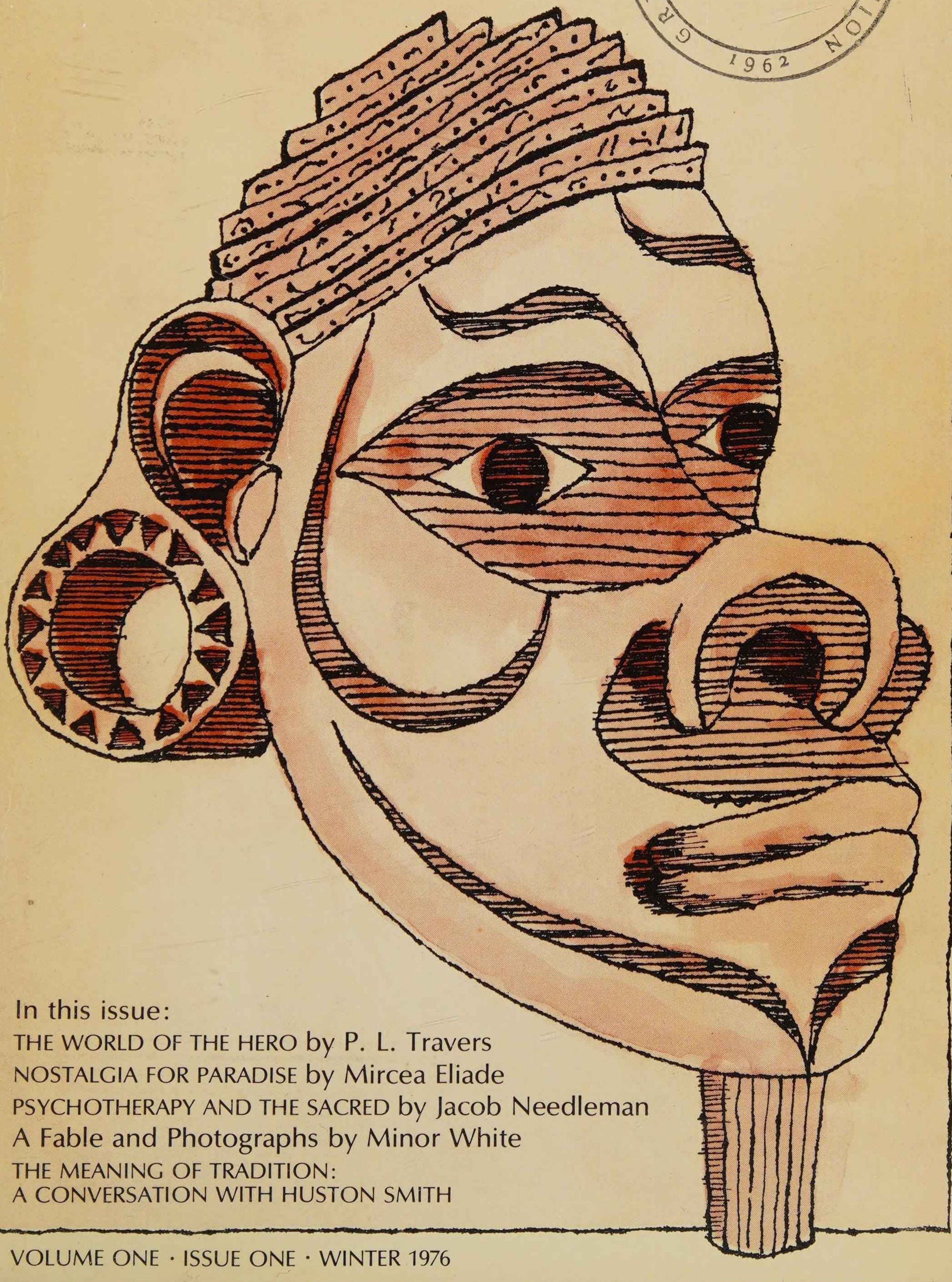
PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

MAR 2 9 1976
GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
1962



In this issue:

THE WORLD OF THE HERO by P. L. Travers
NOSTALGIA FOR PARADISE by Mircea Eliade
PSYCHOTHERAPY AND THE SACRED by Jacob Needleman
A Fable and Photographs by Minor White
THE MEANING OF TRADITION:
A CONVERSATION WITH HUSTON SMITH

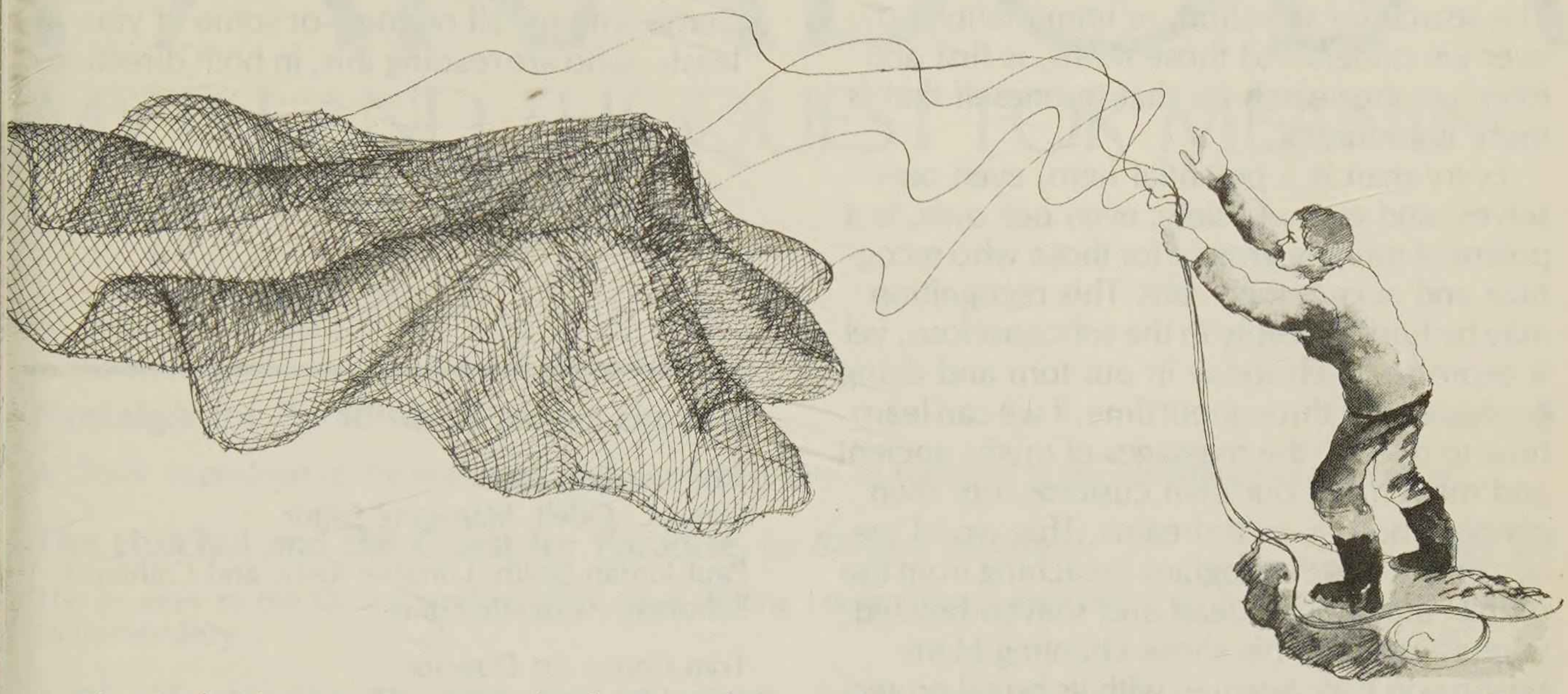
VOLUME ONE · ISSUE ONE · WINTER 1976

v.1
1976

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/parabola_winter-1976_1_1

FOCUS



This is the first appearance, the first words spoken in public, of a new magazine. For us behind the editorial scenes, *Parabola* has been in rehearsal for a long time; now the curtain goes up and beyond it there is the feared and longed-for audience–strangers ,waiting to be bored or entertained, whom it is our task to convert first into friends, then into participants in our play. We are nervous, naturally; but like the curve of our title, we must launch out. We must speak to you, we must introduce ourselves.

We have been asked, and we have asked ourselves, searching questions: Why *Parabola?* Why the name, why the magazine? Perhaps the response to one question will begin to answer the other. A parabola (besides being, of course, a *parable)* is a curving line that sails outward and returns with a new expansion —and perhaps a new content, like the flung net of the Japanese fishermen. With an opposite movement, it curves back in upon itself in the concavity of the parabolic mirror, which reflects and intensifies the light it confronts. It seems a good name for a quest: a directed quest, of course, a search that begins from a standpoint, a point of view, a conviction. Now another question we have been asked is: how can we honestly speak of questioning, when we already have convictions? Our reply to that is that to be open-minded doesn't mean being like a basket with no bottom. Conviction and quest are not only not incompatible, they are essential to each other. Parsifal could never have asked the right question had he not been convinced about the existence and the primordial importance of the Grail. *Parabola* has a conviction: that human existence is significant, that life essentially makes sense in spite of our confusions, that man is not here on earth by accident but for a purpose, and that whatever that purpose may be it demands from him the discovery of his own meaning, his own totality and identity. A human being is born to set out on this quest, his quest, like any knight of Arthur's court.

That is why our first issue is centered around the hero. The hero: that more-than-life-sized figure of myth and history and fairy tale; the conqueror of evil, the liberator, the rescuer of the oppressed? But who is the hero? How terrible to think, as P.L. Travers points out in this issue, of *not* being the hero of one's own life; this is the role for which each of us is cast, no matter how unsuccessfully we play it. And if the part seems too big, if we picture the hero as being indeed "more than life-sized", it is because our daily life has dwindled, become less than real, and only pygmy proportions seem natural to us.

Every true teaching, every genuine tradition has sought to train its disciples to act this part, to become in fact followers of the great quest for one's self. Saint or sannyasin, monk or craft apprentice, Sioux sun-dance warrior, Muslim sheikh or knight of the Round Table, all are striving for the conquest of the ego-dragon , the finding and liberating of the pure essence, the center of being. As Dr. Eliade has brilliantly shown in the chapter from which we have taken *Nostalgia for Paradise,* the search for centrality expressed in myths and rituals across the

globe is the search for the truly human position, the midpoint and link between heaven and hell, angel and animal; the specifically human function of the reconciliation of the opposites, by which life becomes whole and holy, eternal, no longer divided, and at last "makes sense". The search for salvation, or immortality, however we understand those terms, is first and foremost the search for that in oneself that is more than mortal.

Every man is a potential hero, even ourselves, and every society, even our own, is a potential training ground for those who recognize and accept their role. This recognition may be buried deeply in the subconscious, yet it expresses itself today in our torn and dying world as it has throughout time, if we can learn how to decode the messages of myths ancient and modern, of our own customs, our own actions and our own dreams. This world we live in, with its theologians preaching from the pulpits that God is dead and shaven-headed youngsters in tennis shoes chanting Hare Krishna on Park Avenue, with its brutal protectorates and its law-breaking legislators, its crusades for freedom leading to worse slaveries, this world of murderous contradiction, destruction, competition—this world we live in needs our heroism as it has never before been needed in man's memory. How to be heroes today? Who will help us to learn, or give us the magic gifts that win the treasure in the fairy tale?

So our search begins by looking for help; and here we find that not everything that offers help can be trusted; the enemy puts on many disguises, and even before courage we need a keen eye and a keen nose. Indeed, for the ancient Maya the capacity *not to be fooled* was the hero's first requisite. So a constant watchfulness is needed, a certain scepticism, and a refusal of stereotyped definitions. The followers of the traditions (though not their teachers) tend to stake claims on truth that are mutually exclusive, and to add their interpretations to scripture. But Christ and Buddha, Moses and Mohammed, were not giving personal opinions, nor speaking of different things. If truth is one, where is the center, the hub of the wheel, the place where all teachings meet at their source? Perhaps the only access point is at the source and center of oneself.

The study of myths and symbols will serve us only in throwing light on our unknown selves. It is not an academic study; the effort to decipher our own unconscious symbols, unravel the real meanings behind our actions, witness unblinkingly the parts we actually play, exacts from us an exercise both of courage and of discrimination that can perhaps be the beginning of our training for the starring role we were intended for.

So *Parabola* launches itself outward to see what it can find, and at the same time draws itself inward to receive what it can reflect. Come with us, all of you—or some of you, at least—who are reading this, in both directions.

D. M. Dooling

D.M. Dooling, *Publisher*

John Loudon, *Editor*
James C. Odell, *Managing Editor*

Paul Jordan-Smith, Lorraine Kisly, and Catherine Scholten, *Associate Editors*

Tom Corey, *Art Director*
David Bershtein, *Photo Research*
Asterisk Graphic Design, *Format*
Art Staff Yasuo Kubota · Pat Cornell

Consulting Editors: Joseph Epes Brown, P.L. Travers, Minor White

Parabola is published quarterly, December, March, June, and September by The Tamarack Press, Mt. Kisco, N.Y.; Publisher: D.M. Dooling, ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO: *Parabola,* 166 East 61 Street, New York, N.Y. 10021.

Parabola welcomes the submission of manuscripts, which should include return postage. The Editor will furnish authors with an editorial style sheet upon request.

Subscriptions are $12 yearly.
Entered in New York as 2'nd class Postal material.

On the Cover

Hanuman. The monkey god; son of the wind, who leapt the ocean to rescue his master's wife, and broke off a mountain-top for herbs to cure the master's wounds. "He is the Hindu ideal of the perfect servant . . . who finds full realization in manhood, faithfulness, obedience".
(A.K. Coomaraswamy)

PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

Nostalgia for Paradise, *by Mircea Eliade* **Page 6**

A classic exposition of the search for transcendent reality, as focussed in the symbolism of the 'center'.

The Huichol and the Quest for Paradise, *by Barbara Myerhoff* **Page 22**

The journey to the sacred land of *Wirikuta*–a striking contemporary enactment of the ritual approach to immortality.

A Circular World: The Vision of Navajo Crafts, *by Barre Toelken* **Page 30**

An illustrated exhibition of how the making of Navajo artifacts offers a radical alternative to our linear, utilitarian perspective.

The World of the Hero, *by P.L. Travers* **Page 42**

An exploration of the dimensions of mythic heroism, and a suggestion that we may well tailor the heroic matrix to fit our own lives as well.

Psychotherapy and the Sacred, *by Jacob Needleman* **Page 52**

Psychotherapy has become a quasi-religion, but can it mediate the sacred in the manner of the great religious traditions?

The Tragic Hero: An Image of Individuation, *by Edward Edinger* **Page 66**

Heroic metamorphosis, as an apt image of the individual's struggle for personal wholeness.

The Diamond Lens of Fable, *by Minor White* **Page 75**

The Meaning of Tradition: A Conversation with Huston Smith **Page 80**

An interview with the author of *The Religions of Man* probing the significance of religious tradition.

FULL CIRCLE: *A Readers' Forum* **Page 4**

EPICYCLES: *Stories, Texts, Parables*

Gilgamesh **Page 16**

Prayer to the West **Page 38**

Phantastes **Page 48**

The Dog with the Curly Tail **Page 78**

Two Stories **Page 92**

The Beloved **94**

TANGENTS *Books in Review*

"The Ambiguities of Eden," Paul Jordan-Smith on *The Gentle Tasaday* **Page 96**

"Speaking in Images," William Doty on *The Mythic Image* **Page 99**

Reviews **Page 104**

Notices **Page 114**

FULL CIRCLE:
A READERS' FORUM

Editor:

I always hate new magazines. Their appearance suggests that time's relentless march is still unchecked, which fills me with panic and thoughts of the grave. But I make an exception for *Parabola*. Partly because a parabola is, it seems to me, an inherently safe figure: unlike most things, it comes down again, or up again, or in any case after venturing out goes sensibly back where it belongs; and partly because, however fashionable 'myth' may be these days, it is actually, unlike most subjects, *interesting*.

Myth is the only way I know of thinking, and I'm fairly convinced that this isn't so much a personal limitation as a generally human limitation. All the stories have been told; it's in that sense that literature is, as John Barth says, "exhausted". But it's because all the stories have been told already, and because a great many are available to us— from Tibet and black Africa, from China and Russia and America and the Arctic—that a writer is now in the joyful position of being able to sit down and figure out what they mean by carefully retelling them, and the critic can puzzle out their meanings by watching the writer twitch. For instance, when I was working out *Jason and Medeia* (I did much the same with *Grendel* and all the rest of my fictions), the rule I set myself was this: I would stick to the facts, making the possibly mad assumption that they all mean something, they're all in some profound sense true; and I would try to understand the meaning and express it in my version of the narrative.

Myth is the one thing we have in common with the Greeks, the one thing every race, every religion, has in common. I don't understand blacks, or women, or God (any God); but it seems to me I understand their stories. I feel cheated that when time finally undoes me, no one will sit my body in the corner of the room and read it the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* to calm its fears.

So I'm glad a magazine has appeared which will think about myths and sometimes print old ones and, I hope, sometimes print new ones. There are more first-rate myth makers alive today (including of course scientists and politicians) than ever before in history, which must even be true statistically. I look forward eagerly to *Parabola's* first issue.

John Gardner
Bennington, Vermont

Editor:

I am very pleased that you are setting up a new periodical connected with "Myth and the Quest for Meaning." This is about as central an area in the contemporary intellectual scene as one could find, but it cuts across so many of the conventional disciplines that it is absolutely essential to have something specifically designed to bring together scholars in literature, comparative religion, popular culture, and other related fields.

I understand that your opening issues will be featuring Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell, which indicates that you know where the central people are and are able to count on their support and interest. I wish you all the best for your efforts, and will take the keenest interest in the periodical as it develops.

Northrop Frye
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Editor:

Your new magazine certainly sounds fascinating, and I look forward to reading it. I am familiar with *Spring*, the Jungian publication, which is an excellent one, and it sounds as if *Parabola* will deal with some of the same issues, plus others that are equally important.

Your sample topics really sound provocative. I wish you the very best luck in launching your new magazine.

Joyce Carol Oates
Windsor, Ontario, Canada

Editor:

Our present situation calls to mind Flaubert's remark: with the old gods dead and the new one not yet born, man stands for the moment alone. It is a splendid moment of incomparably rich potential. But not everyone sees it that way. Many suffer what Charles Davis has so aptly called the "lust for certitude", whoring after idolatrously fundamentalist movements of faith, whether in Jesus, Krishna or the ineffable Rev. Moon.

Many more look down upon this response as infantile and regressive. But they suffer an anguish no less exquisite over their own idol overthrown: science. (I speak, of course, not of the authentic scientist, but of the technological *apparatchik*.) Generations ago, Whitehead remarked that all the "eternal"

verities of science he had learned as an undergraduate in 1885 were overturned by 1900. Yet even a decade ago, the intellectual community engaged in a fatuous debate over the supposed "two cultures".

Elizabeth Sewell, student of Vico and Polanyi that she is, demonstrated in *The Orphic Voice* that man has not the luxury of two ways of thought. There is no "objective" thought, exactly as Kierkegaard told us. There are only varying modes of poetry (i.e., *poiesis*, making or creating).

One may comprehend this view as a central insight of modernity. Even those who could never explicitate the concept suffer the consequences in their lives. We may finally say that the religious crisis of our time devolves upon our being unable to affirm any revelation as an absolute. But how many whose maimed lives testify to that inability can understand that Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God is a joyous and liberating kerygma indeed?

This crisis is the more pronounced because of the explosive possibilities of global communication and travel in our time. Let us remember that the concept of *Weltliteratur* began only with Goethe and has yet to be absorbed by more than a few. A comparable religious concept is just now being born. Incursions of new knowledge of other faith-systems (alternative mythic modes) liberate the few, seduce more into an observance of exotic externals and depress the many.

I can thus think of nothing more cogent to our situation than a profound and ongoing public study of myth, the marriage bed of faith and poetry. A serious and catholic attention to myth is perhaps the most creative religious act of our time. Precisely because it is so germane, it runs the risk of becoming intellectually and academically chic. Your magazine may suffer a dangerous temptation it must resist. It can all too easily degenerate into a hermetic exercise: ponderous pedants protecting professional preserves from poachers while babbling strange dead tongues and barbarous neologisms.

Eliade and Campbell have demonstrated again and again that it is feasible to discuss these vital and ever more central issues at the highest level without the least condescension or mystification. The growing public response to their work suggests an authentic audience for this enterprise.

You have an enormous task before you. Be of good cheer. Remember the words of that Northern sage, Marshall McLuhan: "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, else what's a metaphor?"

Bernard J. Hassan
Newark, N.J.

Editor:

The more I think about *Nostalgia for Paradise*, which I had the opportunity to read before publication, the more it seems to reveal something about the quest that *Parabola* is beginning with its first issue. It may seem odd, but a quest begins with an answer, with facts; from there it proceeds to discover the question that lies at their center. Paradise is the answer to our nostalgia, myths the answer to *Parabola*'s quest; but what are the questions? What is a quest? What we need, as Mircea Eliade shows, is not to find the right answers, but the right questions, the central questions that connect us with our own center as well as with the core meaning of an image or a myth. Like Paradise, *Parabola* offers rich treasures, but to find them one will need to experience the challenge of a focusing question.

Anne Wilson
University of Massachusetts,
Class of 1976

Editor:

Paul Jordan-Smith's review of *The Gentle Tasaday*, which I have just read in galley-proof, does well to speculate on not only what we, with regard to the primal innocence of the Tasaday, have lost but what, by this same primal innocence, the Tasaday have lost. What is certain is that far from falling into Eden—is such a thing possible?—they have never fallen out of it. For the Tasaday, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is still inviolate, the fruit has never been eaten. They live in a static world. No interaction of good and bad fairy, of hero and dragon carries their story forward. For them no Hindu *devas* and *asuras*, by mutual friction, churn the ocean of milk that is the world, no Yin & Yang—white fish with black eye, black fish with white—together create the Ten Thousand Things.

Not one of them—as we all must—has descended the ladder of being as far as the husks and the swine in order that we might come to ourselves and climb up again laboriously to get to the house of our father. And while I would as soon give a child arsenic as expose the Tasaday to what we laughably call civilization, I feel we should not overlook the fact that the discovery of these gentle people opens up questions not merely anthropological and ecological but above all metaphysical. It should turn us back to the eternal verities that give our own so less gentle life its meaning.

P.L. Travers
New York, N.Y.

Editor:

Cheers, what a good idea *Parabola* is!

This certainly is the time, as never before, for a magazine devoted to exploring the mythic consciousness. The major magazines haven't taken seriously enough (or playfully enough) the new awareness of myth, symbol, and ritual. So *Parabola* stands alone, and is much needed.

Keep me in mind and up to date on what you are doing. I like *Parabola* already.

Sam Keen
Muir Beach, California

Parabola requires the active participation of its readers; we welcome letters and comments on issues raised in our pages. Address all correspondence to the Editor, *Parabola*, 166 East 61 Street, New York, N.Y. 10021.

Nostalgia for Paradise

Symbolism of the Center and the ritual approach to immortality.

Mircea Eliade

Certain myths and symbols have circulated throughout the world, spread by certain types of culture; this means that those myths and symbols are not, as such, spontaneous discoveries of archaic man, but creations of a well defined cultural complex, elaborated and carried on in certain human societies: such creations have been diffused very far from their original home and have been assimilated by peoples who would not otherwise have known them. *What is it that these myths and symbols answer to, that they should have had such a wide diffusion?*

The nostalgia for Paradise is universal, although its manifestations vary almost indefinitely. Are we condemned to be content with exhaustive analyses of particular manifestations and their differences? Have we no means of approach to the Image, the symbol, the archetype, in their own structures; in that "wholeness" which embraces all their "histories", without, however, confusing them? There are universally attested formulas for the "Center of the World", by which communication with Heaven is opened and the entire Universe is "saved". But the notion of "salvation" does no more than repeat and complete the notions of perpetual renovation and cosmic regeneration, of universal fecundity and of sanctity, of absolute reality and, in the final reckoning, of immortality—all of which coexist in the symbolism of the Center.

In archaic and traditional societies, the surrounding world is conceived as a microcosm . At the limits of this closed world begins the domain of the unknown, of the formless. On this side there is ordered—because inhabited and organized—space; on the other, outside this familiar space, there is the unknown and dangerous region of the demons, the ghosts, the dead and of foreigners—in a word, chaos or death or night. Because they attack, and endanger the equilibrium and the very life of the city or the nation, enemies are assimilated to demonic powers, trying to reincorporate the microcosm into the state of chaos; that is, to suppress it. The destruction of an established order, the abolition of an archetypal image, was equivalent to a regression into chaos, into the pre-formal, undifferentiated states that preceded the cosmogony. Let us note that the same images are still invoked in our own days when people want to formulate the dangers that menace a certain type of civilization: there is much talk of "chaos", of "disorder", of the "dark ages" into which "our world" is subsiding. All these expressions, it is felt, signify

the abolition of an order, of a Cosmos, of a structure, and the re-immersion in a state that is fluid, amorphous, in the end chaotic.

Every microcosm, every inhabited region, has what may be called a "Center"; that is to say, a place that is sacred above all. It is there, in that Center, that the sacred manifests itself in its totality, either in the form of elementary hierophanies—as it does among the "primitives" (in the totemic centers, for example, the caves where the *tchuringas* are buried, etc.)—or else in the more evolved form of the direct epiphanies of the gods, as in the traditional civilizations. But we must not envisage this symbolism of the Center with the geometrical implications that it has to a Western scientific mind. For each one of these microcosms there may be several "centers". All the Oriental civilizations—Mesopotamia, India, China, etc.—recognized an unlimited number of "Centers". Moreover, each one of these "Centers" was considered and even literally called the "Center of the World". The place in question being a "sacred space", consecrated by a hierophany, or ritually constructed, and not a profane, homogeneous geometrical space, the plurality of "Centers of the Earth" within a single inhabited region presented no difficulty. What we have here is a sacred, mythic geography, the only kind effectively *real,* as opposed to profane geography, the latter being "objective" and, as it were, abstract and non-essential—the theoretical construction of a space and a world that we do not live in, and therefore do not *know*.

In mythical geography, sacred space is the essentially *real space,* for in the archaic world the myth alone is real. It tells of manifestations of the only indubitable reality—the *sacred*. It is in such a space that one has direct contact with the sacred—whether this be materialized in certain objects (*tchuringas,* representatives of the divinity, etc.) or manifested in the



hierocosmic symbols (the Pillar of the World, the Cosmic Tree, etc.). In cultures that have the conception of three cosmic regions—those of Heaven, Earth and Hell—the "center" constitutes the point of intersection of those regions. It is here that the breakthrough on to another plane is possible and, at the same time, communication between the three regions. We have reason to believe that this image of three cosmic levels is quite archaic; we meet with it, for instance, among the Semang pygmies of the Malay peninsula: at the center of their world there stands an enormous rock, Batu-Ribn, and beneath it is Hell. From the Batu-Ribn a tree-trunk formerly reached up towards the sky. Hell, the center of the earth and the "door" of heaven are all to be found, then, upon the same axis, and it is along this axis that the passage from one cosmic region to another is effected. The Semang say that the trunk of a tree *formerly* connected the summit of the Cosmic Mountain, the Center of the World, with Heaven. This is an allusion to a mythic theme of extremely wide diffusion: formerly, communication with Heaven and relations with the divinity were easy and "natural"; until, in consequence of a ritual fault, these communications were broken off, and the gods withdrew to still higher heavens. Only medicine-men, shamans, priests and heroes, or the sovereign rulers, were now able to re-establish communication with Heaven, and

that only in a temporary way and for their own use.

It is chiefly in the early Oriental civilizations that we meet with the archetypal image of the three cosmic regions connected in a "Center" along one axis. The name of the sanctuaries of Nippur, Larsa and Sippara was *Dur-an-ki,* "link between Heaven and Earth". Babylon had a whole list of names, among others "House of the basis of Heaven and Earth" and "Link between Heaven and Earth." But there was also in Babylon the link between the Earth and the lower regions, for the town had been built upon *bāb-apsū*, the "Gate of *apsū*"; *apsū* meaning the waters of Chaos before the Creation. We find the same tradition among the Hebrews. The Rock of Jerusalem went deep down into the subterranean waters *(tehōm)*. It is said in the Mishna that the Temple stood just over the *tehōm* (the Hebrew equivalent for *apsū*), and just as, in Babylon, they had "the Gate of *apsū*", so in Jerusalem the Rock of the Temple covered the "mouth of the *tehōm*". We encounter similar traditions in the Indo-European world. Among the Romans, for example, the *mundus* constitutes the meeting-point between the lower regions and the terrestrial world. The Italic temple was the zone of intersection between the higher (divine) world, the terrestrial world and the subterranean (infernal) world.

Every Oriental city was standing, in effect, at the center of the world. Babylon was *Bāb-ilāni,* a "gate of the Gods", for it was there that the gods came down to earth. The capital of the ideal Chinese sovereign was situated near to the miraculous Tree "shaped Wood" *(Kien-mou)* at the intersection of the three cosmic zones, Heaven, Earth and Hell. Examples could be multiplied without end. These cities, temples or palaces, regarded as Centers of the World are all only replicas, repeating *ad libitum* the same archaic image—the Cosmic Mountain, the World Tree or the central Pillar which sustains the planes of the Cosmos.

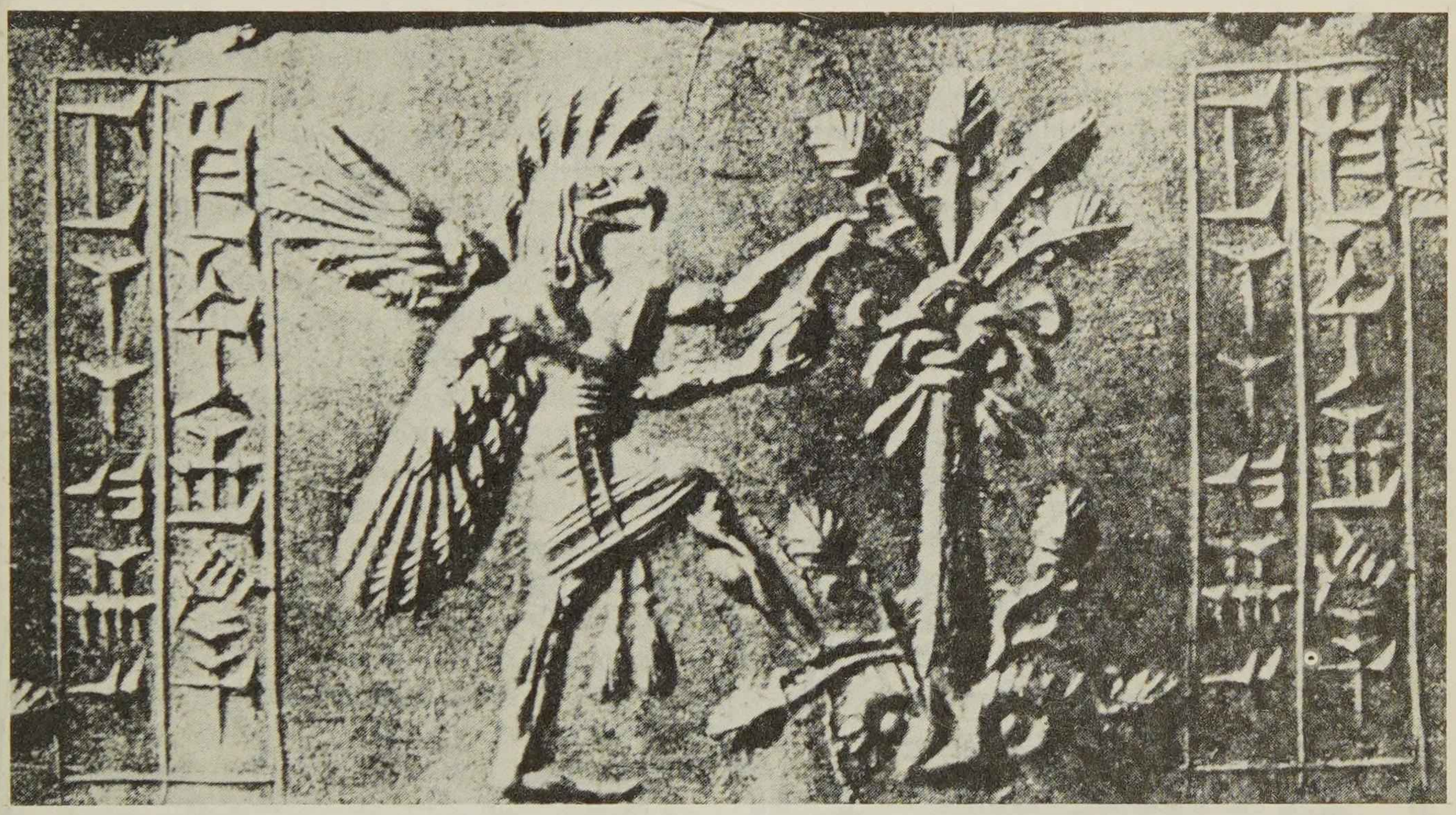
This symbol of a Mountain, a Tree or a Column situated at the Center of the World is extremely widely distributed. We may recall the Mount Meru of Indian tradition, Haraberezaiti of the Iranians, the Norse Himingbjör, "the Mount of the Lands" in the Mesopotamian traditions, Mount Tabor in Palestine (which may signify *tabbur*—that is, "navel" or *omphalos*), Mount Gerizim, again in Palestine, which is expressly named the "navel of the earth," and Golgotha which, for Christians, represented the center of the world, etc. Because the territory, the city, the temple or the royal palace thus stood at the "Center of the World"—that is, on the summit of the Cosmic Mountain—each was regarded as the highest place in the world, the only one which had not been submerged at the Deluge. "The land of Israel was not submerged by the Deluge," says a rabbinical text. And, according to Islamic tradition, the highest elevated place on earth is the Ka'aba, because "the Pole Star proves that . . . it lies over against the center of Heaven". The Babylonian *ziqqurat* was, properly speaking, a cosmic mountain—that is, a symbolic image of the Cosmos; its seven stages represented the seven planetary spheres; by ascending them, the priest attained to the summit of the Universe.

The summit of the Cosmic Mountain is not only the highest point on the Earth, it is the navel of the Earth, the point at which creation began. "The Holy One created the world like an embryo," affirms a rabbinical text. "As an embryo proceeds from the navel onward, so God began the creation of the world from its navel onward, and from thence it spread in different directions." "The world was created, beginning at Sion," says another text. The same symbolism occurs in Ancient India, in the *Rig Veda;* where the Universe is conceived as expanding outward from a central point.

The creation of man, a replica of the cosmogony, took place similarly from a central point, in the Center of the World. According to the Mesopotamian tradition, man was fashioned at the "navel of the earth", where there is also *Dur-an-ki,* the "link between Heaven and Earth". Ohrmazd created the primordial man Gajomard, at the center of the world. The Paradise in which Adam was created out of clay is, of course, situated at the Center of the Cosmos. Paradise was the "navel of the Earth" and, according to a Syrian tradition, was established "upon a Mountain higher than all the others". According to the Syrian book *The Cavern of Treasures,* Adam

was created at the center of the earth, on the very same spot where, later on, the Cross of Jesus was to be erected. The same traditions have been preserved by Judaism. The Judaic apocalypse and the Midrash specify that Adam was fashioned in Jerusalem. And Adam, having been buried at the same spot where he was created—that is, at the center of the world, upon Golgotha—the blood of the Lord will redeem him also.

The most widely distributed variant of the symbolism of the Center is the Cosmic Tree, situated in the middle of the Universe, and upholding the three worlds as upon one axis. Vedic India, ancient China and the Germanic



mythology, as well as the "primitive" religions, all held different versions of this Cosmic Tree, whose roots plunged down into Hell, and whose branches reached to Heaven. In the Central and North Asiatic mythologies its seven or nine branches symbolize the seven or nine celestial planes—that is, the seven planetary heavens. The majority of the sacred and ritual trees that we meet with in the history of religions are only replicas, imperfect copies of this exemplary archetype, the Cosmic Tree. Thus, all these sacred trees are thought of as situated in the Center of the World, and all the ritual trees or posts which are consecrated before or during any religious ceremony are, as it were, magically projected into the Center of the World. Let us content ourselves with a few examples.

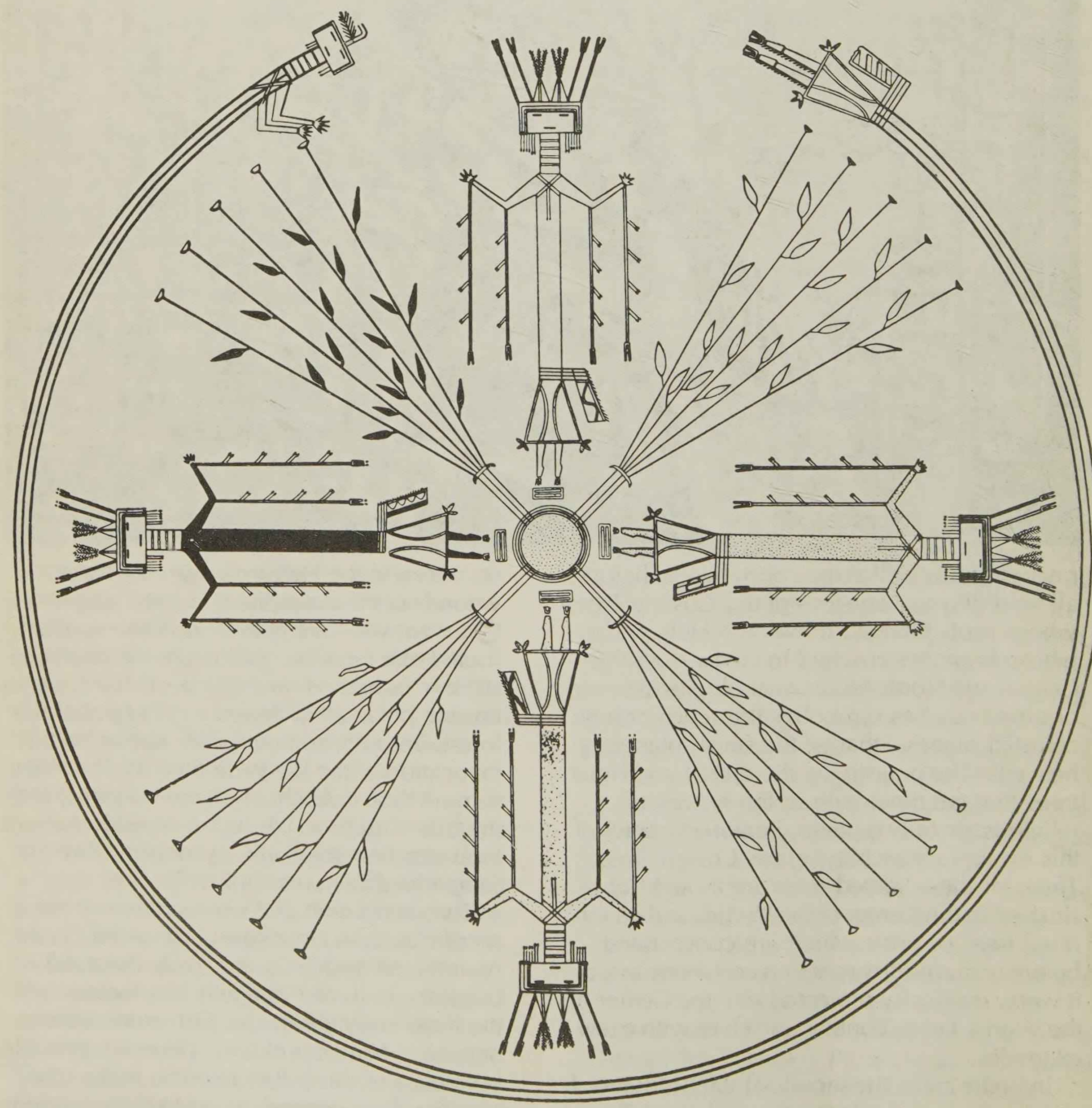
In Vedic India, the sacrificial stake is made of a tree which is similar to the Universal Tree. While it is being felled, the priest of the sacrifice addresses these words to it: "With thy summit, do not rend the Heavens; with thy trunk, wound not the atmosphere . . ." It is easy to see that what we have here is the Cosmic Tree itself. From the wood of this tree the sacrificial stake is fashioned, and this becomes a sort of cosmic pillar: "Lift thyself up, O Lord of the forest, unto the summit of the earth!" is the invocation of the *Rig Veda* (III,8,3). "With thy summit thou doest hold up the Heavens, with thy branches thou fillest the air, with thy foot thou steadiest the earth," proclaims the *Satapatha Brāhmana* (III,7,1,4).

The installation and consecration of the sacrificial stake constitute a rite of the Center. Assimilated to the Cosmic Tree, the stake becomes in its turn the axis connecting the three cosmic regions. Communication between Heaven and Earth becomes possible by means of this pillar. He who makes the sacrifice does, indeed, go up to heaven, alone or with his wife, upon this post now ritually transformed into the World-Axis itself. While

setting up the ladder, he says to his wife: "Come, let us go up to Heaven!" She answers: "Let us go up!" (*Sat. Br.* V,2,i,9), and they begin to mount the ladder. At the top, while touching the head of the post, the sacrificer cries out: "We have reached Heaven!". Or, while climbing up the steps of the stake, he stretches out his arms (as a bird spreads its wings!) and on reaching the top cries out: "I have attained to heaven, to the gods: I have become immortal:" (*Taittirīya Samhitā*, 1,7,9.) "In truth," continues the *Taittirīya Samhitā* (VI,6,4,2), "the sacrificer makes himself a ladder and a bridge to reach the celestial world."

The bridge or ladder between Heaven and Earth were possible because they were set up in a Center of the World—like the ladder seen in a dream by Jacob, which reached from earth to the heavens. "And behold! the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." (*Genesis* XXVIII, 11-12). The Indian rite also alludes to the immortality that is attained in consequence of the ascent into Heaven. As we shall see presently, a number of other ritual approaches to a Center are equivalent to a conquest of immortality.

The assimilation of the ritual tree to the Cosmic Tree is still more apparent in Central and North Asiatic shamanism. The climbing of such a tree by the Tatar shaman symbolizes his



ascension to heaven. In fact, seven or nine notches are cut in the tree and the shaman, while he is climbing up them, makes the pertinent declaration that he is going up to heaven: he describes to the onlookers all that he sees at each of the celestial levels which he passes through. At the sixth heaven he worships the moon, at the seventh, the sun. Finally, at the ninth, he prostrates himself before Bai Ulgan, the Supreme Being, and offers him the soul of the horse that has been sacrificed.

The shamanic tree is only a replica of the Tree of the World, which rises in the middle of the Universe and at whose summit is the supreme God, or the solarized god. The seven or nine notches on the shamanic tree symbolize the seven or nine branches of the Cosmic Tree—that is, the seven or nine heavens. The shaman feels, moreover, that he is united with this Tree of the World through other mystical relationships. In his initiatory dreams, the future shaman is believed to approach the Cosmic Tree and to receive, from the hand of God himself, three branches of it, which are to serve as frames for his drums. We know the indispensable part that is played by the drum during the shamanic ceremonies; it is above all by the aid of their drums that shamans attain to the ecstatic state. And, when we think that *the drum is made of the very wood of the World Tree,* we can understand the symbolism and the religious value of the sounds of the shamanic drum—and why, when he beats it, the shaman feels himself transported in ecstasy near to the Tree of the World. Here we have a mystical journey to the "Center", and thence into the highest heaven. Thus, either by climbing up the seven or nine notches of the ceremonial birch-tree, or simply drumming, the shaman sets out on his journey to heaven, but he can only obtain that rupture of the cosmic planes which makes his ascension possible or enables him to fly ecstatically through the heavens, because he is thought to be already at the very Center of the world; for, as we have seen, it is only in such a Center that communication between Earth, Heaven and Hell is possible.

Among the Arctic and North American population, the centerpost of the cabin they live in is assimilated to the Cosmic Axis. And it is at the foot of this post that one deposits the offerings intended for the heavenly divinities, for it is only along this axis that offerings can mount up into heaven. When the form of the dwelling is changed and the hut is replaced by the yourt (as, for example, among the nomadic stock-breeders of central Asia), the mythico-ritual function of the central pillar is performed through the opening left in the roof to let out the smoke. On sacrificial occasions, they bring a tree into the yourt, so that the top of it projects through this opening. This sacrificial tree with its seven branches symbolizes the seven celestial spheres. Thus, on the one hand, *the house is made to symbolize the Universe,* and, on the other, *is supposed to be situated in the Center of the World,* the smoke-hole opening upwards towards the Pole Star.

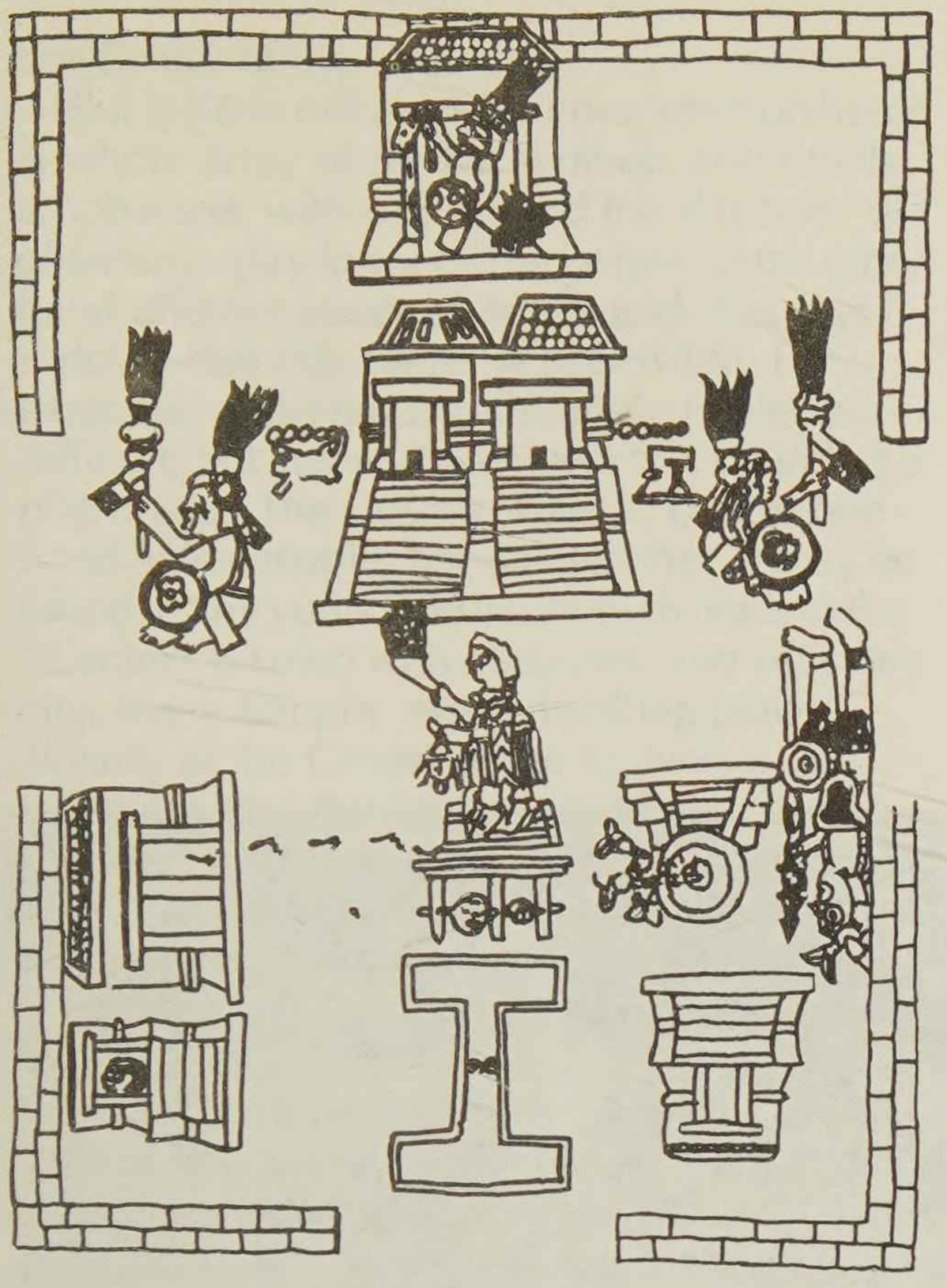
Let us look at the ritual of ascension that takes place in a "center". We saw that the Tatar or Siberian shaman climbs a tree, and that the Vedic sacrificer mounts a ladder: the two rites are directed to the same end, the ascension into Heaven. A good many of the myths speak of a tree, of a creeper, a cord, or a thread of spider-web or a ladder which connects Earth with Heaven, and by means of which certain privileged beings do, in effect, mount up to heaven. These myths have, of course, their ritual correlatives—as, for instance, the shamanic tree or the post in the Vedic sacrifice. The ceremonial staircase plays an equally important part, of which we will now give a few examples:

Polyaenus (*Stratagematon,* VII, 22) tells us of Kosingas, the priest-king of certain peoples of Thrace, who threatened to desert his subjects by going up a wooden ladder to the goddess Hera. The ascension to Heaven by ritually climbing up a ladder was probably part of an Orphic initiation; in any case, we find it again in the Mithraic initiation. In the mysteries of Mithra the ceremonial ladder *(climax)* had seven rungs, each being made of a different metal. According to Celsus (Origen, *Contra Celsum,* VI, 22), the first rung was made of lead, corresponding to the "heaven" of the planet Saturn; the second of tin (Venus) the third of bronze (Jupiter); the fourth of iron (Mercury); the fifth of "monetary alloy" (Mars); the sixth of silver (the Moon) and the seventh of gold (the Sun). The eighth rung, Celsus tells us,

represented the sphere of the fixed stars. By going up this ceremonial ladder, the initiate was supposed to pass through the seven heavens, thus uplifting himself even to the Empyrean—just as one attained to the ultimate heaven by ascending the seven stages of the Babylonian *ziqqurat,* or as one travelled through the different cosmic regions by scaling the terraces of the Temple of Barabudur, which in itself constituted a Cosmic Mountain and an *imago mundi*.

We can easily understand that the stairway in the Mithraic initiation was an Axis of the World and was situated at the Center of the Universe: otherwise the rupture of the planes would not have been possible. "Initiation" means the symbolic death and resurrection of the neophyte or, in other contexts, the descent into Hell followed by ascension into Heaven. Death—whether initiatory or not—is the supreme case of a rupture of the planes. That is why it is symbolized by a climbing of steps, and why funerary rites often make use of ladders or stairways. The soul of the deceased ascends the pathways up a mountain, or climbs a tree or a creeper, right up into the heavens. We meet with something of this conception all over the world, from ancient Egypt to Australia. In Assyrian, the common expression for the verb "to die" is "to clutch the mountain". Similarly in Egyptian, *myny,* "to clutch", is a euphemism for "to die". In the Indian mythological tradition, Yama, the first man to die, climbed up the mountain and over "the high passes" in order to show "the path to many" as it is said in the *Rig Veda* (X, 14, 1). The road of the dead, in popular Ural-Altaic beliefs, leads up the mountains: Bolot, the Kara-Kirghiz hero and also Kesar, legendary king of the Mongols, enter into the world of the beyond by way of an initiatory ordeal, through a cave at the summit of the mountains: the descent of the shaman into Hell is also effected by way of a cavern. The Egyptians have preserved, in their funerary texts, the expression *asket pet* (*asket* means "a step") to indicate that the ladder at the disposal of Rē is a real ladder, linking Earth to Heaven. "The ladder is set up that I may see the gods," says the *Book of the Dead,* and again, "the gods make him a ladder, so that, by making use of it, he may go up to Heaven." In many tombs of the periods of the archaic and the middle dynasties, amulets have been found engraved with a ladder *(maqet)* or a staircase. The custom of the funerary ladder has, moreover, survived until our days: several primitive Asian peoples—as, for instance, the Lolos, the Karens and others—set up ritual ladders upon tombs, to enable the deceased to ascend to heaven.

As we have just seen, the ladder can carry an extremely rich symbolism without ceasing to be perfectly coherent. *It gives plastic expression to the break through the planes necessitated by the passage from one mode of being to another,* by placing us at the cosmological point *where communication between Heaven, Earth and Hell becomes possible*. That is why the stairway and the ladder play so considerable a part in the rites and the myths of initiation, as well as in funerary rituals, not to mention the rites of royal or sacerdotal enthronement or those of marriage. But we also know that the symbolism of climbing-up and of stairs recurs often enough in psychoanalytic literature, an indication that it belongs to the archaic content of the human psyche and is not a "historical" creation, not an innovation dating from a certain historical moment (say, from ancient Egypt or Vedic India, etc.). The ideas of sanctification, of death, love and deliverance are all involved in the symbolism of stairs. Indeed, each of these modes of being represents a cessation of the profane human condition; that is, a breaking of the ontological plane. Through love and death, sanctity and metaphysical knowledge, man passes—as it is said in the *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad,* from



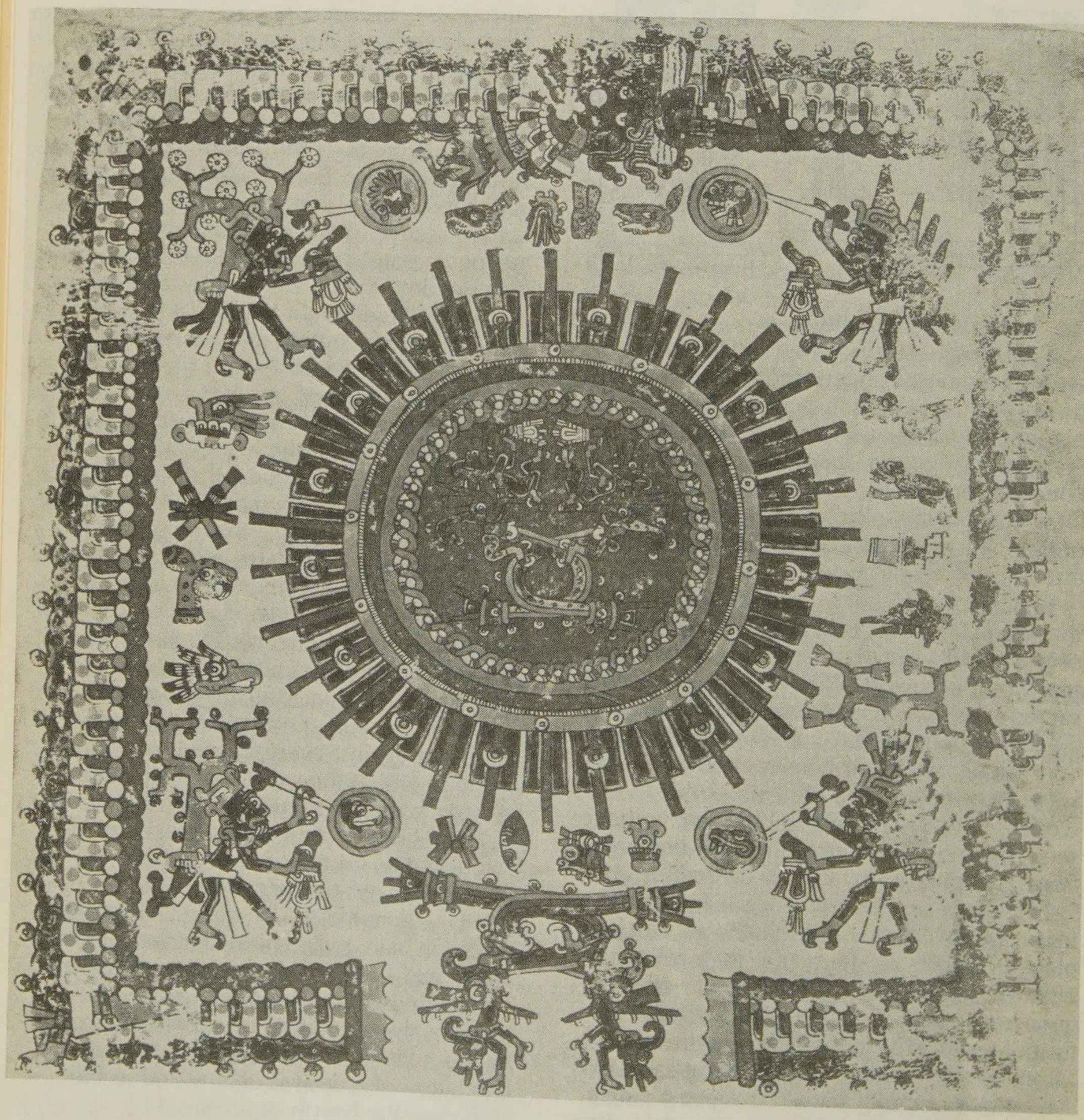
the "unreal to the reality".

