

*Meditation on the
Second Major Arcanum of the Tarot*

THE HIGH PRIESTESS

LA PAPERSE

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LETTER II



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Dear Unknown Friend,

As set forth in the preceding Letter, the Magician is the arcanum of intellectual geniality and cordiality, the arcanum of true spontaneity. Concentration without effort and the perception of correspondences in accordance with the law of analogy are the principal implications of this arcanum of spiritual fecundity. It is the arcanum of *the pure act* of intelligence. But the pure act is like fire or wind: it appears and disappears, and when exhausted it gives way to another act.

The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. (John iii, 8)

The pure act in itself cannot be grasped; it is only its *reflection* which tenders it perceptible, comparable and understandable or, in other words, it is by virtue of the reflection that we become conscious of it. The reflection of the pure act produces an inner representation, which becomes retained by the memory; memory becomes the source of communication by means of the spoken word; and the communicated word becomes fixed by means of writing, by producing the "book".

The second Arcanum, the High Priestess, is that of the reflection of the pure act of the first Arcanum up to the point where it becomes "book". It shows us how Fire and Wind become Science and Book. Or, in other words, how "Wisdom builds her house".

As we have pointed out, one becomes conscious of the pure act of intelligence only by means of its reflection. We require an inner mirror in order to be conscious of the pure act or to know "whence it comes or whither it goes". The breath of the Spirit—or the pure act of intelligence—is certainly an event, but it does not suffice, itself alone, for us to become conscious of *h.Con-sciousness* (*con-science*) is the result of two principles—the active, activating principle and the passive, reflecting principle. In order to *know* from where the breath of the Spirit comes and where it goes, Water is required to reflect it. This is why the conversation of the Master with Nicodemus, to which we have referred, enunciates the absolute condition for the *conscious* experience of the Divine Spirit—or the Kingdom of God:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. (John iii, 5)

"Truly, truly"—the Master refers here twice to "truth" in this mantric (i.e. magical) formula of the reality of con-sciousness. By these words he states that full consciousness of the truth is the result of "inbreathed" truth and reflected truth. Reintegrated consciousness, which is the Kingdom of God, presupposes two renovations, of a significance comparable to birth, in the two constituent elements of consciousness—active Spirit and reflecting Water. Spirit must become divine Breath in place of arbitrary, personal activity, and Water must become a perfect mirror of the divine Breath instead of being agitated by disturbances of the imagination, passions and personal desires. Reintegrated consciousness must be born of Water and Spirit, after Water has once again become Virginal and Spirit has once again become divine Breath or the Holy Spirit. Reintegrated consciousness therefore becomes born within the human soul in a way *analogous* to the birth or historical incarnation of the WORD:

Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine. (by the power of the Holy Spirit the Word became incarnate from the Virgin Mary)

The re-birth from Water and Spirit which the Master indicates to Nicodemus is the re-establishment of the state of consciousness prior to the Fall, where the Spirit was divine Breath and where this Breath was reflected by virginal Nature. This is *Christian yoga*. Its aim is not "radical deliverance" (*mukti*), i.e. the state of consciousness without breath and without reflection, but rather "baptism from Water and the Spirit", which is the complete and perfect response to divine action. These two kinds of baptism bring about the reintegration of the two constituent elements of consciousness as such—the active element and the passive element. There is no consciousness without these two elements, and the suppression of this duality by means of a practical method such as that inspired by the ideal of unity (*advaita*—non-duality) must necessarily lead to the extinction not of being but rather of consciousness. Then this would not be a *new birth* of consciousness, but instead would be its *return* to the pre-natal embryonic cosmic state.

On the other hand, this is what Plotinus says concerning the duality underlying all forms and every level of consciousness, namely the active principle and its mirror:

. . . when the mirror is there, the mirror-image is produced, but when it is not there or is not in the right state, the object of which the image would have been is (all the same) actually there. In the same way as regards the soul, when that kind of thing in us which mirrors the images of thought and intellect is undisturbed, we see them and know them in a way parallel to sense-perception, along with the prior knowledge that it is intellect and thought that are active. But when this is broken because the harmony of the body is upset, thought and intellect operate without an image, and then intellectual activity takes place without a mind-picture. (Plotinus, *Enneadl.* iv. 10; trsl. A. H. Armstrong. London, 1966, pp. 199 and 201)

This is the Platonic conception of consciousness, the thorough study of which can serve by way of introduction to the nocturnal conversation of the Master with Nicodemus on the reintegration of consciousness or the aim of Christian yoga.

Christian yoga does not aspire directly to unity, but rather to the *unity of two*. This is very important for understanding the standpoint which one takes towards the infinitely serious problem of unity and duality. For this problem can open the door to truly divine mysteries and can also close them to us. . . for ever, perhaps, who knows? Everything depends on its comprehension. We can decide in favour of monism and say to ourselves that there can be only one sole essence, one sole being. Or we can decide—in view of considerable historical and personal experience—in favour of dualism and say to ourselves that there are two principles in the world: good and evil, spirit, and matter, and that, entirely incomprehensible though this duality is at root, it must be admitted as an incontestable fact. We can, moreover, decide in favour of a third point of view, namely that of *love* as the cosmic

principle which presupposes duality and postulates its *non-substantial but essential* unity.

These three points of view are found at the basis of the Vedanta (*advaita*) and Spinozism (monism), Manichaeism and certain gnostic schools (dualism), and the Judaeo-Christian current (love).

In order to give more clarity and precision to this problem, as well as to attain greater depth — we shall take for our point of departure what Louis Claude de Saint-Martin says concerning the number *two* in his book *Des Nombres* ("On Numbers").

