

*Meditation on the  
Seventeenth Major Arcanum of the Tarot*

THE STAR

I/ETOILE

The righteous flourish like the palm tree,  
And grow like a cedar in Lebanon. . .  
They still bring forth fruit in old age,  
They are ever full of sap and green.. .

(Psalm 92, 12-14)

Two things fill the mind with ever new  
and increasing admiration and awe. . .  
the starry heavens above me and the moral  
law within me.

(Immanuel Kant)\*

## LETTER XVII



## THE STAR

Dear Unknown Friend,

The sixteenth Major Arcanum of the Tarot presented us with the alternative of two ways — that of *construction* and that of *growth*; and it portrayed the dangers of the way of construction by presenting the law of the tower of Babel to our hearts and minds. Having understood this, one is led to decide upon the way of growth.

Now, the seventeenth Major Arcanum of the Tarot — "The Star" — is the Arcanum of growth, just as the sixteenth Arcanum is that of construction. Therefore, it is a matter now of a spiritual exercise devoted to growth, i.e. it is time for us to concentrate on the problem of growth and to meditate on its essential aspects with a view to arriving at a contemplation of its kernel or its mystical-gnostic-magical-

*"Critique of Practical Reason; trsl. L.W. Beck, Chicago, 1949, p. 258)*

metaphysical essence — in a word: at its Hermetic essence. Let us therefore apply ourselves to this threefold task.

A tower is built; a tree grows. The two processes have this in common: that they present a gradual increase in volume with a pronounced tendency upwards. But there is at the same time the difference that the tower rises by leaps and bounds, whilst the tree shows a continuous elevation. This is because bricks or hewn stones are put one on top of the other in the process of building the tower, whilst the microscopic "bricks"—the cells —of a tree multiply through division and growth in volume. It is the *sap* in the tree, rising from the roots into the trunk and branches, which renders growth of the tree possible and which makes it shoot up through the multiplication and growth in volume of its cells. Whilst the tower is *dry*, the tree is filled with sap in movement, which underlies both the division of its cells and their growth—in a word, it underlies the process of growth.

Growth is flowing, whilst construction proceeds by leaps and bounds. And what is true of the artificial and the natural in the physical domain is also true in the psychic and spiritual domain. "The righteous flourish like the palm tree. . .they are ever full of sap and green. . ." (Psalm 92). but ". . .a down cast spirit dries up the bones. . ." (Proverbs xvii, 22).

Here we are in the presence of a theme of the same significance as that of the astral "magical agent", the link between consciousness and action, which so much is made of in occult literature —namely the theme of *the universal sap of life*. which is the theme of the seventeenth Arcanum, the Arcanum of growth. Not just as there is a mysterious intermediary agent which effects the passage from imagination to reality, so there is also a no-less mysterious agent which effects the passage from the potential state of a seed to that of maturity, i.e. the passage from what is only potential to its realisation. This is *the agent of transformation from the ideal to the real*.

Just as an intermediary force enters into play in the process which transforms imagination into action, i.e. into an objective event, so does the play of an unknown force take place in the process of *becoming* — where either an acorn becomes a branched oak, or a crying infant becomes a St. Augustine, or lastly a world in the state of "primordial mist" becomes a planetary system with forms of living beings, ensouled beings and intelligent beings. Whatever it is in question — it does not matter whether it is the growth of an organism, the development of an individual from birth to death, or cosmic evolution — it is necessary to postulate the existence of an active agent which effects the passage from the state of that which is only potential to one of reality. But *something has acted during* the time in which an acorn becomes an oak, or a fertilised egg becomes a mature man, or a primordial cosmic mist becomes a planetary system (including our globe inhabited by mankind). I know quite well that this reasoning is not in accordance with the rules of the game fixed by the natural sciences, but there are other rules—above all those of natural reasoning, with which this here is not only in agreement but which also is categorically demanded by them. Categorically. . .this means to say that

one must either resign oneself to silence of thought with regard to problems of this order, or else reason in a way that conforms to the nature — to the *structural exigencies* — of the reasoning that is the rule of the game in Hermeticism. It is necessary, therefore, to postulate a structural "agent of growth", just as it is necessary to postulate a "magical agent" acting as intermediary between consciousness and events, if one decides to think about it.

What is the intrinsic difference between the "magical agent" and the "agent of growth"? It is as follows:

The magical agent is of an *electrical* nature — either terrestrial or celestial. It is of a nature to act through discharges, through the emission of sparks or flashes. It is *dry and warm* — of the nature of *fire*. The "blasted tower" of the sixteenth Arcanum is in fact only the meeting of two "drynesses"—that of the tower below and that of the thunderbolt from above; and the Arcanum "The Devil" (Arcanum XV) is essentially that of "warmth"—moreover two "warmths": that of evil and that of good. The Arcana XV and XVI are therefore those *of fire*, whilst the Arcana XIV and XVII are those of *water*. For Angelic inspiration and the agent of growth have this in common that they *flow*— that they do not act through shocks and discharges, but in a continuous way. *Continuous transformation* is the essential manifestation of the agent of growth, just as *creative lightning* is that of the magical agent.

These two agents manifest themselves everywhere, including the domain of human intellectuality. There are minds who have sided with "water", and it is to them that we owe the ideas of "transformism": evolution, progress, education, natural therapy, living tradition, etc.; and there are others who have sided with "fire", to whom we owe the ideas of "creationism": creation *ex nihilo*, invention, election, surgery and prosthesis, revolution, etc. Thales (ca. 625-547 B.C.) believed that it is the agent of growth or water which plays the principal role in the world, whilst Heraclitus of Ephesus (flourished ca. 500 B.C.) attributed it to the magical agent or fire.

Goethe, in the "classical Walpurgis night" scene in part II of *Faust*, has Anaxagoras, a partisan of fire, discuss with Thales, a partisan of water, the theme of the priority of creative lightning or continuous transformation in Nature — a discussion which leads to the dramatic result of Anaxagoras' magical evocation of the threefold moon (Diana, Luna and Hecate), which he regrets. Thus he throws himself down, face to the ground, imploring the flashing forces, which threaten irreparable catastrophe, to calm down. With respect to Thales, he invites Homunculus to a joyous maritime festival (*zum heitern Meeresfeste*) — the festival of metamorphoses, the "ball" of transformism — where Thales cries out:

All things are out of water created,  
All by water maintained. Thou Life-giving  
Ocean, vouchsafe us thine agency ever!

*(Alles ist aus Wasser entsprungen  
 Alles wird durch das Wasser erhalten  
 Ozean. gonn' uns dew eiviges Walten!)*  
 (Goethe, *Faust II*)\*

It is not to be wondered at that Goethe, although he admires the reality of the magical agent of fire, ranges himself on the side of the agent of growth or water—for he was the author of four works on *metamorphosis*, the principal theme of his life, namely on the metamorphosis of light or colour (*Farhenlehre*), on the metamorphosis of plants (*Metamorphose der Pflanzen*), on the metamorphosis of animals (*Metamorphose der Tiere*), and on the metamorphosis of man (*Faust*), which is his principal work. His faith was that of transformism, evolution, the tradition of cultural progress without revolution—in a word. Goethe believed in and attached value to all that *flows*, all that grows without leaps and bounds. He ranged himself on the side of the principle of *continuity*.

The principle of continuity was portrayed in the intellectual domain in a particularly impressive and fruitful way by the German philosopher Leibnitz—who, moreover, wrote more in French and Latin than he did in German. Proceeding in his thought according to the principle of continuity, i.e. thinking without leaps and bounds, Leibnitz did not have to face the gulfs or abysses which separate one belief from another, or one thesis from another, or one human group from another. All theses are separated from their antitheses by abysses, but Leibnitz threw the bridge of the rainbow of continuity, i.e. gradual transition, across them. Just as red is transformed gradually into orange, and orange into yellow, which in its turn is transformed imperceptibly into green, in order later to become blue, indigo and violet, so is every thesis transformed into its antithesis. Thus the thesis "each centre of a particular existence (monad) is free" and the thesis "all is predetermined by the effective and final cause of the universe (pre-established harmony)" co-existed in peace in the rainbow of the totality of Leibnitz's ideas on the world, although they are clearly contradictory. But for Leibnitz they were no more nor less contradictory than red and violet in the rainbow.