But it must not be forgotten that the staircase symbolizes these things because it is thought to be set up in a "center", because it makes communication possible between the different levels of being, and, finally, because it is a concrete formula for the mythical ladder, for the creeper or the spider-web, the Cosmic Tree or the Pillar of the Universe, that connects the three cosmic zones.

We have seen that it was not only temples that were thought to be situated at the "Center of the World", but that every holy place, every place that bore witness to an incursion of the sacred into profane space, was also regarded as a "center". These sacred spaces could also be constructed; but their construction was, in its way, a cosmogony—a creation of the world—which is only natural since, as we have seen, the world was created in the beginning from an embryo, or from a "center".

Let us note one thing which is of importance in our view: to the degree that the ancient holy places, temples or altars, lose their religious efficacy, people discover and apply other geomantic, architectural or iconographic formulas which, in the end, sometimes astonishingly enough, represent the same symbolism of the "Center". To give a single example: the construction of a *mandala*. The term itself means "a circle"; the translations from the Tibetan sometimes render it by "center" and sometimes by "that which surrounds". In fact a *mandala* represents a whole series of circles, concentric or otherwise, inscribed within a square; and in this diagram, drawn on the ground by means of colored threads or colored rice powder, the various divinities of the Tantric pantheon are arranged in order. The *mandala* thus represents an *imago mundi* and at the same time a symbolic pantheon. The initiation of the neophyte consists, among other things, in his entering into the different zones and gaining access to the different levels of the *mandala*. This rite of penetration may be regarded as equivalent to the well-known rite of walking round a temple *(pradakshina)*, or to the progressive elevation, terrace by terrace, up to the "pure lands" at the highest levels of the temple. On the other hand, the placing of the neophyte in a *mandala* may be likened to the initiation by entry into a labyrinth; certain *mandalas* have, moreover, a clearly labyrinthine character. The function of the *mandala* may be considered as at least twofold, and is that of the labyrinth. On the one hand, penetration into a *mandala* drawn on the ground is equivalent to an initiation ritual; and, on the other hand, the *mandala* "protects" the neophyte against every harmful force from without, and at the same time helps him to concentrate, to find his own "center".

Every human being tends, even unconsciously, toward the Center, and towards his own center, where he can find integral reality—sacredness. This desire, so deeply rooted in man, to find himself at the very heart of the real—at the Center of the World, the place of communication with Heaven—explains the ubiquitous use of "Centers of the World". We have seen above how the habitation of man was assimilated to the Universe, the hearth or the smoke-hole being homologized with the Center of the World; so that all houses—like all temples, palaces and cities—are situated at one and the same point,



the Center of the Universe.

But is there not a certain contradiction here? A whole array of myths, symbols and rituals emphasizes with one accord *the difficulty of obtaining entry into a center;* while on the other hand another series of myths and rites lays it down that *this center is accessible*. For example, pilgrimage to the Holy Places is difficult; but any visit whatever to a church is a pilgrimage. The Cosmic Tree is, on the one hand, inaccessible; but on the other, it may be found in any yourt. The way which leads to the "Center" is sown with obstacles, and yet every city, every temple, every dwelling-place *is already* at the Center of the Universe. The sufferings and the "trials" undergone by Ulysses are fabulous; nevertheless any *return to hearth and home* whatever is equivalent to Ulysses' return to Ithaca.

All this seems to show that man *can live only in a sacred space,* in the "Center". We observe that one group of traditions attests the desire of man to find himself at the Center *without any effort,* whilst another group insists upon the *difficulty,* and consequently upon the *merit,* of being able to enter into it. We are not here concerned to trace the history of either of these traditions. The fact that the first-mentioned —the "easy" way which allows of the construction of a Center even in a man's own house—is found nearly everywhere, invites us to regard it as the more significant. It calls attention to something in the human condition that we have called the *nostalgia for Paradise*. By this we mean the desire to *find oneself always and without effort* in the Center of the World, at the heart of reality; and by a short cut and in a natural manner to transcend the human condition, and to recover the divine condition—as a Christian would say, the condition before the Fall.

There is an episode in the legend of Parsifal and the Fisher King, concerning the mysterious malady that paralyzed the old King who held the secret of the Grail. It was not he alone who suffered; everything around him was falling into ruins, crumbling away—the palace, the towers and the gardens. Animals no longer bred, the trees bore no more fruit, the springs were drying up. Many doctors had tried to cure the Fisher King, all without the least success. The knights were arriving there day and night, each of them asking first of all for news of the King's health. But one knight—poor, unknown and even slightly ridiculous—took the liberty of disregarding ceremony and politeness: his name was Parsifal. Paying no heed to courtly custom, he made straight for the King and, addressing him without any preamble, asked: "Where is the Grail?" In that very instant, everything is transformed: the King rises from his bed of suffering, the rivers and fountains flow once more, vegetation grows again, and the castle is miraculously restored. Those few words of Parsifal had been enough to regenerate the whole of Nature. But those few words propound the central question, the one question that can arouse not only the Fisher King but the whole Cosmos: Where is the supreme reality, the sacred, the Center of Life and the source of immortality, where is the Holy Grail? No one had thought, until then, of asking that central question—and the world was perishing because of that metaphysical and religious indifference, because of lack of imagination and absence of desire for reality.

That brief episode of a great European myth reveals to us at least one neglected aspect of the symbolism of the Center: that there is not only an intimate interconnection between the universal life and the salvation of man; but that it is *enough only to raise the question of salvation,* to pose the central problem; that is, *the* problem—for the life of the cosmos to be forever renewed. For—as this mythological fragment seems to show—death is often only the result of our indifference to immortality.

Nostalgia for Paradise is adapted from my *Images and Symbols,* trans. by Philip Mairet (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961).

EPICYCLES: STORIES, TEXTS & PARABLES

EPICYCLE I

Gilgamesh

(In answer to the prayers of the people of Uruk, the goddess Aruru sent Enkidu as a challenge to Gilgamesh, king of Uruk, to divert his limitless energy from the constant battles and building that were wearing his people out. The goddess took clay and water and fashioned a man and set him down in the wilderness. A temple harlot was sent to seduce Enkidu from the wilderness and bring him to the walls of Uruk, where he was to meet and challenge Gilgamesh. The two heroes were equal in strength however, and in their battle neither yielded. They became fast friends and set forth on all expeditions together.

One day Gilgamesh revealed that he had set his heart upon the cedars growing in the forest known as the Country of the Living. His purpose was twofold: to gather cedar wood, and to slay the monster Humbaba, the watchman of the forest. Enkidu was full of foreboding, but at length they set out, once Gilgamesh had consecrated his task to the sun-god Shamash.

The foreboding in Enkidu's heart grew stronger as their forest journey progressed. When he set his hand to the forest gate, he lost the strength of it, and his nights were full of evil dreams. At last they met Humbaba and joined battle.

With the slaying of Humbaba, the goddess Ishtar presented herself to Gilgamesh and demanded that he be her lover. When he refused, she sent the Bull of Heaven to destroy him, but this monster the heroes also slew, and so incurred the wrath not only of Ishtar but of Enlil, the god of the storm, as well. The judgment was passed among the gods that the two men should die, but the arguments of Shamash prevailed in the judgment against Gilgamesh, and he was spared. Thus it was that Enkidu, who had been to Gilgamesh as a brother, was slain by the gods.)

•

"Hear me, ye elders of Uruk!" cried Gilgamesh, from where he sat by the body of his friend. "I weep for my brother Enkidu, my friend, my companion. All the beasts that ran with you, Enkidu, mourn you as I do: let the elders of Uruk weep for you also. You were the axe at my side, my brother: my hand's strength, my sword and my shield. Listen! the beasts that we hunted, panther and tiger, weep for you; Listen! the mountain we climbed to slay the watchman Humbaba mourns for you. Listen! the rivers of Kullab, Ula of Elam and the blessed Euphrates, weep for you. Listen! the warriors of Uruk, where we slew the Bull of Heaven, mourn for you. Listen! the harvesters weep for you now, and the servants, the women, and the temple harlot who brought you to me. Can you hear them? What is this sleep which lies over you now? What is this darkness which cloaks you so that you cannot hear the words of my mourning?"

For a long time Gilgamesh stayed by the body of his friend: seven days and nights he sat, numbed and silent, until at last the worms, who serve the Annunaki, the judges of the dead, fastened on Enkidu to take him below. Then did Gilgamesh bury his friend and make an offering to Shamash. Then he covered himself with the pelts of wild beasts, and streaking his face with ashes, he set forth to find Utnapishtim.

"At the end of the world lives Utnapishtim, who is called the Faraway," said Gilgamesh to his heart. "Him will I seek whom the gods spared from the Flood. They set him in a land far away, at the mouth of the rivers of the earth, in the garden of the gods. To him they gave eternal life. Him will I seek because I am afraid

of death. I will seek him and learn from him the secret of eternal life."

A long path through the wilderness Gilgamesh walked, and when he came at last to the mountain passes, he made his camp. For a time he watched the embers of his fire, and then he slept. But in the night he awoke from a dream and beheld a strange sight. There in the moonlight were lions, and they leapt and played and gloried in their life. Then Gilgamesh took his sword and fell on them like an arrow from a taut bowstring, and he vanquished them, he destroyed and scattered them.

In the morning he rose and went his way, coming at length to the great mountain Mashu, which guards the rising and setting of the sun. At its gate stand the Men-Scorpions, the dragons who guard the passes and whose glance is death. For a moment only did Gilgamesh shield his eyes; then he went forward.

"Who are you who comes to us without fear, without trembling? Your courage is that of the gods, but you are dressed as a wild man, in pelts. Stand and tell us the reason you come," said the Man-Scorpion, the captain of dragons.

"Gilgamesh is my name," answered that one. "I come for Enkidu, my friend. Him I loved dearly; together we suffered and together we gloried. Now he is dead, and surely that is my lot also. I seek Utnapishtim, the Faraway. To him the gods gave life everlasting. I need to question him about the living and the dead. Open the gate of the mountain and let me pass!"

"No man has done what you have done," replied the Man-Scorpion. "None, not one has made the journey through the mountain. Twelve leagues does the way run under the mountain, all in darkness. Three leagues are in darkness, and three more. Yet three more leagues are in darkness, and yet three more. Would you go that way? There is no light there, the presence of Shamash does not find a way in.



Yet if you would go that way, Gilgamesh, I will open the gate to you. Go with the blessing of the gods, may you find what you seek. Go, the Gate of Mashu is open."

Now three leagues under the mountain went Gilgamesh, and darkness cloaked every step. Nothing could he see before him, nothing behind. Three leagues more he went, and yet three leagues. Nine leagues thus he went in darkness, the darkness was thick about him, it enveloped him like a cloak. Nothing could he see before him, and nothing behind. After nine leagues, the end was near, a cool wind blew upon his face, yet he could see nothing. So yet three more leagues he went, and at last he came out from under the mountain and beheld the sun, the light of Shamash, streaming down upon him.

So it was that Gilgamesh came, weary and worn, to the garden of the gods. Golden trees were there, and fruit of gems. Lapis lazuli were the leaves, and grapes of carnelian hung upon the vine. There Gilgamesh sat down by the shores of the ocean, and there Shamash saw him, saw his weariness, saw the labors of this man dressed in pelts of wild beasts. And Shamash spoke to him:

"Gilgamesh, listen to me! To me you dedicated yourself and slew Humbaba, the watchman of the forest; and it was I whose supplica-

tions spared your life when you slew the Bull of Heaven. Listen then to me, Gilgamesh! Never will you find the life you are seeking. Better it were that you never came this way, a way no man has gone before."

And to Shamash Gilgamesh replied, "Long have I toiled in darkness, through the wilderness and over the mountain passes. In darkness I came here, to seek Utnapishtim the Faraway. Am I to cover my head with earth now? Though I may be no better than a dead man, let me at least look upon the glory of the sun."

*

With her golden bowl she sits by that sea: Siduri, the maker of wine. With a veil she is covered, none can see her face. To her gate came Gilgamesh, and from afar she saw him approach. She saw a man dressed in the pelts of wild beasts, a man with the marks of a long journey on his face, with despair in his heart. To him she barred the way, she drew the bolt across the gate, saying to herself, "Surely this is a thief who comes this way."

But even as the bolt shot home, Gilgamesh lodged his foot in the gate and called in anger, "Woman, wine-maker, who are you to bar the gate to me? I will smash your gate, I will tear down your door. I am Gilgamesh, who slew the Watchman of the Forest, who slew the Bull of Heaven, who vanquished the lions in the mountain passes. You may not bar the way to me!"

Then Siduri said to him, "This is not Gilgamesh, lord of Kullab, slayer of Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven, vanquisher of lions. This is one who is dressed in the pelts of wild beasts, whose face is weary, whose heart is full of despair. Why do you come this way? Are you looking for the wind?"

"And why should I not be weary and full of despair?" Gilgamesh replied. "My friend Enkidu is dead, whom I loved as a brother. Now I seek Utnapishtim, who lives at the mouth of the rivers, and to whom the gods granted eternal life. I would ask him about life and death. Woman, I have looked upon your face: let me not look upon the face of death, that face I fear so much."

"Gilgamesh," Siduri said to him softly, drawing him inside her hut, "you will never find that life for which you are seeking. The gods have not given that to man. To man they gave the fruit called Death; the fruit called Life they kept for themselves. As for man—as for you—fill your belly with good food and wine. Day and night, feast on the things of life, dance, rejoice in what is your lot. Soon enough all will be taken from you: food and wine, the love of family and friends. Make your garments fresh, Gilgamesh, anoint your hair. Cherish the hand of the child, make your wife happy in your embrace: this is the lot of man."

Now Gilgamesh sat by the fire in Siduri's hut and stared a long while into the embers and was silent. At last he spoke.

"Woman, wine-maker: how can I be silent, how can I rest, how can I be merry, dance, enjoy the things of life, when my brother, whom I loved, is dead? Seven days and seven nights I sat by him and wept, and then the worms, the servants of the Annunaki, fastened on him and carried him below. This too is my fate, and I fear it. No, I cannot rest. I will go over this Ocean, to find Utnapishtim. What directions can you give me?—this, not soft words and wine, is the boon I ask of you. How will I cross the Ocean?"

Siduri said to him, "There is no crossing of that sea, Gilgamesh; except for Shamash, who can cross it? Deep are the waters of death that lie between this place and that which you seek. How can you cross? When you come to the waters of death, what will you do? Nevertheless, Gilgamesh, I will tell you this. In the woods, seek out Urshanabi, the ferryman of Utnapishtim. With him are the Sacred Ones, the Ones of Stone. With his help you might cross. But if it is not possible, you must turn back."

Then Gilgamesh leapt up, in a rage. He seized his axe in his hand, and he sped to the woods by the shore like an arrow from a taut bowstring. Swinging his axe wildly, shattering the Ones of Stone in his wrath, he sought Urshanabi the Ferryman. He found him as he sat by his boat, carving the prow in the shape of a bird.

"Who is this who comes wildly, shattering the Ones of Stone, the Sacred Ones who protected the crossing and the landing of the ferryboat?" said Urshanabi as he sat by the beak of his ship. "Surely this is a thief, a brigand who comes thus wildly. Would you shatter me too? I have nothing to give you."

"I am Gilgamesh, lord of Kullab, slayer of Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven. For Enkidu I come, for Enkidu my brother, who is dead. I would speak with Utnapishtim of the secret of eternal life. Take me to him! Take me now in your boat across the Ocean, across the waters of death!"

Urshanabi stood up then and for a long time looked at Gilgamesh in silence. He looked at the clothing of Gilgamesh, the pelts he wore. He looked at the marks of mourning and weariness on his face. Urshanabi looked at the de-

spair in the heart of the lord of Kullab. Then he spoke.

"The crossing is deadly, Gilgamesh. It is doubly deadly now that you have destroyed the Ones of Stone: they protected this harbor, they protected the crossing and the landing. How will we cross now?

"Go into the woods and do this. Go, and cut six score staves, each sixty cubits long. Caulk them with bitumen and cap them with ferrules and bring them here."

At once Gilgamesh turned and went into the woods. There with his axe he cut six score staves of straight wood, caulked them with bitumen, and capped them with ferrules. He brought them to Urshanabi and placed them in the boat.

"Now listen to me again, Gilgamesh. When we come to the waters of death, you must do this. Thrust in a pole, down to very bottom of the sea. When the pole runs out, thrust in another, and another after that, and another. Make sure your hand never touches the water, for that is certain death."

For three days they sailed, they sped across the Ocean in three days, the journey of a month and a half. Then they reached the waters of death and the boat would not move. Then it was that Gilgamesh took up the first staff and thrust it down deep into the water, taking care that his hand did not touch the water of death. When the first pole ran out, he took another, and after that another. So they crossed, pole by pole, until all six score staves had thus been used. Then Gilgamesh raised his arms like a mast and fastened his garments to them like a sail, and so they crossed the waters of death and came to the other side.

From where he sat by the water's edge he saw them coming: Utnapishtim, the Faraway, he to whom the gods gave eternal life. And Utnapishtim wondered to himself, "Who is this who sails with Urshanabi, dressed in the pelts of beasts? This is none of mine, and yet he is. By his clothes and wild appearance he is none of mine. But by his face and heart he might be myself, though not for many, many years."

Then Gilgamesh approached and bowed down before Utnapishtim and prayed to him:

"Utnapishtim, the Eternal, you whom men call the Faraway, you who dwell at the mouth of the rivers, hear me! I am Gilgamesh, lord of Kullab, from the house of Anu, king of Uruk. You wonder at my appearance, but why should I not look thus? My face is of one who has made a long journey in heat and cold, in light and darkness, over the mountain passes and across the waters of death. As for my clothing, it is the raiment of mourning, and I wear it for my friend Enkidu, who is dead. For seven days and nights I watched by his side when he died, and I saw the servants of the Annunaki take him below. I watched his death, and now I fear my own. As for my heart, it is the heart of a man who has seen death a thousand times and never feared it, yet saw death but once and now cowers in despair. O you whom the gods spared, you to whom they gave eternal life, my father Utnapishtim, you who have entered the assembly of the gods, I beg you: how shall I find the life for which I am searching?"

*

By the sea they sit, Gilgamesh and Utnapishtim, the young king and the old man, the mortal and the deathless. Utnapishtim looks at Gilgamesh and speaks.

"Tell me, what is permanent? Tell me of the works of men, are they permanent? Do houses stand forever? Do brothers divide an inheritance to keep for ever? What endures? Does the floodtime of the rivers endure? Does the dragon-fly endure forever? From the days of old there is no permanence. To all creation the gods gave death. The sleeping and the dead, how alike they are, like brothers! Yes, sleep is like a painted death. What happens when the Annunaki assemble together, when Mammetun, the mother of destinies, decrees the fates of men? This one shall live, that one shall die. But the day of death they never tell."

To Utnapishtim the Faraway, Gilgamesh now speaks.

"I came here expecting a hero, a warrior like myself, but what do I find? An old man taking his ease in the sun by the water's edge. If nothing is permanent, if nothing endures, if nothing lives forever and all shall die, how do you come to be here, how came you to enter the assembly of the gods, how did you merit everlasting life?"

"Listen to me now," says Utnapishtim. "Lis-

ten to me now, Gilgamesh: I will tell you a secret of the gods."

Then Utnapishtim spoke and told of Shurrupak, where it stands by the Euphrates, a city old when the earth was young. The world was filled with people in those days, and their noise went up as a great clamor and offended the gods. They came together in council then, and resolved to destroy the earth by deluge. But Ea, whom Utnapishtim honored, warned him of the flood, and guided the building of a boat. Onto that boat went Utnapishtim and his wife and his servants. Onto that boat went gold and living things, the beasts of the fields and the craftsmen who made the boat. When the time came, the ship was battened down, and the destroying rains came and flooded the earth. The boat of Utnapishtim rode out the storm. It rode out the rains and the rising waters. It rode out the darkness and the thunder. When Enlil, the god of storm, broke the land like a cup, the boat rode out the storm. Great was that flood: even the gods fled before it to the highest reaches of the heavens. And when it was over, nothing was left: over the earth was water only, there was no land to be seen. Then on the mountain of Nisir, the boat of Utnapishtim touched land and held fast. The first day it held fast, and the waters receded. The second day it held fast and the waters receded. The third day it held fast, and the waters receded. For seven days the waters receded and the boat held fast. On the seventh day, Utnapishtim let loose a dove, but it found no resting place, and so returned. Utnapishtim let loose a swallow, and it also returned. Then he let loose a raven, and the raven did not return. Then Utnapishtim threw open everything, and made a sacrifice to the gods and gave thanks. And the gods, smelling the sacrifice, swarmed like flies over it. Ishtar was there, and she saw the earth, smashed and broken and the bodies of men and beasts strewn everywhere. Then she took her necklace, made of the jewels of heaven, and set it above the earth. She forbade Enlil to come to the sacrifice, for without reflection he had destroyed her people. Then came Enlil and said in anger, "Has any mortal survived the flood? For none was to survive." Then Ea spoke and told him of Utnapishtim, she told him that it had been she who had warned the man. Then Enlil repented, and took Utnapishtim and his wife, and the god touched his forehead to theirs, and so they became immortal. Then he set them down by the mouth of the rivers, far away at the end of the world, in the garden of the gods, to live forever.

"How then will you find the life for which you seek, Gilgamesh?" said Utnapishtim as he finished. "Who will call the gods to assembly for your sake? But if you are intent, put it to the test: only prevail against sleep for seven days and seven nights. . . ." Yet even as he spoke, a mist of sleep stole over Gilgamesh, and his head nodded upon his breast.

"Look at this strong man now," said Utnapishtim to his wife. "Over the wide world he travels, in search of eternal life. High over the mountain passes he came, and over the sea, to escape from death: yet he cannot even hear out my story, but sleep steals over him like a cloak."

"Touch him, then, and awaken him," said the wife to Utnapishtim.

"No, let him sleep. And let him know how long he sleeps. Men are great dissemblers: even you he will try to deceive. Therefore bake bread while he sleeps, one loaf for each day he sleeps so."

So Utnapishtim's wife took flour and water and made dough and baked bread, one loaf each day as Gilgamesh slept. And when the hero awoke, he said, "I had hardly slept when you awoke me." Then Utnapishtim pointed to the loaves, seven of them, and said, "One loaf was baked for each day of your sleep, O mighty king, and look: the first loaf is hard, the second like leather, and the third is soggy. The fourth is mouldy, the fifth is mildewed, the sixth is fresh, and the seventh lies still upon the embers of the oven."

"What then shall I do, O Utnapishtim my father, where shall I go? Already sleep, that painted death, lies hold of my limbs, it crouches in the corner of my chamber. Wherever I put my foot, there I find death."

Then Utnapishtim spoke to Gilgamesh and said, "Go now, and freshen yourself. Cast your pelts aside and bathe. Anoint your hair, renew the fillet upon your forehead, put on fresh clothes. Renew yourself, Gilgamesh, and return to Uruk. The clothes I will give you will show no wear of age while you journey, always they will be fresh upon you."

Down to the water's edge went Gilgamesh and removed his clothes, which Utnapishtim burned upon the shore. And while he bathed, the wife of Utnapishtim said to her husband, "What will you give to Gilgamesh that he can take back with him? For he came here on a long journey. He must not return empty-handed." And Utnapishtim called out to Gilgamesh where he bathed, "Gilgamesh, you have come here on a long journey; you shall not return empty-handed. I will reveal a secret thing, a secret of the gods will I tell you.

"There is a plant that grows deep in the ocean, at the very bottom of the sea. Thorns it



"Gilgamesh"

has which will wound your hands, but if you pluck it and carry it back, your hands will hold that charm which will return to a man his lost youth."

Then Gilgamesh swam to the deepest part of the ocean. He tied stones to his feet and went to the bottom of the sea. There on the bottom he saw the plant, and the thorns wounded his hand. But he prevailed and cutting loose the stones tied to his feet returned triumphant to the boat of Urshanabi.

"Look, ferryman! Behold this marvelous plant, the means for a man to win back his youth and his strength. I will carry it back to Uruk. I will give it to old men to eat. I will call it, 'The Old are Young Again,' and I will eat it myself and have back my lost youth," said Gilgamesh to Urshanabi. Then he put on the clothes which Utnapishtim gave him and set sail for Uruk.

Over the seas they went, the journey of six weeks in three days time. Over the land they went after that, and when they were weary, they made their camp. Then Gilgamesh saw a well of cool water, and he bathed in it and lay down beside it.

But in the pool was a serpent, and the serpent smelled the sweetness of the herb. He came out from the well, he came to the plant even as Gilgamesh slept, and ate it. Immediately, he sloughed his skin and returned to the well.

When Gilgamesh awoke, he looked, and the herb was gone. Then he raised his voice in a loud wail and cried, "O Urshanabi, for this I toiled long and hard. For this I came over the mountain passes and over the sea. For this I was wounded in the hand—that the beasts might benefit from my heart's blood, but not myself. For myself I have nothing."

They returned to Uruk, and Gilgamesh showed Urshanabi the walls of burnt brick, the work of his building. Great is the name of Gilgamesh, lord of Kullab, king in Uruk. He knew secret things, he was wise, he brought us a tale of the days before the Flood. A long journey he went, he was weary and worn out with labor. He returned, and he engraved on a stone the whole story.

The Huichol and the Quest for Paradise

This is the story of a pilgrimage to Paradise in which I had the good fortune to take part. Between 1965 and 1966, Professor Peter T. Furst and I worked in Mexico among the Huichol Indians, where the late Ramón Medina Silva, Huichol shaman or *"mara'akame"*, and his wife Guadelupe, shared their knowledge and time with us most generously. It was Ramón who led the peyote hunt in which we participated in 1966, which was to my knowledge the first time anthropologists had an opportunity to witness this event.

The Huichol Indians realize the apex of their religious life in "Wirikuta," a high desert plateau several hundred miles from their mountain homeland, conceived of by them as a sacred land of origins. There is reason to believe that Wirikuta represents a historical as well as mythical site of Huichol beginnings. They say that the First People, quasi-deified ancient ancestors, once dwelled in harmony and freedom as nomadic hunters in Wirikuta, and from there they were driven out into mortality, and into a life of sedentary agriculture, in the Sierra Madre Occidental. Yearly, small groups of Huichols, men and women, young and old, are led by a shaman-priest, the *"mara'akame,"* in a return to Wirikuta to hunt the peyote.

To re-enter this sacred land they must be transformed into the deities. That complex cluster of ceremonies and rituals which prepares them for this return includes a ritual wherein the *mara'akame* dreams their names, the names of the Ancient Ones, and thus determines the pilgrims' sacred identities. The peyote-hunt pilgrimage is a return to Paradise, for Wirikuta is the place where "All is one, it is a unity, it is ourselves." There, before time began, they "find their lives," and for a while dwell in primordial unity until the *mara'akame* leads them back into ordinary time and life. The climax of the pilgrimage is the hunting of the peyote.

Peyote, for the Huichols, as a sacred symbol is inseparable from deer and maize. Together, deer, maize and peyote symbolize the totality of Huichol life and history. The deer is associated with the idealized historical past of the Huichols as nomadic hunters. The maize stands for the life of the present—mundane, sedentary, good and beautiful, utilitarian, difficult and demanding. Peyote evokes the timeless, private, purposeless, aesthetic dimension of human spiritual life, mediating between former and present realities, and providing a sense of being one people despite dramatic changes in their recent history, society and culture. Through the capture of the peyote a complex series of unifications takes place in Wirikuta.

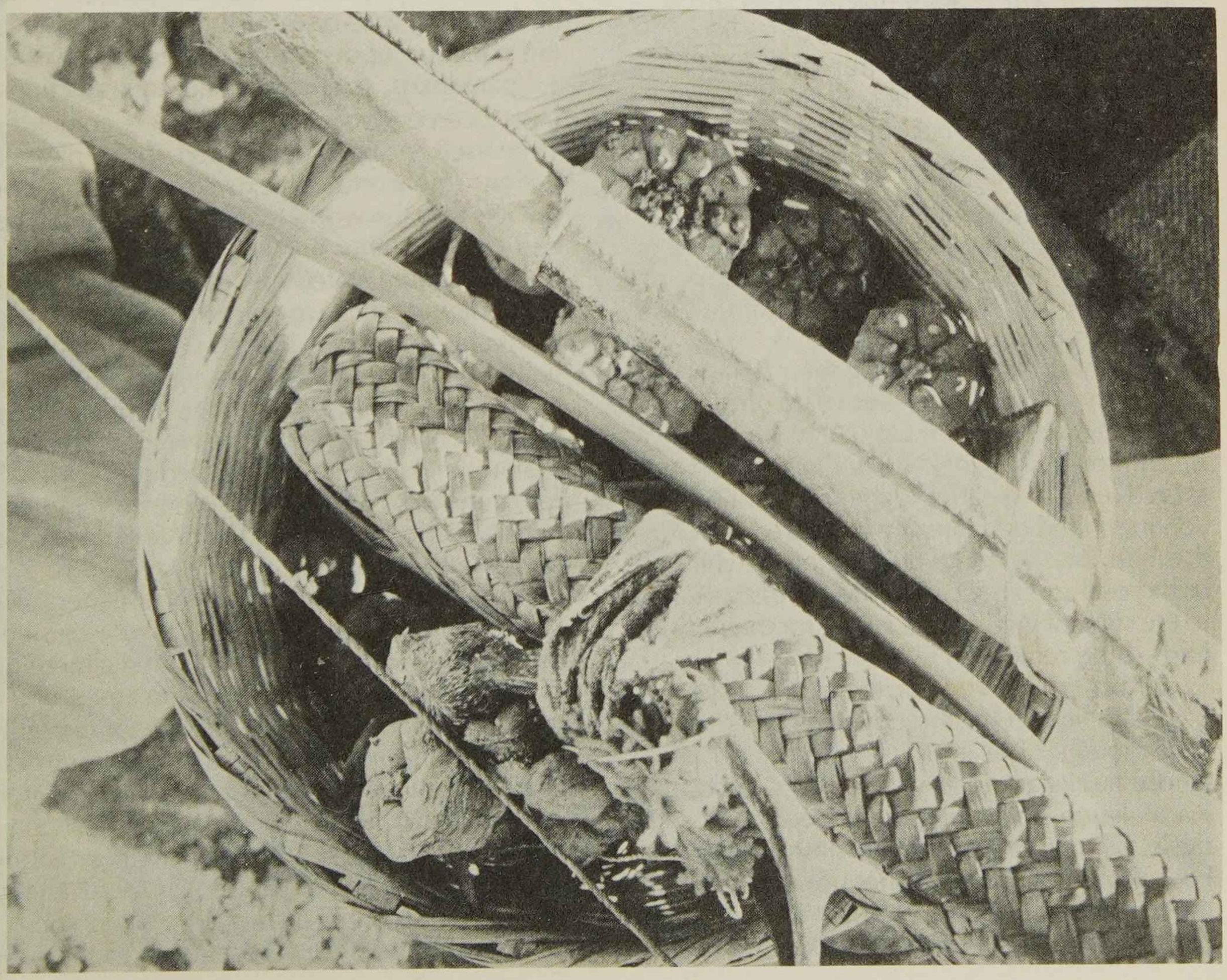
The pilgrimage lasts several weeks. Each step along the way is highly ritualized, for the pilgrims follow in reverse the exodus of the Ancient Ones out of Wirikuta, performing numerous acts attributed to the First People at specific locations. They re-enact the feelings, attitudes, and behavior of the deities, rejoicing, grieving, celebrating and mourning appropriately as the journey progresses. They do so as a profoundly integrated community, for if the hunt is to succeed the pilgrims must pledge their entire loyalty and affection to each other and their *mara'akame*. Unless they are in complete accord, their venture will fail and they will not find the peyote. Moreover, the journey is very dangerous, for it is possible to lose one's soul, conceptualized as a fuzzy thread *(kupuri)* which connects each *peyotero* to the deity who

Barbara G. Myerhoff

gave him life. Our shaman friend Ramón stated that if the pilgrims do not give their whole hearts to the leader and to their companions, the *mara'akame* will not be able to protect them from the danger of soul-loss in Wirikuta. Such intensity of trust and affection cannot be sustained in the ordinary social world, and when the peyote hunt has ended, it dissolves. The unity and its dissolution are symbolized by a ritual in which each pilgrim makes a knot in a cord which the *mara'akame* keeps during the journey. When the pilgrimage has been completed, the cord is unknotted, the unity terminated.

As the deities, the pilgrims endure many privations. They forego or minimize human physiological needs as much as possible. Sleep, sexual relations, excretion, eating and drinking are actually or ritually forsworn during this period, for these are activities of humans, not gods. In becoming the gods, the pilgrims are cleansed of their mortality, which is symbolized by sexual relations. Ritually they confess to all illicit adventures; even children must participate, as does the *mara'akame*. After this confession, they are reborn and re-named, and the divine character so received is maintained throughout the pilgrimage.

Sometime before reaching the sacred land, everything is equated with its opposite and reversed. The known world is backwards and upside down. The old man becomes the little child. Whatever is sad and ugly is considered beautiful and gay. One thanks another by telling him, "You're welcome." One greets



another by turning his back on him and bidding him goodbye. The sun is the moon, the moon the sun. Ramón says:

> *When the world ends it will be like when the names of things are changed, during the peyote hunt. All will be different, the opposite of what it is now. Now there are two eyes in the heavens, "Dios Sol" and "Dios Fuego." Then, the moon will open his eye and become brighter. The sun will become dimmer. There will be no more difference. No more man and woman. No child and adult. All will change places. Even the* mara'akame *will no longer be separate. That is why there is always a* nunutsi *(little baby) when we go to Wirikuta. Because the old man and the tiny baby, they are the same.*

These oppositions, like the sacred identities, like the hunt of the peyote, are not merely stated; they are enacted. The old man does not gather firewood in Wirikuta. It is not fitting work for a baby.

"Primeros," those making their first peyote pilgrimage, have their eyes covered on arriving at the periphery of Wirikuta so that they will not be blinded by the glory and brilliant light of the sacred land. Only after proper preparation, involving a kind of baptism with sacred water by the *mara'akame* and a description of what the *primeros* may expect when their eyes are bared to the sight of Wirikuta, it is safe for their blindfolds to be removed.

On arriving in Wirikuta, the party camps and begins to search for the peyote. The plant is now thought of as equivalent with a deer, whose tracks are followed. Once sighted, the *mara'akame* stalks the peyote-deer and cautiously, silently drawing near, slays it with his bow and arrow. Blood gushes upward from it in the form of a rainbow of rays. With his sacred plumes, the shaman gently strokes the rays back into the body. The *peyoteros* weep with joy at having attained their goal, and with grief at having slain their brother; his "bones," the roots of the peyote plant, will be cut away and saved, to be buried in the brush so that he may be re-born. The peyote is removed from the earth, the resulting cavity surrounded with offerings. The cactus is then sliced by the *mara'akame* and a segment given to each of the peyote companions. Then, a pilgrim acting as the *mara'akame*'s assistant administers, in turn, a piece to his leader.

This moment marks the fulfillment of the highest goal in Huichol religious life. Unity has been accomplished on every level. The social distinctions among humans have been obliterated: male, female, old, young have been treated and have behaved as if they were the same. The normally profound distinction between *mara'akame* and his followers is deliberately abolished when he becomes one of them by receiving the peyote from their hands. Now the peyote becomes identified with maize: it is of the same color; it also is food for the people. The separations of the natural and the supernatural order have been overcome, for the *peyoteros* are the deities. The plant and animal realms have likewise merged, as the deer and the peyote are one. And past, present, and interior time-beyond-time are fused in the equation of deer and maize and peyote. All paradoxes, separations and contradictions have been transcended. Opposites coincide. Time itself has been obliterated, for Wirikuta is not only the world as it existed before Creation but it is also the world that will reappear at the end of Time, after this epoch has been completed. Ramón stated this explicitly in saying, "One day all will be as you have seen it there in Wirikuta. The First People will come back. The fields will be pure and crystalline . . . One day the world will end and that beauty will be here again." Thus past and future are the same and the present is but a human interlude, atypical and transitory, a mere deviation from the enduring reality represented by Wirikuta. It is a foretaste of Paradise.

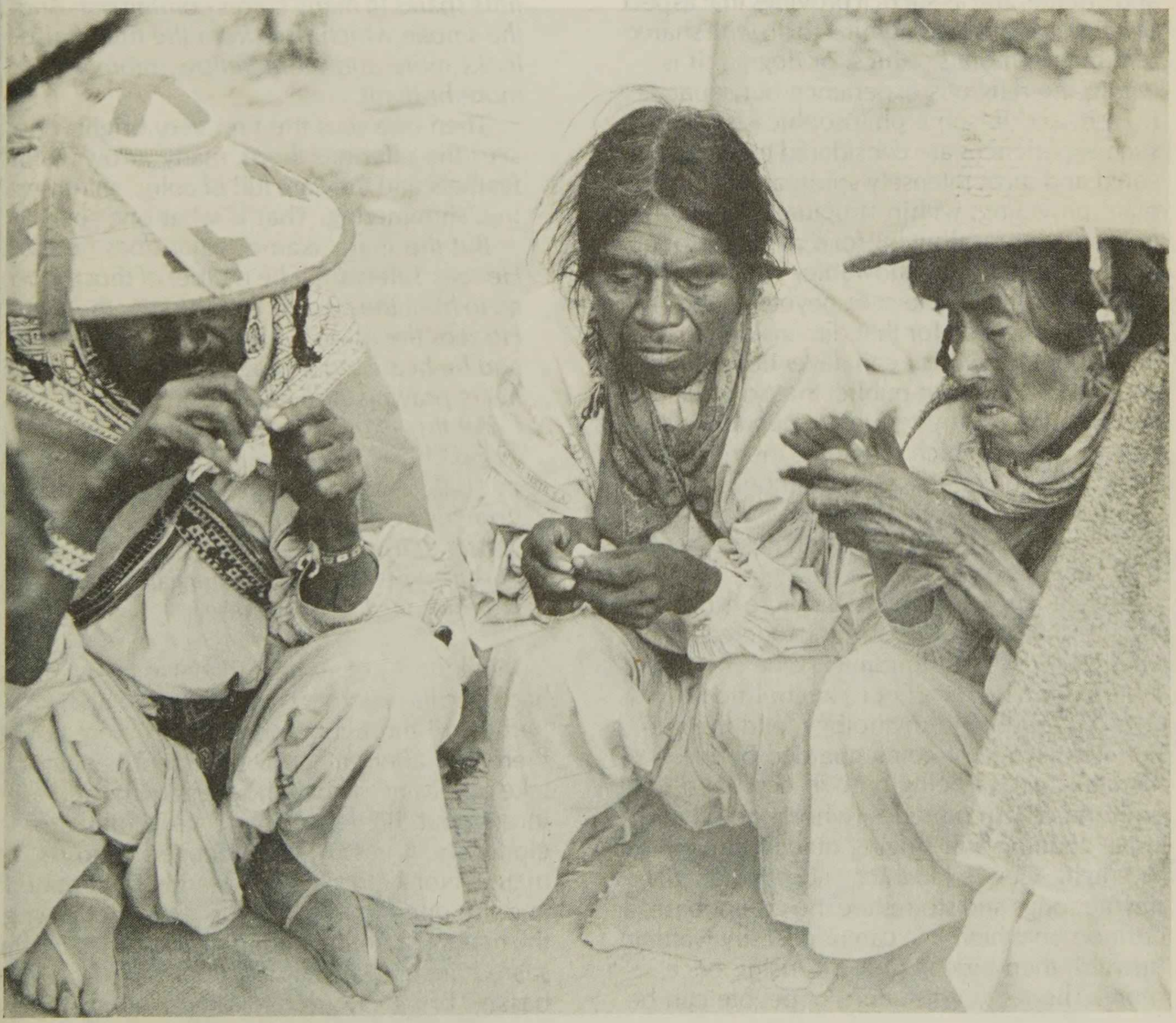
Analytically speaking, the most general fusion which takes place in Wirikuta can be described as what Geertz has called a merging of the "lived-in order and the dreamed-of order." The attainment of this dream in reality arouses in the *peyoteros* great joy, genuine ecstasy. There are no visions on this occasion, for only a small amount of peyote has been consumed. The rest of the day is spent in gathering more peyote to be eaten later. On the evening following the ritual slaying and token consumption of the first peyote, each of the pil-

grims seated together around the fire withdraws into silence, and eats several segments of the best peyotes. There is general quiet, and it is the first release they have had from the intense camaraderie and conformity to ritual prescription that have characterized their behavior up to this point. Now each one is alone in an inner world, for it is not the custom, as the Huichols say, to talk of one's visions.

It is said that ordinary people merely see beautiful lights, lovely vivid shooting colors, little animals, and funny creatures. There is no purpose, no message. Each person has his or her own experience, and only the vaguest references are made to this part of the ceremony. The visions are always good, if one has followed the *mara'akame* and done all with a pure heart. There is no nausea, no terror. Only if the peyote is eaten by one who is not properly prepared, who has not properly confessed, or has not gathered "good peyote" under the direction of the *mara'akame,* conventional bad visions are said to occur.

The *mara'akame* alone has routinized visions. His are concerned with lessons and messages from "Tatewarí", Grandfather Fire. He sees Tatewarí in the fire and communicates directly with him. Thus the *mara'akame* brings back information from other worlds, information of value and meaning to his people. He undertakes a magic flight to help his people understand the regions of the unknown, in classical shamanic fashion. But ordinary folk need not be concerned with such cares; for them, peyote brings only extravagant, purposeless beauty and release into the realm of pure aesthetic and spiritual delight.

The year before the peyote hunt in which I participated, before I understood the need for secrecy, Ramón had given me some peyote and watched over me while I had my vision. Afterwards, I attempted to elicit from him an explanation for or interpretation of what I had seen. It took me some time to understand his reluctance as he attempted tactfully to lead me away from questions about meaning toward observations about how beautiful it had been. We continued in this fashion for a while until at last he said, "It means *itself* no more." So I understood that the peyote visions of ordinary pilgrims are



gratuitous; and because peyote produces experiences which are only uniform in being consistently pleasant, it brings to each one who takes it something unpredictable, irregular, spontaneous, and unstructured, though still within safeguards and limits. It permits an experience which is not completely regulated, but not dangerous or likely to lead to individual or societal disruption. Peyote constitutes that part of human life which is private, beautiful, and unique, and as such, it provides that aspect of religion which has nothing to do with shared sentiments, morals, ethics, or dogma. It is within the religious experience but separate from it, and in some philosophical systems, such experiences are considered the most elevated and most intensely spiritual available to man, providing, within structure, liberation from structure—allowing for a voyage into subjectivity, into the unknowable, within a fixed framework. Here one sees peyote as the Huichol provision for that dimension of religious experience which can never be routinized and made altogether public, that sense of awe and wonder, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* without which religion is mere ritual and form. It is the ecstatic and enormous moment when the soul departs, flies upward and loses itself in the other reality. The darkness explodes into dancing colors.

The Huichol pilgrim knows there is nothing to fear; the flight will not last. One can fling oneself into it with impunity. One is safeguarded by the wealth of Huichol tradition, ritual, symbol, and mythology, and the certain knowledge of being guarded by the *mara'akame*, of being pure in heart and one with the other comrades, whom the pilgrim hears chatting and singing quietly throughout the night. Gentle laughter and fragments of peyote songs and stories are the groundbase, a *cushion* on which one can ride, easily wafting upward, then touching down, rising once more. The religious culture of peyote can be thought of as a strong resilient net which allows for greater and greater ascent and freedom.

What does the *peyotero* actually see? Here is the *mara'akame's* description of an ordinary vision and his contrasting description of his own didactic vision of Tatewarí.

And then, when one takes peyote, one looks upward and what does one see? One sees darkness. Only darkness. It is very dark, very black. And one feels drunk with darkness except for a little bit of light, a tiny bit of light, brilliant yellow. It comes there, a brilliant yellow. And one looks into the fire. One sits there, looking into the fire which is Tatewarí. One sees the fire in colors, very many colors, five colors, different colors. The flames divide–it is all brilliant, very brilliant, and very beautiful. The beauty is very great, very great. The flames come up, they shoot up, and each flame divides into those colors and each color is multi-colored–blue, green, yellow, all those colors. The yellow appears on the tip of the flames as the flame shoots upward. And on the tips you can see little sparks in many colors coming out. And the smoke which rises from the fire, it also looks more and more yellow, more and more brilliant.

Then one sees the fire, very bright, one sees the offerings there, many arrows with feathers and they are full of color, shimmering, shimmering. That is what one sees.

But the mara'akame, *what does he see? He sees Tatewarí, if he is chief of those who go to hunt the peyote. And he sees the Sun. He sees the* mara'akame *venerating the fire and he hears those prayers, like music. He hears praying and singing.*

All this is necessary to understand, to comprehend, to have one's life. This we must do so that we can see what Tatewarí lets go from his heart for us. One goes understanding all that which Tatewarí has given one. That is when we understand all that, when we find our life over there.

Wirikuta is just as magnificent as the pilgrims had been led to expect in the stories which they had heard throughout their lives before going there. Yet after gathering sufficient peyote to take home and plant in house gardens and use throughout the year, they leave Wirikuta precipitously. It is said, "It is dangerous to remain." Not a moment of lingering is permitted and the pilgrims literally run away, following the *mara'akame* beyond the boundaries of the sacred area as speedily as their bundles and baskets of peyote permit. They leave behind

their offerings, their deity names, the reversals, their intense companionship, and all physical traces and reminders of Wirikuta. Spines from cactus, bits of earth, dust, match sticks, cigarette stubs, pieces of food, all that was part of or was consumed or used in Wirikuta is emptied and scraped and shaken into the fire; the things of the present world and the things of the sacred are kept rigidly apart.

Returning to ordinary reality, the pilgrims are left grief-stricken ,exhausted, and exhilarated by the experience of Wirikuta. An enormous undertaking has been accomplished. They traveled to Paradise, dwelled there as the deities for a moment, and returned to mortality. In their lifetimes, they have achieved the most total and complete intention of religion: the experience of entire meaning and coherence in the universe. Best is the Huichol's own description: "It is one, it is a unity, it is ourselves."

*

These practises and beliefs represent the Huichol version of a common human experience—the mystic vision. Many terms have been used to identify this phenomenon: peak experience, ecstasy, poetic vision, inspiration, and so forth. Examination of their contents quickly reveals that they are describing the same event, and in very consistent terms, under different labels. If dreams and myths can be shown to be stable and structured, as Freud and Lévi-Strauss have demonstrated, it should come as no surprise to find that so is the mystic vision. Indeed, it appears that this most mysterious, ineffable, and subtle human experience is patterned and uniform in many respects, crossing cultural and historical boundaries to reassert its regular, fundamental shape. The mystic vision may be produced by alterations in the blood chemistry of the brain, induced with drugs or by other means. The Huichol are hardly unique in using a hallucinogenic substance to achieve their spiritual purposes, indeed a growing body of evidence suggests that religion and psychedelic plants developed together from the beginning of human culture. What is of special interest here is how the Huichols use peyote to construct a



religious world view, which though built of universal ingredients is nevertheless distinctly their own. What are some of the themes in the peyote hunt which reach beyond that event and show themselves to belong to mankind whenever it has sought such visions? Four such features are immediately evident.

First, in the peyote hunt as in all mystic visions, the sense of unity is a signal ingredient, a unity of several kinds. The peyote pilgrims experience profound unity with each other and also perceive the basic unity underlying the multiple and diverse forms and appearances of objects in the world. Ultimately, the sense of unity is fulfilled when the self blends with the cosmos, accompanied by feelings of ecstasy, oceanic bliss and blessedness.

Eliade accounts for this union of self with the cosmos in religious terms, calling it, "the panhuman yearning for Paradise." Freud has explained it as the desire to return to the condition of undifferentiated dependence of the womb. Jung sees it as the wish to escape individuation, adulthood and mortality. In individual terms, it is the wish to return to pre-natal euphoria, in religious terms, the yearning to live in communion with the deities. Birth and creation wrest us from this state of bliss and hurl us into an existence of struggle, loneliness, and accountability, but the desire to re-enter that paradisiacal condition before birth and Creation never disappears altogether, and the memory of it lingers and haunts us.

No mortal can return to Paradise, as the Huichols know well, for when they go to Wirikuta they go as the deities, and they maintain that sacred condition until they return home. And they understand fully the dangers of the quest. They hurry out of Wirikuta as soon as their work there is done, knowing that it is perilous to linger in Paradise—too easily one may lose one's *kupuri*—the thread of one's soul-connection. No mortal can make Paradise a permanent abode or the ecstatic condition a permanent way of life. Huichol world view is precise and expert in guarding against the dangers of this apocalyptic unity and in guiding pilgrims out of Wirikuta and back to the ordinary realm.

Part of the sense of unity which appears in the mystic vision is an intense intimacy between people: Buber's *Zwischenmenschlicheit*, Turner's *communitas*. It is a eucharistic love, shared by those who undertake the mystic voyage together. The Huichols symbolize this total camaraderie with the knotted cord which the peyote pilgrims carry until they return to normal life, each knot symbolizing one of the *peyoteros* and the cord their unity and common purpose. The knots are undone on returning home, for it is clear to them that such a love cannot be made the basis of ordinary friendship and should not be carried into daily secular life. Just as all the objects belonging to Wirikuta are left behind, so is that intense unity among fellow pilgrims.

Another feature which appears regularly in mystic visions is an altered sense of time. Ordinary chronology is suspended and the single moment is expanded to contain all that has ever been or will ever be. The mystic moment is one in which time and change are obliterated. Wirikuta, the Huichols say, is the land of Origins, where the First People lived in the very beginning. It is also the End, for when the world is finished, "all will be as it was in Wirikuta." The beginning and the end are the same, and the present historical moment becomes a passing interlude interposed between the first and last manifestations of Eternity.

How should one act in Paradise? How can one find the right deportment for such a purpose and how can one recognize oneself and others as truly deities? The Huichols use a mnemonic device to give cues to themselves and the others, and to synchronize and identify their actions as those suitable for deities in the Sacred Land. This they do by reference to the reversals instituted just before they entered Wirikuta. The upside-down quality of life in Wirikuta clearly sets it apart from mundane, secular life. And at the same time it provides a metaphor on the basis of which the pilgrims may design and coordinate their behavior. If the sacred realm is just the opposite of the known, everyday world, one can picture it in detail, relate to it concretely and precisely. But not just any metaphor would serve as well. The reversals signify that basic sense of unity which is the essential attribute of Wirikuta and of all mystic visions. Reversals function to reaffirm that despite the appearance of difference and even opposition, indeed underneath it is all

One. Oppositions are ultimately definable in terms of each other and call attention to their linkage. Eliade refers to reversals as examples of the *coincidentia oppositorum,* the eschatalogical image *par excellence,* suggesting always the mystery of totality, whether appearing in folklore, dream, religion or imagination. The presentation of reversals, as he tells us, "denotes that Time and History have come to an end—(it) is the lion lying down with the lamb, and the child playing with the snake. Conflicts, that is to say opposites, are abolished; Paradise is regained."*

Yet another stable ingredient of the mystic vision which appears in the peyote hunt is the insistence on its ineffability. Words have ever failed to render this experience. It is intrinsically indescribable because one of the constituents of the experience is the direct perception of the world without the intervention of language and interpretation. The escape from word-bound thought, the sense of deeply and immediately knowing and being, freed from collective, objective linguistic labels, is a regular and essential component of the mystic vision. Goethe phrased this aptly when talking abut the "half-opaque medium of concepts, which distorts every given fact into the all too familiar likeness of some generic label or explanatory abstraction." The mystic experience carries one behind abstractions, back to perceptual innocence, before the word, back to the stunning immediacy of uninterpreted sense data. The understanding of this feature of the mystic vision is reflected in the Huichol proscription against talking about one's visions.

Among the Huichol, peyote is the means of access to a universally sought, treasured event—that spiritual experience which carries the individual into the unknown, beyond the boundaries of self and the familiar world, to become a part of all that exists. The Huichols cherish peyote for its provision of a breach in the walls of history, time, and daily, mundane experience. Their customs and beliefs show a wisdom, a sense of proportion and an understanding, in which their life is enriched by the knowledge and use of peyote. Our own world, so far removed from theirs, is also enhanced when we glimpse these fortunate pilgrims who for a short time each year hold the keys to Paradise.



*Mircea Eliade, *The Two and the One,* Harper Torchbooks 1965, p. 121.

There is a remarkable consistency in the way physical artifacts produced by a traditional culture reflect and, indeed, embody important non-tangible cultural ideas, from custom to religion to philosophy. We are of course accustomed to these ideas as they reach expression in traditional literature: folktale, legend, myth. But we are less inclined to watch for subtleties like world view in such practical items as rugs and houses, or in objects of adornment, like necklaces. The Navajo provide us with a very interesting example of the way in which a discrete cluster of abstract world-view premises finds continual expression over a wide range of material and artistic production.

World view is a general way of referring to the manner in which a culture sees and expresses its relation to the world around it. While earlier students of culture nourished the fond notion that similar conditions would strike the human eye and soul in similar ways in widely separated places, there is now evidence to the contrary; that is, objective reality (as we like to call it) varies according to the viewer's means of perceiving it. Often, those means are affected by cultural and linguistic factors. For example, a UCLA research team working recently on the Hopi reservation found by brain wave analysis that Hopi children use the right hemisphere for speaking and hearing Hopi language and use the left hemisphere for English. They concluded that there is solid support for the concept that people speaking different languages "may perceive things in basically different ways."

The same would seem to be true of visual experience. In *Patterns of Discovery: An Inquiry Into the Conceptual Foundations of Science,* Norwood Russell Hanson says, "We are set to appreciate the visual aspects of things in certain ways. Elements in our experience do not cluster at random. . . . Seeing is not only the having of a visual experience; it is also the way in which the visual experience is had." Putting it in an anthropological-psychological context, Dorothy Lee, in 1950, suggested that a member of a given society not only codifies experienced reality through the use of language and patterned behavior characteristics, but grasps reality *only* as it is presented to him in the codes with which he is familiar. Edward T. Hall, in the *Hidden Dimension,* pointed out that "Significant evidence that people brought up in different cultures live in different perceptual worlds is to be found in their manner of orienting themselves in space, how they get around and move from one place to the next."

It is fairly clear from these and other researches that the members of any given culture perceive reality in terms of culturally provided sets of ideas and premises; the world of reality is processed somewhat differently from culture to culture. Not only are the incoming "data" interpreted by the patterning of a particular culture, but outward-moving communications are based on those same perceptions and premises. The human mind keeps producing, in miniature as it were, the world view which has formed its conception of reality by forming parallels on all levels of human expression, from houses to myths. We may expect, for this reason, that the artifacts and artistic expressions of any culture will reflect rather strongly the premises which that culture sees as representing the codes of reality. There is nothing new in this general observation, for it has been demonstrated widely in anthropological and artistic scholarship.