Now, in order to show how they (numbers) are related to their base of activity, let us begin by observing the working of *unity* and of the number *two*. When we contemplate an important truth, such as the universal power of the Creator, his majesty, his love, his profound light, or suchlike attributes, we bear ourselves wholly towards this supreme model of all things; all our faculties are suspended in order to fill us with him, and we really only make ourselves one with him. This is the active image of unity, and the number *one* in our languages is the expression of this unity or invisible union which, existing intimately between all attributes of this unity, must equally exist between it and all its produced creations. But if, after having borne all our faculties of contemplation towards this universal source, we return our gaze to ourselves and fill ourselves with our own contemplation, in such a way that we regard ourselves as the origin of some of the inner light or satisfaction that this source has procured for us, from that moment we establish two centres of contemplation, two separate and rival principles, two bases which are not linked; lastly, we establish two *unities*, with this difference—that one is real and the other is apparent, (p. 2) [Then he adds:] But to divide being through the middle is to divide it into two parts; it is to pass from the whole to the quality of the part or the half, and it is here that the true origin of illegitimate twofoldness lies. . . this example is sufficient to show us the birth of the number *two* — to show us the origin of evil. . . (p. 3). (Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, *Des Nombres*, Nice, 1946, pp. 2-3)

Duality therefore signifies the establishment of two centres of contemplation, two separate and rival principles—one real and the other apparent—and this is the origin of evil, which is only illegitimate twofoldness. Is this the *only* possible interpretation of duality, twofoldness, the number two? Does there not exist a *legitimate two/oldness*? . . . a twofoldness which does not signify the *diminution* of unity, but rather its qualitative enrichment?

If we return to the conception of Saint-Martin of "two centres of contempla-

tion" which are "two separate and rival principles", we can ask ourselves if they must *necessarily* be separate and rival? Does not the expression "contemplation" itself, chosen by Saint-Martin, suggest the idea of two centres which contemplate simultaneously—as would two eyes if they were placed vertically one above the other—the *two* aspects of reality, the phenomenal and the noumenal? And that it is by virtue of the two centres or "eyes" that we are—or are able to be—conscious of "that which is above and that which is below"? Could one, for example, enunciate the principal formula of the *Emerald Table* if one had only one "eye" or centre of contemplation instead of *two*?

Now, the *Sep her Yetzirah* says:

Two is the breath which comes from the Spirit, and formed in it are twenty-two sounds. .. but the Spirit is first and above these.
(*Sepher Yetzirah* i, 10; trsl. W. Wynn Westcott, London, 1893, p. 16)

Or, in other words, two is the divine Breath and its Reflection; it is the origin of the "Book of Revelation" which is the world as well as the Holy Scripture. Two is the number of consciousness of the breath of the Spirit and its "formed" (engraved) letters. It is the number of the reintegration of consciousness, signified by the Master to Nicodemus by the virginal Water and the Breath of the Holy Spirit.

Two is all this, and it is even more. Not only is the number two not necessarily the "illegitimate twofoldness" described by Saint-Martin, but also it is the number of love or the fundamental condition of love which it necessarily presupposes and postulates... because love is inconceivable without the Lover and the Loved, without ME and YOU, without One and the Other.

If God were only One and if he had not created the World, he would not be the God revealed by the Master, the God of whom St. John says:

God is love; and he who abides in love abides in God. and God abides in him. (I John iv, 16)

He would not be this, because he would love no one other than himself. As this is impossible from the point of view of the God of love, he is revealed to human consciousness as the eternal Trinity—the Loving One who loves, the Loved One who loves, and their Love who loves them: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Do you not also experience, dear Unknown Friend, a feeling of discomfort each time that you encounter a formula stating the higher attributes of the Holy Trinity, such as "Power, Wisdom, Love" or "Being, Consciousness, Beatitude" (*sat—chit—ananda*). Personally, I always experienced this discomfort, and it was only later, many years later, that I understood its cause. It is because God is love, that he admits of no comparison, that he surpasses all — power, wisdom, and even being. One can, if one wishes, speak of the "power of love" the "wisdom of love"

and the "life of love" in order to make a distinction between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, but one cannot put on the same level love on the one hand and wisdom, power and being on the other. For God is love and it is love—it is only love—which by its presence gives worth to power and to wisdom and to being itself. For *being* without love is deprived of all worth. Being without love would be the most appalling torment—the Inferno itself!

Does love therefore surpass being? How could one doubt this after the revelation of this truth through nineteen centuries by the Mystery of Calvary? "That which is below is like to that which is above"—and is not the sacrifice of His life. His terrestrial being, accomplished through love by God Incarnate, is this not the demonstration of the superiority of love over being? And is not the Resurrection the demonstration of the other aspect of the primacy of love over being, i.e. that love is not only superior to being but also that it engenders it and restores it?

The problem of the primacy of being or of love goes back to antiquity. Plato raised it when he said:

The sun, I presume you will say, not only furnishes to visibles the power of visibility but it also provides for their generation and growth and nurture though it is not itself generation... In like manner, then, you are to say that the objects of knowledge not only receive from the presence of the good their being known, but their very existence and essence is derived to them from it, though the good itself is not essence but still transcends essence in dignity and surpassing power. (Plato. *The Republic* 509B; trsl. P. Shorey, 2 vols., London, 1930, 1935, vol. ii, p. 107)

And seven centuries later Sallustius, the friend of Emperor Julian, said:

Now if the First Cause was soul, everything would be animated by soul, if intelligence, everything would be intellectual, if being, everything would share in being. Some in fact, seeing that all things possess being, have thought that the First Cause was being. This would be correct if things that were in being were in being only and were not good. If, however, things that are are by reason of their goodness and share in the good, then what is first must be higher than being and in fact good. A very clear indication of this is that fine souls for the sake of the good despise being, when they are willing to face danger for country or friends or virtue. (Sallustius, *Concerning the Gods and the Universe*, v; trsl. A. D. Nock, Cambridge, 1926, p. 11)

