

# *The* VEIL OF ISIS

*“Le Voile d’Isis”*



*René Guénon*

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# Table of Contents

F.-Ch. Barlet and the Initiatic Societies	1
Some Precise Details of the H.B. of L.	5
Sédir and the Hindu Doctrines	8
Léon Champrenaud (1870-1925)	10
Cologne or Strasbourg?	11
Madame Chauvel de Chauvigny	13
The Gift of Languages	14
The Compagnonnage and the Bohemians	17
The Secret Language of Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore'	20
The Thunderstones	31
The Triple Druidic Precinct	35
Some Aspects of the Symbolism of Janus	39
The Guardians of the Holy Land	45
Atlantis and Hyperborea	53
Concerning the Masons of the Middle Ages	59
A New Book on the Order of the Elect Priests	63
About the 'Lyonnais Rose-Cross'	68
The Symbolism of Weaving	71
Atma-Gita	75
The Greater Holy War	79
Regarding Pilgrimages	82
At-Tawḥīd	87
Al-Faqr	90
The Limits of the Mind	95
The Sifra di-Zeniuta	99
Sacerdotal Initiation and Royal Initiation	103
The Science of Letters ('Ilm al-Hurūf)	106
The Rind and the Core (Al-Qashar wa al-Lab)	112
The Hermetic Tradition	116
The Rose-Cross and Rosicrucians	121
Magic and Mysticism	126
The Hieroglyph of Cancer	129
The Place of the Atlantean Tradition in the Manvantara	134

Sheth	138
The Language of Birds	143
Some Remarks on the Name Adam	147
Cain and Abel	151
The Symbolism of the Theater	155
The Secret Language of Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore'	158
Hermes	165
Chirolology in Islamic Esoterism	171
Initiatic Organizations and Religious Sects	175
New Insights into the Secret Language of Dante	179
Taoism and Confucianism	184
Conditions of Initiation	196
Initiatic Regularity	202
Initiatic Transmission	209
Initiatic Centers	216
Initiation and Counter-Initiation	221
Initiatic Rites	225
Initiatic Trials	230
Qabbalah	234
Initiatic Knowledge and Profane 'Culture'	238
'Fedeli d'Amore' and 'Corte d'Amore'	242
Kabbalah and the Science of Numbers	248
Kundalini-Yoga	256
Kundalini-Yoga II	262
Initiatic Education	268
The 'Religion' of a Philosopher	274
The Holy Grail	279
The Holy Grail II	285
Initiation and Crafts	290
'Verbum, Lux, and Vita'	295
Initiatic Death	299
Alleged Empiricism of the Ancients	303
Şūfism	307
Initiatic Organizations and Secret Societies	313
Initiatic Organizations and Secret Societies II	318
Initiatic Secrecy	324
Profane Names and Initiatic Names	330
The Rite and the Symbol	335
Confusion of the Psychic and the Spiritual	342
The Arts and Their Traditional Conception	345

So-Called Psychic 'Powers'	350
The Rejection of 'Powers'	354
Some Errors Concerning Initiation	358
The Hindu Theory of the Five Elements	362
Myths, Mysteries, and Symbols	378
Dharma	385
Symbolism and Philosophy	389
Varṇaḥ	394
Synthesis and Syncretism	399
The Being and the Milieu	403



*René Guénon*

## F.-Ch. Barlet and the Initiatic Societies

*F.-Ch. Barlet et les sociétés Initiatiques, April 1925.*

Before taking part in the beginnings of the movement which one can label as properly Occultist, F.-Ch. Barlet was one of the founding members of the first French branch of the Theosophical Society. Shortly following this, he contacted the organization widely designated by the initials H.B. of L., meaning Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor,<sup>1</sup> which proposed as its principal goal “the establishment of external centers in the Occident that would resurrect the rites of ancient initiations.” This organization’s claimed origin went back 4,320 years before the year 1881 of the Christian era; obviously this is a symbolic date referring to certain cyclical periods.<sup>2</sup> It professed to be connected with a properly Occidental tradition, for, according to its teachings, “the Hermetic Initiates have borrowed nothing from India; the similarity that manifests between a number of different names, doctrines, and rites of the Hindus and Egyptians, far from showing that Egypt has drawn its doctrines from India, only makes it clear that the defining characteristics of their respective teachings were derived from a singular stock, and this original source was neither Indian nor Egyptian, but the Lost Island of the Occident.” As for the form taken recently by the order, here is what was said: “In 1870, a follower of the old Order, which still existed, in the original H.B. of L., with the permission of the initiates beside him, resolved to choose in Great Britain a neophyte who could properly transmit his views.” After completing a significant private mission in mainland Europe, he landed in Great Britain in 1873, where he managed to find a neophyte whom he instructed, after sufficiently verifying the authenticity of his credentials. The neophyte then obtained permission to establish an outer circle of the

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<sup>1</sup> A similar organization named “Hermetic Brotherhood of Light”, or the “Fraternité Hermétique de Lumière”, which seems to have been a rival or dissident branch to the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. Furthermore, we can notice that the name “Luxor” means “Light,” and even doubly so when broken down into two words (Lux-Or) which each carry the same meaning in Latin and Hebrew, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> These cycles are referred to in Trithemius’ “*Traité des Causes secondes*,” the teaching of which was included in the teachings of the H.B. of L.



H.B. of L., to draw in those worthy of the form of initiation for which they would qualify.

Upon joining the H.B. of L., Barlet had some hesitations: was membership compatible with being a member of the Theosophical Society? He posed this question to his Master, an English clergyman, who rushed to reassure him by stating that “he and his Master (Peter Davidson) were also members of the Council of the Theosophical Society.” Nonetheless, a thinly veiled hostility existed between the two organizations since 1878, when Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott had been expelled from the H.B. of L., which they had been affiliated with since 1875 through their acquaintanceship of the Egyptologist Georges H. Felt. Without a doubt, when the *Théosophist* journal claimed in one of its issue that this outer circle of the H.B. of L. only dated back to 1884 it was meant to conceal this unflattering expedition of the two founders of the Theosophy Society; peculiarly, the same journal had published an advertisement from the ‘Occult Magazine’ of Glasgow in 1885, a publication of the H.B. of L., wherein it appealed to people who wished “to be admitted as members of an Occult Fraternity, who does not openly boast of their knowledge, but freely and unreservedly instructs all those whom it finds worthy of receiving its teachings” an indirect, but very clear, allusion towards the opposing processes which the Theosophical Society was known and criticized for. The hostility of the Theosophical Society was to come to fruition later when members of the H.B. of L. began a project to found an agricultural colony of sorts in America; Madame Blavatsky found this opportunity favorable to avenge her previous expulsion, and she managed to have the Secretary-General of the Order, T. H. Burgoyne, barred from obtaining residency in the United States. Peter Davidson, who bore the title of “Northern Provincial Grandmaster,” was the only one permitted to enter, wherein he settled with his family in Loudsville, Georgia, where he died several years ago.<sup>3</sup>

In July 1887, Peter Davidson wrote a letter to Barlet where, after describing “esoteric Buddhism” as “an attempt to corrupt the Western spirit,” he states,

“the genuine and sincere Adepts do not teach these doctrines of ‘karma’ and ‘reincarnation’ put forth by the authors that profess “esoteric Buddhism” and other theosophical works. Neither in the works discussed above, nor in the pages of the *Theosophist*, is

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<sup>3</sup> While the H.B. of L. was falling inactive, Peter Davidson founded a new organization called the ‘Order of the Cross and the Serpent.’ Another of the foreign leaders of the H.B. of L., of his own accord, was at the head of a movement of a very different character, which Barlet was also involved in, but which we will not deal with here.

there, as far as I am aware, an accurate and esoteric sense of these important questions. One of the main objects of the H.B. of L. was to reveal to those brothers that have shown their worth the complete mysteries of these grave and profound subjects. It must be noted that the Theosophical Society is not and has never been, ever since Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott arrived in India, to be under the direction or inspiration of an authentic and real Himalayan Fraternity, but under that of an inferior Order belonging to a Buddhist cult.<sup>4</sup> I am speaking here of something that I know and hold to be true with indisputable authority; but, if you hold some doubts about my assertions, Mr. Alexander de Corfou has several letters from Madame Blavatsky in which she clearly confesses some of the same as what I have told you.”

One year later, Peter Davidson wrote in another letter, this slightly enigmatic phrase: “The true Adepts and the true Mahatmas are like two poles of a magnet, although several Mahatmas are in the ranks of our Order, but they only appear as Mahatmas for very important reasons.” At this moment, which is to say, in the middle of 1888, Barlet was leaving the Theosophical Society, following dissensions which had occurred in the Parisian ‘Isis’ branch, and in the echoes of the ‘Lotus’ branch of the period.

It was also at about this time that Papus began to formally organize Martinism; Barlet was one of this first to be summoned to his Supreme Council. It was first established that Martinism’s purpose was to serve as a preparation point for its members to enter into an order which could confer a true initiation on those who would be capable of receiving it; the Order which was intended for this purpose was none other than the H.B. of L., of which Barlet had become the official representative for the Order in France. This is why, in 1891, Papus wrote: “Genuine Occult societies exist which still possess the integral tradition; as a witness, I name one of my Masters in practice, one of the most scholarly Westerners, Peter Davidson.”<sup>5</sup> However, this project did not succeed, and it was recognized that the superior center of Martinism was the Kabbalistic Order of the Rosicrucian, which had been founded by Stanislas de Guaita. Barlet was also a member of the Supreme Council of this Order, and when Guaita died in 1896, he was named to succeed him as Grandmaster; however, if he ever actually had the title, he never exercised his functions in an effective manner. In fact, the Order had no regular meetings after the death of its founder, and later, when Papus thought to revive it, Barlet,

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<sup>4</sup> This is the organization headed by the Rev. H. Sumangala, the principal of the “Vidyodaya Pirivena” of Columbo.

<sup>5</sup> *Methodical Treatise on Occultic Science*, p. 1039.

who was no longer affiliated in any Occultist groups, declared he was disinterested entirely; he thought, no doubt with reason, that such attempts that rested on no solid foundation could only lead to new failures.

We shall not speak further of some organizations that are, more or less, ephemeral, to which Barlet affiliated with perhaps a little too easily; his great sincerity and honest, confident character prevented him in these circumstances from seeing that some people only sought to use his name as a guarantee of "respectability." In the end, these unfortunate experiences had led him to be more cautious and to question the usefulness of all the associations which, under pretensions of initiation, hid their lack of knowledge, and which were ultimately but a pretext for adorning themselves with pompous titles; he understood the vanity of the external forms in which truly initiatic organizations are clear of. Several months before his death, he spoke of a new so-called Rosicrucian society that was imported from America, which he was invited to join. He told us that he would do nothing about it, because he was absolutely convinced, as we are, that true Rosicrucians never founded societies. We will close on this conclusion that Barlet reached at the end of so much research, and which should give many of our contemporaries very serious thought, if they want, as the teachings of the H.B. of L. said, "To learn to know the enormous difference between the intact truth and the apparent truth," that exists between the real initiation and its innumerable counterparts.

## Some Precise Details of the H.B. of L.

*Quelques précisions à propos de la H. B. of L.,* October 1925.

The “Occult Review,” in its May 1925 issue, published a note on the article we have devoted to F.-Ch. Barlet and his experience with a variety of initiatory societies, but specifically with the ‘H.B. of L.’ (“Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor”), there has been a plethora of inaccurate information which has surrounded discussions of this topic, and in order to rectify this we would specify what has been said previously.

Firstly, when Barlet was affiliated with the ‘H.B. of L.,’ the seat of the organization had not yet been moved to America; this affiliation must have been a little earlier than the publication of the Occult Magazine which appeared in Glasgow in 1885 and 1886, of which we possess the complete collection. This journal was indeed an official publication of the H.B. of L., whose motto was “Omnia vincit Veritas;” At this time, Peter Davidson resided in Banchory, Kincardineshire, New Brunswick, and it was only at the end of 1886 when he moved to Loudsville, Georgia, where he was to spend the rest of his life. It was much later that he published a new magazine entitled ‘The Morning Star,’ which was the official publication of the ‘Order of the Cross and the Serpent,’ founded by him after the H.B. of L. returned to inactivity.

On the other hand, it was in the ‘Occult Magazine’ of October 1885 that a note was first published, publicizing for the first time the project of organizing an agricultural colony of the H.B. of L. in California; this note was signed with the initials of T. H. Burgoyne, the Secretary-General of the Order (and not the title of Northern Provincial Grandmaster, which belonged to Davidson). This project was often mentioned in discussion related to this, but the idea of establishing the colony in California was soon abandoned in favor of Georgia; it was even announced that Burgoyne would be at Loudsville beginning April 15, 1886, but he never arrived, of which is credited to Madame Blavatsky’s previously alluded to intervention. Burgoyne had previously been convicted of fraud; Madame Blavatsky, aware of this fact, succeeded in obtaining documents which contained proof of the conviction, which she sent to the American government, in order to prevent Burgoyne from staying in the United States; the reasoning behind this was to take revenge for her and General Olcott’s exclusion from the ‘H.B. of L.’ eight years earlier in 1878. As for

Davidson, whose honesty was never questioned, he did not have to “flee to America,” as the ‘Occult Review’ put it; but there was nothing preventing him from establishing himself in Georgia with his family, to form the first nucleus of the future colony, nonetheless, this never succeeded as the long-awaited development.

The editor of the ‘Occult Review’ says that Davidson acted on behalf of Burgoyne, which is not correct, since their respective positions did not involve subordination of the former to the latter; and, what is more astonishing, he then asserts that behind even Burgoyne was an ‘ex-Brahman’ named Hurychund Christaman: this is an odd mistake, and one which requires some explanation. Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott had been affiliated with the American branch of the ‘H.B. of L.’ around April 1875, through George H. Felt, who claimed to be a professor of Mathematics and Egyptology, and with which they had been put in touch with through a journalist named Stevens. One of the consequences of this affiliation was that, in the spiritualist séances which Madame Blavatsky held, the manifestations of the famous ‘John King’ were replaced by those of a so-called ‘Serapis’ on September 7, 1875, and on November 17 of the same year that the ‘Theosophical Society’ was founded. About two years later, ‘Serapis’ was in turn replaced by a certain ‘Kashmiri brother;’ this is the moment where Olcott and Madama Blavatsky had met Hurrychund Chintamon (and not Christaman), who was not the hidden head of the ‘H.B. of L.,’ but rather the representative in America of the ‘Arya Samaj,’ an association founded in India in 1870 by Swami Dayananda Saraswati. In September or October 1877, in the words of Madame Blavatsky, “an offensive and defensive alliance” was established between the ‘Arya Samaj’ and the ‘Theosophical Society;’ this alliance was to be broken in 1882 by Dayananda Saraswati himself, who then spoke very critically of Madame Blavatsky’s conduct. The latter, for reasons still yet unknown, later manifested a real terror of Hurrychund Chintamon; but what is important to remember is that his relations began precisely with the moment when he began to refute the assertion of the ‘Occult Review.’

Now, an explanation of this error still remains to be seen: would there not have been simply some confusion, because of the partial similarity of the two names Chintamon and Metamon? This latter name is that of the master of Madame Blavatsky, the magician Paulous Metamon, who was of a Coptic or Chaldean origin (we never could be exactly sure), who she had met in Asia Minor in 1848, then tracked down in Cairo in 1870; but, it will be asked, what is the relation between this character and the ‘H.B. of L.?’ To answer this question, we need to inform our associate, the ‘Occult Review,’ who seems to ignore it, the identity of the real leader, or, to

speaking more precisely, the Grand Master of the 'Outer Circle' of the 'H.B. of L.' This Grand Master was Dr. Max Théon, who was to later create and direct the 'Cosmic Movement;' and this explains why Barlet, the former representative of the H.B. of L. in France, took this step from the beginning (that is, if we are not mistaken, from 1899 or 1900). Regarding the origins of Dr. Max Théon, who has always been very mysterious, we have but one testimony, but which deserves some serious consideration: Barlet himself, who was known for his honesty and consistency, assured us that he was Paulous Metamon's own son; if this is true, everything is explained by this one fact.

We had not wanted, in our previous article, to implicate any living people, and this is why we had refrained from naming Mr. Théon, to whom we had only made an allusion; but, following the intervention of the 'Occult Review,' a clarification was necessary in the interest of historical truth. It is expected that these explanations will provoke more questions, for we do not pretend to dispel all obscurities at once; there must be other witnesses to the facts in question, and since certain questions are asked, could they not make it known what they know?

## Sédir and the Hindu Doctrines

*Sédir et les doctrines hindoues*, April 1926.

We have learned with sadness of the premature death of Paul Sédir just as we were reading his article, in the previous issue of *Amitiés Spirituelles*, the article he had devoted to *Hindu metaphysics*, which dealt specifically with our book *Man and his Becoming according to the Vedanta*. Sédir, in fact, had formerly been fascinated in the Indian doctrines; it is especially, we believe, the influence of Dr. Alphonse Jobert which had helped to push him in this direction. He had then published a study on *The Incantations*, which as an essay remained vague, but, nonetheless, gave hope for further in-depth works. However, he only later gave some notes that were used in lectures regarding the Hindu tradition, and which, if our memory does not fail us, appeared in Mr. Jollivet-Castelot's journal. We also, for the record, wish to make mention of a booklet on Fakirism, a simple summary of the existing knowledge on the subject, which, incidentally, is of secondary importance. Sédir was not long in changing his orientation from study turning towards a rather special Christian mysticism, much more concerned with action than with mere knowledge; a great number of his friends, while always recognizing his great sincerity, could not help but regret this change which disappointed them. It must be said to be true, because it may help to explain some things, that Sédir had found little encouragement from the few Hindus whom he had met, who he considered to be too concerned with 'phenomena;' had it not been for this, perhaps, he would have persevered to get rid of this Western tendency and to penetrate further into the knowledge of the veritable doctrines. Unfortunately, he shut himself up in a hostile attitude which always caused us some astonishment: he sought, between Christianity and the Oriental traditions, oppositions which did not exist; he saw a sort of irreconcilable divergence, where we saw a profound harmony and a real unity under the diversity of external forms. His final article still bears the mark of this way of looking at things; but on the other hand, we believe that there is proof that he never ceased to be interested in those doctrines of India, in the depths of himself and in spite of appearances, which had exercised so much attraction to him at the beginning of his career; and if he had lived longer, who knows if he might not come back with other dispositions, and if he would

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not have seen new horizons that had opened to him. This thought can only add to the regret felt by those who knew him following his sudden and unexpected end.



## Léon Champrenaud (1870-1925)

*Léon Champrenaud, May 1926.*

Léon Champrenaud died on October 23, 1925, only at the age of 55, after a long and painful period of illness. He has been involved in the contemporary Occultist movement since a very young age, nearly from the beginning, and he had taken a very active role, despite writing little. He became a member of the Supreme Council of the Martinist Order, under the name 'Noël Sisera,' he was the editor-in-chief of a little-known publication: *L'Initiateur*, an initiatory study bulleting reserved for Martinist representatives, which had only published seven issues between January 1904 and March 1905. From the fourth issue onwards, Sisera's name as editor-in-chief was replaced by that of Sédir's; it was around this time that Léon Champrenaud began to depart from Western occultism, which had appeared to him to be a standstill, and turned definitively towards the study of the Oriental doctrines, in which he had some interest for some time already. It was then that he founded the review *La Voie* with Matgioi, which was published from April 1904 to March 1907. Under the name of Théophane, he published the first part of the *Secret Teachings of Gnosis* with Simon (Matgioi); this volume was to be followed by two more volumes, but these were never published. It was again under the same name of Théophane that he gave in 1910 a study on Matgioi, his role in the Chinese secret societies, and a summary of Taoist metaphysics. Finally, between 1909 and 1912, he also looked after the journal *La Gnose*, which he helped to direct in the study of the Oriental traditions. Having known him at this time, and having worked with him constantly for many years, we do not want to let him disappear without sending out an impactful remembrance and not recalling that he was one of the first to work and make known the true Metaphysical doctrines of the East in France.

## Cologne or Strasbourg?

*Cologne ou Strasbourg?*, January 1927.

The question which was posed and considered in the previous October issue of *Le Voile d'Isis* must, as we understand it, be divided in twain: a question of a historical order and a question of a symbolic order; the divergence of opinion resides, in fact, only on the first of these two points of view. Moreover, this contradiction is perhaps only apparent and not in essence: if the Strasbourg cathedral is indeed the 'official' center of a certain rite of compagnonnage, could it not be that the cathedral of Cologne is a center of the same rite? And would it not make sense, precisely for this reason, that two separate Masonic charters, one originating in Strasbourg and the other Cologne, could have given rise to confusion? This would have to be investigated, and it would also become necessary to know whether the charters bear the same date or different dates. This point is especially interesting from the historical view; this is not of special importance for us, but it is not without value either, because it is related in a certain way to the symbolic point of view: it is not for arbitrary reasons that these places were chosen as a center by organizations such as those in question.

In any event, we are in complete agreement with Mr. Albert Bérnet, when he says that the "sensory point" must exist in all cathedrals which have been built according to the true rules of art, and when he states that, most importantly, it must be analyzed from the symbolic point of view. There is, in this regard, a curious connection to be made: Wronski affirmed that in every body there is such a point that, if it is taken away, the entire body is thereby broken up, volatilized in such a way that all of its molecules are dissipated; and he claimed to have found the means of determining the point of such a center of cohesion. Is that not, especially considering the symbolic as we believe must be done, the same as this "sensory point" of the cathedrals?

The question, at its most general, is that of what can be labelled the 'vital knot.' The defining point relating to this issue is the same expression as the famous 'Gordian knot' of antiquity; despite this, the modern Masons would be shocked if they were told that their sword can act, ritually, in the same respect, as the role of Alexander.

Or we can reiterate, once again, that the effective solution of the issue in question is related to the 'power of the keys' (*potestas ligandi et solvendi*), as it is extended in its Hermetic meaning, or, what corresponds to the second phase of the *coagula*, the *solve* of the Alchemists. It must not be forgotten that, as pointed out in the article in *Regnabit* to which Mr. Paul-Redonnel referred, Janus, being the god of initiation into the Mysteries for the Romans, was at the same time the patron of *collegia fabrorum*, the guilds of craftsmen and artisans that have continued through the Middle Ages, and even continued into modern times through the rite of *compagnonnage*. Few, no doubt, understand today any semblance of the profound symbolism of the 'Lodge of Saint John.'

## **Madame Chauvel de Chauvigny**

*Madame Chauvel de Chauvigny, May 1927.*

Last February 9, after a long period of painful illness borne with great courage, Marie Chauvel de Chauvigny died in Toulon, the place she had retired to in recent years. All those who knew her, and those who appreciated the qualities in the depths of her heart and intelligence, will be painfully moved to hear of her demise.

Under the name of 'Esclarmonde,' she had collaborated in the journal *La Gnose*, publishing some original works, including a brief exposition of the Gnostic doctrine; however, the greatest part of her writings remains to be published.

We wish to thank, on behalf of all her friends, the members of the psychic group in Toulon who assisted her in her final moments, and those who were kind enough to take care of the pious burial.

## The Gift of Languages

*Le Don des langues*, August 1927.

Among the gifts of the true Rosicrucians, or, to speak more precisely (because the word 'gifts' could give rise to incorrect interpretations), among their characteristic features, we often mention the 'gift of languages;' which has never been clearly explained what is meant. Of course, the literal meaning of such an expression can be justified in certain ways: indeed, the possession of certain keys of language can provide, in order to understand and speak a diverse array of languages, the means that are quite other than those understood ordinarily; and it is certain there exists what might be called a 'sacred philology,' which is entirely different from profane philology. Nevertheless, while accepting this initial interpretation, it is permissible to concede above all, a symbolic meaning, of a higher order, which is superimposed above the former while not contradicting it in anyway, and which coincides with the initiatory principles common to all traditions, whether Oriental or Occidental.

Originating at this point of view, it can be said that the one who truly possesses the 'gift of languages' is the one who speaks to each of his own languages, in the sense that he always expresses himself in a form appropriate to the ways of man's different languages: it is always the same thought, which, in and of itself, is independent of all expression; every time it is expressed in another language it becomes accessible to men who, without it, could never have known it; and this analogy is, moreover, strictly in accordance with the symbolism of the 'gift of languages.'

The one who has reached this point is the one who has reached, through a direct and profound knowledge, the identical source of all traditional doctrines, who has found the truth that hides under the multiplicity and diversity of the external forms. The difference, indeed, is only in form and appearance; the essential substance is everywhere and always the same, because there is only a singular truth, and that, as the Initiate-Muslims still say, "the doctrine of Unity is unique;" but it takes a variety of forms to adapt to the mental conditions of this country, that country, of this era, of that era; and those who stop at the form see firstly the differences, while these differences dissipate for those who go beyond. Those who go beyond can then descend into form, but without being affected by it in anyway, without their profound knowledge being

modified in any manner; they can draw the logical conclusion of a principle, and realize, preceding from above below, from the inside out (and it is in this true synthesis that is quite the opposite of a vulgar 'syncretism'), all the acclimations of the fundamental doctrine. In this manner, to use the same symbolism, they are no longer obliged to speak one particular language, they are capable of speaking all of them because they have realized the very principle of which all languages derive and adapt from. What we have designated as languages here are all the traditional forms, religious and otherwise, which are, in reality, only adaptations of the great primordial, universal Tradition, different trappings of the one truth. Those who have gone beyond all particular forms and have attained universality, thus 'knowing' what others merely 'believe,' are necessarily 'Orthodox' in the light of any formal tradition; and, at the same time, they are the only ones that can call themselves fully and effectively 'Catholic,' in the strictly etymological sense of the word, while others can only be so virtually, by an aspiration that has not yet realized an object.

Those who have gone beyond form are thereby freed from the limitations inherent in the individual condition of ordinary humanity; that is why they can, as stated above, assume different individualities to suit all circumstances; these individualities, for them, really have no more importance than clothes. They are, according to the Hindu tradition, superior when compared to 'name' and 'form,' which constitute the elements of individuality; the name is the expression of the individual essence itself, and one can understand this by what a change of name or title really means from the initiatic point of view. The same external formality is found to symbolize a change of state everywhere; and, even in the monastic orders, the *raison d'être* is in no way different from at the secular level, for here too the individuality must disappear to give way to a new being, and even when the symbolism does not exist it is still more fully understood in its deepest sense, despite still retaining a certain forcefulness.

If one can understand these indications, one will understand at the same time why the true Rosicrucians could never form a 'society' in the modern and profane sense of the word: those who are beyond any form cannot shut oneself in the forms of an organization possessing written statutes and regulations, definite meeting places, external signs of recognition, all of which they do not necessitate. They can, no doubt, as can still be seen in the Orient, inspire visibly, and in a certain way invisibly, external organizations constituted temporarily for a particular and definite reason; but they themselves do not bind themselves to these organizations, nor do they, except in quite exceptional cases, play an apparent

role therein. What has been labelled as Rosicrucians in the West since the 14th century, and which has received other designations in other times and in other places (since the name here has only a purely symbolic meaning and must itself adapt to circumstances), is not an association whatsoever, it is the collectivity of Beings who have reached the same superior state that, when compared to inferior humanity, makes apparent the degree of initiation, of which we have tried to indicate one of the essential aspects, and who thus possess the same internal character, which is sufficient enough for signs of recognition. This is why they have no meeting place other than the "Temple of the Holy Ghost, which is everywhere;" and this is also why they remain unknown to the laymen among whom they reside, precisely because their only distinctive marks are purely interior and can be perceived only by those who have attained the same spiritual development and marks, so that their influence is exercised by ways that are incomprehensible to the common man.

## The Compagnonnage and the Bohemians

*Le Compagnonnage et les Bohémeins*, October 1928.

In an article by Mr. G. Milcent, published in the journal *Le Compagnonnage* in May 1926, and published again in the November 1927 issue of *Le Voile d'Isis*, we noted the sentence: "What surprised me, and even caused some skepticism, was C. Bernet telling us that he presides at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, for the annual election of the King of the Bohemians." We have held the same opinion for a long time but did not wish to raise the question first; but now that it has been posed publicly, we have no reason not to comment and say a few words, especially since it may help to elucidate some points that are not without interest.

Firstly, it is not a king whom the Bohemians elect, rather is it a queen, and furthermore this election is not repeated annually; what takes place annually is, with or without the election, the meeting of the Bohemians in the crypt of the church of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. Furthermore, it is quite possible that some who do not belong to the Bohemian race are admitted, by reason of their qualities or abilities, to attend this meeting and the rites fulfilled therein; but, as to "presiding over" it, it is quite another matter altogether, and the least we can say is that this is highly unlikely. As for the assertion in question first introduced in an interview published in *L'Intransigeant* long ago, we wish to simply believe that what it contains that is inaccurate should simply be blamed on the journalist, who, as often happens, will have exaggerated the matter in order to pique the curiosity of his audience, as ignorant as he is himself of the questions he is asking, and consequently unable to perceive his own errors. So, we do not wish to insist on more than what is suited in regard to the claims; this is not the real interest of this case, but more of the general relations that may exist between the Bohemians and the Compagnonic organizations.

Mr. Milcent, in his article, continues to say that "the Bohemians practice the Jewish rite and that there may be links with the Foreign Stonecutters of the Duty of Liberty Compagnonnage." The first part of this sentence seems to still contain an inaccuracy, or an equivocation at the least: it is true that the Queen of the Bohemians bears the name, or rather, the title of *Sarah*, which is also the given name of the Saint whom they recognize as their patroness and whose body resides in the crypt of the



Saintes-Maries; it is also true that this title, the feminine form of *Sar*, is Hebrew and means 'princess;' but is it enough for us to speak of a 'Jewish rite?' Judaism belongs to a people in which religion is closely bound up in race; but the Bohemians, whatever their origin actually is, have certainly nothing in common with the Jewish race; but, in spite of that, would there not also be reports of certain affinities of a more mysterious order?

When one speaks of Bohemians, it is indispensable to make a distinction that is forgotten too often: there are in fact two kinds of Bohemians who seem quite foreign to each other and treat each other as enemies; they do not have the same ethnic character, do not speak the same language, and they do not perform the same professions. There are the Eastern Bohemians, or the *Zingaris*, who are chiefly showmen and boiler-smiths; and there are Southern Bohemians or *Gitans* who are called 'Car-aques' in Languedoc and Provence, these are almost exclusively horse traders; it is this latter group alone who assemble in the Saintes-Maries. In a very curious study on *The Bohemians of the Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer*, the Marquis of Baroncelli-Javon indicates many traits that are in common between the Bohemians and the redskins of America, he also does not hesitate, because of these comparisons and also by their own interpretations of their traditions, to attribute an Atlantean origin to them; this is only a hypothesis, but in any case it is worth mentioning. But here is something else that is unique and extraordinary that has not been seen anywhere: as there are two kinds of Bohemians, there are also two kinds of Jews, *Ashkenazim* and *Sephardim*, for which one can make analogous comparisons with regards to the differences in physical features, language, aptitude, and which, too, do not always maintain the best relations, each willingly pretending to represent pure Judaism, whether in respect to race or that of tradition. There is even a striking similarity in regard to language: neither the Jews nor the Bohemians have, to tell the truth, a complete language which belongs to them in their own right, at least for the current usage; they use the languages of the regions they live in, through mingling certain words which have some significance for them, Hebrew for the Jews, and, for the Bohemians, words also coming from an ancestral language of which the last remnants remain in these words; this peculiarity can be explained by both being forced to live scattered among strangers. What is more difficult to explain is that it turns out that the regions travelled by both the Eastern and Southern Bohemians correspond precisely to the same as those inhabited respectively by the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim; would this view perhaps be as "sim-  
plistic" as being only a pure coincidence?

These notes lead us to think that, if there are no ethnic relations between the Bohemians and the Jews, there may be other relationships that we can qualitate traditionally. Now this brings us back to the subject of the article, of which we have departed only in appearance, the Compagnonic organizations, of which the question of ethnicity does not arise, could they not, too, have relationships of the same order, either with the Jews, with the Bohemians, or with each other? For the moment, at least, we do not intend to explain this origin and the reason for these relationships, but rather we will be content with calling attention to a few more specific details. Are the Compagnonnage not divided into several rival rites, and have they not often found themselves embroiled in more or less open hostility? Do they not have different programs according to differing rites, and with different points of attachment? Do they not, in a way, have a special language, the substance of which is formed by ordinary language, but is distinguished from the ordinary by the introduction of particular terms, just as in the case of the Jews and the Bohemians? Do we not use the term 'jargon' to designate the ordinary language used in some secret societies, but particularly in regard to the Companionships, and do not the Jews sometimes also give the same name to the language they speak? Furthermore, in some countries, are Bohemians not known as 'passers,' through which they are confused with peddlers, and who is, as we know also a designation that applies to some Compagnons? Finally, would not the legend of the 'wandering Jew,' like many others, be of a compagnonic origin?

We could no doubt multiply the amount of these questions, but we believe that this is sufficient, and that research directed in this direction could enlighten certain enigmas. Perhaps we will return to this question, if necessary, and give some additional characteristics; but are the Compagnons of today really all that interested in all that relates to their traditions?

## The Secret Language of Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore'

*Le Langage secret de Dante et des « Fidèles d'Amor »,*  
February 1929.

Under the title *Il linguaggio segreto di Dante a dei fidele d'amore*,<sup>6</sup> Luigi Valli, to whom we are already indebted for several studies on the significance of Dante's writings, has published a new work that is too important for us to pass by with no more than a mere bibliographical note. Its thesis may be briefly summarized as follows: the various 'ladies' celebrated by the poets attached to the mysterious organization of the Fedeli d'Amore, from Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, and their contemporaries, to Boccaccio and Petrarch, are not women who actually lived on this earth but are all, under different names, one and the same symbolic 'Lady,' who represents transcendent Intelligence (the *Madonna Intelligenza* of Dino Compagni) or divine Wisdom. In support of this thesis the author brings forward formidable documentation and a collection of arguments that must impress even the most skeptical; in particular he shows that those verses that seem most unintelligible from the literal point of view become perfectly clear with the hypothesis of a 'jargon' or unconventional language the principal terms of which he claims to have interpreted; and he recalls other cases, notably that of the Persian Sufis, where a similar meaning has been concealed in this fashion under the guise of simple love poetry. It would not be feasible to summarize his whole argument, which is based on exact textual citations that support his views, and so we can only refer anyone interested in the subject to the book itself.

In truth, what is involved has always seemed to us an obvious and incontestable fact, though one nevertheless needing to be firmly established. Indeed, Valli foresees that his conclusions will be challenged by several kinds of adversary: firstly, the so-called 'positivist' criticism (which he is wrong to qualify as 'traditional' since it is, on the contrary, opposed to the traditional spirit, to which all initiatic interpretation is linked); secondly, the party spirit, whether Catholic or anti-Catholic,

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<sup>6</sup> Roma: Biblioteca di filosofia e Scienza, Casa editrice 'Optima', 1928.

which will find no satisfaction at all in what he writes; and finally, 'aesthetic' criticism and 'romantic rhetoric,' which are fundamentally nothing other than what one might call the 'literary' spirit. We have here a group of prejudices that will always and inevitably stand opposed to the search for the profound meaning of certain works, though in the presence of such works those of good faith and open mind will readily see which side the truth is on. For our part, the only objections we have to make concern certain interpretations that in no way affect the general thesis; moreover, the author has made no claim to provide a definitive solution to all the questions he raises and is the first to acknowledge that his work will require correction or amendment in many points of detail.

Valli's principal shortcoming, whence stem most of the insufficiencies observed in his work, is – let us say it plainly – that he lacks the 'initiatric' mentality required to treat such a subject in depth. His point of view is too exclusively that of a historian: it is not enough to 'investigate history' in order to solve certain problems; and, moreover, we are entitled to wonder whether this does not really amount to interpreting medieval ideas with the modern mentality, a reproach the author quite rightly levels at the official critics. Did the men of the Middle Ages ever 'investigate history for its own sake?' The above matter requires a more profound kind of understanding, and if one brings to them only a 'profane' spirit and intention, one can only accumulate materials reflecting an altogether different spirit; and we do not see that there could be much interest in historical research if some doctrinal truth does not result from it.

It is truly regrettable that the author lacks certain traditional data and a direct and so to speak 'technical' knowledge of his subject-matter. This prevented him from recognizing the properly initiatric import of our study *The Esoterism of Dante* and explains why he did not understand how little it matters, from our point of view, whether such 'discoveries' be attributed to Rossetti, Aroux, or to anyone else, for we cite them only as 'supports' for considerations of quite another order: we are concerned with initiatric doctrine, not literary history. As regards Rosetti, we find rather strange the assertion that he was 'Rosicrucian' since the true brothers of the Rose-Cross (who were, by the way, not of 'Gnostic descent') had disappeared from the Western world well before his time; and even if he were attached to some sort of pseudo-Rosicrucian organization, of which there were so many, such an organization would certainly not have had any authentic tradition to impart to him. Moreover, Rosetti's initial idea of reading a purely political meaning into everything quite clearly contradicts such a hypothesis. Valli has only a very superficial and altogether 'simplistic' idea of Rosicrucianism, and he does not seem to have any inkling of the symbolism of the cross any more than

he seems to have understood the traditional significance of the heart, which refers to the intellect and not to feelings. Let us say on this last point that the *cuore gentile* of the 'Fedèles d'Amour' is the heart purified, that is, devoid of all that concerns worldly objects, and by this very fact made ready to receive interior illumination. It is remarkable that an identical doctrine is found in Taoism.

Let us move on to some other points raised in the course of our reading, for there are some rather unfortunate references that detract from this otherwise serious work. Thus, one might easily have found better authorities to cite on Gnosticism than G. R. S. Mead, on number symbolism than Marc Saunier, and above all on Masonry than Léo Taxil! Moreover, Valli cites the last mentioned on a most elementary point, the symbolic ages of the different grades, something that can be found anywhere. In the same place, following Rossetti, the author also cites the *Recueil précieux de la Maçonnerie Adonhiramite*; but the reference is made in an altogether unintelligible fashion which clearly demonstrates that he himself has no personal knowledge of the book in question. We have, besides, grave reservations concerning everything Valli says of Masonry, which he qualifies bizarrely as 'ultra-modern;' an organization may have 'lost the spirit' (or what is called in Arabic the *barakah*) through the intrusion of politics or otherwise, yet keep its symbolism intact even while no longer understanding it; but Valli himself seems not to have a very good grasp of the true role of symbolism nor a very clear sense of traditional filiation. When he speaks of the different 'currents' he confuses esoterism and exoterism and takes as sources of inspiration for the Fedeli d'Amore what only represent prior incursions into the profane world of an initiatic tradition from which these Fedeli d'Amore themselves preceded directly. Influences descend from the initiatic sphere into the profane world, but the inverse is not possible, for a river never returns to its source; that source is the 'foundation of teaching' so often in evidence in the poems studied here, and generally described as situated at the foot of a tree that is obviously none other than the 'Tree of Life.'<sup>7</sup> The symbolism of the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and of the 'Celestial Jerusalem' must find its application here.

There are also some no less regrettable linguistic inaccuracies: thus the author qualifies as 'human' things that are on the contrary 'supra-human,' as, moreover, is the case for anything of a truly traditional and initiatic order. Similarly, he commits the error of calling initiates of any

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<sup>7</sup> This tree, among the Fedeli d'Amore, is generally a pine, a beech, or a laurel; the 'Tree of Life' is often represented by evergreens.

grade whatever 'adepts',<sup>8</sup> whereas that term must be strictly reserved for the supreme degree. The misuse of this word is particular noteworthy because it constitutes, so to speak, a 'hallmark': there are a certain number of mistakes that the 'profane' rarely fail to commit, and this is one of them. We should also call attention to the constant use of words such as 'sect' and 'sectarian' to designate organizations that are initiatic and not religious, an entirely improper and most displeasing usage,<sup>9</sup> which brings us directly to the gravest shortcoming we must point out in Valli's work.

This failing is Valli's continual confusion of the 'initiatic' and the 'mystical' points of view, and his assimilation of the matters in question into a 'religious' doctrine, whereas esoterism, even if it bases itself on religious forms (as is the case with the Sufis and the Fedeli d'Amore), really belongs to an entirely different order. A truly initiatic tradition cannot be 'heterodox;' to qualify it as such is to reverse the normal and hierarchical relationship between the interior and the exterior. Esoterism is not contrary to 'orthodoxy,' even orthodoxy construed simply in the religious sense; it is above or beyond the religious point of view, which is obviously not at all the same thing; and in fact the unjustified accusation of heresy was often nothing more than a convenient ruse for getting rid of people who might be problematic for altogether different reasons. Rossetti and Aroux were not wrong in thinking that in Dante's works theological expressions must be interpreted 'inversely;' esoterism is not superimposed on exoterism, but neither is it opposed to it, for it is not on the same plane and gives to the same truths a deeper meaning by transposing them to a higher order. It is of course true that *Amor* is the inverse of *Roma*,<sup>10</sup> but we must not conclude from that, as some have wished to do, that it signifies the antithesis of *Roma*, but rather that *Roma* is only its reflection or visible image, necessarily inverted as is the image of an

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<sup>8</sup> The Fedeli d'Amore were divided into seven degrees; these are the seven rungs of the initiatic ladder, corresponding to the seven planetary heavens and the seven liberal arts. The expressions 'terzo cielo' (heaven of Venus), 'terzo loco' (to be compared with the Masonic term 'third apartment'), and 'terzo grado' indicate the third degree of the hierarchy in which the *salute* (or 'salute') was received, this rite taking place, it seems, at the feast of All Saints, as did others at Easter, around which the action of *The Divine Comedy* is centered.

<sup>9</sup> This is not at all the same thing, whatever some may think, as 'jargon' (*gergo*), which, as we have pointed out (*Voile d'Isis*, Oct. 1926, p652), was a technical term before passing into popular usage, where it took on a pejorative sense. Let us point out here also that we always take the word 'profane' in its technical sense, which of course implies nothing insulting.

<sup>10</sup> It is curious that if one writes this simple phrase, 'In Italia è Roma' [In Italy and Rome], and then reads it backward, it becomes 'Amore ai Latini' [Love to the Latins]: 'chance' is sometimes surprisingly ingenious!

object in the mirror – which gives us occasion to recall the *per speculum in aenigmate* of Saint Paul. Regarding Rossetti and Aroux and some reservations we have about certain of their interpretations, we will add that one cannot say a method is ‘unacceptable because unverifiable’ without running the risk of falling into the prejudices of ‘positivist’ criticism, which would entail rejecting everything obtained by direct knowledge, especially and in particular all knowledge obtained through the regular transmission of a traditional teaching, which is in effect unverifiable... for the profane!<sup>11</sup>

It is the more astonishing that Valli confuses esoterism with ‘heterodoxy’ in view of the fact that he has at least understood, far better than his predecessors, that the doctrine of the Fedeli d’Amore was in no way ‘anti-Catholic’ (even being, like that of the Rosicrucians, rigorously ‘catholic’ in the true sense of the word) and that it had nothing in common with the profane currents from which the Reformation was to come. Where then did he get the idea that the Church had revealed the deeper meaning of its ‘mysteries’ to the general populace? On the contrary, so little of this is taught by the Church that one comes to doubt, with good reason, whether she herself has retained any knowledge of it; and it is precisely in this ‘loss of spirit’ that the ‘corruption’ already denounced by Dante and his associates consisted,<sup>12</sup> although the most elementary prudence dictated that when speaking of this ‘corruption’ they do not do so clearly. But one should not conclude from this that the use of a symbolic terminology has no other *raison d’être* than the desire to conceal the true meaning of a doctrine; there are things that by their very nature cannot be expressed otherwise than in this form, and this side of the question, which is by far the most important, scarcely seems to have been recognized by the author. And there is yet a third aspect, intermediate so to speak, where prudence is indeed involved, but in the interest of the doctrine itself and no longer of its exponents. This aspect is more particularly related to the symbol of wine used by the Sufis, whose teaching, let us add in passing, cannot be qualified as ‘pantheistic’ except by a typ-

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<sup>11</sup> It must be admitted that it is difficult to avoid the influence of the spirit of the times; thus, the qualification of certain Biblical books as ‘pseudo-solomonic’ and ‘mystico-platonic’ seems to us an annoying concession to modern exegesis, that is to say to the same ‘positivist criticism’ against which the author justifiably takes his stand.

<sup>12</sup> The head of Medusa, which turns men to ‘stone’ (a word that plays a very important part in the language of the Fedeli d’Amore), represents the corruption of Wisdom; her hair (according to the Sufis symbolic of the divine mysteries) turns into serpents, naturally taken in the pejorative sense, for in its other sense the serpent is also a symbol of Wisdom itself.

ical Western error. The allusions he makes to this symbol in no way establishes that 'wine' signifies 'mystery,' a secret or restricted doctrine, simply because *yayin* and *sôd* are equivalent numerically in Hebrew, or because in Islamic esoterism wine is the 'drink of the elite,' which the common man may not use with impunity.<sup>13</sup>

But let us move on to the confusion of the 'mystical' with the 'initiat'ic' point of view, a confusion that is connected to the preceding one because it is the false assimilation of esoteric doctrines to mysticism (which the latter pertains to the religious domain) that leads to situating them on the same plane as exoterism and insisting on opposing them to it. We see very well what it is in the present case that could have provoked this error: a 'chivalric' traditional always requires the preponderance of a principle represented as feminine (*Madonna*)<sup>14</sup> as well as the intervention of an affective element (*Amore*) in order to adapt to the nature of the men to whom it is particularly addressed. The linking of such a traditional form with that represented by the Persian Sufis is altogether sound, but it should be added that these two are far from being the only cases where one encounters the cult of the 'donna-Divinità,' that is to say the feminine aspect of the Divinity: we also find it in India, where that aspect is designated as the *Shakti*, equivalent in certain respects to the Hebraic *Shekinah*; and it should be noted that the cult of the *Shakti* concerns above all the Kshatriyas. A 'chivalric' tradition is precisely nothing other than a traditional form appropriate to the Kshatriyas, and that is why it cannot constitute a path that is purely intellectual as is that of the Brahmins; the latter is the 'dry way' of the alchemists, whereas the former is the 'moist way,'<sup>15</sup> water symbolizing the feminine as fire does the masculine, the first corresponding to the emotivity and the second to the intellectuality that predominate respectively in the natures of the

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<sup>13</sup> The proverbial expression 'to drink like a Templar,' generally taken in the most crudely literal sense, doubtless has this as its real origin since the 'wine' that the Templars drank was the same as that drunk by the Jewish Kabbalists and the Islamic Sufis. Similarly, the other expression, 'to swear like a Templar,' is only an allusion to the initiatic vow, robbed of its proper significance by profane incomprehension and malice.

<sup>14</sup> The 'active Intellect,' represented by *Madonna*, is the 'celestial ray' that constitutes the link between God and man, and that leads man to God: it is the Hindu *Buddhi*. Nevertheless, one should beware of taking 'Wisdom' and 'Intelligence' as strictly identical, for there are two complementary aspects to be distinguished here (*Hokma* and *Binah* in the Kabbalah).

<sup>15</sup> In another sense, and according to another correlation, these two ways might also be, respectively, that of initiates in general and that of mystics; but the latter way is 'irregular' and need not be envisaged by anyone holding strictly to the traditional norm.



Kshatriyas and the Brahmins. This is why such a tradition may seem mystical from the outside even when it is really initiatic, so much so that one could even think that mysticism in the ordinary sense of the word is a sort of vestige of it, a 'survival' in a civilization such as that of the West, after every regular traditional organization has disappeared.

The role of the feminine principle in certain traditional forms is noticeable even in Catholic exoterism in the importance attributed to the cult of the Virgin. Valli seems astonished to find the *Rosa Mystica* figuring in the litanies of the Virgin, but there are in these same litanies many other properly initiatic symbols, and what he does not seem to suspect is that their application is perfectly justified through the association of the Virgin with Wisdom and with the *Shekinah*.<sup>16</sup> Apropos of this let us also note that Saint Bernard, whose connection with the Templars is well known, appears as a 'knight of the Virgin,' and he calls the Virgin 'his Lady,' the origin of the expression 'Our Lady' [*Notre Dame*] even having been attributed to him. She is also *Madonna*, and in one of her aspects is identified with Wisdom, hence the same *Madonna* of the Fedeli d'Amore, this being yet another correspondence Valli does not suspect, any more than he seems to suspect the reason why the month of May is consecrated to the Virgin.

One thing out to have led Valli to see that the doctrines in question were not 'mysticism' at all: he himself acknowledges the almost exclusive importance these doctrines attach to 'knowledge,' something totally foreign to the mystical point of view. He is mistaken, moreover, about the consequences to be drawn therefrom, for this emphasis is not a characteristic peculiar to 'gnosticism,' but a general feature of all initiatic teaching, whatever form it may have taken; knowledge is always the sole aim, and all the rest but different means of attaining it. One must take care not to confuse 'gnosis,' which signifies 'knowledge,' with 'gnosticism,' although the latter obviously takes its name from the former; besides, the term 'gnosticism' is rather vague and seems in fact to have been applied indiscriminately to very different things.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that in certain cases the same symbols even represent simultaneously the Virgin and Christ. This is indeed an enigma worthy of being posed to the sagacity of our modern researchers, and its solution would result from a consideration of the links of the *Shekinah* with *Metatron*.

<sup>17</sup> Valli says that the 'critics' show little appreciation for the traditional theses of contemporary 'gnostics;' for once such 'critics' are in the right because these 'neo-gnostics' have never received anything through any transmission whatsoever, and all that is involved is an attempt at a 'reconstitution' from documents, very fragmentary ones, that lie within reach of one and all. On this point one can believe the testimony of someone who has had occasion to observe these things closely enough to know the real story.

One must not allow oneself to be hindered by external forms, whatever they may be. The 'Fedeli d'Amore' were well able to go beyond these forms, as is attested by the fact that in one of the first tales of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Melchizedek affirms that, was between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, 'no one knows which is the true faith.' Valli was right to interpret this affirmation in the sense that 'the true faith lies hidden under the external aspects of the various beliefs,' but what is most remarkable here – and this he did not see – is that these words are put into the mouth of Melchizedek, who is precisely the representation of the single tradition concealed under all these outer forms, clearly indicated that certain individuals in the West at that time had retained a knowledge of the true 'Center of the World.' However that may be, an 'affective' language, such as that of the Fedeli d'Amore, is also an outer form by which one must not be fooled, for it may very well conceal something far more profound; and the word *amour* in particular may, by virtue of an analogical transposition, signify something altogether different from the sentiment it ordinarily denotes. This deeper meaning of 'love' in connection with the doctrines of the Orders of Chivalry becomes clear enough if one considers the following together: firstly, Saint John's phrase, 'God is Love;' then the battle-cry of the Templars, 'Vive Dieu, Saint Amour;' and finally the last verse of *The Divine Comedy*, 'L'amor che muove il Sole e l'altre stelle.'<sup>18</sup> Another interesting point in this regard is the relationship established between 'love' and 'death' in the symbolism of the Fedeli d'Amore, a twofold relationship, as the word death itself has a double meaning. On the one hand, there is a parallel and a sort of association of love with death, where the latter must be understood as 'initiatric death;' and this parallel seems to have endured in the current that, at the close of the Middle Ages, gave rise to the depictions of the 'dance of death;' on the other hand, there is also a point of view that establishes an antithesis between love and death, an antithesis that can be explained in part by the very formation of the words *amour* and *mort*: the root *mor* is common to both, and, in *a-mor*, is preceded by a very privative 'a,' as in the Sanskrit *a-mara*, *a-mrita*, so that 'amour' could be interpreted as a sort of hieroglyphic equivalent for 'immortality.' The 'dead' can in this sense be regarded, in a general way, as designating the profane, whereas the 'living,' or those who have attained immortality, are the initiates; and here we should recall the expression 'Land of the Living,' synonymous with 'Holy Land' or 'Land of the Saints,' 'Pure Land,' and so forth; and

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<sup>18</sup> Concerning the Orders of Chivalry, let us say that the 'Johannine Church' denotes the totality of all those who were related in any such way to what was called in the Middle Ages the 'Kingdom of Prester John,' to which we have alluded in our study *The King of the World*.

the opposition that we have just indicated is, in this context, equivalent to the opposition of hell, which is the profane world, to the heavens, which represents the degrees of the initiatic hierarchy.

As for the 'true faith' of which we spoke awhile ago, it is designated as the *Fede Santa*, an expression which, like the word *Amore*, applies at the same time to the initiatic organization itself. This *Fede Santa*, of which Dante was a *Kadosch*, is the faith of the Fedeli d'Amore; and it is also the *Fede dei Santi* – that is, the *Emounah* of the *Kadosch*, as we explained in *The Esoterism of Dante*. This designation of the initiates as 'Saints,' of which *Kadosch* is the Hebrew equivalent, is perfectly understandable if one considers the meaning of the 'heavens' just now indicated, since the heavens are in fact described as the abode of the saints. This must be seen in the context of many other analogous denomination, such as 'Pure Ones,' 'Perfect Ones,' Cathars, Sufis, Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā, and so forth, which are all taken in the same sense, permitting us thereby to understand what the 'Holy Land' truly is.<sup>19</sup>

This raises another point to which Valli alludes all too briefly: the secret significance of pilgrimage, which is related to the peregrinations of initiates whose itineraries in fact coincided most frequently with those of ordinary pilgrims, with whom they were thus easily confused, thus permitting them the better to conceal the true reasons for their journeys. Moreover, the very locations of pilgrimage sites such as the sanctuaries of antiquity have an esoteric value that should be taken into consideration here, and this is something directly related to what we have called 'sacred geography'<sup>20</sup> and which must also be considered together with what we have written on the subject of the Compagnons and the Bohemians, a subject to which we shall perhaps return on another occasion.

The question of the 'Holy Land' could also provide the key to the relationship of Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore to the Templars, again a subject that receives very incomplete treatment in Valli's book. Valli does not consider these relationships with the Templars, as well as with the Alchemists, to be an undeniable fact, and he points out some interesting correspondences, as, for example, that of the Templars' nine-year probation with the symbolic age of nine years in the *Vita Nuova* – but there could have been many other things to choose. Thus, apropos of the Templars' center on Cyprus, it would be interesting to examine the meaning of that island's name, its connection with Venus and the 'third heaven,'

<sup>19</sup> It is perhaps not without interest to note further that the initials F.S. can also be read as *Fides Sapientia*, an exact translation of the *Pistis Sophia* of the gnostics.

<sup>20</sup> On this subject Grillot de Givry has provided a study entitled 'Les Foyers du mysticisme populaire' in *Voile d'Isis*, April 1920.

and the symbolism of copper, from which it took its name, all subjects that we can only point to at the moment, without dwelling on them.

Similarly, regarding the obligation imposed on the Fedeli d'Amore to employ the poetic form in their writings, there would be good reason to ask why poetry was called the 'language of the gods' by the ancients; why *vates* in Latin signified both the poet and the soothsayer or prophet (oracles, moreover, being rendered in verse); why verses were called *carmina* (charms, incantations, a word identical with the Sanskrit *karma*, understood in its technical sense of 'ritual act');<sup>21</sup> and also why it is said of Solomon and other sages, particularly in the Islamic tradition, that they understood the 'language of the birds,' which, strange as it may seem, is only another name for the 'language of the gods.'<sup>22</sup>

Before concluding these remarks, we must still say a few words on the interpretation of *The Divine Comedy* that Valli has developed in other works and which he simply summarizes in the work we are now considering. The symmetries of the cross and of the eagle, on which the poem is based entirely, certainly explain a part of its meaning (in conformity, moreover, with the conclusion of *De Monarchia*); but there are in this poem many other things that cannot be completely explained in this way even if we limit ourselves to the use made of symbolic numbers, the author wrongly believing that he has found some single key sufficient to resolve all difficulties. Furthermore, he seems to regard these 'structural connections' as devices peculiar to Dante, whereas, on the contrary, there is something essentially traditional in this symbolic 'architecture,' which, although it did not perhaps play a part in the modes of expression customary among the Fedeli d'Amore properly speaking, nonetheless existed in organizations more or less closely allied to their own, and was closely bound to the very art of the builders.<sup>23</sup> There seems to be an intuition of these relationships, however, when he states that 'a study of symbolism in the figurative arts' could further the research in question. Moreover, here, as everywhere, one could discover many other points of comparison, sometimes quite unexpected ones, once all 'aesthetic' pre-occupations were laid aside.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Rita* in Sanskrit signifies what is in conformity with order, a meaning that the adverb *rite* has retained in Latin; the cosmic order is here represented by the law of rhythm.

<sup>22</sup> The same thing is also found in the Germanic legends.

<sup>23</sup> We recall the Masonic expression 'fragment of architecture,' which applies in the truest sense to the work of Dante.

<sup>24</sup> We are thinking especially of certain of the ideas contained in Pierre Piobb's curious book *Le Secret de Nostradamus*, Paris, 1927.

If we have dwelt at such length on Valli's book it is because it is one that truly deserves our attention, and if we have especially pointed out its omissions, it is because in this way we are able to indicate for him and for others new paths for research that may successfully complement the results already achieved. It seems that the time has come when the true significance of Dante's work may at last be uncovered; if the interpretations of Rossetti and Aroux were not taken seriously in their own times, it is perhaps not because minds were much less prepared to receive them then they are today, but rather because it was foreseen that the secret must be kept for six centuries (the Chaldean *Naros*). Luigi Valli often speaks of these six centuries during which Dante was not understood, but evidently without seeing any particular meaning in that fact; and this again demonstrates the need, in studies of this kind, for a knowledge of 'cyclical laws,' something the modern West has so completely forgotten.

# The Thunderstones

*Les Pierres de Foudre*, May 1929.

In his article devoted to the Tarot in the special issue of *Voile d'Isis*, Mr. Auriger, referencing the sixteenth Arcanum, wrote this sentence: "It seems that there exists a relationship between the hails of stone that surround the Lightning Tower and the word *beith-el*, the House of God, of which the Semites designated as the aeroliths of lightning stones." This link is suggested by the name of 'House of God' given to the Arcana in question which is indeed the literal translation of the Hebrew *beith-el*; but it seems to us that there exists some confusion between several differing things, and that a clarification of the issue may be of some interest.

Firstly, it is undoubted that the symbolic role of aeroliths or stones falling from the heavens is very important, because these are the same 'black stones' that are mentioned in so many different traditions, from the figure of Cybele, or the 'Great Goddess,' to the black stone enshrined in the Ka'abah in Mecca, which is also related to the story of Abraham. In Rome as well, there was the *lapis niger*, not to mention the sacred shields of the Salians that were said to have been carved from a meteorite in the time of Numa.<sup>25</sup> These 'black stones' can certainly be classified in the category of 'baetylus,' which is to say stones considered as 'dwellings of the divine,' or, in other words, as supports of certain 'spiritual influences;' but did all the baetylus have this origin? We do not think, and, in particular, we have seen no evidence that this may have been with the case with the rock which Jacob, according to the account of Genesis, gave the name of *Beith-el*, a name applied to the very place he had rested his head on while having his vision.

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<sup>25</sup> Mr. Ossendowski reported the story of a 'black stone,' once sent by the 'King of the World' to the Dalai-Lama, then transported to Ourga in Mongolia, where it disappeared one hundred years ago: not knowing what the stone was, the Dalai-Lama tried to explain certain phenomena, such as the appearance of characters on the surface of the stone, assuming from this that it was a kind of slate.

The 'baetylus,' strictly speaking, is the representation of the *Omphalos*, which is to say, a symbol of the 'Center of the World,' which is naturally identified with the 'divine interior.'<sup>26</sup> This stone could have taken a variety of forms, including that of a pillar; this is why Jacob says: "And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be the house of God;" and among the Celtic peoples some menhirs, if not all, had the same meaning. The *Omphalos* could also be represented by a conical or ovoid stone, such as the 'black stone' of Cybele; the cone evokes the sacred mountain, a symbol of the 'Pole' or the 'Axis Mundi;' as for the ovoid form, it relates directly to a very important symbol, that of the 'World Egg.' In any case, the 'baetylus' was a 'prophetic stone,' a 'talking stone,' which is to say, a stone that made oracles, or with which oracles were made, thanks to the 'spiritual influences' of which it was the support; the example of the *Omphalos* of Delphi is very characteristic in this respect. The 'baetylus' are therefore essentially sacred stones, but not necessarily of a celestial origin; however, it is perhaps true that, symbolically at the least, this idea is true in a certain way. What makes us think this is so is their relation to the mysterious *luz* of the Hebraic tradition, this relation is certain in the case of the 'black stones,' which are actually meteorites, but it should not be limited to this one case, since it is stated in Genesis, when speaking about the *Beith-el* of Jacob, that the first name of this place was precisely the same, *Luz*. We may even recall at this point that the *Grail* had been, it was said, to have been carved from a stone fallen from the heavens, between all these there are very close ties, but we will not ponder on it anymore, for these considerations may lead us astray from our subject.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, whether they are 'baetylus' in general, or 'black stones' in the specific, neither have anything in common with the 'thunderstones;' it is especially on this point that we recall a serious confusion in the sentence quoted at the very beginning, which can be explained quite easily. One is certainly tempted to suppose that the 'thunderbolts' or 'thunderstones' must be stones that fall from the sky, aeroliths, and yet it is not so; one could never guess what they are without have learned from the peasants who have preserved the memory of it through the oral tradition. In fact, by their very nature, these same peasants have committed an error of interpretation, showing the true nature of tradition escapes them when they believe that these stones to have fallen with the lightning, or that

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<sup>26</sup> This designation of the 'divine interior,' known as *mishkan* in Hebrew, was also later attributed to the Tabernacle: as it indicates itself, it is the seat of the *Shekinah*.

<sup>27</sup> There have been ample considerations on the issue of *luz*, as well as on the *Omphalos*, in our study on *The King of the World*.

they are the lightning themselves. They say that the thunder falls in two manners, 'of fire' or 'of stone;' the first case is when it burns, while in the second it breaks; but they know very well of the "thunderstones," and they are only in mistaken in attributing to them, because of their name, a celestial origin which they do not have and never had.

The truth is that the 'thunderstones' are stones that symbolize lightning; they are nothing more than the prehistoric flint axes of the 'World Egg,' just as the fossilized sea urchin is the material figuration of the 'serpent's egg.' The stone axe is the stone that breaks and splits, and this is why it represents lightning; this symbolism harkens back to an extremely remote era, and it explains the existence of certain axes, labelled by archaeologists as 'votive axes,' ritual objects that never had any practical usage as weapons or instruments.

This brings us quite naturally to recall a point that has already been treated: the stone axe of Parashurama and the stone hammer of Thor are one and the same weapon, and we will add that this weapon is the symbol of lightning.<sup>28</sup> We also see that this symbolism of the 'thunderstones' is of a Hyperborean origin, which is to say that it is related to the oldest of the traditions of present humanity, to that which is really the primal tradition of the present *Manvantara*.<sup>29</sup>

It should be noted, moreover, the very important role that lightning plays in Tibetan symbolism, the *vajra*, which represents it, is one of the principal insignias of the dignitaries of Lamaism.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, the *vajra* symbolizes the masculine principle of the universal manifestation, and thus lightning is associated with the idea of a 'divine paternity,' an association which is found just as clearly in Western antiquity, since lightning is the main attribute of *Zeus Pater* or *Ju-piter*, the 'father of the gods and men,' who besides blasts the Titans and the Giants with thunderbolts, just as Thor and Parashurama destroy their equivalents with their respective weapons of stone.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> See the article by P. Genty on *Thor and Parashurama*, in the *Voile d'Isis* of December 1928.

<sup>29</sup> Let us note in this connection that some, by a peculiar confusion, speak of a "Hyperborean Atlantis;" Hyperborea and Atlantis are two distinct regions, as much as North and West are two different cardinal points, and as a starting point for one tradition, the first is well before the second. We think it is all the more necessary to draw attention to this fact that those who make this confusion would attribute this error to us, but it goes without saying that we have never done this, and that we do not even see, in all that we have written, what could give the slightest credence for such an interpretation.

<sup>30</sup> *Vajra* is the Sanskrit term for lightning; the Tibetan form of the word is *dorje*.

<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to note here that the thunderbolts of Jupiter are forged by Vulcan, which establishes a certain relationship between the 'celestial fire' and



There is even, in relation to this connection, even in the modern West itself, another link that is quite unique: Leibnitz, in his *Monadology*, says that “all the created monads are born, so to speak, by continuous *fulgurations* of Divinity from moment to moment;” thus, in this way, through the traditional points we have just recalled, lightning (*fulgur*) is linked to the idea of the production of beings. It is likely that the academic commentators have never noticed this, nor does it have exactly the same meaning as that of the great Tibetan Lamas; but who, then, in modern Masonry, could boast of actually possessing the mysterious power, one in its essence, though double in its apparently contrary effects, of which this attribute is the sign? We do not think that we are going too far in saying that in what remains of the Western initiatic organizations, no one has even a remote idea of what this is about; the symbol remains, but when the ‘spirit’ has withdrawn, it is nothing but an empty form; is it necessary to maintain, despite everything, the hope that a day will come when this form is revitalized, where it will once again respond to the reality of its original *raison d’être* and which alone gives it its true initiatic character?

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the ‘underground fire,’ a note which is not established in cases where it is a question of stone weapons; the ‘underground fire,’ in fact, was in direct relation with the metallurgic symbolism, especially in the Kabiric mysteries: Vulcan also forges the weapons of heroes. It should be added that there is another version according to which the *Mjolnir* or the hammer of Thor would be metallic and would have been forged by the dwarves, who are attached to the same order of symbolic entities as the Kabiris, the Cyclops, the Yakshas, etc. Also note, regarding the fire, that the chariot of Thor was dragged by two rams, and that in India, the ram is the mount of Agni.

# The Triple Druidic Precinct

*La triple enceinte druidique*, June 1929.

Mr. Paul Le Cour reported, in the *Atlantis* (July-August 1928), a curious symbol traced on a Druidic stone discovered around 1800 in Suèvres (Loir-et-Cher), which had previously been studied by the president of the Society of Natural History and Anthropology of Loir-et-Cher, Mr. E.-C. Florance. Florance believes that the location where this stone was found could have been the annual meeting place of the Druids, situated, according to Caesar, on the borders of the Carnutes' land.<sup>32</sup> His attention was drawn to the fact that the same symbol was found on a seal of a Gallo-Roman occultist, found around 1870 in Villefranche-sur-Cher (Loir-et-Cher); and he suggested that what the symbol could represent was a triple sacred precinct. This symbol is indeed formed of three concentric squares, interconnected by four lines at right angles (fig. 1).

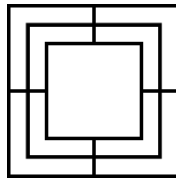


Fig. 1

At the time when the article in the *Atlantis* appeared, it was pointed out to Mr. Florance that the same symbol had been engraved on a large stone base of a buttress on the church of Sainte-Gemme (Loir-et-Cher), a stone that seems to have an origin preceding the construction of the church, which could even have its origin in Druidism. Furthermore, it is certain that like many other Celtic symbols, and particularly of this wheel, this figure remained in use up to the Middle Ages, since Mr. Char-

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<sup>32</sup> Caesar says: *in finibus Carnutum*; Florance's interpretation seems a little doubtful, as *finis* does not always signify borders, but often designates the land itself. On the other hand, it does not seem that there has been anything found in Suèvres that is reminiscent of the *Omphalos*, which, in the *Mediolanon* or the *Medionemeton* of Gaul, was, according to the customs of the Celtic peoples to be represented by a menhir.

bonneau-Lassay reported it among the 'graffiti' in the dungeon of Chinon,<sup>33</sup> together with another figure that is just as ancient, formed of eight rays and circumscribed by a square (fig. 2), which is on the 'baetylus' of Kermaria studied by M. J. Loth<sup>34</sup> and to which we have had occasion to reference elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> Mr. Le Cour indicated that the triple-square symbol is also found in Rome, in the cloister of San Paolo, dating from the thirteenth century, and furthermore it was known in antiquity by those besides the Celts, as he has pointed to it several times at the Acropolis in Athens, on the tiles of the Parthenon, and on those of the Erechtheion.

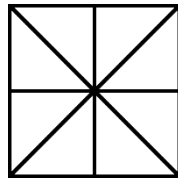


Fig. 2

The interpretation of the symbol in question as representing a triple precinct appears to be correct; and Mr. Le Cour, in this regard, establishes a connection with what Plato says, who, speaking of the metropolis of the Atlanteans, describes the palace of Poseidon as being built in the center of three concentric enclosures connected to each other by canals, which indeed forms a figure similar to the one in question, but circular in place of a square.

Now, what can the significance of these three precincts be? Our immediate thought was that it should be three degrees of initiation, so that these would have been in some way representative of the structure of the Druidic hierarchy; and the fact that this same figure is found elsewhere than among the Celts would indicate that there were, in other traditional forms, hierarchies built on the same model, which is perfectly ordinary. The division of initiation into three grades is, furthermore, the most frequent, and we could say, the most fundamental; all others represent, generally, only subdivisions or more or less complicated developments. What gave us this notion is the awareness of documents which, in some Masonic systems of high ranks, describe precisely these grades as many

<sup>33</sup> *Le Cœur rayonnant du donjon de Chinon*.

<sup>34</sup> *L'Omphalos chez les Celtes*, in the *Revue des Études anciennes*, July-September 1915.

<sup>35</sup> *The King of the World*, ch. 9; *L'Omphalos, symbols du Centre*, in *Regnabit*, June 1926.

successive precincts drawn around a central point;<sup>36</sup> certainly, these documents are incomparably less old than the monuments in question, but we can nonetheless find an echo of tradition, and in any case, these provided us with a starting point for interesting connections.

It must be noted that the explanation which we propose is in no way incompatible with certain other explanations, such as that given by Mr. Le Cour, and which would bring the three precincts back to the three circles of existence recognized by the Celtic tradition; these three circles, which are found in another form in Christianity, are also the same as the 'three worlds' of the Hindu tradition. Therein, the celestial circles are sometimes represented as so many concentric enclosures surrounding the *Meru*, which is to say the sacred Mountain which symbolizes the 'Pole,' or the 'Axis Mundi,' and this again is a remarkable agreement. Far from excluding each other, the two explanations harmonize perfectly, and one could even say that they coincide in a certain sense, because, if it is a question of initiation, its degrees correspond to as many states of beings which are described, in all traditions, as so many different worlds, for it must be understood that 'localization' has only a purely symbolic character. We have already explained, when speaking of Dante, that the heavens are properly 'spiritual hierarchies,' which is to say, degrees of initiation;<sup>37</sup> and it goes without saying that they relate at the same time to the degrees of universal existence, because, as we stated then,<sup>38</sup> by virtue of the constitutive analogy of Macrocosm and Microcosm, the initiatic process rigorously reproduces the cosmogonic process. We will add that, in general, the characteristic of any true truly initiatic interpretation is to never be exclusionary, but, on the contrary, includes within itself, synthetically, all possible interpretations; it is, moreover, why symbolism, with its multiple and superimposed meanings, is the normal means of expression of all true initiatic teaching.

With this same explanation, the meaning of the four lines arrange in the form of a cross and connecting the three precincts becomes immediately clear: they are channels through which the teaching of the traditional doctrine is communicated from above, below, from the supreme rank which is the depository, and is distributed hierarchically to other degrees. The central portion of the figure thus corresponds to the 'fountain of teaching' of which Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amor' speak,<sup>39</sup> and the

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<sup>36</sup> Mr. Le Cour notes that the central point is marked on most of the figures he saw at the Acropolis in Athens.

<sup>37</sup> *The Esoterism of Dante*, ch. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 6.

<sup>39</sup> See our article in the *Voile d'Isis* of February 1929.

cruciform arrangement of the four channels identifies with the four rivers of *Pardes*.

Relating to this connection, it should be noted that there is, between the two circular and square shapes of the figure of the three precincts, an important nuance to observe which relate respectively to their derived symbolism. In the first case, the center of the figure would then be the source of the doctrine, while the second would relate more to the 'reservoir,' the spiritual authority that has a role of conservation; but, of course, the symbolism of the 'fountain of teaching' applies to both cases.<sup>40</sup>

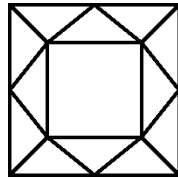


Fig. 3

From the point of view of numerical symbolism, it must be noted that all three squares form the duodenary. Arranged otherwise (Fig. 3), these three squares, to which are added four crosswise lines constitute the figure according to which the ancient astrologers inscribed the Zodiac; furthermore, this figure was regarded as that of the celestial Jerusalem with its twelve gates, three on each side, and there is an evident connection with the meaning we have just given for the square form. No doubt there are many more similarities to consider, but we believe that these few notes, however incomplete, will shed some light on the mysterious question of the triple Druidic precinct.

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<sup>40</sup> The other figure that we have produced above (fig. 2) is often also in the circular form: it is then one of the most common varieties of the wheel, and this wheel with eight spokes is in some respects identical to the eight-petalled lotus, more particular to Oriental traditions, just as the six-rayed wheel is equivalent to the lily, which has six petals (see our articles on *Le Chrisme et le Cœur dans les anciennes marques corporatives* and on *L'idée du Centre dans les traditions antiques*, in *Regnabit*, November 1925 and May 1926.)

## Some Aspects of the Symbolism of Janus

*Quelques aspects du symbolisme de Janus*, July 1929.

We have made many references and allusions in our works to the symbolism of Janus; to completely explain this symbolism, with its complex and multiplicity of meanings, and to point out all the links with a large number of similar figurations which we meet in other traditions, would require a whole volume, which we may write someday. Until then, it seemed to us interesting to gather some notes concerning certain aspects of the symbolism in question, and to more completely, than we have been able to do so as of yet, consider the links established sometimes between Janus and Christ, which may seem strange at first glance, but is none the less perfectly justified.

Indeed, a curious record expressly representing Christ as Janus was published a few years ago by Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay in *Regnabit*,<sup>41</sup> and we commented on it ourselves in the same journal.<sup>42</sup> It is a cartouche illustrated on a detached page of a fifteenth century church manuscript found in Luchon, which completes the leaf of the January issue of the opening calendar of the book. At the top of the inner medallion is the IHS monogram surmounted by a heart; the rest of the medallion is occupied by a bust of *Janus Bifrons*, with both a masculine and a feminine face, as is depicted quite frequently; he wears a crown on his head, and holds in one hand a scepter and in the other a key.

Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay wrote on the Roman monuments:

Janus is shown, as on the cartouche of Luchon, with a crown on his head and the scepter in his right hand, because he is King; he holds in the other hand a key which opens and closes the ages; that is why, by an extension of this idea, the Romans dedicated the gates of homes and cities to him... Christ too, like the ancient Janus, carries the royal scepter to which he is granted by his Father in Heaven and his ancestors here below; and his other hand holds the key of the eternal secrets, the key tinged with his blood which opened to humanity the lost door of Life. This is why, in the fourth

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<sup>41</sup> *Un ancien emblème du mois de janvier* (May 1925).

<sup>42</sup> *A propos de quelques symboles hermético-religieux* (December 1925).

of the great antiphons before Christmas, the sacred liturgy acclaims him thus: "*O Clavis David, et Sceptrum domus Israel!...* Thou art, O Christ, long awaited, the Key of David and the Scepter of the House of Israel, who opens, and no man shuts, who shuts and no man opens."<sup>43</sup>

The most common interpretation of the two faces of Janus is in regard to them as respectively representing the past and the future; this interpretation, though accurate from a certain point of view, is very incomplete. This is why, in a large number of figurations, the two faces are that of a young and old man; such is not the case in the emblem of Luchon, which an examination reveals that it is the androgynous Janus, or *Janus-Jana*;<sup>44</sup> and it is scarcely necessary to point out the close relationship of this form with certain Hermetic symbols such as the *Rebis*.<sup>45</sup>

From the point of view where the symbolism of Janus is related to time, it is necessary to make a very important note: between the past that is no more, and the future that is not yet, the true face of Janus, he who looks at the present is, it is said, neither of which we can see. This third face, indeed, is invisible because the present, in its temporal manifestation, is only an elusive moment;<sup>46</sup> but when we rise above the conditions of this transitory and contingent manifestation, the present conditions, on the contrary, all is reality. The third face of Janus corresponds, in another symbolism, that of the Hindu tradition, to the frontal eye of Shiva, which is also invisible since it is not represented by any corporeal organ, and which represents the 'sense of the eternity.' It is said that one look of this third eye reduces everything to ashes, which is to say, it destroys all manifestation; but when succession is transmuted into simultaneity, all things remain in the 'eternal present,' so that apparent destruction is, in reality, only a 'transformation,' in the most strictly etymological sense of the word.

By this respect, it is easy to understand already that Janus really represents Him who is not only the 'Master of the triple time' (a designation which is also applied to *Shiva* in the Hindu doctrine),<sup>47</sup> but also, and

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<sup>43</sup> *Roman Breviary*, office of December 20.

<sup>44</sup> The name of *Diana*, the lunar goddess, is just another form of *Jana*, *Janus*' feminine aspect.

<sup>45</sup> The only difference is that these symbols are generally *Sol-Luna*, in various forms, while it seems that *Janus-Jana* is rather *Lunus-Luna*, his head often being surmounted by the crescent.

<sup>46</sup> It is for this reason that certain languages, such as Hebrew and Arabic, do not have a verbal form that corresponds to the present.

<sup>47</sup> The trident (*trishula*), an attribute of *Shiva*, is the symbol of the triple time (*trikala*).

above all, the 'Lord of Eternity.' "Christ," Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay writes, "in this respect, dominates the past and the future; Coeternal with the Father, he is like him the 'Ancient of Days:' 'In the beginning was the word,' says Saint John. He is also the Father and the Master of the centuries to come: *Jesu pater futuri sæculi*, the Roman church repeats daily, and Himself proclaiming the beginning and end of everything: 'I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the beginning and the end.' He is the 'Lord of Eternity.'"

It is quite obvious, indeed, that the 'Master of time' cannot himself be subject to time, which has its origin in him just as, according to the teachings of Aristotle, the first motor of all things or the principle of universal motion is necessarily motionless. It is the Eternal Word that the Biblical texts often refer to as the 'Ancient of Days,' the Father of ages or cycles of existence (this is the proper and primeval meaning of the Latin word *sæculum*, as well as the Greek *aion* and the Hebrew *olam* which it serves to translate); and it should be noted that the Hindu tradition gives it the name of *Purana-Purusha*, whose meaning is strictly equal.

Let us now return to the figuration we have taken as a starting point for these remarks: we see, as has been noted, the scepter and the key in the hands of Janus, as well as the crown (which can be regarded as a symbol of power and elevation in the most general sense, in the spiritual as well as in the temporal order, and which here seems to refer to this twofold meaning), the scepter is the emblem of the royal power, and the key, for its role, is that of the sacerdotal power. It should be noted that the scepter is on the left of the figure, on the side of the masculine face, and the key is on the right, on the side of the feminine face; according to the symbolism employed by the Hebrew Kabbalah, the right and the left respectively correspond to two divine attributes: Mercy (*Hesed*) and Justice (*Din*), which are manifestly suited to Christ, and more so when one considers his role as Judge of the living and the dead. The Arabs, making a similar distinction in the divine attributes and their corresponding names, say 'Beauty' (*Jamāl*) and 'Majesty' (*Jalāl*); and one can even better see, with these final designations, that these aspects are represented each by a feminine and masculine face.<sup>48</sup> In short, the key and the scepter, substituted here for a set of two keys which is perhaps a more common insignia of Janus, only makes even more clear one of the meanings of this emblem, which is that of a double power proceeding from a single principle: sacerdotal power and royal power, united, according to the

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<sup>48</sup> In *The King of the World*, we explain in more detail the symbolism of the right and the left, of the 'hand of righteousness' and the 'blessing hand,' which is also indicated by several Fathers of the Church, especially by Saint Augustine.



Judeo-Christian tradition, in the person of Melchizedek, who is, as Saint Paul says, "made unto like the Son of God."<sup>49</sup>

We have just said that Janus, most commonly, carries two keys; these keys are that of the two solstitial doors, *Janua Cœli* and *Janua Inferni*, corresponding respectively to the winter solstice and the summer solstice, which is to say to the two most extreme points of the race of the sun in the annual cycle, for Janus, as 'Master of time,' is the *Janitor* who opens and closes this cycle. Furthermore, he was also the god of initiation into the mysteries: *initiatio* derives from *in-ine*, 'to enter' (which is also related to the symbolism of the 'gate'), and, according to Cicero, the name of Janus has the same root as the verb *ire*, 'go,' this root, moreover, is found in Sanskrit with the same meaning as in Latin, and in this language it has among its derivatives *yana*, 'way,' whose form is very similar to the name of Janus. "I am the Way," says Christ;<sup>50</sup> should we see here the possibility of another link? What we have said seems to be a way to justify it; and it would be the greatest mistake, when it comes to symbolism, not to take into consideration certain verbal similarities, the reasons for which are often very deep, although unfortunately they often escape modern philologists, who are ignorant all of that can legitimately be called 'sacred science.'

Be that as it may, as Janus was considered the god of initiation, his two keys, one of gold and the other of silver, were those of 'grand mysteries' and 'minor mysteries,' to use another equivalent language, the silver key is that of the 'terrestrial paradise' and the golden key is that of the 'celestial paradise.' These same keys were one of the attributes of the Sovereign Pontificate, to whom the function of 'hierophant' was essentially attached; like the boat which was also a symbol of Janus,<sup>51</sup> these remained among the principal emblems of the Papacy; and the evangelical words relating to the 'power of the keys' are in perfect accord with the ancient traditions, all of which derive from the great primordial Tradition. Furthermore, there is a rather direct relation between the meaning just indicated and that according to which the golden key represents the spiritual power and the key of silver the temporal power (the latter being

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<sup>49</sup> *Epistle to the Hebrews*, VII, 3.

<sup>50</sup> In the far Eastern tradition, the word *Tao*, whose literal meaning is also 'Way,' serves as a designation of the supreme principle; and the ideographic character that represents it is formed by signs of the head and feet, which are equivalent to the *alpha* and the *omega*.

<sup>51</sup> This boat of Janus only moved in two directions, either forwards or backwards, which corresponds to the two faces of Janus.

sometimes replaced by the scepter as we have seen):<sup>52</sup> Dante, in fact, assigns to the Emperor and the Pope the duty of leading humanity respectively to the 'terrestrial paradise' and the 'celestial paradise.'<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, by virtue of a certain astronomical symbolism which seems to have been common to all ancient people, there are also very close links between the two meanings of the keys of Janus and the two solstitial gates or the 'grand mysteries' and 'minor mysteries.'<sup>54</sup> This symbolism to which we allude is that of the zodiacal cycle, and it is not without reason that this cycle, with its two ascending and descending halves which each have their respective starting points at the two solstices of winter and summer, is affixed on the gates of so many medieval churches.<sup>55</sup> Here we see another meaning of the two faces of Janus: he is the 'Master of the two ways' to which give access to the solstitial doors, these two ways of right and left (for here we find the same symbolism as given above) which the Pythagoreans represented by the letter Y,<sup>56</sup> and it is included in an exoteric form in the myth of Hercules, between Virtue and Vice. These are the same two ways that the Hindu tradition, designate as the 'way of the gods' (*deva-yana*) and the 'way of the ancestors' (*pitri-yana*); and *Ganesha*, whose symbolism has many links with that of Janus, is also the 'Master of two ways,' by an immediate consequence of his character as the 'Lord of Knowledge,' which brings us again back to the idea of initiation into the mysteries. Finally, these two ways are also, in a sense, like the doors to which one reaches the heavens and hell,<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup> The scepter and the key are also related symbolically to the 'Axis Mundi.'

<sup>53</sup> *De Monarchia*, III, 16. – We give the explanation of this passage of Dante in our latest work, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*.

<sup>54</sup> We must remember in passing, although we have already pointed this out on several occasions, that Janus still had another function; he was the god of the guilds of craftsmen or the *Collegia fabrorum*, who celebrated in his honor the two solstitial feasts in the winter and summer. Subsequently, this custom was maintained in the corporations of builders; but, within Christianity, these solstitial feasts became identified with the two Saint Johns of winter and summer (hence the expression 'Lodge of Saint Jean' which has been preserved in modern Masonry); this is an example of the adaptation of pre-Christian symbols often misunderstood or misinterpreted by the moderns.

<sup>55</sup> This is clearly related to what we indicated in the preceding note with respect to the traditions preserved by the corporations of builders.

<sup>56</sup> This ancient symbol has been maintained until quite recently: we find it in the brand of the printer Nicolas du Chemin, designed by Jean Cousin, in Geoffroy Tory's *Le Champ fleuri* (Paris, 1529), where it is named as the 'Pythagorean letter,' and also, at the Louvre, on various pieces of furniture of the Renaissance.

<sup>57</sup> In the symbols of the Renaissance that we have just mentioned, the two paths are, in this regard, designated respectively as *via arcta* and *via lata*, the 'narrow way' and the 'wide way.'

and it can be noticed that the two sides to which they correspond, the right and the left, are those to where the chosen and the damned are distributed in representations of the Last Judgement, which, also, by a very significant coincidence, are also frequently found on the church gates, and not in any other part of the building.<sup>58</sup> These representations, as well as those of the Zodiac, we believe, show something quite fundamental in the conceptions of the cathedral builders, who proposed to give their works a 'pantacular' character, in the truest sense of the word,<sup>59</sup> which is to say, to make their work as a kind of synthetic summary of the Universe.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> It sometimes seems that what is reported on the right is, in some cases, on the left in others, and vice versa; it happens, furthermore, that this contradiction is only apparent, for we must always seek in what connection we take the right and the left; when the contradiction is real, it can be explained by certain rather complex 'cyclical' conceptions, which influence the correspondences envisaged. We only mention this so as to not conceal a problem that must be taken into account when correctly interpreting a large number of symbols.

<sup>59</sup> One must write 'pantacle' (*paniaculum*, literally 'small all'), and not 'pentacle' as it is done so often: this orthographic error has made some to believe that this word had a relation with the number 5 and had to be taken as a synonym for 'pentagram.'

<sup>60</sup> This conception is, furthermore, involved in some way to the very plan of the cathedral; but we cannot, for the moment at the least, undertake to justify this assertion as it would lead us too far astray.

# The Guardians of the Holy Land

*Les Gardiens de la Terre sainte, August 1929.*

Among the attributes of the chivalric orders, and more particularly of the Templars, which is the best known, but not the best understood in general, is that as the 'guardians of the Holy Land.' Certainly, if we adhere to the outermost meaning, we find an immediate explanation in the connection that exists between the origin of the Orders in the Crusaders, because, for Christians as it is for Jews, it seems that the 'Holy Land' means nothing but Palestine. However, the issue becomes more complex when one realizes that a variety of Oriental organizations, whose initiatic character is a certainty, such as the Assassins and the Druze, have also taken as their title 'guardians of the Holy Land.' Here, indeed, is the realization that it can no longer simply be Palestine; and it is also remarkable that these organizations have quite a number of features in common with the Western chivalric orders, so much so that some of them even have been historically connected. What then is to be really understood as the 'Holy Land,' and in what way is the role as 'guardian' attached to a certain kind of initiation, which may be called a 'chivalric' initiation, in giving this term a more general meaning than is usually done, but which is justified through the variety of forms of which legitimize it?

We have already shown elsewhere, but in particular in our study of *The King of the World*, that the expression 'Holy Land' has a number of synonyms: 'Pure Land,' 'Land of the Saints,' 'Land of the Blessed,' 'Land of the Living,' and 'Land of Immortality,' that these equivalent designations occur in the traditions of all people, and that they always apply essentially to a spiritual center whose location in a given region can, depending on the case, be understood literally, symbolically, or a mix of the two. Each 'Holy Land' is still designated by expressions such as the 'Center of the World' or the 'Heart of the World,' and this requires some explanation, as these uniform designations, although applied in a variety of ways, could easily lead to some confusion.

If we consider, for example, the Hebraic tradition, we see that in the *Sefer Yetzirah* there is spoken of the 'Holy Palace,' or the 'Inner Palace,' which is the true 'Center of the World' in the cosmogonic sense of the term; and we also see that this 'Holy Palace' has its image in the human

world in the *Shekinah*, which is the 'real presence' of Divinity.<sup>61</sup> For the people of Israel, this residence of *Shekinah* was the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*), which for this reason was considered by them to be the 'Heart of the World,' because it was in fact the spiritual center of its own tradition. This center, furthermore, was not at first a fixed location; when it comes to nomadic peoples the spiritual center must move with him, while remaining always the same during his displacement. "The residence of the *Shekinah*," Mr. Vulliaud says, "had no fixity until the day when the Temple was built, for which David had prepared the gold, the silver, and all that was necessary to complete the work."<sup>62</sup> The Tabernacle of the Sainthood of *Jehovah*, the residence of the *Shekinah*, is the Sacred of Sacred which is the heart of the Temple, which is itself the center of Zion (Jerusalem), as the Holy Zion is the center of the Land of Israel, as Israel is the center of the world."<sup>63</sup> We can notice here that there is a series of extensions gradually attributed to the idea of the center in the applications which are made successively, so that the name of 'Center of the World' or 'Heart of the World' is finally extended to the entire Land of Israel, as it is considered the 'Holy Land;' and it must be added that, in the same respect, it also receives, among other designations, that of 'Land of the Living.' It is spoken of as 'the Land of the Living including seven lands,' and Mr. Vulliaud observes that "this earth is Canaan in which there were seven peoples,"<sup>64</sup> which is literally correct, although a symbolic interpretation exists. This expression 'Land of the Living' is synonymous with 'immortality,' and the Catholic liturgy applies it to the celestial residence of the promised, which was indeed represented by the Promised Land, since by entering Israel they were to see the end of tribulations. From another point of view, the Land of Israel, as a spiritual center, was an image of Heaven, for, according to the Jewish tradition, "all that the Israelites do on Earth is accomplished according to what is happening in the celestial world."<sup>65</sup>

What is said here of the Israelites can be said alike of all people that possess a truly orthodox tradition; and, in fact, the people of Israel are not the only ones that have coopted their country to be the 'Heart of the

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<sup>61</sup> See our articles on *Le Cœur du Monde* in the Hebraic tradition and *La Terre sainte et le Cœur du Monde*, in the journal *Regnabit*, July-August and September-October 1926.

<sup>62</sup> It is worth noting that the expressions that are used here that evoke the materials used in the construction of the Temple, considered in its ideal meaning, mirror that of the 'Great Work' of the Hermeticists.

<sup>63</sup> *La Kabbale juive*, t. I, p. 509.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, t. II, p. 116.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, t. I, p. 501.

World,' and who have regarded it as an image of Heaven, two ideas which do not contradict one another in reality. The use of the same symbolism is found among other people who also possessed a 'Holy Land,' which is to say a country where a spiritual center was established that had a role comparable to that of the Temple of Jerusalem for the Hebrews. In this respect, the 'Holy Land,' as well as the *Omphalos*, was always the visible image of the 'Center of the World,' for the people living in the regions where it was located.<sup>66</sup>

The symbolism of which is a question that is particularly found among the ancient Egyptians; in fact, according to Plutarch, "the Egyptians give to their country the name of *chemia*,<sup>67</sup> and they compare it to a heart."<sup>68</sup> The reason given by Plutarch is rather strange: "This country is hot and humid indeed, including the southern portions of the inhabited earth, extended to the South, as in the body of man the heat of the heart extends to the left," because of this "the Egyptians consider the East to be the face of the world, the North as the right, and the South as the left."<sup>69</sup> These are only rather superficial similarities, and the true reason must be quite different since the same comparison of the heart has been applied equally to any land to which a sacred and 'central' character, in the spiritual sense, has been applied, no matter the geographical location. Furthermore, according to the report of Plutarch himself, the heart, which represented Egypt, also represented the Heavens: "The Egyptians," he writes, "depict the Heavens, which cannot age because of their eternity, as a heart resting on a flame which feeds its ardor."<sup>70</sup> While the heart is the hieroglyph of both Egypt and that of Heaven, it is also represented as a vase, which is then the same as that of the 'Holy Grail' in the legends of the Western Middle Ages. The conclusion to be drawn from these considerations is that there are as many specific 'Holy Lands' as there are ordinary traditional forms, since they represent the spiritual

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<sup>66</sup> See our article on the *Thunderstones*, in the *Voile d'Isis* of May 1929.

<sup>67</sup> *Kemi*, in the Egyptian language, means 'black earth,' a designation whose equivalent is also found in other peoples; the word alchemy is derived from this (al being only the article in Arabic) which originally designated the Hermetic science, which is to say, the sacerdotal science of Egypt.

<sup>68</sup> *Isis et Osiris*, 33; translated by Mario Meunier, p. 116.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 32, p. 112. In India, the opposite is true where the South is designated as the 'side on the right' (*dakshina*); but, in spite of appearances, it amounts to the same thing, as it is to say the side we have on our right when we turn to the East, and it is easy to imagine the left side of the world as extending to the right of him who imagines it, and conversely, as it takes place for the two people facing one another.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, p. 49. – It will be noted that the symbol, with the meaning given herein, is similar to that of the phoenix.

centers that correspond respectively to these different forms; but, if the same symbolism applies uniformly to all these 'Holy Lands,' it is because these spiritual centers all have an analogous constitution, often even in their precise details, because they are so many images of the same unique and supreme center, which alone really is the 'Center of the World,' but whose attributes they take as a participant in its nature through direct communication, in which traditional orthodoxy resides, and as the actual representative, in a more or less external way, for certain times and places. In other words, there exists a 'Holy Land' par excellence, of which is the prototype of all the others, a spiritual center to which all the others are subordinated as to the seat of the primordial tradition, of which all traditions are derived by adaptation to such or such defined conditions defined by a people or a time. This 'Holy Land' par excellence, is the 'supreme land,' following the meaning of the Sanskrit term *Paradesha*, which the Chaldeans named *Parde*, and in the West as *paradis*; it is indeed the 'terrestrial Paradise,' which is the starting point of all tradition, having in its center the sole source from which flow the four rivers flowing towards the cardinal points, and which is also the 'residency of immortality,' as is readily apparent from the first chapters of Genesis.<sup>71</sup>

We cannot think of reviewing here all the questions concerning the Supreme Center, which we have already treated elsewhere more or less completely: its preservation in a fluctuating manner according to the periods of the cycle, that is, from the 'Terrestrial Paradise' to the 'Celestial Jerusalem' which represents the two most extreme phases; the multiple names under which it is designated, such as *Tula*, *Luz*, *Salem*, *Agartha*; the various symbols that appear, such as the mountain, the cave, the island, and many others, or in an immediate relation, with the symbolism of the 'Pole' or the 'Axis Mundi.' To add to these figurations, we may also point out the city, the citadel, the temple, or the palace, according to the aspect under which it is especially contemplated; and this is where we will recall, together with the Temple of Solomon, which is more directly related to the subject, the triple precinct of which we have spoken

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<sup>71</sup> This is why the 'fountain of teaching' is also the 'fountain of youth' (*fons juventutis*), because whoever drinks there is free from temporal condition; it is also located at the foot of the 'Tree of Life' (see our study on *The Secret Language of Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amor'* in the *Voile d'Isis* of February 1929) and its waters are identified, naturally, as the 'elixir of longevity' by the Hermeticists (the idea of 'longevity' here having the same meaning as in the Oriental traditions), or the 'drink of immortality,' which is everywhere under a variety of names.

recently as representing the initiatic hierarchy of certain traditional centers,<sup>72</sup> and also the mysterious labyrinth, which, in a more complex form, is related to a similar conception with the difference of an emphasis on a 'journey' towards the hidden center.<sup>73</sup>

We must now add that the symbolism of the 'Holy Land' has a double meaning: whether it is related to the Supreme Center or to a subordinate center, but also, by an association that is quite natural, the tradition that emanates from it or is preserved therein, which is to say, in the first case, the primordial tradition, and, in the second, a particular traditional form.<sup>74</sup> This double meaning is also present very clearly in the symbolism of the 'Holy Grail' which is at the same time a vase (*grasale*) and a book (*gradale* or *graduale*); this last aspect clearly indicates the tradition while the other concerns it in a more direct manner, the state corresponding to the effective possession of this tradition, which is to say the 'Edenic state' if it is the primordial tradition; and whoever has reached this state is thereby integrated into the *Pardes*, so that one can say that his dwelling is now in the 'Center of the World.'<sup>75</sup> It is not without reason that we have displayed the close similarity of these two symbolisms, because when we speak of the 'chivalry of the Holy Grail' or the 'guardians of the Holy Land,' what we must hear by these two expressions is exactly

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<sup>72</sup> See our article on *The Triple Druidic Precinct* in the *Voile d'Isis* of June 1929; we have pointed out in detail the relation of this symbol, in its two circular and square forms, the connection with the symbolism of the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and the 'Celestial Jerusalem.'

<sup>73</sup> The Cretan labyrinth was the palace of *Minos*, whose name is identical to that of *Manu*, thus designating the primordial lawgiver. Moreover, one can understand, by what has been said here, the reason why the route of the labyrinth was traced on the flaggings of some churches in the Middle Ages, which was regarded as replacing the pilgrimage to the Holy Land for those who could not accomplish it; it must be remembered that pilgrimage is precisely one of the faces of initiation, so that a 'pilgrimage to the Holy Land,' is, in the esoteric sense, the same as the 'search for the Lost Word' or the 'quest for the Holy Grail.'

<sup>74</sup> Analogously, from the cosmogonic point of view, the 'Center of the World' is the original point from which the Creator Word is uttered, and it is also the Word itself.

<sup>75</sup> It is important to remember, in this respect, that in all traditions, places essentially symbolize states. Furthermore, we will remark that there is an obvious kinship between the symbolism of the vase or cup and that of the fountain mentioned above; we have also seen that among the Egyptians the vase was the hieroglyph of the heart, the vital center of being. Finally, let us recall what we have said on other occasions about wine as a substitute for the Vedic *soma* and as a symbol of a hidden doctrine; in all this, in one form or another, it is always the 'drink of immortality' and the restoration of the 'primordial state.'



the same thing; what remains for us to explain is the functions of these 'guardians,' a function that was particularly attributed to the Templars.<sup>76</sup>

To fully understand what it is, we must first distinguish between the holders of the tradition, whose function is to preserve and transmit it, and those who receive only to a degree, a communication, or we might say, somebody that takes part in tradition. Regarding the first, depositaries and dispensers of the doctrine stand at the source, which is naturally near the very center; from there, the doctrine is communicated and distributed hierarchically according to the various initiatic stages, according to the currents represented by the four rivers of the *Pardes*, or, if we wish to resume from the figuration which we have studied recently, by the channels which, going from the interior to the exterior, connect together the successive precincts which correspond to these varying degrees. All those who participate in the tradition have therefore not reached the same degree and do not fulfill the same function; it would even be necessary to make a distinction between two things, which, although generally corresponding in a certain way, are not strictly united, for it can happen that a man is intellectually qualified to attain the highest degrees, but is not fit to perform all the functions in the initiatic organization. Here, it is only the functions that we must consider; from this point of view, we will say that the 'guardians' stand at the borders of the spiritual center, taken in its widest sense, or at the last precinct, the one by which the center is at the same time separated and connected from the 'outside world.' Therefore, these 'guardians' have a dual function: on the one hand, they are properly the defenders of the 'Holy Land,' in the sense that they forbid access to those who do not possess the qualifications required to enter into it, and they constitute what we have called an 'outer cover,' which is to say, they hide it from profane eyes; on the other hand, they also ensure regular relations with the outside, as we will explain later.