Platonism, Aristotelianism, Scholasticism, Cartesianism, Spinozism and mysticism were for Leibnitz only "colours" of the rainbow of the "perennial philosophy" (*philosophia perennis*), and in his thoughts he moved according to the "zodiacal circle" of thought. His whole work was therefore that of *peace*, just as the work of Hermeticism is; for Leibnitz's method is nothing other than Hermeticism, pure and simple. And it was this "rainbow of peace" (the principle of continuity) which guided Leibnitz in his all-consuming activity, which aimed at two salient goals: the foundation of scientific academies, and the fusion of the Catholic and Reformed Churches.

The Berlin, St. Petersburg and Vienna scientific academies were the fruit of Leibnitz's efforts to introduce the "rainbow of peace" in its practical form of coop-

\*Trsl. A. G. Latham. Everyman Library. London-New York. 1908. p. 175.

eration between scientists of all the different scientific disciplines in western civilisation. With respect to the work of uniting the Catholic and Reformed Churches undertaken together with Bossuet, the intellectual and moral bridge that he built then still exists and there has been a considerable to-and-fro across it since that time—the time immediately following the Thirty Years War.

It was again the principle of continuity, the "water" of Hermeticism, which led Leibnitz to the discovery of the basis of differential calculus in mathematics. For differential calculus is simply the application of the principle of continuity—the *fluidic* mode of thought instead of *crystallised* thought — in the domain of mathematics. Infinitesimal calculus, comprising differential and integral calculus—the alpha and omega of thought-become-fluidic in mathematics —is an application of the principle of continuity. It is the fruit of the admission of the agent of growth into the domain of mathematics, where previously the principle of construction reigned alone.

I take the occasion to rescue from oblivion the work of a man that is probably either already forgotten or has not been noticed, i.e. the engineer Schmakov's *Svyashchennaya Kniga Tota—Velikiye Arkany Taro* ("The Sacred Book of Thoth — the Major Arcana of the Tarot"), published in Russia in 1916 or 1917, where on almost every page the author makes use of differential and integral calculus in dealing with such problems as individuality, God, freedom and cosmic order, planes of existence and consciousness, spirit and matter, etc. The author of the book (400 pages) impressed me all the more profoundly as, in addition to the numerous formulae of infinitesimal calculus strewn throughout the book, he did not deign to translate—or even to transcribe in Latin or Cyrillic characters—long passages from the *Zohar* and other books in Hebrew or Aramaic. And this magnificent disdain for popularity was at a time when the populace became all-powerful and when demagogy was the order of the day! I should add that the book was large, printed in Cyrillic, Latin, Greek and Hebrew characters on the best paper, and that it was the author himself who published it at his own expense.

Yes, there have been noble stars in the heaven of Hermeticism — and I hope that this will always be so. . . This tribute to a deceased Unknown Friend is not, however, without a contribution to the theme of this Letter, addressed to the living Unknown Friend. For the engineer Schmakov's contribution to the tradition of Hermeticism is a demonstration of the fruitfulness of the application of infinitesimal calculus in the domain where it belongs from right of birth — the domain of Hermeticism.

In enumerating the spirits who have grasped the Arcanum of the agent of growth, I cannot pass by a great spirit, a star in the heaven of the perennial philosophy, whom you, dear Unknown Friend, certainly know without doubt. This is Henri Bergson—again a Hermeticist by the grace of God alone, without any external affiliations with initiation orders or societies. Henri Bergson had the courage and the talent to re-affirm, with its scientific consequences, the principle of continuity and the mode of thought which grasps movement by moving with it and not by arresting it. The following is what he says himself concerning this:

If it is a question of movement, all the intelligence retains is a series of positions: first one point reached, then another, then still another. But should something happen between these points, immediately the understanding intercalates new positions, and so on indefinitely. It refuses to consider *transition*. . . Suppose we skip this intellectual representation of movement, which shows it as a series of positions. Let us go directly to movement and examine it without any interposed concept: we shall find it simple and all-of-a-piece. Let us go further; suppose we get it to coincide with one of those incontestably real and absolute movements which we ourselves produce. This time we have mobility in its essence, and we feel that it mingles with an effort whose duration is an indivisible continuity. . . We shall say as much for change; the understanding breaks it up into successive and distinct states, supposed to be invariable. If one looks a little more closely at each of these states, noticing that it varies, asking how it could endure if it did not change, the understanding hastens to replace it by a series of shorter states, which in their turn break up if necessary, and so forth ad infinitum. *But how can we help seeing that the essence of duration is to flow, and that the fixed placed side by side with the fixed will never constitute anything which has duration. It is not the "states", simple snapshots we have taken once again along the course of change, that are real; on the contrary, it is flux, the continuity of transition, it is change itself that is real.* . . . What we have here is merely an uninterrupted thrust of change — of a change always adhering to itself in a duration which extends indefinitely. (Henri Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvement*; trsl. M. L. Andison in *The Creative Mind*, New Jersey, 1965, pp. 15-17)

Henri Bergson therefore invites us to grasp the agent of growth in action instead of occupying ourselves with its fossilised products — he invites us to experience what he calls *intuition*.

Amongst those who have given effect to the call and to the work of Henri Bergson, the most prominent is Father Teilhard de Chardin. Here is a summary of his life-work that we find on the last page of his diary, written 7th. April, 1955, three days before his death:

*Last page of the journal of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin  
Maundy Thursday. What I believe.*

1. St. Paul — the three verses: *En pasi panta Theos.*
2. Cosmos = Cosmogogenesis-Biogenesis-Noogenesis-Christogenesis.



## 3. The two articles of my creed:

}	The Universe is centrated – Evolutively	}	Upward
			Forward
}	Christ is its Centre	}	The Christian Phenomenon
			Noogenesis = Christogenesis
			( = Paul)

The three verses are from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he (the Christ) has put all things in subjection under his feet. . .When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put ail things under him, that God may be every-thing to everyone (*en pasi panta Theos*) (I Corinthians xv, 26-28). (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man*; trsl. N. Denny, London, 1964, p. 309)

Just as there is Fire and fire, i.e. the celestial Fire of divine love and the fire of electricity due to friction, so there is also Water and water, i.e. the celestial Water of the sap of growth, progress and evolution and the lower water of instinctivity—the "collective unconscious", engulfing collectivity—which is the water of floods and drowning. Thus, the woman represented on the Card of the seventeenth Arcanum pours water from *two* vases — held in her left and right hands—which blend into the same stream.

.. .which blend into the same stream, alas! Here is the tragedy of human life and mankind's history and cosmic evolution. The flow of continuity — in heredi-ty, tradition and, lastly, evolution — bears not only all that which is healthy, no-ble, holy and divine of the past but also all that which was infectious, vile, blas-phemous and diabolical. All is borne pell-mell, never ending, towards the future. What Verlaine said of the river Seine in his *Poemes Saturniens* could also be said — with good reason — of the flow of human life, mankind's history, and cosmic evolution:

Still, Seine, your crawling journey do you make.  
Curving through Paris like some aged snake,  
A muddy snake\* And all your ports are fed  
With loads of wood, of coal and of the dead!

*(Et tu coules toujours, Seine, et, tout en rampant,  
Tu traines dans Paris ton cours de vieux serpent,  
De vieux serpent boueux. emportant vers tes havres  
Tes cargaisons de bois, de houille et de cadavres!)*

(Paul Verlaine, "Paris: A Nocrurne")\*\*

\*The mud of the serpent of old.

\*\*From *Poemei Salumiens*; trsl. B Hill, *The Sky above the Roof*. London, 1957, p. 37.

The same again could be said —also with good reason—in the words of Victor Hugo:

As a river of the communal soul,	(Comme un fleuve dame commune,
From the white pylon to the rough rune,	Du blanc pylone a l'apre rune,
From the Brahmin to the Roman flamen,	Du brahme au flamine romain,
From the hierophant to the Druid,	De l'hierophante au druide,
A kind of godly fluid	Une sorte de Dieu fluide
Runs through the veins of the human race.	Coule aux veines du genre humain.)