The primacy of good (good being the abstract philosophical notion of the *reality* of love) in relation to being has also been discussed by Plotinus (*Enneads* vi, 7, 23-24), by Proclus (*In Platonis Theologiam* ii, 4 = *On the Theology of Plato*),

and by Dionysius the Areopagite (*De divinis nomimbus*, iv = *On the Divine Names*). St. Bonaventura (*Collattonesin Hexaameron* x. 10) tried to reconcile this Platonic primacy of good with the Mosaic primacy of being: *Ego sum qui sum* ("I am that I am". Exodus iii, 14)—asserted first by John Damascenus (John of Damascus) and then by Thomas Aquinas. The latter states that amongst all the divine names there is one which is eminently suited to God. and this is *Qui est* ("He who is"), precisely because it signifies nothing other than being itself. Etienne Gilson, in harmony with St. Thomas, John Damascenus and Moses, writes concerning being:

In this principle lies an inexhaustible metaphysical fecundity . . .there is but one God and this God is Being, that is the corner-stone of all Christian philosophy, and it was not Plato, it was not even Aristotle, it was Moses who instituted it. (Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, trsl. A. H. C. Downes, London. 1950, p. 51)

Yet what is the full *significance* of the adoption of the primacy of being, instead of that of good, or according to St. John, that of love?

The idea of being is *neutral* from the point of view of the moral life. There is no need to have the experience of the good and the beautiful in order to arrive at it. The experience solely of the mineral realm already suffices to arrive at the morally neutral idea of being. For the mineral *is*. For this reason the idea of being is *objective*, i.e. it postulates, in the last analysis, the *thing* underlying everything, the permanent substance behind all phenomena.

I invite you, dear Unknown Friend, to close your eyes and to render an exact account of the image which accompanies this idea in your mental imagination. Do you not find the vague image of a substance without colour or form, very similar to water in the sea?

Whatever your subjective representation of being as such, the *idea* of being is morally indifferent and *is*. consequently, essentially naturalistic. It implies something *passive*, i.e. *a given or an unalterable fact*. In contrast, when you think of love in the johannine sense or of the Platonic idea of good, you find yourself facing an essential *activity*, which is in no way neutral from the point of view of moral life, but which is the heart itself. And the image which accompanies this notion of pure actuality would be that of fire or of the sun (Plato compared the idea of good to the sun, and its light to truth), in place of the image of an indefinite fluid substance.

Thales and Heraclitus have two different conceptions. The one sees in *water* the essence of things and the other sees it in *fire*. But here, primarily, it is so that the idea of GOOD and its summit—LOVE—is due to the conception of the world as a *moral* process, whereas the idea of BEING and its summit—the God QUI EST—is due to the conception of the world as that of a fact of Nature. The idea

of good (and of love) is essentially *subjective*— It is absolutely necessary to have had experience of psychic and spiritual life in order to be able to conceive of it, whilst—as we have already indicated—the idea of being, being essentially *objective*, presupposes only a certain degree of outward experience. . . of the mineral realm, for example.

The consequence of choosing between these two — I will not say "points of view", but rather "attitudes of soul"—lies above all in the intrinsic nature of the experience of practical mysticism which consequently derives from this choice. He who chooses being will aspire to true being and he who chooses love will aspire to love. For one only finds that for which one seeks. The seeker for true being will arrive at the experience of *repose* in being, and, as there cannot be *two* true beings ("the illegitimate twofoldness" of Saint-Martin) or two separate co-eternal substances but only *one* being and *one* substance, the centre of "false being" will be suppressed ("false being" = *ahamkara*, or the illusion of the separate existence of a separate substance of the "self"). The characteristic of this mystical way is that *one loses the capacity to cry*. An advanced pupil of yoga or Vedanta will for ever have dry eyes, whilst the masters of the Cabbala, according to the *Zohar*, cry much and often. Christian mysticism speaks also of the "gift of tears"— as a precious gift of divine grace. The Master cried in front of the tomb of Lazarus. Thus the outer characteristic of those who choose the other mystical way, that of the God of love, is that they have the "gift of tears". This is in keeping with the very essence of their mystical experience. Their union with the Divine is not the absorption of their being by Divine Being, but rather the experience of the breath of Divine Love, the illumination by Divine Love, and the warmth of Divine Love. The soul which receives this undergoes such a miraculous experience that it cries. In this mystical experience fire meets with FIRE, Then nothing is extinguished in the human personality but, on the contrary, everything is set ablaze. This is the experience of "legitimate twofoldness" or the union of two separate *substances* in one sole *essence*. The substances remain separate as long as they are bereft of that which is the most precious in all existence: free alliance in love.

I have spoken of "two *substances*" and "one *essence*". Here it is necessary to really grasp the significance of these two terms—substance (*substantia*) and essence (*essentia*), whose exact distinction is today almost effaced. However, at one time these two terms denoted two distinct categories not only of ideas but also of existence and consciousness itself.

Plato established the distinction between *elvai* (*einai*, being) and *ourria* (*ousta*, essence). *Being* signifies for him the fact of existence as such, whereas *essence* designates existence due to Ideas.

Everything which has *existence* has *essence* through its share in Ideas, which are themselves essences. The term essence will therefore not designate for us abstract existence but the reality of the Idea. (A.J. E. Fouillee, *La philosophie de Platon*, 4 vols., Paris, 1888-89, vol. ii, pp. 106-7)

Essence (essentia, ousia) signifies the positive act itself" by means of which being is (*in the Cabbala one would speak of the act of emanation of the first Sephirah, KETHER—whose corresponding divine name is AHIH (eyeh), i.e. "I AM"—from AIN-SOPH, the Unlimited).*

... as *it esse* could generate the present participle active *essens*, whence *essentia* would be derived. (Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*; trsl. A. H. C. Downes, London, 1950, p. 54)

Thus the term *essentia* properly belongs only to God alone; everything else enters into the category of *substantiae*. This is what the Church Father and Platonist, St. Augustine, says:

