

*Meditation on the
Eleventh Major Arcanum of the Tarot*

FORCE
LA FORCE

*Haec est tonus fortitudinis
fortitudo fortis:
quia vincet omnem rem subtilem
omnemque solidam penetrabit.*

(This thing is the strongest of all powers,
the force of all forces,
for it overcometh every subtle thing
and doth penetrate every solid substance.)
(*tabula Smaragdina*, 9)

*Virgo potens
Virgo clemens
Virgo fidelis*

(Powerful Virgin
Merciful Virgin
Faithful Virgin)
(Lauretanian Litany)

LETTER XI



FORCE

Dear Unknown Friend,

In the preceding Letter the transformation of fallen animality into holy animality was discussed, where the latter is spontaneous obedience to God, without the hindrance of reflection, doubt or motives of interest. Such obedience is basically an instinct. This is why holy animality is represented in the Hermetic tradition, in the vision of Ezekiel, in the Apocalypse of St. John, and in Christian iconography, by four holy animals, whose synthesis — the sphinx — is divine instinctivity, or the kingdom of God in and through the unconscious. For God reigns— i.e. he is worshipped, obeyed and loved — nor only through explicit theologies and philosophies, or through explicit prayer, meditation and cult-acts, bur also in general through

the "hunger and thirst for righteousness", for truth, and for beauty, and likewise through each act of generosity and every expression of respect, admiration and adoration. . . Yes. the world is full of implicit religion, and the inspired saints and poets, who say that the birds "praise God" when they sing, are in no way mistaken. Because it is their tiny life itself which sings the "great life" and makes heard, through its countless variations, the same news which is as old as the world and new as the day: "Life lives and vibrates in me." What homage to the source of life is expressed by these small streams of life: the birds which sing!

Religio naturalis, natural religion, certainly exists and fills the world. Its waters emanate from the throne of God because — in filling beings, great and small, with the prodigious hope and faith which underlies vital elan—they *cannot* flow out from anywhere else other than the immediate presence of God. The cascades of hope and faith which are revealed by the great "yes" that all living beings say, by the very fact that they are living and that they prefer life to death, these cascades cannot bear in themselves anything else other than certain testimony of the fundamental Presence of God, i.e. the meaning and purpose of being alive.

The waves of this testimony reach the unconscious nature of beings and take effect there as this prodigious conviction which underlies vital elan. The "primal revelation", which is referred to by theology and to which natural religion is due, is the hope and faith, which vibrates both in the whole world and in each particular being (generally as a *subconscious* conviction), that life proceeds from a holy source, that it flows towards an end of supreme worth, and that it is "gift, benediction and vocation".

The mystery of natural religion, which is at the same time that of vital elan, is found expressed with remarkable clarity in the Apocalypse of St. John:

Before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come!
(Revelation iv. 6-8)

This gives a tableau of the working of natural religion, and its structure and elements. It is the Presence which is reflected in the limpid sea "like crystal", and it is Holy Animality, which never ceases to sing: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

The "sea of glass" is the eye of the whole of Nature for God; the four creatures "full of eyes all round and within"—what they are and what they do—represent

the natural *reaction* to the divine Presence. *Perception* and *reaction*— here is the essence of the natural religion which fills the unconscious core of creatures and which manifests itself through vital elan. Because all that lives participates in the collective perception of the "sea of glass", and in the collective reaction of the chorus: "Holy, holy, holy. . .". for this participation' is the Life of life and the source from which the Elan of vital elan springs forth.

The saying "Nature is fundamentally supernatural" is therefore profoundly true. For natural and supernatural *life* always originate from the same source. The source of *all* life is religion, conscious or unconscious, *i.e. perception* of the Presence and *reaction* to the Presence.

In so far as my heart beats, that I breathe, that my blood circulates — in so far, in other words, that faith and hope work in me — in so far do I take part, thereby, in the great cosmic ritual in which all beings participate, all the hierarchies from the Seraphim down to butterflies. . . namely, in natural religion's "sacrament of baptism", which is immersion in the waters of the "sea of glass", and natural religion's "sacrament of confirmation", which takes place day and night through the chorus of choirs of animated Nature: "Holy, holy, holy. . ." All beings are baptised and confirmed in natural religion. Because, in so far as they live, they have faith and hope. But the baptism and confirmation with "fire and Spirit", the sacraments of love, surpass those of natural religion. They bear forgiveness and healing *to fallen* nature.

Fallen Nature also has its unconscious mystery, *i.e.* its collective instinctivity of *perception* (its "waters") and its collective instinctivity of *reaction* (its "creatures"). Again, it is the Apocalypse of St. John which reveals this. The following is the origin of the "sea" of fallen Nature according to the Apocalypse:

The serpent poured water like a river out of his *mouth* after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon had poured from his mouth. (Revelation xii. 15-16)

The difference between the waters of the "sea of glass" before the throne and the waters poured forth by the serpent is that the former are the calm, peace and stability of contemplation, or pure perception — they are "as glass", "like crystal"—whilst the latter are in movement, "poured forth", "like a river", *in the pursuit of an aim*, namely that of sweeping away the woman.

In the world there are therefore two different kinds of arriving at a conviction: one can be illumined by the serene clarity of contemplation, or one can be *swept away* by an electrifying flood of passionate arguments aiming at a desired end. The faith of the illumined is full of tolerance, patience and calm steadfastness — 'like crystal'; the faith of those who are swept away is, in contrast, fanatical, agitated and aggressive — in order to live it needs conquests without end. because it is con-

quest alone which keeps it alive. The faith of those who are swept away is greedy for *success*, this being its reason for existence, its criterion and its motivating force. Nazis and communists are of this faith, i.e. that of those who are swept away. True Christians and true humanists can only belong to the other faith, i.e. that of the illuminated.

In the world there are therefore two kinds of faith, two kinds of instinctivity, two different ways of *seeing* the world, two different ways of *looking* at it. There is the open and innocent look which desires only to reflect the light—i.e. which wants only *to see*—and there is the scrutinising look, which seeks to find and lay hold of its desired prey. There are spirits whose thought and imagination are put to the service, without reserve, of that which is true, beautiful and good—and there are spirits whose will, infatuated with an aim, make use of thought and imagination so as to win others to their cause, so as to sweep them away by the river of their *will*. A Plato has never had success as a revolutionary and will never do so. But Plato himself will always live throughout the centuries of human history—he has lived there for twenty-three centuries—and will be in each century the companion of the young and old who love pure thought, seeking only the light which it comprises. Karl Marx, in contrast, has had one century of astonishing success, and has revolutionised the world. He has swept away millions—those who went to the barricades and trenches in civil wars, and those who went to the prisons, either as jailers or as prisoners. But you, as a solitary human soul, a soul of depth and sobriety, what do you owe to Karl Marx? You know quite well that despite the intellectual fracas and the blood and dust provoked by Marx, when once appeased it will be Plato, anew, to whom the young will turn, and also the old, who will love the light of thought in centuries to come. For Plato *illuminates*, whilst Marx *sweeps away*.

Imagine a *Christian Hermeticist* in Moscow's Red Square on the first of May or on the anniversary day of the October Revolution, the great socialist revolution!

But let us return to our Tarot Arcana, seeing that we are still neither swept away by any kind of "mass-movement", nor forced to march in columns and shout with the crowd. . .

Now, the waters which pour out of the mouth of the serpent sweep away, whilst those of the "sea of glass" like crystal, before the throne, illumine. And just as the collective perception of virgin Nature (the "sea of glass" before the throne) is accompanied by the collective reaction to this perception (perpetual adoration by the four holy creatures), so also there is in fallen Nature a reaction to the waters of the serpent swallowed up by the earth, namely the *beasts* of the Apocalypse. The Apocalypse does not designate them by the term "living creature" (*to dzoon*), which it uses to designate the four before the throne, but rather by the term "beast" (*to therion*; Latin. *bestia*). Thus it opposes *animality* and *bestiality*. Genuine animality is holy; bestiality is degenerate.

Besides the "red dragon with seven heads and ten horns" (Revelation xii, 3)—which is the primordial serpent, the Apocalypse speaks of the beast "with ten horns

and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads" (Revelation xiii, 1). St. John saw this beast rising out of the sea: "It was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth" (Revelation xiii, 2). St. John goes on to describe "another beast which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon" (Revelation xiii, 11)- The Apocalypse speaks also of "a scarlet beast, which was full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns" upon which the woman Babylon is seated (Revelation xvii, 3). Finally, it speaks of the "false prophet who, in the presence of the two-horned beast, worked signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped its image" (Revelation xix, 20).

There are therefore four* beasts (including the "false prophet" who is a *human* beast), which correspond to the four *Hayoth*, the holy living creatures before the throne.

Since it is a matter here (in the two "tableaus" above) of the mystery of Force (*shakti* in the tantric tradition), namely that which moves non-fallen Nature and that which moves fallen Nature, and since the notion "force" comes down to the principle of *reaction*, which implies the *perception* preceding it, the two tableaus are summarised in two feminine figures:

.. .a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. .. (Revelation xii, 1-2); [and]... a woman sitting on a scarlet beast. . . arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication. . . (Revelation xvii, 3-4).

The former is the soul of cosmic non-fallen Nature (sun, moon, stars) and the latter is the soul of terrestrial fallen Nature (gold, jewels, pearls and beast). The first is a mother; the second is a prostitute. The one is *perception* of that which is above and *reaction* to that which is thus perceived—through its realisation ("childbirth"); the other is *horizontal perception* ("fornication") and *reaction* to that which is thus perceived—through sterile enjoyment (the "cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication"). The one is the Virgin-Mother and the other is the great prostitute of Babylon.

The Virgin-Mother. . . the soul of natural virgin Nature, i.e. non-fallen Nature, which is in the anguish of perpetual childbirth, until the Birth which is the ideal of all births is accomplished.

