

TAOIST WRITINGS



ANDRE PREAU

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BOOKS



André Préau

The Secret of the Golden
Flower and the Supreme One

followed by

Taoism without Tao

"The Veil of Isis", 1931.

The Secret of the Golden Flower of the Supreme One

To Paul Petit.

U recent German publication¹ has brought to the European public a translation of a Taoist work that was apparently little known until then, *The Secret of the Golden Flower of the Supreme One*². A commentary from the 17th or 18th century has also been translated and accompanies this text. The German version, which fills a fifty or so pages of fairly large format, is by Richard Wilhelm, the late sinologist who died about a year ago³. It is preceded by a long introduction in which the Taoist treatise is "commented on", for the benefit of Europeans, by the well-known Zurich psychiatrist, Dr C. G. Jung.

In his interesting foreword, Wilhelm reports that the current unrest in China has led to the emergence of a large number of more or less secret "sects", some of which engage in magical or even spiritualist practices, while others, which he calls "esoteric", seek a far more serious goal: Taoist contemplation, the attainment of those extraordinary states of detachment whose mere mention evokes the great names of *Lie-Tseu* and *Tchoang-Tseu*. He praises the methods of the Taoist schools as perfectly suited to the Chinese temperament and even goes so far as to suggest that all those who follow them, with very few exceptions, see their efforts crowned with success – which is really too good to be true. Unfortunately, he also tells us that in 1920, a thousand copies of *The Secret of the Golden Flower* were distributed in Beijing⁴, with a new title ("The Art of Prolonging Life") and preceded, by way of preface, by a banal spiritualist "communication" from *Lu-Yen*, the head of a Taoist school whom we will discuss and to whom the work is attributed: all this shows the confusion that reigns in certain circles there and

¹ *Das Geheimnis der goldenen Blute, ein chinesisches Lebensbuch*, Munich, 1929.

² *T'ai-I Kinn-Hoa Tsoung-Tcheu*. The German transcription is *Tai I Gin Hua Dsung Dchi*.

³ Richard Wilhelm, who left for China as a Protestant missionary, quickly realised that this country had more to teach him than he had to teach it; he gave up his missionary work and devoted his life to studying Chinese books. After the war, he taught for a time at Peking University and ended his days as a professor at the University of Frankfurt am Main, where he founded the China Institute. He died on 1st March 1930. Wilhelm's translations are widely read on the other side of the Rhine and have certainly influenced German thought. Unfortunately, Wilhelm was never able to free himself from this "philosophy of life" whose mirages seduce so many minds in the West. But, although his role was incomplete, we cannot forget the services rendered and still rendered by his translations, notably those of *Lie-Tseu* and *Tchoang-Tseu*, those of *the Yi-King*, *Lu-Pou-Wei* and the *Book of the Golden Flower*.

⁴ At the same time as the treatise on the *Golden Flower* was printed and distributed, another Taoist text, the *Hoei Ming King*, by *Liou Hoa Yang*, was also published, a translation of which appeared in the *Chinesische Blätter* (1st year, 3rd issue). The high price of this publication prevented us from purchasing it, and the libraries in Paris where we searched for it had also had to give up on acquiring it. Was it really necessary to publish this work in such expensive issues?

would justify all mistrust. Wilhelm nevertheless presents the text as authentic¹ and specifies that a 17th-century copy was used for the 1920 edition; there is therefore no reason to dwell on the hypothesis of a modern forgery.

According to Richard Wilhelm, the *Secret of the Golden Flower* is based on an esoteric tradition preserved in the school known as *Kinn-Tan-Kiao* (school of the "golden pill")², a tradition that was passed down orally for a long time and then recorded in writing, at least in part, no later than the 18th century. The *Kinn-Tan-Kiao* school is said to have been founded in the 7th century by the famous Taoist master *Lu-Yen*, whom we have just mentioned and who is also called *Lu-Tong-Pinn* ("Lu, the cave dweller") or *Lu-Tsou* or *Tch'ounn-Yang-Tseu*; and *Lu-Yen* traced his doctrine back to the equally famous *Koan-Yin-Hi*, the "prefect of the pass", to whom *Lao-Tseu*, on leaving China, is said to have given the *Tao-Te-King* and to whom an important Taoist treatise preserved under his name is also attributed. After his death, *Lu-Yen* was elevated to the rank of one of the "Eight Immortals" and apparently still has temples dedicated to him. He is a popular figure in China. The Book of the *Golden Flower* is expressly placed under his authority, with each section beginning with the words: "Master *Lu-Tsou* says: ...". There are indications that the *Kinn-Tan-Kiao* school sheltered at least some of the remnants of the Nestorians who had settled in China and that, according to Wilhelm, it is still very favourably disposed towards Christianity today. We would add that the "Golden Flower" was also the name of a convent (*Kinn-Hoa-Koan*), established in the mountain range of the same name (*Kinn-Hoa-Chan*), which Father Wiegier bluntly describes as a "den of alchemists"³: a "den" that was perhaps an important spiritual centre.

The *Secret of the Golden Flower of the Supreme One* mainly concerns the early stages of contemplation; it shows how one must "get down to work". Another work, the *Su-Ming-Fang*, by *Liou-Hoa-Yang* – which, it seems, has not yet been translated – explains how the initial results must be consolidated and how one must ultimately "let go".

The Flower of Gold is quite a difficult book to read. Its symbolism is extremely varied. The latter sections often refer to the trigrams of *the I Ching*, further proof, if any were needed, that this latter work is not merely a manual of divination. Certain Buddhist teachings, particularly those of the *Chan* school, are also cited. It is therefore not exclusively Chinese Taoism, but a Taoism that has been influenced by more Western doctrines: Christianity, Vedanta, Yoga, Buddhism, and undoubtedly Tantrism as well; which, all things considered, does not make it much less

¹ However, he believes it to be composed of parts of very different ages and values; he even refrained from translating the last sections of the book, which he considered to be inferior to the rest. Perhaps it would have been preferable to translate them anyway, in order to give the reader the opportunity to form their own opinion about them.

² Father Wiegier translates *Tan* as cinnabar. It would therefore be the school of "cinnabar-gold". But, as we shall see later, it is always the "elixir of long life".

³ The Taoist Canon, p. 112.

interesting. In any case, the work is distinctly Chinese in form. Obscure details are not uncommon; nevertheless, the general idea of the book, which is the creation of a "seed of immortality" in human beings, is clear to any attentive reader. Given its importance, this idea deserves further consideration. Let us try to explain what it is about.



Man, caught up in the "flow of forms", exhausts himself in the pursuit of material goods and, worn down by desires and passions, finally arrives at death without strength: he is then carried away into an indefinite succession of happy and unhappy states. "The force of *Yang*¹ is exhausted and flows away, and one is swept away into the nine dark regions²." To escape the common fate and overcome the attraction of all things produced by the incessant interplay of *Yang* and *Yin*, there is only one way: to return to the Origin, to the 'Primordial Spirit', to the 'Great One', superior to all multiplicity and change. "Inside our six-foot-tall bodies, we must strive towards That which was before the foundations of Heaven and Earth were laid." How can this be achieved? It is very difficult: it requires an extremely lucid and penetrating intelligence to grasp the method and, to apply it, an absolutely calm heart and a soul entirely turned in on itself.

In general, the method is based on "retrograde movement": the path of Return is in fact the "retrograde" path, no longer that of "evolution" and externalisation, but that of "involution" and deepening of oneself. Contraction and concentration must oppose the forces of distraction, in the etymological sense of the term, and dispersion. It is therefore necessary first of all to stop expending one's energies, but on the contrary to conserve and accumulate them, so that they can then be used effectively. But how should the Return be conceived? Is it the exchange of one particular reality for another, the abandonment of this world for a better one? Not at all. It is in fact a return to the Supreme One, where everything we already possess, our body, our self, has its origin. There is therefore no reason to break with our present state, assuming that such an undertaking were possible; it suffices to consider existing reality as the material and starting point for a process of "reduction" which, by transforming the effect back into the cause and thus moving up step by step, cannot

¹*Yang* is the luminous principle, corresponding to everything that is active: Heaven, man, the higher worlds. The dark or passive principle is *Yin*, which corresponds in particular to the Earth, woman and the lower worlds.

²These "nine dark regions" (*Kiou-You*) appear to be identical to the "long night of the nine paths" mentioned in another passage that will be quoted later. For Wilhelm, these two expressions refer to the destiny of beings who remain subject to the law of transmigration. One is tempted to compare the nine dark regions to the nine circles of Hell described by Dante. This is all the more tempting given that, as far as the upper world is concerned, the Chinese count nine heavens, just as the Florentine poet counts nine celestial spheres. Some texts refer to the "paths of the nine Dragons", which form the counterpart of the nine dark paths and are undoubtedly closely related to the "nine gates" through which, it is said, the "Genies" leave the "Purple Palace".

lead only to the "Primordial Spirit", the universal cause and ultimate cause. Such work is necessarily extremely difficult. Man is a highly complex being, and every part of his nature is an obstacle to be overcome. The slightest mistake on his part exposes him to dangerous reactions. He needs an Art that reveals to him the flaws and weaknesses of Nature and teaches him, so to speak, to "find the joints"¹. Moreover, in any case, the Return to the Principle cannot be achieved in one fell swoop. It must be done in stages, imitating Nature, which does not create a living organism from scratch, but first forms a seed, which then develops. In fact, "every man coming into this world" already possesses within him a seed of immortality, since he harbours in his heart a "termination" of the primordial Spirit, without which he would have neither life nor existence. But in almost all men, this seed remains apparently dead, like a grain of wheat deprived of water and light. The first phase of the Return will consist in awakening this dormant possibility², in bringing to germination this "transcendent seed". The Supreme One will then manifest itself in the being in a new way, no longer only as an organising power and principle of life, but as a "transforming" power and seed of eternity. Thus, a kind of "embryo" will be formed, a centre around which the forces of the being will regroup and reorganise themselves, so that all of them, orienting themselves, so to speak, towards the "transformation" that must be accomplished, dispose themselves and prepare themselves for it.

This is why, as soon as the light begins to turn, the forces of the whole body present themselves before its throne: thus, when a Holy King founds the capital and promulgates the law, all the states send him their tributes; or again, when the master is calm and lucid, servants and maids obey his orders of their own accord and each one does his or her work.

