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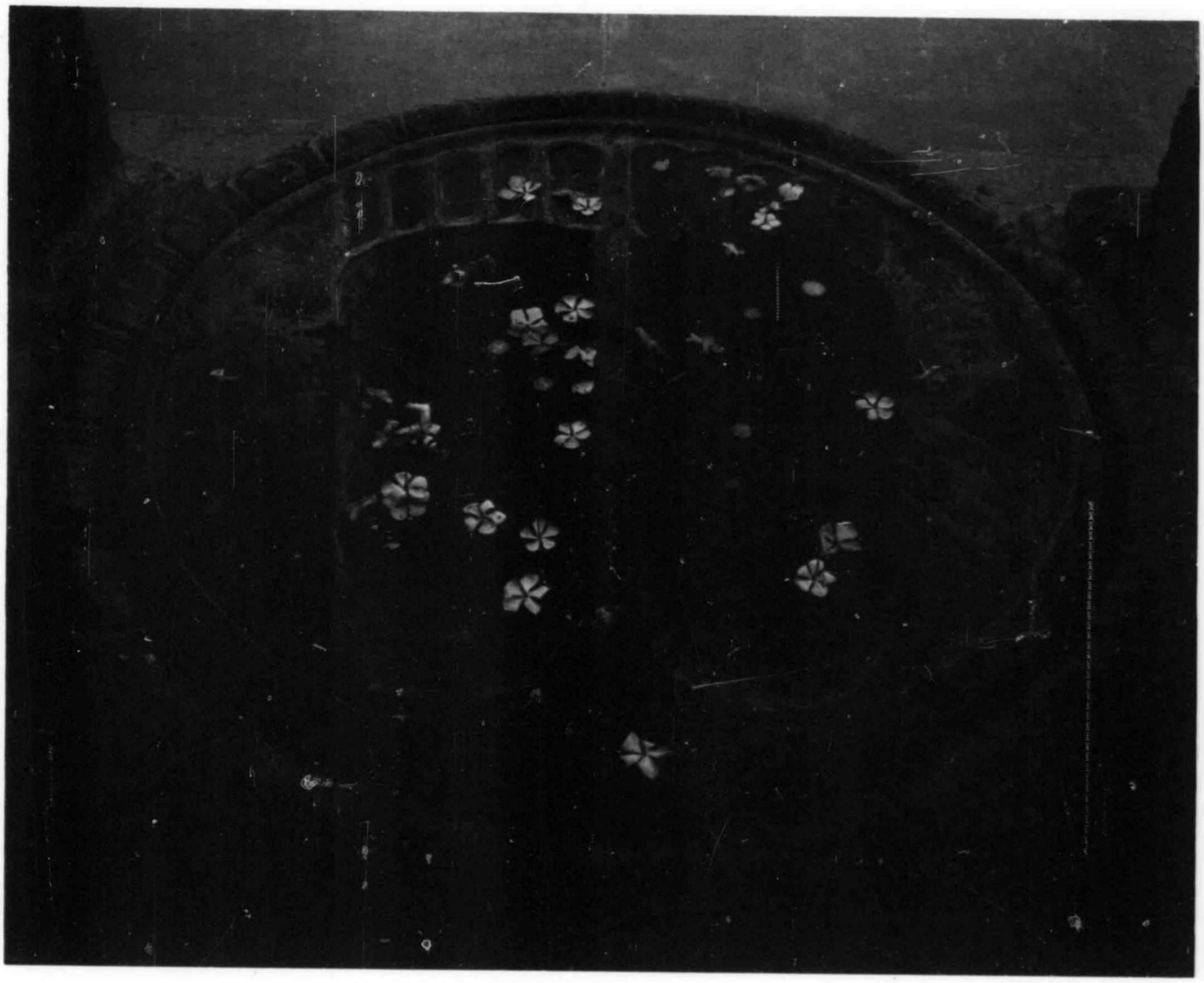

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THE WITNESS

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Designer Gloria C. Ortiz
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Consulting Editors Joseph Epes Brown, Thomas Buckley, Frederick Franck, Lobsang Lhalungpa, John Loudon, Barre Toelken, P.L. Travers

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Cover: Buddha's Footprints, *India, 1979. Photograph by Linda Connor.*

FOCUS

ARJUNA: And now, Krishna, I wish to learn about Prakriti and Brahman, the Field and the Knower of the Field. What is knowledge? What is it that has to be known?

SRI KRISHNA: This body is called the Field, because a man sows seeds of action in it, and reaps their fruits. Wise men say that the Knower of the Field is he who watches what takes place within this body.

Recognize me as the Knower of the Field in every body. I regard discrimination between Field and Knower as the highest kind of knowledge.

Now listen, and I will tell you briefly what the Field is; its nature, modifications and origin. I will tell you also who the Knower is, and what are his powers.

The sages have expressed these truths variously, in many hymns, and in aphorisms on the nature of Brahman, subtly reasoned and convincing in their arguments.

Briefly I name them:
First, Prakriti
Which is the cosmos
In cause unseen
And visible feature;
Intellect, ego;
Earth, water and ether,
Air and fire;
Man's ten organs
Of knowing and doing,
Man's mind also;
The five sense-objects—
Sound in its essence,
Essence of aspect,
Essence of odor,
Of touch and of tasting;
Hate and desire,

And pain and pleasure;
Consciousness, lastly,
And resolution;
These, with their sum
Which is blent in the body:
These make the Field
With its limits and changes....

Now I shall describe That which has to be known, in order that its knower may gain immortality. That Brahman is beginningless, transcendent, eternal. He is said to be equally beyond what is, and what is not.

Everywhere are His hands, eyes, feet;
His heads and His faces:
This whole world is His ear; He exists,
encompassing all things;
Doing the tasks of each sense, yet Himself devoid of the senses:
Standing apart, He sustains: He is free from the gunas but feels them.
He is within and without: He lives in the live and the lifeless:
Subtle beyond mind's grasp; so near us, so utterly distant:
Undivided, He seems to divide into objects and creatures;
Sending creation forth from Himself, He upholds and withdraws it;
Light of all lights, He abides beyond our ignorant darkness;
Knowledge, the one thing real we may study or know, the heart's dweller.

Now I have told you briefly what the Field is, what knowledge is, and what is that one Reality which must be known. When my devotee knows these things, he becomes fit to reach union with me....

The supreme Brahman in this body is also known as the Witness. It makes all our actions possible, and, as it were, sanctions them, experiencing all our experiences. It is the infinite Being, the supreme Atman. He who has experienced Brahman directly and known it to be other than Prakriti and the gunas, will not be reborn, no matter how he has lived his life.

Some, whose hearts are purified, realize the Atman within themselves through contemplation. Some realize the Atman philosophically, by meditating upon its independence of Prakriti. Others realize it by following the yoga of right action. Others, who do not know these paths, worship God as their teachers have taught them. If these faithfully practice what they have learned, they also will pass beyond death's power.

Know this, O Prince:
Of things created
All are come forth
From the seeming union
Of Field and Knower,
Prakriti with Brahman.
Who sees his Lord
Within every creature,
Deathlessly dwelling
Amidst the mortal:
That man sees truly.

Thus ever aware
Of the Omnipresent
Always about him,
He offers no outrage
To his own Atman,
Hides the face of God
Beneath ego no longer:
Therefore he reaches
That bliss which is highest.

Who sees all action
Ever performed
Alone by Prakriti,
That man sees truly:
The Atman is actless.

Who sees the separate
Lives of all crea[illegible]res
United in Brahman
Brought forth from Brahman,
Himself finds Brahman.

Not subject to change
Is the infinite Atman,
Without beginning,
Beyond the gunas:
Therefore, O Prince,
Though It dwells in the body,
It acts not, nor feels
The fruits of our action.

For, like the ether,
Pervading all things,
Too subtle for taint,
This Atman also
Inhabits all bodies
But never is tainted.

By the single sun
This whole world is illumined:
By its one Knower
The Field is illumined.

Who thus perceives
With the eye of wisdom
In what manner the Field
Is distinct from its Knower,
How men are made free
From the toils of Prakriti:
His aim is accomplished,
He enters the Highest.

—*Bhagavad-Gita*

FULL CIRCLE

A Readers' Forum

Dear Readers,

We feel this is an appropriate time, now that we are starting our second decade of publication, to thank you for your continuing support and to share with you our reflections about our first ten years as well as our plans for the future.

The Society for the Study of Myth and Tradition (SSMT) was established in 1974 as a not-for-profit organization to study the contemporary search for meaning, and for this purpose began publishing PARABOLA Magazine. From small beginnings, PARABOLA has steadily grown; subscriptions are now up to 14,000 and newsstand/bookstore sales amount to several thousand more. PARABOLA may be found in many institutions of higher learning—sometimes used as a textbook—and libraries, both in the United States and abroad. Reader surveys indicate our readership may be around 40,000. Back issue sales continue to be very high; many issues have been reprinted. We find this particularly encouraging as it means there is a real, continuing, and ever growing interest in what we publish.

SSMT's activities expanded in 1979 to include the presentations of lectures and symposia concerned with rituals, sacred disciplines, and oral transmission of

knowledge in various cultural and spiritual traditions. Its first event in New York was on Jewish Storytelling. Several public programs which ranged from Tibetan Music & Mythology to Native American Running were conducted at the American Museum of Natural History. A program at Boston University focused on Words of Power in the Sufi tradition, and a more recent program at The Ethical Culture Society in New York premiered a film on Thomas Merton and presented a lecture by Prof. Richard R. Niebuhr of Harvard University.

Our venture with Parabola Books is still new, but doing well. The first title of the series, *The Sons of the Wind: The Sacred Stories of the Lakota,* was launched in October, 1984 with an event in New York City on Native American Storytelling which featured two well-known storytellers, N. Scott Momaday and Joseph Bruchac. The success of *Sons of the Wind* encouraged us to publish a second book, *A Way of Working: The Spiritual Dimension of Craft,* this past January.

The activities of the SSMT, including the publication of PARABOLA, have always depended upon the generous donations of individuals and granting agencies, and upon PARABOLA readers through their subscription renewals and gift subscriptions. Although we are still operating with a deficit, it is steadily decreasing in spite of increasing costs, and we are happy to report that the New York State Council for the Arts recently has awarded us another grant, this time for two years.

There is always room for growth and improvement—among our ideas for the future is a public radio program series on fairy tales and legends for children, and possibly other programs, to feature subjects that appear in the current PARABOLA. Another thought is to produce a series of cassette recordings to preserve the rare and disappearing religious and secular music of traditional societies the world over.

We are always on the lookout for new ideas, new writers, new themes for issues: the next ones we are planning are *Mirrors; Sadness; Work; The Knight & the Hermit.* If you have any comments or suggestions, we would be very happy indeed to hear from you (which we don't do often enough—your feedback is very appreciated, and we hope to see the next Full Circle column filled with letters from you!).

With our warm wishes and thanks.

—The Publishers, Editors, and Staff of PARABOLA.

Looking Through the Wall: A Meditation on Vision

RICHARD R. NIEBUHR

Henry David Thoreau once wrote, "I begin to see . . . an object when I cease to understand it." *To understand* meant, for Thoreau, to impose our own a priori rules upon the world, thereby reducing it to conformity to our settled social patterns of thought and social habits of expectation. Since these patterns are so thoroughly ingrained, we would have to destroy them, destroy the conventions of socially sanctioned art, religion, and politics, and a good deal else as well, to make the world newly visible. But how can we accomplish this? How can we conspire against ourselves, against our society, to recognize the inestimable brilliances, the beautiful daimons that peer at us from every countenance? We would need a "new sense of the heart," as one of our Puritan ancestors put it, to vitalize our vision; we would need an "angel of the earth," to use Wallace Stevens's language, in whose sight we might "see the earth again."

In my case it has been photography of a certain kind that has offered glimpses of what lies on the farther side of socially patterned looking. Photography has been much criticized of late, partly because it has been put to such abusive and degrading uses and partly out of superficial disdain for what is not literary or painterly. When it was that I first saw the work of Lewis Hine I cannot now remember. His images have become elements of my own memory and sense of who I am. Hine began by photographing immigrants at Ellis Island in 1905 and progressed from there to photographing women, men, and children—above all, children—at work, in coal mines, in cotton mills, in glassworks factories, and in the shadows of tenements—dazed and brutalized yet beautiful survivors on the coasts of hell. He taught Paul Strand in his first use of the camera and served as the model to which Roy Stryker looked—though Stryker denied him employment—when in 1935 he formed a corps of photographers for the federal agency later called the Farm Security Administration, a group that included Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Arthur Rothstein, Ben Shahn, and many others and that gave new stature to documentary photography and ultimately to photography itself.

It is in the light radiating from their images that I have learned to be more aware of light itself. We turn toward the light, we are phototropic beings, and it is on this tropism of our nature that I meditate in the following paragraphs. Photographers write or draw with light in a camera obscura upon light-sensitive material. In their finest moments they do not write proposi-

Seville, Spain, 1933. *Henri Cartier-Bresson.*

tions; rather they write, scribble, or draw questions and enigmas in the form of human figures and faces and life-spaces, which like our thumb prints are signatures of lives lived once, never to be lived again. If you have a pathos for the real, a sense and taste for the infinite in the finite, study infinitude in the shadows that light casts.

In 1933 Henri Cartier-Bresson made a photograph of children playing in a street of Seville, one shattered by the conflict that burgeoned into the Spanish Civil War. In the immediate foreground is a thick masonry wall punctured by a gaping hole, the effect, presumably, of an artillery shell or similar explosive. Through the hole we see boisterous children (in a game of tag?) amidst rubbish littering the alley. The alley itself, picked out by the children's dancing bodies, angles away from us toward the right, into the distance; so that what we look at—though at first do not necessarily see—is an ovoid with a dark, downward shifted, pupil-like center, a countenance slightly averted from our gaze. One boy holds a hoop, another a basket, and the child nearest us scurries forward on a pair of crutches, showing in his grin his utter determination to get away from the boy who is "it." The white-grey surfaces of the battered walls and chunks of debris reflect a diffuse, monotonous light; but this bleakness fails to subdue the vibrant forms of the children.

It is with these silver-grey children of Seville that we begin our meditation.

Among the countless photographs we have seen, this one is especially compelling, because it draws us into a repetition of what, one supposes, must have been Cartier-Bresson's original response to the game that greeted him as he moved through the city. Since we are looking through the wall at the children, much as Cartier-Bresson looked through the finder of his camera, we have the sensation of sharing in a discovery and—what is more—of an impulse to identify ourselves with this life-going-on-despite-the-destruction.

Yet for its part the photograph is reticent under our gaze. It offers us not a declarative statement but rather a riddle: one fleeting instant in which the powers of life and death are arrayed in a startling, fragile truce. Hence if it "speaks" to us at all, it does so in multiple "voices," "voices" of different tenors, a fact of which we become aware as we try to transpose the visual image into propositions. We might say, for example:

Here is destruction, an evil done to flesh and blood.

And if we do not pause, that is all we will "hear" and so believe that we have understood.

But we might add:

Here is life leaping, frisking.

And the photograph sustains that reading as well as the first. It sustains both readings at once.

Similarly, we can take visual hold of the picture in various ways. We can make the gaping mouth in the wall the main path of our moving eyes and situate the children within the cavern. Then the hole portends yet more artillery shells to fall, threatening an end to the playing once and for all; we see the dance as a dance of death. Or we can choose the game as the dominant energy and regard the sinuous line of small figures as a freshet of life about to well over the lip of the cave.

Spanish Civil War, 1933. Robert Capa.

This photograph and many others made by Cartier-Bresson are canny images of life-moments that set our minds in motion. They emphasize the temporal, processive movement of vision. They trouble us and tend to estrange us, though perhaps only briefly, from our preconceptions; they draw us away from our theoretical constructions of the real by intimating how fluid are the interactions of the physical, social, and moral energies constituting our changing world.

Cartier-Bresson has named his guiding idea "the decisive moment," but there are varieties of decisive moments. A comparison of his work with Robert Capa's, his one-time associate on the staff of Magnum, helps to make this clear. Capa's best-known photograph also comes out of the Spanish Civil War and shows a "decisive moment." It is a 1936 picture of a single falling Loyalist soldier who will never rise again in this age: a dreadful synthesis of physical beauty and death. This decisive moment is an unambiguously final moment, and as such the photograph itself has no peer. In contrast, Cartier-Bresson's characteristic decisive moment is what he describes as "a small link in the sentence"; it is unfinished, and what is unfinished questions us with its hints of multiple possibilities. The photograph of the children of Seville patently has this interrogatory quality. It refuses to shed its enigmas and to explain itself to us, and therefore we have to interpret it, seeing ourselves into it as a moment of destruction about to continue in the next frame, or as a moment of life resilient, or—and this third possibility does not exclude either of the former two—as a moment that comments on the action of perceptual interpretation itself.

Another child of 1933, this time on a street in Valencia, leads us to ask first about its own expressive but puzzling posture, then about Cartier-Bresson's intention, and finally about the assumptions and habits we bring to interpretation. Is the child watching the sky for danger? Is it lost in a daydream of flying? How are the upward tilt of the face, the outstretched arms, the bent knees, and the menacing scarred wall to be combined by us? Does this decisive moment have the physiognomy of play or of fear? How do we decide? How ought we to decide?

A 1953 picture of a midnight mass, made in Scanno, Italy provokes questions of a similar kind. The backs of these old priests are turned toward the altar and their faces are undecipherable masks. Have the years spent in the office of the rite inured them to its holiness? Or are they under the spell of its solemnity?

Perceiving is taking hold by sense and intellect of what presents itself to us. These photographs interrogate us and ask how we take visual hold of what they give. They disturb and absorb our gaze, until we recognize that the pictured masses and energies have to do with ourselves also, yet not with ourselves alone but with ourselves in this surprising, streaming world. To the degree these photographed decisive moments create that effect in us, they make us more conscious participants, if not in Cartier-Bresson's expert act of vision, then certainly in the vision entrusted to us. They heighten our awareness that much of our visual response to what is given issues not from our eyes alone but also from other latitudes of our being with which our sight and sister senses are connected: from our cardiac regions, from our *phrenes* or midriffs, where Homeric poetry located feeling and thought. The relation of our seeing to

Valencia, Spain, 1933. *Henri Cartier-Bresson*.

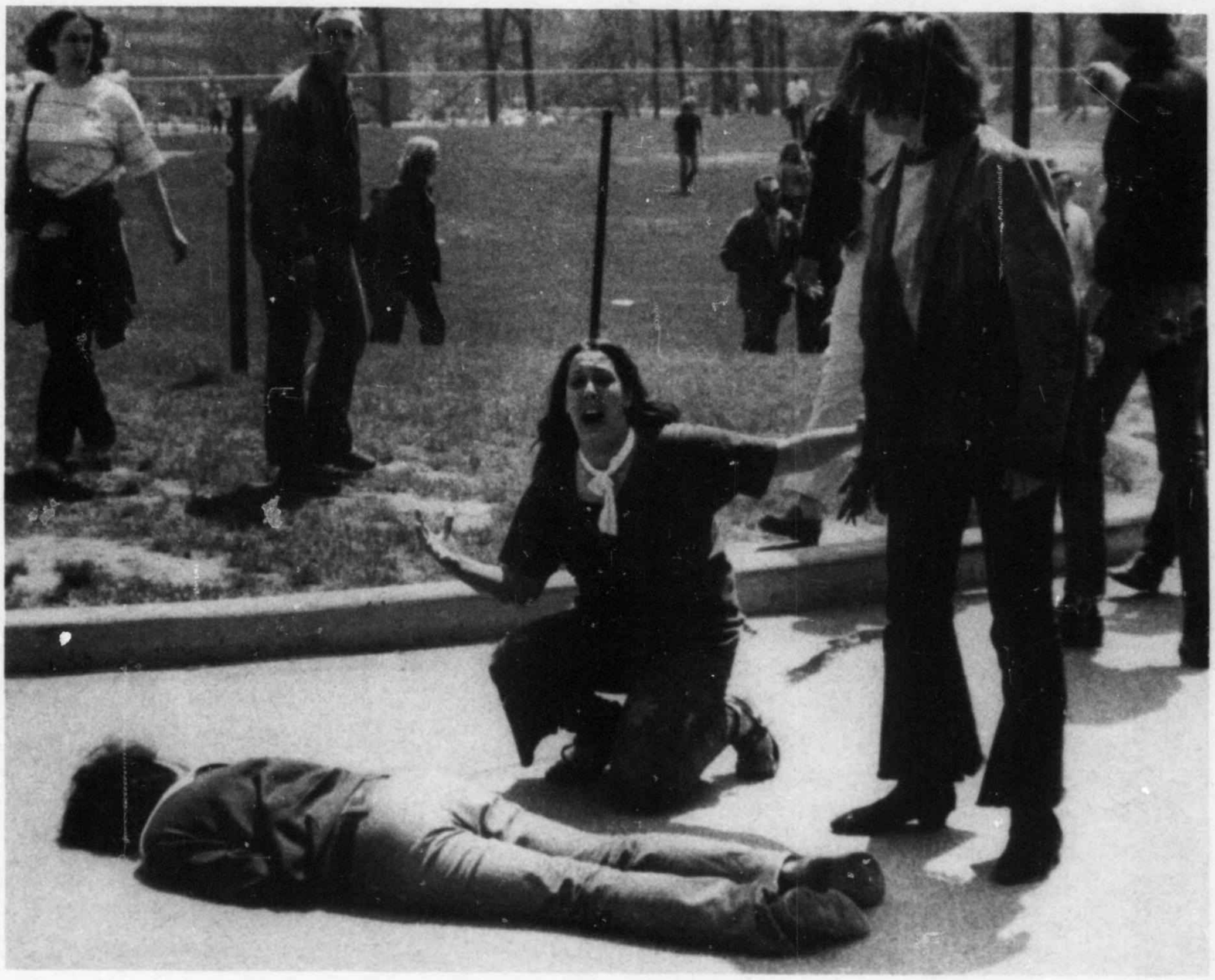
the whole of our being is little less a mystery now than it was for Meister Eckhart, who believed that the soul has agents in the belly and other parts of the body and that not the least of them is the soul's agent in the eye. Nowadays, of course, we do not speak of our souls as agents in our eyes, if only because we do not speak of souls at all. But that our world is somehow in us according to the way we perceive it, affecting our weal and woe, is a fact we must surely grant.

The way we perceive our world is the way of symbols, the way of casting sensible forms or qualities together with ideas. The lines and creases of a face, for example, may symbolize sorrow; the flowing of a river may symbolize life's transiency. Anything can become a symbol, 1) so far as we *think* it by *perceiving* it and by taking it up as an *idea*; 2) so far as we *communicate* it—to others or to ourselves; 3) and so far as we *respond* to the communication by *interpreting* it. The interpreting response may be a fresh perception or new thought or a modified action or the acquisition of a different *habit* of perceiving and acting. These three steps are all phases of one symbolizing process. And since this symbolizing process is incomplete without a response, we are also perforce interpreters, so that our life itself—including the life in our eyes—is a continuous play of interpretation, a continuous apprehending by renewing and metamorphosing our symbols. Hence not only is our world present in us according to the way of symbols, but we as inheritors and transformers of symbols play out our parts in our world according to the way of symbols. As Emerson said, "We are symbols, and inhabit symbols"—to which we need add only that symbols are always changing: growing and declining, coalescing with other symbols and decomposing into multiple new symbols.

Our ancestors symbolically perceived themselves as microcosms mirroring the great cosmos or pleroma of life in which they were embedded. We, on the other hand, to the degree we share the assumptions of much of modern psychology, sociology, and philosophy, have little sense of a larger life and conceive ourselves as shipwrecked on a remote outcropping, the pinnacle of some nearly submerged mountain, "surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion, where many a fog bank and many a swiftly melting iceberg give the deceptive appearance of farther shores . . . ."[1] Having forsaken the discredited metaphysical illusions of a larger life encompassing us, our hungry psyches, foraging for saving symbols, find nothing but themselves to feed upon, just as a starving body consumes its own tissue. Holding before ourselves a chart borrowed from some artist-explorer of the interior nether world, a Dostoyevsky or Conrad or Freud or Kafka, we descend into ourselves, searching out the hidden laws that govern the hidden mechanisms of our secret desires and fears. But the goal of the knowledge of ourselves, on which we stock all our hopes, ever recedes and leads us into still deeper labyrinths, where the grey light fades, and the likeness of our humanity for which we look takes the phantom form of a Minotaur or other life-devouring monster. Such are the self-portraits we routinely meet in the information-laden chronicles and in the literature of disillusionment of our times.

"Watching with the expectation of diseased response"—are the words Benjamin DeMott uses to characterize the figures populating the literature of the 1960s and '70s.[2] The phrase applies to us as well who are also watchers. Much has been written—far less has been said—about television as an instrument broadcasting diseased images. In fact, no

1970, Kent State University. John Filo.



doubt, it does just that. But it is not enough to simply condemn television or the media in general as perverse or mendacious interpreters of our condition. Many among the highly educated of our society deliberately adopt *suspicion* as their policy and universal principle of understanding what is going on. The media may distort; the media do distort; and we are obliged to hold them accountable. But they carry a malaise that afflicts us all: indifference, capability of only "zero sensation," analgesia and anhedonia combined. Nothing touches us except that which confirms our expectation of diseased response—from others and from ourselves. These are our "Raven Days"—unrelieved by memory or anticipation of "the lit mountains of To-morrow."

Yet no retirement into seclusion suffices. Though we seek not to touch others, we are touched; though we try not to hear, we are called to; though we wish not to see, we are seized by the presences of others in their beauty, their torment, and solitude. We are indeed now what the ship Pequod in Melville's *Moby-Dick* has long symbolized, a crew of all nations quartered together on a vessel in space—"the world's a ship on its passage out." But this community is also like a city partitioned many times over into mutually suspicious enclaves, a Berlin of many walls. Nothing else so well conveys this strange, uneasy ethos of solitariness in society as does the camera and its product; nothing better represents it than the photograph that appeared on the 5th of May 1970 of a shrieking young woman kneeling by a dead young man on the campus of Kent State University, in the wake of a student protest of the invasion of Cambodia. It is a photographic instance of and comment on—a full symbol of—our shared sense of impotence. The image replicated itself almost instantaneously across the whole nation and became a posterized cover for *Newsweek* magazine. It remains still an image enveloped with horror, resonant to and concentrating in itself all the specters of the years 1968 to 1972 that we cannot exorcize: photographs of black students assaulted and killed at Jackson State University, of the assassinated Martin Luther King, Jr., the assassinated Robert Kennedy, the Chicago "Days of Rage," the Tet Offensive, Watergate and Richard Nixon's resignation.

Yet in the hands of a patient and rigorously attentive inquirer the camera is the most versatile of all instruments for cultivating the cast of mind that willingly submits to "the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality which surrounds us." No other is so well equipped as the patiently attentive photographer for identifying living forms, assisting them to stand forth in relief, and bringing to light unanticipated analogies—analogies perhaps now familiar to us, but largely on account of the creative vision of these photographers. Photography spreads the figured masses of the universe upon the flat map of light-sensitive paper, intimating to us something of the same extraordinary celebrative and abstractive seeing as was once, and still is, practiced by the Kwakiutl, Haida, and Tlingit carvers of the north Pacific Coast, whose art so renders whales, ravens, and shamans that their forms flow harmoniously into one another.[3] Georg Gerster's photographs of contour-plowed Nebraska fields, taken from a low flying plane, challenge our habit of discursive looking.[4] As we gaze down, with Gerster, at the field of curving bands of fallow and grain-dark earth, the field does not cease to be a field, yet in our gaze it also becomes an absorbing icon, a work of

art, giving us enjoyment and setting us to meditating on the other presently invisible, more complex patterns with which it agrees. It becomes a true symbol, evoking and predicting forms of the same general character in regions now not in view. The image situates us, the viewers, within an environment of which we might otherwise not dream. For those susceptible to "ontological wonder-sickness," no other device better trains and strengthens what Samuel Taylor Coleridge called the "primary imagination," "the living power of perception," than does the camera; no other better pilots the enchanted explorer of living forms along the river of the endlessly changing scales of being within which we live.

