PARABOLA

THE MAGAZINE OF MYTH AND TRADITION

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Volume IX
Number 1

PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

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Cover: Copper with gold wash, South India, c. eighteenth century. Private collection.
Inside cover: An Angel Leads St. John to Heaven from the *French Apocalypse*, Ms. Royal 19. B. XII, sheet 5/v. England, early fourteenth century. British Museum, London.

FOCUS



"Hierarchy? I'm against it." This was the most categorically negative advance response we've had to the theme of this issue, but there have been many people who, in one way or another, have recoiled from opening the question. I suppose it's because hierarchy is not generally taken as a question, but simply as a word which triggers a great number of distasteful associations: the pecking order; the master race and "inferior human types"; the caste system and untouchables; the Mafia; the military; bureaucracies, corrupt Popes, crooked Presidents. We think of the abuse of authority, the misuse of power, the arrogance of wealth, the exploitation of the helpless—and we are against it.

Perhaps especially in the United States, the term sounds out-of-date, archaic, like something we've happily outgrown. That all men are created equal has the force of revelation, and it is threatening even to begin to consider in what ways this may be true and in what ways it may not be. We tend to assume that equality is a God-given right, even when we don't believe in God, and that hierarchy is manmade and fallible, rigid and static, arbitrarily imposed and externally enforced.

It is evident to us, however, that no individual, no society, no natural process can come into being and continue its existence without lawful relationship, without the various elements knowing their places and fulfilling their roles. It is often not as evident that hierarchy is inseparable from order, that it is inherent in order on every level, on all scales—that it is an organic principle without which the world could not exist.

In true hierarchy everything—and everyone—has a place, and our expressions reveal that this fact is often considered uncongenial. We don't like to be "put in our place," or to be told that we don't "know our place." The assumption in these expressions is that our rightful place is beneath where we think we are or where we ought to be. Just as often, however, we refuse to fill our place because it seems beyond our capacities. Most of the time we are unaware of having a place at all, but aware of it or not, we have a role to play, and there is something in us which knows that finding our place and being able to fill it is an essential task, necessary for true freedom.

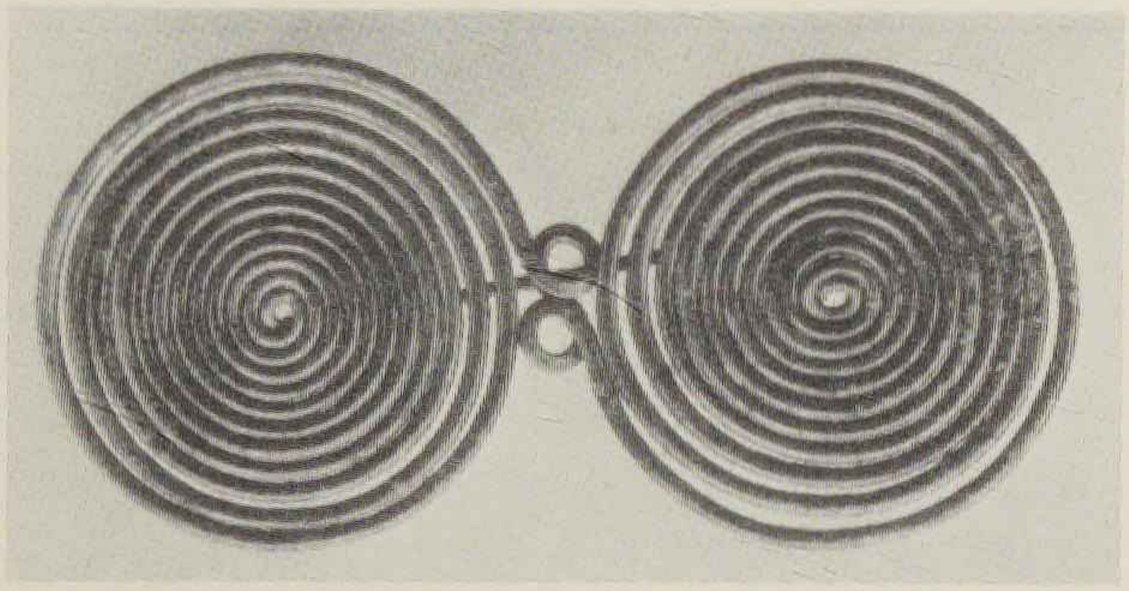
The central question of this issue of PARABOLA is that for human beings there is not one hierarchy, but many, and all of our contributors confront this dilemma. "The Taste for Things That Are True" is the title of Henri Tracol's piece, and throughout the issue there is an affirmation of the capacity in human beings to find a measure, to develop discrimination among conflicting hierarchies, to recognize and respect what is higher within and without. Weak, neglected, unsupported as it may be in our time, human beings have an appetite for the truth that cannot be satisfied by anything less. Several writers hint that an active awareness of what lies above us and below us can be a vehicle for awakening and refining that appetite, for allowing us to receive the finer nourishment that will make it possible for our whole being to develop and fulfill the purpose for which it was created.

We are living in cramped quarters these days, locked in Plato's cave, but even this can be a starting place—once we've had even one breath of fresh air, one glimpse of the sun.

—Lorraine Kisly

FULL CIRCLE

A Readers' Forum



We encourage readers to use this space to share their thoughts and questions, either in response to a particular article or in order to raise matters of general interest. We are looking for letters which will help to open new ideas, and we will offer a free back issue for every contribution we publish.

I believe I share with Kathleen Raine the common language she speaks about in her delightful interview (Summer, 1983, Vol. VIII, No. 3), since I find myself in warm agreement with every point she makes. Every point that is, but one: her comment that Christianity needs to free itself from Thomistic philosophy in order to return to a more spiritual foundation. This notion is an example of the common misconception that the thought of Thomas Aquinas and the influence of Thomism were—and continue to be—detrimental to the development of genuine spiritual and mystical realization in Christianity. This is simply not so. In the first place, Aquinas himself was a mystic who experienced many visions and even, according to an eyewitness account, was seen to levitate during periods of ecstatic prayer. His interest in Aristotle clearly did not turn him into an earthbound materialist. In the second place, many of the greatest Christian mystics were "Thomist" in their own way, Ruysbroeck, Francis de Sales, and Aquinas's fellow Dominican, Meister Eckhart, to name a few. In our day, the work of Thomas Merton and Jacques Maritain shows the compatibility of the Thomistic *via positiva* with the *via negativa* of the chief Christian mystics, including St. John of the Cross.

On the other hand, St. Thomas has often been misunderstood to the point of caricature, even by those who claim to be his disciples. A caricature always has some underlying truth, which tends to keep it alive, especially in Aquinas's case, since hardly anyone reads him anymore. A once popular anecdote in France perfectly expresses this caricature: "There are three steps in the historical degradation of the Catholic Church. The first was due to Constantine, who turned the Church into an institution; the second to St. Thomas Aquinas, who turned it into a system; and the third to St. Ignatius Loyola, who turned it into a police force!"

Certainly Thomism is systematic, but systematic theology in itself is not a block to spiritual realization. The grain of truth in the caricature is that Thomism, in order to allow Revelation alone the glory of "supernatural" knowledge, seems to reduce

the Intellect to simple rationality. However, informed Thomists know that there are many texts in Aquinas which point to the reality of a higher form of knowledge than reason alone: *sapientia*, immediate knowledge, *gnosis*.

In the third place, Christian theology as a whole, including Roman Catholic theology in this century, has long since abandoned the unity of Thomistic metaphysics for a humanistic babble of competing rationalisms. Thomism is out of fashion, its vocabulary rarely employed, its insights esoteric.

Thomism and Aristotelianism are not synonymous. Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson, two of the greatest modern Thomists, now virtually unread, have shown that Aquinas did not simply adopt an imitative Aristotelianism. In a creative achievement of unparalleled brilliance, he forged a rigorous and supple synthesis of Aristotle, Plato, Moses, and St. Paul, with the help of the insights of Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite, both Christian Neoplatonists of the greatest authority in the Middle Ages. In short, Thomism is at the heart of the once living, now abandoned, but still authentic metaphysical tradition of Christianity.

Although this view is very much in the minority, I am convinced along with Gilson, Maritain, Coomaraswamy, and others, that the only sure way to restore a spiritually authentic metaphysics (Neoplatonism, if you will) in Christianity is not to avoid but to go straight through the balanced, harmonious, and disciplined thought of Thomas Aquinas. The work of Thomas Aquinas is so central to the timeless transmission of integral Christianity, both exoteric and esoteric, that, contrary to current theological opinion infected as it is with uncritical modernism, Thomism cannot be superseded, only adapted, reexpressed, and if need be rescued from the unimaginative rationalists who claim to speak in his name. Don't blame Thomas Aquinas or his authentic interpreters for the current spiritual bankruptcy of conventional (as opposed to traditional) Christianity. When theology lost its living metaphysical, mystical, cosmological, and symbolical tradition, it also lost touch with the "Angelic Doctor."

Vincent Rossi
Director General
Holy Order of MANS
San Francisco, California

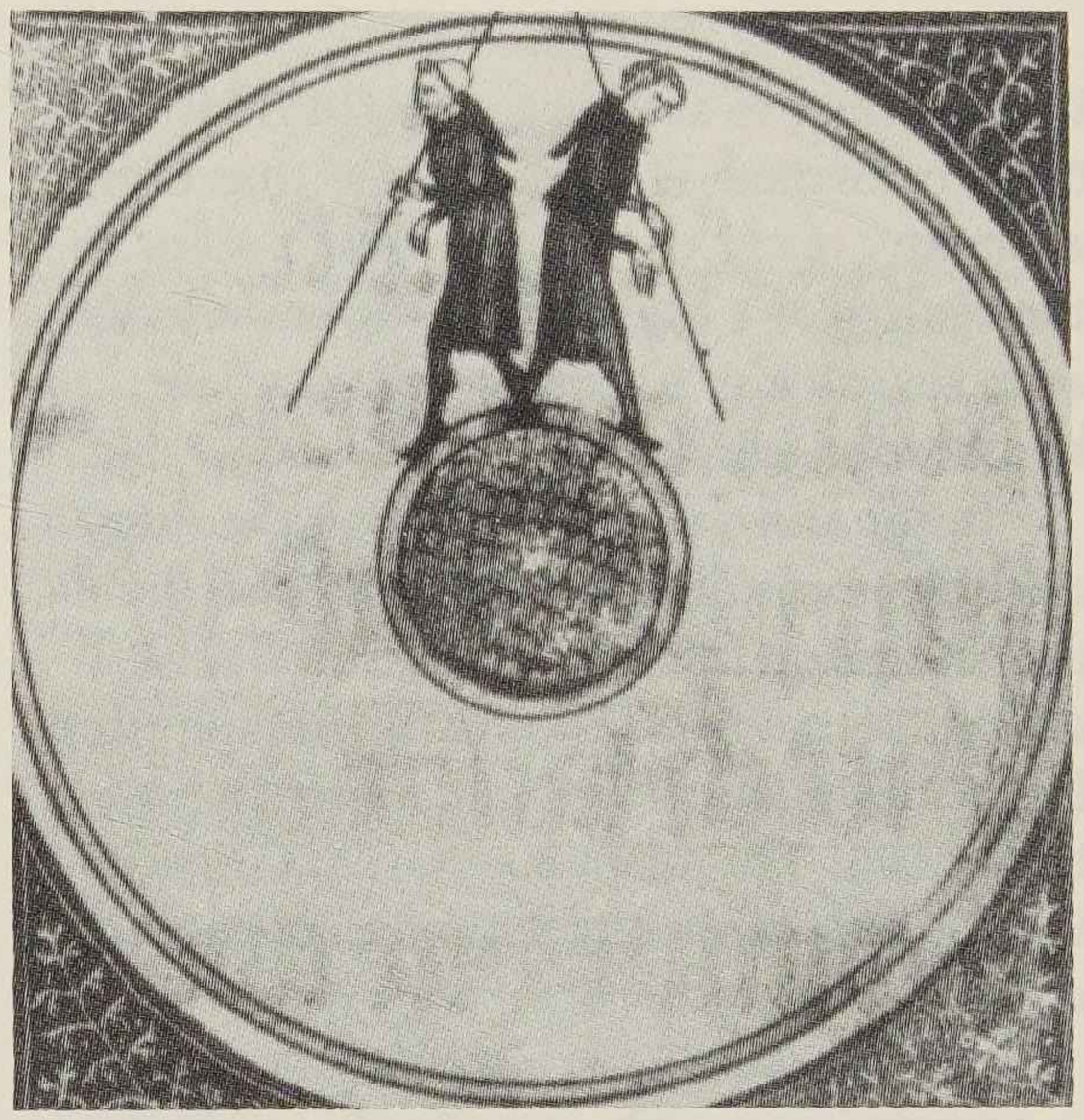
I was eager to read your issue on "Words of Power" (Summer, 1983, Vol. VIII, No. 3), but was disappointed by it.

I was surprised at the absence of any article on Kabbalah, much of which is based on the concept of the power of words. Even normative Judaism is based on it to a large extent. For example, there is the story of the rabbinic martyr who was executed by being burned alive slowly and wrapped in a scroll of the Torah. His students asked him what he saw, and he said, "I see the parchment burning, but the letters ascend aloft." Charbonneau-Lassay's "Tongues of Fire" made reference to Kabbalah, but the Kabbalah referred to is a Christian variation having very little to do with its Jewish origins. Another distortion occurred in Anne Twitty's "Voice Above, Voice Below," in which the origin of "abracadabra" is cited as "the Hebrew *abreq ad habra*," which makes no sense to me

(Continued on page 125)

The First Initiation

G. I. GURDJIEFF



The following is a translation of words recorded by G. I. Gurdjieff's pupils during a meeting in Paris on December 16, 1941. Printed by permission of Triangle Editions.

You will see that in life you receive exactly what you give. Your life is the mirror of what you are. It is in your image. You are passive, blind, demanding. You take all, you accept all, without feeling any obligation. Your attitude toward the world and toward life is the attitude of one who has the right to make demands and to take; who has no need to pay or to earn. You believe that all things are your due, simply because it is you! All your blindness is there! None of this strikes your attention. And yet this is what in you keeps one world separate from another world.

You have no measure with which to measure yourselves. You live exclusively according to "I like" or "I don't like," you have no appreciation except for yourself. You recognize nothing above you—theoretically, logically, perhaps, but actually no. That is why you are demanding and continue to believe that everything is cheap and that you have enough in your pocket to buy everything you like. You recognize nothing above you, either outside yourself or inside. That is why, I repeat, you have no measure and live passively according to your likes and dislikes.

Yes, your "appreciation of yourself" blinds you! It is the biggest obstacle to a new life. You must be able to get over this obstacle, this threshold, before going further. This test divides men into two kinds: the "wheat" and the "chaff." No matter how intelligent, how gifted, how brilliant a man may be, if he does not change his appreciation of himself, there will be no hope for an inner development, for a work towards self-knowledge, for a true becoming. He will remain such as he is all his life. The first requirement, the first condition, the first test for one who wishes to work on himself is to change his appre-

ciation of himself. He must not imagine, not simply believe or think, but see things in himself which he has never seen before, see them actually. His appreciation will never be able to change as long as he sees nothing in himself. And in order to see, he must *learn* to see: this is the first initiation of man into self-knowledge.

First of all, he has to know what he must look at. When he knows, he must make efforts, keep his attention, look constantly with persistence. Only through maintaining his attention, and not forgetting to look, one day, perhaps, he will be able to see. If he sees one time he can see a second time, and if that continues he will no longer be able not to see. This is the state to be looked for, it is the aim of our observation; it is from there that the true wish will be born, the irresistible wish to become: from cold we shall become warm, vibrant; we shall be touched by our reality.

Today we have nothing but the illusion of what we are. We think too highly of ourselves. We do not respect ourselves. In order to respect myself, I have to recognize a part in myself which is above the other parts, and my attitude towards this part should bear witness to the respect that I have for it. In this way I shall respect myself. And my relations with others will be governed by the same respect.

You must understand that all the other measures—talent, education, culture, genius—are changing measures, measures of detail. The only exact measure, the only unchanging, objective real measure is the measure of inner vision. *I* see—*I* see myself—by this, you have measured. With one higher real part, you have measured another lower part, also real. And this measure, defining by itself the role of each part, will lead you to respect for yourself.

But you will see that it is not easy. And it is not cheap. You must pay dearly. For bad payers, lazy people, parasites, no hope. You must pay, pay a lot, and pay immediately, pay in advance. Pay with yourself. By sincere, conscientious, disinterested efforts. The more you are prepared to pay without economizing, without cheating, without any falsification, the more you will receive. And from that time on you will become acquainted with your nature. And you will see all the tricks, all the dishonesties that your nature resorts to in order to avoid paying hard cash. Because you have to pay with your ready-made theories, with your rooted convictions, with your prejudices, your conventions, your "I like" and "I don't like." Without bargaining, honestly, without pretending. Trying "sincerely" to see as you offer your counterfeit money.

Try for a moment to accept the idea that you are not what you believe yourself to be, that you overestimate yourself, in fact that you lie to yourself. That you always lie to yourself every moment, all day, all your life. That this lying rules you to such an extent that you cannot control it any more. You are the prey of lying. You lie, everywhere. Your relations with others—lies. The upbringing you give, the conventions—lies. Your teaching—lies. Your theories, your art—lies. Your social life, your family life—lies. And what you think of yourself—lies also.

But you never stop yourself in what you are doing or in what you are saying because you believe in yourself. You must stop inwardly and observe. Observe without preconceptions, accepting for a time this idea of lying. And if you observe in this way, paying with yourself, without self-pity, giving up all your supposed riches for a moment of reality, perhaps you will suddenly see something you have never before seen in yourself until this day. You will see that you are different from what you think you are. You will see that you are two. One who is not, but takes the place and plays the role of the other. And one who is, yet so weak, so insubstantial, that he no sooner appears than he immediately disappears. He cannot endure lies. The least lie makes him faint away. He does not struggle, he does not resist, he is defeated in advance. Learn to look until you have seen the difference between your two natures, until you have seen the lies, the deception in yourself. When you have seen your two natures, that day, in yourself, the truth will be born. ■

Becoming Unstable / Hierarchy and Evolution

AN INTERVIEW WITH ADIN STEINSALTZ

Whether we are aware of it or not, levels of authority everywhere govern the course of our lives. Bosses oversee our places of work, guardians of the law enforce civil order, red lights and green regulate the public bustle in our streets. Within us, mysterious stops and starts curb and give rein to jostling mitochondria and avid enzymes in the spaces of our cells. Moral codes weigh heavily on us all; good and bad alike, we are plagued by the hierarchical demands of our conditioned ethical imperatives.

Yet confronted as we are on every hand by its impact, the hierarchical principle has, in our time, a bad name and tends to be denied, discounted, ignored. The fault may lie with hierarchies of doubtful authenticity, such as those imposed by political knavery. But even legitimate ones are uncongenial to those living in an age bemused by the dream of equality, freedom, and the importance of "me."

To be sure, those in search of spiritual understanding are primarily concerned with the essential truth and the way to it. Whatever their attitude toward hierarchy, they may find that what is required of them first off is obedience and, moreover, the only obedience worthy of the name—that which is voluntary. When rebellious nuns and monks jump over the wall, it is rarely the rigors of poverty or sexual deprivation that motivate them. Resistance to authority is far more likely to be the root of the trouble.

Be that as it may, the fact is that the interstices of our lives are laced with subtle skeins of authority; a maze of hidden hierarchies exert their inevitable impact on our comings and goings. When the opportunity came our way, we were grateful to be able to turn for light on this troublesome subject to a man widely schooled at the interface between reason and revelation.

Adin Steinsaltz, head of the Israel Institute for Talmudic Publications in Jerusalem, is a scholar, teacher, scientist, writer, social critic, and a formidable rabbi, held in the highest esteem by his colleagues. His achievements include an ongoing translation into modern Hebrew of the Babylonian Talmud, and treatises on such disparate subjects as French literature, science fiction, archeology, mysticism, Israeli politics, and zoology.

He received us kindly in Jerusalem in the fall of 1982, and when he was in New York this spring he consented to be interviewed. We soon realized why his evening seminars in Jerusalem attract devoted students, scholars, and notables from around the world.

—William and Louise Welch

PARABOLA We live in an egalitarian moment in which it is considered that everyone is equal and everyone is free, and the idea of hierarchy is perceived as an arbitrary imposition on the freedom of man. I wonder how realistic this conception is from your point of view.

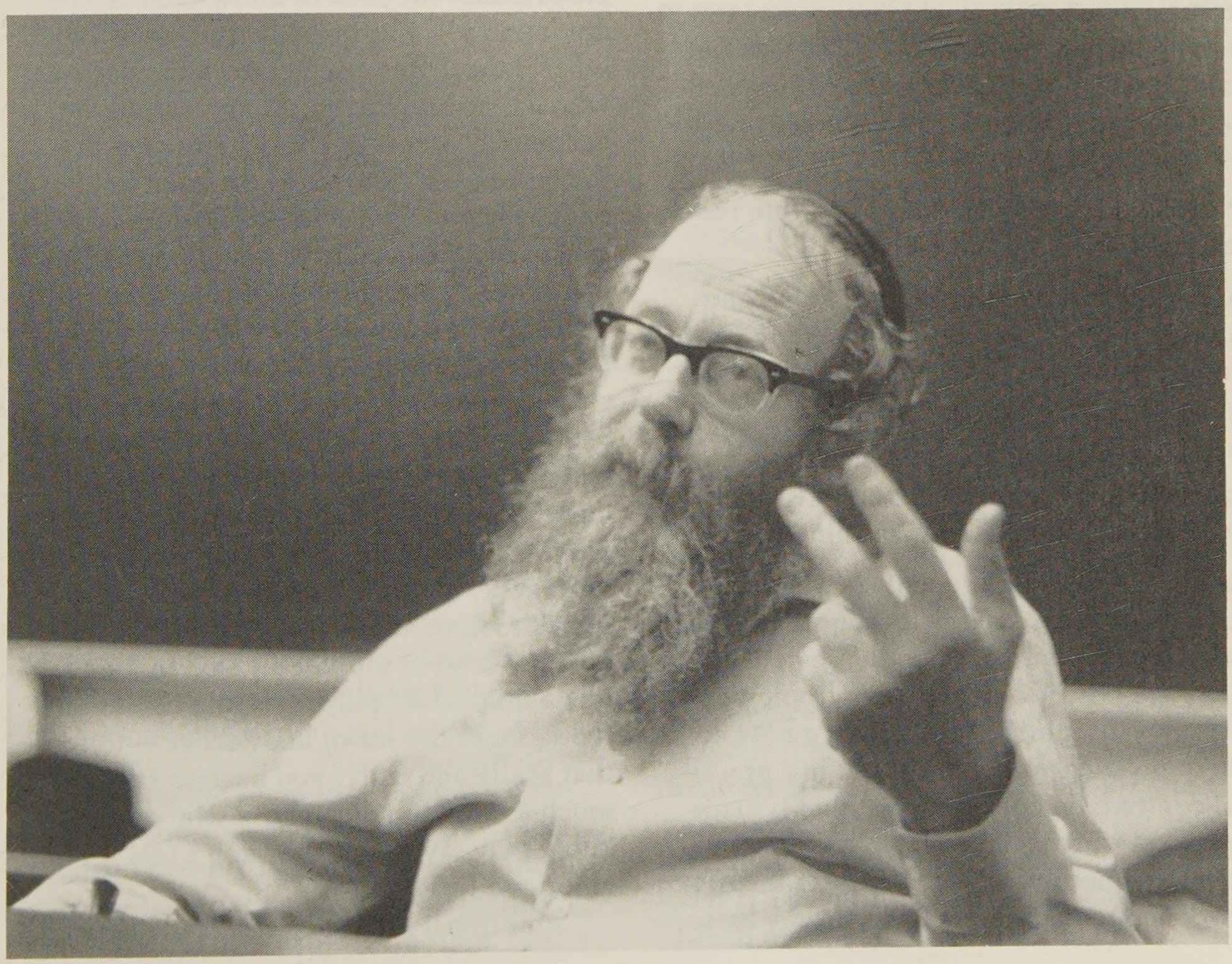
Adin Steinsaltz My point of view is almost the opposite. Egalitarian ideas are not supported by any evidence. The inequality of man is blatantly apparent. The only way one can find any support for the idea of equality is in a very difficult religious concept: the concept that people are born in the image of the Lord and are therefore equal. There is no other argument that I have heard that serves any purpose. All egalitarian movements are an outcome of Judeo-Christian ideas that contain within

them the notion of receiving a divine soul that for everyone is more or less the same. We can speak—in a way—of the equality of souls mostly because we can't see them! But it is very hard to speak about equality in any other way. All forces everywhere, within and without, work against equality. People are so inherently different—not only different, but unequal—that it requires a constant struggle to accept the notion of some kind of equality. The only justification for the idea is what you may call a mystical one; even though people don't appear to be equal, there is something equal in them.

From this point of view, whether it is a good thing or not such a good thing, hierarchy seems to me to be a given element; inherent in creation and in nature. This is nature—everything else is an attempt to change nature.

P. The evidence of hierarchy in the physiological organization of man is quite clear; from above downward, with semi-independent functions, each with a certain autonomy but subject to control from above. Might there be a relationship between the higher and lower in our psyche and some corresponding potential, if not actual, authority?

A.S. The physiological model has the advantage of stressing that hierarchy involves interdependence. For instance, the mind is far superior to the legs—anyone would prefer to have his leg cut off rather than to have his head cut off. On the other hand, there are functions that the legs perform which the head cannot. Recently I taught some ancient texts that spoke about inner spiritual hierarchy—for hierarchy exists not only as an outer biological and social structure, but also as an inner one. There are higher and lower forces within our world, within our souls, and within our concepts. And even there, hierarchy is interdependent. There are lower elements—



clearly lower by every definition—that have a basic power which makes them not only worthwhile, but in certain situations far more important than higher ones.

There are many discussions in Jewish mystical tradition about interrelationships between mind, or intellect, and emotion. In our view, in the hierarchy of the soul emotions are below mind, because mind gives meaning and direction to emotions. The powers of conceptualization and of thinking are called the father and mother; the emotions are called the children. It is a common way of describing them; but even so, we know that in the working of the soul there are instances when the mind cannot do anything. The intellect is powerless to achieve things. That which emotions can achieve, the mind cannot, but the emotions cannot operate without some kind of subject–object relationship. Emotions, dependent on information and direction supplied by the mind, can only work within that context. The mind works as a watcher, or censor, of things without and within.

It has often been noted that the strength of emotional and intellectual ties is very unequal. Whether we like it or not, emotionally we get attached to things and aren't able to change our attachment with the intellect.

P. Isn't there also a hierarchy within the realms of thinking and feeling?

A.S. There is an internal hierarchy, and another hierarchy of different sets of things, one above the other. There are also complete cycles that go one into another.

P. Where do you place the sense of values? I think different levels exist in what we value, and how we value it.

A.S. We consider the sense of values as something that comes before, or hierarchically above, conscious mind. We believe there are powers within every framework that give direction. I am speaking now not about mystical experiences but in a practical context: on one level my mind is made up about whether it wants to be for or against something. Then it creates the network and the building blocks for my basic

"There are lower elements—clearly lower by every definition—that have a basic power which makes them not only worthwhile, but in certain situations far more important than higher ones."

attitude. Later, some kind of appropriate emotion arises. Because emotion is secondary, in order to develop it needs something to build upon. If I don't have any picture of whatever it is, I cannot have any emotion—love or hatred—

P. Or reverence.

A.S. Or even reverence. I have to have a point of view; and to have a feeling of awe, of facing the unknown, on an emotional basis, one has to have a very deep intellectual background. In the Middle Ages people said that the peak of knowledge is "I don't know." The question is: if that is so, what is the difference between the person who has no knowledge whatever and the person who knows? The difference is that the person who knows, knows that he doesn't know. The person who does not know, doesn't even have knowledge of his ignorance. So the feeling of reverence is enhanced by knowing the distance. Even if I think that something is far beyond me, I need to know the gap in order to have the feeling of reverence and awe. If I don't know about the gap, the distance doesn't make any sense to me. To know that I don't know is more than just making a statement; to be emotionally involved in it, I have to have an idea of what the meaning of it is. Newton supposedly said that he felt like a small child playing with pebbles on the shore of the sea of knowledge—to feel that really and truly, you have to know as much as Newton did. Those who don't know may say it, but they don't feel it emotionally.

Emotional life is hierarchically depend-

ent on conceptual life; conceptual life makes it possible to have emotional life. And conceptual life is hierarchically below a value system that makes things desirable or nondesirable. I have given lectures concerning what philosophers say about the nature of proof. Philosophy has no real way of defining proof, except what is said by some conservative philosophers: that the proof that something is true is that it clicks. That is the only way I know that something is true, that I have proved it: there is some kind of click. That is possibly the highest hierarchy in our conscious minds—that which says one relationship is true, and another is not. So we are, in fact, judging things, and we say: that fits and that doesn't fit. Now, we cannot explain the way something fits together, because explanation itself comes back to the same question: does it click? If it does, the explanation makes sense. The nature of proof is something that, within the soul, is above anything in the conscious mind—even above the power of pure reason. Above pure reason stands something—we don't know what it is—but it convinces us that something *is*.

P. Is the vision of hierarchy essential, then, for the movement upwards of the sense of values, and the spiritual search?

A.S. There is something that has to be achieved. If there is no hierarchy, nothing can be achieved by moving from one point to another. When there is a difference, movement makes sense; when there is no difference movement does not make sense. If one goes into it further, one gets into very complex concepts of movement and what movement means; we would be speaking about the theory of relativity. In the abstract, when there is no interrelation, movement or size doesn't make any sense. Without a scale, there is no movement; to advance or retreat depends on having a direction—a beginning and an end.

P. One has the sense that along with the force of emotion, and the polarity of like and dislike, there can be at times an intelligence of feeling that has its own quality. You place the mind above emotion, but

"There is something that has to be achieved. If there is no hierarchy, nothing can be achieved by moving from one point to another."

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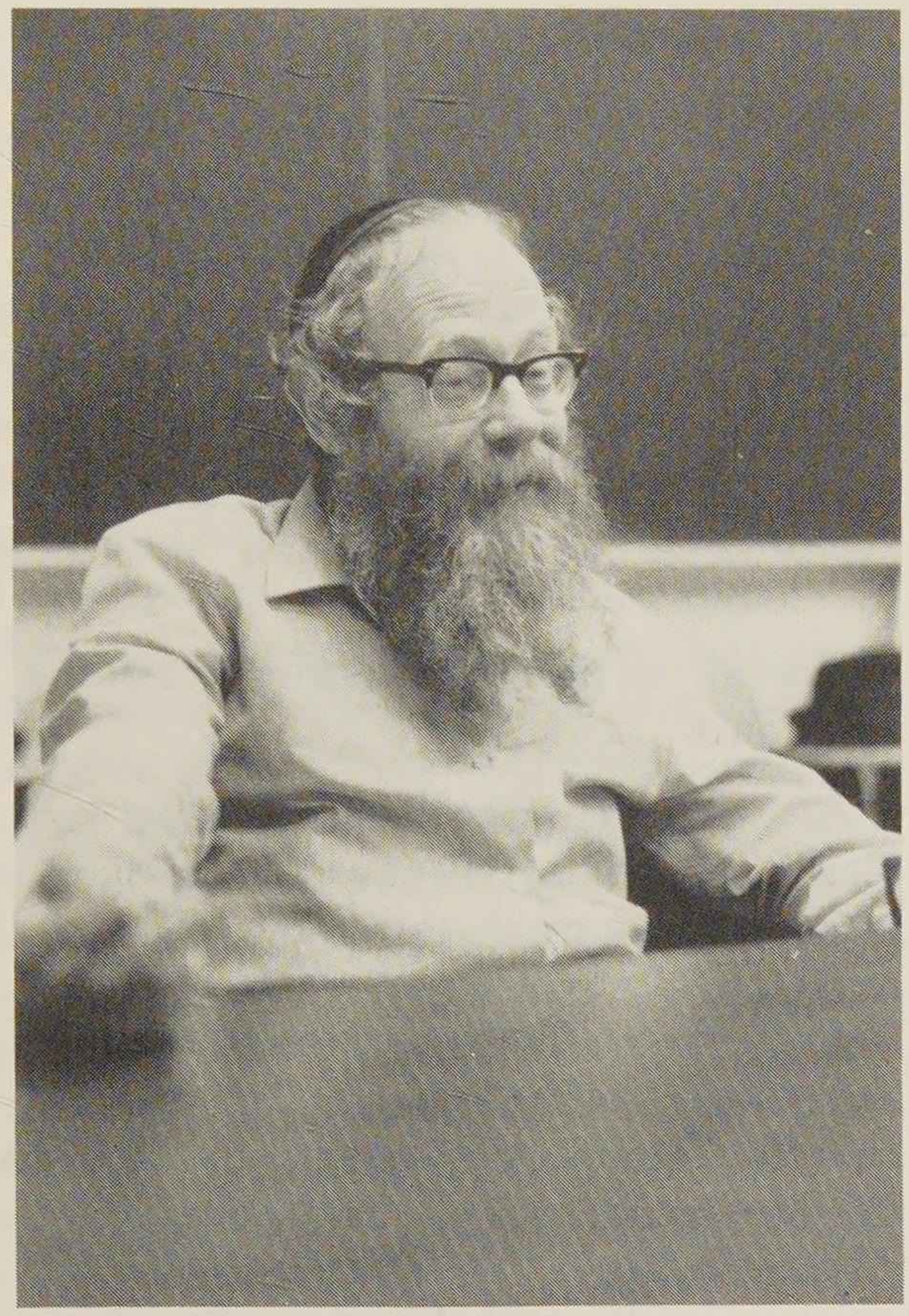
where do you place this intelligence of the emotions?

A.S. People say that the heart has its own reason. We believe that every emotion is made, roughly speaking, of three parts, as mind is made up of the same three parts. There is the intelligence of the emotion; the emotions of the emotion; and the mechanics of emotion, getting it expressed. So the intelligence, or mind of the emotion, does exist. We believe that the intellectual powers are also made like this. There is intellectual thought and emotional thought, because intellect has in it an emotional part. That is one reason why the process of thinking sometimes becomes enjoyable per se; intelligence is not pure, it also has a part that is emotion. The reason of the emotion works in a different way, on a different level; that is the inner hierarchy. Emotion has its own way of conceptualizing, not intellectually but by creating images.

P. Is there a concept in Judaism that this model within the individual is a reflection of an order which exists on another level? Do the same elements exist on a cosmic scale?

A.S. Given the creation by God of a complete universe, it is a basic assumption that everything is interconnected. One can see something like that by looking at drops of water; one sees reflections, smaller ones and bigger ones, like in a house of mirrors; the same thing, the same nature, reflected in different ways. It follows that if I would know perfectly, completely, entirely, one part, then I would know the whole.

It is a beautiful thing: when God says, "Let us make man," He is calling the



"Movement destroys equilibrium all the time; the power to move is also the power to destroy order."

whole universe—"Let *us* make man." And each contributes something: the foxes and the lions, the monkeys and the angels all give something! So we are the result of everything that is. The idea is that we contain (and this point is considered essential) the mind-body point of connection; the same hierarchy that exists in the body exists in the mind.

One of the ways to explain the basic concept of our religion is to say that because we are men, we have to correct. We have free will, and we have the ability to repair. Because we have free will, we are also the only ones who have the ability to distort. One of our problems is that of choice. There is an attempt to become better; it is like making corrections for a lens. The lens became for some reason not right, so it distorts whatever is seen through it. We believe the main duty, the chief work of man, is to make corrections until it is possible to transmit the right picture.

P. The question in my mind, before you said that, is that there is an order evident in our bodies and in all nature; everything is perfect—except me. If I am a reflection of this perfect order, why am I not perfect?

A.S. Free will is an element of disorder. It is also the only element of advancement.

Any kind of movement is a way of destroying a system of order. Walking, for example, is *becoming unstable.* Running is becoming even more unstable. Flying in a plane creates a different kind of instability; the plane becomes less and less stable until it takes off, and then it restabilizes and gains equilibrium. Movement destroys equilibrium all the time; the power to move is also the power to destroy order. The imperfection is inherent, because I am the only creature that has independent volition, and the only creature in the universe that can distort. These distortions are part of our common human work for coming to a higher point, because other creatures, seemingly, cannot move of their own volition, and we can. And being able to move means that we can move in different directions. We don't have the same biological point of view as other creatures; we are free of instinct—not entirely, but to a very great degree. That is our power, and that is our downfall.

P. You almost say *choice*, don't you?

A.S. Yes, I am always saying *choice.* Animals and plants don't have that element of choice. It used to be a habit of mine, when I felt angry or discontented, to go to the zoo and watch the animals; animals have a certain type of perfection that we don't. In a way, it's the same thing that makes babies beautiful. Sometimes you wonder why so many babies are born wise and beautiful, and why when they become adults, they lose both those qualities! It is because babies are innocent; they reflect the power of

relation and choice. They reflect something which we call the great order of things. The bigger they become, the more they are able to move. There are some people who, as they grow older, clearly become wiser—not just more knowledgeable; there is a great difference between the two—and also more beautiful. Their choice, their achievement of consciousness, was a growing from one set of relationships to another, a bigger one, a better one, which is what all this is about. On the other hand, there are some people who make the choice of distorting, and they become less wise and less beautiful, everything less. So as I say, this difficulty of mankind, being the one creature that is not in order, is my strength and my weakness.

P. You are speaking of levels of order, aren't you? Because doesn't a human being then choose to live according to another, higher order?

A.S. That is what I am saying. We are in movement. In every set of circumstances, every level of hierarchy, there is stability of some kind. Movement is a disturbing element, and also rather dangerous. Between one step of a ladder and another, there is a void; the void is necessary because it makes the difference between the levels. But if I want to move from the first rung to the second or the third, I have to take the risk of passing through this void, of abolishing my foothold in one place in order to get to another, and in between I may fall down. It often happens. So our process of growing, from the physical to the spiritual, is getting from one set of ways of behavior, and so on, to a different one, which we hope is a higher one. It is not necessarily so, but it is a movement into a different order in which things, after some time, again become more or less stabilized. In any process of inner growth or evolution, there is the same problem of getting from one point to another. Being born is in a way ceasing to exist in one set, one type of order, and getting into a different type of order in which almost all the rules are changed. As a fetus, I don't breathe, and my life system is entirely different. Being born is the shock of transfer

"...if I want to move from the first rung to the second or the third, I have to take the risk of passing through this void, of abolishing my foothold in one place in order to get to another, and in between I may fall down."

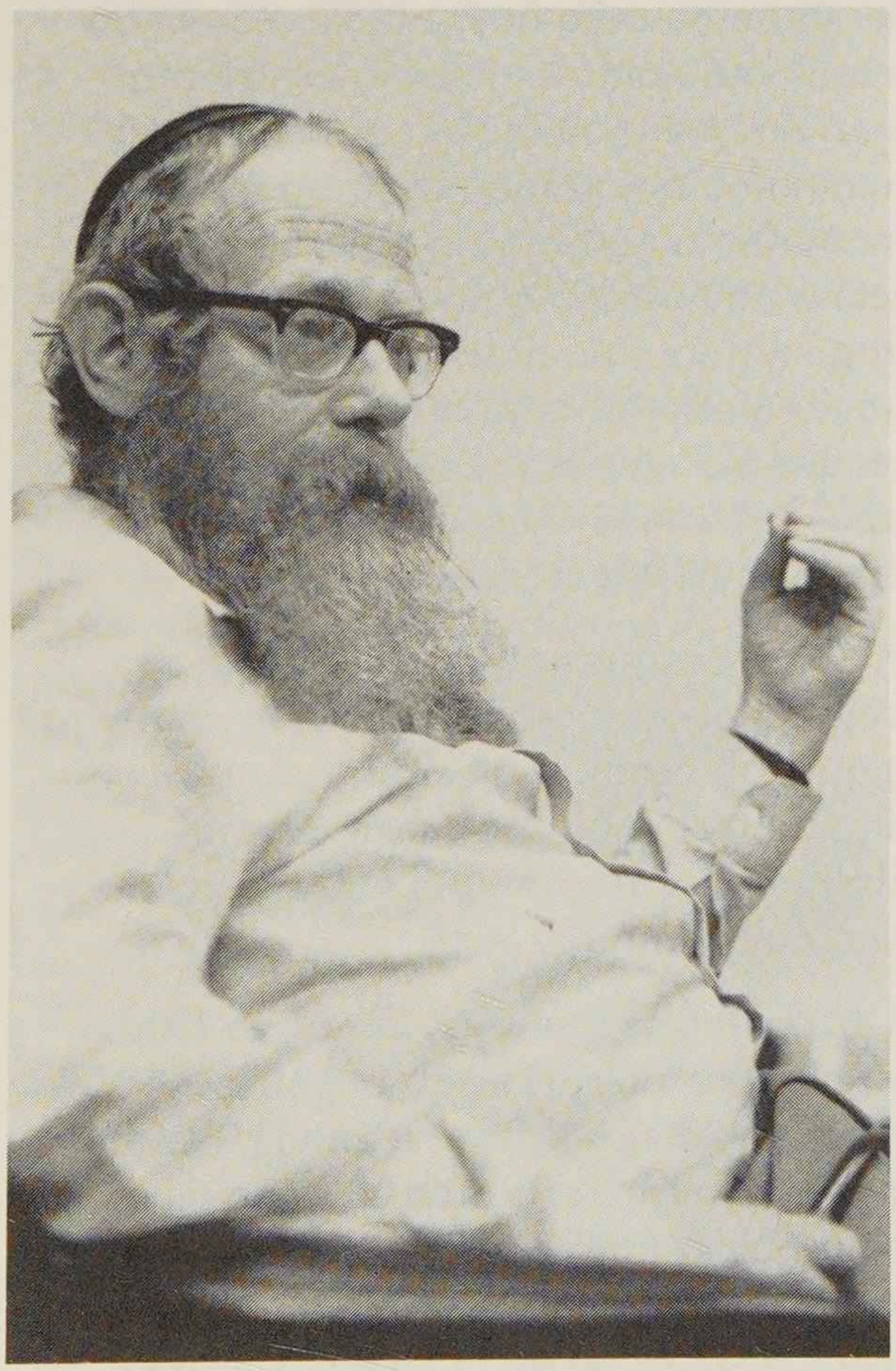
to a set of circumstances in which almost everything is done in a different way, in which there is an order of a different kind. Dying is doing the same thing—again, in a different way, perhaps coming to a point where I discard certain things about my being. The shock there is clearly that of transferring from one set of circumstances to another. Our notion of people going to hell has to do with this transfer. I might be magnificently suited to survive in this world, but now I have to go into another world with other rules, whether I want to or not. And the things that equipped me to be, for instance, a financial success in this world will send me to hell in a different world! If a person doesn't grow through adaptation to a certain order and then moves into another one, he is unable to deal with it. It is like the tadpole and the frog. We see this all the time: men who were wonderful as boys in school are not necessarily wonderful as adults out of school. Because a change creates a necessity for a different order.

P. The transformation of a tadpole to a frog, or from one set of conditions in life to another in death, is something that happens automatically; but isn't there another possibility of transformation for human beings, an intentional one?

A.S. Oh, that is what it *should* be! That is what I meant about a person going to heaven or hell; the process of learning, of education, determines which way one takes. It is a process of knowing the direction consciously and following it consciously to a different state, so that one is not thrown

into the workings, so to say, but is preparing consciously to go into them. I would call any type of school or learning preparation for entering into a different order—a conscious preparation. The tadpole doesn't learn to become a frog; but for man, as we know, it is very hard work. What I said about emotional hell refers to when a person is kicked into a different set without being prepared. Imagine: all your desires, images, ways of thinking are tied to a very particular set of values and notions. If you are put into a place where none of this applies, then you don't need devils to torment you, you will be as miserable as anybody can imagine, because of your inability to deal with something you are not equipped for.

As a human being, I have some ability to change consciously to a different order,



but actually, we set our hearts on a certain place and don't want to get any higher. There is an old Russian story about a simple soldier who rescued the Czar from some danger. The Czar told him he could ask for whatever he wanted, and the soldier said, "Please, change my commanding officer!" Instead of moving upward in the hierarchy, I just want to shift into a more comfortable position on the same level.

P. What is the difference between mechanical and conscious equilibrium?

A.S. Conscious equilibrium is not a stationary stability, but rather a constant readjustment. If I consciously want to remain in equilibrium, in quiet, in peace, it means I have to work very hard, to adjust all the time. In a mechanical equilibrium, forces are more or less in balance, they can go on in the same way until something changes. In a conscious equilibrium, I have to work very hard to stay in the same place. What Alice said is a very good definition of conscious equilibrium: to run very fast in order to stay in the same place.

Some people seem to have such equanimity that they do not mind anything, but this may come from two very different ways of being; one, in which the person does not care about anything, and the other, in which he cares very much, but is able to make constant adjustments in order not to get angry or sad or overjoyed. This sort of conscious equilibrium is very, very hard work. You have to work all the time. It's like what a pilot does in a plane. You can't fall asleep.

If someone makes me angry or does something I don't like, then I may say something or think about something that is just the opposite. But I don't only want to learn, as every adult person learns, not to *show* a reaction—I wish to learn how not to be overwhelmed by the reaction. If I just escape the situation, nothing really happens. When events occur that I don't like and I'm not prepared for—there is the test.

I would say that hierarchy is an infinite number of orders of laws, one above the other. Each order has within it an inner order; and with this interdependence, all in

all, the whole hierarchical situation is a complete set in which different parts are working. So there is a context in which we are all equal, in which existence is equal in this eternal interdependence.

P. What you have said raises the question, What is equality? Are you saying that authority is determined by the degree of consciousness?

A.S. I am a part of something. Authority is the rule of the higher over the lower. I think that, as you say, possibly hierarchy is defined by greater consciousness. Julian Huxley seems an unlikely source to quote, but in speaking about evolution he says that only in this sense of growing consciousness can we make sense of evolution as a progressive line. Advance is not in terms of "fitness"; if evolution is simply a matter of the survival of the fittest, it would have stopped with the cockroach. But there is a different striving, for more consciousness; and in this way we may say we have something above the cockroach.

So power or authority is connected with the level of consciousness, in every level, in every degree. It determines what is bigger, what is smaller; the bigger is bigger because it can encompass the smaller. In every hierarchy the one that knows where to put the others is the one who is in charge. The highest in the hierarchy is the one who can put all the parts in some kind of complete order. Otherwise, whatever the official, apparent order may be, it is a false hierarchy. In a real hierarchy, the one who is most conscious about what is happening is the higher. Other people may perhaps be more powerful, but they are not higher.

One of the things that makes life so complicated is that there is not one type of hierarchy, but many. And because there are conflicting hierarchies, we get confused. There is the hierarchy of the good, the hierarchy of the wise, the hierarchy of the powerful. Each is different. I would say that all designs somehow end up at the infinite, at a convergent point; but in our world they are not convergent. The problem of existence is that different hierarchies are not aligned, not compatible with each other. It has been said before that in this world we have the clever and the good —and they are usually not the same people! A world in which they would become more and more identical would be a better world.

So our problem is not lack of hierarchy, but too many hierarchies. Our problem is to make order among them, to arrange the different hierarchies in a hierarchical formation. We have different types of ladders, and when they are not arranged among themselves, they don't lead anywhere. We have the feeling that we have lots of ability and can climb higher. What we need is a way of attaching the separate ladders into one which becomes far bigger. But every group has its own ladder and doesn't want to share it, and because of this we come to the point where no one in his separate way can go any higher. So we divide and come to a sort of compromise that says: because we don't agree on which is better, let us assume that nothing is better. Because we don't agree on who should be on top, nobody should be there.

P. What authority will we all accept?

A.S. We all accept that there is a certain ladder; what we dispute about is which one. The ladders seem incompatible; they don't meet. We are dealing in different areas. The differences between us—for instance, between the believing man and the knowledgeable man—often take precedence over something that is more urgent: which ladder is the more important one.

