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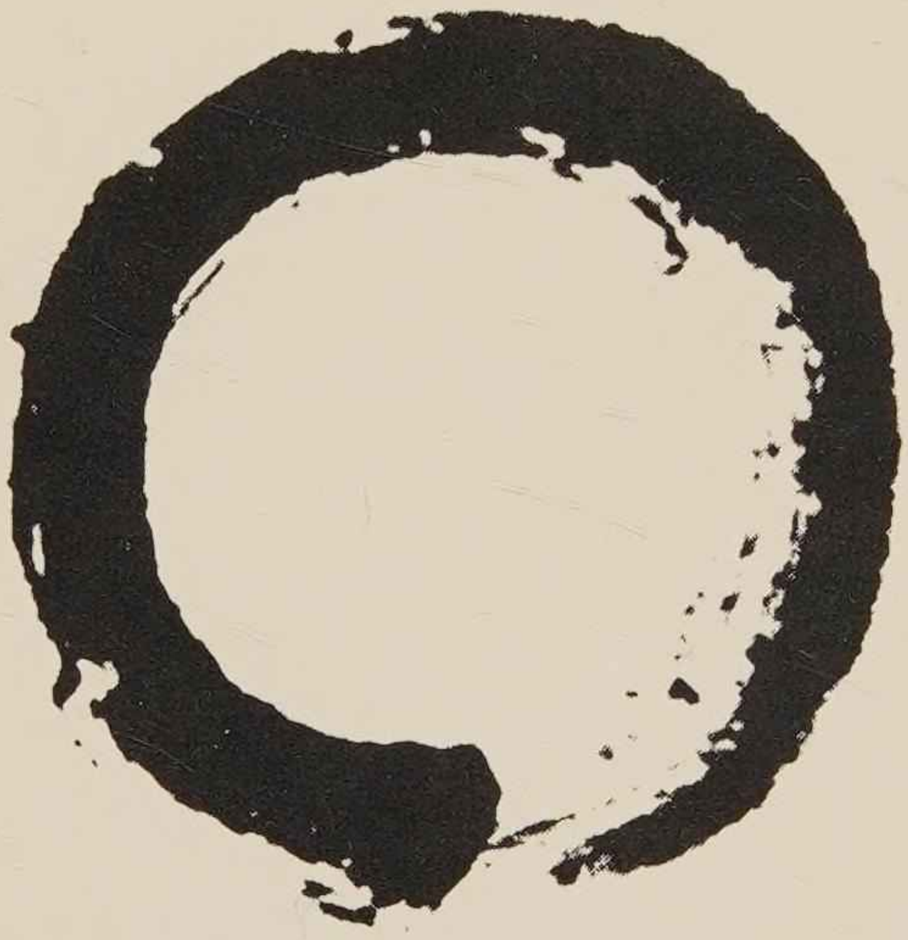
PARABOLA

THE MAGAZINE OF MYTH AND TRADITION



FOOD

WHOLENESS



The Tenth Anniversary Issue
of
PARABOLA
Coming in January

Volume IX
Number 4

PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

FOOD

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Cover Porcelain bowl with underglaze incised and carved decoration. China. Sung Dynasty, late 11th–early 12th centuries A.D. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum.

FOCUS

It has been said that creation is a cosmic metabolic act: everything feeds and is fed. A vast and subtle streaming network of forces and energies meet, exchange, and are transformed on all levels from the infinitely large to the infinitely small. In his article in this issue, Basarab Nicolescu explores the implications of recent research in theoretical physics which seem to conform to the traditional view of the universe as a metabolism—whole and interrelated.

The difference between matter and energy, between what has life and what does not, blurs in this vision of the universe as an organic entity, inconceivably complex, incessantly changing, in one field or another tending toward finer or denser vibration; the whole charged with order and coherence.

Human beings appear as cells of this organism, arising from it, inextricably enmeshed in it, nourished unceasingly by the action of innumerable results occurring in other parts of the cosmic organism. So much is required to sustain our lives, from so many sources both distant and near, known and unknown. Whether we are actively aware of these many sources of nourishment or not, our being is dependent upon them. Implicated in this way as we are, the idea that the knowledge of a greater reality is directly and proportionately linked to self-knowledge becomes more concrete. On a subjective level, for exam-



ple, it is inevitable that at a moment when one's perception of oneself deepens and enlarges, one's perception of another human being also expands, as does the context in which both have their being.

In preparing this issue, it was our intention to try to see the limits inherent in our contemporary attitudes towards food, and how it might be possible to expand those limits. Most of what is written about food seems to imply that we are organisms with only physical needs and that those needs can be definitively known. This attitude seems directly linked to a progressively constricted view of human life, a tendency to increasingly reduce it to its most outer and obvious aspects.

In contrast, Lobsang Lhalungpa writes in this issue about the Buddhist view that there are four nutriments necessary to sustain human life, of which material food is but the first. The harvest of the sense organs—the impressions we receive through seeing, touching, tasting, smelling, and hearing, that flow of impressions which penetrates and sustains us at every moment—is the second. The last two nutriments further amplify the potential of the individual, revealing him as a being in movement, tending always to either greater or lesser awareness. It is a more whole picture of human life and at the same time a more whole picture of the kinds of food necessary to sustain that which is uniquely human. In one way or another each of the articles in this issue serves to deepen and refine the sources of food and purposes it can serve.

Many questions remain. It is possible to accept that food is a vehicle of transformation—at least to accept that material food is transformed in us into substances and energies which sustain our functioning. But into what are more subtle, equally necessary, forms of nourishment transformed? Everyone has recognized a moment of being nourished by an experience—suddenly seeing a friend clearly and as if for the first time; walking down a path in the woods and, for a moment, sensing the vast order and purposefulness of nature. What parts of our being do these moments nourish? If, as Henri Tracol says in our interview with him, finer foods surround us and are offered over and over again, why is it that we are so seldom able to receive them?

These questions and the many others that emerge in this issue lead ultimately to the question of the source and aim of life. Why are we fed? For what are we food? It is here that we can sense that to be in question is a uniquely human capacity which can in itself be a form of nourishment: the capacity not to know, and to remain not knowing, and open.

—Lorraine Kisly

FULL CIRCLE

A Readers' Forum



I should like to suggest craft as a theme for investigation. What is the meaning of man's relationship to physical material as he transmutes it, manipulates it, into form? What is the link between the first objects and tools created by men, and the world in which we now live? In traditional cultures the craftsman occupies a position of power, power which can be used for good or ill, and hence the ambivalence towards the craftsman and his creations. One of the most stimulating investigations of craft and its presence in myth and culture can be found in *The Forge and the Crucible* by Mircea Eliade. I feel that this subject would have the potential to be one of the most exciting issues of your magazine.

David Harvey
Williamsburg, Virginia

Overtones from the chord struck by Richard Niebuhr in "Pilgrims and Pioneers" (PARABOLA Vol. IX, No. 3) reverberated in my own life, revealing it as part of the odyssey he describes. I could look back to the point when my ancestors reached these shores from England and Germany in 1634 and 1700, follow their movement westward to Nebraska where my parents grew up, met and married. From there they travelled to Africa as missionaries, where I grew up, returning to this country to claim my heritage and to follow "the spirit's compass" in other directions—seeking God behind "the mask that each man wears."

Your approaching Tenth Anniversary reminds me of the influence PARABOLA has exerted on my life during that decade. I recall my reaction to the first issue, which I flipped through as I would any ordinary magazine, waiting for some article to attract my interest. Gradually, it dawned on me that this was no ordinary magazine, but one that had been put together with intention—from that moment I began to read each issue from cover to cover. Not only the articles but the issues related to each other. Sometimes the theme came as a shock—like the issue on "Death" with the sculptured skull on the cover. Together, they formed a rich tapestry, weaving to-

gether shades of meaning from many sources.

So now, after ten years, I want to thank you for making my heritage more accessible to me.

Erva Zuckerman
Levittown, New York

The "Pilgrimage" issue of PARABOLA (Vol. IX, No. 3) was interesting and inspiring (as are so many issues); but alas, I have a stiff neck from looking to the East throughout the whole issue.

I know little about Christian pilgrimages, though I would not be surprised to find out that they play an important role in this religion. But I do know that pilgrimages to the Temple three times a year (on Pesach, Shavu'ot, and Sukkot) were central to the religious life of the Jews when the Temple existed.

I would have liked to look Westward too, and I look forward to the second issue of "Pilgrimage," maybe to be published in two or three years from now?

Shlomit Ritz Finkelstein
Atlanta, Georgia

ERRATUM

On the Credits page in "Pilgrimage" (Vol. IX, No. 3), an inaccurate credit was given for the photographs and rubbings illustrating Thomas Buckley's "Living in the Distance" (pages 64–79). The proper credit is, "From the Arthur M. Sackler Collections, New York. Photographs by Otto E. Nelson. Decor rubbings by Elizabeth J. Frechette." Our apologies to the Arthur M. Sackler Collections, Mr. Nelson, and Ms. Frechette.



The Unending Hunger

MARTHA HEYNEMAN

Above all, in things both great and small, the naturalist is rightfully impressed and finally engrossed by the peculiar beauty which is manifested in apparent fitness or "adaptation"—the flower for the bee, the berry for the bird.

—D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson

In full summer all I can see out my kitchen window are layers of leaves. I might be living in the trees. The light is green. When the wind blows, green light and leaf shadows stream across the floor. I might be living in the water. I breathe moist air. A purple finch flashes past the window.

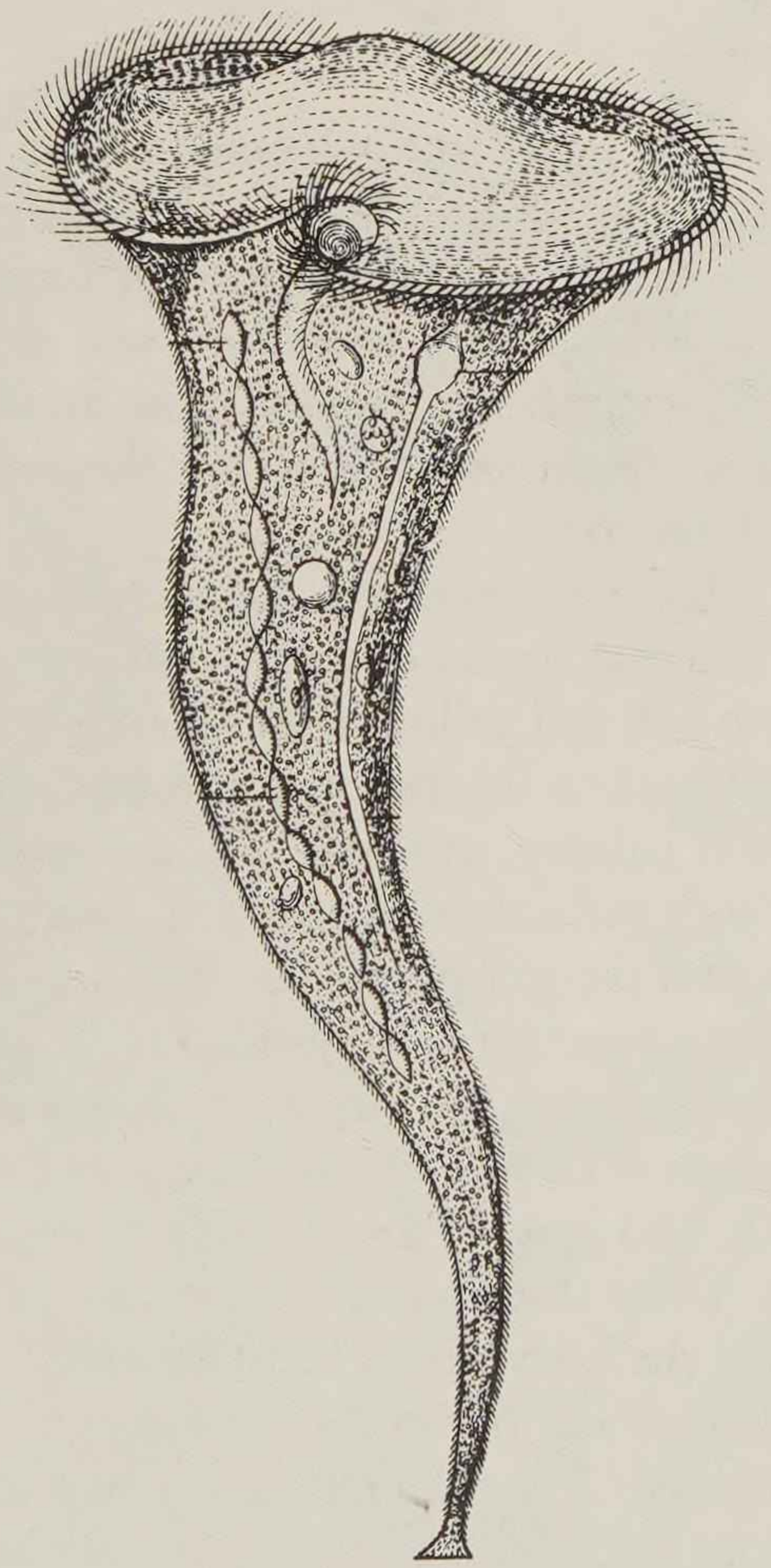
I stand up straight. My hands are free to grasp and carry. Through streaming shadows my feet walk over to the vegetable bin. My fingers close around cool potatoes. I count out six. The potatoes smell of earth.

From the refrigerator my hands lift out a package of fish for dinner, lay it on the counter, reach back in and close around two lemons. I lift the lemons to my nose. In my mind's eye I see them hanging, small suns half-hidden, some near, some far, among the leaves. Hands learned to grasp in the trees, closing around branches. I owe my grasp to the lemurs. Color and stereoscopic vision I owe to the monkeys. What had been a flat world took on depth. Such eyes could see what fruit was near, what far. Such hands could close around branch after branch, swinging the body toward the fruit.

I lay the lemons on the counter beside the fish and spread out my hand between white fish and yellow fruit. Before it was a hand it was a fin, not meant for grasping but for balance, guidance, and maneuver through three dimensions in the water. Jaws did the grasping then. Fins and jaws evolved together. Fins guided the body swiftly toward the target, with quick changes of course and adjustment of roll, pitch, and yaw, if the target was a moving one. Once the jaws had taken hold, fins rolled the body around and around its own axis, twisting off a bite from a whole plant or animal. The jaw, before it was a jaw, supported a gill arch. Old parts change shape and serve new purposes. The bone that attached the fish's jaw to its cranium became the sound-transmitting bone in a reptile's ear. That bone became one of the bones in my own ear. Two bones that articulated the reptile's jaw became the other two. And so now, through articulations of

hammer, anvil, and stirrup, I hear, through summer air, the call of the finches.

Before there were jaws there was only filter-feeding for the vertebrates, sucking in sea water with muscular mouths (as my babies' mouths sucked milk), filtering out small particles, sending the filtered water on out through slits on either side of the throat. (My babies had such gill slits when they were embryos. So did I. We have all spent time in warm sea water.) Without fins the jawless fishes swam erratically. Nevertheless, they swam. Vertebrates, then as now, were highly motile animals, able to move their bodies to where the food was. Beneath them invertebrates slid slowly along under heavy shells, scraping with rough tongues the film of algae off the rocks; or hid their long, segmented bodies



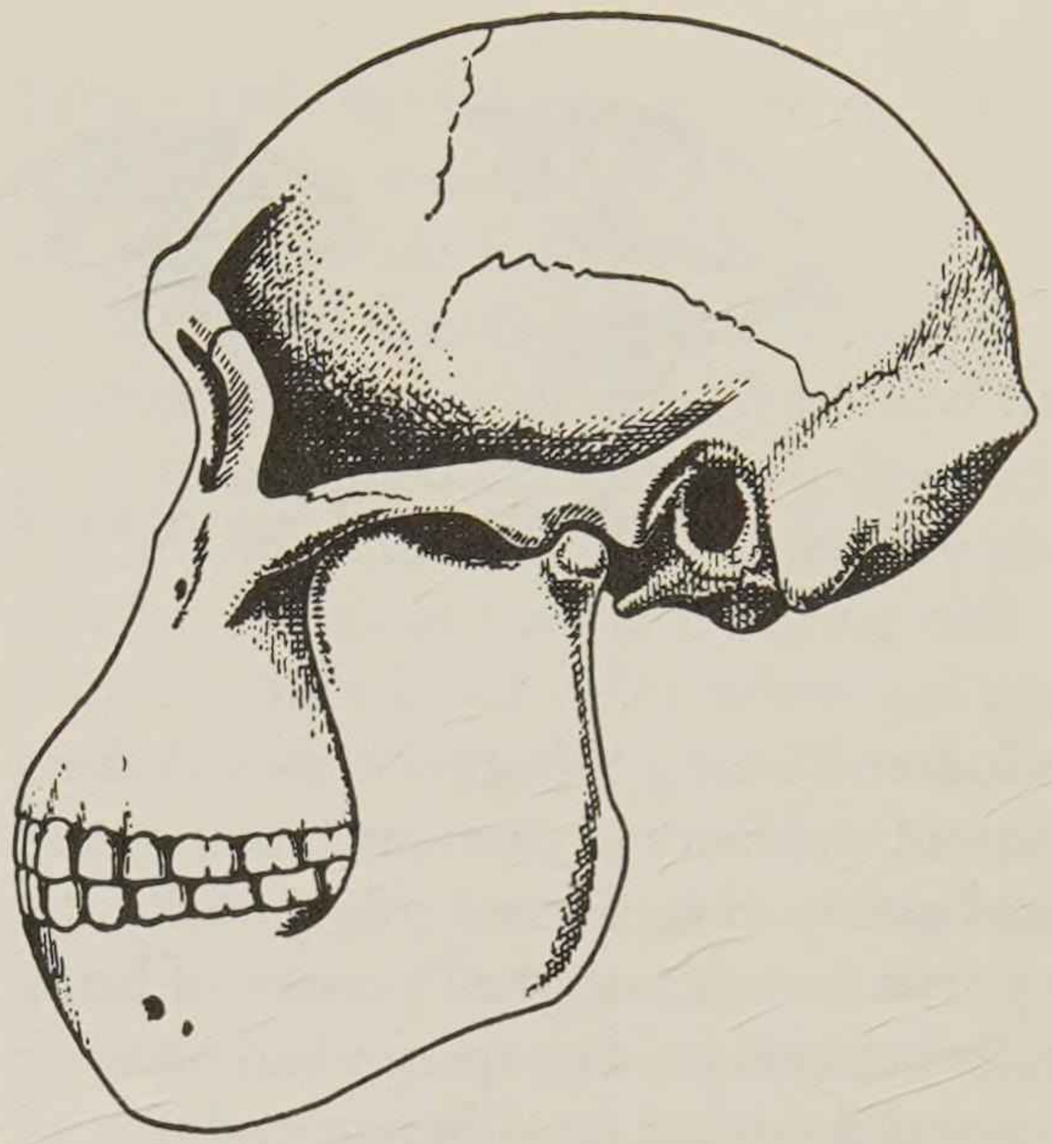
Stentor, *a ciliate infusorian*

immobile in tubes, each leaving outside a feathery tuft to trap whatever edible something happened by; or stuck fast to the substrate, wafting water weakly toward their mouths with cilia. All the basic invertebrate designs appear at once in the Cambrian rocks of 600 million years ago. Before that only single cells without nuclei have been found—bacteria and blue-green algae, going back as far as three billion years. Vertebrates may have evolved from the free-swimming larvae of one of the sessile invertebrates—something like a sea-squirt. If so, it wasn't the only time a kind of failure to grow up has given rise to the wave of the future.

I clench my own jaw now, feeling the force of it. It isn't much, but then it doesn't need to be, what with the rack of knives above the cutting board and the stove beside it, whose oven I now light with a match. I am omnivorous, and so are most other primates, as recent patient, years-long studies of them in the wild reveal, discrediting the rash of books, popular a few years ago, which portrayed us—as if to make excuse for our wars—as the only bloodthirsty apes. Chimpanzees prey on vertebrates with skill and persistence, although they cannot bring down animals larger than themselves, as man can with his weapons. Such books also forgot the role of women in hunting/gathering societies, which are probably the earliest human type. There the everyday diet consists of the roots and tubers the women dig with their pointed sticks, the nuts and berries they carry home in their baskets. Hunting is an occasion, and the men bring back the kill to camp, dividing it carefully in accordance with traditional rules, so that all have a share.

I have the cutting incisors of a rodent, the grinding molars and premolars of a herbivore, the pointed canines of a carnivore. But I cannot crush large bones with the unaided strength of my jaw nor eat the raw bamboo and giant celery that gorillas prefer. I am just as glad, too, because in evolution everything has its price. The finch's ancestors sacrificed the possibility of hands in exchange for wings (and not a bad trade, either). One of our cousins on the hominid bush, *Australopithecus boisei*, sacrificed the possibility of a large brain in exchange for a powerful jaw, and became extinct. A massive jaw requires a thick

skull, with early-closing sutures, to work against. In such a skull there is no room for the brain to go on growing after birth, as ours does. *Homo habilis* had a brain little larger than *Australopithecus*, but nevertheless had a talent for invention. He could sharpen one stone by banging on it with another and, hitting the sharp stone with the blunt one, could break open bones for their marrow or cut through tough thick stalks or pound them to a pulp. He had no need for a heavy jaw. As for *Homo erectus*, he (or she?) harnessed fire for cooking and devised more and better tools. With the advent of tools, there was no further need to change the shape of the body (or to wait for thousands of years for it to change) to get at a certain type of food. I do not have to wait a thousand years until my hand turns into a pincer or grows stiff bristles. I grasp a potato in my left hand, turn on the water with my right, grasp the handle of a stiff brush and give this potato a thorough scrubbing, then the rest. I put the potatoes in the oven, with silent thanks to *Homo habilis* and *erectus*.



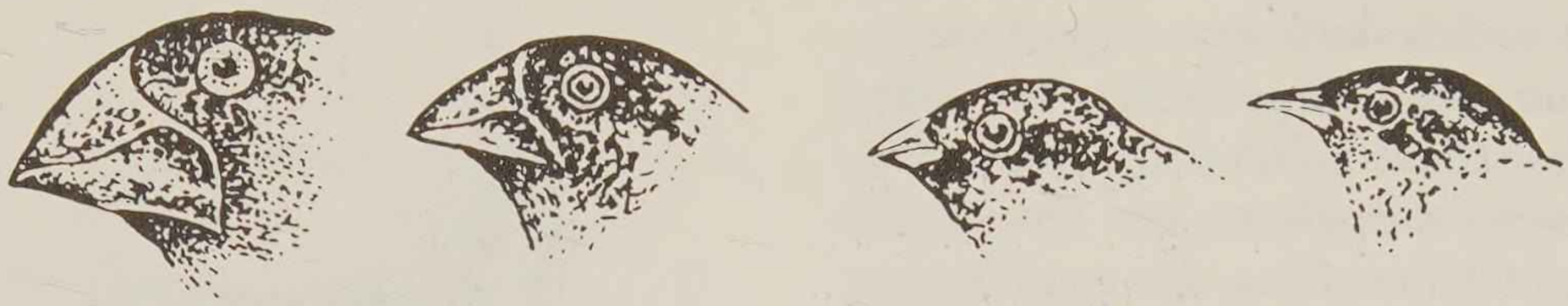
Skull of adult Australopithecus

I stand in front of the sink again, pondering with my large brain (no larger than yours). The potatoes will take much longer to cook than the fish. The salad needs only washing, chopping, and dressing. Long since grown up, I go on trying, in intervals between physically necessary jobs of work, to imagine the whole of things, to feel and sense my place in it, to understand what I am supposed to do, in order that I might begin to live consciously and deliberately as well as instinctively. This is all because my ancestors never grew up. We owe our large brains to something called neoteny, where juvenile forms are carried on into sexually mature life.

Our embryonic skulls scarcely differ from those of chimpanzees. And we follow the same path of changing form through growth: relative decrease of the cranial vault since brains grow so much more slowly than bodies after birth, and continuous relative increase of the jaw. But while chimps accentuate these changes, producing an adult strikingly different in form from a baby, we proceed much more slowly down the same path and never get nearly so far. (Stephen Jay Gould, *The Panda's Thumb*, p. 106.)

Some mutation or series of mutations affected our growth rates, so that we spend a long time in the womb, our brains go on growing at fetal rates for four more years after we are born, our childhood is long, leaving plenty of time for our elders to try to transmit the culture to us, the sutures in our skulls do not close completely until well into adulthood, and our lifetime as a whole is longer than that of any other mammal. Scientific theories come and go, and we go on learning.

Although tools make it no longer necessary for me to wait until the shape of my body changes before I can get something to eat, the capacity to use tools has, according to the theory of evolution, taken shape through this groping, trial-and-error process of random genetic mutation and natural selection, a process too slow for the tempo of my brain to imagine without speeding up the film. The call of the finch reminds me that it was the finches of the Galapagos Islands whose images in memory gave Darwin the idea. He does not mention them in the first published edition of his *Journal of the Voyage of the H.M.S. Beagle*. But in the second edition of 1845 he describes "the perfect gradation in the size of the beaks in the different species," and



Beak structure of four species of Galapagos finches studied by Darwin

concludes: "Seeing this gradation and diversity of structure in one small, intimately related group of birds, one might really fancy that from an original paucity of birds in this archipelago, one species had been taken and modified for different ends." This was his first public pronouncement on the subject he was to elaborate and generalize into the "one long argument" of *The Origin of Species*.

You can tell what a bird eats by the shape of its beak. Finches generally have broadly conical, strong bills suited for breaking capsules and splitting seeds. Warblers have delicate slender ones suited for dealing with small insects, while hummingbirds have the longest, most delicate, slenderest of all, for probing into flowers to reach the nectar they drink. Woodpeckers have hard and chisel-like beaks, for drilling holes in the bark and wood of trees, and long tongues for probing into the holes to extract the insects. On the Galapagos, Darwin saw birds with beaks of all these shapes, but all of them were finches. David Lack made an exhaustive study of them in 1938 and the years following:

...the beak differences between most of the genera and subgenera of Darwin's finches are clearly correlated with differences in feeding methods. This is well borne out by the heavy, finch-like beak of the seed-eating *Geospiza*, the long beak of the flower-probing *Cactornis*, the somewhat parrot-like beak of the leaf-, bud- and fruit-eating *Platyspiza*, the woodpecker-like beak of the woodboring *Cactospiza*, and the warbler-like beaks of the insect-eating *Certhidea* and *Pinaroloxias*. (*Darwin's Finches*, p. 60.)

But *Cactospiza* does not have a long tongue like a born woodpecker. Instead, having drilled its hole, "it picks up a cactus spine or twig, one or two inches long, and holding it lengthwise in its beak, pokes it up the crack, dropping the twig to seize the insect as it emerges." (p. 58) *Cactospiza* is almost alone among birds in having figured out how to use a tool.

...the form of an object is a diagram of forces.
—D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson

But how did Darwin's finches feel? Reading about evolution is like watching television with the sound turned off. It might be argued that, being birds of little brain, they felt nothing, but maybe our large brains oblige us to feel for them, consciously. Loren Eiseley thought this human capacity to put oneself in the place of another creature was more important than our capacity to penetrate outer space.

...whenever I see a frog's eye low in the water warily ogling the shoreward landscape, I always think inconsequentially of those twiddling mechanical eyes that mankind manipulates nightly from a thousand observatories....I stand quite still and try hard not to move or lift a hand since it would only frighten him. And standing thus it finally comes to me that this is the most enormous extension of vision of which life is capable: the projection of itself into other lives. This is the lonely, magnificent power of humanity. (*The Immense Journey*, pp. 45–46.)

It must have been that a few (at least two) finches were blown by a great storm, or swept on a raft of vegetation, 600 miles out over the raging ocean west of Ecuador, arriving by luck (how many drowned?) upon these islands. There they found no

other land birds. All the ecological niches were vacant. There were no predators. (On this account, the finches are even today not very agile flyers and extremely tame.) Their situation was not unlike that of my great-grandmother (of whom I am reminded by the smell of the potatoes, beginning now to bake). About how she felt, I think I do know something.

The real troubles of Ireland...arose from an increase of population which far outstripped production...There were 685,000 farms in all. Of these, 300,000 were under 3 ac. in extent; and 250,000 were from 3 to 5 ac. As might be expected, the condition of the vast majority of land workers was miserable.
The potato blight...reached Europe in 1845. 1846 and 1847—especially the latter—were its worst years. In a few weeks the abundant potato harvest in Ireland became a waste of putrifying vegetation. The total Irish mortality for the five years that ended in 1851 was close upon a million. In the decade that followed 1847 more than 1,500,000 persons emigrated. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1947 edition, Vol. 12, p. 612.)

TARPEY

On October 25, 1852, as MR. PATRICK TARPEY *was returning by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway to Liverpool, from one of the inland counties, where he had been disposing of several large lots of cattle, purchased at recent fairs in this country, he incautiously stepped from the carriage while in motion, and having missed his footing, fell under the train and was instantaneously crushed to death. Deceased was an extensive cattle dealer residing in the neighborhood of Dunmore, and has left a large family to deplore his loss. —Tuam* [Co. Galway, Ireland] *Herald.*

"Requiescat in pace."

In 1855 my great-grandmother, Bridget O'Grady Tarpey, gathered her nine remaining children about her and set sail for America. Her eldest son, Matthew, was already in California. My grandfather, Dominick Patrick, was five years old. Mrs. Tarpey and the children crossed the isthmus of Panama on muleback and sailed up the west coast to San Francisco.

In 1970 I went to Ireland with my husband and four children. We found the place from which my great-grandmother had set out. Standing there, I felt the ghost of what she must have felt: setting out from the once loved valley where her people had lived, it may be, since prehistoric times; stepping, with her children, into a leaky sailing ship, terror of the monstrous ocean in front of her, tearing sorrow of leaving all she knew behind her, impelled by that inexorable force we call Nature, the will to survive—which is no more personal, no more "I" than a hurricane.

This is the force that drives "natural selection" from behind. We have known that force in ourselves, immediately, with no need for definition in words, if we have ever been drowning or (unlikely for most of us, likely for my great-grandmother) starving to death, or if a child of ours had been threatened with death, or even ridicule. I have been terrified to feel the magnitude of the force with which I struggled, when a great wave knocked me under, to reach the surface, to fill my choking lungs with air; to realize (afterward) the speed with which I ran to snatch my child from in front of oncoming traffic, the murder that arose in my heart if someone picked on him.

In front is the sieve of circumstance, through which most creatures never pass, most dying before they grow up, all suffering, those who make it doing so through accident of birth, luck, or constant vigilance punctuated by bloody battle or swift escape. Most warm-blooded animals have to spend all their time getting food enough to stay alive, to fuel the fires of their fierce metabolism. Even primates have to spend 80 percent of their waking hours in this way. Only human beings have time (and capacity) to ponder, to try to find out where they came from, to imagine how it feels to be someone else, to envision the whole and their place in it, to wonder what they are supposed to do with their large brains and their leisure time.

Sometimes a creature is lucky. The Galapagos were a kind of Golden West of the finches. In California, my great-uncle Matthew bought, in 1859, Rancho Colorado, 4,000 acres. His brother Michael established vineyards near Bakersfield and, in 1886, ran for Lieutenant Governor. My grandfather was a miner, an assayer, a railroad land agent, a rancher. He owned the ranch on which the golden spike was driven that united the eastern and western halves of the transcontinental railroad. By the next generation all these ecological niches were filled or had vanished, but that is another story. My grandfather and great-uncles did not develop into new species, but they developed traits they could not have developed in Ireland (supposing they could have survived).

There are moments in Loren Eiseley's *The Immense Journey* when the volume is suddenly turned up and I hear an echo of how much agony lies behind the decorous screen of the theory of evolution. Eiseley is imagining how it was for the freshwater Crossopterygian fish who was the first vertebrate to walk out on dry land, to breathe air, the first to develop the hollow brain without which we would be, like insects, programmed machines with no possibility of ever changing our behavior.

...It began with a strangled gasping for air. The pond was a place of reek and corruption, of fetid smells and of oxygen-starved fish breathing through laboring gills....On the oily surface of the pond, from time to time a snout thrust upward, took in air with a queer grunting inspiration, and swirled back to the bottom. The pond was doomed, the water was foul, and the oxygen almost gone, but the creature would not die. It could breathe air direct through a little accessory lung, and it could walk....There was dew one dark night and a coolness in the empty stream bed. When the sun rose next morning the pond was an empty place of cracked mud, but the Snout did not lie there. He had gone. Down stream there were other ponds. He breathed air for a few hours and hobbled slowly along on the stumps of heavy fins. (*The Immense Journey*, pp. 49–51.)

I fill the sink with water now and begin to wash the lettuce. To stand here in a human body, serenely breathing, with no need for effort on my part, is to stand on top of millions of years of suffering.

Driven from behind, then, by the imperious command to survive, to reproduce (there was a time in my life when I said, like Rachel, "Give me children or else I die"), to see to it that one's offspring survive; through, in front, the sieve of circumstance, whose holes, most of the time, are very fine—at rare moments, unaccountably, large and commodious—we change shape and character, through struggle, suffering, luck, or some combination thereof. But how did the shapes get there in the first place?

Oh! Blessed rage for order, pale Ramon,
The maker's rage to order words of the sea,
Words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred,
And of ourselves and of our origins,
In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds.

—Wallace Stevens

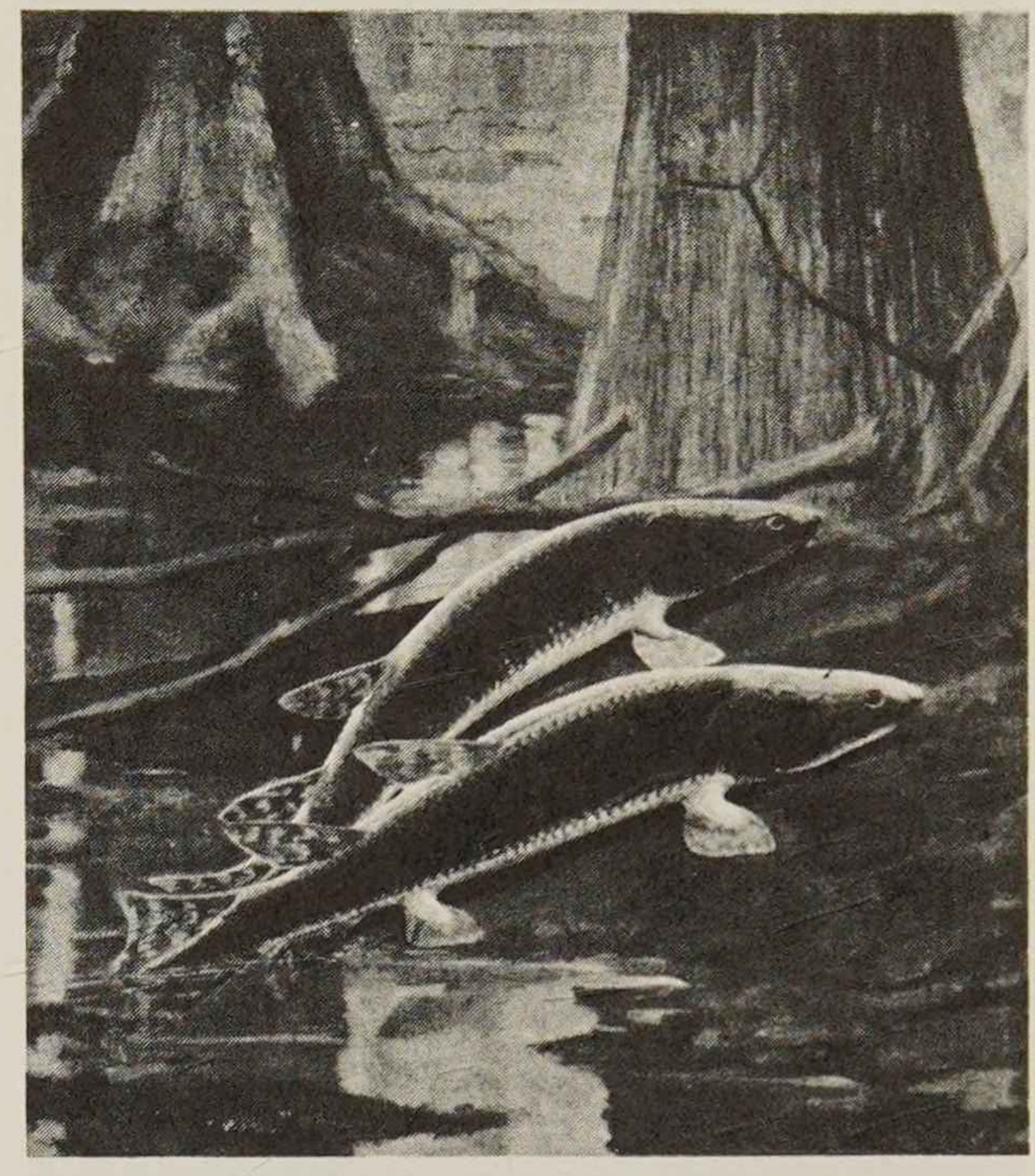
The sun is low now. For a moment the branches part and it flashes through. I am blinded.

In the beginning the sun's radiations were moving on the face of the waters. There was lightning without thunder. There was no air. There were simple inorganic gases—carbon monoxide, hydrogen, methane, ammonia, water vapor. In the 1950s, these conditions were recreated in the lab. After a week, sugars, nucleic acids, and amino acids were found in the moisture. In recently improved laboratory tests, "All five substances that carry the messages of heredity within nucleic acids were spontaneously synthesized." (*New York Times*.)

...if two particles are put together in an "organized" way, instead of the formula $1+1=2$, we get $1+1>2$, and...this is the basic equation of biology. Thus if an electron and a nucleus come together in an organized way, a hydrogen atom is born, which is more than an

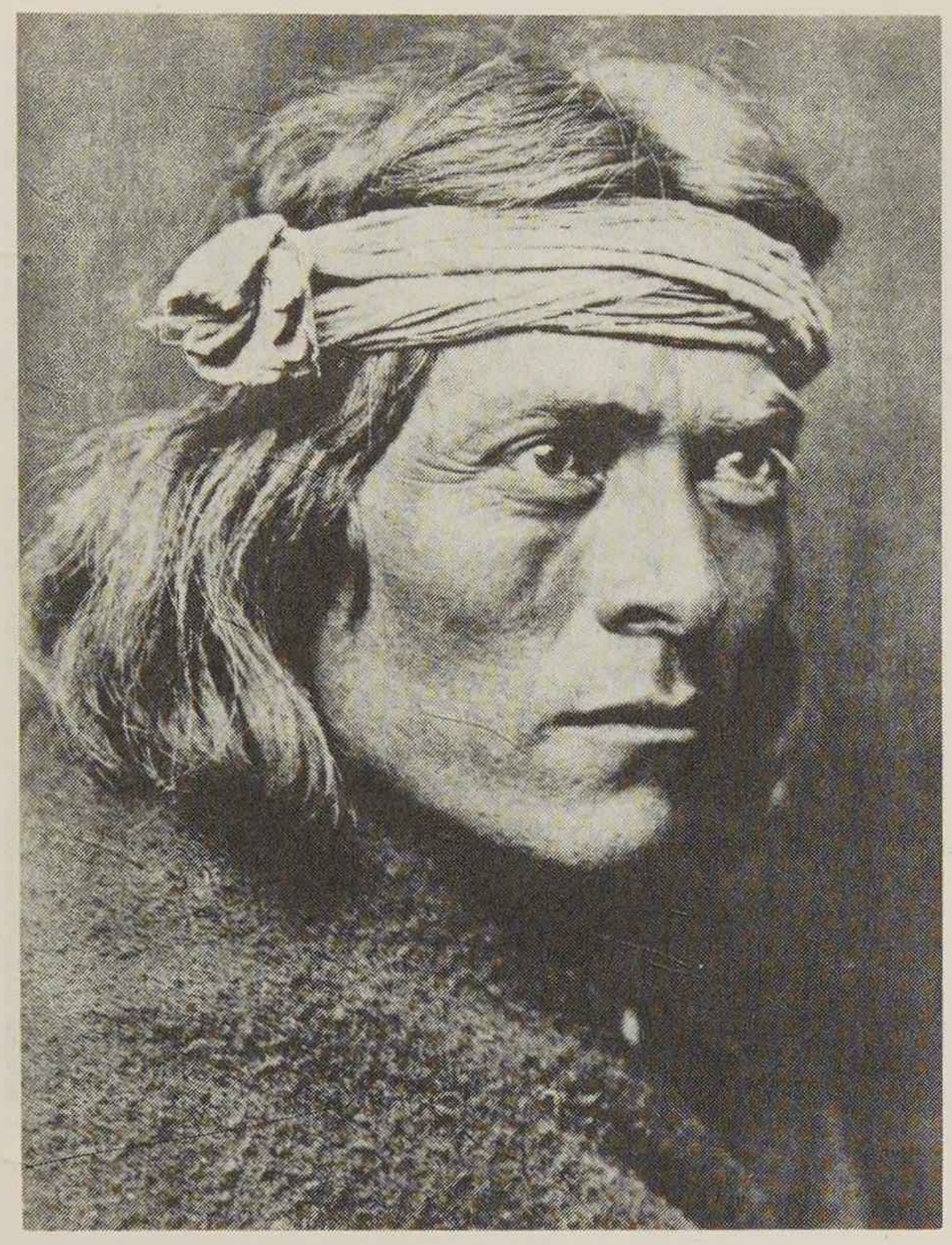
electron and a nucleus. If atoms are built into a molecule, something new is born, which can no longer be described solely in terms of atoms. The same holds true when small molecules are built into macromolecules; macromolecules into organelles; organelles into cells; cells into organs; organs into individuals; and individuals into a society or ecological "associes"....(*The Biology of Nutrition*, Richard N. T-W-Fiennes and others, p. 182.)

As Sir Peter Medawar points out (*The Art of the Soluble*), information theory is inadequate to explain the kind and degree of organization found in living things (which exist, at least in our solar system, only in the thin film of organic life on earth). We know something of the magnitude of this force of organization by witnessing the magnitude of the force released when it is undone, all at once, as at Hiroshima. All life lives on its energy. In the daisy-shaped molecule of chlorophyll in green leaves, photons of sunlight raise electrons to less probable, higher-energy levels in the organization of atoms. The high-energy electrons are then stored in chemical bonds or passed on stepwise through the metabolic reactions of life—in plant, herbivore, and carnivore—until they reach their lowest energy level in water, whence they are raised up again by sunlight in the leaves. Into the descending stream we are all plugged, like the factories that used to be built along New England rivers, harnessing their energy with every sort of contraption—water wheels, driving belts, turning spools, banging looms—as the water descended from mountain springs down to the sea.



Devonian lobe-finned Crossopterygian fish

Men talk much of matter and energy, of the struggle for existence that molds that shape of life. These things exist, it is true; but more delicate, elusive, quicker than the fins in water, is that mysterious principle known as "organization," which leaves all other mysteries concerned with life stale and insignificant by comparison. For that without organization life does not persist is obvious. Yet this organization itself is not strictly the product of life, nor of selection. Like some dark and passing shadow within matter, it cups out the eyes' small windows or spaces the notes of a meadowlark's song in the interior of a mottled egg.



That principle—I am beginning to suspect—was there before the living in the deeps of water. (*The Immense Journey*, p. 26.)

I have some immediate experience of this force too—as you do, if you have ever "made" anything (that is, have been the medium through which a multiplicity of unrelated items strive to combine into a harmonious whole, an organized unity). Every morning I look and see it is not yet right, and again the next day it is not yet right, and so on, through a peculiar kind of suffering, until either time is up or further work begins to make it worse instead of better.

Now I finish "making" dinner: mix golden oil pressed from olives that grew in Italy, wine vinegar, garlic, spices from all over the world; put the fish in the broiler, squeeze the juice of the lemon over it. The family gathers. A daughter sets the table. We serve the plates, add parsley and paprika, slices of lemon, a pat of golden butter to melt and mingle with the mealy white flesh of the split potato. A dim striving impels us to try to make a harmony of colors, textures, flavors, nutrients on each round plate. We call the others and carry the plates into the dining room.

Daylight is pearl-grey now. We light the candles. I sit down, heave a sigh and look around at my family, this unity in multiplicity, these variations on a theme. There they are with their large brains, their thoughtful faces in the rippling candlelight betraying the presence of inner lives I cannot know.

We too live at the edge of the sea, like Rachel Carson's snails and mussels, barnacles, sea urchins and starfish. But the thin strip of shore we inhabit lies not between continent and ocean, between dry land and water, but between the outer and the inner worlds. Our attention lives now in one, now in the other. First one, then the other, is real to us. For four hundred years now the center of gravity of attention in the West has been in the outer world. Scientific facts, observations, and theories are piled up like shells and pebbles, loosely intertwined with seaweed, scattered along the shore. Now the tide turns. We have got ourselves in trouble, into an evolutionary impasse. Attention begins to turn toward the inner, and we find that various sciences of the inner have already long ago reached high levels of development in the East and in the medieval West. Some cast their Western-educated brains behind them, plunge in, and drown.

