes never rest. With a single glance it sweeps up thousands of suns from the Milky Way, and flings them like sand on the path of its own immortality. Its dreams gain no lightness unless they move above the abysses—for the true element of the soul is the space stretching from the kindling of worlds to their extinction. Its nights prepare the way for its days; its weaknesses—for its strength; its fall—for its victory; death—for the affirmation of life. And how could one call a path “rest” when every step opens onto the infinite?

The soul wants to master all that it encounters. It penetrates all things, so as to subject them to its own laws of freedom. In the soul’s language every depth

expresses a possibility of descent and new knowledge. According to the traditions of its own origins, it knows no greater delight than to build eternity on earth. Ever wakeful, it can do no other than to wake the sleepers. The soul's gaze makes every flower bloom; never satisfied, it is not stopped by its surface woven from perfumes and light; passing through, it penetrates to the fire of the earth that gave it growth, and even further, through the earth—as though this were transparent—to the other hemisphere where another space opens, with other stars. Nothing can place limits on the soul but the unlimited.

The soul is generous in sublime prodigality to all that it has vanquished; but it jealously guards its own hopes for the unattainable. Not even death is strong enough to hypnotize it into inactivity, to extinguish in it that thirst for conquest, that dazzlement by the splendor of the treasures amassed in the cosmic treasury, whose arches are lost in infinity and where the worlds, like so many gems, shine with light absorbed in ages past.

The sun has created its earthly sight; gravity—its power; pain—its love; the impossible—its audacity. The greater the effort, the sweeter and more lovable is the red blush on its face, and the quicker and more harmonious its breathing. Greedy for motion, it loves all that is rapid—time; and all that frees its flight from obstacles—glorious space . . .

The freest, the strongest manifestations of the soul, which astound our sight in the rare, splendid, luminous moments of this earth, are of a febrile and radiant voracity, of a splendor like that of flying, flaming hair combed out by the wind. To those unused to this spectacle (hardly credible in the poor and cold climate of our time), there seems to be something hard and egotistic in this ardent flight, whose beauty is too dazzling for eyes scarcely released from dreams. The intense concentration of the maker seems like indifference to his brethren, who do not understand that when the soul is at work, every instant is worth ages. How else could one grasp all the forces in those glorious creative gestures which penetrate matter like ethereal fingers, move networks of inner relationships and weave them anew? How could one reproach an architect for the severity of his gaze when he examines the foundations of a building over which thousands of beings not yet born will pass? How, if love could not take on so many forms—love, which is as multiform as fire! How, if its heat vanished when the flame became invisible!

The soul never builds for itself alone. In the places of its making, the space is filled with thousands of hands that rise from the depths of the centuries: hands that meet in significant grasps of universal brotherhood, passing on the work from one to the other. Memory returns shocked and dumb from the places of this

ardent and terrifying activity, wearied to death by the strokes of thousands of hammers; blinded by the white refulgence of the furnaces; deafened by the din of the tools of these mysterious factories, by the commands that cut through the hot air, the feverish breathing of the masses, the noise of footsteps coming and going, and the singing of those working above. There is nothing in these lands resembling earthlings' faded opinions on egotism, or the petty concern that seals the honeycombs, lest their sweetness should reach fraternal lips. There is no act there that does not set in motion every atom, to the uttermost worlds. In these seas, every wave spreads in circles that reach the shores undiminished. Roads are built here for thousands of men, cities to be inhabited by whole peoples, and whose every gate opens on a new century. Here falls the rain that fertilizes the rich fields of every planet in the cosmos. In the Sun that shines here, all suns sparkle like dust motes on a summer's day, over infinite fields where the future harvest ripens with a rustling of the ears. Here all wills vibrate in the vibration of a single will. All forces unite in a single impulse of omnipotence. Here one inhales love like air glowing with the fire of all the tropics, cooled by the ice of all the Arctic nights, perfumed by the fragrances of every spring. . . .

What courage the soul must have, wretchedly confined in the prison of a few dim senses, subject to all the ironies of matter; what courage it must have, if it wants to understand its situation! That the stars in all infinities are its own sight transmuted into fire, which, projected, will return to it, while its pallid earthly shadow will survive only in the uncertain memory of a few solitary souls, before becoming forever extinct.

## X.4

# Various Commentaries

## PRODIGIES AND FORMER TIMES

What we have said about the contrast between the scientific and the magical conceptions of nature may clarify an often-raised objection. Why is it that the reputed “prodigies” almost always happened in the past—a past when credulity reigned and the means for positive, scientific verification were nonexistent—whereas nowadays, when this means exists and awaits them, they have become rare and insignificant?

Those who think thus are not taking account of the prejudice that Bruto has pinpointed, which holds that human attitudes have no influence over nature.

Civilizations like those of antiquity, which considered “prodigies” as part of the natural order of things, *created* a favorable environment for them actually to occur. Call this attitude “superstitious” if you like; but we will say that “superstition” emanates an *objective power* through which certain conditions arise, not just internal ones (as believed by those who reduce the basis of prodigies to simple *faith*) but subjective-objective conditions, containing the virtual possibility of certain extra-normal phenomena. The absence of superstition and the “scientific attitude” are equally *objective* forces, which however act in the opposite direction by paralyzing and freezing those possibilities. Hence the circle is closed.

Speaking of the scientific attitude, nowadays it is no longer just an intellectual position, but something that through heredity, environment, education, etc., has become an organic part of modern man in his deepest being.

## SEXUAL MAGIC

It may be interesting to compare what Abraxa has written about the “magic of conjunctions” with the views on sexual magic of Gustav Meyrink, as expounded in his novel *The Angel of the West Window*.<sup>1</sup>

On the central theme of this novel, we will only say that it deals with a being who strives for initiatic realization—marked specifically with the symbol of the crowned Androgyne and the occult conjunction with the Queen—along the generations of a single bloodline. Neither the first to have attempted the work—the English alchemist John Dee—nor one of his later manifestations as a certain “Sir Roger” has achieved it. It succeeds only with the last descendant of the line.

The setting is permeated by the contrast between the magical vocation of these characters and the action of a hostile, feminine force that obstructs and diverts it. As in his other books, Meyrink mixes fictional events with elements of authentic doctrinal value.

Thus he writes of the essence of sexual magic as “being able to conserve and fix the force of the two principles, male and female, and to prevent its waste and debasement in common erotic life and animal union.” There is a force that Meyrink associates with the figure of the goddess Isis, and with women in whom she manifests and who cross the characters’ path; it tries to prevent the “chemical wedding” and to capture the active magical element, subjecting it to the “sucking death that comes from woman” (an expression used by Abraxa that actually comes from Meyrink). This force is related to the *blood*. “It is more than a woman or a god once worshiped and now forgotten for centuries: it is the sovereign of man’s blood, and he who would conquer it must go beyond the blood.”<sup>2</sup> He adds: “The means for redeeming the world and destroying the Demiurge<sup>3</sup> is not the self-betraying sacrifice of those given over to the animal, procreative Eros, but only the mutual hatred of the sexes, which is the very mystery of sexuality.<sup>4</sup> The attraction that every common man is inclined to feel for the opposite sex, and which he calls with contemptible euphemism by the name of Love, is the hateful tool of the Demiurge, through which he keeps the eternal rabble of Nature alive. . . . Love robs both man and woman of the sacred principle of their selfhood and plunges them both in the swoon of a union, out of which there is no more awakening for the creature but that of rebirth in the lower world, from which it came and to which it keeps returning.” However, it is not a question of banishing sex (“Exorcise sex? What would be left of man? Not even the outer form of a saint. You can’t destroy elements!” says another character in the novel), but of transmuting the force and changing the process. Meyrink here even mentions the Hindu practice of *vajrolitantra*; but as the novel’s translator

notes, the reference is incorrect: “Tantra” is not the name of a practice, but of a school; the practice in Tantrism is called *vajroli-mudrā* and is done through intercourse in which the semen does not enter the woman, and its force is converted, as Abraxa has explained. Meyrink says: “The Gnostics called this the river Jordan flowing upward (against the current),” adding that he who cannot discover for himself the mystery hidden therein, even if one tries to communicate it to him, would find only an empty shell. “External action without internal is a practice of red magic, which serves only to start an inextinguishable fire.” We will speak of that next.

The procedure implies “making the woman’s essence enter into oneself,” which one may relate to the dissolution, disaggregation, and amalgamation that occur in magical contact with the female substance. The novel indicates, albeit indirectly, that the true force of the woman only reveals itself in supersensible experiences: the enemy, it says, “is hidden, so as to spy from behind the threshold of the senses,” and the chief character, who finally achieves the goal, only encounters it after a sort of self-initiation by means of a “corrosive water.” He has passed the trial of a toxic smoke, maintaining consciousness beyond that which is bound to the physical senses. Thereupon the force of the Goddess Isais, manifesting through a woman (Princess Assia) tries to master him and prevent the magical realization.

Meyrink refers here to a variety of the ancient Mysteries, celebrated around the Black Sea under the sign of Isais (Isis), but more likely corresponding to those of Cybele. It is said of them that “those to be initiated were made to approach the Goddess with the feminine element of their body, sacrificing their consciousness of the other element, the masculine one.” It was probably done through a kind of emasculating ecstatic intoxication, such that as this cult degenerated, the neophytes, at the height of their frenzy, would even sacrifice their virility to the Goddess in physical form, castrating themselves and assuming feminine dress. But in such contacts—according to Meyrink—it could also be a matter of the inexorable testing of the neopyhyte’s strength and the indestructibility of his self-consciousness, reinforcing it through special disciplines. Failure meant giving in to the force to which one had opened oneself and become conjoined, resulting in absorption by it, losing the magical virile principle and being “struck out of the Book of Life.”

An analogous situation and trial are faced both by John Dee and by the man in whom Dee is reincarnated, in order to face the same force that he succumbed to the first time. The virile magical power came to Dee’s family line as a supernatural inheritance from its mythical founder, Hoel Dhat. It symbolized by

a spearhead that Dee loses when he abandons the initiatic path under the illusion of possessing the Woman, the Queen of the Green Land, in the person of an earthly sovereign whom he bends to his desire by means of enchantments. His descendant is also overcome at first, in contact with Assia. The novel has an interesting description of the obsession which results from an aborted operation, because it corresponds to what can happen in similar cases. The woman, already known physically, transfers her action to the supersensible level, in the form of a hallucinatory magical image that enthralls him “with her eyes, her body, her whole pitiless being.” We let the character in question speak:

“Henceforth the succubus completely mastered my senses. . . . It was like an unceasing death by thirst, going to the limit where either the container shatters, or God himself opens the prison. . . . My torment increased a hundredfold because Assia had, as it were, retreated to a deeper level, less tangible to my senses yet making me constantly feel her consuming presence. If I had tried before to banish her with my will, now my own will turned against me and I felt on fire with longing for her.” There now appear to him in a thousand fascinating images “the Naked One, the Sucker, the Dissolver,” and in all these images of fever, desire and nudity, the woman begins to “wrap him in her aura and penetrate him, growing in him and around him,” until he feels that he is at the “limit of perdition, on the edge of what the Wise call the eighth world, that of utter destruction.”

All this is obviously more than a novelist’s fantasy. Feelings, emotions, sensations, human pleasure and torment in ordinary erotic life habitually conceal the abysses of sex, protecting one with a prudent barrier from the profound force that acts in it, and which is only experienced and challenged in forms of the most dangerous magical initiation.

# **PART XI**



## XI.1

**BRENO**

# Notes on Occult Morphology and Spiritual Corporeality

**E**sotericism has several ways of considering the divisions of the human being, due to the variety of possible points of view. But such diversity implies neither disagreement nor contradiction. From a higher standpoint, what analysis has separated reverts to *one*, so that this diversity helps toward a fuller understanding of the whole.

Since we have agreed here to emphasize the aspect of practical realization, we will say something about this division of the human being from that particular viewpoint, namely, that which concerns action. In so doing, we will refer on more than one occasion to what others have written in these pages.

Human faculties are usually distinguished as *intellectual*, *emotional/feeling*, and *volitive*. Elsewhere it has been said (chap. IX.3, p. 315) that one of the effects of magical discipline is to experience a state in which these faculties appear separately, not in theory but in reality, unlike the way in which they are interwoven in any ordinary psychological phenomenon.

These three powers correspond to a division of the human body into three parts, to be considered as the respective seat or center of each power.

We have the *head*, with the *brain*, as the seat of *thought*. The breast, from the larynx to the solar plexus with its center at the *heart*, is the seat of *emotion*. The *lower part*, with the *sexual organs* and the *upper and lower limbs* (arms and legs) is the seat of *will*.

Each of these three parts has its own form of consciousness, as though they

were three distinct entities. The primary consciousness of today's man is centered in the first and upper part, whose organ is the brain. It is not that he ignores the rest: naturally he is also aware of emotional and volitive processes. But it is important to realize that he experiences these indirectly, not in their own locations but via the state of consciousness connected with the head.

Emotion in its own seat, that of man's median consciousness, is *life* and *rhythm*. Rhythms here are what thinking is in regard to the head. They are linked to the rhythms present in the universe and experienced in the physical body in various modes, especially the respiratory and circulatory systems.

To the lower part of the body and the limbs corresponds a consciousness in which the will is a *creative force* in the real sense, and linked to all the creative processes active in nature. Its material symbol is the power of sexual reproduction and the active and working power of man's limbs.

The "I" is usually considered in an abstract way. But it is *also* a physical and organic function. It is the function that connects the disparate laws acting in the body, as well as the various forms of consciousness that are present, which amalgamate and neutralize each other in that mysterious sense of the self known as "kinesthesia."

When the "I-function" is centered in the head, modern man is in the waking state, characterized by lucid thought. The type of thinking that allows accurate mathematical calculations or a rigorously logical argument is the typical expression of this state. It may be called complete when intellectual processes predominate over everything that reaches the head by way of rising influences from processes in the other two seats, median and lower, with their emotions, feelings, instincts and tendencies.

However, due to a general law of alternation the "I-function" does not always reside in the head, but passes into the other seats, which predominate in turn. The ordinary man is unable to accompany this displacement of the I-function with corresponding states of lucid consciousness. When the I-function descends to the median, rhythmic seat, resting in the heart, he enters hypnagogic and dreaming states, and then sleeps. And when the I-function moves even lower, to the seat of the creative will-processes, he passes into the state of deep sleep, or in certain cases into trance or similar states.

So much for the three parts of man, the processes corresponding to them, and their equivalents in common consciousness.

Concerning their significance for initiatic action, we recall the task briefly indicated in the introduction to the first volume: "The human brain has already

given all it had to offer. Now what matters is to make the whole body into an instrument of consciousness, which, by overcoming the limitations of the individual, must penetrate those vital layers where the deep and dark energies of a higher Self are at work.” (*Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, introduction, 5)

In the waking state, everyone is having an experience in the upper center, but it is almost never perfect. The point of departure must therefore be the complete possession of this center. Otherwise one will lack the quality which in the “descent” can lead to magical awakening. It is achieved by giving a special energy to the processes of conscious and exact thought, using an uninterrupted intellectual discipline to suppress the other processes that develop irrationally, instinctively, passionately, and associatively, through influx from the lower seats.

For this reason one can understand why Plato saw mathematics as the vestibule of the sacred sciences. The study of the exact and experimental sciences, and, on another level, an attitude of active realism in practical life, are considered as the way to give thought a lucid, welldefined, energetic form. They are also a good preparation for avoiding the false path of visions, mediumism, and inferior clairvoyance. The contrary tendencies of aversion to clear thought, attraction toward everything formless, instinctive, and unconscious, and passivity toward the emotional and impulsive life are obviously negative conditions. In such a case, once the threshold is crossed one runs the risk that instead of shedding light on the lower world (*descending current*), the dark forces ascend from there to the upper realm (*ascending current*).

Note, too, that the discipline of clear and precise thought is not just a preparation. It has an *organic* counterpart. In that way the conditions of the upper seat are firmly organized under the I-function.

The difficulty of a truly initiatic realization of the lower seats lies in the fact that one cannot follow the natural and *direct* route, because one is habitually carried along into states, beginning with the hypnagogic, which are antagonistic to lucid consciousness. It is difficult enough to maintain clear and distinct thought when relaxing or observing oneself before sleep: instead, an automatic and irrational flux of images and disordered associations takes over.

An *indirect* method can give better results. In order to carry the waking state over into the forms of non-cerebral consciousness, one should try to access them through the corresponding experience in the waking state, namely, their effects in the physical world. It is a matter of penetrating certain natural processes that have a secret correspondence with those that develop in the median or lower

seat. Having formed a distinct thought of them, one should intensify and enliven it through a symbolic representation, which brings about an inner disposition favorable for conscious access. For the median man, which contains the rhythmic forces, one takes as object of this lively thought the natural phenomena in which rhythm is most evident. For instance, the succession of day and night, or of the seasons of the year, reveal the “light” aspect of the Sun. Instructions for this have already been given. When the ritual has succeeded in giving a certain sense of *inner luminosity*, one has what is needed for other methods to “work,” up to the complete realization of the form of consciousness belonging to the central center of the I-function.

For the lower seat, attention should be directed to all those processes in nature that manifest a creative and formative energy, considering the Sun’s aspect of “fire” (rather than “light”): especially phenomena of growth or formation in the vegetal realm, where the masculine, creative, vertical direction is still pure. (In the symbolism of the Cross it is the part of the vertical line below the horizontal.) One can also contemplate elemental manifestations where the active aspect predominates, e.g., fire and wind. When these images have attained a living significance in the spirit, the inner attunement is ready to galvanize practices aimed at the realization of the lower seat and its forces.

Once the limitation of consciousness bound solely to the head and brain has lifted, perception no longer dwells on material appearances. While the lively penetration of processes in the external world prepares for knowledge of processes in the deep, organic interior of man, this second realization prepares in turn for the subtle knowledge of the forces acting in natural phenomena.

It may be helpful to add some remarks on the esoteric side of organic systems, as distinct from their ordinary physiology.

We should consider the *lymphatic* system (or that of vegetal life), the nervous system, and the blood system. Through these systems the roots of the I dig themselves into the dark recesses of the body, reaching that which is the very root of corporeality: the *minerality* of the *skeletal* system.

The *lymphatic* system is the support of the formative and growth forces; its centers are the *endocrine glands*. Organization in the strictest sense and bodily constitution depend on it.

This in turn is linked to the *nervous* system. From the external point of view, it is a matter of the influence of nerve tone and under-or overstimulation of the nervous system on the endocrine glands. From the occult point of view, it is a deeper relationship that confirms the saying “the function creates the organ.”

Apart from incidental individual modifications, the formative forces in the lymphatic system obey “archetypes” and “signatures,” which also act directly, through the bloodstream, and not only via the nervous system.

The *blood* system is the most immediate support of the I-function. It is a sort of double of the physical body. If the blood were all solidified, it would reproduce the human form: it is its substratum, penetrating the whole texture of the nerves and bones.

This figure, or the man made from blood, is what connects various orders and principles in the body.

First, through breathing it makes a union between the inner world and the outer world. It receives the images that come from the external world and transmits them in the form of formative, emotional impulses to the other systems as far as the organic structure; thus the blood influences the condition of the cells and their connection in systems and organs. One could call this the function of the blood in regard to space.


But the blood has another function, in regard to time, because it also receives images and impulses that constitute what in general terms could be called “ancestral memory.” It is the action of the past on the present, the collective forces of race and ancestry, and other even more ancient and august forces that continue their formative operations by means of the blood, even inside the body’s organs.


Thus the two limits of normal individuality, that of space and that of time, meet in the blood. It is the cosmic Cross, whose point of intersection falls at the heart of man; the heart “which wakes even while man sleeps.”

The various organic systems each contain a form of consciousness. The consciousness of the blood-being is related to that of the median man. The rhythmically luminous world of the state of the median seat is contained in the mystery of blood. Expanding from the heart both horizontally and vertically—the *red* rose which blossoms at the center of the Cross—through the blood, consciousness radiates in time and space. One might even say “in space-time,” because what consciousness knows in the median center are figures or “signatures” (space), interwoven with rhythm (time); or if one prefers, rhythms (time) that manifest in forms and images (space; see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, V.3, 135–40). This becomes clearer upon noting that knowledge in the center of the heart is a remembrance (*anamnesis*)—a return to the memory contained in the blood of the state of co-essentiality with mighty forces that still act as formative impulses on the various organs, but which express themselves

otherwise in the laws and the elementarity of nature (space).

The three systems, vegetal, nervous, and circulatory, correspond to the three Hermetic colors of green, white, and red. To “spiritualize the body” means to attain a state of consciousness corresponding to each of the bodily systems. That means the extension and *organic* integration of consciousness and the I-function. The opposite way, the way of *regression*, occurs through inhibition of the cortical centers in someone for whom they are the condition for lucid consciousness, whereupon the inferior states emerge from the individual or collective unconscious in the form of “secondary personalities.”

As far as its realization in consciousness is concerned, the blood system, since it is related to the median seat, can be considered as a function of either of the two seats adjacent to it. This results in two states, two experiences, two paths: in respect to the upper center it is *light* (vision); in respect to the lower it is *heat* (potency). The “light” aspect is the actual way to the nervous system (the “white rose,” the “lunar body,” the “lamp of life,” ).

The “heat” aspect is a deeper aspect, more ancient and more radical  which is related to the *Saturn-*

*Man* or the mineral man, present in the *force of calcium* contained in the body (especially the osseous system).

Blood is therefore the medium through which the I can extend itself, even to the complete emergence of the “spiritual body.” The emotional element, reduced or rectified in *rhythm-life*, leads inward as *ardent* blood as far as the Saturnian element, extracting the bone-consciousness from bone, which some traditions call the “body of flame,” “victory over death,” “breath of the bones,” or “lightning-skeleton.” Certain Mahāyānic and Taoist texts state that in its perfect condition, the human body becomes *boneless*. Certain initiations have already been mentioned in which one feels oneself only in the bones (vol. II, V.4, p. 179). They are symbolic allusions to this supreme state of spiritual corporeality.

## XI.2

ZAM

### A Pagan Magical Spell

According to a report in *Civiltà Cattolica*, on 23 December 1851 Padre Marchi and Cavaliere G. B. De Rossi were near Rome, exploring an underground site in the area between the Appian Way and the Via Latina, on the left-hand part of the latter. While they stood on the edge of the excavations, one of the excavators uncovered a sheet of lead, folded double, badly crumpled and damaged. The lead tablet was brought to Rome and opened with great care, whereupon eleven lines were found written on one side, and seven on the other, in Sabine script. The tablet, which was interesting from the paleographic, historical, and Hermetic points of view, was deposited in the former Museum of the Collegio Romano of Rome.

