

*Meditation on the  
Eighteenth Major Arcanum of the Tarot*

THE MOON  
LA LUNE

God forbade Lot and his family *to look back*:  
but Lot's wife behind him looked back,  
and she became a pillar of salt.

(Genesis xix, 26)

David's heart smote him  
after he had numbered the people.  
And David said to the Lord,  
"I have sinned greatly in what I have done". . .  
So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel.

(II Samuel xxiv, 10. 15)

Our intelligence, as it leaves the hands of Nature,  
has for its chief object the unorganised solid. . .  
Of the discontinuous alone  
does the intellect form a clear idea. . .  
Of immobility alone  
does the intellect form a clear idea. . .  
The intellect lets what is *new*  
in each moment of history escape.  
It does not admit the unforeseeable.  
It rejects all creation. . .  
The intellect is characterised by  
a natural inability to comprehend life. . .  
But it is to the very inwardness of life  
that *intuition* leads us —  
by intuition I mean instinct  
that has become disinterested,  
self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object  
and of enlarging it indefinitely.

(Henri Bergson)\*

## LETTER XVIII



## THE MOON

Dear Unknown Friend,

The prohibition to Lot and his family against looking back, David's sin in having numbered the people of Israel, and the characteristic traits of human intelligence (as opposed to intuition) formulated by Henri Bergson, have this in common that they relate to the problem of the *inversion* of the forward movement of life, i.e. they relate to the problem of *retrograde movement*. Now, it is the problem of retrograde movement, contrary to that of life, which is suggested spontaneously by the Card of the eighteenth Major Arcanum of the Tarot—"The

\**Creative Evolution*, trsl. A. Mitchell. London. 1964. pp. 162-164. 174. 186.

Moon". It is the antithesis of the seventeenth Arcanum "The Star". Par if the latter evokes ideas, feelings and impulses of will relating to the evolution of life and consciousness, concerning their infinite *development*, the former evokes ideas, feelings and impulses of will relating to the *inversion* of the evolutionary movement of life and consciousness, i.e. to their *envelopment*, arrest of movement, and retrograde movement. Instead of the current which flows and the verdant shrubs of the Card of the seventeenth Arcanum, we find the stagnant water of a swamp and two rigid stone towers in the Card of the eighteenth Arcanum. Instead of the naked woman who makes the current (which continues in its flow) emanate from the two vases, we find an image of the most enveloped or shielded creature—the crayfish—at the bottom of the swampy basin, and two dogs (or a dog and a wolf) which are baying at the moon above. Lastly, instead of the radiant constellation of eight stars, we find the darkness of a total eclipse of the moon.

Through the totality of the context of its Card, the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot invites us to a spiritual exercise — to a meditation on that which arrests evolutionary movement and tends to give it a direction in an inverse sense. And just as the dominant and principal theme of the seventeenth Arcanum is the agent of growth, so is it a matter in the eighteenth Arcanum of the special *agent of diminution* — the principle of the eclipse. In the case of the eighteenth Arcanum it is a matter neither of temptation from outside, which is the subject of the sixth Arcanum, nor of the devil and demons —the intoxicating and enslaving forces — which constitute the subject of the fifteenth Arcanum, nor even of the presumptuous tendency to build "towers of Babel", which is the subject of the sixteenth Arcanum, but rather of something which is there, which is given and imposed on every incarnated human soul by the very fact of being incarnated, i.e. which the fate of being incarnated entails with necessity. The principle of the eclipse or the "agent of diminution" would be present and active in us even if the devil and all demons resigned, and even if all human beings learnt the lesson of humility and abandoned the desire to build "towers of Babel".

The eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot is the *arcانum* of the twofold current that Henri Bergson designates as "intelligence—matter" or "materialistic intellectuality", contrary to the twofold current "duration—spirit" or "intuition—conscience". For the current "intellectuality—materiality" that Bergson portrays like no other thinker is precisely this "agent of diminution" or "eclipse principle" that is suggested by the context of the Card of the eighteenth Arcanum. Because the moon is the principle of *reflection*: just as it reflects the light of the sun, so does human intelligence reflect the creative light of conscience—and the latter is eclipsed when "materialistic intellectuality" prevails. Just as man's will to master Nature sets "materialistic intellectuality" in motion and prescribes it the "rules of the game" for its work, so is the moon of the eighteenth Arcanum in eclipse, i.e. it is only fringed by rays of reflected sunlight, whilst the surface of the moon itself reflects only the image of a human face in profile. Further, just as the crayfish moves backwards in swimming, so does human intelligence move backwards, i.e.

in the direction "effect—cause", when it is engaged in the act of knowledge that is proper to it. The other details of this Card — the coloured drops which are *falling upwards*, the two towers, the two dogs which are baying, the stagnant water of the swamp —only make more specific, as we shall see through the following meditation on the central theme of this Arcanum, further aspects of the current "intellectuality—materiality" that is contrary to the current of creative evolution or "duration—spirit".

The sun, moon and stars are — according to Genesis — lights "in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth" (Genesis i, 16-17), whose creation constituted the fourth day of the creation of the world.

Now, human consciousness is the field where *three* kinds of light are manifest: *creative* light, *reflected* light and *revealed* light. The first participates in the work of the creation of the world such as it has continued since the sixth day of creation, which we now call "creative evolution"; the second illuminates the dark field of action of the human will, which we now call "matter"; the last orientates us towards transcendent values and truths which constitute, as it were, the supreme court of appeal, the ultimate criterion, of all that is of worth and of all that is true in space and time. It is thanks to these three types of light that man is at one and the same time a creator participating in creative evolution, a master of matter — author of the work of civilisation — and that he is a kneeling worshipper of God, capable of orientating his will towards the divine will. Creative consciousness, reflecting intelligence, and revelation from above are the three lights of the human microcosm — its "sun", "moon" and "stars".

The three Major Arcana of the Tarot—"The Star", "The Moon" and "The Sun" are those of light revealed from above, reflecting intelligence and creative consciousness. We were occupied with the stellar Arcanum in the last Letter. In the following Letter we shall be occupied with the solar Arcanum. In this Letter, it is a matter of the lunar Arcanum, i.e. the Arcanum of the inseparable couple — the earth and its satellite (the moon) — or, for the microcosm, materiality and intelligence. It should be formally pointed out that the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot reveals the *relationship* between the moon and the earth; it deals with the couple "moon—earth" as such — just as, for example, Henri Bergson deals with the couple "intelligence—matter" as such. For materiality (i.e. the material and mechanical aspect of the world) is to intelligence (i.e. to the faculty of consciousness which proceeds from effects to causes by induction and deduction) as the earth is to the moon. Intelligence is attuned to matter, and the latter is attuned to intelligence by lending itself easily to analysis and synthesis. Matter thus adapts itself to intelligence, and the latter "is characterised by the unlimited power of decomposing according to any law and of recomposing into any system" (Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*; trsl. A. Mitchell. London, 1964, p. 165). They constitute an inseparable couple.

Imagine what the state of intelligence would be if it were deprived of the environment of the material world, where there is the "unlimited power of decom-

posing according to any law and of recomposing into any system". Not only would it be incapable of separating out particular things from their enduring totality and grouping them into categories and classes, but also it would be powerless to manufacture the implements and machines which it makes use of to supplement the organs of action and perception with which Nature has endowed the human being.

The divisibility and malleability of inorganic matter (or matter *rendered* inorganic) are as indispensable to intelligence as water is to a fish which swims, or as the air is to a bird which flies. They constitute its vital element.

The essential function of our intellect, as the evolution of life has fashioned it, is to be a light for our conduct, to make ready for our action on things, to foresee, for a given situation, the events, favourable or unfavourable, which may follow thereupon. Intellect therefore instinctively selects in a given situation whatever is like something already known; it seeks this out, in order that it may apply its principle that "like produces like". In just this does the prevision of the future by common sense consist. Science carries this faculty to the highest possible degree of exactitude and precision, but does not alter its essential character. Like ordinary knowledge, in dealing with things science is concerned only with the aspect of *repetition*. Though the whole be original, science will always manage to analyse it into elements or aspects which are approximately a reproduction of the past. Science can work only on what is supposed to repeat itself. . . Anything that is irreducible and irreversible in the successive moments of history eludes science. (Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*; trsl. A. Mitchell, London, 1964, p. 31)

At the same time there is reason to point out that the aspect of the *repetition* of things that intelligence seeks in the first place corresponds to the almost innate inclination of intelligence to reduce movement to immobility and to transform time into space. "Repetition" is only the immobile element in movement and the *spatial* element in time. When, for example, we speak of the yearly cycle of seasons, we turn the movement of time into space; we replace movement by the representation of a *circle* in space. And this circle signifies the stable *repetition* of the course of the seasons; springtime—summer—autumn—winter—springtime, etc.

No one has stated this postulate of intelligence—i.e. repetition, and the consequent transformation of time into space—with more force than Solomon, who says in Ecclesiastes:

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. Is there a thing of which it is said: See, this is new? It has been already,

in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to happen among those who come after. (Ecclesiastes i, 9-11)

Clearly, it is a matter here of a *postulate* — a dogma of faith for intelligence — because the statement by Solomon surpasses the limits of experience by affirming that something which arises as new in the field of immediate experience *must* be the repetition of something old, fallen into forgetfulness, and that it is only ignorance due to the forgetfulness of the past which makes it appear as new, and that it will be just the same in the future, i.e. everything that will be judged as new will be thanks only to forgetfulness of what happens in the present. Time creates nothing; it only combines and recombines that which *is given* for ever in space. Time is like the wind, and space is like the sea; the wind produces waves in infinite repetition on the surface of the sea, but the sea remains the same; it does not change at all. Therefore there is nothing —and *there cannot be* anything — new under the sun.