.. . *manifestum est Deum abusive substantiam vocari, ut nomine usitatioe intellegitur essentia, quod vere ac proprte dicitur, ita ut fortasse solum Deum dici oporteat essentiam* (. . . hence it is clear that God is not properly called a substance, and that he is better called by the more usual term *essence*, which term is a right and proper one; so much so indeed that perhaps *God alone ought to be called essence.*) (St. Augustine, *De Trinitate* vii, 5, 10)

The distinction between substance and essence, between reality and the ideal, between being and love (or the idea of good), or between *He who is* and AIN-SOPH is also the key to the Gospel according to John:

No one has ever *seen* God: the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. (John i, 18)

"No one has ever *seen* God", i.e. no one has ever contemplated God face to face while maintaining his personality. For "to see" signifies "to perceive while being in the face of that which one perceives". Before Jesus Christ there were, without doubt, numerous examples of the experience of God—being "seized by God" (experience of the prophets), being "immersed in God" (experience of yogis and mystics in antiquity), or seeing the revelation of His work, the world (experience of sages and philosophers in antiquity), but no one ever *saw* God. For neither the inspiration of the prophets, nor the immersion in God of the mystics, nor the contemplation of God in the mirror of the creation by the sages is equivalent to the new experience of the "vision" of God—the "beatific vision" of Christian theology. For this "vision" takes place in the domain of *essence* transcending all substance; it is not a fusion, but an *encounter* in the domain of essence, in which the human personality (the consciousness of self) remains not only intact and without impediment, but also becomes "that which it is", i.e. becomes truly itself—such as the Thought of God has conceived it for all eternity. The words

of St. John, when thought of in this way. I cannot intelligible those of the Master in the Gospel of St. John:

All who came before me are thieves and robbers. (John x, 8)

There is a profound mystery in these words. Indeed, how may they be understood alongside numerous other sayings of the Master referring to Moses, David and other prophets, who were all before him?

Now, it is a matter here not of theft and robbery, but of *the principle of initiation* before and after Jesus Christ. The masters prior to His Coming taught the experience of God at the expense of the personality, which had to be diminished when it was "seized" by God or "immersed" in God. In *this sense* — in the sense of the diminution or augmentation of the "talent of gold" entrusted to humanity, the personality, which is the "image and likeness of God" (Goethe: *Dashochste Gut der Erdenkinder ist doch die Personlichkeit*, i.e. "The highest treasure of the children of earth is surely the personality") — the masters prior to Christ were "thieves and robbers". They certainly bore testimony to God but the way which they taught and practised was that of *depersonalisation*, which made them witnesses ("martyrs") of God. The greatness of Bhagavan, the Buddha, was the high degree of depersonalisation which he attained. The masters of yoga are masters of depersonalisation. The ancient philosophers — those who really lived as "philosophers" — practised depersonalisation. This is the case above all with the Stoics.

And this is why all those who have chosen the way of depersonalisation are unable to cry and why they have dry eyes for ever. For it is the personality which cries and which alone is capable of the "gift of tears". "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew v, 4).

Therefore this is one aspect at least (there is also another more profound one, but I do not know if it will be possible to write about it in one of the following Letters) according to which we may say that the mysterious words relating to "thieves and robbers" can become a source of radiant light. When the Gospel speaks of those who came *before* Jesus Christ, it is not only time which the word "before" designates, but also the *grade* of initiation — they are thieves and robbers with respect to the personality, since they taught the depersonalisation of the human being. In contrast, the Master also says: "I have come that they (the sheep) may have *life*, and have it abundantly" (John x, 10); in other words, the Master has come in order to tender *more living* that which is dear to him and which is menaced with dangers, i.e. the sheep as the image of the personality! This appears inconceivable in the presence of the ideal of the personality according to Nietzsche and his "superman" or the great historical personalities such as Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon... and the "great personalities" of modern times!

No, dear Unknown Friend, *possession* by the will-to-power or the will-to-glory makes neither the personality nor its greatness. The "sheep" in the language of love of the Master signify neither the "great personality" nor the "little personali-

ty", but simply the individual soul which lives. He wants the soul to live without danger and to have as intensive a life as God has destined for it. The "sheep" is the living entity, surrounded by dangers, which is the object of divine care. Doesn't this suffice? Is there too little brilliance and glory here? Is this too feeble an image to be able to arrive at, for example, a magician evoking good and evil spirits?

Here it is a matter of drawing attention to one thing, to one sole thing: the language of the Master is that of love and not that of psychology, philosophy, or science. The powerful magician, the artistic genius, the profound thinker, and the radiant mystic certainly merit all these qualifications and perhaps still greater ones, but they do not dazzle God. In the eyes of God they are dear sheep to him; in his consideration of them he desires that they shall never go astray and that they shall have life increasingly and unceasingly.

Before completing our reflections on the *problem of the number two*, the problem of legitimate twofoldness and illegitimate twofoldness, I should pay tribute to Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, who set this problem in motion with his passionate intellectuality. In his work *Mission des juifs* ("Mission of the Jews", Paris, 1956), he concentrated on the comparison of the *complete* divine name (YOD-HE-VAU-HE) with the *incomplete* name (HE-VAU-HE). In the first case YOD, *essence*, is considered to be the supreme hierarchical principle; in the second case it is HE, *substance*, to which priority is attributed. It is in this way that spiritualism and naturalism originated—with all the consequences they entail in religious, philosophical, scientific and social spheres. The problem—as a *formula*—is therefore put with admirable exactness and precision, and it is this that I want to draw attention to. But I am at the same time obliged to say that exact and precise as it is, the material content that Saint-Yves gives to it leaves much to be desired. In particular he states that the principle of pure intellect is YOD, and to HE-VAU-HE as material content he attributes the principle of love and soul, or the "passionate principle". Thus, in attributing priority to the intellect as the masculine, spiritual principle, he subordinates love to it as the feminine, psychic principle. Now, the Master taught of the Father, who is love. The intellect being the reflection—or light—of the fire principle of love, can only be the feminine principle, Sophia or Wisdom, who *assists* the Creator in the work of creation, according to the Old Testament. The gnostic tradition also considers Sophia as the feminine principle. Pure intellect is that which reflects; love is that which acts.