In the first part of the tablet are these eleven lines: *Quomodo mortuos qui istic*

*sepultus est nec loqui  
nec sermonare potest seic  
Rhodine apud M. Licinium  
Faustum mortua sit nec  
loqui nec sermonare possit  
ita uti mortuos nec ad Deos  
nec Rhodine apud M. Licinium  
accepta sit tantum valeat  
quantum ille mortuos quei.*

Translation:

As he is dead who is buried there, and can neither speak nor discourse, so may Rhodine at M. Licinius Faustus's house be dead, and not be able to speak or discourse. So as he being dead has been received neither to the gods nor to men, so may Rhodine at M. Licinius's be received and have as much strength (*or be good for as much*) as the dead man who is buried there.<sup>1</sup>

On the reverse of the tablet are these seven lines: *Istic sepultus est: dite pater*

*tibi commendo uti semper Rhodine*

*Odio sit M. Licinio Fausto*

*item M. Hedium Amphionem*

*item C. Popillium Apollonium*

*item Vennonit Hermiona*

*item Sergia Glycinna.*

Translation:

Here he is buried. Father Ditis I commend to thee Rhodine, that she may ever be hateful to M. Licinius Faustus. Likewise (I commend to thee) Marcus Hedius Amphion. Likewise Gaius Polillius Apollonius. Likewise Vennonia Hermiona. Likewise Servia Glycinna.

The text contains many archaic forms, and the spell may be presumed to date from the first era of Roman paganism.

It is one of the few authentic magical spells that have come down to us, and the magical value of the spell, made at such a time and with such intention, must have been considerable: one can still feel the force of it.

The tablet with the "Spell" can be seen and read at the present day, because all the objects of the period have been transferred from the Museum of the Collegio Romano to the National Museum of Villa Giulia. See the *Catalogo del Museo Kircheriano* by Professor De Ruggiero, p. 61.



The document does not tell us who made the spell or under what conditions; but those who are already initiated into the secret agency of occult forces will easily be able to imagine the conditions.

In this spell we find the “will” of the Operator, the “dead one” as the basis and potency of the analogy, and the imprecatory words; perhaps some object of Rhodine’s was also present.

Since the magical force of the Operator had a means of manifestation, the effect must have been certain.

## XI.3

ARVO

# On the Hyperborean Tradition

Since the *primordial tradition* has several times been mentioned in these pages, it seems fitting to enlarge on this concept, with historical and geographical references to the races that were the bearers of that tradition and to their original locations.

First we must remove the limitations due to supposedly “positive” researches into prehistory and to the current views of paleoethnology and geology. Some other time I will show how “evolutionism” is a bad joke, because if one wants to define the direction of humanity’s overall course during the terrestrial cycle in which we find ourselves, one must speak not of evolution but of *involution*. It is equally contestable that a purely animal and apelike humanity was all that existed in distant prehistory. Even the so-called caveman is the result of a misunderstanding: men of the earliest period (pre–Stone Age) did not so much *inhabit* the caves as use them as suitable places for certain rituals: hence the symbols and signs that have been found in them, whereas time and weather have eliminated all traces elsewhere. As for the symbolic and ritual reason for cultic activity in a cavern, an “interior” place within the “earth,” students of esotericism are well aware of that.

But I am not going to dwell on these problems, beyond mentioning that ancient peoples, much closer to their origins than we, *never knew or remembered anything of an animal past*, but always spoke of superior races, often even considered “divine,” which preceded them and to which they owed their religions, their laws, and their culture. The recurrent motif among ancient peoples is never that of “evolution” but always of a “fall” or “decline” in one

form or another.

Esoteric doctrine teaches that the original center of all that in the present cycle is tradition, in the higher sense, was *Hyperborean*, i.e., Arctic or polar. The North Polar region was therefore the original homeland of the races whose successive migrations created secondary or derived traditional centers and cultural forms in a series of other regions. The apparent absurdity of this idea vanishes if one thinks of the inclination of the earth's axis and the so-called precession of the equinoxes, which allows for the possibility that the Arctic regions did not always have the climate that now renders them uninhabitable. Coal has been found beneath the polar ice, which means that there were once forests and fires in the region; there is also an absence of seasonal indicators, suggesting a constant climate like that of today's tropics. Glaciation did not come until a later period—and supporting memories of that cataclysm are found in various traditions, especially clearly and precisely in the Aryo-Iranian, which also says that the *airyanem-vāejō*, the original homeland or “seed” of the Aryan race, was actually located in the extreme North. One of the names of *Asgard*, the sacred seat of the *Aesir* (divine heroes) and also the progenitors of the royal dynasties in the Scandinavian tradition, is the “green land”: a name that has remained like a kind of echo in the Greenland of today. Up to the time of the Goths, traditions held that this land still bore a rich vegetation, hence was not yet completely covered with ice.

Another name for the primordial center in the Nordic-Scandinavian traditions is *Midgard*. This means more or less the “land of the center,” which is the *polar* land. It is important to consider this expression in both a geographic and a spiritual sense. Originally, that spirituality which had, has, and will always have the function and significance of a center, hence of a pole or axis for all of human life, both individual and collective, was equally “polar” in the geographic sense. This fatidic concordance between symbol and reality would be broken in later times, due to the climatic changes caused by the inclination of the terrestrial axis: an inclination which, as some have noted, seems not to have existed at the beginning, but occurred at the start of the present cycle as the cosmic consequence of a spiritual fact, a *deviation* of mankind. Still, the polar symbolism was preserved and reproduced in one form or another in all the traditional and initiatic centers directly or indirectly derived from the Hyperborean center. Lacking the geographical counterpart, they transferred it to lands or cities that functioned as “centers” and “poles” only for a certain area or a certain cycle.

As for other references, I may recall that *Thule* was the name given by the

Greeks to a land or island of the extreme North. It is often confused with the sacred land of the Hyperboreans from which Apollo had come: the solar and Olympian deity of the Dorian-Achaean races that descended on Greece from the North. Plutarch says of Thule that the nights there had the same length as those of the Boreal lands today. Moreover, in classical traditions the Boreal sea is called Mare Cronide, i.e., the sea of Cronos (= Saturn): a significant name if we recall that Cronos-Saturn was considered the king or god of the Golden Age, i.e., the primordial age preceding the deviations and involutions that must have led to the Iron Age, or to use the equivalent Hindu expression, the dark age, the Kali Yuga.

Turning to the traditions of pre-Columbian America, we find concordances extending even to the names. The ancient Mexicans called their original land Tlapallan, Tullan, and even Tulla—like the Greek Thule! And just as the latter was associated with the solar Apollo, the American Tulla was actually considered as the “House of the Sun.”

We can juxtapose these Mexican traditions with the Celtic. While the distant progenitors of the Mexicans remembered coming to America from a North Atlantic land, Irish legends speak of the divine race of the Tuatha de Danann, said to have come to Ireland from the West, from a mystical Atlantic or North Atlantic land called *Avalon*. We may well think—and many other elements confirm such an assumption—that here are two complementary forms of a single testimony. Two racial streams are said to have come to Atlantic America and Atlantic Europe from a single center, from a single land now vanished or become uninhabitable. One naturally thinks of the much-discussed Atlantis. The existence of Atlantis is also part of esoteric teaching, setting aside the fantasies that have been spun around it in recent times. However, we need to distinguish the location of Hyperborea from that of Atlantis, and likewise their traditions. When the Hyperborean cycle closed, it seems that a spiritual and traditional center was founded in Atlantis that reproduced the Boreal center, so to speak, for a certain cycle, adopting many of its symbols because it was a sort of image of it. But the two centers should not be confused. The Atlantean center already had a secondary and particular character, and many traditional centers on the Eurasian continent were founded independently of it, deriving directly from the Hyperborean. Since there were interferences between them, it is understandable that this important distinction has escaped many students of these problems.

Having clarified this, one notices elements found by modern scientific research that can be integrated into the prehistoric perspective given above. On the Atlantic coast of Europe (also the Iberian-African), especially in the so-

called Magdalenian culture, there are well-known and precise traces of a higher culture and a race—the *Cro-Magnon*—of a very different biological quality from the quasi-animal stock of “Ice Age” or Mousterian man inhabiting many regions of Europe. The surviving vestiges of Cro-Magnon culture are of such high quality that someone has called this race, by analogy, the “Hellenes of the Paleolithic.” Hence anthropologists have dismissed the idea that they represent an “evolved” form of the brutish, “glacial” or Neanderthal type. They are therefore a different race. We might now suppose that these Cro-Magnons, who appeared enigmatically in the first Stone Age among inferior races along the Atlantic shores, are of the same stock as the Tuatha de Danann mythologized in Irish memory, i.e., the “divine race” that arrived in Europe from the mysterious North Atlantic land. And the myths of conflicts between the “divine race” and races of demons or monsters could well be interpreted as mythic echoes of the struggle between the two races, the Cro-Magnon—the “Hellenes of the Paleolithic”—and the bestial Mousterians. Beside these, in myths such as the biblical one of the sons of God uniting with the daughters of men, or the analogous one that Plato refers specifically to Atlantis, we may recognize the memory of contaminating crossbreedings, which were certainly one of the factors in the successive degeneration and involution. Moreover, the Atlantean cycle should not be confused with the Hyperborean, because it seems that from a certain period onward the former changed markedly from the original spirituality and tradition, both in the “lunar” and in the “titanic” direction. But for more detail on this idea, I would have to go into the doctrine of the various eras of our cycle and the forms of spirituality that correspond to each of them. I refer the reader to the work of Julius Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World*, in the second part of which this argument is treated with full documentation, and from which I have taken the current ideas. Here I will limit myself to the following points.

In the doctrinal field, one must avoid confusing the Hyperborean tradition and any of its legitimate filiations with the matriarchal, or to use Bachofen’s term, “gynecocratic” cycles. This confusion, found in some occultist circles, also predominates in the massive work that Herman Wirth, a Dutchman, has dedicated to the religion, symbolism and script of the North Atlantic race (*Der Aufgang der Menschheit* [Jena, 1928]). Wirth calls the “sacred land,” the original seat of the civilizing race of our cycle, by the name of *Mo-uru*, meaning the “Land of the Mother,” thus ignoring, among other things, an explicit statement in the *Zend-Avesta* which shows that the cycle thus named is not the original one. As a general rule, one must say that any traditional form that stands under

the sign of feminine and maternal symbols, including lunar and telluric ones like “Mother Earth,” has nothing to do with the primordial Hyperborean tradition, or else represents a deviant form of it due to outside infiltrations. Forms of this degeneration are quite visible in the ancient Mediterranean world, which is all the more reason for us to avoid such a confusion. In this context we might even ask whether it would be better to substitute for the famous East-West opposition that of North to South. For we find, not only in the ancient South Mediterranean World but also in India, traces of a great maternal civilization that seems to have spread latitudinally from Europe into Asia, in an ethno-cultural band with the recurrent sovereign symbol of the divine woman and of the Mother, in a whole series of variations. It is probably an inheritance from races of the South or of southern Europe, which had their own Mysteries, very different in origin from those derived from Hyperborea.

The “solar” character of the Hyperborean tradition, proceeding from the “Land of the Living,” is constant through all the various testimonies, starting from the many designations of the polar center itself. But another error has arisen in certain circles, through considering the solar theme on the basis of the symbolism of the year or even of the day, i.e., as an eternal death and rebirth of the light. Such a notion is definitely *not* Hyperborean in spirit. Certainly it can form the basis for theories of death and resurrection, and for rebirth in general, such as those linked to the myths of Osiris, Attis, Zagreus, Quetzalcoatl, Christ, *etc.* But this is not in fact the highest mystery of Hyperborean spirituality: that has an Olympian character, which is to say one of calmness, immutable sovereignty and intangible transcendence, devoid of passion and change, as in the Apollonian symbol of pure light and celestial heights. This distinction is very important for one who does not want to lose sight of the supreme values of the “polar” initiatic heritage. It is easy to succumb to the allure of an ambiguous mysticism that can, at best, provide the equivalent of the “Lesser Mysteries,” and remains excluded from the higher form of royal and pontifical initiation. The passing centuries and millennia have imported into the world of traditions every kind of myth, symbol, cult, interference, superposition, and hybridization. Orienting oneself requires constant referral to principles of a purely doctrinal kind. To this end, any conclusions drawn from merely “historical” research within the “science of religions” (to use the academic term) will be absolutely useless for the problem of origins, or for discerning the underground connections existing between the various centers of Hyperborean spirituality that were established at the dawn of the historical period in the Mediterranean, in west-central and northern Europe, and in Asia.

The phenomenon of the *migration of symbols* is familiar to students of these matters, and constitutes a new cause of confusion in the exploration of origins, given the fact that the same symbol may be used by traditional forms in a certain period in a very different sense from its original one. Nonetheless, one can name certain important symbols of specifically Hyperborean origin, so that when found, one should always suspect the presence of an echo or a lost fragment of the primordial tradition. One of these symbols is the *swastika*, sometimes called the fylfot cross or gammadion: it is a polar symbol, because the important and essential element is not the idea of rotation but that of a fixed, “polar” point around which the movement occurs. This is the true meaning of what has been called the “cross of the glaciers,” i.e., of the Ice Age.

Another symbol of Hyperborean origin is the *ax*, which has a close, analogous relation to the power of lightning to strike and split, to the point of functioning mainly as a symbol of lightning itself. It likewise relates to a series of divine figures in both East and West, who fight and destroy titanic, telluric, and generally “infernal” forces.

A third Hyperborean symbol is the *fish*. In Hindu tradition, the first divine manifestation in the present cycle was in the symbolic form of a fish: *matsya-avatāra*. Other symbols are the *boar* and the *bear*. The “land of the boar” or the “land of the bear” are names which are related, in that tradition, to the terms *Varāha* and *Vārāhī*, corresponding again to the classical *Borea*, from which the word “Hyperborean” comes. A symbolism of this kind passed down to the Middle Ages, transmitted by the Nordic-Britannic tradition. In fact, the legend of King Arthur and the related saga of the Grail thus speak of a Hyperborean legacy. Arthur’s name goes back to the Greek word *arktos*, meaning “bear,” and to his reign were attributed the “polar” and sacred characteristics common to all the images of the supreme primordial center. A mysterious name for the Grail King is the “Fisher King,” itself explicable on the basis of the originally Hyperborean symbolism of the fish. The *wolf*, too, is sometimes a Hyperborean symbol, as when it appears as one of Apollo’s sacred animals. Some classical authors went so far as to relate it to the idea of the Olympian light, on the basis of a phonetic similarity between *λύκος* = wolf, and *λυκή* = light.<sup>1</sup>

Ancient Italy and Romanity contain enigmatically more than one sign of the primordial Hyperborean heritage. It can already be found, up to a point, in what Pietro Negri has written in this volume. Since Latium was considered as a region where Saturn himself had hidden, who also gave his name to the sea of the extreme North, it positively proves the Latins to be descendants of prehistoric races that have left in northern Italy—especially in Val Camonica—traces of

symbols and signs very similar to those of Hyperborean prehistory in Atlantic Europe and the North Atlantic.

It has been suggested that Galilee, the region in which Christianity was born, shows by its megalithic monuments that it was once one of the places in which groups of North Atlantic conquerors settled after reaching the Mediterranean. Hence it has been thought that something of the ancient spirit of that solar tradition was rekindled in Christianity. This theory may have the advantage of relieving Christianity of that isolated and “original” character on which its apologists insist—no matter that they thereby deprive it of any traditional value in the higher sense. But it certainly overlooks the aspects of Christianity that, however things stand in the secret history of the ancient Mediterranean, enroll the Christian god in the list of divinities who suffer a “passion,” die, and are reborn, which clearly distances them from the divine Olympian-Hyperborean ideal. According to Evola’s theory, one finds instead in some high points of ancient, sacral Romanity—in the Augustan period, for example—a kind of miraculous renaissance of the spirit of the primordial tradition.

To conclude these brief notes, a warning is in order. Due to contemporary racism in both the political and the cultural field, there has been an unexpected vogue for ideas such as that of an original Nordic homeland, of the Arctic region as wellspring of the Aryan races, of the “Northern Light,” etc., not lacking in attempts at their scientific justification. We have to make a sharp distinction here. The confused and quasi-unconscious perception of a remote truth may possibly have played a part in these modern “Nordic” motifs; but it is true in every case that this perception has immediately been altered by contingent concerns, especially political and nationalistic, and by absurd adaptations and agendas. Moreover, any justification of it on the basis of reconstructions by profane researchers can only be shaky, to the point of compromising the theory rather than reinforcing it. The idea of the Hyperborean tradition belongs neither to the domain of archaeology, nor to anthropology, nor to contemporary racism: it belongs to esotericism. Far from being anything modern, we find it in the most various teachings of the past, among different peoples, totally independent from the absurd pretension of exploiting it for political and exclusivist goals. This is self-evident when one considers that the “mystery of the pole” has always been considered as one of the most secret and august of all the mysteries that the disciples of the Royal Art may venture to approach.



## XI.4

# The Golden Flower of the Great One

*The ancient Sages have taught men the method of not letting the First Principle escape them, and of protecting the One—and this is the meaning of the rotation of the Light and the defense of the Center.*

LÜ-YEN



*T'ai I Chin-hua Tsung*, meaning approximately “The Treatise of the Golden Flower of the Supreme One,” is the title of a Chinese initiatic text known in Europe through a German translation by the noted Sinologist Richard Wilhelm. An English translation was based on this,<sup>1</sup> and recently a French one with an introductory essay by René Guénon, while an Italian edition is in preparation from Edizioni Mediterranee, Rome. The text seems not to have circulated in China before the seventeenth century, but the teachings in it go back at least to the eighth century. They concern the so-called doctrine of the golden elixir of life—*chin tan chao*—formulated by the adept Lü-yen on the basis of Taoist tradition, with the intention of opposing the path of spiritual alchemy to that of physical alchemy. The text in question also shows influences not altogether traceable to the Taoist line, such as from Mahāyāna Buddhism, but without a significantly hybrid result.

The technical character of the treatise is evident from the fact that the circles following its doctrine accepted not only Taoists and Confucians, but also followers of Buddhism, Islam, and even Christianity, without the disciples being obliged to abandon their own religious communities. This does not signify, as

Wilhelm says, a “syncretism,” much less a “spirit of tolerance.” It is a matter of objective procedures whose plane transcends that of a particular faith or belief, nor does it intrude on the latter. We know that everything esoteric, by its very nature, is beyond the domain of jurisdiction of any religion, which it leaves behind.

The reason for treating this text here is the desire to enable readers to orient themselves to it, and despite everything, to draw some profit from it. I say “despite everything” because any translation from the Chinese into European languages always leaves uncertainties, and since the text is often involved, a linear exposition is not to be found there. Moreover, in the editions mentioned, except the French, half the book is taken up by a commentary by the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst C. G. Jung, who wants to present a “psychological” interpretation of the mystery of the Golden Flower. In fact, it only serves to mislead and to falsify everything that he claims to illuminate. What else can be expected from one who writes in his commentary with supreme self-confidence that “all religions are therapies for the sorrows and disorders of the soul” (p. 127), i.e., more or less equivalent to treatments for psychopaths? But I will treat Jung in another essay. It is enough here to dismiss this unfortunate commentary as nonexistent, and, together with the reader, to try to approach the text directly, so as to highlight its essential content. Several correspondences will then appear between these ancient teachings from far-off China and those of the Western Hermetic-chemical tradition.

To begin with, we need to familiarize ourselves with the Chinese terminology. I will give briefly the general concepts that frame the teachings of this text.

The first principle is called the “great Pole” (*T'ai chi*) or “great One,” “state without duality” (*wa chi*) and also Tao. The Tao is “that which exists of itself” and “great One” is “the term given to that which has nothing above it” (p. 21). Differentiated from that is the primordial duality of yang, the luminous masculine principle, and yin, the dark feminine principle. In the hexagram system of the *I Ching* these also correspond to *Li* (sun and fire, luminous and fiery principle ) and *K'an* (water, abyssal element, desire ). In every

being and every phenomenon there is a yang aspect and a yin aspect in various proportions, with one or the other predominating: the various energies and forces have either a yang or a yin nature.

One must now consider man, and see how the yang-yin polarity manifests in

him. It appears first in the form of two “souls” of man, called *hun* and *po*, *hun* being the luminous, yang soul seated in the head, or rather between the eyes, and *po* being the dark, yin soul bound to the earth and to desire, located in the lower part of the body, in what is called “the space of energy.” To judge from certain illustrations, it seems to be around the solar plexus. One should accept this placement with reservation, because there are divergent views in other teachings about where the “basal energy” resides. The German translator, Wilhelm, uses an appropriate pair of terms derived from Latin: he calls the yang soul or *hun* “animus” (*mens, νοῦς*), and the yin soul or *po* “anima.”<sup>2</sup>

The more general opposition is expressed in man through the polarity of *being* and *life*, in Chinese *hsing* and *ming*. The heart (the “lower heart”) and emotionality are often ascribed to *ming*, having a yin nature. This duality is particularly significant for the condition of the ordinary man, determining the situations in which whatever is being (conscious being) is not life, and whatever is life is not being. The text says that at birth, with individuation, “human nature and life are divided in two. From this time on, if the utmost quietness is not achieved, human nature and life never see each other again” (p. 23)—meaning unless initiatic procedures intervene to restore them to the origin, the “great Pole” that comprises in itself both being and life, animus and anima.

Ordinary man has been alienated from the primordial state. It is important to appreciate the consequences of this. First, “the Center is undefended” and an inverse relationship has become established in man between the masculine yang animus and the feminine yin anima. The anima (life) subjects the animus, forcing it into servitude and orienting it to the outside. This outward direction or extraversion is called in the text “irreversible straightness” (like someone impelled forward), and results in the dispersion and dissipation of energy.

The “straightforward” compulsion also implies a split. The Chinese character that expresses individuation or being an individual is *ho*, interpreted as “energy within an enclosure,” hence separated. Individuation is commonly equated with alienation: beginning with birth (and following the path where the anima predominates over the animus, the yin nature over the yang), “man leaves the one sound [the ‘Name’] of individuation behind him . . . and until his old age he will never look backward” (p. 32). Everything thereafter develops automatically, as though destined, until the enclosed energy is exhausted and death supervenes.