It is obvious that the role of the defender is, to speak the language of the Hindu tradition, a function of Kshatriyas; and, precisely, any 'chivalric' initiation is essentially adapted to the proper nature of the men who belong to the warrior caste, which is to say the Kshatriyas. From this comes the special character of this initiation, the particular symbolism which it makes use of, and in particular, the intervention of an affective element, very explicitly designated by the term 'Love.' We have already

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<sup>76</sup> Saint-Yves d'Alveydre uses, to designate the 'guardians' of the Supreme Center, the expression 'Templars of Agartha;' the considerations we present here will show the accuracy of this term, of which he himself may not have grasped the entirety of its meaning.

explained it sufficiently that we do not have to go any further than this.<sup>77</sup> But, in the case of the Templars, there is something more to consider: although their initiation was essentially 'chivalric,' as it suited their nature and function, they had a dual character, at both the military and religious levels; and it must be so if they were, as we have many reasons to think, among the 'guardians' of the Supreme Center, where spiritual authority and temporal power are united in their common principle, and which communicates the mark of this meeting to all which is directly attached to it. In the Western world, where the spiritual takes the specifically religious form, the true 'guardians of the Holy Land,' as long as they had an existence that was 'official,' they were to be knights, but knights who were monks at the same time; and indeed, that is what the Templars were.

This brings us directly to the second role of the 'guardians' of the Supreme Center, a role which consisted, as stated earlier, in ensuring certain external relations, and above all we will add, in maintaining the link between the primordial tradition and secondary derived traditions. For this to be so, there must be, for each traditional form, one or more organizations constituted in this model, in all manifestations, composed of men with the consciousness of what is beyond all forms, which is to say, from the unique doctrine which is the source and essence of all the others, and which is nothing less than the primordial tradition. In the world of the Judeo-Christian tradition, such an organization should naturally take as a symbol the Temple of Solomon; having long since ceased to exist materially, could at that time have only an ideal meaning, as being an image of the Supreme Center, as well as any subordinate spiritual center; the very etymology of the name of Jerusalem indicates quite clearly that it is but a visible image of the mysterious *Salem* of Melchizedek. If such was the character of the Knights Templar, they must, to fulfill the role assigned to them which concerns a specific fixed tradition, that of the Occident, remain attached externally to the form of this tradition; but at the same time, the inner consciousness of true doctrinal unity should enable them to communicate with other representatives of other traditions:<sup>78</sup> this explains their relations with certain Oriental organizations, and naturally, with those that play a role similar to their own.

Furthermore, one can understand, under these conditions, that the destruction of the order of the Temple caused for the West the rupture

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<sup>77</sup> See *The Secret Language of Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amor,'* in the *Voile d'Isis*, February 1929.

<sup>78</sup> This refers to what has been symbolically called the 'gift of languages;' on this subject, we will refer to our article in the special issue of *Voile d'Isis* consecrated to the Rosicrucians.

of the regular relations with the 'Center of the World' and it is indeed in the fourteenth century that this rupture first occurred, and which has been progressively accentuated until our time. However, this is not to say that every link was broken at one fell swoop; for quite a long time, relations could be maintained to a certain extent, but only in a hidden manner, through organizations such as the *Fede Santa* or the 'Fedeli d'Amor,' such as the 'Massenie du Saint-Graal,' and no doubt many others, all heirs to the spirit of the order of the Temple, and for the most part attached to it by a more or less direct filiation. Those who preserved this living spirit and those who inspired these organizations without ever constituting themselves into any definite group, were those who were called, by an essentially symbolic name, the Rosicrucians; but a day came when these Rosicrucians themselves had to retire from the West, whose conditions had become such that their action could no longer be exercised, and, it is said, they then retired to the Orient, absorbed somehow in towards the Supreme Center of which they were an emanation. For the Western world, there is no longer any 'Holy Land' to maintain since the path that leads to it is now is completely lost; how long will this situation last, and should it even be hoped that communication will ever be restored? This is a question that is not for us to answer; besides that we do not wish to risk any prophesying, the solution depends only on the West itself, because it is by returning to normal conditions and by recovering the spirit of its own tradition, if it still has some, he will be able to see the path to the 'Center of the World' open once more.

## Atlantis and Hyperborea

*Atlantide et Hyperborée*, October 1929.

In *Atlantis* (June 1929), Mr. Paul Le Cour brings up the note in our article in the previous May issue (The Thunderstones, p. 348), in which we affirm the distinction of Hyperborea and Atlantis, against those who would confuse the two and who speak of a 'Hyperborean Atlantis.' Truth be told, although Mr. Le Cour does indeed hold this notion, we do not think only of him when writing this note; it is also found in Herman Wirth, author of an important book on the origins of mankind (*Der Aufgang der Menschheit*) recently published in Germany, which constantly uses the term 'North Atlantic' to designate the region that was the origin of the primordial tradition. On the other hand, Mr. Le Cour is indeed the only one, to our knowledge at the least, who has given us an affirmation of the existence of a 'Hyperborean Atlantis;' if we had not named it in this respect, it is because people's questions matter very little to us, and the only thing that concerned us was to warn our readers against a false interpretation, wherever they might come from. We wonder how Mr. Le Cour interpreted us; we ask ourselves now more than ever, because now he is telling us that the North Pole, at the time of its origin, "was not that of today, but a neighboring region, it seems to be Iceland and Greenland;" how did he come up with this? We are absolutely certain to never have written a single word about this, to have never made even the slightest allusion to this issue, incidentally which is secondary to our point of view, of a possible pole displacement from the beginning of our *Manvantara*;<sup>79</sup> it is even more so because of this that we have never specified this in relation to the original issue, because, for a variety of reason, it is rather difficult to define in relation to present-day lands.

Mr. Le Cour also says that, "in spite of our Hinduism, we agree that the origin of traditions is Western;" we do not agree with this, on the contrary, because we say that it is of a polar origin, and the pole, as we know, is not more Western than Eastern; we continue in our thinking that, as we said in the note referred to, North and West are two different

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<sup>79</sup> This question seems to be related to that of the inclination of the earth's axis, an inclination which, according to some traditional data, would not have existed at the origin, but is a consequence of what is designated in the Western language as the 'fall of man.'

cardinal directions. It is only at a time that is distant from the origin that the seat of the primordial tradition, transferred to other regions, could become either Western or Eastern, Western in some periods and Eastern for others, in any case, surely recently it is Eastern and already well before the beginning of the so-called 'historical' times (because they are the only times accessible to the investigations of 'profane' history). Furthermore, it is notable that it is not "in spite of our Hinduism" (Mr. Le Cour, in using this word, probably does not believe it to be entirely accurate), but on the contrary it is because of 'our Hinduism' that we regard the origin of traditions as Nordic, and even more exactly as polar, since this is expressly stated in the *Vedas*, as well as in other sacred books.<sup>80</sup> The land where the sun circled the horizon without going to sleep was in fact much closer to the pole, if it is not the pole itself; it is also said that, later, the representatives of the tradition moved to a region where the longest day was double the shortest day, but this already relates to a later phase, which, geographically, had obviously nothing to do with Hyperborea.

It may be that Mr. Le Cour is right in distinguishing between southern Atlantis and northern Atlantis, although they should never have been originally distinguished; but it is none the less true that northern Atlantis was not hyperborean. What complicates the question greatly, we very readily admit, is that the same designations have been applied in the course of time to very different regions, and not only to the successive locations of the primordial center of tradition, but also to secondary centers that proceeded more or less directly. We have pointed out this difficulty in our study on *The King of the World*, where, precisely on the very page which Mr. Le Cour references (p. 115), we write this: "We must first distinguish between the Atlantic *Thule* (the place of origin of the Toltecs, which was likely located in northern Atlantis) and the Hyperborean *Thule*; and it is the latter which, in reality, represents the first and highest center for the whole of the present *Manvantara*; it was it which was the 'sacred island' par excellence, and its location was literally polar. All the other 'sacred islands,' which are designated everywhere by names of identical signification, were only images of this one; and this applies even to the spiritual center of the Atlantean tradition, which governs only a secondary historical cycle subordinate to that of the *Manvantara*."<sup>81</sup> And

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<sup>80</sup> Those who would like to have specific references in this respect can find them in B. G. Tilak's remarkable book *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, which, unfortunately, seems to be largely unknown in Europe, probably because its author was an un-Westernized Hindu.

<sup>81</sup> With regard to the Atlantean *Thule*, we believe it interesting to reproduce here a piece of information which we noticed in a geographical chronicle in the *Journal des Débats* (January 22, 1929), on the Indians of the Isthmus of Panama, and

we added in a note: “A great difficulty to determine the junction point of the Atlantean tradition with the Hyperborean tradition, this is due to certain substitutions of names which can lead to confusion, but the question, in spite of everything, may not be entirely unsolvable.”

Speaking of this ‘junction point’ we thought first of all of Druidism; and here it is precisely that, concerning Druidism, we find again in *Atlantis* (July-August 1929) another note which proves how difficult it is to understand. With respect to our June article on the ‘triple precinct,’ Mr. Le Cour writes: “It is restricting the scope of this symbol to only make it a druidic symbol; it is likely that it is older and radiates beyond the druidic world.” But we are far from restricting it merely as a druidic symbol, in this article, after noting, according to the work of Mr. Le Cour himself, examples from Italy and Greece, we said (p. 397): “the fact that this same figure is found elsewhere than among the Celts would indicate that there were, in other traditional forms, hierarchies built on the same model, which is perfectly ordinary.” As for the question of anteriority, it would first be necessary to know at what precise time Druidism originates, and it is probable that it goes back much farther than one believes usually, especially as the Druids were the possessors of a tradition of which a notable part was incontestably of a hyperborean origin.

We will take this opportunity to make another remark which is important: we say ‘Hyperborea’ to conform to the usage that has prevailed since the time of the Greeks; but the usage of this word shows that even at this ‘classical’ time, it had already lost the meaning of its primitive designation. Indeed, it would be sufficient to say ‘Borea,’ a word strictly synonymous to the Sanskrit *Varaha*, or rather, when it comes to a land, to its female derivative *Varahi*: it is the ‘land of the wild boar,’ which also became the ‘land of the bear’ at one time, during the period of Kshatriyas dominance that Parashurama ended.<sup>82</sup>

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whose importance clearly escaped the author of this article: “In 1925, a large part of the Kuna Indians rose up and deposed the Panamanian police who lived on their territory and founded the independent republic of *Tule*, whose flag is a swastika on an orange background with a red border. This republic still exists today.” This seems to indicate that there is much more to the traditions of ancient America than one might be tempted to believe.

<sup>82</sup> This name of *Varahi* applies to the ‘holy land’ equated symbolically to a certain aspect of the *Shakti* of *Vishnu*, which is considered especially in the third *avatara*; there is a lot to say on this subject, and maybe we will return to it someday. This same name has never been able to designate Europe as Saint-Yves d’Alveydre seems to have believed; furthermore, we would have perhaps seen a little clearer on these questions about the West, if Fabre d’Olivet and those who followed him had not inextricably mixed the story of *Parashurama* and that of

To conclude this necessary explanation, we have yet to say a few words on three or four questions which Mr. Le Cour incidentally mentions in his two notes; firstly, there is an allusion to the *swastika*, of which he says that “we make as the sign of the pole.” Without affixing the least animosity, we will here pray that Mr. Le Cour does not affix his case to ours, for we finally we must say things as they are: we consider him to be a ‘researcher’ (which is not to lessen his merit), which offers explanations according to his personal views, which sometimes are a bit adventurous, and this is his right since he is not attached to any tradition currently alive and is not in possession of any data received by direct transmission; we could say, in other words, that he does archaeology while we do initiatic science, and there are two points of view for the two, even when they touch on the same subjects, that cannot coincide in anyway. We do not ‘make’ the *swastika* the sign of the pole; we say that it is, and always has been, that this is its true traditional meaning, which is quite different; it is a fact to which neither Mr. Le Cour nor ourselves can change. Mr. Le Cour, who obviously can only make more or less hypothetical interpretations, claims that the *swastika* “is only a symbol referring to an ideal without elevation;”<sup>83</sup> this is his way of seeing things, but it is nothing more, and we are all the less disposed to discuss it, which, after all, represents a mere sentimental appreciation; ‘elevated’ or not, an ‘ideal’ is for us something rather hollow, and, in truth, it is much more ‘positive,’ and we would say so willingly had this word not been abused.

Mr. Le Cour, on the other hand, does not seem satisfied with the note we have given (in the June issue, p. 430) when speaking of the article by one of his collaborators who was anxious to see opposition between East and West, which showed quite clearly, vis-à-vis the Orient, a deplorable exclusivism.<sup>84</sup> He writes some astonishing things about this: “Mr. René Guénon, who is a pure logician, cannot seek, both in the East and in the West, other than the purely intellectual side of things, as his writings prove; he again shows it by stating that *Agni* is self-sufficient (see *Regnabit*, April 1926) and he ignores the *Aor-Agni* duality, which we often

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*Ramachandra*, which is to say, the sixth and seventh *avatars*, which are distinct in all respects.

<sup>83</sup> We wish to assume that in writing these words Mr. Le Cour had in view the modern and non-traditional interpretations of the *swastika*, such as those conceived of by the German ‘racists,’ for example, who claimed to seize this emblem, affixing to it the baroque and insignificant designation of *hakenkreuz* or ‘hooked cross.’

<sup>84</sup> Mr. Le Cour reproaches us for having said in this link that his collaborator “certainly does not have the gift of languages,” and he finds that “this is an unfortunate statement;” alas, he simply confuses the ‘gift of languages’ with linguistic knowledge; what is at stake has absolutely nothing to do with erudition.

return to because it is the cornerstone of the building of the manifested world.” Despite our indifference to what has been written about us, we cannot say that we are a ‘pure logician,’ whereas we do not consider logic and dialectic only as mere instruments of exposition, sometimes used in this respect, but of an entirely external character, and without any interest in themselves; we repeat ourselves only once more that anything other than the initiatic point of view, and everything else, which is to say all that is ‘profane’ knowledge is entirely devoid of value in our eyes. If it is true that we often speak of a ‘pure intellectuality,’ it is because this expression has a very different meaning for us than for Mr. Le Cour, who seems to confuse ‘intelligence’ with ‘reason,’ and who considers on the one hand, an ‘aesthetic intuition,’ whereas there is no other true intuition than ‘intellectual intuition’ of a supra-rational order; that is something more formidable than anyone who obviously does not have the slightest suspicion of what ‘metaphysical realization’ may be, and who is probably thinking that we are only a type of theoretician, which proves once again that he has misread our writings, which oddly appear to irritate him. As for the history of *Aor-Agni*, which we do not “ignore” at all, it would be good to conclude once and for all with these reveries, which Mr. Le Cour does not have a stake in: if ‘Agni is self-sufficient unto himself,’ it is for this reason that this term, in Sanskrit, designates fire in all aspects, without any exception, and those who claim the contrary prove simply by this their total ignorance of the Hindu tradition. We did not say anything else in the note of our article in *Regnabit*, which we believe necessary to reproduce here, verbatim: “Knowing that the readers of *Regnabit* are aware of the theories of a teaching whose work, though very interesting and highly estimable in some respects, calls for some reservations, we must say here that we cannot accept the use of the terms *Aor* and *Agni* to designate the two complementary aspects of fire (light and heat). Indeed, the first of these two words is Hebrew, while the second is Sanskrit, and we cannot thus associate terms borrowed from different traditions, whatever the actual concordances that exist between them, and even in the innate identity that hides under the diversity of their forms; we must not confuse ‘syncretism’ with a real synthesis. Furthermore, if *Aor* is exclusively light, *Agni* is the igneous principle in its entirety (the Latin *ignis* being the same word), so both as light and as heat, the restriction of this term to the designation of heat is quite arbitrary and unjustified.” It is scarcely necessary to say that, in writing this note, we have not thought in the least bit of Mr. Le Cour; we thought only of the Hieron of Paray-le-Monial, to whom the invention of this odd verbal association is attributed. We feel that we do not have to ignore a whimsy from the somewhat fertile imagination of Mr. de Sarachaga, which is therefore entirely



devoid of authority and not of any value from the traditional point of view, to which we maintain strictly.<sup>85</sup>

Finally, Mr. Le Cour takes advantage of the situation to assert anew the anti-metaphysical and anti-initiatic theory of Western 'individualism,' which, after all, is his affair and binds him; he adds, with a sort of pride that shows there is, in reality, very little individual contingencies present: "We maintain our point of view because we are the ancestors in the domain of knowledge." This pretension is really quite extraordinary; does Mr. Le Cour really think that he is so old? Not only are modern Westerners the ancestors of no one, but they are not even legitimate descendants because they have lost the key to their own tradition; it is not that 'in the Orient there has been deviation,' whatever those ignorant of Oriental doctrines may say. The 'ancestors,' to use Mr. Le Cour's words, are the effective holders of the primordial tradition; there can be no others, and at the present time they certainly do not exist in the West.

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<sup>85</sup> It is the same Mr. De Sarachaga who wrote *zwadisca* in place of *swastika*; one of his disciples, who commented one day on this, assured us that he must have his reasons for writing it thus; this is a justification that is a little too simple!

## Concerning the Masons of the Middle Ages

*A propos des Constructeurs du moyen âge*, November 1929.

An article by Mr. Armand Bédarride, published last May in the respective issue of *Symbolisme*, which we have previously alluded to in our review column, seems to us to be an opportunity to reflect on some useful notes. This article, entitled *The Ideas of our Forerunners*, deals with the construction corporations of the Middle Ages that are considered to have transmitted something of their spirit and traditions down to modern Masonry.

It should first be point out on this note that the distinction between 'operative Masonry' and 'speculative Masonry' seems to us to be interpreted in a totally different sense than is ordinarily attributed to it. Indeed, it is often that the 'operative' Masons were only mere workers and craftsmen, nothing more, nothing less, and that the symbolism with more or less profound meanings would only have come later, as a result of the introduction of different artisans outside the art of building that were introduced into the corporate organizations. This is not the opinion of Mr. Bédarride, who cites a large number of examples, notably in religious monuments of figures whose symbolic character is incontestable; in particular, he speaks of the two columns on the Würzburg cathedral, "which prove," he says, "that the fourteenth century Masons built a philosophical symbolism," which is true, provided, that you understand this in the sense of 'hermetic philosophy,' and not in the ordinary sense that would be profane philosophy, which, furthermore, has never made the slightest use of any symbolism. We can multiply the examples indefinitely; the very plan of the cathedrals is eminently symbols, as we have already remarked on other occasions; and it must be added that among the symbols used in the Middle Ages, besides those which the modern Masons have kept the memory of while hardly understanding the meaning, there are many others of which they have not the slightest idea.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> We have recently had occasion to raise attention to, at the cathedral of Strasbourg and on other buildings of Alsace, a rather large number of marks of stone-cutters, dating from various times between the twelfth and the beginning of the seventeenth century; among these marks, there are some very curious ones, and we have especially noticed the *swastika*, to which Mr. Bédarride alludes to, in one of the turrets of the steeples of Strasbourg.

In our opinion, it is necessary, to counter the current opinion, and to consider 'speculative Masonry' as, in many respects, a degeneration of 'operative Masonry.' The latter, indeed, was really complete in its order, possessing both the theory and the corresponding practice, and its designations may, in this regard, be understood as an allusion to the 'operations' of 'sacred art,' whose construction according to traditional rules was one of the operations. As for 'speculative Masonry,' which came into being at a time when the Mason corporations were in full decay, its name indicates quite clearly that it is confined to pure and simple 'speculation,' which is to say, a theory without realization; certainly, it would be odd to look at it as 'progress.' If even there had been just a diminution, the evil would not be as great as it really is; but, as we have already said several times, there was also a real deviation at the beginning of the eighteenth century, during the formation of the Great Lodge of England, which was the starting point for all modern Masonry. We shall not press further for the moment, but we wish to point out that, if we really wish to understand the spirit of the Masons of the Middle Ages, these observations are absolutely essential; otherwise, one would only have a false idea, or at the least, a very incomplete one.

Another idea that is no less important to rectify is that the use of symbolism would have simply been imposed due to reasons of prudence. That these reasons have sometimes existed we do not dispute, but this is only the outermost and least interesting part of the question; we said it about Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amor',<sup>87</sup> and we will reiterate it once more with regard to the corporations of Masons, all the more so because there have been close links between all these organizations, apparently so different in character, but all of them participating in the same knowledge of tradition.<sup>88</sup> Symbolism is the normal mode of expression for knowledge of this order; this is its true *raison d'être*, and this, in all times and in all countries, even in cases where there was no need to conceal anything, and simply because it consists of things which, by their very nature, cannot be expressed otherwise than in this form.

The mistake which we often find in this respect, and of which we find to a certain extent as an echo in the article of Mr. Bédarride, seems to have two principal reasons, the first of which is that, generally speaking, it is difficult to imagine what Catholicism was in the Middle Ages. It should not be forgotten that, just as there is a Muslim esoterism, there was also at that time a Catholic esoterism, we mean an esoterism that takes its base and its point of support in the symbols and rites of the

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<sup>87</sup> See the *Voile d'Isis* of February 1929.

<sup>88</sup> The Compagnons of the 'Rite of Solomon' have preserved the memory of their connection to the Order of the Temple to this day.

Catholic religion, superimposing upon it without opposing it in any manner; and there is no doubt that certain religious orders were far from being foreign to this esoterism. If the tendency of most modern Catholics is to deny the existence of these things, it only proves that they are not better informed in this respect than the rest of their contemporaries.

The second reason for the error that we have pointed out is that they imagine that what is hidden under the symbols are almost exclusively social or political conceptions;<sup>89</sup> in reality, it is far more than this. The conceptions of this order could not have, in the eyes of those who possessed certain knowledge, an altogether secondary importance, which is that of a possible application among many others; we will even add that wherever this assumption has come to assume too great a place and become predominant, they have invariably been a cause of degeneration and deviation.<sup>90</sup> Is this not precisely the reason why modern Masonry has lost the understanding of what it still retains of the old symbolism and traditions of which, in spite of all its insufficiencies, it seems to be, the sole heir in the Western world today? If we object to, as proof of the social concerns of the Masons, satirical figures that are more or less licentious that is sometimes encountered in their works, the reason is very simple: these figures are primarily intended to baffle the laymen, who stop at the external appearances and do not seek what lies deeper. There is something here that is far from being unique to the Masons; certain writers, such as Boccaccio, Rabelais especially, and many others, have taken the same mask and used the same processes. It must be believed that this scheme has been successful, since, even today, and perhaps especially today, the laymen still are fooled.

If we wish to reach the bottom of things, we must see in the symbolism of the Masons the expression of certain traditional sciences, related to what we can, in a general way, denote by the name of 'hermeticism.' Only, we should not believe, because we are speaking of 'sciences,' that it is something comparable to secular science which is known only to almost all moderns; it seems that an assimilation of this sort has been made in the mind of Mr. Bédarride, who speaks of "the changing form of the positive knowledge of science," which applies properly and exclusively to secular science, and who, taking literally what is purely symbolic images, believes in discovering 'evolutionary' and even 'transformative' ideas, ideas which are in absolute contradiction with all traditional

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<sup>89</sup> This view is largely that of Aroux and Rossetti as far as Dante's interpretation is concerned and is also found in many passages of *The History of Magic* by Eliphas Lévi.

<sup>90</sup> The example of some Muslim organizations, in which political concerns have stifled the original spirituality, is very clear in this respect.

data. In many of our works we have developed at length the essential distinction between sacred, or traditional, science and secular science; we cannot think of reproducing all these considerations here, but at the least we have seen fit to draw attention once more to this important point.

We shall add but a few words to conclude: it is not without reason that Janus, among the Romans, was both the god of initiation into the mysteries and the god of the guilds of artisans; it is not sound reason either that the Masons of the Middle Ages kept the same two solstitial feasts of the same Janus, that became the two Saint Johns of the winter and the summer; and when we learn of Saint John's connection with the esoteric side of Christianity, does it not immediately appear that, under another adaption required by circumstances and by the 'cyclical laws,' it is the same initiation into the mysteries that it once was?

## A New Book on the Order of the Elect Priests

*Un nouveau livre sur l'Ordre des Elus Coens,*  
December 1929.

Mr. R. Le Forestier, who specializes in the historical studies of secret, masonic, and other such organizations of the second half of the eighteenth century, published an important volume a few months ago about *Occultist Freemasonry in the Eighteenth Century and the Order of the Elus Coens*. This title calls for a slight reservation, because the word 'occultist,' which seems to have never been used before Eliphas Lévi, appears to be an anachronism; perhaps it would have been better to find another term, this is not a mere question of words, because what was properly called 'occultism' is really a product of the nineteenth century.

The work is divided into three sections: the first deals with the 'doctrines and practices of the Elus Coens;' the second, relations between 'the Elus Coens and the occultist tradition' (the word 'esoteric' would certainly have been the most appropriate here); the third, with the 'founding and history of the Order.' All which is properly historical is very well written and supported by a very serious study of the documents that the author had at his disposal, and we cannot recommend reading it enough. From this point of view, there is very little to regret, but a few shortcomings become apparent in regard to the biography of Martinez de Pasqually, of which there are some dim points; the *Voile d'Isis* will soon publish new documents that may help to elucidate them.

The first part is an excellent overview of the content of the *Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings*, a rather confusing book, written in an improper style which is sometimes unintelligible, and which, furthermore, remained unfinished; it was not easy to draw a coherent statement from it, and we must praise Mr. Le Forestier for succeeding in this. There remains, however, a certain ambiguity as to the nature of the 'operations' of the Elus Coens: were they actually 'theurgic' or only 'magic?' The author does not seem to perceive that these are two essentially different things which are not of the same order; it is possible that this confusion existed among the Coens themselves, whose initiation always seemed to

have remained rather incomplete in many respects, but it would be beneficial to have pointed this out. We would gladly say that it appears to be rituals of 'ceremonial magic' with theurgic pretensions, which opens the door to many illusions; and the importance attributed to mere 'phenomenal' manifestations, for what Martinez called the 'passes' were nothing more than this, proves that the domain of illusions was never surpassed. What is more sad in this story, in our opinion, is that the founder of the Elus Coens may have thought himself in possession of transcendent knowledge, where as it was only knowledge that, although real, was still only of a secondary order. There must have been, for these reasons, a certain confusion between the 'initiatic' point of view and the 'mystic' point of view, because the doctrines he expresses always have a religious form, whereas his 'operations' have no such character; it is unfortunate that Mr. Le Forestier seems to accept this confusion and does not have a clear enough idea of the distinction of the two points of view in question. Furthermore, it should be noted that what Martinez calls 'reintegration' does not exceed the possibilities of the individual human being; this point is very clearly established by the author, but it would have been necessary to draw from it some very important consequences as to the limits of the teachings which the leader of the Elus Coens could distribute to his disciples, and, consequently, of the 'realization' which he could lead them.

The second portion is the least satisfactory, and Mr. Le Forestier, perhaps in spite of himself, has not been able to free himself from a certain spirit that we can describe as 'rationalist,' and this must be due to his university education. Some similarities between various traditional doctrines does not necessarily imply borrowing or direct influence; wherever the same truths are expressed, it is natural that such similarities exist; and this applies in particular to the science of numbers, whose meanings are by no means a human invention or an arbitrary conception. We will say the same for astrology; these are cosmic laws which do not depend on us, and we do not see why everything connected to them should be borrowed from the Chaldeans, as if they had a monopoly on this knowledge; the same holds true of angelology, which is closely connected with it, and it is not possible, unless one accepts all the prejudices of modern 'criticism,' to look upon it as having been ignored by the Hebrews until the time of Babylon's captivity. Let us add that Mr. Le Forestier does not seem to have a perfectly correct notion of Kabbalah, whose name simply means 'tradition' in the most general sense, but which he equates with a certain particular state of the teachings in the written wordings of such or such teachings, so that it happens that "Kab-

balah was born in southern France and northern Spain” and dates its origins to the thirteenth century; here again, the ‘critical’ mind, which is unaware of any form of oral transmission, has gone too far. Let us finally note here a last point: the word *Pardes* (which is, as we explained in other circumstances, the Sanskrit *Paradesha*, ‘supreme land,’ and not a Persian word meaning ‘animal park’, which does not seem to us to have a profound meaning despite the link with the *Cherubim* of Ezekiel) does not designate a mere ‘mystical speculation,’ but rather the obtaining of a certain state, which is the restoration of the ‘primordial’ or ‘Edenic state,’ which shares a close similarity with the ‘reintegration’ envisaged by Martinez.<sup>91</sup>

All these reservations made, it is quite certain that the form of which Martinez has taken as his teachings is of a strictly Jewish inspiration, which moreover does not imply that he himself was of a Jewish origin (this is one of the points which has not been sufficiently clarified so far) nor that he was insincerely Christian. Mr. Le Forestier is right to speak of ‘Esoteric Christianity’ in this connection, but we do not see why conceptions of this order would be denied the right to call themselves authentically Christian; to maintain the modern ideas of an exclusively and narrowly exoteric religion is to deny to Christianity any really profound meaning, and it is also to disregard all that there was in the Middle Ages, and of which, precisely, we find as a reflection, perhaps weakened, in organizations like that of the Elus Coens.<sup>92</sup> We know well what hinders our contemporaries here: it is their tendency to reduce everything to a question of ‘historicity,’ a preoccupation that seems to be common now to the partisans and opponents of Christianity, although the opponents are certainly the first to have brought the debate to this level. Let us say it very clearly, if Christ were to be considered only as a historical figure, he would be largely uninteresting; the consideration of the Christ-principle has an entirely different importance; and, furthermore, one does

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<sup>91</sup> In this link, we have noted a rather amusing misunderstanding in one of Willermoz’s letters to the Baron of Turkeim published by Mr. Émile Dermenghem as a result of *Sleepers*: Willermoz protests against the assertion that the book of Errors and Truths of Saint Martin “came from the *Parthes*,” what he mistook as the name of a people, who in fact had nothing to do with this, was evidently the word *Pardes*, which was probably quite unknown to him. As for the Baron of Turkeim speaking on the subject “of the *Pardes*, a classical work of the Kabbalists,” we think that what he was dealing with in reality must be the work entitled *Pardes Rimmonim*.

<sup>92</sup> Instead of ‘Esoteric Christianity,’ it would be better to say ‘Christian esoterism,’ which is to say, it takes its base in Christianity, but it marks that what is involved does not belong to the religious field; the same naturally applies to Muslim esoterism.



not exclude the other, because, as we have already said often, the historical facts themselves have a symbolic value and express the principles in their own way and in their own order; for the moment we cannot press on this point further, which seems quite clear to us.

The third portion is devoted to the history of the Order of the Elus Coens, whose actual existence was rather brief, the exposition of which one can learn of the various ranks, which seems to have never been fully completed and developed, any more than those of the famous 'operations.' It may not be correct to label it as 'Scottish,' as Mr. Le Forestier does, all systems of high Masonic ranks without exception, or to see, as it were, a mere mask in the Masonic character given by Martinez to the Elus Coens; but a comprehensive discussion of these issues may drag us too far astray.<sup>93</sup> We only wish to draw attention to, in a more specific way, the name of 'Réau-Cross' given by Martinez to the highest ranks of his 'regime,' as it was then called, and in which Mr. Le Forestier only wishes to see an imitation, or even counterfeiting, of the 'Rose-Cross;' for us, this is something else. In the mind of Martinez, the 'Réau-Cross' was to be, on the contrary, the true 'Rose-Cross,' while the rank which bore the latter name in ordinary Masonry was only 'apocryphal,' following the expression he uses often; but where does this strange name of 'Réau-Cross' come from, and what does it mean? According to Martinez, the true name of Adam was "*Roux* in the vernacular and *Réau* in Hebrew," meaning the "Man-God who was very strong in wisdom, virtue, and power," an interpretation which, at first sight at the least, seems quite fanciful. The truth is that *Adam* literally means 'red;' *adamah* is red clay, and *damah* is blood, which is also red; *Edom*, a name given to Esau, also has the meaning of 'red;' and this red color is most often taken as a symbol of strength or power, which partly justifies Martinez's explanation. As for the form of *Réau*, it certainly has nothing to do with Hebrew; but we think that it must be seen as a phonetic assimilation with the word *roeh*, 'seer,' which was the first designation for the prophets, and whose meaning is quite comparable to that of the Sanskrit *rishi*; this sort of phonetic symbolism is not exceptional, as we have indicated on a variety of occasions,<sup>94</sup> and it would hardly be surprising that Martinez has

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<sup>93</sup> With regard to the various systems of high grades, we are a little surprised to see attributed to the 'Council of Emperors of the Orient and the Occident' the 'aristocracy of birth and money,' whose founder seems to have been the 'Master Pirlet, tailor of clothes,' as documents of the time state: as badly informed as Thory was on certain points, he certainly did not invent this piece of information (*Acta Latomorum*, vol. I, p.79).

<sup>94</sup> Mr. Le Forestier also points out another example in Martinez himself: it is the link he establishes, by a kind of anagram, between 'Noachites' and 'Chinese.'

used it here to refer to one of the principal characters inherent in the 'Edenic state,' and, consequently, to signify the possession of this state. If this is true, the expression 'Réau-Cross,' by the addition of the 'Restorer' Cross to this first name of *Réau*, indicates the 'minor restored in his prerogatives,' to speak the language of the *Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings*, which is to say the 'restored man,' who is indeed the 'second Adam' of Saint Paul, and who is also the true 'Rosicrucian.'<sup>95</sup> Indeed, it is not an imitation of the term 'Rose-Cross,' it would have been much easier to simply appropriate it as many others have done, but it is one of the many interpretations or adaptations to which it can legitimately give rise, which, of course, does not mean that Martinez's claims as to the real effects of his "ordination of the Réau-Cross" were fully justified.

To finish this all too brief examination, let us mention one last point: Mr. Le Forestier is quite right in seeing in the expression 'glorious form,' which is frequently used by Martinez, and where 'glorious' is in a way synonymous with 'luminous,' an allusion to the *Shekinah* (which some old Masonic rituals, by an odd deformation, call the *Stekenna*);<sup>96</sup> but it is exactly the same with that of the 'glorious body,' which is commonplace in Christianity, even exoterically, ever since Saint Paul: "Sown in corruption, resurrected in glory....," and also of the designation from the 'light of glory' in which, according to the most orthodox theology, the 'beatific vision' takes place. This shows that there is no opposition between exoterism and esoterism; there is only a superposition of the latter on the former, esoterism giving, to the truths expressed that are veiled by exoterism, the fullness of their superior and profound meaning.

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<sup>95</sup> The cross is itself the symbol of the 'Universal Man,' and we can say that it represents the very form of man brought back to his original center, from which he was separated by the 'Fall,' or, according to the vernacular of Martinez, by 'prevarication.'

<sup>96</sup> The word 'glory,' applied to the triangle bearing the Tetragrammaton and surrounded by rays, which appears in the churches as well as in the Lodges, is indeed one of the designations of the *Shekinah*, as we have explained in *The King of the World*.

## About the 'Lyonnais Rose-Cross'

*À propos des « Rose-Croix Lyonnais », January 1930.*

The number of studies on Martinez de Pasqually and his disciples are increasing at this moment in a curious way: after the book of Mr. Le Forestier, of which we spoke of last month, Mr. Paul Vulliaud, in turn, has published a volume entitled *The Lyonnais Rose-Cross in the Eighteenth Century*.<sup>97</sup> This title does not seem to us to be justified, because, to tell the truth, if we put aside the introduction there is no inquiry into the Rose-Cross in the book; would it not have been inspired by the famous name of 'Réau-Cross,' of which Mr. Vulliaud, was not preoccupied in seeking an explanation? It is possible; the use of this term does not imply any historical connection between the Rosicrucians proper and the Elus Coens, and in any case, there is no reason to include under the same name organizations such as the Strict Observance and the Rectified Scottish Regime, which, in their spirit and in their form, certainly had no Rosicrucian character. We will go even further: in the Mason rites where there is a 'Rose-Cross rank,' this one symbol has only been borrowed from the Rosicrucians, and to qualify its possessors as 'of the Rose-Cross,' without further explanations, would be a rather unfortunate equivocation; there is something of the same sort in the title used by Mr. Vulliaud. For him, other words still, such as 'illuminated' for example, do not seem to have a very precise meaning either; these appear quite haphazardly and capable of substituting one another, which can only create confusion in the mind of the reader, who will already have enough trouble recognizing himself in the multitude of the Rites and Orders existing at the time in question. However, we do not wish to believe that Mr. Vulliaud himself has not recognized this, and we prefer to see in this incorrect use of technical vocabulary, an almost obligatory consequence of the 'profane' attitude that he likes to put on display, which was not without causing us some shock, because, until now, we had met many people attaching a kind of glory to the 'profane' in the academic and 'official' circles, which, we believed, Mr. Vulliaud has no more esteem for these types than we ourselves have.

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<sup>97</sup> "Bibliothèque des Initiations modernes", E. Nourry, editor.

This attitude has yet another consequence: it is that Mr. Vulliaud has thought it necessary to adopt, almost constantly, an ironic tone which is rather embarrassing and which risks giving the impression of a partiality that a historian should carefully avoid. Already in Vulliaud's *Joseph de Maistre Franc-Maçon* we have been given the same impression; would it be so difficult for a non-Mason (we will not say a 'layman') to approach questions of this order without using controversial language that should be left specifically to anti-Masonic publications? To our knowledge, only Mr. Forestier is an exception; and we regret not finding another exception in Mr. Vulliaud, since his regular studies have had more serenity.

All this, of course, does not detract from the value or interest of the many documents published by Mr. Vulliaud, although some of them are not so completely unpublished as he believes;<sup>98</sup> and we cannot help but wonder that he has devoted a chapter to 'Sleepers' without even mentioning that it has already appeared, precisely under the same title, a work by Mr. Emile Dermenghem. However, we believe that the extracts of the 'initiatic notebooks' transcribed by Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin are actually unpublished; the strange nature of these notebooks raises many questions that have not been clarified. We once had the opportunity to see some of these documents; the bizarre and unintelligible scribbles which they are filled with gave us a very clear impression that the 'unknown agent' who was the author was nothing more than a somnambulist (we do not say a 'medium' because it would be a serious anachronism); they would therefore simply represent the experiments of the same kind as the 'Sleepers,' which greatly diminishes their 'initiatic' impact. In any case, what is certain is that it has absolutely nothing to do with the Elus Coens; who, by the way, had already ceased to exist as an organization; and we will add that there is nothing directly related to the Rectified Scottish Regime, although it is frequently referred to as the 'Lodge of the Beneficence.' The truth is that Willermoz and other members of this Lodge, who were interested in magnetism, had to form between them a sort of 'study group,' as is said today, to which they had given the somewhat ambitious title of 'Society of the Initiates;' this title, which does appear in the documents, cannot be explained otherwise, by showing very clearly, that the use of the word 'society,' shows that the group in question, although composed of Masons, had in itself no Masonic character. Even now, it often happens that Masons form, for any purpose, what is called a 'fraternal group,' whose meetings are devoid of any ritual form; the 'Society of the Initiates' must not have been anything

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<sup>98</sup> The five 'Instructions' to the Elus Coens reproduced in chapter 9 have already been published in 1914 in the *France Antimaçonnique*: let us judge each according to his own merits.

other than this; such is at least the only plausible solution to this rather unclear question.

We think that the documents that related to the Elus Coens are of another significance which is of the initiatic point of view, in spite of the gaps of this type that have always existed in the teachings of Martinez of which we have mentioned in our last article. Mr. Vulliaud is quite right to insist that those who wish to make Martinez a Kabbalist are in error; of what is involved that is undeniably Judaic does not imply any knowledge of what is properly termed as Kabbalah, which is often used incorrectly. On the other hand, the bad orthography and defective character of Martinez, which Mr. Vulliaud emphasizes a little too complacently, proves nothing against the reality of his knowledge of a certain order; we must not confuse profane instruction with initiatic knowledge; an initiate of a supreme order (which Martinez was certainly not) can even be illiterate, and this is seen quite often in the Orient. It seems, furthermore, that Mr. Vulliaud was pleased to present the enigmatic and complex character of Martinez in the worst light; Mr. Le Forestier has certainly been much more impartial; and even after this, there are still many points to be elucidated.

These persistent obscurities show the difficulty in these studies on things which sometimes seem to have been confused intentionally; therefore, we should be grateful for Mr. Vulliaud for his contribution and, although he does not make any definitive conclusions, his work at least provides some new material that is, as a whole, very interesting.<sup>99</sup> Also, since this work is sure to have a sequel, we hope that Mr. Vulliaud does not make his readers wait too long, who will certainly find many more curious and attention worthy notes, and perhaps even a starting point of reflection that the author, confining himself in the role of a historian, does not wish to express himself.

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<sup>99</sup> Let us note in passing a historical error that is too large to simply be the effect of a lapse in concentration: Mr. Vulliaud writes that "Albéric Thomas, opposed to Papus, founded the Rite of Misraïm with others" (note from p. 42); this Rite was founded in Italy around 1805 and was introduced to France in 1814 by the Bédarride brothers.

## The Symbolism of Weaving

*Le Symbolisme du Tissage*, February 1930.

In the Oriental doctrines, traditional books are frequently referred to by terms which, when taken in their literal sense, relate to weaving. Thereby, in Sanskrit, *sutra* properly means 'thread' (this word is identical to the Latin *sutura*, consisting of the same root, with the meaning of 'to sew,' being also in both languages): a book can be formed by a set of *sutras*, as a fabric is formed by an assembly of threads;<sup>100</sup> *tantra* also has the meaning of 'thread' and that of 'fabric,' and more specifically the 'warp' of a fabric.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, in Chinese, *king* is the 'warp' of a fabric, and *wei* is its 'weft'; the first of these words designates at the same time a fundamental book, while the second designates its commentaries. This distinction of the 'warp' and 'weft' in the set of traditional scriptures corresponds, according to Hindu terminology, to that of the *Shruti*, which is the fruit of direct inspiration, and of the *Smriti*, which is the product of reflection exercising on the data of the *Shruti*.

To fully understand the meaning of the symbolism, it must first be noted that the warp, formed of threads stretched over the craft, represents the immutable and principal element, while the threads of the weft passing between those of the warp by the seesawing of the shuttle, represents the variable and contingent element, which is to say the applications of the principle to particular conditions. Moreover, if we consider a thread of the warp and a thread of the weft, we immediately perceive that their union forms the symbol of the cross, of which they are respectively the vertical line and the horizontal line; and every point of fabric, thus being the meeting point of two wires perpendicular to each other is thereby the center of the cross. Now, according to the general symbolism of the cross, the vertical line represents that which unites all the states of being or all the degrees of existence, while the horizontal represents the development of one of these states or of these degrees. If we relate this to what we said earlier, we can say that the horizontal direction will

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<sup>100</sup> It is curious to note that the Arabic word *surat*, which designates the chapters of the Qu'ran, is composed of exactly the same elements as the Sanskrit *sutra*; this word has the similar meaning of 'rank' or 'row,' and its derivation is unknown.

<sup>101</sup> The root *tan* in this word expresses primarily the idea of extension.

be, for example, the human state, and the vertical sense which is transcendent with respect to this state; this transcendent character is indeed that of the *Shruti*, which is essentially 'non-human,' whereas the *Smriti* includes the applications to degrees of the human order and is the product of the exercise of human faculties.

We can add here another remark which will bring to light out the concordance of various symbolisms more closely related to each other than might be supposed at first glance: in a somewhat different aspect from that which we have just considered, the vertical line represents the active or masculine principle (*Purusha*), and the horizontal line the passive or feminine principle (*Prakriti*), every manifestation being produced by the influence of the 'non-acting' from the first to the second. Or, from another point of view, the *Shruti* is equated to direct light, represented by the Sun, and the *Smriti* is the reflected light, represented by the Moon; but, at the same time, the Sun and the Moon, in almost every tradition, also symbolize respectively the masculine principle and the feminine principle of universal manifestation.<sup>102</sup>

To return to the symbolism of weaving, it is not applied exclusively to traditional scriptures; it is also used to represent the world, or more exactly, the set of all the words, which is to say the states or degrees, in definite multitude, that constitute universal existence. Thus, in the *Upanishads*, the Supreme *Brahma* is designated as "what the world is woven on, by warp and weft," or by other similar formulas.<sup>103</sup> The warp and the weft naturally have, here again, the same respective meanings which we have just defined; and, moreover, there is all the more connection between these two applications that the Universe itself, in certain traditions, is sometimes symbolized by a book: we will only remind ourselves of the *Liber Mundi* of the Rose-Cross, and also the well-known symbol of the 'Book of Life,' which would give rise to some very interesting remarks, but it deviates a little too much from our subject so we cannot consider formulating them just now.<sup>104</sup>

Another form of this same symbolism, which is also found in the Hindu tradition, is the image of the spider weaving its web, an image which is all the more proper as the spiders form the web from its own

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<sup>102</sup> For further developments on the reports of *Shruti* and *Smriti*, we will refer to what we have said in *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, and in *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*.

<sup>103</sup> *Mundaka Upanishad*, Mundaka 2, Khanda 2, shruti 5; *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*, Adhyay 3, Brahama 8, shrutis 7 and 8.

<sup>104</sup> In particular, there is a very interesting relationship between this symbol of the 'Book of Life' and that of the 'Tree of Life;' perhaps we will return to this some other time.

substance.<sup>105</sup> Due to the circular shape of the web, which is also the blueprint of the cosmogonic spheroid, the warp is represented here by the wires radiating around the center, and the weft by the lines arranged in concentric circumferences.<sup>106</sup> To return from this back to the ordinary image of weaving, one has only to consider the center as indefinitely distant, so that the rays become parallel, in the vertical direction, while the concentric circumferences become perpendicular to these rays, which is to say horizontal.

The warp, according to what we have said above, are the principles which connect all the worlds or states to each other, each of its children connecting at corresponding points in different states; the weft is the sets of events that occur in each of the worlds, and each thread of this frame is thus the unfolding of events in a given world. We can also take up here the symbolism of the book, and say that all the events, envisaged in the simultaneity of the 'timeless,' are thus inscribed in this book, each of which is, so to speak, a character identifying itself at a single point on the fabric.

From another point of view, it can be said again that the manifestation of a being in a certain state of existence is, like any event, determined by the meeting of a thread of the warp with a thread of the weft. Each thread of the chain is then a being envisaged in its essential nature, which, as a direct projection of the principal 'Self,' makes the link of all its states, maintaining its own unity through their indefinite multiplicity. In this case, the thread of the weft that the thread of the warp encounters at a certain point corresponds to a definite state of existence, and their intersection determines the relations of this being in its manifestation in this state, with the cosmic environment. For example, the individual nature of a human being is the result of the meeting of these two children; in other words, it will always be necessary to distinguish two kinds of elements, which must be reported respectively in the vertical sense and the horizontal sense: the first expresses what belongs to the being, whereas the second comes from the conditions of the environment.

Let us add that the threads of which the 'cloth of the world' is formed are still designated, in another equivocation, as 'the hair of Shiva.' One could say that these are, in a way, the manifested Universe's 'lines of force,' and that the 'directions of space' are their representation in the corporeal order. It is easy to see how many different applications of these considerations are likely; but we wished to indicate here the essential

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<sup>105</sup> Shankaracharya's commentary on the *Brahma-Sutras*, Adhyaya 2, Pada 1, sutra 25.

<sup>106</sup> The spider standing in the center, gives the image of the Sun surrounded by its rays; it can thus be taken as a figure of the 'Heart of the World.'



meanings of the symbolism of weaving, which is, we believe, largely unknown in the West.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> There are, however, traces of a similar symbolism in Greco-Latin antiquity, especially in the myth of the Parques; but this myth seems to refer only to the threads of the weft, and its 'fatal' character can indeed be explained by the absence of the idea of the warp, which is to say by the fact that being is envisaged only in its individual state, without any intervention of its transcendent personal principle.

# Atma-Gita

Âtmâ-Gîtâ, March 1930.

In our most recent work we have alluded to an interior sense of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which, when considered from that point of view, takes the name of *Atma-Gita*,<sup>108</sup> as we have been asked for further explanations on this subject, we thought it would not be without interest to share them here.

The *Bhagavad-Gita*, which is, as we know, a detached installment from the *Mahabharata*,<sup>109</sup> has been so often translated into Western languages that it should be well known to everyone; but this is not so, because, to tell the truth, none of these translations show a real understanding. The title itself is generally rendered somewhat inaccurately as the 'Song of the Happy' because in reality *Bhagavat*'s principal meaning is that of the 'glorious' and 'venerable;' a meaning of 'happiness' also exists, but in a very secondary way, and besides, it is not appropriate enough for the case in question.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, *Bhagavat* is an epithet that applies to all divine aspects, and also to beings who are considered particularly worth of worship;<sup>111</sup> the idea of happiness, which is, in fact, essentially individual and human, is not necessarily contained in it. No wonder this particular epithet is given to Krishna, who is not really a venerable person, but who, as the eighth *avatara* of *Vishnu*, truly corresponds to a divine aspect; but there is still something more profound here.

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<sup>108</sup> *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*, p. 79, note 1.

<sup>109</sup> We can recall that the two *Itihasas*, which is, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, belong to the *Smriti*, thus having the character of traditional writings, are more than simple 'epic poems,' in the secular and 'literary' sense which Westerners usually see.

<sup>110</sup> There is a certain kinship which can be confusing, between the roots *bhaj* and *bhuj*: the latter, whose primitive meaning is that of 'to eat,' expresses above all the ideas of enjoyment, possession, and happiness; by contrast, primarily and in the derivatives, as *bhaga* and especially *bhakti*, the predominant ideas are those of a veneration, adoration, respect, devotion, or attachment.

<sup>111</sup> The Buddhists naturally give this title to Buddha, and the Jains give it to their *Tirtankaras*.

To understand this, it must be remembered that the two points of view of Vaishnavist and Shaivist, which correspond to two great paths suitable to beings of different natures, each take, as a support to rise to the supreme principle, one of the two divine aspects, complementary in some aspects, to which they owe their respective designations, and transpose this aspect in such a way that it identifies with the same principle, envisaged without any restriction and beyond any determination or specification whatsoever. This is why the *Shaivists* designate the supreme principle as *Mahadeva* or *Maheshwara*, which is properly equivalent to *Shiva*, while the *Vaishnavists* refer to it by the names of *Vishnu*, such as *Narayana* or *Bhagavat*, the latter being mostly employed by a certain branch which bears the name of *Bhagavatas* for this reason. There is in all this no element of contradiction: the names are multiples as the paths to which they relate, but these paths, more or less directly, all lead to the same goal; the Hindu doctrine knows nothing of the sort similar to Western exclusivism, for which one and the same way should equally suit all beings, without taking into account the differences in nature that exist between them.

Now, it will be easy to understand that *Bhagavat*, being identified with the Supreme Principle, is none other than the unconditioned *Atma*; and this is true in all cases, whether this *Atma* is considered in the 'macroscopic' order or in the 'microscopic' order, according to whether one wishes to apply this to different points of view; we obviously cannot think of reproducing all the developments that we have already given elsewhere on this subject.<sup>112</sup> What interests us most directly here is the application that we can label as 'microcosmic,' which is to say the one that is made according to each being considered in particular: in this respect, Krishna and Arjuna respectively represent the 'Self' and the 'me,' the personality and the individuality, which are unconditioned *Atma* and *jivatma*. The teaching given by Krishna to Arjuna is, from this point of view, the intellectual, supra-rational intuition by which the 'Self' is communicated to the 'me' when it is 'qualified' and prepared in such a way that this communication can be effectively established.

It should be noted, because this is of great importance, that Krishna and Arjuna are represented as mounted on the same chariot; this chariot is the 'vehicle' of being considered in its state of manifestation; and, while Arjuna fights, Krishna leads the chariot to battle, that is to say without himself being engaged in the action. Indeed, the battle in question symbolizes the action, in a general way, in a form appropriate to the nature and function of the Kshatriyas, to whom the book is intended

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<sup>112</sup> We will mainly refer back to, for this and for what follows, to the considerations we have set out in *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*.

for;<sup>113</sup> the field of battle (*Kshetra*) is the field of action in which the individual develops his possibilities; and this action in no way affects the principal, permanent, and immutable being, but concerns only the individual 'living soul' (*jivatma*). The two who are mounted on the same chariot are therefore the same as the two birds spoken of in the *Upanishads*: "Two birds, inseparably united companions reside on the same tree; one eats the fruit of the tree, the other looks on without eating."<sup>114</sup> Here too, with a different symbolism to represent the action, the first of these two birds is *jivatma*, and the second is the unconditioned *Atma*; it is the same for the "two who entered the cave," which is mentioned in another text;<sup>115</sup> and, if these two are always closely united, it is because they are really only one in the light of absolute reality, for *jivatma* is distinguished from *Atma* only in an illusory mode.

There is also, to express this union, and precisely in a direct relation with the *Atma-Gita*, a term which is particularly remarkable: it is that of *Naranarayana*. We know that *Narayana*, 'he who walks (or is carried) on the waters,' is a name of *Vishnu*, applied by transposition to *Paramatma* or the Supreme Principle, as has been said above; the waters here represent the formal or individual possibilities.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, *nara* or *nri* is the man. The individual being as belonging to the human species; and it is necessary to notice the close relation which exists between this word and that of *nara* which designates the waters;<sup>117</sup> however this may lead us to stray too far from our subject. Thus, *Nara* and *Narayana* are respectively the individual and the Universal, the 'me' and the 'Self,' the manifested state of being and its unmanifested principle; and they are of an indissoluble union in the whole of *Naranarayana*, of which it is sometimes spoken of as two ascetics dwelling upon the Himalayas, which reminds us especially of the last of the texts of the *Upanishads* which we mentioned a moment ago, in which the "two who entered the cave" are

<sup>113</sup> It should be noted that this meaning is also exactly that of the Islamic conception of the 'holy war' (*jihad*); the social and external application is here only secondary and what shows this well is that it constitutes only the 'lesser holy war' (*jihad al-asghar*), while the 'greater holy war' (*jihad al-akbar*) is of a purely interior and spiritual order.

<sup>114</sup> *Mundaka Upanishad*, Mundaka 3, Khanda 1, shruti 1; *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, Adhyaya 4, shruti 6.

<sup>115</sup> *Katha Upanishad*, Adhyaya 1, Valli 3, shruti 1. – The 'cavern' is none other than the cavity of the heart, which represents the place of the union of the individual with the Universal, or of the 'me' with the 'Self.'

<sup>116</sup> In the Christian tradition, Christ's walking on water has a meaning that relates exactly to this same symbolism.

<sup>117</sup> Perhaps, among the Greeks, the name of Nereus and the Nereids, the water nymphs, is not unrelated to the Sanskrit *nara*.

simultaneously designated as “dwelling on the highest peak.”<sup>118</sup> It is also said that in this same ensemble, *Nara* is Arjuna, and *Narayana* is Krishna; it is the two who are mounted on the same chariot, and it is always, under one term or another, and whatever the symbolic forms employed, *jivatma* and *Paramatma*.

These indications will make it possible to understand what the inner meaning of the *Bhagavad-Gita* is, and all other meanings are in fact only more or less contingent applications. This is particularly true of the social meaning, in which the functions of contemplation and action, respectively relating to the supra-individual and the individual, are considered to be those of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya.<sup>119</sup> It is said that the Brahmin is the type of fixed or immutable beings (*sthavara*), and that the Kshatriya is the type of moving or changeable beings (*jangama*);<sup>120</sup> it is easy to see the analogy between these two classes of beings on one hand, and the immutable personality and the individuality that is subject to change on the other hand; and this immediately establishes the link between this meaning and the preceding one. We can also see that where the Kshatriya is specifically mentioned, the latter, because of the action of its own function, can be taken to symbolize the individuality in whatever form, which is necessarily also engaged in the action by the very conditions of its existence, while the Brahman, because of its function of contemplation or pure knowledge, represents the higher states of being;<sup>121</sup> and thus one could say that every being has within him the Brahmin and the Kshatriya, but with predominance of one or the other of the two natures, according to his tendencies which bear him principally on the side of contemplation or on the side of action. This shows that the scope of the teaching contained within the *Bhagavad-Gita* is far from being limited to the Kshatriyas, understood literally, although the form in which this teaching is exposed suits them particularly; and, if Westerners, in whom the nature of Kshatriya manifests much more frequently than that of the Brahmin, returned to the understanding of traditional ideas, such a form is undoubtedly also that which would be the most immediately accessible to them.

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<sup>118</sup> This is an indication of the symbolic relationship between the cave and the mountain, to which we have had occasion to refer to in *The King of the World*.

<sup>119</sup> This point of view is the one we developed especially in *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*.

<sup>120</sup> This set of beings is sometimes referred to in the compound as *sthavarajangama*.

<sup>121</sup> This is why the Brahman is referred to as a *Deva* on earth, the *Devas* corresponding to supra-individual or informal (though still manifest) states; this designation, which is rigorously correct, seems to have never been understood by Westerners.

## The Greater Holy War

*La Grande Guerre sainte*, May 1930.

In our last article, we mentioned, while referencing the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the symbolic significance of war, and we pointed out that this conception is found not only in Hindu doctrine, but also in Islamic doctrine, which is the real meaning of *jihad* or 'holy war.'

In a very general way, it can be said that the essential *raison d'être* of war, from whatever point of view and in any field, is to put an end to disorder and restore order; it is, in other words, the unification of a multiplicity, by means that belong to the world of multiplicity itself; it is in this capacity, and only in this capacity, that war can be considered just. Moreover, disorder is, in a sense, inherent in every manifestation within itself, since manifestation, outside of its principle, therefore as a nonunified multiplicity, is only an indefinite series of breaks in equilibrium. War, understood as we have just presented, and not limited to an exclusively human sense, therefore represents the cosmic process of reintegration of the manifested into the unity of principal; and this is why, from the point of view of the manifested itself, this reintegration appears as destruction, as we can see very clearly by certain aspects of the symbolism of *Shiva* in the Hindu doctrine.

If we say that war itself is still disorder, it is true in a certain relation, by the very fact that it is accomplished in the world of manifestation and multiplicity; but it is a disorder which is destined to compensate for another disorder, and, as the doctrines of the far East teach, it is the sum of all the disorders, or all the imbalances, which constitute the total disorder. Order, moreover, appears only if we rise above multiplicity, if we cease to consider each thing in isolation in order to consider all things in unity. This is the point of view of reality, because multiplicity, out of principal, has only an illusory existence; but this illusion, with the inherent disorder of it, subsists as long as it has not arrived in a fully effective manner (and not as a mere theoretical conception), from this point of view of the 'unity of existence' (*wahdat al-wujud*) in all modes and degrees of universal manifestation.

From what we have just established, the very purpose of war is the establishment of peace, because peace is nothing but order, balance, or

harmony, these three terms being more or less synonymous and designating all, in somewhat different aspects, the reflection of unity in multiplicity itself when related to this principle. Indeed, multiplicity, then, is never really destroyed, but it is 'transformed;' and when all things are brought back to unity, this unity appears in all things, which, far from ceasing to exist, on the contrary, acquire the fullness of reality. It is then that the two complementary points of view of 'unity in multiplicity' and 'multiplicity in unity' (*al-waḥdah fil-kathrah wa'l-kathrah fī al-waḥdah*) are united at the central point of all manifestation, which is the 'divine place' (*al-maqām al-ilāhī*) where all the contrasts and oppositions are resolved. For one who has reaching this point, there are no more opposites, therefore no more disorder; it is the very place of order, of balance, of harmony, of peace, while outside of this place, and for one who has a tendency towards it without having arrived yet, it is the state of war as we have defined it, since the oppositions, in which the disorder resides, are not yet definitely overcome. All traditional doctrines are in complete agreement, whatever form these ideas may be expressed in; and all bestow the same importance to the symbolism of the central point, which is the 'pole' around which the revolutions of the manifested universe are completed.

Even taken within its external and social sense, the just war, directed against those who would disturb the order and aim to bring them back, appears essentially as a function of 'justice,' which is to say, in short, as a balancing function, whatever the secondary and transient appearances may be; but this is only the 'lesser holy war,' which is only an image of the other, of the 'greater holy war,' which is of a purely interior and spiritual order. Here we can apply what we have said many times about the symbolic values of historical facts, which can be considered as representative, according to their mode, of realities of a higher order.

The 'greater holy war' is the struggle of man against the enemies he carries within himself, which is to say against all the elements which, in him, are contrary to order and unity. It is not, however, to destroy these elements, which, like all that exists, also have their reason for being and their place as a whole; it is rather, as we said earlier, to 'transform' them by bringing them back to unity, by reabsorbing them in some way. Man must tend first and foremost to realize unity within himself, in all that constitutes himself, according to all the modalities of his human manifestation: unity of thought, unity of action, and also, which is perhaps the most difficult, unity between thought and action. It is important to note that, as far as action is concerned, what is essentially true is intention (*niyyah*), for it is this alone which depends entirely on man himself,

without being affected or modified by external contingencies as are always the results of the action. Unity in intention and a constant will immersed within the invariable and immutable center are represented symbolically by ritual orientation (*qiblah*), terrestrial spiritual centers being visible images of the true and unique center of all manifestation, which has elsewhere its direct reflection in all the worlds, at the central point of each of them, and also in all beings, where this central point is figuratively designated as the heart, because of its effective correspondence within the corporeal organism.

For the one who has succeeded in perfectly realizing unity with itself, all opposition having ceased, the state of war also ceases by this very fact, because there is only absolute order, according to the total point of view which is beyond all particular points of view. To such a being, nothing can harm him henceforth, for there is no longer any enemies for him, neither in him nor out of him; the unity carried on inside, is also at the same time outside, or rather there is neither inside nor outside, this still being only one of those oppositions which have now been erased from his view (the gaze of *Shiva*'s third eye according to the Hindu tradition). Established definitively within the center of all things, this one is to himself his own law, because his will is one with the universal Will; he has obtained the 'great peace,' which is truly the 'divine presence' (*As-Sakinah*, identical to the name of *Shekinah* in Hebrew Kabbalah); being identified, by his own unification, with the principal unity itself, he sees unity in all things and all things in unity, in the absolute simultaneity of the 'eternal present.'



## Regarding Pilgrimages

*A propos des pèlerinages*, June 1930.

The recent republication, in the *Voile d'Isis*, of the remarkable article by Mr. Grillot de Givry on the pilgrimage sites brings us back to the question to which we have previously alluded to, and which Mr. Clavelle recalls in his introduction of the article.

Let us first note that the Latin word *peregrinus*, from which 'pilgrim' derives, can mean both 'traveler' and 'stranger.' This simple note already gives rise to some rather curious comparisons: indeed, on the one hand, among the Compagnons, there are some who describe themselves as 'passers-by' and other as 'strangers,' which corresponds precisely to the two meanings of *peregrinus* (which are also found in the Hebrew *ger-shon*); furthermore, in Masonry, alike in modern and 'speculative' Masonry, the symbolic tests of initiation are called 'journeys.' Moreover, in many different traditions, the different initiatic stages are described frequently as the stages of a journey; sometimes it is a regular trip, sometimes it is a navigation, as we have occasion to point out previously. This symbolism of travel is perhaps more widely used than that of war, of which we spoke in our last article; the one and the other, moreover, are not without presenting between them a certain relation, which has even sometimes translated outwards into historicity; we are thinking in particular here of the close link that existed in the Middle Ages between the pilgrimages to the Holy Land and the Crusades. Let us add that, even in the most ordinary religious language, earthly life, considered as a period of hardship, is often assimilated to a journey, and even more expressly qualified as a pilgrimage to the celestial world, the goal of this pilgrimage being also symbolically identified with the 'Holy Land' of the 'Land of the Living.'<sup>122</sup>

The state of 'wandering,' so to speak, or of migration, is, in general, a state of 'probation,' and here again we can notice that this is indeed the character of such organizations such as the Compagnonnage. Furthermore, what is true in this respect for individuals can be true, in some

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<sup>122</sup> Regarding the symbolism of the 'Holy Land,' we will return to our study on *The King of the World*, and also to our article in the special edition of the *Voile d'Isis* devoted to the Templars.

cases at least, for people taken collectively: a very clear example is that of the Hebrews wandering for forty years in the desert before reaching the promised land. We must also make a distinction here, because this state, which is essentially transitory, must not be confused with the nomadic state that is normal to certain peoples: even when the Hebrews arrived at the Promised Land, and until the time of David and Solomon, this nomadism did not have the same character as their pilgrimage in the desert.<sup>123</sup> There is even reason to consider a third state of 'wandering,' which may be more properly described by the word 'tribulation:' it is that of the Jews after their dispersion, and also in all similarity to the Jews, the Bohemians; but this would bring us too far astray, and we will only say that this case also applies to communities and individuals. We can see how complex these things are and how many distinctions can be made among men presenting themselves externally under the same appearances, which are confused with pilgrims in the ordinary sense of the word, especially since it is still necessary to add that: it sometimes happens that insiders, who have reached the goal, even 'followers,' repeat, for special reasons, the same appearance as 'travelers.'

But let us return to the pilgrims: we know that their distinguishing marks were the shells (named as Saint James) and the staff; the latter, which also has a close relation to the *compagnon* cane, is naturally an attribute of the traveler, but it has many other meanings, and perhaps we will devote a special study to this question one day. As for the shell, in certain regions it was called 'creusille,' and this word is similar to that of 'crucible,' which brings us back to the idea of tests, envisaged more particularly according to an alchemic symbolism, and understood in the sense of 'purification,' the *Katharsis* of the Pythagoreans, which was precisely the preparatory phase of initiation.<sup>124</sup>

The shell being viewed especially as an attribute of Saint James, we are then led to make a remark about the pilgrimage of Santiago de Compostela. The routes formerly followed by pilgrims are often called, even today, 'paths of Saint James;' but this expression has at the same time an entirely different application: the 'path of Saint James,' indeed, in the language of the peasants, it is also the Milky Way; and this may seem less unexpected if one observes that Compostela, etymologically, is nothing less than the 'starry field.' Here we stumble across another idea, that

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<sup>123</sup> The distinction of nomadic peoples (pastoralists) and sedentary farms, which goes back to the very origins of terrestrial humanity is of great importance for the understanding of essential characters of different traditional forms.

<sup>124</sup> We can refer here to what we have said in *The King of the World* about the designation of the initiates, in various traditions, by terms referring to the idea of 'purity.'

of 'celestial journeys,' incidentally correlated with terrestrial journeys; this is still a point on which it is not possible for us to press at present, and we will only indicate that we can sense by this a certain correspondence between the geographical situation of the pilgrimage sites and the actual order of the celestial sphere; here, 'sacred geography' to which we have alluded previously will thus be integrated into a true 'sacred cosmography.'

Still speaking of the pilgrimage routes, it should be remembered that Mr. Joseph Bédier had the merit to recognize the link between the sanctuaries that marked the steps and the formation of the *chansons de geste*. It seems to us that this fact can be generalized, and one could say the same thing with regards to the propagation of a multitude of legends whose real initiatic scope is unfortunately almost always unknown to moderns. Due to the plurality of their meanings, stories of this kind could be addressed to both pilgrims and... others; each one understood them according to the measure of his own intellectual capacity, and only some of them penetrated the deep essence of it, as it happens with all initiatic teachings. It should also be noted that, however diverse the people who roamed the roads, including the peddlers and even the beggars, there is established between them, for reasons no doubt rather difficult to define, a certain solidarity translating into the common adoption of a special conventional language, 'slang of the Shell' or the 'language of the pilgrims.' Interestingly, Mr. Léon Daudet pointed out in one of his recent books that many words and phrases belonging to this language are found at Villon and at Rabelais;<sup>125</sup> and at the latter, he also indicates, which is worthy of note from the same point of view, that for several years, "he wandered through Poitou, a province that at that time was celebrated for the mysteries and the jokes that were performed there and also by the legends that ran there; in Pantagruel, we find traces of these legends, these jokes, and a number of terms belonging to the Poitevins."<sup>126</sup> If we quote this last sentence, it is because, besides mentioning these legends of which we spoke a moment ago, it raises yet another question in connection with what is at stake here, that of the origins of theater: this, firstly, was one part essentially ambulant, and on the other hand veiled in a religious character, at least in regards to external forms, religious character, which is to be compared with that of the pilgrims and people who adopted these appearances. What is most important about this fact is that it is not peculiar to Europe within the Middle Ages; the history of theater in ancient Greece is quite similar, and similar examples can be found in most of the Oriental countries.

<sup>125</sup> *Les Horreurs de la Guerre*, pp. 145, 147, and 167.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

But we must limit ourselves, and we will consider only one final point regarding the expression 'noble travelers' that is applied to the initiates, or at least to some of them, precisely because of their journeys. Regarding this subject, Mr. Oscar Milosz wrote the following:

"'Noble travelers' is the secret name for the initiates of antiquity, transmitted via oral tradition to those of the Middle Ages and modern times. It was last uttered in public on May 30, 1786, in Paris during a sitting of the Parliament devoted to the interrogation of a famous defendant (Cagliostro), a victim of the pamphleteer Théveneau de Morande. The journeys of the initiates were distinguished from ordinary study trips only by the fact that their itinerary coincided rigorously under the appearance of an adventurous race, with the most aspirations and secrets of the adepts. The most illustrious examples of these pilgrimages are offered to us by Democritus, who was initiated into the secrets of alchemy by the Egyptian priests and the magician Ostanès, as for the Asiatic doctrines from his stays in Persia, and according to some historians, in India; Thales, matured in the temples of Egypt and Chaldea; Pythagoras, who visited all the countries known to the ancients (and most likely India and China) and whose stay in Persia was marked by the conversations there with the magician Zarathustra, in Gaul by his collaboration with the Druids, finishing in Italy with his speeches to the Assembly of the Ancients of Croton. Adding to these examples, Paracelsus' travels should be added to France, Austria, Germany, Spain and Portugal, England, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Wallachia, Carniola, Dalmatia, Russia, and Turkey, as well as Nicholas Flamel's travels to Spain where Maistres Canches taught him to decipher the famous hieroglyphic figures of the Jewish book of Abraham. The poet Robert Browning has defined the secret nature of these scientific pilgrimages in a singularly rich stanza of intuition: 'I see my way as birds their trackless way; In some time – his good time – I shall arrive; He guides me and the bird.' Wilhelm Meister's years of travel also have the same initiatic meaning."<sup>127</sup>

We wished to reproduce this passage in its entirety, despite its length, because of the interesting examples it contains; no doubt we can find many more known or less known examples, but these are particularly characteristic, although they may not all relate to the same case among those we have distinguished above, and this we should not confuse with 'study trips,' even legitimately initiatic ones with the special missions of the adepts or even of certain initiates of a lesser degree.

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<sup>127</sup> *Les Arcanes*, p. 81-82.

To return to the expression ‘noble travelers,’ what we wished to draw attention to is that the epithet ‘noble’ seems to indicate that it should designate, not all initiation indistinctly, but more properly an initiation of *Kshatriyas*, or what may be called the ‘royal art,’ according to the word preserved until today by Masonry. In other words, it would be an initiation referring to the cosmological order and not one of a purely metaphysical order, and the applications that are attached to it, or to all that in the West, has been understood the general name of ‘hermeticism.’<sup>128</sup> If this is so, Mr. Clavelle was quite right in saying that while Saint John corresponds to the purely metaphysical point of view of Tradition, Saint James corresponds rather to the point of view of ‘traditional sciences;’ and, even without mentioning the plausible connection with the ‘Master James’ of the Compagnonnages, many consistent indications would tend to prove that this correspondence is effectively justified. It is indeed in this area that we can qualify as an ‘intermediary,’ which indeed refers to all that has spread through pilgrimages, as well as traditions of the Compagnonnage or those of the Bohemians. The knowledge of ‘lesser mysteries,’ which is that of the laws of ‘becoming,’ is acquired by traversing the ‘wheel of things;’ but the knowledge of the ‘greater mysteries,’ being that of the immutable principles, requires the immobile contemplation in the ‘great solitude,’ at the fixed point which is the center of the wheel, the invariable pole around which the revolutions of the manifested Universe are accomplished.

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<sup>128</sup> On the distinction of the sacerdotal and royal initiations, we will return to our last book, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*.

## At-Tawhīd

*Et-Tawhid*, July 1930.

The doctrine of Unity, that is, the affirmation the Principle of all existence is essentially One, is a fundamental point common to all Orthodox traditions, and we can even say that it is on this point that their underlying identity appears most clearly, reflected even in the very expression. Indeed, when it comes to unity, all diversity disappears, and it is only when we descend to the multiplicity that the differences of forms appear, the modes of expression then being multiple themselves, and are vary indefinitely to suite the circumstances of time and place. But 'the doctrine of Unity is unique' (according to the Arabic formula: *at-tawhīd waḥīdun*), which is to say that it is everywhere and always the same, invariable as the Principle, independent of the multiplicity and is of change only when it can affect contingent applications.

So we can say that, contrary to current opinion, there has never been anywhere really of a 'polytheistic' doctrine, which is to say admitting a plurality of absolute and irreducible principles. This 'pluralism' is only possible as a deviation resulting from the ignorance and misunderstanding of the masses, their tendency to focus exclusively on the multiplicity of the manifest: hence 'idolatry' in all its forms, arising from the confusion of the symbol in itself with what it is intended to express, and the personification of the divine attributes considered as so many independent beings, which is the only possible origin of an actual 'polytheism.' This tendency, moreover, is accentuated as we advance in the development of a cycle of manifestation, because this development itself is a descent into multiplicity, and because of the spiritual obscurity which inevitably accompanies this descent. That is why the most recent traditional forms are those which must state in the most apparent way the affirmation of Uniqueness; and, indeed, this affirmation is expressed nowhere so explicitly and so insistently as in Islam where it seems even, if one can say, to absorb in itself any other affirmation.

The sole difference between traditional doctrines in this respect is the one we have just indicated: the affirmation of Unity is everywhere, but originally it did not even need to be formulated expressly to appear as the most obvious of all truths, because men were then too close to the Principle to disregard it or lose sight of it. Now, on the contrary, it may

be said that most of them, engaged entirely in the multiplicity, and having lost the intuitive knowledge of higher-order truths, have difficulty in understanding Unity; and this is why it gradually becomes necessary, during the history of earthly humanity, to formulate this affirmation of unity on many occasions and more and more clearly, we could say more and more energetically.

If we consider this present state of affairs, we see that this affirmation is somewhat more enveloped in certain traditional forms, that it sometimes even constitutes it as the esoteric side, taking this word in its broadest sense, while that in others, it appears to all eyes, so that we come to see more than it, although there are certainly many other things, but which are more than secondary to this one. This last case is that of Islam, even exoterically; esoterism here only explains and develops all that is contained in this affirmation and all the consequences that derive from it, and if it does so in terms often identical to those we encounter in other traditions, such as the *Vedanta* and Taoism, there is no reason to be surprised, nor to see there the effect of borrowings which are historically contestable; it is simply so because truth is one, and because, in this principal order, as we said at the beginning, Unity is necessarily translated even into the expression itself.

However, it is to be noted, always considering things in their present state, the Western peoples, and especially the Nordic peoples, are the ones who seem to have the greatest difficulty in understanding the doctrine of unity, at the same time they are more engaged than everyone else in change and multiplicity. These two things obviously go together, and perhaps there is something at least partly related to the conditions of existence of these peoples: a question of temperament, but also of climate, one being besides function of the other, at least to a certain point.

In the Northern countries, indeed, where the sunlight is weak and often veiled, all things appear in view with equal value, so to speak, and in a way which asserts purely and simply their individual existence without leaving anything to be seen beyond; so, in ordinary experience itself, one really sees only the multiplicity. It is quite different in countries where the sun, by its intense radiations, absorbs, so to speak, all things within itself, making them disappear before it as multiplicity disappears before unity, not that it ceases to exist according to its own mode, but because this existence is strictly nothing with regard to the Principle. Thereby the Unity becomes somewhat sensitive: this solar flare is the image of the fulguration of the eye of Shiva, which reduces to ashes all manifestations. The sun stands out here as the symbol par excellence of the Principle One (*Allahu 'Aḥad*), which is his necessary Being, the one who alone is self-sufficient in His absolute fullness (*Allahu aṣ-Ṣamad*), and on whom

depends the entirety of existence and sustenance of all things, which outside of Him would be nothingness.

‘Monotheism,’ if we can use this word to translate *At-Tawhīd*, although it somewhat restricts its meaning by making one think almost inevitably of an exclusively religious point of view, ‘monotheism,’ we say, therefore has a character that is essentially ‘solar.’ It is nowhere more ‘responsive’ than in the desert where the diversity of things is reduced to a minimum, and where, at the same time, the mirages reveal all that is illusory of the manifested world. There, solar radiation produces things and destroys them in turn; or rather, because it is incorrect to say that he destroys them, he transforms them and reabsorbs them after having manifested them. One could never find a truer image of Unity unfolding externally in multiplicity without ceasing to be itself and without being affected by it, and then bringing back to it, always according to appearances, this multiplicity which, in reality, has never come out of it, for there can be nothing outside the Principle, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be subtracted, because it is the indivisible totality of the unique Existence. In the intense light of the countries of the East, it is enough to see to understand these things, to seize immediately the deep truth; and above all it seems impossible not to understand them thus in the desert, where the sun traces the divine names in letters of fire in the sky.



## Al-Faqr

*El-Faqr*, October 1930.

The contingent being can be defined as one who does not have within himself sufficient reason; such a being, therefore, is nothing by himself and nothing of his own belongs to him. Such is the case of the human being, as an individual, as well as of all manifested beings, in whatever state, for whatever the difference between the degrees of Universal Existence, it is always null in respect to the Principle. These beings, human or otherwise, are, in all that they are, in a complete dependence on the Principle, “out of which there is nothing, absolutely nothing that exists;”<sup>129</sup> this is the consciousness of this dependence that properly consists of what many traditions refer to as ‘spiritual poverty.’ At the same time, for the being who has attained this consciousness, this has the immediate consequence of detachment from all manifested things, for he knows then that these things too are nothing, that their importance is strictly zero in relation to Absolute Reality. This detachment, in the case of the human being, implies essentially, and above all, the indifference towards the fruits of action, as taught in particular by the *Bhagavad-Gita*, indifference by which the being escapes the indefinite sequence of the consequences of this action: it is ‘action without desire’ (*nishkama Karma*), while ‘action with desire’ (*sakama Karma*) is the action accomplished in view of its fruits.

By this, the being thus departs from multiplicity; it escapes, according to the expressions used by the Taoist doctrine, the vicissitudes of the ‘streams of form,’ the alternation of states of ‘life’ and ‘death,’ ‘condensation’ and ‘dissipation,’<sup>130</sup> from the circumference of the ‘cosmic wheel’ to its center, which is itself designated as “the emptiness (the unmanifest) that unites the rays and makes them a wheel.”<sup>131</sup> “The one who has reached the maximum amount of emptiness,” Lao-tzu also states, “will be firmly fixed in the rest... To return to its root (that is to say the Principle which is both the first origin and the last end of all beings) is to enter the state of rest.”<sup>132</sup> “Peace in the void,” the *Lieh-tzu* states, “is an

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<sup>129</sup> Muhyiddin ibn ‘Arabī, *Risālat al-‘Aḥadīyyah*.

<sup>130</sup> Aristotle, in a similar sense, says ‘generation’ and ‘corruption.’

<sup>131</sup> *Tao-Te-Ching*, XI.

<sup>132</sup> *Tao-Te-Ching*, XVI.

definable state; it is neither taken nor give; we are only able to settle there.”<sup>133</sup> This ‘peace in the void’ is the ‘great peace’ (*Ash-Shakinah*) of Muslim esoterism,<sup>134</sup> which is at the same time the ‘divine presence’ at the center of being, implied by the union with the Principle, which can only really occur in this very center. “To him who abodes in the unmanifest, all beings who are manifested themselves are united unto the Principle, he is in harmony with all beings. United with the Principle, he knows everything by superior general reasons, and no longer uses, his various senses to know. The true reason of things is invisible, elusive, indefinable, indeterminable. Only the mind restored to the state of perfect simplicity can reach it in deep contemplation.”<sup>135</sup>

‘Simplicity,’ the expression of the unification of all the powers of being, characterizes the return to the ‘primordial state;’ and here we see the difference that separates transcendent knowledge from the wise, from ordinary and ‘profane’ knowledge. This ‘simplicity’ is also what is referred to elsewhere as the state of ‘childhood’ (in Sanskrit, *balya*), understood naturally in the spiritual sense, and which, in the Hindu doctrine, is considered a precondition for the acquisition of knowledge par excellence. This is reminiscent of the similar words found in the Gospel: “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” “You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to the simple and the small.”<sup>136</sup>

‘Simplicity’ and ‘smallness’ are basically the equivalents of ‘poverty,’ which is so often discussed in the Gospel, and is generally understood very poorly: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>137</sup> This ‘poverty’ (in Arabic *al-faqr*) leads, according to Muslim esoterism, to *al-fanā’*, which is to say to the ‘extinction’ of the ‘me;’<sup>138</sup> and by this ‘extinction’ we reach the ‘divine place’ (*al-maqām al-ilāhī*), which is the central point where all the distinctions inherent in external points of view are passed, where all the oppositions have disappeared and are resolved in a perfect equilibrium. “In the primordial state, these oppositions do not exist. All are derived from the diversification of being (inherent in the manifestation and contingencies of it), and from their

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<sup>133</sup> *Lieh-tzu*, I.

<sup>134</sup> See our chapter on *War and Peace* in *The Symbolism of the Cross*.

<sup>135</sup> *Lieh-tzu*, IV.

<sup>136</sup> *Matthew*, XI, 25; *Luc*, X, 21.

<sup>137</sup> *Matthew*, V, 2.

<sup>138</sup> This ‘extinction’ is not without analogy, even as to the literal meaning of the term which designates it, with the *Nirvana* of the Hindu doctrine; beyond *al-fanā’*, there is still *fanā’ al-fanā’i*, the ‘extinction of extinction’ which corresponds to *Parinirvana*.

contacts caused by the universal gyration (that is, by the rotation of the 'cosmic wheel' around its axis). They immediately cease to affect the being who has reduced his distinct self and his particular movement to almost nothing."<sup>139</sup>

This reduction of the 'distinct self,' which finally disappears in one single point, is the same as *al-fanā'*, and also as the 'emptiness' mentioned above; it is also evident from the symbolism of the wheel that the 'movement' of a being is all the more reduced as this being moves closer to the center. "This being no longer comes into conflict with any being, because he is established in the infinite, erased in the indefinite."<sup>140</sup> He has arrived and stands at the starting point of transformation, the neutral point where there is no conflict. By concentrating his nature, by feeding his vital spirit, by gathering all his power, he is united with the principle of all genesis. His nature being whole (totalized synthetically in the principal unity), his vital spirit being intact, no being can crush it."<sup>141</sup>

The 'simplicity' referred to above corresponds to the 'dimensionless' unity of the primordial point, which is the result of the movement back to the origin. "The simply absolute man bends all beings by his simplicity... so that nothing is opposed to him in the six regions of space, that nothing is hostile towards him, that fire and water do not harm him."<sup>142</sup> Indeed, he stands in the center, whose six directions are radiated, and where they converge, in the returning moment, neutralize each other in pairs in this single point, their triple opposition ceases entirely, and that nothing which results from it or is localized to it cannot reach the being who remains in immutable unity. The latter does not oppose anything, nothing can be opposed to him, because opposition is necessarily a reciprocal relation, which requires two terms in the presence, and which, consequently, is incompatibly with a principled unity; and hostility, which is only a continuation or an outward manifestation of opposition, cannot exist with respect to a being who is outside and beyond any opposition. Fire and water, which are the two types of opposites in the 'elementary world,' cannot harm him, for, to tell the truth, they do not exist contrary to him, having been absorbed, balancing and neutralizing each

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<sup>139</sup> *Chuang-tzu*, XIX.

<sup>140</sup> The first of these two expressions refers to 'personality' and the second to 'individuality.'

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* The last sentence still refers to the conditions of the 'primordial state:' this is what the Judeo-Christian tradition refers to as the immortality of man before the 'fall,' immortality recovered by the one who, returned to the 'Center of the World,' feeds upon the 'Tree of Life.'

<sup>142</sup> *Lieh-tzu*, II.

other by the union of their apparently opposite, but really complementary, qualities in the undifferentiation of the primordial ether.

This central point, by which communication with the higher or 'celestial' states is established for the human being, is also the 'narrow door' of evangelical symbolism, and we can therefore understand who the 'rich' who cannot enter: they are the beings attached to multiplicity, and who, consequently, are incapable of rising from distinctive knowledge to unified knowledge. This attachment, in fact, is directly contrary to the detachment mentioned above, as wealth is contrary to poverty, and it connects beings to the indefinite series of cycles of manifestation.<sup>143</sup> The attachment to multiplicity is also, in a certain sense, the Biblical 'temptation' which, by making taste be the fruit of the 'Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,' which is of the dual and distinctive knowledge of contingent things, removes it from the original central unit and prevents it from attaining the fruit of the 'Tree of Life;' and it is indeed by this fact that the being is subject to the alternation of cyclical mutations, that is, at birth and at death. The indefinite course of multiplicity is precisely represented by the serpent's spirals wrapping around the tree that symbolizes the 'Axis Mundi:' it is the path of the 'misguided' (*ad-dāllin*), of those who are in 'error,' in the etymological sense of the word, as opposed to the 'right path' (*aṣ-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*), in vertical ascension along the same axis of which is spoken in the first *surah* of the *Qur'ān*.<sup>144</sup>

'Poverty,' 'simplicity,' 'childhood,' these are all one and the same thing, and the bareness that all these words express<sup>145</sup> leads to an 'extinction' which is, in reality, the fullness of being, just as 'non-action' (*wui-wei*) is the fullness of the activity, since it is from there that are derived all particular activities: "The Principle is always non-acting, and yet everything is done by him."<sup>146</sup> The being who has thus arrived at the central point has thereby achieved the totality of the human state: it is the 'true man' (*chen-jen*) of Taoism, and when, from this point ascends towards higher states, he has achieved the perfect totalization of his possibilities, he will have become the 'divine man' (*cheun-jen*), who is the 'Universal Man' (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*) of Muslim esoterism. Thus, it can be said that it is the 'rich' from the point of view of manifestation who are in reality the 'poor' in regards to the Principle, and conversely so; this is

<sup>143</sup> It is the Buddhist *samsara*, the indefinite rotation of the 'wheel of life,' whose being must be liberated to reach *Nirvana*.

<sup>144</sup> This 'right path' is identical to the *Te* or 'Righteousness' of Lao-Tzu, which is the direction that a being must follow in order for his existence to be according to the 'Way' (*Tao*), or, in other words, in accordance with the Principle.

<sup>145</sup> It is the 'stripping of metals' in Masonic symbolism.

<sup>146</sup> *Tao-Te-Ching*, XXXVII.

what the words of the Gospel still very clearly express: “So the last shall be the first, and the first last;”<sup>147</sup> and we must note in this regard, once more, the perfect agreement of all the traditional doctrines, which are only the various expressions of the one Truth.

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<sup>147</sup> *Matthew*, XX, 16.

## The Limits of the Mind

*Les limites du Mental*, November 1930.

Following a series of questions from a few of our readers, we believe it necessary to return to a point which we have often dealt with in our works: the deficiency of the mind in regard to all knowledge of a properly metaphysical or initiatic order. We are obliged to use the term 'mind,' over any other, as an equivalent to the Sanskrit *manas*, because it is connected to it via roots; by this we mean the set of faculties of knowledge which are specifically characteristic of the human individual (also designated in various languages by having words of the same root), and of which the principal is reason.

We shall not return here to the distinction between reason and pure, supra-individual, intellect, a distinction which has been recognized, at least theoretically, by certain ancient Western philosophers such as Aristotle and the Scholastics, although they do not seem to have drawn all the consequences that this implies. We will say only that metaphysical knowledge, in the true sense of the word, being of a universal order would be impossible if there was in the being a faculty of the same order, thus transcendent knowledge with respect to the individual is intellectual intuition. Indeed, all knowledge being essentially a realization, it is obvious that the individual, as such, cannot reach knowledge that is beyond the individual domain, which would be contradictory; this knowledge is possibly only because the being who is a human individual in a certain contingent state of manifestation is also something else, at the same time.<sup>148</sup> It would be absurd to say that man, as a man and by his human means, can surpass himself; but the being who appears in this world as a man is, in reality, quite another thing by the permanent and immutable principle which constitutes its deep essence. All knowledge that can truly be called 'initiatic' results from a communication consciously established with the higher states; and it is to such a communi-

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<sup>148</sup> We are referring here to the metaphysical theory of the multiple states of being, to which our work, which is currently being prepared, is specifically related, on *The Symbolism of the Cross*.

cation that words, such as those of 'inspiration' and 'revelation' are alluded to, if they are understood in their true meaning and without taking into account the abuse that is sometimes made of them.<sup>149</sup>

Direct knowledge of the transcendent order, with the absolute certainty which it implies, is evidently, within itself, incommunicable and inexpressible; every expression, being necessarily distinct and thereby individual, is therefore inadequate and can only give it a reflection in the human order of things. This reflection may help certain beings to attain this same knowledge, by awakening in them higher faculties, but it cannot dispense them from doing personally what no one can do for them; it is only a 'support' for their inner work. Such is the role of symbols, which are the mode of expression best suited to initiatic teaching; such can be also that of ordinary language, which, when applied to the truths of this order, also take on a truly symbolic value. Now, since human language is closely related, in respect to its very constitution, to the exercise of the rational faculty, it follows that all that is expressed or translated by means of language necessarily takes on a form of 'reasoning;' but it must be understood that there can be only a purely apparent and external similarity, a similarity of form and not of substance, between ordinary reasoning, which concerns the things of the individual domain, and that which is intended to reflect something of the supra-individual truths. It must also be understood that he who, by the study of any dialectical exposition, has arrived at a theoretical knowledge of certain truths of this order, yet has in no way a real (or 'realized') knowledge of it, in view of this, theoretical knowledge cannot constitute anything more than a simple preparation.

This theoretical preparation, so apparently indispensable in fact (apart perhaps from certain exceptional cases), has only a value of contingent and accidental means; as long as we stick to it, we cannot speak of 'initiation,' even to the lowest degree. If there was nothing more and nothing else, there would only be the analog, in a higher order of what philosophy is in any other similar speculation, for such knowledge that is merely theoretical is only of the mind, while actual knowledge is by the 'spirit' and the 'soul' (*rūḥ wa an-nafs*). This is why even the simple-minded 'mystics,' in the sense that this word is taken most commonly in the Western world, without exceeding the limits of the individual do-

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<sup>149</sup> These two words refer basically to the same thing but considered from two different points of view: what is 'inspiration' for the very being who receives it becomes 'revelation' for other beings to whom he transmits it, as far as possible, by manifesting it externally by any mode of expression.

main, are nevertheless incomparably superior to philosophers, even theologians, because the smallest piece of actual knowledge is immensely worth more than all the reasonings which proceed only from the mind.<sup>150</sup>

As long as knowledge is only of the mind, it remains only a mere 'reflection' of knowledge, such as the shadows seen by the prisoners of Plato's cave, hence an indirect, exterior knowledge. To transition from shadow to reality, seized directly within itself, is to pass from the 'exterior' (*az-ẓāhir*) to the 'interior' (*al-bātin*); this passage implies the renunciation of the mind, which is to say, of any 'discursive' faculty, which has now become powerless, since it cannot cross the limits imposed on it by its very nature; intellectual intuition alone is beyond these limits because it does not belong to the order of individual faculties. Using the symbolism based on organic correspondences, one can say that the center of consciousness must be transferred from the 'brain' to the 'heart;' for this transfer, all speculation and dialectics can obviously no longer be of any use; and it is from there only that it is possible to truly speak of 'initiation' (*at-Taṣawwuf*). The point at which this begins is therefore well beyond all that is relatively valid in the philosopher's theories ends; between the one and the other, there is a true abyss, that the renunciation of the mind, as we have just said, allows one to cross. He who attaches himself to reasoning remains a prisoner of form, which is the limitation by which the individual state is defined; he will never go beyond it, and he will never go further than the 'exterior,' that is, he will remain abound to the indefinite cycle of manifestation. The passage from the 'exterior' to the 'interior' is also the passage from multiplicity to unity, from the circumference to the center, to the unique point from which it is possible for the human being, restored in the prerogatives of the 'primordial state,' to rise to the higher states and, by the total realization of its true 'essence' (*ad-dat*), to finally be effectively what it is from virtually all eternity. He who knows himself in the 'truth' (*al-ḥaqīqah*) of the eternal and infinite 'Essence,' he knows and possesses all things in himself and by himself, because he has managed to reach the unconditioned state which leaves no possibility out of itself, and this state, in relation to all

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<sup>150</sup> We must specify that this superiority of the mystics must be understood as to their internal state; it may happen that, for lack of theoretical preparation, they are unable to express anything intelligibly. On the other hand, the realization of these mystics can only be fragmentary and incomplete: but it is in fact all that remains possible, in fact of realization, where there no longer exists any initiation and traditional teaching, and one can say that the purpose of this 'irregular' realization is precisely to keep alive what may remain in such a case.



the others, however high they may be, are only preliminary stages incomparable to it, that state which is the ultimate goal of all initiation is properly what is meant by 'Supreme Identity.'

## The Sifra di-Zeniuta

*Le Siphra di-Tzeniutha*, December 1930.

Mr. Paul Vulliaud has just given, as a beginning for a series on the 'fundamental texts of the Kabbalah,' a translation of the *Sifra di-Zeniuta*, preceded by a long introduction, which is much longer than the translation itself, and even then there are two translations, because there are, in this volume, two successive versions of the text, one that is literal and the other that is paraphrased. This introduction seems destined above all to show that, even after the *Zohar* of Jean de Pauly, such a work is far from useless; most of it is devoted to a detailed history of the stated French translation of the *Zohar*, a historical record containing as it seems, almost all that is possible to know of the life of the translator, who is a truly enigmatic character and whose origins are still not finally clear. All of the history is very intriguing, and it is not indifferent in explaining the shortcomings and imperfections of the work, to know in what conditions it was made and the strange difficulties the editor had with the unfortunate Jean de Pauly, who was somewhat affected by a persecution complex. However, we will allow ourselves to find that these details hold too large of a place here; upon reading them, it is regrettable that Mr. Vulliaud had not devoted himself to what may be called the little details of history, for he certainly would have brought with it an unusual eloquence; but the Kabbalistic studies would have greatly suffered.

On the present state of these studies, the same introduction contains some general considerations on the course of which Mr. Vulliaud attacks, as only he is capable, the 'Doctors,' that is, the 'officials,' which lay claims to hard truths in Jewish Kabbalah, then he criticizes a Jesuit Father, Father Bonsirven, whom some, it seems, are trying to present as an incomparable authority on matters of Judaism. This discussion is an occasion to give a number of very interesting remarks, notably on the Kabbalists' processes and path, considered as 'stupefying' by the critics, of which they only quote the scriptural texts; and Mr. Vulliaud adds in this link: "Contemporary exegesis has been unable to analyze properly the 'quotations' of the Gospels, because it has been resolved to ignore the processes of the Jewish hermeneutics; it is necessary to move to Palestine, since the evangelical work was elaborated in this country." This seems to fit, at least as a trend, with the work of another Jesuit Father, Father Mercel

Jousse; it is a pity that this is not mentioned, because it would have been biting to have put him in front of his colleague. On the other hand, Mr. Vulliaud rightly points out that the Catholics who make a mockery of the so-called magic formulas, contained within Kabbalistic works, and who hasten to call them 'superstitious,' should be cautious, for their own rituals are filled with things of the same type. The same applies to accusation of 'erotism' and 'obscenity' against a certain type of symbolism: "The critics who belong to Catholicism should think before joining their voices with the Jews and the rationalist Protestants, Catholic theology is likely, just as Kabbalah is, to be easily ridiculed with what we are dealing with." It is good that these things are said by a writer who has taken Catholicism as a profession; and, especially, some anti-Jewish and anti-Masonic fanatics should make good use of this excellent lesson.

There are many more things to note in the introduction, especially on the Christian interpretation of the *Zohar*: Mr. Vulliaud has reservations about some of the rather forced rapprochements established by Drach and accepted by Jean de Pauly. He also returns to the question of the *Zohar*'s antiquity, that the opponents of Kabbalah strive to challenge with very bad reasoning. But there is something else we are glad to emphasize: Mr. Vulliaud declares that, "in order to translate certain essential passages properly, it is necessary to be initiated into the mysteries of Jewish esoterism," and that, "de Pauly has approached the translation of the *Zohar* without possession this initiation;" further on, he notes that the Gospel of Saint John, as well as of the Apocalypse, "was addressed to initiates;" and we can note other such similar sentences. There is, therefore, a certain change of attitude in Mr. Vulliaud, of which we can only congratulate him for, previously he seemed to have an odd qualm with pronouncing the word 'initiation,' or at least if he did it was only to mock certain 'initiates' that he should have, to avoid any unpleasant confusion, qualified rather as 'pseudo-initiates.' What he is writing now is the exact truth: it is a matter of 'initiation' that it is, in the proper sense of the word, with regard to Kabbalah as well as any other form of esoterism that is worth the name; and we must add that it goes much further than deciphering a type of cryptography, which is what Mr. Vulliaud seems to have in mind when he has previously spoken on the topic. Without a doubt, this also exists but this is only a question of external form, which is far from being negligible, since we must pass through this to arrive at an understanding of the doctrine; but we must not confuse the means with the end, nor put them on the same plane.

