

*Meditation on the
Third Major Arcanum of the Tarot*

THE EMPRESS
LTEMPERATRICE

Ecce ancilla Domini;
mi hi fiat secundum verbum tuum.
Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord;
let it be to me according to your word.
(Luke i, 38)

LETTER III



THE EMPRESS

Dear Unknown Friend.

The third Arcanum, the Empress, is that of sacred magic. Now, there are three kinds of magic: magic where the magician is the instrument of divine power—this is sacred magic; magic where the magician himself is the source of the magical operation—this is personal magic; lastly, magic where the magician is the instrument of elemental forces or other unconscious forces—this is sorcery. The teaching of the third Arcanum—in view of the context of the Card and its place between the second and fourth Arcana—refers to sacred or divine magic.

All magic, including sorcery, is the putting into practice of this: *that the subtle*

rules the dense—force, matter; consciousness, force; and the superconscious or divine, consciousness. It is this latter rulership that the Empress symbolises. Her crown, sceptre and shield (coat-of-arms) are the three instruments of the exercise of this power. The crowned head indicates the power of the Divine over consciousness; the right arm (according to the viewer of the Card), which bears a sceptre topped by a cross mounted on a globe of gold, represents the power of consciousness over force; and the left arm, which carries a shield bearing an eagle, signifies the power of energy over matter or the volatile over the gross.

The crown is the *divine authorisation* of magic. It is only magic crowned from above which is not usurpatory. The crown is that which renders it legitimate. The sceptre is *magical power*. It is by virtue of the sceptre that she is not impotent. The shield bearing the eagle shows the *aim* of magical power; it is its emblem and its motto, which reads: "Liberation in order to ascend". And the steady throne on which the Empress is seated symbolises the indisputable and inalienable *place* which belongs to magic in spiritual, psychic and natural life—thanks to divine authorisation or the crown, to the reality of her power or the sceptre, and to that which she has as her objective or the shield. This is the *role* of magic in the world.

Let us now consider in a more thorough way the crown, the sceptre, the shield or coat-of-arms and the throne of the Empress, understood as the divine legitimacy, the power, the objective and the role of magic.

The *crown* of the Empress differs primarily from the tiara of the High Priestess of the second Arcanum in that it has *two* levels instead of three. The dignity or function that it signifies or confers therefore has bearing upon two planes. Gnosis has a tiara because she has the task of carrying revelation through three planes as far as the "book" or tradition. Magic is crowned, since her task is the sublimation of Nature, as indicated by the shield or coat-of-arms with the eagle in flight, that the Empress holds instead of the book of the High Priestess.

Josephin Peladan defined magic as "the art of sublimation of man"; no other formula is superior to his (cf. *Comment on devient mage*, Paris, 1892 p. 135). This is exactly the emblem — or aim — of magic, if one understands by "sublimation of man" that of *human nature*. Peladan had a very profound understanding of the emblem of magic: the shield with the eagle in flight. All his works bear witness to this. Together they represent a magnificent flight; they aim, as a whole and each taken individually, at the ideal of the sublimation of human nature. It is because Peladan bore the emblem of magic: the flying eagle, that this is so. Isn't it to have the emblem of magic before one's eyes that one is invited "to throw the eagles of one's desires to the wind", because happiness "raised to the level of an ideal, freed from the negative aspects of oneself and of things. . . is the sole triumph of this world"? (J. Peladan, *Traite des antinomies*, Paris, 1901, p. 112). It is this same emblem — the shield with the eagle — that Papus had in mind, in actual fact, when he defined magic as:

The application of the strengthened human will to accelerate

the evolution of the living forces of Nature. (Papus, *Traité methodique de magie pratique*, Paris, 3rd edition, p. 10)

He preceded this definition by another:

Magic is the science of love, (ibid., p. 2)

for it is precisely "the accelerated evolution of the living forces of Nature" that the eagle of the *shield* of the Empress represents; "the science of LOVE" is the *sceptre* of the Empress, which represents the *means* by which the aim of magic is attained.

Now, if the shield signifies the "what?" and the sceptre the "how?" of magic, the crown represents here the "by what right?"

Although magic has disappeared from the criminal codes of our time, the question of its legitimacy still persists as a moral, theological and also medical question. One asks oneself today, just as in the past, if it is morally legitimate to aspire—without talking of exercising—to an exceptional power conferring us with dominion over our fellow beings; one asks oneself if such an aspiration is not due, in the last analysis, to vaingloriousness, and if it is compatible with the role that all sincere and believing Christians reserve for divine grace, be it immediate or be it acting through the intermediary of guardian Angels and the saints of God? One asks oneself, lastly, if such an aspiration is not unwholesome and contrary to human nature, religion and metaphysics, given the limits to which one can go with impunity towards the Invisible.

All these doubts and objections are well-founded. It is therefore a matter not of refuting them, but of knowing whether there exists a magic which is free from these doubts and objections or, in other words, whether there exists a *legitimate magic* from a moral, religious and medical point of view.

As a point of departure, we shall take these words from the New Testament:

Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years and was paralysed. And Peter said to him: Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed. And immediately he rose. (Acts ix, 32-34)

Here is a spiritual act of healing whose legitimacy is beyond doubt: from a moral point of view, it is an act of pure charity; from a religious point of view, it is in the name of Jesus Christ and not the name of Peter himself that the healing is effected; from a medical point of view it is a perfect cure, without prejudice to physical or psychic health, that is denoted for the healer. That which establishes

the indisputable legitimacy of the healing of Aeneas is, firstly, the *aim* of Peter's deed: to restore movement to the person who had been unable to move: secondly, it is the *means* by which the healing was accomplished: the word based on the essence of Jesus Christ; thirdly, it is the *source* of the deed: "Jesus Christ heals you!"

These are the three elements of sacred magic which render it legitimate and in which it is easy to recognise the three insignias of the Empress—the crown, the sceptre and the emblem. For to give movement to the motionless is the liberating action represented by the eagle on the shield; to realise the healing solely through the spoken word is to put into play the sceptre surmounted by the cross; to accomplish it in the name of Jesus Christ is to have the head crowned by the divine.