The moment of time we call the present exists only as continuously appearing and disappearing. "Where is it, this present?" William James asks. "It has melted in our grasp, fled ere we could touch it, gone in the instant of becoming." In his book *The Decisive Moment*, Cartier-Bresson writes that his way of practicing photography involves "recognition of a rhythm in the world of real things." In the same passage, he identifies a "fugitive moment" using language that recalls James's question about the present that melts in our grasp.

> We work in unison with movement as though it were a presentiment of the way in which life unfolds. But inside movement there is one moment at which the elements in motion are in balance . . . .we are out to capture the fugitive moment, and all the interrelationships involved are on the move.[5]

Other photographers who work in the field rather than in the studio also speak of their purpose as being to portray an instant of *life*: not a "dead point" plucked out of the flow of time but an epitome of a hundred or thousand other "elusive and constantly changing states of being, manifested physically," as that most admirable American photographer Paul Strand once put it. Those who aspire to this order of achievement must so record the moment that its vanishing "before" and arriving "after" are visible as well. But the realization of this goal requires a rare tact and—as some also acknowledge—the cooperation of chance or luck.

Still photographs that satisfy Cartier-Bresson's and Paul Strand's criteria exhibit a paradox, then. Their flat surfaces and range of greys convey the contingent, living moment as no other visual phenomenon does or can. These qualities make us especially conscious that photographs that sting us to new awareness are not pale copies of some perished time, not *memento mori,* but rather fresh re-creations of it, and they set our minds in motion. The shadow-reality of the black and white image in the "straight" photograph—the photograph made in the field—invites us to become the world it re-presents. Some would say that it invites us to imagine the real for ourselves. Similarly, the stillness of the human figures and the human spaces newly awakens our awareness of the unceasing movement going on outside and inside ourselves.

Perhaps it is the knowledge of this magical potency of the black and white photograph that prompts photographers to speak of moments that *reveal* or of their intention to let what is there *reveal* itself. Edward Weston is unabashed in his use of the word in his *Daybooks*. Other photographers are more cautious and reserved. But *revealing* is the right word for certain photographs at certain times. In the moments we become con-

fluent with them, they are vessels of revelation. And these revelations are credible, because they take place in the lights and shadows of the ordinary world without annulling its ordinariness. It is a mode of revelation of which we hear nothing or little from theologians today. We need, of course, to recognize that the true ordinary, the pure ordinary—the ordinary that pierces through the film of our sense of the familiar—is the creature of rhythms and of a tact not our own. At unexpected times we happen upon this pure ordinary, and such happenings can be revelations; they are like returns to a long forgotten country.

Those who practice photography on the move in the world outside the studio have to cultivate awareness of the fact that not only does seeing take place in time but time is in our seeing. Seeing itself is movement, is act; not the act psychology analyzes but a deeper, personal, moral act that encompasses all physiological and psychological acts. Once this truth comes home, it can change our way of seeing—and our way of living as well.

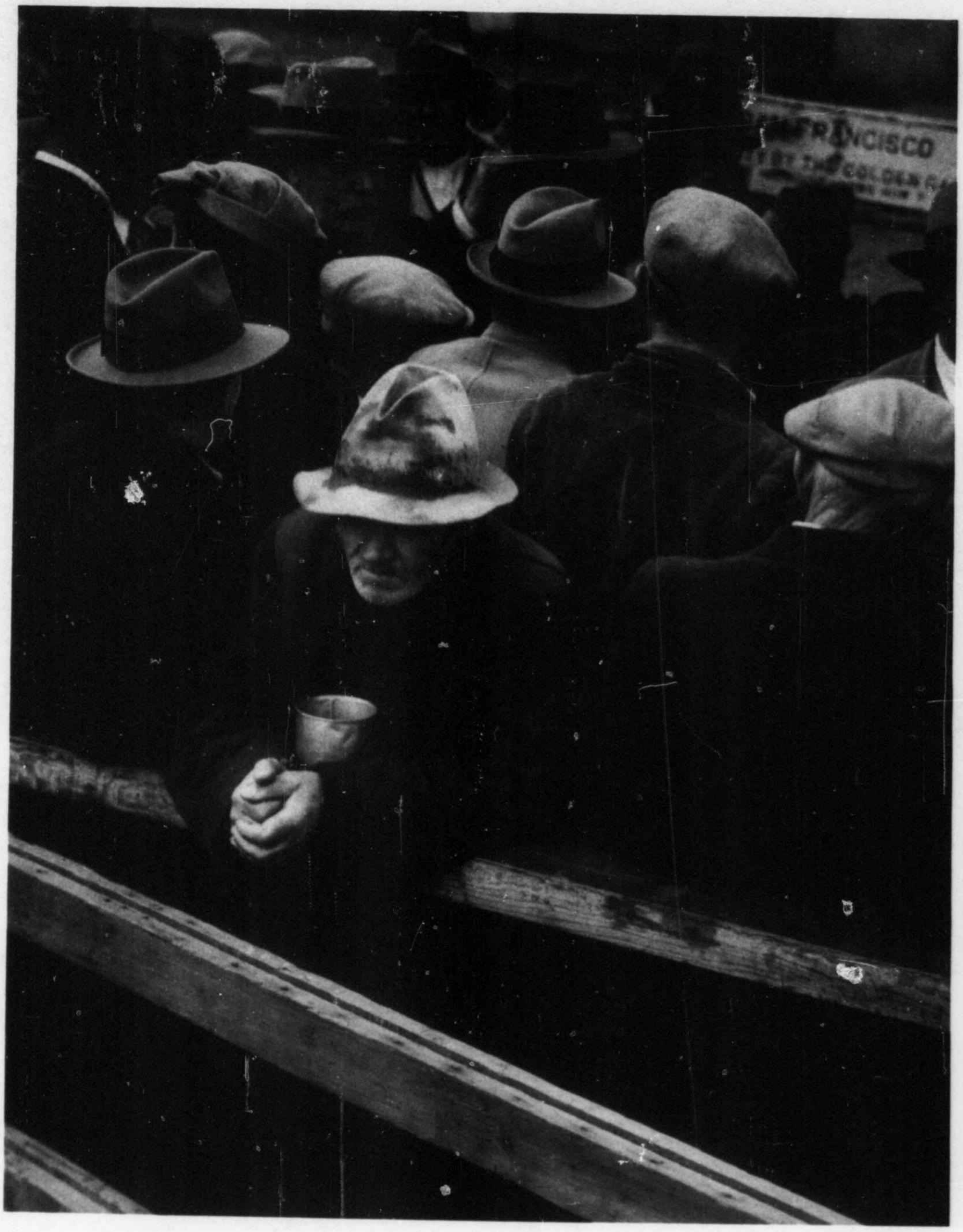
Dorothea Lange gives an account of the pull of the motion of life, a pull so powerful that it redirected the course of her work. In 1932 she looked down from the window of her corner studio on Montgomery Street in San Francisco:

> I remember well standing at that one window and just watching the flow of life. Up from the waterfront it came to that particular corner, that junction of many different things. There was the financial district to the left, Chinatown straight ahead, and the Barbary Coast and the Italian town. The unemployed would drift up there, would stop, and I could just see they did not know where next . . . . The studio room was one flight up and I looked down as long as I could and then one day I said to myself, "I'd better make this happen," and that started me. I made a print and put it on the wall to see what reaction I would get.[6]

The reaction came as a question: "Yes, but what are you going to do with it?" She hadn't the slightest idea, Lange recalled later. "I was compelled to photograph as a direct response to what was around me." One of the photographs she made on the street below is "White Angel Bread Line," a photograph of a man displaced into a homeless world. Turned away from his comrades, he is leaning on a rail with a tin cup cradled between his arms. Of this photograph and herself at that time, Lange comments: "I can only say I knew I was looking at something. You know there are moments such as these when time stands still and all you do is hold your breath and hope it will wait for you."[7] "White Angel Bread Line" is a prophetic photograph, a presagement of the astonishing growth and expansion of American photography in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, with which Lange had so very much to do.

In an interview recorded years later, Dorothea Lange said: "Artists are controlled by the life that beats in them, like the ocean beats in on the shore. They're almost pursued; there's something constantly acting upon them from the outside world that shapes their existence."[8]

Those in whom the tides of a wider life insistently surge undergo changes in the contours and gradients of their attention; they come to feel the deeper currents that eddy against and in us all. The experience of that disturbing motion stirs them to explore in circuits of life to which they had hitherto been insensible, in regions lying below the hori-



White Angel Bread Line, *San Francisco, 1933. Dorothea Lange.*

zons of their everyday awareness. "White Angel Bread Line" is a witness to that process.

We have "White Angel Bread Line" as the lasting product of Dorothea Lange's reasonable, felt need to respond to the life flowing around her. She has made what Paul Strand once called the "dead eye" of the "dead machine," the camera—artifact of the system that spawned the bread line—into an extension of her own life reaching out toward and taking the form of another vessel of life. This transformative action has no more fitting name than love. To be sure, we do not often link charity with photographs, perhaps because we regard the making of photographs not as a personally demanding and creative act but rather as merely part of a commercial process. Charles Sanders Peirce, one of our wisest American philosophers, characterized love as follows: "The movement of love is circular, at one and the same impulse projecting creations into independency and drawing them into harmony."[9] In fact this is Peirce's definition of divine love, for which he coined the fine phrase "cherishing-love"; but with appropriate modifications it describes human love as well. We also can be creative—not possessive—by cherishing others, by going out toward those who are unlike us and consent to being drawn into an expanded harmony with what is new and unfamiliar to us. Thus by love more complex and open societies of likeness-in-unlikeness, systems without fixed boundaries, grow out of meetings between ourselves and what is initially alien to us.

In such small deeds of charity as Lange's photograph lies our hope. They are the spores from which life spreads. For passage into larger, more encompassing life takes place in our acts of connecting with living beings whom we, in our casual unmindfulness, treat as separate from ourselves. This photograph and others that strike us as carrying the same kind of intention act upon and in us to dispel such mindlessness. Our eyes and with them all our senses, including our "sensible hearts"—for the heart also is a "perceptive organ," as our philosopher Peirce agrees—become dynamically connected with this nameless man and through him connected with our past and present and future neighbors, and ultimately with all living things, by chemistry, by flesh and blood, and by love. ■

Adapted from a longer, unpublished essay.

NOTES

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan and Co., 1950), p. 257.
2. Benjamin DeMott, "Did the 1960s Damage Fiction?," *New York Times Book Review*, July 8, 1984, p. 27.
3. See Bill Holm, *Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965).
4. Georg Gerster, *Grand Design: The Earth From Above* (New York: Padding Press Ltd., 1976), pp. 203f.
5. N. Lyons, ed., *Photographers on Photography* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 47.
6. *Dorothea Lange: The Making of a Documentary Photographer—An Interview Conducted by Suzanne Riess* (Berkeley: University of California Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, 1968), p. 144f.
7. Milton Meltzer, *Dorothea Lange: A Photographer's Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978), p. 71.
8. *The Making of a Documentary Photographer*, p. 145f.
9. Charles Hartshone and Paul Weiss, ed., *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vol. VI, *Scientific Metaphysics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 191.

The Unsleeping Eye: A Fairy Tale

P.L. TRAVERS

"I give you something, you know not what, enrich it, you know not how, bring it back, you know not when. And, remember, I shall be watching you," said the Sun to the newborn child.

And the infant serenely smiled to herself, content not to understand until the time should ripen.

I need not tell you that she was a princess. All women, in or out of fairy tales, are born princesses, being descended from the Goddesses who, by the very nature of things, had to precede the gods.

Inanna of Sumeria was the first to be known to us historically but there can be no doubt that she herself was merely a descendant, the latest comer, as it were, to the hidden genealogies of those who belong to the north side of the mountain and the south side of the river. Thus, with such a lineage, sovereignty was and still is the prerogative of woman, as long ago Dame Ragnell made clear to King Arthur's faithful knight, Gawain. This is a fact she either forgets, and thereby betrays it, or on the other hand uses it for some ego-purpose instead of bestowing it, once it is adequately acknowledged—and here again we must remember Ragnell—as a gift to those who belong to the south side of the mountain and the north side of the river. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that the Muse, while she inspires, herself also sings and dances, makes her own music and weaves her own stuff of poetry.

So, since the child was of notable lineage, there had to be a christening, a modest affair such as happens daily, and of course Wise Women were present—not twelve of them, a mere handful only, all of them silent, finger to lip, as they presented their gifts. There has been only one story where the largesse of these puissant ladies was publicly proclaimed. But that, it is clear, was a special occasion. For the commonality such ceremonies are performed in silence. It can take the recipient a lifetime to discover the nature, not always benign, of these baptismal bequests.

So the child grew, ever in the eye of the Sun, content to be seen and known by him as a mere piece of the world, without at all asking to know whether she herself was anything other than tree or stone or grass.

Occasionally she would ask herself, "Why me? Why should I be given a gift?" But never an answer came.

But inevitably there came a time when aspects of herself arose that did not want to be looked at; things unbecoming, unknown and unknowable, to the trees and the grass, that would rather run and hide themselves than be seen by the Sun or, indeed, herself.

Then she would cry "Go down! Go down! Let the width of the world be between us."

But the sun merely smiled and shone. "It is you who are turning, not I," he said. "The earth is as filmy as a

bridal veil. For me there are no Antipodes. I cannot help but see all, as I myself am seen. That is the way of the law."

She knew that this was true and felt the pain of letting herself be seen and known, no rag to cover her nakedness. It was at such times that the favors of the Wise Women came, in a sense, to her rescue.

One such, it seemed to her, was the love of and the need to work; to busy herself, like Allerleirauh, in making soups for the king; to herd the geese along with the Goose Girl; spin wool and flax with the Three Spinners or mull a stoup of wine for Homer.

As for the second gift, perhaps it was the satisfaction that lies in what is small and passing, the unconsidered moment; the King of Hearts on a city pavement, dropped from a pack of playing cards, gazing benignly up at her, begrimed, serene, majestic; all minor losings and findings; a rose, of all flowers most enigmatic, unfurling, letting its petals fall, its secret still untold; shadows moving upon a wall, the outside of the inside of their substantial selves; lines of a poem leaping, unasked for, to the mind; the day dissolved, absolved by the night.

But the third gift was the greatest. The Wise Women, it appeared, had so arranged matters for her that she should find, as she went her way, hand after hand held out to her of those who asked the same questions that had burned in her since childhood. "Who am I? What is my purpose? Where is the abiding city?" And from each she received—oh, never an answer—but a spark of instructive fire.

With these she went on, unwinding the way, through the dark forests, across the wide deserts, the Sun's eye always upon her.

And at length, since it happens in all the tales, she encountered the vermilion thread and became so enmeshed in its joys and sorrows that for a moment she despaired and cried rebelliously to the Sun, "Whatever it is you have given me, I cannot carry it any longer. I must throw it away."

"If you do, it will return to me. That, too, is the law. But you yourself will be lost," said the Sun.

Of course she had not meant what she said. She had no intention of being lost and would go her way through the thrice-nine lands, no matter what it cost her. And it had, she saw, to cost her much, everything she had, perhaps, if she wanted to come to Happy Ever After. Those whose hands still led her on were quick to remind her that this was no simple matter. The fairy tales that end with this phrase have told only half the story. In their wisdom—they are manuals of sagacity—they leave the other half to the reader. It is he who must complete it.

Thus, wilily, they force him to search within himself until he comes to understand—and our princess was no exception—that it is not the advent of the Prince, or the ship coming safely home to port, that brings about the denouement. She had to learn that happiness is not pleasure, though pleasure—and, above all, joy—are in its warp and woof. Rather it is a moral virtue, come to by grace and discipline and not without suffering, withal. It requires a poign-

ant letting go of what has been most cherished and learning a new vocabulary—the grammar, as it were, of the heart. The "I" that knocks upon the door must become, in answér to "Who is there?" inevitably "Thou"; Love, as noun, must become verb and lose itself in Loving; and Passion assume the syllable that makes of it Compassion. Only thus, when what was lost has been found, is it possible to enter the city with bliss-bestowing hands.

"It is all very difficult," she said to the Sun, as the realization worked within her.

"Would you value it if it was easy?" he asked, shining upon her.

And, reflecting that the nightingale leans his breast upon a thorn to sing his song of joy; that the fly is forever wringing his hands; the mantis clasping his in prayer; that wormwood, for all its bitterness, contains a healing virtue—she knew that she would not. The fascination of what's difficult continually sustained her.

"I will go and sit in a rocking chair and commune with myself on these matters. I have made enough soup for the king and herded geese long enough."

So she did that, fanning herself as she pondered with a leaf of cocoanut palm.

And children came and played about her as though she were part of their landscape.

"Why do you sit in a rocking chair?" a fair-haired boy demanded.

"Well, the rocking chair is the clock of the earth—tick-tock, tick-tock, it tells the time."

And, not being scientists they did not inquire what time the earth was telling. When a thing is true, you can let it alone.

"And I use my fan of cocoanut palm to shade me from the Sun."

"Ah, but he can still see you," another child said smugly, "The Sun can see through everything."

This she knew only too well, but how did the child know it?

"The Sun," the fair-haired boy was dreamy, "the Sun has a mother's face." And she knew he was thinking of some merchant's sign—the Sun Alliance, the Sun Insurance—hung high above a city street, a metal orb with its gilded rays, eyes downcast but all-seeing, mouth full-lipped and faintly smiling, tender, ironic, a little weary. The metaphor was apt.

"He'll be pleased," another child joined in, "when we bring him back his gift."

At that the rocking chair stopped rocking.

"What gift?" she was startled. "What gift did he give you?"

"But you must know that," the fair boy said. " 'I give you something, you know not what, bring it back you know not when.' We do not know what it is. Perhaps it's a kind of riddle."

The palm leaf fan fell from her hand at the shock of the revelation. She had thought that the sun had singled her out, given her something solely her own, for reasons she could not guess at. Her uniqueness fell from her like a garment, leaving her first with a sense of loss and then with a feeling of freedom. Whatever it was, all men received it. She was not alone.

She turned to the children to draw

them nearer but they were off on another tack.

"Riddles!" they shrieked. "Let's ask her riddles." And they rained on her all the old conundrums.

"Who killed Cock Robin?"

"When is a door not a door?"

"Why does a chicken cross the road?"

And to each—as though she did not know!—she shook her head and let them triumph.

"Where was Moses when the candle went out?"

And of course she knew that answer, too, had even, as a child, felt sorry for Moses, left as he was in the dark. But now poor Moses did not matter. In her mind the riddle turned on itself. What, rather, of the candle? Or, to go further, what of the flame? One moment there it is and the next—puff!—it is gone. But is it possible, she wondered, that light can not exist, be nothing? Blown out, it must surely go to its source. And life—can it be lost either? The two are in a sense one. Life, too, must surely go back whence it came.

And suddenly her head knew what her body had always unwittingly known. The Sun's bounty had at last a name.

Gently, as though it were a newborn child, she sat and rocked her life in her arms, gratitude welling up within her. She might so easily have been lost to it, as the candle is lost to the flame.

The children were arguing together, confronted by their own riddle. How could they bring their life back to the Sun. He was so far and they so small.

"A ladder!" said the fair-haired boy. "A great long ladder to lean against a cloud."

She rocked and nodded her agreement. A ladder was indeed the answer. But she refrained from telling them that it need not be so very long. They must find that out for themselves. For she knew now that what she had to do—what they would all have to do at last—was to climb up through the length of herself, on each rung repairing what had been—the wrong roads taken, the forgettings, the long stretches of nothingness—and preparing what was to come. Only thus could she enrich the gift she had to bring back to the Sun. And the Sun would convey it where it belonged.

Tick-tock, tick-tock, went the rocking chair as she began her inward journey back through the thrice-nine lands to the beginning which would contain the end.

Look at her! She is still climbing. And, yes,—can you hear her—singing?

"Therefore, with my utmost art,
I will sing thee,
And the cream of all my heart
I will bring thee."*

Rocking, rocking, she goes her way, with the Sun keeping vigil upon her. And on the children wandering home; on you; on me; and all the rest. A constant sleepless eye.

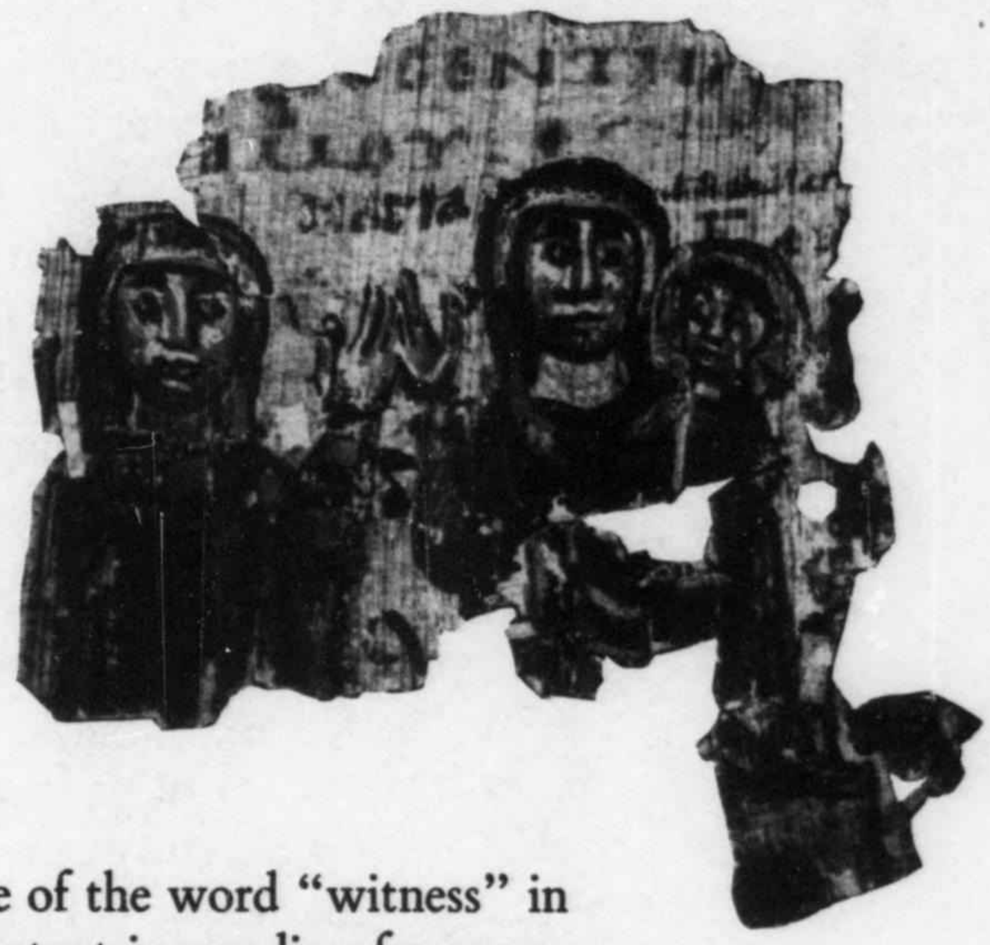
But, you will say, this is just a fable, a tale told around the hearth as the fire reddens and falls.

True enough. And enough of truth. If you don't like it, don't listen. ■

* George Herbert, 1593–1633

"You Are My Witnesses"

DAVID H.C. READ



The use of the word "witness" in a religious context is puzzling for many of our contemporaries. In the constituency represented by what are called the "mainline churches," it has become one of the many words freely used by the clergy which are opaque to the laity. The latter have come to associate it with the kind of professional jargon that spills over into the pulpit from the seminaries and church bureaucracies. As an officer of my church who is a lawyer once said: "I know what a witness is in a court of law, or as a signatory to a document, but what on earth do you mean by 'the witness of the Church'?" On the other hand the growing community of fundamentalist churches and sects are clearly at home with this word, and as their influence increases it has come to be associated with aggressive and sometimes offensive methods of evangelism. It is not only "Jehovah's Witnesses" who come to mind in this connection but all, including many young people, who are being taught that devotion to Christ involves being a witness—and that word is interpreted narrowly in the sense of constantly giving verbal testimony to one's faith at all times and in all places. "Witness" thus becomes the supreme method of evangelism, and that word is also interpreted—contrary to the New Testament evidence*—to mean what we call "proselytism." Hence, for some years now, the laity of the historic denominations have come to react unfavorably to "evangelism" and "witness" in spite of all efforts on the part of the clergy to disinfect them and explicate their original meaning.

Even outside the religious communities, however, it is not too difficult to discern a meaning in the word "witness" that goes beyond the purely legal context. Everyone of us is witnessing to something by the way we behave, the things we say, the kind of people we

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. (Matthew 23:15)

are. Sometimes this is perfectly conscious as we commit ourselves openly to a cause we believe in, or stand up to be counted on some moral issue. All the time we are also unconscious witnesses to the values we believe in, or are representatives of our home, our school, our church, or our country. For instance, an American travelling or residing abroad cannot help being a witness for his country. We may remember pep-talks from a headmaster: "Keep in mind, how you behave reflects on our school: you are wearing our badge." We may not use the word commonly in this sense, but we all instinctively understand what it means. And it is extremely difficult, as every preacher knows, to find a current modern equivalent. To be a witness, in this sense, means to reveal, to reflect, to incarnate, to represent the values by which we live.

It is obvious that, in the religious arena, this kind of witness can be found only in the context of communities. Those to whom religion is an entirely private matter, those who rigorously avoid association with any church or group with a name and a reputation to uphold, are witnessing to nothing but their own integrity as believers. Since such individualists often deceive themselves about the originality of their beliefs, forgetting how many of them were inherited from the religious climate in which they were raised, it could be said that they are in fact witnesses to the enduring power of such a tradition—in our case usually the Judaeo-Christian—but the distinction holds. It is within the great communities of faith that the question of witnesses comes to the fore. The few religions that claim the world as their parish have all laid emphasis, some more than others, on the need for the believer to share his faith, to make known the teachings and practices of his religious tradition.

Christianity and Islam have been by far the most aggressive religions in history to date. The secular historian has to be fascinated by the extraordinary story of their spectacular success in winning the adherence of millions around the world, not only in these crucial early centuries but in our own era. (From our western perspective Christianity in particular is often represented as being in rapid decline, but Africa and some nations of the Far East tell a very different story.) All kinds of factors enter into this tale of religious expansion—political, economic, psychological, cultural—but it cannot be denied that *witness* in the sense described above was a basic condition for such success. I am not qualified to elucidate the concept of witness in the Koran, but almost everyone knows that the Moslem faith was borne across the world with the resounding witness of the slogan: "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger." Since, however, Islam and Christianity derive from Judaism, and all three are known as "the people of the Book," I want to explore the concept of witness as we find it in the Bible.

Perhaps surprisingly we find that, particularly in the Old Testament, the word translated "witness" is nearly always used in the common legal sense of the word. The Mosaic legislation had much to say about the calling of witnesses in cases under trial. The ninth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (which we have correctly expanded to mean "Don't tell lies") referred specifically to judicial proceedings. In the New Testament we find Jesus referring to the requirements of the law concerning witnesses, and the word occurs in the narration of his own trial, and, later, that of St. Paul. The question then arises as to whether in the legal sense the word carried any religious overtones. And the answer must be that it did.