Be that as it may, it is quite certain that Kabbalists can, more often than not, speak in reality of something else than what they openly speak about; and these processes are not unique to them, far from it, because it

is also found in the Western Middle Ages; we have had the opportunity to see this subject when relating to Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore,' and we indicated then that the main causes for this, are not all of simple prudence as the 'profane' can be tempted to assume. The same exists in Islamic esoterism, and it is developed to a point that no one, we believe, can suspect in the Western world; the Arabic language, as well as the Hebrew language, can be admired in this respect. Here, we do not find only the usual symbolism which Mr. Luigi Valli, in his work, has shown to be common to both the Sufis and the 'Fedeli d'Amore;' there is still much better to be seen: is it inconceivable, for Western minds, that a simple treatise on grammar, or geography, or even commerce, has at the same time another meaning which is also a far-reaching initiatic work? These are examples that really exist and that we currently have in our possession.

This leads us to make a slight criticism with regards to the translation that Mr. Vulliaud has given to the very title of the *Sifra di-Zeniuta*: he names it as the 'Secret Book,' and not 'Book of the Secret,' and the reasons that he gives seems inconclusive. It is certainly juvenile to imagine, as some have done, that "this title recalls the flight of Simeon bar Yochai, during which time the Rabbi secretly composed this short work;" but this is not what the 'Book of the Secret' means, which in reality has a much higher and deeper meaning than that of the 'Secret Book.' We mean here to allude to the important role played in certain initiatic traditions, the very ones that concern us presently, the notion of a 'secret' (*sod* in Hebrew, *sirr* in Arabic) which has nothing to do with discretion or concealment, but what is the very nature of things; should we recall in this connection that the early Christian church itself had a 'secret discipline,' and that the word 'mystery' in its original sense refers properly to the inexpressible?

As for the translation itself, we said that there were two versions, and they are not duplicates, because the literal version, which is so useful for those who wish to refer to the text and follow it closely, is often unintelligible. It is always so, as we have said on many other occasions, when it comes to Sacred Books or other traditional writings, if a translation must necessarily be 'word for word' according the school and university methodology, we should declare them truly untranslatable. In reality, for those of us who have a completely different point of view from that of linguists, it is the paraphrased and commented version which constitutes the meaning of the text and which makes it possible to understand it, where the literal version sometimes makes the effect of a kind of 'logogriph,' as Mr. Vulliaud puts it, or incoherent rambling. We only regret that the commentary is not more extensive and more explicit; the notes,

although numerous and very interesting, are not always sufficiently 'enlightening,' so to speak, and it is to be feared that they cannot be understood by those who do not already have more than an elementary understanding of Kabbalah; but no doubt it is necessary to wait for the continuation of these 'fundamental texts,' which, hopefully will happily complete this first volume. Mr. Vulliaud owes us, and himself, to now provide a similar work in regards to the *Idra Rabba* and the *Idra Zuta*, who, alongside the *Sifra di-Zeniuta*, as he states, are far from simply "annexes or appendages" of the *Zohar*, but "are, on the contrary, the central parts," those which contain in some way, in the most concentrated form, all the essentials of the doctrine.

## Sacerdotal Initiation and Royal Initiation

*Initiation sacerdotale et initiation royale*, January 1931.

Although we deal with it often, particularly in our last work *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*, the question of the relations between the dual sacerdotal and royal functions, and their corresponding initiations, we think it would be of benefit to return to this once again due to certain erroneous conceptions which seem to be spread, and which tend to present each of the two initiations as forming by themselves a complete whole, so that we are not dealing with two different degrees of hierarchy, but with two irreducible doctrines. The main intention of those who propagate such a conception seems to be simply to oppose Eastern traditions, which is of the sacerdotal or contemplative type, against the Western traditions, which are of the royal and warlike or active type; and when they do not go so far as to proclaim one superior to the other, they at least claim that they are on equal footing. It should be added that this is generally accompanied, as far as Western traditions are concerned, by somewhat fantastical historical views of their origin, such as, as an example, the hypothesis of a primitive and unique 'Mediterranean tradition,' which likely has never existed.

In reality, in the beginning, and before the division of the castes, the dual sacerdotal and royal functions did not exist in distinct and differentiated states; they were both contained within their common principle, which is beyond castes, and from which they only emerged in a later phase of the cycle of earthly humanity. It is also clear that once castes have been distinguished, all social structures must have included them both, since they represent different functions that must necessarily co-exist; we cannot conceive of a society comprised solely of Brahmins, nor another composed solely of Kshatriyas. The coexistence of these functions imply their hierarchization, according to their nature, and consequently that of the individuals who filled these roles; the Brahmin is superior to the Kshatriya by nature, and not because he has taken a more or less arbitrary place in society; it is because knowledge is superior to action, because the 'metaphysical' domain is superior to the 'physical' domain; as the principle is superior to everything that derives from it; and this comes, no less naturally, in the distinction between 'greater

mysteries,' which properly constitutes sacerdotal initiation, and 'lesser mysteries,' which properly constitute royal initiation.

However, any tradition, to be regular and complete, must include both forms of initiation, that of the 'greater mysteries' and of the 'lesser mysteries,' the second being subordinated to the first, as indicated by the very terms that designate them. This subordination could only be denied by the rebellious Kshatriyas, who strove to overthrow normal relations, and in some cases, succeeded in constituting a sort of irregular and incomplete tradition, which is reduced to the 'lesser mysteries,' the only ones of which they had any knowledge, and falsely presenting this as the total doctrine. In such a case, royal initiation alone remains, moreover being degenerated and deviated by the very fact that it is no longer attached to the principle which legitimized it; as for the opposite case, the case where the sacerdotal initiation alone exists, it is certainly impossible to find any example of this anywhere. This is enough to put things in order: if there are really two types of traditional and initiatic organizations, it is that one is regular while the other is irregular, one complete and the other incomplete; it could not be otherwise, and this is a general principle, in the Occident as well as in the Orient.

Admittedly, we have said on many occasions that, in the present state of things at least, contemplative tendencies are much more widespread and active (or rather 'effective') in the East than in the West; but this is only a question of proportion, and not of exclusivity. If there was a traditional organization in the West, which is not the case now, but just as in the East, should include both sacerdotal initiation and royal initiation in one form or another, but always with acknowledgement of the superiority of the former over the latter, and regardless of the number of individuals who would respectively be able to receive one or the other of these two types of initiation, because the quantity does not change anything about it and cannot in any way change what is inherent in the very nature of things.

What acts as an illusion in the West, where any truly initiatic organization has disappeared (in spite of the maintenance in some cases of certain misunderstood symbolic forms), we find it easier to see the vestiges of the royal initiation when compared to sacerdotal initiation; and even, by some rather strange phenomena, one sometimes sees reappearing, in a more or less fragmented manner, something of these deviated traditions which were, under different circumstances of time and place, the product of the Kshatriyas' revolt, whose 'naturalistic' character is still the primary mark. It is not appropriate, at least in the current time, to press on this and give specific examples; we will only point out the preponderance often given in such cases to the 'magic' point of view (and

one must not exclusively search for more or less extraordinary external effects), which is the result of the alteration of traditional sciences separated from their metaphysical principle.

The 'mixture of castes,' which is to say the destruction of any real hierarchy, which is characteristic of the last period of the Kali-Yuga, makes it much more difficult, at least for those who do not dive into the depths of matters, to determine exactly the real nature of the elements we are discussing; and again, we have not yet arrived at the most confusing points. The historical cycle, starting from a superior level to the distinction of castes, must lead, by a gradual descent in the stages we have described elsewhere, to a level below the same distinction, since there are obviously two opposite ways to be separated from the castes: we can be above or below, above the highest, or below the lowest; and if the first of these two cases was the norm for men at the beginning of the cycle, the second will be that of the immense majority in its final phase; we can see such clear indications that this is the case that it would be useless to dwell on it further, for no one can deny the tendency towards moving below, which is one of the most striking characteristics of the present epoch.

However, one may object: if the end of one cycle must necessarily coincide with the beginning of another, how can the lowest point reach the highest point? An adjustment must take place, and this will only be possible precisely when the lowest point has been reached; this is related to the 'reversal of the poles.' This recovery will have to be prepared, perhaps even visibly, before the end of the current cycle; but it can only be done by him who, uniting within himself the powers of the Heavens and the Earth, that of the East and the West, manifesting both in the realm of knowledge and in that of action, the dual sacerdotal and royal powers preserved throughout the ages, in the integrity of its unique principle, by the hidden holders of the Primordial Tradition. It would be futile to try and find out when and how such an event will occur, and no doubt it will be far different from one could imagine; the 'mysteries of the Pole' (*al-asrār al-quṭbānīyyah*) are well guarded, and nothing can be known of this before the time is set.



## The Science of Letters (ʿIlm al-Hurūf)

*La Science des Lettres (Ilmul-Hurûf)*, February 1931.

In the introduction of his study on the ‘Theodicy of the Kabbalah’ (October 1930), Mr. Warrain, after saying that the “Kabbalistic assumption is that the Hebrew language is the perfect language taught by God to the first man,” finds it necessary to make some reservations about “the deceptive pretension of possessing the pure elements of the natural language, whereas one only possesses snippets and deformations.” Nonetheless, he admits that “it remains probable that ancient languages derive from a hieratic language composed by inspiration,” and that “there must therefore be words expressing the essence of things and their numerical relations,” and that “the same can be said of the divinatory arts.” We think it would be of benefit to make some clarifications on this issue; but, first, we wish to point out that Mr. Warrain has placed himself in a particular philosophical point of view, while we intend to restrict ourselves strictly, as we always do, to the initiatic and traditional field.

An initial point to draw attention to is this: the affirmation that the Hebrew language is the very language of primitive revelation seems to have nothing but an exoteric character and is not the essence of the Kabbalistic doctrine, but, indeed, used to simply cover something much more profound. The proof for this is that this is also true of other languages, and this claim of ‘primordially,’ so to speak, cannot be taken literally in all cases, since there would be an obvious contradiction. In particular, this is the case with the Arabic language, and it is even a fairly common opinion that it is the original language of mankind in the countries where it is in use; but what is remarkable, and what makes us believe that this is the same case with regards to Hebrew, is that this vulgar opinion is so unfounded and devoid of authority that it is in contradiction with the true traditional teachings of Islam, according to which the ‘Adamic’ language was the ‘Syriac language,’ *loghah suryānīyyah*, which has nothing to do with the country currently known as Syria, nor with any of the more or less ancient languages of which men have preserved the memory of until today. This *loghah suryānīyyah* is properly, according to the interpretation given by its name, the language of ‘solar illumination,’ *shams-ishraqīyyah*; in fact, *Sūrya* is the Sanskrit name of the Sun, and this would seem to indicate that its root *sur*, would designate light, and

it belongs to that original language. It is therefore this primitive Syria that Homer speaks of as an island located 'beyond Ogygia,' which identifies it with the Hyperborean *Thule*, and 'where revolutions of the Sun are found.' According to Josephus, the capital of this country was named Heliopolis, 'The City of the Sun,'<sup>151</sup> a name later given to the city in Egypt called *On*, like Thebes would have been one of the first of the names for the capital of Ogygia. The successive transfers of these names and many others would be particularly interesting to study in regards to the constitution of the secondary spiritual centers of various periods, a constitution which is closely related to that of languages destined to serve as 'vehicles' for their corresponding traditional forms. These languages are those which can properly be called 'sacred languages;' and it is precisely this distinction which must be made between these sacred languages and the vulgar, or profane, languages upon which the justification of the Kabbalistic methodology rests, as well as similar processes found in other tradition.

We can say this: just as every secondary spiritual center is an image of the supreme and primordial center, as we have explained in our study on *The King of the World*, any sacred language, or 'hieratic' language if one wishes, can be regarded as an image or reflection of the original language, which is the sacred language par excellence; this is the 'Lost Word,' or rather, hidden for men of the 'dark age,' just as the Supreme Center has become invisible and inaccessible to them. But this is not 'snippets and deformations;' on the contrary, it is a question of ordinary adaptations necessitated by circumstances of time and place, which is to say, according to what Muḥyiddīn ibn 'Arabī taught at the beginning of the second part of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyyah*, each prophet or revelator had to use a language that could be understood by those to whom it was addressed and what was appropriate to the mentality of such people and times. The reason for this is because of the diversity of traditional forms, and it is in this diversity that results, as an immediate consequence, the languages that must serve as their respective means of expression; it is therefore all sacred languages that must be regarded as truly the work of the 'inspired,' without which they cannot be fit for the role to which they are essentially destined. As for the primitive language, its origin was to be 'non-human' such as the Primordial Tradition itself; and every sacred language participates in this character of its structure (*al-mabānī*) and its significance (*al-ma'ānī*), a reflection of this primitive language. This can

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<sup>151</sup> Cf. the 'Solar Citadel' of the Rose-Cross, the 'City-State of the Sun' of Campanella, etc. – It is to this first Heliopolis that the cyclic symbolism of the Phoenix should be related.

also be interpreted in different ways, which do not have the same significance in all cases, because the issue of adaptation intervenes here once again: for example, the symbolic form of the signs used for writings;<sup>152</sup> such is the case, particularly with Hebrew and Arabic, the correspondence of numbers with letters, and consequently with the words which compose them.

It is certainly difficult for Westerns to realize what sacred languages really are, because, under the present conditions at least, they have no direct contact with any of them; and we can recall in this link what we have said more generally on other occasions, with the difficulty of assimilating the 'traditional sciences,' which is much more difficult than that of teachings of a purely metaphysical order, because of their special character which binds them indissolubly to particular forms, and which does not allow for transportation from one civilization to another, under threats of making them completely unintelligible, or to have only an illusory result, if not one that is completely false. Thus, to effectively understand the full significance of the symbolism of letters and numbers, it is necessary to live it in a way, in its application to the very circumstances of everyday life, as is possible in certain Eastern countries; but it would be absolutely quixotic to pretend to introduce considerations and applications of this sort into European languages, for which they were not made, and where the numerical value of letters, in particular, is a non-existent thing. The essays that seek to attempt anything from this sort of order of ideas, apart from what is from traditional data, are therefore incorrect from the outset; and, if they have obtained some accurate results, for example from the 'onomantic' point of view, this does not prove the value and legitimacy of the processes employed, but only the existence of a kind of 'intuitive' faculty (which, of course, has nothing in common with the true intellectual intuition) of those who have implemented them, as frequently happens in the 'divinatory arts.'<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> This form may have undergone modifications corresponding to later traditional readaptations, as it happened to Hebrew after the Babylonian captivity; we can say that this is a readaptation, because it is unlikely that the old writing system was really lost in a short period of seventy years, and it is amazing that this seems generally to not be perceived. Occurrences of the same type have had also had to occur for other more or less remote writings systems, notably for the Sanskrit alphabet and, to a certain extent, for the Chinese ideograms.

<sup>153</sup> It seems as if, in spite of the 'scientific' appearance of these methods, the results obtained by modern astrology, which is so far removed from true traditional astrology; the latter, whose keys seem to be lost, was quite something other than a mere 'divinatory art,' although it was obviously susceptible to applications of this kind, but they are altogether secondary and 'accidental.'

To expose the metaphysical principle of the 'science of letters' (in Arabic *ʿilm al-hurūf*), Sayyidī Muḥyiddīn, in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyyah*, considers the Universe to be symbolized by a book: it is the well-known symbolism of the *Liber Mundi* of the Rose-Cross, and also of the apocalyptic *Liber Vitae*.<sup>154</sup> The character in this book are, in principle, all written simultaneously and indivisibly by the 'divine pen' (*al-qalam al-ilāhī*); these 'transcendent letters' are the eternal essence or divine ideas; and every letter being at the same time a number, one will notice the agreement of this teaching with the Pythagorean doctrine. These same 'transcendent letters,' which are all creatures, having been condensed principally within the divine omniscience, are by the divine breath, descended to the lower lines, thereby composing and forming the manifested Universe. A rapprochement is necessary here with the role that the letters play in the cosmogonic doctrine of the *Sefer Yetzirah*; the 'science of letters' has more or less equal importance in both the Hebrew Kabbalah and in Islamic esoterism.<sup>155</sup>

According to the basis of this principle, it will be easy to understand that correspondence is established between the letters and the different portions of the manifested Universe, and more particularly within our world; the existence of planetary and zodiacal correspondences is, in this regard, sufficiently well known to be useless to press further upon, and it suffices to note that this places the 'science of letters' in close connection with the astrology envisaged as a 'cosmological' science.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, by virtue of the constitutive analogy of the 'microcosm' (*al-kawn as-ṣaghīr*) with the 'macrocosm' (*al-kawn al-kabīr*), these same letters also correspond to different parts of the human organism; and, in this connection, we will note in passing that there is a therapeutic application of the 'science of letters,' each letter being employed in a certain manner to cure the diseases which affect the corresponding organism.

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<sup>154</sup> We have already had occasion to point out the relation between this symbolism of the 'Book of Life' and that of the 'Tree of Life': the leaves of the tree and the characters of the book represent all the beings of the Universe (the 'ten thousand beings' of the Far-Eastern traditions).

<sup>155</sup> It should also be noted that the 'Book of the World' is at the same time the 'Divine Message' (*Ar-Risālat al-Ilāhīyyah*), the archetype of all sacred books; traditional scriptures are only translations into the human language. This is affirmed expressly in the *Vedas* and the *Qurʾān*: the idea of the 'Eternal Gospel' also shows that this same conception is not wholly foreign to Christianity, or that at least it has not always been so.

<sup>156</sup> There are also other correspondences, with the elements, sensible qualities, the celestial spheres, etc.; the letters of the Arabic alphabet, being twenty-eight in number, are also in relation with the lunar mansions.

It also follows from what has been just said that the 'science of letters' must be considered in different orders, that we can in fact related this to the 'three worlds:' understood in its higher sense is the knowledge of all things in the very principle, as eternal essences beyond all manifestation; in another sense, that can be said to be an average, it is the cosmogony, which is to say, the knowledge of the creation or the formation of the manifested world; finally, in the inferior sense, it is the knowledge of the virtues of names and numbers, insofar as they express the nature of each being, knowledge allowing, by way of application, to exercise by their means, and reasons for this correspondence, a 'magic' action on the beings themselves and on the events concerning them. Indeed, according to what Ibn Khaldūn explains, the written formulas, being composed of the same elements which constitute the totality of beings, have the faculty of acting upon them; and this is also why the knowledge of the name of a being, expression of its own nature, can give a power over him; it is this application of the 'science of letters' which is usually referred to by the name *sīmā*.<sup>157</sup> It is importante to note that this goes much further than a simple 'diviniatory' process: one can first, by means of a calculation (*ḥisab*) carried out on the numbers corresponding to letters and names, arriving at the forecast of certain events;<sup>158</sup> but this is only an initial degree, the most elementary of all, and it is possible to carry out mutations on the results of this calculation which will have the effect of bringing about a corresponding modification in the events themselves.

Here again, we must also distinguish between varying degrees, as in the knowledge itself, of which this is only one application and implementation: when this action is exerted only in the sensible world, it is only the lowest degree, and it is in this case that we can properly speak of 'magic;' but it is easy to conceive that one is dealing with something of a completely different order when it is an action having an impact within the higher worlds. In the latter case we are obviously dealing with the 'initiatric' order in the most complete sense of the word; in only such an order can you actively operate in all the worlds, which has reached the degree of 'red sulfur' (*Al-Kabrīt al-aḥmar*), a designation indicating a

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<sup>157</sup> This word *sīmā* does not appear to be purely Arabic; it probably comes from the Greek *semeia*, 'signs,' which makes it roughly equivalent to the name of the Kabbalistic *gematria*, a word of Greek origin as well, which is not derived from *geometria* as is often claimed, but from *grammateia* (from *grammata*, 'letters').

<sup>158</sup> One can also, in certain cases, obtain by a calculation of the same kind the solution of doctrinal questions; and this solution sometimes presents itself in a remarkable symbolic form.

link, which may appear quite unexpectedly, between the 'science of letters' with alchemy.<sup>159</sup> Indeed, these two sciences, understood in their most profound meanings, are but one in reality; and what they both express, under very different appearances, is nothing other than the very process of initiation which rigorously reproduces the cosmogonic process, the total realization of possibilities of a being necessarily taking place through the same phases as that of the Universal Existence.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Sayyidī Muḥyiddīn is called *Ash-Shaykh al-Akbar wa Al-Kabrīt al-Aḥmar*.

<sup>160</sup> It is curious to note that the Masonic symbolism itself, in which the 'Lost Word' and its research plays an important role, in characterizing the initiatic degrees by expressions obviously borrowed from the 'science of letters:' spell, read, write. The 'Master' who has among his attributes the 'tracing board,' if he were really what he should be, would be able to not only read from, but also to write in the 'Book of Life,' that is to say he can cooperate consciously in the realization of the plan of the 'Great Architect of the Universe;' one may be judged by the distance separating the nominal possession of this rank from its actual possession!

## The Rind and the Core (Al-Qashar wa al-Lab)

*L'écorce et le noyau (El Qishr wa el-Lobb),*  
March 1931.

This title, which is one of the many traits of Sayyidī Muḥyiddīn ibn ‘Arabī, expresses in symbolic form the relations between exoterism and esoterism, compared respectively to the skin of a fruit and its inner part, the pulp or kernel.<sup>161</sup> The skin or rind (*al-qashar*) is the *sharī‘āh*, which is to say the external religious law, which is addressed to all and is made to be followed by all, as indicated by the meaning of the ‘great road’ which is attached to the derivation of its name. The core (*al-lab*) is the *ḥaqīqah*, that is to say the truth or the essential reality, which, unlike the *sharī‘āh*, is not accessible to all, but is reserved for those who know how to discover it under appearances and reach it through the external forms that cover it, protecting and concealing it all at once.<sup>162</sup> In another symbolism, *sharī‘āh* and *ḥaqīqah* are also designated respectively as the ‘body’ (*al-jism*) and the ‘marrow’ (*al-mukh*),<sup>163</sup> whose relations are exactly the same as the rind and the core; and no doubt we would still find other symbols that are the equivalent to these.

What we are talking about, under whatever designation, is always the ‘exterior’ (*az-ẓāhir*) and the ‘interior’ (*al-bāṭin*), which is to say the apparent and the hidden, which by their very nature are such, and not by the effect of any conventions or precautions taken artificially, if not arbitrarily, by the holders of the traditional doctrine. This ‘exterior’ and this ‘interior’ are represented by the circumference and the center, which can be considered as the very section of the fruit evoked by the preceding

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<sup>161</sup> Incidentally, the symbolism of fruit is related to the ‘Egg of the World,’ as well as to the heart.

<sup>162</sup> It may be noted that the role of external forms is related to the double meaning of the word ‘revelation,’ since they manifest and conceal at the same time the essential doctrine, the one truth, as this word inevitably does for the thought it expresses; and what is true of the word in this regard is also true of every other formal expression.

<sup>163</sup> We will recall Rabelais’ ‘substantive marrow,’ which also represents an inner and hidden meaning.

symbolism, at the same time that we are thus returned to the image, common to all traditions, of the 'wheel of things.' Indeed, if we consider the two terms in question in the universal sense, and without limiting ourselves to the application which is usually reserved to a particular traditional form, we can say that the *sharī'āh*, the 'great road' traversed by all beings, is nothing other than what the Far Eastern traditions calls the 'stream of forms,' while the *ḥaqīqah*, the one and unchangeable truth, lies in the 'invariable middle.'<sup>164</sup> To pass from one to the other, from the circumference to the center, one must follow one of the rays: it is the *ṭarīqah*, which is to say the 'path,' the narrow way which is only followed by a few.<sup>165</sup> There are also a multitude of *ṭuruq*, which are all the rays of the circumference taken in the centripetal sense, since it is a question of starting from the multiplicity to go towards the principal unity: each *ṭarīqah*, starting from a certain point on the circumference, is particularly appropriate to the beings who are at this point; but all whatever their point of departure, tends towards a single point,<sup>166</sup> all ending in the center and bringing back the beings who follow them to the essential simplicity of the 'primordial state.'

Indeed, beings who are now in multiplicity, are forced to leave from there if they seek any realization whatsoever; but this multiplicity is at the same time, for most of them, the obstacle that stops and holds them back: the changing and diversity of appearances prevent them from seeing the true reality, so to speak, as the skin of the fruit prevents one from seeing one's interior; and this can only be attained by those who are able to pierce the skin, that is, to see the Principle through manifestation, and even to see only Him in all things, for the manifestation of the whole of itself is no more than a set of symbolic expressions. The application of

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<sup>164</sup> It is to be noted, with regards to the Far Eastern traditions, that we find there the very clear equivalents to these two terms, not as two exoteric and esoteric aspects of the same doctrine, but as two separate teachings, at least since the beginning of the time of Confucius and Lao-Tzu: it can be said, indeed, that strictly speaking, Confucianism corresponds to *sharī'āh* and Taoism to *ḥaqīqah*.

<sup>165</sup> The words *sharī'āh* and *ṭarīqah* both contain the idea of a 'journey:' therefore movement (and note the symbolism of the circular motion for the first and the rectilinear motion for the second); there is indeed a change and a multiplicity in both cases, the first having to adapt to the diversity of external conditions, the second to that of individual natures; only the being who has reached the *ḥaqīqah* participates in unity and immutability.

<sup>166</sup> This convergence is represented by that of the *qiblah* (ritual orientation) of all places towards the ka'abah, which is the 'house of God' (*Bayt Allah*), and whose shape is that of a cube (an image of stability) occupying the center of a circumference which is the terrestrial (human) section of the sphere of universal existence.



this to exoterism and esoterism understood in their ordinary sense, which is to say, as aspects of a traditional doctrine, is easy to make here: here too, the outer forms hide the profound truth from the eyes of the vulgar, whereas they make it appear on the contrary to those of the elite, for which what is an obstacle or a limitation for others thus becomes a point of reference, support, and a means of realization. It must be understood that this difference results directly and necessarily from the very nature of the beings, the possibilities and the aptitudes that each one carries within himself, so that the exoteric side of the doctrine always plays exactly the role he must play for everyone, giving to those who cannot go further all that they can receive in their present state, and at the same time providing those who are beyond it the 'supports,' which without being a strict necessity, since contingents can greatly assist them in advancing inwardly, and without which the difficulties would, in certain cases, amount to real impossibilities.

It must be noted, in this respect, that for the greater number of men, who inevitably cling to the exterior law, it takes on a character which is less that of a limit than that of a guide; it is always a link, but a link that prevents them from going astray or getting lost; without this law, which makes them go down a central road, not only would they never reach the center, but they would be able to move away from it indefinitely, while the circular shape keeps them at least at a constant distance.<sup>167</sup> By this, those who cannot directly contemplate the light at least receive a reflection and a participation; and they thus remain attached in some way to the Principle, even though they do not have any and cannot have the actual consciousness. Indeed, the circumference cannot exist without the center, of which it proceeds in reality entirely, and, if the beings which are bound to the circumference do not see the center, or even the rays, each of them is found inevitably at the end of a ray whose other end is the very center. Only it is here that the rind intervenes and hides all that is inside, while the one that pierces it, thereby becoming aware of the radius corresponding to its own position on the circumference, will be freed from the indefinite rotation of it and will only have to follow this radius to go towards the center; this ray is the *ṭariqah*, by which, beginning with the *sharī'ah*, it will reach the *ḥaqīqah*. It must also be pointed out that, as soon as the skin has been penetrated, one finds oneself in the domain of esoterism, this penetration being, in the situation of being in relation to the skin itself, a sort of reversal in what consists of the passage

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<sup>167</sup> Let us add that this law must be regarded normally as an application or a human specification of the cosmic law itself, which similarly connects the entire manifestation to the Principle, as we have explained elsewhere about the meaning of the 'Law of Manu' in the Hindu doctrine.

from the exterior to the interior; it is even more properly, in a sense, that the designation of *ṭarīqah* is appropriate when considered with esoterism, because, to tell the truth, the *ḥaqīqah* is beyond the distinction of exoterism and esoterism, which implies comparison and correlation: the center appears as the innermost point of all, but, as soon as one has reached it, there can no longer be any question of exterior or interior, any contingent distinction then disappears while resolving itself in the principal unity. This is why *Allah*, just as he is the 'First and the Last' (*Al-ʿAwwal wa Al-ʿAkhīr*),<sup>168</sup> is also the 'Exterior and the Interior' (*Az-Zāhir wa Al-Bāṭin*),<sup>169</sup> for nothing that can not be beyond Him, and in Him alone is contained all of reality, because He himself is the Absolute Reality, the Total Truth: *ʿAl-Ḥaqq*.

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<sup>168</sup> That is, as in the symbol of the *alpha* and the *omega*, the Principle and the End.

<sup>169</sup> It can also be translated as the 'Evident' (in relation to manifestation) and the 'Hidden' (in itself), which still corresponds to the two points of view of the *sharīʿah* (of a social and religious order) and of the *ḥaqīqah* (of a purely intellectual and metaphysical order), though the latter can also be said to be beyond all points of view, as including all of them synthetically within itself.

## The Hermetic Tradition

### *La Tradition hermétique*, April 1931.

Under the title: *La Tradizione Ermetica nei suoi Simboli, nella sua Dottrina e nella sua « Ars Regia »*,<sup>170</sup> Mr. J. Evola has published an interesting work in many respects, but which shows once more, if necessary, the desirability of what we have written recently here (in the January 1931 issue) on the relationship of sacerdotal initiation and royal initiation. We find here, indeed, the same affirmation of the independence of the latter, to which the author wishes precisely to connect hermetism, and this idea of two distinct and even irreducible traditional types, one contemplative and the other active, which would be, generally, respectively characteristic of the East and the West. So, we must make some reservations about the interpretation given to hermetic symbolism, insofar as it is influenced by such a conception, although, on the other hand, it shows that true alchemy is spiritual and not material, which is precisely the truth, and a truth which is too often unknown and ignored by the moderns who pretend to cover these questions.

We will take this opportunity to further clarify some important concepts, the first of which is the meaning that should be attributed to the word 'hermetism' itself, as some of our contemporaries seem to be using it somewhat incorrectly. This word indicates that it is essentially a tradition of Egyptian origin, later clothed in a Hellenic form, most likely in the Alexandrian period, and transmitted in this form, in the Middle Age, to the Islamic world and to the Christian world, and, we will add, it is through the former that it has reached the latter, as the numerous Arab and Arabized terms adopted by the European hermetists prove, beginning with the very word 'alchemy' (*al-kīmiyā*).<sup>171</sup> It would therefore be quite illegitimate to extend this designation to other traditional forms, just as it would be, for example, to call 'Kabbalah' something other than Hebrew esoterism; it is not, of course, that there is no equivalent elsewhere, and there is even so much so that this traditional science of alchemy has its exact correspondences in doctrines such as those of India,

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<sup>170</sup> I vol. in-8°, G. Laterza, Bari, 1931.

<sup>171</sup> This word is Arabic in form, but not at its root; it is likely derived from the name *Kemi* or 'black earth' given to ancient Egypt.

Tibet, and China, although with quite different modes of expression and methods of realization; but as soon as one pronounces the name 'hermetism,' one specifies by this a definite form, whose origin can only be Greco-Egyptian. Indeed, the doctrine thus designated is thereby attributed to *Hermes*, as it was considered by the Greeks to be identical to the Egyptian *Thoth*; and we will point out immediately that this goes against Mr. Evola's thesis, this doctrine is presented as essentially derived from a sacerdotal teaching, for Thoth, in his role as conservator and transmitter of tradition, is not something other than the very representation of the ancient Egyptian priesthood, or rather, to speak more precisely, of the principle of inspiration with which he held authority and in whose name he formulated and communicated initiatic knowledge.

Now a question arises: what has been maintained under the name of 'hermetism,' does it constitute a complete traditional doctrine? The answer can only be negative, because it is strictly a knowledge of order and not metaphysical, but only cosmological (by hearing this it also applies the dual application of 'macrocosmic' and 'microcosmic'). It is therefore not acceptable that hermetism, in the sense that this word has been taken since Alexandrian times and has been constantly kept since then, represents the entirety of the Egyptian tradition; although, in this, the cosmological view point seems to have been particularly advanced, and that it is in any case what is most apparent in all vestiges that remains, whether in texts or monuments, we must not forget that it can never be anything but a secondary and contingent point of view, an application of the doctrine to the knowledge of what we can call the 'intermediate world.' It would be interesting, but probably quite difficult, to find out how this part of the Egyptian tradition could have been in some way isolated and preserved in a seemingly independent manner, then being incorporated into Islamic esoterism and Christian esoterism of the Middle Ages (which a complete doctrine never could have done), to the point of becoming a truly integral portion of both of them, and to provide them with a whole symbolism which, by a proper transposition, may even serve as a vehicle for truths of a higher order. This is not the place to enter into these complex historical considerations; but, in any case, we must say that the strictly cosmological character of hermetism, if it does not justify the conception of Mr. Evola, it may explain this at least to a certain extent, because the sciences of this order are indeed those which were the prerogative of the Kshatriyas or their equivalents, while the pure metaphysics was that of the Brahmins. This is why, by an effect of the Kshatriyas' revolt against the spiritual authority of the Brahmins, we have sometimes seen the formation of incomplete traditional currents, reduced to those sciences separated from their principle, and even deviated in the

'naturalistic' sense, by the negation of metaphysics and the ignorance of the subordinate character of 'physical' science, as well as of the sacerdotal origin of all initiatic teachings, even more particularly intended for the use of Kshatriyas, as we have explained on a variety of occasions.<sup>172</sup> This is not to say, certainly, that hermetism constitutes within itself such a deviation or that it essentially involves something illegitimate (which would have made it impossible to incorporate it into traditional orthodox forms); but it must be admitted that it can easily lend itself to it by its very nature, and it is there, more generally, the danger of all the traditional sciences, when they are cultivated in a way for themselves which exposes them to losing sight of the attachment to the main order. Alchemy, which could be defined as the 'techniques' of hermetism, is truly a 'royal art,' if we mean by this a mode of initiation more specifically appropriate to the nature of Kshatriyas; but this even marks its exact place in the whole of a regularly constituted tradition, and, furthermore, we must not confuse the means of initiatic realization, whatever they are, with its final goal, which is always of pure knowledge.

Another point which seems questionable to us in Mr. Evola's thesis is the assimilation which he tends almost constantly to establish between hermetism and 'magic;' it is true that he seems to take it in a sense quite different from that in which we usually hear it, but we are very much afraid that it may only cause some rather unfortunate confusions. Inevitably, as soon as one speaks of 'magic,' one thinks of a science destined to produce more or less extraordinary phenomena, notably (but not exclusively) in the sensible order; whatever the origin of this word may have been, this meaning has become so inherent within it, it should be left to this. It is then only the most inferior of all the applications of traditional knowledge, we might even say the most despised, whose exercise is abandoned to those whom their individual limitations render incapable of developing other possibilities; we see no advantage in evoking the idea when it is really a question of things which, even though still contingent, are still noticeably higher; and, if it is only a question of terminology, it's importance must be admitted. Besides, there may be something more: this word 'magic' has a certain fascination with some people in our time, and, as we have already noted in the previous article which we referred to at the beginning, the preponderance accorded to such a point of view would not be the same as in intention, which is still linked to the alteration of the traditional sciences separated from their metaphysical principle, it is doubtless the pitfall with which every attempt at reconstituting such sciences is confronted, if we do not begin with what

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<sup>172</sup> See *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*, especially.

is the beginning in all respects, that is to say, by the very principle, which is also the end in view of which everything must be ordinarily ordered.

On the other hand, where we fully agree with Mr. Evola, and where we see the greatest merit in his book, is when he insists on the purely spiritual and 'inner' nature of true alchemy, which has absolutely nothing to do with the material operations of any 'chemistry,' in the natural sense of the word; almost all the moderns are strangely mistaken on this, both those who wish to pose as defenders of alchemy and those who make themselves detractors. Yet it is easy to see in what terms the old hermetists speak of 'blowers' and 'coal burners,' in which we must recognize the real precursors of the current chemists, which is so unflattering for them; and, in the eighteenth century again, an alchemist like Pernéty does not fail to emphasize the difference between the 'hermetic philosophy' and the 'vulgar chemistry.' Thus, what gave birth to modern chemistry is not alchemy, with which it has in fact no relation (any more than the 'hyper chemistry' imagined by some contemporary occultists); it is only a distortion or deviation, resulting from the incomprehension of those who, unable to penetrate the true meanings of symbols, took all literally, and believing that it was all in material operations, embarked on a more or less disordered experimentation. In the Arab world too, material alchemy has always been considered very lowly, sometimes even assimilated to a kind of witchcraft, while spiritual alchemy, the only real type, is often referred to by the name of *al-kīmiyā' as-sa'ādah* or the 'alchemy of bliss.'<sup>173</sup>

Moreover, this is not to say that it is necessary to deny the possibility of metallic transmutations, which represent the alchemy in the eyes of the vulgar; but we must not confuse things that are of a completely different order, and we do not even see, 'a priori,' why such transmutations could not be realized by processes that are simply a matter of secular chemistry (and, at its essence, the 'hyper chemistry' we were alluding to earlier is nothing other than this). However, there is another aspect of this issue, which Mr. Evola rightly points out: the being who has arrived at the realization of certain interior states can, by virtue of the analogical relation of the 'microcosm' with the 'macrocosm,' produce externally corresponding effects; it is therefore permissible for him who has attained to such a degree in the practice of spiritual alchemy to be able to thereby accomplish metallic transmutations, but this is an accidental consequence, and without recourse to any of the methods of material pseudo-alchemy, but only by a kind of projection outside the energies it carries within itself. Here there is a comparable difference to that which separates 'theurgy' or the action of 'spiritual influences' from magic and

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<sup>173</sup> There is a treatise of Al-Ghazālī which bears this title.

even witchcraft: if the apparent effects are sometimes the same on both sides, the causes which provoke them are totally different. Moreover, we will add that those who really possess such powers do not generally make use of them, at least outside of very peculiar circumstances in which their exercise is legitimized by other considerations. Be that as it may, what we must never lose sight of, and what is at the basis of all true initiatic teaching, is that any worthy realization of the name is essentially internal, even if it is likely to have exterior repercussions; man can find the principles and the means within himself, and he can because he carries in him the correspondence of all that exists: *al-insānu ramz al-wujūd*, “Man is a symbol of Universal Existence;” and if he manages to penetrate to the center of his own being, he thereby attains total knowledge, with all that it implies in addition: *man ‘yaraf nafsahu ‘yaraf Rabbāhu*, “Who-soever knows himself knows his Lord,” and he then knows all things in the supreme unity of the very Principle, out of which there is nothing that can have the least degree of reality.

## The Rose-Cross and Rosicrucians

*Rose-Croix et Rosicruiciens, May 1931.*

The name of the Rose-Cross is nowadays most often used in a vague and sometimes abusive manner, and applied indistinctly to many different characters, among whom very few, without a doubt, would truly be entitled to the name. To avoid these unfortunate confusions, it seems that the best solution would be to establish a clear distinction between the Rose-Cross and Rosicrucians, the latter term possibly being extended to a greater extent than the first; and it is probable that much of the so-called Rose-Cross, commonly referred to as such, were really only Rosicrucians.

To understand this important yet overly neglected distinction, it is necessary to remember that, as we have already pointed out on other occasions, the true Rose-Cross never formed an association with defined external forms; there were, however, from the seventeenth century at the least, many associations that can be described as Rosicrucian, but we can at the same time be assured that the members were by no means of the Rose-Cross, by the very fact that they were apart of such associations. There is something here that may seem paradoxical and even contradictory at first glance; we have therefore thought that some explanations on the subject might be of some benefit, for the distinction is far from being reduced to a mere question of terminology, as one may think, and is connected with considerations of a much more profound order.

The term of Rose-Cross is properly the designation of an actual initiatic degree, which is to say, of a certain spiritual state, which obviously is not necessarily linked to the fact of belonging to a defined organization; what it represents is what can be named as the perfection of the human state, which was the goal of the initiation into the 'lesser mysteries.' What must be taken into account, on the other hand, due to this designation, which is expressly linked to the usage of a certain symbolism, has been used only in certain determined circumstances of time and place, outside of which it would be illegitimate to apply it; it could be said that those who possessed this degree in question appeared as the Rose-Cross in these circumstances only and for historical reasons, as they may have appeared in other respects in other circumstances.



It does not seem possibly to trace the name of the Rose-Cross to beyond the fourteenth century, and this is attested to by the legend of the Christian Rosenkreutz, in which it is doubtful that he is a historical figure, whatever some may have said, but rather appears as the representative of a 'collective entity.' This, of course, does not mean that the symbol to which this name refers cannot be much older, and, as with any truly traditional symbol, it would probably be futile to search for a definite origin; but this relates to another issue that we do not wish to address here. What we wish to say is that the name taken from the symbol was applied to an initiatic degree only from the fourteenth century, and, moreover, one that is exclusive to the Western world; it therefore applies only in relation to a certain traditional form, which is that of Christian esoterism, or, one could say more precisely, that of Christian hermetism. We explained in our previous article that hermetism was a knowledge of a cosmological order, corresponding precisely to the initiation into the 'lesser mysteries' whose sign of the Rose-Cross marks the completion, appearing as the reintegration to be at the center of the human state and the full expansion of its individual possibilities within this center. We have also seen that hermetism, of a Greco-Egyptian origin, as its name suggests, had incorporated both Christian esoterism and Islamic esoterism, so as to become an essential part of both worlds; besides, these two traditional forms certainly present, in almost every respect, more similarities to each other than to all others.

The meaning of the legend of the Christian Rozenkreutz and the journeys attributed to him seem to be that, following the destruction of the Order of the Temple, the initiates of Christian esoterism reorganized themselves, in agreement with initiates of Islamic esoterism to maintain, as far as possible, the link which had apparently been broken by this destruction; but this reorganization had to be done in a hidden manner, invisible in some respects, and without taking its support in an institution which is known externally and which, as such, could have been destroyed once again. Those truly of the Rose-Cross were likely the inspirers of this reorganization, or, if one wishes, the possessors of the initiatic degree of which we spoke, envisaged especially as they played this role, which continued until when, as a result of other historical events, the traditional bond was definitively broken for the Western world in the seventeenth century. It is said that those of the Rose-Cross retreated to the Orient, which means that there was no longer any initiation in the West to achieve this degree effectively, and also that the action which had been exercised up to then for the maintenance of traditional education ceased to manifest itself, at least on a regular basis.

As for knowing which are the true Rose-Cross, and to say with certainty if this or that personage was of them, it appears as absolutely impossible, by the very fact that it is essentially a question of a spiritual state, therefore being purely interior, of which it would be very imprudent to judge according to any external signs. Moreover, because of the nature of their role, those of the Rose-Cross, could not leave any trace in secular history, so that, even if their names could be known, they would learn nothing from anyone; and besides these names would have only a certain relative value, since it is said that they changed according to the countries in which they resided, which clearly indicates that they were freed from certain limitations of ordinary individuality. As for those characters who are known, especially those of authors of such and such writings, and who are commonly referred to as being from the Rose-Cross, it is likely that, in many cases, they were only influenced or inspired by the Rose-Cross, to which they served as a sort of spokesman, which we will express by saying that they were only Rosicrucians, whether or not they belonged to some of the groups to which we can attribute the same name. On the other hand, if it has occurred in an exceptional accident that a true one of the Rose-Cross has played a role in external events, historians may be far from suspecting its quality, since the two belong to different domains. All this, assuredly, is unsatisfactory for the curious, but they must take their part; many things are thus beyond the means of investigation of secular history, which in shorts allows us to grasp only what can be called the exterior of events.

We must add another reason why the true ones of the Rose-Cross have remained unknown: none of them can ever assert themselves as such, any more than, in Islamic initiation, no authentic *Ṣūfī* can claim this title. There is even then a similarity to which it is particularly interesting to note, although, to tell the truth, what is enclosed in the name *Ṣūfī*, by the numerical value of the letters which compose it, is of a higher order than that of the Rose-Cross, and refers to possibilities that go beyond those of human individuality, even when considered in the entirety of its indefinite extension; but it goes without saying that the being who has developed these possibilities possess *a fortiori* degree that makes up the Rose-Cross and may, if necessary, perform corresponding functions. Moreover, the name of *Ṣūfī* is commonly subject to the same abuse as that of the Rose-Cross, to the point of it being applied to those who are on the path which leads to real initiation, without having ever reached even the first degrees of it (and it may be noted in this connection that such an illegitimate extension is commonly given to the word *Yogi* as far as the Hindu tradition is concerned, so that this word, which properly

designates the one who has reached the supreme goal, comes to be applied to those who are still in the preliminary stages and even the most external stages of preparation). Not just in this case, but even for the one who has attained the highest degrees, yet has not reached the final term, the proper designation is that of *mutaşawwuf*; and as the *Şūfî* itself is not marked by any external distinction, this same designation will also be the only one it can take or accept, not by virtue or purely human considerations such as prudence or humility, but because his spiritual state is truly an incommunicable secret. It is distinctly analogous, in a more restricted order (since it does not go beyond the bounds of the human state), which can be expressed by the two terms Rose-Cross and Rosicrucian, the latter can designate any aspirant to the state of the Rose-Cross, despite the degrees he has actually arrived to. Furthermore, we can draw from what we have just said as a negative criterion in the sense that, if someone has declared himself as the Rose-Cross or *Şūfî*, we can say that he certainly was not in reality.

Another negative criterion results from the fact that we discussed at the beginning that the Rose-Cross never formed an association; if they invisibly inspired and directed certain associations, which may be termed Rosicrucian for this very reason, they never took any direct part in it, which would have been contrary to their role and character; and, therefore, if anyone is known to have been a member of such an association, it can still be said that, at least as long as he was a member, he was not truly of the Rose-Cross. It should also be noted that the more or less external organizations of this kind did not bear the title of Rose-Cross until much later, since it does not appear until the beginning of the seventeenth century, which is to say shortly before the moment when the true Rose-Cross withdrew from the West; and it is even visibly, by many indications, that those who made themselves known under this title were already more or less deviated, or at any rate far removed, from the original source. This is all the more necessary in the case of the associations which later formed under the same name, and of which most would have probably claimed, with respect to the Rose-Cross, only on link, that of an 'ideal,' so to speak, and not of an authentic and regular filiation; and we do not speak, of course, of contemporary formations which have retained any of the rosicrucians except in name, having kept no trace of traditional doctrine, and having simply adopted a symbol which each interprets according to his own fantasies, for want of not understanding the true meaning.

In the above, there is still a point on which we must return for more accuracy: we have said that there must have been, at the origin of Rosi-

crucianism, a collaboration between initiates in both Christian and Islamic esoterism; this collaboration must also continue thereafter, since it was precisely to maintain the link between the initiations of the Orient and the Occident. We will go even further: the same characters, whether from Christianity or Islam, may have lived in both East and West (and constant references to their journeys suggest that it was the case with many of them), to be both Rose-Cross and *Şūfī* (or *mutaṣawwuf* of higher degrees), the spiritual state they had reached implying they were beyond the differences that exist between external forms and which in no way affect the essential and fundamental unity of the traditional doctrine. Moreover, when there is lack of the name of the Rose-Cross, the symbol itself was no stranger to Islamic hermetism, and we can see, above the tomb of a *shaykh* founder of a *ṭarīqah*, the image of the crucified rose. Of course, it is none the less appropriate to maintain, between Sufism and Rosicrucianism, the distinction which is that of two different forms of traditional education; and the Rosicrucians, more or less direct disciples of the Rose-Cross, are only those who follow the path of Christian hermetism; but there can be no initiatic organization worthy of the name which does not have, at the top of its hierarchy, beings having exceeded the diversity of formal appearances. These may, according to the circumstances, appear as Rosicrucians, as *mutaṣawwufīn*, or in other aspects; they are truly the living link between all traditions, because, through their consciousness of unity, they actually participate in the grand Primordial Tradition, all of which are derived by adaptations to times and places, and which is like the Truth itself.

## Magic and Mysticism

*Magie et Mysticisme*, June 1931.

In an interesting article published recently herein (the March issue of 1931), Mr. J. Marquè-Rivière rightly points out the dangers and illusions to which those who engage in the practice of magic are exposed. We believe that it would be of benefit to return to this issue, to clarify and supplement some certain points on the notes already given, because it is important to leave no ambiguity.

The dangers in questions are especially grave for Westerners for at least two reasons, the first of which is their tendency to attach undue importance to everything that is 'phenomena,' as evidenced by the development they gave to the experimental sciences; and if they are so easily seduced by magic, it is because it is also an experimental science, however different it is from those sciences that the university educators know under this label. One must not be deceived: this is an order of things which in itself has absolutely nothing 'transcendent,' and if such a science can, like any other, be legitimized by its attachment to the higher principles upon which everything depends, according to the general conception of the 'traditional sciences,' it will be placed only at the last rank of secondary and contingent applications, among those furthest away from the principles. This is how magic is considered in all Eastern civilizations: it exists there, it is a fact that needs no challenge, but it is far from being held in honor as Westerners often imagine, who willingly lend their tendencies to others. In Tibet itself, as well as in India or in China, the practice of magic as a 'specialty,' so to speak, is abandoned to those who are unable to rise to a higher order; of course, this does not mean that others cannot sometimes produce, for particular reasons, phenomena externally similar to magic phenomena, but the goal and even the means are then quite different in reality. Moreover, to stick to what is known in the Western world, simply take tales of saints and sorcerers, and see how similar facts are on both sides; and this shows that, contrary to the belief of the modern 'scientist,' phenomena cannot prove anything by themselves.

Now, it is obvious that deluding ourselves about the value of these things greatly increases their danger, and this brings us to the second of

the two reasons we mentioned earlier: this is the ignorance of Westerners, as in the absence of any traditional teaching, of which they are dealing with such a case. Even leaving aside the numerous street performers and charlatans who have greatly stigmatized Mr. Marquès-Rivière, those who want to try study these phenomena, lacking sufficient data to guide them, or organizations set up to support and protect them, are reduced to a rather crude empiricism; they act like children who would like to handle formidable forces, and, if unfortunate accidents result from this, there is no link to be astonished at.

Speaking here of accidents, we wish to refer above all to the risks of imbalance to which those who act in this way expose themselves: this imbalance is indeed an all too frequent consequence of communication in what Mr. Marquès-Rivière calls the 'vital plan,' and which is in fact nothing else than the domain of subtle manifestation. The explanation for this is simple: this is exclusively a development of certain individual possibilities; if this development occurs abnormally, disordered, and in-harmonic, it is naturally and in a certain sense inevitable that it should lead to such a result, not to mention the reactions of the forces of all kinds with which the individual is indiscriminately in contact with. We say 'forces,' without specifying further; we prefer this term, despite its vagueness, to that of 'entities,' which risks giving rise too easily to 'personifications' which are more or less fanciful. Furthermore, this 'intermediary world' is much more complex and extensive than the corporeal world; but the study of this world enters, in the same manner, into what may be called the 'natural sciences,' in the most true sense of this expression; to want to see something more through this, is, we reiterate, to delude ourselves in the strangest way. There is nothing to it, let us say it clearly, anything 'initiatric,' and it emerges there in a generally way, there are many more obstacles than of supports to reaching true knowledge, especially for beings subject to the attraction of phenomena which is one of the characters of the modern West.

Some, after having engaged in this search for extraordinary phenomena, end up getting bored, for whatever reason, or by being disappointed, and it often happens that they turn to mysticism, which is entirely Western; surprising at it may seem at first glance, it still meets needs or aspirations of the same order. Certainly, it may seem that mysticism has a higher character than magic; but, if we reach the essence of things, we can realize that the difference is not so vast: here again, it is about 'phenomena,' visions to others, sensitive and sentimental manifestations of all kinds, with which one always remains exclusively the realm of individual possibilities. Which is to say, the dangers of illusion and imbalance are far from being surpassed, and if they assume here different forms,

they may be no less important for that; they are even aggravated, in a sense, by the passive attitude of the mystic, who leaves the door open to all the influences that may arise, while the magician is at least defended to a certain extent by the active attitude he strives to conserve. The unfortunate consequences of passivity are too obvious to insist upon; they are found carried to their most extreme degree in a case such as of the mediums; we would certainly not wish to establish the slightest assimilation, or even the slightest comparison, between mediums and mystics, but it must be admitted that this character of passivity is common to both. What also emerges from the mystic, almost always, is he is too easily duped by his imagination, whose productions in him, come to mingle with the real results of his 'experiences' in an almost inextricably way. For this reason, we must not exaggerate the importance of the 'revelations' of the mystics, or at least we cannot accept them without some restraint; what makes all the visions of interest, such as those of Anne-Catherine Emmerich, since Mr. Marquès-Rivière cited this example, is that they are in agreement, on many points, with certain traditional data; but it would be a mistake, and a reversal of normal relations, to wish to find here a 'confirmation' of these points, which, furthermore, have no need for this, and which are, on the contrary, the only guarantee that the visions in question are more than just a product of individual fantasy.

We have just said that there is nothing 'initiatic' in magic; we can say the same thing again for mysticism; we do not mean to depreciate things whose value, albeit relative, may still be considerable in certain points of view, but it is advisable to put them in their place and not to confuse them. Truly initiatic knowledge is something other than this; without any trace of 'phenomenalism' or 'sentimentalism,' it is only purely intellectual intuition, which alone is pure spirituality.

## The Hieroglyph of Cancer

*L'hiéroglyphe du cancer*, July 1931.

We have often had occasion, during our various studies, to refer to the symbolism of the annual cycle, with its two ascending and descending halves, and especially to that of the two solsticial gates, which open and close respectively the two halves of the cycle, and which are related to the figures of *Janus* of the Latins, as well that of *Ganesha* among the Hindus.<sup>174</sup> To fully understand the importance of this symbolism, it must be remembered that, by virtue of the analogy of each part of the universe with the whole, there is a correspondence between the laws of all the cycles no matter what order, so that the annual cycle, for example, can be reduced and therefore more accessible, the picture of the great cosmic cycles (and an expression such as that of the 'great year' indicates this quite clearly), and as an abridgement, if one may say so, of the very process of universal manifestation; this is what gives astrology all its meaning as a properly 'cosmological' science.

If this is so, the two 'stopping points' of the solar march (this is the etymological meaning of the word 'solstice') must correspond to the two extreme terms of the manifestation, either as a whole or in each of the cycles which constitute it, cycles which are in indefinite multitude, and which are nothing other than the different states or degrees of the Universal Existence. If we wish to apply this more specifically to a cycle of individual manifestation, such as that of existence in the human state, we can easily understand why the two solsticial gates are traditionally designated as the 'door of men' and the 'door of the gods.' The 'door of men,' corresponding to the summer solstice and the Cancer zodiacal sign, is the entry into the individual manifestation; the 'door of the gods,' corresponding in the same way to the winter solstice and to the Capricorn zodiacal sign, is the exit of this same manifestation and the passage to the higher states, since the 'gods' (the *devas* of the Hindu tradition), just as the 'angels' according to another terminology, properly represent,

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<sup>174</sup> See especially *The King of the World*, ch. 3.



from the metaphysical point of view, the supra-individual states of being.<sup>175</sup>

If we consider the distribution of the zodiacal signs according to the four elementary trigons, we see that the sign of Cancer corresponds to the 'depths of the waters,' which is to say, in the cosmogonic sense, to the embryogenic medium which the germs are deposited into the manifested world, germs corresponding in the 'macrocosmic' order, to the *Brahmanda* or the 'Egg of the World,' and, in the 'microcosmic' order, to *pinda*, a formal prototype of individuality, pre-existing in a subtle mode from the beginning of the cyclical event, as constituting one of the possibilities that will have to develop during this event.<sup>176</sup> This can also be related to the fact that this same sign of Cancer is the home of the Moon, whose relationship with the Waters is well known, and which, like the waters itself, represents the passive and plastic principle of manifestation: the lunar sphere is properly the 'world of formation,' or the domain of elaboration of forms in the subtle state, the starting point of existence in the individual mode.<sup>177</sup>

In the astrological symbol of Cancer, we see the germ in the state of half-development which is precisely the subtle state; it is therefore not a question of the bodily embryo, but of the formal prototype of which we have just spoken, and whose existence is situated in the psychic domain of the 'intermediate world.' Moreover, this figure is also that of the Sanskrit *u*, an element which, in the *akshara* or the sacred monosyllable *Om*, constitutes the intermediate term between the point (*m*), representing the non-principal manifestation, and the straight line (*a*), representing the complete development of the manifestation in the gross or corporal state.<sup>178</sup>

What is more, this germ is here double, placed in two inverse positions of one another and thus representing two complementary terms: it

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<sup>175</sup> This point will be more fully explained in a book in preparation on *The Multiple States of the Being*.

<sup>176</sup> See *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, ch. 13. – The constitutive analogy of 'microcosm' and 'macrocosm,' considered in this respect is expressed in the Hindu doctrine by this formula: *Yatha pinda Tathâ Brahmda*, "as the individual (subtle) embryo, so is the World Egg."

<sup>177</sup> See *ibid.*, ch. 21. On a variety of occasions, we have pointed out the identity of the 'world of formation,' or *Yetzirah* in the terminology of Hebrew Kabbalah, with the domain of subtle manifestation.

<sup>178</sup> On these geometric forms corresponding respectively to the three *matras* of *Om*, see *ibid.*, ch. 17. – It should be remembered in this link that the point is the primordial principle of all geometric figures, as the unmanifested is of all states of manifestations, and that, being supra-formal and 'dimensionless,' it is, in this order, the true indivisible unity, which makes it a natural symbol of pure Being.

is the *yang* and the *yin* of the Far Eastern Tradition, where the *yin-yang* symbol that brings them together has the exact same form. This symbol, as representative of the cyclic revolutions, whose phases are related to the alternative predominance of *yang* and of *yin*, is related to other figures of great importance from the traditional point of view, such as that of the *swastika*, and also that of the double spiral which refers to the symbolism of the two hemispheres. These, one luminous and the other dim (*yang*, in its original meaning, is the side of the light, and *yin* the side of shadow), are the two halves of the 'Egg of the World,' linked respectively to the Heavens and the Earth.<sup>179</sup> There is also for each being, always by virtue of the analogy of the 'microcosm' with the 'macrocosm,' the two halves of the primordial Androgyne, which is generally described symbolically as being of spherical form;<sup>180</sup> the spherical form is that of the complete being which is in virtuality in the original germ, and which must be reconstituted in its full plenitude at the end of the individual cyclical development.

It should be noted, furthermore, that the form is also the schema of the conch (*shankha*), which is in obvious relations with the Waters, and which is also represented as containing the seeds of the future cycle during the periods of *pralaya* or of the 'outer dissolution' of the world. This conch encloses the primordial and imperishable sound (*akshara*), the monosyllable *Om*, which is, by its three elements (*matras*), the essence of the triple *Vedas*; and this is how the *Veda* perpetually subsists, being in itself anterior to all the worlds, but somehow hidden or enveloped during the cosmic cataclysms which separate the various cycles, to then be manifested once again at the beginning of each of these.<sup>181</sup> The diagram can also be completed as that of the *akshara* itself, the straight line (*a*) covering and closing the conch (*u*), which contains within its interior the point

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<sup>179</sup> These two hemispheres were represented by the Greeks by the round coifs of the *Dioscuri*, which are the two halves of Leda's egg, which is to say, the swan's egg, which, similar to the snake's egg, represents the 'Egg of the World' (Cf. the Hamsa of the Hindu tradition).

<sup>180</sup> For example, see the speech that Plato, in the *Symposium*, gives to Aristophanes, and which most modern commentators wrongly ignore the symbolic, yet obvious, value. – We have developed the considerations concerning this spherical form in our recent work on *The Symbolism of the Cross*.

<sup>181</sup> The affirmation of the perpetuity of the *Veda* must be directly related to the cosmological theory of the primordality of sound (*shabda* among the sensible qualities, as a proper quality of the Ether, *Akasha*, which is the first of the elements); and this theory itself must be brought closer to that of the 'creation by the Word' in Western traditions: the primordial sound is the Divine Word "by which all things have been made."

(*m*), or the essential principle of beings;<sup>182</sup> the straight line then represents at the same time, by its horizontal direction, the 'surface of the Waters,' that is to say, the substantial environment in which the development of the germs will take place (represented in Eastern symbolism by the blossoming of the Lotus flower) after the end of the period of intermediate obscurity (*Sandhya*) between two cycles. We will then have, in the same schematic representation, a figure that we can describe as the inversion of the conch, opening to let the germs escape, following the straight line now oriented in the descending vertical direction, which is that of the development of the manifestation from its unmanifest principle.<sup>183</sup>

Of these two positions of the conch, which are found in the two halves of the symbol of Cancer, the first corresponds to the figure of Noah's Ark (or *Satyavrata* in the Hindu tradition), which can be represented as the lower bottom of a circumference, closed by its horizontal diameter, and containing inside it the point in which all the germs are synthesized in the state of the complete environment.<sup>184</sup> The second position is then symbolized by the rainbow, appearing 'in the cloud,' which is to say in the region of the superior Waters, at the moment that marks the restoration of order and the renovation of all things, while the Ark, during the cataclysm floated on the inferior Ocean of the Waters; it is therefore the upper half of the same circumference and the union of the two figures, inverse and complementary to each other, forming a single complete circular or cyclic figure, the reconstitution of the primordial spherical shape: this circumference is the vertical section of the sphere whose horizontal section is represented by the circular enclosure of the earthly Paradise.<sup>185</sup> In the *yin-yang* of the Far-East, we find in the inner part of the two half-circumferences, but displaced by a doubling of the center rep-

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<sup>182</sup> By a rather remarkable agreement, this schema is also that of the human ear, the organ of hearing, which must, in order to be adapted to the perception of sound, have a disposition corresponding to the nature of the latter.

<sup>183</sup> This new figure is the one given in the *Archeometer* for the letter  $\pi$ , which corresponds to the Cancer zodiacal.

<sup>184</sup> The half-circumference is to be considered here as a morphological equivalent of the spiral element which we envisaged previously; but in this one clearly shows the development taking place from the initial germ point.

<sup>185</sup> See *The King of the World*, ch. 11. – This is also related to the mysteries of the letter  $\cup$  in the Arabic alphabet.

resenting a polarization which is, for each state of manifestation, the analog of what is *Sat* or of the pure Being in *Purusha-Prakriti* for the Universal Manifestation.<sup>186</sup>

These considerations do not pretend to be complete, and without a doubt only correspond to some of the aspects of the sign of Cancer; but they can at least serve as an example to show that there is in traditional astrology anything other than a 'divinatory art' or a 'conjectural science' as the moderns think. In reality, there is all that is found, under various expressions, in other sciences of the same order, as we have already indicated here in our previous study on the 'Science of Letters,' and what gives these sciences a truly initiatic value, allowing them to be regarded as truly part of 'sacred science.'

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<sup>186</sup> This is a first distinction or differentiation, but still without separation of the complementary; it is at this stage that the constitution of the Androgyne corresponds properly, whereas, prior to this differentiation, we can speak only of the 'neutrality' which is that of the pure Being (see *The Symbolism of the Cross*, ch. 30).

## The Place of the Atlantean Tradition in the Manvantara

*Place de la tradition atlantéenne dans le Manvantara,*  
August-September 1931.

We have previously, in an article published here under the title *Atlantis and Hyperborea*,<sup>187</sup> pointed out the confusion that is too often made between the primordial tradition, originally 'polar' in the literal sense of the word, and whose starting point is the same one of the present *Manvantara*, and the derivative and secondary tradition that was the Atlantean tradition, referred to a much more restricted period. We have said then, and elsewhere at various times,<sup>188</sup> that this confusion can be explained, to a certain extent, by the fact that the subordinate spiritual centers were constituted in the image of the Supreme Center, and that the same denominations have been applied to them. Therefore the Atlantean *Thule*, whose name was preserved in Central America where it was brought by the Toltecs, had to be the seat of a spiritual power which was like an emanation of the Hyperborean *Thule*; and, as this name *Thule* designates Libra, its double meaning is closely related to the transfer of this same designation from the polar constellation of the Great Bear to the zodiacal sign, which still bears the name of Libra. It is also the Atlantean tradition that the transfer of *sapta-riksha* (the symbolic abode of the seven *Rishis*) should be related, at a certain time from the same Great Bear to the Pleiades, a constellation also composed of seven stars, but of a zodiacal situation; what leaves no doubt in this respect is that the Pleiades were called the daughters of Atlas and, as such, are also called Atlanteans.

All this is in keeping with the geographical location of the traditional centers, which is itself linked to their own characteristics, as well as to their respective place in the cyclical period, because everything here is much closer than those who ignore the laws of certain correspondences could suppose. Hyperborea corresponds of course to the North, and Atlantis to the West; and it is remarkable that the very designations of these

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<sup>187</sup> *Le Voile d'Isis*, n° 118, October 1929.

<sup>188</sup> See especially *The King of the World*.

two distinctly different regions may also be confusing, since names of the same root have been applied to both. Indeed, one finds this root in a variety of forms such as *hiber*, *iber*, or *eber*, and also *ereb* by a transposition of letters, designating at the same time the region of winter, which is to say the North, and the region of the evening or the setting sun, which is to say the West, and the peoples who inhabit one and the other; this fact is obviously of the same order as we have just recalled.

The very position of the Atlantean center on the East-West axis indicates its subordination to the Hyperborean center, which is located on the North-South polar axis. Indeed, although these two axes form, in the complete system of the six directions of space, what may be called a horizontal cross, the North-South axis must nevertheless be considered as relatively vertical with respect to the East-West axis, as we have explained elsewhere.<sup>189</sup> One can still, in accordance with the symbolism of the annual cycle, give the first of these two axes the name of the solstitial axis, and the second that of the equinoctial axis; and this helps to understand that the starting point given to the year is not the same in all the traditional forms. The starting point which one can call normal, as being directly in conformity with the Primordial Tradition, is the winter solstice; beginning the year at one of the equinoxes indicates the connection to a secondary tradition, such as the Atlantean tradition.

The latter, on the other hand, being situated in a region which corresponds to the evening in the diurnal cycle, must be regarded as belonging to one of the last divisions of the cycle of the terrestrial humanity of today, so relatively recent; and, in fact, without seeking to give details that would be difficult to justify, we can say that it certainly belongs to the second half of the present *Manvanatara*.<sup>190</sup> In addition, as the autumn in the year corresponds to the evening in the day, we can see a direct allusion to the Atlantean world in what is indicated by the Hebrew tradition (whose name is also that of those who mark the origin of the West), that the world was created at the autumnal equinox (the first day of the month of *Tishri*, following a certain transposition of the letters of the word *Bereshith*); and perhaps this is also the most immediate reason (there are others of a deeper order) from the enunciation of the 'evening'

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<sup>189</sup> See our study on *The Symbolism of the Cross*.

<sup>190</sup> We believe that the duration of the Atlantean civilization must have been equal to a 'great year' understood in the sense of the half-period of procession of the equinoxes; as for the cataclysm that ended there, certain condordant data seem to indicate that it took place 7,200 years before the year of the Kali-Yuga, a year which is itself the starting point of a known epoch, but of which those who still use it today no longer seem to know the origin nor the meaning.

(*ereb*) before the 'morning' (*boqer*) in the story of the 'days' of Genesis.<sup>191</sup> This can be confirmed by the fact that the literal meaning of Adam's name is 'red,' the Atlantean tradition being precisely that of the red race; and it also seems that the Biblical flood corresponds directly to the cataclysm in which Atlantis disappeared, and that, consequently, it must not be identified with the deluge of *Satyavarta* which, following the Hindu tradition, issued directly from the Primordial Tradition, preceded immediately by the beginning of our *Manvantara*.<sup>192</sup> Of course, this meaning that can be labelled as historical does not exclude other meanings; it must never be forgotten that, according to the analogy which exists between a primary cycle and the secondary cycles in which it is subdivided, all the considerations of this order are always susceptible of applications to varying degrees; but what we wish to say is that it seems that the Atlantean cycle was taken as a basis in the Hebrew tradition, that the transmission was done via the Egyptians, which at the least is not implausible through any other means.

If we make this last reservation, it is because it seems particularly difficult to determine how the junction of the current came from the West, after the disappearance of Atlantis, with another current descended from the North and proceeding directly from the Primordial Tradition, a junction from which the constitution of the different traditional forms belonging to the final part of the *Manvantara*. This is not, in any case, a pure and simple reabsorption in the Primordial Tradition, of what had emanated from it in an earlier period; it is a kind of fusion between previously differentiated forms, to give birth to other forms adapted to new circumstances of time and place; and the fact that these two currents appear in some way as autonomous can still contribute to maintaining the illusion of an independence of the Atlantean tradition. No doubt it would be necessary, if one wished to search for the conditions in which this junction takes place, would give particular importance to the Celts and the Chaldeans, whose name, which is synonymous, actually means not a particular people, but rather a sacerdotal caste; but who knows today of the Celtic and Chaldean traditions, as well as that of the ancient Egyptians? One cannot be too cautious when it comes to completely extinct civilizations, and it is certainly not the attempts at reconstitution made by profane archaeologists that are capable of clarifying this question; but it is nonetheless true that many vestiges of a forgotten past come out of

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<sup>191</sup> Among the Arabs also, the use is to count the hours of the day from the *Maghrib*, which is to say, from the sunset.

<sup>192</sup> Par contre, les déluges de *Deucalion* et d'*Ogygès*, chez les Grecs, semblent se rapporter à des périodes encore plus restreintes et à des cataclysmes partiels postérieurs à celui de l'Atlantide.

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the earth in our time, and this cannot be without a purpose. Without risking the slightest prediction of what might result from these discoveries, of which those who make them are generally incapable of suspecting their possible scope, we must certainly see here a 'sign of the times:' should not everything at the end of *Manvantara*, serve as a starting point for the development of the future cycle?



# Sheth

*Sheth*, October 1931.

*Kāna al-insānu ḥayyah fī al-qidam*

("Man was formerly a serpent.")

In the column recently published by our colleague Argos (July issue) devoted to a curious English book on the 'end times,' there is one point which has particularly caught our attention and on which we would like to make some additional clarifications: the interpretation of the names Nimrod and Sheth. As a matter of fact, the link established between the two by E. H. Moggridge calls for some reservations, but there is at least a certain real relation, and the approximations drawn from the animal symbolism seems to us well founded.

Firstly, *namar* in Hebrew, as is *nimr* in Arabic, is properly the 'spotted animal,' a common name for the tiger, panther, and the leopard; and it may even be said according to the most external sense, that these animals represent the 'hunter' that was Nimrod according to the Bible. But, furthermore, the tiger, envisaged in a sense which is not necessarily unfavorable, is, like the bear in the Nordic tradition, a symbol of the Kshatriya; and the foundation of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire by Nimrod seems to be indeed the fact of a revolt of the Kshatriyas against the authority of the Chaldean sacerdotal caste. Hence the legendary relationship established between Nimrod and the *Nephilim* or other antediluvian 'giants,' who also included the Kshatriyas in earlier periods; and from there also the epithet of 'nimrodian' is applied to a temporal power which asserts itself independent of spiritual authority.

Now, what is the relationship of all this with Sheth? The tiger and other similar animals are, as 'destroyers,' emblems of the Egyptian Set, the brother and murderer of Osiris, to which the Greeks attributed the name Typhoon; and it may be said that the 'nimrodian' spirit proceeds from the dark principle designated by the name Set, without, however, claiming that it is one with Nimrod himself; there is a distinction that is more than a simple nuance. But the point that seems to give rise to the greatest difficulty is this evil meaning of the name Set or Sheth, who on the other hand, as he designates the son of Adam, designating the stability and restoration of order. Moreover, if we wish to establish biblical connections, the role of Set vis-à-vis Osiris will recall that of Cain vis-à-

vis Abel; and we note in this connection that some designate Nimrod as one of the 'Cainites' who would have escaped the diluvian cataclysm. But the Sheth of Genesis is opposed to Cain, far from being linked with him, how has his name appeared here?

In fact, the word *Sheth*, in Hebrew proper, really has two opposing meanings, that of 'foundation' and that of 'tumult' and 'ruin';<sup>193</sup> and the expression *beni-Sheth* (son of Sheth) is also given this double meaning. It is true that linguists wish to see in these two distinct words, coming from two different verbal roots, *shith* for the first and *shath* for the second; but the distinction of these two roots appears altogether secondary, and in any case their essential constitutive elements are identical. In reality, this is nothing more than an application of the double meaning of symbols to which we have often had occasion to refer to; and this application relates more particularly to the symbolism of the serpent.

Indeed, if the tiger or the leopard is a symbol of the Egyptian *Set*, the snake is another,<sup>194</sup> and this is easily understood, if one considers it under the malefic aspect which is most commonly attributed to it; but we almost always forget that the snake also has a beneficial aspect, which is also in the symbolism of ancient Egypt, especially in the form of the royal serpent, 'uraeus' or the basilisk.<sup>195</sup> Even in Christian iconography, the serpent is sometimes a symbol of Christ;<sup>196</sup> and the Biblical *Sheth*, whose role in the legend of the Grail we have mentioned elsewhere,<sup>197</sup> is often regarded as a 'prefiguration' of Christ.<sup>198</sup> It can be said that the two *Sheths* are nothing else, at its most basic, than the two serpents of the hermetic

<sup>193</sup> The word is identical in both cases, but, curiously enough, it is masculine in the first and feminine in the second.

<sup>194</sup> It is quite remarkable that the Greek name *Typhon* is anagrammatically formed of the same elements as *Python*.

<sup>195</sup> Let us also remember that the snake appears in the *Kneph* and produces the 'Egg of the World' by its mouth (a symbol of the Word); it is known that this, for the Druids, was likewise the 'egg of the snake' (represented by the fossil sea urchin).

<sup>196</sup> In *The King of the World*, ch. 3, we have mentioned in this respect the figuration of the 'amphisbene' or two-headed serpent, one of which represents Christ and the other Satan.

<sup>197</sup> *The King of the World*, ch. 5.

<sup>198</sup> It is likely that so-called 'Sethian' Gnostics did not differ in reality from the 'Ophites,' for whom the serpent (*ophis*) was the symbol of the Word and Wisdom (*Sophia*).

caduceus:<sup>199</sup> it is, if you will, life and death, both produced by a unique power in its essence, but dual in its manifestation.<sup>200</sup>

If we stop at this interpretation in terms of life and death, although it is in fact only a particular application of the consideration of two contrary or antagonistic terms, it is because the symbolism of the serpent is indeed linked, before everything, to the very idea of life:<sup>201</sup> in Arabic, the snake is *al-ḥayyah*, and life is *al-ḥayah* (in Hebrew *hayah*, is both 'life' and 'animal,' of the *hayi* root which is common to both languages).<sup>202</sup> This, which is related to the symbolism of the 'Tree of Life,'<sup>203</sup> allows at the same time to glimpse a singular relationship of the serpent with Even (*Hawah*, 'the living'); and one can recall here the medieval figurations of the 'temptation' where the body of the serpent wound to the tree is surmounted by a woman's bust.<sup>204</sup> It is no less strange, in Chinese symbolism *Fu-hsi* and his sister *Nu-wa*, who are said to have ruled together, forming a fraternal couple as is also found in ancient Egypt (and even up to the time of the Ptolemies), are sometimes represented with the body of a snake and a human head; and it happens that these two snakes are intertwined like those of the caduceus, without a doubt alluding then to the complementarianism of *yang* and *yin*.<sup>205</sup> Without further pressing, which might carry us far astray, we can see in all this the indication that the serpent head, at times no doubt very remote, an importance that we no longer suspect today; and if one studied all aspects of its symbolism closely, especially in Egypt and India, one might be led to quite unexpected findings.

With regard to the double meaning of symbols, it should be noted that the number 666, too, does not have an exclusively malefic meaning; if it

<sup>199</sup> It is rather curious that the name of *Sheth*, reduced to its essential elements S and T in the Latin alphabet (which is only a form of the Phoenician alphabet) gives the figure of the 'serpent of brass.' With regard to the latter, let us point out that it is actually the same word which in Hebrew means 'snake' (*nahash*) and 'brass' or 'copper' (*nehash*); in Arabic there is another no less strange connection: *nahas* 'calamity,' and *nahās*, 'copper.'

<sup>200</sup> On this point, we can refer to the article we have devoted here to the 'thunder stones.'

<sup>201</sup> This meaning is particularly evident for the serpent that wraps around the staff of Aesculapius.

<sup>202</sup> *Al-Hay* is one of the principal divine names; it must be translated, not as 'the Living' as is often done, but as 'the Vivifying,' the one who gives life or who is the principle of life.

<sup>203</sup> See *The Symbolism of the Cross*, ch. 25.

<sup>204</sup> An example is found at the left portal of the Notre-Dame of Paris.

<sup>205</sup> It is said that *Nu-wa* melted stones of five colors (white, black, red, yellow, blue) to repair a tear in the sky, and also that she cut the four feet of the turtle to lay the four extremities of the world.

is the 'number of the Beast,' it is first of all a solar number, and, as we have said elsewhere,<sup>206</sup> he is of *Hakathriel*, or the 'Angel of the Crown.' On the other hand, this number is also given to the name of *Sorath*, who is, according to the Kabbalists, the solar demon, as opposed to the arch-angel *Michael*, and this refers to the two faces of *Metatron*;<sup>207</sup> *Sorath* is also the anagram of *sthur*, which means 'hidden thing,' is this the 'name of mystery' of which the Apocalypse speaks? But, if *sathar* means 'to hide,' it also means 'to protect;' and, in Arabic, the same word *salar* evokes almost exclusively the idea of protection, and often even divine providential protection;<sup>208</sup> here again, things are so much less simple than those who only view this from one side.

But let us return to the symbolic animals of the Egyptian *Set*: there is still the crocodile, which is self-explanatory, and the hippopotamus, in which some have wished to see the *Behemoth* of the Book of Job, and perhaps not without some reason, for this word (the plural of *behemah*, *bahimah* in Arabic) is properly a collective designation of all the great quadrupeds.<sup>209</sup> But another animal that is at least as important here as the hippopotamus, as amazing as it may seem, is the donkey, and especially the red donkey,<sup>210</sup> who was represented as one of the most formidable entities among all those whom the dead must meet during their journey from beyond the grave, or, esoterically, the initiate during his trials; would it not be here, even more than the hippopotamus, the 'scarlet beast' of the Apocalypse?<sup>211</sup> In any case, one of the most gloomy aspects of the 'typhonian' mysteries;<sup>212</sup> we have some reason to think that,

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<sup>206</sup> *The King of the World*, ch. 5.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 3.

<sup>208</sup> Could one, without too much linguistic fancy, bring up the Greek *soter*, 'savior?' And must it be mentioned in this connection that there can and should be a singular likeness between the designations of Christ (*Al-Māssīḥ*), and that of the Anti-Christ (*Al-Massīḥ*)?

<sup>209</sup> The root *baham* or *abham* means 'to be mute,' and also 'to be hidden;' if the general meaning of *Behemoth* is related to the first of these two ideas, the second can evoke more specifically the animal 'which hides under the reeds;' and here the connection with the meaning of the other *sathar* root of which we have just spoken is rather curious.

<sup>210</sup> Still another strange linguistic rapprochement: in Arabic 'donkey' is called *ḥimar* (in Hebrew *hemor*) and 'red' 'aḥmar; the red donkey would be like the 'brazen serpent,' a kind of 'pleonasm' in phonetic symbolism.

<sup>211</sup> In India, the donkey is the symbolic mount of *Mudevi*, the 'infernal' aspect of *Shakti*.

<sup>212</sup> The role of the donkey in the Gospel tradition, at the birth of Christ and his entry into Jerusalem, may seem at odds with the maleficent character attributed to it almost everywhere else; and the 'feast of the donkey' which was celebrated in the Middle Ages does not seem to have ever been satisfactorily explained: we

in one form or another, it has continued to this day, and some even say that it must last until the end of the current cycle.

From this last point, we want to draw at least one conclusion: to the decline of a civilization, it is the lowest side of its tradition that persists the longest, especially the 'magical' side, which contributes, by the deviations to which it gives rise, to complete its ruin; this is what would have happened, it is said, for Atlantis. This is also the only thing from which the debris has survived for civilizations that have completely disappeared; the observation is easy to make for Egypt, for the Chaldeans, for Druidism; and no doubt the 'fetishism' of the Negro peoples has a similar origin. One could say that sorcery is made of the remains of a dead civilization; is this why the snake, in the most recent epochs, has almost kept only its evil meaning, and that the dragon, the ancient Far-Eastern symbol of the Word, awakens only 'diabolical' ideas in the spirit of Western moderns?

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will be careful not to risk the slightest interpretation on this very obscure subject.

# The Language of Birds

*La Langue des Oiseaux*, November 1931.

*Wa as-ṣāffāti ṣaffan*  
*Fa az-zājirāti zajrā,*  
*Fa at-tāliyāti dhikran*

("By those who range themselves in ranks,  
And those who are so strong in repelling,  
And thus proclaim the invocation!")

(*Qurʾān*, XXXVII, 1-3).

In a variety of traditions, we often speak of a mysterious language called 'the language of birds:' an obviously symbolic designation, for the very importance attributed to the knowledge of this language, as a prerogative of a higher initiation, does not permit it to take it literally. This is also what we read in the *Qurʾān*: "And Solomon was David's heir; and he said: O people! We have been taught the language of birds (*'ulimnā manṭaq at-ṭayrī*) and on us has been bestowed all things." (XXVII, 16). Elsewhere, we have seen dragon-vanquishing heroes, such as Siegfried in the Nordic legends, immediately understand the language of the birds; and this makes it easy to understand the symbolism in question. In fact, the victory over the dragon has the immediate consequence of conquering immortality, represented by some object of which this dragon has defended the approach; and this conquest of immortality essentially implies reintegration at the center of the human state, that is, at the point where communication with the higher states of being is established. It is this very communication that is represented by the understanding of the language of birds; and, indeed, birds are frequently taken as a symbol of angels, that is, precisely the higher states. We have had the opportunity to cite elsewhere,<sup>213</sup> the Evangelical parable where, in this meaning, it is a question of the 'birds of the sky' coming to rest upon the branches of the tree, of the same tree which represents the axis passing through the center of each state of being and linking all states together.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, ch. 3.

<sup>214</sup> In the medieval symbol of the *Peridexion* (a corruption of *Paradision*), we see the birds upon the branches of the tree and the dragon at its foot (see *The Symbolism of the Cross*, ch. 9). – In a study on the symbolism of the 'bird of paradise'

In the Qur'ānic text we reproduced above, the term *as-ṣāffāt* is considered to literally designate birds, but symbolically applied to angels (*al-mala'ikah*); and so the first verse signifies the constitution of celestial or spiritual hierarchies.<sup>215</sup> The second verse expresses the angels' struggle against demons, celestial powers against the infernal powers, that is, the opposition of the higher and lower states;<sup>216</sup> it is, in the Hindu tradition, the struggle of the *Devas* against the *Asuras*, and also, according to a symbolism quite similar to what we are dealing with here, the fight of the *Garuda* against the *Naga*, in which we find, furthermore, the snake or dragon that we mentioned earlier; the *Garuda* is agile, and elsewhere it is replaced by other birds such as the ibis, the stork, the heron, all enemies and destroyers of reptiles.<sup>217</sup> Finally, in the third verse, we see the angels reciting the *dhikr*, which, in the most common interpretation, is considered as having been the recitation of the *Quran*, not, of course, of the *Quran* expressed in the human language, but from its eternal prototype inscribed on the 'guarded tablet (*al-lawḥ al-laḥfūz*), which extends from heaven to earth as Jacob's ladder, hence through all the degrees of Universal Existence.<sup>218</sup> Similarly, in the Hindu tradition, it is said that the *Devas*, in their struggle against the *Asuras*, protected themselves (*acchan dayan*) by reciting the hymns of the *Veda*, and that for this reason the

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(*Le Rayonnement Intellectuel*, May-June 1930), Mr. L. Charbonneau-Lassay reproduced a sculpture in which the bird is figured with only a head and wings, a form under which angels are often represented.

<sup>215</sup> The word *ṣāff*, 'rank,' is one of those, beside many others, in which some wish to find the origin of the terms *sūfī* and *taṣawwuf*, although this derivation does not appear to be acceptable from the purely linguistic point of view, it is none the less true that, like many others of the same type, it represents one of those ideas actually contained within these terms, because the 'spiritual hierarchies' are essentially identified with the degrees of initiation.

<sup>216</sup> This opposition is expressed in every being by that of the two ascending and descending tendencies, called *sattwa* and *tamas* by the Hindu doctrine. It is also that which Mazdaism symbolizes by the antagonism of the light and darkness, respectively personified in *Ormuzd* and *Ahriman*.

<sup>217</sup> On this subject, see the remarkable works of Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay on the animal symbols of Christ. It is important to note that the symbolic opposition of the bird and the snake only applies when the latter is considered in its evil aspect; on the contrary, in its beneficial aspect, it sometimes unites with the bird, known in the figure of the *Quetzalcohuatl* of the ancient American traditions; moreover, we also find in Mexico the fight of the eagle against the snake. In the case of the association of the bird and the snake, one can recall the text of the Gospel: "Be gentle as doves and wise as serpents" (Matthew, X, 16).

<sup>218</sup> On the symbolism of the Book, to which this directly relates, see *The Symbolism of the Cross*, ch. 14.

hymns were given the name of *chhandas*, a word which properly designates the 'rhythm.' The same idea is contained in the word *dhikr*, which, in Islamic esoterism, applies to rhythmic formulas corresponding exactly to the Hindu *mantras*, formulas whose repetition is intended to produce a harmonization of the various elements of the being, and to determine vibrations that, through their repercussion through the series of states, can induce an indefinite hierarchy to open up a communication with the higher states, which is, generally, the reason for essential and primordial being of all rites.

We are thus brought back directly, as we see, to what we have said at the beginning regarding the 'language of the birds' which we can also call 'angelic languages,' and whose image in the human world is the rhythmic language, because it is on the 'science of rhythm,' which has many applications, that all the means that can be used to communication with the higher states are ultimately based. This is why an Islamic tradition says that Adam, in the terrestrial Paradise, spoke in verse, that is, in rhythmic language; this is the 'Syriac language' (*loghah suryānīyyah*) of which we spoke in our previous study on the 'science of letters' and which must be regarded as directly translating 'solar' and 'angelic illumination' as it manifests itself at the center of the human state. This is also why the Sacred Books are written in rhythmic language, which, as we can see, is quite different from the simple 'poems' in the purely profane sense that the anti-traditional bias of modern 'critics' seeks to see; and, moreover, poetry, originally, was not that vain 'literature' which it has become by a degeneration explained by the downward march of the human cycle, and it had a true sacred character.<sup>219</sup> It can be traced back to classical Western antiquity, where poetry was still called 'the language of the Gods,' an expression equivalent to those we have indicated since the 'Gods,' that is to say the *Devas*,<sup>220</sup> are, like the angels, representations of the higher states. In Latin, the verses were called *carmina*, a designation which related to their use in the performance of rites, for the word *carmen* is identical to the Sanskrit *Karma*, which must be taken here in

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<sup>219</sup> It may be said, more generally, that the arts and sciences have become profane only by such a degeneration, which has robbed them of their traditional character and, consequently, of all significance of a higher order; we explained ourselves on this subject in *The Esoterism of Dante*, ch. 2, and *The Crisis of the Modern World*, ch. 4 (see also *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, ch. 8).

<sup>220</sup> The Sanskrit *Deva* and Latin *Deus* are one and the same word.



its special meaning of ‘ritual action;’<sup>221</sup> and the poet himself, the interpreter of the ‘sacred language’ through which the Divine Word transpires, was *vates*, a word that characterized him as endowed with a prophetic inspiration. Later, by another degeneration, the *vates* was no more than a vulgar ‘diviner,’<sup>222</sup> and the *carmen* (hence the English word ‘charm’) an ‘enchantment,’ which is to say an operation of low magic; this is another example of the fact that magic, or even sorcery, is what remains as the last vestiges of lost traditions.

These few indications will suffice, we believe, to show how wrong are those who wish to make fun of stories about the ‘language of the birds;’ it is really too easy and too simple to treat disdainfully all ‘superstitions’ that one does not understand; but the elders, they knew very well what they said when they used the symbolic language. The true ‘superstition,’ in the strictly etymological sense (*quod superstat*), is what survives of itself, that is, the ‘dead letter;’ but this preservation, so unworthy of interest as it may seem, is not so despicable for the mind, which ‘breathes where it wills,’ and when it wills, it can always arrive to revitalize the symbols and the rites, and restore to them, with their lost meaning, the fullness of their original virtue.

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<sup>221</sup> The word ‘poetry’ also derives from the Greek word *poiein*, which has the same meaning as the Sanskrit root *Kri*, from which *Karma* originates, and which is found in the Latin verb *creare* understood in its primitive meaning; originally, it was something quite different from the mere production of an artistic or literary work, in the profane sense that Aristotle seems to have only in mind when speaking of what he called ‘poetic sciences.’

<sup>222</sup> The word ‘diviner’ itself is no less deviated from its original meaning, because etymologically it is nothing else than *divinus*, meaning here ‘interpreter of the gods.’ – The ‘auspices’ (from *aves spicere*, ‘observe the birds’), omens were drawn from the flight and song of the birds, are more especially compared to the ‘language of the birds,’ understood then in the most material sense, but nevertheless identified still to the ‘language of the gods’ since these were regarded as manifesting their will by these omens and the birds thus played a role as ‘messengers’ similar to that which is generally attributed to angels (hence their very name, since this is exactly the proper meaning of the Greek word *angelos*), although taken from a very inferior aspect.

## Some Remarks on the Name Adam

*Quelques remarques sur le nom d'Adam*, December 1931.

In our article on “The Place of the Atlantean Tradition in the Manvantara” (August-September special issue), we said that the literal meaning of *Adam*’s name is ‘red,’ and that we can see here a hint of the connection between the Hebrew tradition and the Atlantean tradition, which was that of the red race. Furthermore, our colleague Argos, in his fascinating chronicle on ‘blood and some of its Mysteries’ (October issue), considers for the same meaning of *Adam* a derivation that may seem different: after having recalled the usual interpretation that it would mean ‘drawn from the earth’ (*adamah*), he wonders if it would rather come from the word *dam* ‘blood;’ but the difference is only apparent, all these words actually having one and the same root.

Firstly, it should be noted that from the linguistic point of view, the vulgar etymology, which amounts to deriving *Adam* from *adamah*, translated as ‘earth,’ is impossible; reverse derivation would be more plausible; but, in fact, both substantives come from one and the same verbal root *adam*, which means ‘to be red.’ *Adamah* is not, originally at least, the earth in general (*erets*), nor the element of earth (*yabashah*, a word whose primitive meaning indicates ‘drought’ as the characteristic quality of this element); it is properly the red clay, which, by its plastic properties, is particularly apt to represent a certain potentiality, a capacity to receive forms; and the work of the potter has often been taken as a symbol of the production of beings manifested from undifferentiated primordial substance. It is for this reason that the ‘red earth’ seems to have a special importance in Hermetic symbolism, where it can be mistaken for one of the figures of the ‘raw material,’ although, if we understood it literally it can only play a role in a very relative way since it already has definite properties. Let us add that the relationship between a designation of the earth and the name of *Adam*, taken as a type of humanity, is found in another form in the Latin language, where the word *humus*, ‘earth,’ is also singularly close to *homo* and *humanus*. Moreover, if one relates more specifically the same name *Adam* to the tradition of the red race, this becomes in accordance with the earth among the elements, as with the West among the cardinal points, and this final concordance still comes to justify what we said previously.

As for the word *dam*, 'blood' (which is common to both Hebrew and Arabic), it is also derived from the same root *adam*;<sup>223</sup> blood is properly the red liquid, which is, indeed, its most immediately apparent character. The kinship between this designation of blood and the name *Adam* is therefore incontestable and can be explained by the derivation of a common root; but this derivation appears as direct for both, and it is not possible, from the verbal root *edam*, to pass through *dam* to arrive at *Adam*'s name. It is true, one could consider things in another way, which is less strictly linguistic, and say that it is because of his blood that man is called 'red;' but such an explanation is unsatisfactory, because the fact of having blood is not peculiar to man, but is common between him and animal species, so that he cannot serve to be characterized by this. In fact, the color red is, in Hermetic symbolism, that of the animal kingdom, as the color green is that of the vegetable kingdom, and the color white of the mineral kingdom;<sup>224</sup> and this, with regards to the color red, can be related precisely to blood being considered as the seat, or more properly, the support of the proper animal vitality. On the other hand, if we return to the more particular relation of the name *Adam* to the red race, this does not seem, in spite of its color, to be put in relation with a predominance of blood in the organic constitution, because the blood temperament corresponds to fire among the elements, and not to the earth; and it is the black race that is in correspondence with the fire element, as it is with the South among the cardinal points.

Note also, among the derivatives of the root *adam*, the word *edom*, which means 'red,' and which differs from the name of *Adam* by the diacritics; in the Bible, *Edom* is a nickname of Esau, hence the name Edomites given to his descendants, and that of Idumea to the country that they inhabited (and which, in Hebrew, is also *Edom*, but feminine). This reminds us of the 'seven kings of Edom' mentioned in the *Zohar*, and *Edom*'s close resemblance to *Adam* may be one of the reasons this name is taken here to refer to the lost humanities, which is to say those of the previous *Manvantaras*.<sup>225</sup> We also see the relation that this last point presents with the question of what we have called the 'pre-Adamites:' if we take *Adam* as the origin of the red race and its particular tradition, it can simply be a matter of the other races that have preceded the former in

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<sup>223</sup> The initial *aleph*, which exists in the root, disappears into the derivative, which is not an exceptional fact; this *aleph* does not constitute a prefix with an independent meaning as Latouche thinks, whose linguistic conceptions are too often fanciful.

<sup>224</sup> On the symbolism of these three colors, see our study on *The Esoterism of Dante*.

<sup>225</sup> See *The King of the World*, ch. 6.

the course of the present human cycle; if we take it in a more extended sense, as the prototype of all present humanity, it will be these earlier humanities to which the 'seven kings of Edom' precisely allude to. In any case, the discussions to which this question gave rise appears quite useless, for there should be no difficulty there; in fact, there is none, at least for the Islamic tradition, in which there is a *ḥadīth* (word of the Prophet) saying that "before the Adam we know, God created one hundred thousand Adams" (which is to say an indeterminable number), which is an affirmation as clear as possible of the multiplicity of cyclic periods and corresponding humanities.

Since we have alluded to blood as the pillar of vitality, we will recall that, as we have already had occasion to explain in one of our works,<sup>226</sup> blood is indeed one of the bonds of the corporeal organism with the subtle state of the living being, which is properly the 'soul' (*nephesh haiah* of Genesis), which is, the etymological meaning (*anima*), the animator principle or vivification of the being. The subtle state is called *Taijasa* by the Hindu tradition, by analogy with *tejas* or the igneous element; and, as fire is, for its own qualities, polarized between light and heat, the subtle state is related to the bodily state in two different and complementary ways, by the blood as to the caloric quality, and by the nervous system to the luminous quality. In fact, blood is, even from a physiological point of view, the vehicle of the animating heat; and this explains the correspondence, which we have indicated above, of the blood temperament with the element fire. Furthermore, it can be said that in fire, light represents the higher aspect, and heat the inferior aspect: Islamic tradition teaches that angels were created from 'divine fire' (or 'divine light'), and that those who revolted after Iblis lost the brightness of their nature keeping only a dark heat.<sup>227</sup> As a result, it can be said that the blood is in direct relation with the inferior side of the subtle state; and from this comes the prohibition of blood as food, its absorption entailing that of what is most gross in animal vitality, and which, assimilating and intimately mingling with the physical elements of man, can actually bring about very serious consequences. Hence the frequent use of blood in the practices of magic or even sorcery (as attracting the 'infernal' entities by conformity of nature); but, on the other hand, this is also likely under certain conditions to be transposed into a higher order, hence the rites, whether religious or even initiatic (such as the Mithraic 'taurobolium'), involving animal sacrifices; as it has been said that the sacrifice of Abel

<sup>226</sup> *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta*, ch. 14; Cf. also *The Spiritist Fallacy*, pp. 116-119.

<sup>227</sup> This is indicated in the link which exists in Arabic between the words *nūr*, 'light,' and *nār*, 'fire,' (in the sense of heat).

is opposed to Cain's bloodless sacrifice, we may return to this point on a future occasion.

# Cain and Abel

*Caïn et Abel*, January 1932.

In concluding our previous article, we referred to the opposition of Cain and Abel in Biblical symbolism, and more particularly to the aspect under which this opposition manifests itself in sacrificial rites: Cain's offering of vegetables, and Abel's offering of animals. This is naturally linked to the type of life that is attributed to them respectively: Cain is represented as a farmer, and Abel as a shepherd. These are the two types of people that have existed since the beginning of humanity, or at least since there has been an initial differentiation; the sedentary, devoted to the cultivation of the earth; nomads, herding livestock;<sup>228</sup> and each of these two categories having their own law, different from each other, and adapted to the nature of their occupations. It may be noted immediately in this connection, that the Hebrew *Torah* is connected with the law of the nomadic peoples: hence the way in which the tale of Cain and Abel is presented, which from the point of view of settled peoples would be susceptible to another interpretation; hence also the disapproval of certain arts and industries which are properly adapted to the settled, and especially to all that pertains to the construction of fixed dwellings. It was such until the time when Israel ceased to be nomadic, which is to say until the time of David and Solomon; and we know that in order to build the Temple it was necessary to call on foreign workers.

It is naturally the farming peoples who, being sedentary, build cities; and in fact it is said that the first city was founded by Cain himself. The works of these people are, one may say, works of time: fixed in space to

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<sup>228</sup> These are the essential and primordial occupations of these two human types; the rest is accidental, derivative, or added later, and to speak of hunting peoples, fishermen, etc., as modern ethnologists do, it is to take the accidental for the most part, or to refer to only more or less later anomalies or degenerations. – The denominations of *Iran* and *Turan*, whose designations of race were intended to actually represent sedentary and nomadic peoples respectively; *Iran* or *Aryana* comes from the word *arya* (hence *aryana* by elongation, which means 'plowman' (derived from the root *ar*, which is found in the Latin *arare*, *arator*, and also *arvum* 'field'); and the use of the word *arya* as an honorific designation (for higher castes) is, therefore, characteristic of the peasant peoples.

a strictly delimited domain, they develop their activity in a temporal continuity which appears to them as indefinite. On the other hand, the nomadic and pastoral peoples do not build anything lasting, and do not work for a future that escapes them; but they have before them space, which has no limitations that oppose them, but on the contrary constantly opens to them new possibilities. We thus find the correspondence of the cosmic principles to which the symbolism of Cain and Abel relates in another order: the principle of compression, represented by time; the principle of expansion, by space. To tell the truth, both of these principles are manifested both in time and space, as with all things, and it is necessary to make a remark to resolve certain apparent oppositions that we do not have to consider right now; but the action of the first predominates in the temporal condition, and the second in the spatial condition. Time uses space, so to speak, thus affirming its role as 'devourer,' and over the ages the sedentary gradually absorbs the nomad: this is a social and historical meaning of the murder of Abel by Cain.