But, one could object, the healing of Aeneas has nothing to do with magic. It is a *miracle*, i.e. the action of God, and man is nothing here.

Was the apostle Peter there, therefore, for nothing? If this were true, why does *he* go up to Aeneas? Why is the divine action of healing not accomplished *directly*, without Peter as intermediary?

No, Peter was there for something. *His* presence and *his* voice were necessary in order that the healing could take place. Why?

This problem merits deep meditation, for it encloses the central mystery of the Christian religion, that of the *Incarnation*. Indeed, why must the Logos, the Son of the Father, incarnate and become God-Man in order to accomplish the supreme work of divine magic—the work of the Redemption?

In order to humble himself!? But, being God, he was humility itself. In order to participate in human destiny: human birth, life and death? But God who is love participated, participates, and will always participate in human destiny—he freezes with all those who are cold, he suffers with those who are suffering and he undergoes agony with all those who die—You know that in monasteries in the Near East, at a time when hearts were still beating on the foundation of the divine Presence, the pronouncing of these words was taught as a miraculous cure for all afflictions and every suffering: "Glory to your long-suffering, Lord!"

No. the work of the Redemption, being that of love, requires the perfect union in love of *two wills*, distinct and free—divine will and human will. The mystery of the God-Man is the key of divine magic, being the fundamental condition of the work of the Redemption, which is an operation of divine magic comparable only to that of the creation of the world.

Thus miracles require *two* united wills! They are not manifestations of an all-powerful will *ordaining*, but are due to a new power which is *born* whenever there is unity between divine will and human will. Peter was therefore certainly there for something at the healing of Aeneas at Lydda. The divine will needed his will in order to give birth to the power which raised the paralysed Aeneas from his bed. Such an action, where there is simultaneously an accordance of divine will and human will, is exactly what we mean by "sacred magic" or "divine magic".

Should one speak of "magic" when it is a case of a miracle? Yes, because there

is a *magus* and the participation of his will is essential for the realisation of the miracle. Peter goes up to Aeneas and it is he who utters the words which effect the healing. The participation of Peter is indisputable— he was there as a *human magus*. Consequently, the use of the word "magic" is quite justified, at least if one understands by "magic" the power of the invisible and spiritual over the visible and material.

But this was not "personal magic"; rather it was "divine magic" to which the healing of Aeneas was due. For Peter could do nothing if his will was not united with the divine will. He was fully conscious of this, and this is why he says to Aeneas: "Jesus Christ heals you". This means to say: "Jesus Christ really wants to heal you. Jesus Christ has sent me to you in order that I might do what he has said to me. As far as I am concerned, I am doubly happy to be able at one and the same time to serve my Master and to heal you, my dear brother Aeneas."

Here lies the meaning of the two-layered crown which the Empress wears. It is to be able to be "doubly happy" to serve that which is above and that which is below. For the crown, just as the tiara, represents the power of *service*. It is service rendered to that which is above and service rendered to that which is below which constitutes the legitimacy of sacred magic.

The magus in sacred magic plays the role of the last link in the magical chain which descends from above, i.e. in order to serve as the terrestrial *point of contact* and *point of concentration* for the operation conceived, willed and put into action from above. In fact, when one is this last link, one wears the *crown* of legitimate magic. And, let us say it again, all magic that is not crowned in this way is therefore illegitimate.

Is the legitimate exercise of sacred magic therefore reserved for the priesthood alone?

To this, I reply with another question: Is the love of God and of one's neighbour reserved for the priesthood alone? Sacred magic is the power of love, born of the union in love of divine will and human will. Now, Monsieur Philip of Lyons was neither priest nor doctor, but he healed sick people through a spiritual power which he said was not his but "from the Friend above".

The priesthood includes numerous thaumaturgists—St. Gregory, St. Nicholas and St. Patrick—which is sufficient to convince us that sacred magic is truly amongst the works of the priesthood. How could it be otherwise, given that the administration of the sacraments—these *universal* operations of sacred magic—constitute the principal responsibility of the clergy and that the *individual* operations "decided above" are entrusted above all to those living in the atmosphere of the universal sacraments? Is it not natural that he who participates each day in the mystery of the transubstantiation is called, in the first place, to sacred magic?

The life and work of the holy priest of Ars leaves no doubt that the response is affirmative. The life and work of the holy priest of Ars shows us the loftiness and splendour of individual sacred magic—*beyond* the universal sacraments—which is able to manifest itself in the life and work of a simple country parson.

But on the other hand, the life and work of Monsieur Philip of Lyons shows us the loftiness and splendour of individual sacred magic—*without* the universal sacraments—which is able to manifest itself in the life and work of a layman, born and raised in the country!

Love is active wherever it exists. It is everyone's vocation; it is no one's prerogative.

Thus, it is clear from the preceding that gnosis due to mystical experience must precede sacred magic. This is the meaning of the crown that the Empress wears. Sacred magic is the child of mysticism and gnosis.

If it were not so, magic would be the putting into practice of *occult theory*. This applies only to personal or usurpatory magic. Sacred or divine magic is the putting into practice of *mystical revelation*. The Master revealed to Peter what he had to do—inwardly and outwardly—in order to heal Aeneas at Lydda. It is here that the order of things in sacred magic is given: firstly, *real* contact with the Divine (mysticism), then the taking into *consciousness* of this contact (gnosis). and lastly *the putting into operation* or the execution of that which mystical revelation has made known as being the task to accomplish and the method to follow.

