

*Meditation on the  
Ninth Major Arcanum of the Tarot*

THE HERMIT

L' HERMITE

Isis: "Give heed, my son Horus; for you shall  
hear the secret doctrine, of which our  
forefather Kamephis was the first teacher.  
It so befell that Hermes heard this teaching  
from Kamephis, the eldest of all our race;  
I heard it from Hermes,  
the writer of the records,  
*when he initiated me  
in the rite of Black (Perfection).*

*(ὅπου ἔμὲ καὶ τῷ τελείῳ μελανί ἐτίμησε.*

Words of Isis from the sacred book  
of Hermes Trismegistus entitled *Kore Kosmu* ).\*

For Trismegistus who, I do not know how,  
has completed the discovery of virtually the  
entire truth, has often described the power  
and the majesty of the Word, as illustrated by  
the foregoing quotation, where he (Hermes)  
proclaims the existence of an ineffable and  
holy Word, whose pronunciation is beyond  
the power of man

*(quo fatetur esse ineffabilem quendam  
sanctumque SERMONEM. cuius enarratio  
modum hominis excedet,*

Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* iv, 9,3)

For the gate is narrow and the way is hard,  
that leads to life,  
and those who find it are few.

(Matthew vii, 14)

## LETTER IX



## THE HERMIT

Dear Unknown Friend,

The Hermit! I am pleased to have arrived, in the series of these Letter-Meditations, at this venerable and mysterious figure of a solitary itinerant dressed in a red robe under a blue mantle, holding in his right hand a lantern—alternately yellow and red—and leaning on a staff. For it is the venerable and mysterious Hermit who was master of the most intimate and most cherished dreams of my youth, as moreover he is the master of dreams for all youth in every country, who are

•("The Virgin of the World"); irsl. Waller Scott, *Hermetica*, vol. i, Oxford, 1924. p. 457; cf. also French trsl. by A. J. Festugiere. *Corpus Hermeticism* vol. iv, Paris, 1954, p. 10, whose translation reads: ". . .when he honoured me with the gift of Perfect Night".

enamoured by the call to seek the narrow gate and the hard way to the Divine. Name for me a country or a time for which the youth—who are truly "young", i.e. living for the Ideal—has not had its imagination haunted by the figure of a wise and good father, a spiritual father, a hermit, who has passed through the narrow gate and who walks the hard way—someone whom one could trust without reserve and whom one could venerate and love without limit. Which *young* Russian man, for example, would not have undertaken a journey, no matter how long and of what duration, in order to meet a *staretz*, i.e. a wise and good father, a spiritual father, a *hermit*? Which *young* Jewish man from Poland, Lithuania, White Russia, Ukraine or Romania would not have done as much to meet a Hassidic *tsadik*, i.e. a wise and good father, a spiritual father, a *hermit*? Which *young* man in India would refuse to make every possible effort to find and meet a chela or *guru*, i.e. a wise and good father, a spiritual father, a *hermit*?

And was it otherwise with the youth around Origen, Clement of Alexandria, St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius of Loyola? Was it otherwise, also, with the pagan youth of Athens around Socrates and Plato?

It was the same in ancient Persia around Zarathustra, Ostanes and other representatives of the spiritual dynasty of the mages that was founded by the great Zarathustra. It was also so in Israel with the schools of the prophets, and with the Nazorenes and Essenes. It was the same in ancient Egypt, where the figure of the founder of the dynasty of "wise and good fathers"—that of Hermes Trismegistus—became, not only for Egypt but also for the entire Graeco-Roman world, the prototype of the wise and good father, the *hermit*'.

Eliphas Levi certainly sensed the universal historical meaning of the Hermit. This is why he stated the admirable formula:

The initiate is he who possesses the lamp of Trismegistus, the mantle of Apollonius, and the staff of the patriarchs. (Eliphas Levi, *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*; transl. A. E. Waite, *Transcendental Magic. Its Doctrine and Ritual*, London, 1968. p. 92)

In fact, the Hermit who haunts the imagination of "young" youth, the Hermit of legend and the Hermit of history was, is, and always will be the solitary man with the lamp, mantle and staff. For he possesses the gift of letting light shine in the darkness—this is his "lamp"; he has the faculty of separating himself from the collective moods, prejudices and desires of race, nation, class and family—the faculty of reducing to silence the cacophony of collectivism vociferating around him, in order to listen to and understand the hierarchical harmony of the spheres—this is his "mantle"; at the same time he possesses a sense of realism which is so developed that he stands in the domain of reality not on two feet, but rather on three, i.e. he advances only after having *touched* the ground through immediate experience and at first-hand contact without intermediaries—this is

his "staff". He creates light, he creates silence and he creates certainty — conforming to the criterion of the *Emerald Table*, namely the triple concordance of that which is *clear*, of that which is *in harmony with the totality* of revealed truths and of that which is the object of *immediate* experience:

*Verum, sine mendacio, certum et verissimum* {*Tabula Smaragdina*, 1).

*Verum, sine mendacio* — this is clarity (the lamp);

*Certum* — this is the concordance of that which is clear and the totality of other truths (the "lamp" *and* the "mantle");

*Verissimum* — *this* is the concordance of that which is clear, the totality of other truths, and authentic and immediate experience (the "lamp", the "mantle" *and* the "staff").

The Hermit therefore represents not only a wise and good father who is a reflection of the Father in heaven, but also the method and essence of *Hermeticism*. For Hermeticism is founded on the concordance of three methods of knowledge: the *a priori* knowledge of intelligence (the "lamp"); the harmony of all by analogy (the "mantle"); and authentic immediate experience (the "staff").

Hermeticism is thus a threefold synthesis of three antinomies:

1. the synthesis of the antinomy "idealism — realism";
2. the synthesis of the antinomy "realism — nominalism";
3. the synthesis of the antinomy "faith — empirical science".

In so far as it is a synthesis—a personal one, of course, in the inner forum of the consciousness of each—in which the three antinomies above supply each time a third term, its number is nine, and it is the ninth Arcanum of the Tarot which teaches us about the three syntheses of the three antinomies.

Let us now look at how Hermeticism is the synthesis of the above three antitheses or antinomies.

1. *The antinomy "idealism — realism"*

This reduces to two opposite formulae, namely:

"Consciousness or the idea is prior to everything"—this is the formula of idealism; and

"The thing (*res*) is prior to all consciousness or ideas"—this is the basic formula of realism.

The idealist (e.g. Hegel) considers everything as so many forms of thought, whilst

the realist (e.g. Spencer) affirms that objects of knowledge have an existence which is independent of thought or consciousness on the part of the subject of the knowledge.

The realist says that notions, laws and ideas are *derived*—by way of abstraction—from *objects* of knowledge. The idealist says, on the contrary, that notions, laws and ideas are *projected*—by way of "concretisation"—from the *subject* of knowledge into objects.

The realist advances the so-called "correspondence" theory of truth, i.e. that "truth is the correspondence between object and intellect". The idealist relies on the so-called "coherence" theory of truth, i.e. that "truth is coherence—or absence of contradictions—in the handling of ideas, notions and objects (objects being only notions) by the intellect".

Truth is, according to realism, that which in the intellect corresponds with the object. According to idealism, truth is that which constitutes a *coherent system* in the intellect.

The entire world exactly reflected in the intellect—this is the ideal of knowledge for realism. The entire world exactly reflecting the postulates and categories of the intellect as a unique coherent system—this is the ideal of knowledge for idealism. It is the world which bears the word and it is the human intellect which listens, says realism. It is the intellect which bears the word and it is the world which is its reflection, says idealism.

*"Nihil in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu"* ("nothing is in the intellect which has not had prior existence in the sense world") is the millennial-old formula of realism. *"Nihil in sensu quod non prius fuerit in intellectu"* ("nothing is in the sense world which has not had prior existence in the intellect") is the counter-formula of idealism.

Which is right? Realism with its idol, i.e. the "thing" (*res*) prior to thought, and its Mazdean dualism, i.e. darkness (the thing) and light (thought), which latter proceeds from or is born from the former? Or idealism with its idol of the human intellect which it sets on the throne of God. and its pan-intellectual monism where there is room neither for the "gift of Perfect Night", i.e. the superhuman wisdom mentioned in the sacred book of Hermes Trismegistus entitled *Kore Kosmu*, nor for the shadows of evil, ugliness and illusion that we experience every day?

No, let us not prostrate ourselves either before the world or before the intellect, but let us prostrate ourselves in adoration of the common source of both the world and the intellect—God: God whose Word is at one and the same time the "true light that enlightens every man coming into the world" (John i, 9) and the creator of the world—"all things were made through him, and nothing that was made was made without him" (John i, 3).

