

ON BUDDHISM



RENE GUENON

BERSERKER

BOOKS



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ABOUT BUDDHISM*

Buddhism, as we have just said, seems closer, or rather less distant from Western conceptions than any other Eastern doctrine, and therefore easier for Westerners to study; this is undoubtedly what explains the marked predilection shown for it by Orientalists. They think they find in it something that fits into their mental framework, or at least does not completely escape it; in any case, they are not perplexed by a total impossibility of comprehension, which, without admitting it to themselves, they must nevertheless feel more or less confusedly. Such, at least, is the impression they experience in the presence of certain forms of Buddhism, for, as we shall say below, there are many distinctions to be made in this regard; and, naturally, they want to see in these forms that are more accessible to them the true and, in a certain sense, primitive Buddhism, while the others would be, according to them, nothing more than more or less late alterations. But Buddhism, whatever it may be, and even in the most "simplistic" aspects it may have taken on in some of its branches, is nevertheless, and despite everything, still Eastern; Orientalists also take assimilation with Western points of view too far, for example when they want to make it the equivalent of a religion in the European sense of the word, which, moreover, sometimes leads them into singular perplexities: have not some of them declared, without flinching at the contradiction in terms, that it was an "atheistic religion"? Moreover, Buddhism is in reality neither "atheistic," nor "theistic," nor "pantheistic"; what must simply be said is that it does not place itself in the point of view in relation to which these various terms have meaning; but if it does not place itself there, it is precisely because it is not a religion. Thus, even that which might seem least foreign to their own mentality, Orientalists still find a way to distort through their interpretations, and in various ways, for when they want to see it as a philosophy, they distort it no less than when they try to make it a religion: if, for example, they speak of "pessimism," as they so often do, Buddhism is not characterized, or at least it is nothing more than Buddhism seen through the philosophy of Schopenhauer; authentic Buddhism is neither "pessimistic" nor "optimistic," for it does not pose questions in precisely this way; but it must be admitted that it is very uncomfortable for some not to be able to apply Western labels to a doctrine.

*Chapter IV of Part 3 of *Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues*, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1921. Éditions Vêga, Paris, 1932, 1939, 1952 (revised and expanded edition at the author's initiative. Chapter II of Part 4, entitled "The German Influence," was removed in this edition, and Chapter IV of Part 3, "On Buddhism," underwent changes).

Author's note: For readers who are familiar with the first edition of this book, we feel it is appropriate to briefly explain the reasons that led us to modify this chapter: when the first edition appeared, we had no reason to doubt that, as is commonly claimed, the most restricted and clearly anti-metaphysical forms of *Hīnayāna* represented the teaching of Shākya-Muni himself; we did not have time to undertake the lengthy research that would have been necessary to adequately explore this question, and, moreover, what we knew about Buddhism at that time was not of a nature that prompted us to do so. But since then, things have taken a different turn following the work of A. K. Coomaraswamy (who was himself not a Buddhist but a Hindu, which sufficiently guarantees his impartiality), and his reinterpretation of original Buddhism, from which it is very difficult to discern the true meaning of all the heresies that have been grafted onto it later and which we had in mind above all when we first wrote our article; it is clear that, as far as these deviant forms are concerned, what we wrote previously remains entirely valid. Let us add on this occasion that we are always willing to recognize the traditional value of any doctrine, wherever it may be found, provided we have sufficient evidence; but unfortunately, while the new information received has been entirely in favor of the doctrine of Shākya-Muni (which does not mean all Buddhist schools indiscriminately), it is very different for all the other things whose anti-traditional character we have denounced.

The truth is that Buddhism is neither a religion nor a philosophy, despite the fact that, especially in its forms most favored by Orientalists, it is in certain respects closer to one and the other than traditional Hindu doctrines. In fact, these are schools that, having placed themselves outside the regular tradition and thereby lost sight of true metaphysics, were inevitably forced to replace it with something that resembled the philosophical point of view to a certain extent, but only to a certain extent. Likewise, one sometimes finds in them speculations which, if considered superficially, may suggest psychology, but which are obviously not properly psychology, a purely Western concept, and in the West itself a very recent one, since it really dates from Locke; one should not attribute to Buddhists a mentality that comes very especially from modern Anglo-Saxon empiricism. To be legitimate, the approach must not go as far as assimilation; and, similarly, as far as religion is concerned, Buddhism is effectively comparable to it in only one respect, which is undoubtedly important but insufficient to conclude that there is an identity of thought: it is the introduction of a sentimental element, which can also be explained in all cases as an adaptation to the particular conditions of the period in which the doctrines affected by it arose, and which, therefore, is far from necessarily implying that they are all of the same kind. The real difference in points of view may be more essential than a similarity, which, in short, has more to do with the form of expression of the doctrines; This is what those who speak of "Buddhist morality" are particularly unaware of: what they take for morality, and this all the more easily since its sentimental aspect may indeed lend itself to such an error, is in reality considered from a completely different angle and has a very different *raison d'être*, which is not even of an equivalent order. One example will suffice to illustrate this: the well-known formula "May all beings be happy" concerns the universality of beings, without any restriction, and not only human beings; this is an extension to which the moral point of view is in no way susceptible, by its very definition. Buddhist "compassion" is not Schopenhauer's "piety"; it would be more comparable to the "cosmic charity" of Muslims, which, moreover, can be perfectly transposed outside of any sentimentality. This does not prevent Buddhism from being unquestionably imbued with a sentimentalism which, without reaching the point of "moralism," is nevertheless a characteristic element that must be taken into account, all the more so as it is one of those elements that clearly differentiate it from Hindu doctrines and make it appear certainly further removed than these from traditional "primordialism."

Another point worth mentioning in this regard is that there is a fairly close link between the sentimental form of a doctrine and its tendency to spread, a tendency that appears both in Buddhism and within religions, as evidenced by its expansion throughout most of Asia; However, we should not exaggerate the similarity here, and it does not seem very accurate to speak of Buddhist "missionaries" who spread outside India at certain times, since, apart from the fact that these were only a few isolated individuals, such a term inevitably brings to mind the methods of propaganda and proselytism that are characteristic of Westerners. On the other hand, it is very noteworthy that, as this diffusion took place, Buddhism declined in India itself and eventually died out entirely after having created there, degenerate and clearly heterodox schools, to which contemporary Hindu works of this last phase of Indian Buddhism refer, particularly those of Shankarâchârya, who never dealt with them except to refute the theories of these schools in the name of traditional doctrine, without, on the other hand, attributing them in any way to the founder of Buddhism himself, which clearly indicated that they were nothing more than a degeneration of those schools. The most curious thing is that it is precisely these diminished and deviant forms that, in the eyes of most Orientalists, represent the closest approximation possible to true original Buddhism. We will return to this point later, but before going any further, it is worth pointing out that India was never actually Buddhist, contrary to what Orientalists generally claim, who want in a way to make Buddhism

the very center of everything concerning India and its history: India before Buddhism, India after Buddhism, such is the clearest distinction they believe they can make, understanding on the other hand that Buddhism left, even after its total extinction, a deep mark on its country of origin, which is completely false for the very reason we have just indicated. It is true that these Orientalists, who imagine that the Hindus had to plagiarize Greek philosophy, could equally well argue, without much more implausibility, that they also plagiarized Buddhism; and we are not very sure that this is not the underlying thought of some of them. It must be admitted that there are some honorable exceptions in this regard; Barth, for example, has said that "Buddhism was only of episodic importance," which, as far as India is concerned, is the strict truth; but despite this, the opposite opinion has continued to prevail, not to mention, of course, the crass ignorance of the common people in Europe, who readily imagine that Buddhism still rules in India today. All that needs to be said is that around the time of King Ashoka, that is, from the third century BC, Buddhism experienced a period of great expansion in India, at the same time as it began to spread outside India, and that this period was, moreover, quickly followed by its decline; But even for this period, if one wanted to find a similarity in the Western world, one would have to say that this spread was more comparable to that of a monastic order than to that of a religion addressing the entire population; while not perfect, this comparison would undoubtedly be the least inaccurate of all.

However, this is not all that concerns the fantasies of Orientalists: we see some, such as Max Muller, striving to discover "the seeds of Buddhism," that is, at least according to their conception, the seeds of heterodoxy, even in the *Upanishads*¹, which, as an integral part of the *Veda*, are one of the essential foundations of Hindu orthodoxy; it is undoubtedly difficult to take absurdity any further and demonstrate a more complete lack of understanding. Whatever one's idea of Buddhism may be, it is nevertheless very easy to understand that, having been born in a Hindu environment and having emerged, so to speak, from Hinduism, it would always have to retain something in common with it, even if it broke away from it, and the similarity found in both cannot be explained in any other way; Mr. Roussel undoubtedly exaggerated in the opposite direction by insisting on the absolute lack of originality of this doctrine, but this opinion is at least more plausible than that of Max Muller and does not imply any contradiction; We would add that it would express praise rather than criticism for those who, like us, adhere to the traditional point of view, since, to be legitimate, the differences between doctrines can only be a simple matter of adaptation, always falling on more or less external forms of expression and in no way affecting the principles themselves. in this case, the introduction of the sentimental form itself is at least such that it leaves metaphysics intact at the center of the doctrine.

That said, we must now ask ourselves to what extent we can talk about Buddhism in general, as is customary, without risking multiple misunderstandings. To avoid this, we should, on the contrary, always take care to specify which form of Buddhism we are referring to, since Buddhism has comprised and still comprises a large number of different branches or schools, and we cannot attribute to all of them indiscriminately what belongs properly to one or another of them. These schools can be classified into two broad divisions known as "*Mahayana*" and "*Hinayana*," which are commonly translated as "Great Vehicle" and "Small Vehicle," but more accurate and clearer terms are "Great Way" and "Small Way." It is better to keep these names, which designate them authentically, than to replace them with names such as "Northern Buddhism" and "Southern Buddhism," which have only a purely geographical value, quite undefined, and which in no way characterize the doctrines in question. Only *Mahayana* can be considered as truly representing a complete doctrine, comprising its properly metaphysical side and constituting its upper and central part; on the contrary, the

¹ *The Upanishads*, volume II, Introduction, pp. XXVI-XXVII and L-LII.

Hīnayāna appears as a doctrine reduced in a certain way to its most external aspect and not going beyond what is accessible to the generality of men, which justifies its name, and, naturally, it is in this diminished branch of Buddhism, whose most typical representative is currently the Buddhism of Ceylon, where the deviations to which we have alluded above have occurred. It is here that Orientalists truly reverse normal relationships; they want the most deviant schools, those that take heterodoxy furthest, to be the most authentic expression of *Hīnayāna*, and *Hīnayāna* itself to be properly primitive Buddhism, or at least its regular continuation, to the exclusion of *Mahāyāna*, which would be, according to them, only the product of a series of alterations and more or less late additions. In doing so, they are simply following the anti-traditional tendencies of their own mentality, which naturally leads them to sympathize with everything heterodox, and they also conform more particularly to this false conception, almost generalized among modern Westerners, according to which what is simpler, or rather, what is more rudimentary, must therefore be the most ancient; With such prejudices, it does not occur to them that the truth could be just the opposite. Under these conditions, one is entitled to wonder what strange caricature was offered to Westerners as a representation of true Buddhism, as formulated by its founder, and one cannot help but smile at the thought that it is this caricature that became an object of admiration for many of them and seduced them to such an extent that some have not hesitated to proclaim their adherence, purely theoretical and "ideal," to this Buddhism that seems to be so extraordinarily in line with their "rationalist" and "positivist" mentality.

Let us be clear: when we say that *Mahayana* should have been included in Buddhism from its origins, this should be understood in terms of what we might call its essence, regardless of the more or less specific forms that are characteristic of its different schools. these forms are secondary, but they are all that the "historical method" allows us to see in them, and this is what gives an appearance of justification to the claims of Orientalists when they say that *Mahayana* is "late" or that it is nothing more than an "altered" form of Buddhism. What further complicates matters is that Buddhism, upon leaving India, has been modified to a certain extent, and in different ways, and that it also had to be modified in order to adapt to very different environments; but the whole question lies in knowing how far these modifications go, and it does not seem very easy to resolve, especially for those who have almost no idea about the traditional doctrines with which it came into contact. This is particularly true in the Far East, where Taoism has clearly influenced certain branches of *Mahayana*, at least in terms of their modes of expression; the Zen school, in particular, adopted methods whose Taoist inspiration is completely evident. This fact can be explained by the particular character of the Far Eastern tradition and by the profound separation that exists between its two parts, internal and external, that is, between Taoism and Confucianism. under these conditions, Buddhism could, in a way, situate itself in an intermediate domain between the two, and it can even be said that in certain cases it has truly served as an "outer shell" for Taoism, which allowed the latter to remain closed much more easily than it could have without it. This also explains why Far Eastern Buddhism has assimilated certain symbols of Taoist origin and, for example, has sometimes identified *Kwan-yin* with a *Bodhisattva*, or more precisely with a feminine aspect of *Avalokiteshwara*, because of the "providential" function they have in common. and this, let us note in passing, caused another mistake on the part of Orientalists, most of whom know Taoism only by name: they have imagined that *Kwan-yin* belonged properly to Buddhism, and seem to be completely unaware of her essentially Taoist provenance. In any case, it is very much their habit, when faced with something whose nature or origin they cannot determine exactly, to get out of the way by applying the label "Buddhist"; it is a rather convenient way of concealing their more or less conscious perplexity, and they are all the more eager to resort to this expedient because, by virtue of the de facto monopoly they have established for their own benefit, they are almost certain that no one will contradict them; what can they fear from

In this regard, what about those who establish the principle that there is no true competition in the order of study in question, except that which is acquired in their school? It is also evident that everything they declare to be "Buddhist" according to their fantasy, as well as that which really is, is in any case nothing more than "altered Buddhism" for them. In a history of religions textbook that we have already mentioned, and where the chapter on China shows a regrettable lack of understanding, it is stated that "only the name of early Buddhism remains in China," and that the doctrines that exist there today have only the name of Buddhism. This would be completely accurate if by "primitive Buddhism" we mean what Orientalists present as such, but first we would have to know whether we should accept their conception of it or whether, on the contrary, it is not this conception that actually represents a degenerate form of Buddhism.

The question of the relationship between Buddhism and Taoism is relatively easy to elucidate, provided, of course, that we know what Taoism is; but it must be admitted that there are problems more complex than this: this is especially the case when we are not dealing with elements belonging to traditions outside India, but with Hindu elements, in respect of which it can be difficult to say whether they were always more or less closely associated with Buddhism, due to the very fact of its Indian origin, or whether they were incorporated later in some of its forms. This is the case, for example, with the Shaivite elements that occupy such an important place in Tibetan Buddhism, commonly referred to by the somewhat incorrect name of "Lamaism"; on the other hand, this is not exclusively particular to Tibet, as there is also a Shiva-Buddha in Java that proves a similar association taken as far as possible. In fact, the solution to this question could be found in the study of the relationship between Buddhism, even in its original form, and Tantrism; but the latter is so little known in the West that it would be almost useless to discuss it without going into lengthy considerations that cannot be included here. We will therefore limit ourselves to this simple indication, for the same reason that led us, when listing the great divisions of the East, to make only a brief mention of Tibetan civilization, despite its importance.

There is one last point to address, albeit briefly: why did Buddhism spread so widely outside its country of origin and enjoy such resounding success, despite the fact that, in that very country, it degenerated quite rapidly and eventually died out? Could it be that the true *raison d'être* of Buddhism itself lies precisely in this spread outside its country of origin? What we mean is that Buddhism seems to have been truly destined for non-Indian peoples; however, it was necessary for it to have its origins in Hinduism itself in order to acquire the elements that were to be transmitted elsewhere, after the necessary adaptation; but once that mission was accomplished, it was normal for it to disappear from India, where it did not belong. In this regard, a fairly accurate comparison could be made between the situation of Buddhism in relation to Hinduism and that of Christianity in relation to Judaism, provided, of course, that we always take into account the differences in perspective that we have emphasized. In any case, this consideration is the only one that allows us to recognize Buddhism, without committing an illogicality, as a traditional doctrine that cannot be denied, at least in the case of *Mahayana*, while at the same time recognizing the no less evident heterodoxy of the latest and deviant forms of *Hinayana*; and it also explains what the Buddha's mission may have really been. If he had taught the heterodox doctrine attributed to him by Orientalists, it would be completely inconceivable that many orthodox Hindus would not hesitate to consider him an *Avatāra*, that is, a "divine manifestation," since what is said about him does indeed present all its characteristics. It is true that Orientalists, who know how to dismiss without listening to reason anything that is of a "non-human" nature, claim that this is "a legend," that is, something devoid of any historical value, and that it is even foreign to "primitive Buddhism"; but if these "legendary" traits are discarded, what remains of the founder of Buddhism in terms of his purely human individuality? It would undoubtedly be very difficult to say, but Western criticism does not shy away from such trifles, and, in order to write a

² *Christus*, chap. IV, p. 187.

life of Buddha suited to their criteria, they go so far as to establish, with Oldenberg, the principle that "Indo-Germans do not admit miracles"; how can one remain serious in the face of such statements? This supposed historical "reconstruction" of the Buddha's life is worth just as much as that of his "primitive" doctrine, and proceeds entirely from the same prejudices; in both cases, the aim is above all to suppress everything that disturbs the modern mentality, and it is thanks to this eminently simplistic procedure that these people imagine they are achieving the truth.

We will say no more on the subject, since Buddhism is not what we have set out to study here and, in short, it was enough for us to "situate" it in relation to Hindu doctrines on the one hand, and on the other hand, in relation to Western points of view with which it is more or less improperly assimilated. We can therefore, after this digression, return to the specifically Hindu conceptions, but we will not do so without first making one last observation that may serve as a conclusion to everything that has just been said: if Orientalists, who have, so to speak, "specialized" in Buddhism, make so many serious mistakes in this regard, what value can be placed on what they say about other doctrines, which for them have always been only a matter of secondary and almost accidental study in relation to Buddhism?

ESOTERIC BUDDHISM*

We have said from the outset that, strictly speaking, there is no theosophical doctrine, and this can already be seen from the various examples of variations and contradictions that we have given, whether in H. P. Blavatsky herself or in her successors; in such a case, the word doctrine cannot be properly applied. However, the Theosophical Society claims to have a doctrine, or rather claims both that it does not have one and that it does have one. Here is what Blavatsky herself says: "When we say that the Society has no particular doctrine, that means that no particular belief is *compulsory*; but that applies, of course, only to the generality of the members. Know that the Society is divided into inner and outer circles. The members of the inner circle (that is, the "esoteric section") do, in fact, have a philosophy, or, if you prefer, a particular religious system." Thus, belief in this doctrine is "mandatory" at least for members who want to go beyond the "outer circle"; undoubtedly, in principle, the utmost tolerance is shown in this circle, admitting people who profess all kinds of opinions; but even there, this tolerance quickly disappears if these people allow themselves to discuss certain "teachings," and it is well known that when this happens, they are made to understand that their place is not within the Society. As for the "esoteric section," those who show the slightest critical spirit can be sure that they will never be admitted to it; moreover, the application for admission that candidates are required to sign contains a clause in which they must expressly affirm the authenticity of teachings about which they are supposed to know nothing yet².

This supposed "particular religious system," which constitutes the official doctrine of theosophy and is presented simply as "the very essence of all religions and absolute truth"³, bears the clearly visible mark of the multiple and discordant sources from which it has been drawn: far from being the "common origin" of all doctrines, as one would like to believe, it is nothing more than the result of plagiarism carried out without much discernment, to which an artificial appearance of unity has been given that does not stand up to scrutiny. In short, it is nothing more than a confused mixture of Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, Jewish Kabbalah, Hermeticism, and occultism, all grouped together, for better or worse, around two or three ideas that, like it or not, are of completely modern and purely Western origin. It is this mixture

*Chapter X of *Le Théosophisme*, Paris, 1921 (footnotes marked with an asterisk were added by the author in the second edition of 1928).

¹ *La Clef de la Théosophie*, p. 86.

² We have had in our hands a copy of the declaration required of candidates for the "esoteric section," now called the "Eastern Theosophical School"; under Mme. Besant, the following preamble: "Inevitable disappointment awaits the student who enters the School without accepting the fundamental facts of nature on which the teachings of the School are based, without belief in the Instructors, and without an ardent desire to learn in order to be more useful to his companions. For this reason, the following conditions have been laid down; no candidate can be admitted unless he satisfies them. The following text must then be signed and returned to the corresponding Secretary of the Division." This is followed by the declaration itself, conceived as follows: "1. I sympathize with the three objectives of the S. T. - 2. I am convinced of the truth of the main teachings of Esoteric Philosophy, namely, the One Existence from which everything proceeds, the Law of Periodicity, the identity between the spirit in man and the Universal Spirit, Reincarnation, Karma, and the existence of the Great Brotherhood. - 3. I wish to become a member of the E. E. T. in order to purify and spiritualize my life, thus making myself a more useful servant to humanity. - 4. I am certain that H. P. B. possessed knowledge that attested to her mission as Messenger of the Great Brotherhood, and that this School, founded by her, is therefore under the protection of the Great Brotherhood. - 5th. I recognize Annie Besant as her successor, as Head of this School under the direction of the Masters and as Their Messenger, appointed by Them to direct this work.

³ *La Clef de la Théosophie*, pp. 83-84.

heterogeneous what was first presented as "esoteric Buddhism," but, as it was very easy to see that it had only very vague connections with true Buddhism, it was necessary to try to explain how it could be Buddhism without being so: "The error (which consists in believing that we are all disciples of Gautama Buddha) has come from a lack of understanding of the real meaning of the title of A. P. Sinnett's excellent work: *Esoteric Buddhism*; the latter word, *Buddhism*, should have been written with a single *d*, and then *Budhism* would have had the real meaning it should have had, that of Religion of Wisdom (from *bodha*, *bodhi*, intelligence, wisdom), instead of *Buddhism*, the religious philosophy of Gautama."⁴ To show the little value of this subtle distinction, suffice it to say that in Sanskrit, too, there is the word *buddhi* to designate intelligence, which is written (or rather transcribed) with two *d*'s; and we note in passing, with regard to this latter term, that Mrs. Besant has decided to translate it as "pure reason," when what it means exactly is "intellectual intuition"; a change in terminology is not enough to dispel the confusion! Strictly speaking, "Buddhism" (with a single *d*) could only mean "the doctrine of Mercury"; that is, a "Sanskritized" equivalent, if one may express it thus, of Greco-Egyptian "Hermeticism," but it does not seem that the idea of this interpretation has ever occurred to theosophists, for we do not think that there was a deliberate and direct allusion to the teachings of another "Mercury," who was then known only under the name of Koot Hoomi, and this is truly regrettable, since such an allusion would not have lacked a certain ingenuity.

The statement we have just reproduced did not prevent H. P. Blavatsky from contributing herself to maintaining the misunderstanding, stating immediately afterwards that "*Buddhism*" (with two *d*'s) encompasses both exoteric and esoteric teachings, so that one is naturally led to wonder to what extent "*esoteric Buddhism*" and "*exoteric Buddhism*" can truly be distinct from one another. Moreover, Sinnett had presented the so-called "*esoteric doctrine*," which he was charged with expounding, as coming from Buddhism itself, or from one of its branches, and at the same time as constituting a link between it and Brahmanism; and he established this link in the most extraordinary way, making Shankarâcharya, who was one of the most implacable opponents of Buddhism in India, a "second incarnation" of Buddha⁵, according to the assertions of an "initiated" Brahmin from South India, "one of the most distinguished Sanskritists and one of the most serious occultists"⁶, who was none other than Subba Rao. Nevertheless, Sinnett could not help but acknowledge that "this view is by no means accepted by uninitiated Hindu authorities," that is, in reality, non-theosophists; now, every Hindu who has any authority has never had anything but the deepest contempt for Theosophy, and, moreover, Madras is certainly not the place to go if one wants to find "distinguished Sanskritists." It is indeed very easy, in order to forestall the objections of one's adversaries, to proclaim that they are not "initiates," but it would perhaps be a little less so to show "initiates" of the kind in question who have no connection with Theosophical circles.

In fact, the truth is that there has never been any authentic "esoteric Buddhism"; if one wants to find esotericism, that is not where one should look, since Buddhism was essentially, in its origins, a popular doctrine that served as the theoretical support for a social movement of egalitarian tendencies. In India, it was nothing more than a simple heresy, which no real link could ever connect to the Brahmanic tradition, with which, on the contrary, it had openly broken, not only from a social point of view, by rejecting the caste system, but also from a purely doctrinal point of view, by denying the authority of *the Veda*. Moreover, Buddhism represented something so contrary to the Hindu spirit that it has long since disappeared completely from the region where it originated; only in Ceylon and Burma does it still exist in an almost pure state, and in all other countries where it

⁴ *La Clef de la Théosophie*, p. 20. Cf. *Le Lotus*, September 1887, p. 325.

⁵ *Le Bouddhisme Esotérique*, pp. 215-216.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

has been modified to the point of becoming completely unrecognizable. Generally, in Europe there is a tendency to exaggerate the importance of Buddhism, which is by far the least interesting of all Eastern doctrines, but which, precisely because it constitutes a deviation and an anomaly for the East, may seem more accessible to the Western mentality and less distant from the forms of thought to which it is accustomed. This is probably the main reason for the predilection that the study of Buddhism has always enjoyed among the vast majority of Orientalists, although some of them have mixed in intentions of another order, consisting in attempting to make it the instrument of an anti-Christianity to which it is, of course, completely foreign. Émile Burnouf, in particular, was not exempt from these latter concerns, and this led him to ally himself with theosophists, who were animated by the same spirit of religious competition. A few years ago, there was also an attempt in France, albeit without much success, to propagate a certain "eclectic Buddhism," quite fanciful, invented by Léon de Rosny, whom Olcott, although not a theosophist, lavished praise on in the introduction he wrote especially for the French translation of his *Buddhist Catechism*.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the Theosophical Society has attempted to annex Buddhism, even simply "exoteric" Buddhism; this attempt was marked first by the publication in 1881 of Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism*, which we have just mentioned. This pamphlet was endorsed by Rev. H. Sumangala, head of the *Vidyodaya Parivena* (College) in Colombo, who, for that occasion, called himself "High Priest of the Southern Buddhist Church," a title whose existence no one had suspected until then. A few years later, Olcott himself, after a trip to Japan and a tour of Burma, boasted of having brought about the reconciliation of the Northern and Southern Buddhist Churches⁹. Sumangala wrote at the time: "We owe to Colonel Olcott the catechism in which our children learn the first principles of our religion, and our present fraternal relations with our co-religionists in Japan and other Buddhist countries"¹⁰². It should be added that the schools where Olcott's catechism was taught were nothing more than Theosophical creations; on this point we have the testimony of Blavatsky, who wrote in 1890: "In Ceylon, we have revived and begun to purify Buddhism; we have established higher schools, we have taken charge of about fifty lesser schools, placing them under our supervision."¹¹. Furthermore, around the same time, Sir Edwin Arnold, author of *Light of Asia*, had gone to India to work, he too, on bringing the Buddhist churches closer together; is it not legitimate to find these Western initiatives in such matters highly suspicious? It was perhaps to legitimize Olcott's role that Leadbeater recounted that he had been, in one of his previous incarnations, King Ashoka, the great protector of Buddhism, after having also been, in another, Gushtasp, king of Persia and protector of Zoroastrianism¹²; thus, spiritualists are not the only ones with the mania of believing themselves to be

⁷ However, he belonged to Freemasonry. *Lanterne*, April 18, 1894.

⁸There is currently a *Buddhist Lodge* in London, which publishes a magazine entitled *Buddhism in England*; its Buddhism, "which belongs to no school, but to all" (*sic*), and which is, moreover, too visibly adapted to the European mentality, is somewhat reminiscent of Léon de Rosny's "eclectic Buddhism."

⁹ See the various reports published on this subject in *Lotus Bleu*, December 27, 1891; April 27, September 27, and December 27, 1892.

¹⁰ Message addressed to the "Parliament of Religions" in Chicago in 1893.

²Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* was translated into Japanese by Midzutani Riozen; the October 1887 issue of *Lotus*, announcing the news, added: "It is to be hoped that Japan will not become Christianized."

¹¹ *Lotus Bleu*, October 7, 1890.

¹²*L'Occultisme dans la Nature*, p. 409.

Reincarnations of illustrious figures! When Olcott died, the American flag was placed over his body, along with "the Buddhist banner he had imagined himself, on which were arranged, in order, the colors of Lord Buddha's aura¹³": a "clairvoyant" fantasy to which authentic Buddhists have never been able to attach the slightest importance. Ultimately, this whole story relates above all to the political role of the Theosophical Society, which we will have the opportunity to explain later; moreover, it does not seem to have had any consequences in terms of uniting the different branches of Buddhism, but it must be believed that theosophists have not given up on using Southern Buddhism, since one of them, M. C. Jinarâjadâsa, recently announced that he had received from the "High Priest of Colombo" the power to admit Europeans who so desire into the Buddhist religion¹⁴. This reduced the Church in question, like a certain Christian Church of which we shall speak, to the rank of the many organizations that the Theosophical Society employs as auxiliaries for its propaganda and for the realization of its special designs.

¹³ *Occultism in Nature*, p. 413.

¹⁴ *Revue Théosophique française*, September 1920.