Personal or usurpatory magic follows, in contrast, the reverse order. Here it is the magician himself who studies occult theory and decides when and how to put it into practice. If he does so following the advice given by a master in magic, someone who has experimented in magic more than he has, the principle remains the same: it is always the human personality who decides the "what" and the "how". Thus Papus says:

What differentiates magic from occult science in general is that the first is *practical* science, whilst the second is above all theoretical. But to want to do magic without knowing occultism is to want to drive a locomotive without having passed through a special *theoretical* school. One can envisage the result (p. 4). Magic being a *practical* science demands preliminary theoretical knowledge, as with all practical sciences, (p. 5)

And lastly:

Magic, considered as a science of application, limits its action almost solely to the development of relationships existing between man and Nature. The study of the relations existing between man and the higher plane, the divine plane, in all its variations, relates more to theurgy than to magic (p. 142). (Papus, *Traite methodique de magie pratique*, Paris, 3rd edition, pp. 4-5. 142)

Here is an entirely characteristic definition, which leaves nothing more to desire, of what we have designated as "arbitrary" or "personal magic". Magic of this sort does not include that which is higher than man: the divine plane. Here man is the sole master—as he is elsewhere in all the practical sciences.

As a general rule, the principal director in every operation is the human will; the means of action, the implement used, is the astral or natural fluid, and the end to achieve is the realisation (generally on the physical plane) of the undertaken operation. (Papus, *La science des mages*, Paris, 1974, p. 69) [But] ... regarding ceremonial magic and naturalism, we can only condemn them as much as for their uselessness as for the formidable dangers that they contain and for the state of soul which they suppose... In fact, one understands here, under this last designation (ceremonial magic), an operation where the *human will and intelligence ALONE* are active, without divine concurrence. (Papus, *Traite elementaire de science occulte*, Paris, 1888 pp. 430-431)

The "formidable dangers" of arbitrary or personal magic have been described by all those who have had direct or indirect experience of this. Henry Cornelius Agrippa (*De Occulta Philosophia*, vol. iii). Eliphas Levi (*Transcendental Magic. Its Doctrine and Ritual*) and Papus have said sufficient to prove that arbitrary or personal magic is most dangerous.

For sacred or divine magic, one risks only that it is inoperative, because of an error—which can be distressing—but it comprises no danger.

Before finishing here with the dangers of corrupt magic, I would like to add what is elaborated by Jean Herbert in his preface to the French edition of Arthur Avalon's *Serpent Power*, where he puts the reader on guard against the temptation of trying to practise the tantric method and evoking the "serpent power" (*kundalini*), raising it up to the head, to the *sahasrara* (crown) centre:

He who attempts this without being guided by an authentic-master—which is almost certainly impossible in the Occident—will find himself in a situation quite analogous to that of a child whom one allows to play with all the drugs filling a pharmacy, or to walk with a lighted taper into a firework factory. Incurable heart problems, slow destruction of the spinal marrow, sexual disorders and madness await those who risk this. (Arthur Avalon, *La puissance du serpent*; trsl. J. Herbert, Lyons, 1959, Intro.)

Here is the bouquet of the "flowers of misfortune" which is offered to the beginner without a guru, or with a non-authentic guru!

Let us return to sacred magic. Having characterised its "crown" or divine legitimacy, we should now consider its "sceptre" or power.

The sceptre of the Empress comprises three parts: a cross, a globe and a staff topped by a little bowl or bulb. The staff is narrower below, beneath where the Empress holds it, than above, where it supports the globe surmounted by a cross. The globe is divided into two by a belt or "equatorial zone". Thus, it can be said that it is formed from *two cups*, one upside down, supporting the cross and turn-

ed downwards or "below", the other turned upwards and supported by the staff, is open towards the "above".



Now, the joining together of the cup surmounted by a cross and of another supported by a staff—which constitutes the sceptre of the Empress—is the symbolic expression of the method of the *realisation* of the potentiality represented by the crown. // is the union of two potential wills in the crown, become actual in the sceptre. The cup surmounted by the cross and turned downwards or "below" is the divine will, whilst the cup supported by the staff and turned upwards or "above" is the human will. Their active union is the sceptre or the power of sacred magic. This power results from the influx from the cross which flows from the upper cup into the empty lower cup and from there descends through the staff in order to be concentrated at its extremity as an "acorn" or a *drop*. Or to express it in other words: the Holy Blood from above concentrates itself and becomes a "drop" of human blood by the human word and action.

Perhaps you will say: but this is the Holy Grail, it is **the** mystical Eucharist of which you speak!

Yes, this is exactly to do with the Holy Grail or the mystical Eucharist. For it is there, and only there, that the power of sacred magic resides. This power is, in the last analysis, that of twofold *sincerity*—divine and human—united in the human word or action. Because not one word or action is *truly* sincere when it is only cerebral, and when it is only cerebral then it is not a flow of vital blood. The more sincerity there is in the human word or action, the more there is the vital essence of blood. When it happens—and the Angels fall down in adoration when this occurs—that the human wish is in accord with the divine, the Holy Blood is then united to the vital essence of the human blood and the *Mystery of the God-Man* is repeated, and also the miraculous power of the God-Man is reiterated. Here is the power of sacred magic—or its sceptre.

Dear Unknown Friend, do not think that I have only combined these things intellectually, after having read books on the Holy Grail and treatises of mystical theology on the sacrament of the Eucharist. No, I would never write of the mystery of blood as the source of sacred magic—even if I "knew" these things—if I had not visited and returned many times to the Chapel of Holy Blood at Bruges. There I have had the unsettling experience of the *reality* of the Holy Blood of the God-Man. It is this experience, with the effect of rejuvenating the soul—what am I saying!?!—not only rejuvenating the soul, but even elevating it in the sense of the healing of Aeneas effected by St. Peter: "Rise, and make your bed!"—it is this experience, I say, which has revealed to me the mystery of the Holy Blood and the source of the power of sacred magic. Do not let the personal character of what

I am writing obscure this for you. I am an anonymous author and I remain so in order to be able to be more frank and sincere than is ordinarily permitted to an author.

The *aim* of sacred magic, as we have said, is represented by the shield that the Empress holds in place of the book which the High Priestess holds. Sacred gnosis has as its aim the communicable expression (or "book") of mystical revelation, whilst the aim of sacred magic is *liberating action*, i.e. the restoration of freedom to beings who have partially or totally lost it. The eagle in flight depicted on the shield signifies this emblem of sacred magic, which could thus be formulated: "Give freedom to he who is enslaved." And this includes all the works mentioned by Luke:

Jesus cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them: Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. (Luke vii, 21-22)

This is the aim of sacred magic; it is nothing other than to give the freedom to see, to hear, to walk, to live, to follow an ideal and to be truly oneself— i.e. to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the ability to walk to the lame, life to the dead, good news or ideals to the poor and free will to those who are possessed by evil spirits. It never encroaches upon freedom, the restoration of which is its unique aim.