Evolution. . . orthogenesis. . . natural selection. . . mutations in the hereditary

the red dragon is not included (ed.)

mechanism. . .Avatars. . .Advent. . .Christmas. . . so many problems and ideas referring to the one great expectation and the one great hope for evolution to attain its ultimate level of flowering and to give its flower: for orthogenesis to produce *the being of the culmination of evolution*, for natural selection to result in the future superman, for the mechanism of heredity to bring its optimum to the light of day, for what we worship above to manifest amongst us below, for the Messiah to come, for God to become man! Evolution, progress, genealogies, prophecies, hopes throughout the centuries—what do they signify *at root* if not the "anguish of childbirth" across the ages and the constant expectation of the Birth in question? What other ideal could be present — radiating into the depths of all motherhood? What other aim could animate free Nature (*natura naturans*) throughout the millennia of her activity of generation?

This is therefore what is conveyed by the "good news": "The Word *became* flesh and *dwelt* among us" (John i, 14). Free Nature, natural religion, the "woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars"—the Virgin-Sophia—was present in Mary and it is thus that the soul of non-fallen Nature gave birth to the divine Word.

Free Nature has therefore accomplished her task. She has surpassed herself, and since then the epoch of the supernatural — the epoch of divine magic — has begun. Natural religion is now flooded in the radiance ("glory") of supernatural religion, and non-fallen Nature has become a dispensator and cooperator in the miracles of the new evolution, the "evolution" of the *Second Birth*.

Nevertheless, the Virgin is the principle of Force, i.e. the principle cooperating in the realisation of supernatural acts of the Holy Spirit. This means to say that divine magic not only does not act *against* non-fallen Nature but also that the latter *cooperates* with it. The sun, moon and stars therefore lend their assistance to acts of divine magic aspiring to the Resurrection. If this were not so, if virgin Nature did not participate in acts of divine magic (miracles), then these latter would always be new creations *ex nihilo*, and not transformations, transmutations and healings. Yet the wine at the wedding of Cana was not *created from* nothing, but rather it was *water* which was changed into wine. Let us also note the fact that the Virgin-Mother was not only present at the wedding but also that she took part in an explicit manner in the miracle of changing the water into wine —since it was thanks to her initiative that the miracle took place.

The multiplying of bread in the desert was a miracle of the *multiplying* of loaves, and not of the *creation* of bread from nothing. Here also the *cooperation* of Nature is evident. And the man born blind had to wash in the pool of Siloam in order to be healed by the words of the Master and by the clay made with the Master's saliva that was applied to his eyes. Here the participation of Nature is apparent.

Even the miracle of miracles, the Resurrection itself, was not the creation of a new body, but rather the transformation of the crucified body: the latter had to *disappear* from the tomb in order that the Resurrected One could *appear* to Mary Magdalene and the others. And the Resurrected One himself indicated the

continuity of his body by inviting Thomas to put his finger in the marks of the nails and his hand in the wound on his side.

Virgin Nature therefore has her part in all the miracles. And it is virgin Nature participating actively in the miracles of divine magic which is the subject of the eleventh Arcanum of the Tarot, force, representing a woman victorious over a lion, holding its jaws open with her hands. The woman does so with the same apparent ease—without effort—with which the Magician of the first Arcanum handles his objects. Moreover, she wears a hat similar to that of the Magician—in the form of a lemniscate. One could say that the two stand equally under the sign of rhythm—the respiration of eternity—the sign ∞ ; and that the two manifest two aspects of a single principle, namely that effort signifies the presence of an obstacle, whilst natural integrity on the one hand, and undivided attention on the other hand, exclude inner conflict—and therefore every obstacle, and therefore all effort. Just as perfect concentration takes place effortlessly, so does true force act without effort. Now, the Magician is the Arcanum of the wholeness of consciousness, or concentration without effort; Force is the Arcanum of the natural integrity of being, or power without effort. Because force subdues the lion not by force similar to that of the lion, but rather by force of a higher order and on a higher plane. This is the Arcanum of Force.

What, therefore, does the eleventh Arcanum of the Tarot teach?

Through the very tableau that it represents, it says: the Virgin tames the lion and thereby invites us to leave the plane, of *quantity*—for the Virgin is evidently weaker than the lion concerning the quantity of physical force—and to raise ourselves to the plane of *quality*, for it is evidently there that the superiority of the Virgin over the lion is to be found.

What is it, therefore, that the lion obeys? What is it that he spontaneously yields to? Is he *hypnotised*? He is not, because the Virgin does not even look at him; her gaze is turned elsewhere, far from the lion whose jaws she opens. The lion is subjected to no constraint—either physical or hypnotic—therefore he obeys nothing beyond his own nature, and therefore it is his true nature which acts in him. It is the Lion before which the lion yields; it is holy animality which bestial animality obeys.

Now, the Force which the Card invokes is that of natural religion—that of non-fallen Nature. It is the magic of virgin Nature which awakens the virgin nature in the lion, and it is this Force that the eleventh Arcanum is called to reveal.

There are two principles which one has to understand and distinguish when one wants to go deeply into the Arcanum of Force. The one is the principle of the serpent, and the other is that of the Virgin. The former is *opposition* from which there proceeds friction which produces energy. The other is *concordance* from which comes fusion which engenders force.

Thus, enormous energies of a psychic nature are released into the world through a war due to a conflict of interests and pretensions; and energies of an intellectual nature pass from a virtual stare to one of actuality when there is a controver-

sy. It is said: "Truth springs forth from the clash of opinions", but actually it is not the truth which springs forth, but rather combative intellectual energy, for truth is revealed through *the fusion* of opinions and not through a clash. A clash certainly produces intellectual energy, but hardly ever discloses the truth. Quarrelling will never lead to the truth, as long as one does not give it up and seek for peace. Certainly minds can be electrified by polemic, which can cause a veritable intellectual storm in the world; but polemic cannot make the clouds disappear, nor is it given to making the sun shine.

I must confess, dear Unknown Friend, that during my long quest for truth I have been truly enriched by the fruits of the constructive work of many scientists, and by the spiritual endeavour of many mystics and esotericists, and also by the moral example of many human beings of good will — but I owe nothing to polemics or polemicists. I owe nothing to early Christian authors who attack paganism, nor to pagan authors who attack Christianity. I owe nothing to the learned Protestant doctors of the sixteenth century; and the academics of the Enlightenment and the Revolution of the eighteenth century have not taught me anything. Also, I owe nothing to the *militant* savants of the nineteenth century; and the revolutionary spirits of our century, such as Lenin, have not given me anything.

What I want to say is that the polemicists enumerated above have given me a lot in the way of *objects* of knowledge — and it is thanks to them that I have understood the intrinsic sterility of the spirit of opposition as such — but they have given me nothing in the way of *sources* of knowledge. In other words, I have learnt much *through them*, but I have learnt nothing *from them*. I owe them what they *do not want* to be owed, and I owe them nothing of what they *want* one to owe them.

Now, it is through the fusion of opinions that truth lights up. *Conversation* — the process of "*together-versing*" (flowing together) — is the very opposite of *controversy*, the process of "*contra-versing*" (flowing against). Conversation is the operation of the fusion of opinions; it is a work of synthesis. True conversation always has in principle the underlying statement from the Gospel: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew xviii. 20). For all true conversation calls upon the transcendent Centre, who is the way, the truth and the life.

The *Zohar* is a historical document which, amongst other things, supplies perhaps the best example of the creative role that conversation can play. There the Rabbis — Eleazar, Simeon, Jose, Abba and others — join their efforts and experiences with the aim of arriving together at a deeper, loftier and greater comprehension of the TORAH. And these Rabbis weep and embrace one another when this happens! From page to page the reader of the *Zohar* — this remarkable document of spirituality experienced in common, aspired to in common and appreciated in common — learns to understand, appreciate, and love more and more the conversation which aims at the fusion and synthesis of opinions.

Now, the force which is at work here is that of the Virgin (which the doctors

of the *Zohar* call SHEKINAH), whilst the energy which electrifies polemicists is that of the serpent.

The force of life, and electrical energy: Are these not the most clear manifestations of these two principles?

Life and electricity must be clearly distinguished. Thus, today there is a tendency to confuse them, and to reduce them to electricity alone. However, electricity is due to the antagonism of opposites, whilst life is the fusion of polarities. Empedocles (ca. 490-ca. 430 B.C.) certainly saw this difference and taught that the motion of the four elements —earth, water, air and fire —is due to two opposite causes: friendship (love) and strife (enmity). The Apocalypse of St. John speaks of the war between the celestial armies of the Archistrategist Michael and the red dragon with his hordes, on the one hand, and the wedding of the Lamb and his Bride (*hieros gamos*), on the other hand.

The dragon (or "serpent of old") *opposes* himself to the higher spheres — here is the origin of "terrestrial electricity"; the hierarchies, represented by the Archistrategist Michael, have to resist the dragon — here is the origin of "celestial electricity". It is celestial electricity which was the means of the miracles of divine anger in the Old Testament: the flash of fire that came out of the tabernacle and consumed Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron (Leviticus x, 1-2); the fire of the Lord which burned in the camp at Taberah and consumed some outlying parts of the camp (Numbers xi, 1-3); the earth which "opened its mouth and swallowed up" Korah and all his men (Numbers xvii, 32); Uzzah struck down on the spot, having taken hold of the ark, because the oxen stumbled and made it tilt (II Samuel vi, 6-7); the fire from above which consumed Elijah's burnt offering before the prophets of Baal (I Kings xviii, 38); the fire which descended twice and both times consumed fifty soldiers and their captains, near the hill at the top of which Elijah was sitting (II Kings i, 10-12); the miracles of Elishah (II Kings), etc. And it is terrestrial electricity of which we make use not only in the technical field of our civilisation but also in hypnosis, in demagogic propaganda, in movements of revolutionary masses— for electrical energy has its analogous forms on various planes —physical, psychic and even mental.