This is the postulate of intelligence, advanced some three thousand years ago, which is still accepted and which underlies the way that intelligence works. And here is its antithesis, formulated by Bergson:

The universe endures. The more we study the nature of time, the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new. (Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*; trsl. A. Mitchell, London, 1964, p. 11)

We shall return later to the Bergsonian — and Hermetic — antithesis, when the necessity for it will be blindingly apparent as the natural reply to this postulate of intelligence, and when it will present itself to the mind as, so to say, the "complementary colour" to the Arcanum "The Moon". For the Arcanum "The Moon", in so far as it is a spiritual exercise, has no other aim than to evoke the conscious desire to go further than intelligence, and to decide to make a "leap" in order to leave its sphere.

But let us return to the pair "intelligence—matter" or "intellectuality-materiality":

...the intellect aims, first of all, at constructing. This fabrication is exercised exclusively on inert matter, in this sense, that even if it makes use of organised material, it treats it as inert, without troubling about the life which animated it. And of inert matter itself, fabrication deals only with the solid; the rest escapes by its very fluidity. If, therefore, the tendency of the intellect is to fabricate, we may expect to find that whatever is fluid in the real will escape it in part, and whatever is life in the liv-

ing will escape it altogether. Our intelligence, as it leaves the hands of Nature, has for its chief object the unorganised solid. (Henri Bergson. *Creative Evolution*; trsl. A. Mitchell, London, 1964, pp. 161-162)

Thus the axiom of intelligence that *the whole is greater than the part* is valid wholly and without reserve when it is a matter of a solid body or a liquid measure (i.e. when fluid is rendered similar to a solid body). Half a stone is evidently smaller than the whole stone, and half a glass of water indicates less water than a whole glass. But this axiom is not valid unreservedly when it is a matter of the functions of a living organism. You can certainly have a leg cut off, which is many times larger than the heart of the human body, without death ensuing, but you cannot do without the heart, without dying. The *function* of the heart is more essential to the life of the whole human organism than the leg, although the heart is very much smaller than the leg. Thus, with respect to a living organism, the axiom in question has to be modified — in the sense that, from the point of view of *functioning*, the functioning parts and the functioning whole can be *equal*. Therefore, so far as the functioning of a living organism is concerned, one could bowl over the bourgeois logician with the formula: *the whole can be equal to the part*.

The same axiom, applied to the *moral domain*, should undergo still further an active modification. In the domain of pure values the axiom in question changes its form and becomes transformed into its contrary. Indeed, Caiaphas' argument in favour of a decision against Jesus, advanced to the assembly of the Sanhedrin, "that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish" (John xi, 50), is evidently simply an appeal to the logical axiom that the *whole* (the nation) is *greater* (is of higher value) than the *part* (a single man). But the whole Jewish nation had no other reason for existence than part of it — the Messiah! Still more: Is the Word —through which all things were made and outside of which nothing has come into existence, and which became flesh (cf. John i, 3, 14)—a part or is it the whole of the Jewish nation . . . mankind. . . lastly, the whole world?

Or again, take the parable of the lost sheep, where the Master says:

If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you. he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. (Matthew xviii, 12-13)

Is the axiom that the whole is greater than the part still valid in the domain of moral *values*'?

Or again, take the parables concerning the treasure hidden in a field, the pearl of great price, and the lesson of the poor widow's two copper coins: Is it not evi-

dent from them that for the world of values the axiom in question should be *the part can be greater than the whole?*

These conclusions at which one arrives when one applies logic to the organic and moral spheres are shocking for intelligence, whose rules of logic are in accordance with inorganic solidity.

David's great sin—in ordering that the people of Israel be numbered (cf. II Samuel xxiv, 2)—consisted in the application of the method proper to human intelligence of reducing the living and moral to inorganic solidity, i.e. men to *things*: the living and moral (the community of Israel) to number. In giving the order to count the people of Israel, David committed the sin, in the spiritual domain, of having reduced living and feeling human beings to dead and inanimate things, i.e. to *corpses*. Thus he sinned against the commandment: Thou shalt not kill.

And it was not only during the darkest time of the year—when the nights are at their longest—but it was also under the sign of virgin intelligence eclipsed by human terrestrial intelligence that the nativity of Jesus Christ took place. For it took place at the time of an enrolment of the whole world: "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. . . when Quirinius was governor of Syria" (Luke ii, 1-2). It was a time when the sin of David was repeated, but on the scale of the Roman Empire—over "all the world". Then, Caesar Augustus decreed that all living and feeling human beings, including the incarnated Word, be treated as inanimate things. It was winter time as far as the sun is concerned. . . and the time of an eclipse of the moon as far as intelligence is concerned.

Our intelligence is only at ease, it is only entirely at home, when it is at work on raw matter, and in particular on solid objects:

What is the most general property of the material world? It is extended: it presents to us objects external to other objects, and, in these objects, parts external to parts. No doubt, it is useful to us, in view of our ulterior manipulation, to regard each object as divisible into parts arbitrarily cut up, each part being again divisible as we like, and so on *ad infinitum*. To this possibility of decomposing matter as much as we please, and in any way we please, we allude when we speak of the continuity of material extension; but this continuity, as we see it, is nothing else but our ability, an ability that matter allows us to choose the mode of discontinuity we shall find in it. It is always, in fact, the mode of discontinuity once chosen that appears to us as the actually real one and that which fixes our attention, just because it rules our action. Thus discontinuity is thought for itself; it is thinkable in itself; we form an idea of it by a positive act of mind; while the intellectual representation of continuity is negative, being, at bottom, only the refusal of our mind, before any actually given

system of decomposition, to regard it as the only possible one.  
*Of the discontinuous alone does the intellect form a clear idea.*  
 (Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*; trsl. A. Mitchell. London, 1964, pp. 162-163)

For this reason not only science decomposes, e.g. objects into chemical substances, the latter into molecules, molecules into atoms, and atoms into electrons, but also occult science (which would like to equal official science) decomposes. For example, the human being is decomposed into *three* principles—spirit, soul, and body—when it is a matter of the place that man occupies between God and Nature; or into *four* principles—physical body, vital body, astral body, and ego (self)—when it is a matter of the practical task of mastership by the operant of his "instruments", as is the case in Raja-yoga; or even into *seven* principles—physical body, etheric body, astral body, lower self, reason, intuition, and higher Self—when it is a matter of the evolution of the human being in time; or lastly into *nine* principles—three corporeal principles, three soul principles, and three spiritual principles—when it is a matter of the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm, with its nine spiritual hierarchies, which reflect, in their turn, the divine Holy Trinity. If we add here also that Christian theology divides man into only *two* principles—body and soul—that the Vedanta and the Cabbala divide him into *five* principles—for the Cabbala these are *basar, nephesh, neshamah, hayah, and yehidah*—that Cabballists also divide man into *ten* principles, according to the ten Sephiroth, and that certain astrologers divide him into *twelve* principles, according to the twelve signs of the zodiac, it becomes evident that man easily allows himself diverse modes of decomposition, according to the aims of the intelligence which applies them. But he admits of this operation only in so far as he is given over to the manipulations of intelligence which treat him in the way proper to it, i.e. which decompose him according to a system corresponding in the best possible way to the ends that the will is aiming at. Because intelligence—*even when it is engaged in occult science*—clearly represents to itself only the discontinuous.

For this reason intelligence represents *motion* to itself as if it were discontinuous. It reconstructs motion by means of a motionless series that it places side by side, i.e. it makes the motion stop a desited number of times, obtaining in this way a cinematographic film, that it then makes roll:

Suffice it now to say that to the stable and immobile our intellect is attached by virtue of its natural disposition. *Of immobility alone does the intellect form a clear idea.* (Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*; trsl. A. Mitchell, London, 1964, p. 164)

The Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea (fifth century B.C.), author of the celebrated

arguments concerning the "flying arrow" and "Achilles and the tonoise", who lived twenty-four centuries before cinematography, even denied the reality of motion for the reason that intelligence can represent only a succession of static positions in movement. Just as Solomon proclaimed, three thousand years ago, the postulate of intelligence "that there is nothing new under the sun", so did Zeno proclaim, twenty-four centuries ago, the other postulate of intelligence "that there is no continuous movement, there are only successive points of rest".

Intelligence is attached above all to *positions* of movement and not to the *progress* through which it passes from one position to another—progress which is movement itself:

From mobility itself our intellect turns aside, because it has nothing to gain in dealing with it. If the intellect were meant for pure theorising, it would take its place within movement, for movement is reality itself, and immobility is always only apparent or relative. But the intellect is meant for something altogether different. Unless it does violence to itself, it takes the opposite course; it always starts from immobility, as if this were the ultimate reality. . . (Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*; trsl. A. Mitchell, London, 1964, p. 163)

Intelligence concentrates only on the *harvest*, i.e. on the *product*, and not on the *production*—which is, for it, only the means, a series of steps, for arriving at the product. It is always the *result* to which it aspires. It is always the "autumn" of things and events which it has in view. It is orientated towards facts—accomplished things—and not towards the process of creation, or that of becoming. The "springtime" and the "summer" of things and events either escape it or are taken into account only under the aspect of "autumn"—as its stages of preparation. Germination and growth are then considered only in relation to the harvest. Mobility coming into being—this is germination and growth; whilst the harvest is what is "become"—it is the product.