The "circular movement of light", to which we will return later, is a means by which the "embryo" is formed. The "light" itself is designated as identical to the "Golden Flower", that is, to the "true force of the transcendent Great One".

"Embryo", "Golden Flower", "elixir of life", "spiritual body", "yellow germ"³, "Sacred Fruit", "seminal pearl": all these names are essentially synonymous. How is the Embryo formed? By reversing the usual relationship between the two souls of man: *Hounn*, the higher, luminous, intellectual soul, and *P'ai*, the lower, dark, passionate soul. *Hounn*,

¹ On this subject, we may recall the beautiful story by *Chuang Tzu: The Cook*.

² The idea of "awakening" is clearly expressed in the Hindu concept of *Kundalini* (see René Guénon, *Le Roi du Monde*, p. 89, and for a detailed explanation, Arthur Avalon, *The Serpent Power*).

³ Yellow is the colour of the "natural agent" *earth (t'ou)*, that is, of the base, of fixity, of the centre, of the pole around which revolutions are accomplished. The "seed" is yellow, but the "Golden Flower" is white, and is sometimes symbolised by snow. Indeed, "the colour of gold is white" (gold is a metal, and the natural agent, *metal*, designated by the same character as gold, is associated with the colour white). "But worldly people, who have not understood the hidden words of the treatises on the elixir of life, have misunderstood the meaning of the words yellow and white and believed that it was a means of transforming stones into gold. Is this not foolish?" It is then clarified that the elixir of life is not a drug that one swallows.

which in most men is at the service of *P'ai*, must free itself from this subjection: not, and this is very important, to detach itself from this instinctive and sentimental soul, but on the contrary to unite with it in a different, normal way, where the higher directs and the lower conforms and obeys. Such an operation requires perfect calm of the heart; it is generally achieved through concentration of the mind:

"Once thoughts are gathered, one flies through the air and is born into Heaven."

We can therefore say that the Golden Flower appears when the sovereignty of the higher soul is effectively established over the lower soul; but this assertion represents only one particular aspect of an extremely complex operation. A seed is not something that belongs to a single order of reality to the exclusion of others; it is a node that binds them all together in a single point. The ordinary seed of a living being is not only the starting point of bodily, spatial development: it is also a centre of vital forces and a psychological seed, all of which is linked to a metaphysical principle. In the final analysis, the Golden Flower is produced by the transforming action of the Supreme One, by a spiritual Ray that passes through all the layers, all the 'envelopes' of the being and leaves its mark on each of them. For each "envelope", this Ray will take on a different aspect and may be given a different name: but, in general, it will always be the meeting of an active principle and a passive principle. Any symbolism of duality can therefore be used here, each symbol being "transposable", i.e. applicable to several "planes". The Taoist text describes in many ways this "endogeneity of transcendent being", as Father Wiegier calls it: it is the union of spirit and force, or breath and force, or fire and water, or the corresponding trigrams *Li* and *K'an*¹, it is the union of seeds and

"light of the Sun and Moon"; it is the marriage of the "Boy" and the

"Fiancée" is the *Yang* that "fixes the strength of *Yin*", the Sky that "penetrates the Earth"². "It is like when a man and a woman unite and conception takes place". This is indeed a second birth, no longer physical, but spiritual³. The "seminal" force is transmuted, "sublimated" by the spirit that has mastered it, the "Sacred Fruit" is tied, and it is said that the spirit, united with the force,

¹ *Li* ☲ and *K'an* ☵ are two of the eight trigrams of the *I Ching*. Their opposition is that of the sun and the moon, fire and running water, the heart and the kidneys, the higher soul and the lower soul.

² One could also say that it is the union of the fish and the bird Hâc, a union from which the Dragon is born. We have already recalled this "legend" in our article of November 1930 (note on page 803). Matgioi, who recounts it in chapter IV of his *Voie Métaphysique*, believes that it can be seen as "the symbol of alchemical synthesis". This opinion seems extremely plausible to us.

³ "Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (St John, III, 5). We have just seen that "water" and "spirit" also appear in the Taoist text among the names given respectively to the two generative, or rather regenerative, principles. Here, the "spirit" is above all the Holy Spirit, which corresponds exactly to the "transforming action" of the Principle we have been discussing. It goes without saying, moreover, that this passage from the fourth Gospel, like any other biblical passage, has a variety of applications. It should also be noted that "water" and "spirit" correspond to the "sperm" and "breath" of Chinese embryogenesis. *Houm* is born from the *Yang* principle "breath", and *P'ai* is born from the *Yin* principle "sperm".

"crystallised". "Then all the forces of Heaven and Earth, *Yang* and *Yin*, crystallise".

The idea of crystallisation evokes the idea of salt. In this regard, it should be remembered that the Great Work sought by alchemists in the Far East – and, it seems, also by Hindu alchemists – was the production of 'cinnabar', a salt of sulphur and mercury. But what was cinnabar? "Gold cinnabar" or "transcendent cinnabar", "drinkable" or "edible" cinnabar, expressly referred to as the "elixir of life" and the "drug of immortality": "cinnabar" necessary for anyone who wanted to "become a Genie", and which had the property of "embalm the *living* body". "Salt," said *Keue-Houng*, "preserves dead meat; we still need to find the ingredient that will preserve living flesh"¹. The sulphur, mercury and cinnabar referred to were therefore not what modern chemistry calls these terms: the treatise on the *Golden Flower*, as we can see, fully confirms this conclusion. We also know that, for Western alchemists, Sulphur, Mercury and Salt were not physical substances either, but rather cosmological principles.

The Embryo, born of the union of an active principle and a passive "base", is effectively comparable to a salt. It can therefore be symbolically designated as cinnabar, crystal, diamond or stone, if we consider it as the result obtained. On the contrary, it will be a budding flower, an embryo, a germ, a seed, if we consider mainly the possibilities it contains within itself, the set of transmutations it must perform².

The Golden Flower, once it has appeared, will open and blossom; the Embryo will develop and be born³. The Chinese commentary indicates four stages in the birth of the Embryo:

1° "The spirit unites with the force and crystallises": we have "set to work".

2° The 'Primordial Spirit' has been transformed into 'true force'⁴; it must then be "distilled", which produces the "elixir of life": this is the "concentrated work".

3° Once the elixir of life has been obtained, the "sacred embryo" can be formed; it must then be warmed, nourished, bathed⁵ and washed: this is "completion".

¹ Quoted by Father Wieger (*Histoire des Croyances religieuses et des Opinions philosophiques en Chine*, 3rd edition, p. 395).

² Another application of the same idea was made by Mr. René Guénon, in relation to the Earthly Paradise and the Heavenly Jerusalem (*The Esotericism of Dante*, p. 92, note 1).

³ Cf. St Matthew: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown, it is greater than all the plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and shelter in its branches" (XIII, 31 and 32).

⁴ Another passage in the commentary refers to "true seed"; this must be treated by "fusion" and mixing.

⁵ The "bath" (is this another "bath"?) is defined towards the end of the treatise: one must "wash the heart and purify the thoughts: this is the bath". Further on, we read: "The deepest mystery of the bath boils down to this: emptying the heart".

4° Once the "child" has gained strength, it must be helped to be born and to "return to the Void" (to *the Tao*, to the Principle): one "lets go of the hand"¹.

According to these explanations, a distinction should be made between the crystallisation of the spirit, the obtaining of the elixir of life and the formation of the embryo, whereas the text of the treatise encourages us to consider these three expressions as equivalent.

A series of Chinese engravings, four of which were reproduced in Wilhelm's German translation and six in Father Wieger's *Philosophical Texts*², illustrate certain phases of Taoist meditation. According to Wilhelm, the four engravings in the German translation refer to the following four phases:

1° Gathering of light; this is the initial contemplation.

2° Birth of the Embryo in the "force field"; we see *the homunculus*, surrounded by a luminous halo, approximately in the place of the navel (solar plexus).

3° Exit of the "spiritual body" through the top of the head: this is the conquest of the "angelic" states, the "orifice of Brahma", the "lotus with a thousand petals" having been reached³.

4° Multiplication of oneself, gift of ubiquity; this is not, strictly speaking, a particular stage of meditation, but rather the exercise of a "power" that is obtained once certain states of contemplation have been reached.

To achieve crystallisation of the mind, the Fleur d'Or school has a special method of meditation, a 'supreme and marvellous secret': the "circular movement of light" (*"der Kreislauf des Lichts"*). The text and commentary make frequent references to it; it is perhaps the subject most frequently discussed in the treatise, and also the most mysterious. The circular movement of light is actually "the circular movement of true creative and transformative forces"; it corresponds to "the exhaustion of the cycles of transmigration: this is why the interval between two breaths signifies a year –

¹ One 'lets go', one lets go. We find a similar, if not identical, idea in another Chinese text, *The Ten Steps in the Art of Keeping Cows*, which we mentioned in the previous issue of this journal (January 1931, p. 62). In the first "steps", the most severe discipline is prescribed: "He must use the whip liberally... Do not let go of the rope from its nostrils, hold it tight, and do not allow yourself any indulgence. Never part with the whip and the halter." Later, all rigour becomes irrelevant:

"Under a thatched roof, next to him, his whip and rope lie useless." On the other hand, Mr. René Guénon pointed out to us that the expressions "to lay hands on" and "to let go" correspond exactly to the *coagula* and *solve* of Western alchemy. These are the same two phases of initiation, which are symbolically described by Dante as a descent into hell and an ascent to the higher regions (see René Guénon, *L'Ésotérisme de Dante*, pp. 94-97). In this symbolism, the arrival at the centre of the earth corresponds to the constitution of the Embryo.

²These six engravings, like most of those illustrating the *Philosophical Texts*, were later reproduced by Father Wieger in his *History of Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China*.

³ Cf. René Guénon, *The King of the World*, pp. 90 and 91.

according to the human reckoning of time – and it signifies one hundred years – in relation to the long night of the nine paths¹. The circular movement of light here symbolises the "retrograde" path, the return movement of the cosmic Wheel. However, this interpretation is too general and other more precise interpretations are certainly associated with it. The circular movement of light is also a movement of vital forces, and it is clear from many passages that it is through this movement that the spirit crystallises and the Embryo is formed and develops. One naturally thinks of the rotation of *the chakras*, which is discussed in Hindu *Hatha Yoga*, but nothing so specific is found in the Chinese text. This deliberate vagueness is not surprising, however, if, as is likely, it refers to a particular method of concentration, that is, a knowledge whose application is dangerous. We know that throughout Asia, methods of concentration are reserved for oral transmission from master to student; they are therefore strictly "initiatory".