Our text speaks particularly of a “consciousness” that is conditioned in its birth by the feminine yin anima, which resides in the body and is reborn from

generation to generation (p. 26). This is what Hindu terminology calls the “samsaric I,” or the “I of the elements.” The primal spirit loses its position, and the I, which is subject to motion, comes to power (whereas the primal spirit is immovable); it identifies itself with the passions, the emotions, and the instincts: “Day and night it wastes the primal seed till the energy of the primal spirit is entirely used up” (p. 29).

Connected to this is the theory of differing destinies after death, which in our Taoist text reflects the views generally held by esoteric doctrines. The character *gui* expresses the nature of the person who has no life of his own after death (not surviving as an absolute individual), because he has drawn his life from the anima, not conserving or possessing it but dissipating it “in irreversible straightness,” i.e., toward external things. In such a case existence after death has a residual character and a definite limit; once all its energy is exhausted, a new birth is produced. Before that, the residual personality goes to various places according to the ways it followed on earth, either lower or higher (celestial). But all of these have a transitory character: one cannot speak either of eternity or of immortality.

The condition is different for the I as *kuei*, a term translatable as “active divine being,” achieved through the initiatic art. The *kuei* has a life of its own because it has separated it from bodily existence, and especially because it has overcome the antithesis between consciousness and being (energy), between being and life. So as not to anticipate what will be said below, I will only mention that there are two degrees in this realization. The first is a possession of life that extends the terminus of death, allowing for the prolonged existence of a living Adept. The second is the passage to the “non-dual state” of the Origin, symbolized by the blooming of the “Golden Flower of the great One.” He who has gone so far, says the text, “tarries no longer in the three worlds” (p. 25): he has overcome not only the human world, but also the subhuman and celestial worlds. The center or “place” of his being no longer falls in the manifest, conditioned world. It is interesting that the ancient character for *kuei* also means *lightning* (compare the Indo-Tibetan *vajra*), and that in the broader Chinese tradition the two degrees are generally known as the “integrated man” (*chen jen*) and the “transcendent man” (*shen jen*).

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After this, we can proceed to the practical instructions in the text. The magical key to the whole procedure is contained in the formula of *circulation*—

circulation of the “light” and of the “seed”—which cannot fail to evoke the “circulations” spoken of in the Hermetic and alchemical *opus transformationis* (work of transformation).

The first step for surpassing the ordinary human condition is the “defense of the Center” and the “search for the Master,” compared to the “pole of the Great Wain which turns the whole of creation” (p. 54). The curious term used is to find the “handle” by which the polar element can be held (p. 63). This is equivalent to restoring the rulership of the luminous yang principle in oneself, which has been lost through the influence of the anima or “lower heart.” The higher principle, whose very nature should be impassivity, has thus been opened up to an irrational movement. The image used for this first step is that of the sovereign who establishes his capital in a certain city, and returning to his throne, puts an end to the usurpation of a violently rebellious general who has taken advantage of the ruler’s weakness; after which his subjects again willingly obey him.<sup>3</sup>

Technically, this preliminary phase of the work takes place in the “higher seat” and is called the diversion, circulation, and crystallization of the “light.” One might speak here of the “fixation of thought,” but that seems a colorless and abstract formula compared to the lively suggestions given in the text. The yang principle is *light*. This light is primarily that of clear and wakeful consciousness. It is the light of *seeing*—which is why the yang is said to reside in the eyes—but also an *aural* light, i.e., the light of hearing, taken as synonym of *understanding*. The straight line which the anima yin imposes on the light is the extraverted orientation to the sense-world, into which the inner light flows when one sees. To make the light “circulate” means reversing the direction, bringing the light back to itself and to the origin, just as in a circle; so that the light, meaning the union of seeing and understanding (light of the eye + light of the ear), gathers itself and now illuminates the interior, rotating around itself.<sup>4</sup> The way is found by means of “extreme intelligence and clarity, and the most complete absorption and tranquility” (p. 23). “There should be no movement in the mind” (p. 44).<sup>5</sup> The “magical key” is indicated by these expressive words: “*One should only let the light fall quite gently on the hearing.*” “To sense brightness without listening to what is outside is to listen inwardly” (p. 43). The concept of “reflection” (*fan chao*) is also used, and “fixed contemplation” (*chih kuan*), though the latter shows the influence of Buddhist schools. “The center in the midst of conditions” or “immobile pole among the flux of appearances” is achieved by “crystallization of the light,” after which the light gathers between the eyes and begins to “circulate,” to rotate around itself. It is not a freezing of thought, but an attitude in which one hears and sees where every thought comes

from and where it ends, always bringing the “intellectual light” or “seed” back to oneself. “[C]irculation of the light. The circulation is fixation. The light is contemplation” (p. 36). And again: “The eyes do not look forward, they lower their lids and light up what is within”; “wash the thoughts, stop pleasures, and conserve the seed.” “The light of the eyes must shine quietly, and, for a long time, neither sleepiness nor distraction must set in” (p. 38). A helpful expression for indicating the direction to be taken is the “quieting of the spirit in the space of the ancestors,” and “taking possession of the former heaven” (p. 58). The Taoists actually call the center in the head, from which one must begin the work of possessing and transmuting life and “distillation of the abyssal element in pure yang,” the “Land of the ancestors,” and Confucius calls it “space of the Ancient Heaven” and also “Yellow Middle.” It does not happen through contemplation alone; it already involves a *change of state* that is fanned like a fire by the “rotation” and crystallization of the intellectual light in the center between the eyes. In the midst of the light, a point of the yang pole arises; “Then suddenly there develops the seed pearl. It is as if man and woman embraced and a conception took place” (p. 31).

The text contains advice for avoiding a wrong direction in practice, such as reducing it to “exercises” and forcing oneself mentally and intentionally while maintaining the everyday sense of one’s I. It says that through the work “one must press on from the obvious to the profound, from the coarse to the fine” (p. 33), and that it is important to have no “intentions” of any kind. The beginning and the end of the work should be a single thing in the spirit, even though there will naturally be states of greater coldness and greater heat. “Master Lü-tsu said, The decision must be carried out with a collected heart, and not seeking success; success will then come of itself ” (p. 40). The often-used formula is “the way that leads from conscious action to unconscious non-action” (p. 24), where “conscious” refers to the common I, unconscious non-action (which is conscious in a different way) to the state of higher spontaneity that replaces it: “If one can attain purposelessness through purpose, then the thing has been grasped” (p. 46). The Hermetists expressed this in different terms, saying that while assisted by art, it is *nature* that must act in the work. “But the goal must be to reach the vastness of heaven and the depths of the sea [in the anima], so that all methods seem quite easy and taken for granted. Only then have we mastered it” (p. 33). “Fixed contemplation” (*fan chao*) is not “contemplating one’s own ego,” but orientation “toward that point where the formative spirit has not yet manifested” (p. 34).<sup>6</sup> It also speaks of passing “out of the ordinary world into the holy world,” precisely in relation to passing into the realm of unconscious action and

liberating oneself from the embryonic shell (p. 24). Enough has been said here to warn anyone who lets himself be deluded by the instructions and recipes of a vulgarized yoga, having no sense of the organic character and the profound obligation of a truly initiatic work, nor of the essential importance of the moment of “breaking through the level” and *opening oneself* (the yang point that manifests).

The text adds that the fixation of the intellectual light between the eyes serves to stabilize the total direction. One thereby determines the direction in which the whole work subsequently unfolds, leading to progressively deeper strata of being (p. 39). The “pure light” is gathered, and therein manifests, reborn, the pure yang with its character of primal energy and embryo of the “non-dual state”: this is the goal of the first phase and the basis of the following ones. Other terms used are “protection of the Center,” the method “whereby the conscious spirit [which would be the one subject to the anima yin] can be subdued and the primal spirit protected,” and “protect the Yellow Middle with the fire of the spirit” (pp. 36, 38).

The two main hindrances to be overcome here are *distraction* and *inertia*, being, respectively, of yang and yin nature. The second is more difficult to conquer, because of domains that cannot be directly attacked by the principal, active, and lively consciousness.

Next under consideration is a special negative phenomenology. The text warns that when the state of circulation and crystallization has begun, images of every sort may suddenly appear, even figures of divinities and saints. If one gives in to their fascination and pays attention to them, if one “follows” them, “the master becomes the servant” and one ends up on the path of “ten thousand ensnarements.” He who follows it, instead of reaching the “space of energy” which is the goal of the next and essential phase of the work, ends in the “cave of fantasy” corresponding to the “world of the demons,” “the world of illusory desire” (pp. 46, 48). These experiences that one may have during the practice are analogous to those that happen after death: the reader can refer to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which speaks of the *bardo* and its false apparitions, celestial or infernal. Our text warns against such apparitions and the feeling of relief, like ecstatic detachment, that one experiences upon “following” them (p. 46). It is interesting to note in passing that what is indicated here, without a shadow of doubt, is the absolute antithesis of what is promoted by psychoanalysis and especially by Jung, whose method is to raise and cultivate such images from the unconscious, absurdly called “archetypes.” The conscious principle is supposed to “follow” and become assimilated to them, thus causing the illusory sensation

of a liberated and unburdened consciousness—exactly what our text puts us on our guard against.

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We now consider the next phase of the Work. It involves the ignification of the light, the realization of reverse motion (as opposed to rectilinear and extroverted) and of circulation in a deeper plane, the transformative union of the light yang with the energy yin, and the transmutation of the seed.

The incompleteness of the work as done solely in the upper seat, crystallizing the light between the eyes, is indicated in these precise terms: “it is as if one had mounted to the hall but had not yet entered the inner chamber. Then the spirit-fire will not develop, the energy remains cold, and the true fruit will hardly manifest itself ” (p. 39). Once the “true seed” is born, one must apply the proper method in order to melt and mix it, so as to produce the elixir of life (p. 24). The technique gives an important role to *breathing*. It even says that “the deeper secrets cannot be effected without making the breathing rhythmical” (p. 39), and that “the circulation of the light must be united to the rhythm of breathing” (p. 40). The action seems to affect the heart, which it is said cannot be influenced directly; “therefore the breath-energy is used as a handle” (p. 41). Thus one achieves *subtle breathing*: “Although the breath that flows in and out through the nose is not the true [i.e., living] breath, the flowing in and out of the true breath takes place in connection with it” (p. 43). The heart, not the ear, should hear the breath when it becomes thoroughly light (p. 41).<sup>7</sup> Here, too, at a certain point the spontaneous state of “non-acting” or “functioning devoid of functioning” should supervene. Heart and breath thus harmonize. “All at once [the heart] becomes so quiet that it stops. Then the true breathing is manifested and the form of the heart comes to consciousness. If the heart is light, the breathing is light” (p. 41). One can call this the release of the heart’s bondage. The practice seems to involve a veritable “regimen of fire” in the Hermetic sense, and the Hermetic symbol of “hatching” (= cooking) is also used here.<sup>8</sup> The *Book of the Elixir*, an alchemical treatise mentioned in the text, speaks specifically of *hatching*, which gives as “magical key” the formula “the heart is always listening” (p. 41). Then, it says, the energy of heat suffers no interruption day or night, “and the primal spirit awakens to life.” However, this does not happen unless “the heart has first died.” The explanation is: “To kill the heart does not mean to let it dry and wither away, but it means that it has become undivided and gathered into one” (p. 42). We might say that the heart which is



killed, so that the spirit and the breath may live, is the “lower heart,” and that the process aims at what other traditions indicate as a “freezing of the heart” or of the “blood.” (The text in fact uses the image of cold ashes.) Only then can the heart move “by itself ” and not as the effect of external objects and emotions. Its motion is then called the movement of Heaven, movement of the higher spirit, and “action through non-action” (p. 58).

Unfortunately, the text does not show clearly the distinction and relation between this phase, where it speaks of the heart, and the essential phase in which the work moves to the “space of energy,” a space which does not coincide with the heart. Referring to esoteric teaching in general, it seems that this operation, which looses the bonds of the heart and allows one to know the living breath, brings about the necessary condition for opening the way toward deeper strata of being, toward “the abyssal element *k’an*.” An important sentence tells one to watch the point where energy and breathing unite—then “*he must feel that a warm release belonging to the true light is beginning to stir dimly. Then he has found the right space*” (p. 48). It is the “magical fire” or the “androgyné” capable of penetrating to the lower seat and giving rise to the true elixir of immortality.<sup>9</sup>

In any case, the task is described thus: “the spirit crystallizes [the germ yang] and enters . . . the place of energy,” which is followed by a transmutation and a new rotation, an inverted or reversed motion. The energy is led from the heart to contemplation and crystallization in the space of energy, for which the basis still seems to be the breath (p. 38—and p. 61, where the breath has the function of “fanning” the fire). I have mentioned that in the text the “space of energy” is located in a point of the stomach, which Wilhelm interprets as the solar plexus. When the new internal activity, the circulation belonging to the new way of breathing, is initiated in the heart, the spirit should be “immersed” in that seat, and spirit and energy must communicate and exchange their nature, until “the primal spirit becomes the seat of life, the true energy” (the light yang acquires the quality of energy yin, and the energy acquires the quality of light). Hence the text also speaks of the method of “turning the mill wheel” (the circulations: we recall those which occur within the Hermetic *athanor* under the action of “our fire”), so that the energy is “distilled” into pure yang and transformed into the elixir of life (p. 30). The spirit (yang) and the energy (yin) reunited and crystallized produce the true, blazing fire which evaporates the water of the abyssal, feminine element, whereupon the being arises which has life in itself, separately from the body: like the golden flowering of the great One (p. 61).

The specific mentions in the Taoist text of sexual energy and human seed are

interesting for their relationship to Tantric and Gnostic views. One of the ways in which a man is led to dissipate himself in the “straight-line,” extroverted direction under the influence of the animayin is when instinctive desire arises and the light-seed runs down to the lower part; there, as “energy of the kidneys,” it becomes what impregnates a woman and generates a fetus, another individual (p. 31). Here, too, the “backward-flowing method” must intervene, to close the path to physical birth. Instead of letting the energy flow outward, which is what transforms it into semen, one must make “the true energy return to its root,” which, restrained, “turns around itself.” “If, in the moment of release, it is not allowed to flow outward, but is led by the energy of thought so that it penetrates the crucible of the Creative . . . then one realizes the backward-flowing method” that produces the Elixir of Life (pp. 31–32, 61–62). The sexual reference is clear enough in our text: it contrasts the man who ejaculates during intercourse with a woman to the one who retains the semen and transforms its energy (p. 62). “The ancients really attained long life by the help of this seed-energy present in their own bodies, and did not lengthen their years by swallowing this or that sort of elixir.” “The difference shown by ordinary people depends only upon how they apply the downward-flowing way or the backward-flowing way” (p. 63).<sup>10</sup>

At this point someone may ask whether the text alludes to actual operations of sexual magic, namely the work “with two vessels,” with the help of a woman, in which intercourse arouses the energy that is not poured into her in the form of semen, but retained (see chap. X.2 of this volume). There is a point in the text that might suggest this, where it speaks of the method of converting into something salutary that which in itself has a lethal and negative character (“convert the poison to medicine”), and immediately adds “By this is meant the bodily union of man and woman from which spring sons and daughters. The fool wastes the most precious jewel of his body in uncontrolled lust, and does not know how to conserve his seed-energy. When it is finished, the body perishes. The holy and wise men have no other way of cultivating their lives except by destroying lusts and safeguarding the seed” (p. 63). This seems precise enough. Yet the text recounts the tradition about the master P’eng, that he used his serving-maids to obtain the elixir, only to explain that this is a misunderstanding: in fact, he used the conjunction and sublimation of the two principles, the crystallized light yang and the humid energy yin. Naturally this is the essential thing if one has an initiatic practice in mind. But it is an open question whether the transformation of the seed is to take place indirectly, through an internal process, or else in an operation performed in union with a woman.

Whatever the case, the goal cannot be different, and the essence of the

operation is that the fire-light element (*li*) descending from the higher seat (called by the *I Ching* “the cause of resurrection”) should come into contact with the abyssal element (“marriage” of the two) and, blending together, “the light of consciousness is transformed into the light of being,” the existential split is overcome, the place of origin “being-life” is regained, because that is what is demanded of him who “seeks eternal life” (p. 24).

It must be emphasized that the text puts all this on a concrete basis. The seed, retained and transmuted, is converted into energy, producing an essential mutation of the state of vital energy in the entire organism. “Everything belonging to the dark principle is wholly absorbed, and the body is born into pure light” (p. 30). This reflects the fact that the conscious spirit (the individualized one, which is normally split off and has no life of its own) is transformed into the “primal spirit,” attaining infinite stability.<sup>11</sup> It is then that the *Kuei*, the active, divine essence, is born, and the body becomes the “Golden Genius” in the “sixfold present” (p. 30).<sup>12</sup> (Like Hermetic alchemy, Taoist alchemy also uses the symbolism of gold making.) It means that this being possesses an immaterial dimension, superior to the realm of the five senses (in Hermetism: the dual nature), which assures its incorruptibility. The process as a whole brings it about that in the newly reborn man,<sup>13</sup> death is dissolved in life, so to speak, while a separate “life body” (“spirit body”) is generated through transformation, capable of leaving the earthly body “which remains behind as a drying shell like that shed by a cicada,” as Richard Wilhelm says (p. 4).

Finally, I will repeat some interesting indications in the text about the signs that announce the incipient crystallization of the Golden Flower. It speaks first of a special serenity, like a calm, unbroken intoxication, in which a transfigured feeling of nature takes shape (“light that falls on nature”). Then it mentions the natural firmness of body and soul: one is untouched by contingencies; bad and unpleasant things around us are not noticed as such. One also has an extraordinary experience of suddenly perceiving that “inside and outside, everything is equally light,” and for an instant one cannot see one’s own body; “This is called ‘In the empty chamber it grows light’” (pp. 50–51). It is a sensation of clarity and infinity: the body generally feels light, and one has the sense of rising (a state called “The clouds fill the ten thousand mountains”) that can even result in genuine phenomena of levitation, which in such a case reflect the spiritual realization in a physical symbol (“the spirit returns and touches heaven”) (pp. 50–51).

When the “circulation of the light” is in process, the lower heart, a creature

of the anima, is excluded; in everyday life the mind becomes “like an expanse of water: objects appear in it, but without the power to touch or distract one.” The disciple lives among men, “mysterious yet visible, different and yet the same, and none can compass it; then no one notices our secret actions.” He realizes the saying of Lü-tsu: “The land that is nowhere, that is the true home” (p. 53).

With that I can end these notes, hoping to have provided the reader with a few hints in case he wishes to study the text. As one can see, the fundamental teachings of our Art are confirmed in the terms of the Far Eastern tradition, and presented in a coherent whole.

## XI.5

# Various Commentaries

## WOMAN AND INITIATION

People often ask about the possibility of initiation for women, namely, to what degree sexual differences influence the initiatic path and may have a negative influence on it.

If one means by initiation simply the procedure through which contact can be made with the supersensible, then initiation, in principle, is equally open to a woman. What remains is the question of the method. Normally the appropriate way for a man is the “dry” and active method, in which he never loses self-awareness, and the ritual is controlled in every detail by a principle that persists through all the changes of state, right up to the phases of realization. For a woman, on the other hand, the natural way would be the “humid” one. This is assuming that humans are of the “male type” or the “female type,” sexually differentiated *internally* just as they are physically. But given that the majority of humans, especially today, are far from being that, and—as best demonstrated by Weininger—since there is usually something feminine in men and something masculine in women, a certain latitude may exist here.

It is in the further development of the initiatic path that the possibilities for man and for woman are no longer the same.

Much has been said, and often mistakenly, about what distinguishes the “Lesser Mysteries” from the “Greater Mysteries.” One of their effective and general differences is that the Lesser Mysteries facilitate a rebirth into “Life,” whereas the Greater Mysteries facilitate a rebirth beyond “Life.” Here “Life” means the cosmic force, while “beyond Life” means the truly transcendent plane, supercosmic, above and beyond all that is manifestation. The point of reference for the former is the Earth; for the latter, Heaven. Now, the fact that feminine and maternal symbols have always been associated with “Life” and the

Earth shows that women can certainly receive the initiation of the Lesser Mysteries (lunar or Isiac initiation). In some traditions, women play a prominent role in mysteries of that kind, and one could even speak of women as initiators and of “Women’s Mysteries,” wherein the earthly woman is presented as an image of the cosmic or telluric Woman—Mother, Virgin, or Bride. But we must note that in history there have often been interferences and transpositions. This is why initiations that have been established with a claim to being “Greater Mysteries,” especially in regions where non-Hyperborean influences predominate, should really be considered as “Lesser Mysteries” according to the criteria mentioned, and because they are under the sign of the cosmic and chthonic feminine. This seems to have been the case even for the Eleusinian Mysteries, and for Pythagoreanism, in which women are known to have had an important place.

Moving on to the domain of the “Greater Mysteries” in the proper sense, everything leads one to believe that women were excluded from initiations belonging to them, and that since “Heaven” was always given a paternal character with respect to “Earth,” these mysteries were masculine in principle.<sup>1</sup> Transcendence—implying a being-in-itself, detached and unsupported by anything and supremely autonomous—cannot be a woman’s ideal, and besides, the “pure” woman lacks the technical qualification for following it.<sup>2</sup> It was even said of the “Taurine” or “Ammonian power,” which is the power of solar and magical initiations, that “no woman may know it without dying from it.” While women were excluded from Mithraic initiations, it was originally the case, too, with an order that was not directly initiatic, but certainly attuned to absolute transcendence: that of Buddhism. What always remains possible for a woman is her development in a system of “participations”; not the aspiration for that which is an absolute principle in itself. All this certainly seems logical on the basis of a simple analogy. Speaking Hermetically, one can say in general that woman can attain the “White Work,” while the “Red Work” is an eminently virile affair. These two degrees of the Hermetic Work correspond, moreover, to the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries.

This also applies to sexual magic. The field of yoga does not lack women who dedicate themselves to corresponding practices, but one must understand what sort of yoga is involved, and the goals that it pursues. Setting aside the approximate forms of yoga imported to Europe, which lack any initiatic character and are reduced to a few physical and mental exercises, in the field of traditional yoga there is at least one form, hatha-yoga as kundalini-yoga, which raises particular problems for women. The essence of this yoga consists of

awakening the basal energy, the *kundalini* (serpent power) which has the feminine character of the Shakti. It must be conjoined with the masculine principle, represented by Shiva, of which the male yogi is considered the bearer and which he must develop sufficiently in himself for this fusion to carry him toward transcendence. But this presupposition—the complementary principle of Shakti-kundalini—is absent in woman as such. At best, one can envisage a woman awakening the kundalini, but only to open herself to it and to activate it for amplifying, integrating, or transfiguring her own nature, making her into an incarnation of the Shakti, which is already her profound feminine nature. The limitation is thus confirmed.