With respect to life, it is like the water of the "sea of glass, like crystal" coming from the throne; it is Force, natural religion, the soul of non-fallen Nature, the Virgin.

Virginity is obedience to the Divine, and is therefore in harmony and cooperation with the Divine. The Virgin is therefore the soul of life, i.e. *Force*, which exercises no constraint, but moves all. And the lion of the eleventh Card is obedient to the Force of its own life, to the profound impulse at the very depths of its own being, when it obeys the Virgin who opens its mouth.

Scripture has two different terms in Greek for "life" : *Zoe* and *bios*. The first signifies "vivifying life" and the second "derived life". *Zoe* is to *bios* as free Nature (*natura naturans*) is to necessitated Nature (*natura naturata*) (cf. also the philosophy of John Scotus Erigena). *Zoe* is therefore the source and *bios* is that which

flows, having come from the source. It is *bios* which flows from generation to generation: and it is *Zoe* which fills the individual in prayer and meditation, in acts of sacrifice and participation in the sacred sacraments. *Zoe* is vivification from above in a *vertical sense*; *bios* is vitality which, although it once issued from the same source above, passes in the *horizontal* from generation to generation.

Now *bios*, biological life, flows in the domain of the serpent. For this reason it is mingled with electrical energy in an inextricable way; biological processes cause electrical currents and the latter influence the former in living organisms. But it is not *bios* which drains the resources of the organism—rather, it is electricity. For electricity is generated through chemical decomposition and by the opposition of contrary forces, i.e. by internal friction in the organism. This is what causes fatigue, exhaustion, senility and death. *Bios*, as such, is never tired or exhausted, and never grows old or dies. The heart and respiration do not need any rest, whereas the remainder of the organism—above all the *brain*—is plunged into a state of rest each night, through sleep, having been drained during the preceding day. Then it is *bios* which, during sleep, repairs the damage done to the organism by electricity. Sleep is the time when electrical activity is reduced to a minimum and when *bios* prevails.

A *tree*, where *bios* always prevails—which "sleeps" continually, so to speak—is in principle *immortal*. For it is not the exhaustion of its interior vitality, but rather mechanical destruction from outside which puts an end to its life. A tree does not *die* of old age; it is always *killed*—uprooted by a storm, struck by lightning, dragged down by the force of gravity, or cut down by man.

The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil — the fruit of the *polarity* of opposites — is therefore electricity; and electricity entails fatigue, exhaustion. *death*. Death is the price that is paid for the knowledge of good and evil, i.e. the price of life amidst opposites. For it is electricity — physical, psychic and mental — which was introduced into the being of Adam-Eve. and thereby into the whole of life-endowed Nature, from the moment that Adam-Eve entered into communion with the *tree of opposites*, that is to say with the *principle of electricity*. And it is thus that death entered into the domain of life-endowed Nature.

Nevertheless, life-endowed Nature is not a uniform and integral entity. It is divided. There is above all division according to the preponderant roles played by *bios*, electricity and *Zoe*. The soul of life-endowed Nature in which *bios* is subordinated to electricity is the "woman Babylon" of the Apocalypse. Life-endowed Nature in which *bios* and electricity are in equilibrium is the "suffering creation" of which St. Paul said that it "sighs for deliverance" (Romans viii, 19-23). And, lastly, life-endowed Nature in which *bios* dominates electricity—and therefore is itself dominated by *Zoe* — is non-fallen Nature. Its soul is the celestial Virgin — the high priestess of natural religion. This is what constitutes the Arcanum of the eleventh Card of the Tarot.

One could formulate it as follows; *Force is virginity*.

What is virginity?

The state of virginity is that of the consonance of three principles—the spirit, the soul and the body. A being in whom spirit, soul and body are in consonance is in a state of virginity. In other words, it is the principle of the unity of three worlds: heaven, purgatory and earth. From the point of view of the earth, it is complete *obedience* of the body to the soul. From the point of view of purgatory, it is complete obedience of the soul to the breath of eternity—or *chastity*. From the point of view of heaven, it is absolute receptivity to the Divine — or *poverty*.

Virginity is therefore the unity of that which is above and that which is below, and it is this which is *Force*, i.e. the action of three worlds in harmony. Because force—"the strongest of all powers, the force of all forces" (*Tabula Smaragdina*, 9) — is the unity of three worlds in action, that is to say in action where the divine spirit, the heart and the body are united.

It is the Virgin speaking through Solomon when he writes:

Before his works of old
 I was set up from everlasting,
 From the beginning,
 or ever the earth was.
 When there were no depths I was brought forth,
 when there were no springs abounding with water.
 Before the mountains had been shaped,
 before the hills. I was brought forth;
 before he had made the earth with its fields,
 or the first of the dust of the world.
 When he established the heavens. I was there,
 when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
 when he made firm the skies above,
 when he established the fountains of the deep,
 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
 so that the waters might not transgress his command,
 when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
 then I was at work beside him.
 (Proverbs viii, 22-30)

"When he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was at work beside him"— is a clear statement of the role of the Virgin, who cooperates with the Divine not only in the miracles of redemption but also in those of creation.

Co-creatrix, Co-redemptrix, Co-sanctificatrix. Virgo, Mater, Regina. .this formula summarises the thoughts relating to the principle of virginity. Here is the place to point out that principles do not exist separately from the beings who incarnate and manifest them. Principles as such are always *immanent*. This is why the reality of the principle of the Divine is God; the reality of the principle of the divine Word is Jesus Christ; and the reality of the principle of fertile and productive virginity is Mary-Sophia. Mary-Sophia represents, i.e. incarnates and manifests, the principle of virginity, that of non-fallen Nature, that of natural

religion, and that of Force. . She is the central individuality—the "queen"—of the whole domain in question. She is the conscious individual soul who is the concrete ideal — the "queen"—of virginity, motherhood, and creative-productive or queenly wisdom (queenly = regnal from *regina* = queen).

There is not a shadow of doubt for anyone who takes the spiritual life of mankind seriously, even if he is short of authentic spiritual experience, that the Blessed Virgin is not an ideal only, nor a mental image only, nor an archetype of the unconscious (of depth-psychology), nor, lastly, an occultistic *egregore* (a collective astral creation of believers), but rather a concrete and living individuality—like you or I—who loves, suffers, and rejoices. It is not only the children of Fatima, the child Bernadette at Lourdes, the children of La Salette-Fallavaux, and the children of Beauraing in Belgium, who have witnessed the "Lady", but also innumerable adults across the centuries, including our own. Numerous meetings still remain intimate and undivulged (I know of three series of such meetings, including one in Tokyo, Japan), but one series of meetings with the Blessed Virgin took place recently in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, where the Blessed Virgin manifested herself as the "Lady of all nations" (*de Vrouwe van die Volkeren*) and inaugurated a prayer-movement with a special prayer, with a view to saving all nations from "degeneration, disaster and war" (*verwording, rampen en oorlog*)* I may add that I went to Amsterdam in order to make as scrupulous an investigation as possible, and the result of this investigation there (confirmed subsequently by experiences of a personal nature) was complete certainty not only with respect to the authenticity of the experiences of the seer (a woman forty years of age) but also with respect to the authenticity of the *subject* of these experiences.

In writing of these things, I can only agree with the sentiment expressed by Rabbi Simeon in the *Zohar*, who exclaimed:

Woe to me if I tell and woe to me if I do not tell! If I tell, then the wicked will know how to worship their master; and if I do not tell, then the companions will be left in ignorance of this discovery! (*Zohar* lib; trsl. H. Sperling and M. Simon, 5 vols., London-Bournemouth, 1949, vol. i, p. 48)

Be that as it may, meetings with the Blessed Virgin are so numerous and so well-attested that one must certainly at least admit their objective reality. I say "at least", because this does not satisfy the demands of my conscience. In fact, I would not be entirely honest or frank with you, dear Unknown Friend, if I were

*Translator's note: The prayer revealed by the Blessed Virgin - the "Lady of All Nations"—in Amsterdam on February 11, 1951. has been translated into English as follows:

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father.
Send now your Spirit over the earth.
Let the Holy Spirit live in the hearts of all peoples.
That they may be preserved from degeneration, disaster and war.
May the Lady of All Nations, who once was Mary,
Be our Advocate. Amen"

(Cf. *The Messages of the lady of All Nations* Amsterdam, 1971)

not to say what is an absolutely sure result (in the inner forum of my consciousness) of more than forty years of endeavour and experience. It is the following:

One meets the Blessed Virgin inevitably when one attains a certain intensity of spiritual aspiration, when this aspiration is authentic and pure. The very fact of having attained a spiritual sphere which comprises a certain degree of intensity and purity of intention puts you in the presence of the Blessed Virgin. This meeting belongs to a certain "sphere"—i.e. to a certain degree of intensity and purity of spiritual aspiration—of spiritual experience, just as the experience of having a mother belongs naturally to human family life on earth. It is therefore as "natural" for the spiritual domain as the fact of having a mother is natural in the domain of one's terrestrial family. The difference is that on earth one can certainly be motherless, whilst in the realm of the spiritual this can never happen.

Therefore, the thesis that I am advancing with one hundred per cent conviction is that every Hermeticist who truly seeks authentic spiritual reality will sooner or later meet the Blessed Virgin. This meeting signifies, apart from the illumination and consolation that it comprises, protection against a very serious spiritual danger. For he who advances in the sense of depth and height in the "domain of the invisible" one day arrives at the sphere known by esotericists as the "sphere of mirages" or the "zone of illusion". This zone surrounds the earth as a belt of illusory mirages. It is this zone which the prophets and the Apocalypse designate "Babylon". The soul and the queen of this zone is in fact Babylon, the great prostitute, who is the adversary of the Virgin.

Now, one cannot pass by this zone without being enveloped by perfect purity. One cannot traverse it without the protection of the "mantle of the Blessed Virgin"—the mantle which was an object of worship and of a special cult in Russia (*Pokrov Presvyatyya Bogoroditsy*—"Mantle of the Very Holy Mother of God"). It is therefore the protection of this "mantle" which is absolutely necessary in order to be able to traverse the "sphere of mirages" without falling prey to the influence of its illusions.