It is more than pure and simple healing which is the object of sacred magic; it is the restoration of freedom, including here freeing from the imprisonment of doubt, fear, hate, apathy and despair. The "evil spirits" which deprive man of his freedom are not at all beings of the so-called "hierarchies of evil" or "fallen hierarchies". Neither Satan, nor Belial, nor Lucifer, nor Mephistopheles have ever deprived anyone of his freedom. *Temptation* is their only weapon and this presupposes the freedom of he who is tempted. But *possession* by an "evil spirit" has nothing to do with temptation. It is invariably the same thing as with Frankenstein's monster. One engenders an elemental being and one subsequently becomes the slave of one's own creation. The "demons" or "evil spirits" of the New testament are called today in psychotherapy "neuroses of obsession", "neuroses or fear", "fixed ideas", etc. They have been discovered by contemporary psychiatrists and are recognised as *real*— i.e. as "parasitic psychic organisms" independent of the conscious human will and tending to subjugate it. But the devil is not there to no avail—although not in the sense of direct participation. He observes the *law*—which protects human freedom and is the inviolable convention between the hierarchies of the "right" and those of the "left"—and never violates it, as stands out in the example of the story of Job. One need not fear the devil, but rather

the perverse tendencies in oneself! For these perverse human tendencies can deprive us of our freedom and enslave us. Worse still, they can avail themselves of our imagination and inventive faculties and lead us to creations which can become the scourge of mankind. The atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb are flagrant examples of this.

Man with the possible perversity of his warped imagination is far more dangerous than the devil and his legions. For man is not bound by the convention concluded between heaven and hell; he can go beyond the limits of the law and engender *arbitrarily* malicious forces whose nature and action are *beyond* the framework of the law. . . such being the Molochs and other "gods" of Canaa, Phoenecia, Carthage, ancient Mexico and other lands, which exacted human sacrifice. One has to guard against accusing the beings of the hierarchies of evil to their detriment of having played the role of Molochs, these being only creatures of the perverse collective human will and imagination. These are *egregores*, engendered by collective perversity, just as there exist the "demons" or "evil spirits" engendered by individuals. But we have said enough about demons; the problem of "evil spirits" will be treated in a more detailed and profound way in the fifteenth Letter, dedicated to Arcanum XV-

The *throne* on which the Empress is seated represents, as we have said, the role of sacred magic in the world. It is its place in the world and in the history of the world; it is, lastly, its basis. In other words, it is that which attends it, desires it and is always ready to receive it. What is this?

In view of the liberating function of sacred magic, it is all that which is deprived of liberty and is bound by necessity. Concerning this, St. Paul says:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans viii, 19-23)

It is therefore the mineral, plant, animal and human realms of Nature — in a word, Nature in its entirety — which constitute the domain of sacred magic. The reason for the existence of sacred magic stems from the Fall and the whole domain of the Fall -comprising fallen Nature, fallen man and the fallen hierarchies. These are the beings belonging to it who hope "with eager longing" to be "set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God".

How does sacred magic operate towards this end? How, for example, does it deliver man?

The throne of the Kmpress has a back. It strongly resembles two wings, so that certain interpreters of the Tarot have seen the Empress as being winged. Others, however, see only a back. In view of the context of the Card, the meaning of the coat-of-arms bearing the eagle, the sceptre surmounted by the cross, and the two-layered crown, could one not see the back here in the form of *two petrified and immobilised wings*, but which had once been genuine wings and which are again potentially so?

If this interpretation is accepted, not only would it reconcile the two apparently opposing points of view but also it would agree with all that the Card teaches about the sphere, the aim, the power and the legitimacy of sacred magic. To give movement to the petrified wings.. would this not be in accord with the liberating mission of sacred magic and with the words of St. Paul?

Whatever it may be, this interpretation comprises the answer to the question as to the concrete mode of the liberating action of sacred magic. It is in every way contrary to the action of constraint of false or personal magic. It sets in opposition to the action of hypnosis — the waking of the free will; and to suggestion — the deliverance from possession by fixed ideas and psychopathological complexes. It sets in opposition to evocation by necromancy — the ascent towards the deceased effected by the force of love; and to the means of constraint employed by ceremonial magic with respect to elemental beings (gnomes, undines, sylphs and salamanders) — the gain of their confidence and friendship by corresponding acts. It opposes to the procedures of the practical Cabbala, which have the aim of subjugating "evil spirits" (in the sense of the fallen hierarchies) — their transformation into servants through their own accord by resistance to the special temptations of each of them. For they also are waiting "for the revealing of the sons of God", and this revealing signifies for them, in the first place, inaccessibility to their temptations. Resist the devil, and the devil will be your friend. A devil is not an atheist; he does not doubt God. The faith which he lacks is faith in man. And the act of sacred magic with respect to such a devil is that of re-establishing his faith in man. The purpose of the trials of Job was not to dispel the doubts of God, but rather those of the devil. These doubts once dispelled, who was it then who laboured to give to Job all that he had lost, if not the same being who had formerly deprived him of everything? Job's enemy became his voluntary servant-and "voluntary servant" means to *say friend*. Sacred magic, finally, opposes to the fluidic transfusion of magnetism — the practice of taking upon oneself the illnesses and infirmities of others, according to St. Paul's precept:

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
(Galatians vi, 2)

It is in this way that saints practise sacred magic. They would not project their forces, their vitality or their fluids into someone else, but on the contrary would rather *take* from him that which was unhealthy in him. St. Lidvina, for example,

who never left her bed or her room for many long years, once smelt strongly of alcohol. At the same time the cure of an alcoholic was effected in the town (Schiedam) where she lived.