We may also touch on the “participations” that are possible for a woman, though in a somewhat dark domain, perhaps corresponding to the telluric Mysteries which degenerated to become centers of the counter-initiation (on which concept, see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, VIII.3, 235–42). Special types of women may accumulate and activate the energies of an ecstasy and an intoxication which work toward a destruction of the masculine and truly supernatural element. On this topic, one can review what has already been said about the “magic of conjunctions” and sexual magic (this volume, X.2 and 4, pp. 335–57) and get an idea—and a presentiment—of what possibilities such techniques have to offer the woman. Beside being extremely dangerous, they are the *only* ones available to her for following a direct path: using sex realized in one’s abyssal and demonic depths for the ecstatic surpassing of sex. Hence the important role in which we see women figuring in the ancient cult of Dionysus and in orgiastic Asiatic Tantrism.

## ***EX ORIENTE LUX***

The idea contained in this expression—that it is from the Orient that spiritual light has come—has become a sort of cliché in the past century. The most immediate reference was to Judaism, which was supposed to have had a monopoly of the higher religion, “monotheism,” and then to Christianity, whose message is supposed to have raised the West to a hitherto unknown spiritual level. These views have since been abandoned, their unilateral and tendentious quality being all too obvious.

Nonetheless, the same formula applies to an idea still honored in many spiritualist milieus, though with reference to properly Asiatic civilizations: that the spiritual light has radiated from the Orient.

This conception, even though less unilateral than the first, is still incomplete and only valid within certain historical boundaries. The ideas presented by Arvo concerning the Hyperborean tradition enable one to understand that (see this volume, XI.3, pp. 370–78). The light that shines from Hindu or Persian civilization did not originate in the Orient, because those civilizations were created by races that came from the West and the North in a distant prehistoric epoch; and whatever they contain of local and specifically Asian origin has a more negative than positive aspect. As for Egyptian civilization, its origin is Western: it did not “evolve” in place, but its myths tell of the “company of Horus,” which came from a sacred West that cannot be unconnected with Atlantis. And various other Mediterranean centers have this same remote origin in the West, even if not easy to discern, due to their great age and all the interferences and stratifications. The light of authentically Greek civilization, namely that which it owes to the Dorians and Achaeans, descended from the North. As for the more distant civilizations of China and Japan, the question of their origin is complicated, because while they certainly bear witness to the “primordial tradition” (especially the Chinese), ethnic races such as the Mongolian have their own relationship to the Indo-European branches of Nordic-Western origin. In any case, the influence of those distant civilizations on the West is practically nonexistent.

Thus when one takes a comprehensive view over the earliest times, the expression *ex Oriente lux* seems inaccurate. A light shone out of Asia, certainly, but more in the sense of a retransmission, since its center of origin was elsewhere, largely in the North and the West.



# Footnotes

## FOREWORD

1. First published in the German edition of the present volume: Julius Evola, *Schritte zur Initiation: Magie als Wissenschaft vom Ich, Band II: Theorie und Praxis des höheren Bewusstseins*, trans. H. T. Hansen (= Hans Thomas Hakl) (Bern: Ansata, 1997), now revised and augmented by the author.
2. Julius Evola / Gruppo di UR, *Magie als Wissenschaft vom Ich* (Interlaken: Ansata, 1985).
3. For a more recent study, see also Hans Thomas Hakl, “Julius Evola and the Ur Group,” *Aries* 12/1 (2012): 53–90.
4. See Julius Evola, *The Path of Cinnabar: An Intellectual Autobiography* (n.p.: Integral Tradition Publishing, 2009), 88–95.
5. In *Vie della Tradizione*, nos. 75, 76 (1989); English translation in Julius Evola and the UR Group, *Introduction to Magic: Rituals and Practical Techniques for the Magus* [vol. I], trans. Guido Stucco, ed. Michael Moynihan (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2001), xi–xxxviii.
6. Renato del Ponte, *Evola e il Magico “Gruppo di Ur”*: *Studi e documenti per servire alla storia di “Ur-Krur”* (Borzano: SeaR, 1994).
7. Highly recommended on this topic is Marco Rossi, “Julius Evola and the Independent Theosophical Association of Rome,” *Theosophical History* VI/3 (July 1996): 107–14.
8. Some recommended books on Raimondo di Sangro, Principe di San Severo:

Paolo Galiano, *Raimondo De Sangro e gli Arcana Arcanorum* (Rome: Simmetria, 2010); L. Sansone Vagni, *Raimondo di Sangro, Principe di San Severo* (Foggia: Bastogi, 1992); Clara Miccinelli, *Il Principe di San Severo, Verità e Riabilitazione* (Genoa: E.C.I.G, 1985).

9. See his fundamental and indispensable work on modern esoteric movements: Massimo Introvigne, *Il cappello del mago* (Milan: SugarCo, 1990), 164. Prof. Introvigne is the founder of CESNUR (Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni, or Center for Studies on New Religions), which probably the most important organization and collecting point in Europe for information on new religious movements, based in Turin and supported by the Catholic Church.
10. On the Arcana Arcanorum, see Denis Labouré, “De Cagliostro aux Arcana Arcanorum,” *L’Originel* 2 (Summer 1995): 20–27, and Massimo Introvigne, *La sfida magica* (Milan: Ancora, 1995), 105–33. It is unclear where Cagliostro obtained this material, but Introvigne assumes that he received much of it from members of the German Gold and Rose Cross, and especially from its offshoot, the Asiatic Brethren. These groups were, in turn, influenced by Jewish Kabbalistic circles around Sabbatai Zevi and Jacob Frank.
11. His last writing was published under the title *Il lume eterno* (Foggia: Bastogi, 1987). A detailed and scholarly biography is Sansone Vagni, *Raimondo di Sangro, principe di San Severo* (Foggia: Bastogi, 1992).
12. Clara Miccinelli, *Il tesoro del Principe di San Severo* (Genoa: E.C.I.G., 1984).
13. See Marc Bédarride, *De l’Ordre Maçonique de Misraim*, 2 vols. (Paris: Bénard, 1845).
14. Here we are following Introvigne, *Il cappello del mago*, 299ff.
15. See Éliphas Lévi, *Einweihungsbriefe* (Schwarzenberg: Ansata, 1980); English edition: *Letters to a Disciple: Letters from Eliphas Lévi Zahed to*

*Baron Nicolas-Joseph Spedalieri on Magic, Numerology and the Tarot* (Wellington: Aquarian, 1980).

16. *Commentarium*, nos. 8, 9, 10 (1910), 210.
17. G. M. G. (M. Daffi), *Giuliano Kremmerz e la Fr+ Tr+ di Myriam* (Genoa: Alkaest, 1981), 62, 84.
18. “La ‘Grande Orma’—la scena e le quinte,” in *Introduzione alla magia*, vol. III (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 2012), 380–83. The main title of the article in Italian, *La grande orma*, may be an anagram for *La grande Roma*.
19. There are a number of investigations into this question. The most important are probably: Stefano Arcella, “L’enigma della grande orma,” in *Esoterismo e fascismo: storia, interpretazione, documenti*, ed. Gianfranco de Turrís (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 2006), 125–45; Giuseppe Maddalena Capiferro and Cristian Guzzo, “Le Quinte, la scena, la grande orma,” *Politica Romana* 7 (2005–2007): 127–70; and, last but not least, Renato del Ponte “Quando il Gruppo di Ur cercò d’influenzare il Fascismo,” in *Esoterismo e fascismo*, 147–52.
20. Renato del Ponte, in his *Il movimento tradizionalista romano nel Novecento* (Scandiano: SeaR, 1987), 43ff., reveals much about this and provides contemporary newspaper reports as evidence.
21. On his scholarly career, see Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, *Giornata di studio nel cinquantenario della morte di Leone Caetani* (Rome: Fondazione Leone Caetani dell’Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1986).
22. On this line of succession, see also CESNUR, *Il ritorno della magia* (Milan: Ancora, 1992), 116–26.
23. Unfortunately, before his death he burned all the letters from Kremmerz, along with other material attributable to him. Along with Gino Mucciaccia, he was the last direct student of Kremmerz, with a very intimate relationship

to his master. When Verginelli was young and could not even support his family, Kremmerz is said to have invited him to Monte Carlo, where he proceeded to win large sums at the Casino.

- [24.](#) See Vinci Verginelli, *Bibliotheca Hermetica* (Florence: Nardini, 1986).
- [25.](#) The manuscripts for the internal use of Myriam, *Rituaria di Catena Terapeutica* and *Sacramento segreto delle Fratellanze Ermetiche*, appear to stem from this Florentine milieu.
- [26.](#) Anonymous, *Dagli Atti del Corpo dei Pari* (Genoa: Alkaest, 1978).
- [27.](#) Anna Maria Piscitelli, *La Pietra Angolare Miriamica: Oltre 100 anni di storia documentata della S.P.H.C.I. Fr+ Tm+ di Miriam di Giuliano Kremmerz* (Naples: Ass. Culturale S.P.H.C.I. Fr+ Tm+ di Miriam, 2013).
- [28.](#) See the work of his wife, Luciana Virio, *Paolo M. Virio, esempio di vita* (Rome: Amenotes, n.d.).
- [29.](#) See especially his book *Pour la Rose Rouge et la Croix d'Or* (Paris: Axis Mundi, 1988). He describes the inner structure of Myriam on 183ff.
- [30.](#) See Gastone Ventura, *I riti massonici di Misraim e Memphis* (Rome: Atanòr, 1975); Francesco Brunelli, ed., *Rituali dei gradi simbolici della Massoneria di Memphis e Misraim* (Foggia: Bastogi, 1981); Francesco Brunelli, ed., *Grandi costituzioni e regolamenti generali dell'Ordine Massonico Orientale del Rito Antico e Primitivo di Memphis e Misraim* (Foggia: Bastogi, 1982); Serge Caillet, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Egyptienne de Memphis-Misraim* (Paris: Cariscript, 1988). For internal writings intended only for members of the order, see the instructions published by Nebo S. I. I.: *Liber Alef Uno*, *Liber Beth*, and *Liber Beth 3*.
- [31.](#) For a good overview, see Alexander Bruce (pseud.), “Arcana Arcanorum: From the Rituals of Egyptian Freemasonry to the Kremmerzian Corpus,” in *Octagon: The Quest for Wholeness*, ed. Hans Thomas Hakl (Sinzheim:

Scientia Nova, 2016), 297–311.

- [32.](#) See *Corpus Philosophorum totius magiae*, 3 vols. (Milan: Agape, 1987); *La magia della Myriam* (Milan: Agape, 1987); and *Scopi e pratiche alchemiche dell'Ordine Osirideo Egizio* (Milan: Agape, n.d.).
- [33.](#) See Peter R. König, *Der O.T.O. Phänomen RELOAD* (Munich: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Religions-und Weltanschauungsfragen, 2011), vol. 2, 471–77; vol. 3, 337–38. This, together with the author's other works, must be rated the most historically important available in German on modern esoteric groups and their connections. [The pages cited from vol. 2 of König's work also contain extensive passages in English. —*Trans.*]
- [34.](#) In 1954 the Casa Editrice Universale di Roma published the *Opera Omnia* (complete works) of Kremmerz in three volumes.
- [35.](#) In the preface to *Scopi e pratiche alchemiche* (see note 32), Prometeo-Agape expressly exempts Kremmerz from these practices, but reproaches him for his silence about such operations in other branches.
- [36.](#) See Introvigne, *Il cappello*, 307, for further details, and especially *Mémoire du sang* by Alexandre de Dánaan [pseud. for Alessandro Boella and Antonella Galli] (Milan: Archè, 1990), 127ff., which explains the spiritual-historical background of these practices and the “Magic of the Avatar” that results from them.
- [37.](#) On Reghini, see, besides Introvigne, *Il cappello*, 181ff., Arturo Reghini, *Paganesimo, Pitagorismo, Massoneria* (Furnari: Mantinea, 1986), i–xvi; Elemire Zolla, *Uscite dal mondo* (Milan: Adelphi, 1992), 443ff.; Laszlo Toth, “Avant-propos,” in Arturo Reghini, *Les nombres sacrés dans la Tradition Pythagoricienne Maçonnique* (Milan: Archè, 1981); and, most recently, the Ph.D. dissertation by Christian Giudice, “Traditionalism and Occultism: Arturo Reghini and the Antimodern Reaction in Early Twentieth Century Italy” (University of Gothenburg, 2016), which, although of great importance, is mostly centered on political issues.

- [38.](#) Despite this information, widely reported as factual, it must at least be mentioned that there is doubt over the authenticity of the certificate of conferral, if only because Article 10 of the Statutes of this Rite explicitly prohibits the conferral of degrees *ad honorem*. See the reproduction of the certificate in Peter-R. König, *Materialien zum OTO* (Munich: A.R.W., 1994), 30. König has also established a very instructive, although somewhat biased, English website, the “Ordo Templi Orientis Phenomenon” at [www.parareligion.ch](http://www.parareligion.ch).
- [39.](#) See the introduction in Amedeo R. Armentano, *Massime di scienza iniziatica* (Ancona: Associazione Culturale Ignis, 1992).
- [40.](#) On this quarrel, see the supplementary pages of UR and KRUR that Renato del Ponte first published in his book *Evola e il magico “Gruppo di UR”* (Borzano: SeaR, 1994), especially 95ff. Noteworthy, too, is the interesting polemic that Aurelio Perenne launched with his article “Renato del Ponte, Evola e il magico ‘Gruppo di UR’” in the periodical *Politica Romana 2* (1995), 139ff, in which he accuses Del Ponte of inaccuracies. For instance, the pseudonym Arvo is said not to be that of Duke Colonna di Cesarò, but of Evola himself. According to Perenne, the magical glosses and marginal comments at the chapter conclusions of the UR monographs did not come from Evola’s mind alone, but were by common consent of the whole group.
- [41.](#) A first attempt at a biography of Parise has been written by Simone Caltabellotta, *Un amore degli anni venti*, (Milan: Ponte alle grazie, 2015). Unfortunately, many important details are missing due to a lack of documents, although the book occasionally offers an interesting glimpse into the inner workings of UR and the difficult relationship between Evola and Parise.
- [42.](#) Evola, *The Path of Cinnabar*, 91.
- [43.](#) Giovanni Vannoni, *Massoneria, Fascismo e Chiesa Cattolica* (Rome: Laterza, 1980), 282.
- [44.](#) Piero Fenili, “Gli errori di Julius Evola,” *Ignis*, issues 1 and 2 of 1991, and

issue 1 of 1992. In *Politica Romana*, 2 (1995) and 3 (1996). Fenili continued this discussion in a very interesting way with the comprehensive article “Julius Evola e la cultura della destra cattolica e neopagana.” [For a summary of this discussion, see Joscelyn Godwin, “*Politica Romana* pro and contra Evola,” in *Esotericism, Religion, and Politics*, ed. Arthur Versluis, Lee Irwin, and Melinda Phillips (Minneapolis: North American Academic Press, 2012), 41–58. —*Trans.*]

45. On Evola and Germany, see the preface and introduction by H. T. Hansen (= Hans Thomas Hakl), “Julius Evola’s Political Endeavors,” in Julius Evola, *Men among the Ruins*, trans. Guido Stucco, ed. Michael Moynihan (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2002), xi–xvi, 1–109.
46. The latest researches on the UR Group were the topic of a fascinating conference in occasion of the 90th anniversary of this magical society in Naples on October 14, 2017. A number of scholars had apparently spent much time researching archives and were able to find many unknown details on the various members of the group. The proceedings of the conference have not yet been published, however. On the website of “Ereticamente” ([www.ereticamente.net](http://www.ereticamente.net)) video recordings of the conference papers can be viewed, although these are unfortunately somewhat compromised by poor acoustics.
47. See, especially, Guido de Giorgio, *L’Instant et l’Éternité et autres textes sur la Tradition* (Milan: Archè, 1987), which contains, among other things, 23 hitherto unknown letters from Guénon in which the UR Group’s activities are viewed fairly negatively; and Pietro di Vona, *Evola, Guénon, de Giorgio* (Borzano: SeaR, 1993).
48. [An Italian *liceo* is equivalent to a college-preparatory high school in the U.S. —*Trans.*]
49. Evola and the UR Group, *Introduction to Magic* [vol. I], 334.
50. See Marc Pluquet, *La Sophiale, Maria de Naglowska, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris: Ordo Templi Orientis, 1993), and Sarane Alexandrian, *Le libérateurs*

- de l'amour* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), 185–206. An English survey of her sex-magical activities can be found in Hans Thomas Hakl, “The Theory and Practice of Sexual Magic, Exemplified by Four Magical Groups in the Early Twentieth Century,” in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter Hanegraaff and Jeffrey Kripal (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 445–78. This article also includes a section on sexual magical theories and practices within the UR Group.
- [51.](#) See the magazine *Abstracta* 16 (June 1987), 16, where Servadio gave an interview with the Evola publisher Gianfranco de Turris; also Giovanni Errera, *Emilio Servadio* (Florence: Nardini, 1990), 47ff.
- [52.](#) This article, entitled “Evola, o il mago,” is reproduced in the richly documented third edition of Evola’s spiritual autobiography, *Il Cammino del Cinabro* (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 2014), 174–76.
- [53.](#) Online at: [www.zenshinji.org/home/?p=1559](http://www.zenshinji.org/home/?p=1559) (accessed 31 August 2018).
- [54.](#) See the journal edited by G. R. S. Mead, *The Quest*, London, II/2 (January 1916), 298ff., where a small selection of Jebavý’s works appear in English translation.
- [55.](#) English edition: *The White Dominican*, trans. Mike Mitchell (Sawtry: Dedalus, 2015).
- [56.](#) See the Belgian political and ideological journal *Vouloir*, no. 89–91 (July 1992), 11.
- [57.](#) *La loggia*, vol. XVII, no. 81 (July–September, 1996).
- [58.](#) See *Arthos* (January–April, 1973), a periodical under Renato del Ponte’s direction; also the Evola anthology *Monarchia, Aristocrazia, Tradizione* (San Remo: CasabiancaMizar, 1986), 224ff., which also shows a facsimile of the first page of the original manuscript in Evola’s handwriting.



- [59.](#) *Europae Imperium* II/2 (1972), 1–5.
- [60.](#) See also Renato del Ponte, *Il Movimento Tradizionalista Romana nel Novecento* (Messina: ARX-dispense, 1986), 33ff.
- [61.](#) Luigi Moretti, “La dinamica del respiro: Resoconto di un’esperienza,” *Convivium* IV/14 (July–Sept. 1993): 4–15.
- [62.](#) The fundamental religious and philosophical works associated with the movement include: Renato del Ponte, *La religione dei Romani* (Milan: Rusconi, 1992), which was honored with one of the most distinguished Italian nonfiction prizes; the Sacra Limina publication *Sul problema di una Tradizione Romana nel tempo attuale* (Scandiano: SeaR, 1988); and the *Manifesto del Movimento Tradizionalista Romana*, published in 1993. Meanwhile the movement itself issued in a very small edition the important *Memoranda et Agenda* (La Spezia: Tridente, 1996), in which the group’s rituals (in Latin) and a sacred calendar were publicly disclosed for the first time. For the latest developments, see Saturnia Tellus, the official site of the Movimento Tradizionale Romano at [www.saturniatellus.com](http://www.saturniatellus.com) (an elaborate website, which also offers hotel accommodation for guests).
- [63.](#) For further details, see Renato del Ponte, “Les courants de la Tradition païenne romaine en Italie” in the Belgian journal *Antaios* 10 (June 1996): 166–73.

I.1

- [1.](#) [English translation by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie in *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, ed. David R. Fideler (Grand Rapids: Phanes, 1987), 163–65, altered when needed to accord with the commentary (the numbering of the commentary has also been adjusted to correspond to the English verse lines). A preliminary paragraph, here omitted, refers to the translation of the *Golden Verses* in Italian hexameters, specially made for UR by “Tikaipōs,” assisted by “Henìocos Àristos.” —*Trans.* (Notes followed by “*Trans.*” are by the Translator. All others represent the original text.)]

2. [Passages in brackets, unless marked “*Trans.*,” are Evola’s later additions to the original writings by others of the UR Group. —*Trans.*]
3. [Page references to the first volume of the UR Group’s writings are to the English language edition: Julius Evola and the UR Group, *Introduction to Magic: Rituals and Practical Techniques for the Magus*, trans. Guido Stucco, ed. Michael Moynihan (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2001). —*Trans.*]

1.2

1. [The Italian editions contained only a schematic drawing based on Gichtel’s first figure. We include here the four original illustrations from Gichtel’s work, which are described and interpreted in the text. Gichtel’s third figure, which is not under discussion, is a geometric design showing “The Wheel of the Birth of God’s Image in Man.” —*Trans.*]
2. [Titles adapted with reference to the German original. —*Trans.*]
3. [References to Gichtel’s *Theoria Practica* are altered, when necessary, to accord with the modern edition: Johann George Gichtel, *Theosophia Practica*, ed. Gerhard Wehr (Schwarzenburg: Imago Solis, 1979). —*Trans.*]
4. The reference to Melchizedek in the passage quoted is particularly interesting, since esotericists are well aware of the relationship of this enigmatic figure to the authentically initiatic tradition, superior to the “religion of Abraham.”
5. These “upper waters” would then have the same symbolic value as *ambrosia*. Macrobius (*Somnium Scipionis*, xxx) relates the mystery doctrine which speaks of a higher and purer nature of “matter” (ὕλη) of which the gods consist. It is called *ambrosia* and is said to be their drink, whereas its lower and more turbid nature is mortals’ drink, identified with the river Lethe, thus with the *draft of forgetfulness* (equivalent to the Oriental *avidya*, ignorance). The first water *restores* and makes *whole* the soul, taken out of the body and out of generation (γένεσις). The second water only perpetuates thirst. We recall that Christ uses an analogous symbolism in John 4:13–14.

6. The terror that one experiences at the command to abandon one's own I, to realize that it is an *error*, is not unrelated to the "Guardian of the Threshold" of Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni*, whatever fantasies some contemporary "occultist" circles have made of it. Gichtel speaks specifically of a Cherub guarding the way to the interior tree of life, situated in the world of fire. The soul has to be pierced by the sword of this Cherub, so as to "surpass God and man" and be able to reach Sophia (I, 12, 17). The blood dripping from the heart in figure 4 [page 23] certainly refers to this wound, which breaks the "shell" imprisoning the I.