(Victor Hugo, "Les mages", 435-440)\*

For both the "mud of the serpent of old" and "a kind of godly fluid" indeed flow in the veins of the human race.

Is this dualism, then? Do the serpent's venom and the tears of the Virgin therefore flow together eternally in the flow of Life?

Yes and no—the one as resolutely as the other. *Yes* for the present, which is action and will; *no* for the future, which is the star of the sea of understanding and hope. Because for action it is dualism which awakens the will and makes it pass from a passive state to an active state — all *effort* presupposes a practical and concrete dualism. The great masters of dualism in the history of humanity such as Zarathustra, Buddha and Mani did not want to *explain* the world through the dogma of cosmic duality (Zarathustra), or psychological duality (Buddha), or even psycho-cosmic duality (Mani), but rather they wanted to *awaken* dormant will for the effort which manifests itself by the power to say *yes* and *no*. Fatalism, resignation to routine, and quietism are the sleep of the will — sometimes harmless, at other times tinged with bitterness. The great masters of dualism made appeal to the will to awaken it and rid it of the weight of somnolence. They wanted to give courage and boldness to the point of exercising in practice the will's birth-right—that of choice, that of saying *yes* or *no*.

The great Zarathustra wanted *knights* to fight under the banner of light in the struggle against darkness—the Turanian idolaters, the demons of impurity and ignorance, and lastly the spirit of Ahriman or Satan. He wanted that there should be people able to say *yes* to the light—and who, consequently, learnt to say *no* to the darkness.

The great Buddha wanted to awaken the will to say *no* to the great routine of desires which make the wheel of births revolve. He wanted *ascetics* with regard

to the automatic mechanism of the psyche, who would learn to say *yes* with regard to the free creativity of the spirit.

The great Mani, who taught a synthesis of the teachings of Zarathustra and Buddha within Christianity, wanted (leaving aside the question of whether the blend that he accomplished was good or not) to mobilise the good will of the whole of mankind —Pagan, Buddhist and Christian —for a single concerted and universal effort of *yes* towards the eternal spirit and *no* towards the transitory things of matter.

The aim which the great masters of dualism pursued was *practical*, i.e. relating to the domain of *yes* and *no*. And we, in so far as we pursue a practical earthly psychic or spiritual aim, cannot accept the flow of human life, mankind's history and cosmic evolution simply as it is and let ourselves be carried along by it. We are bound to distinguish here between the "mud of the serpent of old" and "a kind of godly fluid", and to say *yes* and *no*—with all the practical consequences that this *yes* and this *no* entail.

At the same time we must not forget that the seventeenth Arcanum is not only that of the water which flows from two vases and is mixed in a single flow but also that of the *star*— all the more so as the traditional name of the Card is "The Star".

The great central star of the Card —as, moreover, the whole constellation of eight stars — invites us to an effort of consciousness to unite contemplative justice (the yellow star with eight rays) with active justice (the red star with eight rays), i.e. to unite the guiding principle of understanding with the guiding principle of the will. In other words, it invites us to overcome dualism through the magical and alchemical operation of nailing opposites to one another—that which one calls the "marriage of opposites". The "marriage of opposites" makes that light-force radiate into the world which renders the future not only acceptable but also desirable, which transforms the future into *promise*, and which is the antithesis of the thesis of the author of Ecclesiastes, the son of David, king of Jerusalem, who said: "What has been is what will be. and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes i, 9)-

The light-force which emanates from the star—constituted through the marriage of contemplation with activity, and which is the antithesis of the thesis that "there is nothing new under the sun"— is *hope*. It proclaims to the world: "What has been is that which prepares what will be, and what has been done is that which prepares what will be done; there is only *that which is new* under the sun. Each day is a unique event and revelation which will never be repeated."

Hope is not something subjective due to an optimistic or sanguine temperament, or to a desire for compensation in the sense of modern Freudian and Adlerian psychology. It is a light-force which radiates objectively and which directs creative evolution towards the world's future. It is the celestial and spiritual counterpart of the terrestrial and natural instinct of biological reproduction—which, with

mutation, produces natural selection, which latter, in its turn, produces with time biological progress. In other words, hope is what moves and directs *spiritual evolution* in the world. In so far as it moves, it is an objective force, and in so far as it orientates and directs, it is a subjective light. This is why we may speak of it as a "light-force".

Hope is for spiritual evolution what the instinct of reproduction is for biological evolution. It is the force and the light of the *final cause* of the world or, if you wish, the force and the light of the ideal of the world—the magical radiation of the "Omega point", according to Teilhard de Chardin. This "Omega point" towards which spiritual evolution is tending—or that of the "noosphere", which surges triumphantly above the "barysphere" and "biosphere"—is the central point of the hope of the "personalising world". It is the point of complete unity of the outer and inner, of matter and spirit, i.e. the God-Man, *the resurrected Jesus Christ*, just as the "Alpha point", the prime mover or the effective cause, is the Word which set in motion electrons, atoms, molecules, i.e. movement *directed* towards their association into planets, organisms, families, races, kingdoms. . .

"I am the Alpha and the Omega" (Revelation xxi, 6)—this is how the message of the central star of the Card of the seventeenth Arcanum of the Tarot reads—which means to say, "I am *activity*, the effective cause, who set all in motion; and I am *contemplation*, the final cause, who draws towards himself all that which is in movement. I am *primordial action*; and I am *eternal waiting*—for all to arrive where I am."

Here is why we say *no* to dualism seen in the light of the future, just as we say *yes* to it if we are looking at it in the light of the present. It is hope, the fruit of the marriage of opposites, which defends dualism for us and which not only invites us to believe in the final unity of opposites but also to work with a view to the realisation of this unity—which is the sense and the aim of the spiritual exercise which is the seventeenth Arcanum of the Tarot. For it has to be said yet again: the Major Arcana of the Tarot are spiritual exercises whose practice alone teaches the "arcanum" (that which one needs to know in order to make discoveries) of each Arcanum.

Now, the spiritual exercise of the seventeenth Arcanum is that of the endeavour to see together—"to contemplate"—the essence of biological growth (the agent of growth) and the essence of spiritual growth (hope), in order to find, or rather re-find, their analogy, their intrinsic kinship and, lastly, their fundamental identity. For it is a matter of grasping the essence of the *water* which flows both in the obscure process of growth, multiplication and continuity in biological reproduction and in the clarity of the serene heights of hope. It is a matter, therefore, of coming to an intuition of *water such* as it is understood in Moses' account of the second day of creation, where God "separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament" (Genesis i, 7), and of understanding ("under-standing") that the light which flows above con-

consciousness and the instinctive drive which flows beneath consciousness are fundamentally the same thing—separated in order to act according to two different modes—namely *water*, which is the principle of growth and evolution, both biological and spiritual. Thus, it is necessary to attain to an intuitive perception, i.e. immediate and endowed with the certainty of obviousness, that the principle of fluid-sap and the principle of hope are one and the same, namely the principle of *water*. Fluid-sap is the bearer of the agent of growth; and so is hope, when it is a matter of growth in the sense of the "transformability" of things, i.e. their transformation in conformity with their divine prototypes. Thus, hope is the bearer of the agent of growth in spiritual evolution. It acts in the sphere situated above consciousness, whilst the agent of growth in biological evolution acts in the sphere beneath it (cf. Genesis i, 7 concerning the "waters above the firmament" and the "waters under the firmament").

This is why the Card of the seventeenth Arcanum of the Tarot represents the woman, the maternal principle, between the constellation of hope above her and the flow of continuity of biological life beneath her. Because every mother professes a double faith—the faith of celestial hope that the future will be more glorious than the present and the faith of terrestrial continuity that the flow of succeeding generations will go *forward*—in the direction indicated by hope from above. Every mother knows—in so far as she is a mother—that underlying the flow of generations there is at work the primordial magical impulse of the effective cause ("the Alpha") of the world and that the final cause ("the Omega") of the world will not fail to direct it and draw it towards itself. In other words, each mother professes—by the very fact that she is a mother—the divine origin of the world and the divine aim of the world. If this were not so, she would refuse to give birth, i.e. to give birth to children who otherwise would be destined to be the victims of absurdity. Therefore, we could also name the seventeenth Arcanum the "Arcanum of the Mother" or the "Arcanum of Eve". In her there are actively present, simultaneously, the intuition of celestial hope and the primordial magic of the benediction of the Creator ("be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it"—Genesis i, 28).