Quite other than the principle underlying intelligence—the principle of autumn—is that underlying the *intuition of faith*:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and nothing that was made was made without him. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John i, 1-4)

The Gospel according to John advances here the principle of the intuition of faith, the *principle of springtime*. It is the *beginning*, the springtime of things of the world, to which the Gospel of St. John aspires, and it is the creative Word—the mobility itself at the heart of life and underlying the light of consciousness—

that it advances as the point of departure for all that follows. The Gospel of St. John invites us from the outset to an unparalleled act of violence to our intelligence—in transposing from autumn, where it is at home, to full springtime; from the harvest to the sowing; from things made to the creative Word; from vivified things to Life itself; from illumined things to Light itself.

We shall occupy ourselves in more detail with *creative intuition* — or the mystery of faith — in the Letter on the nineteenth Arcanum of the Tarot, "The Sun", which is the Arcanum of springtime. Here it is a matter simply of portraying more clearly the lunar (autumnal) principle of intelligence by means of contrasting the principle of creative intuition—such as it is stated in the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John—with the principle of intelligence, which is the theme of the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot.

Now, the Gospel of St. John appeals to the human soul to transpose its intelligence from autumn into full springtime—to rejuvenate it by placing it in the domain of creativity instead of that of the created, i.e. to accomplish a "conjunction" of the sun and moon, expressing it in astrological terms. This means to say that, if the postulate of intelligence is "that there is nothing new under the sun", it is invited to adapt itself to the pure and simple creativity expressed in the formula "in the beginning was the Word"; that if intelligence represents clearly to itself only immobility, it is bidden to plunge itself into the act of pure creation of the Word; that if intelligence represents clearly to itself only discontinuity, it finds itself confronted with the Word, in which is the life which is the light of men; that if intelligence has for its principal object inorganic solidity, it now has the task of understanding both the whole world as the organisatory act of the Word and Jesus Christ as the cosmic Word made flesh; that if, lastly, intelligence is characterised by a natural incomprehension of life, it has now to understand the Word at the heart of life, and the life underlying the light of consciousness. And all this it will do not in order to *understand*—i.e. in order to reap *that which is*—but rather in order to effect an act of becoming, in order to accomplish the birth of the new, i.e. of *that which is not*. Because "to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God. who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 12-13).

Here is the difference between the nature of intelligence and that of intuition of faith, between the principle of autumn and that of spring. The former is *understanding of that which is*; the latter is *participation in the becoming of that which is to be*. When Abraham left Ur and went to a strange country by way of the desert in order to give birth to a people of the future—some centuries after him—he acted as a *man of the springtime*, or a man of faith. When Solomon, in the treatise known under the title "Ecclesiastes", summarised all that he had learnt during his life through experience and reflection, he acted as a *man of autumn*, a man of intelligence. Abraham was a "sower"; Solomon was a "reaper".

In so far as Hermeticism is concerned, it has a history of continuous and sustained effort aimed at an alliance of intelligence and the intuition of faith—the alchemical marriage of the moon and the sun. Is this marriage possible? St. Thomas

Aquinas, Henri Bergson and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, amongst others, say *yes*—each in his own way. I have chosen these three names because they represent theology, philosophy and science. No doubt it is encouraging that these eminent representatives of religion, philosophy and science lend their assistance to our task, but if this were not so would we be able to aspire to anything else? Would we be able to abandon the millennial-old work and effort aimed at alliance—at the marriage and union of intelligence and faith? No, because whether we like it or not, we are engaged on this way for ever—even if it were a matter only of a mirage.

I say "even if it were a matter only of a mirage" because this alliance, this marriage, this union, has inspired (and still inspires) a continuous and sustained effort through the millennia, but this effort has never—as far as I know—been crowned with complete success. Intelligence and the intuition of faith sometimes approach quite near; they sometimes collaborate as allies; they sometimes complement one another in a way to give rise to the highest hope; but their true *fusion*, their complete and lasting alchemical marriage, is still not achieved. In the minds and hearts of certain workers at this great work, intelligence and the intuition of faith already act as an *engaged* couple, but not yet as a married couple. There has as yet been no complete success in obtaining the *alloy* of these two metals. It is always either silvered gold or gilded silver.

With Thomas Aquinas, for example, it is silvered gold; with most occultist-authors it is gilded silver. Origenes, Dionysius the Areopagite, Jacob Boehme, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, Vladimir Soloviev and Nicolas Berdyaev, for example, show in their works a progress which is very advanced in *substantially* bringing together intelligence and the intuition of faith. The same could be said for Henri Bergson and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Here is the endeavour that Henri Bergson proposes to us in the direction of a fusion of intelligence and intuition. After having ascertained that "the intellect is characterised by a natural inability to comprehend life", Bergson illuminates the nature of *instinct*:

In instinct, on the contrary, is moulded on the very form of life. While intelligence treats everything mechanically, instinct proceeds, so to speak, organically. If the consciousness that slumbers in it should awake, if it were wound up into knowledge instead of being wound off into action, if we could ask and it could reply, it would give to us the most intimate secrets of life. . . (trsl., p. 174). "

. . . instinct and intelligence are two divergent developments of one and the same principle, which in the one case remains within itself, in the other steps out of itself and becomes absorbed in the utilisation of inert matter. . . (trsl., p. 177).

A very significant fact is the swing to-and-fro of scientific theories of instinct, from regarding it as *intelligent* to regarding it as simply *intelligible*, or, shall I say, between likening it to an in-

telligence "lapsed" and reducing it to a pure mechanism. Each of these systems of explanation triumphs in its criticism of the other, the first when it shows us that instinct cannot be a mere reflex, the other when it declares that instinct is something different from intelligence, even fallen into unconsciousness... The concrete explanation, no longer scientific, but metaphysical (or Hermetic\*), must be sought along quite another path, not in the direction of intelligence, but in that of "sympathy". Instinct is sympathy. If this sympathy could extend its object and also reflect upon itself, it would give us the key to vital operations—just as intelligence, developed and disciplined, guides us into matter. For—we cannot too often repeat it—intelligence and instinct are turned in opposite directions: the former towards inert matter, the latter towards life. Intelligence, by means of science, which is its work, will deliver up to us more and more completely the secret of physical operations; of life it brings us, and moreover only claims to bring us, a translation in terms of inertia. It goes all round life, taking from outside the greatest possible number of views of it, drawing it into itself instead of entering into it. But it is to the very inwardness of life that *intuition* leads us—by intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely. (Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trsl. A. Mitchell, London. 1964, pp. 174, 177, 185-186)

Here, therefore, is the practical task of the endeavour. It envisages *rendering the instincts disinterested*, i.e. the true aim of all *asceticism*, or that part of the way towards mystical union that tradition calls *via purgativa* — the way of *purification* of the spiritual disciple —or also *purgatorium* ("purgatory"), when it is a matter of the way of human destiny; then it envisages *instinct becoming conscious of itself*, i.e. what tradition calls *via illuminativa* — the way of *illumination* of the spiritual disciple—or also *coelum* ("heaven"), when it is a matter of the way of human destiny; and then, lastly, it envisages *instinct becoming capable of reflecting upon its object and expanding indefinitely* whilst being completely united to it through sympathy, i.e. what tradition calls *via unitiva*—the way of *union*. The fruits of the way of union are *gnosis* (where "instinct is capable of reflecting upon its object") and the *mysticism* of contemplation (where "instinct is capable of expanding indefinitely")—or also the *visio beatifica* ("beatific vision"), which human souls enjoy in heaven after purgatory and after their celestial school in which they learn not to be dazzled by the divine light, but rather to see through it, when it is a matter of the way of human destiny.

Such is the task. But what is the endeavour? How is it to be realised?

It consists of the enterprise of the "going out" of intelligence from its milieu. Here is what Bergson has to say on this:

\*Author's parentheses.

In vain, we shall be told, you claim to go beyond intelligence: how can you do that except by intelligence? All that is clear in your consciousness is intelligence. You are inside your own thought; you cannot get out of it. Say, if you like, that the intellect is capable of progress, that it will see more and more clearly into a greater and greater number of things; but do not speak of engendering it. for it is with your intellect itself that you would have to do the work.

The objection presents itself naturally to the mind. But the same reasoning would prove also the impossibility of acquiring any new habit. It is of the essence of reasoning to shut us up in the circle of the given. *But action breaks the circle.* If we had never seen a man swim, we might say that swimming is an impossible thing, inasmuch as, to learn to swim, we must begin by holding ourselves up in the water and, consequently, already know how to swim. Reasoning, in fact, always nails us down to the solid ground. But if, quite simply, I throw myself into the water without fear, I may keep myself up well enough at first by merely struggling, and gradually adapt myself to the new environment: I shall thus have learnt to swim. So, in theory, there is a kind of absurdity in trying to know otherwise than by intelligence; but if the risk be frankly accepted, action will perhaps cut the knot that reasoning has tied and will not unloose.