7. On this, see Abraxa in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 50–51.

8. On the technical level one might think of the relationship of the "ignification of the astral light" to the blood system (see Abraxa in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 133–34). In Hermetism, the Sea and the passage of the Waters are distinctly shown in *Chymica Vannus* (Amsterdam, 1666), 192, where we see a man issuing from the Forest of Mars (according to G. Braccesco, *Expositione di Geber* [Venice, 1551], 58, Mars is *fixed sulfur*, the element by which fire overcomes fire) and preparing to cross a "river," on whose further side are winged beings (the beings of the "air"). The same illustration shows a sea with a ship leaving for a *secret shore* (a symbol corresponding to the "island"); in the upper part is Mercury, and beneath him, in the *lower* part, the so-called Fountain of Bernardo Trevisano, which it is not too rash to relate to the awakened *kundalinī*.

### I.3

1. [The first volume of *Introduction to Magic*, like the German edition, altered the pseudonym of Ercole Quadrelli from "Abraxa" to the standard spelling of this Gnostic deity: "Abraxas." While the change respected the well-known numerical equivalent (365) of the seven-lettered name, we prefer to retain the original version. —*Trans.*]

### II.1

1. [See the following essay by Iagla. —*Trans.*]

## II.2

1. Malinsky and De Poncins, *La guerre occulte* (Paris, 1935). [In the original quotation, from Benjamin Disraeli's novel *Coningsby*, the word is not "forces" (*forze*) but "personalities." —*Trans.*]
2. One can see that these instructions are more comprehensive and go much further than those offered by so-called modern depth psychology and psychoanalysis. (Note by UR)
3. [This passage occurred in the original (1927) version of Ea's "Considerations on Magic and Its Powers" (absent from the revised version in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 257–65). French translation in Julius Evola, *Tous les écrits de Ur & Krur—Ur 1927* (Milan: Arché, 1983), 91ff. —*Trans.*]
4. Carlo Michelstaedter, *La Persuasione e la Rettorica* (Florence, 1922), 88.
5. J. Evola, *L'Uomo come Potenza* (Rome, 1926), 214.
6. Evola, *L'Uomo come Potenza*, 205.

## II.3

1. [*Urbe Condita*, i.e., since the founding of Rome in 753 BCE. The "(sic)" is in the original. —*Trans.*]
2. *Rituel du grade de Maître*, 75. Elsewhere (*Maçonnerie Occulte* [1853], 537), Ragon lists Latium among the great centers of initiation. What now? As for the importance and initiatic character of Alesia (probably located near the present village of Alise Sainte-Reine, NW of Dijon. —*Trans.*), one will find that history only speaks of Alesia on the occasion of its destruction. All the rest is a brief legend told by Diodorus Siculus (bk. IV); whereas the Italian School of Pythagoras has a proven and historic importance of the first order. Can the Greater come from the Lesser?

- [3.](#) J. M. Ragon, *Orthodoxie Maçonnique* (Paris, 1853), 23.
- [4.](#) Stanislas de Guaita, *Au seuil du Mystère*, 5th ed. (Paris, 1915), 53.
- [5.](#) Marco Saunier, *La leggenda dei simboli* (Italian trans., 1912), 176.
- [6.](#) Romans 1:18–32.
- [7.](#) *L'Initiation* (August 1898).
- [8.](#) *La Thrécie* (Paris, An VII). [The year of publication is 1798/99 —*Trans.*]
- [9.](#) L. C. de Saint-Martin, *Correspondance inédite avec Kirchberger* (Paris, 1862).
- [10.](#) Sin . . . [sic —*Trans.*] in *O' Thanatos* (June 1923), 17.
- [11.](#) Acts 4:13.
- [12.](#) If truth be told, it was not the name of Christ but rather “I.H.S.V.H.”: a word that does not exist in Hebrew but was fabricated by medieval Christian Kabbalists for their own use and convenience, inserting an S into the Old Testament’s Tetragrammaton. On this Tetragrammaton supplied with a letter *Shin*, see the scholarly study by Savino Savini in *Ignis*, April–May 1925.
- [13.](#) We are only repeating the concepts and language of Saint Paul (I Corinthians 1:21–28).
- [14.](#) The rebels and traitors to the imperial authority and discipline pass as martyrs of the faith. Such is the case of Saint Sebastian, whom yesterday’s Guelfism wanted to make the patron of the Fascist Militia.
- [15.](#) [The reference is to Paul La Cour, who founded the periodical *Atlantis* in 1927. —*Trans.*]

- [16.](#) [English equivalents of foreign words in parentheses are supplied by the translator. —*Trans.*]
- [17.](#) R. Guénon, *Le Roi du Monde* (Paris, 1927), 124.
- [18.](#) Varro derives *pontifex* from *pons* (bridge) and *facere* (to make), because of the work of the *pontifices* in constructing the Ponte Sublicio; but the word *pontifex* is very ancient, and *pons* originally meant *via* (road or way) (Curtius, *Princ. Etym.*, I, 323). Likewise, the sea is called *ponto*; and for that reason, the Pontifices were those who “made the roads.”
- [19.](#) Alberto Gianola, *La fortuna di Pitagora presso i Romani* (Catania, 1921).
- [20.](#) Already in Mommsen’s time, the value of the Roman mythic tradition had been vindicated by J. J. Bachofen; see *Die Sage von Tanaquil* (Basel, 1870).
- [21.](#) [In the original text, wrongly referenced as *Aeneid*. Subsequent classical references have been standardized or corrected without comment. —*Trans.*]
- [22.](#) [Literal translation of the author’s version, not corresponding to Macrobius’s text. —*Trans.*]
- [23.](#) [Michel Bréal and Anatole Bailly, *Dictionnaire étymologique latin* (Paris: Hachette, 1885). —*Trans.*]
- [24.](#) [The quotation begins by translating Varro’s text, but then varies from it. I have translated literally the author’s following “translations.” —*Trans.*]

### III.2


- [1.](#) [The original is in poetic meter and rhyme. This prose translation attempts only to capture the factual content, which appears to be based on Rudolf Steiner’s doctrines as found especially in *Cosmic Memory: Prehistory of Earth and Man*, trans. Karl E. Zimmer (Hudson: Steinerbooks, 1987). —*Trans.*]

### III.3

1. Like the “rose” found in pagan tradition (e.g., the rose in Apuleius’s *Golden Ass*, symbolizing regeneration for one fallen into the “animal” state), this corresponds to the “battle” of Oriental traditions (though technically that alludes to a somewhat different “awakening”). Thus the “lady” of the Fedeli d’Amore can be compared to the “Sophia” who causes “resurrection” in a “new body,” mentioned in connection with Gichtel (see this volume, I.2); also with the “Diana,” who in Hermetism acquires a precise technical meaning; with the Shakti of Hinduism, the first thing the initiate needs for his integration; with the *prajñā* or *prajñāpāramitā* (transcendent wisdom), which in Mahayana Buddhism is represented as a celestial woman, to whom the Buddha is joined. (Note by UR)
2. For these two terms, we need to refer to the Arabic and scholastic elaboration of Aristotelian metaphysics and psychology. The “active intelligence” is the transcendent and universal one. The “possible intellect” means the latent capacity, limited and hindered in itself, of the human intellect to actualize itself as that intelligence, with which it stands in the same relationship as “possibility” to “actuality.” (Note by UR)
3. [*Fedele* is the singular; *Fedeli* the plural. —*Trans.*]

### III.4

1. For the meaning of the various symbols, refer to the first volume of this collection. Explanations will be limited to new symbols encountered as we proceed. (Note by UR)
2. [This unsourced quotation seems to be based on Vedic sources such as the *Aitareya Brahmana*, II, 6. —*Trans.*]
3. [English version from Iamblichus, *Theurgia or the Egyptian Mysteries*, trans. Alexander Wilder (New York: Metaphysical Publishing Co., 1911), 174. —*Trans.*]

4. See *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, chapters I.3, III.3, VI.3, VIII.1, IX.3; vol. II, chap. I.3. [These are the chapters containing contributions by Abraxa. —*Trans.*]
5. [The “oldest Tradition” referred to here is the Vedic; cf. *Brhadāranyaka Upanishad*, 3, 2, 13 (senses and faculties go to elements, etc.) and 3, 1, 3–6 (liberation through senses and elements). —*Trans.*]
6. Gustav Meyrink’s novel *The Golem* contains a description suggestive of these experiences, relative to the figure of the “Hanged Man” of the Tarot, which is also the alchemical sign . (Note by UR)
7. [*Bhagavad Gita*, III, 10–11. —*Trans.*]

#### IV.1

1. [Article added in Evola’s 1955 edition of the UR material. —*Trans.*]
2. Strictly speaking, there is a third possibility: that of initiatic organizations whose exterior rituals have remained more or less unchanged, but have come to incarnate and permit the action of spiritual influences very different from their original ones. (Note by UR)
3. A book that I recommend, also translated into Italian, published by Bocca, Milan, 1944. [The translation was by Evola. —*Trans.*]
4. [The French translation of this essay is followed by a detailed note by the unnamed editor, which deplores Evola’s credulity regarding Sebottendorf’s work, and concludes that the latter “amalgamated some materials, imperfectly understood and assimilated, perhaps received during his stays in Turkey, with information borrowed from Western alchemical and occultist literature”; see Julius Evola, *Tous les écrits de Ur & Krur (1927 – 1928 – 1929) “Introduction à la magie (1955) Signés ARVO –AGARDA – IAGLA* (Milan: Archè, 1986), 247. Sebottendorf’s book has been published in



English as Baron Rudolf von Sebottendorff, *Secret Practices of the Sufi Freemasons: The Islamic Teachings at the Heart of Alchemy*, trans. Stephen E. Flowers (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2013). —*Trans.*]

5. [The figure of 825 days is obviously not that of 22 lunar months of 29½ days each. It is reached by adding the numbering of the 29 relevant suras of the Quran, which total 822, plus 3; cf. Sebottendorff, *Secret Practices*, 68–70. Those wishing to study this method in detail should consult the original, rather than Arvo’s summary. —*Trans.*]
6. [In Sebottendorf ’s original: “the thumb is now extended so that it forms an angle of 90 degrees, a right angle with the line of the index finger” (*Secret Practices*, 71). —*Trans.*]
7. [In the edition cited (*Secret Practices of the Sufi Freemasons*, 79, et passim), “the Closing-grip.” —*Trans.*]
8. In Kerning the practice is much more complex and abstruse; the animation of the letters and syllables is extended to many other alphabetic and graphic elements. These developments do not seem very convincing to me. As for the correspondences with yoga, one recalls that every chakra contains a certain group of letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. Furthermore, there is a practice called *nyāsa*, in which the “divine” quality is induced or awakened in various organs and parts of the body by means of “names” and the imposition of the hands. Similar though fragmentary elements are found in some rituals of the Greek Orthodox Church and in Hesychasm.

#### IV.2

1. [“Bardo: Actions after Death,” in *The Yoga of Power: Tantra, Shakti, and the Secret Way*, trans. Guido Stucco (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1992), 191–204. Original: *Il Yoga della potenza*, 3rd ed. (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1968). —*Trans.*]
2. In reference to magical and theurgical experiences while still alive, we recall that similar apparitions occur in the “Mithraic Ritual” (*Introduction to*

*Magic*, vol. I, 111), where we pointed out the concordance with a ritual of Pietro d’Abano.

#### IV.3

1. [Several expressions in this essay are in French, and have been left thus, with translations. —*Trans.*]
2. [Perhaps alluding to 1 Chron. 21:27 or John 18:11. —*Trans.*]
3. [Punctuation as in original. —*Trans.*]
4. *Jīvanmukti* (from *jīva* = the living, and *mukta* = liberation), as opposed to *videhamukti*, is the one who achieves liberation while still alive and maintains it while continuing to live on some plane of the manifested world.
5. Our correspondent is alluding to the *Mahāyāna*, or “School of the Great Vehicle,” which has a more metaphysical orientation than the ascetic Buddhism of the *Hīnayāna* or “School of the Small Vehicle.”
6. [Roger Bacon, *Perspectiva*, 3.3.1. —*Trans.*]
7. [See *Introduzione alla Magia*, vol. III, chap. V.3. —*Trans.*]

#### V.1

1. We can also mention the possibility, and the usefulness, of a hybrid way, already described by Abraxa in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 49–52. This involves the combination of “corrosive waters” with an internal discipline that first constitutes the “seed of gold,” immune to the “strong waters,” which then serve to purify it from dregs and impurities. In the exclusive use of the “strong waters” at high potential, the “seed of gold,” instead of being present and needing only to be stripped bare, would have to create itself with an absolute act at the very moment of dissolution. (Note by UR)

2. On this subject one can recall the sacred *drunkenness* of the Pythonesses and Sibyls, with the consequent ecstasy and manifestations of inspiration and prophecy. This too is a case of invasions in states analogous to trance, though mostly induced so as to attract superior or “divine” intelligences. Still, this does not alter the “obsessional” character belonging to these phenomena. (Note by UR)
  
3. With special reference to *wine*, we recall that in antiquity it was often considered as a sacred drink. According to the Oriental teachings, at a certain epoch the true “draught of immortality”—the Persian *Haoma*, the Vedic *Soma*—was no longer “known,” so that in the rituals it had to be substituted by another beverage that was no more than a reflection of the original *Soma*. This role was often filled by *wine*, which was brought into relation with higher states of consciousness (see René Guénon, *Le Roi du Monde* [Paris, 1926], chap. VI). This relation can be not only symbolic, but practical. Given a human condition in which the primordial state is obscured, contact with a superindividual order can no longer happen directly through the sheer impetus of the spirit, but through a certain relaxation, a certain ecstasy, such as intoxication by wine or similar substances can cause. This is the meaning of the use of wine in orgiastic Dionysism. And if in extreme cases consciousness may thus pass from the individual to the non-individual state, thereby becoming *free*, one of the consequences may be the manifestation, albeit sporadic, of various incidental magical powers, even influencing natural phenomena. Thus in principle we do not exclude a certain credibility in Euripides’s and Pliny’s accounts of the Dionysian “miracles” produced by ecstasy in the orgiastic Lenaia festivals. (Note by UR)
  
4. Compare what has been said about the “immortal body” in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 196–202. (Note by UR)

V.2

1. Compare this: “Reality is far from indifferent to the ways in which it is interpreted, whether right or wrong, superstitious or scientific, so that in some cases superstition seems to introduce a new determination into reality, as in the case of magical therapy or telepathy” (p. 227).


2. [Following the 2nd ed., *una formazione storica*. The 3rd ed. has *una formazione esoterica* (an esoteric formation), doubtless a misprint. —*Trans.*]
3. [Bracketed insertions in quotations from De Martino are by the author. —*Trans.*]
4. Compare De Martino, p. 197: “There are no ‘spirits’ now, but there were in the past, and they can return to existence in the measure to which we abdicate the character of our civilization and redescend to the archaic level of magical experience.”
5. For the author, the “magical problem of the soul in peril” recurs in schizophrenics and hysterics, hence in isolated individuals who find themselves in a different environment from that of savages, having no traditions or “magical institutions” to help them overcome the existential crisis of the Self (p. 180). That said, it is unclear how De Martino can claim to recognize “substantial differences” between the “primitive” mentality and that of paranoiacs (p. 262). He even writes (p. 183): “Doubtless the consideration of psychopathological material has a great heuristic value for the researcher who attempts reconstruction of the essentially magical drama.” C. G. Jung, following more or less the same path, presumed that he could “scientifically” interpret any species of esoteric tradition by starting from the study of paranoiacs and hysterics. Such is the perversity of those who are taken seriously today as exponents of “scientific thought”! We will only say that the whole world of psychopathology and psychoanalysis is a purely unreal world of subjective images and plain hallucinations, without the slightest relationship to magical reality, or even to sorcery.
6. De Martino (pp. 134–35), referring specifically to bewitchment, says that it is merely superstition when it concerns the only person or Self that we have: that of our civilization. “In a world in which the being of the Self is consolidated, the victim’s risk is virtually nonexistent, and the operation (of bewitchment) ineffective.” This is only true up to a certain point. It is, however, true that the disenchantment of the environment which he mentions greatly reduces the efficacy of any subtle operation.

1. G. Braccesco, *La Espositione di Geber philosopho* (Venice, 1551), fol. 77b.
2. Braccesco, *La Espositione*, fol. 35a.
3. Cf. F. Pizzati, *Dalla Pietra Filosofale al Radio* (Turin, 1905).
4. *Chymica Vannus* (Amsterdam, 1666), 258.
5. C. Della Riviera, *Il Mondo Magico de gli Heroi* (Milan, 1605).
6. A. J. Pernety, *Dict. Mytho-hermétique* (Paris, 1758), 534.
7. Sendivogius, *De Sulphre* (Venice, 1644), 190.
8. Cf. Maximus, “Brevi note sul Cosmopolita,” in *Ignis* 4–5 (1925).
9. L. Valli, *Dante e il linguaggio secreto dei fedeli d’amore* (Rome, 1928)
10. René Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, trans. Marco Pallis and Richard Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1962), 45.
11. As the Hermetists often repeat, it is necessary for the operator to be *inside* the work (*oportet operatorem interesse operi*) and for him to have realized its image in himself (cf. *Liber Platonis Quartorum*, in *Theatrum Chemicæ*, V, 114ff., 137; this text also mentions the correspondences between the *exaltationes* of the faculty and the elements, culminating in the *exaltatio intellectus* [exaltation of the intellect] which has its correspondence in the Fire). Gerard Dorn says explicitly that the intellectual and spiritual power (the “act” or “form” of man, in Aristotelean terms) is the principle, the means, and the end of the Art’s procedures (*Theat. Chem.*, II, 487).
12. [The Italian adjective *reale* means both “real” (from Latin *res*) and “regal” (from Latin *regalis*). —*Trans.*]

- [13.](#) In this context, one of the most frequent recommendations of the Hermetists is to return again and again to the texts. It may happen that a significance in some phrase is glimpsed in a flash but then vanishes, and every effort to recall it is in vain. Then suddenly it reappears in the mind. This is because it comes from a sort of “contact” that needs to be repeated, following a determinism of which we are usually ignorant, in order for the same superrational evidence to present itself again.
- [14.](#) In *Bibliothèque des Philosophes chymiques* (Paris, 1756), vol. II, 177.
- [15.](#) Cf. also Zachaire, *De la Philos. natur. des Métaux*, II, sect. I (pp. 494–95 of the *Bibl. Phil. Chym.*, vol. II): “The Philosophers have written the various Practices for themselves, dispersed among the method of inquiry, the Causes to arrive at the perfect knowledge of it. . . . They have not written the invented Science except for themselves, but have kept back the means of knowing it.” He adds (p. 491) that treating an *operative* philosophy, “we can only show the truth and certitude of the doctrine *by experience*.”
- [16.](#) O. Wirth, *Le Symbolisme Hermétique* (Paris, 1909), 1.
- [17.](#) Braccesco, *La Espositione*, fol. 77a.
- [18.](#) Braccesco, *La Espositione*, fol. 42a.

V.4

- [1.](#) [In the 1955 edition, the reference is to “v. I, cc. 3, 7–8,” i.e., to parts III, VII, and VIII of vol. I. The French and German translations follow this somewhat broad reference. However, the 1971 edition amends this to “vol. I, cap. III, pp. 7–8.” This refers to “Knowledge as Liberation,” Evola’s commentary on a Tantric text, although Hermetic complementarity is not specifically mentioned there. —*Trans.*]
- [2.](#) [Original: *conoscenza* (German translation: *Mit-Kenntnis*), indicating the mutual nature of such knowledge. —*Trans.*]

3. To be exact, one can also understand it as a purification of feeling—the preparation of a “distilled water”  (see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I,

74)—rather than as a silencing. But since feeling is commonly understood only as its impure state, we think that the latter expression and the consequent opposition of the feeling faculty to that of realization offers less room for misunderstanding.

4. C. S. Narayānaswami Aiyar, “Ancient Indian Chemistry and Alchemy of the Chemico-Philosophical Siddhānta-system of the Indian Mystics,” *Proceedings of the Third All-India Oriental Conference*, December 1924 (Madras, 1925): 597–614.

5. [The following extracts are transcribed from the original source. —*Trans.*]

6. *Kāyasiddhi-process*. The meaning of the Sanskrit term *siddhi* corresponds to the Greek τέλειον, perfection or accomplishment. The *Kāyasiddhi* therefore relates to the σῶμα τέλειον (perfected body) mentioned in the Mithraic Ritual (see *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 100, 102, 112, etc.).

7. [This appeared in *Introduzione alla Magia*, vol. III, chap. VI.1. —*Trans.*]

8. The two aspects of seeing in the dark should be considered as “signs” of each other; spiritual vision has a sort of symbolic testimony in the power of also seeing in material darkness, or where physical vision cannot reach.

9. Cf. below, chap. XI.4, p. 393, for the correspondence with what is mentioned in an esoteric Taoist text.

## VI.1

1. By day, the Sun reveals the external world. Thus we consider as reality the things corresponding to the impressions given by the physical senses, which impose themselves on the soul so strongly as to make it forget the sense of its own reality, the inner reality. We will see below how this relationship is

inverted after one has gone through certain experiences. (Note by UR)

2. We have been told of a similar phenomenon happening to a member of our group who was doing the evening solar ritual that was seen objectively by others who knew nothing about it, but were in the same room.
3. The book in question is Rudolf Steiner, *Das Initiaten-Bewusstsein: Wahrheit und Irrtum in der geistigen Forschung* (Initiatic Knowledge: Truth and Error in Spiritual Research [Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1927]). With due reservations about the hybrid character of Steiner's conceptions, it is worthwhile skimming through this book. (Note by UR)
4. Cf. Heraclitus, fragment 26 (Diels): "Man *himself* kindles a light by dying in the night, and while living he resembles a dead man [i.e., the one who kindled the light for himself in the night] by sleeping, when his eyes close. Upon awakening, he *comprehends* the sleeper."
5. In the writer's instinctive technique for *fixing the volatile*, it is a matter of the "heart" (the center) of the inner man coinciding with the "heart" of the outer man, which leads to a kind of short circuit that overcomes their discontinuity. Clearly the effort of containing oneself within the physical body requires that the other body, although inside it, remain *free*; i.e., it presupposes the prior experiences mentioned, which guarantee its detachment. Otherwise one would simply return to the normal sleeping state. (Note by UR)

## VI.2

1. We may note that the principle of equilibrium was the basis of Paracelsus's own medicine, to which some modern medical circles have finally granted recognition.
2. In the biography of the yogi Milarepa, he removes the potency of a poison from his body, projects it onto a door which becomes unhinged, and also onto another person, then takes it back into himself. It is interesting that he says: "The illness of a monk is not like that of a common man. For that



reason I must keep it [instead of transferring it].”