P. Is it finally a matter of agreement or decision? Or is there one which simply is more important? It seems there would have to be, if there is real hierarchy.

A.S. I would say there definitely is one; that we don't agree about it doesn't mean anything. All of us agree that what is most positive should be at the head. The question is not so much about hierarchy as about what hierarchy to adopt. Almost every religion tries to give some way of measuring things, some kind of scale. We need a way of bringing different things to some kind of common scale, some common value into which they can all be translated. That is what we are in search of. ■

Participators of Sacred Things

ROGER LIPSEY

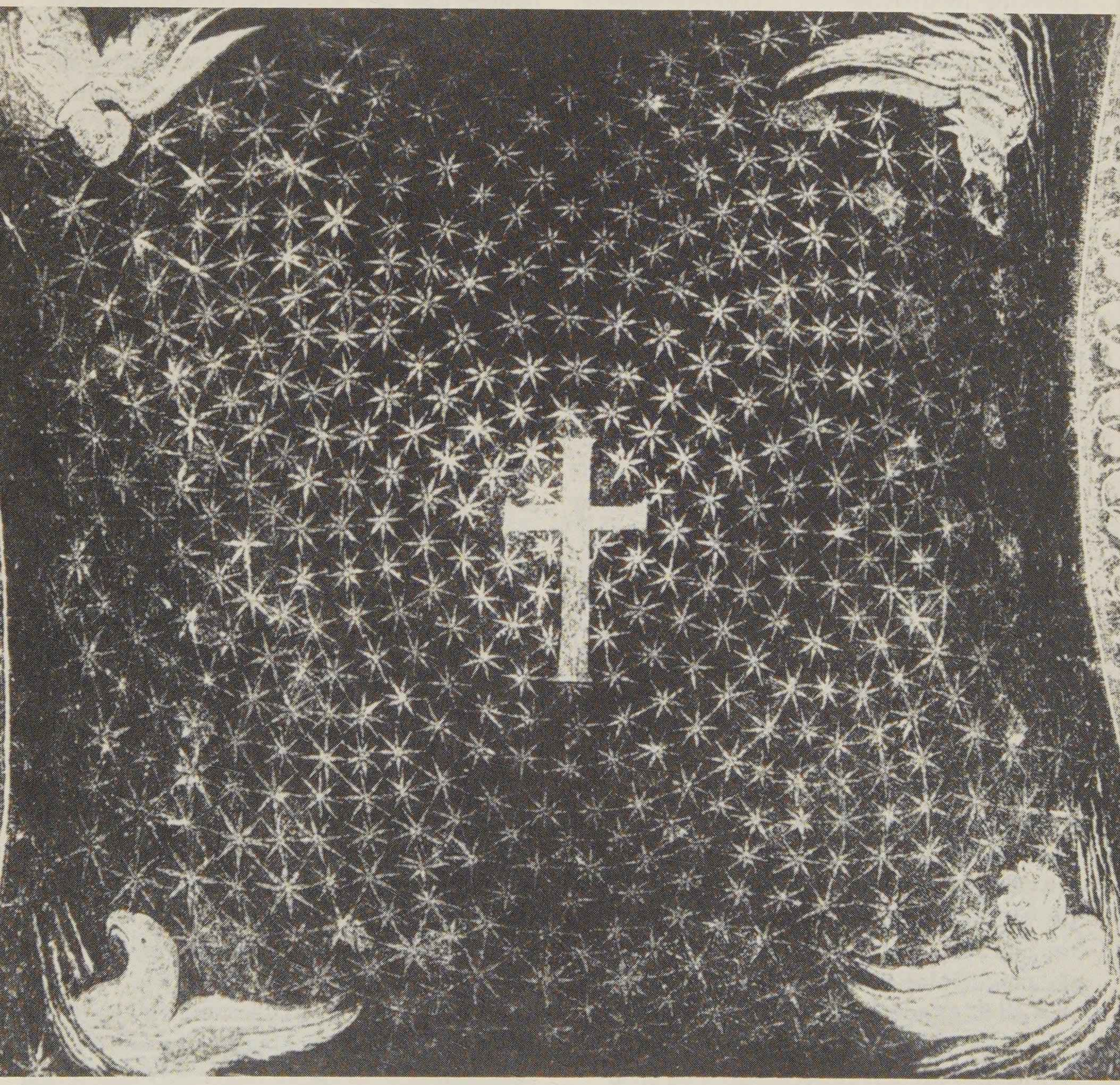


Figure 1 *Vault mosaic, Mausoleum of Galla Placidia*

Participators of sacred things—the phrase is from St. Thomas Aquinas, the thirteenth-century theologian remembered today as the preeminent Scholastic, his works to be avoided at all cost. Yet the ancient idea of hierarchy was lovingly and brilliantly focused by medieval thinkers: it governed their picture of the natural cosmos and of the supernatural order from which cosmos derived; it structured art, endowing images with the clarity of a map; and it pervaded the ecclesiastic and feudal social orders. "Hierarchy means a sacred principality," wrote St. Thomas. "Now principality includes two things; the prince himself and the multitude ordered under the prince . . . . Because there is one God, the Prince not only of all the angels but also of men and all creatures; so there is one hierarchy, not only of all the angels, but also of all rational creatures, who can be participators of sacred things" (*Summa*, Q. 108.1). This structure is eternal and fixed, but within it occur endless giving and receiving, and consequent movement. The sixth-century Christian author, Dionysius,* to whom St. Thomas turned more often than to any other on the question of hierarchy, expressed the nature of this movement in confident prose. "Hierarchical order implies that some are purified and others purify, some are illuminated and others illuminate, some are perfect and others work for perfection" (*Celestial Hierarchy*, 3.2). And some fall. In the *Summa*, St. Thomas follows the discussion of hierarchy with inquiries into "the ordering of the bad angels," "the demons' assaults on man," and "that exterior help granted by God to the whole human race—namely the guardianship of angels." The word hierarchy, composed of Greek roots meaning holy and rule, was not applied to the demonic order, but for the medieval mind it was evident that man occupies the midpoint between two worlds: a sacred hierarchy above, a demonic order below. Both solicit him.

Few authors in any tradition experienced as acutely as Dionysius the role that sacred art plays in the process of man's *theosis*, his movement toward God. Nothing of a biographical nature is indisputably known about Dionysius, but he is thought to have written his major works at the turn of the sixth century in Syria, a Christian and Hellenized province of the Byzantine Empire. Assuming this to be true, he could not have known the remarkable mid-sixth-century art sponsored by Justinian—the wondrous Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the mastery of mosaic that created images of exquisite beauty from bits of marble and glass. But he would have known the precursor art from which Justinian's chief artists and architects matured their own work, and it was powerful enough: a fluent architecture based on Classical Roman forms, an already splendid pictorial art. A mid-fifth-century mosaic in Ravenna (*fig. 1*), which magnificently transforms the night sky into a hierarchic pattern centered on a symbol of Christ, powerfully demonstrates the strength of art in his time. Theologian and religious seeker, saturated with such images, Dionysius came to think of them as "very holy poetic fictions," "sacred veils" which the wise man will both understand and, in the course of things, set aside. "It is indeed impossible," he wrote, "for the thearchic ray to illuminate us otherwise than by concealing itself, for our elevation, beneath sacred veils . . . . In the measure to which we are like them, we may be raised through these very holy fictions to the simple and imageless heights, for our minds cannot rise to the immaterial imitation and contemplation of the celestial hierarchies without being led there by material images suited to their nature . . . . " Much of Dionysius's book is an interpretive inventory of sacred symbols, each reverently examined in its proper place, each ultimately viewed as a stepping stone toward an austere fulfillment which he called "the Darkness of

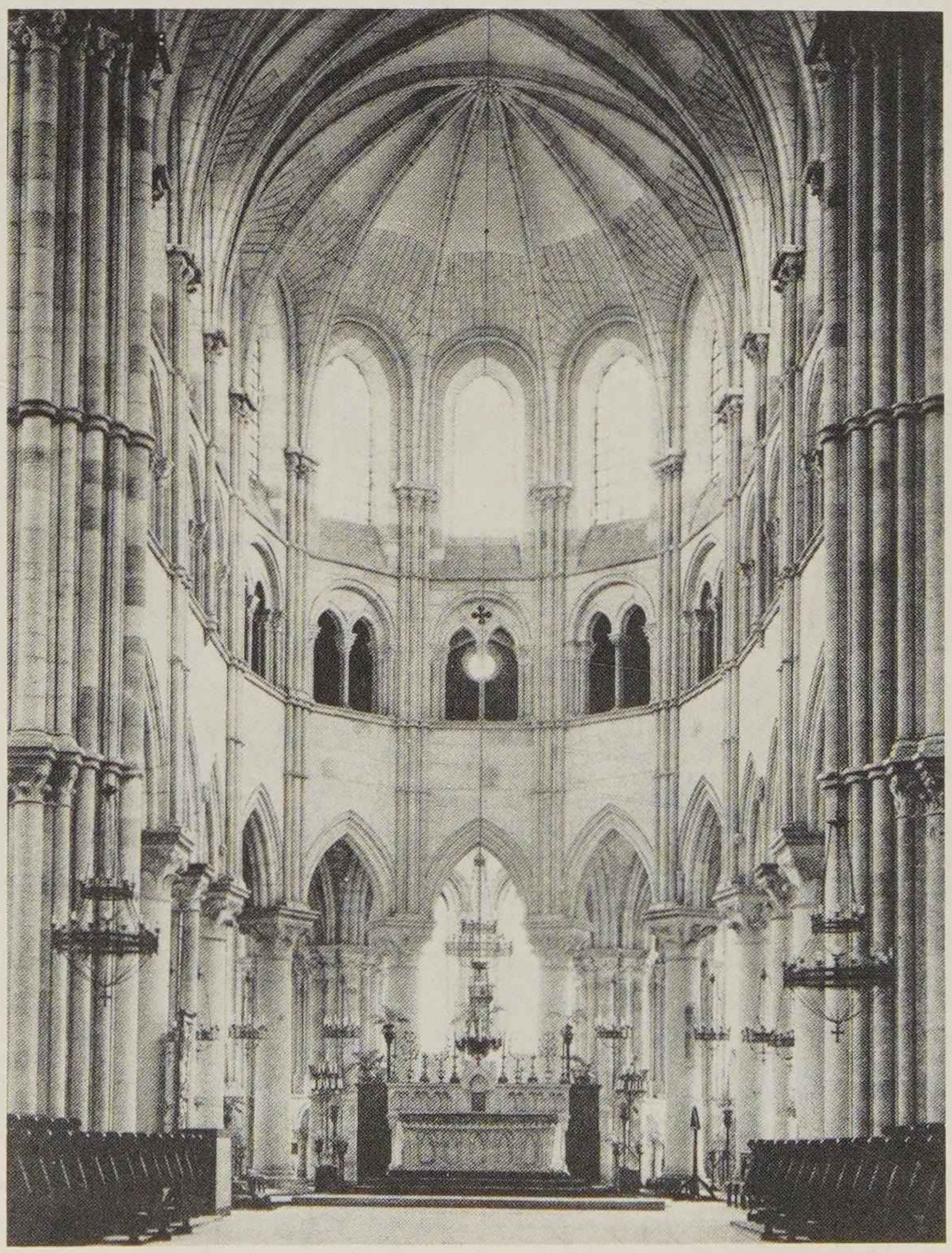
* Dionysius is known in scholarly literature, including common references such as encyclopedias, as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. His works were ascribed from an early date to Dionysius the Areopagite, a disciple of St. Paul.

Unknowing." The whole spectacle of religious art is, for Dionysius, a prelude to an encounter with God that defies description.

We model ourselves best on Dionysius's example by turning to art, as he first did. In the art of Christendom and of traditional religious cultures throughout history, the idea of hierarchy has been expressed by differences in size, place, and character, and through designs that define relationships. A purely architectural example, such as the Early Gothic choir at Vézelay (*fig. 2*), can help us to understand hierarchic patterns in simplest terms. Gothic style blends structural necessity with a poetry of form ultimately based on the architects' appreciation of the beauty and truth of hierarchic patterns. At Vézelay, the eastern apse that closes off the choir both rises to a central height and issues from the height in a measured flow back to the pavement. Each segment of the elevation—the sturdy arcade below, the delicate triforium, the wide clerestory windows and rib-vaulted conch above them—has its own distinct nature and yet harmonizes with the other elements and joins them in a whole. The design breathes the spirit of hierarchy as Dionysius and Thomas understood it: an order that flows, a complex association in which each member receives its due.

Something of the genius of Gothic architecture entered into Piero della Francesca's extraordinary painting, *La Madonna della Misericordia*, dating to about 1450 (*fig. 3*). In this work, the hierarchic idea is communicated in part through the overwhelming size of the Madonna relative to her kneeling worshipers: as large as Mother Church herself, she is depicted in a sheltering pose that transforms her into a house of worship. Strengthening the architectur-

Figure 2 Abbey Church of St. Madeleine





3 *Piero della Francesca,* La Madonna della Misericordia



Figure 4 Li T'ang, Landscape

al metaphor, cloak and gown fall in regular, columnar folds, and the cinch around her waist has the tidiness and angularity of architectural detail. The Virgin's *hieratic* pose (yet another word that echoes the religious life of Classical Greece) distinguishes her in character from the anxious suppliants at her feet: theirs is the tension of living and yearning, hers the peace of heaven. But not altogether. Piero is a modern artist, and even while offering one of the most memorable hierarchic images in later Western art, he endows it with what must be his personal uneasiness and conviction. The face of the Virgin, like so many faces in Piero's unique oeuvre, is beautiful and introspective, sad and still. While she utterly dominates the composition with hieratic dignity, her face implies reserves of privacy. She is Queen of Heaven and yet intensely individual. Were Dionysius to have seen this image, he might have recognized that it introduces an ambiguity into the tradition of sacred art that foreshadows the end of the cycle of sacred art in the West of which he, in his era, had seen the beginning. The *Madonna della Misericordia* is a profitable image for our investigation precisely because, for Piero as for us, the reality of a supernatural hierarchy is no longer assumed. *He* endows it with a personal humanity, hence a fragility; *we* no longer endow it at all, if endowment means giving substantially of oneself.

Indian and Far Eastern religions developed celestial hierarchies and demonic orders of their own, but their representation in art is not radically different in structure from their counterparts in European art. On the other hand, Chinese and Japanese landscape painting often reflect an understanding of hierarchy unlike anything in the West. Li T'ang's painting of a diminutive traveler in a soaring mountain landscape, where an almost absurd fence is the only other human trace, takes the measure of man in relation to the greatness of Nature (*fig. 4*). The tense energy of the foreground trees, the rocky embankment and rushing water, the peaks lost in the heights, the atmosphere itself that seems to enter the valley from a limitless sky—all speak of a reality other than man, in comparison with which his little comings and goings are hardly worthy of mention. Nonetheless, the suggestion pervades Asian religions that man can search out and find within himself the universal forces that shape the world. The grandeur of the landscape is an invitation.

The hierarchies of traditional religious art are not always gathered along a vertical axis. While there is Jacob's Ladder, there is also Ezekiel's visionary Wheel. Whether an Asian mandala, a European rose-win-

dow, or an Islamic *shamsa*, the pattern of the circle has been able over centuries to capture the intuition of hierarchy. Preserved from the art collection of Shah Jahan, the North Indian Muslim Emperor, the *shamsa* illustrated in figure 5 is perhaps not a specifically religious work, but it was created in a culture that developed abstract calligraphic arts to a high level in association with Koran decoration (*shams* = Arabic "sun"). Even an apparently secular application of those skills and aesthetic norms resulted in work that commands respect. In this case, the name of a living person, perhaps the Shah himself, might have been inscribed at the center, but the design as a whole, blending a multitude of details into a powerful and refined unity, speaks not of the Shah but of the unfolding of Divinity.

As modern people, almost nothing religious belongs to us; such things become "our own" by a passionate adoption that reaches past the secular scientific culture of the age and seizes on an ancient work of art or thought. Our essential poverty is attractive in the sense that it makes us citizens of the world; we can look with equally reverent, questing eyes at a Christian icon, a Muslim symbol of unity, or a Taoist landscape painting. Each can be "one's own" without excluding the others, provided that one pays a fair price by attentively absorbing the image and gathering a reasonable body of information about it—less than a scholar, more than a tourist. But each ultimately is not one's own, and returns one to present times with an often unspoken question.

We know too little about hierarchy for it to appear in our art. We have little to guide us, and it would be foolish to expect the picture of our aspirations to resemble the ancient hierarchies of Christianity or the East. We have reached a time without pictures, a lesser Darkness of Unknowing from which we begin. Traditional art offers a further clue in images now torn from the sanctuaries where they once stood, but still remarkably alive *(fig. 6)*. Their attitude alone establishes a sure sense of hierarchy and of their dignity within it. They may be distant from their gods; but isn't this always so? ■

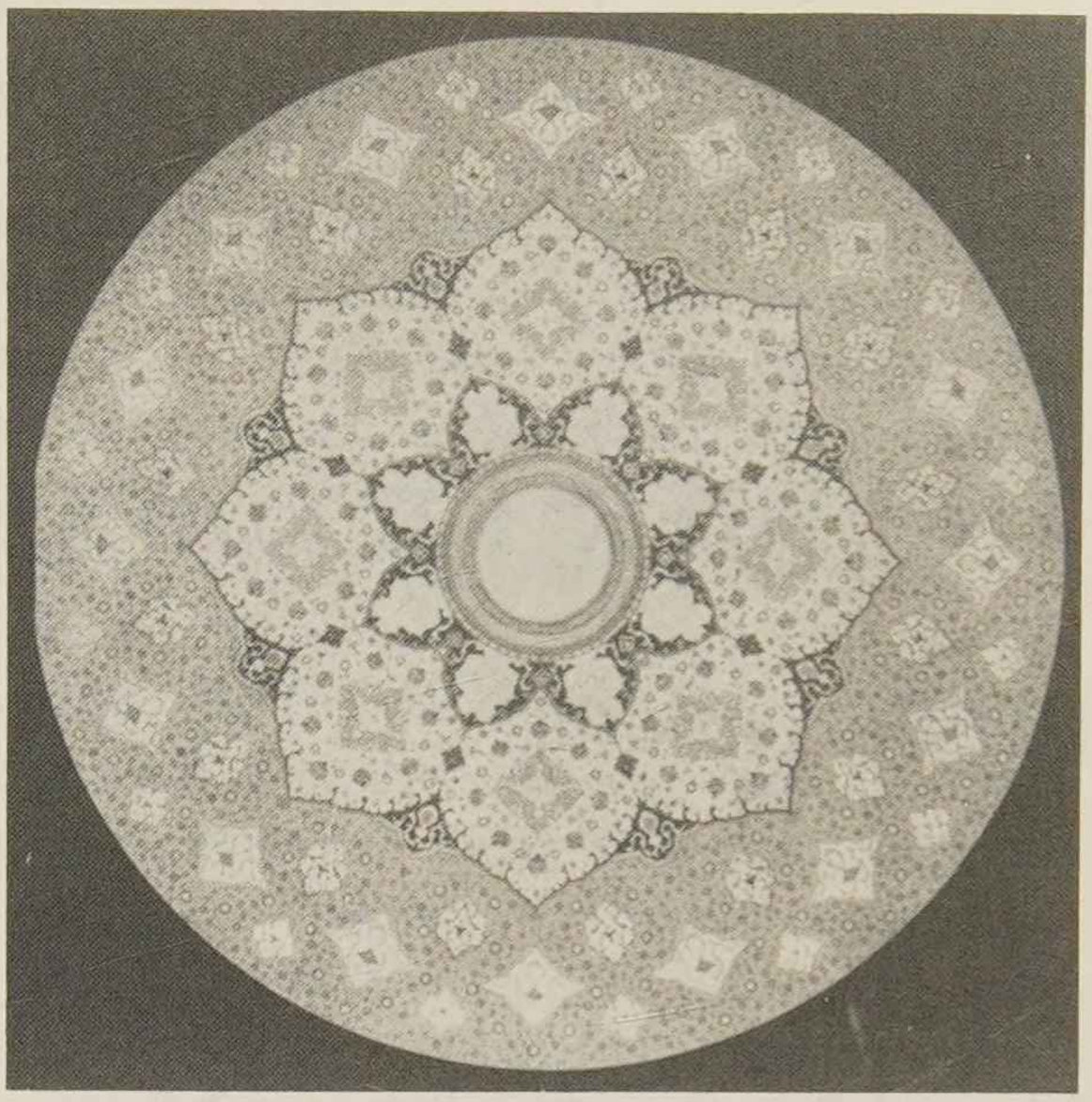
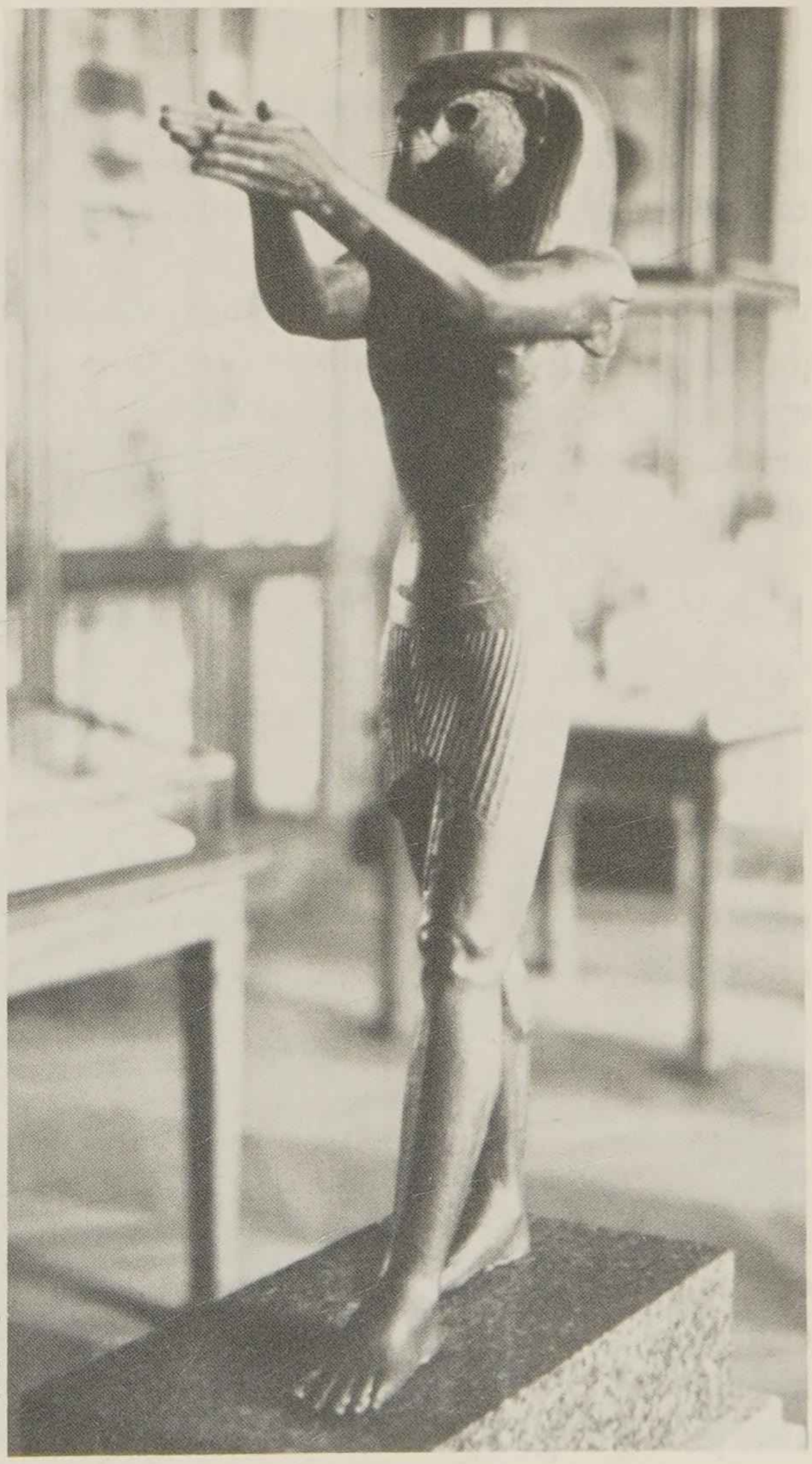


Figure 5 Shamsa, *probably from an album of Shah Jahan*

Figure 6 *Figure wearing Horus mask, Egypt*



Photograph by the author

The Taste for Things That Are True

HENRI TRACOL

This essay from Henri Tracol's book Pourquoi dors-tu Seigneur? *(Editions Pragma, Paris: 1983) appears here for the first time in English. It was written when the author was in his twenties and at the beginning of his search, or, as he puts it in his book, "some thirty years before May 1968"—the date of the student uprisings in Paris.*

We young ones were hungry. Our appetite was law; we absolutely had to taste everything, know everything, satiate ourselves with everything. We had read, reread, and catalogued all the most variegated and extravagant bills of fare. Our eyes shone at the mere sight of the appetizers; when the main dishes appeared, we shouted with enthusiasm.

Poor innocents. There are no words for what this banquet was—and still is. Under the sauces which were too skillful to be honest, there was only spoiled meat, vegetables no longer fresh, fruit three-quarters rotten. The few morsels that were good were all mixed up with the worst. The more appetizing the plate looked, the less it contained. Everything smelled of adulteration, artifice, machine oil, and the chemical factory.

For this is the way it is: with our cooks, whether they are philosophers, politicians, industrialists, sportsmen, economists, writers, or artists, the aim is to imitate or to conceal *the taste of things that are true.* And so keen is our appetite at first that we devour everything eagerly. We lick the plates and ask for more. But soon enough weariness, the memory of imaginary feasts, and sluggish digestion have their effect. Tired of stuffing ourselves to no purpose, we beg (or demand) to be given at last some nourishment worthy of the name; and immediately our pseudo-master-cooks bestir themselves and bustle about arguing, only to wind up offering us (or forcing on us) some new concoctions. But under other names, we are always served the same dishes.

No words, indeed, for such a banquet. But I ask you, what then can we say about the guests? Because the worst of it is that in spite of everything we should still be sitting today at the same table with the same disgusting messes in front of us, and to crown it all, that we have wound up by acquiring a taste for them.

No doubt, such persistence is laughable; but all the same, it's a serious matter. For if we go on cheating our hunger, tomorrow we will kill it. All that will remain will be that artificial hunger, at once tyrannical and servile, that obeys instantly the smallest solicitation from without—and makes us its slaves.

Do you remember how we experienced with all our being the need to live fully? Life, naked life, was in front of us. We wanted to chuck into the fire all that cheap finery that decked out our purpose; sweep away the dubious company of half-truths, half-feelings, half-decisions; the crowd of walk-ons made up as scholars, poets, civilizing heroes, with their big

empty words and their spectacular gestures; tear down finally all the cardboard stage sets in front of which they played out their comedy for us, but behind which, surely, *something* must be happening . . .

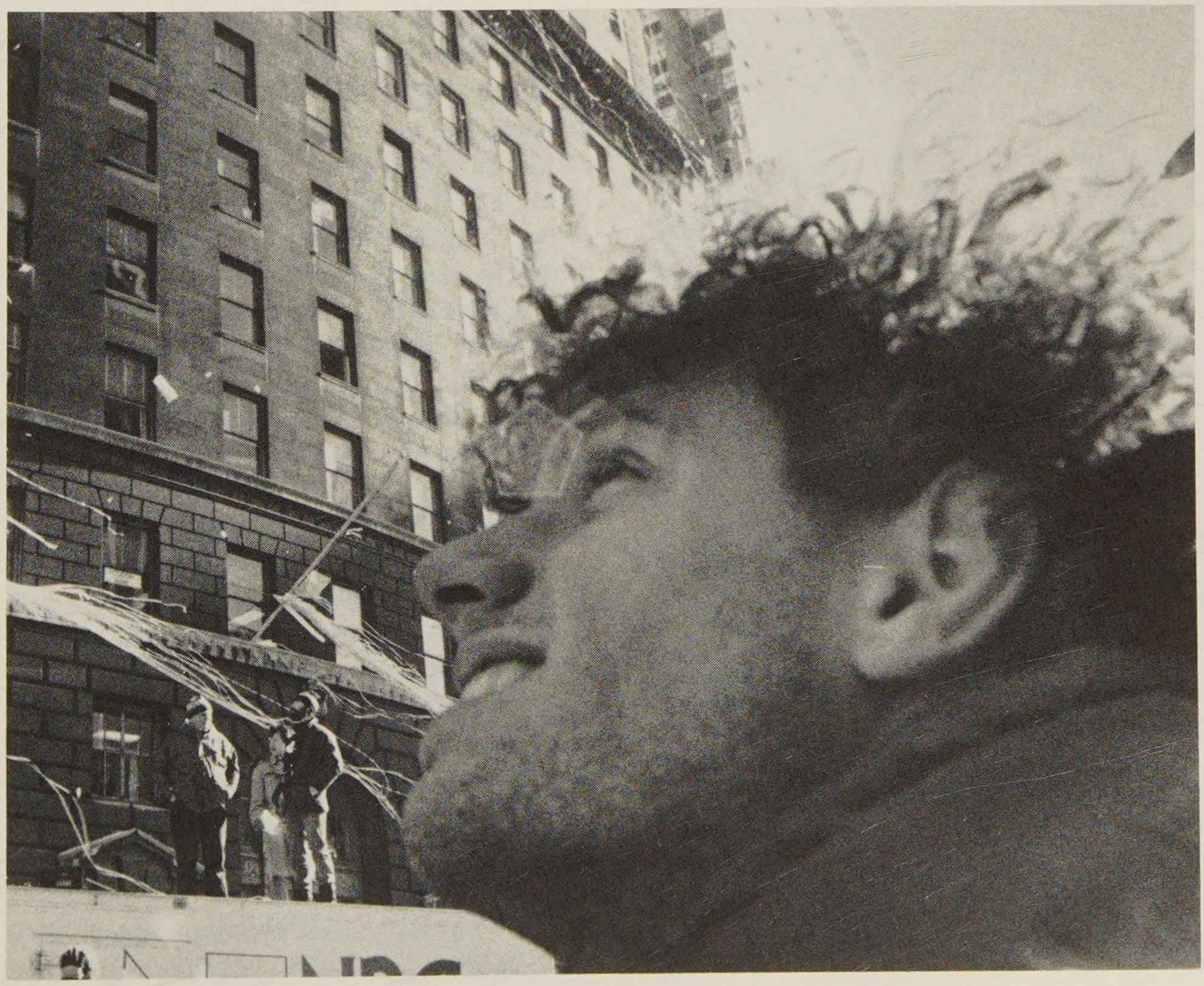
Remember how so many questions had us by the throat, which have gone unanswered. And since then, we've dared to make fun of them, we've dared to deny them, because it's the fashion to be skeptical, reasonable—that is, not to search *sincerely* any more to understand.

And yet—at the start, for us, *to understand* didn't mean to penetrate the skillfully arranged labyrinth of some philosophical theory; it didn't mean to accumulate thousands of fragments of information in order to fit them ingeniously together in the laboratory; on the contrary, it meant to seize reality with open arms, in the midst of life; and to look at it bravely, as the only way to become men.

I see you shrug your shoulders; I hear you snicker. But remember how it was: to understand, for us then, meant the opposite of words. We had to act, to risk our safety, our lives, make dangerous experiments; we had to measure ourselves in action, to know our possibilities and our limits not in the abstract but in the full exercise of our functions. We felt the need to play to the hilt our role among other people, so as to discover the meaning of our presence in the world. We felt the need to believe, to love, to commit ourselves, to march shoulder to shoulder towards a common ideal.

Do you remember? We had no words harsh enough, then, for the lukewarm, the sleepyheads, for sulking adolescents, for cowards and mollycoddles, for "philosophizers" in bedroom slippers and abstainers of every kind. For all those defeated before they began, all those who accepted to be bought off cheaply to lead a dog's life, we had only one cry: "Back to your kennels!"

But I ask you: what have we ourselves



made of our enthusiasms? We have been traitors and perjurers; we in our turn have become deceivers, sleight-of-hand artists; we know all the ins and outs of performing conjurers' tricks with the only real, living questions. We have learned to be crafty with ourselves, to manipulate irony, to "philosophize," to dismiss, kindly, as "infantile," the manliness of our former search.

Already lethargy is creeping up on us. Already, at the least alarm, with our snail-like reflexes, we rush to reenter the deepest hollow in our mental shells. We take our stand in previously established positions; we refuse to expose ourselves.

What then has happened? Why have we deserted? From whence comes this progressive numbness, this sliding toward death of all that was most alive in us?

It came on by itself, stealthily, like a creeping infection—as the consequence of who knows what dangerous illusions or premature discouragement. From one disappointment to another, the sickness has taken a progressively deeper hold, gradually chasing us out of ourselves.

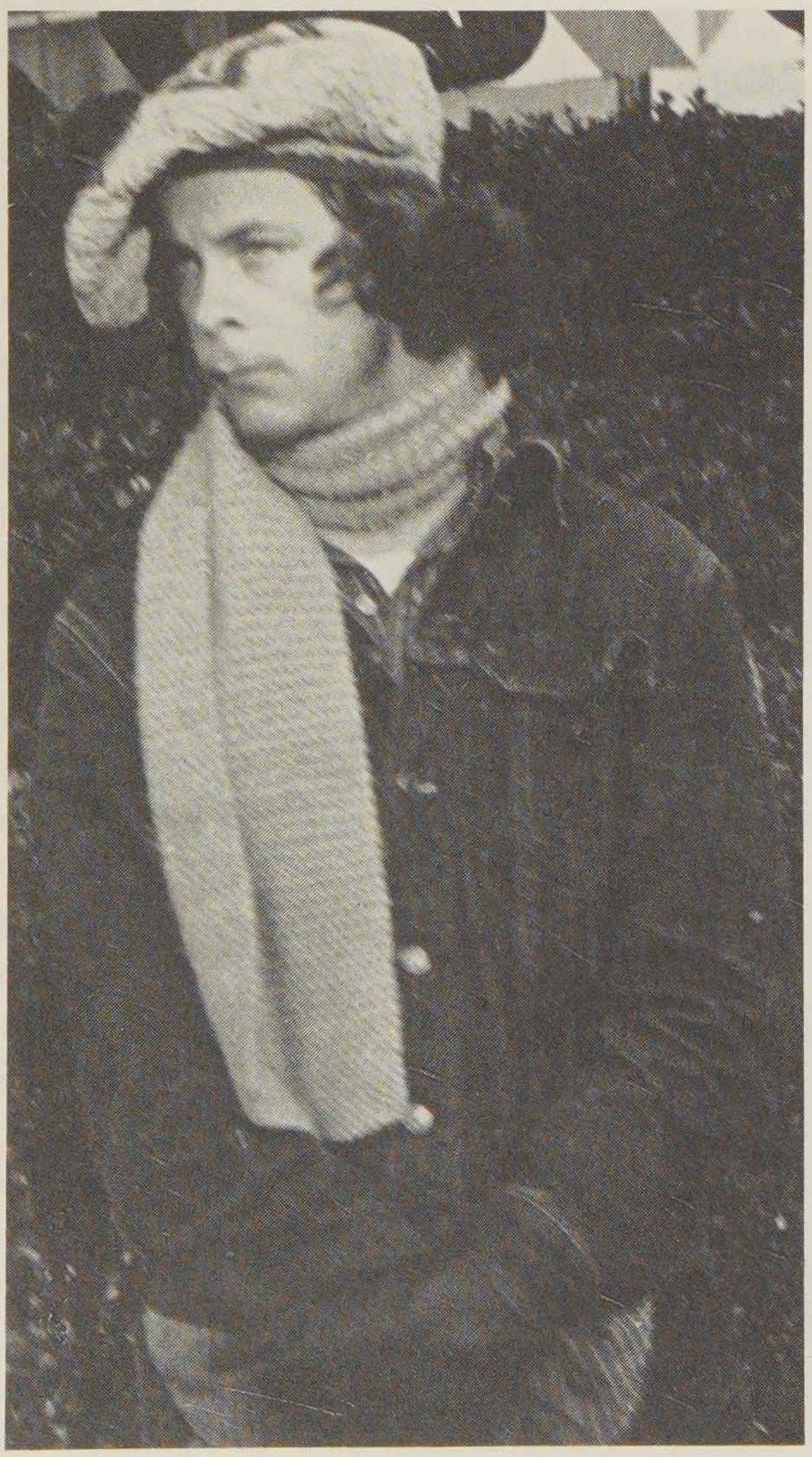
For that is where the trouble lies: what we didn't have courage enough to look for *inside*, we have thought we could find *outside*. Not that we have given up hope of a change, of a better use of our powers; but without knowing it, we have stopped really counting on ourselves to bring that about. Not that we have given up entirely, but now we wait for a miracle from outside. And we have begun to have wild dreams of favorable circumstances, of better conditions of life, or of some exceptional encounter. To feed our hopes, we have pounced greedily on the most absurd fictions and the stupidest arguments; we flung ourselves at the stockpile of ready-made notions, at the leftovers of the great thinkers, at the whole doctrinal flea market. Anything would do to save us from the terrible effort of facing ourselves.

We were afraid, of course, in front of life, and tried to escape. But the endless circle of the imagination is vicious indeed. Between the tyranny of our dreams and the bitterness of our awaking, we were wholly caught in the cogwheels. In the too-bright light of the sun, we preferred the shadows of our dreams, and then blamed the whole universe because they vanished.

So we began demanding everything from others; from society or from chance —and nothing from ourselves. Soon it was on these others, on society or misfortune, that we were heaping the blame for all our defeats.

We cry that we have been cheated, hoaxed, duped. But who began it? We have deserved these falsehoods a hundred times over. What am I saying? It was we who called them, adopted them, warmed them in our bosoms, fattened, pampered, and cherished them in order to flaunt them and carry them around in triumph. Who among us doesn't daily take his wishes for reality? If we fool ourselves like this, where will we find the strength to resist the lies that flatter our secret preferences?

"Whose fault is it?" That's our great





cry. For every one of our failures, individual or collective, we must have at all costs someone to blame. At all costs we must find out who is responsible and chastise him thoroughly—sometimes one, sometimes another; there is always a scapegoat.

But our worst misfortune is just that *no one is responsible*—ourselves less than anyone. We spend our time refusing all responsibility, even for our thoughts. We claim to have an answer for everything, but no longer wish to be answerable for anything.

In our frantic flight away from ourselves, we nevertheless feel a need for brotherhood, for walking side by side, which draws its strength from the same source as our deepest and truest emotions. But after the first professions of faith have been exchanged, why do we come together? To congratulate ourselves, to complain, to lull each other to sleep—or to make common property of all our hate and rancor. So in the group we are part of, we hurry to repeat the mistakes we already made with ourselves. It is always "the others" who are wrong; we, collectively, are excused. We consolidate our lies, we multiply them; and above all, we convince ourselves that we are strong. But the union of the worst weaknesses has never created strength.

When will we understand true brotherhood? If you are my brother, it's not flattery or sympathy I expect from you, but questions, provocations, a challenge; then you can help me, not before. If you are my brother, don't leave me in peace, don't let me go to sleep; my life is at stake. If we are brothers, we will rediscover together the hunger we knew when we were twenty, and the questions that had us by the throat—questions that have no answer except in the struggle for self-mastery and the conquest of our lives. Only that struggle can give us the taste for things that are true.

If we are sick to death of the sham banquet, who keeps us here? Let's leave this table of deceptions and go together in search of real food. Let us, too, return to earth—return to the abandoned field of our own lives, and clear, plow, fertilize, and cultivate this unworked ground that has been invaded by weeds. And when harvest time comes, we will go and tell our other comrades how bread tastes that one has kneaded with one's own hands. ■

Master/Disciple or how to beg for problems

JANWILLEM VAN DE WETERING

To submit to a master is a difficult concept, especially in America. To bow to another? Most of the Americans I know are intellectual Cool Hand Lukes, and as a free Dutchman I sympathize. We got where we are by initiative, by free will, or so we like to think. Gurdjieff claimed that "men are machines" and seemed quite successful at proving his theorem; and the idea of karma connects cause and effect by relentless logic. Just how free are we? Are there as many choices as we would love to believe?

We must assume there are, for otherwise there wouldn't be much point in being here. So we can choose whether or not we wish to develop.

We may be in a mess, but we do believe that it's possible to get whatever it is we have together, and once we are somehow centered, maybe we'll understand how we got into the mess in the first place.

Masters are, by definition, free of the mess. They got out of it, free from the misconceptions, by various means. Some of them followed arduous disciplines, like sitting under trees or having themselves bricked into caves, and others flew to India and knew they had it all before they got off the airplane stairs. Others again point at impressive credits, acknowledgments of supreme insight bestowed on them by their masters. There are Buddhist lines that have origins in remote antiquity, and there is the Hindu heritage that reaches back to Patanjali, who was a legend when the Buddha was born. There are living Christian saints, and Hasidic rabbis walk the streets of New York. Once the decision is made that we will bow, we have a choice between Mr. Moon, the Krishna lords, and the salesmen of EST.

So which way to go? There are masters galore, and even the exclusive Zen adepts advertise these days, but suppose we go and kneel at their feet—what are we getting ourselves into?

"Master" means "a person whose teachings in religion, philosophy, etc., one follows or professes to follow," but Webster's defines the term also as "an owner of animals or slaves." To become a disciple entails giving away one's freedom. Some masters may tell the aspirant not to smoke tobacco, others make their followers get up at three in the morning, some will insist on ritual sex parties liberally sprinkled with cognac, one or two prescribe the daily use of assorted vitamins, a few want us to strip ourselves of our worldly goods and donate the proceeds to the ashram. *The master arrives when the disciple is ready.* This mystic truth is all too true; we are ready to give it all away at certain crisis points in our lives. There is a book, *Monkey*, a sixteenth-century Chinese allegorical novel, (perhaps) by Wu Ch'êng-ên (in print, translated by Arthur Waley), that tells the tale of a monk who sets out to realize his Buddha nature. The seeker is accompanied by his alter ego, a nasty, witty, and courageous ape, representing intelligence. Intelligence can fly, and so can Monkey. Our intellect is a wonderful instrument, it soars while we plod. It sees the possibilities and risks, it even visualizes the final solution. Man, however, does not live within his intelligence alone. Achieving detachment is a hellish adventure, an exercise in dragging all our weight along while it lightens along the way. The Chinese monk stumbles along the holy path, and Monkey trips around him, takes off at odd times, return-

ing unexpectedly to tell the future adept that he has taken the wrong turn again.

"Oh Monk, once more you fell into a trap you managed to set yourself," exclaims Monkey in desperation.

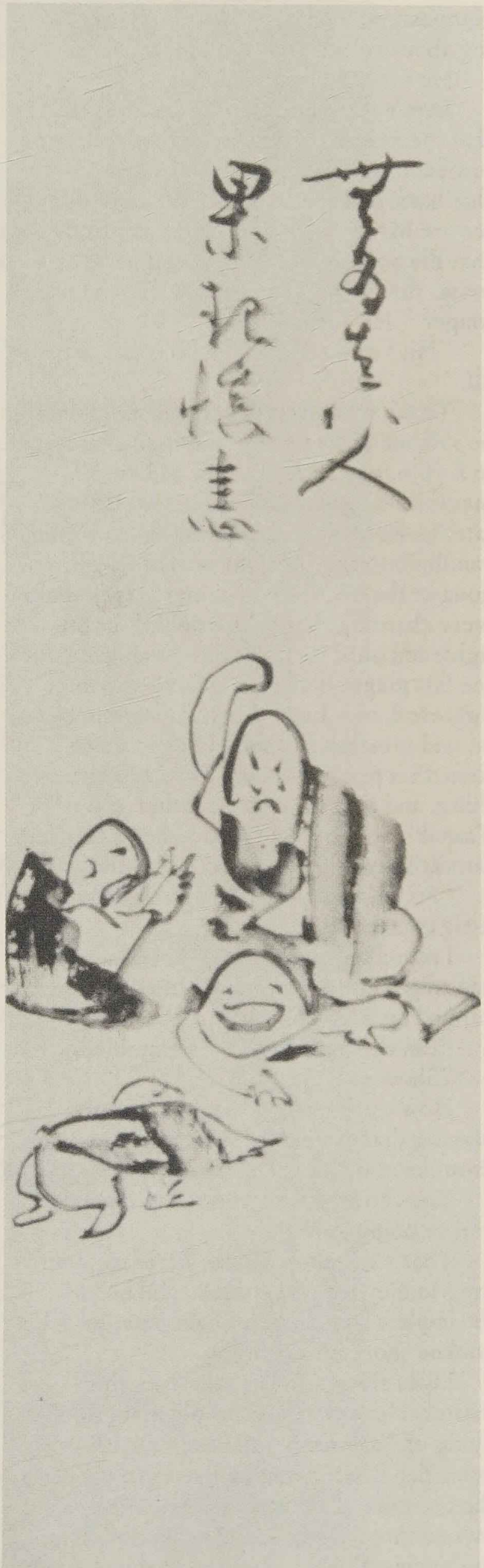
How true. When the disciple (our stumbling self) is ready to fall into a trap, the bogus master arrives. Who is this con man with the charismatic eyes and the hypnotic touch? Is he perhaps the projection of all we want him to be? Could it be that we read our idealism into his slightest gesture? Do we want him to be the smooth vehicle that will take us to the shore we cannot reach by ourselves? Are we paying him so that we can ride on his shoulders to the promised land? The master may take on various forms—he appears to us as a voice on tape and urges us to come to his next seminar and bring $400; he smiles at us from the pages of *Time*, offering advice that will change the level of our lives if we disclose the number on our Visa card; he sends young men in three-piece suits on Saturday afternoon. When, after having proved our readiness in various ways, he finally receives us in his hidden room, he will initiate us, open us up, turn us on, set us on our true ways.

He will break our egos.

And sure enough, that's what we have to do. The literature now flooding the land from publishing houses on both shores is all inspired by that basic truth. The karmic wheel turns because the rooster, the pig, and the snake turn its axle. The rooster of our pride, the pig of our greed, the snake of our self-centered evil. If we can't give, we can't break away. Have you ever studied the pictures Tibetans draw? There is this huge wheel containing the ten thousand scenes of our earthly lives, making us move through exercise after exercise, possibility after possibility. Rooster, pig, and snake program the circular pogrom. We think we're free because we aren't standing still; we're getting somewhere, but maybe we've been there before. So no one is free? What's the Buddha doing on the cloud, well away from the wheel's rim?

And who is this Buddha?

Who is this Christ-in-us who got out of the wheel, this Superior Man who smiles



compassionately at the little people crawling about between the gigantic spokes?

He = me, He = you.

Don't all religions, philosophies, etc., that the masters proclaim and we follow or profess to follow (Webster's), agree on that basic and subtle point? We may think we are Mr. Blow, and our I.D. confirms that illusionary fact, but Joe is a persona, a mask, that we hold up for a while and no longer. "Hi, I'm Joe."

"Hi, I'm the Buddha who is out of it all."

That's what my master told me, when he saw me in his private room, in a temple in Kyoto, at 4:30 A.M., after an hour of meditation (with another six to follow later in the day), smouldering incense, and candles burning. A monk was beating a gong in the next building, and other monks were chanting that they wouldn't be enlightened until the last sentient android on the last planet in the last galaxy was enlightened, too. I was much impressed, but he said it rather casually. He also mentioned his persona-name, Tamaki or something, and told me that his father, old Tamaki, now deceased, had been a chicken farmer somewhere around Hokkaido.

"So who are you?" he asked, making a little conversation.

I mumbled and he rang his bell and I had to go but I kept on mumbling and he cupped his ears.

"I'm the Buddha too," I mumbled.

"Show me," he said.

How do you show that you're only playing that you're Joe B., how do you drop the mask?

You show it right now, in whatever you're doing.

That's what my Monkey told me, and my Monkey told the master, and he beat the hapless animal on his bald pate, with his wicked short stick.