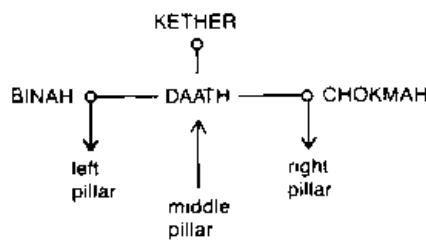
Besides, the risk will appear to grow less, the more our point of view is adopted. We have shown that intellect has detached itself from a vastly wider reality but that there has never been a clean cut between the two; all around conceptual thought there remains an indistinct fringe which recalls its origin. And further we compared the intellect to a solid nucleus formed by means of condensation. This nucleus does not differ radically from the fluid surrounding it. It can only be reabsorbed in it because it is made of the same substance. He who throws himself into the water, having known only the resistance of the solid earth, will immediately be drowned if he does not struggle against the fluidity of the new environment: he must persevere still clinging to that solidity, so to speak, which even water presents. Only on this condition can he get used to the fluid's fluidity. *So of our thought, when it has decided to make the leap.*

But leap it must, that is, leave its own environment. Reason, reasoning on its powers, will never succeed in extending them, though the extension would not appear at all unreasonable once it were accomplished. Thousands and thousands of variations on the theme of walking will never yield a rule for swimming: come, enter the water, and when you know how to swim, you will understand how the mechanism of swimming is connected with that of walking. Swimming is an extension of walking, but walking would never have pushed you on to swimming. So you

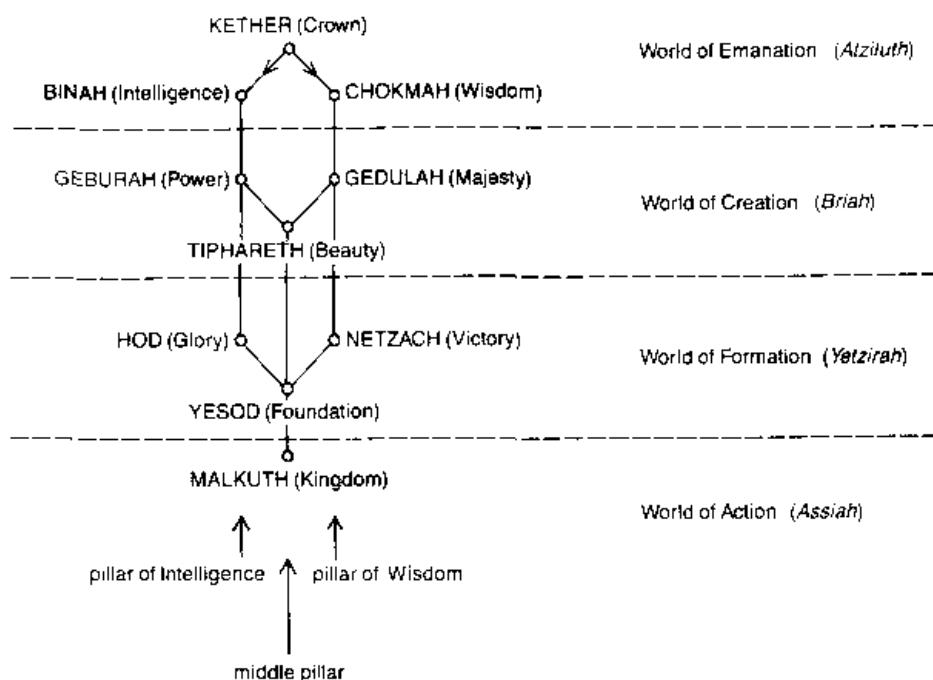
may speculate as intelligently as you will on the mechanism of intelligence; you will never, by this method, succeed in going beyond it. You may get something more complex, but not something higher nor even something different. *You must take things by storm: you must thrust intelligence outside itself by an act of will.* (Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*: trsl. A. Mitchell, London, 1964, pp. 202-204)

This is the essence of "Bergsonian yoga", i.e. the practical method of making intelligence unite itself with instinct or the principle of sympathy, so that the latter can extend its subject matter and reflect upon itself—or, in other words, so as to develop *intuition*.

Now, the endeavour that Bergson has in mind is what the Cabbala calls KAWWANA (קָוָןָה), and the result of this endeavour—that Bergson calls "intuition"—is called DAATH (דַּעַת). KAWWANA is profound meditation, i.e. the endeavour of intelligence which aims at plunging into the depths of darkness surrounding it. KAWWANA differs essentially from Cartesian meditation, where it is a matter notably of the concentration of the clarity of intelligence itself within itself, and also from Kantian meditation, where intelligence strives to rise above itself by making itself the object of observation, analysis and criticism. Profound meditation or KAWWANA is neither only concentration of the light of intelligence with a view to the intensification of its clarity, nor is it only the endeavour of intelligence to arrive at knowledge of itself. Profound meditation is the endeavour of intelligence to probe the dark depths which surround it and to which it finds access by means of *sympathy*, instead of through the exercise of its own logical, analytical and critical faculties. Speaking in terms of the Cabbala, it is therefore a matter of the marriage of the principle of intelligence—the Sephirah BINAH (בִּנָה)—and the principle of wisdom—the Sephirah CHOKMAH (חֹקְמָה)—in the "middle pillar" of the Sephiroth Tree. DAATH is therefore the state of consciousness where intelligence and wisdom—acquired and acquirable knowledge, on the one hand, and latent and actualisable knowledge, on the other hand—become one. It is the same state of consciousness that the Church calls "intellect illumined by grace" (*intellectus gratia illuminatus*)—grace being the principle actualising within us latent knowledge of the "image and likeness of God", and intellect being the "Bergsonian" intelligence which unites with and understands things that it would never have understood from within itself. It is therefore "illuminated".



With respect to the Sephiroth Tree of the Cabbala, it must be pointed out that DAATH is nowhere to be found as a Sephirah or as a constituent element of the system (or "Tree") of Sephiroth. Whereas there are *four* Sephiroth to be found on the middle pillar—namely KETHER (כתר) or the Crown, TIPHARETH (תפארת) or Beauty, YESOD (יסוד) or the Foundation, and MALKUTH (מלכות) or the Kingdom—DAATH is something to be created, to be added to the Sephiroth Tree. This means to say that a synthesis of the pillar of Wisdom—containing the Sephiroth GEDULAH (גדולה) or Majesty, and NETZACH (נצח) or Victory—and the pillar of Intelligence—containing the Sephiroth GEBURAH (גבורה) or Power, and HOD (הוד) or Glory—is foreseen in the Sephiroth Tree only for the worlds of creation (*olam ha briah*) and formation (*olam ha yetzirah*), whilst in the world of emanation (*olam ha atziluth*) the synthesis constitutes the *point of departure* of emanation, creation and formation of the world; and the world of action (*olam ha assiah*) is itself the synthesis of the two columns (Wisdom and Intelligence).



As is evident from this scheme of the Sephiroth Tree, there is a synthesis of the principles of Wisdom and Intelligence preceding the division of these two principles, which takes place in the Sephirah KETHER. There is also a synthesis which takes place in the world of action (MALKUTH); otherwise it is effected in artistic creativity (TIPHARETH), or in love between the sexes (YESOD), but it is not foreseen here for the *act of knowledge*, i.e. for the domain of gnosis.

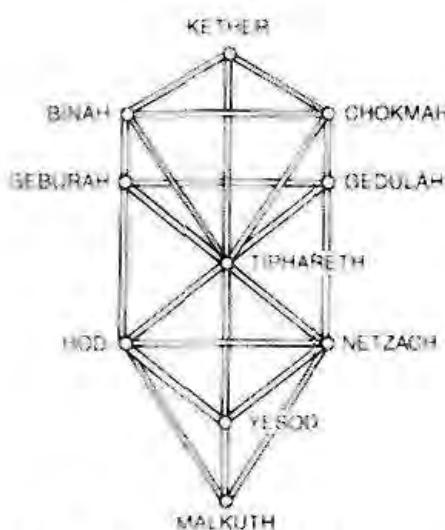
Now, it is precisely the *act of knowledge* which is in question in the case of

DAATH, which is the aim of the spiritual school of the Cabbala—just as it is that of Hermeticism in general; it is nothing other than the task of the realisation of *intuition*, by uniting disinterested instinct and disinterested intelligence, as advanced by Henri Bergson. Cabalists and Hermeticists (including Henri Bergson) therefore pursue the same aim, i.e. the union of intelligence and wisdom (or spontaneous knowledge) *other* than their union in artistic or aesthetic creativity and in love between the sexes. They have it in mind to achieve a *third* type of union of intelligence and wisdom: the "gnostic" union—DAATH or intuition.

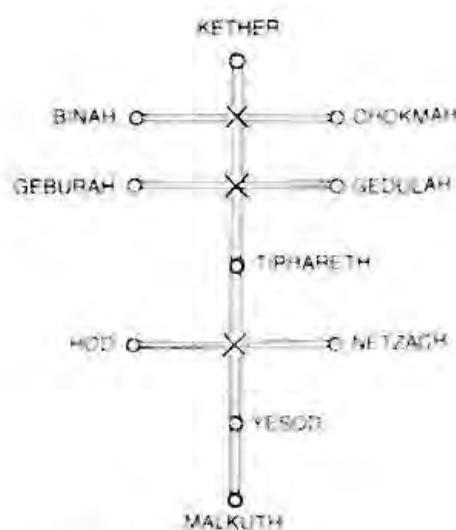
We have spoken above of this millennial-old task of Hermeticism—this work and effort continued from century to century aiming at a complete fusion or marriage of the principles of intelligence and wisdom, i.e. of the power of knowledge acquired by logical discourse and the spontaneous knowledge of revelation. We have also pointed to some concrete facts, i.e. names of such personalities which are of a nature to inspire in us the hope that this work will one day be realised. Nevertheless, it is not yet so, because it is a matter of the realisation of the *third Great Arcanum* of the Hermetic tradition.