The ancients drew hope for life and for death in the mysteries of the Mother. I have in mind not only the mysteries of Eleusis but also a number of others, including those of Isis in Egypt. But one finds the essence of all these mysteries of the Mother expressed in the Epistle to the Romans of the apostle Paul:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility—not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it—in the hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been suffering the pangs of childbirth until now. . . (Romans viii, 19-23)

Here is not only the soul of all the ancient mysteries of the Mother but also of all modern doctrines of "transformism" and biological and spiritual evolution! For modern evolutionism is, at root, only the renaissance in a scientific guise of the ancient mysteries of the Mother—the mysteries of hope and of the "pangs of childbirth". The mysteries of the Father contain the "what"—*salvation* through the Son; and the mysteries of the Mother contain the "how"—biological *and* spiritual evolution. Now, natural science is orientated towards the *how* of the world, and for this reason is on the way towards renewing the ancient mysteries of the Mother—knowledge of *evolution*; whilst the Christian religion is in the first place orientated towards the mysteries of the Father—*salvation* through the Son. It is to Teilhard de Chardin, a Hermeticist of our time, by the grace of God, that we owe the synthesis—or at least a way towards synthesis—of the *what* and the *how* of the world, i.e. of religion and science, which is the task and the mission of Hermeticism. Henceforth everyone can contemplate the serpent of evolution crucified on the cross of divine providence *and the* Son of God crucified on the cross of evolution of the serpent—and from thence draw hope for life and death. Here evolution and salvation—the two truths of science and religion—are no longer contradictory: they bear together the message of hope.

But let us not forget that this synthesis of today has had its history, and that this is due also to many "pangs of childbirth". It was born after a long series of continuous endeavours from century to century: the endeavour of Heraclitus, the philosopher of the perpetual change of matter; that of the Gnostics, who made the drama of the fall and return of Sophia Achamoth resound in human history; that of St. Augustine, the father of the philosophy of history, who brought to light the twofold current in mankind's history—that of the "terrestrial city" and that of the "city of God"; that of the Hermetic-alembic thinkers who affirmed and re-affirmed untiringly the principle of transformability of that which is base into that which is noble; that of Martinez de Pasqually, who wrote his *Traite de la reintegration des ietres* ("Treatise on the Reintegration of Beings"); that of Fabre d'Olivet, the author of *L'histoire philosophique du genre humain* ("Philosophical History of the Human Race"), showing the dynamic operation of the triangle fate-freedom-providence in mankind's history; that of H. P. Blavatsky, who added and opposed to Charles Darwin's materialistic evolution a breath-taking vision of the spiritual evolution of the universe; that of Rudolf Steiner, who emphasised that the centre of gravity of spiritual-cosmic evolution is Jesus Christ (it is then but a short step to Teilhard de Chardin's "Omega point"); all these endeavours have contributed—in a visible or invisible manner—to the synthesis of today. They *live*, all together, in the contemporary synthesis of evolution and salvation, which is the fruit of this collective endeavour from century to century. Truly, from the fusion of opinions truth shines forth. Because it is not the collision of opinions to which this synthesis is due, but rather to their fusion as constituent elements of the "rainbow of peace".

The synthesis of the truths of salvation and evolution is in fact a rainbow in which the immortal essences of the endeavours of the past are resplendent—purified of the temporary and accidental which has enveloped them. The modern "transformism" of biological *and* spiritual evolution is not due to a refutation of ancient and mediaeval alchemy, for example, but rather to the fact that the fundamental alchemical dogma of transmutability has been embraced by contemporary thinkers. Purified of temporary and accidental elements—like the orientation towards the aim of producing material gold, a material philosopher's stone and a material panacea—alchemy today celebrates its apotheosis in the splendour of the rainbow of the synthesis of salvation and evolution. Today alchemy has come out of the sombre alchemical kitchens where its adepts often lavished entire fortunes and the flower of their lives—in order to be installed in a laboratory more worthy of it: the vast extent of the universe. Now, it is the world which has become the alchemical laboratory, just as it has become the mystical oratory. Is this a loss or a gain for alchemy? Is it a loss or a gain for alchemy that it has ceased to be the secret—often maniacal—occupation of a sect, and that it has become the "prince of ideas" for mankind? What has become of the secret art of the transmutation of metals, the manufacture of the philosopher's stone and the preparation of the panacea—everyone's light of hope for a synthesis between salvation (the salvation of souls) and cosmic evolution? The answer is apparent: today we are witnesses of the triumph of alchemy—an unparalleled triumph, surpassing the most rash hopes of the past.

What is true of alchemy is also true of the Augustinian philosophy of history. The cross of the "terrestrial city" and the "city of God" that St. Augustine saw especially in the history of Israel and the Roman empire has today been transformed, whilst preserving its immortal essence, into the cross of salvation and evolution, that of religion and science—in the last analysis, the cross of *ora et labora* ("pray and work"), or grace and endeavour. The Augustinian vision therefore also lives in the rainbow of the modern synthesis of salvation and evolution.

And what is true of alchemy and of St. Augustine is also true of all other contributions—ancient, mediaeval and modern—to the synthesis of salvation and evolution. The work of all those who taught a *way*—the mystical and spiritual way of purification, illumination and union, or the historical and social way of the progress of civilisation through social and moral justice, or the biological way of evolution from the sphere of chemical elements to the sphere of living organisms and from the sphere of living organisms to that of beings endowed with thought and word—the work of all these, I say, which teaches us a *way* of individual and collective perfection, is now resplendent in the rainbow of the synthesis of salvation and evolution, the rainbow of mankind's hope. Because this rainbow is tradition in full flower—it is living tradition which has attained a certain degree of brilliancy. For this reason, let us also not forget the poet:

... it is he who, in spite of thorns,	(. . . c'est lui qui, malgré les épines,
Envy and derision,	L'envie et la derision,
Walks, bent under your remains,	Marche, courbe dans vos mines,
Gathering <i>tradition</i> .	Ramassant la tradition.
From fertile tradition	De la tradition féconde
Comes all that covers the world,	Sort tout ce que couvre le monde,
Everything that heaven can bless.	Tout ce que le delpeut benir.
<i>Every idea, human or divine,</i>	<i>Toute idee, humaine ou divine,</i>
<i>Which is rooted in the past.</i>	<i>Qui prend le passe pour racine</i>
<i>Has its foliage in the future.</i>	<i>A pour feuillage l'avenir.)</i>

(Victor Hugo, "Fonction du poete", 287-296)\*

One cannot pass by poetry if one attaches value to tradition. The whole of the Bible breathes poetry—epic, lyric and dramatic—and likewise the *Zohar* is full of poetry.

The principal works of St. John of the Cross are simply commentaries on some pieces of poetry written by him. A poetic impetus vibrates in the whole work of Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, of a kind that his critics—as I understood from a conversation with one of them—see in it a weakness that is reprehensible from a scientific, philosophical and theological point of view. But they are mistaken, since poetry is elan and elan gives wings to imagination, and without winged imagination—directed and controlled by the strict laws of intrinsic coherence and conformity to facts—no progress is possible. One cannot pass by poetry, because one cannot do without the elan of imagination. One should only be on guard that one is not carried away by an imagination which seeks brilliance and not truth. With respect to an imagination that loves truth, i.e. which loves and seeks only what is coherent and in conformity with facts, it is what we name "genius" or fruitfulness in the domain of human endeavour.

Hermeticism, also, cannot pass by poetry. What is the *Emerald Table* of Hermes Trismegistus if not a piece of sublime poetry. Certainly, it is not "only poetry" in the pure and simple sense of verbal and musical aesthetics, since it advances a great mystical, gnostic, magical and alchemical dogma, but no more is it a discursive treatise in prose. It is a song of truth concerning three worlds.