I was always rather taken by this master. He was a cheerful old man, slowly dying of Parkinson's disease. His title was *roshi*, Zen master, and he lived in a cabin on the grounds of the monastery. He only owned three robes, and if he wanted to go to the cinema, he had to ask the head monk for money. It was hard to fool him, but he didn't get too mad when you tried.

He said my Monkey was right; of course you show your Buddhahood in whatever you do, right now, but Monkey's words were mere words.

Who breaks the self? The self breaks the self, no one else. The master doesn't do it. Maybe he'd like to, in his compassion, for only very sick people enjoy the suffering of others.

Now if only the self can break the self (Blow versus Blow, spurring on his steed, firing his combat rifle), why should we crawl too much at the feet of the master? Does he really want us to care for his needs? Should he have any needs?

What does a master require? Three square meals a day, a vehicle in working order, a telephone, electricity and gas, medicine when he is unwell. How much do we have to give him in return for what we already know? Do we have to write checks, ease his sex life, say yes before he has even phrased his requests, bow when we see him pop up on the horizon?

The man is a master, right? Doesn't he say so himself? Can't he take care of himself?

I met a master in America who couldn't buy his own pants because he was shy in stores. The disciples took his measurements. When they returned with the pants, he didn't like them, and they had to go back a few times.

I thought he was very clever, this master. He had designed an exercise for his followers, he was breaking their egos. Then I witnessed another scene. The master wanted to indulge in some hanky-panky and offered a bit of insight in return. Another clever exercise?

How far will we go? I mean, here we are, disciples of a holy man. Aren't we special, we, the chosen? Don't our friends envy us? They keep asking us how early, exactly, we rise, and how long the daily meditation lasts, and how many hours we work on the land, and what the ornamentation means that we embroidered on our robes. Can we afford to doubt the qualifications of our very own master? Do we doubt our own effort?

The trap is so easy. To gain true insight





we have to break the ego. We have to give all we are and have, away. The master takes it, he's helping us along. He takes our new Jeep, our girlfriend, a couple of thousand dollars, a ticket to Europe. Meanwhile we're getting lighter, we float out of the confines of the grinding wheel. Aren't we lucky?

Some Japanese monks once complained about their master to another master. The other master was an old hermit, revered by the sect, a recluse who lived on turnips and rice that he grew himself—he wrote passable poetry in his spare time.

"Why are you putting up with the fellow?" the hermit asked. That had never occurred to the complaining monks. A master/disciple relationship is two-sided.

The monks went home to their monastery, said hello to their teacher, and went to bed. The next morning the teacher got up and hollered for his assistant. No reply. The teacher stamped about, rang bells, beat gongs. Nobody appeared. He checked the monks' quarters, but his slaves had all left during the night. The teacher found nothing but clean floormats. He took the hint and left himself, and the monks, hidden in a nearby forest, returned after watching him go. In due time another teacher was appointed by the sect, and the new master worked on himself while he worked on the monks, for he knew what had happened to his predecessor, and he didn't want to become a bum in the back alleys of Tokyo.

The self has to be broken, but who says we have to smash what we happened to be when we confronted our master for the first time? The creation is composed of shadow and light. No one is all shadow, we must have done something right, even if it happened to be by chance. We can buy our own pants, so why put up with a man who doesn't dare to go into a store? If he never learned what we learned ourselves a long time ago, do we beg for his teaching?

"Show me your Buddha nature," the Zen master says.

What is the master showing us, when

he tries to barter insight for horseplay?

Would Cool Hand Luke believe that he was showing his true nature if he had to shave his hair, don a robe, and beat a drum on Fifth Avenue?

Let us presume all masters start out good but sometimes give way to evil; can we compromise with evil?

There is a hypothesis that is helpful in this field. We say, "Look here, the master is enlightened but he is also a man." A little schizoid maybe? The saint is wonderful, his feet do not touch the earth, but the other half of the phenomenon we beg for favors treads the earth, and we must excuse his failings. So, okay, he wants a shot of bourbon at times, and maybe a bit of skirt, well, hell, let's set up an expense account. And if we do that, we, his beloved special slaves, then he will remember and call us in, via some secret sign, and we'll slip into his room at the second nightwatch, and he will pass us the magic mantra that gives hidden power. There are no free lunches. We give, he takes, *he* gives, we get.

There is a self-appointed master, located in France. He is from the Far East and seven feet tall. Architects trained in Ceylon built him a monastery surrounded by austere gardens. The master wears a robe. He has an inner circle and all sorts of outer circles. He supplies koans by mail, and the best answer wins a prize.

There was a master who chose the States as his happy hunting ground. He looked like an elderly elf. Didn't he sport some fine whiskers, didn't he look the spitting image of some of the holy ones on cave wall paintings in the valley near Bombay? This master attracted female disciples; the older ones were rich and the younger beautiful. He told his maidens, face to face, in the back room of his apartment, that they had been his consorts during previous lives. The younger ones could be his consorts again, and the richer ones could give him money. This master did well for a while, until jealousy within the group bought him a one-way ticket home.

We live and learn. It's impossible not



to learn, life always moves, circumstances always change, we keep on having to adapt. The bad masters are teachers, too, they give us the gift of seeing how things shouldn't be done. We feel foolish afterward and angry with ourselves, once we've stopped blaming it all on them, but we're certainly wiser.

To adore is the easy way out, but it can be fun while it lasts. This good man, out of the goodness of his heart, bows down to us while we reach up to him (and then he picks us up and carries us to heaven?).

Isn't it nice to have to ask for permission? If the master agrees, how could we possibly do wrong? It's just like having parents again; the strong father and the loving mother, merged into one master. *Our* master.

We transfer our power of attorney to him, and maybe he'll take it for a while, while we submit to discipline, to harsh exercises, but shouldn't he give us the power back at some point? We do have two feet, and it's quite possible to walk on them without holding on forever, without clasping the guiding hand.

Slaves are institutionalized, they have trouble with freedom. But freedom is the ultimate test. Groups support the seeker, but the point will be reached when we strike out alone; do we reach back for the group then? Do we falter forever? Shouldn't training have a limit? Suppose medical men spent their lives in medical schools, to learn. Where would we go when we break an arm? There won't even be a secretary to listen to us, for the secretary is in her twenty-seventh year at secretarial school.

Masters are all bad?

I beg your pardon, I didn't quite say that. There are so many masters nowadays that some must be good. Some must be bad.

The Ayatollah conducts holy warfare, the clever man from India collects Rolls-Royces, the Zen master takes his number-one student to the Bahamas and sips a Tom Collins while she prances in the surf, this winter he'll take his number-two student to Saint Thomas. Who wants to go to Acapulco next year?

Who wants to break his ego?

Who doesn't? Ego is a heavy load, and we suffer while we carry. Life is suffering, a Buddhist dogma, but there's no reason to suffer more than our karma requires. There's no need to exaggerate. We're denizens of the free world, we have learned to avoid the extremes, we walk the middle way, we're reasonable men, are we to throw our reason overboard when we select the guide who'll lead us out of error?

"Take care," the master said, when I left his holy temple in Japan, many years ago. "The whole world is a school," he also said. And he smiled.

Take care, don't blunder into traps, but we do, we do. So what? Traps have an opening, to fall into, to climb out of. It's fun, really. There's death at the end, the last trap, the tunnel with light on the other side. We go through it alone. ■

Seeds from Another World



Much on earth is hidden from us, but to make up for that we have been given a precious mystic sense of our living bond with the other world, with the higher heavenly world, and the roots of our thoughts and feelings are not here but in other worlds. That is why the philosophers say that we cannot understand the reality of things on earth.

God took seeds from different worlds and sowed them on this earth, and His garden grew up and everything came up that could come up. But what grows lives and is alive only through the feeling of its contact with other mysterious worlds. If that feeling grows weak or is destroyed in you, the heavenly growth will die away in you. Then you will be indifferent to life and even grow to hate it. That's what I think.[1]

—*Father Zossima*

If a man is not rising upwards to be an angel, depend on it, he is sinking downwards to be a devil. He cannot stop at the beast. The most savage of men are not beasts; they are worse, a great deal worse.[2]

—*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

. . . a man goes forward . . . to ascend on high, as by a ladder. On this ladder angels ascend and descend to help the climbers, while God stands above it awaiting such labors and efforts as are within our powers . . . . God does not allow those who strive towards Him with all their zeal to fall completely off this ladder, but seeing them exhausted, helps and supports them, stretching out the hand of His power and leading them to Himself.[3]

—*St. Simeon the New Theologian*

Know that when God had created Intelligence (*Ennoia*) on the first of the Days, he said to it: "Now go down." And Intelligence went down until it reached our world. The final stage of its descent coincided with the time of Adam. Then the call resounded in the world through the mouth of Hazrat Adam and through the mouths of all those who summon men to God: "Now turn around and go up again." At the time of the Descent, those who spoke for God were cosmic expressions in the language of cosmogenesis. At the time of the Ascent they were inspired expressions in the language of prophecy. The world undertakes its ascent, its gradual return, thanks to the prophetic language of the Messengers. If it should happen that past times are revealed to you, you will see them under your feet, vertically, not beside you, horizontally.

The adventure of our world is the adventure of someone who has to be brought up from the bottom of a well. Moment by moment he reaches a certain level in the well; from level to level he comes to the upper level. At each moment the level he has passed is under his feet. Whoever knows how to look with the organ of inner sight will thus see past times beneath his feet more and more opaque, dense, and dark; whereas, day after day, he continues to ascend time, drawing nearer to the primordial Will and becoming more luminous, more subtle.[4]

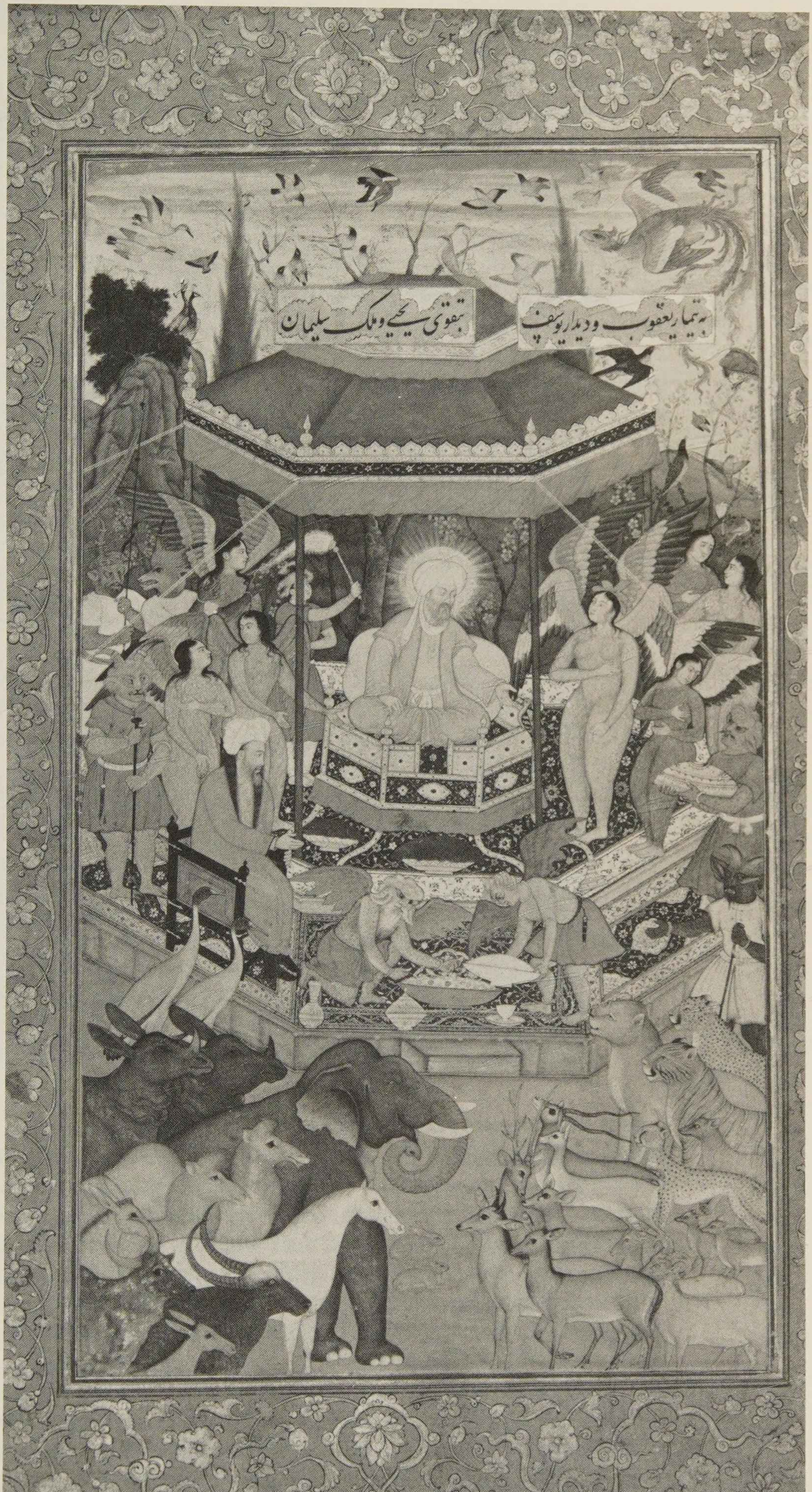
—*Shaikh Hajj Muhammad Karim Khan Kirmani*



There are as many strata at different levels of life as there are leaves in a book. When on the higher levels we can remember the lower levels, but when on the lower we cannot remember the higher.[5]

—*Henry David Thoreau*

. . . since everything follows in continuous succession and deteriorates stage by stage from the first to the last degree, a wise and reflective observer must conclude that from the supreme deity to the lowest life everything is united and bound by mutual and


بتقوی یحیی و ملک سلیمان
به تمنا یعقوب و دیدار یوسف

forever indissoluble links; this is the marvelous golden chain that Homer shows us, hanging in God's hand from the vault of heaven and descending to earth.[6]

—*Macrobius*

Let us strive therefore by our prayers to raise ourselves to the height of these divine and beneficent rays. It is as if we were to seize an infinitely bright chain hanging from the summit of the sky and descending to us, constantly striving to pull it down to us with each hand in turn. We should have the impression that we are bringing it down, but in reality our effort would be unable to move it, for it would be present as an entirety from top to bottom, and it is we who would be raising ourselves, to the highest splendors of a bright and shining perfection. Similarly, if we were in a boat, and ropes were thrown to save us which were tied at the other end to a rock, we should not be pulling the rock towards us, but rather hauling ourselves and the boat with us, towards the rock.[7]

—*Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite*

The function of the maggid is to both instruct and act as a channel for the influence of the upper Worlds. He is in relation to the student at the level of ego as the tempering self or will that can raise the student's level up to his own Seat of Solomon. Once the individual has reached this level and can maintain it, or at least gain it by himself, the maggid must step aside and allow the person to make his own connection with the Tradition. However, this usually only happens after many years' preparation and training.[8]

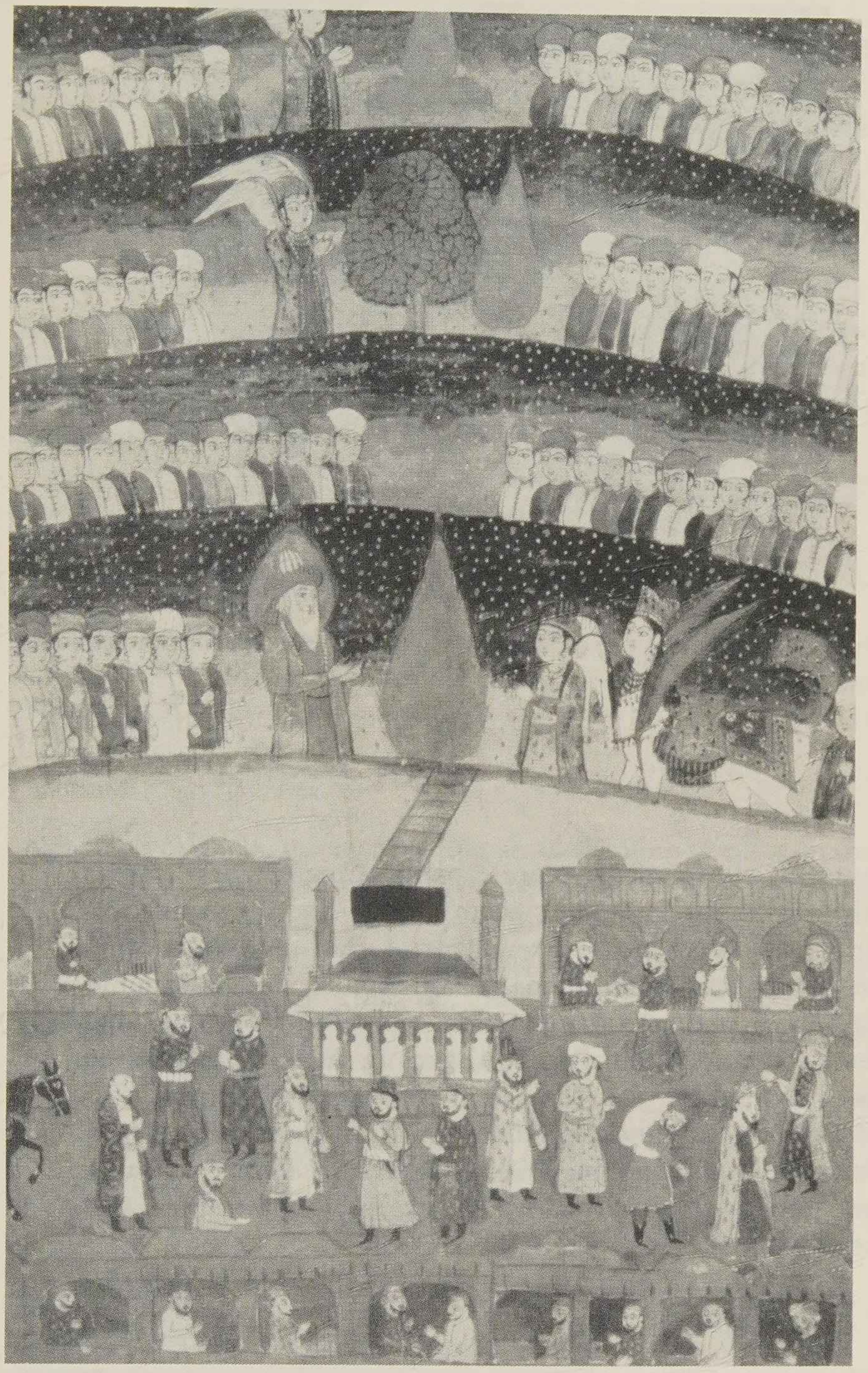
—*Z'ev Ben Shimon Halevi*

Just as there are six stages in the ascent into God, there are six stages in the powers of the soul, through which we ascend from the lowest to the highest, from the exterior to the interior, from the temporal to the eternal. These are the senses, imagination, reason, understanding, intelligence, and the summit of the mind or the spark of conscience. We have these stages implanted in us by nature, deformed by sin and reformed by grace. They must be cleansed by justice, exercised by knowledge and perfected by wisdom.[9]

—*St. Bonaventure*

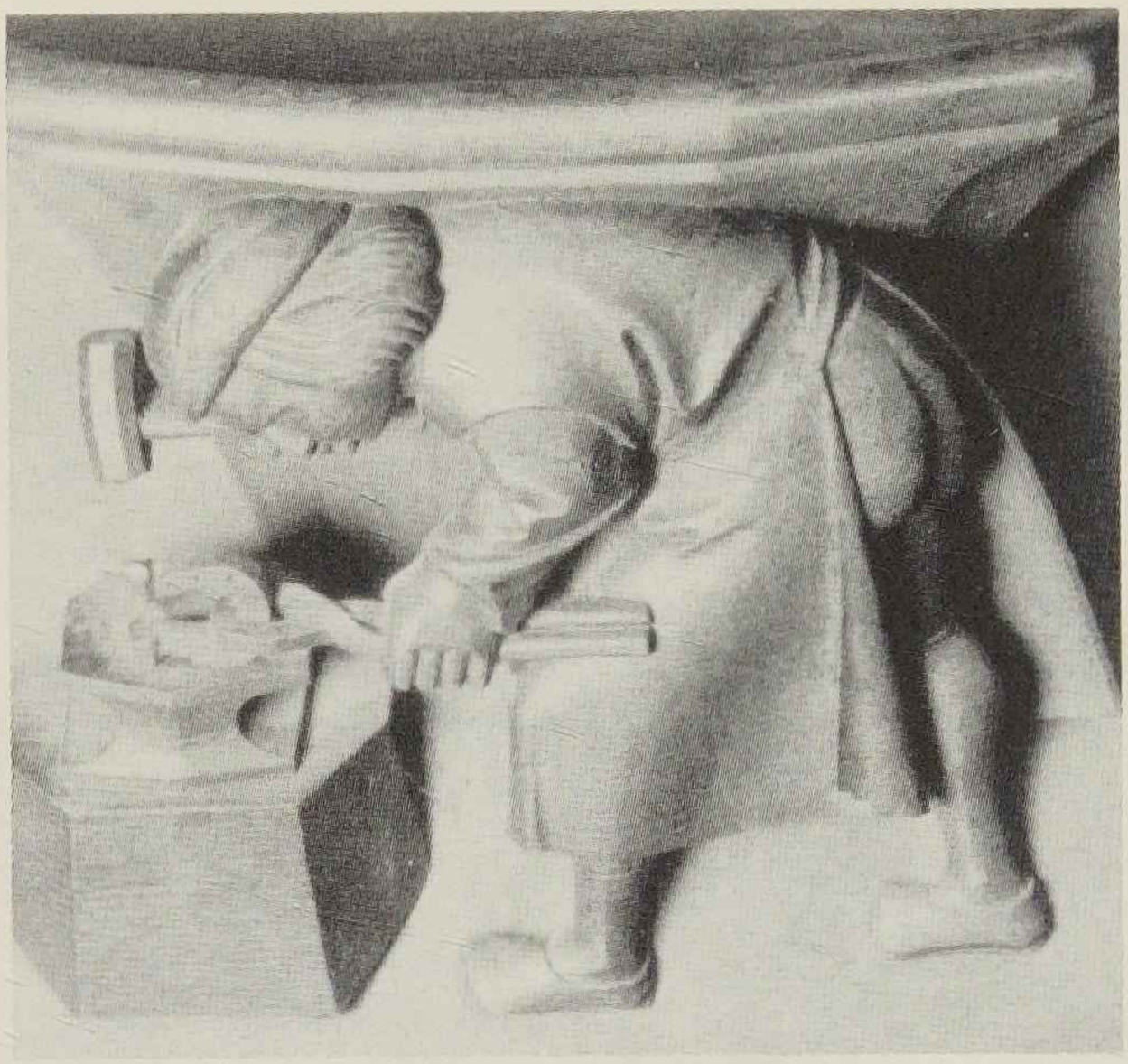
All rising to great place is by a winding stair.[10]

—*Sir Francis Bacon*



Now in every living being the upper parts—head, face—are the most beautiful, the mid and lower members inferior. In the Universe, the middle and lower members are human beings; above them, the Heavens and the Gods that dwell there; these Gods with the entire circling expanse of the heavens constitute the greater part of the Cosmos: the earth is but a central point, and may be considered as simply one among the stars. Yet human wrongdoing is made a matter of wonder; we are evidently asked to take humanity as the choice member of the Universe, nothing wiser existent! But humanity, in reality, is poised midway between gods and beasts, and inclines now to the one order, now to the other; some men grow like to the divine, others to the brute, the greater number stand neutral.[11]

—*Plotinus*



We naturally believe we are more capable of reaching the center of things than of embracing their circumference, and the visible extent of the world is visibly greater than we. But since we in our turn are greater than small things, we think we are more capable of mastering them, and yet it takes no less capacity to reach nothingness than the whole. In either case it takes an infinite capacity, and it seems to me that anyone who had understood the ultimate principles of things might also succeed in knowing infinity. One depends on the other, and one leads to the other. These extremes touch and join by going in opposite directions, and they meet in God and God alone.[12]

—*Blaise Pascal*

There is no rectifying of those above by those below. Rectification must be from above downwards.[13]

—*Mo Ti*

It is fitting that the workman should use the tool, and not the tool the workman: that the rider should guide and spur the horse, and not the horse the rider: and that the sovereign should direct and govern the people, and not the people the sovereign. If in such things as these the natural order is maintained, the result is harmony and beauty; but if the relations are reversed, the result is confusion, ugliness and distortion.[14]

—*Hermes*

The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow.[15]

—*William Blake*

The leveling down of humanity into a herd, by suppressing the natural aristocratic or hierarchic structure, must inevitably lead sooner or later to a catastrophe. For if all that is distinguished is leveled down, then all orientation is lost and the yearning to be led becomes inevitable.[16]

—*Carl Jung*

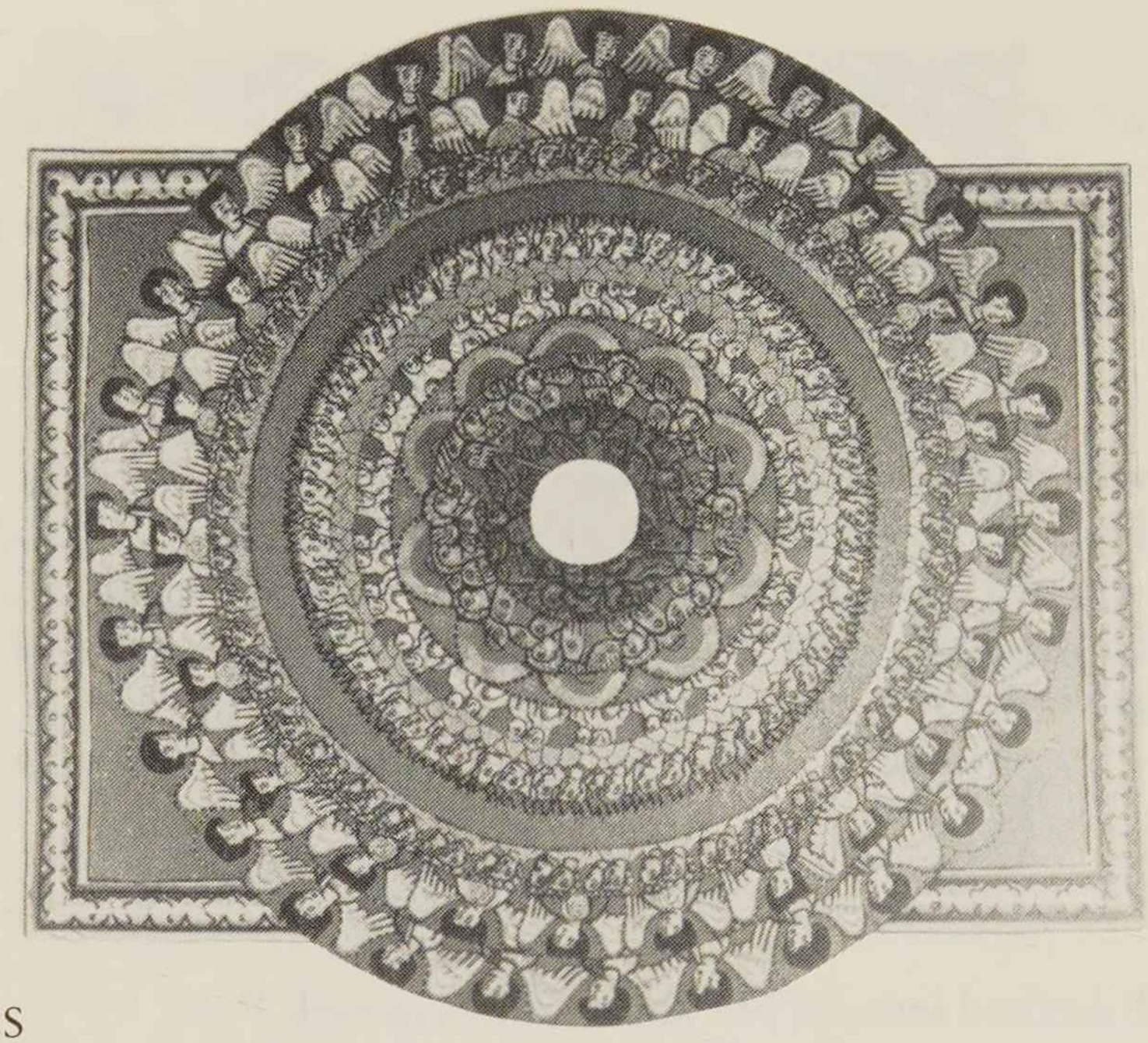
He hath exalted some of you above others in rank.[17]

—*Koran 6:165*

As I stand over the insect crawling amid the pine needles on the forest floor, and endeavoring to conceal itself from my sight, and ask myself why it will cherish those humble thoughts, and hide its head from me who might, perhaps, be its benefactor, and impart to its race so cheering information, I am reminded of the greater Benefactor and Intelligence that stands over me the human insect.[18]

—*Henry David Thoreau*





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The Mythic Dimension

D. M. DOOLING

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil," Christians are taught to pray. "At first the mountain is a mountain," say the Zen Buddhists, "and the tree is a tree. Then the mountain is no longer a mountain, and the tree is no longer a tree. Then again the mountain is a mountain, and the tree is a tree."

What is the process of escaping temptation, of sorting out truth from falsehood, and how do we go about it? Does nature, creating a world of false appearances, also provide help to see through them? Is it possible not to be tempted by how things look, but to see how they are?

If any clue is given that can lead us out of the labyrinth of appearances, it is in the myths and fairy tales that should reach us—if parents are wise and children lucky—at almost the same time that the appearances become familiar, so that how things look is united in the developing consciousness with the real meaning of their hidden dimensions. Otherwise, there awaits the painful process of either bringing the opposites together as we grow older, or of living our lives with a one-sided—or more exactly, a one-dimensional—version of reality. For it is not that appearances are in themselves false; they are indeed a part, but only a part, of what things are. The falsity consists in the impression that they are the total truth. A lie made up of whole cloth is easier to see through than the masquerade of the part for the whole. "Always tell the truth," the trouble-making Lakota trickster Iktomi instructs the demon Gnaski, "but never the whole truth."

So we fall into temptation; we take a picture of the mountain for the mountain itself. Our reality lacks the mythic dimension, the invisible, proportional relation with varying distances that alone puts everything in its right perspective. That is why Coomaraswamy could say, "Myth is the closest thing to absolute truth that can be expressed in words," while Webster gives one definition of the word (and certainly it is the one most commonly used) as "any fictitious story." How very confusing to be told that truth is a lie, unless reality and appearance have found their true relation at an early stage. For there is a strong human tendency to take literally what should be understood symbolically, and to dismiss as "symbolic" (i.e., a "myth" in the sense of fiction) what should be wholly believed, which changes the mythic into its diametric opposite: superstition, an honoring of outer forms whose content is forgotten or has never been seen. It is in consequence of this that this proudly literal-minded era is more superstitious than the Middle Ages.

Consider the myth of evolution—and I use the word in Coomaraswamy's sense, not in Webster's. Evolution as a possibility is the only idea that can make sense of human life. The evolution of man (and all the great myths speak of this) is the ladder reaching to heaven, the return to the father, the conquest of the monsters: an or-

dering and surpassing of the confusion of our lives. This is the true myth, and something in us would be ready to affirm it, if it could be heard. Unfortunately, the myth is almost forgotten, having been replaced by the superstition of a mechanical evolution on the ordinary physical plane: a lateral "progress," an evolution that "happens," untouched, as it were, by human hands. But along with people getting bigger and the life span longer, we have also less active intelligence (ask any aging member of a college faculty) and a vastly greater tendency to madness, divorce, and suicide. Can this be the real meaning of evolution?

Here is another definition: "The evolution of man is the evolution of his consciousness. And consciousness cannot evolve unconsciously. The evolution of man is the evolution of his will, and will cannot evolve involuntarily. The evolution of man is the evolution of his power of *doing*, and doing cannot be the result of things which happen."*

It would be difficult, it seems to me, to quarrel with this statement. But to accept it means to accept the idea of a ladder, and a place higher than where we are to which it reaches; as well as the fact that the effort to climb it will not be undertaken by everyone, and everyone who undertakes it will not climb with equal speed or energy. There are differences between the rungs, and some people are farther up than others. Of course. Everybody agrees that there are different levels; everybody says, "Of course!" But the fact is that very few people really understand and accept all that this idea implies. It implies hierarchy, and that is a very unpopular notion. It implies that there are different qualities of being, of life, of understanding, of consciousness, of spiritual energy. It requires a vision of the mythic dimension; and this will demand an attitude towards oneself (because there are interior levels also), and towards one's fellow man and the universe, that acknowledges a distance between the ordinary and the sacred—an attitude that has been lost in our times. It implies that there are some things and some people who are more valuable than others, and that is truly shocking. It is an idea that is out of favor, out of style; it is not democratic.

The proponents of the democratic stance may cite in their defense another myth (or perhaps it is the same one): the myth of creation and the Creator, the Father of life, to whom all life is equally precious; the myth of the fatherhood of the divine and the brotherhood of man. We recognize its truth; but alas! what is really being cited here is not the myth, but its attendant superstition: that all life is the same and that "brothers" are "equal"—there are no older or younger in this strange family, and for all practical purposes, no parents. In this very prevalent superstition the father is an unknown factor, admittedly necessary but anonymous, who performs his creative act behind the scenes and then disappears—much as he has in the modern family.

But family is the mythical, hierarchical structure into which human beings are still being born—however threatened by the test tube, whose difference in all essentials from the father is rapidly diminishing. Parental authority has almost vanished because we are all equals. Those undemocratic differences of level between children and parents are done away with. "Why should my children obey *me*?" and "Heavens! I don't want them to *respect* me!" are remarks I have heard from young fathers and mothers. So children, like humankind as a whole, are deprived of their parents, and perhaps soon will have no more idea what their origins were as individuals than we do as a race.

It seems to me that it is a catastrophe to lose the link with one's beginnings, and consequently with the direction one needs to follow. It seems also that this catastrophe is not due to any event that has occurred in our recent history or any newly discovered truth, but on the contrary, to a simple loss of perspective and the consequent disappearance of other dimensions than the immediately visible. Father and Mother *are* Tom and Jane (as they encourage their offspring to call them); but

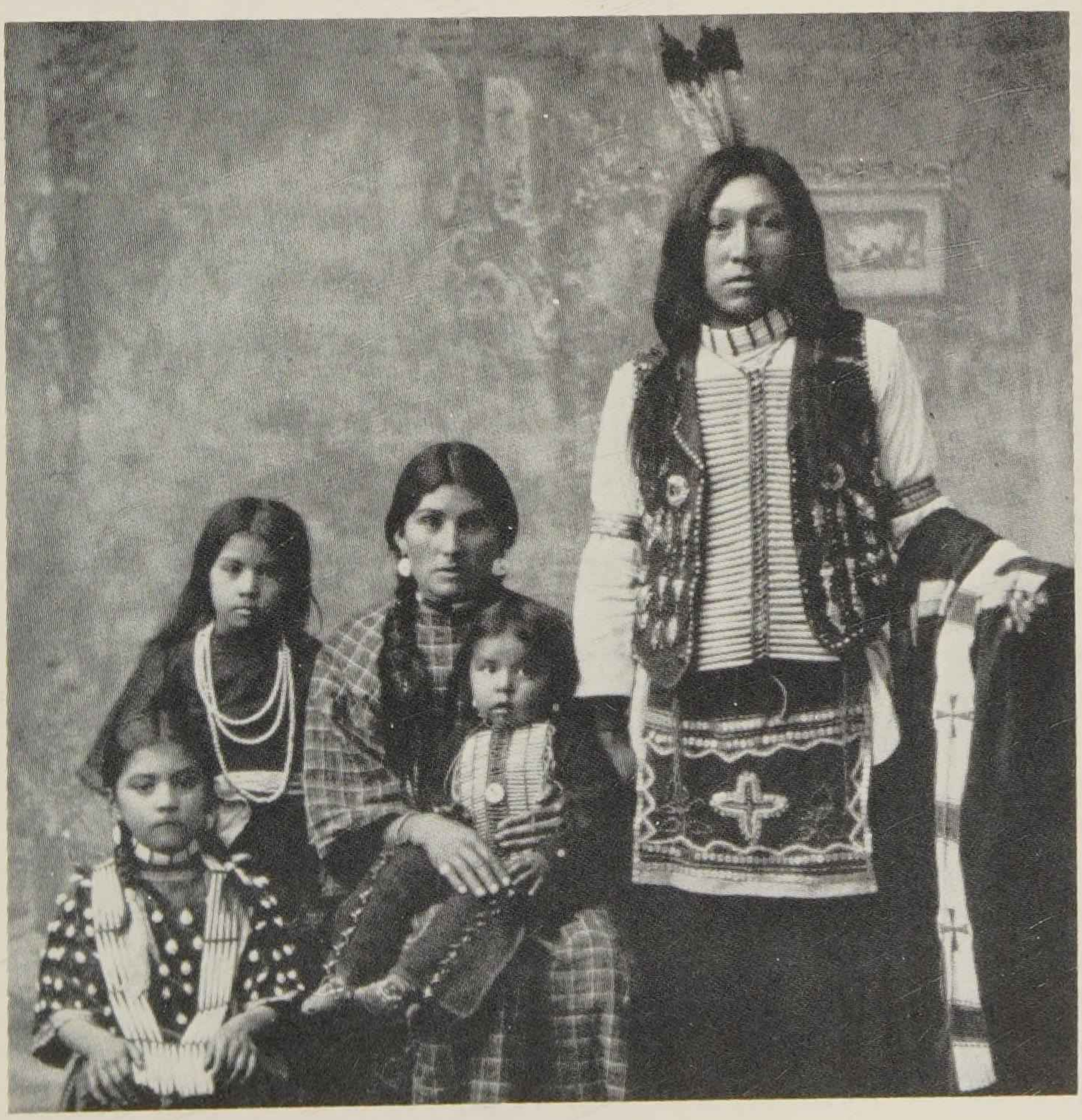
*G.I. Gurdjieff in *In Search of the Miraculous* by P.D. Ouspensky.

they are also *father* and *mother*. They are playing those great roles, which are perhaps more important than the roles of Tom and Jane. How do they dare to take these parts if they themselves do not look up to them? The roles have in their own right a function and an action that must be honored, however inadequate the actors.

I think it is a common experience at the death of parents, even the faultiest and most burdensome, and whatever the emotions of guilt or relief, to feel also the sudden absence of something that was overhead, as if a gale had taken off the roof of the house. No more older generation; however I resented it, how . . . strange . . . without it; perhaps I never understood what it was for.

For nature, even inanimate nature, is subject to hierarchical rules which are both inexorable and immutable. Scientists, without any admixture of moral judgment, any suggestion of "better" or " worse," freely describe energy states as "higher" and "lower," and their interrelation is called "potential" by American physicists; the English, interestingly, use the term "tension." It is a fact, not a moral judgment, that silver has a higher energy level than lead, and that consequently there exists between them a potential which, if they are related by a conducting solution, manifests itself as electric current. In such abstruse areas as quantum physics, I am told that many of the energetic reactions of individual atoms are explained by a theory that the atom is capable of storing a tiny packet or quantum of energy because of the raising of the level of an electron. A more understandable example for most of us is that of a weight which has been lifted to a height off the ground and consequently contains invisibly within it potential energy which can be released by allowing it to fall; or that of water whose usefulness for generating electric power, for turning a mill wheel, or for irrigating a field depends entirely upon the fact that it was at a higher level.

The measure of energy that is con-



Native American



American

tained within any organized system of relationships, which scientists call entropy, has a tendency to dissipate, just as a round stone has a tendency to roll downhill to its lowest energy level. Because of this tendency of energy to dissipate, and of an organization of relationships to become disorganized, many physicists believe that a time will come when all energy and all matter will be evenly distributed throughout the entire universe in one vast, featureless pudding. Some theorists refer to this ultimate state of low entropy as the "heat death of the universe," when time itself will stop. Perhaps the human potential of a conscious choice between "higher" and "lower" exists in order to turn this eventually fatal force of inertia into another and "higher" kind of entropy. But the value of difference and of hard choice, the virtue of distance, the beauty of mystery, the marvelous sense of the sacred are not much thought of nowadays. We are all so cozy and so close, no distance between parent and child, "equality" and unisex between man and woman, no differences; already we see the beginning of that terrible pudding of sameness.

Without differences, there is no relation, just mixture; and without distance, nothing to which we can raise our eyes. There is a new wave of interest in religion, it is said—the Eastern religions, the cults, the born-again Christians; but is it, I wonder, *religion*, the linking with the sacred, whose language is the myth of evolution; or "*religions*," the churches, increasingly "ecumenical," democratic, leveling, reduced and distorted to superstition?

The sacred cannot be on our level. If we all sit down crosslegged to meditate together between puffs of marijuana, if the Mass is as sociable an affair as coffee-upstairs-afterwards-folks, if we talk to God as if he were the football coach or my co-pilot, he is *not* the Great Mystery, Wakan Tanka, the Thunderer, the Unpronounceable Name. What a terrible loss.

If we destroy the distance between man and God, we destroy the only space where

our own evolution could occur. And if we don't discover, and make room for, higher dimensions in our personal lives and relations, there will be no place for this necessary distance, no room for the divine.

The word "respect," so scorned by my young acquaintances, is a key word. It designates the emotional response springing from the recognition of anything that is in any important way greater than oneself. The structure of the family—which is still a fact, in spite of the twentieth century and its progress—has an above and a below, and levels of higher and lower both below and above: not only parents and children, but parents and grandparents, older and younger brothers and sisters; and their places and roles are not the same. What is above me is not necessarily bigger, but it is *more*: more in age, in experience, in capacity, and so in authority and responsibility. Whether it wants it or not, it commands my respect. I have only to recognize a real difference in degree, and respect for what is higher than myself appears as inevitably as the necessity to raise my eyes to meet the eyes of someone taller. This feeling can turn quickly into resentment, but with any luck and a little intelligence, I recognize that the difference in quality and the distance in height are not an insult but an invitation.

Respect is the beginning, the seed, of a new feeling—a new *kind* of feeling. It is the first step on the ladder of evolution. And the first experience one has of "higher," the first relationship with a bigger dimension, is evidently with one's parents. Here could begin the most important and the most overlooked part of the human being's education, the real basis of his possible evolution: the education of feeling—if parents will allow, and even help, their children to respect them and the place they occupy. It is in feeling that children naturally first begin to function; the development of the head should come later, although the modern tendency is to force the intellect and neglect the feeling; and we see the results in many aspects of modernity, in our art and music as well as in our heartless social and family life. We don't seem to think it necessary to nurture *feeling*, and perhaps that is why we have little but reactions and sentimentality when we become adults. We are more concerned with a premature facility with numbers and the alphabet than with the



Persian

opening of conscience and the development of a sensitive, independent sense of values. So education is of the mind only, and we are all packed with information before we have time to be aware of the dormant knowledge of the heart.

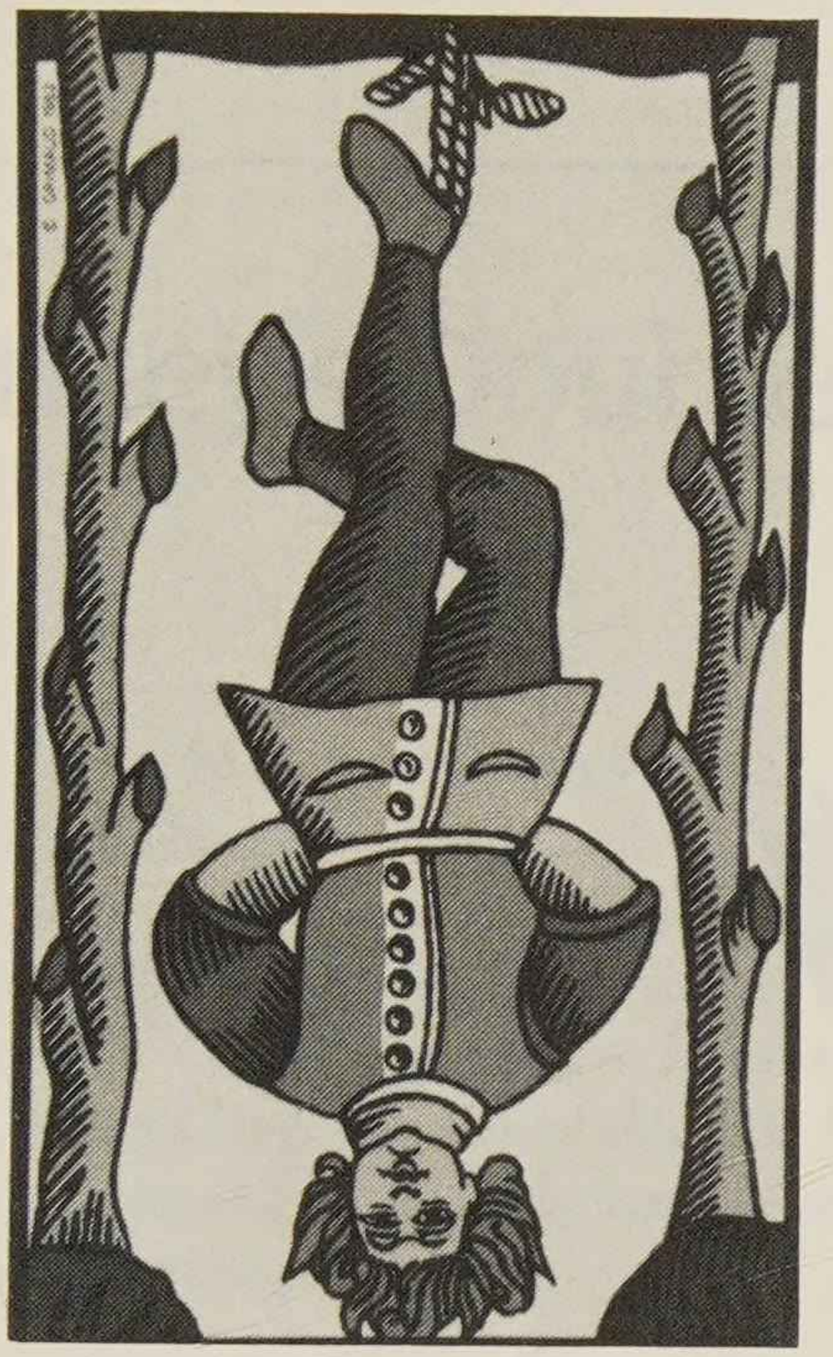
The natural source of guidance for the emerging feelings is built into the structure of family relationships, with its sibling frictions and parental trial and error; and I believe it continues to be the principal school for the development and refinement and possible eventual transformation of that perceptive force which we call feeling. Here in this first small pattern of an ordered society is the analogy of a greater order and a larger society, and the expanding relation of the individual with the whole—a model indeed of the universe and one's shifting place in it. The family structure is not just something we are born into and can free ourselves from as soon as possible thereafter; it is a living organism in which we move, changing positions constantly. There are new roles to be learned, or escaped from, if these unique, custom-made conditions for growth are not appreciated. There are expanding fields of feeling-experience in the given relationships with those of our own blood, sharers of the same genes, so like us and so different from us that their capacity to teach us what we are is limitless. Other relationships seem more alluring, but unless we have made use of the conditions in our original family, we will inevitably be disappointed. We leave home for greener pastures, but we find ourselves sooner or later in the position of the prodigal son and know the need to return to the father.

But we are reluctant to face a relation with another dimension, as if it threatened us instead of offering us hope. Our fear is misplaced. We should be much more afraid of this one-dimensional view of appearances only, and of the destruction that it causes. We should be afraid of the way we manipulate nature, the way we treat the earth and the sky and the sea as if they were only what they look like and not what they are, and so as if we could own them; the way we experiment with life, not to learn from it but to try to control it, because we have forgotten that there is anything greater than we are. We have come to believe that we can do as we please with everything we see, that we can change forms of life, including the human —and eliminate some of them, even human races, that we consider inferior or that get in our way. But this idea that we are alone on top of the heap is the worst, most dangerous superstition of all. We need to recover the knowledge that the universe is a structure of dimensions, like the family, and relationships within and between these dimensions; and beyond and above them all, a very powerful mystery.