3. In Stobaeus, *Flor.*, IV, p. 107 (Meineke).

#### VI.3

1. [The original reference is “cf. vol. II, cap. V, p. 134” (or in the 1956 edition, “vol. II, cap. 5, p. 147”), which corresponds to the first page of the “Various Commentaries” of chapter IV (here, p. 138). The connection is unclear. Following the German edition, we amend this to refer to the author’s previous mention of blood in the current article (p. 196). —*Trans.*]

#### VI.4

1. [The novel is also called *Demons*. —*Trans.*]
2. [Passages quoted in this article are adapted from Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*, trans. Andrew R. MacAndrew (New York: Signet, 1962), 636–37, 111–12. —*Trans.*]

#### VII.1

1. [I have also consulted an English translation by Cologero, at [www.gornahoor.net/?p=6397](http://www.gornahoor.net/?p=6397) (accessed 26 April 2017). —*Trans.*]
2. [An allusion to Victorinus Afer, the converter of Saint Augustine. —*Trans.*]

#### VII.2

1. [Reissued Paris: Fayard, 1971. —*Trans.*]
2. [The present English version is also based on Laufer’s German translation, as found in *Schritte zur Initiation*, 248–59. However, I have followed the Italian when Evola diverges from, or presumes to correct, Laufer’s reading. This is especially the case in the second song. All ellipses are in the

originals, both German and Italian. Other English translations of these songs, markedly different from Laufer's, Evola's, and each other, exist in Garma C. Chang, *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* (New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1962), 24–32, 43–44, 52–53, and Antoinette K. Gordon, *The Hundred Thousand Songs: Selections from Milarepa, Poet-Saint of Tibet* (Rutland, Vt., and Tokyo: Tuttle, 1961), 46, 51–60, 74–76, 87–89. —*Trans.*]

3. In Milarepa as in other Tibetan texts there is talk of a *magical heat* that the yogis have the power to produce. This heat has an inward aspect, in that it aids in maintaining the continual state of contemplation. But it may at the same time have an outward, physical aspect, and then it allows the Tibetan yogis to resist extremely low temperatures and even to live among the snows (the snow melting in a circle around the ascetic). On this and on many other magical phenomena in Tibet, Alexandra David-Néel gave interesting lectures in Paris, published in *Christliche Welt*, nos. 1–2–3 of 1928. [Later in her *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* and other books. —*Trans.*]
4. Milarepa had made *contact* with the powers of the storm, which come to manifest within him as a psychic state of disturbance. When this contact is *real* and not a mere emotion, *being able* to transform this inner state to one of calmness means simultaneously calming the storm outside oneself.
5. Through the storm and ice, a demon was trying to overthrow the ascetic. “The world is filled with demons,” said the Greeks, and here too it is said: “There is an infinite number of demons of perception.”
6. *Shūnyatā*: the interior state of “emptiness,” which arises from overcoming the condition of individuality. On that basis one can penetrate what the following verses give as the the key to illumination and realization, which we translate as “liberated heart” rather than the German text's *gutes Herz* (good heart): a meaningless expression, or else the very opposite of what is intended, which is the state in which the “heart's bond” is released, and the anguish (*duhkha*) and attachment (*tanha*) that belong to individual existence are suspended.
7. Or: the detachment of the mind from images and its gathering into a

dimensionless point. To this could correspond *ekāgra*, the ability to fix the mind on one point, which in classic Yoga is the presupposition of all the other phases of the discipline.

8. Compare *Corpus Hermeticum, Asclepius*, III, 1: “The conception of divinity is like a rapid river that plunges downward: and thus it often escapes the attention of the listener, and even of those who are masters.”
9. One might perhaps align these and the following expressions with the Taoist doctrine of “non-acting action,” which is acting without “intention,” without “willing.” It is necessary to eliminate the I which intrudes on the practice, and paralyzes it by “self-referring” or “watching” it. Elsewhere (Bacot, *Milarépa*, 201) [p. 182 of the 1971 edition. —*Trans.*], Milarepa gives the image of the “*immobile and blessed water of the unconscious* (i.e., of undifferentiated consciousness) *on which the flowers of illumination open.*”
10. The *nidāna* in Buddhist metaphysics are the conditions linked in series (*pratītyasamutpāda*) which, starting from the state of ignorance, the supreme root of the successive states, determine individual samsaric existence.
11. “Vow” (translating the German *Gelübde*) is understood here and in what follows in the highest sense, as constant dedication, fervid inner adherence to the direction originally willed.
12. Six, because in this doctrine *thought* is not the mind but one of its faculties, a particular organ belonging to the same group as the other five senses.
13. *La co-nascenza è l’immensità naturale*. [Evola’s note on the hyphenated word follows.—*Trans.*] With analogy to Claudel’s use of *co-naissance*, we are trying to give an equivalent of *Mitgeborenwerden*. The state in question is “knowledge” (*conoscenza*) not as a subjective process but as a *sympathy of community*, like being born together [literal meaning of Laufer’s *Mitgeborenwerden*. —*Trans.*]: the thing and the form of knowledge becoming a single state of coincidence. The next verse in fact goes on to speak of an identity of the “inside” to the “outside,” understood as the “immensity of knowing.”

14. [*Queste sono le sei immensità che danno sicurezza*, based on Laufer's *Dies sind die sechs zuversichtlichen Unermeßlichkeiten*. The hazards of translation are well illustrated by comparing Chang's translation of this line as "These are the Six Unshakable Realms of Essence," and Gordon's: "These are the six knowledges to the Ultimate Reality." —*Trans.*]

15. The explanation of this passage could go far beyond the limits of a footnote. The complete doctrine on the subject can be found in Evola's *Lo Yoga della Potenza (The Yoga of Power)*. The two arteries or energy currents (in Sanskrit *nādī*, from *nad* = current; in Tibetan, *rtsa*) in question have no correspondence in anatomical physiology, because they wind snakelike to the right and left of the spinal column, intersecting it like the two serpents around the central rod of the Hermetic Caduceus. They constitute the fundamental polarity of male-female, Sun-Moon, right-left, Fire Water, in human energy. According to Hindu doctrine, the female one is the left and called in Sanskrit *idā* (Tibetan *roma*), while the male is called *pingalā* (Tib. *dhuma*). If one succeeds in joining these two currents, the single energy follows the axial and central direction, indicated by the rod of the Caduceus, to which corresponds the *sushumnā* artery (Tib. *rkyang-ma*). The entrance to the latter is called *brahmadvāra*, meaning "Brahma's threshold" and equivalent to the "threshold of the Kingdom of Heaven." In reality, the process leads to the realization of nonhuman modalities of consciousness, corresponding to the seven heavens, the seven "planets," and not least the energies active in the metallic states linked to the same planets, according to the Hermetic tradition.

Especially in these verses, we regret not having the original text at our disposal. What exactly does the German translator's "*in der Mitte*" (in the middle) mean when referred to this realization? And this "*durch die Liebe der Erbarmen*" (through the love of mercy)? The deformation seems beyond doubt here. What would "through the love of mercy" mean in such a technical field? [The English translations by Chang and Gordon omit many details, including this phrase. —*Trans.*]

16. Unknowing—*avidyā*—is, as we have said, the first link in the chain of *nidāna*. As reintegration refers to the being that awakens and returns to itself, so unknowing refers to the being that is altered in relationship to another. But in this doctrine the other does not exist except as a simple phenomenon of consciousness which is thinking of another; therefore at the

root of the human and cosmic mirage there is a fact of unknowing, of unconsciousness. Limitation follows it, because the referral to something else causes conditioning. By removing the “illusion rooted in unknowing,” consciousness frees itself and the world frees itself. Hence the text passes on to the symbolism of the “void.” The soul—as will be said below—identifies its own real nature with that of the aether, ungraspable and limitless, and realizes that there is no difference between the apparitions of the “real” world and the “void”; that nirvāna and samsāra, liberation and non-liberation are one and the same, and that the meaning of this accomplishment is a *self-awakening*.

17. Awareness (*consapevolezza*) thus signifies the destruction of the illusion of difference, which is indicated below as the principle of error.
18. *Zungjug* is a technical term expressing the state in which the vital force of the two serpentine arteries is united in the middle artery. To this corresponds the experience of immateriality, of the spiritual *vacuum*.
19. Just as dream images are symbolic transcriptions of deep impressions, so according to esoteric Mahāyāna the “demons,” the “gods,” and the “genii” of initiatic experience should be considered as projections and visualizations of powers of one’s own deepest essence. Such apparitions nevertheless preserve their semblance of reality and personality to the degree that there is still a difference between normal human consciousness and the deeper, “abyssal” consciousness. Only in relation to the latter are these beings revealed as mere images.
20. In that it does not have a subjective, psychological character, but corresponds to a plane of being.
21. This is probably intended to be understood in relation to Milarepa’s supreme truth (and partly also that of Zen), according to which reality is already liberation and man has never been separated from nirvana.

1. See Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, II, 23.
2. Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, II, 23.
3. Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, II, 49, says to write the name of the effect on the *back* of the image when the work is negative, and on the *abdomen* when it is beneficent. He also says to write the person's name on the forehead, the ascendant and ruling signs on the breast, as well as the characters and names of the respective angels. In preparing the effigy, he prescribes special prayers, for which he refers the reader to the *Speculum* of Albertus Magnus.
4. So as to be under no illusions if one is following the path of High Magic, we cite this other passage from Agrippa (*De Occulta Philosophia*, II, 50): "But know this, that such images work nothing, unless they be so vivified that either a naturall, or Celestiall, or Heroicall, or animasticall, or demoniacall, or angelicall vertue be in them, or assistant to them. But who can give a soul to an image, or make a stone to live, or mettall, or wood, or wax? . . . Certainly this Arcanum doth not enter into an Artist of a stiffe neck; neither can he give those things which hath them not. No body hath them but he who doth (the Elements being restrained, nature being overcome, the Heavens being over powered) transcend the progress of Angels, and comes to the very Archetype it self, of which being then made a cooperater may do all things. . . ." [English translation by "J. F." [ John French] in *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (London: R. W. for Gregory Moule, 1651), 315–16. —*Trans.*]
5. Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, II, 32. In the next chapter (33) he gives the "mansions" of the Moon that correspond to the different types of intentions.
6. Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, I, 50.

#### VIII.1

1. See René Guénon, "Point de vue rituel et point de vue moral," *Études traditionnelles* IV–V (1948), 91.

2. The *Bhagavad Gita* says clearly that by realizing one's own *dharma* (the law of one's own nature), whatever it is, one honors the Supreme, for such a law thereby has the value of a *ritual*, as we have already said.
3. Chuang Tzu (178): "The true form of man is that which he has received from Heaven, whose action is spontaneous and immutable. For the Sage takes his law from Heaven, in holding to his own truth, without accepting the chains of conventional morals. The ignorant, on the other hand, incapable of taking Heaven for their law, let themselves be guided by others."
4. The act which fully realizes itself—as we read in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, VI, 1–2—has nothing lacking nor needs anything to complete it, and cannot desire anything, for that would make it worse; there is nothing it could lose or whose loss could cause it grief; nothing could alter it, through which it could be subjected to passion. Such is the good; whereas the bad is everything that obeys the law of desire, of privation, of fear and passion. "Where there is passion, the Good cannot be; and wherever the Good is, there is no passion, just as the day is not the night and the night is not the day."
5. Lao Tzu refers to this point where he says that trying to stand on tiptoe is not the same thing as climbing up.
6. This is why the term "superhuman" is avoided in initiatic discourse, using instead "*nonhuman*." The "superman" can in fact be seen as the limit of the quality or species of "man," whereas the initiate, considered in his entirety, represents *another* species altogether.
7. This is, in fact, the so-called "Left-Hand Path"—*vāmācara*—which nevertheless leads to the same point as the "Right-Hand Path," despite the alarmist and fantastic interpretations of moralizing spiritualism. Aside from certain degenerations, the difference is only one of techniques.
8. [Reading *reazioni*, as in the 1955 edition, rather than *relazioni* (relations), as in the 1971 edition. —*Trans.*]


1. [Rather than reproducing the existing English translation of the *Turba* by A. E. Waite (London, 1896), I have worked from the Italian text and the French version of 1741 (accessible from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, thanks to the Gallica project), which the Italian translator has followed almost word for word. The original *Turba* was presumably in Greek, translated into Arabic and thence into Latin, so that this is actually a fourth- or even fifth-hand translation! Its only presumption is to reproduce, as closely as English allows, what the readers of *UR* had in front of them. —*Trans.*]
2. The red Stone is the human compound, whose redness relates to the quality of Gold in its common state. The tincture is the principle that works the transformation, so called because the new quality transfuses itself into the entire human being, like a dye that dissolves in water or colors a cloth.
3. The white refers to the opening of consciousness which follows the *mortification* (= breaking the Stone, black color, etc.), and in which the solution-resurrection in the living Water occurs. The ultimate goal in Hermetism is not simple ecstasy, because the “red” quality (the regal color), which relates to the principle of the personality, must reaffirm itself. The Water should only “raise it” and make it reborn. Its virtue is thereby quintessentialized (“Tincture of Tincture”).
4. The permanent Water is the Life-principle, root of the mobile and mutable principle of the individual being.
5. The constant Hermetic fire used in the preparation.
6. The resuscitated Gold then absorbs and converts to itself all the Water in which it was dissolved. That is: reestablishment of the “dry” quality. *Cooking* is the effect and operation of the Hermetic fire.
7. Allusion to a special state of subtlety-impalpability-weightlessness, not unrelated to an aspect of the experience of “emptiness” (*shūnyatā*) in the






Mahāyānic teaching.

8. The Relatives are the same elements (body, spirit, soul) considered, on the one hand, under the condition of human individuality; on the other hand, outside that condition.
9. The incombustible Sulfur is the Gold principle prepared so that it is fixed, and will not “flare up” and even escape the Water in the operation.
10. In fact, the passage could not be clearer. The Sun that loses its light = mortification. Dominion of the Moon = denudation-dissolution-contact. The Moon darkening and clothed in red = reintegration of the solar quality, no longer conditioned, and such as to convert the whole human composite into its simple and immortal nature.
11. The Hermetist must take great care to avoid this dangerous deviation, amounting to a “mortification” that is incomplete and merely apparent.
12. In the Aristotelian sense, i.e., it transforms, mutates.
13. The text is speaking about the human being in general (when it says “Stone”); then it alludes specifically to the lunar body which in rejoining (after separation) its companion (the physical body) gives rise to transformations or reawakenings, symbolized by colors.
14. Iron: the quality of *hardness* and of *Mars*. Rust, referring to its color, is equivalent to an infusion of “red.”
15. One will recall that this is the virtue of the Mithraic “Eagle” and of the “Hawk” of the ancient Egyptian tradition.
16. Reference to the occult *roots* of the principles.
17. There is a play of words on the root *ur* of “urine,” which means fire in Chaldean (compare Della Riviera, *Il Mondo Magico de gli Heroi*, Milan,

1605, p. 188); and “child’s” refers to a character of simplicity and birth.

- [18.](#) It is the water of the “Great Sea,” as opposed to that of the individualized being.
- [19.](#) This is the same Water; they are the “Waters above.”
- [20.](#) The blood and the power corresponding to it.
- [21.](#) The human body, which contains all the elements necessary for the Work.
- [22.](#) With an artistic turn, the discourse goes on to speak of Mercury, which is the Water that *dissolves* the body, and is *Vinegar* because of its “solvent” property (at the roots).
- [23.](#) One could refer here to the Hermetic “golden intellect” (*aurea apprehensio*). It is said of it that “one needs to open the eyes of the intellect and of the soul, observing and knowing with the inner Light that which God at the beginning kindled in nature and in the heart” (*Aquar. Sap. in Mus. Herm.*, 106, 73).
- [24.](#) One must remember that in the terminology of the period, Spirit—*spiritus*—refers to the force of life, as the intermediary principle between Body and Soul, the latter (  ) and not the “spirit” being the higher principle.
- [25.](#) The “cleft” is equivalent to the *athanor* hermetically isolated from the environment.
- [26.](#) The spring is at the same time the wild Beast spoken of below. It is the original force, whose first differentiation is Sulfur and Mercury.
- [27.](#) The faculties created through preparatory disciplines.
- [28.](#) The root has already been mentioned; also the two (Sulfur and Mercury)

which become three through their neutralization, which is the Salt. The four are the elements of Earth, Water, Air, and Fire.

- [29.](#) Composition of the androgynous Mercury or the fiery Water, which makes the *magical* solvent (unlike the simple Water of the “wet way”).
- [30.](#) The black garment is the state of *nigredo*.
- [31.](#) That is, fix it.
- [32.](#) These locations may not be merely symbolic. In that case, one could also review what has been said about the “Seed of chyle” to which Milarepa alludes (this vol., VI).
- [33.](#) Staying in bed is equivalent to “hatching” at a small fire (urine), etc.; it refers to the Regimen of Fire.
- [34.](#) The reader should be attentive to such flashes, scattered here and there. Note that in this passage, the “black” takes on a different significance: it does not refer to the *nigredo* provoked by the Art, but to the common state of the Metals.
- [35.](#) Hopefully no one will ask for a clearer statement.
- [36.](#) On the significance of the “initiatc quarantine,” see the study of Arturo Reghini in *Ignis*, nos. 11–12 (1926).
- [37.](#) That is to say, when the fluid or lunar body is immersed in the physical body.
- [38.](#) Compare *Corpus Hermeticum*, X, 17–18: “The intelligence (  ) takes the soul as its wrapping; the soul, which itself is divine, wraps itself in the spirit (  ) and the spirit spills itself into the animal (compound). When the  intelligence leaves the body of earth, it immediately puts on its own tunic of

fire, which it could not keep while inhabiting that body of earth, because that cannot bear the fire, of which a single spark would be enough to burn it. This is why the water surrounds the earth and forms a bastion that protects it from the fire's blaze. . . . Lacking fire, the intelligence cannot achieve divine works, and submits to human conditions.”

39. The text immediately makes the Cow correspond to Nature in the universal sense, i.e., to Mercury.
40. Here the Stone probably symbolizes Nature itself, come to express, through the body, the Gold principle of man. This is the Son, who in magical perfection only resumes contact with the Mother (*active* contact—he generates her himself) in order to subjugate her.
41. In the same way as the quaternary of the Elements reduces to the Hermetic duality of Fire and Water.
42. So long as it is in the body, the central igneous principle is lacking in strength and as though shut up in a tomb. The Water has to *dissolve* the body, that is, transform the corporeal condition into the fluid condition, so that it can rise again.
43. This could also allude to that predestination through the presence of a primordial or transcendent heredity, which is almost always the condition for initiatic realizations that are not tied to regular transmission of a power.
44. The Companion is the Masculine of the Water: again, it is speaking of the process of fixation that leads to the *rubedo*.
45. This refers to the common Red, whose virtue, however, is reaffirmed on superseding the phase of *albedo*.
46. From here until Sirius's speech, the symbolism becomes a sort of riddle with even a light touch of teasing. We leave the commentary to those who combine an interest in Hermetism with an interest in the *rebus*.

47. [The whole passage is posited on the Aristotelean idea that an embryo arises from two types of “sperm.” While the details may be irrelevant, I note that the Italian text reads: “*E lo Sperma dell’Uomo non fa che convertirsi e morire in quello della Donna,*” whereas the French version of 1741 reads: “*Et le Sperme de l’Homme ne fait sinon de convertir et mourir celui de la Femme,*” i.e., the Man’s Sperm only causes the Woman’s to convert and die. —*Trans.*]
48. One of the possible applications of this symbolism of *Hermetic multiplication* refers to initiatic transmission, which places the seed so that the new plant (the “neophyte”) will arise.
49. Here “Stone” means the “Philosophers’ Stone,” and not the “crude” or “common” stone which is designated here by the expression “our Matter.”
50. “But those who say otherwise.”
51. When the magical Fire, which is the *One*, passes to the *two*, it refers to the polarity of the subtle and gross, the volatile and fixed; or to its androgyne aspect, which contains it; when it passes to *three* the reference is to the *salt*, i.e., the product of interference and neutralization of the two; as for the *four*, that is partly the “man of the elements,” who is then specified according to the planetary septenary (number *seven*).
52. The alchemical translation of the Aristotelian terms is: Gold (Sulfur) = form or actuality or individual; Mercury (Water) = matter, potentiality or universal.
53. The *Athanor*, equivalent to the “bed,” the cleft of the Oak, the Egg, the closed Womb, *etc.*
54. Note the concordance with the terms of the ancient Mysteries. The glorious and perfect death is the *initiatic death*, whereby the end of the human state is simultaneously the start of the τέλος, which is “eternal life.”

- [55.](#) A possible reference to the seven centers, corresponding to the forces of the seven planetary metals.
- [56.](#) A possible reference to the method of turning the poison against itself, or the autoconsumptive method.
- [57.](#) The blood is the red Water of the human body.
- [58.](#) The same symbolism as the “Moon’s spittle.”
- [59.](#) It is impossible to make contact with the state of Mercury while the light of the common Gold prevails. For that, this Gold has to be neutralized and dissolved (domination by the Moon). Then Mercury will reintegrate it and transform it into regal and philosophical Sun-Gold, which in its turn “clothes” and “tinctures” its six companions in red.
- [60.](#) Servants and companions: the powers with which the Sun is associated in the human compound and which are the basis of its temporal manifestation.
- [61.](#) He warns us enigmatically that time and its divisions here have nothing to do with what is commonly understood by these terms.
- [62.](#) The initiatic *rectification* or *purification* of an element or faculty is achieved by resuscitating its occult and unconditioned root, which is also known as “reduction to the prime matter.”
- [63.](#) The bodily spirit of the individualized being.
- [64.](#) In the same symbolic sense as the seven “days” of the creation.
- [65.](#) [The French edition of 1741 adds “for this is the end of our Science.”  
—*Trans.*]
- [66.](#) In this phrase, through an effective analogy, a fundamental key is given for

the technique of the Hermetic Fire and alchemical “cooking.”