The activity of the nomads is exercised over the animal kingdom, mobile just like them; that of sedentaries takes as its object the two fixed kingdoms, the plant and the mineral.<sup>229</sup> Furthermore, by the nature of things, the sedentary people come to form visual symbols, images made of varying substances, but which, from the point of view of their essential meaning always returns more or less directly to geometric schematism, the origin and base of any spatial formation. On the other hand, the nomads, to whom images are forbidden, just as everything that tends to attach them to a specific place, form sound symbols, the only ones which are compatible with their state of constant migration.<sup>230</sup> But it is remarkable that among the sensible faculties, sight has a direct relationship with space and hearing with time: the elements of the visual symbol express themselves simultaneously, those of the sound symbol in succession; therefore, in this order there is a kind of reversal of the relations that we have previously envisaged. Thus, the sedentary creates visual arts (architecture, sculptures, paintings), which is to say the art forms that unfold in space; the nomads create phonetic arts (music, poetry), which is to say

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<sup>229</sup> The use of mineral elements includes construction and metallurgy: there is much to say about the latter, that which is of Biblical symbolism relates to Tubalcain.

<sup>230</sup> The distinction of these two fundamental theories of symbols is, in the Hindu tradition, that of the *yantra*, the figurative symbol, and the *mantra*, the sound symbol; it naturally entails a corresponding distinction between the rites in which these symbols are used respectively, although there is not always such a clear separation, and, in fact, all combinations are possible here.

the art forms that take place in time; because all art, at its origin, is essentially symbolic and ritual, and it is only by a later degeneration, or even likely very recently, that it loses this sacred character to become the purely profane game to which it has been reduced in our contemporary.<sup>231</sup>

Here is the complementarism of the conditions of existence: those who work for time are stabilized in space; those who wander in space are constantly changing with time. Here is where the antinomy of the 'opposite meaning' appears: those who live according to time, a changing and destructive element, fix themselves and preserve; those who live according to space, a fixed and permanent element, disperse and change incessantly. This must be so that the existence of each remains possible, by a kind of relative equilibrium between the terms representative of two opposite tendencies; if only one of these two tendencies were in action, the end would come soon, either by crystallization or by volatilization, if it is permissible to use in this respect symbolic expressions which must evoke 'coagulation' and the alchemical 'solution.' In fact, we are here in a field where all the consequences of the cosmic dualities are particularly clear, images or reflections of a more or less distant first duality of 'essence-substance' (*Purusha-Prakriti*), which generates and governs any manifestation.

But the animal sacrifice is fatal to Abel,<sup>232</sup> and Cain's offering of plants is not accepted;<sup>233</sup> whoever is blessed dies, whoever lives is accursed. The balance on both sides is broken; how to restore it, if not by exchanges such that each has its share of the production of the other? Thus, move-

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<sup>231</sup> What we say here about the arts also applies to the sciences: the secular science of the moderns represents only a sort of residue of old traditional science, separate from its principle, and subsequently emptied of its profound meaning: the external and superficial development of this profane science (especially in regards to practical applications) must not be misleading in this respect.

<sup>232</sup> As Abel shed the blood of animals, his blood is shed by Cain; there is here the expression of a 'law of compensation,' according to which the partial imbalances, in which consists all manifestations, are integrated in total equilibrium.

<sup>233</sup> However, it is important to note that the Hebrew Bible admits the validity of bloodless sacrifices considered within itself: such is the case with Melchizedek's sacrifice of bread and wine; but this refers to the rite of the Vedic *Soma* and the perpetuation of the Primordial Tradition, beyond the specialized form of the Hebrew tradition, and even beyond the distinction of the law of sedentary peoples and that of nomadic peoples. – The acceptance of Abel's sacrifice and the rejection of Cain's are sometimes figured in a rather curious symbolic form: the smoke of the first rises vertically towards the sky, while that of the second spreads horizontally on the surface of the Earth.



ment associates time and space, being in a way resultant of their combination, and reconciles in them the two opposing tendencies of which we have spoken; movement itself is still only a series of imbalances, but the sum of these forms the relative equilibrium compatible with the law of manifestation or 'becoming.' All exchange between beings is a movement, or rather a set of two inverse and reciprocal movements, which harmonizes and compensates one another; here, equilibrium is thus realized directly by the very fact of this compensation.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Equilibrium, harmony, justice, are only three forms or three aspects of one and the same thing; in a sense, we could make them correspond to the three areas we are speaking about, respectively.

# The Symbolism of the Theater

*Le symbolisme du théâtre*, February 1932.

In a recent article (November 1931 issue), Mr. Clavelle rightfully pointed out that there is a symbolism of theater, just as we have spoken on a variety of occasions that there is a symbolism of journeys, pilgrimage, navigation, and war. Furthermore, this can be related to what we have already said about the primacy of the arts, sciences, and even trades,<sup>235</sup> all possessing a symbolic value by the fact that they were attached to a superior principle, from which they derived contingent applications, and which became purely 'profane' solely as a result of the spiritual degeneration of humanity in the course of the downward march of its historical cycle.

It may be said, generally speaking, that the theater is a symbol of manifestation, of which it expresses the illusory character as perfectly as possible; this symbolism can be considered from the point of view of the actor, or from the point of view of the theater itself. The actor is, as Mr. Clavelle says, "a symbol of the Personality manifested as an indefinite series of individualities, until the day when he puts down the mask of his final role and leaves to never return to the scene of the manifested." Note here the significance of the ancient usage of the mask and the perfect accuracy of this symbolism: indeed, under the mask the actor remains himself in all his roles, as the Personality is 'unaffected' by all its manifestations; on the contrary, the suppression of the mask forces the actor to modify his own physiognomy and thus seems to alter in some way his essential identity. However, in all cases the actor remains fundamentally something else than what he appears to be, just as the Personality is something other than the manifold states of the manifested, which are only the external and changing appearances of which it is clothed to realized, according to the various modes which suit their nature, the indefinite possibilities which it contains within itself in the permanent actuality of the non-manifest.

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<sup>235</sup> Let us note in this connection that the distinction between the arts and the crafts, between the 'artist' and the 'artisan,' does not have the importance or value generally assumed for them; it took the decay from the profession to the mechanical occupation for art to be distinguished and to make it into a higher category.

If we go to the other point of view, we can say that the theater is an image of the world: one and the other are properly a 'representation,' because the world itself, existing only as a consequence and expression of the Principle of which it depends essentially in all that is, can be regarded as symbolizing in its own way the principal order, and this symbolic character confers on it a value superior even to what is within itself since this is where it participates in a higher degree of reality.<sup>236</sup> In Arabic, the theater is designated by the word *tamthīl*, which, like all those derived from the same root *mathl*, has the proper meaning of resemblance, comparison, image, or figure; and some Muslim theologians use the expression *alam tamthīl*, which could be translated as a 'figurative world,' to designate everything in the sacred scriptures that is described in symbolic terms which should not be taken literally. It is remarkable that some apply this expression in particular to angels and demons, who effectively 'represent' the higher and lower states of being; furthermore, we know the considerable role that these angels and demons played in the religious theater of the Western Middle Ages.

Indeed, theater is not necessarily limited to represent the human world, which is a single state of manifestation; it can also represent the superior and inferior worlds at the same time. In the 'mysteries' of the Middle Ages the scene was, for this reason, divided into several stages corresponding to different worlds, generally distributed according to the ternary division: Heaven, Earth, Hell; and the action played simultaneously in these different divisions represented the simultaneity of the states of being. The moderns, no longer understanding this symbolism, have come to regard it as a 'naïvety,' which is not to say a dullness, precisely having the most profound meaning here; and what is astonishing is the rapidity with which this misunderstanding, so striking in the writers of the seventeenth century has appeared; this radical break between the Middle Ages and modern times is not one of the least puzzles in history.

Since we have just spoken of the 'mysteries,' we do not think it is useless to point out the singularity of this denomination that has a dual meaning: one should, in all etymological rigor, write 'misteries,' because this word is derived from the Latin *ministerium*, meaning 'office' or 'function,' which clearly indicates to what extent the theatrical representations of this kind were originally considered as an integral part of the celebration of religious holidays. But what is strange is that this name has contracted and abbreviated so as to become exactly the namesake of

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<sup>236</sup> The consideration of the world, either as related to the Principle, or only in what it is in itself, is what fundamentally differentiates the traditional sciences and the secular sciences.

‘mysteries;’ and to finally be confused with this other work of Greek origins with a derivation that is far different; is it only by allusion to the ‘mysteries’ of religion, staged in the designated rooms that this assimilation may have occurred? This can likely be a plausible reason; on the other hand, if one thinks that similar symbolic representations took place in the ‘mysteries’ of antiquity, in Greece and probably also in Egypt as Mr. Clavelle has noted, one may be tempted to see there something that goes much farther, and as an indication of the continuity of a certain esoteric and initiatic tradition, affirming itself outside at more or less distant intervals, by similar manifestations, with the adaptations required by the diversity of circumstance of time and place. Moreover, we have often had occasion to point out the importance, as a process of symbolic language, of phonetic assimilations between philologically distinct words; in truth, there is something there which is not arbitrary, whatever our contemporaries may think of it, and which is rather directly related to the modes of interpretation pertaining to the Hindu *nirukta*; but the secrets of the intimate constitution of language are so completely lost today that it is hardly possible to refer to it without everyone imagining that it is a question of ‘false etymologies,’ or even vulgar ‘wordplays,’ and Plato himself in his *Cratylus*, does not find favor with the pseudo-scientific ‘criticism’ of minds limited by modern prejudices.

To conclude these notes, we will again indicate in the symbolism of theater another point of view, that which relates to the dramatic author: the different characters, being mental productions of him, can be regarded as representing secondary modifications and in a way extensions of himself, in much the same way as the subtle forms produced in the dream state.<sup>237</sup> The same consideration would, naturally, apply to the production of every type of imaginative work; but, in the particular case of the theater, it is special that this production is realized in a sensible way, giving the very image of life as it also takes place in the dream. In this respect, the author has a truly ‘демиургic’ function, since he produces a world that he draws entirely from himself; and it is in this, the very symbol of the Being producing the universal manifestation. In this case as well as in that of the dream, the essential unity of the producer of the ‘illusory forms’ is not affected by the multiplicity of accidental modifications, any more than the unity of the Being is affected by the multiplicity of the manifestation. Thus, from whatever point of view one finds oneself, one always finds in the theater that character which is its profound reason, unknown as it can be for those who are purely profane, which forms by its very nature one of the most perfect symbols of universal manifestation.

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<sup>237</sup> See our recent work on *The Multiple States of the Being*, ch. 6.

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

*Le Langage secret de Dante et des « Fidèles d'Amour »,  
March 1932.*

We have previously devoted an article here (in February 1929) to the important work published under this same title by Mr. Luigi Valli; last year we learned of the sudden and premature death of the author, whose other studies we had hoped were no less worthy of interest; then a second volume came to us bearing the same title as the first and containing within it the answers to the objections which were targeted at the thesis, and a number of additional notes.<sup>238</sup>

Objections, bearing witness to a misunderstanding for which we have no reason to be surprised as it easily foreseen, which can be reduced almost entirely to two categories: some emanate from 'literary critics' imbued with all the scholarly and academic prejudices, and others from Catholic circles where they do not wish to admit that Dante belonged to an initiatic organization; all agree, albeit for different reasons, to deny the existence of esoterism, even where it appears with the most manifest evidence. The author seems to attach a greater importance to the former, which he discusses at much greater lengths than the latter; for ourselves, we would have been tempted to do the exact opposite, seeing in the latter a much more serious symptom of the distortion of the modern mentality; but this difference of perspective is explained by the special point of view to which Mr. Valli wishes to place himself in, which is that of a 'research' and a historian. From this far too exterior point of view results a number of gaps and inaccuracies of language which we have already pointed out in our previous article; Mr. Valli recognizes, precisely in connection with this, that "he has never had contact with initiatic traditions of any kind," and that "his mental training is clearly critical;" it is all the more remarkable then that he has arrived at conclusions so far removed from those of ordinary 'criticisms,' which is rather astonishing on the part of someone who affirms his wish to be 'a man of the twentieth century.' It is none

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<sup>238</sup> *Il Linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei « Fedeli d'Amore », vol. II (Discussion e note aggiunte); Biblioteca di Filosofia e Scienza, Rome: Casa editrice 'Optima.'*

the less regrettable that he refuses to be biased in comprehending the notion of traditional orthodoxy, that he persists in applying the unfortunate term 'sects' to initiatic and non-religious organizations, and that he denies having confused the 'mystic' and the 'initiate,' when he precisely repeats this again throughout this second volume; but these faults must not prevent us from recognizing the great merit of this 'layman,' of which he wishes to be and to remain, who has seen a good part of the truth in spite of all the obstacles that his education naturally brings with it, and to have said it without fear of the contradictions which would be attracted by those who have some interest in all this being disregarded.

We will note only two or three typical examples from the misunderstandings of the academic 'critics:' some have even claimed that poetry which is beautiful cannot be symbolic; it seems to them that a work of art can only be admired if it means nothing, and that the existence of a profound meaning destroys its artistic value! This is clearly expressed as clearly as possible, this 'profane' conception which we have recently pointed out on several occasions, with regards to art in general, and poetry in particular, as a completely modern degeneration and as contrary to the character that the arts, as well as the sciences, originally possessed and they always had in any traditional civilization. Note in this conception a rather interesting formula quoted by Mr. Valli: in all medieval art, as opposed to modern art, "it is about the incarnation of an idea, and not of the idealization of a reality;" we would say a reality of a sensory order, because the idea is also a reality, and even of a higher degree; this 'incarnation of the idea' in a form is nothing else than the same symbolism.

Others have made a really comical objection: it would be 'wretched,' they claim, to write in 'jargon,' which is to say in conventional language; they obviously see in this a kind of cowardice and concealment. As a matter of fact, Mr. Valli himself insisted, perhaps a bit too exclusively, and as we have already noted, on the desire of the 'Fedeli d'Amore' to hide for reasons of prudence; it is indisputable that this actually existed, and it was a necessity imposed on them by circumstance; but this is only the slightest and most external reason for their usage of a language that was not only conventional but also, and above all, symbolic. Similar examples would be found in other circumstances, where there would have been no danger in speaking clearly if this had been possible; it can be said that, even then, there was an advantage in excluding those who were not 'qualified,' which is already a concern other than a simple prudence; but what must be said above all is that truths of a certain order, by their very nature, can only express themselves symbolically.

Finally, there are some who have found the existence of a symbolic poetry unlikely in the 'Fedeli d'Amore' because it would constitute a

‘unique case,’ whereas Mr. Valli had endeavored to show precisely that the same had existed in the Orient at the same time, especially in Persian poetry. One may even add that this symbolism of love has sometimes also been used in India; and to stick to the Muslim world, it is rather odd that one always speaks almost exclusively in this respect of Persian poetry, whereas one can easily find similar examples in Arabic poetry, of a character which is no less esoteric, for example in ‘Umar ibn Al-Fāriḍ. Let us add that many other ‘veils’ have been also used in the poetic expressions of Ṣūfism, including that of skepticism, examples of which are ‘Umar al-Khayyām and Abū al-‘Alā‘ al-Ma‘arrī; especially for the latter, very few know that he was in fact a high-ranking initiate; and, as we have not seen it said elsewhere so far, it is particularly curious for the subject before us that his *Risālat al-Ghufrān* could be regarded as one of the principal Islamic ‘sources’ of the *Divine Comedy*.

As for the obligation imposed on all members of an initiatic organization to write in verse, it was perfectly in keeping with the character of the ‘sacred language’ of poetry; as Mr. Valli quite rightly states, it was far more than “to make literature,” a goal that Dante and his contemporaries never had, which, he adds ironically, “were wrong in not having read the books of modern criticism. Even in very recent times, in certain esoteric Muslim fraternities, each year on the occasion of the Shaykh’s *mawlid*, each have to present a composed poem in which he strove, even at the expense of the perfection of form, to enclose a more or less profound doctrinal meaning.

With regards to the new notes made by Mr. Valli and which pave the way for further research, one of them relates to the links between Joachim de Fiore with the ‘Fedeli d’Amore:’ *Fiore* is one of the most common symbols in poetry of this type, synonymous with *Rosa*; and, under this title *Fiore*, an Italian adaptation of the *Roman de la Rose* was written by a Florentine named Durante, who is almost certainly Dante himself.<sup>239</sup> Furthermore, the name of the convent of *San Giovanni di Fiore*, from which *Gioacchino di Fiore* took his name, does not appear anywhere before him; is it he who gave himself this, and why has he chosen this name? Remarkably, Joachim de Fiore speaks in his works of a symbolic ‘widow,’ just as Francesco da Barberino and Giovanni Boccaccio did, both of which belonged to the ‘Fedeli d’Amore;’ and we will add that, even today, this ‘widow’ is well known in Masonic symbolism. In this regard, it is unfortunate that political concerns seem to have prevented Mr. Valli from making some very striking comparisons; no doubt, he is right to say that the initiatic organizations in question are not Masonic, but between them the link is unquestionable; is it not curious, for example, that the

<sup>239</sup> *Dante* is indeed a contradiction of *Durante*, which was his real name.

'wind' has exactly the same significance in the language of the 'Fedeli d'Amore' as 'rain' in that of Masonry?

Another important point is that concerning the relationship of the 'Fedeli d'Amore' with the alchemists: a particularly significant symbol in this respect can be found in Francesco de Barberni's *Documenti d'Amore*. It is a figure in which twelve characters arrange symmetrically and which form six couples representing so many initiatic degrees, leads to a single character placed in the center; the latter, which carries in its hands the symbolic rose, has two heads, one male and the other female, and is obviously identical to the Hermetic *Rebis*. The only notable difference with the figures that are found in the alchemical treatises is that it is the right side that is male and the left side is female, whereas here we find the opposite disposition; this peculiarity seems to have escaped Mr. Valli, who nevertheless gives the explanation himself, without seeming to notice it, when he says that "the man with his passive intellect is united with active intelligence, represented by the woman," whereas generally it is the masculine that symbolizes the active element and the feminine the passive element. What is most remarkable is that this kind of reversal of the ordinary relation is also found in the symbolism employed by Hindu Tantrism; and the link is even stronger when we see Cecco d'Ascoli say "*onde io son ella*," exactly like the *Shaktas*, instead of saying *So'ham*, 'I am He,' (the *Ana Huwa* of Islamic esoterism), say *Sa'ham*, 'I am She.' Furthermore, Mr. Valli notes that, next to the *Rebis* figured in the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, we find a kind of tree bearing six pairs of faces arranged symmetrically on each side of the stem and a single face at the top, which he identifies with the characters of the figure of Francesco da Barberino; it seems to effectively be in both cases an initiatic hierarchy and seven degrees, the last degree being essentially characterized by the reconstitution of the Hermetic Androgyne, which is to say, on the whole as the restoration of the 'primordial state;' and this is consistent with what we have had the opportunity to say here about the meaning of the 'Rose-Cross' as designating the perfection of the human state. On the subject of the seven degree initiation, we have spoken in our study on *The Esoterism of Dante* of the seven-step ladder; it is true that these, generally, are put in correspondence with the seven planetary heavens, which refers to superhuman states; but, by reason of analogy, there must be in the same initiatic system a similarity of hierarchical distribution between the 'lesser mysteries' and the 'greater mysteries.' Moreover, the being reintegrated into the center of the human state is thereby ready to rise to the higher states, and he already dominates the conditions of existence in this world of which he has become master; this is why the *Rebis* of the *Rosarium Philosophorum* has under its feet the moon, and that of



Basil Valentine the dragon; this meaning has been completely misunderstood by Mr. Valli, who has seen it only as symbols of a corrupt doctrine or 'the error that oppresses the world,' whereas, in reality, the moon represents the domain of forms (the symbolism is the same as that of the 'walk on the waters'), and the dragon here is the figure of the elementary world.

Mr. Valli, while having no doubts about Dante's relationship with the Templars of which there is many indications, raises a discussion about the medal in the Vienna Museum, which we discussed in *The Esoterism of Dante*; when he wished to see this medal, he found that the two faces had been united later and had belonged first to two different medals; moreover, he recognizes that this strange operation did not have to be done without some reason. As for the initials F. S. K. I. P. F. T., which appears on the reverse, they are for him the seven virtues: *Fides*, *Spes*, *Karitas*, *Justitia*, *Prudentia*, *Fortitudo*, *Temperantia*, although there is an anomaly in the fact that they are arranged in two lines of four and three instead of being three and four as it would be the distinction of the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues; as they are joined with laurel and olive branches, "which are properly the two sacred plants of the initiates," he admits that this interpretation does not necessarily exclude the existence of another more hidden meaning; and we will add that the anomalous spelling of *Karitas*, rather than *Charitas*, could have been necessitated precisely by this dual meaning. Besides, we have also pointed out in the same study the initiatic role given to the three theological virtues, which has been preserved in the eighteenth degree of Scottish Masonry;<sup>240</sup> in addition, the septenary of virtues is formed of an upper ternary and a lower quaternary, which indicates sufficiently that it is constituted according to esoteric principles; and finally it can, just as the 'liberal arts' (divided into a *trivium* and *quadrivium* too), corresponding to the seven echelons to which we alluded a moment ago, especially since 'Faith' (the *Fede Santa*) is still at the peak of the 'mysterious ladder' of the *Kadosch*; therefore all of this forms a much more coherent whole than superficial observers can believe.

On the other hand, Mr. Valli discovered Dante's original medal at the same Vienna Museum, and the reverse of it presents an even stranger and enigmatic figure: a heart placed in the center of a system of circles that has the appearance of a celestial sphere, which may not be one in

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<sup>240</sup> In the seventeenth degree, that of the 'Knight of East and West,' one also finds a watchword formed of seven initials, which are those of a septenary of divine attributes whose enumeration is drawn from a passage in the *Apocalypse*.

reality, and which is not accompanied with any inscription.<sup>241</sup> There are three meridian circles and four parallel circles, which Mr. Valli relates again respectively to the three theological virtues and to the four cardinal virtues; which would lead us to believe that this interpretation must be cored, it is above all the accuracy of the application which is made, in this arrangement, to the vertical meaning and the horizontal meaning to the relations of the contemplative life and the active life, or of the spiritual authority and the temporal power governing one and the other, to which these two groups of virtues correspond, that an oblique circle, completing the figure (and forming with the others the number 8, which is that of equilibrium), connects in perfect harmony under the radiation of the 'doctrine of love.'<sup>242</sup>

One last note concerning the secret name that the 'Fedeli d'Amore' gave to God: in Francesco da Barbery's *Tractatus Amoris*, represented himself in an attitude of adoration before the letter I, and in the *Divine Comed* Adam says that the first name of God was I,<sup>243</sup> the next being *El*. This letter I, which Dante calls the 'ninth figure' according to its rank in the Latin alphabet (and we know what symbolic importance the number 9 had for him), is obviously none other than the *yod*, although this is the tenth letter in the Hebrew alphabet; and the *yod*, besides being represented by the first letter of the Tetragrammaton, constitutes a divine name by itself, either isolated or repeated thrice.<sup>244</sup> It is the same *yod* which, in Masonry, became the letter G, by assimilation with God (because it was in England that this assimilation took place); this being without prejudice against the other multiple meanings which came secondarily in this same letter G, and which is not our intention to examine here.

It is to be hoped, while saddened by the demise of Mr. Luigi Valli, that he finds successors in this field of research, which is as vast as it is so far explored; and it seems that this must be so, since he himself informs us

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<sup>241</sup> This heart thus placed reminds us of the figure, no less remarkable and mysterious, of the heart of Saint-Denis d'Orques, represented in the center of the planetary and zodiacal circles, a figure that was studied by Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay in the journal *Regnabit*.

<sup>242</sup> In this connection we may refer to what we have said concerning Dante's treatise *De Monarchia* in *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*.

<sup>243</sup> *Paradiso*, XXVI, 133.

<sup>244</sup> Is it by a simple coincidence that the heart of Saint-Denis d'Orques, of which we have just spoken, bears a wound (or what appears to be a wound) in the form of *yod*? And would there not be some reason to suppose that the old figurations of the 'Sacred Heart' prior to its 'official' adoption by the Church, may have had certain links with the doctrine of the 'Fedeli d'Amore' or of their successors?

that he has already been followed by Mr. Gaetanu Scarlata, who has devoted a work<sup>245</sup> to the special study of the treatise *De vulgari eloquentia* by Dante, a book also “full of mysteries,” as Rossetti and Aroux had clearly seen, and while it seems to speak simply on the Italian idiom, it relates in reality to the secret language, following a process also used in Islamic esoterism where, as we have pointed out on another occasion, an initiatic work can assume the appearance of a simple treatise on grammar. Many other discoveries will likely be made in this same order of ideas; and even if those who devote themselves to this only personally bring a ‘profane’ mentality (on the condition that it is impartial) and see there only the object of a sort of historical curiosity the results obtained will not be less apt in themselves, and for those who will know to understand their full significance, to contribute effectively to a restoration of the traditional spirit: are these works, unconscious and involuntary as they are, attached to the ‘search for the Lost Word,’ which is the same as the ‘Quest for the Grail?’

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<sup>245</sup> *L'origine della letteratura italiana nel pensiero di Dante.*

## Hermes

*Hermès*, April 1932.

In speaking here of the Hermetic tradition (April 1931 issue), we have said that it properly refers to a knowledge which is not metaphysical, but only cosmological, by seeing in it the dual application of the 'macrocosmic' and the 'microcosmic.' This affirmation has not had the good fortune in pleasing some, despite it being an expression of the strict truth, and they see Hermetism through their own fantasy which would like to make everything fit indistinctly; it is true that they do know what pure metaphysics can be... Be that as it may, it must be understood that we have not intended to deprecate the traditional sciences which fall within the domain of Hermetism, nor those which correspond to them in other doctrinal traditional forms of the Orient or of the Occident; but it is necessary to know how each thing falls in place and these sciences, like all specialized knowledge, are secondary and derived from the principles, of which they are only the applications to a lower order of reality. Only those wish to attribute to the 'Royal Art' the pre-eminence over the 'Sacerdotal Art' can claim the opposite;<sup>246</sup> perhaps it is precisely here, at its essence, the more or less conscious reason for these protests which we have just alluded to.

Without concerning ourself with what everyone thinks or says, because it is not our wont to take into account those individual opinions which do not exist in the light of tradition, it does not seem useless to us to make some new clarifications concerning what has already been said, and this refers particularly with what concerns Hermes, since at the least no one can deny that it is from this that Hermetism has its name.<sup>247</sup> The

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<sup>246</sup> We have contemplated this question in *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*. – Regarding the expression, 'Royal Art' which has been preserved in Masonry, we can note here the curious resemblance that exists between the names *Hermes* and *Hiram*; of course, this does not mean that these two names have a common linguistic origin, but their constitution is none the less identical, and the ensemble H R M of which they are both essentially formed could still give rise to other rapprochments.

<sup>247</sup> We must maintain that Hermetism is of a Hellenic-Egyptian origin, and that it cannot be abused to extend this denomination to that which, under a variety of forms, correspond in other traditions, no more than, for example, we would

Greek Hermes does indeed have characters which correspond exactly to what is in question, and which is expressed particularly by his principal attribute, the caduceus, which we have no doubt we will examine the symbolism more completely on another occasion; for the moment, it will suffice to say that this symbolism relates essentially and directly to what may be called 'human alchemy,'<sup>248</sup> which concerns the possibilities of the subtle state, even if these should only be taken as the preparatory means of a higher realization, as in the Hindu tradition, the equivalent practices come under *Hatha-Yoga*. We can also transfer this to the cosmic order, since all that is in man has his correspondence in the world and inversely so;<sup>249</sup> here again, because of this very correspondence, it will properly be the 'intermediate world,' where forces are implemented whose dual nature is clearly represented by the two serpents of the caduceus. We will also recall in this respect, that Hermes is represented as the messenger of the Gods and as their interpreter (*hermeneutes*), a role which is indeed that of an intermediary between the celestial and terrestrial worlds, and that he also has the function of a 'psychopomp,' which in a lower order, obviously also relates to the realm of subtle possibilities.<sup>250</sup>

Perhaps one may object when it relates to Hermetism, that Hermes takes the place here of the Egyptian Thoth which he has been identified with, and that Thoth properly represents Wisdom, relating to the priesthood as a conservator and transmitter of tradition; this is true, but since

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call 'Kabbalah' a doctrine that is not specifically Hebrew. Without a doubt, if we write in Hebrew we would say *qabbalah* refers to tradition in general, just as writing in Arabic, we would call *taṣawwuf* initiation in any form whatsoever: but, transported into another language, the Hebrew, Arabic, etc., words must be reserved for the traditional forms whose languages of origin are their respective expressions, whatever the comparisons or even the assimilations to which they may give rise legitimately; and we must in no way confuse a certain order of knowledge considered within itself with this or that special form, of which it has been clothed in certain historical circumstances.

<sup>248</sup> See *Man and his Becoming according to the Vedanta*, ch. 21.

<sup>249</sup> As it is said in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān as-Ṣafā*, "the world is a great man, and the man is a small world" (*al-ālam insān kabīr, wa'l-insān ālam ṣaghīr*). – It is also by virtue of this correspondance that a certain achievement in the 'microcosmic' order may result, as an accidental consequence for the being who has attained it, an external realization relating to the 'macrocosmic' order, without the latter having been specifically researched for its own sake, as we have indicated in connection with certain cases of metallic transmutation in our previous article on *The Hermetic Tradition*.

<sup>250</sup> These two functions of the messenger of the Gods and 'psychopomp' could, astrologically, be related respectively to a diurnal aspect and a nocturnal aspect; furthermore, one can also find there the correspondence of the two descending and ascending currents which symbolize the two serpents of the caduceus.

this assimilation cannot be made without reason it must be admitted that in this we must consider more specifically a certain aspect of Thoth, corresponding to a certain part of the tradition, which includes knowledge relating to the 'intermediary world;' in fact, all that can be known of the ancient Egyptian civilization, according to the vestiges of what it left, shows precisely that knowledge of this order was much more developed and had taken on an importance which is more significant than anywhere else. For the rest, there is another link, we may even say an equivalence, which shows that this objection would be without real significance: in India, the planet Mercury (or Hermes) is called *Budha*, whose real root properly means Wisdom; here again it is enough to determine the order in which this Wisdom, which in its essence is indeed the inspiring principle of all knowledge, must find its more particular application when relating to this specialized function.<sup>251</sup>

Regarding this name *Budha*, it is a curious fact to note that it is identical to the Scandinavian *Odin*, *Woden*, or *Wotan*,<sup>252</sup> so it is not arbitrary that the Romans assimilated him to their Mercury, and anyway, in the Germanic languages Wednesday, or the day of Mercury, is currently still designated as the day of Odin. Perhaps what is even more remarkable is that this same name is found exactly as the *votan* of the ancient Central American traditions, which also has the attributes of Hermes in *Quetzalcohuatl*, the 'Bird-Snake,' and the union of these two symbolic animals (corresponding respectively to the elements of air and fire) is also represented as the wings and serpents of the caduceus.<sup>253</sup> You would

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<sup>251</sup> The name *Budha* should not be confused with the name *Buddha*, the designation for Shakyamuni, although both obviously have the same radical meaning, and moreover certain attributes of the planetary *Budha* have been later transferred to the historical *Buddha*, the latter being represented as having been 'illuminated' by the irradiation of this star, which he would have absorbed the essence within himself. – Note in this connection that the mother of *Buddha* is called *Mayadevi* and among the Greeks and Latins, *Maia* was also the mother of Hermes or Mercury.

<sup>252</sup> We know that the change from *b* to *v* or *w* is an extremely common linguistic phenomenon.

<sup>253</sup> Regarding this subject see our article on *The Language of Birds* (November 1931 issue), where we have pointed out that the snake is opposed or associated with the bird according to whether it is considered in its maleficent or beneficial aspect. We will add that a figure such as the eagle holding a snake in its claw (which is found precisely in Mexico) does not exclusively evoke the idea of antagonism represented in the Hindu tradition, as the fight of *Garuda* against *Naga*; it occurs, especially in heraldic symbolism, that the snake is replaced by the sword (substituted particularly when it has the shape of the flaming sword, which is linked to the thunderbolts held by the eagle of Jupiter), and the sword,

have to be blind to not see, in facts of this type, a mark of the innate unity of all traditional doctrines; unfortunately, such a blindness is all too common in our times when those who really know how to read the symbols are no more than a disabled minority, and where, on the other hand, there are too many 'laymen' who believe themselves qualified to interpret 'sacred science,' which they accommodate according to their more or less disordered imagination.

Another point that is not less interesting: in the Islamic tradition, Sayyidūnā 'Idrīs is identified in both Hermes and Enoch; this dual assimilation seems to indicate a continuity of tradition that goes beyond the Egyptian priesthood, the latter having only been an inheritance of what Enoch represents, which clearly is related to an earlier period.<sup>254</sup> At the same time, the sciences attributed to 'Idrīs and placed under his special influence are not purely the spiritual sciences, which are linked to Sayyidūnā 'Īsā, which is to say Christ; these are the sciences that can be described as 'intermediary,' among which are, primarily, alchemy and astrology; and these are indeed the sciences which can be said to be properly 'Hermetic.' But here is another consideration which could, at first sight at least, be regarded as a rather strange reversal compared to the usual correspondences: among the first prophets, there is one, as we shall see in a future study, which presides over each of the seven planetary heavens, of which he is the 'Pole' (*Al-Qutb*); it is not Sayyidūnā 'Idrīs who presides over the sky of Mercury, but Sayyidūnā 'Īsā, and Sayyidūnā 'Idrīs presides over the sky of the Sun; naturally, this entails the same transposition in the astrological correspondences of the sciences which are respectively attributed to them. This raises a very complex question, which we cannot claim to deal with entirely here; it may be that we have the opportunity to return to this, but for the moment we will limit ourselves to a few remarks which will perhaps make it possible to foresee

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in its highest meaning, represents Wisdom and the power of the Word (for example, see *Revelations*, I, 16). – It should be noted that one of the main symbols of the Egyptian Thoth was the Ibis, the destroyer of reptiles, and as such became a symbol of Christ; but, in the caduceus of Hermes, we have the snake under its two opposing aspects, as in the figure of the 'amphisbene' of the Middle Ages (see *The King of the World*, ch. 3).

<sup>254</sup> Should we not conclude from this same assimilation that the *Book of Enoch*, or at least what is known under this title, must be considered as an integral part of the set of 'Hermetic books?' – Furthermore, some also say that the prophet Idrīs is the same as Buddha; what has been indicated above sufficiently shows in what sense this assertion, which is in fact related to *Budha*, the Hindu equivalent of Hermes, must be understood. It cannot here be the historical Buddha, whose death is a known event, while Idrīs is expressly said to have been transported alive to Heaven, which corresponds well to the Biblical Enoch.

the solution, and which, in any case, will at least show that there is something more than a mere confusion, and what would risk being regarded as such in the eyes of the superficial and 'external' observer is in reality based on very profound reasons.

First, this is not an isolated case in the ensemble of traditional doctrines, because something quite similar can be found in Hebrew angelology: generally, Michael is the angel of the Sun and Raphael is the angel of Mercury, but sometimes these roles are reversed. Furthermore, if Michael, representing the solar *Metatron*, is esoterically assimilated to Christ,<sup>255</sup> Raphael is, according to the nature of his name, the 'divine healer,' and Christ also appears as the 'spiritual healer' and as the 'spiritual revivifier;' moreover, one can find other relations between Christ and the principle represented by Mercury among the planetary spheres.<sup>256</sup> It is true that among the Greeks medicine was attributed to Apollo, which is the solar principle, and to his son Asclepius (of which the Latins made Aesculapius); but in the 'Hermetic books,' Asclepius becomes the son of Hermes, and it is also to be remarked that the staff which is his attribute has a close symbolic relationship with the caduceus.<sup>257</sup> Cet exemple de la médecine permet d'ailleurs de comprendre comment une même science peut avoir des aspects qui se rapportent en réalité à des ordres différents, d'où des correspondances également différentes, même si les effets extérieurs qui en sont obtenus sont apparemment semblables, car il y a la médecine purement spirituelle ou « théurgique », et il y a aussi la médecine hermétique ou « spagyrique »; ceci est en relation directe avec la question que nous envisageons présentement; et peut-être expliquerons-nous quelque jour pourquoi la médecine, au point de vue traditionnel, était considérée essentiellement comme une science sacerdotale.

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<sup>255</sup> See *The King of the World*, ch. 3.

<sup>256</sup> Perhaps here we must see the origin of the misunderstanding that some commit by considering Buddha as the ninth *avatara* of Vishnu; it would actually be a manifestation related to the principle designated as the planetary *Budha*; in this case, the solar Christ would properly be the Glorious Christ, which is to say the tenth *avatara*, the one who must come at the end of the cycle. – We will recall, as a curiosity, that the month of May takes its name from *Maia*, the mother of Mercury (who is said to be one of the Pleiades), to which it was formerly devoted; but in Christianity, it has become the 'month of Mary,' by an assimilation which is likely not purely phonetic, between Maria and Maia.

<sup>257</sup> Around the rod of Aesculapius is wound a single snake, the one that represents the beneficial force, because the maleficent force must disappear because he is the spirit of medicine. – Note also the report of this same staff of Aesculapius as a sign of healing, with the Biblical symbol of the 'serpent of brass' (see our article on *Sheth*, in the October 1931 issue).



On the other hand, there is almost always a close connection between Enoch (Sayyidūnā 'Idrīs) and Elijah (Sayyidūnā Dhū al-Kifl), both taken to heaven without passing through the corporeal death,<sup>258</sup> and the Islamic tradition places them both in the solar sphere. In the same manner, following the Rosicrucian tradition, *Elias Artista*, who presides over the Hermetic 'Great Work,'<sup>259</sup> resting in the 'Solar Citadel,' which is also properly the residence of the 'Immortals' (in the sense of the *Chirajivis* of the Hindu tradition, which is to say, being 'endowing with longevity,' or whose life perpetuates throughout the cycle),<sup>260</sup> and represents one of the aspects of the 'Center of the World.' All this is undoubtedly worth of reflection, and if we add to this the traditions which symbolically equate the Sun itself with the fruit of the 'Tree of Life,'<sup>261</sup> we can understand that the special relationship that exists between solar influence and Hermetism, for the latter, as the 'lesser mysteries' of antiquity, has for its essential aim is the restoration of the human 'primordial state:' is it not the 'Solar Citadel' of the Rose-Cross that must 'descend from Heaven to Earth' at the ending of the cycle, in the form of the 'Celestial Jerusalem,' realizing the 'quadrature of the circle' according to the perfect measure of the 'golden reed?'

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<sup>258</sup> It is said that they must manifest themselves again on the Earth at the end of the cycle: these are the two 'witnesses' spoken of in ch. 11 of *Revelations*.

<sup>259</sup> He embodies in a way the nature of the 'philosophic fire,' and it is known that according to the Biblical account, the prophet Elijah was taken to heaven on a 'chariot of fire;' this refers to the igneous vehicle (*taijasa* in the Hindu doctrine) which, in the human being, corresponds to the subtle state (see *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, ch. 14).

<sup>260</sup> See *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, ch. 1 – Also recall, from the alchemic point of view, the correspondence of the Sun with gold, designated by the Hindu tradition as the 'mineral light;' the 'potable gold' of the Hermetists is the same as the 'drink of immortality,' which is also called 'gold liquor' in Taoism.

<sup>261</sup> See *The Symbolism of the Cross*, ch. 9.

## Chirology in Islamic Esoterism

*La chirologie dans l'ésotérisme islamique, May 1932.*

We have often had occasion to point out how the conception of 'traditional sciences' has become entirely foreign to Westerners in modern times and how difficult it is for them to understand its true nature. Recently, we have found an example of this incomprehension in a study devoted to Muḥyiddīn ibn 'Arabī, whose author was astonished to find therein, besides purely spiritual doctrine, many considerations on astrology, on the science of letters and numbers, on symbolic geometry, and on many other such things of the same order, which he seemed to regard as unrelated to this doctrine. Moreover, there was a double misunderstanding, for the properly spiritual portion of Muḥyiddīn's teaching was itself presented as being 'mystical,' whereas it is essentially metaphysical and initiatic; if it were 'mystic,' it could not have any relation to any sciences whatsoever. On the contrary, since it is a question of metaphysical doctrine, these traditional sciences whose very value the author totally fails to comprehend, as is ordinary with the modern prejudice, normally derive from its application just as the consequences derive from the principle, and, as such, is far from representing elements that are in a sense adventitious and heterogeneous, they are an integral part of *ataşawwuf*, which is to say of all initiatic knowledge.

Of these traditional sciences, most are now completely lost to Westerners, and what they know of others is only a more or less shapeless debris, often degenerated to the point of taking the character of empirical recipes or simple 'divinatory arts,' which is obviously lacking any doctrinal value. To express clearly by example how such a way of looking at these is so detached from reality, we will give some indications of what, in Islamic esoterism, is chirology (*'ilm al-kaf*), which constitutes only one of the many branches of what we can call, for lack of a better term, 'physiognomy,' although this word does not give the full extent of the Arabic term which designates the entirety of this knowledge (*'ilm al-firāsah*).

Chirology, as strange as it may seem for those who have no idea of such things, is directly related in its Islamic form to the science of divine names: the arrangement of the main lines traced on the left hand form the number 81, and in the right hand the number 18, i.e. in total 99, the number of attributive names (*ṣifātīyyah*). As for the name *Allah* itself, it

is formed by the finger, as follows: the little finger corresponds to the *alif*, the ring finger to the first *lam*, the middle finger and index to the second *lam*, which is double, and the thumb to the *he* (which, regularly, must be drawn in its 'open' form); this is the primary reason for the usage of the hand as a symbol which is so widespread in all Islamic countries (a secondary reason referring to the number 5, hence the name *khums* sometimes given to this symbolic hand). By this we can understand the meaning of the words of *Ṣifr Sayyidūnā Ayyūb* (Book of Job, 37, 7): "He has placed a seal (*khātim*) in the hands of every man, that all may know of His work;" and we will add that this is related to the essential role of the hand in the rites of blessing and consecration.

Furthermore, the correspondance of the various parts of the hand with the planets (*kawākib*), which is generally known to have been preserved in Western chiromancy but in such a way that it is scarcely possible to see anything other than conventional designations, while in reality this correspondence establishes an effective link between chiromancy and astrology. Moreover, as we have indicated in our last article, each of the seven planetary heavens presides over one of the main prophets, who is the 'Pole' (*Al-Qutb*); and the qualities and sciences which are specifically related to each of these prophets are in relation to the corresponding astral influence. The list of the seven celestial *Aqtāb* is as follows:

Heaven of the Moon (*Al-Qamar*): Sayyidūnā 'Ādam.

Heaven of Mercury (*Al-Utārid*): Sayyidūnā 'Īsā.

Heaven of Venus (*Az-Zohrah*): Sayyidūnā Yūsuf.

Heaven of the Sun (*Ash-Shams*): Sayyidūnā 'Idrīs.

Heaven of Mars (*Al-Mirrikh*): Sayyidūnā Dāwūd.

Heaven of Jupiter (*Al-Barjīs*): Sayyidūnā Mūsā.

Heaven of Saturn (*Al-Kaywān*): Sayyidūnā 'Ibrāhīm.

Sayyidūnā 'Ādam is linked to the farming of the Earth (Cf. Genesis, 2, 15: "God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and maintain it"); Sayyidūnā 'Īsā to pure spiritual knowledge; Sayyidūnā Yūsuf to beauty and the arts; Sayyidūnā 'Idrīs to the 'intermediary' sciences, which is to say those of the cosmological and physical order; Sayyidūnā Dāwūd to government; Sayyidūnā Mūsā, which his brother Sayyidūnā Hārūn is inseparably associated, to things of religion under the dual aspects of legislation and worship; Sayyidūnā 'Ibrāhīm to faith (for which this correspondence to the seventh heaven must be compared to what we recently recalled of Dante, as to his position at the highest of the seven steps of the initiatic ladder).

Moreover, surrounding these principal prophets are the other known prophets distributed in the seven planetary heavens (which is to say, of

those who are named in the *Qur'ān*, those that number 25) and the unknown (which is to say all others, the number of these prophets being 124,000 according to tradition).

The 99 names that express the divine attributes are also distributed according to this septenary: 15 for the heaven of the Sun, due to its central position, and 14 for each of the six other heavens ( $15 + 6 \times 14 = 99$ ). Examination of the signs on the portion of the hand corresponding to each of the planets indicates in which proportion ( $\frac{s}{14}$  or  $\frac{s}{15}$ ) the subject possesses the qualities related thereto; this proportion corresponds to the same number (s) of divine names among those belonging to the planetary heaven considered; and these names can be determined later, by means of a very long and complication calculation.

Let us add that in the area of the wrist, beyond the proper hand, the correspondence of the two superior heavens is located, the heavens of the fixed stars and the empyrean sky, which, combined with the seven planetary heavens, completes the number 9.

Moreover, in the different parts of the hand are the twelve zodiacal signs (*burūj*), in relation to the planets of which they are the respective domiciles (one for the Sun and the Moon, two for each of the five other planets), and also the sixteen figures of geomancy (*'ilm ar-raml*), because all the traditional sciences are closely linked with each other.

The examination of the left hand indicates the 'nature' (*at-tabīyyah*) of the subject, which is to say the tendencies, dispositions, or aptitudes which constitute in a way his innate characteristics. That of the right hands makes known acquired characters (*al-istiṣḥab*); these are constantly shifting, in order for a thorough study, this examination must be repeated every four months. This four month period constitutes a complete cycle, in that it brings about the return of a zodiacal sign corresponding to the same element as that of the starting point; we know that this correspondence with the elements is done in the following sequence of succession: fire (*nār*), earth (*turāb*), air (*hawā*), water (*mā'*). Therefore it is an error to think, as some may have done, that the period in question should only be three months, since the three month period is only a single season, which is to say, one part of the annual cycle, and is not in itself a complete cycle.

These few indications, however brief they may be, will show how a regularly constituted traditional science is attached to doctrinal principles and depend entirely upon them; and at the same time they will affirm what we have said so often, that such a science would be utterly useless outside the civilization for which it was constituted according to that form. For example, the considerations here which refer to the divine names and the prophets, which are precisely those on which all else is

based, would be inapplicable outside the Islamic world, just as, to take another example, the onomantic calculation, used either alone or as a part of the establishment of the horoscope in certain astrological methods, can only be valid for Arabic names, whose letters have determined numerical values. In this order of contingent applications there is always a question of adaptation which makes it impossible to transport these sciences as they are from one traditional form to another; without a doubt, this is also one of the main reasons for the difficulty in understanding for those, just like modern Westerners, do not have the equivalent in their own civilization.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> The data upon which these notes are based are drawn from the unpublished treatises of Shaykh Sayyid ‘Alī Nūr ad-Dīn Al-Bayūmī, the founder of the *ṭarīqah* which still wears his name (*bayūmīyyah*); these manuscripts are still in possession of his direct descendants.

## Initiatic Organizations and Religious Sects

*Organisations initiatiques et sectes religieuses*, June 1932.

We have recently point out here, in reference to the final book of Mr. Luigi Valli, how improper it is to apply the term 'sects' to initiatic organizations; the study done by our collaborator P. Genty on the Albigensians, published at the same time, has incited us to make some more reflections on this subject and we think that it is not untimely to return to this. Indeed, this is something more than a simple choice of words; this expression 'sects,' in such a case, is not only to be rejected because it is unpleasant, but because it appears to be the result of adversaries, although some, such as Mr. Valli for example, have been able to use it without particularly ill intent, by imitation or habit, as there are some who call 'paganism' the doctrines of antiquity without even suspecting that this is only an insulting term and of a polemical basis. In reality, there is a serious confusion between things of entirely different orders, and this confusion, in those who create or maintain it, does not seem to be always purely involuntary; this can be primarily attributed in the Christian world, and sometimes even in the Islamic world, to the enemies or negators of esoterism, who wish, by a false assimilation, to attribute something of the disrepute of 'sects,' which is to say in other words, 'heresies,' understood in the specifically religious sense.

By the very fact that it is about esoterism and initiation, it is not a question of religion, but of pure knowledge and 'sacred science,' which, to have this sacred character (which is not monopolized by religion, as some wrongly seem to believe), is no less essentially scientific, although in a sense significantly different from that given to the word by the modern ones who know only of 'profane science,' devoid of any value from the traditional point of view and which proceeds from a more or less alteration of the very idea of science. Without a doubt, this is what makes the confusion in question possible, this esoterism has more connection, and in a more direct way, with religion than with anything else external; it can even in some cases take its base and fulcrum in a definite religious form, but it does not relate less to a whole other area than this one, with which, consequently, it cannot enter into opposition or competition. Moreover, this still results from the fact that this, by definition, is an order of knowledge reserved for an elite, whereas, by definition, religions

address all indistinctly; initiation, in the true sense of the word, involving particular qualifications, cannot be religious. Moreover, without even examining the essence of things, the supposition that an initiatic organization could compete with a religious organization is truly absurd, because, by the very fact of its closed recruitment it would be too much at a disadvantage in this respect; but this is neither its role nor its purpose.

We will then remark that whoever says 'sect' necessarily is saying, by the very etymology of the word, scission or division; effectively, 'sects' are divisions engendered within a religion, by a more or less profound divergences between its members. Thus, sects are necessarily of multiplicity,<sup>263</sup> their existence implies a departure from the principle, whose esoterism is, on the contrary and by its very nature, closer than the exoteric religion, ever devoid of any deviation. In fact, it is through esoterism that all the traditional doctrines are united, beyond the necessary differences and their external forms; from this point of view, not only are initiatic organization are not 'sects,' but they are the exact opposites.

Further, 'sects,' schisms, or heresies always appear as deriving from a given religion, in which they originate and of which they are, so to speak, irregular branches. On the contrary, esoterism can in no way be derived from religion; even when it is taken as a medium, as a means of expression and realization, it is linked to its principle, and it represents, in relation to it, the Tradition prior to all particular religious forms. The interior cannot be produced from the exterior, neither the center from the circumference, nor the superior from the inferior, nor the spirit from the body; the influences which preside over traditional organizations always descend and never ascend, nor does a river return to its source. To pretend that initiation could be derived from religion, let alone a 'sect,' is to overthrow all the normal relations which result from the very nature of things;<sup>264</sup> so that, when a religion has lost all points of contact with esoterism, there remains only a 'dead letter' and a misunderstood formalism,

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<sup>263</sup> This shows the falsity of the conceptions of those who speak of the 'Sect,' in the singular and with a capital letter, as a type of entity which their imagination attributes everything to what they hate; moreover, the fact that these words are able to completely lose their legitimate meaning is one of the characteristics of the mental disorder of our time.

<sup>264</sup> A similar, perhaps even worse, error is made by those who would like to take the initiation out of something which is exterior, for example, philosophy; the initiatic world exerts its influence on the profane world, directly or indirectly, but it can in no way be influenced by it.

because what vivified it was the effective communication with the Spiritual Center of the world, and this can only be established and maintained by esoterism and a genuine and regular initiatic organization.

To explain how the confusion that we are currently trying to dissipate may have appeared with enough of a semblance of reason so that it makes itself accepted by those who only consider things from the exterior, it must be said: it seems that in such cases, religious 'sects' may have arisen because of the thoughtless dissemination of fragments of esoteric doctrine which would be more or less misunderstood; but esoterism in itself cannot be held responsible for this kind of vulgarization, or 'profanation' in the etymological sense of the word, which is contrary to its very essence, and which has never been able to cost its doctrinal purity. In order for such a thing to happen, it was necessary for those who received such teachings to understand them badly enough, for a lack of preparation or perhaps of qualification, to attribute to them a religious character which completely distorted to them; and does not the error always originate from a misunderstanding or distortion of the truth? This was probably the case with the Albigenses; but if they were 'heretics,' Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore,' who stood upon strictly initiatic ground, were not; and this example will further aid to make clear the crucial difference between 'sects' and initiatic organizations. Let us add, while certain 'sects' may have arisen from a deviation of initiatic teachings, this presupposes, of course, its pre-existence and its independence with regards to the 'sects' in question; historically, as well as logically, the contrary opinion seems unsustainable.

One question remains to be examined: how and why could such deviations occur at times? This would risk taking us very far astray, because it goes without saying that, in order to answer this completely, we should examine each particular case closely. What can be said in a general manner is that, firstly and from the most external point of view, it seems almost impossible to completely prevent any divulgations by taking precautions; and if these divulgations are in any case partial or fragmentary (because they can only relate to what is relatively most accessible), the distortions that ensue are all the more accentuated. According to another more profound point of view, one might perhaps say that such things must take place in certain circumstances as a means of action regarding the course of events; 'sects' also have their role to play in the history of humanity, even if it is of an inferior role, and any apparent disorder is in fact only one element of the total order of the world; and is it not Saint Augustine who said: "*Opportet haereses esse?*" The quarrels of the exterior world lose much of their importance when we consider them from a point where the oppositions which arouse them are reconciled;



but precisely for this reason it would not be the role of the initiatic organizations to mingle in these quarrels, while, on the contrary, 'sects' are inevitably involved in it, and this perhaps is what forms their *raison d'être*.

We will simply submit these reflections to people of good faith, so that they know what to say regarding a confusion which is too often concerned; as for others, we do not pretend, whatever we say, will cause them to change their attitude or language, but, after having restored the truth to the extent of our means, we have the right to neglect and ignore them. As far as the religious opponents of esoterism are concerned, besides claiming to question an issue which is in no way within their competence, since it is essentially 'extra-religious,' they answer without doubting their own condemnation, thereby showing their inability to pierce the peel of their tradition form and to penetrate into the core that is wrapped within; because the peel hides the core within, they claim that it does not exist. A blind man can just as well, and with as much reason, deny the existence of light, and it is probably impossible to convince him of it; but does this prevent the light from existing and does it prevent those who enjoy all their faculties from perceiving it? He who sees the light has no need to discuss his existence with the blind, and all philosophical quibbles that they can invent will be null and void for him; the reasoning of the 'profane,' with regards to things of the initiatic order, are just as valuable and important as this, and we do not see why we should be concerned with it.

## New Insights into the Secret Language of Dante

*Nouveaux aperçus sur le langage secret de Dante, July 1932.*

Several months ago while speaking here (March 1932, *The Secret Language of Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore'*) of the last book of Mr. Luigi Valli, we mentioned the work that followed the same guiding ideas, Mr. Gaetano Scarlata devoted his treaty to the *De vulgari eloquentia* of Dante, or rather as he prefers to name it (for the title has never been exactly determined), *De vulgaris eloquentiae doctrina*, according to the expression used by Dante himself to define the subject from the beginning, and in order to highlight his intentions towards the doctrinal content of vernacular poetry.<sup>265</sup> Indeed, those whom Dante calls *poeti volgari*, are those whose writings had, as he says, *verace intendimento*, which is to say, containing a hidden meaning according to the symbolism of the 'Fedeli d'Amore,' since what opposes them is *litterali* (and not *litterati* as it has sometimes been incorrectly read), or to those who write only in the literal sense. For him, the first are the real poets, and he also calls them *trilingues doctores*, which can be understood externally from the fact that such a poetry existed in the three languages Italian, Provençal (not 'French' as Mr. Scarlata wrongly says), and Spanish, but in reality this means (no poet having ever written in all three languages) that it should be interpreted in a triple sense;<sup>266</sup> and Dante, speaking further on the subject of the *trilingues doctors*, says that *maxime conveniunt in hoc vocabulo quod est Amor*, which is a rather obvious allusion to the doctrine of the 'Fedeli d'Amore.'

With regards to these, Mr. Scarlata makes a very true remark: he believes that they have never had to constitute an association according to rigorously defined forms, more or less similar to that of modern Masonry, as an example, with a central authority establishing 'subsidiaries' in the

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<sup>265</sup> *Le origini della letteratura italiana nel pensiero di Dante*: Priulla, Palermo.

<sup>266</sup> Without a doubt this means that the three meanings superior to the literal meaning, so that with it we would have the four meanings of which Dante speaks in the *Convito*, as indicated at the beginning of our study on *The Esoterism of Dante*.

varying localities; and we may add in support of this remark, that in Masonry itself nothing of this kind has ever existed before the constitution of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717. Moreover, it does not seem that Mr. Scarlata has grasped the full scope of this fact, which he believes must be attributed simply to circumstances, which are not favorable to the existence of an institution presenting itself under a more stable exterior; in reality, as we have already said often, a truly initiatic organization cannot be a 'society' in the modern sense of the word, with all the external formalism it implies; when statutes, written regulations, and the like come into being, we can be sure that there is a degeneration that gives the organization a 'semi-profane' character, if we can use such an expression. But, as far as a properly initiatic order is concerned, Mr. Scarlata has not reached the essence of things, and he seems to not have come as close as Mr. Valli; he sees primarily the political side, which is altogether incidental, and he speaks constantly of 'sects,' a point which we amply explained in our last article; in its development, it draws but a few consequences from the doctrine (esoteric and non-heretical) of the *amor sapientiae*, which is entirely essential, the rest being limited to historical contingencies. It is also possible that the subject of this study lends itself quite easily to what appears to be an error of perspective: *De vulgaris eloquentiae doctrina* has a direct link with *De monarchia*, and consequently is related to the portion of Dante's work where social applications have the most important place; but can these applications themselves be understood if we do not constantly relate them to their principle? The most unfortunate thing is that Mr. Scarlata, when he moves on to historical views, has let himself be led to more than questionable interpretations: does it not go so far as to present Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore' as adversaries of the spirit of the Middle Ages and precursors of modern ideas, animated by a 'secular' and 'democratic' spirit which would, in reality, be all the more 'anti-initiatic?' Nevertheless, there are some interesting notes in the second part of his books, especially on the Oriental influences at Frederick II's court and in the Franciscan movement, which would be to begin again on bases which are more in line with the traditional sense; it is true that it is presented only as an 'attempt at historical reconstruction,' and who knows whether the author will not be led by this to further research which will impel him to rectify this?

Perhaps, one of the causes of Mr. Scarlata's mistake is the way in which Dante contrasts the use of the *vulgare* with that of Latin, the ecclesiastic language, and also the manner of symbolizing poets, according to the *verace intendimento*, contrasted to theologians (the latter being a way of mere allegory); but it is in the eyes of Dante's adversaries, or (which is often the same in such cases) of those who do not understand

that the *vulgare* could be no more than the *sermo laicus*, whereas for himself it was something altogether different; furthermore, from the strictly initiatic point of view, is the function of initiates more truly 'sacerdotal' than that of an exoteric 'clergy' that possesses only the letter and stops at the rind of the doctrine?<sup>267</sup> The essential point here is to know what Dante means by the expression *vulgare illustre* which may seem strange and even contradictory if we stick to the ordinary meaning of words, but which is explained if we notice that *vulgare* is synonymous with *naturale*: it is the language that man learns directly through oral transmission (as the child who, from the initiatic point of view, represents the neophyte, learning his mother tongue), which is to say symbolically, the language that serves as a vehicle for tradition, and which can, in this respect, be identified with the primordial and universal language. This is closely related, as we can see, to the question of the mysterious 'Syriac language' (*loghah suryāniyyah*) that we have discussed here in previous articles;<sup>268</sup> it is true that, for Dante, this 'language of revelation' seems to have been Hebrew, but as we said then, such an affirmation must not be taken literally, the same can be said of any language that has a 'sacred' character, which is to say any that serves to express a regular traditional form.<sup>269</sup> According to Dante, the language spoken by the first man, created immediately by God, was continued by his descendants until the building of the tower of Babel; then, "*hanc formam locutionis hereditati sunt filii Heber...; hiis solis post confusionem remansit;*" but are not these 'Sons of Heber' all those who have retained the tradition, rather than a specific people? Has the name 'Israel' not often been used to refer to all initiates, irrespective of ethnic origins, and these, who in fact actually form the 'chosen people,' do they not possess the universal language which enables them to understand each other, which is to say the knowledge of the unique tradition which is hidden under particular forms?<sup>270</sup> Moreover, had Dante thought it was truly the Hebrew language, he could not have said that the Church (referred to by the enigmatic name *Petramala*) believed to speak Adam's language, it speaks Latin, and not Hebrew, for

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<sup>267</sup> According to the normal hierarchic order, the initiate is above the ordinary 'cleric' (even if they are theologians), while the 'laity' is naturally below this.

<sup>268</sup> *The Science of Letters* (February 1931), and *The Language of Birds* (November 1931).

<sup>269</sup> It goes without saying that when one contrasts 'vulgar languages' with 'sacred languages,' one takes the word 'vulgar' in the usual meaning; if it were taken in the meaning that Dante uses, this expression would no longer apply, rather 'profane languages' should be used to avoid any ambiguity.

<sup>270</sup> See our article on *The Gift of Languages* (special issue devoted to the Rose-Cross, August-September 1927).

which it does not seem that anyone has ever claimed the quality of primitive language; but if one understands by this that it believes to teach the true doctrine of revelation, everything becomes perfectly intelligible. In addition, even admitting that the first Christians, who possessed this true doctrine, had actually spoken Hebrew (which would be historically inaccurate, because Aramaic is no more Hebrew than Italian is Latin), the 'Fedeli d'Amore,' who considered themselves as their successors, never claimed to use this language in opposition to Latin, as they would logically have had to according to this literal interpretation.<sup>271</sup>

We see that this is all very far removed from a purely 'philological' meaning which is usually attributed to the treatise Dante, and that it is fundamentally something other than the Italian idiom; and even what really relates to it can also have at the same time a symbolic value. Therefore, when Dante opposes one city or region to another, it is not simply a linguistic opposition, or, when citing certain names such as *Petramala*, *Papienses*, or *Aquilegienses* in this choice there is (even without going so far as to consider the properly named geographic symbolism) a rather transparent intention, as Rossetti has already remarked; of course, in order to return to the true meaning of this or that seemingly insignificant word, it is often necessary to refer to the conventional terminology of the 'Fedeli d'Amore.' Mr. Scarlata correctly points out that it is almost always the examples (including those which seem to have only a purely rhetorical or grammatical value) which give the key to the context; indeed, this was an excellent way of diverting the attention of the 'profane,' who could only see sentences without any importance; one could say that these examples play a fairly similar role to that of the 'myths' in the Platonic dialogues, and one only has to see what the academic 'critics' makes of them to be convinced of the perfect efficiency of the process of offering a '*hors-d'œuvre*,' in place of what is the most significant.

In sum, what Dante seems to have essentially had in view is the formation of a language capable, as far as is possible through the superposition of multiple meanings, of expressing the esoteric doctrine; and if the codification of such a language can be qualified as 'rhetoric,' it is in any case, a rhetoric of a very special type, as far removed from what is now understood by this word as the poetry of the 'Fedeli d'Amore' is from the modern ones, whose predecessors are those *litterali* to whom

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<sup>271</sup> Let us add that, as Mr. Scarlata notes, the idea of the continuation of the primitive language is contradicted by the words that Dante himself, in the *Divine Comedy*, attributes to Adam (*Paradise* 26, 124). These words can also be explained by the consideration of the cyclic periods: the original language was *tutta spenta* from the end of the *Krita-Yuga*, well before the enterprise of the 'people of Nimrod,' which corresponds solely to the beginning of the *Kali-Yuga*.

Dante reproached for rhyming ‘stupidly’ (*stoltamente*) without enclosing in their verses any profound meaning.<sup>272</sup> In the words of Mr. Valli which we have already quoted, Dante proposed quite something other than “to make literature,” and this amounts to saying that he was precisely the opposite of a modern; his work, far from being opposed to the spirit of the Middle Ages, is one of the most perfect syntheses, just as that of the builders of the Cathedrals; and the simplest initiatic data makes this easy to understand that there are some very profound reasons for this connection.

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<sup>272</sup> It is in much the same manner that the predecessors of the contemporary chemists are not the true alchemists, but the ‘blowers;’ whether in the sciences or the arts, the purely ‘profane’ conception of the modern ones always results from a similar degeneration.

## Taoism and Confucianism

*Taoïsme et Confucianisme*, August-September 1932.

Ancient peoples, for the most part, have done little to establish a rigorous chronology of their history; some even used, at least in the most remote epochs, only symbolic numbers which one could not, without committing a grave error, take as dates in the ordinary and literal sense of the word. In this respect, the Chinese are a rather remarkable exception: they are perhaps the only people who have constantly taken care to date their annals by means of precise astronomical observations since the very beginning of their tradition, including the description of the state of the sky at the moment when they occurred, events whose memory has been preserved. Due to this, we can, in the case of China and its ancient history, be more affirmative than in many other cases; it is well known that the origin of this tradition which can properly be called Chinese dates back 3,700 years before the Hebraic age; but for the latter, it is difficult in reality to say what event this starting point relates to.

Such an origin, so remote as it may seem when compared to that of the Greco-Roman civilization and the dates of so-called 'classical' antiquity is, to tell the truth, still quite recent; what was the state of the yellow race before this time, which then presumably inhabited parts of Central Asia? It is impossible to be precise in the absence of sufficiently explicit data; it seems that this race has gone through a period of obscurity, of indefinite duration, and that it was drawn from sleep at a time which was marked by important changes for other parts of humanity. Therefore, it may be, and indeed it is the only thing which is affirmed quite clearly, that what appears as a beginning has really been nothing other than an awakening of a very ancient tradition, which must have existed in another form, to adapt to new conditions. Be that as it may, the history of China or what it is so called today, begins properly only Fu-hsi, who is regarded as its first emperor; it must be added at once that this name Fu-hsi, to which all knowledge which constitutes the very essence of the Chinese tradition is attached, is actually used to designate an entire period, which extends over a duration of several centuries.

Fu-hsi, to determine the principles of the tradition, made use of linear symbols as simple and simultaneously synthetic as possible: the continuous line and the broken line, respective signs of *yang* and *yin*, which is

to say of the two active and passive principles which, proceeding from a type of polarization of the supreme metaphysical unity, gives rise to the whole of the universal manifestation. Combinations of these two signs, in all their possible arrangements, form the eight *koua* or 'trigrams,' which have always remained the fundamental symbols of the Far-Eastern tradition. It is said that, "Before drawing the trigrams, Fu-hsi looked at Heaven, then looked down at Earth, observed its particularities and considered the character of the human body and of all external things."<sup>273</sup> This text is particularly interesting in that it contains the formal expression of the Great Triad: Heaven and Earth, or the two complementary principles from which all beings are produced, and man, who, by their nature being apart of both, is the middle term of the Triad, the mediator between Heaven and Earth. It should be pointed out that the 'true man,' that is, the one who, having attained the full development of the higher senses, "can help Heaven and Earth in the upkeep and transformation of beings, and by this very fact, constitute a third power with Heaven and Earth."<sup>274</sup> It is also said that Fu-hsi saw a dragon emerging from the river, uniting in him the powers of Heaven and Earth, and bearing the trigrams inscribed on his back; this is just another way to symbolically express the same thing.

The entire tradition was therefore first and foremost contained and germinated in the trigrams, symbols wonderfully suited to support indefinite possibilities: it remains only to extract all the necessary developments, either in the field of pure metaphysical knowledge, or in that of its various applications to the cosmic order and the human order. For this reason, Fu-hsi wrote three books, the last of which, called *I Ching* or 'Book of Changes,' has reached us alone; and the text of this book is still so synthetic that it can be understood in multiple meanings, perfectly concordant among them, according to whether we stick strictly to the principles or we wish to apply them to such or such determined order. Thus, aside from the metaphysical meaning, there is a multitude of contingent applications, of unequal importance, which constitute as many traditional sciences: logical, mathematic, physiological, social applications, and so on; there is even a divinatory application, which is also regarded as one of the most inferior of all, and whose practice is abandoned to wandering jongleurs. Moreover, it is a characteristic common to all traditional doctrines to contain in themselves from the beginning, the possibilities of all conceivable developments, including those of an indefinite variety of sciences, of which the modern West has no idea, and of all the adaptations that may be required by subsequent circumstances.

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<sup>273</sup> *The Book of Rites of Li-chi.*

<sup>274</sup> *Zhongyong*, ch. 22.



Therefore, it is not surprising that the teachings contained within the *I Ching*, which Fu-hsi himself claimed to have taken from a very ancient past and which were very difficult to determine, have in turn become the common basis of the two doctrines in which the Chinese tradition has continued to this day, and which, due to their totally different domains to which they relate, may seem at first glance to have no point of contact: Taoism and Confucianism.

What are the circumstances which, following around three thousand years, necessitated a re-adaptation of the traditional doctrine, which is to say an altered support, not on the substance which always remains strictly identical to itself, but on the forms in which this doctrine is somehow incorporated? Again, this is a point which would no doubt be difficult to fully elucidate, for these things, in China as well as elsewhere, are among those which leave little trace in written history, where the external effects are much more apparent than the root causes. In any case, what seems certain is that the doctrine, as it was formulated at the time of Fu-hsi, had ceased to be generally understood in what is most essential; no doubt, the applications which had been extracted from it formerly, in particular from the social point of view, did not correspond any more to the conditions of existence of the race, which had to change very appreciably in the interval.

It was then in the sixth century B.C.; it is to be remarked that in this century there have been considerable changes in almost all peoples, so that what happened in China then seems to be related to a cause, which is perhaps difficult to define, whose action affected all terrestrial humanity. What is odd is that this sixth century can be considered, in a very general manner, as the beginning of the proper 'historic' period: when one wishes to go further, it is impossible to establish an even approximate chronology except in some exceptional cases, which is precisely the case with China; on the contrary, from this period the dates of events are known everywhere with great accuracy; assuredly, this is a fact that deserves some thoughts. The changes that take place are then presented different according to the characters of the country: for example, in India Buddhism was born, which is to say, a revolt against the traditional spirit, the negation of all authority to a veritable anarchy in the intellectual order and the social order; on the other hand, in China it is strictly in line with tradition that the two new doctrinal forms were simultaneously constituted, to which the names Taoism and Confucianism are given.

The founders of these two doctrines, Lao-tzu and K'ung-tzu, whom the Westerners called Confucius, were therefore contemporary, and history tells us that they met one day. "Have you discovered Tao?," Lao-tzu asked. "I have sought it for twenty-seven years," replied K'ung-tzu, "and

I have not found it." Thereupon, Lao-tzu confined himself to giving his party these few counsels: "The sage loves darkness; he does not give himself up to all comers; he studies times and circumstances. If the moment is suitable, he speaks; otherwise, he is silent. Whoever has a treasure does not show it to everyone; thus, one who is truly wise does not reveal wisdom to everyone. This is all I have to tell you; make the most of it." K'ung-tzu, returning from this meeting, said: "I saw Lao-tzu; he resembles the dragon. As for the dragon, I know not how it can be carried by winds and clouds and rise to Heaven."

This anecdote, reported by the historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien, perfectly defines the respective positions of the two doctrines, rather we should say of the two branches of doctrine in which the Far Eastern tradition would now be divided: one with essentially pure metaphysics, to which all the traditional sciences having a speculative or, to put it better, 'cognitive' scope are added; the other confined to the practical field and standing exclusively in the field of social applications. K'ung-tzu himself admitted that he was not "born in Knowledge," which is to say, he had not reached the knowledge par excellence, which is that of the metaphysical and supra-rational order; he knew the traditional symbols, but he had not penetrated their deepest meaning. This is why his work must necessarily be limited to a special and contingent domain, which was his competence alone; but at least he was careful to not deny what was beyond him. In this, his more or less distant disciples did not always imitate him, and some, by a flaw that is widespread among 'specialists' of all kinds, sometimes showed a narrow exclusivism which attracted to them some responses of their scathing irony, from the great Taoist commentators of the fourth century B.C., the Lieh-tzu and above all Chuang-tzu. However, the discussions and quarrels that occurred at certain times should not make Taoism and Confucianism look like two rival schools, they never were, and they cannot be, since each has his own domain which are clearly distinct. Therefore, there is in their coexistence, nothing but perfectly ordinary and regular, and in some respects their distinction corresponds quite exactly to, in other civilizations, are spiritual authority and temporal power.

Moreover, we have already said that the two doctrines have a common root, which is the anterior tradition; K'ung-tzu, no more than Lao-tzu, has never intended to expose conceptions which would have been exclusively his own, and which, by the same token, would have been deprived of all authority and any real significance. "I am," said K'ung-tzu, "a man who loved the elders and who has made every effort to acquire

their knowledge;<sup>275</sup> this attitude, which is the opposite of the individualism of modern Westerners and their claim to 'originality' at any price, is the only one that is compatible with the constitution of a traditional civilization. The word 're-adaptation,' which we used previously, is therefore the correct one here; and the resulting social institutions are endowed with a remarkable stability, having lasted for twenty-five centuries and have survived all the periods of troubles that China has experienced so far. We do not wish to dwell on these institutions, moreover, which are quite well known in their broad outlines; we will only recall that their essential trait is to take as a basis the family, and to extend from there to the race, which is the set of families attached to the same original stock; indeed, one of the characteristics of Chinese civilization is to be based on the idea of race and solidarity uniting its members with each other, while other civilizations, which generally include men belonging to diverse or poorly defined races, are based on principles of unity which is quite different from this one.

Ordinarily in the West when one speaks of China and its doctrines, one thinks almost exclusively of Confucianism, which, does not mean that one interprets it always correctly; it is sometimes claimed to be a kind of Eastern 'positivism,' whereas it is something else in reality, firstly because of its traditional character, and also because, as we have said, it is an application of higher principles, while positivism implies, on the contrary, the negation of such principles. As for Taoism, it is generally passed over in silence, and many seem to ignore its existence, or at least believe that it has long since disappeared and that it is of only historical or archaeological interest; we will see the reason for this mistake later.

Lao-tzu wrote only a single treatise, concisely, the *Tao-te-Ching*, or the 'Book of the Way and Rectitude;' all other Taoist texts are either commentaries of this fundamental book or more or less later writings of some complementary teaching which firstly had been purely oral. *Tao*, literally translated as 'Way,' and which gave its name to the doctrine itself, is the Supreme Principle, viewed strictly from a metaphysical point of view: it is the origin and the end of all beings at once, as is clearly indicated by the idiographic character which represents it. *Te*, which we prefer to render as 'Rectitude' rather than 'Virtue' as is sometimes done, in order not to appear to give it a 'moral' meaning which is not in the spirit of Taoism, *Te*, we say, is what we could call a 'specification' of the *Tao* with respect to a specific being, such as the human being for example: it is the direction that this being must follow so that his existence, in the state in which he is currently, is according to the Way, or in other words, in conformity with the Principle. Lao-tzu therefore places himself

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<sup>275</sup> *Lun-yu*, ch. 7.

first in the universal order, and then descends down to an application; but this application, although properly aimed at the case of man, is by no means made from a social or moral point of view; what is envisaged is always and exclusively the attachment to the Supreme Principle, and so, in reality, we do not exit from the metaphysic domain.

Thus it is not external action that Taoism accords importance; in sum, it holds it indifferent to itself, and it expressly teaches the doctrine of 'non-action,' which Westerners in general have little difficulty in understanding the true meaning, although they may be helped by the theory of the Aristotelian 'prime mover,' whose meaning is the same in substance, but they do not seem to have ever developed the consequences. 'Non-action' is not inertia, on the contrary, it is the fullness of activity, but it is a transcendent and entirely interior activity, unmanifest, in union with the Principle, therefore beyond all distinctions and appearances that the vulgar wrongly take for reality itself, whereas they are only a more or less distant reflection of it. Moreover, it is to be remarked that Confucianism itself, whose point of view is that of action, nevertheless speaks of the 'invariable middle,' which is, of a state of perfect balance, subtracted from the incessant vicissitudes of the exterior world; but, for it, this can only be the expression of a purely theoretical ideal, and he can at most, in his contingent domain, grasp only a mere image of the true 'non-action,' while for Taoism it is a question of something completely different, a fully effective realization of this transcendent state. Placed within the center of the cosmic wheel, the perfect sage moves invisibly, by its mere presence, without participating in its movement, and without having to worry about exerting any action; his absolute detachment makes him master of all things, because he can no longer be affected by anything. "He has reached perfect impassability; life and death being equally indifferent to him, the collapse of the universe would not cause him any emotion. By scrutinizing, he has arrived at the immutable truth, the knowledge of the unique Universal Principal. He lets beings evolve according to their destinies, and he stands at the immobile center of all destinies... The external sign of this inner state is imperturbability; not that of the brave man who, alone for the sake of glory, approaches an army arrayed in battle; but that of the spirit which, superior to heaven, to heaven, to all beings, dwells in a body to which it is not held, does not care about the images that its sense prove it, knows everything by a global knowledge in its immobile unity. This spirit, absolutely independent, is the master of men; if it pleased him to summon them en masse, on the appointed day they would all come running; but he does not wish to be served."<sup>276</sup> "If a true sage had, in spite of himself, taken charge of the

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<sup>276</sup> *Chuang-tzu*, ch. 5.

empire, remaining in non-action, he would use the leisure of his non-intervention to give free rein to natural propensities. The empire would be well off having been handed over to this man. Without putting his organs into play, without using his bodily senses, sitting motionless, he would see everything from his transcendent eye; absorbed in contemplation, he would shake everything just as thunder does; the physical heaven would move meekly to the movements of his mind; all beings would follow the impulse of his non-intervention, as dust follows the wind. Why would this man manipulate the empire, when letting go is sufficient?"<sup>277</sup>

We insist especially on this doctrine of 'non-action,' aside from being one of the most important and characteristic aspects of Taoism, there are more special reasons for this, which the following will make clear. But a question arises: how can one reach the state that is described as that of the perfect sage? Here, as in all similar doctrines found in other civilizations, the answer is very clear: it is achieved exclusively by knowledge; but this knowledge is the very knowledge that K'ung-tzu confessed to not having obtained, it is of quite a different order than ordinary or 'profane' knowledge, it has no relation with the external knowledge of the 'letters,' nor, with science as understood by modern Westerners. This is not an incompatibility, although ordinary science, by the limits it establishes and by the mental habits it makes, can often be an obstacle to the acquisition of true knowledge; but whoever possesses the latter must necessarily regard the relative and contingent speculations in which most men indulge as negligible, the analysis and detailed research in which they are embarrassed, and the inevitable consequences of the multiple differences of opinion. "Philosophers are lost in their speculations, the sophists in their distinctions, the researchers in their investigations. All these men are captive within the limits of space, blinded by particular beings."<sup>278</sup> The sage, on the contrary, has gone beyond all distinctions inherent in the external points of view; at the central point where he stands, all opposition has disappeared and resolved in perfect equilibrium. "In the primordial state, these oppositions do not exist. All are derived from the diversification of beings, and their contacts caused by the universal gyration. They would cease if diversity and movement ceased. They immediately cease to affect the whole being who has reduced his distinct ego and his particular movement to almost nothing. This being no longer conflicts with any being, because he is established in the infinite, erase in the indefinite. He has arrived and stands at the starting point of transformations, the neutral point where there are no conflicts.

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<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 11.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 14.

By concentrating his nature, by feeding his vital spirit, by gathering all his power, he has united with the principle of all genesis. His nature being complete, his vital spirit being intact, no being can harm him."<sup>279</sup>

It is for this reason, and not by any kind of skepticism, which of course excludes the degree of knowledge in which he has arrived, that the wise man stands entirely outside of the discussions which stir the common people; indeed, for him all contrary opinions are equally valueless, because, by the very fact of their opposition, they are all equally relative. "His point of view is a point from where this and that, yes and no, still seem indistinguishable. This point is the pivot of the norm; it is the immovable center of a circumference, on the contour of which rolls all contingencies, distinctions, and individualities; from which we see only an infinite, which is neither this nor that, neither yes nor no. To see everything in the primordial unity which is not yet differentiated, or of a distance such that everything merges into one is the true intelligence... Let us not distinguish, but see everything within the unity of the norm. Let us not argue to win, but rather use with others the process of monkey trainers. This man says to the monkeys that he was raising: I will give you three taros in the morning, and four in the evening. The monkeys were all malcontent. So, he said, I'll give you four taros in the morning, and three in the evening. The monkeys were all content. With the advantage of having satisfied them, this man finally gave them the seven taros which he had originally intended for them. And so does the sage; he says yes or no, for the sake of peace, and remains quiet in the center of the universal wheel, indifferent to the meaning in which it turns."<sup>280</sup>

It is scarcely necessary to say that the state of the perfect sage, with all that it implies and upon which we cannot insist here, cannot be attained with a single stroke, and even degrees lower than this one, and which are like so many preliminary stages, are accessible only at the cost of efforts of which very few men are capable. Moreover, the methods employed for this purpose by Taoism are particularly difficult to follow, and the assistance they provide is much smaller than that which can be found in the traditional teachings of other civilizations, India for example; in any case, they are practically impassable for men belonging to races other than that to which they are more particularly suited. Moreover, even in China, Taoism has never been widely disseminated, nor has it ever aimed to, always refraining from propaganda; this reserve is imposed by its very nature; it is an extremely closed and essentially 'initiat'ic' doctrine, which as such is intended only for an elite, and which can-

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<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 19.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 2.

not be proposed to all indistinctly, for not all are capable of understanding it, and especially of 'realizing' it. It is said that Lao-tzu confided his teaching only to two disciples, who then trained ten others; following writing the *Tao-te-ching*, he disappeared to the West; no doubt he took refuge in some almost inaccessible retreat of Tibet or the Himalayas, and, as the historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien says, "we do not know where or how he ended his days."

The doctrine which is common to all, the one that all, to the extent of their means, must study and put into practice is Confucianism, which embraces all that concerns social relations is fully sufficient for the needs of ordinary life. Yet, since Taoism represents the principal knowledge from which all the rest derives, Confucianism in reality is only an application of a contingent order, it is subordinated in law by its very nature; but this is something that the mass does not have to worry about, that it cannot even fathom, since only the practical application falls within their intellectual horizon; and, in the mass of which we speak, it is certainly necessary to understand the great majority of Confucian 'scholars' themselves. This *de facto* separation between Taoism and Confucianism, between the inner doctrine and the external doctrine constitutes, apart from any form of questioning, one of the most notable difference between the civilization of China and that of India; in the latter, there is but one singly body of doctrine, Brahmanism, comprising both the principle and all its applications, and, from the lowest to the highest, there is no continuum, so to speak. This difference is largely due to the mental conditions of the two peoples; however, it is very probably that the continuity which has been maintained in India, and no doubt in India alone, has existed as long ago in China, from the time of Fu-his to that of Lao-tzu and K'ung-tzu.

We now see why Taoism is so unknown to Westerners: it does not appear on the outside as Confucianism does, whose action is manifested visibly in all circumstances of social life; it is the exclusive prerogative of an elite, perhaps more restricted in number today than it has ever been, and which does not wish to communicate externally the doctrine of which it is the guardian; finally, its very point of view, its mode of expression, and its mode of teachings are all that is foreign to the modern Western mind. While some know of the existence of Taoism and realizing that this tradition is still alive, imagine that, because of its closed nature, its influence on the whole of Chinese civilization is practically negligible, otherwise being absolutely null; again, this is a serious mistake, and it remains for us to explain, to the extent that is possible to do so here, what is true in this respect.

If we refer to the few texts we quoted above regarding 'non-action,' we can understand without too much difficulty, at least in principle if not in the modes of application, what the role of Taoism must be, the role of an invisible leadership, dominating the events instead of taking a direct part in them, and which, to not be clearly visible in external moments, is only more profoundly effective. Taoism fulfills, as we have said, the function of the 'prime mover:' he does not seek to mingle with action, he is even entirely disinterested insofar as he sees in action only a transient and momentary modification, a minute element of the 'current of forms,' a point of the circumference of the 'cosmic wheel;' on the other hand, it is like the pivot around which the wheel turns, the norm on which its movement is regulated, precisely because it does not participate in this movement, and without even having to expressly intervene in it. All that is involved in the revolutions of the wheel changes and passes; all that remains, being united to the Principle, invariably stands at the center, immutable as the very Principle; and the center, which nothing can affect in its undifferentiated unity, is the starting point of the indefinite multitude of modifications which constitute the universal manifestation.

It must be added at once that what we have just said concerning what is essentially the state and function of the perfect sage, since it is the latter who has actually reached the center, applies strictly only to the supreme degree of the Taoist hierarchy; the other degrees are such as the intermediaries between the center and the exterior world, and, as the spokes of the wheel leave its hub and connect to the circumference, they assure, without any discontinuity, the transmission of the influence emanating from the invariable point where the 'non-acting activity' lies. The term influence, not action, is the correct term here; we could also say, if you will, that it is a 'action of presence;' and even the inferior degrees, though far removed from the fullness of 'non-action,' still participate in some way. Moreover, the modes of communication of this influence necessarily escape those who only see the outside of things; they would be just as unintelligible to the Western mind, and for the same reasons, as the methods which allow the accession to the varying degrees of hierarchy. It would be perfectly useless to insist on the so-called 'temples without doors,' the 'colleges where we do not teach,' or on what could be the constitution of organizations which do not have the character of a 'society' in the European sense of the word, which have no definite external form, and which sometimes do not even have a name, and yet creates between their members the most effective and indissoluble



link that can exist; all this cannot represent anything to the Western imagination, which is familiar with it, providing no valid term of comparison here.

At the most exterior level, there are, without a doubt, organizations which, being engaged in the field of action, seem easier to grasp although they are still far more secretive than all Western associations which have some more or less justified pretensions in possessing this character. These organizations usually only have a temporary existence; formed for a special purpose, they disappear without a trace as soon as their mission is accomplished; they are merely simple emanations from other deeper and more permanent organizations, from which they receive their real direction, even though their apparent leaders are entirely alien to the Taoist hierarchy. Some of them, who have played a considerable role in the more or less distant past, have left in the minds of the people, memories which are expressed in a legendary form: thus, we have heard that formerly the masters of such secret associations took a handful of pins and threw it on the ground, and that from these pins were born so many armed soldiers. This is exactly the story of Cadmus sowing the dragon's teeth; and these legends, which the vulgar have wrongly taken as literal, under their naïve appearances, a very real symbolic value.

In many cases, it can also happen that the associations in question, or at least the most external, are in opposition and even in struggle with each other; superficial observers would not fail to draw an objection against what we have just said, and to conclude that, under such conditions, the unity of direction cannot exist. They would only forget one thing, which is that the direction in question is 'beyond' the opposition which they see, and not in this field in which this opposition asserts itself and for which it alone is valid. If we had to answer such contradictors, we would confine ourselves to reminding them of the Taoist teaching on the equivalent of the 'yes' and the 'no' in the primordial indistinction, and, as for the placing into practice of this teaching, we would simply return them to the apologue of the monkey trainer.

We think that we have said enough to make it clear that the real influence of Taoism can be extremely important, while always remaining invisible and hidden; it is not only in China that there are things such as this, but they seem to be more consistently applied here than anywhere else. It will also be understood that those who have some knowledge of the role of this traditional organization must be suspicious of appearances and be very reserved in the estimation of events such as those currently unfolding in the Far East, which are too often assimilated with what is happening in the Western world, which makes them appear in a completely false light. Chinese civilization has gone through many other

crises in the past, and has always found its balance; in sum, there is nothing to indicate that the present crisis is much more serious than the preceding ones, and, even if it were admitted, it would not be a reason to suppose that it must necessarily reach where there is something much more profound and essential in the tradition of the race, and a very small number of men may be sufficient to preserve it intact in periods of trouble, for things of this order do not rely on the brute force of the multitude. Confucianism, which represents only the exterior side of the tradition, can even disappear if social conditions change to the point of requiring the constitution of an entirely new form; but Taoism is beyond these contingencies. Let it be remembered that the sage, following the Taoist teachings we have reported, "remains quiet in the center of the cosmic wheel," whatever the circumstances may be, and that even "the collapse of the universe would not cause him any emotion."

## Conditions of Initiation

*Des conditions de l'initiation*, October 1932.

The confusion between the esoteric, initiatic domain and the mystic domain seems to have never been as widespread as it is today, and the findings we have had the opportunity to make recently in this regard has committed us to formulate some considerations that seem appropriate and even necessary. Indeed, it is now fashionable, if we may say so, to call the Eastern doctrines 'mystic,' including those where there is not even a shadow of an appearance which could give rise to such a qualification; this is a fact that appears to be quite new and it may be interesting to look at what tendencies or intentions it corresponds with. The origin of this false interpretation is naturally attributable to certain Orientalists, who may not have been brought to this conclusion by an ulterior motive, but only by the more or less unconscious bias which is ordinary for them to bring everything back to Western viewpoints.<sup>281</sup> But others came then, seizing this assimilation, and who, seeing the part they could extract for purposes which do not seem entirely selfless, strive to spread the idea outside of the special world all in all in a quite limited way, reaching only the Orientalists and their clientele; and this is more serious because it is not difficult to perceive unequivocal marks of an 'annexationist' attempt, against which it is important to guard against; moreover, we have recently given two examples of this here.

We do not propose to expose all the differences which separate the two initiatic and mystic points of view here, because it would necessitate a whole volume, or even to specify the essential distinction of the domains to which they correspond or give access to respectively. For the moment, our intention is only to insist on what may be called a difference of 'modality,' according to which initiation, in its very process, presents

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<sup>281</sup> Especially since the English orientalist Nicholson thought to translate *taṣawwuf* as mysticism, it is agreed in the West that Islamic esoterism is essentially 'mystical;' in this case, one does not even speak any more of esoterism, but only of mysticism, which is to say that one arrived at a true substitution of viewpoints. The most beautiful thing is that, regarding questions of this kind, the opinion of the Orientalists, who know of these things only through books, is clearly much more important to the vast majority of Westerners than the opinion of those who have a direct and effective knowledge!

characters which are quite different from those of mysticism; this suffices to show at least that there are two very distinct 'paths' here, although it remains to be established, despite some apparent analogies which may delude the observer 'from outside,' that these two paths do not lead to the same goal.

What is most often said in this regard is that mysticism is 'passive,' while initiation is 'active;' this is true, on the condition of specifying in what sense it is precisely understood. Above all, this means that, in the case of mysticism, the individual confines himself to simply receiving what is presented to him and as such he presents himself without himself being there; let us say that it is in this that the principal danger lies for him, because it is thus 'open' to all influences of whatever order and that, in general, he does not have the preparation that would be necessary to allow him to establish any discrimination between them.<sup>282</sup> On the contrary, in the case of initiation it is to the individual that an initiative of 'realization' belongs, which will continue methodically under rigorous and incessant control, and will ordinarily lead to overcoming the possibilities of the individual; it is essential to add that this initiative is not enough, because it is quite obvious that the individual cannot surpass himself by his own means, but it is he who necessarily constitutes the starting point of any 'realization' for the initiate, while the mystic has none, even for things which go no farther than the realm of individual possibilities.

This distinction may already appear clear enough, but it will not suffice; we could even say that it answers only the most 'exoteric' aspect of the question, and in any case, it is too incomplete with regards to initiation, from which it is very far from including all the necessary conditions. Let us say first of all, although it goes without saying, that the first of these conditions is a certain natural aptitude or disposition, without which all effort is in vain, for the individual can develop only the possibilities he carries within himself from the beginning; this aptitude, which may be called 'initiability,' properly constitutes the 'qualification' required by all initiatic traditions. Moreover, this condition is the only one which is, in a certain sense, common to initiation and mysticism, for it is clear that the mystic must also have a special natural disposition, though it is entirely different from that of the 'initiable,' it is even opposed in some aspects; but this condition, for him if it is also necessary, is sufficient; there is nothing else which must be added to it, and circumstances alone can do the rest, passing at their pleasure from 'power' to 'deed' in

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<sup>282</sup> It is also this character of 'passivity' which explains, if it does not justify them, the modern errors which tend to confound the mystics, either with 'mediums' and other 'sensitives,' or even with simply maladies.

the possibilities of the provision in question. This is a direct result of the character of 'passivity' of which we have just spoken: in such a case, it cannot be an effort or personal work of any kind which the mystic will never have to perform, and of which he must even carefully guard himself from, as something which would be in opposition to its 'way,' whereas, for initiation, due to its 'active' character, such work constitutes another condition which is no less strictly necessary than the first, and without which the passage of 'power' to 'deed' cannot be accomplished in any other way.<sup>283</sup>

However, this is not all: in sum, we have only developed the first distinction, to draw the consequences, for initiation, there is a condition which does not exist with regards to mysticism; but there is another condition, which is no less necessary, of which we have not spoken and which is placed between those just mentioned. This condition is even the most characteristic of all, that which makes it possible to preclude any misunderstanding of initiation and to avoid confusing it for something else altogether; in this case, initiation is much better determined than that which place themselves in the conditions required to obtain it; one of these conditions is precisely the one of which we speak, as another condition is an effort of which the men of the first ages did not have any need for, since spiritual development was fulfilled in them just as naturally as physical development.

Therefore, it is a necessary condition in accordance with the laws that govern our world today; to make it easier to understand, we can resort here to an analogy: all the beings that will develop during a cycle are contained from the beginning, in the state of subtle germs, within the 'Egg of the World;' thenceforth, why should they not be born to the corporeal state on their own and without parents? This is no longer an absolute impossibility, and one can conceive of a world where it may be so; but, in fact, this world is not ours. Of course, we do not deal with questions of anomalies; there may be exceptional cases of 'spontaneous generation,' and in the spiritual order we have applied this very expression

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<sup>283</sup> It follows from this, among other consequences, that doctrinal knowledge, which is indispensable to the initiate and whose theoretical understanding for him is a precondition of any 'realization,' may be entirely lacking to the mystic; hence, in addition to the possibility of multiple errors and confusions, there is often a strange incapacity to express oneself intelligibly. Moreover, it must be understood that the knowledge in question has absolutely nothing to do with all which is external teachings or secular knowledge, which is of no value here, and which would be an obstacle than an aid in many cases; a man may not know how to read or write, and yet he may reach the highest levels of initiation, while he who is a 'savant' and even a 'genius' according to the method of seeing the profane world, is not 'initiable' to any degree.

to the case of the mystic, but we have also said that it is 'irregular,' while initiation is essentially a 'regular' thing, which has nothing to do with anomalies. It would still be necessary to know exactly how far they can go; they must also finally enter into some law, for all things can exist only as elements of the total and universal order. If one is willing to think about this, it may suggest that the states realized by the mystic are not exactly the same as those of the initiate, and that, if their realization is not subject to the same laws, it is actually something else entirely; but this is a question of the distinction between the two initiatic and mystic domains themselves, a question which we have declared from the beginning as not wishing to tackle here; and besides, we can now leave the case of mysticism entirely, on which we have said enough for what we propose to establish, so as to not consider initiation exclusively.

What remains for us is to specify the role of attachment to a traditional organization, which cannot exempt the internal work which each must accomplish by oneself, but which is required for this work itself in order for it to bear fruit. It must be understood that those who have been made the depositories of initiatic knowledge cannot communicate it in a way which is more or less comparable to that which the teacher, in profane education, communicates to his pupils in bookish formulas that they will only have to store in their memory; the question here is of something which, in its very essence, is properly 'incommunicable,' since they are states which are realized internally. What can be taught are only preparatory methods to obtain these states; what can be provided from the outside in this regard, in sum, is an aid, a support which greatly facilitates the work to be done, and also a control that removes obstacles and dangers that may arise; all this is far from being negligible, and the one who is deprived of it runs a great risk of failure, but even that would not fully justify what we said when we spoke of a necessary condition. This is not what we had in mind, at least in an immediate way; all this intervenes only secondarily, and to some extent as consequences, after initiation understood in the strictest sense, as we indicated above, and when it comes to effectively developing the virtuality that it constitutes; but it is still necessary that this virtuality pre-exists. It is therefore otherwise that the initiatic transmission must be properly understood, and we can characterize it better only by saying that it is essentially the transmission of a 'spiritual influence;' we propose to return to this amply in future studies, for the moment, we will confine ourselves to more precisely determining the role played by this influence, between the natural aptitude previously inherent to the individual and the work of realization which he will accomplish later. We have remarked elsewhere that the phases of initiation, as well as those of the Hermetic 'Great Work' which is at its

essence only one of the symbolic expressions, that replicate those of the cosmogonic process; this analogy, which is based directly on that of the 'microcosm' with the 'macrocosm,' allows, better than any other analogy, to shed light on the present question. Indeed, it can be said that the aptitudes or possibilities included in the individual nature are firstly, in themselves, only a *materia prima*, which is to say, a pure potentiality, where there is nothing developed or differentiated;<sup>284</sup> it is then the chaotic and tenebrous state that initiatic symbolism corresponds precisely to the profane world, and in which is found the being who has not yet arrived at the 'second birth.' For this chaos to begin taking shape and organizing itself, an initial vibration must be communicated to it by the spiritual powers, which the Hebrew Genesis designates as the *Elohim*; this vibration is the *Fiat Lux* which illuminates the chaos, and which is the necessary starting point for all subsequent developments; and, from the initiatic point of view, this enlightenment is precisely constituted by the transmission of the 'spiritual influence' of which we have just spoken.<sup>285</sup> Henceforth, and by the virtue of this influence, the spiritual possibilities of being are no longer the mere potentiality they once were; they have become a virtuality ready to develop in action the various stages of initiatic realization.

We can summarize all this by saying that the legitimate initiation implies three conditions that present themselves in successive modes, and that we can respectively correspond them to the three terms 'potentiality,' 'virtuality,' and 'actuality:' 1. The 'qualification' constituted by certain possibilities inherent in the proper nature of the individual, and are the *materia prima* upon which the initiatic work will have to take place. 2. The transmission, through the attachment to a traditional organization, of a 'spiritual influence' giving to the being the 'enlightenment' which will enable it to order and develop these possibilities that it carries within itself. 3. The interior work by which, with the help of 'adjuvants' or 'external supports,' if there is a link especially in the early stages, this development will be carried out gradually, passing the being from step

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<sup>284</sup> Strictly speaking, it is a *materia prima* only in a relative sense, and not in the absolute sense; but this distinction does not matter from the point of view which we have placed ourselves.

<sup>285</sup> Hence such expressions such as 'to give Light,' used to designate initiation in the most restricted sense, which is to say, the very transmission that we are dealing with here. It should also be noted, as far as the *Elohim* are concerned, that the septenary number attributed to them is closely related to the constitution of the initiatic organizations, which must effectively be an image of the cosmic order.