This knowledge is basic to a traditional society, which ours has long since ceased to be. Ancient Hindu mythology has a wonderful image of creation as Indra's net—a complex network with a bell attached to each crossing of the strands, so wherever the net is touched, all the bells ring. The Native Americans, who *have* a traditional society when they are allowed to maintain it, express these relationships in family terms: Grandmother Earth; Grandfather Sky; my brother the buffalo.

We need to drop our superstitions about appearances and get back to myth and reality. All myth, perhaps, refers to evolution, to becoming; Mircea Eliade has said that it is about creation, which I think is another way of saying the same thing. All myths have to do also with relationship, for there is no evolution without it. Relationship *is* structure, *is* hierarchy—the structure, the hierarchy of the family of man. And myth is the language of another level, the language of the sacred, the language in which are written messages from a higher world, calling us to that world and even indicating the way. It is a language we have almost forgotten, and we had better be careful not to lose it entirely if we want ever to learn how things really are.

In the process of learning, our vision is changed. When the mountain becomes the mountain again, it is recognizable, but not the same. Something was added to it during the time when it seemed to be something else. ■



Tarot Card No. 12 / The Hanged Man

P. L. TRAVERS

"Oh, young man, why do you hang there upside-down, smiling and seeming to dance? Your blood will all run into your head. You will have no chance of growing old if you persist in such folly."

"I have already been old," said the young man. "And it does not appear to me that I am upside-down. The blood has indeed run into my head but it has also run out again, leaving it all but empty."

"Empty? But you are not the Fool. The number of the Fool is zero, and zero contains all numbers."

"Not the Fool, but a simpleton, set free of his too-much knowledge. Oh, there was nothing I did not know, no question I could not answer. I was ancient and heavy with my learning; knowledge ever breeding knowledge; propositions, measures, degrees; sciences, lore of every kind; the old and the new mixing, adhering; affinities and parallels begetting themselves eternally. Many men came to me for teaching. The universe was my bedside book. I elaborated on the secrets of life and death. What was above and below I knew. I was a prodigy among scholars." He swung to and fro on his rope.

"And then there came to me one who asked, 'Who is it, sir, that knows all this? What sustains your learning?' And there, for the first time, was a question I could not answer. No lexicon had prepared me for it. I looked within and found no one. 'Who am I?' I inquired of myself and nothing made reply. Oh, then, indeed, I was upside-down, a mere head walking the earth. 'What shall I do?' I demanded of my erudition, aghast at the discovery that far from being more than a man, I was less than half. But my erudition could not tell me. It does not deal in such things. Then deep within me something wept—I who had never wept before, nor needed the gift of weeping—and I knew what had to be done. A tear is an intellectual thing, opening doors no knowledge can broach. It gave me the grace to remember Plato: *Man is a heavenly plant and what this means is that he is like an inverted tree of which the roots tend heavenwards and the branches down to earth.* And I said to myself, 'I will be rooted.'

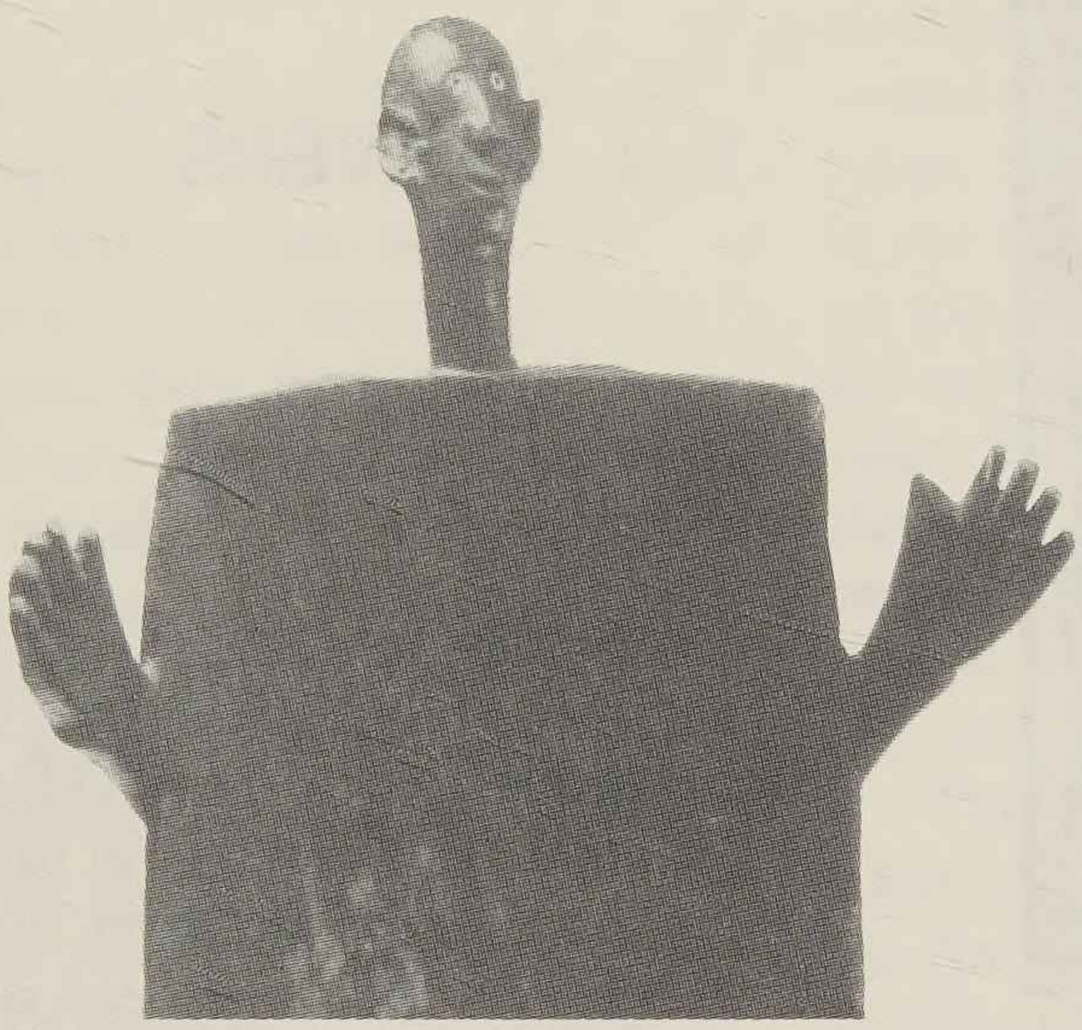
"My tear also brought to me Lao Tzu, whom before I had thought of as merely a book. *The man of learning increases every day, the man of Tao decreases every day.* And I said to myself, 'I will decrease.'

"And that is why you find me here, foot-fast to the celestial root, swinging between Nonexistence and Existence. And while it is more difficult to decrease than to increase, I find that daily something falls from me, daily myself grows nearer to me. If there is anything I now need to know, a passing bee will apprise me of it."

"But what will happen to you at last, hanging there, prey to every wind?"

"I do not know. The dancer and the dance are one. And, anyway," the young man said, "the matter is not in my hands." ■

EPICYCLES



God and Pride / Sudanese

God created Ares, and Ares was bigger, all by himself, than the seven heavens and the seven earths put together.

Around Ares God entwined a serpent, who went around him seven times. The serpent thought that nothing could be as big as he was, and he swelled up with pride.

To crush the serpent's pride, God created a toad so huge that the serpent could easily fit inside one of his nostrils.

The toad, in his turn, thought that nothing could be as big as he was, and he swelled up with pride.

To crush the toad's pride, God created a river so wide that the toad could swim and swim forever and never reach the other bank.

The river, in its turn, thought that nothing could be as big as it was, and it swelled up with pride.

To crush the river's pride, God ordered one of his angels to wash himself in it. But it took all the water in the river just to wash one corner of the angel's face. He was standing there, wondering how to finish his bath, when there appeared another angel, who solved his problem by spitting out a jet of saliva that nearly drowned him.

As the bather sputtered and stared at this mighty angel, the newcomer said sternly, "Remember, I am one of the tiniest creatures God ever made!"

Reprinted from *Contes soudanais* by Charles Monteil (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905). Translated by Anne Twitty.

Monkey's Double / Chinese

In Chapter 56 of The Journey to the West, *Monkey offends his master, Tripitaka, and is sent to cool his heels on Mount Potalaka. His fellow-disciple Sandy is sent with him to recover the wraps that have been stolen from Tripitaka and his three disciples by a monkey impersonating the true Monkey, "Great Sage Equal to Heaven," and hidden in Monkey's own Water-Curtain Cave. The aim of this false Monkey is to usurp the real Monkey's place, and obtain for himself the scriptures which are the goal of Tripitaka's pilgrimage.*

The two disciples rode the clouds together, and soon came to the Flower-Fruit Mountain. Lowering their clouds to look around, they found outside the cave another Pilgrim Monkey, sitting high up on a stone ledge and drinking merrily with a flock of monkeys. Now look! His appearance is exactly like that of Great Sage: a gold fillet is clamped to his head, his eyes are gray with diamond pupils, he wears a silk shirt with a tiger kilt tied round his waist, and he holds a golden-hooped iron rod in one hand. The true Great Sage, his wrath aroused, left his companion and challenged the usurper: "What kind of fiend are you, who dares to take on my appearance, capture my descendants, occupy my immortal cave, and assume these airs?" That other Pilgrim made no reply to this challenge, but took up his iron rod and met his opponent in combat.

What a battle! Two iron rods, wielded by two monkey spirits, clashed in the air! These are not children playing a game! They are exact equals, and their magical powers are evenly matched! See how they transform themselves into vast forms, blocking and parrying, first outside the cave, and at last rising into the air. Sandy does not have the courage to join the battle, and indeed he finds it impossible to tell the two of them apart. Instead, he routs the monkey fiends from in front of Water-Curtain Cave and searches as best he can for the missing wraps. But alas, not knowing the wonderful mysteries of that cave, he finds nothing. Coming forth, he ascends into the air to see what help he might give Great Sage, holding aloft his staff, but not daring to strike either of the combatants. "Sand Monk!" cries Great Sage. "If you can't help, go back to Master and inform him of our predicament. Let old Monkey battle this fiend all the way to Potalaka Mountain, so that the Bodhisattva may distinguish the true from the false!" Then the other Monkey said exactly the same thing, and Sandy had no choice but to do the bidding of both, and at once took his leave.

Look now at those two Pilgrim Monkeys! All the way up to Potalaka they fought, creating such a noise and commotion that all



the guardian deities of Potalaka rushed inside the Tidal Sound Cave to alert Kuan-yin, who immediately descended from her lotus platform to confront the combatants. Speaking with but one voice, both Pilgrims explained why they were fighting, and so alike were they in appearance and sound that even the Bodhisattva could not tell them apart. Looking them over carefully, she said to two of her attendants, "Each of you take hold of one of these villains firmly. Do not let go of them while I recite the Tight-Fillet spell; we shall soon distinguish the true from the false!" That Tight-Fillet spell, of course, was the same spell that the Bodhisattva had given to the T'ang monk, Tripitaka, to keep the Monkey of the Mind under control. So, while her attendants held the two firmly, Kuan-yin recited the spell in secret, and immediately both Monkeys fell to the ground, writhing in pain, gripping their heads as the gold fillets bound around their skulls tightened mercilessly, and screaming "Don't recite! Don't recite!" The Bodhisattva stopped reciting, and the two of them again became entangled in ferocious combat. Unable to tell them apart, the Bodhisattva addressed them thus: "Monkey Aware-of-Emptiness! When you were appointed stable-keeper in the Region Above, you very nearly brought total chaos to Heaven. Surely all those celestial warriors, and even the Jade Emperor himself, will be able to tell the two of you apart. Depart now, and go to the Heavenly Region, for I cannot help you."

At these words, Great Sage Equal to Heaven bowed low, and so did his rival, thanking the Bodhisattva for her advice. Then, tugging and pulling at each other, screaming and hollering as before, they fought their way up to the South Heavenly Gate, through battalions of guardians, into the presence of the Jade Emperor.

Upon hearing the explanation given by both, in identical voices, the Jade Emperor commanded as follows: "Let us look at these two in our imp-reflecting mirror. Surely that way, the false may perish and the true endure." But lo! When they looked, there was not the slightest difference between those two. Their clothing, their golden fillets, even every hair on their bodies, was exactly the same! Since the Jade Emperor could not tell them apart, he ordered them both to depart immediately.

And so they did, continuing to claw and bite each other. They fought their way down to the Regions Below, and arrived at the Mountain of Perpetual Shade. There they begged King Yama, Lord of the Dead, to tell them apart. Accordingly the Book of Life and Death was brought forth, and the judge in charge of the book was asked to look up the name of the false Monkey. But no name could be found, since Great Sage, during the time he had caused great havoc in those infernal regions, had crossed out not only his own name from that book, but all one hundred and thirty entries under the name "monkey." The judge said to them, "There's no help here! You must seek discrimination in the world of light!"

Just as they were about to depart, however, the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha said, "Wait a moment! Wait a moment! I will ask Investigative Hearing to listen for you!" This was the name of a beast who usually lay underneath the desk of the Bodhisattva; when his ear was placed against the ground, he could instantly tell the true from the false, the virtuous from the wicked, among all

creatures, short-haired, scaly, hairy, winged, and crawling, among all immortals, celestial and otherwise, no matter where they were on the Four Great Continents or in the Regions Above or Below. In obedience to his master, Investigative Hearing placed his ear to the ground, and in a little while said, "I have the name of the false fiend who is impersonating Great Sage, but I cannot announce it in his presence, nor can we help in capturing him." "Why not?" asked Ksitigarbha. "Because," replied the beast, "if I were to do so, that monster-spirit might unleash all his violence and ruin the peace of the office of darkness. That spirit's power is exactly equal to Great Sage Monkey's, and the gods of the nether region possess no powers sufficient to subdue that fiend." Ksitigarbha then asked, "How then can he be dealt with?" Investigative Hearing replied, "The power of Buddha is limitless." At once, Ksitigarbha awoke and understood, and he said to the two Pilgrims, "If you want distinction, you must go to the Thunderclap Monastery, the abode of Buddha." "You are right! You are right!" replied both Monkeys at once, and locked in combat, they departed at once to see Tathagata.

At that moment, Buddha Tathagata was delivering a lecture to all the arhats, bodhisattvas, guardians of the faith, mendicant nuns and monks, and the great holy multitude that had gathered beneath the lotus seat of seven jewels, and that multitude had bowed their heads in submission and chanted in unison the words of Buddha in response. Tathagata said to them, "You are all of one mind; but now look and see two Minds in conflict, just arriving here."

When the congregation turned to look, they saw the two Monkeys in clamorous battle, approaching the region of Thunderclap. The Eight Diamond Kings were so horrified that they went forward to bar the way, but were unable to restrain them, and the brawl was carried right up to the lotus platform itself. "Your disciple was accompanying the T'ang monk Tripitaka," the two began in unison, "on his journey to your treasure mountain to beg for true scriptures. Master took offense at the way I dealt with some bandits and banished me. Accordingly, I went to Potalaka Mountain to tell Kuan-yin of my woes, and in my absence, this false creature assumed my form and now pretends to be me. We have gone before Kuan-yin, the Jade Emperor, and King Yama, but none has been able to discriminate between us. I have come here, therefore, to beg you in your great compassion to discern the right from the perverse, so that I may again join the T'ang monk on his quest."

The congregation of arhats marveled that two mouths spoke with the same voice. Just then, Kuan-yin arrived on a cloud, and Tathagata beckoned to her, saying, "Honored One, can you not tell the true Pilgrim from the false?" "Truly," replied the other, "though they came before me and I recited the Tight-Fillet spell, I cannot tell them apart, nor could the lords of Heaven and Earth. I have therefore come to ask Tathagata to do this on behalf of the true Pilgrim."

Tathagata smiled and spoke to the whole congregation. "Though all of you possess vast dharma power and are able to observe every event in the whole universe, you cannot know all the things therein. Without a knowledge of all the species of immortals and creatures, you cannot tell these two apart. There are five kinds



of immortal: celestial, earthly, divine, human, and spirit. There are also five kinds of creature: short-haired, scaly, hairy, winged, and crawling. But in addition to these ten species, there are four kinds of monkeys.

"The first is the intelligent stone monkey, who knows transformations and is able to alter the course of planets and stars. The second is the red-buttocked baboon, who has knowledge of yin and yang and is able to avoid death and prolong its life. The third is the bare-armed gibbon, who can seize sun and moon and manipulate the cosmos. The fourth is the six-eared macaque, who can hear all things and know past and future. The false Monkey is just this last kind, who can indeed hear things a thousand miles away though he stands in one place."

When the macaque who had taken on Great Sage's appearance heard these words, he was terrified and tried to escape. But at once all the arhats and bodhisattvas and guardians of the faith—in fact that whole sacred multitude—surrounded him, so that he had no place to run. Instantly, he changed himself into a bee, and flew up, thinking to escape, but Tathagata threw into the air his golden almsbowl, which caught the bee and brought it down. This happened so quickly that everyone thought that the bee had escaped, but when Tathagata lifted the bowl, there was the six-eared macaque in his original form. Instantly, Great Sage stepped forward and brought his golden-hooped iron rod down on the creature's head, killing it with one blow. To this day, that species of monkey has been extinct.

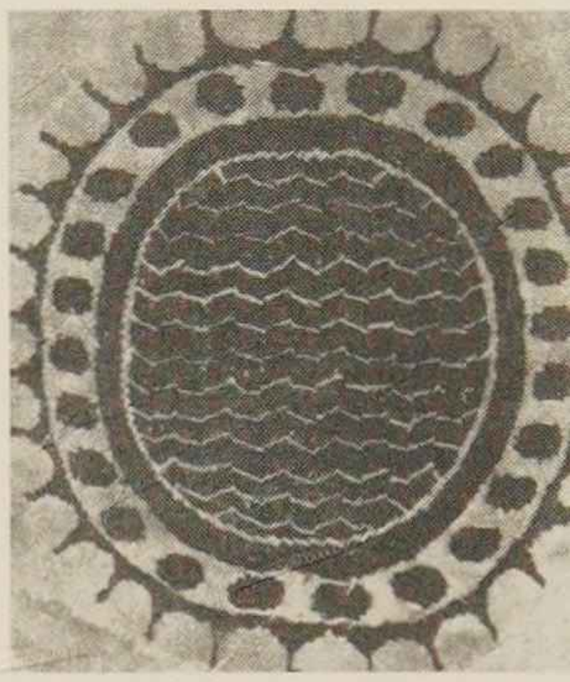
Tathagata was moved to pity by the destruction of the macaque, but Great Sage said, "You should have no compassion on that one, Tathagata. He wounded my Master and robbed us of our wraps. He violated the law, and deserved to be punished." Buddha replied, "Now *you* return to your master, and accompany him on his quest!" Great Sage replied, "It's no use my going back now. He'll only start reciting the Tight-Fillet spell again and reject me as before. Please recite the Loose-Fillet spell and allow me to return to secular life." Tathagata replied, "Don't be foolish! I will ask Kuan-yin to speak to your master and explain everything. Now go, and protect him on his journey, and in due time,

> When merit's done and nirvana's home,
> You, too, will sit on a lotus throne."

So Great Sage returned to his master and his fellow disciples, Kuan-yin having prepared the way, and the journey to the west was resumed. And if you don't know when Tripitaka will come to face Buddha and receive the scriptures, you must read about it in the next chapter.

—Retold by Paul Jordan-Smith

Dana Nuk / Mandaean



Once upon a time there was only one religion in the world. All the children of Adam were Mandai. Of these, there were twenty-four learned men; but one wise man, whose name was Dana Nuk, was greater than them all.

They came to him for advice, and he had all the sacred books which Hiwel Ziwa gave to Adam, and knew them by heart, no doubt. And yet another sacred book appeared one day in his study. This was the book of Sira the Moon. He was astonished and did not know where it had come from. He said, "This must have come from the planets." And one by one, six more books came, and each contained a different Way. Dana Nuk studied them all. At last a book appeared that radiated light. The heart of Dana Nuk went out to that book, and he read it and believed what was written in it and saw that it contained the perfection of the knowledge of God. When he read it, his spirit was glad, and all fear left him. God gave him, and all who read it, power. So he took this one for his Way.

It happened after that, that he was in his garden, praying, when he saw a being of light descend from the North Star. It was Hiwel Ziwa, who stopped before him. Dana Nuk prostrated himself before the being, who said to him, "Those who have taken another book, their souls will remain bound to earth. But you will rise, because your book is of Shamish the Sun. Now I must take your soul to the World of Light, so that you may understand the truth and then return to this world to tell others what you have seen."

He led the sage to a place where there was a chamber built among trees and left him there, saying, "Sleep!" Dana Nuk slept gladly, for he wished to see the World of Light.

Hiwel Ziwa gave him a form of air, of his own shape, and Dana Nuk's soul entered into it. But he was not visible to the sons of Adam. His body was sleeping, and his pulses beating, but his soul was away.

Hiwel Ziwa took him to Ptahil, and Ptahil rose before him saying, "Rejoice that thou hast come to this place!" And he told the Spirits of Light to guide Dana Nuk and show him the underworlds with their demons and places of purification. Next they took him to the abode of the Moon, and that of Venus, for their places are beautiful. Next they went to the place which God gave Ruha, who rose from the darkness, a place which is of God and of great loveliness. Then they took him to a place all of light, in the World of Light, and of a radiance past description. Then they bore him upwards—up, up, up! until he reached Paradise, the place of God, and that was lovelier than all he had seen before.

Dana Nuk cried to them, "I want to stay in this place, and never leave it!" But they took him higher yet, to the place where the four great ones abide. When he saw them in their beauty, he cried to Hiwel Ziwa, "I cannot go farther! Let me rest here!"

Hiwel Ziwa said, "No, you must go yet farther."

They rose, and they came to the place of the King of Light, and that was vast and all of light. There were four suns, always stationary and not turning like our sun. It was a place of wonder and power.

But Hiwel Ziwa took him up yet higher, and they came to another heaven, also lit with four suns, but yet greater and more brilliant. Dana Nuk asked, "Of whom is this?" Hiwel Ziwa answered, "This is my place. But we must go yet higher."

They continued their way upwards, and they came to a place full of Spirits of Light. There, there was a sea of light. Its waters were of light only, and above it there were other spirits, male and female, adoring God. Dana Nuk said to Hiwel Ziwa, "I see no babies in this world of light, where are they?"

He replied, "Within the womb of that sea, the living water of light, they grow, and when they are ready to pray, they issue from its waters, for we are not like you in the matter of our reproduction. Our seed is in the waters of the Ocean of Light."

When Dana Nuk had seen this heaven of heavens, he cried to Hiwel Ziwa, "I will not go from here! Leave me here!"

Hiwel Ziwa said to him, "Did I not say that you must return to tell the people what you have seen, so that they will know the way, and believe and not deny?"

So Dana Nuk returned, but he wept. The other said to him, "You shall return here one day, but now your place is in the world."

—*Retold by Anne Twitty*

Adapted from *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran* by E.S. Drower (Oxford: The Clarendon Press. 1934).

The Lesson of the Ants / Hindu

After the God Indra slew the giant dragon and released the waters, all the gods of heaven acclaimed him as their savior. They returned to their lofty city on the summit of the central mountain of the earth. But during the time of the dragon, the mansions of the city had cracked and crumbled. Indra summoned Vishvakarman, the god of arts and crafts, to build him a palace fit, in its unequaled splendor, for the king of the gods.

As Vishvakarman began to build palaces, gardens, lakes, and towers, Indra's demands became even more exacting, and his unfolding visions vaster. At last the divine craftsman, in despair, sought relief from Brahma, the Universal Spirit, who abides far above the sphere of ambition, strife, and glory.

"You will soon be relieved of your burden," Brahma comforted him. "Go in peace."

And while Vishvakarman was still hurrying down to the city of Indra, Brahma himself ascended to a still higher sphere and appeared before Vishnu, the Supreme Being. In silence Vishnu listened, and with a nod, let it be known that Vishvakarman's request would be fulfilled.

Early next morning a brahmin boy, carrying the staff of a pilgrim, made his appearance at the gate of Indra, bidding the porter announce his visit to the king. The gate-man hurried to the master, and the master hastened to the entrance to welcome in person the auspicious guest. The boy was slender, some ten years old, radiant with the luster of wisdom. Indra discovered him amidst a cluster of enraptured, staring children. The boy greeted the host with a gentle glance of his dark and brilliant eyes. The king bowed to the holy child and the boy cheerfully gave his blessing. The two retired to the hall of Indra, where the god ceremoniously proffered welcome to his guest with oblations of honey, milk, and fruits, and said: "O Venerable Boy, tell me of the purpose of your coming."

The beautiful child replied with a voice that was as deep and soft as the slow thundering of auspicious rain clouds. "O King of Gods, I have heard of the mighty palace you are building, and have come to refer to you the questions in my mind. How many years will it require to complete this rich and extensive residence? What further feats of engineering will Vishvakarman be expected to accomplish? O Highest of the Gods,"—the boy's luminous features moved with a gentle, scarcely perceptible smile—"no Indra before you has succeeded in completing such a palace as yours is to be."

Full of the wine of triumph, the king of the gods was entertained by this mere boy's pretension to a knowledge of Indras earlier than himself. With a fatherly smile, he put the question: "Tell me, Child! Are they then so very many, the Indras and Vishvakarmans whom you have seen—or at least, whom you have heard of?"

The wonderful guest calmly nodded. "Yes, indeed, many have I seen." The voice was as warm and sweet as milk fresh from the cow, but the words sent a slow chill through Indra's veins. "My dear child," the boy continued, "I knew your father, Kashyapa, the Old Tortoise Man, lord and progenitor of all the creatures of the earth. And I knew your grandfather, Marichi, Beam of Celestial Light, who was the son of Brahma. Marichi was begotten of the god Brahma's pure spirit; his only wealth and glory were his sanctity and devotion. Also, I know Brahma, brought forth by Vishnu from the lotus calix growing from Vishnu's navel. And Vishnu himself—the Supreme Being, supporting Brahma in his creative endeavor—him too I know.

"O King of Gods, I have known the dreadful dissolution of the universe. I have seen all perish, again and again, at the end of every cycle. At that terrible time, every single atom dissolves into the primal, pure waters of eternity, whence originally all arose. Everything then goes back into the fathomless, wild infinity of the ocean, which is covered with utter darkness and is empty of every sign of animate being. Ah, who will count the universes that have passed away, or the creations that have risen afresh, again and again, from the formless abyss of the vast waters? Who will number the passing ages of the world, as they follow each other endlessly? And who will search through the wide infinities of space to count the uni-

verses side by side, each containing its Brahma, its Vishnu, and its Shiva? Who will count the Indras in them all—those Indras side by side, who reign at once in all the innumerable worlds; those others who passed away before them; or even the Indras who succeed each other in any given line, ascending to godly kingship, one by one, and, one by one, passing away? King of Gods, there are among your servants certain who maintain that it may be possible to number the grains of sand on earth and the drops of rain that fall from the sky, but no one will ever number all those Indras. This is what the Knowers know.

"The life and kingship of an Indra endure seventy-one eons, and when twenty-eight Indras have expired, one Day and Night of Brahma has elapsed. But the existence of one Brahma, measured in such Brahma Days and Nights, is only one hundred and eight years. Brahma follows Brahma; one sinks, the next arises; the endless series cannot be told. There is no end to the number of those Brahmas—to say nothing of Indras.

"But the universes side by side at any given moment, each harboring a Brahma and an Indra; who will estimate the number of these? Beyond the farthest vision, crowding outer space, the universes come and go, an innumerable host. Like delicate boats they float on the fathomless, pure waters that form the body of Vishnu. Out of every hair-pore of that body a universe bubbles and breaks. Will you presume to count them? Will you number the gods in all those worlds—the worlds present and the worlds past?"

A procession of ants had made its appearance in the hall during the discourse of the boy. In military array, in a column four yards wide, the tribe paraded across the floor. The boy noted them, paused, and stared, then suddenly laughed with an astonishing peal, but immediately subsided into a profoundly indrawn and thoughtful silence.

"Why do you laugh?" stammered Indra. "Who are you, mysterious being, under this deceiving guise of a boy?" The proud king's throat and lips had gone dry, and his voice continually broke. "Who are you, Ocean of Virtues, enshrouded in deluding mist?"

The magnificent boy resumed: "I laughed because of the ants. The reason is not to be told. Do not ask me to disclose it. The seed of woe and the fruit of wisdom are enclosed within this secret. It is the secret that smites with an ax the tree of worldly vanity, hews away its roots, and scatters its crown. This secret is a lamp to those groping in ignorance. This secret lies buried in the wisdom of the ages, and is rarely revealed even to saints. This secret is the living air of those ascetics who renounce and transcend mortal existence; but worldlings, deluded by desire and pride, it destroys."

The boy smiled and sank into silence. Indra regarded him, unable to move. "O Son of a Brahmin," the king pleaded presently, with a new and visible humility, "I do not know who you are. You would seem to be Wisdom Incarnate. Reveal to me this secret of the ages, this light that dispels the dark."

Thus requested to teach, the boy opened to the god the hidden wisdom. "I saw the ants, O Indra, filing in long parade. Each was once an Indra. Like you, each by virtue of pious deeds once ascended to the rank of a king of gods. But now, through many

rebirths, each has become again an ant. This army is an army of former Indras.

"Piety and high deeds elevate the inhabitants of the world to the glorious realm of the celestial mansions, or to the higher domains of Brahma and Shiva, and to the highest sphere of Vishnu; but wicked acts sink them into the worlds beneath, into pits of pain and sorrow, involving reincarnation among birds and vermin, or out of the wombs of pigs and animals of the wild, or among trees, or among insects. It is by deeds that one merits happiness or anguish, and becomes a master or a serf. It is by deeds that one attains to the rank of a king or a brahmin, or of some god, or of an Indra or a Brahma. And through deeds again, one contracts disease, acquires beauty and deformity, or is reborn in the condition of a monster.

"This is the whole substance of the secret, this wisdom is the ferry to beatitude across the ocean of hell."

Adapted with permission from *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* by Heinrich Zimmer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946).



Payment

I'd better tell you the whole story, because we may be together for a while and you should know what kind of a man (he spat in the fire) you're dealing with.

My men act like babies, complaining about the hunting regulations from here on up. There's lots of good game everywhere, I'm not denying. But the guides up above know what they're doing when they forbid hunting beyond Meadowbrook. They have rea-

sons, and I have cause to know. For a rat I killed fifty paces from here I lost the four peradams I'd gone through hell to find and hold on to. And I lost ten years of my life as well . . . .

I come from a peasant family which has lived for centuries in Port o'Monkeys. Several of my ancestors left for the mountain and became guides. But my parents, fearing that I, their eldest son, would leave too, did everything they could to protect me from the call of the mountain. With this in mind, they urged me to marry very young. Down below I have a wife I love and a grown son. He could try the ascent now if he wanted, and so could she. After my parents' death when I was thirty-five, I suddenly saw the emptiness of my life. What was I doing? Was I to go on bringing up my son so that he in turn could carry on the line, and so on? What for? I'm not very good at expressing myself, as you see, and I was worse off then. The whole business seemed to strangle me. One day a guide of the upper mountains who was going through Port o'Monkeys came in to buy provisions from me. I went for him, shook him by the shoulders with nothing better to shout at him but "Why? Why?"

He answered me gravely. "It's true. But you must begin to think of *how*." He talked to me for a long time, that day and the days that followed. Finally we arranged to meet the next spring—it was autumn at the time—at the base chalets. He accepted me as one of a caravan he would be forming then. I persuaded my brother to come with me. He too wanted to know why and to free himself from the stifling atmosphere of the coastal area.

Our expedition of twelve reached the first camp in time to winter there. In the spring I decided to go back down to Port o'Monkeys to see my wife and son in the hope of persuading them to accompany me. Between the base chalets and this camp where we are now I was caught in a very bad blizzard lasting three days. The trail was buried in twenty places by avalanches. For two nights running I had to bivouac with insufficient rations and without fuel. When the weather cleared, I was a hundred yards from here. Exhausted and famished, I stopped to camp. At that time the cattle had not yet been brought up to Meadowbrook, and I found nothing to eat. Then on the slope right opposite me I saw an old rock rat come out of his hole. It's something between a field mouse and a groundhog. It came out to warm itself in the sun. Picking up a stone, I smashed its skull with a lucky throw, cooked it over a fire of rhododendrons, and devoured the leathery meat. Then I slept an hour or two and went on down to Port o'Monkeys, where my wife and son and I celebrated our reunion after so long a separation. However, I could not persuade them to come back up with me that year . . .

A month later, as I was about to start up the mountain again, I was called before the guides' tribunal to answer for the murder of the rat. How they learned about it I'll never know. The law makes no exceptions. Access to the mountain above Meadowbrook was denied me for three years. After that I could ask to leave with the first caravan on the condition that I make reparations for any damage my action might have caused. It was a numbing blow. I forced myself to set up again in Port o'Monkeys. With my brother and my son, I farmed and raised cattle to provide supplies for the

caravans. We organized teams of porters and hired out their services as far as the prohibited zone. That way, while earning a living, we kept in touch with the mountain people. Before long my brother also was bitten by the desire to leave, by that need for the higher regions which gets into your system like a poison. But he decided he would not leave without me and wanted to wait for the expiration of my punishment.

Finally the day arrived. I proudly carried with me in a cage a fat rock rat which I had captured easily and which I would free as we went by the place where I had killed the other one—for I had to repair the damage. Alas, the damage had just begun to show. As we left Meadowbrook just at sunrise, a terrifying sound filled the valley. The entire side of the mountain, which was not then cut through by the waterfall, collapsed and crashed down in an avalanche of rocks and mud. A cataract of water, mixed with blocks of ice and stone, burst out of the tip of the glacier, which hung down to the upper slope, and wore great gulleys in the sides of the mountain. The trail, which at that time climbed after leaving Meadowbrook to cross the slope much higher up, was obliterated for a considerable distance. For several days rock slides and eruptions of water and mud kept occurring, and our path was completely blocked. The caravan went back down to Port o'Monkeys in order to reequip for unforeseen dangers and then set out in search of a new trail to the base chalets along the other bank—a long, mean trail on which several men perished. I was not allowed to leave until a commission of guides had determined the causes of the catastrophe. A week later I was called before the commission, which declared that I was reponsible for the disaster, and following the original sentence, would have to repair the damage.

I was dumbfounded. But they explained to me how it had all happened, according to the findings of the commission. They made the statement impartially, objectively, and today I would even say leniently, but categorically. The old rat I had killed fed principally on a species of wasp common in that spot. But beyond a certain age a rock rat is no longer agile enough to catch wasps on the wing. Therefore he lived for the most part on the sick or weak insects who dragged themselves along the ground and could barely fly. In this way he destroyed the wasps that were malformed or carriers of diseases. His unsuspecting intervention protected the colonies of these insects from dangerous afflictions spread by heredity or contagion. Once the rat was dead, these afflictions spread rapidly, and by the following spring there was scarcely a wasp left in the region. These wasps, visiting flowers in search of honey, also fertilized them. Without the wasps, a large number of plants which play an important part in holding the terrain in place . . . .

—*René Daumal*

In the middle of the above sentence, *Mt. Analogue* abruptly ends. The author, a poet, essayist, and Sanskrit scholar, died before he could complete his "novel of symbolically authentic non-Euclidean adventures in mountain climbing." This excerpt is reprinted from *Mt. Analogue* by René Daumal, translation and introduction by Roger Shattuck.

Freedom and Equality

MARTIN LINGS

The world of today is a chaos of jostling opinions and aspirations: the so-called "free world" is a fluid chaos; the totalitarian part of the modern world is a rigid chaos. By contrast with both, the ancient world was always an order, that is, a hierarchy of concepts, each at the level that rightly belongs to it. The chaos has been caused, as we have seen, by the humanistic "telescoping" of the hierarchy down to the psychic level and by the consequent intrusion into worldly considerations of frustrated and perverted other-worldly aspirations. Equipped as he is by his very nature for worship, man cannot not worship; and if his outlook is cut off from the spiritual plane, he will find a "god" to worship at some lower level, thus endowing something relative with what belongs only to the Absolute. Hence the existence today of so many "words to conjure with" like "freedom," "equality," "literacy," "science," "civilization," words at the utterance of which a multitude of souls fall prostrate in submental adoration. The superstitions of freedom and equality are not merely the results but also partly the causes of the general disorder, for each in its own way is a revolt against hierarchy; and they are all the more pernicious for being perversions of two of the highest impulses in man. *Corruptio optimi pessima*, the corruption of the best is corruption at its worst; but restore the ancient order and the two idols in question will evaporate from the plane of this world (leaving legitimate earthly aspirations for freedom and equality room to breathe) to take their place once more, transformed, at the very summit of the hierarchy.

The desire for freedom is above all the desire for God, Absolute Freedom being an essential aspect of Divinity. Thus it is that in Hinduism the supreme spiritual state which marks the end of the mystic path is termed deliverance (*moksha*), for it is the state of union (*yoga*) with the Absolute, the Infinite, and the Eternal and therefore of freedom from all the bonds of relativity. It was clearly above all to this freedom that Christ referred when He said: "Get knowledge, for knowledge will make you free," inasmuch as direct knowledge, Gnosis, means union with the object of knowledge, that is, with God. But these words of Christ have also a secondary application at a lower level: there is a relative liberation in direct knowledge of spiritual truths, for such knowledge means access to a higher world and therefore a possibility of escape from this world. This escape is the "ascent from the cave" in Plato's famous image, and it will not be out of place to recall here what he says, for it represents the outlook of the ancient world, both Eastern and Western.

Plato—or rather Socrates, for it is into his mouth that Plato puts this discourse[1]—asks us to imagine a large subterranean cave in which are prisoners who have been confined there ever since their childhood. They are made to sit in a long row facing one of the walls of the cave, and they are chained to their seats in such a way that

they cannot turn their heads, being only able to look straight in front of them. A fire, raised up behind them, casts its light on to the wall, and between them and the fire puppets are being carried, made in the image of all kinds of living and lifeless earthly creatures. But not being able to turn their heads, the prisoners can only see the shadows which the puppets cast on the wall in front of them.

Then Socrates tells us to imagine that one of the prisoners escapes from his chains. First he is able to turn round and see the puppets themselves. Then he escapes from the cave and goes up to the outside world, where are to be seen all those things in whose likeness the puppets were fashioned. To begin with, he is only able to look at their shadows and their reflections in water, first by moonlight and then by sunlight; then he is able to look at the things themselves; and finally he is able to look at the sun.

The cave is this world, and the prisoners are mortals during their earthly life. Through lack of objectivity due to inertia, obtuseness, and prejudice, the prisoners cannot see clearly even the puppets, that is the things of this world; they can only see a vague shadowy likeness of them, "for now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face."[2] The outside world is the next world, which contains the spiritual realities of which the things in this world are symbols. The increase in the escaped prisoner's powers of vision after he has come up to the outside world corresponds exactly to the increase in the brightness of the smile of Beatrice as she leads Dante up through the seven Heavens. This increase denotes the intensifying of direct intellectual perception as the being rises up throughout the hierarchy of spiritual states, gaining with each a fuller degree of liberation, compared with which the freedom conferred by the escape from the chains seems more and more relative, not to speak of what is commonly called "freedom," that is, those lesser "freedoms" such as may be enjoyed by the prisoners themselves, most of whom do not even aspire to be released from their chains. Socrates invites us to imagine how the activities and interests of these prisoners, centered as they are entirely upon the shadows of the puppets, would appear to one who had reached the end of all enlightenment.

If we reflect for a while upon Plato's image, as he certainly intended us to do, it is clear that preeminent among those who escape from the cave and then return to it are the Divine Messengers, the founders of religions, some of whom were never prisoners but simply descended from above. In either case, their mission is always to tell the inmates of the cave about the sun and the moon, about men and women, animals and birds, trees and flowers, according to their full dimensions, how wonderful they are in shape and in color; and some of the prisoners drink in their words and are filled with longing to escape from the world of shadows into the real world, but many of them are angry, maintaining that the prophets are madmen or dreamers, and that the shadows of the puppets are the highest realities that exist.

In the light of this image it will be seen that the difference between the believer and the skeptic is not as the difference between the imprisoned and the free but as between two prisoners, one of whom is conscious of his imprisonment, whereas the other refuses to admit that this world is a prison, because his thoughts stop short at his prison walls.

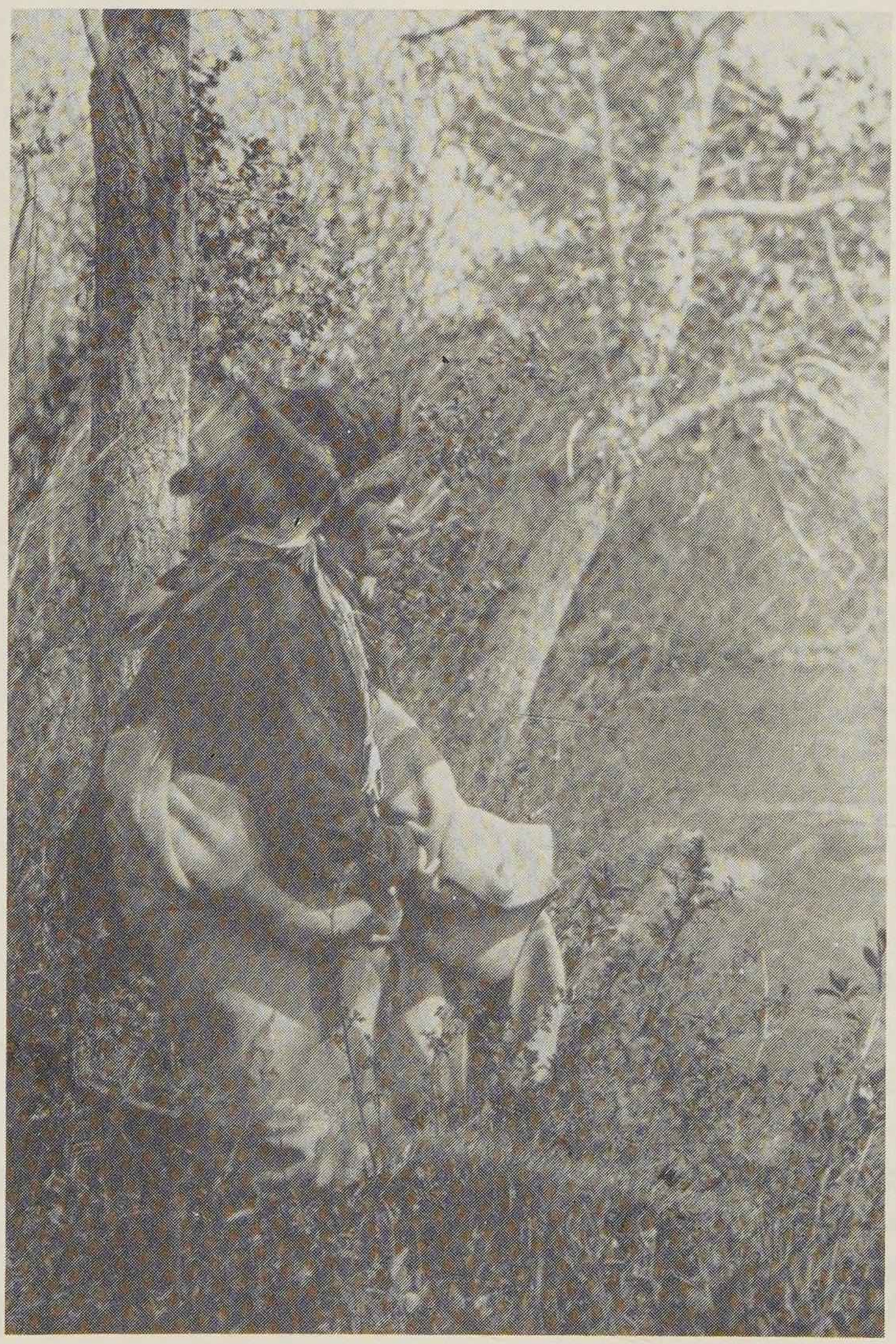
If we now trace the conception of equality back to its source in the Absolute, it will be seen to be an aspect of that supreme spiritual possibility which Christianity calls "deification" and which Hinduism expresses in the words "thou art That" (God is thy True Self). The need for equality, which is part of the nostalgia in the soul of fallen man, is above all the need to be "adequate" once more to the Divine Presence. This adequacy, the greatest of all Mysteries, is expressed in Islam in the words: "Neither My earth nor My heaven hath room for Me, but the heart of My believing slave hath room for Me."

The highest Saints are equal in virtue of the equality of their emptinesses which receive the Fullness of the Infinite; and this

equality has, underlying its Divine aspect, what might be called a celestial aspect. A medieval English poem, *The Pearl*, tells of a man who visits the tomb of his dead daughter, and falling asleep there, has a vision of her in Paradise. He asks her how she is, and she tells him that she is Queen of Heaven. He remonstrates with her, and she replies: "It is true, as you say, that the Blessed Virgin Mary is Queen of Heaven; but such is her unfathomable kindness and bounty that she allows others to reign as King and Queen beside her."

Even on the human plane, a society of men who are all "socially" equal is not merely a utopian dream but a possibility, and tradition tells us that it was in fact the norm on earth for thousands of years. The Golden Age is by definition the age when all men are "above caste." But failing such equality, it is clearly better that some elements of humanity should remain relatively excellent than that all should sink to an equal mediocrity, and the "caste system" was one means among others of safeguarding as far as possible what excellence remained and placing it in a position where it could best benefit society as a whole. This system has moreover amply justified itself, for it was no doubt practiced more rigorously and methodically among the Hindus than among other peoples, and it is the Hindus who have succeeded in preserving intact to this day, in all its intellectuality, an exceedingly ancient religion, of which the Greek, Roman, and Germanic counterparts were already degenerate in the earliest historic times.

The existence of lower castes, in itself abnormal, is bound to become normal towards the end of a cycle of time, and the ancient world was preoccupied with the problem of self-preservation, how best to stem the tide of degeneration, that is, to



check the breeding of inferior human types and lessen the speed of a downward movement which they knew to be inevitable; but the methods of resistance to this movement varied. The caste system implies an acceptance of the fact that a certain degeneration has already taken place. A more ancient means of self-preservation is for a people to hold at arm's length, as the Native Americans do, some of the chief outward causes of human decadence such as the non-nomadic, sedentary life and all that goes with it, and to remain in as close contact as possible with virgin nature, that is, in a physical and psychic contact which is ritualized and illuminated by a truly intellectual contact. This last condition is indispensable.

"It is through the animal species and the phenomena of nature that the Indian contemplates the angelic essences and the Divine Qualities . . . . No object is for them [the Indians] what it appears to be, but it is simply the pale shadow of a Reality. It is for this reason that every created object is *wakan*, holy.

"The Red man's sanctuary is everywhere; that is why the earth should remain intact, virgin and sacred, as when it left the Divine Hands—since only what is pure reflects the Eternal. The Indian is nothing of a 'pantheist,' nor does he imagine for one moment that God is in the world; but he knows that the world is mysteriously plunged in God."[3]

This perspective imposes a way of life which makes it possible to dispense altogether with a caste system, and to retain a social order which is, at least virtually, a prolongation of primordial equality. There are no "lower classes" and no "middle classes" among the Native Americans; so long as they remain true to themselves and uncontaminated by White men, they are a race of nobles which still produces, in every generation, a small minority of throwbacks to the priest-kings of remote antiquity.

But mere persistence in nomadism, if it is not based on an intellectual contact with nature, is only a safeguard against certain forms of degeneration. There are many different downhill paths, and the world is old enough for some of these to have become widely divergent. The word "primitive" is used today with far too little discrimination. Compared with men of more primordial ages, the Native Americans of the Iron Age consider themselves degenerate, but relatively speaking they no doubt deserve the title of "primitive," whereas many if not most "savages" who are currently called "primitive" are exceedingly degenerate. There is no sense in calling them primitive simply because a closer contact with nature has saved them from that particular form of decadence which has reached its extreme in the modern civilization.