And the Major Arcana of the Tarot? Are they not a call to the winged imagination, within a framework and in a direction proper to each of them? They are symbols. But what does one do with symbols if not apply the inspired imagination to them, directed towards their meaning via a will obedient to the laws of intrinsic coherence and in conformity with outward and inward—material and spiritual—facts of experience? Now, poetry is not simply a question of taste, but rather one of fertility (or sterility) of the spirit. Without a poetic vein there can be no access to the life of the Hermetic tradition.

Let us therefore love poetry and respect the poets. For it is not dukes, margraves and counts who constitute the true nobility of mankind, but rather the poets.

\*From the collection *Les rayons et les ombres*, Paris, 1928, p. 19.



One is noble (in the sense of the "nobility of the heart") in so far as one is a poet at heart. And since every human soul is in principle a priest, a nobleman and a worker at one and the same time, let us not smother the nobility within us by an overestimation of practical aims or by a preoccupation with our salvation, but on the contrary let us ennoble our work and our religion by bringing in the breath of poetic inspiration. This will in no way adulterate the functions of priest and worker. The prophets of Israel were great poets, and the song of St. Paul concerning love (*caritas*) is a work of poetry which has yet to be surpassed. With respect to work, there is joy in it only in so far as it is elevated above the spirit of slavery by participating in the poetic elan of the "great human endeavour".

Be that as it may, we are bound to make a case concerning the problem of poetry under the title of the seventeenth Arcanum of the Tarot—the Arcanum of water above and beneath the firmament: the Arcanum of hope and continuity. For poetry is the union of the upper waters and the lower waters on the second day of creation. The poet is the point at which the separated waters meet and where the flow of hope and that of continuity converge.

It is when the circulation of the human blood, which bears continuity, and the radiation of hope, which is the blood of the spiritual world and of all the celestial hierarchies, meet, unite and begin to vibrate together that the poetic experience takes place. Poetic inspiration is the union of blood from above (hope) and blood below (continuity).

This is why it is necessary to be *incarnated*, i.e. to have the pulsation of warm earthly blood, in order to be able to create poetic works—and not only poetic works of subjective significance (*setrams*) but also those of objective significance (*mantrams*). It was necessary to be immersed in warm human blood, i.e. to be incarnated, and to rise above it by uniting with the luminous blood of heaven, i.e. with hope, in order that the Psalms of David, for example, could be born. It was not in heaven, but rather on earth, that the Psalms of David came to birth. And once born, they became an arsenal of magical mantrams not only on earth but also in heaven. Because the mantrams, i.e. magical formulae, of the Psalms **are** in use as such not only amongst beings with warm blood, i.e. human beings, but also amongst beings with luminous blood—entities from the celestial hierarchies.

Mantrams—formulae of magical significance in the three worlds—are born from the marriage of warmth and light: from earthly blood, the bearer of continuity, and from celestial blood, the bearer of hope.

On the other hand, every human word can become magical if it is sincere to the point of engaging the blood, and if at the same time it is filled by faith to the point of setting the luminous waters of hope from above in motion. The "great cry" uttered by Jesus Christ on the Cross when he gave up the spirit (cf. Matthew and Mark) was followed by trembling of the earth—"...the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened. . ." (Matthew xxvii, 51-52)—for this cry bore

simultaneously the magic of the last drop of human blood shed and the whole ocean of the world's hope.

Therefore, it follows from the preceding that magical formulae are not invented—just as true poetry is not invented—but that they are *born* from blood and light. This is why one uses in sacred magic, as a rule, traditional formulae—and this not because they are ancient, but rather because they took birth in the above-indicated manner and they have proved themselves as such. This was well known to Martinez de Pasqually, for example. The rituals of his magical invocations consist only of traditional formulae, drawn above all from the Psalms—not because he was a practising Catholic but solely in view of their magical effectiveness (in the magic that he taught and practised).

Sacred magic differs from arbitrary or personal magic—beyond the differences which we have stated in the third Letter—also in that it "makes use" of the agent of growth, whilst arbitrary magic works above all with the magical agent of electrical nature. Now, it is to these two agents that the following passage from the Sermon on the Mount relates:

Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old: You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn. But I say to you: Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply "Yes" or "No"; anything more than this comes from evil. (Matthew v, 33-37)

For "to swear" includes all categories of magical acts designed to magically reinforce a simple promise or decision of the human will made within the limits of its competence, i.e. within the limits of "yes or no". The desire to go beyond these limits by evoking the aid of forces from beyond the precise circle of the will's competence, so as to render it more powerful by arranging to this end a dynamic mechanism that will serve it, necessarily makes appeal to the electrical forces of the serpent—or "evil". "To swear" is therefore a characteristic act representing the whole domain of arbitrary or personal magic, where it is a matter of rendering a personal will more powerful by reinforcing it through forces of an electric nature—flashing forth like lightning and acting through discharges—coming from beyond the will and submitting to its domination.

Now, the quoted passage says that reality is shielded from arbitrary human will—heaven and earth being assigned to God, Jerusalem being assigned to another individuality (that of "the great King"), and the head (one's own body) being reserved for the agent of growth, which is removed from human arbitrariness ("for you cannot make one hair white or black"). Heaven, earth, Jerusalem and the head are not only removed from human arbitrariness but also from that of

the serpent—from the electrical force due to friction and conflict. It is not the magical agent which rules reality—heaven, earth, Jerusalem and the head—but rather another agent which serves only God and his servants ("the great King"). Now, this other agent—this agent removed from human arbitrariness and from the arbitrariness of the serpent—is what we have designated as the "agent of growth"; and it is this which is the agent of sacred or divine magic.

Here we have the whole problem of the difference between *magical phenomana* and *miracles*, between what personal or arbitrary magic realises and what sacred or divine magic accomplishes. Although this problem has been treated under the title of the third Major Arcanum of the Tarot, "The Empress", it is presented anew here, i.e. under the title of the seventeenth Arcanum, in a new and special aspect. Ibr the problem of personal magic and divine magic was presented in the meditation on the third Arcanum above all from the aspect of the *author*, the source of the initiative of the magical operation—either personal or divine—whilst the same problem is presented now under the aspect of the *agent*, the active means of this operation.

Now, the agent of divine magic is essentially removed from the personal human will, whilst that of personal magic is not. It is the agent of growth which is used as "instrument" in divine magic; and it is therefore the dynamic means of *miracles*, if we understand by "miracle" the effect of the action of a force which is essentially and entirely removed from human personal will, but which is at the same time not indifferent towards the moral qualities of the aspirations of the human personal will—and can lend it a power of realisation higher than the forces of physical, biological, psychological and intellectual determinism, i.e. beyond natural, psychic and intellectual laws. Divine magic is therefore the moral consciousness which *invokes* the help of higher moral consciousness, which latter answers this invocation by setting in motion the agent of growth—the lower waters of the continuity of life and the higher waters of hope. And everywhere where hope and continuity act together in reply to the moral evocation of the human will, a miracle takes place. A miracle is the descent of hope, i.e. the "higher waters above the firmament", into the domain of continuity, i.e. the "lower waters beneath the firmament", and it is the action of the two "waters" united.

Neither science nor personal or arbitrary magic can perform miracles. Only a series of "determinisms" (or "laws"), one against another, are set in play, e.g. wind moves the water, warmth moves the air, electricity produces warmth. Now, science supplies itself with mechanical movement by means of warmth and electricity. It effects the conversion of electricity into warmth and warmth into mechanical movement. In the "act of knowledge" science proceeds from the visible movement to its invisible causes, and in the "act of realisation" it proceeds from the invisible forces to their visible movement. The research thus pursued led to the discovery of nuclear energy. The electrons, protons, neutrons, etc., of nuclear atoms are invisible, but a nuclear explosion is certainly visible.

Here, therefore, is the circle of science: ascending from the visible to the in-

visible in theory, and descending from the invisible to the visible in practice. It is the ancient symbol of the serpent which bites its tail:



Because this circle is closed—not in the sense of the circle's *dimension*, since it can grow indefinitely, but rather in the sense that it is and always will be a *circle without opening* (in contrast to the spiral, which is an "open circle"). The forces of warmth, magnetism, electricity and nuclear forces are thus discovered—and a series of other forces, more hidden and still more subtle, can be discovered—but only *forces* are discovered, i.e. the causes of mechanical movement. It is in that this circle is closed that it is why—without intervention from outside of it, such as that of Teilhard de Chardin—it is a prison and captivity for the spirit.