Both Judaism and the Christianity to which it gave birth were, and are, historical religions. That is to say that they are not primarily systems of thought or mystical exercises or ethical guidance, but a declaration of what God has done and therefore is doing, and will do. Central to this declaration in both sections of our Bible is an historical event—in the Old Testament, the Exodus of Israel from Egypt; in the New Testament, the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. A mere glance at the literature of the prophets, the liturgical shape of their worship, the songs of the psalmists, will tell us that this historical event was the inspiration of this people's faith and shaped their religion. By historian, prophet, and priest it was attested: in other words, witness was given. The ethical tradition, the commandments that have been passed on to millions across the world, are prefaced by the words: "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exodus 2:2)

In the New Testament it is evident that the word "witness" is being used on occasion in the narrowly legal sense. The Christian message, the "Good News," depends on the conviction that the crucified Christ did in fact rise from the dead. However that event has been subsequently interpreted, the New Testament documents lay emphasis on the testimony of the eyewitnesses—those who claimed to have seen the risen Christ. The qualification for being regarded as an apostle was to have been among those who saw and spoke with him as one alive from the dead. (Paul, who was not present at that time, claimed to be an eyewitness on the grounds of his vivid encounter with the living Lord on the Damascus Road: the vehemence of his claim—see especially the first chapter of the letter to the Galatians—indicates that it had been strongly challenged.)

In Luke's account of the life of the early Church immediately after its birth on the day of Pentecost, we find this crucial statement: "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection on the Lord Jesus . . . ." (Acts 4:33). Whatever else was said as the Gospel was publicly announced in the earliest days, there can be no doubt that sooner or later the apostles confidently announced that they actually saw the risen Christ, and the later testimony of Christian preachers rested on their testimony. It was this witness that gave rise to the expressions "apostolic Gospel" and "apostolic Church." Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church about A.D. 54, refers to the apostolic tradition in these pregnant words: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised from the dead on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), and then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, although some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of

all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me." (1 Corinthians 15:3–7)

It is very clear from the New Testament evidence that the Gospel was launched on this testimony, the firsthand eyewitness affirmation of the apostles and the subsequent secondhand witness of their successors. The "Good News" rested on something that had happened. The Gospel, which is recognized as a supremely *religious* message, is rooted in a fact to which witness was given in the legal sense of the word.

But the word "witness" can be found in the Bible in the other sense of "revealing," "reflecting," "representing," "standing for." Already by the time of the prophets we hear such words as " 'You are my witnesses,' says the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the Lord, and beside me there is no other ... you are my witnesses,' says the Lord." (Isaiah 43:10–12)

Here emerges the conviction that Israel's destiny is to reveal the sovereignty of the one, true God, and to reflect his will to all peoples. Judaism has not been an evangelizing religion like Christianity or Islam. At various times, particularly during the late Roman Empire, its teaching and ethics appealed to many, some of whom were received into the Jewish community; but active proselytizing was discouraged. Yet, the memory of the promise given to Abraham never died away: "In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:3) By their worship, by their behavior, by their observance of the law of God, the people of Israel were to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles." It was in the light of this calling that the prophets constantly lashed out at the failures and follies of their contemporaries. The much-debated concept of a "chosen people" rests on this unique conviction that God has called Israel to reveal and reflect his will for the whole human family, and equally unique has been its history in both "ecstasy and agony." What we have here is the ideal of a community that witnesses, not so much by the content of its moral and religious teaching,

as by its very existence. Wasn't it Frederick the Great who, on being asked for proof of the existence of God, answered simply: "The Jews."?

In the New Testament we find the origin of the Church's emphasis on witnessing. It is tied in with the pervasive sense of mission. When Jesus chose twelve intimate followers he immediately sent them out to speak and act as representatives of the "Kingdom" he proclaimed (Mark 3:13–19). An apostle is one who is sent to bear witness. A mission is the sending out of witnesses. We see from the Book of Acts how this was implicit in the founding of the Church. "With great power gave the disciples witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." It is worth examining more closely what these words mean. We have seen that it involved what we know as "eyewitness testimony" in the legal sense. But if that is all that is implied one would expect some account of the trials of those first Christians in which they would be cross-examined as to the reliability of their accounts of the resurrection. When we look at the context of this statement we find nothing of the sort. Instead we notice that the words "With great power gave the apostles witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" are embedded in an account of a remarkable experiment by which this infant Church provided for its poorer members by funds raised by the voluntary selling of possessions on the part of the richer members. This kind of "Christian Communism" (as it has been somewhat misleadingly termed) does not seem to have lasted long, but the important point is that this action of the disciples was clearly seen as part of their witness. Compassion, as demonstrated by this practical sharing, became an enduring mark of the Christian community. Their "witness" thus was something much more than the declaration that Jesus was alive. Its "power" lay in the manner in which they were seen to live. The expression "see how these Christians love one another" is often used sarcastically today, but it was in fact the spontaneous tribute of the pagan world to the style of life of this new community. The words "great grace was upon them all" which follow the account of their witness may just indicate that they received divine help in delivering their witness, but an alternative translation (New English Bible) reads "they are all held in high esteem" and suggests this impact made by the new quality of life of the Christian community.

The witness of the Church has therefore been interpreted in all but the most narrowly fundamentalist circles as involving the total impact made by Christian believers. When that impact reflects the concerns of Christ, witness is given to his living presence and power. When it reflects contrary concerns and values, or just reflects contemporary mores, the witness to the living Lord is no longer there. No amount of skillful apologetics, no eloquent Easter sermons, can convince an unbelieving world if they are not backed up by the lifestyle of believing communities, and the total impact of the ecumenical body that claims to be "the Body of Christ." In our day it is abundantly clear that the strongest witness of the Church is being given, not by its preachers, but by such phenomena as the Confessing Church in Hitler's Germany, martyred groups in totalitarian countries in many parts of the world (the word "martyr" derives from the Greek word for witness), and the life and work of a Mother Teresa.

This brief review of the meaning and experience of "witness" in the Christian tradition reminds the author, and I hope the reader, of the immense significance of this concept in the authentic Christian tradition. It is rooted in the mission of Christ himself, and in the impulse of the early Church to make known the "Good News." ■

Science and Tradition

BASARAB NICOLESCU

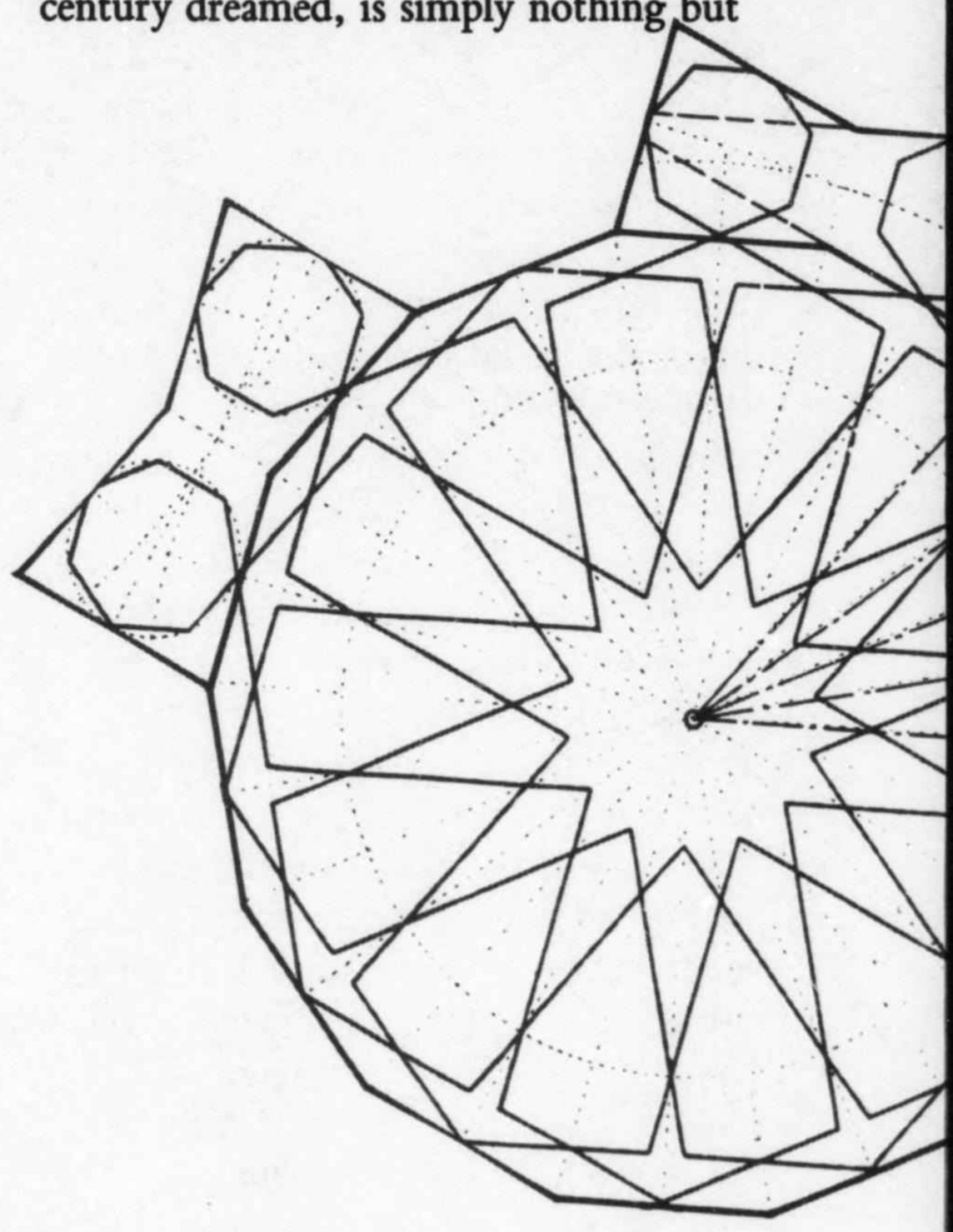
Translated by D.M. Dooling

The title of this article may seem surprising. In what sense can today's scientist be considered a "witness"? To what does he "bear witness"? It is evident also that the question implicit in this title is connected with an even larger one: Does Nature have meaning, a rationale? I am not so presumptuous as to try to answer such a question; but I can at least try to approach it more closely by striving to make a careful distinction between a "scientific statement" and an "act of faith."

With this question of meaning, of rationality, it is easy to become lost at the outset in an infinite number of philosophical, methodological, historical, and even sociological considerations. I would rather begin with some simple observations that it would be hard to challenge.

First of all, any scientist knows from his own experience within the context of his specialty that in our representation of the world there is no absolute. Any theoretical scientific construction can be overthrown if it is incompatible with experimental data. There is something indeed which *resists* it; with what other attribute can we characterize this resistant something but that of "reality"?

A second aspect, which has become more and more evident since the advent of quantum physics, is that of our implication, our *participation* in the reality we observe. The frontier between the observer and what is observed is a dynamic one, moving and changing. Purely "objective" reality, of which the nineteenth century dreamed, is simply nothing but



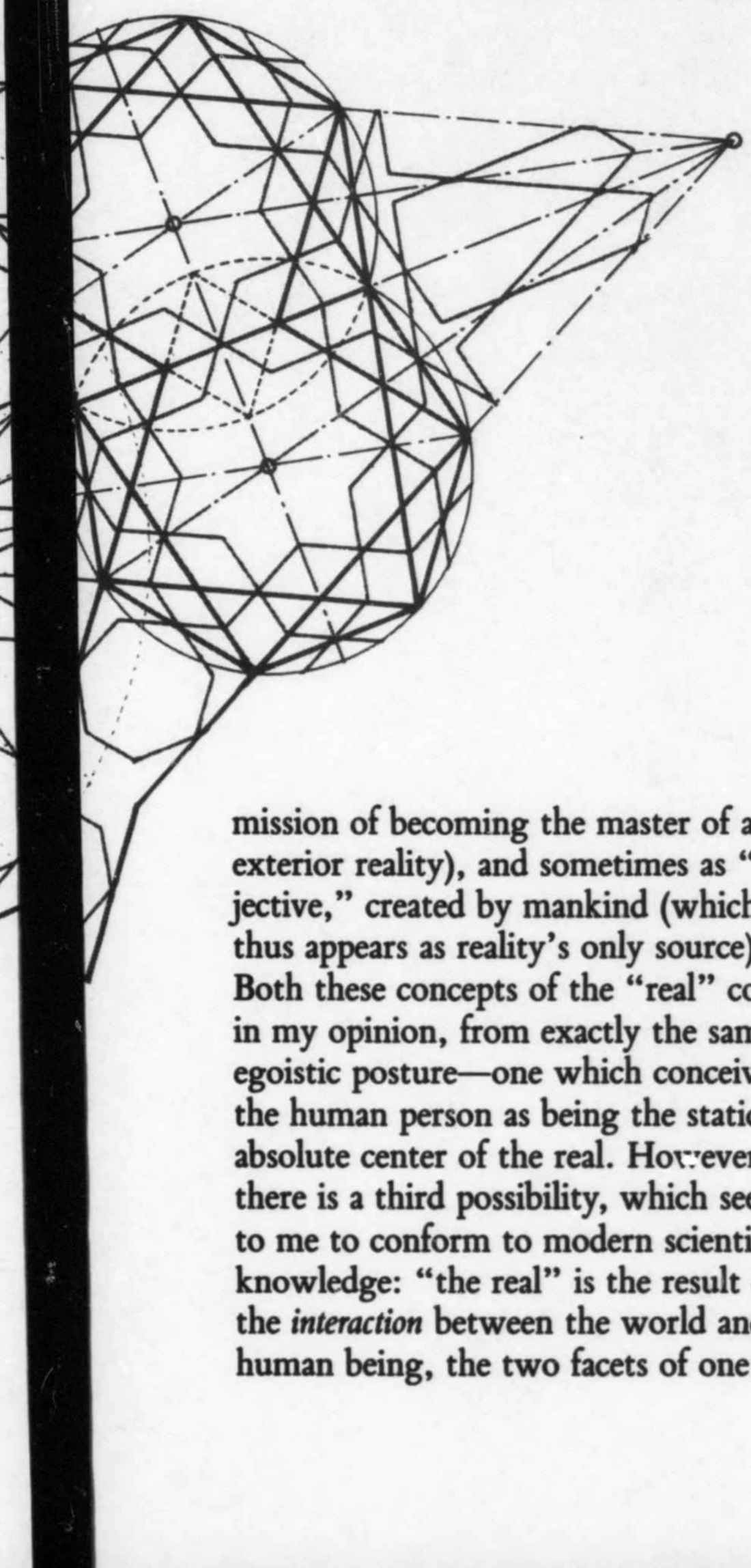
a mental construction—sometimes useful, but very dangerous as immutable dogma. Everything that takes place seems to indicate that our role is *to find and at the same time to give meaning* to reality.

Lastly, a third aspect is that of the conformity between our thinking and

the world. A scientific theory is not limited to a simple description of what is known; it anticipates, it discovers the unknown by its power to *predict*. A scientific theory may be formulated extremely abstractly and mathematically, but nevertheless it leads to concrete, experimental predictions of what has never heretofore been observed.

These three aspects, considered together, could provide a point of departure for a new approach to reality.

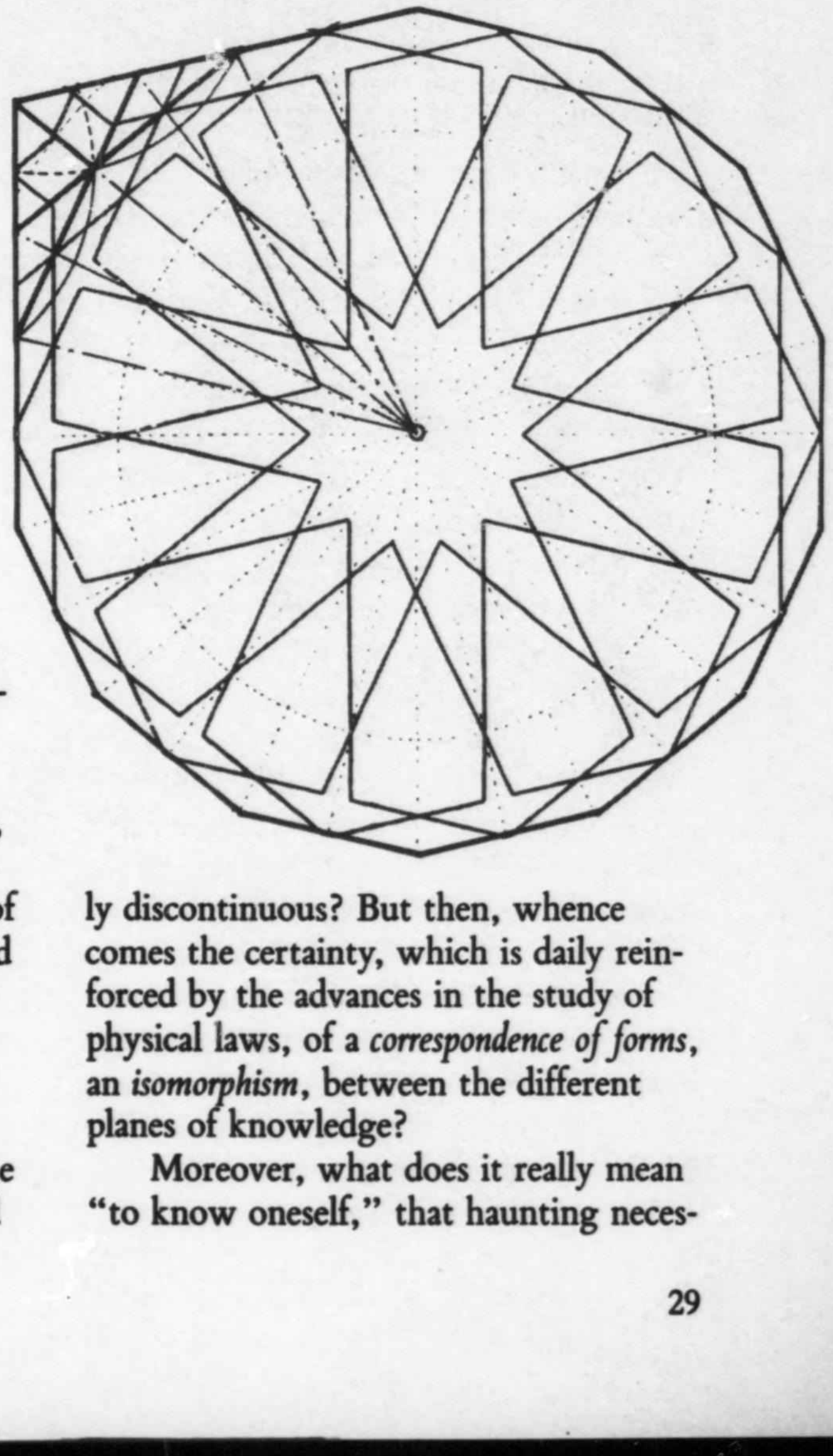
Up to now, two ways of understanding reality have prevailed in our representations of the world. Reality was sometimes thought of as "objective" (humanity appearing as having the



mission of becoming the master of an exterior reality), and sometimes as "subjective," created by mankind (which thus appears as reality's only source). Both these concepts of the "real" come, in my opinion, from exactly the same egoistic posture—one which conceives of the human person as being the static and absolute center of the real. However, there is a third possibility, which seems to me to conform to modern scientific knowledge: "the real" is the result of the *interaction* between the world and the human being, the two facets of one and the same Reality. It is to this interaction that the modern scientist could truly "bear witness."

A remarkable coherence seems to govern both the quantum scale and the cosmological scale. Is the scale between them—that of mankind—an exception to that unity of the world which grows more and more perceptible? Is violence, anarchy, and lack of coherence the lot of humanity, in contrast with the self-organization and self-consistence which seem to govern other natural systems?

Has nature something to tell us about ourselves? Is it true that in coming to know the universe, I can come to know myself? Or rather are these two planes of knowledge, which correspond to our dual nature, irreparably separated, and the passage between them completely discontinuous? But then, whence comes the certainty, which is daily reinforced by the advances in the study of physical laws, of a *correspondence of forms*, an *isomorphism*, between the different planes of knowledge?



Moreover, what does it really mean "to know oneself," that haunting neces-

sity that is absurd from the point of view of ordinary logic? For how can one system entirely decode another of equal complexity? Am I then obliged to "open" myself to a level of another complexity? But isn't this "opening" simply a word used as a discreet disguise for the inaccessibility of the unknown?

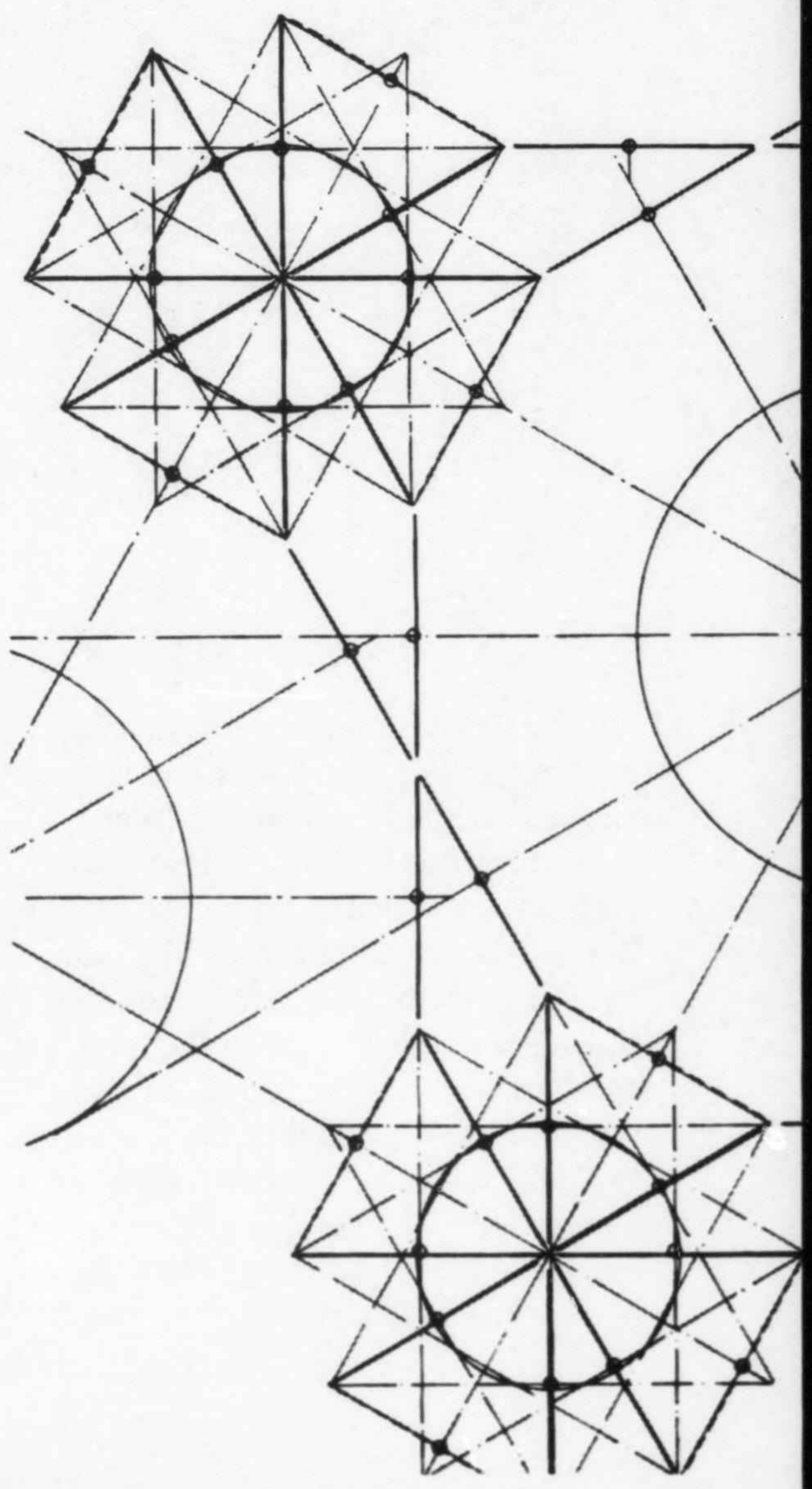
And finally, do all these questions really make sense for science, as it is defined in our time? Should we not be satisfied to consider science as a collection of recipes, operative on the plane of simple materiality, but without any meaning on the plane of "being"? Should we not accept the "how?" but forget the "why?"? Should we exile "being" from the realm of science, and fall back thus into an empty, separate world from which all "signs" are absent?

How can we not be astonished at the way those who want to see "spirit" everywhere abuse scientific presuppositions? For science offers us an image of a perpetually *changing* reality. There is nothing stable or permanent in the statements of science. The only possible advance is through questioning. But how also can we see without astonishment the position of those who, without knowing any scientific data, proclaim that between science and spirit there exists an unbridgeable gulf?

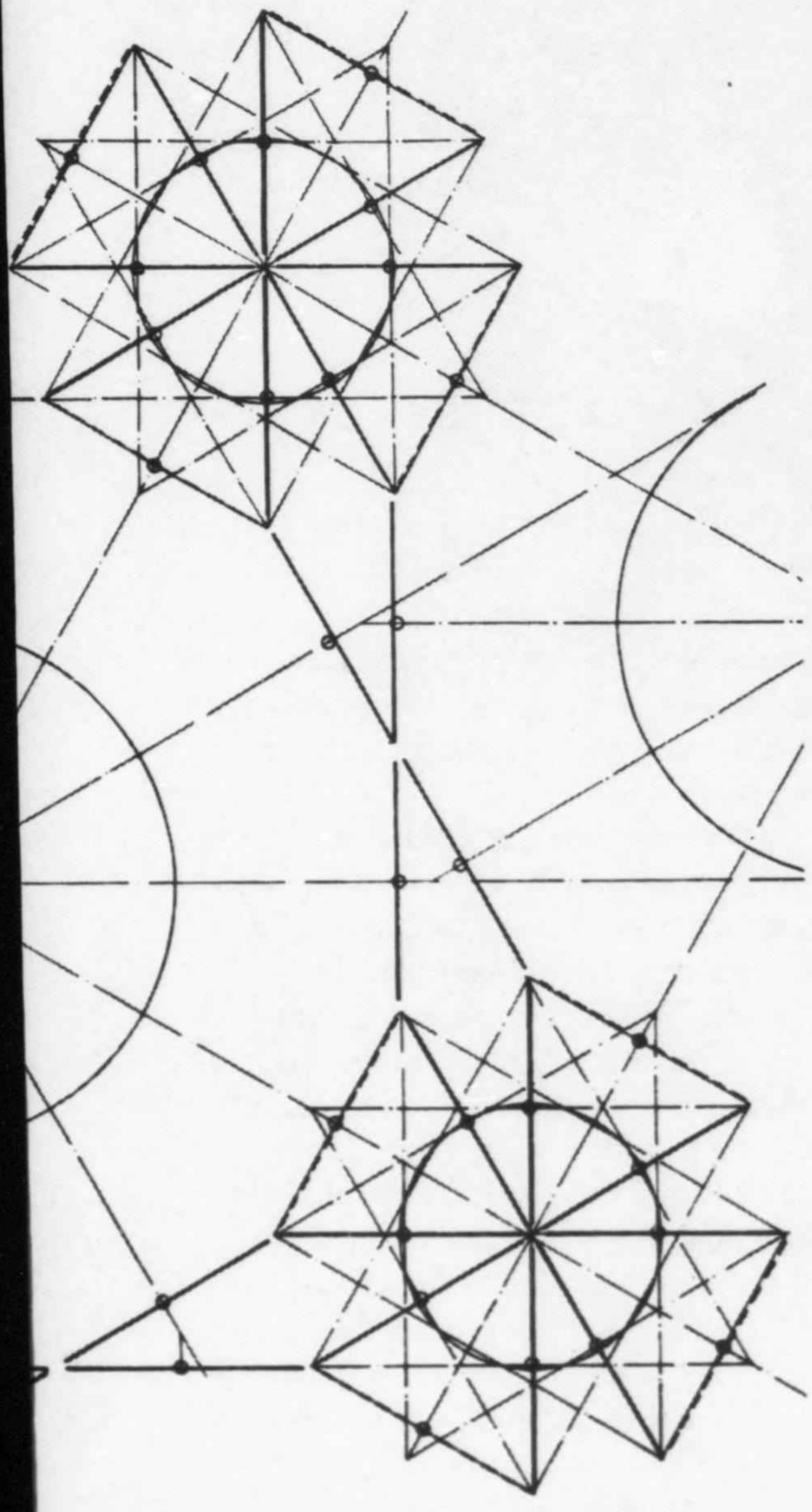
Creative scientific action, engendered by the conformity between humanity and nature, is not simply mental. Opening to the realm of the "subconscious" (which might better be called the "superconscious"), it also includes intuition. Creative scientific action cannot be reduced to simple experiential testimony; rather, it takes place in an abstract, mathematical world which is far removed from all empirical evidence. Mathematics, the true science of the analogy between analogies, is an organic part of the construction of science, the bridge which allows the existence of an isomorphism between different sciences. And how can we avoid seeing in this mathematical structure the very essence of the conformity between man and nature?