The incarnation of the intellectual outlook in a strongly constituted spiritual authority is what Plato held to be the best safeguard against decadence, and this is what the Native Americans share with the Hindus as well as with those later sedentary theocracies which have no caste system. Both striking and characteristic are the ways in which the two latest theocracies seek to neutralize or reduce to a minimum the discrepancies between caste and class, that is, between natural qualifications and a social position which is more and more liable to be the result of mere "accidents." Christendom retained the existing social order for its partial correspondence to a true caste system but established above it a highest caste which was open to all classes though protected against intruders by the far-reaching sacrifices imposed on its members. In Islam, which is a direct appeal to the priest-king who lies in the depth of man's nature, membership of the highest caste is imposed on all classes; but the gulf between Golden Age ideal and Dark Age fact is bridged by the insistence of the Koran and the Prophet upon "degrees." Though it would be misleading to say that the Islamic civilization is pervaded with a sense of caste, it can truly be said that it is outstandingly pervaded with a sense of what is the essence of the caste system, namely a sense of the hierarchy of the different degrees of spiritual possibilities in mankind. Thus, for the Moslem, the secular hierarchy of class distinctions is first of all eclipsed by the virtual equality

of priesthood and then replaced by the spiritual hierarchy within the framework of that equality.

In considering how it would be practically possible to form an ideal state, which he calls an "aristocracy," Plato says that it would first be necessary to find some true philosophers and set them up as rulers, even though it might be against their will. From his description of the aristocrats, it is clear that he means nothing less than Saints in the fullest sense of the word, for the true philosopher is one who has "escaped from the cave" and has direct vision of the "sun." Plato's state is in fact a theocracy: having escaped from the cave, the aristocrat in the full Platonic sense is henceforth able to go to and fro between it and the world above, and here lies the meaning of the function of Pontiff, in Latin *Pontifex*, literally "bridgemaker."

But what if the spiritual potentate is far from being in himself a true aristocrat? And has not history shown that the highest offices are liable to be like garments too big for their wearers?

The modern "solution" is to cut down the garment to fit a dwarf. The way of the ancients was to be patient and hope for a better man. Besides, they knew that the garment itself was precious, even independently of the wearer. The theocrat may be very far from possessing in fact the spiritual degree which corresponds to his function, but that function is none the less itself *pontifex* in the sense that its existence at the head of the state affirms the supremacy of the spiritual above the temporal. It is an official recognition of "the outlet from the cave" and a guarantee of the collectivity's orientation towards it. Moreover, in addition to the outward hierarchy of spiritual dignitaries, there is the inner hierarchy of the Saints, that is, those who are *pontifices* in themselves, independently of any function they may or may not hold, and this inner hierarchy may, practically speaking, replace the outer hierarchy or at any rate throw untold weight into the scales to counterbalance shortcomings in the fulfillment of higher functions. Throughout the Middle Ages, Western Christendom had a continuous sequence of great Saints in every generation, men and women whose word was law far and wide, in fact if not in function, and the same is true of the Eastern Church and of the great non-Christian theocracies further East whose "Middle Ages" have come to an end much more recently. But without the theocratic order itself, with its official outer hierarchy to ensure that the general sense of values is a true one, these Saints could never have "let their light shine before men" with such dazzling plenitude. Here lies the very point of a theocratic civilization, which only exists in order to further the "upstream" movement and to check "downstream" drifting, to set and keep in motion a centripetal impetus which will counteract the centrifugal tendencies of creation—in short, to provide a setting in which religion can best fulfill its function; and the Saints *are* religion, in the sense that they incarnate all that is "upstream" and centripetal. This applies also by extension to the mystic orders or brotherhoods, each of which is as a prolongation of the life of the Saint who founded it.

In medieval Christendom, with its network of monasteries and convents all over Europe and Asia Minor, every village had at least one such center not very far away, a group of men and women who lived intensely the great cycle of the Christian year—Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the Feast of St. Michael and all Angels, All Saints, All Souls, linked together throughout the months by the chain of single Saint's day festivals; and the intense living of this cycle set in motion a powerful spiritual vortex into which it was difficult not to be drawn in some measure.

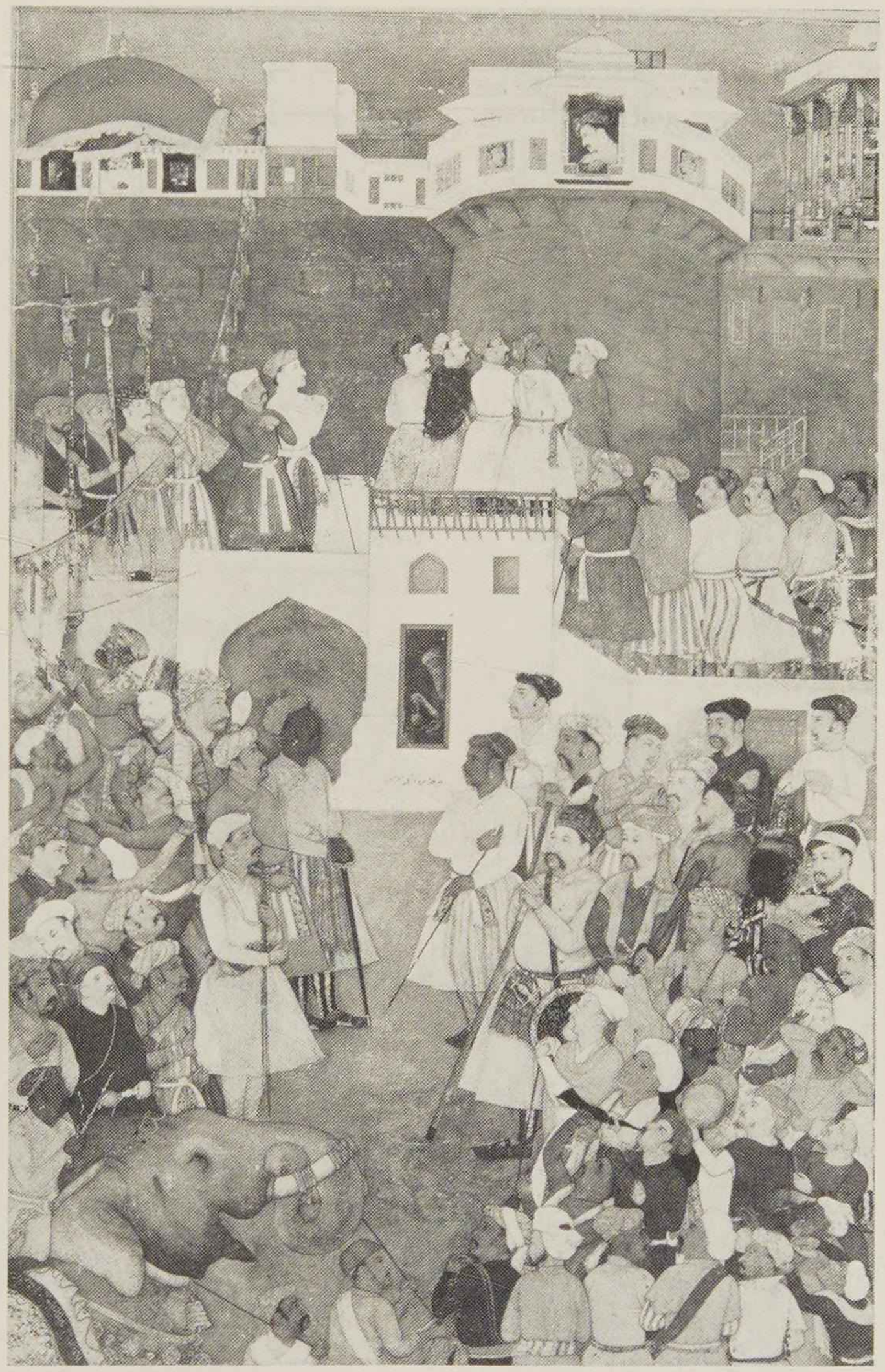
From each center elementary religious instruction was dispensed to all, and charity to those who needed it. In addition it was always possible for anyone, even the son of the poorest peasant, to receive the very highest instruction, provided that he showed a deep-rooted aptitude worthy of doctrine which itself was rooted in the Spirit. The current notion that "the lower classes" were "kept down" in the Middle

Ages is based on a purely mundane conception of "up." But it would be a contradiction in terms for a theocracy to allow any section of its community to be deliberately hindered from drawing nearer to the Spirit, which is the only mode of rising that a medieval monk, for example, would have considered worthy of the name. To him the fact that it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the poor to acquire wealth and titles, both of which he himself had turned his back on, would have seemed no great tragedy, to say the least. But as to rising in a positive sense, even the most rigid caste system is bound to sanction, at the margin of society, an upward path which is open to all without restriction, including members of the lowest caste.

"If Hinduism considers first of all in human nature those fundamental tendencies which divide man into so many hierarchical categories, it nevertheless realizes equality in the super-caste of wandering monks, the *sannyasis*, in which social origin no longer plays any part. The case of the Christian clergy is similar in the sense that among them titles of nobility disappear: a peasant could not become a prince, but he could become Pope and crown an Emperor."[4]

The individual cases of injustice and oppression, the wide rifts which gaped between theory and practice here and there from time to time in Christendom and in





other sacred civilizations known to history were not the fault of theocracy but of the collective decrepitude of the human race in its extreme senility. Moreover, if things went badly, as they very often did, it was thanks to theocracy that they were no worse and that occasionally, at certain times and in certain places, they went well; and there reigned always the hope that what good had happened before would happen again.

The Iron Age as a whole might be called "the age of the choice between two evils"; the Middle Ages, unlike any subsequent period, had at least the virtue of deserving to be called "the age of the choice of the lesser evil." The worst Popes and the worst Caliphs of Islam did incomparably less harm than men like Henry VIII, Ataturk, and other inaugurators of the bleak hopelessness of secularism.

Medieval Europe was like a man in the grip of an illness which he knew would prove to be fatal*, and which often con-

*Our medieval ancestors knew well what Plato knew when he said, even of his ideal state (and they were very far from considering their state ideal): "Everything which is generated is liable to corruption, neither will such a constitution as this remain forever but be dissolved." Nor would they have been unduly surprised at the turn things have taken this century, for in explaining how his theocracy would inevitably be overthrown and in tracing the stages of degeneration through which the state would pass, Plato mentions "democracy" and "dictatorship" as the two lowest possible forms of government, the one tending to lead to the other, "dictatorship" being, in his conception, the rule of an unprincipled demagogue who is swept into power upon a wave of reaction against the chaos of democracy.

vulsed his whole body with pain and forced from him groan after groan. But the constitution was sound, the heartbeat was strong and regular. The blood still flowed through the arteries and the veins to the extremities of the limbs; and sometimes the fever would abate for a while, and the patient would remember what it was to possess youth and health. Is it better to be like this or to be, possibly with less suffering, like a body in the last stages of the illness, so drugged that the relatively little discomfort it feels* bears no relation to the seriousness of its condition? The heartbeat is scarcely perceptible; the blood almost stagnates in the veins; the skin festers with nauseating eruptions; some outlying parts of the body are already atrophied; and the patient, according to whether he is nearer to coma or delirium, mutters or raves: "I am getting better and better every day."

But if it is possible for individuals to fall below the collectivity—though no doubt the word "below" would not fit every such case, for the depths of misery can be less low than complacence—it is also possible for individuals to escape from the general run in a positive sense. There is no truer proverb that that of the "ill wind," for it is a metaphysical necessity, resulting directly from the Divine Omnipresence, that there is always a surpassingly good "best" to be made of every situation. In the present case one aspect of that "best" might be expressed as follows: in the past men proclaimed the vanity of this world actively and directly, voicing the *sauve qui peut* of religion, but the world itself remained relatively silent, whereas now that men are less and less active in proclaiming this truth, the world itself, with men included in a purely passive sense, becomes more and more vociferous of its own vanity. In fact, all that we experience daily of a world in its dotage demonstrates that it is indeed a place "where moth and rust do corrupt," and more and more of the false gods to which men cling are coming to pieces in their very hands.

To say that it is one thing to lose one's faith in this world and quite another to believe in the next is a simplification. We are remotely descended from men for whom there stood, at the boundary between the next world and this, not a closed door but an open one. Their souls were equipped accordingly, and whether we are aware of it or not, we have inherited certain things from them; and though there is no chance that a bird will fly so long as it persists in scraping the earth with its wings, if for some reason it can be induced to stop scraping the earth, there is a good possibility that it will at least attempt to fly. ■

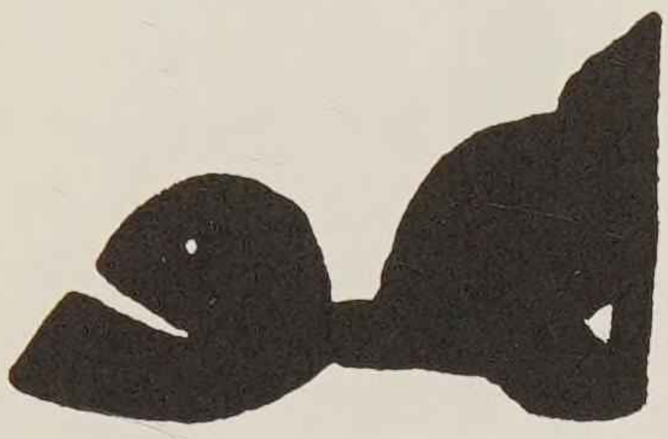
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*Collectively speaking, that is; but as regards individuals, the modern world is liable to produce combinations of temperament and circumstance which are impervious even to the strongest "drugs." It is not for nothing that our times are often described as "an age of suicides and nervous breakdowns."

NOTES

1. Book VII of *Plato's Republic*, or, more correctly, *Plato's State*.
2. Corinthians 1:13.
3. Frithjof Schuon, *Language of the Self*. This book should be read not only for its study, based on direct contacts, of the spirituality of the Native Americans, chiefly those of the plains, but also for its chapter on "Distinctions in the Social Order," which throws a long-needed light on the whole question of castes and classes according to the different religious perspectives. This chapter and two others are now available in a separate publication, *Castes and Races* (Perennial Books, 1982).
4. Ibid.

A Sufi Prayer



He who knows, and does not know that he knows:
He is asleep.
Let him become one, whole.
Let him be awakened.

He who has known, but does not know:
Let him see once more
The beginning of all.

He who does not wish to know,
Yet says that he wants to know:
Let him be guided
To safety and to light.

He who does not know,
And knows that he does not know:
Let him through this knowledge, know.

He who does not know, but thinks that he knows:
Set him free
From the confusion
Of that ignorance.

He who knows, and knows that *he is*:
He is wise.
Let him be followed.
By his presence alone man may be transformed.

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I who know, and do not know that I know:
Let me become whole.
Let me be awakened.

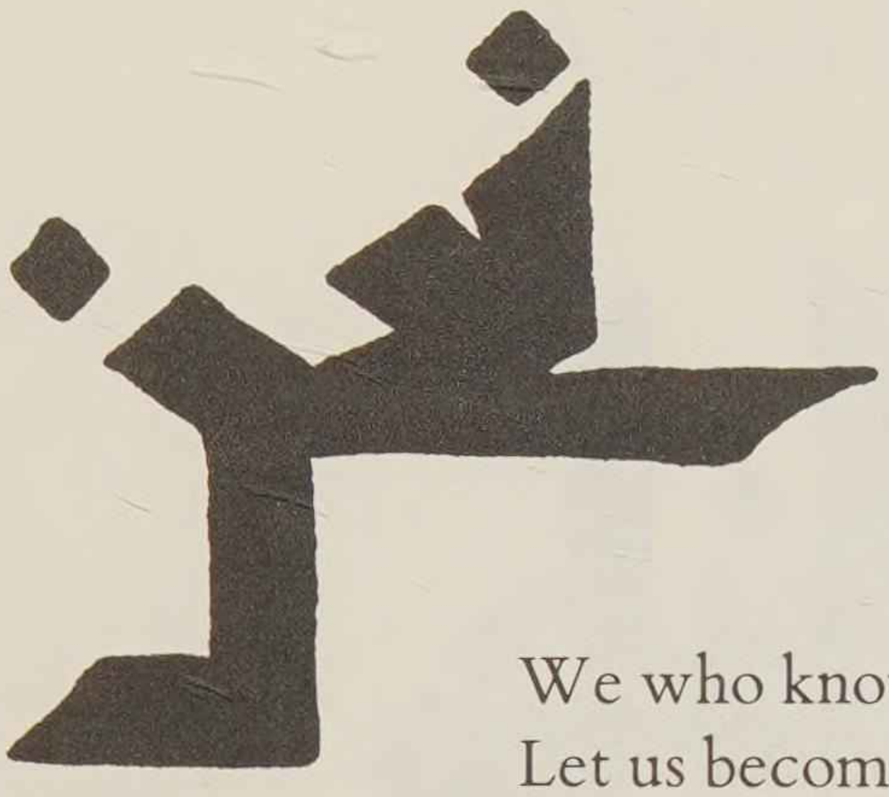
I who have known, but do not know:
Let me once more see
The beginning of all.

I who do not wish to know,
But still say that I wish to know:
Let me be guided
To safety and to light.

I who do not know,
And know that I do not know:
Let me through this knowledge, know.

I who do not know, but think that I know:
Set me free
From the confusion
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We who know, and do not know that we know:
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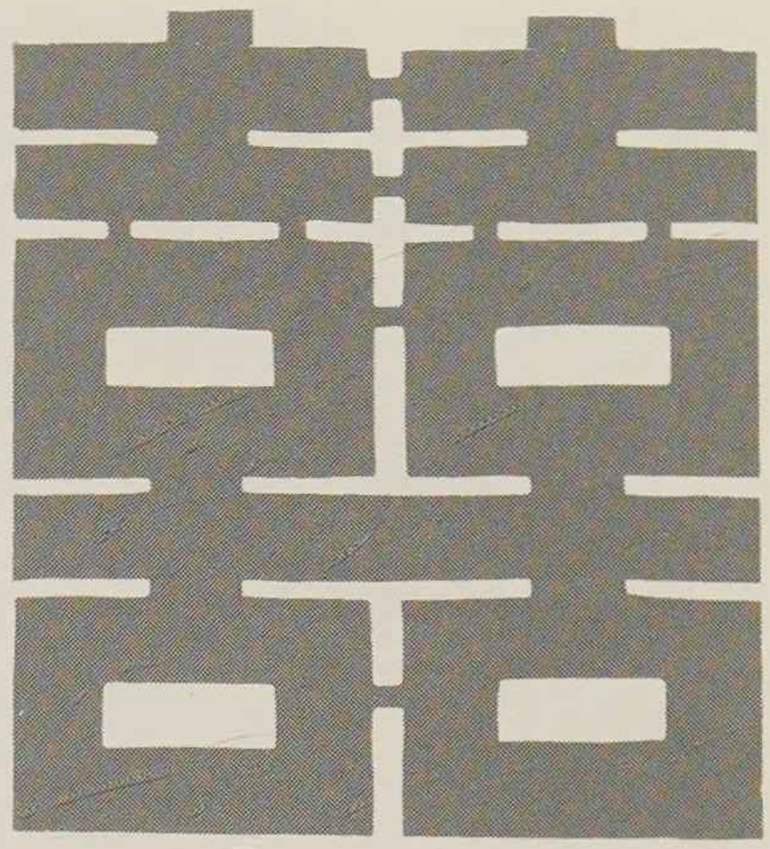
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As with our forebears
So with our successors
So with us
We affirm this undertaking
So let it be.

This ancient, anonymous Sufi prayer is known throughout the Islamic world. According to tradition, it is composed of several hadiths *of the Prophet Muhammad, "strung together like pearls on a necklace." The Arabic words in Kufic script above each stanza are* huwa (*he*), ana (*I*), *and* nanhu (*we*).

The Price of Harmony

JAMES B. ROBINSON



K*'ung fu tzu*, "the Great Master K'ung," Latinized to "Confucius," was among the many great men and women who contributed significantly to Chinese culture. The insights of the school that developed from his teachings illuminate social institutions throughout history, not just in China but around the world. The thought of Confucius may be profitably applied even today.

While Confucius edited collections of poetry, historical documents, and ceremonial instructions, and even contributed to the *I Ching*, most of what we know of his personal life comes from the *Lun-yu*, usually translated as the Analects. It is not a biography of Confucius. The first impression a Western reader is likely to have is of a miscellaneous collection of anecdotes and aphorisms, without any obvious connecting theme.

The exact circumstances of the Analects' composition are not clear, but I envision the students of the Master gathered together, perhaps in a memorial ceremony, and reminiscing about the great man who was their teacher. One memory sparks another in a process of association meaningful only to those who are there. Fortunately, someone has the presence of mind to start taking notes.

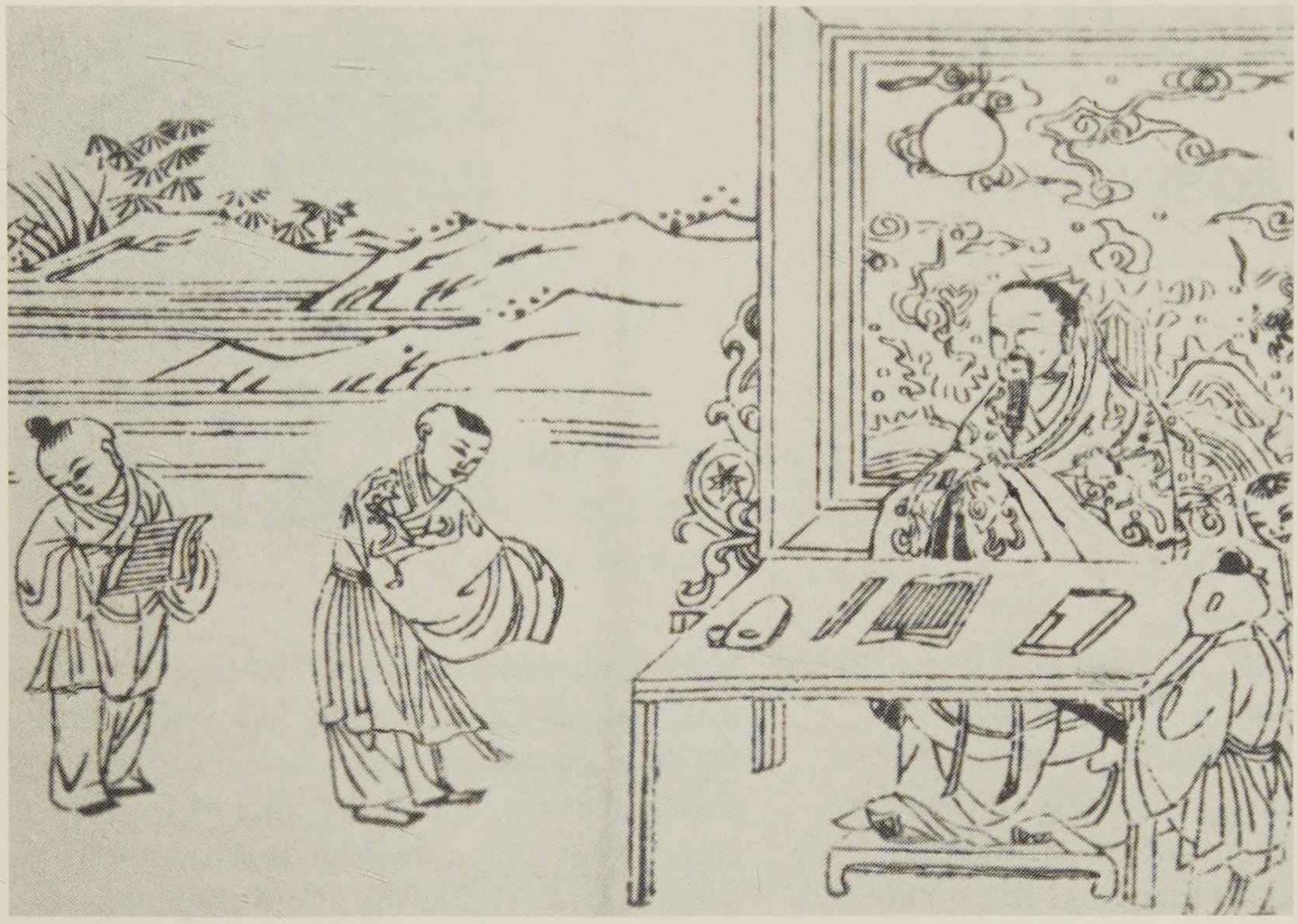
Confucius lived from 551 to 479 B.C., in that time when, in many places all over the world, great religious figures marked the shift from preclassical to classical civilization. He was a contemporary of the Buddha in India and of the great post-Exile prophets in Israel.

In China, this was a period of great stress and social turmoil, resulting from the decay of the Chou dynasty. This venerable political institution had reigned for five hundred years, but by the time of Confucius, it was only a shadow of what it had been before. While the Chou emperors retained a certain political legitimacy, they had no real power. As would be the case in later times, during this epoch China was carved up by competing warlords who lived essentially by the survival of the most treacherous.

In these circumstances, it was easy to lose sight of the ancient norms by which the great culture heroes of China made a civilization and upon which the twelfth-century B.C. rulers, King Wen, King Wu, and his brother, the Duke of Chou, established the Chou dynasty. What are these norms? They are recognition of duty and reciprocal obligation, which makes civilization possible, and compassion and due respect, which makes for social harmony; together they provide the environment that allows us to cultivate and realize our true humanity.

Some—they would later be called "the Legalists"—believed that these norms were irrelevant. Whatever served the interests of the state was the basic coin of social philosophy—an attitude not unknown to us in the present day. Confucius, on the other hand, recognized the value of the ancient norms; yet he also realized that they had to be presented anew, and their relevance demonstrated.

Confucius sought clues to these norms not in divine revelation, but in what we might call "humanistic study." He turned



This article is illustrated with scenes from the life of Confucius, taken from tablets in a temple at Qufu, Shandong, China. Above, Confucius, age seven, attends school.

to the traditional disciplines of history, poetry, ritual, music, and even the divinatory system of the *I Ching* for guidance. For him, it was not deities dwelling in paradise who revealed the principles by which proper human behavior was to be guided; rather, it was the far ancestors, the great culture heroes of the past, who, being closer to the source of things, had the deepest insights into their workings.

Confucianism is unusual among religious traditions. Some Western scholars have argued that it is not a religion at all. If one means by "religion" only concern for the supernatural, there is merit to that position. Certainly it is not a God system, though it is not incompatible with belief in God. Buddhism and certain contemporary Jewish thinkers show that one does not need a God to have religion.

If, however, we understand religion to be a system of beliefs and practices suffused with a sense of the sacred, Confucius and his tradition are quite religious. For Confucianism, the sacred centers not on some transcendent being such as a God but rather on the social and moral order of this world. The term which Confucius used to designate the sacred is "Heaven" (*t'ien*).

While some scholars have speculated that *t'ien* originally was an anthropomorphic sky god, Heaven for Confucius is not so much a being or a place as a moral force. Heaven is the guardian of moral norms and insures their preservation from age to age. Society benefits from righteousness and in fact cannot survive without it. Yet righteousness is not merely a social convenience. If we talk of social utility, it is not the historical relativism the Legalists (among others) would later espouse. Righteousness is socially useful because it is rooted in a sacred order; thus it is given a specific localization as Heaven, which is above any particular time and place.

Confucius recognized that the quality of human life is dependent upon that of human society. In order that true humanity (*jen*) might flourish, society must be order-



When Confucius assumed responsibility for the stock of the Chi family, the herd thrived.

ly and harmonious. Conversely, harmonious society is possible only where human beings actively cultivate virtue, of which true humanity is the root. Harmonization of society through moral reform is where the Confucian system finds its religious fulfillment. And the moral ordering of society is expressed in proper hierarchy.

Hierarchy is natural to any social organization; there are those who lead and give direction and those who follow. Any effective organization has leaders at the top, with subordinates who in turn may be the leaders of subgroups.

But it is also clear that not all hierarchies are equal. Some forms of social organization are more conducive to our humane development than others. Since hierarchy is a given, the question is not how to abolish it, but how shall we have the best kind of hierarchy? How shall we order society so that the best part of our human nature finds its fullest expression? Confucius and his school sought to disclose this proper ordering.

The central concept upon which the Confucian concept of hierarchy is based is *li*, which is often translated as "rites," "propriety," or "the proper mode of action." The word *li* actually has several levels of significance. Its original meaning was "sacrifice"; it then came to mean the entire ritual structure, and then everything that is done ceremoniously. *Li* can be particular actions, but it is, even more, a particular way of doing them. It refers to the quality of our inner being as well as our outer actions.

In the great religious ceremonies of archaic China, the proper order of those in attendance depended upon rank and family relationships. Hence *li* came to mean proper hierarchical relations not just in ritual but in society as a whole.

Li came to encompass all ritualized elements of human existence, even details of etiquette. One important text arising out of the early Confucian tradition was the *Li Chi*, usually translated as *The Record of Ritual*.[1] It is primarily an encyclopedia of an-



Confucius declines an offer of equal seating rank with the Duke of Chi, saying, "I dare not compete with you, a common man against a king."

cient Chinese ceremonial lore, but includes details of mores, traditions, and social conventions, those seemingly minor but pervasive acts of courtesy that make civilization possible. *Li* is the structure of everyday amenities in which we implicitly recognize and so enhance the human dignity of ourselves and others.[2]

Indeed, *li* is the heart of the harmonious society. In Analects 1:12, Yu Tzu, a disciple and companion of Confucius, says:

Among the functions of propriety (*li*) the most valuable is that it establishes harmony. The excellence of the ways of ancient kings consists of this. It is the guiding principle of all things great and small. If things go amiss and you, understanding harmony, try to achieve it without regulating it by the rules of propriety, they will still go amiss.

The famous later Confucian master, Hsun Tzu, rhapsodizes upon *li*, extending it up into the cosmos and making it virtually equivalent to Tao, the way of nature:

Indeed it is through *li* that Heaven and earth are in harmony, that the sun and moon are splendid, that the four seasons succeed each other, that the stars follow their movements, that the rivers and streams maintain their flow, that all things and creatures enjoy prosperity, that love and hatred are tempered and joy and anger are controlled. *Li* causes the lower orders of society to be obedient and the higher orders to be illustrious. One who abides by *li* never goes astray amid the multifarious changes; one who deviates from *li* is lost. Is not *li* the greatest of all principles?[3]

It should not be thought that Confucius disdained religious rituals:

When Confucius offered sacrifice to his ancestors, he felt as if his ancestral spirits were actually present. When he offered sacrifice to other spiritual beings, he felt as if they were actually present. He said, "If I do not participate in the sacrifice, it is as if I did not sacrifice at all."[4]

According to Analects 3:17, one of his disciples suggested that it was not neces-



Confucius accepts a personal gift of a thousand bushels of grain and then divides it among the poor. "Showing kindness to one man is not as good as to give to hundreds."

sary to sacrifice a sheep to the ancestors at the beginning of the month, presumably because he thought Confucius did not concern himself with spirits. Yet Confucius replied: "You love the sheep. I love the ceremony."

Ceremony was important, but its value came more from its transcendent social utility than from the need to placate spirits. It allowed the individual or social group to express feelings in a way that reinforced a positive social value. Sacrificing a sheep at the beginning of the month brought the ancestors to mind, making them psychologically, if not actually, present. The continual reminder of one's debt to one's ancestors was sufficient reason for the ceremony.

That there actually were spirits present was an idea of diminishing importance to Confucius and his school. More and more, Confucius made the relations associated with *li* purely human in nature:

> Devote yourself earnestly to the duties due to men and respect spiritual beings but keep them at a distance. This may be called wisdom.[5]

What is the content of *li* as hierarchy? The early Confucian school talked of five basic relationships: ruler/subject, father/son, husband/wife, elder/younger, and friend/friend. Mencius, the great interpreter of Confucius's thought, mentions the five relations in connection with establishment by the semidivine culture heroes of the education and discipline needed for civilization. The people should be taught

> . . . that between father and son, there should be affection; between ruler and minister, there should be righteousness; between husband and wife, there should be attention to their separate functions; between old and young, there should be a proper order; and between friends, there should be faithfulness.[6]

The Confucian concept of hierarchy is not based on birth or social level or occupation, as is the Indian caste system. Nor is it based on military prowess, as one might



When Confucius was governor of Chung-tu he established regulations concerning the support of parents. Old and young had different food, strong and weak had different duties, and men and women walked on different roads.

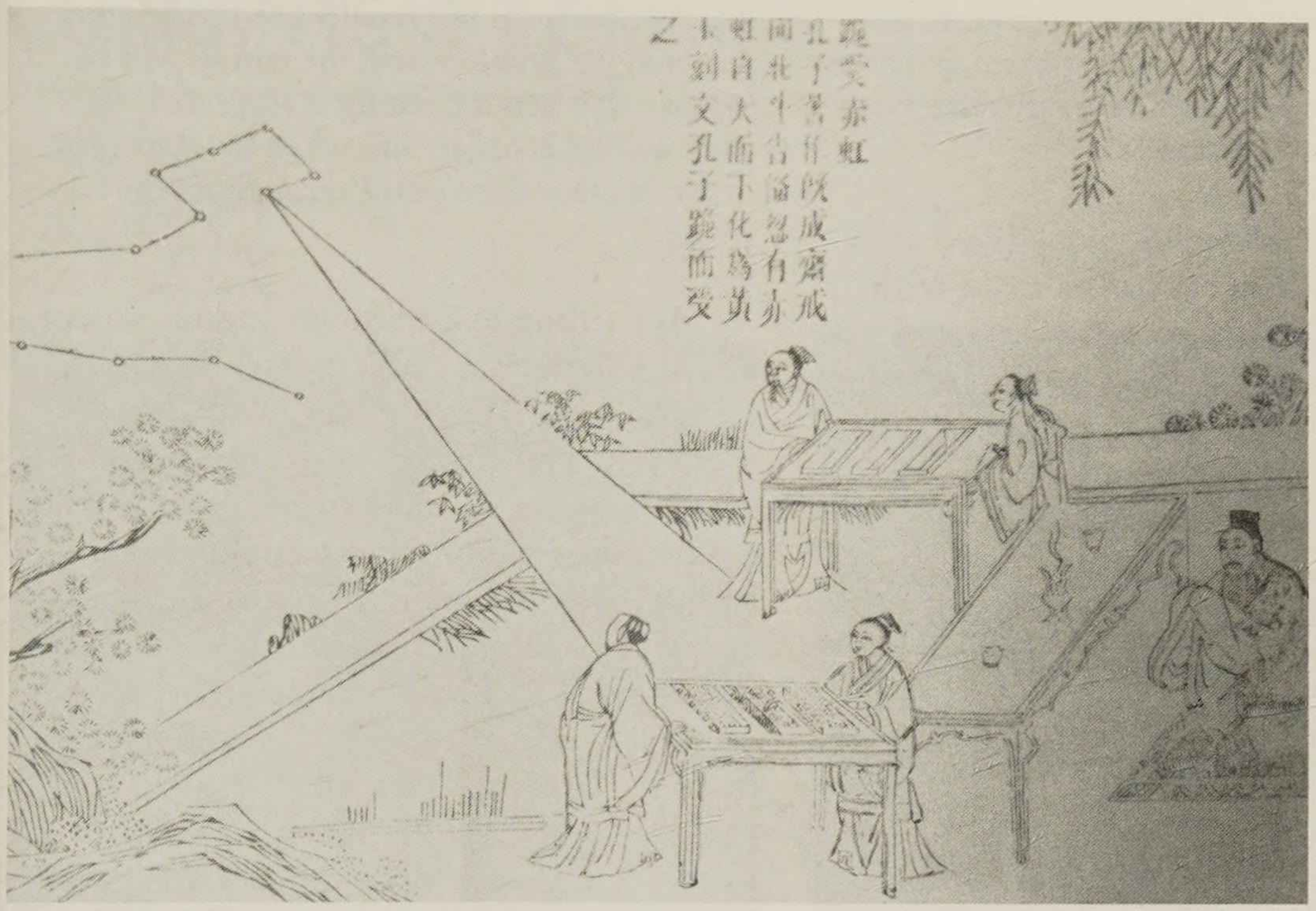
find in a feudal system. The Confucian model of social relationships is the family.

While it is true that only father/son and husband/wife relations refer directly to the family, the ruler/subject relation was often compared to the father/son relation. The elder/younger relation has as its primary reference older and younger brothers. Since the family in some form is basic to every known society, these five relations can truly be called universal, a bedrock on which other social relations are built.

Since the family is the model of hierarchy, we are not defined in our lives by any one role or one relation. Each of us lives in a network of relations which evolve over time as we mature. To take myself as an example, I am a son to my father and mother and a father to my son. I am a husband and an older brother. As a teacher, I guide my students somewhat like a ruler, and I am subject to a hierarchy of rulers, from an academic department head up to the president of the United States. So I have many roles and relations, expressing the complexity of my social self.

This model of hierarchy permits the possibility of social mobility, of which there are many illustrious examples in Chinese history. The Han Dynasty, roughly contemporary with the Roman Empire, established a civil service system as an attempt to put Confucian ideals into practice. Even the sons of peasants could enter into governmental service after passing examinations; once in government, it was possible for them to rise to become prime minister of the empire. In theory, this was government by the meritorious, and in practice, China was governed rather well compared to other empires.

The Confucians knew as well as anyone that some might abuse their position in a hierarchy. But in the Confucian social system, no one has a moral blank check. Everyone, even the emperor, is under moral constraints in his or her social relations. To develop this, the *Li Chi* matches



When Confucius finished his literary work he announced it to the pole star. Suddenly, a red rainbow appeared and changed into yellow jadestone carved with characters. Confucius knelt and accepted this gift.

the five basic relations with what has sometimes been called the ten appropriate attitudes.

Rulers are expected to be benevolent, just as subjects are to be loyal. Fathers are to be kindly, just as sons are to be filial. Husbands are to be righteous, just as wives are to be obedient. Elder brothers are to be gracious, while younger brothers are to be respectful. Elders are to show humane consideration, just as juniors are to be deferential.

Confucius himself effectively summarized these attitudes in the term *shu*, which is sometimes rendered "altruism," but which involves relations of self and others and so may also be rendered as "reciprocity" or "mutuality." *Shu* points to the mutual regard and reciprocal maintenance that underlies every society.

In its simplest form, reciprocity can mean the golden rule, or, as Confucius was said to have put it in Analects 11:2: "Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you." In the context of the hierarchical ordering of society, it implies that hierarchical relationships impose mutual responsibilities. The will of the superior cannot be unconditional. The bonds of mutuality bind both ways. For example, loyalty is not simply a virtue in its own right; it is the response to the benevolence of rulers. It was widely known in China, as it is elsewhere, that when subjects are not loyal, rulers are not likely to be benevolent. But Mencius argued that the reverse is also true. If rulers are not benevolent, they are not true rulers, and the subjects do not have to be loyal.[7] Of course, this could and did function as a justification for revolution.

There is one last component of *li*, perhaps the most important of all, and that is *jen*, which may be translated "humaneness," "human-heartedness," or "true humanity." *Jen* is the individual and internal dimension of *li*; it is the personal orientation or condition of the person who maintains *li*. In Analects 12:1, when Yen Yuan asked about humanity (*jen*), Confucius said:

To master oneself and return to propriety (*li*) is humanity. If a man can for one day master himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will return to humanity.

Inversely, Confucius said: "If a man is not humane (*jen*), what has he to do with ceremonies (*li*)?"[8] The root of the proper ordering of society is the proper ordering of the human heart.

The Confucian classic, *The Great Learning*, attributed to Confucius's grandson, emphasizes this internal element. Inquiring how the state is to be ordered, the author descends in a hierarchical progression from the world to the state to the family to the individual. In the central part of the essay, he says:

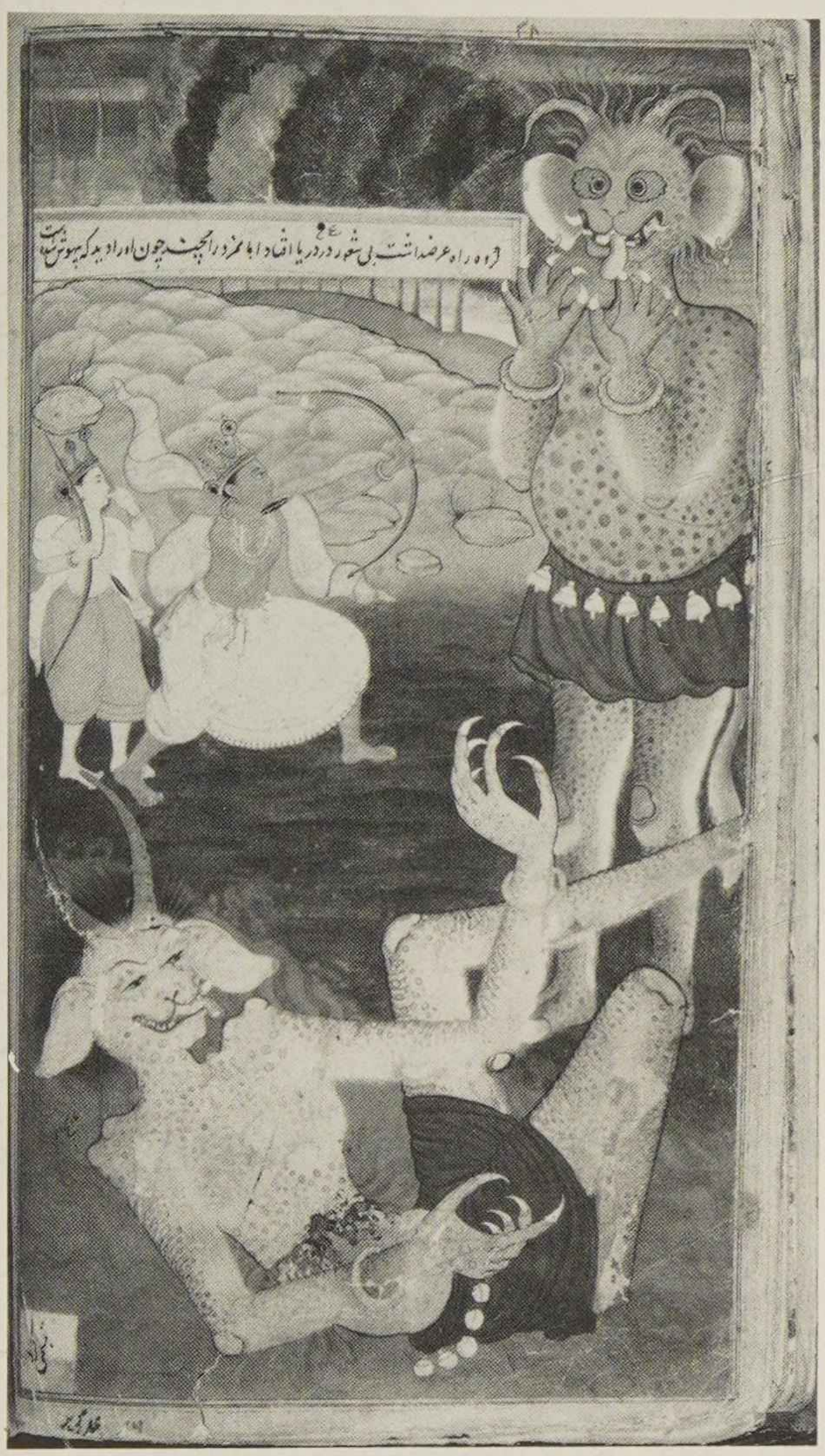
> When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; and when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout the world.[9]

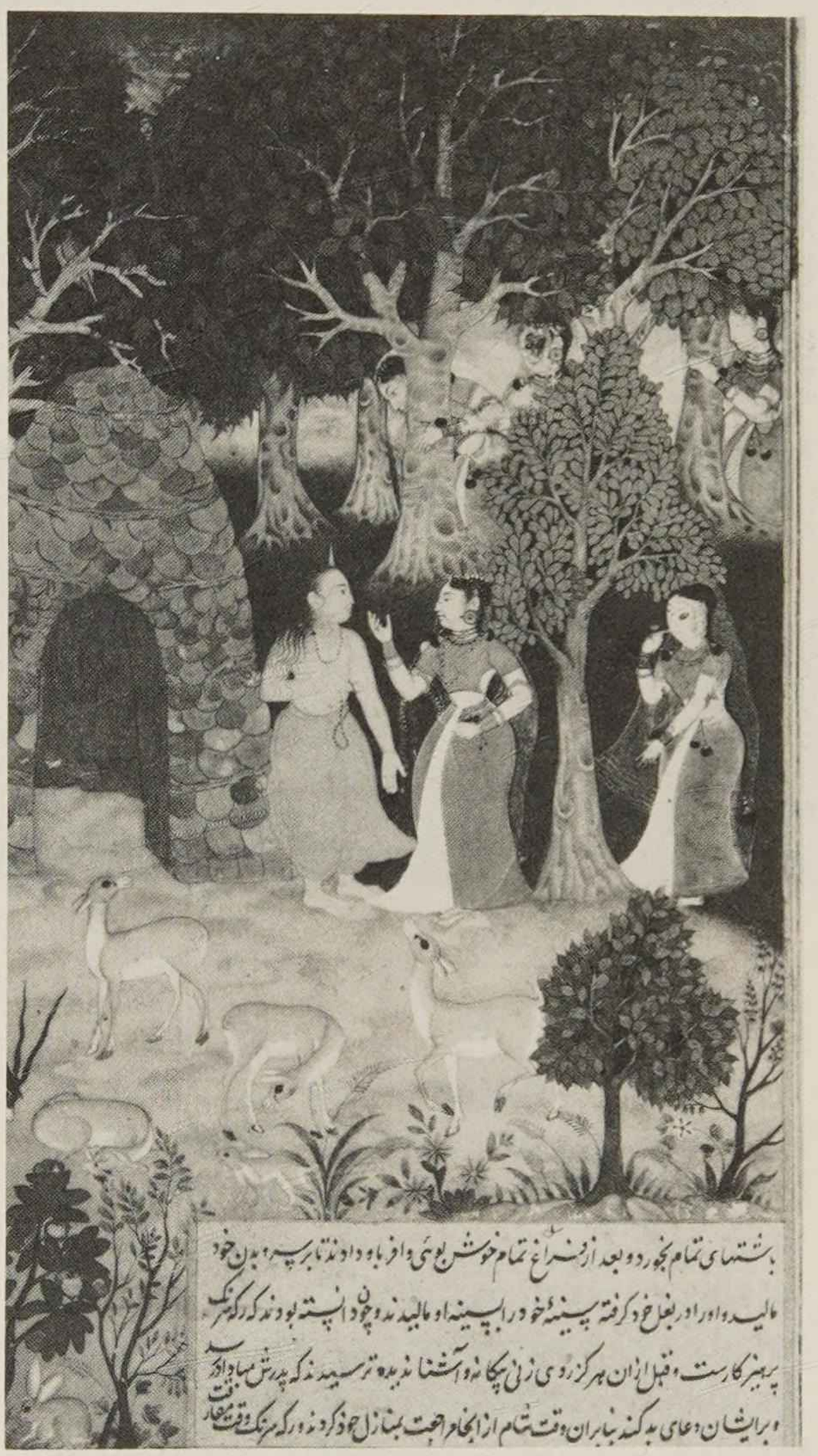
According to Confucius and his school, one approaches the proper ordering of society and self with the same awe and respect with which one carries out a religious ceremony. This is the root image of *li*. The Confucian view of society could probably be justified on grounds of social utility alone. But Confucius and his tradition saw the order of society as grounded in the way of nature and the cosmos, a way given a locus in the term "Heaven." Heaven is not personal, but it is relentlessly moral. Confucius said: "He who commits a sin against Heaven has no god to pray to."[10] One cannot placate Heaven by sacrifice, but only by living in accordance with *li*. ■

NOTES

1. *The Li Ki*, translated by James Legge, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXVII (Varanasi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprinted 1966).
2. This particular insight into the nature of *li* comes from Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius—the Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).
3. *The Sacred Books of Confucius and Other Confucian Classics*, edited and translated by Ch'u and Winberg Chai (New Hyde Park: University Books, 1965).
4. Analects, 3:12, Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963). All citations from the Analects are from this source.
5. Ibid. 6:20.
6. Selections from *The Book of Mencius* in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy,* op. cit.
7. Ibid.
8. Analects, 3:2, op. cit.
9. *The Great Learning* in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy,* op. cit.
10. Analects 3:13, op. cit.