Having advanced this list of contraries, I do not have the intention of judging, still less of condemning—hypnosis, magnetism, suggestion, all evocation, ceremonial magic dealing with Nature, and practical Cabbala aspiring to the subjugation of "evil spirits". The sole aim here is to make clear that which differentiates sacred magic from these practices. They *can* also serve the good. But sacred magic can do nothing else than to serve the good.

Are there *grimoires* of sacred magic? Yes, if one understands by "*grimoire*" an arsenal of arms or implements which one makes use of. This arsenal is composed of formulae, gestures, and figures reproduced by the gestures. But one must not choose them arbitrarily. The choice must be reserved either according to profound knowledge *confirmed by revelation* or otherwise to *direct revelation* confirmed subsequently by the knowledge of experience.

With regard to the arsenal of formulae, it is accessible almost entirely to everyone. For the principal source of the formulae of sacred magic is the Holy Scripture, the Bible, comprising the New and Old Testaments. The Gospel according to St. John occupies a prominent place here, for it consists almost completely of magical formulae. Then come the three other Gospels and the Apocalypse (Book of Revelation). One also finds magical formulae in the Epistles and in the Acts of the Apostles. As for the Old Testament, one finds them above all in the Psalms, the Book of Genesis (*Bereshith*), Ezekiel and the other prophets. There are also the magical formulae in the liturgical ritual of the Church and in the written or oral tradition leading back to the saints and to the great mystics. Equally, the text of the *Emerald Table* belongs to the arsenal of formulae of sacred magic.

Concerning the "silent" part (i.e. the gestures and figures reproduced by gestures) of sacred magic, their choice must be in the same way either confirmed by revelation or indicated by it. They consist, as a rule, of the ritual gestures employed by the traditional Church (Roman or Greek-Orthodox) and of gestures reproducing a certain number of geometrical figures. Thus it is necessary sometimes to kneel down, sometimes to be upright, sometimes to prostrate oneself; sometimes it is necessary to do the gesture of benediction, sometimes that of protection or that of liberation, etc.

These formulae and gestures are not secret, but one should not *betray* them. "To betray" does not signify to divulge them, to make them known to others; one does not betray a magical formula which is known to nearly everyone solely by the fact of making it known to others. But one betrays it when one uproots it from its proper, sacred ground and from the sacred *context* of the magical operation to which it belongs and when one brings it down to a lower plane, i.e. when one *abuses* it. It is the same as with the formulae by means of which consecration operates in the Mass. Everyone knows them, but they operate only when they are pronounced in the sacred context of the Mass by a person who is alone legitimately

authorised to do it. It is not secrecy which enables their operation; it is the *context* and it is the *niveau* of the operation, and it is the *legitimacy* of the operant or celebrant. Therefore one does not betray the formulae of consecration by printing them in the missals. But one certainly would betray them if one were to use them, as a layman, in an arbitrarily improvised or invented "mass".

The *mystery* is protected in another way than the *secret*. Its protection is its light, whilst the protection of a secret is its obscurity. As for an *arcanum*, which is a middle degree between the mystery and the secret, it is the twilight which protects it. For it reveals itself and hides itself at the same time by means of symbolism. Symbolism is a twilight for arcana. Thus the Arcana of the Tarot are formulae rendered visible and accessible to everyone. They were entertaining in the past for thousands of people; they were used for telling fortunes by hundreds of people; a few experienced in them a revelatory effect. Court de Gebelin was astonished by them; Eliphas Levi was captivated by them; Papus was inspired by them; others followed them and became subject to the strange and almost irresistible attraction of the Tarot. They studied it, meditated and commented upon it, and interpreted it, being stimulated, inspired and illumined by "something" in the Tarot which simultaneously reveals itself and hides itself in the twilight of its symbols. And ourselves? Where do we stand in relation to the Tarot? We shall have a sure knowledge of this after the twenty-second Letter, dedicated to the Minor Arcana of the Tarot.

The throne on which the Empress is seated represents the second HE of the *Tetragrammaton* of sacred magic, i.e. its *manifested entirety*; her crown corresponds to YOD, the sceptre to the first HE and the coat-of-arms to the VAU of the *Tetragrammaton*. This is why we have defined the throne as "the role of sacred magic in the world and in history". One could equally say that it is the *phenomenon* of the whole of sacred magic as it has manifested itself, as it is manifesting itself, and as it will manifest itself in the history of mankind. It is its historical *body* which reveals its soul and spirit. By "body" I mean that which makes possible direct action in the world of facts. Thus the arsenal or store of magical formulae and gestures which one uses in the practical exercise of sacred magic are part of its body. The rituals of its universal operations, destined to serve the whole of mankind, and transcending space and time, i.e. the seven sacraments of the universal Church, in so far as they are rituals, are equally part of its body. Then those who have the mission or the ability to perpetuate the tradition of sacred magic are likewise part of it. This body is like a *tree* which has a certain number of branches which bear many leaves, but whose roots are in heaven and whose top is turned downwards. "as only one trunk and a sap which nourishes and vivifies all its branches with their innumerable leaves.

Is this the Tree of the Sephiroth of the Cabbala? Or rather the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? Or, again, the Tree of Life?

The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil has had a triple effect: toil, suffering and death. Toil or work took the place of mystical union with God,

which union (without effort) is the teaching of the first Arcanum of the Tarot, the Magician. Suffering replaced the directly reflected revelation or gnosis, whose direct revelation is the teaching of the second Arcanum of the Tarot, the High Priestess. And death entered into the domain of life or creative, sacred magic, which is the teaching of the third Arcanum of the Tarot, the Empress. For sacred magic is that life which was before the Fall. The gnosis of the second Arcanum is that consciousness which was before the Fall. And the mystical spontaneity of the first Arcanum is that relationship between man and God which was before the Fall. This primordial spontaneity gave the impulse and direction to evolution and the development of the human being. It was not the struggle for existence, described by Charles Darwin a century ago, which was the fundamental directing impulse towards the ideal or aim of evolution before the Fall, but rather that state of being which we designate today by the term "mystical union". The principle of *struggle* or toil (effort) only came into play after the Fall. Similarly, suffering did not play the role of awakening consciousness before the time of the Fall; this role was then reserved for directly reflected revelation, or gnosis. Neither did death then play the role of liberating consciousness, through the destruction of the forms which enclose it, that it has played since the Fall. Instead of the destruction of forms, their continual *transformation* took place. This was operated by the perpetual action of life effecting the metamorphosis of forms, in conformity with changes in the consciousness using them. This perpetually liberating *constructive* action of life was—and still is—the function of sacred or divine magic. And it is this transforming function, opposed to the destructive function of death, that Moses' Genesis designates by the symbol of the Tree of Life.