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to step through the various stages of the initiatic hierarchy, to lead it to the final goal of 'Deliverance' or 'Supreme Identity.'



## Initiatic Regularity

*De la régularité initiatique*, November 1932.

We said in our previous article that initiation implies as a necessary condition the attachment to a regular traditional organization; it is this very connection which constitutes initiation in the strictest meaning, as defined by the etymology of the word which designates it, and it is it which is everywhere represented as a 'second birth' or as a 'regeneration:' a 'second birth' because it opens the being up to a world other than the one where the activity of the corporeal mode is exercised, a world which will be for him the field of development for possibilities of a superior order; a 'regeneration' because it thus restores the being to its prerogatives that were natural and normal in the early ages of humanity, where it had not moved away from the original spirituality, towards materiality as it is in subsequent eras, and because it must lead it foremost as an essential step in its realization, to the restoration of the 'primordial state' within itself, which is the fullness and perfection of human individuality residing at the unique and invariable central point from which the being can rise to higher states.

We must now insist upon a crucial point in this respect: it is that the attachment in question must be real and effective, and that a so-called 'ideal' attachment, as some people have sometimes like to considerate in our time, as entirely in vain and effectively null. This is easy to understand, since it is properly the transmission of a 'spiritual influence,' which must be carried out according to defined laws; and these laws, which are obviously quite different from those that govern the forces of the physical world, are no less rigorous, and they even present themselves in spite of the profound differences separating them, a certain analogy, the virtue of the continuity and correspondence that exist between all states of the Universal Existence. It is this analogy that allowed us, for example, to speak of 'vibration' regard the *Fiat Lux* by which the chaos of spiritual potentialities is illuminated and ordered, although it is by no means a vibration of a sensory order such as those studied by physicists, any more than the 'light' in question can be identified by that which is grasped by the visual faculty of the corporeal organism; but these ways of speaking, while necessarily are symbolic since they are based upon analogy, are none the less strictly legitimate, for this analogy

exists in the very nature of things and, in a certain sense, are much more distant than one might assume.<sup>286</sup> We will return to these considerations more fully when we discuss, in the following studies, initiatic rites and their efficacy; for the moment, it is sufficient to remember that there are laws that must be taken into account, otherwise the desired result could no more be achieved than a physical effect cannot be obtained if one does not work within the conditions required by the laws which govern the productions of its subject; since it is a question of a transfer to operated effectively, it obviously implies a real contact, whatever the manner may be in which it is established, terms which will naturally be determined by these laws of action of the 'spiritual influences' which we have just alluded to.

It follows from the necessity of an effective attachment there are several extremely important consequences, either in regards to the individual who aspires to initiation, or in regards to the initiatic organizations themselves; these are the consequences which we intend to presently examine. We know that there are some, even many, to whom these considerations will appear unpleasant, because they will disturb the idea which is too convenient and 'simplistic' that they had formed of initiation, or because it will destroy certain unjustified pretensions and certain more or less self-interested assertions, but which are devoid of any authority; but these are things to which we cannot stop, having, here as always, no concern other than the truth.

Firstly, as far as the individual is concerned, it is clear from what has just been said that his intention is to be initiated, even admitting for him this intention to be attached to a tradition of which he may have some 'exterior' knowledge, cannot by itself be sufficient to assure him an effective initiation. Indeed, it is not a question of 'erudition,' which, like all that concerns profane knowledge, is without any value here; it is no more a question of dreams and imaginations, nor of sentimental aspirations. If it were sufficient to simply read books in order to be called initiated, even if they were Sacred Scriptures of an authentic orthodox tradition, or to reflect on more or less vague past or present organizations to which one

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<sup>286</sup> It is the misunderstanding of this analogy, which they base their identity upon, combined with the finding of a certain similarity in modes of action and their external effects which has led some people to make for themselves an erroneous conception which is more or less grossly materialized 'spiritual influences,' assimilated to pure and simple physical forces, such as electricity and magnetism; and this misunderstanding may have come also, at least in part, from the all too common idea of trying to draw parallels between traditional knowledge and the points of view of modern profane science, since these are two things which do not belong in the same domain.

indulges his own 'ideal' (this word, which is used at all times nowadays, and which signifies all that one wants, does not mean anything at its essence), would be all too easy; the preliminary question of 'qualification' would therefore be entirely abolished, since everyone is naturally inclined to call themselves 'well and duly qualified,' and thus being both judge and party in his own case, would undoubtedly discover without any difficulty excellent reasons (excellent, at least, in his own eyes and according to the ideas he has forged) with which to consider himself an initiate without formality, and we do not even see why he would hesitate to claim himself in one fell swoop as being of the most transcendent degrees. Do those who imagine that one 'initiates' oneself, as we have said before, have ever thought of the rather unfortunate consequences of their affirmation? In these conditions, there is no more selection or control, no more 'means of recognition,' in the sense that we have already used this expression, there is no more possible hierarchy, and, of course, no more transmission of anything; in a word, nothing that essentially characterizes initiation and what constitutes it in fact; yet this is what some, with astonishing unconsciousness, dare to present as a 'modernized' concept of initiation (well modernized indeed, and well worthy of lay, democratic, and egalitarian 'ideals'), without even doubting that, instead of having at least 'virtual' initiates, which after all is something altogether, we would no longer have simple laymen who would undeservedly pose as initiates.

But let us leave these ramblings, which may seem negligible, if we have thought it our duty to speak only of it a little, it is because the misunderstanding and the intellectual disorder which unfortunately characterizes our time allows them to propagate with deplorable ease. What must be understood is, since it is a question of initiation, that it is about earnest things and 'positive' realities, we would say so willingly if the profane 'scientist' had not abused this word; that one accepts these things as they are, or that one no longer speaks of initiation at all; we do not see any possible middle way between these two attitudes, and it would be better to frankly renounce any initiation than to attribute to the name what would be nothing more than a vain parody, without even the external appearances that at least seek to safeguard other counterfeits we have spoken of earlier.

To return to what was the starting point of this digression, we will say that the individual must not only intend to be initiated, but 'accepted' by a regular organization, having the quality to confer to him initiation, which is to say to transmit to him the 'spiritual influence' of which without it would be impossible for him, in spite of all of his efforts, to never exit from the limitations and obstacles of the profane world. It may happen that, due to his lack of 'qualification,' his intention is met with no

response, however sincere it may be, because that is not the question, and in all this it is not question of 'morality,' but of 'technical' rules referring to 'positive' laws (we repeat this word for want of finding another more adequate one), and which are an inescapable necessity as, in another order, the physical conditions are indispensable for the exercise of certain professions.<sup>287</sup> In such a case, he will never be able to consider himself an initiate, whatever theoretical knowledge he may acquire; moreover, it is to be presumed that, even in this regard, he will never go very far (we speak naturally of a true understanding, though still external, and not of mere erudition, that is, of an accumulation of memory-based notions, as it occurs in profane education), because theoretical knowledge itself, going beyond certain degrees, already presupposes the 'qualification' required to obtain the initiation which will allow to be transformed, by internal 'realization,' into true knowledge, so no one can be prevented from developing the possibilities he really carries within himself; in the end, only those who deceive themselves on their own account are excluded, believing that they can obtain something which, in reality, has been incompatible with their individual nature.<sup>288</sup>

Continuing on to the other side of the question, which is to say the one which refers to the initiatic organizations themselves, we will say this: it is too obvious that one can only transmit what one possesses oneself; therefore, an organization must necessarily have a 'spiritual influence' in order to communicate it to the individuals attached to it; and this immediately excludes all pseudo-initiatic organizations which are so numerous in our time, and which are devoid of any authentic traditional character. Indeed, under these conditions an initiatic organization must

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<sup>287</sup> Perhaps we will return to this question of initiatic 'qualifications' someday, among which are not only intellectual qualifications, but also psychic and even physical ones (in the corporeal sense, as this word is taken most commonly); it should be noted that the latter do not differ substantially from this which are required; even in the exoteric regions, for the access to the sacerdotal functions; and this is easily understandable since it is also, in both cases, the ability to receive and use 'spiritual influences,' and some organisms may be useless instruments in this regard.

<sup>288</sup> For those who would be tempted to see any contradiction with what we indicated in our previous note, we will add this: strange as it may seem, because most of our contemporaries are in complete ignorance of all that is traditionally scientific, psychic, and even what is corporeal generally correspond to intellectual limitations, of which they are in some sort external signs. Moreover, there are secondary 'qualifications' whose absence does not constitute an impediment for admission to the various degrees of initiation, but only for the exercise of certain functions in initiatic organizations; and these are two very different things, that we must be very careful not to confuse, as often is done.

not be the product of an individual fantasy; it cannot be founded, like a profane association, on the initiative of some people who decide to meet by adopting a form; and even if these forms are not invented from scratch, but borrowed from truly traditional rites, whose founders would have had by knowledge of 'erudition,' they will not be any more valid due to this, because, in the absence of a regular filiation, the transmission of the 'spiritual influence' is impossible and non-existence, so that in all cases we are dealing only with a vulgar counterfeit of initiation. This is even more the case when we are dealing only with pure hypotheticals, not to say imaginary reconstructions of traditional forms that have disappeared since a more or less remote time, for example, such as those of ancient Egypt of Chaldea; and even if, in the use of such forms, there was a serious desire to be attached to the tradition to which they belonged, they would not be more efficacious, for one can only relate something to reality which has a present existence, and yet it is necessary for that, as we said with regards to individuals, to be 'accepted' by the authorized representations of the tradition to which we are referring, so that an apparently new organization can only be legitimate if it is an extension of a pre-existing organization, so as to maintain without interruption a continuity of the initiatic 'chain.'

In all this, we only are expressing in other words, what we have already said above about the need for an effective and direct attachment and the vanity of an 'ideal' connection; we must not be deceived in this respect by the denominations attributed to certain organizations which have no right to them, but who try to give to themselves an appearance of authenticity. Thus, to take as an example, there is a multitude of groups, of recent origin, called 'Rosicrucians,' without having ever had any contact with those of the Rose-Cross, even by some indirect and diverted means, and without even knowing what they were in reality, since they almost invariably represent them as having constituted a 'society,' which is a gross error, as we have explained on a variety of occasions. It is necessary to see there, most often, the need to adorn itself with a title that will have an effect or the will to impose on the naïve; even if one considers the most favorable cases, which is to say one that admits that the constitutions of some of these groups proceed from a desire to attach oneself 'ideally' to the Rose-Cross, it will still be, from the initiatic point of view, a pure nothingness. What we say about this particular example applies equally to all the organizations invented by the 'occultists' and other 'neo-spiritualists' of every kind and denomination, organizations which, whatever their pretensions, can in all truth be described as 'pseudo-initiatic,' because they have absolutely nothing authentic to

transmit, and what they present is only a counterfeit, or even too often a parody or caricature of initiation.<sup>289</sup>

Let us add, another consequence of the preceding is that, even though it is an authentic initiatic organization, its members do not have the power to change its forms at will or to alter them in their own essential way; this does not exclude certain possibilities of adaptation to circumstances which are imposed on individuals rather than deriving from their will, but which are limited in any case by the condition of not undermining the means by which the preservation and transmission of the 'spiritual influence' of which the depository organization in question is ensured; if this condition were not observed, it would result in a real break with tradition, which would cause the organization to lose its 'regularity.' Moreover, an initiatic organization cannot validly incorporate into its rites elements which are borrowed from traditional forms other than the one in which it is regularly constituted; such elements, the adoption of which would have an entirely artificial character, would only represent mere superfluous fantasies, without any efficiency from the initiatic point of view, and which consequently would add absolutely nothing real, but whose presence would be, because of their heterogeneity, a cause of disorder and disharmony. The laws which preside over the handling of 'spiritual influences' are too complex and too delicate a matter for those who do not have complete knowledge of it to be able to afford, with impunity, more or less arbitrary modifications to ritual forms, where everything has its *raison d'être*, and whose exact scope is likely to escape them.

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<sup>289</sup> Investigations that we have made on this subject in the distant past, has led us to a formal and unmistakable conclusion that we must express here clearly, without worry about the anger that it risks raising on various sides: it we put aside the case of the possible survival of some rare groups of Christian Hermetism in the Middle Ages, which are extremely limited in any case, it is a fact that, of all organizations with initiatic pretensions which are now widespread in the Western world, there are only two of them, who, however fallen they are due to their ignorance and misunderstanding of the vast majority of their members, can claim an authentic traditional origin and a real initiatic transmission; these two organizations, which moreover, to tell the truth, were originally one, albeit with multiple branches, are the Compagnonnages and Masonry. Everything else is only fantasy or charlatanism, even when it is not used to hide something worse; and, in this order of ideas, there is no invention so absurd or extravagant that in our time there is no chance of success and of being taken seriously, even from occultist reveries on 'initiations in the astral' to the American system, whose intentions are chiefly 'commercial,' so-called 'initiation by correspondence!'

What clearly results from all this is the nullity of individual initiatives concerning the constitution of initiatic organizations, either in regard to their origin or in terms of their forms; and it may be remarked in this connection that there are no traditional ritual forms to which particular individuals can be assigned as authors. It is easy to understand that this is, if we recall that the essential and final goal of initiation goes beyond the realm of individuality and its particular possibilities, which would be imposed if we were to reduce it to purely human means; from this simple remark, and without even diving deeper into things, we can immediately conclude that the presence of a 'non-human' element is necessary, and as such is the character of the 'spiritual influence,' whose transmission constitutes a proper initiation. What remains for us to specify, as far as possible, the conditions under which this transmission can actually take place, which is to say, in sum, to give a clearer idea of what the different traditions agree to designate as the initiatic 'chain,' and this will be subject of a future article.

## Initiatic Transmission

*De la transmission initiatique*, December 1932.

We have said previously that proper initiation is essentially the transmission of a 'spiritual influence,' a transmission that can only be made by means of a regular traditional organization, so that one cannot speak of initiation outside of the attachment to such an organization. We also specified that 'regularity' should be understood as excluding all pseudo-initiatic organizations, which is to say all those, whatever their pretensions and whatever appearances they take, which are not actually depositories of any 'spiritual influence,' and therefore cannot in reality convey anything. Therefore, it is easily understood the paramount importance that all traditions place on what is designated as the initiatic 'chain,' which is to say, a succession ensuring the transmission of what acts in an uninterrupted way; without this succession, the very observation of ritual forms would be in vain, because there is no vital element which is vital to their efficacy.

We propose to return more specifically to the question of initiatic rites later, but we must now answer an objection that may arise here: These rites, it will be said, do they not themselves have an efficacy which is inherent to them? They do indeed have an efficacy, since, if they are not observed, or if they are altered in one of their essential elements, no real result can be obtained; but, if it is a necessary condition for the efficacy of rites, it is not sufficient, moreover, it is necessary for these rites to have their effect, to be accomplished by those who have the capacity to accomplish them. This is by no means peculiar to initiatic rites, but applies equally to religious rites which are equally efficacious in their own right, but which cannot be validly performed by anyone; thus, if a religious rite requires a priestly ordination, he who has not received this ordination will not be able to observe all the forms and bring the desired intention,<sup>290</sup> he will not obtain any result from it, because he does not carry the 'spiritual influence' which must operate by taking these ritual

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<sup>290</sup> We expressly formulate here the condition of 'intention' to make it clear that rites cannot be an object of 'experiences' in the profane sense of the word; whoever wishes to accomplish a rite, of whatever order, by a mere curiosity, and to experience its effect, could of course be assured that the effect will be null and void.



forms as support. Even in rites of a very inferior order, of a magical order for example, in which an influence intervenes which is not spiritual, but which is merely psychic (understanding that, in the most general sense, it means that which belongs to the domain of the subtle elements of human individuality), the production of a real effect is conditioned in many cases by a certain transmission; and the most vulgar country sorcery would suffice for a number of examples. We do not have to insist on this final point, which is entirely outside our current subject; we indicate this only to make it clearer that, 'a fortiori,' a regular transmission is indispensable to enable the rites involving the action of an influence of a superior order, which may be properly said to be 'non-human,' of which is the case with both initiatic rites and religious rites.

Indeed, this is the essential point, and we must insist upon it: we have already said that the formation of regular initiatic organizations is not at the disposal of individual initiates, and the same can be said for religious organizations, because in both cases, it requires the presence of something that cannot originate from individuals, being beyond the realm of human possibilities. We can even combine these two cases by saying that we are talking here of all organizations that can truly be described as 'traditional;' it will be understood then why we refuse, as we have said on many occasions, to apply the name 'tradition' to what is only purely human, as profane language does this profusely; and it will not be without interest to remark that this very word 'tradition,' in its original meaning, expresses nothing but the very idea of transmission which we are currently considering.

Now, for the sake of convenience, we can divide traditional organizations into the 'exoteric' and 'esoteric,' although these two terms, if we wished to understand them in their most precise meaning, may not apply everywhere with equal accuracy, but for what we have in mind, it will suffice to understand by 'exoteric,' the organizations which, in a certain form of civilization, are open to all indistinctly, and by 'esoteric,' those which are reserved for an elite or, in other words, where only those who have a particular 'qualification' are admitted. The latter are properly initiatic organizations; as for the others, they do not include only religious organizations, but also, as can be seen in Oriental civilizations, social organizations that do not carry a religious character, while simultaneously being attached to a principle of a higher order, which the essential condition for them to be recognized as being traditional. Since we do not have to consider exoteric organizations in themselves here, only to compare their case with that of esoteric or initiatic organizations, we can limit ourselves to the consideration of religious organizations, because

they are the only ones of the type known in the West, and so what is related to it will be more immediately understandable.

We will say this: all religion, in the true sense of the word, has a 'non-human' origin and is organization in such a way as to preserve the deposit of an element which is also 'non-human' in that it derives from this origin; this element, which is order of the order of what we call 'spiritual influences,' exerts its effective action by means of appropriate rites, and the fulfillment of these rites, to be valid, provide a real support for the influence in question, requires direct and uninterrupted transmission within the religious organizations. If this is true in the purely exoteric order (and it is well understood that what we say is not addressed to denying 'critics' who claim to reduce religion to a 'human fact,' while we do not take this opinion into consideration), then it is even more so in the higher order, such as in the esoteric order. The terms which we have just used are broad enough to apply here without change, replacing only the word 'religion' with that of 'initiation;' the entire difference is in the exact nature of the 'spiritual influences' that come into play (for there are many distinctions to be made in this domain, where we understand, in sum, all that pertains to supra-individual possibilities), and especially the respective ends of the action they perform in each case.

If we make ourselves better understood, we refer more specifically to the case of Christianity in the religious order, we can add this: the rites of initiation, aiming at the transmission of the 'spiritual influence' from one individual to another who can then transmit it in turn, are exactly comparable to ordination rites in this respect;<sup>291</sup> and it may even be remarked that both are similarly susceptible to several degrees, since the fullness of the 'spiritual influence' is not necessarily communicated at once with all the prerogatives that it implies, especially with regards to the current aptitude to perform such and such functions within the traditional organization.<sup>292</sup> Now we know how important the question of 'apostolic succession' is to the Christian churches, and this is understandable without any difficulty, since, if this succession were to be interrupted, no ordination would be valid, and consequently most of the rites

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<sup>291</sup> We say 'in this respect' because, from another point of view, the first initiation, as 'second birth,' would be comparable to the rite of baptism; it goes without saying that the correspondences that can be envisaged between orders as different as these must be necessarily rather complex and cannot be reduced to a sort of unilinear scheme.

<sup>292</sup> We say 'current aptitude' to make it clear that this is something other than the prior 'qualification,' which can also be referred to as aptitude; thus, it may be said that an individual is fit for the exercise of priestly functions if he has no impediments which forbid access to it, but he will be able to do so only if he has actually received the ordination.

would be nothing more than vain formalities without any real impact.<sup>293</sup> Those who rightly admit the necessity of such a condition in the religious order should not have the slightest difficulty in understanding that it does not impose itself any less rigorously in the initiatic order, or, in other terms, that a regular transmission, constituting the 'chain' of which we spoke above, is just as strictly indispensable.

We said earlier that initiation must have a 'non-human' origin, for otherwise it could not achieve its ultimate goal in any way, which goes beyond the realm of individual possibilities; that is why the true initiatic rites, as we have indicated before, cannot be related to human authors, and, in fact, we never know such authors,<sup>294</sup> any more than we know the inventors of traditional symbols, and for the same reason, because these symbols are also 'non-human' in their origin and essence.<sup>295</sup> It can be said in all seriousness that in cases like these there is no 'historical' origin, since the real origin is in a world to which the conditions of time and place, which define historical facts, do not apply; and this is why these things will always inevitably escape the profane methods of research, which can give valid results only in the purely human order.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> In fact, Protestant churches which do not admit sacerdotal functions have suppressed almost all rites or have kept them only as mere 'commemorative' simulacra; and they cannot be anything more in such a case. On the other hand, discussions of the question of 'apostolic succession' gives rise to questions of legitimacy for the Anglican church; and it is curious to note that the Theosophists themselves, when they wished to constitute their 'Liberal Catholic' church, sought above all to ensure the benefit of a regular 'apostolic succession.'

<sup>294</sup> Certain attributions to legendary, or more specifically symbolic, characters cannot in any way be regarded as having a 'historical' character, but on the contrary they fully confirm what we say here.

<sup>295</sup> The esoteric Muslim organizations transmit to themselves a sign of recognition which, according to tradition, was communicated to the Prophet by the archangel Gabriel himself; the 'non-human' origin of initiation cannot be more clearly indicated.

<sup>296</sup> It would be noted in this connection that those who, with 'apologetic' intentions, insist on what they call, by a rather barbaric term, the 'historicity' of a religion, which they see through to their very essential and subordinate doctrinal considerations (whereas, on the contrary, the historical facts themselves are really worth anything as they are taken as symbols of spiritual realities), which commits a serious error to the detriment of the 'transcendence' of the religion. Such an error, which bears witness to a rather strongly 'materialized' conception and the inability to rise to a higher order, can be regarded as an unfortunate concession from the 'humanist' point of view, which is individualistic and anti-traditional, which properly characterizes the modern Western spirit.

Under such conditions, it is easy to understand that the role of the individual who confers initiation on another takes the role of 'transmitter,' in the most precise meaning of the word; he does not act as an individual, but as a support for an influence that does not belong to the individual order; it is only a ring of the 'chain' whose starting point is outside and beyond humanity. This is why he cannot act in his own name, but in the name of the organization to which he is attached and whose powers he possesses, or, more specifically, in the name of the principle that this organization visibly represents. This explains that the efficacy of the rite performed by an individual is independent of the value of the individual and as such is also true of religious rites; and we do not mean this in the 'moral' sense, which would be too obviously irrelevant in a question which is in fact exclusively 'technical' in nature, but in the sense that, even if the individual does not possess the degree of knowledge necessary to understand the profound meaning of the rite and the essential reason for its various elements, this rite will have its full effect if, being regularly invested with the function as 'transmitter,' he performs it in observing all the proscribed rules, and with an intention sufficient to determine the consciousness of his attachment to the traditional organization. From this comes the immediate consequences, that even an organization where it would not be at a certain moment more than we can call 'virtual' initiates would still be able to continue to transmit the 'spiritual influence' of which it is a depository; it suffices for the 'chain' not to be interrupted; in this respect, the well-known fable of the 'the ass bearing relics' is likely to have an initiatic significance worthy of consideration.<sup>297</sup>

On the contrary, the complete knowledge of a rite, if it has been obtained outside the regular conditions, is entirely devoid of any value; thus, to take a simple example (since the rite is reduced to the pronouncement of a formula), in the Hindu tradition, a *mantra* that has been learned otherwise from the mouth of an authorized *guru* is without effect, because it is not 'vivified' by the presence of the 'spiritual influence' of which it is only intended to serve as the vehicle.<sup>298</sup> This extends to one

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<sup>297</sup> It is remarkable that, in this connection, that relics are precisely a vehicle of 'spiritual influences;' this the true reason for worship of which they are not the object, even if this reason is not always conscious among the representatives of the exoteric religions, who sometimes seem to not realize the very 'positive' character of the forces they handle, which does not prevent these forces from actually acting, even without their knowledge, although perhaps with less than if they were better 'technically' directed.

<sup>298</sup> Note in passing, regarding 'vivification,' if we can say this, that the consecration of temples, images, and ritual objects has the essential purpose of making it

degree or another, to all that is attached to a 'spiritual influence:' thus, the study of the sacred texts of a tradition, made in books, can never supplement their direct communication; and this is why, even where the traditional teachings have been more or less completely written down, they nevertheless continue to regularly be the subject of oral transmission, which, at the same time is essential to give them their full effect (since it is not a question of adhering to merely theoretical knowledge), which ensures the perpetuation of the 'chain' to which the very life of tradition is linked. Otherwise, we would only be dealing with a dead tradition, to which no actual attachment is possible; and if the knowledge of what remains of such a tradition may still have some theoretical interest (apart, of course, from the point of view of mere profane erudition, whose value here is null, and as it may help to understand certain doctrinal truths), it cannot be of any direct benefit for any 'realization.'<sup>299</sup>

In all this, it is so completely a matter of communicating something 'vital' that, in India, no disciple can ever sit facing the *guru*, in order that the action of *prana*, which is linked to the breath and the voice, is not exercised too directly so that it produces a violent shock which, consequently, could be without danger, both psychically and even physically.<sup>300</sup> This action is all the more powerful in the *prana* itself, in such a case, it is only the vehicle or the support of the 'spiritual influence' which is transmitted from the *guru* to the disciple; and the *guru*, in the exercise of his own function, must not be considered as an individuality (which then disappears truly, except as a mere support), but only as the representative of the very tradition, which he embodies in a way in relation to his disciple, which is indeed the role of 'transmitter' as we spoke above.

We think that we have said enough to show, as clearly as possible, the necessity of the initiatic transmission, and to make it clear that these are not more or less vague and nebulous things, but extremely precise and well-defined things. In order to complete what we have said on this question, we would still have to speak a little regarding the spiritual centers from which any regular transmission proceeds, directly or indirectly; although we have already had occasion to give many notes elsewhere in this regard,<sup>301</sup> this subject is rather important from the point of view

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the effective receptacle of 'spiritual influences,' without which the presence and action of the rites to which they are to serve would be ineffective.

<sup>299</sup> This completes and clarifies what we said in our last article about the vanity of an alleged 'ideal' attachment to the forms of a vanished tradition.

<sup>300</sup> There is also the explanation of the special arrangements of seats in a Masonic lodge, which most current Masons, are certainly far from suspecting.

<sup>301</sup> See our study on *The King of the World*.

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where we place ourselves, so that it is not without benefit to return to it in another article.

## Initiatic Centers

*Des centres initiatiques*, January 1933.

All regular initiations transmissions proceed more or less directly, as we have said, from spiritual centers which are themselves attached to the supreme center which preserves the repository of the Primordial Tradition, from which all particular traditional forms are derived by adaptation to specific circumstances of time and place. We have indicated in our study on *The King of the World*, how these spiritual centers are constituted in the image of the supreme center, of which they are in a way like so many reflections; we will not return to this here, and we will only consider some points which are more immediately related to the questions we have dealt with in our preceding articles.

Firstly, it is easy to understand that the attachment to the supreme center is indispensable to ensure the continuity of transmissions of 'spiritual influences' from the very origin of present humanity (we should even say beyond these origins, since what is involved is 'non-human') and throughout the duration of its cycle of existence; this is true of everything that has a truly traditional character, even for exoteric, religious, or other such organizations, at least at their onset; this is even more so in the initiatic order. At the same time, it is in this connection which maintains the inner and essential unity existing under the diversity of formal appearances, and, therefore, is the guarantee of 'orthodoxy,' in the true meaning of the word. It must be understood that this attachment may not always remain conscious, and this is all too obvious in the exoteric order; on the contrary, it seems that it should always be so in the case of initiatic organizations, one of whose fundamental reasons, by taking a certain traditional form, is to go beyond this form and rise from diversity to unity. Naturally, this does not mean that such a consciousness must exist in all the members of an initiatic organization, which is obviously impossible and would make the existence of a hierarchy of degrees useless, but it should exist at the peak of this hierarchy, if all those who have reached it were truly 'adepts,' that is, beings who have actually realized the fullness of initiation; such 'adepts' would constitute an initiatic center which would constantly be in conscious communication with the supreme center. However, in reality, this may not always be so, if only because of a certain degeneration that makes the removal of origins

possible, and which can reach the point, as we said earlier, where an organization would come to only understand what we have called 'virtual initiates,' yet it still transmits, even if they do not realize it, the 'spiritual influence' of which this organization is the depository. In such a case, the attachment still remains, so that the transmission has not been interrupted, and it is sufficient for some who have received the 'spiritual influence' in these conditions to be able to regain consciousness if he has within him the required possibilities; even in this case, belonging to an initiatic organization is far from representing only a mere formality without real meaning, such as those who do not reach the essence of things.

Furthermore, it is important to note that an initiatic organization can proceed from the supreme center, not directly, but through secondary and subordinate centers, which is the most common case; as there is in each organization a hierarchy of degrees, there are also, among the organizations themselves, what may be called degrees of 'interiority' and of relative 'externality;' it is clear that those which are the most external, which is to say the furthest from the supreme center, are also those where the consciousness of attachment can be lost most easily. Although the purpose of all initiatic organizations is essentially the same, there are some who are at different levels of participation within the Primordial Tradition (which, by the way, does not mean that among their members there cannot be those who have personally attained the same degree of effective knowledge); there is no reason to be astonished, if we observe that the different traditional forms themselves do not all immediately derive from the original source; the 'chain' can count a greater or lesser number of intermediate rings, without being any solution of continuity. The existence of this superposition is not one of the least reasons among all those that make up the complexity and difficulty of a somewhat in-depth study of the constitution of initiatic organizations; it must be added that such a superposition can also be found within the same traditional form, and we have had occasion to give a particularly clear example here with respect to the Far-Eastern tradition.<sup>302</sup> This example is perhaps one of those which best allows us to understand how continuity is ensured through the multiple echelons constituted by so many superimposed organizations, since those engaged in the field of action are only temporary formations destined to play a relatively external role, as opposed to those of the most profound order, which, while being a resident of the 'non-action' principal, by this very fact, they give all others their real direction. In this connection, we must draw special attention to the fact that, even

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<sup>302</sup> See our article on *Taoism and Confucianism*, in the special issue on China (August-September 1932).



if some of the most external organizations, find themselves in opposition to each other, this cannot in any way prevent the unity of direction from existing, because the direction in question is beyond any opposition, and not in the field where it asserts itself. In short, there is something comparable to the roles played by different actors in the same play, and which, even as they are opposed, do not contribute any less to the march of the whole; each organization plays the same role as it is intended, and this can even extend to the exoteric domain, where the elements that fight against each other adhere to a single direction of which they do not even suspect of existing, albeit quite unconsciously and involuntarily.<sup>303</sup>

These considerations also show, within the same organization, how there may be a kind of dual hierarchy, and this especially is the case where the apparent leaders are not themselves aware of the attachment to a spiritual center; there may then be, outside of the visible hierarchy that they form, another invisible hierarchy whose members, without fulfilling any 'official' function, will be those who effectively ensure, by their very presence, an effective liaison with the center. These representatives of the spiritual centers, in the most relatively external organizations, obviously do not have to make themselves known as such, and they can take such a look as is best suited to the 'action of presence' that they fulfill, that is that of the simple members of the organizations if they must play a fixed and permanent role, or if it is a momentary influence before being transported to different points, that of the mysterious 'travelers' whose history has guarded more than one example, and whose external attitude is often chosen in the best way to either baffle investigators, whether it is to get attention for special reasons or to otherwise go completely unnoticed.<sup>304</sup> It is also possible to understand what role those

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<sup>303</sup> According to the Islamic tradition, every being is a *muslim*, which is to say the subject of divine will, from which nothing can escape; the difference between beings consists in that, while some consciously and voluntarily conform to the universal order, the others ignore it or even claim to oppose it (see *The Symbolism of the Cross*, ch. 25). To fully comprehend the relationship of this with what we have just said, it must be noted that the true spiritual centers must be considered as representing the Divine Will in this world; those who are effectively attached to it can be regarded as collaborating consciously in the realization of what the Masonic initiation refers to as the 'plan of the Great Architect;' as for the two other categories which we alluded to, those who are pure and simply ignorant are the profane, and those who have the illusory pretension of being against the pre-established order, belong to 'counter-initiation,' of which we will have to speak later.

<sup>304</sup> In this final case, which necessarily escapes historians, but which is likely the most frequent, we will cite only two typical examples, which is well known in

who, without belonging to any known organization (and we mean an organization with external graspable forms), presided in some cases over the formation of such organizations, or, afterwards, inspired and directed them visibly; such was the role of the Rose-Cross in the Western world, and this is also the true meaning of what Masonry of the eighteenth century referred to as the 'Unknown Superiors.'

All this makes it possible to foresee certain possibilities of actions of the spiritual centers, apart from the means which one can consider as normal, and that especially when the circumstances are abnormal, we mean in such conditions that do not allow the use of more direct routes and a manifest regularity. Therefore, without even mentioning the immediate intervention of the spiritual center, which is possible always and everywhere, a spiritual center, whatever it may be, can act outside of its normal zone of influence, either in favor of particularly 'qualified' individuals, but who is isolated in an environment where the obscurity has reached such a point that nothing traditional remains in it and initiation can no longer be achieved, either in view of a more general purpose, and also something more exceptional, such as that which would consist in renewing an initiatic 'chain' which was broken accidentally. Such an action occurs more specifically in a period or in a civilization where spirituality is completely lost, and where, therefore, things of the initiatic order are more hidden than in any other case, it should not be surprising that its modes are extremely difficult to define, especially since the ordinary conditions of place and sometimes even time become virtually nonexistent. We will not insist on this anymore; what is essential to remember is that, even if an apparently isolated individual happens to have a real initiation, this initiation can never be spontaneous in appearance, and that, in fact, it will always imply the attachment to an existing center by some means, apart from such an attachment, it can in no way be a question of initiation.

If we return to the considerations of normal cases, we must say this again to avoid any ambiguity on what precedes: in alluding to certain oppositions, we are not considering the multiple paths that can be represented by so many special initiatic organizations, either in correspondence with different traditional forms, or in the same traditional form. This multiplicity is made necessary by the very fact of the differences of nature which exist between individuals, so that each can find that which, being in conformity with it, will permit him to develop his own possibilities; if the goal is the same for all, the starting points are indefinitely diversified and comparable to the multitude of points of a circumference,

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the Taoist tradition and whose equivalent can even be found in the Occident: that of the jongleurs and that of the horse traders.

from which departs so many rays which end in the single center, and which are thus the image of the very paths in question. There is no opposition in all this, but on the contrary a perfect harmony; in fact, there can be opposition only when certain organizations are, by reason of contingent circumstances, called upon to a sort of accidental role, which is external to the essential purpose of initiation and not affecting it in any way. However, it may be supposed from certain appearances, and it is often believed in fact, that there are initiations which are, in themselves, opposed to each other; but this is a mistake and it is easy to understand why it cannot be so. Indeed, since there is in principle only one Unique Tradition, from which every orthodox traditional form is derived, there can be only one initiation that is equally unique in its essence, albeit in various forms and with multiple modalities; where 'regularity' is lacking, which is to say, where there is no attachment to a traditional orthodox center, we are no longer dealing with true initiation, and it is only abusively that this word can still be used in such a case. In this we do not mean to speak only of the pseudo-initiatic organizations which have already been mentioned before, and which are really nought; but there is something else which presents a more serious character, and which is precisely what can give an appearance of reason to the illusions which we have just pointed out: if it seems that there are opposing initiations, it is because, apart from true initiation, there is what may be called, albeit with certain reservations, the 'counter-initiation;' we will have to explain ourselves smore completely on this point, which is too often misunderstood or misinterpreted, so that further developments will be necessary to dispel the confusions which give rise and makes things appear in their true form.

## Initiation and Counter-Initiation

*Initiation et contre-initiation*, February 1932.

We have said to conclude our previous article, that there is something that may be called 'counter-initiation,' which is something that it presents itself as an initiation and which can give this illusion, but which goes against true initiation. Yet, we added that this designation calls for some reservations; indeed, if taken in the strictest sense, it could force us to believe in a sort of symmetry, or an equivalence, so to speak (albeit in the opposing direction), which, is in the claims of those who are attached to it, but which does not exist and cannot exist. It is on this point that it is necessary to insist, because many, being deceived by appearances, imagine that there are in the world two opposing organizations fighting for supremacy, a wrong conception which corresponds to that which, in theological language, puts Satan on the same level as God, and that, rightly or wrongly, is commonly attributed to the Manichaeans. This conception, let us note, amounts to affirming a radically irreducible duality, or in other words, to denying the Supreme Unity which is beyond all oppositions and antagonisms; there is no reason to be surprised that such a negation is the result of the very adherents of 'counter-initiation,' but, at the same time, it shows that the metaphysical truth, even in its most elementary principles, is totally alien to them, and thus their claim destroys itself.

It is important to note before everything else, in its very origins, 'counter-initiation' cannot stand as something independent and autonomous: if it had been spontaneously formed, it would be nothing but a human invention, and thus would not be distinguished from pure and simple 'pseudo-initiation.' To be more than this, as it is in fact, it must necessarily proceed from the sole source to which all initiation is attached, in a way, and, more generally, all that manifests in our world as a 'non-human' element; it proceeds through degeneration to go so far as this 'reversal' which constitutes what can properly be called 'Satanism.' Therefore, it appears that this is, in fact, a deviated and distorted initiation, which, by the same token, no longer has the right to be truly described as initiation since it no longer leads to the essential goal of the latter, and even removes it instead of coming closer to it. It is not enough to speak here of a truncated and reduced initiation at its most inferior

part, as it may happen in certain cases; the alteration is much deeper, but there are two different stages in the same process of degeneration. The point of departure is always a revolt against legitimate authority, and the claim to independence that cannot exist, as we have had the opportunity to explain elsewhere;<sup>305</sup> what immediately results is the loss of all effective contact with a true spiritual center, thus the impossibility of reaching the supra-human states; in what still subsists, the deviation can then only worsen, passing through different degrees, to arrive in extreme cases, at the 'reversal' of which we have just spoken.

A premier consequence of this is that the 'counter-initiation,' whatever its pretensions may be, is nothing but a dead end, since it is incapable of leading the being beyond the human state; in this very state, because of the 'reversal' which characterizes it, the modes which it develops are those of the lowest order. In Islamic esoterism, it is said that whoever brings himself to a certain 'door,' without having reached it in a normal and legitimate way sees the door close before him and is obliged to turn back, not however as a mere layman, which is now impossible, but as *sāḥir* (sorcerer or magician); we cannot give a clearer expression of what this is.

Another related consequence of this is that, due to the link with the center being broken, the 'spiritual influence' is lost; this would be enough for us to be able to speak truly of initiation, since this, as we have explained previously, is essentially constituted by the transmission of this influence. However, there is something else which is transmitted, without which we would have reduced it to the case of 'pseudo-initiation,' devoid of all efficacy; but it is no more than an influence of a lower order, 'psychic' and no longer 'spiritual,' and which, thus abandoned to itself and without control of a transcendent element, inevitably takes on a 'diabolic' character.<sup>306</sup> It is also easy to understand that this psychic influence can imitate spiritual influences in its external manifestations, to the point that those who stop at appearances will be mistaken, since it belongs to the order of reality in which these manifestations occur (and do we not say proverbially, in a sense comparable to this, "Satan is the monkey of God?"); but it imitates it, one could say, just as the elements of the same order evoked by the necromancer imitate the conscious being to which they belonged.<sup>307</sup> Let us say by the way, this fact is one of those

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<sup>305</sup> See *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*.

<sup>306</sup> According to the Islamic doctrine, it is by the *naḥs* (the soul) that the *Shayṭān* takes over man, while the *rūḥ* (the spirit), whose essence is pure light, is beyond his attacks; moreover, this is why 'counter-initiation' can in no way affect the metaphysical domain, which is prohibited through its purely spiritual character.

<sup>307</sup> See our work on *The Spiritist Fallacy*.

which show that identical phenomena in themselves can differ entirely as to their root causes; this is one of the reasons why, from an initiatic point of view, there should be no importance attributed to such phenomena for whatever they may be, they cannot prove anything in relation to pure spirituality.

That being said, we can specify the limits within which 'counter-initiation' is likely to oppose true initiation: it is obvious that these limits are those of the human state within its multiple modes; in other words, the opposition can only exist in the field of 'lesser mysteries,' while that of the 'greater mysteries,' which relates to supra-human states, is, by its very nature, beyond such opposition, as it is so completely closed to all that is not true initiation according to traditional orthodoxy.<sup>308</sup> As for the 'lesser mysteries' themselves, there will be between initiation and 'counter-initiation,' this fundamental difference: in one, there will only be a preparation for 'greater mysteries;' in the other, they inevitably will be taken as an end in themselves, the access to the 'greater mysteries' being forbidden. It goes without saying that there may be other differences of a more special character; but we shall not enter into these considerations here, of which are a secondary importance from the point of view in which we place ourselves, and which would require a detailed examination of the whole variety of forms that 'counter-initiation' may take.

Naturally, centers may be set up by organizations which are linked to 'counter-initiation;' but it will then be purely 'psychic' centers, and not spiritual centers, although they may, by reason of what we have indicated above as to the action of corresponding influences, take completely external appearances. It will not be surprising is that these centers themselves, and not just some of the organizations subordinated to them, may in many cases be in conflict with one another, for the field in which they are situated is one in which all oppositions are given free rein, when they are not harmonized and brought back to unity by the direct action of a principle of a higher order. Hence, as far as the manifestations of these centers or of what emanates from them, there is often an impression of confusion and incoherence which is not illusory; they agree only negatively, one could say, in the struggle against the true spiritual centers, insofar as they are at a level that allows such a struggle to engage, which is to say, according to what we have just explained in regards to the field

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<sup>308</sup> We have been reproached for not considering the distinction between 'lesser mysteries' and 'greater mysteries' when we spoke of the conditions of initiations; it was that this distinction did not have to intervene then, since we envisaged initiation in general, and that besides there being only different stages or degrees of one and the same initiation.

of exclusively 'lesser mysteries.' All that pertains to the 'greater mysteries' is exempt from such opposition, and even more so the supreme spiritual center, the source and principle of all initiation, can it not be attained or affected to any degree by any struggle whatsoever (and this is why it is said to be 'elusive' or 'inaccessible to violence'); this leads us to point out yet another point which is of particular importance.

Representatives of 'counter-initiation' have the illusion of opposing the supreme spiritual authority, which nothing can oppose, because it is obvious that then it would not be supreme: supremacy admits no duality, and such an assumption is contradictory in itself; but their illusion stems from the fact that they cannot know its true nature. We can go further: despite themselves and without their knowledge, they are subordinated to this authority, in the same way that, as we said before, everything is, even unconsciously and involuntarily, subject to the Divine Will, to which nothing can escape. They are therefore used, though against their own will, for the realization of the divine plan in the human world; like all other beings, they play the role that suits their own nature, but, instead of being aware of this role as the true initiates are, they have fooled themselves, and in a way which is worse than the simple ignorance of the profane, since instead of remaining at the same extent from the same point, it results in rejecting even further from the principal center. But, if we consider things, no longer in relation to these beings themselves, but in relation to the whole world, we must say that, as well as the others, they are necessary in the place that they occupy, as elements of the ensemble, and as 'providential' instruments, as one might say in theological language, of the march of the world in its cycle of manifestation; therefore, they are, in the last resort, dominated by the authority which manifests the Divine Will by giving to this world its Law, and which makes them serve its ends in spite of themselves, all the partial disorders necessarily having to contribute to the total order.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> To avoid any ambiguity on what we have said before concerning the state of initiatic and pseudo-initiatic organizations in the present West, we wish to make it clear that we have merely stated the ascertainment of facts where we gain nothing, with no other intention or concern than to speak the truth in this regard, as completely disinterested as possible. Everybody is free to draw such consequences as will suit him; we are not responsible for leading or removing adherents to any organization whatsoever, we do not bind anyone to requesting initiation here or there, or to refrain from doing so, and we even take the view that this is none of our business.

## Initiatic Rites

*Des rites initiatiques*, March 1933.

In our previous insights into the question of initiation, we have naturally been led to allusions to rites, since they are the essential element for the transmission of the 'spiritual influence' and the attachment to the initiatic chain, so that we can say, without rites, there can be, in any way, no initiation. We must return to this subject again to point out some particularly important points; of course, it is understood that we do not pretend to deal with rites completely in general here, their *raison d'être*, their role, the various types in which they are divided, for it would be necessary to complete, not an article, but an entire volume.

It is important to note foremost that the presence of rites is a character common to all traditional institutions, of whatever order, exoteric as well as esoteric, taking these terms in their broadest meaning, following the distinction we have already indicated. This character is a consequence of the 'non-human' element involved in such institutions, because it can be said that the rites are always intended to place the human being in a relationship, directly or indirectly, with something that goes beyond individuality and belonging to other states of existence; moreover, it is evident that it is not necessary in all cases for the communication thus established to be conscious in order to be real, since it operates most commonly through certain subtle modes of the individual, in which most men are currently unable to transfer the center of their consciousness. In any event, whether or not the apparent effect is immediate or delayed, the rite is still effective in itself, provided, of course, that it is carried out in accordance with traditional rules which ensure its validity, and out of which it would be nothing more than an empty form and a vain simulacrum; this efficacy is not 'marvelous' or 'magic,' as some people sometimes say with an intention of degradation and negation, because it results simply from the clearly defined laws according to the 'spiritual influences,' whose ritual technique is only the application and implementation.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> It is hardly necessary to say here that all the considerations which we expose here relate exclusively to the true rites, having a traditional character, and that we absolutely refuse to give this name rites to what is only a parody, which is to say, to ceremonies established by virtue of purely human customs, the effect



This consideration of the efficacy inherent within rites, and founded on laws which leave no room for fantasy or arbitrariness, is common to all cases without exception; this is true for exoteric rites as well as for initiatic rites, and with the former is true for traditional non-religious forms as well as for religious rites. We must again remember, for this is an important point, that, as already explained above, this efficacy is wholly independent of the worth of the individual who performs this rite; the function alone counts here, and as such not the individual; in other words, the necessary and sufficient condition is that he has regularly received the power to perform such a rite; it does not matter if he does not understand its meaning, and even if he does not believe in its efficacy, it cannot prevent the rite from being valid if all the prescribed rules have been properly observed.<sup>311</sup>

That being said, we can come to what especially concerns initiation, and we will first note that its ritual character highlights one of the fundamental differences which separate it from mysticism, for which there is no such thing, which is hardly understandable if we refer to what we have said regarding its 'irregularity.' One may be tempted to object that mysticism sometimes appear to have a more or less direct link with the observance of certain rites; these do not belong to it in their own right, being nothing more nor else than ordinary religious rites; moreover, this link has no character of necessity, for in fact it is far from existing in all cases, whereas, we reiterate, there is no initiation without special and appropriate rites. Initiation, indeed, is not like mystical realizations, something that falls from the clouds, if one can say, without knowing how or why; on the contrary, it relies on positive scientific laws and rigorous technical rules; this cannot be overemphasized to rule out any possibility of misunderstanding its true nature.<sup>312</sup>

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of which, if they have any, cannot in any case go beyond the 'psychological' domain, in the most profane sense of this word.

<sup>311</sup> Therefore, it is a very grave mistake to employ, as some Masonic writers often do, apparently satisfied with this rather unfortunate 'discovery,' the expression 'to play the ritual' in speaking of the accomplishment of initiatic rites by individuals who do not know the meaning of it, and who do not even seek to penetrate such an expression, would be suitable only in the case of laymen who would simulate the rites, having no quality to perform them validly; but, in an initiatic organization, despite how degenerate the quality of the present members may be, the ritual is not something that one plays, it is and always remains a serious and effective thing, even without the knowledge of those who take part.

<sup>312</sup> It is to this technique that expressions such as 'sacerdotal art' and 'royal art' properly relate to the handling of 'spiritual influences;' furthermore, it is a matter of sacred and traditional sciences, but which, being of a totally different order

As for the distinction between initiatic rites and exoteric rites, for the time being at least we can only point this out summarily, for if this became a question of entering into detail, it would lead us too far astray. In particular, it would be appropriate to draw all the consequences from the fact that the former are reserved and concern only an elite with particular 'qualifications,' while the latter are published and apply without distinction to all members of the group of a given social environment, which shows that, whatever apparent similarities may sometimes exist, their goal cannot be the same in reality.<sup>313</sup> In fact, the purpose of exoteric rites is not, unlike initiatic rites, to open the being to certain possibilities of knowledge, to which all cannot fit; furthermore, it is essential to note that, although they necessarily also call upon the intervention of an element of a supra-individual order, their action is never intended to lead beyond the realm of individuality. This is very visible in the case of religious rites, which we can take more specifically as a basis of comparison, because they are the only exoteric rites known in the West: every religion proposes only to assure the 'salvation' of its adherents, which is an end of the individual order, and, by definition, its point of view does not extend beyond this; the mystics themselves always envisage only 'salvation,' and never 'Deliverance,' whereas this is, on the contrary, the final and supreme goal of initiation.<sup>314</sup>

Another point of crucial importance is the following: initiation, to whatever degree, represents for the being who has received it a permanent acquisition, a state that, virtually or effectively, it has attained once and for all, and nothing henceforth may take it from him.<sup>315</sup> We can note,

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from profane science, is none the less 'positive,' and is much more so if taken in the true meaning of this word.

<sup>313</sup> In this connection, let us point out the error of ethnologists and sociologists who very improperly describe 'rites of initiation' as rites simply concerning the aggregation of the individual to an external social organization, and for which the fact of having reached certain ages is the only qualification required.

<sup>314</sup> If we say that this is true only of the 'greater mysteries,' we will respond that the 'lesser mysteries,' which stop at the limits of human possibilities, constitute in relation to them only a preparatory stage and not their own in themselves, while religion presents itself as a whole which is sufficient and does not require any further complement: in reality, this is only the three different successive stages of a single and actual initiation.

<sup>315</sup> More precisely, in order that there is no room for ambiguity, that this must be understood only as degrees of initiation, not functions, which may be conferred only temporarily on an individual, or which may become unfit to practice for multiples reasons: these are two entirely distinct things, between which we must be careful to not confuse, the first being of a purely internal order, while the second relates to an activity that is external to the being, which explains the difference that we just indicated.

without departing from the current subject, that this is still a very clear difference with the 'mystic states,' which appear as something fleeting and even fugitive, whose beings goes out as he entered it, and he may never end find it again, which is explained by the 'phenomenal' character of these states, received from outside, as it were, instead of proceeding from an 'interiority.'<sup>316</sup> What immediately results from this is the consequence, that the rites of initiation confer a definitive and ineffaceable character; it is also the same, in another order with certain religious rites, which, for this reason, can never be renewed for the same individual, and which are thereby those which present the most accentuated analogy with initiatic rites, so much so that one could, in a certain sense, consider them as a sort of transposition into the exoteric domain.<sup>317</sup>

Another consequence of what we have just said is that the initiatic quality, once it has been received, is in no way attached to the fact of being an active member of this or that organization; since the attachment to a traditional organization has been carried out, it cannot be broken by anything, and it subsists even when the individual no longer has any apparent relationship with that organization, which is of a secondary importance. This alone would suffice, in the absence of any other consideration, to explain how initiatic organizations differ profoundly from profane associations, to which they cannot be assimilated or compared in anyway: whoever withdraws from a profane association or who is excluded from it has no connection to it and becomes exactly what he was before becoming a part of it; on the contrary, the link established by the initiatic character does not depend on contingencies such as resignation or exclusion, which are of a merely 'administrative' order and only affect 'external' relations; if they are all in the profane order, where an association has nothing else to give its members, they are in the initiatic order

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<sup>316</sup> This touches on the question of the 'duality' maintained by the religious point of view, because it relates essentially to what the Hindu terminology refers to as the 'non-Supreme.'

<sup>317</sup> We know that among the seven sacraments of Catholicism, there are three in this case which can only be received once: baptism, confirmation, and ordination. The analogy of baptism with initiation, as a 'second birth,' is obvious, confirmations represents accession to a higher degree: as for ordination, we have already pointed out the similarities that can be found there in regards to the transmission of 'spiritual influences,' which are made even more striking by the fact that this sacrament is not received by all and requires certain special qualifications. Moreover, ordination is, in fact, only the exoteric substitute for sacerdotal initiation, and this point could later give rise to ample developments, in which it is not possible for us to consider at present, all the more so because they would inevitably touch on questions such as that of the 'power of the keys,' which we consider preferable to reserve until further notice.

though an altogether incidental mean, which is in no way necessary, relative to the internal realities which alone are of a true import. We believe it is sufficient to think that this is all perfectly obvious; what is astonishing to note, as we have had on many occasions to, the general ignorance of such simple and elementary notions.<sup>318</sup>

To complete these few notes on the question of rites, we have yet to speak more precisely of what are called 'initiatric trials;' this is only a special case, but it is important enough to be treated separately, especially since it gives rise to many misconceptions which would be well to dispel at this opportunity; it will therefore be the subject of a future article.

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<sup>318</sup> To take, as an application of what has been just said, the simple and most vulgar example with regards to initiatic organizations, it is totally inaccurate to speak of an 'ex-Mason' as is often done; a Mason who has resigned or even been excluded is no longer part of any Lodge or Obedience, but is none the less a Mason still; whether he likes it or not, it does not change anything, and the proof of this is that if he comes to be 'reintegrated,' he is not re-initiated, nor is he made to return to the ranks he has already received; the English expression *un-attached Mason* can only exist in such a case.

## Initiatic Trials

*Des épreuves initiatiques, April 1933.*

We have concluded our previous article by saying that the question of 'initiatic trials,' or what is thus called, gives rise to many misconceptions; the very word 'trial,' which can mean multiple things, may have something to do with these misunderstandings, unless some of the meanings it commonly adopts are already the result of prior confusions, which is also possible. Indeed, it is not clear why one commonly calls any painful event a 'test,' nor why one says of someone who suffers that he is 'tested;' if one thinks on this even a little, apart from any preconceived idea, it is difficult to see anything more than an abuse of language, of which it might be of some interest to search for the origin of this. Be that as it may, this vulgar idea of the 'trials of life' exists, even if it does not correspond to anything that is clearly defined, it is especially that which gave rise to a false assimilation with regards to 'initiatic trials,' to such an extent that some have even seen in them only a symbolic image, which, by an odd reversal, would lead us to suppose that it is the facts of the profane life which have an effective value and which really matter from the initiatic point of view. It would be too simple if it were so, and then all men would, without even suspecting it, be candidates for initiation; it would be enough for everyone to have gone through some difficult circumstances, which happens more or less to everyone, to reach this initiation, one would have difficulty to say by whom and in whose name it would be conferred. We believe we have already spoken enough of the true nature of initiation to not insist on the absurdity of such consequences; the truth is, ordinary life has nothing to do with the initiatic order in itself; from a certain point of view, it is ordinary life that can, if we wish, be taken as a symbol and not the other way around.

This point merits our attention for a moment: we have often had occasion to point out that the symbol must always be of an inferior order than what is symbolized (which is enough to disregard all imagined 'naturalistic' interpretations by the modern ones); the realities of the profane domain, being those of the most inferior order, cannot be symbolized by anything, moreover they do not even need it. On the contrary, any event or phenomenon, insignificant as it may be, can always be taken as a symbol of a reality of a superior order, of which it is, in a way, a sensory

expression, by the very fact that it is derived from it as a consequence of its principle; as such, as devoid and interest as it is in itself, it can present a profound meaning to the one who is able to see beyond immediate appearances. There is a transposition here which is the result of which has nothing in common with ordinary life, which has simply provided support for a being endowed with a special aptitude to escape from his limitations; this point of support, we insist, may be anything depending on the nature of the being who will utilize it. Consequently, this brings us back to the idea of 'trials,' there is nothing that can be done that suffering, in some particular cases, is the opportunity or starting point for a development of latent possibilities, just as anything else can act in other cases; let us say it is an opportunity, and nothing more; this would not allow us to ascribe suffering in itself as a special and privileged virtue, in spite of all the accustomed declamations on this subject. Moreover, let us remark that this contingent and accidental role of suffering, even reduced to its proper proportions, seems to be much more restricted in the initiatic order than in certain other 'realizations' of a more external character; it is especially among the mystics that it becomes habitual and seems to acquire an importance which can be deluded, which is probably due to considerations of a specifically religious nature. It must be appended that profane psychology has certainly contributed to spreading the most confused and erroneous ideas regarding this; but, in any case, whether simple psychology or mysticism, all this has absolutely nothing in common with initiation.

That being the case, we must still indicate the explanation of a fact which might appear to be able to give rise to objections: although the difficult or painful circumstances are certainly common to the life of all men as we have just said, it often happens that those who follow an initiatic path see them multiple in an unusual way. This fact is simply due to a kind of unconscious hostility of the environment: it seems that this world, meaning the ensemble of beings and the very things that form the profane domain, strive to restrain the one who is close to escape; such relations are perfectly normal. These are properly obstacles created by opposing forces, and not, as is sometimes wrongly imagined, 'trials' necessitated by the powers that preside over initiation; it is necessary to put an end to these fables, which are much closer to 'occultist' revelries than to initiatic realities.

What is called 'initiatic trials' is something quite different, and we will now need only one word to definitively put an end to any ambiguity: they are essentially rites, which the alleged 'trials of life' are not in any way; they cannot exist without this ritual character, nor be replaced by

something that does not possess this same character. It can be seen immediately that the aspects that are generally most emphasized are in fact quite secondary: if these 'trials' were really intended, according to the most 'simplistic' notions, to show whether a candidate for initiation possesses the requisite qualities; it must be admitted that they would be most inefficacious, and we understand that those who hold to this view are tempted to regard them as worthless, but, normally, he who is admitted to undergo them must already have been recognized as 'well and duly qualified;' so there must be something else. It will then be said that these 'trials' form a teaching given in symbolic form, which are intended to be meditated on later; this is true, but the same can be said of any other ritual, because all of them also have a symbolic character, meaning that it is up to each to deepen according to the measure of their own abilities. The essential *raison d'être* of the rite is the efficacy inherent within it, as we have already explained; this efficacy is, of course, closely related to the symbolic meaning included in its form, nonetheless it is independent of the current understanding of the meaning among those who take part in the rite. Therefore, it is from this point of view of the direct efficacy of the rite that it is necessary to place oneself first; the rest, no matter how important, can only come second, and all that we have said so far in these studies does not require us to dwell on this further.

To be more specific, we will say that 'trials' are preliminary or preparatory rites for proper initiation; they constitute the necessary preamble, so that initiation itself is like their conclusion or immediate result. It should be noted that they often take the form of symbolic 'journeys;' we only note this point in passing, because enough has been said here regarding the symbolism of the journey, on several occasion, so that it is not necessary to return to it. Let us only say, in this aspect, they present themselves as a 'quest' leading the being from the 'darkness' of the profane world into the initiatic 'light;' but this form, which is self-evident, however appropriate it may be for what is in question. 'Trials' are essentially rites of purification; this is what gives the true explanation for the very word 'trials,' which here has a distinctly 'alchemical' meaning, and not the vulgare meaning which has given rise to the misconceptions we have pointed out. What is important in understanding the fundamental principle of the rite, is to consider that the purification is done by the elements, the reason for this can be expressed in a few words: to say element is to say simple, to say simple is to say incorruptible. Therefore, the ritual purification will always have for 'material' support the bodies which symbolize the elements and which carry the designation (because it must be understood that the elements themselves are in no way supposedly 'simple' bodies, which is a contradiction, but rather that from

which all bodies are formed), or at least one of these bodies; this also applies in the traditional exoteric order, especially with regard to religious rites, where this mode of purification is used not only for human beings, but also for other living beings, for inanimate objects, and for places or buildings. Water seems to play a predominant role here compared to other representative bodies of the elements, it must be said that this role is not exclusive; perhaps one could explain this predominance by remarking that water is, in all traditions, the symbol of the 'universal substance.' Be that as it may, it is scarcely necessary to say that the rites in question, lustrations, ablutions, or others, as well as fasts and the prohibition of certain foods, which are equally ritualistic in character, has absolutely nothing to do with the prescriptions of hygiene or of corporeal cleanliness, according to the foolish conceptions of some modern people, who wish to bring all things back to a purely 'human' explanation, and who always like to choose the most gross interpretation that can be imagined. It is true that the alleged 'psychological' explanations, if they are more subtle in appearance, are no better in their essence; all equally neglect to consider the only thing that truly matters, namely, the effective action of rites is not a 'belief' or theoretical view, but a positive fact.

We can now understand why, when 'trials' take the form of successive 'journeys,' they are respectively related to the different elements; we only have to indicate in what sense, from the initiatic point of view, the very term 'purification' must be understood. It is a question of returning the being to a state of undifferentiated simplicity, comparable, as we said before, to that of the *materia prima*, so that it is fit to receive the vibration of the initiatic *Fiat Lux*; it is necessary that the 'spiritual influence' whose transmission will give him the initial 'illumination' must meet no obstacle due to inharmonic 'preformations' originating in the profane world; this is why he must first be reduced to this state of *materia prima*, which, if we are to reflect on this for a moment, shows quite clearly that the initiatic process and the Hermetic 'Great Work' are in reality one and the same thing: the conquest of the Divine Light which is the unique essence of all spirituality.



# Qabbalah

*Qabbalah*, May 1933.

The term *Qabbalah* in Hebrew does not mean anything other than 'tradition' in the most general sense; although it most usually designates the esoteric or initiatic tradition, when it is used less specifically, it sometimes also happens that it applies to the exoteric tradition as well.<sup>319</sup> This term in itself is therefore capable of designating any tradition; but, as it belongs to the Hebrew language, it is normal when using another language to reserve it to the Hebraic tradition alone, as we have already pointed out on other occasions, or if we wish to speak more precisely, to the specifically Hebrew form of tradition. If we insist on this, it is because we have seen in some people, a tendency to attribute another meaning to this word, to denominate it as a special kind of traditional knowledge, wherever it may be, because they believe that they have discovered in this word all sorts of extraordinary things that are not really there. We do not intend to waste our time on all these fanciful interpretations; it is more useful to specify the true original meaning of the word, which is enough to reduce their interpretations to nothing, and that is all we propose to do here.

The root Q B L, in Hebrew and Arabic,<sup>320</sup> essentially means the ratio of two things that are placed opposite each other; from there come all the different meanings of the words which are derived from them, as, for example, those of encounters and even oppositions. From this link also results the idea of a passage from one to the other, from which ideas such as receiving, hosting, accepting, are expressed in both languages by the verb *qabal*; and *qabalah* directly derives from this, which it to say 'what is received' or transmitted (in Latin *traditum*) from one to the other. Here we see, with this idea of transmission, that of a succession; it must be noted that the primary meaning of the root indicates a relation which can be simultaneous as well as successive, both spatial and temporal. This

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<sup>319</sup> This does not go without causing some misunderstandings: thus, we have seen some claim to relate the *Talmud* to the 'Kabbalah,' understood in the exoteric sense; in fact, the *Talmud* is 'tradition,' but purely exoteric, religious, and legal.

<sup>320</sup> We call attention to this fact that these two languages, which have most of their roots common to each other, can very often be illuminated by one another.

explains the dual meaning of the preposition *qabal* in Hebrew and *qabl* in Arabic, meaning both 'in front of' (which is to say 'in the face' of space) and 'before' (in time); the close relationship of these two words 'in front of' and 'before,' even in French, shows that a certain analogy is always established between these two different modes, one in simultaneity and one in succession. This also permits us to resolve an apparent contradiction: although the most common idea in respect to temporal relations is that of anteriority and therefore relating to the past, it also happens that derivatives of the same root designate the future (in Arabic *mustaqbāl*, which is literally to say that towards which one goes, from *istiqbāl*, 'to go toward'); do we not also say in French that the past is *before* us and that the future is *in front* of us? In sum, it suffices in all cases that one of these two terms are considered as 'before' or 'in front' of the other, whether it is a spatial relationship or a temporal relationship.

All these remarks can be further confirmed by the examination of another root, also common to Hebrew and Arabic, which has very similar meaning, one could say for the most part, they are identical, although the point of departure is distinctly different, where the derived meanings manage to rejoin. It is the root Q D M, which expresses firstly the idea of 'to precede' (*qadam*), whence all that refers, not only to a temporal anteriority, but to a priority of any order. Thus, we find, for the words originating in this root, besides the meaning of origin and antiquity (*qedem* in Hebrew, *qidm* or *qidam* in Arabic), that of primacy or precedence, and even that of walking, advancing, or progression (*taqaddum* in Arabic);<sup>321</sup> here again, the preposition *qadam* in Hebrew and *qoddām* in Arabic has the dual meaning of 'in front of' and 'before.' But the principal meaning here is what is primary, either hierarchically or chronologically; hence the most frequently expressed idea is that of origin or primordality, and, by extension, of antiquity when it comes to the temporal order: thus, *qadmon* in Hebrew, *qadīm* in Arabic, signify 'ancient' in common usage, but when referred to the field of principles must be translated as 'primordial.'<sup>322</sup>

It is also necessary with regards to these same words to point out other considerations which are not without interest: in Hebrew, the derivatives of the root Q D M also serve to designate the Orient, that is to

<sup>321</sup> Hence the word *qadam* meaning 'foot,' that is to say, what is used for walking.

<sup>322</sup> *Al-Insān al-Qadīm*, which is to say the 'Primordial Man,' is, in Arabic, one of the designations of the 'Universal Man' (a synonym of *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, which is literally the 'Perfect Man' or 'Complete Man'): this is exactly the Hebrew *Adam Qadmon*.

say the side of 'origin,' in that it is where the rising sun appears (*orians*, from *oriri*, from which *origo* in Latin also comes), the starting point of the diurnal march of the sun; at the same time, it is also the point one has in front of oneself when one 'orientates' while turning towards the sun at its rising.<sup>323</sup> Thus, *qedem* also means 'Orient,' and *qadmon*, 'oriental;' but we should not wish to see in these designations the affirmation of a primordality of the Orient from the point of view of earthly humanity, since, as we have often had occasion to say, the origin of the tradition is Nordic, 'polar' even, and not Oriental or Occidental. The explanation which we have just indicated seems to us entirely sufficient. We will add in this connection, that questions of 'orientation' have, in a general way, a rather great importance in traditional symbolism and in the rites which are based on this symbolism; they are more complex than one may think and may give rise to some misunderstandings, since in various traditional forms there are several different modes of orientation. When we turn to the rising sun as we have just said, the South is designated as the 'side of the right' (*yamīn* or *yaman*, cf. the Sanskrit *dakshina* which has the same meaning), and the North as the 'side of the left' (*shemol* in Hebrew, *shimāl* in Arabic); but it also happens that the orientation is taken by turning to the sun at the meridian, and then the point we have before us is no longer the East, but the South: this is how in Arabic, the southern side still has, among other denominations, that of *qiblāh*, and the adjective *qibli* means 'southern.' These last terms bring us back to the root Q B L; we know that the same word *qiblāh* also designates in Islam the ritual orientation; it is, in all cases, the direction one has in front of oneself. What is still curious is that the spelling of this word *qiblāh* is the same as that of the Hebrew *qabbalah*.

Now, one can ask this question: why is tradition in Hebrew designated by a word coming from the root Q B L, and not from the root Q D M? One might be tempted to say in this regard, that, since the Hebrew tradition is only a secondary and derived from, a denomination evoking the idea of origin or primordality cannot suit it; but this reason does not seem to us essential, because, directly or not, every tradition is connected with the origins and proceeds from the primordial tradition, and we have

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<sup>323</sup> It is curious to note that Christ is sometimes called *Oriens*; this designation can no doubt be related to the symbolism of the rising sun; but, because of the dual meanings that we indicate here, it is possible that it should also, and especially, bring it closer to the Hebrew *Elohi Qedem*, or the expression designating the Word as the 'Ancient of Days,' which is to say the One who is before the days, or the Principle of the cycles of manifestations, represented symbolically as 'days' by various traditions ('days of Brahma' in the Hindu tradition, 'days of the creation' in the Hebrew Genesis).

even seen elsewhere that every sacred language, including Hebrew itself and Arabic, is considered to represent in some way the primordial language. The true reason, it seems, is that the idea that must be highlighted here is that of a regular and uninterrupted transmission, an idea which is what the very word 'tradition' itself expresses properly, as we indicated at the beginning. This transmission constitutes the 'chain' (*shelsheleth* in Hebrew, *silsilah* in Arabic) which unites the present to the past and must continue from the present to the future: it is the 'chain of tradition' (*shelsheleth ha-qabbalah*), or the initiatic 'chain' of which we had occasion to speak of recently. It is also the determination of a 'direction' (here we find the meaning of the Arabic *qiblāh*) which, through the succession of time, directs the cycle towards its end and rejoins it at its origin, and which, even extending beyond these two extreme bridges by the fact that its principal source is timeless and 'non-human,' linking it harmoniously with other cycles, helping to form with them a larger 'chain,' the one that some Oriental traditions call the 'chain of worlds,' where the order of the universal manifestation is integrated step by step.

## Initiatic Knowledge and Profane 'Culture'

*Connaissance initiatique et « culture » profane, June 1933.*

We have pointed out in passing in our previous articles, that we must be wary of any confusion between the doctrinal knowledge of the initiatic order, even while it is only theoretical and simply preparatory for 'realization,' and all that is external instruction or profane knowledge, which is unrelated to this knowledge. Some reflections that have been transmitted to us from various sides have come to show us the need to insist more specifically on this point: we must put an end to the prejudice that is commonly called 'culture,' in the profound and 'worldly' sense, has any value, if only as a preparation vis-à-vis the initiatic knowledge, when it has and cannot have any real point of contact.

In principle, this is, quite simply, a lack of rapport: profane instruction, to whatever degree it is contemplated, can serve no purpose in initiatic knowledge, and it is not compatible with it either; it appears only from this point of view as an indifferent thing, in the same way as the skill acquired in a manual trade or the 'physical culture' which is so fashionable nowadays. At its core, all this is of the same order for those who take the point of view which we take; it is dangerous to allow oneself to be misled by the pretended 'intellectuality' which has nothing to do with pure and true intellectuality; the constant abuse of the word 'intellectual' by our contemporaries is enough to prove that this danger is all too real. It often results, among other consequences, in a tendency to want to unite, or rather, to mix together things that are of a totally different order, we have had many occasions to point out the futility of all attempts to establish any link or comparison between modern and profane sciences and traditional knowledge. Some even go so far as to claim to find in the former 'confirmations' of the second, as if that which rests on immutable principles could derive the slightest benefit from an accidental and external conformity with some of the hypothetical and ever-changing results of this uncertain and tentative search that the modern ones are pleased to decorate with the name of 'science!'

But it is not on this aspect of the question that we must insist upon, or even on the danger that there may be when we give undue importance to this inferior knowledge, but to devote all activity to the detriment of a superior knowledge, whose very possibility will thus be totally unknown

or ignored. We know all too well that this case is the majority with our contemporaries; for these, the question of a relationship with initiatic or traditional knowledge no longer arises, since they do not even suspect the existence of such knowledge. But even without going so far, profane instruction can very often form, if not in principle, an obstacle to the acquisition of true knowledge, which is to say the very opposite of effective preparation, we will explain the various reasons for this now in a little more detail.

Firstly, profane education imposes certain mental habits that can be difficult to discard afterwards; it is all too easy to see that the limitations and even the distortions which are the usual consequence of university education are often irremediable, and to escape entirely from this unfortunate influence, special arrangements must be made which can only be exceptional. We speak here in a very general way and we will not dwell upon such particular inconveniences, as the narrow views which inevitably result from 'specialization;' what is essential to observe is that, if profane knowledge in itself is simply indifferent, as we have said, the methods by which it is inculcated are the very negation of those which open the door to initiatic knowledge.

Next, it is necessary to take into account an obstacle which is far from negligible, this kind of infatuation which is frequently caused by an alleged knowledge and which is even, in many people, all the more accentuated as this knowledge is more elementary, inferior, and incomplete; besides, even without leaving the profane point of view and the contingencies of 'ordinary life,' the misdeeds of primary education in this respect are easily recognized by all those who are not blinded by certain preconceived ideas. It is evident that of two ignorant people, he who realizes that he knows nothing is in a disposition much more favorable to the acquisition of knowledge than he who thinks he knows anything; the natural possibilities of the former are intact, while those of the latter are 'inhibited' and can no longer freely develop. In any case, even admitting the same goodwill in the two individuals considered, it would still remain that one of them would first have to rid his 'mind' of the misconceptions that it is encumbered with, while the other is at least exempt from this preliminary and negative work, which represents one of the meanings of what the Masonic initiation symbolically designates as the 'stripping of metals.'

This can easily be explained by the fact that we have frequently had occasion to observe the alleged 'cultured' people. We know what is commonly understood by this word. On another level, this 'culture' generally produces effects quite similar to those we recalled earlier with regards to primary education; there are certainly exceptions, for it may happen that

the person who has received such a 'culture' is endowed with happy natural dispositions in order to appreciate it only to its true value and not to be deceived by it, but we are not exaggerating in saying that, apart from these exceptions, the great majority of 'cultured' people must be counted among those whose mental state is most unfavorable to the reception of true knowledge. There is in them, vis-à-vis the latter, a kind of resistance which is often unconscious, sometimes deliberate; even those who do not formally deny, originating in a bias 'a priori,' all that is esoteric or initiatic, at least in this respect, they testify to a lack of complete interest, and they may even be affected to display their ignorance of these things, as if they were in their own eyes a mark of the superiority conferred on them by their 'culture!' Let it not be thought that there is on our part the least caricatural intention; we are only saying exactly what we have seen in many circumstances, not only in the West, but also in the East, indeed this type of 'cultured' man is of little importance, having made no appearance only as the product of a certain education that is more or less 'Westernized.' The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the people of this type are simply the least 'initiable' laymen, and it would be perfectly unreasonable to take any account of their opinion if only to try to adapt the presentation of certain ideas; moreover, it should be added that the concern for 'public opinion' in general is an attitude as 'anti-initiatic' as is possible.

We must also at this point specify another point which is closely related to these considerations: that all knowledge that is exclusively 'bookish' has nothing in common with initiatic knowledge, even considered at its merely theoretical stage. This may appear obvious after what we have just said, for all that is bookish study is incontestably part of the most external education; if we insist on this, it is possible that we could be mistaken in the case where this study concerns books whose concerns are of the initiatic order. Whoever reads such books in the same manner as 'cultured' people, or even the one who studies them in the same manner as the 'scholars' and according to profane methods, will for this reason not be any closed to true knowledge, because he introduces provisions which do not allow him to neither penetrate the real meaning of it or be assimilated with it in any degree; the example of the Orientalists, with their total misunderstanding is a striking illustration of this. The opposite is true of the one who takes these same books as 'supports' for his inner work, which is the role to which they are essentially destined, knows how to see beyond words and finds in them an opportunity and a point of support for the development of his own possibilities. It can be easily understood that this has nothing in common with bookish study, although the books are the point of departure; the fact of piling up in

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one's memory verbal notions does not even conjure up the shadow of real knowledge; only the penetration of the mind enveloped in the external forms counts, which implies that the being carries within itself corresponding possibilities, since all knowledge is identification. Without this inherent 'qualification' in the very nature of this being, the highest expressions of initiatic knowledge, to the extent that is possible, and the Sacred Scriptures themselves, will never be anything but a 'dead letter.'



## **'Fedeli d'Amore' and 'Corte d'Amore'**

*« Fidèles d'Amour » et « Cours d'Amour », July 1933.*

The research on the 'Fedeli d'Amore,' which we have had occasion to speak of here, continue to give rise to interesting works in Italy: Mr. Alfonso Ricolfi, who had already published various articles on the subject, has just published a study that others must follow where he affirms his intention to resume the yet unfinished work of Luigi Valli.<sup>324</sup> Perhaps he does so, however if he does it is with some timidity, because he thinks that Mr. Valli has 'exagerrated' on certain points, notably by refusing a real existence to all the women sung of by the powers attached to the 'Fedeli d'Amore,' which is opposed to the most commonly accepted opinion; to tell the truth, this question is undoubtedly less important than he seems to believe, at least when one places oneself outside of the point of view of mere historical curiosity, which in no way affects the true interpretation. There is nothing impossible for some who, through a feminine name for divine wisdom, have adopted the names of people who have actually lived in a purely symbolic manner, and even then there can be two reasons for this: firstly, as we have said again and again, anything can be the occasion and the starting point of a spiritual development depending on the nature of the individual, this can also be true of an earthly love as well as of any other circumstance (especially, since it must not be forgotten that what we are dealing with here may in fact be characterized as a way of the *Kshatriyas*); secondly, the true meaning of the designation thus employed was all the more difficult for the profane, who naturally adhered to the letter, and this advantage, although contingent, was perhaps not always entirely negligible.

This note leads us to consider another point which has rather close links with this one: Mr. Ricolfi considers that we must distinguish between the 'Corte d'Amore' and the 'Corte d'amore;' this distinction is not, as one may think at first glance, a mere subtlety. Indeed, we must understand by 'Corte d'Amore' a symbolic assembly presided over by Love itself personified, while a 'Corte d'amore' is only a human meeting, constituting a kind of court called to pronounce on more or less complex

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<sup>324</sup> *Studi sui "Fedeli d'Amore": in Francia ed i loro riflessi in Italia:* Biblioteca della Nuova Rivista Storica, Societa Editrice Dante Alighieri.

cases; that these cases have been real or supposed, or in other words, whether it was an effective jurisdiction or a mere game (and it may have actually been both), regardless of the point of view that we stand. The 'Corte d'amore,' if they really only dealt with questions concerning profane love, were not the assembles of the true 'Fedeli d'Amore' (unless they had taken some external appearances to better hide); but they may have been an imitation and a parody, born of the incomprehension of the uninitiated, just as there were unquestionably, at the same time, profane poets who, celebrating real women in their verses, placed no importance on anything but the literal meaning. In the same way, aside from the real alchemists, there were the 'blowers;' here too, we must be aware of any confusion between them, it is not always easy without a thorough examination, since, externally, their language may be the same; this confusion, in this case as well as in the other, may have sometimes served to confuse indiscreet inquiries.

But what would be inadmissible is to attribute a kind of priority or anteriority to what is only a counterfeit and degeneration; Mr. Ricolfi seems inclined to admit all too easily that the profound meaning may have been added to something which, at its origins, would have had nothing other than a profane character. In this regard, we will be content with recalling what we have said quite often regarding the initiatic origin of all science and art, whose purely traditional character could later be lost only be an effective misunderstanding of which we spoke earlier; moreover, to suppose the opposite, is to admit an influence of the profane world on the initiatic world, which is to say a reversal of the real hierarchical relations which are inherent in the very nature of things. What may be an illusion in the present case is that the profane imitation must have always been more visible than the true organization of the 'Fedeli d'Amore,' an organization which we should be careful not to conceive of in the manner of a 'society,' as we have already explained for initiatic organizations in general: if it may seem exclusive to the ordinary historian, this is proof, not of its non-existence, but of its very serious and profound character.<sup>325</sup>

One of the primary merits of Mr. Ricolfi's work is to bring new indications as to the existence of the 'Fedeli d'Amore' in northern France; the little-known poem of Jacques de Baisieux on the *Fiefs d'Amour* (identified with the 'celestial fiefs' as opposed to the 'terrestrial fiefs'), on which it

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<sup>325</sup> In this regard, let us recall that there can be no question of a 'sect:' the initiatic domain is not that of exoteric religion, and the formation of religious 'sects' can only have been here another case of profane degeneration; we regret to find again in Mr. Ricolfi a certain confusion between the two areas, which greatly affects the understanding of what this is really about.

extends at some length is particularly significant in this regard. The traces of such an organization are certainly much rarer in this region than in Languedoc and Provence;<sup>326</sup> however, it must not be forgotten that there was a little later the *Roman de la Rose*, moreover there were close links with the 'Chivalry of the Grail' (to which Jacques de Baisieux himself makes explicit allusions) are suggested by the fact that Chrétien de Troyes translated Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, which could also have some meaning other than the literal meaning (and this would be no astonishment on the part of the author of the *Metamorphoses*). Assuredly, all is far from being said about the organization of the 'knights errants,' whose very idea is related to that of the initiatic 'journeys;' for the moment we can only recall all that has already been written here on this last subject, and we will only add that the expression 'savage knights,' as pointed out by Mr. Ricolfi, alone deserves a specific study.

There are also rather peculiar thinks in the book of André, the chaplain to the King of France; unfortunately, they have largely escaped Mr. Ricolfi, who relates some things without seeing anything extraordinary. Thus, it says that the palace of Love rises "in the middle of the Universe," that this palace has four sides and four doors; the gate of the East is reserved for the god, and that of the North always remains closed. But this is remarkable: Solomon's Temple, which symbolizes the 'Center of the World,' also has, according to the Masonic tradition, the form of a quadrilateral or a 'long square,' and doors open on three of its sides, that of the North alone having no opening; if there is a slight difference (the absence of a door on the one, and the closed door on the other), the symbolism is precisely the same, the North here being the dark side, the one that does not illuminate the light of the Sun.<sup>327</sup> Moreover, Love appears here in the form of a king bearing on his head a crown of gold; is this not how we also see him represented in Scottish Masonry as the 'Prince of Mercy,'<sup>328</sup> and can we not say that he is then the 'peaceful king,' which

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<sup>326</sup> Is it mere coincidence that, in the *Compagnonnage*, the 'Tour de France' leaves out the entire northern region and includes only towns located south of the Loire, or should we see in this something whose origin can go back a long way and whose reasons, which is needless to say, are now completely out of sight?

<sup>327</sup> This is the side of *yin* in the Chinese tradition, while the opposite side is that of *yang*; this remark may help to resolve the controversial question of the respective position of the two symbolic columns: that of the North should normally correspond to the feminine principle, and that of the South the masculine principle.

<sup>328</sup> See *The Esoterism of Dante*, ch. 3. – Mr. Ricolfi himself has studied in one of his articles on the *Corriere Padano*, the meaning given by the 'Fedeli d'Amore'

is the very meaning of Solomon's name? There is yet another approach that is no less striking: in various poems and fables, the 'Corte d'Amore' is described as composed entirely of birds, which in turn we see speak, but we have already said what was meant by the 'language of the birds';<sup>329</sup> would it be permissible to see only a pure coincidence in the fact that, as we have said then, it is precisely in connection with Solomon that, in the *Qur'ān*, this 'language of the birds' is expressly mentioned? Let us add no other remark which is not without interest to establish other concordances: the principal roles in this 'Corte d'Amore' seem to be generally attributed to the nightingale and the parrot; we know the importance given to the nightingale in Persian poetry, of which Luigi Valli has already pointed out the points of contact with the 'Fedeli d'Amore,' but what is perhaps less known is that the parrot is the *vahana* or symbolic vehicle of *Kama*, which is to say that of the Hindu *Eros*; is all this not enough to give pause? While we are dealing with birds, is it not also curious that Francesco da Barberino in his *Documenti d'Amore*, represents Love itself with falcon or sparrow hawk feet, the emblematic bird of the Egyptian *Horus*, whose symbolism is closely related to that of the 'Heart of the World'?<sup>330</sup>

On the subject of Francesco da Barberini, Mr. Ricolfi returns to the figure of which we have already spoken,<sup>331</sup> and where six couples of characters arranged symmetrically and a thirteenth androgynous figure in the center visibly represents seven initiatic degrees; if its interpretation differs somewhat from that of Luigi Valli's, it is only on points of detail which do not change the essential meaning. He also gives the reproduction of a second figure, a representation of a 'Corte d'Amore' where the characters are distributed in eleven tiers; this fact does not seem to have particularly attracted his attention, but if one is willing to refer to what we have said elsewhere about the role of the number 11 to Dante, in relation to the symbolism of certain initiatic organizations,<sup>332</sup> it would be easily understood how important this is. Moreover, it seems that the author of the *Documenti d'Amore* has not been a stranger even

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to the word *Merzè*, which seems to have been one of the enigmatic designations of their organization.

<sup>329</sup> See our article on this subject in the *Voile d'Isis* issue of November 1931.

<sup>330</sup> Mr. L. Charbonneau-Lassay has devoted a study towards this subject in the journal *Regnabit*.

<sup>331</sup> *The Secret Language of Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore' – Le Voile d'Isis*, March 1932.

<sup>332</sup> *The Esoterism of Dante*, ch. 7. – Moreover, Mr. Ricolfi seems inclined enough to admit the links of the 'Fedeli d'Amore' with the Templars, although he only makes a passing mention of it, this question being outside of the subject he has proposed to treat more specifically.

to certain traditional knowledge of a rather special kind, such as the explanation of the meaning of words by the development of their constituent elements; indeed, that one attentively reads this sentence by which it defines one of the twelve virtues to which corresponds the twelve parts of his work (and this number also has its *raison d'être*: it is a zodiac whose Love is the Sun), and that Mr. Ricolfi quotes without comment: "Docilitas, data novitiis notitia vitiorum, docet illos ab illorum vilitate abstinere;" is this not reminiscent of Plato's *Cratylus*, for example?<sup>333</sup>

Let us point out again, without departing from Francesco da Barberino, a rather curious mistake by Mr. Ricolfi about this androgynous figure, which is clearly Hermetic and is absolutely not 'magical' because these are two quite different things; he even speaks in this respect of 'white magic,' whereas he would like to see 'black magic' in the *Rebis* of Basil Valentin, because of the dragon which, as we already said,<sup>334</sup> simply represents the elementary world, which is also placed under the feet of the *Rebis*, dominated by him, and also, even more amusing due to the square and the compass, for reasons that are all too easy to guess, which undoubtedly raise much more political contingencies than considerations of an initiatic order! Finally, to finish, since Mr. Ricolfi seems to have some doubt regarding the esoteric character of the figure where under the appearance of a simple 'ornate letter,' Francesco da Barberino was represented in adoration before the letter I, let us further specify the meaning of this, which according to Dante was the first name of God: it properly designates the 'Divine Unity' (and this is why this name is first, the unity of the essence necessarily preceding the multiplicity of attributes); indeed, not only is it the equivalent of the Hebrew *iod*, a hieroglyph of the Principle, and itself the principle of all other letters of the alphabet, and whose numerical value is 10 reduced to unity (this is the unit developed in the quaternary:  $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$ , or the central point producing the circle of universal manifestation through its expansion). Not only does the letter I represent unity in Latin numeration, because of its straight line form, which is the simplest of all geometric forms (the point

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<sup>333</sup> In a more recent period, we find a similar process again, and employed in a much more apparent way, in the Hermetic treatise of Cesare della Riviera, *Il Mondo Magico degli Heroi* (see our review in *Le Voile d'Isis* of October 1932). – Similarly, when Jacques de Baisieux says that *a-mor* means 'without death,' we must not hasten to declare, as Mr. Ricolfi does, that this is a 'false etymology:' in reality, this is not a question of etymology, but of a process of interpretation comparable to the *nirukta* of the Hindu tradition; without knowing anything about the poem in question, we ourselves had indicated this explanation, adding to it a comparison with the Sanskrit words *a-mara* and *a-mrita*, in the first article we have devoted to the works of Luigi Valli. (*Le Voile d'Isis*, February 1929 issue).

<sup>334</sup> *Le Voile d'Isis*, March 1932 issue.

being 'formless'); yet, in the Chinese language, the word *i* means 'unity,' and *Tai-i* is the 'Great Unity,' which is symbolically represented as residing in the polar star, which is yet full of meaning, because in returning to the letter I of the Western alphabets, one realizes that, being a vertical straight line, it is thus apt to symbolize the 'Axis of the World,' the importance of which is well known in all traditional doctrines,<sup>335</sup> and so this 'first name of God' also reminds us of the anteriority of 'polar' symbolism in relation to 'solar' symbolism.

Naturally, we have above all insisted on the points where the explanations of Mr. Ricolfi are most obviously insufficient, because we think that this is what is most beneficial, but it goes without saying that it would be unfair to criticize specialists in 'literary history,' who have not been prepared to approach the esoteric domain, who lack the necessary data to discern and correctly interpret all the initiatic symbols. On the contrary, we must recognize the merit of daring to go against officially accepted opinions and anti-traditional interpretations imposed by the profane spirit that dominates the modern world, and their gratitude to place at our disposal, by impartially expounding the results of their research, documents in which we can find what they themselves have not seen; we can only wish to see other works of the same kind appear again soon, bringing new light to the mysterious and complex question of the initiatic organizations of the Western Middle Ages.

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<sup>335</sup> In operative Masonry, the plumb line, the figure of the 'Axis of the World,' is suspended from the polar star, or the letter G which in this case holds the place, and which is itself as we have indicated, a substitute of the Hebrew *iod* (*Le Voile d'Isis*, March 1932 issue, see also a remark on the origins of the letter G in the reviews of the magazines in the December 1932 issue).

## Kabbalah and the Science of Numbers

*Kabbale et science des nombres*, August-September 1933.

We have often insisted that the 'sacred sciences' of a given traditional form are integral to it, at least as much as subordinate and secondary elements can be, which are far from being mere additions that would have been attached artificially. It is indispensable to understand this point and to never lose sight of it if one wishes to penetrate, no matter what, the true spirit of a tradition; it is all the more necessary to draw attention to this fact, because among those who claim to study traditional doctrines it is found frequently in our times a tendency to disregard the sciences, either because of the special difficulties in their assimilation, or because, besides the impossibility of incorporating them into the framework of modern classification, their presence is particularly embarrassing for anyone who tries to reduce everything to the exoteric point of view and to interpret doctrines in terms of 'philosophy' or 'mysticism.' Without wishing to dwell further upon the vanity of such studies undertaken 'from the outside' and with all profane intentions, we will nevertheless be referring to these again, because we see daily opportunities of the distorted conceptions which inevitably lead to what is worse than pure and simple ignorance.

It sometimes happens that certain traditional sciences play a more important role than the one just mentioned, in addition to their own inherent value in their contingent order, they are taken as symbolic means of an expression for the higher and essential part of the doctrine, so that it becomes entirely unintelligible if it separated from it. This is particularly the case with respect to the Hebrew Kabbalah, for the 'science of numbers,' which is largely identified with the 'science of letters,' as well as in Islamic esoterism; by virtue of the very constitution of the two Hebrew and Arabic languages, which, as we pointed out recently, are so close to each other in all respects.<sup>336</sup>

The preponderant role of the science of numbers in Kabbalah is so evident that it cannot escape even the most superficial observer, and it is hardly possible for the most prejudiced and biased to deny or conceal

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<sup>336</sup> See our article on *Qabbalah* in the May 1933 issue; we also ask readers to refer to our study on *The Science of Letters*, published in the February 1931 issue.

this. However, these latter do not fail to, at the least, make false interpretations in order to make it best fit within the framework of their preconceived ideas; we propose here above all to dispel these deliberate confusions, due in no small measure to the abuses of the so-called 'historical method,' which has every intention of seeing 'borrowing' wherever it sees certain similarities.

We know that it is fashionable in academic circles to pretend to connect Kabbalah with Neo-Platonism, to diminish both antiquity and scope; is it not admitted, as an indisputable principle, that nothing can come but from the Greeks? Unfortunately, it is forgotten that Neo-Platonism itself contains many elements that are not specifically Greek, and that Judaism in particular had, in the Alexandrian milieu, an importance that was far from negligible, if there was truly borrowing, it might be that they had taken place in the opposite direction of what is claimed. This hypothesis would be even more probable, firstly due to the adoption of a foreign doctrine is hardly reconcilable with the 'particularism' which was always one of the dominant features of the Judaic spirit, and secondly because, Neo-Platonism is considered relatively to be an exoteric doctrine (even if it is based on esoteric data, it is only an 'externalization') and as such, could not exert any real influence on an essentially initiatic tradition, especially one that is 'closed,' as is and always was Kabbalah.<sup>337</sup> Moreover, we do not see any particularly striking similarities between it and Neo-Platonism, nor do, in the form in which it is expressed, numbers play the role which is so characteristic of Kabbalah; the Greek language would not have allowed this, while this is, we repeat, something which is inherent in the Hebrew language itself, which, consequently, must have been bound from the beginning to the traditional forms expressed by it.

Of course, it is not that there is a reason to deny that a traditional science of numbers has also existed among the Greeks; it was the basis of Pythagoreanism, which was not a simple philosophy, but had a properly initiatic character. It is from there that Plato drew not only the cosmological part of his doctrine, as he expounds particularly in the *Timaeus*, but his 'theory of ideas,' which is essentially only a transposition according to a different terminology of Pythagorean conceptions as numbers envisaged as principles of things. Therefore, if one really wanted to find a term of comparison with Kabbalah among the Greeks, it was Pythagorism that should be followed back; it is precisely here that the

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<sup>337</sup> This latter reason is also valid against the pretention of attaching Islamic esoterism to the same Neo-Platonism; among the Arabs, philosophy alone is of a Greek origin, as is everything to which the name 'philosophy' (in Arabic *falsafāh*) can properly apply, which is like a mark of this very origin, but here we are no longer speaking of that which is philosophy.



whole futility of the 'borrowing' thesis appears most clearly: we are indeed in the presence of two initiatic doctrines which likewise give a crucial importance to the science of numbers, but this science is presented on both sides in radically different forms.

Some considerations here of a more general nature would not be useless: it is perfectly normal that the same science be found in various traditions, because the truth is that in any field, whatsoever, cannot be the monopoly of a single traditional forms to the exclusion of others; this fact cannot be a matter of astonishment, except with the 'critics' who do not believe the truth. Only the opposite would be, not only surprising, but rather difficult to conceive. There is nothing here that implies a more or less direction communication between two different traditions, even if one is undeniably older than the other: can we not find a certain truth and express it independently of those who have already expressed it previously, and is it not all the more probable that through this independence the same truth will be expressed in another way? It must be noted that this does not go against the common origin of all traditions, but the transmission of principles, starting from this common origin, does not imply in an explicit way that of all the developments which are implied within it and of all the applications to which they may give rise. Everything that is a matter of 'adaptation,' in a word, can be considered as belonging to one or another particular traditional form, and if we find the equivalent elsewhere, it is because of the same principles, one should naturally draw the same consequences, whatever the special way in which way they have been expressed here or there (of course, this is subject to reservation when certain symbolic modes of expression which, being everywhere the same, must be regarded as going back to the Primordial Tradition). The differences of form will, in general, be all the greater as we move further away from the principles by descending to a more contingent order; this is one of the primary difficulties in understanding some of the traditional sciences.

It will be easily understood that almost all interest is removed due to these consideration, in regards to the origins of the traditions or the origins of the elements which they contain, from the 'historic' point of view as it is understood in the profane world, since they perfectly render useless the supposition of any direct filiation; even where we notice a much loser similarity between two traditional forms, this similarity can be explained less by 'borrowing,' which is very often improbably, than by 'affinities' due to a certain set of similar or common conditions (race, type of language, way of life, etc.) among the peoples to whom these forms

are respectively addressed.<sup>338</sup> As for the cases of real filiation, it does not mean that they must be entirely excluded, because it is obvious that all the traditional forms do not proceed directly from the Primordial Tradition, but that other forms have sometimes had to play the role of intermediaries, but these latter are, in most cases, those which have entirely disappeared, and these transmissions generally hark back to times far too distant for ordinary history, whose field of investigation is very limited, so that they do not have the slightest knowledge of it, not to mention the means by which intermediaries are carried out are not of those which may be accessible for these research methods.

All this is only leading us away from our subject in just appearance: if it cannot be directly derived from the it, even assuming that it is not really anterior to the other, and if only due to a great difference of form on which we will return later more specifically, could we at least consider for both a common origin, which would be, according to the views of some, the tradition of the ancient Egyptians (which, it is needless to say, this time would go well beyond the Alexandrian period)? Let us say immediately, this is a theory which has been abused; as far as Judaism is concerned, it is impossible for us, despite certain more or less fanciful assertions, to discover the slightest connection with all that can be known of the Egyptian tradition (we are talking about the form which is alone to be considered in this, since the substance is necessarily identical in all traditions). No doubt it would have more real links with the Chaldean tradition, whether by derivation or mere affinity, and as far as it is possible to truly grasp something of those traditions which have been extinct for so many centuries.

For Pythagorism, the question is perhaps more complex; the travels of Pythagoras, which must be understood literally or symbolically, do not necessarily imply borrowing from the doctrines of this or that people (at

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<sup>338</sup> This may apply in particular to the similarity of expressions that we have already point out between Kabbalah and Islamic esoterism, in this regard there is, as far as the latter is concerned, a curious remark to be made: in Islam itself, 'exoterist' adversaries have often sought to depreciate it by attributing it to a foreign origin, on the pretext that many of the best-known Sūfis were Persian, they wished to see borrowing from Mazdeism, even extending this gratuitous affirmation to the 'science of letters,' but there is no trace of anything like it among the ancient Persians, while, on the contrary, this science exists in an entirely comparable form in Judaism, which is easily explained by the 'affinities' we are referring to, not to mention the community of a more distant origin that we will have to return to; this fact was the only one which could give any semblance of verisimilitude to the idea of a borrowing made from a pre-Islamic and non-Arab doctrine, and it seems to have escaped them completely.

least as for the essential, and whatever other points of detail may be involved), but rather the establishment or strengthening of certain links with more or less equivalent initiations. Indeed, it seems that Pythagorism was above all the continuation of something which pre-dated Greece itself, and there is no reason to look elsewhere for its principal source: we wish to speak of the Mysteries, more particularly of Orphism, which was perhaps only a 'rehabilitation,' in the sixth century B.C., which, through a strange synchronism saw changes of form take place in the traditions of almost all peoples. It is often said that the Greek Mysteries were themselves of an Egyptian origin, but such a general assertion is far too 'simplistic,' and, while this may be true in some cases, such as that of the Eleusinian Mysteries (which we believe especially applies here), there are others where it would not be tenable.<sup>339</sup> Thus, whether it is Pythagorism itself or the earlier Orphism, it is not at Eleusis that we must look for the 'point of attachment,' but at Delphi, and the Delphic Apollo is by no means Egyptian, but of a Hyperborean origin that is impossible to envisage for the Hebraic tradition;<sup>340</sup> this brings us directly to the most important point with respect to the science of numbers and the different forms it has worn.