The concept of the Return that we have just briefly outlined, which envisages it as a gradual "transmutation" of the being, will undoubtedly appear much more interesting than the somewhat "simplistic" concept according to which the "soul" is simply released from the "matter" that imprisons it. No traditional doctrine recognises the existence of a

"matter" that subsists by itself, but only that of particular substances that are specifications of the divine substance. Therefore, there can be no irreducible antinomy between the Principle and any form of existing reality. Nothing prevents, at least theoretically, any physical or psychic reality from being the object of a kind of "sublimation" or

"distillation" which eliminates what is obscure, that is to say limited, and restores, in all its primitive purity, this "Sweet Earth" mother of all beings, this divine Water which, to quote Pierre-Jean-Fabre, conceals all forms "foamed and hidden in the treasure of its abyss". Here, as elsewhere, it is the "doctrine of Unity" that forms the basis of any clear and coherent conception; and it is obviously implied in this idea of "Deliverance", which was undoubtedly as familiar to the alchemists of the 13th century as it is

to the Eastern elite today. If this idea is no longer found in contemporary philosophy, if it has become entirely foreign to the Western mentality, is it not because of this incomprehensible notion of a reality that is antinomic to the mind, whose existence would not call for, and would not even tolerate, any explanation, and to which our "soul" would be incomprehensibly attached? Whatever the case may be on this last point, we believe it is worth emphasising that, for Easterners, Deliverance is not an "escape" from the phenomenal world², but a development that takes this world as its starting point

¹ See note (2) above on page 89.

² In Eastern books, as in Plato and Plotinus, we sometimes encounter expressions such as "leaving the world" or "escaping from the world"; but it is important to understand that these expressions represent only one aspect of things, and a superficial one at that. To take them literally would be to overturn the entire teaching of *the Upanishads*.

departure and leading to the "transformation" of the whole being: what one is freed from is not "matter", but only the conditions that define manifestation. This explains, incidentally, why, contrary to what many Westerners believe, death cannot be considered in itself as a "deliverance". It is true that, on the surface, the Hindu yogi, the "transcendent man" of the Taoists, ultimately abandons his body when he dies: one could therefore argue that he has not "transmuted" it. But there is reason to believe that things are not so simple in reality, for, as Mr Guénon has clearly pointed out, Deliverance is the universalisation, the totalisation of being: neither the bodily modality nor any other can therefore remain outside the final realisation¹. Since Deliverance is not a material operation, no question of quantity can arise here: it is sufficient for an infinitesimal bodily particle to be "transmuted", if that particle is such that it can represent the entire body². The exceptional cases mentioned by the same author³, in which the liberated person disappears without leaving a corpse, obviously imply the possibility of a "transmutation" of bodily substance.



We will now give some excerpts from the book of the *Golden Flower*, so that the reader, through these examples, can understand the nature of the text and its difficulties.

Like many Chinese books, the treatise *La Fleur d'Or* begins with a reminder of the metaphysical doctrine that forms the basis of everything that follows:

Master *Lu-Tsou* said: That which subsists by itself is called the Principle (*Tao*). The Principle is nameless and formless. It is the One Being, the One Primordial Spirit. Neither Being (*Sing*) nor Life (*Ming*) can be seen⁴. This is contained in the Light of Heaven. The Light of Heaven cannot be seen; it is contained in both eyes⁵...

The "Great One" is the name given to that which has nothing above it.

¹*Man and his becoming according to the Vedanta*, note on page 236.

² One will recall the Hebrew concept of *luz*, an indestructible bodily particle which is, in human beings, the "core of immortality" (cf. René Guénon, *The King of the World*, pages 87 to 89).

³ *The King of the World*, p. 195, and *The Spiritist Error*, p. 118. The existence of these extraordinary cases is expressly affirmed not only by the Old Testament, but also by Hindus and Taoists.

⁴*Sing* and *Ming* are two complementary principles, the first active and the second passive. Wilhelm translates *Sing* as *das Wesen* and *Ming* as *das Leben*. We have rendered *Sing* as "Being" and not as "Essence" in order to avoid using a feminine term here.

⁵The two eyes correspond to the Sun and the Moon. The same is true in India for the two eyes of *Vaishwânara* (see René Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta*, pp. 131 and 132). Compare *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*, IV, 2, shrutis 2 and 3, and *Maitrâ-yâna Upanishad*, VII, 11, shloka 1). The "Light" of the two eyes is already differentiated; but slightly above them is the "third eye," which will be discussed later and which dominates their duality, just as the supreme principle is above the two principles symbolised respectively by the Sun and the Moon.

Here is section 2 of the treatise, reproduced in its entirety.

The primordial Spirit and conscious thought.

Master *Lu-Tsou* says: Man is ephemeral in the eyes of Heaven and Earth; but in the eyes of the Principle (*Tao*), Heaven and Earth are but a bubble of air and a shadow. Only the Primordial Spirit, only the true Being (*Sing*) is above time and space.

Like Heaven and Earth, the seminal force¹ is perishable, but the Primordial Spirit ("*der Urgeist*") is beyond all duality. This is the place from which Heaven and Earth draw their existence. When disciples succeed in grasping the primordial Spirit, they overcome the oppositions of *Yang* and *Yin* and no longer dwell in the three worlds². But to be able to do so, one must have contemplated the primordial aspect of Being (*Sing*).

When the child detaches itself from its mother's body, the primordial Spirit resides in a square one inch wide (between the two eyes). Conscious thought resides below, in the heart⁵. This heart of flesh, the lower heart, is shaped like a large peach, sheltered by the lungs like two wings, supported by the liver and served by the intestines. This heart depends on the outside world. If one goes without food for even a single day, it feels extremely ill. If it hears something frightening, it beats; if it hears something that angers it, it stops; if it encounters death, it becomes sad; if it sees something beautiful, it is dazzled. But the heavenly heart in the head, when has it ever moved? You ask me: can the heavenly heart not move? I reply: how could true intelligence, which resides in a square inch, move? If it does indeed move, it is an unfortunate event. For when ordinary men die, it begins to move, but this is an unfortunate event⁶. The most favourable case, in truth, is that in which the light has become strong enough

¹ Understood in particular in the sense of "vital force".

² Heaven, Earth, and Hell (note by R. Wilhelm).

³ The *Katha Upanishad* (II, 4, 12) says of *Purusha* (the primordial Spirit) that he is "the size of a thumb". Mr. Guénon, quoting this passage from the Vedic text, points out that it could be compared to Taoist concepts concerning the "endogenous nature of the Immortal", i.e. precisely those concepts that form the subject of the book *The Flower of Gold (Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta, Chapter III)*. This chapter also contains the quotation from St Matthew that we reproduced above: the passage from St John relating to rebirth through water and the spirit is quoted in chapter XXI of the same work).

⁴ This parenthesis is an explanatory addition by R. Wilhelm.

⁵ "Conscious thought" seems to correspond fairly accurately to *the Hindu manas*. It is the (subtle) organ of the discursive faculty, memory and feelings. We will return later to the two locations indicated in the text.

⁶ Indeed, death generally causes a separation of the two souls of man, *Houunn* returning to Heaven and *P'ai* to Earth. It is different for the "transcendent man" whose entire being, body, lower soul and higher soul, has been "transmuted": death has no hold on him and causes neither separation nor "movement" of any kind. This idea is found in the Hindu tradition and is expressly affirmed by the *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad* (III, 2, 11 and IV, 4, 6). See also Shankarāchārya's interpretation of these texts in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras* (4^e Adhyāya, 2^e Pāda, sūtras 12 to 16).

to condense into a spiritual body ("*Geistleib*") and where its vital force gradually permeates appetites and movements. But this is a secret that has not been revealed for several millennia.

The lower heart moves like a general aware of his power, who looks with disdain upon the apparent weakness of the heavenly sovereign¹ and who has taken control of the affairs of state. But when one has succeeded in fortifying and defending the primordial keep ("*das Urschloss*"), then it is like a powerful and wise sovereign sitting on his throne. The two eyes set the light in motion and make it turn, like two ministers on the right and left of the sovereign, who assist him with all their means. When sovereignty is in order at the centre, all the rebellious heroes soon appear, with the tips of their spears turned towards the ground, to receive his instructions.

The elixir of life³ is obtained by a supreme, marvellous means, which is threefold: the seminal Water, the Fire of the spirit and the Earth of thoughts. What is seminal Water? It is the true and unique Force of the previous Heaven ("*des früheren Himmels wahre, Eine Kraft*"). The Fire of the spirit is precisely the Light. The Earth of thoughts is precisely the heavenly heart of the middle dwelling. The Fire of the spirit is used as the active principle, the Earth of thoughts is the substance, and the Seminal Water serves as the basis⁴. Ordinary men produce their bodies through their thoughts. The body is not only this large external body seven feet tall. Within the body resides *the anima*⁵. *The anima* is attached to consciousness, which it itself produces. Consciousness needs *the anima* in order to be born. *The anima* is feminine (*yin*), it is the substance of consciousness. As long as this consciousness is not interrupted, it continues to produce from generation to generation, *the anima* constantly causing changes in form and substance.

In addition to *the anima*, there is *the animus*, in which the spirit is hidden. During the day, *the animus* resides in the eyes; at night, it dwells in the liver. When it resides in the eyes, it sees; when it dwells in the liver, it dreams. Dreams are journeys of the spirit through the nine heavens and the nine earths. But those who, upon waking, feel their spirit confused and absorbed, attached to the bodily form, are captive to *the anima*. That is why, through the circular movement of the

¹In China, the Emperor was, as we know, the Son of Heaven.

² This reflects an idea dear to most Chinese writers, whether Confucian or Taoist.

³ Literally, the "golden pill" (*Kim-Tan*).

⁴ This passage and another found a little further on are the only ones in the treatise that refer not to two, but to three principles. Fire of the spirit, Seminal water and Earth of thoughts are reminiscent of both the three Hermetic principles (Sulphur, Mercury and Salt) and the tripartite conception of the world set out in the *Chhândogya Upanishad* (VI¹prapâthaka, khandas 2 to 7).