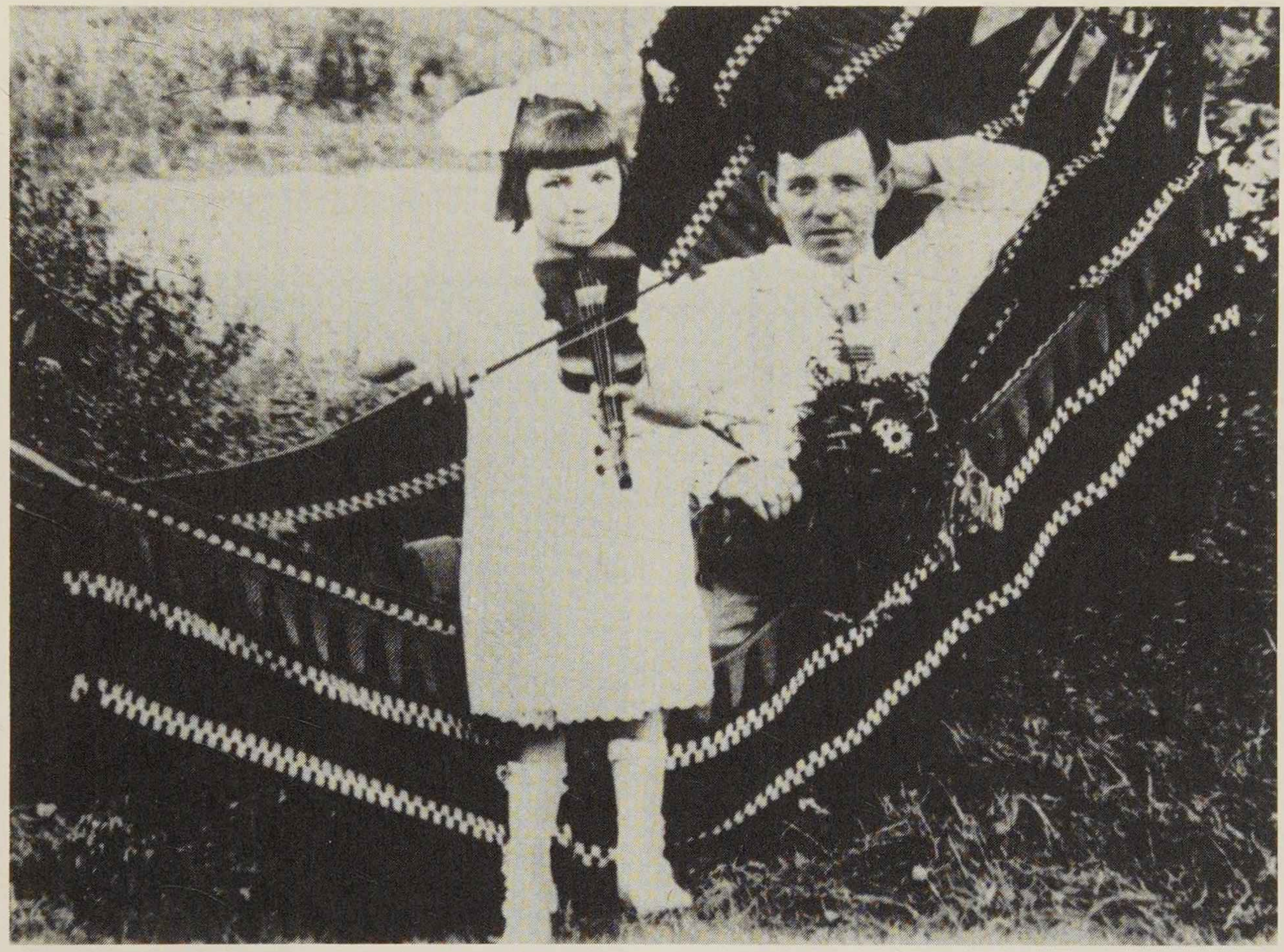
CURRENTS & COMMENTS





MUSEUMS

Portions of an illustrated **Ramayana** commissioned by Khan Khanan during the rule of the Mughal emperor Akbar the Great (1556-1605) are currently on display at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Twenty-four paintings filled with animals, demons, and magical transformations, along with seven sculptural interpretations, bring to life this centuries-old tale of Rama and Sita. An adaptation of the story by curator Milo Beach, designed for American readers and featuring forty-two illustrations based on twenty-three of the original images, is available from the Gallery for $15.00 plus $2.50 postage. The exhibit is on view through March 31 at the Gallery, Jefferson Drive at Twelfth Street, S.W., Washington, D.C., 20560. Hours are 10:00 A.M.-5:30 P.M. daily; admission is free.



Family Folklore—stories, traditions, customs, expressions, and artifacts—has been collected over the past nine years by the Smithsonian and made into a giant scrapbook of an exhibit. Twenty photo panels will share with a national audience the diaries, photographs, home movies, and favorite objects of the nearly two thousand families who contributed to this collection. While folklore may once have been confined to rural and ethnic folk, this exhibit embraces cab drivers, steel workers, and suburbanites as well as fiddlers and farmers. The show will circulate the country through 1986 as part of SITES, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.

Tour itinerary, 1984: Feb. 11-Mar. 11, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus; May 19-June 17, McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisc.; July 7-Aug. 5, State Historical Museum, Jackson, Miss.; Aug. 25-Sept. 23, Columbus Museum of Arts & Sciences, Columbus, Ga.; Oct. 13-Nov. 11, Rensselaer County Junior Museum, Troy, N.Y.; Dec. 1-Dec. 30, Western Heritage Center, Billings, Mont.

A major exhibit of **The Art of Cameroon** will tour the United States through 1985. Assembled by the Smithsonian Institution, the show features 150 ceremonial and ritual objects including sculptures, masks, and textiles. Emphasis is placed on Cameroon Grassland art, distinguished by its monumentality, wealth, and splendor. The exhibit has been culled from public and private collections in Cameroon, Europe, and America. Photographs of architecture, ritual, and daily life accompany the show.

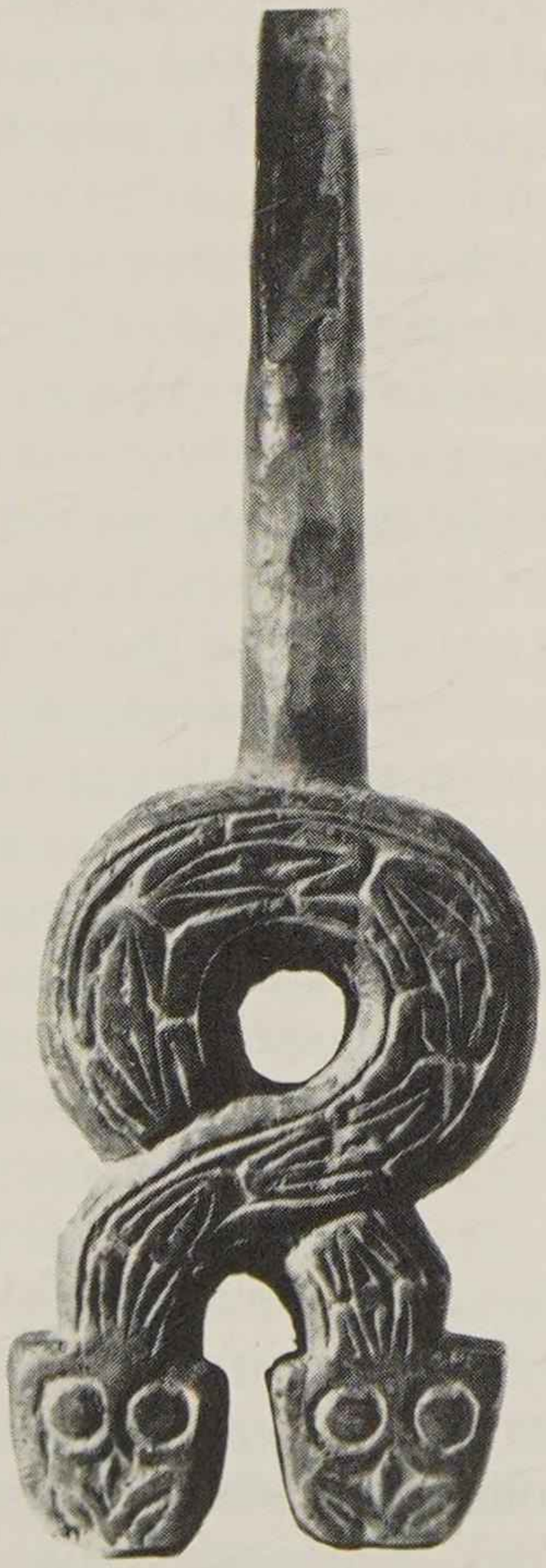
Tour itinerary, 1984: Feb. 1-Apr. 1, National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.; July 21–Sept. 9, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Oct. 6–Nov. 24, New Orleans Museum of Art. 1985: Mar. 9–June 16, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; July 15–Oct. 15, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

DANCE

A performance of **Bugaku**, an ancient dance form of the Japanese Imperial Court, will be presented at the Asia Society in New York City on February 24 and 25. Dating from the eighth century, Bugaku is the oldest continuous dance and musical tradition in the world. During times of adversity, the art form survived by secret transmission within families from one generation to the next. Today, a small group of performers keeps it alive by appearing at temples, shrines, and theaters. Performances will be at 8:00 P.M., with preprogram slides and demonstrations starting at 7:30 P.M. Tickets, which cost $20.00 for the general public, $18.00 for members, and $10.00 for students, are available from the Society's Performing Arts Department, 725 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021. (212) 288-6400.

MUSIC

Ecuadorean musician Pepe Santana will demonstrate the ancient technique of **flute making** at the Museum of the American Indian in New York City on February 10, 11, and 12. He also will demonstrate this instrument's capabilities and discuss its role in Ecuadorean culture. Mr. Santana, a member of "Tahuantinsuyo," a musical group that researches and performs ancient Incan music, will be on hand from 10:00 A.M.-12:00 Noon and 1:30-3:30 P.M. each day. Museum admission—$2.00 for adults, $1.00 for senior citizens and students with I.D.—includes the price of the demonstration. Further information is available from the Museum, Broadway at 155 St., New York, N.Y. 10032. (212) 283-2420.



STORYTELLING

Storytelling Sundays at the 92nd Street Y in New York City will take place through April. Children and adults are invited to gather for songs, folktales, poetry, and legends. Offerings include stories from around the world on January 15, Spanish tales and songs on January 29, poems about the sky on February 5, and stories about water on March 11. Performances begin at 11:00 A.M.; admission is $3.50, or $30.00 for a series of ten. For further information please write or phone the 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave., New York 10128, (212) 427-6000 ext. 137.

The Flattened Cosmos

PHILIP ZALESKI

Mindsteps to the Cosmos
By Gerald S. Hawkins. New York: Harper & Row, 1983. Pp. *x* + 340. $19.95.

Algeny
By Jeremy Rifkin. New York: The Viking Press, 1983. Pp. 298. $14.75.

The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes
Edited by Ken Wilber. Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1982. Pp. 301. Paper $8.95.

A crab is no lower or less complex than a human being in any meaningful way.

—Stephen Jay Gould

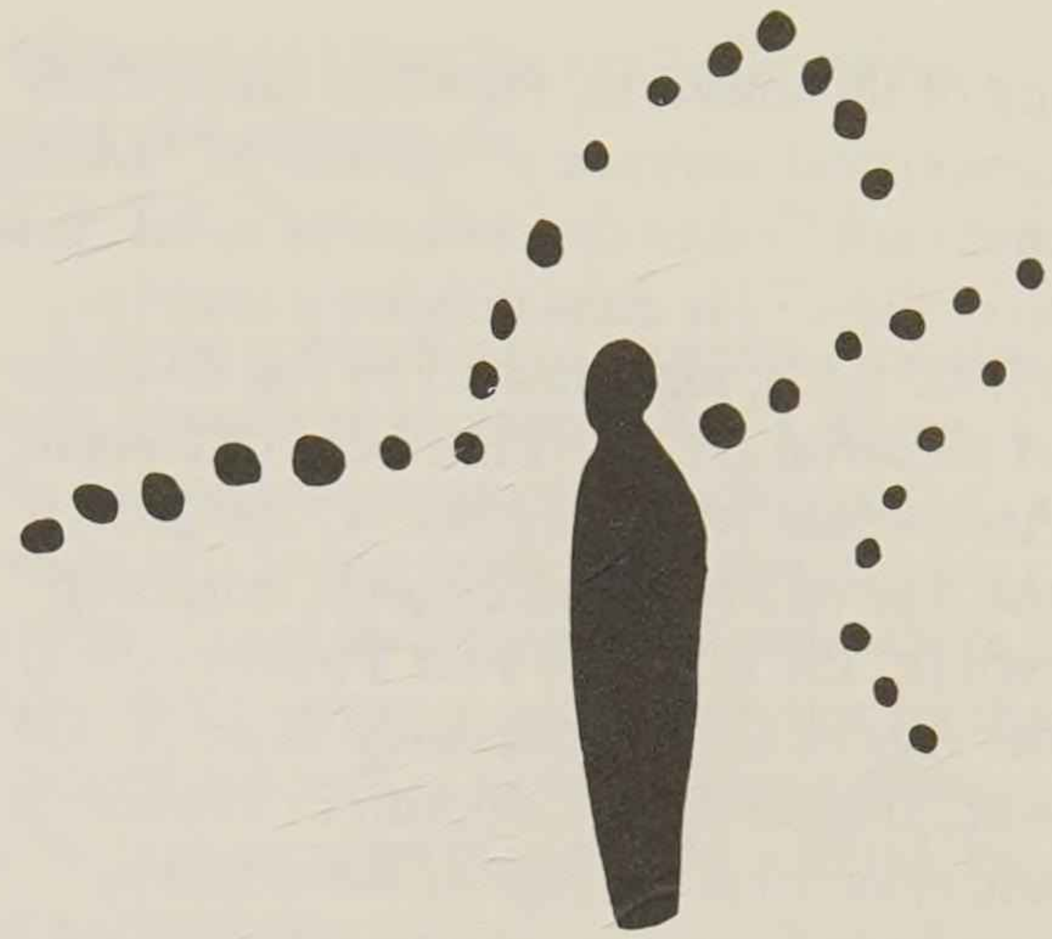
I am a collection of water, calcium and organic molecules . . . . You are a collection of almost identical molecules with a different collective label. But is this all? Is there nothing in here but molecules? Some people find this idea somehow demeaning to human dignity. For myself, I find it elevating . . . .

—Carl Sagan

Twenty-five hundred years after Pythagoras declared our planet round, two thousand years after Erastothenes deduced its radius, four hundred years after Magellan circumscribed its waters, ten years after the first orbiting astronaut blotted out its blue-green ball with a thumb at arm's length, twentieth-century man inhabits—emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, cognitively—a flat earth, floating aimlessly through a flattened cosmos.

The deflation of the globe began many centuries ago, when humanity abandoned the soaring cathedral of medieval cosmology, a sanctuary with its spires in heaven and its cornerstone marking the center of creation. We took to the open air, to the vast horizontal vistas unveiled in a Cartesian-Newtonian world knowable through scientific inquiry alone. As Bacon's rule of repeatable experiment took hold, the new credo became, "I measure, therefore I am." Quantity replaced quality as the test of truth. That the scientific method bears bright fruit is incontestable; our world abounds in such marvelous inventions as the digital wristwatch that awoke me this morning and the typewriter upon which I write this article. But what price have we paid in return?

We read that once man was perfect, a creature made in the image of God. He fell and became, in Emerson's phrase, "a god in ruins." In our time, however—as the quotes above by two of our nation's leading scientific spokesmen make clear—man has become a biochemical broth. The expansion of science has brought the contraction of meaning, the leveling of value, the dismantling of hierarchy. Measurement has supplanted myth; the reducing wand of antimagic has turned all our dragons into dragonflies. The planets, once gods, are now chunks of stone tumbling in the vacuum, and even the Man in the Moon suffers our bootprints on his face. The Great Chain of Being —formerly a lifeline suspended between heaven and earth—has been hammered flat, reforged into a charm bracelet from which human and animal, plant and rock, dangle trinketlike in no-



The earliest identified notations of the moon

thingness. The lowest common denominator has become the highest good: thus the obsession we see in subatomic physics for splitting the nuclear world into ever tinier units (most lately, quarks) until we can go no smaller and no lower, and, in biology, for pinpointing the subcellular mechanisms of life—witness the recent deification of the gene (reaching a bizarre epiphany in the widely held theory of the "selfish gene," wherein evolution exists only so genes may perpetuate themselves. The gene's carrier, be it worm or human, is nothing more than a disposable wrapper. Human history from Adam to atom-smashing becomes the by-product of the gene's manifest destiny; we are all puppets jerked this way and that on strands of DNA).

In order to purify its method, science must screen out psychology and symbolic thought. In the process, it erases any real link between the human being—a psychological entity that grasps the world through symbol—and his wider cosmos. Without this link, purpose flounders. Unable to serve anything higher than itself, science falls into a narcissistic trance, more politely known as "pure research." Of course, science isn't alone in all this, although its ideology flavors—when it doesn't overwhelm—other human enterprises. Consider art. The razing of the cosmos can be seen in modern painting (in, for example, the canvases of the abstract expressionists, where geometric forms jostle one another in fruitless Brownian motion), modern fiction (in the novels of Robbe-Grillet and Burroughs, which shatter narrative and install instead a facile scanning of surfaces), and modern architecture (which favors towering, flat-sided boxes, the monumental expression of height without levels).

But what of post-Newtonian science? Didn't Einstein and Heisenberg loose relativity and randomness upon the world, and loosen the Cartesian chains of unconditioned certainty? Isn't quantum physics, freed from a clockwork cosmos, offering us a second chance? Well, not exactly. Replacing Democritus's out-of-date atoms with modish waves of probability in no way reinstates hierarchy or value. Indeterminancy, as the word implies, offers little in the way of purpose or meaning. A recent development, Geoffrey Chew's bootstrap physics, seems to go one step further by abolishing all distinctions, everywhere and absolutely. "The bootstrap philosophy," writes Fritjof Capra, "accepts no fundamental entities whatsoever—no fundamental concepts, laws, or equations."

Can this be all there is? Has science finally wrenched the earth from Atlas's shoulders and smashed it to the ground? Some say otherwise. They see strange lights on the horizon, and tell us that a new paradigm is about to rise, trailing enlightenment in its wake. Others warn that this glow is a false dawn, and that the night is closing in. Three books at hand focus the debate.

Mindsteps to the Cosmos, by astronomer Gerald S. Hawkins—the man who decoded Stonehenge—risks little. For the most part, it docilely retraces well-known stages in humanity's scientific understand-

ing of the universe. Hawkins labels each conceptual advance a "mindstep," adding that each "takes the collective mind closer to reality." He dubs mindstep zero (c. 35,000 B.C.), inaugurated by the invention of pictorial art, the Threshold of Cosmic Awareness. Mindstep one (c. 300 B.C.) is the Age of Myth and Legend; mindstep two (c. 150 A.D., the year Ptolemy died) is the Age of Order; mindstep three (c. 1543 A.D., triggered by Copernicus's heliocentric system) is the Age of Revolution; mindstep four, our current era, is the Age of Space. No surprises here; we expect such an outline from a professional astronomer schooled in the axiom that technological progress is tantamount to human evolution.

Hawkins's account of our passage from Stone Age to Space Age skips lightly between encyclopedia filler and personal anecdote. He engages us most when guiding us around his personal workbench, filling us in on his latest research in Stonehenge, the Giza pyramids, and the Totonac ball court of Tajin, Mexico. His knack for deciphering astronomical data from megalithic alignments, or for discerning the movements of sun and moon in, say, the Epic of Gilgamesh, is astonishing. Despite an occasional slip—the Zodiac, for example, is seen as little beyond a rudimentary astronomical diagram—he always demonstrates more sensitivity to mythology and religion than Carl Sagan, whose *Cosmos* seems to have provided the inspiration and structure for this book.

Perhaps intoxicated by each mindstep's furious forward momentum, Hawkins never applies his brakes; instead of stopping in 1983, he flips his time machine into future mode and blithely sails into eternity. The future, we learn, is communication. Mindstep five will be the Age of Cosmic Connection, possibly brought by contact with extraterrestrial intelligence. Hawkins lights his candles in the church of cybernetics; information theory supplies the key that explains how and why we think and act. Thus, ideas, now called "memes," are "software" stored in the "hardware" of the brain. His faith finds visual expression on the book's dust jacket, which depicts Rodin's *Thinker* (primordial man) crouched at the base of a rectangular grid receding into the future; along its rushing lines, in moribund black and white, are strewn pyramids, Stonehenge, an antique reflecting telescope—three artifacts of mindsteps past—and then, in a burst of color at the end of the sequence, a glittering, golden telecommunications satellite, a metal-and-silicon Star of Bethlehem heralding mankind's imminent transformation. For mindstep six will inaugurate the Age of the Spirit, while mindstep seven, the Omega Era, will bring with it contact with the Omnipotent. Millennialists needn't fret; we don't have long to wait. Hawkins's mindsteps follow each other in rapidly accelerating progression in keeping with his extraordinary formula, Mindstep M = $30{,}629 + 98{,}048\ (\frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4}^2 + \frac{1}{4}^3 + \ldots + \frac{1}{4}^M)$. Mindstep seven, the end of the series, is slated for 2053 A.D. Hawkins hedges his bets on the futures market by calling all this "conjecture," but, if the details are necessarily blurred, the underlying eschatology comes through loud and clear.

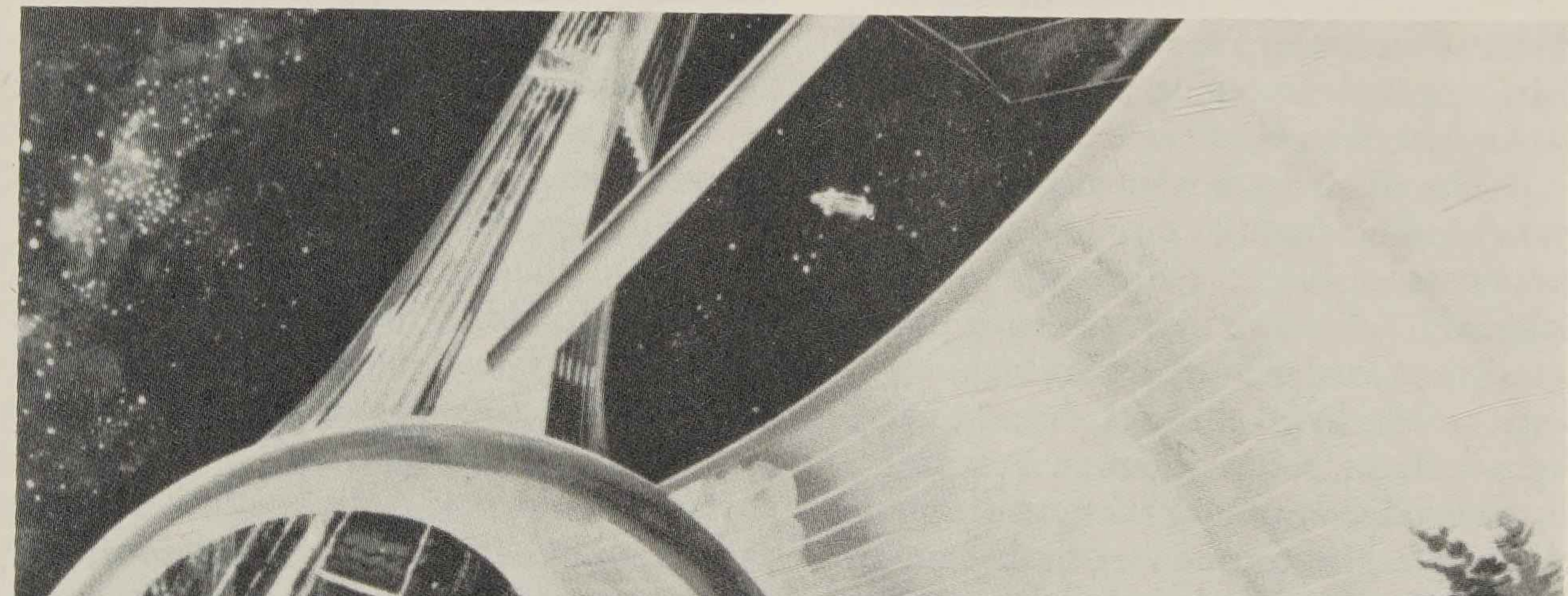
It isn't difficult to discern in these mindsteps a new kind of hierarchy—a pseudohierarchy—erected on a Darwinian foundation. The scheme shares many premises with those of Teilhard de Chardin, Sri Aurobindo, and some transpersonal psychologists, all of whom teach, in their own fashion, that humanity is sweeping inexorably up the evolutionary ladder from muck to monkey to man to majesty, and soon enough we'll all enjoy a postlapsarian promenade in Eden. Doubts remain. Just as every parent glimpses in his child those qualities he lacks himself, so does every generation see a better future lying just beyond time's horizon. But despite frequent outbreaks of millennial fever, utopia has not yet visited this dark corner of the cosmos. Tradition teaches no less persuasively that, fallen from paradise, we are trapped in a downward cycle, the Kali Yuga, and that upward movement against this devolving current is limited to individuals. That Hawkins senses this himself is hinted by his anomalous jump from mindstep five, still technological in nature, to mindstep six, explicitly "spiritual." Here

he betrays his own thesis, for up to now every advance, which "brings us closer to reality," has been more atomistic and anti-hierarchical. His mindsteps belong only to the staircase of science and thus ascend, Esherlike, without ever leaving the horizontal. Yet suddenly released from the conditions of the present, Hawkins opts for transcendence. Even his wish for contact with extraterrestrials mirrors darkly the religious impulse for communication with forces above and beyond the mundane world. Faith in automatic evolution, by contrast, actually forecloses possibilities and constricts the future, by ignoring the merits of work and struggle. It also overlooks man's twofold nature (in traditional terms, as sinner and saint), and the idea of scale, which, expressed in the Great Chain of Being, suggests that there are uncrossable limits to human development. At best, Hawkins's mindsteps remind us that ascent and descent are equally available. We are always at a crossroads.

A more sophisticated blueprint for the future appears in Jeremy Rifkin's *Algeny*, a rather ugly title meaning "to change the essence of a living thing from one state to another." Said transformation will arrive not by inner sweat or surrender, nor by the transforming power of self-illumination, but by tinkering with genes. In a word, by bioengineering.

Rifkin bases his predictions and his scathing critique of the current scientific paradigm (which he identifies with Darwin's theory of evolution) on a startling premise: that science is culturally conditioned and reflects the current social order, that "people create cosmologies to sanction their behavior." Darwinian evolution, with its emphasis on robust competition,

Plans for an orbiting space colony



thus reflects the ideology of the Industrial Age: the social pecking order conforms to the designs of Great Nature, with the British on top and barbarians on the bottom; living organisms are machines screwed together by chance over millions of years.

But the Victorian era has passed. Consequently, says Rifkin, Darwin's days are over. Dissident scientists have punched sufficient holes in the orthodox theory of evolution for the light of a new paradigm to leak through, and no amount of patching will repair the damage. Among the mortal wounds: no transitional forms have been discovered between species, while the fossil record should teem with them; breeding experiments indicate that random mutations stabilize rather than undermine species; complex organs (Rifkin singles out the eye) exist that could only have developed through myriad simultaneous mutations, a statistical impossibility; some creatures (humans, for instance) possess larger brains than required for survival; the appearance of genetic codes through random mutation and natural selection seems about as probable, in astronomer Fred Hoyle's words, as that "a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 707."

If Darwin is dead, who will attend the wake? Rifkin identifies the mourners as proponents of Whitehead's process philosophy, of J.T. Fraser's theory of temporal complexity, and of Norbert Weiner's cybernetics. Reduced to bones, the new paradigm declares that an organism is not a discrete individual but a "pattern of activity" that "takes account"—i.e., that anticipates the future and adjusts its actions accordingly (Whitehead); that this process entails each creature's attuning its biological and psychological rhythms to those of Great Nature (Fraser); that the process is best described through the vocabulary of information theory. All organisms are in flux; species no longer exist except as suspended droplets in the eternal flow, momentarily frozen by our limited perception. All creatures, in fact, can (and will) be reduced to configurations of DNA, to be reorchestrated at will. The algenic paradigm, like its predecessors, matches current socio-economic conditions. By diminishing life to manipulable "data," we can take advantage of our advanced biological, technological, and cybernetic skills. Welcome to Moreau's Island: "Simply by punching in the instructions on the keyboard, it will be possible to cross species walls and program an entire array of novel organisms." Morality crumbles; what harm comes of vivisecting a monkey, or torturing a man, if they amount to no more than "packets of information"?

Rifkin writes as an alarmist, not as an advocate. "There would be no lonelier place than a biologically engineered world." He urges us to recognize our "indebtedness" to nature, to redefine knowledge as "the why of things rather than the how," to brake our runaway hubris. Algeny chills him not only because it is so horrifying, but because it is so probable. Humanity, it has been said, never devises a new technology and fails to implement it. One may quibble with some of Rifkin's ideas—is medieval cosmology, as exemplified by Thomas Aquinas, merely a "cosmic rationale" that allows those in power to "eschew all responsibility"? The Great Chain of Being may reflect feudal Europe, but it may also reflect eternal truth. Yet the sober weight of his evidence prevails. If bioengineering rules the day, it will, as he maintains, "fundamentally alter humanity's entire relationship with the globe" and mark "the termination of one great lifeline in history and the abrupt beginning of another." If all is in flux, and all is interchangeable, then the tail wags the head, and hierarchy—sacred order—recedes beyond our grasp.

When the holographic paradigm burst forth a few years back, New Age advocates greeted it with all the fervor and faith of a revivalist tent crusade as the End of the Quest, Ultima Thule, the grand confluence of science and religion. I don't exaggerate: "The holographic model is . . . an integral theory catching all the wildlife of science and spirit"—Marilyn Ferguson; "It is for the first time that we have stumbled upon a comprehensive model for mystical experience, which has the additional advantage of deriving from the forefront of

contemporary physics"—Lawrence Beyman. In *The Holographic Paradigm and other Paradoxes*, editor Ken Wilber has culled articles from *Brain/Mind Bulletin*, *Human Behavior*, and his own *ReVision Journal*, written by a dozen authorities and interested bystanders, ranging from Karl Pribram to William Irwin Thompson, tracing the trajectory of this countercultural roman candle from ignition to imminent extinction.

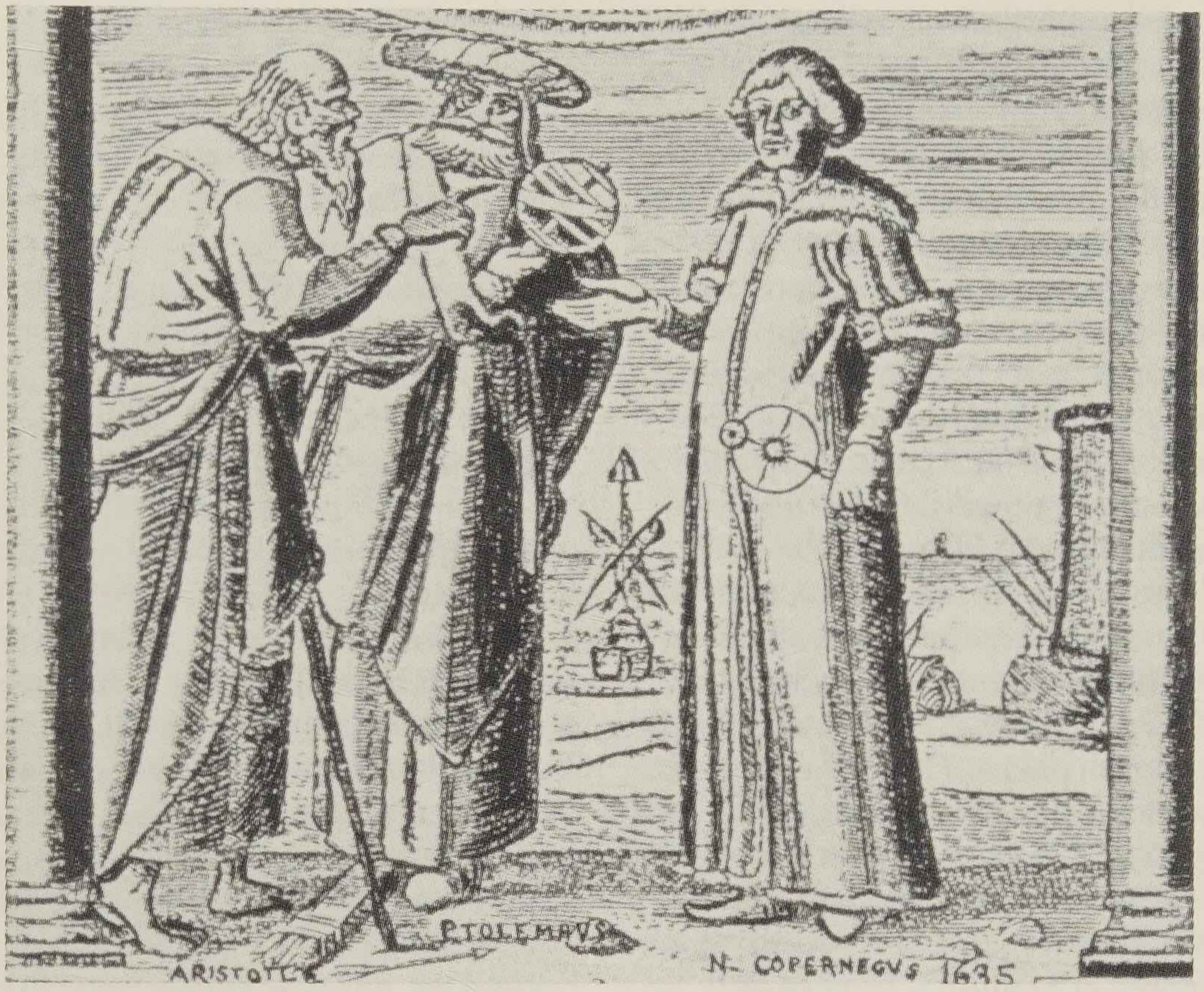
A hologram is a lensless technique for capturing a three-dimensional image on a photographic plate. The magic comes when a laser is employed to reproduce the original image; it turns out that any portion of the picture can reconstruct the whole. "The part is in the whole and the whole is in each part—a type of unity-in-diversity and diversity-in-unity," as Wilber puts it. The first stage in transforming this optical curiosity into a New Age icon came when Karl Pribram, a neuroscientist at Stanford University, discovered that some aspects of the brain appear to function holographically. Memories, for example, don't concentrate in specific neural areas, but scatter throughout our upper story. Pribram then made a prodigious—or presumptuous—leap from neurology to cosmology, proposing that the universe itself is a vast hologram, its concrete three-dimensionality a conjuror's sham, our brains magic lanterns that project reality from an unknown "holistic frequency domain." So far this tastes like warmed-over Kant, the *Ding an Sich* disguised in a twentieth-century casserole. But Pribram goes farther than Kant ever dared. Perhaps, he suggests, the frequency domain is synonymous with the transcendental ground of being.

Enter David Bohm, theoretical physicist, friend of Krishnamurti, former colleague of Einstein, to give the paradigm a more elegant design. Bohm divides creation into an "explicate" order of energies and entities, and an "implicate" order of undifferentiated oneness from which the explicate derives. The implicate order is "enfolded" in the explicate like melted chocolate in a brownie. Each part of the explicate order has access to all of the implicate. This schema, with its Vedantic overtones of the One exhaling and encompassing the Many, is for Bohm the logical culmination of quantum physics. Scientists have overlooked it up to now because they have lost their way in the trackless deserts of mathematical equation, hypnotized by the mirages of prediction and control.

Here some confusion sets in—perhaps because Bohm expounds his ideas in this volume via interview rather than essay. Or maybe the muddle is deliberate on his part. Sometimes both implicate and explicate orders appear to be material, with idea, feeling, will, and consciousness described as subtler gradations of matter. At other times, the implicate order seems to consist of spirit divorced from matter. Sometimes Bohm equates the implicate order with the unmanifest origin of our daily reality (i.e., with Pribram's frequency domain). At other times, the ground of being—the Plenum, or Emptiness—lies beneath or beyond the implicate order, in a "bigger ocean" beyond the unmanifest's "ocean of energy."

Whatever the case, the significance of Bohm's model lies in the relevance he assigns it for self-transformation. Since each of us holographically contains the whole, on the implicate level we share (literally) one consciousness. A change in one person's level of being can thus begin to change all others. This theory has obvious parallels to Buddhism's Chain of Interdependent Arising, and the saving role of the Bodhisattva. Transformation comes through "insight" (Krishnamurti's term), an active intelligence born at the implicate level which has the power to transfigure both ideas (the agents which structure explicate reality) and matter itself—including brain tissue.

Most of the subsidiary essays in *The Holographic Paradigm* buttress the viewpoints of Pribram and Bohm. The only sustained "no" vote is cast, astonishingly, by the editor. While saluting the new paradigm for "making room for spirit," Wilber savages it on perennialist grounds. His fundamental objection: the paradigm violates hierarchy by steamrolling reality into two levels, implicate and explicate. Wilber draws a six-tiered diagram of the cosmos,



Aristotle, Ptolemy, and Copernicus discuss the cosmos

with the "physical" realm at the bottom, overlaid by the "biological," the "mental," the "subtle," and the "causal," with the "ultimate" on top. Traditional thought, as he points out, states that the higher subsumes the lower, and the lower cannot understand the higher. Yet Bohm deals only with the physical realm, which (argues Wilber) can experience only itself, but not intellect or spirit. The implicate order "subscends" rather than transcends the physical. Bohm's model, starting on ground zero and looking down, ignores even the complexities of biology—the second realm—not to mention the other four. The holographic paradigm, says Wilber, is pantheistic; the frequency domain may be preperceptual, but it's not the Absolute.

At times, Wilber's certainty can be annoying. He discusses the Absolute with an intimacy usually reserved for one's spouse, and carves the cosmos into parts as if cutting slices of apple pie. Yet his objections convince. It's clear that reality does unfurl in layers; that, for instance, Heisenberg doesn't supplant but merely supplements Newton, that quantum events don't have much of a bearing on the quotidian world, where a different set of laws apply—or where reality responds to identical laws in a different way. Similarly, it seems apparent that physics will never wholly explain biology, biology will never wholly explain psychology, and so on up the mountain.

Yet the holographic paradigm shouldn't be shelved without a generous thank you. Its equation of "the part in the whole and the whole in each part" echoes faintly the hermetic formula, "As above, so below," and thus provides a contemporary metaphor for relationship between human and cosmos. And, in a sense, metaphors are all that Bohm offers. Beyond the vague proposal that physics illuminates matter, and mysticism illuminates mind, and mind and matter join together in a mysterious wedding witnessed by God in a subatomic chapel, he remains silent. Elsewhere, he retreats even from this tentative connection, asserting flatly that "the attempt to make the spirit part of the universe of discourse is not going to work."

Where does all this leave the bewildered searcher? Common sense can be a guide, although much in these volumes suggests that common sense has become an esoteric discipline. Clearly, we must distinguish between historical fact (Hawkins's mindsteps one through four) and futuristic fantasy (mindsteps five through seven), between new paradigms that blossom, however monstrously, from the reality of our love affair with the silicon chip, and new paradigms that promise a cyclone of transformation but deliver a thin holistic mist. Common sense tells us that science and religion inhabit different landscapes. Science is sea level, exploring a terrain equally accessible to any "objective" observer. Religion, or the inner life, takes place in subtler realms where hierarchical distinctions necessarily apply—for less cannot of itself produce more, wisdom cannot spring from ignorance, true knowledge must descend to us from above. When we ask, "What has gone so desperately wrong with science?" the answer is, "Nothing." It is our error if we expand scientific discovery into universal fiat.

Yet it is also true that facts and artifacts, the secretions of science, fail to nourish us sufficiently; that only ideas transform. Perhaps this is why so many great scientists breathed mystery over their work. It's no accident that Newton abandoned physics as an idler's hobby and devoted himself to alchemy (a fact that still causes embarrassment in scientific circles), or that Kepler's discovery of the three laws of planetary motion came as a byproduct of his search for the music of the spheres.

Much can be learned by seeing how people incorporate science into their total world view. Up to a point, most of us inhabit a scientific cosmos: we look at the sun and see a nuclear furnace, not a golden chariot or Blake's choir of angels. But at the same time, most of us adhere (however automatically, however imperfectly) to a code of value, meaning, and morals—qualities that have no place in scientific enterprise. We don't believe—not really, not yet, not entirely—that we are disposable envelopes for DNA, or ambulating computers, or upscale orangutans. Tell someone that men and crabs are equal, or that he is a molecular mulligatawny stew, and he will suspect that lucidity has abdicated and humbug rules the throne.

In past ages, men yoked together science and religion. The cosmos was a great living organism, and a set of symbols to be deciphered. The earth nestled at the center of concentric circles of being, at the nexus of crisscrossing rainbows of purposeful energy. All meaning was transmitted through man. But this traditional wisdom, perhaps still available to individuals in their private understanding, lies beyond the reach of contemporary science. To give one rudimentary reason, access to this ancient cosmos came through contemplation, using the living instruments of mind and body, and not through measurement, using impersonal devices of plastic and metal. Now the common ground has sunk like Atlantis beneath the pressure of the years.

Science, like a paralytic, can look in only one direction: forward. And looking forward, only Rifkin's nightmare seems a plausible scientific paradigm—a future of morphological meltdown, of dogs turned into dodos at the punch of a computer button. And this paradigm—which is actually an antiparadigm, since it collapses all distinctions between one species and another, one level of being and another, and thus offers a world without form or law—marks the final public extinction of meaning, inititated some five hundred years ago.

The wish for being, the hunger for knowledge, the desire for transformation, remain humanity's birthright. Perhaps a new science will emerge one day that acknowledges this fact. Such a development will demand a vast infusion of consciousness into a world view that has become increasingly unconscious. From where will that conscious energy derive? Perhaps from those very seekers who, in their efforts to explore the terra incognita of both inner and outer space, venture beyond the streets of science into the royal road lit by traditional thought. ■

Philip Zaleski is Executive Editor of PARABOLA.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Way of the Animal Powers: Historical Atlas of World Mythology, Volume I

By Joseph Campbell. San Francisco: Alfred van der Marck Editions, Harper and Row, 1983. Pp. 304. $75.00.

Reviewed by David Leeming

The horns of a Paleolithic wizard-beast on the walls of the Lascaux cave are "rediscovered" in the pointing sticks worn in an Aborigine initiation ceremony. A figure who is both Trickster and Creator, both amoral and the source of moral values, appears in the guise of Mantis of the Bushmen, Raven of the Eskimos, Coyote of the Winnebago, and the clown of the circus tent. Etymology links King Arthur, the "once and future king," with a "Master Bear" cult of sacrifice and renewal. A Blackfoot hero's descent to the Land of the Shades to retrieve a dead wife reminds us of the Orpheus and Eurydice story; it also has an analogue in the curative journey of Siberian and American Indian shamans to the spirit world.

It is these characters, events, and issues, and thousands like them, that make up the fascinating and strangely living world that is Joseph Campbell's scholarly domain. That it is eminently *his* domain is once more made clear with the publication of *The Way of the Animal Powers*, the first volume of his *Historical Atlas of World Mythology*. The publishers refer to this work as the "culmination" of the author's career. By any standards, that career has been remarkable: the early work on Jung, Joyce, and Indian art and mythology; the brilliant teaching at Sarah Lawrence; and, most of all, the books for which Campbell is best known. Most scholars of myth would be more than satisfied to have their careers culminate in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949), a book that has been as influential as Frazer's *The Golden Bough* or Bulfinch's *Mythology*. But this was just the beginning. The four-volume *The Masks of God* (1959–69) is as systematic and definitive a study of mythology as we have, and the *Mythic Image* (1974), a study of the relationship between art and myth, is a beautiful tour de force, the perfect book to culminate a career. Yet we are now presented with the first volume of a mammoth project, an historical atlas of world mythology.

Like all of Campbell's writing, *The Way of the Animal Powers* is at once erudite and accessible to the general reader. His command of his field in its philosophical, historical, psychological, literary, and anthropological aspects is extraordinary, but he never forgets that "the one great story" is everyone's story, that the ritual and mythic representation of cave people, Bushmen, Eskimos, and Adamanese are but local expressions of the "high adventure" of my soul and yours, the soul of the "world village."

The Way of the Animal Powers is a study of the Paleolithic Age. The author takes us from myths of the Creation, through a highly technical and scientific survey of man's emergence on the planet, to the mythologies of our early ancestors, the hunters and gatherers. Campbell travels easily between continents, ethnic groups, religious systems, and time periods, always keeping in view the "progressive enlargement of man's knowledge of the magnitude of his own ignorance and the expansion thereby of his wonder—and religion." He concentrates first on archeological indications that Neanderthal man's awakening to the reality of death—an awakening that separated our species from all others—led to an attempt to circumvent that ultimate barrier by myths of afterlife and by shamanistic rituals such as those apparently depicted in the great cave paintings of

southwestern Europe and elsewhere. Campbell moves on to establish parallels between these rituals and myths and those extant among such groups as the Bushmen and Pygmies of Africa, the Tasaday of the Philippines, and the Adaman Islanders of the Indian Ocean. Cave art comes literally to life when the Bushman hunter identifies himself with the "Master Animal" who is his prey, by ritually suffering the animal's painful death and wearing its horns in a complex ceremony.

In "Mythologies of the Great Hunt," the second half of the volume, Campbell relates the diffusion of myths to the great West-to-East dispersal following the Riss-Würm glacial period. As the ice melted, the hunting peoples followed the animal herds northward towards Siberia, and eventually made their way to the Americas. With them came the cult of the Master Shaman and related cults of the Master Animal. Especially interesting is the worship of the bear. Alpine sanctuaries containing bear relics proved the earliest indication of the worship of divine beings, and the animal who walks like a human and annually "dies" only to return in the spring remains even today the central figure in myths and ceremonies of isolated groups in Asia and North America. Bear worship, with its emphasis on sacrifice and curative power, is clearly related to the shamanistic traditions in which a man or woman with special powers, aided by knowledge gained from hunted and sacrificed Master Animals, descends to the spirit world for the good of the tribe. Campbell's discussion of the Master Bear and the shaman provides us with the possibility of fresh approaches to the great sacrificial cults of the planting societies of the Near East, cults that will presumably be treated in Volume II of the atlas.

The final chapters of *The Way of the Animal Powers* are devoted to the Indians of North America. They provide a vivid insight into a tradition in which divinity or the "power" of the Master Animal is immanent in all things, in which not only man, but all of Nature, including the hunted animal, the farmed field, and the family dwelling, are made in the image of God. Through the Hopi, the Navajo, and the Plains Indian, we experience the "way of the animal powers" as living reality.

Finally, this is physically as well as intellectually a beautiful work. A comprehensive myth motif index greatly increases its value for scholars of mythology. And the hundreds of color plates, maps, and drawings are carefully chosen to illustrate rather than merely to decorate the text. The full-color maps commissioned for this volume are particularly impressive. Creations of Sidney Marland, Luis Freila, and David Strong, they give vivid concreteness not only to the process Campbell calls "peopling the earth," but to the distribution throughout the world of androgynous mythic beings, Venus figurines, and medicine wheels.