The way of Hermeticism, solitary and intimate as it is, comprises authentic experiences from which it follows that the Roman Catholic Church is, in fact, a depository of Christian spiritual truth, and the more one advances on the way of free research for this truth, the more one approaches the Church. Sooner or later one inevitably experiences that spiritual reality corresponds—with an astonishing exactitude—to what the Church teaches: that there are guardian Angels; that there are saints who participate actively in our lives; that the Blessed Virgin *is* real, and that she is almost precisely such as she is understood, worshipped and portrayed by the Church; that the sacraments *are* effective, and that there are seven of them — and not two, or three, or even eight; that the three sacred vows —of obedience, chastity and poverty—constitute in fact the very essence of all authentic spirituality; that prayer is a powerful means of charity, for beyond as well as here below; that the ecclesiastical hierarchy reflects the celestial hierarchical order; that the Holy See and the papacy represent a mystery of divine magic; that hell, purgatory and heaven *are* realities; that, lastly, the Master himself—although he

loves everyone, Christians of all confession as well as all non-Christians —abides with his Church, since he is always present there, since he visits the faithful there and instructs his disciples there. The Master is always findable and meetable there.

Let us return to the Arcanum of Force.

It is said that "union makes force", and one understands by this the alliance of individual wills with a view to achieving a common aim. It is the formula for the *quantitative* increase of force. With respect to qualitative force, it would be appropriate to say that "unity is force", because one is strong only in so far as there is unity of spirit, soul and body, i.e. in so far as there is *virginity*. It is inner conflict that renders us weak: the fact that we serve two or even three masters at the same time.

The *Emerald Table* of Hermes states not only the principle of universal analogy, but also that of universal force: "to *accomplish* the miracles of one thing". It teaches concerning the "strongest of all powers, the force of all forces, for it overcometh every subtle thing and doth penetrate every solid substance" (*Tabula Smaragdina*. 9). The force taught by the *Emerald Table* is the unity in action of heaven and earth, for *thelema* (the fundamental will) "doth ascend from earth to heaven; again it doth descend to earth, and uniteth in itself the force from things superior and things inferior" (*Tabula Smaragdina*, 8).

Let us now examine the two aspects of Force which the *Emerald Table* speaks of, namely:

that it "*overcometh every subtle thing*"
and "*doth penetrate every solid substance*".

1. "*It overcometh every subtle thing*"

The deeper meaning —mystical, gnostic, magical and Hermetic —of "overcoming" is to change the enemy into a friend. To render him impotent only is not yet victory. Thus the Germany of 1914 was certainly rendered impotent in 1918, but was not overcome —as the year 1939 proves. But after the defeat of 1945, Germany was certainly *overcome*— in so far as she is sincerely allied to her old adversaries. The same applies to Japan as a state.

On another plane, it is likewise true that the devil will be overcome only at the moment when his voice —no matter whether it is rough or smooth—will be heard in chorus with the choirs of celestial hierarchies praising God.

Saul of Tarsus was the very soul of the persecution of Christians; Paul the apostle was the very soul of the work of conquest of the so-called "pagan" world for Christianity. Here is a case of authentic victory in the true sense of the word.

And it is authentic victory that one must hope for and wait for in the conflict that tradition represents as the struggle between the Archistrategist Michael and the dragon. The day when it is achieved will be the day of a new festival —the festival of the coronation of the Virgin *on earth*. For then the principle of opposition will be replaced on earth by that of collaboration. This will be the triumph

of life over electricity. And cerebral intellectuality will then bow before Wisdom (SOPHIA) and will unite with her.

"To overcome every subtle thing" is therefore equivalent to changing opposing forces—mental, psychic and electrical—into friendly and allied forces. The "subtle things" to overcome are the intellectual forces of temptation based on *doubt*, the psychic forces of temptation based on sterile *enjoyment*, and the electrical forces of temptation based on *power*.

In the last analysis, the "subtle things" meant here are therefore equivalent to temptations. However every temptation is similar to a two-way flow of traffic. Because when evil tempts good, it is itself at the same time "tempted" by the latter. Temptation always entails *contact*, and therefore an exchange of influence. Every beautiful temptress, in attempting to tempt a saint, risks finishing up by "wetting his feet with her tears, wiping them with the hair of her head, kissing them, and anointing them with ointment" (Luke vii, 38). Do we not have prefigured here the victory over the "great prostitute Babylon"? Have we not discovered the root and core of the much celebrated and lamented "fall of Babylon", described in chapters 17 and 18 of the Apocalypse?

Doubt, sterile enjoyment, power—these constitute together the "technology" of temptation.

First of all, doubt... it is the principle of division and opposition, and therefore of illness. For just as intellectual doubt divides the intellect by confronting it with two contrary tableaux, and reduces it to the impotence of indecision, so is bodily illness a "doubt" in the organism, i.e. two tendencies, opposed to one another, reducing it to impotence and constraining it to remain in bed.

Doubt is to faith as the sight of eyes suffering from astigmatism is to normal eyesight. Just as normal eyes either do not see or see *together*, so does faith see—whether more or less is not important—with the "higher eye" and the "lower eye" *together*. For *certainty* is due to the coordinated vision of the higher or transcendent Self—this is the "higher eye"—and the lower or empirical self, which is the "lower eye". Doubt appears when the "higher eye" and the "lower eye" do not see together. There is then a spiritual astigmatism, a lack of coordination between the two "seers" in man. Doubt is a beast with two horns, since it only bifurcates.

However, doubt that is mastered, under the control of the will and put into us service, proves to be prodigiously useful, as the whole history of science shows. There doubt is utilised as the instrument of scientific faith; there one doubts within the precise limits of the scientific method, being guided by — and in — the interests of scientific faith. If Pasteur had not doubted spontaneous generation on the one hand, and if he had not had faith in observation and experimentation, on the other hand, we would not now benefit from the fruits of the "Pasteurian revolution" in biology and medicine.

Productive though it is in the scientific domain, doubt nevertheless entails expenses that must be paid. Its practice, be it only by using it as a method, results in partial blindness; it renders us *one-eyed*. For the fact of regularly turning away

from the "higher eye", from its message and testimony, and confining oneself to the "lower eye" (the five senses plus cerebral intellectuality), cannot fail, sooner or later, to have its effect, i.e. to render one-eyed he who assiduously practises the use of one eye instead of two.

And exactly as the great doctors of theology, metaphysics and mysticism of the Middle Ages proved to be sterile in what concerns medicine, biology, physics, physiology and other sciences—the help of which saves, in France alone, 69.000 human lives each year from the bane of tuberculosis, and has reduced mortality—due to typhoid fever by more than 97 percent, mortality due to diphtheria also by 97 percent, that due to scarlet fever by 98 percent, etc. (cf Dr. Etienne May, *La medecine. son passe, son present, son avenir*, Paris, 1957, pp. 336-337)—so are the doctors of the sciences of our time sterile in what concerns the vital spiritual needs of mankind. The former had an eye only for the spiritual; the latter have an eye only for the temporal.

Is it necessary to be one-eyed in order to produce something of value—whether scientific or spiritual? No. Individual examples, including the recent example of the author of *The Phenomenon of Man* and *Le Milieu divin*. prove it. And esoteric Hermeticism, i.e. Hermeticism cultivated within the inner forum of consciousness, is called to play a role—whether visible or invisible is of little importance—as a link in each individual's inner forum of consciousness, between what is given by the *two* "eyes". It can certainly be an agent in establishing coordination of the two "eyes", between culture and civilisation, between spirituality and progress, between religion and science. It can act as a healing agent in this singular contemporary illness (which is a kind of schizophrenia) of the dissociation between spirituality and intellectuality—but it can do so only in the inner forum of each individually, in order to guard against arrogating functions of general significance belonging properly to Church and Academia. Briefly, the role which it is called to play is anonymous and intimate, and is not provided with the means of the armoury of collectives, such as pamphlets, press, radio, television and congresses where a great din is made. The magic of the constant work of service done in silence—this is what it is a matter of.

A secret, then? Not at all, for a private thing is not a secret thing. The private life is not a secret life. Silence as the essential condition for intimate work is in no way equivalent to a jealously guarded secret. Just as Trappist monks maintain silence without anyone suspecting them of wanting to keep secrets, so is the community composed of Hermeticists scattered in the world in the right to be silent, in order to maintain the atmosphere of privacy essential for its work, without it being suspected of dark secrets. Authentic spiritual life requires the inviolable sanctuary of privacy—which has nothing in common with "initiation secrets" or those of "secret societies", whose secrets, furthermore, inevitably become "open secrets".

Let us now consider sterile enjoyment. The role that certain schools of philosophy and psychology assign to *pleasure* as the final cause of all human activity—including moral activity—is well known. According to them, man would not have

any desire to act if he did not have the promise of real or imaginary pleasure.

What is pleasure? It is the lowest constituent of the scale: pleasure —joy —blissfulness—beatitude. It is only the psycho-physical signal announcing accord between what one desires and what one attains. Being only a signal, it does not have moral value in itself; it is desire, whose satisfaction it signals, which falls under the moral qualification of good or evil. This is why pleasure can be followed by joy or disgust, according to the case. Pleasure is therefore a reaction—at the surface of man's psychic being—to objective events. In other words, a life dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure alone would be the most superficial that one could imagine for a human being.

Joy is more profound than pleasure. It is still an index, but what it indicates is deeper than the relationship between a desire and the event of its being satisfied. Joy is the *state* of soul which participates most intensely in *life* and experiences it in appreciating its value. Joy is the spreading of the soul beyond the limits of conscious awareness. It signifies an augmentation of the soul's vital elan.

Blissfulness is the state of the human being where spirit, soul and body are united in a comprehensive *rhythm*. It is the rhythm of the spiritual, psychic and bodily life brought into harmony.