The thing, the world — it is the Word which is its source. The intellect, the light of thought — it is again the Word which is its source. This is why Christian Hermeticism of the present as well as the pagan Hermeticism of the past is neither mere-

ly realistic nor simply idealistic. It is "logoistic" ("of the Logos"), being founded neither on the thing nor on the human intellect, but rather on the Logos, the Word of God, whose *objective* manifestation is the world of prototypes underlying the phenomenal world, and whose *subjective* manifestation is the light or prototype of human intelligence. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness receives it not" (John i, 5), which means to say that there is darkness both in the world and within consciousness which has not received — i.e. is not penetrated by—the light, and that consequently evil, ugliness and illusion certainly exist in the world and in consciousness.

But the darkness of the world that is not penetrated by the Word is not the source of consciousness, and the human intellect that is not illumined by the Word is not the principle of the world. In the phenomenal world there are "objective illusions", i.e. "things which are *not real*" which have not been made by the Word, but which have arisen for an ephemeral existence from the sub-strata of darkness. In the domain of subjective consciousness there are illusions, i.e. notions, ideas and ideals which are *not real*, which have not been engendered by the light of the Word, but which have arisen for an ephemeral existence from the depths of darkness in the subconscious.

Now, the correspondence between an illusory object and a notion of it in the intellect would not be truth, but rather a double illusion. Realism should be aware of this when it advances its so-called "correspondence" theory of truth. And the inner coherence of an intellectual system based on illusions would not be a criterion of its truth, but rather an indication of an obsession that is so much the deeper the more the coherence is complete. Idealism should be aware of this when it advances its so-called "coherence" theory of truth.

Objects are only *real*, in the sense of realism, when they are real in the Word. And intellectual constructions are only *true*, in the sense of idealism, when they are true in the Word. The human intellect, as such, is not the producer of truth after the fashion of a spider producing its web. A fact of the outer or inner world, in so far as it is a fact, need not instate truth when it can just as well point to an illusion or the history of an illusion, be it in Nature (e.g. antediluvian monsters) or be it human (e.g. many idols of the past or present).

Now, the "world" of our experience is the phenomenal manifestation of both the world created by the Word and the evolutionary world of the serpent. The "intellect" of our experience, also, is the manifestation both of the light of the Word and of the "ruse" (to take the Biblical term for the method where darkness *imitates* light without receiving it) of the serpent. This is why it is still necessary to distinguish, before one professes to realism, between the World and the world. Similarly, before one embraces idealism, one has to distinguish between cosmic Intelligence and the human intellect.

But once this distinction is made, one can without hesitation embrace idealism and realism at one and the same time—which would be the "idealism — realism" or the *logoism* of ancient and contemporary Hermeticism.

Then the method of correspondence becomes the staff in the hand of the Hermit and the method of coherence becomes the mantle which covers him. This is thanks to the light of the Hermit's lamp, which is the holy instrument where the light of the Word is united with the oil of human intellectual endeavour.

2. *The antinomy "realism — nominalism"*

In this antinomy the term "realism" has nothing in common with the "realism" of the antinomy "realism — idealism". Realism here signifies the school of occidental thought which attributes objective reality to general notions that are now usually designated as "abstract" but which mediaeval philosophy designated "*universalia*" ("universals"). The current of occidental thought which denies the objective reality of universals and which admits reality only in "particulars" is that of nominalism.

Now "realism", as a current of occidental thought opposed to nominalism, differs from realism opposed to idealism in the sense that it is a matter here of the objective reality of universals (types and species) and not of the correspondence between notions of the intellect and the reality of objects (as *the* criterion of truth). Therefore it is a question of a totally different problem. "Realists", in that which concerns the problem of the reality of universals, are in fact extreme "idealists" in that which concerns the problem of the priority of the intellect or the object.

The problem underlying the antinomy "realism — nominalism" was posed for the first time in the history of ideas in an explicit manner by Porphyry (A.D. 234-ca. 304) in his *hagoge* (or *Introduction by Porphyry the Phoenecian, disciple of Plotinus of Lycopolis*, to give the complete title of this little work). The problem is posed from the beginning, with all desirable clarity, as follows:

- I shall put aside the investigation of certain profound questions concerning genera and species (i.e. universals), since such an Undertaking requires more detailed examination: (1) whether genera or species exist in themselves or reside in mere concepts alone; (2) whether, if they exist, they are corporeal or incorporeal; and (3) whether they exist apart or in sense objects and in dependence on them. (Porphyry, *Isagoge* i, 9-14; transl. E. W. Warren, *Mediaeval Sources in Translation*, vol. 16. Toronto. 1975. pp. 27-28)

In fact, from Boethius to the Renaissance —and even to our own time—there has been given to this problem the "more detailed examination" which Porphyry believed that it merited. For the mediaeval doctors, having clearly seen that the problem of universals is at the very centre of philosophy, treated it as the central problem, which gave rise to the division of the world of philosophers into "realists" (types and species exist in themselves, above and beyond individuals) and "nominalists" (types and species do not exist beyond individuals; they are only "names". i.e. words useful for the purpose of classification). A third school - that of the "con-



ceptualists" or, according to the case, "moderate realists" or "moderate nominalists" (general ideas certainly exist, but they exist only in the mind of he who conceives them)—originated during the controversy and played a role, not of synthesis, but rather one similar to the role of Lorraine which the Emperor Lothar I assigned to it. namely that of intermediary between France and Germany.

The passionate controversy between realism and nominalism lasted a millennium and, not restricting itself to learned debates, it took diverse forms, including the decisions of Church councils, as for example the council of Soissons, which condemned nominalism in 1092.

The thesis of the "realists" leads back to Plato, to his doctrine of ideas. That of the "nominalists" is associated with Antisthenes: "I see a horse, but I don't see horseness" (cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. iii, Cambridge, 1969. P- 214). Now, the essence of the problem is whether "horseness" is anterior to the individual horses (*universale ante rem*), whether it is immanent in the individual horses (*universale in re*) or whether it is, lastly, posterior to the individual horses and is only derived from them by way of abstraction (*universale post rem*). According to Plato, "horseness" exists as an idea *before* the horses; according to Aristotle, "horseness" exists only *in* the horses as the principle of their form; according to the conceptualists (e.g. Kant), "horseness" is a concept formed by the mind by way of summarising the common features of all horses, abstracting from the particular characteristics (*universale post rem*).

The problem whether "horseness" is anterior to the real horses, whether it is the formative principle in them or, rather, whether it is only a notion of the mind derived from the experience of the senses is, truth to tell, not passionate when it is a matter only of "horseness". Nevertheless, it becomes so when it is a question of mankind or the world. For then it becomes a problem of *creation*, which differs from *genesis*. In creation the idea or "plan" of the world is anterior to the act of its realisation, whilst in genesis or evolution there is not an idea or plan anterior to the fact, but rather a *force* immanent in substances and individual beings, which pushes them to seek through trial and error a way of progressing. With respect to humanity, it becomes a problem of the prototype man or celestial *Adam*, i.e. a problem of the *creation* of man or his evolutionary *genesis*.

Let us now examine more closely the fundamental theses of realism and nominalism.

"The general is anterior to the particular"—is the formula at the basis of realism.

"The particular is anterior to the general"—is the counter-formula of nominalism.

These two contrary theses imply that for realism the general is more real and

of higher objective value than the particular, and that for nominalism the particular is more real and of higher objective value than the general. In other words, for realism *humanity* is more real and is of higher value than the individual man. In contrast, for nominalism it is the *individual man* who is more real and has a higher value than humanity.

For realism, there would be no human beings if there were no humanity. For nominalism, on the contrary, there would be no humanity if there were no human beings. Human beings compose humanity, says the nominalist. Humanity engenders, from its invisible but real womb, individual human beings, says the realist.

Who is right? Realism with its idol of collectivity anterior to the individuality, the individual soul, which, through the mouth of Caiaphas enunciated the justification for condemning Jesus Christ to death, in having said: "It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish" (John xi, 50)?.. .which through the tribunals of the Inquisition annihilated "noxious individuals" in sacrificing them for the interests of humanity or the Church?.. . Realism which, lastly, setting the race above individuals or the class above individuals, exterminated millions of Jews and gipsys at the hands of the Nazis, and also millions of *koulaks* or well-to-do peasants and individuals of the higher classes at the hands of the Bolsheviks.

And nominalism?

Nominalism is blind to ideas and principles, which are only words as far as it is concerned. Truth, beauty and goodness do not exist for it as objective realities, and are only a matter of taste. No serious science or philosophy worthy of its name would be able to exist if nominalism were the only intellectual terrain in which it could live. For instead of aspiring to the universal, it would go in search of the particular. It would collect only particular facts and, far from setting any value on their common traits from which it would be able to derive laws and principles, would only result in a kind of museum of particular facts. This museum would wait in vain for the advent of scientific and philosophical thought in order for it to be useful to mankind in a general way: nominalism itself would not produce it. For it is the opposite of science.