^{3*}Jinarâjadâsa is currently vice president of the Theosophical Society.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN BEING ACCORDING TO THE BUDDHISTS*

Some heterodox schools, especially Buddhist ones, have considered the question of the constitution of the human being from the exclusive point of view of the individual; the imperfection of such a conception is obvious, since it results from its own relativity, which does not allow it to be linked to any principle of metaphysical order. However, in order to fully demonstrate its inadequacy according to the doctrine of Vedānta, it is necessary to outline, as briefly as possible, the Buddhist theory on this subject, and more precisely that of the *Sautrāntika* and *Vaibhāshika* schools, which Shankarāchārya refuted in a special way. The *Sautrāntikas* are so called because their teaching is based mainly on the Sūtras attributed to Shākya-Muni; the *Vaibhāshikas* share many of their theories, although they differ on some quite important points, especially in that they admit the direct perception of external objects, while for the *Sautrāntikas* this perception would operate through analogical forms presented to the mind as a consequence of sensory impression. Both schools agree in distinguishing first and foremost between external (*bāhya*) and internal (*abhyantara*) objects: the former are the elements (*bhūta* or *mahābhūta*) and what proceeds from them (*bhautika*), namely, sensory qualities and the sense organs; the latter are thought (*chitta*) and everything that derives from it (*chaittika*). Buddhists, like various other schools (especially the *Vāishēshikas* and Jains), claim that the elements are constituted by the aggregation of bodily atoms (*anu* or *paramānu*) in indefinite quantities, with each element corresponding to a particular type of atom. We will point out in passing that this is an opinion whose consequences, logically deduced, entail insoluble contradictions; atomism, in all its forms, is a clearly heterodox conception, in the sense we specified at the beginning; but its refutation does not fall within the scope of the present study. Moreover, Buddhists admit only four elements²: not recognizing ether (*Akāsha*) as a fifth element (or, rather, as the first of all), nor as any substance³, since this ether, for them, would be "insubstantial," belonging to the non-formal category (*nirūpa*), which can only be characterized by purely negative attributes; this is also untenable, since ether, corresponding to a primordial state in its order, is the starting point for the formation of the corporeal world, and this belongs entirely to the domain of formal manifestation, of which it is only a very restricted and determined portion. Be that as it may, this denial of the "substantiality" of ether is the foundation of the theory of "universal emptiness" (*sarvaśūnya*), which has been developed above all by the *Mādhyamika* school; moreover, the conception of emptiness is always linked to atomism, since it is necessary for it to account for the possibility of movement⁴. On the other hand,

*This text constituted Chapter XI of *L'Homme et son Devenir selon le Vedānta*, and appeared in the original 1925 edition by Bossard, in the 1934 reprint by Denoël & Steele, and in the 2nd edition by Éditions Traditionnelles, Paris, 1941, but was subsequently removed by the author from the 1947 edition by Éditions Traditionnelles. Translator's note.

¹ This conception is not unrelated to that of the "sensible species" of some scholastic philosophers, although the importance of such an analogy should not be exaggerated, since similarities of this kind can be quite external and superficial, concealing differences of view of a much deeper order.

² It is at least curious to note that a large number of Greek philosophers also considered only four elements, which are precisely the same as those of the Buddhists.

³ We are thinking here of the word "substance" in its ordinary relative sense; it is therefore equivalent to the Sanskrit *dravya*.

⁴ Understood in its true sense, the concept of emptiness corresponds to a possibility of non-manifestation; the error here lies in transposing it to the order of manifestation, where it represents nothing more than an impossibility.

According to Buddhists, the individual "living soul" (*jivâtmâ*) is not distinct from conscious thought (*chitta*), and nothing exists, characterized by positive attributes, that cannot be reduced to the categories listed here.

Bodies, which are the objects of the senses, are composed of elements, which is otherwise in accordance with orthodox doctrine, except in regard to the atomic constitution of the elements themselves; but these bodies are not considered to exist as specific objects, but rather as they are effectively perceived by thought, whether this perception is understood as direct or indirect: For this reason, Buddhists have been given the epithet *pûma-vainâshikas* or *sarva-vainâshikas*, "believers in the dissolvability of all things" (*vinâsha* means "destruction"), while the *vaishêshikas* or disciples of Kanâda, who claim that identity ceases for a being in each of its modifications, while admitting that there are certain immutable categories and certain principles superior to change, are called *arddhavainâshikas*, "believers in semi-dissolubility," that is, in partial dissolubility, rather than the complete or total dissolubility (from the point of view of substance) taught by Buddhists. As for thought (*chitta*), which resides in the bodily form of the individual, and which here is not distinguished at all from the individual consciousness that properly belongs to it, it perceives external objects and conceives internal objects and, simultaneously, subsists as "self": this, and only this, is for Buddhists the "self" (*âtman*), which, as can easily be seen, differs essentially from the orthodox conception of the "Self" as we have previously explained it. It is no longer a question of personality understood metaphysically, and everything is reduced to the sole consideration of individuality; this is one of the aspects in which Buddhism clearly approaches Western conceptions, although this approximation should not be taken to the point of making an assimilation that would be completely illegitimate given the differences in points of view that nevertheless remain.

With regard to internal objects, Buddhists establish five branches or divisions (*skandhas*): 1st, the branch of forms (*rûpa-skandha*), which comprises the sense organs and their objects, considered solely in their relations with individual consciousness, that is, in their perceptible (and even effectively perceived) qualities, abstracting from what they are in themselves; these qualities (*âlambanas*) are external insofar as they proceed from the elements (*bhautika*), but are considered internal insofar as they are objects of knowledge; and, likewise, the sense organs, which are also external in their correspondence with the elements, are *chaittika* in their connection with thought; 2nd, the branch of distinctive knowledge (*viññana-skandha*), identified with thought itself (*chitta*) conceived as individual consciousness, and, consequently, with the "Self" (*âtman*) in the restricted sense that we have already indicated, while the other four branches comprise everything that proceeds from this same thought (*chaitta* or *chaittika*), which is considered, for this reason, as "belonging to itself" (*adhyâtmika*); however, this last denomination, taken in its broadest sense, contains the set of the five *skandhas*; 3rd, the branch of conscious impressions (*vêdanâ-skandha*), which comprises pleasure and pain, or their absence, and other analogous feelings produced by the perception or conception of any object, whether external or internal; 4th, the

(⁵) Berkeley's theories could be recalled in this regard, since, for him, there are two kinds of beings, ideas and *minds*, which in some respects remind us of the two fundamental categories established by Buddhists, especially with regard to the second, since, as for the first, neither the conception of elements nor atomism could find a place in Berkeley. On the other hand, the points of comparison that can be observed are not to be taken too broadly, and their general intention is certainly very different; nor does the Western philosophical term "idealism" fit Buddhism very well, not even the *Yogâchâra* school, to which Orientalists wish to apply it most particularly. Nor would the expression "phenomenism" be free from all objection.

branch of judgments (*sanjnâ-skandha*), which designates the knowledge that arises from names or words, as well as from symbols or ideographic signs, knowledge that otherwise implies the existence of a true relationship between the sign and the thing or idea signified⁶; 5th, the branch of active operations (*sanskâra-skandha*), which contains affections such as desire and aversion, and all the modifications produced by their impulse, that is, all those whose determining cause lies properly in individual activity.

As for the coming together of these five divisions (*skandhas*) that contribute to the formation of individuality, Buddhists attribute the starting point of individual existence to ignorance (*avidyâ*), that is, to the error that leads us to believe that what is merely transitory is permanent. From this comes reflected activity or passion (*sanskâra*), which includes desire (*kâma*), illusion (*mâyâ*) and everything that results from it, and which, in the embryonic being, still in potential, gives rise to distinctive knowledge (*viijnâna*), at first a pure possibility, but whose development immediately produces, from its inception, the consciousness of the "I" (*ahankâra*). It is this consciousness which, by uniting with the various elements, both psychic and corporeal, supplied by the parents, gives the individual being in the process of formation its name (*nâma*) and form (*rûpa*), that is, the "essence" and "substance" of its individuality, these terms being taken here in a relative sense, since they apply to a particular being: they then express respectively the participation of that being in each of the two universal principles to which we previously gave the same names, and from which everything that manifests itself effectively proceeds. It can also be said that the name corresponds to the subtle state, and the form to the gross state; the latter must then be understood in a restricted sense (that of *sthûla-sharîra*), since, in a general sense, the subtle state, like the gross state, is part of formal manifestation. This consideration of name and form (generally combined in *nâmarûpa*) as characteristic elements of individuality, or as constituents of "individual nature," does not properly belong to Buddhism; it took this, like many other ideas, from orthodox doctrine, and in various passages of the Upanishads, it deals either with the development of names and forms, or with their fading away for the being who has transcended the conditions of individual existence. We shall return to this latter question later, but let us resume our exposition of Buddhist theory at the point where we left off, that is, at the determination of name and form. From the various principles that have been considered here so far, six faculties emerge, consisting of the consciousness of distinctive *principal* knowledge, the four elements in their relations with individuality, then as principles of sensible qualities (*âlambanas*), and finally, the combination of name and form, that is, individuality itself. These six faculties correspond, in the body, to six organs that are their respective seats (*shad-âyatana*). The operation of these faculties, in union with name and form, results in experience (*sparsa*, literally "touching," that is, by extension, the contact of the sense with its objects), through which conscious impression (*vidanâ*) is produced. This, in turn, engenders thirst (*trishnâ*), that is, the individual's aspiration to seek pleasant impressions and to

⁶ We should point out in this regard that, contrary to the opinion of some modern philosophers, such as Berkeley, there are no signs, even conventional ones, that are purely arbitrary, since no convention would be made if there were no reasons for making it, in preference to any other. One thing can be the expression or translation of another if there is a certain analogical relationship between them, so that all "meaning" must have a basis in reality, that is, in the very nature of things.

⁷ What is corporeal is form; intellectual and sensory states are the name (*Milinda-Pânha*, II, 24).

⁸See especially *Chhândogya Upanishad*, 6th Prapâthaka, 3rd Khanda, shrutis 2 and 3, 18th Prapâthaka, 1st Khanda, shruti 1, and *Brihad-âranyaka Upanishad*, 1st Adhyâya, 4th Brâhmana, shruti 7.

⁹ *Prashna Upanishad*, 6th Prashna, shruti 5; *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3rd Mundaka, 2nd Khanda, shruti 8.

avoiding unpleasant impressions, and it is this aspiration that causes effort (*upādāna*), the initial element of all individual activity¹⁰. This is the starting point of the current existence (*bhava*) of the being, considered as beginning at the birth (*jāti*) of the individual, while everything that precedes it can be referred to the different phases of its embryonic development; it is only from birth onwards that the individual is considered to be properly "specified," that is, as belonging to a definite species of living beings: this is why the word *jāti* is also used to designate the species or specific nature, distinct from the individual nature constituted by name and form. We should add, moreover, that birth, in the sense in which we are treating it, should not be understood solely as bodily birth, since it more precisely consists of the aggregation of the five divisions (*skandhas*), comprising the whole set of potentialities that will come into being in the course of individual existence. Consequently, this existence implies from its origin the particular state of the individual, the special condition that is proper to him, that makes him what he is, both as a member of such a species and as such an individual of that species, and that thus distinguishes him from all other individuals, each of whom equally possesses, in the same way, his own special condition. As we have just indicated, the five divisions, taken together, comprise all the modalities of the individual, considered in their entirety; when they reach their full development (complete at least for a given individual, and taking into account their special condition, which implies such possibilities to the exclusion of all others), their maturity leads to old age (*jarā*), which ends with their separation. This is properly speaking death (*marana*), that is, the disintegration or dissolution of the current individuality, after which the being passes into another state to undergo, under different conditions, a new cycle of existence. All the terms that have just been considered successively constitute a chain of causes or, rather, of conditions (*nidānas*), each of which is determined by the preceding ones and in turn determines the following ones, hence the name of the theory of "conditioned production" (*pratītya samutpāda*); and it will be noted that these terms refer exclusively to the domain of individual existence.

Such, then, is the Buddhist teaching on this question, and it can be seen that it is not at all metaphysical, since it is limited to individuality, although, as we said earlier, it approaches the philosophical point of view in certain respects; nevertheless, it is much further removed from it than its Western interpreters usually believe. According to Vedānta¹¹, the individual aggregate, as just defined, cannot exist in this way, that is, insofar as it refers to two¹² origins, one external and one internal, understood as essentially different, since this

¹⁰ This effort could be seen as analogous to "virtuality" in the special sense understood by Leibnitz, that is, conceived as implying a tendency that is in a certain way intermediate between potency and act (a conception that, moreover, conceals a contradictory element, since if the same being can be at the same time in potency under one aspect and in act under another, it cannot, from the same aspect, be both potential and actual at the same time); the "thirst" or aspiration referred to here also bears some similarities to the "appetite" which, for the same philosopher, is inherent in every individual being, and which he considers to be the internal principle of all the changes that occur in that being. On the other hand, one might recall the role attributed by Maine de Biran to effort, whereby the individual, opposing, so to speak, the outside world, in which he encounters a resistance correlative to this effort (as reaction presents itself to action), would become aware of the distinction between "I" and "not-I"; but, in any case, it should not be forgotten that all these references concern only very specific points.

¹¹ Cf. *Brahma-Sūtras*, 2nd Adhyāya, 2nd Pāda, sūtras 18 to 32.

¹² In this regard, we could point out a certain analogy with Locke's theory, which attributes two different origins to knowledge: sensation, which is external, and reflection, which is internal. But this is an exclusively psychological theory, which does not concern the formation of the self; Buddhism, despite all its conceptual flaws, goes much further than this psychological point of view.

would imply the admission of a fundamental duality in things. On the other hand, the very existence of this aggregate depends entirely on the contingent modifications of the individual, since it can consist only of the chain of these modifications (called by Buddhists "the chain of twelve conditions"), according to the conception we have just outlined¹³, unless one admits a permanent being, for whom this same aggregate constitutes nothing more than a contingent and accidental state, which is precisely contrary to the Buddhist theory according to which the "Self" (or more exactly, thought insofar as it is "Self," *âtman*) would have no real and proper existence, independently of this aggregate and its substance. Furthermore, since the modifications of the individual are considered momentary (*kshanika*), there can be no real cause-and-effect relationship in their succession, since one ceases to be before the existence of the other begins. It should be noted that among the Greeks, some skeptical philosophers, such as Enesidemus and Sextus Empiricus, who also formulated an argument of this kind, did so with a very different intention, since they sought to use it to deny causality, undoubtedly because they could not conceive of it existing in any way other than successively, as most modern Westerners conceive of it¹⁴; what this argument actually proves is precisely that the causal relationship is not and cannot be a relationship of succession; and, on the other hand, it would be completely insufficient to dismiss this objection by attempting to replace the notion of "cause" (*hêtu*) with that of "condition" (*nidâna*)¹⁵. One could see here, even though these considerations on causality are susceptible to a much broader application, a certain relationship with the arguments of Zeno of Elea, and all the more so since these, in the mind of their author, seem to have been intended to demonstrate, not the true impossibility of movement, or more generally of change, but only its incompatibility with the assumption, clearly admitted by the atomists (and it should not be forgotten that Buddhists are also atomists), of an absolutely real and irreducible multiplicity existing in the nature of things; ultimately, these arguments must have been originally directed against this multiplicity, whatever interpretations may have been offered subsequently. The possibility of change, however paradoxical this may seem at first glance, is logically incompatible with the theory of the "flow of all things" (*panta rei*), analogous to the "total dissolubility" of the Buddhists, insofar as this dissolubility cannot be reconciled with the "stability of all things" (*panta menei*) in the "permanent actuality" of the Universe considered *in principle*; in other words, change cannot suffice unto itself, and if there is no principle superior to it, its very existence is contradictory. The solution can be found in a theory such as Aristotle's "unmoved mover," which appears as an anticipated refutation of the "evolutionism" of modern Westerners, and also as a direct response to those *sarva-vainâshikas* that Greece knew at least as well as India: in order to combat those who thus place all reality in "becoming," it is not a question of simply denying the existence of the latter, but only of reducing it to its level of relative and contingent existence, that is, to the dependent and subordinate rank that befits that which does not possess its own sufficient reason. The flow of things (which, moreover, should in no way be assimilated, except in a purely symbolic sense, to that particular mode of change which is bodily movement) can therefore only be admitted as a special point of view, and only insofar as it concerns the domain of manifestation, and even formal manifestation; it is then what the Far Eastern metaphysical tradition calls the "current of forms." But let us return to the true conception of

¹³ The twelve *nidânas* are: *avidyâ, samskâra, vijnâna, nâmarûpa, shadâyatana, sparsha, vêdâna, trishnâ, upâdâna, bhava, jâtî and, finally, jarâmarana.*

¹⁴ Let us note in passing that "empiricist" conceptions such as those of Stuart Mill, for whom the cause of a phenomenon is nothing but another phenomenon considered as the "invariable and necessary antecedent," have no relation whatsoever to the true notion of causality.

¹⁵ Such a condition may play the role of what is called an "occasional cause," but this is not a cause in the true sense of the word.

causality, as taught by Vedanta: the effect must pre-exist in the cause, albeit "undeveloped," for no production can be anything other than a development of the possibilities implicit in the very nature of the producing agent; it is also necessary that the cause actually exist at the very moment of the production of the effect, failing which it could obviously not occur; finally, this production does not affect the cause in any way, whose nature is not altered or changed by it, since what happens in the effect is not a part of this nature, but only the outward manifestation of something that, in itself, remains strictly as it was. The causal relationship is therefore essentially irreversible and constitutes a relationship of simultaneity, not of succession; in particular, it cannot be considered a relationship of temporal succession, since it also extends to modes of existence that are not subject to time, and to which the consideration of such a succession could not be applicable at all. On the other hand, if the modifications of the individual are not conceived as simultaneous (coexisting in principle in what we might call "non-time") in the same way as they are conceived as successive (determining each other according to a certain chain, purely logical for that matter, and not chronological, since time represents only a special modality of succession), it can properly be nothing more than a "non-entity," since what is cannot not be, under any condition; and this "non-entity" cannot be the cause of anything. Entity cannot be an effect of non-entity: if one could proceed from the other (through a causal relationship), then an effect could be produced by a being unrelated (to any relationship with this effect) without any (causal) activity on the part of this being¹⁶. Thus, a farmer could harvest rice without sowing or cultivating his field; a potter would build a vase without molding the clay; a weaver would make a fabric without weaving the warp; no being would need to apply their efforts to obtain (in the sense of "achieve") Supreme Bliss and Eternal Liberation¹⁷.

¹⁶ This responds in advance to Hume's singular conception, for whom there is no relationship of nature between what is called cause and effect, such that "anyone can produce anything."

¹⁷ Shankarāchārya's commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras*, 2nd Adhyāya, 2nd Pāda, sūtra 27.

THE "TRIRATNA"

To conclude our examination of the similarities between different traditional triads, we will say a few words about the triad of *Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha*, which constitutes the *Triratna* or "triple jewel," which some Westerners, quite improperly, call the "Buddhist Trinity." It must be said right away that it is not possible to make its terms correspond exactly and completely with those of the Great Triad; nevertheless, such correspondence can be considered in some respects at least. First of all, starting with what is most clearly apparent in this regard, the *Sangha* or "Assembly"¹, that is, the Buddhist community, clearly represents here the specifically human element; from the special point of view of Buddhism, it occupies, in short, the place of Humanity itself², since for Buddhism the *Shanga* is the "central" portion of the latter, that in relation to which the rest is considered³, and also because, in general, any particular traditional form can only deal directly with its actual adherents, and not with those who are, so to speak, outside its "jurisdiction." Furthermore, the "central" position given to the *Sangha* in the human order is truly justified (as could also be the case, and for the same reason, for its equivalent in any other tradition) by the presence within it of the *Arhats*, who have attained the degree of "true man"⁴ and who, consequently, are effectively situated at the very center of the human condition.

As for the *Buddha*, it can be said that he presents the transcendent element through which the influence of Heaven manifests itself and that, as a consequence, he "embodies," so to speak, this influence with respect to his direct and indirect disciples, who transmit to one another a share in it through a continuous "chain" by means of the rites of admission into the *Sangha*. In saying this about *Buddha*, however, we are thinking less of the historical figure considered in himself, whatever he may have been in fact (which is of only secondary importance from the point of view we are taking here), than of what he represents⁵ by virtue of the symbolic characteristics attributed to him.

^{*}Chapter XXIV of *La Grande Triade*, Paris, 1946.

¹ We avoid using the term "Church," which, although it has almost the same etymological meaning, has taken on a special meaning in Christianity that cannot be applied elsewhere, just as the term "Synagogue," which has even more exactly the same original meaning, has taken on a specifically Jewish meaning.

²One may recall here what we said at the beginning about the similar role of the term *hwei*, or what it represents, in the case of the *Tien-ti-hwei*.

³We have already explained this point of view in another case, with regard to the "central" situation attributed to the Chinese Empire.

⁽⁴⁾The *Bodhisattvas*, who could be equated with the degree of "transcendent man," escape the domain of the earthly community and reside properly in the "Heavens," from where they "return" by way of "descending" realization only to manifest themselves as Buddhas.

⁵ Moreover, it is only in this respect that the name *Buddha* is given to him and that it really suits him, since it is not an individual proper name, which, moreover, could not truly be applied in such a case (cf. *Aperçus sur l'Initiation*, chap. XXVII).

attribute⁶, and that they make him appear above all with the characteristics of *the Avatāra*⁷. In short, his manifestation is precisely the "redescend from Heaven to Earth" spoken of in *the Emerald Tablet*; and the being who thus brings celestial influences to this world, after having "incorporated" them into his own nature, can truly be said to represent Heaven in relation to the human realm. Undoubtedly, this conception is very far from the "rationalized" Buddhism with which Westerners have become familiar through the works of Orientalists; it may correspond to a "Mahayanist" point of view, but this cannot be a valid objection for us, since it seems that the "Hinayanist" point of view, which has been presented as "original" undoubtedly because it agrees too well with some preconceived ideas, is, on the contrary, nothing more than the product of simple degeneration.

Moreover, the correspondence we have just indicated should not be taken as a pure and simple identification, for although *Buddha* represents in a certain way the "celestial" principle, this is only in a relative sense, and insofar as he is in reality the "mediator," that is, insofar as he plays the role that is properly that of the "Universal Man." Therefore, as far as *Shanga* is concerned, in order to assimilate it to Humanity, we have had to restrict ourselves to considering it exclusively in the individual sense (including the state of "true man," which is still only the perfection of individuality); and it must also be added that Humanity is conceived here "collectively" (since it is an "Assembly") rather than "specifically." It could be said, then, that although we have found here a relationship comparable to that of Heaven and Man, the two terms of this relationship are nevertheless comprised in what Far Eastern tradition designates as "Man" in the fullest and most "comprehensive" sense of the word, and which, in effect, must contain within itself an image of the entire Great Triad.

As regards *Dharma* or the "Law," it is more difficult to find a precise correspondence, even with reservations such as those we have just formulated for the other two terms of the triad; moreover, the word *dharmā* has multiple meanings in Sanskrit, which must be distinguished in the different cases in which it is used, making a general definition virtually impossible. However, it can be pointed out that the root of this word properly has the meaning of "to support"⁹, and in this respect, an association can be made with the Earth, which "supports," as explained above; in short, it is a principle of conservation of beings, and therefore of stability, at least to the extent that this is compatible with the conditions of manifestation, since all applications of *dharmā* always concern the manifested world; and, as we have said about the role attributed to Niu-kua, the function of ensuring the stability of the world corresponds to the "substantial" side of manifestation. It is true, on the other hand, that the idea of stability refers to something that, in the very realm of change, escapes change, since it must be situated in the "Unchanging Middle"; but it is something that comes from the pole

⁶To say that these characteristics are symbolic, let us be clear, does not mean at all that they were not in fact possessed by a real person (and we would even say willingly that he was all the more real in that his individuality is erased by these characteristics); we have already spoken frequently enough of the symbolic value that historical events necessarily have for it to be necessary to insist on it further (cf. especially *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, Prologue), and we will only recall once again, on this occasion, that "historical truth" itself is not solid unless it derives from the Principle (*Chuang-tsé*, chap. XXV).

⁷ For further details on this subject, we can do no better than refer to the various works in which Ananda Coomaraswamy has dealt with this question, especially his *Elements of Buddhist Iconography* and *The Nature of Buddhist Art*.

⁸ One may refer, in this regard, to what we have said earlier about the "transcendent man" and the "true man," and about the relationships between the different degrees of the Taoist and Confucian hierarchies.

⁹ The root *dhri* means to carry, to hold, to maintain.

"Substantial," that is, on the side of earthly influences, on the lower part of the axis traveled in an ascending direction¹⁰. Moreover, the notion of *dharma*, understood in this way, is not limited to man, but extends to all beings and all their states of manifestation; thus, it can be said that, in itself, it is of a properly cosmic order; but in the Buddhist conception of "Law," it is applied especially to the human order, so that, although it has a certain relative correspondence with the lower term of the Great Triad, the latter must be considered here with respect to Humanity, always understood in the individual sense.

It can also be pointed out that in the idea of "law," in all its senses and applications, there is a certain character of "necessity"¹¹ or "constraint," which places it on the side of "Destiny," and also that *dharma* expresses, in short, for every manifested being, conformity with the conditions imposed on it externally by the environment, that is, by "Nature" in the broadest sense of the word. And then it can be understood why Buddhist *Dharma* has the wheel as its main symbol, in accordance with what we have previously explained about its meaning¹²; and at the same time, from this representation, it can be seen that it is a passive principle with respect to *Buddha*, since it is he who "turns the wheel of the Law"¹³. Moreover, this must obviously be the case, since *Buddha* stands on the side of celestial influences, just as *Dharma* stands on the side of terrestrial influences; and it can be added that *Buddha*, since he is beyond the conditions of the manifested world, would have nothing in common with *Dharma*¹⁴ if he did not have to apply it to Humanity, just as, as we have seen before, Providence would have nothing in common with Destiny without Man, who links the two extreme terms of the "universal ternary" to each other.

¹⁰ The root *dhri* is related, in form and meaning, to another root, *dhru*, from which the word *dhruva* is derived, designating the pole; it can also be said that the idea of the "pole" or "axis" of the manifested world plays an important role in the very conception of *dharma*. On stability or immobility as an inverted reflection of *principled* immutability at the lowest point of manifestation, cf. *Le Règne de la Quantité*, chap. XX.

¹¹ Depending on the case, this may be a logical or mathematical necessity, a "physical" necessity, or even a so-called "moral" necessity, which is quite improper, of course; Buddhist *Dharma* naturally falls into the latter category.

¹² The *Dharma-chakra* or "wheel of the Law" is generally a wheel with eight spokes; which can naturally be related, in spatial symbolism, to the four cardinal points and the four intermediate points, correspond, in Buddhism itself, to the eight paths of the "Excellent Way," as well as to the eight petals of the "Lotus of the Good Law" (which can also be compared to the eight "beatitudes" of the Gospel). A similar arrangement is also found in the eight *kua* or trigrams of Fo-Hi; it may be noted in this regard that the title of *the Yi-king* is interpreted as meaning "Book of Mutations" or "of Changes in the Circular Revolution," a meaning that has an obvious connection with the symbolism of the wheel.

¹³ It therefore plays a role similar to that of *the Chakravartī* or "universal monarch" in another application of the symbolism of the wheel; it is also said that Shākya-Muni had to choose between the role of Buddha and that of *Chakravartī*.

¹⁴ This absence of connection with the *Dharma* corresponds to the state of *Pratyēka-Buddha*, who, having reached the end of total realization, does not "descend" back into manifestation.

ASCENDING REALIZATION AND DESCENDING REALIZATION*

In the total realization of being, it is worth considering the union of two aspects that correspond in a certain way to two phases of this realization, one "ascending" and the other "descending." The consideration of the first phase, in which the being, starting from a certain state of manifestation, rises to identification with its unmanifested principle, cannot present any difficulty, since it is the one that, always and everywhere, is expressly indicated as the process and essential goal of all initiation, leading to the "exit from the cosmos," as we have already explained in previous articles, and, consequently, in liberation from the limiting conditions of every state of existence. On the contrary, as for the second phase, that of the "redescend" into the manifested, it seems that it has been spoken of only very rarely, and in many cases in a less explicit manner, and even sometimes, we might say, with a certain reserve or hesitation, which the explanations we propose to offer will, on the other hand, make it possible to understand. This is undoubtedly the reason why it easily gives rise to misunderstandings, whether this way of approaching things is mistakenly considered more or less exceptional, or whether confusion arises regarding the true nature of the "redescend" in question.

We will first consider what might be called the question of principle, that is, the very reason why any traditional doctrine, when presented in a truly complete form, cannot in reality consider things in any other way; and this reason can be easily understood if we refer to the Vedanta teaching on the four states of *Ātmā*, as described in particular in the *Māndūkya Upanishad*¹. Indeed, not only are there the three states represented in human beings by wakefulness, sleep, and deep sleep, which correspond respectively to bodily manifestation, subtle manifestation, and the unmanifest; beyond these three states, beyond the unmanifest, there is a fourth, which can be called "neither manifested nor unmanifest," since it is the principle of both, but also, for that very reason, encompasses both the manifested and the unmanifest. Now, although the being truly reaches its own "Self" in the third state, that of the unmanifest, this is not the ultimate goal, but rather the fourth, in which alone the "Supreme Identity" is fully realized, for *Brahma* is both "being and non-being" (*sadasat*), "manifest and unmanifest" (*vyaktāvyakta*), "sound and silence" (*shabdāśhabda*), without which it would not truly be absolute Totality; and if realization were to stop at the third state, it would imply only the second of the two aspects, the one that language can express only in a negative form. Thus, as Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has expressed in a recent study², "it is necessary to have gone beyond the manifested (which is represented by the passage 'beyond the Sun') in order to reach the unmanifested (the 'darkness' understood in its higher sense), but the ultimate goal is still beyond the unmanifested; the end of the path is not reached *until* *Ātmā* is known as both manifested and unmanifested"; to reach it, one must therefore go even "beyond darkness," or, as some texts express it, "see the other side of darkness." Otherwise, *Ātmā* may "shine" in itself, but it does not "radiate"; it is identical to *Brahma*, but in a single nature, not in the dual nature comprised in His single essence³.

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¹See *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Védānta*, chapters XII to XVII.

² *Notes on the Katha Upanishad*, Part 3.