The next phase of evolution could be outer. The force of organization could take hold of societies, until my children and grandchildren become, like ants and termites, cells in an elaborate structure of imposed functions and interconnections. Or the next phase could be inner and individual, radiations of the inner sun moving on the face of our inner waters, organizing our inner earth, which is now a chaos, without form, and void.

I have to acknowledge that about my own face in the mirror and about these loved faces in the candlelight there is something unformed, soft, larval. Our faces do not show the iron determination I see in the portrait of my great-grandmother. They have not the aching emotional intelligence I see in the faces of the statues at Chartres, refined in the fires of moral suffering. Is this softness a sign of degenera-

tion or another case of the "never growing up" which prepares a wave of the future, a drawing back *pour mieux sauter*? We have not been forced to struggle much, by external circumstances or externally imposed doctrine. For the moment, we do not need to struggle for food. Supermarkets stand like horns of plenty on every street corner. The air is not yet too polluted to breathe. These children of mine, descendants of frontiersmen, would not take well to the external imposition of doctrine. We are not likely to engage in moral struggle until we know what for. It has to be on our own initiative, on the basis of our own understanding of what we owe, where we have come from, what our purpose is.

I received in the mail not long ago an invitation to a conference, on a Mediterranean island, whose purpose was to devise a myth for the post-Newtonian age. Indeed it is a myth we need, an imagined whole we could digest, a framework within which the bewildering multiplicity of unrelated impressions accumulated over a lifetime might begin to take on meaning, find their place in a living, growing organism. But when a myth is alive, people do not think of it as myth but as the truth, the way things are. We already have half our myth in science, our story of the creation of the world and the evolution of man. But it is in a form indigestible for most of us. Scientific facts, theories, and observations are as numberless as the grasses of the original Great Plains. Fortunately, there are a few herbivores—Loren Eiseley, Rachel Carson, Lewis Thomas, a few others—who are able to graze upon these fields, to imagine, feel, and sense what they know and to communicate it to us in digestible language. What we need now are carnivorous poets—who will feed upon such writings and who also have practical experience in the sciences of the inner world—to imagine the whole and digest it into one body.

It is a pity the creationists and evolutionists can't get together. Whether we think of the species of living things as created all at once or developing painfully one from the other over three billion years is a matter of how, at the moment, we are experiencing time. To God, all time is present at once; and we know, from Dante, Christian saints, Hindu holy men, Zen masters, that human beings also have the possibility of this level of consciousness. "Does the wind move or does the grass move?" ask the pupils. "Your mind moves," answers the Zen master.



Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. (Henry David Thoreau.)

"Take the understanding of the East and the knowledge of the West—and then seek," said G.I. Gurdjieff. And bring us back a myth that contains the whole horizontal expanse of outer science, the whole vertical height and depth of the possible qualities of man's inner world. And do not cram it down our throats, but let each one eat in his own time, digest at his own organic tempo, then rise and do, on his own volition, on the basis of his own understanding, the work that only he, as "a particle of a part of the great whole," with his particular capacities, in his particular circumstances, was born to do. ■

Notes on the Four Nutriments

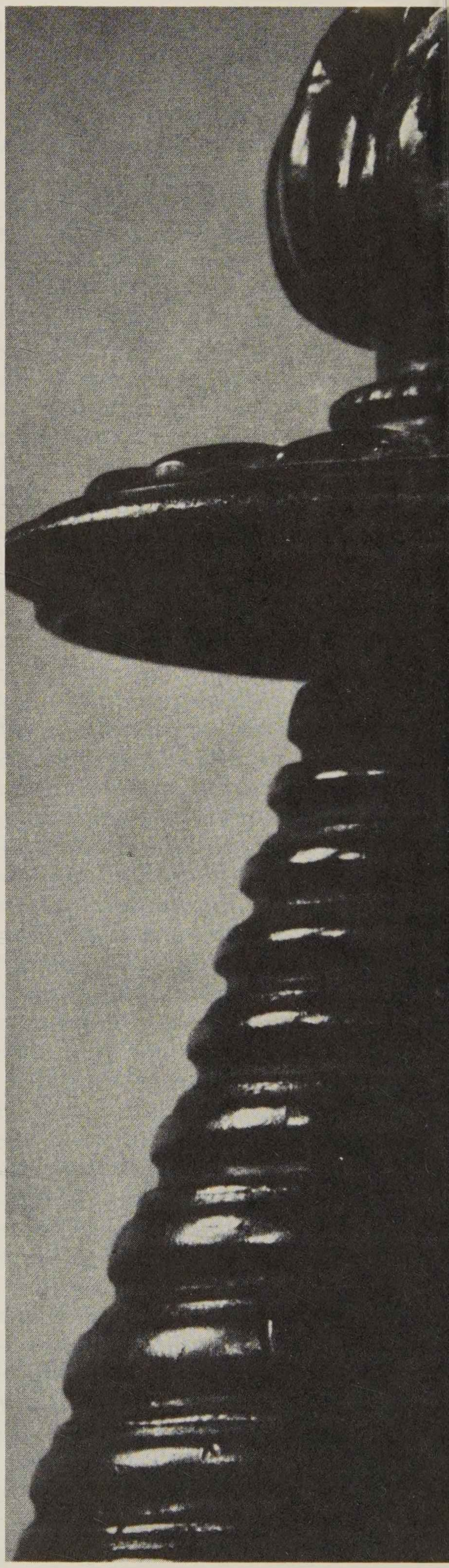
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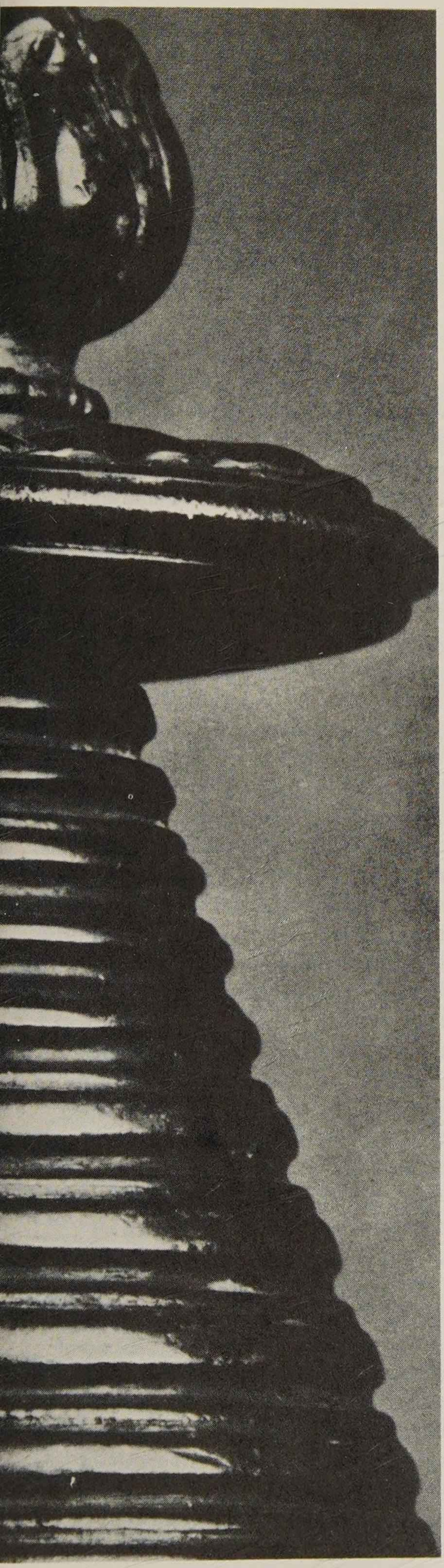
In the doctrine of the "Four Noble Truths," the Buddha revealed: "O monks, know ye that existence is suffering; remove its cause within yourselves; realize the state of perfect cessation (nirvana); and walk on the path of your liberation."

The first two instructions are shown as the *thesis* of the doctrine, and the last two as the *antithesis*. In explaining the *thesis* on the nature of existence, Buddha showed how the wheel of rebirth is set in motion by mind through sensual indulgence in the four nutriments.

The "material nutriment" figures first and needs no explanation. The "nutriment of the senses" is often taken in beyond what is normal because of the mistaking of transient pleasures for genuine happiness. The "nutriment of consciousness" refers to the way mind fosters attachment to worldly existence, which inevitably leads to the "nutriment of craving." This craving causes the will to cling to existence and rebirth.

The four nutriments were shown not so much for their properties and potencies, but as a warning to innocent minds of the pitfalls of indulging the mind. If uncontrolled and untamed, the mind clings more and more to the ingrained primal notion that there is within oneself an immutable entity separate from and unrelated to stream-consciousness.* This notion of self controls one's life, and one cannot see the wisdom of harnessing, for a positive purpose, the energy of the nutriments inherent





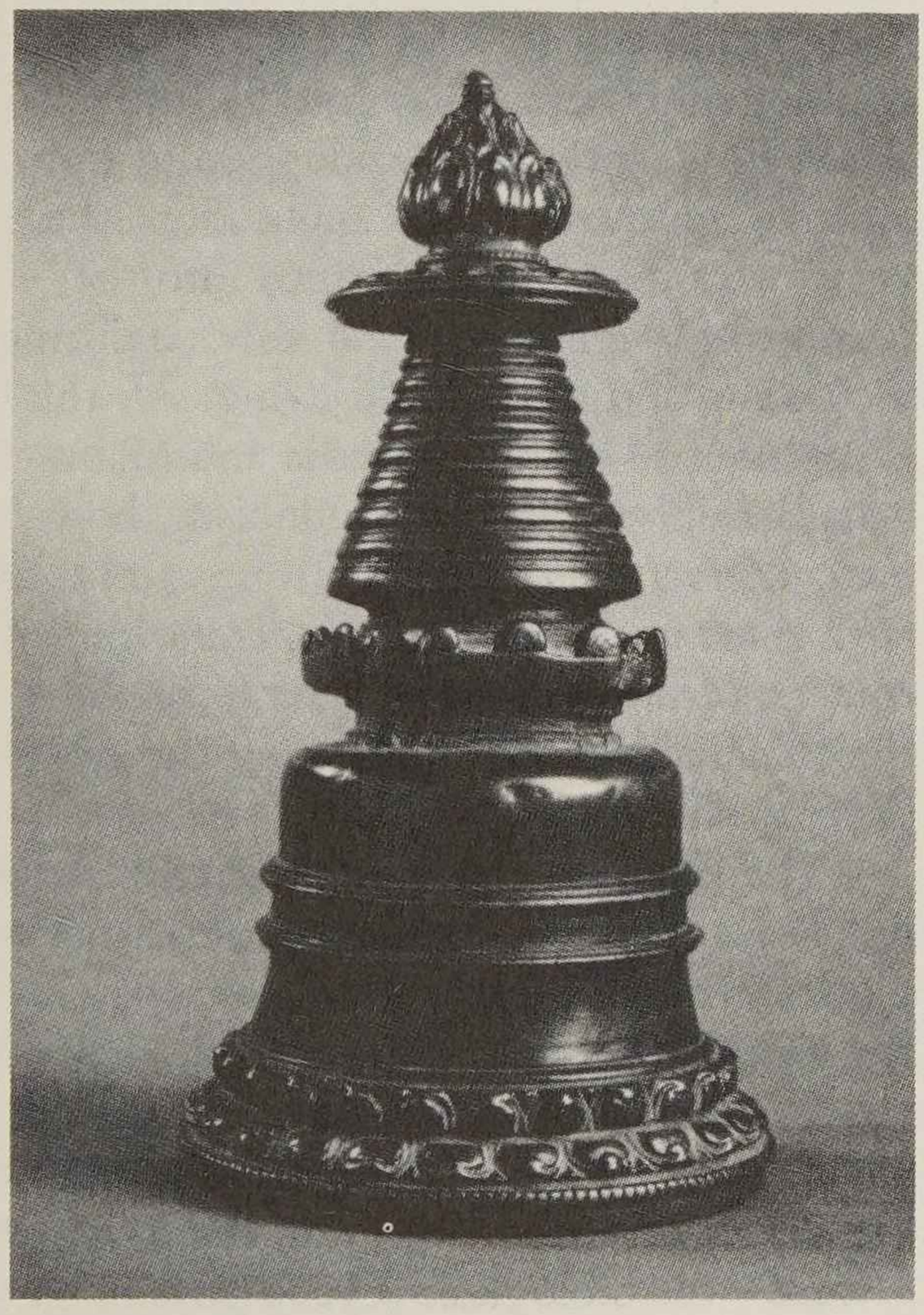
in the human psyche, senses, and stream-consciousness.

The Buddha's *antithesis* provides countermeasures against the misdirection of the *thesis* of existence. His ideas are embodied in the doctrine of the Middle Path (Madhyamarg) which rectifies the profaning of the four nutriments. The Middle Path shows how, through the adoption of right attitude, motivation, and application, these very forces may be transformed into the means of realizing, here and now, enduring well-being and enlightened living. All this is common to both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism, however, offers a fully integrated system of both these traditions, thus widening the concept of the nutriments, and its application, under the term "generative forces" (Kyepai Nüpa).

The idea of generative forces covers the whole range of moral, metaphysical, and meditational processes. What precisely are the generative forces and energies? They are those energies that emanate from mind in contemplation, worldly activities, creative endeavors, as well as from the infinite cosmos—the biological, psycho-physiological systems of the human body. For instance, the energies issuing from the body are grouped as "the ten energies." The Buddhist mystic tradition provides an in-depth description of these.

The harnessing and exploitation of the diverse forms of the generative forces and energies requires a systematic training and consistent dedication. Immediate and enduring results can be achieved with certain-

* Stream-consciousness is a concept unique to Buddhism. It is defined as a clear reflective and creative power; as perceiver of the sensory spectrum; as creator and destroyer of inner bondage and of cyclic existence. Its universal characteristic consists of a unified state of lucid awareness and its innate emptiness.



ty. In this ancient wisdom, mind is recognized—with all its generative energies and spiritual potential—as being capable of mastering its creative endeavors and of guiding its own destiny. Yet it cannot achieve the desired results without first resolving the problems of self-delusion coming from its misguided view of reality. Enlightened awareness is the highest of the generative powers, and this is achieved through the joint development of wisdom and compassion as taught by the Middle Path doctrine.

Wisdom and compassion represent the two generative powers of mind. Wisdom is the highest discerning faculty whose chief function is the perfect perception of reality. Compassion is the unconditional, non-discriminating mind which acts spontaneously to alleviate the suffering of others. The mind which realizes these twin principles perceives the unity of all dualities. In the last analysis, conditioned reality, according to the enlightened masters, consists of illusory appearance, while the unconditioned reality is the all-encompassing void. The conditioned and unconditioned are the two indivisible aspects of the same reality. The all-encompassing void is intrinsic in all things and is the substratum upon which stream-consciousness and the flux of the cosmos rest.

An illusory manifestation arises from the incessant interactions of diverse elements and energies acting as causes and conditions. Cosmic phenomena therefore emerge, endure, disintegrate, annihilate each other, only to re-emerge in a different scale of cosmic space-time. At the microcosmic level death does not terminate the

subtle forces of stream-consciousness which merely seeks a new vehicle through the use of the four nutriments.

The subject of the nutriments is connected with that of health. The Middle Path tradition states that health consists of a total harmony of the body and mind which ensures smooth functioning of the various systems. The vigor of the body and the calm and peace of the mind must complement each other. Where an inner serenity shines, the outer vehicle becomes a sacred temple.

The means to achieve such health are stated to be four, according to some ancient texts. The first, "material sustenance," should always be fresh, clean, and of the right kind. Food should be consumed in moderate quantity with a noble thought, esthetic sense, and civil manners—all in an atmosphere of tranquillity. As part of an elaborate code of ethics, the Buddha thus implores an assembly of monks:

Know that food is like medicine,
Partake of it without craving or hatred.
Not in order to fatten or to indulge,
Neither to heighten arrogance—
But only to sustain the body!

The second factor is sleep. This tradition refers not only to normal rest but also to methods of using sleep as a means of contemplative absorption. There are effective methods of meditation designed to master the unknown subconscious in sleep and dream, in order to attain the subtle, lucid state of stream-consciousness.

The third factor prescribed is "massage." This implies different ways of invigorating the body such as physical exercise of various kinds, and highly specialized methods such as yoga postures and breathing exercises, combined with higher contemplative practices.

The fourth factor is "contemplation," which calms the restless and neurotic impulses and relieves stress and pressure, thus creating an imperturbable harmony, tranquillity, and clarity permeating every aspect of life and every level of one's stream-consciousness.

The Buddhist yoga of the Diamond Vehicle (Vajrayana) shows how one can transform the generative energies in a rapid method of achieving spiritual awakening. These generative energies emanate from the body, speech, and mind, and from the whole cosmic realm.

Buddhist mysticism offers a staggering diversity of methods and secret oral instructions for the instantaneous transformation of ordinary consciousness into enlightened awareness. This includes the sublimation of the senses, emotions, prejudices, negative impulses and experiences, distress and even disease. Only through the harmoniously combined application of the generative forces and energies can we achieve a healthy body and a happy mind, with enlightened awareness and ever present joy. ■

Sip No Sup and Bite No Bit

P.L. TRAVERS

"Good morning, Thade!"

The man in the culvert straightened his back.

An English hedger and ditcher would have answered my greeting merely with a finger to brow or at most the wave of a hat. But Thade, being Irish, has to turn everything to drama. All encounters, for him, take place on the road to Damascus. He flung down his spade and clapped a hand to his heart.



"O Mary Hynes, O my share of the world," (a line from an old Irish poem)"is it yerself?" he hailed me.

Well, was it? Could I swear on oath that it was myself calling to him from the lane? It needed a Socrates to answer, and even he, knowing it to be rhetorical, might cravenly have evaded the question as, indeed, I did myself.

Instead, I flattered him. "That's a good ditch," I said, eyeing the neatly tailored earth, the shorn green bank rising above it and the clipped hedge crowning all.

"Was I ever after making a bad one?" he demanded. "When the rain comes it will be a river with fish in it sporting themselves."

"But why so crooked?" I went on. For the line of the field, unlike the checkerboard land around it, swelled out in a rounded promontory before it returned to the straight.

Thade favoured me with a pitying look. "And you with a mind as bright as a pin not to know the reason for it! It's a *rath* that's in it, I'm telling you, and where's the strong farmer that would put himself in fear of the Folk by crossing a *rath* with a ditch?"

I should have known. A *rath* is a fairy fort or mound and humans disturb it at their peril.

Leaping the ditch, I climbed the bank and peeped over the hedge. There it was, a daisy-pied circular knoll with a black thorn tree spreading its shade above it. I shivered. I had seen other such mounds in Ireland and always a tremor in my blood—Emily Dickinson's "zero at the bone"—had warned me to keep my distance, to walk around them, never across.

Clearly, the farmer who had first laid out the field—long dead he would be and full of lore—would have taken care to avoid this place by following its fairy contours and curving his hedge and his ditch!

"Come away down out of that!" cried Thade, helping me over the ditch with one hand and with the other tearing from the hedge a straggling frond of bindweed. "I don't want you taken before me eyes. It's this will keep you safe," he said, winding the frond round my wrist. "A widdershins thing it is, the creature, climbing against the sun and the clock. And Themselves—" he nodded towards the mound—"Themselves have no relish for it. It will never be abiding their spells. Sure, it has power of its own!"

I looked at the sorcerous dark leaves that seemed to cling to my hand. "But, Thade, you're not wearing it yourself!" If I was in danger, so was he.

"And am I not!" he scoffed at me, and took from his pocket a similar sprig along with an old rusty nail and something in a twist of paper.

"Bindweed, iron and salt!" he said. "With those they'll never have me."

"Do you know of anyone who has been—taken?" I was only half serious, asking the question—my rational mind making mocking of me—but Thade was wholly so.

"I do, then. A widow's son in the town beyant—" he jerked his thumb at the distant village. "Handsome he was, a fine boy-o, the spit, barring a wing or two, of the Archangel Michael himself. He was taken below at the full of the moon for Them to work their will on."

"And did the handsome young man come back?"

"Him, is it? An old bent fellow it was came back and him as hoar as the winter frost, wrapping his arms about himself and crying out to all the world, 'Nobody knows and I'll not be telling, what happened under the thorn-tree.' "

" 'Did yez eat anything?' they asked him."

" 'A sup of wine,' he said, 'in a cowslip and it only half full.' "

"And that was it. That was enough. Eat their food and they have you." Thade took a pinch of salt from his spill and solemnly made the sign of the cross. He was bringing every spell he knew to bear on the situation.

"It was that way," I told him, "with Childe Rowland. He was playing at

ball with his two elder brothers and when it was lost their sister, Burd Ellen, ran widdershins round the church to find it.''

''Widdershins round a church! That would do it! They'd get her for that, for sure! And so—?''

Like all true Tellers, Thade is avid for a story told and therefore a perfect Listener. He turned his wheelbarrow onto its side, sat down and patted a place beside him.



''Now for the rest of it,'' he demanded.

''Well,

They sought her East, they sought her West,
They sought her up and down,
And woe were the hearts of those brethren
For she was not to be found.

So the first brother went to the warlock, Merlin, who, of course, knew where she was.''

''She was with the Gentry! Where else?'' said Thade.

''Yes! In the great dark tower of the King of Elfland. So, Merlin consulted with himself, told the eldest brother what to do and what not to do and sent him off to the Underworld.

But long they waited and longer still,
With doubt and muckle pain
And woe were the hearts of his brethren
For he came not back again.

So the second brother had to go to Merlin, who sent him away with the same instructions.

But woe were his mother's and brother's
hearts
For he came not back again.''

''Ha! They had to wait for the third, begob! The one and the two, where would they be, unless the three was in it? That's the law, I'm thinking.''

Oh, who can tell a Teller the tales? They know them before they are half spun.

''Well, now,'' I went on, ''came Childe Rowland's turn. He was his mother's youngest son—the youngest in those days was the heir—and she would not let him go. So he begged and pleaded till she agreed and girt him with his father's brand that had never struck in vain. And he, too, went to Merlin.

'' 'Once more and but once more,' he said. 'Tell how a man or a mother's son may rescue Burd Ellen and her brothers twain.' ''

''And Merlin gave him the same instructions. 'The thing to do is this,' he said. 'Once you have entered the land of fairy, whoever you encounter till you meet

Burd Ellen you must fell them with your father's brand. And what you've not to do is this—you must sip no sup and bite no bit or you'll never see Middle Earth again.' "

"That'll be it!" Thade slapped his knee. "As it might be in a nutshell. The widow's son over again. Go on now, with the telling."

"Well, he did the things he had to do, inquiring the way of this one and that and cutting off their heads when they answered. And at last he came to a round green hill with seven terrace rings about it and a door set in the side. Three times Childe Rowland knocked and the third knock let him in. And there, in a great hall, was Burd Ellen, sitting on a velvet cushion and combing her hair with a golden comb.

"Up she sprang and kissed him, crying

O luckless fool, O woe, O woe,
That ever you were born,
For come the King of Elfland in
Your fortune is forlorn."

"Forlorn. Forlorn." Thade rocked himself rhythmically as though the words were a tune. "And that indeed was what he'd be if he was after forgetting what he had not to do."

"He did forget. He said he was hungry and Burd Ellen, under a spell as she was, could not give him a warning word. But over the bowl of bread and milk she looked at him so deep in the eye that he remembered and put it aside."

"Ah!" cried Thade, triumphantly.

"And then there came a voice saying:

Fee, Fo, Fi, Fum.
I smell the blood of a Christian man,
Be he dead, be he living, with my brand
I'll dash his brains from his brain pan.

And in came the King of Elfland."

" 'Strike, Bogle, if thou darest, ' said Childe Rowland. And they fought till the king was on his knees yielding and begging for mercy."

"Ah! That would be the length of it, the girl released and the brothers, too, riding safe home to Middle Earth. It's the way with all such tales."

Thade was happy with the happy ending.

"Not all," I said. "We have to remember Persephone."



"And who would that be?" Cat-like, he pounced on the unknown name as though it were a mouse.

"She was a daughter of the gods."

"As it might be a child of the Dagda Mor?" His mind was carrying him back to the oldest gods of Ireland.

"In a way. But this happened in ancient Greece."

"Far away and long ago. And she comely—when was there ever a fairy-tale woman that wasn't without a spot?—and taken away by the Gentry. Sure, they're everywhere in the stretch of the world, not only here in Erin."



"No, not by the Gentry, but by Hades, Lord of the Underworld. She was picking flowers on the Nysian plain when he came by with his black horses, caught her up into his chariot and carried her down to the depths."

"My grief, my grief!" Thade keened softly, as one bereft of a daughter.

"And her mother, Demeter, roamed the world, seeking for her lost child and vowing that no seed would sprout—for she was the goddess of growing things—until she had her child again."

"And what of the pastures?" Thade demanded. The thought of a seed not putting on leaf was, to him, sacrilege.

"They were brown and sere; no corn thrusting up a blade, no green on any tree. And the people so cried against the gods that Zeus, the All-Father, himself was dismayed."

"And who can wonder?" Thade interjected. "If the land itself was not a-greening there'd be divil a man left to cry. And how would the gods be filling their days with no sons of Adam to work their wiles on?"

"Perhaps Zeus took that into account, for he sent his messenger, faithful Hermes, to bring the girl back to her mother. And once the two were together again, the grasses sprang up and the flowers bloomed and the fields were ripe to the harvest."

"Well, that would be the full of it; Childe Rowland over again unless—" Thade's face was suddenly anxious as of one fearing to hear bad news. "Unless she had sipped a sup down there."

"She had eaten a seed of pomegranate."

"God save us!" He crossed himself.

"And for that, as Queen of the Underworld, she was compelled to live in it for a third of the year and the rest above in the light."

Thade was silent, brooding long over the story like a blackbird on a nest of eggs. At last he sighed and turned his somber gaze upon me.

"A Teller has to be told by the tales. It's them, not him, that has the wisdom, and him that has to find it. I'll not be forgetting that Greek colleen. Many a time, under a hedge or by a peat fire, I'll regale the company with her fate, which is also yours, and me own, begob, and theirs, too, if it comes to that."

"How so?" It seemed an equivocal statement. "We've never been down to the Underworld."

"Faith, have we not?" He eyed me with pity. "Tell me now," he demanded sternly. "Where's the kingdom of Heaven?"

Thade's digressions, for all that they often have sense and meaning, always catch me on the hop.

"You know that I know that, Thade," I reproached him.

"If you do and if itself is in you, then isn't also the other place?"

"You mean the Underworld?" I was startled.

"I mean it, every living word. And we going down to it day and night, as we might be divers in the sea, cavorting among the comestibles, ay, and gorging ourselves upon them, too, till our bellies swell with the wind."

"I hadn't thought of it like that." But already I sensed his drift.

"Well, be thinking now, for yer soul's sake. If it's not in the canon it should be, by rights. I'm telling you, and the tale tells it, there's a darksome world within us, too. How else would we ever know the light? And the both of them calling back and forth like neighbors over a fence."

I was silent. How else, indeed? I thought of my own crepuscular realm—Its "comestibles"! Its pomegranates! And all its Dead Sea fruit! Would the other kingdom have a mansion for me?

"Arrah, it's as it should be!" said Thade, his face losing its doleful look as the story continued to blossom within him. "Them two would be snug enough down by the roots, together all winter, weaving the Spring. And sure as we are sitting here she had to eat the one seed to give her the extent of the dark and bring her up green to the sun. That way she'd be knowing more, the creature, than ever her mother knew. So, let you not be grieving for her. Once ye have the pith of it there's nothing amiss in the tale at all."

He flung a questioning glance at the sky.

"Mid-day!" he said. "Time for me dinner. Ye'll take a sup and a bite with me?"

I hestitated, glancing instinctively at the fairy mound.

"Arrah, ye're safe with the bindweed," he said, untying his knotted, faded bundle and spreading out its contents.

"Poteen, it is!" he smacked his lips. "Me cousin has a still up the glen. And a loaf of soda bread, made by the woman."

He unscrewed the cap of a dingy bottle and the colorless liquid ran into it, vibrant as mercury.

I felt like a fire-swallower in a circus as the sip darted down my throat. Who would have thought a mere potato would have such spirit in it!

"Keep at it!" Thade encouraged me, "and ye'll have a gullet as supple and strong as it might be the tail of a cat. And now a little knob of the loaf. That's the sweetest part."

"Paracelsus said," I told him, "that we eat stars with our bread."

"Well, tell him from me, it's not much he knows."

"I can't, he's dead hundreds of years. I read it in a book."

"Book, is it?" he jeered at me. "Sure, paper never refused ink!"

"Are you after telling me," I mimicked his brogue, "that because it's in a book, it's not true?"

"I am not, then. But the poor maneen, God rest his soul, didn't know the half of it. If there's stars in it, isn't there also the rain? And the clouds gallivanting over the sky with the wind at their heels, like a sheepdog? And the moon and the blessed sod itself and the sun over all, as it might be a tent?—That's the other half. Eat!"

And suddenly I was hungry. Congress with the immortal worlds vivifies the soul and the soul in its turn vivifies the body. I needed to taste on my mortal tongue the food of Middle Earth.

Thade raised his bottle. "*Sláinte!*"* he said, with a glint in his eye, and took a long, hard swig.

I acknowledged the toast and bit into my knob of bread. It was indeed sweet. There were stars in it. And all the cosmic rest besides. Nothing was amiss. ■

*Good health.

Unity and Exchange

BASARAB NICOLESCU

Translated by D.M. Dooling and Paul Jordan-Smith

How does the universe function? Is it a kind of machine—a marvelous one, certainly, but nevertheless a machine—made up of practically independent systems, only mechanically connected? Or is there an underlying unity, affirmed by a dynamic, constantly evolving intelligence, at work on each of Nature's scales? Are there laws which run through all these scales—the scale of atoms, of human beings, of planets, etc.—laws which are unchanging but which nevertheless produce different effects according to the level on which they operate? In other words, is there a kind of "reciprocal feeding" between the different scales of Nature, or on the contrary, is the universe a dismal machine in which every level of life is doomed to destruction and death by a continually increasing disorder, a progressive entropy?

Quite evidently, these are difficult questions which, in one form or another, human beings have always asked themselves—questions which we cannot answer with certainty, since our vision of Nature is constantly changing. What is new in our time, however, is the considerable experimental and theoretical progress of contemporary science, which has succeeded by rigorous mathematical methods in penetrating to the very heart of matter. Although the questions formulated above are by their nature metaphysical ones, they may still find partial but striking illumination through rational scientific procedures. When they no longer remain shut away in subjective human experience, these questions acquire aspects that are essentially new through the discovery of correspondences on the plane of matter, of the material universe in which we are immersed. Thus a new stage of knowledge begins, a stage in which the study of the universe and the study of man sustain each other.

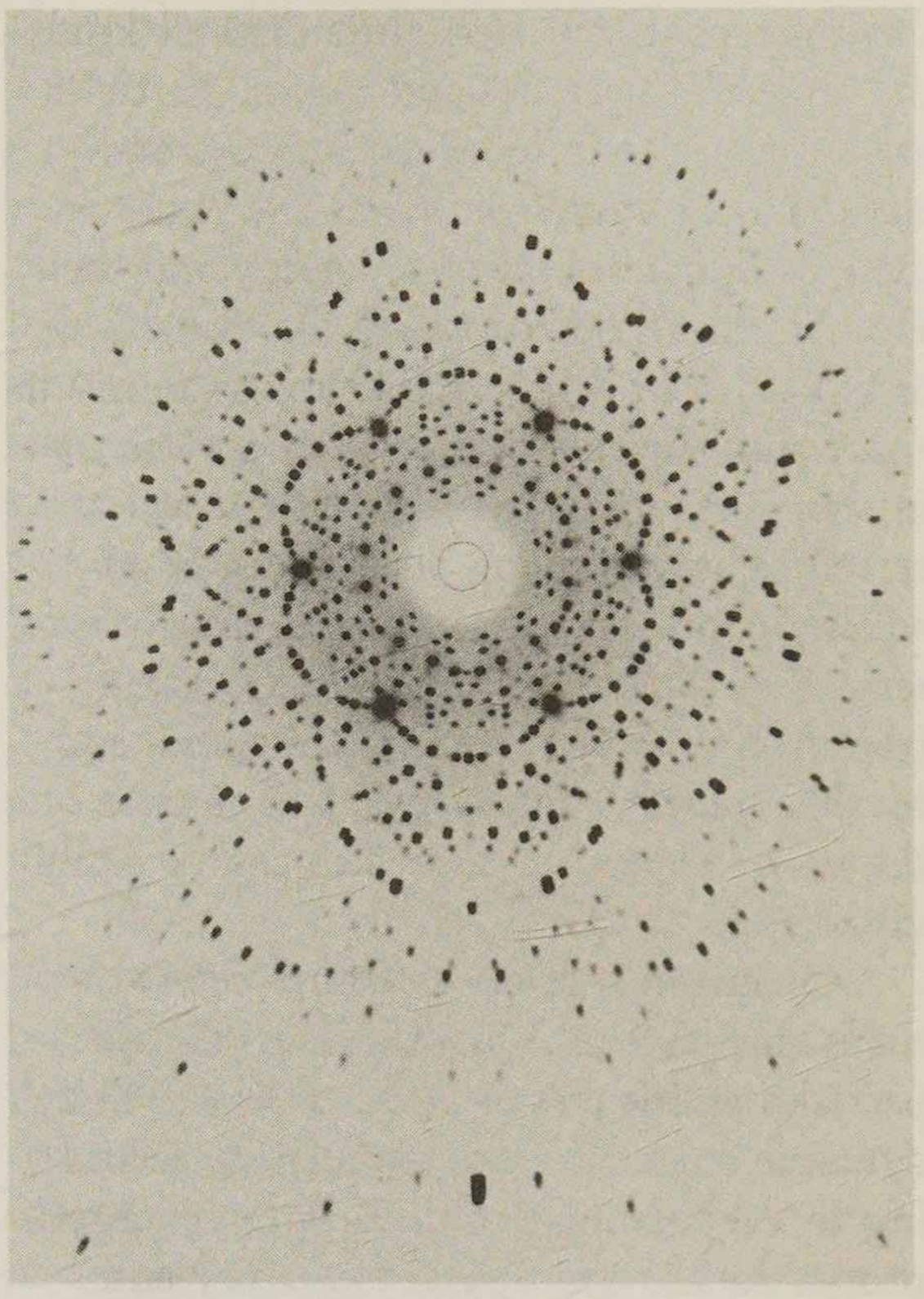
The quantum vision of the world

The concept of "matter," always central to scientific thought, was for a long time identified with "substance." This concept has been completely changed by modern science.

In classical physics, the central role is played by the idea of "object," the idea of "energy" being only a derivative and secondary one. Modern relativistic quantum physics has radically upset this order of things. The idea of "object" has been replaced by that of "event," or "relation," or of "interconnection"; the true movement is that of energy.

There is a subtle relation of opposition between substance and energy. If a certain quantity of energy is available, there can be produced from it a particle and an antiparticle which never before "existed" in the usual meaning of the word. Conversely, when a particle encounters an antiparticle, the "death" of these entities takes place, an annihilation accompanied by the production of a certain quantity of energy.

Energy appears as a unifying concept. Energy can manifest itself as substance, but also as "information," apparently quite without the help of substance. From this, the idea of "reciprocal feeding" between natural systems can be formulated in a scientific way. This "reciprocal feeding" does not necessarily presuppose an exchange of *substances;* this exchange does take place on certain levels but seems to be absent on that of the microphysical. On the other hand, the exchange of *information* is compatible with the nature of the microphysical world. In the "bootstrap" theory (which will be analyzed later) it is exactly this exchange of information which ensures the coherence of the microphysical world.



Lattice of atoms revealed by x-rays beamed through a beryl crystal

The quantum vision of the world made its appearance at the beginning of our century, and constituted a revolution of thought which I believe humanity's future history will probably go on talking about much longer than any of the other revolutions which have strongly marked this century. On December 14, 1900, presenting his work on "black body radiation" (concerning the thermodynamics of electromagnetic radiation) to the German Society of Physics in Berlin, Max Planck introduced the concept of "the fundamental quantum of action" ("action" is a physical quantity corresponding to energy multiplied by time). This quantum (or "Planck's constant") has a definite numerical value, and operates through whole multiples of itself. It introduces a discrete, discontinuous structure of energy. The old, all-powerful concept of "continuity" is shaken, and with it, the very foundations of what was thought to be reality.

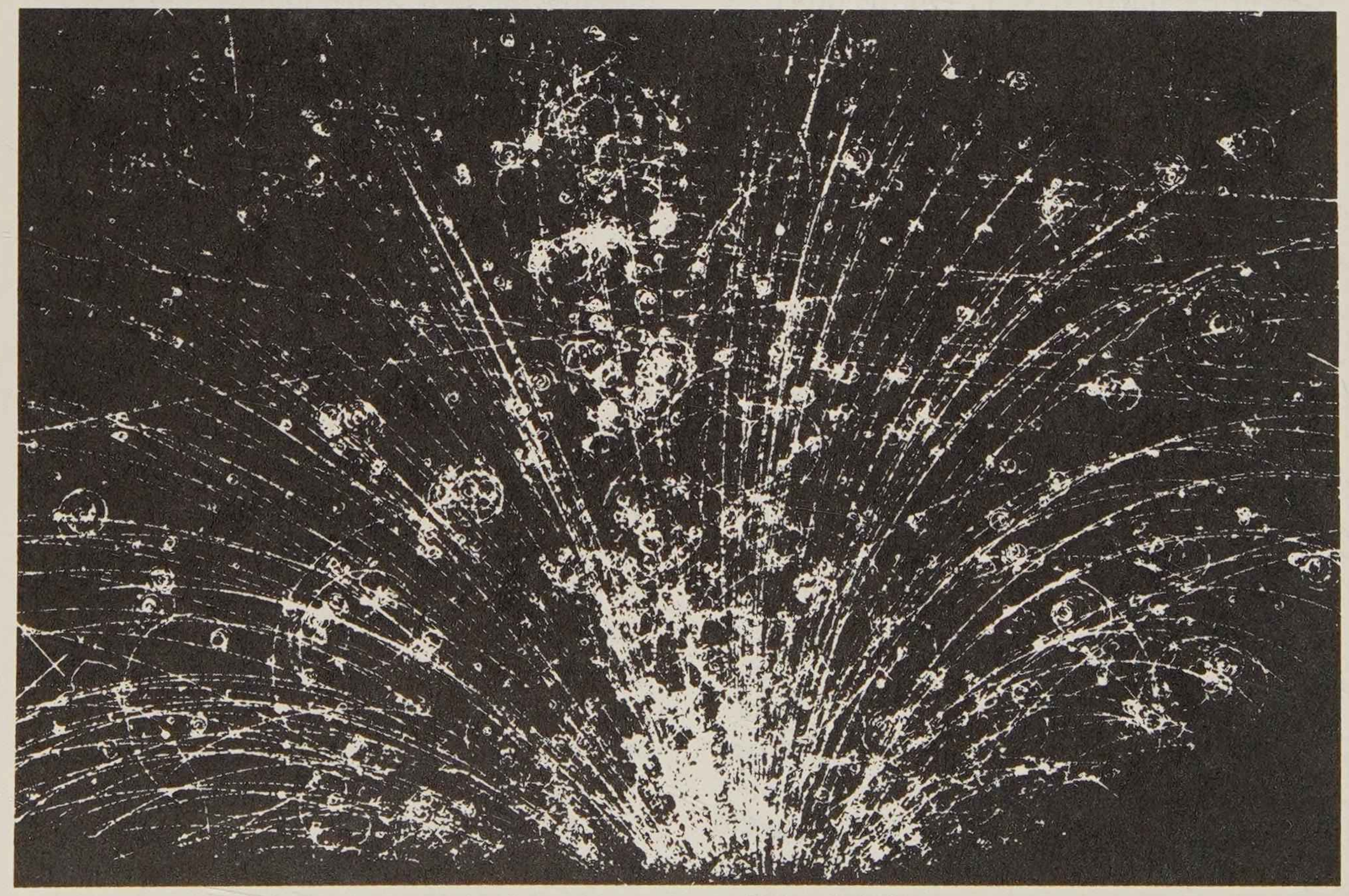
The idea of continuity has indeed been a constant in human thought since the most remote times. It is probably based on the evidence furnished by the sense organs: the continuity of our very body, the continuity of our memory. It is easy to grasp the deep connection between the idea of continuity and that of "local causality." "Objects" were considered in classical physics to be subject to laws of movement, and if the exact "initial conditions" were known (the physical state at a given moment in time), the physical state could be predicted at any other moment in time.

Planck's discovery opened Pandora's box, to the misfortune of reductionists of every kind, and a whole series of apparent paradoxes quickly appeared. Thus, classical

physics recognized two quite distinct kinds of "object": particles and waves. Particles are entities clearly localized in space and time, and characterized from the point of view of dynamics by their energy and their momentum. They can easily be visualized as billiard balls which move continuously in space and time, describing very precise trajectories. As for waves, they were conceived of as occupying all of space in an equally continuous way. Waves are characterized by their "frequency of vibration" (the inverse of their duration in time) and by the "number of waves" (the inverse of the wave's length). They also can be easily visualized.

Quantum mechanics completely overturns this picture. Quantum entities are particles and waves *at the same time.* Their dynamic characteristics are related, according to the formulae of de Broglie: energy is proportional to temporal frequency and momentum is proportional to the number of waves, the factor of proportionality being precisely Planck's "fundamental quantum of action." It is not wrong to compare this definition of a quantum particle to a Zen *koan:* it defies any formal picturing in space and in time, for it is evidently impossible to have a mental image (except by means of mathematical equations) of something which is both a particle and a wave. At the same time, energy is "quantified," and changes by "jumps," discontinuously. The concepts of continuity and discontinuity are found to be limited, not by an effort of philosophical or metaphysical speculation, but by the intervention of the physicists' supreme judge, Nature itself; in other words, under the evidential weight of experimental facts which can be repeated and verified.

Heisenberg's celebrated Uncertainty Relations very strikingly illuminate the dynamic of quantum particles: the product of the extension in terms of momentum of a quantum event multiplied by its spatial extension, or the product of its extension in terms of energy multiplied by its temporal extension, must be greater than the fundamental quantum of action. Thus, for example, if one wishes a precise, pinpointed localization in space, the result is that the extension in terms of momentum becomes infinite; and if one wishes a precise, on-the-dot localization in time, the result is that the extension in energy must be infinite. So it does not require a high degree of sophis-



Vapor trails of atomic particles tracked in bubble chamber

tication in mathematics or physics to understand that an exact localization of a physical event in space-time is an impossibility. The concept of the identity of the classic particle (a definite identity of the particle itself, as a separate part of the whole) is thus seen to crumble.

The Pandora effect continues to show itself in today's physics. In 1964, Bell established a theorem expressed in the form of certain inequalities which allow us to put to the test, in a precise, rigorous, experimental way, the most general ideas about local causality and separability. I cannot analyze here in detail Bell's inequalities and all they imply; in this paper I wish simply to underline the significance of these inequalities. Let us suppose that there are two researchers, separated in space-time, and each chooses the conditions of his own experiment quite independently. The results obtained by one of them, according to the ideas of local causality and separability, must be completely independent of the results obtained by the other. The very idea of "scientific objectivity" seems to require the absence of any non-local connection.Nevertheless, Bells's theorem shows clearly that the predictions of quantum mechanics are irreconcilable with the independence of results. Bells's inequalities are not "philosophical" inequalities; they do not presuppose *a posteriori* interpretations, and they have been subjected to experiment. The great majority of experimental results agree with quantum mechanical predictions.

Must we see in these non-local correlations the intervention of the irrational, the violation of causality, the breakdown of scientific objectivity? Surely not. What is put in question is one particular, narrow form of causality, based on the notion of separate objects, independent of each other. The world remains causal, the world remains rational; but our view of the world is obliged to change and our reason must adapt itself to a higher degree of refinement.

The question necessarily arises whether or not the laws that are valid on the microphysical scale, so different from the human, concern human life. It is impossible to give a definite answer to this question; but the evidence is more and more abundant that there is a deep unity in the world. Differing scales relate to finer and finer degrees of matter which are only forms of the manifestation of the *same* matter. Certainly there exists the discontinuity of concepts and of specific laws, but the world as we know it today is compatible with a continuity of general laws. Natural phenomena carry the "signature" of these general laws and they themselves are signs of a global unity.