Instead of science or philosophy, it would give rise to a multitude of sects of subjective tastes. Each would think and believe in its own way. One would only adhere to that which pleased one. This is precisely why the Church condemned nominalism as a doctrine and why science banished it as a method. It would have atomised the Church into a mass of small religions according to the personal taste of each individual, and it would have reduced science to sterile collectionism and an infinite number of private opinions.

Therefore we cannot dispense with realism if we attach any value to the existence of objective truth (science) and trans-subjective truth (religion). Objective and trans-subjective truth must therefore be admitted if one aspires to a union of mankind in the universal objective truth of science and trans-subjective truth of religion.

But can we do without nominalism?

No, for nominalism is a vision of the world consisting of individual, unique and irreplaceable beings. It is a vision of the world as a great community of entities, instead of a world of laws, principles and ideas. It is the vision of a world where Father, Son and Holy Spirit, true and living persons, united by the eternal bonds of paternity, filiality and fraternity, reign—surrounded by Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels, Angels, human beings and beings of Nature, visible and invisible. How can one say, with all sincerity of the heart, in prayer addressed to the Father in heaven: "Hallowed be thy *name*", without believing that it is the unique and holy name of a living being—unique and holy, and not a designation for the supreme idea or the "first cause" or the "absolute principle"? Can one *love* an invisible world of impersonal "first causes", a world populated by laws and principles?

If general intellectual knowledge of the world as such (i.e. science) and as the work of God (i.e. philosophy) is not possible without idealistic realism, intuitive individual knowledge—through love—of particular beings (i.e. mysticism, gnosis and magic) is no more so without realistic nominalism.

Now, one can neither embrace idealistic realism or realistic nominalism without reserve, nor dispense with one or the other. For love (which demands realistic nominalism) as well as the intellect (which demands idealistic realism) are structural faculties of human nature. Human nature itself is realist, in so far as thought is concerned, and it is nominalist, in so far as social communion or love is concerned.

The "problem" of universals was resolved in the spiritual history of mankind by the *fact* of the Incarnation, where the fundamental universal of the world—the Logos—became Jesus Christ, who is the fundamental particular of the world. Here, the universal of universals, the very principle of intelligibility, the Logos, became the particular of particulars, the very prototype of the personality, Jesus Christ.

It is above all the Gospel according to St. John which portrays in an explicit and clear way the fact of the union of the principle of universal knowledge with the Being of individual love, from heart to heart. This Gospel describes the work of divine alchemy, where water is united with fire—where water became living water, and tongues of fire became the Pentecostal tongues understandable to everyone individually. The substance of baptism—vivified water and fire not consuming the particular but enabling it to participate in eternity—is the outcome of the work of redemption that began with the Incarnation. Baptism is—in the domain of the history of the spirit—also the union of realism and nominalism, the union of the head and the heart in the human being, which union is only the reflection of the fact of the Incarnation, where "the Word became flesh".

Christian Hermeticism is the friend of realistic nominalism, in so far as this form of nominalism aspires to mystical experience of the communion of beings through love, as well as of idealistic realism, in so far as the latter aspires to the

Logos. Christian Hermeticism itself can only be knowledge of the universal which is revealed in the particular. For Hermeticism there are no "principles", "laws" and "ideas" which exist *outside* of individual beings, not as structural traits of their nature, but as entities separated and independent from it. For Hermeticism there is neither a "law of gravitation" nor a "law of reincarnation"; there is only the attraction and repulsion of beings (atoms are beings also) in so far as gravitation is concerned, and only the attraction of beings to earthly life, with its joys and sorrows, in so far as reincarnation is concerned. But on the other hand, if there were no such entities in the world as the laws of gravitation and reincarnation, there is certainly the universal desire of beings — great and small — to associate with one another, to form together molecules, organisms, families, communities, nations . . . It is a desire or universal *structural* need which manifests itself as "law". "Laws" are *immanent* in beings, as logic is immanent in thought, being part of the very nature of thought. And true progress, true evolution, is the advance of beings from life under one law to life under another law, i.e. the structural change of beings. It is thus that the law "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" is in the process of being gradually replaced by the law of forgiveness. It is thus again that the law "the weak serve the strong, the people serve the king, the disciple serves the master" will one day give way to the law shown by the Master through the act of the Washing of the Feet. According to this higher law, it is the strong who serve the weak, the king who serves the people, the master who serves the disciple — just as it is in heaven, where Angels serve human beings. Archangels serve Angels and men. Principalities serve Archangels, Angels and human beings, and so on. And God? He serves all beings without exception.

Thus the "law" of the *struggle for existence* that Darwin observed in the domain of biology will one day cede its place to the law of *cooperation for existence* which exists already in the cooperation of flowering plants and bees, in the cooperation of different cells in an organism, and in cooperation in the human social organism. The end of the "law" of the struggle for existence and the future triumph of the law of cooperation for life has been foretold by the prophet Isaiah:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
 And the leopard shall lie down with the kid.  
 And the calf and the lion and the fatling together.  
 And a little child shall lead them.

(Isaiah xi, 6)

This will be, because the new "law"—i.e. a profound change in the psychic and physical structure of beings—will replace the old "law", firstly in consciousness, then in desires and affections, then lastly in the organic structure of beings.

"Laws" succeed one another and change. They are not immutable metaphysical entities. It is the same with respect to "principles" and "ideas". "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the

sabbath" (Mark ii, 27-28)—here is the relationship between beings, on the one side, and laws, principles and ideas, on the other.

Are laws, principles and ideas therefore not real?

They are certainly real, but their reality is not that of an existence separate from beings, i.e. that of metaphysical entities populating a world or plane—a world of laws, principles and ideas—proper to themselves. The spiritual world is not a world of laws, principles and ideas; it is a world of spiritual beings—human souls, Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominions, Thrones, Cherubim, Seraphim and the Holy Trinity: the Holy Spirit, the Son and the Father.

What, then, is the reality of laws, principles and ideas?

It is in their structural *kinship*—spiritual, psychic and corporeal. All beings manifest a universal kinship and bear witness to their common origin and their common archetype. Now, this common archetype—that the Cabbala calls "Adam Kadmon"—is the law, the principle and idea of all beings. "The image and likeness of God" in Adam is the law by virtue of which God "let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Genesis i, 26). Adam is the law, the principle and the idea of all the beings of Nature, because he is their prototype-synthesis.

Realism is right when it affirms the reality of universals, for they are the structural features of the archetype for all particular beings. Also, nominalism is right when it teaches that there are no other realities in the world than individual beings and that universals are not to be found amongst these beings.

Hermeticism regards the Logos who became man as the archetypal universal become the perfect particular being. The controversy between realism and nominalism does not exist for Christian Hermeticism.

### 3. *The antinomy "faith — empirical science"*

"For truly, I say to you. if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain: Move hence to yonder place—and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you" (Matthew xvii, 20-21)—these are the words of the Master.

"And science takes a grain of hydrogen and releases the energy imprisoned in this grain, and reduces the mountain to dust"—replies the twentieth century.

This is where we are with respect to the antinomy of faith and empirical science. Our faith does not transport mountains, but the energy that we have learnt to wield through science is quite capable of reducing them to dust.

Is it because we do not have a mustard-grain of faith?

Is it because we have concentrated all our efforts on the task of penetrating the secret contained in a grain of hydrogen instead of the task of acquiring faith as in a grain of mustard?

In order to be able to answer these questions we must first take account of what faith is and what empirical science is.

*Faith:*

Faith which can—when it is as a grain of mustard seed—transport mountains: Is this faith identical with faith-belief, with the feeling of certainty with regard to a doctrine?... Is it identical with faith-confidence, with the absence of doubt with respect to the sureness of the authority of a witness or testimony?... Is it, lastly, identical with faith-hope, with optimism as opposed to pessimism? Briefly, is it sufficient that we have no doubt at all in order to realise "nothing will be impossible to you"?

Many mad people certainly display a complete absence of doubt with regard to their illusions or fixed ideas. They would therefore be able to do miracles, if faith was nothing other than *intensity* of belief, confidence and hope, due to the absence of doubt. Because mad people certainly have this intensity. However, the intensity of belief, confidence and hope alone is not the faith that the Gospel has in view. There it is evidently a question not only of the intensity of certainty, but rather the intensity of the certainty of the *truth*. If this were not so, mad people would be thaumaturgists and madness would be the ideal.

A force which can move a mountain must be equal to that which piled it up. Therefore, the faith which can move mountains can neither be an intellectual opinion nor a personal feeling, no matter how intense. It must be the product of the union of the thinking, feeling and desiring human being with cosmic being—with God. The faith which moves mountains is therefore complete union—even if only for an instant—of man and God.