Lastly, beatitude transcends blissfulness in so far as the state which it comprises is higher than that in which the rhythm of the human spirit, soul and body holds sway; it is the state of the actual Presence of the "Fourth"—of God. It is therefore the state of the "beatific vision" (*visio beatifica*) of Christian tradition.

Pleasure is therefore most peripheral and superficial on the scale of blessedness. Yet in the technique of temptation it plays the same role with regard to the soul as doubt does with regard to the spirit. For just as doubt reduces the spirit to impotence, so does pleasure (or sterile enjoyment) reduce the soul to impotence, to a state of passivity. It enslaves it and changes it from the subject into an object of action.

Lastly, *power*. . . here again schools of philosophy and psychology have erected the "will-to-power" as the supreme principle of human activity. According to them man aspires only to power; and religion, science and art are only means to this end.

Now, it is true that no one desires powerlessness as such. And if we worship the Crucifix, which is the symbol of complete outer powerlessness, we do so because it is at the same time the symbol of supreme inner power. For there is power and Power. The one enslaves and the other liberates. The one constrains; the other inspires.

True power always appears as powerlessness. For it is always due to a kind of crucifixion. False power, however, crucifies others. This is because it knows of no other growth than that at the expense of others. An autocrat is powerful only when he has reduced to impotence all other candidates—all the independent elements in his country; a hypnotist is powerful in so far as the number of people who resist his hypnosis is small; a philosophical system is powerful in so far as it *compels* minds to accept it by the weight of the totality of its arguments (Fichte attempted to *compel the* reader to understand *-Ein Versuch, die Leser zum Verstehen zu*

zwingen); lastly, a machine is powerful in so far as it is capable of rendering powerless the obstacles which prevent it from functioning.

Now, the technique of temptation in the domain of power consists in substituting false power for the true—in the substitution of the power of compulsion or "electricity" for that of freedom of inspiration and healing or "life" (*Zoe*).

Sacred magic has nothing in common with the power which compels. It operates only with currents of "life" or *Zoe*—spiritual, psychic and physical. Even its "armoury"—such as the "swords" of the Archangel Michael and the Holy Cherubim who guards the gate of Eden—are showers of rays of "life" whose intensity is such as to repulse or put to flight anyone who is either opposed to "life", or who cannot support its intensity, and on the other hand it attracts and vivifies anyone who aspires to "life" and who can support its intensity. Who knows how many people otherwise ill or despairing owe the re-establishment of their physical or psychic health to the "sword" of the Archangel Michael? There are no statistics of this kind, but if there were, one would probably be astonished at the number of "victims" of the flaming sword!

Be that as it may, the "swords" in question are powerful arms of true power. They are the fruits of outer powerlessness, i.e. they are forces due to *crucifixion*. For the guardian of freedom is, by this very fact, the victim of freedom; he has also to endure the age-old abuse of the freedom that he protects. It is the age-old powerlessness towards the abuse of freedom—therefore it is an age-old crucifixion—which is the source of power concentrated in the "sword" of the Archistrategist Michael.. .

It is the same with the "flaming sword" of the Cherubim "set in the east of Eden". Here again it is divine impotence in relation to human freedom, which latter chose the way of the Fall—impotence which nourished and concentrated the "sword".

Thus, here is the choice which each of us is called to make: the choice between the power of crucifixion and that of compulsion. To pray or to order: Which would we prefer?

"Electricity" in its triple form—physical, psychic and mental—is an instrument which lends itself prodigiously to the service of the will-to-power, i.e. to the desire to order and subjugate. For this reason it is a temptation for mankind. Mankind is confronted by the choice between the power of sacred magic and that of mechanics—a choice which, in the last analysis, amounts to one between life (*Zoe*) and electricity.

These are therefore the three principle "subtle things" which are overcome by Force or virginity.

2. *"It doth penetrate every solid substance"*

Solidity is the experience of an obstacle to our freedom of movement. Air is certainly not it, whilst a wall of stone certainly is. Similarly, mistrust towards you can erect a veritable psychic wall which can be an insurmountable obstacle to your movement aiming at contact and the communication of ideas. Similarly, again,

a well-defined and rigid intellectual system can render you dumb with regard to the person who is held under its power. It would be impossible, for example, to reach the inner organ of comprehension of an orthodox Marxist or a Freudian psychoanalyst in speaking to them of authentic mystical experience. The one would *hear only* what lends itself to interpretation by the concept of "narcosis", remaining quite deaf to the rest, and the other would have an open ear only for that which lends itself to interpretation by the concept of "sublimation of libido", i.e. for what lets itself be reduced to the play of sexuality. Therefore, here again there is a wall.

Now, there is physical, psychic and mental "solidity". All three forms of solidity have in common that they are experienced as obstacles to our movement. They are experienced as *impenetrable*. Nevertheless, the *Emerald Table* affirms that "every solid substance", i.e. each physical, psychic and mental obstacle, is certainly penetrable for Force or virginity.

How?

By action opposite to that of explosion, i.e. by *emollient action*. With regard to a mental obstacle presented by a rigid intellectual system, Force will not occupy itself with the mental formation itself, but will admit its breath into the heart of the person concerned. The heart having tasted life (*Zoe*), the creative movement of life will pass its breath to the head and will breathe movement into the mental formation. This latter, having been set in motion — *not by doubt, but rather by creative elan* — will lose its rigidity and will become fluid. It is thus that the liquification of crystallised mental formations is effected.

With respect to psychic obstacles, it is again emollient action which effects the transformation of a psychic complex from rigidity into sensitivity. Here again it is the breath of life which dissolves the complex, by way of the heart so that the mistrust, fear or hate, concentrated in the complex is dispersed and the soul is left free of the blinding influence of the psychic complex.

Lastly, physical obstacles exist for Force, i.e. for the radiation of life, only in so far as they are due to morbid processes of crystallisation in living organisms. If we give them a common comprehensive name, it is "sclerosis"; this constitutes the obstacle in general. Sclerosis is the process of gradual alienation of the body from the soul and spirit. A corpse is the limit and end of this, because the corpse is a body completely alienated with regard to the soul and spirit.

This is what Dr. Etienne May says in making an assessment from the standpoint of modern day medicine:

With regard to arterio-sclerosis, it is to a certain extent a natural modification of the arteries with age. And thus, pushing this to an absurd extreme, one could almost say that, all other illnesses being suppressed, sclerosis of the arteries—in the long run obligatory—would alone prevent us from becoming immortal. (Dr. Etienne May, *La medecine, son passe, son present, son avenir*, Paris, 1957, p. 341)

Sclerosis is therefore death itself, which is at work during life in modifying, little by little, the living body into a corpse. At least, this is what it appears to be, seen in the light of modern medicine and biology.

There are, nonetheless, two different ways of dying. The one is where the body refuses to serve as the instrument for the soul—which is the case with sclerosis. The other is that where the principle which vivifies and animates the body retires and thus is missed by the body; it is then the *soul* which quits the body.

In the first case, it is the body which expels the soul; in the second case, it is the soul which refuses to make use of the body any longer. One dies, therefore, because the body becomes unserviceable for life or, otherwise, because life itself retires from the body. In the latter case one certifies from a clinical point of view a generally increasing lapse of biological functions which advances to the point where the activity of respiration and circulation halts, i.e. where clinical death takes place. This can happen in the state of deep sleep, at the hours when vitality is normally at its minimum — between two and four o'clock in the morning. Then one says that death was due to old age, pure and simple—without any specific ailment, including sclerosis, being the cause. With respect to hardening of the arteries or arterio-sclerosis, this process has long been considered as an inevitable consequence of advancing age. "But one knows nowadays that there is arterio-sclerosis in young people and that there are old people whose arteries (without speaking of the brain and nervous system) remain supple" (Dr. Étienne May, *La médecine, son passé, son présent, son avenir*, Paris. 1957, p. 346). One can therefore die with supple arteries, without cancer and without being the victim of pathological viruses. One can depart entirely, just as one departs partially when one falls asleep.

Now, there are several modes of sleeping. There is sleep and Sleep. You can believe, or not believe, in the testimony of the Cabbala, which describes what is said to happen during the sleep of the righteous, during the sleep of ordinary-people, and during the sleep of sinners. (It is described how at the hour of midnight the Ancient of Days draws near to the earth and arrives at the gate of Eden, where the souls of the righteous meet him. etc.) However there is no one who does not know from sure experience what arises during sleep at night, in diverse states not only of health but also of the soul. The overwhelming cares of one day can be changed during sleep into things of secondary importance and can even appear insignificant, whilst insignificant things of the day before, which skated almost imperceptibly across the screen of your memory before sleep, can acquire in dream a singular importance which was not at all surmised the preceding day. How many different ways of awakening! How moods, states of mind, desires, general states of soul, differ when you awake, for example, after a Christmas night or an Easter night, or some night in November or February. . . If the ways of awakening are as different as black and white, it is because there are as many different kinds of *sleep*.

Just as there are several modes of sleeping, so there are several modes of dying.

It is again the Cabbala which makes mention of this and which describes a whole scale of ways of dying, the summit of which would be death due to the kiss of the Eternal One. According to the Cabbala, conscious or unconscious *ecstasy* would therefore be the most sublime cause of death.

Must an ecstatic rapture necessarily be sudden or can it be slow and gradual as well? Consider the process of death where it is not the body which refuses to serve the soul, but rather where it is the soul itself which gradually quits the body—could this not be the visible manifestation of invisible ecstasy, of the increasing attraction of the Divine working in the very depths of the soul? Would not increasing *nostalgia* suffice to explain the gradual departure of vital elan that is recorded in the case of general decline resulting in death?