In Pythagorism, this science of numbers appears closely related to that of geometric forms; and so, it is with Plato, who in this respect is purely Pythagorean. Here we could see the expression of a characteristic feature of the Hellenic mentality, attached above all to the consideration of visual forms; indeed, we know that among the mathematic sciences, it is geometry that the Greeks developed most particularly.<sup>341</sup> However, there is something more, at least with regards to 'sacred geometry,' which is what this is about: the 'geometric' God of Pythagoras and Plato, understood in its most precise and, one could say, 'technical' meaning is none other than Apollo. We cannot dwell on this subject for too long for there are developments which would lead us too far astray, and perhaps we will return to this question on another occasion; it is enough for us

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<sup>339</sup> It is scarcely necessary to say that certain accounts in which we see Moses and Orpheus receiving initiation at the same time in the temples of Egypt are only fantasies which rest upon nothing serious; what remains to be said of Egyptian initiation since Abbé Terrasson's *Sethos*?

<sup>340</sup> This is the direct derivation; even if the Primordial Tradition is hyperborean, and if all the traditional forms without exception are finally attached to this origin, there are cases, such as that of the Hebraic tradition, where it can only be indirectly and through a more or less long series of intermediaries, besides of which it would be very difficult to claim reconstitute precisely.

<sup>341</sup> On the contrary, algebra is of an Indian origin and was not introduced to the Occident until much later, through the intermediary of the Arabs, who gave it the name it has kept (*al-jābr*).

at present to point out that this fact is clearly opposed to the hypothesis of a common origin of Pythagorism and Kabbalah, and this is the very point we have sought above all to reconcile, and which is, to tell the truth, the only one which could have given the idea of such a comparison, which is to say, the apparent similarity of these two doctrines and the roles played by the science of numbers.

In Kabbalah, this same science of numbers is in no way connected with geometric symbolism, and it is easy to understand that this is so, for this symbolism could not be suitable for nomadic peoples, as was originally the case for the Hebrews and the Arabs.<sup>342</sup> On the contrary, we find here something which does not have its equivalent among the Greeks: the close union, one could even say the identification in many respects, of the science of numbers with that of letters, because of the digital correspondences of these; this is what is eminently characteristic of Kabbalah,<sup>343</sup> and which is found nowhere else, at least in this aspect and with this development, if not, as we have already said, in Islamic esoterism, which is to say on the whole in the Arab tradition.

It might seem surprising at first glance that considerations of this order remained foreign to the Greeks,<sup>344</sup> since letters have a numerical value for them as well (which is also the same in the Hebrew and Arabic alphabets for those which have their equivalents), and there were never other signs of numeration. However, the explanation of this fact is quite simple: it is that the Greek writing represents in reality only a foreign import (either 'Phoenician' as is most often said, or in any case 'Cadmean,' which is to say, 'oriental' without any more precise specification, and the varying names of the letters are proof of this), and which, in its numerical or other symbolism, has never really, if we can express it thus,

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<sup>342</sup> On this point, see our article on *Cain and Abel* (January 1932); it should not be forgotten that, as we said then, Solomon had to appeal to foreign workers for the construction of the Temple, which is particularly significant because of the intimate relationship between geometry and architecture.

<sup>343</sup> Let us recall in this connection that the word *gematria* (which, being of a Greek origin, must, like a certain number of other terms of the same provenance, have been introduced in a relatively recent period, which does not mean that what it designates did not exist previously), does not derive from *geometria* as is often claimed, but from *grammateia*, it is therefore still from the science of letters that this is a question.

<sup>344</sup> It is only with Christianity that something like this can be found in writings of Greek expression, and then it is obviously a transposition of data whose origin is Hebraic; we mean, in this regard, to refer principally to *Revelations*, and one could probably also note things of the same order in what remains of writings related to Gnosticism.

become one with the language itself.<sup>345</sup> On the contrary, in languages such as Hebrew and Arabic, the meaning of words is inseparable from literal symbolism, and it would be impossible to give a complete interpretation as to their most profound meanings, the one that really matters in the traditional and initiatic point of view (because we must not forget that these are essentially 'sacred languages'), without taking into account the numerical values of the letters that compose them; the links existing between numerically equivalent words, and the substitutions to which they sometimes give rise, are, in this regard, a particularly clear example.<sup>346</sup> There is something which, as we said at the beginning, is essentially due to the very formation of these languages, which is related in a strictly 'organic' way, far from having things added from without and afterwards, as in the case of the Greek language; since this element is found in both Hebrew and Arabic, it can legitimately be regarded as proceeding from the common source of these two languages and the two traditions they express, which is to say what may be called the 'Abrahamic' tradition.

We can now draw from these considerations the necessary conclusions: that if we consider the science of numbers among the Greeks and the Hebrews, we see it clothed in two very different forms, supported in one by a geometric symbolism, and in the other by a literal symbolism.<sup>347</sup> As a result, there can be no question of 'borrowing,' no more on one side than the other, but only equivalences as it necessarily occurs between all the traditional forms; we leave aside entirely any question of 'priority,' without any real interest in these conditions, and perhaps insoluble, the real point of departure being able to be well beyond the periods for which

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<sup>345</sup> Even in the symbolic interpretation of words (for example in Plato's *Cratylus*), the consideration of the letters of which they are composed does not interfere; the same is true of *nirukta* for the Sanskrit language, and while there are certain aspects of the Hindu tradition which have a literal symbolism, which is even highly developed, it rests on principles entirely different from what we are dealing with here.

<sup>346</sup> This is one of the reasons why the idea, put forward by some under the pretext of 'convenience,' that writing Arabic with Latin characters is totally unacceptable and even absurd (this without prejudice to other more contingent considerations, like the impossibility of establishing a truly precise transcription, by the same reason that the Arabic letters do not have all their equivalents in the Latin alphabet). The true motives for which some Orientalists propagate this idea are quite different from those they claim, and must be seen with 'anti-traditional' intent in relation to political concerns, but this is another story...

<sup>347</sup> We say 'supported' because these symbolisms effectively constitute, in both cases, the sensible 'support' and the 'body' of the science of numbers.

it is possible to establish a timeline that is somewhat rigorous. In addition, the hypothesis of an immediate common origin must also be rejected, because we see the tradition of which this science is an integral part, on the one hand, to an 'Apollonian' science, which is to say directly hyperborean, and, on the other, an 'Abrahamic' source, which is most likely related to (as the very names of the Hebrews and Arabs suggest) to the traditional stream of the 'Lost Island of the West.'<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> We constantly use the expression 'the science of numbers' to avoid confusion with profane arithmetic; perhaps one could adopt a term such as 'arithmology,' but because of the 'barbarism' of its hybrid composition, it is necessary to reject that of 'numerology' of recent invention, and by which, some seem to want to designate above all a sort of 'divinatory art' which has little to do with the true traditional science of numbers.

# Kundalini-Yoga

*Kundalinî-Yoga*, October 1933.

The work of Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe), devoted to the one of the most obscure aspects of the Hindu doctrines, has been discussed several times previously; what is called ‘Tantrism,’ because it is based on the treaties designated under the generic name *tantras*, and which is much more extensive and less clearly delimited than is commonly believed, has been almost entirely neglected by the Orientalists, who have been excluded both by the difficulty of understand it and by certain prejudices, which are the direct consequence of their misunderstanding. One of the principal works, entitled *The Serpent Power*, has recently been reissued;<sup>349</sup> we do not propose to make an analysis of it, which would be almost impossible and uninteresting nonetheless (it is better for those of our readers who know English to refer to the volume itself, of which we would never give an incomplete idea), but rather to clarify the true meaning of what it deals with, without actually constraining us to follow the order in which the questions are subject.<sup>350</sup>

Firstly, we must say that we cannot entirely agree with the author on the fundamental meaning of the word *yoga*, which, being literally that of ‘union,’ could not be understood unless it applied essentially to the supreme goal of any ‘realization;’ he objects to this that there can be no question of a union except between two distinct beings, and that *Jivatma* is not really distinct from *Paramatma*. This is perfectly true, but the individual is in fact distinguished from the Universal in an illusory mode alone, it must not be forgotten that it is from the individual that necessarily originates all ‘realization’ (this word would not have any *raison d’être* otherwise), and that, from his point of view, this presents the appearance of a ‘union,’ which, to tell the truth, is not something ‘which

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<sup>349</sup> *The Serpent Power*, 3rd edition review; Ganesh & Co., Madras. – This volume includes the translation of two texts: *Shatchakra nirupana* and *Paduku-panchaka*, preceded by a long and important introduction: it is the content to which our study relates.

<sup>350</sup> On many points, we can do not better than to reference our own work. *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, for further explanations that are impossible for us to reproduce in the framework of an article, and that we must, therefore, suppose are already known.

must be done,' that is to say the 'Supreme Identity.' A term like that of *yoga* expresses the aspect that things take on the aspect of manifestation, and which is obviously illusory in the same way as manifestation itself; but it is the same, inevitably, of all the forms of the language, since they belong to the domain of the individual manifestation, and it is enough to be warned of not being misled by their imperfection, nor to see in their expression a real 'dualism.' It is only secondarily and by extension that this same word *yoga* can then be applied to all the various means implemented to achieve 'realization,' means which are only preparatory and to which the name 'union,' in whatever way it may be understood, cannot be properly understood; all this in no way affects the exposition of what it is about, because the word *yoga* is preceded by a determinative, so as to distinguish between several kinds, it is quite evident that it is used to designate the means, which alone are multiple, while the goal is necessarily one and the same in all cases.

The kind of *yoga* we are dealing with here is related to what is called *laya-yoga*, which consists essentially of a process of 'dissolution' (*laya*), that is, resorption in the non-manifested of the different constitutive elements of the individual manifestation, this resorption taking place gradually in an order that is strictly opposite to that of the production (*Srishti*) or development (*prapancha*) of this same manifestation.<sup>351</sup> The elements or principles in question are the *tattwas* that the *Sankhya* enumerates as production of *Prakriti* under the influence of *Purusha*: the 'internal sense,' that is to say the 'mind' (*manas*), joined to the individual consciousness (*ahamkara*), and through it to the intellect (*Buddhi* or *Mahat*); the five *tanmatras* or subtle elemental essences; the five faculties of sensation (*jnanendriyas*) and the five faculties of action (*karmendriyas*);<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> It is regrettable that the author frequently uses, especially to translate *srishti*, the word 'creation,' which, as we have often explained, is not suitable for the point of view of the Hindu doctrine; we know all too well how many difficulties give rise from the necessity of using Western terminology, as inadequate as it is with questions of expression, but we think that this word is one of those which we can easily avoid, and in fact we have never used it ourselves. – While we are on this issue of terminology, let us also mention the impropriety of translating *samadhi* by 'ecstasy,' this last word is all the more unfortunate because it is normally used, in Western language, to designate mystic states, that is, something which is of a totally different order and with which it essentially imports to avoid any confusion; moreover, it means etymologically 'to go out of oneself' (which is well suited to the case of mystic states), whereas what the term 'samadhi' refers to is, on the contrary, a 're-entry' of the being into his own Self.

<sup>352</sup> The word *indriya* designates both a faculty and the corresponding organ, but it is preferable to translate it generally into 'faculty,' first because it is in keeping



finally, the five *bhutas* or bodily elements.<sup>353</sup> Each *bhuta*, with the *tan-matra* to which it corresponds, and the faculties of sensation and action which proceed from it, is resorbed into the one immediately preceding it according to the order of production, so that the order of resorption is as follows: 1st the earth (*prithvi*), with the olfactory quality (*gandha*), the sense of smell (*ghrana*) and the faculty of locomotion (*pada*); 1st the water (*ap*), with the quality of taste (*rasa*), the sense of taste (*rasana*) and the prehension faculty (*pani*); 3rd the fire (*tejas*), with the visual quality (*rupa*), the sense of sight (*chakshus*) and the faculty of excretion (*payu*); 4th the air (*vayu*), with the tactile quality (*sparsha*), the sense of touch (*twach*) and the faculty of generation (*upastha*); 5th the ether (*akasha*), with the sound quality (*shabda*), the sense of hearing (*shrotra*) and the faculty of speech (*vach*); and finally, at the last stage, the whole thing is resorbed in the 'internal sense' (*manas*), the whole individual manifestation thus being reduced to its first term, and as at a point beyond which the being passes into another domain. Such will be the six preparatory stages that will have to be traversed successively by the one who follows this path of 'dissolution,' thus gradually freeing himself from the various limiting conditions of individuality, before reaching the supra-individual state where the total union with the Supreme Self (*Paramatma*) can be realized, in the pure and informal Consciousness (*Chit*), the union of which immediately results 'Deliverance' (*Moksha*).

To fully understand what will follow, it is important to never lose sight of the notion of the constitutive analogy between the 'Macrocosm' and the 'Microcosm,' by virtue of which all that exists in the Universe is also found in man, what the *Vishwasara Tantra* expresses in these terms: "What is here is there, what is not here is nowhere" (*yad ihasi tad anyatra, yan nehasti na tat kwachit*). It must be added, because of the correspondences that exist between all states of existence, each of them contain in some way a reflection of all the other states, which makes it possible to 'locate,' by example, in the field of gross manifestation, whether contemplated elsewhere in the cosmic ensemble or in the human body, 'regions' corresponding to various modes of subtle manifestation, and

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with its primitive meaning, which is that of 'power,' and also because the consideration of the faculty here is more essential than that of the corporeal organ, because of the pre-eminence of the subtle manifestation in relation to the gross manifestation.

<sup>353</sup> We do not understand the objection made by the author to the use of the word, in designating the *bhutas*, 'elements,' which is a traditional term of ancient physics: there is no need to worry about the oblivion in which this meaning has fallen among the modern ones, to whom any conception of what is properly 'cosmological' has become entirely foreign.

even to a whole hierarchy of 'worlds' that represent so many different degrees in universal existence.

That said, it is easy to conceive that there are in the human being 'centers' corresponding respectively to each of the groups of *tattwas* that we have enumerated, and that these centers, although essentially belonging to the subtle form (*sukshma-sharira*), may in a certain sense be 'localized' in the corporeal or gross form (*sthula-sharira*), or, rather, in relation to the different parts of it, these 'localizations' being in reality nothing more than a way of expressing correspondences which involve a very special link between a certain subtle center and this particular portion of the corporeal organism. It is thus that the six centers in question are referred to the division of the vertebral column, called *Meru-danda* because it constitutes the axis of the human body, as well as, from a 'macrocosmic' point of view, the *Meru* is the 'axis of the world.'<sup>354</sup> the first five, in the ascending direction, correspond respectively to the coccygeal, sacral, lumbar, dorsal, and cervical regions, and the sixth to the encephalic part of the central nervous system; it must be well understood that they are not nervous centers, in the physiological sense of the word, and we must in no way assimilate them with various plexuses, as some have claimed (which is in contradiction with their 'localization' inside the spinal column itself), because it is not an identity that is involved, but only a relation between two distinct orders of manifestation, a relation which is sufficiently justified by the fact that it is precisely by means of the nervous system that one of the most direction relations of the corporeal state with the subtle state is established.<sup>355</sup>

Similarly, the subtle 'channels' (*nadis*) are no more nerves than they are blood vessels; these are, it may be said, 'the lines of direction which the vital forces follows.' Of these 'channels,' the three main ones are *sushumna*, which occupies the central position, *ida* and *pingala*, the two left and right *nadis*, the first feminine or negative, the second masculine

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<sup>354</sup> It is rather astonishing that the author did not report the relationship of this with the symbolism of the Brahmanic staff (*Brahma-danda*), all the more because he repeatedly refers to the equivalent symbolism of the caduceus.

<sup>355</sup> The author rightly remarks how erroneous are the interpretations ordinarily given by Westerners, who, confusing the two orders of manifestation, wish to reduce everything to a purely anatomical and physiological point of view: Orientalists, ignorant of all traditional science, believe that this is only a more or less fantastic description of certain corporeal organs: Occultists, for their part, if they admit the distinct existence of the subtle organism, imagine it as a kind of 'double' of the body, subject to the same conditions as this one, which is scarcely more exact and can only result in grossly materialized representations: the author shows in detail this final point how far the conceptions of the Theosophists, in particular, are removed from the true Hindu doctrine.

or positive, the latter two thus corresponding to a 'polarization' of vital currents. *Sushumna* is 'located' inside the cerebrospinal axis, extending to the orifice corresponding to the crown of the head (*Brahma-randhra*); *ida* and *pingala* are outside this same axis, around which they cross each other by a kind of double helical winding, leading respectively to the left and right nostrils, thus being related to the alternate breathing of one to the other nostril.<sup>356</sup> It is on the path of *sushumna*, and even more exactly in its interior (because it is described as enclosing two other concentric and more tenuous 'channels' called *vajra* and *chitra*),<sup>357</sup> what are the 'centers' of which we have spoken? As *sushumna* is itself 'localized' in the medullary canal, it is quite evident that it can in no way be any body organs.

These centers are called 'wheels' (*chakras*) and are also described as 'lotuses' (*padmas*), each of which has a definite number of petals (radiating in the interval between *vajra* and *chitra*, which is to say, inside the first and around the second). The six *chakras* are: *muladhara*, corresponding to the abdominal region; *manipura*, to the umbilical region; *anahata*, to the region of the heart; *vishuddha*, to the region of the throat; *ajna*, to the region between the two eyes, which is to say the 'third eye'; finally, at the crown of the head, around the *Brahma-randhra*, is a seventh 'lotus,' *sahasrara* or the 'thousand-petalled lotus,' which is not counted among the *chakras*, because, as we shall subsequently see, as a 'center of consciousness,' to a state that is beyond the bounds of individuality.<sup>358</sup> According to the descriptions given for meditation (*dhyaana*), each lotus carries in its pericarp the yantra or geometric symbol of the corresponding *bhuta*, in which is the *bija-mantra* of the latter, supported by its symbolic 'vehicle' (*vahana*); there also resides a 'deity' (*devata*), accompanied by a particular *shakti*. The 'deities' who preside over the six *chakras*, and who

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<sup>356</sup> In the symbol of the caduceus, the central rod corresponds to *sushumna*, the two serpents to *ida* and *pingala*: these are also sometimes represented, on the Brahmanic staff, by the outline of two helical lines winding in opposite directions from each other, so as to cross at each of the nodes which represent the different centers. – In cosmic correspondances, *ida* is related to the Moon, *pingala* to the Sun, and *sushumna* to the igneous principle; it is interesting to note the relationship this presents with the three 'Great Lights' of Masonic symbolism.

<sup>357</sup> It is also said that *sushumna* corresponds by its nature to fire, *vajra* to the Sun, and *chitra* to the Moon: the interior of the final, forming the most central conduit, is called *Brahma-nadi*.

<sup>358</sup> The seven knots of the Brahmanic staff symbolize the seven 'lotuses;' in the caduceus, on the contrary, it seems that the terminal ball has to be brought back only to *ajna*, the two alleys accompanying it then identifying with the two petals of this 'lotus.'

are nothing other than the 'forms of consciousness' through which the being passes at the corresponding stages, are respectively, in ascending order, *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Rudra*, *Isha*, *Sadashiva*, and *Shambhu*, on the other hand, from the 'macrocosmic' point of view, their dwellings in the six 'worlds' (*lokas*) are hierarchically superimposed: *Bhurloka*, *Bhuvarloka*, *Swarloka*, *Janaloka*, *Tapoloka*, and *Maharloka*; at *sahasrara* presides *Par-amashiva*, whose home is the *Satyalo**ka*; thus, all these worlds have their correspondence in the 'centers of consciousness' of the human being, following the analog principle that we have indicated previously. Finally, each of the petals of the different 'lotuses' bears one of the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the petals are the very letters;<sup>359</sup> but it would be of little use now to enter into more depth on this subject, and the necessary complements in this respect will find their place better in the second part of our study, following what we have said of *Kundalini*, of which we have not spoken yet.

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<sup>359</sup> The numbers of the petals are: 4 for *muladhara*, 6 for *swadhishtana*, 10 for *manipura*, 12 for *anathata*, 16 for *vishuddha*, 2 for *ajna*, or a total of 50, which is also the number of letters in the Sanskrit alphabet; all the letters are found in *sahasrara*, each of them being repeated 20 times ( $50 \times 20 = 1000$ ).

## Kundalini-Yoga II

*Kundalinî-Yoga II*, November 1933.

*Kundalini* is an aspect of *Shakti* considered as a cosmic force: one might say it is this force even as it resides in the human being, where it acts as a vital force; this name *Kundalini* means that it is represented as coiled on itself in the manner of a serpent, its most general manifestations taking place in the form of a spiral movement developing from a central point which is its 'pole.' The 'winding' symbolizes a state of rest, that of a 'static' energy from which all forms of manifested activity proceed; in other words, all the more or less specialized vital forces which are constantly in action in human individuality, under its dual subtle and corporeal modes, are only secondary aspects of this same *Shakti* which in itself, in as long as *Kundalini* remains motionless in the 'root center' (*muladhara*) as the basis and support of all individual manifestation. When she is 'awake,' she unfolds and moves in an ascending direction, reshaping in herself these various secondary *Shaktis* as she passes through the various centers we have spoken of before, until she finally unites with *Paramashiva* in the 'thousand-petalled lotus' (*sahasrara*).

The nature of *Kundalini* is described as being both luminous (*vyotirmayi*) and sonorous (*shabdami* or *mantramayi*); we know that 'luminosity' is considered to properly characterize the subtle state, and we also know the primordial role of sound in the cosmogonic process; from the same cosmogonic point of view, there is much to say about the close connection between sound and light.<sup>360</sup> We cannot dwell on the extremely complex theory of sound (*shabda*) and its different modes (*para* or non-manifested, *pashyanti* and *madhyama*, both belonging to the subtle order, and finally *vaikhari*, which is the articulated word), the theory on which rests the entire science of the *mantra* (*mantra-vidya*); we will point out that this is the reason why only the presence of the *bija-mantras* of the elements inside the lotus, but also the letters on their petals, are explained. In fact, it must be understood that it is not a question here of letters as written characters, nor even of articulated sounds

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<sup>360</sup> On this point, we will only recall, as a particularly striking concordance, the identification established at the beginning of the Gospel of Saint John between the terms *Verbum*, *Lux*, and *Vita*, stating that, to be fully understood, it must be brought back to the world of *Hiranyagarbha*.

perceived by the ears; these letters are regarded as the *bija-mantras* or the 'natural names' of all activities (*kriya*) in connection with the *tattwa* of the corresponding center, or as expressions in its gross subtle sounds (*vaikhari-shabda*) produced by the forces which constitutes these activities.

*Kundalini*, as long as she remains in her resting state, resides in the *muladhara chakra*, which is, as we have said, the 'localized' center at the base of the spine, and that is the root (*mula*) of *sushumna* and all the *nadis*. There is the triangle (*trikona*) called *Traipura*,<sup>361</sup> which is the seat of the *Shakti* (*Shaktipitha*); it is wrapped three and a half times<sup>362</sup> around the symbolic *linga* of *Shiva*, designated as *Swayambhu*, covering with his head the *Brahma-dwara*, that is, the entrance of *sushumna*.<sup>363</sup> There are two other *lingas*, one (*Bana*) in the *anahata chakra*, and the other (*Itara*) in the *ajna chakra*; they correspond to the main 'vital nodes' (*granthis*), the crossing of which constitutes what might be called the 'critical points' in the *Kundalini-yoga* process;<sup>364</sup> and there is finally a fourth (*Para*) in *sahasrara*, the residence of *Paramashiva*.

When *Kundalini* is 'awakened' by the appropriate practices, the description of which we will not enter, she enters *sushumna* and, during her ascent, successively 'pierces' the various 'lotuses,' which flourish as

<sup>361</sup> The triangle, like the *yantra* of the *Shakti*, is always traced with the base at the top and the top at the bottom: it would be easy to show the similarity with many other symbols of the feminine principle.

<sup>362</sup> We will give an analogy in passing between these three and a half turns of *Kundalini*'s winding and the three and a half days during which, according to various traditions, the mind still remains bound to the body after death, and which represents the time required for 'Denouement' of the vital force, remaining in the 'un-awakened' state in the case of the ordinary man. One day is a cyclic revolution, corresponding to a turn of the spiral; since the process of resorption is always the opposite of manifestation, this course of action is considered to be a summary of the entire life of the individual, but taken up by the course of the events which constituted it; it is scarcely necessary to add that these misunderstood data have too often engendered all sorts of fanciful interpretations.

<sup>363</sup> The *mandala* or *yantra* of the *Prithvi* element is a square, corresponding as a plane figure to the cube, whose form symbolizes the ideas of 'foundation' and 'stability'; one could say, in the language of the Islamic tradition, that here we have the correspondence in the human being of the *Ka'abah*, within which is the 'black stone,' equivalent to the Hindu *linga*, and also to the omphalos which is, as we have explained elsewhere, one of the symbols of the 'center of the world.'

<sup>364</sup> These three *lingas* also relate to different situations, depending on the state of development of the being, the *luz* or 'nucleus of immortality,' which we have spoken about in *The King of the World*.

it passes; as it reaches each center in this way, it reabsorbs into itself, as we have already said, the various principles of individual manifestation which are especially related to this center, and thus reduced to its potential state, are carried with it in its movement towards the higher center. These are all stages of *laya-yoga*; at each of these stages is also reported the obtaining of certain particular 'powers' (*siddhis*), but it is important to notice that it is by no means what constitutes the essential one, and even one cannot insist upon it too much, for the general tendency of Westerners is to attribute to these sorts of things, as indeed to all that is 'phenomena,' an importance which they do not have and cannot have in reality. As the author rightly points out, the *yogi* (or to speak more precisely, the one who is about to become one) aspires to the possession of any conditioned state, be it a superior or 'celestial' state, so high as it may be, but uniquely 'Deliverance;' can he not attach himself to 'powers' whose exercise falls entirely within the sphere of the most external manifestation. Whoever seeks these 'powers' for themselves and who makes them the goal of his development, instead of seeing only mere accidental results, will never be a true *yogi*, because they will constitute for him impassable obstacles, preventing him from continuing to follow the ascending path to its ultimate end; all his 'realization' will therefore consist only in certain extensions of human individuality, a result whose value is strictly nil with regard to the supreme goal. Normally, the 'powers' in question should be regarded only as signs that the being has actually reached a particular stage; it is, if you will, an external means of control, but what really matters, at any stage, is a certain 'state of consciousness,' represented, as we have said, by a 'deity' (*devata*) to which the being identifies himself at this degree of 'realization;' these states themselves are worth only as gradual preparatory to the supreme union, which has no common measure with them, for there can be nothing between the conditioned and the unconditioned.

We will not repeat here the enumeration, which we have already given the first part of this study, of the centers corresponding to the five *bhutas* and their respective 'localizations;'<sup>365</sup> they relate to the different degrees of the corporeal manifestation, and, in the passage from the one to the other, each group of *tattwas* is 'dissolved' into the next higher group, the grossest always being resorbed into the most subtle (*sthulanam sukshme layah*). Finally, there comes the *ajna chakra*, where the subtle *tattwas* of the 'mental' order are, and in the pericarp of which is the

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<sup>365</sup> It is important to note that *anahata*, referred to as the region of the heart, must be distinguished from the eight-petaled 'heart lotus,' which is the residence of *Purusha*: the latter is 'located' in the heart itself, considered as the 'vital center' of individuality.

sacred monosyllable *Om*; this center is so called because it is there that it is received from above (which is to say from the supra-individual domain) the command (*ajna*) of the inner *Guru*, which is *Paramashiva*, to which the 'Self' is identical in reality.<sup>366</sup> The 'localization' of this *chakra* is directly related to the 'third eye,' which is the 'eye of Knowledge' (*Jnana-chakshus*); the corresponding cerebral center is the pineal gland, which is not the 'seat of the soul,' according to Descartes' truly absurd conception, but which nonetheless has a particularly important role as a connecting organ with the extra-corporeal mode of the human being. As we have explained elsewhere, the function of the 'third eye' refers essentially to the 'sense of eternity' and the restoration of the 'primordial state' (of which we have also repeatedly reported the relationship with *Hamsa* in the form of which *Paramashiva* is said to manifest itself in this center); the stage of 'realization' corresponding to the *ajna chakra* thus implies the perfection of the human state, and there is the point of contact with the higher states, to which all that is beyond this stage is related.<sup>367</sup>

On top of *ajna* are two secondary *chakras* called *manas* and *soma*,<sup>368</sup> and in the very pericarp of *sahasrara* is still a twelve-petalled lotus, containing the supreme triangle *Kamakala*, which is the abode of *Shakti*.<sup>369</sup> *Shabdabrahma*, which is to say the 'causal' and unmanifested state of sound (*shabda*), is represented by the *Kamakala*, which is the 'root' (*matla*) of all *mantras*, and which has its inferior correspondence (which can be regarded as its reflection in relation to the gross manifestation) in

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<sup>366</sup> This commandment corresponds to the 'celestial mandate' of the Far Eastern tradition; furthermore, the name of *ajna chakra* could be rendered in Arabic precisely as *maqām al-‘amr*, indicating that there is a direct reflection of the 'world' called '‘ālam al-‘amr,' in the human being, just as from the 'macrocosmic' point of view, this reflection is situated in our state of existence at the central place of the 'Terrestrial Paradise,' one could even deduce from this precise consideration on the modality of the 'angelic' manifestations in relation to man, but this would lead us entirely away from our subject.

<sup>367</sup> The sight of the 'third eye,' by which the being is freed from the temporal condition (which has nothing in common with the 'clairvoyance' of Occultists and Theosophists), is intimately related to the 'prophetic' function; it is referred to by the Sanskrit word *rishi*, which literally means 'seeing,' and which has its exact equivalent in the Hebrew *roeh*, the ancient designation of the prophets, later replaced by the word *nabī* (which is to say 'one who speaks by inspiration'). – Let us point out, without being able to insist otherwise, that what we indicate in this note and in the preceding one is related to the esoteric interpretation of the *Sūrat al-Qadr*, concerning the 'descent' of the *Qur’ān*.

<sup>368</sup> These two *chakras* are represented as 'lotuses' with six and sixteen petals respectively.

<sup>369</sup> One of the reasons why *Shakti* is symbolized by the triangle is the triplicity of its manifestation as Will (*Ichchha*), Action (*Kriya*), and Knowledge (*Jnana*).



the triangle *Traipura* of *muladhara*. We cannot think of going into the details of the very complex descriptions given of these different centers for meditation, which relate for the most part to the *mantra-vidya*, or of the enumeration of the various particular *Shaktis* who have their 'seats' between *ajna* and *sahasrara*. Finally, *sahasrara* is called *Shivasthana*, because it is the residence of *Paramashiva*, in union with the supreme *Nirvana Shakti*, the 'Mother of the Three Worlds;' it is the 'home of bliss,' where the 'Self' (*atma*) is realized. He who truly and fully knows *sahasrara* is free from 'transmigration' (*samsara*), because he has broken by this very knowledge all the bonds that have held him attached, and he has since reached the state of *jivanmukta*.

We will conclude with a remark, which we believe has not yet been made anywhere, on the concordance of the centers mentioned here with the *Sephiroth* of Kabbalah, which, in fact, must necessarily have their correspondence in the human being. It might be objected that the *Sephiroth* are ten in number, while the six *chakras* and *sahasrara* form only a total of seven, but this objection falls flat if one observes that in the arrangement of the 'Sephirothic tree' there are three pairs placed symmetrically on the 'columns' of the right and left, so that the *Sephiroth* set is distributed at seven different levels only; consider their projections on the central axis or 'middle column,' which corresponds to *sushumna* (the two lateral 'columns' being linked with *ida* and *pingala*), so we are brought back to the septenary.<sup>370</sup>

Beginning from the top, there is no difficulty in first regarding the assimilation of *sahasrara*, 'localized' to the crown of the head, to the supreme *Sephirah*, *Keter*, whose name precisely means the 'Crown.' Then comes the set of *Hokhmah* and *Binah*, which must correspond to *ajna*, and whose duality could even be represented by the two petals of this 'lotus;' moreover, they are *Da'at* 'resultant,' which is to say, 'Knowledge,' and we have seen that the 'localization' of *ajna* also refers to the 'eye of Knowledge.'<sup>371</sup> The following couple, *Hesed* and *Gevurah*, can, according to a very general symbolism concerning the attributes of 'Mercy' and

<sup>370</sup> Note the similarity of the symbolism of the 'Sephirothic tree' with that of the caduceus, according to what we have indicated previously; furthermore, the different 'channels' connected the *Sephiroth* with each other are not without analogy with the *nadis*, this, of course, in regards to the particular application that can be made to the human being.

<sup>371</sup> The duality of *Hokhmah* and *Binah* can also be put in symbolic relation with the 'microcosmic' correspondence of the right and left eyes with the Sun and the Moon.

‘Justice,’ be placed in the man in relation to the two arms;<sup>372</sup> these two *Sephiroth* will therefore be placed at both shoulders, and consequently at the level of the guttural region, corresponding thus to *vishuddha*.<sup>373</sup> As for *Tiferet*, its central position obviously refers to the heart, which immediately leads to its correspondence with *anahata*. The pair of *Netzah* and *Hod* will be placed at the hips, the attaching point of the lower limbs, like that of *Hesed* and *Gevurah* at the shoulders, the upper attachment points; the hips are at the level of the umbilical region, so it is *manipura*. Finally, with regards to the last two *Sephiroth*, it seems that there is reason to consider an inversion, because *Yesod*, according to the very meaning of its name, is the ‘foundation,’ which corresponds exactly to *muladhara*. *Malkut* should be assimilated to *swadhishtana*, which the meaning of the names seems to justify, for *Malkut* is the ‘Kingdom,’ and *swadhishtana* literally means the ‘proper abode’ of the *Shakti*.

In spite of the length of this expose, we have only sketched a few aspects of a subject that is truly inexhaustible, hoping only to have been able to provide some useful clarifications to those who wish to study it further.

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<sup>372</sup> See what we have said in *The King of the World*, of the symbolism of both hands, in precise relation to the *Shekinah* (which we will mention in passing with relation to the Hindu *Shakti*) and the ‘Sephirothic tree.’

<sup>373</sup> It is also at both shoulders that, according to Islamic tradition, the two angels responsible for recording the good and bad deeds of a man are placed respectively, and which also represents the divine attributes of ‘Mercy’ and ‘Justice.’ – It should also be noted, in this connection, that the symbolic figure of the ‘balance’ mentioned in the *Sifra di-Zeniuta* could also be ‘situated’ in a similar way in the human being.

## Initiatic Education

*L'enseignement initiatique*, December 1933.

As a complement to our previous studies on the question of initiation, and more particularly with regards to the essential difference between the methods of initiatic education and those of profane education, we reproduce here, without any modifications, an article we published earlier in the journal *Le Symbolisme* (January 1913 issue). Since most current readers of *Voile d'Isis* may have never heard of this article, we believe that its reproduction will not be untimely; at the same time, it will show that whatever may be imagined by those who judge too easily according to themselves, our way at looking at these things has never changed.

It seems that, in a rather general way, one does not realize a very exact account of what is, or what should be, initiatic education, what essentially characterizes it, by differentiating it deeply from profane education. In such matters, many view things in a superficial way, they stop at external appearances and forms, thus seeing nothing more, as a peculiarity worthy of remark, they find the usage of symbolism strange and at the least useless, they do not understand its *raison d'être*, we may even say the necessity for it. Apart from this, they suppose that the initiatic doctrine is basically only a philosophy like all others, perhaps a little different by its methods, but in any case, nothing more because their mentality is thus made that they are unable to conceive of anything else. Those who will agree to recognize the education of a doctrine as having some value from one point of view or another, and for any reason which usually are not initiatic reasons, those even can never be more than a type of profane education, a complement to ordinary education, for the use of a relative elite. Now, it is perhaps even better to deny its value altogether, which amounts to ignoring it altogether, than to belittle it in this way and to present in its name and in its place the expression of particular views, which are more or less coordinated, on all sorts of things that, in reality, are not initiatic either in themselves or by the way they are treated.

If this defective way of looking at initiatic education is due only to a lack of understanding of its true nature, there is another that is about as

equivalent, though apparently quite opposite to this. It consists in wanting to contradict it with profane education, while at the same time attributing to it a certain special science, which is more or less vaguely defined, at each moment putting it in contradiction and in conflict with the other sciences, and always declaring superior these without knowing much of why, since it is not less systematic in its exposition, nor less dogmatic in its conclusions. Partisans of a teaching of this kind, so-called initiatic, affirm, it is true, that it is of a very different nature from ordinary education, be it scientific, philosophical, or religious; from that they give no proof and, unfortunately, they do not stop there in facts of gratuitous or hypothetical assertions. Moreover, grouping themselves into multiple schools and under different denominations, they contradict each other no less than they contradicted, often in a biased way, the representatives of the different branches of profane education, which does not prevent each of them from pretending to be taken at his word and considered more or less infallible.

But if initiatic teaching is neither an extension of profane education, as some would like, nor its antithesis, as others claim, if it is neither a philosophical system nor a specialized science, one wonders what it is, because it is not enough to have said what it is not, it is necessary, if not to give a strict definition which is perhaps impossible, at least try make it understood what its nature is. To make its nature understood, at least insofar as can be done, it is to explain at the same time, and by the same token, why it is not possible to define it without distorting it, and also why it is so generally and in a certain way necessarily despised for its true character. Thus, the basis which forms this teaching is the constant use of symbolism in the transmission of this teaching, it could however be for anybody who thinks even a little, as is simply logical to do, a mode of expression quite different from ordinary language which must have been created to express, at least at its origins, ideas other than those expressed by the latter, and conceptions which cannot be translated integrally by words, for which we would need a less limited language, which is more universal, because they are themselves measures of a more universal order.

But if the initiatic conceptions are other than the profane conceptions, it is because they proceed above all from a different mentality than these, of which they differ less by their object than by the point of view under which they envisage this object. Now, according this essential distinction which exists between these two orders of conceptions, it is easy to admit that, on the one hand, all that can be considered from the profane point of view can be so, but then they can be so in a completely different way and with another understanding from the initiatic point of view, while,

moreover, there are things which completely escape the profane domain and which are peculiar to the initiatic domain, since it is not subject to the same limitations.

That symbolism, which is like the sensible form of all initiatic education, if we consider that every symbol is susceptible to multiple interpretations which are not in contradiction with each other, but on the contrary complement each other which are all equally true though proceeding from different points of view, it is not allowed to be doubted for even a moment that it is indeed in reality a language more universal than human languages; if this is so, it is because the symbols is the synthetic and schematic representation of a whole ensemble of ideas and conceptions that everyone can grasp according to his own mental abilities and to the extent that they have prepared their intelligence. And so the symbol, for which it penetrates its own deep meaning, will be able to conceive of far more than is possible to express by words; this shows the necessity of symbolism: it is the only way to transmit the inexpressible which constitutes the proper domain of initiation, or rather to deposit conceptions of this order to germinate in the intellect of the initiate, who will then have to transfer them from power to action, to develop and elaborate them by his own personal work, because nothing more can be done than to prepare it by outlining for him by appropriate formulas, the plan that he will have to realize in himself to achieve the effective possession of initiation that he has received from outside symbolically.

But if symbolic initiation, which is only the basis or support of true and effective initiation, is the only thing that can be given externally, at least it can be preserved and transmitted even by those who do not understand its meaning nor scope. It is enough for the symbols to be kept intact so that they are always capable of awakening, in him who is capable of it, all the conceptions of which they appear in the synthesis. And it is in this fact the true initiatic secret lies, whose nature is inviolable and which defends itself against the curiosity of laymen, and whose relative secret of certain external signs is only a symbolic figuration. There is no other mystery than the inexpressible, which is obviously thereby incommunicable, each will be able to penetrate it according to the extent of his intellectual horizon; even if he has penetrated it in full, he will never be able to communicate to another what he understands himself, at most it will help to reach this understanding only by those who are currently able.

Thus, the initiatic secret is something that lies well beyond all the rituals and all the sensory forms used for the transmission of external and symbolic initiation, which does not prevent these forms from having in the early stages of initiatic preparation, their necessary role and their

own value originating in what they do to translate the fundamental symbols into gestures, and from this they are a way to give the initiate the teaching that is presented to him which is the most adequate and generally applicable way of preparing him for assimilation, since all the manifestations of human individuality are translated, in its present conditions of existence, into various mode of the vital activity. But, it would be wrong to go further and pretend to make life, as many would like, a kind of absolute principle; the expression of an idea in the vital mode is after all only a symbol like others, as well as, for example, its translation in the spatial mode which constitutes a geometric symbol or ideogram. If any process of initiation present in its different phases and correspondence, either with individual human life, or even with the whole of terrestrial life, it is that one can consider the vital evolution itself particular or general, like the development of a plan similar to that which the initiate must realize in order to realize himself in the complete expansion of all the powers of his being. They are always and everywhere plans corresponding to the same synthetic conception, so that they are identical in principle, although they are different and indefinitely varied in their realization, they proceed from a single ideal Archetype, the universal plan drawn by a cosmic Force or Will that, without in anyway prejudging its nature, we can call the Great Architect of the Universe.

Therefore every being, whether individual or collective, tends, consciously or not, to realize in itself by the means appropriate to its particular nature the plan of the Great Architect of the Universe, and to complete there, according to the function which belongs to him in the cosmic whole, the total realization of this same plan, which is, in sum, only the universalization of his own personal realization. It is at the precise point of its evolution where a being is actually aware of this finality that the true initiation beings for him; when he has become aware of himself, he must lead himself, according to his personal path, to this integral realization which is accomplished, not in the isolated development of certain special and more or less extraordinary faculties, but in the complete, harmonic, and hierarchical development of all the virtual possibilities involved in the very essence of this being. Since the end is necessarily the same for all that has the same principle, it is in the means employed to achieve it that lies exclusively what constitutes the proper value of any being, considered within the limits of the special function which is determined for him by his individual nature, or by certain elements of it; moreover, this value of the being is relative and exists only in relation to its function, for there is no comparison of inferiority or superiority to

establish between different functions which correspond to so many different particular orders, although all are equally included in the Universal Order, of which they are, all in the same way, necessary elements.

Thus, initiatic instruction, envisaged in its universality, must include so many applications in an indefinite variety, of the same transcendent and abstract principle, all the particular ways of realization which are not only limited to each category of beings, but also to each individual being; comprehending all thus, it totalizes them and synthesizes them in the absolute unity of the Universal Way. Therefore, if the principles of initiation are immutable, their symbolic representation can and must vary so as to adapt to the multiple and relative conditions of existence, conditions whose diversity means that, mathematically, there cannot be two identical things throughout the universe, because if they were really identical in all, or in other words, if they were perfectly coincidental in the full extent of their understanding, they would obviously not be two separate things, but one and the same thing.

We can therefore say, in particular, that it is impossible for two different individuals to have two absolutely similar initiations, even from the external and ritual point of view, and, *a fortiori*, from the point of view of the internal work of the initiate. The unity and immutability of the principle in no way demands the uniformity and immobility, which are in any case unrealizable for external forms, and this allows, in the practical application which must be made according to the expression and transmission of the initiatic teaching, reconciling the two notions, which are so often wrongly opposed, of tradition and of progress, but recognizing a purely relative character of the latter. It is only the external translation of the initiatic instruction and its assimilation by this or that individuality which are susceptible to modifications, and not the instruction envisaged in itself; indeed, insofar as such a translation is possible, it must necessarily take relativities into account, whereas what it expresses is independent in the ideal universality of its essence, and it can obviously not be a question of progress from a point of view which includes all the possibilities in the simultaneity of a single synthesis.

Initiatic education, external and transmissible in forms, is and can only be a preparation of the individual to receive the true initiatic instruction by the effect of his own personal work. We can thus indicate to him the path to follow, the plan to realize, and arrange it to acquire the mental and intellectual attitude necessary for the intelligence of the initiatic conceptions; we can still assist and guide him by controlling his work in a constant way, but that is all, because no one else, even a Master in the fullest sense of the word, can do this work for him. What the initiate must necessarily acquire on his own, because no one or anything

external to him can communicate it to him, is precisely what escapes him by his very nature of profane curiosity, which is to say the effective possession of the initiatic secret itself. But for him to be able to achieve this possession in all its extent and with all that implies, the teaching that serves as a sort of base and support for his personal work must have unlimited possibilities, and thus enable him to extend his conceptions indefinitely, instead of confining them within the more or less narrow limits of a systematic theory or of any dogmatic formula.

Now, this being established, how far can this teaching go when it extends beyond the first phases of the initiatic preparation with the external forms which are most especially attached to it? Under what conditions can it exist as it should be to fulfill the role assigned to it and effectively assist those who participate in it, provided only that they themselves are capable of reaping the benefits? How are these conditions realized by the various organizations with an initiatic character? Finally, to what extent do the hierarchies of such organizations correspond in actual initiation? There are so many questions that it is hardly possible to deal with in so few words, and all of which would deserve to be amply developed, without it being possible, by doing so, to provide something other than a theme for reflection and meditation, and without having the vain pretention of exhausting a subject that is expanding and deepening more and more as one advances in one's study, precisely because who studies it with the necessary dispositions of mind, it opens up truly unlimited conceptual horizons.



## The 'Religion' of a Philosopher

*La « religion » d'un philosophe, January 1934.*

We are not used to paying attention to manifestations of profane 'thought,' so we should not have read the recent book by Mr. Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, and still less would we have spoken of it had we not been informed that it was on things which are normally not the responsibility of a philosopher. In fact, the author talks about 'religion,' 'mysticism,' indeed even of 'magic;' we must say at once that this is not one of those things which can be accepted as the idea they are, rather it is the custom of the philosophers to divert the words from their meanings to tune with their particular conceptions.

First, with respect to religion,<sup>374</sup> the origins of the thesis which M. Bergson backs are not mysterious and are very simple in their essence; it is quite astonishing that those who spoke about his book do not seem to have noticed this. We know that all the modern theories in this regard have in common the attempt to reduce religion to something purely human, which amounts to denying it, consciously or unconsciously, since it is to refuse to consider what forms its very essence, which is precisely the 'non-human' element. As a whole, these theories can be reduced to two types: the 'psychological' one, which pretends to explain religion by the nature of the human individual, and the other 'sociological,' which wishes to see it as an exclusively social thing, the product of a kind of 'collective unconsciousness' that dominates individuals and imposes itself on them. The originality of Mr. Bergson is that he has sought to combine these two kinds of explanations: instead of viewing them as more or less exclusive of each other, as their respective supports usually do, he accepts them both at the same time by relating them to different things, but nevertheless designated by the same word 'religion;' the 'two sources' he envisions are nothing other than this in reality. There are two types of religions for him, one 'static' and the other 'dynamic,' which, oddly enough, he also calls 'closed religion' and 'open religion;' the first is of a social nature, the second of a psychological nature; naturally, it is it where his preferences led and that which he considers as the

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<sup>374</sup> We leave aside what relates to morality, which does not interest us here; naturally, the explanation proposed in this respect is parallel to that of religion.

superior form of religion, we say this, because it is quite obvious that in a 'philosophy of becoming' such as his, it cannot be otherwise. In fact, such a philosophy admits no immutable principle, which is the very negation of metaphysics; putting all reality into change, he considers that, whether in doctrines or in external forms, that which does not change responds to nothing real, and even prevents man from grasping reality as he conceives it. But, it will be said, if one denies that there are immutable principles and 'eternal truths,'<sup>375</sup> we must logically refuse all values, not only metaphysics, but also in religion; this is indeed what happens, for religion in the true meaning of the word is what Mr. Bergson calls 'static religion,' and in which he only wishes to see an imaginary 'fabulation;' as for his 'dynamic religion,' it is not religion at all.

This so-called 'dynamic religion' does not even have any characteristic elements that constitute the very definition of religion: no dogmas, since this is immutable and, as Mr. Bergson says, 'frozen;' no rites, of course, for the same reason, and also because of their social character; both must be left to 'static religion,' and, as far as morality is concerned, Mr. Bergson started by setting it aside as something that does not fit into religion as he sees fit. Then there is nothing left, or at least there remains only a vague 'religiosity,' a sort of confused aspiration towards an 'ideal' of some kind, in fact it is quite close to that of the modernist and liberal Protestants which also recalls, in many ways, the 'religious experience' of William James. It is this 'religiosity' that Mr. Bergson takes for a higher religion, thus believing to 'sublimate' religion when he has emptied it of all of its content, because there is nothing in this which is compatible with his conceptions; besides, it is undoubtedly all that can be extracted from a psychological theory, for we have never seen that such a theory has proved itself capable of going beyond 'religious sentiment,' which, once again, is not religion.

The 'dynamic religion,' in Mr. Bergson's eyes, finds its highest expression in 'mysticism,' seen through its worst side, because he does not exalt it except for what benefits the 'individual,' which is to say vaguely, inconsistently, and somehow 'anarchically,'<sup>376</sup> what pleases him about the mystics, let us say it clearly, is their tendency towards rambling... As for what constitutes the very basis of mysticism, which is to say, whether we like it or not, its attachment to a 'static religion,' he obviously views

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<sup>375</sup> It should be noted that M. Bergson seems to avoid even using the word 'truth,' and that he almost always substitutes it with 'reality.'

<sup>376</sup> It is astonishing that Mr. Bergson does not cite, as one of the most accomplished specimens of his 'dynamic religion,' the 'teachings' of Krishnamurti; it would be difficult to find something more exact in what he means.

it as negligible; we also feel that there is something that bothers him because his explanations on this point are rather embarrassing. What may seem curious from a 'non-Christian' is that, for him, 'complete mysticism' is that of the Christian mystics, indeed, he forgets a little too easily that these are Christians before they are mystic; or, at least to justify them as Christians, he unduly poses mysticism at the very origins of Christianity. To establish a kind of continuity in this regard between it and Judaism, he succeeds in transforming the Jewish prophets into 'mystics,' obviously, he has not slightest idea of the character of the mission of the prophets and the nature of their inspiration... Now, if Christian mysticism, no matter how distorted the conception of it, is for him the very type of mysticism, the reason for this is very easy to understand: it is because there is hardly any mysticism other than that one, and perhaps even mysticism itself is, deep down, something specifically Christian. But this too escapes Mr. Bergson, who tries to discover before Christianity, 'sketches of the future mysticism,' whereas it is totally different; there are some pages on India which bear witness to an incredible incomprehension! There are also the Greek mysteries, and here the approximation is reduced to a very bad play on words; moreover, Mr. Bergson is forced to confess himself that "most mysteries have nothing mystical about them;" but then why does he speak of it under this term? As to what these mysteries were, it is the most 'profane' representation that they can be; ignorant of everything relating to initiation, how could he understand that there was there, as well as in India, something which at first was in no way religious, and which went on incomparably beyond his 'mysticism,' and even beyond authentic mysticism? But then how could a philosopher understand that he should, like all ordinary mortals, refrain from talking about what he does not know?<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Mr. Alfred Loisy wished to reply to Mr. Bergson and support against him that there is only one 'source' of morality and religion. As a specialist in the 'history of religions,' he prefers the theories of Frazer to those of Durkheim, and also the idea of a continuous 'evolution' to that of an 'evolution' by abrupt mutations; to our eyes, all this is exactly the same, but it is at least a point on which we must give him ground, which he certainly owes it to his ecclesiastic education: thanks to it, he knows the mystics better than Mr. Bergson, and he points out that they have never had the slightest suspicion of something resembling the 'vital impetus;' obviously, Mr. Bergson wished to make 'Bergsonians' before the term came into existence, which is hardly in keeping with the simple historical truth; Mr. Loisy is also astonished to see Joan of Arc ranked among the mystics... - Let us note, because it is good to record, that his book opens with a very amusing admission: "The author of this pamphlet," he declares, "has no particular inclination for questions of a purely speculative order." This is at least a

If we return to the 'static religion,' we see that Mr. Bergson accepts, on its so-called origins, all the nonsense of the 'sociological school,' including the most questionable gossip: 'magic,' 'totemism,' 'taboo,' 'mana,' 'animal cult,' 'spirit cult,' 'primitive mentality,' nothing is missing from all the usual 'junk,' if it is permissible to express oneself as such... Perhaps what belongs to him in his own right is the role he assigns in all this to a so-called 'fabulous function,' which seems to us much more truly 'fabulous' than what it serves to explain, but it is necessary to imagine some theory which makes it possible to deny en bloc all real foundations which one agrees to treat as 'superstitions,' a 'civilized' philosopher, what is more, a philosopher 'of the twentieth century,' obviously considers that any other attitude would be unworthy of him!

We stop only on one point, that which concerns 'magic;' this is a great resource for some theorists, who probably do not know what it is very well, but who wish to draw out religion and science at the same time. This is not precisely the position of Mr. Bergson: seeking a 'psychological origin' for magic, he makes it into "the externalization of a desire whose heart is filled," and he claims that "if we reconstruct, by an introspective effort, the natural reaction of man to his perception of things, we find that magic and religion are held together, and that there is nothing in common between magic and science." It is true that there is some wavering: if we take a certain point of view, "magic is obviously part of religion;" but, from another point of view, "religion is opposed to magic;" what is clearer is the assertion that "magic is the opposite of science," and that 'far from preparing the coming of science, as has been claimed, it was the great obstacle against which methodical knowledge had to struggle.' All this is exactly the opposite of the truth: as we have explained quite often, magic has absolutely nothing to do with religion, and it is not the origin of all sciences, but simply a particular science among others, and, more precisely, an experimental science, but Mr. Bergson is no doubt convinced that there can be no other sciences than those enumerated by modern 'classifications'... Speaking of 'magical operations' with the assurance of something who has never seen one, he writes this amazing phrase: "If the primitive intelligence had begun here by conceiving of principles, it would soon have gone to experience, which would have proved its falsity." We admire the intrepidity with which this philosopher, shut up in his cabinet, denies 'a priori' all that does not fit within the framework of his theories! How can he believe that men were foolish enough to have repeated indefinitely, even without 'principles,' 'operations' that would never have succeeded? What would he say if it

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rather laudable frankness; since it is he who says so, and quite spontaneously so, we readily believe him at his word!

happened that, on the contrary, “experience demonstrated the falsity” of his own assertions? Obviously, he does not even conceive that such a thing is possible; such is the strength of preconceived ideas, in him and his ilk, that they do not even doubt for a moment that the world is strictly limited to the measure of their conceptions.

Now it happens that this is truly remarkable: it is that magic is cruelly avenging itself of the negations of Mr. Bergson; reappearing in its most base and rudimentary form, under the disguise of ‘psychic science,’ it succeeds in being admitted by him without recognizing it, not only as real, but as playing a vital role for the future of his ‘dynamic religion!’ We do not exaggerate anything: he speaks of ‘survival’ just like a vulgar spiritist, and he believes in an ‘experimental deepening’ that makes it possible “to conclude the possibility and even the probability of a survival of the soul,” however without being capable of saying if it is ‘for a time or forever’... But this unfortunate restriction does not prevent him from proclaiming in a dithyramb: It does not take any more to convert into a living and active reality a belief in the afterlife that seems to run across most men, but which remains mostly verbal, abstract, and ineffective... In truth, if we were sure, absolutely sure of survival, we could not think of anything else.” Ancient magic was more ‘scientific’ and had no such pretensions; it was necessary for some of its most elementary phenomena to give rise to such interpretations, to await the invention of spiritualism, to which the deviation of the modern mind alone could give birth, and it is indeed the theory of spirituality, pure and simple, that Mr. Bergson, like William James before him, accepts with a ‘joy’ which ‘pales in all pleasures’... and who fixes us on the degree of discernment of which he is capable: in fact, ‘superstition,’ there was never anything better! That is where his book ends; we cannot, certainly, wish for a better proof of the nothingness that is all this philosophy!

## The Holy Grail

*Le Saint Graal*, February 1934.

Mr. Arthur Edward Waite recently published a work on the legends of the Holy Grail,<sup>378</sup> imposing in its size and the amount of research it represents, and in which all those interested in this question can find a very complete and methodical account of the contents of the many texts relating to it, as well as the various theories that have been proposed to explain the origin and meaning of these very complex and sometimes contradictory legends in some of their elements. It must be added that Mr. Waite did not intend to do any scholarly work, and it should also be praised, because we are entirely of his opinion regarding the value of any work that does not pass beyond this point of view, and whose interest can only be 'documentary;' he wished to identify the real and 'inner' meaning of the symbolism of the Holy Grail and the 'quest.' Unfortunately, we must say that this side of his work is that which seems to be the least satisfactory; the conclusions it reaches are rather disappointing, especially if one thinks of all the work done to reach it, and this is the point on which we would like to make a few observations, which will quite naturally be related to questions which we have already dealt with on other occasions.

We believe it is not insulting to Mr. Waite to say that his work is somewhat *one-sighted*; should we translate this into French as 'partial?' This may not be strictly accurate, and in any case we do not mean to say that it should be so; rather, there is something of the defect which is so common in those who, having 'specialized' in a certain order of studies, are inclined to reduce everything to it, or to neglect that which cannot be reduced. That the legend of the Grail is Christian is certainly not questionable, and Mr. Waite is right to say so; but does this necessarily prevent it from being something else at the same time? Those who are conscious of the fundamental unity of all traditions will see no incompatibility, but Mr. Waite, for his part, wishes to see this as something specifically Christian, thus being closed in a traditional form, whose links with other forms, precisely because of its 'inner' aspect, seems to escape him. It is not that he denies the existence of elements from another source,

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<sup>378</sup> *The Holy Grail, its legends and symbolism*; Rider and Co., London, 1933.

one probably prior to Christianity, because it would go against the obvious, but he gives it only a very slight importance, and he seems to regard them as 'accidental,' as having been added to the legend 'from the outside,' simple because of the milieu in which it was developed. These elements are regarded by him as belonging to the so-called *folklore*, not always by disdain as the word may suggest, but rather to satisfy a kind of 'fashion' of our time, without always being aware of the intentions involved in it; it may be useful to dwell on this point a little further.

The very conception of *folklore*, as it is usually understood, rests on a radically false idea, the idea that there are 'popular creations,' spontaneous products of the mass of people; we immediately see the close relationship of this view with 'democratic' prejudices. As has been rightly said, "the profound appeal of all popular traditions lies in the fact that they do not have a popular origin,"<sup>379</sup> we will add that, if it is, as is almost always the case, traditional elements in the true sense of the word, so distorted, diminished, or fragmented as they sometimes may be, and things having a real symbolic value, all this, far from being of a popular origin, is not even of a human origin. What can be popular alone is the fact of 'survival,' when these elements belong to vanished traditional forms; in this respect the term *folklore* takes on a meaning quite similar to that of 'paganism,' taking into account only the etymology of the latter, less with the 'polemic' and injurious intention. The people thus preserve, without understanding it, the remains of ancient traditions, sometimes even going back to a past so remote that it would be impossible to determine it, and we are content to report, for this reason, the obscure domain of 'prehistory;' it fulfills in this the function of a kind of collective memory which is more or less 'subconscious,' whose content has obviously come from elsewhere.<sup>380</sup> What may seem astonishing is that, when one goes to the essence of things, one finds that what is thus preserved contains, in a more or less veiled form, a considerable amount of esoteric data, which is to say, everything that is less popular in essence; this fact itself suggests an explanation that we will confine ourselves to indicating in a few words. When a traditional form is about to be extinguished, its last representatives may very willingly entrust, to the collective memory of which we have just spoken, what otherwise would be lost without return; it is the only way to save what can be saved to some degree, and, at the same time, the natural incomprehension of the mass is a sufficient guarantee that what possessed an esoteric character will not be stripped

<sup>379</sup> Luc Benoist, *La Cuisine des Anges, une esthétique de la pensée*, p. 74.

<sup>380</sup> This is an essentially 'lunar' function, and it should be noted that, according to astrology, the popular mass corresponds to the Moon, which at the same time indicates its purely passive nature, incapable of initiative or spontaneity.

of it, but will only remain, as a kind of testimony of the past, for those, in other times, will be able to understand it.

That being said, we do not see why it is attributed to *folklore*, without further examination, all that belongs to traditions other than Christianity, which alone is an exception; such seems to be the intention of Mr. Waite, when he accepts this denomination for the 'pre-Christian' and particularly Celtic elements which are encountered in the legends of the Grail. There is no privileged traditional form in this respect; the only distinction to be made is that of extinct forms and those which are now alive, and therefore the whole question would be whether the Celtic tradition had really ceased to live when they form the legends in question. This is at least questionable: on the one hand, this tradition may have lasted longer than what is commonly believed, with an organization which is more or less hidden, and, on the other hand, these legends themselves may be older than the 'critics' think, not that there were necessarily texts which are lost today, which we do not believe any more than Mr. Waite does, but by an oral transmission that may have lasted several centuries, which is far from being an exceptional fact. We see here the mark of a 'junction' between two traditional forms, one old and the other new, the Celtic tradition and the Christian tradition, a junction by which what was preserved from the first was incorporated in the second, probably changing to a certain extent in its external form by adaptation and assimilation, but not by transposing itself to another plane, as Mr. Waite would have it, for there are equivalences between all the regular traditions; there is much more than just a question of 'sources,' in the sense that scholars understand it. It may be difficult to specify exactly where and when this junction took place, but it has only a secondary and almost historical interest; it is also easy to conceive that these things are of those that leave no trace in written 'documents.' Perhaps the 'Celtic Church' or the 'Culdean Church' deserves, in this regard, more attention than Mr. Waite seems willing to grant it; its very name could be interpreted, and there is nothing improbable about the fact that there is something behind it which is of another order, no longer religious, but initiatic, because, like all that relates to the links existing between the different traditions, what is involved here is necessarily the initiatic or esoteric domain. Exoterism, whether religious or otherwise, never goes beyond the limits of the traditional form to which it belongs; what goes beyond these limits as such cannot belong to a 'church,' but it can only be its external 'support,' and this is a point on which we will have the opportunity to return later.

Another observation, more particularly concerning symbolism, is also essential: there are symbols that are common to the most diverse and



distant forms of tradition, not as a result of 'borrowing' which, in many cases would be impossible, but because they actually belong to the Primordial Tradition of which these forms are all directly or indirectly derived. This case is precisely that of the vase or cup; why is it only *folklore* when it comes to 'pre-Christian' traditions, whereas in Christianity alone it would essentially be a 'Eucharistic' symbol? It is not the assimilations envisaged by Burnouf or by others who are here to reject, but rather the 'naturalistic' interpretations that they wished to extend to Christianity as to all the rest, and which are valid nowhere. We should therefore do exactly the opposite of what Mr. Waite does, who, stopping at external and superficial explanations, which he accepts with confidence as long as it is not about Christianity, seeing radically different and unrelated meanings where there are only more or less multiple aspects of the same symbol or its various applications; no doubt it would have been otherwise if he had not been constrained by his preconceived idea of a kind of heterogeneity of Christian in relation to other traditions. Similarly, Mr. Waite quite rightly rejects, with regards to the legend of the Grail, theories which call upon so-called 'gods of vegetation,' but it is regrettable that it is much less clear with regards to the ancient Mysteries, which never had anything in common with this 'naturalism' which is an entirely modern invention. The 'gods of vegetation' and other similar stories have never existed except in the imagination of Frazer and his ilk, whose anti-traditional intentions are not doubted.

In truth, it also seems that Mr. Waite is more or less influenced by a certain 'evolutionism;' this tendency is betrayed in particular when he declares that what matters is much less the origin of the legend than the last state to which it has subsequently arrived, and he seems to believe that there must have been, from one stage to the next, a kind of progressive improvement. In reality, if it is something that has a truly traditional character, everything must be on the contrary from the beginning, and later developments only make it more explicitly, without adding new elements from without. Mr. Waite seems to admit a kind of 'spiritualization,' by which a higher meaning could have been grafted onto something that did not have it in the first place; in fact, it is rather the opposite that generally occurs, and this is a little too reminiscent of the profane views of 'historians of religion.' We find, with regard to alchemy, a very striking example of this kind of reversal: Mr. Waite thinks that material alchemy preceded spiritual alchemy, and that it only appeared with Khunrath and Jacob Boehme; if he knew certain Arab treatises much earlier than these, he would be obliged, even if he stuck with written documents, to modify this opinion, and besides, since he recognizes that the language used is the same in both cases, we could ask him how he can

be sure that, in this or that text, it is only material operations. The truth is that we have not always felt the need to expressly declare that it was something else, which must, on the contrary, be veiled precisely by the symbolism put into use; if it has happened later that some have declared it, it was especially in the presence of degeneration due to the fact that there were then people who, ignorant of the value of the symbols, took all literally and in an exclusively material sense: they were the 'blowers,' the precursors to modern chemistry. To think that a new meaning can be given to a symbol which does not possess in itself, is almost to deny symbolism entirely, because it is to make it artificial, if not entirely arbitrary, and any case purely human. In this order of ideas, Mr. Waite goes so far as to say that everyone finds in a symbol that which he finds in himself, so that his signification would change with the mentality of each epoch; here we recognize the 'psychological' theories dear to many of our contemporaries, were we not right to speak of 'evolutionism?' We have said it often, and we cannot repeat it enough: every true symbol carries its multiple meanings in itself, and that from the beginning, because it is not constituted as such by virtue of a human convention, but by virtue of the 'law of correspondence' which connects all the worlds to each other; whereas, while some see these meanings, others do not see them or see only a part of them, they are none the less contained within, and the 'intellectual horizon' of each makes all the difference. Symbolism is an exact science, not a reverie where individual fantasies can be given free rein.

Therefore, we do not believe in things of this order, 'the invention of poets,' which Mr. Waite seems disposed towards; these inventions, far from concentrating on the essential, only conceal it, voluntarily or not, enveloping it in the deceptive appearances of any 'fiction.' Sometimes they conceal it all too well, because when they become too invasive, it ends up becoming almost impossible to discover the profound and original meaning; is it not so that, among the Greeks, symbolism degenerated into 'mythology?' This danger is especially to be feared when the poet himself is not conscious of the true value of the symbols, for it is evident that this case may occur; the apologue of 'the ass bearing relics' applies here as in many other things, and the poet, then, will play a role analogous to that of the profane people without knowingly conserving and transmitting initiatic data, as we said above. The question arises here in particular: were the authors of the Grail sagas in the latter case or, on the contrary, were they aware of the deeper meaning in one degree or another of what they were expressing? It is certainly not easy to answer with certainty, because, again, appearances can be an illusion: in the presence of a mixture of insignificant and incoherent elements, one is

tempted to think that the author did not know what he was talking about, nevertheless, it is not necessarily so, for it has often happened that the obscurities and even the contradictions were precisely desired as such, and that the useless details are expressly intended to mislead the attention of the layman, in the same way as a symbol may be intentionally concealed in a more or less complicated ornamental pattern; especially in the Middle Ages, example of this kind are abound, even if it is just among Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore.' The fact that the higher meaning is less apparent in Chrétien de Troyes, for example, than in Robert de Borron, does not necessarily prove that the former was less aware of it than the latter; still less would it be necessary to conclude that this meaning is absent from his writings, which would be an error comparable to that which consists in attributed to the former alchemists only what concerns the material, for the sole reason that they have not thought to write in letters that their science was actually of a spiritual nature.<sup>381</sup> Moreover, the question of the 'initiation' of the authors of the sagas may be less important than one might think at first sight, since it does not change the appearances under which the subject is present in any case; since it is an 'externalization' of esoteric data, but in no way a 'polarization,' it is easy to understand that it must be so. We will go even further: a layman may even, for such an 'externalization,' have served as a 'spokesperson' for an initiatic organization, which will have chosen him for this purpose simply for his qualities as a poet or writer, or for any other contingent reason. Dante wrote in perfect knowledge of the facts; Chrétien de Troyes, Robert de Borron, and many others were probably far less aware of what they were saying, and perhaps not even some of them were; it does not really matter, for if there was an initiatic organization behind them, whatever it may be, the danger of a distortion due to their misunderstanding was thereby removed, this organization being able to guide them constantly without them even suspecting it, either through some of its members providing them with the elements to be implemented, or by suggestions or influences of another kind, more subtle and less 'tangible' but no less real or effective. It will be easy to understand that this has nothing to do with the so-called poetic 'inspiration,' as the modern ones understand it, and which is in reality only pure and simple imagination, nor with 'literature,' in the profane sense of the word; we will immediately add that it is no more a matter of 'mysticism,' but this last point touches indirectly on other questions, which we will consider in the second part of this study.

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<sup>381</sup> If Mr. Waite believes, as it seems, that some things are too 'material' to be consistent with the existence of a higher meaning in which they are encountered, we could ask him what he thinks of, for example, Rabelais and Boccaccio.

## The Holy Grail II

*Le Saint Graal II*, March 1934.

It does not seem doubtful to us that the origins of the legend of the Grail must be related to the transmission of traditional elements of the initiatic order from Druidism to Christianity; this transmission having been made regularly, and no matter through which modes, these elements were from then on an integral part of Christian esoterism, we agree with Mr. Waite on this second point, but we must say that the first seems to have escaped him. The existence of Christian esoterism in the Middle Ages is an absolutely certain thing; proofs of every kind are abound, and the denials of modern incomprehension, whether from partisans or adversaries of Christianity, can do nothing to change this fact. We have had enough opportunity to talk about this issue so that it need not be emphasized here. But even among those who admit the existence of this esoterism, there are many who make it into an inaccurate conception, and such appears to be the case of Mr. Waite, judging by his conclusions; there are confusions and misunderstandings that are important to dispel.

First, observe that we say 'Christian esoterism' and not 'esoteric Christianity;' it is not a special form of Christianity, it is the 'inner' side of the Christian tradition, and it is easy to understand that there is more than just a simple nuance. Moreover, when it is necessary to thus distinguish in a traditional form two faces, one exoteric and the other esoteric, it must be understood that they do not relate to the same domain, so that there can be no conflict or opposition between them; in particular, when exoterism is of a specifically religious character, as is the case here, the corresponding esoterism, while taking it as a base and support, has in itself nothing to do with the religious domain and is in a totally different order. It immediately results that this esoterism can in no way be represented by 'Churches' or 'sects' which, by definition, are always religious and therefore exoteric; this is another point which we have already dealt with in other circumstances and is therefore enough for us to only briefly recall. Certain 'sects' may have arisen from a confusion between the two domains, and from an erroneous 'externalization' of esoteric data that is poorly understood and misapplied, but the true initiatic organizations, keeping strictly on their own ground, remain necessarily foreign to such deviations, and their 'regularity' even obliges them to recognize only

what presents a character of orthodoxy, even in the exoteric order. We are therefore assured that those who wish to link 'sects' to esoterism or initiation are wrong and can only go astray; there is no need for further examination to rule out any such hypothesis, and if we find in some 'sects' elements which appear to be of an esoteric nature, it must be concluded, not that they had their origin therein, but, on the contrary, that they have been diverted from their true meaning.

That being so, certain apparent difficulties are immediately resolved, or, to be more precise, we notice that they are non-existent: thus, there is no need to ask what the situation may be in relation to Christian orthodoxy understood in the ordinary sense, to a line of transmission outside the 'apostolic succession,' such as the one of which is in question in some versions of the Grail legend; if it is an initiatic hierarchy, the religious hierarchy can in no way be affected by its existence, moreover, it does not even have to know of it 'officially,' if it can be said, since it itself has legitimate jurisdiction only in the exoteric domain. Similarly, when it comes to a secret formula in relation to certain rites, there is, frankly, an odd naïvety to wonder whether the loss or omission of this formula is likely to prevent the celebration of the mass and its validity; mass, as it is, is a religious rite and this is an initiatic rite. Each is worth its own order, and even if both have a 'Eucharistic' character in common, this does not change this essential distinction, any more than the fact that the same symbol can be interpreted at the same time from both the exoteric and esoteric points of views prevents them from being entirely distinct and from referring to totally different domains; whatever might sometimes be the external resemblances, which are explained by certain correspondences, the scope and purpose of the initiatic rites are quite different from those of religious rites. All the more, there is no need to inquire whether the mysterious formula in question could not be identified with a formula used in this or that Church possessing a more or less special ritual; first, as long as it is about orthodox Churches, the variants of the ritual are quite secondary and can in no way relate to something essential; secondly, these various rituals can never be other than religious, and as such they are perfectly equivalent, the consideration of one or the other does not bring us any closer to the initiatic point of view; useless research and discussion would be spared if we were fixed upon the principles above all things!

Now, the fact that the writings concerning the Grail legend are emanated, directly or indirectly, from an initiatic organization does not mean that they constitute a ritual of initiation, as some people have rather oddly supposed; it is curious to note that this hypothesis has never been made, to our knowledge at least, for works which more clearly describe

an initiatic process, such as the *Divine Comedy* or the *Roman de la Rose*, it is quite obvious that not all writings that are esoteric are rituals. Mr. Waite, who rightly rejects this assumption, points out the improbabilities: in particular, the fact that the alleged recipient would have a question to ask, instead of having to answer the question of the initiator as usually takes place, and we might add that the divergences which exist between the different versions are incompatible with the character of a ritual, which necessarily has a fixed and definite form. But how does all this prevent the legend from being attached, in any other respect, to what Mr. Waite calls *Instituted Mysteries*, which we more simply call initiatic organizations? It is because they have an idea that is much too narrow and inaccurate in more than one way: on the one hand, he seems to conceive of them as something almost exclusively 'ceremonial,' which, let us remark by the way, is a way of seeing that is quite typically Anglo-Saxon; on the other hand, following a common error, he regards them as more or less 'societies,' while if some of them have come to take such a form, it is only the effect of a kind of modern degeneration. He has undoubtedly experienced, by direct experience, a good number of these pseudo-initiatic associations which are now common in the West, and, despite seeming to have been rather disappointed, he has nonetheless remained influenced by what he saw in one specific sense: we mean that, failing to clearly perceive the difference between authentic initiation and counter-initiation, he wrongly attributes characters comparable to those of the counterfeits he has been in contact with to true initiatic organizations, and this misunderstanding leads to other consequences, directly affect, as we shall see, the positive conclusions of his study.

In fact, it is clear that anything of an initiatic order can in no way fit into a framework as narrow as that of 'societies' constituted in the modern way, but precisely where Mr. Waite does not find anything that resembles his 'societies' near or far, he is lost, and he comes to admit the fantastic assumption of an initiatic that can exist outside any organization and any regular transmission; we cannot do better here than to refer to the articles we have previously devoted to this question. Apart from the so-called 'societies,' he apparently sees no other possibility than that of a vague and indefinite thing which he calls the 'Secret Church' or the 'Inner Church,' according to expressions borrowed from mystics such as Eckartshausen and Lopoukine, and in which even the very word 'Church' indicates that one is, in fact, returned purely and simply to the religious point of view, perhaps by one of those more or less aberrant varieties in which mysticism tends to develop spontaneously as soon as it escapes the control of rigorous orthodoxy. Effectively, Mr. Waite is still one of those, unfortunately so numerous today, who, for various reasons,

confuse mysticism and initiation; he comes to speak somehow indifferently to one or the other of these two things, incompatible with each other as they are, as if they were synonymous. What he believes to be initiation ultimately resolves itself as a mere 'mystic experience,' and we wonder whether he really does not conceive of this 'experience' as something 'psychological,' which would bring us back to a level even lower than that of mysticism understood in its proper meaning, because the true mystic states are already entirely outside the realm of psychology, despite all the modern theories of the kind whose most famous representative is William Jones. As for the interior states whose realization is of the initiatic order, they are neither psychological states nor even mystic states; they are something much more profound, and at the same time they are not of those things of which we cannot say where they come from or what they are, but rather they imply an exact knowledge and a precise technique. Sentimentality and imagination no longer hold the slightest part here. To transpose the truths of the religious order into the initiatic order is not to dissolve them in the clouds of any 'ideal;' it is, on the contrary, to penetrate the deepest and most 'positive' meaning at the same time, by removing all the clouds which arrest and limit the intellectual view of ordinary humanity. To tell the truth, in a conception such as that of Mr. Waite, it is not transposition that is involved, but at most, if you will, a kind of prolongment or extension in the 'horizontal' sense, since all that is mysticism is included in the religious domain and does not go beyond it; in order to go beyond it, something other than aggregation to a 'Church' labelled as 'Inner' is needed above all, as it seems, because it has only an 'ideal' existence, which, translated in clearer terms, amounts to saying that it is in fact only a dream organization.

There cannot really be the 'secret of the Holy Grail,' nor any other initiatic secret; if we want to know where this secret lies, we must refer to the very 'positive' constitution of the spiritual centers, as we have indicated quite explicitly in our study on *The King of the World*. In this respect, we will confine ourselves to pointing out that Mr. Waite sometimes touches on things whose scope seems to elude him: this is how he sometimes speaks of 'substituted' things, which may be symbolic words or objects, but this may refer either to the various secondary center as images or reflections of the Supreme Center, or to the successive stages of 'obscuration' which occurs gradually, in accordance with the cyclic laws, in the manifestation of these same centers in relation to the exterior world. Besides, the first of these two cases returns in a certain way to the second, since the very constitution of the secondary centers, corresponding to the particular traditional forms, whatever they may be, already marks an initial degree of obscurity vis-à-vis the Primordial Tradition; in

fact, the Supreme Center is no longer in direct contact with the exterior, and the link is maintained only through the secondary centers. On the other hand, if one of these disappears, one can say that it is in away resorbed in the Supreme Center, of which it was only an emanation; moreover, here again there are degrees to be observed: it may happen that such a center becomes only more hidden and more closed, and this fact may be represented by the same symbolism as its complete disappearance, any distance from the exterior being at the same time, and to an equivalent extent, a return to the Principle. We wish to refer here to the symbolism of the final disappearance of the Grail: whether it has been taken to Heaven, according to certain versions, or has been transported to the 'Kingdom of Prester John,' according to others, it means precisely the same thing, which Mr. Waite hardly seems to suspect.<sup>382</sup> It is always the same withdrawal from the exterior to the interior, because of the state of the world at certain times, or, to speak more precisely, of that portion of the world that is related to the traditional form in question; this withdrawal applies here only to the esoteric side of the tradition, the exoteric side being, in the case of Christianity, remaining without apparent change, but it is precisely on the esoteric side that the effective and conscious links with the Supreme Center are established and maintained. The fact that something subsists, but the traditional form remains vivified necessitates that it remains invisibly in some way; if it were otherwise, it would amount to saying that the 'spirit' has entirely withdrawn from it and there remains only a dead body. It is said that the Grail was no longer seen as before, but it is said that no one saw it anymore; certainly, in principle at least, it is always present for those who are 'qualified,' but, in fact, these have become more and more rare, to the point of constituting only a minute exception, and since the time when it is said that the Rose-Cross retreated to Asia, whether literally or symbolically, what possibilities to achieve effective initiation can still be found before them in the Western world?

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<sup>382</sup> From the fact that a letter attributed to Prester John is obvious apocryphal, Mr. Waite claims to conclude that it is nonexistent, which is a very odd argument; the question of the relationship of the legend of the Grail with the Order of the Temple is treated by him in a way that is hardly less perfunctory; it seems that he has, unconsciously, no doubt, a certain hurry to dismiss these as too significant and irreconcilable with his 'mysticism,' and, in general, the German versions of the legend seems to us to deserve more consideration than he grants them.



## Initiation and Crafts

*L'initiation et les métiers, April 1934.*

We have often said that the 'profane' conception of the science and the arts, as is now prevalent in the West, is a very modern thing and implies a degeneration from a previous state in which both had a very different character. The same thing can be said also of crafts, and the distinction between arts and crafts, or between 'artist' and 'artisan,' is also specifically modern, as if it were born of this profane deviation and is only made meaningful through this fact. For the ancients, the *artifex* is the man who exercises an art or craft; in fact, it is neither the artist nor the artisan in the sense that these words have today, it is something more than both, because, originally at least, the activity is attached to principles of a much more profound order.

In every traditional civilization every activity of man, whatever it may be, is always considered as deriving essentially from principles, in this way it is 'transformed,' one might say, and instead of being reduced to what it is as a mere outward manifestation (which is the profane point of view), it is integrated into the tradition and constitutes, for the one who accomplishes it, a means of effectively participating in the tradition. This is even the case from the simple exoteric point of view: for example, if we consider a civilization such as the Islamic civilization, or the Christian civilization of the Middle Ages, nothing is easier than to realize the 'religious' character in the most ordinary acts of existence. This is because religion is not something that occupies a separate place without any relation to everything else, as it is to modern Westerners (for those at least who still consent to admit religion); on the contrary, it permeates the whole existence of the human being, or, to put it better, everything that constitutes this existence, and in particular the social life is found as encompassed in its domain, so that in such conditions there can be nothing 'profane' except for that which, for one reason or the other, are outside the tradition, and whose case represents only a simple anomaly. Elsewhere, where there is nothing to which the name 'religion' properly applies, there is none the less a traditional and 'sacred' legislation which, while having different characters, fulfills the same exact role; these considerations may therefore apply to any traditional civilization without exception. But there is still something more: if we move from exoterism

to esoterism (we use these words here for convenience, although they are not equally appropriate in all cases), we find, very generally, the existence of an initiation related to crafts that takes them as a base; it is therefore that these crafts are still capable of a superior and more profound meaning, and we would like to indicate how they can actually provide a path to the initiatic domain.

What best allows us to understand it is the notion of what the Hindu doctrine calls *swadharma*, that is, the fulfillment by each being of an activity conforming to its own nature, and it is also by this notion, or by its absence, that the defect of the profane conception is most clearly marked. Indeed, in this conception a man may adopt any profession, and he can even change it at will, as if this profession were something purely outside him, without any real connection with what he really is, with what makes him himself, and with what does not make himself something else. In the traditional conception, on the contrary, everyone must normally fulfill the function for which he is destined by his very nature, and he cannot fulfill another without there being serious disorder, which will have repercussions on the whole social organization of which he is a part; moreover, if such a disorder becomes generalized, it will come to have effects on the cosmic milieu itself, all things being linked together according to rigorous correspondences. Without further insisting on this last point, which might easily be applied to the conditions of the present age, we will point out that the opposition of the two conceptions may, at least in a certain relation, be reduced to that of the 'qualitative' point of view and a 'quantitative' point of view: in the traditional conception, it is the essential qualities of beings that determine their activity; in the profane conception, individuals are only considered as interchangeable 'units,' as if they were, in themselves, devoid of any quality of their own. This latter conception, which is clearly close to the modern ideas of 'equality' and 'uniformity' (the latter being literally the reverse of true unity, because it implies the pure and 'inorganic' multiplicity of a kind of social 'atomism') can logically only lead to the exercise of a purely 'mechanical' activity, in which there is no longer anything strictly human, and that is indeed what we can see nowadays. It must be understood then that the 'mechanical' crafts of the moderns, being only a product of profane deviation, cannot in any way offer the possibilities of which we are speaking here; to tell the truth, they cannot even be considered as crafts, if we wish to restrict this word to its traditional meaning, which is the only one that interests us at present.

If the craft is something of the man himself, as a manifestation or expansion of his own nature, it is easy to understand that he could, as we said earlier, serve as a basis for an initiation and it is even best suited for

this purpose in most cases. Indeed, if the initiation is essentially to exceed the possibilities of the human individual, it is none the less true that it can take as a starting point only this individual as he is; hence the diversity of the initiatic ways, which is to say, in short, the means implemented as 'supports,' in conformity with the difference of the individual natures, this difference intervening all the less after the beings advances further in his path. The means thus employed can only be effective if they correspond to the very nature of the beings to which they apply, and since it is necessary to proceed from the most accessible to the least accessible, from the exterior to the interior, it is normal to take them into the activity by which this nature manifests itself externally. But it goes without saying that this activity can play such a role only in so far as it really reflects the interior nature; there is thus a real question of 'qualification,' in the initiatic sense of the term, and, under normal conditions, this 'qualification' should be required for very exercise of the craft. At the same time, this affects the fundamental difference between initiatic and profane education: what is simply 'learned' from the outside is without any value here; what is at stake is 'awakening' the latent possibilities the being has within itself (and this is, fundamentally, the true meaning of Plato's 'reminiscence').

We can still understand, by these last considerations, how initiation, taking the craft as 'support,' will have at the same time, and somehow conversely, a repercussion on the exercise of this craft. The being, having fully realized the possibilities of which his professional activity is only an external expression and thus possessing the effective knowledge of what is the very principle of this activity, will consciously accomplish what was firstly an entirely 'instinctive' consequence of his nature; so, if the initiatic knowledge is born of the profession for him, this, in turn, will become the field of application of this knowledge, from which he can no longer be separated. There will then be a perfect correspondence between the interior and the exterior, and the work produced may be, not only the expression to some degree and in a more or less superficial way, but the truly adequate expression of the one who conceived and executed it, which will constitute the 'chef-d'œuvre' in the true sense of the word.

This, we see, is far from the so-called unconscious, or subconscious if you will, 'inspiration' in which the modern ones wish to see the mark of the true artist, while looking at it as superior to the artisan, following the more than questionable distinction which they have become accustomed to. Artist or artisan, he who acts under such an 'inspiration' is only a layman in any case; it undoubtedly shows that he carries with him certain possibilities, but as long as he has not really become aware of them,

even if he reaches what is known as 'genius,' that will not change anything, and without being able to control these possibilities, his successes will be only accidental, which is commonly recognized by saying that 'inspiration' is sometimes lacking. All that can be said, in order to assimilate the case which real knowledge intervenes in, is that the work which, consciously or unconsciously, truly flows from the nature of the person executing it, will never give the impression of a more or less painful effort, which always entails some imperfection, because it is an abnormal thing; on the contrary, it will draw its very perfection from its conformity with nature, which will imply in an immediate and necessary way, its exact adaptation to the end for which it is destined.

If we now wish to more strictly define the domain of what we can call the initiation of crafts, we will say that they belong to the order of the 'lesser mysteries,' referring to the development of the possibilities which properly belong to the state of the human being, which is not the ultimate goal of initiation, but at least obligatorily constitutes the first phase. In fact, it is necessary that this development must first be accomplished in its entirety, to then allow the being to go beyond the human state, but, beyond this, it is obvious that the individual differences, on which these initiations of crafts are based, disappear entirely and can no longer play any role. As we have explained on other occasions, the 'lesser mysteries' lead to the restoration of what traditional doctrines refer to as the 'primordial state,' but, as soon as the being has reached this state, which still belongs to the domain of human individuality (and which is the point of communication of it with the higher states), the differentiations which give rise to the various 'specialized' functions have disappeared, although all these functions also have their common source which is indeed a question of returning to the full possession that is involved in the exercise of any function.

If we contemplate the history of mankind as taught by traditional doctrines, in accordance with cyclic laws, we must say that, originally, man having full possession of his state of existence, naturally had the possibilities corresponding to all the functions prior to any distinction. The division of these functions occurred at a later stage, representing a state already inferior to the 'primordial state,' but in which each human being, while having only certain definite possibilities, spontaneously had the effective consciousness of these possibilities. It was only in a period of greater obscuration that this consciousness became lost, and from then on initiation became necessary to allow the man to find, with this consciousness, the previous state which was inherent; this is indeed the first of its goals, the one it proposes most immediately. To be possible, this implies a remontant transmission, by an uninterrupted 'chain,' to the

state which is a question of restoration, and thus, from near to far, to the 'primordial state' itself; still, initiation does not stop there and the 'lesser mysteries' being only the preparation for the 'greater mysteries,' which is to say, taking possession of the higher states of being we must go back even beyond the origins of humanity. Indeed, there is no true initiation, even at the most inferior level, even at the most inferior and elementary level, without the intervention of a 'non-human' element, which is, according to what we have exposed previously in other articles, the 'spiritual influence' communicated regularly by the initiatic rite. If this is so, there is obviously no need to look 'historically' at the origin of initiation, a question which appears from then on as meaningless, nor at the origins of the crafts, arts, and sciences, envisaged in their traditional and 'legitimate' conception, because all, through multiple, but secondary, differentiations and adaptations derive from the 'primordial state,' which contains them all in principle, and hence they are connected to other orders of existence, beyond humanity itself, which is necessary so that they can effectively contribute to the realization of the plan of the Great Architect of the Universe each in their own ranks and according to their own measures.

## ‘Verbum, Lux, and Vita’

« *Verbum, Lux et Vita* », May 1934.

During our recent study on *Kundalini-Yoga*,<sup>383</sup> we have been lead to point out the close connection which exists between sound and light from the cosmogonic point of view; we recalled in speaking of this association, and even the identification established, at the beginning of the Gospel of Saint John, between the terms *Verbum*, *Lux*, and *Vita*. We propose to develop this information on this point, without however claiming to treat completely the subject which it touches, directly or indirectly, with a multitude of other more or less complex questions, as one can easily see from a study, however brief it may be, of what relates to it in the different traditional doctrines.

We know that the Hindu doctrine affirms the primordiality of sound among the sensory qualities, as corresponding to Ether among the elements, but, at the same time, this affirmation, thus enunciated, immediately refers to the corporeal world, it is likely to be transposition into other domains, for it translates the very process of universal manifestation with regards to this corporeal world which is only a simple case. If we consider this in its entirety, this same affirmation becomes the production of all things, in any state whatsoever, by the Divine Verb or the Divine Word, which is thus at the commencement or the principle of every manifestation. This is also expressly stated at the beginning of the Hebrew *Genesis*, and we see that the first uttered word, as the starting point of the manifestation, is the *Fiat Lux*, by which the chaos of possibilities is illuminated and organized; this precisely establishes the direct relation which exists, in the principal order, between what can be designated analogically as sound and light, which is to say in sum, what sound and light are as respective expressions in our world.

Here, it is necessary to make an important remark: the word ‘*amar*’, which is used in the Biblical text, and which is usually translated as ‘to say,’ has for its principle meaning in Hebrew, as in Arabic, that of ‘to command’ or ‘to order;’ the Divine Word is the ‘order’ (‘*amr*’) by which the creation is effected, which is to say, the production of the universal manifestation. Also according to the Islamic tradition, the first creation

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<sup>383</sup> See the November 1933 issue of *Voile d’Isis*.

is that of Light (*An-Nūr*), which is also called *min amrillāhī*, resulting directly from the divine commandment, and this creation is situated, so to speak, in the 'world,' which is to say, the state or degree of existence, which for this reason is also called 'ālam al-'amr, and which is properly speaking the 'spiritual world.' Indeed, the intelligible Light is the essence (*dhāt*) of the 'Spirit' (*Ar-Rūh*), and this, when considered in the universal sense, identifies with the Light itself; this is why the terms *An-Nūr al-Muḥammadī* and *Ar-Rūh al-Muḥammadīyyah* are equivalent, both denoting the principal and total form of the 'Universal Man,'<sup>384</sup> who is 'āwwal *khalqillāhī*, 'the first of the divine creation.' This is the true 'Heart of the World,' whose expansion produces the manifestation of all beings, while its contradiction finally brings them back to their Principle, and so he is both 'the First and the Last' (*Al-'Awwal wa Al-'Akhīr*) in relation to the creation, as *Allāh* Himself is 'the First and the Last' in the absolute sense. 'Heart of hearts and Spirit of spirits' (*Qalb al-qulūbī wa Rūh al-'arwāh*), it is in its midst that the particular 'spirits,' the angels (*al-mala'ikah*) and the 'separate spirits' (*al-'arwāh al-mujarradah*), which are thus formed of the Primordial Light as their only essence, without a mixture of the elements representing the determining conditions of the lower degrees of existence.<sup>385</sup>

If we now continue to the more particular consideration of our 'world,' which is to say the degree of existence to which the human state belongs, we must find there, as 'center,' a principal corresponding to this 'Universal Heart' and which is somehow only the specification in relation to the state in question. It is in this principle that the Hindu doctrine designates as *Hiranyagarbha*: it is an aspect of *Brahma*, which is to say, the Word that produces the manifestation, and at the same time it is also 'Light,' as indicated by the designation *Taijasa* given to the subtle state which constitutes its own 'world,' and of which it contains in itself all possibilities.<sup>386</sup> It is here that we find the third of terms we mentioned at the beginning: this Cosmic Light, for the beings manifested in this domain, and in conformity with their particular conditions of existence, appear as 'Life;' *Et Vita erat Lux hominum*, the Gospel of Saint John says exactly in this sense. *Hiranyagarbha* is therefore, in this regard, the 'vital

<sup>384</sup> See *The Symbolism of the Cross*, ch. 6.

<sup>385</sup> It is easy to see that what we are dealing with here can be identified with the field of the supra-individual manifestation.

<sup>386</sup> See *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta*, ch. 14. – In the very name *Hiranyagarbha*, the luminous nature is clearly indicated, for the light is symbolized by gold (*Hiranya*), which is itself 'mineral light,' and which corresponds, analogously, among metals, to the sun among the planets, and we know that the sun is also one of the figures of the 'Heart of the World.'

principle' of this whole world, and that is why it is called *jiva-ghana*, the word *ghana* indicates that we find here the 'global' principal form of which we speak above, so that the 'Life' appears as an image or a reflection of the 'Spirit' at a certain level of manifestation;<sup>387</sup> this same form is still that of the 'Egg of the World' (*Brahmanda*), of which *Hiranyagarbha* is the vivifying 'germ.'

In a certain state, corresponding to this first subtle mode of the human order which constitutes the world of *Hiranyagarbha*, the being feels itself like a wave of the 'Primordial Ocean,' without it being possible to say whether this wave is a sound vibration or a light wave; in reality, it is both at once indissolubly united in principle, beyond any differentiation which occurs only at a later stage in the development of manifestation. We speak here analogically, of course, because it is obvious that in the subtle state there can be no question of sound and light in the ordinary sense, which is to say, as sensory qualities, but only of what they proceed respectively, furthermore, the vibration or the undulation, in its literal sense, is only a movement which, as such, necessarily implies the conditions of space and time which are peculiar to the domain of the corporeal existence; the analogy is none the accurate and it is the only possible mode of expression here. The state in question is therefore directly related to the very principle of life;<sup>388</sup> it is found as an image in the essential manifestations of organic life itself, both in the pulsations of the heart and in the alternative movements of respiration, and we will indicate, without being able to insist upon it at this point, that this is the true foundation of the many applications of the 'science of rhythm.' This naturally includes the *mantra-vidya*, which corresponds here to the 'sonic' aspect, and, on the other hand, the 'luminous' aspect appears more particularly in the *nadis* of the 'subtle form' (*sukshma-sharira*), we can see without difficulty the relation of all this to the dual nature of *Kundalini*, who, at the same time, lies in the human being as a 'life force.'<sup>389</sup> Thus we find the three terms *Verbum*, *Lux*, and *Vita*, are inseparable from each other at the very principle of the human state, and on this point, as on

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<sup>387</sup> This remark may help to define the relations between the 'spirit' (*ar-rūh*) and the 'soul' (*an-nafs*), which is properly the 'vital principle' of each particular being.

<sup>388</sup> In the Islamic tradition, this refers more specifically to the aspect or attribute expressed by the divine name *Al-Ḥayy*, which is usually translated as 'the Ever-Living,' but which could be rendered more accurately as 'the Vivifier.'

<sup>389</sup> We will recall here again the close relationship that exists in symbolism between the serpent, which is represented by *Kundalini*, and the 'Egg of the World,' to which we alluded a moment ago regarding *Hiranyagarbha*.



all others, we find the perfect agreement of the different traditional doctrines, which are only the various expressions of the one Truth.

## Initiatic Death

*De la mort initiatique*, June 1934.

The question regarding what is called 'initiatic death,' like almost all those of this order, seems very little understood by those of our contemporaries who claim to be dealing in these things; thus, when speaking on this we often encounter an expression such as 'fictitious death,' which testifies to the most complete incomprehension. Those who thus express themselves evidently see only the exteriority of the rite and have no idea of the effects it must produce on those who are truly 'qualified;' otherwise, they would realize that this 'death,' far from being 'fictitious,' is on the contrary, even more real than death understood in the ordinary sense of the word, because it is obvious that the layman who dies does not become initiated by that, and the distinction between the profane order and the initiatic order is, in fact, the only one that goes beyond the contingencies inherent in the particular states of being and which, consequently, have a profound and permanent value from a universal point of view. We will be content with recalling in this regard, all traditions insist on the essential difference which exists in the posthumous states of the human being according to whether it is the profane or the initiate; if the consequences of death, taken in its usual sense, are thus conditioned by this distinction, it is therefore that the change that gives access to the initiatic order corresponds to a higher degree of reality.

It is understood that the word 'death' must be taken here in its most general sense, according to which we can say that any change of state, whatever it may be, is both a death and a birth, according to whether it is considered from one side or the other: death in relation to the antecedent state, birth to the consequent state. Initiation is generally described as a 'second birth,' which it is indeed, but this 'second birth' necessarily implies death to the profane world and follows immediately in a certain way, since these are only two sides of the same change of state. As for the symbolism of the rite, it will be based on the analogy that exists between all the changes of state; due to this analogy, death and birth in the ordinary sense symbolize initiatic death and birth, the images borrowed from them being transposed by the rite into another order of reality. In this connection, it should be remarked that any change of state must be

regarded as being accomplished in the darkness, which gives the explanation of the symbolism of the color black in relation to this question:<sup>390</sup> the candidate for initiation must pass through complete darkness before entering the 'True Light.' It is in this phase of darkness that what is referred to as the 'descent into the underworld' takes place, which we have discussed extensively elsewhere:<sup>391</sup> it is, one may say, a sort of 'recapitulation' of the antecedent states, by which the possibilities of the profane domain will be definitively exhausted, so that the being can then freely develop the possibilities of the higher order that he carries within him, and whose realization properly belongs to the initiatic domain.

On the other hand, since similar considerations are applicable to any change of state, and the subsequent and successive degrees of initiation naturally correspond also to changes of state, we can say that there will still be for each accession a death and birth, although the 'disconnect,' if it is allowed to be expressed as such, is less clear and of less fundamental importance than for the first initiation, which is to say, for the passage from the profane order to the initiatic order. Moreover, it goes without saying that the changes undergone by the being during its development are truly in an indefinite multitude; the initiatic degrees conferred ritually, in any traditional form whatsoever, can therefore only correspond to a sort of general classification of the main stages to be covered, and each of them can summarize an entire ensemble of secondary and intermediate stages. But it is in this process a more particularly important point, where the symbolism of death must appear once again in a most explicit way, and this still requires some explanation.

The 'second birth,' understood as corresponding to the first initiation, is what one may properly call a 'psychic regeneration,' and it is indeed in the psychic order, which is to say, in the order which the subtle modes of the human being are situated, that the first phases of the initiatic development must take place; these do not constitute an end in themselves, and they are only preparatory for the realization of possibilities of a higher order, we mean of the spiritual order in the true meaning of this word. The point of the initiatic process to which we have just alluded is therefore that which will mark the transition from the psychic order to the spiritual order, and this passage may be regarded more especially as constituting a 'second death' and a 'third birth.'<sup>392</sup> It should be added that this 'third birth' will be instead represented as a 'resurrection' than as an ordinary birth, because it is no longer a 'beginning' in the same sense as

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<sup>390</sup> This explanation is also appropriate for the phases of the Hermetic 'Great Work,' which strictly correspond to those of initiation.