This is why illusion can in no way engender faith; and this is also why miracles due to faith are testimonies of the *truth*—and not only of sincerity—of belief, confidence and hope of the person through whom they are operated. Miracles are *fruits* of the union of the whole, concentrated human being with cosmic truth, beauty and goodness—with *God*. They are operations of divine-human magic which is, and always will be, based on the spiritual constellation "God-Man"—or, in other words, they always operate "in the *name* of Jesus Christ", conforming to the formula:

My Father is working still, and I am working (John v, 17).  
 (ὁ πατήρ μου ἔως ἄρτι ἐργάζεται, κἀγὼ ἐργάζομαι -*Pater meus usque modo operatur, et ego operor*).

The faith for which "nothing is impossible" is the state of soul where "God works, and the soul also works". It is the state of soul concentrated on the truth to which God adds the intensity of certainty and the power which renders miracles possible. It is magic due to the union of two mages: God and man.

It is therefore neither logical certainty, nor the certainty of authority, nor the acceptance of a testimony worthy of faith—it is the union of the soul with God, attained through effort of thought, through confidence in that which is worthy of confidence, through accepting testimonies worthy of faith, through prayer,

meditation, contemplation, through practising moral endeavour, and through many other ways and endeavours which help the soul to open to the divine breath.

Faith is divine breath in the soul, just as hope is divine light and love is divine fire in the soul.

*Empirical science:*

Heat, steam, magnetism, electricity, nuclear energy—such are the powerful forces harnessed by man thanks to the prodigious work of empirical science! It is thanks to science that we are able to converse with our friends across the ocean, to see what takes place thousands of miles away, to visit a sick friend in another country within an hour, to call to our aid, when we are in distress at sea, in the mountains or in the desert, life-saving expeditions: planes, boats, ambulances. It is again thanks to science that we are able to hear the voice of someone who has been dead for years, that we are able to walk despite having lost a leg, that we are able to see far although being myopic, that we are able to hear whilst being almost deaf, and that we have the capacity for many other things, all of which are thanks to empirical science.

To what may the fabulous success which science achieves be attributed? What is the basic principle which can explain it?

It is *doubt* in the first place. For it is thanks to doubting the experience of the senses that science has been able to establish that it is not the sun which moves across the sky but rather the earth which moves around it. It is thanks to doubting all-powerful fate that remedies and methods of treatment for healing formerly incurable illnesses were sought for and found. It is again thanks to doubting past traditions that empirical science discovered biological evolution, hormones, enzymes, vitamins, the structure of the atom, and subconscious consciousness. . .

For doubt is at the very root of every question, and questions are the basis of every quest and all research. Doubt is therefore the father of the scientific method. It is this which is *the primus motor*, the principle which once set in motion the whole prodigious machine consisting of laboratories, observatories, libraries, museums, collections, universities, scientific academies and associations.

Doubt set it all in motion. But is the *fruitfulness* of the motion to be attributed to doubt alone? Does doubt alone suffice for discoveries? Is it not necessary to *believe* in the possibility of such discoveries before one sets out on the route which leads to them?

Evidently this is necessary. The father of empirical science is doubt and its mother is faith. It owes its fruitfulness to faith, just as it owes its motivating force to doubt. Just as there is "scientific doubt" underlying empirical science as a method, so there is a "scientific faith" which underlies science as the principle of its fruitfulness. Newton *doubted the* traditional theory of "gravity", but he *believed in* the unity of the world, and therefore in cosmic *analogy*. This is why he could arrive at the cosmic law of gravitation in consequence of the fact of an apple falling from a tree. Doubt set his thought in motion; faith rendered it fruitful.

What, therefore, are the dogmas of scientific faith? The following is the scientific creed:

I believe in a single substance, the mother of all forces, which engenders bodies and the consciousness of everything, visible and invisible.

I believe in a single Lord, the Human Mind, the unique son of the substance of the world, born from the substance of the world after centuries of evolution: the encapsulated reflection of the great world, the epiphenomenal light of primordial darkness, the real reflection of the real world - evolved through trial and error, not engendered or created, consubstantial with the mother-substance—and through whom the whole world can be reflected. It is he who—for we human beings, and for our use—has ascended from the shadows of the mother-substance.

He has taken on flesh from matter through the work of evolution, and he has become the Human Brain.

Although he is destroyed with each generation that passes, he is formed anew in each generation following, according to Heredity. He is summoned to ascend to comprehensive knowledge of the whole world and to be seated at the right of the mother-substance, which will serve him in his mission as judge and legislator, and his reign will never end.

I believe in Evolution, which directs all, which gives life to the inorganic and consciousness to the organic, which proceeds from the mother-substance and fashions the thinking mind. With the mother-substance and the human mind, evolution receives equal authority and importance. It has spoken through universal progress.

I believe in one diligent, universal, civilising Science. I acknowledge a single discipline for the elimination of errors and I await the future fruits of collective efforts of the past for the life of civilisation to come. So be it.

These are the twelve articles of scientific faith, which is based not only on scientific effort throughout the centuries but also on the martyrdom undergone by numerous human beings in the name of science. Compare this creed with the traditional Christian Creed, article by article, and the whole significance of the antinomy "faith—empirical science" will be evident.

*The Synthesis:*

The *unique substance* at the basis of the multiplicity of phenomena; the *human mind* capable of reducing this multiplicity to a unity; the *evolution* to which the human mind owes its existence, and the collaboration with which it promises to the human mind its future development until it becomes master of evolution;



the *collective and organised effort*, according to the method of doubt and empirical verification continued from century to century—these are the four principle dogmas of scientific faith. Substance, the human mind, evolution and the scientific method constitute the four "letters" of the *tetragrammaton* of the "ineffable name" of science.

Eliphaz Levi made much of a case for the role which the name HVHY (*Hava-joi*)—which is an inversion of the sacred *Tetragrammaton* YHVH—plays in being used in black magical evocations. As the *Tetragrammaton* is the law of causality (the sequence: active principle, passive principle, neutral principle—and their manifestation; or again: effective cause, material cause, final cause—and the phenomenon) and consequently of reason, he concluded that the inversion of the *Tetragrammaton* is the magical formula for chaos and irrationality.

Yet it is precisely the inverted *tetragrammaton* which is the arcanum of empirical science. Because it is the passive principle of substance or matter which empirical science considers as first, as the "principle" *par excellence*, whilst the neutral principle (the human mind) follows, and the active principle (the method) concludes the series. In fact, in the name YOD-HE-VAU-HE ( יהוה ), if YOD is the active principle (effective cause), the first HE is the passive principle (material cause), VAU is the neutral principle (final cause) and the second HE is the whole phenomenon which results from it, then the inverse name HE-VAU-HE-YOD ( הוהי ) would be the series: "passive principle—neutral principle—passive principle—active principle" or "matter, reason, evolution, scientific method".

The series HVHY means to say that nothing precedes matter; that nothing moves it; that it moves from itself; that mind is the child of matter; that evolution is matter which engenders mind; and that, lastly, mind, once born, is the activity of matter in evolution, which becomes conscious of itself and takes evolution in its hands. The inverted *tetragrammaton* is without doubt the formula-synthesis of empirical science.

Is it that of chaos and irrationality?

No. It is the mirroring of the formula spirit-matter-evolution-individuality of the sacted name YHVH. It is not the formula of irrationality, no more than it is that of intelligence—it is the formula of *cunning* ("ruse"), i.e. of reflected intelligence.

It is not a logical formula, a formula of the Logos, but rather it is that of the serpent of Genesis "who was the most cunning of all living creatures" (Genesis iii, 1), and whose aspiration is the expansion of consciousness in the horizontal ("the fields"). The ultimate aim of the logic of cunning, that of the serpent, is not to become God but to become "like God". "To become like"—this is the essence of cunning and is also the meaning of scientific faith, the scientific creed, which is at the same time only a paraphrase and development of the promise of the serpent: "your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis iii, 5).

To open your eyes, to be like gods, knowing good and evil—this is the great

arcanum of empirical science. This is why it is dedicated to the cause of enlightenment ("open your eyes", for the horizontal); this is why it aspires to absolute power for man ("be like gods"); and this is why, lastly, it is intrinsically amoral or *morally neutral* ("knowing good *and evil*").

Does it deceive us? No. It opens our eyes *in fact*, and thanks to it we see *more* in the horizontal; it gives us power over Nature *in fact*, and makes us sovereign over Nature; it is useful to us *in fact*, no matter whether for good or for evil. Empirical science in no way deceives us. The serpent has not lied — *on the plane where its voice and promise were audible*.

On the plane of *horizontal expansion* ("the fields" of Genesis) the serpent certainly keeps its promise. .. but at what price with regard to other planes, and with regard to the vertical?

What is the price of scientific enlightenment, this "opening of the eyes" in the horizontal, i.e. for the *quantitative* aspect of the world? It is at the price of the obscuration of its *qualitative* aspect. The more one has "open eyes" for quantity, the more one becomes blind to quality. Yet all that one understands by "spiritual world" is only quality, and all experience of the spiritual world is due to "eyes that are open" for quality, for the *vertical* aspect of the world. Thus number has only a qualitative meaning in the spiritual world. "One" signifies unity, "two"—duality, "three"—trinity, and "four"—the duality of dualities. The *vertical* world, the spiritual world, is that of *values* and, as the "value of values" is the individual being, it is a world of individual beings or entities. Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominions, Thrones. Cherubim and Seraphim are so many individualised values or entities. And the *supreme value* is the supreme Entity—*God*.