Be that as it may, this is not only what the Cabbala teaches, but also contemporary Christian Hermeticism. The Hermetic teaching is as follows:

During the period of preparation for so-called "natural" death—i.e. caused neither by the unserviceability of the organism, nor by violent interference from outside, nor by poisoning—a well-defined process takes place in the "vital body" (the "etheric body", or *nephesch* according to the Cabbala). There the vital forces concentrate little by little in the region of the eight-petalled lotus, which is the crown centre. To the extent that this concentration in the crown region of the head (in fact, even above the head, if one understands by "head" the physical brain) takes place, vital activity diminishes—at first in the lower region of the organism, i.e. the genital and intestinal region, then in the region of the stomach, and lastly in the central region in the neighbourhood of the heart. At the moment when the concentration of vitality at the crown centre is complete, the heart and also the circulatory and respiratory system cease their activity—this is the moment of death.

Now, the process here corresponds to the ecstasy to which one aspires in the practice of yoga. For the state of *samadhi*, or yogic ecstasy, is realised, in terms of esoteric physio-psychurgy, by the concentration of energy—arising from the lower region of the body—in the crown region, in the region of the "thousand-petalled lotus" (*sahasrara*). The eight-petalled lotus is designated in India as "thousand-petalled" because of its intense scintillation, which gives the impression of a multitude of petals (a "thousand"). Once the energy is concentrated in the crown region the body is reduced to a state of stupor, and the consciousness of the self departs and is united with the consciousness of the transcendent Self—which is the state of *samadhi* or ecstasy. *Samadhi* or yogic ecstasy is a temporary or artificial death.

Although the Christian ecstasy of *sursum corda* ("elevation of the heart") differs essentially from *samadhi*, there is no reason to deny the reality of yogic ecstasy or the fact that it is an authentic ecstasy, albeit not the only possible one.

It is therefore quite justifiable to say that so-called "natural" death is fundamentally a natural ecstasy—notably, a natural *samadhi*, where the transcendent Self accomplishes union with the personal self, in withdrawing it from the body and

uniting with it. It is, again, a case where Force "doth penetrate the solid substance" when one dies a natural death, having supple arteries and a normal nervous system. It is then Force (*Zoe*) which keeps the blood vessels supple through its emollient action, and which renders natural death possible as a result of "natural ecstasy" or the gathering of vital forces above.

These, therefore, are some of the facts and thoughts which can contribute to an understanding of the statement from the *Tabula Smaragdina*:

It doth penetrate every solid substance.

The concept of Force is that of an intermediary between pure consciousness and manifestation. It is the link between the idea and the phenomenon.

Force has two aspects—that of electricity and that of life (or struggle on the one hand, and cooperation, on the other). These two aspects correspond to the serpent (*nahash*) and the Virgin. Occultists of the school of Eliphas Levi considered the serpent as the "great magical agent" *par excellence* and did not much occupy themselves with the Virgin, who bears the principle of sacred magic. They interested themselves above all in the psychic and mental aspect of the principle of electricity, called by them the "mobile astral agency", thus desiring to extend the domain of science—which is occupied only with the physical aspect of electricity—to the psychic and mental realms. They wanted to win over to science, i.e. for that understanding which makes use of the method of observation and experimentation, the *whole* domain of electricity — physical, psychic and mental.

Their dominant preoccupation was therefore to demonstrate that the tradition of ancient and mediaeval magic contains many a truth—due to observation and experimentation—ignored by science, and that the "great magical agent" can certainly be placed in the service of human intelligence and will just as is the energy of electricity and magnetism. The fact is that they enveloped their essential message in a cloud of verbal romanticism evoking the mild shivers that accompany allusions to "secret initiations", to the "mysteries" of age-old secret fraternities of adepts who know and accomplish all that is worth the trouble of knowing and accomplishing, to mysterious communities of sages and mages who possess, across the ages, the knowledge and power for the occult government of the world, secretly fashioning the destiny of mankind. The fact of this romanticism—quite understandable and excusable, moreover—does not at all prevent an understanding of the true task that they were pursuing in establishing facts and in sifting out laws and principles from the totality of occult traditions and experiences. What they were doing in reality—disregarding the romanticism—was elaborating a *modern science* from the raw material of occult traditions and experiences.

May at long last the whisperers be silent— all those who spread rumours about the work of these occultists, placing them under suspicion of "satanism" and "dark practices"! They are no more—nor less—"satanists" than the people who, for example, treat mental patients with electric shocks, and they are without doubt in-

nocent angels in comparison with the physicists who discovered nuclear energy and put it in the service of destruction!

It is time, once and for all, that an end is made to the foolish and unpleasant accusations — concerning contemporary doctors of occultism — of "satanism" or "black magic". They are, if the worst comes to the worst, romantics infatuated with the ideal of an absolute science of a glorious past, and they are, in so far as they are doing their best, pioneers of a science of the ignored or neglected domain of magic, i.e. a science of the dynamic relationships which exist between subjective consciousness and objective phenomena.

But, whilst wholly rejecting with indignation all the suspicions and accusations of "satanism" with regard to the classical authors of contemporary occultism. I regret nonetheless that they preferred science to Hermeticism, and consequently dedicated their efforts, in preference, to the study of the principle of the serpent, that of psychic and mental *electricity*, instead of devoting themselves to the task of rendering themselves capable of participating consciously in the principle of the Virgin, that of psychic and mental *life*. If they had chosen Hermeticism — i.e. the spiritual life which comprises the totality of mysticism, gnosis, magic and the perennial philosophy — they would have "written" collectively a modern Christian *Zohar* (or "Book of Splendour"), and they would have poured out into the world a flow of wisdom and spiritual life which would have been able to accomplish a true spiritual renaissance in the western world. *Satis scientiae. sapientiae parum* ("lots of knowledge, but too little wisdom") — this is what must be said to the representatives of occult science of our time. It is not the scholars and experimenters who are called to realise a spiritual springtime in the western world, but rather those participating in authentic sources of the profound life — the deeper life of thinking, feeling and the will. In order for this to take place, thought must become meditative, feeling — contemplative, and the will — ascetic. For in order to attain authentic sources of the profound life, one must seek profound thought — which is meditation; one must seek profound feeling — which is contemplation; and one must seek the primal will (beyond desires and longings) — which is asceticism. It is thus that conscious participation in authentic spiritual life is gained, and it is thus that the sources of this life are opened.

The Virgin, the Force of our Arcanum, is the principle of springtime, i.e. that of creative spiritual elan and spiritual flourishing. The prodigious flourishing of philosophy and the arts in ancient Athens took place under the sign of the Virgin. Similarly, the flourishing of the Renaissance at Florence was under the vernal sign of the Virgin. Also, Weimar at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a place where the breath of the Virgin perceptibly moved hearts and minds.

In ancient Egypt the domain of the mysteries of death was attributed to Osiris, and that of life — including language, writing, law and the arts — was attributed to Isis. Thus, Isis was the soul of the civilisation of ancient Egypt, which we are still admiring after more than twenty centuries.

The sickness of the West today is that it is more and more lacking creative elan.

The Reformation, rationalism, the French revolution, materialistic faith of the nineteenth century, and the Bolshevik revolution, show that everywhere mankind is turning away from the Virgin. The consequence of this is that the sources of creative spiritual elan are drying up, one after the other, and that an increasing *aridity* is showing up in all domains of the spiritual life of the West. It is said that the West is growing old. But why? Because it lacks creative elan, because it has turned away from the source of creative elan, because it has turned away from the Virgin. Without virginity there is no springtime; there is neither freshness nor youth.

For this reason, it is regrettable that most of the authors and doctors of contemporary occultism also side with the "dethroners" of the Virgin. Thus, they turn towards "scientism", i.e. towards knowledge which unveils and undresses, and they turn away from wisdom, i.e. from knowledge which is veiled and dressed with symbols, which is due not to *scrutinising observation* but rather to *revelatory worship*. For there is a world of difference between a scientific scrutiniser of the "naked truth" and a worshipper of the truth which is revealed through symbols. The former is inevitably an *iconoclast*; the latter is an *iconodule*. The former seeks nudity; the latter prepares himself for revelation through the fullness of symbolism.

Now, the Hermeticist is essentially an *iconophile*. For him symbols are not obstacles that must be eliminated in order to arrive at knowledge of the truth, but rather means for receiving revelation. The "clothes"—the symbols—of truth are for him not what *hides* it, but rather what *reveals* it. The entire world, in so far as it is a series of symbols, does not hide, but reveals the Word. The divine commandment: *Thou shall not kill*, is also applicable to the domain of knowledge. He who *denies* the life of symbols, kills them in his thought. For to deny that which reveals means to kill that which lives in the domain of thought. The iconoclast is an intellectual murderer. The Hermeticist is, in contrast, an iconophile and traditionalist. This means to say that he does not side with the successive waves of iconoclasm—the waves named "reformation", "enlightenment", "scientific faith"—which set fire to forests of symbols protecting the intellectual sun of humanity against barrenness and erosion. This means to say, also, that he has as a basic principle not only the commandment "Thou shalt not kill", but also the commandment which is the foundation of all tradition—i.e. all continuity in progress, growth, development and evolution—the commandment: *Honour thy father and thy mother*.

To honour "father" and "mother" is the spirit and soul of *tradition*, of constructive continuation from the past to the present, of true progress across the ages of the path of the life of mankind towards truth. It is still more—it is the very essence of the life of the spirit and the soul. Because it is the experience of honoured paternal love which renders us capable of raising our gaze to heaven and saying with sincerity and authenticity: *Pater noster qui es in coelis* ("Our Father who art in heaven"). And it is the experience of honoured maternal love which underlies our prayer: *Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis* ("Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us").