The fact that man is usually more intellectual than woman does not signify that the intellect is a masculine principle. On the contrary, rather: man, being physically masculine, is feminine from the psychic point of view, whilst woman, being physically feminine, is masculine (active) in her soul. Now, the intellect is the feminine side of the soul, whilst the fertilising imagination is the masculine principle. The intellect that is not fertilised by imagination guided by the heart is sterile. It depends on impulses which it receives from the participation of the heart by means of the imagination.

With regard to the third principle, the Spirit, it is neither intellect nor imagina-

(ion, but Love-Wisdom. In *principle* it ought to be androgynous, but in practice it is not always so.

This, therefore, is all that it seems to me necessary to say on the subject of the problem of two and its significance—the resolution of this problem being the key to the second Arcanum, the High Priestess. For this is the arcanum of the twofoldness underlying consciousness—spontaneous activity and its reflection; it is the arcanum of the transformation of the pure act into representation, of representation into memory pictures, of memory pictures into the word, and of the word into written characters or *the book*.

The High Priestess wears a three-layered tiara and holds an open book. The tiara is laden with precious stones, which suggests the idea that it is by way of three stages that the crystallisation of the pure act descends through the three higher and invisible planes before arriving at the fourth stage—the book. For the problems that the symbol implies are: *reflection, memory, word and writing*; or, in other words—*revelation and tradition*, spoken and written; or, to express it in a single word—GNOSIS (this is also the title given by Eliphas Levi as a heading for the second chapter of his *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*; trsl. A. E. Waite, *Transcendental Magic. Its Doctrine and Ritual*, London, 1968).

It is concerned with gnosis and not at all with science, since gnosis is exactly what the Card of the High Priestess expresses both in its entirety and in its details, namely the *descent* of revelation (the pure act or essence reflected by substance) down to the final stage—or "book". Science, on the contrary, begins with facts (the "characters" of the book of Nature) and ascends from facts to *laws* and from laws to *principles*. Gnosis is the reflection of that which is above; science, in contrast, is the interpretation of that which is below. The *last* stage of gnosis is the world of facts, where it *becomes fact* itself, i.e. it becomes "book"; *the first* stage of science is the world of facts which it "reads", in order to arrive at laws and principles.

As it is gnosis (i.e. mysticism become conscious of itself) that the Card symbolises, it does not present the image of a scientist or a doctor, but rather that of a priestess, the High Priestess—the sacred guardian of the Book of Revelation. As the High Priestess represents the stages of the descent of revelation, from the small uppermost circle on her tiara as far as the open book on her knees, her position is in keeping with this—she is *seated*. For, to be seated signifies a relationship between the vertical and horizontal which corresponds to the task of the outward projection (horizontal, book) of the descending revelation (vertical, tiara). This position indicates the *practical method of gnosis*, just as the standing Magician indicates the practical method of mysticism. The Magician *dares*—for this reason he is standing. The High Priestess *knows*—this is why she is seated. The transformation from *to dare* to *to know* consists in the change of position from that of the Magician to that of the High Priestess.

The essence of pure mysticism is creative activity. One becomes a mystic when one dares to elevate oneself—i.e. "to stand upright", then even more upright, and

ever more upright - beyond all created being as far as the essence of Being, the divine, creative fire. "Concentration without effort" is burning without smoke or crackling fire. On the part of the human being it is the act of *daring* to aspire to the supreme Reality, and this act is real and effective only when the soul is serene and the body completely relaxed—without smoke and crackling fire.

The essence of pure gnosis is reflected mysticism. Gnosis signifies that that which takes place in mysticism has become *higher knowledge*. That is, gnosis is mysticism which has become conscious of itself. It is mystical *experience* transformed into higher knowledge.

Now, this transformation of mystical experience into knowledge takes place in stages. The first is the pure reflection or a kind of imaginative repetition of the experience. The second stage is its entrance into memory. The third stage is its assimilation in thought and feeling, in a manner where it becomes a "message" or inner *word*. The fourth stage, lastly, is reached when it becomes a communicable symbol or "writing", or "book"—i.e. when it is *formulated*.

The pure reflection of mystical experience is without image and without word. It is purely *movement*. Here consciousness is moved by the immediate contact with that which transcends it, with the trans-subjective. This experience is as certain as the experience belonging to the sense of *touch* in the physical world and is, at the same time, as much devoid of form, colour and sound as the sense of touch. For this reason one can compare it with this sense and designate it as "spiritual touch" or "intuition".

This designation is not quite adequate, but at least it has the merit of expressing the character of *immediate contact*, which is peculiar to the first stage of reflection of the mystical act. Here, mystical experience and gnosis are still inseparable and are as one.

If we want to establish the relationship between, on the one hand this state of consciousness and the three states which follow it, and on the other hand the sacred name *mm* (YOD-HE-VAU-HE; abbreviated YHVH), which is the summation of Jewish gnosis or the whole Cabbala, we cannot do otherwise than to attribute it to the first letter, YOD. The letter YOD is a point with the tendency of the indicated projection: •> . This corresponds admirably to the experience of spiritual touch, which also is nothing other than a point signifying germinally within itself a world of potentialities.