Science reduces quality to quantity. This is what it calls "knowledge". Thus the prismatic colours—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet—lose for science their quality of redness, orangeness, etc., and become quantities, i.e. numbers expressing different frequencies or wavelengths of the vibration that one calls "light". Light, also, is reduced to quantity. It is only a formula expressing quantitative factors of the vibration of something deprived of all quality.

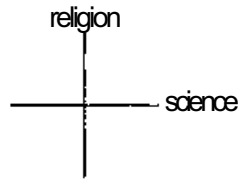
Is it necessary, therefore, to turn one's back on empirical science because it accomplishes the promise of the serpent—in opening our eyes to the quantitative world at the price of making us blind to the qualitative world?

What should one do, confronted with the choice between science and religion?

But is it necessary to choose? Does it not suffice to give each of these two aspirations its place—not that which they arrogate to themselves, but that which is their proper place?

In fact, if there is nor a religious empirical science or a scientific religion, there are religious scientists and scientific believers. In order to be a religious scientist or a scientific believer honestly, i.e. without compromising one's conscience, it is

necessary to *add* to the definite horizontal aspiration the definite vertical aspiration, i.e. to live under the sign of the cross:



This means to say that one separates the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the world in a clear way, and that one takes account of the precise difference between the function of a mechanism and the action of a sacrament. For the whole world has its mechanical side and its sacramental side. Moses describes the sacramental world in the book of Genesis; modern astronomy is in the process of describing the world-machine. The one speaks to us of the "what" and the other of the "how" of the world. The "how" is the mechanism; the "what" is the essence. The mechanism is knowable through quantity; the essence is revealed by quality.

And the scientific creed? How does one reconcile it with the Christian creed? .. because it is not the expression of belief in quantity alone, but it is also — and above all — that of belief in *values* contrary to those of the Christian creed.

I have no other answer than the following:

Crucify the serpent. Put the serpent — or the scientific creed — on the cross of religion and science, and a metamorphosis of the serpent will follow. The scientific creed then becomes what it *is* in reality: the mirroring of the creative Word. It will no longer be *truth*; it will be *method*. It will no longer say: "in the beginning was substance or matter", but it will say: "in order to understand the mechanism of the *made* world, it is necessary to choose a method which takes account of the origin of matter and of that which set it in motion from above". And it will no longer say: "the brain produces consciousness", but it will say: "in order to understand the function of the brain, it is necessary to consider it in such a way *as if* consciousness is caused by it".

The first metamorphosis of scientific faith will therefore be the transformation of its metaphysical dogmas into methodological postulates. Its denial of God, of the creation, and of ante-phenomenal spirit, will become the method of the "ignorant scientist" (or *docta ignorantia*, to use the expression of Nicolaus Cusanus), which is nothing other than concentration on the domain which is proper to it.

This metamorphosis will be followed sooner or later by another, namely that of changing the very will which manifests itself in scientific faith. The *will-to-power*, aspiring to the unlimited growth of man's domination of Nature, no matter whether for good or evil, will gradually lose its moral indifference and will become more and more inclined to good — it will be transformed into the *will-to-service*. It is thus that scientific faith will undergo an alchemical transmutation and that

empirical science will cease to be amoral or morally indifferent. It will side with what is constructive, with what serves the health, life and well-being of humanity. After this, it will be open to all the innovations in its method that particular tasks call for. and it will one day, finally devote itself to the constructive vital forces of the world with the same zeal and intensity that today it devotes to forces of destruction (heat due to combustion, electricity due to decomposition or friction, nuclear energy due to the destruction of atoms. . .). This in its turn will call for changes in scientific method in the sense that wishful ignorance of the spiritual world will be abandoned as out of date.

But all this will not be able to take place until a number of scientists have "set the bronze serpent on a pole", i.e. to add, first of all in the inner forum of consciousness, the *vertical* of religion to the horizontal of empirical science. This will neutralise the poison of scientific faith and transform it into a servant of life.

It is the divine counsel that was given to Moses in the deserr, between Mount Hor and the land of Edom, that I am referring to here:

Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.  
(Numbers xxi, 9)

It is also we, who are in the desert of the present day, who have need of the bronze serpenr set on a pole, in order to look at it and thus save our spiritual life. The synthesis of science and religion is not a theory, but rather the inner act of consciousness of adding the spiritual vertical to the scientific horizontal or, in other words, *the act of erecting the bronze serpent*.

It should be said that this is not only Biblical advice or rhe pious desire of a solitary man afflicted by the ravages that scientific faith, supported by the success of empirical science, has brought to bear upon mankind's spiritual life, but rather it is already an accomplished fact. And it is France which has had the honour of giving birth to and contributing to the education of the great contemporary scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (who is at the same time Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin) who, knowing the situation from both sides, has erected high the bronze serpent in our time. His *Phenomenon of Man*, just as with all his works (published in five volumes), is the realised synthesis of the antinomy "faith — empirical science", in the sense that a true scientist who was a true believer succeeded through his life's work in uniring the horizontal of science (and what a horizontal!) with the vertical of religion (and what a vertical!). It should still be added that he is not alone, and that there are many others who look at the bronze serpent and who thereby *conserve* LIFE.

With respect to ourselves — Hermericists—here we are brought up againsr a work which would have been due ro be accomplished by us, but which was not because we have not wanted to embrace wholeheartedly either the cause of science and its discipline or that of religion and its discipline. We insisted upon a science for

ourselves and a faith for ourselves. This is why no one amongst us was able to fully erect the bronze serpent for our age. Because to be able to do this he would have to be simultaneously a true scientist according to the rules of Academia and a true believer according to the criteria of the Church.

Who amongst us has not — at least in his youth — applauded the maxim boldly stated by Papius: "Neither Voltaire, nor Loyola!". . . which means to say: neither doubt nor faith?

Well, the result is that we doubt a little and we believe a little. We do not have enough critical spirit where we ought to have it, and yet we have enough to render our faith lame when it is a matter of accepting without reserve the spiritual values offered for our appraisal. In practice, "neither Voltaire, nor Loyola" means to say "a little Voltaire and a little Loyola", because one cannot do entirely without doubt and faith. And there is one—I still have Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in mind—who had the courage to say "both Voltaire and Loyola", and to be a true scientist at the same time as being a Jesuit. He heroically accepted the cross of "Voltairean" doubt and "Ignatian" faith. The result is a light-filled vision of the world evolving through the impulse of the serpent towards a final aim set by providence.

Let us also not fear, therefore, to become like the Hermit of the Tarot, who is clothed in the habit of faith and whose doubt fathoms the ground—with his staff! The light of the lamp which he holds is that which is emitted from the opposition of faith and doubt!

*The Gift of Black Perfection (or The Gift of Perfect Night).*

The Arcana of the Tarot, I must stress, are spiritual exercises. And the ninth Arcanum, the Hermit is one of them.

For this reason the preceding meditations on the three antinomies aim not so much at a solution of the antinomies that will please everyone, but more to encourage spiritual endeavour orientated towards the solution of these antinomies. You can certainly resolve them in a more profound and satisfying way. It is a matter, in the case of the solutions that I have proposed above, above all of a *concrete illustration* (which is, I know, far from being the best) of an individual endeavour by way of a special spiritual exercise. This consists in setting before you a thesis and an antithesis, both as clearly as possible — I should say: as crystallised light—in such a way that all intellectual light which is at your disposal may then be consumed by these two opposing theses. You will then arrive at a state of mind in which all that you know and clearly perceive is put into the thesis and its antithesis, so that they may be like two rays of light, whilst your mind itself is plunged into darkness. You know and see nothing more than the light of these two contrary theses; beyond them there remains only darkness.

And it is then that one undertakes the essential thing about this exercise, namely *the endeavour to draw light from darkness*, i.e. an effort aiming at knowledge which appears to you to be not only unknown but also unknowable.

In fact, every serious antinomy signifies psychologically: "the light that I possess is polarised at two poles; between these two luminous poles there is only darkness". Now, it is from this darkness that the solution to the antinomy, the synthesis, must be drawn. It is necessary to *create* light from darkness. One could say that it is a matter of an act analogous to the *Fiat lux* ("Let there be light", Genesis i, 3) of the first day of creation.

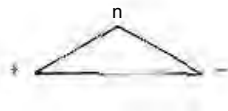
Experience teaches us that there are two kinds of darkness in the domain of consciousness. One is that of ignorance, passivity and laziness, which is "infra-light" darkness. The other, in contrast, is the darkness of higher knowledge, intense activity and endeavour still to be made—this is "ultra-light". It is a question of this latter "darkness" in instances where it is a matter of resolving an antinomy or finding a synthesis.