The source of spiritual life is in this experience of the two aspects of love: the virile love which provides for and directs our steps towards what is good for us, and the tender love which assuages all our tears. Now, when care and tenderness manifest themselves amongst human beings on earth, it is unthinkable that this unparalleled treasure is not also to be found at the very depths of the world from which mankind has arisen. Here is the foundation of *natural religion* in human consciousness—and therefore of all confidence in divine order, all worship of the invisible, and all aspiration towards the invisible. And this aspiration proves to be well founded—the invisible is in fact neither deaf nor mute. This latter fact is the foundation of *supernatural religion* in the experience of human consciousness which experiences the action of grace and revelation from above. Grace and revelation are the manifestation of paternal love from above, just as it is said in the Sermon on the Mount:

What man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew vii, 9-11)

Hermeticism, in so far as it is a living tradition—for more than thirty centuries—owes its life to the commandment "Honour thy father and thy mother". For this commandment brings longevity with it—as, moreover, is said in the text: "Honour thy father and thy mother, *that thy days may be long* in the land which the LORD God gives thee" (Exodus xx, 12). It is in honouring the transcendent God ("Our Father who is in heaven") and the soul of non-fallen Nature ("the Virgin Mother") that Hermeticism—in spite of numerous temporary aberrations on the part of its representatives who at one time have given themselves up to pagan "philosophism", at another time to "cabbalism" without Christ, or to "alchemy" in order to make material gold, or lastly to modern "scientism"—has survived Egyptian decadence, Graeco-Roman pagan decadence, the organised "theologism" of the Middle Ages, the iconoclasm of the Reformation, the rationalism of the Enlightenment and, lastly, the "scientism" of the nineteenth century. Even though Hermeticism has every reason to regret, to repent, to expiate and make good a lot of its past, in this it is no exception, as all man's spiritual traditions have sinned a lot. Its longevity, however, is due to the fact that, fundamentally, it has honoured its celestial and terrestrial parents. It is not true—as its adversaries would have it—that its longevity is due to the persistence in human nature of the vices of morbid curiosity and arrogant presumption, which latter refuses to bow before a mystery. No, Hermeticism lives and survives from century to century thanks to its essential faithfulness to the divine commandments "Thou shalt not kill" and "Honour thy father and thy mother".

As a Hermeticist, I honour all the spiritual "fathers and mothers" of earthly

mankind's past who have contributed to its spiritual life, including all the ancient sages, the patriarchs, Moses, the prophets. Greek philosophers, Cabbalists, apostles and saints, the masters of the Scholastic School, Christian mystics, and many others besides. Is this, therefore, syncretism? No. but thanks should be accorded to those to whom it is due. To deny is to kill; to forget is to bury. To honour and appreciate is to preserve living; to restore to memory is to recall to life. In honouring much. Hermeticism participates in the life of much; therefore it has much life. It is to this that Hermeticism owes its longevity.

In writing all these things, I am concerned all the time with the subject of Force, the eleventh Arcanum of the Tarot. For Force is life, and longevity is an important aspect of it. The Virgin is not only the source of creative élan, but also of spiritual longevity. This is why the West, in turning away more and more from the Virgin, *is growing old*, i.e. it is distancing itself from the rejuvenating source of longevity. Each revolution which has taken place in the West—that of the Reformation, the French revolution, the scientific revolution, the delirium of nationalism, the communist revolution—has advanced the process of aging in the West, because each has signified a further distancing from the principle of the Virgin. In other words. Our Lady *is* Our Lady, and is not to be replaced with impunity either by the "goddess reason", or by the "goddess biological evolution", or by the "goddess economy".

The adulation of all these "goddesses" bears witness to the unfaithfulness of so-called "Christian" mankind; it very much resembles the sort of spiritual adultery which the Biblical prophets gave so much utterance to. It is, still more, a sin against one of the commandments of faithfulness to the principle of non-fallen Nature, the Virgin Mother, namely the commandment: *Thou shalt not commit adultery*.

Every living spiritual tradition ought to be faithful to its original impulse, to the essence and substance of the cause that it espouses, and to the ideal aim that it pursues. In other words, it will preserve its identity only by remaining faithful to its effective cause, to its formal and material causes, and to its final cause. The four modes of causality of the traditional school of logic — *causa efficiens*, *causa formalis*, *causa materialis*, and *causa finalis* — also constitute the logic of causality for all living spiritual tradition. For every spiritual tradition has its original impulse, its principle and its method, as well as its ideal. It is always the *Tetragrammaton* YOD-HE-VAU-HE which underlies the reality of life as well as logical causality. The effective cause, the original impulse, is the YOD of the *Tetragrammaton*; the formal cause is the first HE; the material cause is the VAU; and the final cause is the second HE. Source, law, method and aim constitute the "*Tetragrammaton*" of every living spiritual tradition.

A spiritual tradition of universal significance—whose effective cause was God, whose formal cause was the Law, whose material cause was the community of Israel (or the *Shekinah*) and whose final cause was the Christ—was founded, or rather engendered, in the desert at Mt. Sinai. This tradition was an *alliance* in the manner of a marriage. And the conditions of durability of this tradition—or alliance.

or marriage—are found expounded in the ten commandments received on Mt. Sinai. Their totality is, so to say, a "portrait" of the Virgin, the *Shekinah*, i.e. non-fallen Nature or divine force. The Cabbalists of the *Zohar* certainly understood this, namely that the soul of the Torah (the Law) is the Virgin Mother.

The Torah is situated between two houses, one recondite and on high, and the other more accessible. The one on high is the "Great Voice" referred to in the verse, "a great voice which did not cease" (Deut. v, 22). This voice is in the recesses and is not heard or revealed, and when it issues from the throat it utters the aspirate without sound and it flows on without ceasing, though it is so tenuous as to be inaudible. From this issues the Torah, which is the voice of Jacob. The audible voice issues from the inaudible. In due course speech is attached to it, and through the force of that speech it emerges into the open. The voice of Jacob, which is the Torah, is thus attached to two females, to this inner voice which is inaudible, and to this outer voice which is heard. Strictly speaking there are two which are inaudible and two which are heard. The two which are not heard are, first, the supernal Wisdom which is located in the Thought and is not disclosed or heard; and secondly the same Wisdom when it issues and discloses itself a little in a whisper which cannot be heard, being then called the "Great Voice", which is very tenuous and issues in a whisper. The two which are heard are those which issue from this source—the voice of Jacob and the articulation which accompanies it. This "Great Voice" which cannot be heard is a "house" to the supernal Wisdom (the female is always called "house"), and the articulation we have mentioned is a "house" to the Voice of Jacob, which is the Torah, and therefore the Torah commences with the letter *beth*, which is, as it were, a "house" to it. (*Zohar* 50b; trsl. H. Sperling and M. Simon, 5 vols., London-Bournemouth, 1949, vol. i, pp. 160-161)

Now, the written Law is the "house" of the oral Law, and the oral Law is the "house" of the Voice which whispers, which, in its turn, is the "house" of the silent Voice which is Thought or the "house" of transcendent Wisdom.

It is in this sense that the ten commandments "whisper" their message of the integral being of the Virgin, who was the instrument of realisation of the aim of the Sinai alliance—the Incarnation of the Word. The ten commandments represent the formal cause (the principles, or the Law) of realisation of the final cause (the Incarnation of the Word) of the tradition founded at Mt. Sinai. At the same time, they suggest, by way of whispering, the Virgin, who is the material cause of this realisation.

Here, therefore, is the "*Tetragrammaton*" of the tradition inaugurated by the patriarchs and founded anew by Moses: the *revelation* of God through words and

deeds —this is its YOD, its effective cause; the revealed *Law* — this is its first HE, its formal cause; the Virgin present in the Law and in the community of Israel as its Force-life — this is its VAU, its material cause; the Messiah, lastly, whose birth is the final cause of the tradition-alliance-marriage of Israel — this is the second HE.

The spiritual tradition of Israel being of universal significance, every particular spiritual tradition falls under the law of its origin, life and work. In other words, no spiritual tradition can live or accomplish its mission in the world without conforming to the essential conditions of the origin, life and mission of the tradition of Israel. In other words again, there are no true traditions other than those modelled on the tradition of Israel. For it is *the* spiritual tradition *par excellence* — the model, the prototype and the law of all viable spiritual traditions which have missions to accomplish.

The following are the essential conditions to which every viable spiritual tradition must adhere; it must be founded from above; it must observe the ten commandments and be inspired by the ideal of virginity; and its aim must be implied in the will which founded it, with every human "programme" withdrawn from it.

1. *It must be founded from above.*

This means to say, in the first place, that the original impulse of a viable spiritual tradition must be given either by explicit revelation or by direct action from above acting with moral irresistibility. It is in this way that the living traditions represented by the Benedictine, Dominican, Franciscan, Jesuit, and also other orders, were founded. An explicit revelation or an irresistible vocation was the source of their origin. Thus the Benedictine order still flourishes after fifteen centuries. Dominican and Franciscan orders after seven centuries, and the Jesuit order after four centuries. Even though it would be easy to draw up a long list of their imperfections and their sins, these orders nonetheless furnish examples of a remarkable longevity. And what they have in common is above all the fact that the origin of the initiative of their foundation was from above.

2. *It must observe the ten commandments and be inspired by the ideal of virginity.*

The ten commandments signify much more than simply a moral code of daily life. They signify, further, the hygiene, the method and the conditions of fructification of the spiritual life, including all forms and degrees of practical esotericism. In this sense, they may be formulated as follows (cf. Exodus xx, 1-17):

- i surrender to the living God ("thou shall have no other gods before me");
- ii non-substitution of products of the human mind, or those of Nature, for the reality of the living God ("thou shalt not make for thyself a graven image, or any likeness");

- iii activity in the name of God without making use of his name in order to adorn oneself with it ("thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain");
- iv practice of meditation ("remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy");
- v continuity of effort and experience ("honour thy father and thy mother");
- vi constructive attitude ("thou shalt not kill");
- vii faithfulness to the alliance ("thou shalt not commit adultery");
- viii renunciation of the desire to accept merit which is neither the fruit of one's own work nor the gift of grace ("thou shalt not steal");
- ix renunciation of an accusatory role towards others ("thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour");
- x respectful consideration for the private and personal life of others ("thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house").