For example, many commentators have noted the way in which Western culture views almost everything as lineal, as susceptible of being planned out (especially in grid patterns), and as productive of certain ends. Alan Dundes has dealt with this revealingly in "Looking Ahead: A Folkloristic Reflection of the Future Orientation in American World View." In this article he notes how our jokes are end-oriented, how many of our proverbs and

A Circular World: The Vision of Navajo Crafts by Barre Toelken

clichés look forward to a future, and in general, how deeply our language and our traditions show forth our lineal view, especially with regard to time. He might also have pointed out that our productions in the material area are also lineal and oriented to grid planning: we prefer the most direct methods of production, and the straightest distance between two places; we plan our cities and our classrooms and graveyards according to certain grids; we assume that the order of the Universe exists and should be reflected in the order, especially the planning, of human productions—material and abstract; we draw graphs and lines and talk about trends and directions, paying particular attention to the future or to the end product. We try to keep our things straightened out, our people in line, our thinking level-headed, our quarters squared away. When we indicate that someone else is crazy, it is often by making a *circular* motion around the ear.

This provides us with a rather sharp contrast to the Navajo cultural way of looking at things: the Navajo see things as essentially cyclic, circular. The individual craftswoman, instead of standing on a straight ribbon of time leading from the past to some future point, stands in the middle of a vortex of forces exerted in concentric circles upon her by her immediate family, her extended family, the clan, and the whole living ecological system within which she lives and functions. Instead of planning the future as if she were separable from nature, she negotiates with those forces presently around her; instead of looking toward a future product, she looks to the past for patterning, for advice and wisdom. As we might expect, her expressions, whether oral (religious or secular), or material, (artistic or practical), are created according to the circular reciprocating designs which are models of her concept of the human position in nature. Time *surrounds* her, as do her dwelling place, her family, her clan, her tribe, her habitat, her dances, her rituals.

The Navajo feel that one's proper position with respect to nature has to do with one's reciprocal responsibilities to it, and that the maintenance of this proper position in turn maintains and occasions good health, which is the central part of Navajo religious concern. Almost any item created, then, needs to reflect this circular, reciprocal, negotiating view; but the word "reflect" does not go far enough in describing the Navajos' own recognition of artifacts themselves as models of world view. Perhaps the juniper seed necklace provides today one of the best examples of the depth I suggest. [Plate 1]

The brown seeds in these necklaces are

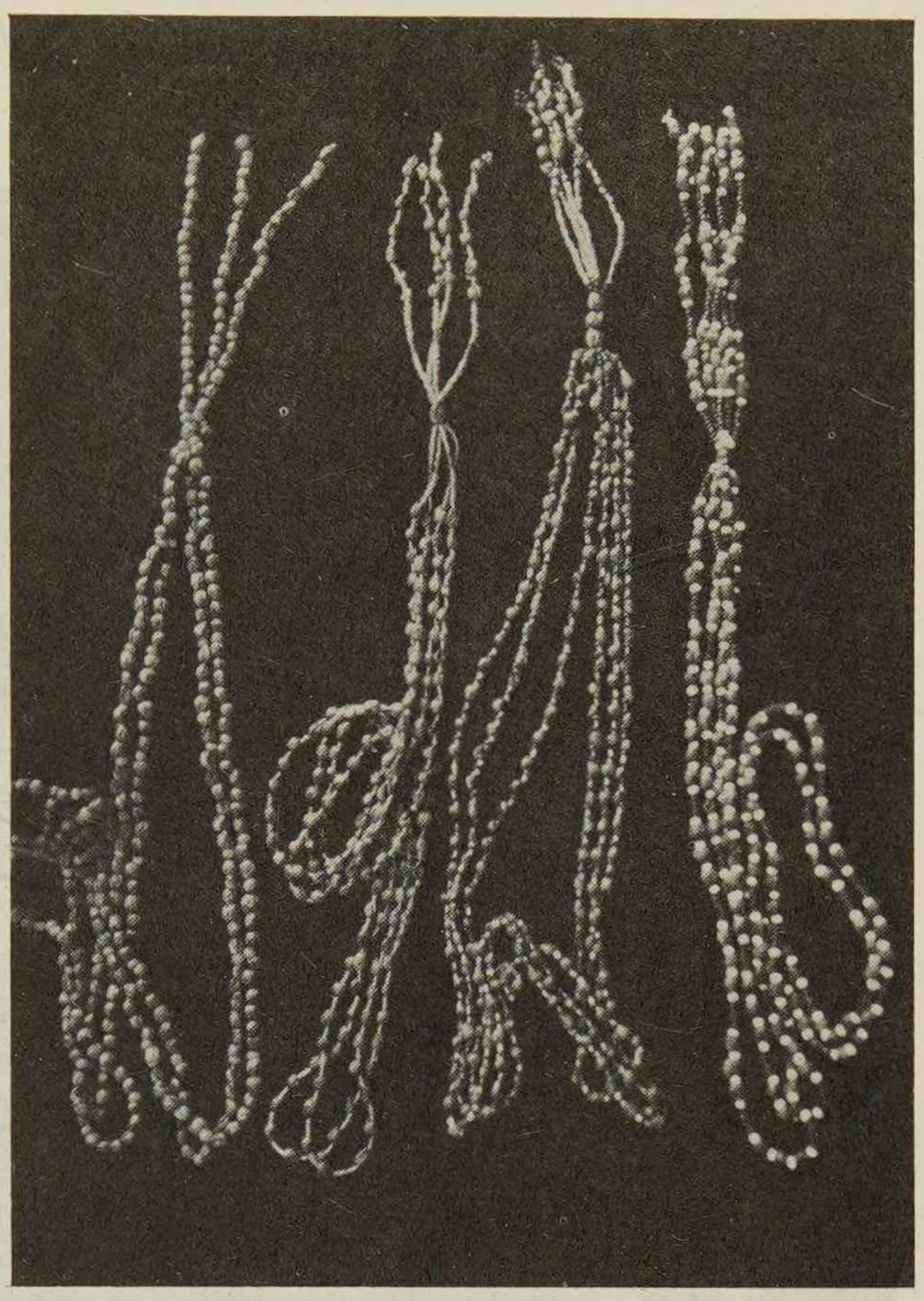


Plate 1: Juniper-seed necklaces, strung with colored glass beads from the trading post.

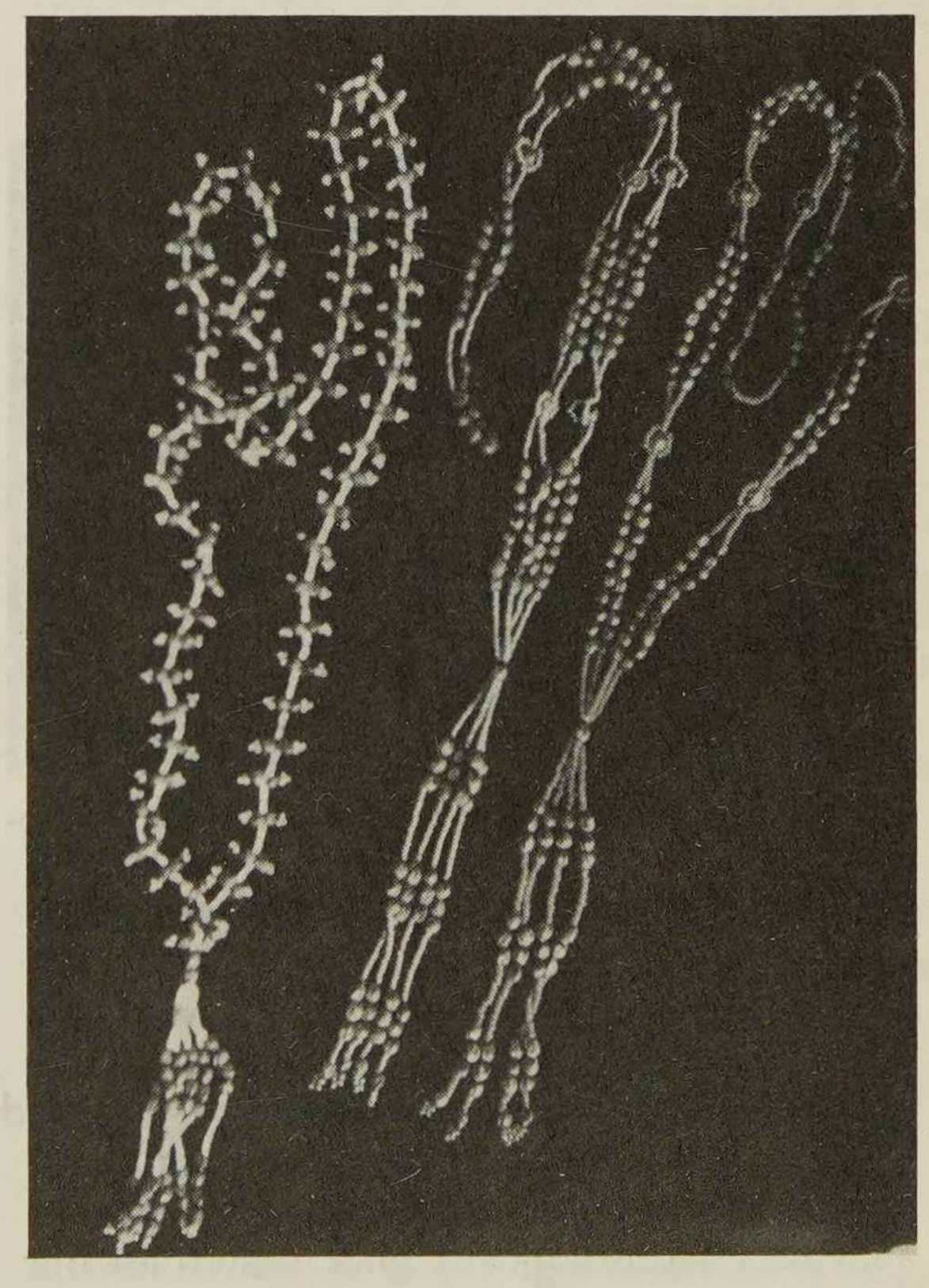


Plate 2: Colored beads used to decorate and surround the juniper seeds.

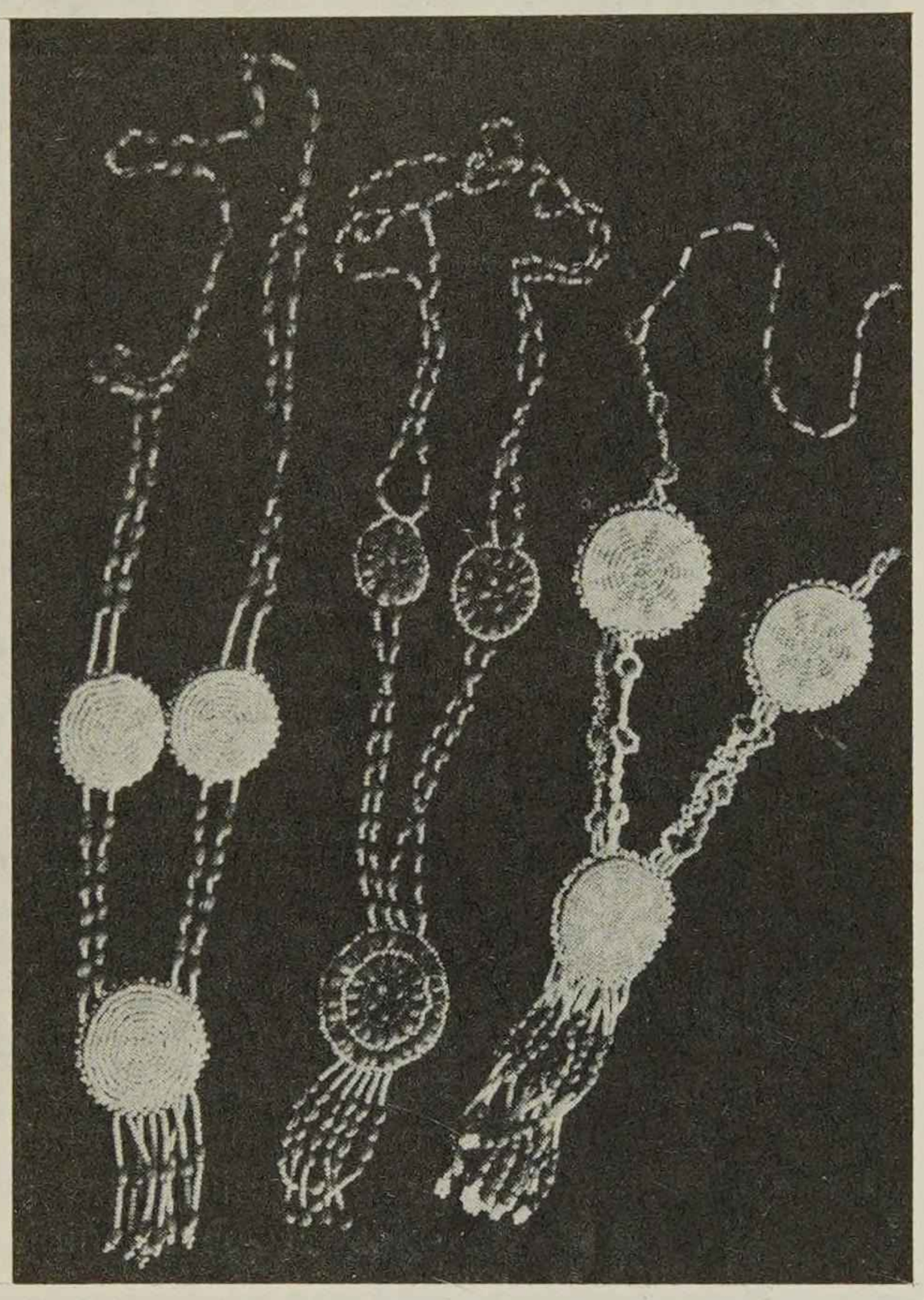


Plate 3: Circular medalions represent the stars.

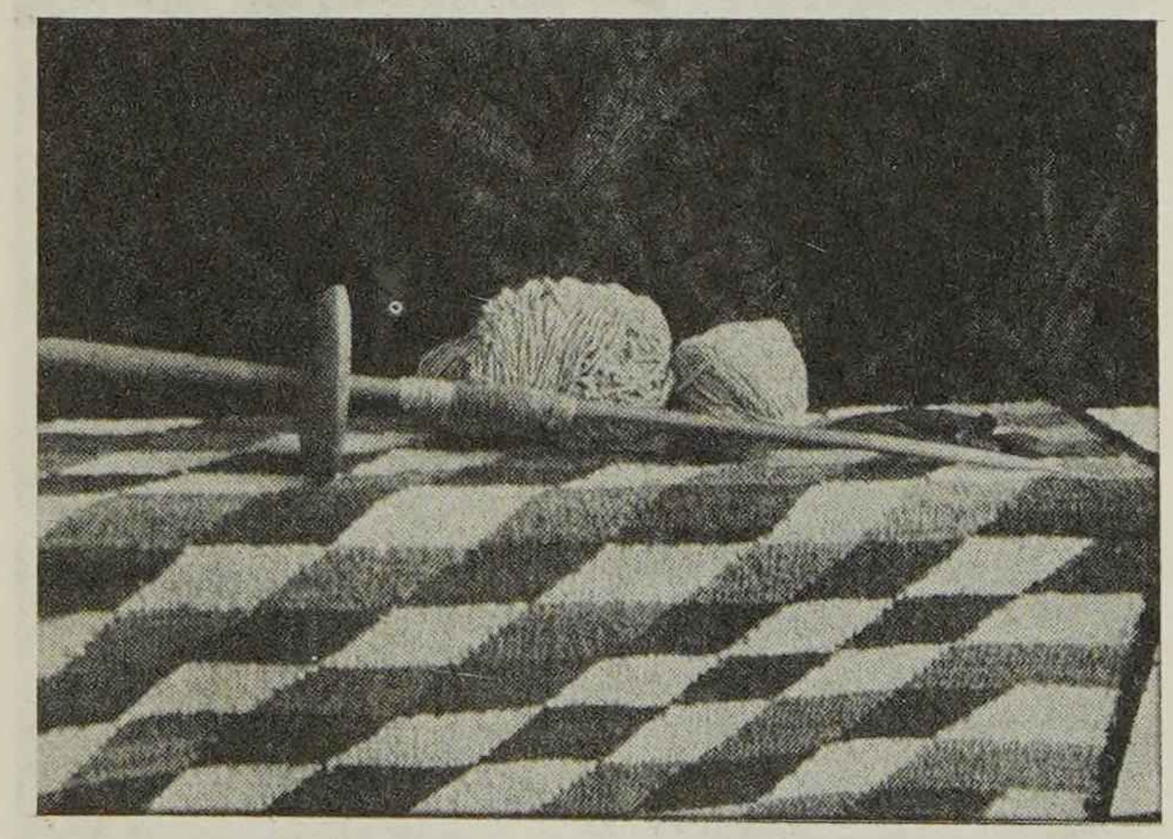


Plate 4: On a Navajo saddle blanket, a spindle (foreground), a ball of handspun sheep's wool, a ball of goat's wool yarn (for the warp), roots to provide the brown color in the pattern shown.

found inside the blue juniper berry; the tree drops the berry to the ground, where it is picked up by chipmunks and other ground animals and taken to partly underground burrows. Navajo children, mostly girls, search for the hiding places and take those seeds which have had one end chewed off, carefully replacing the rest so as not to deprive the animals of their normal food supply. The beads are then taken home, where the hole in one end serves as a guide for punching a hole in the other end with a needle. Colored beads are obtained from a near-by trading post or mercantile store, and the results are necklaces sometimes called "ghost beads" by the whites who buy them. The Navajo term, however, is *gad bi naa'*—literally, "juniper's eyes." Because the seeds represent a partnership between the tree, the animal, and the human, they stand in the Navajo mind for the delicate interrelationships between various departments of nature whose harmony produces good health. A Navajo will say that one who wears the juniper seed necklace will not go astray in the fog, or get lost in the dark, or have bad dreams.

However, Navajos of my acquaintance whom I have quizzed on this subject have assured me that they do not believe the necklace itself actually has magical properties; that is, the necklace as a physical item does not *produce* the condition of harmony necessary for good health, but rather it epitomizes it in such a way as to act very strongly as an external, physical representative of an internal frame of mind which the Navajo considers absolutely necessary in the maintenance of natural harmonies. If a person lives harmoniously with the living world, he will be healthy. If he is healthy, he will not get lost or have bad dreams. In this respect, the necklace is *primarily* symbolic, or it acts as what a literary critic might call an "objective correlative," because in and of itself it is a physical model of some deeper kind of reality, one which must be operative in one's own relationships to his total natural context. It functions, therefore, exactly as a sand-painting does, but without the support of formal ritual and narrative.

The beads are strung in sometimes simple, sometimes complex ways, [Plate 2], but always with the same meaning for the wearer. One further dimension is sometimes added: in those juniper seed necklaces which feature circles with pointed figures, [Plate 3], there is a representation of the cosmos, the stars, which deepens further the physical reference to total context for a Navajo. No Navajo of my acquaintance, living in Navajo country, goes without juniper seeds on his person, although not all people wear them as necklaces. The production of these necklaces for sale, especially featuring brightly colored beads from the trader, is probably an innovation encouraged by the Utes, who have used bead work more prominently than the Navajo. It seems also to be based on a widespread Navajo belief that whites like bright colors.

Another model of world view is seen in the

weaving of Navajo rugs or blankets [Plate 4]. It is important to remember that the Navajo do not normally weave rugs for themselves, but produce them to trade for food, or to sell directly for income. Thus, the Navajo could conceivably produce rugs in ways which do not distinctively represent their world view. But inquiry into the matter suggests that in this craft, as in others, the Navajo way of doing things is very much a part of their total processing of data through the world view, and shows that their concern is with process more than with end products.

In his very exciting research Professor Sol Worth of the University of Pennsylvania gave movie cameras to a group of Navajos and asked them to produce their own films. When one girl made a film on the weaving of rugs, having done all the filming and editing herself, Worth was rather surprised to find that the bulk of the film concerned people and sheep moving across the countryside, someone walking out in the hills in search of herbs, someone spinning thread from the wool, and so on. Only here and there in the film were there the briefest glimpses of someone actually weaving, and only a few seconds (of a half-hour film) were devoted to full shots of rugs. This seemed rather puzzling to those Anglos who first viewed the film, but in fact it represented very well the Navajo attitude toward weaving: the weaving itself, although done still in traditional ways, is the least Navajo part of the production. Rather, the interaction of people with plant life in the gathering of herbs for dyes, the movement of people across a familiar landscape, are matters which deeply absorb the Navajo as aspects of their reciprocal relationships with the environment. These are the *central* aspects of weaving. I suspect strongly, too, that the reciprocating geometrical designs in the rugs (suggesting a balance of the four cardinal directions) are also a reflection of a basically "circular" attitude produced on a flat plane, but they may be as well functions of a style of weaving which is done on slants by counting so many vertical strings across for each movement in the pattern [Plate 5]. The same slanted weave (sometimes called "lazy lines" by whites) can be seen in Plate 6.

The rug in Plate 6 would probably be termed a *"yei"* rug by many buyers (*"Yei"* in Navajo means something like "Holy People," or spirits, or something approaching the idea of departmental nature Gods). *These* figures, however, are not made to represent generalized Holy Spirits; rather, they are *nasho'i,* or lizard people. The rug itself was made as a gift to my wife, and while its weaver, my adopted Navajo sister, would rather have used four figures (the Navajo special number is four, as compared to our three), she wanted to let these figures represent my five children: the two on either end are alike because my oldest and youngest are both girls. The next two are alike because I have twin boys. My fifth child, who in actuality is the second oldest, is depicted here in the middle as different from the rest because he has no one else in the family who matches him; he is set apart by four feathers on his head.

But why should my adopted sister care to depict my five children as lizards? It is because reptiles in general, and lizards in particular, are symbols of longevity and good health, and by superimposing the idea of my children with a concrete expression of longevity and health, my sister was creating a physical model for an abstract health concept, and offering it as a gift which reflects her attitude toward my children. But the rug goes far deeper than that: as we talked about it, I found she was quite insistent on the idea that the wool represented in and of itself an interaction between the sheep and the human herder, as well as between the sheep and the shearer, the spinner of the yarn, and the weaver of the rug. In addition to this, nearly all the colors in this rug are taken from plant and herb dyes which had to be gathered over the span of an entire year because some of them are from the same plants, whose roots produce different colors in different seasons. Thus the coloration of the rug itself represents not only the interaction of man with plants, but of man with the continuing cycle of natural seasons, and all of these, too, are to be applied to the total model of longevity and health for my children.

In addition, some of the plants used are associated with particular medicines. The design, as I have suggested already, also represents an interaction between all of these factors and the human agent, the weaver, who had all of these possibilities within the scope of her conceptualization of the rug. In following these ideas still farther back, I found that even in the spinning of the yarn, the spindle must be turned in one direction ("clockwise") [Plate 7], for it represents the direction of the sun's movement; to spin the yarn by turning the spindle "backward" would be to produce yarn which represents the reverse of the normal state, yarn which will "come unraveled," "won't stay in the rugs" and "might cause sickness." It matters little whether the yarn might really physically come unravelled, for Navajo health beliefs are ritual and psychosomatic: the *idea* of unravelling is a greater reality and therefore a greater threat to health and stability than mere physical

"fact."

It is important to note, further, that in Navajo tradition it is from the woman that fertility and power emanate. The woman owns the hoghan, owns the children, owns most of the livestock, and weaves the blankets and rugs. This particular rug, given by one mother to another, is a powerful and eloquent articulation of human and natural relationships which language can only begin to describe. An artifact which we might normally say *reflects* the tastes and artistic premises of a culture is actually found to represent far more deeply the whole set of beliefs underlying the weaver's cultural world view, and thus ordering and giving power to her attempts at expression.

The production of Navajo moccasins [Plate 8] provides us with an analogous situation with respect to man's responsibilities to his other relations in nature. When deer skin is to be worn as part of the clothing, such as in moccasins, shirts, or cradle boards, according to older custom the deer's hide should not be punctured in the killing. Accordingly, the hunter must find a deer, chase it into open country, and pursue it until it is exhausted. While a deer will run at a great burst of speed for a short distance, it cannot endure very long in the open or semi-open desert. The hunter eventually catches up, throws the deer over onto the ground gently, and holds its nose and mouth shut, suffocating it (often with sacred corn pollen), while singing a chant which apologizes to the deer for taking his life and hide, and which thanks him for donating his substance to the welfare of the man. Other more complicated ritual acts follow, but I have been asked not to share them.

The reason such ritualism was obligatory, I am told, is that while food is a natural *right* of man, clothing is in another ritual category, and thus requires extra apology, and a greater sense of direct responsibility in the killing. This is, of course, very close to Hopi custom in the pursuit and killing of deer; my friend Yellowman informs me that not long ago most traditional Navajos would have tried, at least, to obtain hides to be used for any kind of body cover in this way. Yellowman himself still occasionally gets his deer in this manner, but since he is now afflicted with back trouble, he is more inclined to use his bow and arrow instead. This seems not to pose a traditional dilemma for him, however, for the moccasins he makes nowadays are chiefly bartered to a local trader for sale to white tourists. Apparently, the same rules of responsibility need not be so efficiently carried out when one is producing clothing for non-Navajos, just as brighter commercial dyes are often used in rugs for trade when the buyers ask for them. Yet, in Yellowman's earnest discussion of these matters, one can see that his role as hunter is still one which is very deeply imbued with cultural attitudes running far deeper than the practical aspects of simply killing and skinning a deer.

Yellowman further points out that the moccasins, made of animal skin, and the dye (some of the ingredients of which come from plants), and the tanning process (which uses the brains of the same deer), and the man with his foot inside, compose a typical Navajo combination of cooperation between plant, animal, and man. It is especially with reference to the moccasin that this coalition is important, because the word for moccasin is exactly the same as the word for foot *(ke');* in the Navajo mind, the moccasin becomes a part of the individual wearing it, and partakes of some aspects of his physical being, the most noticeable of which are the indentations of the toes and the shape of the foot which one finds distinctively inside each moccasin. The old adage of not criticizing someone else until one has walked a considerable distance in his moccasins is wide-spread in many tribes, including the Navajo, and carries more meaning than our comparatively superficial metaphor "if the shoe fits, wear it."

The bow and arrow [Plate 9] are still another complex of cooperative elements: the bow, of course, is made of wood, and the bow string is made of braided animal hide (in this bow Yellowman used cow hide). The arrows, too, come from the plants, but are guided by the feathers of birds and are tipped by arrow heads made by man. The arrow heads today are made of nails pounded out between rocks and then shaped. (Stone arrowheads are made by reptiles and are left on the ground for us to use in medicine). On the arrow, at the end grasped by the fingers, are two bands of color; one of them is always red from herb dyes, and represents danger and death. Inscribed on each arrow are lightning designs which are representative both of speed and death.

The arrows are straightened away from their original crookedness by two means: one is a ram's horn through which two holes have been pierced in such a way as to provide a strain on the arrow being passed through them. The arrow is soaked and then is continually bent through these holes until its original crooks are worked out of it. The other method, used in conjunction with this helper from the animal world, is the human mouth; the arrow maker makes minor adjustments in the arrow's straightness by biting it with his teeth. Thus on the arrow itself are the tooth marks of man, the feathers of birds, lightning from the cosmos,

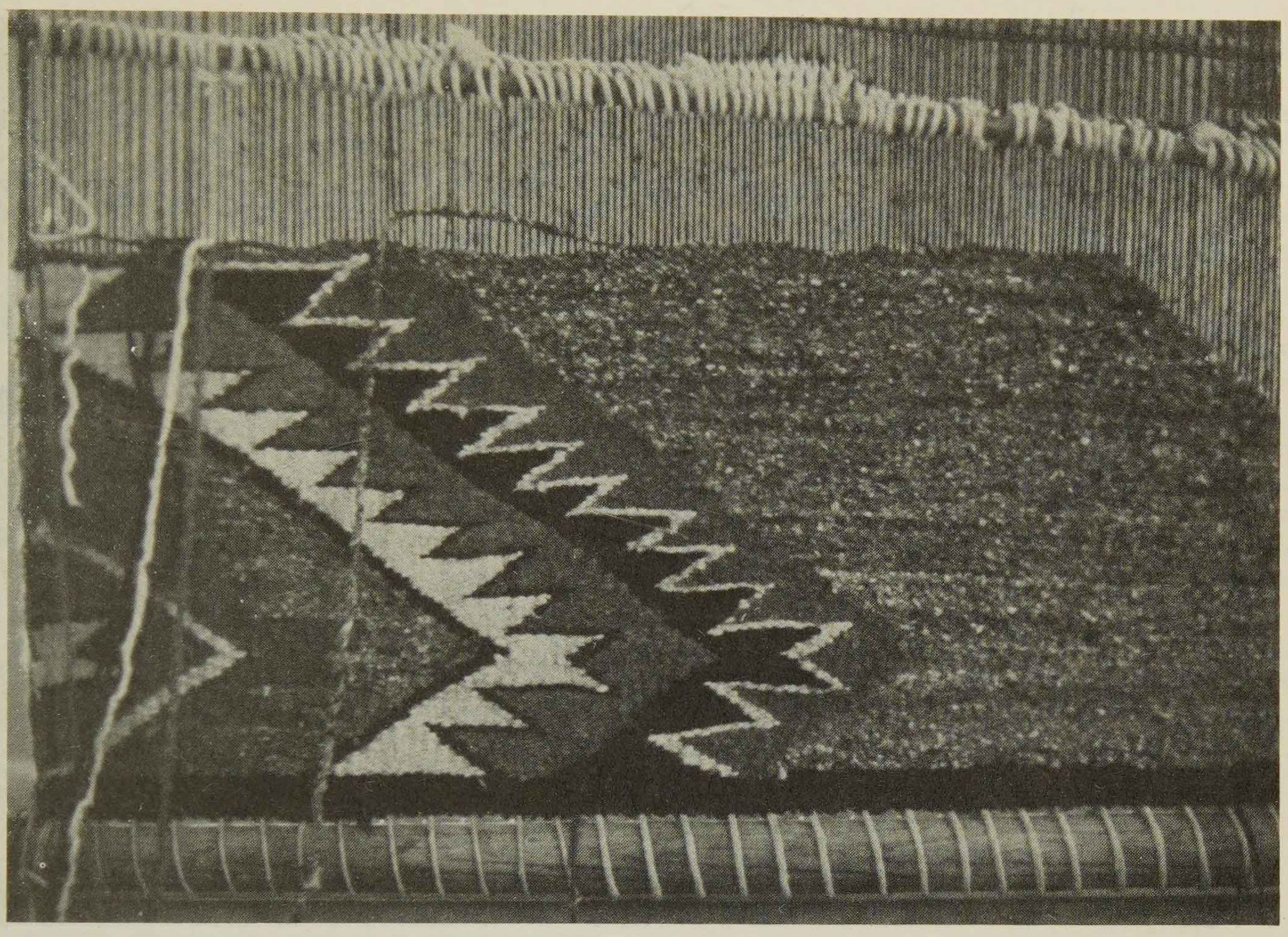


Plate 5: The lower left corner of a blanket in process. The same pattern will appear on the lower right corner, and will be reciprocated at the other end of the blanket.

colors derived from the vegetable world, all applied to a piece of wood.

Yellowman, in describing the workings of the bow and arrow, makes reference to all these things as necessary points of interaction in the production not only of the arrow itself, but in the development of an instrument which is to be used quite carefully and specifically in one of the most delicate areas of man's interaction with his ecological environment. One further gestural dimension should be noted here: when the Navajo bow is used, it is not held vertically, but horizontally; the hand drawing the arrow is brought back to the front of the chest where it lies briefly over the heart of the hunter before the arrow is released. In this way, in addition to all the cultural considerations mentioned here, the hunter makes one final gestural commitment to his task which is, if all other ritual aspects have been successfully completed, reciprocated at the other end by the entrance of the arrow into the heart of the pursued animal. The arrow is thus a *link* between man and animal, a form of communication and communion.

We could make similar excursions into nearly every aspect of Navajo material culture and we would find that in most cases the premises upon which each artifact is made will also be found behind the myths, tales, and religious commentaries. Not only is the hoghan

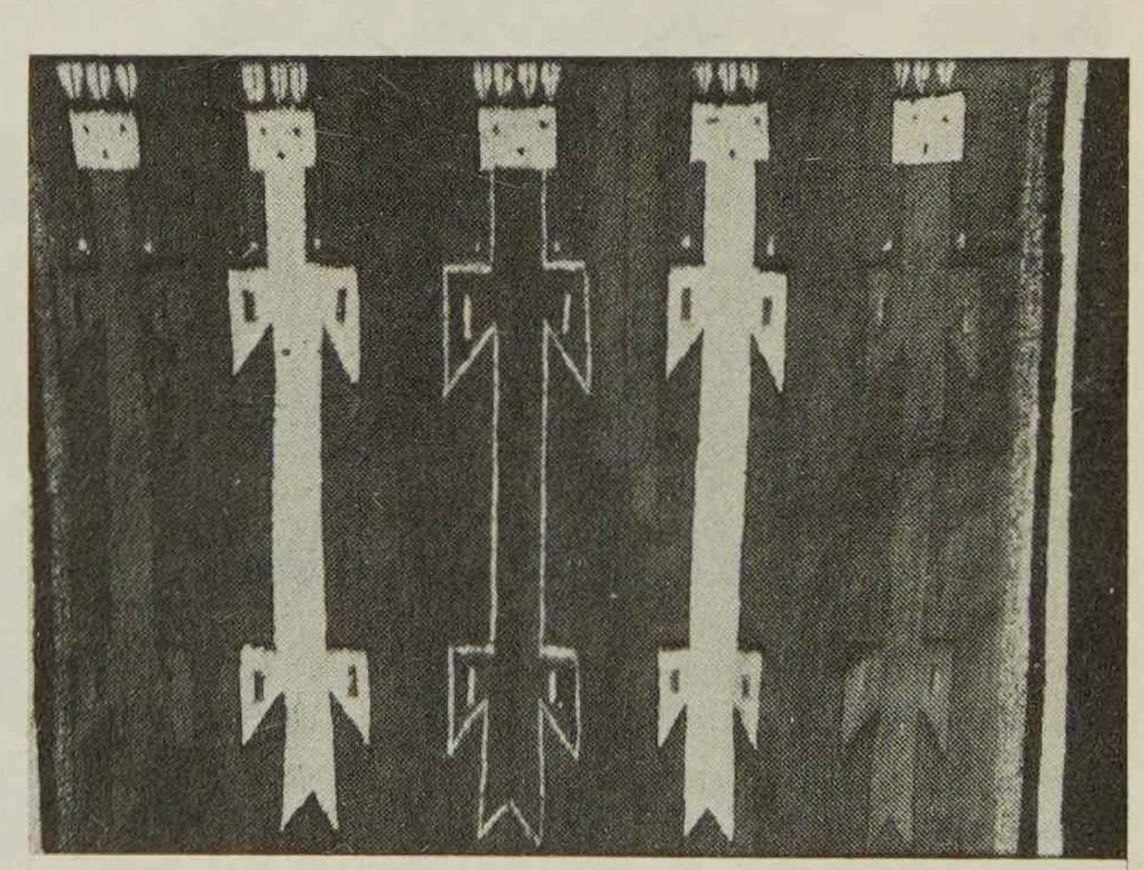


Plate 6: "Lizard People" figures woven into a blanket. Note that instead of the typical four-way reciprocation (end to end, side to side), there is only an end-to-end reflection here.

the living space for the Navajo; it is also the place where rituals occur. It is created in the shape of rituals, its round floor and eastward-facing door parts of the total alignment of man with the world of nature to which his rituals are addressed. Man's ritual space is not separated out from his daily life, but integrated into it. The hoghan, not surprisingly, is made of a combination of plants (in the form of trees and



Plate 7: "Grandma" Johnson, of Blanding, Utah, spinning yarn sunwise.

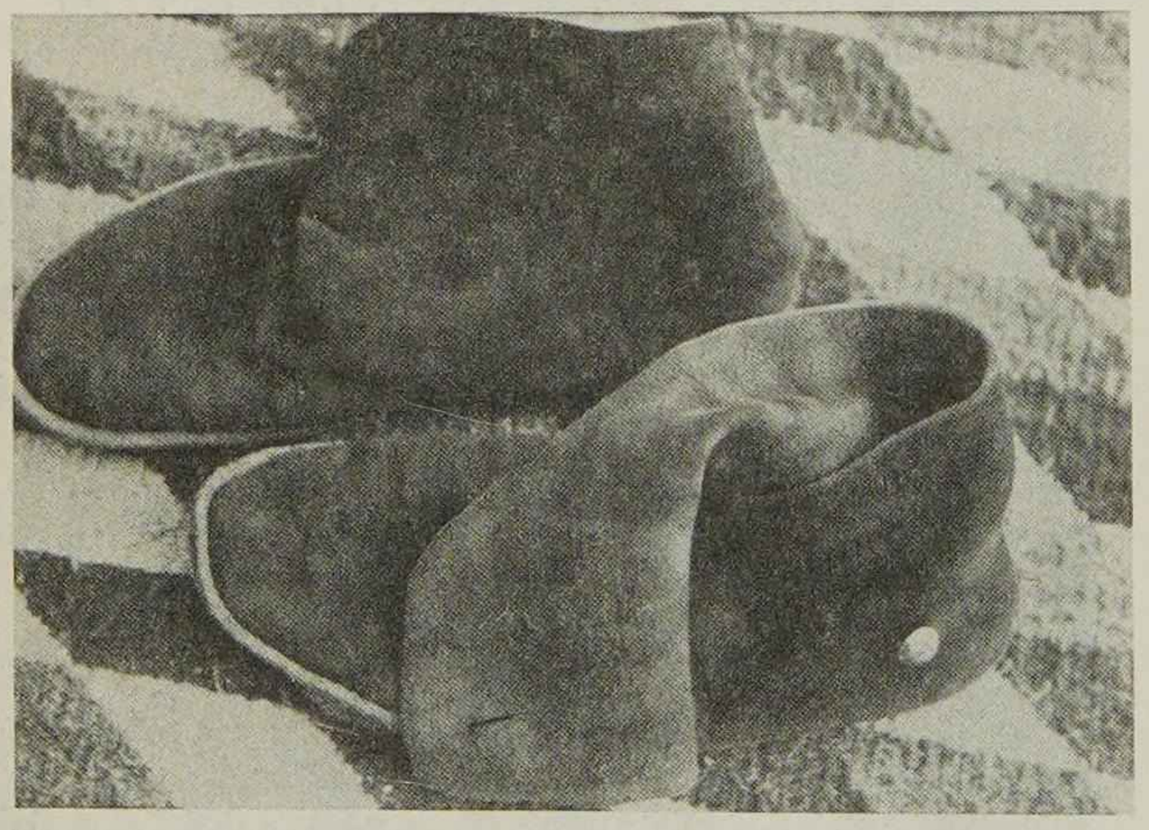


Plate 8: Navaho moccasins made by Yellowman, Blanding, Utah.

branches used for the internal structure), animal substances used in the lashing of materials together, dirt from the earth covering the outside, corn pollen rubbed along the main beams inside when the hoghan is blessed, and the whole combination created for, and lived in, by humans whose concept of their position in the world is expressed in terms of circles and interaction with those various departments of nature. The great sandpaintings, produced on the dirt floor of the hoghan, provide a two-dimensional diagram for the forces of nature. When the patient walks out on the sandpainting, the ritual creates a four-dimensional world where the patient is surrounded by and related to the Holy powers.

One last artifact may be mentioned in connection with these considerations: the string figure, which of course does not last beyond its own performance, is done by the Navajo only in the winter time, for the string figure designs were taught to man by the spiders (or by Spider Woman); while the spiders are "awake" and functioning during the summer, man does not intrude into their domain. In the winter, on the other hand, when the spiders are "away," mankind is able to approximate their designs by his own manipulation of strings. The designs may represent people, objects (such as a rug, a sweat lodge), natural phenomena (such as lightning) or star constellations. Since they are to be done and seen only in the winter, I do not feel it is appropriate to supply an illustration here. To the Navajo, engaging even in the apparently playful production of string figures is a matter which is closely allied to concepts of season, propriety with respect to the animal world, and is thus deeply symbolic once more of man's position and its responsibilities.

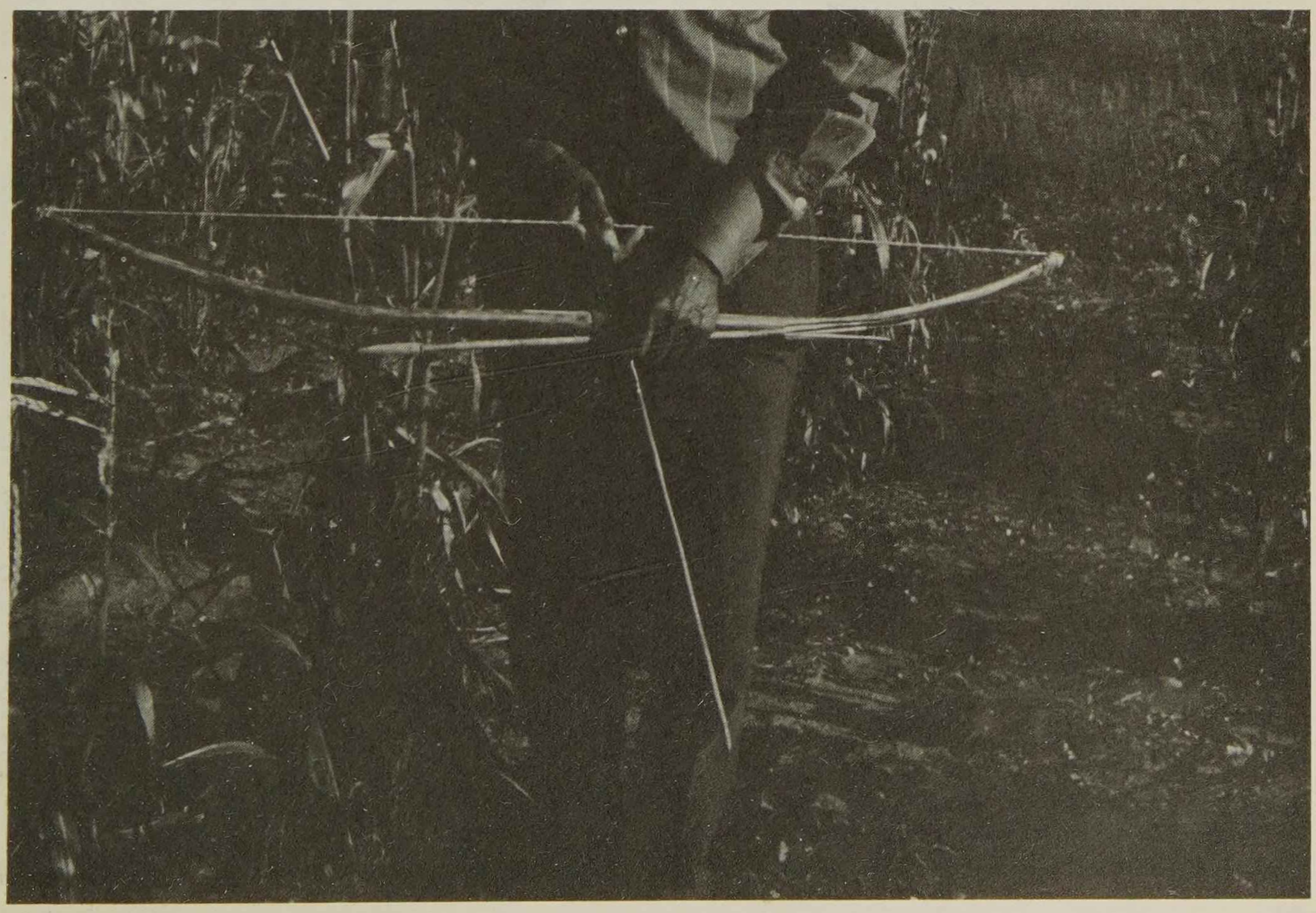
It is safe to say that it would be nearly impossible for a Navajo to take a close look at any of her own artifacts and not recognize in it the epitome of the larger realities governing the world which she sees about her. Similarly, it

would be impossible for her to look out at any natural scene without responding to each plant and color as potential symbol or helpful substance.

Our study of material culture has the potentiality of allowing us access to the deep structures of any culture's premises and world view if we are willing to go beyond the artifact itself into that set of abstract data it represents. The search is often aided by the people under scrutiny. Let us go back to the rug briefly: many, not all, Navajo rugs have a border. In many, not all, cases, this border is interrupted by a gap, called—in Navajo—*ch'indi bitiin,* "road of bad spirits." One reads, or hears the specialist claim, that the Indians believe all rugs must have a "flaw," or that every blanket needs such a road for its evil spirit to escape. I have inquired of many weavers about this and I have received this reply: there is no spirit in the *rug* and thus nothing to be let out. Rather, there is a bad condition in the mind of any weaver who believes a *design* can be finished off, completed. If a "mistake" occurs, it is left there as a good sign; if not, a "spirit road" can be provided. For it is the mind and culture of the weaver, not the rug, that remains the Navajo concern. Never the same from rug to rug, the *designs* remain with the weaver. The *rug* is a product, and when it is completed it is sold off. What we are speaking of then is a cluster of cultural and artistic codes which occasionally reach expression in a rug [read: string figure, hoghan, moccasin, bow/arrow, necklace] but which really *exist* primarily as traditional assumptions. The real tradition, then, is not the artifact itself: *it* is a particularized statement of traditional premises and assumptions.

This sounds quite platonic; indeed, one suspects Plato would have understood the Navajo concepts easily. In any case, we need to guard against the myopia imposed on us by our own thing-oriented world view. We must learn to watch beyond the thing, beyond the rug, the turquoise, the moccasin, for there—with proper visual and aural training—we will begin to perceive indeed another reality. This is not a reality to be discovered through chemicals or Sunday witch-hunting trips to obscure mountain villages, but by means of the rather more difficult path of language acquisition and sensitivity to a culture's most delicate expressions of itself. We may find *many* separate realities along the way, for each culture will yield forth its own, and we will perhaps have the good fortune then of witnessing the unlimited kaleidoscope of human thought and expression.

Plate 9: Yellowman's bow and arrows. Note the extra arrow held in bow hand. Both arrows have metal points made from carpenters' nails flattened and shaped.



PRAYER TO THE WEST

by Arthur Amiotte

Oh you to the West
the first direction
home of Wakiyan and of the setting sun:
hear my prayer.
Pity me.

I am just a man, but of the people.
It is for them that I make this prayer.
It is that we may live that I make this prayer.
My voice is weak but it comes from my heart.
Hear my voice and be merciful to me.

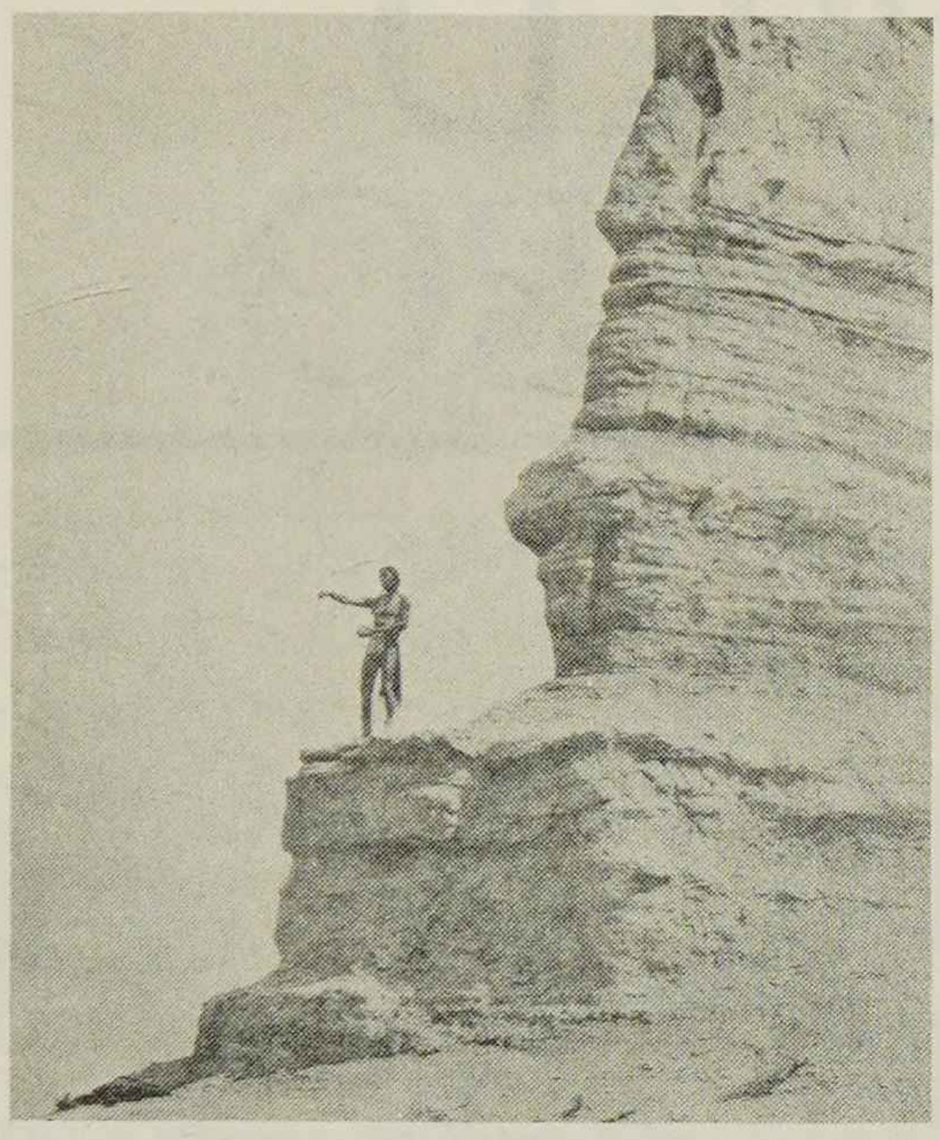
Oh you where the thunder and lightning live
home of the rain and hail
your powers to give life are those of the storm
that comes in fury but leaves peace in its wake.
You shake the world with the voice of thunder

and your eye of lightning
eagles fly before you
you bless the world with your lifegiving rain
and dancing hail
eagles fly after you.

Oh you from where comes the blessing wind
the wind of answers to prayers
bring to the people the rain of washing away blindness
that we and our land and our faith may be renewed
made whole and wholesome again.
Shower us that we may wash away our ignorance
and once more look upon you that we may see you
with a pure heart.
Wash from our eyes the blindness of unholy ways
that we may see again the good red road and walk it with pride
knowing that dignity in this life is being in harmony
with a proud creation with humble origins.

Oh you where the lightning lives and the day is red
cast your dancing eye of light
and in its power strike the nation with enlightenment
that we may realize that we are
but as momentary as that flash yet as powerful
for that power which is the lightning
is also the power that makes us live.
Enable us to understand
and live with that power in a holy way.
Remind us that we are of one creation
yet below it and above it
and that our duty to pray to you should be as faithful
as the thunder that follows the lightning.

Oh you where the daytime rests
bring solace and peace to the people in their weariness
for we cry and are hungry
strangers in our own land
deprived of survival
and losing the strength of mind and body
to see our way in this changing world.
Give us the healing light
and the beauty of your setting sun to see that way
so we may live in health and beauty and peace.
Send us the living rain
so we may grow again as the plant people do
reaching fruition in our time
and bearing the fruit and seeds for generations of good people.
Send us the living rain
that we may relearn for ourselves
the meaning of all that grows from the land
for we too are of the land
and must be reminded of how we are to live with it
and from it
and take care of it.



Open our ears that we may listen to the whole creation
and hear again the voices that are one voice.
Open our ears that we may hear the wisdom of our teacher
who is the universe
and once more listen to the message of the red way.
Help us to learn
that the voice of Wakan Tanka is continually around us
and it is our duty to listen when the voice calls
and to recognize the voice.

Oh you where the thunder lives
sound your voice that all may hear
and ears will be opened to the sound of voices.

Oh you to the West
hear my prayer.
I am only a man and I now cry and weep before you.
I cry to you for the people and for myself.
Pity me.

Arthur Amiotte, or Good Eagle Center, of the Lakota Teton Sioux, is a gifted artist as well as a teacher and lecturer. His dedication to the future of his people, exemplified in his teaching of children, is inseparable from his belief in their sacred heritage. He has recently completed four years of association with the shaman Petoǧa in the ceremonial traditions of the Sioux.

THE WORLD OF THE HERO

P.L. TRAVERS

I will preface what I am going to say with a few lines from e. e. cummings:

"May my mind walk about freely and supple
And even if it's Sunday may I be wrong,
For whenever men are right they are no longer young."

This gives you leave to doubt me and to take what I say simply as hint and indication and not at all as assertion. It is meant as a whisper at the inner ear and designed to touch that part of you which is not accessible to the things that are spoken of in newspapers.

But before we begin to search for the hero, I think we should take a look at the element he moves in, the world where he functions —folklore, fairy-tale, allegory, legend, parable, even nursery rhyme; for all these are as it were the principalities that together comprise the homeland of myth, the country which in the old Russian stories is called East of the Sun and West of the Moon, and for which there is no known map.

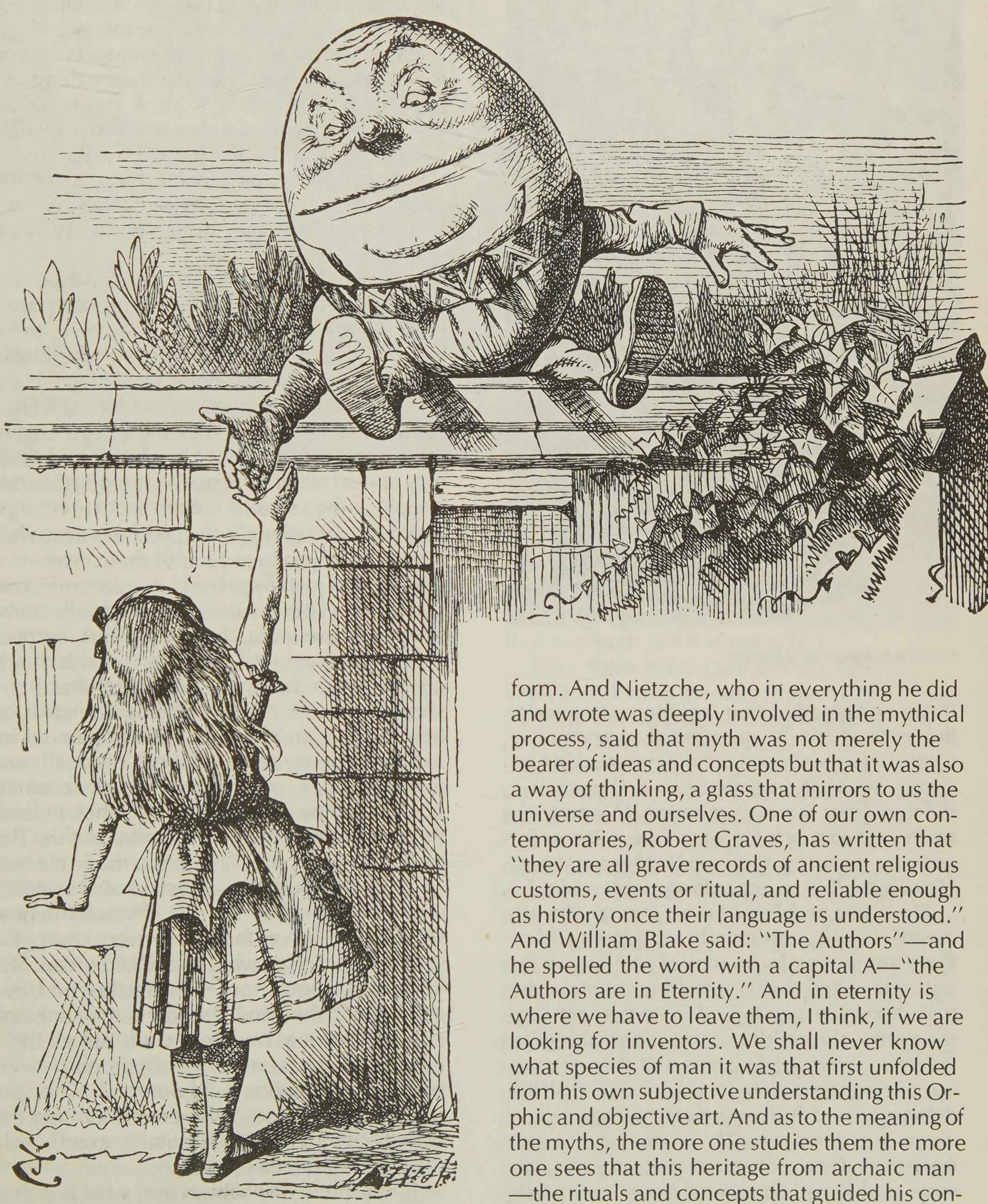
But first I think it important to clarify what I mean by that word myth. We have so betrayed and brutalized language that we have forgotten that in itself it is, in a way, mythical, in the sense that it is sacred, in its essence, a gift at some immemorial time mysteriously bestowed. Even the behaviorists are beginning to question their own theory that language is a simple human function that has evolved, over milleniums, from the grunting of bears and apes. We have lost our respect for this given treasure and now care so little to foster its growth that we have all become like Humpty-Dumpty: "When I use a word," he says in Alice in Wonderland, "it means exactly what I mean it to mean." This is all very well, perhaps, for somebody who is living down a rabbit hole, but not for us, if we are truly to understand each other and try to communicate ideas; we have to admit that words exist in their own right, that they have antecedents, long family trees and are not just foundlings left on a doorstep for anybody to pick up and do with as they will. If I were a hero the maiden I would set out to rescue would be language.