The Hermetic tradition teaches the existence of three *Great Arcana*, the third of which is that of the marriage of intelligence and wisdom (DAATH). Here is how the Great Arcana are placed in the *oral tradition* of Hermeticism, making use of the Sephiroth Tree:

The Sephiroth Tree, as is well known, consists not only of the Sephiroth located in the four worlds (Emanation, Creation, formation, and Action), but also of lines of communication ("channels") between the Sephiroth. There are therefore twenty-two "channels" joining the ten Sephiroth in the Sephiroth Tree (see left figure). Beyond the ten Sephiroth themselves, special significance is attached to the three "crossing-points" on the middle pillar of horizontal channels with vertical channels (see right figure).



**Figure: The Sephiroth Tree with twenty-two channels**



**Figure: The three crossing-points**

These three crossing-points, each marked in the scheme by a St. Andrew's cross, indicate the "metaphysical or psychological points", where the three tasks — named "Great Arcana"—are to be realised.

The first Great Arcanum—called the "Great Magical Arcanum"—is situated at the crossing-point of the horizontal channel joining the Sephiroth NETZACH (Victory) and HOD (Glory), and the vertical channel joining TIPHARETH (Beauty) and YESOD (Foundation). It belongs to the world of formation.

The second Great Arcanum—the "Arcanum of moral geniality"—is situated at the crossing point of the horizontal channel joining the Sephiroth GEDULAH (Majesty) and GEBURAH (Power), and the vertical channel joining KETHER (Crown) and TIPHARETH (Beauty). It belongs to the world of creation.

The third Great Arcanum—that of geniality in the domain of knowledge, the "gnostic Arcanum"—is situated at the crossing-point of the horizontal channel joining the Sephiroth CHOKMAH (Wisdom) and BINAH (Intelligence), and the vertical channel joining KETHER (Crown) and TIPHARETH (Beauty). It is the state of consciousness that Cabalists call DAATH, that the Hindu yogis call *samadhi*, and that we call here—with Henri Bergson—*intuition*. It belongs essentially to the world of emanation, i.e. the sphere of divine respiration, the sphere of the Holy Spirit.

The Great Magical Arcanum is therefore the centre of the cross formed by the current "Inspired Elevation—Certainty of Knowledge" and the current "Beauty—Love". It is a matter, therefore, of the task of realising the marriage of the creative fire of imagination with the limpid clarity of the waters of thought in the current which goes out from Beauty and ends in Love.

The Great Arcanum of the moral life is the centre of the cross formed by the binary "Magnanimity—Justice" in the current "Divine Radiation—Beauty". It is a matter of the realisation of the marriage of the charity which pardons all and everything with the judgement of strict justice in the current which emanates from divine Essence and arrives at the realisation of Beauty.

The Great Arcanum of knowledge is the centre of the cross formed by the binary "Wisdom—Intelligence" in the current "Divine Radiation—Beauty". It is a matter of the realisation of the marriage of revelation from above with argumentative intelligence based on experience.

The three Great Arcana of the tradition are therefore three crosses formed by the vertical middle pillar and three horizontal channels on the Sephiroth Tree. This is why the triple cross is the traditional symbol of complete initiation, and this is also why the title *Trismegistus* ("thrice greatest") is attributed to the founder of Hermeticism, the author of the *Emerald Table*.

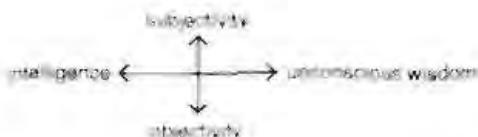
Much has been written on the gnostic, moral and magical Great Arcana, and no doubt still more will be written in the future—their themes being central and inexhaustible at one and the same time. Here it is a matter simply of considering the Great Arcanum of the marriage of intelligence and wisdom in the context



of the two other Great Arcana of the tradition. For the three Great Arcana are, truth to tell, only three aspects on three planes of one single Great Arcanum of the marriage of opposites in the head, in the heart and in the will. In other words, it is a matter of three aspects of the sole *Great Arcanum of the Cross*, since it is always the cross which realises the marriage of opposites—including that of the formal knowledge of intelligence and the material knowledge due to revelation from above.

The intuition of which Henri Bergson speaks is the fruit of the gradual transmutation of intelligence which has put its light at the disposal of the whispering—from black depths—of instinct-wisdom. It is the vow of obedience made by intelligence to the element which transcends it, which works its gradual transformation of the organ of formal knowledge (i.e. of the knowledge of the *relationships* of things and beings) into an organ of material knowledge (i.e. of the knowledge of *things and beings as such*). And it is the vow of poverty made by intelligence to the element which transcends it which renders it capable of perceiving this element and of receiving its intimate teaching, with regard to which it would be deaf and blind if it were not emptied of its own richness, i.e. if it did not know how to reduce itself to silence in order to listen. And it is, lastly, the vow of chastity made by intelligence to the element which transcends it, which transforms it gradually from an entity greedy for quantity of knowledge into an entity which seeks only the profound and essential, i.e. *quality*.

The gnostic aspect of the Great Arcanum of the conjunction of opposites (*coniunctio oppositorum*), or the marriage of opposites, is thus the transmutation of intelligence which is occupied with the "how" of things into an intuitive organ which is occupied with the "what" of things. It is, at the same time, the transformation of the revelation of wisdom from beyond the threshold of intelligence (which proceeds, from the point of view of intelligence, so spontaneously and in such a "dogmatic" manner that it appears to intelligence to be complete darkness from the unconscious) into intelligible language and communications that can be assimilated by the intelligence. In other words the unconscious, instead of shocking intelligence, allies itself with it, penetrates it, and becomes luminous within it. But this takes place only after the more-or-less long and painful experience of the crucifixion of consciousness on the cross formed by the pair of opposites: subjectivity—objectivity, and the pair of opposites: intelligence—unconscious wisdom (see figure). The four elements of this cross correspond to the first three Sephiroth (KETHER, CHOKMAH, BINAH) and the "middle pillar" between absolute subjectivity (KETHER) and absolute objectivity (MALKUTH).



It is this cross where the gradual approach, alliance and, lastly, union of intelligence and unconscious wisdom is effected. At the beginning of this process intelligence and unconscious wisdom have so little in common that communication between them is reduced almost entirely to *dreams*, i.e. to the state of consciousness where intelligence, although present, is most passive. Then this communication is extended to the waking state also. The language of communication then becomes that of *symbols*, including those of the Tarot. Lastly, intelligence and wisdom—no longer unconscious—arrive at such a degree of mutual comprehension that they understand directly without the intermediary of dreams and symbols. It is only then that their union is achieved, i.e. that the state of consciousness that Bergson calls "intuition", and that Cabalists identify with DAATH, is attained.

Direct communication between intelligence and wisdom is, truth to tell, only the development of *conscience*, which is extended from the domain of action to the domain of knowledge, and is awakened there to the point of becoming the light of intelligence. Conscience has two aspects, notably: a negative aspect (well-known and of which much is made in daily life), which manifests itself as warning disapproving an action before its execution or else as remorse disapproving of an action already committed; and a positive aspect (almost wholly ignored in daily life), which manifests itself as an impulse recommending an action before its execution and as serene joy after its execution. It is above all this positive aspect of conscience which becomes the illuminating and revelatory principle of intelligence, i.e. when the latter unites with unconscious wisdom (which is nothing other than the principle of conscience). Therefore intuition is, after all, only the marriage of intelligence (having renounced its absolute autonomy) with conscience awoken to the point of becoming a source of concrete and precise revelations for intelligence. One could also simply say that intuition is intelligence become entirely conscientious, and that it is conscience become entirely intelligible for intelligence.

Conscience thus offers intelligence as vast a world of inner experience as does the empirical world for outer experience. Intelligence can therefore develop itself and grow in two directions simultaneously—in the direction of the outer empirical world, thanks to the senses, and in that of the inner empirical world, thanks to conscience. Conscience is the door—the sole legitimate and healthy one—to a world at least as vast, and much more profound, than the world that we perceive with the senses. And it is the decision of intelligence to become "the servant of conscience" (*ancilla conscientiae*)—just as in the Middle Ages philosophy considered itself "the servant of theology" (*ancilla theologiae*)—which opens this door.

The leading role of conscience in the passage from the "surface world" to the "depth world" has long been known of in the tradition. It was dramatised and concretised by speaking of the "guardian of the threshold" and of the "meeting" with him. The decisive role was assigned to this meeting, concerning the passage

## MEDITATIONS ON THE TAROT

across the "threshold" which separates the "surface world" from the "depth world". Because the admission or rejection of the aspirant depends on this meeting. He who could not bear the truth concerning himself, revealed to him by the "guardian of the threshold" at this meeting, fell back, i.e. decided to content himself with the "surface world"—the world of outer experience and constructions of argumentative intelligence. Whilst he who had the courage and humility necessary to bear the revelation of the truth concerning himself passed the threshold and was therefore admitted to the school of esoteric life, i.e. to the "depth world". The "guardian of the threshold" figures in the tradition (including more recent contributions to the tradition) either as a kind of double incorporating the whole past of the person in question, or also as a hierarchical entity of the rank of an Archangel who teaches the lesson of conscience by means (this is only one means) of projecting the double of the human personality aspiring to the "depth world". The latter conception of the "guardian of the threshold" and of the nature of the meeting with him is more complete and still more true. The guardian of the threshold is not a moral bogey for bowing over the "spiritual bourgeoisie", but rather our elder brother and servant of God, who helps us with infinite kindness and superhuman wisdom—although with perfect truthfulness—to advance from the surface to the depths. At least, such is the evidence of the experience of five people of this century known to me.

The guardian of the threshold spoken of in the Hermetic tradition is the great judge, charged with preserving the equilibrium of that which is above and that which is below. The traditional iconography of the Church represents him with a sword and balance. The sword is his vivifying and healing action, giving courage and humility to the soul which hungers and thirsts for the depths, and the balance is his action of presenting the precise account of what must be paid in order to have the right to go further.