⁵*Animus* and *anima* are the terms chosen by Richard Wilhelm to render the Chinese words *Houun* and *P'ai* (Wilhelm transcribes *Po*), which, as we have said, designate the two souls of man. *The animus* is therefore the luminous soul, which at death reunites with *Yang*; *the anima* is the dark, inferior soul, which remains attached to the corpse for a shorter or longer period of time and finally returns to *Yin*.

light, *the animus* is concentrated and, thereby, the spirit is preserved; thus *the anima* is subjugated and consciousness is suppressed¹. The method followed by the Ancients to leave the world consisted precisely in completely melting away the dross of darkness², in order to return to the pure *K'ien* principle³. This is nothing other than a diminution of *the anima* and the complete realisation of *the animus*. And the circular movement of light is the marvellous means by which darkness is diminished and *the anima* is mastered. Even when one does not aim to bring back *K'ien*, but merely employs the marvellous means of the circular movement of light, the light is precisely *K'ien* itself. Through its circular movement, one returns to *K'ien*. If one follows this method, one will find seminal Water in abundance, the Fire of the spirit will be ignited, the Earth of thoughts will condense and crystallise, and the sacred Fruit will thus reach perfect development. The beetle rolls its little ball of dung, and in this little ball life is born, produced by the undivided effort of its concentration of mind. If even in dung an embryo can be born that manages to free itself from its shell, how could the residence of our heavenly heart, if we concentrate our mind on it, not also produce a body?

The unique, active and true Being divides into *animus* and *anima* as soon as it descends into the dwelling of *K'ien*⁴. *The animus* resides in the heavenly heart. It is of the nature of *Yang*, it is the force of the light and the pure. This is what we have received from the Great Void, which is identical to the First Principle ("*Uranfang*"). *The anima* is of the nature of *Yin*. It is the force of the heavy and the troubled, it is linked to the bodily, carnal heart. *The animus* loves life. *The anima* seeks death. All sensual pleasures and movements of anger are effects of *the anima*, it is the conscious spirit, which after death feeds on blood⁵, but during life is in extreme distress. Darkness returns to darkness, and things attract each other according to their nature. But the disciple knows how to completely distil *the dark anima*, so that it is transformed into pure *Yang*.

The reader may have been surprised by the indications in this text concerning the dwelling place of the primordial Spirit, the divine principle, in man: "The primordial Spirit resides in the square of one inch on each side (between the two eyes). Conscious thought resides below, in the heart." One might be tempted to see a contradiction between

¹Naturally, this refers only to the human forms of consciousness (discursive thought, feelings, volitions, etc.). The different stages of contemplation cannot be states of unconsciousness, let alone stages of progressive annihilation.

² "By this, all darkness will flee from you" (*Emerald Tablet*). Deliverance is, one might say, the effective reconstitution of the perfect, luminous unity of being; it is indeed a work of concentration.

³*K'ien* is the first trigram of *the I Ching*, composed of three "masculine" lines, or ☰, and designating "active perfection"; the second trigram is ☷, *K'oum*, "passive perfection" (see Matgioi, *La Voie Métaphysique*, chap. III). Richard Wilhelm translates *K'ien* as "*das Schöpferische*" ("creative principle"), an expression that has the dual flaw of appealing to a non-Chinese concept (that of "creation") and failing to mark the relationship of "complementarity" that links *K'ien* to *K'oum*.

⁴ This dwelling is obviously the 'heart', the vital centre of the being.

⁵ Allusions to the psychic "remains" left behind by the deceased (*prêtas*, manes).

This assertion and the Hindu idea that the heart is the "abode of Brahma" (*Brahmapura*). But we must not forget that these locations are all symbolic, since what is spiritual cannot strictly speaking be located; the symbolic location may therefore vary depending on the point of view from which one looks at it. In general, Chinese writers agree with Hindus and other Easterners in identifying the heart as the "vital centre" of the being: they often assert that intelligence, "participation in Heaven", is located in the heart. Note also the expressions "heavenly heart" and "lower heart" in the previous text. There must therefore be two ways of looking at things or, if you like, two "hearts", which differ depending on the point of view adopted. And this is indeed what seems to be indicated by the following passage from the commentary:

At the moment of birth, conscious thought breathes in the force of air and thus becomes the dwelling place of that which is born¹. It resides in the heart. From then on, the heart is the master and the primordial Spirit loses its place, with conscious thought retaining supremacy.

In other words, in the present situation of "fallen" man, the divine principle is, as we have already seen, deprived of its sovereignty; it no longer coincides with the "heart", the vital centre of man, except in a virtual sense. There are, so to speak, two hearts competing with each other, and this explains why all traditional doctrines teach that, in order to restore the "heavenly heart" to the fullness of its powers, it is necessary to silence the "lower heart" and stop its disorderly activity. At the beginning of the *Yoga Sūtras*, we read: "Union with the Principle implies the cessation of the movements of thought." And in Chinese books, it is repeated ad nauseam that only rest and emptiness of the heart allow the intelligence to reflect Reality. Now why is the "heavenly heart" indicated as residing between the two eyes? Obviously because that is where it must first be sought, according to the method of meditation specific to the school of

"Golden Flower". The human eye, according to the treatise, is like the sun in the world, the place where the radiance of Light manifests itself. It is the two eyes that trigger the "involutionary" movement; it is they that cause the rotation of *Yang* and *Yin*. These rather enigmatic assertions become clearer to some extent when viewed in conjunction with information on the constitution of the human being given in the treatises on *Hatha Yoga* and in certain Tantric works². We know what an important role concentration on the space between the two eyebrows plays in *Hatha Yoga*. This is where the "residence of Shiva" (*Shivasthāna*) is located; the place in the body that corresponds to the sixth *chakra* of the subtle state, *Ajnā*, represented by a white lotus with two petals, at the centre of which is depicted the *linga*, symbol of Shiva, and the sacred monosyllable *Om*; this centre is also referred to as the 'Moon' (*chandra*), from which nectar (*Soma*) flows incessantly

¹ Of the soul subject to birth and death, *jivātmā*.

² See, for example, the *Hatha-Yoga-Pradīpikā*, the *Shat-Chakra-Nirūpana* (translated by Arthur Avalon in *The Serpent Power*) and the *Shiva-Samhitā*.

which is "drunk" by the *Yogi*; and finally it is identified with the "third eye", the frontal eye of Shiva, which represents the "sense of eternity"¹. It is therefore quite understandable that the Chinese, for their part, located the "celestial heart" in this place, and there is no reason to suppose that their knowledge of human nature was significantly inferior to that of the Hindus.

From section 3 onwards, the treatise gives a series of indications concerning progress and the means of achievement, for example on the link between thought and breathing and on the need to 'refine' the breath and make it completely silent. Breath control is also presented as the best way to stop the disordered movements of thought. None of this is unique to the Chinese⁽²⁾ and most of these instructions can be found in the treatises on Yoga. Nevertheless, we believe that we should not be too quick to describe them as "borrowings" made by Taoism from Indian doctrines³.

We will quote two more passages from section 7, one from the treatise and the other from the commentary. These passages are easy to understand, a quality that readers will no doubt appreciate after the arduous work we have imposed on them. They concern the last sentences of "realisation", those where one can "let go", and are not unrelated to certain remarks made by Mr Clavelle in a recent article⁴.

Master *Lu-Tsou* said: Once we have gradually brought light into circular motion, we must not abandon our usual occupations. The ancients said: When affairs come to us, we must accept them; when things come to us, we must study them thoroughly. When we settle our affairs with right thoughts, the light is not carried away by external things, but revolves according to its own law...

And here is the commentary on this passage:

... How can the Master rightly say that one should not abandon one's usual occupations? One might think that the Master wishes to prevent the disciple from quickly obtaining the elixir of life. But the one who knows replies:

¹ On the subject of the "third eye", see René Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta*, pp. 202 and 203, and *The King of the World*, p. 90.

² With regard to the "refinement" of the breath in particular, see our article on Mongolian ascetics (*Le Voile d'Isis*, July 1930, p. 523).

³The question of "borrowing" from one civilisation to another is much less simple than is commonly thought: for an idea is only "borrowed" if it is understood and recognised as valid, that is, if it corresponds to a pre-existing intellectual possibility in the mind of the person who accepts it. Modern "positive" science, for example, borrows nothing from the traditional doctrines of any country, because the few ideas it uses fall short of those doctrines. One does not borrow an idea as one borrows money or imports goods! It is only possible to speak of "borrowing" when, through contact between two civilisations, intellectual possibilities that had previously remained latent are awakened. But this also means that, in the case of a complete civilisation such as Chinese civilisation, these borrowings can never relate to fundamental ideas or essential applications, but only to secondary applications, such as, for example, the Western techniques that China is currently working to assimilate.

⁴ *Le Voile d'Isis*, October 1930 issue, pp. 726 and 727.

Not at all! The Master fears that the disciple has not fulfilled his destiny to be active, which is why he speaks thus. Once, through hard work, one has entered the Abode of the Blessed ("*In die seligen Gofilde*"), the heart is like the mirror of still water¹. When things come, it reflects them; when things go, the mind and strength come together of their own accord and do not allow themselves to be carried away by things. This is what the Master means when he says that all thoughts of others and of oneself must be absolutely banished. When the disciple has succeeded, through true thoughts, in concentrating continuously on the "place of power"², he no longer needs to turn the light; it turns by itself. But when the light turns, the elixir is produced by itself and one can engage in worldly activities without any inconvenience. It is different at the beginning of the work of meditation, when the mind and power are still distracted and confused. If one cannot then put aside all worldly occupations and find a quiet place where one can devote all one's energies to concentration and avoid the disturbances brought about by daily affairs, one may be diligent in the morning, but in the evening one will certainly be indolent: how long will it take, in this way, to penetrate the true mysteries? That is why it is said: at the beginning of the work, domestic affairs must be set aside. If this is not possible, they must be entrusted to another person, so that one can devote oneself to the work with one's full attention. But when the work has reached the point where one receives secret confirmations³, there is no harm in attending to one's ordinary affairs at the same time, in order to fulfil one's destiny to be active. This is called "the way of turning the light within life itself"⁴. A long time ago, *Tseu Yang Tchenn Jen* ("the true man of the purple luminous principle") uttered the following words: "If one lives in the midst of the world, but in harmony with the light, then the round is round and the angular is angular⁵; then one lives among men, hidden and visible, unlike them and

⁽¹⁾ A frequent comparison among Chinese authors. See what we said above about "rest and emptiness of the heart".