Spiritual touch (or intuition) is that which permits contact between our consciousness and the world of pure mystical experience. It is by virtue of this that there exists in the world and in the history of mankind a real relationship between the living soul and the living God—which is true religion. Mysticism is the source and the root of all religion. Without it religion and the entire spiritual life of humanity would be only a code of laws regulating human thought and action. If God signifies for man something more than an abstract notion, it is thanks to spiritual touch or mysticism. It is the *seedai aW* religious life—with its theology, rituals and practices. Mysticism is also the seed of gnosis, which is esoteric theology,

jusi as magic is esoteric art and occultism or Hermeticism is esoteric philosophy. Now, mysticism is the YOD of the *Tetragrammaton*, jusi as gnosis is the first HE. magii is the VAU - or "child" of mysticism and gnosis - and Hermetic philosophy is the second (final) HE, i.e. the summation of what is revealed. The last HE or Hermetic philosophy is the "book" which the High Priestess holds on her knees, whilst the three layers of her tiara represent the stages of the descent of revelation from the mystical plane to the gnostic plane, then from the gnostic plane to the magical plane and, lastly, from the magical plane to the philosophical plane — to the plane of the "book" or the "doctrine".

Just as spiritual touch is the mystical sense, so there is a "gnostic sense", a "magical sense" and a special "Hermetic-philosophical sense". Full consciousness of the sacred name YHVH can only be attained by the united experience of these four senses and the practice of four different methods. For the fundamental thesis of Hermetic epistemology (or "gnoseology") is that "each object of knowledge demands a method of knowledge which is proper to it". This thesis or rule signifies that one ought never to apply the same method of knowledge on different planes, but only to different objects belonging to the same plane. A crying example of ignorance of this law is "cybernetic psychology", which wants to explain man and his psychic life by mechanical, material laws.

Each mode of experience and knowledge when pushed to its limit becomes a sense or engenders a special sense. He who dares to aspire to the experience of the unique essence of Being will develop the mystical sense or spiritual touch. If he wants not only *to live* but also to learn to understand what he lives through, he will develop the gnostic sense. And if he wants to put into practice what he has understood from mystical experience, he will develop the magical sense. If, lastly, he wants all that he has experienced, understood and practised to be not limited to himself and his time, but to become communicable to others and to be transmitted to future generations, he must develop the Hermetic-philosophical sense, and in practising it he will "write his book".

Such is the law that YOD-HE-VAU-HE expresses concerning the process of transformation of mystical experience into tradition; such is the law of the *birth* of tradition. Its source is mystical experience: one cannot be a gnostic or a magician or a Hermetic philosopher (or occultist) without being a mystic. The tradition is a living one only when it constitutes a *complete organism*, when it is the result of the union of mysticism, gnosis, magic and Hermetic philosophy. If this is not so, it *decays and dies*. And the death of the tradition manifests itself in the degeneration of its constituent elements, which become separated. Then, Hermetic philosophy separated from magic, gnosis and mysticism becomes a parasitic system of autonomous thought which is, truth to tell, a veritable psychopathological complex, because it bewitches or enslaves human consciousness and deprives it of its liberty. A person who has had the misfortune to fall victim to the spell of a philosophical system (and the spells of sorcerers are mere trifles in comparison to the disastrous effect of the spell of a philosophical system!) can

no longer see the world, or people, or historic events, as they are; he sees everything onW through the distorting prism of the system by which he is possessed, I hus, a Marxist of today is *incapable* of seeing anything else in the history of mankind orhet than the "class struggle".

What I am saying concerning mysticism, gnosis, magic and philosophy would be considered by him only as a ruse on the part of the bourgeoisie class, with the aim of "screening with a mystical and idealistic haze" the reality of the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. . . although I have not inherited anything from my parents and I have not experienced a single day without having to earn my living by means of work recognised as "legitimate" by Marxists!

Another contemporary example of possession by a system is Freudianism. A man possessed by this system will see in everything that I have written only the expression of "suppressed libido", which seeks and finds release in this manner. It would therefore be the lack of sexual fulfillment which has driven me to occupy myself with the Tarot and to write about it!

Is there any need for further examples? Is it still necessary to cite the Hegelians with their distortion of the history of humanity, the Scholastic "realists" of the Middle Ages with the Inquisition, the rationalists of the eighteenth century who were blinded by the light of their own autonomous reasoning?

Yes, autonomous philosophical systems separated from the living body of tradition are parasitic structures, which seize the thought, feeling and finally the will of human beings. In fact, they play a role comparable to the psycho-pathological complexes of neurosis or other psychic maladies of obsession. Their physical analogy is cancer.

With respect to autonomous magic, i.e. magic without mysticism and without gnosis, it necessarily degenerates into sorcery or, at least, into a pathological, romantic aestheticism. There is no "black magic", but rather sorcerers groping in the dark. They grope in the dark because the light of gnosis and mysticism is lacking.

Gnosis without mystical experience is sterility itself. It is just a religious ghost, without life or movement. It is the corpse of religion, animated intellectually by means of scraps fallen from the table of the past history of humanity. A "Universal Gnostic Church"! Good Lord! What can one say, what should be said, when one has a knowledge, however limited, of the laws of spiritual life governing all tradition?!

Passing on to mysticism which has not given birth to gnosis, magic and Hermetic philosophy—such a mysticism must, sooner or later, necessarily degenerate into "spiritual enjoyment" or "intoxication". The mystic who wants only the experience of mystical states without understanding them, without drawing practical conclusions from them for life, and without wanting to be useful to others, who forgets everyone and everything in order to enjoy the mystical experience, can be compared to a spiritual drunkard.

So tradition can only live—as with all other living organisms—when it is a com-

plete organism of mysticism, gnosis and effective magic, which manifests itself outwardly as Hermetic philosophy. This means to say simply that a tradition cannot live unless the *whole* human being lives through it, in it, and for it. For the whole human being is at one and the same time a mystic, a gnostic, a magician and a philosopher, i.e. he is religious, contemplative, artistic and intelligent. Everyone *believes* in something, *understands* something, *is capable of* something and *thinks* something. It is human nature which determines whether a tradition will live or die. And it is also human nature which is capable of giving birth to a complete tradition and keeping it living. Because the four "senses"—mystical, gnostic, magical and philosophical—exist, be it in potentiality or in actuality, in each human being.

Now, the practical teaching of the second Arcanum, the High Priestess, relates to the development of the gnostic sense. What is the gnostic sense?