³ Cf. *Bṛihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*, II, 3.

Here it is necessary to forestall a possible objection: one could, in fact, point out that there is no common measure between the manifested and the unmanifested, such that the former is null in relation to the latter, and, moreover, that the unmanifested, being in itself the principle of the manifested, must therefore contain it in some way. All this is perfectly true, but it is no less true that the manifested and the unmanifested, insofar as they are considered as such, still appear in a sense as two terms between which there is an opposition; and this opposition, even if it is only illusory (as, moreover, all opposition is ultimately illusory), must nevertheless be finally resolved; now, it can only be resolved by going beyond both terms. On the other hand, if the manifested cannot be called real in the absolute sense of the word, it nevertheless possesses a certain reality in itself, relative and contingent, no doubt, but nevertheless a reality to some degree, since it is not pure nothingness, and it would even be inconceivable for it to be so, for that would exclude it from universal Possibility. It cannot therefore be said, in short, that the manifested is strictly negligible, even if it seems so in relation to the unmanifested, and even if this is perhaps one of the reasons why what refers to it, in its realization, may sometimes be less evident and appear to be submerged in shadow. In short, if the manifested is included in principle in the unmanifested, it is as a set of possibilities of manifestation, but not as actually manifested; for it to also be included under this latter aspect, it is necessary to go back, as we have already said, to the common principle of the manifested and the unmanifested, which is truly the supreme Principle from which everything proceeds and in which everything is contained; and it must be so, as will be better understood below, for the full and total realization of the "Universal Man" to exist.

Another question then arises: according to what we have just said, are we dealing here with different stages in the course of a single path, or, more precisely, with a stage and the final destination of this path, and it is clear that this must indeed be the case, since the realization continues until its final outcome? but then, how can we speak, as we did at the beginning, of an "ascending" phase and a "descending" phase? It is clear that, if both representations are legitimate, they must, in order not to be contradictory, refer to different points of view; but, before seeing how they can actually be reconciled, we can already indicate that, in any case, this reconciliation is only possible on condition that the "redescend" is not conceived at all as a kind of "regression" or "return backwards," which would otherwise be incompatible with the fact that everything acquired by the being in the course of the initiatory realization is acquired in a permanent and definitive way. There is therefore nothing here comparable to what occurs in the case of temporary "mystical states," such as "ecstasy," in which the being finds itself purely and simply in human earthly existence, with all the individual limitations that condition it, retaining from these states, in its current consciousness, only an indirect and always more or less imperfect reflection⁴. Needless to say, the "redescend" in question is also not comparable to what is referred to as the "descent into Hell"; this takes place, as is well known, prior to the very beginning of the initiatory process itself, and, by exhausting certain inferior possibilities of the being, plays a "purifying" role that would clearly have no reason to exist thereafter, especially at the level to which we are now referring. Let us add, so as not to overlook any possible misunderstandings, that there is absolutely nothing here in common with what could be called a "reverse realization," which would only make sense if it took this "descending" direction from the

⁴It should be added, in this regard, that something similar can also occur in a case other than that of "mystical states," namely, that of a true metaphysical realization, albeit incomplete and still virtual; the life of Plotinus offers what is undoubtedly the best-known example. In the language of *Islamic Sufism*, this is a *hâl* or transitory state that has not been able to be fixed and transformed into a *maqâm*, that is, a permanent "station" acquired once and for all, regardless of the degree of realization to which it corresponds.

human state, but whose meaning, then, would be properly "hellish" or "satanic," and, consequently, could only depend on the domain of "counter-initiation"⁵.

That said, it is easy to understand that the point of view in which complete realization appears as the journey along a somewhat "straight" path is that of the being who accomplishes it, since, for this being, it could never be a question of turning back and entering into the conditions of any of the states that it has already overcome. As for the point of view where this same realization takes on the appearance of two phases, "ascending" and "descending," it is ultimately only the one under which it can appear to other beings, who consider it while remaining themselves enclosed in the conditions of the manifested world; but it can still be considered how a continuous movement can thus take on, even if only outwardly, the appearance of a set of two movements succeeding each other in opposite directions. Now, there is a geometric representation that allows us to form as clear an idea as possible: if we consider a circle placed vertically, the path of one half of the circumference will be "ascending," and that of the other half will be "descending," without the movement ever ceasing to be continuous; Furthermore, there is no "return backward" in the course of this movement, since it does not pass again through the part of the circumference that has already been traveled. There is a complete cycle here, but if we remember that there can be no truly closed cycles, as we have explained on other occasions, we can realize that it is only in appearance that the end point coincides with the starting point or, in other words, that the being returns to the manifested state from which it departed (an appearance that exists for others, but which is not the "reality" of this being); and, on the other hand, this consideration of the cycle is all the more natural here in that what is at stake here has its exact "macrocosmic" correspondence in the two phases of "inhalation" and "exhalation" of universal manifestation. Finally, it can be pointed out that a straight line is the "limit," in the mathematical sense of the word, of a circumference that grows indefinitely; the distance traveled in the realization (or rather what is represented by a distance when spatial symbolism is used) is truly beyond any assignable measure; there is in reality no difference between the path of the circumference we have just discussed and that of an axis that remains always vertical in all its successive parts, which ultimately reconciles the representations corresponding respectively to the "inner" and "outer" points of view that we have distinguished.

We believe that, after these few considerations, it is now possible to sufficiently understand the true nature of the "descending" or apparently descending phase; but we still need to consider what the difference might be, with regard to the initiatory hierarchy, between the realization that stops at the "ascending" phase and that which also includes the "descending" phase, and it is this above all that we are going to examine more particularly below.

While the being who remains in the unmanifested has achieved realization solely "for himself," the one who "descends" afterwards, in the sense we have previously specified, has from then on, with regard to manifestation, a role expressed by the symbolism of solar "irradiation" through which everything is illuminated. In the first case, as we have already said, *Atma* "shines" without "radiating"; but nevertheless it is necessary to dispel one more error: very often, in this regard, there is talk of a "selfish" realization, which is truly absurd, since there is no longer any ego, that is, individuality, the limitations that constitute it as such having been necessarily abolished, and definitively, so that the being can "establish" itself in the unmanifest. Such a misunderstanding obviously implies a gross confusion between the "Self" and the "I"; we have said that this being has realized itself "for itself," and not "for itself," and this is not a mere question of language, but a

⁵ The path of such a "descending" route, with all the consequences it implies, cannot even be effectively considered, to the extent that this is possible, except in the extreme case of the *awliyā es-Shaytān* (cf. *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, p. 186).

completely essential distinction in terms of the very substance of what is at stake. That said, there is still a difference between the two cases, the true scope of which can be better understood by referring to the way in which various traditions consider the states that correspond to them, for even though the "descending" realization, as a phase of the initiatory process, is generally indicated only in a more or less veiled manner, one can nevertheless easily find examples that assume it very clearly and without any possible doubt.

To take, in principle, an example that is perhaps the best known, if not the best understood, the difference in question is, in short, that between the *Pratyêka-Buddha* and the *Bodhisattva*⁶; and it is particularly important in this regard to note that the path leading to the first of these two states is referred to as a "small path" or, if you will, a "minor path" (*hīnayāna*), which implies that it is not without a certain restrictive character, while the path leading to the second is considered to be truly the "great path" (*mahāyāna*), that is, the path that is complete and perfect in all respects. This allows us to respond to the objection that could be raised by the fact that, in general, the state of Buddha is considered superior to that of *Bodhisattva*; in the case of *Pratyêka-Buddha*, this superiority can only be apparent, and is primarily due to the character of "impassivity" which, also apparently, the *Bodhisattva* does not have; We say apparently because a distinction must be made between the "reality" of the being and the role it has to play in relation to the manifested world, or, in other words, between what it is in itself and what it appears to be to ordinary beings; we find the same distinction in cases belonging to other traditions. It is true that, exoterically, the *Bodhisattva* is represented as still having to pass through a final stage to reach the state of perfect Buddha; but if we say exoterically, it is precisely because this corresponds to the way things appear when considered from the outside; and it must be so in order for the *Bodhisattva* to fulfill his function, inasmuch as this consists in showing the way to other beings: he is "he who has done so" (*tathā-gata*), and so must those who can attain the supreme goal like him; it is therefore necessary that the very existence in which his "mission" is fulfilled, in order to be truly "exemplary," should in a certain way present itself as a recapitulation of the way. To claim that this is really an imperfect state or a lesser degree of realization is to completely lose sight of the "transcendent" side of the *Bodhisattva*'s being; this may be in accordance with certain current "rational" interpretations, but it renders completely incomprehensible all the symbolism concerning the *Bodhisattva*'s life, which from its very beginning gives it a truly "avatic" character, that is, it effectively shows it as a "descent" (this is the proper meaning of the word *avatāra*) by which a principle, or a being that represents it because it is identified with it, is manifested in the outside world, which, obviously, could in no way alter the immutability of the principle as such⁷.

In Islamic tradition, what we have just said has a large measure of equivalence, taking into account the difference in points of view that are naturally inherent in each

⁶ The case of the *Pratyêka-Buddha* is one of those to which Western interpreters readily apply the term "egoism," the absurdity of which we have just pointed out.

⁷ It could still be said that such a being, charged with all the spiritual influences inherent in its transcendent state, becomes the "vehicle" through which these influences are directed toward our world; this "descent" of spiritual influences is indicated very explicitly by the name Avalokiteshvara, and is also one of the main and "beneficial" meanings of the inverted triangle. Let us add that it is precisely with this meaning that the inverted triangle is taken as a symbol of the highest degrees of Scottish Freemasonry; in the latter, moreover, the 30th degree, considered as *the nec plus ultra*, must logically mark the end of the "ascent," so that the following degrees can properly refer only to a "redescend," through which the influences intended to "enliven" it are brought to the entire initiatory organization; and the corresponding colors, which are respectively black and white, are even more significant from the same perspective.

one of the various traditional forms: this equivalent is found in the distinction made between the case of *the walī* and that of *the nabī*. A being may not be a *walī* but "for himself," if I may use the expression, without manifesting anything outwardly; on the contrary, a *nabī* is not such unless he has a function to perform with respect to other beings; and, even more so, the same is true of *the rasūl*, who is also a *nabī*, but whose function is universal in nature, while that of the simple *nabī* may be more or less limited in scope and purpose. It might even seem that the apparent ambiguity we saw a moment ago with regard to *the Bodhisattva* should not exist here, since the superiority of *the nabī* over the *walī* is generally admitted and even considered obvious; and yet, it has also sometimes been argued that the "station" (*maqām*) of *the walī* is, in itself, superior to that of *the nabī*, because it essentially implies a state of divine "proximity," while the *nabī*, by his very function, is necessarily turned toward creation; but here too, only one of the two sides of reality is seen, the external one, and it is not understood that it represents an aspect that is added to the other without destroying it in any way and without even truly affecting it⁹. In fact, the condition of *the nabī* implies in itself that of *the walī*, but at the same time it is something more; there is, then, in the case of *the walī*, a kind of "lack" in a certain respect, not in terms of his inner nature, but in terms of what might be called his degree of universalization, a "lack" that corresponds to what we have said about the being who stops at the stage of the unmanifest without "redescending" toward manifestation; and universality reaches its effective fullness in the *rasūl*, who is thus truly and totally the "universal Man."

It is clear, in cases such as those just mentioned, that the being who "descends" has, in relation to manifestation, a function whose somewhat exceptional nature shows that it is in no way comparable to that of ordinary beings; thus, these cases are those of beings who can be called "missionaries" in the true sense of the word. In a certain sense, it can also be said that every manifested being has its "mission," if this is understood simply to mean that it must occupy its proper place in the world and is thus a necessary element of the whole of which it is a part; but it is clear that this is not how we understand it here, and that it is a "mission" of a very different scope, which comes directly from a transcendent and *principal* order and expresses something of that same order in the manifested world. Just as "redescending" presupposes a prior "ascent," such a "mission" necessarily presupposes perfect inner realization; it is not useless to insist on this, especially at a time when so many people very easily imagine themselves to have more or less extraordinary "missions," which, in the absence of this essential condition, can only be pure illusions.

After all the considerations we have set forth so far, we must still insist on one aspect of the "descent" that seems to us to explain, in many cases, the fact that this subject is overlooked or surrounded by reticence, as if there were something here that made people reluctant to speak clearly: it is what could be called its "sacrificial" aspect. It should be understood, first of all, that when we use the word "sacrifice" here, it is not in the simple "moral" sense commonly given to it, which is but one example of the degeneration of the

⁸ The *rasūl* manifests the divine attribute of *Er-Rahmān* in all worlds (*rahmatan lil'ālamīn*), and not only in a particular domain. It may be noted that, on the other hand, the designation of *Bodhisattva* as "Lord of compassion" also refers to a similar role, "compassion" towards all beings being, in essence, another expression of the attribute of *rahmah*.

⁹ This brings us back to what was said about the notion of *barzakh*, which allows us to easily understand how these two aspects of reality should be understood; the inner face is turned towards *El-Haqq*, and the outer face towards *El-Khalq*; and the being whose function is of the nature of *barzakh* must necessarily unite these two aspects in himself, thus establishing a "bridge" or a "channel" through which divine influences are communicated to creation.

modern language, which diminishes and distorts everything in order to reduce it to a purely human level and make it fit into the conventional frameworks of "ordinary life." On the contrary, we take this word in its original and true sense, with all that it implies in terms of effectiveness and even essential "technicality"; it is clear, in fact, that the role of beings such as those mentioned above could have nothing in common with "altruism," "humanitarianism," "philanthropy," and other "ideal" banalities celebrated by moralists, and that they are not only too obviously devoid of any transcendent or superhuman character, but are even perfectly within the reach of the first layman who comes ^{along}(1)⁰.

The being who has realized his identity with *Ātmā*, and his "redescend" into manifestation, or what appears as such from the point of view of the latter, being in effect nothing other than the full universalization of this same identity, is then none other than "the *Ātmā* incorporated into the worlds," which means that the "redescend" is in reality, for him, no different from the very process of universal manifestation. Now, precisely, this process is often traditionally described as a "sacrifice": in the Vedic symbol, it is the sacrifice of *Mahā-Purusha*, that is, of the "Universal Man," to whom, according to what we have already said, the being in question is effectively identical; and not only must this primordial sacrifice be understood in a strictly ritual sense, and not in a more or less vaguely "metaphorical" sense, but it is essentially the very prototype of all sacrificial rites¹¹.

The "missionary," in the sense in which we have previously used this word, is then literally a "victim"; it is clear, however, that this does not imply in any way that his life must end in violent death, since, in reality, it is this very life, in its entirety, that is already the consequence of the sacrifice¹². It can be immediately noted that herein lies the profound explanation for the hesitations and "temptations" which, in all traditional legends, and whatever special form they may take in each case, are attributed to the Prophets, and even to the *Avatāras*, when they find themselves in a certain way in the presence of the "mission" they have to fulfill. These hesitations are, in essence, no different from those of Agni when he agreed to become the driver of the "cosmic chariot"¹³, as Coomaraswamy affirms.

¹⁰ We must specify that what we are saying here refers specifically to the modern view of "secular morality"; even when this does not, as is often the case despite its claims, "plagiarize" precepts taken from religion, it empties them of all real meaning, removing all elements that would allow them to be linked to a higher order and, beyond simply literal exotericism, transposing them as signs of fundamental truths. Sometimes, even while appearing to maintain what could be called the "materiality" of these precepts, this morality, through its interpretation of them, actually "inverts" them in an anti-traditional sense.

¹¹ In this regard, we can incidentally make a point that is not without importance: the life of certain beings, considered according to individual appearances, presents facts that correspond to others of a cosmic order and that are, in a certain way, from an external point of view, an image or a reproduction of these; but from an internal point of view, this relationship must be reversed, for since these beings are in reality the *Mahā-Purusha*, it is the cosmic events that are truly modeled on their lives or, to be more precise, on that of which their lives are a direct expression, while the cosmic events themselves are but a reflection of their expression. We would add that it is this which gives reality and validity to the rites instituted by the "missioned" beings, whereas a being who is merely a human individual can never, on his own initiative, invent anything but "pseudo-rites" devoid of any real efficacy.

¹² It should also be noted that what is at stake here has no connection with the use that certain mystics willingly make of the word "victim" or "immolation"; even in cases where they understand it to mean a reality of their own and do not reduce it to mere "subjective" illusions, always possible in them because of the "passivity" inherent in their attitude, it is a reality whose scope does not in any way exceed the order of individual possibilities.

¹³ *Rig-Vēda*, X, 51.

in the study we have already cited, thus linking all these cases to that of *the* "eternal *Avatāra*," with whom they are one in their innermost "truth"; and, surely, the temptation to remain in the "night" of the unmanifested is easily understood, for no one could deny that, in this higher sense, "the night is better than the day"¹⁴. Coomaraswamy also explains with this, and quite rightly, the fact that Shankarāchārya always visibly strives to avoid considering "redescension," even when commenting on texts whose meaning clearly implies it; it would indeed be absurd, in a case like this, to attribute such an attitude to a lack of knowledge or a misunderstanding of the doctrine; it can therefore only be understood as a kind of retreat in the face of the prospect of "sacrifice" and, consequently, as a conscious desire not to lift the veil that conceals "the other side of darkness." More generally, this is the main reason for the usual reserve on this question¹⁵. To this can be added, as a secondary reason, the danger that this misunderstood consideration may serve as a pretext for some to justify, deceiving themselves about their true nature, a desire to "remain in the world," when it is not a question of remaining, but, which is very different, of returning after having already left, and this prior "departure" is only possible for the being in whom no desire subsists, just as no individual attachment subsists; care must be taken not to forget this essential point, failing which there would be a risk of seeing no difference between ultimate realization and a mere beginning of realization halted at a stage that does not even exceed the limits of individuality.

Now, returning to the idea of sacrifice, we must say that it implies yet another aspect, which is even the one directly expressed by the etymology of the word: "to sacrifice" is properly *sacrum facere*, that is, "to make sacred" that which is the object of the sacrifice. This aspect is no less relevant here than the one that is more commonly considered, and which we had *in mind* at the outset when speaking of the "victim" as such; it is sacrifice, in fact, that confers on the "missionaries" a "sacred" character, in the fullest sense of the word. Not only is this character obviously inherent in the function of which their sacrifice is truly the investiture, but also, since it is also implicit in the original meaning of the word "sacred," it is what makes these beings "apart," that is, essentially different both from ordinary manifested beings and from those who, having attained the realization of the "Self," remain purely and simply in the unmanifest. Their action, even when outwardly similar to that of ordinary beings, has in reality no relation to it, going far beyond this simple outward appearance; it is, in its "truth," necessarily incomprehensible to individual faculties, for it proceeds directly from the inexpressible. This character also demonstrates very well that these are, as we have already said, exceptional cases, and in fact, in the human state, the "missionaries" are certainly only a tiny minority compared to the immense multitude of beings who could not claim such a role; but, on the other hand, since the states of being are in indefinite multiplicity, what reason can there be for not admitting that, in one state or another, every being has the possibility of reaching that supreme degree of the spiritual hierarchy?

¹⁴This expression also has its application, in another order, in the "rejection of powers"; but while this attitude is not only justified, but is even the only legitimate one for the being who, having no "mission" to fulfill, does not have to appear on the outside, it is evident that, on the contrary, a "mission" would be non-existent as such if it were not manifested externally.

¹⁵ We will recall, as an "illustration" of what has just been said, a fact whose historical or legendary nature is of little importance from our point of view, since we do not intend to give it anything but a purely symbolic value: it is said that Dante never smiled, and that people attributed this apparent sadness to the fact that he "came from hell"; Would it not be more accurate to see the real reason for this in the fact that he had "descended from Heaven"?

30 BOOK REVIEWS

VI: *Le Voile d'Isis*
ET: *Études Traditionnelles*

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- Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Nature of Buddhist Art*. In ET, 1938. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Mrs. Rhys Davids, *To become or not to become (that is the question), Episodes in the history of an Indian word*. In ET, 1938. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- L. Adams Beck, *From Kashmir to Tibet, Discovering Yoga*. In ET, 1938. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Jean Marqués Rivière, *Le Yoga tantrique hindou et tibétain*. In ET, 1938. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- L. Adams Beck. *Au Coeur du Japon: Zenn, Amours mystiques*. In ET, April 1939. Reprinted in *Comptes Rendus*, Paris, 1973.
- Clarence H. Hamilton, *Whei Shih Er Lun, or the Treatise in twenty stanzas on Representation-only, by Vasubandu*. In ET, 1940. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*. In ET, 1945-46. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*. In ET, 1947. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Robert Bleichsteiner, *L'Eglise jaune*. In ET, 1947. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*. In ET, 1949. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- *The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha, presented by Ananda Coomaraswamy and J. B. Horner*. In ET, 1949. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Hindouisme et Bouddhisme*. In ET, 1950. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.

-Louis Finot, *La Marche à la Lumière (Bodhicharyâvatâra)**, Sanskrit poem by Shântideva; French translation with introduction. - One volume in-8° of 168 pages. Collection des Classiques de l'Orient; Bossard, Paris, 1920. -*Bodhi*, a term that has been translated somewhat freely as "Light," and which evokes above all the idea of "Wisdom," is "the supreme Enlightenment that reveals to the Buddha the law of the universe"; the march toward *Bodhi* is therefore "the set of spiritual exercises that lead the future Buddha to his goal." Shântideva's treatise, regardless of its poetic merits, is very appropriate for giving an idea of the Buddhist asceticism of *Mahâyâna* or "Great Vehicle," which proposes as its goal for its adherents "the ideal state of Buddha as savior of the world," while *Hinayâna* or "Small Vehicle" is content to lead its followers to the peace of Nirvana. It also offers, especially in its last chapters, an excellent example of the special dialectic of the *Mâdhyaṃika* school, to which its author belonged, who is believed to have lived around the 7th century AD.

There was already a French translation of *the Bodhicharyâvatâra*, by Mr. de la Vallée-Poussin, published in 1905-1907 in the *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature religieuses*. "This translation," says L. Finot in his introduction, "emphasizes doctrinal explanation and deliberately sacrifices conciseness, which is the main merit of Shântideva's style." It is from another point of view, mainly literary, that he has chosen to position himself; but one might wonder whether, in his efforts to preserve the conciseness of the original, he has not introduced some obscurity into his version. It is regrettable that he did not deem it appropriate to at least add more explanatory notes to compensate for the inadequacy of French words, which very often correspond only very approximately to Sanskrit terms. It is not by scrupulously copying the translation onto the text that one can best translate its spirit, especially when dealing with an Eastern text; and is it not to be feared that, under such conditions, the essence of the thought will escape most readers? Finally, even if the aim is simply to address a "literate audience" and a certain disdain for "theological questions" is assumed, is it really legitimate to give more importance to form than to substance?

-Louis Finot, *Les Questions de Milinda (Milinda-pañha)*** , translated from Pali with introduction and notes. -One volume, 166 pages, in-8° format. Collection des classiques de l'Orient; Bossard, Paris, 1923. -This book, already translated into English by Rhys Davids, consists of a series of dialogues between King Milinda and the Buddhist monk Nâgasena; Milinda is the Greek king Menander, who reigned in Sâgalâ, in the Punjab, around the second century BC; and his questions clearly reveal all the subtlety of the Greek character. The discussion covers a wide range of topics in Buddhist doctrine, some of which are of very unequal importance; but, taken as a whole, this text is undoubtedly one of the most interesting of its kind in existence. Is it because Finot did not concern himself this time with the idea that he had to translate a poem? In any case, we found his translation clearer than that of *The March Toward the Light*. He also added more abundant notes and took care to indicate the Pali equivalents of technical terms. Our only regret is that he only exceptionally gave the corresponding Sanskrit forms.

In the same well-edited collection, we would also mention two other works for those interested in Buddhism: *Trois Mystères tibétains (Three Tibetan Mysteries)*, translated with an introduction, notes, and index by Jacques Bacot (1 vol. in-8° of 300 pages, 1921), and *Contes et Légendes du Bouddhisme chinois (Tales and Legends of Chinese Buddhism)*, translated by Edouard Chavannes, with a preface and vocabulary by Sylvain Lévi (1 vol. in-8° of 220 pages, 1921). Although these stories have been presented with purely literary intentions, in reality they have, as on the other hand

* *La Marcha hacia la Luz (The March Toward Light)*, Ediciones Miraguano, Madrid. Translator's note.

***Milinda Pañha*, MRA, Barcelona, 1995.

all those of the same genre that can be found in the East, a very different scope for those who know how to penetrate their symbolism instead of dwelling on their external forms, however seductive they may be.

1924

-P. Masson-Oursel, *Esquisse d'une histoire de la philosophie indienne*. - One volume in-8° of 314 pp. P. Geuthner, Paris, 1923. In his introduction, the author states his intention to "pay the most vigilant attention to the interpretations that the East has for the classics," and even acknowledges that "our seasoned scholars, accustomed to criticism, whether historical or philological, show a systematic aversion, not without partiality, to indigenous traditions." That is all well and good, but then why, in the body of his work, does he take into account only the more or less contestable results of European criticism? And, when he has begun by denouncing "the superstition of chronology," why allow himself to be interrupted in the exposition of a doctrine by the concern to follow a chronology that is often hypothetical, to the great detriment of the logical chain of ideas? The fact is that it is probably very difficult, even with the best will in the world, to break away from the mental habits imposed by a particular education.

The best part of the work, the most accurate and complete, is certainly, as might be expected, that which concerns Buddhism. The author even rightly rectifies the "pessimistic" interpretations that have been common since Schopenhauer; but he greatly exaggerates the originality of this doctrine, in which he would even like to see something other than the deviation from Brahmanism that it actually is. What he also exaggerates is the influence of Buddhism on the subsequent development of Hindu doctrines; undoubtedly, the need to respond to certain objections often leads him to clarify the expression of his own thoughts; but this somewhat negative influence, the only one we can recognize in Buddhism, is not the one attributed to it here.

The exposition of the orthodox *darshanas* did not seem very clear to us, and furthermore, it is done from a very external point of view; we do not believe that the a priori assumption of wanting to find "evolution" everywhere is compatible with the understanding of certain ideas. The same observation applies to what has been agreed to call "Hinduism," which is presented as the product of elements originally foreign to Brahmanism and to which it would have adapted more or less well, so that the *Trimurti* would be nothing more than a modern invention! The profound reasons for the distinction between Vishnuism and Shaivism are not even visible; but this question, like that of origins, risks taking us too far afield. There would also be much to say about Yoga, which has never been able to consist of a "pragmatic" attitude: how could that word suit it when it is precisely a matter of freeing oneself from action? Finally, let us point out a strangely inaccurate notion of what magic is and, above all, what it is not; a "*magician*" and a "*magic*" are not entirely the same thing, nor are a "seer" and a "visionary"; and translating *rishi* as "visionary" seems to us a regrettable mistake.

In general, the doctrines of India are here, so to speak, belittled, given the twofold perspective from which they are considered: first, the historical perspective, which brings to the fore questions of no real importance; then the philosophical point of view, which is very inadequate for the subject at hand and quite incapable of getting to the bottom of things, of reaching the very essence of the doctrines in question. "Philosophy is philosophy everywhere," we are told; but is there really philosophy everywhere? We will concede, at least, that it is not the only thing in the world; and we are not very sure that some Indianists "have fared very well by having first possessed a European-style philosophical culture"; in any case, we, for our part, have had to congratulate ourselves on having been able to learn about the doctrines of the East before studying Western philosophy.

Georges Groslier, *La Sculpture Khmère ancienne*; illustrated with 175 reproductions outside the text. This very beautiful publication gives, for the first time, an overview of Khmer sculpture, at least to the extent that the current state of archaeological research allows. The author is also very cautious in his conclusions, and one can only praise him for this, as many questions are still far from being definitively resolved. It is almost impossible to establish a rigorous chronology, and here, as in India, the dates proposed are often only hypothetical. It is also difficult to determine how Indian influence first penetrated Cambodia, and whether Brahmanism or Buddhism established itself first in this region; for us, moreover, it is not impossible that they arrived simultaneously, since they coexisted in India for several centuries. In any case, Groslier rightly points out that the two cults often mix (the same fact can be observed in other countries, especially Java); moreover, it is a transformed Buddhism, strongly tinged with Shaivism, as was also the case in Tibet. The author does not dwell on these considerations, which would merit in-depth study but are only indirectly relevant to his subject; he seeks above all to highlight external influences while also showing what is truly original in Khmer art. Our only criticism would be that he sometimes allows himself to be influenced a little too much in his assessments, although he rejects this, by Western aesthetic concepts and modern individualistic prejudice; he seems preoccupied by everything traditional in this art, by its symbolic and ritualistic character, which is, in our view, its most interesting aspect.

The plates, which make up about two-thirds of the volume, are very noteworthy (only two or three lack sharpness, no doubt due to the conditions in which the photographs were taken); most reproduce unpublished or recently discovered pieces, and provide a much more complete picture of Khmer sculpture than the isolated fragments that can be seen in museums.

Jacques Bacot, *La Vie de Milarepa*^{3*}. -Here is a book that more than compensates us for the works of simple scholarship to which Orientalists generally confine themselves. This will come as no surprise to those readers of *Cahiers du Mois* who are familiar with Bacot's response—undoubtedly one of the best—to the question posed by *Appels de l'Orient* (Calls from the East), whose readers have therefore already seen how far he is from sharing the usual prejudices of the West and accepting the preconceived ideas that circulate in certain circles.