²The "place of power" ("*Raum der Kraft*"), which corresponds to the solar plexus, is the point where "Heaven penetrates Earth", the "crucible" where spirit and power unite and where the spirit "crystallises".

³ "Confirmations" ("*Bestätigungen*") are signs that one is on the right path. Section 6 describes several of them. Here is the first: "During rest, a lively joy ("*eine grosse Heiterkeit*") is felt without interruption, as if one were drunk or had just taken a bath: this is a sign that *Yang* is harmoniously regulating the whole body; the bud of the Golden Flower is beginning to form."

⁴ Title of section 7, to which this comment refers.

⁵ *That is*, all things are in their place. Heaven is "round", Earth is "angular"; cf. on this subject the very curious chapter by *Lu-Pou-Wei* entitled: "The circular path" (Spring and Autumn, III, 5). The "roundness" of Heaven and the "angularity" of Earth are ideas suggested by nature itself. We know that they were preserved in the West until the end of the Middle Ages. "The movement of celestial bodies," Copernicus writes, "is equal, circular, perpetual, or composed of circular movements... Straight movement can only occur in things that are not in their proper place, that are imperfect and separated from their whole." Refer to the well-known alchemical figure, where *Rebis* is seen holding a compass (symbol of the circle) in his right hand and a square in his left hand: above the compass is *Sol*, the male principle, which corresponds to the Chinese Heaven; above the square is *Luna*, the female principle, which corresponds to the Earth. Moreover, with its two horns, *Luna* is visibly angular. It is curious to note that these same symbols were taken up, but in a different sense, by the School of Wisdom in Darmstadt, which expressly states that its emblem is not the circle (which is closed) but the angle (which is open). A Chinese person would understand that this school prefers the Earth to Heaven, which would undoubtedly not be in line with Count Keyserling's intentions.

like them; no one could understand our secret conduct and no one even notices it". The "way of making light shine within life itself" is precisely the art of living in the midst of the world and yet in harmony with the light.

Finally, we would like to point out section 8 of the treatise, which contains, among other noteworthy things, a very curious page on the birth of the "Enfançon". In the commentary on this section is the following sentence, which clearly refers to the rise of *Kundalini* and also recalls the *tumo* exercises, through which Tibetan ascetics manage to produce considerable organic heat¹:

The path to follow starts from the sacrum and ascends, in a retrograde movement, to the summit where *K'ien* stands and through *K'ien's* residence; it then descends, in a normal movement, crosses the two floors and arrives at the solar plexus, which is warmed.

The "summit where *K'ien* stands" can only be the "celestial heart", that is, the *Âjnâ* "lotus" we mentioned, which is located between the two eyebrows. The "two floors" are the "lotuses" of the throat (*Vishuddha*) and the heart (*Anâhata*). Finally, the solar plexus corresponds to the *Manipûra chakra*, the ten-petalled "lotus" where *ram*, the "seed" (*bhîja*) of fire is found²; it is the "region of fire" (*Vaishvânarasya mandalam*), also referred to as the "Sun" (*Sâyva* or *Bhânu*), which is of "the nature of fire" (*dahanâtmake*). And, incidentally, it is certainly not without reason that this plexus has also been called "solar" in the West. When the commentary says that this plexus is "warmed", it obviously means that the corresponding vital centre, i.e. *Manipura*, is "activated" and thus develops the heat it contains in potential.

In general, the book *The Golden Flower*, whatever exact importance we should attribute to it – a point that is rather difficult to determine – sheds some light on a little-known and little-studied aspect of Far Eastern thought. We recommend it to those who are already somewhat familiar with this way of thinking. Let us hope that we will soon have a French translation, made, if possible, directly from the original.



There is one last point to draw attention to. The Book of the *Golden Flower*, through all the connections it suggests with Western conceptions of the "Great Work" and from the "elixir from long life", constitutes a testimony

¹ See in particular Alexandra David-Neel, *Mystics and Magicians of Tibet*, pp. 218–231.

² On the subject of *bhîjas*, see Jean Marquès-Rivière: *La puissance du Mantra selon l'ésotérisme asiatique* (The Power of Mantra According to Asian Esotericism) (*Le Voile d'Isis*, March 1930, p. 147). It should be noted that *ram*, the "seed" of fire, is also a Germanic root meaning ram (in English *ram*, in Old German *Ramm*); yet we know that in India, the ram is the vehicle of *Agni*, the god of fire.

This is remarkable in favour of the opinion that the material production of gold was of little concern to true alchemists, whether Eastern or Western. This opinion cannot be examined here, but we will at least point out how contrary it would be to the spirit of a "traditional science" to limit its domain – as modern sciences do – to a single order of reality viewed from a single perspective. A science whose technical terms could not be taken symbolically and transposed to higher "planes" would be a science entirely "superficial", a science without principles or depth, and if this were the case with alchemy, it would be difficult to explain the important place this doctrine occupied in Europe and among the Arabs as well as in the Far East, and the interest it aroused in many minds, most of whom were indifferent to wealth, and some of whom are among the most illustrious.

In a second article, we will examine the interpretation of Taoism proposed by Dr C. G. Jung in his lengthy introduction to the book *The Golden Flower*.

ANDRÉ PRÉAU.

Taoism without Tao.

A psychological interpretation by Dr C. G. Jung.

Man is ephemeral in the eyes of Heaven and Earth; but in the eyes of *Tao*, Heaven and Earth are but a bubble of air and a shadow.

The Secret of the Golden Flower of the

Supreme One.

L Dr C. G. Jung, of Zurich, who, along with Freud and Adler, is one of the most prominent figures in psychoanalytic psychiatry, shared his interpretation of Taoist thought in a lengthy "commentary" at the beginning of the German translation, published just over a year ago, of the Chinese work *The Secret of the Golden Flower of the Supreme One*. In the penultimate issue of this journal, we devoted an article to this work, from which we gave some excerpts.

M. Jung is not a metaphysician and does not want to hear about metaphysics. Since the thinking and entire life of Easterners are dominated by a certain conception of ultimate reality and by the principles that derive more or less directly from it, one wonders with curiosity what a non-metaphysical interpretation of a metaphysical doctrine might be. This interpretation, which is that of a psychiatrist, is, as one might guess, psychological and even psychoanalytical. Before discussing it, however, it would be useful to say a few words about what might be called Mr Jung's agnosticism, since it was this agnosticism that led him to propose a new interpretation of Taoism. Mr Jung, since it was this agnosticism that led him to propose a new interpretation of Taoism.

I. — The rejection of metaphysics.

On various occasions, Mr Jung mentions the West's extraordinary ignorance of Eastern thought and the ease with which we moderns treat as fairy tales anything in that thought that does not fit into the framework of our mentality; but on the subject of metaphysical knowledge, he is categorical and affirms his position in such a way as to leave no room for uncertainty: "My admiration for the great Eastern thinkers is as unquestionable as my attitude towards their metaphysics is disrespectful. I suspect them in particular of being psychologists expressing themselves through symbols (*symbolische Psychologen*) and to whom no greater injustice could be done than to take them at their word. If it is really metaphysics they wanted to talk about, then there is no hope of understanding them" (p. 66). This is clear, and we must be grateful to Mr Jung for expressing himself so clearly. We believe, moreover, that the vast majority of Western scholars would not hesitate to endorse such a statement.

While Mr. Jung's opinion on metaphysical knowledge is thus very clear, it is less easy to understand the reasons behind it. In the sentence preceding the passage we have just quoted, Mr. Jung criticises metaphysics for being something that cannot be "conceived" (*unvorstellbar*). There is no answer to this criticism, except that it could be levelled at any science whatsoever; for, if we are not mistaken, there is only science of the general, and there is only representation of the particular. Certain particular representations can serve as "supports" for the mind, helping it to conceive certain general ideas, but they cannot, of course, be confused with them. And if we cannot represent the Universal, the object of metaphysics, we cannot represent a mathematical derivative, the year 653 AD, humanity, or even Mr. Jung's "collective unconscious", an idea that will be discussed later.

In the same section, Mr. Jung speaks quite often of experience and in such terms that one may wonder whether he is not purely and simply an empiricist. Empiricism has long been considered – in France at least – as a rather unserious theory, and philosophy professors were quick to point out its lack of substance. For those who did not yet dare to recommend it, Kant provided a refuge, where, to tell the truth, one felt rather uncomfortable, but which made it possible to wait for a new shift in current philosophical conceptions. Today, there are countless empirical professions of faith among scholars, and experience is constantly presented as the sole source of all possible knowledge. This situation is all the more paradoxical given that modern science, in all its branches, draws on knowledge that is not derived from experience, namely mathematical knowledge; it even makes such extensive use of this knowledge that, according to some, science is only about "what can be counted and weighed". Such a contradiction between theory and practice, however, does not trouble anyone, nor does anyone wonder how an accumulation of experimental 'facts', however numerous, but all contingent and diverse, could ever satisfy the fundamental needs of the mind, which are necessity and unity.