Am I then in the process of rediscovering the ancient belief in the absolute "objectivity" of science, which excluded any intervention of "subject"? Certainly not. The quantum universe, the universe of interconnection, of nonseparability, implies the participation of the subject, a veritable microcosm reflecting the macrocosm. It is just this participation and this conformity which tell us that it is impossible to speak seriously of science's absolute objectivity or its absolute subjectivity.

A new kind of objectivity seems to emerge from contemporary science, an



objectivity that is no longer linked only with the object, but with the fusion of object and subject. New concepts will have to be found, so that we could speak about the *subjective objectivity* of science and the *objective subjectivity* of tradition. The contemporary human being has the good fortune to be able to try to bring to life in himself the two poles of a fertile contradiction.



Where is the borderline between the "rational" and the "nonrational"? The entire history of science testifies to an incessant, stubborn struggle against the unknown, and it could be said that the unknown is the very source of scientific progress. Many aspects which at one time were considered nonrational, bizarre, or paradoxical have later through the advance of scientific knowledge been found to be rational, normal, and capable of integration within a coherent scientific description. Between this point, however, and that of declaring that everything in the world is rational, there is an important step still to be taken, whose consequences on all levels must not be underestimated.

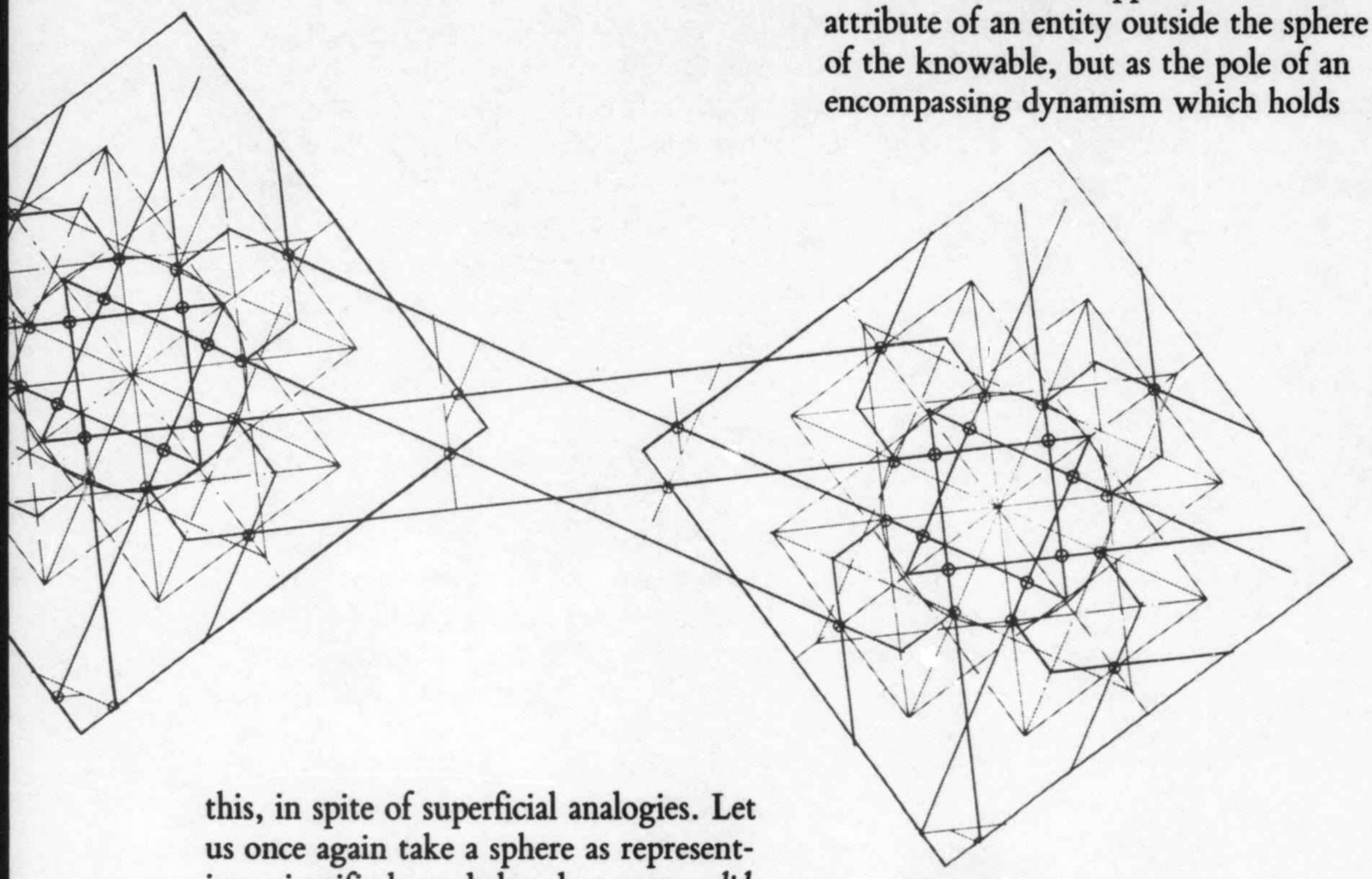
Thus, the dialectical-materialistic world view tells us that everything that is unknown will some day be revealed and known; so the nonrational is conceived of as an abstract *asymptotic point*,* devoid of any character of reality. What is real is rational—that is, what is reproducible and subject to scientific experiment and understanding.

The dialectical-materialistic description of knowledge can be visualized by representing scientific knowledge as a sphere, whose surface is the frontier between the known and the unknown. The sphere is solid, and all its interior points represent what is known at a given time. Constant human efforts throughout history push the frontier further and further back in an endless process, and with the growth of scientific knowledge the sphere's volume (in other words, what is known) also grows, simultaneously with its surface which is the frontier between the known and unknown. But the sphere's volume grows *faster* than its surface; the relation between volume and surface, with the passage of time, tends toward

*A point that approaches but never reaches a limit.

infinity, thus insuring the endlessly continuing progress of scientific rationality.

However, from the systemic and quantum viewpoint, a vision can be formed that is radically different from



this, in spite of superficial analogies. Let us once again take a sphere as representing scientific knowledge, but not a *solid* sphere: inside this sphere of the known there are also smaller spheres representing the unknown. In the process of the growth of scientific knowledge, the little spheres diminish in volume as well as in surface, and the relation between their volume and surface tends, with the passage of time, towards zero. Here also there is progress in scientific knowledge as time goes on; but the unknown is continually, *irreducibly* present: it shows itself by *points* which are present, no matter what happens, in the sphere of the known. And could not *the sacred* be defined as being precisely all that is irreducible in relation to mental operations? In the model we are suggesting, everything happens as though there were not an opposition but a permanent *cooperation* between the rational and the nonrational, which appear as the two contradictory poles of the same Reality which transcends them both. Everything happens as though there were a mutual interaction, a reciprocal transformation between the rational and the nonrational. The nonrational appears not as the attribute of an entity outside the sphere of the knowable, but as the pole of an encompassing dynamism which holds humanity at its center. This dynamism is the source of freedom, of spontaneity, of creativity in the evolution of natural systems.

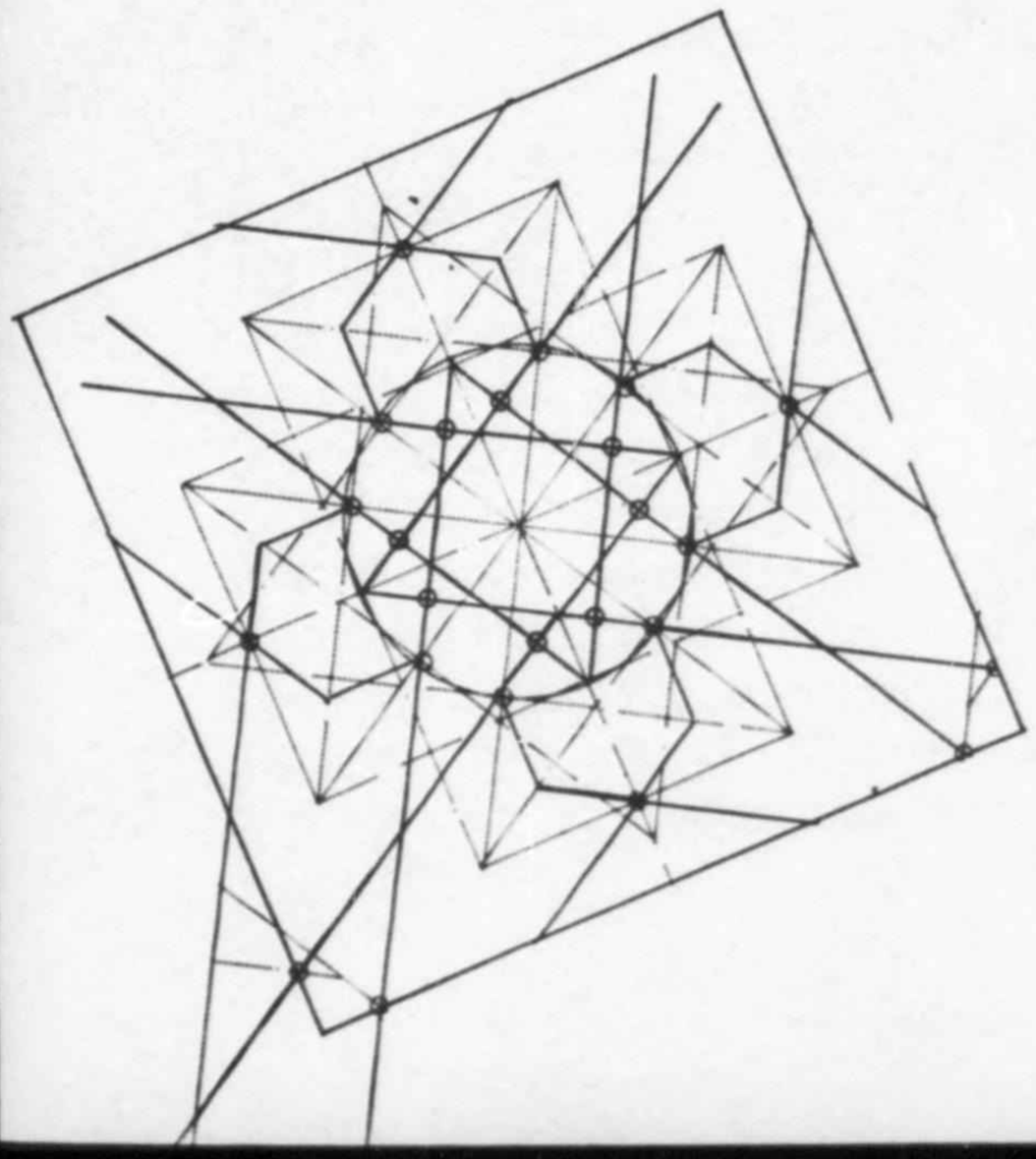
Scientific practice teaches us the value of interrogation, of continuously putting our own answers in question; it teaches us to choose between the "wealth" of knowing and the "poverty" of a continual questioning of our understanding. It teaches us to advance as if on a razor's edge, refusing every "definitive" theory, every utopian construction, every exclusive, closed system of thought. One learns to become oneself a question, feeling oneself thus related with oneself and others—an exercise that, however perilous, makes room for freedom and for tolerance.

Rational and nonrational, materiality and consciousness, matter and spirit,

finality and nonfinality, order and disorder, chance and necessity, etc., etc., are worn-out words, shriveled and meaningless, based on the *classical* view of Reality which is not in accordance with the facts. Their pairs of opposites provoke endless arguments which give rise to bitter feelings. We would have to invent completely new words and completely new concepts in order to approach the richness of a more complex, and at the same time more harmonious, Reality than that of the classical viewpoint.

But to create new concepts always leads onto a path where many dangers lie in wait, including those of the worst kind of deformation and the falsest kind of reconstruction. It seems to me that the only way to avoid these distortions and false starts is by means of a long, hard, patient research that would be truly transdisciplinary, open to the best abilities and based on scientific rigor.

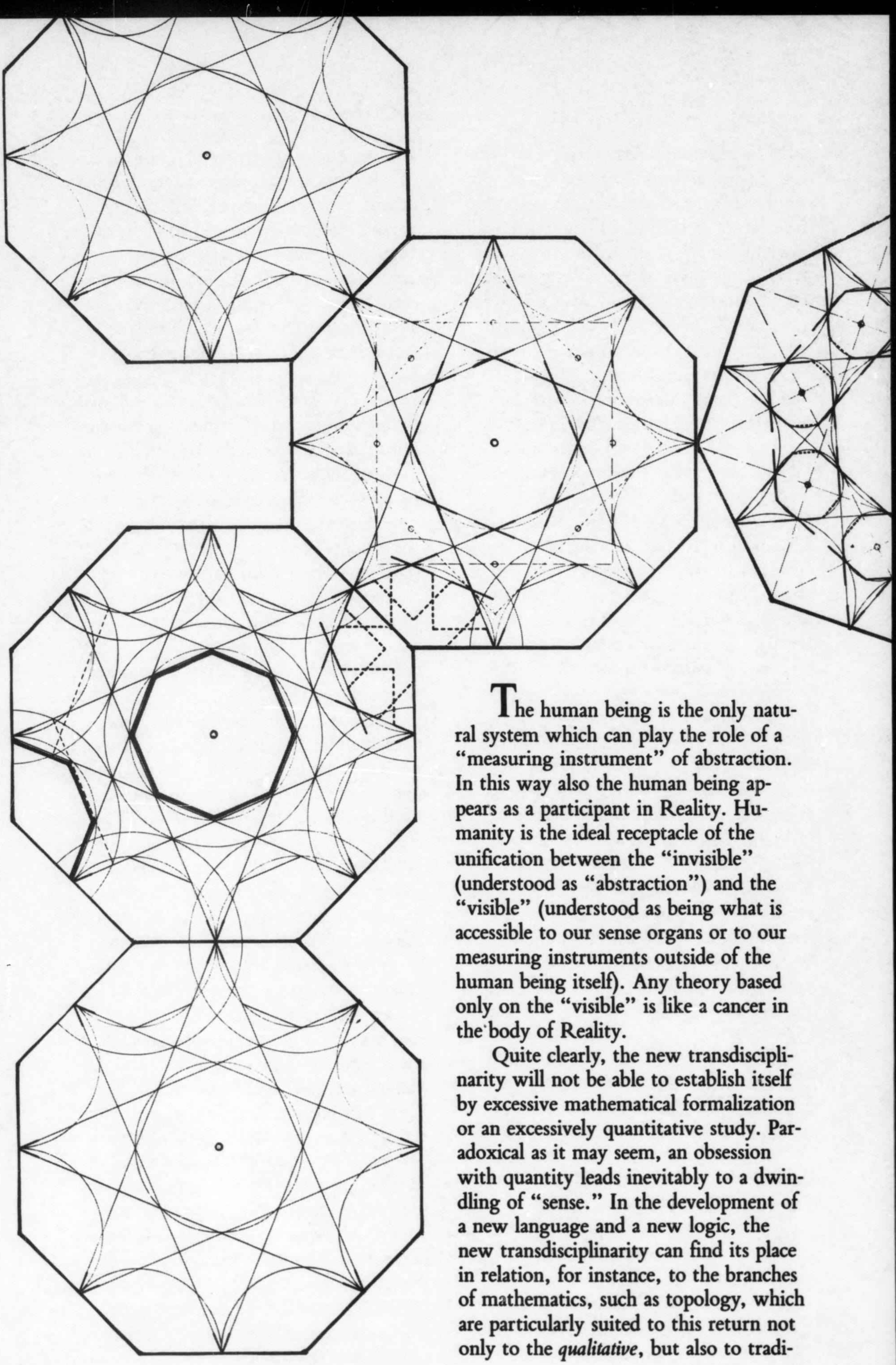
The new rationality will certainly have a difficult birth. But from time to time we must find the courage to throw outworn ideas and world views, even those that are deeply rooted in our ways of living, into the "trash cans of history." All the social, political, and economic ideas prevalent today were fashioned, whether consciously or not, by a world view founded on nineteenth-century science. Even the smallest actions in our daily life are dictated by our cultural environment.



Perhaps the expression "trash cans of history" is too strong; we should speak rather of "history's storehouses." Ideas now outgrown were necessary, after all, in other epochs, for the advancement of our knowledge. They even continue to have a certain validity for an *approximate* study of certain phenomena, on a certain scale. But the obstinacy of preserving these ideas at any cost as the foundation for an exclusive, totalitarian world view is one of the worst aberrations of thinking—and one which unfortunately is both active and destructive.

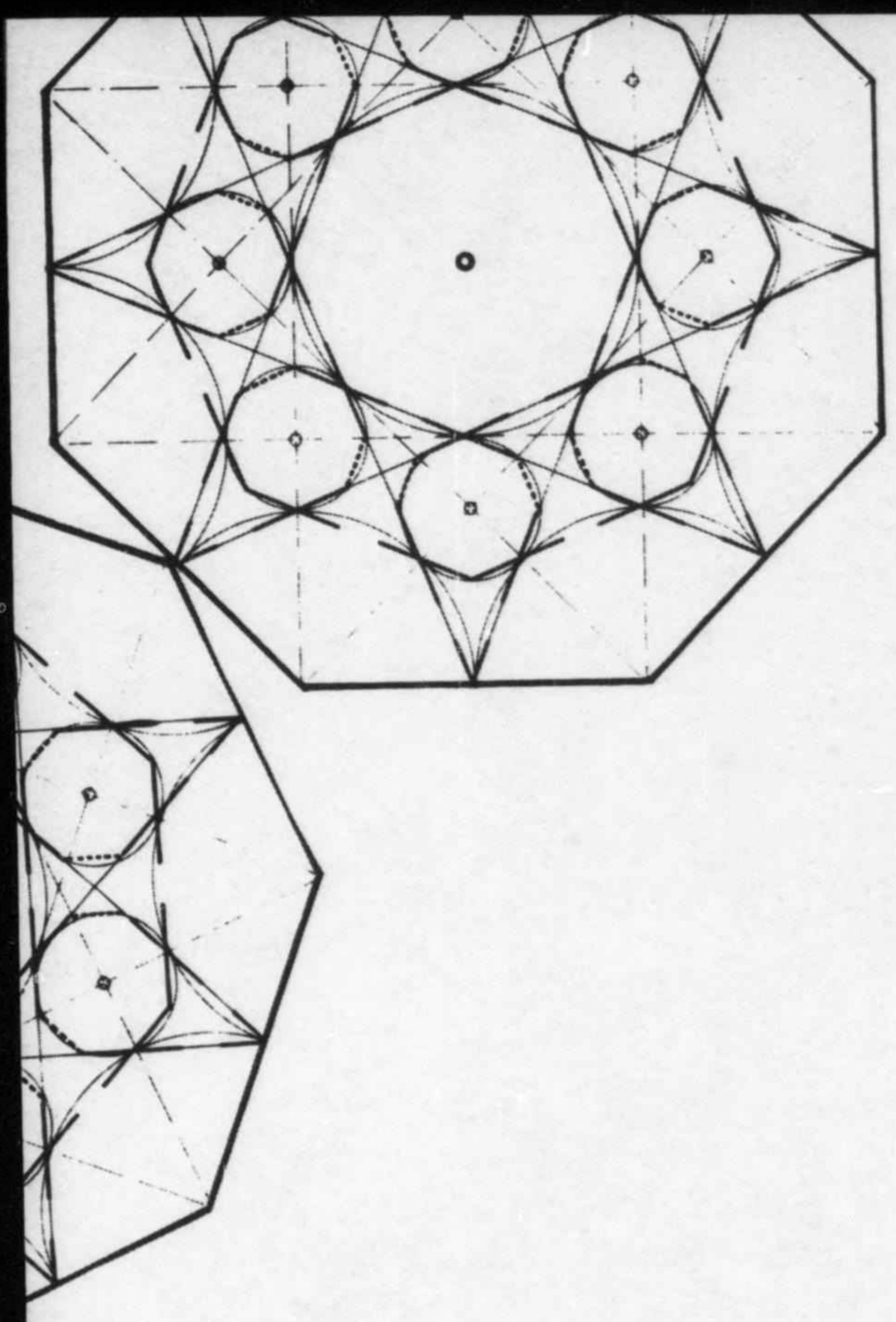
At present it is very difficult to foresee what the characteristics will be of the new transdisciplinarity which could reduce the harmful maladjustment between a worn-out vision of the world and a Reality infinitely more subtle and complex; but a few plausible hypotheses can be suggested.

Primarily, I conceive of this new transdisciplinarity as a long, hard, fundamental scientific research. Like all fundamental science, it would forbid any ideological or philosophical point of reference or any immediate goal, whether industrial or other. The *scientific mind* seems indispensable to me in the development of this new transdisciplinarity. Science is characterized by the fact that no hypothesis is ever brought in gratuitously—a hypothesis or basic idea that is already part of a scientific theory is never renounced unless experimental data or the logical coherence of the approach make it imperative. (Physicists, in Heinz Pagel's admirable formulation, are "conservative revolutionaries.") That is why real conceptual revolutions in science are so rare. On the other hand, *sham science* is characterized by the arbitrary introduction of hypotheses not forecast nor engendered by the scientific idea's own dynamic. The scientific mind must preside over the destiny of the new transdisciplinarity if it is not to degenerate rapidly into sham science.



The human being is the only natural system which can play the role of a "measuring instrument" of abstraction. In this way also the human being appears as a participant in Reality. Humanity is the ideal receptacle of the unification between the "invisible" (understood as "abstraction") and the "visible" (understood as being what is accessible to our sense organs or to our measuring instruments outside of the human being itself). Any theory based only on the "visible" is like a cancer in the body of Reality.

Quite clearly, the new transdisciplinarity will not be able to establish itself by excessive mathematical formalization or an excessively quantitative study. Paradoxical as it may seem, an obsession with quantity leads inevitably to a dwindling of "sense." In the development of a new language and a new logic, the new transdisciplinarity can find its place in relation, for instance, to the branches of mathematics, such as topology, which are particularly suited to this return not only to the *qualitative*, but also to tradi-



tional symbolic thought.

The reader will have gathered by this time that in my opinion all the branches of knowledge, without exception, must have their place in the new transdisciplinarity: human sciences and the exact sciences as well as art and tradition. Thus a veritable *metascience* could be born—that is, a science of the science of Reality (a partial example of which could be a future *metaphysics*, the physics of physics), which would bring us a little closer to this eternal enigma which is Reality. The present actual existence of a powerful and prophetic metamathematics shows us that such an undertaking, however difficult, is not completely utopic.

The progress and the extraordinary multiplicity of the present-day fields of knowledge are such that competence in any one field requires years and years of study, and no one can claim to be a specialist in more than one. The new transdisciplinarity could only be based on the highest skills. It could not be the work of only one person, however gifted; a Leonardo is inconceivable in our times. The solution would be found in an association of organisms, centers of transdisciplinary research, bringing together specialists in different fields and functioning with complete autonomy in regard to any economic, political, financial, ideological, or administrative power.

But in the name of what would these specialists dedicate their long, hard efforts, whose results could not materialize, at least not directly, in their own field of research? Clarification of this question: "In the name of what?" seems to me to be the absolutely primary condition to any transdisciplinary research undertaken in the sense previously described.

In this context, the strange meeting between science and tradition could play an important role. Tradition brings us a sense of *permanence* which is cruelly lacking today. It also reminds us that true knowledge cannot exclude the human being, and it can help us to rediscover the virtues of symbolic thought which is based on the idea of humanity's oneness with the world. The new transdisciplinarity, while taking as an axis the integral polarity of science and tradition, would produce a paradigm which necessarily would go beyond both science and tradition.

The goal of the new transdisciplinarity is clearly not to build a new utopia or a new dogma in the search for power and dominance. Like all science, it would disclaim the embodiment of absolute certainties, but it would lead, by means of ceaseless questioning of the "real," to the development of an open approach, which would constantly evolve and be fed by all human knowledge, and which would put humanity back at the center of humanity's concerns. A new development of human knowledge is urgently needed, in which the study of the universe and the study of mankind would support and bear witness to each other. ■

The Silent Guide

AN INTERVIEW WITH FATHER BEDE GRIFFITHS

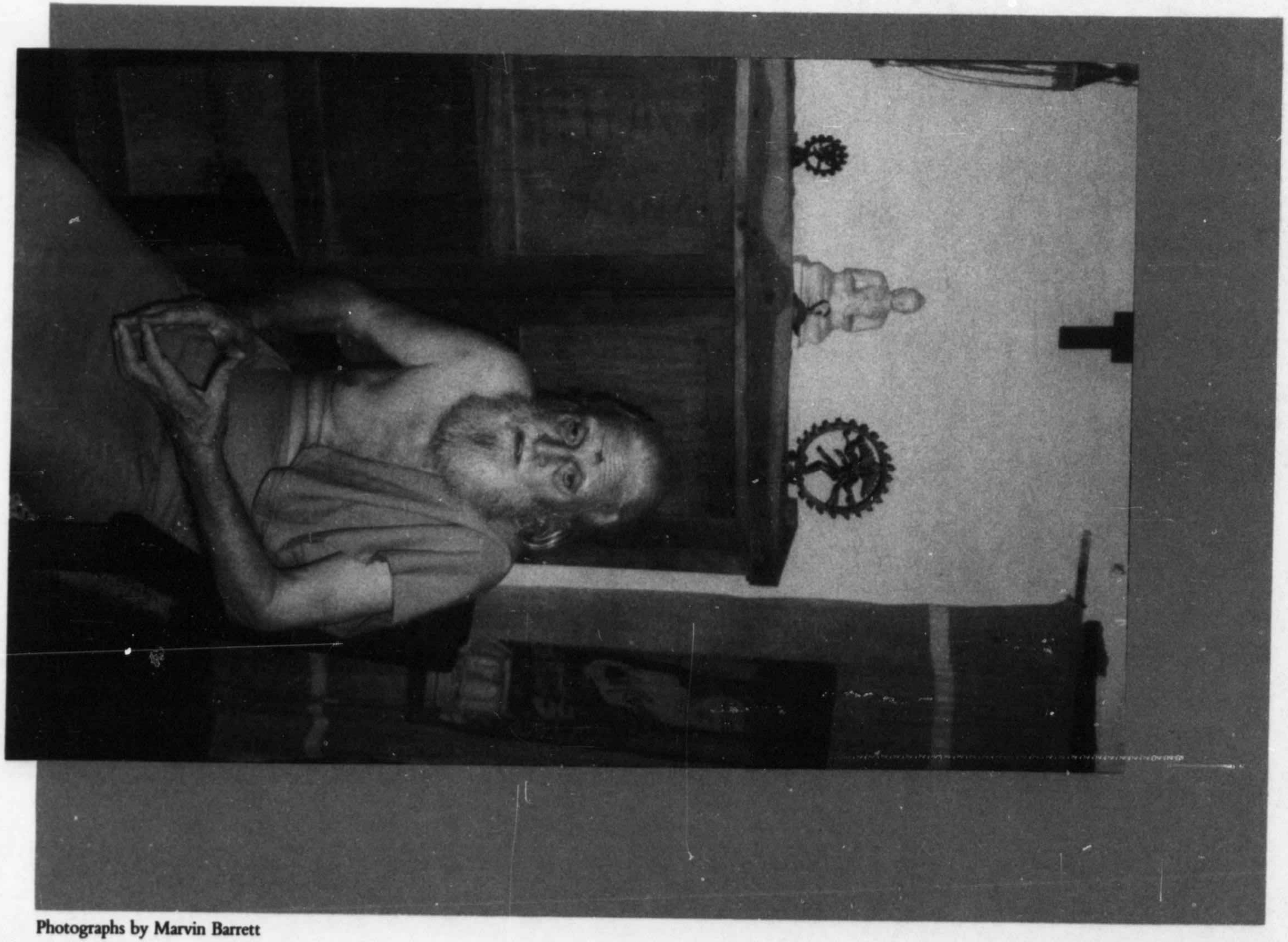
Few men today more clearly embody the concept of the witness in all its various facets than Father Bede Griffiths. Born to Anglican parents in England in 1906, he was tutored by C.S. Lewis at Oxford. Disillusionment with middle-class British life following World War I led him to the Roman Catholic Church and almost immediately into the Benedictine cloister.