The word myth, for example, is largely accepted and used as something synonymous with lie. "It's a myth," we say, meaning something that is not to be believed, a tarradiddle, a tall story, an impossibility. Even the Oxford Dictionary describes it as a "fictional account". I would rather have said "unverifiable", but even that would not have been exact. For whether we know it or not, or wish it or not, we all—like the hero—live in myth, or rather the context of myth, as the egg yolk lives in its albumen; and if we set about it, we can verify and confirm the fact in ourselves.

If we begin to look for the origin of myths, we hear first perhaps the answer of such Victorians as Frazer of *The Golden Bough* and Andrew Lang: that they are the relics of an ancient barbaric world, the avocations, even the aberrations, of savages. But when one thinks of Gilgamesh, of the Chinese structures that underlie that oldest of known books, the I Ching, of the Hindu myths, the African and those of the American Indians, one can only say: "What barbarians are these!" and pray to be turned forthwith into a savage.

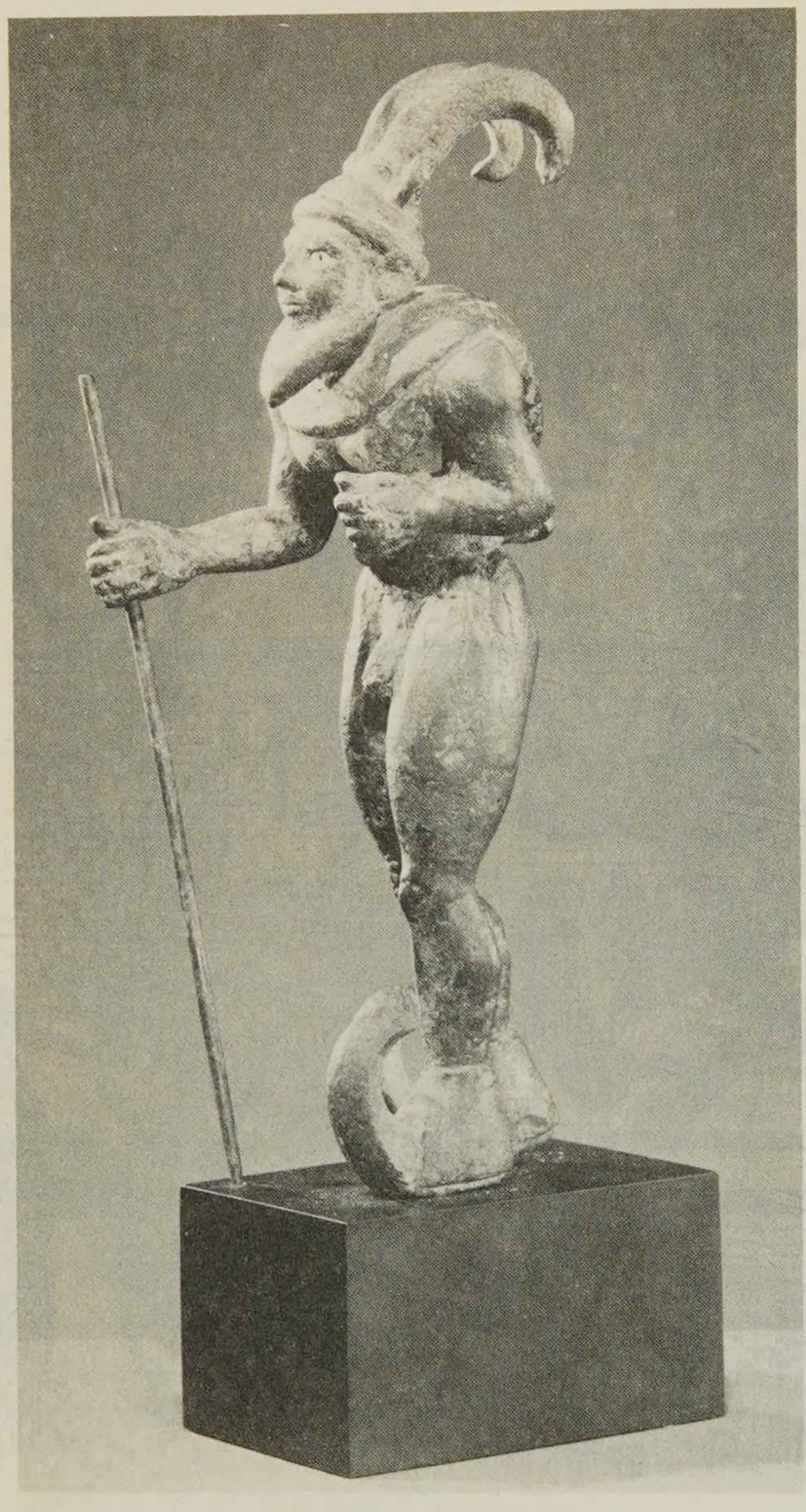
Malinowsky, nearer the mark, called them the re-arising of primordial reality in narrative

Copyright © 1976 by P. L. Travers.



"Humpty Dumpty"

form. And Nietzche, who in everything he did and wrote was deeply involved in the mythical process, said that myth was not merely the bearer of ideas and concepts but that it was also a way of thinking, a glass that mirrors to us the universe and ourselves. One of our own contemporaries, Robert Graves, has written that "they are all grave records of ancient religious customs, events or ritual, and reliable enough as history once their language is understood." And William Blake said: "The Authors"—and he spelled the word with a capital A—"the Authors are in Eternity." And in eternity is where we have to leave them, I think, if we are looking for inventors. We shall never know what species of man it was that first unfolded from his own subjective understanding this Orphic and objective art. And as to the meaning of the myths, the more one studies them the more one sees that this heritage from archaic man —the rituals and concepts that guided his conscious life—miraculously survives and is ever present in the subterranean layers of ourselves.



Unknown Figure of a Seeker

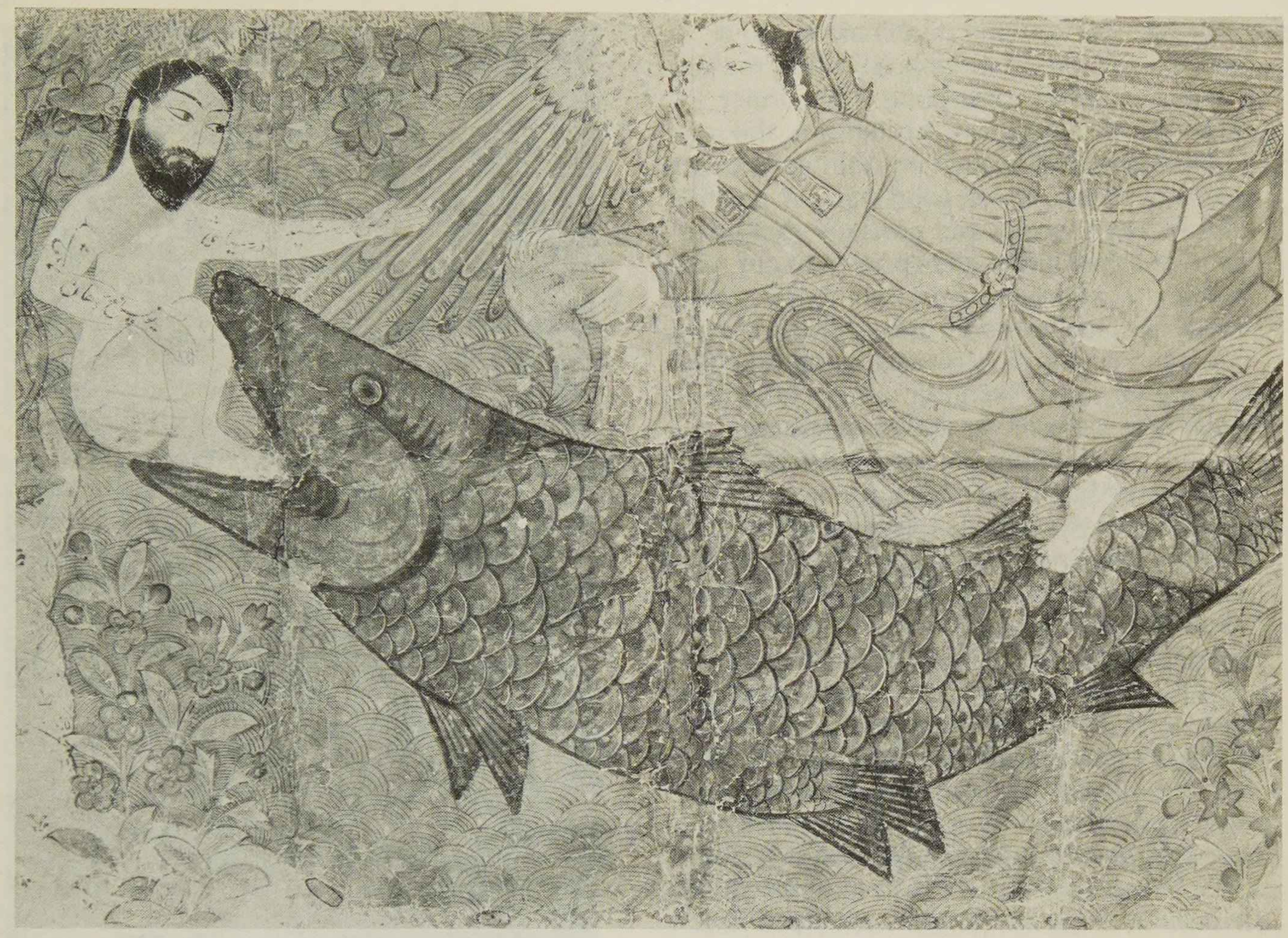
It can be tapped as one taps the waters under the earth; it can be questioned as once our forefathers questioned the oracles, seeking an answer to what, in essence, is perhaps not so different from our own question. We go to the myths not so much for what they mean as for our own meaning. Who am I? Why am I here? How can I live in accordance with reality?

Now, this problem of meaning can literally overwhelm us, particularly nowadays when there are no rituals, no rites of passage, as the ancients called them, to help us to make the transition from one stage of life to the next. One moment we're children and a moment later, as it seems, we're adolescents and then grown-ups, facing alone our own existence and all the dubiousness of things. And yet, perhaps, not so alone as we imagine. The myths have something to say here; not an absolute, not one sole word, no blanket phrase—although every religion, every tradition, to say nothing of every anthropologist, every archeologist, and of course, every psychoanalist lays claim to the myths as his special province, his own particular possession. "We know," they say, in the kind of voice that makes one reach immediately for one's hat. "We know and we will interpret. The myth means this, the myth means that; it means, of course, *our* meaning."

Well, to be honest, so it may; but that it is not the end of it. One of the characteristics of this ancient art is that it won't go into any particular pocket, it won't be coerced or owned. The myths never have a single meaning, once and for all and finished. They have something greater; they have meaning itself. If you hang a crystal sphere in the window it will give off light from all parts of itself. That is how the myths are; they have meaning for me, for you, and for everyone else. A true symbol has always this multisidedness. It has something to say to all who approach it.

One could say, I think, that the myths never were and always are and therefore they are indestructible. Wherever there are men, there are myths; and no matter where on the globe they arise, these myths have a startling likeness to one another. At some particular moment, always unknown—for they are not subject to the carbon test and can't be dated; and they may appear at different periods among different peoples—the selfsame themes seem to emerge, as though something in the psyche of a race had ripened and produced a fruit that corresponded, not in its form but in its substance, with the fruit of all other races. The fact that the same stories arise in India, the Middle East, Europe, the Americas, as well as in China and Japan, is an intimation that their proper soil and seeding-place is not in any geographical location but in man himself. This alone could insure, if we believed it, (I'm speaking ideally and mythologically, of course) that no one on the planet need be a stranger to any other. Indeed, there is a Hindu myth that illustrates this. The high god Indra, it is said, once made a net to enclose the world, and at each knot or intersection, he fastened a little bell. If you think of a seine fishing net, with a bell in every knot of the string, you can see what this would mean. Nothing could move, not a man, not the wind, not a thought in the mind, without setting one bell ringing; and that one bell would set all the others going. It is a wonderfully graphic way of telling people who could not read, who received things through the ear rather than the eye, that everything is inevitably connected with everything else.

But if the myths always are, who is it that enacts them? Who sustains them? Who keeps them alive? You have only to read the *New*



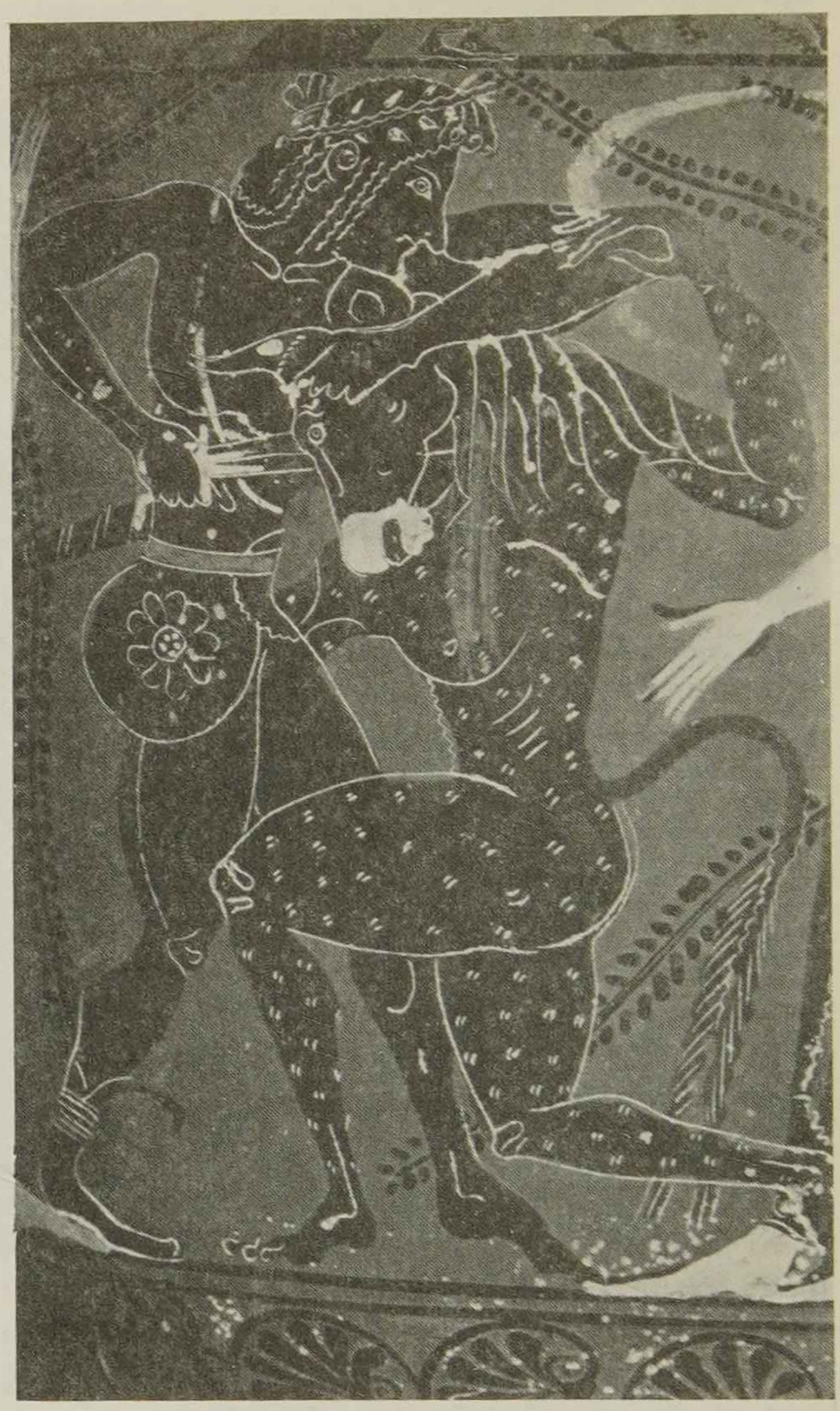
Jonah Cast Up by the Whale

York Times to see the myths crowding into it with their splendid and terrible deeds. The daily disclosures in the papers show the material on which the mythmaking process inherent in man is always at work, however unconsciously—not only among poets and mystics, Boehme, Bunyan, Blake and the rest, but also, and chiefly, in the folk; and by folk I mean you and me and anyone walking in the street. Take as an instance the story of Galileo. Galileo is not a myth; he is in all the history books, where you will read the undoubted fact that at a time when it was believed that the sun moved round the earth, Galileo dared to assert that the very opposite was true, that the earth moved round the sun. Under pressure, however, and on pain of death, he was forced to deny his truth. Thus he was able to save his life; but as he turned away from recanting he muttered firmly into his beard: "Eppur si muove" —"Nevertheless, it moves." The story is known to everyone. Galileo is famous for the "Eppur si muove"; but the recantation of his recantation has nowhere been recorded. How could it have been? The only people near enough to hear it were his inquisitors, and had they heard it, his fat would have been in the fire. He never said "Eppur si muove"—except, of course, in his accurate heart. But in its unconscious shaping of the hero, the folk required that it be said, the story required that it be said; the truth had somehow to be told that Galileo was not a liar. So, mythologically, Galileo was required to say it. It is a truth but it is not a fact.

Then there is the case of Lady Godiva. Everybody knows the story: how in order to get from her skinflint husband a gift of land for the poor of Coventry, she offered to ride through the streets naked, having first taken the precaution of ordering the people into their houses and all the shutters closed. The whole of Coventry obeyed except for one man by the name of Tom who peeped at her through the crack of a door and had his eye shrivelled up for his pains. It is from him that we get the phrase "a peeping Tom". But the fact of the matter is that Tom did not enter the story until it was two hundred years old. Gradually and mythologically, the folk must have come to realize that nakedness without an eye to observe it has no meaning whatever—like Bishop Berkeley's cow that didn't exist until somebody beheld it—and that an order without somebody to disobey it is somehow incomplete. A story can't live with a heroine only, it needs a villain to bring her to life. So, of course, the matter was at last put right and Peeping Tom now belongs to the myth. He also is true but he is not a fact.

So you see how the mythmaking mind works, balancing, clarifying, adjusting, making events somehow correspond to the inner necessity of things. It is this tension, the uncompromising insistence on both ends of the stick—black and white, good and evil, positive and negative, active and passive—that gives the myths their ambivalent power. In our Aristotelian, Apollonian world, where we constantly applaud the good, uphold law and order and stand on the side of what is right (while keeping the atom bomb in our pocket), the bloodiness of the myths, their vengefulness and brutality, their Dionysian recklessness—and, on the other hand, their splendor—are difficult to accept. They are too large for us, too mighty. Perhaps that is why we give them to children who, with their strong stomachs and their minds as yet untainted with knowledge, are more likely to understand them. To understand: for years I pondered on that word and tried to define its effect on myself. At last I came to the conclusion that what it means is the opposite of what it says; to understand is to stand under. Later I discovered that this was, in very fact, its meaning in Middle English. So, in order to understand, I come to something with my unknowing—my nakedness, if you like: I stand under it and let it teach me, rain down its truth upon me. That is, I think, what children do; they let it make room in them for a sense of justice, for the Wicked Fairy as well as the Sleeping Beauty, for dragons as well as princes.

This grasping of the whole stick is an essential feature of the hero. So what or rather who is the hero? We're all familiar with the paladins of myth: Theseus slaying the Minotaur and finding his way through the labyrinth by means of a single linen thread; Aeneas finding the way to the underworld with the help of a little golden twig; Daniel outfacing his pride of lions; Jonah measuring the dark in the belly of the whale. But what is the common denominator among these—and indeed, all other heroes? Could it be (and it's a question, not an assertion) that first and foremost the hero is one who is willing to set out, take the first step, shoulder something? Perhaps the hero is one who puts his foot upon a path not knowing what he may expect from life but in some way feeling in his bones that life expects something from him. I think, too that no hero would ever protest that he didn't ask to be born. If he isn't sure that he did ask, at least he is ready to behave *as if* he had, as if, having been given life, he is ready to answer for his life. And so he has to leave home, or safety, or his own conditioned way of thinking and feeling, and put himself, naked, at the service of whatever necessity arises: a dragon



Theseus Slays the Minotaur

to be slain, a Gorgon beheaded, fire brought down from Heaven. All the tasks are different, but if you closely examine the myths you will see that fundamentally the quest is always the same. Looked at from the point of view of the story, the hero's work is to rescue a beleaguered maiden from an unspeakable fate, to gather up some hoarded treasure after slaying a seven-headed serpent, or to fetch a cup of the Water of Life from the well at the world's end; all of these asking no less than all. But what do they mean essentially? Perhaps the myths are telling us that these endeavors are not so much voyages of discovery as of rediscovery; that the hero is seeking not for something new but for something old, a treasure that was lost and has to be found, his own self, his identity. And by finding this, by achieving this, he takes part in the one task, the essential mythical requirement: the reinstatement of the fallen world. It is a long and perilous journey back from the nadir to the zenith, from lying amid the husks and the swine to eating the fatted calf.

Now, the hero is not a god, nor even a saint, though many saints have been heroes. He has a human heart and therefore a dimension of vul-

nerability and the possibility of failing. The idea that there is a flaw in creation is fundamental to all myths. But only by studying them does one realize that it is *only* by the flaws, only by its imperfections (because they summon up the perfections) that creation can proceed. It is the same with the hero. Each one is a fallible man. Achilles has his inordinate pride; but where would his battle fervor be without that very pride? Lancelot, perhaps the most cherished hero in all myth, envied by men, loved by women, set out to find the Holy Grail while at the same time betraying his friend and king with the wife of his king and friend. He never saw the Holy Grail; it passed him by, by a hair's breadth, but by his heroic faithfulness to his own unfaith he not only sustained his place at the Round Table but was its brightest ornament. And his son, Galahad (or his own unsullied part, perhaps) was the one who found the Grail. Ulysses, whom one might call Lancelot's runner-up in popularity, succumbed to temptation in every known port in the world until he dropped anchor in his own haven of Ithaca; he succumbed, yes, but unlike his men, whom he left behind in various stages of beastlihood, he was alive to what he was doing, he kept an eye upon himself—the cunning man, the crafty one—and came home as a hero. David, spying Bathsheba from the housetops, arranged to have her husband Uriah the Hittite set in the forefront of the battle so that he might marry her himself; and we are surprised (but the myth is not) that the outcome of this distasteful deed was Solomon the Wise. Generations later the lineal descendant of David's tree will say to the man who loved him and betrayed him thrice: "Thou art Peter, and on this rock shall I build my church." This rock, this matrix of gross earth and crystal, is the essential hero stuff. For it is through his human failings and his human triumphs that the hero serves his purpose, which is to make himself a channel for the gods to come down to men. In the process of discovering his own identity, he becomes for us mythologically, the mediating or reconciling element and indeed the pattern. And, also mythologically, in an antique way, we comfort and sustain ourselves with what in us corresponds to the hero.

But is this enough? Perhaps if we could really listen to what the myths are telling us we would hear what I heard myself saying not so long ago: "Everybody has to be the hero of one story: his own." I said it lightly; or rather something said it in me, for we know more than we know we know, more than we understand. And if it is true, what an awesome undertaking! All those dragons—give them whatever name you like; those journeys to our own dark underworld, all those imprisoned princesses to be rescued. One would shrink from such an obligation if the alternative was not also so awesome. *Not* to be the hero of one's own story—could one agree to that? Could I fail to be some sort of Demeter, searching the world for my child, myself, my lost Persephone? It is not a question to be answered but responded to, stood under, as it were, with a kind of fear and trembling. Because, to attempt it, I have to be in the same situation as the hero in the Russian story called *Go I know not whither, Bring back I know not what*. It is with this unknowing that I have to set out to find the homeland of myth, that homeland so well described in *Rumpelstiltzkin* where it is called "the country where the fox and the hare say goodnight to each other." This phrase embodies all we need to know. For in effect, this is the country, the conditions where the opposites are reconciled, the place where one goes beyond them. Goodnight, fox, goodnight, hare! I wonder where we can find it, where in ourselves can we look for it?

And yet, is it not always there, and are we ever really out of this East of the Sun, West of the Moon land of myth? Can we escape from it, even if we wish? If you feel that in what I have said about myth (whose garment I have hardly touched), I have drawn too long a bow, you must remember that the long bow itself comes out of a myth, the myth of Philoctetes. And if, as I said at the beginning, you wish to take anything I have said with a grain of salt, do so, always remembering that salt also is an essential mythological ingredient.

On the third day of my journey, I was riding gently along a road, apparently little frequented, to judge from the grass that grew upon it. I was approaching a forest. Everywhere in Fairy Land forests are the places where one may most certainly expect adventures. As I drew near, a youth, unarmed, gentle, and beautiful, who had just cut a branch from a yew growing on the skirts of the wood, evidently to make himself a bow, met me, and thus accosted me:

"Sir knight, be careful as thou ridest through this forest; for it is said to be strangely enchanted, in a sort which even those who have been witnesses of its enchantment can hardly describe."

I thanked him for his advice, which I promised to follow, and rode on. But the moment I entered the wood it seemed to me that, if enchantment there was, it must be of a good kind; for the Shadow, which had been more than usually dark and distressing since I had set out on this journey, suddenly disappeared. I felt a wonderful elevation of spirits, and began to reflect on my past life, and especially on my combat with the giants, with such satisfaction, that I had actually to remind myself, that I had only killed one of them; and that, but for the brothers, I should never have had the idea of attacking them, not to mention the smallest power of standing to it. Still I rejoiced, and counted myself amongst the glorious knights of old; having even the unspeakable presumption—my shame and self-condemnation at the memory of it are such, that I write it as the only and sorest penance I can perform—to think of myself (will the world believe it?) as side by side with Sir Galahad! Scarcely had the thought

EPICYCLE II

FROM

PHANTASTES

BY GEORGE MACDONALD

been born in my mind, when, approaching me from the left, through the trees, I espied a resplendent knight, of mighty size, whose armour seemed to shine of itself, without the sun. When he drew near, I was astonished to see that this armour was like my own; nay, I could trace, line for line, the correspondence of the inlaid silver to the device on my own. His horse, too, was like mine in colour, form, and motion; save that, like his rider, he was greater and fiercer than his counterpart. The knight rode with beaver up. As he halted right opposite to me in the narrow path, barring my way, I saw the reflection of my countenance in the centre plate of shining steel on his breastplate. Above it rose the same face—his face—only, as I have said, larger and fiercer. I was bewildered. I could not help feeling some admiration of him, but it was mingled with a dim conviction that he was evil, and that I ought to fight with him.

"Let me pass," I said.

"When I will," he replied.

Something within me said: "Spear in rest, and ride at him! else thou art for ever a slave."

I tried, but my arm trembled so much that I could not couch my lance. To tell the truth, I, who had overcome the giant, shook like a coward before this knight. He gave a scornful laugh, that echoed through the wood, turned his horse, and said, without looking round, "Follow me."

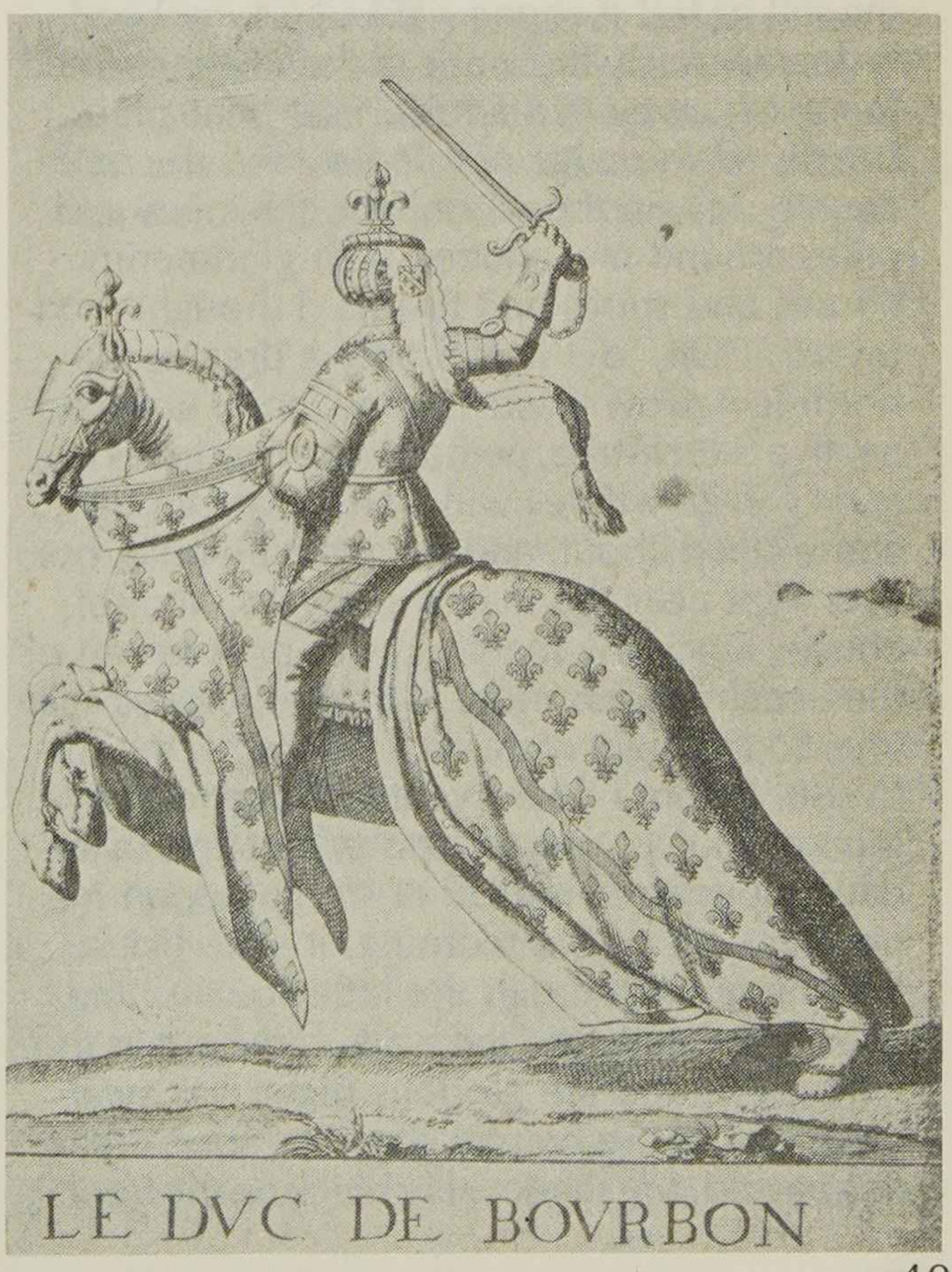
I obeyed, abashed and stupefied. How long he led, and how long I followed, I cannot tell. "I never knew misery before," I said to myself. "Would that I had at least struck him, and had had my death-blow in return! Why, then, do I not call to him to wheel and defend himself? Alas! I know not why, but I cannot. One look from him would cow me like a beaten hound." I followed, and was silent.

At length we came to a dreary square tower, in the middle of a dense forest. It looked as if scarce a tree had been cut down to make room for it. Across the very door, diagonally, grew the stem of a tree, so large that there was just room to squeeze past it in order to enter. One miserable square hole in the roof was the only visible suggestion of a window. Turret or battlement, or projecting masonry of any kind, it had none. Clear and smooth and massy, it rose from its base, and ended with a line straight and unbroken. The roof, carried to a centre from each of the four walls, rose slightly to the point where the rafters met. Round the base lay several little heaps of either bits of broken branches, withered and peeled, or half-whitened bones; I could not distinguish which. As I approached, the ground sounded hollow beneath my horse's hoofs. The knight took a great key from his pocket, and reaching past the stem of the tree, with some difficulty opened the door. "Dismount!" he commanded. I obeyed. He turned my horse's head away from the tower, gave him a terrible blow with the flat side of his sword, and sent him madly tearing through the forest.

"Now," said he, "enter, and take your com-



LE DVC DE BRETAGNE



LE DVC DE BOVRBON

panion with you."

I looked round: knight and horse had vanished, and behind me lay the horrible shadow. I entered, for I could not help myself; and the shadow followed me. I had a terrible conviction that the knight and he were one. The door closed behind me.

Now I was indeed in pitiful plight. There was literally nothing in the tower but my shadow and me. The walls rose right up to the roof; in which, as I had seen from without, there was one little square opening. This I now knew to be the only window the tower possessed. I sat down on the floor, in listless wretchedness. I think I must have fallen asleep, and have slept for hours; for I suddenly became aware of existence, in observing that the moon was shining through the hole in the roof. As she rose higher and higher, her light crept down the wall over me, till at last it shone right upon my head. Instantaneously the walls of the tower seemed to vanish away like a mist. I sat beneath a beech, on the edge of a forest, and the open country lay, in the moonlight, for miles and miles around me, spotted with glimmering houses and spires and towers. I thought with myself, "Oh, joy! it was only a dream; the horrible narrow waste is gone, and I wake beneath a beech-tree, perhaps one that loves me, and I can go where I will." I rose, as I thought, and walked about, and did what I would, but ever kept near the tree; for always, and, of course, since my meeting with the woman of the beech-tree far more than ever, I loved that tree. So the night wore on. I waited for the sun to rise, before I could venture to renew my journey. But as soon as the first faint light of the dawn appeared, instead of shining upon me from the eye of the morning, it stole like a fainting ghost through the little square hole above my head; and the walls came out as the light grew, and the glorious night was swallowed up of the hateful day. The long dreary day passed. My shadow lay black on the floor. I felt no hunger, no need of food. The night came. The moon shone. I watched her light slowly descending the wall, as I might have watched, adown the sky, the long, swift approach of a helping angel. Her rays touched me, and I was free. Thus night after night passed away. I should have died but for this. Every night the conviction returned, that I was free. Every morning I sat wretchedly disconsolate. At length, when the course of the moon no longer permitted her beams to touch me, the night was dreary as the day. When I slept, I was somewhat consoled by my dreams; but all the time I dreamed, I knew that I was only dreaming. But one night, at length, the moon, a mere shred of pallor, scattered a few thin ghostly rays upon me; and I think I fell asleep and dreamed. I sat in an autumn night, before the vintage, on a hill overlooking my own castle. My heart sprang with joy. Oh, to be a child again, innocent, fearless, without shame or desire! I walked down to the castle. All were in consternation at my absence. My sisters were weeping for my loss. They sprang up and clung to me, with incoherent cries, as I entered. My old friends came flocking around me. A gray light shone on the roof of the hall. It was the light of the dawn shining through the square window of my tower. More earnestly than ever, I longed for freedom after this dream; more drearily than ever, crept on the next wretched day. I measured by the sunbeams, caught through the little window in the trap of my tower, how it went by, waiting only for the dreams of the night.

About noon, I started as if something foreign to all my senses and all my experience, had suddenly invaded me; yet it was only the voice of a woman singing. My whole frame quivered with joy, surprise, and the sensation of the unforeseen. Like a living soul, like an incarnation of Nature, the song entered my prison-house. Each tone folded its wings, and laid itself, like a caressing bird, upon my heart. Ere I knew, I had walked to the door, and seated myself with my

ear against it, in order to catch every syllable of the revelation from the unseen outer world. And now I heard each word distinctly. The song was something like this:

The sun, like a golden knot on high,
Gathers the glories of the sky,
And binds them into a shining tent,
Roofing the world with the firmament.
And through the pavilion the rich winds
blow,
And through the pavilion the waters go.
And the birds for joy, and the trees for prayer,
Bowing their heads in the sunny air,
And for thoughts, the gently talking springs,
That come from the centre with secret
things–
All make a music, gentle and strong,
Bound by the heart into one sweet song:
From the narrow desert, O man of pride,
Come into the house, so high and wide.

Hardly knowing what I did, I opened the door. Why had I not done so before? I do not know . . .

I bethought me what now I should do. First, I must leave the tower far behind me, lest, in some evil moment, I might be once more caged within its horrible walls. But it was ill walking in my heavy armour; and besides I had now no right to the golden spurs and the resplendent mail, fitly dulled with long neglect. I might do for a squire; but I honoured knighthood too highly, to call myself any longer one of the noble brotherhood. I stripped off all my armour, piled it under the tree, and took my unknown way, eastward through the woods. Of all my weapons, I carried only a short axe in my hand. Then first I knew the delight of being lowly; of saying to myself, "I am what I am, nothing more." "I have failed," I said; "I have lost myself—would it had been my shadow." I looked round: the shadow was nowhere to be seen. It was not myself, but only my shadow, that I had lost.

I learned that he that will be a hero, will barely be a man; that he that will be nothing but a doer of his work is sure of his manhood. In nothing was my ideal lowered, or dimmed, or grown less precious; I only saw it too plainly, to set myself for a moment beside it. Indeed, my ideal soon became my life; whereas, formerly, my life had consisted in a vain attempt to behold, if not my ideal in myself, at least myself in my ideal. Now, however, I took, at first, what perhaps was a mistaken pleasure, in despising and degrading myself. Another self seemed to arise, like a white spirit from a dead man, from the dumb and trampled self of the past. Doubtless, this self must again die and be buried, and again, from its tomb, spring a winged child; but of this my history as yet bears not the record. Self will come to life even in the slaying of itself; but there is ever something deeper and stronger than it, which will emerge at last from the unknown abysses of the soul: will it be as a solemn gloom, burning with eyes? or a clear morning after the rain? or a smiling child, that finds itself nowhere, and everywhere?



course of work in American universities. The ranks of psychiatry swelled, and its message was carried to the public through the changing forms of literature, art and educational theory. Against this juggernaut of new hope, organized religion was helpless. The concepts of human nature which had guided the Judeo-Christian tradition for two thousand years had now to be altered and corrected just as three hundred years earlier the Christian scheme of the cosmos retreated against the onslaught of the scientific revolution.

But although psychiatry in its many forms utterly pervades our present culture, the hope it once contained has slowly ebbed away. The once charismatic psychoanalyst has become encapsulated within the workaday medical establishment, itself the object of growing public cynicism. The behaviorist who once stunned the world by defining man as a bundle of manageable reactions finds himself reduced to mere philosophizing and to the practice of piecemeal psychological cosmetics. In the burgeoning field of psychophysiology the cries of "breakthrough" echo without real conviction before the awesome and mysterious structure of the human brain. And as for experimental psychology, it has become mute; masses of data accumulated over decades of research with animals remain unrelated and seemingly unrelatable to the suffering, fear and frustration of everyday human life.

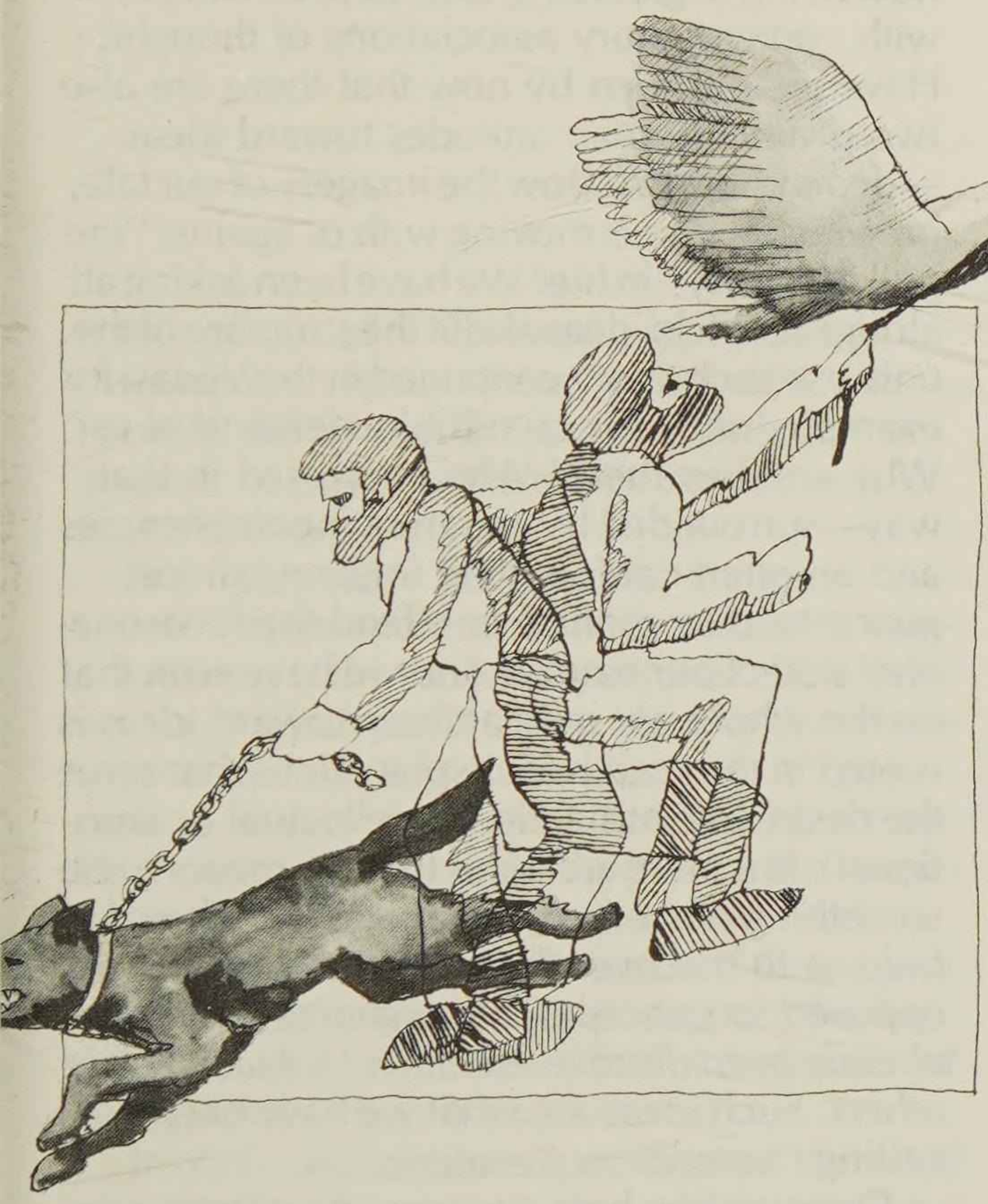
The growing feeling of helplessness among psychiatrists and the cries for help from the masses of modern people operate in perverse contrast to the constant psychologizing of the media. Amid the "answers" provided by a *Psychology Today* or *Reader's Digest,* millions seem quite simply to have accepted that their lives have no great direction and ask only for help to get them through the night. The once magical promise of a transformation of the mind through psychiatry has quietly disappeared.

Psychotherapy and the Sacred
Jacob Needleman

The Era of Psychology

Modern psychiatry arose out of the vision that man must change himself and not depend for help upon an imaginary God. Over half a century ago, mainly through the insights of Freud and through the energies of those he influenced, the human psyche was wrested from the faltering hands of organized religion and was situated in the world of nature as a subject for scientific study. The cultural shock waves were enormous and long-lasting. But equal to them was the sense of hope that gradually took root throughout the Western world. To everyone, including those who offered countertheories to psychoanalysis, the main vision seemed indomitable: Science, which had brought undreamt-of power over external nature, could now turn to explaining and controlling the inner world of man.

The era of psychology was born. By the end of the Second World War many of the best minds of the new generation were magnetized by a belief in this new science of the psyche. Under the conviction that a way was now open to assuage the confusion and suffering of mankind, the study of the mind became a standard



Of course, questions about the meaning of life and death and one's relationship to the universe may still tear at a person's insides. But now neither psychiatry nor the Church is able to respond even from the same gut level at which such questions can arise—far less from a level of universal knowledge and intuitive relationship which understands certain cries for help as the seed of the struggle for inner transformation.

No one suffers from this lack more than the psychiatrists themselves, more and more of whom despair over their inability to help another human being in the fundamental way they once dreamed possible. Faced with the accelerating pressure of technology upon the normal patterns of human life, faced with the widespread effects of modern man's twisted relationship to nature, and themselves yearning for a coherent purpose in living, they have come to see themselves as being in the same situation as their patients and the rest of us.

Such, in quick strokes, is the background of a new question that is now arising concerning the hidden structure and distortions of man's inner life. A large and growing number of psychiatrists are now convinced that the Eastern religions offer an understanding of the mind far more complete than anything yet envisaged by Western science. At the same time, the leaders of the new religions themselves—the numerous gurus and spiritual teachers now in the West—are reformulating and adapting the traditional systems according to the language and atmosphere of modern psychology.

Transformation and "Happiness"

Taking all this together, it is no wonder that thousands of troubled men and women throughout America no longer know whether they need spiritual or psychological help. The line is blurred that divides the therapist from the spiritual master. As one observer, speaking only half facetiously, put it: "The shrinks are beginning to sound like gurus, and the gurus are beginning to sound like shrinks."

Yet I wonder if it is so simple a thing to pass off the distinction between the search for transformation and the desire for happiness. Is it only a matter of two different approaches to the same goal, two different conceptions of what is necessary for well-being, peace of mind or personal fulfillment? Or is it a question of two quite distinct directions that human life can take?

There is a fragment of an old Scottish fairy tale attributed to the pre-Christian Celts (the Druids, possibly) that tells of two brothers meeting on the side of a mountain. One is climbing and the other is descending. One is being led upward by a miraculous crane to which he is attached by a long golden thread. The other is led downward by a snarling black dog straining at an iron chain. They stop to speak about their journey and compare their difficulties. Each describes the same sorts of dangers and obstacles—precipices, huge sheer boulders, wild animals; and the same pleasures they have

experienced—the wondrous vistas, the fragrant, subtle flowers. They agree to continue their journey together, but immediately the crane pulls the first brother upward and the dog drags the second downward. The first youth cuts the golden thread connecting him to the crane and seeks to guide himself by what he has heard from the other. But although all the obstacles are exactly in the places which the second brother has indicated, he finds each guarded by evil spirits, and without the crane to guide him he is constantly driven back and is himself eventually transformed into a spirit who must eternally stand guard inside a gaping crevasse.

The larger context of this tale is not known, but it may serve very well to open the question of the relationship between psychiatry and the sacred. Of all the numerous legends, fairy tales and myths that concern what are called "the two paths of life" (sometimes designated as "the path of the fall" and "the path of the return"), this particular fragment uniquely focuses on a neglected point about the obstacles in the struggle for awakening and the obstacles in the search for happiness. The tale is saying that however similar these obstacles might appear, in actuality they are very different and woe to him who fails to take them both into account. He will never move either toward "earthly happiness" or toward self-transformation.

This tale almost seems specifically designed to expose our present uncertainty about so-called "spiritual psychology." Consider the ideas, sourced in the practical core of the ancient traditions, that are now entering into the stream of modern psychological language: ideas about "states of consciousness," "enlightenment," "meditation," "freedom from the ego," "self-realization," to name only a few. Is it possible that each of these terms can be understood from two different angles of vision? For example, does one meditate in order to resolve the problems of life or to become conscious of the automatic movement of forces in oneself?

A similar question can be raised about the apparently non-psychological parts of these integrative teachings—the metaphysical and cosmological ideas which are often contradictory to the scientific world view and which are now being neglected or altered in order to fit in with contemporary associations of thought. Have we not seen by now that there are also two distinct human attitudes toward ideas —depending, to follow the imagery of our tale, on whether one is moving with or against "the pull of gravity" in life? We have been asking all along: What do ideas about the structure of the universe such as are contained in the Vedas, for example, or in our own Bible, demand of us? Why are they there? Why expressed in that way—surrounded by apparent inconsistencies and an often confounding imagery almost guaranteed to confuse or offend the "reasonable" side of our nature? And we have seen that on the whole our own attitude toward ideas is rooted in the search for explanations that serve the desire for satisfaction (intellectual or emotional). But there are ideas that are meant to be something other than explanations—*ideas that help us to discover the truth for ourselves as opposed to concepts that organize what has already been discovered either by ourselves or others*. Such ideas are what we have been calling "sacred" or "esoteric."

Our question here concerns psychiatry considered as a means to an end, as the removal of obstacles that stand in the way of happiness. (I choose the word "happiness" only for the sake of brevity; we could equally well speak of the goal of psychiatry as useful living, or the ability to stand on one's own feet or adjustment to society). These obstacles to happiness—our fears, unfulfilled desires, violent emotions, frustrations, maladaptive behavior are the "sins" of our modern psychiatric "religion." But now we are asked to understand that there exist teachings about the universe and about man under whose guidance these "sins against happiness" may instead be embraced as material for the development of the force of consciousness.

At this point it would be helpful to mention the idea of the development of consciousness and to recall the age-old distinction between consciousness and the contents of consciousness. From the point of view of the *path,* the great struggle is for an inner freedom that can simply watch and contain both the upward and the downward movements of energy within the psyche (the "upward" and "downward

path" of our tale). The real enemy of self-development is our automatic tendency to identify the whole of ourselves with one or another of these fundamental movements of psychic energy.

From this latter perspective, the main requirement for understanding the nature of consciousness is the *repeated personal effort* to be aware of whatever is taking place in the whole of ourselves at any given moment. All definitions or systematic explanations, no matter how profound, are secondary. Thus the formulations of both ancient masters and modern psychologists can be a diversion if they come to us in a way that does not support the immediate, choiceless awareness of the totality of ourselves in the present moment.

In traditional cultures special terms surround this quality of consciousness which connect it to the direct human participation in a higher, all-encompassing reality, "beyond the earth," as it is sometimes said. The existence of these special terms, such as *satori* (Zen Buddhism), *fana* (Islam), *pneuma* (Christianity) and many others, may serve for us as a sign that this quality of consciousness was always set apart from the normal, everyday goods of organized social and private life. And while the traditional teachings tell us that any human being may engage in the search for this quality of existence, it is ultimately recognized that only a very few will actually wish to do so. For, so we are told, it is a search that in the last analysis is undertaken solely for its own sake, *without recognizable psychological motivation*. Thus, what we have been calling the "esoteric" or inner *path* embedded within every traditional culture is discoverable only by those yearning for something inexplicably beyond the duties and satisfactions of religious, moral and social life.

What we can recognize as psychiatric methods in traditional cultures must surely be understood in this light. Psychosis and neurosis were obviously known to the ancient world just as they are known in the few remaining traditional societies which still exist today in scattered pockets throughout the world. Surely, then, in a traditional culture the challenge of what we would call psychotherapy consisted in bringing a person back to a normal life without stamping out the nascent impulse toward transformation in the process of treatment. To do this, a practitioner would have had to recognize the difference in a man between thwarted normal psychological functioning and the unsatisfied yearning ("that comes from nowhere," as one Sufi teacher has described it) for the evolution of consciousness. Certainly, that is one reason why traditionally the psychotic was treated by the priest. It is probably also why what we would call "neurosis" was handled within the once intact family structure, permeated as this structure was by the religious teachings teachings of the culture.

It has been observed, rightly, I think, that modern psychiatry could only have assumed the place it now has after the breakdown of the patriarchical family structure that dates back to the beginnings of recorded history. But the modern psychiatrist faces a tremendously difficult task as a surrogate parent, even beyond the problems that have been so thoroughly described under the psychoanalytic concept of transference. For there may be something far deeper, subtler and intensely human, something that echoes of another "cosmic dimension" hidden behind the difficulties and therapeutic opportunities of the classical psychoanalytic transference situation. We have given this hidden "something" a name: the desire for self-transformation. In the ancient patriarchical family structure (as I am told it still exists, for example, among the Brahmin families of India) the problems of living a normal happy life are never separated from the sense of a higher dimension of human existence. What we might recognize as therapeutic

counseling is given by family members or friends, but in such a way that a troubled individual may never confuse the two possible directions that his life can take. He is helped to see that the obstacles to happiness are not necessarily the obstacles to "spiritual realization," as it is called in such traditions. I think a great deal of what we take to be intolerable acceptance of restrictions, such as predetermined marriage partners or vocations, for example, or the fixed roles of men and women, is connected to this spiritual factor in the make-up of the authentic traditional patterns of family life.

Can the modern psychiatrist duplicate this aspect of family influence? Almost certainly he cannot. For one thing, he himself probably did not grow up in such a family milieu; almost none of us in the modern world have. Therefore, the task he faces is even more demanding than most of us realize. He may recognize that religion has become a destructive influence in people's lives because the *path* which the traditions offer has been covered over by ideas and doctrines which we have neither understood nor experienced. He may even judge that this same process of getting lost in undigested spiritual ideas and methods is taking place among many followers of the new religions. But at the same time, perhaps he sees that there can exist in people—*be they "neurotic" or "normal"*—this hidden desire for inner evolution. How can the therapist bring the patient to a tolerably normal life without crushing this other hidden impulse?

At the heart of the great traditions is the idea that the search for truth is undertaken for its own sake ultimately. These teachings in their entirety propose to show man the nature of this search and the laws behind it—laws which, as I have suggested, too often get lost in our enthusiasm for ideas and explanations that we have not deeply absorbed in the fire of living with all its sufferings and confusion. Psychotherapy on the contrary, is surely a *means* to an end, what we have called happiness. Unlike the way offered by tradition, therapy is never an end in itself, never a way of life, but is motivated toward a goal which the therapist sees more clearly than his patient. The therapist may even experiment with invented methods to achieve this goal and often succeeds. But is it recognized that two kinds of success are possible in the process of therapy? On the one hand, the successful result may be a patient in whom the wish for evolution has been totally "disillusioned" and stamped out through the process of having had aroused and encouraged in himself the very quality of egoistic emotion which the traditions seek to break down and dissolve. But another kind of success may be possible in certain cases—a patient in whom the wish for evolution has been driven inside, who no longer longs for a response to this wish from the outside world, but who now has within him an even greater sensitivity and hunger for deeper contact with himself. To the outside observer such a person may seem to have developed a certain strength or "inner-directedness," but in actuality he is precisely the sort of person who may desperately need what the traditions seek to communicate. The efforts of contemporary teachers from the East to bring their message to such people in terms that are neither freighted with dead antiquity nor compromised by modern psychologisms constitute the real spiritual drama of the present age.

I suspect that many psychiatrists sense there can be these two different kinds of success in the process of psychotherapy. But the second class of patients probably leave the therapist before the treatment is far advanced, while the first class of patients stay and pay as long as they can. Therefore, this second type of patient is probably not consciously or officially recognized by the profession of psychiatry.

Ideas as Help

What is "help" for man? As we have said, during the first half of the twentieth century it was chiefly the Freudians who were offering the public a new answer to this question. But what is never said about Freudianism, or about the whole of modern psychology, is that the help it offers is directed solely to the automatic part of the human psyche. In psychoanalysis and its present day derivatives the effort is chiefly to reawaken the intense, but nevertheless still automatic, emotional reactions which are often associated with childhood experi-

ences. The automaticity, as well as the integrity, of childhood is understood as related to the most real part of a person.