It was Maitre Philip of Lyons who, as much as any I know, had the most profound comprehension and the most complete knowledge of the practical manipulation of the balance referred to here. He did not tire of repeating:

*Pay your debts! Pay the debts of your neighbours! Because each will pay his debt, and it does not matter if it is paid in this world or in the other, provided that it is paid. (cf. Alfred Haehl, *Vie et paroles du Maitre Philippe*, Lyon, 1959, and Philippe Encusse, *Le Maitre Philippe de Lyon*, Paris, 1958)*

This is why before healing a sickness he often asked the sick person and the people around him to pay "the price of healing", which he fixed as a certain time of abstention from slander with regard to others, which time he measured according to the case either by hours or by weeks.

Another way of paying debts—one's own or Others—is by giving money to the poor or to a good cause. Our ancestors had the right sentiment in leaving money to the poor, to the Church, to hospitals, or in accompanying their novenas of prayer

for pardon and for healing by gifts of money paid to the poor or to good causes. They knew instinctively that debts must be paid and that it is better to pay them here than after death. They still had a feeling for the reality of the balance of the guardian of the threshold.

The guardian of the threshold spoken of in the tradition is therefore the administrator of the justice of conscience — and, at the same time, the master of the school of conscience. His balance signifies the negative aspect of conscience, and his sword signifies the positive aspect of conscience, i.e. the revelatory and healing aspect. One cannot dispense with the meeting with the guardian of the threshold when one wants to cross the threshold which separates the "surface world" from the "depth world". It is through the door of conscience that one must enter. And *intuition*, which reveals the "depth world", is nothing other than intelligence submitted to conscience — submitted from the point of view of being one with it.

There is therefore no esoteric or occult technique which is able to help us (without speaking of making us) pass from the "surface world" to the "depth world" other than the purely moral act of *sacrificium intellectus* — the sacrifice of intelligence to conscience. It is the recognition, once and for all, of the primacy of "moral logic"—its superiority to the "formal logic" of intelligence—which effects the passage from the state of reasoning to that of intuition. No exercise whatever for the concentration of attention or for the suppression of mental activity will, alone, help you to attain intuition. No breathing exercise or mental technique of itself will be of any use here. Because in order to attain an aim higher than intelligence and the body, one has to make use of means which are also higher than intelligence and the body. That which is spiritual is achieved only by spiritual means—and these comprise no technique beyond the purely moral act and endeavour.

A strange thing! The Christian Occident, which has developed technique and technology to such an extent on the material plane, possesses hardly any psycho-spiritual "technique and technology", whilst the Buddhist and pantheistic Orient—which has almost entirely neglected material technique—has developed a quite advanced body of psycho-spiritual "technique and technology". It seems that the "technological genius" of intelligence in the Orient is turned towards—and perhaps is exhausted in—the domain of the inner life, whilst the same "genius" of intelligence in the Occident has exhausted or continues to exhaust its creativity in the domain of external life. The consequence of this is that the spiritual life of the Occident—its mysticism, gnosis and magic—is developed above all under the sign of the *principle of grace*, and that the mysticism, gnosis and magic of the Orient are developed above all under the sign of the *principle of technology*, i.e. the scientific empirical principle of the observation and utilisation of the chain of cause and effects concerning efforts and that which results from them. Thus, for example, the classic work on yoga, *The Yogasutra of Patanjali*, recommends, *as useful to concentration*, devotion to a personal god—to be abandoned later when having lost its utility, i.e. when the yogi will have acquired the aptitude to concentrate himself on the formless and impersonal. "Yoga is the suppression

of (involuntary) movements of the mental substance", says *The Yogasutra of Patanjali*, i.e. according to the law of causality—the chain of cause and effect—it is the suppression of mental movements which is the cause whose effect is yoga or union with the Absolute Being.

Now, St. John of the Cross, who was many times taken up in rapture through—or plunged in—union with the Absolute Being, also spoke in his writings of the state of the complete silence of personal intelligence, imagination and will—the state, therefore, where mental movements are suppressed; but he does not tire of repeating that it is the Divine Presence, of which the soul is enamoured, which effects this silence—this suppression of the mental movements—and not the human will. The state of complete silence of intelligence—and, moreover, of the imagination and will—is present in the soul set ablaze by the love of God. There is no psycho-spiritual "technology" here; it is the mutual love between the soul and God which does all.

Thus, here is the difference between the science of psycho-spiritual technique (Raja-yoga) and the "sheer grace" of love in the "night of the senses and the spirit" of St. John of the Cross. The term "sheer grace" which intends to specify this difference, is employed by St. John of the Cross himself. He says in his *Canciones del alma en la noche obscura* ("Songs of the Soul" in *The Dark Night of the Soul*):

One dark night, Fired with love's urgent longings —Ah. the sheer grace!— I went out unseen, My house being now all stilled.	<i>(En una noche obscura,            Con ansias en amores inflamada.            - Oh dichosa ventura!            Salt sin ser notada.            Estando ya mi casa sosegada.)*</i>
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My house being now at rest. . .(the soul) goes forth into the divine union of love. . .with the whole household of its powers and desires sunk in sleep and silence. . .,

says St. John of the Cross in his commentary to the verse. He says elsewhere:

It was a sheer grace for the soul that God had brought it into this dark night, from whence such great good came to it, and into which it would never have been able to enter by itself. Besides, no one would be capable through his own forces alone of disengaging himself from all his tendencies ("the whole household of powers and desires") in order to go forth to God. (St. John of the Cross, *The Ascent o/Mt. Carmel* I, i, 5)

There he indicates the precise difference between the Christian way—the way of purification, illumination and the consummation of union—where there is •Trsl. K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez. *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, London, 1966. p. 295. (148-2 p. 514)

nothing concerning technique, and that of yoga which comprises a scale ranging from techniques of physical preparation (Hatha-yoga) to psycho-mental techniques (Raja-yoga).

There is nothing of technique—here all is art and grace—in Christian mysticism, gnosis and magic. And how is it concerning the reciting of the rosary prayer amongst Catholics and the prayer of the heart (the "Jesus prayer") practised in the Orthodox Church? (The prayer of the heart is the uninterrupted repetition, day and night, with the beating of the heart, of the prayer: *Kyrie, Iesou Chnste eleison. . ."Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."*) Or, again, the Irish monks, who recited each day all the Psalms by heart? Is it not a matter here also of a technique?

The *principle of rhythm* and *that of technique* (or maximum effect with minimum effort) differ as biology differs from mechanics, or as a living organism from a machine. The repetition of ages and generations, festivals, the rituals of religious cult, breathing, the beating of the heart, prayer—with respect to the rosary prayer and the practice of the prayer of the heart, and also with respect to the daily recital of the Psalms—are manifestations and applications of the principle of rhythm, whilst, for example, the prayer wheel of the Tibetans, turning in the wind, is the application of a mechanical principle, i.e. the fundamental principle of the technique of minimum effort in order to obtain maximum effect.

Rhythm in prayer makes it pass from the psychological domain to that of *life*, from the domain of personal tendencies and moods to that of the fundamental and universal impulses of life itself. Speaking in occult terms, here it is a matter of carrying prayer over from the "astral body" (or "soul body") to the "etheric body" (or "vital body"), i.e. of making prayer employ the *language of life* instead of the language of personal feelings and desires. And just as life is like a river which flows unceasingly, so does the rosary prayer, for example, flow without stopping and *without fatigue*, because that which lives is at the same time *vivifying*. Calm and rhythmic prayer ("prayer-life") *does not take* forces—it does not tire—but *gives* forces to the person praying. This is why the anonymous author of the writing *The Way of a Pilgrim*—dealing with the experiences of a Russian pilgrim devoted to the practice of the prayer of the heart—speaks of the experience of plenitude and serene joy which filled him day and night, giving him a foretaste, already on the earth, of celestial beatitude. It is the same with the practice of the rosary prayer. The one hundred and fifty *Ave Marias* and the fifteen *Pater Nosters* of the rosary prayer introduce one to the universal river of spiritual life—which is the proof of a universal prayer—and thus lead one to joyous serenity. The pilgrim points out—in the third chapter of *The Way of a Pilgrim*—before his experience of the uninterrupted prayer of the heart, and even before he learnt of its existence, that in himself and his wife,

the wish for prayer was there, and the long prayers we said without quite understanding did not seem tiring, indeed we

liked them. Clearly it is true, as a certain teacher once told me, that a secret prayer lies hidden within the human heart. The man himself does not know it, yet working mysteriously within his soul, it urges him to prayer according to each man's knowledge and power. (*The Way of a Pilgrim*; trsl. R. M. French, London, 1954, pp. 70-71)

It is perhaps this "secret prayer" in the unconscious of the soul which St. Paul has in mind in the Epistle to the Galatians where he says:

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying: Abba! Father! (Galatians iv, 6)

Now, it is rhythm which unites conscious prayer and this unconscious "secret prayer", and it is as a consequence of their union that "prayer-effort" becomes "prayer-life", i.e. that prayer of the soul becomes spiritual prayer. The rosary prayer, the prayer of the heart, litanies and psalms that are repeated, etc., effect the transformation of "prayer-effort" into "prayer-life". Far from being means of the mechanisation of prayer, *they spiritualise it*.