The text translated by Bacot is a biography of Milarepa, first a magician, then a poet and hermit, who lived in the 11th century of the Christian era and who still has followers today, authentic heirs to his word, transmitted orally through an unbroken spiritual lineage. This biography takes the form of a story told by Milarepa himself to his disciples when he had already attained sainthood and reached the end of his life of trials. All the events referred to in it, even those that seem less important, have a mystical meaning that constitutes their true value; and moreover, as the translator rightly points out, "the mystical interpretation given to an event does not detract from its authenticity." Even the details that may seem most implausible to the ordinary reader may nevertheless be true; it is certain, for example, that "the mortifications to which a Tibetan ascetic may devote himself go far beyond what the European imagination considers possible." In general, "it is regrettable that the Western-trained mind is so readily disposed to declare absurd what it does not understand, and to reject as fable what does not agree with its own credibility." It should not be forgotten that there is a considerable distance between a man like Milarepa and a Westerner, especially a modern Westerner, both in terms of intellectual profile and in terms of the facts that require conditions that are unattainable in the current European environment.

^{3*} *The Life of Milarepa*, Anagrama, Madrid, 1994.

We have borrowed some of the most interesting phrases from the introduction that Bacot has placed before his translation, in which he demonstrates truly exceptional understanding. Indeed, we could not have said it better ourselves, and what he expresses coincides perfectly with what we ourselves have always stated: We are particularly happy to see this agreement. Bacot also insists on the *"difference between the Eastern and Western meanings of each word"* and emphasizes that *"nothing is more misleading than a transposition of terms from one religion to another: the same vocabulary for different notions."* Thus, the word "mysticism," if it is to be retained, cannot have the same meaning here as in the West: Eastern mysticism, or what is called by this name, is active and voluntary, while Western mysticism is above all passive and emotional; and "as for the very principle of meditation in which Milarepa is absorbed for most of his long life, it is not comparable to any of our methods and philosophies."

We cannot resist the pleasure of reproducing another passage, which refers to essential points of a very general nature: *"What is surprising is that, without claiming to derive from revelation, without appealing to sentiment, the pure idea has seduced countless peoples and maintained this seduction over the centuries... Buddhist piety has no connection with sensitivity. It is not spontaneous but the result of long meditation."* Teachings such as those of Milarepa *"do not have the social value or opportunism of our 'healthy philosophy,' which, while being a strength in the eyes of us practical Europeans, is a weakness in the eyes of Easterners, proof of relativity, because they see social needs as a very poor contingency."* Moreover, although it may seem paradoxical to those who do not go to the bottom of things, *"Eastern idealism is morally more advantageous and socially more practical than our realism. It suffices to compare the spirituality and gentleness of the peoples who have inherited the Indian ideal (since the teachings in question here, despite their specifically Tibetan character, are inspired by India) with the materialism and incredible brutality of Western civilization. The centuries have proven the theoretical charity of Asia. Participating in the absolute, it does not fall into the rapid decline in which the law of love for one's neighbor is lost, a law ignored among nations, abolished among classes of individuals of the same nation, or among individuals themselves."* But we would have to quote everything, and we need to finish...

As for the actual text itself, there is no question of summarizing it, which would only give an incomplete, if not inaccurate, idea of it. It must be read, and read without ever losing sight of the fact that it is certainly not a simple tale of more or less fictional adventures, but above all a teaching intended, as the original title expressly indicates, to "show the way to Liberation and Omniscience."

1928

Edmond Isnard, *La Sagesse du Bouddha et la science du bonheur* (Éditions de la Revue Extrême-Asie).

This book is curious in that it shows well what a mind imbued with Western prejudices can understand, or rather, not understand, even with a certain goodwill that is not in doubt, when transported to an Eastern environment. Buddhism is here little more than a pretext for rather disparate reflections, in which "scientism" and "sentimentality" alternately predominate; there is a little bit of everything, even accounts of metapsychic experiences. Buddhism has nothing in common with any of this, nor with philosophical conceptions such as those of Spinoza, Kant, or even Schopenhauer, nor with "evolutionism," "relativism," and the hypotheses of contemporary physics. However, the author does not seem satisfied with the purely material development of modern Western civilization; why, then, does he continue to accept ideas that are exclusively characteristic of this same civilization? On the other hand, there is an error that we have found both in this work and in that of Mr. de Henseler, which we reviewed here recently (May 1928), and which

must be highlighted: whatever may be said, there is no possible assimilation between Vedanta, or more generally Brahmanism and Buddhism; their relationship is not and cannot be other than that of an orthodox doctrine and a heresy arising from it: it is therefore quite comparable to that which exists, from a very different point of view, between Catholicism and Protestantism in the Western world.

1929

Jean Marquès-Rivière, *A l'ombre des monastères tibétains*^{4*} ; preface by Maurice Magre. (Éditions Victor Attinger, Paris and Neuchâtel, 1929).

This book is, along with *Brahmâne et Paria* by D. G. Mukerji, the best to appear so far in the *Orient* collection; in the "novelized" form required by the nature of this collection, it contains a wealth of interesting information about things little known in the West. The author imagines that one of his friends, who left for Tibet with no intention of returning, has sent him an account of his initiation into the mysteries of Lamaism, and this account constitutes the entire book. We cannot even dream of summarizing it here; it is better to encourage our readers to discover it for themselves, and we are sure they will not regret it, for they will find there, pleasantly presented, many notions about Tibetan spiritual centers which, although not all of them are new, would be quite difficult to find elsewhere. We will make only two criticisms. The first is that there is perhaps not a clear enough gradation between the different phases of the initiation described, which may leave those who do not already know about it with some uncertainty as to the goal that must ultimately be achieved through all these successive trials. The second criticism, which is more serious in our view, is that the more or less extraordinary "phenomena" seem to take on a somewhat excessive importance here and occupy more space than considerations of a doctrinal nature. We certainly do not dispute the existence of such things, but we wonder whether it is appropriate to insist on them with such complacency, since Westerners are already too inclined to exaggerate their value. The problem is not the same in the East, where such manifestations are very well understood to be of a much lower order; the author himself acknowledges that Lamas who possess certain "powers" do not use them except in exceptional circumstances; we would have preferred to see him imitate this reserve. We hope that Mr. Marquès-Rivière will soon provide us with other studies on Tibet that are more doctrinal and stripped of any "fantastic" character; we know that he is quite capable of doing so.

1933

Henri Valentino, *Le voyage d'un perelin chinois dans l'Inde des Bouddhas* (Éditions G. P. Maisonneuve, Paris). This is the account of the famous journey made by HiuenTsang in the 7th century AD, reconstructed from Stanislas Julien's translation (which is no guarantee of perfect accuracy), and around which, moreover, one has the impression that a little "literature" has also accumulated; be that as it may, it is quite pleasant reading. Unfortunately, the work is "preceded by an exposition of the doctrines of ancient India on life and death," that is, in reality, by a kind of summary of everything that Orientalists have taken pleasure in writing on this subject; it is worth reading these interpretations, presented "in perspective," so to speak, in order to appreciate their incredible fantasy; However accustomed one may be to such things, one cannot help but be somewhat stunned by the accumulation of all the "ism" labels invented by Westerners for their own use and consumption, and applied indiscriminately to things to which they do not apply at all, or by the innumerable confusions generated by the use of the single term "soul" to indicate indiscriminately the most disparate elements of the human being. On the other hand, leaving aside questions of detail, it suffices to point out the spirit in which this exposition has been written, to say that the very notion of tradition is totally absent, that heterodoxy is placed on the same level as orthodoxy, and that everything is treated as a set of "speculations."

^{4*} *In the Shadow of Tibetan Monasteries*, Kier, Buenos Aires.

purely human, which have been "formed" in this or that era, then have "evolved," and so on; between such a view and the one that conforms to the truth, no compromise is possible; and perhaps the greatest usefulness of this book lies precisely in making this appear in the clearest possible way.

1934

Gabriel Trarieux, *La Lumière d'Asie* (Éditions Eugène Figuière, Paris). This is a translation of Edwin Arnold's poem, *The Light of Asia*, well known to all those who are interested in Buddhism, whether closely or from afar. We are not qualified to judge its form; in principle, we are always a little wary of verse translations, as we find it difficult to believe that they can be accurate; but in this case, the author himself has anticipated this objection, stating that he "wanted to translate the meaning and rhythm rather than the literal text." As for the work itself, G. Trarieux acknowledges that it contains an element of fantasy and that "none of the Buddhist schools would find their doctrine exactly reflected in it"; but, to justify it, he asserts that "imagination, among true poets, is a faculty of knowledge," which does not seem entirely convincing to us. and when he adds that it is "a clairvoyance that is ignored," it is even less so, for we think that the proposition should be reversed: this overly famous "clairvoyance" is itself, in most cases, nothing more than the illusion of an imagination that, in a kind of "daydream," takes its own constructions for external and independent realities.

1935

L. De Païni, *Le Mysticisme intégral* (Éditions "Les Argonautes," Paris). This small volume could be considered an "illustration" of what we say elsewhere about the confusion between the psychic and the spiritual; this definition would suffice to show it clearly: "Mysticism itself is an experimental science of the unconscious, which is a complete penetration of the mystery of the dark psychic forces of the organism." And the author shows great esteem for current psychology because "the unconscious regains its great primordial function in it; in human economy, our fragile consciousness rests on its bottomless, living, eternally moving darkness..." All this is naturally accompanied by a certain "evolutionism," which is expressed above all in largely chimerical "cosmogonic" points of view; and there is, on the other hand, a strange exaggeration of the role of the body; undoubtedly, it very truly represents a state of our being and is therefore more or less closely related to the other modalities of it; but that does not mean that it is a "structure of pure psychism," much less a "spiritual construction"; here again, in the absence of any notion of the hierarchy of states, we are in complete confusion. There is another point regarding mysticism itself: what the author calls "integral mysticism" is not found in Western mysticism, which is, however, the only one to which this name could properly be applied, but in what she believes to be "Asian mysticism," which is in reality something very different, and that "integral mysticism," according to her idea, would only fully exist in Tibet;

Why in Tibet rather than in other countries, if not because it has, rightly or wrongly, the reputation of being particularly fertile in singular phenomena? Of the Tibetan tradition, which is initiatory and not mystical, only the psychic and even psycho-physiological aspects are dealt with here, that is to say, the means are taken for the end; and all this would be nothing more than a "living dislocation of the being," leading to an "immersion in the great psychic ocean in the unfathomable and fearsome depths"... Fearsome indeed, for these are possibilities of the being, but inferior possibilities that initiation should, on the contrary, enable it to overcome definitively. Such a book makes a truly painful impression; what it proposes to man is a "step backwards," but one that, far from leading "towards the pure spirit," could only propel him towards a "cosmic communion" with "subhuman" powers, for it is these, and not "spiritual forces," that reign in the "immense ocean of the deep racial psyche," deep, no doubt, but in the "abysmal" and "infernal" sense of the word!

G. Constant Lounsbery, *Buddhist Meditation, a study of its theory and practice according to the Southern School* (Adrien Maisonneuve, Paris).

This little book is a rather elementary exposition, with a marked tendency to "rationalize" everything, and a constant concern to choose only what is considered useful for Westerners. In general, we do not appreciate this kind of "adaptation"; at least, this one seems, on the whole, fairly harmless, especially when compared to the methods of "psychic training" advocated by theosophists and other similar schools. Certain linguistic oversights are regrettable, especially Anglicisms, as well as a typographical layout that is not particularly effective.

I. de Manziarly, *Pérégrinations asiatiques* (Paul Geuthner, Paris).

This volume contains, as the author says, some "impressions" gathered in the course of several trips to various regions: Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Ceylon, India, Indochina, China, Korea, Japan; impressions without pretension, but which make for very pleasant reading and testify to an undeniable, frankly confessed sympathy for things of the East. Fortunately, this sympathy has not been stifled by the "Orientalist" readings listed at the end; it is true that this was by no means a work of "scholarship," nor was it "reportage," and it is certainly much more valuable from all points of view.

1936

Mrs. Rhys Davids, *The Birth of Indian Psychology and its development in Buddhism* (Luzac and Co., London).

Even after reading this book, we find it highly doubtful that there has ever been anything that could be called "Indian psychology," or, in other words, that the "psychological" point of view, as understood by modern Westerners, has ever been taken into consideration in India. The author acknowledges that the study of human beings has always been carried out from the inside out, and not in the opposite direction as in the West; but it is precisely for this reason that psychology, which limits itself to analyzing indefinitely some superficial modifications of the being, could not in itself be the object of the same interest. Only in Buddhism, and undoubtedly as a consequence of its tendency to deny, or at least to ignore, transcendent principles, are there considerations that could, to a certain extent, be interpreted in psychological terms; but it is not the case to take the comparisons too far. If one then wants to find psychology even in the *Upanishads*, then one is demonstrating a complete lack of understanding; a misunderstanding that is also manifested all too clearly in incredible linguistic confusion: "soul," "spirit," "Self," "man" are all terms used indiscriminately, as if they indicated one and the same thing! Needless to say, this book constantly embodies the prejudice, common to all Orientalists, of reducing everything to human "thought," which would have begun in a kind of "infancy" and then "evolved" progressively; between such a point of view and that of tradition, there is obviously no ground for possible understanding... The so-called "historical method," moreover, is in fact far from excluding more or less fanciful hypotheses: Mrs. Rhys Davids has thus imagined, under the name of *Sakya*, something she believes to have been the original Buddhism, which she thinks she can reconstruct by eliminating, as "late" additions, everything that does not agree with her idea of the beginnings of what she calls a *world-religion*, and in the first place everything that may have a "monastic" character; only she is afflicted by a violent anti-monastic prejudice! On the other hand, if we wanted to highlight the traces of her own religious or philosophical preferences in her interpretations, we would never finish; but since she is firmly convinced that anyone who does not share them lacks any "critical spirit," our underlining would surely be useless... In any case, after reading a work of this kind, we are certainly better informed about what the author thinks than we are

about what those she has set out to study "historically" may have truly thought; this, at least, is not without a certain "psychological" interest!

Mrs. Rhys Davids, *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon*. -Part I. *Dhamenapada: Verses on Dhamena, and Khuddaka-Pâtha: The Text of the Minor Sayings*. (Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, London).

This volume, which forms part of the *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, contains the text and translation side by side; its main feature is that some parts are printed in smaller type: these are the parts that are believed to have been "interpolated," added, or modified in more recent times. In a long introduction, the translator also explains her intentions: she has set herself the task of reconstructing what she believes to have been original Buddhism, which she has chosen to designate by the name of *Sakya*; and, to do so, she strives above all to eliminate everything that seems to her to have a "monastic" character; perhaps the only conclusion to be drawn from this is quite simply that she herself has a particularly violent "anti-monastic" prejudice! She also considers as "late" everything that seems to her to indicate an influence from *Sankhya*; but it is not really clear why this influence would not also have been exerted on Buddhism from its beginnings... In short, her *Sakya* is little more than another hypothetical construction, added to all those already erected by other "historians," each following their own individual tendencies and preferences. As for the translation itself, it could undoubtedly have been more precise and clearer if it had not been versified; however, we believe that a translation in verse always has far more disadvantages than advantages, especially since it is totally impossible to preserve the true rhythm of the original in another language.

E. Steinilber-Oberlin, *Les Sectes bouddhiques japonaises*. (Éditions G. Crès et C^{ie}, Paris).

This book is presented as a "philosophical investigation," which might lead one to fear that it is more or less influenced by Western points of view; but, in truth, when it comes to the history of the doctrines of the different sects or schools, the author mostly limits himself to recounting, impartially and apparently accurately, what he has been told by the Buddhist teachers he has consulted. It can be seen from this account that Buddhism in Japan, as in other countries, has changed greatly to adapt to its environment; the early sects, which had remained closer to Indian or Chinese forms, have not survived. It can also be seen that the sects that are currently tending to spread most widely are those that simplify the doctrine the most and have the most pronounced "quietist" character; these are also, unsurprisingly, the ones that show a tendency towards "modernization" and a predominant "social" concern, all of which are obviously closely related to the "Westernization" of contemporary Japan. Such is the general impression that emerges from the book, where those who are not "specialists" will find sufficient information, including excerpts from some characteristic texts. We should add that it is easy to read and is also richly illustrated with views of the main Japanese Buddhist shrines.

Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*⁵ (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts).

This important work contains an interpretation of the main symbols used by Buddhism, which are, however, much older and actually have a Vedic origin, since, as the author rightly says, "Buddhism in India represents a heterodox development, given that everything in its ontology and symbolism that is metaphysically correct is derived from the primordial tradition." The symbols that have been applied to the Buddha are mainly those of *the Vedic Agni*, and this is no more or less

⁵ *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, Sanz y Torres/Ignitus, Madrid, 2007.

late, but rather from the time when it was not yet represented in human form. Those symbols that are specifically studied here (and of which the graphic tables illustrate a series of significant examples) are: the tree, which is, as in all traditions, the "Tree of Life" or "Tree of the World"; the *vajra*, in its double meaning of "splendor" and "diamond"—the second of these meanings corresponding to the ideas of indivisibility and immutability; the lotus, which represents the "ground" or "support" of manifestation; the wheel, which, whether as the "wheel of the Law" or as the "cosmic wheel," represents the operation of principles in manifestation. The author emphasizes the close relationship between these various symbols and the concept of the "axis of the World," from which it follows that the geographical locations themselves, in Buddhist legend, are ultimately purely analogical. He also addresses a number of other interesting points, such as the similarity between the symbol of the *vajra* and the *trishûla*, the meaning of the footprints, representing the "traces" of the Principle in the manifested world, the column of fire as an "axial" symbol equivalent to that of the tree, the symbolism of the chariot and the throne, etc. This brief summary will suffice, we think, to show how the scope of this work is far greater than that of a study of Buddhism; the specific examination of the latter, as the author says, is, strictly speaking, only an "accident"; and in reality, this book deals with traditional symbolism in its truly universal sense. We may add that the considerations contained herein are capable of significantly modifying the "rationalist" idea that Westerners have of primitive Buddhism, which was perhaps less heterodox than some of its successive derivations; if there has been "degeneration" anywhere, might it not be precisely in the opposite direction to that presupposed by the prejudices of Orientalists and the natural sympathy of "moderns" for everything that presents itself as "anti-traditional"?

Jean Marqués-Rivière, *Le Bouddhisme au Thibet* (Éditions Baudinière).

The first part of this book is an exposition of the fundamental ideas of Buddhism in general, and more particularly of *Mahayana*; the second deals with the special form taken by Tibetan Buddhism, or Lamaism. Very aptly, the author corrects some misconceptions that are prevalent in the West, particularly with regard to "Tantrism," but also concerning "reincarnationist" interpretations; Furthermore, he rejects the notion that *Mahayana* is a "corrupted form of Buddhism," which, he says, reflects "a total ignorance of Eastern doctrines and their true value." In many respects, his book is therefore of greater value than the usual works of "Orientalists." Among the most interesting chapters are those devoted to meditation, the symbolism of the "wheel of life," and the "science of emptiness." However, not everything is perfectly clear, and it is perhaps understandable that the author falls into some of the common confusions: Buddhism is not at all "religious" in the Western sense of the word, and what it really is has nothing to do with "mysticism"; this is also the reason why it contains an initiation and a method, which are obviously incompatible with any "mysticism," and of which the author does not seem to understand either the nature or the scope. Perhaps this is due in part to this very confusion, and also in part to the exaggeration of the importance of "phenomena" and "psychic development," which are only secondary matters, even if they do not presuppose, as is said, "a very extensive knowledge of human physiology." in any case, even these flaws in perspective are not sufficient to explain how one can speak of an "entirely mechanistic and materialistic" conception precisely where the notion of "matter" is absent, or define as "purely human" what, on the contrary, essentially implies the intervention of "superhuman" elements; it is such a widespread ignorance of the true nature of "spiritual influences" that it is astonishing! The truth is, however, that the statements we have quoted are related to a set of "biased" reflections which, curiously, do not seem to fit in with the rest of the work, because they are almost always found at the end of the chapters, as if they had been added, and some of them respond to "apologetic," if not "missionary," concerns of a rather inferior order. Under these circumstances, is it not legitimate to

to legitimately ask whether such ignorance has been "deliberate," at least to some extent? In any case, it is quite regrettable that a work that has very real merits in other respects should be so marred by intrusions of a spirit that we prefer to define only as a form of Western "proselytism," although a more severe term would be more appropriate...

1938

Vladimir Pozner, *Le Mors au Dents* (Éditions Denoël, Paris).

This book is a "fictionalized" and overly "gloomy" account, marked by an obvious spirit of partisan hostility, of the turbulent career of Baron Ungern-Sternberg, who had already been discussed some time ago, albeit from a different perspective, in Ferdinand Ossendowski's work, *Beasts, Men and Gods*^{6*}. What is truly curious is that the very existence of this character was questioned by some at the time, and the same thing is happening again this time around. However, he belonged to a well-known Baltic family, related to that of Count Hermann Keyserling, a letter from whom is reproduced in the book. It may be of interest to some to clarify matters and shed light on a story that seems to have been deliberately manipulated. To this end, we will quote the main passages from some letters written in 1924 by Major Antoni Alexandrowicz, a Polish officer who, as commander of the Mongolian artillery, under the direct orders of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg between 1918 and 1919, as we believe they offer the most accurate picture of the situation: "Baron Ungern was an extraordinary man, with a very complicated nature, both from a psychological and political point of view. To describe his characteristic traits in a very simple way, we could summarize them as follows:

1) He was a bitter opponent of Bolshevism, which he saw as an enemy of humanity and its spiritual values; 2) He despised the Russians, who in his eyes had betrayed the *Entente* by breaking their oath of allegiance to the Tsar during the war, and then to the two revolutionary governments, before accepting the Bolshevik government; 3. He had little contact with Russians and only associated with foreigners (and also with Poles, whom he esteemed because of their struggle against Russia); among Russians, he preferred simple people to intellectuals, as they were less corrupt; 4. He was a mystic and a Buddhist; he harbored the idea of founding an order of vengeance against war; 5th, he considered founding a great Asian empire to fight against the materialistic culture of Europe and Soviet Russia; 6th, he was in contact with the Dalai Lama, the "Living Buddha," and with representatives of Islam in Asia, and held the title of priest and Mongol Khan; 7th, he was brutal and ruthless as only an ascetic and a sectarian can be; his lack of sensitivity was beyond imagination, and in his presence one seemed to be facing an incorporeal being, with a soul as cold as ice, who knew neither pain, nor pity, nor joy, nor sadness; 8th, he possessed superior intelligence and extensive knowledge; there was no subject on which he could not give a judicious opinion; at a glance, he judged the worth of the man before him...

In early June 1918, a Lama predicted to Baron Ungern that he would be wounded at the end of that month, that he would meet his death after his army had entered Mongolia, and that his glory would spread throughout the world. Sure enough, at dawn on June 28, the Bolsheviks attacked the Dauria station... and the baron was shot in the left side, near his heart. The prediction also came true with regard to his death: it occurred at the moment when the glory of his victory was spreading throughout the world.

The last sentence is perhaps excessive, judging by the discussions we referred to at the beginning; but what seems certain is that he was never captured by the Bolsheviks and that, although still very young, he died of natural causes, contrary to Vladimir Pozner's version. Pozner's readers will also be able to see, after these indications, whether such a character could not have been, as he suggests,

^{6*} *Beasts, Men and Gods*, Ed. Abraxas, Sta. Perpetua, 2001.

more than a simple agent in the service of Japan, or if he truly acted under influences of a very different order; we would add in this regard that he was not exactly what could be called a "neo-Buddhist," since, according to information we have received from other sources, his family's adherence to Buddhism dated back three generations. On the other hand, it has recently been pointed out that certain phenomena of "enchantment" occurred in Ungern's castle; could this be the manifestation of some "psychic residues" more or less directly connected with this whole story?

Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Nature of Buddhist Art* (A. Townsend Johnson, Boston). –This is the separately published introduction to an important work on *The Wall-Paintings of India, Central Asia and Ceylon*, in collaboration with Benjamin Rowland. The author shows how, in order to understand Buddhist art, and in particular representations of the Buddha, it is necessary to refer to concepts that predate Buddhism itself, since Buddhism is ultimately linked to Vedic sources and, with that, to universal symbolism common to all traditions. The more or less heterodox application that has been made does not prevent the cosmic birth of the Buddha from representing the cosmic manifestation of *Agni* in terms of principles, and his life can, in this sense, be called "mythical," which does not mean denying its reality, but rather highlighting its essential meaning. Initially, the Buddha was represented only by footprints, or by symbols such as the tree or the wheel (and it is noteworthy that, in the same way, Christ has also been represented for many centuries by purely symbolic figures); the question is: how and why did an anthropomorphic image come to be accepted? This fact must be seen in a certain way as a concession to the needs of a less intellectual age, in which doctrinal understanding had already weakened; if "supports for contemplation" are to be as effective as possible, they must in fact be adapted to the conditions of each age; However, it should be noted that the human image itself, whatever it may be in the case of Hindu "deities," is really "anthropomorphic" only to a certain extent, in the sense that it is never "naturalistic" and always retains, above all and in each of its particularities, an essentially symbolic character. This does not mean, however, that it is a "conventional" representation as imagined by moderns, since a symbol is in no way the product of human invention; "symbolism is a hierarchical and metaphysical language, not a language determined by organic or psychological categories; its foundation lies in the analogical correspondence of all orders of reality, states of being, or levels of reference." The symbolic form is "revealed" and "seen" in the same sense that Vedic incantations have been "revealed" and "heard," and "there can be no distinction in principle between vision and hearing," since what matters is not the type of sensory medium used, but the meaning that is in a certain way "incorporated" into it. The "supernatural" element is an integral part of the image, as it is of stories that have a "mythical" value, in the original sense of the term; in both cases, these are primarily means intended not to communicate, which is impossible, but to allow the "mystery" to be realized, which obviously neither a simple portrait nor a historical fact as such could do: what inevitably escapes the "rationalist" point of view of moderns is therefore the very nature of symbolic art in general, just as "miracles" and the character of "theophany" (divine manifestation) of the manifested world itself escape them for the same reasons; man can understand these things only if he is at once sensitive and spiritual and if he perceives that "access to reality is not obtained by making a choice between matter and spirit, supposedly unrelated to each other, but by seeing in material and sensible things a formal resemblance to spiritual prototypes that cannot be grasped directly by the senses"; it is "a reality considered at different levels of reference, or, if you prefer, different orders of reality, but which are not mutually exclusive."

Mrs. Rhys Davids, *To become or not to become (that is the question), Episodes in the history of an Indian word* (Luzac and Co., London).

It is all too true that grammarians, philologists, and translators have often done poor work, and it would be good if someone were willing to rectify their shortcomings and errors; on this point, we are in complete agreement with the author. but does that mean we should agree with her on the particular point at issue, namely the verb *bhû* and its derivatives, such as *bhava* and *bhavya*, in which, instead of the meaning of "to be" that is generally attributed to them, she wants to see almost exclusively that of "to become"? The truth seems to us to be somewhat different, and we do not think that so much discussion and meticulous analysis is needed to establish it; the two roots *as* and *bhû* are certainly not synonymous, but their relationship corresponds exactly to that of "essence" and "substance"; strictly speaking, the word "being" should be reserved to translate the former and words related to it, while the idea expressed by the latter is properly that of "existence," meaning the set of all modifications that derive from *Prakriti*. Of course, the idea of "existence" implies in a certain way that of "becoming," but it is equally obvious that it is not entirely reducible to it, since, in the "substantial" aspect to which it refers, the idea of "subsistence" is also included. if we do not take this into account, we wonder how, for example, a term such as *Swayambhû* could be translated, which certainly cannot mean anything other than "He who subsists by himself": there is no doubt that modern language commonly confuses "being" and "existing," just as it confuses many other notions; But it is precisely confusions of this kind that must be dispelled above all else in order to restore the proper and original meaning of the words she uses. In short, we see no other way to improve translations, at least to the extent that the rather limited resources of Western languages allow. Unfortunately, a mass of preconceived ideas too often intervenes to complicate the simplest of questions; Rhys Davids, for example, is clearly influenced by certain highly questionable ideas, and it is not difficult to understand why she clings so much to the word "becoming": it is simply because, in accordance with the theories of Bergson and other contemporary "evolutionist" philosophers, she considers "becoming" to be more real than "being"; in other words, she wants to make what is a lesser reality the highest and perhaps also the only reality; that she thinks this way on her own is certainly something that concerns only her; but that she "manipulates" the results of traditional texts so that they fit such totally modern conceptions is more than just inappropriate: Moreover, her way of seeing things is naturally influenced by "historicism": she believes that certain ideas appeared at a certain moment and then changed from one era to another, as if they were mere profane "thoughts"; moreover, as we have already seen, she has a surprising ability to "imagine" history, so to speak, according to her own visions; what is more, we even wonder if these are merely imaginings, because, to tell the truth, certain fairly clear allusions to "psychic" experiences make us seriously fear that it is something even worse!

L. Adams Beck, *Du Kashmir au Tibet, a la découverte du Yoga*. Translated from English by Jean Herbert and Pierre Sauvageot (Éditions Victor Attinger, Paris and Neuchâtel). This novel, written with a spirit of obvious sympathy for Eastern doctrines, may arouse some interest in them in people who are not yet familiar with them and perhaps lead them to undertake a more serious study. This does not mean that the way certain things are presented is always flawless; for example, Hindu and Buddhist doctrines are mixed in a way that is perhaps not very plausible, which risks giving readers unclear ideas about their relationships. It is truly commendable, however, that, unlike what almost always happens in works of this type, the more or less extraordinary "phenomena" occupy only a fairly limited space and that their value is reduced to its proper proportions; when they are presented, they can be interpreted as "signs," but nothing more. In another respect, the true and proper purpose of *Yoga* is perhaps not indicated with all the precision that would be necessary to avoid confusion among those who are not already informed:

it would have been appropriate, to this end, to make it clearer that skill in an art, for example, can only be a totally incidental consequence and, at the same time, in some cases, a kind of "support" on condition that the spiritual orientation remains unchanged; However, if it is taken as an end in itself, or simply sought for its own sake, it will, on the contrary, become an obstacle and will, from this point of view, have more or less the same drawbacks as "powers" of a more seemingly strange nature, since, in essence, these are all things that always belong to the same contingent order.