Modern Hermetic literature (of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) takes account of the "neutralisation of binaries", i.e. the method where one finds the *third* term, or neutral term, for the two terms ("binary") corresponding to the active and passive principles. Thus you will find in Papus' *Traite elementaire de science occulte* (Paris, 1888, p. 121) the following examples of this "neutralisation":

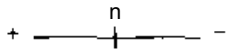
Father (+) — Mother(-) — Child (n)  
 Light (♦) — Darkness (-) — Twilight (n)  
 Sun(+) — Moon (-) — Mercury (n)

The method of the "neutralisation of binaries" (the term was in use in Russia; I am not sure if it is used in France) is generally considered by Hermetic and occultist authors as the traditional method of Hermeticism.

Now, a binary can be "neutralised" in *three* different ways: (1) above (synthesis); (2) in the horizontal (compromise); and (3) below (mixture). Neutralisation above takes place when one finds the neutral term on a plane higher than the plane of the binary itself:



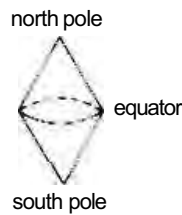
Horizontal neutralisation is accomplished by finding the median term between the two terms of the binary on the plane of the binary itself:



Neutralisation below is effected when one reduces the binary to a third term on a plane lower than that of the binary, by way of mixing:



In order to illustrate the three ways of "neutralisation" of binaries, the "coloured body" of the German scientist Wilhelm Ostwald (cf. *Die Farben fibel*, Leipzig, 1916) will serve us as an example. Ostwald's coloured body is formed by two cones:



This body therefore has a "north pole", a "south pole" and an "equator".

The "north pole" is the *white point* which is the synthesis of all colours. It is this white light which is more and more differentiated as it progressively descends towards the "equator". There the colours attain their maximum differentiation and individual intensity. Thus, for example, red is only present in potentiality at the point of the "north pole", then it becomes pinkish as it comes a degree lower, then rose, then reddish, before becoming bright red when it reaches the "equator". The "equator" therefore consists of seven colours (the seven colours of the visible spectrum) at their maximum intensity.

These same colours, in continuing their descent from the "equator" towards the "south pole", gradually lose their chromatic light and become darker. When they reach the "south pole" they lose all distinction and become equally *black*. The "south pole" is therefore the *black point* of the coloured body, just as the "north pole" is the *white point*. The "white point" is the synthesis of all the colours; it is their "neutralisation above", in the light. The "equator" is the region of maximum distinction between the colours. It is there that the transition from one colour to another can be established. It is the region where "horizontal neutralisation" can be effected. The "black point", lastly, is that of the confusion of all colours, where they are lost in darkness. It is the region of "neutralisation below".

Ostwald's coloured body, invented by its maker towards useful ends in the coloured fabrics and textile industry, allows the "latitude and longitude" of every nuance and degree of intensity of each colour to be shown precisely, and can therefore be useful — certainly without the knowledge of its inventor — for Hermetic meditations as an important basis for a chain of analogies.

We are able by analogy, therefore, to conceive of the "white point" or "north pole" of the coloured body as that of *wisdom*, the "equator" as that of the family of particular sciences of human knowledge, and the "black point" or "south pole" as that of *ignorance*. Now, wisdom is the synthesis above of all the particular sciences of human knowledge. It contains them simultaneously, undifferentiated within itself, as white light contains the seven prismatic colours. The "neutralisa-

tion" or synthesis of the binary "yellow—blue", for example, can therefore be effected by rising towards the "white point" of wisdom.

Another method of finding a third term for the binary "yellow—blue" is that of finding the point of transition from yellow to blue on the scale on the equator of prismatic colours, which is exactly at the middle of the distance separating the "most yellow point" from the "most blue point". This would be *the green point*.

Lastly, there is the third method of "neutralisation"—that in the direction beneath the equator. This is the direction towards the "black point", where the particular colours disappear into darkness. The "neutralisation" of the binary "yellow—blue" is therefore effected, according to this method, when a point on the scale of the reversed cone of the coloured body is found, where yellow and blue cease to be discernible in the dark brown which they become.

If we now take instead of the binary "yellow—blue" that of "mathematics—descriptive science" or "mathematics—phenomenalism", and apply the three methods of "neutralisation" here, we obtain a formula of transcendental synthesis, another that is a compromise or equilibrium, and a third that is indifferent, as follows:

1. Transcendental synthesis: "God geometrises: numbers are the creators of phenomena" (the formula of Plato and the Pythagoreans);
2. Equilibrium: "The world is order, i.e. phenomena display limits due to the equilibrium that we call measure, number and weight" (the formula of Aristotle and the Peripatetics);
3. Indifference: "Our mind reduces phenomena to numbers so as to make it easier for the work of the mind to handle them" (formula of the sceptics).

We see, therefore, that Platonism is orientated towards the "white point" of wisdom, Aristotelianism moves in the "equatorial" region of precise distinctions, and scepticism tends towards the "black point" of nihilism.

With respect to Hermeticism, the Hermit holds the lamp which represents the "luminous point" of transcendental synthesis; he is wrapped in a mantle, hanging in folds, for deploying the particular qualities which have their place in the region of the "equator"; and he supports himself with a staff for feeling his way in the domain of darkness, in the region of the reversed cone culminating in the "black point". He is therefore a Peripatetic Platonist (en route around the "equator"), making use of scepticism (his "staff") while he walks. This is why the traditional interpretation of the ninth Arcanum is *prudence*.

Prudence is constant awareness of being between two darknesses — the darkness of the "white point" of absolute synthesis above, which is dazzling and which demands a slow and gradual spiritual preparation in order to be able to bear its light without being blinded, and the darkness of the black point, that of the subconscious below. Prudence is at the same time "mobile concentration" proceeding



from one particular colour to another in the "equatorial" region between the two opposite poles. It is wrapped in the mantle of their "synopsis" not as a knowledge that is ever-present in the mind, but rather as the background of each particular branch of knowledge—as the certainty of *faith* in the unity which certainly envelops it and with which it is clothed, but which is open at the front to make room for the use of the lamp (*orientated vision*) and the staff (*concentrated touch*).

Prudence does not entail a vision that is always present in the mind, either of the "white point" of synthesis, or of the "synopsis" of the rainbow of colours. It is an enveloping presence, as the subconscious envelops the conscious, and is present only as a force of orientation, as a directing inclination and fundamental impulse in relation to the conscious. Prudence never elaborates an "absolute system" for synthesising all knowledge. It is occupied only with particular problems on the basis of their synthesis present at deeper levels of consciousness. A general all-embracing synthesis is formed on another level of consciousness than that where the conscious self performs intellectual work. It is thus that the prudent Hermit would be able to offer you dozens of answers to dozens of questions, giving them spontaneously and without apparent care for their mutual agreement, and you would have the impression that each particular answer is absolutely *ad hoc* and that it is in no way due to a preconceived intellectual system. You will ask, perhaps, if this is not a matter of "intellectual poetry", such that each particular answer appears spontaneously and ingenuously, although it may certainly be appropriate and conclusive.

This would be the first impression. However, after thought and reflection, you would find that all these spontaneous and well-intentioned *ad hoc* answers disclose a "whole", an organism of synthesis behind them, and that they are *in essence* prodigiously married, and *in essence* constitute only a single articulated "word".

Then you will understand the role played by the mantle enveloping the Hermit, when he employs his lamp for seeing clearly into particular problems, and when he employs his staff for probing his terrain. The "mantle" is the presence at a deeper level of consciousness of the *whole truth*, and it is this which envelops and inspires all intellectual work relating to particular problems that is carried out by the conscious self with its lamp and staff. It is this which gives the conscious self direction and style, and sees to it that each solution to each particular problem is in harmony with the whole. The whole truth lives at this deeper level, and is present there as the certainty of *absolute faith*, as the certainty of the *imprint* of truth from above.

The initiate is not someone who knows everything. He is a person who bears the truth within a deeper level of his consciousness, not as an intellectual system, but rather as a level in his being, as a "mantle" which envelops him. This truth-imprint manifests itself as unshakeable certainty, i.e. as *faith* in the sense of the *voice of the presence of truth*.

Truth attained through synthesis is present at a deeper level of consciousness than that of the consciousness of self. It is found in darkness. It is from this darkness

that the rays of light of particular branches of knowledge are emitted, as a result of efforts aspiring to the "neutralisation of binaries" or the "solution of antinomies". These efforts are nothing other than excursions into the region of this deeper level of consciousness; they are contacts established with the inner darkness, which is full of revelations of truth.

The knowledge and power drawn from this dark and silent region of luminous certainty can be well described as the "gift of Perfect Night", the *TEΛΕΙΟΝ ΗΕΡΜΙΟΥ* mentioned in *Kore Kosmu*, the sacred book of Hermes Trismegistus.