That is why microphysical particles are fascinating; for otherwise they would be nothing but ordinary specks of matter, like the specks of paint on an old master's canvas, which can transmit nothing of the beauty of the whole painting. Recent studies in physics have shown that what happens on the scale of the infinitesimal can explain what happens on the cosmic scale, that of the indefinitely large. (See, for example Steven Weinberg's book, *The First Three Minutes.* The big-bang theory offers a magnificent example of the probable coherence of the world we live in.)

If the quantum vision really has a significance for our own life, are we ready to accept the general drift of the paradoxical linkage between continuity and discontinuity? Are we ready to replace the idea of separate objects with the vision of a world of universal interconnections? Are we ready to understand that the observer stops being an "observer" and becomes, as Wheeler says, a "participant"? These questions deserve at least to be formulated.

The "bootstrap" theory

The place of the "bootstrap" theory is in the context of elementary particle physics, a science which pushes the study of the structure of matter to its furthest limits, and which carries on and presupposes Einstein's relativity theory and quantum mechanics but which tries to go further than either of these two.

The evolution of the "bootstrap" theory is exemplary in every point. It was the veritable "dominant theory" of the 1960s, then suffered a moment of decline, and at the present time is in a period of renewal. The "bootstrap" hypothesis made its first appearance as a possible explanation of certain experimental data. It was formulated for the first time by Geoffrey Chew, professor at The University of California at Berkeley. It seemed to be a natural reaction against classical realism; it proposed a radical renunciation of all equations of movement. This attitude corresponded with the "S-matrix" program initiated by Heisenberg in 1925, which says that a "realistic" theory must be capable of being expressed in terms of quantities directly linked to experimental observation. Thus the attempt was made to construct the theory of particles and of all the phenomena of the natural world from general principles, making use of the dynamic mechanism of bootstrap. Here is a more exact definition of bootstrap, given by Chew in an article published in 1974 in the Encyclopedia Britannica: ". . .the unique mechanism for collective satisfaction of the general principles may be the mechanism exhibited by nature. In other words, the observed collection of nuclear particles, with their assorted reaction probabilities, may represent the *only conceivable* fully consistent quantum-relativistic system. . .each nuclear particle is supposed to support the existence of others, which in turn support it. Each nuclear particle may be seen in three different roles: (1) a *constituent* of some composite, (2) a contributor to the *force* that binds together a composite, or (3) an *entire composite.*"

In this definition, the part appears at the same time as the Whole. So bootstrap is a vision of the unity of the world, a principle of Nature's self-consistency; the world constructs its own laws through self-consistency. The only world compatible with general laws is the world of Nature; it is impossible to find a system with no internal contradictions on the logical plane which at the same time coincides with everything that is or will be observed. In other words, all that is possible for *us* is a series of approximations. This is an affirmation of humility in front of the rational order of Nature, but at the same time, an affirmation of hope. It recalls Gödel's well-known theorem about the structure of mathematics: a "sufficiently powerful" system of axioms (i.e., one large enough to be useful) that has no internal contradictions is necessarily open (there will always be real, but undemonstrable results) and so a closed system that is also sufficiently powerful is a contradiction in terms.

What is put in doubt in the bootstrap theory is the very idea of the precise identity of a particle, and the idea of relationship between "events" is put in its place. It is the relationship between events which is responsible for the appearance of what is called a particle. There is no such thing as an object in itself, having its own identity, which could be defined in a way that is separate and distinct from other particles. *A particle is what it is because of all other particles existing at the same instant.* The bootstrap is a dynamic law (in the most general sense of the idea of movement) which regards the characteristics and attributes of a certain physical entity as the result of interactions with other particles existing in the whole, in the whole of Nature.

The bootstrap theory has important implications about the nature of scientific prediction. It is of course impossible to know the All, to know Nature in its wholeness. Consequently, it must be acknowledged that our search is for ways to illuminate the self-consistency of nature and that we must renounce the Luciferian ambition to lay completely bare the structure of the "ultimate" laws. At the same time, there is an assurance that behind the approximation is hidden a fundamental coherence, a flawless rational order.

Bootstrap, then, conceives of the world, of Nature, as a global entity. At the basic level there is nonseparability. However, separability certainly exists at the level of approximation, and it is on that account, moreover, that measurements can be made of the details and predictions of sci-

ence. Although at the basic level there are no laws of fixed identity, there are nevertheless relatively independent wholes which, considered as particles, can be approximately identified. The way in which physicists have worked until now (and it cannot be denied that it has been very successful on a practical plane) is to use the method of separation. We have been able to make extraordinary discoveries because we have been able to separate objects. In spite of this, the bootstrap affirms that real understanding comes by means of nonseparability.

In the recent form of the bootstrap theory (''topological bootstrap''), there are two spaces: one connected with the intrinsic qualities of particles and one which is limited to space-time. These two spaces are not separated; they communicate with each other, and in their deepest nature they are indeed similar. The mathematical tool called topology introduces also an idea of complexity: starting from something very simple (at topological complexity zero) the attempt is made to construct more and more complex systems, in order to reach the ''real'' world, the observed world. At the basic level of zero complexity, bootstrap's law of unity operates in the clearest and most direct way. What is being dealt with is not yet the ''real'' world but a subquantum world, the world of particles in which fundamental laws are operating. Later, with a certain degree of complexity, another level is reached, that of particles as they are described in quantum mechanics. But this is still not the observed world. To reach the observed world, a summation is necessary, a still greater complexity. One of the results is that space-time itself appears as an approximation. Complexity engenders reality and thus the real world appears as an approximation. The fundamental laws are not found again in their pure form in space-time (which is the receptacle of our reality).

Thus we arrive at this affirmation, apparently so astonishing in the mouths of physicists, that in the context of this theory observable reality appears as an approximation. Reality (in the deepest sense of the word) implies a space different from space-time, a greater space where the physical event takes place in all dimensions at the same instant. Consequently, at that level, linear and continuous time can no longer be spoken of. There is a law of causality, but the event happens *suddenly*; there is no ''before'' and ''after'' in the usual sense of the words. There is a certain kind of discontinuity in the idea of time itself, and the continuous time one observes is the result of these operations of complexification and summation at different degrees of freedom. So continuous time appears as an approximation. This touches on something essential, the very nature of space-time.



Uranium atoms magnified 7½ million times

If we accept this very rich idea formulated by Chew, of reality as an approximation, there is really no more contradiction between separable and nonseparable objects; they appear at different levels of complexity. Local causality is defined in space-time and so appears as an approximate concept. In the greater space of topological bootstrap a new causality enters. So causality is maintained, although the concept of it is more subtle than the one we are accustomed to.

The idea of bootstrap has the fundamental characteristic of appearing as a sym-

bolic idea. In an article which appeared in 1968 under the provocative title "Bootstrap: A Scientific Idea,"? Chew himself observed that the idea of bootstrap, in its most general formulation, is ". . .much older than particle physics." He continued: "The number of *a priori* concepts has lessened as physics has progressed, but it would seem that science, as we know it, requires a language based on some unquestioned framework. Semantically, therefore, an attempt to explain *all* concepts can hardly be called 'scientific.' " And he concluded: "Carried to its logical extreme, the bootstrap conjecture implies that the existence of consciousness, along with all other aspects of nature, is necessary for self-consistency of the whole. Such a notion, although not obviously nonsensical, is patently unscientific."

We find here a precise, inexhaustible, and irreducible definition of the idea of bootstrap which gives it the property of a symbol. As a symbolic idea, the idea of bootstrap may be seen as "imprecise." This shows the confusion, unfortunately a very common one, between the ideas of "imprecise" and "inexhaustible." This confusion may explain the instinctive distrust which the "typical" scientist feels of the use of symbolic ideas in science. On the other hand, "precision," cherished by scientists, can be obtained by a partial, truncated, delimited, acceptance of a symbolic idea. This is exactly what has happened with the idea of bootstrap, which in its truncated form has led to precise mathematical formulation, detailed calculations, and direct confrontations with experimental data. The partial and truncated sense of a symbolic idea thus becomes efficacious on the plane of "direct materiality."

At the same time, it is evident that a truncated symbolic idea is potentially capable of continual improvement, of perpetual evolution, in the attempt to rediscover more and more of the symbol's unlimited richness. A theory based on a symbolic idea is therefore an *open theory*. The symbol ensures the permanence of such a theory. It is in this sense that the recent words of Abdus Salam, Nobel prizewinner in Physics, may be understood: "Concerning dynamics, our High Court of Appeal, when all else fails, is the mechanism of bootstrap, the principle of the self-consistency of the universe . . . ." An open theory may in the course of time change its form and its mathematical formalism, but its "direction" always remains the same.

Some questions, by way of conclusion

a) What is the significance of complexity?

In general, we associate "organized complexity" and "order," implying that "organized complexity" is accompanied by a magnitudinal increase in scale (for example, cell – human body). The theory of topological bootstrap offers an interesting example of the opposite. The elements of S-matrix, which describe the diffusion among particles, are differentiated according to a (growing) index of topological entropy (or complexity). The maximal "order" occurs at the level where this index is at zero. However, at this zero complexity, the particle itself shows a considerable complexity: it is "composed" (in the sense discussed previously) of all other particles. As one sees it, the idea of "complexity" is intrinsically ambiguous. This ambiguity is due to the fact that there are essentially *two types of complexity*: one limited to the gradual emergence of space-time and the other to a space which is different from space-time. The presence of "inaccessible degrees of freedom" in topological boot-strap allows the coexistence of these two types of complexity.

b) Is there a well-defined frontier between the living and non-living?

For universal interconnection and a permanent exchange to be possible, every self-organizing system, as Erwin Laszlo observed, must have a certain degree of "intelligence" and of "subjectivity." The bewildering quantity of information and the increasing density of energy discovered on the scale of the infinitesimal show that it is practically impossible to delineate the frontier between the living and the non-living. "Lifeless matter" is consequently a

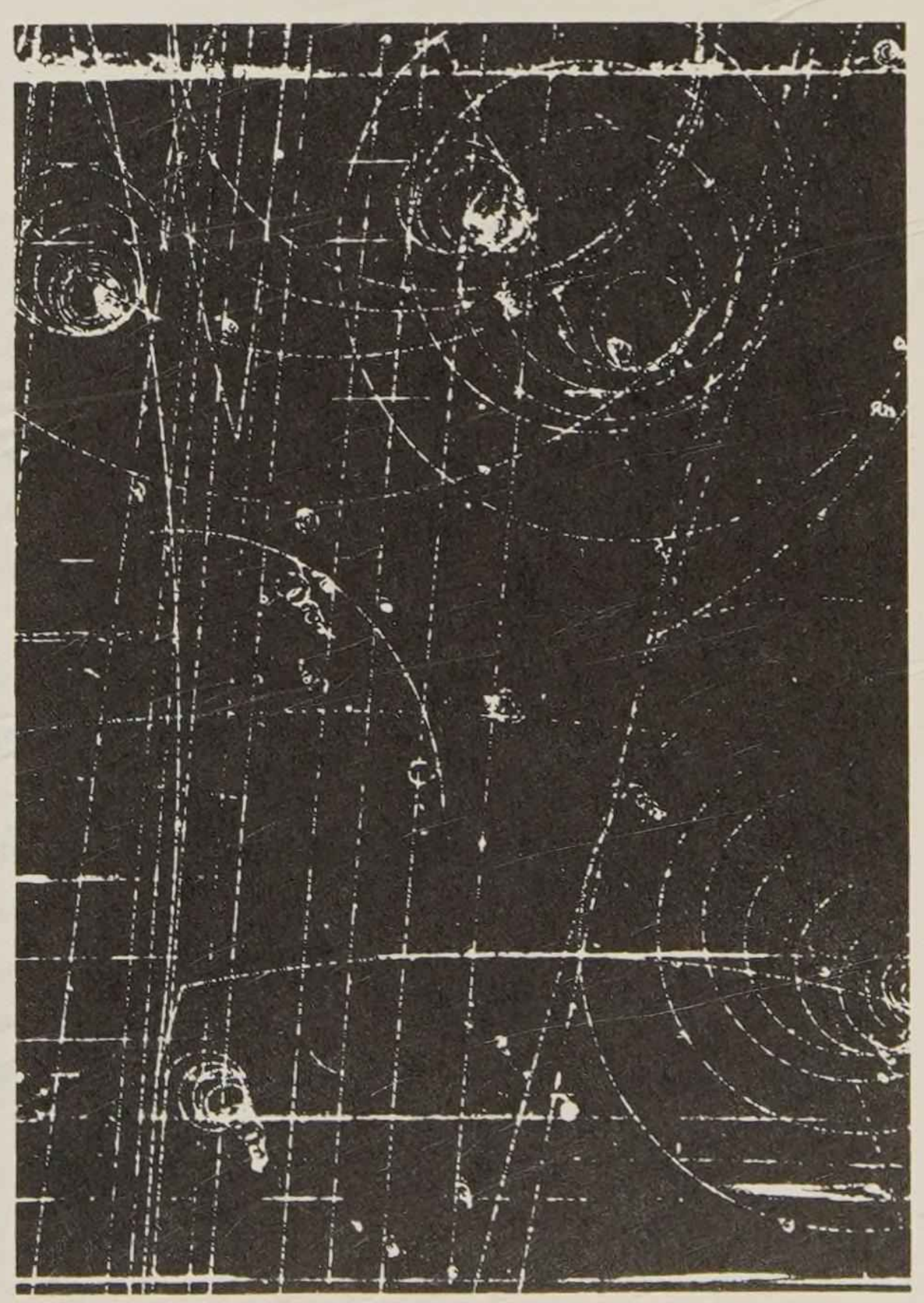
meaningless notion. So it is conceivable that the quantum particle possesses its own subjectivity and its own intelligence in the complex relationships of perpetual combat and continual creation and annihilation that it carries on with all other particles.

c) Is there a "vertical" exchange between different scales?

It seems to me that contemporary systemic thought has somewhat neglected the idea of *scale*. A scale could be defined as a group of systems which remains invariant under the action of certain transformations. One can thus conceive, for instance, of "the scale of particles," "the human scale," or "the scale of planets" (man appearing as the interface system between those which belong to the first and last scales). So it is natural to suppose the existence of two types of exhange: a "horizontal" exchange which takes place between systems belonging to one and the same scale, and a "vertical" exchange which takes place between systems belonging to different scales.

There is abundant experimental evidence for the first type of exchange, but there is practically none for the "vertical" exchange. This situation might be explained by the extreme subtlety of the effects associated with this "vertical exchange." As an example, it does not seem to me completely absurd to suppose that the deep meaning of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle might be linked to the possible exchanges between the world of particles and the other systems of different scales. The "probabilistic" character of quantum events could thus be given an unexpected explanation. I also think it is reasonable to suppose that a relation exists between the systemic unity of the world and the significance of Gödel's theorem about the structure of mathematics, to the extent that Reality itself has a mathematical structure. These hypotheses evidently have a highly speculative character in science's present state. A deepened understanding of space-time is particularly necessary before testing to see if such hypotheses may be well-founded. ■

Omega-minus particle transforming into proton, tracked in bubble chamber



Manna and Wisdom

from the Zohar



YHVH *said to Moses*
"I am about to rain down for you bread from heaven." . . .
Moses said to Aaron
"Say to the whole assemblage of the Children of Israel:
'Approach **YHVH**, *for He has heard your grumbling.' "*
As Aaron spoke to the whole assemblage of the Children of Israel,
they turned to face the desert,
for there, the Presence of **YHVH** *had appeared in the cloud . . . .*
That evening, the quail rose and covered the camp.
In the morning, there was a fall of dew around the camp.
The fall of dew rose,
and there, on the face of the desert,
a fine coating, as fine as frost on the ground.
The Children of Israel saw.
They said to one another, "What is it?"
for they did not know what it was.
Moses said to them
"It is the bread that **YHVH** *has given you to eat."*
(Exodus 16:4, 9–10, 13–15)

Come and see:
Every single day, dew trickles down
from the Holy Ancient One to the Impatient One,
and the Orchard of Holy Apple Trees is blessed.
Some of the dew flows to those below;
holy angels are nourished by it,
each according to his diet,
as it is written:
"A human ate angel bread"
(Psalms 78:25).
Israel ate of that food in the desert.

Rabbi Shim'on said
"Some people are nourished by it even now!
Who are they?
The Comrades, who engage Torah day and night.
Do you think they are nourished by that very food?
No, by something like that very food;
two balancing one.

Come and see:
When Israel entered and joined themselves to the Holy King
by uncovering the holy marking,
they were pure enough to eat another kind of bread,
higher than at first.
At first, when Israel went out of Egypt,
they went into the bread called *Mazzah.*
Now they were purer;
they went in to eat higher bread from a high sphere,
as it is written:
'I am about to rain down for you bread from heaven,'
literally: from Heaven!
It was then that Israel discovered the taste of this sphere.

Comrades engaging Torah are nourished from an even higher sphere.
Which is that?
That which is written:
'Wisdom gives life to those who have it'
(Ecclesiastes 7:12),
a very high sphere."

Rabbi El'azar said to him
"If so, why are they weaker than other human beings?
Other human beings are stronger and more powerful;
the Comrades should be the stronger ones."

He said to him, "A good question!
Come and see:
All human food comes from above.
The food that comes from heaven and earth is for the whole world.
It is food for all; it is coarse and dense.
The food that comes from higher above is finer food,
coming from the sphere where Judgment is found.
This is the food that Israel ate when they went out of Egypt.

The food found by Israel that time in the desert,
from the higher sphere called Heaven—
it is an even finer food,
entering deepest of all into the soul,
detached from the body,
called angel bread.

The highest food of all is the food of the Comrades,
those who engage in Torah.
For they eat food of the spirit and the soul-breath;
they eat no food for the body at all.
Rather, from a high sphere, precious beyond all: Wisdom.

That is why a Comrade's body is weaker than a normal body:
they do not eat food for the body at all.
They eat food for the spirit and the soul-breath
from someplace far beyond, most precious of all.
So their food is finest of the fine, finest of all.

Happy is their portion!
As it is written:
'Wisdom gives life to those who have it.'
Happy is the body that can nourish itself on food of the soul!''

Rabbi El'azar said to him, ''Certainly that is true.
But how can such food be found now?''

He answered, ''Certainly a good question!
Come and see:
This is the clarity of the word . . . .
The food of the Comrades engaging Torah is most precious of all.
This food flows from Wisdom on high.
Why from this sphere?
Because Torah derives from Wisdom on high,
and those who engage Torah enter the source of her roots;
so their food flows down from that high and holy sphere.''

Rabbi El'azar came and kissed his hands.
He said, ''Happy is my portion! I understand these words!
Happy is the portion of the righteous!
Engaging Torah day and night
entitles them to this world and the world that is coming,
as it is written:
'That is your life and the expanse of your days.' ''

■

From *Zohar; The Book of Enlightenment*. Translated by Daniel Chanan Matt. New York: Paulist Press, 1983.

Gastronomy in Ancient China

DONALD HARPER

Animals feed themselves; men eat; but only wise men know the art of eating.—Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*, M.F.K. Fisher trans.

The beginnings of Chinese gastronomy (by which I mean the art and science of delicate eating) go back at least to the third century B.C., when the oldest extant gastronomic treatise appeared. By that time clear distinctions had been established between gluttonous indulgence and gastronomic refinement, between the vulgar eating habits of the ignorant and the rarefied diet of certain wise men. The flora, fauna, and minerals of the earth were potential aliments, each to be assessed for gastronomic value. Only the most subtle examination might reveal how to utilize these materials—how to eliminate their noxious effects and combine them into dishes which both pleased the palate and nourished the body.

From the time of earliest civilization in China there was a keen awareness of the effects of food on the body, and the Chinese applied their culinary skills to the preparation of dishes which promoted physical well-being. Although documentation of attitudes towards food is scant in sources earlier than the third century B.C., notions of raw, cooked, cold, warm, dry, moist, and the like were already ingrained in the culinary code of Shang and early Chou times (sixteenth-eighth centuries B.C.). The flowering of gastronomy was in China part of a revolution in spiritual and intellectual ideas which is documented in the speculative writings of the fifth to third centuries B.C. At the core of the teachings expounded in this literature, be it the ethical philosophy of Confucius and Mencius or the naturalism of Chuang Tzu, was the belief that humankind was perfectable. A person needed only to undertake the appropriate program of self-cultivation in order to experience the transformation into a sage.

It was inevitable that food should become a matter of the greatest importance in the daily life of a would-be sage; and dietary regimens proliferated which were designed to aid the adept in the cultivation of body, mind, and spirit. Just what kind of diet was deemed most appropriate was a controversial subject. Teachings ascribed to the fifth century B.C. philosopher Mo Tzu, for example, appear to be directly critical of the trend in eating habits:[1]

> The sage kings of antiquity in fashioning the model for drinking and eating let it be sufficient to fill the empty stomach, sustain the vital vapor, strengthen the limbs, make the ears and eyes sharp and clear, and then desisted. They did not carry to extremes the blending of the Five Tastes or the harmonizing of fragrant aromas. They did not import rare oddities and marvelous substances from distant realms.

Those dietary niceties which according to Mo Tzu the legendary kings did not practice were of course the very practices being

promoted in contemporary gastronomic circles.

The antithesis to the utilitarian attitude towards food professed by Mo Tzu, and the oldest manifesto of gastronomy, is an essay in the *Lü Shih Ch'un Ch'iu* (*Spring and Autumn of Sire Lü*), a compendium of speculative ideas compiled in the second half of the third century B.C. The essay is entitled "Pen Wei" ("Seeking the Root of Taste").[2] The core of the essay provides a counterstatement to Mo Tzu's dicta on eating, and the practices Mo Tzu criticizes may be the very ones espoused by the authors of "Seeking the Root of Taste." There is also evidence of the physiological and therapeutic orientation of ancient dietary practices in this essay; for gastronomic arts were fundamentally concerned with the effects of food on a person's physical well-being, not simply with the pursuit of culinary delight for its own sake. Food was considered to belong to the resources of materia medica. The theory and technique of food preparation paralleled pharmacy—the cook and pharmacist practiced a similar art.

This dual role is apparent in the figure of I Yin, the master of gastronomy in "Seeking the Root of Taste." I Yin was a cook whose accomplishments became known to King T'ang, the founder of the House of Shang in the mid-second millenium B.C. King T'ang recognized I Yin's virtue, sought him out, and made I Yin his chief advisor. The legend of I Yin the cook is recorded elsewhere in early literature: how he first delighted T'ang with his culinary expertise and then rose to assist the king in establishing the Shang dynasty. Another version of the I Yin legend emphasizes his knowledge of drugs. According to later tradition, I Yin was the first cook of herbal medicine, for he was the creator of medicinal decoctions.

Collecting Rare and Marvelous Delicacies



It is in the guise of I Yin's inaugural lecture to King T'ang that the gastronomic theory of "Seeking the Root of Taste" is presented:

> I Yin delighted T'ang with a teaching on the Culminant Taste. T'ang said, "Can this be practiced?" I Yin responded, "My Lord's domain is small and will not suffice to provide for it. Become the Son of Heaven and then it can be provided for. Now, of the three groups of creatures, the water-dwellers have a rank fishiness; the carnivores are rancid; and the herbivores are malodorous. Stinking and foul, they are still excellent; and each has its use. At the root of all tastes, water is primordial. Among the Five Tastes and Three Materials, and the Nine Simmerings and Nine Transformations, fire serves as the regulator. At times brisk and at times slow, fire eliminates fishiness, removes rancidness, and eradicates malodorousness. It must be done so that the ingredients are conquered without losing their inherent qualities."

From the outset I Yin makes it clear that only the supreme individual ordained by Heaven as son, the king by divine right, can expect to successfully practice it. The image of the true king was a common trope for the cultivation of the sage in the ancient speculative writings, and thus the promise of initiation to gastronomic secrets for those who adopt the teaching is implicit.

In the first part of the teaching I Yin sets out the principles of cooking. Water and fire are the primary forces at work in cooking. Water is the elemental liquid in which all tastes are resolved; fire acts to modulate the cooking process so that the food is brought to the ideal condition of maturation. What transpires in the cooking pot is an imitation of the effects of moisture and heat in nature; a notion also evident in the word *shu*, which in ancient usage denoted both properly cooked food and perfect ripeness for grain, fruit, and vegetables. However, the correlation with natural processes involves a more complex symbolism which was still being elaborated in the third century B.C. Gradually evolving as the Chinese sought to penetrate the mysterious operation of the world, the concept of Yin and Yang dualism and of Five Actions (*wu hsing*) provided the base for a symbolic theory of correspondence which meshed the manifold phenomena of the world into a single fabric.

Water and fire were the first of the Five Actions to emerge in the cosmic creation according to the cosmogonic sequence of the Five Actions as established in sources earlier than the third century B.C. (the sequence is: water, fire, wood, metal, earth).[3] Thus, declaring water to be primordial accords to water the same role in cooking as in the original creation. And the fire that arose after water is present in the fire burning in every stove. Unlike classical Greek theories of the elements in nature, the Chinese theory of the Five Actions associated water, fire, wood, metal, and earth with qualities native to their respective substances and with various cyclical processes in nature. All aspects of human existence were susceptible to analysis in terms of these qualities and cycles. By the third century B.C. Yin Yang and Five Action theories were well-developed in astrology and calendrics, serving to correlate celestial motions and seasonal passages with the microcosmic human realm below. They were also being applied in physiological speculations, although it was another few centuries before the model of the human body based on Yin Yang and Five Action theories was formalized in Chinese medicine.

Reference to the Five Tastes in I Yin's teaching constitutes early witness to the importance of Five Action theories in the analysis of foodstuffs. The tastes as correlated with the actions are: salty/water, bitter/fire, sour/wood, acrid/metal, sweet/earth.

The purpose of identifying the tastes is to know the ingredients and proportions which will result in a perfectly balanced dish. While fire is the chief actor among the Three Materials (water, fire, and the wood which is the fuel), Nine Simmerings, and Nine Transformations, if the tastes of the ingredients are not properly chosen then the dish will fail. The concern for the tastes of ingredients was shared by pharmacy. In the oldest materia medica the taste of a drug according to the five-fold schema is standard information; the individual drugs used in a compound are referred to as the "tastes" of the compound. The very notion of a Culminant Taste in gastronomy is premised upon seeking the supreme harmonization of the tastes of the ingredients. And this is the subject taken up by I Yin in the second part of the teaching:

In the business of harmonious blending, one must make use of the sweet, sour, bitter, acrid, and salty. Whether things are to be added earlier or later and in what amounts—their balancing is very subtle and each thing has its own characteristics. The transformation which occurs in the caldron is quintessential and wondrous, subtle and delicate. The mouth cannot express it in words; the mind cannot fix upon an analogy. It is like the subtlety of archery and horsemanship, the transformation of Yin and Yang, or the calculations of the four seasons. Thus it is long-lasting yet does not spoil; thoroughly cooked yet not mushy; sweet yet not cloying; sour yet not overpoweringly so; salty yet not deadening; acrid yet not caustic; mild yet not insipid; unctuous yet not unpalatable.

What better choice of a spokesman could have been made than I Yin to counter the opinion voiced by Mo Tzu that the sage kings of antiquity "did not carry to extremes the blending of the Five Tastes or the harmonizing of fragrant aromas"?

Orchestration is the essence of fine food. Selection of ingredients for taste, cor-

The Physiological Effects of the Five Tastes



rect proportions, and timing are the three factors noted by I Yin in achieving the perfect medley. The cook who undertakes this enterprise oversees a wondrous transformation, for which the shooting of an arrow to strike a distant target and the operation of Yin and Yang in the world are the closest approximations. It is important to appreciate the emphasis on harmonization and blending in I Yin's gastronomical model, which is a characteristic of Chinese cuisine to this day. Gastronomy was a way of maintaining balance through the creation of dishes which were themselves perfectly balanced. In terms of theory and practice there was little difference between the gastronomer-cook and the pharmacist. The former applied his knowledge of aliments to healthful nutrition on a normal daily basis. The latter, whose stock of drugs included the cook's foodstuffs, blended his potions to deal with medical crises.

In the third part of the teaching I Yin turns to a consideration of the ingredients required by one who hopes to realize the Culminant Taste. Naturally, the refined diet of which he speaks is not prepared from the standard comestibles in the ancient larder. Each item named represents a superlative specimen in its category. Many are the exotic products of distant regions known only in legendary geography; truly unobtainable save by the one Son of Heaven, the paragon of gastronomers. Is this not the very predilection for imported marvels criticized by Mo Tzu? I shall not attempt to translate I Yin's list of products in its entirety. Some are monsters and others magical plants which stirred the imagination of ancient Chinese and defy the attempts of modern scholars to affix prosaic identifications to them. A judicious survey must suffice.

Seven categories of aliments are named: animal flesh, fish, edible plants, harmonizing agents, grain, water, and fruit. The animals are all exotic creatures. Several of the fish come from the waters of China, but there is also a marvelous winged fish which nightly flies from the mythical Western Sea to the Eastern Sea. Mt. K'un-lun, the Olympian paradise of the Queen Mother of the West (an important immortality goddess), is the source for several of the edible plants. More readily available are the fragrant cress of Yang Hua, the celery of Yün Meng, and the kale of Chü Ch'ü—regions located in present day south-central China. The harmonizing agents include ginger from Yang P'u (in Szechwan) and cinnamon from Chao Yao (in Hunan). The grains, all varieties of millet, must be obtained from lands beyond the ancient borders of China. In the categories of water and fruit, I Yin recommends the well water and fruits of Mt. K'un-lun. Most of the other items also come from magical sources. The only fruits whose taste might have been familiar to the ancient Chinese are tangerines from the banks of the Yangtse and pomelos from Yün Meng (in Hupei, also the source of celery). Acknowledging the difficulty of obtaining the various products, I Yin identifies the finest horses who are able to cover the great distances involved.

I Yin's gastronomic lecture to King T'ang concludes with an admonition:

> One who does not first become the Son of Heaven cannot provide for it. One cannot become the Son of Heaven by force; one must first realize the Way. The Way lies in dispensing with other things and concentrating on the self. Having perfected the self, one becomes Son of Heaven. When one becomes Son of Heaven, then the Culminant Taste is provided for. Thus scrutinizing what is near is the way to know of what is distant. Perfecting the self is the way to perfect others. Such is the essence of the Way of the sage king! What use indeed to engage in many futile exertions!

The high status of the cook and the attention paid to diet were not innovations of the gastronomic theorists who composed "Seeking the Root of Taste." The choice of I Yin as the advocate of gastronomy was no doubt due to his legendary status as cook and pharmacist to King T'ang. Traces of an antique style of royal life which was centered around the nurture of the king are also found in ritual literature compiled during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.). One book, the *Chou Li* (*Rites of Chou*), describes in idealized form the huge staff which supervised the diet of the Chou king. However, the sort of gastronomic cultivation described in "Seeking the Root of Taste" is not simply a popularization of old royal ways. It represents one response—that of gastronomic theorists—to the issue of spiritual and physical cultivation which nearly monopolized Chinese speculations from the fifth century B.C. well into the Han.

The role that food and diet was to play in early Chinese speculations on the issue of spiritual and physical cultivation was spurred by ideas concerning the nature of *ch'i*, "vital vapor" in my translation. An archaic word in the Chinese language connoting steamy, vaporous emanations, by the fifth century B.C. *ch'i* had come to be regarded as the stuff of life. The world itself was composed of this vital vapor, which all things generated in the world likewise possessed. Both the material body and the spirit consisted of *ch'i*; and human life depended upon maintaining the store received at birth. Physical strength and the sharpness of the senses resulted from its circulation through the body.

Food possessed *ch'i* which underwent transformation when ingested and supple-

Various Sorts of Soup and Jam



mented the supply of vital vapor in the body. The idea that people relied on this supply, which might grow or dwindle depending on how they lived their life, was a generally accepted principle. It is evident, for example, in Mo Tzu's belief that people should only eat enough to "fill the empty stomach, sustain the vital vapor, strengthen the limbs, make the ears and eyes sharp and clear, and then desist." If all substances introduced into the body were believed to affect the body's supply of vital vapor, it followed that artful eating might so enrich a person's store that the vigor of youth might be retained—life itself might be prolonged indefinitely.

Such were the hopes raised by gastronomic cultivation. This kind of thinking was associated most closely with practices which early sources refer to as "nurturing life" (*yang sheng*). Part of the reason for their sometimes hostile reception among certain moral philosophers lay in the emphasis which the practitioners of "nurturing life" placed on the positive value of human desires. Rather than insist that the path to spiritual and physical perfection necessitated the repression of the appetite for food and sex, "nurturing life" philosophy vaunted the benefits of these desires. The pleasures of the table and the boudoir were both exploited for the purpose of self-cultivation. Their practice was always directed towards a higher goal—the enhancement of vitality and life—and indulgence of the passion for food and sex was strongly warned against. Careless indulgence could only lead to disease and death.

The discovery of valuable aliments, the study of the nutritional properties of food (based on the theories of *ch'i*, Yin and Yang, and the Five Actions), and cookery (what I Yin calls "the transformation which occurs in the caldron"): these were the special concerns of alimentation in the practice of "nurturing life" which deserve the title of gastronomy. Gastronomy was, of course, one facet among many of the "nurturing life" philosophy, which embraced pharmacy, alchemy, therapeutic exercise, and breath cultivation in the pursuit of a material, physical immortality. The magical products from Mount K'un-lun and other mysterious locales which I Yin tantalizingly names for King T'ang must have elicited thoughts of wondrous elixirs in the minds of eager adepts. For some believers the supreme transformation was achievable only through the alchemical elixir or through diets which rejected all forms of ordinary food; and they chose to subsist on certain drugs or by ingesting only the pure cosmic vapors in the atmosphere.[4] But for anyone who accepted a daily diet based on the available foods, "nurturing life" gastronomy offered a model for eating habits.

Ultimately, it was the tradition of refined eating which sprang from the gastronomy of this period that defined connoisseurship in food among the elite classes of the following centuries. We know that during the T'ang (618–907) the genre of "Food Canons," books devoted to the exposition of gastronomic principles, was a fixture of elite life. Unfortunately, the T'ang gastronomic literature and all earlier such specialized compilations have been lost, save for scattered quotations excerpted in medical literature. The same fate has befallen the records of cookery recipes, leaving us with only a handful of written recipes from sources earlier than the Sung (960–1279).

By serendipity, recent archeological excavations in China have yielded manuscripts from the second century B.C. burial of a Han nobleman which document various "nurturing life" practices. A medical

recipe manual from the same tomb includes savory dishes among the medicinal preparations used in treating ailments. According to a record left inside, the tomb was sealed in 168 B.C. The manuscripts discovered in the tomb, which range from speculative writings to divination books and astrological aids, appear to have been part of the deceased's private library.[5] Many details of ancient "nurturing life" practices and of early medicine are revealed in the manuscripts for the first time. I would like to mention just two passages: first a gastronomic lesson on the value of leeks, liquor, and sleep; and second a recipe for baked chicken.

Like "Seeking the Root of Taste," the gastronomic lesson is in the form of a didactic interview between a ruler and a learned master.[6] The ruler, King Wei of Ch'i (r. 357–320 B.C.), was a noted patron of esoteric wisdom whose court was a gathering place for those with special knowledge or techniques to impart. In the manuscript interview, King Wei asks Wen Chih to describe his most essential art, to which the master responds simply, "sleep." But the ruler presses Wen Chih to speak of what the master eats when not sleeping. Wen Chih replies, "pure liquor and leeks." The interview then becomes a forum for Wen Chih's teachings on leeks, liquor, and sleep.

Wen Chih explains that the leek is a longevity food with many beneficial properties:

When those who suffer attacks of fright eat it, they regain regular composure. When those whose eyes do not see clearly eat it, they regain regular clearness. When those whose ears do not hear eat it, they regain regular sharpness. When eaten in the Spring in the third month, sickness does not flourish and sinews and bones grow ever stronger. It is the leek that is called "king of the hundred grasses."

Eating Cures the Various Ailments



Wen Chih's enumeration of the leek's attributes is strikingly similar to the medicinal value of the leek in later materia medica.

As for liquor, Wen Chih explains:

> Liquor is the quintessential vital vapor of the five grains. It disperses when ingested. When it enters the veins, it makes a penetrating cycle; opening the veins without necessitating sleep. Thus it is regarded as the medium for the hundred drugs.

Wen Chih, thus, equates the role of liquor in distributing the nutriments in food through the body with the use of liquor in pharmacy as the medium for drugs. Wen Chih's leeks are more nutritious eaten with liquor than without. At this point in the interview the ruler observes that dietary custom pairs leeks with eggs in the Spring, not leeks with liquor. Wen Chih has a ready answer:

> That is also permissible. Now then, the chicken is a Yang creature; one that emits a clear sound at the break of day with head outstretched and feathers ruffled. . . .Thus practitioners of the Way eat it.

Although liquor is useful in circulating nutriments through the body, it is sleep (Wen Chih's foremost art) that the master recommends as the best companion to eating. According to Wen Chih, "sleep is to eating what fire is to metal." In the theory of the Five Actions, fire conquers metal. Sleep acts to transform the food a person consumes in the same way that fire transforms metal; without sleep, proper digestion does not occur. In discussing the therapeutic attributes of leeks, the medicinal value of liquor, the identification of the chicken as a Yang creature, and the Five Action analogue to the relation between sleep and eating, Wen Chih touches on key elements of ancient gastronomy; providing us with an intriguing glimpse of the art of eating in a source of almost the same antiquity as "Seeking the Root of Taste."

The cookery evident in the manual of medical recipes is no less intriguing. The kitchen equipment employed is considerable (steaming pots, kettles, skillets, bowls, ladles, and so forth); the heating methods are varied (principally boiling, steaming, frying with oil, and dry-parching); and the ingredients include many foodstuffs. The recipes themselves describe the method of preparation with a precision which is not often found in old recipe literature. Medicinal gruel prepared from different grains, which remains a common cure in China to this day, is one kind of dish in the manuscript remedy manual. I have chosen, however, to present a chicken dish which calls for an unusual cooking method. In the remedy manual it is listed in the section of recipes for treating hemorrhoids:[7]

> Pour soy sauce over a yellow hen, making it die of its own. Wrap the chicken in miscanthus leaves (a common Chinese grass). Daub mud on it. Bake it. When the mud seal is dry, eat the chicken. Use the feathers to fumigate the perineum.

The recipe calls for a hen drowned in soy sauce, which is then wrapped in leaves without either defeathering or eviscerating it, sealed with mud, and placed in the fire to bake.

This is undoubtedly the oldest recipe in the world for clay-wrapped chicken. Currently in Chinese cuisine the dish goes by the name "beggar's chicken," the story being that it was invented during the Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1911) by a beggar who had stolen a chicken. According to several versions of the story, the beggar adopted this method of cooking the chicken because he was afraid of being discovered by the authorities. With no time to

properly dress the bird, he quickly wrapped it in some leaves, patted mud over it, and buried it in the ashes of the fire. When he later removed the chicken from the fire, the hardened mud fell off and the feathers with it, leaving a fragrant baked bird. The annals of cuisine are filled with such stories of culinary inventions. But now we have a second century B.C. manuscript to attest that the Ch'ing beggar's chicken was already being cooked in Han kitchens as a treatment for hemorrhoids. Chinese food attitudes and favored dishes survive in remarkable ways. ■

NOTES

1. Mo Tzu (*Chu Tzu Chi Ch'eng* ed.), p. 102.
2. *Lü Shih Ch'un Ch'iu* (*Chu Tzu Chi Ch'eng* ed.), pp. 139–143.
3. The cosmogonic sequence was one of many patterns in which the Five Actions could be construed. There is still scholarly disagreement over the antiquity of the theory, but no one would date it to later than the early fourth century B.C.
4. The phrase "abstain from grain [i.e. all ordinary food] and consume vital vapor" epitomized the practice of achieving immortality through breath cultivation (air and breath were both *ch'i*).
5. J.K. Riegel, "A summary of some recent *Wenwu* and *Kaogu* articles: Mawangdui tombs two and three," *Early China* 1 (1975), pp. 10–15, describes the burial and surveys the manuscript library. D. Harper, "The *Wu Shih Erh Ping Fang*: Translation and Prolegomena" (dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1982; University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor), pp. 2–152, discusses the manuscripts related to medicine and physical cultivation.
6. The original text is written on slips of bamboo. It is transcribed in the Chinese journal *Ma Wang Tui I Shu Yen Chiu Chuan K'an* 2 (1981), pp. 2–14.
7. The remedy manual is written on a sheet of silk. Harper, op. cit., is a translation and study of it. See p. 428 for the Chinese text of the chicken recipe.

Opposition between Aliments



This Must Thou Eat

"When you taste food, if you know who it is that tastes it, then you have known HIM (Brahman)."[1]

—Sri Ramana Maharshi

The bodily food we take is changed into us, but the spiritual food we receive changes us into itself; therefore divine love is not taken into us, for that would make two things. But divine love takes us into itself, and we are one with it . . . . [2]

—Meister Eckhart

What is eaten is the sunlight. What is excreted is the dark night. The breath of life is the clouds, and the blood is the rain that falls on the world.[3]

—Ogotemmeli



I dreamed that I floated at will in the great Ether, and I saw this world floating also not far off, but diminished to the size of an apple. Then an angel took it in his hand and brought it to me and said, "This must thou eat." And I ate the world.[4]

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Life's greatest danger lies in the fact that men's food consists entirely of souls.

—Eskimo shaman

King. Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

Hamlet. At supper.

King. At supper! where?

Ham. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table; that's the end.

King. Alas, alas!

Ham. A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

King. What dost thou mean by this?

Ham. Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.

—*William Shakespeare*

Brahman is not confined to the top but is in immediate contact with everything, and the mystery of food accompanies us all along the way. There is a process of assimilation, a cosmic metabolism which begins in the lowest strata of reality and continues up to the highest. The culmination is that extraordinary mystical song: "I am food, I am food, I, who am food, eat the eater of food!" There is no deeper unity than that produced by the eating of the other, just as there is no better love than that of being the food of the lover. The tension between *jñāna* and *bhakti*, knowledge and love, is harmoniously solved in the symbol of food. Even more, in the eating and preparing of food, human action and divine action are both required; the *karma-mārga*, the way of action, is also integrated into the mystery of food. Matter and spirit are united in the food by which they subsist.

He consists of mind, is the leader of body and
life, and reposes on food, directing the heart.[5]

—*Raimundo Panikkar*

Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

—*Ecclesiastes 11:1*

Old Uncle would sometimes leave a heifer or steer in front of a poor cousin's house. He used to tell me, "There's more to food than just

passing through your body. There are spirits in the food, watching over it. If you are stingy, that spirit will go away thinking 'that bastard is so tight, I'll leave.' But if you share your food with others, this good spirit will always stay around.'' I was brought up to regard food as something sacred. I can foresee a day when all you have to give us are capsules with some chemicals and vitamins instead of food, with the missionaries telling us to fold our hands over a few tablets on our plates, saying, ''Heavenly Father, bless our daily pill.'' I'm glad I won't be around to see it.[6]

—John Lame Deer

Ought we not when we are digging and ploughing and eating to sing this hymn to God? ''Great is God, who has given us such implements with which we shall cultivate the earth: great is God who has given us hands, the power of swallowing, a stomach, imperceptible growth, and the power of breathing while we sleep.'' [7]

—Epictetus

Live in each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influences of each. Let them be your only diet drink and botanical medicines. In August live on berries, not dried meats and pemmican, as if you were on shipboard making your way through a waste ocean, or in a northern desert. Be blown on by all the winds. Open all your pores and bathe in all the tides of Nature, in all her streams and oceans, at all seasons. Miasma and infection are from within, not without. The invalid, brought to the brink of the grave by an unnatural life, instead of imbibing only the great influence that Nature is, drinks only the tea made of a particular herb, while he still continues his unnatural life—saves at the spile and wastes at the bung. He does not love Nature or his life, and so sickens and dies, and no doctor can cure him. Grow green with spring, yellow and ripe with autumn. Drink of each season's influence as a vial, a true panacea of all remedies mixed for your especial use. The vials of summer never made a man sick, but those which he stored in his cellar. Drink the wines, not of your bottling, but Nature's bottling; not kept in goatskins or pigskins, but the skins of a myriad fair berries. Let Nature do your bottling and your pickling and preserving. For all Nature is doing her best each moment to make us well. She exists for no other end. Do not resist her.[8]



—Henry David Thoreau

Everything that the senses receive is nourishment. Be careful therefore not to let yourself be encroached upon by your stomach. And try always to remain the master of what you absorb.[9]

—*Ananda Moyi*

The third virtue is fasting. Fasting I call the eating of a little bit once a day . . . To refrain from food for a day, or two days, three, four, five, or a week, a man can not do always. But, so as every day to eat bread and drink, one can always do this; only, having eaten, one should be a little hungry so that the body will be submissive to the spirit and capable of labours and sensitive to mental movements, and so the bodily passions will be conquered. Complete fasting cannot mortify the bodily passions as well as poor food mortifies them. Some fast for a time and then give themselves over to delicious foods, for many begin fasting beyond their strength and also other severe labours, and then they grow weak from lack of measure and unevenness of this labour, and they seek tasty foods and repose for the strengthening of the body. To act in this way means to build and then again to destroy. . . .[10]

—*St. Paisius Velichkovsky*

As the Ikhwān write:

Plants come before animals in the series of beings and serve them as material for the forms of animals and food for the nutrition of their bodies. From this point of view, plants would be like a mother who eats raw food, digests it, assimilates it and transforms it into pure milk which is absorbed very gently by those who drink it. The plants subsequently present this to the animals considered as their sons . . . Plants occupy an intermediate position—necessary and salutary—between the four elements and the animals. All the parts of the vegetables which the animals consume such as seeds, leaves, fruit, and so on, come from the four elements digested and transformed by the plants. . . .