For the Fall changed the destiny of humanity—so that mystical union became replaced by struggle or toil, gnosis by suffering and sacred magic by death. This is why the formula announcing the "good news" that the effects of the Fall can be overcome and that the *way* of human evolution can return to that of mystical union instead of struggle, that immediately reflected revelation or gnosis can replace the teaching of the *truth* through suffering, and that sacred magic or transforming *life* can take the place of destructive death—this is why. I say, this formula has the tenor of the following:

I AM THE WAY. THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. (John xiv. 6)

This formula is at the same time the summation of the first three Arcana of the Tarot, i.e. the arcanum of the true way or mystical spontaneity, the arcanum of revealed truth or gnosis, and the arcanum of transforming life or sacred magic.

Sacred magic is therefore the Tree of Life, inaccessible to arbitrary fool-hardiness, but manifesting itself in the whole history of mankind by the agency of those who know how to say, "*Ecce ancilla Domini, mi hi fiat secundum verbum tuum*" (cf. Luke i, 38: "Behold. I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word") or rather. "*Ecce servus Domini, faciam secundum verbum tuum*"

("Behold the servant of the Lord, I will do according to your word"). It manifests itself in human history by a miracle: namely, that human supra-biological *life* continues from century to century, from millennium to millennium, and its source does not dry up; that the sacred fire above the altars of hearts and the altars of stone is not extinguished from century to century, from millennium to millennium; that goodness, truth and beauty do not lose their attraction from century to century; that, in spite of all, there is faith, hope and charity in the world; that there are saints, sages, geniuses, benefactors, and healers; that pure thought, poetry, music, and prayer are not being engulfed by the void; that there is this universal miracle of human history; and *that the miraculous exists*. Yes, the miraculous does exist, for *life* is only a series of miracles, if we understand by "miracle" not the absence of cause (i.e. that it would not be caused by anyone or anything—which would be more the concept of "pure chance"), but rather the visible effect of an invisible cause, or the effect on a lower plane due to a cause on a higher plane.

Incomprehensibility is not at all the distinctive quality of a miracle; on the contrary, a miracle is often essentially more comprehensible than a so-called "natural" and "explained" phenomenon. It is, for example, more comprehensible that Teresa Neumann, in Bavaria, lived for decades without any food other than the host—in view of the fact that matter is only condensed energy and energy is only "condensed" consciousness—than the "well explained" fact of a single cell which, in multiplying itself by division, produces quite different cells for the brain, muscles, bones, hair, etc., which group themselves in such a way that the result is a complete human or animal organism. When someone tells me that all this is explained by heredity, that such are the "genes" contained within the first cell that it results in such an organism, then I nod in agreement, but I am completely hoodwinked.

The Tree of Life is the source of the miracles of generation, transformation, rejuvenation, healing and liberation. Conscious participation with it, *ad perpetrandam miracula rei unius* as the *Emerald Table* expresses it, is the "great work" of sacred magic.

One can understand the idea of the "great work" when one compares it with the ideal of modern exact science. For the idea of science is *power*—practical technical power and intellectual technical power. The intellectual aspect of the scientific ideal is to reduce the multiplicity of phenomena to a limited number of laws and then reduce these to a single simple formula. It is a matter, in the last analysis, of mechanising the intellect in such a manner that it *calculates* the world instead of understanding it. Then one would attain intellectual technical power.

The practical aspect of the scientific ideal is revealed in the progress of modern science from the eighteenth century to the present day. Its essential stages are the discoveries and putting into man's service, successively, steam, electricity and atomic energy. But as different as these appear to be, these discoveries are based only on a single principle, namely the principle of the *destruction of matter*, by which energy is freed in order to be captured anew by man so as to be put at his service.

It is so with the little tegular explosions of petrol which produce the energy to drive a car. And it is so with the destruction of atoms, by means of the technique of neutron bombardment, which produces atomic energy. That it is a matter of coal, petrol, or hydrogen atoms, is not important; it is always a case of the production of energy as a consequence of the destruction of matter, for the practical aspect of the scientific ideal is the domination of Nature by means of putting into play the principle of *destruction* or *death*.

Imagine, dear Unknown Friend, efforts and discoveries in the opposite direction, in the direction *of construction or life*. Imagine, not an explosion, but rather the *blossoming out* of a *constructive* "atomic bomb". It is not too difficult to imagine, because each little acorn is such a "constructive bomb" and the oak is only the visible result of the slow "explosion"—or blossoming out— of this "bomb". Imagine it, and you will have the ideal of the *great work* or the idea of the *Tree of Life*. The image itself of the tree comprises the negation of the technical and mechanical element. It is the living synthesis of celestial light and elements of the earth. Not only is it the synthesis of heaven and earth, it constantly synthesises that which descends from above and that which ascends from below.

Now, the ideal of Hermeticism is *contrary* to that of science. Instead of aspiring to power over the forces of Nature by means of the destruction of matter, Hermeticism aspires to conscious participation with the constructive forces of the world on the basis of an alliance and a cordial communion with them. Science wants to *compel Nature* to obedience to the will of man such as it is; Hermeticism— or the philosophy of sacred magic— on the contrary wants to purify, illumine and change the will and nature of man in order to bring them into harmony with the creative principle of Nature (*natura naturans*) and to render them capable of receiving its willingly bestowed *revelation*. The "great work", as an ideal, is therefore the state of the human being who is in peace, alliance, harmony and collaboration with life. This is the "fruit" of the Tree of Life.