These constitute the ten foundations not only for a healthy moral life but also for all mystical, gnostic, magical and Hermetic practice.

In fact, mysticism is the awakening of the soul to the reality of the presence of God. This awakening is possible only towards the living God, only towards the divine Person, whereas pantheism offers only the perspective of letting oneself be lulled by the undulation of the ocean of deified Nature, and atheism offers only nothingness. Gnosis is what reflected consciousness apprehends of mystical experience and revelation from above. The fundamental law of gnosis is not to substitute imagery drawn from the human mind, or from Nature, for divine intuition. Magic is the bringing into play of that which consciousness has received from mysticism and gnosis. Now, the fundamental law of sacred magic is to act in and through the name of the Divine, whilst guarding against making the name of the Divine an instrument of one's own will. Hermeticism is the life of thought *within* the whole organism of mysticism, gnosis and magic. Its fundamental law is meditation, i.e. the practice of "remembering the sabbath day, to keep it holy". Meditation is "sanctified rest", where thought is turned towards that which is above.

This, then, is the role of the first four commandments in spiritual practice. The other six commandments state the fundamental laws of spiritual culture or discipline serving as a basis for the spiritual practice to which the first four commandments relate.

In truth, in order to advance one has to learn. In order to learn, one has to appreciate the experience of the past and one has to *continue* it. All progress presupposes continuity—coherence between the past, present and future. This is stated by the fifth commandment: *Honour thy father and thy mother*. There only is real progress within a living *tradition*. For life — spiritual as well as biological — is always tradition, i.e. continuity. Therefore, one has to abstain from all action that

breaks continuity, cutting the current of life. It is the fundamental law of a *constructive* attitude, which is essential in spiritual life, that is stated by the sixth commandment: *Thou shalt not kill*. Continuity—or tradition and life—implies faithfulness to the cause that is espoused, to the direction taken, to the ideal that one has as a guide, and to all alliances with entities above and with human beings below, for the sake of the continuity of life. This is what is stated by the seventh commandment: *Thou shalt not commit adultery*. There is carnal adultery, psychic adultery and spiritual adultery. The Biblical prophets spoke of this in relation to the unfaithfulness to the alliance of Sinai on the part of the kings and people of Israel, who on many occasions gave themselves up to cults of Canaanite divinities. This is today also the case when one embraces, for example, the Vedanta or Buddhism, whilst having been baptised and sufficiently instructed in order to have access—given good will—to experience of the sublime Christian mysteries. I am speaking neither about the *study* nor the adoption of the *technical methods* of yoga, Vedanta or Buddhism, but only about the case where one changes *faith*, i.e. where one substitutes the ideal of liberation for that of love, an impersonal God for the personal God, return to the state of potentiality (or *nirvana*) for the *kingdom of God*, a wise instructor for the Saviour, and so on. However, there is no element of spiritual adultery in the case of J. M. Dechanet, for example; he is the author of *La Voie du silence* (trsl. R. X. Hindmarsh, *Christian Yoga*, London, 1960), who adapted the technical methods of yoga to Christian spiritual practice. For nothing is more natural and legitimate than to learn and make use of the benefits of *experiences* accumulated in the East or West. If western medicine saves the lives of millions in the East, why should not oriental yoga help millions in the West, those engaged in spiritual practice. to attain the equilibrium and psycho-physical health that the technical methods of yoga render possible in such an effective way? Exchange of the fruits of experience between the various cultural realms of mankind is simply an expression of the fact of human brotherhood. It expresses reciprocal help between members of a single family, and has nothing in common with spiritual adultery, i.e. with unfaithfulness to the spiritual alliance or faith to which one belongs or to which one is called to belong.

All the fruits of human experience merit being studied and examined—and, according to their merit, accepted or rejected. But experience is one thing and faith, or metaphysical ideal, is another. With the latter what is at stake are the *moral values* that one cannot change without either essential ruin or gain in the life of soul and spirit. One cannot change faith without gaining or losing. A Negro fetishist who embraces Islam gains; a Christian who is converted to Islam loses. The former gains new moral values for his soul; the latter loses moral values from his soul. Regrettable or not, it is a fact that religions constitute a scale of moral and spiritual values. They are not equal—being stages of mankind's evolution over millennia, on the one hand, and successive revelations from above, on the other hand. There is therefore no religion without value, or that is even intrin-

sically false or "diabolical" ; but, on the other hand, there is no religion of higher value than that of love.

Spiritual adultery is therefore the exchange of a higher moral and spiritual value for a lower moral and spiritual value. It is, for example, the exchange of: the living God for an impersonal divinity; Christ crucified and resurrected for a sage deep in meditation; the Holy Virgin-Mother for Nature in evolution; the community of saints, apostles, martyrs, monks, confessors, church doctors and virgins for a "community of geniuses" of philosophy, art, science, etc.

We have said that all the fruits of human experience merit being studied and examined—and, according to their merit, accepted or rejected. In speaking of spiritual experience, there are certainly fruits of experience that must be rejected. These are those that are due to *theft*, i.e. where there is the desire to obtain without effort or sacrifice results whose worth implies effort and sacrifice. Thus Gurdjieff, the master of P. D. Ouspensky (the author of *Tertium Organum*), taught that there are three ways of coming out of the confinement of ordinary experience and consciousness—the way of the yogi, the way of the monk and that of the "artful man" (*put' khitrogo chelovieka* in Russian). What the yogi and the monk achieve after long endeavours of discipline and sacrifice, the "artful man" (*khitryi cheloviek*) can achieve without effort, without sacrifice, and almost immediately, taking a pill containing quite assorted elements.

There are indeed people who seek transcendental experience by means of the cactus peyote (*Echinocactus Williamsii*, or *Anhalonium Williamsii*, or even *Lophophora Williamsii Lemaire*), whose usage towards the end of evoking visions was widespread amongst tribes of Red Indians from Mexico to Canada, which led to the foundation of a "Native American Church", an indigenous American church (cf. Oliver La Farge, *A Pictorial History of the American Indian*, London, 1962). What is understandable and quite excusable with respect to American Indians—seeing their desperate situation—is not so with respect to people of European origin, the heirs of the Christian civilisation of the West. Those seeking transcendental experience by such means evidently want to dispense with the costs of the way of regular spiritual development, in order to obtain cheaply what others obtain only after much effort and sacrifice.

The commandment: *Thou shalt not steal* is still of fundamental importance for the spiritual life. Every school of authentic spirituality owes its continuation to the commandment which preserves its authenticity and which, for the spiritual domain, comes down to a fundamental rule of agricultural labour: you will harvest only after having tilled the earth, only after having sown, and only after having waited for the time when the fruit will be ripe for harvesting. All "tricks" of a technical nature, having as their aim the dispensing with the effort and sacrifice required for normal spiritual growth and development, thus fall under the heading of sinning against the eighth commandment.

There still remain two commandments as indispensable for the spiritual life

as the eight commandments already discussed: *Thou shai' not bear false witness against thy neighbour*, and *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house*.

These two commandments relate to the spirit of *rivalry*, which manifests itself either as negative criticism or as envy. This means to say that every spiritual movement, every spiritual tradition, every school of spirituality, and every disciple or so-called "master" of a school of spiritual life, should in no way be motivated by a spirit of rivalry, but rather by love for the cause and ideal.

Thus St. Teresa of Avila, enamoured by the cause and ideal of a life entirely devoted to God, accomplished a profound reform of the Carmelite order without destroying the unity of the Church, and without accusing or condemning anyone. At the same time the Augustinian monk Martin Luther, given up to the spirit of criticism, thought out a reform of the whole Church and, carried away by the desire to do better, founded a rival church, whilst declaring Rome as "the seat of the antichrist" and its faithful either as "poor strays" or as "wolves in sheep's clothing". Therefore St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Julian of Avila and other contemporaries of the same spiritual stature would, according to Luther, be "strays" or "ravishing wolves in sheep's clothing", i.e. either deceived or deceivers. Here is a clear case of "bearing false witness against thy neighbour" due to the spirit of criticism and rivalry. Anyone who takes on himself the mission of judge can act only in the sense of destruction. Anyone who begins to criticise before long passes to censure and sooner or later ends up by condemning, which leads inevitably to division into hostile camps and to other forms of destruction.

Criticism and polemicism are mortal enemies of the spiritual life, for they signify the substitution of destructive electrical energy for constructive vital force. A complete change of the inspiring and motivating source takes place when a person or spiritual movement becomes engaged in the way of rivalry—with the criticism and polemicism that it comprises. Once carried away by electricity, "bearing witness against thy neighbour" will always be essentially and intrinsically false.

Now, there is no authentic spirituality which owes its origin and existence to opposition or rivalry. "To be *against* something" is sterile and is never capable of engendering a viable tradition or giving birth to a school of spiritual life, whilst "to be *for* something" is fertile and is an indispensable condition for all constructive activity. This includes every tradition or viable school of spirituality.

The spirit underlying "bearing false witness against thy neighbour" and "coveting thy neighbour's house" is spiritually sterile and destructive. Particular spiritual schools and traditions should not, in order to live, be rivals, but should live in consciousness of the *kinship* of their cause and ideals, if there *is* kinship; or, if there is not, they should respect the domain of freedom of the other—the "house" proper to it—without mixing this with envy or criticism. If there is no cooperation resulting from kinship of causes and ideals, then spiritual traditions and schools should live and let live in peace!

Be that as it may, the totality of the ten commandments constitutes the law

of life, progress and fertility for spiritual traditions and schools, just as it is that of the life, progress and fertility of each individual engaged on a path of spiritual practice. For the ten commandments—when comprehended and practised—signify harmony with non-fallen Nature, with the Virgin and the principle of virginity, i.e. with the Force of the eleventh Arcanum of the Tarot.

*Haec est totius fortitudinis
fortitude forth:
quia vincet omnem rem subtilem.
omnemque solidam penetrabit.
(Tabula Smaragdina, 9)*