Jean Marqués Rivière, *Le Yoga tantrique hindou et thibétain* (Librairie Véga, Collection "Asie," Paris).

What immediately strikes one about this little book is the total lack of care with which it has been written and printed; it is literally teeming with errors of all kinds, and unfortunately it is not always possible to classify them as typographical errors... As for the substance, despite the claims of "direct information," it is mostly a compilation, since the most important part of the book is clearly taken from Arthur Avalon's *Serpent Power*, with many other copies as well; some are not declared, but we have good reasons to recognize them; only that, undoubtedly precisely in order not to give the impression of pedantically "copying," the author has seen fit to replace precise terminology with a curious jumble of vague or inappropriate words. In addition, there is an entire chapter on "reincarnation" from which it is absolutely impossible to deduce what the author really thinks about the subject, and this is certainly the best way to avoid upsetting anyone. Could it be concerns of this kind that led to the strange remarks pointing out the purely fantastical nature of certain speculations by the late Leadbeater and others, or a note that seems to accept the reality of spiritualist "communications"? We will not dwell on the usual "mystical" confusion, nor will we linger on certain more or less eccentric statements, not all of which concern Hindu or Tibetan doctrines (for example, the label "blowers" attributed to alchemists), or the remarks about "Baphometian idols"... One must wonder about the true purpose pursued by the author, unless he simply wanted to pique the curiosity of potential readers of his other books, which he announces will be published soon.

1939

L. Adams Beck, *Au Coeur du Japon: Zenn, Amours mystiques*. Translated from English by Jean Herbert and Pierre Sauvageot. (Éditions Victor Attinger, Paris and Neuchâtel). Once again, we find in this book the same qualities as in the other novel by the same author that we discussed earlier, but also the same flaws, which, it must be said, seem to be somewhat worse. The way in which some Europeans are mixed in these stories with certain Eastern circles may be acceptable once, as there is nothing implausible about it as such, but when it is repeated, it gives the impression of a very artificial "procedure"; moreover, the consequences of this intervention are translated here, as the title indicates, into "mystical loves" that are quite difficult to reconcile with the character of authentic Zen. On the other hand, the idea of drawing parallels between a traditional doctrine and the conceptions of modern Western science and relying on the latter to make the former acceptable, an idea whose vanity we have so often denounced, plays a rather large role here. Moreover, we know that this idea really exists among the representatives of certain branches of contemporary Japanese Buddhism, where "modernism" is unfortunately wreaking havoc, but we want to believe, nevertheless, that this is only the case in the most exoteric schools. There is even a rather curious contradiction: the author quite rightly says that "when one follows the disciplines of Asia, one does not go fishing for souls and one does not engage in facile propaganda"; but this does not prevent him from attributing such propaganda to an initiatory organization, or one that should be such, which he represents as preparing a kind of "missionaries" to send to the West after having taught them not only

European languages, but also the "scientific" language that pleases Westerners. It is no less true that, alongside all this, there are very interesting insights into the methods of spiritual development employed by Zen, as well as how they are reflected in various characteristic aspects of Japanese society. It is nevertheless regrettable that, as with Yoga in another book, the results of "realization" do not appear very clearly, and that the author even seems to have a restricted idea of it, limited to some very secondary points of view; but, despite everything, this can undoubtedly encourage some to reflect and try to penetrate these things more deeply if they have the possibility within themselves.

1940

Clarence H. Hamilton, *Whei Shih Er Lun, or the Treatise in twenty stanzas on Representation-only, by Vasubandhu*, translated from the Chinese version of Hsüan Tsang, Tripitaka Master of the T'ang Dynasty (American Society, New Haven, Connecticut).

The treatise in question is the first of two fundamental classical texts of the *Vijnaptimātra* school (this is the name translated as *Representation-only*), one of the branches of the Mahayana *Yogācāra* school; these two texts are *Vasubandhu's Vimshatikā* and *Trimshikā*, of which Sylvain Lévi provided a supposedly French translation a few years ago that was almost completely incomprehensible: by insisting on translating every word in the text with a single term, even when there were no corresponding terms in French, he was forced to continually use neologisms such as "inscience," "mentation," "ainsité," "essencité," which are really nothing more than true barbarisms, and even more implausible expressions such as "*révolution de tréfonds*," "*impregnation de concoction*," "*révolution du récipient*," "*mise-au-point de barrage*," etc., to which it is impossible to assign any meaning whatsoever. This is undoubtedly a perfect example to show how we have never exaggerated when speaking of the defects of certain works by "Orientalists" and their absolute uselessness. The author of the present English translation seems to us to show great indulgence towards his predecessor, contenting himself, as he does, with declaring that he has not been able to follow his "specialized vocabulary" and attributing its strangeness to "concerns about preserving linguistic nuances"; the truth is that, with his claim to "translate the meaning exactly," Sylvain Lévi has conveyed absolutely none. Fortunately, C. Hamilton has not fallen into this trap; it is not that his translation cannot be disputed on certain points, since the text is undoubtedly extremely difficult, given the very nature of the ideas expressed in it, nor, in this respect, should one place too much trust in the possibilities of Western philosophical terminology; but, in any case, it can at least be understood, and as a whole it presents a fairly plausible meaning. The translation, with Hiuen-tsang's Chinese text alongside, is accompanied by notes that provide a good number of clarifications, and preceded by an introduction that includes a historical summary of the Chinese versions of the treatise and an analysis of its content; the latter is perhaps somewhat influenced by the idea that it is comparable to Western "idealism," although the author acknowledges that "Vasubandhu's idealistic doctrine is ultimately at the service of a supra-intellectual realization" (we would say more accurately "supra-rational"); But isn't this precisely the essential point, that is, the point that, by profoundly differentiating this doctrine from modern philosophical speculations, gives it its real character and true scope?

1945–46

Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*^{7*} (Philosophical Library, New York). This book is divided into two parallel parts, the first of which refers to Hinduism and the second to Buddhism, although the author believes that it might have been better to treat the whole as a single subject, in order to highlight even more clearly the real harmony between the two. To begin with, he quite rightly points out that it is possible to give a fairly accurate picture of Hinduism

^{7*} *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Sanz y Torres/Ignitus, Madrid, 2007.

categorically rejecting most of the arguments put forward on this subject by Western scholars, or by some modern Westernized Hindus. He then provides some clarifications on the meaning of "myth" understood in its true sense, and conceived as essentially valid outside of any particular condition of time and space: *agré*, at the beginning, means even more precisely "at the apex," that is, "at its first cause" or "at the Beginning" (as in the Greek *en arché* and the Latin *in principio*); in any symbolic description of the cosmogonic process, it is therefore in reality a timeless "beginning." Sacrifice (*yajna*) is a ritual imitation of "what was done by the Gods in the beginning"; it is therefore a reflection of the "myth," inverted, however, like all reflections, in the sense that what had been a process of generation and division now becomes a process of regeneration and reintegration. In order to understand such an operation, it is necessary first of all to ask "what is God" and "what are we": God is an essence without duality (*advaita*), but which subsists in a dual nature, hence the distinction between the "Supreme" and the "Non-Supreme" (*apara*), to which correspond, according to different points of view, all dualities in which one of the terms, subordinate to the other, is "eminently" contained in the latter; and we find in ourselves two similar terms, which are the "Self" and the "I." The function of sacrifice is to "reunite what has been separated," therefore, as far as man is concerned, to bring the "I" back to the "Self"; this reunion is often symbolically represented as a marriage, and the higher and lower terms of such a duality are respectively masculine and feminine in relation to each other. It should also be remembered that, from an entirely traditional point of view, any action should normally be considered "sacred," that is, characterized by a "sacrificial" aspect (from *sacra facere*), and this means that the notion of Sacrifice can be extended to the whole of human life; this is precisely what the "way of works" (*karma-mârga*) of the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* consists of, a conception that is naturally the opposite of the profane one of moderns. From another point of view, sacrifice, performed *in divinis* by *Vishvakarma*, requires, in its ritual imitation in this world, the cooperation of all the arts (*vishvâ karmâni*), from which it follows that, in the traditional social order, all functions, whatever they may be, also have a sacred character; at the same time, social organization, unlike works, cannot be considered an end in itself, and must be such that it enables each of its members to achieve their own perfection: in Hinduism, this need is met by the institution of the four *âshramas*, according to which everything is ordered with a view to obtaining final Liberation. Moving on to Buddhism, A. K. Coomaraswamy notes how much more it seems to differ from Hinduism the more superficially it is studied and how, as one delves deeper into it, it becomes increasingly difficult to pinpoint its differences with the latter, to such an extent that one could say that in the West "Buddhism has been admired above all for what it is not." On the other hand, the Buddha himself never claimed to teach a new doctrine, nor, in the precepts he gave to his "lay" listeners, to sponsor "social reform"; in fact, the essential part of his teaching was directed at the members of a "monastic order" within which no social distinction could exist, since these were men who had already renounced the world, like the *sannyâsî* of Hinduism. Here the "myth" is constituted by the very "life" of the Buddha, who presents all the distinctive characteristics of the *Avatâra*, in the face of which individual particularities are entirely canceled out; most modern scholars have thought, in view of this, that it was a case of a man who was "deified" *a posteriori*, but this "evemeristic" conception is the antithesis of the truth; what can be deduced from all the authentic texts, however, is that it is a question of the "descent" of a celestial Archetype clothed in human remains, whose "birth" and "awakening" could be said to represent timeless events. As far as doctrine is concerned, Coomaraswamy is particularly concerned with highlighting the falsity of the interpretation according to which the Buddha denied the *âtmâ*; when, speaking of individual, contingent, and transitory modifications, he said, against those who identified their own being with such accidents (among whom would certainly include Descartes with his "*Cogito ergo sum*"), that "this is not the Self"; and this is all the more absurd since he himself, in his state as Buddha, can only be conceived as identical with the "Self." We cannot delve into

We will return to the details later, but we must in any case point out an excellent interpretation of the term *Nirvana*; this is another issue that is in great need of clarification after all the confusion caused by Orientalists. Another point of great interest is the following: the names and epithets of the Buddha are, generally and in the same way as his deeds, those same ones that the Vedic tradition attributes more particularly to *Agni* and *Indra*, to whom the name *Arhat* is also very often applied; now, *Agni* and *Indra* are respectively the Priesthood and the Kingship *in divinis*; it is precisely with these two possibilities that the Buddha was born, and it can be said that, by choosing the first, he has realized both, for this is one of the cases in which, as we have said before, one of the two terms is "eminently" contained in the other. We have learned that a French translation of this important work is currently in preparation, and we hope that it will be published soon.

1947

Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*^{8*} (Cassell and Co., London, 1947).

This work, to which Coomaraswamy has already devoted a note in this journal at the time of its publication (June 1940 issue), has since been reprinted several times, with the author adding some details. Returning to our review, our intention is not to discuss what is strictly speaking a "travelogue," whatever its interest may be, but only to point out more specifically some points that refer directly to Tibetan doctrine. To begin with, we will emphasize that Pallis does not accept the term "Lamaism," which in English seems to have a pejorative connotation; we must say that this does not seem to be the case in French, so much so that we ourselves had seen no problem in using it when the occasion arose; it is true that it is a purely conventional name, but it is also true that there are others in the same situation (for example, "Confucianism"), and they are used solely for reasons of convenience. Undoubtedly, we can content ourselves with simply speaking of Tibetan Buddhism, and perhaps this is ultimately the best approach; in any case, what must be clear is that this form of Buddhism has characteristics that clearly distinguish it from other forms, not only from Buddhism in general, but also from *Mahayana*, of which it is a branch. A chapter of particular importance from a doctrinal point of view is entitled "The Round of Existence," which contains an excellent exposition of the symbolism of the "Wheel of Life," a schematic representation of the multiple states of conditioned existence. On this occasion, the author explains various fundamental points of Buddhist doctrine, insofar as it is essentially aimed at freeing the being from the indefinite chain of such states in order to lead him to Nirvana, with regard to which he quite rightly rectifies the false interpretations that have spread in the West: "It is the extinction of Ignorance and the series of its consequences; a double negation is the only means we have to weakly suggest its positive reality. Those who reach this state know it; those who have not reached it can only speculate about it in terms of their own relativity, which are not applicable to them: between such a state and the Circle of Existence there is a complete discontinuity." We will also note the considerations concerning Method and Wisdom, seen as complementary and inseparable from each other, and symbolized respectively by the *dorje* and the bell or *dilbu*. Another chapter contains a few pages on the symbolism of the *Tantras*, pages which, in addition to the clarifications they provide in the true and proper doctrinal field, particularly with regard to the conception of *Shakti*, constitute the most radical refutation possible of the tendentious statements that are found almost everywhere on the subject, a subject that is undoubtedly one of those on which Western incomprehension has reached one of its highest levels. Elsewhere, we find explanations of the "Three Refuges," the formula *Om mani padmê hum*, and mantras in general as aids to meditation; and still other points, too numerous to list here, are dealt with incidentally in the course of the book.

^{8*} *Cumbres y Lamas*, Kier, Buenos Aires.

—The last part is almost entirely devoted to Tibetan art; it initially deals with its current conditions, and in this regard it can be noted that it is one of the rare examples of a traditional art form that is still truly alive today. The author presents some general views on "folk art" inspired by the ideas of A. K. Coomaraswamy, but observes that in Tibet it is almost impossible to find "folk art" distinct from other types of art, "since all the elements that have contributed to shaping Tibetan civilization, whatever their source, have been combined in an elaborate synthesis that is absolutely complete and adapted to the needs of men of all ranks and abilities." Pallis then highlights the close connection between art and doctrine; in this chapter, which is impossible to summarize, we will only highlight the considerations on the essentially intellectual nature of traditional art, on ritual understood as "a synthesis of all the arts, placed at the service of doctrine and mutually collaborating with a single goal in mind," a goal that is to prepare the intellectual faculties for metaphysical realization, and the absence of any "idolatry" in the use of symbolic figures in this way. Finally, he draws attention to the danger that may result, for art and for traditional civilization as a whole, which form an inseparable whole, from the penetration of Western influence, which has not yet affected Tibet as a whole, but is already beginning to be felt at its borders. We should also recall, in this regard, some very apt reflections on the importance of dress in preserving the traditional spirit; those who want to destroy a people's tradition undoubtedly know very well what they are doing when they begin by imposing European dress on them!

Robert Bleichsteiner, *L'Église jaune*. Translation by Jean Marty (Payot, Paris).

The title of this book calls for some immediate observations: first, we believe that it would have been better to avoid using the term "Church" in this case, because of the specifically Christian meaning associated with it, from which it is almost impossible to separate it; Secondly, the name "Yellow Church" should in any case only be applied to one branch of Lamaism (unlike Pallis, the author willingly uses the latter term), which follows the reform of Tsong-Khapa, to distinguish it from what could then be called the "Red Church," which has remained as it was before the time of that reform. However, the book actually deals with both, that is, basically, Tibetan Buddhism in general, and, in addition, Mongolian Buddhism, which has derived directly from it; in fact, it is perhaps the only comprehensive work, at least the only easily accessible one, that exists on the subject, and this makes it particularly interesting; We are, of course, talking about "documentary" interest, since, as far as the "spirit" in which it was written is concerned, there are certainly numerous reservations to be made. It opens with a fairly comprehensive historical overview; unfortunately, this overview is also tinged with a kind of skepticism about anything that cannot be explained according to modern Western ideas, and it suffers greatly from the tendency to "rationalize" everything. One point that remains somewhat unclear is that concerning the *Bon* religion, which predates the introduction of Buddhism and about which very little is known; as for what is said about an even older "popular belief," it is practically impossible to understand what it is about; perhaps the author is referring to a form of "shamanism," which, however, must undoubtedly predate the current degeneration of the latter, and in any case could only be "popular" in its partial survivals, forming, if one may say so, a kind of "folklore," after which it was replaced by other traditional forms. In this regard, we will point out, although it is found elsewhere in the book, a rather interesting statement, or at least one that could be interesting if the consequences were known; the points of contact between Lamaism and Shamanism "cannot be explained by the influences suffered in Mongolia and Tibet by Buddhism on the part of the theories that prevail in this region; they are exclusively characteristics already attested to in Indian Tantrism and which, from this country, have been combined with the ideas of Lamaism"; only that, instead of considering these facts as indications of a common traditional source, which can otherwise be traced back very far in time, the author is content to declare that "the explanation of these

interesting parallels should be referred to further research" ... -After the historical part, monasteries and temples are studied in turn, as well as the different categories of "gods" in Lamaism, the hierarchy of monks (among whom those who follow the direct path are called "mystics" in a totally inappropriate way), the "magical arts" (a term that covers many things here, not all of which are certainly magical in the true sense of the word), rites and festivals (among which symbolic dances occupy an important place, and in this regard the author rightly highlights the all-too-frequent error made by those who have described them, and have confused "terrible" divinities with diabolical entities), and also cosmology (whose symbolic aspect is poorly understood), the sciences, in particular astrology and medicine, and finally the arts and literature. All of this, let us repeat once again, is interesting from a documentary point of view, but only if we disregard the author's opinions, as he never misses an opportunity to rail against what he calls "Tantric horrors" and to treat as absurd and reprehensible superstitions everything that escapes his understanding! We do not know to what extent some defects of expression are attributable to the translation; this is probably the case when we encounter phrases whose meaning is rather unclear, and unfortunately there are quite a few of them; but it seems difficult not to attribute to the author himself the use of some rather extravagant expressions, such as "fulminating stone" (*Pierre fulminaire*) to translate *dorje*, or the term "reincarnation" to refer to *tulkus*, which most Europeans improperly call "living Buddhas," who are nothing more than human supports for certain spiritual influences. In another respect, it is regrettable that the translator saw fit to adopt a fanciful transcription for Tibetan words, which seems to us to be the German transcription with slight modifications, a transcription that sometimes makes them quite difficult to recognize for those accustomed to seeing them written in another way. The absence of any indication of long vowels in Sanskrit terms is also quite annoying, and yet these are imperfections that would not have been difficult to avoid, since they refer to things that obviously require no effort to understand.

1949

Marco Pallis, *Peaks and Lamas*. (Alfred A. Knopf, New York). Although this book has already been discussed twice in our magazine (June 1940 and January-February 1947 issues), we must return to it to highlight an important chapter entitled "The Presiding Idea"⁹; this chapter was added by the author for the American edition, and in it he sets out to define more explicitly the principle of unity characteristic of the Tibetan tradition, a principle that distinguishes it from other forms of traditional civilization. There is no doubt that this principle is found in Buddhist doctrine, but such a finding is still insufficient, since in countries other than Tibet where it has been similarly practiced, the influence of Buddhism has produced very different results. In fact, what characterizes Tibetan civilization above all is the importance it attaches to one element of this doctrine in proportions not found anywhere else; this element is the concept of the *Bodhisattva* state, that is, the "state of being completely awakened which, although no longer bound by the Laws of Causality, which it has overcome, nevertheless continues to freely follow the Circle (*Rounds*) of Existence by virtue of its identification with all creatures who are still subject to egocentric illusion and the suffering that is its consequence." An apparent difficulty arises from the fact that the *Bodhisattva* state is, on the contrary, commonly considered to be a lower and preliminary stage to that of Buddha; however, this situation seems to apply poorly to the case of a being "who has not only realized emptiness, in a transcendent sense, but has also realized it in the World itself, in an immanent sense, a double realization that for him is otherwise one," understanding that the supreme Knowledge he possesses is essentially "without duality." The solution to such a difficulty seems to lie in the

⁹Translated as: "The Tibetan Tradition, its guiding principle," in the volume *El Camino y la Montaña (The Path and the Mountain)*, Kier, Buenos Aires. Translator's note.

distinction between two different uses of the same term *Bodhisattva*: in one case it is used to indicate the saint who has not yet reached the highest degree of perfection, and is only about to achieve it, while in the other the term is actually applied to a being "who is identical to the Buddha by right of Knowledge, but who, for the benefit of creatures, 'recapitulates,' so to speak, certain stages for 'exemplary' reasons, in order to 'indicate the path,' and in this sense *descends again* into the 'Circle,' rather than remaining in it, whatever impression he may give in this sense to beings always ready to be deceived by outward appearances." This way of considering the *Bodhisattva* corresponds therefore to what we have called the "descending realization," and obviously this has an obvious connection with the doctrine of the *Avatāra*. Later in the chapter, which we cannot summarize completely, Pallis endeavors to dispel the confusion that such a conception of *the Bodhisattva* could give rise to if it were misinterpreted, in accordance with certain tendencies of the current mentality, in terms of "altruistic" or supposedly "mystical" sentimentality; he then gives some examples of its constant applications to the spiritual life of Tibetans. One such example is the practice of invocation, widely spread throughout the population; another concerns in a special way the life of the *naldjorpa*, that is, those who are already variously advanced on the path to realization, or whose aspirations and efforts, at least, are definitely directed in that direction, and whom Tibetans, even the relatively ignorant, consider to be the true protectors of humanity, and without whose "non-acting" activity, humanity would soon be irretrievably lost.

The Living Thoughts of Gotama the Buddha, presented by Ananda Coomaraswamy and J. B. Horner (Casell and Co., London). – Although the parts of the book attributable to each of the two contributors are not expressly indicated, it seems clear to us that the late A. K. Coomaraswamy is the author of the exposition of the Buddha's life and Buddhist doctrine that constitutes the first part of the volume, and in which we find, in abbreviated and slightly simplified form, the interpretations he had already given in other writings, particularly in *Hinduism and Buddhism*. Since our readers are already familiar with the main points, we will limit ourselves to recalling that one of the most important of these is the refutation of the common misconception that Buddhism denies the "Self," a refutation which has, among other consequences, that of rectifying the "nihilistic" conception that some have made of Nirvana. The alleged Buddhist "atheism" is also refuted by the consideration that "between the immutable will of God and the *Lex Aeterna* there is no real distinction" and that "*Dharma*," which has always been a divine name, is also, in Buddhism itself, synonymous with *Brahma*. We also note that the author quite rightly insists on the fact that neither the doctrine of causality nor that of the chain of actions and their effects implies, contrary to another widespread error, the common idea of "reincarnation," which in reality does not exist in Buddhism or in any traditional doctrine. The choice of texts that follows this first part, and is undoubtedly attributable to Miss Horner, comprises a set of excerpts grouped according to the themes to which they refer, some of which appear to have been retranslated from Pali, while others are taken from various existing English translations.

1950

Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Hindouisme et Bouddhisme*^{10*} . Translated from English by René Allar and Pierre Ponsoye. (Gallimard, Paris). We would like to draw our readers' attention to this excellent translation of the work of our late collaborator, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, recently published in the Tradition collection. Having already reviewed the English edition of this important book (see the August 1946 issue), which corrects a large number of errors and confusions made by Orientalists, we will not dwell on it again. We will only recall that the two somewhat parallel parts into which it is divided clearly highlight the concordance that exists

^{10*} *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Paidós, Barcelona, 1997.

between Hinduism and Buddhism; it is clear, however, with regard to the latter, that it is not a question of its more or less deviant schools, such as those whose heterodox views were refuted by Shankarâchârya, but of true original Buddhism, which bears as little resemblance as possible to what has been presented in the West under the same name, in which, as the author says, "Buddhism has been admired above all for what it was not."

20 MAGAZINE REVIEWS

VI: *Le Voile d'Isis*

ET: *Études Traditionnelles*

- Buddhism in England*. In *Voile d'Isis*, October 1928. Reprinted in *Articles et Comptes Rendus I*, Paris, 2002
- Le Lotus Bleu*, April 1929. In VI, July 1929. Reprinted in *Le Théosophisme*, Paris, 1965.
- Le Lotus Bleu*, In VI, October 1929. Reprinted in *Le Théosophisme*, Paris, 1965.
- Ultra* (May-June and July-August issues). In VI, November 1929. Reprinted in *Articles et Comptes Rendus I*, Paris, 2002
- Le Lotus Bleu*. In VI, November 1929. Reprinted in *Le Théosophisme*, Paris, 1965.
- Les Amis du Bouddhisme*. In VI, April 1931. Reprinted in *Articles et Comptes Rendus I*, Paris, 2002
- Le Lotus Bleu*. In VI, 1932. Reprinted in *Aperçus sur l'esoterisme islamique et le Taoïsme*, Paris, 1973.
- Lotus Bleu* (January issue). In VI, May 1932. Reprinted in *Articles et Comptes Rendus I*, Paris, 2002
- Synthesis*. In ET, June 1936. Reprinted in *Articles et Comptes Rendus I*, Paris, 2002.
- Journal of the Indian Society* (December 1935). In ET, 1936. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Indian Culture*. In ET, 1936. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Mesures*. In ET, 1938. Reprinted in *Aperçus sur l'esoterisme islamique et le Taoïsme*, Paris, 1973.
- Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. In ET, 1940. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- New Indian Antiquary*. In ET, 1945-46. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- New Indian Antiquary*, In ET, 1945-46. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Journal of American Folklore (1944)*. In ET, 1945-46. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Some Sources of Buddhist Iconography* in Dr. B. C. Law Volume, Part 1. In ET, 1945-46. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- The Wayfarer's Journal*. In ET, April-May 1949. Reprinted in *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Paris, 1966.
- Études Carmelitaines*, 1948. In ET, 1949. Reprinted in *Comptes Rendus*, Paris, 1973.



1928

Buddhism in England. We have received the December 1927 issue of this magazine, which is the organ of the Buddhist Lodge in London. Its Buddhism, "which belongs to no school, but to all," reminds us rather unfortunately of the "eclectic Buddhism" invented long ago by Léon de Rosny. Moreover, we find there only considerations of a totally elementary order, and they are still too visibly "adapted" to the European mentality; this is an example of the spirit of propaganda and "vulgarization" so characteristic of our time. We are far from defending Buddhism, which is outside the regular tradition, but we think that, despite everything, it is still worth much more than the distorted images that have been presented of it in the West.

In the April issue of *Lotus Bleu*, J. Marquès-Rivière continues a series of very interesting articles; this time he discusses "The Buddhist 'Wheel of Life' according to Tibetan traditions." It contrasts sharply with Leadbeater's stories!

In *Lotus Bleu*, there is never anything more interesting to note than the excellent studies by J. Marquès-Rivière: "Tantric Buddhism" (May issue) and "The Science of Emptiness in Northern Buddhism" (June issue), which could only be criticized for being too concise. From the conclusion of the first of the two articles, we highlight a few lines that express a very accurate thought: "One should not rush to draw definitive conclusions, as so many authors have done. The science of the Tantras is multifaceted. It can be very good and somewhat frightening. The will and intention of the operation make everything... It is the Science of Life and Death... Let there be lengthy discussion about the 'how' and 'when' of the introduction of Tantrism into Buddhism, but this seems to me to be very secondary, as there is no possible solution. Tantrism goes back a long way in tradition. It is possible that, due to the evolution of the current age, it has taken on and still takes on a certain predominance. But to conclude from this that it is 'degeneration' and 'witchcraft' is to ignore the facts of the matter.

-In *Ultra* (May-June and July-August issues), we highlight an article on *Mahayana* Buddhism, in which we have seen, not without some surprise, it presented as the product of "secular" and "popular" thought; when it is known that it is, on the contrary, a repair, if one may say so, and a transformation of Buddhism by the influence of the traditional spirit, infusing it with elements of a profound order that were totally lacking in original Buddhism. One can only smile at such assertions and record them as further proof of Western incomprehension.

- *The Lotus Bleu* (August issue) publishes a lecture by Mr. G. E. Monod-Herzen on "Dante and Western Initiation," based on the book by Luigi Valli to which we devoted an article here a few months ago; it is little more than a glimpse of what the work in question contains, and we find there not the slightest indication of the inadequacies and gaps that we have pointed out, placing ourselves precisely from the initiatory point of view. -The same issue contains an article by J. Marquès-Rivière, concluding the series of his studies on Buddhism that we have mentioned on several occasions; this article, entitled "Buddhism and Western Thought," is excellent, like the previous ones; but the points of view it expresses are so contrary to theosophical conceptions (which are among the Western "distortions" he so rightly denounces) that we wonder how such things could have made their way into *Lotus Bleu*.

The Amis du Bouddhisme publish the translation of a pamphlet entitled *Kamma* (Karma) by Bhikku Silacara, a simple propaganda booklet, which nevertheless incidentally rectifies some misconceptions circulating among Westerners.

Lotus Bleu (August-September issue) publishes, under the title "Revelations on Japanese Buddhism," a lecture by Mr. Steinilber-Oberlin on the methods of spiritual development used in the *Zen* sect (a name derived from the Sanskrit *dhyāna*, "contemplation," and not *dziēna*, which we would like to believe is a simple misprint); these methods do not seem "extraordinary" to those familiar with Taoism, which has clearly had a major influence on them. Whatever the case, it is certainly interesting, but why use the word "revelations," which could easily lead one to believe that some secret is being betrayed?

The Lotus Bleu (January issue) publishes a lecture by Alexandra David-Neel on "The Superhuman Life of Guésar of Ling," considered more particularly in its symbolic sense; but the indications given in this regard, however interesting they may be, unfortunately remain a little too fragmentary. In the February issue, a very biased note attempts to attack us through M. Clavelle's article in the January issue of *Le Voile d'Isis*. If the author of this note would take the trouble to refer to the various attacks discussed here, he would undoubtedly understand how misguided he is!