We will not dwell on empiricist theory, however, because in another section of his introduction, Jung defines as "unscientific" any problem that is "beyond human perception and judgement and therefore beyond any possibility of demonstration" (*jenseits des menschlichen Wahrnehmungs-und Urteilsvermögens und damit jenseits aller Beweismöglichkeit*) (p. 42). This thesis, even if understood as not going beyond rationalism, already marks a great advance over empiricism. With the words "and judgement", mathematics is restored to its rightful place as a legitimate field of knowledge. Moreover, how could the theorist of the "collective unconscious", i.e. something which, by definition, escapes all experience

possible, could he himself be an empiricist¹ ? But rationalism is still insufficient; we must go further, and this is also what Mr Jung does: by "human capacity for judgement", he means not only the faculties of understanding given to human beings as individuals, but also those that transcend the individual sphere. On the subject of the Chinese concept of *Houmn*, he writes the following: "The term *Logos* seems particularly appropriate here (to translate the Chinese word *Houmn*), in that it implies the idea of a universal being: for the clarity of consciousness and reason (*Vernünftigkeit*) in man are not something particularised, but rather something universal; they are not individual, but, in the deepest sense of the term, something supra-individual, in complete contrast to *the* 'anima', which is an individual demon and manifests itself first and foremost through the most individual whims (hence the word 'animosity!') (pp. 52-53)"². It should be noted that this sentence, which would otherwise call for several reservations, contains nothing less than the Hindu conception of *Buddhi*, the higher intelligence, a faculty of a universal order – a conception which is obviously not exclusively Hindu, since it is also clearly found in China and Greece. The idea that there is something universal in man, something that therefore transcends the individual, is an extremely important idea. For, as Mr. René Guénon recently observed here, "metaphysical knowledge, in the true sense of the word, being of a universal order, would be impossible if there were not in the being a faculty of the same order, and therefore transcendent in relation to the individual"³. In this case, indeed, any metaphysical assertion would be, as Mr Jung says, a "childish attempt to grasp what is beyond our reach" (*kindischer Uebergriff*) and a sign of "ridiculous presumption" (*lächerliche Anmassung*), not to say "simple absurdity" (*barer Unsinn*)⁴. But as soon as we admit that human beings have a faculty of universal knowledge, we thereby recognise the possibility of metaphysical knowledge. In this respect, there is no longer any difficulty.

If Mr Jung rejects metaphysics, it is not for reasons of principle. Rather, it is for contingent and accidental reasons. The main reason is undoubtedly that Mr Jung has never encountered a satisfactory metaphysical doctrine. In this respect, he is in the same situation as most Europeans. There is no such thing as a truly metaphysical teaching anywhere in the West: modern European thought either falls well short of the universal, as in scientific and philosophical theories, or

¹ It should be noted that on page 68 of his work, Mr Jung defends the "reality" of the "soul" and contrasts it with the "world of experience" (*erfahrbare Welt*).

² On the subject of *Houmn* and *the anima*, see our article in the February 1931 issue, pp. 93 and 105. In order not to confuse the reader with new vocabulary, we have translated *persönlich* as individual, which does not distort the author's thinking.

³ *The limits of the mind*, in the November 1930 issue, p. 794.

⁴ One might wonder, however, whether, in this case, the very idea of a metaphysical assertion could come to mind and whether the fact that humans sometimes ask themselves metaphysical questions is not precisely proof that a certain conscious contact with the Universal – however slight and elusive it may be – is not denied to them.

When it encounters this idea, for example in Christian theology, it merely mentions it, without ever giving it its full value or drawing all the consequences implied by it: which means that it does not truly understand it¹. As for extracting the metaphysical teachings contained in Eastern books – often in a very apparent way – it must be acknowledged that such a task is not as easy as it seems; because, in fact, despite the significant work of analysis accomplished by Orientalists, there are very few Europeans who have expounded Asian metaphysical ideas in a way that is truly satisfactory to the mind and who have made it understandable how beings endowed with intelligence and discernment could have accepted them. And it must be added that these few authors have all, in one way or another, been schooled by Orientalists. To all the others, or almost all the others, the content of Oriental books has generally seemed so strange and incomprehensible that they could not help but see them as the ramblings of a 'primitive' mind, to which, it is said, the principle of contradiction itself would be foreign (which would indeed be the height of "primitiveness"), and they reduced theories whose abstruse and scholarly nature was often obvious to the level of popular "beliefs". These latter interpretations of the East, which are entirely Western, are certainly the only ones that Mr. Jung has considered – even assuming that he is familiar with the others: it is therefore impossible to regard his opinion on the metaphysical concepts of Taoism as anything other than a provisional judgement, which he might be called upon to revise himself in other circumstances.

II. – The psychological theory of Dr Jung.

Now that this preliminary question has been examined, we can turn to Mr Jung's positive ideas and his interpretation of the East. For this psychologist, individual consciousness is based on a substratum common to all humanity, which is the 'collective unconscious'. 'Without doubt, consciousness originates from the unconscious'. Mr Jung specifies that this "unconscious" does not consist of elements capable of consciousness, but of "latent dispositions to certain identical reactions" and adds that "the fact of the collective unconscious is simply the psychic expression of the identity of brain structure, an identity superior to all differences of race" (p. 16). It is immediately apparent that this so-called "collective" is in reality "general"; but this is only a matter of words². The collective unconscious manifests itself through certain instinctive demands that lie outside the realm of human conscious awareness, the effects and repercussions of which humans merely feel. For a long time, human life was much more instinctive than conscious, so these

¹ Throughout this paragraph, we address issues that would require quite lengthy discussion. However, it will suffice to refer readers who are interested in these issues to René Guénon's *General Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines*.

²On the other hand, it could be argued that the relationship established between the collective unconscious and the structural identity of brains is a materialistic idea. Psychoanalysis, however, claims credit for having inaugurated a truly psychological method, by doing justice to the reality of the soul for the first time. We confess that we do not see how the two ideas can be reconciled.

obscure demands were fully satisfied and freely expressed, particularly in the form of "myths" and symbols¹. Over the last few centuries, however, "Science" has emerged, causing an abnormal development of conscious life and destroying the balance that had been maintained until then between conscious life and instinctive life. But although the collective unconscious has been neglected and misunderstood, it has not been suppressed; lacking its normal means of expression, it demands satisfaction through violent and disordered reactions, through the neuroses and disorders of all kinds that afflict humanity today. We must therefore restore instinctive life to its rightful place. We must no longer be ashamed of 'living our instincts'; we must stop repressing and suppressing them, as nineteen centuries of Christian life and exaggerated asceticism have taught us all too well to do. At the same time, far from being clouded, our minds will become freer and better able to perform their tasks. If the Taoists succeeded in turning their gaze so inwardly, in detaching themselves so completely from the world, was it not

"because these men had satisfied the instinctive demands of their nature to such an extent that little, if anything, prevented them from contemplating the invisible essence of the world? ... Would not the gaze towards the spiritual be freed when one observes the law of the Earth?" (p. 13). "When lived with total abandon, life gives a premonition of the Self, of personal being" (p. 34).

"What is the use of a morality that destroys man?" (p. 19).

We will see how Mr Jung finds, or believes he finds, this theory in Taoism. Let us say straight away how, rather curiously, most of the connections he proposes were suggested to him. During their psychoanalytic examination, some of his patients revealed the dark depths of their souls by drawing, describing or even dancing figures that are sometimes rather unpleasantly reminiscent of certain illustrations currently in vogue among German occultists — figures that Mr Jung does not hesitate to call (*horresco referens!*) European *mandalas*². The brochure contains reproductions of both a beautiful Tibetan *mandala* and ten "European *mandalas*", allowing the reader to make a comparison. In these "European *mandalas*", Mr Jung recognised, as we shall see later, some of the symbols from the text of the *Golden Flower*. Now, since for him every symbol is the expression of something found in the unconscious, he naturally wondered whether there might be a connection between the experiences of his patients and the states attained by Taoists through the method of concentration described in the *Golden Flower* book.

Let us see what results his research led him to.

¹ As we can see, Mr Jung is far from attributing a predominant role to sexual tendencies, as Freud does. In particular, he believes that Freud's theory of 'repression' (*Verdrängung*) implies a misunderstanding of the reality of the unconscious. In fact, however, as we shall see, Mr Jung nonetheless admits that there is a fairly marked opposition between moral concepts (particularly those of Christianity) and the demands of the unconscious.

²A *mandala* is a ritual instrument used in particular when invoking a deity. It is a set of figures drawn inside and around a circle (the literal meaning of the Sanskrit word *mandala* is circle, round, disc).

III. – The Tao.

Every doctrine contains ideas of very different importance, some being profound and essential, while others represent only more or less distant applications. Understanding the doctrine naturally requires understanding the hierarchy according to which its various parts are ordered, a hierarchy to which any serious exposition or interpretation must conform. Thus, for example, the theorems of geometry are, so to speak, suspended from one another, and their order cannot be arbitrarily changed.

It is difficult to dispute that the fundamental, "central" idea of Taoism is that of *the Tao*. So what is the *Tao*?

To find out, Jung studies the composition of the character *Tao*, which he translates as "conscious path" and interprets as the union of "consciousness" and "life". "life". This interpretation is based on a few sentences from the Book of the *Golden Flower* and the *Hoei Ming King*, most of which do not even contain the word *Tao*. Such an approach would be acceptable if it were one of those obscure terms belonging to extinct languages, the meaning of which can only be guessed at; but this is not the case here, as the word *Tao* has been explained very clearly by many Taoist authors. Now, when it comes to the meaning of a Chinese word, the testimony of the Chinese undeniably carries greater authority than the suppositions of a European scholar, even a famous one. So what do Taoist authors say about *Tao*?

"Master *Lu-Tsou* says: That which subsists by itself is called the *Tao*. The *Tao* is nameless and formless. It is the unique Being, the unique primordial Spirit... In the eyes of the *Tao*, Heaven and Earth are but a bubble of air and a shadow... The primordial Spirit is beyond all duality. That is the place from which Heaven and Earth derive their existence." The reader will recognise the text from the Book of the *Golden Flower*¹. We could add many other quotations from Taoist authors from very different periods, but we do not believe that the meaning of the word *Tao* can be seriously disputed. Everywhere it is said that *Tao* is what was "before the foundations of Heaven and Earth were laid", that it is the sole Origin of all beings. *Tao* is informal, timeless, unaffected by world events and indefinable except in a negative way. All this is clearly explained, often repeated, and leaves no room for "symbolic" interpretation or hidden meaning. The *Tao* is a metaphysical principle; it is the supreme reality. This is also why the idea of *the Tao* is the fundamental idea, the primary idea of Taoism: since thought has value only if it is "in accordance with reality," what is fundamental in the order of reality must also be fundamental in the order of thought.

¹ See our article in the February 1931 issue, pp. 102 and 103.

For Mr Jung, however, the *Tao* is far from being a metaphysical principle: it is the union of 'consciousness' and 'life', these two terms being understood not only in a human sense, but also in a psychoanalytical sense: 'consciousness' is the clear consciousness of man, a small island lost in the midst of the immense "collective unconscious", and "life" is this same "collective unconscious"¹ ; the *Tao* is the psychoanalytical method by which the unsatisfied and disturbing elements of the unconscious are, so to speak, extracted from this unconscious, revealed to the poor psychopath who was previously unaware of the true cause of his illness, and thus rendered harmless.