But does not the Bible say that the approach to the Tree of Life is defended and that "at the east of the garden of Eden God placed the Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the Tree of Life" (Genesis iii, 24)? Yes, it is defended, but the defence is not absolute and general; it is *specific*. Read what the Bible says here: "Then the LORD God said: Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever. . ." (Genesis iii, 22). Now, it is a matter here of defence against *putting forth the hand and taking* from the Tree of Life, and it is this and only this that the flaming sword at the garden of Eden prevents.

"Putting forth the hand and taking"—this is the motif, the method and the ideal of science. It is the will-to-power underlying the scientific attitude which is prevented by the flaming sword of the Guardian of Eden from repeating the act committed with respect to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. But the motif, method and ideal of Hermeticism is contrary to that of science. The will-

to-serve underlies the fundamental Hermetic attitude. Instead of putting forward the hand to *take*, the human being opens his mind, his heart and his will to *receive* that which will be graciously bestowed upon him. The inspiration, illumination and intuition that he seeks are not so much conquests accomplished by his will; they are rather gifts from above, preceded by the efforts of the human will endeavouring to become worthy.

The flaming sword of the Guardian of Eden is a weapon of divine magic. This means to say that it is essentially a "yes" and not a "no". It is essentially constructive and not destructive. In other words, it invites, encourages and directs all those who are worthy, all that which is worthy in each person, to the benefits of the Tree of Life; and it forbids, discourages and sends away all those who are unworthy, and also all that which is unworthy in each person. The flaming sword is a *benediction* to those who seek the Tree of Eternal Love which is the Tree of Life, and at the same time, by the very fact that it blesses, the flaming force prohibits those who seek the Tree of Life in order to take possession of its fruits. The sword of the Holy Guardian of Eden is always active in the spiritual life of humanity. It calls to seekers and it repulses thieves. Thanks to it Hermeticism, the millennial-old tradition of uninterrupted pursuit of the ideal of the "great work", exists—in spite of all the chimera, all the illusions and all the forms of charlatanism, conscious and unconscious, which accompany this pursuit.

The sword of the Holy Guardian of Eden works the magical revelation of the Tree of Life—for everyone, without distinction. It is the magical word stirring ablaze in human souls ardent desire for the "great work", the miraculous life. It "will not break a bruised reed or quench a smouldering wick" (Matthew xii, 20), because its mission is divine; and it is characteristic of the Divine not only to save every droplet of sincerity and every spark of love, but also to make them grow and spread. Because in spite of all corruption that historical experience brings to the light of day, in totality nothing is corrupt. The traditional teaching of the Church that "Nature is wounded but not destroyed" (*natura vulnerata, non cieleta*) is absolutely true.

The Tree of Life is the unity or synthesis of consciousness, force and matter. *Three* is its number. . . because it reflects the unity of the Holy Trinity. It is at the same time the unity of mysticism, gnosis and magic. This is why one should not separate them. The Empress, as a symbol of sacred magic, contains within itself gnosis and mysticism—or the High Priestess and the Magician. These Arcana are incomprehensible when one takes them separately. In general, all the Arcana of the Tarot are comprehensible only when considered as a whole.

But it so happens that in human consciousness one separates the inseparable—in forgetting the unity. One takes a branch of the tree and cultivates it as if it exists without the trunk. The branch can have a long life, but it degenerates. It is thus that in forgetting gnosis and mysticism, magic has been taken separately which, being a branch separated from its trunk, ceased to be sacred magic and became arbitrary or personal magic. This latter mechanised to a certain degree and became

what one understands as "ceremonial magic", which flourished from the time of the Renaissance until the seventeenth century. It was *parexcellence* the magic of the humanists, i.e. it was no longer divine magic, but *human* magic. It no longer served God, but man. Its ideal became the power of man over visible and invisible Nature. Later, invisible Nature was also forgotten. Visible Nature was concentrated upon alone, with the aim of subjugating it to the human will. It is in this way that technological and industrial science originated. It is the continuation of the ceremonial magic of the humanists, stripped of its occult element, just as the former is the continuation of sacred magic, but deprived of its gnostic and mystical element.

What I am saying here is perfectly in accord with what Papus (and Eliphas Levi) thought, concerning which one cannot say that he was speaking without knowledge of the matter. For Papus said:

Ceremonial magic is an operation by which man seeks, through the play of natural forces, to compel the invisible powers of diverse orders to act according to what he requires of them. To this end he seizes them, he surprises them, as it were, in projecting, through the effect of *correspondences* which suppose the unity of Creation, forces of which he himself is not master, but to which he can open extraordinary outlets... Ceremonial magic is of an order absolutely identical to our industrial science. Our power is almost nothing alongside that of steam, electricity and dynamite; but in opposing them by appropriate combinations to natural forces as powerful as themselves, we concentrate them, we accumulate them, we compel them to transport or to smash weights which would annihilate us... (Papus. *Traite elementaire de science occulte*, Paris, 1888 pp. 425-426)

What more is there to say? One can, perhaps, add another statement by Papus, defining the relationship between the "scientific mage" or occultist and the sorcerer, as follows:

The sorcerer is to the occultist as the worker is to the engineer.
(Papus, *La science des mages*, Paris, 1974, p. 68)

The sorcerer is therefore only an amateur occultist.

Just as contemporary technological science is the direct continuation of ceremonial magic, contemporary profane art is merely a continuation of gnosis and magic which have lost sight of mysticism and become separated from it. Because art seeks to *reveal* and applies itself to do this in a *magical* manner.

The ancient mysteries were only sacred art — being in the background conscious of mysticism and gnosis. But after forgetting this background or, so to say, after this background receded too far into the background, there remained a gnosis

(or a "revelationism") deprived at root of mystical discipline and experience. In this way "creative art" originated, and the mysteries became theatre, revelatory mantras became verses, hymns became songs, and revelatory "pantomimic" movements became dances, whilst cosmic myths gave way to *belles lettres*.