As minerals serve plants and plants animals, so do animals in turn serve man, who therefore comes to this world later than all of them, since each has come after the kingdom upon which it depends.[11]

—*Seyyed Hossien Nasr*

When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?



And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

—John 6; 5-13

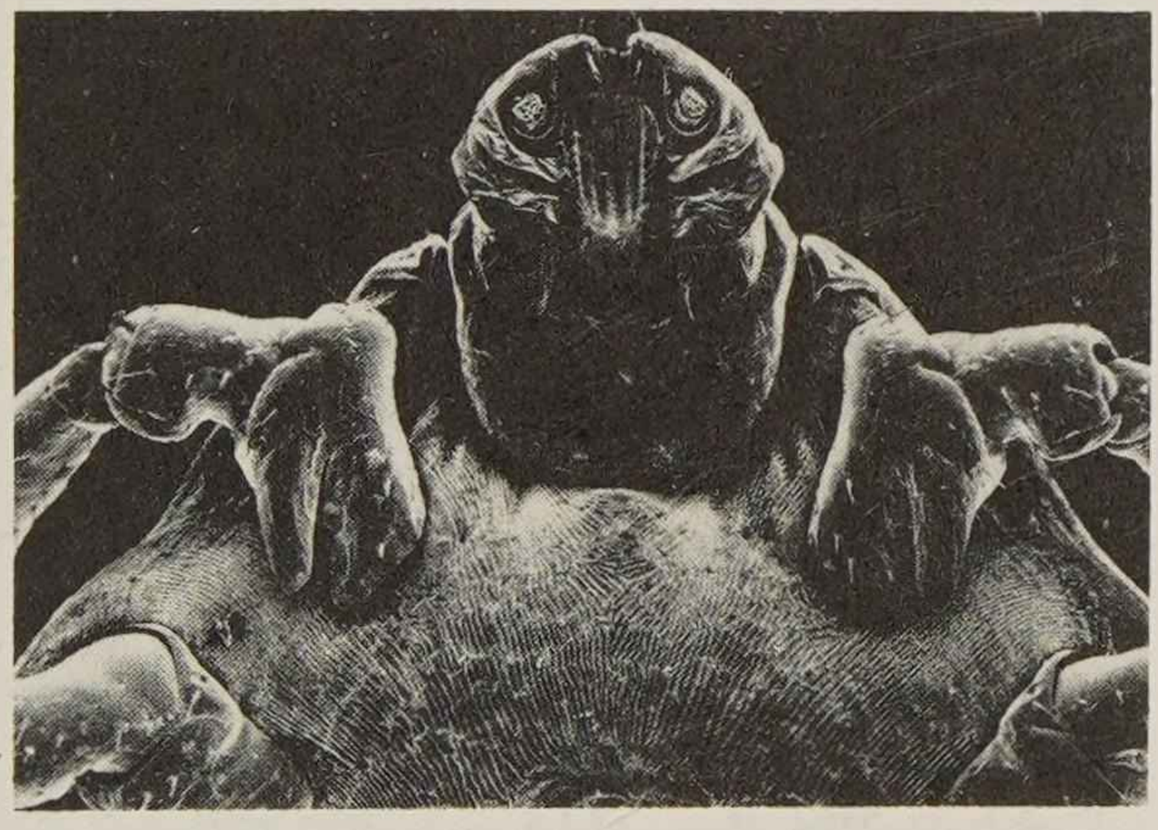
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Dira

URSULA K. LE GUIN

Told by Ire's husband Red Bull to a group of children and young adolescents in the Obsidian heyimas.



Heya hey heya,
hey heya heya, in that time that place, in the dark cold time, the dark cold place, she was going alone, this woman, a human woman, walking in the hills, looking for something to eat. She was looking for brodiea and calochortus bulbs before they bloomed, and putting out snares for brush rabbit, and gathering anything that could be food, because her people were hungry and so was she. Those were times when people had to work all day for enough to eat, times when even so they didn't have enough to eat, and people died of hunger, human and animal, they died of hunger and cold, so they say.

She was hunting and gathering in the hills, then, and started down into a canyon where she thought she saw some cattail down by the creek. She got into buckbrush and scrub oak and spiney, and had to push her way along; there weren't any deer trails, not even rabbit trails. She pushed along through the brush, trying to get down into the canyon. It was very dark, like it was going to rain. She thought, "Oh, before I get out of this brush, this time of year, I'll be covered with ticks!" She kept brushing at her neck and arms and feeling in her hair for ticks, trying to keep them from sticking to her. She didn't find any cattails. There was nothing to eat down in the canyon. She started to go along downstream, pushing through that thick underbrush, tearing her shirt and scratching her skin on the buckbrush and the spiney. She came into a place where the yellow broom grew very tall and close together. Nothing else grew there. The broom was half dead and grey-looking, without flowers yet. She pushed her way into the broom thicket, and ahead of her there, in the middle of the thicket, she saw a person standing. It was a wide, thin, dark person, with a little head, and one hand without fingers, just two prongs, like pliers or pincers. It stood there waiting. It had no eyes, they say.

She stopped; she stood still. Then she tried to back away very quietly as she had come. But the broom thicket had closed behind her and it made a lot of noise when she tried to go back. She could only go forward quietly. The person stood still, not moving, not looking, so still she began not to be sure it was alive. She thought, "Maybe I can get past it." That was her mistake. She went forward very quietly, moving softly, smoothly, quickly. The waiting person didn't move. She saw how thin and flat it was, dry-looking, and thought it must be something that had never been alive. She came on past it. She

Dira is an excerpt from Ursula K. Le Guin's new novel, *Always Coming Home,* to be published in 1985 by Harper & Row.

was beside it. She passed it and now her back was to it. It jumped, then. It jumped, and caught her with its gripping hand at the back of her neck. It held her and said, "Take me home with you!"

She struggled and said, "Let me go!" She tried to get free but it held on. She was struggling. It held tighter and tighter, and she said, "All right, I'll take you home with me!"

"That's good," the person said. It let go of her then. When she could turn and look at it, it looked like a man, a human being, dark and thin, with a small head and small eyes, but with two arms and two hands with thumb and fingers, and all seeming to be the way a human being should be. "Go on," the man said, "and I'll follow."

So she went on, and the man followed.

She came to where she lived, a little town, just a few houses, a few families, somewhere in that dark, cold valley. She came there, the man following, and her people said, "Who is this with you?"

She said, "A hungry man."

They said, "He certainly is thin. He can share what we have to eat."

She tried to say, "No! Send him away!"—but when she started to speak her throat closed and she couldn't breathe, as if he were still holding her by the neck. She could say nothing against him.

They asked the man what he was called, and he answered, "Dira."

The woman had to open her door to Dira. He came in and sat down by her fire. She had to share the food she had brought for her children and her mother with him. There wasn't much: a few bulbs and greens, that was all she had found. They were all still hungry when they had eaten, but Dira said, "Ah, that was good! That was fine!" And he seemed not so thin already.

He asked the woman, "Where is your husband?"

She said, "He died last year."

Dira said, "I'll take his place."

She tried to say, "No!" but she couldn't: her throat tightened till she thought her head would burst, and she could not breathe, until she said, "Yes."

So Dira was her husband, and she made the best of it.

Her mother said after a while, "This husband you picked up in the woods, he doesn't do any work."

"He's still weak from starving so long," she said.

People in town said, "Why doesn't Dira farm, or hunt, or gather? He stays in the house all day and night."

She said, "He's ill."

They said, "Maybe he was ill when he came here, but look at him now!"

Because he had become quite fat—every day after he got fatter, and his skin was ruddy instead of dark.

"He's fat, and you and your family are all thinner than ever—how is that?" they asked her. But she could not say. When she tried to speak against Dira, even when he was not there with her, she strangled. The tears came into her eyes. She said, "I don't know."

They had planted gardens, but the summer was dark and cold. The seeds rotted in the ground. There was little to hunt; there were not many Blue Clay animals, because they too were starving and sick; there were few Obsidian animals. Nobody had food. The woman's children grew weak and sick, with big, swollen bellies. She wept, but her husband laughed. "See, they're like me!" he said. "We all



have big bellies!'' He ate everything: he grew fatter, thicker, redder, every day. The family had one cow, and there was enough grass to keep her fit; it was her milk that kept the children alive. Dira went out one day into the fields. The woman said, ''There, see, my husband is going to work!'' He went to where the cow was grazing, and she said, ''He's going to look after our sister there.'' But what he did was drink the cow's blood, sucking it. He did this every day, and the cow could not give milk; he went on doing it, and she lay down and died. He butchered her there in the field and came home carrying the meat. He had to go back and forth several times for it all. ''See how hard my husband works!'' the woman said. There were tears running down her face. They saw that, her townspeople.

Her children had grown very weak without milk. The husband, Dira, always spoke kindly to them, but he gave them no meat. He ate it all. Sometimes he would say to them, the children, their mother, their grandmother, ''Here, don't you want this meat? You don't want this food?'' But when he said that their throats would tighten and close, so they could only shake their heads; then he would eat the meat, smiling and joking. One of the children died. The other, the elder, began dying too. Dira was so fat he could no longer get up; he sat by the fire all day and night. His belly was huge, a huge ball. His skin was tight and pale red all over. His eyes were covered with fat. His arms and legs were stubs coming out of that great ball of fatness. His wife and her mother stayed beside the dying child.

The people of the town spoke together. They talked a while, and decided to kill Dira. The men were angry and said, ''A knife across that throat, a spear into that belly!'' But there was a lame woman, a visionary, who said, ''Not that way, not that way. This is not a man!''

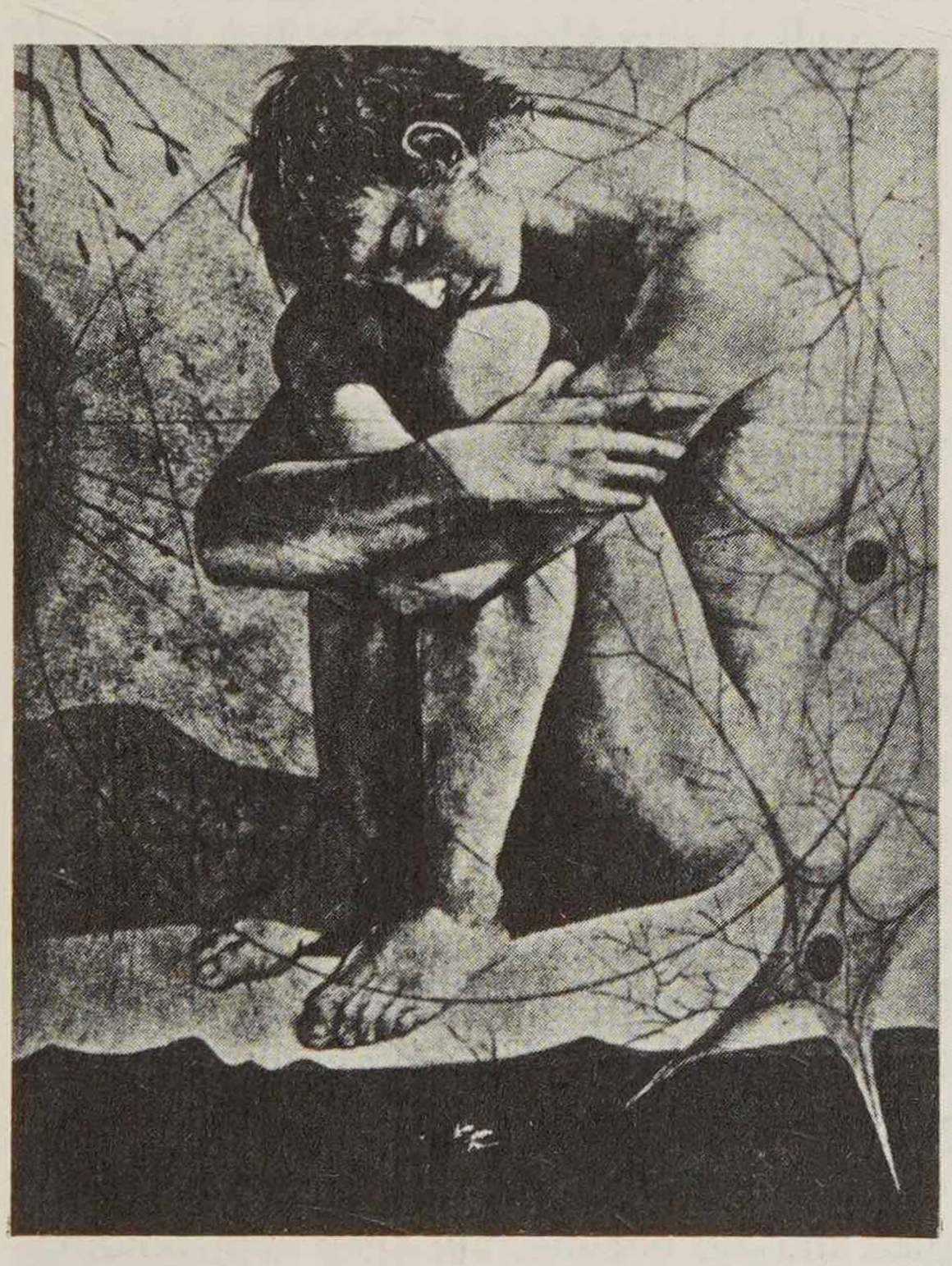
''But we are going to kill him,'' they said.

''If you kill him that way, his wife and her family will die with him. You must not spill all that blood in him. It is their blood,'' she said.

''Then we'll suffocate him,'' one of the men said.

''That is the way,'' the lame woman said.

They went, all of them, to the house. The door was shut. They pushed it open and came in. The grandmother and mother and child lay like sticks of wood, like old bones on the floor, too weak to sit up, dying. The husband sat by the fire like a great, red ball of skin. When he saw the people he changed into his old form, and put out his pliers hand, but he was too fat to move, and couldn't catch them. They had brought with them a basin of eucalyptus oil, and they held Dira down and pushed his head into the oil, and held it there a long time. A long time he struggled and did not die, but they kept holding his head under the oil, and at last his great, wide, fat body stiffened and began to shrink. It shrank and shrank, and the wife and her mother and child sat up. It shrank more, and they stood up. It shrank down no larger than a fist, and they could speak again. It shrank down no larger than a walnut, and they could move freely and say what had happened. It shrank no longer than a thumbnail, flat and dry and dark, and the people, greeting and comforting the wife and her family, didn't keep careful watch on it. It shrank down to something not as big as a lentil, and then scrambled out of the basin of oil, and out the door, back into the hills, to wait somewhere for another person to come by. It's still waiting there, they say. ■



Daily Bread

CHRISTOPHER BAMFORD

The experience of human beings in the world of visible, exteriorized nature is at first inevitably paradoxical. Born with the intuition of unity, of the singleness of the universe, all too soon we find ourselves torn apart. Once seamless reality becomes bifurcated into outside and inside, the first seeming to obscure the second, while the second, in turn, seems to hide behind the first. The realization that, so long as these two sundered aspects do not become one, we cannot be, in Rilke's words, "reliably at home in our interpreted world," marks the first stage of spiritual awakening. Indeed, the initiatory path of transformation—the work of esotericism—is, from a certain point of view, none other than this movement from outer to inner, the way of interiorization, or love, by which the two are made one.

There are other approaches to this juncture. Many traditions begin with the contemplation of death. Living in visible, outer nature, we do not seem to belong to her. Something masks the relation. Tragically, we find ourselves cut off and outside. Nature sustains us—our body comes together from her elements and is maintained according to her laws—but at the same time nature is indifferent to us. When we

"die," the innocent necessity of her laws takes over our body, reducing it to dust from our point of view, although from hers the elements that make it up are never destroyed and would seem to live forever. In that sense, as children of physics and chemistry, we are immortal and nature as we ordinarily know her is our place; but insofar as we aspire to the freedom of self-knowledge, nature's mother-womb becomes a prison or a trap.

The gnostic injunction thus becomes to leave this world of exile. As Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." Hence teaching stories, like "The Hymn of the Pearl," portray the human soul as a pilgrim, a stranger, a homeless traveller. And it is true: considering nature with our ordinary, dualizing minds, we are surrounded by mortality. Whatever is externally visible, including our own body, is transient and forever dying. Death, infirmity—mortal nature with its needs and passions—is the cosmic condition. Human life, history, is carnage and pain. It would seem that such suffering is evidence of some pervasive sin or wrong; but our response to it affirms that it is not essentially ours. In our bones we know that we have been made for something else. And yet we love this earth; we know that it was made for us, we for it. It intimates our paradise, our most perfect nature. Because of intuitions of its true meaning and beauty, we feel responsible for it and we sense its participation in another reality. Without sharing in nature, we know that we share in her nevertheless, as she does in us. We realize in other words that our fate is one, that she is us—that nature, in the phrase of Scotus Eriugena, is human nature.

More astonishingly still, confirming this, each morsel and drop of outer, visible nature, every sensorial perception, feeds us in our inner being. This dying world, that we feel apart from, paradoxically sustains us in our inner being. Visible, mortal food is transformed in us, in mortal nature, into food for immortality. Surely this is a great mystery. Somehow "nature" uses "nature" to resist and overcome "nature." In the celebrated sentence of Ostanes: "Nature delights in nature, nature overcomes nature, nature dominates nature."

Nineteenth-century science spoke of the conservation of "matter," of its indestructibility. Nothing was ever lost, nothing created; there was only transformation. Thinking therefore centered on the capitalization of matter and health; nutrition and agriculture became synonymous with the quantification of elements. But, in nature, biological transmutation—the transmutation of elements—is the rule, while in human beings there occurs what can only be called a resurrection of "matter" into "consciousness." This indicates that, rather than speaking of the conservation of matter-energy, one ought to speak of its—and the world's—continuous creation out of nothing, the symbol for which is food. This process we are. In the words of the mystical chant that concludes the *Taittiriya Upanisad:* "I am food, I am food, I am food. I am the food-eater, I am the food-eater, I am the food-eater. I am the combining agent, I am the combining agent, I am the combining agent. I am the first-born of the world-order, earlier than the gods, in the center of immortality. Whoso gives me, he surely does save thus. I, who am food, eat the eater of food. I have overcome the world. I am brilliant like the sun. . . ."

As always, then, the unique question arises: Who am I, to what world, where do I belong? Where are human beings at home? Visible, outer nature seems to exclude us. She is death to us and we know nothing of her. The being of things escapes us and we find ourselves always outside. As Rilke says:

> And we: spectators, always, everywhere,
> looking *at* everything and never *from!*
> It floods us. We arrange it. It decays.
> We arrange it again, and we decay.
> *(Duino Elegies: The Eighth Elegy.)*

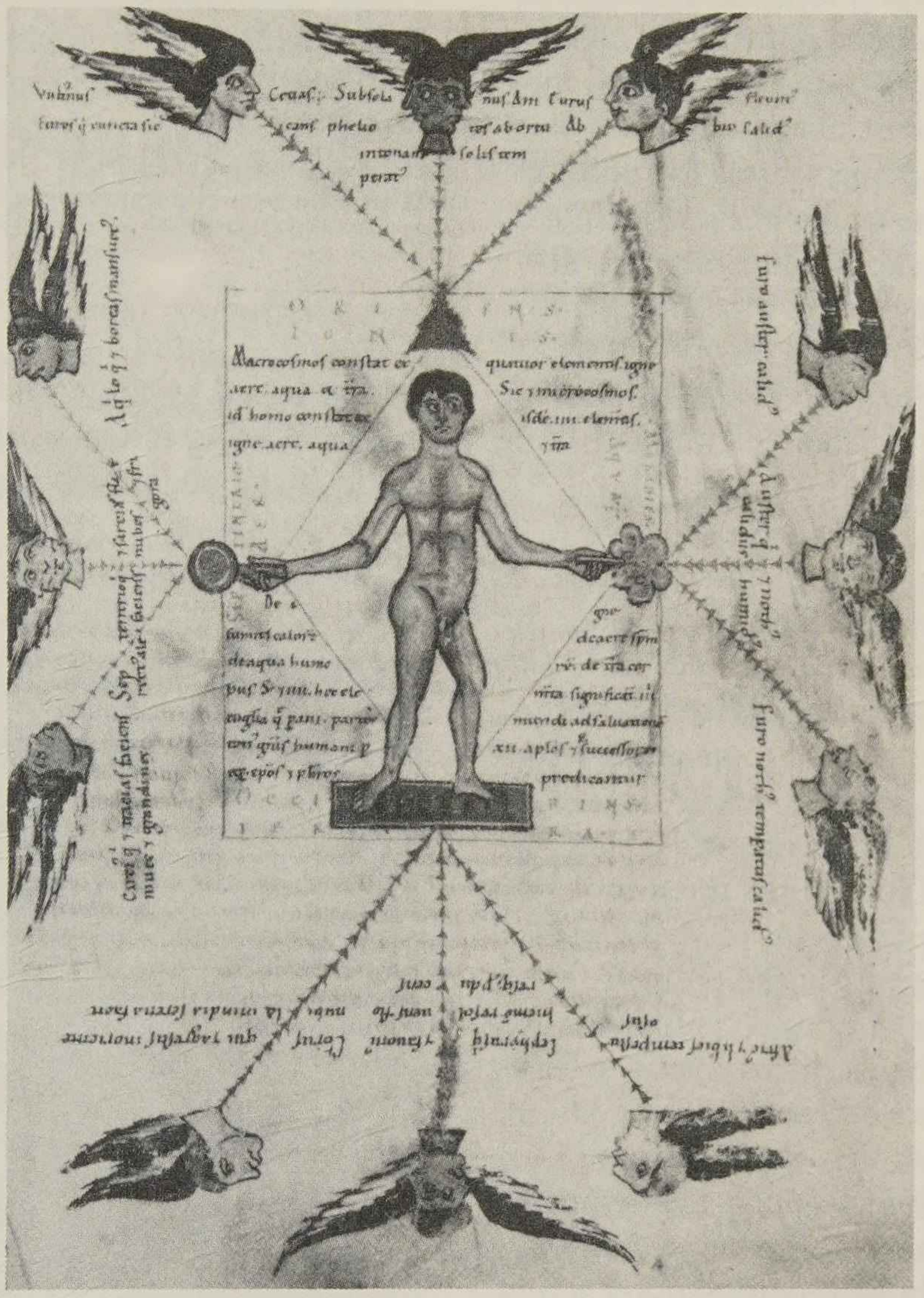
The first, paradigmatic transmutation is the overcoming of this "outsidedness"—the overcoming of the world of mortality and its transformation into food for immortality.

Angelus Silesius, in *The Cherubimic Wanderer,* wrote: "The bread is not our food. What feeds us in the bread is God's eternal Word, is spirit and is life." For him, life is the light of human beings. True food is true, that is, unmediated, cognition. Writing of the meaning of "supersubstantial"—as in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our supersubstantial bread"—Origen confirms that true bread is incorporeal, spiritual, living food which comes down from heaven. As such, for Origen, it is the bread of angels, so that whoever receives it becomes himself an angel and feeds upon contemplation of the truth. But one cannot become an angel—that is, a being of perfect interiority—unless one is already an angel in some sense. These are not metaphors. Henri Corbin has shown how, gnostically, anthropology becomes angelology. Nor was St. John being metaphorical when he spoke of God's Word, the *logos* in the beginning, as "Bread." The *logos* is the foundational activity of all creation. Sharing in him, we become children of the unity of the origin, but sharing in the dragon, as Origen says, we become serpents of the fragmentation of subjective, psychological time. This is not surprising. Origen writes: "But if, inasmuch as the Son of God exists substantially (as real being), as the Adversary does also, there is nothing incongruous in either of them becoming the food of this person or that, why do we hesitate to admit that in the matter of all powers, good and evil, and men, each of us can be nourished by them all." For Origen, to eat is to think and we live by our thoughts.

Certainly it has often been said that by their thoughts, feelings, and desires, human beings nourish superhuman entities, but less frequently alluded to is the equally plausible circumstance that by these same thoughts, feelings, and desires human beings feed on what is superhuman. The relationship, the connecting activity, is primary. It is an eating world. Feeding, we are fed; eating, we are eaten. We become what we eat and what eats us. This is our food-naturedness. Realizing it, the organic health of the one true world is maintained. As it is said in the Christian tradition, All of us, as many as we are, form one Body because we partake of one Bread. It is only a question of doing so. But how?

Dionysius the Areopagite begins his work on the Celestial Hierarchies with a quotation from St. James: "Every good gift and perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of Lights." Dionysius goes on to explain that every procession of radiance "fills us anew, as with a unifying power, by recalling us to things above." Such food is heavenly; eating it, we are led into unity and outwardness drops away. For Dionysius this occurs by means of hierarchy, which is a holy order, knowledge and activity at once purifying, enlightening, and perfecting. By its means all beings, animate and inanimate, harmoniously conform in the divine co-operation, the theophony by which what is mortal becomes immortal and what is immortal becomes all in all.

To begin to understand this hierarchical process of transmutation we may consider the first celestial order, that of the Seraphim, the Cherubim, and the Thrones, as Dionysius explains it. By their ceaseless activity, the Cherubim "kindle or make hot" those below them with a purifying, energetic flame. The Cherubim or "Streams of Wisdom," lost in gnostic contemplation and filled with Seraphic love, bounteously outpour on those below them the wisdom bestowed upon them. Meanwhile the Thrones rest immovably and perfectly in Immanence. Theirs is the purity, the power and the steadfastness of divine presence. They provide the foundation of all. Each feeds each: the three are a triunity, below and above denoting not direction but relationship. Of this first order, which we may take as exemplary, Dionysius says: "They are filled with the divine food which is manifold through the first given outpouring and yet one through the unific oneness of the divine banquet; and they are deemed worthy of communion and co-operation with God by virtue of their assimilation to him."



Three interdependent activities are thus enjoined by Dionysius as the means by which to partake of divine food. The first activity, here called Seraphic, indicates the primacy of self-sacrificing love or devotion: the laying down or surrender of all one is for another. By this unconditional laying down, this absolute openness, the living warmth of true life is generated. This warmth is light and, by it, transmission and reception of Cherubimic gnosis is made possible—made possible finally by the reciprocity of these, in that they rest in Throne-like immobility, that place of all which is itself no place.

This sacrificial threefold process is paradigmatic. It is repeated—of necessity—by the two other orders intermediary to human beings, who, from this point of view, constitute a fourth (celestial) hierarchy. Only the connection is missing. Should human beings enact a similar sacrificial process then—and here is the foundation of all *gnosis*—sensible, outer reality would be translated into intelligible symbols, themselves the bearers of primal source-reality. Thus, by the sacrifice which is self-knowledge, mortal food becomes immortal manna. Indeed, by this self-knowledge, which is communion and transformation, interiorization and appropriation by sacrificial action, all creation subsists.

On this point Vedic tradition is unambiguous. Sacred science is sacrificial science, the science of sacrifice. The cosmos is a sacrificing one. Sacrifice is the path of the gods, the link between temporal and eternal, outer and inner, nature and spirit. Sacrifice is the primordial deed or bond, that unites and distinguishes. As in eternity the primordial sacrifice of dismemberment gave

rise to the names and forms of creation, so now, in time, sacrifice re-members all names and forms in a single embodied moment. The Eucharist likewise is an *anamnesis*, or recollecting and affirms the unity of the two sacrifices—those of creation in eternity and redemption in time. But all sacrifice is the single effort that integrates what is fragmented. And it is the effort that counts, spiritual food being also received according to labors performed. More precisely, as Swedenborg notes, it is received according to the degree that we transform the past into the present, that we live in the present. That is the labor for which we receive our *daily* bread, for "*daily* signifies. . .a continual glorification of the God Messiah, so that the moments are continuous without differentiation." As Swedenborg says, such bread cannot be kept until tomorrow, for worms breed in it, as in manna. From this point of view, to sacrifice is to be present, in the present.

In the Vedas sacrifice is central, but it is the context, the sacrificial hymn, which makes the sacrifice efficient. "The gods created the hymns first." The divine food—*soma*—grows through the hymns. The hymns themselves, however, born as they are on the breath, depend upon and are themselves the first sacrifice. For one cannot speak truly without laying oneself down in recognition of the primacy of the Other, the Open. In this sense, true speech, which is song, spun on the airy threads of breath, is synonymous with sacrifice—each breath, each word, selflessly, rhythmically, perfectly laying itself down for the next. This is the weaving power of *maya,* made possible by the affirmation of each moment—the great "yes" which is prayer, unmediated presence, union. Therefore the *Bhagavad Gita* says:

Except for the action engaged in as sacrifice,
This world is subject to the bondage of action.
For the sake of that, Son of Kunti,
Perform action free from attachment as sacrifice. Long ago Prajapati created creatures together with sacrifice, and said:
By sacrifice shall you prosper,
Let this be the milch-cow of your desires.
By this nourish the gods and may the gods nourish you;
Thus nourishing each other, you will attain to the supreme good.
For the gods nourished by the sacrifice
Will give you the enjoyments you desire.

To be fed by the world, to feed our immortal being in the world, by our activities in it and our perceptions of it, we must



first overcome our attachments to it. But what of the suggestion that sacrifice is primordial and originary to creation; that creatures were created by sacrifice for sacrifice; that sacrifice is the rule of life, the cosmic law, by which all is food, that is, life?

Traditionally, creation is separation and reunion, difference and relation, fall and redemption. Unity is trinity; it abides, proceeds, returns. First there is nothing, non-existence. Nothing, desiring, polarizes—sacrifices itself to itself. Duality arises: an infinite non-existence, nothing—and an indefinite existence—something. But this indefinite something also desires: to be measured. Thereupon the third arises: rhythm, relationship, harmony, the pattern that connects—consciousness. Hence transformation, life, food: the cosmic web. Consciousness connects: it is the ternary, to-gethering power, carrying back what has been carried apart. Consciousness—itself sacrifice, separation, and reunion—sacrifices itself. Cosmic Man, who is total being-consciousness, offers himself on the altar of himself and becomes *Anthropocosmos,* the archetypal human universe, perfect nature. With the "fall"—the descent—cosmic consciousness of total reality enters incarnation. Consciousness, life, food begins its complex journey into visibility, unfolding and opening, analyzing the implications implicit in its seed or principle, Divine Humanity.

What sufferings this incarnation, this becoming visible has involved! No wonder the privileged images are sacrifice and crucifixion. For incarnation is just that: limitation, fixation, concretization. Cosmic consciousness is sifted and analyzed, measure by measure, sacrifice by sacrifice, from realm to realm, until the moment of present Adamic humanity. We are the last, the deepest materialization, the outermost visualization: the point of inversion or return. To us, outer nature no longer seems a home, but the home we must leave behind. Or rather: take with us and leave behind as cosmic humanity in its unfolding has always taken all with it as it has left all behind. What else is the meaning of transformation?

But who or what is cosmic humanity? Who or what evolves? Rumi gives an answer, and more, when he writes:

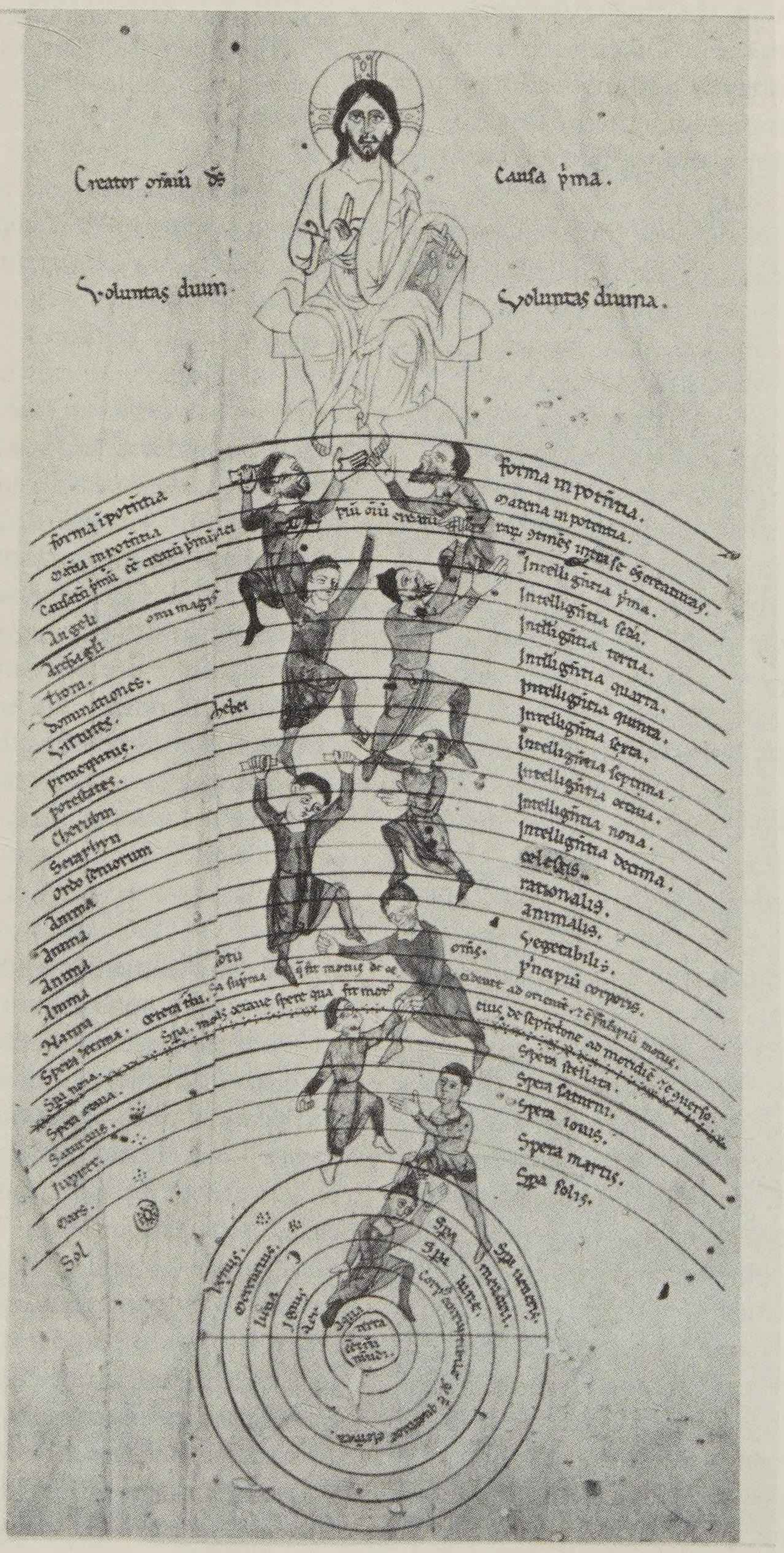
I died as a mineral and became a plant,
I died as a plant and rose to animal,
I died as animal and I was Man.
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
Yet once more shall I die as Man, to soar
With angels blest; but even from angelhood
I must pass on: all except God perish.
When I have sacrificed my angel soul,
I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
Oh, let me not exist! For Non-existence
Proclaims in organ tones, To him we shall return.

Before Abraham was I am. The true I, the Logos-being who is cognition, sacrificing himself again and again, unfolds his cognitive powers in the marvelous visual display we call "nature." Constantly tearing himself apart, he dies from realm to realm. What suffering, what sacrifice! By which we understand that this being divides, measures, specifies himself; purifies himself; unites himself with himself: assimilates himself to himself; exalts himself: *a perpetual offering to himself.* As Schwaller de Lubicz writes: "Suffering is the only stylus whose nature corresponds to the substance on which imperishable consciousness is inscribed. This is because suffering is of the same nature as consciousness; for both depend upon the realization, the conjunction, of opposites."

Today humanity finds itself increasingly outside, opposite nature. Containing all within himself, the prodigal son prefers the path of duality, spending his substance and power in the husks of illusion and *trompe l'oeil* creations. *Maya,* the creative power of true Imagination, what Paracelsus called "the Star in Man," has become a mere fantasy, a will o'the wisp. We are entranced by our creations; technology seems to have the upper hand. Nevertheless, there is an underlying uneasiness. We fear death, set life against death, and thereby make a mockery of both. Thereby, too, we abuse ourselves, isolate ourselves, so that like nature—the nature we have cre-

ated—we languish in the deep sleep of ignorance.

Archetypal humanity, entranced by its own image, fell face first into nature's arms. Now, having struggled from realm to realm to raise themselves up, human beings, upon whom much depends, do not realize that it is for them too to raise nature up, insofar as she is them: imperishable consciousness. That is what feeds us in the bread: the sacrifice of consciousness. "Man is the Messiah of nature," wrote Novalis, who also said: "If God could become man, then He can also become stone, plant, animal and element, and perhaps in this way there is a continuous redemption in nature." Hermetically: "The stone has suffered for the plant, the plant has suffered



for man, and man has suffered for Redemption.'' (Schwaller de Lubicz.)

Rilke puts it this way:

Earth, is not this what you want: invisibly
to arise in us? Is it not your dream
to become one day invisible? Earth! Invisible!
What do you charge us with if not
transformation.
(Duino Elegies: The Ninth Elegy.)

And in his marvellous letter to Witold von Hulewicz, Rilke writes: ''Nature, the things of our intercourse and use, are provisional and perishable; but they are, as long as we are here, *our* property and friendship, coknowers of our distress and gladness, as they have already been the familiars of our forebears. So it is important not to run down and degrade all that is here, but just because of its provisionalness, which it shares with us, these phenomena and things should be understood and transformed by us in a most fervent sense. Transformed? Yes, for it is our task to imprint this provisional, perishable earth so deeply, so patiently and passionately in ourselves that its reality shall rise in us again 'invisibly.' *We are the bees of the invisible*. . .The earth has no way out other than to become invisible: *in* us who with a part of our natures partake of the invisible, have (at least) stock in it and can increase our holdings in the invisible during our sojourn here,—*in* us alone can be consummated this intimate and lasting conversion of the visible into an invisible no longer dependent upon being visible and tangible, as our own present destiny continually grows MORE PRESENT AND INVISIBLE IN US. . .*We are the transformers of the earth; our entire existence, the flights and plunges of our love, everything qualifies us for this task.*'' Having become visible, outward, we must become invisible, inward. We must interiorize the world. This transformation is true sacrifice, true making sacred. It is to give back to the world all that it has given us. This giving back which is the laying down of our petty ego-power and its objects is the food that renews life for gods and humans alike. Once nature—stars and planets, trees and mountains—seemed ensouled, animate, divine. Now, with Pascal, we shudder at the infinity of empty space and the litter of dead matter. But what once lived still lives, if only we give it life. In the Kingdom of Heaven, which is within, the stars are still divine. Overcoming the exteriority of the visible world, our attachment to it and our desires for it, another energy, another food becomes available, For, unlike the exterior world, the non-exteriorized world is a ''moral'' world of goodness, truth and beauty, courage, humility, and steadfastness: ideals that produce true work long after physical energy is exhausted. True health, as Plato knew, is but the cultivation of this moral world. That is, to ''know'' the virtue of Mars inwardly benefits a person infinitely more than any outer voyage on a spacecraft. And similarly with all aspects of our sundered nature. Let them rise invisibly within us. Thus we overcome them and unite with them. This is the work against nature—against necessity, animality, objectification. Precisely the sacrifices of these is true food for human beings, daily bread in the spiritual sense.

For this reason Swedenborg writes that food and drink, by which spirits and angels are nourished, is spiritual and lies in their continual desire to know. Spiritual hunger is for *gnosis* and knowledge by identity—inner and outer made one in a living act of being—is daily bread for human beings as spiritual beings. More specifically, Swedenborg writes, ''the food of celestial angels is love and, at the same time, the intelligence of truth and good by which especially they are gladdened.'' By this love, which repeats the original and creative sacrificial gesture of unconditional openness, the living bread of knowledge which comes down from heaven (and alone rises to it) is made manifest. ■

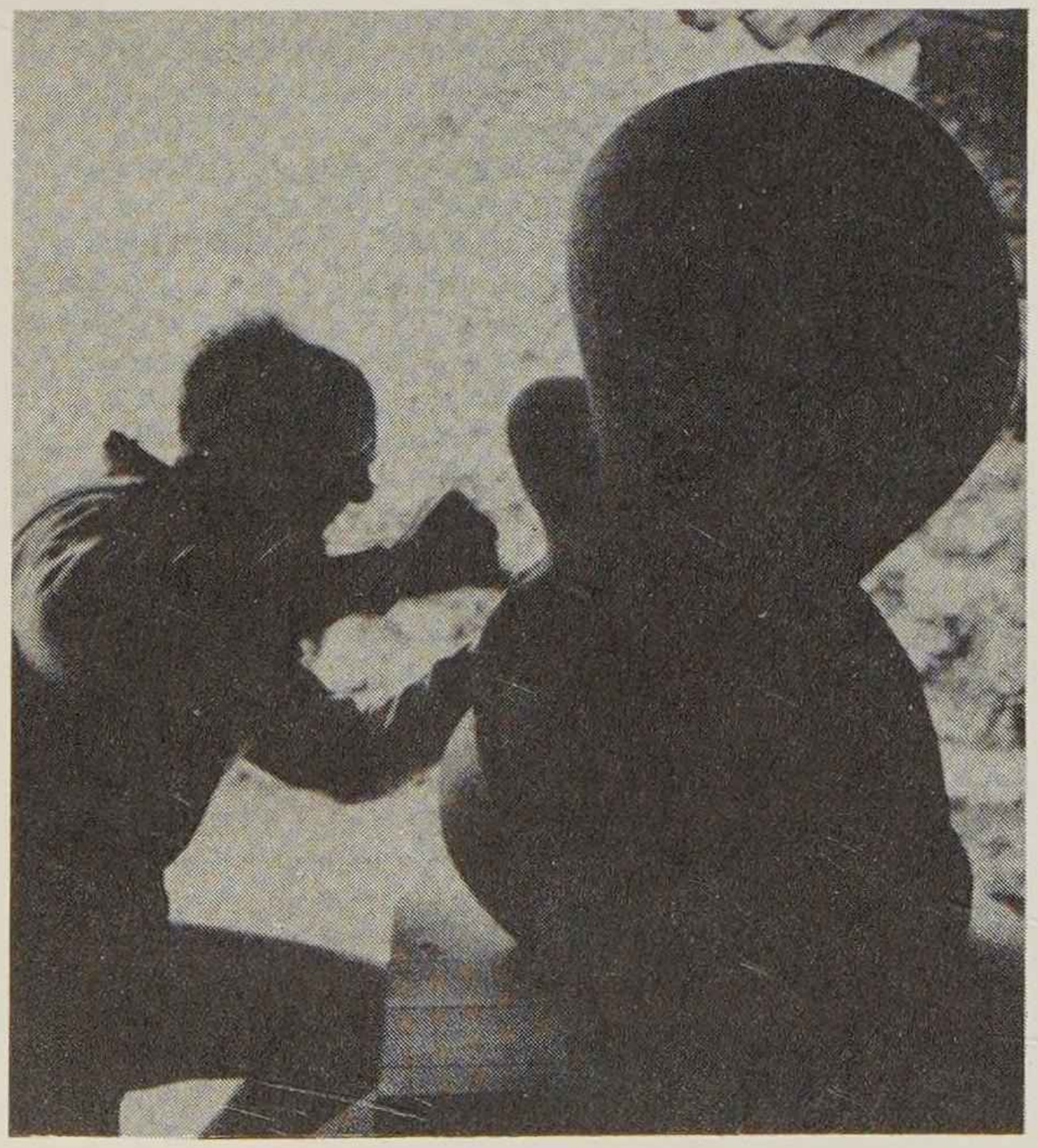
A Question of Balance

AN INTERVIEW WITH HENRI TRACOL

Former journalist, photographer, anthropologist with the Musée de l'Homme, Henri Tracol has been for many years one of the chief exponents of the teaching of G.I. Gurdjieff. The system taught by Gurdjieff includes within it a complex elaboration of the place of food on cosmological and psychological levels. We sought out Mr. Tracol in his summer retreat in the south of France to speak with him about these ideas in the light of his own long experience. He greeted us in his shaded courtyard where among the trees, herbs, and flowers were several of his large stone sculptures—massive forms smoothed out of a local white stone. His latest work, "Ganesha," awaited final polishing in an open-air studio adjoining the main house.