1936

Synthesis, a new publication edited by Félix Valyi, declares itself to be "resolutely inspired by a metaphysical principle" and sets itself the goal of bringing about an intellectual and spiritual rapprochement between different civilizations; these intentions undoubtedly deserve our wholehearted approval. We fear only that there may be some illusions about the role that Orientalists can play in this regard, and also that "eclecticism" may be taken too far. Among the articles of a very varied nature, in French and English, contained in the first volume, there are some whose juxtaposition is somewhat contradictory: thus, alongside an article rightly protesting against the imitation of the West in the Islamic world, is it not regrettable to find another advocating the "secularization" of Indian legislation, that is, the radical suppression of everything that gives it a traditional character? We would like to highlight, as particularly interesting from our point of view, an article entitled "How to interpret Hindu philosophical terms" by Betty Heimann, which represents a real effort at understanding; unfortunately, the results are of rather uneven value, sometimes affected by the very idea that it is "philosophy," and also by a notion of "dynamism" that is not the clearest; but that does not prevent there from being some very noteworthy insights on certain points, especially on the essential role of the verbal root, as well as on the intrinsic value of rhythm and sound. -Under the title "Fundamentals of Buddhist Thought," Bruno Petzold presents an important study in which he endeavors to elucidate the main notions of Buddhism from the *Mahayana* point of view, taking as his framework the division of *the Triratna (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha)* and drawing inspiration mainly from Japanese sources...

The Journal of the Indian Society (December) has published an important study by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy on Jain painting, which, in accordance with the guiding ideas of his *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, discussed elsewhere, happily completes the views set forth in the latter; and the subtitle: *Explicatur reductio haec artis ad theologiam*, inspired by a pamphlet by St. Bonaventure, clearly states his intentions. Like Buddhism, Jainism, although heterodox and formally rejecting the Vedic tradition, has not changed anything essential in the primordial conception of an eternal *Avatâra*, so much so that observations parallel to those arising from the life of the Buddha can be made regarding the "life of the Conqueror" (*jina-charitra*). The author also notes that the rebellion of temporal power (*Kshatra*) against spiritual authority (*Brahma*), reflected in both Jainism and Buddhism, is in a sense prefigured, as a possibility, by a certain "Luciferian" aspect of the Vedic *Indra*; heterodox doctrines of this nature could therefore be considered as the very realization of similar possibilities in the course of a historical cycle. The study concludes with some interesting considerations on the method of "continuous narration" used in the execution of the paintings in question, according to which "a succession of events is represented in spatial simultaneity," which in a certain way restores, by analogy, the timeless character of their metaphysical archetype. All these considerations can obviously also be applied to similar elements found in Christian art or any other traditional art, which always derives, through continuous derivation, from the "universal and unanimous tradition" (*sanâtana dharma*), whose ultimate source is a "revelation" (*shruti*) "received from the beginning of the Light of Lights."

In Indian Culture (vol. III, no. 1), an article by A. K. Coomaraswamy entitled "Renaissance and Omniscience in Pali Buddhism" criticizes Mrs. Rhys Davids' conception, which is entirely in line with the one we ourselves formulated recently in this same place, on the occasion of a review of one of her works. The author rightly protests against a certain tendency to distort the texts by depriving them of their metaphysical parts, which can only lead to a complete distortion of their meaning. He also points out that anyone who has studied the doctrines of death and rebirth in the *Rig-Veda*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and Pali Buddhism has never found in any of these texts any "development" of such a doctrine, nor the slightest teaching of a return of the being to the same world abandoned at death; everywhere there is talk of "transmigration," but nothing at all of "reincarnation."

1938

In Mesures (July issue), Emile Dermenghem studies, citing numerous examples, "The moment among mystics and in some poets"; perhaps it is regrettable that he did not distinguish more clearly in this exposition three degrees that are, in reality, very different: firstly, the higher meaning of the "moment," of a strictly metaphysical and initiatory nature, which is naturally found particularly in Sufism and also in Japanese Zen (where *satori*, as a technical procedure for realization, is clearly related to certain Taoist methods); then, the meaning, already diminished and limited in scope, that it takes on among mystics; finally, the more or less distant reflection that may still remain of it among certain secular poets. On the other hand, we believe that the essential point, which, in the first case at least, gives the "instant" its profound value, lies much less in the fact that it is sudden (which is, moreover, more apparent than real, as it is always, in such a case, in fact, the result of previous work, sometimes very long, but whose effect had remained latent until then), than in its indivisible nature, for it is this that allows its transposition into the "timeless" and, as a consequence, the transformation of a transitory state of being into a permanent and definitive acquisition.

1940

In the Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies (July), Ananda Coomaraswamy studies the meaning of various Pali terms that have been inaccurately interpreted in recent publications; he points out that they cannot be truly understood unless we refer to their Sanskrit form and the ideas that the latter conveyed in the environment in which Buddhism originally developed; this presupposes a knowledge of the Vedas and the Upanishads which, moreover, has too often been lacking in Buddhist commentators themselves. The "articles" devoted to some of the terms in question constitute a true and proper study of Buddhist rhetoric and dialectic; others touch more directly on points of doctrine and symbolism, and again we find in them some of the considerations already expressed here by the author; it is in one of these "articles" that we find the note on the *pāsa* that we discuss elsewhere in the journal, in our article on the "eye of the needle."

1945-46

In the New Indian Antiquary (December 1939), in an article entitled "The Reinterpretation of Buddhism," A. K. Coomaraswamy examines some points on which the conception of Buddhism that had been held until then needs to be corrected, a conception that was so admired in Europe precisely because it had been so misunderstood. Rhys Davids has contributed to this correction in his recent books, particularly with regard to the interpretation of *anattā*, which in no way implies a

* Compiled in Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Gotama the Buddha*, Sanz y Torres/Ignitus, Madrid, 2007.

denial of the *Ātmā*, as has so often been claimed, but which cannot truly be understood except by virtue of the distinction between the "Great *Ātmā*" and the "little *ātmā*," that is, ultimately, between the "Self" and the "I" (whatever terms one prefers to adopt to indicate them in Western languages, and among which the term "soul" should be avoided above all, since it causes innumerable confusions); and only the latter is denied to possess an essential and permanent reality. When it is said that individuality, understood both in its psychic and corporeal aspects, is not the "Self," this presupposes that a "Self" exists, a "Self" that is the true and spiritual being, completely distinct and independent from that composite which serves only as its temporary vehicle, and of which it is not at all one of the component elements; and in this, Buddhism does not differ in any way from Brahmanism. Therefore, the state of the *arhat*, who is liberated from the "I" or "small *ātmā*," should in no way be considered as "annihilation" (which is, moreover, properly inconceivable); he has ceased to be "someone," but precisely because of that, he "is" purely and simply; it is also true that he is "nowhere" (and here Rhys Davids seems to have been confused about the meaning of this), but since the "Self" cannot obviously be subject to space, neither can it be subject to quantity or any other special condition of existence. Another important consequence is that, in both Buddhism and Brahmanism, there can be no question of "so-called reincarnation": the "I," being transitory and impermanent, ceases to exist with the dissolution of the composite that constituted it, and therefore there is nothing that can really "reincarnate"; only the "Spirit" can be conceived as "transmigrating," or passing from one "dwelling place" to another, but that is precisely because it is, in itself, essentially independent of any individuality and of any contingent state. The study ends with an examination of the meaning of the word *bhū*, a term whose meaning Rhys Davids has insisted too exclusively on the idea of "becoming," although such an idea is often contained therein, and of the meaning of the word *jhāna* (*dhyāna* in Sanskrit), a meaning that is not that of "meditation" but rather that of "contemplation" and which, being an essentially active state, has nothing in common with any "mystical experience."

The New Indian Antiquary (April 1940) has published an important study by A. K. Coomaraswamy, entitled *Ākimchannā: self-naughting*, which refers to a subject related to the question of *anattā*, and deals mainly with the parallels that exist in this regard between Buddhist and Christian doctrines. Man has two *ātmā*, in the sense indicated above, one rational and mortal, the other spiritual and absolutely unconditioned by time and space; it is the former that must be "annihilated," that is, man must free himself from it through the very knowledge of its true nature. Our real being is not at all engaged in the operations of discursive thought and empirical knowledge (with which philosophy generally seeks to prove the validity of our consciousness of being, which is properly anti-metaphysical); and it is only this "spirit," distinct from the body and the soul, that is, from everything that is phenomenal and formal, that tradition recognizes as having absolute freedom, which, exercised both in relation to time and space, necessarily entails immortality. We cannot summarize the numerous quotations that prove in the most decisive way possible that such a doctrine is as Christian as it is Buddhist (in fact, it can be said to be universal), nor the texts that more specifically define the concept of *ākimchannā* in its Buddhist form; we will only point out that anonymity is considered an essential aspect of *ākimchannā*, which is directly related to what we ourselves have expounded (*Le Règne de la Quantité et les Signes des Temps*, chap. IX), where we have also recalled the article we are discussing here) about the higher meaning of anonymity and its role in traditional civilizations.

The Journal of the American Oriental Society (supplement to the April-June 1944 issue) has published two studies by A. K. Coomaraswamy, the first of which is entitled:

"Reminiscence, India, and Plato" ; this refers to Platonic "reminiscence" and its equivalent in Hindu and Buddhist traditions. This doctrine, according to which what we call "learning" is actually "remembering," implies that our "knowledge" is nothing more than participation in the omniscience of an immanent spiritual principle, just as beauty is such through participation in Beauty, and each being is a participation in pure Being. This omniscience is correlative with timeless omnipresence; therefore, one should not speak of a "foreknowledge" of the future as such, from which our destiny would be arbitrarily decreed, and it is from this false conception that all the usual confusion on the subject arises. Under these conditions, it is neither a knowledge of the future nor a knowledge of the past, but only a "now"; the experience of duration is incompatible with omniscience, and this is why the empirical "I" is incapable of the latter. On the other hand, to the extent that we are able to identify with the omniscient "Self," we rise above the concatenations of events that constitute destiny; consequently, this doctrine of knowledge by participation is inseparably linked with the possibility of liberation from pairs of opposites, of which the past and the future, the "here" and the "there," are but particular cases. As Nicholas of Cusa says, "the wall of Paradise in which God resides is made of such opposites, between which passes the narrow path that allows access"; in other words, our path passes through the "now" and the "nowhere," of which no empirical experience is possible, but the existence of "reminiscence" assures us that the Way is open to those who understand the Truth. The second study, "The One and Only Transmigrant"² is in a way an explanation of Shankarâchârya's statement that "truly there is no other transmigrant (*samsârî*) but *Ishwara*." The process of contingent existence or becoming, in any world, is a "reiteration of death and birth"; liberation (*Moksha*) is properly the liberation from that becoming. In traditional doctrine, there is no mention of "reincarnation" at all, unless that term is understood simply as the transmission of the elements of the individual and temporal "I" from the father to his descendants. Transmigration is something very different: when a being dies, the "Self," which is of a universal order, transmigrates (*samsarati*), that is, it continues to animate contingent existences, whose forms are predetermined by the concatenation of mediate causes. Liberation is not for our "I," but for that "Self" that never becomes "someone," that is, it is not for us unless we are no longer ourselves as individuals, but have realized the identity expressed by the Upanishadic formula "You are That." This doctrine, moreover, is not specific to India, as numerous texts belonging to other traditional forms show; in this case, as in that of "reminiscence," it is a doctrine that is certainly part of the universal tradition.

-In a series of notes entitled ***Some Sources of Buddhist Iconography***³ (Dr. B. C. Law Volume, Part I), A. K. Coomaraswamy provides some new examples of the conformity of this iconography with Hindu symbolism prior to Buddhism. The representation of the Buddha as a "pillar of fire" is closely related to the description of *Brahma* as the "Tree of Life," which is also a "burning bush"; that axial pillar, supporting the Sky, is naturally also a symbol of *Agni*, and "there is no doubt that the representation of a pillar or a tree of fire supported by a lotus is ultimately based on the Vedic texts that refer to the unique and archetypal birth of *Agni Vanapasti*, or the tree of a thousand branches, born of the lotus." The prototype

* Compiled in Coomaraswamy, *Indian and Platonic Remembrance*, Sanz y Torres/Ignitus, Madrid, 2007.

² Compiled in Coomaraswamy, *Indian and Platonic Remembrance*, Sanz y Torres/Ignitus, Madrid, 2007.

³ "Some sources of Buddhist iconography." Compiled in Coomaraswamy, *The Indian Doctrine of the Ultimate End of Man*, Sanz y Torres/Ignitus, Madrid, 2007.

The story of Buddha's victory in his dispute with Kassapa, whose wood for the sacrificial fire refuses to burn while his own ignites immediately, is found in the *Taittiriya Samhitâ* (II, 5, 8). –The flame above the head of a Buddha is explained in this passage from *the Bhagavad-Gîtâ* (XIV, II): "Where there is Knowledge, light emanates from the orifices of the body." –The *Bodhisattva's* struggle with *Mâra*, shortly before the "Great Awakening," has as its prototype Indra's battle against *Vritra*, *Ahi*, or *Namuchi*, all of whom are assimilated to Death (*Mṛityu*). In both cases, the hero, although alone, still has an "entourage" or "guard" which is in reality made up of the "breaths" (*pranâh*) or regenerated "powers" of the soul, gathered in *samâdhi*. This state of "possession of oneself," in which the forms of Death (represented by the army of *Mâra*) are mastered, is often referred to as a "dream," even though it is the most completely "awake" state there can be. In this case, as always happens in similar cases, there is a reversal of the relationships that exist, under ordinary conditions, between sleep and waking consciousness: "That our currently active life is a 'dream' from which we must one day awaken, and that, once awakened, we must seem to plunge into sleep, is a conception that reappears constantly in the metaphysical doctrines of the whole world." Finally, it should be noted that in some representations of *Mara's* army, headless demons are present; this refers to a question that Coomaraswamy has dealt with more extensively in other studies, which we will discuss shortly.

1947

In the *Journal of American Folklore* (1944), A. K. Coomaraswamy published "A Note on the Stickfast Motif": these are symbolic stories or tales, many of which are found in Buddhist texts and in particular in the *Jâtaka*, in which an object filled with mistletoe or some other trap of the same kind (which may be, or appear to be, animated) is set by a hunter representing Death; the being who is caught by such a trap is generally attracted to it by thirst or some other desire that drives him to wander into unfamiliar territory, representing the attraction of sensual things. The author shows, through various parallels, that a story of this type may well have originated in India, although it cannot be said that this is definitely the case, and it may also be admitted that it spread to India or other places from some common prehistoric source; but what must be accepted as certain in all cases is that, for his research to be valid, the history of "motifs" must take into account not only their "letter" or external form, but also their "spirit," that is, their real meaning, which, unfortunately, "folklorists" too often seem to forget.

1949

In 1945, Marco Pallis published an article in *The Wayfarer's Journal*^{4*} entitled "The Way and the Mountain" (The Way and the Mountain), in which, emphasizing that the title of this publication and of the group of which it is the organ implies, albeit unconsciously, one of the oldest and most significant symbols, that of travel (*wayfaring*), he first gives readers unfamiliar with these issues some notions about symbolism in general, its nature, and its uses. He then addresses the symbolism of the Way, referring especially to Taoism and Buddhism; and, with regard to the latter, he points out the distinction, particularly clear in *Mahayana*, between the "indirect way," which is that of ordinary men, and the "direct way," which is followed only by a few and can be compared to the "narrow way" of Christianity. After giving further examples taken from different traditions, each of which highlights a more particular aspect of this symbolism, he returns to the Mountain: many pilgrimages have as their destination a sacred mountain, which is, in all cases, an image that "replaces" that which symbolizes the "axis of the World"; and it should be noted that, while the Way

^{4*} Compiled in the volume *El Camino y la Montaña*, Kier, Buenos Aires. Translator's note.

It could initially be considered as located at a specific level, but instead it rises from the foot of the mountain, following the "axial" direction, that is, when moving from the horizontal to the vertical direction. Another important symbol is the *cairn* or pile of stones placed at the entrance to the path, then found at the main stages of the ascent and finally at the summit, which, being an emblem and a reduced image of the symbolic Mountain, constantly reminds the traveler that the true Way must follow the axis until the summit, which is the supreme Goal, is reached. The traveler may also encounter secondary summits along the way that appear to be transitional goals, because they all symbolize the ultimate Goal in a certain way; but these are really nothing more than other "stages," the main one being the "primordial state," that of the "true man," represented in Dante by the summit of the mountain of Purgatory. The true summit is the only point where all distinction between the various routes leading to it disappears; not only does it occupy no space, even though the entire mountain is contained therein, but it is also outside of time and all succession, and only the "eternal present" reigns there.

In 1948, *Études Carmelitaines* published a special issue on Satan; it is a thick volume comprising exactly 666 pages, a number that, on this occasion, seems to have been chosen expressly.

(...) A study on "The adversary of the good God in primitive [peoples]" contains some rather interesting references, although the classification of so-called "primitive" civilizations adopted there seems to us to raise a number of reservations. In any case, what we cannot but approve of is the way in which it denounces the confusion that often arises from the use, or rather the abuse, of the name "devil," which, corresponding to a well-defined notion, cannot, even when dealing with truly evil entities, be applied indiscriminately in all cases. Unfortunately, it is not certain that all the contributors to the magazine are themselves immune to this confusion. The texts accompanying some of the illustrations even lead us to fear that some of them have gone so far as to share the gross error of ill-informed and uncomprehending travelers who mistake the "terrible" deities of *Mahayana* for "devils"!

EXCERPTS FROM OTHER WORKS

In *Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues*, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1921, chapter: "Las relaciones de los pueblos antiguos" (The relations of ancient peoples). (*General introduction to the study of Hindu doctrines*, Sanz y Torres/Ignitus, Madrid, 2006):

We are not at all authorized, simply because the earliest Greek philosophers preceded Alexander's era by several centuries, to conclude that they knew nothing of Hindu doctrines. To cite one example, atomism, long before it appeared in Greece, was held in India by the school of Kânada and later by the Jains and Buddhists; it may have been imported into the West by the Phoenicians, as some traditions suggest, but, on the other hand, various authors claim that Democritus, who was one of the first among the Greeks to adopt this doctrine, or at least to formulate it precisely, had traveled through Egypt, Persia, and India. The early Greek philosophers may even have been familiar not only with Hindu doctrines but also with Buddhist doctrines, because they certainly predate Buddhism, and moreover, Buddhism soon spread outside India to the regions of Asia closest to Greece and therefore relatively more accessible. This circumstance would strengthen the very plausible thesis of borrowings, certainly not exclusive but nevertheless significant, from Buddhist civilization: this would explain, in particular, the fact that most physical philosophers accepted only four elements instead of five.



In *Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues*, Marcel Rivière, Paris, 1921, chapter "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy":

The conception of atoms as the constituent elements of things has as its corollary that of the void in which these atoms must move; from this, sooner or later, a theory of the "universal void" was bound to arise, understood not in a metaphysical sense relating to the "unmanifest," but rather in a physical or cosmological sense, and this is what happened in fact with certain Buddhist schools, which, identifying this void with *Akâsha* or ether, were naturally led by this very fact to deny its existence as a corporeal element and to admit only four elements instead of five. It should also be noted in this regard that most Greek philosophers also admitted only four elements, like the Buddhist schools in question, and that if some did speak of ether, they always did so in a rather restricted manner, giving it a much more special meaning than the Hindus and a much less precise one. We have already said enough about which side the plagiarisms are on when concordances of this kind are found, especially when these plagiarisms are incomplete, which is perhaps their most visible mark; and let it not be objected that the Hindus "invented" ether later, for more or less plausible reasons, analogous to those that make it generally accepted by modern philosophers; their reasons are of a different order and are not drawn from experience; there is no "evolution" of traditional conceptions, as we have already explained, and, moreover, the testimony of the Vedic texts is formal both for ether and for the other four corporeal elements. It therefore seems that the Greeks, when they came into contact with Hindu thought, took up this thought, in many cases distorted and mutilated, and moreover did not always present it faithfully, as they had taken it up; on the other hand, it is possible, as we have indicated, that in the course of their history they had more direct and continuous relations with Buddhists, or at least with certain Buddhists, than with Hindus. Be that as it may, let us add, with regard to atomism, that what was most serious about it was that its characteristics predisposed it to serve as the foundation for this "naturalism" that is so generally contrary to Eastern thought, as is often the case, in more or less accentuated forms, in Western conceptions. It can be said, in fact, that if all "naturalism" is not necessarily

atomist, atomism is always more or less "naturalistic," at least in tendency; when incorporated into a philosophical system, as was the case among the Greeks, it even becomes "mechanistic," which does not always mean "materialistic," because materialism is a very modern concept. This is of little importance here, since in India it is not a question of philosophical systems, nor of religious dogmas; the deviations of Hindu thought have never been religious or philosophical, and this is also true of Buddhism, which is, however, throughout the East, what seems to come closest, in certain respects, to Western views, and which, for this very reason, lends itself very easily to the false assimilations to which Orientalists are accustomed; in this regard, and although the study of Buddhism does not strictly fall within our subject, we must nevertheless say at least a few words about it here, if only to dispel certain common misconceptions in the West.



In *Le Théosophisme*, Paris, 1965, chap. II. (*Theosophism, History of a Pseudo-Religion*, Sanz y Torres/Ignitus, Madrid, 2006):

Being very familiar with everything related to the H. B. of L. (whose members, incidentally, do not sign their writings with those initials, but only with a swastika), we can affirm that, after what we have just recounted, it never had any official or unofficial relationship with the Theosophical Society; on the contrary, it was in constant opposition to it, as well as to the English Rosicrucian societies, which we will discuss a little later, although some individuals may have been members of these different organizations at the same time, which may seem strange in such circumstances, but which is nevertheless not an exceptional occurrence in the history of secret societies. Moreover, we have documents that provide absolute proof of what we have just stated, specifically a letter from one of the dignitaries of the H. B. of L., dated July 1887, in which "esoteric Buddhism," that is, the theosophical doctrine, is described as "an attempt to pervert the Western spirit," and where it is also stated, among other things, that "true and real adepts do not teach those doctrines of 'karma' and 'reincarnation' put forward by the authors of *Esoteric Buddhism* and other theosophical works," and that "neither in the aforementioned works nor in the pages of *The Theosophist* is a fair and esoteric view of these important questions to be found." Perhaps the division of the H. B. of L. in "outer circle" and "inner circle" may have suggested to Blavatsky the idea of establishing an "exoteric section" and an "esoteric section" in her Society; but the teachings of the two organizations contradict each other on many essential points; in particular, the doctrine of the H. B. of L. is clearly "anti-reincarnationist," and we will have to return to this in connection with a passage from *Isis Unveiled* that seems to have been inspired by it, since this work was written by H. P. Blavatsky during the period we are currently discussing.



In *Le Théosophisme*, Paris, 1965, chap. VI:

As regards the accusation of "black magic" in particular, it is the one most commonly and indiscriminately levelled by theosophists against all those they consider their enemies or rivals. We have already seen how this accusation was made against the members of the "Order of the Dew and the Light," and we shall find yet another case later on, this time in a dispute between theosophists. Moreover, Blavatsky herself was the first to set an example of such an attitude, since in her works she frequently refers to "black magicians," whom she also calls *Dugpas* and "Brothers of the Shadow," and whom she opposes to the "Adepts" of the "Great White Lodge." In reality, the *Dugpas* are, in Tibet, the Red Lamas, that is, the Lamas of the primitive rite, prior to the reform of Tsong-Khapa; the Yellow Lamas, those of the reformed rite, are called *Gelugpas*, and, moreover, there is no antagonism between the two. One may wonder why H. P. Blavatsky

professed such hatred for the *Dugpas*; perhaps it was simply because she had failed in some attempt to enter into relations with them, and had felt deep resentment; this is at least, without being able to state anything with absolute certainty, the explanation that seems most plausible to us, and also the one most consistent with the angry and vengeful character that even her best friends could not help but recognize in the founder of the Theosophical Society.



In *Le Théosophisme*, Paris, 1965, chap. IX:

"Alexandre Csoma de Kőrös has published an analysis of the *Kandjur* and the *Tandjur* and translated some fragments in volume XX of *Asiatic Researches*, Calcutta, 1836, in 4th edition, and from this the famous Mrs. Blavatsky has randomly plagiarized a good part of that "theosophy" that she claims to have received, by telepathy, from occult stylists in the heart of Tibet, undoubtedly not far from Renan's "Asgaard" (see *Dialogues et Fragments*, Paris, 1876)." (Augustin Chaboseau, *Essai sur la Philosophie bouddhique*, p. 97).



In *Le Théosophisme*, Paris, 1965, chap. XVII:

The "Angarika" H. Dharmapâla (or Dhammapâla), a Buddhist from Ceylon, was delegated to the "Parliament of Religions" with the title of "lay missionary" by the "High Priest" Sumangala, as representative of the *Mahâ-Bodhi Samâj* (Society of Great Wisdom) of Colombo¹. It is said that during his stay in North America, he "officiated" in a Catholic church, but we believe this to be mere legend, especially since he declared himself to be a "layman." Perhaps he gave a lecture, which would not surprise those familiar with American customs. Be that as it may, for several years he traveled throughout North America and Europe, giving lectures on Buddhism everywhere; in 1897, he was in Paris, where he spoke at the Guimet Museum and took part in the Congress of Orientalists. The last known mention of this character is a letter he wrote from Calcutta on October 13, 1910, to the head (identified only by the initials T. K.) of an American secret society called *the "Order of Light,"* which also describes itself as a "Great School" and which recruits its members mainly from the higher ranks of Freemasonry. One of the most active members of this organization is a well-known theosophist, Dr. J. D. Buck, who is also a dignitary of Scottish Freemasonry and was one of the speakers at the "Parliament of Religions." H. P. Blavatsky had a special esteem for Dr. Buck, whom she

¹*The Mahâ-Bodhi Society* has unique connections, as can be seen in an article by Alexandra David-Neel entitled "Free Thought in India and the Contemporary Buddhist Movement" published in *Les Documents du Progrès* (January and February 1914). Indeed, we read there: "The *Mahâ-Bodhi* Society has two main headquarters in Colombo (on the island of Ceylon) and in Calcutta, a central office near Benares, on the site where, according to tradition, the Buddha delivered his first sermon, and numerous branches in various parts of India. This Society delegated me in August 1910 to represent it at the Free Thought Congress held in Brussels. In this connection, the secretary general, M. Dharmapâla, sent me a letter to be read at the session." Here is a characteristic excerpt from this report: "We are deeply convinced that the marvelous progress made by science in the West will enable the ignorant masses to be freed from all forms of ritualism and superstition, the creation of a despotic clergy... The Buddha was the first to proclaim the science of human betterment, and on this 2499th anniversary of his preaching, those of us who follow his doctrine rejoice to see the promoters of scientific thought in the West working, according to the same principle, for the emancipation and instruction of the entire human race, without distinction of nationality or color." Mrs. Alexandra David-Neel, a well-known theosophist, stated in the same article that "the Buddha should be considered the father of free thought." Alexandra David-Neel, author of a book on *Le Modernisme Bouddhiste*, published in 1927 an account of an exploration to Tibet entitled *Voyage d'une Parisienne à Lhassa* (Translator's note: *Journey to Lhasa*, Indigo Editions, Barcelona).

He called him "a true Philaethist" and, quoting a passage from a lecture he gave in April 1889 before the Theosophical Convention in Chicago, paid him this tribute: "No Theosophist has better understood and better expressed the real essence of Theosophy than our honorable friend Dr. Buck." It should also be noted that the "Order of Light" is distinguished by a most pronounced anti-Catholic tendency; however, in his letter, Dharmapâla warmly congratulated the American Freemasons for their efforts to "preserve the people from the bondage of papal devilry" (*sic*), and wished them complete success in that struggle, adding that "the clergy, in all countries and in all ages, has shown only one goal, the fulfillment of which seems to be its sole desire, and that is to reduce the people to slavery and keep them in ignorance." We wonder whether language such as this has received the approval of the "High Priest of the Southern Buddhist Church," who claims to be at the head of a "clergy," even though nothing of the sort ever existed in the conception and organization of early Buddhism.



In *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Védânta*, chapter XXIII, Paris, 1925. (*Man and his future according to Vedanta*, Sanz y Torres/Ignitus Ediciones, Madrid, 2006):

The true meaning of the word *Nirvana*, which Orientalists have given so many false interpretations, can therefore be understood: this term, which is far from being specific to Buddhism as is sometimes believed, literally means "extinction of breath or agitation," that is, the state of a being that is no longer subject to any change or modification, that is definitively liberated from form, as well as from the rest of the accidents or bonds of manifested existence. *Nirvana* is the supra-individual condition (that of *Prâjna*) and *Parinirvâna* is the unconditioned state; the terms *Nirvritti* ("extinction of change or action") and *Parinirvitti* are also used in the same sense. In Islamic esotericism, the corresponding terms are *Fanâ* ("extinction") and *Fanâ el Fanâi* (literally "extinction of extinction").



In *La Crise du Monde Moderne*, chap. I, Paris, 1927. (*The Crisis of the Modern World*, Paidós, Barcelona, 2001):

In the sixth century BC, whatever the cause, considerable changes took place in almost all peoples; moreover, these changes took different forms depending on the country. In some cases, it was a readjustment of tradition to conditions different from those that had previously existed, a readjustment that was carried out in a strictly orthodox manner; This is what happened specifically in China, where the doctrine, originally constituted as a single whole, was then divided into two clearly distinct parts: Taoism, reserved for an elite, which comprised pure metaphysics and the traditional sciences of a strictly speculative nature, and Confucianism, common to all without distinction, which dealt with practical and mainly social applications. Among the Persians, there also seems to have been a readaptation of Mazdeism, since this was the era of the last Zoroaster. In India, Buddhism was born at that time, which, whatever its original character may have been²

² In reality, the question of Buddhism is far from being as simple as this brief overview might suggest; and it is interesting to note that, although Hindus, from the point of view of their own tradition, have always condemned Buddhists, many of them nevertheless profess great respect for the Buddha himself, a respect that in some even goes so far as to see him as the ninth *Avatâra*, while others identify him with Christ. On the other hand, as far as Buddhism as it is known today is concerned, it is necessary to take great care to distinguish between its two forms, *Mahayana* and *Hinayana*, or the "Great Vehicle" and the "Small Vehicle"; in general, it can be said that Buddhism outside India differs markedly from its original Indian form, which began to lose ground rapidly after the death of Ashoka and

On the contrary, at least some of its branches led to a rebellion against the traditional spirit, a rebellion that went so far as to deny all authority, to true anarchy, in the etymological sense of "absence of principle," in the intellectual and social order. What is quite curious is that in India there are no monuments dating back beyond this period, and Orientalists, who want to make everything begin with Buddhism, whose importance they singularly exaggerate, have tried to take advantage of this observation in favor of their thesis; However, the explanation for this fact is quite simple: all previous constructions were made of wood, so they naturally disappeared without a trace³; but what is true is that such a change in the mode of construction necessarily corresponds to a profound modification of the general conditions of existence of the people where it occurred.