The "gift of Perfect Night" manifests itself in consequence of such spiritual endeavours as are implied by the "neutralisation of binaries" or the "solution of antinomies". It is, one can say, the very essence of Hermeticism and constitutes at one and the same time the method which is proper to it and the faculty of knowledge to the exercise of which its very existence is due.

The Hermit is the spiritual image of he who follows the method and exercises the faculty of the "gift of black perfection" (or the "gift of Perfect Night"). As this method comprises true impartiality, i.e. the search for the synthesis of antinomies and the third term of binaries, the Hermeticist must necessarily be solitary, i.e. a hermit. *Solitude* is the method itself of Hermeticism. For one has to be profoundly alone in order to be able to exercise the "gift of Perfect Night" in the face of contraries, binaries, antinomies and parts which divide and rend the world of truth. He who seeks synthesis, i.e. true *peace*, can never take part for or against opposing things. And since it is precisely "taking sides" which groups people into communities and divides them into sections, he is necessarily alone. He can neither embrace any human cause without reserve, nor be opposed to any human cause, being loyal to the cause of *truth*, which is synthesis and peace. This is why he is condemned, whether he wants it or not, to profound solitude. He *is* a hermit in his inner life, whatever his outer life may be. He will never be given the joy of plunging himself in national, social or political collectivity. He will never have the blissful experience of having shared out the weight of responsibility with the multitude, and he can never fit in at festivals—or orgies—in the sense implied in the words "we French", "we Germans", "we Jews", "we Republicans", "we Royalists", or "we communists". The intoxication of plunging into collectivity is not given to him. He must be sober, i.e. *alone*. Because the pursuit of truth through synthesis—which is peace—implies prudence, and prudence is solitude.

This is why the Gospel puts the peacemakers in the same list as those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, assigning them another blessing than that of which they are deprived. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew v, 9) is what is said in the Sermon on the Mount for those who refuse to take sides in the face of partial truths and prejudices, being dedicated to the cause of the whole truth which unites the world and bears *peace* to it.

The itinerant Hermit—with his mantle, his lamp and his staff—is a "travel-

ling salesman" of peace. He makes his way from opinion to opinion, from belief to belief, from experience to experience — and traces his route so that he traverses the way of peace between opinions, beliefs and experiences, being always equipped with his mantle, lamp and staff. He does so alone, because he *walks* (and no one can walk for him) and because his work is peace (which is prudence, and therefore solitude).

However, there is no need to take pity on him. For he has his joys, and these are intense. When, for example, he meets another itinerant hermit on the way. what joy and what happiness there is in this meeting of two solitary travellers! This joy has nothing in common with that of the intoxication of feeling free from the burden of responsibility which plunging into collectivity brings about. On the contrary, it is the joy of responsibility encountering the same responsibility, which together share and alleviate the responsibility of a *third*— one who said of his earthly life:

Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son  
of Man has nowhere to lay his head. (Matthew viii, 20)

For it is the Master whom all itinerant hermits follow and serve. It is then the joy of two who meet one another in his name, and where he is "present".

Then there are the joys of profound silence, full of revelations, and those of the starry heaven, whose solemn presence speaks in the language of eternity, and the joys of the constellations of stars, and those of thoughts, and those of breathing air full of spirituality! No, one need not take pity on the Hermit. Although, like his Master, he has nowhere to lay his head, he is already blessed with the good fortune that the Master promised to those who are peacemakers. He has the good fortune to participate in the work of the Son of God, in taking part in the solitude of the earthly life of the Son of Man.

Those who are peacemakers—hermits—do not in any way procure peace "at any price" and without distinction in kind. For one can achieve peace in various ways, and it is still necessary to distinguish between peace and Peace. Ostwald's coloured body can again help us in the solution of this problem. The "white point", the "equator of living colours" and the "black point" of this body can serve as a basis, by analogy, for the problem of the different types of peace and the different ways of realising it.

Peace is unity in diversity. There is no peace where there is no diversity, and there is no peace when there is only diversity.

Now, unity where diversity disappears is not peace. For this reason, although the "white point" of the coloured body, where all colours are drowned in light, is certainly that which renders peace possible, it is not peace as such, taken by itself. Similarly, the "black point" of the body, where all colours disappear into darkness, is not the point of peace, but rather the point of death of diversity and the conflicts that diversity can produce. It is therefore the "equator of living col-

ours" which is the region proper to peace. The living colours of the rainbow that appear in the sky are the visible manifestation of the idea of peace, because the rainbow causes us to see unity in the diversity of colours. There the whole family of colours presents itself to us as seven sisters who join their hands. For this reason the rainbow is the sign of peace (or alliance) between heaven and earth, as in Moses' Genesis:

And God said: This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations — I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. (Genesis ix, 12-13)

Now, four types of peace, understood as the elimination of conflict or opposition, are possible: transcendental peace ("nirvanaic"), immanent peace ("catholic"), the peace of predominance ("hegemonic") and the peace of death ("nihilistic").

Transcendental or "nirvanaic" peace corresponds to the "white point" of the coloured body. Immanent or "catholic" peace is the simultaneous living manifestation of *all* colours of the rainbow and corresponds to the "equator" of the coloured body. The peace of predominance, or "hegemonic" peace, corresponds to the result of the tendency of a particular colour to eclipse other colours in the region of the "equator of colours", and to engulf them so that there remains only a single colour. The peace of death, or "nihilistic" peace, corresponds to the "black point" of the coloured body, and signifies an absolute levelling-out of all diversity. Of these four kinds of peace, it is only the peace that we have designated "immanent" or "catholic" (universal) which is real and true peace. It is the peace of *brotherhood* and *mutual complement*.

As it is this peace that the Hermit has for an ideal, he is not presented on the Card in the *padmasana* posture of Buddhist or yogic meditation aiming at the transcendent peace of *nirvana*, nor is he presented *seated on* the throne of power making a commanding gesture, nor lying asleep or dead on the ground, but rather he is presented as *walking*. He walks, i.e. he goes round the "equator of living colours" of the coloured body, and his way is that of peace in the sense of unity in diversity.

It follows from the foregoing that the Hermit, i.e. the serious Hermeticist, is in no way a "neutralist"—although he applies himself to the "neutralisation" of binaries or polarities, to the solution of antinomies or opposites, and to the peace of the rainbow or unity in diversity. He knows how to say "no" to the tendencies aiming at false peace—those of transcendental indifference, subjugation and nihilism—just as he knows how to say "yes" to everything which aims at the true peace of unity in diversity.

He knows how to say "yes" and "no"—these two magical words of the will, by means of which the will is strong, and without which it goes to sleep. "Yes and

no"—this is the very life of the will, its supreme and unique law. The will does not know of a third term between, beyond, above or below "yes and no". "Amen" and "anathema" are not only the solemn formulae of liturgy summarising ultimate affirmation and negation, but also those of the will which lives and keeps awake. The will as such is never impartial, neutral or indifferent.

Now we have arrived at a further antinomy — *-a practical* antinomy: "wisdom — will", or "universal synthesis — particular action" or, also, "knowledge — will". One *must* know, i.e. see unity in diversity, and one *must* will, i.e. cut through contemplated unity, with a sharp sword that cuts both ways—the "yes" and the "no" of the will. To become contemplative is to turn to inactivity. To become active is, in the last analysis, to turn to ignorance.

One can certainly choose to live a contemplative kind of life, but at what price? The following analogy illustrates the price of choosing contemplation as the principal way and central preoccupation of life:

A boat carries passengers and a crew consisting of a captain, officers and sailors. It is the same with the boat as with human society, which voyages from century to century. The latter also bears crew and passengers. The members of crew are vigilant so that the boat follows its route and the passengers are healthy and safe. Now, to take the part of living a contemplative life implies the decision to become a passenger on the boat of human society and to leave the responsibility for the boat's route, and for the well-being of the other passengers as well as oneself, to the crew—the captain, and the officers and sailors. One therefore becomes a passenger on the boat of human history, when one chooses a life of the contemplative kind. This is the moral price of this choice.

Nevertheless, one must guard against the direct—but superficial—conclusion that all "hermits" and "contemplatives" in the various religious orders are passengers. Nothing could be further from the truth. Because amongst these "contemplatives" are often found not only sailors and officers of the crew but also even captains. It is because their work and aim is essentially *practical*, although spiritual, that this is so. *Prayer*, divine service, study, and a disciplined and austere life constitute a very active and effective endeavour, having in view the route and destiny of the boat of mankind's spiritual history. Truth to tell, it is the "contemplatives" who bear consciously and voluntarily the bulk of the responsibility for the spiritual route of the boat and for the spiritual well-being both of its crew and its passengers.