In the prologue to his atlas, Campbell writes, "It has always been the business of the great seers . . . to perform the work . . . of a mythology by recognizing through the veil of nature, as viewed in the science of their times, the radiance, terrible yet gentle, of the dark, unspeakable light beyond, and through their words and images to reveal the sense of the vast silence that is the ground of us all and of all beings." Joseph Campbell has demonstrated that as a scholar he is such a seer. He has led us beyond the documentation of myth, even beyond the sense of its meaning and significance, to an experience of its essential reality. As a teacher of myth who strives to discover and to help students discover both the beauty and the usefulness of myth, I cannot imagine even having begun without *The Hero With a Thousand*

Faces and *The Masks of God*. With *The Way of the Animal Powers*, the debt is greatly increased.

David Leeming is a member of the English Department at The University of Connecticut in Storrs. He is the author of Mythology: The Voyage of the Hero *and of several other works in the area of myth, religion, and literature. He is a Contributing Editor to* PARABOLA.

Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources
By Martin Lings. New York: Inner Traditions, 1983. Pp. 359. $24.95.

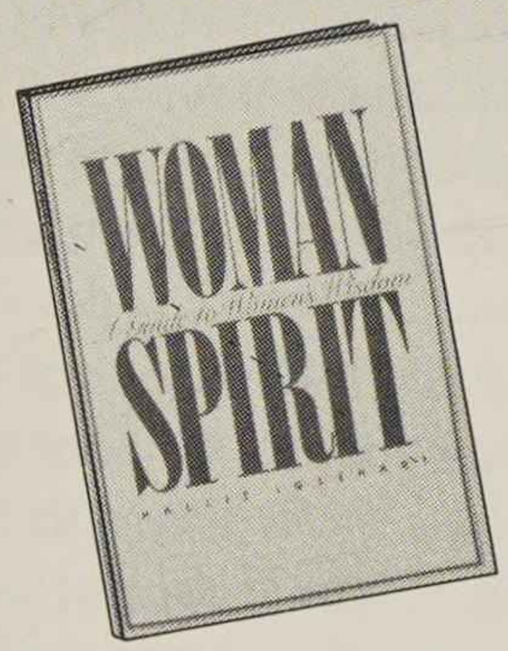
Reviewed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr

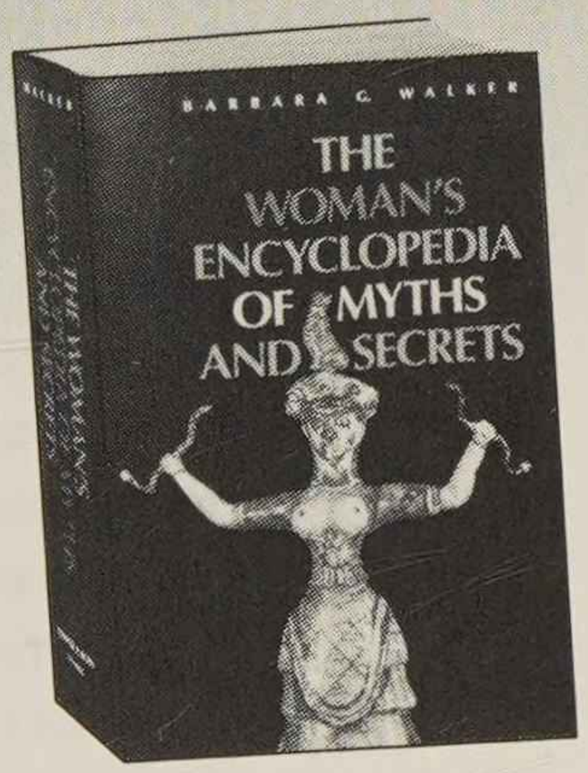
This biography of the Prophet by Martin Lings must be considered as a major event in both the history of Islamic studies in the West and the creation of a veritable Islamic literature in the English language. In the same way that such languages as Persian and Turkish became Islamic through the creation, in their idiom, of works imbued with the ethos and grace (or *barakah*) of Islam, so, too, does English, as expressed through the powerful and masterly pen of Lings, become an Islamic language in the pages of this book.

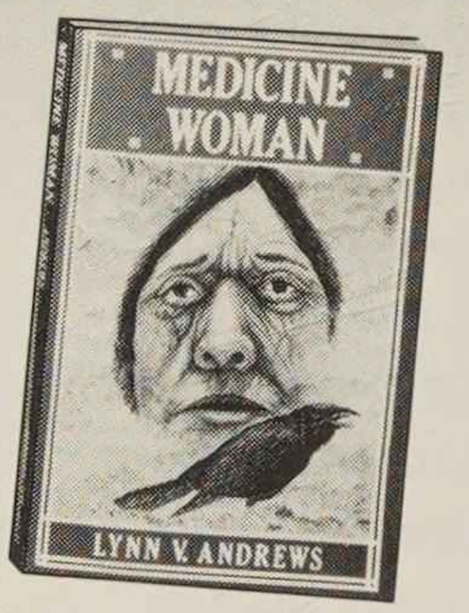
This biography is not based on secondary sources. Rather, Lings returns to the earliest Arabic ones, namely, the biographies of Ibn Isḥāq (*Sīrāt rasūl Allāh*), Ibn Sa'd (*Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*) and al-Wagidī's *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, while also consulting such other traditional sources as Azraqī, Ṭabarī, and Suhaylī, and of course the various collections of *ḥadīth*. The uniqueness of his treatment of the subject can be gauged when this book is compared with the scholarly translations by Guillaume or Moinul Haq of Ibn Hishām and Ibn Sa'd, respectively. The latter works, as well as the French translation of Tabarī, and even the biographies by the modern Muslim scholars, Hamidullah and Shibli Nu'mani, who use these sources, contain much valuable information. But they do not reflect the living, spiritual presence that one finds in Lings's work, nor give the easy access to the whole universe of Islamic spirituality which he provides. In fact, Lings's biography occupies a unique position among all the other existing biographies, whether by Western scholars critical of the Islamic tradition, or by Muslim scholars who write with respect and devotion about the man whom Muslims consider to be the most perfect of God's creatures. It reflects the devotion of the best Muslim sources, along with a mastery of the English language and the medium of Western thought.

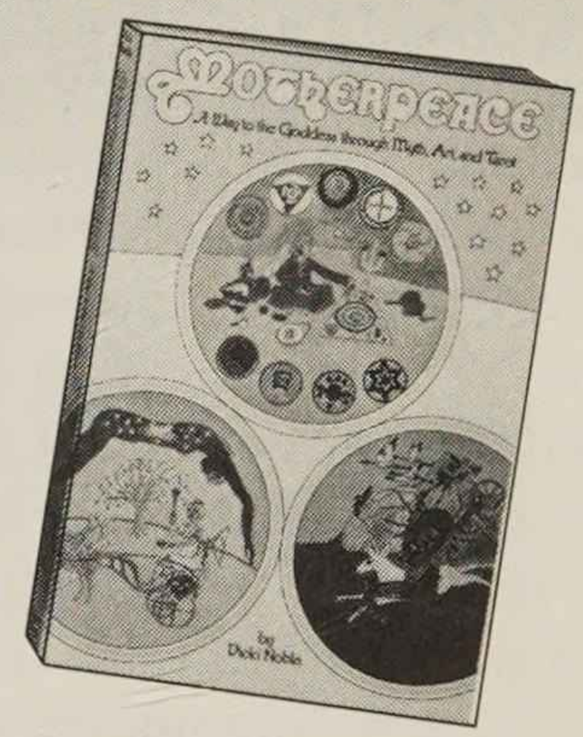
Lings's point of view is the traditional one, standing above and beyond individualistic idiosyncrasies and transient scholarly and philosophical fashions. Earlier biographies of the Prophet are dated precisely because they looked upon the incomparable figure of God's Last Messenger from the point of view of one kind of passing fad or another. Some have seen him as a "superman" hero of history; others at the other extreme have tried to analyze his rise and career in terms of purely economic and social factors in the crypto-Marxist manner so prevalent in certain circles. There is none of this dated coloring in Lings's biography. Rather, the characteristic feature of the book is what one might call "absence of the author"—an absence which one feels more as a result of the lack of an introduction. The book opens suddenly with the world of Abraham, the patriarch and ancestor of the Arabs and Jews. There is no transition from the present-day world of the reader through an introduction to the world of the ancient Semitic people where the sacred story and history begin. If the author is to be found within

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the pages of this long book, it is only in the beauty of the text, and the headings and episodes of the chapters.

Muhammad depicts upon an immense canvas the historical background, birth, early life, reception of revelation, trials and tribulations, and final victory of the man whom nearly a billion people on the surface of the earth today consider as the Last Prophet and the most perfect model of human existence. The book reveals how the sacralization of all aspects of human life through the Muhammadan norm necessitated that the Prophet undergo the whole gamut of human experience, from being a lonely orphan to ruling over a sector of the cosmos. The book also depicts what is involved in the formation of a new religion on earth within the world of human vicissitude; it shows how the Divine Will molds out of the elements of a faraway human society a new community which, despite all apparent odds, becomes the nucleus of a new world order and the heart of a civilization destined to encompass much of the globe.

Despite the vastness of the subject, this biography makes easy and absorbing reading for anyone interested in religion as such. For those interested in Islam in one way or another, it is mesmerizing. Through the power of storytelling in short episodes and the use of language of a highly poetic nature, Lings is able to carry his reader through even the most obscure chapters of his story, while the major events in the life of the Prophet, such as the nocturnal ascent (*al-mi'raj*), the battles of Badr and Uhud, and the Farewell Pilgrimage, become memorable moments. The book's literary art overcomes the strangeness of distant lands and peoples as well as the difficulty of numerous Arabic names and titles. In reading it, one feels a sense of the sacred through its many pages.

Among the most valuable features of this biography are the translations of passages of the Quran which run throughout the text. In them, Lings pushes the possibilities of the English language to their utmost limit. One hopes that before long Lings will produce a complete translation of the Quran.

I consider *Muhammad* the best available biography of the Prophet in the English language for those who seek to understand his life and significance from the traditional Islamic point of view. It is also bound to be of great value to Muslims themselves, especially those who no longer have full access to the traditional sources in such languages as Arabic and Persian. The book is well printed despite a number of typographical errors caused by the number of Arabic proper names and terms. The cover in blue and gold, enriched by formulas in praise of the Prophet in classical Arabic calligraphy, is most beautiful and worthy of a book which must be considered as one of the most significant works in Islamic studies to appear in recent years.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is Professor of Religion and Islamic Studies at Temple University and the author, most recently, of Knowledge and the Sacred.

Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism
By N.J. Girardot. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983. Pp. *xiv* + 424. $34.00.

Reviewed by Donald Harper

The nature of China's early religious traditions still perplexes historians of religions. The cult of Confucius has been called a religion by some, but besides teaching certain ethical principles couched in the protocols of ritual conduct, what is specifically religious about it? And while Taoism (that is, the organized religious

sects which begin to emerge in the second century A.D.) claims Lao Tzu as a deity and the book *Lao Tzu* (a.k.a. *Tao Te Ching*) as a holy scripture, it is difficult to connect this religious ideology with the mystical school which made Lao Tzu its patriarch in the third century B.C. The issue of the religious history of Lao Tzu and the so-called Taoist school first associated with this figure forms the background of N.J. Girardot's *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism*. Subtitled "The Theme of Chaos (hun-tun)," the book attempts to reconstruct the mythic theme of *hun-tun* in the *Lao Tzu*, *Chuang Tzu*, and other writings which the author regards as early repositories of Taoistic thought. Girardot's intent is "to see how the theme of *hun-tun* functions as a paradigm of religious meaning and practice in the early Taoist texts"; and the foreseen result of his study is "to demonstrate that it is the cosmogonic fable of *hun-tun* that defines the religious vision of early Taoist mysticism." The objective of the book is to posit a synthetic view of Taoism in which the early traditions are seen to be continued in the later Taoist sects. Thus, according to Girardot's thesis, "when post-Han Taoism became conscious of itself as an organized religious movement it creatively drew upon a preexisting history of religious ideas most closely associated with the early classical texts."

Ideally, the diagnosis Girardot proposes to perform on the early Taoist texts can reveal significant patterns of thought and consequently enrich one's appreciation of the conceptual gemstones embedded in the texts. However, the effectiveness of any interpretive methodology depends upon the skills of its user. Having followed Girardot's exposition of the theme of *hun-tun* from the "Preliminary Meanders" to the "Concluding Spirals," I have concluded that his gems have a false glitter.

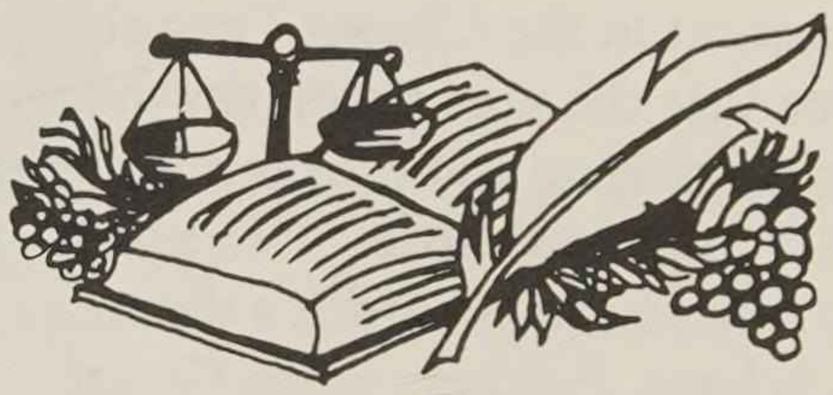
Problems in Girardot's interpretation of the texts and in his general interpretation of the interplay between early Chinese religion and philosophy crop up even in the introduction. For Girardot, the thought of early Taoists (that is, of texts such as *Lao Tzu*, *Chuang Tzu*, etc.) is centered on a concept of chaos as the optimal state of perfection:

> The oddity of early Taoist thought was its strange solicitude for chaos, its mystically austere passion for confusion. "The sage," the *Chuang Tzu* says, "steers by the torch of chaos and doubt [*ku i*]."

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One might conclude from the phrase "steers by the torch of chaos and doubt" that the *Chuang Tzu* mixes metaphors (how does one steer by a torch?) and expresses ideas through antithetical riddling (the dim confusion of chaos and doubt is an illuminating torch). In fact, this impression is due only to a faulty translation, in this case Burton Watson's *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. A.C. Graham, in *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London, 1981), accurately renders the same sentence as:

> Therefore the glitter of glib implausabilities [*ku i*] is despised by the sage.

The context in the *Chuang Tzu* relates to the idea that the sage perceives the inner essence of a thing and thus is not deluded by "glib implausabilities." The line quoted has no relation to Girardot's theme of a *hun-tun* chaos. Further, when Girardot describes early Taoist thought as having a "mystically austere passion for confusion," he is confusing Western notions of chaos with Chinese *hun-tun*. Chaos, as Girardot himself notes, has simply become the ordinary translation for *hun-tun*. While there may be certain similarities between the concept of *hun-tun*, which signifies the primal condition of undifferentiated homogeneity contained within an unbroken sphere, and the original Greek sense of chaos as the dark abyss, *hun-tun* has none of the connotations of confusion and disorder which came to form around the concept of chaos.

There is, to be sure, a core of mysticism in both the *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu* which corresponds roughly to the *hun-tun* theme as explicated by Girardot. By practicing certain ecstatic procedures, the true sage extricates himself from the vicissitudes of a degenerate world and returns spiritually to the Primeval Beginning. It is also clear that the archaic myth of *hun-tun* was influential in the formation of this mystical thought. Where Girardot's exposition goes astray is in his evaluation of the function of mythic themes in the speculative literature of the Warring States period (fifth-third centuries B.C.). This literature does not address itself to the question of salvation for mankind, but rather focuses on the cultivation of the ideal sage or king—an omniscient, omnipotent superman who will return the world to a utopian condition. The *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu* would have a person achieve sagehood through mystical transformation, while books such as *Meng Tzu* and *Hsün Tzu* recommend the cultivation of ethical norms (for Girardot to type early Taoist and Confucian thought as representing a dichotomy between "folk and elite" is nonsensical). Girardot believes that the *hun-tun* theme in the *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu* "defines the religious vision of early Taoist mysticism." In fact, the adaptation of this mythic theme to the cultivation of the sage in these books serves to justify a particular philosophical model.

The existence of decisive differences between the mysticism of the *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu* and the distinctly religious vision of the later Taoist sects is clear even to Girardot when he discusses the historical emergence of the latter:

> A mystic counterdefinition of the world is impossible to maintain without the support of general society, and the popular success of sectarian Taoism can be said therefore to reflect a kind of sociological routinization of the more charismatic and anarchistic religious strivings of the early texts . . . . Esoterically, as it applied to the priestly elite or individual adepts, the mystical ideal of returning to chaos continued to harbor revolutionary metaphysical and imaginative implications; but as an institutionalized mass movement, Taoism was forced to adapt itself to the conventional definitions of social reality.

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The implication of Girardot's argument is that the beliefs and practices of the later sects represent a devolution of an earlier mystical religious vision—a compromise forced upon Taoism by the "conventional definitions of social reality." This strikes me as an odd theory for the history of religions. A critical evaluation of the relevant facts might lead one to question the importance of the role played by the *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu* in shaping the theology of the later Taoist sects. Rather than attempt to find the source of a religious tradition in these books, a more fruitful line of investigation would be to study the relation between the religious thought of the Taoist sects and earlier religious traditions. For example, the imprint of these earlier traditions on Taoist liturgy is unmistakable, as is the influence of a popular millenarianism which erupted during the Han period on Taoist soteriology. The fusion of such elements with a desire for personal salvation achieved through the practice of meditation and physical cultivation is perhaps a religious innovation of the Taoist sects, signaling the beginning of a new spiritual enterprise rather than the vulgarization of the mystical purity of the enigmatic Lao Tzu.

Girardot's study of the *hun-tun* theme in early Taoist literature might still be useful to those interested in comparative religion and philosophy. Unfortunately many of Girardot's analyses have the "glitter of glib implausabilities," as the *Chuang Tzu* saying goes. For example, Girardot cites the research of Chang Kwang-chih to support his triadic schema of Chinese cuisine, a schema which is meant to reveal the *hun-tun* logic underlying ancient culinary conceptions. His summation of "the most salient outcome of Chang's discussion" is a flagrant misreading of the latter scholar's article. A few pages later Girardot mentions Chang's research on Chinese creation myths, followed by several footnoted quotations ostensibly concerning the attitude of Confucians towards the early myths. The quotations do not originate with Chang—the source of his ideas is not even indicated—but are excerpted from Mircea Eliade's *Myth and Reality*. In Eliade's book they occur in a general discussion of the structural analysis of origin myths, and Girardot has edited this theoretical discussion to make it apply specifically to the Confucian tradition. These are not the only examples of Girardot's misuse of other scholars' ideas. In addition, misinterpretations of Chinese texts and incorrect etymologies of significant terms appear throughout the book. In short, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism* is an erratic work, and the reader should proceed with caution.

Donald Harper teaches in the Department of Asian Languages at Stanford University.

In the Beginning: A New English Translation of the Book of Genesis
Translated with Commentary and Notes by Everett Fox. New York: Schocken Books, 1983. Pp. *xxxi* + 288. $14.95.

Reviewed by Eduardo Rauch

> We proceed from the insight that the Bible stems from living recitation and is intended for living recitation, that its true existence may be found in speech, that writing ("Scripture") is merely its form of preservation.
>
> —Martin Buber

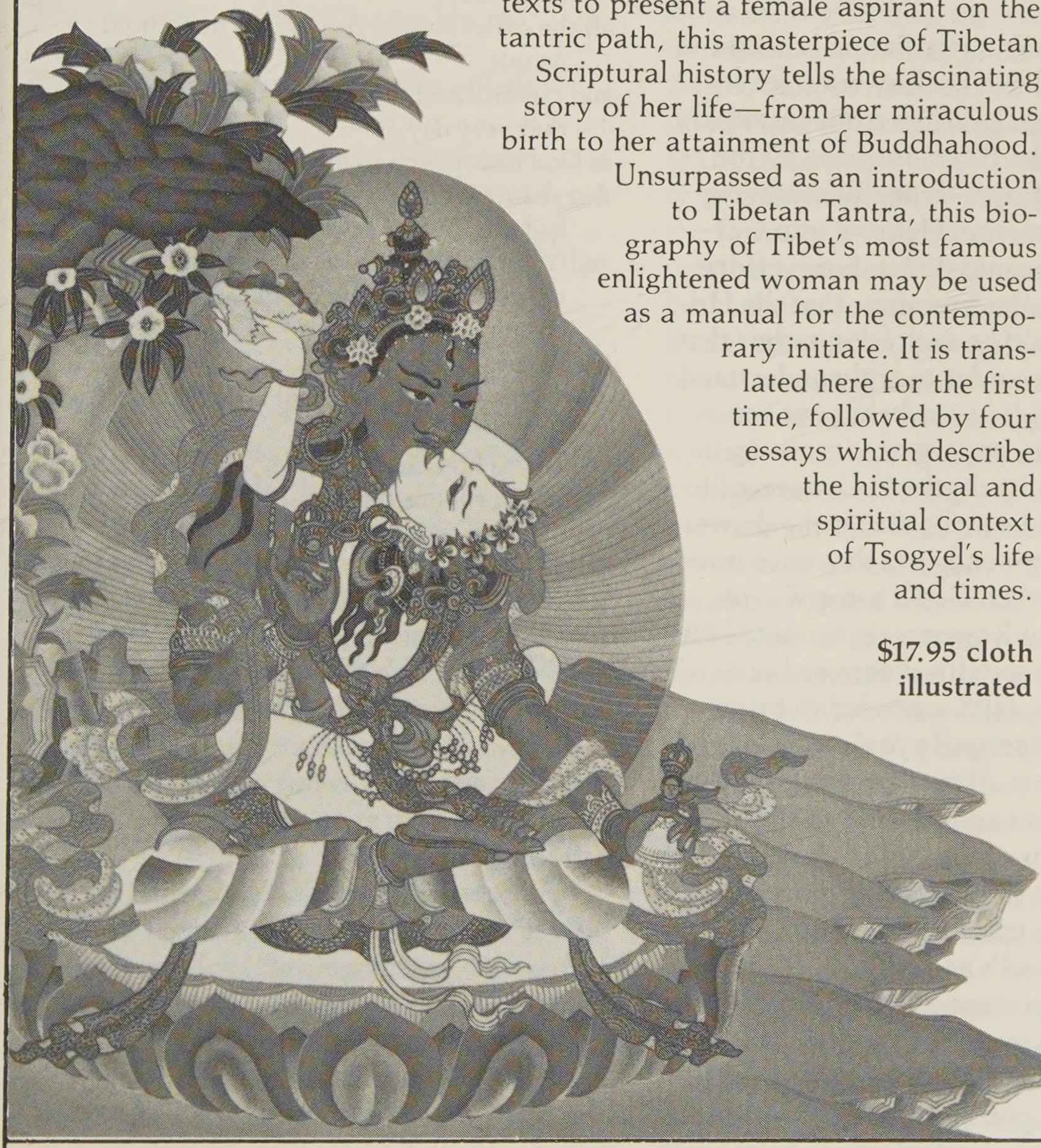
One can read the Genesis story countless times, yet the impact of this powerful narrative remains intact. Everett Fox's version contributes additional dimensions

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to our experience of the text. Through his work we come alive to the rhythms of the original Hebrew text, the songs implicit in its phrases, its rich poetic musicality, and the powerful sensuality of biblical imagery. Because of the form and intent of this translation—and even if we need to sacrifice some of the elegance of structure and fluidity of language found in other translations—we almost feel the heat of the Judean desert, smell the sacrificial lamb, and touch the rough beards of the frightening heroes.

The Everett Fox translation is bound to be controversial in a healthy way, for its audacious approach differs from customary translations of the Bible. Inspired by the famous Martin Buber-Franz Rosenzweig Bible translation from Hebrew into German begun in the mid-1920s, Fox's efforts are based on similar premises: that the Hebrew Bible should be recitation rather than scripture; that in order to truly understand the text and feel it in our being, we must hear its cadences, experience its musicality, vibrate with its rhythms. Connected to this necessity to hear the text is the desire to convey the awe and aura that once must have been felt when God's name was uttered. Buber and Rosenzweig rendered His name with the capitalized personal pronouns YOU, HE, HIM, intended to bring attention to a necessarily nameless God whose presence is all pervading. For etymological reasons and because of the overly male emphasis of the Buber-Rosenzweig translation, Fox settles for the more traditional YHWH, a transliteration of a Hebrew form of God's name.

Equally important to the oral nature of the text are the repetitions that occur throughout. As Fox explains in his introduction, such repetitions have been ignored in most other translations, which have been more concerned with providing the smoothest reading of the verse or chapter at hand. Buber and Rosenzweig, on the other hand, were deeply aware of the function of repetition as a unifying agent drawing themes and motifs together through the use of sound. Buber called this the "leading-word style," often utilized in poetry and popular song but absent from modern narrative forms. This is well exemplified in Fox's version of Genesis 17:23-27:

Avraham took Yshmael his son and all those
    born in his house and all those bought with
    his money,
all the males among Avraham's household
    people,
and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins on
    that very day,
as God had spoken to him.
Avraham was ninety-nine years old when he
    had the flesh of his foreskin circumcised,
and Yshmael his son was thirteen years old
    when he had the flesh of his foreskin
    circumcised.
On that very day
were circumcised Avraham and Yshmael his
    son,
and all his household people, whether house-
    born or money-bought from a foreigner,
    were circumcised with him.

The carefully balanced and spaced, rhythmical repetition of "circumcised" and "Yshmael his son" carries us into an auditory experience of drama and ceremony, awe and communion. There is a non-literary roughness to this text, which awakens in us an ancient recognition of a different kind of truth.

A second important insight into the power of the biblical text, utilized by Buber and Rosenzweig and followed by Fox, has been the exploration of the meaning and translation of the names of individuals. The explication of these names within the actual body of the translated text is based on both biblical folk etymology and grammatical etymology. Names in the Bible are always intended to give us in-

sights into the characters, insights that the characters themselves are often not aware of. This textual device is not unlike certain elements of theater. A good example is the birth of Yaakov (Jacob) and Esav (Esau) as translated by Fox, Genesis 25:19-26:

YHWH said to her [Rivka]
    Two nations are in your body,
    two tribes from your belly shall be divided,
    tribe shall be mightier than tribe,
    elder shall be servant to younger!
When her days were fulfilled for bearing, here:
    twins were in her body!
The first one came out ruddy, like a hairy
    mantle all over,
so they called his name: Esav/Rough-One.
After that his brother came out, his hands
    grasping Esav's heel,
so they called his name: Yaakov/Heel-Holder.
Yitzhak was sixty years old when she bore
    them.

From the beginning, the two children are tragically fated by name and birth to their dramatic roles.

The rich notes, intelligent introduction, and useful commentaries that flow along with the text provide the reader with excellent tools with which to further explore the translation. One only misses the presence of the original Hebrew text, which would have made an attractive addition to the already generous offerings in this volume.

Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig were the leading Jewish intellectual figures of pre-Holocaust Germany. Their work in philosophy, adult education, community leadership, and Jewish scholarship represented the highest and most lucid embodiment of the prewar German-Jewish renaissance, rapidly and tragically destroyed by Hitler's hordes. Everett Fox is an intellectual child of the sixties. Presently a professor of religion at Boston University, he grew and matured in the heart of the Jewish-American Havurah movement, an attempt by young Jews to renew forms of worship, religious celebration, and communal living in the midst of the American urban context. There are numerous analogies (and many differences) between the concerns of young German-Jewish intellectuals and community leaders of the twenties and their counterparts in America during the late sixties and early seventies. Both were searching for community renewal, for new forms of study and exploration, and for new ways of reading, understanding, and living out the sacred texts. Both renewal movements were attempts at purification and simplification of the forms of Jewish life and thought. And they both produced new readings of the biblical text in a form that is known as a literal translation, generally understood to be a mechanical word-for-word reproduction, but actually an attempt at capturing not only the sense of the text but also its configuration of Hebrew phrases, words, and even letters. This is seen as an attempt to retain in translation at least the auditory pattern of divine revelation; the utterances themselves are intact only in the unburdened and untouched original.

This effort at literalness, devotion to form, and loyalty to original detail seems to be a traditional Jewish concern. Many other schools of translation have preferred the idiomatic or sense-for-sense form of translation, a philosophy expressed by the idea that "this is how the author would have said it, had he said it in English and not in Hebrew." Idiomatic translation reaches its audience with a new poem that restates in modern terms and contemporary grammatical forms what is perceived as the slightly rusty character of the original. These two contrasting forms of translation have been also called the "author

oriented" (corresponding to the literal) and "audience oriented" (corresponding to the idiomatic) modes.

The idiomatic approach has always been evangelical. The Word of God, according to this view, must be able to speak in every language, to the peoples of all races and religions. Jews, on the other hand, have been more concerned with reaching other Jews, by trying to restore to the translation the Hebrew voice of the original text.

In trying to return to this sense of the original, both Buber and Rosenzweig and Fox have divided the text into breath-lengths, which are the natural breathing punctuation and coincide with units of meaning within the text. These breath-lengths are known as "cola," and they facilitate reading aloud, making it possible for the listener to discover the text's inner rhythm, while at the same time illustrating the principle that form and content are inseparable in the Bible. This is demonstrated by Fox's translation of the concluding passage of the creation story, Genesis 2:1-3:

Thus were finished the heavens and the earth,
    with all of their array.
God had finished, on the seventh day, his work
    that he had made,
and then he ceased, on the seventh day, from all
    his work that he had made.
God gave the seventh day his blessing, and he
    hallowed it,
for on it he ceased from all his work, which by
    creating, God had made.

The text thus becomes a poem whose rhythms and repetitions illustrate superbly the majesty and drama of the story of creation.

Eduardo Rauch is Co-director of the Melton Research Center for Jewish Education in New York City.

Japanese Pilgrimage
By Oliver Statler. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1983. Pp. 349. $17.95.

Reviewed by Eleanor Munro

The author of this book is a long-time and respected *amateur* of Japanese culture in the best and proper sense of that word, meaning a lover of its arts and ideas who doesn't hold himself to the rigors of academic scholarship. His earlier book, *Japanese Inn*, was admired for its pleasurable blend of history, legend, folk tale, and anecdote. Here he has taken the same approach but with less fluidity, for the topic is a more demanding one, and so much has been written for the general reader on both Buddhism and pilgrimage that one's expectations are high.

Both the charm and the frustration of the book lie with its affectionate, rambling style. Statler invites us to join him on a two-month, thousand-mile trek around one of Japan's most venerable pilgrimage trails, one sanctified by the life-experience of the ninth-century founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism. The trail circumambulates Shikoku, the fourth biggest of the Japanese islands, encompassing the Daishi's birthplace and the site of his achievement of enlightenment, as well as eighty-six other shrines, each distinguished by some remarkable topographical or historical detail.

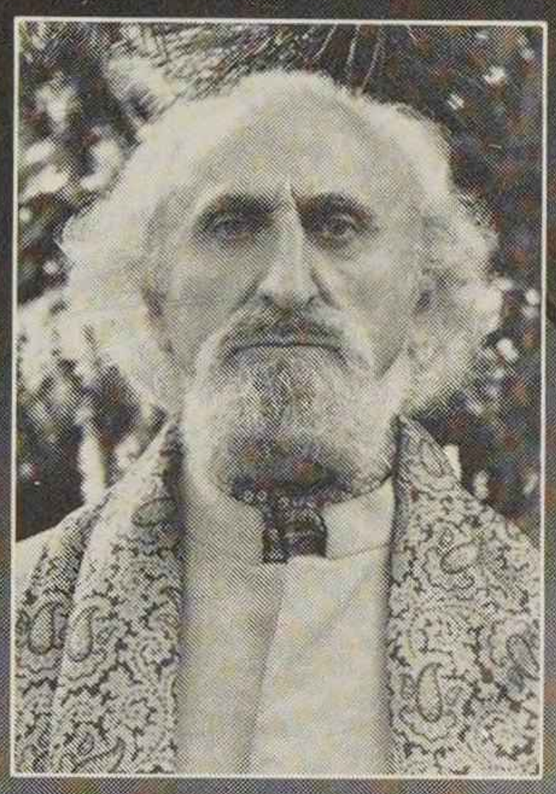
Clearly there are several levels of interest for Statler. There is the life story of a singular seeker of the Asian Middle Ages, who early in life caught a glimpse of what he took for truth and followed its trail to the capital city of T'ang China, where he mastered its tenets and became a patriarch of the teaching. There are several fascinating evocations here of the Daishi's early devotion to his personal deity, Kokuzo, Guardian of Space. Kokuzo lived in, or

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was, the morning star, Venus. Daishi sought him on a Shikoku mountaintop and then in a seaside cave. After his experience of awakening, he renamed himself Kukai: *ku* from "sky," *kai* from "sea." Esoteric Tibetan-Chinese doctrine, to which Kukai finally found his way, focused on a pivotal, universal Buddha of Infinity, Vairochana, or Dainichi in Japanese. The paradoxes and visual images of the school are taxing and rich, and Statler mostly skirts them with notations that it is "optimistic" and universalist. More fully expounded, Shingon might be shown to have special import for a contemporary world committed to ecology and a special feeling for the planet Earth as it floats in space.

Statler moves on to the droll tale of the inflating of the human teacher Daishi-Kukai into a transcendent deity by later centuries of shaggy holy men. He touches on the social conflict between these popularizing evangelists and the cerebral, politicized priests of the official Shingon Temples. There is also the story of emerging Japanese nationalism, to which this and other centralized Buddhist institutions contributed. Then there is the matter of present-day travelers along this trail, from American Japanophiles to Japanese modernists, as well as simple folk in the immemorial style. There are the arts and artifacts of the Way, very old stone shrines and markers, perilous cliff-top temples and

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temples of great beauty and historic import. And there are the living priests of these shrines, who must have had more of interest to communicate than they are allowed to in these pages.

In other words, there is too much informal range here for a book of thematic depth, and the one thing Statler avoids is what might have given his story particular interest nowadays: a bit of self-searching into what Buddhism and pilgrimage mean to him as an educated Westerner, participant in an ancient and alien ritual. Often, for example, he stops at a shrine to pray. He notes that the virtue of pilgrimage is in the walking or in a degree of "ascetic renunciation." In what sense do these acts have living truth for him? We understand that pilgrimage as a psycho-physical endeavor turns on, or at least drives toward, the experience called, in many religions, enlightenment. But in that very word there is a world of mystery. Surely Oliver Statler has yet another book germinating in his notebooks. Readers of this seductive one will look forward to that even more revealing one.

Eleanor Munro's writings have appeared in Art in America, Partisan Review, The Atlantic, *and other national publications. She is the author of three books, most recently* Originals: American Women Artists, *and she is at work on a book on pilgrimage to be published by Thames & Hudson.*

The Travels of Sir John Mandeville
Introduction and commentaries on the plates by Josef Krasa. New York: George Braziller, 1983. Pp. 112. $45.00.

Romanesque Bible Illumination
By Walter Cahn. New York: Cornell University Press, 1982. Pp. 308. $95.00.

Reviewed by Lasse Antonsen

The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, written by an unknown hand around 1356, was extraordinarily popular during the second half of the fourteenth century. The book recounts Mandeville's journeys to Constantinople, Jerusalem, and other holy places, focusing on vivid descriptions of marvelous phenomena, foreign customs, and different religions and cults, especially the Christian cult of relics. With true medieval logic—that is, acknowledging many, often contradictory, levels of meaning—the text freely mixes authentic experience with commonly held beliefs and

superstitions, relying heavily on disparate travel accounts and other literary sources of the time. Underlying the narrative is an acceptance of the equal value of ideas and descriptions as sources of allegorical, anagogical, mystical, moral, and literal meaning.

Such a text, with its rich range of fantastical and exotic images, demands illustration. A medieval manuscript in the British Museum, consisting of twenty-eight full-page images from the *Travels*, but without text, is now available in a facsimile edition. An introduction by Josef Krasa informs us that the unknown master who painted these illuminations worked with a Czech version of the text, in which—in keeping with the medieval custom of free translation—much material was deleted or rearranged.

As always, the freedom as well as the limitations of the medieval craftsman-artist has to be taken into account. The tradition of copying and the still developing artistic techniques (which lack, for instance, linear perspective) often interfere with contemporary appreciation of late medieval illuminations. But as Krasa points out, the strength of medieval art is its "great assimilative power . . . capable of erasing differences of time and space and transplanting any foreign material into a familiar environment." The illuminator of the *Travels*, in illustrations such as "The Four Types of Wood in Christ's Cross" or "The Burial of Adam," establishes a consistent, although somewhat timid, mixture of innocence, wonder, and sudden aesthetic coherence. In the image of the "Astronomers at the Top of Mount Athos," a place, we are told, where the air is so dry that it is impossible to breathe unless through a moistened sponge, we see a group of astronomers observing the heavenly bodies with the help of contemporary astronomical instruments, while a group of philosophers write letters in the dust—dust which is undisturbed by wind or rain, and where the writing therefore remains untouched. If we wish to see the state of the northern late medieval mind, it is nowhere expressed more forcefully than here.

Romanesque Bible Illumination by Walter Cahn is the definitive scholarly introduction to this major area of artistic concern during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Written with clarity and conciseness, this elaborate "coffee-table" volume provides chapters on the development of the Bible as a book and the history of its illumination from late antiquity through the early part of the Middle Ages. When examining the Romanesque period itself, much attention is given by Cahn to the development and diffusion of new ideas and iconography. The book is extensively illustrated throughout, with sixty very fine color plates and two hundred in black and white. A few of the black and white illustrations seem murky, perhaps because they may be reproductions of reproductions.

Modern sensibilities will be quite receptive to the geometric, abstract vocabulary of the Romanesque style, with its juxtaposition of various kinds of space, and its use of exaggerated pantomimic poses and gestures. The logic of the conclusions presented within each image may escape us, but their emotional intensity is almost always directly conveyed. For example, the Lambeth Bible illumination which juxtaposes scenes of Jacob's dream with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac below a frieze depicting the arrival of the three angels and their reception by Abraham, is, as Cahn points out, "Romanesque picture-making at its most arresting." We see the sleeping Jacob close to the ram "caught in a thicket by his horns," and the two separated by the ladder "with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it." When

Jacob awoke, "he was afraid, and said how dreadful is this place, this is none other than the house of God." We then see Jacob represented a second time, above himself sleeping, setting up the stones of his pillow as a pillar, pouring oil over it. This illumination is a stark representation indeed of the unsentimental reality of the entire Romanesque period and the force of its spiritual emotions as they relate to religious discipline, with its inherent and deeply disturbing ideas of acceptance and self-sacrifice.

Lasse Antonsen teaches at the Museum School in Boston, Massachusetts, and writes for Art New England.

Krishna, the Butter Thief
By John Stratton Hawley. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983. Pp. *xxi* + 415. $50.00.

Reviewed by H. Daniel Smith

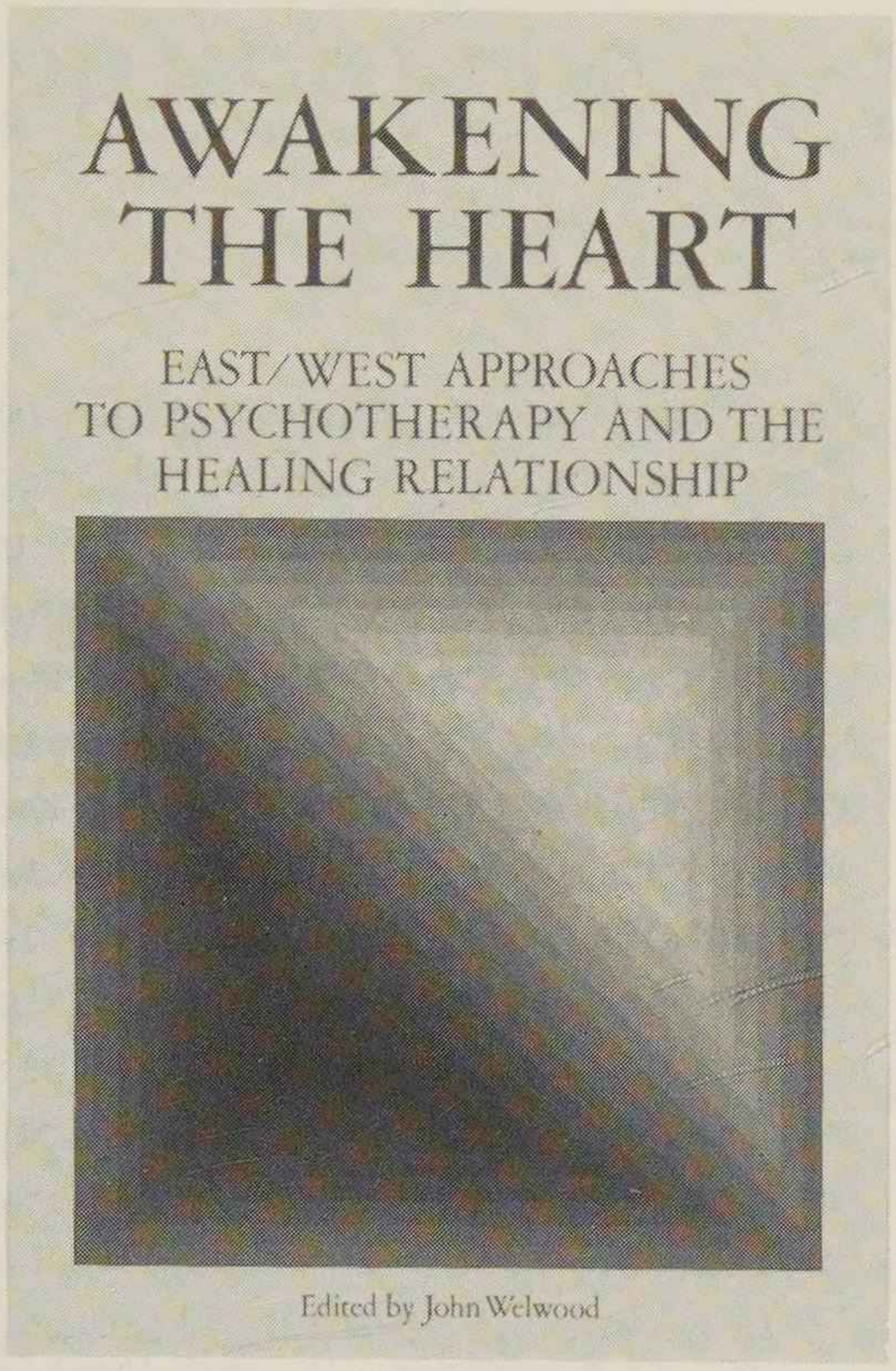
The figure of Krishna has become increasingly familiar in recent years. Since the mid-sixties, "Krishna Consciousness" has meant more than an alternate lifestyle and belief system which some of us have adopted. It has meant that we have witnessed a proliferation of artifacts—scholarly monographs, attractive art albums, reliable translations of traditional texts, impressive dance recitals and vocal performances, and professional recordings—which mark a growing intellectual fascination with, and a general cultural awareness of, the rich, Indian heritage celebrating the Dark Lord.

Of the many phases of Krishna's career, two have left an indelible mark on our minds, namely, Krishna the Counselor (of the *Bhagavad Gita*) and Krishna the Rustic Swain (of the *Gita Govinda*). Less well known to us, but perhaps the best loved of all the many aspects of the Lord among his millions of Hindu devotees in India, is Krishna the Divine Child. And even there, cult tradition differentiates the Holy Infant from the youngster who confounds King Kamsa, the juvenile who quells the serpent Kaliya, the stalwart boy who holds aloft Mt. Govardana, the little prankster who steals the gopis' clothes, and the tiny toddler who craves curds. It is this latter mode—and even there zooming in on the Butter Thief motif—that serves as focus for John Stratton Hawley's study.

In *Krishna, the Butter Thief*, Hawley gathers together important evidence which discloses to us the great significance in its Indian setting of this manifestation of Krishnaism. Drawing from his own experience in North India, where he did most of his field research in and around Mathura and Brindavan during the past decade, he observes that there Krishna, as the Butter Thief, is an ubiquitous presence "worshipped through his tiny image on myriad home altars, venerated in the temples and popular songs of the region; prominently featured in some of the oldest surviving temple sculpture . . . ; equally central in the newest (illustrated) calendars; and . . . the divine background for many people's perceptions of their children."

This volume is really three books in one. What ties them together is a common focus on the Butter Thief motif as it can be discerned in "texts" of various kinds. Each of the three "books" complements the other two, and any one could most certainly be read by itself. The specialist who goes to only one of the "books" in Hawley's volume would, however, be immensely rewarded by perusal of the whole.

In the first of these "books," Hawley quickly examines the surfacing of the But-



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ter Thief motif in the more conventional texts of Hindu religious literature. He surveys those texts from the ancient Tamil writings of the early Christian era to the Pan-Hindu Sanskrit compositions dating up to 1500 A.D. But the author notes that this gives only half of the story, so he turns to another kind of test, " . . . information recorded not on palm leaves and paper but in stone"—that is, to the incidence of the motif in Hindu sculpture all over the Indian subcontinent from the second or third century A.D. to the late sixteenth century and beyond. What is found in these two chapters is more than many less gifted and less energetic researchers turn out in a lifetime of reportage. I found this section particularly exciting because of its specificity: I know of no other catalogue in English that approaches what Hawley has done here for thoroughness. Appendices A and B, comprising over sixty pages, belong to this first "book," and they both locate and describe sculptures depicting the young Krishna in temples and museums throughout India. This material will be instructive to historians of Indian art in particular; but anyone interested in the visual arts inspired by devotion to Krishna will find this part of Hawley's study very useful, indeed.

In the second "book" of Hawley's impressive volume, he turns for his "text" to selections from the sixteenth-century anthology of Krishna-inspired poems known as the *Sur Sagar*, the "ocean" of verses attributed to Sur Das. Here Hawley provides fresh and original translations for some thirty-seven of the "early" *Sur Sagar* poems. That is, to be sure, but a small sampling of the sprawling corpus of devotional poems addressed to Krishna, attributed to Sur Das, and used so widely in liturgy, celebration, and meditation; the reader is reminded more than once that other, fuller treatments of the well-known and widely acclaimed utterances exist—among them, not only Hawley's own treatment (*Sur Das: Poet, Singer and Saint*) but also the work of Kenneth E. Bryant (*Poems to the Child-God: Structures and Strategies in the Poetry of Surdas*). But there is no need for the general reader to resort to collateral materials; here, in the three central chapters of his study, Hawley gives all the guidance necessary in order to help his general reader see that the deceptively simple poems of the blind poet are in fact very subtle evocations of complex moods occasioned by a vibrant faith in Krishna.

The third "book" contained in this volume grows out of Hawley's inclination to regard the miracle plays depicting Krish-

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na's early life staged in Brindavan today for, quite literally, the man in the street, as a genre of "text" on a par with other texts. They, too, must be culled for what they tell about the Butter Thief motif. Accordingly, he translates one entire play which he attended and recorded in 1975, and compares it with others he has also witnessed for common elements and for the consistency with which they convey the basic Krishna myth. What he says here is persuasive and provocative, based as it is on new materials and informal interviews with both those who stage and those who watch the plays. Again, he freely cites where other materials may be found in his own work (*At Play with Krishna: Pilgrimage Dramas from Brindavan*), and in the work of others (for example, Norvin Hein's *The Miracle Plays of Mathura*).

Throughout each of these component "books" of his volume, Hawley interprets the material he presents, so that his readers may be better able to discern the different levels at which the Butter Thief motif is understood by devotees of Krishna in various times and places. He concludes his study with two chapters especially designed, on the one hand, to bring out what the people in and around Mathura and Brindavan have to say about the Butter Thief and, on the other hand, to show how the Butter Thief and related motifs of Krishna's career relate to certain basic structures and boundaries recognized today in Hinduism. These two chapters may seem tangential, irrelevant, or meaningless to some readers. To others, they will constitute, along with the related passages offered by way of interpretation throughout the volume, a fourth "book" which overarches and substantiates the other three.