<sup>391</sup> See *The Esoterism of Dante*.

<sup>392</sup> In Masonic symbolism, this corresponds to initiation into the rank of Master.

in the first initiation; the possibilities already developed and acquired once and for all, will have to be found after this passage, but 'transformed' in a way analogous to that of the 'glorious body' or the 'body of resurrection' which represent the 'transformation' of human possibilities, beyond the limiting conditions that define the mode of existence of individuality itself.

The question, thus reduced to its essentials, is overall rather simple; what complicates it is, as almost always happens, the confusions that one commits by mixing considerations that are actually related to something else. It is particularly the case with regards to the 'second death,' to which many attach a rather unfortunate significance, because they do not know how to make certain essential distinctions between the various cases in which this expression may be used. The 'second death,' according to what has just been said, is nothing but the 'psychic death;' this fact can be considered as likely to occur, more or less long after death for the ordinary man outside of any initiatic process, but then this 'second death' will not give access to the spiritual domain, and the being, coming out of the human state, will simply pass to another individual state of manifestation. This is a formidable possibility for the layman, who has every advantage in being maintained in what we have called the 'extensions' of the human state, which is, in all traditions, the main *raison d'être* for funerary rites. But it is quite different for the initiate, since the latter only realizes the possibilities of the human state in order to overcome it, and they must necessarily exist out of this state, without actually needed to wait for the dissolution of the corporeal appearance to pass to the superior states.

To not omit other possibilities, let us add that there is another adverse aspect of the 'second death,' which refers to 'counter-initiation;' indeed, the latter imitates true initiation in its phases, but its results are, in a way, at the opposite of it, and can in no way lead to the spiritual domain. When the being who follows this path arrives at the 'psychic death,' he finds himself in a situation not exactly similar to that of the layman, but even worse in some respects, because of the developments he has given to the possibilities of the subtle order; we will not insist on this anymore, for this is a case which can only be of interest from a very special point of view, and which, in any case, has absolutely nothing to do with true initiation. The fact of the 'black magicians,' as is commonly said, regard only themselves, and it would be useless to add fuel to the fantastic ravings which this subject gives rise all too often already. It is proper to deal with them only to denounce their misdeeds when circumstances require it, and to oppose them as far as possible; unfortunately, at a time like

ours, these misdeeds are oddly more extensive than those who have not had the opportunity to realize it directly.

## Alleged Empiricism of the Ancients

*Du prétendu « empirisme » des anciens, July 1934.*

We have already explained the fundamental difference existing between the nature of the sciences among the ancients and the moderns on many occasions, a difference which is that of the traditional sciences and the profane sciences; this is a question on which so many errors are so widespread that we cannot return to them with too much insistence. This is how we often see without any doubt that the science of the ancients was purely 'empiric,' which basically means that it was not even a science properly speaking, but only a kind of practical and utilitarian knowledge. On the contrary, it is easy to see that preoccupations of this order have never held so much room as among modern men, and without even going back further than so-called 'classic' antiquity, all that pertains to experimentation was regarded by the ancients as being able to constitute only a knowledge of a very inferior degree. We do not see how this can be reconciled with the previous statement; by an odd inconsistency, even those who formulate it almost never fail to reproach the ancients for their disdain of experience!

The source of the error in question, as a multitude of other errors, is the 'evolutionist' or 'progressive' conception: thereunder they wish that all knowledge begins in a rudimentary state, from which it would have developed and elevated little by little. They postulate a kind of crude primitive simplicity, which naturally cannot be the object of any observation, and they claim that everything is made from below, as if it were not contradictory to admit that the superior can emerge from the inferior. Such a conception is not merely an error but is properly a 'counter-truth'; by this we mean that it is exactly the opposite of the truth, by a strange reversal which is very characteristic of the modern spirit. On the contrary, the truth is that there has been since the beginning a sort of degradation or continual 'descent,' passing from spirituality to materiality, which is to say, from the superior to the inferior. Manifesting itself in all domains of human activity, and from which arose in relatively recent times, the profane sciences, separated from every transcendent principle, and justified solely by the practical applications to which they give rise, because this is, in sum, all that interests modern man, who cares little for pure knowledge, and who, speaking of the ancients as we have

just said, attributed to them their own tendencies,<sup>393</sup> because he cannot even conceive that they could be any different, any more than he cannot conceive that other sciences can exist in object and methods, other than those he himself exclusively cultivates.

This same error also implies that 'empiricism' understood in the sense that designates a philosophical theory, which is to say the very modern idea that all knowledge derives entirely from experience, and more precisely from the sensory experience; in fact, this is just another form of the affirmation that everything comes from below. It is clear that, apart from this preconceived idea, there is no reason to suppose that the first state of all knowledge must have been an 'empiric' state; this connection between the two meanings of the same word is certainly not fortuitous, and we could say that it is the philosophic 'empiricism' of the moderns that lead them to attribute to the ancients an 'empiricism' of fact. But we must admit that we have never been able to even understand the possibility of such a conception, so much does it seem to go against the obvious: that there is knowledge that does not come from the senses, it is there, pure and simple, a question of fact, but the moderns, who claim to rely only on facts, do not know or readily deny this when they disagree with their theories. In sum, the existence of this 'empiricist' conception simply proves, in those who have emitted it and in those who accept it, the complete disappearance of certain faculties of the supra-sensory order, starting, naturally, with pure intellectual intuition.<sup>394</sup>

Science as understood by the moderns, which is to say, the profane sciences, does not suppose anything in a general way other than the rational development of sensory data; it is therefore they who are truly 'empiric' in their starting point, and one could say that the moderns unduly confuse the starting point of their sciences with the origin of all science. Yet even in their sciences there are sometimes, like vestiges diminished or altered by ancient knowledge, whose real nature escapes them, and we think especially of the mathematic sciences, whose essential notions cannot be drawn from sensory experience; the efforts of certain philosophers to explain 'empirically' the origin of these notions are sometimes overwhelmingly comical! If some are tempted to protest

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<sup>393</sup> It is by an illusion of the same kind that the modern ones, because they are driven mainly by 'economic' motives, claim to explain all the historical events by relating them to causes of this order.

<sup>394</sup> The demise of these faculties as to their actual exercise, naturally they subsist in spite of everything in a latent state in every human being, but this kind of atrophy can reach such a degree that their manifestation becomes completely impossible, and this is what we see in the great majority of our contemporaries.

when we speak of diminishment or alteration, we will ask them to compare in this regard, for example, the traditional science of numbers to profane arithmetic; they will probably quite easily understand what we mean by that.

Moreover, most of the profane sciences really owe their origin only to debris or, one may say, the residues of traditional sciences not understood: we have cited elsewhere as particularly characteristic of this, the example of chemistry, it is not a question of true alchemy, but of its denaturation by the 'blowers,' which is to say by laymen who, unaware of the true meaning of the hermetic symbols, took them in a grossly literal sense. We have also mentioned the case of astronomy, which represents only the material part of ancient astrology, isolated from all that constituted the 'spirit' of this science, and which is irretrievably lost for the moderns, who repeat stupidly that astronomy was discovered, in a very 'empiric' way, by 'Chaldean shepherds,' without suspecting that the name of the Chaldeans was actually the designation of a sacerdotal caste! We could multiply examples of this kind and establish a comparison between sacred cosmogonies and the theory of the 'nebula' and other similar hypotheses, or, in another order of ideas, show the degeneration of medicine from its ancient dignity as the 'sacerdotal art,' and so on. The conclusion would always be the same: the profane illegitimately seized fragments of knowledge of which they could not grasp the scope or significance of, and they formed so-called independent sciences, which are just worth what they were worth themselves; modern science, which has originated from it, is therefore only the science of the ignorant.<sup>395</sup>

The traditional sciences, as we have said so often, are essentially characterized by their attachment to the transcendent principles, of which they strictly depend on as contingent applications, and this is the very opposite of the 'empiricism'; the principles necessarily escape the profane, and that is why they, even if they are modern scholars, can only ever be 'empirical.' As a result of the degradation to which we alluded previously, men are no longer all equally qualified for any knowledge, which is to say, since the beginning of the *Kali-Yuga*, there must be those who are profane; in order for the truncated and distorted science to be taken seriously and to attribute to it what it is not, it was necessary for true knowledge to disappear, which the initiatic organizations were in charge of preserving and transmitting it, and this is precisely what has happened in the Western world in recent centuries.

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<sup>395</sup> By a curious irony of things, the 'scientism' of our times is above all to proclaim itself 'secular,' without realizing that it quite simply there the explicit admission of this ignorance.



We will add again that, in the way that the moderns consider the knowledge of the ancients, we see clearly this negation of any 'suprahuman' element which forms the basis of the anti-traditional spirit, and which is, after all, a direct consequence of profane ignorance. Not only is everything reduced to purely human proportions, but because of this reversal of all things brought about by the 'evolutionist' conception, one goes as far as to put the 'infrahuman' as the origin. The most grave thing is that, in the eyes of our contemporaries, these things seem to be self-evident: they have come to express them as if they could not even be contested and the least founded hypotheses are presented as 'facts,' because one does not even have the idea that it could be otherwise; we say this is the most grave thing, because that is what may make us fear that, having reached such a point, the deviation of the modern spirit is not entirely irremediable.

These considerations may further help to understand why it is absolutely futile to try to reach any agreement or rapprochement between traditional knowledge and profane knowledge, and why the former does not have to ask the latter for 'confirmation' of which they do not even demand of themselves. If we insist on it, it is because we know how widespread this view is today among those who have some idea of traditional doctrines, but an 'external' idea, if we may say so, is insufficient to allow them to penetrate the profound nature of the traditional doctrines, as well as to prevent them from being deluded by the deceptive prestige of modern science and its practical applications. Thus placing on the same plane things which are by no means comparable, they waste not only their own time and effort, but they are still in danger of going astray and misleading others in all kinds of false conceptions; the manifold varieties of 'occultism' exist to show that this danger is all too real.

## Şūfism

*Le Soufisme*, August-September 1934.

Under the title *Islamic Sufism*, Sirdar Ikbāl Ali Shah has recently published a volume<sup>396</sup> which is not, as one may think, a more or less complete and methodical treatise on the subject, but rather a collection of studies, some of which relate to general questions, while others deal with more particular points, especially with regards to the most prevalent *ṭuruq* currently in India, such as the *Naqshbandīyyah* and the *Chishtīyyah*. Although these latter are the most interesting in this book, it is not our intention to dwell on them here, and we think it preferable to rather examine what touches more directly on the principles, which will, at the same time, be an occasion for us to recall and clarify indications that we have already given in various other circumstances.<sup>397</sup>

Firstly, the title itself calls for an observation: why *Islamic Sufism*, and is this not a kind of pleonasm? Assuredly, in Arabic one must say *taṣawwuf islāmī*, because the term *taṣawwuf* generally designates any doctrine of the esoteric or initiatic order, to whatever traditional form it is related; the word ‘Sufism,’ in Western languages, is not really a translation of *taṣawwuf*, it is simply a kind of conventional term forged specially to designate Islamic esoterism. It is true that the author explains his intention: he wanted, by adding the adjective ‘Islamic,’ to avoid any confusion with other things are sometimes also called ‘Sufism’ in ignorance; must we consider the abuse of words at this point, especially in a disordered period like one in which we live? It is certainly necessary to warn against theories and against organizations which unduly hang on to titles which do not belong to them, but, this precaution taken, nothing prevents the use of words taken in their normal and legitimate meaning; besides, if it were otherwise, it is without a doubt there would be few words that could still be used.

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<sup>396</sup> Rider and Co., editors, London.

<sup>397</sup> In order to not return to it, we will immediately criticize a detail, which has its importance: the transcription of the Arabic words in this book is very defective, especially in the quotations, they are almost always separated in a faulty way which makes them very difficult to understand; it is to be hoped that this defect will be carefully corrected in a later edition.

On the other hand, when the author declares that “there is no form of Sufism other than Islamic,” it seems to us that there is an equivocation: if he means to properly speak of ‘Sufism,’ this should go without saying, but if he means *taṣawwuf*, in the Arabic sense of the word, one must understand the initiatic forms existing in all traditional doctrines, and not only in Islamic doctrine. Even with such generality, this affirmation is true in one sense: any regular initiatic form, indeed, essentially implies, first and foremost, the consciousness of the Principle Unity, and, secondly, the recognition of the fundamental identity of all traditions, derived from a single source, and consequently, from the inspiration of all sacred books; at its essence, this is the strict equivalence of the two articles of the *shahādah*. Therefore, it may be said that *mutaṣawwuf*, whatever form he is attached to, is truly *Muslim*, at least implicitly. It suffices to hear the word *Islām* in all the universality it contains; no one can say that this is an illegitimate extension of its meaning, for then it would become incomprehensible that the *Qurʾān* itself applies this word to traditional forms earlier than what is more specifically called Islamic: in sum, it is, in its premier meaning, one of the names of the orthodox Tradition in all its forms, all of which proceed directly from prophetic inspiration, and the differences being due only to the necessary adaptation to the circumstances of time and place. Moreover, this adaptation only really affects the outer side, what we can call the *sharīʿah* (or what constitutes its equivalent); the inner side, or *ḥaqīqah*, is independent of historical contingencies and cannot be subject to such changes, it is through these means that, under the multiplicity of such forms, the essential unity subsists. Unfortunately, in the work in question, we do not find a sufficiently clear notion of the relation between *sharīʿah* and *ḥaqīqah* anywhere, or, if you like, exoterism and esoterism; when we see in some chapters doctrines and practices belonging to the most exoteric Islamism presented as if they properly belonged to ‘Sufism,’ we cannot help but fear that in the author’s mind, there is some confusion between the two domains which must always remain perfectly distinct, as we have often explained. The exoterism of a certain traditional form is, for its adherents, the indispensable support of esoterism, and the negation of such a link between one and the other only results in some more or less heterodox schools; but the existence of this relation does not prevent the two domains from being radically different: religion and legislation on the one hand, and initiation on the other, do not proceed by the same means and do not aim at the same end.

As for the origin of ‘Sufism,’ in the usual sense of this word, we fully agree with the author that it is properly Islamic and proceeds directly from the very teaching of the Prophet, to whom the authentic *silsilah*

ultimately leads back to. This means that anyone who really adheres to the tradition cannot accept the views of profane historians who claim to relate this origin to a foreign influence, Neo-Platonist, Persian, or Indian; this is another point that we have dealt with on several occasions, so that we do not have to insist on it now.<sup>398</sup> Even though some *turuq* have 'borrowed,' it would be better to say 'adapted,' some details of their particular methods (although the similarities may be explained by the possession of the same knowledge, especially in regards to the 'science' of rhythm' in its different branches), this is of only a secondary importance. Sufism is above all Arabic, and its form of expression, in all that is truly essential, is closely related to the constitution of the Arabic language, just as the Jewish *Qabbalah* is to the constitution of the Hebrew language; it is Arabic like the *Qur'ān* itself, in whom its direct principles are held, just as the *Qabbalah* has its own in the *Torah*. But in order to discover these principles, the *Qur'ān* must be understood and interpreted according to the *ḥaqā'iq*, and not simply by the linguistic, logical, and theological processes of the '*ulamā'* *az-ẓāhir* (literally 'learned from the exterior,' or doctors of the *sharī'ah*, whose competence extends only to the exoteric domain).

In this regard, it matters little whether the word *Ṣūfī* itself and its derivatives (*taṣawwuf*, *mutaṣawwuf*) existed in the language from its origin or appeared only later, which is still a great subject of discussion among historians; it may well have existed before the word, either under another designation or even without having felt the need to give it a name.<sup>399</sup> As far as the origin of this word is concerned, the question is perhaps insoluble, at least from the point of view where we place ourselves most habitually: we would readily say that it has too many supposed etymologies, none of which are either more or less plausible than the others, to really have one; the author enumerates a certain number, and there are still others which are more or less known. For our part, we see there a purely symbolic denomination, a kind of 'figure,' if you wish, which, as such, does not need to have a strictly linguistic derivation; in other traditions, one would find comparable cases (of course, to the extent where the constitution of the languages they use), without seeking further, the term 'Rose-Cross' is a rather characteristic example, and this is what certain initiations call 'covered words.' As for the so-called etymologies,

<sup>398</sup> In this connection, the author rightfully remarks that some of the most eminent Sufis, such as Muḥyiddīn ibn 'Arabī, 'Umar ibn Al-Fāriḍ, and without a doubt Dhūl-Nūn al-Miṣrī, never had any contact with Persia or India.

<sup>399</sup> In any case, whatever some may have said, there can be no equivalence between *zuhd* or 'asceticism' and *taṣawwuf*, the first can never be anything more than a simple means, and which is not always used for initiatic purposes.

they are in fact only linguistic similarities, which correspond to relations between certain ideas which thus come together more or less incidentally around the word in question; those who have knowledge of what we have said elsewhere about the very existence of a certain general phonetic symbolism cannot be surprised. But here, given the character of the Arabic language (a character which is in fact common to the Hebrew language), the first and fundamental meaning must be based on numbers; indeed, what is particularly remarkable is that the word *Ṣūfī* has the same number as *Al-Ḥikmah al-Ilahīyyah*, which is to say 'Divine Wisdom.'<sup>400</sup> The true *Ṣūfī* is therefore the one who possesses this Wisdom, or, in other words, he is *al-ʿarīf billāh*, which is to say 'he who knows God,' for He can only be known by Himself; whoever has not reached this supreme degree cannot be said to really be *Ṣūfī*, but only *mutaṣawwuf*.<sup>401</sup>

These last considerations give the best possible definition of *at-taṣawwuf*, in so far as it is permissible to speak here of a definition (for there can only be one properly when it is limited by its very nature, which is not the case with *at-taṣawwuf*); to finish, we should repeat all that we have said previously about initiation and its conditions, and we can do no better than to refer our readers to it. The formulas found in the most well-known treatises, some of which are quoted in the work to which we refer, cannot really be regarded as definitions, even with the reservation we have just expressed, because they do not directly reach the essential; they are only 'approximations,' so to speak, intended above all to provide a starting point for reflection and meditation, either by indicated the means and by hinting at the goal in a more or less veiled way, either by describing the external signs of the interior states attained to such and such degree of the initiatic realization. There are also a large number of enumerations or classifications of these degrees and states, but all of them must be taken as having only, in sum, a relative value, because there may be an indefinite multitude; we necessarily consider only the principal stages, which are 'typical' in a way, and which can also differ according to the points of view in which we place ourselves. Additionally, it should not be forgotten that there is, especially for the initial phases, a diversity which results from the individual natures, so that

<sup>400</sup> The total number given by the addition of the numerical values of the letter is, for both, 186.

<sup>401</sup> "The extent of abuse commonly given to the word Sufi is totally comparable to the case of the term Yogi, which is also properly designated to the one who has to the "Union", but that is customarily used equally to those who are still at a preliminary stage."

there can be no two cases which are strictly similar;<sup>402</sup> and this is why it is said that 'the ways to God are as numerous as the souls of men' (*at-turuqu ilallāhi ka-nufūsī banī 'Ādam*).<sup>403</sup> These differences are effaced only with 'individuality' (*al-annīyyah*, from *'anā*, 'me'), which is to say, when the higher states are attained, and when the attributes (*ṣifāt*) or *al-'abd* or of the creature (which are strictly limitations) disappear (*al-fanā* or 'extinction') to leave only those of *Allāh* (*al-baqa* or 'permanence'), being identified with those in his 'personality,' or 'essence' (*adh-dhāt*). In order to develop this more fully, the fundamental distinction between the 'soul' (*an-nafs*) and the 'spirit' (*ar-rūḥ*) should be particularly emphasized, which, oddly, the author of the book in question seems to ignore almost entirely, which brings a lot of vagueness to some of his exposes; without this distinction, it is impossible to truly understand the constitution of the human being, and, consequently, the different orders of possibilities that he carries within himself.

In relation to this final thing, we must also note that the author seems to delude himself about what can be expected from 'psychology'; it is true that he considers it differently from the present-day Western psychologists, and as likely to extend much further than they can suppose, in which he is completely right. Despite this, psychology, according to the etymology of its name, will never be anything other than *'ilm an-nafs*, and, by definition, all that is of the domain of *ar-rūḥ* will escape it. This illusion at its essence proceeds from an all too common tendency, which we unfortunately find other marks of in this book: the tendency, against which we have risen often, to wish to establish a sort of connection or concordance between traditional doctrines and modern conceptions. We do not see what use the quoting of philosophers who, even though they employ some apparently similar expressions, do not in reality speak of the same things; the testimony of the 'profane' cannot be worth anything in the initiatic domain, and the true 'Knowledge' has nothing to gain from these erroneous or superficial assimilations.<sup>404</sup> Nevertheless, taking into account the few observations we have made, it will

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<sup>402</sup> In exoteric Islamism itself, the impossibility of the existence of two beings of two things alike in all respects is frequently invoked as a proof of the omnipotence of God; indeed, this is the expression in theological terms of the infinity of the Universal Possibility.

<sup>403</sup> These particular paths are totalized in the "adamic" universality, just as human souls were, in virtuality, all present in Adam from the beginning of this world.

<sup>404</sup> What is curious is that the author seems to place 'psychology' above 'metaphysics'; he does not seem to suspect that all the philosophers designate by this latter name has nothing in common with true metaphysics, in the etymological sense of the word, and that this is none other than *at-taṣawwuf* itself.

certainly be of interest and of benefit to read this book, especially the chapters devoted to the more special questions of which we cannot think of giving even the slightest preview. Moreover, it must be understood that we must not demand of books, whatever they may be, any more than they can give; even those of the greatest Masters will never make somebody a *mutaṣawwuf* simply by reading them. They cannot provide either natural 'qualifications' nor an attachment to a regular *silsilah*, and if they can certainly bring about a development of certain possibilities in the person who is prepared for it, so to speak, only as an 'occasion,' because the true cause is always elsewhere in the 'world of the spirit;' we must not forget that, in the end, everything depends entirely on the Principle, before which all things are as if they were not:

*Lā 'ilāha 'illāllāh waḥdahū lā sharīkah lahu, lahu al-mulku wa lahu al-ḥamdu, wa huwa 'alā kulli shay'in qadīr!*

## Initiatic Organizations and Secret Societies

*Organisations initiatiques et sociétés secrètes,*  
October 1934.

We have often insisted on a point which we consider absolutely essential when speaking of initiatic organizations: such organizations totally differ in their very nature from all that we call 'societies' or 'associations,' who are defined by their external character which may be entirely lacking in initiatic organizations, and even if external characters are introduced to them they are always accidental and must be regarded only as the effect of a kind of degeneration or, if you will, a 'contamination,' in the sense that it is the adoption of profane or exoteric forms, without any real relation to the real purpose of these organizations. Therefore, it is quite wrong to identify 'initiatic organizations' and 'secret societies' together as is commonly done; as we have been asked from various sides to further specify the distinctions that should be made in this regard, we will return to it more explicitly, at the risk of repeating ourselves to dispel as much confusion as possible.

Firstly, it is quite obvious that the two expressions can in no way coincide in their application, for there are many kinds of secret societies, many of which certainly have nothing initiatic about them; it can be formed by the act of an individual leader without any traditional attachment, and for any purpose whatsoever, we will have to return to this later. On the other hand, and this is undoubtedly the primary cause of the error we have just recalled, if it happens that an initiatic organization accidentally takes the form of a society, it will necessarily be secret, in at least one of the meanings that we will ascribe to this word in such a case. In fact, it must be said that in common usage there are several meanings, which are quite different from each other and do not seem interrelated, attached to the expression 'secret societies,' hence the differences of opinion as to whether this designation is appropriate for a particular case. Some wish to restrict it to associations that conceal their existence, or at least the name of their members; others extent it to those which are simply 'closed,' or which keep the secret only in certain special forms,



ritualistic or not, which are adopted by them in certain means of recognition reserved for their members, or other such things of this kind. Naturally, the former will protest when the latter qualifies an association as secret when it is not within their own definition. We say 'protest' because, as is all too often, discussions of this kind are not entirely selfless: when the more or less openly declared opponents of any association say it secretly, rightly or wrongly, they manifest a polemic and more or less insulting intention, as if the secret could only have 'unspeakable' motives. It can even sometimes be discerned as a kind of barely disguised threat, in the sense that there is an intended allusion to the 'illegality' of such an association, for it is scarcely necessary to say that it is always on the 'social' ground, if not more precisely 'political,' in which such discussions are preferable. In these circumstances it is quite understandable that the members or supporters of the association in question endeavor to establish that the epithet 'secret' cannot truly be suitable for it, and for this reason they do not wish to accept the most limited definition, that which most obviously, cannot be applicable to it. It may be said generally that most discussions have no other cause than a want of understanding as to the meaning of the terms used; when any interests are at stake, as it happens here, behind this vergence in the use of word, it is very likely that the discussion may continue indefinitely without the adversaries ever coming to an agreement. In any case, the contingencies which intervene therein are certainly very far from the initiatic domain, the only one which concerns us; if we thought it necessary to say a few words, it is only to 'clear the ground' in a way, and also because that would be enough to show that, in all the quarrels pertaining to the secret societies or those which are so-called, it is not initiatic organizations which are involved, or at least it is not the character of these in questions, which would otherwise be impossible for other reasons more profound than the rest of our exposé will make better understood.

Placing ourselves entirely outside of these discussions, and from a point of view that can only be that of a completely disinterested knowledge, we can say this: an organization, whether or not it has the particular external forms that make it possible to define it as a society can be described as secret, in the broadest sense of the word and without attaching any adverse intention to, when that organization possesses a secret of whatever nature, and that it is so by necessity or by virtue of a more or less artificial and express convention. We believe this definition is broad enough to accommodate all possible cases, from that of the initiatic organization which is the furthest away from any external manifestation, to that of the mere societies of any purpose, political or otherwise, which have, as we said above, nothing initiatic about them. It is

therefore within the domain that each embraces, and basing ourselves as much as possible on its very terms, that we must make the necessary distinctions in a dual way, on the one hand between organizations which are societies and those which are not, and on the other hand between those which have an initiatic character and those which do not, because of the 'contamination' mentioned at the beginning these two distinctions do not precisely coincide; they would only coincide if the historical contingencies had not, in certain cases, led to the intrusion of profane forms into organizations which, by their origin and essential purpose, are incontestably initiatic in nature.

On the first of the two points we have just mentioned, it is not necessary to insist for long, because, besides the fact that which we have already spoken of it on various occasions, everyone knows well enough what a 'society' is, which is to say an organization that has statutes, regulations, meetings at fixed time and place, a register of its members, archives, records of its meetings, and other written documents, which are surrounded by an entire exterior encumbering apparatus. We repeat that all this is perfectly useless for an initiatic organization, which, in terms of exterior forms, needs nothing but a certain set of rites and symbols, which, like the teachings which accompany and explain them, must regularly be transmitted by oral tradition. We recall in this connection that, even if it sometimes happens that these things are put in writing, it can never be anything but a simple 'aide-memoire,' and this would not dispense with oral and direct transmission in any way, which is the only transmission that is valid, since only it allows for the communication of a 'spiritual influence,' which is the fundamental reason for any initiatic organization. A layman who knows all the rites by having read the descriptions in books would not be initiated into it: it is for this same reason that, according to the Hindu doctrine, a *mantra* learned in some way without being regularly communicated by a *guru* is devoid of all efficacy, because the 'spiritual influence' required to 'awaken' or 'vivify' him is totally lacking in such a case.

An immediate consequence of what we have just said is that an initiatic organization, so long as it does not take on the accidental form a society with all its external manifestation, is in some way 'elusive' to the profane world; it is easy to understand that it leaves no trace accessible to the investigations of ordinary historians, whose method has the essential character of referring only to written documents, which are non-existent here. On the contrary, any society, however secret it may be, presents itself 'outside' which is necessarily within the reach of the layman's research, and by which it is always possible that they come to know it to a certain extent even if they are unable to penetrate their more

profound nature. It goes without saying that this last restriction concerns initiatic organizations having taken such a form, or, we may say, degenerated into societies because of the circumstances and environment in which they are located; we will add that this phenomenon has never occurred as clearly as in the modern Western world, where it affects all that still exists of organizations that can claim an authentic initiatic character, even if, as we see all too often, this character in its current state comes to be unrecognized or misunderstood by most of its members themselves. We do not wish to look here for the causes of this misunderstanding, which are diverse and manifold; we will only point out that this form of society may well be such because, the exterior inevitably taking on a disproportionate importance in relation to its real value, the accidental ends up completely covering the essential, and the apparent similarities with profane societies can also give rise to many misconceptions about the true nature of these organizations.

We will give only one example of these misunderstandings, which touches more closely to the very essence of our subject, and which we have already indicated in a previous study: when it comes to a profane society, we can exit it just as we entered it, and then we find ourselves where we were before, purely and simple; a resignation or a radiation is enough for any link to be broken, this link obviously being of an entirely exterior nature and not implying any profound modification of the begin. On the contrary, once one has been admitted to an initiatic organization, whatever it may be, one can never, by any means, cease to be attached to it, since, as we have explained on other occasions, initiation is conferred once and for all and possesses a character that is truly ineffaceable: it's 'interior' order is a fact against which no administrative formality can do anything. But wherever there is a society, there are also administrative formalities, there may be resignations and cancellations, by which they cease to be a part of the society in question; one immediately sees the equivocation that will result from it if it represents nothing but the 'exteriority' of an initiatic organization. It would then be necessary, in all rigor, to make, in this regard, a distinction between societies and initiatic organizations as such; since the former is, as we have said, only a mere accidental and 'superimposed' form, the second of which, in itself and in all that constitutes its essence, remains entirely independent, the application of this distinction is actually much less different than it may seem at first glance.

Another consequence to which we are logically led to by these considerations is this: a society, even a secret society, can always be subject to attacks from outside, because in its constitution there are elements which situate, so to speak, at the same level as these outside powers; it

will thus be able to be dissolved by the action of a political power. On the contrary, the initiatic organization, by its very nature, escapes such contingencies, and no external force can suppress it; in this sense as well, it is truly 'elusive.' In fact, since the quality of its members can never be lost or removed from them, it preserves an effective existence as long as only one of them remains alive, and only the death of the last will lead to its disappearance; this very eventuality supposes that its authorized representatives will, for reasons of which they are the only judges, renounce to ensure the continuation of the transmission of which they are the depositories, and so the only possible cause of its suppression is necessarily within itself.

Finally, any initiatic organization is still 'elusive' from the point of view of its secret, the latter being such by nature and not by convention, and therefore cannot be penetrated by the profane in any case, a hypothesis which would imply in itself a contradiction, because the true initiatic secret is nothing but the 'incommunicable,' and initiation alone can give access to its knowledge. But this relates rather to the second of the first distinctions which we have indicated above, those which have an initiatic character and those which do not; we will have to return to it more fully in the second part of this study.

## **Initiatic Organizations and Secret Societies II**

*Organisations initiatiques et sociétés secrètes II,*

November 1934.

The distinction between the initiatic organizations and all other more or less secret organizations should be very easy to differentiate between the very purposes of each other, but, indeed, the question is more complex than it may seem at first glance. However, there is one case that cannot be doubted: when one finds oneself in the presence of a group constituted for any purpose and whose origin is entirely known, which is known to have been created from scratch by individualities whose names may be mentioned, therefore it has no traditional attachment, we can be assured that this grouping, whatever its pretensions, has absolutely nothing to do with the initiatic. The existence of ritual forms in some of these groupings does not change anything, for such forms, borrowed or imitated from initiatic organizations, are then a simple parody devoid of any real value. Moreover, this does not apply only to organizations whose purposes are solely political or more generally 'social,' in whatever sense can be attributed to that word, but also to all these modern formations which we have called 'pseudo-initiatic,' including those which invoke a trendy 'ideal' attachment to any tradition; we have already sufficiently explained this last point in previous articles, so that it is not necessary that we insist upon it further.

However, there may be doubt as soon as we are dealing with an organization whose origin is enigmatic and cannot be related to defined individualities; indeed, even if the organization's known manifestations obviously have no initiatic character, it may nonetheless represent a deviation or degeneration of something that was originally such. This deviation, which can occur under the influence of social preoccupations especially, supposes that the incomprehension of the first and essential goal has become general among the members of this organization; moreover, it can be more or less complete, and what still remains of initiatic organizations in the Occident, in its current state, represents an intermediary stage to some extent in this regard. The extreme case will be when

ritual and symbolic forms are preserved, however, no one will be conscious of their true initiatic character, so that one will interpret them only according to any contingent application: whether this is legitimate or not, that is not the question, degeneration properly consisting in the fact that nothing is contemplated beyond this application and the more or less external domain to which it especially relates. It is quite clear that in such a case, those who only see things 'from the outside' will be unable to discern what it is in reality and what distinguishes between such organizations and those we talked about in the first place, all the more so when they do not have the purpose for which they were artificially created, consciously at least, both can thus be in more or less direct contact and even sometimes end up intermingling in an inextricable way.

To give a better understanding of what we have just said, we shall cite the example of two organizations which, externally, may appear to be quite comparable with each other, however they differ distinctly in their origins, so that they respectively return to each of the categories we have just distinguished: the Illuminati of Bavaria and the Carbonari. With regard to the former, the founders are known and we know how they have developed the 'system' of their own initiative, separate from any attachment to anything preexisting; it is also known by what successive states are passed through in the ranks and rituals, some of which were never practiced and existed only on paper. For everything was put in writing from the beginning and, as the ideas of the founders developed and became clearer, their very plan was thwarted by this fact, which, naturally, related exclusively to the social domain and did not exceed it in any respect. There can be no doubt that this is only the artificial work of a few individuals, and that the forms they adopted could only constitute a simulacrum or a parody of initiation, the traditional attachment being entirely lacking as the truly initiatic goal was never their concern. On the contrary, if we consider Carbonarism, we can see, on the one hand, that it is impossible to assign to it a 'historic' origin of this kind, and, on the other hand, that its rituals clearly present a character of an 'initiation of crafts,' as such being related to Masonry and the Compagnonnage, but, while they have always kept a certain awareness of their initiatic character, though diminished by the intrusion of concerns of the contingent order and the increasing share that has been attributed to them, it seems (though one can never be absolutely affirmative in this regard, a small number of members can always be an exception to the general misunderstanding without making it known) that Carbonarism has finally pushed the degeneration to the extreme, to the point of being nothing more in reality than a simple association of political conspirators

of which we know of their actions in the nineteenth century. The Carbonari then mingled with other associations of recent foundation and which had nothing initiatic about them, while, on the other hand, many of them belonged to Masonry at the same time, which can be explained both by the original affinity of the two organizations and by a certain relative degeneration of Masonry itself, going in the same direction as Carbonarism. As for the Illuminati, their relations with Masonry had a very different character: those who entered it did so only with the firm intention of acquiring a preponderating influence and using it as an instrument for realization of their particular designs; speaking in passing, we can see how many who claim to make the Illuminati themselves a 'Masonic' organization. Let us add still that the ambiguity of this appellation 'Illuminati' must in no way be an illusion: it was taken only in a strictly 'rationalist' sense, and we must not forget that, in the eighteenth century, the 'enlightenment' had in Germany a significance roughly equivalent to that of philosophy' in France; that is to say, we could not conceive of anything more profane or even more formally contrary to any initiatic spirit.

Let us upon a parenthesis about this last remark: if it happens that 'philosophic' and more or less 'rationalist' ideas infiltrate into an initiatic organization, we must see here only the effect of an individual (or collective) error of its members, due to their inability to understand its true nature, and therefore to guarantee itself of any profane 'contamination'; naturally, this error in no way affects the very principle of the organization, but it is one of the symptoms of this degeneracy of fact which we have spoken of, whether it has reached a more or less advanced degree. We will say the same regarding 'sentimentalism' and 'moralism' in all their forms, things which are no less profane by their very nature; moreover, the rest is, in general, more or less closely linked to a predominance of social occupations; it is especially so when these come to take a specifically 'political' form, in the narrowest sense of the word, that the degeneration risks becoming almost irremediable. One of the strangest phenomena of this kind is the penetration of 'democratic' ideas into Western initiatic organizations (and, naturally, we think especially here of Masonry, or at least some of its parts), without their members seeming able to perceive that there is a contradiction pure and simple, and even in a dual way: indeed, by definition, any initiatic organization is in formal opposition to the 'democratic' and 'egalitarian' conception first, in relation to the profane world, to which it constitutes, in the most precise sense of this term, a separate and closed 'elite,' and then within itself, by the hierarchy of grades and of functions which it necessarily established between its own members. Moreover, this phenomenon is only one of

the manifestations of the deviation of the modern Western mind, which extends and penetrates everywhere, even where it should meet irreducible resistance; this does not apply only to the initiatic point of view, but just as much from the religious point of view, which is to say, all that has a truly traditional character.

Thus, besides the organizations which have remained purely initiatic, there are those which, for one reason or another, have degenerated or deviated more or less completely, but which nevertheless remain initiatic always in their profound essence, however misunderstood it may be in their present state. Then there are those that are only counterfeits or caricatures, which is to say the 'pseudo-initiatic' organizations, and finally there are other organizations of a more or less secret nature, but which have no pretensions of this kind, and which proposes only aims which obviously have no relation to the initiatic domain. But it must be understood that, whatever appearances, the 'pseudo-initiatic' organizations are in fact just as profane as the latter, and that is why we have gathered them from the beginning to form only a single group, as opposed to initiatic organizations, either pure or 'contaminated' with profane influences. But to all this, we must add another category, that of the organizations that come under what we have called 'counter-initiation'; having sufficiently explained what is meant by this, we will limit ourselves to only mentioning them, otherwise our enumeration would present a serious deficiency, especially since the organizations in this category are certainly of far greater importance than would commonly be tempted to assume. We will only point out a new complication that results from their existence: in some cases they may have a more or less direct influence on profane organizations, especially the 'pseudo-initiatic'; hence another difficulty in exactly determining the real character of this or that organization; of course, we are not concerned here with the examination of particular cases, and it suffices for us to have indicated quite clearly the classifications which is to be established in a general manner.

However, that is not all: there are organizations which, while having in themselves only a goal of the contingent order, have a real traditional connection, because they proceed from initiatic organizations of which they are an emanation of some sort, and by which they are 'invisibly' directed, even though their apparent leaders are entirely unknown to it. This case, as we have already indicated elsewhere, is particularly to be found in the Far Eastern secret organizations: constituted only for a special purpose, these are generally only in existence temporarily, and they disappear without leaving a trace as soon as their mission is accomplished; they represent the last echelon in reality, and the outermost, of a hierarchy rising step by step to the most pure and inaccessible initiatic



organizations in the eyes of the profane organization. It is therefore no longer a matter of a degeneration of initiatic organizations, but of formations expressly desired by them, without themselves descending to this contingent level and mingling with the action exercised therein, and this for purposes which, naturally, are very different from all that a superficial observer can see or suppose. We will recall what we have already said on this subject, that the outermost of these organizations may sometimes be in opposition and even in struggle with each other, and nevertheless have a common direction or inspiration, this direction being beyond the domain where their opposition asserts itself and for which it is valid; perhaps this would also find its application elsewhere than in the Far East, although such a hierarchy of superimposed organizations is probably nowhere as clear and complete as in the Taoist tradition. Here we have organizations of a 'mixed' character, of which we cannot say that they are properly initiatic, nor are they merely profane, since their attachment to higher organizations confers on them an involvement, even if it is indirect and unconscious, to a tradition whose essence is purely initiatic; something of this essence is always found in their rites and symbols for those who know how to penetrate their most profound meaning.

All the categories of organizations which we have envisaged have only the fact of holding a secret in common, whatever the nature of it may be; it goes without saying that, from one to the other, it can be extremely different: between the true initiatic secret and a political design that is kept hidden, or the concealment of the existence of an association of names of its members for reasons of simple caution, there is obviously no possible comparison. Still, we are not speaking of these fanciful groupings, as there are so many in our day, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries, which in 'mimicking' the initiatic organizations, adopt forms that cover absolutely nothing, which are genuinely devoid of any scope or significance, over which they claim to keep a secret which is not justified by any serious reason. This last case is of interest only in that it shows quite clearly the mistake that is commonly made in the mind of the profane public, regarding the nature of the initiatic secret; it is imagined that it is simply about the rites, as well as the words and signs used as a means of recognition, which would make it a secret as external and artificial as any other secret, a secret which in sum would only be such by convention. Now, if such a secret exists in most initiatic organizations, it is nevertheless only a very secondary and accidental element, and, to tell the truth, it has only one symbolic value per its relation to the true initiatic secret, which itself is so by the very nature of things, and which

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consequently can never be betrayed in any way, being of a purely internal order and, as we have already said, residing properly in the 'incommunicable.' On this point, we think that some clear points will not be useless; it will therefore be the subject of a future article, which will complete the present exposé in this regard.

## Initiatic Secrecy

*Du secret initiatique*, December 1934.

As a follow-up to our previous articles, we must further clarify the true nature of initiatic secrecy, which is distinguished from all other types of external secrets that we encounter in the various organizations which, for this reason, are described as secret in the most general sense. Indeed, we have said that this qualification only means for us that such organizations possess a secret of whatever nature; we have already explained that, according to the purpose proposed by these organizations, this secret can relate naturally to the most diverse of things and take the most varied forms. In any case, any secret other than the properly initiatic secret always has a conventional character; by this we mean that it is only by virtue of an express agreement, and not by the very nature of things. On the contrary, the initiatic secret is such because it cannot be otherwise, being of a purely internal order and consisting exclusively of the 'inexpressible,' which, consequently, is necessarily also the 'incommunicable'; therefore it is absolutely independent of any convention, and thus, if the initiatic organizations are secret, this character is not artificial and does not result from any arbitrary decision on the part of anybody. This point is therefore particularly important to distinguish, on the one hand, the initiatic organizations from all other secret organizations of any kind, and on the other hand, from the initiatic organizations themselves, which constitutes the essential all that may accidentally be added to them; we must now focus on developing some of the consequences of this.

The first of these consequences, which we have already indicated before, is that, while any secret of the external order can always be betrayed, the initiatic secret alone can never be betrayed in any way, since, in itself and by definition, it is inaccessible and elusive for the profane and cannot be penetrated by them, its knowledge can only be the consequence of the initiatic itself. Indeed, this secret is of a nature such that words cannot express it; this is why, as we have explained on another occasion, initiatic teaching can only make use of rites and symbols, which it suggests instead of the ordinary sense of this word. Properly speaking, what is transmitted by initiation is not the secret itself, since it is communicable, but the 'spiritual influence' which takes the rites as 'vehicle,' and which makes possible the interior work through which, by

taking the symbols as a base and support, each will reach this secret and penetrate it completely, more or less profoundly, according to the extent of his own possibilities of understanding and realization.

Whatever one may think of other secret organizations, one cannot, in any case, blame initiatic organizations for having this character, since their secret is not something they voluntarily hide for any reason, legitimate or otherwise, and always are less subject to discussion and appreciation as anything that belongs to the profane domain,<sup>405</sup> but something that is not in anyone's power, even if he wished to reveal and communicate the secret with others. As for the fact that these organizations are 'closed,' which is to say that they do not admit everyone indistinctly, it is simply explained by the need to possess certain 'qualifications,' without which no real benefit can be derived from an attachment to such an organization. Moreover, when it becomes too 'open' and insufficiently strict in this regard, it runs the risk of degenerating as a result of the incomprehension of those whom it admits so recklessly, and who, especially when they become the majority do not fail to introduce all kinds of profane views and divert their activity towards goals which have nothing in common with the initiatic domain, as we see all too often in our times, there are still such organizations of this kind in the Occident.

Thus, and this is a second consequence of what we have stated at the beginning, the initiatic secret in itself and the 'closed' character of the organizations which hold the secret (or, to speak more precisely, who hold the means by which it is possible for those who are 'qualified' to have access to it) are two quite indistinct things and should not be confused in any way. With regards to the first, it is to completely disregard the essence and scope of invoking reasons of 'prudence' as is sometimes done; as for the second, on the contrary, owes its character to the general nature of man and not to that of the initiatic organization, one can speak to a certain extent of 'prudence' in the sense that the organizations defends itself, not again 'indiscretions' which are impossible in its essential nature, but against the danger of degeneration of which we have just spoken. This is still not the primary reason, the latter being none other than the perfect uselessness of admitting individuals for whom initiation would never be anything except for a 'dead letter,' which is to say an empty formality without any real effect. As for the 'prudence' vis-à-vis the exterior world, as it is most often understood, this can only be an altogether incidental consideration, although it is certainly legitimate in

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<sup>405</sup> This is why it says in the Bible that "God has delivered the world (which is to say the profane domain, both in terms of knowledge and action) to the disputes of men," necessarily escapes all that presents a 'supramundane' character, which is to say of the 'sacred' or traditional order.

the presence of a more or less completely hostile milieu, the profane incomprehension seldom stopping at a kind of indifference and changing all too easily into a hatred whose manifestations constitute a danger which is certainly not illusory; however, this cannot reach the initiatic organization itself, which is, as we have said, is truly 'elusive.' Therefore, the precautions in this regard will be all the more necessary since this organization will already be more 'externalized,' and therefore less purely initiatic; moreover, it is only in this case that it can be in direct contact with the profane world, which otherwise could simply ignore it. We shall not speak here of a danger of another order, which may result from the existence of what we have called 'counter-initiation,' and to which the mere measures of 'prudence' cannot obviate; these are valid only against the profane world, whose reactions, we repeat, are to be feared only if the organization has taken an external form such as that of a 'society' or has been dragged more or less completely into an action exercised outside of the initiatic domain, all things of which can only be regarded as having a merely accidental and contingent character.<sup>406</sup>

Thus we arrive at another consequence of the nature of initiatic secrecy: it may happen that, in addition to this secret which it alone is essential to it, an initiatic organization also possesses secondary, and without losing its own character, other secrets which are not of the same order, but are of a more or less external and contingent order; these are purely accessory secrets which, being necessarily the only ones apparent to the observer from the outside, will be liable to give rise to the confusion we pointed out at the end of our previous article. These secrets may come from the 'contamination' of which we have spoken, in other words the addition of goals which are not initiatic, and which can be attributed a more or less importance, since, in this sort of degeneracy all degrees are possible; it is not always so, and it may happen that such secrets relate to contingent, but legitimate, applications of the initiatic doctrine itself, which are considered to be 'reserved' for reasons that may be very diverse, and which would have to be determined in each case. The secrets to which we are referring here are those concerning the sciences and the traditional arts especially; what can be said in the most general way in this regard is that, since these sciences and arts cannot be truly understood apart from the initiation in which they have their principle, their 'vulgarization' could only have disadvantages, because it would inevitably lead to a distortion or even a denaturation, of the kind that gave rise

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<sup>406</sup> What we have just said applies to the profane world reduced to itself, if we can express it as such; it should be added that it may also, in certain cases, serve as an unconscious instrument for an action exercised by representatives of the 'counter-initiation.'

to the sciences and profane arts, as we have explained in other circumstances.

In this same category of accessory and non-essential secrets, we must also classify another kind of secret which exists very generally in initiatic organizations, and which is the one which most commonly causes, among the profane, this mistake on which we have previously called attention to: this secret is the one that bears, either on all the rites and symbols used in such an organization, or, more specifically and in a more strict way than is common, on certain words and signs used as a 'means of recognition,' to allow its members to distinguish themselves from the profane. It goes without saying that any secret of this nature has only conventional and relative value, and, because it concerns external forms, it can always be discovered or betrayed, which will quite naturally be more of a risk than a more rigorously 'closed' organization; so we must insist on this, not only can this secret be in no way confused with the true initiatic secret, except by those who do not have the slightest idea of the nature of it, but that even there is nothing essential, so that its presence or absence cannot be invoked to define an organization as possessing an initiatic character or to define it otherwise. In fact, the same, or something similar, also exists in most other secret organizations which are not initiatic, although the reasons are different: it can be either to imitate the initiatic organizations in their outermost appearances, as is the case with the associations we have described as 'pseudo-initiatic' and those certain fanciful groups that do not deserve even this name, or simply to guarantee as much indiscretion as possible, in the most vulgar sense of the word, as happens for political associations especially which is easily understandable. On the other hand, the existence of a secret of this sort is not necessary for the initiatic organizations; even in these they have even less importance because they are of a purer and higher character, because they are then all the freer from all external forms and all that is inessential. So it happens that, which may seem paradoxical at first glance, but which is nonetheless very logical at the heart of it: the use of 'means of recognition' by an organization is a consequence of its 'closed' character, but in those which are precisely the most 'closed' of all these means are reduced to the point of disappearing altogether, because there is no longer any need of them since their utility, being directly linked to a certain degree of 'externality' of the organizations that uses it, reaches its peak when the organization has a 'semi-profane' aspect, where the form of 'society' is the most typical example, because it is then that its opportunities of contact with the exterior world are the most extensive and multiple, and this, consequently, is most important

for it to distinguish itself from the world by means which are themselves of the external order.

The existence of such an external and secondary secret in the most widespread initiatic organizations is justified by other reasons: some attribute to it above all a 'pedagogic' role, if it is permissible to express oneself thus; in other words, the 'discipline of secrecy' would constitute a kind of 'training' or exercise as part of the methods peculiar to these organizations, and one could see in this, as it were, an attenuated and restricted form of the 'discipline of silence' that was used in some ancient schools, especially among the Pythagoreans.<sup>407</sup> This point of view is certainly correct, provided that it is not exclusive. It is to be remarked that in this regard the value of the secret is completely independent of the things which it bears; secrets of the most insignificant things will have, as 'discipline,' the same efficacy as a secret that is important unto itself. This should be a sufficient answer to the profane who, in this regard, accuse the initiatic organizations of 'puerility,' failing to understand that the words or signs on which the secret is imposed have a symbolic value of their own; if they are incapable of going as far as considerations of this last order, that which we have just indicated is at least within their reach, and certainly does not require a great effort of understanding.

But it is, in reality, a deeper reason, based precisely on the symbolic character we have just mentioned, and which makes what we call 'means of recognition' not only that, but also, at the same time, something more: these are really symbols like all others, whose meaning must be meditated and deepened in the same way, and which thus forms an integral part of the initiatic teaching. The same is true of all the forms used by initiatic organizations, and, more generally, of all those which have a traditional character (including religious forms): they are always, fundamentally, something other than what they seem to be on the outside, and that is what distinguishes them essentially from profane forms, where the external appearance is everything and does not cover any reality of another order. From this point of view, the secret in question is itself a symbol, that of the true initiatic secret, which is obviously much more

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<sup>407</sup> *Disciplina secreti* or *disciplina arcani*, as it was called in the Christian church of the first centuries. It should be noted that the word *disciplina* in Latin most often has the meaning of 'education,' which is also the etymological meaning, and even, by derivation, that of 'science' and 'doctrine,' while what is called 'discipline' in French has only the value of a preparatory means in view of knowledge as is the case here, but which can also be of quite another order, as an example that which is simply 'moral'; it is even of this last manner that one hears it most commonly in the profane domain

than a mere 'pedagogic' means;<sup>408</sup> but, of course, here as anywhere else, the symbol should not be confused with what is symbolized, and it is this confusion that profane ignorance emerges, because it does not know to see what is behind the appearance, and it does not even conceive that there can be anything other than what falls under the senses, which is practically equivalent to the pure and simple negation of all symbolism.

Finally, we will indicate a final consideration that could still give rise to other developments: the secret of the external order, in the initiatic organizations where it exists, is properly part of the ritual, since what is the object is communication under the corresponding obligation of silence, even in the course of initiation at each degree or at the completion; it thus constitutes, not only a symbol as we have just said, but also a true rite, with all the proper virtue which is essentially inherent to it as such. Moreover, to tell the truth, the rite and the symbol are, in call cases, closely linked by their very nature, for every rite necessarily implies a symbolic meaning in all its constitutive elements, and, conversely, every symbol produced for the one who meditates with the necessary aptitudes and dispositions, effects which are strictly comparable to those of rites proper, subject, of course, to the starting point of this work of meditation and as a precondition, the regular initiatic transmission, outside of which, the rites would be only a vain simulacrum, as it happens in the parodies of the 'pseudo-initiation.'

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<sup>408</sup> One could, if one wanted to go into some detail in this regard, notice that the 'sacred words' that must never be pronounced are a particularly clear symbol of the 'ineffable' or the 'inexpressible'; moreover, we know that something similar is sometimes found in exoterism, for example the Tetragrammaton in the Judaic tradition. In the same vein, one could also show that certain signs are related to the 'localization' in the human being of the subtle 'centers' whose 'awakening' constitutes, according to certain methods such as those of which we have spoken here in our study on *Kundalini-Yoga*, a means of acquiring initiatic knowledge.



## Profane Names and Initiatic Names

*Noms profanes et noms initiatiques*, January 1935.

Speaking in our previous articles of the various kinds of secrets of a more or less external order which may exist in certain organizations, initiatic or not, we have mentioned among others the secret concerning the names of their members; it may well seem that this is to rank among the simple precautionary measures intended to be protected against dangers which can come from any enemy, without there being any reason to look for a more profound reason. In fact, this is certainly the case in many instances, and at least in those where we are dealing with a purely profane secrete organization; but yet, when it comes to initiatic organizations, there may be something else, and this secret, like everything else, is truly symbolic. It is all the more interesting to dwell some on this point, that the curiosity of names is one of the most common manifestations of modern 'individualism,' and when it claims to apply to things of the initiatic domain it bears witness to a serious misunderstanding of the realities of this order and an unfortunate tendency to want to reduce them to the level of profane contingencies. The 'historicism' of our contemporaries is satisfied only if a name is placed on everything, which is to say it attributes them to specific human individualities, according to the most restricted conception that can be made of it, that which takes place in profane life and which takes into account only the corporeal mode. However, the fact that the origin of initiatic organizations can never be related to such individualities should already give food for thought in this regard; when it comes to those of the most profound order, their members themselves cannot be identified, not because they hide themselves, which, whatever carefulness is devoted towards it, cannot always be effective, but because, strictly speaking, they are not 'personages' in the sense that historians would like, so that whoever believes they can name them will inevitably be in error. Before entering into further explanations on this point, we shall say that something analogous is found proportionally at all stages of the initiatic scale, even at the most elementary levels, so that, if an initiatic organization is really what it ought to be, the designation of any of its members by a profane name, even if it is exactly 'materially,' will always be tainted with falsity, just as the confusion that would exist between an actor and a character whose role he plays and

whose name one would persist in applying to him in all circumstances of his existence.

We have already had occasion to speak of initiation conceived as a 'second birth'; it is by an immediate logical consequence of this conception that in many organizations the initiate receives a new name, different from his profane name. This is not a mere formality, for this name must correspond to a mode equally different from its being, the one whose realization is made possible by the action of the 'spiritual influence' transmitted by initiation; it may also be remarked that, even from the exoteric point of view, the same practice exists with a similar reason in certain religious orders. We then have two distinct modes for the same being, one manifesting itself in the profane world, and the other within the initiatic organization; normally, each of them must have its own name, that of one not suitable to the other, since they are in two truly different orders. We can go further: to every degree of actual initiation corresponds yet another mode of being; he should therefore receive a new name for each of these degrees, and even if this name is not given to him in fact, there is nonetheless, one may say, as a characteristic expression of this mode, because a name is nothing else than that in reality. Now, since these modes are hierarchical in being, so are the names that represent them respectively: a name will therefore be all the truer since it will correspond to a mode of a more profound order, since, by this, it will express something that will be closer to the true essence of the being. Contrary to common opinion, it is therefore the profane name which, being attached to the most external mode and the most superficial manifestation, is the least true of all; it is especially so in a civilization which has lost all traditional character, and where such a name expresses almost nothing of the nature of the being. As for what may be called the true name of the human being, the most true of all, a name which is also a 'number,' in the Pythagorean and Kabbalist meaning of this word, is the one that corresponds to the central mode of its individuality, which is to say, its restoration in the 'primordial state,' because it is that which constitutes the integral expression of its 'individual essence.'

It follows from these considerations that an initiatic name does not have to be known in the profane world, since it represents a mode of the being which cannot be manifested in the profane world, so that its knowledge would somehow fall into the void, finding nothing to which it could really apply. Inversely, the profane name represents a mode that the being must discard when he returns to the initiatic domain, which is then for him only a mere role that he plays on the exterior; therefore, this name cannot be valid in this domain, in relation to which what it

expresses is in a way non-existent, as belonging to a lower degree of reality. Moreover, it goes without saying that these profound reasons for the distinction and, so to speak, the separation of the initiatic name and the profane name, as designating actually different 'entities,' may not be entirely conscious everywhere where the name change takes place; it may happen that, as a result of a degeneration of certain initiatic organizations, we come to try to explain it by motives which are entirely external, for example by presenting it as a simple measure of prudence, which is worth the interpretations of rituals and symbolism in a moral or political sense, and in no way precludes that there was anything else at the origin. On the contrary, if it concerns only profane organization, these same external motives are really valid, and there can be nothing more, unless, in some cases, these also concern rites as we have already said, the desire to imitate the uses of initiatic organizations, but, naturally, without this being able to respond to the slightest reality; this again shows that similar appearances can, in fact, cover the most different things.

Now, all that we have said so far about this multiplicity of names, representing so many modes of being, relates only to extensions of human individuality included in its integral realization, which is to say, initiatically, to the domain of 'lesser mysteries.' When the being passes into the 'greater mysteries,' which is to say the realization of supra-individual states, he passes also beyond name and form, since, as is taught in the Hindu doctrine, these are the respective expressions of the essence and substance of individuality. Truly, such a being has no name since this is a limitation from which he is henceforth free; he may, if necessary, take any name to manifest himself in the individual domain, but this name will not affect him in any way and will be just as 'accidental' as a simple garment that can be discarded or changed at will. This is the explanation of what we have said at the beginning: when it comes to organizations of this order, their members have no names, and moreover they themselves do not have even have a name; in this conditions, what is there to give rise profane curiosity? If even they manage to discover some names, they will have only one of conventional value; this can already happen, very often, for organizations of a lower order than that, in which 'collective signatures' will be used, representing either these organizations themselves as a whole, or functions envisaged regardless of the individualities that fill them. We repeat, all this results from the very nature of things of an initiatic order in which individual considerations count for nothing and which is not intended to confuse research, although this a consequence; but how can the profane suppose anything other than intentions they themselves have?

Hence in many cases the difficulty or even the impossibility of identifying the authors of works having a certain initiatic character: they are entirely anonymous, or, what amounts to an equivalent, they have as a signature only a symbolic mark or a conventional name; moreover, there is no reason for their authors to have played any apparent role in the profane world. On the contrary, when such works bear the name of an individual who is otherwise known to have lived, they may not be much more advance, because that is not why we will know exactly who or what we are dealing with: this individual may very well have been a spokesperson, even a mask; in such a case, his purported work may imply knowledge he never really had, he may be only an initiate of a lower degree, or even a mere layman who has been chosen for any contingent reason, as we have explained in connection with the sagas of the Holy Grail, and then it is obviously not the author who matters, but the organization that inspired him.

Moreover, even in the profane order, we can be astonished at the importance attributed nowadays to the individuality of an author and to everything that touches it: does the value of the work depend in any way on these things? On the other hand, it is easy to see that the concern to attach one's name to any work is less so in a civilization that is more closely related to the traditional principles, of which, indeed, 'individualism' in all its forms is in a sense a negation. We can easily understand that all this is fulfilled and we do not wish to insist upon it more, but it was not without benefit to emphasize it again, on this occasion, the role of the anti-traditional spirit, characteristic of the modern epoch, as the principal cause of the misunderstanding of initiatic things and the tendency to reduce them to profane points of view. It is this spirit which, under names such as those of 'humanism' and 'rationalism,' it has endeavored for a few centuries to reduce everything to the proportions of vulgar human individuality restricted to the knowledge of the profane, and to deny everything that goes beyond this narrowly limited domain, which is everything that comes under initiation in any degree. It is scarcely necessary to remark that these considerations which we have just expounded upon here are essentially based on the metaphysical doctrine of the multiple states of being, of which they are a direct application. How could this doctrine be understood by those who claim to make of the individual man, and even exclusively his corporeal mode, a complete and closed whole, a self-sufficient being, instead of seeing what it is in reality, the contingent and transient manifestation of a being in a very particular domain among the indefinite multitude of those whose whole constitutes the Universal Existence, and to which correspond, for this same being, so many different modes and states, from which it will

be possible for him to become consciously precisely by following the path opened to him by initiation?

## The Rite and the Symbol

*Le rite et le symbole*, February 1935.

We drew attention to the close connection between the rite and the symbol at the end of one of our previous articles: all the constituent elements of the rite necessarily have, we stated, a symbolic meaning and, on the other hand, the symbol itself in its most usual sense is essentially intended to produce effects that are rigorously comparable to those of rites as a support of meditation. Let us add that, when it comes to truly traditional rites and symbols (and those which do not possess this character do not deserve to be named, being only counterfeits or parodies in fact), their origin is similarly 'non-human.' Thus the impossibility of assigning a definitive author or inventor is not due to ignorance, as the profane historians may suppose (when they do not arrive at this, in their despair they see this as a product of a kind of 'collective unconscious' which, even if it existed, would be incapable in any case of giving rise to transcendent things such as those in question),<sup>409</sup> but it is a necessary consequence of this very origin which can only be contested by those who totally ignore the true nature of tradition and all that is an integral part of it, as is obviously the case for both rites and symbols.

If we wish to examine the fundamental identity of the rite and the symbol in more detail, we can say firstly that the symbol, understood as the 'graphic' figuration as is most common, is in a way the fixation of a ritual gesture.<sup>410</sup> It often happens that the very path of the symbol must be carried out regularly under conditions which confer on it the characteristic of a rite proper; we have a very clear example from this, in an inferior domain such as that of magic (which is a traditional science nonetheless), with the production of talismanic figures, and, in the order which concerns us immediately, the outline of the *yantras* in the Hindu tradition is also a striking example.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> On this subject see what we have said about the alleged *folklore* in our study on *The Holy Grail* (February 1934 issue).

<sup>410</sup> These considerations are directly related to what we have called the 'theory of the gesture,' which we have alluded to on a number of occasions, but without having been able to develop it yet.

<sup>411</sup> In ancient Masonry, we can assimilate the outline of the 'Tracing Board of the Lodge,' which effectively constituted a real *yantra*. Rites in connection with

But that is not all, because the notion of the symbol to which we have just referred is much too narrow, to tell the truth. There are not only figurative or visual symbols, there are also sound symbols; we have already indicated on another occasion this distinction of two fundamental categories, which in the Hindu doctrine is that of the *yantra* and *mantra*.<sup>412</sup> We have even said then that their respective predominance characterized two types of rites, which originally relate to the traditions of sedentary peoples in the case of visual symbols, and to that of nomadic peoples in the case of sound symbols; naturally, it is understood that separation between the two cannot be established in an absolute manner (and this is why we speak only of predominance), all combinations being possible here because of the multiple adaptations that have occurred over the ages and through which the various traditional forms have been constituted that are known to us today. These considerations quite clearly show the connection which quite generally exists between rituals and symbols; we can add that this link is more immediately apparent in the case of *mantrāsaḥ*: indeed, while the visual symbol, once it has been outlined, possibly remains in the permanent state (and this is why we spoke of the fixed gesture), the sound symbol, on the contrary, is manifested only in the very accomplishment of the rite. This difference is attenuated when a correspondence is established between sound symbols and visual symbols; this is what happens when writing, which represents a true fixation of the sound (not of the sound itself as such, of course, but of a permanent possibility of reproducing it); it is scarcely necessary to recall that all writing is an essentially symbolic figuration, at its origin at least. Moreover, this is not the case with the word itself, to which this symbolic character is no less inherent in its very nature: it is obvious that the word, whatever it may be, cannot be anything other than a symbol of the idea that it is intended to express. Thus, every language, oral or written, is truly a set of symbols, and this is precisely why language cannot be a creation more artificial or less artificial, nor a mere product of individual faculties, despite all the 'naturalist' theories that are imagined to explain it.<sup>413</sup>

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the construction of monuments to traditional destination could still be cited here as an example, these monuments necessarily having a symbolic character within themselves.

<sup>412</sup> See our article on *Cain and Abel* (January 1932 issue).

<sup>413</sup> We will refer here to what we said earlier about the primitive language (*The Science of Letters*, February 1931 issue); it goes without saying that the distinction between 'sacred languages' and 'profane languages' only intervene secondarily. For language as well as for sciences and arts, the 'profane' character is

For the visual symbols themselves, it is also a case quite comparable to that of the sound symbols in relation to what we have just indicated: this case is that of the symbols which are not drawn permanently, but only are employed as signs in the initiatic rites (especially the 'signs of recognition' that we have spoken of in our previous articles) and even religious ones (the 'sign of the cross' is a typical example and known to all); here, the symbol is really one with the ritual gesture itself.<sup>414</sup> Moreover, it would be quite useless to make of these signs a third category of symbols, distinct from those we have spoken so far. Certain 'psychologists' would probably consider them thus and designate them as 'motor' symbols or by some other expression of this kind, but, being obviously made to be perceived by sight, they thus enter into the category of visual symbols; they are in this category because of their 'instantaneity,' so to speak, those which present the greatest similarity with the complementary category, that of sound symbols. Moreover, the 'graphic' symbol itself is, we repeat, a gesture or a fixed motion (the very movement or the complex set of motions that must be made to outline it, that the same 'psychologists' would no doubt call a 'motor scheme'). As far as sound symbols are concerned, we can also say that the movements of the vocal organs, necessary for their production (whether it is the emission of ordinary speech or of musical sounds), is in fact a gesture in the same way as all other kinds of corporeal movements, of which it is impossible to isolate it entirely.<sup>415</sup> Thus, this notion of the gesture, taken in its widest sense (which is more in conformity with what the word really implies than the more restricted meaning which is imposed on it by common usage), brings all these cases that differ into unity, so that it may be said

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never anything but the result of a true degeneration (this could only have happened earlier and more easily in the case of languages because of their common and general use).

<sup>414</sup> A case that is intermediate in some way is that of the symbolic figures which, traced at the beginning of a rite or in its preparation, are erased immediately after its completion; this is so for many *yantrāsah*, and it was the same for the 'Tracing Board of the Lodge' in Masonry. This practice is not only a precaution taken against profane curiosity, an explanation which is always much too 'simplistic': it must be seen above all as a consequence of the link that intimately unites the symbol to the rite, so that it would not have a reason to subsist visibly outside of it.

<sup>415</sup> Let us point out with regard to the relations of language with the gesture understood in its most ordinary and restricted sense, the works of R. P. Marcel Jousse, who, although having a base necessarily very different from ours, are no less worthy in our view, in that they touch on the question of certain traditional modes of expression which are generally related to the constitution and the use of sacred languages, and almost entirely forgotten in profane languages, which are reduced to the most restricted form of language.



that it is there that they have their common principle in essence; in the metaphysical order, this fact has a profound meaning, which we cannot think of developing at present.

It must be easy to understand now that every rite is constituted literally by a set of symbols; indeed, these do not only include the objects used or the figures represented, as one might be tempted to think when one sticks to the most superficial notion, but also the gestures made and the words uttered (since these are in reality, according to what we have just said, only a particular case of these), in a word, all the elements of the rite without exception; these elements are thus symbols by their very nature, and not by virtue of a superimposed significance which would come to them from external circumstances and which would not be inherent to them. One could still say that rites are symbols 'put into action,' that any ritual gesture is a symbol 'acted';<sup>416</sup> it is only another way of emphasizing the same thing, only emphasizing the character of the ritual of being, like any action, something which is necessarily accomplished in time,<sup>417</sup> while the symbol as such can be considered from an 'atemporal' point of view. In this sense, one could speak of a certain pre-eminence of the symbol in relation to the rite, but rite and symbol are in their essence only two aspects of the same reality; this is none other than the 'correspondence' which connects all the degrees of the Universal Existence, so that through it our human state can be put in communication with the higher states of being.

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<sup>416</sup> From this point of view, we can particularly note the role played in the rites by the gestures which the Hindu tradition calls *mudrāḥ*, and which constitutes a true language of movements and attitudes; the 'touching' used as a 'means of recognition' in initiatic organizations, both in the Occident and the Orient, are nothing more than a special case of *mudrāḥ*.

<sup>417</sup> In Sanskrit the word *Karma*, which first means 'action' in general, is used in a 'technical' way to refer to 'ritual action' in particular; what it then directly expresses is the same character of the rite that we indicate here.

## **Confusion of the Psychic and the Spiritual** *De la confusion du psychique et du spirituel*, March 1935.

We have already pointed out on many occasions the unfortunate tendency of some people in the West to confuse the two domains of the psychic and the spiritual; we are forced to observe so many manifestations of this tendency in various forms that we must return to this subject once again, unfortunate as it is to deal with it. Indeed, we see all too often the consequences that may result: spreading this confusion is, whether we like it or not, to commit beings to be irretrievably lost in the chaos of the 'intermediary world,' and, in this way, to play the game of the 'satanic' forces that govern what we have called 'counter-initiation.'

It is important here to be precise in order to avoid any misunderstanding: no development of the possibilities of a being, even in a lower order, can be regarded as essentially 'malefic' in itself; everything depends on the use that is made of it, and, first and foremost, it is necessary to consider whether this development is taken for an end in itself, or on the contrary, for a simple means to achieve a goal of a superior order. Indeed, as we have often pointed out, anything can serve as an opportunity and 'support' depending on the circumstances of each particular case for those who embark on the path that will lead them to spiritual 'realization'; this is especially true at the beginning, because of the diversity of the individual natures whose influence is then at its peak, but it is still so in later stages, to a certain extent, as long as the limits of the individuality are not exceeded. On the other hand, anything can be as much of an obstacle as it can be a 'support,' if the being stops there and is allowed to be deluded and misled by certain appearances of 'realization' which does not have any value on its own and are only accidental and contingent results, even if they may be regarded as results from any point of view; this danger of illusion and aberration always exists precisely as long as we are still in the order of individual possibilities.

The most gross example, if we can say, of such a mistake is that which refers to possibilities of a purely corporeal and physiologic order, in this we refer, in particular, to the common mistake among Westerners with regard to certain preparatory processes of *Yoga*, where their ignorance only wishes to see a kind of method of 'physical training' or a special 'therapy.' Moreover, this error is basically the least serious and the least dangerous, because it is the one whose consequences go the least far: it runs little more risk than the obtaining of an opposite result to the that which is desired due to 'practices' being carried out inconsiderately and uncontrollably, and to ruin one's health by believing it to be improved. This does not interest us in anything except that there is a deviation in the use of these 'practices' which, in reality, are made for an entirely

different use, as far as possible from the physiologic domain, and the natural repercussions of which are merely an 'accident' to which it is not appropriate to attach the slightest importance. However, it must be added that these same 'practices' may also have repercussions in the psychic domain, i.e., in the subtle modes of the individual, which considerably increases the danger: without suspecting it in the least, we can thus open the door to 'influences' of all kinds, against which we are all the less prejudiced so that sometimes we do not even suspect their existence, and even more that we are unable to discern their true nature. But at the least there is no 'spiritual' or 'initiatric' pretension, whereas it is quite different for those who seek so-called 'powers,' i.e., in sum, extraordinary 'phenomena,' or for those who try to 'center' their consciousness on lower extensions of human individuality, mistaken for higher states simply because they are outside a setting in which the activity of the ordinary man is generally closed from; we will return to the first of these two cases again, for it is on the second that we wish to insist on now.

Indeed, here again it is the attraction of the 'phenomenon' that is most often at the root of the error: those who behave in this way wish to obtain results that are 'sensory,' and this is what they believe to be a 'realization'; however, this is to say that everything that is truly spiritual escapes them entirely. Of course, it is not a question of denying the reality of the 'phenomena' in question as such; they are all too real, we might say, and they are all the more dangerous: what we are questioning is their value and their interest, and that is what the illusion is about. If there was only a waste of time and effort again, the evil would not be very great, but, in general, the being who attaches himself to these things then becomes unable to overcome them and go beyond them; the cases of these individuals is well known in Oriental traditions, those who have become mere producers of 'phenomena' that will never reach the slightest spirituality. But there is more: there may be a kind of 'reverse' development, which not only does not bring any valid acquisition, but always moves away from spiritual 'realization' until it is to be definitively lost in those inferior extensions of his individuality to which we were alluded moments ago, and by which he can only come into contact with the 'infra-human.' His situation is then hopeless, or at least there is only one, which is a 'disintegration' of the conscious being. It is there, one could say in all rigor, that is a true 'descent to Hell' without any possible 'recovery'; as for the outcome, it corresponds to one of the most unfavorable and 'sinister' meanings of this 'second death' of which we have spoken in a previous article: it is properly the 'inverted' shadow of the 'second death' of initiation.

One can never be too wary in this regard of any appeal to the 'sub-conscious,' to 'instinct,' to infrarational 'intuition,' or even to an ill-defined 'life force,' in a word all those vague and obscure things that lead more or less directly to a contact with the lower states. All the more, we must beware of everything that induces beings to 'coalesce,' we might willingly say 'to dissolve,' in a kind of 'cosmic consciousness' exclusive of all 'transcendence,' and therefore of all effective spirituality; this is the ultimate consequence of all the anti-metaphysical errors that terms such as 'pantheism,' 'immanentism,' and 'naturalism' designate, all things closely related to each other, a consequence which some would certainly retreat from if they knew what they were really talking about. In fact, it is there that spirituality is taken 'backwards,' to substitute it in place of the opposite, since this leads to its definitive loss, and this is what 'Satanism,' properly speaking, consists of; whether it is conscious or unconscious, it does not change the results, and we must not forget that the 'unconscious Satanism' of some, more numerous than ever in our age of intellectual disorder, is never anything but an instrument at the service of the 'conscious Satanism' of the representatives of 'counter-initiation.'

We have sometimes had the opportunity to point out the initiatic symbolism of the 'journey' accomplished through the Ocean representing the psychic domain, which must be crossed, avoiding all dangers, to reach the goal; but what of the one who would throw himself in the middle of this Ocean and have no other inspiration than to drown in it? This is exactly what this 'fusion' with a 'cosmic consciousness' means, which is only the confused and indistinct whole of 'psychic influences' which, although some may imagine otherwise, have certainly nothing in common with the 'spiritual influences,' even if they sometimes imitate them in some of their external manifestations. Those who commit this fatal mistake simply forget or ignore the distinction between the 'Upper Waters' and the 'Lower Waters'; instead of rising to the Ocean from above, they sink into the abyss of the Ocean below; instead of concentrating all their powers to direct them to the informal world, which alone can be called 'spiritual,' they disperse in the infinitely changing and fleeting diversity of forms of the subtle manifestation, without suspecting that what they are taking for a plentitude of 'life' is actually only the kingdom of death.

## Confusion of the Psychic and the Spiritual

*De la confusion du psychique et du spirituel, March 1935.*

We have already pointed out on many occasions the unfortunate tendency of some people in the West to confuse the two domains of the psychic and the spiritual; we are forced to observe so many manifestations of this tendency in various forms that we must return to this subject once again, unfortunate as it is to deal with it. Indeed, we see all too often the consequences that may result: spreading this confusion is, whether we like it or not, to commit beings to be irretrievably lost in the chaos of the 'intermediary world,' and, in this way, to play the game of the 'satanic' forces that govern what we have called 'counter-initiation.'

It is important here to be precise in order to avoid any misunderstanding: no development of the possibilities of a being, even in a lower order, can be regarded as essentially 'malefic' in itself; everything depends on the use that is made of it, and, first and foremost, it is necessary to consider whether this development is taken for an end in itself, or on the contrary, for a simple means to achieve a goal of a superior order. Indeed, as we have often pointed out, anything can serve as an opportunity and 'support' depending on the circumstances of each particular case for those who embark on the path that will lead them to spiritual 'realization'; this is especially true at the beginning, because of the diversity of the individual natures whose influence is then at its peak, but it is still so in later stages, to a certain extent, as long as the limits of the individuality are not exceeded. On the other hand, anything can be as much of an obstacle as it can be a 'support,' if the being stops there and is allowed to be deluded and misled by certain appearances of 'realization' which does not have any value on its own and are only accidental and contingent results, even if they may be regarded as results from any point of view; this danger of illusion and aberration always exists precisely as long as we are still in the order of individual possibilities.

The most gross example, if we can say, of such a mistake is that which refers to possibilities of a purely corporeal and physiologic order, in this we refer, in particular, to the common mistake among Westerners with regard to certain preparatory processes of *Yoga*, where their ignorance only wishes to see a kind of method of 'physical training' or a special 'therapy.' Moreover, this error is basically the least serious and the least

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## The Arts and Their Traditional Conception

*Les arts et leur conception traditionnelle*, April 1935.

We have often insisted that the profane sciences are only the product of a relatively recent degeneration, due to the incomprehension of the old traditional sciences, or rather only a few of the sciences, the others having fallen entirely into oblivion. What is true in this regard for sciences is equally true for the arts, and, moreover, the distinction between the arts was much less marked in the past than it is today; the Latin word *artes* was sometimes also applied to the sciences, and in the Middle Ages the enumeration of the 'liberal arts' brought together things that the modern ones would make into both categories. This remark alone would suffice to show that art was then something other than what is now conceived under the name, that it implied a real body of knowledge; this knowledge could obviously only be of the order of the traditional sciences.

Only in this way can it be understood that in certain initiatic organizations of the Middle Ages, such as the 'Fedeli d'Amore,' the seven 'liberal arts' were put in correspondence with the 'heavens,' i.e. states that identified themselves with the different degrees of initiation.<sup>418</sup> This required that the arts, as well as the sciences, be capable of a transposition giving them a real esoteric value; what makes such a transposition possible is the very nature of traditional knowledge, which, of whatever order they may be, are always essentially attached to the transcendent principles. This knowledge thus receives a meaning that can be said to be symbolic, since it is based on the correspondence that exists between the various orders of reality; what we must insist on is that this is not something that would be accidentally added to them, but, on the contrary, what constitutes the most profound essence of all normal and legitimate knowledge, and which, as such, is inherent in the sciences and arts from their very origin and remains so long as they have not undergone any deviation.

It is not surprising that the arts can be considered from this point of view if we observe that the crafts themselves, in their traditional concep-

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<sup>418</sup> See *The Esoterism of Dante*, ch. 2.



tion, serve as a basis for initiation, as we have shown on another occasion.<sup>419</sup> Moreover, we must recall in this connection what we said then, that the distinction between arts and crafts appears to be specifically modern and exists only due to the consequence of the same degeneration which gave rise to the profane point of view, the latter expressing nothing but the very negation of the traditional spirit. At heart, whether it was art or a craft, there was always the application and the implementation of some knowledge of a superior order to one degree or another that was closely related to initiatic knowledge itself; moreover, the direct implementation of initiatic knowledge also received the name art, as we clearly see by expressions such as those of the 'sacerdotal art' and the 'royal art,' which respectively relate to applications of the 'greater mysteries' and the 'lesser mysteries.'

If we now consider the arts by giving this word a more restricted and, at the same time, a more usual meaning, i.e. what is more precisely called the 'fine arts,' we can say, according to the preceding, that each must constitute a symbolic language adapted to the expression of certain truths by means of forms which are, for some, of a visual order, and for others, of the auditory or acoustic order, hence their current division into two groups, the 'plastic arts' and the 'phonetic arts.' We have explained in previous studies that this distinction, as well as that of two kinds of corresponding rites based on these same categories of symbolic forms, relate in their origin to the difference that exists between the traditions of sedentary peoples and those of nomadic peoples.<sup>420</sup> Whether it is arts of one or the other kind, it is easy to see in a very general way that they have the character that is all the more symbolic since the civilization itself is more strictly traditional, for what makes their true value then is less what they are in themselves than the possibilities of expression they provide beyond what ordinary language is limited to. In short, their productions are primarily intended to serve as 'supports' for meditations, as 'points of support' for an understanding as profound and extensive as possible, which is the very *raison d'être* for all symbolism;<sup>421</sup> everything, down to the most minute detail, must be determined by this considera-

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<sup>419</sup> *Initiation and Crafts*, April 1934.

<sup>420</sup> See *Cain and Abel*, January 1932, and *The Rite and the Symbol*, February 1935.

<sup>421</sup> It is the Hindu notion of *pratika*, which is no more an 'idol' than a work of imagination and individual fantasy; these two Western interpretations, somehow opposing each other, are equally false.

tion and subordination to that purpose, without any unnecessary addition, without meaning or intended to play a merely 'decorative' or 'ornamental' role.<sup>422</sup>

We see that such a conception is as far removed as possible from all modern and profane theories, whether it be that of 'art for the purpose of art' for example, which basically amounts to saying that art is what it must be when it means nothing, or that of 'moralizing' art, which is obviously not worth any more in terms of knowledge. Traditional art is certainly not a 'game,' as the term is dear to some psychologists, or a way to simply provide the man with a kind of special pleasure that is qualified as being 'superior' without any understanding as to why, because, since it is only a question of pleasure, everything is reduced to pure individual preferences between which no hierarchy can logically be established; nor is it a vain sentimental declaration, for which ordinary language is assuredly more than sufficient, without any need for recourse to forms which are more or less mysterious or enigmatic, and which is much more complicated than what they would have to express in any case. This is an occasion for us to recall the perfect nullity of the 'moral' interpretations that some claim to attribute to all symbolism, for these are things that cannot be overemphasized, including initiatic symbolism properly speaking: if it were only similar trivialities, we do not see why or how we would have ever thought of 'veiling' them in any way, which they do very well when they are stated by profane philosophy, and better than simply saying that there is in fact no symbolism or initiation.

That being said, one may wonder which among the various traditional sciences are those whose arts are most directly dependent, which, naturally, does not exclude that they also have more or less constant relations with others, for everything here is necessarily connected and bound in the fundamental doctrine of unity in which the multiplicity of its application can in no way destroy or even affect; the conception of sciences that are narrowly 'specialized' and completely separated from each other is clearly anti-traditional, inasmuch as it manifests a defect of principle, and is characteristic of the 'analytic' mind which inspires and governs the profane sciences, while any traditional point of view can only be essentially 'synthetic.' Subject to this reservation, it can be said that what constitutes the very basis of all the arts is principally an application of the science of rhythm in its different forms, a science which itself is immediately connected with that of numbers; of course, when we speak of the science of numbers, it is not a question of profane arithmetic

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<sup>422</sup> The degeneration of certain symbols into motifs of ornamentation, because we have ceased to understand its meaning, is one of the characteristic features of profane deviation.

as is understood by the modern ones, but of that which is best known in the examples of the Kabbalah and Pythagorism, and the equivalents which exist also under various expressions and with more or less development in all the traditional doctrine.

What we have just said may seem obvious especially for the phonetic arts, whose productions are all constituted by ensembles of rhythms unfolding over time; poetry owes to its rhythmic character to have primitively been the mode of ritual expression of the 'language of the Gods' or the 'sacred language' par excellence,<sup>423</sup> a function of which is even kept until a time relatively recent to us, when 'literature' had not yet been invented.<sup>424</sup> As for music, it would certainly be pointless to insist upon it, and its digital base is still recognized by the modern ones themselves, though distorted by the loss of traditional data; formerly, as is particularly clear in the Far-East, changes could only be made in music in accordance with certain changes occurring in the state of the world according to the cyclic periods, because the musical rhythms were intimately bound up with both the human and social order, and the cosmic order, and even expressed the relations existing between them in a certain way; the Pythagorean conception of the 'harmony of the spheres' is related precisely to the same order of considerations.

For the plastic arts, whose productions develop in extension in space, the same thing may not appear so immediately, and yet it is none the less rigorously true; only, the rhythm is then fixed in simultaneity, so to speak, instead of taking place in succession as in the previous case. We can especially understand this by noting that in this second group the typical and fundamental art is architecture, the others, such as sculpting and painting, are in fact mere dependencies in their original purpose; however, in architecture the rhythm is expressed directly by the proportions existing between the various parts of the ensemble, and also by geometric forms, which are ultimately, from the point of view that we envisage, only the translation into space of numbers and their relationships.<sup>425</sup> Here again, geometry must obviously be considered in a very

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<sup>423</sup> See *The Language of Birds*, November 1931.

<sup>424</sup> It is curious to note that modern 'scholars' have come to apply this word 'literature' to all indistinctly, even to the Sacred Scriptures that they claim to study in the same way as all other writings and by the same methods; when they speak of 'Biblical poems' or 'Vedic poems,' while completely disregarding what poetry was for the ancients, their intention is still to reduce everything to something purely human.

<sup>425</sup> In this connection, it should be noted that Plato's 'Geometer God' identifies itself properly with Apollo, who presides over all the arts; this, which is also directly derived from Pythagorism, has a particular importance with regard to

different way from that of the profane mathematicians, and whose anteriority in relation to this brings the most complete denial to those who wish to attribute to this science an 'empiric' and utilitarian origin; on the other hand, we have here an example of how, as we said above, science is linked to the traditional point of view, so much so that one could even look at it as being in some way only expressions of the same truths in different languages, which is only a natural consequence of the 'law of correspondence' that is the very foundation of all symbolism.

However brief and incomplete, these few notions will at least be enough to make it understood what is most essential in the traditional conception of the arts and what differentiates it most profoundly from the profane conception, in its basis as applications of certain sciences, in its meaning as various modes of symbolic language, and in its destination as means to help man come closer to true knowledge.

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the filiation of certain traditional Hellenic doctrines and their attachment to a 'Hyperborean' origin.

## So-Called Psychic 'Powers'

*Des prétendus « pouvoirs » psychiques, May 1935.*

In speaking recently of the confusion between the psychic and the spiritual, and the attraction of 'phenomena' as the primary cause of this error, we have referred to the case of those who seek so-called 'powers,' what they call powers is nothing but the faculty of producing more or less extraordinary 'phenomena.' Indeed, most of the pseudo-esoteric or pseudo-initiatic schools of the modern West do not propose anything besides it; this is a real obsession for the great majority of their adherents who delude themselves about the values of these 'powers' to the point of taking them as signs of a spiritual development, or even as its culmination, whereas, even when they are not a mere mirage of the imagination, they belong only to the psychic domain and are most often only an obstacle to the acquisition of all true spirituality.

For some, this illusion is often accompanied by a more or less excessive interest in 'magic,' whose cause is still the same passion for 'phenomena' which is so characteristic of the Western mentality; here is another mistake that is worthy of note: the truth is that there are no 'magic powers,' although we meet this expression at every moment, not only in those of whom we speak, but also in those who strive to fight their tendencies, all being no less ignorant that they are from the essence of things. As we have often said, magic is in fact only one science like any other and should be treated as such; the phenomena with which it deals, strange or exceptional as they may be, are for this reason not any more 'transcendent' than others, all this is purely 'physical,' in the proper and original meaning of the word. When provoking such phenomena, the magician does so by applying the knowledge he has of certain natural laws; then there is no extraordinary 'power,' any more than there is in him who, having studied any science, puts the results into practice. Will we say, as an example, that a doctor has 'powers' because, knowing which remedy is suitable for a particular disease, he cures it by means of the remedy in question? Between the magician and the one that has psychic 'powers,' there is a difference comparable to that which exists in the corporeal order between the one who performs a certain work with the help of a machine and the one who realizes it by only the means of the strength or ability of his body; both operate well in the same domain, but

not in the same way. On the other hand, whether magic or 'powers,' there is, we repeat, absolutely nothing spiritual or initiatic; if we mark the difference between the two things, it is not that one is worth more than the other in our point of view, but it is always necessary to know exactly what one is talking about and to dispel the confusion which exists in this subject.

In certain individuals, psychic 'powers' are something quite spontaneous, the effect of a simple natural disposition which develops itself; it is quite obvious that in this case there is no point in drawing any vanity any more than any other aptitude, since they do not bear witness to any desired 'realization,' and even the one who bears these powers may not even suspect the existence of such a thing: if he has never heard of 'initiation,' he will certainly not come to the idea of believing himself 'initiated' because he sees things that everyone does not see, because they sometimes have 'premonitory' dreams, or because they sometimes heal a patient by simple contact, without knowing how this is done themselves. But there is also the case where similar 'powers' are acquired or artificially developed as the result of certain special 'training'; this is something more dangerous because it rarely goes without causing a certain imbalance. At the same time, it is in this case that the illusion occurs most easily: there are people who are convinced that they have obtained certain 'powers,' which are in fact perfectly imaginary, either simply under the influence of their desire and a kind of 'fixed idea,' or by the effect of a suggestion exerted on them by one of those circles in which such 'training' is usually practiced. It is here especially that we speak of 'initiation' by mistake, by identifying it more or less with the acquisition of these famous 'powers'; therefore it is not surprising that weak or ignorant minds allow themselves to be so fascinated by such pretensions, so that it suffices to reduce the mere observation of the existence of the first case of which we have spoken to nothing, since, in this, there are 'powers' which are quite similar, if not even more developed and more authentic, without there being any trace of 'initiation,' real or supposed. What is perhaps the most odd and most difficult thing to understand is that the possessors of these spontaneous 'powers,' if they happen to come into contact with these same pseudo-initiatic circles, are sometimes led to believe that they too are 'initiates'; they should certainly know better regarding the real character of these faculties, which occur in many otherwise very ordinary children to one degree or another, although often they quickly disappear afterwards. The only excuse for all these illusions is that none who incite them and maintain in themselves or others have any notion of what true initiation is; naturally, this does not mitigate the danger in any way, either as to the psychic and even

physiologic disturbances which are the usual companion of these sorts of things, or as to the more distant but even more serious consequences of a development of inferior possibilities which, as we have said before, go directly opposite of spirituality.

It is particularly important to note that the 'powers' in question may very well coexist with the most complete doctrinal ignorance, as it is all too easy to see in most 'clairvoyants' and 'healers,' for example; this alone would sufficiently prove that they do not have the slightest connection with initiation, the aim of which can only be pure knowledge. At the same time, it shows that their attainment is devoid of any real interest, since the one who possesses these powers is no more advanced in the realization of his own being, a realization which is one with knowledge itself; they represent only all contingent and transient acquisitions, exactly comparable in this to the corporeal development, which at least does not present the same dangers, and even the few advantages, which are no less contingent, which their exercise can bring certainly do not compensate for the inconveniences to which we have just alluded. Yet these advantages are too often only to astonish and be admired by the naïve, or to satisfy other desires which are no less vain and puerile; displaying these 'powers' is already showing a mentality incompatible with all initiation, even at the most basic level. What of those who use it to pretend to be 'grand initiates?' Let us not insist on this, because it is nothing more than charlatanism, even if the 'powers' in question are real in their order; in fact, it is not the reality of 'phenomena' as such that matters above all, but rather the value and scope that should be attributed to them.

There is no doubt that even among those whose good faith is incontestable, the role of suggestion is great in all this; to convince oneself of this, it is only necessary to consider a case such as that of the 'clairvoyants,' whose so-called 'revelations' are always in accordance with their own ideas, those of their milieu, or the school to which they belong. Suppose, however, that these things are real, which is more likely to occur when 'clairvoyance' is spontaneous than when it has been artificially developed; even in this case, one does not understand why what is seen or heard in the psychic world would have more interest or more importance than that in the corporeal world, which everyone can see and hear while walking on the street: people whom are unknown or indifferent to him, incidents which do not concern him in any way, fragments of incoherent or even unintelligible conversations, and so on. The first is more excusable to mistake it, for he must have some difficulty in recognizing that all his efforts only result in such a derisory result, but, as for the spontaneous clairvoyant, this should seem quite natural to him, as it is indeed,

and, if it were too often persuaded that it is extraordinary, he would never think of worrying more about what he encounters in the psychic realm than of its analogue in the corporeal domain, or of looking for the marvelous or complicated meanings which is utterly lacking in the vast majority of cases. To tell the truth, there is indeed a reason for everything, even the most minute and seemingly indifferent fact, but it matters so little to us that we do not take it into account and do not need to look into it, at least when it comes to what is commonly called 'ordinary life,' i.e. events of the corporeal world; if the same rules were observed with regard to the psychic world, we would be spared from such ravings! It is true that it would require a degree of mental equilibrium, which 'clairvoyants' are unfortunately seldom endowed with, even those that are spontaneous, and even more so those who have undergone the psychic 'training' we spoke of above. However that may be, this total 'disinterestedness' with regard to phenomena is none the less strictly necessary for anyone who, being provided with faculties of this kind, nevertheless wish to undertake a spiritual realization; as for the one who does not have it, far from striving to obtain it, he must, on the contrary, consider that it is an advantage for him in view of this same realization, in the sense that he will thus have fewer obstacles to discard; we will return to this last point next time.

In sum, the very word 'powers,' when so employed, is wrong to evoke the idea of a superiority which these things do not entail in anyway; if we can accept this, it could only be a mere synonym of 'faculties,' which has, etymologically, a meaning that is almost identical: there are many possibilities of being so, but possibilities that are not 'transcendent,' since they are entirely of the individual order, and thus are far from the highest and the most deserving of attention even in this order. As for attributing to them an initiatic value, if only as an auxiliary or preparatory value, that would be the opposite of the truth; as this alone counts in our eyes, we must say things as they are without any regard to what may please or displease anyone. The possessors of psychic 'powers' would certainly be very wrong to hold us against them, because they would only give us even more reason by showing their incomprehension and lack of spirituality: indeed, how could one describe the fact of keeping to an individual prerogative, or rather to its appearances, to the point of preferring it to knowledge and truth any differently?<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Let it not be opposed to what we said above, that spontaneous 'powers' could be the result of some initiation received 'in astral,' if not in 'previous existences'; when we speak of initiation, we mean only serious things, not phantasmagoria of dubious taste.



## The Rejection of 'Powers'

*Le rejet des « pouvoirs », June 1935.*

In our previous article, we have shown that there is little interest in the alleged claims of 'psychic' powers and the absence of any relation between their development and a realization of the spiritual or initiatic order; before departing from this subject, we must still insist that such an achievement is truly harmful in most cases rather than just being indifferent. In fact, it constitutes a 'distraction' in the strictly etymological sense of the word: the man who lets himself be absorbed by the multiple activities of the corporeal world will never manage to 'center' his consciousness in higher realities, nor, consequently, develop the possibilities corresponding to these realities in himself; even more so will he who is lost and dispersed in multiplicity of the psychic world with its indefinite modes, which is incomparably greater and more varied, will never succeed in ridding himself of it, especially if he does not realize the value of these illusions that do not involve the exercise of corporeal activities.

Therefore anyone who has the will to depart on an initiatic path, not only must they never seek to acquire or develop these famous 'powers,' but must, even if they are spontaneous and accidentally developed, remove them pitilessly as obstacles diverting him from the single goal he is aiming for. It is not necessary to see there necessarily, as some might readily believe, 'temptations' or 'diabolic tricks' in the literal sense; there is nevertheless something that, as we explained when we spoke of the question of initiatic 'trials,' the 'profane' world, by which we must understand as the whole ensemble of both the psychic and corporeal domains, seem to try every means to retain the one who aims to escape it. There is, then, a reaction of adverse forces, which, like many difficulties of another order, can only be due to a kind of unconscious hostility from the milieu. Of course, since man cannot isolate himself completely from this milieu and make himself completely independent until he has reached the goal, this does not exclude that these manifestations are at the same time the very natural, though accidental, results of the internal work in which he engages, and whose external repercussions sometimes take the most unexpected forms, far surpassing all that might be imagined by those who have not had the opportunity to realize for themselves.

On the other hand, even those who naturally possess certain psychic faculties are thereby, as we have already said, at a certain disadvantage with regard to their spiritual development; not only is it essential that they totally lose interest and attach no importance to it, but it may even be necessary for them to reduce the exercise to a minimum, if not to suppress it altogether. In fact, it is advisable to restrict the use of the corporeal sense as much as possible, at least during certain more or less prolonged periods, in order to not be distracted from them, the same is equally true of these psychic faculties; moreover, while man could not live if he stopped the exercise of his senses completely and indefinitely, there is obviously no such thing in other cases, and no serious inconvenience can result from this 'inhibition.' On the contrary, the being can only benefit in terms of his organic and mental equilibrium, and consequently find himself in better conditions to undertake developments of possibilities of a superior order, without risking being confused by a more or less pathologic and abnormal state.

The producers of extraordinary 'phenomena' are, in most cases, beings inferior in respect of the intellectual and spiritual, or entirely deviated by the special 'training' to which they are subjected; it is easy to understand that he who has spent a part of his life exclusively practicing the production of some 'phenomena' has become incapable of anything else, and that the possibilities of another order are now irremediably closed. This is what generally happens to those who yield to the attraction of the psychic domain: even if they had first undertaken a work of initiatic realization, they are then stopped on this path and will not go any further, they are happy if they stay there and do not allow themselves to be carried away little by little in the direction which, as we have explained previously, leads properly away from spirituality and can only ultimately lead to 'disintegration' of the conscious being; however, even leaving aside this extreme case, the mere pausing of all spiritual development is already a rather serious consequence in itself and which should give food for thought to those who are completely blinded by the illusions of the 'intermediate world.'

It may be objected that there are authentic initiatic organizations that exercise certain individuals for the development of these 'powers,' but the truth is that, in this case, the individuals in question are those in whom initiatic 'qualifications' are lacking, and who, at the same time, anoint special aptitudes in the psychic order, as this is all they are capable of. Moreover, under such conditions, psychic development is guided and controlled so as to present the minimum of inconveniences and dangers; these beings even benefit from the bond that is thus established with a traditional organization, albeit at an inferior level, and this, for its part,

can use them for purposes of which they themselves will not be aware, not because it is deliberately concealed from them, but because they would be utterly incapable of understanding it given the limitation of their possibilities.

It goes without saying that the dangers of which we have just spoken no longer exist for those who have reached a certain degree of initiatic realization; one can even say that he has all the 'powers' implicitly, without having to develop them in any particular way, because he dominates the forces of the physical world 'from above,' but, in general, he does not exercise them, because he no longer has any interest in them. In a similar way, the one who has penetrated certain traditional sciences in their deepest essence is also totally indifferent to their application and never makes any use of them; pure knowledge is sufficient, and it is really the only thing that matters, all the rest being mere contingencies. Moreover, all manifestations of these things are necessarily a 'descent' in a sense, even if this is only apparent and cannot affect the being itself; it must not be forgotten that the unmanifest is superior to the manifest, and that, consequently, the fact of remaining in this 'non-manifestation' will be, if one may say, the most adequate expression of the state that the being has realized internally. This is what some people symbolize when saying 'the night is preferable to the day,' and it is also what is represented by the figure of the turtle hidden inside its shell. Consequently, if it happens that such a being manifests certain 'powers,' it will only be in quite exceptional cases and for particular reasons which will necessarily escape the appreciation of the external world, which are naturally totally different reasons from those which the ordinary producers of 'phenomena' may have; apart from these cases, its only mode of action will be what the Far Eastern tradition designates as the 'non-acting activity,' which is precisely because of its character of non-manifestation, the very plenitude of activity.