67. It is the quintessence, the Water of Life, the great generative Sea in which he emerges after passing through initiatic death. In particular, it is the subtle body that is spagirically drawn out of the physical body, of which it is the root.
68. That is, astral Light (Magnesia) and the individuated magical igneous force (Sulfur). Pay attention here to the manifold meanings of the various symbols.
69. That is to say, the natural process of completion, of “cooking” in a certain sense, is now finished in the body, whereas that is not the case in the world of the soul, which is still “crude,” i.e., unformed, chaotic, volatile, still lacking heat, the magical virtue of which Artephius calls *spiritual blood*.
70. This perhaps alludes to the actual periods that are astrologically most favorable to the Work. Owing to the opposition of external to internal, there is heat (summer) internally while ice reigns in external nature. In symbolism, on the other hand, winter generally refers to the *nigredo*, spring to the flowering of the White, and summer to the maturation characterizing the final stage of the Matter.
71. The white Tree is the Mercury, *tree of life*; its Man is the Gold; the round house is the Hermetic “athanor”; and the number 100, which was anciently used as a symbol of perfection, probably indicates a work of preparation and integration preceding the closure in the philosophical egg.
72. A new cycle of completion.
73. This is the *sweetening* or *tempering* of the internal Fire, necessary for its dissolution
74. It is a matter of dissolving the elements or returning them to their roots, their “first matter,” which restores their *living state*, free from the conditions of

corporeality and individuality.

[75](#). [The French edition of 1741 has “280 days.” —*Trans.*]

[76](#). Refer to chap. VI.2 of this volume (p. 182), which speaks of the white Man contained inside man. The text here will actually call him the *watcher*.

[77](#). There may even be an obscure allusion here to that “mystery of the skin” and of “passing through the skin,” which was an important phase in the initiatic rituals of ancient Egypt.

[78](#). This may be a warning against certain extrinsic procedures whose effect is transitory; they may admit a gleam of light, but afterward one is back where one began, whereas the real goal is substantial transformation.

#### VIII.4

[1](#). [Translation adapted from Werner Sombart, *The Quintessence of Capitalism*, trans. M. Epstein (New York: Dutton, 1915), 179–80. —*Trans.*]

#### IX.1

[1](#). We think that cases of this kind should better be interpreted as the result of an extraneous force that has been attracted by the psychic entity created through the procedure, and taken possession of it. (Note by UR)

#### IX.2

[1](#). [The quotation is from the original version (*UR*, 1928) of Ea’s essay, “L’esoterismo e il superamento della morale” (Esotericism and the Overcoming of Morality), which was largely rewritten for the postwar editions. (The corresponding passage is on p. 245). —*Trans.*]

[2](#). [An untranslatable wordplay between *uomo dabbene*, “upright or honest man,” and *uomo dabbennaggine*, “credulous person,” “simpleton.” —*Trans.*]



3. For this doctrine and the terms traditionally used for it, see Arturo Reghini, “E. Cornelio Agrippa e la sua Magia,” in vol. I of Agrippa’s *Filosofia Occulta* (Milan: Fidi, 1926), 142–52.
4. John 5:24.
5. John 3:36: “He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, will not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” In the New Testament, in perfect psychological concord with the Old, this threat of divine anger is often brandished (e.g., see also John 6:40). Some heretic might think that to make anger, one of the seven deadly sins, an attribute of divinity contrasts somewhat with the concept of divine perfection. However, it is good to keep in mind that according to Paul (Gal. 5:22) and Luke (18:7), God has the great virtue of being *slow* to anger!
6. One of the more recent hybrid mixtures of evolutionism and religion, complete with a background of the philosophy or theology of nature, is the theory of the Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin, which has found much credit among “progressive” Catholics. (Note by UR)
7. Compare the desire of which Abraxa speaks in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 16.
8. [In English in the original. —*Trans.*]
9. [The quotation is from Giuseppe Gioachino Belli’s *Sonetti Romaneschi*, no. 1490, which satirizes monastic orders. —*Trans.*]
10. The nonexistence of a law of spiritual evolution has other reasons, very different from those given above, which we prefer not to discuss here.
11. [The Latin verb *inire*, “to enter,” is the root of word “initiation.” —*Trans.*]

1. Similar phenomena occur in the field of psychopathology, as in certain forms of schizophrenia.
2. This allusion to memory is interesting: in the process of mortification, memory passes through a critical phase and a neutral point, as was remarked on in a commentary in *Introduction to Magic*, vol. I, 313. (Note by UR)

X.1

1. We may recall here what Iagla wrote (this volume, chap. II.2, pp. 54–56) about the *invisibility of magical action*, hidden precisely because it can be “explained” through natural causes. For example, the biography of Milarepa, already cited, tells of a magical action he performed for killing a group of people on whom he wanted revenge. He does the necessary rituals, formulates the command, and thinks no more of it. And the consequence is as follows: these people *happen* to find themselves at dinner in some Tibetan house, which like some shelters in the Aosta Valley has the animals in the lower story and the living quarters above. A dog *chances* to start barking near the animals’ enclosure. They become scared and throw themselves around, breaking the supports of the upper floor, which collapses, killing the entire company. All this is explained “naturally”—but at that very instant Milarepa completed the last phase of his destructive rite. In almost identical circumstances, the Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya eliminated the sultan Tughluq before he could reach Delhi, intending to persecute him. This is remembered in India almost as a proverb, “*Dilli dur ast!*” (Delhi is far off !), spoken by the saint.
2. G. Ferretti, *Natura, spirito e educazione* (Rome, 1923), and the article “L’Idealismo magico” in the periodical *L’Idealismo realistico*, nos. 2, 4, 5, 6 of 1928.
3. *Enneads*, VI, viii, 3. [The text has ὡς ἐθούλετο και οἶον ἐθούλετο; here corrected. —*Trans.*] The expression “as He willed to be so He is” is found in VI, viii, 13, 21, and 15 where it adds “What shall we say of Him, if not that He is more than free and more than Lord of himself ?” The declaration that the substance of the gods is *action* is a recurrent motive. Cf., e.g., *Corpus Hermeticum*, XVI, 13.

4. Here Bruto is interpreting the two aspects of the Kabbalistic Sephirothic Tree, “Rigor” and “Grace,” in the sense of the two hypothetical aspects of “necessity” and “liberation” of the cosmic process. Neoplatonic metaphysics speaks of “proceeding” (πρόοδος) and “returning” (ἐπιστροφή); Hindu, of the “way of identification” (*pravrttī-marga*) and the “way of liberation” (*nivrttī-margā*).
5. This evidently refers to what has been said about De Martino’s views on the “magical world” (see pp. 153–61). See also René Guénon, *Le Règne de la quantité et les signes des temps* (Paris, 1949) [English edition: *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, trans. Lord Northbourne (London: Luzac & Co., 1953). —*Trans.*], which speaks of the *solidification* arriving in the natural world precisely because of the human type that creates scientific and technical civilization.
6. The reader who sees a problem in regard to the adept’s action—namely that the determinism of nature is interrupted—could choose between the following solutions: (1) on the basis of the above considerations and of Boutroux’ criticism of science, that nature leaves a margin for such alterations, either as extra-normal facts or in what scientific determinism presupposes and does not explain; (2) say that the magical action of the “Liberated ones” may take place on planes unconnected with those of human experience; (3) say that the “Liberated ones,” while capable of intervening with an “unconditioned magic” (direct action) do so only in exceptional cases—being content to act *through* certain laws of nature, using those as their instruments.

X.2

1. In a *hatha-yoga* text (*Hathayogapradīpikā*, III, 87–90) it says: “As the semen poured [into the woman] leads to death, thus the semen retained leads to life.” The Sanskrit word often used for semen is *vīrya*, which also designates what Abraxa has called “magical virility”: it is active in ascetic practices, but loses this quality when turned into the semen emitted in animal generation. The *Dhyānabindu-upanishad* mentions the *khecari-mudrā*, through whose practice it is said that “the man does not lose his virility even when embraced by a young and ardent woman,” in the exact sense of overcoming

the abovementioned “sucking death that comes from woman.” (Note by UR)

2. On this, see the illustration in the Hermetic *Trésor des Trésors* (ms. Jung, 558), which depicts coitus in the *Water*, inside the closed vessel, and has the caption *Solutio perfecta* (perfect solution).
3. To clarify the significance of pleasure and its active conversion, see again the articles on “Corrosive Waters” (chap. V.1, 146–52) and “the Metaphysics of Pain” (chap. VI.2, 189–92). Esoterically speaking, sexual pleasure has the same significance as suffering in general, because it is usually connected to passivity toward the change caused by the emergence of a transcendent force. By “pleasure,” which is *passion* in both senses of the word, one might speak of a *joyful pain*. Thus the attitude of one who gives in to pleasure and even pursues it as his immediate goal is antagonistic to what the above practices demand. (Note by UR)
4. Indo-Tibetan esoteric teaching speaks of an “ungenerated pleasure”—*sahajasūkha* or *sahajānanda*—which is that of the embrace beyond space and time of the God with the Goddess, of Shiva with Shakti; an ubiquitous pleasure that flashes forth in its undivided nature, so to speak, whenever a man and a woman unite—their union being merely an occasion for it to manifest. But it is experienced in its own nature when the above-described procedure of sexual magic releases the orgasmic climax from the physiological consequence of ejaculation, and everything that is merely animal sensation is burnt away. Such “ungenerated pleasure” is also said to manifest in certain after-death experiences (see G. Tucci, *Il libro tibetano del morto*, [Milan, 1949], 130, 201). (Note by UR)
5. Compare this to the episode in the life of Ramakrishna where a master had him strike the Mother, the divine Woman, because her worship and cosmic beatitude had brought him to an impasse. Only with this act could he make contact with the unconditioned. (Note by UR)
6. This recalls a teaching that is also valid for the path of Mystics and Saints: only he who has arrived at a certain height of perfection will meet the one capable of “tempting” and breaking him. But also he alone will be able to recognize the force acting behind the being whom he encounters.

X.3

1. Translated from the Czech by B. Vendis from *Hudba Pramenů* (Prague: Odkaz, 1918).

X.4

1. Published in Italian by Bocca (Milan, 1949). One must keep in mind that the present essays, in their essential form, were first published between 1927 and 1929. [*Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster* was first published in 1927. The Italian translation cited above was by Evola himself. The quoted passages are translated here from the original German, except where Evola makes significant alterations. —*Trans.*]
2. One could connect this to the esoteric notion of the “occult woman” whom the man contains in himself. Dorn, for example, speaks of it (*Theatrum Chemicum*, I, 578), mentioning Adam “qui suam invisibilem Evam in suo corpore gestavit” (who bore his invisible Eve in his own body). Compare a scholia in Manget (I, 417): “Hermaphroditus noster adamicus, quamvis in forma masculi appareat semper tamen in *corpore occultam Evam sive foeminam suam* secum circumfert” (Our Adamic Hermaphrodite, although it appears in masculine form, always carries around in its body the occult Eve, its wife).
3. The concept of the “Demiurge” refers to Gnostic dualism, and designates the “God of this world” as opposed to the transcendent God.
4. C. G. Jung (*Psychology and Alchemy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press [orig. ed. Zürich, 1944]), 152): “Although man and woman unite they nevertheless represent irreconcilable opposites which, when activated, degenerate into deadly hostility.”

XI.2

1. [English translation from Henry John Roby, *A Grammar of the Latin Language from Plautus to Suetonius* (London: Macmillan, 1872), 430.

—*Trans.*]

XI.3

1. Concerning the foregoing, René Guénon has drawn attention in various writings to the most important elements of such Hyperborean symbols.

XI.4

1. [*The Secret of the Golden Flower*, translated from Chinese into German by Richard Wilhelm, subsequently translated from German by Cary F. Baynes, with commentary by C. G. Jung (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962). Page references in the present text refer to this edition, and quotations are taken from it whenever possible. —*Trans.*]
2. “The one effective, true human spirit . . . divides into animus and anima. The animus is in the heavenly heart [situated in the head]. It is of the nature of light; it is the power of lightness and purity. It is that which we have received from the great emptiness, that which is identical in form with the primordial beginning. The anima partakes of the nature of the dark. It is the energy of the heavy and the turbid; it is bound to the bodily fleshly heart. The animus loves life. The anima seeks death [meaning this false life mixed with death, which manifests in desire]. All sensuous desires and impulses of anger are effects of the anima” (p. 28). [Wilhelm’s use of the terms *anima* and *animus* is entirely different from Jung’s; see Cary Baynes’s note on p. 14 of the English edition. —*Trans.*]
3. “The lower heart moves like a strong, powerful commander who despises the heavenly ruler because of his weakness, and has usurped the leadership in affairs of state. But when the primal castle can be fortified and defended, then it is as if a strong and wise ruler sat upon the throne. . . . When rule in the centre is thus in order, all those rebellious heroes will present themselves with lances reversed ready to take orders” (p. 25).
4. “Therefore, understanding (ear) and clarity (eye) are one and the same effective light” (p. 40).

5. [I follow the Italian text “*Occorre che non vi sia moto nella mente,*” but the German reads “*Man muss alle Verwicklungen beiseite legen,*” correctly rendered by Baynes as “one must lay aside all entanglements.” —*Trans.*]
6. “Within our six-foot body we must strive for the form which existed before the laying down of heaven and earth” (p. 34).
7. P. 43: “Only the heart must be conscious of the flowing in and out of the breath; it must not be heard with the ears. If it is not heard, then the breathing is light; if light, it is pure.”
8. Also the well-known Hermetic symbol of “bathing.” The text says that “the secret of the bath” consists of a practice intended to empty out the heart: it is the ablution of the heart and the purification of thought (p. 59).
9. The sequence “The spirit is thought; thought is the heart; the heart is the fire; the fire is the Elixir” (p. 39) exactly expresses the ignification of the light, with the heart as the transitional point.
10. The well-known Gnostic formula is to drive the “waters of the Great Jordan” against the current, which when flowing downward (following sexual polarity) produce physical birth, but flowing upward produce the birth of gods. On all this, see Julius Evola, *Lo yoga della potenza*, 3rd ed. (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1968) [English edition: *The Yoga of Power*, trans. Guido Stucco, Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1992. —*Trans.*].
11. [Wilhelm’s German reads “*unendliche Wandelbarkeit*” (endless changeableness/ mutability). Both the third edition of the UR material (our source) and the German translation treat this as an error. Evola blames the “Italian translator” (presumably of the edition which he mentions as “in the course of publication”) for writing *infinita instabilità* (infinite instability) and emends it to *infinita stabilità* (infinite stability); the German translator emends it to *unendliche Unwandelbarkeit* (endless immutability). As translator, I am obliged to follow this emendation. However, Baynes saw no need to alter Wilhelm’s words, translating them as “an infinite capacity for transformation” (p. 30), which is worth the reader’s consideration. —*Trans.*]

- [12.](#) [The English edition explains that whereas the “fivefold present” is the region of the five senses, the “sixfold present” is the spiritual realm (p. 30n). —*Trans.*]
- [13.](#) “Born in heaven”—and the text, citing the book *Leng Yen*, explains that “Heaven is not the wide blue sky but the place where corporeality is begotten in the house of the Creative” (p. 23).

#### XI.5

- [1.](#) The presence of women in Uranian, hence typically masculine cults, such as that of Apollo, should not be misinterpreted. Women there were priestesses or mouthpieces for an oracle, and did not have an active role but rather one of instrument and medium for forces from above: a passive and receptive role for which woman is particularly qualified by her nature. This role is shown graphically in the tradition that the women dedicated to Apollo received the force of inspiration through the vagina, like an insemination.
- [2.](#) It is interesting to note the relationship that various traditions recognize between the virile force and the solar principle. While Aristotle wrote “Man and the *sun* generate a man,” it says in the *Jaiminīya-upanishad-brāhmana* (II, x, 4-5) “When the (human) father emits it thus, as semen in the woman’s womb, it is really the *sun* which emits it; there, in truth, it rules it and leads it beyond this (first) death. . . . In consequence it is born in conformity with this seed and with the breath” (references in *Études traditionnelles* VIII [1946], 308).

[\\*1](#) Gichtel’s fourth figure.

[\\*2](#) Gichtel’s fifth figure.



# About the Author

**JULIUS EVOLA** was one of the foremost authorities on the world's esoteric traditions. His other works available in English include *The Hermetic Tradition*, *The Yoga of Power*, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, *Eros and the Mysteries of Love*, *The Doctrine of Awakening*, *The Mystery of the Grail*, *Meditations on the Peaks*, and *Men Among the Ruins*.

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# Index

Page numbers in *italics* indicate illustrations.

All page numbers are refer to the print edition of this title.

Abraxa, xxi–xxii

Ercole Quadrelli as, xxi–xxii on magic of conjunctions, 335–47

on the magic of creation, 290–97

on rhythm and liberation, 108–14

on ritual magic, 35–39, 173–75

on sexual magic, 335–47

Acca, 83

adoration, in the *Golden Verses*, 8

after death. *See also* death; immortality; *Tibetan Book of the Dead*

and “Golden Flower” text, 387

initiatic consciousness after death, 132–37

possibility of actions, 132–33

ages, four, 77

and four yugas of Hinduism, 78, 82

agriculture

agricultural symbolism in Rome, 85–89

and religious cult, 85–86

Agrippa, Henry Cornelius, 232n3, 233n4

ahamkāra, 29

alchemical Hermetism, 162

myth in, 171–72

alchemy

- and chemistry, 162–68
- current opinion of, 162–63
- genuine, 166
- Hermetic tradition of, 162–72
- physical, 167–68

Al-Ghazali, 140, 246

amulets, 291

Androgyne, 335, 337, 353

*Angel of the West Window, The* (Meyrink), 353

anima, 381–82, 381n2, 384, 390–91

animus, 381–82, 381n2

Anthroposophy, xii, 63–64

ara, 86

Arcana Arcanorum, xiii, xx–xxi archetypes, 388

Armentano, Amedeo, xxii

art, 299–300

*Arthos*, xxxi

Arthur, King, 376

Arvo

- on esoteric doctrine of a Christian mystic, 17–34
- on ethnology and “perils of the soul,” 153–61
- on Hyperborean tradition, 370–78
- on Kirillov and initiation, 203–8
- on the magic of effigies, 229–36
- on signs and grips, 122–31

asceticism, 210, 213, 299

- and Realization, 93, 95

asceticism, and asceticism, 213

Asgard, 371

Associazione Romània Quirites, xxxii astral body, 117–18



*Atanòr*, xxii–xxiii atheism, 215  
Atlantis, 373, 374  
    Friends of Atlantis, 71  
Aucler, Quintus-Nantius, 61  
automatism, 313–14  
Avalon, 372  
avidyā, 225n16  
ax, 376

Bacchanalia, suppression of, 72, 74  
Barberino, Francesco, 103, 105–6  
bardo, 387  
Beatrice, 105  
being, 108, 110, 382  
    mystery of, 307  
belief, 205, 301  
Besant, Annie, 63  
Blavatsky, H. P., dissension with Papus, 63  
blood system, 364–66  
body  
    astral body, 117–18  
    bringing consciousness into, 285  
    dark body, 25  
    diaphanous body, 115–18  
    and earth, 86–88  
    esoteric doctrine of, 22–24  
    fourfold, 115–16  
    glorious body, xiii, xxi  
    infusion of the, 22–24  
    radiant body, 24

resurrection body, xiii

separating “solar” from physical, xxi Spirit and, 264

three parts, 360–62

Boehm, Jacob, 164

## book of the dead

Egyptian, 133

Tibetan. *See Tibetan Book of the Dead*

*Book of the Elixir*, 389

Braccesco, G., 163, 172

breathing, 215

in “Golden Flower” text, 388–89

Breno, on occult morphology and spiritual corporeality, 360–66

Březina, Otokar, xxviii

on the soul and courage, 348–51

Brunelli, Francesco, xxxi

Bruto, on science v. magic, 322–24, 327, 329, 332

Buddhism, 12. *See also Tibetan Book of the Dead*

doctrine of Supreme Identity in, 133–34

lesser and greater, 140

teaching on liberation of gods, 333–34

bull, “killing the Bull,” 286–87

Bulwer-Lytton, Edward, 102

Caduceus, 27

Caetani, Leone, xvi–xvii

Cagliostro, xiii

Catholic Church, xxxiii, 107

cavemen, 370

center, wisdom places one at, 2

centers, esoteric

animating the, 193–202

behind larynx, 197–99

centers four through seven, 201–2

Gichtel's Christian doctrine on, 17–34  
heart center, 199–201  
pituitary gland, 195–97

Centro Studi Tradizionali Arx, xxx chains, magical. *See* magical chains chakras, 27–29, 130

chance, 54–55, 57–58

chemistry, and alchemy, 162–68

Christianity, xxxiii, 398  
Asiatic character of, 65–66  
Gichtel's esoteric doctrine on the centers of the body, 17–34  
and paganism, 66  
and solar tradition, 377  
symbols of, 73  
and Western esoteric tradition, 63–67

Chuang Tzu, 241n3

Cicero, “The Dream of Scipio,” 14–15

circulation, in “Golden Flower” text, 384

circulation of the light, 393

*Cittadella*, xxx, xxxi civilization, modern, 39

color, and larynx center, 198

concentration  
and animating the subtle centers, 194  
and creation, 291  
developing dynamic, 44, 45–46

conduct, and subterranean causes, 54

confarreatio, xxxii

Confucius, 385

conjunctions, magic of, 335–47, 398

consciousness, 115–16, 302, 303–5  
bringing into the body, 285

corporealizing, 285  
in “Golden Flower,” 382

continuity, strengthening the sense of, 44, 48

Corpo dei Pari, xix

correspondences, principle of, 251

corrosive waters, 146–52, 253, 308, 337

courage, 351

creation  
in a chain, 292  
magic of, 290–97

Cro-Magnon man, 373

Cross, and the Eagle, 99

Crowley, Aleister, xxii

cult, 86

Daffi, Marco, xviii

daimon, 12–13  
in the *Golden Verses*, 9–10, 13

Dante, 99–107

dark body, 25

Dark Man, The, 18, 21

David-Néel, Alexandra, on magic in Tibet, 296–97

day, and night, 182–83

death. *See also* after death and initiation, 192

Dee, John, 353, 356

de Giorgio, Guido. *See* Havismat deliberation, 197–98

del Ponte, Renato, xv–xvi, xxx del Ponte, Richard, xi–xii Delta Lodge, xxxi

De Martino, Ernesto  
commentary on his book and conceptions, 153–61  
*Il mondo magico*, 153–61

demon of the snows, Milarepa song about, 217–19  
denudation, in Gichtel's schema, 29  
*Der Bourgeois* (Sombart), 288  
De Rossi, Cavaliere G. B., 367  
de Servis, Pasquale, xiv–xv, xvi desire  
    in Gichtel's schema, 30  
    and magical possibilities, 173–74  
detachment, 4  
determinism, 324–28  
dharma, 241n2  
diaphanous body, 115–18  
digestion, two sorts of, 263  
Dioscuri Group, xxx–xxxi  
di Sangro, Raimondo, xiii  
    “Testament” of, xiv  
discus, in the *Golden Verses*, 12–13  
Disraeli, Benjamin, 55  
distraction, 387  
docility, 101–2  
dog's tooth story, 292–93  
d'Olivet, Fabre, 61  
Dostoevsky, 203, 205–8  
double, two distinct men in each person, 182–88  
Dream of Scipio, The, 14–15  
drunkenness, sacred, 151n2