Neither the Jungians nor the later Freudians ever completely abandoned this point of view about the importance of childhood reactions. Yet among the founders of modern psychology there existed practically no discrimination of levels with regard to the influences which produced these childhood reactions. To the modern psychologist it is simply assumed that the fundamental influences upon the child concern its physical safety, its recognition by others, its security and its bodily sensations. Parental love or its absence is understood entirely in these terms. The differences among the various schools of psychology depend in the main on which of these influences is understood as paramount in the formation of the individual's identity.

Other influences—upon the intellect, for example—were understood as secondary or derivative. It was never seriously considered that there might exist in the child a subtle emotional receptivity on the basis of which the ancient structures of patriarchical family life and education were built and maintained throughout the centuries. No attention was given to the communication of ideas through art or literature, nor to the possibility of essential learning experiences through the child's encounter with difficulties that demand he be more "present," that is, less automatic.

It would be wrong, of course, to lay too much blame on modern psychology for its estimation of the sort of influences that act upon man and govern his development. For in this it is only following in the wake of the practices of religion, art and education in the modern era. The ever-increasing tendency of Western religion to offer rationalistic explanations of its ancient teachings along with simplistic consolations concerning death and the problems of social and family life made it all but impossible for the influences of Christianity and Judaism to challenge the automaticity (or passivity) of human nature. Another word for this is "secularization"—a term which should, I believe, be understood in reference to the psychophysical structure of the human organism. Ideas and practices which were meant to penetrate behind the screen of man's automatic thoughts and motivations were so formalized or so covered over with rationalizations that they almost totally disappeared into the vortex of the ordinary influences of "civilized" life.

Similarly with education. The liberalizing of education in the modern era came from an intention to widen the scope of human knowledge and open the doors to every sphere of learning. Yet this movement has been so connected with the industrial and technological forces of modern life—that is to say, with the influences of pragmatism and materialism —that even the most powerful and all-encompassing teachings of mankind were presented to the automatic part of the mind, the part that merely remembers and recombines words and impressions like a computer. Gradually, the experience of learning became limited to the cerebral intellect alone and was valued solely for its results in terms of self-satisfaction or the "mastery" of nature in one form or another.

But what is admirable in the child is his integrity—the almost total unity of his innocent mind with his body. *That something of this organic unity should continue to exist as his mind is informed about life on this planet seems to me to be the basic aim and problem of education.*

As for art and literature, they have lost entirely their function of, first, awakening and supporting the wish for a new knowledge of unity and reality and, second, of transmitting subtle emotional impressions through allegory and symbol in an order more corresponding to

the interconnected and causal world behind the appearances. Even the very possibility was forgotten that there can exist in man a purer or less automatic emotionality that is actually an indispensable organ of knowing. Art was for "aesthetic pleasure" or persuasion, and then led in a different direction than knowledge.

Modern psychology has come to take its place as one of the numerous channels for influences that answer man's desire for such goods as health, safety, satisfaction and the feeling of individual worth. As we have said, modern psychotherapy generally works by nourishing in the patient the very kinds of emotion that traditional spiritual teachings and methods seek to destroy. But from the point of view of what we have been calling the *path* (the "upward path" of the legend), it is not simply the object of certain emotions or their painfulness that makes them a pathological factor in human life, but their automaticity and their power to mask the subtler and more active feelings that bring man in contact with reality. Thus, it is not a matter of what I desire (it may even be "God") or whether I suffer, but rather what in me is struggling with desire.

Historically, sacred disciplines have offered themselves as a means for destroying the egoistic emotions for the sake of developing consciousness and real moral and emotional force. As I understand it, these inner disciplines thus exist in the world as a completely unique sort of influence, unconnected to the help offered man by psychotherapy, as well as by most modern forms of religion, art and education.

When seen from this point of view, it seems to me that none of the more recent attempts to broaden psychology have hit the mark. The numerous forms of "existential" psychology offer devastating criticism of the concept of the unconscious introduced by the depth psychologies. Yet neither they nor the depth psychologies entertain the possibility that there may indeed exist an unconscious intelligence in man, but one which is not "located," so to say, where it has been sought.

According to the teachings of the *path,* this hidden intelligence comes into being and grows into an active force only through a specific form of voluntary struggle. And "sacred" ideas are intended not only to attract that hidden intelligence but therefore to support the struggle against all forms of psychic automatism, especially on the level of emotion and feeling. We are thus asked to understand that a "great idea" is not simply an idea about "great things" such as the soul or freedom or the cosmos.

The point is, rather, that in order for real ideas to be an influence against the rule of inner automatism, their expression must not only appeal to the nascent, hidden intelligence, but must also specifically interrupt the habitual, associative processes of thought and ordinary egoistic emotion. I see no other way of understanding why such ideas are rigorously set apart from the more familiar formulations about God and man that gradually become the comfortable heritage of particular periods of history under the name of religion and philosophy. In this way, one understands as well why such ideas are part of the practical method of effecting palpable changes in the psychobiological organism of man, and why their influence in any particular era is only partly visible to many of us.

Is Love an Attribute of Reality?

But it is time to call things by their proper names and admit that we are speaking here about *love*—love both as a cosmic and as a human phenomenon. Surely one cannot speak for long about the idea of the microcosm without attempting to think about the meaning of love. A conscious universe, a universe that is more, not less, than man must contain love.

The difficulty, the enormous difficulty, arises as we come to see how shallow, crude or sentimental is our understanding of love. Even people willing to entertain the thought that there is great intelligence and purpose in the cosmos balk at the possibility that love is an attribute of reality.

And well they might. Does not even the simplest observation reveal the "cruelty" or, in any event, the rigor and severity of nature? And is there anything more cloying than a metaphysician or nature poet who sees only "beauty" in the cycle of reciprocal killing and feeding that proceeds endlessly among all living things great and small? What love is there in that?

I remember very well the shock of relief I felt when I first read Freud on this subject long ago. It was in his book, *The Future of an Illusion,* which, along with *Civilization and Its Discontents,* so powerfully and cleanly defined the issue for our era. There he writes of religious ideas as being "born of the need to make tolerable the helplessness of man."

> *It is true that nature does not ask us to restrain our instincts, she lets us do as we like; but she has her peculiarly effective mode of restricting us: She destroys us coldly, cruelly, callously, as it seems to us, and possibly just through what has caused our satisfaction. It was because of these very dangers with which nature threatens us that we united together and created culture, which amongst other things, is supposed to make our communal existence possible. Indeed, it is the principal task of culture, its real* raison d'être, *to defend us against nature.*
>
> *One must confess that in many ways it already does this tolerably well, and clearly as time goes on it will be much more successful. But no one is under the illusion that nature has so far been vanquished; few dare to hope that she will ever be completely under man's subjection. There are the elements, which seem to mock at all human control; the earth, which quakes, is rent asunder, and buries man and all his works; the water, which in tumult floods and submerges all things; the storm, which drives all before it; there are the diseases, which we have only lately recognized as the attacks of other living creatures; and finally there is the painful riddle of death, for which no remedy at all has yet been found, nor probably ever will be. With these forces nature rises up before us, sublime, pitiless, inexorable; thus she brings again to mind our weakness and helplessness. . . .*[2]

As is well known, Freud considered religion to be a psychological gambit by which earlier cultures personalized the objective force of nature in order to feel more comfortable, or at least more emotionally intimate with great reality. The belief in God and a divine Providence was an illusion, a wish fulfillment. For Freud, the true fact about nature was that it was indifferent to man's needs.

In science, civilization had finally found its real champion in the conquest of nature. No longer was it necessary for man to postulate illusory gods in order to feel that there was something he could *do*. It would now be possible *actually* to master—though never completely—the forces that threaten human survival.

Psychoanalysis was put forth as the effort to perform more successfully the task that always defined the essence of civilization: to master the forces of nature in man himself, though again never completely. Civilization only existed to the extent that man went against his own nature and delayed the gratification of what Freud called "instinct." The strongest of these instincts was the sexual drive. It was, of course, man's relationship to sexuality —conceived now very much as pitiless nature itself working in man—that determined his success or failure in surviving.

In psychoanalysis Freud saw that the task of science was to maximize the gratification of sexuality while maintaining the rational order of civilization as it was reflected in the individual.

Despite all the modifications and refinements that Freud and his followers made in his theories, the impact on society was quite elementary: Love was based on sexual pleasure and sexuality was blind nature's operation in the man-animal. To an age uncertain about the meaning and value of art and religion, an age unable to take seriously the idea of higher knowledge, Freudian theory was irresistible.

Had anyone answered Freud by saying that the existence of certain ideas and their expression in certain forms of art, philosophy and religion was itself the trace of another sort of love emanating from a stratum of reality that was hidden to modern man, he would have been ridiculed.

I was a young man when I first read Freud. Like almost everyone else, I had no means of distinguishing great ideas from concepts that were the product of ordinary minds like my own. Similarly with regard to art and religious thought. And, like many people, I suffered from a sort of mental and emotional malaise when pondering the basic questions of human existence. The teachings of the great masters mingled and disappeared among the arguments, fantasies and logical constructions that my own brain invented or that I borrowed from the writings of others. Therefore, the stunning clarity that Freud's theories brought. Immediately, I cut away all that malaise. Religion was an illusion. Man was an animal. Civilization was based on contradictions between the social and biological elements of human nature. It could never have occurred to me then that the contradictions in human nature which Freud and modern psychology perceived so emphatically could be understood in another way—in quite another way, as an expression of the complexity of the human organism and the fate of its lower parts, including ordinary reason, when they are severed from a relationship to higher levels of awareness.

What we may call psychological pragmatism—modern psychology—is the attempt to help man make peace with his contradictory nature without providing him real access to an awareness which alone has the power to bring order into the human chaos, and which alone is the manifestation of love toward and in man.

Whether it is Jung I read, Skinner or Maslow, it is always a matter of increasing pleasure, meaning or vitality within the contradictions of human nature. Neither the "peak experiences" of Maslow nor the "integration" spoken of by Carl Jung communicate the sense of man as a being between two levels of reality. It does not matter that one psychologist has rejected Freud's view of sexuality or that another speaks of transcendent experiences or that yet another brings in ideas from ancient spiritual and esoteric traditions. It is strictly a matter of help for man being understood by psychologists as the improvement of a horizontal cross section of man.

Creation and Destruction

Many speculative philosophers have written about the idea, contained in many traditions, that in the universe there is a law of creation and a law of destruction, a law of love and a law of death. We find it clearly stated in Hinduism where these two forces are symbolized by the gods Brahma and Vishnu. In the Chinese system, Yang and Yin are sometimes understood in this way. In the Cabala, *Hesed* may be taken as the force of God's creative love and mercy, while its counterpart, *Din,* may be taken as God's rigor and power of negation, sometimes translated by the word *judgment*.

It is interesting to try, as many have, to find a relationship between love in the human sphere and this universal energy of creativity which is manifested in the variety and abundance of nature and in the force of sex in all living beings. The difficulty arises, however, when one tries to identify the manifestation of this force that is *specifically* human, as distinguished from the sexuality that connects man to animal life. The difficulty is compounded when one understands love as a form of help.

Plato, we may recall, understood by the word *eros* a striving for a new creation through the participation in something more fundamentally beautiful and real. Christian theology, on

the other hand, has seen love from the side of God—as a divine outpouring and downflow, much in the way Buddhism speaks of compassion.

And then there is that most mysterious of ideas: God *is* love.

How are we to untangle all this? How can we begin to approach the idea that love is a property of reality, whether we call that reality God or the great universe? Unless we find some way into this idea we shall inevitably remain stranded with the sundry modern psychological perspectives on love: as something which affirms the ego or gratifies sexual need.

One of the difficulties we meet is our tendency to think of the universe in terms of entities such as living things, planets, atoms and the laws that describe them. In that universe we may doubtless find wondrous examples of the fecundity and beauty of natural creation. In the environment around us we may see, without sentimentality, how death and life go hand in hand and how the force of sexual creation and environmental adaptation call into being and sustain a million forms of life.

Illusions About the Force of Sex

But what help does the universe, seen in this way, offer to man? It sustains our bodily existence, yes, but it irrevocably destroys it as well. One need not be a cynic to conclude that the universe perceived through the senses or through scientific presuppositions is more the destroyer than the preserver of man. As for the force of sex, who can say that in our ordinary lives we are much more than its slave? Anyone who thinks that his sexual delights and pleasures are signs of his freedom with respect to this force has never tried to put that freedom to any meaningful test. I am not for a moment connecting these thoughts with the hypocrisies and contradictions surrounding the conventional Judeo-Christian attitude toward sex. I am speaking only of the seemingly unbreakable bonds that connect our attractions and repulsions toward sex with our egoistic emotions and illusions about ourselves. To say that man is a slave of sex is to say that, as he is, the force of sex is one of the post powerful chains that bind him to the ego. And whatever service modern psychology has done by liberating us from the tyranny of sexual guilt is surely counterbalanced by its having led us more and more to define ourselves, both directly and implicitly, in terms of sexual pleasure.

It is true that in many of the great traditions sex openly occupies a central and positive place. But it is particularly useless for us to take this out of context, citing statements or admiring works of art that seem to deify sex. I do not think we have a very clear idea what sort of sexuality is being spoken about or illustrated in these cases. The assumption that traditional civilizations unconsciously understood or experienced sex in the same way we moderns do has supported many nonsensical psychoanalytic and psychological efforts to justify psychological pragmatism.

The main point is that these teachings about sexuality occur within the framework of a great system of ideas—such as the system of Mahayana Buddhism or Samkhya. Without the ability to understand such systems of ideas, how is it possible for us to apply their views about sex to our own lives?

A Definition of Love

Returning now to our central question, we ask: Is the universe made up only of what we perceive through the senses? If so, we may conclude that in it there is no such thing as real help for man.

But have we not all along been dealing with realities that are also part of the universe? Are not *ideas* also part of the universe—ideas, great teachings and great masters?

But we rarely think of the universe in quite this way. In asking what help there is in the universe for ourselves, we tend to include along with ourselves all of mankind. Seeing that our own thoughts and concepts bring us no light, we tend to include with them all ideas. But our whole study has been based on the assumption of the vast real difference that exists between ordinary thought and sacred ideas.

We arrive at the conclusion that for us *cosmic love exists in the form of ideas and men who embody, communicate these ideas.*

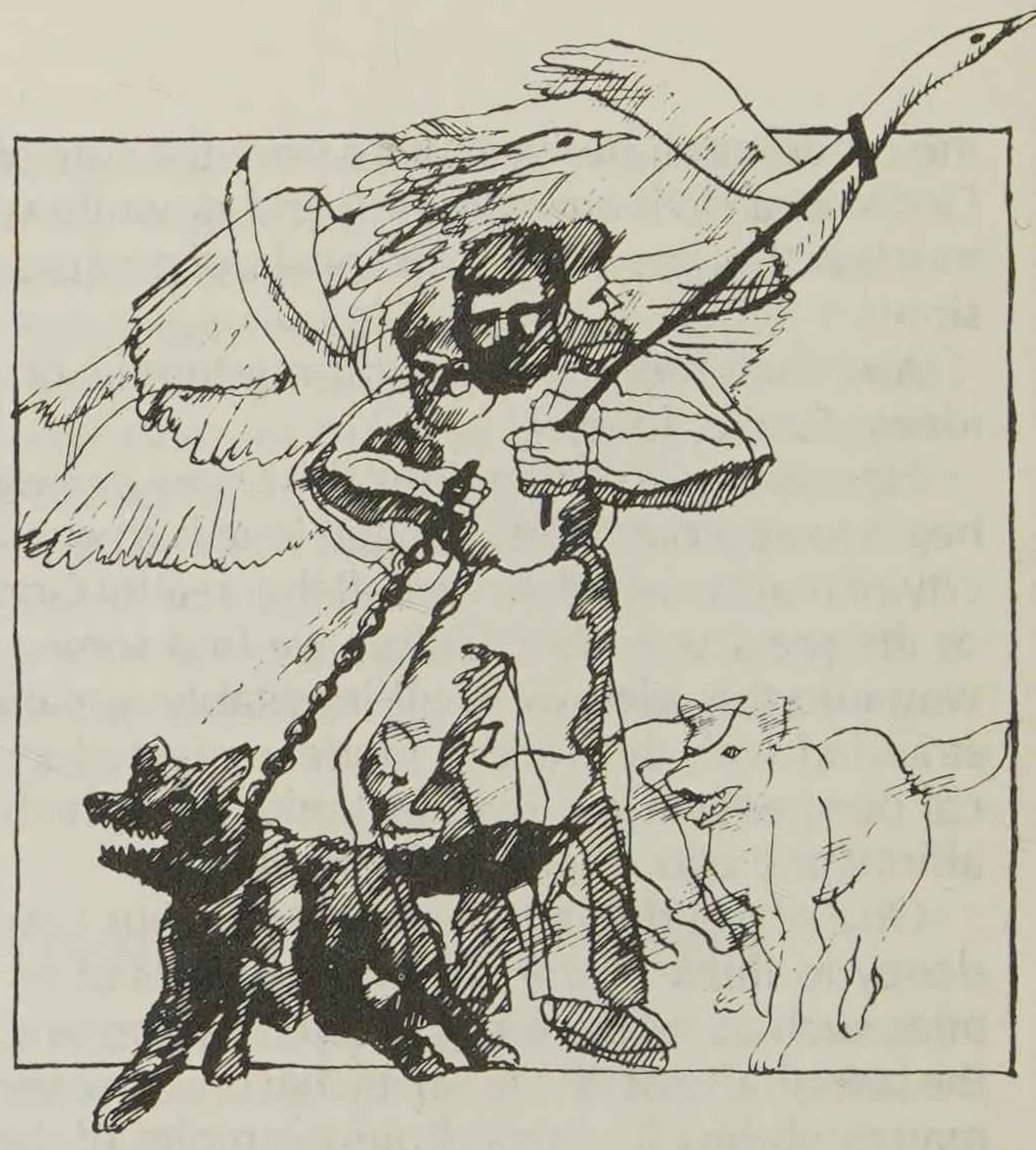
But, saying this, we come immediately to

another conclusion that strikes even closer to home. In our present condition, as we are, we are unable to receive these ideas or hear these communications, nor are we able to recognize which men embody them. In short, in our present state of consciousness we are not *able* to receive the help which is offered to us.

Therefore, we may finally define love in the most accurate way for ourselves: Love is that which helps us to understand the truth about ourselves and our possibilities. Are there men and teachings, methods and disciplines, ideas, forms of organization and community pattern, attitudes toward death, sex, material goods, children, time and every other concern of human life which can awaken in us an ableness to hear and understand sacred ideas?

In the universe, as we ordinarily perceive it, man is merely part of planetary nature. Whatever love that exists in such a universe, whatever help for existence, is directed not to man alone, but to the whole of planetary nature. In that whole, man is a being who lives and dies as part of the cycle of mutual killing and feeding; he has his place there, but it is the place of a slave among slaves. And it is that universe upon which modern psychology has fashioned its theories of human happiness. Closed to the help that is possible for man, we receive only the help that is offered to planetary nature.

We need to reiterate: Religion fails man by assuming that he has the ability to understand and take in the great teachings of the past. It fails by assuming that as we are we are able to receive the love of which it speaks. Science —especially psychology—is a reaction to this blindness of modern religion, a reaction that takes us far over to the other direction by assuming that there is no help for man "out there." In moving to that extreme, in denying the existence of higher levels of intelligence in the external universe, it never finds its way to search for these same levels within man himself, levels of receptivity, organs of intelligence



which can mirror in microcosm the laws of a conscious universe. It seems to me that the error of humanism—the error of modern psychology—is not that it seeks for help within man alone, but that it so radically underestimates just what it is that can be found within man. But to glimpse such high possibilities in man it is necessary to have a system of cosmology, a metaphysics, that communicates the existence in reality of these levels. Otherwise, we are stranded with the undeniable fact that, as we are, we are totally cut off from the great cosmos. Psychology underestimates what we can become; modern religion overestimates what we are.

The Third Brother

In conclusion, let us return to our tale of the two youths meeting on the side of a mountain. Were I to attempt to reconstruct the whole story from this tiny fragment, I would work on the assumption that it is a tale about the nature of love, as it is spoken of in symbol and legend in

all the traditions of mankind. I suspect that the two young men are introduced as brothers, as two aspects of everyman's human nature, and that the story is meant to warn us against identifying ourselves solely with either the inward or the outward movement of energy within the psyche of man. I see the narrative following the crane now flying free, but with the long golden thread trailing from its neck and brushing against the earth from time to time. And I imagine as well that we are given an unmistakable picture of the fate of the second brother being dragged with ever-increasing violence down the mountain, finally stumbling and falling injured as the black dog breaks loose. As in many such fairy tales, there is probably a third brother in this story, younger than the first two, but more sincere in his ways and more open to deep learning about the totality of himself. He represents the embryonic human soul in its ancient meaning as that in ourselves which can stand between the highest and the lowest within us and which, for us to live and evolve, must care for both the animal and the spiritual in man. Long ago, Western religion turned away from this "third brother" and gratuitously insisted that all men were born with a fully developed "immortal soul." As a result, teachings which recognized that long and exacting work was needed to develop the real *I* in man that stands "between the worlds" went underground and kept their secrets well. The subtle discipline through which a man learns impartially to take in impressions of both sides of his nature became for the West a forgotten science.

I see the third brother grasping hold of the golden thread just before the crane soars out of reach and I see him then laying hold of the powerful black dog. There he stands, connected for the moment to both the spiritual teachings and the natural desires of the body and the social self which must be neither indulged nor ignored, but *known* if man would acquire the energy to actually live the truths which the traditions communicate. And so he proceeds with the thread in one hand and the iron chain in the other. Who will help him? Is there a love for man, for ourselves, which can care from moment to moment for the growth of both sides of our nature, the part that hears the whispering from the cosmos and the part that lives and serves the biological life of earth?

A BRIEF NOTE ON JUNGIANISM

There is currently a revival of interest in Jungianism, understood as a psychological system that makes room for religious man. Carl Jung was the first of Freud's early followers who repudiated scientism in the study of man and who sought for categories which were not derived from the physical or biological sciences. He is famous, of course, for his concept of the collective unconscious—the ancient, ancestral psychic life lying beneath the surface of the individual ego. Working with this concept, he and his followers look upon the symbolism of spiritual teachings such as alchemy and Mahayana Buddhism, as well as upon the myths and legends of all nations, as forms by which the collective unconscious expresses itself—even as it struggles to express itself in the dreams and fantasies of every individual.

Nowhere in modern psychology is there more preoccupation with the fabulous contents of the mind than in the school of Jungianism. Indeed, the main thrust of Jungian therapy is the evocation of dreams and the establishment of a positive emotional relationship between the patient and his dream images, which represent, according to the Jungians, the dark powers of life that need to be integrated with the rational, empirical self. The patient is urged to become more and more familiar with this "inner world," to participate in it, to enter into its imagery and mood, to understand, play with, live with, carry and become familiar with it. In

this process, man finds his "soul," his inner life.

In the writings of the Jungians, it is difficult to find a clear expression of how they see their relationship to the search for transformation. Sometimes they speak as though they considered their form of psychoanalysis to be a modern, Western version of the Eastern disciplines—and in some respects even an improvement upon them, as though Jungian theories had finally provided a rational expression of what ancient man grasped dimly and instinctively. Elsewhere, they more modestly claim only to prepare the psyche for spiritual experience. A leading Jungian analyst asserts that traditional disciplines such as alchemy, Yoga, contemplative Christianity, Sufism and Zen Buddhism are actually concerned with the deepest sense of what Jungians term "personality development."[3]

The career of Jungian psychoanalysis and its ambiguous influence make plain how difficult it is for modern man to reclaim a sense of inwardness while holding fast to a scientific picture of the universe. The symbols of ancient traditions take on an entirely new meaning when one entertains the idea of a conscious universe containing levels of intelligence that far exceed the highest states experienced by the ordinary, "healthy" mind. If sacred symbols are understood to be the communication of a higher consciousness, they can no longer be approached in Jungian fashion as a bridge between the rational ego and the forces of the unconscious psyche. A spiritual symbol is the expression of an idea, not the result of the play of psychic forces.

The metaphysics of scientism encourages man to stop his search for inwardness at the level of psychic contents. The reason for this is that science does not offer laws of reality that are themselves symbols, that is, the expression of great consciousness. So man has no motive to look within himself for laws, but only for feelings, images or thoughts. From the perspective of science, it is a form of slavery to live according to cosmic laws. From the perspective of esotericism, the possibility of living according to truly cosmic laws is the only meaning of human freedom. And that because the laws of a conscious universe are the patterns by which will maintains itself against resistance, a process mirrored to some small extent in great artistic work.

Microcosmic man has therefore been understood traditionally as man in whom the fundamental laws of the cosmos operate without deviation or distortion. In religious language, this goal has been expressed as "service to God."

From this perspective, then, the transformation of human nature begins as man acquires the sensitivity and therefore the power to live under higher and more universal laws, laws which govern the great cosmic movement between levels of being. No psychology that does not effectively recognize a universe of levels and conscious hierarchy can possibly establish a relationship to the ancient teachings, far less prepare an individual man for the work of spiritual struggle. Surely, a sacred psychology is a teaching that can guide men into the study of these laws as they operate within the structure of human nature. And surely, a spiritual master is a man who, having understood these laws, can guide another past the obstacles that prevent his living in accordance with them.

Therefore, the question still remains open whether any psychiatrist, even a Jungian, can prepare a man—except by accident—for the search for consciousness. In fact, as has been suggested, there are grounds for wondering if perhaps modern psychotherapy works in precisely the opposite direction. I offer the following quotation from the writings of Sri Anirvan as food for thought on this issue:

> *Psychoanalysis works on the intensive exposure of the emotions. They are brought out into the daylight with the object of cleaning*

out the subconscious, and thus are lived over again, which means that each of them is amplified. Instead of belonging only to the damaged part of the being, they invade the whole field of prakriti,* *as the tares spread over a wheatfield.*

The very structure of emotion must be denied as such, for it arises from one's subjective view of external elements. . . . The traditional techniques pay no attention to emotion. Even the Vaishnavites, who worship Krishna and make full use of emotion in their fundamental attitude of adoration, use only those sublimated elements of emotion that sustain the ideal.

Several levels have to be passed through before one can know how to minimize emotion at its very source, to know it, to isolate and master it. and finally to be able to get rid of it. The lower stage is to realize once and for all that emotions are a debt to be paid; this realization is the beginning of a process that uproots them. This is the process of eradication. The second stage is to conceive of emotion as a surrender, an always recurring pattern. It is part of the automatism which becomes evident and really does not exist. The third stage is that in which a "light form" of an ideal is methodically and voluntarily put in the place of the "heavy form" of an emotion which is oppressive. . . .

Renunciation (variâgya) is the voluntary giving up of all emotions whatsoever. This notion, supported by a long tradition, goes hand in hand with life. . . . To be capable of mastering an emotion, one has first to evaluate it and dispose of it for what it really is–the distortion of an uncontrolled and misplaced sensation.

When the intestines are out of order, one follows a strict diet. The cure comes about by abstaining for the time being from certain foods. Thus the body regains strength. Psychically, power is gathered. This method is the exact opposite of psychoanalysis, which digs about in the ego. Samkhya places you under a cosmic force and disregards the ego, saying, "Why are you afraid of this or that? All these things are only movements of prakriti, *aspects of the eternal recurrence in men, animals, the whole of nature." One must learn to live in the very movement that shapes and molds* prakriti, *without trying to escape from it. To look at* prakriti *and see her agitated movement makes it possible not to identify with her. I observe what she is. By doing that, I feel the movement in myself, but I do not linger on the fact that I was created from the same matter. Time plays an important part in this discipline, and also patience. On the part of the Guru this patience is pure love.*

Emotion does not enter into any spiritual discipline, because in itself emotion has no consistency. It is only a movement of prakriti. *When the mind is perfectly calm it is like the still water of a mountain lake. The slightest ripple on the surface is an emotion.*

What happens to it? If Purusha *allows this ripple, however slight, to intensify and become a wave, he himself will be swallowed. Blind emotion is then master of the situation, although in fact it has no* raison d'être.

If this emotion, while it is still only a ripple, is voluntarily interiorized, then little by little, because of its inconsistency, it will disintegrate and of itself go back whence it came.[4]

* Essential to the Samkhya is the distinction between *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. *Prakriti* may be translated as "Great Nature" and comprises the entire universe of things, laws and movement. *Purusha* is Great Consciousness which pervades *Prakriti* at every point and is yet completely distinct from it. The Samkhya system deals with these two realities as they operate in the universe and in the microcosm and is a method of awakening the *prakriti* in man to the influence of consciousness through a discipline of presence-to-oneself in the midst of the ordinary conditions of life.

[1]Robert Ornstein, *The Psychology of Consciousness* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1972), pp. 96–99.

[2]Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. by W. D. Robson-Scott (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Book) pp. 21–23.

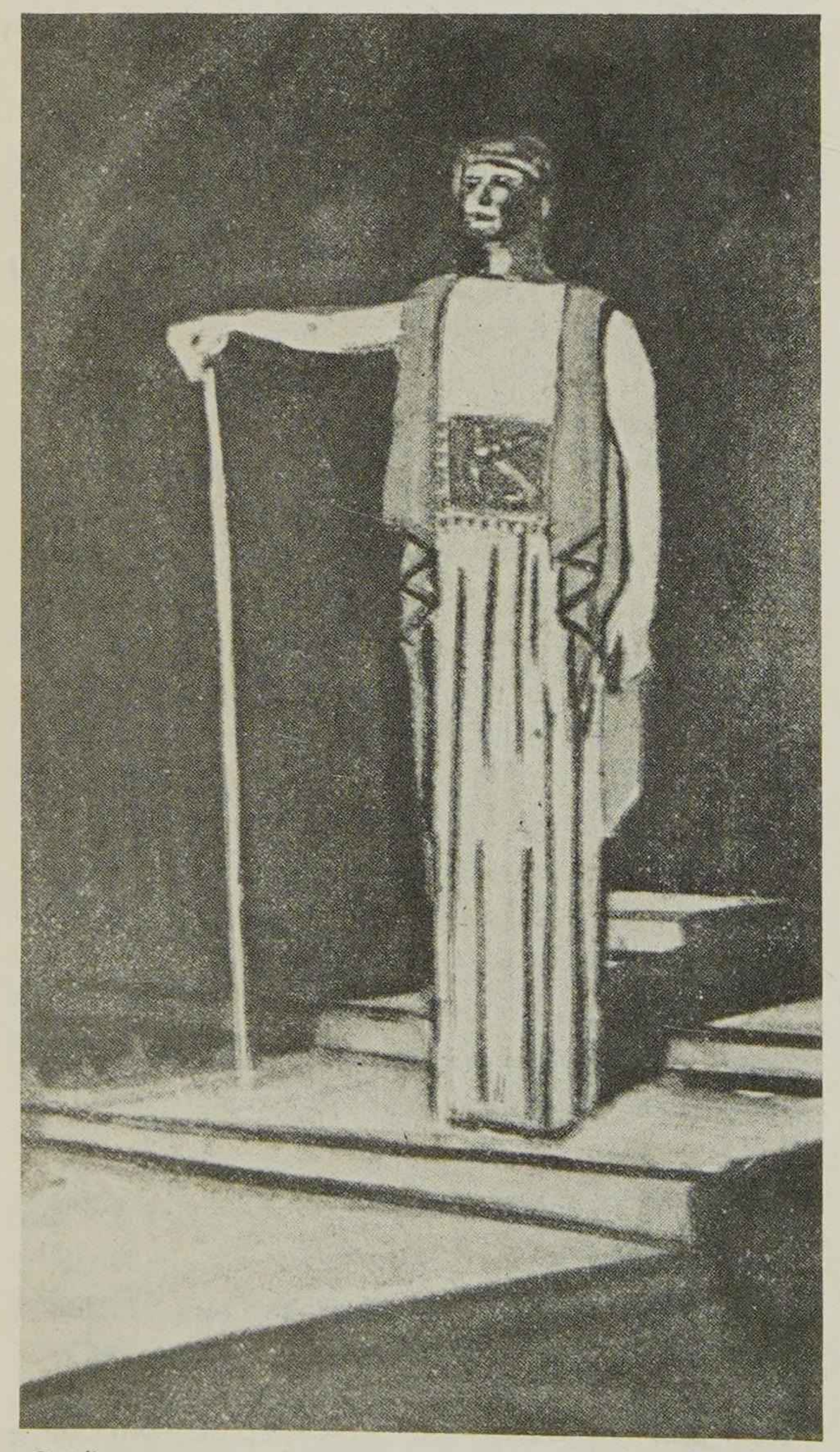
[3]James Hillman, *Insearch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967) p. 84.

[4]Lizelle Reymond, *To Live Within* (New York: Penguin Books, Inc.) pp. 204–207.

Psychotherapy and the Sacred is adapted from Chapter Five of my book *A Sense of the Cosmos* (New York: Doubleday, 1975).

THE TRAGIC HERO: AN IMAGE OF INDIVIDUATION

EDWARD F. EDINGER



Oedipus

What is mythology, and why should we study it?

To begin with, it fixes in concrete, graspable forms the universal, archetypal realities which underlie psychic experience, and which determine that experience—especially whenever these determinant factors are unconscious. A knowledge of mythological images is an essential requirement if the ego is to have a conscious relation to the deeper layers of the psyche, for they provide forms and categories of understanding by which to grasp and consciously to realize the nature of the transpersonal powers. The ego that lacks these categories of understanding will be either confined to the shallow level of personalistic meanings, or it will be taken over by the archetypal energies and forced to live them out unconsciously. So, as I see it, the psychological answer to the question of "Why study mythology?" is that the psyche will otherwise be invisible and that only through acquaintance with the mythological images is the psyche made manifest in its origins, its structure, and its transformations.

Mythology, it seems, performs the same service for developing culture and consciousness as does Athena's mirror for Perseus facing Medusa. In fact, this image of Athena's mirror is a very apt symbol for human culture in general because what culture, and mythology in particular, does is break up the terrifying totality of being into graspable images. The function corresponds to what Shakespeare has to say about the nature of drama in *Hamlet:* "The purpose of the playing is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." Myths promote consciousness, providing the relevant connections with our own personal life can be made. One must always ask, "How does this relate to me?" It sometimes happens that finding one's own particular myth or the

particular myth that's operating at a given time in given circumstances can be a very moving experience that carries with it a kind of shock of recognition, a sudden realization that that is I that's looking back at me from the collective mythological images.

Greek mythology is one of the two main roots of the Western psyche, the other being Judaeo-Christian mythology. And the Greek myths are therefore our "scriptures" just as much as the Bible is, and should be approached with equal seriousness. Because myths are not stories of remote happenings in the past; they are dramas that are living themselves out repeatedly in our own personal lives and in what we see around us here and now. To be aware of this adds a dimension to existence which is usually reserved for the poets. Moses is eternally bringing down the law from Sinai. Jesus is eternally being crucified and resurrected. Likewise, Hercules is eternally performing his labors; Perseus continues to confront Medusa; Theseus forever stalks the Minotaur; and all the other myths are always recurring everywhere about us and within us. It may even be that Plato discovered his concept of the eternal ideas from contemplating the Greek myths.

* * *

It is from this perspective, viewing myth from the vantage of psyche, that I want to treat the theme of the tragic hero.

Viewed psychologically, the mythological hero can be defined as a personification of the urge to individuation. He stands midway between the Self and the ego—less than Self but more than ego. The tragic hero is more human than the mythological hero. He has no supernatural powers. He is a limited human being caught like Laocoön in the coils of a transpersonal destiny. He represents the ego gripped by the process of individuation.

The figure of the tragic hero emerged from two outstanding and inter-related instruments of civilization created by the ancient Greeks —the sacred games and the ritual drama. It is indicative of their psychological similarity that we refer to both games and drama by the same word, play. These action-forms give human energies a second world in which to function. We are apt to forget the crucial role that games and athletic contests played in civilizing the aggressive energies of early man. Nietzsche had a profound understanding of this fact as indicated by the following passage:

> *When a victor in a fight among the cities executes the entire male citizenry in accordance with the laws of war and sells all the women and children into slavery, we see in the sanction of such a law that the Greeks considered it an earnest necessity to let their hatred flow forth fully; in such moments crowded and swollen feeling relieved itself; the tiger leaped out, voluptuous cruelty in his terrible eyes. Why must the Greek sculptor give form again and again to war and combat in innumerable repetitions: distended human bodies, their sinews tense with hatred or with the arrogance of triumph; writhing bodies, wounded; dying bodies, expiring? Why did the whole Greek world exult over the combat scenes of the* Iliad? *I fear that we do not understand these in a sufficiently "Greek" manner; indeed, that we should shudder if we were ever to understand them "in Greek." (1)*

It is these wild and primitive energies that are contained, channeled, and finally transformed by means of organized games and athletic contests. In the beginning, the games were always dedicated to a god, indicating that the athletes' efforts were being offered up to a transpersonal meaning. Indeed, a transpersonal meaning *is* achieved whenever we succeed in transforming primitive psychic energy by humanizing it.

At such times we are serving the grand enterprise of the evolution of consciousness. I think this is Plato's meaning when he speaks about the need for men to play, in that late work written in his old age, *The Laws:*

> *God is the real goal of all beneficent serious endeavor. Man, as we said before, has been constructed as a toy for God, and this is, in fact, the finest thing about him. All of us, then, men and women alike, must fall in with our role and spend life in making our* play *as perfect as possible. We should pass our lives in the playing of games*—certain *games that is, sacrifice, song, and dance—with the result of ability to gain heaven's grace.*

In later thinking the athletic contest, the *agone,* became a paradigm for spiritual development. St. Paul used it for that purpose. (2) Today we can see it as a symbol of the individuation process.

Drama is another type of play which has the capacity to transform primitive psychic energy. Originally the drama was the ritual acting-out of a myth. While watching the drama, the spectators became identified with the mythical happening being portrayed, allowing them to participate briefly in the archetypal level of reality. We know from psychotherapeutic experience that an encounter with the archetypal dimension can have healing and transformative effects. Drama is certainly very important psychologically and has many parallels to dreams. Aristotle described the effect of watching tragedy as a catharsis in which one has the opportunity to release the emotions of pity and fear. The idea is that, just as a possessed person is calmed by the playing of frenzied music, so sad and fearful people are relieved by seeing the emotions which grip them acted out. Thus, the play functions as a mirror which provides an image to objectify the inner affect. Modern psychology can add another aspect to the significance of tragic drama. The tragic hero depicts the ego undergoing individuation. Individuation is, in part, a tragic process. We define it as the ego's progressive awareness of and relation to the Self. But, as Jung has taught us, "the experience of the self is always a defeat for the ego," and a defeat for the ego is experienced as tragedy.

Gilbert Murray has given us a valuable description of the origin and basic features of the classic tragedy. It is his view that Greek tragedy started as the ritual re-enactment of the death and rebirth of the year-spirit (equated with Dionysus), and that this ritual re-enactment had four chief features. First, there was an *agone* or contest in which the protagonist, the representative of the year-spirit, is in contest with darkness or evil. Secondly, there is a *pathos* or passion in which the hero undergoes suffering and defeat. Third is a *threnos* or lamentation for the defeated hero. And fourthly, there is a *theophany,* a rebirth of life on another level with a reversal of emotion from sorrow to joy. This sequence is basically the same as the ritual drama of Osiris and of Christ, each of which has the characteristic features of the death and rebirth of the year-spirit. In later Greek tragedy the final phase, the theophany, almost disappears, perhaps remaining only as a hint. In psychological terms we can say that the sequence of steps which constitute the tragic process involves the overcoming of the ego, the defeat of the conscious will, in order for the Self, the final epiphany, to manifest.

The Shakespearean scholar, Bradley, speaks of the tragic hero in terms of a fatal flaw. This would correspond to what Jungian psychology knows as the problem of the inferior function. One side of the circle of the personality is always undeveloped and open to the depths. The so-called "fatal flaw" is thus a typical and characteristic feature of the individual psyche. Bradley also speaks of Shakespeare's tragic heroes as having "a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion, or habit of mind." This, likewise, is a well-known psychological phenomenon in which the ego identifies with the superior function; but that identification with its greatest strength then leads to its falling victim to its greatest weakness. Bradley has a description of tragedy that is relevant to our purpose. He writes:

> *. . . (In Shakespearean tragedy, man) may be wretched and may be aweful, but he is not small. His lot may be heart-rending and mysterious, but it is not contemptible. The most confirmed of cynics ceases to be a cynic*

while he reads these plays. And with this greatness of the tragic hero (which is not always confined to him) is connected, secondly, what I venture to describe as the center of the tragic impression. This central feeling is the impression of waste. With Shakespeare, at any rate, the pity and fear which are stirred by the tragic story seem to unite with, and even to merge in, a profound sense of sadness and mystery, which is due to this impression of waste. "What a piece of work is man," we cry; "so much more beautiful and so much more terrible than we knew! Why should he be so if this beauty and greatness only tortures itself and throws itself away?" We seem to have before us a type of the mystery of the whole world, the tragic fact which extends far beyond the limits of tragedy. Everywhere, from the crushed rocks beneath our feet to the soul of man, we see power, intelligence, life and glory, which astound us and seem to call for our worship. And everywhere we see them perishing, devouring one another and destroying themselves, often with dreadful pain, as though they came into being for no other end. Tragedy is the typical form of this mystery, because that greatness of soul which it exhibits oppressed, conflicting and destroyed, is the highest existence in our view. It forces the mystery upon us, and it makes us realize so vividly the worth of that which is wasted that we cannot possibly seek comfort in the reflection that all is vanity.

Bradley expresses beautifully how the fourth phase of the ritual drama of the year-spirit, the phase of theophany, which no longer appears in the tragic drama itself, is transferred to the experience of the spectator. In watching the tragedy, the spectator becomes aware of the transpersonal worth of man. The spectator becomes the ground, so to speak, on which the theophany is experienced.

This same sequence of four stages—the *agone* or contest, the *pathos* or defeat, the *threnos* or lamentation, and the *theophany*—is found in all important processes of psychological development and certainly in every psychotherapeutic process that goes at all deep. At times a given phase may repeat itself. For example, take the first phase, the *agone* or contest. As long as the *agone* ends in success, the process won't go any further. It is short-circuited, so to speak. and the happy victor leaves the scene little knowing that he has missed the main thing. But no one experiences success perpetually; sooner or later defeat does come, and that then leads to the possibility of the completion of the sequence.

Let us examine now the two Oedipus plays of Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, as an example of the tragic process. These plays are of particular significance to depth psychology because Oedipus was the first archetype to be discovered. Freud made the important observation that this archetype can give rise to a complex, the so-called Oedipus complex. Since then we have learned that any archetypal image can manifest itself as a personal complex in the individual psyche. Other tragic hero figures besides Oedipus can be at the root of complexes. I have personally seen an Orestes complex, an Iphigenia complex, a Hamlet complex and a Coriolanus complex.

Oedipus the King begins in the middle of the story and requires an introduction to bring the reader up to date. Because of an oracle that prophesied that Oedipus would kill his father and marry his mother, Oedipus was abandoned at birth and left for dead. However, unbeknown to his parents, a shepherd rescued him and took him to the king of Corinth, who adopted him and reared him in his own house. About fifteen years before the opening of the play, Oedipus had been told by the oracle at Delphi that he was destined to murder his

father and marry his mother. Shocked by this prediction, he determined never to go back to Corinth whose king and queen he thought were his parents. His wanderings brought him eventually to the city of Thebes where his real father and mother were reigning. However, on the way he brawled with an old man in a carriage over the right of way, and in a fit of temper, killed him. Arriving at Thebes, he finds the city in an uproar because the king, Laius, has gone on a journey and never returned. Also a female monster, the Sphinx, has taken up a position on a rock outside Thebes and is strangling the inhabitants one by one because they are not able to answer her riddle. Oedipus answers it, and the Sphinx throws herself from the rock. The citizens in gratitude make Oedipus their king and he marries Jocasta, their widowed queen. But no one knows that Jocasta is Oedipus' real mother, and that the old man he killed on the road was Laius, his father. There follow fifteen years of apparent prosperity, but only apparent, because the gods are disgusted by the corruption that exists. Therefore Thebes is struck by a plague. The people, led by their priests and elders, flock around the great and successful Oedipus and ask him to save them. This is where the play begins.

At the start, Oedipus is in his prime. He signifies the successful, confident ego that thinks it has met life and its problems (represented by the Sphinx) successfully and has nothing more to fear. Concerning Oedipus' over-confidence, Jung writes,

> *The tragic consequences could easily have been avoided if only Oedipus had been sufficiently intimidated by the frightening appearance of the terrible or devouring mother whom the Sphinx personified. . . . Little did he know that the riddle of the Sphinx can never be solved merely by the wit of man. . . . A factor of such magnitude cannot be disposed of by solving a childish riddle. The riddle was, in fact, the trap which the Sphinx laid for the unwary wanderer. Over-estimating his intellect in a typically masculine way, Oedipus walked right into it. (3)*

The play begins with Oedipus in an illusory state of well-being which is broken into by the plague which has struck Thebes. He is told:

> *. . . look upon the city, see the storm*
> *that batters down this city's prow in waves of*
> *blood.*
> *The crops diseased, disease among the*
> *herds.*
> *The ineffectual womb rotting with its fruit.*
> *A fever-demon wastes the town*
> *and decimates with fire, stalking hated*
> *through the emptied house where Cadmus*
> *lived:*
> *while poverty-stricken night grows fat*
> *on groans and elegies in Hades Halls.*

Here we have the theme of the diseased or barren land as in the beginning of the Grail legend. The psychological counterpart to this condition is a state of depressed emptiness, a loss of energy, interest and life-meaning. This neurotic condition requires action and Oedipus, the ego, is asked to do something about it.

> *So, Oedipus, you most respected king,*
> *we plead with you to find for us a cure;*
> *some answer blown from God or—could*
> *it be?*
> *enlightenment from man . . .*
> *Mend the city, make her safe. . . .*
> *Be equal to your stature now.*
> *If king of men (as king you are),*
> *then be it of a kingdom manned and not a*
> *desert.*

Oedipus resolutely sets out to discover what

is wrong. There is a distressing symptom that needs attention. This would correspond to the first indication of a psychological problem. The individual realizes he must act; so perhaps he will enter psychotherapy. In the play Oedipus sends Creon to consult the oracle at Delphi. The message that comes back is, "Banish the murderer of Laius." The unconscious has been consulted, perhaps by examining dreams, and the answer that comes is to bring the guilty one to justice. In other words, the shadow must be made conscious. Oedipus readily agrees to this procedure. Little does he know that he is the one. The evil is his own, but he still naively imagines himself innocent. Oedipus might well be told at this point, "Never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

Next, Teiresias the seer is called. The unconscious is consulted again on another level. Replies to his questions are gradually forced out of Teiresias by Oedipus. When the incriminating evidence first appears Oedipus accuses Teiresias and Creon of the crime. The first emerging awareness of the shadow leads to its projection. But that won't hold up, and Oedipus' origin gradually unfolds as he seeks it out. The shepherd is questioned and Oedipus learns that he is, in fact, Jocasta's child. Jocasta realizes the dreadful truth and disappears within. Finally and cataclysmically the insight bursts upon Oedipus that *he* is the one. Awareness of his identity and his guilt conjoined rushes in on him and he cries:

Lost! ah lost! At last it's blazing clear.
Light of my eyes, good bye—my final gaze!
My birth all sprung revealed from those it
never should;
myself entwined with those I never could;
and I the killer of those I never would.

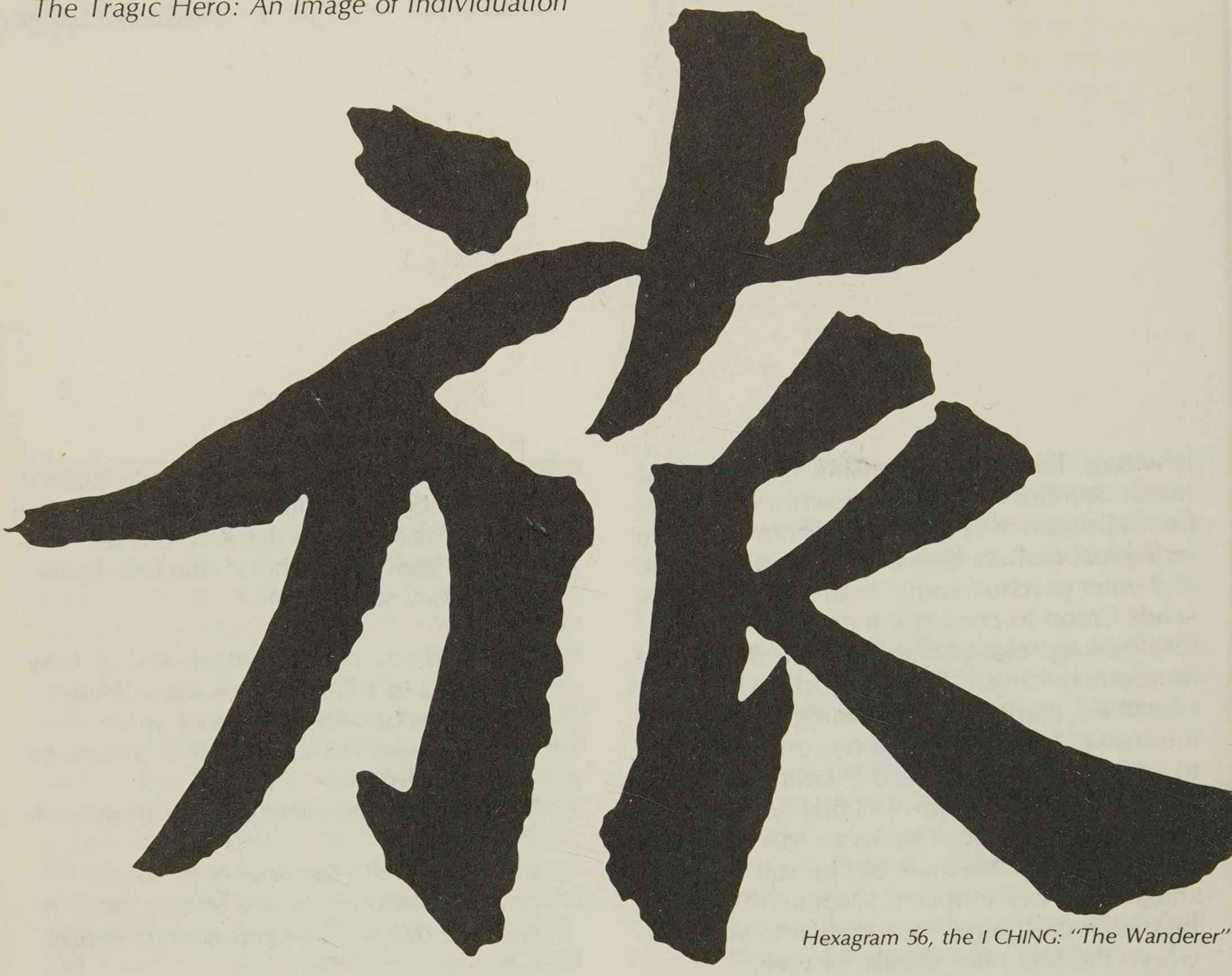
He goes into the palace, sees Jocasta who has hanged herself, and blinds himself with the pins of Jocasta's brooches.

The symbol of blindness has an important role in the Oedipus plays. It has a paradoxical quality. At the moment that Oedipus sees himself as he really is, he blinds himself. Earlier Teiresias had said to him,

I'm blind you say. You mock at that! I say
you see and still are blind—appallingly:
Blind to your origins and to a union
in your house. Yes, ask yourself, "where are
you from?"
You'd never guess what hate is dormant in
your home
or buried with your dear ones dead;
or how a mother's and a father's curse
will one day scourge you with its double
thongs
and whip you staggering from the land.
It shall be night where now you boast of day.

Oedipus had been blind all along, but when he sees his blindness he blinds himself. When he can see physically, he is blind psychologically; and as he comes to see psychologically, he becomes blind physically. Along with this paradoxical symbolism is the fact that Teiresias the seer is blind, indicating that sight of one kind is deleterious to sight of another kind—as though inner and outer sight work reciprocally.

Let us consider the nature of Oedipus' insight. What he discovered literally was that he had murdered his father and married his mother. These were probably the worst possible crimes of which ancient man could conceive. The paternal Logos principle and the maternal Eros principle have both been violated. Simultaneously, Oedipus discovers his identity and his guilt. He experiences for himself the teaching of traditional Christianity, that man is a miserable sinner. In psychological terms, Oedipus has been overwhelmed by a sudden realization of the shadow. The intensity of his reaction indicates that he has encountered not the personal shadow but the arche-



Hexagram 56, the I CHING: "The Wanderer"

typal shadow. The abyss opens before him and he is utterly demoralized. There is a parallel to Oedipus' self-horror in John Bunyan's description of his own self-loathing.

> *But my original and inward pollution, that was my plague and my affliction. By reason of that, I was more loathsome in my own eyes than was a toad; and I thought I was in God's eyes too. Sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water would bubble out of a fountain. I could have changed heart with anybody. I thought none but the Devil himself could equal me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. . . . I was both a burden and a terror to myself; nor did I ever so know, as now, what it was to be weary of my life, and yet afraid to die. How gladly would I have been anything but myself! Anything but a man! And in any condition but my own. (4)*

Oedipus the King ends with the total defeat of Oedipus. There is no *theophany*. This is reserved for *Oedipus at Colonus*, which is part two of *Oedipus* and is very similar to part two of *Faust*. As the second play opens, Oedipus has long been banished from Thebes and is wandering from place to place, guided by his daughter. The theme of the wanderer is characteristic of one stage of individuation. Cain was condemned to wander. According to legend, Elijah and the Wandering Jew are both required to wander homelessly until the Messiah comes. In Gnostic thought the whole earthly life of man is considered to be a banishment from his heavenly home. One of the hexagrams of the *I Ching*, No. 56, is entitled "The Wanderer." Psychologically, the state of banishment and wandering is a necessary intermediate condition in the process of individuation. One cannot find a durable relation to the inner center, the Self, until he has been deprived of outer comfortable containments and identifications.

After long wanderings, Oedipus comes at last to a sacred spot close to Athens. He is now a sage and holy man, a precious sacred entity. His two sons, who are fighting one another for Thebes, both want his approval because an oracle has said that whoever gets his approval wins. The oracle has also announced that his tomb will bless the land it's on. Oedipus has

become a sacred object, he is a living theophany. In this passage, he describes the holy power of his tomb.

Come, listen, son of Aegeus,
I'll lay before you now a city's lasting treasure.
There is a place where I must die,
and I myself, unhelped, shall walk before you there.
That place you must not tell to any human being:
not where it lurks, nor where the region lies—
if you would have a shield like a thousand shields,
and a more perpetual pact than spears of allies.
No chart of words shall mark that mystery.
Alone you'll go: alone your memory
shall frame it in that spot.
For not to any persons here
not even to my daughters so beloved
am I allowed to utter it.
You yourself must guard it always.
And when your life is drawing to its close
divulge it to your heir alone
and he in turn to his, and so forever.
This way you'll keep your city safe against the dragon seed,
though many a state attack a peaceful home,
though sure be the help from heaven
(but exceeding slow)
against earth's godless men and men gone mad.
No such fate for you, good son of Aegeus.
But all of this you know without my telling you.
And now to that spot—God signals me.

The life of Oedipus, as it is revealed in these two plays, parallels the alchemical process. Like the *prima materia* with which the alchemists began, Oedipus is subjected to fiery ordeals and sufferings until he is transformed into a sacred object that benefits all who touch him. Here is the *theophany* that redeems the suffering of the first play.