What is true of natural science is also true of personal or arbitrary magic. The latter proceeds exactly as the former—ascending in theory and descending in practice. Modern authors on magic are perfectly right in advancing the thesis that magic is a science and that it has nothing to do with miracles as such:

Magic is the study and practice of the control of Nature's secret forces. It is a science—pure, or dangerous—like all sciences...  
(Papus, *Traite methodique de magie pratique*, Paris, 1970, p. v)

We have to add here only that this is true, and also that "Nature's secret forces" are secret only for a limited time, notably until their discovery by natural science—which simply discovers and renders controllable the "secret forces" of Nature one after the other. It is therefore only a question of time until the pursuit of magic and that of natural science coincide and become identical.

But, on the other hand, it is also true that the closed circle of science, which is a prison and captivity for the spirit, applies also to personal magic. Magic, in so far as it is a science—and it is one—has the same fate as science, i.e. captivity in a closed circle. And when Papus says further on in the introduction to his *Traite methodique de magie pratique* that, "Magic, we could say, is the materialism of the future knights of Christ..." (p. vi), he admits with this statement the fact of the captivity of magic as such—in a closed circle of a single aspect of the world, which he names "materialism". And he gives expression to his hope that in the future there will be an intervention from beyond this closed circle by future magicians ("knights of Christ"). . . in other words, that future Teilhard de Chardins will do for magic what he has done for science: that they will open the closed circle and transform it into a spiral.

When Louis Claude de Saint-Martin left the circle of disciples of Martinez de Pasqually, who were practising ceremonial magic, and abandoned the practice of this magic—without denying the effectiveness of its capacity for realisation—in order to embrace Jacob Boehme's kind of mysticism and gnosis, it was because he sensed that ceremonial magic is a closed circle, whilst he aspired to unlimited qualitative perfection, i.e. to God. For even if the supreme aim of the invocations of the ceremonial magic of Martinez de Pasqually had been realised, even if there had been success in the realisation of a "pass" at which the resurrected Jesus Christ would have appeared, it would have been a matter only of a "pass" with a phenomenal apparition rather than an immediate and certain revelation of the essence of Christ within the human soul. The circle of this type of magic, however sublime its aim may be, is *closed in* that it is always a matter of *apparitions* through "passes". But Saint-Martin had hunger and thirst for intuitive union—soul with soul, spirit with spirit—and nothing less than this could satisfy him. He says in his *Mon portrait historique et philosophique* ("My Philosophical and Historical Portrait"):

There are people who are condemned to time. There are those who are condemned (or called) to eternity. I know someone of this latter kind; and when those who are condemned to time would wish to judge his eternity and govern him by the sceptre of their times, one may presume how they will treat him. (Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, *Mon portrait historique et philosophique*, 1789-1803. para. 1023, Paris, 1961, p. 411)

Being sentenced (or called) to eternity, Saint-Martin could not be content with that which is passing—including every "pass" realised by means of ceremonial magic. This is why he turned to the gnostic mysticism or mystical gnosis of Jacob Boehme.

On the 9th day of the month of Brumaire (= November, 1800), I published my translation of Jacob Boehme's *L'Aurore naissante*. I felt in subsequently re-reading it at my leisure that this work is blessed by God and man, except for the whirlwind of the butterflies of this world, who will see nothing in it, or who will only make it the object of their criticism and sarcasm. (Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, *Mon portrait*, para. 1013, Paris, 1961, p. 408)

This is what he said concerning this book of Jacob Boehme, at the same time giving expression to his appreciation of Boehme's whole work: ". . . this work is blessed by God and man. . ." Elsewhere, concerning Boehme's work, he said:

I would have been suffering and unhappy far too long if God had made known to me much sooner the things that he has acquainted me with now, thanks to the fruits born in me from

the fertile foundations of my friend B. (= Boehme). This is why these magnificent gifts were deferred for so long. (Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, *Mon portrait*, para. 902, Paris. 1961. p. 379)

Now, the "magnificent gifts" of which it is a matter here are not magical phenomena but rather revelations in the inner life of intuition and inspiration.

In returning to the problem of the difference between magical phenomena and miracles, it should be said that the former fall under the heading of human scientific knowledge and power, whilst the latter fall under that of divine knowledge and power—which means to say that conscious human participation in the miracles of sacred magic begins with mysticism, proceeds to gnosis and results in miracles, i.e. in practical sacred magic: *ex Deo, in Deo, per Deum* ("from God, in God, through God"). It was the way *ex Deo, in Deo, per Deum* which was Saint-Martin's inner vocation, and this is why he could not be content with the way *ex homine, in homine, ad Deum* ("from man, in man, towards God")—the way of the most noble kind of ceremonial magic of his time: that of the school of Martinez de Pasqually. Saint-Martin, in leaving the closed circle of this school, nevertheless remained grateful for the experience that he had had there and kept his veneration for the master of this school. He said of him:

If Martinez de Pasqually, who was the master for each one of us, had wanted to know me, he would have led me in another way than he did, and he would have made another person of me, though, nevertheless, I have an inexpressible moral obligation to him, and I thank God every day for having allowed me to participate—although only in a small measure—in the light of this extraordinary man who, of all the people I know, has been the only living person whom I could not have bypassed. (Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, *Mon portrait*, para. 167, Paris, 1961, p. 107)

It is thus that for Saint-Martin the circle of Martinez de Pasqually—a prison in so far as being a closed circle—played the role of the first circle of a spiral. And in having sought and found the way out, he could not see it otherwise than as the first step of an "infinite spiral" in which he was engaged.

Having sought and found the way out, was the circle of ceremonial magic of the school of Martinez de Pasqually therefore not closed, since Saint-Martin could leave it?

The circle of ceremonial magic—just like that of science—*is* closed in principle, but every individual human soul can leave it by embracing a more elevated ideal and by renouncing all the advantages that the circle offers him. This is an important aspect of the meaning of the formula of Christ: "I am the door"—namely, that there is an exit from every closed circle, from all captivity of the spirit. "I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out

and find pasture" (John x, 9). which means to say that if someone is moved by love of God and neighbour, he can enter each closed circle and he can leave it. Instead of prisons he will "find pasture", i.e. *he will move in a spiral*. It is thus, for example, that Teilhard de Chardin could enter the closed circle of science without being captured, and he could leave this circle by transforming it into a spiral. It is thus, also, that Saint-Martin could enter the closed circle of ceremonial magic without being captured by it, and he could also leave it by transforming it into a spiral.

The spiral: this is the "good news" (i.e. the "Gospel") to all those in captivity in closed circles. Jesus Christ said to Nathanael:

Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe?  
You shall see greater things than these. . Truly, truly, I say to  
you, *you will see heaven opened, and the Angels of God ascend-  
ing and descending upon the Son of man.* (John i, 50-51)

"Heaven opened"—it is the way of the spiral into the infinite which opens.

The spiral is the arcanum of growth — both spiritual and biological. A plant grows following the movement of a spiral; an idea, a problem, likewise grows following the movement of a spiral. Not only the branches of a tree are found arranged according to the spiral, but also the so-called "tree-ring" circles, which are formed each year between the bark and the centre of the trunk of the tree, constitute traces or effects of the operation of circular growth in two dimensions—vertical and horizontal—at the same time, i.e. proceeding in a spiral. With respect to ideas and problems, they grow in human consciousness through a series of expansions and contractions, i.e. through concentric circles, similar to tree-rings on the trunk of a tree, crossing in two directions — in breadth and height. Thus it was in 1919/20 that I was for the first time occupied with the Major Arcana of the Tarot under the four aspects comprising the divine name **יהוה** (YOD-HE-VAU-HE), which then were presented to me as a unity comprising Nature, man and heaven, or alchemy, ethical Hermeticism and astrology—united in theurgy. Now, after returning to this theme a number of times, the present meditations on the Tarot also deal with the four aspects which comprise the divine name **יהוה**, but they now already present themselves as the unity of mysticism, gnosis and sacred magic in Hermeticism. This is therefore an example of the growth of ideas and problems — taking place in a spiral in two dimensions.