The gap, as we can see, is wide between the *Tao* of the Taoists and Mr Jung's '*Tao*'. To bridge this gap, the author explains that the *Tao*, or union of "consciousness" and "life", involves focusing one's attention on the "innermost region" of the soul, on the "sacred" region, which is "the origin and end of the soul" and which contains the lost and sought-after union of life and consciousness (p. 35). Indeed, once the demands of the unconscious have been recognised and accepted, once agreement has been established as far as possible between consciousness and instincts, "the centre of gravity of the whole person is no longer the ego (*das Ich*), which is only the centre of consciousness, but is, so to speak, a virtual point between the conscious and the unconscious, which could be called the Self (*das Selbst*)". Thus is born "detached" consciousness (p. 60).

Let us leave aside the question of the validity of all these statements and acknowledge that here Mr Jung is taking a step towards the *Tao* of the Taoists. But it must be added that he is only taking one step. It is true that the *Tao* is within every being and that in it all duality is abolished. But it does not follow that everything that is within the being and everything in which duality disappears is the *Tao*. One can 'descend into oneself' to a greater or lesser depth: one has not reached the *Tao* because one has transcended the limits of one's individuality, and one is even further from it when one has merely restored harmony between the demands of the conscious and the unconscious. The *Tao*, let us remember once again, is the *ultimate* reality, the *ultimate* goal of introspection, "that which has nothing above itself". However, the idea of a ultimate reality is obviously a metaphysical idea, not a psychological one; and that is why Mr Jung, by limiting himself to being a psychologist, deprives himself of the possibility of explaining to us what the *Tao* is, and even of legitimately using the term.

Mr Jung – let us emphasise this point – cannot call the union of "consciousness" and "life" unless he can show at the same time that everything Chinese authors tell us about *the Tao* also applies to this union: that it is the universal Cause, the single, eternal and transcendent Principle, the Absolute in all its indefinable aspects. Mr Jung is undoubtedly entitled to refuse to

¹ At least, this is what clearly emerges from certain passages (cf. what is said about "uprooted consciousness" on pp. 18 and 30, and the second paragraph on p. 60). On p. 34, however, Mr. Jung contrasts the "unconscious" with 'life'.

engage in this line of reasoning; but then there is no longer any reason to identify the union of consciousness and life with the *Tao*. In the sixty-seven pages in which Mr Jung introduces Taoism to European thought, the Chinese idea of *the Tao* appears only to be immediately dismissed: let us therefore not hesitate to declare that Mr Jung offers us a Taoism without *Tao*.

IV. – The Return to Tao and the Golden Flower.

It is true that there are other ideas in the book *The Golden Flower* besides that of *the Tao*: notably, there is the idea of the Return to the Origin and the related idea of the "spiritual body", the Golden Flower or Embryo. The idea of Return, of "Union with the Principle", which, in *Chuang Tzu*, for example, or later in the *Penn-K'i-King*, is expressed so vividly and which is also clearly recalled, on several occasions, in the treatise on the *Golden Flower*, this idea does not appear in Mr Jung's commentary, which in fact could hardly mention it: for if there is no question of *the Tao*, there can be no question of the return of *the Tao* either. On the other hand, Mr Jung speaks at some length about the particular states of "detached consciousness"; it is true that he does so in such a way that he seems more inclined to conceal his thoughts than to reveal them: sometimes he tells us that consciousness is detached "from the domination of the unconscious", sometimes that it is detached "from the world", sometimes that it is detached from its object, in the sense that the conscious being no longer identifies with what it perceives¹; and finally, as we have seen, he also explains that the person's "centre of gravity" is then transported to "a virtual point located between the conscious and the unconscious". The psychological transformation manifested by these states is nothing more than a natural preparation for death, a preparation that begins when the middle of life has been reached. Mr Jung, however, does not hesitate to equate "detached consciousness" with the states, albeit very unnatural ones, of mystics and contemplatives of all kinds, and in this regard he quotes passages from authors as diverse as St Paul, Hildegard of Bingen and Edward Maitland. But there is a gulf between the experiences of Dr Jung's patients and mystical experiences; and there is another gulf between simple mystical experiences, especially if we limit ourselves to considering them from a psychological point of view, and Deliverance as understood by Easterners: on this subject, the book *The Golden Flower* reminds us that it is a matter of "leaving the path of births and deaths", of "no longer dwelling in the three worlds", of achieving immortality, of reaching "the place from which Heaven and Earth derive their existence " (pp. 115, 121 and 123). Mr Jung would certainly be reluctant to talk to us about all this, but what a strange situation he finds himself in: forced to gloss over the essential parts of the text he wants to explain to us!

¹ The identification of the "subject" and the "object" would constitute an illusion peculiar to "primitive" minds, an illusion called "mystical participation" by Lévy-Bruhl. Initially a simple intellectual error, this "mystical participation" is then presented by Mr Jung as a psychic, even magical, link. If the 'primitive' is wrong to 'animate' nature, modern man is wrong not to realise that he is often 'identical to his parents': here the error consists in identifying, there in not identifying. We can see how the theory varies according to the applications to be drawn from it.

The fact that this author repeatedly refers to the Self (*das Selbst*), which he contrasts with the ego (*das Ich*), cannot impress anyone. As long as he has not said that this "Self" is an "extension of the primordial Spirit", that it is universal and identical to the "Great One", he has said nothing; and he remains open to the objection that what is truly interesting in Eastern thought has escaped him and that he has fallen short of a fundamental conception of Taoism, without which the idea of Return becomes incomprehensible.

On the subject of the Golden Flower, Mr Jung observes that his patients had already introduced him to this symbol. Indeed, at the centre of certain "European mandalas" we see either an open flower, a plant bearing a flower, or something that more or less resembles a flower. The unconscious, Mr Jung says elsewhere, becomes conscious through a process "of life and growth " (p. 33). The union of "consciousness" and "life" gives rise to the subtle but very important feeling "for the life and well-being of the individual" that a higher being is born within us. This is the feeling experienced by Saint Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me ." Here, Mr. Jung's thinking must be clarified: such a feeling is nothing other than the recognition of the reality of the unconscious within which the ego is included (p. 69). In the "Christ" of whom St. Paul speaks, we should therefore recognise the "collective unconscious," that is, a set of "latent dispositions to certain reactions."

These are the analogies that Mr. Jung has pointed out. On the other hand, what is not clearly indicated in his interpretation is the idea of the seed itself, of this first result, seemingly insignificant, but which contains within it the possibility of indefinite development. He does not explain why the Golden Flower can be called a "spiritual body", a remarkable term that we find in the same chapter XV of the first epistle to the Corinthians, where St Paul wrote: "For this corruptible body must put on incorruption, and this mortal body must put on immortality"¹. Mr Jung is silent on "the rest and emptiness of the heart", on this first detachment from the "wheel of the world", through which the Taoist, imitating first in his soul the immutability and "emptiness" of the Principle, prepares for the formation of the Embryo. He leaves aside the texts that speak of concentration of the mind, whose important role is nevertheless known to all those who have studied the East and which, it is true, is the exact opposite of psychoanalytic treatment in the West, during which the patient must, on the contrary, abandon himself and let his imagination run free. He says nothing about the 'crystallisation of the spirit', through which the Golden Flower is produced, nor about the different stages of the Embryo's development, nor about the bodily correspondences indicated in the Taoist text.

He does not dwell on the idea of 'transmutation', an idea so clearly suggested by the alchemical symbols in the text. Having removed the idea of *the Tao* and

¹ On two occasions, Mr Jung refers to the production of a "psychic body" ("*Hauchkörper*", "*subtle body*"); but he also specifies that this body is only a symbol expressing the "psychological fact" of "recognition of the unconscious".

the idea of Return, what else could Mr Jung have to say to us about the Golden Flower? What can remain of a text but a dead letter, under which everyone can read whatever they want, when the spirit in which it was conceived is systematically ignored? Mr Jung did, it is true, note a flower in certain

"European *mandalas*", but the question is whether we are allowed to identify this flower with the Golden Flower of the Taoists. It is understandable that it caught his attention and suggested the possibility of certain connections, but it is difficult to understand how such a superficial resemblance could be considered proof of anything. It should be added that, out of ten

Of the "European *mandalas*" reproduced in the book, only two contain a flower – and what a peculiar flower it is! Even with the best will in the world, it is difficult to see any connection between most of the figures that make up these unfortunate "*mandalas*" and the Taoist text: among these figures, we note a mountain range, crows, snakes, dogs, a goat, a stained-glass window, etc.

As for the other connections made by Mr Jung, not only are they extremely vague, but they also assume what is in question, namely that mystical or contemplative states are part of this author's psychological theory on consciousness, the unconscious and life. We must therefore briefly examine this theory; we will do so by limiting ourselves to two of its points, which seem to us to be the most important.