After extended residence in three English monasteries, he pulled up roots in 1955 to continue his spiritual search as a Christian among the devout Hindu villagers of Southern India. For the past decade and a half he has presided over Saccidananda Ashram, a house of prayer and retreat in the beautiful rural countryside west of Tiruchirapalli on the shores of the sacred river Cavery.

The ashram, established by two French Benedictines, Jules Monchanin and Henri le Saux, was near extinction when Father Griffiths arrived. Now it is a thriving community with a core group of a dozen or so permanent residents, all Indian except for Father Griffiths. Transients make up the rest of the ashram's population. An average of fifty visitors from around the world are in residence at any given time, staying for a few days in the simple guest house or for months in one of the individual thatch-roofed cells scattered throughout the ten-acre property. In a year these visitors will total more than a thousand.

Life at the ashram fashions itself on that of the peasants in the surrounding villages who, although they retain their Hindu faith, see in Father Griffiths a true holy man. Indeed, Griffiths's dress is the saffron robe of the Hindu sannyasin, which he wears with a complete lack of self-consciousness. The community's rule is firmly based on St. Benedict's specifications for prayer, study, work, and meditation: "Meditation," says Father Griffiths, "is the base of it all." However, the Christian services, performed seated on the ground in the traditional yoga position, incorporate in addition to the elements of the Mass, chanting of the sacred syllable OM, *readings from Eastern scriptures, and the use of sandal paste, ashes, and the purple powder known as kumkumum. "The aim of our ashram . . . is to bring into our Christian life the riches of Indian spirituality, to share in that profound experience of God which originated in the Vedas, was developed in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, and has come down to us today through a continual succession of sages and holy men. From this experience of God lived in the context of an authentic Christian life, it is hoped that we may eventually be able to assist in the growth of a genuine Indian Christian liturgy and theology."*

Father Griffiths, a tall man, slightly stooped, goes about his duties firmly and gently, giving a daily homily at morning Mass and presiding over the three main services each day. Though in his eightieth year, he still travels throughout the world meeting



Photographs by Marvin Barrett

with groups interested in exploring the common ground of Eastern and Western religions and their crucial importance to each other. At home, he is usually at work on a book, six of which so far have been published—among them the contemporary spiritual classics The Golden String, The Return to the Center, *and* The Marriage of the East and the West *(Templegate Publishers, Springfield, Illinois).*

This interview took place in Father Griffiths's small and sparsely furnished single room. On one side was the ashram's open refectory, a terracotta building flanked by the kitchen and the cow shed where a dozen cows placidly stared out onto the ashram's central open space. On the other side was the octagonal library of Father Griffiths's own design and the Chapel of the Holy Trinity, the focal point of the community, a structure conforming to the style of South Indian temples. Rising above the sanctuary is a four-sided pyramid encrusted with colorfully glazed figures from Christian iconography.

Father Griffiths, representing a true reconciliation of the East and West in his ochre robes, his long white hair and beard, and his beautifully modulated Oxford English, spoke slowly and precisely with few pauses or hesitations.

—Marvin Barrett

Marvin Barrett Do you have a definition of what a witness means in the context of religion?

Father Bede Griffiths In meditation one tries to calm the body and the senses, to calm the mind, and become what's called "the silent witness," the witness beyond the mind. We in the West think that the mind is everything, but all Eastern practice is to get beyond the mind to the point of the silent witness, where you're witnessing yourself, where you've gone beyond the ego, beyond the self.

The Indian tradition rests on what the West has largely lost: that there are three levels. There is the level of the body and the level of the mind, which the Western world thinks is the end. But beyond the body is the spirit. It's the Atman, the pneuma of St. Paul, another dimension where we go beyond the mind, the senses, and the feelings, and we're aware of the transcendent reality. And that is the goal of life, to get to that.

M.B. How do you see the development of the capacity to witness validly? What is involved in that?

B.G. The supreme example of this in Hinduism is the guru who is regarded as able to fully awaken a person. But I think that at almost any level there can be a sharing—you see, we do actually influence the mind of the person we're talking to, and someone who has gone beyond the mind can help others to go beyond it.

M.B. The West, it seems to me, resists

the concept of the guru, someone one has to obey.

B.G. I do think it's true that the guru has a deeper insight and that he can awaken it in others, but the idea that one simply surrenders to the guru I find rather dangerous. It can help people at a certain stage, without a doubt, but equally it can lead to a sort of infantilism where you may lose your ego but you also lose your own dynamism and your own identity. The Indian temperament tends toward total surrender to the guru, but frequently there is little growth. And it can be very bad for the guru; he can become inflated if he's not careful, you see.

M.B. The final guru is the witness inside us.

B.G. Yes, but it's very tricky. You can reach quite a deep level of experience, but the ego is always there behind. It can always come up again, and sometimes you don't recognize it. There are some gurus who are really very egoistic. I remember one very well-known guru whom I respect saying of another one that he was ego from head to foot.

M.B. What about the dependence, or independence, of witnessing on faith?

B.G. I see faith as awakening to the transcendent. In the Christian perspective we say God is beyond the reason, beyond the created world altogether, and it's necessary to open the heart and the mind to the transcendent. Normally the transcendent manifests through some particular tradition. This seems to be where the religions differ. If you awaken to it in the Buddhist tradition you name it Nirvana and you enter into the Eight-Fold Noble Path and so on. And if you're a Hindu you name it Brahman or Atman and take the path of yoga, and if you're a Christian you name it God the Father and you enter into the path of Christ. So each is a path to the Supreme, having its own unique character.

M.B. What do you see as the purpose and the function of monastic life in regard to witnessing?

B.G. This awakening can take place under any circumstances, and does so. But if it's to be nourished and to grow, most people need a time apart. And many need not only a time, but a life. A monastery or an ashram is a place which exists precisely to enable people both to awaken and to grow in their awareness of the transcendent.

M.B. At a very sensitive period in their development.

B.G. Yes. And it can be temporary. In Buddhism particularly there is temporary monasticism, and many of us feel we should have temporary Christian monasticism. But in our tradition, normally, it's for life. You need centers where people can find this experience, and in the center you need one or two people, at least, who are fully committed to it. The Benedictine monk is one who is committed to this search, the experience of God, and who creates a center where others can find it.

M.B. It isn't so easy to establish such a

center, obviously, from your own experience.

B.G. And today perhaps more difficult than ever, because the rational mind is taking over everywhere. Science and technology make such incredible advances and people become more and more absorbed in them. That's entirely on the level of the rational mind, and people begin to think there's nothing beyond it. So it becomes more difficult now. And many people think that those who withdraw from the activity of life are not quite balanced or are escapists. But two things are happening. One is that the old system of science and technology is going on with marvelous developments, but the other is that there's been a breakthrough in science, in physics particularly, and an opening onto deeper levels of consciousness.

M.B. This has been going on for some time.

B.G. This has been going on for some time, and I feel that this movement is the hope for the future. In that sense it's becoming easier, but the main movement is still towards the advance of technology.

M.B. Do you think there is an exoteric and an esoteric tradition in witnessing?

B.G. I don't normally make that distinction as much as some people do. Especially in Christianity, I'm more inclined to think that the esoteric exists within the exoteric. They're not two separate movements. Many people see

only the more outer surface of religion, but there are always some who can see the inner depth of it. I think that Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas were right at the center of the esoteric church, while remaining with the exoteric.

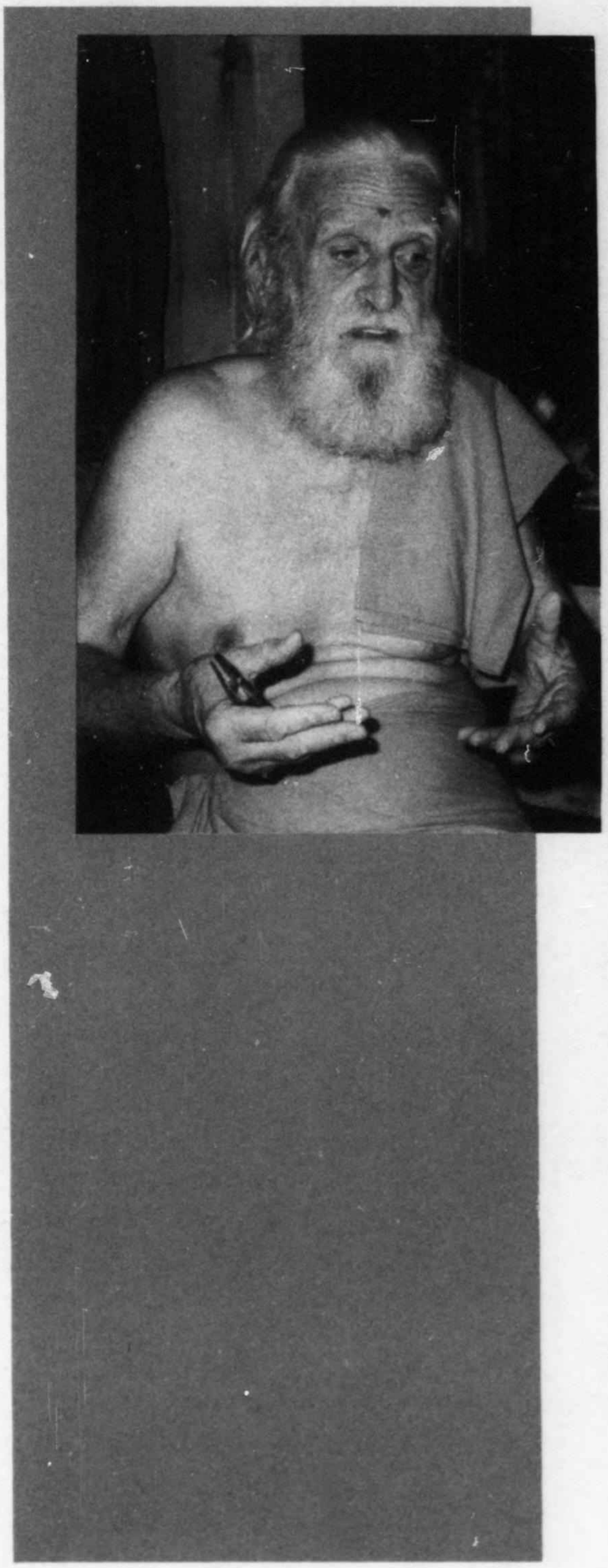
M.B. So there's always an access . . . .

B.G. Yes. I'm a Christian because I do believe that within the Christian churches, however external they are, the Holy Spirit is always present.

M.B. What about the relationship between morality and the witness?

B.G. This is rather difficult. Quite a high level of spiritual experience can still leave people without much moral development. Actually, I make a distinction here between the psychic and the spiritual. When you get into the world of meditation, you enter into the psychic world that is beyond the physical. All of parapsychology is there—clairvoyance, healing powers, and so on—and that world is both good and evil. You can go through it to the spiritual which transcends the psychic, and which properly is the world and realm of the witness. But the whole of the vast psychic world is in between, as it were, and people can get caught in it. And it can be positively evil. I think a man like Rajneesh has tremendous psychic power—but he's not a spiritual man at all. So it's totally ambivalent—it can be good and evil. And it's very difficult to separate them.

M.B. What of the witness in relation to



compassion?

B.G. That is very fundamental, I think. As you go beyond the mind with all its divisions into good and evil, and right and wrong, you come to infinite compassion. You've gone beyond all the limits and now you can see everything in a much deeper perspective. I think it's almost the sign of a genuine spiritual experience. Take Buddhism—it's very remarkable. You have a vast method of meditation and discipline, and at the heart of it there's this extraordinary compassion. Normally, you can tell a genuine master—a Zen master or a Hindu yogi—precisely by that; when you see their compassion, you know that they are genuine. When you don't see the compassion, they are highly suspect.

Although there are differences. Buddhist compassion is not quite the same as the Hindu devotion and love, and that's still not quite the same as the Christian agape. Each has its own distinctive character.

M.B. What do you see in regard to bearing witness to what you have witnessed inside yourself?

B.G. In India, we're very much concerned with the whole problem of poverty and suffering, and the feeling is very strong—particularly among Christians but also among Hindus—that a genuinely spiritual person must have concern for the poor and the suffering. So it links up with the problem of compassion. As you go deeper into your inner self and discover the transcendent mystery within, you become more open to the sufferings of people, to the problems of the world. We've had a tradition in the Catholic Church of separating active and contemplative lives. Some people are active and go into the world; some are contemplative and they leave the world and meditate. I think that's an artificial division. What is really wanted is very difficult. There are two different movements: one is withdrawal from the world in total silence and solitude; and the other is at the same time to have an openness horizontally. So there is a vertical and a horizontal movement which has a dual rhythm, a polarity which you have to discover.

M.B. Who are the ones in the Christian tradition who would exemplify this?

B.G. It's fairly common in the Christian tradition, really; Jesus Himself is the best witness of all. We sometimes forget that while He went about doing good, He was also at the same time in communion with the Father. Jesus was living in that communion with the Father, that inner Witness, and from that all His work, all His teaching, followed. It's typical of the Christian tradition, but unfortunately in the last two or three centuries we've rather gone over to the active side, and there are not many witnesses to a really profound contemplative experience.

M.B. When do you feel that one is ready to witness in the world?

B.G. Normally, I think, the witness itself tells you. This is very important. As

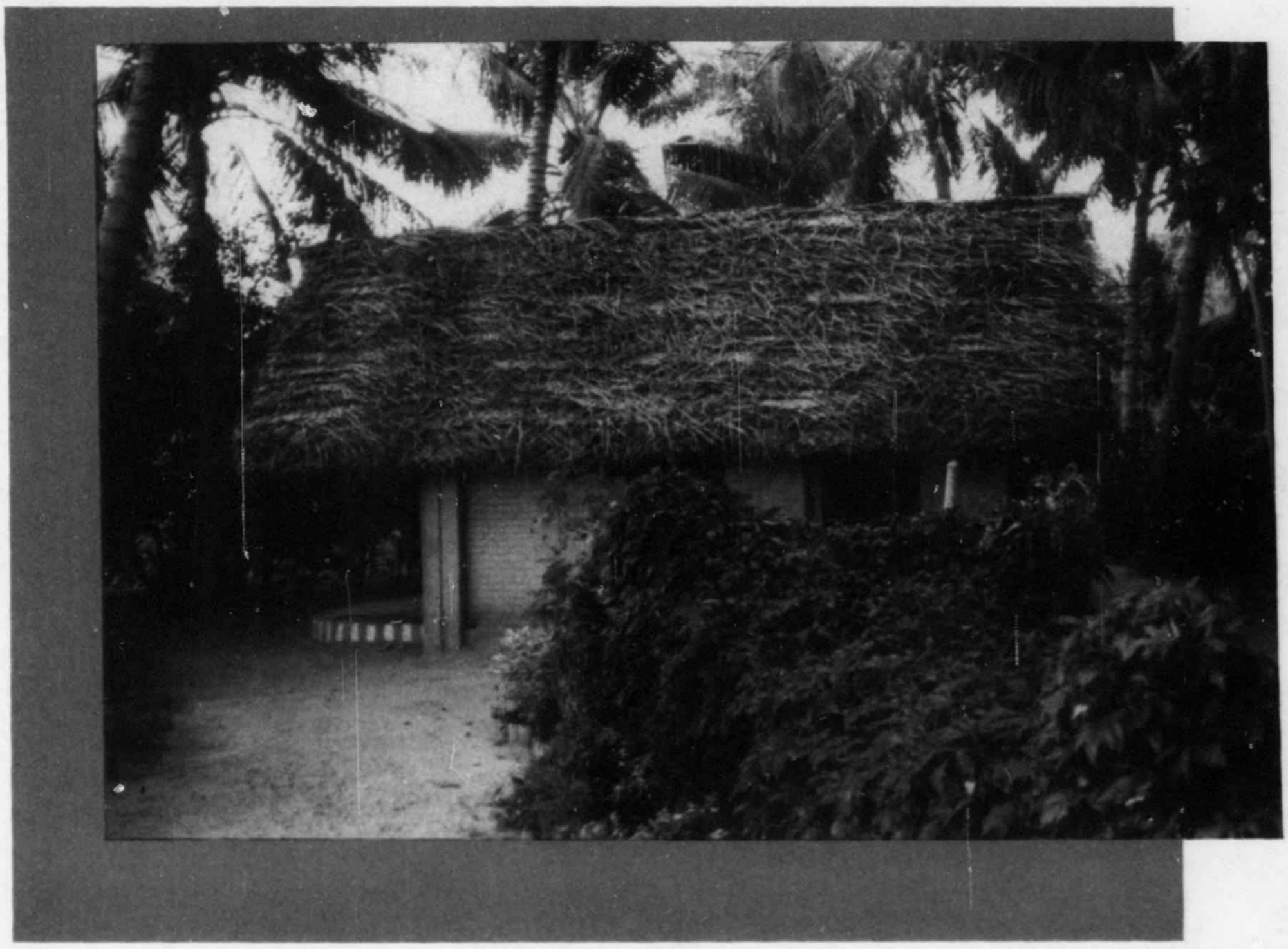
you become more and more aware of the guide within, your outer life is guided as to when and where to act. It's delicate, because some people get worried that they ought to be doing more, but I think you have to wait until the guidance comes.

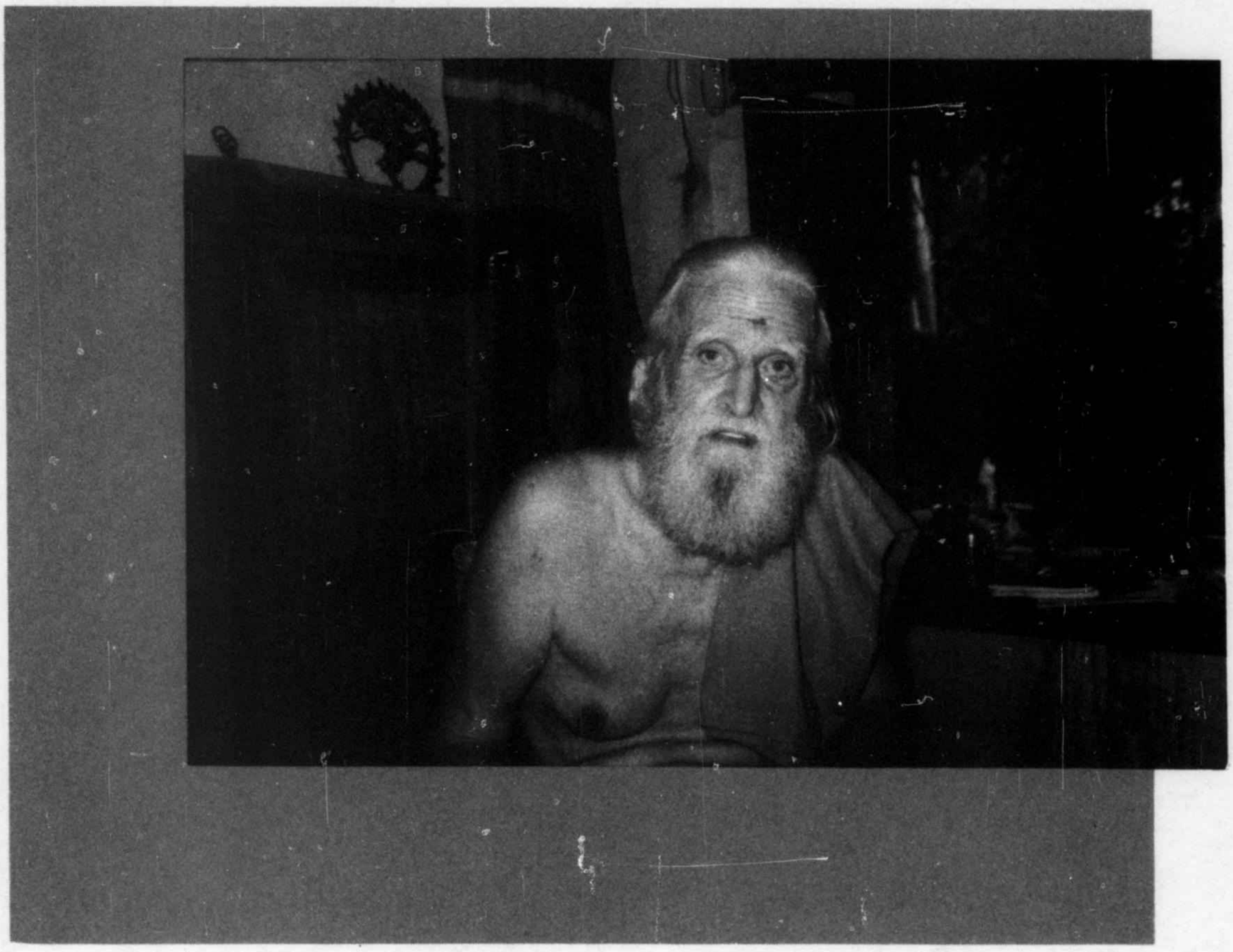
M.B. Where does martyrdom and asceticism enter into this process?

B.G. I think that martyrdom is simply when your inner experience brings you into conflict with forces without, and the guide tells you that this is fundamental, you must give your life for this.

Asceticism is a difficult subject. It can be an obstacle. The ego can get into asceticism very easily, in the mastering of the body and the mind and the senses. So I always feel that while asceticism has a certain value, it must always proceed in relation to the inner experience. And asceticism should come from within. It should be an inner guide which tells you, "Do this" or "Don't do that," rather than something you impose on yourself.

M.B. I'm interested in the whole idea of witnessing to another religious tradition; the crossover, in which you are involved.





B.G. That is extremely important. There I find two dangers. The danger in the West until recently has been to see all religions as completely separate, and even opposed. But the danger in the East is the opposite, and that is to say that all religions are the same, that there is no real difference at all. We have to learn to see the unity and distinction. Each religion has its unique character. We must respect that. For the Christians, it's very important. There is a unique Christian gospel and message that we want to share with others. But at the same time we need to recognize that there is a unique message in Hinduism and in Buddhism, which we need to share as well.

When I first came to India, I attended a very interesting meeting in Bangalore of the Union for the Study of the Great Religions. It was founded by Radakrishnan, when he was a professor at Oxford. Radakrishnan actually came to the meeting. We had representatives of all the religions of India there, witnessing to their own religion. It was held at Theosophical Hall, and there were quite

a number of Theosophists there, and they were all saying, "We must get beyond all these religions and meet in pure spiritual truth." That is the opposite, you see. I think you must live within your tradition, respect the others, and grow towards unity. But don't mix them all up or think there's another way you can get beyond them all.

M.B. When would you say that you began your own witnessing?

B.G. Inner or outer? Well, I had very deep experiences which I recorded in *The Golden String* and that set me on the path. And then I was twenty years in the monastery in England and I was witnessing in a way. I wrote a good deal, in a small way. I always felt that I was living for others; I never felt that I was living just for myself. But I suppose the critical time came when I felt the attraction for India and was given the opportunity to come. And then it was a quite definite effort to try to witness to the Christian tradition of contemplation within the context of the Hindu and Buddhist.

M.B. How do you feel that your witnessing to the Indian people has proceeded? Are they opening out to it?

B.G. Yes and no. If you try to witness to a contemplative tradition, to the spiritually transcendent in Christianity, Hindus are deeply interested and impressed. But they don't see the differences in it. They see you as a holy man, even a saint, but they don't see the difference, you see. So I think the task is to witness to a distinctive Christian contemplative life—which is at the same time open to the Hindu, to the Buddhist, and to other religions.

M.B. How would you distinguish between the missionary thrust and the genuine witnessing?

B.G. I don't see any point in a kind of evangelical witness which is not a witness to the spirit. As Mahatma Gandhi used to say, "You should spread the Gospel as a rose would spread its scent." Something that comes from your heart and from your life and from your whole inner being—and then that is convincing.

M.B. I wonder about witnessing in relation to self-realization or ecstasy.

B.G. The silent witness: that really is self-realization. It's finding the real self, which is the witness behind the active self. I always understand it in the Christian sense of the spirit, the pneuma of St. Paul; and that is the capacity for God in each human person. There's this point of the spirit beyond the body, beyond the soul with all of its activities; there's a point of the spirit where we're open to God. It's the point of our openness to the Divine. And that is the point of witness and of self-realization. The spirit is the principle of the self: the Divine self manifesting in that human self at the point of the spirit.

M.B. And this would be synonymous with ecstasy?

B.G. Well, now, ecstasy has two senses, you see. One is when you lose consciousness of the body-soul, and you're only experiencing the spirit. I think much more normal is an awakening to the spirit, to the presence of God within, while remaining fully conscious of the physical, the psychosomatic level.

Normally when people speak of ecstasy they mean a going out of your present consciousness into a state of trance or something like that. To me it's important that the experience of God, of the true self, does not destroy or in any way inhibit the lower self, the psychophysical organism,which is your means of experience and of expression. You go beyond it, but you don't reject or deny it.

M.B. What about the body? What is its function in the witness?

B.G. I was particularly interested in that number of PARABOLA on "The Body." I feel that in the Christian view, which I share, the body is of very great importance. There is a tendency in certain forms of Hinduism, certainly, to think that the purpose of spiritual exercises is to get beyond the body. But in my understanding, the human being is body-soul-spirit, and it's an integrated whole. Body and soul—the body is dependent upon and integrated with soul, and body and soul are dependent upon and integrated in spirit. The body is part of the wholeness of the human being. And that's why incarnation is very important. God enters into the psychophysical realm and assumes it and doesn't discard it. And at the resurrection the body is not discarded, it is assumed into the life with the soul and the spirit.

M.B. You would be suspicious of ascetic practices.

B.G. Yes, I'm very suspicious. I think the place of the body is a significant part of the Christian contribution. I always like to quote St. Paul: "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit." Glorify God in your body. And another very interesting one, "The body is not for fornication but for the Lord." The same body which fornicates is for the Lord. So it's the total human being which is to enter into the life of the spirit.

M.B. There is a long tradition of the punishing of the body in all religions.

B.G. I think it's particularly bad in Christianity. Punishing the body and suppressing the senses, the feelings, and the imagination—it's a method, and it can work for those who have strong will and character. They can attain to the spirit through that sort of negative approach. But for many people it's disastrous. They precisely need to strengthen the body and the senses and the feelings. Many people begin on a path from the emotions, and if you emphasize the soul and the mind and the will you're stressing the very thing that needs to be calmed down.

M.B. What was Christ's concept of witnessing? I've always been confused by the idea that you should not hide

your light under a bushel, yet you must withdraw to pray. Those two concepts always seemed to me to be contradictory.