It is the *contemplative* sense. Contemplation—which follows on from concentration and meditation—commences the very moment that discursive and logical thought is suspended. Discursive thought is satisfied when it arrives at a well-founded *conclusion*. Now, this conclusion is *the point of departure* for contemplation. It fathoms *the profundity* of this conclusion at which discursive thought arrives. Contemplation discovers a world *within* that which discursive thought simply verifies as "true". The gnostic sense begins to operate when it is a matter of a new dimension in the act of knowledge, namely that of *depth*. It becomes active when it is a question of something deeper than the question: Is it true or false? It perceives more the *significance* of the truth discovered by discursive thought and also "why this truth is true in itself, i.e. it reaches to the mystical or essential source of this truth. How does it arrive at this? By listening in silence. It is as if one wanted to recall something forgotten. Consciousness "listens" in silence, as one "listens" inwardly in order to call to mind from the night of forgetfulness something that one formerly knew. But there is an essential difference between the "listening silence" of contemplation and the silence arising from the effort to recall. In this second situation, it is the *horizontal*—in time, past and present—which comes into play, whilst the "listening silence" of contemplation relates to the *vertical*—to that which is above and that which is below. In the act of recall, one establishes in oneself an inner mirror in order to reflect the past: when one "listens in silence" in the state of contemplation, one also makes consciousness into a mirror, but this mirror has the task of reflecting that which is above. It is the act of recall in the *vertical*.

There are, in fact, two types of memory: "horizontal memory", which renders the past present, and "vertical memory", which renders that which is above as present below, or—according to our distinction between the two categories of symbolism which were defined in the first Letter—the "mythological memory" and the "typological memory".

Henri Bergson is perfectly right when he writes of horizontal or mythological memory:

The truth is that memory does not consist in a regression from the present to the past, but on the contrary in a progress from the past to the present. (Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*; trsl. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer, London, 1911, p. 319)

and also:

. . . pure memory is a spiritual manifestation. With memory we are in very truth in the domain of the spirit, (ibid., p. 320)

It is therefore the past which comes to us in the remembrance and this is why the act of recollection is preceded by a state of empty silence which plays the role of a mirror, where the past can be reflected or, according to Bergson, where

the state of the brain continues the remembrance; it gives it a hold on the present by the materiality which it (acting as a mirror) confers upon it. (ibid., p. 320)

It is the same again for vertical or typological memory. Plato is also perfectly right when he says of the memory of the transcendent Self which can confer reminiscence upon the empirical self:

Seeing that the soul is immortal and has been born many times, and has beheld all things both in this world and in the nether realms, she has acquired knowledge of all and everything. . . (thus) it would seem, research and learning are wholly recollection. (Plato, *Menon* 81, c, d; trsl. W. R. M. Lamb, London, 1924. p. 303)

Here, likewise, that which is above, in the domain of the transcendent Self, descends to the plane of the empirical self, when there is created in oneself the empty silence which serves to mirror the revelation from above.

What is necessary, therefore, in order to obtain here in the realm of the state of waking consciousness the reflection of that which is above in the mystical domain?

It is necessary "to be seated", i.e. to establish an active-passive state of consciousness, or state of soul which listens attentively in silence. It is necessary to be woman", i.e. to be in the state of silent expectation, and not in that of the activity which "talks". It is necessary "to cover with a veil" the intermediare planes between the plane whose reflection is expected and the plane of the state of waking consciousness where the reflection becomes actualised. It is necessary⁷ "to cover the head with a three-layered tiara", i.e. to apply oneself to a problem or ques-

lion of such gravity that it bears upon the three worlds and on that which is above. Lastly, it is necessary "to have one's eyes turned towards the open book on the knees", i.e. to carry out a complete psychurgical operation in the aim of objectifying one's result, in the aim of "continuing the book of the tradition", adding something to it.

Now, all these practical rules of gnosis are found clearly indicated in the Card, the High Priestess. Here is a *woman*, she is *seated*; she wears a *three-layered tiara*; a *veil* is suspended above her head to cover the intermediate planes that she does not want to perceive; and she is looking at an *open book* on her knees.

The gnostic sense is therefore spiritual hearing, just as the mystical sense is spiritual touch. This does not mean to say that the gnostic sense perceives sounds, but only that its perceptions are due to a consciousness analogous to that in the attitude of *expectation* and *attention* when one *listens*, and that the contact between the perceiver and the perceived is not so immediate as in spiritual touch or mystical experience.

It still remains to characterise the two other senses mentioned above, namely the magical sense and the Hermetic-philosophical sense.

The magical sense is that of *projection*, whilst the Hermetic-philosophical sense is that of *synthesis*. By "projection" is meant to put outwards, followed by detaching from oneself, the contents of the inner life—an operation similar to that which is produced on the psychic plane in artistic creation and on the physical plane in giving birth.

The talent of the artist consists in this: that he can render objective—or project—his ideas and feelings so as to obtain a more profound effect on others than that of the expression of ideas and feelings by a person who is not an artist. A work of art is endowed with a life of its own. When a woman gives birth to a child, she gives birth to a being endowed with a life of its own, which detaches itself from her organism in order to start an independent existence. The magical sense also consists in the faculty of projecting outwards the contents of the inner life, which remain endowed with a life of their own. Magic, art and giving birth are essentially analogous and pertain to the same category of projection or exteriorisation of the inner life. The Church dogma of the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, i.e. the projection from "nothingness" of forms and matter which are conferred with a life of their own, signifies the divine and cosmic crowning of this series of analogies. The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is the apotheosis of magic. Its essential statement is, in fact, that the world is a magical act.

In contrast, pantheistic, emanationist and demiurgic doctrines deprive creation of its magical sense. Pantheism denies the independent existence of creatures; they live only as parts of the divine life and the world is only the body of God. Emanationism attributes only a transitory, and therefore ephemeral, existence to creatures and the world. Demiurgism declares that *ex nihilo nihil* ("out of nothing comes nothing") and teaches that there must exist a *substance* co-eternal with God, which God uses as *material for* his work of craftsmanship. God is therefore

not the creator or magical author of the world, but only its craftsman — he only forms, i.e. regroups and recombines, the material elements which are given to him.