V. – The satisfaction of the unconscious.

The first of these points is the assertion that it is through the prior satisfaction of instincts that one arrives at 'detached consciousness', that it is by 'observing the law of the Earth' that one liberates the contemplative faculty. In section II, we quoted several passages that leave no doubt about Mr Jung's thinking in this regard. This author, to tell the truth, does not advise us to abandon ourselves purely and simply to our instincts, but only to satisfy them in a reasonable (*sinnvoll*) manner. Nevertheless, he considers that the current morality in Europe is far too rigorous and that our entire spiritual life is "poisoned by the violent repression of instincts" (p. 62). Whatever one may think of this last point, Mr Jung's thesis on the satisfaction of the unconscious is particularly important, since it constitutes the only link that can be seen between Mr Jung's psychological theory of the conscious and the unconscious and everything else he reports on the experiences of mystics, the 'sacred region' and 'detached consciousness': it therefore formed the essential point that this author had to establish if he wanted to recognise in the Taoist text some of the ideas to which his experience as a psychiatrist had led him. Three reasons made a proper demonstration necessary here. First, the seriousness of the thesis put forward, which is fraught with consequences and overturns the ideas we generally have about how to behave with regard to our instincts: "Anyone who lives their instincts," Jung writes, "is not afraid to write, can be

separate from them, and in a manner just as natural as he experienced them" (p. 62). Secondly, the fact that the living conditions imposed on contemplatives, in Asia as in Europe, are very severe and make few concessions to the demands of the unconscious. One of the points on which Taoists – like Confucians, Hindus and Buddhists – insist most is the need to achieve rest and "emptiness" of the heart, freed from all desire and passion. However, we do not believe that Mr Jung goes so far as to confuse this absolute calm of the soul, which certainly requires years of incessant control and painful effort¹, with the feeling of "relaxation" experienced by one or another of his patients who has resolved to cease the struggle and accept his own character "in both its positive and negative aspects"². The third reason, which made a thorough discussion of the question essential, is that Mr. Jung's thesis, as he himself acknowledges (p. 62), conflicts with the formal letter of the treatise on the *Golden Flower*. This treatise, as we shall recall, compares the "lower heart", which "depends on the outside world", to a rebellious general; it teaches that this "lower heart" must submit to the legitimate sovereign, which is the "heavenly heart", and that *the dark anima* must be "diminished". "subdued", "controlled", "distilled", so that we can return to *K'ien*, which is "light"³. "Through concentration of thought, one can fly through the air; but the accumulation of desires causes one to fall. The disciple who pays little attention to meditation, but much to satisfying his desires, follows the downward path" (p. 123). The commentary, for its part, specifies that those who want to "turn the light" must "forget the body and the heart"; as for greed, (worldly) folly, desire, pleasure "and all possible faults", it indicates that they make "the power of the mind" troubled and confused and sees this as the cause of all the misfortunes of being (p. 120).

However, we find that Mr Jung, who addresses so many issues in his introduction, provides no evidence for a thesis that would nevertheless require the most solid of demonstrations. This thesis – although it is later referred to by Mr Jung as a known and established truth – is initially presented by him only as a series of doubts crossing his mind, as a hypothesis that seems plausible to him, but which he nevertheless formulates with caution; and all he can find to argue in its favour is that "anyone who knows the history of Chinese customs and has also studied the *I Ching* carefully will probably not dismiss these doubts out of hand" (*der wird wohl diese Zweifel nicht ohne weiteres von der Hand weisen*) (p. 13). We are highly sceptical that the history of Chinese customs, and especially the *I Ching*, provide any support for Mr Jung's thesis, and we calmly await his clarification of his

¹ "He must use the whip liberally... Do not let go of the rope around its nostrils, hold it tight, and do not allow yourself any leniency. Never part with the whip and the halter." *The Ten Steps in the Art of Keeping Cows* (See n° February 1931, page 97, note 1).

² "... and with that I also accept my own nature with its positive and negative aspects, and everything becomes more alive," writes a former patient of Mr Jung (p. 68).

³ See February 1931 issue, pp. 103-107.

thought. How disappointing, in any case, to see that Jung, when he has to reveal the compelling reason that forced him to overlook all the difficulties we have just pointed out, evades the issue and bases his entire interpretation, all the connections he establishes between the Taoists, mystics and his patients, on a supposition that is contradicted a thousand times by the texts, a supposition of which he himself is not sure and which he only hopes that certain people will not reject outright! What can be said about an interpretation that nothing inclines us to accept and which is contrary to both the spirit and the letter of the Book of the *Golden Flower*?

VI. – The theory of the unconscious.

The second point we need to discuss is the thesis that the "collective unconscious" is not composed of "elements susceptible to consciousness", but of "latent dispositions towards certain reactions" (*Diese unbewusste Psyche... besteht nicht etwa aus bewusstseinsfähigen Inhalten, sondern aus latenten Dispositionen zu gewissen Reaktionen*) (p. 16). In other words, the unconscious, as understood by Mr Jung, is not only unconscious in the sense that it lies beyond the reach of ordinary human consciousness, but it is absolutely unconscious, it can never be made conscious¹, it is what we might call, in the German manner, the "eternal unconscious".

Has Mr. Jung explored the "collective unconscious" so thoroughly that he can afford to be so categorical about its nature? This is the first question that naturally comes to mind. It is not without importance, for if the answer were negative, we would be obliged to turn most of Mr Jung's criticisms of metaphysicians back on him, and this time with good reason. Nevertheless, what interests us most is to highlight the consequences of such a theory.

The first is that it is difficult to understand what Mr Jung means when he argues that consciousness 'originally proceeds from the unconscious' (p. 55). It is hardly disputable that our consciousness proceeds from something that is not given in our experience and that can be called, relatively speaking, the unconscious; but it is necessary that this something be "luminous", that is, of the nature of consciousness, otherwise no one will ever understand how our consciousness could have emerged from it. If science is to have intellectual value, it must link observed effects to causes that explain them, and not to supposed causes that do not explain them; for this particular "transmutation" of experimental data into ideas, which is called science, is obviously only of interest if the ideas are intellectually clearer than the content of our experience. Now, to explain

¹The word *Inhalte* ("contents") in the sentence we have just quoted (and where we have rendered it as "elements") clearly suggests that "susceptible to consciousness" should be taken to mean "susceptible to being made conscious".

Deriving the origin of consciousness from "latent dispositions to certain reactions" seems to us to be less a solution to a problem than a transformation of that same problem into an enigma for which there is no word.

Another equally serious consequence is that, with the above statement, Mr Jung once again contradicts Taoist doctrine on a fundamental point. There can obviously be no reconciliation between a philosophy of the unconscious, according to which human consciousness is an atom lost in the darkness of the 'collective unconscious', and a doctrine which, like all traditional doctrines, links this atom to a 'luminous' principle. For the former, there can be no question of "completely melting away the dross of darkness", nor of returning to *K'ien*, which is "light", nor of "distilling *the* dark *anima*", so that it is transformed into pure *Yang*"¹. If man is not 'the measure of all things', there is no reason to suppose that his thinking is the highest possible form of thinking and that what escapes his perception is unrelated to all consciousness and thought; indeed, there are reasons to suppose the opposite. This is the point of view of traditional doctrines, which not only offer a glimpse of a solution to the problem of human consciousness, but also open up the possibility of reaching, through contemplation – albeit in a difficult and exceptional way – the higher "sources of light", by detaching the conscious centre of being from the sensible world and transposing it either into the psychic realm or, even more difficult, into the Universal². But such a possibility is obviously denied to Mr. Jung's conscious monad, which is rigorously imprisoned in the collective unconscious; and for it, the return to the origin could only be dissolution within the unconscious from which it emerged. Mr. Jung seems to shy away from this consequence of his theory; yet the highest ideal he can offer us is the union of "consciousness" and "life", the attainment of "detached" consciousness, that is, consciousness emptied of all content, the concentration of personality on a virtual point located between the conscious and the unconscious. All this is extremely obscure, and we believe that Mr Jung would not hesitate to speak more clearly if he could recognise that, in the invisible world that surrounds us, there is something more than mere 'latent dispositions to certain reactions'.

¹This possibility of a "distillation" of *the anima* shows the huge gap between Taoist thought and that of Mr Jung. When the Chinese treatise teaches that *the anima* is the "substance" of consciousness, it certainly does not mean that consciousness arises purely and simply from the unconscious. A curious and significant contradiction between the treatise and Mr. Jung's commentary is that the former associates ordinary human consciousness ("conscious thought") with *the anima*, which is a *yin* (dark) principle, and contrasts it with the *animus*, a luminous principle, whereas Mr Jung contrasts this same consciousness with the unconscious (i.e. the *anima*) and assimilates it to *Sing*, a luminous principle, which is said to be "unseen" and "contained in the light of heaven".

²It is undoubtedly superfluous to point out that such a conception is not purely Eastern, but is also Jewish and Christian: one need only open the *Prophets* and *the Apocalypse* to realise this.

Mr Jung himself is certainly aware of how limiting his system is. This leads him to speak to us of the "sacred region", which is "the origin and end of the soul" and which contains the union of consciousness and life, to recall certain experiences of mystics and to quote Saint Paul; il va même beaucoup plus loin : il prononce le mot de 'contemplation' (*Schauen*) (p. 59) and that of 'universal being' (p. 53), speaks of a feeling of 'divine sonship' (*Gotteskindschaft*) (p. 70), admits that parts of the psychic process (*Gebiete des seelischen Geschehens*), which are otherwise shrouded in darkness, can sometimes be raised to the level of consciousness (p. 39) and even goes so far as to write that the unconscious can become conscious (p. 33). But one immediately wonders whether consciousness does not proceed from the 'sacred region' rather than from the unconscious, what contemplation, what universal being and what God is involved, and how the unconscious, which is not composed of elements capable of consciousness, can become conscious. Every step taken in the direction of the mystics and Taoists distances Mr Jung from his theory; and every return to his theory distances him from the Taoists and mystics. His introduction gives the impression of a continual back and forth, which is completely disconcerting. Mr. Jung dismisses the entire Taoist tradition with a stroke of his pen and replaces it with a European interpretation, so one naturally expects him to have at least something clear and definite to offer in place of what he rejects. However, not only does he fail to provide any solid reasons in favour of his interpretation, as we have shown, but also, far from solving any riddles, he seems to take pleasure in presenting us with new ones.



There are many other points to be raised in this interpretation, notably the "humanism" professed by Mr Jung – a concept so distinctly Western that one is taken aback and disarmed when he presents it as the only possible basis for a true understanding of the East – and also his thesis that modern man suffers from an exaggerated development of the "Intellekt". On these two points, we will simply refer the reader to the works of Mr Guénon (notably *Orient et Occident* and *La Crise du Monde moderne*), where he will find all the clarification he needs.

Mr. Jung's interpretation – and this is why we have discussed it at such length – is a good example of those 'interpretations' of the East that are now flourishing in Europe, one of whose lesser faults is that they are always partial and forced to consider a significant part of the texts null and void. These pseudo-interpretations – for they cannot be called otherwise – tend, not to bring us into Eastern thought through a difficult process of adaptation and assimilation, but to make us find at all costs in this thought this or that idea that is dear to us; and, in order to obey certain intellectual fashions such as positivism, empiricism or pragmatism, they in fact end up substituting each time an individual, limited and hypothetical philosophy

individual, limited and hypothetical philosophy for a metaphysical thought that is open on all sides, steeped in the authority of a tradition dating back several millennia and ultimately the only one capable of satisfying that indefinable requirement of the mind, which can be called, indifferently, a need for unity, a need for clarity or a need for causality.

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