Taken together, the two Oedipus plays reveal explicitly the four stages of tragedy previously mentioned. The first, the *agone* or contest, is represented by Oedipus' encounter with the Sphinx, followed later by the struggle to discover the hidden knowledge that was causing the plague. The second stage, the *pathos* or passion, corresponds to the blinding insight and the ego-defeat which it caused. The *threnos* or lamentation is represented by the chorus which bemoans the downfall of the mighty Oedipus followed by Oedipus' prolonged wanderings. The fourth stage, the *theophany,* comes at the end of *Oedipus at Colonus* when his tomb becomes a sacred sanctuary and a perpetual blessing. These four stages portray quite precisely the steps in every major increase of consciousness. In each case a suffering, deflating ordeal for the ego must preceed the epiphany of the Self. This is necessary because the ego starts out in a state of identification with the Self. It can only realize its separate and dependent condition by a tragic ordeal which enforces the separation. Sophocles describes this process in the final lines of *Antigone.*

Where wisdom is, there happiness will crown
a piety that nothing will corrode.
But high and mighty words and ways
are flogged to humbleness, till age,
beaten to its knees, at last is wise.

[1]Friedrich Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," in *The Portable Nietzsche,* ed. by Walter Kaufman (New York: Viking, 1968), p. 33.

[2] 1 *Cor.* 9: 24–27.

[3]C.G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation, Collected Works* Vol. 5 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), para. 264 and 265.

[4]Quoted in William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: New American Library, 1958), p. 155.

This Quest Fable about well-crafted photography comes from the already mythical Peter Rasun Gould. The personage of the story would unify sex and so is named Hēshē. Due to contemporary word usage beyond the control of the writer, Hēshē is frequently referred to as "they" or "them."

THE DIAMOND LENS OF FABLE

MINOR WHITE

Hēshē's fabulous predecessors in the time of myth searched for such trifles as Blue Birds, Golden Fleeces and Grails. Hēshē searched for the Diamond Lens of Utmost Clarity. As had their incredible forebears, Hēshē traveled far. Lenses from all countries passed through Hēshē's hands. They eyed all of them for a certain nameless something, never doubting their ability to recognize the unnamable in case it were present. Lenses from Europe revealed the Fool in the Tarot Pack. Lenses from China revealed the world according to the *I Ching*'s cycles of Change. Trigramic cycles within Hexagramic cycles prognosticated clearly that the end of day was the beginning of night: that an aperture closed must open again.

Looking through a telescopic lens at the Zodiac, Neptune with his Trident thrust into Hēshē's mind the idea of a Diamond Lens. After that three-pronged jab, Hēshē asked only how to get to it. "Seek out Old Nana of the focussing Cloth," Neptune replied, "she lives on the other side of the hole in the Hopi Kiva. Ask Old Nana to make you an amulet; then ask directions of Gilgamesh."

Old Nana was not hard to find, but hard to live with. Over Hēshē's head went the focussing Cloth almost at once. She distilled their brains and gave the distillate to Hēshē in a vial. "Save this for Gilgamesh at the foot of the Mountain," she said. "Zigzag across the deserts. You will see Upsidedown Mountain all the way, but you can not get to it by going straight."

Deserts, of course, made Hēshē thirsty. So they drank the fluid. With their brains back, they zigged and zagged relentlessly. When the tester of questers, Gilgamesh, asked for the vial, they wished that their brains had been bigger. He demanded their heart instead. He ground

their heart into flour, dampened it with Water and fried it into pancakes. "Throw them to the Freudian Wolves on the way up the mountain where Rasun gazes in rapture at the Diamond Lens."

Spiraling up the mountain made them very hungry. They debated seriously before they ate the pancakes. For that transgression, they were fiercely detained by the wolves. The wolves insisted Hēshē learn how to howl at the moon before they let them go. When they finally encountered Rasun, he flashed the fabulous lens in Hēshē's face and they died. They fell like angels into the depths of the Abyss, and were reborn. Only a fabulous reason could explain why Rasun, who destroyed Hēshē on the mountain, should help Hēshē in the Abyss. Rasun followed them, and magically enough, all around them lay Philosophers' Stones from the Alchemical Eruption some years back. Hēshē began to hand-grind lenses out of these stones. They sweat blood, tears and electronics to make the paradigm of lenses from Rasun's computerized formulas. Lenses refined to the degree of penetration associated with X-Rays were made. Still the Essence they sought eluded them. As each lens ended, the next began through all the cycles of moons and seasons.

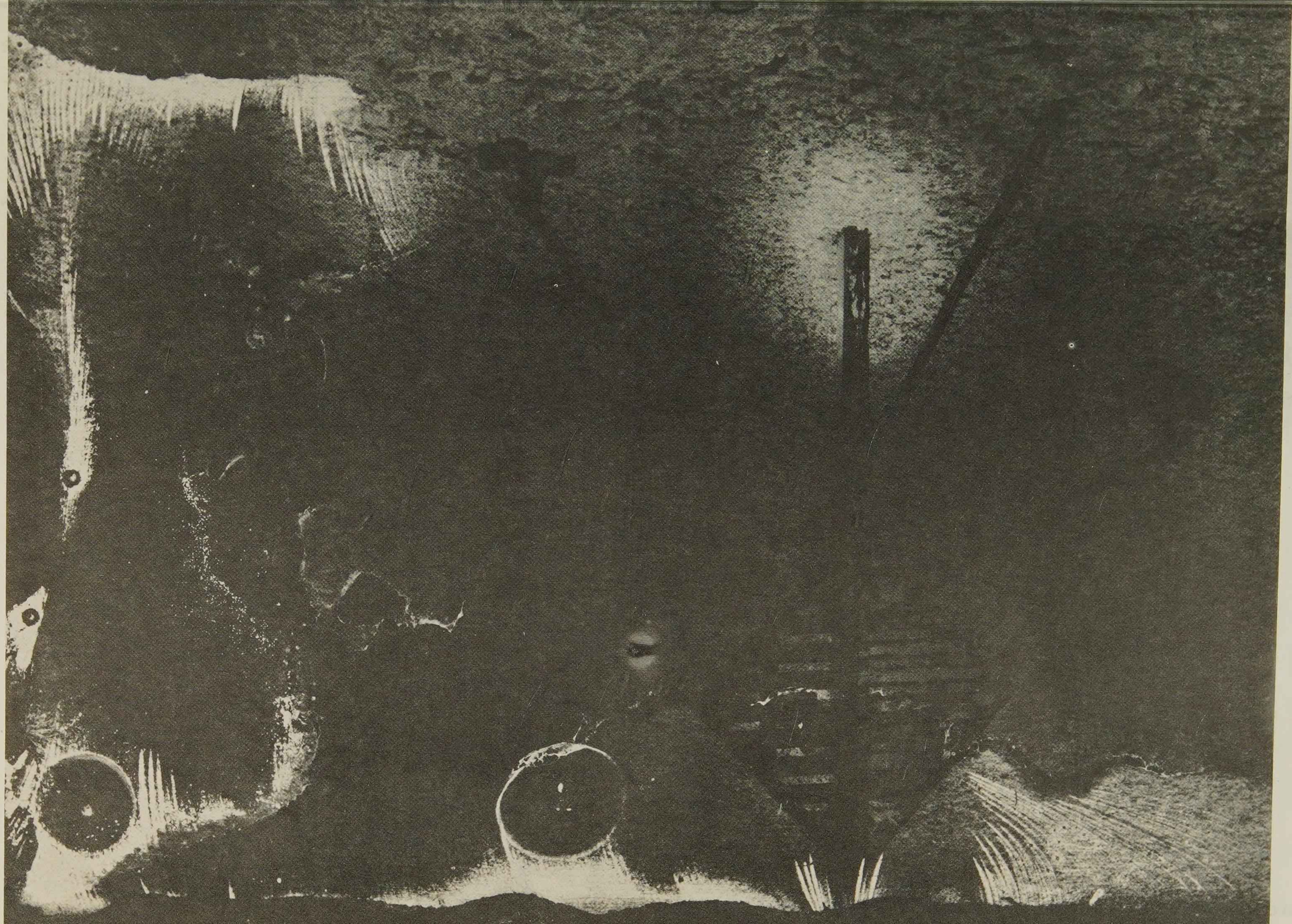
On a stormy night in the Abyss, lightning struck one of the Stones. Thereupon, it glowed and flashed like a diamond. In a state of despair, Hēshē began to grind again. Then, something struck both Hēshē and the Lens-in-Progress. What struck? The Astrologer's Uranus? The Inca's Plumed Serpent? Whatever struck at that moment, the eyes of Hēshē and the Philosophers' Stone fused. A Diamond Lens appeared in Hēshē's forehead. Now, Hēshē could take a picture of their eyes Seeing.

Peter Rasun Gould was struck by our real incomprehension of his fable. So, he explained that his fable was not about how diamonds were planted in the earth eons ago, because Hēshē are People of the 1970's.

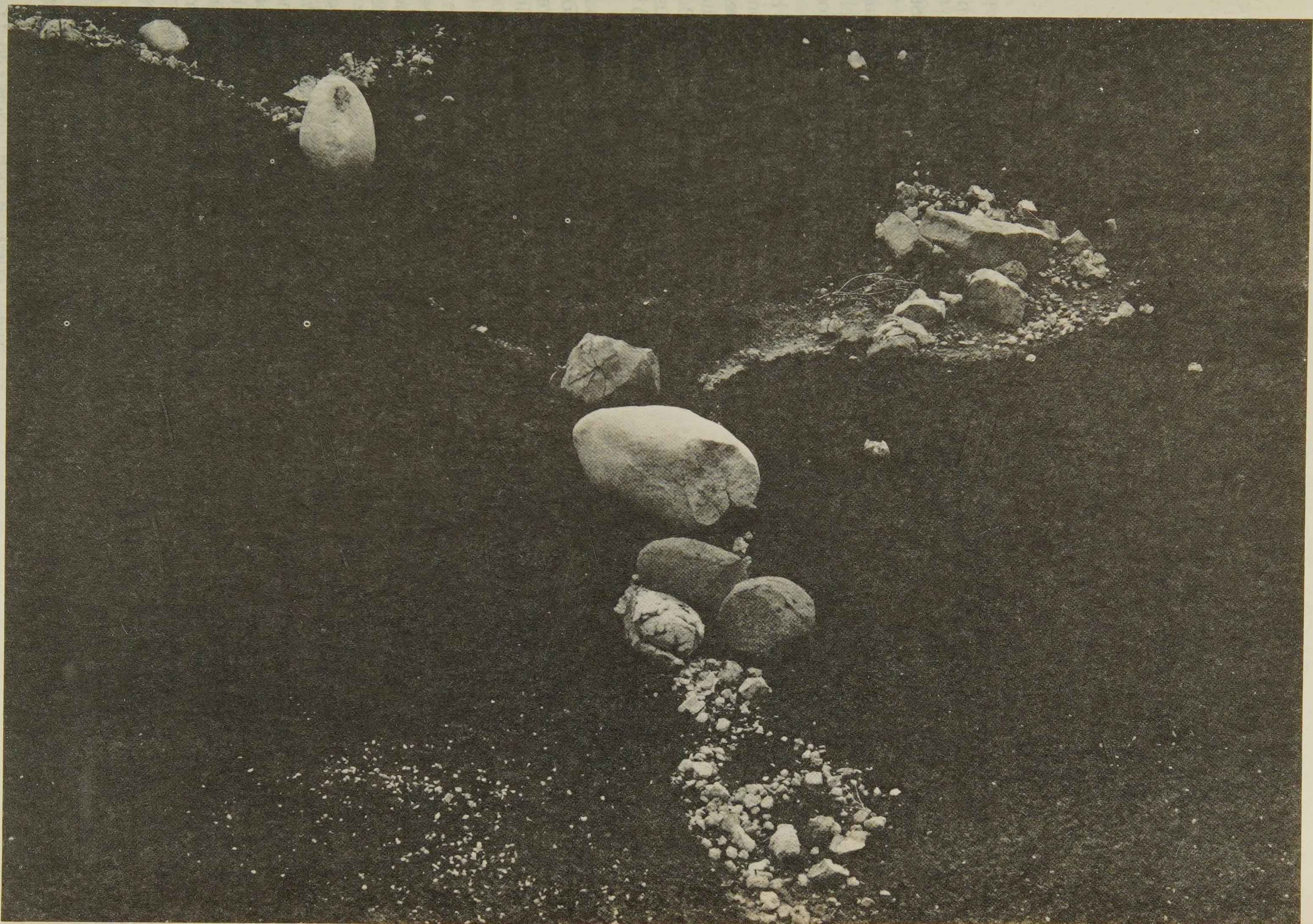
The art of Minor White, who is as famous a teacher as he is a photographer, has always been at the service of the search for the diamond lens.

And who is the mysterious Peter Rasun Gould? Perhaps he also is a teacher of photography . . .

Two of Minor White's photographs appear on the following pages.



STONE STEPS Notoh, Utah. 1967



EPICYCLE IV

The Dog with the Curly Tail

A very poor man went to see a holy man who lived in the forest. Prostrating himself, he kissed the hermit's feet and wept.

"What can I do for you, my son?" asked the *sannyasin*.

"Oh father!" said the poor man, "I am so miserable! I have eight children; my wife is always ill; my fields are poor; I work from dawn till dark, but there is always someone sick in my house that I have to take care of, and there is never a rupee to pay the doctor. It is more than one man can do, and I have come to the end of my endurance; I have decided to kill myself unless you will give me a ghost to help me."

"Oh no, my son," said the *sannyasin*, "I cannot do such a thing; you do not know what you are asking. A ghost is very dangerous; it would be the end of you to have one on your hands."

"It will in any case be the end of me," said the poor man, drawing a knife from his belt, "for I will cut my throat here and now at your feet if you do not help me."

"No, no," said the holy man hastily, for he went out of his way to avoid stepping even on a beetle, and could not bear the thought of a dead body lying in a pool of blood in his favorite glade in the forest. "Please do not do that. But do you realize that a ghost must be kept busy continually, and if he has nothing else to do he will immediately devour you?"

"Oh, if that is what you call danger!" said the poor man. "I assure you, there is no problem in that. With all the work I have to do, I can keep him occupied with no trouble at all. Give him to me, father, I beg you. Otherwise I must certainly do away with myself."

"No, no. Very well," said the *sannyasin*, "but you cannot say that you have not been warned. Go home and you will find the ghost waiting; you had better be ready with the tasks you want him to do."

"Oh, thank you, father, may you be blest!" cried the poor man over his shoulder as he ran from the forest toward his home. And as he drew near his hut he saw a horrible greenish monster with great teeth, approaching him.

"Here I am, master!" said the creature, grinning dreadfully, "and very hungry! Feed me with something to do!"

The man could not help feeling a shiver of terror, but he said quickly,

"Very good! Plant and cultivate my fields, and see that there is a good crop."

"Yes, master; it is done," replied the ghost, "and what shall I do now?"

"What!" cried the man. "How can it be done already? The crop is already up and har-

vested?"

"Well, you had not mentioned the harvest," said the ghost, "but now that you have, it is done too. The bins and granaries are overflowing. And I am starving—" and it opened its mouth even wider and came a step closer to the man, "so give me something to do!"

"Build me a new house, much larger and finer than the one I live in," said the man.

"Yes, master. It is done," said the ghost.

"Furnish it with the finest weavings and works of art!"

"Yes, master! It is done; look and see!"

"Build me a city, then!"

"Yes, master! Behold, it is there!"

"A gold mine!"

"Yes, master! Bars of gold are pouring into your city's coffers!"

"A fleet of ships!" shrieked the man, beginning to retreat.

"They are in the harbor, ready to sail!" said the ghost, advancing ominously. "What more, master? What more?"

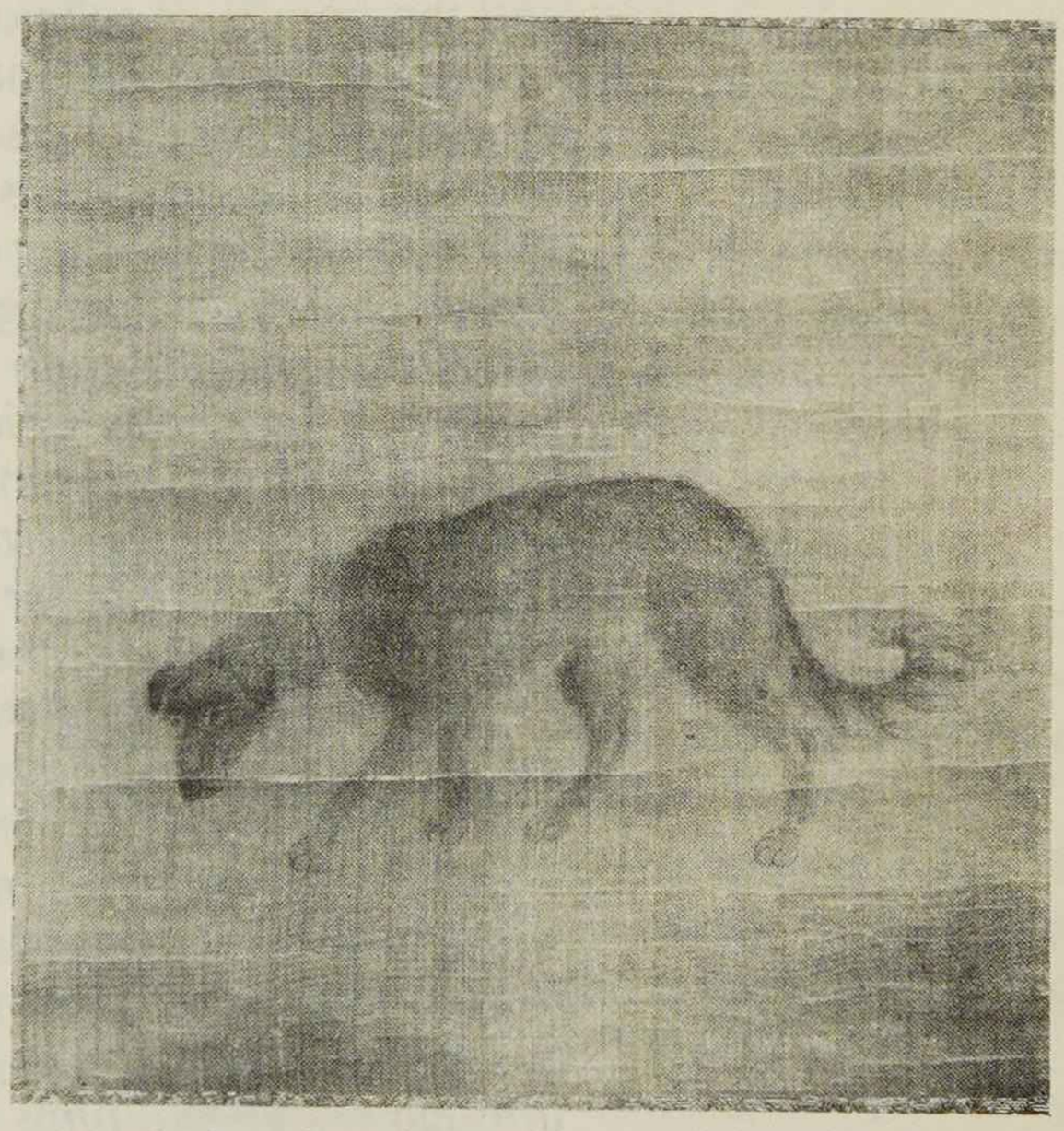
"*Nothing* more!" wailed the man, and ran toward the forest as fast as he could go, with the ghost rushing after him with gaping jaws. By great good fortune, the *sannyasin* was standing beside the road, begging. Flinging himself at the hermit's feet, the man cried, "Save me, father!"

The holy man, holding back the ravening ghost by the power of his thought, at the same time addressed himself severely to his terrified petitioner.

"What did I tell you? Are you convinced now that you were better off as you were? If I protect you now from the ghost, will you accept your lot and try to live in contentment?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" cried the man. "Only save me from this terrible ghost and I will do anything you say."

"Very well," said the holy man, sighing a little, because he had heard much the same words before. "Look, here comes a dog with a curly tail. Tell the ghost to straighten the dog's tail."



With that the ghost, released from the bonds of the *sannyasin*'s will, rushed on his master, shouting, "Give me something to do or I shall devour you!" and at the same moment, a dog came trotting down the road with his tail curled over his back.

"Straighten the dog's tail!" the man shouted, and the ghost turned with a snarl and seized the dog with one hand, while with the other he carefully smoothed down the curly tail. But the moment he released it, it sprang back and curled again over the dog's back. The ghost tried again to straighten the tail but every time it sprang back. After a time, the man crept away back to his home, the same poor little hut where he had always lived, leaving the ghost absorbed in his task, which for all anyone can tell he is doing still.

THE MEANING OF TRADITION: A CONVERSATION WITH HUSTON SMITH

If a man's quarters reflect his interior state (as my own cluttered digs and mind seem to attest), Huston Smith's spare, even Spartan office at Syracuse University mirrors a soul largely divested of unnecessary baggage. He met me there with a reserved warmth that accommodates without overwhelming and , with the forceful clarity born of keeping to essentials, he spoke of the meaning–both the sense and the import–of religious tradition.

Tall, trim, almost gaunt, Huston Smith has the look of a distance runner and moves with a dancer's disciplined grace. The dancer in him maintains a dynamic equilibrium as he springs, like Nietzsche's Cosmic Dancer, from one religious world to another, shifting quickly to alternative symbolic languages. The marathon runner has undertaken a global course through the great traditions, guided by the conviction that the truth is one though its ways are many and unpredictable.

Born in Soochow, China, in 1919, his personal odyssey has taken him from the evangelical Christianity of his missionary parents through Vedantic Hinduism and Zen Buddhism to the mysticism of the Sufis. But these apparent changes in direction, far from being prompted by a continually disappointed search for a spiritual home, have in fact entailed a fuller and fuller entry into what he calls "the primordial tradition," the esoteric dimension lying at the heart of all the great traditions and variously expressed according to differences in culture and temperament. Integral to this journey has been his role as a teacher–principally at Washington University, M.I.T., and Syracuse–allowing the traditions to speak to successive generations of fellow seekers. For many, a first introduction to comparative religions came through his book The Religions of Man, *which has sold over a million copies, and his teaching has spread beyond the classroom through television, films, lectures, and a record album.*

His conviction that there is a transcendental unity to the religions is complemented by an emphasis on the power of the great historical traditions to transform the individual, a power which surpasses the potentiality for fulfillment of any of us on our own. He thus regards himself as uniquely blessed, *in the full religious sense of the word, to have been able to live with these traditions and let their richness fill his life. The upshot, it seems, is a singularly happy man, dwelling in a state of energetic contentment, so grounded in the essence of the traditions that he is free to experience the varied riches of them all. Elemental to this bliss is a downplaying of ego which has become instinctive: he is loath to impute motives or to issue personal judgments of people or paths; he sees his role as learning from the traditions and letting them speak; and his aim is not so much to express the truth himself as for the truth to be expressed. Without false humility, he lapses spontaneously into universals and passive tenses, a mark not only of the philosopher at home with abstractions but of a man who knows that it is a power transcending the human round that moves the sun and the stars. And the benefits of overcoming the demands of ego become palpable in his presence.*

Leaving his home at the end of our conversation, I inadvertently picked up the manuscript of his forthcoming book and started carrying it off. In mild distress, he

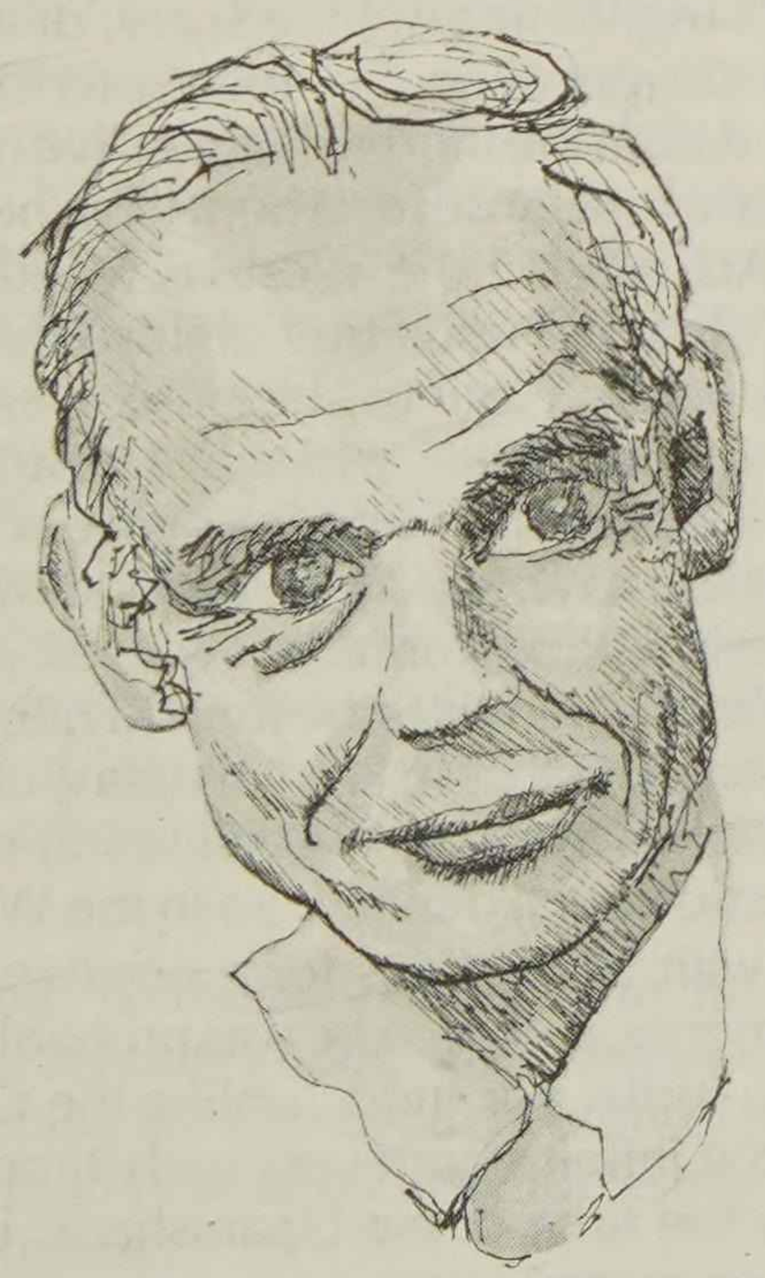
asked, "Are you going to take that?" The sense of the question startled me. Here I was walking off with his only copy with no justification whatever, and he was inquiring whether it was really vital that I take it. There was a dominant feeling that the Tao must flow. And I awoke to the realization that I wanted to take something of him home with me.

I left him standing beside a statue of St. Anthony in his Japanese garden. It seemed fitting. St. Anthony, he tells me, is a patron of travellers, and Huston Smith is a man who has traveled widely, but deeply, learning the many languages for what is primordially true.

John Loudon

John Loudon: The latest published writing of yours that I've seen is your enthusiastic introduction to the new edition of Frithjof Schuon's *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*. There you speak of the primordial tradition. What do you mean by it?

Huston Smith: If we look at human beings, the first thing that strikes us is how different they are—different heights, different shapes, different complexions—and yet we know that underlying this manifold diversity, the structure of the human spine that holds all these bodies erect is surprisingly similar. Now it has come upon me that the collective outlooks of mankind are analogous to this situation concerning human



physiques. That is to say, when we first come upon the Native American Indian outlook or the Hindu outlook or the Islamic outlook, what strikes us first is, again, how distinctive they are, how much they differ from one another. But the intriguing—more than intriguing, the important—thing that has become ever more evident the longer I work with these traditions is that at the heart of all of them is what we might call a conceptual spine which is extraordinarily the same. It's as though, behind the scenes, a kind of invisible geometry was drawing them all towards a truth which in the final instance is single. *That* I call the primordial tradition. It has a certain resemblance to what people familiar with philosophy know as the perennial philosophy. I don't object to that phrase, even rather like it. But to avoid taking over all the baggage that's become associated with that phrase, I prefer to speak of the primordial tradition.

Loudon: You don't mean primordial in the sense of primary in a temporal sequence, do you—so that there was some primary beginning of religion which was then diffused into various historical streams?

Smith: Well, yes and no. The word primordial, if I look it up in the most recent dictionary of American usage, is defined in terms of temporal origin. But in the *Oxford English Dictionary,* which indicates the way in which the word has been used, it is defined as "pertaining to, or *since,* the origin of things." In other words, it really means "no matter where or when," and that's the sense in which I support and like the word—"under whatsoever sky." So it's not basically a temporal word but a timeless word.

Loudon: So it's not unlike the word primal, in the sense of absolutely root, basic, universal. What a primal therapist, for instance, seems to want to get back to is the origins of an individual's emotional state, which isn't strictly a sequential affair. The origins are always there as the *prima materia* of behavior.

Smith: That's good. That's exactly what I mean.

Loudon: How is this primordial tradition related to the great historical religious traditions?

How does this primordial tradition take on the different flesh of the various traditions?

Smith: To begin with, it is the font and spring of them all. But it takes on, as it were, different coloring as it enters into, and in ways is also the source of, differing civilizations. To take an analogy from human life, the same individual might couch the same point in different ways, depending on the audience to which he is speaking. A father, say, talking about the same general subject might speak in different language to his wife or to his five year old or to a professional audience. Such diversity is appropriate, indeed essential, for communication. If the primordial truth had delivered itself in the same idiom to all mankind, it would have been understood by none. I've spoken in terms of analogy, and that's useful and inevitable to some extent. But to speak more directly, more literally—and if one uses anthropomorphic imagery—one could say that God, to connect with the different temperaments of the different civilizations, perforce must meet them on their own ground. Now if we don't like to think in those terms, then we could say that the deepest truths welling up from the unconscious of the great spiritual geniuses—Mohammed, the seers of the Upanishads, the Prophets of Israel, Christ, Gautama Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tsu—naturally are filtered through the distinctive sensibilities of the various civilizations, which we know are different or there would only be one civilization. So the unity is, in this sense, transcendent in all the traditions. They point toward it, converge toward it, and yet it eludes being fully deliverable or describable in any finite mode.

Loudon: Friedrich Heiler, in an article in *The History of Religions,* a University of Chicago collection, listed seven elements common to the great world religions. Do you think that it is genuinely possible to articulate such elements and thereby give a skeleton outline of the primordial tradition itself?

Smith: Well, I think you can. Indeed, some people—not everybody—should. At the same time there should be no mistaking the finger that is pointing at the moon for the moon itself, and there should be recognition that every articulation will itself be finite and relative. But it's a useful *upaya,* as the Buddhists would say, a useful means.

Loudon: My suspicion would be that Heiler's academic, Western intellectual way of putting it wouldn't be the same as the formulation of Suzuki, for instance, or somebody from a very different background. In fact, if you were to ask scholars from the various traditions to come up with these common points, you might get the same diversity of formulation that you have in the traditions at large.

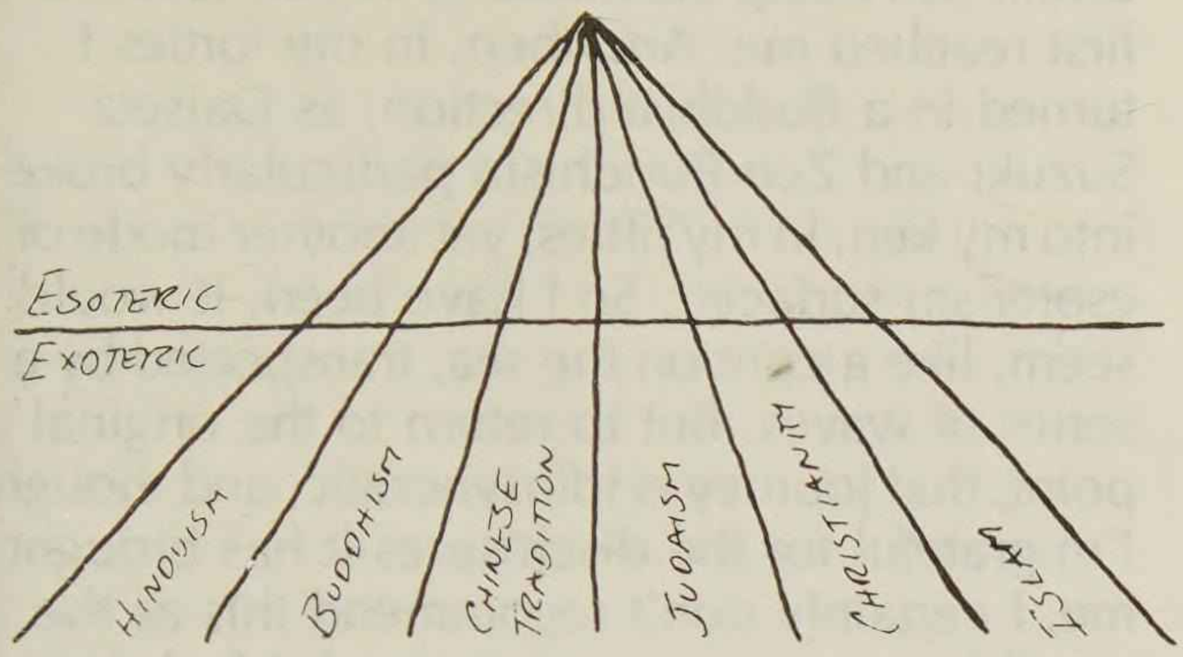
Smith: Yes. But I'm not sure that it would be equal in degree. And there is the fact too of different modes of expression. Archaic man would probably dance it out, and the Sung painters would paint it out, and we philosophers try to use words.

Loudon: You also seem to like very much Schuon's distinction between the esoteric and exoteric dimensions of the traditions and to find this a useful way of talking about unity amid diversity. Could you explain the basic distinction between the esoteric and the exoteric?

Smith: The key difference has to do with the notion of infinity. A true infinite is without limitation of any form and, by the same token, beyond any positive definition, because definition would demarcate and therefore limit. Some minds, faced with this notion of the infinite, are enticed, one might almost say, entranced. Their response to it is affirmative, embracing. They are like a moth before the candle flame: they go for it. Other minds are rebuffed by such a notion. Repelled may be too strong a word, but they are certainly turned back by it. At best, they can't get their hands on it, their minds around it, and so it's meaningless. At worst, it's frightening, a little scary, or at least certainly unappealing. So, the esoterics are those for whom the infinite is a positive notion; the exoterics are those for whom it is a negative notion. Actually, in the Western world, it's doubtful that one finds true philosophical esoterics before Plotinus, because even the Greeks, with all their passion for abstraction, saw the infinite as an inferior concept. They saw it merely as an indefinite and that which is indefinite is without form, amorphous. And for the Greeks, the perfect is the formed rather than the unformed. Just as in French today, *ouvrage fini,* a finished work, is a good work, completed, articulated, defined. So in the West we have to wait till Plotinus for a positive infinite to emerge, and even he was probably influenced by India. For India, unlike the Greeks, viewed the infinite from very early times, certainly by the time of the Upanishads, in the positive or esoteric way.

Loudon: Then, just to round this off, Schuon finds a converging unity in the esoteric dimensions of the traditions and a growing diversity as the traditions become more fully exoteric?

Smith: Right.



Loudon: In the distinction in a specific tradition between the esoterics, who I understand are always a minority, and the exoterics who follow more closely and more literally the specifics which their tradition gives them, might the esoteric be regarded as a privileged or higher state and the exoteric following of the tradition somehow for the more ordinary people?

Smith: Either can be saints, so sanctity is no monopoly of one or the other.

Loudon: So is the distinction more one of personal calling or constitution?

Smith: Spiritual temperament, I think we might say. But, to speak of temperaments generally, you can't say, for instance, that an extrovert is inferior to an introvert, or to use Jungian terms, that intuitive types are preferable to sensate types. It's a matter of living one's type to the fullest that it allows. It's along *that* line that virtue and vice, or attainment and limitation, are to be viewed.

Now if I were to be fully honest and expose myself, I should probably add that I may have hedged a little bit in that answer. Because, if we talk about truth, it *may* be the case that the esoteric enters more fully into the divine nature. I'm not totally certain of that, but it may be more complicated than my initial answer suggests.

Loudon: You seem to indicate in the introduction to Schuon's book that at least the matter of discerning the transcendent unity of religions is more readily intelligible to the esoteric than to the exoteric.

Smith: That's true. For seeing the relationship between religions, I do think the esoteric has an edge. But that's a rather special problem. It doesn't put one ahead on the score of religious attainment.

Loudon: What do you think of the idea that occurs in Tillich's work, and more fully in John Dunne's, that by passing over to other lives and other traditions one can come back to one's own expanded and enriched, and discover there dimensions that had been closed to you or unnoticed before? Is this a fruitful way of experiencing the infinite potentiality of one's own tradition?

Smith: If it does indeed open you to resources in one's own tradition, it is to be lauded, and I can readily see that it could do that. In fact, I would say that my passings over have done that. But if one were to make a religion out of that method, which I don't think Dunne does, I would, of course, have misgivings. For one thing, though this is one way of discovering the resources of one's own tradition, I don't think it's the only way. There are ways of ferreting our unexplored corners other than the method Dunne proposes. One way would be to dialogue with other seekers within one's own tradition, the expectation being that they will have seen things you have missed. Also, I think it would be a mistake to think that we, by virtue of our cosmopolitan perspectives, have more resources for sanctity than a Bedouin, say, who may never have heard of a religion other than Islam.

Loudon: So then perhaps it's a way for those for whom religious pluralism is a genuine question or challenge?

Smith: Yes, that's a good way of putting it. Because, once that problem has broken over you, then to stay completely confined to your own tradition might have an element of rejection and dismissal which doesn't occur in the case of the Bedouin or an Australian aborigine. And that shutting out might have an element of closure about it which would be spiritually detrimental.

Loudon: With the influx of Eastern traditions at all levels into the West, the related question arises of just how tradition-bound we are, simply by growing up in a culture. Can an ordinary, church-going, publicly educated person growing up in Syracuse, New York, really become, say, a Zen monk in a truly authentic sense? How transportable are the traditions?

Smith: I think it's possible. More than that, I think it is being done—Philip Kapleau at Rochester has done it; Richard Baker at the Zen Center in San Francisco has done it. By saying this, I am saying in the same breath that I think Jung was mistaken in his claim that it splits a person apart. Albeit, even with the pluralistic situation today, it is atypical, and the more

natural route is to follow the tradition in which one is raised.

Loudon: This leads me to a second area of questioning: how the individual seeker after truth, who is aware of and affirms the authenticity of various religious traditions, lives out this realization concretely. I understand that your own tradition is Christian and Methodist.

Smith: Yes. I was raised on the Methodist mission fields of China.

Loudon: How has your study of world religions affected your relationship to your own tradition?

Smith: I hesitate to answer, because it's unclear in my own mind how useful this kind of testimony is. I will answer, but I'm not sure I am wise to do so, because I certainly don't see my own odyssey as any kind of a model. And so if anyone were to take it that way, I think they would be misled. But saying that will take a bit of the onus off what I'm going to say. My particular pilgrimage has been rather peculiar. I didn't plan for things to happen as they have, but in actual fact successive waves have broken over me which left me with no option. I don't know whether this has anything to do with the fact that I happen to have been born in Asia and spent my first seventeen years there. My first spoken words, I'm told, were Chinese. And maybe because my parents were witnessing to a foreign faith in China, by some law of cosmic retribution their son was rendered particularly open to hearing the witness of other traditions. Be this as it may, it is a fact that my spiritual center of gravity has been rather mercurial. Raised in a good missionary home, I was unambiguously Christian through my twenties, but I would have to say that the strongest spiritual force in my thirties was Vedanta, this by virtue of my coming upon the Upanishads—the first form of esoterism that I encountered. My main response, I now see, was not to Hinduism but to esoterism, Vedanta (Hindu esoterism) being the mode by which esoterism first reached me. And then, in my forties I turned in a Buddhist direction, as Daisetz Suzuki and Zen Buddhism particularly broke into my ken. In my fifties, yet another mode of esoterism surfaced. So I have been, it would seem, like a cork on the sea, transported by a series of waves. But to return to the original point, that journey is idiosyncratic, and though I'm grateful for the disclosures it has brought me, I certainly don't recommend this as the sensible way to proceed. Indeed, I feel that persons like Thomas Merton who find who they are and stay there probably have had the better of it.

Loudon: In the sense that he always had a home base?

Smith: Exactly. I think that would be better on the whole, but we live in peculiar, polycultural times, so a trajectory like mine may not be altogether unique—in fact, I know, of course, that it isn't.

Loudon: But you see a definite continuity in your being centered in the esoteric dimension?

Smith: Yes, that I do. One evidence of this is the absence of jar in these transitions. As I was moving from one esoterism to another, it was like acquiring a new vocabulary for saying the same thing. We've spoken of my personality type as being esoteric. Before I came upon that word in this technical sense, I thought of mysticism as the constant that attracted me.

Loudon: Is there any reason why the mystical traditions of the East should have spoken to you more strongly than those of Christianity?

Smith: The reason, as is so often the case, lay in finding myself in the presence of living exemplars. To speak more plainly, the Christian mystical literature was all around me during my undergraduate and graduate days, but none of my teachers were mystics in the sense we are talking about, and being impressionable one follows the religion one sees exemplified. What made mysticism come alive for me was not so much coming upon the Upanishads as coming upon a member of the Ramakrishna order—Swami Satprakashananda in St. Louis, the first serious, dedicated, practicing mystic I had encountered. There was the added advantage that he came out of a tradition which was versed in articulating that mysticism in a profound metaphysic, which meant that he could more than hold his own on my philosophical turf, and at the same time speak authoritatively about the experiential side of mysticism.

Loudon: Referring again to the diversity of your experience, how do you view your colleague David Miller's interest, shaped by the work of James Hillman, in polytheism as an authentic contemporary religious option and his sense that, for many today, there are many numinous centers none of which can be said to be preeminent, and that for them monotheistic consciousness is inappropriate, even stultifying?

Smith: The issue that links the way I see things and the way David describes them in *The New Polytheism* is the issue of freedom and form. He picks up on the freedom end of that polarity. He sees modern man as restricted, or to put the matter another way, as having aspects of personality that are undeveloped and in need of being rounded out. I pick up on the form aspect of the polarity, seeing us as needing to find life's center and to discover its abiding priorities. David talks like Oscar Wilde, wanting to "taste *all* the fruit on the tree of life." I respond more to the prophetic injunction, "Choose ye this day whom ye shall serve."

Loudon: Which way would you point a person who has become alienated from his or her tradition, or whose development has been arrested, or who has become acutely aware of the pluralism of religious traditions—back to his or her own tradition or outward to exploring another one?

Smith: The important point to be stressed is the *parity* and *importance* of the great traditions —both the ones I deal with in *The Religions of Man* and what Eliade calls the archaic ones, like those of the Native Americans. Parity: that in principal and practice the authentic traditions are equal. Importance (and this is likely to be the most controversial thing that I will say): that these traditions have a saving power which in all likelihood is greater than the saving power in any one of us as disconnected individuals. I know very well that Gautama says, "Be ye lamps unto yourselves." But in the traditions, statements like this assume a corporate base. One must also remember that "the spirit bloweth where it listeth": there will always be exceptions that prove any generalizations. Still, on average, as between a private *sadhana* (spiritual quest) which an individual Scotch tapes together for himself and one outlined by an enduring tradition, I place my confidence in the latter. That's somewhat out of tune with the temper of the times, and I may be less convinced about this than about the other things I've said, yet I more than suspect that it's true. It's a case of "I believe, help thou my unbelief." The moral is not necessarily that one return to his or her own tradition. There may be alienating factors at work there—a bad Sunday school experience or whatever—that would take a whole lifetime to undo. The moral is to find *some* tradition and to steep one's soul in it. To me it is immaterial which tradition; it is of maximum materiality that it be a tradition.

Loudon: Amid the myriad current religious options available, from Reverend Moon to Zen Centers, how can a novice tell an authentic teaching from an inauthentic one? Is connection with a tradition essential?

Smith: I think it is. With due respect to the innumerable innovating gurus that are around today, I see their departures from tradition as, on the whole, aberrations. There are many personal growth programs that can help to some extent, but in terms of life's final potentials I don't find innovative or eclectic systems to equal the tried and the true.

Loudon: There seem at least two types of entry into a tradition, besides birth of course. One would be more along the line of 'blind faith,' that is, after an initial encounter, putting your hand in the hand of the guru and committing yourself to this way unconditionally. It has the advantage of being an absolute involvement without which true experience of a tradition seems impossible. The other is a more gradual entry by which the truth you experience and know personally is confirmed and enhanced by the tradition you are entering.

Smith: I think that puts it very well, and both are open options and much depends on the circumstances—whom one finds oneself in the presence of—as well as, again, one's spiritual temperament. The Indians talk about the monkey way and the cat way: in the monkey way, the baby monkey with its own arms will embrace the mother's neck, but in the cat way, the mother picks up the kitten by the nape of the neck. Perhaps the experience of al-Ghazzali is

relevant here. He went through three stages: one very orthodox, becoming versed in the law, but finding that rather dry; then coming upon the Sufis, whose way was entirely esoteric, ecstatic, and mystical; and then finally—this is the important thing—he came to realize the dangers of excess if ecstasy is not curbed by orthodox guidelines. Thus he came in the end to a definitive blend of form and substance that has remained normative for Sufism. I respect that model.

Loudon: For many your book *The Religions of Man* was a first introduction to the study of comparative religions. What do you see as the importance of this study?

Smith: Everything turns on how it is done. For me, the opportunity to work with this gold in its various historical veins has been a continuing joy. I am ever grateful for the opportunity to attend to such vivifying, salvific—it's nothing less than that—material. At the same time, I can remember the courses that I took in world religions in my collegiate days. They were without doubt the dullest, least profitable courses in my curriculum. I went through them without encountering a single item that would tempt me to pursue them on my own. Looking back, I sometimes feel that those teachers must have been geniuses of a kind—geniuses in reverse, if you will—to have been able to conceal the material from us to the extent they did. There's nothing very special about learning certain facts and dates: it could easily turn people off.

Loudon: So you would regard as unprofitable, even counterproductive, an approach that treats traditions as assemblages of historical information, propositional truths, and ancient curiosities?

Smith: The main thing was that those teachers did not themselves value what they were teaching. At most, they were cultural historians, curious as to how the old boys felt way back in the old benighted days.

Loudon: I wonder if the contemporary increased awareness of the variety of religious traditions, through courses and books, encourages individuals to develop their own personal syntheses.

Smith: It probably does. The question is whether such individual syntheses are likely to change people as much as involvement in a living tradition can. As you know, I side with the latter. Even so, by the mere fact of living in our polycultural times, there is likely to be some borrowing. Look at the art around my office here—from India, Japan, China. To a degree, that's eclectic, and it can be welcomed, I think. What we have to realize though is that a religious outlook and a religious way is in the end more like an organism than like a mechanism. That means it is not basically constructed of random or interchangeable parts. We are learning from the difficulty with heart transplants that organisms tolerate intrusions from the outside to some extent, but not beyond given limits. We can learn from this analogy that each of us needs a religion that is not just a collage but an organic whole. And for me that means a tradition whose various ingredients have over the centuries (if we put the matter in human and historical terms) settled into relations with one another that are organic and whole. We need to ground our lives in a center that is holistic in this way. *Fixed* in that center we can, with appreciation, borrow some trimmings from one another, so to speak.

Loudon: Do you think that people are inescapably religious, that even without a great tradition patterning their lives they constellate their existence about an ultimate and a series of hierarchically related values?

Smith: I think in a meaningful sense that's true, though the degrees may vary.

Loudon: There then would be two senses to religious conversion: one, converting to one of the traditions, not excluding the one in which one was born, and learning from it how to articulate, symbolize, actualize one's religious concerns; the other, shifting from one lifestyle to another.

Smith: That's true, but I wonder if the alternatives are equally promising. You see, I don't see serious involvement with a tradition as merely the adoption of a set of values—look at Martin Lings's *What is Sufism?* and you will see my point. There is a dynamic, substantive power to traditions. Assuming that a tradition is alive, it is like an artery, and to be incorporated in it is like

receiving a spiritual transfusion. To change the image, it's like a wave which can carry one forward. It follows that an important question about any *ad hoc* eclecticism is: does it possess that kind of *barakah* as the Muslims would say, that kind of substantive grace? You can see here that I am passing beyond a purely humanistic point of view to posit a flow of spiritual force which the traditions channel. Granted that to some degree this force seems spent today, I think it continues to some extent and is the world's best hope.

Loudon: Backtracking a bit, would it be correct simply to identify the esoteric dimension of the traditions with what is more popularly called the mystical dimension?

Smith: I think they certainly lie in the same direction. The problem is the many senses in which the word mysticism is used. Sometimes it means nothing more than a direct experiential encounter with the transcendent, whatever its form. From there it can go on to specify a dramatically different *kind* of experience. And the word is also used to emphasize the experience of unity, of the oneness of things. All of those would be involved in an esoteric encounter, but in addition that encounter, since to some degree it is of the Infinite, would be ineffable; it could not with any degree of adequacy be put into words. But esoterism doesn't turn wholly on direct experience; it can take its stand on the conviction that the esoteric perspective is true without claiming a great deal in the way of experience of its truth.

Loudon: So that a philosopher, for instance, who had a certain position about the nature of reality without having a so-called mystical experience could be in the esoteric camp?

Smith: Correct. The Sufis have a nice way of putting the point. They speak of the lore of certainty, the eye of certainty, and the truth of certainty. The lore of certainty they liken to hearing about fire; the eye of certainty to seeing fire; and the truth of certainty to being burned by fire. Now an esoteric can be one to any of these three degrees. With respect to what strikes me as true, I see myself as an esoteric, but I would not lay any great claims to having experienced the truth I feel confident of. I think the moment when I first realized I was an esoteric, though of course I didn't use the word, was when I first opened the Upanishads and found the truth of those writings pouring through to me. My wonder was that truth of this degree of depth could be articulated to this extent in words. There was a rush of conviction regarding the truth of that perspective, but it wasn't *samadhi*.

Loudon: My assumption, in listening to you, has been that some traditions have a larger dimension of the esoteric, and others have a larger dimension of the exoteric. I would assume, for instance, that in Zen the esoteric dimension would totally predominate.

Smith: Yes, but I wouldn't of course consider Zen a distinct tradition apart from Buddhism. You might think of it as an esoteric dimension within Buddhism, though not the only one. But I do think that by and large the Asian traditions tend to accommodate the esoteric perspective more routinely than do Judaism and Christianity, with Islam a border case in which Sufism is explicitly esoteric and much of Islam is not.

Loudon: Well, could there be a sense in which Sufism itself, say, has both an esoteric and an exoteric dimension? Isn't there an external, formal tradition of teaching that functions almost as an exoteric dimension?

Smith: Yes there is. There are degrees of Sufism, as elsewhere. The esoteric presents itself as circles within circles within circles, its teachings becoming more and more esoteric as one approaches the center. That means, as you say, certain doctrines will be readily available for everyone, but there'll be certain teachings and methods that are initiatic, just as early Christianity was initiatic with stages of entry and the Eucharist reserved to those who were in the inner coterie. Another point on Sufism: it almost seems that the more refined the esoteric core, the more it tends to draw a rabble, one might almost say, to its outer fringe. So in Sufism one finds the loftiest spirituality ringed about with jugglers and magicians—spiritual riffraff almost. In places Sufism has acquired a bad name, precisely through such hangers-on. But though one might not be totally pleased with that picture, there is a kind of naturalness about it too, because the bizarre element on the fringes at least senses that something important is present at the center of the circle that attracts them.

Loudon: What would be a standard term for what you mean by the exoteric?

Smith: One of the reasons a term doesn't immediately come to mind is that in the West it's generally what we think of as mainline, institutional Christianity, or whatever the religion is, where the doctrines are articulated, the observances specified, and the laws laid out.

Loudon: How would you characterize the freedom the mystically inclined person has

in regard to his or her tradition?

Smith: It's difficult to generalize on that, because the answer differs at different stages. In early stages when the individual life really needs to be made over—cast in a different mold, one might say—too much individual discretion could compromise needed rubrics. I am assuming, of course, that one begins the quest because one wishes to be born again, or changed into something different from what one already is. But then later on, as one's feet are more firmly planted on the way, over-dependence on external authority could be, in certain cases, debilitating. There's a wonderful *mondo* in the Zen tradition on that. When one of the students went to his *roshi* to report a great *satori,* the *roshi* heard him out but said, "Well, that wasn't such a great *satori;* it was just a little *satori.*" Whereupon the student replied: "I don't care what kind of *satori* you think it was; it *was* a great *satori!*" To which the *roshi* responded, "Well, in that case, it *was* a great *satori.*" So there comes a time when the independence and appropriateness of private judgment comes back into the picture.

Loudon: I would think that Thomas Merton's experience might bear out the legitimacy of this gradual independence within an ongoing dialectic between freedom and form.

Smith: It is a dialectic. The Zen tradition, as we know, has many stipulations like, "When you see the Buddha, kill the Buddha!" or "Tear up the Sutras!" Such teachings have their place, but we tend to over-generalize them, divorcing them from the contexts for which they were intended. Too early in the game, we appropriate to ourselves the right to take the liberties they counsel.

Loudon: Might there be a special temptation for Westerners, with the emphasis on freedom and individuality, to avoid the early stages of initiation into a teaching?

Smith: Yes. And there's a sizeable streak of counter-dependence in our culture. "Don't tell me what to do!" The Fritz Perls attitude toward life.

Loudon: And if you say that at the start, you may never get off the ground?

Smith: Exactly.

Loudon: Does following a religious way, a path of faith, necessarily involve spiritual disciplines of some sort?

Smith: Yes. Again, we must recognize that "the spirit bloweth where it listeth," so there may be one in a million who may be the exception. But overwhelmingly the need is for wisdom and method both; all the traditions so teach. As the saying goes, we need to walk on both feet: right views and right practice.

Loudon: How can a person understand a religious tradition that he or she does not practice?

Smith: Very imperfectly. There are those who see the promised land, get some intimation of what lies there, but for some quirk within them just do not take the steps to cross over into it. But the rule in religious matters is that understanding proceeds through living what one is trying to understand.

Loudon: So it is only by living a tradition that one comes to understand it and gains thereby the resources to understand other traditions?

Smith: That's true. Noam Chomsky spoke here last summer and one of the things he said was that there's a very real sense in which to understand fully how one language functions is to understand how they all function. The situation with religious traditions is comparable.

Loudon: Is the advanced, scholarly study of the particular traditions a necessary or vital part of the interplay between knowledge and practice?

Smith: One has to ask, "Necessary for what?" You see, I believe that Black Elk, or an Australian aborigine living the 'dream time' that Eliade talks about, had everything 'necessary unto salvation,' as the saying goes. Scholarly equipment would be irrelevant to the depth and quality of their awareness. When it comes to religious living, the kind of information that appears in scholarly journals is quite expendable. Even so, the mind is a part of the human complement, and one can become interested in comparative religions as one can in other things. Lunching with a colleague, Bertrand Russell listened attentively to his report of a discovery in brain-functions that he had made, and then commented quietly, "It's nice to know things." That holds for religions too. I am constantly grateful for such historians of religion. As you may know, I chanced myself to stumble on one remarkable fact in this area: the capacity of certain specially trained lamas to sing multiple tones simultaneously. Was that discovery important? Probably not. It was a grace, you might say; a grace, moreover, from which one can learn something beneficial.

Loudon: So it's not necessary, but such study can be enriching.

Smith: It can also be distracting, because if one

isn't careful one's attention can get sidetracked into merely collecting information. In which case living, organic wholes get pulverized and become like dry sand.

Loudon: Regarding the interrelationship of religious traditions, what about the individual traditions' claims of exclusivity and preeminence?

Smith: It's totally understandable, because that to which one gives one's life one must think is ultimate. Otherwise, it doesn't deserve ultimate allegiance. If one gives one's life to Christ, exoterically conceived, then it's almost as though one wouldn't be wholly committed to Christ unless that Christ were absolute above all other exoterically nameable deities.

Loudon: Otherwise you'd always be on the threshold of commitment and never committing yourself actually.