Or, consider the history of the work of preparation for the coming of Christ. . . The Gospel according to Matthew summarises it in the guise of the genealogy of Jesus Christ which, in its turn, he summarises with a single phrase as follows:

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. (Matthew i, 17)

Here is the spiral of the history of the preparation for the coming of Christ—a spiral of three circles or "steps", each step being fourteen generations. The first circle or step of the spiral is that where the threefold imprint of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—an imprint from above which corresponds to the sacrament of baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—made possible the revelation on Mt. Sinai and the act of alliance that took place there, and resulted in the Law (Torah) becoming soul in a human personality: David. For it was in David that the commandments and ordinances of the Law—revealed with "thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain... so that all the people trembled" (Exodus xix, 16)—became interiorised to the point of becoming love and conscience, the concern of a heart enamoured of their truth and beauty. The Law became soul in David; and this is why his transgressions, also, gave rise to the birth in the soul of a new force—that of inner penitence.

The first step of the spiral, the fourteen generations from Abraham to David, therefore corresponds to the process of interiorisation which takes place from the sacrament of *baptism* (the three patriarchs), through the sacrament of *confirmation* (the alliance of the Sinai desert), to the sacrament of *penance*. The second circle or step of the spiral, the fourteen generations from David to the deportation to Babylon, is the "school of David"—the school of inner penitence—which resulted in its outward aim, that of *expiation*, i.e. the deportation to Babylon. The third circle or step of the spiral, the fourteen generations from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ, corresponds to that which takes place spiritually between the last act of the sacrament of penance, i.e. *absolution*, and the sacrament of *holy communion* (the Eucharist)—that of the presence and reception of Christ.

John the Baptist "prepared the way of the Lord and made his paths straight" (Matthew iii, 3) by repeating—in abridged form—the entire history of the preparation of the coming of Christ, i.e. the way of penitence which was his "baptism by water". For the "son of David" was the "son of penitence" on his father's (Joseph's) side and the "son of innocence" on his mother's (Mary's) side. Jesus Christ could not come into another milieu than that of virginal innocence and innocence recovered through penitence. John the Baptist is therefore the one who—in the history of the world—accomplished the act of transition from penitence to communion; it is he who led by the hand the first penitent from the ancient world to the altar of grace of the new world. This moment of immense significance could not be more concisely described than in the Gospel according to John:

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said: Behold, the Lamb of God! The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them: What do you seek? And they said to him: Master, where are you staying? He said to them: Come and see. They came and saw



where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. (John i, 35-39)

It was thus that John the Baptist transmitted the fruit of the world which had come to an end to the world which was beginning. If the three holy kings (magi) laid at the feet of the child Jesus the threefold quintessence of what the ancient world had achieved - gold, frankincense and myrrh—St. John the Baptist gave the Master a fourth gift: the pure heart which could see the Divine ("Behold, the Lamb of God"), of which the Master was to say: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew v, 8).

Three times fourteen generations is therefore the spiral of the three steps of the way from Abraham to Christ, just as the ages of gold, frankincense and myrrh were the three steps of the spiral of mankind's spiritual way from the patriarchs of spirituality—the Rishis of ancient India—to the Christ. For the age of gold on this spiritual way, that of ancient India, was followed by the spiritual age of frankincense, that of ancient Iran, where the cosmic revelation of the Rishis became soul and an affair of the human heart; and the age of frankincense, in its turn, was followed by the age of myrrh — an age of mourning and penitence, of which ancient Egypt was the millennial-old torch. . . the ancient Egypt of which Hermes Trismegistus says in his treatise entitled *Asclepius*:

Do you not know, Asclepius, that Egypt is an image of heaven, or, to speak more exactly, in Egypt all the operations of the powers which rule and work in heaven have been transferred to earth below? Nay, it should rather be said that the whole Cosmos dwells in this our land as in its sanctuary. And yet, since it is fitting that wise men should have knowledge of all events before they come to pass, you must not be left in ignorance of this: there will come a time when it will be seen that in vain have the Egyptians honoured the deity with heartfelt piety and assiduous service; and all our holy worship will be found bootless and ineffectual. For the gods will return from earth to heaven; Egypt will be forsaken, and the land which was once the home of religion will be left desolate, bereft of the presence of its deities. This land and region will be filled with foreigners. . . In that day will our most holy land, this land of shrines and temples, be filled with funerals and corpses. . . O Egypt, Egypt, of thy religion nothing will remain but an empty tale, which thine own children in time to come will not believe; nothing will be left but graven words, and only the stones will tell of thy piety. (*Asclepius* iii, 24b-25; trsl. W. Scott, *Hermetica*. vol. i, Oxford, 1924, pp. 341-343)

This is the voice of the embalmer, the sage of the wisdom of myrrh, who is familiar

with death, with the laws of death — the voice of the Jeremiah of Egypt. And here is the voice of frankincense — that of the sage of the wisdom of frankincense — the voice of the psalmist of ancient Iran:

We shall not, O Ahura Mazda! displease you and Asha (the Law) and Vahista Mananh (the Best Reason) who have been endeavouring in the gift of praises unto you. ..

When I first conceived of Thee, O Mazda, in my mind—says Zarathustra— I sincerely regarded Thee as the First Actor in the universe, as the Father of Reason (Good Mind), as the true Originator of the Right Law (Righteousness), as the Governor over the actions of mankind.. .

We praise the intelligence of Ahura Mazda, in order to grasp the holy word.

We praise the wisdom of Ahura Mazda, in order to study the holy word.

We praise the tongue of Ahura Mazda, in order to speak forth the holy word.

We adore, every day and night, the mount Ushidarena, the Giver of Intelligence.

(*Gathas* in R. P. Masani, *The Religion of the Good Life. Zoroastrianism*, London, 1938, pp. 52, 139)

And lastly the voice of a sage of the wisdom of gold, preaching cosmic humanism:

The Purusha (Man) is this All,  
 that which was and which shall be.  
 He is Lord of immortality,  
 which he grows beyond through (sacrificial) food. ..  
 One fourth of him is all beings,  
 The three fourths of him is the immortal in heaven.  
 Three fourths on high rose the Purusha,  
 One fourth of him arose again here (on the earth).  
 Thence in all directions he spread abroad,  
 as that which eats and that which eats not.

(*Rigveda* x, 90, 2-4)\*

Here is the key of gold to material and spiritual evolution, i.e. it is only the universal and transcendent human principle—the Adam Kadmon of the Cabbala, or the Purusha of the Vedas—who renders evolution intelligible.

The spiral of Israel's three steps, each of fourteen generations, and of the three steps of spirituality—those of gold, frankincense and myrrh—in the general history of mankind, thus constituted the preparation for the coming of Christ. Aren't

•Trsl. E. J. Thomas. *Vedic Hymns*, London, 1923, pp. 120-121.

the three weeks of Advent an abridgement of this preparation through millennia — the fourth week being their summary: the work of John the Baptist?

Be that as it may, it is the law of the spiral which occupies us here. For it is the spiral which characterises the action of the agent of growth which is the theme of the seventeenth Major Arcanum of the Tarot—whose Card shows us the relationship that there is between the stellar-, female-, fluidic- and growth-principles. There are stars in the sky, there is a naked woman who is pouring water from two vases, and there are two shrubs which are growing. It is the water which makes it possible for the shrubs to grow in the sandy desert; it is the woman who is pouring water; it is the stars, lastly, from whence the luminosity emanates which is transformed into fluidity through the woman as intermediary. The latter therefore transforms hope into the continuity of tradition and generations. It is thus that the shrubs are growing. The context of the Card therefore represents a spiral which descends from the stars (first step) to the woman (second step), then to the water (third step) and ends with the shrubs (the result, the fourth step).

The Card answers the question: What does a tree need to live? Stars, a woman, and water are needed — answers the Card. Indeed, what is required for mankind's evolution to continue? Hope, maternity and heredity are required.

What is essential in order that spiritual truth is not forgotten, and that it lives? Hope, true creativity and tradition are the essential factors. The corroborating testimony of *three* ever-present witnesses —spirit, blood and water—is necessary. True testimony through the spirit, through blood, and through water will never fall into forgetfulness. One can kill spiritual truth, but it will resurrect.