## Ea

    on esoteric doctrine of a Christian mystic, 17–34  
    on esotericism and morality, 238–49, 298, 299  
    on pain and illness, 189–92, 250

on “Tibetan Book of the Dead,” 132–37

Eagle, and the Cross, 99

earth, and human body, 86–88

East, defined, 64–65

Eastern tradition, and Western tradition, 63–67

effigies, the magic of, 229–36

Efodebuts, 264

Egypt

- in context of East-West divide, 64–65
- origin of Egyptian civilization, 399

Egyptian Order, xvi–xvii

Egyptian Rites, xiv

Ekatlos, xiv–xv

elements, four, 268–69

Eleusinian Mysteries, 65

Éliphas Lévi. *See* Lévi, Éliphas elite, 211

Elixir of Life, 391

emotion, as a faculty, 360–61

Encausse, Gerard. *See* Papus endocrine glands, 364

Ennius, 87–88

entity, creation of, 291

equilibrium, 57

Erim, xix

ES, Emilio Servadio as, xxvii esotericism. *See also* initiatic path; magic knowledge as basis of, 239

- and morality, 238–49
- nonhuman character of, 238
- occult morphology, 360–66
- as science, 242
- two phases of, 244–45

ethnology, 153–61

    ethnologist defined, 153

Evans-Wentz, W. Y., 132

Evola, Julius

    and Arturo Reghini, xxii–xxv autobiography of, xxiv

    on chance, 57–58

    and dissolution of UR Group, xxix and Emilio Servadio, xxvii groups influenced by, xxix–xxxiii memoir of, xii

*Revolt against the Modern World*, 374

    on sex, 57

    translation of *The White Dominion*, xxviii *The Yoga of Power*, 132

evolution, 75–76

    evolutionism, 370–71

    spiritual, 300, 302. *See also* spiritual development existential crisis, of humankind, 1

ex Oriente lux, 398–99

experiences, 182–88

exterior mode, 307

faculties, 360–62

Fascism, xxiii

fate, 5–8

Fedeli d'Amore, 165

    secret language of, 99–107

feeling, v. realization, 175–76

female. *See also* sexual magic alchemical nature of, 337–38

    woman and initiation, 395–98

    woman chosen for sexual magic, 344–46

Fenili, Piero, xxv

Fire and Water work, 129

fire/Fire, 363–64



esotericism, 25–27, 29, 29–31, 33, 129  
in sexual magic, 343  
in *Turba Philosophorum*, 256, 258, 260, 267–69, 276, 278, 281, 283

fish, as symbol, 376

Fisher King, 376

fixity, 189  
training in, 44, 46–48, 49

Flamel, Nicolas, 169

Fogagnolo, Paolo, xx

foods, forbidden, 14

force, way of, 4

Formisano, Ciro. *See* Kremmerz, Giuliano Frazer, James, 157

freedom, 328–29, 332. *See also* determinism; free will and determinism, 327–28

Freemasonry  
Islamic, 124–31  
“signs” and “grips” in, 122–31

free will, 54

from within to without, 147

Geley, Gustav, 201

Gianola, Alberto, 74

Gichtel, Johann Georg  
conversion experience of, 34  
esoteric doctrine of, 17–34  
*Theosophia Practica* of, 17–34  
transformative process described by, 22–34

Giudicelli, Jean-Pierre, xix–xx globe, in Gichtel’s schema, 26–27

glorious body, xiii, xxi

God  
existence of, 203–7

Love of, 30  
god, creation of a, 293–96  
Gods, honoring, 5  
golden age, 77  
Golden Dawn, Hermetic Order of, xiv “Golden Flower of the Great One,” 379–94  
    crystallization of Golden Flower, 393–94  
    terms used in, 381–83  
Golden Genius, 393  
“Golden Verses” (Pythagoras), 4–16  
    as rite, 4  
Golem, 295  
Gonella, Giammaria, xviii–xix good, v. evil, 243–44  
Greater Mysteries, 71, 396, 397  
Great Mystery, 26  
great One, 381  
Greek civilization, origin of, 399  
*Green Dream* (Trevisano), 31  
“grips” of Freemasonry, 122–31  
Gruppo di UR. *See* UR Group Guaïta, Stanislas de, 59–60  
Guénon, René, xxii, xxvi  
gui, 383  
  
Hahnemann, Samuel, 251–52  
Hakl, Hans Thomas, biography of, xxxiii harmony, way of, 4  
hatching, 389  
Havismat  
    on ascesis and anti-Europe, 210–15  
    biography of, xxvi  
    comments on article by, 142–43  
    on tradition and Realization, 92–95

health, 6  
heart, killing the, 389  
heart center, 199–201  
heat, magical, 219  
heaven, third heaven, 104  
hell, in Gichtel's schema, 26  
Hermetic tradition, 65, 71  
    alchemy in, 162–72  
    and Fideli d'Amore, 103–6  
    ultimate goal of, 256n3  
Hinduism  
    esotericism in, 24, 27–29  
    origin of, 399  
    realization in Hindu alchemy, 176–78  
    teachings on after-death states, 136  
history, 55  
ho, 382  
Hoel Dhat, 356  
Holy Spirit, 30  
homeopathy, 251–53  
honor, in the *Golden Verses*, 8  
horizontal phase, in esotericism, 244–45, 298–99  
hsing, 382  
human, etymology of, 86–87  
humanization, in recent history, 239  
humility, 29  
*Hygieia*, xxiv  
Hyperborean tradition, 370–78, 399  
    solar character of, 375  
hypnosis, 53–55

I, 317–18

closure of, 320

in “Golden Flower” text, 386

I-sense, 196

and not-I, 314–16

and physical functions, 361–65

unreality of, 221

Iagla

commentary on his work, 176–78

on “corrosive waters,” 146–52

his essay commented on, 189

on subterranean logic, 53–58

*I Ching*, 392

*Ignis*, xxii–xxv

*Il Ghibellino*, xxiv–xxv illness, 189–92, 250

imitation, rituals of, 37

immortality, xiii, xxviii. *See also* after death in the *Golden Verses*, 16

Pythagoras on, 8

*Imperialismo Pagano* (Evola), xxiv inertia, 387

initiatic consciousness

after death, 132–37

initiatic tradition in the West, 67–70

initiatic knowledge. *See also* esotericism; initiation; magic

after death, 132–37

initiatic path, 1–2, 307

as an orientation today, 2

initiation, 299. *See also* esotericism; initiatic path availability to women, 395

Kirillov and, 203–8

shamanic, 178–80

Sufi story about, 213–14

insects, 309–10  
instinctivity, 313  
Institute for Higher Operative Psychology, xxxi intelligence  
    in the *Golden Verses*, 14  
    toward natural phenomena, developing, 44–45, 49  
Interior Man, The, 18, 19  
interior mode, 307  
intiatic path, 1  
intolerance, religious, 65–66  
I-sense. *See* I  
Isis, 353  
    Isis teachings, xxi  
Italic school, xxv  
  
Janus, xxxii, 72–73, 77, 79  
Jesus Christ, 60–61, 64, 65, 300–301, 306–7  
    in Gichtel’s schema, 32–33  
Jīvanmukti, 140n4  
journal, private journal entries, 318–20  
Judaism, 66, 398  
Jung, C. G., 387–88  
    interpretation of “Golden Flower,” 380  
justice, 5  
  
Kali Yuga, 372  
k’an, 389–90  
Kāya-siddha, 177–78  
Kazi Dawa-Samdub, lama, 132  
Kerning, J. B., 123–26  
“killing the Bull,” 286–87

Kingdom of Heaven, 306  
Kirillov, and initiation, 203–8  
Kremmerz, Giuliano, xv, 114, 333  
    groups of, xvii–xxii  
Kronos, 81  
    and Saturnus, 83–85  
kuei, 383, 392–93  
kundalinī, 28, 192, 397  
    kundalinī yoga, 397–98

lapis niger, 75  
larynx, subtle center behind, 197–99  
Latium, 77–78, 377  
laws  
    natural, 324–31, 333  
    of the power of imagination, 229–30  
    of sympathy, 231–34  
    of the ubiquity of the idea, 230–31  
    of water, 333

Leadbeater, Charles, xiv  
Lebano, Giustiniano, xiv–xv, xvi Left-Hand Path, 241n3, 247n7, 248  
“Le message de l’étoile polaire,” xxvi Leo, on animation of “centers,” 193–202  
Lesser Mysteries, 375, 396, 397  
Lévi, Éliphas, xiv, 8, 36, 37, 246  
    on persistence, 146, 147  
liberation, 221  
    rhythm and, 108–14  
    sacrificial, 109  
    six ways to, 223  
life, 318–19, 382

- as gift not possession, 336
- and Lesser and Greater Mysteries, 396
- light, as yang principle, 384–86
- Light of Nature, 251
- “Like produces like,” 37
- Living Perfect Man, The*, 17–18, 19–20
- logic, 54
- love
  - and consternation, 336–37
  - in Dante and the Fedeli d’Amore, 100–104
- Luce
  - on the diaphanous body, 115–19
  - Giulio Parise as, xxiv
- luminous body, 30
- lunar influence, 182–86
- Lü-tsu, Master, 386
- Lü-yen, 379–80
- lymphatic system, 364
  
- Macrobius, 79
- Magia Sexualis*, xxvi magic. *See also* esotericism; magical chains; sexual magic
  - accessibility of, 139, 143
  - “colors” of, 238
  - of conjunctions, 335–47, 398
  - of creation, 290–97
  - effects of magical discipline, 312–20
  - of effigies, 229–36
  - the experience it affirms, 322
  - immortality as purpose of, 16
  - magical conception, 340
  - magical marriage, 32

the Master, the song, and, 138–43  
meaning of term, 142  
necessity of preliminary work, 312  
pagan magical spell, 367–69  
and positive science, 322–34  
practical and concrete in, 138  
sacrificial Magic, 108  
v. science, 352–53

magical chains, 285  
first instructions for, 49–51  
initiatic purpose of, 42  
instructions for, 42–52  
instructions for a later phase, 51–52  
preparation for individuals, 44–49  
roles in, 42

magus, role of, 158–59

man. *See also* sexual magic two distinct men in each person, 182–88

manhood, in occult sense, 344

mantrā, 123

mantric values, of words, 199

Marchi, Padre, 367

marriage, magical, 32

Martinism, 61–62

Master, 147  
in magic, 138–43

mathematics, 362

matriarchal cycles, 374–75

medicine, and poison, 250–53

Melchizedek, 24n4, 106–7

Mercury, in sexual magic, 335, 338



metaphysical reality, 1–2  
Meyrink, Gustav, 123–24  
    mentions UR in novel, xxviii on sexual magic, 353–57  
Miccinelli, Clara, xiv  
Midgard, 371  
migration of symbols, 376  
Milarepa, 326n1  
    brief biography, 216  
    excerpts from the life of, 216–28  
    Song: The Demon of the Snows, 217–19  
    Song: The Song of Joy, 220–26  
    Song: The Song of the Essence of Things, 226–28  
ming, 382  
miracles. *See* prodigies  
mistrust, as mother of wisdom, 55  
Moon, and Sun, 182–83, 186  
morality, 299  
    in ancient world, 239  
    and asceticism, 243  
    and esotericism, 238–49  
    modern v. traditional, 241  
Moretti, L., xxxi  
mortification, 286–87  
*Mos Maiorum*, xxxi Movimento Tradizionale Romano, xxxii  
mudrā, 123  
mūladhārā, 27, 28  
Mussolini, xvi, xviii, xxiii  
Myriam, xvii, xvii–xix, xx  
Nagłowska, Maria de, xxvi  
Narayānaswami Aiyar, C. S., 176–78  
Nature, 257  
Natures, two, 279  
Neanderthal, 373  
Negri, Pietro, xxiii, 377

on opposition in spiritual development, 298–311  
on secret language of Fedeli d'Amore, 99–107  
on the Western tradition, 59–89

nidāna, 221n10

Nietzsche, 189

Night, and Day, 182–83

Nilius, on medicine and poison, 250–53

Nir, on science v. magic, 323, 327–30, 332

Nizamuddin Auliya, 326n2

noise, nuisance of, 309

Nordic motifs, 377–78

North Pole. *See* Hyperborean tradition oath, in the *Golden Verses*, 9

opposition, contingent in spiritual development, 298–311

Orcus, 5, 9

Order of Mantos, xix

Order of the Iron Crown, xxix–xxx Ordine Nuovo, xxx

Orient, 398–99

Osiridian Egyptian Order, xx–xxi Osiris magic, xxi

Oso, on solar will, 96–98

“other,” 183–85

Ottaviano, xiv–xv

overcompensation, 288

Ovid, 59–60, 78–79

paganism

- and Christian initiatic tradition, 67–70
- devaluation of pagan tradition, 59–62
- existence of pagan initiatic center, 69–70
- a pagan magical spell, 367–69
- Western pagan initiatic tradition, 68–70

pain, 189–92

palingenesis, 22, 24, 27  
    as initiatic rebirth, 88

Papus, 61–62  
    dissension with Blavatsky, 63

Paracelsus, 250–51

Parise, Giulio, xxiv

Parvulesco, Jean, xxviii–xxix Paul, 306–7

pentagram, and magical chain, 43

Perfect and Illuminated Man, The, 19, 20

perils of the soul, 157–61

Persian civilization, origin of, 399

Phineas, 339, 340

Phoenix, 106

Piscitelli, Anna Maria, xix pituitary gland, 195–97

Plato  
    and Atlantis, 374  
    on beings that were both male and female, 335  
    on mathematics, 362

Platonic love, 342

pleasure, mistrust of, 56–57

Plotinus, 243

Plutarch, 192

poetry, 211

poison, 146  
    and medicine, 250–53

polarity, in sexual magic, 338

*Politica Romano*, xxv post-hypnotic suggestion, 53–54, 55

potentiation, 316–17

power, and the modern spirit, 287–88

Practical Theosophy, 17  
precognition, 328  
Procesi, Placido, xxx  
prodigies, former times and, 352–53  
Prometeo-Agape, xx–xxi  
psychic life, 332–33  
psychoanalysis, 314  
purposelessness, 386  
Pythagoras  
    advice from, 5–8  
    commentary on “Golden Verses” of, 8–16  
    “Golden Verses” of, 4–16  
    Pythagorean movements in France, 61–62  
    as quoted in *Turba Philosophorum*, 255–84  
    Roman aversion to Pythagoreanism, 74  
    as wisest man, 283

Quadrelli, Ercole. *See* Abraxa radiant body, 24  
Ragon, Jean-Marie, 71  
    devaluation of Roman tradition, 59, 60  
realization  
    Abraxa on, 36  
    Havismat on, 92–95  
    tradition and, 92–95  
    v. feeling, 175–76  
Rebis, 103  
Red Sea, in Gichtel’s schema, 30–32  
red Stone, 155, 255n2, 277  
Regenerated Man, The, 18, 22, 23  
regeneration, Gichtel’s secret of, 26–27

Reghini, Arturo. *See also* Negri, Pietro and his followers, xxii–xxiv as Pietro Negri, xxiii

Reginelli, Corallo, xxvii–xxviii Regnaud, 80–81

reincarnation, 375

removal of obstacles, 179

resurrection body, xiii

*Revolt against the Modern World* (Evola), 374

rhythm, and liberation, 108–14

Richet, Charles, 53

rightness, 4

ritual, 35, 113, 212, 239, 299

ritual magic, 35–39

    Abraxa on, 35–39, 173–75

    first requirement of, 35–36

    similarity in, 36

Roman tradition, xxxi, 71–74

    devaluation of, 59–62, 71–72

    historical criticism of, 75–76

    Roman initiatic center, 72, 74

    Roman mysteries, 73

Roman Traditional Movement, xxxii Roman way, xxxi. *See also* Roman tradition Rome. *See also* Roman tradition agricultural symbolism in, 85–89

    as center of the West, 64, 71

    knowledge of building, 73–74

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 102

Rota, Nino, xviii

Royal Art, 308, 311

RUD, Domenico Rudatis as, xxvii Rudatis, Domenico, xxvii

salvation, 301

sat, 82

Saturn. *See also* Saturnus etymology of name, 80–83

Saturnalia, 77, 78

Saturnus, 80–83

agriculture and, 84–85

and doctrine of being, 82

and golden age, 78

and Kronos, 83–85

legend of, 77–80

as subterranean god, 79–80

Saunier, Marco, on Roman esoteric tradition, 60

Schola Philosophica Hermetica . . . , xix School of the North, 62

Schroeder, 163

science

constancy in, 324

magic and positive science, 322–34

summary of characteristics of, 322

v. magic, 352–53

seasons, 261

Sebottendorf, Rudolf von, practice with signs and grips, 124–31

sekhem, 24

self, as historically conditioned, 154–56

self-honor, 5

serpent, in Gichtel's schema, 25–26

Servadio, Emilio, xxvii

Sestito, Robert, xxiv

seven basic principles, 222

sexual magic, xix, xx–xxi, 398

Abraxa on, 335–47

and controlling intercourse, 337

in “Golden Flower” text, 391–92

Gustav Meyrink on, 353–57  
place for, 345  
two great tests in, 340–42  
woman chosen for, 344–46

Shakti, 24

shamanism, shamanic initiation, 178–80

Shankaracharya, 95

Shiva, 24

Shūnyatā, 220n6

signature, of an illness, 250–52

“signs” of Freemasonry, 122–31

silence, importance of, 13

sing, letting the light sing, 142–43

six binding ties of non-liberation, 223

six external deficiencies, 222–23

sixfold modes of spiritual wellbeing, 222

sixfold way of yogi’s spiritual wellbeing, 224

six immensities that bestow confidence, 223–24

six ways to liberation, 223

sleep, 308–9

solar consciousness, 182–88

solar will, 96–98

Sombart, Werner, 288

Song of Joy (Milarepa), 220–26

Song of the Essence of Things (Milarepa), 226–28

Sophia, 31

soul, 115–17, 348–51  
how to treat, 58  
perils of the, 157–61  
two souls in man, 381

Souverain et Hermétique Order d'Atoum, xix–xx speech, 5–6  
spells, a pagan magical spell, 367–69  
Spirit, and body, 264  
spirit, 115–17  
spiritual body, 366  
spiritual development, 311. *See also* esotericism; magic opposition contingent in, 298–311  
spiritual world, 323  
Spiritus Mundi, 25  
Steiner, Rudolf, xii, 63  
Stone, in *Turba Philosophorum*, 255, 262–66, 271, 277, 282  
subtilization, 253  
subtle state, 252  
Sufi story, on initiation, 213–14  
suicide, 206, 318–20  
Sulfur, 337  
    in sexual magic, 335, 337–38  
Sun, 349  
    and Moon, 182–83, 186  
Supreme Identity, 133  
survival instinct, 303  
swastika, 376  
symbolism, 170–71  
tantra, 28, 354–55  
Tao, 139, 142  
    defined, 381  
Taoism, “Golden Flower of the Great One,” 379–94  
Taurulus, Corallo Reginelli as, xxvii–xxviii Tetraktys, 7, 11–12  
*Theosophia Practica* (Gichtel), 17–34  
Theosophical Society, xiv, 63, 302



*The Possessed* (Dostoevsky), 203

thought, as a faculty, 360–63

Thule, 372

*Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 143, 387

    Ea on, 132–37

Tibetan tradition, magic in, 296–97

time, and consciousness, 329

tradition

    Havismat on, 92–95

    oral nature of, 76

    primordial tradition, 399

    and realization, 92–95

Traditional Civilization, 2

tragedy, tragic sense of life, 212–13

transcendence

    access to, xxii. *See also* esotericism; spiritual development Tree of Life, 335, 337

*Turba Philosophorum*, 254–84

    history of, 254–55

two Vessels, 335

unknowing, 225, 225n16

UR Group

    aim of their initiations, xxviii dissolution of, xxix

    historical and esoteric context of, xi–xxxiii intention to resurrect Roman Empire, xvi UR-inspired groups after 1930, xxix–xxxiii Val, on science v. magic, 323–27

Valentine, Basil, 27

Valli, Luigi, 165

    on Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore, 99–107

Vannoni, Giovanni, xxiv

Varro, 80, 87–88  
Ventura, Gastone, xxxi  
Verginelli, Vinci, xviii  
vertical phase, in esotericism, 244–45, 298–99, 307  
Vestment of Liberty, 24  
Viola, Loris, xxxii  
Virgil, 60, 78, 89  
Virgin, in Gichtel’s schema, 32  
Virio, xix  
virtue, 244  
    path of, 5–8  
visions, 314  
Vital Points, vivification of, 51

water  
    esoteric, 15, 17  
    in *Turba Philosophorum*, 267, 274  
water of life, 24–25, 274, 338–39  
waters, 24n5  
    corrosive, 146–52, 253, 308, 337  
Way of Heaven, 245  
Western civilization, 2  
Western tradition, 67–70  
    and Christianity, 63–67  
    and Eastern tradition, 63–67  
    not necessarily Christian, 67–70  
    Pietro Negri on, 59–89  
Wilhem, Richard, 379–81, 390, 393  
will, 96–98, 214, 305  
    as a faculty, 361

wine, 151n3

Wirth, Herman, 374

wisdom, 76

wolf, as symbol, 376–77

women. *See also* female; sexual magic woman and initiation, 395–98

    woman chosen for sexual magic, 344–46

word, magic of the, 38

words, mantric values of, 199

yang, 381

    light as principle of, 384–86

yauategn, 180

Yezidis, xvi

yin, 381

yoga, 397

*Yoga of Power, The* (Evola), 132

yugas, and four ages, 78, 82

Zam, on a pagan magical spell, 367–69

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