B.G. Jesus Himself is witnessing, not so much in what He says or what He does, but He Himself is bearing witness to the Father. So the two sides are there. For a Hindu, you go to the holy man, simply to see him, feel the presence, and not so much to hear any words. The holy man witnesses by his silence. You have to be open to it and to come into the presence. The Christian is sent out, to preach and to teach. The two are present in both, however. The life of the Buddha is a supreme example. I think we have to realize—and Western people find this difficult—that any kind of external word, preaching or teaching, is secondary to the inner reality, the inner self, the inner experience. That is what we have to learn. So many Christians think the whole thing is going out preaching and teaching.

M.B. If you have this gift for evangelism, it's very tempting to use it.

B.G. And it's very difficult for your ego not to get into it.

M.B. What about the danger in connection with premature witnessing?

B.G. It's very serious. Your own ego gets into it, you forget that it's the Divine Himself who has come through your ego, and you confuse the Divine with the ego. That's disastrous.

Many Christian saints, monks in particular, fled from people when they had a conversion experience. People would flock to them and they would flee further away, to the desert. They were so afraid of getting involved in the ego in that way. They had an experience of the spirit, and people coming to see them and agitating them in so many ways prevented that inner growth, that inner experience, which to them was the reality.

M.B. Would there be a point when they would feel certain enough and strong enough so they could go back?

B.G. They varied, you know. St. Anthony's the best example. He spent twenty years in the desert, fled from everybody, but then people came to him and he came out and preached in the most marvelous way. But there were others who would feel this pressure around them which would lead them to seek greater solitude.

M.B. There is a danger, it would seem to me, of premature witnessing, in one who has had a conversion experience and who immediately wants to go out and convert the world.

B.G. Exactly, yes. You confuse your own particular experience with the universal element in it. Every conversion is a discovery of the absolute in some measure, within a particular, limited human context. And you think your own context is the only truth. You experience the absolute in a unique way, and later confuse the absolute with the unique way in which you've experienced it. ■

Shahadah

VICTOR DANNER

Like other spiritual ways, Sufism speaks of an interior, conscious reality that is the ultimate and unique Witness *(shahid)* of all things within and outside man. It is identified with the Divinity, or *Allah*; but here, in this aspect of things, God is seen as being immanent, that is to say, within the universe and therefore within man, in contrast to the complementary view of the transcendence of God, which pictures Him as beyond the universe and man.

In both cases, we are in the presence of a spatial symbolism: to speak of God as being within or beyond the universe is but a figure of speech, although based on the intrinsic symbolism of things. The two aspects are indeed complementary, but Muslim theologians stress transcendence in order to avoid the danger of pantheism, or the identification of God with the world.

The Sufis, for their part, stress the immanence of God within man and the universe, but without this implying any material identification at all. Transformations and changes in the world do not affect God, even if He dwells within man in his innermost heart as the Spirit, the ultimate Witness of all things. Because this can easily give rise to misconceptions among those who do not have a contemplative bent of mind, many Sufi expressions, such as the famous *Ana 'l-Haqq* ("I am God," or "I am the Truth") of al-Hallaj, will seem blasphemous in the light of exoteric Islamic law and theological dogma. But from an esoteric perspective the same expressions will be understood as the formulations of the inner Spirit speaking through saintly persons.

From the above, we can discern that Islam has two levels of comprehension, the exoteric and esoteric—the Law and the Path—that do not see the Koran and the Prophet in the same way. Even the fundamental sacred formula of Islam, "There is no divinity other than God," which is called the *Shahadah* ("Testimony," or "Witnessing"), can be interpreted in a purely external and literal sense to mean simply that there is only one God; or it can be given metaphysical and spiritual interpretations that go all the way to the negation of one's ego and the affirmation of the Divine Ego.

Needless to say, the exoteric interpretation lacks the depth and wisdom of the esoteric Sufi viewpoint. Thus, since the term *Shahadah* also means "Witnessing," one can be a witness, in a purely verbal sense, to the Oneness of God, rejecting all polytheistic attempts to ascribe divinity to other beings and things, and this is what characterizes Islamic exoterism. Or one can carry one's witnessing much further: for the Sufis, the Ninety-Nine "Most-Beautiful Names" of God in the Koran can be interpreted

as paraphrases of the *Shahadah*. We then have: "There is no guide other than the Guide"; "There is no light other than the Light"; "There is no creator other than the Creator," and so on. Among those Divine Names is "the Witness" *(al-Shahid)*: from the Sufi metaphysical viewpoint, the phrase "There is no witness other than the Witness" means either that all empirical witnesses in the universe are reducible to the one Divine Witness or else that He alone is the real Witness in the particular consciousness of each being, whether that being is aware of this or not.

The Koran says of *Allah*: "Thou art a Witness to all things." We are reminded here of the silent Witness (*saksin*) of the Hindu Vedanta; and hence it is not surprising that the Sufis should have developed interpretations for such verses that are reminiscent of Hindu and other Eastern mystical positions. Just as Hinduism teaches that the Intellect (*buddhi*) in man discerns the movements of his mind, but is above them, unruffled in its calmness, so likewise Sufism says that the Intellect *(aql)* in man is the faculty that witnesses all things in his soul. Hinduism makes a distinction between the individual *buddhi* that connects man with the *mahat-buddhi* ("Universal Intellect"); and Sufism says, in a similar fashion, that the individual Intellect in man issues from the Universal Intellect *(aql kulli)*.

According to a statement of the Prophet Muhammad, "The first thing created by God was the Intellect" (or "the Spirit," in a variant version, for Spirit and Intellect are synonymous). The Spirit is both uncreated in its essence and created at one and the same time. In the Prophet's sentence, the created Universal Spirit is the luminous center of the entire creation, which then issues from its central point like rays of light moving in different directions. One of those rays of light intersects with the plane of man's soul, in the innermost heart. Because man's Spirit can return to its universal source—as if it were a ray of sunlight reabsorbed back into the sun—we speak of "spiritual realization," namely, the awareness that we are united with God through the Spirit.

But the quest does not stop with reabsorption into the Universal Intellect (or Spirit). It goes back all the way to the uncreated Divine Intellect that is both the origin and the end of the Path. That is no doubt the significance of yet another statement made by the Prophet, but this time it is *Allah* speaking through him: "The heavens and earth contain Me not, but the heart of My believing servant does contain Me." By "heart" we must understand Intellect or Spirit, which plunges into the depths of the Divine Essence. "Intellect," affirms Meister Eckhart, in a corroborative remark, "is the temple of God and nowhere does He shine more holy than there." This is the Intellect in the heart, it is not reasoning in the brain; the first is unitive and intuitive, the second is separative and dualistic. It is the Intellect alone that reaches God, not reasoning, for the latter can never transcend its limitations, especially the subject-object duality.

We can therefore appreciate that there are degrees to the question of Witnessing, depending upon what faculty we use. If we witness orally that God is One, that is purely verbal; if we witness with reasoning that God is One, that is rational discourse based on a mixture of faith and reason; but if we transcend these limitations and witness through

the illuminative knowledge of the Spirit, then our witnessing is no longer an individualistic perception. Instead, it is an intellectual intuition that unites the subject-knower with the object-known in a single flash of certitude that admits of no doubt or hesitation and that engenders a luminous peace in the soul.

In a sense, the whole point of the Sufi Path is to reach that interior Witness through experiential knowledge of the Real, or through what is called gnosis. The Sufis are unanimous in saying that this knowledge cannot be reached through merely rational discourse proceeding from reasoning. This type of mental activity is indirect and reflective; but it does have a function, like man's other powers, in preparing the way for the purification of the Intellect, which lies buried in the layers of illusion and forgetfulness that cloud its solar radiance, preventing it from shining forth in man's soul. Let the dark clouds that hide the intellective Witness be purified from the soul and it will radiate within man as the sun does when the clouds hiding it on a gloomy day are banished.

Ibn 'Ata'illah, the Egyptian Sufi, poses this question to the beginner anxious to attempt the spiritual ascension all the way back to the One: "How can the heart be illumined while the forms of creatures are reflected in its mirror?" What this means is that the heart is really a mirror-like substance, luminous by nature, that needs to be purified of the multiplicity of forms reflected on its

surface by the forms coming from the world within the mind. A mirror that reflected no creatures would be an undifferentiated light, like the Divine Essence itself, which is said to be the very ground of the Intellect.

In another aphorism, Ibn 'Ata'illah provides the clue to understanding the origins of multiplicity when he says, "That which shows you the existence of His Omnipotence is that He veiled you from Himself by what has no existence alongside of Him." This important maxim tells us a number of things. First, the world has an illusory aspect to it which arises from the actual creative Omnipotence of God; it is not, therefore, an accidental feature of the creation that we witness with our everyday minds the multiplicity and other-than-Godness of all beings and things, for all of this has its origins in the Divine Art of the Creator. Second, that illusory side to things does not mean that they have no real existence, as if they were mere nothings; on the contrary, they have been given existence and are real at their appropriate level. And third, while they are real, they are immediately reduced to nothingness alongside of the Divine Reality, for there can be no reality competing with the One, otherwise there would be two or more ultimate realities, two or more eternals, and so on, which would destroy the metaphysical uniqueness of the One, *Allah*.

Speaking of God, the Koran says, "Vision grasps Him not, but He grasps vision." The vision in question is of course spiritual; the verse is stating an axiom in all Sufism: one cannot grasp the Divine Witness for the simple reason that it is He who "grasps" all things. Nevertheless, the actual process of witnessing does necessarily start out with an empirical, individualistic awareness that is separated from its Object, which is God. The infinitude of the Object rules out the possibility of a limited, finite mind grasping the Infinite; but the reverse is not to be ruled out, according to the Koranic verse. How to understand this in a way that does not harshly confront the Infinite with the finite, but that allows for an intermediate stage between the two that gives to the finite the possibility of an expansion into a semi-infinite reality, and to the Infinite a contraction into a more limited state? Previously, we had spoken of the human Intellect as being an individuated ray of Light coming from the Universal Intellect, that spiritual Sun at the center of the created universe. Beyond that Intellect is the uncreated Divine Intellect of God, which has none of the limitations of the other two. As the divine consciousness moves down the ontological plane towards man, it contracts first into the Universal Intellect, and then afterwards into the particular Intellect of man, which transcends him and all his powers of the soul. Somewhere between the divine plane, on the one hand, and the human plane, on the other, there is that intermediate spiritual world of the Universal Intellect where the divine breaks through into the human and the human into the divine in a mysterious fashion defying all comprehension or articulated analysis.

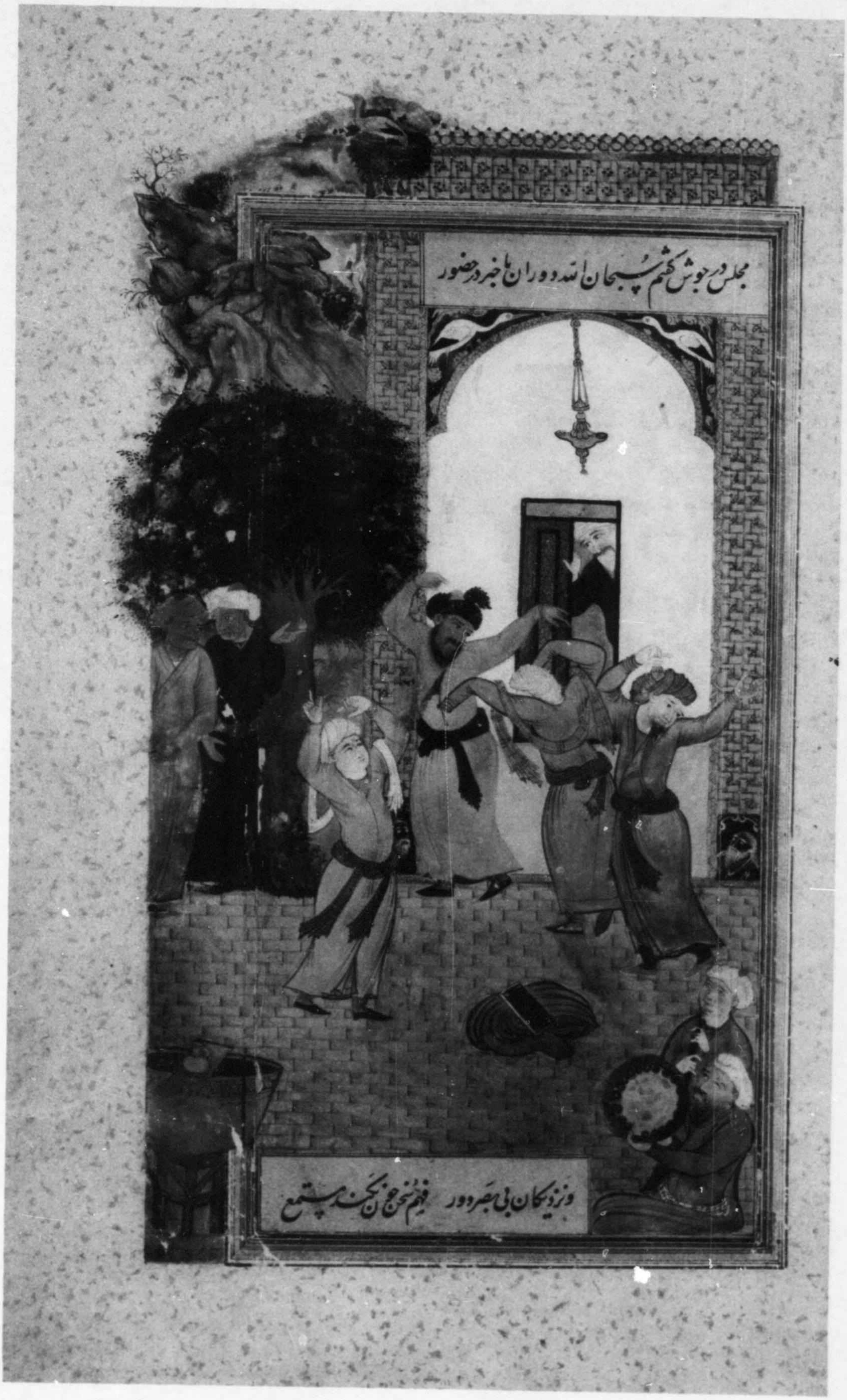
As a result, the mirror in the heart can be taken on all three planes simultaneously or otherwise, according to case. When Ibn al-Arabi suggests to us that "when looking at yourself in the mirror, try to see the mirror itself, and you will find that you cannot do so," he means the Intellect by the physical mirror. So long as the empirical self, which is a form, is present to your view, you cannot see the mirror. In the inner life of the Spirit, we cannot reach

its mirror so long as creatures are reflected on it, as previously noted. But in the sage, the Intellect acts as a mirror on all three planes, which is evidently what Ibn al-Arabi had in view when he says elsewhere, "In seeing your true self, He is your mirror, and you are His mirror in which He sees His Names; now His Names are not other than Himself."

The Intellect, in other words, is the "eye of the heart" that permits the sage to see himself in God and God to see Himself in man. Purification in the Sufi Path is often referred to as the "polishing of the mirror" in the heart, so that the eye of the heart can see spiritual realities previously veiled from it by the imperfections and multiple veils in the soul. That polishing is accomplished by meditational exercises and the well-known Sufi practice of remembering the One through the invocation *(dhikr)* of one of the Ninety-Nine Names of God, such as *Allah*. With time, the veils are gradually gotten rid of, allowing the mirror of the inner heart—the interior Witness—to shine without obstacles. It is this which leads to the realization of the supreme identity between God and man, an awareness of which must obviously be present even in the first steps of the Path, an awareness that becomes increasingly concrete in the later stages.

In a famous statement wherein the Divinity speaks through the mouth of the Prophet, the supreme identity is described in the following terms: "My servant draws nigh unto Me, and I love him; and when I love him, I am his ear, so that he hears by Me, and his eye, so that he sees by Me, and his tongue, so that he speaks by me, and his hand, so that he takes by Me." Strictly speaking, without the presence of the Spirit in man's innermost being, he could not function at all, for he would have no life nor consciousness nor even individual existence, since all of those traits come to him from the Spirit, death being the departure of the Spirit from man's body, taking the soul with it for judgment. That is what Rumi is saying in the following remark, when he talks about the Mind (or the Spirit): "Were not the shadow of the Mind over man, all his members would become atrophied; the hand would not grasp in due manner, the foot would not go straight upon the road, the eye would not see anything, whatever the ear heard it would hear awry." In short, all of the powers of our soul are ontologically dependent on the transcendent Mind. But this is evidently not the same thing as the Prophet's statement: therein the realized sage is described, for he knows that it is indeed the Spirit that operates through the powers of his soul and body, something that he had not concretely known before beginning to tread the Path. That treading is referred to in the beginning of the statement with the words, "My servant draws nigh unto Me, and I love him." The effort to draw closer to the inner Witness yields interior graces that in turn attract the soul even more.

At what point in the Path the Spirit takes over the powers of the individual is another question. The inner Witness is present at the first steps, as was said; at the end, we are aware that it has always been there and has never been absent. That awareness of the unique Reality leads to what the school of Ibn al-Arabi calls "the Oneness of Being" *(wahdat al-wujud)*, or the realization that all being or existence stems from the one absolute Being of *Allah*. While we are cognizant, in this world of multiplicity, of myriads of beings, this is an illusion, for all being is One, even though it might be refracted by the surfaces of the different levels of reality. The sun's rays are multiple and are reflected off the waves of a lake, giving the impression of an endless series of suns; but in reality


مجلس در جوش کثم پسبحان الله دوران باجبر در حضور
وزدیکان بی بصر دور فیم تنحج جن بکند پستمع

there is only one sun that is at the origin of the countless rays of light that strike the constantly shifting waves on the lake's surface. We see the multiplicity of suns, but the doctrine of the Oneness of Being insists that there is but one sun reflected everywhere.

Instead of the Oneness of Being, we could have spoken of "the Oneness of Witnessing" *(wahdat al-shuhud)*, or of "the Oneness of Consciousness," which is the other great school of Sufi metaphysical thinking that stresses, not the Object of knowledge, but the Subject. There is the witness, the object witnessed, and the act of witnessing—a familiar trio of terms, as is the lover, the beloved, and love, or the knower, the known, and knowledge. The point is that the real Witness in everyone who witnesses is God; the real Object witnessed in everything is God; and the real Witnessing in all individual acts of witnessing is God. It is *Allah* who is the real Lover, Knower, and the like; it is He who is the real Beloved and the Known; and He is the ultimate Love and Knowledge. The Subject is its own Object. Unlike the school of the Oneness of Being, which stresses the objectively Real, this school accentuates subjective knowledge, or consciousness, that has its ontological roots in the absolute Witness, the ultimate Subject, who is God. The multiplicity of witnesses, due to the innumerable mirrors reflecting the one solar Witness, give us the same image as above, but seen this time as multiple subjectivities that reflect the one unique Subject. The two perspectives are complementary: everything depends on whether one wants to emphasize the divine Object as the unique Reality or the divine Subject as the unique Knower or Witness.

The Koran, in one of the verses often quoted by the Sufis, says, "Wheresoever ye turn, there is the Face of God." This can be understood from the vantage point either of the Oneness of Being or of the Oneness of Witnessing. If the former, then all beings are reflections of God's Being, His "Face," as the text says; if the latter, then we witness, through the connection of our intellectual faculty with that of God's, that all forms in this world come from the "ideas" in the Divine Intellect, the Mind that is in all things, the unique Subject.

In this connection, the Prophet's remark, "Whosoever knows himself knows his Lord," is also bound up with the two schools just mentioned. It is sometimes interpreted in the sense that, once aware of the limitations of our individual selves, we know that our Lord's Self is unlimited. But seen in the light of the Oneness of Being, the remark means that he who knows the being of his soul knows that it comes from the pure Being of his Lord; or, in the perspective of the Oneness of Witnessing, it means that the consciousness of the soul can come only from the Consciousness of the Lord.

To arrive at the awareness of the Oneness of Being or of Witnessing, Sufism proposes to the beginner that he tread the Path under the guidance of a teacher, the Sufi Shaykh or Pir. It is the Shaykh who furnishes his disciples with the teachings and practices of the Path, the weapons he will use to combat and vanquish his ego, the dragon within. But it is the Witness within us who, like the full moon at night, lights our way from the beginning to the end: "*Allah* is the Light of the heavens and the earth," the Koran tells us. "Light upon Light! God doth guide whom He will to His Light." ■

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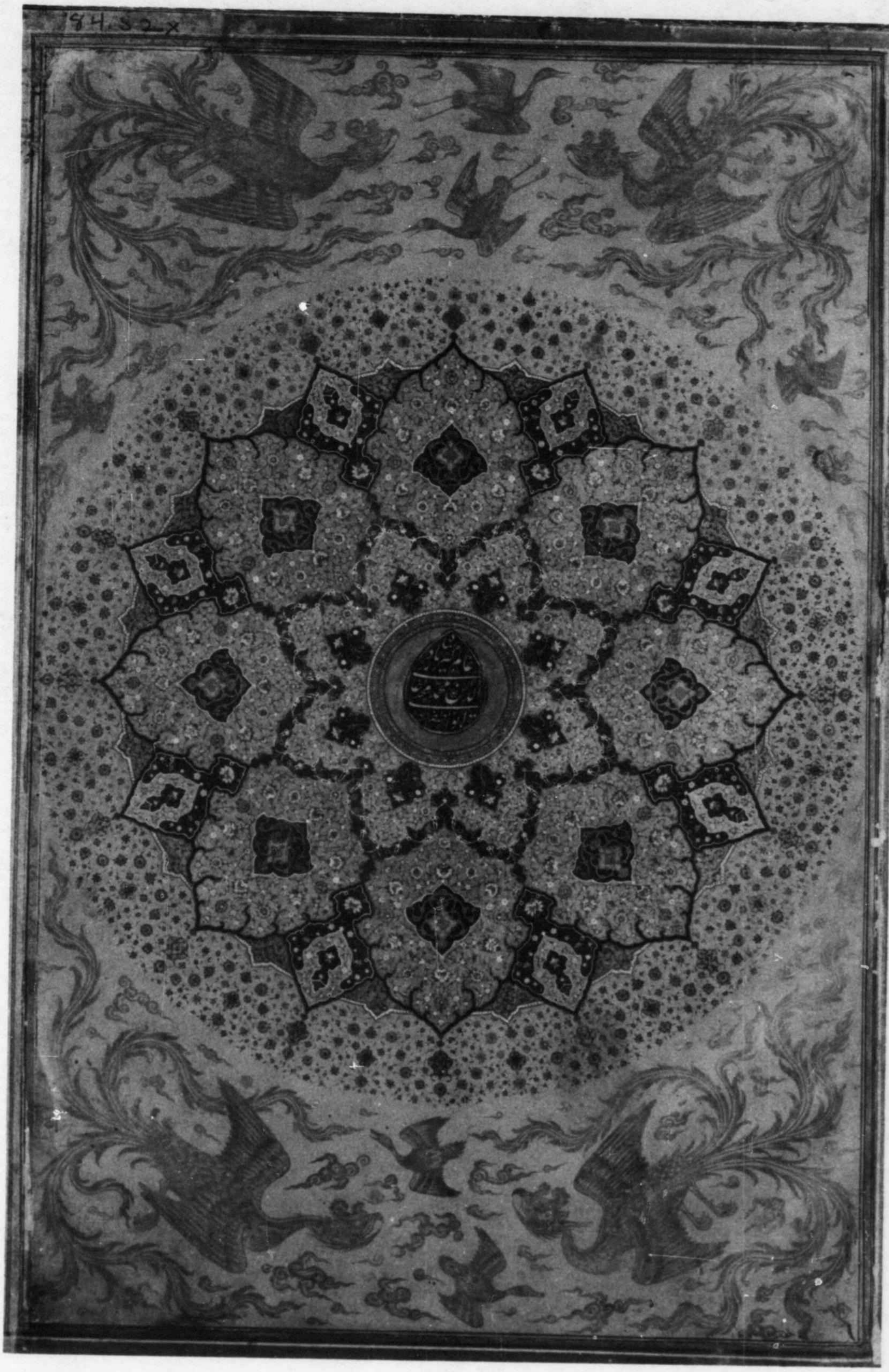


The Witnesses

JULIO CORTÁZAR

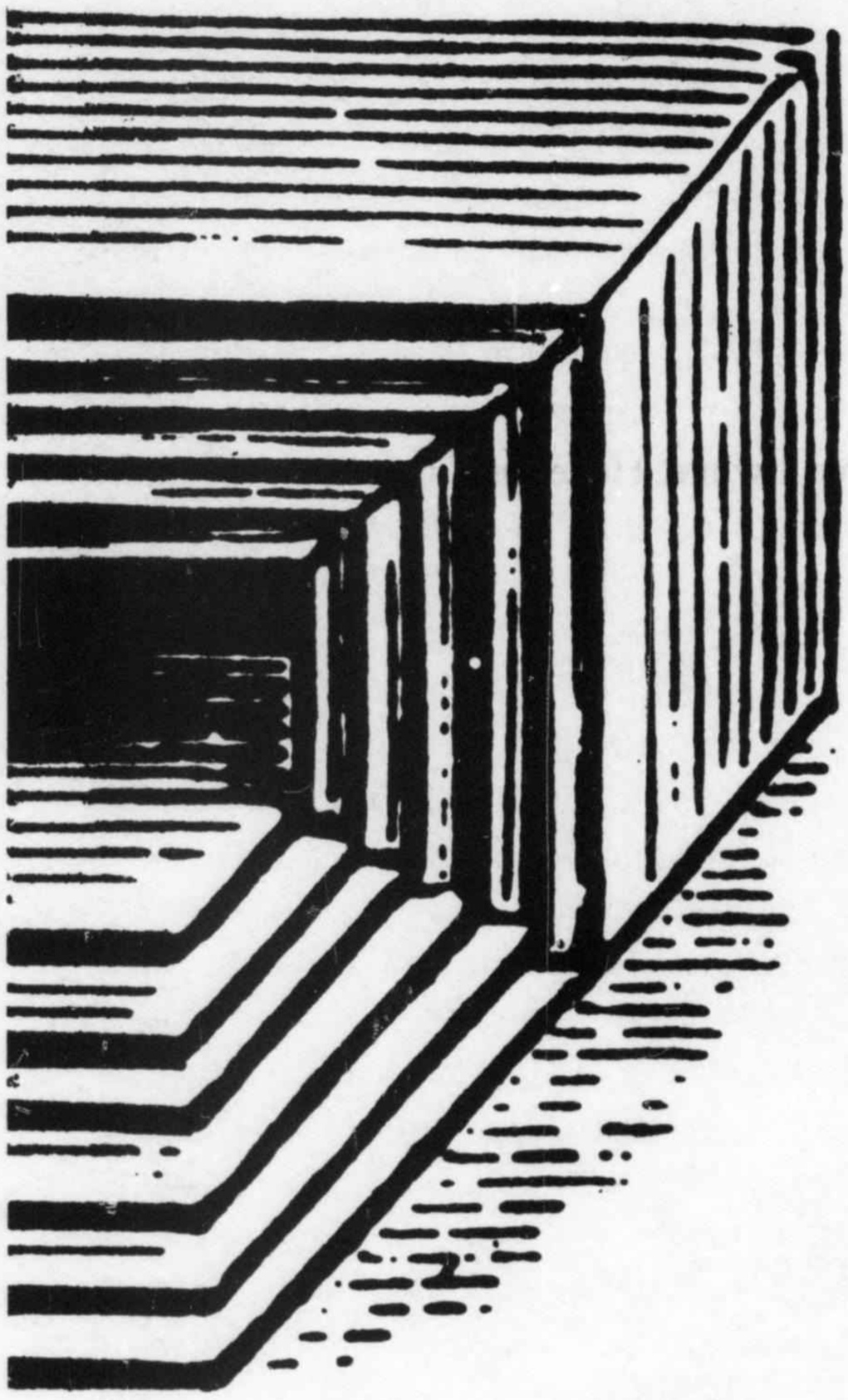
When I told Polanco that there was a fly in my room that flew on its back there followed one of those silences that resemble holes in the vast cheese of the air. Polanco, being a friend, finally asked politely if I was sure. I'm not sensitive, so I explained in some detail that I had discovered the fly on page 231 of *Oliver Twist*; I mean, I was in my room with the doors and windows shut reading *Oliver Twist* when, raising my eyes just as evil Sykes was about to kill poor Nancy, I saw three flies flying near the ceiling, two conventionally and one upside down. What Polanco said to me then is completely crazy, but before repeating it I must tell you exactly what happened.