La Crise du Monde Moderne, chap. III, Paris, 1927:

In any case, in a very general way, there is a feeling that, in the current state of affairs, there is no longer any stability; but while some sense the danger and try to react, most of our contemporaries take pleasure in this disorder, which they see as an externalized image of their own mentality. Indeed, there is an exact correspondence between a world where everything seems to be in pure "becoming," where there is no longer any place for the immutable and the permanent, and the state of mind of men who make all reality consist in this same "becoming," which implies the denial of true knowledge, as well as the very object of this knowledge, that is, transcendent and universal principles. One can even go further: it is the denial of all real knowledge, in any order whatsoever, even in the relative order, since, as we indicated above, the relative is unintelligible and impossible without the absolute, the contingent without the necessary, change without the immutable, multiplicity without unity; "relativism" contains a contradiction in itself, and when one wants to reduce everything to change, one should logically end up denying the very existence of change; ultimately, the famous arguments of Zeno of Elea had no other meaning. Indeed, it must be said that theories of this kind are not exclusive to modern times, as it is necessary not to exaggerate; some examples of this can be found in Greek philosophy, and the case of Heraclitus, with his "universal flow," is the best known in this regard; this is what led the Eleatics to combat both these conceptions and those of the atomists, by a kind of reduction to absurdity. In India itself, something comparable has been found, but, of course, from a different point of view than that of philosophy; some Buddhist schools, in fact, also presented the same character, since one of their main theses was that of the "dissolubility of all things"⁴. Only that these theories were then only exceptions, and as such

disappeared completely a few centuries later.

³ This case is not unique to India and is also found in the West; it is for exactly the same reason that no trace is found of Celtic cities, whose existence is nevertheless indisputable, since it is attested to by contemporary accounts; and here too, modern historians have taken advantage of this absence of monuments to describe the Celts as savages living in the forests.

⁴ Shortly after its origin, Buddhism in India became associated with one of the main manifestations of the rebellion of the *kshatriyas* against the authority of the *Brahmins*, and, as is easy to understand from the above indications, there is, in general, a very direct link between the denial of any immutable principle and that of spiritual authority, between the reduction of all reality to "becoming" and the affirmation of the supremacy of temporal power, whose domain is the world of action; and it could be noted that the emergence of "naturalistic" or anti-metaphysical doctrines always occurs when the element representing temporal power takes precedence over that representing spiritual authority in a civilization.

Rebellions against the traditional spirit, such as those that have occurred throughout the course of *the Kali Yuga*, have had only a fairly limited scope; what is new is the generalization of such conceptions, as we see in the contemporary West.



In *Aperçus sur l'ésoterisme chrétien*: "Christianity and Initiation," Paris, 1954. (*Christian Esotericism I*, Ediciones Via Directa, Valencia, 2007):

This Church was, in short, comparable, from this point of view, to the Buddhist *Sangha*, where admission also had the characteristics of a true initiation⁵, and which is usually likened to a "monastic order," which is fair at least in the sense that its particular statutes were not, like those of a monastic order in the Christian sense of the term, intended to be extended to the whole of the society within which this organization had been established⁶. From this point of view, Christianity is not unique among the various traditional forms known to us, and we believe that this observation is likely to diminish the surprise that some might express.

Following the article on Buddhist ordination mentioned above, we put a question on this subject to A. K. Coomaraswamy; he confirmed that this ordination was never conferred except in the presence of the members of the *Sangha*, composed solely of those who had themselves received it, excluding not only those outside Buddhism, but also "lay" adherents, who were in short nothing more than "outside" associates.



In *Autorité Spirituelle et Pouvoir temporel*, Paris, 1929, chapter II. (*Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*, Paidós, Barcelona, 2001):

Sometimes, the exercise of intellectual functions on the one hand and rituals on the other has given rise to two divisions within the priesthood itself; a very clear example of this can be found in Tibet: "The first of the two great divisions comprises those who advocate the observance of moral precepts and monastic rules as means of salvation; the second encompasses those who prefer a purely intellectual method (called the "direct path"), freeing those who follow it from all laws, whatever they may be.

There is no perfectly watertight partition separating the adherents of the two systems. Very few religious attached to the first system fail to recognize that virtuous living and the discipline of monastic observances, however excellent and in many cases indispensable they may be, are nevertheless only a preparation for a higher path. As for the supporters of the second system, all, without exception, fully believe in the beneficial effects of strict fidelity to moral laws and to those that have been specially decreed for members of the *Sangha* (Buddhist community). Furthermore, they are unanimous in declaring that the first of the methods is the most recommendable for the majority of individuals" (Alexandra David-

⁵ See A. K. Coomaraswamy: Is *Buddhist ordination* an initiation? In the July 1939 issue of *Études Traditionnelles*.

⁶It is this illegitimate extension that later gave rise, in Indian Buddhism, to certain deviations such as the denial of castes; the Buddha did not have to take them into account within a closed organization whose members were, in principle at least, supposed to be beyond such distinctions; but to want to abolish this same distinction in the entire social milieu constituted a formal heresy from the point of view of the Hindu tradition.

Neel, "Mystical Tibet," in *La Revue de Paris*, February 15, 1928). We have reproduced the passage verbatim, although some of the expressions used require some reservations: thus, there are not two "systems" which, as such, would necessarily be mutually exclusive; but the role of contingent means, which is that of rites and observances of all kinds, and their subordination to the purely intellectual path is very clearly defined, and in a manner which, moreover, is exactly in accordance with the teachings of Hindu doctrine on the same subject.



In *La Grande Triade*, Paris, 1946, Prologue:

Those who have discovered a certain Taoist influence in "secret societies" have been unable to go any further and have not drawn any important conclusions from it. Noticing at the same time the presence of other elements, especially Buddhist elements, they have hastened to use the word "syncretism" in this regard, without imagining that what this word designates is something completely contrary, on the one hand, to the eminently "synthetic" spirit of the Chinese race, and also, on the other hand, to the initiatory spirit from which this obviously comes, even if they are only, in this respect, forms quite distant from the center. Of course, we do not mean that all members of these relatively external organizations must be aware of the fundamental unity of all traditions; but those who are behind these same organizations and inspire them necessarily possess this awareness in their capacity as "true men" (*chenn-jen*), and this is what, when circumstances make it opportune or advantageous, allows them to introduce into them formal elements that properly belong to other traditions.

In this regard, we must insist somewhat on the use of elements of Buddhist origin, not so much because they are undoubtedly the most numerous, which is easily explained by the widespread influence of Buddhism in China and throughout the Far East, but because there is a deeper reason for this use that makes it particularly interesting, and without which, to tell the truth, this very spread of Buddhism might not have occurred. One could easily find multiple examples of this use, but they are only of secondary importance in themselves and, precisely because of their large number, serve to attract and retain the attention of the outside observer and, for that very reason, distract it from what is more essential.⁷ There is at least one extremely clear example that refers to something more than mere details: the use of the symbol of the "White Lotus" in the very title of the other Far Eastern organization that is on the same level as the *Tien-ti-huei*⁸. In fact, *Pe-lien-che* or *Pe-lien-tsong*, the name of a Buddhist school, and *Pe-lien-kiao* or *Pe-lien-huei*, the name of the organization in question, designate two totally different things; but in the adoption of this name by this organization emanating from Taoism there is a kind of deliberate misunderstanding, as well as in certain rites of Buddhist appearance, or also in the "legends" in which Buddhist monks almost constantly play a more or less important role. An example such as this clearly shows how Buddhism can serve as a "cover" for Taoism and how, in this way, it has been able to avoid the inconvenience of becoming more public than would have been appropriate for a doctrine that, by its very definition, must always be reserved for a select minority. This is why Taoism was able to promote the spread of Buddhism in China without having to invoke original affinities that exist only in the imagination of some Orientalists; and, moreover, it was able to do so all the better because the esoteric and exoteric parts of the Far Eastern tradition had become two branches of doctrine.

⁷The idea of the supposed "syncretism" of Chinese "secret societies" is a particular case of the result obtained by this means, when the outside observer happens to be a modern Westerner.

(⁸) We say "the other" because there are effectively only two, not all the associations known externally, but branches or emanations of one or the other.

As profoundly different as Taoism and Confucianism are, it was easy to find a place between the two for something that depends on an order that is, so to speak, intermediate. It is worth adding that Chinese Buddhism itself has been greatly influenced by Taoism, as shown by the adoption of certain methods of manifestly Taoist inspiration by some of its schools, especially *Chan*⁹, and also the assimilation of certain symbols of no less Taoist origin, such as that of *Kuan-yin*; and it hardly needs to be noted that this made it even more suitable for playing the role we have just indicated.



In *La Grande Triade*, Paris, 1946, chapter VI:

In Hindu and Tibetan traditions, this same "power of the keys" also corresponds to the dual power of *the vajra*¹⁰; as is well known, this symbol represents lightning, and its two ends, formed by flame-shaped points, correspond to the two opposing aspects of the power represented by lightning¹¹: generation and destruction, life and death. If the *vajra* is related to the "Axis of the World," these two ends correspond to the two poles, as well as to the solstices¹²; it must therefore be placed vertically, which also agrees with its character as a masculine symbol¹³, as well as with the fact that it is essentially a priestly attribute¹⁴. Held in this vertical position, the *vajra* represents the "Middle Way" (which, as will be seen later, is also the "Way of Heaven"); but it can be tilted to one side or the other, and then these two positions correspond to the two tantric "ways" of right and left (*dakshina-mârga* and *vâma-mârga*), and that right and left can also be related to the equinoctial points, just as up and down can be related to the solstice points¹⁵. Obviously, there would be much to say about all this, but in order not to stray too far from our subject, we will content ourselves here with these few

⁹ Chinese transcription of the Sanskrit word *Dhyâna*, "contemplation"; this school is more commonly known by the designation *Zen*, the Japanese form of the same word.

⁽¹⁰⁾ It is both "ray" and "diamond," due to a double meaning of the same word, and in both meanings it is also an "axial" symbol.

¹¹ This is also represented by some double-edged weapons, especially in the symbolism of archaic Greece, the double axe, whose meaning can also be related to that of the caduceus. On the other hand, in Scandinavian tradition, the lightning bolt was represented by Thor's hammer, which can be likened to the Master's mallet in Masonic symbolism; the latter is therefore also equivalent to *the vajra* and, like it, has the dual power of giving life and death, as shown by its role in the initiatory consecration on the one hand and in the legend of Hiram on the other.

¹² In the spatial correspondence of the annual cycle, these are assimilated to the North (winter) and the South (summer), while the two equinoxes are assimilated to the East (spring) and the West (autumn); these relationships are particularly important from a ritual point of view in the Far Eastern tradition.

¹³ Its female counterpart in the Hindu tradition is the conch shell (*shankha*), and in the Tibetan tradition, the ritual bell (*dilbu*), on which a female figure is often seen, representing *Prâjña-pâramitâ* or "Transcendent Wisdom," of which it is a symbol, while the *vajra* is a symbol of the "Method" or "Way."

¹⁴ Lamas hold the *vajra* in their right hand and the bell in their left; these two ritual objects must never be separated.

¹⁵ In Tibetan symbolism, there is sometimes a figure formed by two crossed vajras, which is clearly equivalent to the swastika; the four points then correspond exactly to the four keys of the clavigeral swastika.

indications; and we will conclude by saying that since the power of *the vajra*, or the "power of the keys" which is essentially identical to it, implies the handling and application of cosmic forces in their dual aspect of *yin* and *yang*, it is ultimately nothing other than the very power to govern life and death.



EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS

EXCERPT TO RENE ALLAR

July 11, 1947. In Pierre Feydel, *Historical Insights Concerning the Work of René Guénon*, Milan, 2003

The "diploma from a supposed Buddhist organization in Burma" that Marquès-Rivière had received from Robert Lievens "figures in a place of honor in an exhibition that Rouhier organized on the occasion of the publication of one of his books!"

TO RENÉ BURLET

Cairo, July 31, 1949. In *Cahier de l'Herne: René Guénon*, Paris, 1985.

As for your painting featuring the swastika, if you do not feel comfortable displaying it in public, that is certainly no reason to want to destroy it, as you can simply "reserve" it for yourself and a few others. Neither of the two directions of rotation of the swastika is beneficial or harmful in itself; it all depends on the traditional form in which it is considered. What is beneficial for one may be harmful for another and vice versa, according to their own characteristics. In the same traditional form, the opposite direction to that which is considered beneficial is sometimes used, not for evil actions, but for those related to unfortunate events, such as funeral rites. It also happens that the difference in meaning serves as a distinctive sign for two traditions that circumstances have led to coexist in the same region, such as Lamaism and *Bon* in Tibet. The opposition between swastika and sauvastika is pure fantasy from a linguistic point of view: the name swastika is the only one that applies to both cases interchangeably, and sauvastika is nothing more than an adjective derived from it and designating what is related to the swastika. As for the expressions "to the right" and "to the left," they are very misleading and unsatisfactory; what must actually be considered in order to avoid any error is whether a person performing the rotation would have their right or left side turned toward the center.

TO LOUIS CHARBONNEAU-LASSAY

Paris, February 25, 1926

There have certainly been relations between the Lamas and Christian organizations that existed in the Middle Ages in Central Asia, and which are usually considered "Nestorian" (but what is the precise meaning to be attributed to this designation?). As for saying that there has been an influence proper, that is a little different, and I think it is difficult to be very affirmative in that regard; it is all quite complicated.

February 19, 1927

What you do is always very interesting; I have read your study on the Lamb, and I see that you are asking me a question; I will try to answer it below. Christian influences on certain Lamaist rites seem to me to be indisputable; but as for the "King of the World" (who, moreover, may not reside in Tibet), the question is quite different, and in that case it is certainly a symbol that predates Christianity. This is also linked to apocalyptic symbolism, which I do not believe can be sufficiently explained by the role of the Lamb in Judaism alone.

Regarding the "King of the World," you have seen from P. Le Cour's letter that my book has finally appeared; I should rather say that it has appeared only halfway, since the printer has so far sent only part of the copies, so that I do not yet have any at my disposal; as soon as I have it, I will be happy to send you one.

Available in facsimile in *Unpublished correspondence between Guénon and Charbonneau-Lassay*: <http://www.cesnur.org/paracllet/guenon1.html>

TO ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

Cairo, February 11, 1936

I have just received your letter of January 21, along with your translation of my chapter from *La Crise du Monde moderne*. I am deeply grateful to you for it; I find it truly perfect, as well as your very kind "introduction" note that preceded it! As I am unable to speak about this myself in *Le Voile d'Isis*, because I am very directly involved, may I ask you to kindly send a copy to Mr. A. Préau, 42, rue Etienne Marcel, Paris (2nd)? Thank you in advance.

A. B. Keith's phrase is very interesting, as the point of view is unusually clear; and I will certainly use it if the occasion arises... And how appropriate to the circumstances is your quotation from St. Augustine!

I am now reading a book by Mrs. Rhys Davids: *The Birth of Indian Psychology and its Developments in Buddhism*, and I see here especially what you were telling me about lately:

That confusion between "soul," "spirit," "self," etc., is truly appalling! And What can be said about your point of view, which claims to be "historical"? Your "*Sakya*" strikes me as being, in large part, a figment of your imagination due simply to your "anti-monastic" prejudice...

Cairo, April 22, 1936

Dear Sir,

I received your letter dated April 1 last week, and the day before yesterday I received your *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, which I was waiting for in order to reply, so that I could thank you at the same time. I have already read part of it; the point of view you take is very interesting and seems to me to be entirely correct; the symbols referring to the World Axis are particularly significant. The comparison you make between the *trishula* and the *Vajra* is very noteworthy; I have spoken of *the Vajra* in the past in an article on "thunder stones," but perhaps I will have another opportunity to return to the subject. On the other hand, you have touched on a question linked to a "prehistoric" mystery: the figures of footprints, human and animal; there is something here that I have never been able to pin down very precisely, but which seems important to me; do you not think you could develop this question separately? One point that is not entirely clear to me concerns the Yakshas. I have always thought that they were mainly associated with "underground fire," like the Cabiri, but is there something else here? Surely, the title *Buddhist Symbolism* that you are considering would have better reflected the nature of the work, especially since it deals mainly with "aniconic" symbols. It is very curious that, in Christianity too, it is symbols of this type that were used exclusively at the beginning...

January 27, 1937

What you explain to me regarding *anartâ* seems much more "normal" than the ordinary interpretation, which raises difficulties and even endless contradictions. Should we conclude that Buddhism, at least in its *Hinayana* form, has become more heterodox than it was at the beginning? And, if so, when and how did this subsequent deviation occur?

November 11, 1938

I have not yet seen Mrs. Rhys Davids' new book; however, it is still possible that we will receive it if it has been published by Luzac like the previous ones. The use of the word *dīksh* in relation to Buddhist ordination is indeed interesting. As for the question of the number of elements, your interpretation would reduce it, as you say, to a question of terminology; however, I wonder if it would be valid for all schools, since some of them seem to establish the equality *ākāsha=shūnya*.

December 17, 1938

Thank you also in advance for the forthcoming article you have announced about Mrs. Rhys Davids' latest book; we have not yet received it, but if it is sent to us, I already know that there will be no need to mention it in the reviews, so as not to repeat your article. I also thank you for your explanations regarding *ākāsha* among Buddhists; the equivalence *ākāsha* = "chaos" is indeed correct, since it is the first undifferentiated element; this "chaos," properly understood, is not, however, the "Void" in the metaphysical sense; it can only be called "void" in a certain relative sense, as the Hebrew expression in Genesis is translated in the Vulgate by *inanis et vacua*." It remains to be seen exactly what happens with the concept of *shūnyatâ* in the different Buddhist schools; on the other hand, the Jains are also generally considered to link *ākāsha* as an element; do you have any details on this last point? The name "Indonesia" is usually given, I believe, only to the Malay islands; for this reason, I had not thought of Easter Island; it also represents an enigma that seems quite difficult to solve...

April 10, 1940

What you say about Mr. Pallis' book is certainly fair; it can surely reach other readers than those who might be reached by a purely doctrinal work. As for Mrs. David-Neel, I completely agree with you; I had a rather unpleasant impression of her at one time; it is true that this was some thirty years ago and that I have never seen her since, but I have heard many rather strange stories about her that do not inspire confidence; in any case, her attraction to "phenomena" is undeniable, and that is above all what must have been the cause of her success. Mr. Pallis had told me about *Mipán*, but this book was first published in French under the title *Le Lama aux cinq Sagesses*, with the dual authorship of Mrs. David-Neel and Lama Yongden, and I have many reasons to believe that the latter is nothing more than a pseudonym...

December 20, 1945

I have just received your letter of November 15, and a few days ago I received a copy of your letter to Mr. Pallis regarding chapter VI of *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*. I thank you for sharing these observations with me, and I will see how I can arrange to take them into account; I think the simplest thing will be to delete much of the end of the chapter, that is, everything concerning *Ashoka*, since it is not

possible to introduce here considerations that would be very complex and extensive. I had modified only those passages that had some connection with original Buddhism, not thinking that the rest might also give rise to objections. Anyway, as soon as I have examined this, I will send the new text to Mr. Pallis so that he can modify the translation accordingly. There is only one point to which I would like to draw your attention: is the actual consecration conferred on a *Shudra* (or, even more generally, on any other *Kshatriya*), even in the regular forms, not invalidated by the lack of request on the part of the recipient?

Cairo, April 10, 1946

Dear Sir,

I have just received the card (undated) acknowledging receipt of my letter of February 5 (*). Thank you in advance for sending me the articles you mentioned; let us hope that they will reach me better than the previous ones, of which I still have no news!

Mr. Luc Benoist has written to me that he has received *Hinduism and Buddhism* and intends to translate it himself; he only fears that you may find the publication deadline a little long, which is unfortunately unavoidable due to the fact that the number of volumes to be published in the collection is limited to three per year.

I am glad to hear that you have received the first two issues of *E. T.*; the third was published at the beginning of March, and I think the fourth should be ready by now; so, after all, things are back to almost normal...

The *Aperçus* were published exactly one month ago, but I don't think anyone has received a copy yet. Chacornac is so busy with everything that it would not be surprising if this took a little longer. *Les Principes* should be coming out any day now, and I am expecting to receive a copy of the second edition of *Le Règne*. Regarding the latter, Mr. Luc Benoist told me that it would be a good idea to come to an agreement with Gallimard as soon as possible regarding the translation, and that he intended to write to him about it; but I see that you yourself have already thought of this.

I am very happy to hear that you have a possibility in mind for the American edition of all my books; what exactly is *Asia Press*? You had previously mentioned John Day to me for *Le Règne*; I wonder if this is now something else or if it is actually just the name of your firm.

There is currently a project to publish the French translation of *Peaks and Lamas*, and we must hope that this will come to fruition despite the current difficulties; you are no doubt aware that Mrs. Gleizes is doing the translation. I believe that Mr. Pallis must still be in Switzerland; at least, he was there a fortnight ago and there was no talk of his departure. I would like to remind you of my request for an address to which I could send my books.

Please accept, dear Sir, my best and most cordial wishes.

LETTER FROM ANANDA COOMARASWAMY TO RENÉ GUÉNON:

April 12, 1946

My dear Mr. Guénon:

I agree with you regarding the implicit limitation in Tagore's writings. But I do not see why you object to the equation *ananda = felicitas or delectatio*. The root is *nand*, to obtain pleasure, with the prefix auto referring *to*. And, apart from ordinary uses, BU. IV. 1.6 regarding Brahma cannot be ignored: "What is His bliss (*ananda*)? Truly, the intellect; it is through the intellect that one goes to the woman, —a son in her image is born of her. This is his bliss: the most high Brahma is the intellect." Here *manas*, of course, is equal to *noûs, intellectus vel spiritus*, and the "woman" is *Vac*; the son is the concept, and *ananda* is the divine pleasure in the conception and

birth of the Logos pronounced. Ananda is the divine delight in what Eckhart calls "the act of fertilization latent in eternity."

In connection with the question of whether Buddhist reception into the order of Bhiksus is an initiation, I see confirmation of my affirmative opinion, since I now find, moreover, that preliminary shaving and lustral washing are regularly referred to as an *abhiseka*, and also that the accepted disciple becomes a "son of the Buddha" and is endowed with "royalty" (*adhipatya*). Lustration corresponds to baptism, which was certainly an initiation in its origin.

I also find an interesting correlation between the Buddhist *ksana* and the Sufi *waqt*, both "moments" without duration and the only place (*loka*) of real being as something distinct from "becoming" (just as *ousia* is distinct from *geneses*, *essentia* from *esse*). This "moment" is the "world within that world" of *mukta*. It is at this moment that every "thing" *ama sunistatai kai apoleipei* (Plutarch, *Moralia* 392 C), just as in Buddhism. The succession of these "nows" constitutes what we know as duration; but, in reality, all these "instants" are "one."

Sincerely, Ananda Coomaraswamy

June 15, 1946

The similarity you point out between the rites of Buddhist ordination and those of royal installation is very interesting. As for the practice of changing one's name, it is certainly of initiatory origin, but we must not forget that it is sometimes found in the exoteric domain, especially in the context of Christian religious orders. In this regard, another important point to note is this: has Buddhist ordination always been performed publicly, or only in the presence of members of the *Sangha*?

Mr. Pallis has spoken to us many times about his son, whom he praises highly; according to what you say, we hope that we may see him here with him soon.

I am not at all surprised by the ignorance you mention in America; as far as American soldiers are concerned, the same thing has been observed here as in India, and the general impression has been one of a truly childish mentality!

August 8, 1946

What you say about Buddhist ordination confirms the possibility that it may indeed be initiatory in nature, since it has never been conferred except in the presence of those who had already received it themselves. There is a very clear difference here with exoteric rites such as Christian ordinations, which anyone can attend.

Spanish translation in *Symbolos*, no. 23-24, Guatemala, 2002.

EXCERPT FROM JULIUS EVOLA

December 30, 1947. In *Letters to Julius Evola*, Sear Edizioni, Borzano, 1996

I see that despite this, you continue to work, since you tell me that you are preparing new and improved editions of your books. I have received *La dottrina del risveglio*; I must tell you frankly that I am a little disappointed, because it seems to me that you have followed the ideas of Orientalists on Buddhism too closely, whereas it would have been necessary to first take into account the reinterpretation of A. Coomaraswamy, which makes original Buddhism appear in a completely different light. It is true that you probably have not been able to read one of

his recent books, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, which is one of the most important in this regard; a French translation has already been done and will be published shortly. In this regard, I must tell you, as you may not yet be aware, that Coomaraswamy sadly passed away last September, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, just after his 70th birthday. He had intended to retire to India at the end of next year, after completing several projects, but he will not be able to carry out this plan, which seemed very important to him.

EXCERPT TO MR. FAVRE

June 2, 1936. In Pierre Feydel, *Aperçus historiques touchant à la fonction de René Guénon*, Milan, 2003.

(Alexandra David-Neel) is undoubtedly intelligent, but she seems unable to shake off her fascination with 'phenomena'; on the other hand, she is quite intriguing and not very disinterested, and I have always wondered whether her travels had any political undertones.

EXCERPT TO F. G. GALVAO

Cairo, December 24, 1947. In *Dossier H: René Guénon*, Lausanne, 1984. We are in complete agreement on the difficulty of identifying the Buddha as the 9th *Avatâra*; those who hold this opinion are also obliged to reconcile it with the fact that this must have been a *Mlêchha-Avatâra*, claiming, based on very dubious etymology, that the Shâkyas were Shakas, that is, a people of Scythian origin. Perhaps he could rather be seen as only a minor *Avatâra*; these are naturally indeterminate in number (...).

EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS TO GUIDO DE GIORGIO. Appeared in Guido de Giorgio, *L'Instant et l'Eternité*, Arché, Milan.

Blois, August 17, 1924

What you say about Buddhism is very true; I am not entirely familiar with the book by Formichi to which you refer, but from what you say, I don't think I have missed anything.

Paris, January 26, 1926.

I am glad that you enjoyed reading Milarepa; otherwise, I would have been very surprised. In the same collection, there is another translation by Bacot: *Three Tibetan Mysteries*; it is also good, but the texts are more literary in nature, and therefore much less interesting to us.

I suppose the book by Father Huc that you mention is the recent edition of his journey to Tibet and Tartary; it contains nothing concerning doctrines; there are some rather curious descriptions, but that is all.

What you say about the concept of *Dharma* among Jains seems very fair to me, and I do not believe that there is any essential difference with orthodox doctrine. On the contrary, the meaning given to the words *loka* and *aloka* is quite particular; it seems quite accurate to translate the former, in this case, as "world of forms," as you do.

Paris, June 12, 1927

Here is the explanation you asked me for regarding *Avalokiteshvara*: this name literally means "Lord *Ishwara* considered (*lokita*) below"; but, despite the form *lokita*, which is that of the past participle, it is more often interpreted as meaning "the Lord who looks down." In reality, these two interpretations, far from being contradictory or mutually exclusive, complement each other perfectly, for there is, in a way, a reciprocity of relationship. One could speak in this regard of an aspiration from below to above, causing the descent of spiritual influences. It is this descent that represents the symbolism of *Avalokiteshvara*; it is what could be called "cosmic charity" (some Muslim schools also use an expression with this meaning), using, let it be understood, this word "charity" outside of any sentimental meaning. One of the most commonly used symbols, which appears almost everywhere, is the triangle with its point facing downwards. The assimilation that has sometimes been made of *Avalokiteshvara* with a feminine principle is also connected with the same idea and the same symbolism; in India, the inverted or descending triangle is one of the signs of the *Shaktis*.

Blois, August 3, 1927

Regarding *Avalokiteshvara*, it is entirely accurate that the two interpretations complement each other, and also that the same symbolism is expressed in the Latin word "charitas" (as well as in the Greek "*charis*," which is identical).

Paris, December 31, 1927

I have spoken to Bacot about the German translation of the songs of Milarepa; he is familiar with it, but, not knowing German well, he has not been able to examine it sufficiently to see exactly what it is worth; moreover, it seems to be very incomplete. The passages you quote do not seem to be very clear, indeed, and notes would have been needed to explain them; but was the translator capable of this? You are certainly right about the middle artery, which can only be *sushumna*, and it is more than likely that the "wind" is *prana*. I also wonder if, where the "five winds" are mentioned, they should not be related to the five *vāyus*, which are modalities of *prana*. The meanings of *mūdra* are as you indicate; as for *Dharmadhātu*, literally "seed of the Law," I know that it is a designation of Buddha, but that does not clarify much the meaning of the sentence where that word is found. With regard to *Vajra*, you know that it means both "lightning" and "diamond"; there would be a whole investigation to be done on that.

Paris, May 4, 1928

About six months ago, Bacot told me about the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* as something very interesting; a young man who often comes to see me is going to have that volume sent from England, and he will lend it to me when he has finished reading it. Thank you for your offer to send it, but as you can see, it would be a wasted effort; moreover, if I had known that I would not be able to get it any other way, I would have placed the order with you.