Smith: That's why Schuon says that for the exoteric the preeminent, privileged status of one tradition is not only inevitable but appropriate. Now such people are going to have problems, because we live in a world where people are aware of other traditions. And how God's mercy is to be reconciled with his apparent favoritism for one tradition will probably be a lifelong *koan* for those people. But whatever one says, this is no problem for the esoteric, because the esoteric core is common to them all.

Loudon: The Jesuit William Johnston, in his comparative work with Zen and Christianity has found a very close correlation in the stages of mystical ascent, but he raises the question of whether they really reach the same goal. Might it be that there are many mansions in inner space that are reached, and perhaps different ones by different traditions?

Smith: Oh, it's logically possible. The only question is whether, at the end of the road, it is in any decisive sense true. Johnston, I assume, thinks it is true that there are many mansions and that maybe Zen gets only into the antechamber. Is there evidence for that?

Loudon: You would see the difference more in terms of language about, or the interpretation of, what is essentially a common experience in the two traditions?

Smith: In the end, yes. Whether in addition to being common the experience is identical is another question. Probably it's a matter of theme and variations. In those moments when you are romantically in love, is your romantic love exactly like your roommate's or does it have idiosyncratic shades and nuances? But I would say that substantially, just as one instance of romantic love is like another, so it is with the theophanies.

Loudon: Referring back, for a moment, to your earlier statements about your personal odyssey, would I be right in assuming that the next wave after the strong influence of Zen in your forties was Sufism?

Smith: Yes, you would be. It does happen that around the turn of this decade, abroad in Iran and later in North Africa, I found myself swept into contact with some Sufis in a sequence of experiences that were eye-opening. If I fantasized this, it's almost as though some man in the sky was saying, "Well, Professor Smith, you've ranged boadly, but there's one tradition that you really don't understand, and that is Islam." And that would have been true, because when I wrote *The Religions of Man* all of the chapters were easy except the one on Islam. I really had to work at that chapter, and even with all my labors I felt I didn't succeed very well. The *Qur'an* itself had seemed to me the least accessible scripture in the world. So it took me totally by surprise that in the present sector of my journey there surfaced persons in the Islamic tradition who seemed spiritual paragons. Moreover, standing as they did in the tradition of al-Ghazzali and Ibn Arabi, they were able to meet me on my own mental ground—philosophy—with an emphatically esoteric bent. So I find myself currently most occupied with sounding that tradition.

Loudon: Do you think the stages in your odyssey involve not only changes in teachers and in language and symbolism but also new dimensions of your personality that were opened up?

Smith: That's possible, but I don't really resonate to this sort of Jungian idea that there are flat sides of myself that need to be rounded out, and that different traditions develop different sectors of these. If that were the case, it might counsel that everyone should do something like what I've done, but I want to stress that on balance I see my own trajectory as aberrant rather than as normative. Though who knows what is appropriate for an individual life? In one sense, our trajectory is our destiny. I have to affirm mine as apparently curiously fitting for my odd circumstances; but it is nothing to emulate. As I have said, I think the Thomas Merton way gets farther.

Loudon: It seems ironic that you who have taken the tour, so to speak, feel that it's an abnormal course, and not necessarily the most

fruitful way, whereas many of those who advocate an odyssey through the traditions, some claiming to follow Jung, have really kept pretty much within their Western perspective or outside of a tradition altogether.

Smith: I can't say. But what would Jung himself have said? He says that such experience splits a person apart. How can a Jungian hold that this pattern is somehow normative, when the master gives that opinion?

Loudon: I suppose Jung would say that you should find these different dimensions within your own culture and make the odyssey within it.

Smith: That strikes me as a reasonable generalization. And it accords with my premise that each religion suffices and that there are many mansions within each. Hinduism is simply more explicit than some of the others in noting that there are different *yogas* for different spiritual types.

Loudon: You have a major new book, entitled *Under Every Sky: A Primordial Philosophy of Religion,* coming out from Harper & Row next September. What is its basic argument?

Smith: It is that human outlooks, taken individually, are too numerous to submit to any pattern—they range all the way from the village atheist to agnostic to pious believer. But if one takes collective outlooks, that is the outlooks of tribes, civilizations, religions, outlooks in the aggregate you might say, they admit to an overview. When one looks at the pattern as a whole, at first the collective outlooks appear very different—Asian from Western, Occidental from Oriental—but as one studies them one becomes progressively aware of a common conceptual spine behind them, as I mentioned at the outset. This common conceptual spine I call the primordial tradition, and I argue that it is universal. It represents, one might almost say, the human unanimity. The only exception is ourselves—the contemporary West over the last two hundred years. Why are we different from the rest of humanity? I think the obvious reason is because of modern science. It has maneuvered us into a distinctive position. Now if it were actual scientific findings that dictated our unique outlook we could regard it as a breakthrough: a new departure for mankind. In point of fact, however, it's not science that dictates our modern outlook, but a misreading of science, one that deserves the name scientism. Scientism may be defined as the view that the scientific approach to truth is the only reliable one, the only one that gives 'news of the universe,' one might say, and that the realities that science turns up are the only true realities. But that's a mistake. Science doesn't show that its own outlook is the only valid one. It's *we* who *assume,* because of the marvels it has wrought in its own sphere, that its epistemology is privileged.

Loudon: An essential element of scientism seems to be a reductionistic mentality that measures things on just one level and eliminates any sense of a hierarchy of being.

Smith: That's right. Scientism reduces what in the West has been called the Great Chain of Being to its ground floor alone.

To continue with the thrust of the book: Our modern atypical outlook is grounded in a mistaken reading of science, but aberrations can be corrected. If we come to see through our mistake, we might rejoin the human race. We could get back on course by returning to the primordial outlook, which I take to be the one that most naturally emerges when the full complement of human sensibilities is pondered seriously.

Loudon: Regarding the parity and importance of the various traditions, what role, if any, do you see for missionary work?

Smith: I think it has a place. I can speak autobiographically both ways on this. First, I think my parents did useful things in their years in China. For one thing, starting the only school for girls that had ever existed in the city where they were, vaccinating against smallpox—these are merely secular spinoffs. But I also think that their level of spirituality had an invigorating effect on the religious environment they were in. By the same token, I am enduringly grateful to Swami Satprakashananda in St. Louis, who for a decade was a cornucopia funneling into my consciousness insights and perspectives that have left me forever indebted. If he had not come to America, I don't know where I would be today.

Loudon: So the value of missionary work lies in people representing their own traditions authentically in other cultures?

Smith: Perhaps invariably there will always be some for whom, for whatever reasons, beginning with plain alienation, a voice from afar speaks more authentically than do the voices at hand.

Loudon: Should there be religious secrets?

Smith: Yes, I think that an authentic tradition must always harbor an element of the esoteric. The text is "cast not pearls before swine."

There is a sense in which the kingdom is not of this world, and to expose it totally to this world is a bit like letting the human heart loose in the world without a protective casement of bone and tissue. This may go a little against our notions of openness, democracy, and egalitarianism, but if we balk at the esoteric rights and necessities in religions, it is evidence that we do not understand the actualities involved. This is not foreign to our own tradition: Christianity emerged in its early, eminently vital period as a highly esoteric religion. It was an initiatic faith, with echelons of entry; more and more of the truth unfolded according to the preparation of the novice and catechument to respond to such information appropriately.

Loudon: And there would be a sense in which even if the secrets are divulged they're not really revealed if one's not in a position to hear them. One hears something other than what is really being said.

Smith: Exactly. When truths are revealed beyond the capacity of assimilation, either the hearer is harmed or the *dharma* is harmed, in the sense of being trivialized, demeaned, debased. I brushed with one such case, when I came upon the special mode of chanting among the Tibetan lamas I referred to earlier, because it turned out to belong to the esoteric dimension of Tantra. Normally that sound would be uttered only under protected, ritualized conditions, and here I have put it on a commercially available phonograph record. The episode confronted me with a problem of conscience, but in the end I referred it to the lamas themselves, and the album contains a covering phrase from the performing abbot to the effect that under the peculiar circumstances of today a few limited stanzas may be released "for the benefit of all sentient beings."

Loudon: The discussion of the unity of religions seems to be growing now, and there is an increasing awareness of the pluralism of religions as a central issue. Does this augur some change within the great religious traditions themselves?

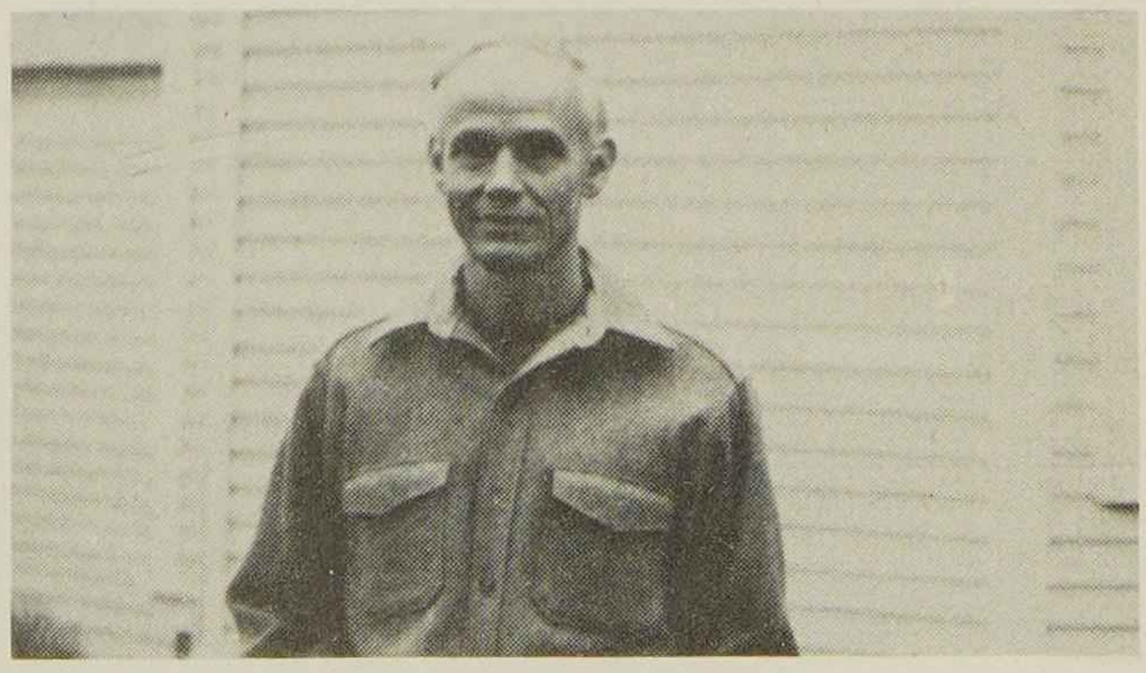
Smith: Growing awareness of other faiths is an undoubted fact, but we should not assume that our degree of awareness here is typical. Would an average villager in India be more aware of Taoists, say, than his great-grandfather was? But in the West, at least, increasing consciousness of other religions is raising in a rather acute way the question of the relation of one's own tradition to other traditions. Beyond those obvious facts, the matter grows more subtle. There's been an emphasis lately on ecumenism, with spotty results. In trying to combat prejudice and divisiveness, it is well-motivated, but it has not brought a clear gain, because much of the empathy towards other faiths has been at the cost of a diminished confidence in one's own tradition. It has been said that a Muslim in the Middle Ages respected a crusader who sought to kill him out of conviction more than he respected a man who preached tolerance toward him but believed nothing.

Loudon: Do you think, then, in terms of an extended "axial age" in which the great religious traditions were founded, ending with the emergence of Islam, with the result that the great traditions are already with us? Or is there the possibility of the emergence of another great religious tradition or of a tradition that is somehow synthetic?

Smith: I'm not waiting for it. There is a clear assertion in one of the traditions, namely Islam, that it will in fact be the last major revelation of this cycle. And it happens that for thirteen hundred years, that has proved true. My personal feeling on this question is one of equanimity and ease. I don't see the *need* for a new religion. What is lacking in the vehicles, the rafts, the *yanas* we how have? They are distinct, and there is a certain awkwardness in that. But I'm inclined to view the prospect of a tensionless world as utopian and unrealistic. If it were to be realized, it would be indistinguishable from paradise and would thereby lose its separate existence. I don't think that this attitude is pessimistic, because it's balanced by the fact that ours is a transitional stage and not the total picture.

Loudon: What would the ordinary, virtuous, non-religious American miss out on by not aligning him or herself to a religious tradition?

Smith: *Sat, chit,* and *ananda:* "infinite being, infinite awareness, infinite bliss." Does the ordinary, decent, secular American aspire to that? Does he see it as within his register? There is a special circle in Dante's hell that is populated by souls whose only fault was that their aspirations were too low.



Two Stories

EPICYCLE V

Mullah Nasr Eddin, or Hodj'a Nasr Eddin, is a legendary Turkish teller of tales, a sort of wise fool, to whom all sorts of exploits are attributed. Here are two of the stories told about him:

1

Mullah Nasr Eddin went to the bazaar to buy some cloth. To his dismay, he found that the booths of the cloth vendors were full of customers, bidding against each other and driving the prices up. After a moment's thought, the wily Mullah placed himself at the lower end of the bazaar and began to shout,

"Oh people! You should see the bargains at this end of the bazaar! Oh, what bargains! They are giving things away down here!"

A few people moved away from the cloth vendors' booths to see what the noise was about. Someone began to walk faster and then someone else ran, and soon more and more people were flocking into the booths at the lower end of the bazaar, leaving those of the cloth vendors practically empty. Mullah Nasr Eddin watched them at first with glee and then with a growing anxiety.

"I wonder," he thought; "what if . . . ? Perhaps there *are* bargains down there!" and he ran as fast as he could after the crowd.

2

Mullah Nasr Eddin asked his neighbor if he could borrow his big cooking pot, but the neighbor was very unwilling to part with it.

"Only for a week!" the Mullah pleaded. "It is my daughter's wedding, and there are many people to feed. Dear good friend, do help me out."

"All right, for a week," the other said grudgingly.

But great was his surprise and delight when exactly at the week's end the Mullah came to his house with the pot, and showed him, inside the pot, a little pot.

"What is this?" the man asked in astonishment.

"I am happy to tell you," said Mullah Nasr Eddin, "that while your pot was at my house, it had a baby."

"How splendid!" said the neighbor, completely bewildered, but eagerly accepting both pots.

A month or so later, Mullah Nasr Eddin again appeared at his house and asked for the loan of his pot.

"My wife's family are visiting me," he began to explain, but the other needed no further excuse.

"Say no more, my dear friend," he said. "You took such good care of my pot the last time, I have no scruple in lending her to you again."

So Mullah Nasr Eddin went off lugging the pot. But time passed, and he did not reappear. At last one day his neighbor met him on the street.

"But where is my pot?" he asked.

Mullah Nasr Eddin looked very sad.

"Alas," he said. "I regret to tell you that while your pot was at my house, it died."

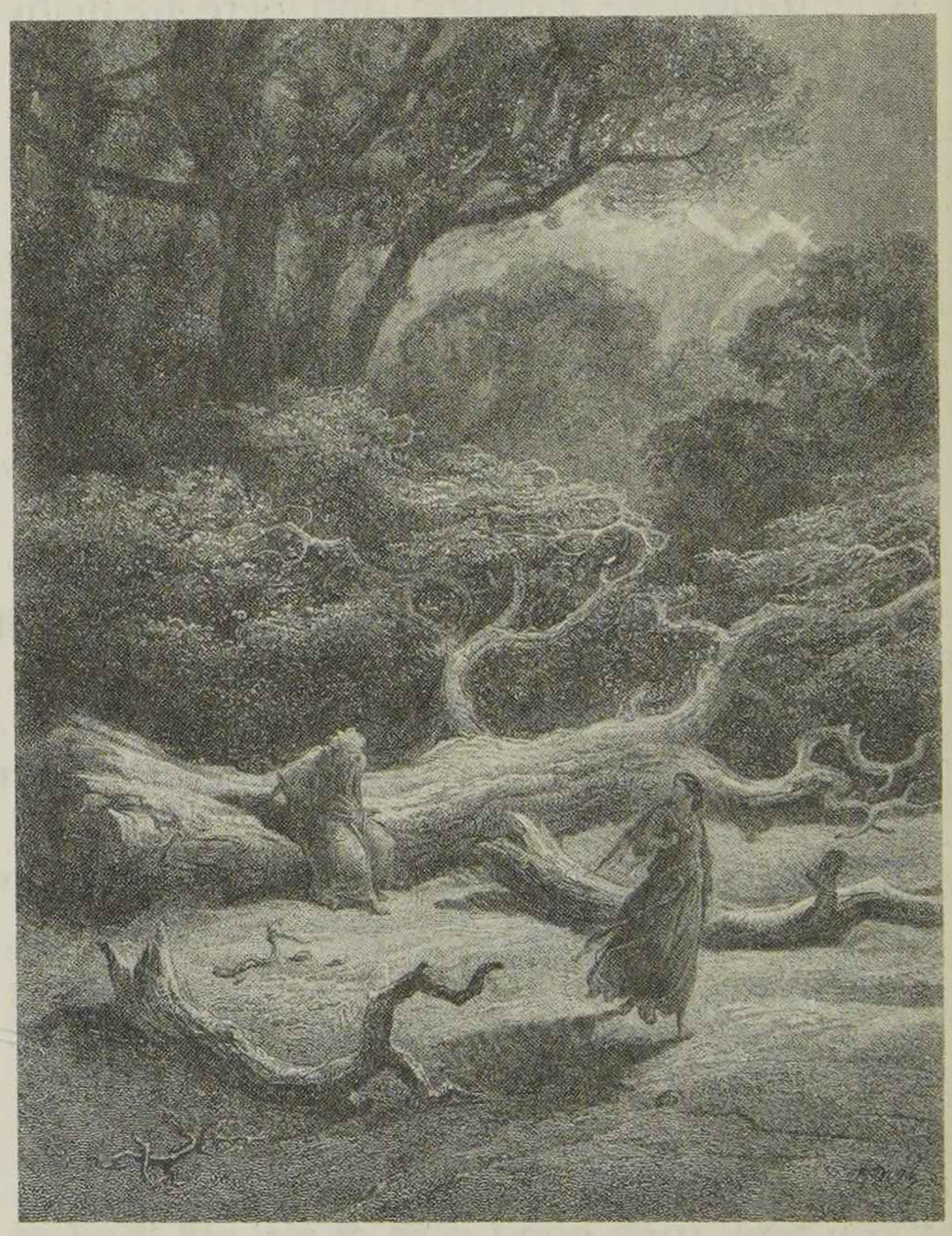
"Nonsense!" shouted the other. "How ridiculous! How can a pot die?"

"Well," said Mullah Nasr Eddin, lifting his hands, "if a pot can have a baby, surely a pot can die!"

THE BELOVED

EPICYCLE VI

The following tale is told by R'Yitzchak of Acco, of blessed memory, in his Ma'Assioth Hap'rushim:



A princess once went to bathe in the river and was observed by a lowborn man, one of the slum dwellers. The thought which first flashed into his mind, "When will I be able to deal with her as I please?" soon became an obsession with him. His desire for her grew mightily within him, and finally he managed to have a word with her. Confessing his love, more in frustrated gesture and deep sighing than in well-put words, he proposed to her. The immensity of his love filled her with compassion and she answered that only in the cemetery could she meet him and be his own. She meant by this that the only place where rich and poor, aristocrat and beggar, are equals, is the ceme-

tery, and that their love would have to wait for death before it could be consummated. But he understood this to be an appointment of a tryst. So he sold his possessions. What would he need of his own when he became the princess's squire? He betook himself to the cemetery, making it his home. Then he meditated on the form of his beloved, day by day increasing in his fervor. The image of her became more and more bold and lovely. When impatience seemed to take hold of him, he answered himself: "How difficult it must be for a princess to leave her palace—she gave her word—if not today, she will come tomorrow." Thus, he waited, beholding her constantly with his inner eye.

From time to time, he saw how they brought corpses to the cemetery, and so he became aware of the transitoriness of existence. It could not be the fleshly form of the princess, he decided, which he loved; there was something very special and unique about the princess, something enduring and divine. And so he began to contemplate the divine in forms: that which gives them such beauty and grace. In time, he turned from the divine which clothes itself in forms to the loveliness of the infinitely divine, which is without form and name. Thus, daily he beheld the preciousness of the King, yearning to be absorbed in His very Being, rather than in any of his manifestations.

No other thought entered into his mind, so absorbed did he keep it in the object of his love. Now, one cannot be preoccupied with such single-minded yearning without being transformed into the very substance and being of the beloved object. And so, the former slum dweller, the lowborn man, realized G-d.
A G-d realized person—a Tzaddik—is soon felt by those who seek one: he attracts those who need him in the same manner that a flower which has blossomed attracts bees. Thus the cemetery became a place of pilgrimages for those who sought his blessing and direction, and he was spoken of as the "Tzaddik of the house of life."

It happened that the princess, who in the meantime had married, was barren. Like so many others, she too came to seek the blessing of the Tzaddik. When she came before him, he greeted her—and greatly thanked her in his heart, for all that he had realized he owed to his initial love for her—and freely bestowed his blessing upon her.

Soon thereafter, he became so absorbed in His Being that he forgot to return to his flesh. At first, the people who came to seek him out did not wish to disturb him, thinking him to be in *devekuth* (absorption). Only later did they understand that he had left "life to the living."

R' Yitzchak of Acco continues: "He who has never loved a woman is likened to an ass or worse, for all service to G-d must begin with the discrimination and further sublimation of lofty feelings."

And the *Reshith Hokhmah* continues: "Thus the words 'desire' and 'learning' must be understood: for he who fastens his desire exclusively to one thing in the Torah, so that day and night he thinks of nothing else, will surely attain to the highest and most amazing levels of his soul. Such a one needs no fasts and austerities, for all depends on the steadfastness and intensity of his longing for Torah, which must be like one who longs for his beloved."

Retold from the Reshith Hokhmah *by Zalman M. Schachter*

TANGENTS: BOOKS IN REVIEW

THE GENTLE TASADAY: A STONE AGE PEOPLE IN THE PHILIPPINE RAIN FOREST. By John Nance. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975. Pp. 465. $15.00.

The Ambiguities of Eden

Paul Jordan-Smith

The Tasaday, for those who may not already know, are a band of 25 people who live in the rain forests of the Cotabato Mountains of Mindanao, the Philippines. They were initially discovered in the early 60s by a Manubo Blit tribesman named Dafal, who introduced them in Spring 1971 to Manuel Elizalde Jr., the young Manila millionaire head of PANAMIN (Presidential Arm for National Minorities). Anthropologically, they are termed a *group* rather than a tribe because they have no formal social structure, no chief or head-man. Their material culture, at least before the complicating arrival of Dafal, consisted almost exclusively of stone tools, a crude drill for making fire, and deer antlers and bones to dig roots. They cultivate no plants, keep no herds, make no pottery, and do no weaving. They trap animals and gather plants, some of which, since Dafal's coming, they have learned to process. They have no weapons and happily lack words for war, enemy, or evil: the worst thing they can say about something untoward is that it is "not good."

The story of the Tasaday is beguiling, particularly when set, as in Nance's account, against the vicissitudes of the neighboring tribes, whose lands and well-being are under continual threat from the spread of civilization. To explore with Nance the peaceful world of the Tasaday is as delightful a diversion as one's fantasies could conjure. One can even justify taking sides with Elizalde, who waged a vigorous campaign to have the Tasaday rain

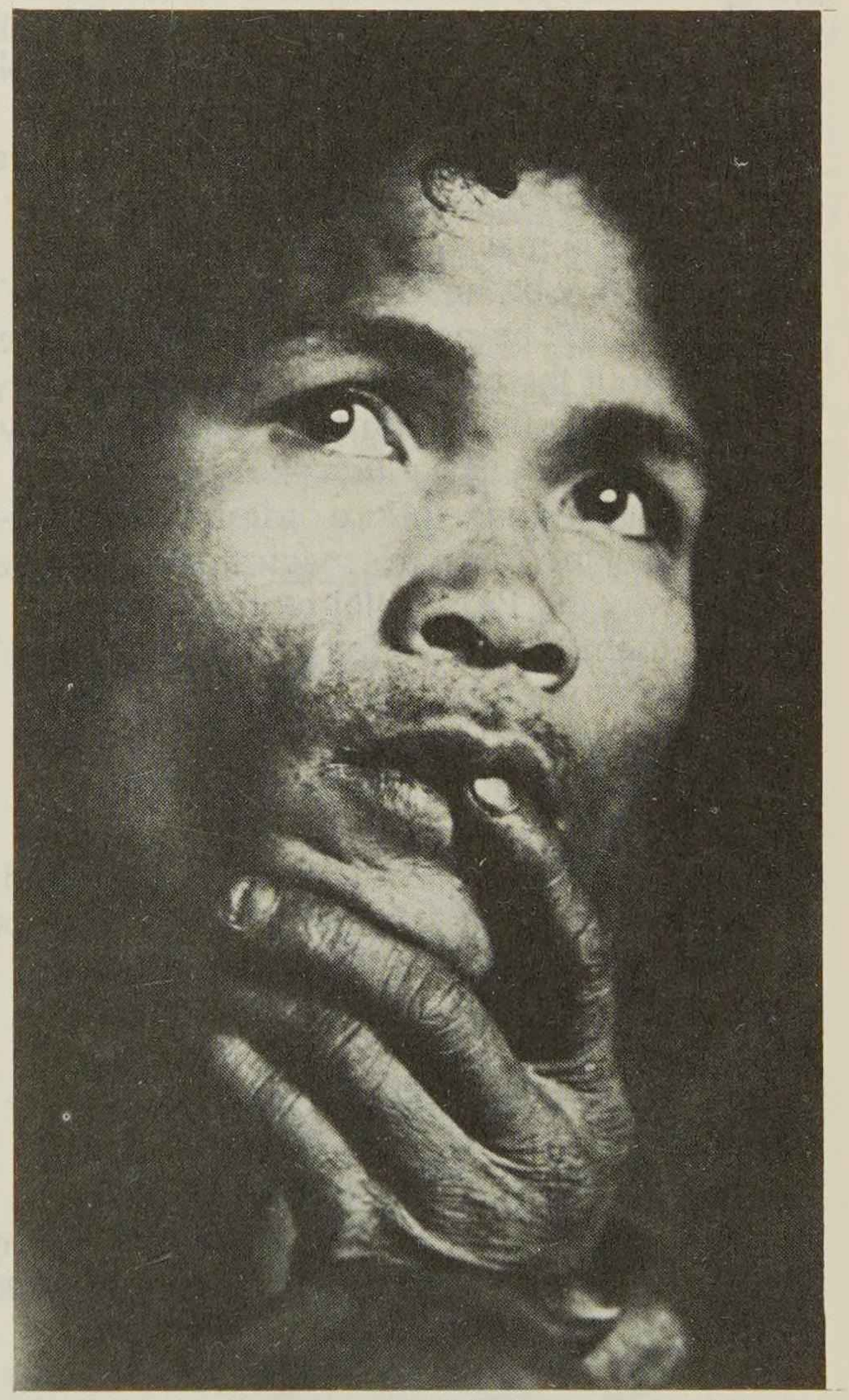
forest set aside as a preserve, legally sheltered against the incursions of the lumber barons. It is difficult to adjust to the idea that such a group actually exists, so ingrained is our educated belief that man is inherently aggressive and prone to evil. They seem to belie inveterate assumptions about man's original and ineradicable sinfulness. Here is a truly gentle people who cannot comprehend enmity and strife. Their survival depends so totally on the harmony between them and the nurturing forest that it gives a measure of credence to even the most radical claims of the back-to-the-earth movement.

Our civilization is repeatedly criticized (and celebrated) for being unreservedly materialistic. Little wonder then that Nance's fine narrative dwells most on the "natural materialism" of this primitive people. As I read the book, however, disturbing questions began to bedevil my laid-back delight with the world of the Tasaday. What was their attitude toward death? Do they have any mythology? Do they have any ideas about the soul and the afterlife? Is there any evidence of shamanism? In a word, is there a Tasaday religion?

These issues are scarcely broached in Nance's book, which otherwise seems painstakingly thorough in its description of the Tasaday. There are a few references to apparently mythical figures, and Elizalde himself came to be regarded as "Momo Dakel Diwata Tasaday"—the Great-Bringer-of-Good-Fortune-to-the-Tasaday. Occasional remarks are made about the first man and woman—or at least the first *Tasaday* man and woman. Thunder is called the Big Voice. But beyond these references, they make no mention of any other mythological figures or events, and the closest thing to mythology is fragmentary tribal legends about their caves.

Their attitude toward death is about as straightforward as one could imagine: when a man stops living, he is dead. Slightly more poetically, a man is said to die when his spirit leaves his body. When death occurs (or even when it is imminent) the body is carried into the forest and left there. It is not buried, nor is the place marked. "Aikman asked if they feared death and Balayam [the most forthcoming of the Tasaday] said not necessarily. What happened when a Tasaday died? They just died, Balayam answered. Did the part of him that had lived go somewhere? 'We don't know. We die, that's all we know.' " Equally absent is any notion of where the spirit comes from in the first place.

The Tasaday get along without chief, shaman, or medicine man. In fact, almost



everything connected with the sense of the sacred—stories of the gods, ritual symbols and ceremonies, spiritual disciplines—is absent or of incidental concern. The religious impulse appears virtually nonexistent among them.

The attention Nance pays to these matters seems proportionate to the importance they have for the Tasaday—hardly any. Death causes sadness but not wonder, and the probing questions of the researchers make them uncomfortable, mostly because such questions, let alone their answers, lie beyond their horizon.

To many, the absence of religion will be as welcome as the joyful tranquility of the whole Tasaday way of life. And that perhaps is because there is so little religion in our culture either, though many vestiges persist that are taken for the real thing. In that sense, the Tasaday may be better off without 'religion.' Still, one can't help wondering what fascinates us so about them. Unlike most peoples, they seem to intrigue us with their capacity to live blissfully *without* so much—for ill and good—that human culture ordinarily involves.

A hint of the Tasaday's magic appeal may lie in the way the PANAMIN representatives regard them. They're referred to as "children" and treated with the circumspect condescension reserved for the very young. There is considerable anxiety over the possibility of their "corruption" by the guests of PANAMIN or by loggers threatening their land. Attempts are made to insure that they do not become dependent on the material gifts of civilization. Presents of bolo knives raise concern about an adverse affect on their tool-making and stone-age ways. The worry seemed accurate enough: after a visit, one PANAMIN team left behind a tent-platform; upon their return, they found that the Tasaday had made copies of the platform and installed them in their own caves. The researchers, accepting this 'progress' as irreversible, then had to show them how to clean and repair the platforms.

The appeal of the Tasaday may simply lie in our own disenchantment with the effects civilization has had on us. The peace which characterizes their relationships contrasts sharply with our own social and ecological experience. Though the Tasaday children may occasionally quarrel, the adults never do. Their only real dislikes seem confined to importunate visitors with "loud voices and sharp looks." Their attitudes do in fact resemble those of young children whose lives are shielded from



the shocks of the world.

But if the Tasaday represent the childhood of the human race, it may be more accurate to think of it as a second childhood rather than a primordial innocence. Nance repeatedly raises the question of "what *we* have lost" with his comparison of modern civilized man and these stone-age forest-dwellers. It is fascinating to speculate on what the Tasaday might have lost—not simply 'lost out on' in terms of our culture, but actually lost of their own. In all the marvelling over them, it is easy to forget that they are only the size of an extended family; that they are *no longer* in touch with neighboring tribes; that they don't recall stories from their childhood—they have no oral tradition, no knowledge of their ancestry. Do they, as many feel, embody the lost possibilities of man? Or is it they who have lost man's possibilities? Might there be a fall into Eden, as well as out of it?

Paul Jordan-Smith is a freelance writer and storyteller; he is also Associate Editor of this magazine.

THE MYTHIC IMAGE. By Joseph Campbell. Assisted by M. J. Abadie. Bollingen Series C. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974. Pp. xv & 552. $45.00

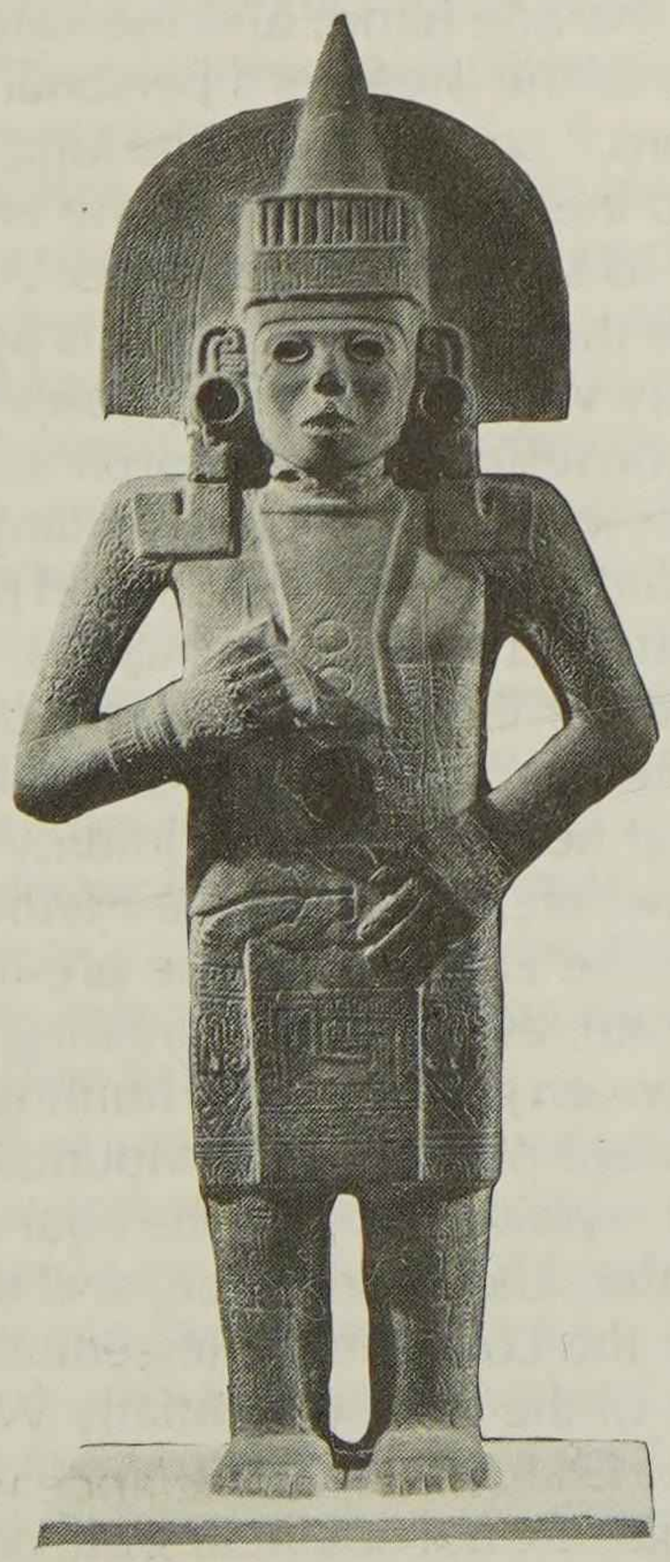
SPEAKING IN IMAGES

William Doty

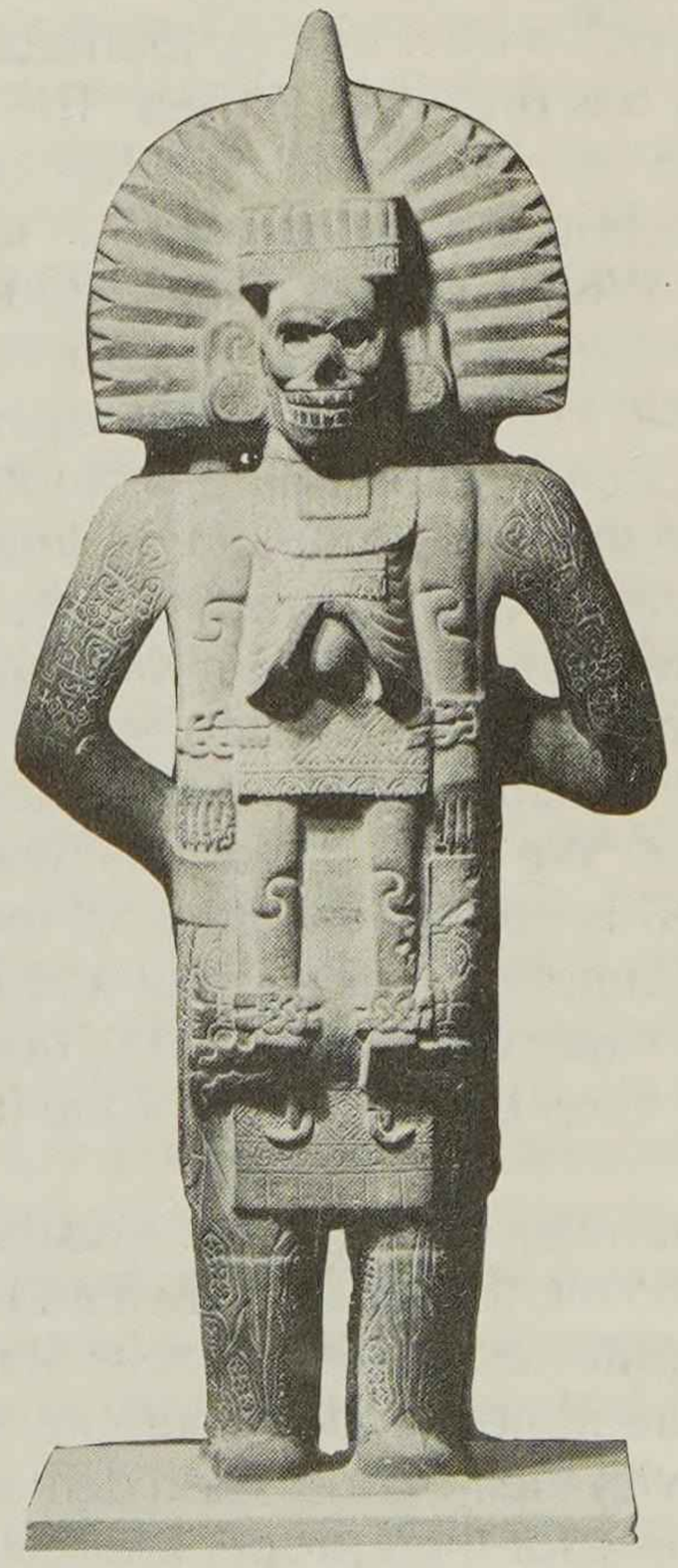
Joseph Campbell's contribution to the analytical study of mythology, and thereby to creative mythopoetics, is vast. Whether we turn to the popular press ("the world's leading expert on mythology"—*Time*), or to college students struggling with *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* or *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*, he comes across as a mythologist who puts it all together without forcing a choice between any particular dream or mask of god.

Striking, then, that this latest volume opens with the dream world of a Kalahari bushman and ends with Schopenhauer's tantalizing suggestion that the universe is "a vast dream, dreamed by a single being, in such a way that all the dream characters dream too." And that the book works its way from the conflicts leading to the *victory* of the hero, the dragon quest, to the *sacrifice* of the hero-form itself: "an immolation of the hero by the dragon; that is to say, self-divestiture through interiorization of the sacrifice."

Binding the beginning and the ending into a uroboric whole are the images of the dragon, the snake, the sacred cobra of India, the intertwined caduceus of Hermes and of Quetzalcoatl. "The Serpent Guide," as one section heading has it; or the Kundalini's sinuous path, cited in the same chapter's suggestion that Tantric yoga represents the highest form of psychological mythologization. The serpents twining about Indian bas-relief and coiled



Lord of Life (front view)



Lord of Death (rear view)

above the Communion chalice of medieval paintings: the images make the way and tell the tale.

Images of the Eye, the Wonder Child, the World Egg, Hieros Gamos, Cosmic Ladder, World Tree, Labyrinths, Earth-Diver, the Hero Cycle—the full list would be a review in itself. A rich polyphony of images released from the prose page and allowed to lead the body along, as well as the mind. Images that now become focal for the final volume of the magisterial Bollingen Series, just as they were the focus, in eighteen astonishing plates of Navajo paintings, in the Series' first volume, *Where the Two Came to Their Father: A Navaho War Ceremonial,* itself outfitted with a commentary by Joseph Campbell.

The images of humankind—and the images of Campbell's own mythic journeys. The dreamer has dreamed himself. The uroborus has been reformed. The hero has conquered, only to relinquish the compulsion to conquer. And the Wisdom of the Other Shore has been heard in yogic texts and in *The Tibetan Book of The Dead.* Here we have one mythologist's lifetime, culminating not in footnotes, though there are those, but in pictorial images: rich, lush, lucid, boldly contrasting reflections of vastly diverse cultures. Campbell's public presentations are now full of slides from countless sources, and they bathe the audience in waves of images. We suspect that this new public Campbell is but the reflection of the inner mythic Campbell. The sensual and image-rich plane of expression found in the book reflects his own deep experiencing of the full mythic vision.

The number of pages and illustrations are there to count; the volume's heft and the polish of its graphic design are palpable. Some photographs are almost undecipherable, but others stun us with their richness and demand a great deal of time for their proper appreciation. But these things are evident to the most casual reader. I think the impact comes through best when one reads straight through, although it is clear that the book will serve as a reference tool for years to come. The important thing, as Campbell puts it, is to let "the spirit of the pictures rule." Since I cannot reproduce the pictures here, however, I will focus on an overview of the book's internal structure and contents, probe its two major themes, and conclude with reflections on the role of the mythologist.

I.

Structure and Content

The outer structure of the book is outlined twice by the author, once at the beginning and again halfway through. Six chapters take us through the argument that "through dreams a door is opened to mythology, since myths are of the nature of dream; as dreams arise from an inward world unknown to waking consciousness, so do myths: so, indeed does life." Chapter I introduces "elementary" or "universal" ideas. Campbell continues here his sustained emphasis upon balancing the universal with the local or "historically conditioned." Although they are "symbols of cosmic import," universal ideas themselves "are never experienced in a pure state," but are known through specific cultural manifestations. Cosmic symbols on the one hand, and mediated "reflections of the dreamer's personal or ethnic limitations," on the other: like Jung, Campbell points to the construction of the archetypal through its specific components. And it is in the ways the archetypal patterns appear in "infinitely various metamorphoses that their fascination resides." Metamorphosis forges the ultimately-one but manifestly-many shapes of *The Mythic Image.* The shapes and patterns are investigated in following chapters.

In Chapter II, Campbell distinguishes between literate and non-literate traditions, and notes that he works here primarily with the literate (whereas in *Primitive Mythology,* for example, he emphasized the pre-historical or non-literate, especially in stressing the difference between gathering and hunting societies). The concept of the World Mountain, and associated mythic themes of the Four Ages, Cosmic Ladder, and World Tree, and the contrast between the Lotus image (essentially Eastern) and that of the Rose (essentially Western) dominate Chapters II and III. We learn that the two images are not conflicting but complementary on the level of their essential contents.

The Lotus and the Rose introduce the theme of "the mathematical round of space-time and waking of the spirit to a life transcending that round," and lead to what Campbell calls "the climax of the book," Chapter IV. There the doctrines of yoga and yogic disciplines are revealed as Campbell's skeleton key to psychological readings of mythic symbolism.

Chapter V introduces the widespread motif of the sacrificed god, and includes Captain Cook's first-hand 1777 report of the human sacrifice ritual he witnessed in the Pacific. The brief concluding Chapter VI carries us beyond the mythological themes of the ultimate silence and the coincidence of opposites to the terminal ideal of the Awakened Consciousness. Such consciousness recognizes at the same time that no one who is enlightened is "any one," as well as that "anyone" is Everyone —the remarkable flow of transpersonality in which one takes on impersonality to gain specific personality.

The next sections of this essay will probe the inner dynamics of the book, but its impressive scope and breadth deserve mention first. The many cultural spheres from which materials are drawn defy brief listing; chief among them are Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, India, Europe and Meso-America, and China and Japan. The order of this list accords with approximate frequency of citation and with their relative importance also. As usual in Campbell's books, complex images (an Orphic bowl, the Aztec calendar stone, Egyptian tomb paintings, the chakras of Kundalini yoga) receive specific and detailed exposition.

Campbell teaches the viewer to see anew, to gather the parts into the total impact while allowing them their own beauty and significance. He has an amazing ability to recognize important details that would otherwise escape the casual view: for example, the pedestals on which deities are positioned—ciphering the World Mountain from which they were born. And there is a magic here of conjuring mutually reflective interpretations when the author juxtaposes images from two cultures simultaneously. A specific instance would be his setting Reubens's "Massacre of the Innocents" against the legend of the killing of male children after Krishna's birth.

This sort of juxtaposition is made possible by the book's design. Using a musical comparison, we could refer to a sort of fugue-like harmony between the main prose text, individual illustrations with their explanations, and the larger themes of the whole work. The viewer/reader is led back and forth between the concrete visual expression and the underlying mythic themes; and stratified images from different cultures allow recognition of the universal ideas to take shape gradually and effectively. Each part becomes richer as it vibrates within the nexus of the entire field of concentration.

II.

The Human Mind and Cultural Diffusion.

Although Campbell documents similarities between vastly different cultures—when he compares objects and themes in Japan and Meso-America, for instance—he rejects pan-psychic theories. He argues against Frazer and others who suggest universal structures of the human mind as the basis of nearly identical phenomena in widely dispersed cultures, and he equally rejects the anthropologists' theory of "convergence," which, as he says, "points to no cause, but only to the *effect* of a cause." Rather he seeks to verify the existence of one essential and universal cultural framework that has spread by historical diffusion. Strongly influenced by psychological interpretation, Campbell, in this latest volume, decides against what I would term an "endopsychic" interpretation, i.e., the interpretation that would derive transcultural similarities from the transpersonal psyche of humankind.

This endopsychic interpretation is represented today by Claude Lévi-Strauss, though I suppose he would be horrified at the suggestion that he uses primarily "psychological" tools of interpretation! We miss direct confrontation with Lévi-Strauss's advocacy of an ultimate human mind scattering mythic elements that are now to be pieced together into complex systems without temporal distinctions. But perhaps an implied confrontation is present: Campbell documents his case for historical diffusion in great detail. For instance we are presented with charts of the newest archaeological discoveries in the Americas, which, in their comparative columns, point to Oriental-American contacts as early as 3000 B.C. The historical source *par excellence,* however is Mesopotamia, and our childhood notions that "civilization began in the Fertile Crescent" are reconfirmed. Even the high cultures of Middle America are considered by Campbell to be "not merely similar to those of ancient Greece and the Orient, but actually of one piece with them—a remote provincial extension of the one historic heritage and universal history of mankind."

These arguments are presented in this book in such overwhelming display that they can

really be countered only by comparably grand iconographic essays. The tantalizing prospect looms of a future convention of experts in mythology and ancient history at which only great panoplies of comparative images are exchanged—but no words! How else could one offer an effective counter-interpretation of the remarkable simultaneity of hand postures ("fear dispelling" and "boon bestowing") in the Orient and in Meso-America that Campbell demonstrates? Or the odd congruity of pig/boar-avoidance and ritual megaliths in both Oceania and the Ancient Near East? Or of the fact that the Mayan astronomical system mirrors mistakes in calculation first made in the *Chinese* system?

These questions expose a serious problem area in both the study of art and anthropology at the present time. The problem has to do with finding basic graphic units for cross-cultural comparison. We have few tools for measuring cultural congruence of artistic elements when we compare, say, Japan and Meso-America, as Campbell does. Several preliminary studies have sought to compare, for example, predominance of hard-edged and soft-edged figures, in order to judge the relative "masculine" or "feminine" values of cultures where these design elements predominate. But we are a long way from adequate statistical comparisons of the ways a culture expresses itself in its images with the ways that culture is socially organized.

Our tools for comparative iconographic symbolism are meagre indeed, and the sort of comparative charting performed by Campbell, while rich by comparison with other contemporary studies, may seem as outdated fifty years from now as do the old pre-photographic engravings of bas-reliefs. At least Campbell—and other volumes in the Bollingen Series—will not let us reduce mythological humankind to *texts*, but show us the necessary interplay of story, text, and images. Mythic images are mythic stories in graphic form; and the graphic forms lead in their turn to new mythic stories.

III.

Yogic Center

The primary cluster Campbell takes to underlie all philosophical, theological, and scientific reflection, however, defies ready graphic summation. Some images are certainly crucial, such as the World Mountain, which he thinks was diffused throughout the world from its source in Near Eastern experiences of seasonal flooding. The structural motif of the ascending levels of the Mountain comes to represent the levels of human consciousness in more than one culture.

Or we can follow Campbell's lead in centering on Tantric yoga, the system which represents the greatest psychological development, and the system most fully expressing the supreme "indwelling Self" permeating all life. This emphasis is the pivot of the book both in terms of its size and its argument, and it is here that Campbell makes his own confession as a mythologist: "it is becoming increasingly apparent as we advance in our knowledge of Asia that in the yogic lore of India and Tibet, China and Japan, we may have a master key to the inward dimensions of *all* symbolic forms."

Here we find Campbell's own personal balancing of the historical and the universal. Chapters II and III showed that "the mythological systems of the great civilizations share a significant body of motifs, many of which may have been derived from a single historic source: the mathematically structured astronomical systems of the Early Bronze Age Near East"; but now we see that it is the system of Kundalini yoga (which he traces back to the Indus Valley of 2500 B.C.E.) that can provide the most effective entrée into the mythic image's Realized Being. Yoga in its root sense is advocated here, yoga as "joining, yoking," not yoga as an aid to weight reduction or as a sedative for harried executives. "What is to be joined through yoga is consciousness to its source, so that one lives in the knowledge of identity with that source and not merely with the limited ego of the daylight personality."

Psychoanalytical interpretations of the yogic chakras (the "Lotus Ladder"), or of the *Bardo Thödol,* may enable us to find a contemporary bridge to this ancient wisdom. And finding such a bridge, we move toward realizing the common sources from which dreams and myths emerge. As Campbell puts it:

> *Mythologies are in fact the public dreams that move and shape societies; and conversely, one's own dreams are the little myths of the private gods, antigods, and guardian powers that are moving and shaping oneself: revelations of the actual fears, aims, and values by which one's life is subliminally ordered. On the level, therefore, of Dream Consciousness one is at the quick, the immediate initiating creative* now, *of one's life, experiencing those activating forces that in due time will bring to pass unpredicted events on the plane of Waking Consciousness and be there observed and experienced as "facts."*

IV.

The Pattern and the Mythologist.

Components of this powerful statement can be found elsewhere—think of Jung's distinction between culturally Big Dreams and idiosyncratic fantasies—but Campbell unites them to disclose an underlying life pattern, a mandala-like synthesis that must reflect his own experience. Frankly, I have trouble accepting the absolute validity of any reconstructed pattern, whether it be Campbell's earlier proposal of a monomyth of the heroic adventure, or the movement here from Dream to Hero Victory to The Silence to Hero Relinquishment and Sacrifice and back to Dream. When insightfully discerned, however, such patternings do provide precious structures of meaning into which we can each fit the discrete moments of personal experience. They offer at least temporary homes for those restlessly seeking to discover the grand scheme in which individual life stories find fulfilling compartments.

But ultimately I am ready to let "the spirit of the pictures rule" even more freely than Campbell does, and to speak of mythic *images* rather than The Mythic Image. I would speak of "the play of images" rather than try to coax the images into a spiritual Oneness collecting and sustaining everything. I sense, following Victor Turner's work, that the "liminal" (the middle section of rituals) is the period of ultimate creativity. Not the final over-the-threshold stage of completion and reintegration, but the liminal suspension between pre- and post-, the time of transition between sure traditions and untried byways, the time of intersecting of the old and the new, where precisely *through* the clashes and new combinations, old symbols come back to life and new ones are born. Metaphor as the key; paradox as the continuing mode; aphorism or story as the diction: I don't find the securities worth holding on to, but I do find the limit-testing and the spaced-out fictional projections life-giving.

At the borders, in the liminal phase, the trickster rules. The trickster, the clown, the teller of parables and riddles, the mythmaker. For it is in the awful pressure points, the awkward junctures, the tense confinement between the clashing rocks or Symplegades; it is at the intersections, in the midst of separations and reunions, that the mythic images spark and ignite new self-realizations. Each product of the quest for wholeness then becomes grist for the mill of other intersections, of other mythopoetic divisions and rejoinings. The quests for wholeness become a series of transformations catalyzed by mythopoetic insight and creativity, and the mythic images call us back from individual separateness to the crucial sense of connectedness that spells humankind.

Campbell as Trickster? That would be forcing him into a characterization that a person of his suave bearing might well reject. But he has often been present to me at those awkward junctures, and while I cannot adopt his synthesis, I know the weight of his contributions to my own intersections. And I can honor him as a consummate mythologist-trickster who gives all of us important components to be assembled into our own emergent mythic images.

William Doty has taught Religion at Vassar and Rutgers, and is co-editor of the forthcoming Myths, Rites, and Symbols: A Mircea Eliade Reader, *to be published by Harper & Row.*

REVIEWS

Re-Visioning Psychology.

By James Hillman. New York: Harper & Row, 1975. Pp. xvii & 266. $12.50.

By Thomas Moore

As its title promises, James Hillman's book is about seeing, specifically about seeing everything twice, seeing through, doing a double-take, being sufficiently paranoid to look for hidden meanings. "Paranoia would see through . . . would go beyond what is given." Hillman is paranoid about psychology. He wants to know what is behind it all, what is going on, what myth is being enacted, which God is at the root of it all. And in the process of seeing through psychology, Hillman demonstrates a way of experiencing everything psychologically.

The metaphor par excellence for "psychologizing," he says, is glass. To the psychological eye all events, all ideas and emotions, all myths and Gods, are "solid transparencies." By seeing through them we may catch glimpses of psyche or soul. Literalism, the ruin of psychologizing, would urge us toward plain experiencing, feeling, acting, and intellectualizing without seeing underlying patterns and purposes. By seeing through we engage in the one true psychological task—making soul. (Hillman does not define soul, but he describes it as a reflective viewpoint toward things, a perspective giving events depth and significance.)

The means Hillman suggests for recovering a psychological attitude is reversion. In one sense that means going back to Greek and Renaissance ways of thinking where soul is seen as central, where the many Gods are known to be active at the roots of everyday life, and where images and stories keep the imagination stirring. "To live psychologically," says Hillman, "means to imagine things." We need a wealth of images to contain and differentiate the contents of psychic life.

Reversion also takes us from everyday events back to their roots, to the feelings and ideas that inspire them, to the deeper collective stories and myths which seem to be living through us, and even back to a particular God or Goddess whose character shines through our experience. Re-experiencing everyday life in the light of a mythic and religious consciousness provides "the invisible background which starts us imagining, questioning, going deeper."

Quaint curiosity and a pleasant game of matching our case histories with myths, however, is not the way to soul. Psychologizing involves pathologizing—being moved, falling apart. At the first sign of pathology, psychotherapists typically leap into treatment, but Hillman advises following pathology as a guide. It is a mode of speech. "The psyche uses complaints to speak in a magnified and misshapen language about its depths." Pathology makes us "excruciatingly sensitive to the movements of psyche." It forces us to stop and ask what is behind experience.

Hillman speaks out of a tradition going back to Heraclitus, who acknowledged the depth and flux of psyche. Following Jung, he is attempting to put psyche back into psychology and psychology back into psyche. But his vision is so foreign and such a challenge to current, honored schools of psychology that it will probably appear as the dream of a man not in his right mind. And it is. For Hillman insists that there is no right mind, that the roots, the archetypes, the Gods of psyche are many. His is not an ego-psychology, nor does therapy for him mean getting-it-all-together for ego. Rather, therapy consists in care for "the powers in the soul that are inhuman and divine." Hillman agrees with Paracelsus that "to deal fully with any human affair, one must devote half one's thought to what is not human."

In recent years, for all of its branchings, psychology has become an ever narrower discipline. Where it was once inseparable from religion, philosophy, and mythology, it is now being stuffed into the shell of an exact science or squeezed into attitudes of personalism, communications, or mental health. By exploring the non-human reaches of psyche, Hillman is again blurring the boundaries of psychology moving not toward a field of study but toward a comprehensive style of living. He is sculpting a psychology of religion and a religious perspective on psychology.