At first it didn't seem so odd that a fly should fly upside down if that made it happy; I had never observed such behavior before, but science teaches us that there is no reason to doubt our senses before every novelty. I thought perhaps the poor creature was deranged or its centers of balance and orientation had been damaged, but I very soon saw the fly was as vital and lively as his two comrades who flew with great orthodoxy right side up. That fly just flew upside down, which among other things enabled it to land nicely on the ceiling; it would approach and land there every so often without the slightest effort. There were, as always, drawbacks. Every time it tried to land on my box of Havanas it had to "buckle the buckle" as English aviation texts translated in Barcelona nicely put it, while its two companions stood like royalty on the *Made in Havana* banner where Romeo was energetically embracing Juliet. When it had had enough of Shakespeare it flew off again on its back and joined its companions in sketching those insensate lines that Pauwels and Bergier persist in calling Brownian. It all was strange, yet it seemed curiously natural, as if it couldn't be any other way; abandoning poor Nancy in the arms of Sykes (what can you do about a crime committed a century ago?), I climbed up on my armchair to try to get a closer look at this behavior in which the supine met the bizarre. When Mrs. Fotheringham came to tell me that dinner was ready (I live in a pension), without opening the door I answered that I'd be there in a couple minutes, and since we were on the subject of time, I also asked if she happened to know how long a fly lives. Mrs. Fotheringham, who knows her boarders, replied without any surprise that it was between ten and fifteen days and that she was not going to let the rabbit pie go cold. As soon as I heard the first of these items of information I decided—I pounce on these decisions like a panther—to investigate and tell the world of science about my small but alarming discovery.

As I explained later to Polanco, I immediately saw the practical difficulties. Whether it flies right side up or upside down, a fly escapes from anywhere with well-known ease; to imprison it in a pitcher or a glass container could alter its behavior or accelerate its death. Of its twelve or fifteen allotted days, how many remained for this tiny animal now placidly floating feet-up a foot from my face? I realized that if I called the Museum of Natural Science they would send out some fellow with a net and my incredible discovery would go fwttttt. If I filmed it (Polanco made films, but with women) I would run a double risk: that the lights would interfere with the flight mechanism of the fly, turning it into a normal one, to the immense annoyance of Polanco, myself, and, indeed, probably even the fly; and that viewers would undoubtedly accuse us of some shameful photographic trick. In less than half an hour (I had to keep in mind that the fly was aging faster than I was) I decided that the only solution was to reduce the dimensions of my room little by little until the fly and I were contained in a minimum of space, an unprecedented scientific condition that would give my observations an unassailable precision (keep a diary, take pictures, etc.) and allow me to prepare my report, once I had called Polanco as a witness not so much to the flight of the fly as to my mental state.

I will not dwell on the description of the labors that followed, the battle against the clock and Mrs. Fotheringham. Once I had solved the problem of coming and going while the fly was away from the door (one of the other two escaped on my first effort, which was lucky; the other I resolutely squashed with an ashtray), I began to gather the necessary materials for reducing the spa , not without first assuring Mrs. Fotheringham that it was only a matter of temporary modifications, and passing her porcelain sheep, the portrait of Lady Hamilton, and most of the furniture out to her through the door, an operation that ran the terrible risk of leaving the door wide open while the fly slept on the ceiling or washed its face on my writing table. During the early stages of these activities I was forced to give more attention to Mrs. Fotheringham than to the fly, since I detected in her a growing inclination to call the police, which would mean that she would no longer be able to hear me through the chink in the doorway. What most alarmed Mrs. Fotheringham was the arrival of the reinforced cardboard because she couldn't imagine what it was for, and I didn't dare tell her the truth since I knew her well enough to be sure that the manner in which flies fly would leave her royally indifferent: I just assured her that I was beginning some architectural experiments based loosely on the ideas of Palladio concerning perspective in elliptical theaters, a concept she greeted with the expression a turtle might assume on similar occasions. I promised that I would pay for any damages, and in a few hours I had installed the cardboard six feet in from the walls and ceiling, thanks to those products of genius, Scotch tape and stick pins. The fly did not appear unhappy or alarmed; it kept on flying feet upwards, and it had already consumed a good portion of the sugar and thimbleful of water I had left solicitously in the most convenient place. I

should not forget to mention that Polanco was not at home (this is all very precisely noted in my journal) and that a woman with a Panamanian accent answered the phone to display her total ignorance of the whereabouts of my friend. Solitary and withdrawn as I am, I could only confide in Polanco; hoping he would turn up, I decided to continue reducing the "habitat" of the fly so that the experiment would conclude under optimum conditions. I was lucky that the second batch of reinforced cardboard came in much smaller sizes than the first, as any owner of stacking dolls can appreciate, and Mrs. Fotheringham watched me bring it into the room without taking any measure beyond covering her mouth with one hand and waving a multicolored plume in the air with the other.



I was afraid, as you can appreciate, that the life cycle of the fly might be drawing to a close, and even though I know that subjectivity falsifies experience, it still seemed to me that the fly was spending more of its time resting and washing itself than before, as if flying made it uncomfortable or tired. I gently stimulated it with a few sweeps of my hand in order to assess its reflexes, and the little creature, I swear, flew up like an arrow, with its feet in the air, and, still on its back, surveyed the cubic space that was growing ever smaller, occasionally landing on the cardboard ceiling with a careless

perfection that it lacked when it landed on my nose or the sugar. Polanco still had not returned home.

The third day, mortally afraid that the fly would reach the end of its term any moment (how dreadful it was to think that I might suddenly find it on the ground, immobile forever and no different from other flies!), I brought in the third batch of cardboard, which reduced my observation space so much that I could no longer stand up and I had to construct an angled observation platform out of two pillows and a small mattress that Mrs. Fotheringham brought me, crying. At this stage of my work the main difficulty was coming and going; each time it was necessary to open and close three successive layers of cardboard very carefully, being sure not to leave the smallest crack, at last reaching the door to my room, where various residents were beginning to congregate. So when I heard Polanco's voice on the phone I let out a cry that he and his otorhinolaryngologist chastised me severely for later. I began a babble of explanation, which Polanco cut short by offering to come over at once, but since the two of us and the fly could not all fit in such a small space at the same time, I realized that I would have to bring him up to date so he could go in by himself and bear witness that the fly might be crazy but I was not. I arranged to meet him at the cafe on the corner, and there, over a couple of beers, I told him the story.

Polanco lit his pipe and looked at me a while. He seemed impressed and also, I thought, a little pale. I think that I have already said at the beginning that he asked me if I was sure about what I had told him. I must have convinced him, because he kept on smoking and meditating, not seeing that I didn't want to waste a moment (and if it were already dead? if it were already dead?), and I paid for the beers so that he would have to decide once and for all.

When he still didn't decide I became livid and pointed out his moral obligation to assist me in an experiment that would not be taken seriously without a credible witness. He shrugged his shoulders as if suddenly sad.

"It's useless, kid," he finally said. "They might believe you without my corroboration. But me . . ."

"You? Why wouldn't they believe you?"

"It's a sad story, friend," Polanco murmured. "Listen, it's not normal, it's not decent for a fly to go around upside down like that. It's not logical when you think about it."

"But I tell you it does fly that way!" I shouted, startling a number of the customers.

"Sure it does. But it's still flying just like any other fly, it's just the exception that proves the rule, it's just made a half a turn, that's all," Polanco said. "No one would believe me, even though it's there plain as day, because it can't be demonstrated. So the best thing to do is for us to go get rid of that cardboard before you get tossed out on your ear. You see what I mean? Right?" ■

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And Nothing But the Truth

THOMAS A. DOOLING

"Do you now swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, in this matter now pending before the court, so help you God?"

The oath of the witness, recited as a toneless litany in ten thousand courts (and seemingly as many TV courtroom dramas) across the world of Anglo-American law every day, bespeaks simultaneously the sacred and the most incredibly profane nature of the witness's role. Like most litanies, it is mainly honored in the breach.

We lawyers and the courts confer on the layman in the hot seat of the witness chair a sacred duty at a level which none of us, lawyers or laymen, could hope in reality to reach. We expect him, the layman, to remain innocent or ignorant of our occasional disregard for the supposedly sacred oaths we administer; we expect him to struggle with the reality of truth while we frequently temporize with expedience; we ask him, under the risk of peril to his soul, not only to have seen, but to recall and to tell the pure, entire truth. No wonder we implore God's help in the job; unawares or not, we acknowledge that such a task requires something divine, something beyond us.

What is "truth"—let alone the "whole truth"? And how can we distinguish the fine line between "something" and "nothing but"? What does it take to be truly a witness?

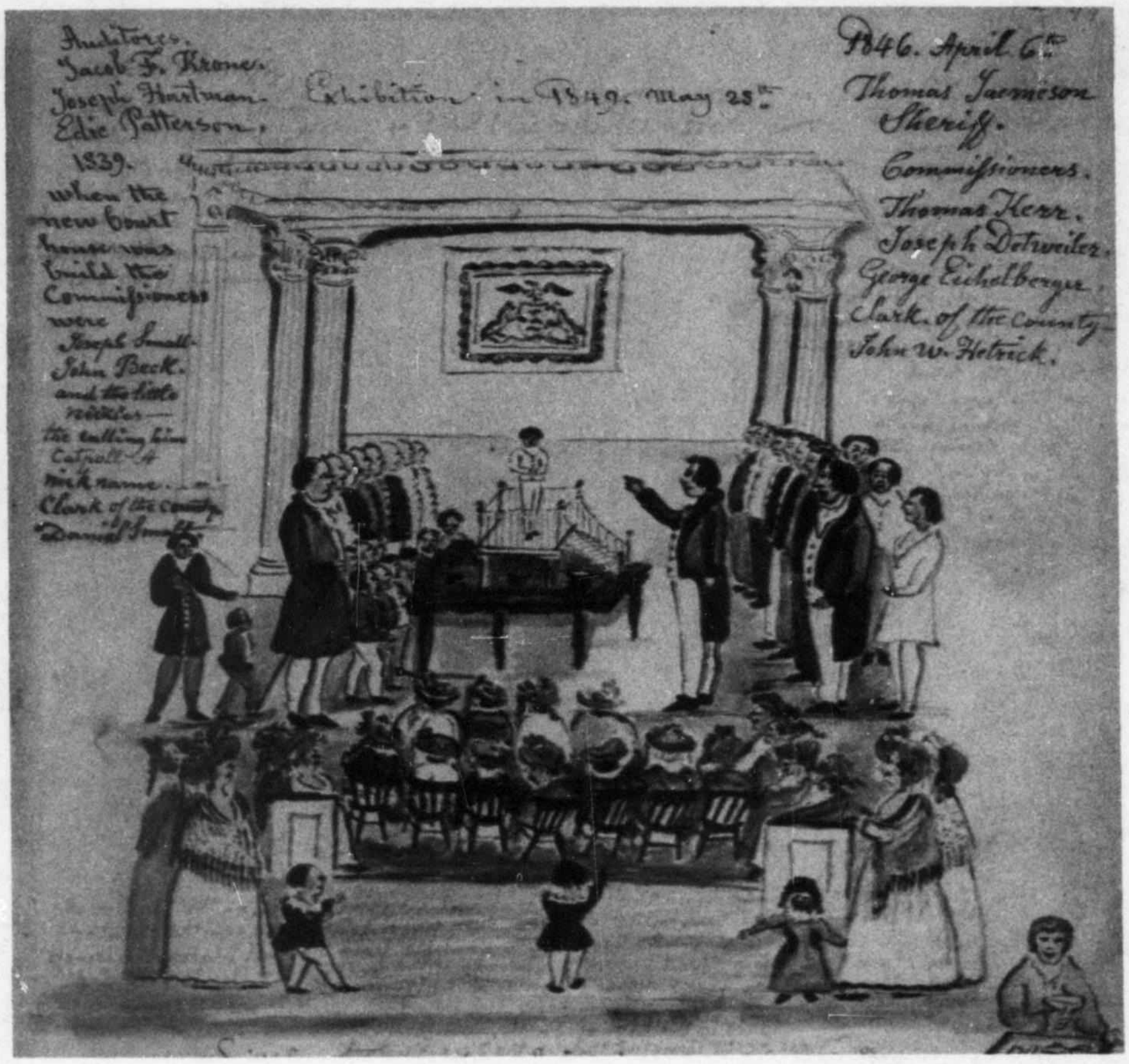
The word "witness" in the sense used by the courts and by lawyers is as dichotomous, and in the same way, as in the most fundamentalist Christian sect. It means both observer and reporter, and imparts two distinct duties. From witness-as-observer we demand (or should) the capacity to *perceive;* a capacity distorted, in all of us, by opinions and conditioning, limited by inattention. From witness-as-reporter we call for commitment and courage to speak out; and what lawyer has not had someone sidle up to him or her in the supermarket and advise, side-mouthed, that they know of facts in a case that would "blow them out of the water," but "don't ask me to testify"? That we as a nation have a Federal Witness Protection Program,

which in some cases provides virtually lifetime bodyguard services for witnesses in certain gangland and racketeering cases, attests to the fact that the commitment and courage can be at the risk of life itself. There is also another danger in the difficulty of expressing, and conveying exactly to others, even what one may have clearly seen—a risk to truth, less visible than the risk to one's physical life but certainly no less real to a lover of the truth; and who but lovers of the truth can be valid witnesses?

Still another element of the witness's risk-taking in a courtroom is exposure to the danger—to the ego and to the reputation—of cross-examination. Any testimony, whether substantially true or mainly contrived, is derived from things heard, seen, smelled, tasted, or otherwise sensed by a flawed and imperfect human being. Minor inconsistencies, small flaws in perception, elements of favoritism and prejudice invariably accompany any testimony. The witness has the choice of admitting these flaws—an exercise in humility rewarded by having opposing counsel lovingly embellish and enhance each admitted hesitation and imperfection to the jury—or of speaking very positively, confessing to no doubts or oversights, only to have the cross-examining lawyer express incredulity at the perfection of the recall and bring the accusation of bias or even mendacity. Under these circumstances, it is understandable that witnesses are either reluctant to testify at all, or become blind proponents of one side or the other, in a search for at least emotional support.

"Witness," an Anglo-Saxon word of ancient religious usage, adopted again in our time, has been used to name our human, and therefore imperfect, attempt to impart to others the grace and perhaps the excitement perceived in the personal and partial experience of the divine. And when lawyers call some poor citizen, by subpoena or browbeating, to testify in court, we also call on something of emotion and importance, whether we realize it or not. In "seeking the truth" we are unaware that we are rushing into areas of cosmic dimensions. For the lawyer in the normal course of litigation, this truth-seeking can and maybe must usually be reduced to a search for some internally consistent, truthful-appearing version of the facts which will serve our purposes and ideally win us and our clients through to victory. But sometimes we seek (occasionally with success) to call upon the witness to rise above himself and actually aid in the search for a more whole truth. Sometimes this is because we really believe in the rightness of our client's cause, and sometimes it is because our client really is right; but it is a fact of life in the legal profession that black and white cases, in which one side is right and the other wrong in any morally absolute way, rarely get into the courtroom. Those get settled. The cases that get tried are ones in which both sides are equally, or almost equally, in the right or in the lack thereof.

In Anglo-Saxon times, the legal profession, such as it was then, embraced Norman French and Latin legalisms with an almost embarrassing fervor. I imagine that, following the Conquest in 1066, it was obvious that the status quo had changed permanently, and William's French courtiers were the new Establishment. Consequently, most ancient words of legal art in our system are words of Latin or French origin, no matter how bastardized they may have become in usage or pronunciation. However, some Anglo-Saxon court personnel such as plaintiffs, bailiffs, and sheriffs, have stayed with us, as well as witnesses. Obviously the word derives from the root whose survivals today include "wit," "to wit," and "wittingly," and which meant *to know*. Literally,



"witness" is an abstract noun having to do with the condition, degree, or quality of knowing, in that sense of the word which implies both perceptivity and *wisdom,* another word from the same root. The council which assisted the Anglo-Saxon kings in deciding judicial and administrative matters was called the Witan, the wise men. We have substituted the "amicus curiae," or friend of the court, who is an expert on *law,* but not necessarily wise. It may not be an improvement. We still call lawyers "counsellors." And surely the idea of wisdom ought not to be separated, as in practice it so often is, from court custom.

The witnesses are those who *know what happened*. They must, ideally and with the aid of "counsel," provide the material out of which the judge and the jury, with the aid of "wisdom" (their own and each other's), find that balance of "right" and "wrong" which is perhaps the nearest we can come to "truth," and which is symbolized by the scales which our image of Justice carries. We as lawyers try to create in the minds of the jury an image of the truth, but an image of the version of the truth which will serve our client's cause. While most lawyers don't really seem to believe that a trial is a "search for truth," it is the theory of our legal system that from the adversarial struggle between the lawyers and their respective sides, the truth will emerge and the verdict (literally *veri dictio,* "telling of the truth") will be a discovery of what is indeed true.

It is instructive to examine what evidence a witness is permitted to bring to the courtroom. Included in the concept of "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" is the adjuration that one may testify only to facts within one's personal knowledge. As tempting as they are, conjecture, rumor, opinion, conclusions, and good old hearsay should be kept out of the courtroom.

Naturally, lawyers being what we are, we have invented a tremendous body of law of evidence primarily oriented towards getting them right back in. And as champions of our clients—or more properly, our clients' causes—it is virtually our duty as lawyers to try to align our witnesses as our allies in battle. Legal theory would try to keep witnesses neutral, aligned solely to truth. The resultant tension is one of the things that keeps law exciting.

It is supposed that a good witness is "impartial," nonpartisan, neither changing the facts he saw nor so involved with them as to be changed by them. But is it so? What does it take, besides courage and perception, to make a worthy witness, and what does worthy witnessing make of the human being? There are "objective" witnesses, in the sense that a signed and sealed document in ancient usage was considered a witness, in and of itself, to the agreement and the solemnity of its signers' intentions. One who observes the signature or execution of a formal document, such as a will, is said "to witness" it, to attest to its binding nature. And in the legal description of lands, corners are often identified by a specified line or angle from a "witness monument," such as a tree, a large boulder, or a major construction such as a bridge. Here there is a sense of the permanence, of the eternal and unwavering truth of the "witness" as a legal and moral fact. The witness tree of old England was immune from the woodsman's axe, and in our time a witness in a case, drawn to the jurisdiction of a particular court, is immune from arrest while present there in his status as a witness in another matter.

But the human witness cannot give human testimony objectively. It is a principle of physics that observation of an event has an effect upon the event as well as upon the observer; the witness is involved in the event's very fabric. In the courtroom and elsewhere, the best witnesses are partisans, not so much of the conclusions to be drawn from their observations, but of the reality of the event which is the subject of their testimony. A witness to a numinous experience, in the face of a degree of hostility from a world which doesn't particularly care about numinous experiences, becomes a partisan about it. Unless the person denies what was seen and felt, he or she will wish to share it or to fight for it. Inevitably a witness becomes committed to the witnessed event. And the most effective witnesses, any lawyer can tell you, are those who relive this event in the process of trying to report it. (The alternative is the unconvincing recitation of a set piece, which neither moves nor molds a jury.) Obviously, one is more affected by a repeated experience than by a single one. Whether it is a matter of simple side-taking in a civil cause or some life-changing spiritual vision, those who for whatever reason are called upon to testify, to share the truth they have seen, can never again be quite as they were before.

Those who participate in the legal system as finders of fact often find the same to be true. In a kind of courtroom ontogeny, juries and judges are required to observe the facts as they are brought to them by lawyers and witnesses, and to report their balance in the form of a verdict, a "truth-telling." They must be witnesses of the witnesses themselves and of their testimony; they also become involved in the fabric of the event. Frequently, even in the dispassionate anonymity of a courtroom, a repetition of the same feats of moral courage in both observation and reporting are called forth, and many a judge and juryman, as well as those giving testimony, have found that their task of witnessing to the truth in a trial has permanently affected their lives. ■

The Witness Within

PADMA PERERA

Photographs by Linda Connor

Webster lists several definitions of both the noun and the verb *witness*, but my own interest focuses on the basically human "one who is cognizant by direct experience."

Each of us, after all, is innately capable of direct experience. Each of us has an abiding witness, within both the conscious and the unconscious levels of experience. By "conscious" I mean conscious of oneself: knowing that you know, seeing that you see. And by the "unconscious" I mean a deeper level beyond that. Finally, both are equally valid parts of our human experience.

Whether at conscious or unconscious levels, we find here a context that dispenses with the Latin tag, *testis unus testis nullus*. A single witness is no witness. My point is exactly the opposite: our sole inner witness is our only humanly enduring witness. In the second century B.C., Polybius said, "There is no witness so dreadful, no accuser so terrible as the conscience that dwells in the heart of every man." True, but that is only one aspect of many. Considering the conscious side of our witness first, I will touch upon some of its other—and infinitely more various—layers and ramifications.

Beginning with the obvious, to be a conscious witness you have to be present. Presence is an essential ingredient, yes; and with it come its corollaries:

A measure of observation: sight/insight; a good ear, perhaps; a sense of touch or smell; an intimation, as in the case of Helen Keller, of the trapped but sentient person awakening within.

The human ability to feel, and be fallible.

Intelligence—at least intelligence enough to make the link between cause and effect, a texture and its source, etc.

The will, or lack of will, to do this.

And of course memory, that birthright of our presumably functioning selves (i.e., when not aphasic or smitten with amnesia); and, by extension, the time and the place where our conscious witness first surfaced. My mother's first memory is the earliest of any I have heard about. She remembers being put to sleep as a baby, in a cradle hung from a wooden frame. As the cradle was swung, she saw the flexible shadow of that frame go back and forth, back and forth, across the ceiling. Shape and movement had come into her ken.

Her witness had begun to be simultaneously conscious both of what she perceived in the outside world *and* of herself perceiving it—that double awareness which illuminated the memory, and anchored it for her. Here is an early, even rudimentary, instance of the way our witness can both participate in our experience and observe it with detachment. Growing with us and sharing our personal journeys, the detached observer inside can also sometimes flash its own signals, set its own standards.

This entails a certain integrity toward experience—something that tries to stay honorably with our sorrows, taking no durable solace either from wallowing in them or escaping from them; something that stays behind, unsatisfied by frenetic pursuits of pleasure, but that can burst into fullness in a mo-

Veiled Woman, *India, 1979*.

ment of wonder and joy. Our inner witness is by no means heavily moralistic: perhaps it is just stubborn.

One of the proverbs in my mother-tongue deals with the neem tree whose bitter leaves . . . fretted nervous and delicate against a chunky bark . . . contain medicinal properties. "Even if you sugar the manure for a neem," runs our saying, "it will stay bitter, and heal."

The neem may be fortunate. Most of us must struggle with the concurrent demands of human existence while striving to remain true to our endeavors. An artist friend of mine speaks of a time when everything in her life had disintegrated: every prop, big or little, pulled out from under her. She had reached that point, which we all face sooner or later, of recognizing that the only thing we can be secure about is our ultimate insecurity. "Even then, some witness in me remained, watching and waiting and making notes, until I could work again."

In experiences like hers, the witness takes on another aspect, enters another sphere: evoking dedication to a chosen task, and demanding an integrity of effort as well as accomplishment, of processes as well as results. We are speaking not of talent, but of the role of this "creative" witness in harnessing that talent—its role, in fact, in any significant contribution toward any field of life.

The successful results, of course, are the easiest to see. For example, great or good art is itself essentially a creative witness of life: expressed and attested to in diverse ways by the individual artists' vision, idiom, and skill. It's right *there*—from seashells to the sculptural forms they summoned for Henry Moore, from Degas's bowed-down laundresses to his leaping ballerinas, from Dostoyevsky's Prince Myshkin to Rilke's Malte Laurids Brigge; and so much else besides, affirming all the nameless artisans and architects from Tikal to Angkor Wat, all the performers and givers of gifts down the centuries.

Less visible, though as crucial, is the role of such a witness in the processes and efforts involved. It stands behind an aspect of the creative will—which must not be confused with the creative impulse. The witness here has nothing to do, either, with a monstrous artistic ego trampling upon everybody else to gain its own ends; it resounds on a more comprehensively human note in the creative process: that part of the artist, cited by my friend, which tries not only to surmount but to integrate the stringencies of life. The creative witness provides patience and persistence and for some it does even more—it can save the artist's sanity as a human being. A cousin of mine, for one, comes to mind. Meeting her after several years, during which she had been through unutterably harrowing experiences, I asked her how she had been able to survive. "By painting," she said. "I'd lock myself up in my room and paint. Some things I tore up, they only reflected the mess. Those I kept were those that saw and remembered there could be another world. I made that world to fight the world I was living in." These worlds of hers were subsequently exhibited across Europe and Asia. They possess a rich, calm, and classic order, as old as it is new.

When the conscious witness stands behind a creative will, however, it need not necessarily pertain to art alone. Trying to live a wise and examined life can perhaps require the greatest creativity of all. I know my father has used that will in himself—past childhood hardships, past the renown and respect he won as an adult. Now facing the physical limitations of old age, he has journeyed toward himself and ar-

Ceremony, *Sri Lanka, 1979*.

Religious Effigies, *Banaras, India, 1979*.

rived at a rare, luminous new understanding that lights up any encounters with him. Children come into its orbit; neighbors; passers-by pausing for a chat; even plants flourish and bloom in this place of growing quietness. You can't quite ask him how he got there. Being reticent about his ordeals and confrontations, all he will allow his witness to say is: "I have seen some things. Now I have to see other things."

But there are regions, which the conscious witness inhabits, beyond serenity or creative will. In the last stages of a mortal disease, in the endless dailiness of poverty as experienced in India, Ethiopia, and elsewhere—in any such basic of life and death, we don't know how the witness endures. Unless outsiders are deeply involved, they haven't the right to speak; and no single experience in the range of human experience can totally speak for all. Yet each has the choice and capacity (in whatever degree) to use its faculties to act upon empathy, wherever it can. And this includes the impulse to battle the man-made mutilations that surround us—from cruelty, injustice, and greed to a nuclear insanity that could destroy all our survivals.

In the deepest sense, each one's witness can be an empathetic witness to the eloquence of another's life. Obviously witnesses can be as various as individuals, and doubtless as shackled by ignorance, or by the convenience of their convictions. But in the compassionate arena to which I now allude, some things get stripped away. Mere intelligence, for instance, won't do. A true witness here needs human imagination, without which sympathies get sluggish, our world-view contracts, and all life as we know it lies open to extinction. Another proverb: *vinaasha kaala vipareetha buddhi*. "In the age of destruction, intelligence becomes overweeningly stupid."

After all, at its best and simplest, the basic gift of our conscious witness is the gift of life itself. At age seven, I found my mother sitting on the grass outside our house and asked her what she was doing. "I'm not doing anything," she said. "I'm just being." And after a while we looked, side by side, at a spider web.