This is a volume to which I will confidently send my students as well as independent learners. Assuming that they already have an interest in Krishna, they are bound at some point to be caught up in a study as rich, resonant, and rewarding as this one. As already suggested, the author is generous with his citations; this serves the further function of acquainting the neophyte with the existing literature on the various topics touched upon. As a book dealing with religious phenomenology, this volume is most impressive when it most candidly reveals the author moving (ever so adroitly) across disciplinary lines. It is an *interdisciplinary* study of a high order, done by a man not only well trained in languages and literature, history and ethnology, the history of religions and the history of art in India, but also by a scholar equally at home in the field and in the museum, in the library and in the classroom.

H. Daniel Smith is Professor of Religion at Syracuse University. He recently completed Reading the Ramayana: A Bibliographic Guide for Students and College Teachers—Indian Variants on the Rama-Theme in English Translations *(Syracuse: The Maxwell School, 1983).*

African Genesis
By Leo Frobenius and Douglas C. Fox. Berkeley: Turtle Island Foundation, 1983. Pp. 265. $8.95.

Gods and Heroes of the Celts
By Marie-Louise Sjoestedt. Translated by Myles Dillon. Berkeley: Turtle Island Foundation, 1982. Pp. 131. $6.95.

Reviewed by Gus Kiley

Leo Frobenius, a controversial cultural evolutionist and theorist, a prominent member of the German diffusionist school, and, in his day, a leading authority on primitive art, made a dozen expeditions into Africa during the first three decades of this century. He explored various prehis-

toric rock-picture sites throughout the continent, recorded and acquired vast amounts of primitive art, and collected ethnographic material, including a great deal of mythology and folklore. From this mythological material were later selected twenty-nine myths and folktales, edited and translated into English by British art historian Douglas Fox, and published under the title of *African Genesis*. We are now fortunate to have this fine collection brought back into print by the Turtle Island Foundation.

From the Kabyl Berbers of northern Africa come an entertaining series of animal tales centered around the trickster antics of Jackal. More powerful, however, are the beautiful Kabyl creation stories which suspend us in an atmosphere of sacred time to which we have intimations of having once belonged. These tales include those of the first man and woman, and of their fifty sons and fifty daughters who emerge from the earth to wander its surface. "Who made you that you stand so high over us and over the trees?" the children call up to the moon and stars, so far above that no reply can be heard. After pairing off in marriage, these children create the first village, and the wise Ant comes to teach them how to grow grain, make fire, and bake bread. A final story tells of the origins and institutionalization of the ceremonies that mark the ritual year.

The legends of the Soninke, a people of the Sudan, revolve around the disappearances and rediscoveries of the illusive, mythical city of Wagadu. The city first comes to an end when the king's son, Gassire, is swayed from a career as a warrior (with the chance to protect Wagadu from its enemies) by the force of his true destiny, which is to become a bard. Although the city falls, it is Gassire's lute—which "gains a heart" and learns to "sing" by traveling with its owner and experiencing the pains and passions of his life—that makes Wagadu immortal in the hearts and memory of the people and allows for the city's eventual rediscovery.

A Hausa story, also from the Sudan, tells of a nasty old woman with a "bloodless heart" who plants such malicious gossip and sows such contention among the people of her village that even the devil, once her only competition, flees in fear and disbelief.

The book closes with myths from southern Rhodesia. The most important of these are Wahungwe creation myths about the *ngona* horn. This magical horn contains a potent oil used to make fire; those who possess it gain power over game animals and the forces of nature. During the creation, the first man (moon) used drops of this oil to impregnate his wives and engender the animals and plants.

Though no single volume can adequately represent the abundance and range of African myth, this volume—illustrated with rendered prehistoric rock paintings also collected on the Frobenius expeditions—serves as an excellent introduction and conveys the vivid quality of the African mythological imagination.

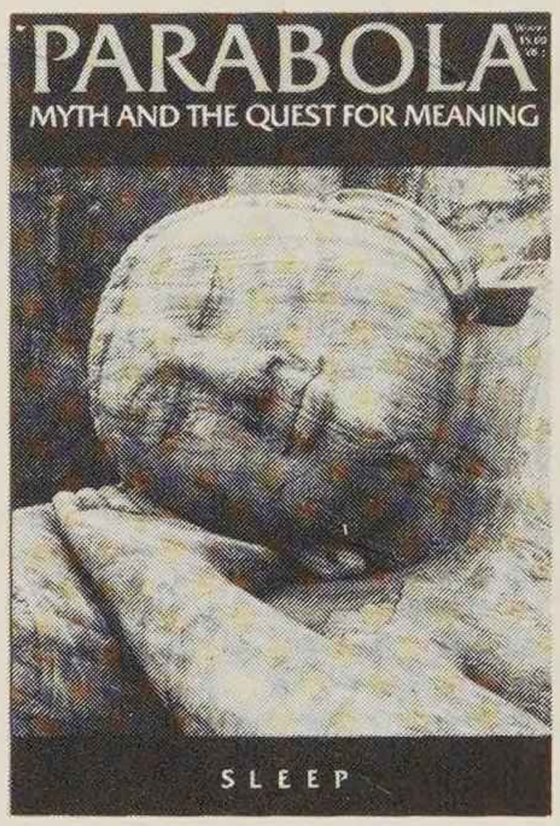
Another important reprint issued by the Turtle Island Foundation is Marie-Louise Sjoestedt's *Gods and Heroes of the Celts*, first published in France in 1940 and translated into English by Myles Dillon in 1949.

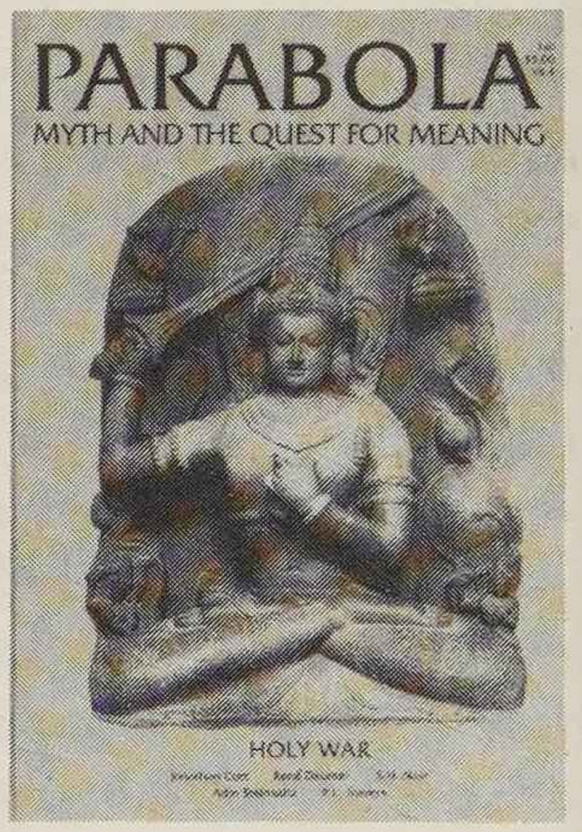
This clear and concisely written essay outlines the underlying patterns of Celtic mythology and the particular characteristics which distinguish it from other Indo-European mythologies. The author argues that the classical gods of Greece and Rome, for example, are defined primarily by their functions—patrons of love, war, or various crafts—and are hierarchically

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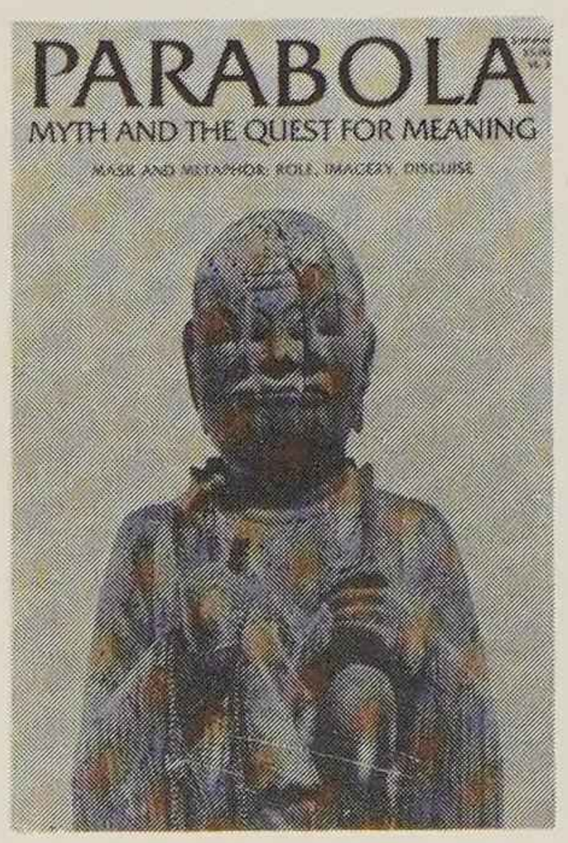
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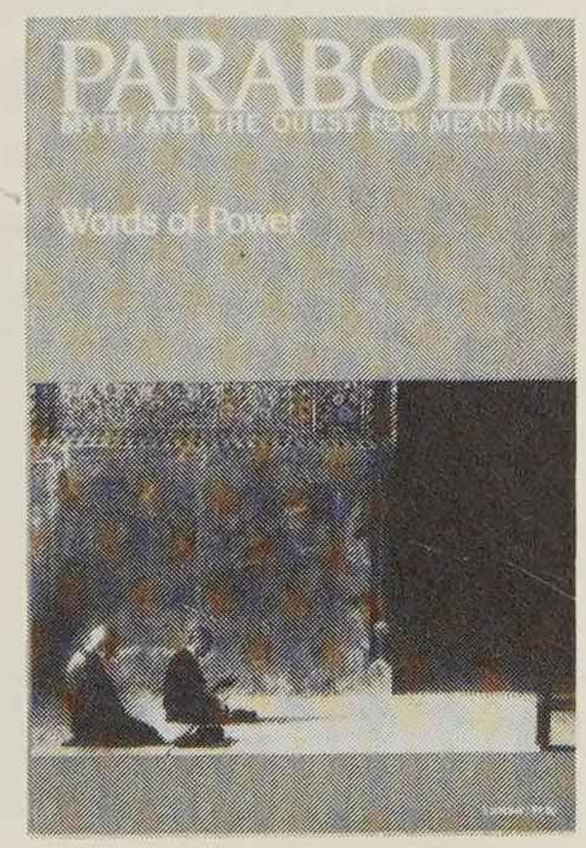
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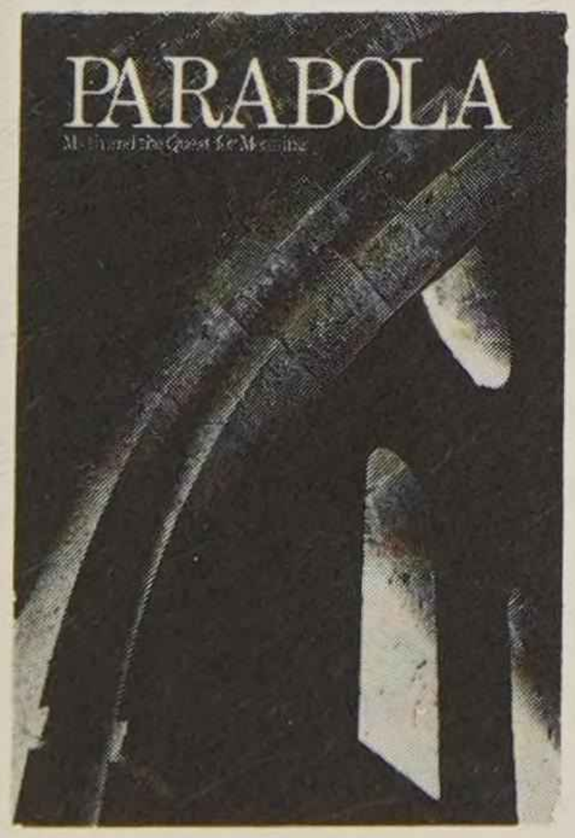
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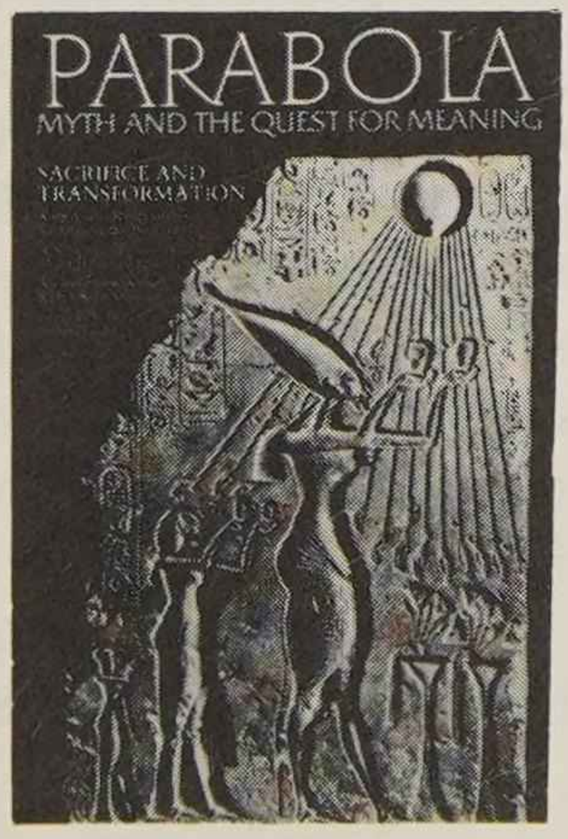
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grouped to form a pantheon, with the chief members in a heaven far removed from earth and humankind. Celtic mythology, on the other hand, features an array of multi-faceted deities who live on earth alongside human beings.

The Irish *Book of Conquests* relates how the Sons of Míl (the race of humans) entered Ireland and overcame the supernaturals (*Tuatha Dé Danann*), forcing them back into the wilds or under the surface of the earth. Ever since, nature has been imbued with the supernatural. Every unusual feature of the landscape is "alive" and witness to some myth. Yet the relationship of humankind to the deities and other supernatural forces which surround it is not an easy partnership. The human race is subject to direct invasion from the supernatural realm, especially on certain ritual feast days, and must defend its limited sphere by means of negotiation, force, and its own supernatural power.

Among the Celtic deities, Sjoestedt identifies two opposite, yet complementary, types: the rural fertility goddesses which inhabit the local landscape, and the male chieftain-gods (the Dagda, Lug, Nuada) who protect and nurture the tribe on a national level. The former govern natural events and are featured in the "topographic" myths, while the latter govern social life and dominate the "historical" myths. Periodic union between the two types assures the prosperity of the tribe and the fertility of the soil.

Irish heroes—superhuman warrior-magicians possessed by self-generated powers—are also of two kinds. There are tribal heroes whose duty is to serve the tribe and king, such as Cu Chulainn, and other heroes, such as Finn, who operate outside the social order as leaders of semi-nomadic warrior bands (*fiana*). The contrast between the "natural" hero and the "social" hero reflects the same basic dichotomy as that found between the female nature goddesses and the male tribal gods.

Much has been added to Celtic scholarship since Sjoestedt's volume first appeared, yet her basic characterizations are still sound. Her work will continue to serve as an excellent introduction to Celtic mythology, and to provide another generation with a clear outline of its unique features.

Gus Kiley is Associate Publisher of PARABOLA.

Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy
By Robert Farris Thompson. New York: Random House, 1983. Pp. *xvii* + 317. $19.95.

Reviewed by Charles H. Long

This work represents the next stage of the work presented by Professor Robert Farris Thompson in *African Art in Motion.* For those of us familiar with that work and the exhibit in the National Gallery, this extension was probably anticipated. In *African Art in Motion*, Thompson attempted to decipher the philosophical meaning of African culture from the forms of African art. His categories of interpretation were derived not from metaphysical or religious conceptions, but from very ordinary and simple portayals of human activities, presented in such modes as "standing," "sitting," "walking," etc.

In the case of African cultures in Africa, such deciphering presupposes the cultures of Africa as a context, with their rich layers of language, ritual, history, and religion as a wider arena in which to check its plausibility. In the Americas, one is dealing not with African cultures, but with "Africanisms," that is, fragments and pieces of culture which are of African derivation. But these fragments are not simply residuals of a past history; they are presented by Thompson as creative cultural forms that survive because they are artistically alive and form the basis for distinctive Afro-American cultures in the New World.

From this perspective, African culture —or better, African gods—did not die in the New World; they simply took new forms, adapting themselves to the new situation, bearing older meanings while at the same time creating new manifestations.

The general method of the text is to discuss the structure and meaning of a cultural religious form in Africa and then to portray this same or a similar form in the New World through texts, interpretation, and pictures. This works well for some areas, such as African modes in Cuba, Bahia, Haiti. It does not work as well in other areas, e.g., Mexico and the U.S.A., and in these latter situations his interpretations are rather shaky.

However, the tendentiousness of his historical-cultural argument in some cases is not the essential point. His major point has to do with the "philosophical" meaning of art and cultural creativity. His reference here is not simply to the problem of causal cultural connections, but to the retention of any unit of Africanness as the basis for cultural creativity among Afro-Americans. In one sense, the argument is self-justifying and would go like this: "Wherever we find a distinct form of cultural and artistic creativity among Afro-Americans, we must posit Africa as its source." This may be true but it may not be provable, especially in terms of causal historical arguments. We are dealing here not so much with history in the ordinary sense, but with a subtle "intrahistory," the "history" of religion, myths, and music, which, though presupposing history in the ordinary sense, is not quite the same thing.

Thompson introduces his study with considerations of this kind when he discusses the percussive performance style and "coolness" as artistic philosophical modalities, but these subtleties tend to be overwhelmed in the body of the text by causal historical arguments. But even if we accept the arguments, other problems remain. The issue of foreign cultures in the New World has been raised before. It looms large today because of the attitudes prevalent in the modern world regarding both the cultures of Africa and of Afro-

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Americans. One would hope that we might be beyond these negative and false notions and even beyond the doubt regarding Africanisms. If we are, other issues might be raised regarding cultural and philosophical creativity.

First of all, in what ways do the retention and adaptation of African cultural and artistic forms represent a critique of these forms in their originary modes? Little of this is discussed in the text. What is the aesthetic meaning of retention and adaptation? Here I am referring to the varied cultural rhythms of the cultures of the New World—the aboriginal, Anglo-Saxon, Mediterranean Roman Catholic, etc.—into which Africans came. Apart from content, the varying temporalities of these cultures present new artistic, stylistic, and aesthetic dimensions. Thompson's notion of the percussive might have been employed here to some advantage.

Finally, there is the issue of referent of meaning. For the most part, the referent of all Afro-American cultural-artistic meaning is found in its African origin. Let me give an example of a different but somewhat similar situation—the Indo-European hypothesis. It is generally accepted that several European cultures possess an Indo-European substructure, e.g., Greek, German, Irish, Scandinavian, etc. This refers to a substructure of language, myth, ritual, ideology. Classical Indian culture (Sanskritic tradition) is also Indo-European. Are we to refer the meaning of all the Indo-European cultures and their forms to an originary referent in India? In Greece? I think not. A better tack might be a comparative study of all of the forms, and then a study of the actual context of each, to show how each culture exemplifies the "originary" in its distinctiveness, and not by reference to a historical origin. In this sense, the historical origin would be simply another example.

After more than five hundred years of Afro-American cultures, what is needed is a comparative cultural study of them, and not simply the tracing of origins. Professor Thompson's *Flash of the Spririt*, while not accomplishing this task, affords us a vision of these rich possibilities.

Charles H. Long is the William Rand Kenan, Jr. Professor of History of Religions at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Religion and Nothingness
By Kenji Nishitani. Translated from Japanese with an Introduction by Jan Van Bragt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. Pp. *xlix* + 318. $28.50. Paper $8.95.

Reviewed by Willard Johnson

Religion and Nothingness presents a mature Japanese interpretation of one of the most profound discoveries of Oriental philosophy, the notion of emptiness. This idea shifts attention from the gross material side of reality to the subtle underside of things, to their mystery, to their immateriality or spirituality ("To become full, be hollow" says the *Tao Te Ching*). Ordinary opinion rates nothingness to be a lack in being (empty bank account, empty larder), but Oriental philosophers tolerated the ambiguity of nothingness better and saw it as a way to identify the ultimate effectiveness of spirit in life (after all, we use a room because four walls create a useful emptiness).

The most extensive philosophical tradition to develop the implications of emptiness is surely the *sunyata* (Sanskrit for "emptiness") schools of Buddhism. Though the Ṛg Veda and the Upaniṣads both use emptiness as a speculative concept, major focus was not placed on the idea until the time of the Buddha, and it remained for his follower, Nāgārjuna, to apply the idea in technical philosophy some five hundred years or so later. The tradition then migrated to China, where it combined with Taoism to create Ch'an Buddhism, to Korea, creating Soen Buddhism, and to Japan, giving rise to the Zen sects. These all practiced meditation as their major spiritual exercise, combining it with the ancient metaphysical doctrine of the ultimate emptiness of all material creation and phenomena, following Nāgārjuna's lead.

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This is a major book in the growing field of East-West encounter, and particularly in Christian-Buddhist dialogue. It comes from the Japanese philosopher Keiji Nishitani (born 1900), a member of the Kyoto School founded by his illustrious predecessor, Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945). This school arose from Japanese acquaintance with Western philosophy (particularly post-Descartes) and Christianity; its members combine Western philosophical modes of thought with Buddhist meditative experience and metaphysical categories. Thus, Nishitani's book at once restates in modern terms an ancient Buddhist response to Christianity's challenge, and attempts a relatively rare synthesis of multi-cultural perspectives into a planetary metaphysics which neglects neither Western nor Eastern methods and conclusions.

Though actually a collection of essays brought together for this book, Nishitani's argument proceeds from his definition of religion, through a critique of Western nihilism, to establish the ground for a genuine alternative in the Buddhist understanding of emptiness. Though about religion, the book actually is Buddhist theology written with a firm grasp of Western existentialism and its dilemmas, to which Nishitani adds the demon of scientism characteristic of the current secularized Western reality paradigm. Both, he argues, have brought human consciousness to a dead end in nihility or the "relative nothingness" which fails to benefit from any sense of spirituality, since it locates reality exclusively in the material realm and sees it through its consequent despair.

The crux of Nishitani's solution to these admittedly crucial problems in metaphysics and human consciousness comes in his proposal that we adopt Nāgārjuna's absolute nothingness, rather than be fixed in the pessimism of its relative forms. In his two most creatively constructive chapters, on time and history, he resolves the impasse. Indeed, both time and history (personal history is karma in Buddhist terms) fix us in "infinite finitude," which can only lead to negative nihilism. Though this notion is contradictory to ordinary logic, it expresses paradoxically the dilemma of scientism and its theory of knowledge, which considers nothing real which is not material, thus locking itself in the cage of materiality (saṃsara, the eternally finite

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turn-around to which people are bound in repeated reincarnation by their karmic actions—their expression of will, as Nishitani calls it).

Nishitani leads the reader through the complexities of distinguishing relative from absolute refuge in nothingness, seeing the former as the nihility which cripples Western spirituality. This becomes an existential confrontation with nihilism, using Buddhist revelation: "For only in the existential confrontation with nihility do we see the earnest life-or-death struggle for the transcendence of birth-and-death, escape from the unending causality of karma, and attainment of the 'yonder shore' beyond the fathomless sea of suffering. It is, in other words, the struggle for nirvana."

True nothingness does not limit us in any fashion, since its realization is based on a reidentification with a transcendent reality realm, a transcendent self, and a transcendent mode of action, all so described because they participate in absolute nothingness rather than remaining at the saṃsaric or material level of creation and phenomena. This allows Nishitani to elaborate his consummate vision of human freedom; for once identity shifts into absolute rather than relative nothingness, limits fall away, as Buddhist soteriology proclaims on the basis of the Buddha's experience of enlightenment. No longer do time, death, recurrence, and karma burden a person, since absolute nothingness transcends all these. Nishitani sees the possibility of "a free karma" which implies "an ecstatic transcendence to nihility." The problems of the nihilistic self-centered will dissolve in an experience of "non-ego samādhi," when work becomes play in "dharmic naturalness," when doing becomes true doing, ecstatic of itself in suchness, playfulness, and spontaneity, which the Buddhist tradition identifies with compassion and love. Here, action frees itself from egotistic self-indulgence to end once and for all personal history and the bonds of time and recurrent death.

Such is the stuff out of which Buddhist salvation is made, the turning about of the foundations of consciousness which gives spiritual freedom and meaning to the wasteland, to transient suffering existence. This conversion experience frees a person. Nishitani adopts the language of salvation to underline the magnitude of emptiness's freeing potential: "As a taking leave of the endless Cycle of birth-and-death, nirvana is a rebirth to true life. It is new life. And here, for the first time, true infinity appears." In Buddhism, he says, "Every day is a good day."

This book, with its soteriological vision of ecstatic transcendence, is bound to thrill some and to stump others. Though Nishitani disclaims it argues for a single religious commitment, it will distress some serious readers for being based on Buddhist revelation and the Sino-Japanese tradition, particularly Zen. But, after all, this is a special kind of philosophy, called theology, which rests on assumptions not proven, but taken from the founder's archetypal experience. Though it adopts a polyglot vocabulary (from *Dasein* to *sunyata* through Greek, Chinese, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century existentialism) and situates itself within a reality determined not only by logic but by meditative experience, it will reward those who persevere in reading it by bringing them to see what Nāgārjuna would say in this age about our dilemmas and possibilities.

Does this mean that the author has convinced us of the validity of emptiness as a remedy for our ills? If he has not, it will not be his fault, for he has brought Nāgārjuna up to date and applied the latter's astringent meditative tradition in language

presumably more accessible to Westerners. Such insights as Nishitani offers can pierce through a cultural commitment made long ago by Greek philosophers to a single-dimensioned material reality. Finding no use for the mysterious other side of transient materiality, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution locked us into a vision of the real which has resulted in a profound malaise and a destructive nihilism which can only come from being cut away from the very spirituality which lies at the true heart of our nature and the world's mystery. Whatever philosophy, religion, or meditative discipline we follow, Nishitani shows a way of reaching the level of divine reality through insight.

Willard Johnson teaches Religious Studies at San Diego State University. He recently authored Riding the Ox Home *(London: Rider, 1982).*

LINEAGE
A CHAIN OF FRIENDS

A Newsletter for the Emerging Sangha in America

A strong networking community or Sangha is emerging in this country: people linked together by common experiences and function—a literal chain of friends.

LINEAGE is, above all, a welcoming committee for those of you who are finding your self in America and want to know where the rest of us are. The purpose of LINEAGE is to bring spiritual practices in America into contact with one another. Not just those who already belong to a spiritual tradition or lineage but also (and especially) those who find themselves involved in this kind of work but have not yet been recognized and/or found their particular lineage. LINEAGE is also devoted to the Householder or married couple, to children and to family practice.

LINEAGE serves as a community bulletin board to help keep us informed with news from the many different groups working in this country: American Indian, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Moslum, etc.—all are welcome. We hope that LINEAGE can serve to provide information and news that can help to confirm who we are and where we can look to find further direction and training.

Our newsletter is just now forming. Sample copies are available upon request. Also needed: art work, articles, news, columnists, what-have-you? Aside from the work we each have to do, we have each other. Please join us in this chain of friends.

LINEAGE

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NOTICES

The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi
By William Chittick. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983. Pp. *viii* + 433. $44.50. Paper $12.95.

Reviewed by Carl W. Ernst

One of the greatest figures in the Islamic mystical tradition was Jālāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207-1273), whose profound outpourings of Persian poetry remain a cherished heritage of Sufi literature. William Chittick's book is a substantial selection from Rūmī's works, arranged systematically by topic with a minimum of commentary, providing an excellent overview of Rūmī's spiritual teaching. It is Chittick's aim to let Rūmī speak for himself, and in this he has succeeded admirably, with highly readable idiomatic translations (in an appendix, he has noted and justified his divergences from the previous translations of Nicholson and Arberry).

The book is divided into three main sections, dealing with theory, practice, and attainment to God, and there are many subdivisions within these chapters, allowing the reader to sample at once Rūmī's thoughts on any given subject. This is especially helpful, since none of Rūmī's works is very systematic, and his remarks on, for example, love and the intellect are dispersed throughout his voluminous writings. Chittick's explanations are often based on the metaphysical writings of Rūmī's associate, Sadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, a leading disciple of the theosophical master of Sufism, Ibn 'Arabi. Chittick also translates the technical terms of mystical vocabulary consistently, with frequent reference to the Koranic origins of Sufi terminology. A number of points are handled particularly well, such as the description of the relation of the partial intellect to the universal intellect, the Resurrection, the *nafs* ("carnal soul") as the ego, and divine jealousy. The material collected under "False Masters" should be required reading for many who will unfortunately never see it. The last sections of the book, on "Poesy and Imagery," with excursuses on the symbolism of the garden, the beloved, and wine, form an excellent commentary on the nature of mystical language in general and poetry in particular.

The texture of the selections is varied, since single lines of verse appear next to prose from Rūmī's recorded conversations (*Fīhi mā fīhi*), lengthy sections from the *Mathnawī*, and complete lyric poems from the *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* (it will be noted that Chittick somewhat downplays the decisive role of Shams-i Tabrīzī in Rūmī's development). Many verses from the *Dīwān* are translated for the first time, such as the superb *ghazal* at the end of the section about the face of the beloved. Rūmī's range includes verses of great intimacy: "I said, 'Who art Thou?' He said, 'The Desire of all.' I said, 'Who am I?' He said, 'The desire of the Desire.'" Rūmī has an uncanny ability to use common imagery to strike home with a spiritual truth: "Love alone is worth hunting—but how can you catch it in your snare? / Unless, perhaps, you become His Prey: Leave aside your snare and enter His!" Like his Sufi predecessor, Sana'ī, Rūmī is not reluctant to use ridiculous and coarse language, as in this mild example: "In their fine exterior you see ascetics, but inwardly—God does not inhabit the house! For two farthings one can buy three or four assloads of these big ducks!" In short, those who enjoy the world's great mystical poetry will find this book a delight, and students of Sufism will value this as a lucid and convenient

guide to the oeuvre of one of the great masters.

Carl W. Ernst specializes in the study of classical Sufism and Indo-Muslim culture. He is Assistant Professor of Religion at Pomona College in Claremont, California.

Axe Handles
By Gary Snyder. Berkeley: North Point Press, 1983. Pp. 128. $12.50. Paper $7.50.

Reviewed by John Sheehy

In a complex culture where alienation is almost the status quo, the idea of living in harmony with the world seems nostalgic—a possibility found only in earlier and simpler times. Yet harmony has never been a truly natural state for humans. When achieved, it has come as the result of effort and know-how. Poet Gary Snyder is confident that we can once again achieve a living harmony, if only by reasserting the effort and regaining the know-how.

In his first collection of poems since the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Turtle Island* (1974), Snyder offers two cornerstones for rebuilding a harmonious culture: sound environment and strong community. For Snyder, harmony begins in the small community, based on direct, affectionate bonds between the members, and a close bond with the environment. These bonds to environment and community are forged through a third ingredient: work. In Snyder's scheme of things, work is what joins people in harmonious relationship to land and community. He sees work as interdependent upon environment and community, and therefore performed with the aim of sustaining both.

A number of poems in this collection begin with a simple task—pumping well-water, tending apple trees, fixing a truck, burning brush—and gradually move to an observation of the poet's surroundings—to the mountain sky, the terrain, an animal, children. In so doing, the poet places his work and himself within the harmony of his surroundings. Such poems may appear incidental, but like still water, they offer much more. They tell us how much of our knowledge of the environment, an environment upon which our survival depends, must be relearned; they remind us how little we know about the ways of living on this earth.

This observational approach is common to most of Snyder's narrative poems. Many find their catalyst in entering the woods—hiking, canoeing, mushroom hunting—others in family or community activities—painting a schoolhouse, working on a friend's house, passing skills on to children—but almost all look away from the activity to the contours and brief occurrences in the surrounding natural world. This glance is done without explicit interpretation of that world; things and events are simply observed in their integrity, but, given the sharp-edged clarity of Snyder's poetry, this is enough: we share his marvel at the natural world and his serene sense of feeling at home in it.

Such a reading experience reminds us that learning, or relearning, begins with observation. Only in watching and listening do we recognize the potentially harmonious relationship our lives have to the natural world around us. Upon that recognition, Snyder suggests, it takes only effort and acquired know-how to achieve a living harmony.

John Sheehy is a staff member of PARABOLA.

One Fairy Story Too Many: The Brothers Grimm and Their Tales
By John Ellis. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983. Pp. 214. $17.50.

Reviewed by Paul Jordan-Smith

This is a readable account, a little wordy perhaps, and fleshed out by too much German text with full translation, of the methods of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in gathering and preparing material for the *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen*, that classic collection of folk tales that has established a unique place in Western culture as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*.

The book addresses itself to the view in academia that the folkloric methodology of the Brothers Grimm was impeccable, a view which Professor Ellis considers widely held by folklorists. To judge from a sampling of various notable scholars in the field, including A.H. Krappe and Stith Thompson, it does not seem to be so widely held an opinion as Professor Ellis would like us to believe. That the brothers did not always adhere to their stated high standards, and indulged at times in considerable literary manipulation, has long been recognized, at least among scholars. Professor Ellis seems a bit hard-pressed for evidence that a different assessment is the current one, and he relies on rather suppositious interpretations of the thought of selected scholars, which he subjects to academic ridicule.

The principal concern of this book seems to be the redemption of the folklore and beliefs of the ancient Germans from the pernicious interpretations of the Grimms, rather than rescuing folklore scholarship from methodological error. But beyond a rather narrow academic horizon, that is, for the "general reader," it is not really all that important that the brothers rendered their versions in a more literary language than that in which they were received, or that their sources were sometimes not even German, but French, or were members of their family or household, rather than the "Märchenfrauen" to whom the stories are ascribed. The tales speak for themselves, fortunately, and they tell us the same things that similar tales tell us that were gathered elsewhere under more exacting conditions than those purportedly guiding the Grimms. As Alexander H. Krappe wrote in *The Science of Folklore*, shortly after Bolte and Polivka, earlier in this century, had revealed the imperfections in the brothers' technique: "Had [the Brothers Grimm], as is now sometimes demanded by overzealous folklorists, taken down the tales literally and published them without their tactful and sympathetic reworking, we should no doubt have texts which might here and there allow better conclusions for the history of a type: yet in that case it is also quite possible that our science would still be sleeping *dans le neant*."

I don't think Professor Ellis's belated exposé will have an impact on the popularity of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* now or in years to come, in German, English, or any of the many other languages into which they have been translated, or in any of the countries in which they are beloved.

Paul Jordan-Smith is a freelance writer and storyteller and a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA.

(Continued from page 5)

(of course, one can never be sure with transliterations). I have always understood the origin of that expression to be the Aramaic "*abra k'dabra*" ("I create as I speak"—a rather succinct definition of the use of words of power for magic).

The best part of this issue, apart from Epicycles and Arcs, which I always enjoy, was William Chittick's article, "The Words of the All-Merciful," which was a clear and interesting account of Muslim doctrines. The similarities to Judaism, by the way, are striking. One of the great functions of your publication is its illustration of the common ground on which all human faiths lie and the common sources from which they arise.

I look forward, as always, to seeing future issues of PARABOLA.

Rabbi Philip J. Bentley
Temple Or-Elohim
Jericho, New York

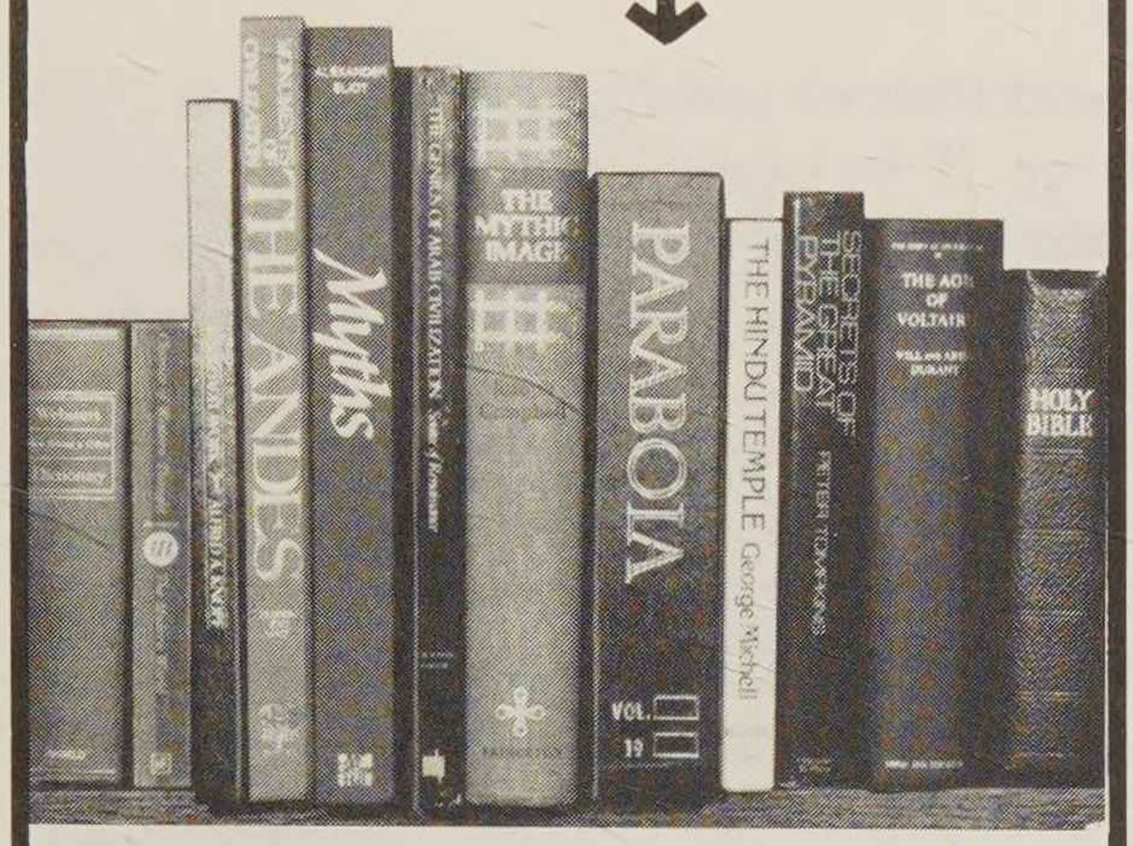
Thomas Dooling's articles, "Glory" (Summer, 1983, Vol. VIII, No. 3) and "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt" (Winter, 1983, Vol. VIII, No. 1), are instructive, insightful, and well written, which grants him liberty to complain about creeping imprecision in legal writing; however, I do not share his concern over the demise of the written word in law.

"Legalese" rightfully carries a negative connotation because so many legal terms mean little or nothing to the public at large. If the legal system is to be accessible, then it must be understandable. This is not to say that specialized language is unimportant; indeed, every discipline has its restricted code, which facilitates communication of standard concepts and movement toward new ideas. However, if law is to serve society, it must at some point communicate with society. If lawyers were shamans or tricksters (and one could certainly argue that many are just that), then empty incantations would be useful; but lawyers should aspire to be heroes, and heroes today, according to Joseph Campbell, must strive to bring light where there is now darkness, to reveal the myth, to communicate, and to love.

Precise writing is an excellent way to communicate, but the nature of communication is changing. The computer chip and the video screen are part of a technological evolution in communication which started with the printing press. Law, too, must evolve. The "written word" in law will soon be largely accessible by a computer linked to data bases by phone or satellite. The lawyer will be required to develop the skills to access the data, integrate it, and communicate its meaning. Perhaps the undigestible quantity of legal materials now accumulating on reams of paper and reels of magnetic medium will force all of us to admit that law is not to be found in books or in computers, but rather in the interaction of people and the affirmation of the human experience.

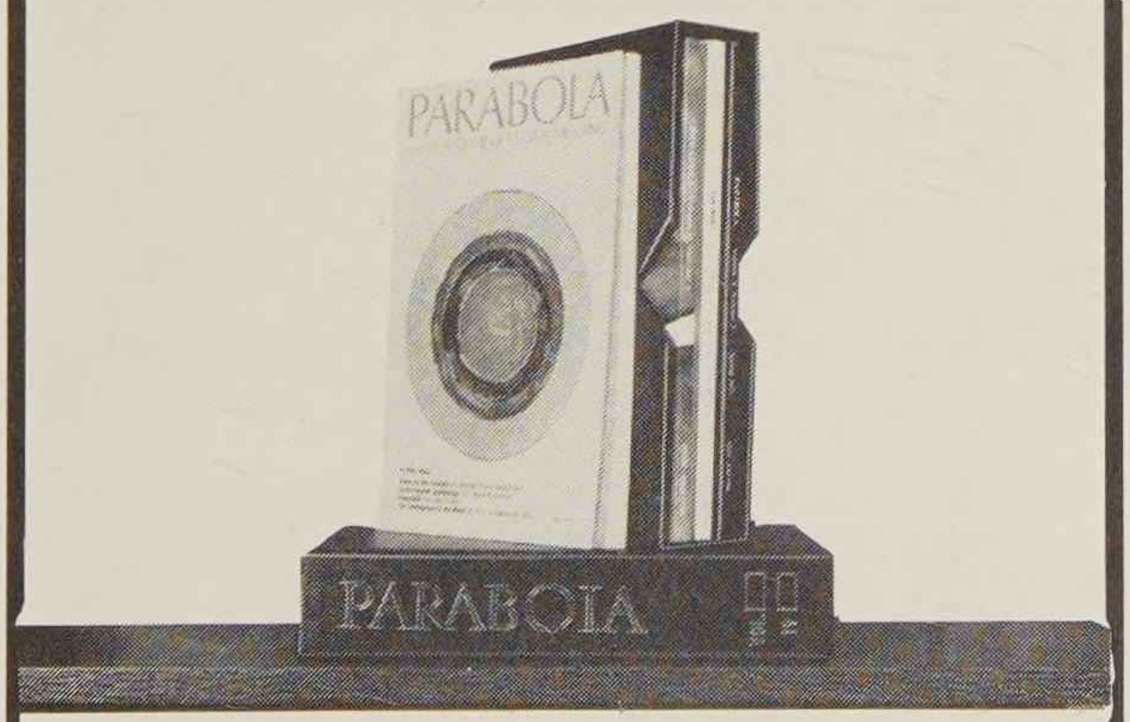
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Photographs by Peter Kaufmann, Deu-Fra

With apologies to all parties, I would like to clear up a footnote to my article "Between Sun and Moon" which appeared in the last issue of PARABOLA (Fall, 1983, Vol. VIII, No. 4). The note cited Vivian One Feather's excellent rendition of Lakota myths, the *Ehanni Ohunkakan*. While I often use the One Feather edition, the quotation was actually taken from James R. Walker's *Lakota Myth*, edited by Elaine Jahner. The particular version of the myth cited was that told to Walker by George Sword.

Paul Jordan-Smith
New York, New York

I regret that in my review of Alvin Josephy's *Now That the Buffalo's Gone* (Summer, 1983, Vol. VIII, No. 3), I stated that I could not find an acknowledgment to Buffy Sainte Marie for the use of her song title in the title of the book. I should have found it: it is graciously stated under Acknowledgments on p. *xii*.

David P. McAllester
Middletown, Connecticut

CREDITS

Page 4 Bronze wire fibula, a continuous puzzle. Greece, 10th century B.C. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Page 6 Jean-Paul Roux, *Les Explorateurs au Moyen Age* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1961).

Page 16 Mid-5th century, Ravenna.

Page 18 12th century, Vézelay.

Page 19 C. 1185, Borgo Sansepolcro.

Page 20 Early 12th century. Koto-in, Daitokuji, Kyoto.

Page 21 (top) C. 1640. Private collection.

Page 21 (bottom) Ptolemaic period. Musée du Louvre.

Page 27 Sengai's *Rinzai at Work* demonstrates how monks must work to help disciples open their eyes. 18th-19th century. Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd., Japan.

Page 29 Ch'i-ch'eng, *Lohan Cleaning his Ear.* British Museum, London.

Page 30 Sengai, *Shoki the Devil-driver.* 18th-19th century. Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd., Japan.

Page 31 *The Second Patriarch*, in the style of Shih K'o. Tokyo National Museum.

Page 33 Fresco of the Buddha receiving alms from a woman and child. 5th-6th century, Ajanta.

Page 34 God creating Adam. 13th century, Chartres Cathedral.

Page 35 *King Solomon's Court* attributed to Madhu Khanahzad, 17th century. Courtesy of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan.

Page 37 Seven floors of Heaven. Indian miniature, 19th century. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Page 38 Carving of blacksmith intent upon his work. 15th century. Basilica of St. Denis.

Page 39 Peter Brueghel, *The Fall of Icarus.* Brussels Museum.

Page 40 *Choir of Angels* from Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber Scivias*, 12th century. Nassauische Landesbibliothek, Wiesbaden.

Page 43 Portrait from Southeastern Idaho Reservations, 1897. Photographer unknown. Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. National Archives.

Page 44 Turn of the century portrait, possibly of Henry T. Thurber (private secretary to President Cleveland). Date and photographer unknown. Records of the Public Building Service, U.S. National Archives.

Page 45 Persian family from Abraham V. Jackson, *Persia Past and Present: A Book of Travel and Research* (New York: Macmillan, 1906).

Page 47 "The Hanged Man" from *Tarot of Marseilles.* (Paris: J.M. Simon).

Page 48 Detail from throne of Sultan of Ukerewe, East Africa. Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin.

Page 53 Sun with a superimposed water or ray pattern, 5th century. *The Sun in Art.*

Page 54 Ink drawing by E.P. Ciocci

Page 57 Albert Bierstadt, *A Storm in the Rocky Mountains—Mount Rosalie*, 1866, detail. Brooklyn Museum.

Page 62 Blackfoot warrior by William Wildschut, c. 1924. Courtesy Museum of the American Indian—Heye Foundation.

Page 65 Raphael, *Pope Leo X Carried in Procession.* Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

Page 66 Abu'l-Hasan, *Jahangir at the* Jharoka *Window.* India, c. 1620. Courtesy of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan.

Pages 82-90 Illustrations from Gerald S. Hawkins, *Mindsteps to the Cosmos* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1983).

Page 97 Illustration from John Stratton Hawley, *Krishna The Butter Thief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

PROFILES

D.M. Dooling is the Founding Editor of PARABOLA.

The works of **George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff** (1870–1949) include *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*; *Meetings with Remarkable Men*; *Life is Real Only Then, When I Am*; and *Views from the Real World*, all published by E. P. Dutton & Co.

Martin Lings is the author of many books, including *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century*, *What is Sufism?*, and, most recently, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Inner Traditions). From 1970 to 1973 he served as Keeper of the Oriental Manuscripts at the British Museum, where since 1955 he has been in special charge of the Arabic manuscripts.

Roger Lipsey, a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA, is the author of *Coomaraswamy: His Life and Work* and the editor of Coomaraswamy's *Selected Papers*. He is currently writing a book on the spiritual dimensions of twentieth-century art.

James Robinson is Associate Professor of Religion at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls. His translation of the lives of the eighty-four Buddhist siddhas has appeared under the title *Buddha's Lions* (Dharma Publishing).

Henri Tracol writes and lectures extensively in the United States and Europe. A collection of his essays, talks, and interviews, *Pourquoi dors-tu Seigneur?* has recently been published by Editions Pragma.

P.L. Travers, a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA since the magazine began, is the author of the Mary Poppins books, as well as *Friend Monkey*, *The Fox in the Manger*, *About the Sleeping Beauty*, and *Two Pairs of Shoes*.

Janwillem van de Wetering is the author of two books about Zen Buddhism, *A Glimpse of Nothingness* and *The Empty Mirror*. He has also written a series of well-known mystery novels, most recently *The Streetbird* (Putnam).