Hillman has written a book with poetry, passion, clarity, and a sense of immediacy. The book itself has soul. To the folklorist and theologian it offers a way into and behind myth and religion. To the psychologist it suggests a way out of egocentricity. For the individual and for the professional it is a remarkable, kaleidoscopic breaking up of psychology's density and life's literalness. And, a rarity, it is a book on psychology that sees through itself.

Thomas Moore teaches humanistic psychology at Glassboro State University.

All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw.

By Theodore Rosengarten. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1974. Pp. xxv & 561. $12.50. New York: Avon, 1975. $2.25

By Robert Detweiler

In early 1969, Theodore Rosengarten, a young Harvard student, accompanied a friend who was studying the Alabama Sharecroppers Union to Tukabahchee County in Alabama; while there he met an 84-year-old illiterate black farmer named Nate Shaw who had been briefly active in the Union in the early Thirties and who was imprisoned for twelve years (1933-1945) for armed resistance to deputies attempting to attach the property of a fellow black tenant farmer. Rosengarten, as he relates it in his introduction, became quickly fascinated by Shaw's desperate and courageous stand against an oppressive system, discovered that Shaw was a marvelous natural raconteur, and determined to hear him out and write down his story. The result of 120 hours of recording during 31 sessions is these 561 pages of edited text, representing Rosengarten's selections from the great wealth of spoken material.

Shaw's life story, even in its written form, is far too rich and intricate, in the manner of oral narration, for adequate synopsis, but one can offer a sketch. Rosengarten divides Shaw's long life into four chapters: Youth, Deeds, Prison, and Revelation. The climax occurs a little more than half-way through Shaw's life, at age 47, and correspondingly a little more than half-way through the book, when Shaw describes how he decided to resist injustice to his neighbor because "I was goin to be next" and, holding only a .32 Smith and Wesson, shot it out with a deputy armed with an automatic shotgun. This act comes to shape Shaw's whole life. He sees his youth and prior manhood as leading up to it and the years that follow as the direct and indirect consequences of it. The chapters, in fact, could just as well be titled Preparation, Initiation, Ordeal, and Reconciliation. Shaw's adolescence under a strict and often brutal father toughened him; in maturity he nurtured a stubborn and proud independence that enabled him to prosper but that antagonized many of the wealthier white land owners—many of his tales concern his strategies for avoiding subjugation through the white man's trickery. Following his arrest and conviction, his twelve-year prison term becomes an exercise in human survival—resisting temptations to be paroled (and thus eternally in debt) to white farmers, sustained by his wife's and family's support, by his newly found religion, and by his fortitude. Emerging at age 59 to start over again, he displays an amazing reconciliatory spirit toward his grim fortunes and, without ever losing his sense of rightness about his earlier defiance, finds an old man's tranquillity that even carries him through his wife's death and a remarriage, over his children's objections, in his late sixties.

Rosengarten in his introduction briefly compares Shaw to Faulkner, and although this sounds audacious at first, one soon sees the aptness of it. Shaw provides the black counterpart, as Rosengarten remarks, to Faulkner's focus on the impact of Southern history on the family that shows the decline of the land-holding dynasties and the ascendance of the poor white farmers. Beyond that, Shaw embodies convincingly what Faulkner could only suggest: the ability of the blacks not merely to endure but to prevail. Even more, Shaw's untaught eloquence, his superb oral style, is the authentic expression of what Faulkner and other literary artists could at best imitate. Vivid and original imagery, a pervasive folklore, a vigor of statement that matches strength of character, evidence of a tenacious (and no doubt creative) memory all mark the narration and give it its unique force. The text is, on the other hand, not a great document of written literature. It is repetitious, often unfocused, disorganized in spite of its editor's attempts at sequentiality, and sometimes simply tedious because of the regular attention paid to family details that cannot interest even an empathetic outsider.

The book, as an edited and radically reduced written version of Shaw's oral autobiography, is finally very frustrating, for it reveals the inadequacy of the written text for conveying the speaker's personality and environment; so much has obviously been lost through transcription. One wishes to be in Shaw's presence as he talks, or at least to see him on film or hear him on tape. Yet this necessary failure of Rosengarten's effort also shows how good the book is: that we can catch *some* of the power of Shaw's defiant vision and his incredible resiliency, enough to make us regret deeply the impossibility of encountering him as actual storyteller, is a tribute to the quality of his native art and to Rosengarten's skillful and sympathetic mediation. They are lucky to have found each other, and we are lucky that they did.

Robert Detweiler is Director of the Institute of Liberal Arts at Emory University.

Religion as Story.

Edited by James B. Wiggins. New York: Harper Forum Books, 1975. Pp. xi & 203. $4.50

By Adele B. McCollum

"Faced with a blank white page, how does one know which characters, which incidents, which narrative distance and point of view make a scene come to life?" Thus, Michael Novak ends his story/essay, " 'Story' and Experience" on the final page of *Religion as Story*. One might ask the same question in regard to this book.

Collections of essays may soon generate another genre of criticism for it is patently obvious that one does not review many stories in quite the same way one reviews a single one of length. Collections leave more room for choice.

Strangely enough, Novak is the only one of six writers represented in this book who offers us a "story" in recognizable, or perhaps one should say, customary or traditional form. No doubt it is this fact which caused a wise editor to place it last in the collection, the frame for all those which precede it. Novak's story which he calls, "The Experimental College at Athensbury" manages not to be an allegory. It is instead paradigmatic (as stories tend to be) of the experiences we share. This story also makes it perfectly clear why Novak changed his mind. There is scarcely an academician around who has not yet played all its parts. Perhaps the essays before Novak's were written by the characters in his.

Religion as Story is a book whose time is just right. It has not arrived too late to be exciting. Not much of it will be "old hat" to the reader, any reader. But neither has it come into print too early, so that the material does not smack of obscurantism as it might. The one exception to this is William G. Doty's, "The Stories of our Times" which more often than not presents a stream of titles and ideas which need to be unpacked if the reader is to be able to "experience" them to the degree that they can become part of his/her story. Doty comes down squarely in favor of "The New Fiction" but includes in this definition everything from Hesse, Camus, and Kafka to John Hawkes and E.M. Beekman. It seems as if Doty has taken on some of the characteristics of those he approves, and in so doing he proceeds to list the contents of his local bookstore. We are told that "Perhaps it takes a certain sophistication to maintain interest in a story that doesn't look like a story!" Doty does not allow for the possibility that any story in which the reader must force or feign interest is either a very poor story or none at all since it fails to grip the imagination. If Doty were monoprincipled he might be able to use the excuse that the reader was simply not up to the story, but there is in his essay an implicit polytheism along with an implicit idea that story is religious because it is a soul-making function. Since Doty's article precedes that of James Hillman who makes the soul-making function of story quite clear, Doty cannot afford to assume that all his readers know where he is going.

Wiggins, himself, opens the book with his "Within and Without Stories," an attractive piece offering us the history of story, and the Western (and primarily Cartesian) story of the end of story which turns out, as Wiggins will have it, to be the story of the story to end all stories. Thus it seems, has not ended story in the Western world but has instead complicated the plot. That is a delightful thought which is further enhanced by James Hillman's "The Fiction of Case History: A Round." Hillman sets about correcting the error of his previous ways wherein he divided case history from soul history and made one outer and one inner. He now finds this an unfortunate division and embarks on the re-visioning of case history. This leads to a re-visioning of all history and a re-

visioning of the possibilities of the soul's moving through time. Heretofore, it has been axiomatic that the soul's time was timeless while the case history was the prisoner of chronicity. Having reversed this division by way of poesis and the mode of Dionysos which is theatre (putting on or playing through), Hillman then lapses into the problem of Dionysos and Apollo as opposing modes. "To put dreams with drama and Dionysos means not to put them with prophetics and Apollo. Jung's move invalidates the entire oracular approach to the dream, an approach Jung himself often fell for, reading the dream as a prophetic message of what to do and how to behave: dream interpretation as counseling for daily life. Again: not messages; masks." What Hillman seems to forget (but only briefly) is that the oracle is a metaphor, not an allegory (the distinction he draws between Jung and Freud). While he is quite right that we must live beyond our Nietzschean images of Dionysos and Apollo, he seems rather to reinforce the distinction he would be rid of. Dream, like oracle, if left to its own ambiguity need not be reduced to the prescriptive mode for daily living which Hillman finds has been its fate until now. If we will have all gods and each god will have his logos, then let us also have Dionysos and Apollo both in dream and waking dream.

Perhaps the most lucid of the essays in this collection is that by Giles Gunn, "American Literature and the Imagination of Otherness." If Wiggins offers the history of story, Gunn returns the favor by offering the story of history. Gunn concentrates on American Literature and our confrontation with the "other" in this literature. Man can confront the other, Gunn finds, as God, Nature, the wilderness, the mass, other selves, and so on. In each case the confrontation with the "other" enriches the self. He specifically selects Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, and William Carlos Williams for more detailed discussion. In his explication Gunn follows a particular path of religion-and-literature studies and finds that various responses to the "other" and the several versions of virtue generated by each coincide with historical periods in American life. The modes of experiencing the "other" may be transcendental, social, or immanental. The responses are, respectively, consent, sympathy, and transparency and the direction of the transcendent is upward, outward, or downward. Gunn rescues himself from freezing these modes into their respective historical periods by positing the Self and Other as the Me and Not-Me so that at last we become aware that the stages which are

NEW ANSWERS FROM OLD BELIEFS

Sacred Tradition & Present Need

EDITED BY

Jacob Needleman & Dennis Lewis

Has the "spiritual revolution" with its profusion of psychological innovations rejected important truths that have guided traditional life and thought? And can these ancient truths offer answers today? This important book, based on a series of lectures given in San Francisco under the auspices of The Esalen Institute, offers some fascinating insights into the current spiritual ferment in America.

$10.00

AN ESALEN BOOK

THE VIKING PRESS 625 Madison Avenue New York, N.Y. 10022

played out in American history and displayed in literature are, in fact, also taking place within and without the individual.

In "Angels We Have Heard," Stephen Crites bemoans the loss of angelology and then resurrects it. The angel in the story marks the place where the eternal enters the temporal narrative plane. He quite openly proclaims that, ". . . the rise and fall of Western angelology represents the persistence and subsequent suppression of polytheistic vestiges in monotheistic religions." For the reader who picks up *Religion as Story* expecting much reference to traditional religious paths, Crites is about as close as one will get. "Angels We Have Heard" does indeed elaborate upon the story of Jacob's wrestling with the night visitor, but we are constantly reminded that the surfacing angels are the resurfacing of more ancient polytheistic/pluralistic impulses. Crites makes no mention of any other mediators, but leaves us believing that the angel function could be fulfilled by other message-bearers. Perhaps Hillman's Hermes serves the same function.

Throughout this gathering of stories there is a pervasive polycentrism. Wiggins tells us that *the* story to end stories nearly ended the Western world, but now it can be seen to be another story so that, hereafter, we will have stories, not story. Crites is clearly telling us that we cannot forever repress our angels or our polytheistic past. Gunn would have it that there are at least two Me's, the Me we are and the Me we are not. William Doty is everywhere insistent that we are in stor-*ies*, not story, and he distinctly prefers experimenting with possible futures to formulating a single past. Hillman wishes to provide us with a many-storied story: ". . . case histories have different fictional styles and may be written in a variety of fictional genres. And therapy may be most helpful when a person is able to place his life within this variety, like the polytheistic pantheon, without having to choose one against the others. And Michael Novak reminds us that the story-teller needs to "veer away from too much abstraction, too much selectivity, and to veer toward the ambiguities and complexities of actual life." That is to say, he would have us welcome the complexities and abandon the search for the one and only true self.

It seems that this volume is certain to keep the reader arguing, talking back, and wondering why no one has said all this before in such a way that it could be heard. But the book is improperly titled. It should be *Religion as Stories,* for it is probable that all of these writers would agree that when stories become reduced to story then there is little of religion either.

Novak sees in story an embarassment to the fully rationalistic period; rationalism attempts to demythologize. Presumably this group of essays signals the beginnings of remythologizing at "Old Athensbury" and beyond. If so, *Religion as Story* has come in time to help rescue religion from losing its soul and history from losing its imagination. Wiggins tells us, "A story of real importance is not an argument so much as it is a presentation and an invitation." And one of the year's best invitations may be this collection of his. In any event, the party promises to be superb.

Adele B. McCollum teaches in the Department of Philosophy/Religion at Montclair State College and is active in the "Myth and History" section of the American Academy of Religion.

Mythology and Humanism: The Correspondence of Thomas Mann and Karl Kerenyi.

Translated from the German by Alexander Gelley. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1975. Pp. xv & 231. $12.50.

By Christine Downing

The letters exchanged between Thomas Mann and Karl Kerenyi were first published in German in 1945; a larger volume which included the letters written between 1945 and Mann's death in 1955 was published in 1960. *Mythology and Humanism* represents the first appearance of this correspondence in English. It is, as Kerenyi recognized, "a rich feast" for those interested in the process whereby mythology is "transmuted" into creativity, taken from the realm of positivistic scholarship and given back its humanizing power.

Kerenyi initiated the exchange because he saw in the author of *The Magic Mountain* someone with a more intuitive inward connection to myth than any of the classical and philological scholars with whom he had studied. He sensed in Mann's novel the possibility of a "hermetic" approach to myth study:

interpretation undertaken with the guidance of Hermes, with "phallic vigor" and with knowledge of the "demonic night."

Kerenyi's overture reached Mann when he, in his "riper years", was beginning the *Joseph* tetralogy, his most avowedly mythical work. His interest had shifted from the "merely individual and particular" "toward the typical, the eternally human, eternally recurrent;" he saw this as signifying "a singular intensification of his artistic mood, a new gaiety and vividness," It meant a "homecoming", a "return to the primal source of fictional narrative" and to his unquenchable boyhood love for mythological tales.

The approach of the "expert in mythology" could not have been more opportunely timed. Mann expresses his own surprise at how passionately he responded to the many essays on mythical themes Kerenyi wrote and sent him during the following years and how often he is stimulated by them to "continue spinning [his] own thread." He is especially delighted by the "correspondences" their correspondence brings into view: by Kerenyi's scholarly confirmation of his intuitive association of apparently unconnected mythic figures and by the amazing ways in which their interests continue to converge. Kerenyi sends his essay on Goethe's Walpurgis Night just as Mann has finished *The Beloved Returns;* Mann has returned to work on *Felix Krull* just prior to receiving Kerenyi's study of the trickster archetype.

For Kerenyi, too, the relationship meant festive joy: he refers again and again to the deep pleasure that each new work of Mann's provides him; he says that writing to Mann is celebration. He is continually amazed at how much Mann knows of "what is still not knowable in a scholarly form." Yet Mann's freedom to "confound" where he "as a historian of religion may not" frightens Kerenyi a little. (This side of Kerenyi is presented with ironic love in the figure of Zeitbloom, the philologist narrator of *Dr. Faustus*.) Mann teases him sometimes about his pedantry, his need to "put the seriousness of scholarship in the place of a half-playful etymology," for Mann has long since come to regard his anachronisms and his borrowings "with an amused conscience": "In the third volume, Egyptian, Jewish, Greek, even medieval elements, both linguistic and mythological, make a colorful mixture. I have increasingly come to consider the whole as a linguistic product first of all, one to which all possible spheres must pay tribute and deliver materials."

But as we read on we discover Kerenyi, too, learning to *play* as Goethe and Mann do, "with the sphere of myth and mysteries." He and Mann both celebrate this move to a "higher, freer stage." The letters make clear how oversimple it is to relegate Kerenyi to the role of supplying Mann with material: each has become a creative mythologist.

The sense of shared destiny deepens after the war when the relationship is no longer so focussed on exchanges which nurture the *Joseph* novels. They feel the power of the hermetic bond ("imperceptible to the uninitiated") between them. Both are self-designatedly humanists, appreciative of how much "the enjoyment of life is elevated, intensified, strengthened, made into a continuing celebration, both spiritual and sensual, by means of the training, the knowledge, the sense of beauty, the joyous and erudite cultivation of the eye." But there is nothing sentimental in their humanism; it springs from "a fearless knowledge of the dark, demonic, radically natural side of man". *Dr. Faustus,* too, and not only the *Joseph* novels suffused as they are with "mythical gaiety", is mythology.

The letters transmit their authors' sense of their superpersonal significance. Their old world formality, their public self-consciousness, may evoke in us some of the ironic affection Mann sometimes felt toward Kerenyi, but we are also moved (at least this is

STRUCTURAL FABULATION

An Essay on Fiction of the Future

Robert Scholes

". . . a stirring introduction to science fiction."
—*Science-Fiction Studies*
". . . this work will become a cornerstone of SF collections . . . "—*Choice*

$2.95

TIME AND MYTH

A Meditation on Storytelling as an Exploration of Life and Death

John S. Dunne

"As a meditation ought to be, it is simple and profound at once."—*The Critic*
"An excellent piece of modern meditative writing."—*Religious Studies Review*

$2.95

University of Notre Dame Press
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

true for me) to deep respect for that "singular frivolity" that expresses itself in "these fragments of two autobiographies communicately intertwined," (Mann's epigraph). The correspondence is evidence of how mythology may be humanized and humanizing—and of the deepest kind of relationship between two "creative spirits": how each can be muse to the other's genius.

Christine Downing is chairwoman of the Religious Studies Department at San Diego State University.

The Rise of Modern Mythology, 1680-1860.

By Burton Feldman and Robert D. Richards, editors. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1972, 1975. Pp. xxvii & 564; paper $5.95.

By Gerald Larue

During the past decades burgeoning interest in mythology has prompted mythographers to look backward for historical antecedents. Many investigators do not seem to have penetrated beyond the late 19th and early 20th centuries; some simply adopt one of the current psychological or mono-myth approaches and ignore the past. This present study, a careful, well-edited volume, provides selections from more than 80 contributors including philosophers, poets, theologians, composers, historians, anthropologists and, of course, mythographers. The selections demonstrate clearly that almost every present day approach to myth was foreshadowed more than 100 years ago.

Contents are grouped in three time periods: the Earlier Eighteenth Century, the Later Eighteenth Century, and the Nineteenth Century to 1860. Within the last section, subdivisions include: German Romanticism and Myth, German Romantic Mythology and India, English Romanticism and Myth, French Romanticism and Myth, Victorian Popular Mythology, and American Romanticism and Myth. A succinct statement providing both a setting and relevant background information prefaces each division and each individual writing.

The editorial aims as stipulated in the Introduction are: (i) "to show that contemporary mythologizing is an indivisible part of a tradition," (ii) "to demonstrate that this early modern work on myth is worth studying for its own sake," (iii) to show that the period and writers "constitute a watershed in which radically new views of myth emerged." There can be no question that the editors fulfill their intentions. They readily acknowledge that sections could have been expanded and that the field of coverage might be widened. As a sampling that presses the reader to explore particular authors in greater depth, the book is representative, informative, and useful. Some texts appear in English for the first time. The excellent bibliography provides a mine of resource materials. To suggest additions would be pedantic.

For those who have engaged in an historiographic approach to myth there will be few surprises. As one might expect, many writers center on Greco-Roman mythology. Nevertheless in the 17th century John Spencer of Corpus Christi College in Cambridge considered relevant Egyptian as well as Greco-Roman materials in interpreting biblical law. The discovery of the Rosetta stone and the deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphics in the 19th century which immensely broadened understanding of Egyptian thought and heightened interest in Near Eastern myth is reflected. Similarly, widening concern for myths of other cultures becomes evident in this anthology.

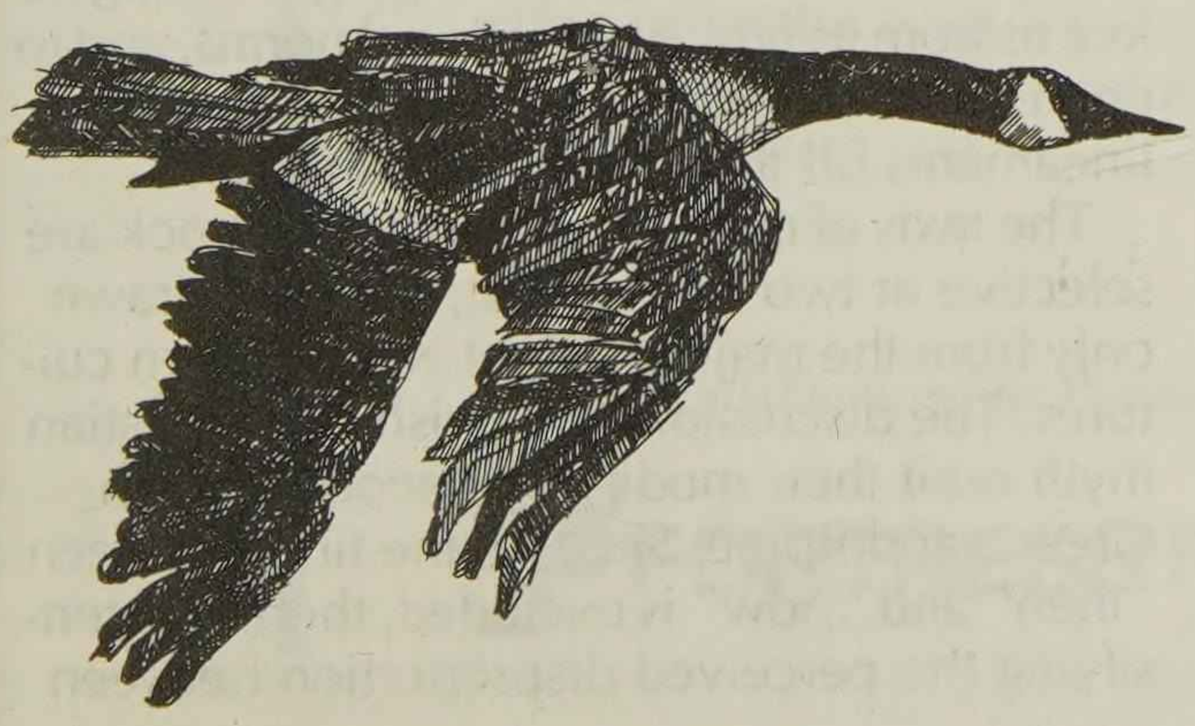
Obviously, as Mircea Eliade notes in the Foreword, what is now called for is a companion volume dealing with the important developmental period in myth studies following 1860. Conveniently, Eliade in the Foreward and the editors in their Introduction provide the outline for such a volume.

Apart from the obvious contributions this volume makes to the study of myth by providing sources of 17th to 19th century thought, there are what might be termed "implicit suggestions" concerning myth studies. First, there emerges a warning against embracing any single approach to myth as the one way of interpreting and understanding. Those who tend to follow, for example, Freudian or Jungian or Marxist or whatever approaches singly, often provide important insights. But if the approach is singular, providing only one angle of vision, the results can be limited and limiting. This volume, embracing approaches of those involved in a variety of disciplines suggests strengths ensuing from awareness of differing ways of studying and interpreting myth.

The second implicit suggestion is that it is possible to become too passively phenom-

enological in the approach to myth, to be too concerned with descriptive methodology and to avoid placing myth under the judgment of history and reason. Pierre Bayle in the 17th century, and others like him in subsequent years did not hesitate to ridicule absurdities in mythic thought. Descriptive, interpretive and evaluative approaches were employed, and although one might not agree with Bayle's moral biases and judgments nor follow his excessive use of denigrating adjectives, he raises significant questions about the human (or superhuman) values implicit in the Jupiter myths. Because myths function paradigmatically, as Eliade has so often pointed out, the evaluative issue is not socially irrelevant. In the Foreword he notes that we have become aware "that in archaic and traditional cultures the myth represents a sacred and *true* story, and constitutes the exemplary model for all significant human activities. Thus only recently has one been able to speak of the *truth* of the myth, that is, of its meaning, function, and power, while acknowledging its fictional character on the plane of cosmic or historical realities." The "truth" in the myth exists only for the accepting group that experiences its integrating potential. What Eliade says about archaic myth applies also to our own environment. Because we belong to an age of both hard and soft persuasiveness in advertising, politics, religion, and almost everything else, the use of rational criticism despite limitations of time, space, knowledge, etc., becomes increasingly important. Ancient myths that still function in our culture must come under critical evaluation. Feldman and Richardson are to be congratulated on compiling an anthology of writings that not only provides important resources for the study of mythographic history but functions to alert us to present-day issues of approach and evaluation.

Gerald Larue is Professor of Biblical History and Archaeology at the University of Southern California and author of Ancient Myth & Modern Man.



Longing for Darkness: Kamante's Tales From Out of Africa.

Collected by Peter Beard. With Photographs and Captions by Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975. Unpaged. $19.95.

By Jane Yolen

She was Hemingway's favorite author and, if we are to believe the excesses of the book's afterword, Jacqueline Onassis's, too. By any judgment, Isak Dinesen is one of the handful of women writers to sit in any author's pantheon, perhaps the *only* woman writer.

She was concerned with the root processes of life, the tales that make up both the private mythologies of individual creative artists and the public mythologies we share. She once said in an interview that "The fairy tale should be a serious statement about our existence" and tried to fashion her own life like a fairy tale. To some, Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen was merely an eccentric, to others a human being whose life was just that serious statement.

Her stories were most often based on the fairy-tale mode but close to the German Romantics in mood. Yet a significant portion of her work—indeed some say the best—were the African reminiscences, essay/stories of her days in Kenya. Hemingway's favorite of her books, which he mentioned by name in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, was "Out Of Africa."

One character moves in and out of the chapters of that book like an African chorus: Kamante. Kamante was Baroness Blixen's major-domo on the Karen Coffee Farm in Kenya, her go-between with the other natives, and her friend. She had saved him from a rather painful and debilitating disease when he was a child, and he followed her throughout her African days.

When the Blixens' marriage and then later the farm failed, and Denys Finch-Hatton was killed in a plane crash, Karen Blixen came back to Europe unhappily and there, to keep herself spiritually alive, created the persona of Isak Dinesen and the stories for which Dinesen is justly famous.

Kamante stayed in Africa, of course, though not on the old farm. He survived the emergence of Kenya into nationhood and was rediscо-

vered in 1962 by Peter Beard, a young photographer who was one of Isak Dinesen's admirers and protégés. Beard kept after Kamante for many years to record his own reminiscences of those days on the Karen Farm. This Kamante did, in Swahili, and they were translated and set down by his sons, for the old man had never learned to write.

"Longing For Darkness" collects those arduously recalled stories and Isak Dinesen's retold Aesopian fables filtered through African eyes. They have been reproduced just as they were set down—on lined copybook paper, mis-spelled (Finch-Hatton is rendered Pinja-Hatern, for example), and decorated with Kamante's own primitive drawings. Old snapshots of the farm, its inhabitants and visitors, plus newer, art photographs by Beard, complement the text. It is a picture not of Kamante and Africa today nor of the African soul as Dinesen herself in her romantic view would have wanted it, but the looking back of an old African servant on a life no longer led. It is a picture from below-stairs, sometimes in agreement with the baroness's memoirs, sometimes widely at variance. It is a picture set down in a shorthand that is difficult to decode without the background of Isak Dinesen's work.

One assumes that the decision to photograph the copybook and reproduce it as written was an artistic rather than a political one. And at a remove, this is a handsome, idiosyncratic, lush coffee-table book. Yet the result, on closer inspection, is strangely condescending towards the unschooled natives who laboriously wrote it out. It is a kind of intellectual colonialism. Just so, rereading Isak Dinesen's "Out Of Africa" one is occasionally jarred by her aristocratic European judgments of the "natives," jarred even as one is overwhelmed by her vivid prose and her startling insights, the breadth of her erudition and imagery.

"Longing For Darkness" is at once beautiful and disappointing, moving, and irritating. It is, first and foremost, a family album. And for those of us who love Isak Dinesen's work, it is a welcome concordance to her two classically splendid volumes "Out of Africa" and "Shadows in the Grass." But it cannot and it does not stand alone.

Jane Yolen is the author of many books of literary fairy tales. Her collection The Girl Who Cried Flowers and Other Tales *was nominated for the National Book Award.*

Ancient Myth and Modern Man.

By Gerald A. LaRue. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1975. Pp. 240. $4.95, paper.

By Barbara Samuelsen Yoshioka

Ancient Myth and Modern Man is a then-and-now-book. Then—the gods enlivened the human; now—they deaden it. Myths are "what the gods and goddesses do in their own realm and embraces what they do in the world of men."

Then—their revelatory prescriptions for the human provided an "understanding of life . . . as the relationship between the totality of body, mind, spirit, and the world." This relational "structure or order" was itself a comprehensive "status quo" of authoritative norms explaining "why life is as it is and what man's significance is." Now, we no longer experience the unifying embrace of the gods and goddesses. The explanatory power of ancient myth fails us. Why?

Though "myth supports existing social structure, patterns of belief and conduct," it also "tends to program attitudes of individuals and groups to encourage an uncritical acceptance of the established norms of a particular society." Myth is perceived to be culture-bound, conservative, and resistant to change. It simply is unable to embrace the rapidly changing historical human self-understanding. We who are no longer "uncritical" suffer from restrictive, internalized, ancient mythic norms. The new in our now was "unforeseen by ancient mythographers."

The deleterious consequences of this inherited mythic programming are played out in our personal and collective tragedies (e.g., racism, sexism, chauvinism, war, the rape of the human in the name of absent gods). Ancient myth no longer explains us to ourselves, nor does it provide us a healing structure of wholeness. *Ancient Myth and Modern Man* attempts to identify our harmful mythic programming, to free us from its now disfunctional norms, and to open us to "new myth" whose prospective lineaments fill the concluding chapter.

The texts of myth examined in this book are selective at two levels. First, they are drawn only from the major ancient Near Eastern cultures. The discussions of Jewish and Christian myth omit their modifying encounter with Greece and Rome. Second, the time between "then" and "now" is excluded, thereby intensifying the perceived disproportion between

ancient myth and modern individuals for whom this myth is disfunctional.

Because the interpretive principle of this book is the explanatory function of myth, the author subdivides myths into six categories of explanation: cosmological myths, societal myths, identity myths, eschatological myths, death of god myths, and future myths. These become the respective chapters, despite the author's contention that actually "all myths are identity myths." Within this categorical framework, Larue tells myths in terms of their functional relevance for ancient man, their residual modern influence (e.g., ancient rites of passage are now no more than high school graduation ceremonies, funerary words, etc.), and their incapacity to fulfill our passionate need for new explanatory myths.

"Future myth," the focus of the last chapter, envisages individuals having overcome their internal mythic censor and its metaphors of "the establishment," "the system," and the "status quo." Its soteriology centers around an as yet unnamed god whose metaphor is "metamorphosis" and whose presence is our "kaleidoscope of experience." The prospect of future myth is a god "who encourages man to rejoice in the 'now' . . . in feeling, responding, and existing without the lurking insecurity of evaluation, judgment, and rewards and punishments in some distant afterworld." This is the shape of humanity stripped of its ancient insecurity.

Those for whom the explanatory approach to myth is satisfying will find Larue's account an able rendering of our present perplexity as well as an ample elaboration of his central theme: "Without the gods, the myths are no longer myths." Those who find in myths something more profound and perdurable had best seek elsewhere.

Barbara Samuelsen Yoshioka, a contributor to Radical Religion *and other journals, is a participant in the "Myth and History" section of the American Academy of Religion.*

The Gods.

By Alain. Translated from the French by Richard Pevear. New York: New Directions, 1974. Pp. 186. $8.95; paper $3.95.

By Thomas Moore

If a believer, a philosopher, and a poet were

CAVE NOTES

First Reflections on Sense and Spirit by Robert E. Meagher

"Robert Meagher's book is a humanist's book par excellence. He has re-thought some of the great classical texts within the context of modern experience without cheapening them, giving them new significance and beauty. The personal quality of his thought, its freedom from jargon, its depth and clarity give this book a value for readers rare in this domain that bridges literature and philosophy."

GERMAINE BRÉE,
Kenan Professor of Humanities,
Wake Forest University.

Available from the Publisher or your local bookseller.

FORTRESS PRESS 2900 Queen Lane Philadelphia 19129

to write a volume on the nature of the gods and goddesses, I would first read the poet. The believer, one within the fold of a particular deity, might well tend toward the expression of sentiment and literalism, while the philosopher might rationalize the gods into airy concepts. I would expect the poet to explore the faces of the gods, preserving their appearances, respecting the metaphorical nature of religious expression.

In *The Gods* Alain is foremost the poet. He explores the environs and elements of religion as if these were images from a dream. He traces them toward their roots, follows associated images, captures the subtle tones of feelings they evoke. He probes the human experience of elements universally associated with religious experience: woods and gardens, the seasons, darkness, the hearth and memories of the dead, land and sea, animals, the city, games and stories. His concern for images and his insight into their meaning pulls the reader by power of Alain's own imagery into a whirlpool of reverie about the religious significance of elemental human experiences.

But Alain is also a philosopher proposing a theory about the nature of religion as well as a hierarchy of values for the fundamental structures of religious consciousness. The outline of his theory is imaginative, provicative, and poetic. Religion, says Alain, rests upon four fundamental experiences personified in Aladdin, Pan, Jupiter, and Christophorus. Aladdin is the Child in each of us recalling a delightful way of life when a word or gesture, an "open sesame" or a rub on a lamp, magically brought us food, opened doors, solved our problems. Pan is the world of nature in all its powers. Jupiter reigns over the city, effectively channeling political power toward an ideal of human excellence. And Christopher, one who bears spirit in its purity, symbolizes the highest form of religion.

The choice of these four archetypal figures promises a rich exposition of the role of religion in culture, but unfortunately Alain is also a believer. Paradoxically, the poet-philosopher, so sensitive to metaphor and aware of profound meaning in everyday experience, practices a religion of materialistic humanism. Thus, he views the Child in religion as a longing for a lost paradise of dependency, an insult to human labor. He praises the physicist for banishing from nature Pan and all the other gods and spirits. He identifies Jupiter and the other Homeric gods as poetic expressions of human experiences; they are merely "moments of man." Only a religion of the spirit, symbolized by Christopher, does he find genuine, though he warns that such a pure religion does not exist.

Although subtle insights are woven into Alain's criticisms of various religious forms, much is lost in defense of humanism and materialism. Indeed, the Child in us can long to be inert and unaware, irresponsible perhaps, and this tendency can taint religion; however, the Child is also a positive force. It is ever open to new possibilities, knowing that the world holds mysteries and powers we cannot fabricate at will. Perhaps nature became more explicable and useful once the spirits were chased out by science, but the bond between nature and man seems to have been weakened. Pan, with his goat feet and rustic dance, witnesses to the fact that the whole world is alive and that nature, man, and the gods enjoy a powerful relationship with each other. The gods and goddesses of Homer, too, are more than the projections of human experience. They personify forces in nature and powers so deep within ourselves as to transcend our individual will and consciousness.

Alain observes that "the religion of the spirit is better preserved from impurity by its images than by arguments." He is at his best at the level of imagery, and the poetic beginnings of his philosophy of religion are enticing and still promising. His belief in a humanism without gods, however, is essentially an argument, and, as he said, by argument religion of the spirit is undone.

NOTICES

Wellspring: On the Myth and Source of Culture.

By Robert Plant Armstrong. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.
Pp. xiv & 153.

There is one great idea in this book, an idea of extraordinary importance, but there is such a good deal of stuff as to make it hard to get at.

The first two-thirds of the book is taken up

Cornell University Press

Symbol Myth and Ritual Series Editor: VICTOR TURNER

New in cloth . . .

African Apostles

Ritual and Conversion in the Church of John Maranke

By BENNETTA JULES-ROSETTE. This absorbing book offers a detailed ethnographic study of the Maranke Apostles, one of the largest independent churches in Africa. The author, a young sociologist who was converted to the Church during her field work in Zaire, gives a vivid and compelling account of her experience and places it within a coherent conceptual framework. Writing from the dual perspective of participant and observer, she emphasizes the close link between symbolism and ritual, and suggests new ways of studying religious groups and social movements. Cloth, $17.50

New in cloth and paperback . . .

Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual

By VICTOR TURNER. Drawing on two and a half years of fieldwork, Victor Turner offers two thorough ethnographic studies of Ndembu revelatory ritual and divinatory techniques, with running commentaries on symbolism by a variety of Ndembu informants. Acknowledging his indebtedness to Ndembu ritualists for alerting him to the theoretical relevance of symbolic action in understanding human societies, Professor Turner suggests that ritual symbols, like botanists' stains, enable us to detect and trace the movement of social processes and relationships that often lie below the level of direct observation. Cloth, $17.50; Paper, $4.95

Now available in paperback . . .

Symbols *Public and Private*

By RAYMOND FIRTH. "A comprehensive, well-researched, scholarly work examining manifold aspects of the 'symbolic idiom' used widely in modern cultural anthropology."—*Choice.* "A compendium of information—historical, analytical, and theoretical—concerning symbolism. . . . An important book."
—*Reviews in Anthropology* Paper, $4.95

Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors

Symbolic Action in Human Society

By VICTOR TURNER. "One of the most imaginative commentators in this field here adds another contribution in brilliant color. . . . His approach, as in earlier works, is highly individual, developing even further his own special vocabulary for key themes."—*Times Literary Supplement* Paper, $4.95

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS ITHACA AND LONDON

with a reworking of the author's idea of the work of art as "the affecting presence." It's a pretentious notion, and it makes this the most pretentious part of the presentation. It may be that anthropologists are as obtuse about art as he suggests. If so, the book may help them. Certainly it comes as no news to art people that many works of art are powerful presences and that their power affects the course of the life they are a part of.

Art criticism has built up a rich and subtle literature on this subject: to speak as he has, Mr. Armstrong ought to have noted what others have said, not only because it is circumspect to do so but because it would have substantially improved his own discussion. He seems not to known Suzanne Langer's basic distinction between "sign" and "symbol," a confusion which vitiates his entire, rather gratuitous attack on her. Yet "symbol" is one of the key terms in discussions of this subject ("affecting presence" is less useful than Cassirer's more serious equivalent, "symbolic form"). Being unaware of the methodology and achievements of critical art history, he substantiates his thesis with analyses of several Yoruba works that are very well done but no better than a good graduate student's work.

Part Two contains the great idea, which would indeed revolutionize anthropology. He asks with the insistent wonder of childhood (and the new simplicity of language suggests he has come home), "What is it like to be somebody else?" The answer is humanistic anthropology.

There is at the root of culture a "mythoform," "a cultural myth which is without specific content but which has a particularity of form and process." The mythoform constitutes our true being, and the true being our culture. It is "the fertility principle of consciousness." Culture is the enactment of this myth. The art work is its richest, most powerful, most effective and affective expression.

Thus it is not by describing a society's artifacts, institutions, or structural systems that anthropology can get at culture, but by penetrating to the generating myth or "mythoform" by way of the work of art, which is, finally, the being of a culture.

Armstrong weakens his own fine idea by suggesting that Lévi-Strauss is working the same vein. His principle is subtler and richer than Lévi-Strauss's reductionism. I hope he will protect it, clarify it, and work to make it effective.

John W. Dixon, Jr.

Beginnings Without End.

By Sam Keen. New York: Harper & Row, 1975. Pp. xi & 131. $6.95.

I saw Sam Keen at a "playshop" about four months before the release of *Beginnings Without End*. "You'll like the new book," he said.

I don't. It is clichéed, smug, redundant (with leftovers to from *To a Dancing God*) and sophomoric. Keen is so afraid we won't "get it" that every play on wor(l)ds is a parenthesized or s/lashed. The book represents a classical case of Jungian inflation or identification with the archetype, which results in a personalization for Sam Keen alone of the myth of the rebirth, of dying and rising along with the earth, which, by rights, belongs to us all. The trivialization of the myth by means of cute word games robs us of our awareness that the meaning of the myth is universal.

On the other hand: Keen is much more likeable in this book than in previous ones, possibly because he describes here places we have all been. There is a poignant account of a return to his mother which reminds us that we are inextricably tied to our mothers even though we can't yet go home again. I wonder though when Sam will be able to play the story of middle American Calvinism, by which, ironically, he feels accused of taking himself too seriously.

Keen has changed his mind, and this change surfaces most clearly in his chapter on "Limits." At last he has recognized that playing fields have boundaries and the self is not one big, amorphous garden of earthly delights. Rather, it is a community. We are many-centered, polytheistic, and happily schizophrenic. Our name is legion. Keen has provided us with a way out of the bind in which Yeats put us; we are no longer forced to choose between perfection of the life or of the work. Instead we can have it all. Each of us has many stories to tell and all the myths to live.

In Keen's own dying and rising he has rediscovered body, earth, and matter (if not matrix) and allowed us once again to become a multi-mythed folk. We are, each one of us, six or more characters in search of an author, and Sam Keen has, by sharing his own myths of endings and beginnings, delivered us up to becoming our own tale-bearers.

Adele B. McCollum

From Cambridge University Press

MODERN FANTASY
by C. N. Manlove

A fascinating discussion of the works of five masters of the genre: Kingsley's *Water Babies;* George MacDonald's fairy tales and romances; C. S. Lewis' *Perelandra;* Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings;* and Peake's *Titus* trilogy. The author shows the diversity of fantasy and the varying success with which each of the authors realized a fully imaginative vision.
$18.95

THE ORDINARY AND THE FABULOUS
Second Edition
by Elizabeth Cook

Elizabeth Cook has written a new preface and brought her bibliography up to date to include such books as *Watership Down,* making more valuable than ever her classic work on myths, legends and fairy tales in children's literature. "And how well she does it, comparing different versions readily available, with interesting and informative comments . . ."

–Times Literary Supplement

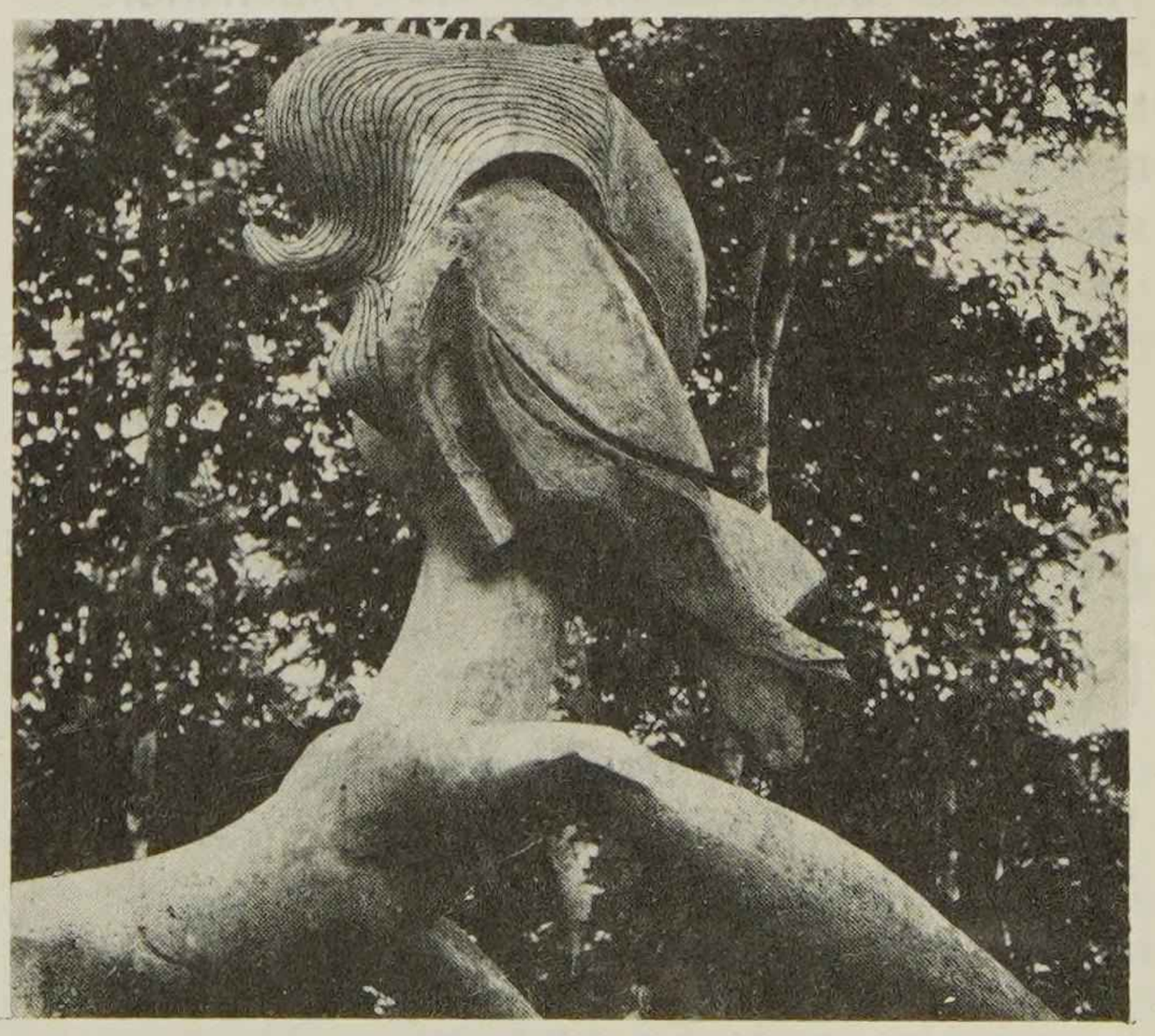
Hardbound $13.50 Paperback $4.95

RETHINKING SYMBOLISM
by Dan Sperber

In this original and witty book a young French anthropologist refutes the seminological conception typified by Victor Turner, the Freudian theory of symbolism, and the structuralist conception of Levi-Strauss. Then he challenges opponents and readers with his new theory of symbolic interpretations which he illustrates with examples from his studies of the Dorze of Ethiopia.
Hardbound $13.75 Paperback $4.95

THE RETURN OF THE GODS
by Ulli Beier

The Yoruba religion, its beliefs and its rituals are seen through the eyes of Austrian artist Susanne Wenger. Here is the story of her life as a priestess of a Yoruba cult, her recreation of the Oshun grove shrines, her work with local artists to bring about a revival of the religion — all told by Ulli Beier, well-known authority on Yoruba art and literature. Handsomely illustrated with photographs of Wenger sculpture and that of native artists.
$14.95



Cambridge University Press · 32 East 57th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022

Indian America.

By Jamake Highwater. Illustrated by Asa Battles. Fodor's Modern Guides. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1975. Pp. xxiii & 431. $10.95.

Highwater presents a guide book to Indian America at several levels which are interwoven throughout the book. First, *Indian America* is a book loaded with practical travel information. Highwater offers planning and packing suggestions, facts on transportation, food, lodging, and he notes with recommendations all the things to see and do, when, where and how much. The bulk of this information is presented in sections on major geographic areas. Second, *Indian America* is a sketch of Indian history focusing on the presentation of the Indian-European encounter from the Indian point of view. Third, *Indian America* is a presentation of Indian culture including arts and crafts, dress, houses, manners and customs, language, and religion. The second and third levels of the book are adequate treatments for their intended purpose, but Highwater's concern, it seems, is more to present the Indian point of view than it is to present a thorough or broadly representative account of Indian history and culture. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, *Indian America* is the attempt by an American Indian to evaluate his rich heritage in the context of contemporary America. The kind of sensitivity and thoughtfulness with which Highwater meets this task has too rarely come to light in published works. The book presents Indian America to non-Indians and engages a cultural exchange, but at its base it is also for Indians. As Highwater lucidly observes, "how much more strange and difficult it is for us, we who are taking renewed pride in something so perilous as a lost identity; we too do not really understand what it is to be Indian."

Sam D. Gill

LOKA: A Journal from Naropa Institute.

Edited by Rick Fields. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1975. Pp. 144. Paper $4.00.

This attractive, lavishly-illustrated, 8½ × 11 soft-back is an offering of the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, founded by the exiled Tibetan Buddhist lama Chogyam Trungpa. The Institute continues to teach the difficult but profound spiritual techniques of the Land of Snows, but has interested itself in other frontier areas of mind and soul as well. Indeed, it seems that whenever the most exciting borderlands of the contemporary meeting of science, spirituality, art, music, and poetry are discussed nowadays, sooner or later the name of the Naropa Institute comes up. This fascinating volume helps explain why. Here, largely based on lectures or seminars at the Institute, are words on such topics as tantra, the way of tea, physics and Buddhism, and theatre. *Loka* presents also a part of a new translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* a talk by Allen Ginsberg, an interview with John Cage, a play based on the Heart Sutra, and much else. Some is terrific, some less so, but all is vibrant with the vitality inherent in the spiritual and artistic creativity of people one immediately knows are really alive and really free.

Robert S. Ellwood, Jr.

Structural Fabulation: An Essay on Fiction of the Future.

By Robert Scholes. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975. Pp. xi & 111. $6.95; paper $2.95.

In 1951 William Faulkner said in his speech accepting the Nobel Prize, "The poet's voice . . . can be one of the props, the pillars to help him [man] endure and prevail." Robert Scholes is echoing this theme today: "If there is any hope at all, it will depend on the ability of our men and women of imagination to make us see and feel the reality of our situation and the consequences of our present actions. Truly, where there is no vision, the people perish."

The first two chapters of this book trace, from a structuralist point of view, the present state of fictional criticism and the decline, in the 20th Century, of realism in fiction. Based on the premise that: "All systems of notation offer us models of reality rather than descriptions of it," Scholes surveys the present situation in "structural fabulation" (his term for science fiction) in the third chapter, and in the fourth chapter he analyses the fiction of Ursula Le Guin, whom he calls "The Good Witch of the West"—one of the best of the new SciFi writers.

Agreeing with Gerald Heard that science fiction is creative myth-making, Scholes has produced a fine analysis of the current state of

fiction and an interesting apology for science fiction, a genre deserving more critics of his abilities. It is much too rich and complex a book to be ignored by anyone who likes science fiction, or, for that matter, by anyone who is interested in the directions of present fiction and criticism.

Ralph Church

Encounter with an Angry God: Recollections of My Life with John Peabody Harrington.

By Carobeth Laird. Morongo Indian Reservation, Banning, California: Malki Museum Press, 1975. Pp. xii & 190. $8.95.

Carobeth Laird's story of her marriage to legendary anthropologist John Harrington bears comparison to Hannah Tillich's *From Time to Time*. Both women were enamored of genius and saw marriage to the great man as entrance to the higher reaches of learning barred to women. Both were to experience rude shocks when they realized the gods they married had feet of clay. Hannah Tillich found that her Paulus saw her as an embodiment of eros, that dynamic and demonic principle of which he wrote in his theology, never as the real woman she was. Carobeth Laird found that John Harrington had not married a woman, but an assistant with a perfect ear for languages to whom he could entrust the less important aspects of his research on American Indian languages and customs.

Laird's is an engrossing tale of trips through the deserts of the Southwest in a Ford motorcar (which she drove) with a man who was so out of touch with material reality that he was reluctant to squander so much as a dollar of the money that could be used to pay informants on food, clothing, baths, or lodging. Laird herself appears as a naive girl who gradually learns her true desires. Harrington appears as a disembodied spirit whose sole lust is for information. Laird suggests that Harrington's "genius" might have come from his painful inability to enjoy ordinary life. Harrington calls to mind Kafka's hunger artist who finally admits his devotion to his "art" came from never having found any food he liked.

Luckily for her, Laird realises her mistake and after six years divorces Harrington to marry George Laird, a Chemehuevi Indian who was originally her paid informant. George Laird offers the love for nature, soil, children, the spiritual, and Carobeth herself, which Harrington knew nothing of.

The stories of Laird and Tillich suggest the existence of a largely unwritten genre of stories of wives of great and not so great men. Dorothea Brooke of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is a perfect representation of the type. A woman more adventurous, more intellectually curious, possibly more spiritual than her female peers, meets a great man or his illusion. She imagines this man as her key to the spiritual riches and possibly also the glory of the tradition he professes—blindly ignoring all evidence which might suggest that the man himself is lacking in the very humanity to which she aspires through association with him.

But the suddenly prolific Ms. Laird is now publishing her own considerable research, and readers can look forward to her forthcoming books, *The Chemeheuvis* and *Chemeheuvi Myths*.

Carol Christ

CREDITS

Page 11 Courtesy of the British Museum

Page 12 Courtesy of the British Museum

Page 15 Plan of an Aztec Temple. Courtesy of the British Museum

Page 16 Pre-Hispanic Codex. Depicts the voyage of Venus into the underworld.

Page 23 Propitiatory Genius of a Hero, Usually Identified as the Gilgamesh. Late Assyrian period; Reign of Sargon: 721-705 B.C. Alabaster.

Page 40 "The Offering" Photograph by Edward S. Curtis, 1908. From *The Indians of North America*, 1925. Photograph courtesy of the Rare Book Division, New York Public Library.

Page 45 Tenniel, John. "Humpty Dumpty", from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. London, 1896.

Page 46 Unknown Figure of a Seeker. Western Iran, c. 3000 B.C. Copper. Height 6.8" The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Lent from The Guennol Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Alastair Martin, 1969.

Page 47 Jonah Cast Up by the Whale. Persian: Early Timurid Period XIV-XV century (ca. 1400). Gouache

on Paper, 12⅝ by 18¾ inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Joseph Pulitzer, 1933.

Page 48 Theseus Slays the Minotaur. Attic vase painting (detail). Vatican Collection.

Page 51 Courtesy of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.

Page 68 Sketch by Max Reinhardt for "Oedipus & the Sphinx", c. 1910.

Page 73 Courtesy of the New York Public Library Picture Collection.

Page 74 The chinese character "Lu" after hexagram number 56 of the *I Ching*. Original calligraphy by Professor Leon Chang, China Institute in America. "It is made after the inscription found on the 'San P'an', a bronze basin of the ninth c. B.C."

Page 81 Unknown Artist. A Dog. Ink on Silk. 14th century A.D. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Page 99 "Lord of Life"; Mexico, Huasteca Culture. Stone. Primitive Art and New World Cultures, Brooklyn Museum.

Page 99 "Lord of Death". Back view of above piece.

FORTHCOMING:

Victor W. Turner's *The Bite of the Hunter's Ghost*

Narcissus by Thomas W. Moore

"Equus" and the Death of Psychiatry by John A. Miles, Jr.

Daniel C. Noel's *Taking Castaneda Seriously*

The Popol Vuh, an epicycle

Myth & Transformation; A Conversation with Joseph Campbell

PROFILES

Edward Edinger is Board Chairman of the C.G. Jung Training Institute in New York. A practicing psychotherapist with an M.D. from Yale, he has lectured on analytical psychology at the New School for Social Research and Union Theological Seminary and is the author of *Ego and Archetype: Individuation and the Religious Function of the Psyche.*

Mircea Eliade, the world's foremost expert in the study of comparative religion, teaches at th University of Chicago and edits the journal *History of Religions*. He is currently embarked on a comprehensive history of religions "from the birth of Adam to the death of God," to which he expects to devote the balance of his career.

Barbara G. Myerhoff teaches Anthropology at the University of Southern California whe she has won awards for outstanding teaching. Her many publications include *Peyote Hunt: The Sacred Journey of the Huichol Indians,* a National Book Award nominee, and *Symbol and Politics in Communal Ideology,* a new book co-edited with Sally Falk Moore.

Jacob Needleman, well known for his book *The New Religions,* has recently published tw new books: *Sacred Tradition and Present Need* (edited with Dennis Lewis) and *A Sense of the Cosmos*. He teaches Philosophy at San Francisco State University and is editor of Penguin Metaphysical Library.

Barre Toelken is editor of the *Journal of American Folklore*. An expert in Native American traditions and folklore, he is especially concerned with discriminating the authentic from the bogus in the current flood of literature on Native Americans. He teaches in the English Department at the University of Oregon.

P.L. Travers, the creator of *Mary Poppins,* has had many years' experience lecturing and writing about myth, legend, folklore, and classic fables. She has been writer-in-residence at Smith College and at Radcliffe. Her latest book, *About the Sleeping Beauty,* was published this fall by McGraw-Hill.