In this connection, we shall recall the perfect insignificance of phenomena that is quite similar but proceeding from very different causes, and which are not of the same order; thus, it is easily conceivable that the being who has a high spiritual degree, if he has occasional cause of any phenomenon, will not act in the same way as the one who has acquired the faculty as a result of psychic 'training,' and that its action will be exercised according to all other modes. The comparison between 'theurgy' and 'magic' would also give rise to the same remark. This truth should be easily recognized even by those who stick to the purely 'exoteric' domain, because, although many cases of 'levitation' or 'bilocation,' for example, can be found in the history of saints, it is certainly as much in the history of sorcerers; the appearances are exactly the same in

both, but no one will conclude that the causes are also the same. From the purely theological point of view, of two similar facts in all points, one may be considered a miracle, while the other will not be, and to discern them it will be necessary to resort to marks of another order independent of the facts themselves; from a natural point of view, we could say that a fact will be a miracle if it is due to the action of a spiritual influence, and that it will not be so if it is due only to that of a psychic influence. This is illustrated particularly clear by the struggle of Moses and the magicians of Pharaoh, who also represents that of the respective powers of initiation and counter-initiation; it is well understood that, as we have already had occasion to explain, counter-initiation can only exert its action in the psychic domain, and all that is of the spiritual domain is absolutely forbidden from them by its very nature.

We think we have now said enough on this subject, and if we have insisted so much on it, it is because we have seen the necessity of it all too often. To conclude in a few words, we will say that initiation should not aim at acquiring 'powers' which, like the very world in which they are exercised, ultimately belong only to the domain of the 'Great Illusion'; for the man in the process of spiritual development, it is not a question of attaching himself even more strongly to it by new bonds, but, on the contrary, of freeing himself from it, and this liberation cannot be obtained by anything except Knowledge alone.

## Some Errors Concerning Initiation

*De quelques erreurs concernant l'initiation, July 1935.*

Although we have already pointed out in our previous articles that there are many errors regarding the nature and purpose of initiation, it is not superfluous to insist even more on some of these points, for all that we have had occasion to read on this subject brings us almost every day new proof of a general misunderstanding. Naturally, we cannot think of pointing out all these errors one by one and in detail, which would be too tedious and uninteresting; it is better to confine ourselves to considering certain 'typical' cases, which has the advantage of dispensing us from making direct allusions to a particular author or school at the same time, since it must be understood that these remarks have a scope quite independent of any question of 'personalities.'

We will recall first, but without insisting upon it, the conceptions according to which initiation is something of the merely 'moral' or 'social' order; these are too limited and 'terrestrial,' and the grossest error is always far from the most dangerous. We will only say, to put an end to all confusion in this regard, that such conceptions do not even really apply to the first part of initiation which antiquity designated by the name 'lesser mysteries'; these concern human individualities in the integral development of its possibilities, therefore beyond the corporeal mode whose activity is exercised in the domain which is common to all men. We do not see what the value or even the *raison d'être* of an alleged initiation which would be limited to repeating, by disguising it in a more or less enigmatic form, what is most banal in profane education, which is most vulgarly 'within the reach of everyone.' Anyway, we have no intention of denying that initiatic knowledge can have applications in the social order, as in any order, but this is a very different question: first, these contingent applications do not constitute the object of initiation; second, they have in themselves a very different character from what we have just spoken of, because they start from principles which have nothing to do with the precepts of current 'morality,' and they proceed by means elusive to the profane by virtue of the very nature of things; it is therefore far from what someone in a recent article called "the preoccupation with living properly"!

The subtlest, and hence most formidable, errors occur when one speaks with regard to initiation of a 'communication' with higher states or 'spiritual worlds,' and there is all too often the illusion of taking as 'superior' what is not really true here. We should repeat here all that we have already said about the confusion between the psychic and the spiritual, because it is this one that is most frequently committed in this regard: the 'psychic' states are not 'superior' or 'transcendent' since they are part of the individual human state; when we speak of the higher states of being, without any abuse of language, we exclusively mean supra-individual states. Some even go further in this confusion and take for 'spiritual' all that does not fall under the ordinary and 'normal' senses; we have even seen the so-called 'etheric' world, i.e. simply the subtlest part of the corporeal world, qualified as such! In these conditions, it is to be highly feared that the 'communication' in question may be reduced to 'clairvoyance,' to 'clairaudience,' or the exercise of some other psychic faculty of the same kind and no less insignificant, even when it is real. This is what happens almost always in fact, and basically all the pseudo-initiatic schools of the modern West are more or less at this point; we have said enough on this subject before that there is no longer any need to insist on it, because it must be too obvious that all this has absolutely nothing to do with true initiation for any who has followed our exposés.

But this is not all: let us admit that, in the thinking of some, it is really a communication with the higher states; it will not suffice to characterize it as initiation yet. Indeed, such communication is also established by rites of the purely exoteric order, especially by religious rites; it should not be forgotten that, in this case also, 'spiritual influences' truly come into play, although for purposes quite different from those related to the initiatic domain. The intervention of a 'non-human' element can define, in a general way, everything that is authentically traditional; the presence of this common character is not a sufficient reason to not make necessary distinctions, and in particular to confuse the religious domain and the initiatic domain, or even to consider between them a simple difference of degree at most, whereas there is really a difference of nature, and even, we may say, of a profound nature. This confusion is very common among those who claim to study initiation 'from the outside,' with intentions that can be very diverse; therefore it is indispensable to denounce it expressly: esoterism is not the 'inner' part of a religion as such, even when it takes its base and its point of support in it as happens in certain traditional forms; nor is initiation a kind of special religion reserved for a minority, as some seem to imagine, for example, those who speak of ancient mysteries by calling them 'religious.' It is not possible

for us to develop all the differences that separate the religious and initiatic domains here, which would take us very far, but it will suffice to make it clear that religion considers being only in the individual human state and is not intended to draw it out, but, on the contrary, to ensure the most favorable conditions in this very state, while initiation is essentially aimed at exceeding the possibilities of this state and making it possible for the passage to the higher states, and even, finally, to lead beyond any conditioned state whatsoever.

With regard to initiation, it follows from this that mere communication with the higher states cannot be regarded as an end, but only as a starting point: if this communication is to be established first of all by the action of a 'spiritual influence,' it is to then allow an effective acquisition of these states, and not simply, as in the religious order, to bring down a 'grace' on the being which connects it in a certain way while not penetrating it. To express this in a way that may be more easily understandable, we will say that if, for example, someone can come into contact with the angels without ceasing to be locked up in his own individual and human conditions, he will not be further advanced from the initiatic point of view; here it is not a question of communicating with other beings who are in an 'angelic' state, but of attaining and realizing oneself as such in a supra-individual state, not, of course, as being human, which would obviously be absurd, but as being manifested as human in a certain state which also has in itself the possibilities of all other states. All initiatic realization is therefore essentially and purely 'internal,' contrary to this 'exit of the self' which constitutes 'ecstasy' in the proper and etymological sense of the word; this is certainly not the only difference, but at least one of the great differences which exist between the 'mystic' states, which belong entirely to the religious domain, and the initiatic states.

It is here that we must always come back to at last, because the confusion of the initiatic point of view with the mystic point of view is that which is most frequently committed, and in a way which does not seem always completely involuntary, the most serious 'deniers' of esoterism, we mean the religious exoterists who refuse to admit anything beyond their own domain, consider this assimilation or 'annexation' more clever than a brutish negation. To tell the truth, this is a rather new attitude, or one which at least has become very general in recent years; to disguise the most clearly initiatic Oriental doctrines as 'mysticism' has been a particularly urgent task of theirs, we do not have to look for the reasons for doing so, but only to notice this fact, of which we have already had the opportunity to report. However, in the religious sphere, there would be something which might be better suited to a rapprochement, or rather to an appearance of rapprochement in certain respects: this is what we

call the term 'ascetic,' because at least there is an 'active' method, instead of the absence of method and the 'passivity' that characterizes mysticism, but it goes without saying that these similarities are entirely external, and, on the other hand, this 'ascetic' perhaps only has goals too visibly limited to be advantageously used in this way, while with mysticism you never know exactly where you are going, and this very vagueness is certainly conducive to confusion. Only those who engage in this deliberate work, not those who follow them more or less unconsciously, seem to suspect that there is nothing vague or nebulous in all that relates to initiation, but, on the contrary, it deals with very precise and 'positive' things; all that we can present here shows it sufficiently, and besides, when we spoke of the conditions of initiation, we have explicitly indicated the reasons why it is incompatible with mysticism. The question probably has other aspects which we will perhaps return someday; for the moment we must be content with having once more underlined this particularly insidious character of this confusion, which is calculated to deceive minds that would not allow themselves to be caught up in the grosser deformations of the modern pseudo-initiation.



## The Hindu Theory of the Five Elements

*La théorie hindoue des cinq éléments*, August-September 1935.

We know that in the Hindu doctrine the 'cosmological' point of view is represented principally by the *Vaiśeṣika* and, in another aspect, by the *Sāṃkhya*, which can be characterized respectively as 'analytic' and 'synthetic.' The name *Vaiśeṣika* is derived from *viśeṣa*, which means 'distinctive character' and, consequently, 'individual thing'; it therefore properly designates the branch of the doctrine that applies to the knowledge of things in distinctive and individual fashion. This point of view is the one that corresponds most precisely to what the Greeks, especially in the 'pre-Socratic' period, called 'physical philosophy,' being subject to the differences which the respective modes of thought of two peoples necessarily entail. However, we prefer to use the term 'cosmology' to avoid any equivocation and to better mark the profound difference between what we are dealing with here and the physics of the moderns; indeed, this is how cosmology was understood in the Western Middle Ages.

Understanding in its object that which relates to sensory or corporeal things, which are eminently of the individual order, *Vaiśeṣika* deal with the theory of the elements, which are the constitutive principles of the bodies, with more detail than other branches of the doctrines; however, it must be remarked that we are obliged to appeal to the latter, especially to *Sāṃkhya*, when it comes to the question of what are the most universal principles from which these elements proceed. According to the Hindu doctrine, these are five in number; they are called *bhūta* in Sanskrit, a word derived from the verbal root *bhū*, which means 'to be,' but more particularly in the sense of 'to subsist,' i.e. that which designates the manifested being considered in its 'substantial' aspect (the 'essential' aspect being expressed by the root *as*). Consequently, a certain idea of 'becoming' also is attached to this word, because it is on the side of 'substance' that the root of all 'becoming' is, as opposed to the immutability of the 'essence'; it is in this sense that *Prakṛti* or the 'Universal Substance' can be appropriately designated as 'Nature,' a word which, like its Greek equivalent *phusis*, precisely implies everything above by its etymological derivation and the very idea of 'to become.' The elements are therefore regarded as substantial determinations, or, in other words, as modifica-

tions of *Prakṛti*, modifications which have only a purely accidental character in relation to this one, such as corporeal existence itself, as a mode defined by a certain set of determined conditions which is nothing more than a mere accident in relation to the Universal Existence envisaged in its entirety.

If we now consider the 'essence' correlatively to the 'substance' in the being, these two aspects being complementary to each other and corresponding to what we can call the two poles of the universal manifestation, which amounts to saying that they are the respective expressions of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* in this manifestation, it will be necessary for these substantial determinations which are the five corporeal elements to correspond to an equal number of essential determinations or of 'elementary essences,' which are, one could say, the 'archetypes,' the ideal or 'formal' principles in the Aristotelian sense of the latter word, which no longer belong to the corporeal domain, but that of the subtle manifestation. *Sāṃkhya* considers in this fact five elementary essences, which have received the name *tanmātra*: this term literally means a 'measure' or an 'assignment' delimiting the proper domain of a certain quality or 'quiddity' in the Universal Existence. It goes without saying that these *tanmātra*, by the very fact that they are of the subtle order, are in no way perceptible by the senses as the corporeal elements and their combinations; they are only 'conceivable' ideally, and they cannot receive particular designations except by analogy with the different orders of sensible qualities which correspond to them, since it is the quality which here is the contingent expression of the essence. In fact, they are usually referred to by the very names of these qualities: auditory or sound (*śabda*), tangible (*sparsa*), visible (*rūpa*, with the double meaning of form and color), sapid (*rasa*), olfactory (*gandha*); but we say that these designations should be taken only as analogical, because these qualities can be considered here only in the principal state and 'non-developed' in a way, since it is only by the *bhūta* that they will be, as we shall see, actually manifested in the sensory order. The conception of *tanmātra* is necessary when we want to relate the notion of elements to the principles of Universal Existence, to which it is still related, but this time on the 'substantial' side by another order of considerations of which we will have to speak later: on the other hand, this conception obviously does not have to intervene when one confines oneself to the study of individual existences and, as such, sensory qualities, and that is why it is undoubtedly a question of *Vaiśeṣika*, which, by definition, is placed precisely in this last point of view.

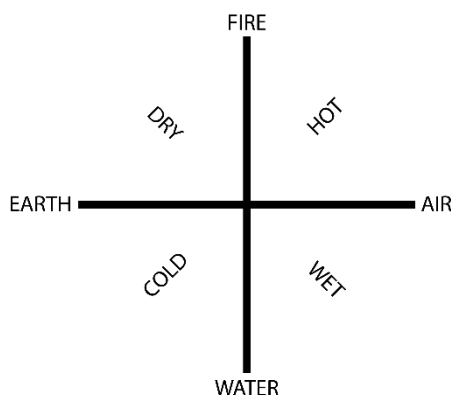
We will recall that the five elements recognized by the Hindu doctrine are the following: *ākāśa*, ether; *vāyu*, air; *tejas*, fire; *ap*, water; *pṛthivī*,

earth. This order is that of their development or their differentiation from the ether, which is the primordial element; it is always in this order that they are enumerated in all the texts of the *Veda* where it is mentioned, especially in the passages of the *Chândogy-Upaniṣad* and *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad* where their genesis is described, and their order of resorption or return to the undifferentiated state is naturally the opposite of this. On the other hand, each element corresponds to a sensory quality which is regarded as its own quality, that which essentially manifests its nature and by which this is known to us; the correspondence thus established between the five elements and the five senses is as follows: ether to hearing (*stotra*), air to touch (*tvac*), fire to sight (*cakṣus*), water to taste (*rasanā*), earth to smell (*ghrāṇa*), the order of development of the senses being also that of the elements to which they are linked and on which they directly depend, and this order is, of course, in conformity with that in which we have already enumerated the sensory qualities by relating them principally to the *tanmātras*. Moreover, any quality which is manifested in an element is equally so in the following, no longer as their proper belonging, but in so far as they proceed from the preceding elements; it would be contradictory indeed to suppose that the very process of the development of the manifestation, thus gradually taking place, can lead at a later stage to the return to the unmanifested state of which has already been developed in stages of lesser differentiation.

Before going further, we can, with regard to the number of elements and their order of derivation, as well as their correspondence with the sensory qualities, point out certain important differences with the theories of these Greek 'philosophic physicists' to which we alluded at the beginning. First, most of them have admitted only four elements, not recognizing the ether as a separate element; in this, curious enough, they agree with the Jains and the Buddhists, who are in opposition on this with orthodox Hindu doctrine, as is the case with many other points. However, we must make some exceptions, especially with Empedocles who admitted the five elements, but developed them in the following order: ether, fire, earth, water, and air, which seems difficult to justify; again, according to some,<sup>427</sup> this philosopher also would have admitted only four elements, which are then enumerated in a different order; earth, water, air, and fire. This last order is exactly the opposite as found in Plato; so, it may be necessary to no longer see the order of production of the elements, but on the contrary their order of resorption into one another. According to various accounts, the Orphics and the Pythagoreans recognized the five elements, which is perfectly normal given the strictly traditional character of their doctrines; later, Aristotle admitted

<sup>427</sup> Karl Ludwig Struve, *De Elementis Empedoclis*. (Dorpati: M. G. Grenzii, 1805).

them; in any case, the role of the ether has never been so important or so clearly defined among the Greeks as among the Hindus, at least in their exoteric schools. In spite of certain texts of *Phaedon* and *Timaeus*, which are undoubtedly of Pythagorean inspiration, Plato generally only considers four elements: for him, fire and earth are the extreme elements, air and water are the mean elements, and this order differs from the traditional order of the Hindus in that air and fire are interchanged; one may wonder if there is not a confusion between the order of production, if it is indeed really the same as Plato himself wanted to hear, and a distribution according to what one would call degrees of subtlety, which we will find again. Plato agrees with the Hindu doctrine by attributing visibility to fire as its own quality, but departs from it by attributing tangibility to earth, instead of attributing it to air. It seems rather difficult to find a rigorously established correspondence between the elements and the sensory qualities among the Greeks; it is easy to understand that this is so, because, considering only four elements, one should immediately perceive a gap in this correspondence, the number of five uniformly regarding the senses everywhere.



In Aristotle we find considerations of a very different character, in which there is also a question of qualities, but which are not the properly alleged sensory qualities; these considerations are in fact based on the combinations of hot and cold, which are respectively principles of expansion and condensation, with the dry and the wet; fire is hot and dry, air is hot and humid, water is cold and wet, ground is cold and dry. The groupings of these four qualities, which are opposed two by two, therefore concern only the four ordinary elements, to the exclusion of the ether, which is justified by the remark that this, as the primordial element, must contain within itself sets of opposites or complementary

qualities, thus coexisting in the neutral state insofar as it perfectly balances one with the other prior to their differentiation, which can be regarded as resulting precisely from a break in this original equilibrium. The ether must therefore be represented as situated at the point where the oppositions do not yet exist, but from which they occur, i.e., in the center of the cruciform figure whose branches correspond to the other four elements; this representation is indeed that adopted by the Hermetists of the Middle Ages, who expressly recognize the ether under the name 'quintessence' (*quinta essentia*), which implies an enumeration of the elements in an ascending order, or regressive, i.e., inverse to that of their production, for otherwise the ether would be the first element and not the fifth. It may also be remarked that it is in reality a 'substance' and not an 'essence,' in this regard the expression used shows a frequent confusion in medieval Latin terminology, where the distinction between 'essence' and 'substance,' in the sense that we have indicated, seems to have never been made very clearly, as we can only too easily realize in scholastic philosophy.<sup>428</sup>

While we are at these comparisons, we must still, on the other hand, warn against a false assimilation which sometimes arises in the Chinese doctrine, where we find something that is also ordinarily called the 'five elements'; these are enumerated thus: water, wood, fire, earth, metal, this order being considered, in this case again, as that of their production. What can be deceptive is that the number is the same on both sides, and that, out of five terms, three have equivalent denominations, but what could the other two correspond to, and how to make the order indicated here coincide with that of the Hindu doctrine.<sup>429</sup> The truth is that, notwithstanding the apparent similarities, this is an entirely different point of view, which would be irrelevant to examine here; to avoid confusion, it would certainly be much better to translate the Chinese word *wúxíng*

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<sup>428</sup> In the figure at the lead of Leibnitz's *Dissertatio de Arte Combinatoria*, which reflects the Hermetists' conception, the 'quintessence' is figured in the center of the cross of the elements (or, if we want the double cross of elements and qualities), by a rose with five petals, thus forming the Rosicrucian symbol. The expression *quinta essentia* can also be related to the 'fivefold nature of the ether,' which must be understood not as five different 'ethers' as some moderns have imagined (which is in contradiction with the indifferenciation of the primordial element), but of the ether envisaged in itself and as a principle of the four other elements; this is the alchemical interpretation of this five-petal rose which we have just spoken of.

<sup>429</sup> These 'five elements' are also arranged according to a cruciform figure formed by the double opposition of water and fire, wood and metal, but here the center is occupied by the earth.

into something other than 'elements,' for example, as it was proposed,<sup>430</sup> into 'agents,' which is closer to its real meaning.

These remarks being made, we must now reject first, if we wish to specify the notion of the elements without insisting on it at length, several erroneous opinions fairly commonly spread about this subject in our time. First of all, it is scarcely necessary to say, if the elements are the constitutive principles of the bodies, it is in a very different sense than that in which the chemists envisage the constitution of these bodies, when they regard them as resulting of the combination of certain 'simple bodies' or things self-styled as such: on the one hand, the multiplicity of the so-called simple bodies clearly oppose this assimilation, and, on the other hand, it is by no means proven that there are really simple bodies, this name being only given to those which chemists cannot decompose. In any case, the elements are not simple bodies, but the substantial principles from which bodies are formed; we must not be deceived by the fact that they are designated analogically by names which may be at the same time those of certain bodies, to which they are in no way identical for that purpose, and every body, whatever it may be, proceeds in fact from all five elements, although in its nature there may be a certain predominance of one or the other.

More recently, what has been attempted is the assimilation of elements to the different physical states of matter as modern physicists understand it, i.e., in sum to its different degrees of condensation, occurring from the homogeneous primordial ether, which fills the whole extant, uniting together all the parts of the corporeal world. From this point of view, from the densest to the most subtle, i.e., in an order opposite to their differentiation, we make a correspondence between the earth and the solid state, water and the liquid state, air and the gaseous state, and fire to an even more rare state, quite similar to what some physicists have called the 'radiant state,' and which should then be distinguished from the etheric state. We find there the vain concern which is so common nowadays, to accord traditional ideas with profane scientific conceptions; this is not to say that such a point of view cannot contain any part of truth, in the sense that we may admit that each of these physical states has certain more particular relations with a certain element, but this is nothing more than a correspondence and not an assimilation, which would be incompatible with the constant coexistence of all the elements in any body, whatever state presents itself. It would be even less legitimate to want to go further than to pretend to identify the elements with the sensory qualities which, from another point of view, are connected

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<sup>430</sup> Marcel Granet, *La Pensée chinoise*. (Paris: La Renaissance du livre, 1934), p. 313.

with them much more directly. On the other hand, the order of increasing condensation thus established between the elements is the same as that which we have found in Plato: he places fire before air and immediately after ether, as if it was the first differentiating element within this original cosmic medium, so it is not in this way that one can find the justification of the traditional order affirmed by the Hindu doctrine. Moreover, we must always take the greatest care to avoid confining ourselves exclusively to a point of view that is too systematic, i.e., one that is too narrowly limited and particularized; it would certainly be misunderstanding the theory of Aristotle and Hermetists that we have indicated, that seek, under the pretext that it involves principles of expansion and condensation, to interpret it in favor of an identification of elements with the various physical states just mentioned.

If one is absolutely interested in finding a point of comparison with physical theories, in the present meaning of the word, it would undoubtedly be more accurate to consider the elements as representing different vibratory modes of matter by referring to their correspondence with the sensory qualities, the modes under which it is successively perceptible to each of our senses; when we say successively, it must be understood that this is only a purely logical succession.<sup>431</sup> Only, when one speaks thus of the vibratory modes of matter, as well as when it is a question of its physical states, it is a point to which one must pay attention: it is that among the Hindus at least (and even among the Greeks to a certain extent), we do not find the notion of matter in the sense of modern physicists; the proof of this is that, as we have already remarked elsewhere, there exists in Sanskrit no word which can even be translated as 'matter.' If, therefore, it is permissible to use this notion of matter to sometimes interpret the conceptions of the ancients in order to make oneself understood more easily, one must never do so with certain precautions, but it is possible to envisage vibratory states, for example, without necessarily appealing to the special properties which the moderns essentially attribute to matter. Despite this, such a conception seems even more apt to analogically indicate what the elements are by means of an image, if we can say so, than to really define them; perhaps this is basically all that can be done in the language that we currently have at our disposal, as a result of the oblivion into which the traditional ideas have fallen in the Western world.

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<sup>431</sup> It goes without saying that one cannot think in anyway of realizing, assuming a chronological succession in the exercise of the different senses, a conception in the style of the ideal pillar that Condillac imagined in his famous *Treatise on the Sensations*.

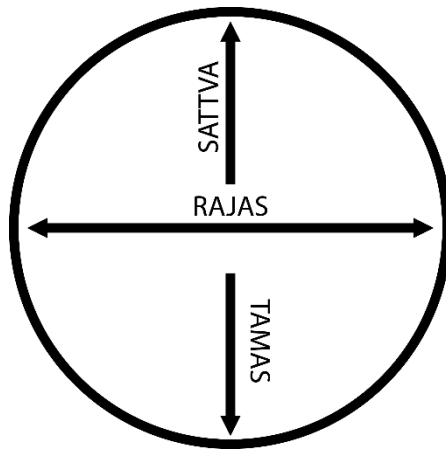
However, we will add this: the sensory qualities express, in relation to our human individuality, the conditions that characterize and determine the corporeal existence as a particular mode of the Universal Existence, since it is by these qualities that we know the body to the exclusion of everything else; we can therefore see in the elements the expression of these same conditions of corporeal existence, no longer from the human point of view, but from the cosmic point of view. It is not possible for us to give here the questions which it would include, but at least one can immediately understand by this how the sensory qualities proceed from the elements, as a translation or 'microcosmic' reflection of the corresponding 'macrocosmic' realities. It is also understood that the bodies, being properly defined by the set of conditions in question, are thereby constituted as such by the elements in which they are 'substantialized'; and this, it seems, is the most precise notion that one can give of these same elements.

Following this we shall proceed to other considerations which will show even better how the conception of elements is connected not only with the special conditions of corporeal existence, but also with conditions of existence of a more universal order and, more specifically, to the very conditions of every manifestation. We know how important the Hindu doctrine is to the consideration of the three *guṇāḥ*: this term designates constitutive and primordial qualities or attributions of the beings envisaged in their different states of manifestation, that they derive from the 'substantial' principle of their existence, because, from the universal point of view, they are inherent in *Prakṛti*, in which they are in perfect equilibrium in the 'indistinction' of pure undifferentiated potentiality. Any manifestation or modification of the 'substance' represents a rupture of this equilibrium; the manifested beings thus participate in the three *guṇāḥ* to varying degrees, and they are not states, but general conditions to which they are subjected in any state, by which they are in some way connected, which determine the present tendency of their 'becoming.' We do not have to enter into a complete account of the *guṇāḥ* here, but only to consider its application to the distinction of the elements; we will not even return to the definition of each *guṇa*, which we have already given on several occasions. We will only recall, for this is what matters most here, that *sattva* is represented as an ascending tendency, *tamas* as a descending tendency, and *rajas*, which is an intermediary between the two, as an expansion in the horizontal direction.

The three *guṇāḥ* must be found in each of the elements as in all that belongs to the domain of universal manifestation; they are found in different proportions, establishing between these elements a kind of hierarchy, which can be regarded as analogous to the hierarchy which, from



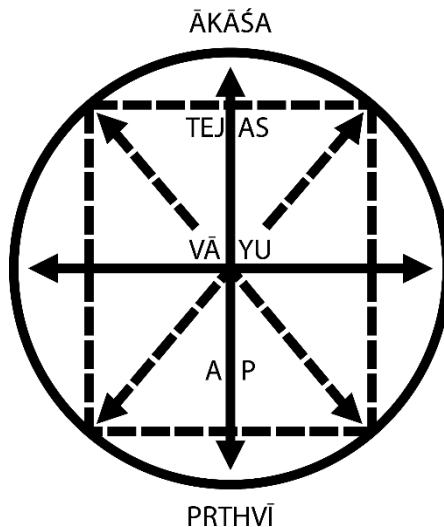
another incomparably more extensive point of view, established in the same way between the multiple states of the Universal Existence, although there are only simple terms included within one and the same state. In water and earth, but especially in the earth, it is predominately *tamas*; physically, this downward and compressive force corresponds to gravitation or gravity. *Rajas* has predominance in the air; this element is regarded as endowed essentially with a transverse movement. In fire, it is predominately *sattva*, because the fire is the luminous element; the ascending force is symbolized by the tendency of the flame to rise, and it is physically translated by the expanding power of heat, as this power opposes the condensation of bodies.



To give a more precise interpretation of this, we can outline the distinction of elements as occurring within a sphere: in this sphere, the two ascending and descending tendencies we have spoken of will be exercised according to the two opposite directions taken on the same vertical axis, in opposing directions from each other and going respectively to the two poles; as for the expansion in the horizontal direction, which marks a balance between these two tendencies, it will be accomplished naturally in the plane perpendicular to the middle of this vertical axis, i.e. the plane of the equator. If we now consider the elements as being distributed in this sphere according to the tendencies which predominate in them, earth, by virtue of the descending tendency of gravitation, must occupy the lowest point, which is regarded as the region of darkness and which is the bottom of the waters at the same time, while the equator marks their surface, according to a symbolism which is common to all the cosmogonic doctrines in whatever traditional form they belong.

Water thus occupies the lower hemisphere, and if the descending tendency is still affirmed in the nature of this element, we cannot say that

its action is exercised in an exclusive (or almost exclusive, necessary co-existence of the three *gunāḥ* in all things preventing the extreme limit from ever being attained in any mode of manifestation whatsoever), for, if we consider any point in the lower hemisphere other than the pole, the radius which corresponds to this point has an oblique direction, an intermediary between the descending vertical and the horizontal. We may therefore regard the tendency marked by such a direction as decomposing into two others of which it is the resultant, which will respectively be the actions of *tamas* and *rajas*; if we relate these two actions to the qualities of water, the vertical component, as a function of *tamas*, will correspond to density, and the horizontal component, as a function of *rajas*, to fluidity. The equator marks the intermediate region, which is that of air, a neutral element which keeps the balance between the two opposing tendencies, like *rajas* between *tamas* and *sattva*, to the point where these two tendencies neutralize each other and which, extending transversely on the surface of the waters, separates and delimits the respective zones of water and fire. Indeed, the upper hemisphere is occupied by fire, in which the action of *sattva* predominates, but where that of *rajas* is still exercised, because the tendency in each point of this hemisphere, indicated as previously for the lower hemisphere, is the intermediate between the horizontal and the ascending vertical this time: the horizontal component, as a function of *rajas*, will correspond to heat here, and the vertical component, as a function of *sattva*, to light, as heat and light are considered as two complementary terms that unite in the nature of the igneous element.



In all this, we have not yet spoken of the ether: as it is the highest and the most subtle of all the elements, we must place it at the highest point, i.e. the highest pole, which is the region of pure light, as opposed to the lower pole which is, as we have said, the region of darkness. Thus, the ether dominates the sphere of the other elements; but, at the same time, it must also be considered as enveloping and penetrating all these elements, of which it is the principle, because of the state of undifferentiation which characterizes it, and which allows it to realize a true 'omnipresence' in the corporeal world; as *Śaṅkarācārya* says in *Ātma-Bodhaḥ*, "the ether is poured everywhere and it penetrates both the exterior and the interior of things." We can therefore say that among the elements the ether alone reaches the point where the action of *sattva* is exercised in the highest degree; we cannot locate it exclusively, as we did for the earth at the opposite point, we must consider it as occupying the whole of the elementary domain at the same time, whatever the geometric representation used to symbolize the whole of this domain. If we have adopted the representation by a spherical figure, it is not only because it is the one that allows the easiest and clearest interpretation, but it is also, and above all, because it agrees better than any other with the general principles of cosmogonic symbolism as can be found in all traditions; there would be very interesting comparisons in this regard, but we cannot enter into these developments here, which would deviate too far from the subject of the present study.

Before leaving this part of our exposé, we have one last remark to make: if we take the elements in the order in which we have distributed them in their sphere, going from highest to lowest, i.e. from the most subtle to the most dense, we find the exact order indicated by Plato, but here this order, which we may call hierarchical, is not to be confused with the order of production of the elements and this must be carefully distinguished. In fact, air occupies an intermediate rank between fire and water, but it is nonetheless produced before the fire and, to tell the truth, the reason for these two different situations is basically the same: it is that air is a neutral element in a way, and which, by the same token, corresponds to a state of less differentiation than fire and water, because the two ascending and descending tendencies are still in perfect equilibrium between the two. On the contrary, this equilibrium is broken in favor of the ascending tendency in fire and in favor of the descending tendency in water, the opposition manifested between the respective qualities of these two elements clearly marks the state of greater differentiation to which they correspond. If we look from the point of view of the production of the elements, we must look at their differentiation as taking place from the center of the sphere, the primordial point where we

will then place the ether as their principle; from there, we will first have the horizontal expansion, corresponding to air, then the manifestation of the ascending tendency, corresponding to fire, and then that of the descending tendency, corresponding first to water and then to the earth, the stopping point and the final end of all elementary differentiation.

We must now go into some details regarding the properties of each of the five elements, and first establish that the first of them, *ākāśa* or ether, is indeed a real element and distinct from the others. Indeed, as we have already pointed out above, some, notably the Buddhists, do not recognize it as such on the pretext that it is *nirūpa*, i.e. 'without form,' due to its homogeneity they look at it as a 'non-entity' and identify it with emptiness, because, for them, the homogeneous can only be a pure emptiness. The theory of the 'universal void' (*sarva śūnyatā*) is presented here as a direct and logical consequence of atomism, for if there are only those atoms that have a positive existence in the corporeal world, and if these atoms must move to aggregate with one another thus forming all bodies, this movement will be able to take place only in the void. However, this consequence is not accepted by the school of *Kaṇāda*, the representative of *Vaiśeṣika*, but this view is precisely heterodox in that it admits atomism, which, naturally, this 'cosmological' point of view is not at all integral in itself; conversely, the Greek 'philosophic physicists' who do not count ether among the elements are far from being all atomists, and they seem more to ignore it rather than expressly reject it. Be that as it may, the Buddhists' opinion easily refutes itself by pointing out that there can be no empty space, such a conception being contradictory: in the entire domain of universal manifestation, which space is apart, there cannot be emptiness, because emptiness, which can only be conceived negatively, is not a possibility of manifestation; moreover, this conception of an empty space would be that of a container without content, which is obviously meaningless. The ether is therefore what occupies all space, but it should not be confused with space itself, because this, being only a container, i.e. in sum a condition of existence and not an independent entity, cannot be the substantial principles of bodies, nor can it give birth to other elements. Ether is therefore not space, but rather the content of the space envisaged prior to any differentiation in this state of primordial undifferentiation, which is like an image of *Prakṛti*'s 'indistinctness' in relation to this special domain of manifestation which is the corporeal world, the ether already contains in power, not only all the elements, but also all the bodies, and its homogeneity even makes it fit to receive all forms in its modifications. Being the principle of corporeal things, it possesses quantity, which is a fundamental attribute common

to all bodies; moreover, it is regarded as essentially simple, always because of its homogeneity, and it is regarded as impenetrable, because it is that which penetrates everything.

Being established in this way, the existence of the ether presents itself quite differently than a mere hypothesis, this shows the profound difference which separates the traditional doctrine from all modern scientific theories. However, another objection is to be considered: ether is a real element, but that does not suffice to prove that it is a distinct element; in other words, it could be that the element that is spread throughout the whole corporeal space (we mean the space capable of containing bodies) is not other than air, and then it is air that would actually be the primordial element. The response to this objection is that each of our senses makes us know, as its own object, a quality distinct from those known by the other senses, but a quality can exist only in something to which it is related as an attribute is in relation to it, and, as each sensory quality is thus attributed to an element of which it is the characteristic property, it is necessary that five senses correspond to five distinct elements.

The sensory quality which is related to the ether is sound; this requires some explanation, which will be easily understood if one considers the mode of production of sound by vibratory movement, which is far from being a recent discovery as some might believe, because Kaṇāda expressly declares that "sound is propagated by waves, wave after wave, radiating in all directions from a given center." Such a movement propagates around its starting point by concentric waves, uniformly distributed in all directions of space, giving rise to the figure of an indefinite and unclosed spheroid. This is the least differentiated movement of all, because of what we call its 'isotropism,' and that is why it will be able to give birth to all the other movements, which will differ from it in so far as they will no longer be uniform in all directions; likewise, all the more particularized forms will proceed from the original spherical form. Thus, the differentiation of the originally homogeneous ether, the differentiation which gives rise to the other elements, originates in an elementary movement occurring in the manner we have just described, from an initial point in this indefinite cosmic medium, but this elementary movement is nothing else than the prototype of the sonic ripple. The auditory sensation is the only one that makes us directly perceive a vibratory movement; even if we admit, with most modern physicists, that the other sensations come from a transformation of similar movements, it is none the less true that they differ qualitatively as sensations, which is the only essential consideration here. Furthermore, after what has just been said, it is in the ether that the cause of sound lies, but it is well understood that this cause must be distinguished from the various media which can serve

secondarily to the propagation of sound, and which contribute to make it perceptible to us by amplifying the elementary etheric vibrations, all the more so as these mediums become more dense. Let us finally add, in this connection, that the sound quality is equally sensory in the other four elements, as these all proceed from the ether. Apart from these considerations, the attribution of the sound quality to the ether, i.e. the first of the elements, has yet another profound reason, which is related to the doctrine of the primordially and the perpetuity of sound; this is a point to which we can only make a simple allusion in passing.

The second element, the one that first differentiates from ether, is *vāyu* or air; the word *vāyu*, derived from the verbal root *vā*, which means 'to go' or 'to move,' properly designates the breath of the word, and, consequently, mobility is considered as the essential character of this element. More precisely, air is, as we have already said, regarded as endowed with a transversal movement, a movement in which all the directions of space no longer play the same role as in the spheroidal movement, which we have had to consider previously, but which, on the contrary, proceeds in a certain particular direction; therefore, it is the rectilinear motion which gives rise to the determination of this direction. This propagation of the movement according to certain determined directions implies a rupture of the homogeneity of the cosmic medium; we therefore have a complex motion, which, no longer being 'isotropic,' must be constituted by a combination or a coordination of elementary vibratory movements. Such a movement gives rise to equally complex forms, and, as the form is what firstly affects touch, the tangible quality can be referred as belonging to air, as this element is, by its mobility, the principle of the differentiation of forms. It is therefore by the effect of mobility that air is made sensible to us; analogically, moreover, atmospheric air becomes sensitive to touch only by its displacement, but, following the remark we made above in a general way, we must be careful not to identify the element air with this atmospheric air, which is a body, as some did not fail to do in noting some similarities of this type. Thus, Kaṇāda declares that air is colorless, but it is very easy to understand that this must be so without referring to the properties of atmospheric air, for color is a quality of fire, and this is logically posterior to air in the order of development of the elements; this quality is not yet manifested at the stage represented by air.

The third element is *tejas* or fire, which manifests itself to our senses in two principle aspects, as light and heat; the quality which belongs to it in its own right is visibility, and in this respect it is under its luminous aspect that fire must be considered, this is too obvious to warrant any explanation, because it is obviously by light alone that the bodies are

made visible. According to Kaṇāda, "light is colored, and it is the principle of the coloring of bodies." Color is therefore a characteristic property of light: in light itself, it is white and resplendent; in the various bodies, it is variable, and we can distinguish among its modifications as simple colors and mixed or blended colors. It should be noted that the Pythagoreans, reported by Plutarch, also affirmed that "colors are nothing but a reflection of light, modified in different ways"; it would be very wrong to see a discovery of modern science here. Furthermore, in its caloric aspect, fire is sensitive to touch, in which it produces the impression of temperature; air is neutral in this respect, since it is anterior to fire, heat is an aspect of it, as for cold, it is regarded as a characteristic property of water. Thus, with regards to temperature as well as to the action of the two ascending and descending tendencies that we have previously defined, fire and water oppose one another, while air is in a state of equilibrium between these two elements. Moreover, if we consider that cold increases the density of the bodies by contracting them, while heat dilates and subtilizes them, we will recognize without difficulty that the correlation of heat and cold with fire and water respectively is included, as a special application and a simple consequence, in the general theory of the three *guṇāḥ* and their distribution throughout the elementary domain.

The fourth element, *ap* or water, has for its characteristic properties, besides the cold of which we have just spoken, density or gravity, which it has in common with earth, and fluidity or viscosity, which is the quality which is essentially different from all other elements; we have already pointed out the correlation of these two properties with the respective actions of *tamas* and *rajas*. Furthermore, the sensory quality that corresponds to water is flavor; it may be incidentally remarked, though there is no point in attaching too much importance to considerations of this type, that this is in agreement with the opinion of modern physiologists who think that a body is 'sapid' only so far as it can dissolve in saliva, in other words, flavor in any body is a consequence of fluidity.

Finally, the fifth and final element is *pr̥thvī* or earth, which no longer possesses fluidity as water corresponds to the most condensed body mode of all; it is in this element that we find gravity at its highest degree, which manifests itself in the descent or fall of bodies. The sensory quality that is peculiar to earth is smell; therefore, this quality is regarded as residing in solid particles which, detaching themselves from bodies, meet the organ of smell. On this point again, there does not seem to be any disagreement with the current physiologic theories; but, even if there was some disagreement, it would not matter, because the error should

then be on the side of profane science and not of traditional doctrine in any case.

In conclusion, we shall say a few words of the way in which the Hindu doctrine envisages the organs of the senses in relation to the elements: since each sensory quality proceeds from an element in which it essentially resides, the organ by which this quality is perceived to be in conformity with it, i.e. that it is itself of the nature of the corresponding element. It is thus that the real organs of the senses are constituted, and it is necessary, contrary to the Buddhists' opinion, to distinguish them from the external organs, i.e. from the parts of the human body which are only their seats and their instruments. Thus, the true organ of hearing is not the pavilion of the ear, but the portion of the ether which is contained in the inner ear that vibrates under the influence of a sound ripple; Kaṇāda observes that it is not the first wave nor the intermediate waves that make the sound, but the final wave that comes into contact with the organ of hearing. Likewise, the true organ of sight is not the globe of the eye, nor even the retina, but a luminous principle which resides in the eye that comes into communication with the light emanating or reflected from the external objects; the brightness of the eye is not ordinarily visible, but it can become so in certain circumstances, especially in animals that see in the darkness of the night. Moreover, it should be noted that the ray of light through which the visual perception takes place, and which extends between the eye and the perceived object, can be considered in both directions, on the one hand as starting at the eye and reaching the object, and secondly, reciprocally, as coming from the object towards the pupil of the eye; a similar theory of vision is found among the Pythagoreans, and this also accords with Aristotle's definition of sensation, conceived as "the common act of the perceiver and the perceived." Considerations of the same type could be given to the organs of each of the other senses; we believe, through these examples, we have given sufficient indications in this regard.

Such is, in its broad outlines and interpreted as precisely as possible, the Hindu theory of the element, which, in addition to its own self-interest, is capable of making us more generally understand what is the 'cosmological' point of view in traditional doctrines.



## Myths, Mysteries, and Symbols

*Mythes, mystères et symbols*, October 1935.

We have spoken occasionally of a certain degeneration of symbolism as having given birth to 'mythology,' taking this word in the sense that it is most usually given, which is indeed true when it comes to so-called 'classic' antiquity, but which would not validly apply outside the period of Greek and Latin civilizations. We therefore believe that the use of this term everywhere should be avoided, the act of which can only give rise to unpleasant equivocations and unjustified assimilations; if the use imposes this restriction, it must be said that the word 'myth,' in itself and in its original meaning, contains nothing which marks such a later degeneration, solely due to a more or less complete incomprehension of what remains a very ancient tradition. It should be added, if one can speak of 'myths' as far as this tradition itself is concerned, provided that the true meaning of the word is restored, there was no such thing as 'mythology,' which, as the modern ones would understand it, is nothing more than a study undertaken 'from the outside' and therefore, one may say, involving a misunderstanding in the second degree.

Sometimes it has been attempted to establish a distinction between 'myths' and 'symbols' which does not seem well-founded to us: for some, where myth is a narrative with a meaning other than that which the words composing it express directly and literally, the symbol would essentially be a figurative representation of certain ideas by a geometric scheme or by any design; the symbol would properly then be a graphic mode of expression and the myth a verbal mode. There is here a totally unacceptable restriction, as can be easily understood by all that we have already stated on other occasions: indeed, any image which is taken to represent an idea, to express it or to suggest it in anyway and to whatever degree, is thereby a sign or, amounting to the same thing, a symbol of that idea. It does not matter whether it is a visual image or any other kind of image, because it introduces no essential difference here and does not absolutely change the very principle of symbolism. In any case, the latter is always based on a relationship of analogy or correspondence between the idea that is to be expressed and the image, be it graphic, verbal, or otherwise, by which it is expressed. We have said elsewhere that we could consider the symbols as being mainly divided into those that are

graphic and those that are acoustic; from this point of view, the words themselves are and cannot be anything other than symbols. One could even, instead of speaking of an idea and an image as we have just done, speak more generally of two realities of any kind, of different orders, between which there exists a correspondence having both its foundation in the nature of both: in these conditions, a reality of a certain order can be represented by a reality of another order, and this is then a symbol.

Having thus recalled the principle of symbolism once again, we see that it is obviously capable of a multitude of different modalities, myth is only a particular case constituting one of these modes; we could say that the symbol is the genus, and myth is one of its species. In other words, one can envisage a symbolic narrative as well as a symbolic drawing, or many other things that have the same character and play the same role; myths are symbolic accounts, as are 'parables,' which do not basically and essentially differ from them, it does not seem to us that there is anything there that gives rise to the slightest confusion, since we have understood the general notion of symbolism.

That being said, it is necessary to specify the proper meaning of the word 'myth' itself, which may lead us to certain important remarks which relate to the character and function of symbolism envisaged in the more definite sense in which it differs from ordinary language and opposes it in certain respects. We commonly look at the word 'myth' as being a synonym of 'fable,' simply meaning a fiction of some kind, most often of a more or less poetic character; this is the effect of the degeneration of which we spoke at the beginning, and the Greeks, whose language is borrowed for this term, certainly have their share of responsibility in what is really a profound alteration and a deviation from the original meaning. In fact, with the Greeks, individual fantasy soon began to give free rein to all forms of art, which, instead of remaining strictly hieratic and symbolic, as among the Egyptians and peoples of the Orient, soon took a completely different direction, aiming much less to instruct and more to please, resulting in productions which are almost devoid of any real meaning where we find no trace of this eminently 'exact' science that is true symbolism; this is, in short, the beginning of what we may call profane art and it coincides appreciably with that of equally profane thought which, due to the exercise of the same individual fantasy in another domain, was to be known under the name 'philosophy.' Aesthetic fantasy was exercised in particular on the pre-existing myths: poets, who were by then no longer sacred and possessing the 'supra-human' influence as at their origin, by developing and modifying myths with their own imagination, by surrounding them with superfluous and vain orna-

ments, obscured and distorted myths so that it often became very difficult to rediscover their meaning and to identify their essential elements, except perhaps in comparison with similar symbols that may be encountered elsewhere which have not undergone the same deformation; it can be said that finally myth was no more, at least for the greatest number, but a misunderstood symbol which remains for the modern ones. But this is only an abuse and, we might say, 'profanation' in the true sense of the word; what must be considered is that the myth was essentially a symbolic narrative before any deformation, as we have said above, and this was its sole *raison d'être*, and, from this point of view already, 'myth' is not entirely synonymous with 'fable,' because this latter word (in Latin *fabula*, from *fari*, to speak) does not etymologically indicate any narrative, without specifying the intention or the character in any way; here too, the meaning of 'fiction' came to be attached to it only later. There is more: these two terms 'myth' and 'fable,' which we have come to take as equivalents, are derived from roots which in reality have an opposite meaning, for while the root of 'fable' refers to the spoken word, that of 'myth,' strange as it may seem at first glance when related to a recitation, refers to silence.

Indeed, the Greek word *muthos*, 'myth,' originates with the root *mu*, and this root (which is found in the Latin *mutus*, mute) represents the closed mouth, and hence silence.<sup>432</sup> This is the meaning of the word *muein*, to close one's mouth, to be silent (and, by an analogic extension, it also comes to mean the eyes, literally and figuratively); the review of some of the derivatives of this verb is particularly informative. Thus, from *muo* (and to the infinitive *muein*) two other verbs are immediately derived which differ only a little in form, *muao* and *mueo*; the first has the same meanings as *muo*, and we must add another derivative, *mullo*, which means to close the lips, and also to murmur without opening the mouth (the Latin *murmur* is also the root *mu* extended by the letter *R* and repeated, so as to represent a dull and continuous noise produced with the mouth closed). As for *mueo*, and this is what is most important, it means initiation (into 'mysteries,' whose name is derived from the same root as we shall later see, and precisely by means of *mueo* and *mustes*), and, consequently, both to instruct (but firstly to instruct without words, as it actually was in the mysteries) and to consecrate; we should even say in the first place to consecrate, if one understands by 'consecration,' as it ordinarily should be, the transmission of a 'spiritual influence,' or the rite by which it is regularly transmitted. What later came from this latter

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<sup>432</sup> The *Mutus Liber* of the Hermetists is literally the 'Silent Book,' i.e. without verbal commentary, but it is also the book of symbols at the same time, as symbolism can truly be regarded as the 'language of silence.'

meaning, in Christian ecclesiastic language, that of conferring ordination, which is indeed also a 'consecration' in this sense, though in a different order from that of the initiatic.

But it will be said, if the word 'myth' has such an origin, how is it that it could have been used to designate a narrative of some kind? This idea of 'silence' must be related here to things which, because of their very nature, are inexpressible, at least directly and by ordinary language; one of the general functions of symbolism is indeed to suggest the inexpressible, to make it approachable, or even better 'to assert,' by the transpositions it allows to perform from one order to another, from the inferior to the superior, from what is most immediately grasped to that which is much more difficult, and this is precisely the premier destination of myths. Moreover, even in the 'classical' period, Plato still resorts to the use of myths when he wishes to expose conceptions that go beyond the scope of his usual dialectical means; these myths, which he certainly has not 'invented' rather he only 'adapted,' for they bear the indisputable mark of a traditional teaching (as do certain processes which he uses for the interpretation of words), these myths, we say, are far from being nothing more than the more or less negligible literary ornaments that modern commentators and 'critics' see all too often, for whom it is assuredly more convenient to dismiss them thus without any other examination than to give an approximate explanation. On the contrary, they respond to what is most profound in Plato's thought, that which is removed from individual contingencies, because of this very profoundness, it can only be expressed symbolically; the dialectic often contains a certain amount of 'play' in it, which is very much in keeping with the Greek mentality, but when it is abandoned for the myth, we can be sure that the game has stopped and that it is dealing with things that have a 'sacred' character.

In myth, what is said is something else than what one wishes to say; we may remark in passing that this is also what the word 'allegory' etymologically means (from *allos agoreuo*, literally 'to say something else'), which gives us yet another example of the deviations of meaning due to common usage, because it now only designates a conventional and 'literary' representation of purely moral or psychological intention, and which, more often than not, manifests into what is commonly called 'personified abstractions'; it is scarcely necessary to say that nothing could be further from true symbolism. But, to return to myth, if he does not say what he means, he suggests it by this analogical correspondence which

is the foundation and the very essence of all symbolism; thus, we might say, to keep quiet while speaking is where myth has gotten its name.<sup>433</sup>

What remains is for us to draw attention to the kinship between the words 'myth' and 'mystery,' both stemming from the same root: the Greek word *musterion*, 'mystery,' is also directly related to the idea of 'silence'; this can be interpreted in several different but interrelated meanings, each of which has its own *raison d'être* in a certain point of view. First, let us remark that, according to the derivation which we have indicated previously (of *mueo*), the principal meaning of this word is that which refers to initiation, and it is thus indeed, that it must be understood that is what was called 'mysteries' in Greek antiquity. On the other hand, what still shows the truly odd fate of certain words is that another term closely related to the ones we have just mentioned is that of 'mysticism,' which, etymologically, applies to everything regarding the mysteries: *mustikos*, in fact, is the adjective of *mustes*, initiated; it is therefore originally equivalent to 'initiatic' and refers to everything that relates to initiation, both in its doctrine and its very purpose (but, in this ancient sense, it can never be applied to people). Now, among the modern ones, this same word 'mystic,' alone among all these terms of common stock, has come to exclusively designate something which, as we have explained on different occasions, has absolutely nothing in common with initiation and is even the opposite of it in some respects.

Let us return to the various meanings of the word 'mystery': in the most immediate sense, we would say the most gross or at least the most exterior, the mystery is what we should not speak of, what we should keep silent, or what is forbidden to make known to the outside; it is thus that we hear it most commonly, even when it comes to the ancient mysteries, and, in the more common meaning it later received, the word hardly has any meaning other than that. However, this prohibition of revealing certain rites and certain teachings must in fact, while taking into account the considerations of expediency which may certainly have played a part in them, but which are never more than a purely contingent consideration, should be considered especially as having a symbolic

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<sup>433</sup> We can remark that this is what these words of Christ also signify, which confirms the fundamental identity of the 'myth' and the 'parable' that we have pointed out above: "For those who are on the outside (an expression exactly equivalent to that of 'profane'), I speak to them in parables, for they look but do not see and hear but do not listen" (*Matthew*, 13:13; *Mark*, 4:11-12; *Luke*, 8:10). There are those who only grasp what is said literally and who are unable to go beyond to reach the inexpressible, and to whom, therefore, "knowing the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven has not been given"; the use of the word 'mystery' in this last sentence of the Gospel is especially noteworthy in connection with the considerations that follow.

value; we have already explained ourselves on this point when we have dealt with the true nature of initiatic secrecy. What has been called the 'discipline of secrecy,' which was just as prevalent in the primitive Christian church as in the ancient mysteries (which some opponents of esoterism seem to forget a little too easily), is very far from what appears as a simple precaution against hostility, which is very real and often dangerous, due to the misunderstanding of the profane world; we see there other reasons of a much more profound order, and which can be indicated by the other meanings contained in the word 'mystery.' Further, in this connection, it is not by mere coincidence that there is a close similarity between the words 'sacred' (*sacratum*) and 'secret' (*secretum*): in both, they are what is set apart (*secernere*, to set apart, whence the participle *secretum*), reserved, separated from the profane domain; in the same way, the consecrated place is called *templum*, whose root *tem* (which is found in the Greek *temno*, cut, retrench, separate, whence *temenos*, sacred enclosure) also expresses the same idea, and 'contemplation,' whose name comes from the same root, is still effectively related to this idea by its strictly 'interior' character.<sup>434</sup>

According to the second meaning of the word 'mystery,' which is already less external, it designates what one must receive in silence,<sup>435</sup> what is not advisable to discuss; from this point of view, all the traditional doctrines, including the religious dogmas which constitute a special case, can be called mysteries (the meaning of this word then extending to domains other than the initiatic domain, but where they also exert a 'supra-human' influence), because they are truths that, by their very nature, are above all discussion.<sup>436</sup> We can say, to relate this meaning to the first, to unknowingly spread among the profane the mysteries thus heard, it is inevitable to engage them in discussion, a profane process par excellence, with all the inconveniences which may result from it and which can be summed up perfectly by the word 'profanation' which we already used previously referring to another subject, which must be taken here in its most literal and complete meaning; the destructive work

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<sup>434</sup> It is therefore etymologically absurd to speak of 'contemplating' any external spectacle, as the modern ones sometimes do, for whom the true meaning of words seems to be completely lost in many cases.

<sup>435</sup> We can recall here the prescription of silence imposed on the disciples in certain initiatic schools, especially in the Pythagorean school.

<sup>436</sup> This is nothing other than the very infallibility that is inherent in any traditional doctrine.

of modern 'criticism' of any tradition is too eloquent an example of what we wish to say to make it necessary to insist further.<sup>437</sup>

Finally, there is a third meaning, the most profound of all, according to which the mystery is properly inexpressible, that one can only contemplate in silence (and it is advisable to remember here what we said just now about the origin of the word 'contemplation'); as the inexpressible is also the incommunicable, the prohibition of revealing the sacred teaching symbolizes, in this new point of view, the impossibility of expressing in words the true mystery which this teaching is only clothing so to speak, manifesting and veiling the entirety.<sup>438</sup> The teaching concerning the inexpressible can obviously only suggest it by means of appropriate images, which will be like the supports of contemplation; from what we have explained, this amounts to saying that such teaching necessarily takes the symbolic form. Such was always, and among all peoples, one of the essential characteristics of the initiation into mysteries, by whatever name it has been designated; we can therefore say that symbols, and in particular, myths, when this teaching was translated into words, truly constitute the very language of initiation in their premiere destination.

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<sup>437</sup> This meaning of the word 'mystery,' which is also attached to the word 'sacred' because of what we have said above, is marked very clearly in this precept of the Gospel: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot, and turn against you and tear you apart" (*Matthew*, 7:6). It will be noted that the profane are symbolically represented here by the animals considered as 'impure,' in the ritual sense of this word.

<sup>438</sup> The vulgar conception of 'mysteries,' especially when applied to the religious domain, implies a manifest confusion between 'inexpressible' and 'incomprehensible,' a confusion that is completely unjustified, except in relation to the intellectual limitations of certain individualities.

# Dharma

*Dharma*, October 1935.

The word *dharma* seems to be one of the Sanskrit terms that confuses most translators and this is not without reason, because, in fact, it has multiple meanings and it is certainly impossible to make its meaning known uniformly by a single word in another language; perhaps it is even better to keep it as is purely and simply, provided it is explained by commentary. Mr. Gualtherus H. Mees, who devoted a recent book towards this topic,<sup>439</sup> which, although being confined almost exclusively to the social point of view, shows more understanding than is found in most Westerners, rightly points out that if there is in this term a certain indeterminacy, being by no means synonymous with being vague, it does not prove that the conceptions of the ancients have lacked clarity or that they have not been able to distinguish between the different aspects of what is in question. This claimed vagueness, of which we could find many examples, rather indicates that the thought of the ancients was much less restricted than that of the modern ones, and, instead of being analytical like them, it was essentially synthetic. Moreover, there remains something of this indeterminacy in a term such as 'law,' for example, which also encloses very different meanings from each other; this word 'law' is precisely, along with the word 'order,' one of those which, in many cases, may render the idea of *dharma* in the least imperfect way.

We know that *dharma* is derived from the root *dhr*, which means to carry, support, sustain, maintain;<sup>440</sup> it is therefore properly a principle of conservation of being, and therefore of stability, so far as it is compatible with the conditions of manifestation, since all the applications of *dharma* always relate to the manifested world. Thus, it is not possible to admit, as the author seems to be disposed towards, that this term could be more or less a substitute for *Ātmā*, with the only difference being that it would

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<sup>439</sup> Gualtherus Hendrik Mees, *Dharma and Society* (London: Luzac and Co., 1935). The greatest part of this book deals more with the question of *varṇāśaḥ* or castes, but this point of view deserves to be the subject of another article.

<sup>440</sup> Whatever the author may say, a root commonality with the word 'form' seems unlikely to us, and we do not clearly see what consequences might be drawn from it in any case.



be 'dynamic' instead of 'static.' *Ātmā* is nonmanifest, therefore immutable; *dharma* is only an expression, if you will, in the sense that it reflects the principal immutability in the order of manifestation. It is 'dynamic' only to the extent that manifestation necessarily implies 'becoming,' but it is what makes 'becoming' not become a pure change, always maintaining through change itself, a certain relative stability. It is also important to note in this respect, that the root *dhr* is almost identical, in form and meaning, to another root *dhru*, from which the word *dhruva* designating the 'pole' derives. Effectively, it is this idea of the 'pole' or 'axis' of the manifested world that we must refer to if we really wish to understand the notion of *dharma*: it is what remains invariable at the center of revolutions of all things, regulating the course of change by the very fact that it does not participate in it. We must not forget that, by the synthetic nature of the thought that it expresses, language is here much more closely related to symbolism than in modern languages, and that it is from symbolism that the multiplicity of meanings of which spoke a moment ago is held; perhaps one could even show that the conception of *dharma* is directly related to the symbolic representation of the 'axis' by the figure of the 'Tree of the World.'

Moreover, Mr. Mees rightly points out the kinship between the notion of *dharma* and that of *rta*, which etymologically has the meaning of 'rectitude' (in the same way that *Dé* of the Far-Eastern tradition is also very close to *dharma*), which obviously still recalls the idea of the 'axis,' being of a constant and invariable direction. At the same time, this term *rta* is identical to the word 'rite,' and it might be said that the latter, at least at its origin, designates all that is accomplished in accordance with order; it comes to take a more restricted meaning only as a result of the degeneration that gives rise to a 'profane' activity in any domain whatsoever. It must be understood that the rite always retains the same character, and that it is the non-ritual activity that is somehow deviated: all that is only 'convention' or 'custom,' without any profound reason that did not originally exist, and ritual, traditionally considered, has nothing to do with it, which can never be anything other than a forgery or parody. But there is something more: when we speak here of conformity to order, we must not only mean human order, but also, and even above all, the cosmic order; in any traditional conception there is always a strict correspondence between one and the other, and it is precisely the rite that maintains their relations in a conscious manner, implying a collaboration between man, in the sphere where his activity is exercised, and the cosmic order itself in a way.

Likewise, the notion of *dharma* is not limited to man, but extends to all beings and all their states of manifestation; that is why a purely social

conception cannot be sufficient to allow it to be understood in depth: this is nothing more than a particular application, which must never be separated from the primordial and universal 'law' or 'norm' of which it is only the translation in the specifically human mode. Without a doubt, we can speak of a proper *dharma* of each being (*svadharma*) or of each group of beings, such as a human collectivity for example, but this is really only a particularization of the *dharma* in relation to the special conditions of this being or of this group, whose nature and constitution are necessarily analogous to those of the whole of which it is a part, that this whole is either a certain state of existence or even the whole manifestation, for analogy always applies to all levels and degrees. We then see that we are far from a 'moral' conception: if an idea such as that of 'justice' is sometimes appropriate to render the meaning of *dharma*, it is only in so far as it is a human expression of equilibrium or harmony, i.e., one of the aspects of maintaining cosmic stability. All the more so that an idea of 'virtue' can apply here only insofar as it indicates that the actions of a being are in conformity with its own nature, and, by the same token, with the total order that has its reflection or its image in the nature of each being. In the same way, if we consider a human collectivity and not an isolated individuality, the idea of 'legislation' only enters into the idea of *dharma* because this legislation must normally be an adaptation of the cosmic order to the social milieu; this character is particularly visible with regard to the institution of castes, as we will see in a future article. In this way, all the secondary meanings of the word *dharma* are explained; there is no difficulty except when we wish to consider them separately and without seeing how they are derived from a common principle, which is, one might say, the fundamental unity to which their multiplicity is reduced.<sup>441</sup>

Before concluding this overview, we must still, to more precisely situate the notion of *dharma*, indicate the place it occupies among the goals that the traditional Hindu scriptures assign to human life. These goals are four in number and are thus listed in an ascending hierarchical order: *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma*, *mokṣa*; the final, 'Deliverance,' is only the supreme goal, and, being beyond the domain of manifestation, it is of an order entirely different from the other three and out of proportion to these, as the absolute is out of proportion to the relative. As for the first three goals, which all relate to the manifest, *artha* includes all that is good of

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<sup>441</sup> It is easy to also understand that the social application of *dharma* is always translated, if one wishes to use modern language, as 'duty' and not as 'right': the proper *dharma* of a being can obviously only express itself only by what he must do himself, and not by what others must do to him, which is naturally the *dharma* of these other beings.

the corporeal order; *kāma* is desire, whose satisfaction constitutes the good of the psychic order; since *dharma* is superior to this, its realization must be considered as properly pertaining to the spiritual order, which accords with the character of the universality that we have recognized. However, it goes without saying that all these goals, including *dharma* itself, being always contingent as beyond the manifestation they cannot be envisaged, can never be but subordinated to the supreme goal, to which they are in fact only means. Each of these same aims is also subordinate to those which are superior to it, being still relative; when they are listed only with the exclusion of *mokṣa*, it is then a point of view limited to the consideration of the manifested, and only thus can *dharma* sometimes also appear as the highest goal offered to man. We will later see that these goals are more particularly in correspondence with the *varṇaḥ*; we can say right now that this correspondence essentially rests on the theory of the three *guṇāḥ*, which shows that, here again, the human order appears as indissolubly bound to the entire cosmic order.

# Symbolism and Philosophy

*Symbolisme et philosophie*, November 1935.

The philosophers, who claim to take hold of the most diverse of things as if their competence extends to everything, sometimes also deal with symbolism, therein they arrive at the strangest ideas and theories; this is how some people wished to constitute a 'psychology of symbolism,' perhaps we will return to this subject. However, some of them recognize that symbolism does not belong to philosophy, but they intend to give this assertion a clearly unfavorable meaning, as if symbolism was something inferior and even negligible in their eyes; one may even wonder if they are simply confusing it with the pseudo-symbolism of certain literary men, thus taking an abusive and diverted use of the word for its true meaning. In reality, if symbolism is a 'form of thought' as is said, which is true from a certain point of view, but does not prevent it from being something else first and foremost, as we will say later, as philosophy is something radically different and opposing it in many regards. We can go further: this form of thought that represents philosophy corresponds only to a very special point of view and is valid only in a rather limited domain, of which its greatest fault is perhaps not knowing, or not wanting to know, its limits. Symbolism, as we have explained often, has a very different meaning; even seeing it as nothing more than two forms of thought would be a grave mistake to place them on the same plane. That philosophers are of a different opinion does not prove anything; to put things in their proper place, we must above all consider these impartially, which the philosophers cannot do in this case. As for us, we are well convinced that, as philosophers, they will never be able to penetrate the most profound meaning of the least symbol, because there is something there which is entirely outside their way of thinking and which necessarily exceeds their comprehension.

Those who already know all that we have said elsewhere regarding philosophy cannot be surprised to see ourselves attributing to it only a relative and secondary importance; moreover, without even reaching the essence of things and in order to realize that its position can only be subordinate, it is sufficient to remember that every mode of expression necessarily has a symbolic character, in the most general meaning of this term, in relation to what it expresses. Philosophers can only use but

words, and, as we recalled in our previous articles, these words in themselves are and can be nothing but symbols; therefore, it is, in a certain sense, philosophy which enters the domain of symbolism, which is consequently subordinate to it, and not the inverse.

However, there is, in a certain relation, an opposition between philosophy and symbolism, if one understands the latter in the more restricted sense which is most habitually given to it: this opposition consists in what philosophy is, as all that is expressed in the ordinary forms of language is essentially analytic, while symbolism itself is essentially synthetic. The form of language is, by definition, 'discursive' as it is the proper instrument of human reason, of which it follows and copies the march as precisely as possible; on the contrary, symbolism properly speaking is truly 'intuitive,' which, quite naturally, renders it incomparably more apt than language to serve as a point of support for intellectual and supra-rational intuition, this is why it forms, as we have already said, the mode of expression par excellence of all initiatic education. As for philosophy, it represents in a way the type of discursive thought (which, naturally, does not mean that all discursive thought has a specifically philosophic character) that imposes limitations which it cannot free itself from; on the other hand, symbolism, as a support for intuitive thought, opens truly unlimited possibilities.

Philosophy, through its discursive character, is exclusively rational, since this character is that which belongs to reason itself; the domain of philosophy and its possibilities cannot extend in any case beyond what reason is capable of attaining, and yet it represents only a certain particular use of this faculty, for it is evident, if only because of the existence of independent sciences, that there is in the very order of rational knowledge, many things which are not within the purview of philosophy. Moreover, it is not a question here of challenging the value of reason in its own domain so long as it does not claim to exceed it, but this value can only be relative just as this domain is relative; besides, does the word *ratio* itself not originally have the meaning of 'relation'? We will not even dispute the legitimacy of the dialectic, even within certain limitations, although philosophers all too often abuse it, but this dialectic must never be anything but a means, not an end within itself, and, moreover, it may be that this means is not applicable to all indistinctly; to be aware of this, one must only go beyond the bounds of the dialectic, and that is why the philosopher cannot do as such.

Even admitting that philosophy goes as far as is theoretically possible, meaning to the extreme limits of the domain of reason, it will still be very little in truth, because, to use an Evangelical expression, "only one thing

is necessary," and it is precisely this thing which will always remain forbidden to him, because it is above and beyond all rational knowledge. What can the discursive methods of philosophy do in the face of the inexpressible, which is, as we explained in our last article, the 'mystery' in the most true and profound meaning of the word? Symbolism, on the contrary, has the essential function of making this inexpressible 'assertion' able to provide the support which will enable intellectual intuition to reach it effectively; who, having understood this, would still dare to deny the immense superiority of symbolism and to dispute that its reach is incomparably beyond that of any possible philosophy? So excellent and so perfect as a philosophy may be (and it is certainly not modern philosophies that would reach such a hypothesis), it remains 'only a piece of straw,' this word being from Saint Thomas Aquinas himself, which should not be brought to depreciate philosophic thought beyond measure.

But there is something else: considering symbolism as a 'form of thought,' it is only considered in the purely human relation, which is the only one under which a comparison with philosophy is possible; it must doubtlessly be considered in this way, but, in truth, it is far from being sufficient and represents only the outermost side of the question. We have all too often had occasion to insist on the 'non-human' side of symbolism so that it is not necessary to return to it at great length; what is sufficient, in fact, is to state that it has its foundation in the very nature of beings and things, i.e. in perfect conformity with the laws of this nature, and to reflect that the natural laws themselves are only at their essence an expression and externalization, so to speak, of the Divine or Principle Will. The true foundation of symbolism is, let us repeat once again, the correspondence that exists between all the orders of reality, which connects them to each other, and which consequently extends to natural order taken as a whole alongside supernatural order itself; by virtue of this correspondence, the whole of nature is itself only a symbol, i.e. it receives its true meaning only if it is regarded as a support for raising us to the knowledge of supernatural truths, or 'metaphysics' in the true sense of this word, which is precisely the essential function of symbolism and what is also the profound *raison d'être* of all 'traditional science.'<sup>442</sup> By this very fact, there is in symbolism something whose origin goes higher and further than humanity, and one could say that this origin is in the very work of the Divine Word: it is firstly in the universal man-

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<sup>442</sup> Therefore, the world is like a divine language for those who know how to understand it: according to the Biblical expression, "*Cæli enarrant gloriam Dei*" (*Psalms*. 18:2).

ifestation itself, and then, especially in relation to humanity, in the Primordial Tradition, which is also a 'revelation' of the Word; this Tradition, which all the others are only derivative forms, is incorporated, so to speak, into symbols which have been transmitted from age to age without having any 'historical' origin attributed to them, and the process of this kind of symbolic incorporation is still analogous, in its order, to that of the manifestation.<sup>443</sup>

In the face of these qualifications professing symbolism's transcendent value, what can philosophy ever lay claim to? The origin of symbolism is truly identical to the origin of time, if it is not, in a sense, beyond time, since time includes only a specific mode of manifestation. Moreover, no authentically traditional symbol can be attributed to a human inventor; should this not all be food for thought for those that are capable? On the contrary, all philosophy only goes back to a definitive period, in sum, a period that is always recent, even if it is a question of 'classical' antiquity which is only a very relative antiquity (which proves that, even in the humane, this form of thought is not essential);<sup>444</sup> it is the work of a man whose name is known to us as well as the dates on which he lived, and it is in this very name which is usually used to designate it, which shows there is nothing here but the human and individual. This is why we said earlier that we cannot think of making a comparison between philosophy and symbolism unless we consider it exclusively on the human side, since, for the rest, we cannot find in the philosophic order any equivalence or correspondence whatsoever.

At best, philosophy is 'human wisdom,' but it is only that in any case, and this is why we say that it is something very little at essence; it is only that because it is a perfectly rational speculation, and reason is a purely human faculty, the very one by which the individual human nature is defined as such. 'Human wisdom,' as well as 'worldly wisdom,' in the sense that the 'world' is understood in the Gospel;<sup>445</sup> in the same sense, we could still say just as well 'profane wisdom.' All these expressions are

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<sup>443</sup> In this connection, let us recall once again, in order to leave no room for ambiguity, that we absolutely refuse to attribute the name 'tradition' to all the purely human and 'profane' things which, in our time, is all too often applied in an abusive manner to any philosophic doctrine.

<sup>444</sup> There is reason to wonder why philosophy originated in the sixth century B.C., a period with rather odd characteristics, as we have pointed out on different occasions.

<sup>445</sup> In Sanskrit, the word *laukika*, 'worldly' (derived from *loka*, 'world'), is often taken with the same acceptance as in the Evangelic language, i.e. with the meaning of 'profane,' and this concordance seems very worthy to us to note.

synonymous at their essence, and they clearly indicate that what is involved is not true wisdom, it is at most a shadow.<sup>446</sup> Moreover, let us insist again, even a philosophy that is as perfect as possible is truly under this shadow and can pretend to be nothing more, but, in fact, most philosophies are not even that, they are only constructions devoid of any solid foundation, more or less fanciful hypotheses, simple individual opinions without authority and real significance.

In concluding, we can summarize in a few words the substance of our thought: philosophy is only 'profane knowledge,' while symbolism, understood in its true sense, is essentially part of 'sacred science.' We know very well that most of our contemporaries, if not the majority, are unfortunately unable to make the distinction between these two orders of knowledge as is appropriate (if a 'profane' knowledge truly deserves this title); naturally, it is not these that we are addressing, because it is only 'sacred science' that we intend to concern ourselves with.

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<sup>446</sup> Moreover, even considering the proper meaning of words, *philosophia* is not *sophia*, 'wisdom'; it can only be a preparation or routing in relation to it, so it could be said that philosophy becomes illegitimate as soon as it is no longer intended to lead to something beyond it.



## Varnaḥ

Varna, November 1935.

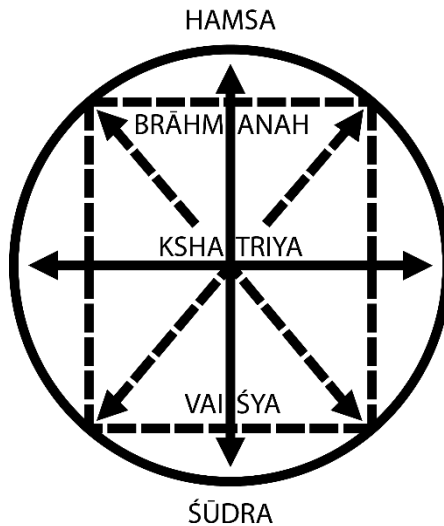
Mr. Gualtherus H. Mees, in his book *Dharma and Society* which we have already spoken of, expands on the question of castes; he does not accept this word in the sense we understand it, but he prefers to keep the Sanskrit word *varṇaḥ* without translation or rendering it by an expression such as that of 'natural classes,' which, in fact, quite well defines what it is, since it is truly a hierarchical distribution of human beings in accordance with the specific nature of each of them. However, it is to be feared that the word 'classes,' even accompanied by a qualifier, evokes the idea of something more or less comparable to the social classes of the Occident which are purely and truly artificial, and which have nothing in common with a traditional hierarchy, of which they represent at most a kind of parody or caricature. For our part, we find that it is better to use the word 'castes,' which certainly has only a very conventional value, but which, at the least, has been made expressly to designate the Hindu organization; Mr. Mees reserves it for the multiple castes that actually exist in present-day India, and in which he wishes to see something quite different from the original *varṇāsaḥ*. We cannot share this way of thinking, because these are really only secondary subdivisions, due to a greater complexity or differentiation of the social organization, and, whatever their multiplicity, they are nevertheless still part of the four *varṇāsaḥ*, which alone constitute the fundamental hierarchy and remain necessarily invariable as an expression of traditional principles and a reflection of the cosmic order in the human social order.

There is, under this distinction that Mr. Mees wishes to establish between *varṇaḥ* and 'caste,' an idea which seems largely inspired by the Bergsonian theories on 'open societies' and 'closed societies,' although he never explicitly refers to these: he tries to distinguish between two aspects of the *dharma*, one which corresponds more or less to *varṇaḥ* and the other to 'caste,' whose predominance would assert itself alternately in what he calls 'periods of life' and 'periods of forms,' to which he respectively attributes 'dynamic' and 'static' characters. We have no intention of discussing here these philosophico-historic conceptions which obviously do not rely on traditional data; it is more interesting for us to point out a misunderstanding regarding the word *jāti*, which the author

believes to designate what he calls 'caste,' whereas, in reality, it is simply used as an equivalent or synonym of *varṇaḥ*. The word *jāti* literally means 'birth,' but it should not be understood, at least not exclusively or in principle, in the sense of 'heredity'; it designates the individual nature of the being as a set of possibilities which it will develop during its existence, insofar as it is necessarily determined from its very birth. This nature results first and foremost from the being in itself, and secondly from the influences of the milieu, of which heredity properly speaking is apart of. It must also be added that this very milieu is normally determined by a certain law of 'affinity,' to conform as closely as possible to the proper tendencies of the being who is born there; we say normally because there may be more or fewer exceptions, at least in a period of confusion like the *Kali-Yuga*. That being so, we do not see at all what an 'open' caste might be, if we understand by that (and what else could we understand?) that an individual would have the possibility of changing castes in a given moment; that would imply in him a change of nature which is just as inconceivable as a sudden change of species in the life of an animal or plant (and it may be remarked that the word *jāti* also has the meaning of 'species,' which further justifies this comparison). An apparent change of caste would be nothing more than the reparation of an error, in the case where one would have first attributed to the individual a caste which was not really his; the fact that such an error can sometimes occur (precisely because of the confusion of the *Kali-Yuga*) does not preclude, in a general way, the possibility of determining the true caste from birth. If Mr. Mees seems to believe that the consideration of heredity would intervene only then, it is because he probably does not know that the means of this determination can be provided by certain traditional sciences, if only through astrology (which, naturally, here is something quite different from the claimed 'scientific astrology' of some modern Westerners and has nothing to do with the 'conjectural' or 'divinatory' art, nor with the empiricism of statistics and calculation of probabilities).

This being established, let us return to the very notion of *varṇaḥ*: this word properly means 'color,' but also, by extension, 'quality' in general, and that is why it can be taken to designate individual nature; Mr. Mees quite rightly dismisses the bizarre interpretation proposed by some, who wish to see in the meaning of 'color' the proof that the distinction of the *varṇāsaḥ* was originally based on differences of race, of which it is absolutely impossible to find confirmation anywhere. The truth is that if colors are actually attributed to *varṇāsaḥ*, it is purely symbolic, and the 'key' of this symbolism is given by the correspondence with the *guṇāḥ*, a correspondence which is particularly indicated very explicitly in this text of the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*: "When *Brahmā*, in accordance with his design, wished

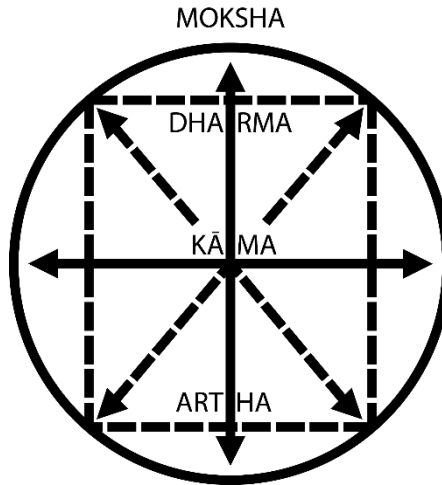
to produce the world, beings in which *sattva* prevailed came from his mouth; others in which *rajas* was predominant came from his chest; others in which *rajas* and *tamas* were great came from his thighs; finally, others came from his feet, having as their main characteristic *tamas*. Of these beings, the four *varṇāsaḥ* were composed, the *Brāhmaṇāḥ*, the *Kṣatriyāḥ*, the *Vaiśyāḥ*, and the *Śūdrāḥ*." *Sattva* being represented by the color white, this is naturally attributed to the *Brāhmaṇāḥ*; likewise, red, the representative color of *rajas*, is attributed to the *Kṣatriyāḥ*; the *Vaiśyāḥ*, characterized by a mixture of the two lower *guṇau*, carries the symbolic color of yellow; finally, black, the color of *tamas*, is consequently the one that suits the *Śūdrāḥ*.



The hierarchization of *varṇāsaḥ*, thus determined by the *guṇāḥ* which predominate respectively in them, is superimposed exactly over that of the elements, as we have explained in our recent study on this subject; this is immediately shown by comparing the diagram opposite the one we gave then. It must only be remarked, for the sake of completeness, that the place of the ether must be occupied here by *Haṃsa*, i.e., by the single primordial caste that existed in the *Kṛta-Yuga*, and which contained the four later *varṇāsaḥ* in principle and undifferentiation, in the same way that the ether contains the four other elements.

On the other hand, Mr. Mees, while also defending himself from pushing these analogies too far, tries to indicate a correspondence of the four *varṇāsaḥ* with the four *āśramāḥ* or regular stages of existence, which we will not examine here, and also with the four purposes of human life of which we have spoken previously regarding *dharma*; in the latter case,

the very fact that it is a quaternary division has induced it to be manifestly inaccurate. Indeed, it is obviously inadmissible that we propose as a goal, even if it is the most inferior of all, to obtain something that corresponds purely and simply to *tamas*; the distribution, if carried out ascending from below, must, in fact, begin at the degree which is immediately superior to that, as indicated by our second diagram, and it is easy to understand that *dharma* corresponds to *sattva*, *kāma* to *rajas*, and *artha* to a mixture of *rajas* and *tamas*. At the same time, the relation of these goals with the character and the role of the three higher *varṇāśaḥ* (i.e., of those whose members possess the *ārya* and *dvija* qualities) then appear on their own: the function of the Vaiśya refers to the acquisition of *artha* or the goods of the corporeal order; *kāma*, where desire is the motive for the activity which is proper to the *Kṣatriya*; and the *Brāhmaṇa* is truly the representative and the natural guardian of the *dharma*. As for *mokṣa*, this supreme goal is, as we have already said, an order entirely different from the other three, without any measure in common with them. It is therefore beyond all that corresponds to the particular functions of the *varṇāśaḥ*, and it cannot be contained just as transient and contingent goals are in the sphere which represents the domain of conditioned existence, since it is precisely the liberation of this very existence; naturally, it is also beyond the three *guṇāḥ*, which concern only the states of universal manifestation.



These few considerations show quite clearly that when it comes to traditional institutions, a purely 'sociological' point of view is insufficient to get to the essence of things, since the true foundation of these institutions is of a strictly 'cosmological' order; it goes without saying

that certain shortcomings in this respect must not prevent us from recognizing the merit of Mr. Mees' work, which is certainly far superior to most of the work that other Westerners have devoted to the same questions.

## Synthesis and Syncretism

*Synthèse et synchrétisme*, December 1935.

Among those of our contemporaries who claim to study traditional doctrines without penetrating their essence, especially those who consider them from a 'historic' and academic point of view, have an unfortunate tendency to confuse 'synthesis' and 'syncretism.' This remark applies in a very general way to the 'profane' study of the doctrines of the exoteric order as well as those of the esoteric order; the distinction between them is seldom made, and the soi-disant 'science of religions' deals with a multitude of things which, in reality, have nothing 'religious' about them, as is the case in the initiatic 'mysteries' of antiquity. This 'science' itself clearly affirms its 'profane' character, positing in principle that he who is outside of all religion, and who, consequently, cannot have any religion (we would rather say tradition, without specifying any particular modality), that an entirely external knowledge is the only one qualified to deal with it 'scientifically.' The truth is that, under the pretext of disinterested knowledge, a clearly anti-traditional intention is concealed: it is a 'criticism' intended above all, in the minds of its promoters and less consciously in those who follow them, to destroy all tradition, by wishing to think of it as a set of psychological facts, social or otherwise, but in all cases as being purely human. We will not dwell on this point further, because, currently, we propose only to point out a confusion which can obviously exist independent of this anti-traditional intention although characteristic of the 'profane' mentality.

'Syncretism,' understood in its true meaning, is nothing more than a simple juxtaposition of elements from various sources, gathered 'from the outside,' so to speak, without any principle of a more profound order unifying them. It is obvious that such an assemblage cannot truly constitute a doctrine, any more than a heap of stones constitute a building; even if some who superficially consider fall under this doctrine, this illusion cannot withstand scrutiny. There is no need to go far to find authentic examples of this syncretism: modern counterfeits of tradition, such as Occultism and Theosophy, are nothing other than this at essence; notions borrowed from various traditional forms, being generally misunderstood and distorted, are mixed with conceptions belonging to philosophy and profane science. There are also philosophical theories formed

almost entirely from fragments of other theories, and here syncretism usually takes the name of 'eclectism'; this case is less serious in fact than the preceding one, because it is only a matter of philosophy, i.e. of profane thought which, at least, does not try to pretend to be something else.

Syncretism, in any case, is always an essentially profane process, by its very 'externality'; not only is it not synthesis, but, in a sense, it is quite the opposite. Indeed, synthesis, by definition, begins with principles, i.e. from what is most internal; one might say, it goes from the center to the circumference, while syncretism stands at the circumference itself, in pure multiplicity, in an 'atomic' sense by the indefinite detail of elements taken one by one, considered in themselves and for themselves, separated from their principle, i.e. separated from their true *raison d'être*. Therefore, syncretism has an entirely analytical character, whether it likes it or not; it is true that no one speaks so often or so willingly of synthesis as certain 'syncretists,' but this proves only one thing: they feel that if they recognized the true nature of their composite theories, they would confess that they are not the depositories of any tradition, and the work they have done is no different from the work that the premier 'researcher' came to by somehow assembling the various notions that he would have drawn from books.

If they have an obvious interest in passing their syncretism off as synthesis, the error of those we spoke of at the beginning usually occurs in the inverse: when they find themselves in the presence of a real synthesis, they seldom label it as syncretism. The explanation of such an attitude is very simple: adhering to the point of view which is the most narrowly profane and the most external as can be conceived, they have no consciousness of what is of another order, as they do not wish or cannot admit that certain things escape them, they naturally seek to reduce everything to processes that are within the reach of their own understanding. Imagining that all doctrine is only the work of one or more human individuals, without any intervention of superior elements (for it must not be forgotten that this is the fundamental postulate of all their 'science'), they attribute to these individuals what they themselves would be capable of doing in such a case; it goes without saying that they do not care at all about whether the doctrine they study in their own way is or is not the expression of the truth, because such a question, not being 'historical,' does not even arise for them. It is even doubtful that the idea has ever occurred to them that there can be a truth of a different order than simple 'truth of fact,' which alone can be an object of erudition; as for the interest that such a study may present for them in these conditions, we must admit that we cannot render it so, because it is a mentality that is foreign to us.

Be that as it may, what is particularly important to notice is that the false conception that wants to see syncretism in traditional doctrines has the direct and inevitable consequence of what may be called the theory of 'borrowing': when one finds the existence of similar elements in two different doctrinal forms, one hastens to suppose that one of them must have borrowed from the other. Of course, this is not a question of the common origin of traditions, nor of their authentic filiation with the regular transmission and the successive adaptations that it entails; all this, escaping the means of investigation available to the profane historian, does not exist for him. They wish to speak only of loans in the grossest sense of the word, of a kind of copy or plagiarism of a tradition by another with whom it has been in contact as a result of all contingent circumstances, of an accidental incorporation of detached elements, not answering to any profound reason, and that is indeed what the definition of syncretism implies. Moreover, one does not wonder if it is not normal that the same truth receives more or less similar expressions or at least those that are comparable between them, independently of all borrowing, and they cannot ask this, since, as we said earlier, they are resolved to ignore the existence of this truth. Furthermore, this last explanation would be insufficient without the notion of primordial traditional unity, but at least it would represent a certain aspect of reality; let us add that it must in no way be confused with another theory, no less profane than that of 'loans,' although of a different kind, which invokes what is commonly called the 'unity of the human mind,' by hearing in this an exclusively psychological meaning, where, in fact, such a unity does not exist, and implying that any doctrine is merely a product of the 'human mind,' so that this 'psychologism' does not consider the question of doctrinal truths any more than the 'historicism' of proponents of syncretic explanations does.

We will also point out that the same idea of syncretism and 'borrowing,' applied more specifically to the traditional scriptures, gives rise to the search for hypothetical 'sources' and the assumption of 'interpolations,' which is, as we know, one of the greatest resources of 'criticism' in its destructive work, whose sole real goal is the negation of any 'supra-human' inspiration. This is closely related to the anti-traditional intention that we indicated at the beginning; let us just note this in passing, since this point of view is not what we intend to develop at the moment. But, at the least, we must recall the incompatibility of any 'humanist' explanation with the traditional spirit, an incompatibility which is obvious, since not considering the 'non-human' element is to properly ignore what the very essence of tradition is, without which there is nothing that deserves to bear this name.



On the other hand, it suffices, in order to refute the syncretistic conception, to recall that all traditional doctrine necessarily has as its center and starting point the knowledge of metaphysical principles, and that all that it entails, in a more or less secondary capacity, is only the application of these principles to different domains; this amounts to saying that it is essentially synthetic, and, from what we have explained above, synthesis excludes all syncretism by its very nature.

We can go further: if it is impossible for there to be syncretism in the traditional doctrines themselves, it is equally impossible for any of those who have truly understood these doctrines to resort to syncretism, those who have necessarily understood the vanity of such a process, as well as the vanity of all those processes which are peculiar to profane thought. All that is really inspired by traditional knowledge always proceeds 'from within' and not 'from without'; anyone who is aware of the essential unity of all traditions may, in order to expound and interpret the doctrine, appeal to means of expression coming from various traditional forms depending on the case, if he considers that there is some advantage in this, but there will never be anything that can be assimilated from near or far to any syncretism or the 'comparative method' of scholars. On the one hand, the central and principal unity illuminates and dominates everything; on the other hand, this unity being absent or, to put it better, hidden from the eyes of the profane 'seeker,' he can only fumble in the 'outer darkness,' vainly thrashing about in the midst of a chaos that could only be brought into order by the initiatic *Fiat Lux* which, due to his lack of 'qualification,' will never be proffered for him.

# The Being and the Milieu

*L'être et le milieu*, December 1935.

With regards to the determination of castes, we have said that the individual nature of a being results first from what it is in itself and secondarily from the influences of the milieu in which it manifests itself; it is important to distinguish between these two elements and mark their relations at the same time in a precise manner. For this purpose, we can use the geometric representation which we have expounded in *The Symbolism of the Cross*, relating the first element to the vertical direction and the second element to the horizontal direction. Indeed, the vertical will then represent what connects all the states of manifestation of the same being, which is necessarily the expression of this very being, or, if you will, of its 'personality,' the direct projection by which it is reflected in all states, while the horizontal plane represents the domain of a certain sense of manifestation, considered here in the 'macrocosmic' sense; consequently, the manifestation of the being in this state will be determined by the intersection of the vertical considered with this horizontal plane.

That being so, it becomes obvious that the point of intersection is not arbitrary, but that it is itself determined by the verticality in question, inasmuch it differs from any other verticality, i.e., in sum, this being is what it is and not what any other being is also manifesting in the same state. In other words, it could be said that it is the being who, by its very nature, itself determines the conditions of its manifestation, being subject that these conditions can only be a specification of the general conditions of the contemplated state in any case, since its manifestation must necessarily be a development of possibilities contained in that state, to the exclusion of those who belong to other states; this reservation is marked geometrically by the preliminary determination of the horizontal plane.

The being will manifest itself by putting on, as it were, elements borrowed from the environment; in the case of the individual human state, these elements will belong to the different modalities of this state, i.e., both to the corporeal order and to the subtle or 'psychic' order. This point is particularly important in order to avoid certain complications which are due only to erroneous or incomplete conceptions: indeed, if we translate this in terms of 'heredity,' we can say that there is not only a physiologic heredity, but also a psychic heredity, both of which are explained

in exactly the same way, i.e., by the presence of elements coming from the specific milieu in the constitution of the individual when the being's birth took place. In the Occident, some people refuse to admit psychic inheritance because, knowing nothing beyond the domain to which they relate, they believe that this domain must be the one that belongs to the being itself, which represents what it is regardless of any influence from the milieu. Others, who will, on the contrary, admit heredity, believe that it can be concluded that the being, in all that it is, is entirely determined by the milieu, that it is nothing more than the milieu which makes it to be, because they cannot conceive of anything outside the corporeal and psychic domains. These are therefore two errors, somehow being opposed, but which have one and the same source: both reduce the entire being to its individual manifestation, and they equally ignore any transcendent principle with respect to the being. What is at the heart of all these modern conceptions of the human being is always the idea of the Cartesian 'body-soul' duality, which, in fact, is purely and simply equivalent to the duality of the physiological and the psychic, considered as irreducible and as comprehending all of the being in two terms, when in reality they represent only the superficial and the external aspects of the manifested being, that they belong to one and the same degree of existence which is the horizontal plane that we have envisaged, so that one is no less contingent than the other, and true being is beyond one as well as the other.

To return to heredity, we must say that it does not fully express the influences of the milieu on the individual, but that it constitutes only the most immediately attachable part of it; in reality, these influences extend much further, and one might even say that they extend indefinitely in all directions. Indeed, the cosmic milieu, which is the domain of the state of manifestation under consideration, can only be conceived as an ensemble of which all the parts are linked together without any solution of continuity, because to conceive it otherwise would be to suppose it as a 'void,' whereas this, not being a possibility of manifestation, could not have any place. Consequently, there must necessarily be relations, i.e., at essence, reciprocal actions and reactions between all the individual beings who are manifested in this domain, either simultaneously or successively; from the nearest to the farthest, it is only a matter of difference of proportions or degrees, so that heredity, whatever its relative importance in relation to all else, no longer appears as only a special case.

In all cases, be it hereditary or other influences, what we said at the beginning is still true: the situation of the being in its milieu is ultimately determined by its own nature, the elements that it borrows from its im-

mediate environment and also those it draws in some way from the indefinite whole of its domain of manifestation must necessarily be in correspondence with this nature, otherwise it could not effectively assimilate them so as to make as secondary modifications of itself. This is what the 'affinity' we have previously alluded to is: the being, one might say, only takes from the milieu that which is in conformity with the possibilities it carries within it, which are those of no other being than that which, because of this conformity, must provide the contingent conditions allowing these possibilities to develop or 'actualize' during its individual manifestation. Moreover, it is evident that any relation between any two beings, to be real, must necessarily be the expression of something which belongs at once to the nature of both; thus, the influence that a being seems to undergo from outside and to receive from someone other than itself is never really of a possibility inherent in the very nature of the being itself, when viewed from a more profound point of view as a sort of translation in relation to the milieu.

However, there is a sense in which one can say that the being really experiences the influence of the milieu in its manifestation; but it is only insofar as this influence is envisaged by its negative side, i.e. insofar as it properly constitutes a limitation for the being. This is an immediate consequence of the conditioned nature of every state of manifestation: the being is subjected to certain conditions which have a limiting role, and which include firstly the general conditions defining the state under consideration, and then the special conditions defining the particular mode of manifestation of this being in this state. Moreover, it is easy to understand that, whatever the appearances, the limitation has no positive existence, that it is nothing other than a restriction excluding certain possibilities, or a 'deprivation' in relation to what it thus excludes, i.e. it is something purely negative in whatever way one wishes to express it.

On the other hand, it must be understood that such limiting conditions are essentially inherent in a certain state of manifestation, that they apply exclusively to what is included in that state, and that, consequently, they cannot attach themselves in any way to the being itself and follow it to another state. The being will naturally also find, to manifest itself in this state, certain conditions having a similar character, but which will be different from those to which it was subjected in the state which we envisaged at first, and which will never be able to be described in terms that are appropriate only to the latter, such as those of human language, for example, which cannot express conditions of existence other than those of the corresponding state, since this language is found

in all things determined and shaped by these very conditions. We insist upon this, because, if we admit without great difficulty that the elements drawn from the atmosphere to enter the constitution of the individuality must be restored to it when this individuality has completed its cycle of existence and passes to another state, as everyone can directly see, at least as far as corporeal elements are concerned, it seems less easy to admit that the being then entirely exits the conditions to which he was subjected in this individual state, although the two things are closely related. Without a doubt, this owes above all to the impossibility, not of conceiving, but of representing conditions of existence other than those of the corporeal, for which one cannot find any term of comparison in this state.

An important application of what we have just indicated is that which relates to the fact that an individual being belongs to a certain species, such as the human species, for example: there is obviously in the very nature of this being something that determined his birth in this rather than in any other. It is therefore subject to the conditions which expressly define the very species, and which will be among the special conditions of its mode of existence as an individual; these are, one could say, the two positive and negative aspects of the specific nature, positive being a manifestation of certain possibilities, negative being a limiting condition of existence. Only, what must be understood is that it is only as an individual manifested in the state considered that the being actually belongs to the species in question, and that in any other state, it escapes him entirely and does not remain bound to him in anyway. In other words, the consideration of the species applies only in the horizontal sense, i.e. in the domain of a certain state of existence; it cannot intervene in the vertical sense, i.e. when the being passes to other states. Of course, what is true in this respect for the species is also true, for all the more reason, for race, for family, in short for all the more or less restricted portions of the individual domain in which the being is included as to its manifestation in the considered state. Naturally, the case of caste is no exception here; this comes, more visibly than in any other case, from the definition of caste as being the very expression of the individual nature and uniting with it as it were one, which indicates that it exists only so long as the being is envisaged within the limits of individuality, and that, if it necessarily exists as long as it is contained, it cannot survive by itself beyond these same limits, all that constitute its *raison d'être* being found exclusively within these limits and cannot be transported to another area of existence, where the individual nature in question no longer meets any possibility.

To close this exposé, we will say a few words as to how, from the foregoing considerations, we may consider what is called 'astral influences'; first of all, it should be pointed out that we must not exclusively understand, or even principally, the proper influences of the stars whose names serve to designate them, although these influences, like those of all things, probably also have their own reality, but these stars represent above all symbolically, which does not mean 'ideally' or figuratively, but on the contrary, by the virtue of actual correspondences founded on the very constitution of the 'macrocosm,' the synthesis of all the various categories of cosmic influences exercised on individuality. If we consider, as is most commonly done, that these influences dominate individuality, this is only the most external point of view; in a more profound order, the truth is that if the individuality is related to a definite set of influences, it is because this whole is the same which is in conformity with the nature of being manifested in this individuality. Thus, if 'astral influences' seem to determine what the individual is, it is only in appearance; at heart, they do not determine it, but they only express it. True determination does not come from without, but from the being itself, and the outward signs simply allow it to be discerned, giving it a sort of sensory expression, at least for those who will be able to interpret them correctly. In fact, this consideration certainly does not alter the results that can be obtained from the examination of 'astral influences,' but, from the doctrinal point of view which alone interests us here, it seems essential to us to understand the true role of these, i.e., in short, the real nature of the relations of the being with the milieu in which its individual manifestation is fulfilled, since what is expressed through these influences, in a form intelligibly coordinated, is the indefinite multitude of diverse elements which constitute this whole milieu.