Now, the unity of hope, creativity and tradition is the agent of growth. It is the concerted action of spirit, blood and water. It is therefore *indestructible*: its action is *irreversible*; and its movement is *irresistible*. And it is the agent of growth which is, in the last analysis, the subject of the *Emerald Table* of Hermes Trismegistus.

"And as all things were by mediation of the One, so all things arose from this one thing by a single act of adaptation"—says the *Emerald Table (Tabula Smaragdina, 3)*. Which amounts to saying: as the One is the creator of the *essence* of all things, thus there is a unique agent which adapts the *existence* of all things to their essence—the principle of the adaptation of that which is born to its created prototype. This is the agent of growth or the principle of *evolution*. It is engendered by the spontaneous light of hope (the sun) reflected in the movement of the lower waters (the moon), which produces the general impulse or "push" (the wind), which bears primordial hope towards its realisation in the material domain (the earth), which donates it with its constructive elements (i.e. nourishes or "nurses" it). Thus, the *Emerald Table* continues:

The father thereof is the sun, the mother the moon; the wind carried it in its womb; the earth is the nurse thereof. (*Tabula Smaragdina, 4*)

The spontaneous light from above, the light reflected below, the impulse or push of evolution which results, and which uses material elements for its realisation — here is a complete analysis of the inner process of evolution and growth. It is a matter here of an agent which constantly *adapts* existence to essence — the agent of growth that the *Emerald Table* refers to with the term *thelema*:

It is the father of all works of wonder (*thelema*) throughout the whole world. (*Tabula Smaragdina*, 5)

Now, the word *thelemos* (θέλημα) signifies in Greek, in poetic language, "voluntary, spontaneous", and the words *thelema* (τὸ θέλημα) and *thelema* (ἡ θέλησις) signify in the language of the New Testament "desire" and "will". Therefore the author of the *Emerald Table* wants to explain the nature of the volitional and spontaneous impulse of the world in transformation and — as we say today — in evolution. He wants to reveal to us the origin and the constituent factors of the transforming agent of "transformism", the active agent underlying evolution. This agent is described in the sixteenth treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, "An epistle of Asclepius to King Ammon":

. . .with the light which is shed downward, and illuminates all the sphere of water, earth, and air, he puts life into the things in this region of the Cosmos (including the earth), and stirs them up to birth, and by successive changes (metamorphoses) remakes the living creatures and transforms them (one into the other in the manner of a spiral — ἑλικὸς τροχὸν *helikos trochon* — the changing of the one into the other operating a continual change from type to type — γένη γενῶν, *gene genon* — and from species to species—εἶδη εἰδῶν, *eideeidon*)... ('Asclepius to King Ammon', *Corpus Hermeticum* xvi, 8-9; trsl. W. Scott, *Hermetica*, vol. i, Oxford, 1924, pp. 267-269; the latter part of the translation, in brackets, is from the French translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* by A.J. Festugiere, vol. ii, Paris, 1945, p. 235)

Thus, this agent acts "in the manner of a spiral" between earth and heaven. For if one separates *thelema* (immanent desire in the depths of matter) from its material envelope, "it doth ascend from earth to heaven, and again it doth descend to earth, and uniteth in itself the force from things superior and things inferior" (*Tabula Smaragdina*, 8)—in the manner of a spiral which ascends and descends.

You see, therefore, dear Unknown Friend, that "transformism", the doctrine of evolution rediscovered by nineteenth-century science, was not only known as a fact in the Hermeticism of the Hellenistic epoch, but was also the subject of a profound philosophy which was occupied with the agent of "transformism" work-

ing "a continual change from type to type and from species to species" and transforming them "in the manner of a spiral" (*Corpus Hermeticum* xvi, 9).

Heliocentricity, also, was known in the Hermeticism of this epoch—at least thirteen or fourteen centuries before its rediscovery—as is evident from the above-cited Hermetic treatise:

... for he (the sun) is stationed in the midst (of the Cosmos), and wears the Cosmos as a wreath (crown) around him (μέσσοι γὰρ ἰδρῖται στεφανωφωρομένην κοσμον). And so he lets the Cosmos go on its course, not leaving it far separated from himself; for like a skilled driver, he has made fast and bound to himself the chariot of the Cosmos, lest it should rush away in disorder. ("Asclepius to King Ammon", *Corpus Hermeticum* xvi, 7; trsl. W. Scott, *Hermetica*, vol. i, Oxford, 1924, p. 267)

Could a more precise statement of the heliocentric solar system be given?

Now, the Hermeticists of antiquity knew the fact of evolution ("transformism") and they sought the active agent of "transformism", i.e. *thelema*—this volitional and spontaneous impulse working in the very depths of matter. And the *Emerald Table* of Hermes Trismegistus is the legacy given by them for posterity: it contains a summary of what they had found. It is a testament of the ancient world to the modern world, through which a gift is made to the latter of what the former had achieved—or, at least, what they believed they had achieved.

.. .it will separate the element of earth from that of fire, the subtle from the gross, gently and with great sagacity. It doth ascend from earth to heaven: again it doth descend to earth, and uniteth in itself the force from things superior and things inferior. Thus thou wilt possess the glory of the brightness of the whole world, and all obscurity will fly far from thee. 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. Thus was the world created. Hence there will be marvellous adaptations achieved, of which the manner is this. For this reason I am called Hermes Trismegistus, because I hold three parts of the wisdom of the world. That which I had to say about the operation of *sol is* (accomplished and) completed. (*Tabula Smaragdina*, 7-13; trsl. R. Steele and D. Singer, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* xxi (1928), p. 42)

"Accomplished and completed" concludes this testament of antiquity. Is it foolish pretension, naive arrogance, pious illusion or an establishment of fact? It is a matter of conscience and experience to be answered by each individually.

Personally, I side with those who see here an establishment of fact—notably an establishment of fact concerning the agent of growth, which is "the strongest of all powers, the force of all forces" moving "every subtle thing" and penetrating "every solid substance".

The theme of the agent of growth has already been treated in these Letters, notably in the Letter on the third Arcanum and in that on the eleventh Arcanum of the Tarot. We cannot avoid the law of the spiral, which "rules" not only the totality of the series of Major Arcana of the Tarot but also the endeavours and the progress in consciousness of he who meditates on them. We have had to return to this theme for a third time in the present Letter, which thus represents the third step of the spiral—to continue to infinity—concerning the theme of growth and evolution.

The *Emerald Table* is a concise summary of what the ancient world had to say on the subject of the agent of growth and evolution. The Major Arcana of the Tarot are a summary, developed into a school or practical "system" of spiritual exercises, of what the mediaeval world had to say on the subject of this agent—as the fruit of its meditations on the *Emerald Table* and of its own efforts and spiritual experiences. In our time, therefore, it is a matter of the task of effecting the third step of the evolutionary spiral of the Hermetic tradition—the third "renaissance" on the subject of the *Emerald Table*. Our time makes appeal to the collective endeavour of Hermeticists of today to make a *third* summary, which will be for our time what the Tarot was for the Middle Ages and what the *Emerald Table* was for antiquity. Thus, just as the *Emerald Table* saved the essence of ancient wisdom, and just as the Tarot saved the essence of mediaeval wisdom, across the deluges which occurred in the time that separates us from them, may the essence of *modern wisdom* be saved in a spiritual "Noah's ark" from the deluge which is going to come, and may it thereby be transmitted to the future, just as the essence of ancient wisdom and that of mediaeval wisdom has been transmitted to us by means of the *Emerald Table* and the Major Arcana of the Tarot. The tradition of Hermeticism blossomed in the past and must live in the future. This is why a new, modern summary is required, which will be as viable as the *Emerald Table* and as the Major Arcana of the Tarot.

This is the message of the woman kneeling under the stars on the bank of a current which flows from the past into the future—a woman who never ceases to pour water from above into the flow of water below. It is she who is the mother of the future, and this is why her message confronts us with duty towards the future—the duty towards the flow of uninterrupted tradition. Let us therefore try to comply with this!