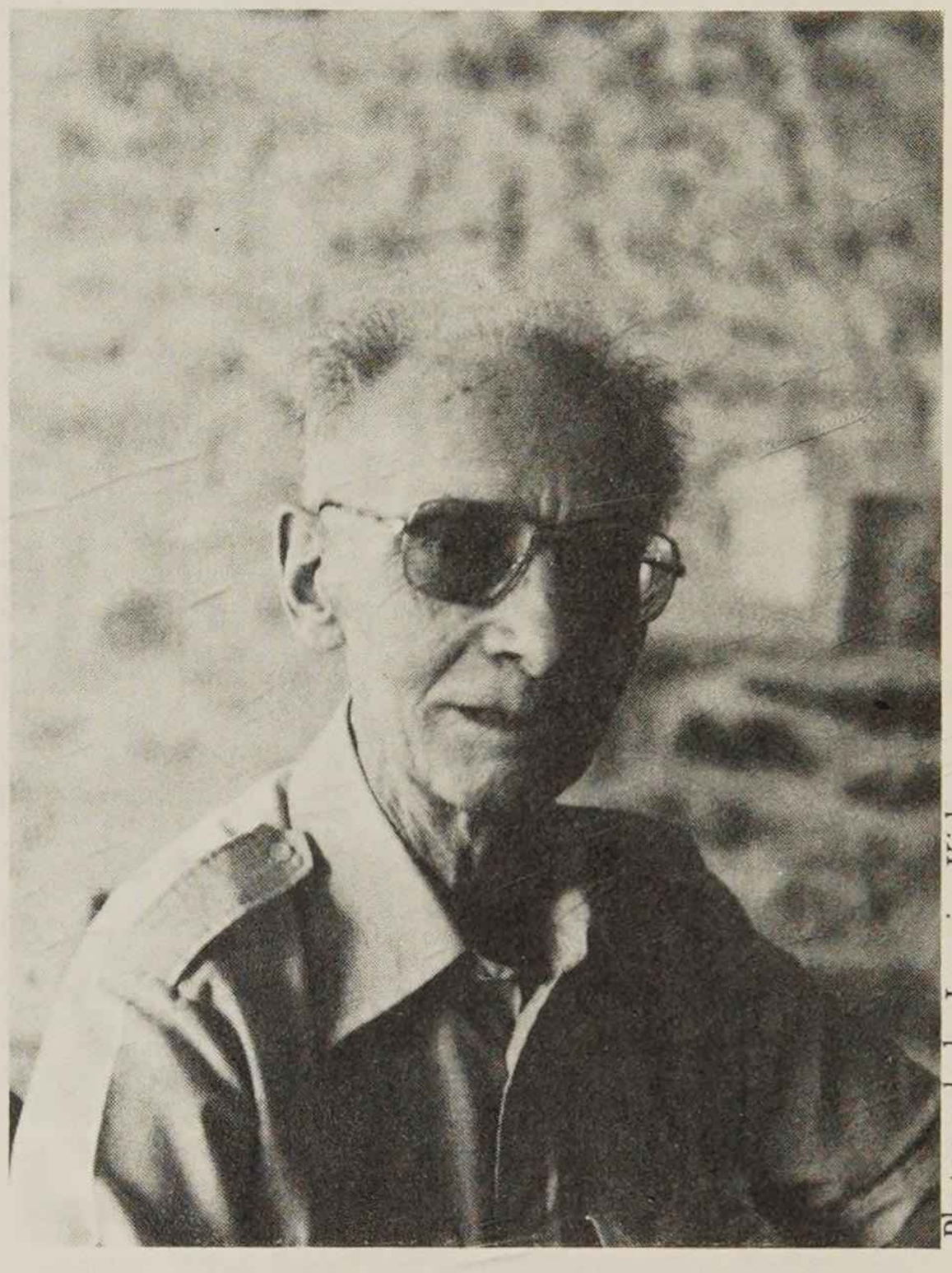
Once inside the cool, high-ceilinged living room, we sat together at a large, old wooden table. Mr. Tracol responded to our questions with great interest and intensity. Gentle, unpretentious, direct, full of quick humor, he seemed somehow to accompany his words. As we spoke, the exchange became not only a discussion of abstract ideas but a kind of nourishment in itself.

—Lorraine Kisly



PARABOLA We might start out by speaking about physical food. In the United States now, perhaps in Europe as well, there is a great interest in experimentation—in macrobiotics, in vegetarianism, in organically grown foods, and it becomes almost a moral issue what sort of food we eat. But in the Gospels Christ says "For what goes into your mouth, that will not defile you, but that which issues from your mouth—it is that which will defile you." Does it make a difference what sort of food we eat?

Henri Tracol It certainly does. Now, what is the point of view from which we could evaluate this first food, physical food? Of course, we cannot be without a certain discrimination about what is good or bad from an ordinary point of view. But what is more important? First, this question can be understood only in relationship to the whole. You have to be attentive to your food, and not only the first food, but to the others. Whether you know it or not, you depend very much on what you eat, and breathe, and so on. It is not only necessary for the physical body, but also for the whole of your being. Food is needed not just to sustain your physical existence, it's also for other purposes. It is not to be



Photographs by Lorraine Kisly

belittled. Now, of course, you can eat the best food, drink the best drinks, and if you do not understand what it is for, it is lost—very largely, lost. What is absorbed and what feeds you really is a very small proportion of what is given. A small part sustains the outer existence, but most of it is wasted. Now I think of something that has been very striking for me. Perhaps you know a book by Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*. He speaks about the way people who were doomed to death in concentration camps could survive. What they ate was very, very little, very insignificant. But for them there was something much more important. There was a wish to be. Even though they did not fully realize the importance of it, they perceived that something was necessary, and was far more important than their comfort, their despair and so on. They knew that something was offered them, and they wanted to live. And on that basis, they could survive in conditions that were impossible—medically, impossible.

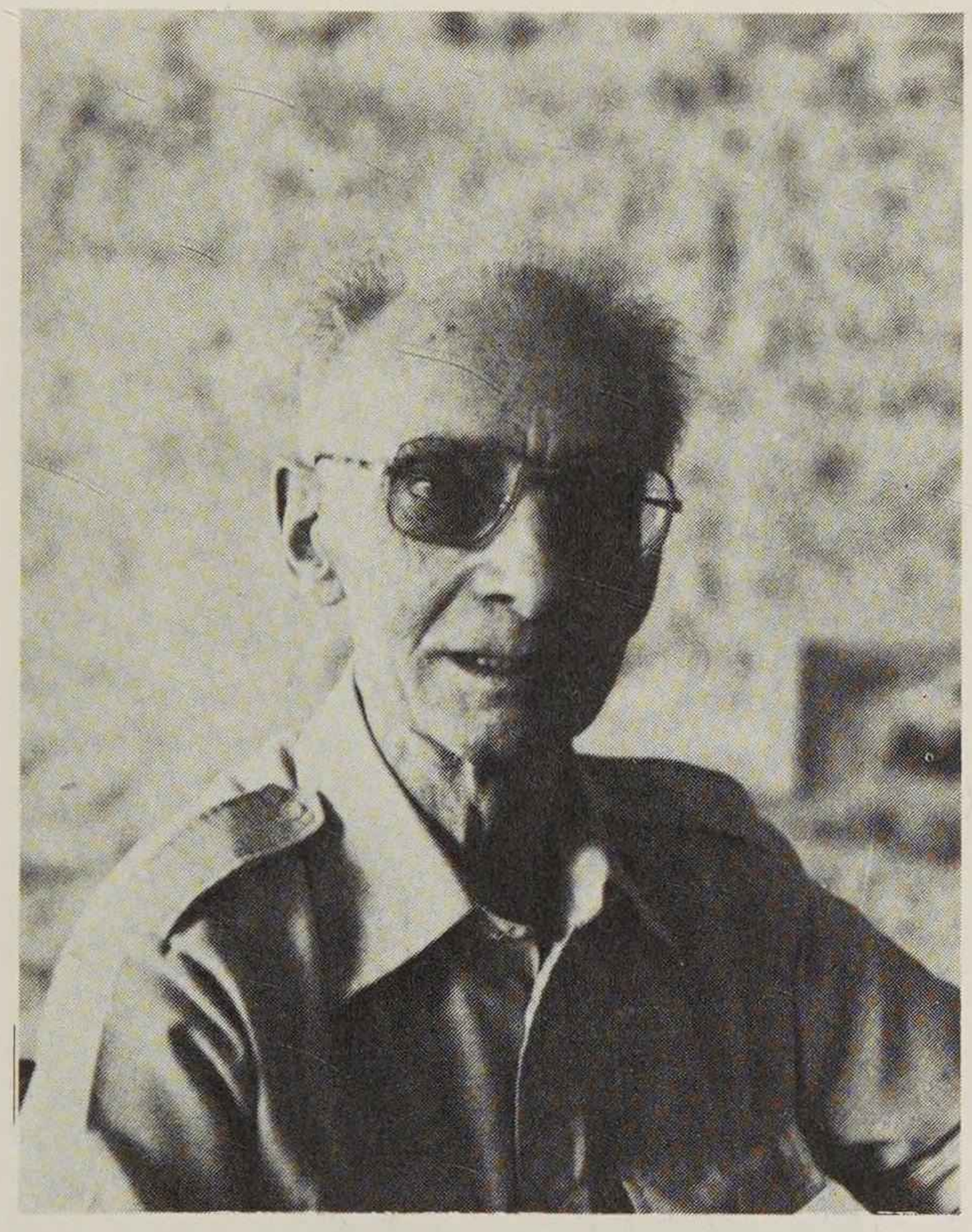
So this is what is really important, to understand that the question of food is not just an outer, mechanical process, it is also something of significance. Insofar as you are able to be attentive to this perspective, it is really of value that you do not treat this food as something insignificant.

I would also say, in another field, that there was something that Mr. Gurdjieff never accepted—a completely stupid disregard for the body, or any kind of scorning of the body. He evoked a respect for the body. In the same perspective, what is really important there is not only that which we ordinarily call the body, with its pleasure, or fear of pain and so on, but the body itself as a place where something can be born again, and develop. So, it has to be respected, and its needs, its real needs, met. There are many misinterpretations of what he said or wrote about the necessity to compel the body to obey higher imperatives. It is not *against* the body, it is *for* the body. And the body knows it, too!

P. Mr. Gurdjieff has written that it is necessary to strive to have everything necessary and satisfying for the physical body. This puzzles me—not only everything necessary, but also everything satisfying. When is this possible—to have both?

H.T. It implies the need for a degree of understanding. If we draw a list of what is necessary and what is satisfying it will be futile, of course.

". . . there are all sorts of food, and it is a question of the whole being."



It is a question of balance, mostly. And it means a balance with other needs as well. Otherwise, something can be quite satisfactory for the body itself, as separate from the rest; but it creates a lack of balance. What is necessary and what is really satisfactory is a balance between all the different needs of the being—physical, and psychological, and spiritual.

P. So the body needs this balance in order to be truly satisfied.

H.T. Yes.

P. How do you see the point of the dietary restrictions that occur in so many traditions—Islam, Judaism, Buddhism? So many traditions set out very clear rules about what to eat, and when, and how much. What is the point of such rules?

H.T. Mr. Gurdjieff has spoken of such rules, and of how they are always linked with other rules. It is a whole, and if something is missing in the other rules, then it is pointless. You forget what the reason is. At certain times it may be necessary to refrain from certain foods, and at other times not. In any case it is not the real point. We have to adapt ourselves to conditions—to outer conditions, of course—but to inner conditions as well. Otherwise we make fools of ourselves trying to stick to something as though it had to be followed at any cost.

P. Did Mr. Gurdjieff subscribe to any particular rules about eating?

H.T. In *Meetings With Remarkable Men* he speaks of his encounter with an old Persian dervish at a time when he as a young man was very keen to follow certain rules; for example, in regard to the thorough chewing of food. Asked by the dervish why he was so scrupulously practising such a demanding method of eating, the young Gurdjieff explained at length why this was highly recommended by certain schools of Indian yogis. To which the old man shook his head and said, "Let God kill him who does not know and yet presumes to show others the way to the doors of His Kingdom." After explaining to his young visitor that it was imperative, at his age, not to deprive his stomach of the opportunity to exercise itself in its natural work, the old man concluded by hinting that those who recommended such mastication had, as is said, "heard a bell without knowing where the sound came from."

As a matter of fact, Mr. Gurdjieff trained us to eat all sorts of things that were not particularly recommended! He would insist that you at times had to eat all sorts of greasy, fatty foods, all sorts of ingredients that would be very, very hot—which from an ordinary medical point of view were impossible to accept. Of course there were those who needed to be on a special diet and he was resilient enough to exempt them. But otherwise, you *had* to eat what was served. He would go to the market and choose the ingredients and would be preparing the food from early in the morning for the evening. He would allow very few to help him. He had his own ways. And when people were eating with him, he was very attentive to the way you took in food. It was very important for him. When he saw someone who was absorbed in a question he perhaps wanted to ask and was eating without knowing he was eating, he would frown, and sometimes scold and so on. So there was a respect for food that was necessary. No matter *what* it was!

P. This respect for food that you mention seems to have almost completely disappeared from our lives—perhaps because most of us are so far away from the growing and raising of food, we no longer know what it has to cost for it to be available to us.

H.T. It is true, it is not easy to obtain. But, you see, when we speak of food, we speak of one category, forgetting or neglecting the others, and I think it's misleading. In fact, there are all sorts of food, and it is a question of the whole being. There is the idea that there are three kinds of food: ordinary food, air, and impressions. You can go on existing for days without ordinary food. You can survive if you do not breathe for a few minutes perhaps, not very long. But you cannot exist one second without impressions. This idea is fantastic. One can hear it, perhaps be surprised, and say, "That's very interesting." But it's forgotten immediately, because it is not properly received. Perhaps it demands a lifetime to understand what it means. The food of impressions is taken in constantly. You need this third kind of food in order to really take in the first food. In order to breathe, you need it too. What is essential there is mostly neglected, ignored—it is fantasy for us. Of course it is closely related to another idea which very largely escapes us, and which is that only higher centers can really receive, properly, the food of impressions. Higher centers—and it is said that higher centers are fully developed in a human being. They function perfectly well. What is missing is the proper link with lower centers. In *Beelzebub,* Mr. Gurdjieff speaks of what happens to this finer food of impressions. Most of it is lost. But part of it is always maintained and perceived and absorbed for the development of higher components of a being. So, without our knowing—and especially when we are asleep—something is taking place there.

P. These impressions are being received all the time, so it is a question of digestion?

H.T. Yes; in fact something is digested without our knowing it. Regardless of what becomes of our lower centers—the higher centers need to go on existing. It is said also that accidentally—but it is not mere accident, it is for a higher purpose—we receive the necessary help for the digestion of these finer impressions. Of course I do not claim to understand this, but it does evoke something in me. So we are made use of for the sake of the higher centers,and even though we seem to be cut from them, they are there.

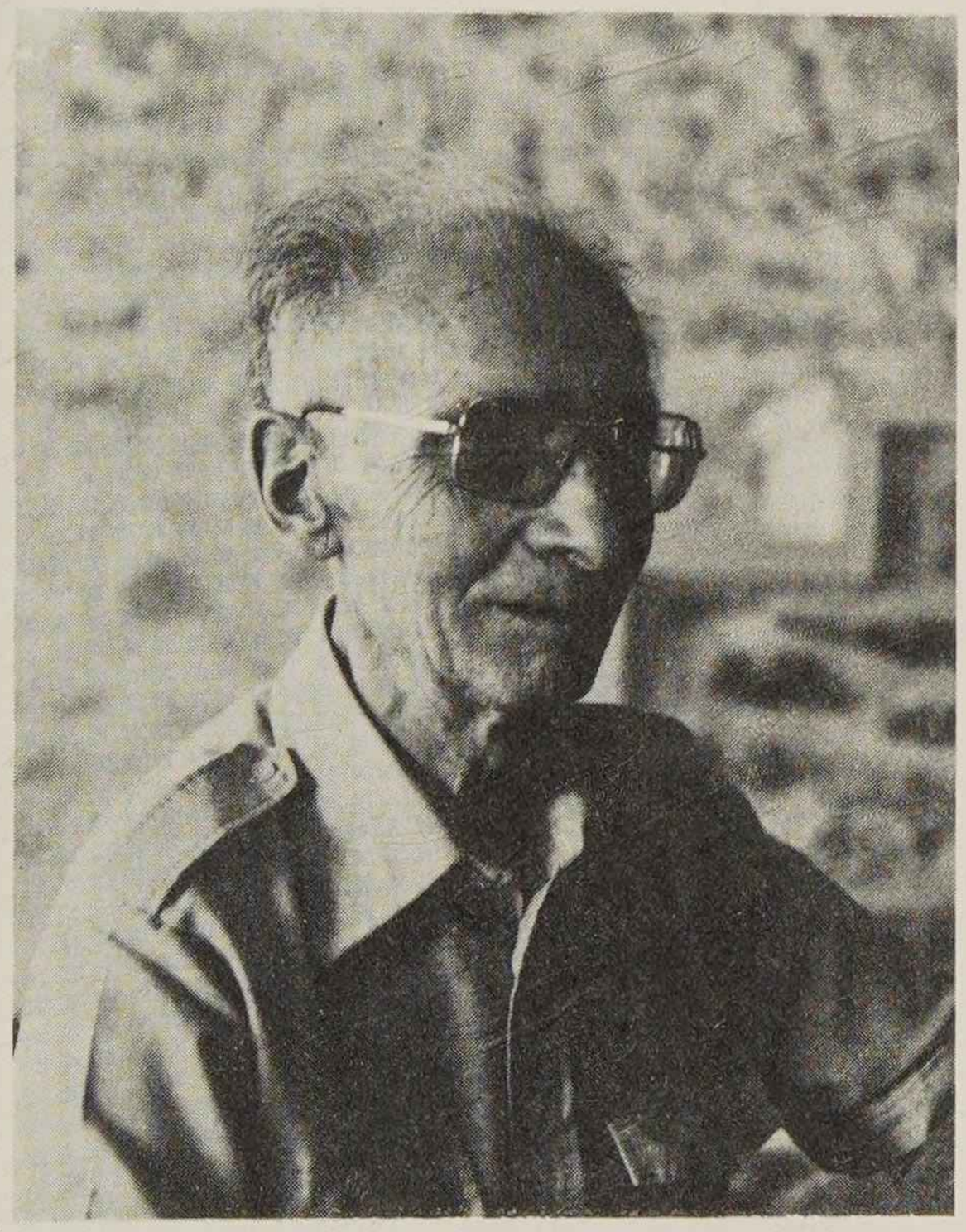
P. It really does seem as though it is impossible to speak of one food at a time, as though we eat at one moment, and breathe at another and then receive an impression.

H.T. We are enslaved by the notion of time, of course.

These questions also evoke the mystery of what is called conscious attention. Ordinarily speaking, what we call conscious attention is when we translate our experience immediately into our ordinary terms. "This is that": we define. But in fact this sort of attention is just on the border—it is superficial. It is an automatism that goes on and on, and the machine is very good. It works very well, outerly. But for the whole of the being, including the higher parts, it is almost insignificant—it deals with the outer part of our existence, that's all. For what is essential is not there. That's why it's so important to take into account what happens in very special conditions, as in the case of the prisoners Frankl speaks of. Ordinary conditions of existence are important of course, they have to be taken into account. But the real meaning is not there.

P. It has been said that every creature is designed for a certain kind of food, and can be defined in relationship to what it eats. Each creature can be seen as a kind of specialist in eating certain foods. It seems that there might be here a kind of definition of the difference between human beings and all other beings in this question of impressions. Are there certain kinds of impressions that only human beings can receive? Are we sort of specialists in the possibility of receiving a certain kind of food?

H.T. Undoubtedly. Now is it for our ordinary mind to try to understand what that means? It is very dangerous, because most of the time we will translate it into terms that do not correspond. Ordinary thinking cannot cover this at all. Now, is there something that we could call higher mind? Do we know it, or do we just project an image? Is it once again a wrong work of our lower mind? It tries to define what it should be, and so on. No; I think we need to keep a kind of respect for what is given us at certain moments to perceive—not as a result of any mental combination, but something that is offered, and offered, and offered, and *for once* we perceive it. Does this perception depend on me or is this something which is granted me? I think even when it depends partly on me, it's

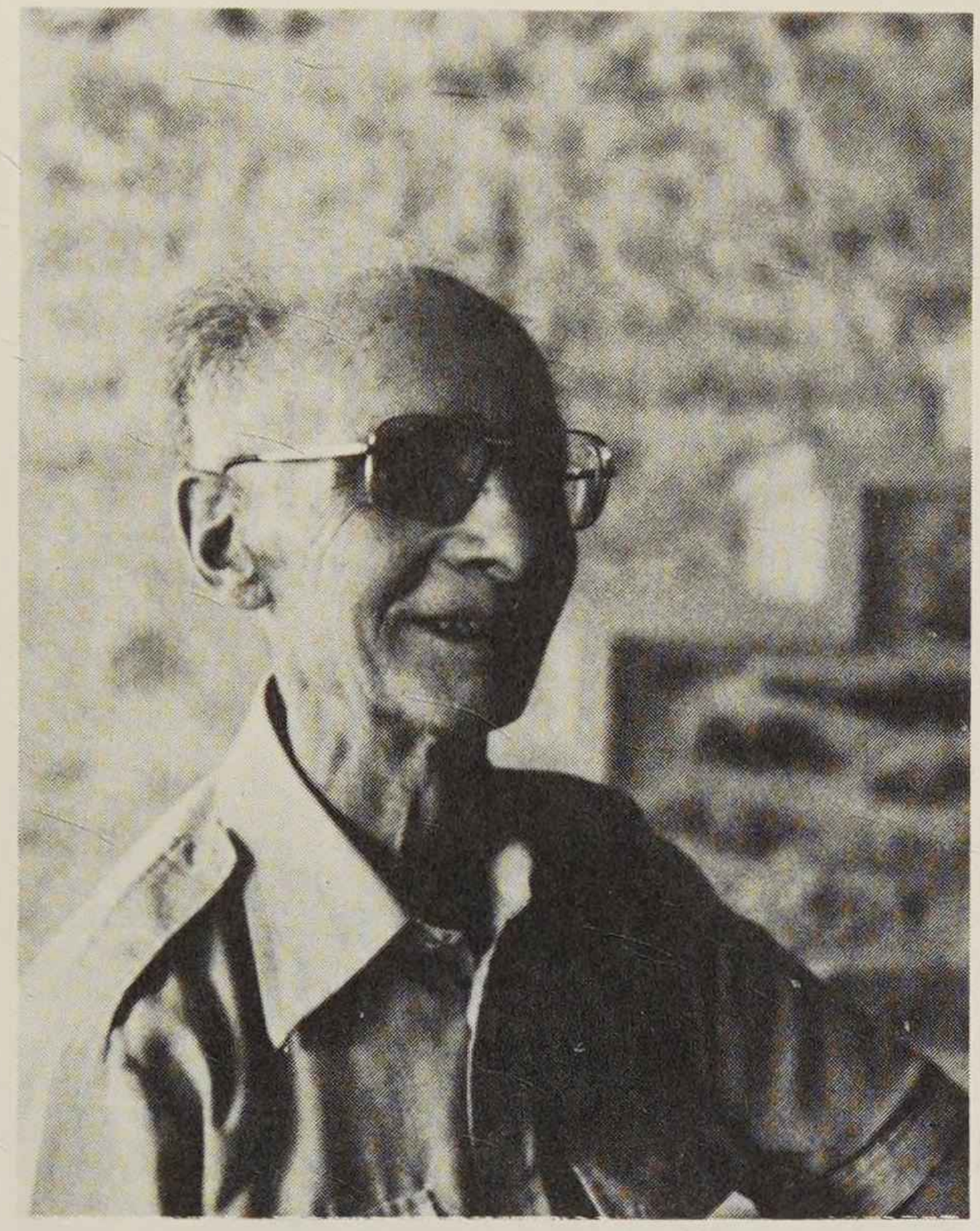


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mostly granted; and it has to be perceived as granted.

P. Several times now you have said that our energy from all sorts of food is mostly wasted. Is anything actually wasted?

H.T. One cannot help thinking of so much waste in nature. All the seeds which seem completely lost—but they are not lost; they serve for something, so nothing is lost, or wasted completely. But we cannot remain indifferent when we see what is *partly* wasted. What can be planted and can grow into a splendid tree—we are sensitive to the difference. It calls something in us. Something is there which could be fully developed—this evokes our real interest. And it applies to man as well. Of course he could be a very splendid animal for the Olympic Games, or a fantastic artist. But something is missed for the full stature of a being—I will not say one who could do everything, it is not the case; I mean one has been born with a certain balance of capacities which go far beyond what our ordinary imagination could conceive. But there is first of all a sense of balance, of right balance, and there is a certain balance in a moment when a man awakes to his own destiny. He is able to join with what is in him, what is there as a seed in him, and find the corresponding attitude and functioning which bear witness to the presence of this hidden capacity. It may not be corresponding to what could perhaps be expected from someone else, but it corresponds to what *he* is. I think this is a real source of commit-



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ment. I mean, not to dream of fantastic realization, but to be sensitive to the presence of the call of capacities which are there waiting for recognition, and waiting for completion.

P. Whatever awareness is (again a word probably misunderstood), it seems that one can sense that the quality of physical food and air and impressions would all change if there was a light of awareness on the process instead of it taking place in the dark, separated somehow. This was what Mr. Gurdjieff seemed to be calling for all the time.

H.T. Oh, yes. He knew that what was usually meant there was most of the time a far distant approach—something that did not correspond really to what he was evoking. If you are not one, whole, there is always something missing. Now a person who dreams of understanding the whole makes a fool of himself—it is simply impossible. He's just dreaming. What you can try is to open to what corresponds to you, and to you only. In a way—this is, I would say, a joke—you can understand something that God cannot understand. God cannot reduce himself to become so little! The sense of specificity, of what is possible for a particular person, evokes a completely different interest from a pretense to understand more and more and more, up to the whole. It is simply stupid. It is not what is demanded. What is offered, and demanded, is to approach what corresponds to you—and to no one else. It means also that you have to share with others—there are many things to share with others. But there is something specific to you and to no one else on the earth. In centuries and centuries you are the only one who can understand in that way, that very particular and specific way. And this is really appealing. It helps us to understand that something is demanded of me.

P. Mr. Gurdjieff speaks of self-remembering very much. In reference to an earlier question, is the impression of oneself unique to human beings? Does it constitute a kind of food only humans can receive?

H.T. Another mystery. Self-remembering . . . to awake. If we begin to think in our ordinary terms, what does it mean to awake? Do I decide at a certain time to awake? And who decides? There is no answer there, except to realize that I am awakened by something. It is not that I decide to awaken and I awake: that is simply impossible. But maybe "I," with another meaning, the real "I," reminds me, calls

me back. The sense of my being: it is not something that I invent, or that I think of. It is there. And it calls me back. That's self-remembering. And on this basis, there is a certain kind of awareness which comes to me. Most of the time it's enjoyed by a part which pretends to be the owner—"Oh yes, I think that." That's a betrayal. I have been given to see something, to understand something, and I try to join with it. But if I let in this pretense to be the *one who* . . . it's spoiled. Does it mean that I have to keep passive about it? Not at all. In order to keep awake, something is demanded of me. It is demanded of the whole of me, all my faculties and capacities, including my ordinary attention, my possibilities to establish connections, associations, useful associations. On behalf of what has been given me, is being given me now, I do not allow myself to be passive. There is something behind. Something—there is no question of reaching for anything. It is not to be reached; it is there. It conveys an objective meaning to my attempt at joining with what is offered me. If I keep that, if my ordinary, my outer self keeps that, is faithful to this recognition, then it's given me over and over again to discover what is proposed and proposed and proposed. Of course, it cannot last very long: but for a time it can last. I can experience it. And it leaves a trace, an alive memory is left in me which I can recapture later. This memory is given. To remember myself is memory, yes? But what will remember? It is given to me to remember and I awake again to a sense again of this hidden presence.

So, food. Food of impressions—impressions of myself.

You know, when a journalist comes to interview, say, a potter, and asks him: "Well, could you explain to me how you do that?" If the potter begins to say, "Well, first this and then that . . . and so on," what does it convey? But if the potter goes on with his pot, the answer is there without an explanation—without reducing it to explanation. It can be perceived. And then the journalist who is really a journalist would also try with his tools to translate what had been perceived into something which could be read. He *saw* the process. But most of the time it is stupidities. I do not know what objective art is, but at least I know that those who pretend to explain are neither artists—nor objective witnesses! Very often we *seem* to understand and very often it's a misappropriation—"Oh yes, *I* understand." It is given me to understand at a moment when I am sensitive to what is offered me. But as soon as I take hold of it, it's finished.

But it's marvelous, isn't it? You know, the person who understands everything always, has an explanation for everything—he's dead!

P. On a larger scale, I'm wondering if you feel there is a relationship between the idea of reciprocal feeding on a cosmic scale and the idea of the three foods.

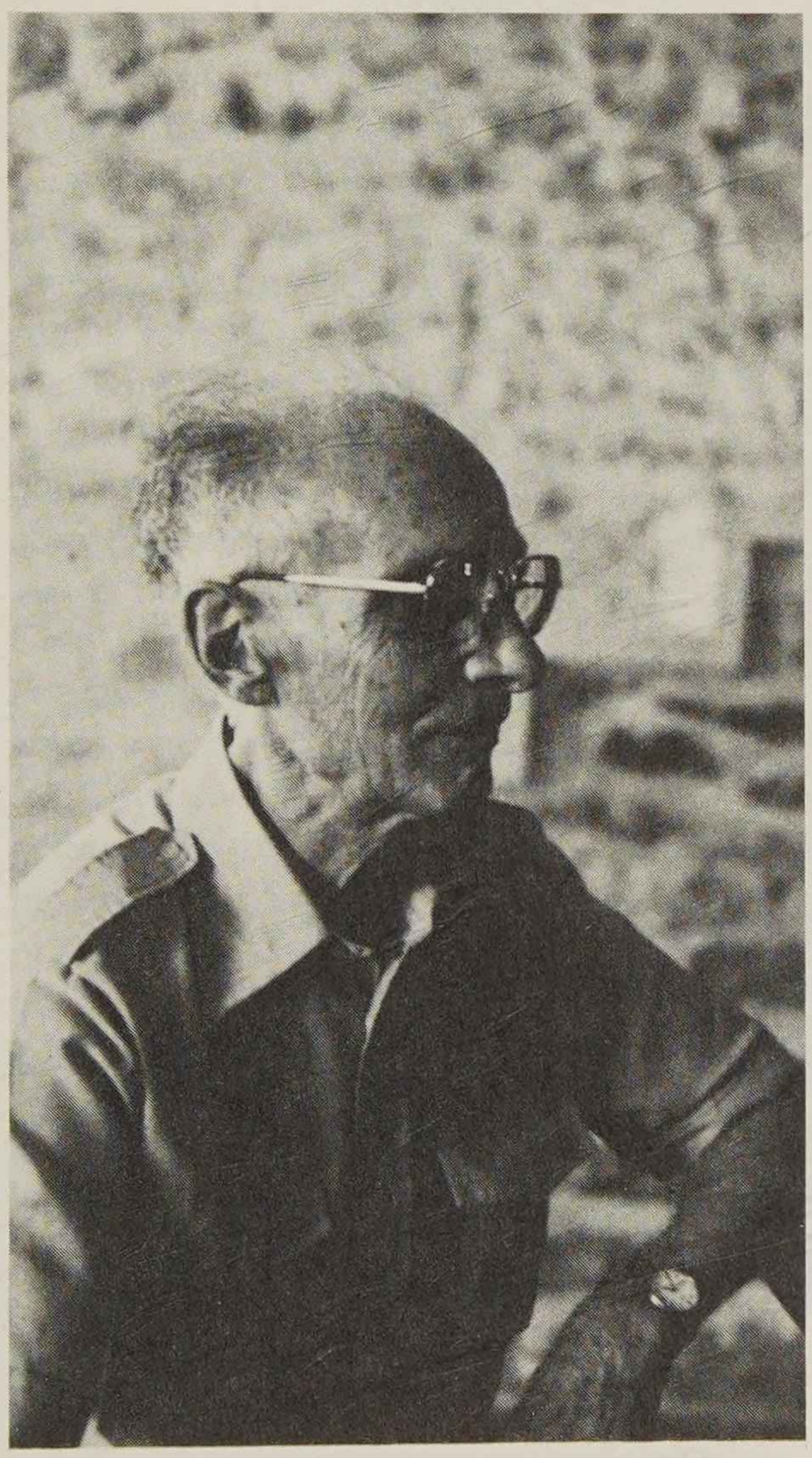
H.T. Part of it is certainly the question of scale. It cannot be approached without keeping the sense of relativity. In the representation of a human being, for example, it

is said that the human mind is thirty thousand times slower than the body. You understand what it means. "Oh, yes, of course." But you don't. It's out of scale for our ordinary way of thinking. We can talk about it—but we do not understand. And there are times we can perceive something corresponding—but there is something which is always late, it comes afterwards. It's a reflection of a reflection—dimmer and dimmer, so slow, and so many things have passed in between. So once again we are in front of this mystery that is far beyond what we are able to conceive of. Yet these questions have a value, provided of course we do not attempt to answer them. But it may be a help to enlarge the scale of our interrogation. What we are given to perceive in our normal surroundings is a reflection of a reflection of a reflection of something much greater and much bigger. It is really of value to understand that what is taking place here is insignificant in a way, and at the same time it is extremely significant for me if I see the other way round. I am a small piece of life which is invisible on this larger scale. So if I begin to *think* about it, and to draw conclusions—I think I need to keep a sense of wonder. When I quote an objective thought from a great thinker, if I just quote it, I spoil it. But if I capture the sense of wonder, I know that I do not understand, but I know that it opens my understanding; it opens it to more—always more. Then I feel myself closer to what was offered.

There are certain formulations I can think of that even if I live twenty more years, I am sure I will not be able to understand. There are things which are unfathomable, but each time it evokes so much in me that it's a rediscovery each time. I don't understand why sometimes we try so hard to get it understood. It would kill something in me. The sense of wonder once again is very much more.

P. There seems to be an appetite of the mind, a kind of greed it has when it is working alone and isolated which wants its own satisfaction without any regard to the rest of the being.

H.T. There is certainly a greed for impressions, but this greed is against a real reception. It is true that the mind has this avidity. Now there is always the possibility of referring to something which is behind. I think that attitudes, outerly expressed by tension—(leans forward, slamming table)—"What do you mean?" For me that means it is finished; it makes it impossible for other impressions to come and to awake corresponding spheres of interest in my mind, in my body, and in my feeling. But these awaken insofar as I am able to remember the amplitude of the gift which is offered me again and again. If I succumb to my ordinary pretense and greed I lose something; but if I try to keep open to what I know is there, whether I am aware of it or not—it is there. Then there is a natural attempt at keeping open—I keep open. I know that something is offered me over and over again and I try not to be away from it.



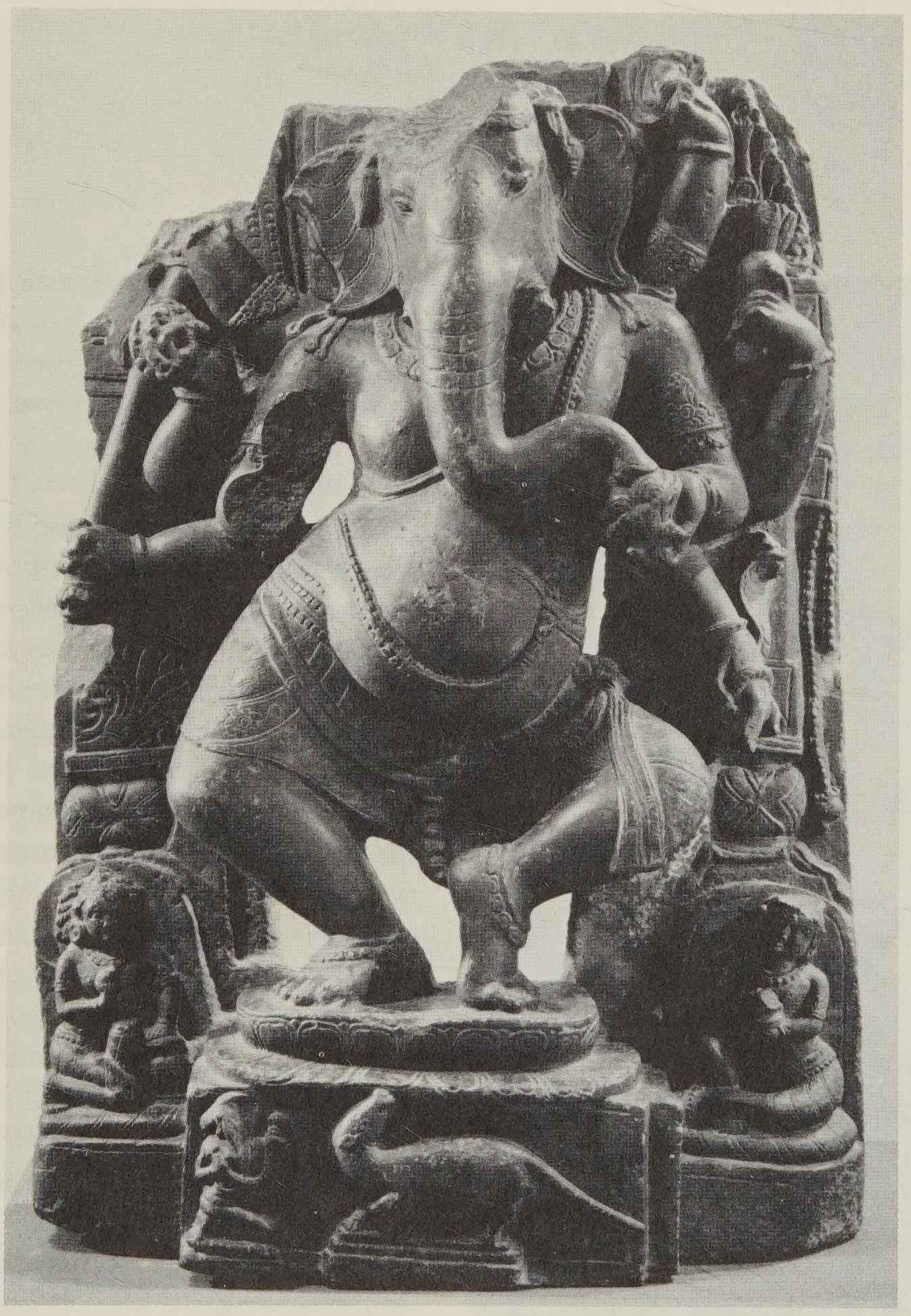
P. So there is a kind of fasting which is possible for the mind, a not allowing the greed of the mind, the greed of the feeling, the greed of the body to overtake this openness.

H.T. Yes, fasting. Keeping available for what cannot satisfy my ordinary greed. Memory is there also to help me—a certain kind of memory. Memories are against it most of the time. But there is memory in depth that we can try to open ourselves to once again, and once again. We lack corresponding words—in the same breath we speak of memory and memory, real memory and false memory. But it is there. ■

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Ceremonies and Sustenance

PADMA PERERA



A cousin of mine who went to live in London, that Little-Bombay-on-the-Thames, wrote home: "I miss our poor, dirty country. I miss all the things we celebrate." Not just nostalgia, no. In India, where so many have so little, festivals become a shared food that nourishes both the spirit and the senses, offering punctuations of release, reminder, supplication, and thanksgiving all in one. It's as if a pervasive *something* acknowledges how even if you don't have the circumstance for rejoicing you still have the innate capacity for it, and proceeds to provide some wherewithal. Such occasions are usually religious and often seasonal, but the subtext always remains human.

Festival foods themselves, of course, can be actual as well as symbolic, with accents varying from region to region. In Central India the "Pola" festival honors the effort of bullocks who have helped till

the soil. On that day you eat only garden produce, never the plowed and striven-for result of a field. Down south, on "Pongal," however, which happens along in mid-January, new crops provide the major ingredients of a meal: sugar cane, coconut, jaggery. While the initial mouthful of food is meant to be shared with friends or passers-by or beggars or even birds, a man we knew in Tirunelveli went a step further. First thing in the morning he flung up handfuls of grain to catch the light, so that the sun too could eat and share and be thanked. I spent my first remembering years joining him in the ceremony, standing by his side to watch specks come showering down against a dazzle of sky. Elsewhere in the south, during "Makara Sankranthi" when the sun moves out of the sign of Capricorn, sesame seeds and similar fare are a must—more for health than sanctimony. The food may be endowed with ritual, but its caloric content, obtained from the oil of seeds and nuts, is obviously necessary for the body as the cold season begins. Then, in parts of the West Coast, before the rains start to hit hardest, you break a particular fast by eating mangoes, which are on their way out, and jackfruit, which is on its way in: goodbye and hello. I find my own sub-sect's "Yugadhi," or New Year, very Jewish. We eat bitter neem leaves before tasting any of the goodies. To prepare us, by implication, for taking the bitter with the sweet in the coming year.

Perhaps celebrations are so easily claimed and accessible because they're implicit in so many dailinesses of ritual. To take something as common across cultures as lighting a lamp at a household shrine: here—even if you have to rush off somewhere five minutes later—in principle this is not only a gesture of faith but an act of reminder. Your head may forget but your hands cannot. Agni, the Vedic fire-god, remains a *sakshi* or witness to each milestone of our mortal experience, and, for many of us, its final participant: affirming to the end that our life is a part of all life. One funerary hymn says: "May your eyes return to the sun, your breath to the wind, your body to the greenness of the earth, the mingling waters . . . ." There's also the joyous aspect of fire. At Divali, the Festival of Lights, small live flames prick out the darkness with the outline of every roof and wall and window—much like the luminarias of New Mexico but without the protection of brown paper bags. Meanwhile tradesmen close one year's account and open another, and everybody hopefully welcomes the Goddess of Prosperity.

Multitudes of other religious festivals underscore different aspects of living. On the day we worship Saraswathi—Goddess of learning, art, and all skills—I always brought my schoolbooks to our prayer room, and the ankle bells I wore in dancing class. My mother brought her violin and veena. From the kitchen came pots and ladles; from the garden, implements for growing things; and once, amidst the array of household offerings, there appeared a jimmy and a picklock. It turned out a professional thief was visiting a relative who lived in the compound.

However, the most profound relevance to our living organism lies in "Ganesh Chaturti," the festival for the elephant-headed god Ganesha. First-born of the power of the absolute, Shiva and Shakti (Parvathi), he is the power of the relative, demarcating the shoreline between *vyaktha* and *a-vyaktha,* the manifest and the unmanifest (down to the latent capacity of a seed to sprout). His is the presiding principle of all life-forms as they emerge not only from water but earth, eggs, embryos, and even excreta. Ganesha himself manifests the first universal sound "Om" or "Aum," born out of silence and returning to silence. Split into its three component syllables, "A . ." represents the waking state when all your senses are fully alert, "U . ." comprises the subtler elements of the dream state, and "M . ." the deep sleep where you exist without knowing it. Following these three, an *a-matra,* an immeasurable beat, leads you beyond to what can never be rendered.

Any summary of this sort willy-nilly leaves out the innumerable complexities involved, and elucidated in those portions of

the Upanishads which probe the connection of the mind to the senses, the impressions received, absorbed, emanated, etc. Suffice it to say, for now, that Ganesha rides a mouse. The mouse, his vehicle or *vahana,* epitomizes the treadmill effect of time, nibbling away at things when you're not looking. Life is borne by time, yes; no news there; but Ganesha standing by that shoreline knows exactly what it's like, supporting you against pressures and helping you overcome obstacles. He is Prana-Shakti, the life force. If he isn't there, nothing is—whether externally in terms of the universe or internally in terms of the self. Satyajit Ray's film, "Pather Panchali," the first of the Apu trilogy, has a scene where Apu's sister lies dangerously ill as a gale blows through the meager shelter of a window. The lamp at the household shrine cowers and flickers; but when the image of Ganesha topples over, you known her life has gone.

Ganesha is invoked at the start of any ritual worship to any deity, his blessing beseeched at the outset of any personally significant undertaking, from the building of a house to the performance of a dance, besides so many other occasions in the course of our entire vulnerable existence. He is more than merely approachable: even the irreverent can find him endearing. He's pot-bellied and he loves sweets. Bequeathing energy, he understands precisely how sweetmeats can pep you up, so long as they are absorbed in the right form and proportion. When decorating his shrine you remember how he also loves the green of *durva* grass, and the flowers you give him are always red, to symbolize his blessing of life's blood.