"Contemplative", for these orders, signifies spiritual endeavour and spiritual responsibility, whilst "contemplative" in the sense of choosing the pole of contemplation at the expense of the pole of will within the human being means that one prefers the *enjoyment* of contemplation to the *effort* of will and action (spiritual or outward) that the latter entails. In fact, one can meet a fair number of people who enjoy the contemplative life. They are almost never from religious orders or orders of so-called contemplatives, but above all are lay-amateurs who are so on their own authority. One can meet them amongst dilettante yoga-

practitioners, would-be Cabbalists, make-believe Sufis, and metaphysicians in general.

One can, on the other hand, decide for the pole of will within the human being and want to occupy oneself only with what relates to action and practical aim. One can certainly choose a life of action of some kind, but at what price! The price is inevitably narrow-mindedness. "What is the good of occupying myself with Eskimos, with whom I have nothing to do, when I do not even know sufficient people in my street and colleagues in my office?"—says one who has chosen action at the expense of knowledge. If he is a believer, he will ask: What is the good of all these vain spiritual occupations—philosophies, sciences, and social and political doctrines—if the sound precepts of the Gospels (or the Bible, the Koran, the Dhammapada, etc.) are sufficient for my salvation and that of humanity? Action demands concentration and this inevitably entails the limitation of the spirit to cross-sections of life and the loss of perspective of its totality.

Now, the prudence taught by the Arcanum "The Hermit" can also give the solution to the practical antinomy "knowledge—will".

The Hermit is neither deep in meditation or study nor is he engaged in work or action. *He is walking*. This means to say that he manifests a third state beyond that of contemplation and action. He represents—in relation to the binary "knowledge —will" or "contemplation—action" or, lastly, "head—limbs"—the term of synthesis, namely that of *heart*. For it is the *heart* where contemplation and action are united, where knowledge becomes will and where will becomes knowledge. The heart does not need to forget all contemplation in order to act, and does not need to suppress all action in order to contemplate. It is the heart which is simultaneously active and contemplative, untiringly and unceasingly. It *walks*. It walks day and night, and we listen day and night to the steps of its incessant walking. This is why, if we want to represent a man who lives the law of the heart, who is centred in the heart and is a visible expression of the heart—the "wise and good father", or the Hermit—we present him as *walking*, steadily and without haste.

The Hermit of the ninth Card is a man of heart, a solitary man who is walking. Therefore he is a man who has realised in himself the antinomy "knowledge—will" or "contemplation—action". For the heart is the solution here.

The "heart" that we have in mind here is not that of emotion and the faculty of being passionate that one generally understands by "heart". It is the middle centre of the seven centres of man's psychic and vital constitution. It is the "twelve-petalled lotus" or *anahata* centre of Indian esotericism. This centre is the most *human* of all the centres of "lotus flowers". For if the eight-petalled lotus or crown centre is that of the revelation of wisdom, the two-petalled lotus is that of intellectual initiative, the sixteen-petalled lotus (the larynx centre) is that of the creative word, the ten-petalled lotus is that of science, the six-petalled lotus is that of harmony and health, and the four-petalled lotus is that of creative force, then the twelve-petalled lotus (the heart centre) is that of *love*. This is why it is the most

human of the centres, and it is the ultimate criterion not of what a human being possesses —what he can do and what he knows —but rather of what he *is*. For the human being is fundamentally what his heart is. It is there that the humanity of the human being resides and is revealed. The heart is the sun of the microcosm.

For this reason Christian Hermeticism—in common with Christianity in general—is "heliocentric", i.e. it attributes to the heart the central place in all its practices. The great work of spiritual alchemy or "ethical Hermeticism" is the transmutation of the substances ("metals") of the other lotuses into the substance of the heart ("gold"). "Ethical Hermeticism" (a term employed in Russia for spiritual alchemy) aims at the transformation of the whole system of lotuses into a system of seven hearts, i.e. to transform the human being entirely into heart. In practice, this means to say the *humanisation* of the whole human being and the transformation of the system of lotuses into a system functioning by love and for love. Thus the wisdom revealed by the eight-petalled lotus will cease to be abstract and transcendent: it will become full of warmth, as the fire of Pentecost. The intellectual initiative of the two-petalled lotus will become "compassion-filled insight" into the world. The creative word of the sixteen-petalled lotus will become magical: it will have the faculty of illumining, consoling and healing.

The heart itself, or the twelve-petalled lotus, which alone of the centres is not attached to the organism, and which can go out of it and live — by the exteriorisation of its "petals", which can be rayed outwards—with and in others, will become a traveller, a visitor and anonymous companion of those who are in prison, those who are in exile, and those who bear heavy loads of responsibility. It will be an itinerant Hermit, traversing ways leading from one end of the earth to the other, and also ways through spheres of the spiritual world — from purgatory to the very feet of the Father. Because no distance is insurmountable for love and no door can prevent it from entering — according to the promise which says: "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew xvi, 18). It is the heart which is the marvellous organ called to serve love in its works. It is the structure of the heart — simultaneously human and divine, a structure of love—which by way of analogy can open our understanding to the significance of the meaning of the following words of the Master: "And lo, *I am with you* always, to the end of time" (Matthew xxviii, 20).

The science of the ten-petalled lotus will then become conscience, i.e. the servant of God and neighbour. The six-petalled lotus, the centre of health, will become that of holiness, i.e. harmony between spirit, soul and body. The creative force of the four-petalled lotus will then serve as a source of energy and inexhaustible elan for the long way of the itinerant hermit, who is a man of heart, i.e. a man who has regained his humanity.

The disciple of Hindu yoga and tantra meditates on, or inwardly recites, "seed-mantras" (*bija mantra*) in order to arouse and advance the development of these centres or chakras. He inwardly vibrates the syllable OM for the centre between the eyebrows (the two-petalled lotus), the syllable HAM for the larynx centre (the

sixteen-petalled lotus), the syllable YAM for the heart centre (the twelve-petalled lotus), the syllable RAM for the umbilical centre (the ten-petalled lotus), the syllable VAM for the pelvic centre (the six-petalled lotus) and the syllable LAM for the centre at the base of the spine (the four-petalled lotus). Concerning the crown centre (the eight-petalled lotus), there is no *bija mantra* for it — this centre being not the means but rather the aim of yogic development. It is the centre of liberation.

Now, the following "mantras" or Christian formulae are those which relate to these centres:

I am the resurrection and the life	-the eight-petalled lotus;
I am the light of the world	-the two-petalled lotus;
I am the good shepherd	-the sixteen-petalled lotus;
I am the bread of life	-the twelve-petalled lotus;
I am the door	- the ten-petalled lotus;
I am the way, the truth and the life	- the six-petalled lotus;
I am the true vine	-the four-petalled lotus.

Here is the difference in the choice of method: It is a matter, dear Unknown Friend, of choosing between the method of vibrating particular syllabic sounds — Om, Ham, Yam, Ram, Vam and Lam — and the method which has in view spiritual communion with the seven rays of the "I AM" or the seven aspects of the perfect SELF, who is Jesus Christ. The first method aims at awakening the centres *such as they are*; the second aims at the *Christianisation* of all the centres, i.e. their *transformation* in conformity with their divine-human prototypes. It is a matter here of the realisation of the words of the apostle Paul: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (II Corinthians v, 17).

The work of Christianisation of the human organisation, i.e. the transformation of the human being into a man of heart, is accomplished in the *inner* life of man, the lotus-flowets being only the field where the *effects* of this purely inner work are manifested. Now, the domain where this transformation is immediately effected consists of three pairs of contraries (practical "antinomies") and three "neutralisations of binaries"—nine factors in all—as follows:

When we speak of the practical antinomy "knowledge — will" and its solution — the "heart"—this is only a general view of the task of integration of the human being. In *practice* we have to do with "will and the heart of knowledge", "knowledge and the will of the heart" and "knowledge and the heart of the will", for there is feeling and will in the domain of thought, thought and will in the domain of feeling, and thought and feeling in the domain of the will. There are therefore three triangles of "knowledge — heart — will" in practising the inner work of integrating the human being.

Now, the distinctly practical teaching of the ninth Arcanum is that it is necessary to subordinate the directing intellectual initiative, as well as the flowing spontaneous movement of thought, to the "heart of thought", i.e. to the profound



feeling that is found at the basis of the thinking that one sometimes designates "intellectual intuition" and which is the "feeling for truth". It is also necessary to subordinate both spontaneous imagination and actively directed imagination to the direction of the heart, i.e. to the profound feeling of moral warmth that one sometimes designates "moral intuition" and which is the "feeling for beauty". Lastly, it is necessary- to subordinate spontaneous impulses and designs directed from the will to the profound feeling which accompanies them that one sometimes designates "practical intuition" and which is the "feeling for the good".

The Hermit of the ninth Card is the Christian Hermeticist, who represents the "inner work of nine", the work of realising the supremacy of the heart in the human being— in familiar, traditional terms: the "work of salvation"— because the "salvation of the soul" is the restoration of the reign of the *heart*.