Do not be scandalised, dear Unknown Friend, by the fact that you find yourself confronted with the rosary prayer in a *Hermetic* meditation on the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot —the Arcanum which teaches how to surmount "eclipsed lunar intelligence". Esoterism is not a collection of extraordinary and unknown things, but rather it is above all a less ordinary and less known way of *seeing* ordinary and known things—of seeing their profundity. And the rosary prayer, wholly "exoteric" and "known to satiety" as it is, reveals profound truths of spiritual life, including that of the union of prayer of the soul and spiritual prayer. It is, moreover, closely related to the theme of the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot: the Arcanum of knowing how to pass from intelligence eclipsed by terrestrial "technicality" to intelligence illumined by the spiritual sun—i.e. to *intuition*. In other words, the leap to which Henri Bergson invites our intelligence can be made by saying the rosary prayer. The opinion of a Capuchin friar? It could be, but why can't a Capuchin friar be right, sometimes at least?

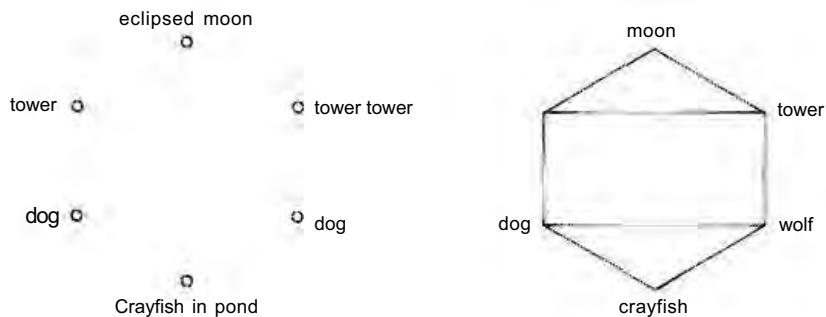
Be that as it may. I declare openly that practical Hermeticism is above all the desire and capacity to learn from everyone and everything—and that "knowing better" is its coffin.

"Knowing better"—the state of consciousness which is present when one has made a review of the totality of efforts made in the past and the results obtained from them, by observing the fixed rules of the game—plunges intelligence into a pond of stagnant water with an exact geometrical border, which encloses it and makes it retreat, like a crayfish, in the face of all that is new and demands creative effort. Intelligence retreats into its element of stagnant water before the antinomy of mental psychism, i.e. the antinomy "credulous obedience—critical revolt". It

does likewise in the face of the intellectual antinomy "thesis—antithesis", which rises up before it like two stone towers, rigid and immobile in their opposition. And above these antinomies, where the *third* term—the synthesis—should be found, it sees only a human face, only the projection of human will desirous of an intellectual arrangement so as to disencumber itself of disquieting contradictions. Whilst retreating, whilst refusing to decide to leap or fly either over the "dog" of submission to authority ("credulous obedience") and the "wolf of criticism denying all authority ("critical revolt"), or over the intellectual "tower of Babel" of theses and that of their antitheses, intelligence nevertheless remains ill at ease—because of the imperceptible drops, emanating from the radiation of synthesis eclipsed by the projection of the shadow of arbitrary human will, which fall into its subconscious and constantly disturb it. For although the moon—intelligence illumined by the sun—is eclipsed, it nevertheless exercises a constant influence on intelligence through a kind of rain, whose drops fall into the subconsciousness of intelligence and produce there movement and confused, disquieting noise.

Yes, "knowing better", when it has once taken hold of intelligence, sets it fully in the scene of the Card of the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot—"The Moon". The context of the Card: the eclipsed moon above, the two towers and the two representatives of the canine species in the middle, and the pond with the crayfish below, says, "being confronted with two antinomies—one psychic and one intellectual—you have no other choice than to *advance* (which means to say, to raise yourself up) or to *retreat* (which means to say, to sink yourself into a stagnant element). Choose!"

This choice being of utmost importance, its "environment" must be seen as clearly as possible. Therefore, here is the geometrical figure underlying the situation (see figure).



Now this figure—that of a square with two triangles opposed—is *magical*. Namely, it is the classical figure of sympathetic or hoodoo magic, i.e. the magical operation or magical mechanism which immobilises the conscious will by means of two

antinomies in the horizontal (the square) and an antinomy in the vertical (the two peaks of the opposed triangles). It goes without saying that it is not a matter of "poisonous magic" making use of "*aqua toffana*, poisoned nosegays, the shirt of Nessus, and other deadly instruments, still stranger and still less known" of which Eliphas Levi speaks under the title of the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot in his *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* (trsl. A. E. Waite, *Transcendental Magic. Its doctrine and ritual*. London, 1968, p. 155). No, it is a matter of something more serious and more profound, namely the *Arcanum of intelligence with conscience eclipsed*. It is the Arcanum of the magical mechanism, working behind the surface of the state of intelligence, which aims at explaining movement by the immobile, life by the non-living, consciousness by the unconscious, morality by the amoral. Indeed, how has it happened to mankind that many of its intelligent representatives—even its leaders and directors—have come to see in the brain not the instrument but the producer of consciousness, in chemistry not the instrument but the producer of life, in the economic sphere not the instrument but the producer of culture? How can it be that human intelligence has arrived—in so far as many of its representatives are concerned—at seeing man without a soul and the world without God? What secret and hidden force is at work pushing and forcing human intelligence to say first of all that the essential problems are insoluble—things transcending the senses and intelligence being unknowable—and then to deny their very existence? In other words, how has it happened that human intelligence finds itself in a state of *metaphysical eclipse*?

It is sympathetic or hoodoo magic—and it is the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot—which can give us the answer to these questions. "Answer" in this case—and in Hermeticism in general—signifies "enabling one to see" or "opening the eyes". For each Arcanum, in so far as it is an Arcanum, is not a doctrine but rather an event—that of opening the eyes, i.e. the opening up of an inner sense which permits things to be *seen* in a new way. And this is precisely the matter at hand in the case of the set of problems belonging to the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot.

Human intelligence has undergone the effects of what is no more, nor no less, than hoodoo magic. Its conscious motivating will is immobilised in the square of two antinomies: that of authority—autonomy and that of affirmation—negation. In order to come out from this, it has to either *retreat* into the region of the sub-intelligent or else *advance* into the region of the super-intelligent, i.e. to retreat in the fashion of the crayfish in its pond, or to advance by surpassing itself—in rising above itself by means of *leaping* or *flying*—and not to build towers of Babel or to bay plaintively or howl furiously in the way of the dog and the wolf.

Now, it is *rerreat* which has been chosen by many representatives of human intelligence. Others make only plaintive elegies to the romantic past, where intelligence was bathed in the light from above; still others make only "thunder and lightning" against the errors and sins of the tragic past with its dogmatism and authoritarianism. Others, lastly, unconcerned about what takes place around them

in their intellectual environment, continue to build towers of intellectual systems of affirmation or negation, which are of the nature of towers of Babel. Thus, some retreat into the sub-intelligent, i.e. give themselves over to the way of seeing the cause of the advanced and the evolved in the primitive, the cause of consciousness in raw matter, the cause of the rational in the irrational, and the cause of the moral in the amoral; whilst others pour themselves out in elegies concerning the golden age of the past, or angrily make "thunder and lightning" concerning its imperfections; whilst, lastly, still others build intellectual towers of Babel founded on theses of affirmation or negation, chosen from the darkness of the inner ceiling of the skull, and eclipsing revelatory and directing consciousness.

One begins to see and to expect only the projection of the primary and elementary impulses of human nature: pleasure (Freud), the will to power (Nietzsche, Adler), material and economic concerns (Marx). The projection of the terrestrial element of human nature onto the nocturnal luminary—moral consciousness—causes its eclipse. One no longer sees anything worthwhile and one also no longer expects anything worthwhile.

The eclipsed moon with the human face instead of reflected solar light... .the arid plain with two towers and with a dog and a wolf howling from below... .the pond with stagnant water geometrically enclosed and shielding the crayfish—doesn't the totality of this imagery at first evoke troubling feelings, and then disquieting ideas relating to a far-reaching operation of hoodoo magic whose victim is human intelligence?

Indeed, with Kant the limits of intelligence were brought to light, i.e. he demonstrated the fact of its imprisonment, and he addressed thinking humanity with the grave warning that one can formulate in the language of imagery of the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot as follows: "The nocturnal luminary is eclipsed! You find there *the face of a man* instead of the pure light of cosmic objective truth! One can escape the prison of this eclipse only by turning to the moral consciousness of the transcendent Self!" Since Kant, the fact of the spellbound state of intelligence has increased more and more in significance and certainty—up to the present day. In this Letter we have quoted Henri Bergson fully because he demonstrated this in an extremely lucid and well-founded manner, but Henri Bergson was not alone in ascertaining the subjective imprisonment of intelligence and making appeal to coming out of it. Whatever the divergence in their views and in other respects may be, Schopenhauer, Deussen, Vladimir Soloviev and Nicolas Berdyaev—to name only the well-known names—are in agreement in that which concerns the theme of the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot. Hegel even advanced a new metaphysical logic—the dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis—which is, fundamentally, only the re-affirmation of the intellectual aspect of the Hermetic method of the "neutralisation of binaries" that one finds in alchemical treatises and with Jacob Boehme, Saint-Martin, Fabre d'Olivet, etc., which aims at intelligence coming out of its prison and raising itself to "objective knowledge" by means of intellectual intuition. In our time Pierre Teilhard de Chardin has ad-

vanced an objective "dialectic of evolution" which is no longer simply intellectual, but which is rather *a way of seeing* chemical, biological, psychic, intellectual, moral and spiritual processes *in evolution*, which proceeds according to an *objective dialectic*" (i.e. everywhere ascertainable, through all means of experience) — namely, *divergence, convergence and emergence*. This is no longer an aspect of Hermeticism, but is Hermeticism pure and simple—including mysticism, gnosis and magic, as well as all experience of the physical world, as a unity.