Predictably, the various legends accounting for his elephant's head include one version with a leeway for laughter—in this case, about human flexibility against the imprimatur of the stars.

When Ganesha was born, we are told, an astrologer climbed up the curve of the earth until he reached holy Mount Kailash and came to mother Parvathi's door. "I've cast your son's horoscope," he said, "and he will have the head of an elephant." Parvathi was furious. Here she'd been, so happy over the birth of her beautiful child, and here was this upstart spewing his macabre tidings. She not only gave him a never-darken-my-doorstep scolding, she cursed him and all his tribe. "Hereafter everything astrologers predict will be false." The astrologer crept away over the horizon. Two or three years went by. One day, playing in the forest while his father Shiva sat rapt in meditation under a tree, Ganesha wanted his attention. "Father! Father! . . ." Now everyone knows that if Shiva is disturbed when meditating, he opens the third eye on his forehead, reducing everything in its line of vision to ashes. So had the foolhardy God of Love tried to lure Shiva, and so had Shiva forever disembodied him. (As a result, if Cupid is blind, our God of Love has no configuration whatever.) Little Ganesha's head, as he stood bothering his father who sat cross-legged on the ground, was directly in front of the third eye. Oblivious and interrupted, Shiva opened it. And the first head that faced north—an elephant's, as it happened—was the only one that could replace the missing part of Ganesha's anatomy. More years passed. He grew up happy and elephant-headed, and the same astrologer came creeping back over the horizon. "Mother," he said to Parvathi, "I only



told you the truth, and nobody is any the worse for it. And for this you cursed me and all my tribe, you said everything we predicted would be false. Was that fair?'' No, she had to admit, it wasn't. But a curse, once uttered, could never be revoked, only alleviated. So, hereafter, only half of what astrologers predicted would be false . . . .

''Ganesh Chaturti,'' lasting ten days, is a big event in the state of Maharashtra, from its capital Bombay and cities like Poona to rural areas all over. Like everything else, it is more than religious, but with a difference. After all, any festival that symbolically shores up our human state must have space in it to accommodate our history. During the pre-Gandhi struggle for Independence, at the turn of the century, Bal Gangadhar Tilak—a grand old man of the freedom movement—saw potential in the sense of enthusiasm and common purpose surrounding Ganesha. Cannily he used it to foster unity among disparate groups. No longer was the elephant-headed God worshiped only in temples or the privacy of homes; he became ''saarvajanik,'' belonging to all people together, an umbrella over demands for social and political justice. However spotty or missing that justice from the corruptions of present-day India, a million images of Ganesha are still carved or molded in clay. Neighborhoods, shopkeepers, civic and motley groups still gather to erect painted or sculpted tableaux of Ganesha's doings at every other street or main corner, often voicing their concerns and comments through him. Three years ago when the Chief Minister of the state was implicated in a scam involving tons of cement, sure enough there stood Ganesha vividly knocking the man off his throne of cement bags. The year Americans reached the moon, another tableau showed Ganesha, trunk uplifted, welcoming Armstrong to a lunar landscape. Here's a God *au courant* in matters traditional or contemporary, and malleably suited to every goal. Down one street of a Poona neighborhood adjacent to ours, a gymnasium carved a life-size statue of Ganesha outside its gate. Painted bright blue, he was bulging with muscles and wielding a club.

''Ganesh Chaturti'' begins on the fourth day of the waxing moon in the lunar month of Bhadrapad (August-September) and lasts until the fourteenth. Special orders for Ganesha's image must be placed with sculptors weeks ahead, specifying size, posture, colors, ornamentation and the like. Others less choosy can find clay im-



ages in the bazaar; still others might want to fashion Ganesha themselves. He may be small as his mouse or ten times larger than your grandparents when you were a child; the point is, he is gala and so are you. There are songs to sing and chants to help each other carry a mammoth to his street-corner stage/shrine. "Watch out," I heard one sweating bearer of an image caution another. "Don't miss a step." For if you do, and damage a fraction of the sculpture, it no longer holds good; it might bode umpteen disasters. Once installed on the platform (which as usual was built six to eight feet high so everyone in the street could see him above the heads of the crowds) this Ganesha was hidden by a curtain until all preparations had been completed. Disclosed in the evening, he appeared benign against the Himalayas, with a spectacularly starry halo around his elephant head, clasping his favorite sweetmeat—a *modak* made of coconut and palmgur—in his left hand. A space had been cleared in front for devotees to bring offerings or just sit together and sing songs to him. On the fifth day a famous classical musician took his turn with the rest, offer-



ing the gift of his voice without any fanfare. If you happened to be on the street you had the luck to hear him.

That year in Poona, local newspapers were fuller than ever of details and photographs about the various saarvajanik Ganeshas—the sculptors, the donors, the decor, the tableaux depicted, etc. Walking with the throngs to look at different shrines, I was appalled at the amount of money wasted in our "poor, dirty country" for lighting and decorations; but I also saw the delight and exhilaration on all faces around me. Everyone was outdoors, some dressed in festive best, some not, women with flowers in their hair, men hoisting toddlers on their shoulders, children munching *modaks.* We gravitated toward the heart of the city where two of the most popular shrines are constructed every year by a sweetmeat-maker and the combined effort of a fruit and vegetable market: their Ganeshas being especially renowned for benediction and answers to prayers. Thanks offerings—in the shape of coconuts numbering one or seven or twenty-one or a hundred-and-one—mounted daily in front of the shrine until by the tenth day you couldn't see the high platforms on which each image had been placed. At festival's end, doubtless, a lot of coconuts would find their way to a lot of stomachs.

Out in the streets or quietly at home, the basic ceremony of worshipping Ganesha is the same, its physical ingredients comparatively simple. Water; the vapor of incense; the flame of oil lamps; a sample of food as "naivedya," subsequently eaten as blessed. If you can't afford extras, an offering of *durva* grass and a flower from a field or a roadside hedge will do just as well. Essentially, you welcome him in spirit as you would welcome a guest, as you would like to be welcomed yourself. All over Maharashtra he is so much like a favorite relative that he is called Uncle.

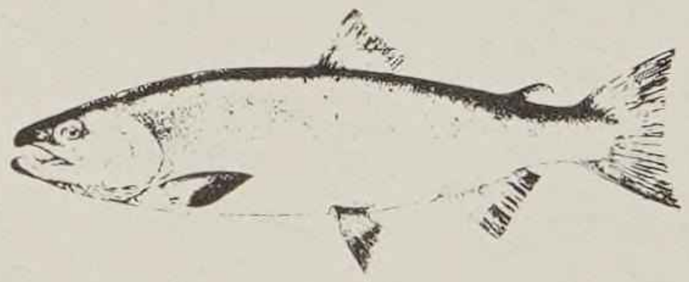
For ten days Ganesha sits in state. (Less for some, if they'd rather install him at home just a couple of days before the end.) Then comes the climax of the festival when he is carefully removed from every shrine, private or public, and carried in procession to be immersed in his element: the first waters of life. This can be a well, a village pond, a river, the sea. In Bombay and coastal areas those who bear his image hold it high overhead, wading into the waves until they can walk no farther, before finally letting him go. Poona boasts two rivers; the procession to their confluence began in the evening and went on until dawn. (Celebrants who couldn't stand crowds took their Ganeshas to more isolated spots along the banks.)

All traffic had been diverted from the route, now lined by spectators who joined the procession, as the mood moved them, at any point along the way. Ganeshas big and little came one after the other, held in the hand or riding a bullock cart or floodlit in an open truck. Since their timing was staggered, each part of the procession paused five or ten minutes while everyone had a share of one final fling before the nearest image. You could fold palms in prayer, or sing, or dance, or perform acrobatics, or express your feelings however you wanted to. Behind us, somewhere, a small boy cried to get up close. The crowd being too big to move, he was passed along overhead from hand to hand until he could join the performance; when it was over, willing hands passed him back to his parents again.

The lavender sky darkened. The air filled with a chanted couplet bidding Uncle goodbye and asking him to come back next year. Uncle himself often faced backward to the crowds instead of forward to the rivers where he bound, *his* farewell a continuing hello. The rivers' edge saw many last moments of worship before each carefully crafted image was given back to the water. You not only confronted transience, you could even celebrate it.

As we walked home we heard the distant mutter and guffaw of thunder. Clouds had piled up on the horizon, probably hiding some lonely astrologer, but it wouldn't rain. The monsoons had just come and gone, and Ganesha's burgeoning green lay under the night. Our footsteps absorbed his reminder: an inherited memory on landscape, which didn't blink away lack or loss; a sustenance of sharing celebration with all the forms and gifts of life. ■

The Salmon of Knowledge/Irish



All desires save one are fleeting, but that one lasts for ever. Fionn, with all desires, had the lasting one, for he would go anywhere and forsake anything for wisdom; and it was in search of this that he went to the place where Finegas lived on a bank of the Boyne Water. But for dread of the clann-Morna he did not go as Fionn. He called himself Deimne on that journey.

We get wise by asking questions, and even if these are not answered we get wise, for a well-packed question carries its answer on its back as a snail carries its shell. Fionn asked every question he could think of, and his master, who was a poet, and so an honorable man, answered them all, not to the limit of his patience, for it was limitless, but to the limit of his ability.

"Why do you live on the bank of a river?" was one of these questions.

"Because a poem is a revelation, and it is by the brink of running water that poetry is revealed to the mind."

"How long have you been here?" was the next query.

"Seven years," the poet answered.

"It is a long time," said wondering Fionn.

"I would wait twice as long for a poem," said the inveterate bard.

"Have you caught good poems?" Fionn asked him.

"The poems I am fit for," said the mild master. "No person can get more than that, for a man's readiness is his limit."

"Would you have got as good poems by the Shannon or the Suir or by sweet Ana Life?"

"They are good rivers," was the answer. "They all belong to good gods."

"But why did you choose this river out of all the rivers?"

Finegas beamed on his pupil.

"I would tell you anything," said he, "and I will tell you that."

Fionn sat at the kindly man's feet, his hands absent among tall grasses, and listening with all his ears.

"A prophecy was made to me," Finegas began. "A man of knowledge foretold that I should catch the Salmon of Knowledge in the Boyne Water."

"And then?" said Fionn eagerly.

"Then I would have All Knowledge."

"And after that?" the boy insisted.

"What should there be after that?" the poet retorted.

"I mean, what would you do with All Knowledge?"

"A weighty question," said Finegas smilingly. "I could answer it if I had All Knowledge, but not until then. What would you do, my dear?"

"I would make a poem," Fionn cried.

"I think too," said the poet, "that that is what would be done."

In return for instruction Fionn had taken over the service of his master's hut, and as he went about the household duties, drawing the water, lighting the fire, and carrying rushes for the floor and the beds, he thought over all the poet had taught him, and his mind dwelt on the rules of meter, the cunningness of words, and the need for a clean, brave mind. But in his thousand thoughts he yet remembered the Salmon of Knowledge as eagerly as his master did. He already venerated Finegas for his great learning, his poetic skill, for an hundred reasons; but, looking on him as the ordained eater of the Salmon of Knowledge, he venerated him to the edge of measure. Indeed, he loved as well as venerated this master because of his unfailing kindness, his patience, his readiness to teach, and his skill in teaching.

"I have learned much from you, dear master," said Fionn gratefully.

"All that I have is yours if you can take it," the poet answered, "for you are entitled to all that you can take, but to no more than that. Take, so, with both hands."

"You may catch the salmon while I am with you," the hopeful boy mused. "Would that not be a great happening!" and he stared in ecstasy across the grass at those visions which a boy's mind knows.

"Let us pray for that," said Finegas fervently.

"Here is a question," Fionn continued, "How does this salmon get wisdom into his flesh?"

"There is a hazel bush overhanging a secret pool in a secret place. The Nuts of Knowledge drop from the Sacred Bush into the pool, and as they float, a salmon takes them in his mouth and eats them."

"It would be almost as easy," the boy submitted, "if one were to set on the track of the Sacred Hazel and eat the nuts straight from the bush."

"That would not be very easy," said the poet, "and yet it is not as easy as that, for the bush can only be found by its own knowledge, and that knowledge can only be got by eating the nuts, and the nuts can only be got by eating the salmon."

"We must wait for the salmon," said Fionn in a rage of resignation.

Life continued for him in a round of timeless time, wherein days and nights were uneventful and were yet filled with interest. As the day packed its load of strength into his frame, so it added its store of knowledge to his mind, and each night sealed the twain, for it is in the night that we make secure what we have gathered in the day.

If he had told of these days he would have told of a succession of meals and sleeps, and of an endless conversation, from which his mind would now and again slip away to a solitude of its own, where, in large hazy atmospheres, it swung and drifted and reposed. Then he would be back again, and it was a pleasure for him to catch up on the thought that was forward and re-create for it all the matter he had missed. But he could not often make these sleepy sallies; his master was too experienced a teacher to allow any such bright-faced, eager-eyed abstractions, and as the druid women had switched his legs around a tree, so Finegas chased his mind, demanding sense in his questions and understanding in his replies.

To ask questions can become the laziest and wobbliest occupation of a mind, but when you must yourself answer the problem that you have posed, you will meditate your question with care and frame it with precision. Fionn's mind learned to jump in a bumpier field than that in which he had chased rabbits. And when he had asked his question, and given his own answer to it, Finegas would take the matter up and make clear to him where the query was badly formed or at what point the answer had begun to go astray, so that Fionn came to understand by what successions a good question grows at last to a good answer.

One day, not long after the conversation told of, Finegas came to the place where Fionn was. The poet has a shallow osier basket on his arm, and on his face there was a look that was at once triumphant and gloomy. He was excited certainly, but he was sad also, and as he stood gazing on Fionn his eyes were so kind that the

boy was touched, and they were yet so melancholy that it almost made Fionn weep.

"What is it, my master?" said the alarmed boy.

The poet placed his osier basket on the grass.

"Look in the basket, dear son," he said.

Fionn looked.

"There is a salmon in the basket."

"It is The Salmon," said Finegas with a great sigh.

Fionn leaped for delight.

"I am glad for you, master," he cried. "Indeed I am glad for you."

"And I am glad, my dear soul," the master rejoined.

But, having said it, he bent his brow to his hand and for a long time he was silent and gathered into himself.

"What should be done now?" Fionn demanded, as he stared on the beautiful fish.

Finegas rose from where he sat by the osier basket.

"I will be back in a short time," he said heavily. "While I am away you may roast the salmon, so that it will be ready against my return."

"I will roast it indeed," said Fionn.

The poet gazed long and earnestly on him.

"You will not eat any of my salmon while I am away?" he asked.

"I will not eat the littlest piece," said Fionn.

"I am sure you will not," the other murmured, as he turned and walked slowly across the grass and behind the sheltering bushes on the ridge.

Fionn cooked the salmon. It was beautiful and tempting and savoury as it smoked on a wooden platter among cool green leaves; and it looked all these to Finegas when he came from behind the fringing bushes and sat in the grass outside his door. He gazed on the fish with more than his eyes. He looked on it with his heart, with his soul in his eyes, and when he turned to look on Fionn the boy did not know whether the love that was in his eyes was for the fish or for himself. Yet he did know that a great moment had arrived for the poet.

"So," said Finegas, "you did not eat it on me after all?"

"Did I not promise?" Fionn replied.

"And yet," his master continued, "I went away so that you might eat the fish if you felt you had to."

"Why should I want another man's fish?" said proud Fionn.

"Because young people have strong desires. I thought you might have tasted it, and then you would have eaten it on me."

"I did taste it by chance," Fionn laughed, "for while the fish was roasting a great blister rose on its skin. I did not like the look of that blister, and I pressed it down with my thumb. That burned my thumb, so I popped it in my mouth to heal the smart. If your salmon tastes as nice as my thumb did," he laughed, "it will taste very nice."

"What did you say your name was, dear heart?" the poet asked.

"I said my name was Deimne."

"Your name is not Deimne," said the mild man, "your name is Fionn."

"That is true," the boy answered, "but I do not know how you know it."

"Even if I have not eaten the Salmon of Knowledge I have some small science of my own."

"It is very clever to know things as you know them," Fionn replied wonderingly. "What more do you know of me, dear master?"

"I know that I did not tell you the truth," said the heavy-hearted man.

"What did you tell me instead of it?"

"I told you a lie."

"It is not a good thing to do," Fionn admitted. "What sort of a lie was the lie, master?"

"I told you that the Salmon of Knowledge was to be caught by me, according to the prophecy."

"Yes."

"That was true, indeed, and I have caught the fish. But I did not tell you that the salmon was not to be eaten by me, although that also was in the prophecy, and that omission was the lie."

"It is not a great lie," said Fionn soothingly.

"It must not become a greater one," the poet replied sternly.

"Who was the fish given to?" his companion wondered.

"It was given to you," Finegas answered. "It was given to Fionn, the son of Uail, the son of Baiscne, and it will be given to him."

"You shall have a half of the fish," cried Fionn.

"I will not eat a piece of its skin that is as small as the point of its smallest bone," said the resolute and trembling bard. "Let you now eat up the fish, and I shall watch you and give praise to the gods of the Underworld and of the Elements."

Fionn then ate the Salmon of Knowledge, and when it had disappeared a great jollity and tranquility and exuberance returned to the poet.

"Ah," said he, "I had a great combat with that fish."

"Did it fight for its life?" Fionn inquired.

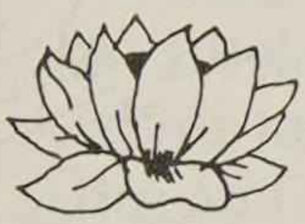
"It did, but that was not the fight I meant."

"You shall eat a Salmon of Knowledge too," Fionn assured him.

"You have eaten one," cried the blithe poet, "and if you make such a promise it will be because you know."

"I promise it and know it," said Fionn, "you shall eat a Salmon of Knowledge yet."

From James Stephens's *Irish Fairy Tales* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948).



The Lotus Eaters/Odyssey

We made off from Ismarus with heavy hearts, for the joy we felt at our own reprieve was tempered by grief for our dear comrades-in-arms; and I would not let the curved ships sail before each of our poor friends who had fallen in action against the Cicones had been three times saluted. Zeus, who marshals the clouds, now sent my fleet a terrible gale from the north. He covered land and sea alike with a canopy of clouds; and darkness swept down on us from the sky. Our ships were driven sidelong by the wind, and the force of the gusts tore their sails to rags and tatters. With the fear of death upon us, we lowered these onto the decks, and rowed the bare ships landward with all our might. Thus we lay for two days and two nights on end, with exhaustion and anxiety gnawing at our hearts. But on the third morning, which a beautiful dawn had ushered in, we stepped the masts, hauled up the white sails, and sat down, leaving the wind and the helmsman between them to keep our vessels straight. In fact I should have reached my own land safe and sound, had not the swell, the current, and the North Wind combined, as I was doubling Malea, to drive me off my course and send me drifting past Cythera.

For nine days I was chased by those accursed winds across the fish-infested seas. But on the tenth we made the country of the Lotus-eaters, a race that lived on vegetable foods. We disembarked to draw water, and my crews quickly set to on their midday meal by the ships. But as soon as we had had a mouthful and a drink, I sent some of my followers inland to find out what sort of human beings

might be there, detailing two men for the duty with a third as messenger. Off they went, and it was not long before they were in touch with the Lotus-eaters. Now it never entered the heads of these natives to kill my friends; what they did was to give them some lotus to taste, and as soon as each had eaten the honeyed fruit of the plant, all thoughts of reporting to us or escaping were banished from his mind. All they now wished for was to stay where they were with the Lotus-eaters, to browse on the lotus and to forget that they had a home to return to. I had to use force to bring them back to the ships, and they wept on the way, but once on board I dragged them under the benches and I left them in irons. I then commanded the rest of my loyal band to embark with all speed on their fast ships, for fear that others of them might eat the lotus and think no more of home. They came on board at once, went to the benches, sat down in their proper places, and struck the white surf with their oars.

From Homer's *Odyssey,* translated by Emil V. Rieu (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1959).

Dancing Ground/New Guinea

In the beginning nine families were on earth. They lived in the jungle with one of the three Virgin Dema, Satene, at a place known as the Nine Dance Grounds between Ahiolo and Varoioin.

Among them was a man called Ameta whose name meant night and he had neither wife nor children, only a dog that went hunting with him. And one day this dog put up a wild pig and chased it into a lake in which it swam until it was so exhausted it drowned in the water. Ameta dragged its body to the shore, and finding a coconut upon one of its tusks he took it home with him, wrapping it reverently in a cloth with an image of a snake's head on it. For coconuts were unknown to men before that time.

That night while he slept Satene sent a man to him in a dream. The man said, "If the coconut is to grow, Ameta, you must plant it

in the ground.'' So next day Ameta planted it, and in three days it was a tall tree and in three more there was blossom on it. But when Ameta climbed the tree to gather the blossom his knife slipped and cut his own finger and the blood from his finger fell upon a leaf. After three days had passed the head of a young girl had grown from the leaf; after six days her body had appeared, and after nine a complete little girl lay ready for gathering, head and body, arms, legs, hands and feet. That night the man again appeared to Ameta. ''Wrap the maid in your snake's-head cloth,'' he said, ''and take her home with you. Her name is Hainuwele and she is Satene's sister, but she will also be your daughter now.''

Hainuwele was very beautiful and like no ordinary girl. Not only did she grow to marriageable age in just three days more, but even her excrement was different from that of others', it was coral and gold and copper, it was gongs and boxes, dishes and knives. Her father gathered up all these precious things and soon he was the richest man among the nine families.

Now the time came for the great Maro Dance. That dance continued for nine nights, one night on each of the nine dance grounds. The women stood in the centre of the ground and handed out betel nuts to the men who danced in spirals round them. This year Ameta's daughter Hainuwele stood among the women. But she was no ordinary woman. The first night on the first dance ground she handed out betel nuts as the other women did. But on the second her gifts were made of coral, the men crowding the dance round her, for none wanted betel when he could have coral ornaments. On the third night she gave dishes of Chinese porcelain, on the fourth dishes again, but still more splendid ones, the fifth, bush knives, the sixth, copper boxes, the seventh, gold earrings, the eighth, huge and splendid gongs. The other women who still had only betel nuts to give grew increasingly envious and angry. And their men too became suspicious, they were jealous of Hainuwele's wealth. The nine families disputed it among themselves but by the ninth day they had decided to kill Hainuwele.

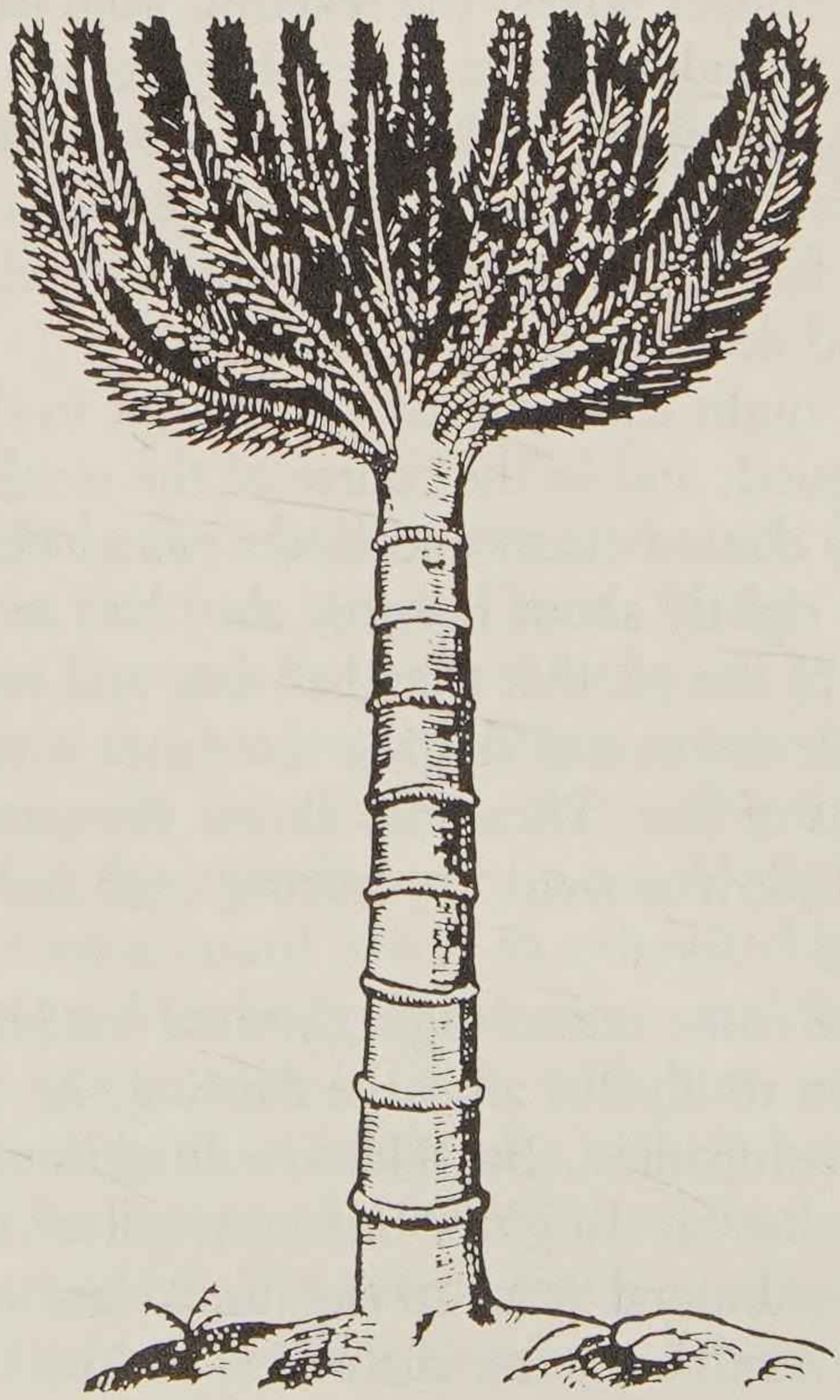
On the ninth night therefore they dug a pit in the middle of the ninth dancing ground, and in the course of the ninth dance all the men of one family danced closer and closer round Hainuwele, winding their spiral so tightly about her that they had soon pressed her right to the edge of the pit that they had dug and were able to cast her in, raising their voices and singing the dance song louder to drown her screams of fear. Then they threw the earth over her and having trampled it down, went on dancing over and over her until she was quite dead.

Ameta, whose name meant night, waited for Hainuwele, his daughter, to return to his hut after the dancing; he waited with his dog, his hunting companion. But Hainuwele did not return. And at last Ameta knew that his daughter had been killed. He cut nine fronds of the cocopalm and went to the ninth dancing ground and stuck them in the earth one after the other; and on the ninth frond

when he took it from the earth he saw the blood and hair of Hainuwele; so he dug there; and when he had found her body, he cut it in pieces and buried it in different parts of the dance floor—all except her two arms which he saved and gave to Hainuwele's sister Satene. And all the time he cursed mankind for the murder of his daughter. But Satene meanwhile was making a gate at the centre of the dancing ground, a gate like the spiral the men danced while they were killing Hainuwele. And she ordered the nine families of men to come to her through the gate. Those who failed to tread the spiral round, she turned into deer and pigs and birds and fishes, and from that time there were animals and birds and fishes where none had been before. But those who had succeeded she struck with one of Hainuwele's arms and divided into tribes according to whether she struck them with the right arm or the left. And then, because they had murdered Hainuwele her sister, she went away and did not live any more among men in the jungle between Ahiolo and Varoioin.

Meanwhile plants had appeared on the dancing ground at the points where Ameta had buried Hainuwele, new plants that had never been known on earth, yams and taros and sweet potatoes. The two tribes of men tasted them and found them good to eat. And each year afterwards they planted again and ate them, the yam, the taro and the sweet potato; the plants that grew first from the body of Hainuwele, sister of Satene and daughter of Ameta whose name meant night; who once again had neither wife nor child in his hut, but lived there with his dog, alone. ■

From Penelope Farmer, *Beginnings: Creation Myths of the World* (New York: Atheneum, 1979).



The Offering/Buddhist



Having renounced the world, and filled with joy, the Bodisat spent seven days in a mango grove. Then he went on foot to Rajagalu and, entering the city, began to beg from door to door. Everyone who saw him was overcome by his beauty, and soon the whole city was in an uproar.

The guards went to the king and said, "O King, this being is begging through the town. We cannot tell whether he is a god, or a man, or a Snake Spirit, or a Winged Being, or what he is."

The king, watching the Great Being from his palace, gave orders to his guards, saying, "Go, my men, and see. If it is a superhuman being, it will disappear as soon as it leaves the city; if a god, it will depart through the air; if a snake, it will dive into the earth; if a man, it will eat the food just as it is."

The Great Being went on collecting scraps of food. When he saw there was enough, he left the city, and seating himself facing the East, under the shadow of the Pandava rock, he began to eat his meal. But he found the food revolting, and his stomach turned and churned. Then he said to himself, "Siddhatta, it is true that you are used to a life in which your food was perfumed rice and curries of the finest kind. But ever since the day when you first saw a man wearing the robes of a wandering beggar, you have been longing to become like him. And now that time is come, what are you doing?" So, overcoming his revulsion, he ate the food.

Seeing this, the guards went to the king and told him what had happened. And after hearing the story the king left the city, went to the Bodisat, and offered him all his kingdom.

But the Great Being, saying he wished only for enlightenment, would not accept.

He went on his way, and at last came to Uruvela and began to live there, devoting himself to the Great Struggle of mastery and meditation.

Then five beggars, after wandering through villages, market towns, and royal cities, met with the Bodisat. And for six years they stayed by him and served him, always thinking, "Now he will become a Buddha! Now he will become a Buddha!"

And the Bodisat, continuing in his austerities, thought, "I will make the utmost renunciation." He forced himself to live on one seed of the oil plant, or one grain of rice, or even to fast and live on nothing. By this fasting he grew thin as a skeleton, his golden body darkened and grew dull, and the thirty-two signs that had adorned it disappeared. He grew weaker and weaker, until one day, walking up and down in deep meditation, he fainted and fell.

But, though some thought he was dead, he recovered.

People talked of the Great Being's six years of austerity, until their talk spread like the sound of a great bell heard in the sky. But

the Bodisat realized that austerity is not the way to wisdom, and once again he began to beg for ordinary food and to eat it.

Then the five wandering beggars thought, "If even after six years of austerity, this man has not been able to attain supreme wisdom, how can he now, when he goes begging through the village, eating ordinary food! He is lost. Trying to get spiritual gain from him is like trying to wash your head in a drop of dew!" So they left the Great Being, and went off to study in the schools.

At that time at Uruvela, in the village of Senani, there was a woman named Sujata, who had as a girl prayed to a Nigrodha tree for a fine husband and a son from him. She had promised the tree god a splendid yearly offering if her prayer was answered, and it was.

In order to make her offering, on the full-moon day of the month of May, she had driven a thousand cows into a meadow of rich grass. With their milk she had fed five hundred cows, with theirs half as many, and so on down to eight. The milk of those eight cows was the sweetest, strongest, and most plentiful of all.

Early on that full-moon day, Sujata rose and milked those eight cows. She took the milk and made the fire with her own hands, and began to cook the sweet milk with rice.

Now, that previous night the Bodisat had had five dreams, and he had understood, "Today I shall become a Buddha." In the morning, he washed and dressed himself and went and sat at the foot of the tree, lighting it up with his glory, until the tree shone like gold in the radiance from his body.

Sujata's daughter, Punna, saw him there, and thinking that a tree-god had come to receive the offering, she ran to tell her mother.

Sujata sent at once for a golden bowl to put the offering in. She poured the rich milk out, and it flowed like water from a lotus leaf, until it filled the golden bowl to overflowing.

Sujata put the bowl on her head, and with great dignity she went toward the Nigrodha tree. She took the Bodisat for a tree god, and, bowing, she offered him the bowl. She placed the bowl with the milk rice in it in his hand, and asked him to accept the offering.

Then the Bodisat rose from his seat, went down to the river, and bathed. And dressing himself again in the robes of an Arahat, he sat down with his face to the East, and he ate all that sweet milk rice.

When he had finished, he took the golden bowl and said, "If I shall today be able to become a Buddha, let this bowl float up the stream. If not, let it float down the stream!" He threw it into the water, and it floated up against the current, far, far up the river, moving as fast as the fastest horse.

—Retold by Anne Twitty

Adapted from *Buddhist Birth Stories*, T.W. Rhys Davids, trans. (London: Trubner & Sons, 1880).

CURRENTS & COMMENTS

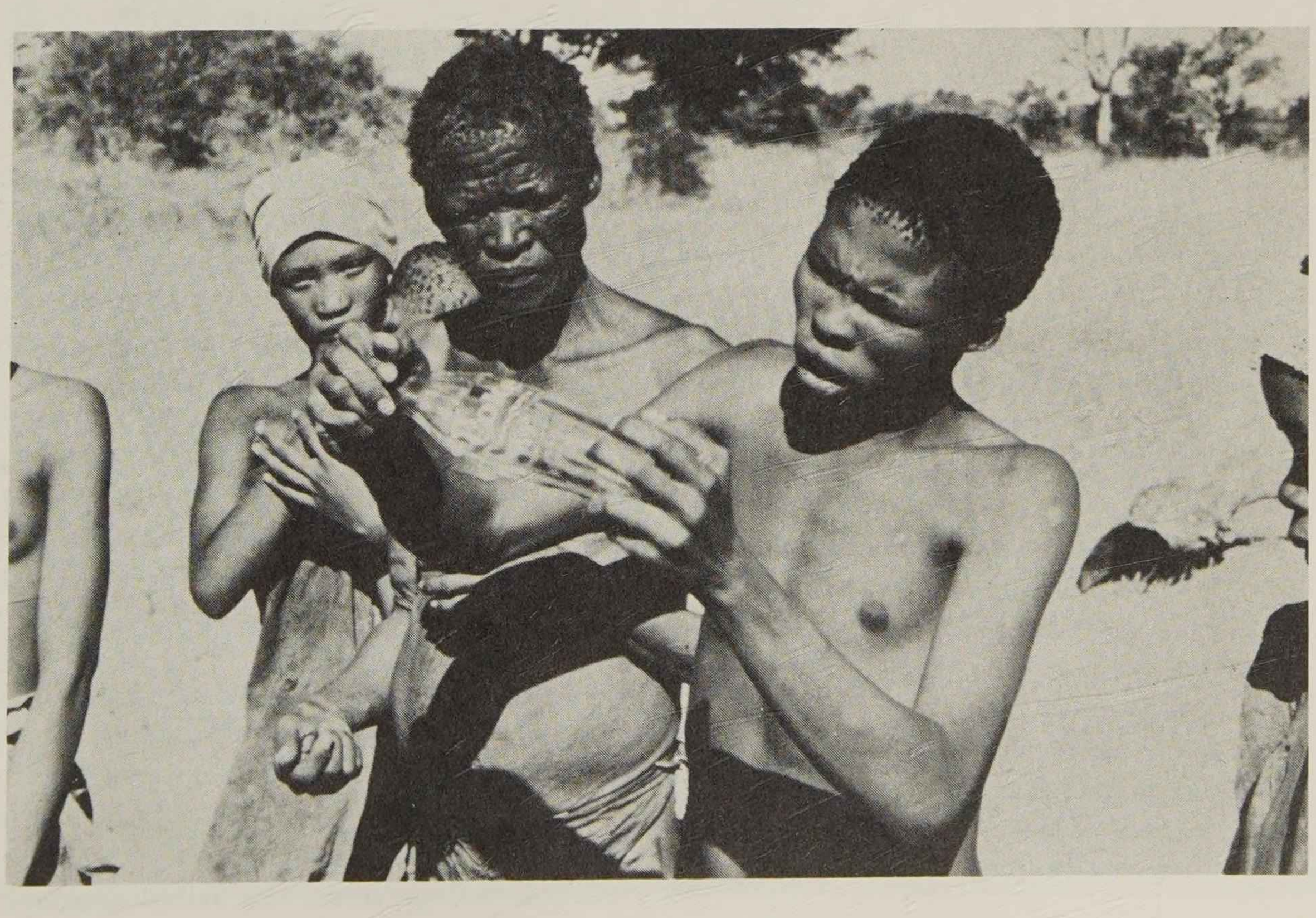
EDUCATION

A new school for adult Jewish education is being opened in Los Angeles. Called the Los Angeles *Metivta*, it is a development of the religious outreach program directed by Jonathan Omer-Man. The underlying philosophy of the *Metivta* is that the process of religious education for adults should take place along three lines: knowledge (this includes Bible, prayerbook, language, theology, and structure of the literary tradition), practice (the skills to pray in a recognizable Jewish format, to perform commandments and rituals, and to celebrate Sabbath and festivals), and being (the ability to experience the self as a spiritual entity that seeks to understand its own nature and to overcome the obstacles to its religious growth).

Activities will start in mid-November. The program of study will be tailor-made for each student, and an essential part of each student's work will be participation in personal, one-to-one tutorials that will focus on the individual's inner work. The *Metivta* strives to cut across current denominational lines, and to reach back to a tradition of wisdom that has become difficult of access. For further information, telephone (213) 934-7066.

FILM

In **The Gods Must be Crazy**, a film written, directed, and produced in Africa by Jamie Uys, we have another sad case of



a film-maker who didn't appreciate the quality of his own material, the possible intelligence of his audiences, or both. Marvelous footage of the Bushmen and their Kalahari Desert habitat, sensitively filmed around the novel situation of a magical object literally falling from heaven (a coke bottle dropped by a careless bush-pilot) is interspersed with the most unbelievable and irrelevant slapstick and pseudo-comic violence. The contrast between the gentle children of Nature and the crudity of white "civilization" could have been made more convincingly with greater simplicity and brevity, leaving more time and space for N!xau and his beautiful people who have something new, though very old, to offer moviegoers already filled to the brim with popping guns and pratfalls in mudpuddles. It was a pity to waste such material on this film.

MUSEUMS

The world's first paper money and first seismograph, seventh century A.D. handmade paper, a bamboo flame thrower, a 2500-character typewriter, and sixteenth century B.C. bronze casting molds are among the objects currently on display at the Georgia Institute of Technology's High Museum of Art in Atlanta. In two simultaneous exhibitions, **China: 7000 Years of Discovery** and **Chinese Ceramics and Bronzes: Art and Technology**, the Museum, in cooperation with the China Science and Technology Museum of Beijing, China, is presenting a wealth of artifacts indicative of Chinese achievement in astronomy, printing, medicine, mechanics, architecture, and eight other disciplines, while exploring in detail through an array of ancient Chinese bronzes and ceramics





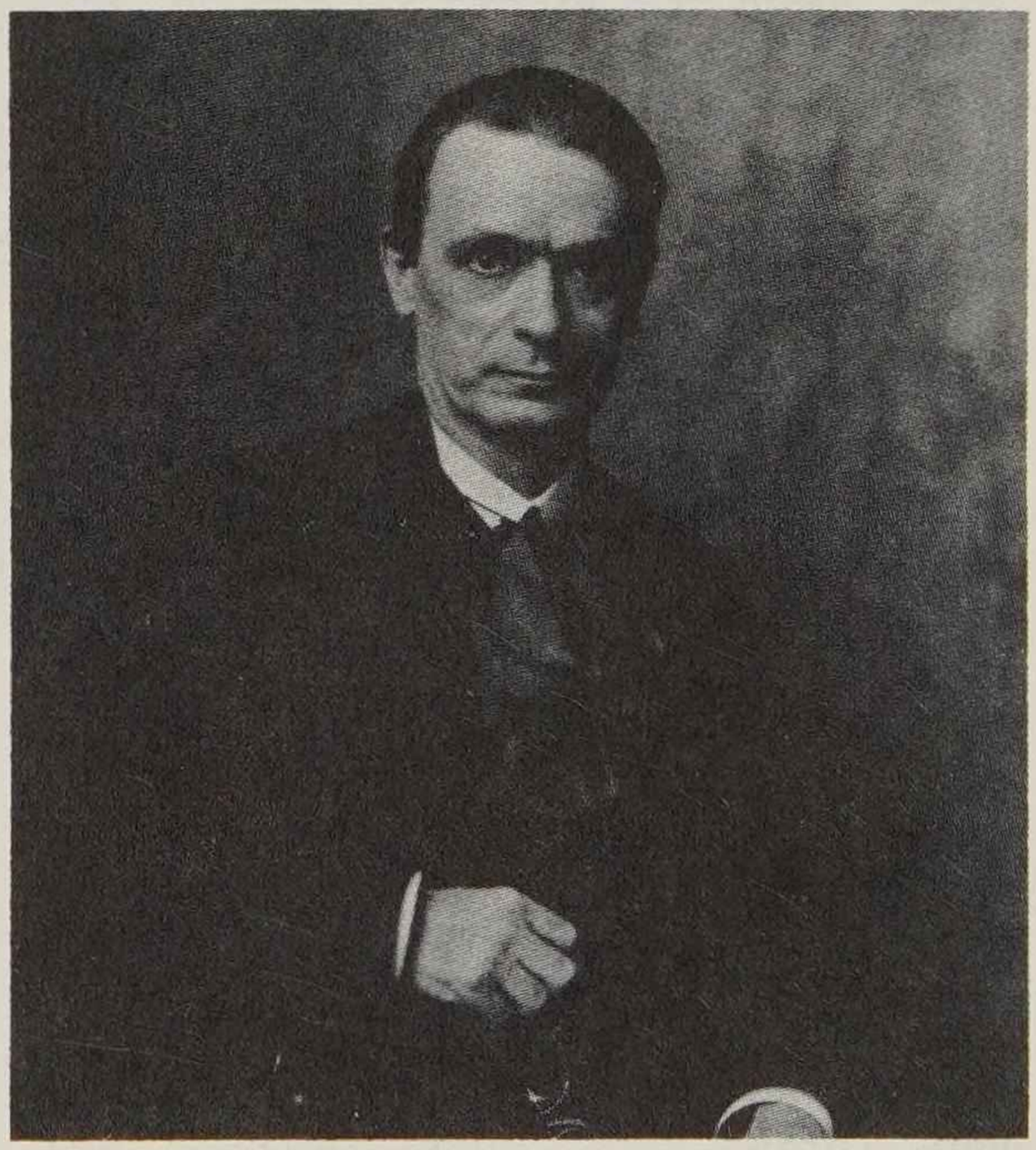
the impact of scientific innovation on art. Demonstrations of papermaking, pottery throwing, silk weaving, and kite construction are included in the program, running through February 24th. The Museum, located at 1280 Peachtree Street, N.E., is open seven days a week (noon to 7:30 P.M., Monday through Thursday; 10:00 A.M. to 7:30 P.M., Friday through Sunday). Admission to the exhibits is $5.00 for adults, $3.00 for senior citizens and students, and $1.50 for children.

Visitors to the IBM Gallery of Science and Art in midtown Manhattan now have the opportunity to explore the rich artistic heritage of the Native American tribes of the Pacific Northwest. The Gallery, located at 590 Madison Avenue, is presenting **Out of the Mists: Northwest Coast Art**, an exhibit organized by the Museum of the American Indian and featuring over 300 art objects, most dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including shaman charms and soul catchers, dance robes, head dresses, helmets, canoe paddles, and basketry. In addition, Kwakiutl artist Calvin Hunt will put the finishing touches on a 31-foot totem pole commissioned for the exhibition. The Gallery's hours are Tuesday–Friday, 11 A.M. to 6 P.M., and Saturday, 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. The show runs through December 29th; admission is free. For further information, telephone (212) 407–6100. ■

Listening to Steiner

OWEN BARFIELD

The Essential Steiner: Basic Writings of Rudolf Steiner
Edited and Introduced by Robert A. McDermott. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984. Pp. *xii* + 450. Paper $10.95.



When I was growing up, the punch-line of a once popular Victorian drawing-room ballad was quoted from time to time in my family circle: *Oh no, we never mention him, his name is never heard!* The song was of course a lament by a lovelorn maiden for her socially inferior lover, taboo'd by the parental establishment; but the line is apt to run in my head, when I contemplate the relation of Rudolf Steiner to that other establishment; I mean the one Dr. Johnson used to refer to as "the lettered world," but which we are more disposed to call "the Western mind-set," or by some such name. Possibly the lady has come to symbolize for me the *anima* within the unconscious of the *Zeitgeist.*

The editor—and part author—of *The Essential Steiner* puts it more soberly in his General Introduction:

If, as his followers claim, Rudolf Steiner is a genius in twelve fields, why do we not come across his name in colleges, in scholarly writings, and in the popular press? Experts in each of the fields in which he worked—including history, philosophy, science, art, social sciences, education and Gospel commentary—seem equally unaware of his work. It is tempting to assume that the only possible reason for this neglect must be that Steiner's writings are either inferior or idiosyncratic. In fact, how-

ever, Steiner's contributions in these fields have not been rejected so much as ignored.