Paris, December 25, 1929

To tell the truth, Marqués-Rivière's book is not very famous, and I don't think it will really interest you; it deals almost exclusively with phenomena; it seems that the publisher wanted it that way... It is good for people who don't know anything yet and may be attracted by this somewhat extravagant aspect; although it is to be feared that they will not go any further. The articles that appeared in *Lotus Bleu* are much better and

* *In the Shadow of Tibetan Monasteries*. Translator's note.

more serious; but as they will probably be collected in a volume, I think it is better to wait. A second book by A. David-Neel has also just been published, entitled *Mystiques et magiciens du Tibet*², but I have not yet seen it (the first was nothing more than a travelogue). As for Mukerji's book, the best part is in the first section, where he recounts his education; the second section, about his stay in America, is not particularly noteworthy.

TO VASILE LOVINESCU

June 22, 1937

The symbolism of *Avalokiteshvara* is closely related to the idea of "Providence," but I find it difficult to see how it could have any connection to Apollo.

TO RENATO SCHNEIDER. Private source.

Cairo, September 13, 1936

With regard to the stories from Romania, there is undoubtedly something enigmatic about Jean de Pauly's life and origins; he himself alluded to a "secret" about which he never wanted to explain himself; he has also played a role in extravagant affairs, such as that of the nuns of Loigny and the alleged captivity of Leo XIII... As for H. Vacarisco [Vacarioco?], I have only seen her once, but she made a rather strange impression on me. What role does she really play with regard to the League of Nations? —You are quite right about Péladan, whose statements lacked a little too much seriousness; I do not know how much truth there is in his dealings with the Vatican, nor, for that matter, in those that some attribute to Sédir (the latter, it seems, in favor of Poland)... —Is the Ambrosian rite you speak of the same as the rite... I remember that there was much talk of the latter in the stories concerning Albania, in which the self-styled "Master R." was involved. — I have also heard, from different sources, the story of the immediate reincarnation of Mme. Blavatsky; some even add that Colonel Olcott has also already reincarnated! I see that, for the story of K. H. and those more or less related to him, I need to give you more explanations; the different things you mention...

They have even closer ties than you suspect! First, I must say that Tibet is actually closed off by the British, so it has never been as difficult to get there as it has been in recent years. As for Mme. David-Néel, I met her a long time ago. She was a theosophist at the time, but it seems she has since changed her mind. I have been told several things about her that indicate a rather intriguing character; because of that, I doubt a little that her travels had a purely disinterested purpose... Be that as it may, her doctrinal understanding is quite limited, and she is certainly much more interested in "phenomena" than in anything else; it is this, let it be understood, that has mainly caused the success of her books, for it is what pleases the "general public." That said, I come to the "Living Buddha": this title does not really exist in the East; it is a designation given by Europeans to numerous figures, in fact to all those who are considered "tulkus," that is, not as "incarnations," as is commonly said, but as "projections" of certain principles or certain superhuman entities. The real title Ossendowsky spoke of is "Bogdo-Khan"; but, let it be understood, the person I was talking about has nothing in common with this one. That character, moreover, is not really Tibetan, but it is very difficult to know exactly what he is; he claims to be descended from Genghis Khan, from the Khmer kings, etc.; his origin is probably as complicated as the names and titles under which he appears successively! What is

² *Magicians and Mystics of Tibet*, Indigo, Barcelona. Note from T.

admirable is that he claims to have been named "Living Buddha" by decree of the late Dalai Lama, who would have at the same time provided him with the transmission of his powers, so that there should no longer be a Dalai Lama, and that it is he himself who, without having the title, must exercise his functions. What is certain is that the "powers" he possesses do not even allow him to find a publisher for the numerous works on physics and biology he has written, while he was still only "Prof. Om Lind," for I know that he is searching in vain for one everywhere! He is currently in America, but he is to come to Paris next year and hold a great universal Buddhist congress there...

Trebtsch Lincoln, who is a well-known agent of "counter-initiation," has also undergone many successive transformations and has always been involved in multiple espionage activities; he has simultaneously served England and Germany, like his colleague Aleister Crowley... Since becoming the "Lama Dorji-Den," he has lived for some time in Canada, then returned to Europe at the head of a group of "Lamas" of the same kind (among whom there are several Frenchmen), and has set about raising funds to establish a Buddhist monastery in Switzerland. I suspect, based on certain allusions, that he is in fairly close contact with the aforementioned "Living Buddha," who is also involved in the Buddhist monastery project. There have been several similar projects (always in Switzerland) that have never materialized and have more or less ended in fraud... This reminds me of another character of the same kind, whose name I cannot recall at the moment, who last year announced his visit to Italy... to convert Mussolini to Buddhism. The matter seems to have come to nothing, but the funny thing is that I discovered that Mussolini, while he was in exile in Switzerland, had one day given a speech in which he declared himself a Buddhist!

I move on to Dr. Cannon, who calls himself "Knight Commander of Asia, Fifth Master of the Great White Lodge," and I don't know what else; what you tell me about him does not surprise me, for the activities of all such characters always have a political aspect; and in that, you are quite right in thinking that they serve only suggestion... One of Dr. Cannon's books, entitled *L'Influence invisible*, has been translated into French; it is completely inept, but it seems to sell very well. A supposed trip to Tibet serves as a backdrop for considerations presented in no particular order, most of which come from the most vulgar Western hypnotism; there are also anecdotes scattered throughout, and in the account of the trip itself, I found things that I recognized from having read them as a child in some English adventure novel, the title and author of which I regret having forgotten. I wrote a review of that book which, as you can imagine, was not flattering; but here's what just happened: one of the organs of the "Living Buddha" reproduced that review, with my signature, but without indicating its source. I conclude from this, first, that Cannon is seen as an annoying "competitor" from that side; it is curious how all these people, who in sum serve the same cause, are always arguing among themselves! But I also note that the followers of the "Living Buddha" would like to pass me off as one of their collaborators, and that does not suit me at all... I would add that the translator of Cannon's volume, a certain Georges Barbarin, has just published a book on the "prophecies" of the Great Pyramid with Adyar Editions. I don't know if I have already told you about this other matter, which also has very suspicious undertones.

The author of the article on Hitler, C. [Kerweiz?], writes on various websites about astrology and other topics, and I have even seen some of his work that was not bad; he has just published a book on "Hatha Yoga," which I have not seen, but which must be much more sensible than most Western productions of the same kind. His real name is F. Guyot, and under this name he is editor of the "Dépêche de Toulouse" (the Sarrant group...). But in the article in question, what gibberish! I even wonder if it wasn't deliberate, at least to some extent; in any case, I don't see the headquarters of Agharta in Germany, and above all, I don't see authentic Orientals accepting such an enormity! If there have been Orientals or supposed Orientals in this affair, they can only be characters of the kind I mentioned earlier...

EXCERPT FROM FRITHJOF SCHUON

November 9, 1946. -In *Connaissance des Religions*, no. 65-66, July-December 2002.

Now I must tell you a little about the extraordinary story of Raymond C..., which, as you will have seen, is discussed in Clavelle's last letter: some time ago, I received from him (this is the first sign of life from him since communications resumed) a very long letter which, rather strangely, was sent from Lausanne, and most of which concerns the alleged possibility, which he says interests him particularly, of a Lamaist connection through Calmels. I was rather stunned and, based on everything I know about Calmels, I immediately suspected that, on that side, such a possibility was in fact non-existent. My only fear is that Clavelle is involved in the "launch" of this idea, so to speak.

Firstly, because of the interest he himself seemed to have in everything related to Buddhism in recent years, and secondly because C... assured me that he had agreed with him to write to me about it. That is why I also asked Clavelle for explanations about what he had said exactly; according to his reply, which I was waiting for so that I could set the record straight with more certainty by writing to C..., it is simply a matter of C...'s "imagination," and I am very glad that this is the case. I had not noticed anything unusual in his previous correspondence, but Allar, who met him in Savoy last year, told me at the time that he did not seem very well balanced, and this story would seem to prove him right... His idea of a "Mahayanist graft" (his expression) on Freemasonry is no less surprising than the rest, and is even truly incomprehensible on the part of someone who has undoubtedly read what I have written regarding the mixing of traditional forms; there is even, on this point, on page 41 of *Aperçus*, a rather explicit anticipated response. On the other hand, Maridort's idea, which Clavelle discusses, concerning Islam (and all that brings us back to the question of "Eastern aid"), does not seem to me to contribute much either, although at least it does not appeal to something as completely "foreign" as Buddhism in relation to Freemasonry (this is mainly because of Solomon, who in fact has an even greater place in the Islamic perspective than in Judaism itself).

October 5, 1950. Quoted in *Vers la Tradition*, no. 100, June-July-August 2005 Furthermore,

it must be acknowledged that, on the question of Buddhism, it was impossible, before before Coomaraswamy's work, it was impossible to say anything other than what I had said, and that it remains true, if not for original Buddhism itself, at least for some more recent schools, without which it would have to be admitted that it is not I who am mistaken, but simply Shankârâcharya himself, to whose authority I have referred in this regard!

EXCERPT FROM JEAN TOURNIAC

August 10, 1950. In *De la Chevalerie au Secret du Temple*, Prisme, Paris, 1975.

I was unaware of the existence in Edjmiazin of a bell bearing the inscription "*Om mani padmê hum*"; it must undoubtedly come from Tibet or at least from some region of Central Asia; but do we know since when and under what circumstances it has been there?

TO AN UNKNOWN ADDRESSEE

Excerpts from letters dated September 12, 1928, and September 24, 1938. Quoted in *Science Sacrée*, no. 3-4, Nuits Saint Georges, Sept. 2001-April 2002.

The *Adi-Buddha* is at the top of the hierarchy, and the five *Dhyâni-Buddhas* (literally Buddhas of contemplation) are his direct emanations; from each of them comes a *Dhyâni-Boddhisattwa*. Each *Dhyâni-Buddha* and each *Dhyâni-Boddhisattva* correspond to a specific period, in which they manifest themselves respectively through a *Mânushya-Boddhisattva*. The *Dhyâni-Buddha* corresponding to the current period is *Amitâbha*, and the *Boddhisattva* is *Avalokîtêshwara*. As there is also a correspondence with different celestial regions, one could undoubtedly consider relationships with the five Emperors of Heaven; but the four *Mahârajas* ruling the four cardinal points mentioned in Tibet are something else. I do not think that the latter can be placed in a "linear" hierarchy, so to speak, with the seven *Rishis*; in a certain sense, they would be below them rather than above them, but it would perhaps be simplifying things a little too much to consider them in this way.

Excerpt from 1937. Quoted in *Connaissance des Religions, special issue on Buddhism*.

(Where it relates the seven main sacred traditions to the seven planets. Lamaism would correspond to the Heaven of the Sun).

DOCUMENTARY APPENDIX: Writings of T Palingénus

REGARDING A MISSION IN CENTRAL ASIA*

There is much talk at present about the discoveries made by Paul Pelliot, a former student of the French School of the Far East, during a recent expedition to Central Asia. So many French and foreign missions have taken place in these regions without appreciable results that it is permissible to be a little skeptical at first: undoubtedly, the explorers have brought back documents that are quite interesting from a geographical point of view, photographs above all, as well as zoological, botanical, and mineral specimens, but nothing more. But now Mr. Pelliot himself has recounted his expedition, first in a lecture at the Sorbonne on December 11, then in an article published in the *Echo de Paris* on December 15 and 16. To find out what his archaeological discoveries may be, it is best to refer to his own account.

He says that he first found, near the village of Tumchuq in Chinese Turkestan, a group of ruins almost entirely buried, in which he was able to uncover Buddhist sculptures that showed very clear traces of Hellenic influence. Next, in Kutchar, one of the main oases of Chinese Turkestan, he excavated "artificial caves, arranged as Buddhist shrines and decorated with wall paintings," as well as open-air temples, "in the courtyard of one of which, one day, manuscripts appeared spread out in a thick layer, tangled, mixed with sand and salt crystals," in short, in rather poor condition. "Separating the sheets will take a long time and the care of expert hands; moreover, these documents have not been deciphered. All that can be said at present is that they are written in the Hindu script called *Brahmî*, but mostly in mysterious Central Asian languages that European philology is only beginning to interpret." Thus, Pelliot himself acknowledges that philologists, of whom he is not one, have only a very imperfect knowledge of certain Asian languages; this is a point of view to which we will return later. For the moment, let us simply note that we are told elsewhere that Mr. Pelliot "has a perfect knowledge of the ancient Chinese, Brahmi, Uyghur, and Tibetan languages" (*Echo de Paris*, December 10); it is true that he does not say this himself, as he is undoubtedly too modest for that.

Be that as it may, it seems that in this first part of his exploration, Pelliot has discovered only, like his Russian, English, German, and Japanese predecessors, only "the remains, preserved in the sands of this arid country, of an essentially Buddhist civilization that had flourished there in the first ten centuries of our era and which, suddenly, around the year 1000, Islam had annihilated." Therefore, it is only a relatively recent civilization, "where the influences of India, Persia, Greece, and the Far East are mixed," and which has simply superimposed itself on earlier civilizations dating back several thousand years. Indeed, Chinese Turkestan is not far from Tibet; is Mr. Pelliot unaware of the true age of Tibetan civilization, and does he also believe it to be "essentially Buddhist," as many of his colleagues have claimed? The reality is that Buddhism has never had more than a superficial influence in these regions, and even in Tibet itself, it would be difficult to find any traces of it, unfortunately for those who, even now, would like to make it the center of the Buddhist religion. The ancient civilizations to which we have just referred must have left remains buried under the sands, but to discover them it would undoubtedly have been necessary to dig a little deeper; it is truly regrettable that no thought was given to this.

*Published in *La Gnose*, issues 3 and 4, January and February 1910, respectively. Later compiled in René Guénon, *Mélanges*, Paris, 1976.

After spending some time in Urumchi, the capital of Chinese Turkestan, Pelliot arrived in Tueng-Huang, in western Kan-su, knowing "that there, about twenty kilometers southeast of the city, was a considerable group of Buddhist caves, called *Tsi'en-fo-tong* or caves of the thousand Buddhas." Here again, it is also a question of Buddhist civilization; it would seem that there has never been any other in these regions, or at least that it was the only one to leave traces, and yet everything proves the contrary; but we must believe that there are things which, although very apparent to some, are completely invisible to others. "We have studied these Buddhist caves extensively," says Pelliot. "There were about five hundred of them, dating from the 6th to the 11th century, still covered with paintings and inscriptions with which the donors had adorned them." Then, in Turkestan, there is nothing prior to the Christian era; all of it is almost modern, given that, by the confession of the sinologists themselves, "a rigorously controlled chronology allows us to go back in Chinese history up to four thousand years," and even these four thousand years are nothing compared to the so-called legendary period that preceded them.

But here is the most important discovery: from Urumchi, Pelliot had heard that some manuscripts had been found a few years earlier in one of the caves of Tuen-Huang. "In 1900, a monk who was clearing out one of the large caves had stumbled upon a walled-up niche which, once opened, had been found to be full of manuscripts and paintings." Strangely enough, from 1900 to 1908, everything had remained in the same place, without anyone realizing that such manuscripts and paintings could be of any interest. Even if the monk was completely illiterate, as Pelliot believes, which would be very surprising, he would not have failed to communicate his discovery to people more capable of appreciating its value. But what is even more surprising is that this monk allowed foreigners to examine these documents and take away everything they found most interesting; no explorer had ever before encountered such complacency in Orientals, who generally guard with jealous care everything related to the past and traditions of their race. However, we cannot doubt Pelliot's account; but we must believe that not everyone attached as much importance to these documents as he did, without which they would have long since been placed in safe keeping in some monastery, let us say a Buddhist one, so as not to dash the hopes of sinologists. No doubt Pelliot was led to find these manuscripts, just as many things are shown to curious travelers visiting Tibet, so that they would declare themselves satisfied and not pursue their investigations any further; this is both more skillful and more courteous than brutally turning them away, and it is well known that, in terms of courtesy, the Chinese are unsurpassed by any other people.

There was a little bit of everything in that niche in Tueng-Huang: "Texts in *Brahmi* script, in Uyghur, but also many Chinese, Buddhist and Taoist manuscripts on paper and silk, a text on Nestorian Christianity, a Manichaeian fragment, works on history, geography, philosophy, literature, the archetypes of the classics (?), the oldest relief prints known in the Far East, sales records, accounts, daily notes, numerous paintings on silk, and finally, some woodblock prints from the 10th and even the 8th century, the oldest in the world." In this list, the Taoist manuscripts seem to be there somewhat by chance, as do the Nestorian and Manichaeian texts, whose presence is quite surprising. On the other hand, since woodblock printing was known in China long before the Christian era, it is unlikely that the prints in question here are truly "the oldest in the world," as Pelliot believes. Satisfied with his discovery, which he himself declared to be "the most formidable that the history of the Far East has ever recorded," he hastened to return to China proper. The scholars of Beijing, too courteous to allow themselves to doubt the value of the documents he mentioned, begged him to send them photographs, which would serve as the basis for a major publication.

P. Pelliot has now returned to France with his collection of paintings, bronzes, ceramics, and sculptures, gathered along his route, and above all with the manuscripts found in Kutchar and Tuen-Huang. Admitting that these manuscripts have all the value that is attributed to them, we are left to wonder how philologists will manage to decipher and translate them, and this task does not seem to be an easy one.

Despite all the claims of scholars, the much-vaunted progress of philology seems rather doubtful, judging by what is still the official teaching of Oriental languages today. As far as sinology in particular is concerned, the path traced by the first translators is still being followed, and it does not seem that much progress has been made in over half a century. We can take as an example the translations of Lao-Tzu, the first of which, by G. Pauthier, is surely, despite its inevitable imperfections, the most meritorious and thorough. Even before it was published in its entirety, this translation was violently criticized by Stanislas Julien, who seems to have made an effort to disparage it in favor of his own, which is nevertheless far inferior and dates only from 1842, while Pauthier's is from 1833. Stanislas Julien, in the introduction to his translation of *the Tao-te-king*, also endorsed the following statement, made by A. Rémusat in a *Mémoire sur Lao-tseu*, which could still be repeated by today's sinologists: "The text of *the Tao* is full of obscurities; we have so few means of acquiring a perfect understanding of it, so little knowledge of the circumstances to which the author wished to allude; we are so far removed, in every respect, from the ideas under whose influence he wrote, that it would be rash to claim to rediscover exactly the meaning he had in mind." Despite this confession of incomprehension, it is still Stanislas Julien's translation (we will see in due course what it is worth in itself) that confers authority and to which official sinologists are most willing to refer.

In reality, apart from Philastre's remarkable translation of *the I Ching* and its traditional commentaries, which unfortunately proved too difficult for Western intellectuals to understand, it must be acknowledged that nothing truly serious had been done in this regard until Matg'ioi's work. Before him, Chinese metaphysics was entirely unknown in Europe; one could even say that it was completely unsuspected without risking being accused of exaggeration. Matg'ioi's translation of the two books of *the Tao* and the *Te* having been revised and approved in the Far East by the scholars who are the custodians of the Taoist scientific heritage, which guarantees its perfect accuracy, it is this translation that we must compare with that of Stanislas Julien. We will content ourselves with referring to the sufficiently eloquent notes accompanying the translation of the *Tao* and *Te* published in *La Haute Science* (2nd year, 1894), in which Matg'ioi points out a number of contradictions of this kind: "It is beautiful to have a jade tablet before you and to ride in a four-horse carriage," instead of: "United together, they go faster and stronger than four horses." We could cite at random a multitude of similar examples, where a term meaning "a blink" becomes "the horn of a rhinoceros," where the coin becomes "a commoner" and its fair value "a carriage," etc.; but here is what is even more eloquent: the assessment of an indigenous scholar, recounted in these terms by Matg'ioi: Holding Mr. Julien's French paraphrase in my hands, I once had the idea of retranslating it literally into vernacular Chinese for the doctor who was teaching me. He first smiled silently, in the Eastern manner, then became indignant, and finally declared to me that: "The French must be very hostile to Asians for their scholars to take pleasure in consciously distorting the works of Chinese philosophers and turning them into grotesque fables, to expose them to the laughter of the French masses." I did not try to convince my doctor that Mr. Julien had imagined he had produced a respectful translation, for then he would have doubted the value of all our scholars; I preferred to let him doubt the loyalty of Mr. Julien alone; and thus the latter has posthumously paid for the imprudence he committed in life, undertaking texts whose meaning and scope were bound to escape him.

The example of Stanislas Julien, who was a member of *the Institut*, gives, we think, a fair idea of the value of philologists in general; however, there may be honorable exceptions, and we even want to believe that Pelliot is one of them; it is now up to him to prove it by accurately interpreting the texts he brought back from his expedition: in any case, as far as Taoist texts are concerned, it should no longer be possible today to display an ignorance of Chinese metaphysics that was perhaps excusable to a certain extent in the days of Rémusat and Stanislas Julien, but which could no longer be excused after the works of Matgioi, and especially after the publication of his two most important works from this point of view, *La Voie Métaphysique* and *La Voie Rationnelle*. But official scholars, always disdainful of anything that does not emanate from one of their own, are ill-equipped to take advantage of them because of their particular mindset; this is very unfortunate for them, and if we were allowed to give Mr. Pelliot some advice, we would strongly encourage him not to follow the usual intrusive procedures of his predecessors.

If we move from Chinese manuscripts to texts written in the languages of Central Asia, or even in certain sacred languages of India, we encounter even greater difficulties, for, as we have noted above, Mr. Pelliot himself acknowledges that "European philology is only just beginning to interpret these mysterious languages."

We can even go further and say that, among those languages, each of which has its own writing system, not counting the cryptographic systems widely used throughout the East, which in certain cases make deciphering completely impossible (even in Europe there are inscriptions of this kind that have never been interpreted), among those languages, we say, there are a large number of which everything, even the names, is and will remain unknown to Western scholars for a long time to come. It is likely that, in order to translate these texts, recourse will be had to the methods already applied in other branches of philology by Egyptologists and Assyriologists; the endless discussions that arise between them at every turn, their inability to agree on the most essential points of their science, and also the obvious absurdities found in all their interpretations, sufficiently demonstrate the little value of the results they have achieved, results of which they are nevertheless so proud. The most curious thing is that these scholars claim to understand the languages they study better than those who once spoke and wrote those languages; we are not exaggerating, for we have seen them point out alleged interpolations in manuscripts which, according to them, proved that the copyist had confused the meaning of the text he was transcribing.

We are far from the prudent reservations of the early sinologists, which we have recounted above; and yet, if the pretensions of philologists continue to grow, there is a great need for their science to make rapid progress as well. Thus, in Egyptology, we are still using Champollion's method, which has the sole flaw of applying only to inscriptions from the Greek and Roman periods, when Egyptian writing became purely phonetic after the degeneration of the language, whereas it was hieroglyphic, that is, ideographic, like Chinese writing. Moreover, the flaw of all official philologists is to want to interpret sacred languages, which are almost always ideographic, as they would vulgar languages, which are simply alphabetic or phonetic. Let us add that there are languages that combine the two systems, ideographic and alphabetic; such is Biblical Hebrew, as Fabre d'Olivet has shown in *La Langue hébraïque restituée*, and we may note in passing that this is enough to make us understand that the text of the Bible, in its true meaning, has nothing in common with the ridiculous interpretations that have been given, from the commentaries of both Protestant and Catholic theologians, commentaries based moreover on entirely erroneous versions, to the criticisms of modern exegetes, who are still wondering how it is that in Genesis there are passages where God is called מִיְהוָה ⁵ and others where he is called

⁵ Elohim (Translator's note)

יהוה⁶, without realizing that these two terms, the first of which is also a plural, have a totally different meaning, and that in reality neither one nor the other has ever designated God.

On the other hand, what makes the translation of ideographic languages almost impossible is the plurality of meanings presented by hieroglyphic characters, each of which corresponds to a different, albeit analogous, idea, depending on how it relates to one or another plane of the Universe. As a result, three main meanings can always be distinguished, subdivided into a large number of more specific secondary meanings. This explains why the sacred books cannot, strictly speaking, be translated; one can simply paraphrase or comment on them, and this is what philologists and exegetes should resign themselves to, if only they were able to grasp their most external meaning; unfortunately, so far, they do not even seem to have achieved this modest result. Let us therefore hope that Mr. Pelliot will be more fortunate than his colleagues, that the manuscripts in his possession will not remain a dead letter for him, and let us wish him good luck in the arduous task he is about to undertake.

⁶YHWY (Translator's note).

THE DALAI LAMA*

For some time now, reports from British sources, which are obviously biased, have been portraying Tibet as invaded by a Chinese army, with the Dalai Lama fleeing from this invasion and preparing to ask the Indian government for help in establishing his threatened authority. It is quite understandable that the British should seek to link Tibet to India, from which it is nevertheless separated by natural obstacles, and that they should seek a pretext for penetrating Central Asia, where no one is thinking of calling for their intervention. The truth is that Tibet is a Chinese province, which for centuries has been administratively dependent on China, and therefore does not need to be conquered... As for the Dalai Lama, he is not and never has been a temporal sovereign, and his spiritual power is beyond the reach of any invaders who might enter the Tibetan region. The alarming news that some people are currently trying to spread is therefore completely unfounded; in reality, there have simply been some acts of depredation committed by a band of looters, but as this is quite a frequent occurrence in this region, no one even thinks to be concerned about it.

We will take this opportunity to respond to certain questions that have been raised with us regarding the Dalai Lama; so that we cannot be accused of making dubious statements that are not based on any authority, we will limit ourselves to reproducing the main passages of a "Correspondence from the Far East" published in *La Voie* (numbers 8 and 9). This correspondence appeared in 1904, at the time when an English expedition, commanded by Colonel Younghusband, was returning from Lhasa with a supposed treaty that did not bear any Tibetan signatures. *"The British brought back from the Tibetan plateau a treaty that had been signed only by their leader and was therefore neither a commitment nor an obligation for the Tibetans. The British intrusion into Lhasa could have no influence on the Tibetan government, and even less on the part of the Tibetan religion that must be considered the ancestor of all dogmas, and even less on the living symbol of Tradition."*

Here are some details about the Dalai Lama's palace, where no stranger has ever entered: *"This palace is not in the city of Lhasa, but on the top of an isolated hill in the middle of the plain, about a quarter of an hour north of the city. It is surrounded and enclosed by a large number of temples built like dinh (Confucian pagodas), where the Lamas who serve the Dalai Lama live; pilgrims never cross the threshold of these dinh. The space in the center of these temples, arranged in a circle next to each other, is a large courtyard that is almost always deserted, in the middle of which are four temples, of different shapes but arranged regularly in a square, and in the center of that square is the Dalai Lama's personal residence.*

The four temples are large but not very high, and are built almost on the model of the rooms of the viceroys or governors of the provinces of the Chinese Empire; they are occupied by the twelve Lamas called Lamas-Namshans, who form the circular council of the Dalai Lama. The interior apartments are richly decorated, but only the Lamaist colors, yellow and red, are visible; they are divided into several rooms, the largest of which are the prayer halls. But, with very rare exceptions, the twelve Lamas-Namshans cannot receive anyone in the interior apartments; even their servants remain in the so-called exterior apartments, because, from those

*Published in *La Gnose*, no. 5, Paris, March 1910. As noted at the beginning, it basically consists of passages from a text published in *La Voie* by Nguyễn Văn Cang, son of the "Master of Sentences" of Indochinese Taoism and initiator of Mat'gioi. Compiled in Italian in René Guénon, *La Tradizione e le tradizioni*, Mediterranee, Rome, 2003.

apartments, the central palace cannot be seen. It occupies the middle of the second square and is isolated on all sides from the apartments of the twelve Lamas-Namshans; a special and personal invitation from the Dalai Lama is required to enter this innermost space.

"The Dalai Lama's palace is only visible to the inhabitants of the inner apartments through a large peristyle that completely surrounds it, as in all buildings in South Asia; this peristyle is supported by four rows of columns, which are covered in gold from top to bottom. No one lives on the ground floor of the palace, which consists only of vestibules, prayer rooms, and gigantic staircases. In front of the quadruple peristyle, the palace rises three stories high; the first floor is stone-colored, the second is red, and the third is yellow. Above the third floor, like a roof, rises a completely round dome covered with gold leaf; this dome can be seen from Lhasa and from far away in the valley, but the interior and exterior temples hide the view of the rooms. Only the twelve Lamas-Namshans know the layout of the rooms in the central palace and what happens there; in the red room in the center, the circular council meetings are held. The complex of these buildings is very grand and majestic; those who are authorized to circulate within them must remain silent." (Nguyèn V. Cang, "The Palace of the Dalai Lama," No. 8, November 15, 1904).

Now, regarding the Dalai Lama himself: *"As for the person of the Dalai Lama, who was already believed to be constrained and contaminated by foreign eyes (after the English intrusion), it must be said that such fear is naive, and that, neither now nor later, could it be admitted.* The Dalai Lama only appears in the red room of the great sacred palace when the twelve *Lamas-Namshans* are gathered there under certain conditions and by order of the one who rules them. The presence of another man, whoever he may be, would be enough to prevent the Dalai Lama from appearing; and there is more than a material impossibility in profaning his presence; he cannot be where his enemies or mere foreigners are. *The Pope of the East, as the faithful of the Pope of the West (very improperly) say, is not one of those who can be examined or intimidated, for he is not under human power or control; and he is always the same, today as on the distant day when he revealed himself to that prophetic Lama whom the Tibetans call Issa and the Christians call Jesus.* (Nguyèn V. Cang, "The Dalai Lama," No. 9, December 15, 1904).

This sufficiently shows that the Dalai Lama cannot be on the run, either now or at the time these lines were written, and that there can be no question of removing him from office or choosing a successor; it also shows the value of the statements of certain travelers who, having explored Tibet to a greater or lesser extent, claim to have seen the Dalai Lama; no importance should be attached to such accounts. We will add nothing to the words we have just quoted, words that come from a very authoritative source; it will be understood, moreover, that this is not a matter that should be discussed publicly without reservation, but we thought it would not be useless or inappropriate to say a few words about it here.

BERSERKER

BOOKS