*The fact* that human intelligence is spellbound is therefore not only recognised but also much effort is being made—and has already been made—towards freeing it. The question still remains with respect to the "technique" of the hoodoo magic whose proven victim is intelligence.

The "technique" in question is summarised by a single word: doubt. Doubt—*dubium, Zweifel, somnenie*, etc.—is the state of consciousness faced with an antinomy, i.e. two theses which seem to it to be equally well-founded and which contradict one another. Kant, for example, formulated four fundamental antinomies:

1. The world has a beginning in time and a limit in space—the world has no beginning in time and is infinite in space;
2. substance consists of simple units—nothing in the world consists of simple units and there is nothing in the world which is simple;
3. there is no freedom, everything is determined by natural causality—determinism according to Nature's laws of causality is not the only kind that exists, for there also exists the determinism of causality having its source in freedom; and
4. the world presupposes an effective cause which is a necessary being—there does not need to be any being, either in the world or beyond the world, which is its effective cause.

In other words, the antinomies of the creation or the eternity of the world, of the simplicity or the infinite complexity of matter, of freedom or absolute determinism, of theism or atheism are those which confront intelligence and are able to reduce it to impotence, i.e. to paralyse it, according to Kant.

Leaving aside the question as to whether the Kantian antinomies are the only ones, or the most essential ones, they suffice to demonstrate *the discouraging and therefore paralysing effect* of antinomies on intelligence, no matter whether they are real or false. Now, the "technique" of hoodoo magic acting on intelligence which has taken place in the history of the human race consists, in the first place, in having put it in the presence of antinomies—real or false—which discourage it and paralyse it, i.e. which make it stop and give up progressing forward in the direction towards the profound. Then this effort is intensified by the demonstration of the *subjective relativity* of the solutions to these antinomies and of the contradictory nature of these solutions: that it is, in the last analysis, only *taste* which determines for the authors of philosophical systems the foundation, struc-

ture and architecture of their intellectual edifices. Plato's idealism. Aristotle's realism, Descartes' rationalism, Leibnitz's monadism, Spinoza's monism. Schopenhauer's pessimistic voluntarism, Fichte's optimistic voluntarism, Hegel's dialectical absolutism, etc., are merely works of intellectual poetry whose differences depend only on the taste and talent of their authors —this is the second constituent element of the operation of hoodoo magic with regard to human intelligence. Lastly, once ensnared in doubt, intelligence sees in illumination from above only manifestations of elements of human psychology—the "face of man on the moon"—and cannot see otherwise. Is the soul immortal? Or is it the desire for self-preservation which is manifested by this thesis? Is man a microcosm? Or is it the desire to be important which is at the root of this idea? Progress, evolution ... an idea conceived of to render suffering, toil and death bearable. God?... an idea which guarantees that all will end well. Karma?... this idea appeases, if not consoles, the blind, the deaf and the dumb. The celestial hierarchies?... one is afraid of emptiness and therefore it is necessary to people a heaven with beings similar to us.

Thus, instead of asking if this or that thesis is *true*, intelligence comes to occupy itself with psychological motives hidden behind the so-called "game of rationalisation" fashioning intellectual superstructures. It projects the "face of man" on the moon and sees there only this face.

In this connection I must say that there are two categories of people with whom I have had the greatest difficulty in conversing, with any profit, during my life: these categories not being those of people who either passionately affirm or who passionately deny in the intellectual domain, but rather the two categories of people—that of the "psychologisers" and that of the "spiritualisers"—*who accept everything* with a tolerance which appears perfect. For you cannot speak with "psychologisers" about objective things and truths in the world and in life: they would understand these only as psychological manifestations that they accept as indisputable, although interpretable, "psychological facts". Therefore you cannot arrive at agreement, nor be in disagreement, with a "psychologiser" concerning things of the world and of life, since, if you speak of the moon, he will see only your face on the moon—if not his own. No more can you speak with a "spiritualiser", i.e. with someone who holds that his higher and true Self is identical with God—the higher and true Self of the world—and who consequently sees and understands only manifestations of this same absolute, universal and eternal truth which is revealed—it alone—relatively in all philosophical and religious opinions. Just as the "psychologiser" projects his lower human self onto the luminary illuminating the darkness of the depths of the world and life, so does the "spiritualiser" project his higher human Self onto the same luminary. The one projects the human *psychic* face there and the other projects the human *spiritual* face—but it is, in both cases equally, the human face which is projected there.

Say to a "spiritualiser" that Jesus Christ was the son of God incarnated, and he will reply to you that it is true—since in Jesus Christ was realised the universal

and eternal truth of the identity of the true higher Self with God. Then say to him that the Incarnation was an act of sacrifice of divine love, and he will say to you that it is true —since love is the identity of all individual "selves" in the universal Self of God, and that each individualisation comprises one incarnation and must necessarily be an act of sacrifice on the part of the higher, universal Self. If you then say to him that it was the victory over death, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which signifies the uniqueness of the work accomplished by Jesus Christ, he will reply to you that there is no reason in the world to deny the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, since the higher and universal Self can always project mental images — by *mayashakti* — to the point of making them appear visibly. Lastly, isn't the whole world a manifestation of mental force which renders the invisible visible? And if you say that Pentecost was the result of the work of Jesus Christ, he will reply to you—with evident benevolence — that to be sure it was Pentecost which necessarily had to result from the work of the avatar Jesus Christ, since it was Pentecost where his disciples, also, realised the universal and eternal truth of the identity of all individual "selves" in the higher universal Self—which is manifested by the fact that their speech became that of the higher Self of each person who listened to them. And if you say lastly—desperate as you are to come, at least, to a disagreement with your interlocutor — that there is evil in the world, that the Fall took place and that there is original sin, he will say to you that without any doubt there is the Fall and original sin, since the illusion of a plurality of individual consciousness has been arrived at, whilst they are identical and one in the consciousness of the universal Self. A Fall was therefore certainly necessary in order to arrive at such an illusion...

Thus the "spiritualiser" as well as the "psychologiser" are not people to converse with about things concerning the world and life; they look at—and consequently see —only *the face*, either psychic or spiritual, *of man*. Here it is the effect of the Arcanum of the moon eclipsed by the face of man that is at work.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the intelligence of those who do not want to see the world as a display of human subjectivity and who, on the other hand, cannot or do not know how to make the *leap* of intelligence of which Henri Bergson speaks —that their intelligence is turned towards the "objective facts of the five senses". . . and hence the retreat into the framework of the pond with the crayfish of the Card of the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot. The operation of magical enchantment—the bringing into play of antinomies and the projection of the face of man onto the luminary called to illumine the enigmas and secrets of the depths beyond the threshold of consciousness (i.e. of the "night") —has attained its aim by making intelligence retreat in the face of heaven, and even from the surface of the earth, into a region situated *beneath* the surface of the earth, i.e. that which underlies the "facts of the senses", symbolised in the Card by the pond with the crayfish.

What is the state of intelligence which has abandoned all metaphysics and has decided to hold to and to limit itself solely to "objective facts of the senses"?

What is most characteristic of this state is that *intelligence no longer moves forwards but backwards*. It looks to the least developed and the most primitive for the cause and explanation of what is most developed and most advanced in the process of evolution. Thus, it looks for the effective cause of the world not in the heights of creative consciousness but rather in the deprhs of the unconscious — instead of going forward and elevating itself towards God, it retreats into matter. It does something with regard to the world which would be absurd with regard to a work of arr, namely to explain it through the qualities—and quantities—of the materials of which it consists, instead of the style, the context, the meaning and the intention which the work of art reveals. Wouldn't it be absurd to want to understand one of Victor Hugo's poems, for example, by chemically analysing the ink with which it had been written and rhe paper on which it was written, or by counting the number of words and letters? Nevertheless, this is precisely what the intelligence under consideration does wih regard to the world — the world in which Victor Hugo's poem makes up only a part and is only a single special case of the manifestation of the great process of the creation.

Now the moment has arrived to conclude our meditation on the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot. Here is the conclusion that it asserts:

Of the four *Hayoth* of the Cabbala, the four "sacred animals" of Hermeticism—the Eagle, the Man, the Lion and the Bull—we find *three* amongst the signs of the zodiac, i.e. the Bull, the Lion and the Man (or Waterbearer). But we do not find the *Eagle*. The Eagle's place in the zodiacal circle is occupied by the *Scorpion*. There, where the Eagle (the principle of elevation) ought to be, the Scorpion (the principle of retreat and suicide) is found. Now, the eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot is that of the Eagle and the Scorpion - the Arcanum of the replacement of the one by the othet. Because the crayfish of the Card of the Arcanum "The Moon" has the scorpion as its ptotytype—and as its aim. Intelligence which prefers retreating to flying must inevitably arrive at the impasse of absurdity—for example, the absurdity that we have pointed out above. And the absurd. .. this is *suicide* for intelligence. This is where "crayfish-intelligence" goes after having renounced becoming "eagle-intelligence".

The eighteenth Arcanum of the Tarot asks us: Do you want to choose the way of the eagle which rises above antinomies or the way of the crayfish which retreats before them until arriving at complete absurdity, i.e. at the scorpionic suicide of intelligence? This is *the point*— i.e. the message to the human *will*—of the eighteenth Major Arcanum of rhe Tarot.