For this pointed silence—no other epithet will do for anyone who is at all acquainted with both the quantity and the quality of the work and thought elicited by Steiner's vast spiritual legacy during the sixty years since his death—there are no doubt reasons, some of them more, some of them less reputable. One of the former class is the vastness itself. Twenty books and five or six thousand lectures are only a crude measure of that, since there are also the various activities which he initiated in education, agriculture, science, art, medicine, and elsewhere, all of which have been and are being developed in Europe and (increasingly) in America and elsewhere. Whatever its cause, the silence raises a communication problem, of which most of his followers are aware and some few of them who are writers have tried to tackle. A.P. Shepherd's *A Scientist of the Invisible* (1954 and 1983), H. Hemleben's more popular and lavishly illustrated *Rudolf Steiner: A Documentary Biography* (1963–English translation 1975), S.C. Easton's *Man and World in the Light of Anthroposophy* (1975 and 1983) and *Rudolf Steiner: Herald of a New Epoch* (1980), M.C. Richards' *Towards Wholeness* (1980, mainly but not exclusively concerned with education in America), may all be seen as attempts to deal with that problem, and they are not the only ones. McDermott particularly recommends a shorter but definitely "in-depth" exegesis by Francis Edmunds, *Anthroposophy, a Way of Life* (Crosby Press, 1982). All these books are of high quality. The fact that they have nevertheless so far failed to penetrate the wall of ignorance that still hides the badly needed light of Spiritual Science from "the lettered world" may well be due to the circumstance that, even allowing for substantial quotation in them, the reader is learning *about* Steiner rather than contacting Steiner himself; that something more than a sip—a taste; something more than a taste-*assimilation* of his own words is needed to dispel a suspicion that his writings may after all have been "inferior or idiosyncratic."

The books tell us, in one way and another, much about the man Steiner and his biography and something about the progress since his death of the Movement he initiated. Perhaps it will be well to attempt a summary of these two topics before proceeding to the third, the nature or substance of Spiritual Science (Anthroposophy) itself.

Rudolf Steiner was born on February 27, 1861 in Kraljevec (now in Yugoslavia), the son of a minor railway official. At the age of eighteen he entered the Technische Hochschule in Vienna, where he studied mathematics, science, literature, philosophy, and history, developing a special interest in Goethe. Three years later, still in Vienna, he was employed to edit Goethe's scientific writings for *Kürschner's National literatur;* from 1890 to 1897, at the Goethe and Schiller Archives in Weimar, he was engaged in editing, for another edition of the Collected Works, virtually the whole of Goethe's scientific writings published and unpublished. His autobiography tells how at this time he enjoyed the friendship of a number of eminent men, such as Ernst

Haeckel, the dogmatic exponent of Darwinian evolution, and Hermann Grimm the historian. It was during this period also that he took his Ph.D at Rostock University with a dissertation later to be revised and published under the title *Wahrheit und Wissenschaft* (Truth and Science).

During the next four years Steiner became deeply involved in the intellectual life—literary and dramatic societies and periodicals and so forth—of Berlin, while at the same time he began his lifelong lecturing activity by giving courses of lectures under the auspices of the Workers Education Movement.

It was not till the turn of the century that his true genius, unable to find expression through any of these outlets, but which had been steadily maturing within him, first came forth into the light. The historical moment was that one in which the western mind had reached the lowest depths of materialism, and there were few who would even listen to what he had to say. Outstanding among those few were the members of the Theosophical Society, who were in the act of founding a German Section. Steiner joined it, became its president (making the condition that he would be free to propound the results of his own spiritual research whether or not they accorded with the tenets of the Society) and remained with it for some years, until the sensationalism and triviality which he felt was corroding the sound impulse that had led to the Society's foundation obliged him to separate himself from it altogether.

The next ten years of his life are best seen as the first phase of the anthroposophical movement, and in 1913 the Society bearing that name was founded by his followers in Munich, where his four Mystery Plays were later to be written and produced. There is not space here to deal with the distinction between that and the General Anthroposophical Society, which he himself founded in December 1923, a little more than two years before his death on March 30, 1925. Suffice it to say that from 1902 to the end of his life he devoted all his energies (writing some twenty books and delivering not less than six thousand lectures) to the cultivation and dissemination of Anthroposophy—to which he also gave the name of Spiritual Science—and at the last, to the affairs of the Anthroposophic Society, which he hoped would become the germ of a world-wide community of human souls.

From one point of view Anthroposophy is a new and startling phenomenon in the history of the mind. From another it can be seen as the natural and inevitable development of intellectual and philosophical impulses which had begun to manifest before Steiner was born. The thinking of others, such as Hegel and the Nature-Philosophers in Germany and Coleridge in England, had taken the same direction, but none of them had achieved their aim so authoritatively or so completely. Coleridge could write, rather vaguely, of "organs of spirit," with a latent function analogous to that of our more readily available organs of sense, and Goethe could apply his "objective thinking" to supplement causality with metamorphosis. But neither of them could carry cognition of spirit beyond spirit-as-phenomenally-apparent in external nature. It was in Steiner that western mind

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and western method first achieved cognition of *pure* spirit. The others were all apostles of Imagination in its best sense, Steiner alone of those profounder levels which he himself termed Inspiration and Intuition, but which may together be conceived of as Revelation; as Revelation in the form appropriate to this age—as a mode of cognition, to which the noumenal ground of existence is accessible directly, and not only through its phenomenal manifestation; to which therefore even the remote past can become an open book.

On the aspect of the progress of the Movement, that is to say of its slight but increasing influence on the lettered world and, through that, on the life of Society, *The Essential Steiner* is both fuller and more up-to-date than the other works I have mentioned. In the sphere of education, for instance, we learn from it that fifty thousand students are now educated in five hundred Waldorf Schools and that, although the United States is still a long way behind Europe (particularly Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Great Britain, France, and Italy) twenty such schools were founded there between 1980 and 1983; in medicine, that in 1981 more than five hundred physicians attended a conference on Spiritual Science by the Medical Section of the Anthroposophical Society at Dornach, Switzerland; with more to similar effect in the realms of literature, the arts, agriculture, etc.

In different ways, all these books and others like them endeavor to give an account of the substance of Spiritual Science; indeed that is their principal concern. It would be going too far to say that they fail. But it is here that the difficulty I have referred to makes itself felt, and it must be understood that the miniscule summary I am about to attempt here suffers far more grievously from that drawback than they do.

One way of listing the basic principles of Anthroposophy would run as follows:

—The evolution of the world is, and always has been, essentially an evolution of consciousness; and the material and biological evolution, which is its outward expression, will never be known, though it may be tinkered with, until that is fully realized.

—In the course of that evolution matter has emerged from mind, not mind from matter. "Spirit must first take on the form of a material brain in order to lead in this form the life of the conceptual world, which can bestow upon man in his earthly life freely acting self-consciousness. To be sure, in the brain spirit mounts upward out of matter, but only after the material brain has arisen out of spirit."

—In its later stages evolution is coterminous with the evolution of human perceiving and thinking. That does not mean a "history of ideas" refracted from particular heads, but a progressive development of the whole relation between the inner and the outer world.

—The verb "to evolve" requires a single subject if it is not to be meaningless. The age-long evolution of *individuality*—that is, of individual selves or egos—out of a general and participating consciousness, is accordingly not conceivable except in terms of repeated earth lives (reincarnation), just

as the evolution of a natural species is inconceivable without repeated individual embodiments in the course of which it acquires its special form.

—The central point in evolution, that is, of the painful emergence of a subjective and specifically "human" consciousness out of that original participation in the phenomenal world which the myths reflect, and its advance to man's final participation in that world as an individual free spirit, was the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

—That stage in the evolution of consciousness which gave rise to, and has been urged forward by, the scientific revolution in the West is, on the one hand, responsible for the prevailing materialism of the present age. On the other hand it is that which has made possible *exact* knowledge both of nature and of spirit. Up to now this has only been realized in relation to knowledge of nature, and there only in a very limited (predominantly mineral) sphere. Correlatively, however, it has made possible exact knowledge of man's own spirit and of the spiritual world of which he is a part. Organs of perception giving rise to such knowledge are latent in all human beings, but can only be developed and brought into activity by arduous and persevering endeavor.

—Steiner himself developed these organs to an extraordinary degree and applied them to many, or nearly all, realms of knowledge. His books and lectures consist in the main of the findings of his spiritual research in those different realms.

So much for the bare bones. But without the whelming flood of corroborative detail in which these principles are clothed and by which they are supported, they may well mean very little. If a man who had never seen or read a play of Shakespeare's, or perhaps never seen any play at all, were to ask what *Hamlet* is like, he would not be much the wiser after being told (quite accurately): it is the story of a man whose father was murdered by an uncle, who subsequently married his mother; prompted by his father's ghost he killed the uncle and at the same time his mother died from accidentally drinking poison intended by the uncle for Hamlet himself.

The Essential Steiner avoids the flatness of skeletal presentation more successfully than any other book I have come across. To say that it is nearer to anthology than to exegesis, though true enough, suggests a collection of relatively brief "purple passages." Not so. The principal substance of the book, outside the Guide to Further Reading and the Bibliography, consists of 182 pages of extracts from the books and lectures, never shorter than a whole chapter or lecture and sometimes longer. These are presented in five separate sections headed respectively Knowledge, Nature and Spirit; Spiritual Anthropology; Historical Vision; Esoteric Christianity; and Society and Education. They are preceded by a brief General Introduction, and each section has its own Introduction of about the same length as the general one. These are of great value; they reveal in the editor both sound insight and an astonishingly wide acquaintance not only with Steiner's own voluminous writings in many disparate fields, but also with the by now numerous writings of his followers and exponents.

The task of selecting the quotations, and of marshalling all this multifarious material into a single book must, it seems to me, have been well nigh Herculean. Nevertheless the Introductions, taken together with the Guide to Further Reading, have, I feel, achieved it satisfactorily. The Guide to Further Reading accounts for 58 out of the book's 438 pages and is an important part of it. It has its own introduction, and here too the editor's skill in marshalling his material as well as his commentary ability is brought into play, since the Guide is divided into 12 sections, covering a Bibliography containing 14 pages of works by Steiner and no less than 12 of works by other authors.

Why should anyone accept that one man was capable of all those revelations? To this reaction the answer that comes from the hither side of the wall—or, let us say, from a lifetime's acquaintance with his work— is twofold, and both answers distinguish him from the general run of so-called "occultists," mystics, gurus, or whatever. In the first place he did not ask for his revelations to be believed, or swallowed; he only asked for them to be *used.* As the author summarizes, Steiner in effect says: let future spiritual scientists

> observe the validity of my spiritual perception, and let the scientist limited to empirical observation note the extent to which observable phenomena not only correspond to, but are illuminated by, the insights of Spiritual Science.

In the second place, if those revelations are in the end accepted, they are seen to entail a burden of responsibility on humanity. If therefore the stature of the man is almost too excessive to be born, that very fact is reassuring. It is easy to talk of macrocosm and microcosm, but for man the microcosm not only to believe but to *realize* himself as such, implies a greatness of spirit, a capacity of mind and heart, which we can only think of as superhuman rather than merely human. But Steiner's lifework reveals—even to those who reject his findings—mental capacities and qualities of heart and will which may reassure us, by exemplifying, that the stature of microcosm is not, or may at least not be in the future, out of reach of man as we know him. In him we can observe, actually beginning to occur, the transition from *homo sapiens* to *homo imaginans et amans.*

Owen Barfield, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, practiced law in London 1934–64, was Visiting Professor to Drew, Brandeis, and other American universities 1964–74, and is the author of Poetic Diction, Saving the Appearances, What Coleridge Taught, *and other books.*

BOOK REVIEWS

In Exile from the Land of Snows
By John F. Avedon. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984. Pp. *xii* + 382. $18.95.

Kindness, Clarity, and Insight
By His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. Translated and edited by Jeffrey Hopkins. Co-edited by Elizabeth Napper. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1984. Pp. 224. Paper. $10.95.

Reviewed by Donald S. Lopez, Jr.

What is this Rebel Headquarters of ours doing? It is to hold high the great red banner of Mao Zedong's thought, and to rebel applying Mao Zedong's thought. We will rebel against the handful of persons in authority in the Party taking the capitalist road. We will rebel against persons stubbornly persisting in the bourgeois reactionary line! We will rebel against all monsters and freaks! We will rebel against the burgeois Royalists! We, a group of lawless revolutionary rebels, will wield the iron sweepers and swing the mighty cudgels to sweep the old world into a mess and bash people into complete confusion.

This declaration from the Lhasa Revolutionary Rebel General Headquarters in December, 1966 marked the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in Tibet. Having lived under Chinese control since 1950, the Tibetans were about to suffer through the darkest hour of the long night of domination by the Chinese. Of the many promises made since "liberation," this was one that the Chinese kept, for the thousands of Red Guards who came to Tibet did indeed "swing the mighty cudgels to sweep the old world into a mess and bash people into complete confusion." The Cultural Revolution was not the beginning of the Chinese destruction of Tibet, nor was it the end. During the thirty-four years since the People's Liberation Army invaded Tibet, one seventh of the nation's population of seven million has died, all but a handful of the over six thousand Buddhist monasteries and temples has been razed, the priceless art and literature they contained either shipped to China, desecrated, or destroyed. Of all the tales of inhumanity to be told of this most inhuman of centuries, the Chinese rape of Tibet stands with the most horrifying. It is a story that has not been fully told until now.

In *In Exile from the Land of Snows,* John Avedon has gathered together the results of years of research to produce the first full account of the trials of the Tibetan people, both those in Tibet and those in exile in India, since the Chinese invasion of 1950. Avedon masterfully depicts their struggle through focusing on the experiences of five

Tibetans: a young refugee, a CIA-trained freedom fighter, a Tibetan doctor, the State Oracle of Tibet, and a physician held captive in Chinese prisons for twenty-one years. Through their eyes, Avedon is able to see and evoke for the reader the life in traditional Tibet, the sufferings under Chinese rule, and the struggle in exile. Avedon brings together information heretofore available only to a few and combines it with accounts never before made public to craft a moving narrative indispensable to everyone from the scholar of Tibetan Buddhism to those with only the vaguest interest in things Tibetan. The story of the Tibetan people since 1950 is one of the endurance of hardship—the hardship of Chinese rule for those in Tibet, and the physical and psychological hardship of entry into the twentieth century for the eighty thousand Tibetans who fled to India. A major part of Avedon's work is devoted to the remarkable story of the refugees who walked out of Tibet with what they could carry on their backs and who, today, twenty-five years later, are a relatively prosperous community working under the direction of the Dalai Lama to preserve Tibetan culture so that it can someday be replanted in their homeland.

The story of Tibet since 1950 is very much the story of the Dalai Lama. *In Exile from the Land of Snows* describes his discovery as the new Dalai Lama, his life in Lhasa before the invasion, his unsuccessful attempts, as a youth of sixteen, to negotiate with the Chinese (both in Peking and Lhasa), his clandestine flight to India, and his continuing efforts there to save what was good about Tibet while seeking to improve the lot of his people left under Chinese rule. Of the many heroes in Avedon's book, the Dalai Lama is the most heroic in his dedication to the welfare of his people and–by extension–all people, through his teaching of the Buddhist dharma.

Many of those teachings are contained in the Dalai Lama's most recent book, *Kindness, Clarity, and Insight.* He visited the United States in 1979 and 1981 and made a brief tour of Canada in 1980. The present book is a compilation of some of the lectures he gave during those visits. The translator of the lectures, Professor Jeffrey Hopkins of the University of Virginia, has worked with Elizabeth Napper to edit the lectures into a book that provides both an excellent introduction to Tibetan Buddhism and a clear picture of the Dalai Lama as a practitioner and scholar of Mahayana Buddhism. The editors have taken the lectures out of chronological order and skillfully arranged them by topic into a typically Tibetan progession, beginning with the more basic teachings and ending with the most advanced. Hence, the book begins with a discussion of the place of religious values in human society and goes on to discuss the four noble truths, the law of karma, and the six perfections. There is a lengthy commentary on Tsong-kha-pa's brief *Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* and a commentary on the famous mantra *om mani padme hum. Kindness, Clarity, and Insight* ends with an important discourse on the compatibility of the Ge-luk and Nying-ma views on the nature of the mind of clear light in the practice of Highest Yoga Tantra. There is one theme that runs throughout the lectures and that is the fundamental importance of compassion, not simply for the practice of Buddhism, but for human society.

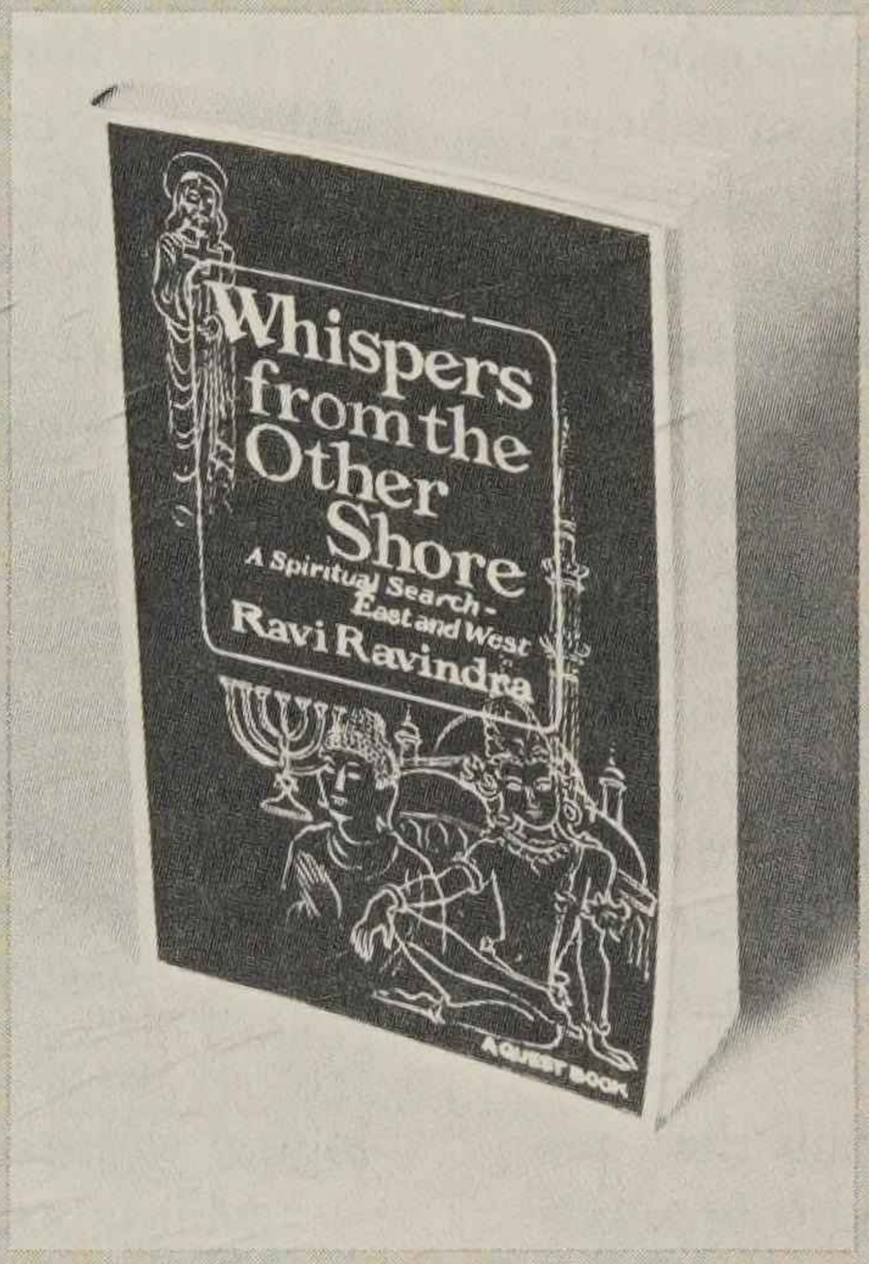
Thus, the question is: Should everyone be used for my attainment of happiness, or should I be used to gain happiness for others? If I am used for these infinite beings, it is right. If others are used for this single I, it is absolutely wrong. Even if you can use others, you will not be happy, whereas if this single one contributes, serves as much as he or she can, that is a source of great joy. It is in terms of this attitude that real compassion and love for others can be developed.

Donald S. Lopez, Jr., is Associate Professor of Religion and Director of the Program in East Asian Studies at Middlebury College in Vermont.

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The Witness of Poetry
By Czeslaw Milosz. Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1983. Pp. 121. $8.95. Paper $3.95.

Reviewed by Joseph Cary

For Czeslaw Milosz, poetry signifies "a passionate pursuit of the Real." The lesson many of us have learned from modern literature, science, and philosophy, however, is that such a platonism is hopelessly old-fashioned and that the witness offered by our best intelligences can only be ironical or, at least with reference to *the Real,* solipsistic. These curious, passionate meditations (originally the six Charles Elliot Norton lectures delivered by the 1980 Nobel laureate in 1981–2) present Milosz's argument that our planet is in process of "one of mankind's major transformations" and that a poetry of hope may be once again possible. This poet's own struggle toward hope, in fact, is the inner story his book has to tell.

To understand what he calls the "peculiar perspective" justifying his presence in the chair of poetry at Harvard, a few dates and details may be in order. Czeslaw Milosz was born to Polish-speaking parents in Lithuania, in 1911 a territory of imperial Russia; which means that before he was ten he had been issued three distinct, successive sets of identification papers—Russian, Lithuanian, and Polish. He was educated in Vilnius, annexed by Poland in 1920 from a Lithuania recently independent of a new Bolshevik Russia. After *Wanderjahr* in western Europe in the early 1930s he settled in Warsaw. From 1939, the beginning of the Nazi occupation, to 1944, when Soviets took over, he was actively writing and editing Resistance publications for the Polish underground. At war's end he joined the diplomatic service of the newly created People's Republic of Poland. He broke with the government in 1951, going into exile first in France and finally here, where he has lived and taught since 1960. Towards the end of the book at hand he writes: "People always live within a certain order and are unable to visualize a time when that order might cease to exist." It has been given to Milosz to live through what his countryman Joseph Conrad called the destructive element: meaning in this case the break-up of a defining socio-political *Gestalt* and, with it, a first-hand experience of "the fragility of those things we call civilization or culture. What surrounds us, here and now, is not guaranteed. It could just as well not exist . . . ."

In his *History of Polish Literature* (1969) Milosz epitomized the group of five University of Vilnius poets with whom he was associated in his early twenties as, "because of their dark visions in which the political was translated into the cosmic [,] instigators of a 'school of catastrophists.' " "Horror was simply in the air," he recalls a half a century later in *The Witness of Poetry,* but adds this crucial gloss: "The principle of hope is also operative whenever people foresee a cataclysm that will put an end to the established order so that a new, purified reality can appear . . . ." Catastrophe, as we shall see, may have an eschatological and redemptive role to play.

Milosz's critique of the generally accepted reality of the established order—i.e., Western society and its culture since, say, 1850 as witnessed by its poetry—occupies about half his book and deals synoptically with familiar ground. We live in a world ruled by "scientific Weltanschauung" where man, traditionally "a platonic dualism of soul and body," has lost his "central place" and become as other animals, subject to "necessity and chance," to the "blind force" of "the chain of causes and effects" as "harsh and pitiless . . . as two times two is four." (This last simile makes allusion to *Notes from Underground;* Milosz's remarks on a society deprived of a sense of the sacred and of anything but a utilitarian notion of value are a coherently voiced version of the castigations made so memorably by Dostoevsky's anti-hero.) Modernist poetry from the French *symbolistes* to, say, Eliot has likewise gone underground. Its poets have proclaimed their disbelief in the self-styled Age of Progress and its Weltanschauung and its "bourgeois" dupes and

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have cultivated a recondite élitist-bohemian art-for-its-own-sake, a so-called "pure" poetry constructed, like the *écriture* of yesterday's structuralists, as "an autonomous, self-sufficient unit no longer describing the world but existing *instead of* the world." Modernist poetry, then, is for the few, happy or unhappy as the case may be, and caviar to the general. What it indubitably does witness, says Milosz, is its own alienation from "the great human family" and, more often than not, the poet's own uneasiness in front of that alienation.

In the sentence above and in the very first sentence of this review I have cited two phrases ("the great human family," "a passionate pursuit of the Real") which crystallize important motifs in Milosz's developing positive vision. Both phrases are the property of *another* Milosz—the author's distant relation, the cabalistic French poet O.V. de L. Milosz (1877–1939)—who, along with Simone Weil, occupies a key position as example and influence in the pages of this book. Oscar Milosz's millenarian belief in a new Age of Spirit and his Swedenborgian reading of the signs of the times heralding it constitute the subject of the second chapter; Simone Weil's 1941 letter to the *Cahiers de Sud* on the responsibilities of the writer and her acute diagnosis of the erosion of the measure of value in modern literature is the subject of most of the third. (It is worth noting that at the very end of his Nobel lecture Milosz named these two as "writers in whose school I have obediently studied.") In *The Witness of Poetry* he draws upon them both to support his conception of a new poetry to come—elemental, hierarchical, and eschatological. Its symptoms derive from what he knows best: catastrophe-haunted Poland.

His thesis runs as follows. With catastrophe—whether natural (flood or fire) or man-made (war, a reign of terror)—a "great simplification" occurs: we are made to perceive reality in a direct, human, and elemental way. There is no debating, for instance, with hunger or isolation. And this seemingly new (but in fact oldest of all) reality reveals a "hierarchy of needs," a scale of value, built into its very fabric; thus "to satisfy hunger is more important than finding food that suits one's taste; the simplest act of human kindness toward a fellow being acquires more importance than any refinement of mind." But such an experience is in effect eschatological, by which Milosz, a Roman Catholic, means not only that branch of theology concerned with last or ultimate things ("Salvation and Damnation, Judgment, the Kingdom of God, the goal of History") but "everything that connects the time assigned to one human life with the time of all humanity," i.e., with "the great human family." Catastrophe also can transform the poet's and his audience's attitude towards language, which now may recover its original function: "to name reality." Such, at least, is the hope. To the question "What can poetry be in the twentieth century?" Milosz answers:

> It seems to me that there is a search for the line beyond which only a zone of silence exists, and on that borderline we encounter Polish poetry. In it a peculiar fusion of the individual and the historical took place, which means that events burdening a whole community are perceived by a poet as touching him in a most personal manner. Then poetry is no longer alienated.

In the 1930s Oscar Milosz prophesied a New Age poetry of hierophantic confidence, Biblical, Whitmanesque, "a spacious prose hammered into verses." But the specimens of recent Polish poetry adduced here in translation, pared and deliberately "poor" of diction and image, suggest far more modest claims. It is enough to narrate the bare sensation of freed movement ("First I went down to the store/ by means of the stairs,/ just imagine it,/ by means of the stairs"), or what seems, humanly considered, the miraculous integrity of a pebble ("equal to itself/ mindful of its limits"). Czeslaw Milosz is painfully aware of the lions in the poet's path. There is the temptation of what he calls classicism (opposing it not to romanticism but to realism) by which he means the pull of the literary past and its glamorous, venerable conventions. There are the poet's legitimate doubts as to the

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general human validity of his own perceptions and apperceptions, no matter how "verifiable" by the five senses. And finally there is the zone of silence that words can only allude to or imply: the habitation, it may be, of the Real. To all this Milosz can only counsel a scrupulously clear eye, "a most humble art of mimesis," and a belief that is also, I think, a prayer: "Reality, as it is remembered, is paramount and dictates the means of expression." The title of the last chapter is "On Hope," but what it truly expresses is this poet's "opposition to hopelessness."

Perhaps the final word belongs to Czeslaw Milosz's more Apollonian master, Simone Weil, who wrote in the midst of the catastrophe of France in 1941 that a writer's renewal could come only "in silence and moral loneliness . . . in the profoundest depths of each man's spirit." Surely it is there, in the being of the historical individual rather than on the fever chart of history, that the transformatory shock of catastrophe may make itself known. In any case, *The Witness of Poetry* will be of peculiar interest to Americans. Have we been spared? Must the signs of the times include napalm and jackboots in the land? Can catastrophe take other forms?

Joseph Cary is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Connecticut.

The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets
By Barbara G. Walker. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984. Pp. 1124. $29.95.

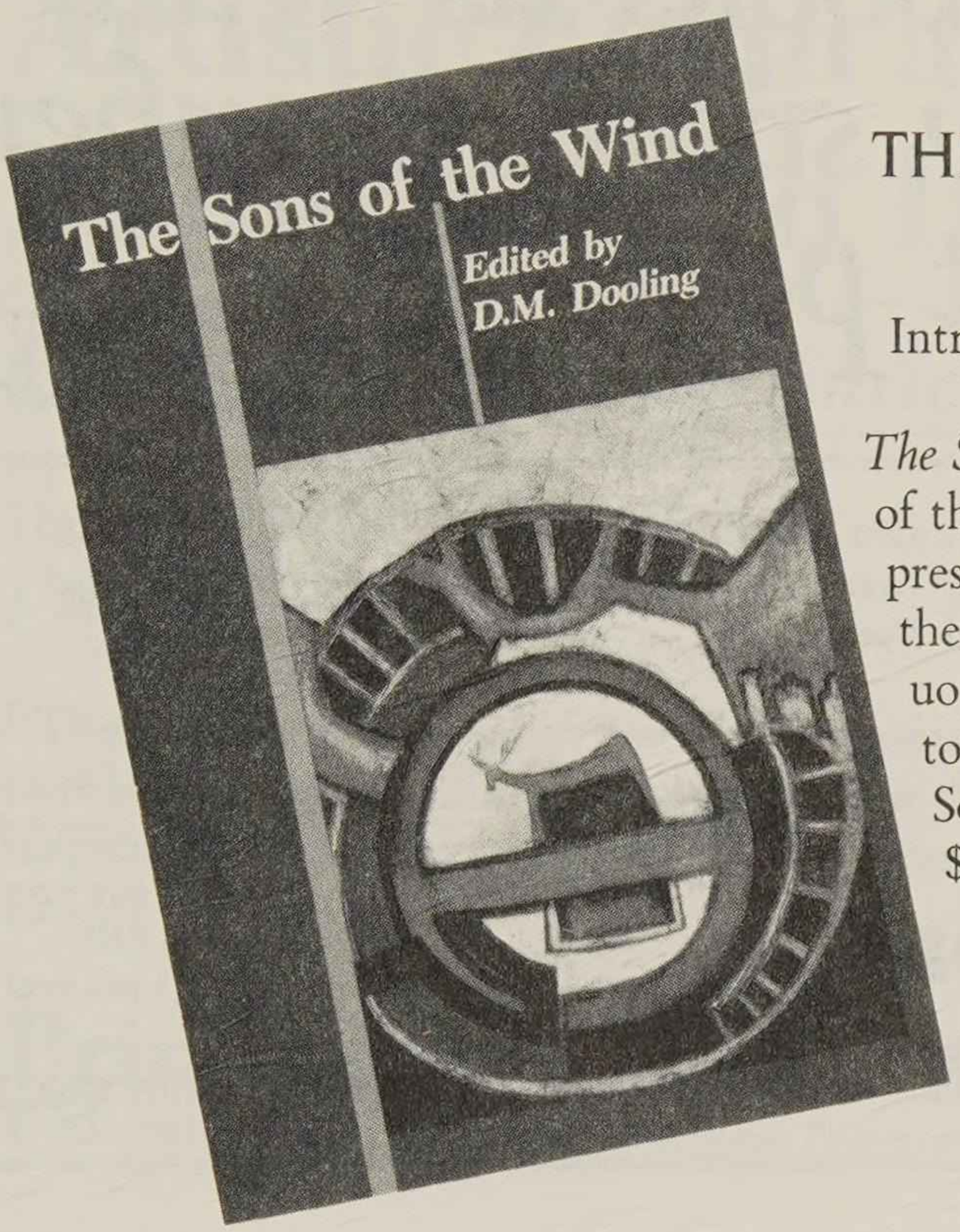
Reviewed by Jane I. Smith

While it might be argued that this volume is less an encyclopedia than a series of persuasive essays, it nonetheless is organized in such a way as to allow the reader to find information on a variety of topics quickly and conveniently. The author obviously has researched her many subjects with diligence and is able to supply data on a great range of entries. It might better be entitled "A Woman's . . ." than "The Woman's Encyclopedia," however, as it clearly represents one woman's interpretation of materials, many of which have long been the more-or-less exclusive province of historians of religion.

Yet to attempt to assess this work by the standards of a classical history of religions discipline is both unfair and inappropriate. The author makes no claim to have the linguistic and conceptual tools that have been the stock in trade of that discipline, but would rather profess that her very purpose in assembling this material is precisely to shed new light and offer new interpretations, specifically to underscore her basic thesis that men (here, presumably, especially scholars) have forgotten the importance of the early conceptions of the divinity as female. That she attempts to interpret the data from a feminist perspective is less problematic to this reader than her selectivity in terms of factual presentation. She seems to choose from among the many available facts and theories primarily those that favor her thesis. The result is that the reader—particularly one who is not familiar with other facts or interpretations—can sometimes be left with a less than complete picture.

There is much in this collection of entries that can be significant in encouraging students of myth and religion to stretch beyond conventional interpretations and to see that the heavy hand of patriarchy has perhaps not always controlled the ways in which humans perceive the divine. The originality of the author's interpretations is often refreshing. Feminists and others may enjoy the work precisely because it highlights materials and interpretations often ignored in classical (usually male) treatments of religious themes and topics. The problem is that the author repeatedly commits the same sin in reverse. By emphasizing only those data that "prove" a certain interpretation, and seemingly ignoring others, she runs the risk of precluding the

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possibility that the reader can come to his or her own judgments on the basis of a range of available materials.

A few examples will suffice to indicate some of the ways in which the process of selection of data results in entries so partial as to be potentially quite misleading. Unfortunately, in some cases this very incompleteness also results in the author's missing an opportunity to reinforce the power of the female aspect of the divine:

—She greatly oversimplifies a complex social and theological situation in Arabia at the time of the Prophet Muhammad by saying that Allah is a late Islamic masculinization of the Arabian Goddess al-Lat (Allah is not a name but simply means in Arabic "The God") and that Arabia was matriarchal for over a thousand years before the advent of Islam. Her analysis would have been greatly strengthened, and therefore her basic thesis enhanced, by examination of the extensive work done in this area by scholars such as Nabia Abbott.

—She calls Karuna the Tantric term for the basic quality of mother-love, with no mention of the fact that in the Buddhist understanding, Karuna is often identified as masculine in distinction to Prajna, the quality of wisdom, which is identified as feminine.

—She seems to overlook the liberating possibilities expressed by the love between Radha and Krishna—an analogy for the relationship between the human soul and the divine reality in Indian thought—by saying that Krishna's adventures with the milkmaids present a classic of religious pornography. Radha, leader of the milkmaids, she characterizes as insatiable, omitting any discussion of how this represents the insatiable longing of the human for the divine, which lifts one out of the confining strictures of daily responsibility. Rama is called a phallic avatar of Krishna, when in fact Krishna and Rama are both avatars (incarnations) of the god Vishnu and neither has the phallic identification of another member of the triune godhead, Shiva.

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will occasionally be misinformed and the scholar may likely dismiss the work. Both of these responses would be unfortunate, and had she been more judicious, the author could have taken steps to avoid them. In fact, the browser will certainly find much of this work highly informative and entertaining. Many of the articles are great fun, and an impressive amount of research has obviously gone into the presentations. It is also true that the traditional scholar might do well to take seriously the author's presentations insofar as they do offer some alternative—and even plausible—ways of reinterpreting materials.

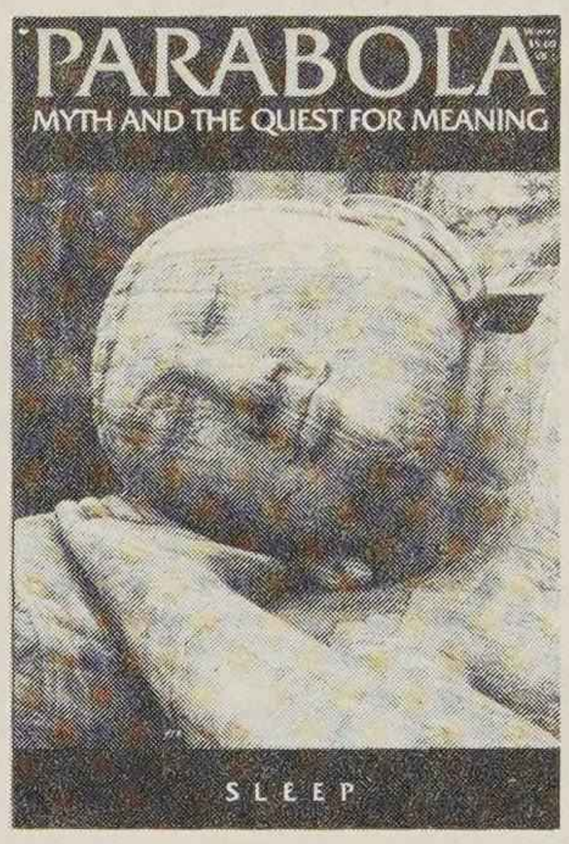
It is unlikely, however, that the scholar will not be seriously put off by the book's problems. In addition to the critical issue of selectivity of material, there is an imprecision that makes it difficult to follow the author's arguments. She puts everything in the past tense, so that one has no idea which customs, beliefs, and practices are still extant. Terms are used without clarification. The book is full of references to magical practices, for example, but nowhere—even in the "Magic" entry—is there any attempt to suggest the relationship between religion and magic or even to define how the author uses the word. In the section on prophecy, she cites the "ancients" but gives no clue as to what she means by that designation. It is also not at all clear on what she bases her principle of selection. Some entries are extremely lengthy and detailed, while others, about which much more could presumably be said to forward her own thesis, are so brief that one wonders why they are included at all. And it is questionable why an encyclopedia devoted to an explication of "myths and secrets" for the express purpose of demonstrating that early conceptions of the divinity were female need to be concerned with such topics as chastity belts, footbinding, and clergy wife-beating.

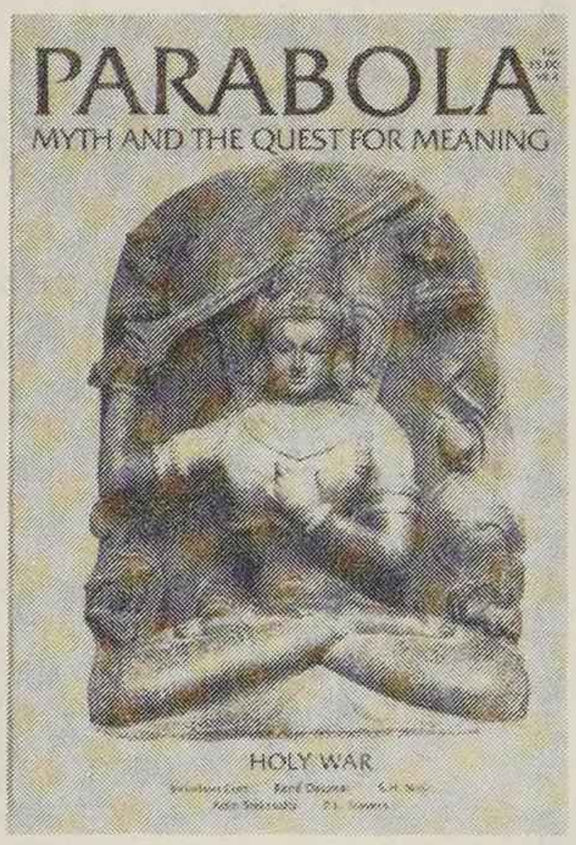
Finally, in the extensive bibliography it is disappointing to find such a paucity of original source materials. Since the author does not claim facility in the classical languages of religious texts, it might have been better to balance several translations in

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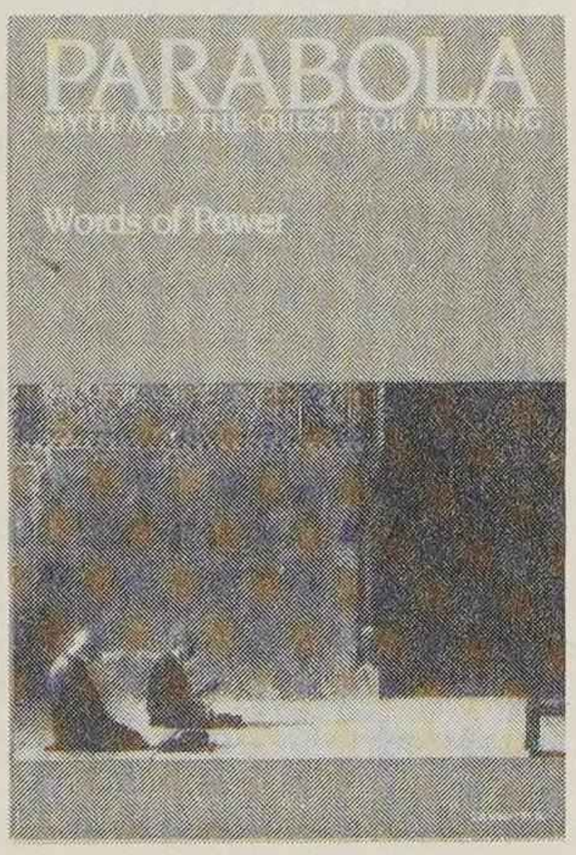
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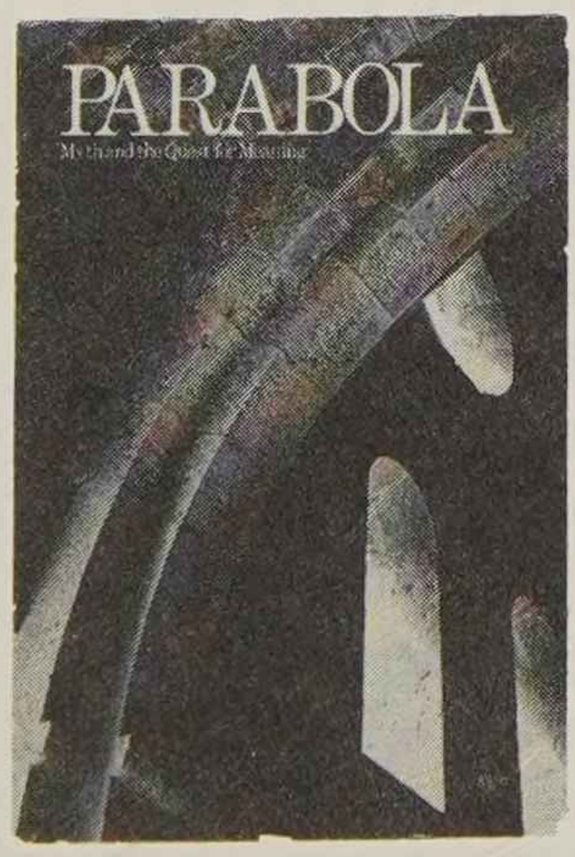
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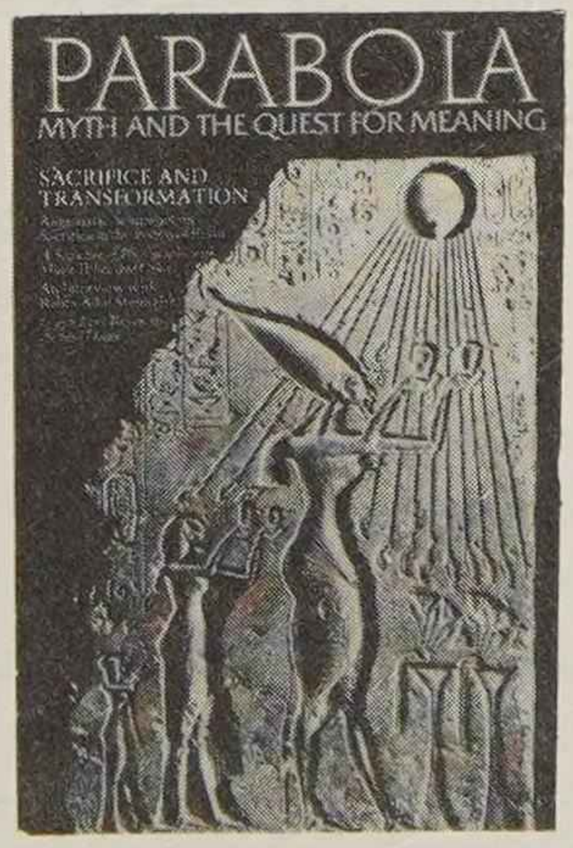
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☐VOL. VIII:3 **Words of Power** William Chittick, L. Charbonneau-Lassay, P.L. Travers, Richard Lewis, interview with Kathleen Raine.

☐VOL. VIII:4 **Sun and Moon** Martha Heyneman, Martin Lev, Carol Ring, Jonathan Omer-Man, Paul Jordan-Smith, interview with Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

☐VOL. IX:1 **Hierarchy** Henri Tracol, Janwillem van de Wetering, Roger Lipsey, Martin Lings, interview with Adin Steinsaltz.