Here it is not a matter of considering the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* as the *only* explanation of the world that we find around us. within us and above us. Because the world is vast and great, there is room and there are levels of existence for *all* modes of constructive activity which, taken all together, explain the world of our experience such as it is. What is it a question of here? It is to affirm with as much clarity as possible the thesis that the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is the highest possible expression of magic, namely divine and cosmic magic.

But if you ask me, dear Unknown Friend, if I believe that the creation of the world is only a magical act, without something preceding and without something following it, I reply to you: no, I do not believe this. A *mystical-act* and *gnostic act* "precede" in eternity the act of creation as a *magical act*; this is followed by the activity of formation by the demiurge, or the demiurgic hierarchies, who undertake the work of craftsmanship—work which is essentially that of executive or Hermetic-philosophical **intelligence**.

The classical Cabbala furnishes us with a marvellous example of *the peace* possible between apparently rival doctrines. In its doctrine often Sephiroth, it teaches first the mystery of eternal *mysticism*—AIN-SOPH, the Unlimited. Then it expounds *the gnostic* doctrine of eternal emanations from the womb of the Divine, which precede — *in ordine cognoscendi*—the act of creation. They are the ideas of God within God. which precede the creation — the latter being a conscious act and not impulsive or instinctive. Then it speaks of pure creation or creation *ex nihilo* —*the act of the magical projection of the ideas of the plan of creation, i.e. the Sephiroth.* This creative, magical act is followed — *!!? ordine cognoscendi,* always —by the activity of formation in which the beings of the spiritual hierarchies participate, including man. It is in this way that, according to the Cabbala, the world comes into being, that the world of facts or deeds known to us through experience becomes what it is.

Now, *'olam ha'assiah*, the world of facts, is preceded by *'olam ha yetzirah*, the world of formation or the demiurgic world; this is the product of *'olam ha beriah*, the world or creation of the magical world which is, in turn, the realisation of *olam ha atziluth*, the world of emanations or the gnostic world, inseparable and inseparable from God, who in his true essence is the mystery of supreme mysticism -AIN-SOPH, the Unlimited.

It is therefore possible — and for us there is no doubt about it —to reconcile the diverse doctrines concerning the creation; it is only necessary to put each of them in its proper place, or to apply each to the plane which is proper to it. The Cabbala, through its doctrine of the Sephiroth, provides a wonderful proof that this is so.

Pantheism is true for the "world of emanations" (*'olam ha atziluth*), where there are only ideas —within God and inseparable from him; but theism is true when one leaves the domain of uncreated eternity to pass on to the creation, meaning

the creation of the ancestors or archetypes of phenomena that we know through our experience. And demiurgism is true when we contemplate the world or plane of formation, or the evolution of beings with the aim of coming into conformity with their created prototypes.

But leaving aside the worlds or planes of formation, creation, emanation and divine-mystical essence, one can confine oneself solely to the plane of facts. Then naturalism becomes true—within the limits of this plane, taken in isolation.

The establishing of the hierarchic order of these doctrines concerning the creation, which appear to be rival, has led us right into the domain of activity of the Hermetic-philosophical sense—the sense of synthesis. This sense, corresponding to the second HE of the divine name YHVH, is essentially that of final summary or the vision of the *whole*. It differs from the gnostic sense—which corresponds to the first HE of the divine name—in that it summarises or gives the synthesis of the *differentiated whole*, whilst the gnostic sense gives the reflection of the *whole in its germinal state*. The gnostic sense produces the *first synthesis* or the synthesis before analysis. The Hermetic-philosophical sense, in contrast, produces the *second synthesis* or the synthesis after analysis. The work which is accomplished by means of this sense is not entirely creative. Rather, it is "demiurgic", a work of craftsmanship, where one carries out the forming of a given material with the aim of giving it the form of its final manifestation.

Since one finds in the *Emerald Table* formulae summarising "the three parts of the philosophy of the whole world" (*trespartes philosophiae totius mundi*), and since these at the same time summarise the worlds of magical experience, gnostic revelation and mystical experience, we have given this sense the name "Hermetic-philosophical" sense, i.e. the sense of synthesis of the three worlds or higher planes in a fourth world or plane. It is the sense of synthesis operating in the *vertical* of the superimposed planes, i.e. it is "Hermetic". For Hermeticism is essentially the philosophy, based on magic, gnosis and mysticism, which aspires to the synthesis of the diverse planes of the macrocosm and microcosm. When one summarises facts on a single plane—for example those of biology—one uses the *scientific* sense and not the Hermetic-philosophical sense. The scientific sense—which is generally known and recognised—summarises the facts of experience *on a single plane*, in the *horizontal*. Hermeticism is not a *science* and will never be one. It can certainly *make use* of the sciences and their results, but by doing so it does not become a science.

Non-Hermetic contemporary philosophy summarises particular sciences with the aim of fulfilling the function of a "science of sciences"—and has this in common with Hermeticism. But, in itself, it differs from Hermeticism, which aspires to summarise experience in all planes, which varies according to the plane where the experience takes place. This is why we have chosen the term "Hermetic-philosophical" to designate the fourth sense, the sense of synthesis.

It goes without saying that the characterisation of the four senses—whose collaboration is necessary for a tradition to live and not to degenerate—is sketched

here in a very incomplete manner. But the two following Arcana—the Empress and the Emperor—are of a nature such as to give greater depth and more concrete content to what we are setting forth, especially concerning the magical sense and the Hermetic-philosophical sense. For the third Arcanum of the Tarot, the Empress, is the Arcanum of magic and the fourth Arcanum, the Emperor, is that of Hermetic philosophy.