Art, being separated from the living organism of the unity of the *Tetragrammaton*, is necessarily removed from gnosis as well as from sacred magic—from which it springs and to which it owes its substance and the sap of its life. The pure revelation of gnosis has become more and more a game of the imagination and the power of magic has degenerated more and more into aesthetics. Richard Wagner understood this and wanted to remedy it. The work of Wagner followed the aim of the reintegration of art—to effect reunion with gnosis and mysticism so that it becomes sacred magic again.

Josephin Peladan endeavoured to do the same in France. He even had dazzling success but this was short-lived—for reasons which he well understood subsequently. Silence is the indispensable climate for all revelation; noise renders it absolutely impossible.

The religious life, as everyone knows, is not exempt from decadence—when it ceases to be founded in mysticism, illumined by gnosis, and actuated by sacred magic. It grows cold without the fire of mysticism, it clouds over without the light of gnosis and becomes impotent without the power of sacred magic. There remains then only theological legalism supported by moral legalism—hence the origin of the religion of the scribes and Pharisees at the time of the New Testament. This is the twilight which precedes its night, its death.

FAITH is the experience of divine *breath*; HOPE is the experience of divine *light*; and LOVE is the experience of *divine fire*. There is no authentic and sincere religious life without *faith*, *hope* and *love*; but there is no faith, hope and love without mystical experience or, what is the same thing, without grace. No intellectual argument can awaken faith; what it can do, at best, is to eliminate obstacles, misunderstandings and prejudices, and thus help to establish the state of interior silence necessary for the experience of the divine breath. But faith itself is the divine breath whose origin is found neither in logical reasoning, nor in aesthetic impression, nor in human moral action.

The divine and flaming Word shines in the world of the silence of the soul and moves" it. This movement is living faith—therefore real and authentic—and its light is hope or illumination, whilst all springs from the divine fire which is love or union with God. The three "ways" or stages of traditional mysticism—*purification*, *illumination antiunion*—are those of the experience of divine breath or faith, divine light or hope, and divine fire or love. These three fundamental experiences of the revelation of the Divine constitute the triangle of *life*—for no spirit, no soul and equally no body would be able to *live* if entirely deprived of all love, all hope and all faith. They would then be deprived of all vital elan (the vital elan advanced by Henri Bergson as the general impulse behind evolution), out what else could this be but some form of love, hope and faith operating at

the basis of all life? It is because "in the beginning was the Word" and "all things were made through him" (John i. 1,3), and it is because the primordial Word still vibrates in all that lives, that the world still lives and has the vital elan which is nothing other than love, hope and faith inspired from the beginning by the creative Word.

In this sense Browning was right in having said. "Nature is supernatural". For its supernatural origin still manifests itself in its vital elan. To want to live! Good Lord, what a profession of faith, what a manifestation of hope and what ardour of love!

Love, hope and faith are at one and the same time the essence of mysticism, gnosis and sacred magic. FAITH is the source of magic power and all the miracles spoken of in the Gospels are attributable to it. The revelation — all the revelations of gnosis have only one aim: to give, to maintain and to increase HOPE. The book that the High Priestess holds on her knees is written so that hope may continue unceasingly. For all revelation which does not give hope is useless and superfluous. Mysticism is fire without reflection; it is union with the divine in LOVE. It is the primary source of all life, including religious, artistic and intellectual life. Without it, everything becomes pure and simple technique. Religion becomes a body of techniques of which the scribes and Pharisees are the engineers; it becomes legalistic. Art becomes a body of techniques—be they traditional or innovative — a field of imitation or experiences. Lastly, science becomes a body of techniques of power over Nature.

But the Arcanum of sacred magic, the Empress, calls to us to take another way. It calls us to the way of regeneration, instead of that of degeneration. It invites us to de-mechanise all that which has become solely intellectual, aesthetic and moral technique. One has to de-mechanise in order to become a mage. For sacred magic is through and through *life* — that life which is revealed in the Mystery of Blood. May our problems become so many cries of the blood (of the heart), may our words be borne by blood, and may our actions be as effusions of blood! This is how one becomes a mage. One becomes a mage by becoming *essential*— as essential as the blood is.

Eliphas Levi puts as the sub-title to the chapter devoted to the third Arcanum of the Tarot in his *Transcendental Magic. Its Doctrine and Ritual: "Plenitudo Vocis"*. His choice is more than happy, it is inspired! Indeed!—"fullness of voice"—could one better describe the essence itself of sacred magic!? Yes, it is "fullness of voice" with which sacred magic is concerned; it is the voice full of blood; it is the blood which becomes voice. It is *being* in which there is nothing mechanical and which is entirely living.

The third Arcanum of the Tarot, being the arcanum of sacred magic, is by this very fact the arcanum of *generation*. For generation is only an aspect of sacred magic. If sacred magic is the union of two wills —human and divine —from which a miracle results, generation itself also presupposes the trinity of the generator, the generant and the generated. Now, the generated is the miracle resulting from

the union of the principles of generator and generant. Whether it is a matter of a new idea, a work of art, the birth of a child, is not important; it is always the same law of generation which operates; it is always the same arcanum—that of fecundity—which is in play; and it is always the same mystery of the Incarnation of the Word which is the divine prototype here.

We have said above that sacred magic is life such as it was before the Fall. As life is always generative, the arcanum of sacred magic is at the same time that of *generation before the Fall—vertical* generation, from a higher plane to a lower one—instead of *horizontal* generation, which is accomplished on a single plane.

The formula of this mystery is well known: ET INCARNATUS EST DE SPIRITU SANCTO EX MARIA VIRGINE. It contains the trinity of the generator above, of the generant below, and the generated—or: the Holy Spirit, the Holy Virgin and the God-Man. It is at the same time the formula of sacred magic in general, because it expresses the mystery of the union of divine will and human will in the element of blood. The blood—in its triple sense, mystical, gnostic and magical—is the "sceptre" or power of sacred magic.

At this point, dear Unknown Friend, I shall withdraw and leave you alone with your Angel. It is not fitting that my human voice arrogates the right of uttering things which are a more profound continuation of what is outlined above.