☐VOL. IX:2 **Theft** Joseph Bruchac, Robert Venables, John Stratton Hawley, Robert Thurman, interview with David Maybury-Lewis.

☐VOL. IX:3 **Pilgrimage** Arthur Amiotte, Padma Perera, Gai Eaton, Richard R. Niebuhr, interview with Tara Tulku, Rinpoche.

order to check the validity of her interpretations. And it is puzzling in a volume espousing a feminist interpretation of religious data that she neglects many of the major feminist scholars. Of Mary Daly's works, she mentions only *Beyond God the Father,* and of Wendy O'Flaherty's, only *Hindu Myths.* No reference at all is given to such scholars as Elizabeth Fiorenza, Judith Plaskow, Rosemary Ruether, Judith Christ, Fatima Mernissi, and others.

Taken in its proper context as a collection of materials assembled to support a thesis, not as a dispassionate presentation of available data, this work is both interesting and entertaining. The reader is cautioned that many of the conclusions offered will no doubt be subject to serious challenge.

Jane I. Smith is Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Lecturer in History of Religions at Harvard Divinity School. She is the author of The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection *(with Yvonne Haddad) and editor of* Women in Contemporary Muslim Societies.

The Traveler's Key to Northern India: A Guide to the Sacred Places of Northern India
By Alistair Shearer. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983. Pp. 547. $18.95.

Reviewed by Lee B. Ewing

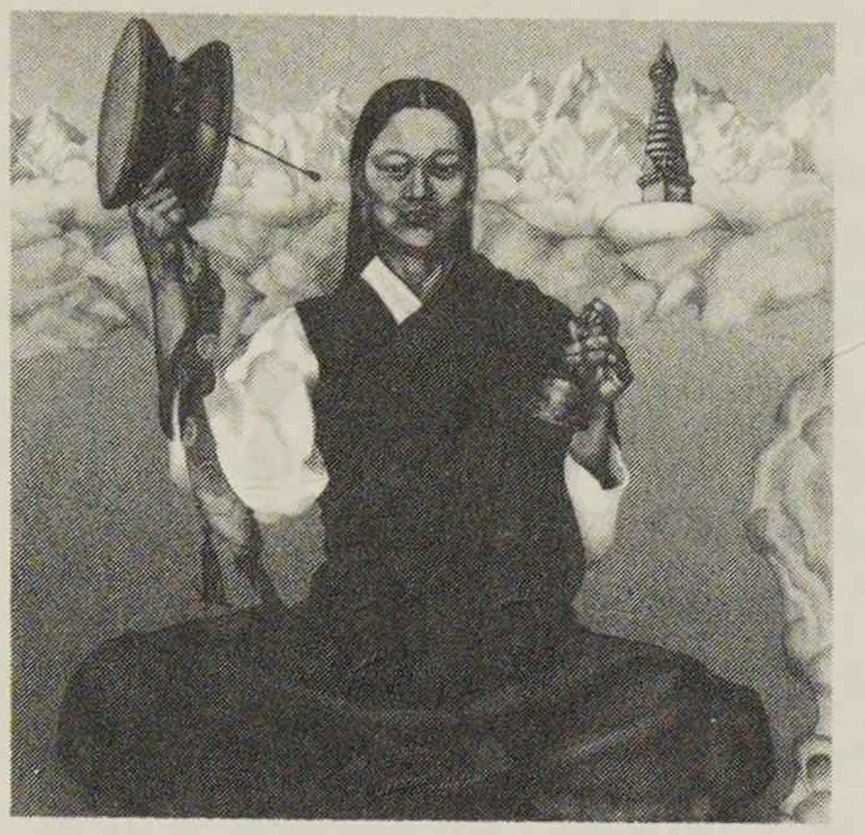
A truly meaningful encounter with a sacred place requires a parallel journey through a culture's traditional literature and mythology. It is a rare guidebook that can make this journey into complex traditional material and do so with an engaging and lively narrative of first hand experience. Alistair Shearer's *The Traveler's Key to Northern India* is such a book.

The reader is first led through a short but remarkably comprehensive presentation of India's major traditions. Major themes—e.g., ritual, worship, the temple, the multiplicity of divinities—are explored in an effort to see beyond religion as simply a static group of exotic beliefs and rather as a way of life that continues to provide meaning and order to a large portion of the population of India. It is this power of tradition that is the key to understanding India's sacred places.

We get a taste of the possibilities with the section on the temple-cave of Elephanta. Shearer leads us through the temple's myriad images carved out of solid rock, weaving together as he goes the major strands of the epic myth of Shiva, the god who presides over the universal forces of change and re-creation. Finally, we encounter the powerful image known as Sadāshiva—Shiva the Eternal One—a massive triune image showing the creative and destructive principles flanking Shiva's "totally impassive, serene, and undisturbed" True Nature—the unmoving Mover. The sequence of Shearer's narrative bringing us to this moment seems to catch something of the creators' original intent as the great mystery of a dynamic universe unfolds before us.

In addition to ancient sites associated with the great Vedic civilizations and the awakening of Buddhism, Shearer explores the relatively more recent monuments—Delhi's Qutb Minar, Red Fort, and the Friday Mosque—products of a clash of cultures that has resulted in much diversity and social conflict. Some of the historical anecdotes are riveting. For example, there is the nineteenth-century story of a British major who nearly succeeded in slicing into small blocks that magnificent monument of one man's devotion—the Tāj Mahal. The blocks were to be sold as "quaint imperial souvenirs" for the gardens of the Victorian English. The scheme failed only when a similar plan aimed at the Red Fort was partially carried out and proved to be not financially viable.

Altogether Shearer visits twenty carefully chosen sacred sites, allowing the significance of each to emerge from an exploration of its art, architecture, and history. A selection of photographs handsomely illustrate the many details and nuances that enrich the narrative. Since the author has focused on a limited number of sites, the reader is spared the shallow and



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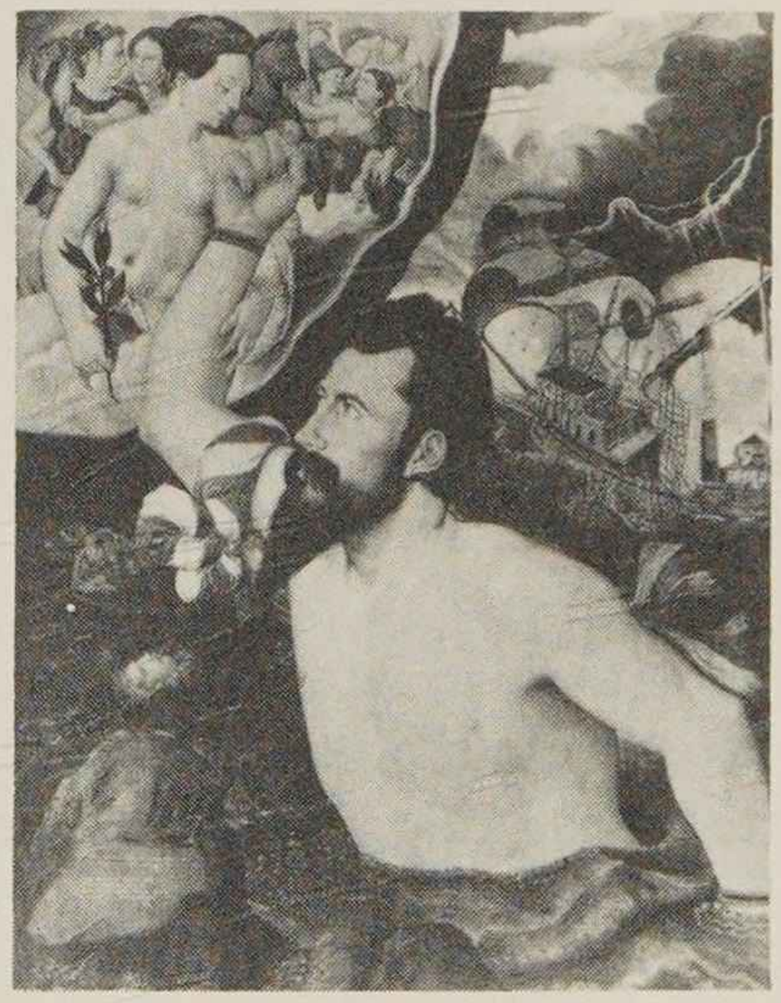
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one-dimensional treatments associated with more comprehensive guidebooks. Indeed, one is touched not only by the deep mystery of these sacred places but by the devotion and sensitivity that the author brings to his task. Having shared this pilgrimage, one feels impelled to venture forth in the same spirit of our author/guide to meet with openness the immediacy of experience that awaits us . . . searching for those doors that are meant to open to us alone. And one also waits with anticipation for the additional titles still to come in this series of guidebooks to sacred places.

Lee B. Ewing is a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA.

The Notebooks of Paul Brunton: Perspectives
Burdett, New York: Larson Publications, 1984. Pp. 350. $25.00.

Reviewed by Tracy Cochran

Paul Brunton has a reputation as one of the first dependable Western interpreters of yoga, meditation, and Eastern philosophy, and is perhaps best known for *A Search in Secret India* and *Quest of the Overself*. In 1953 he withdrew completely from his travels in the Orient and his public life in Europe and undertook an intensive search for spiritual attainment that lasted until his death in 1981. During this silent period he wrote daily in journals which came to fill 7,000 single-spaced pages and which were intended for posthumous publication. *Perspectives* is a selection from these *Notebooks*.

In the material included in *Perspectives* Brunton proclaims "a 'prophetic' message to our times, a religious revelatory work." The *Notebooks* are designed to be nothing less than a new universal teaching for the "world minds" prepared among us from the wide knowledge which has come to mankind through thousands of years of evolution. Brunton believes that he has created a true East-West synthesis in which he is able to abandon ancient systems and to integrate Western knowledge and sacred truth. Despite reservations about the ultimate nature of Brunton's accomplishments, we can accept his *Notebooks* as the moving record of a man's search and as a magnificent struggle for the language and formulations that could galvanize the modern reader.

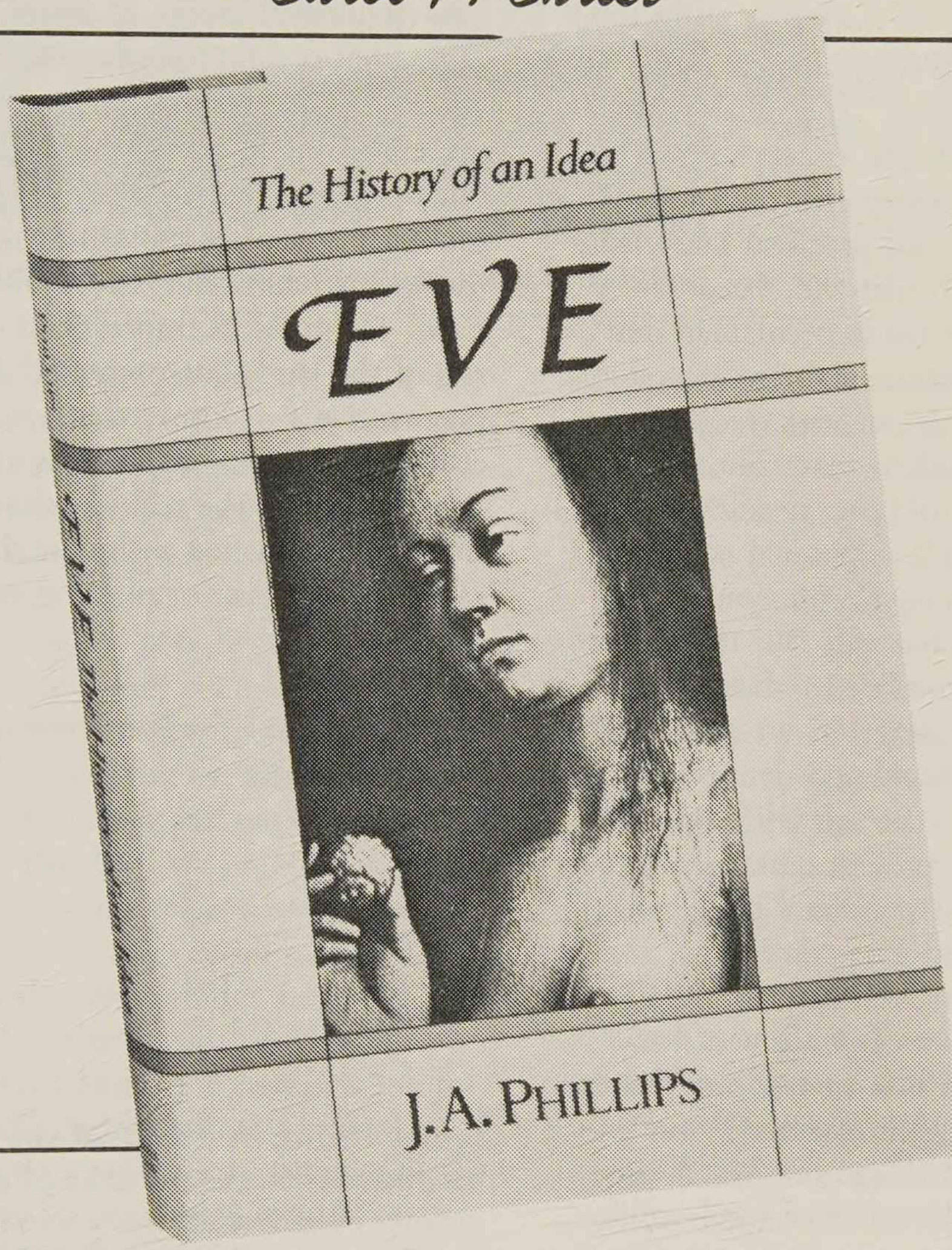
Brunton admits that a teacher is needed for those who seek real results, but stresses the need for "intelligent faith." He calls this approach "philosophy" in homage to its ancient dignity as "love of wisdom," and warns dreamers that the Quest demands real work in the real world. It begins with the double work of yoga and metaphysics, soon requires practical experience, and demands an inner balance as complete as a man can attain.

"The Long Path" must meet "the Short Path" in Brunton's philosophy for Western man: the fragile gifts cultivated in a long work on oneself must be helped by the metaphysical reflections of a practiced, quiet mind. For him, knowledge of Way is accumulated in the arduous work of seeing and disciplining the intellect, body, and emotions. But, that slow work accepted, the heart of his philosophy is feeling. The glimpses of a luminous and empty awareness behind our chattering thoughts are for Brunton intuitions of an "Overself." The seeker must cultivate these moments of intuition until—through faith and philosophy—they fuse to become an unshakable feeling of the connection between the Overself and the Absolute.

Brunton denies the generative force of the sacred ideas of ancient systems, and contrives a term for the kind of thought which can connect a man with something higher. He calls this generative idea "mentalism": "Here is a whole philosophy congealed into a single phrase: The world is an idea." To Brunton this is the thought that helps modern scientific man link his personal experience with the Absolute. It is a reflection which suggests the connection between his glimpses of the Overself and the creative action of Universal Mind: like the empty and luminous attention which

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"Phillips's study of the myth of Eve in Western religious history demonstrates a pervasive need in Judaism, Catholic and Protestant Christianity, Islam, and even Gnosticism to scapegoat women for the origin of evil and to use this myth to rationalize male fear and negation of women."
—Rosemary Radford Ruether

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"Brilliant." *—Publishers Weekly*

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includes and transcends the ordinary thoughts, the Absolute is a Consciousness which includes all manifest things. The manifest world is related to the Absolute like "dreamer and dream, the Real and the unreal."

It is interesting to note that although Brunton discards all cosmological ideas, he ascribes to "mentalism" the subtle creative force of Truth itself. He asserts that in the moment when the three efforts of mysticism, metaphysics, and practical knowledge "attain such a pitch that they become fused," intuition is made permanent and man is shown his place in the solar system.

For Brunton, the ancient traditions are unnecessary for modern man. He abandons them as a "pabulum" that needlessly conceals the truth. All is subsumed and replaced for Brunton by his glorious experience of the Overself. But the reader longs for a simpler, more graduated language to point the way. As we are, our intuitions can be stupid and dangerous as well as partial. It is the inner life that is remote. Given our present condition, we long for hints of a "perennial philosophy" which could indicate our relation to something higher. We need a map.

Brunton seems to lose sight of how exquisitely difficult it is to attain glimpses of reality given our "imbalance," our "emptiness of soul," and the "fatal extroversion" that the crush of modern life demands. While it is true that scientific information is expanding at geometric rates, Brunton's belief in its power to create "world minds" is tragically misguided. Just as he loses sight of our true condition, he seems to lose sight of his own advice that a spiritual guide is needed. His statement that "It is next to impossible to ascertain the Truth without a Teacher" is lost in his claim that he has a revelatory message to bestow. In giving in to the temptation to think of himself as a prophet, Brunton loses sight of what it means to guide a seeker to the Way. If it is true that blindly following a teacher or doctrine results in nothing, it is equally true that turning away leads more often to confusion than to inner freedom. Brunton does not offer us a system by which to measure ourselves, nor a cosmology by which to know our place in the universe.

Some of Brunton's words touch us, but they are notes of a journey undertaken by Brunton alone. He has given us a compass in his indications of a presence called Overself. And he has given us a detailed diary of a Quest. But while he begins like a prudent captain, giving observations about direction, about the shoals and reefs along the way, at a place we cannot know he is transported and sends back private intuitions. He gives us impressions of the glories of the land, but presented in such a way that lets us know that we are lost. His claim that he is a prophet resounds through *Perspectives* like the reckless shout of a man who has discovered a new land: but we cannot see its size or place in relation to our own.

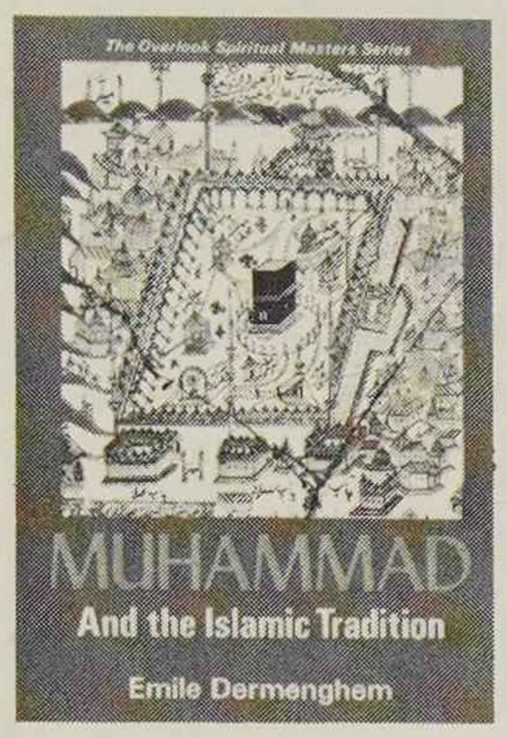
Tracy Cochran is a free-lance writer and editor living in New York City.

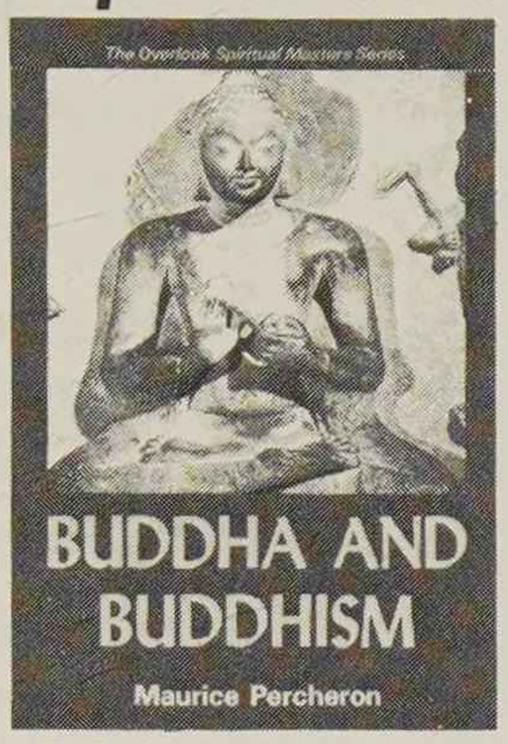
Spirit Child: A Story of the Nativity
Translated from the Aztec by John Bierhorst: pictures by Barbara Cooney. New York: William Morrow, 1984. Pp. 32. $12.00.

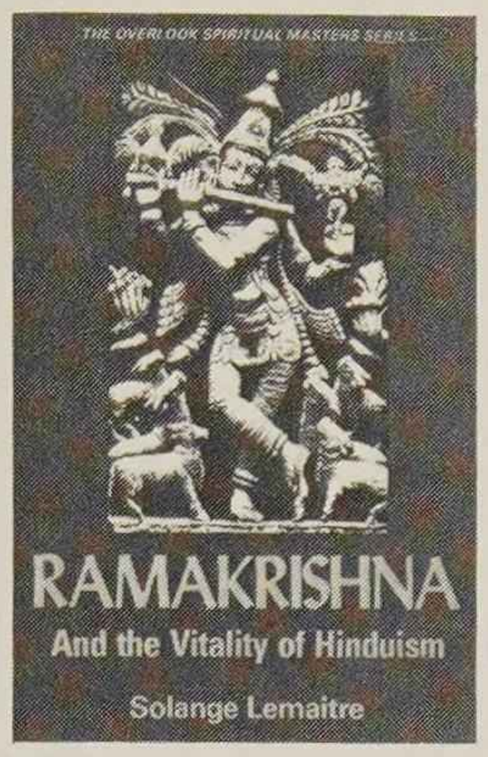
Reviewed by John Cech

This is the first English translation—indeed, the only translation into any modern language—of the Aztec version of the Christian nativity. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, a missionary and a chronicler of Aztec history and culture, included this revisioning of the Christ story in his *Psalmodia Christiana* (1583), one of the first books published by Europeans in the New World. It was a miracle play, meant to be chanted aloud to the rhythms of the *teponatztli* and *huehuetli:* the recitation of a new myth of a new son to take the place of the old Aztec suns that had set on the con-

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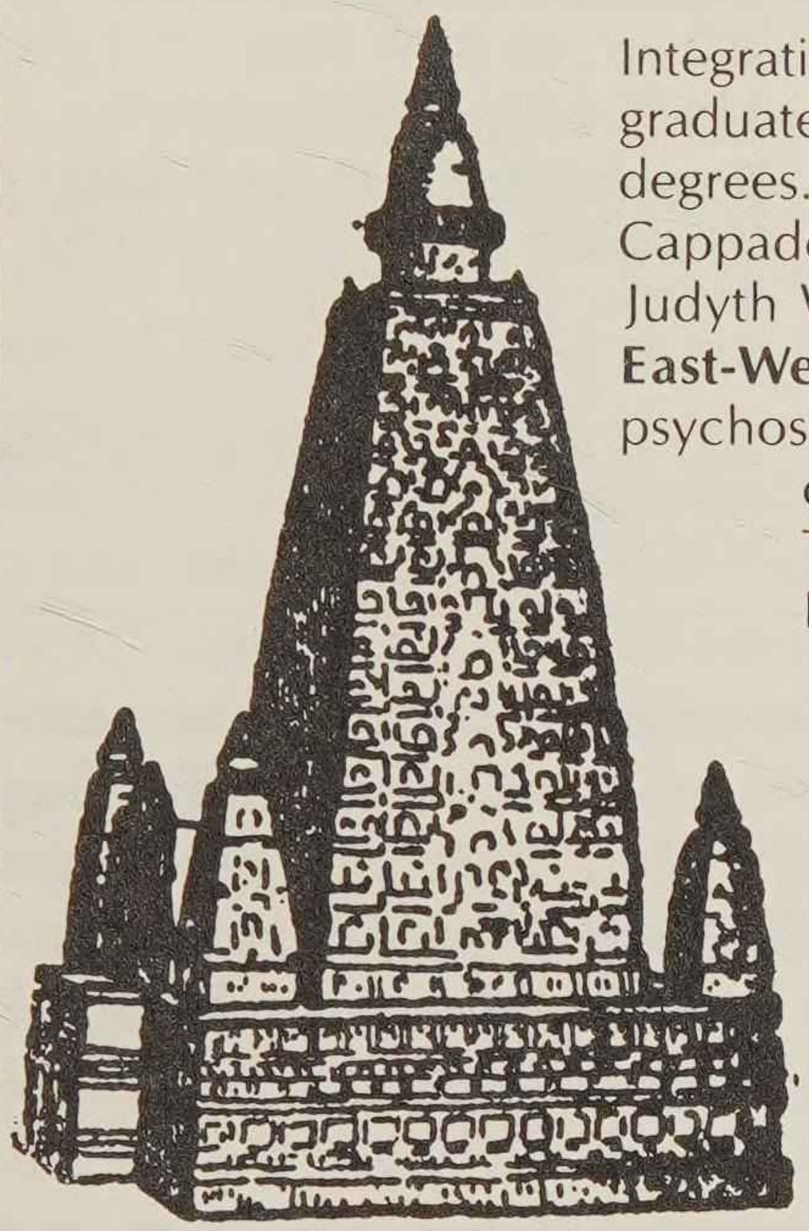
quered shards of Tenochtitlán over half a century earlier.

Sahagún essentially follows the traditional story from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, but his adaptation becomes much more than a literal retelling. He expands on his original text by adding motifs from medieval folklore, such as the devil's appearance in the opening of the story, which sets the stage for the advent of Christ: "For five thousand years after the world began, the devil was king. He was proud and mean, and there was no one anywhere on earth who could save us from his hands." Sahagún includes an underworld as well, "the Dead Land," compressing the nine hells of Aztec mythology into one dreadful place where one finds "nothing but hunger and arguments all the time, and sickness, and hard work." Against this backdrop of misery, the angel Gabriel makes his entrance, and with his appearance one hears the lyricism of the Nahuatl poets who helped Sahagún compose his verses and who sang them to their countrymen. Gabriel's wings, they chant, "came gleaming, came glistening. They were longer and more brilliantly green than quetzal plumes." And after Christ's birth the host of angels "came down from the sky like birds. Their voices were bells. They sounded like flutes." Their hymns of praise soar with the tropes of the poets to become "sweet-smelling song-flowers . . . Heart flowers, plumelike bell flowers, red cup flowers. They're beaming with dawn light, they're shining like gold." The book ends with still another natural image, one reverberant with ancient meaning for the Aztec ear and deeply refreshing for our own: "Now a heavenly peace has come over the earth. Now everywhere in the world a beautiful rain, a wonderful rain is falling. A miraculous rain has come over the earth."

Bierhorst's mellifluous translation is in perfect harmony with Barbara Cooney's pictures, which take their shapes, textures, and colors from the vital lore, landscape, and people of the Mexican countryside. The devil, a ghoulish skeleton, grins atop his terra cotta throne while poor humanity sags before him in the flames beneath the weight of his oppression. Yet these are real mothers and fathers and children who are being terrorized—not stylized abstractions—and this makes the startling *Totentanz* that begins the book all the more arresting and truly frightening. However, the mood quickly changes when Gabriel appears and speaks to Mary, who is spinning cotton, while a small butterfly hovers just above her serene brown head, the outward sign of the mystery that is taking place within her. Here, too, Cooney can not resist the telling details of life: while the angel is talking, the family dog is sniffing at the stranger's feet, albeit from a respectful distance. Later we meet Herod, fat and glowering on his throne, like some malevolent bas relief, as he instructs the wise men to bring him the news of Jesus' birth. But in the cobalt darkness of the manger on the next page, illuminated by the reds of the poinsettias and the white dresses of the women and the cloth on

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which baby Jesus is lying, they forget about Herod's instructions as the smoke from their incense wafts across the still night air. And, in the final picture of the book, as the rain begins to fall, Joseph holds out his upturned palm to the raindrops as he stands under his family's arbor in the forest, which is awash with the cool green promise of springtime. Again and again, one is struck by Cooney's simple, elegant, graceful power as an illustrator.

Together, Cooney and Bierhorst have created a remarkable book, remythologizing in their own vocabularies what Sahagún had himself transformed and offered in his. The sincerity of his gesture, and the spirit in which it is given, allows one, for a time at least, to set aside the historical ironies implicit in making such an offering to a people that had been so unspeakably brutalized in the name of this same "spirit child." For in the end it is the myth of the divine child, in his many forms and transformations, that offers us a vision of the future.

John Cech is the editor of American Writers for Children, 1900–1960. *He teaches in the English Department at the University of Florida in Gainesville.*

On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami
Translated by J. Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. Pp. *xlv* + 298. $35.00. Paper $14.95.

Reviewed by Karen Brazell

Few Western students of theater are aware of the sophisticated theories of performance written in the first three decades of the fifteenth century by Zeami, the Japanese playwright and actor who completed the transformation of the Nō theater from a popular, religious entertainment to a secular art of lasting beauty and influence. This is not surprising, for Zeami's treatises, made public in Japan only in the early years

of this century, have heretofore been translated piecemeal into English in various scholarly books and journals. Now J. Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu have made nine of Zeami's major treatises available in a book designed for the general reader.

In these treatises Zeami explores the training of the actor, the phenomenology of acting, interactions between audience and actor, and the composition of plays. He also comments on the history and traditions of Japanese theatre, and on the skills and the lack of skills of his contemporaries in the theater. Nō actors, today as in the fourteenth century, are trained from childhood, and Zeami's first treatise, *Teaching on Style and the Flower* (c.1400), which he says reflects the teachings of his father, Kan'ami, describes the course of an actor's life, discussing the training and stage effects appropriate to each age from seven to over fifty.

In later treatises Zeami explores the psychology of the actor. In *Mirror Held to the Flower* (1424), he discusses the necessity for aesthetic detachment ("an actor must look at himself using his internalized outer image, come to share the same view as the audience, examine his appearance with his spiritual eyes and so maintain a graceful appearance with his entire body") and for intense concentration ("the inner force that can be termed 'connecting all the arts through one intensity of mind.' ") In *Notes on the Nine Levels* (c.1424), Zeami identifies nine levels of acting that can be useful to the master teacher in training his disciples (only men traditionally perform Nō) or in describing the abilities of actors. These levels range from the "art of the flower of peerless charm. . . . a realm beyond logical explanation" to "the way of crudeness and leadenness."

The relationship between actor and audience is explored at length. The actor's sensitivity to the context of the performance is crucial—the audience's mood and expectation must be recognized and exploited. The performer must always take into consideration the time of day, the season of the year, and the nature of the audience. Different techniques should be used for an urbane, aristocratic audience well-versed in the traditional arts, and for an illiterate country audience. The former group, Zeami's most important patrons, are those Zeami sets out to please. Yet Zeami is aware that the interaction between audience and actor is a two-way street and that there are numerous types of spectators: "spectators of discernment who do not really understand the art of the Nō, spectators who possess a true grasp of the essential nature of the Nō but who cannot observe subtle differences [and] those who have both a practical and a theoretical understanding. . . ." It is this last group whose evaluations are meaningful and on whose reactions the actor depends to improve his art.

The creation of character is a problem Zeami attacks somewhat differently from Western theorists. He gradually develops three types or styles of performance which

The Main Stalk

A Synthesis of Navajo Philosophy

John R. Farella

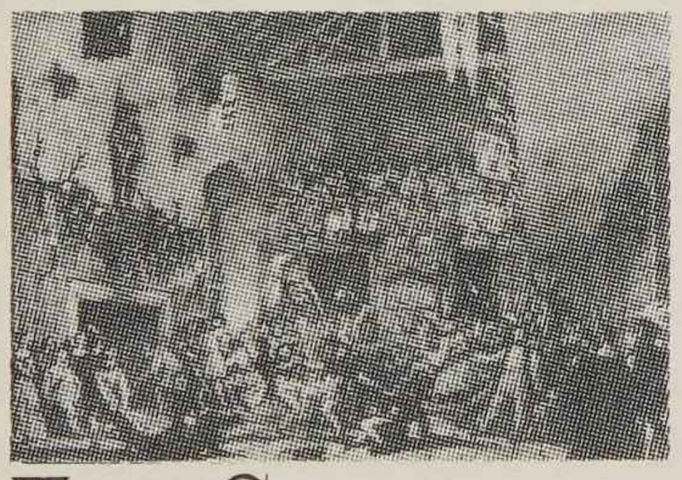
When cast in a nonprejudicial light, the Navajo perception of reality is shown to be paradoxical, nondualistic, and keenly aware of wholeness and process in life and nature. After *The Main Stalk*, our perception of the Navajo can never be the same.
240 pp. $19.95 October 1984.

University of Arizona Press
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he considers basic to all characterization: the aged, the feminine, and the martial. The actor must master these three styles and then vary and combine them in any number of ways to create a specific character. This emphasis on stylization in acting is one of the characteristics of Nō performance which Yamasaki points out in his interesting introductory essay to the book.

Zeami was not only an actor, but also a playwright whose plays are still considered the best in the repertory. As his comments reveal, composing Nō is more than writing a text. First the seed, the source material, is chosen ("original" stories were the exception, not the rule); then the material is structured to fit an appropriate musical and kinetic structure; finally the poetry is written. It is best, Zeami says, that the composition (the words, music, and choreography) be done by the actor playing the main role. There wasn't, and still isn't, any room for a director in Nō.

The physical book is handsome and includes nine excellent color plates. Although the production staff is to be congratulated, the editors are not. To mention only a few egregious errors: the headings for figures 18 and 19 are reversed (jealous females have horns, demons merely grimace); the Chinese characters are missing from the parentheses on p. 137; numerous words, especially Japanese words, are misspelled. In addition to mistakes a copy editor should have caught, there are other problems with the translations. Zeami's tone, that of an established master teacher speaking directly to his best disciples, has been replaced by an impersonal, scholarly style. Medieval Japanese had few abstract terms for analyzing performance, so Zeami, in good Zen fashion, makes extensive use of metaphor. He talks of the flower of an actor (which is something akin to stage presence), the seed of a play, and the skin, flesh, and bone of performance. Although these particular



THE CHRISTMAS REVELS RECORD

In Celebration of the Winter Solstice

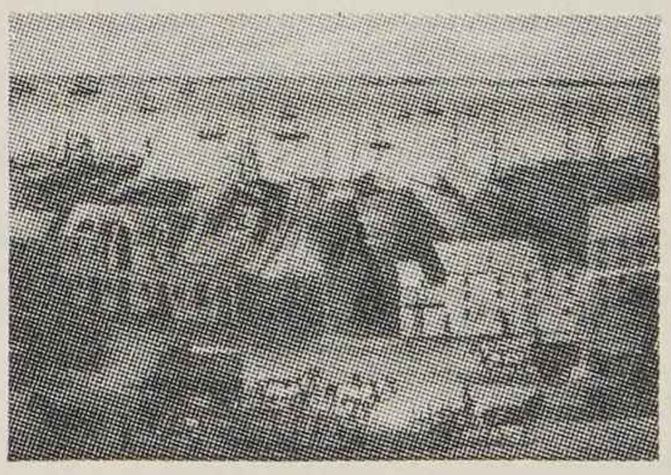
The Christmas Revels celebrates the ushering out of the shortest day of the old year and the welcoming of the rebirth of the sun — a wild and holy day known to early civilization as the Winter Solstice, which many of us celebrate as Christmas. Recorded here are traditional and ritual carols, dances, processionals and poetry, including Mediæval and Renaissance music with the Cambridge Symphonic Brass Ens, the early instruments of Alexander's Feast, the Revels children and chorus, John Langstaff and Robert J. Lurtsema. Included are *The Lord of the Dance,* the *Abbots Bromley Horn Dance &al.*



Wassail!

An American Celebration of the Winter Solstice

Recorded here is a Christmas Revels drawn from the traditions in the United States including music of Colonial America, Southern Appalachian and Black American traditions, shape-note hymnals, Shaker songs, children's street games, 19th century Boston brass music, string band dance music of the South, and Native American carols and poetry. Jean Ritchie, the traditional singer from Kentucky, is featured with the Cambridge Symphonic Brass Ensemble, the Revels chorus, the Revels children, musicians playing traditional American instruments and Robert J. Lurtsema reading.



Blow, Ye Winds, in the Morning

A Revels Celebration of the Sea

Chanteys, sea songs, ballads, dockside street cries, children's games, instrumental music, dance and ritual with the singing of David Jones, Douglas Kennedy, John Langstaff and full chorus with poetry of the sea read by Robert J. Lurtsema.

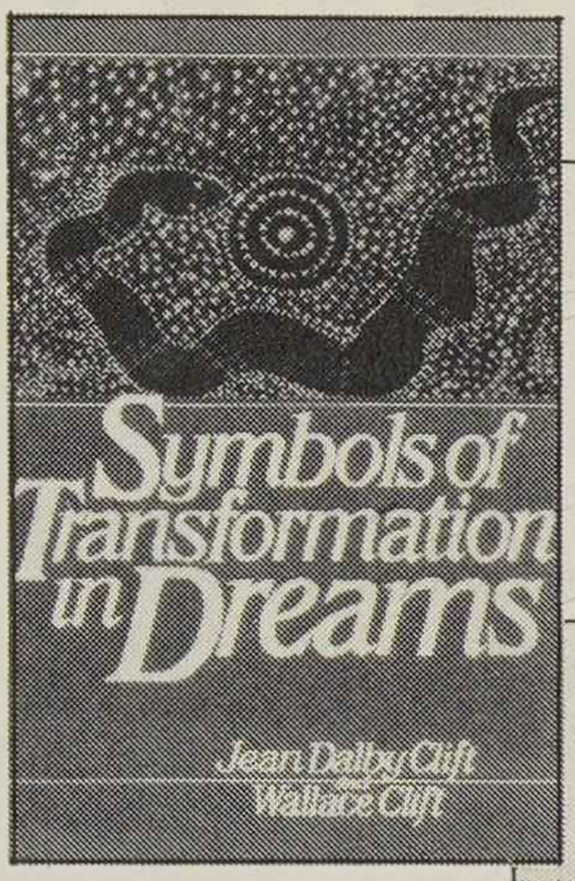
REVELS RECORDS

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Program notes by Susan Cooper

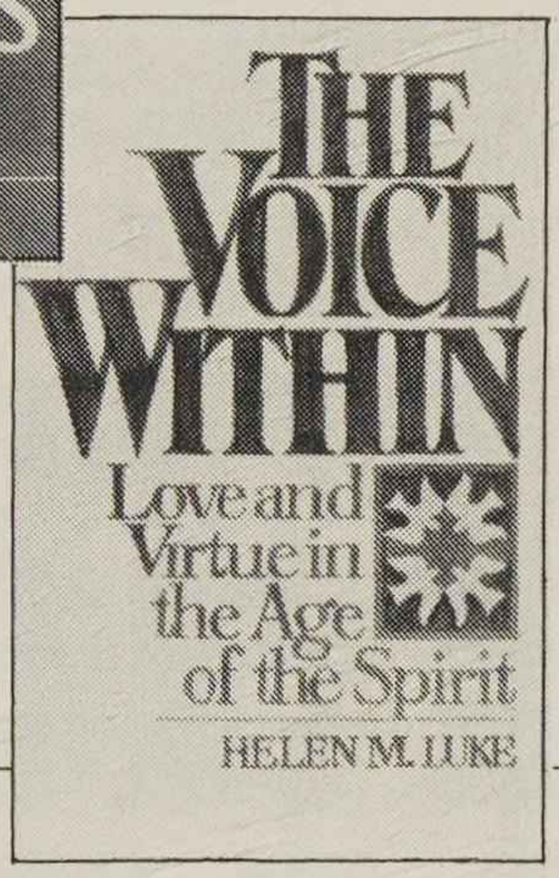
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metaphors are retained in the translations, the tendency of the translators is to transform pithy, metaphoric comments into verbose, abstract explanations. It is not easy to do otherwise, but some translators of Zeami—Donald Keene, Makoto Ueda, and Thomas Hare, for example—have done better in this respect.

Some passages in the translations are so abstract and abtruse that one wonders if the translators clearly understood the original. An example is the discussion of the Five Skills of dancing. There are, of course, numerous passages in Zeami which no one claims to understand clearly. However, the notes in this book give no hint of this; all sections of the translations appear to have the same degree of authority. For a sense of some of the complexities of the language and ideas of the treatises, see the elaborately annotated translations by Mark Nearman in *Monumenta Nipponica* between 1978 and 1983. In the book under review, the translators' annotations usually appear in brackets in the text, and they are sometimes misleading.

In short, the translations have some problems. However, the book does make the writings of Zeami much more readily available to the English reading world—three of the treatises (including the longest one, *Reflections on Art*) have not been translated elsewhere. The bibliography lists English and French translations for the other treatises, (the only important omission is of Mark Nearman's translation of *Kakyō* done in *Monumenta Nipponica* in 1982–83, after this book was in press) and the reader is advised to check these to clarify the meanings of difficult passages. Used with some care, this book is helpful, and it is important to all those whose aim is to better understand the nature of theater. As Wallace Chappell rightly claims in his foreword: "Zeami was a genius at his art, as actor, dancer, playwright, and producer and has much to teach us six hundred years later."

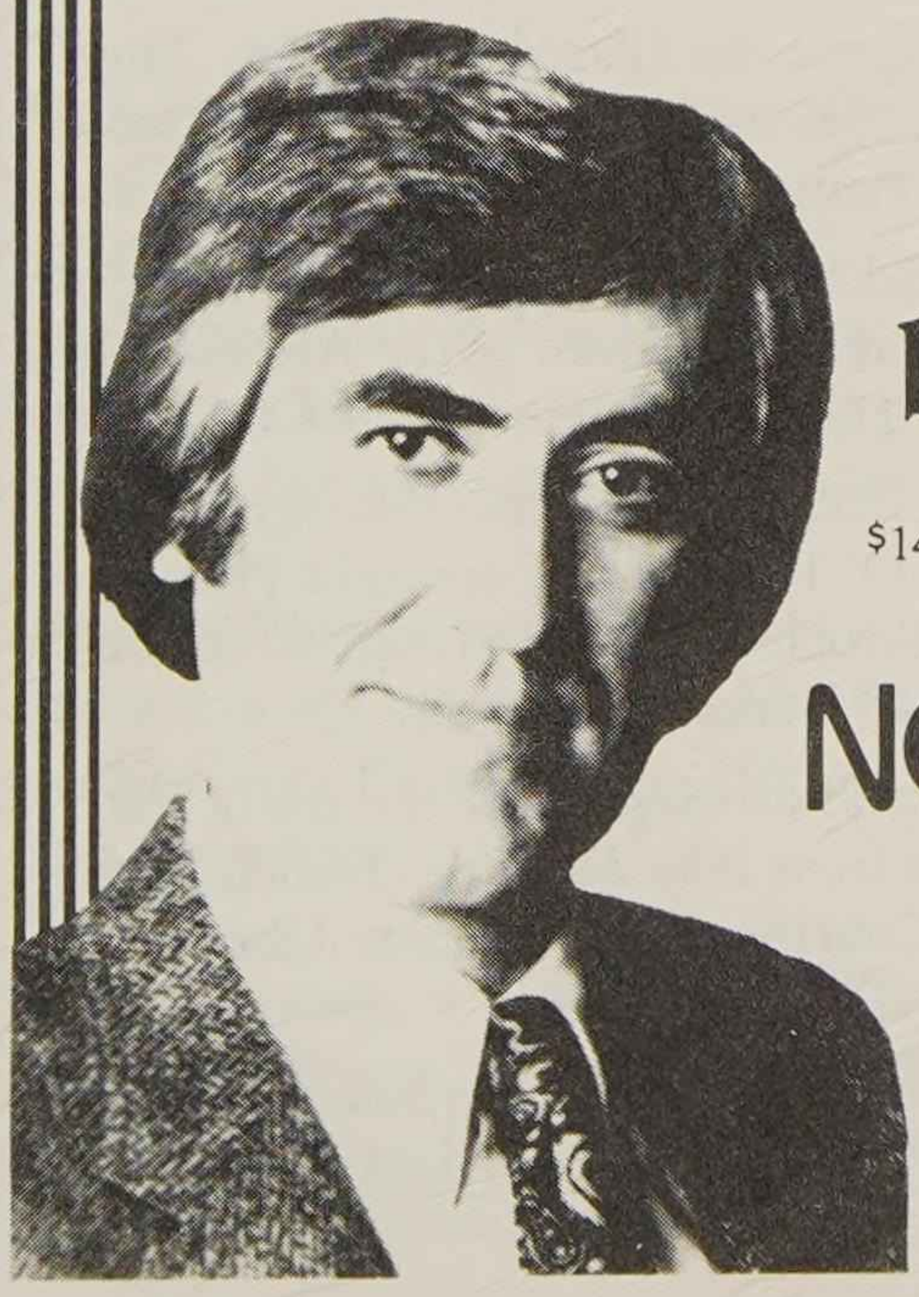
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