In embarking upon the unconscious domain of our inner witness, I have first to make a brief foray into the purlieus of what is called "psychic experience," which has nothing to do with the sensational occult. For those of us who are somehow naturally attuned to certain intangible clues, these feel as factual and four-square as tables and chairs. It's simple enough. Personally, I find some of the laboratory research on parapsychology quite absurd. Knowing whether a hidden pack of cards opens on the four of hearts or the six of clubs, whether you see four red smudges or six black, seems like pointless child's play. Living an international existence as I do, more to my point is whether those I love, continents away, are all right. And sometimes when I still my mind of its squabbles and distractions, and sometimes even when I don't, I can sense how it is with them. Something in me can also send messages across to something in my brother, when telephones don't answer or even telegrams go astray. Myself, I don't fish too deep for the wherewithal of all this, merely describing this condition of receptivity—of at times voluntarily relinquishing control—as "letting life live me." Too often I have distrusted my peripatetic witness despite its years of reliability, since proof usually comes straggling behind later, and we are all heir to doubt.

But extra-sensory perception only hovers on the littorals of something far more difficult to express. Approaching this deepest layer of the unconscious witness, I will refer to an observation in Vedantic philosophy—for not only a Vedantist but every human being has expe-

rienced the three states of awareness detailed in the Upanishads: your waking state, when your faculties are alert to the solid actualities, the external stimuli around you; your dream state, responsive to subtler psychological reaches; and finally (the crux here) that third state of deep and dreamless sleep, where all relationships between the subjective and the objective have ceased to exist . . . where a part of yourself—call it Inner Consciousness, or your breathing entity, or whatever you like—still remains a witness to your life. A steadfast presence, however beleaguered your waking or dreaming states, it returns unimpaired night after night. And to the end it retains no attributes: no vivid five senses, no purposefully operative intelligence, no specific image or memory, no adjectives, no words at all.

Some might see this as an insensate retrogression to vegetative existence, but Vedanta takes the attributeless witness much higher: from its usual existence in deep sleep to the possibility of an ultimately evolved and transcendent awareness, equally without attributes.

For my part, I have seen lulled and well-meaning meditators having to be nudged awake. And in my language we joke, when someone dozes off in the middle of something, that he or she has hit *samadhi*—that transcendent state, through which this individual snores away to oblivion. The serious connection implied beneath the jest is this: If our unconscious witness has natural access to an area beyond attributes, it can journey there, unsleeping—spontaneously or otherwise.

Groping after a concrete and describable analogy, I come up with memories of going to the temple as a child, in the far south of India. There was nothing particularly "religious" about the experience. It is rather the totality of texture that stays with me still.

The *gopuram* or gate towered into the sky, a gigantic twelfth-century stone structure, every inch carved with scenes from mythology and an abundance of life forms: crocodiles, snakes, birds, flowers . . . many too high to be deciphered from below. The threshold was marked by a huge golden step I had to hop across, right foot forward. Inside, a passageway was first to be traversed clockwise from left to right, all the way around. (Circumambulating, so that you not only honored the central shrine but contained it . . . the *sanctum sanctorum* being significantly called "garbha griha": "garbha" meaning womb, "griha" meaning house. Not only the womb but the house, the home of the womb—the source.)

Near the entrance stood a stone pillar with a frieze of elephants around it, at just about my height: trunk curling into tail curling into trunk. I would keep running my hand along them, around and around and around, until they were a part of my palm and my palm was a part of them. A private ritual. Each time. Having to know what it was like to be an animal before you could enter a shrine.

Within, the smoky erratic flicker of oil lamps probed but never dispelled the dark. When the priest started to chant, his voice rose and echoed and melted away: into that shadow, into that stone. And when he stopped, the silence was as sculptured as the stone.

It was as if all boundaries had disappeared: between solid and void, between light and dark, between sound and stillness—between you and what you saw.

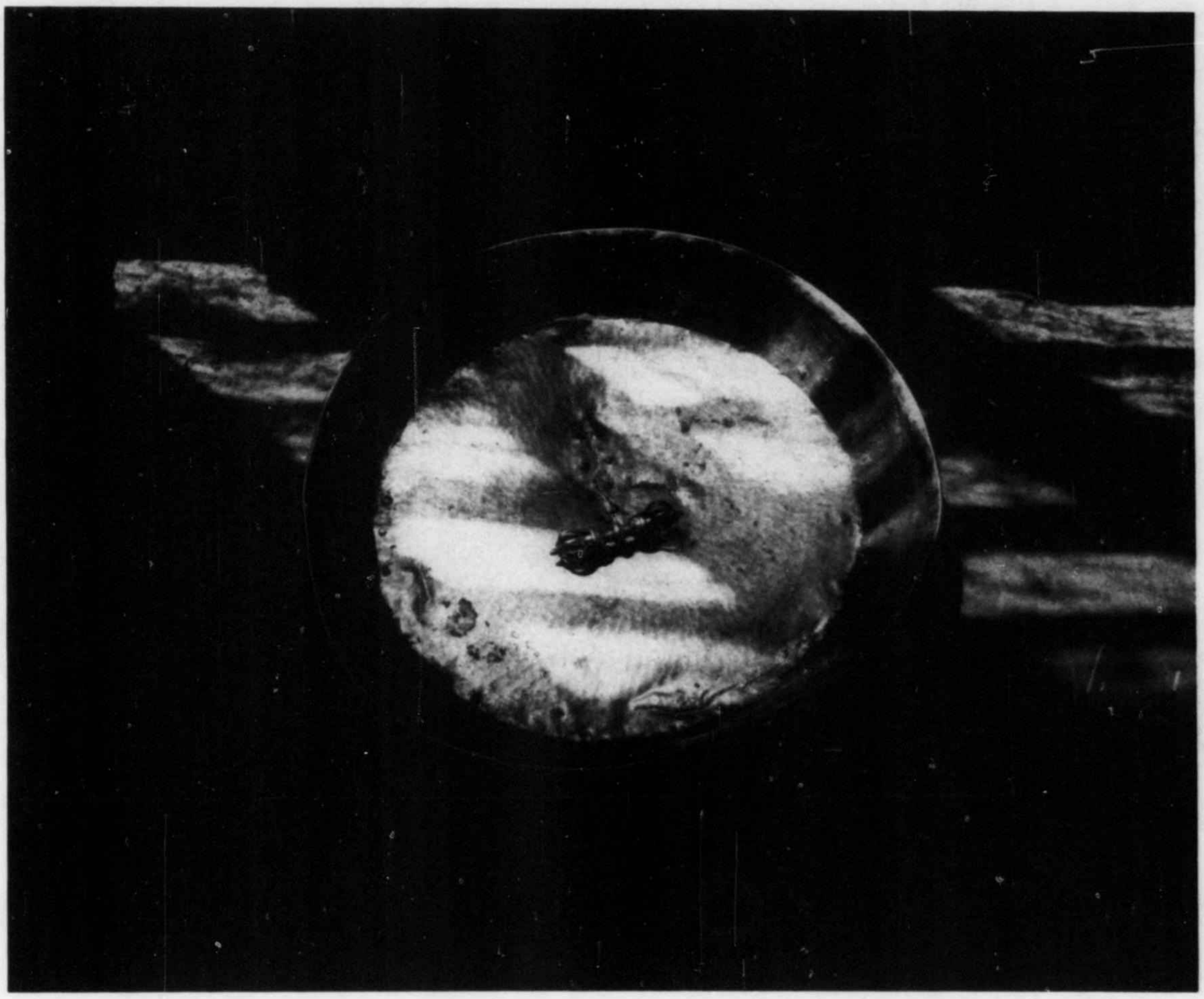
Gone. Beyond logic or possibility.

At the time, I had no words for this. Even now, as an adult, I find that none quite fit, though the same thing can happen away from the temple, on the opposite side of the earth. Of course I am not alone in this inarticulacy; examples have been noted before, all over

the world.

Since the unconscious witness has no truck with words, we return and apply to the conscious witness for any attempts to communicate. Describing her similar experience while watching the sunset one evening, and merging imperceptibly into it, my mother wrote to me: "Somewhere along the way, my seeing eye was no longer an individual point but a part, as it were, of the whole circumference."

In the end we use attributes to get beyond attributes. We recognize a presence that absorbs its seeming absence, and persists as the deepest part of witness within. ■



Vajra, *Ringdum Monastery, Zanskar, India, 1985.*

The Emperor's New Clothes/

Hans Christian Andersen

Many years ago there lived an emperor who thought so much of new clothes that he spent all his money in order that he might be very fine. He did not care for his soldiers, nor for going to the play; or driving in the park, except to show his new clothes. He had a coat for every hour of the day, and just as they say of a king, "He is in the council-room," so they always said of him, "The Emperor is in his dressing-room."

The great city where he lived was very gay; and every day many strangers came there. One day there came two swindlers; they gave out that they were weavers, and said they could weave the finest cloth to be imagined. Their colors and patterns, they said, were not only exceptionally beautiful, but the clothes made of their material possessed the wonderful quality of being invisible to any man who was unfit for his office or hopelessly stupid.

"Those must be wonderful clothes," said the Emperor. "If I wore such clothes I should be able to find out which men in my empire were unfit for their places, and I could tell the clever from the stupid. Yes, I must have this cloth woven for me without delay." And he gave a lot of money to the two swindlers in advance, so that they should set to work at once. They set up two looms, and pretended to be very hard at work, but they had nothing whatever on the looms. They asked for the finest silk and the most precious gold; this they put in their own bags, and worked at the empty looms till late into the night.

"I should very much like to know how they are getting on with the cloth," thought the Emperor. But he felt rather uneasy when he remembered that he who was not fit for his office could not see it. He believed, of course, that he had nothing to fear for himself, yet he thought he would send somebody else first to see how matters stood. Everybody in the town knew what a wonderful property the stuff possessed, and all were anxious to see how bad or stupid their neighbors were.

"I will send my honest old Minister to the weavers," thought the Emperor. "He can judge best how the stuff looks, for he is intelligent, and nobody understands his office better than he."

So the good old Minister went into the room where the two swindlers sat working at the empty looms. "Heaven preserve us!" he thought, and opened his eyes

wide. "I cannot see anything at all," but he did not say so. Both swindlers bade him be so good as to come near, and asked him if he did not admire the exquisite pattern and the beautiful colors. They pointed to the empty looms, and the poor old Minister opened his eyes wider, but he could see nothing, for there was nothing to be seen. "Good Lord!" he thought, "can I be so stupid? I should never have thought so, and nobody must know it! Is it possible that I am not fit for my office? No, no, I cannot say that I was unable to see the cloth."

"Well, have you got nothing to say?" said one, as he wove.

"Oh, it is very pretty—quite enchanting!" said the old Minister, peering through his spectacles. "What a pattern, and what colors! I shall tell the Emperor that I am very much pleased with it."

"Well, we are glad of that," said both weavers, and they named the colors to him and explained the curious pattern. The old Minister listened attentively, that he might relate to the Emperor what they said; and he did so.

Now the swindlers asked for more money, more silk and gold, which they required for weaving. They kept it all for themselves, and not a thread came near the loom, but they continued, as hitherto, to work at the empty looms.

Soon afterwards the Emperor sent another honest courtier to the weavers to see how they were getting on, and if the cloth was nearly finished. Like the old Minister, he looked and looked, but could see nothing, as there was nothing to be seen.

"Is it not a beautiful piece of cloth?" said the two swindlers, showing and explaining the magnificent pattern, which, however, was not there at all.

"I am not stupid," thought the man. "Is it therefore my good appointment for which I am not fit? It is ludicrous, but I must not let anyone know it"; and he praised the cloth, which he did not see, and expressed his pleasure at the beautiful colors and the fine pattern. "Yes, it is quite enchanting," he said to the Emperor.

Everybody in the whole town was talking about the splendid cloth. At last the Emperor wished to see it himself while it was still on the loom. With a whole company of chosen men, including two honest councilors who had already been there, he went to the two clever swindlers, who were now weaving as hard as they could, but without using any thread.

"Is it not *magnifique*?" said both the honest statesmen. "Will your Majesty see what a pattern and what colors?" And they pointed to the empty looms, for they imagined the others could see the cloth.

"What is this?" thought the Emperor. "I do not see anything at all. This is terrible! Am I stupid? Am I unfit to be emperor? That would indeed be the most dreadful thing that could happen to me."

"Yes, it is very fine," said the Emperor. "It has our highest approval"; and, nodding contentedly, he gazed at the empty loom, for he did not like to say that he could see nothing. All his attendants who were with him looked and looked, and although they could not see anything more than the others, they said, like the Emperor, "It is very fine." And all advised him to wear the new magnificent clothes at a great procession which was soon to take place. "It is *magnifique*! beautiful, excellent!" went from mouth to mouth, and everybody seemed to be delighted. The Emperor gave

each of the swindlers the cross of the order of knighthood and the title of Imperial Court Weavers.

All through the night before the procession was due to take place the swindlers were up, and had more than sixteen candles burning. People could see that they were busy getting the Emperor's new clothes ready. They pretended to take the cloth from the loom, they snipped the air with big scissors, they sewed needles without thread, and said at last, "Now the Emperor's new clothes are ready!"

The Emperor, with all his noblest courtiers, then came in; and both the swindlers held up one arm as if they held something, and said, "See, here are the trousers! Here is the coat! Here is the cloak!" and so on. "They are all as light as a cobweb! They make one feel as if one had nothing on at all, but that is just the beauty of it."

"Yes!" said all the courtiers; but they could not see anything, for there was nothing to be seen.

"Will it please your Majesty graciously to take off your clothes?" said the swindlers. "Then we may help your Majesty into the new clothes before the large looking-glass!"

The Emperor took off all his clothes, and the swindlers pretended to put the new clothes upon him, one piece after another; and the Emperor looked at himself in the glass from every side.

"Oh, how well they look! How well they fit!" said all. "What a pattern! What colors! That is a splendid dress!"

"They are waiting outside with the canopy which is to be borne over your Majesty in the procession," said the chief master of the ceremonies.

"Yes, I am quite ready," said the Emperor. "Does not my suit fit me quite marvelously?" And he turned once more to the looking-glass, that people should think he admired his garments.

The chamberlains, who were to carry the train, fumbled with their hands on the ground, as if they were lifting up a train. Then they pretended to hold something up in their hands; they dared not let people know that they could not see anything.

And so the Emperor marched in the procession under the beautiful canopy, and all who saw him in the street and out of the windows exclaimed, "How marvelous the Emperor's new suit is! What a long train he has! How well it fits him!" Nobody would let others know that he saw nothing, for then he would have been unfit for his office or too stupid. None of the Emperor's clothes had ever been such a success.

"But he has nothing on at all," said a little child. "Good heavens! Hear what the little innocent says!" said the father, and then each whispered to the other what the child said. "He has nothing on—a little child says he has nothing on at all!" "He has nothing on at all!" cried all the people at last. And the Emperor too was feeling very worried, for it seemed to him that they were right, but he thought to himself, "All the same, I must keep the procession going now." And he held himself stiffer than ever, and the chamberlains walked on and held up the train which was not there at all.

From *The Arthur Rackham Fairy Book*. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1976.)

Turncoat/Bakongo

There were two men who had been friends from childhood, and had never been known to quarrel with one another. So great was their friendship that they had made their fields next neighbors, and were divided only by a village path.

Now there was a wicked wit who liked to cause trouble, and he made a coat in two colors, the left side red, the right side blue, and he put it on and walked along the path between the two friends as they were busy working.

"Wa! Say! Did you see that man?" said one of the friends.

"Yes."

"Did you notice the bright coat he wore?"

"Yes."

"What color do you say it was?"

"Blue, of course."

"Blue, man! It was kind of red!"

"It was blue!"

"Red!"

"Blue!"

"I know it was red!"

"If you know that, then you are a fool!"

"A fool! All our lives you are friends with a fool?"

"Then I was the fool! To be the friend of a fool!"

"That's an end!" And they began to fight.

Then their women screamed and interfered, and broke it up.

The friends were ashamed, and sat in the fields, each with his elbows resting on his knees and his head between his hands.

And here comes the wicked wit, walking back the other way. Aiee!

From The Guizer: A Book of Fools, *by Alan Garner (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975).*

The Wall of Mystery/Sufi

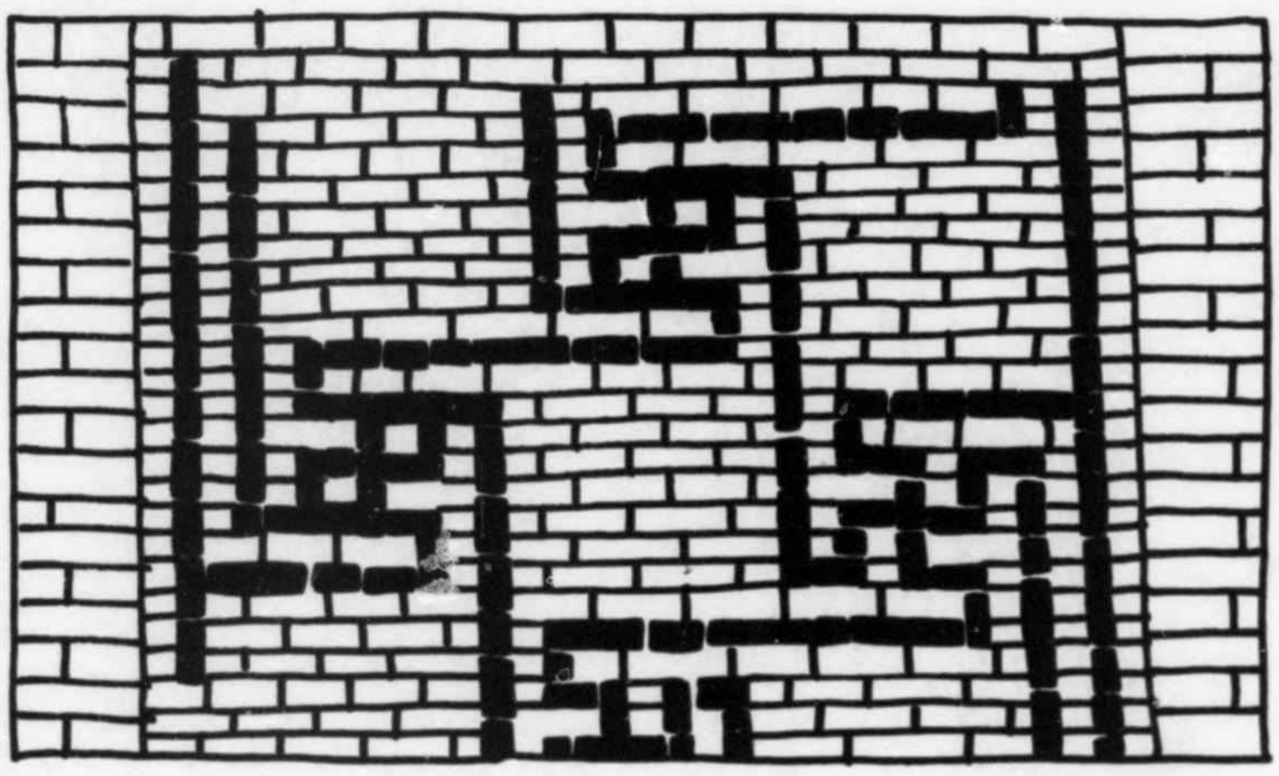
Far in the East there was once a wall of mystery. Few people approached it. Occasionally, however, someone more daring than the rest made his way to the wall and began to climb. It was not easy to climb to the top of the wall, but some persevered. Those who reached the top and looked over to the other side were seen to smile; then they slipped over the wall and were never seen again.

After a while, the people of that country learned to recognize the signs that told them someone was about to approach the wall. That person's eyes would begin to stare through and beyond his surroundings. He grew forgetful, and would often fail to answer questions put to him. He seemed absorbed in other questions that those about him could not understand.

The people of the country grew more and more curious. Although they did not want to risk climbing the wall themselves, they very much wanted to know what lay on the other side of it. Several of the men began to talk together. Then, the next time that they noticed someone with staring eyes and the look of inner vision, they brought chains and waited beside the wall. As the young man began to climb, they seized his feet and fastened chains to them. Still, he climbed upward, and at last reached the top of the wall.

He looked over. He smiled, just as the others had, a smile of rapture. The men at the foot of the wall, overcome with curiosity, pulled on the chains, and pulled him back. Eagerly, they began to question him. What was it like on the other side? But none of their questions were ever answered. By the time the young man's feet touched the ground, he had lost the power of speech.

Retold by Anne Twitty



Mr. Fox /British

Lady Mary was young, and Lady Mary was fair. She had two brothers, and more lovers than she could count. But of them all, the bravest and most gallant was a Mr. Fox, whom she met when she was down at her father's country house. No one knew who Mr. Fox was; but he was certainly brave, and surely rich, and of all her lovers, Lady Mary cared for him alone. At last it was agreed upon between them that they should be married. Lady Mary asked Mr. Fox where they should live, and he described to her his castle, and where it was, but, strange to say, did not ask her, or her brothers, to come and see it.

So one day, near the wedding day, when her brothers were out, and Mr. Fox was away for a day or two on business, as he said, Lady Mary set out for Mr. Fox's castle. And after many searchings, she came at last to it, and a fine strong house it was, with high walls and a deep moat. And when she came up to the gateway, she saw written on it:

BE BOLD, BE BOLD

But as the gate was open, she went through it, and found no one there. So she went up to the doorway, and over it she found written:

BE BOLD, BE BOLD, BUT NOT TOO BOLD

Still she went on, till she came to the hall, and went up the broad stairs till she came to a door in the gallery, over which was written:

BE BOLD, BE BOLD, BUT NOT TOO BOLD,
LEST THAT YOUR HEART'S BLOOD SHOULD RUN COLD

But Lady Mary was a brave one, she was, and she opened the door, and what do you think she saw? Why, bodies and skeletons of beautiful young ladies all stained with blood. So Lady Mary thought it was high time to get out of that horrid place, and she closed the door, went through the gallery, and was just going down the stairs, and out of the hall, when who should she see through the window, but Mr. Fox dragging a beautiful young lady along from the gateway to the door. Lady Mary rushed downstairs, and hid herself behind a cask, just in time, as Mr. Fox came in with the young lady, who seemed to have fainted.

Just as he got near Lady Mary, Mr. Fox saw a diamond ring glittering on the finger of the young lady he was dragging, and he tried to pull it off. But it was tightly fixed, and would not come off, so Mr. Fox cursed and swore, and drew his sword, raised it, and brought it down upon the hand of the poor lady.

The sword cut off the hand, which jumped up into the air, and fell of all places in the world into Lady Mary's lap. Mr. Fox looked about a bit, but did not think of looking behind the cask, so at last he went on dragging the young lady up the stairs into the Bloody Chamber.

As soon as she heard him pass through the gallery, Lady Mary crept out of the door, down through the gateway, and ran home as fast as she could.

Now it happened that the very next day the marriage contract of Lady Mary and Mr. Fox was to be signed, and there was a splendid breakfast before that.

And when Mr. Fox was seated at table opposite Lady Mary, he looked at her. "How pale you are this morning, my dear." "Yes," she said. "I had a bad night's rest last night. I had horrible dreams." "Dreams go by contraries," said Mr. Fox; "but tell us your dream, and your sweet voice will make the time pass till the happy hour comes."

"I dreamed," said Lady Mary, "that I went yestermorn to your castle, and I found it in the woods, with high walls, and a deep moat, and over the gateway was written:

BE BOLD, BE BOLD"

"But it is not so, nor it was not so," said Mr. Fox.

"And when I came to the doorway over it was written:

BE BOLD, BE BOLD, BUT NOT TOO BOLD"

"It is not so, nor it was not so," said Mr. Fox.

"And then I went upstairs, and came to a gallery, at the end of which was a door, on which was written:

BE BOLD, BE BOLD, BUT NOT TOO BOLD,
LEST THAT YOUR HEART'S BLOOD SHOULD RUN COLD"

"It is not so, nor it was not so," said Mr. Fox.

"And then—and then I opened the door, and the room was filled with the bodies and skeletons of poor dead women, all stained with their blood."

"It is not so, nor it was not so, and God forbid it should be so," said Mr. Fox.

"I then dreamed that I rushed down the gallery, and just as I was going down the stairs, I saw you, Mr. Fox, coming up to the hall door, dragging after you a poor young lady, rich and beautiful."

"It is not so, nor it was not so. And God forbid it should be so," said Mr. Fox.

"I rushed downstairs, just in time to hide myself behind a cask, when you, Mr. Fox, came in dragging the young lady by the arm. And, as you passed me, Mr. Fox, I thought I saw you try and get off her diamond ring, and when you could not, Mr. Fox, it seemed to me in my dream, that you out with your sword and hacked off the

poor lady's hand to get the ring."

"It is not so, nor it was not so. And God forbid it should be so," said Mr. Fox, and was going to say something else as he rose from his seat, when Lady Mary cried out:

"But it is so, and it was so. Here's hand and ring I have to show," and pulled out the lady's hand from her dress, and pointed it straight at Mr. Fox.

At once her brothers and her friends drew their swords and cut Mr. Fox into a thousand pieces.

From British Folk-Tales and Legends: A Sampler, *by Katherine M. Briggs (London: Granada Publishing/Paladine Books, 1977).*

The Cedar Tree/Mohawk

There once was a boy who lived with his uncle. The boy's parents had died and the uncle did not like him or treat him well. The boy dressed in ragged clothing and was not well fed. He always tried to do exactly as his uncle told him, though, for his parents had taught him to listen closely and obey his elders. The other children in the village laughed and called him "The Listener," because he was always watching and listening and seldom spoke.

One day, his uncle grew tired of taking care of the boy.

"Come here," he said to The Listener, "I want you to do something for me. Go into the forest to the clearing to the north. There is a small cedar tree there. I want you to climb up that tree and spend the night in it."

Without asking his uncle why he had to do such a strange thing, the boy went into the forest as he was told, went to the clearing to the north and climbed the tree.

There he sat as it became evening. He was cold and lonely, but he did not say a word or make a sound. It grew darker and darker and then the boy began to hear a strange sound like voices overhead. He looked up and saw strange green lights flying through the air towards the clearing. Although he did not know it, this clearing was the place where the evil-hearted ones, the witches, came to plan their work. This was why the uncle had sent him there. The uncle knew that no one who stayed in that clearing to the north overnight ever returned.

The Listener, however, did not move or make a sound. The green lights flew closer and then landed in a circle near the base of the tree where they turned into men and women and began to talk.

"Did you see how sick the old chief has become?" said one of the witches.

"Yes," said another, "and no one knows we are the ones who made him sick."

"Soon he will die," said a third witch, "for he does not know what can cure him."

"Yes," said a fourth witch, "we are the only ones who know that. We are the only ones who know that one has only to boil some of the moss from the eastern side of that cedar tree there and then drink the tea to grow well again."

All of the witches began to laugh. They laughed and laughed, louder and louder, as The Listener watched them and did not make a sound. Then, still laughing, the witches turned again into green lights and flew away.

Without moving or speaking, the boy stayed in the tree for the rest of the night. When the sun rose, he climbed out of the tree and hurried back to the village, carrying with him a handful of moss from the eastern side of the cedar tree. He went straight to the lodge of the old chief, who was almost dead.

Later that day, the boy's uncle heard shouting from the other side of the village. A great crowd had gathered and at its center was the old chief, smiling and well. By his side was The Listener. As the uncle watched, people came up and gave the boy gifts and praised him for saving the life of the old chief.

"Do not praise me," said the boy. "My uncle told me where to go to gain the knowledge to save the old chief's life." The people, though, paid no attention to the uncle and began to prepare a feast for the boy.

Now the uncle was jealous. "Hunh," he said to himself, "why should I not be praised also? I will go and gain knowledge myself." Then he walked out of the village, went to the clearing to the north and climbed up into the cedar tree. He was so fat, though, that he was not hidden by the branches as his nephew had been. He was not comfortable in the tree and was not able to sit still and keep from making any noise. However, he was so jealous of his nephew that he remained in the tree as the evening came and it grew darker and darker.

Then he saw green lights flying through the air. They circled the tree, as the uncle shifted his weight and shook the branches. Then the green lights landed in the clearing and turned into men and women.

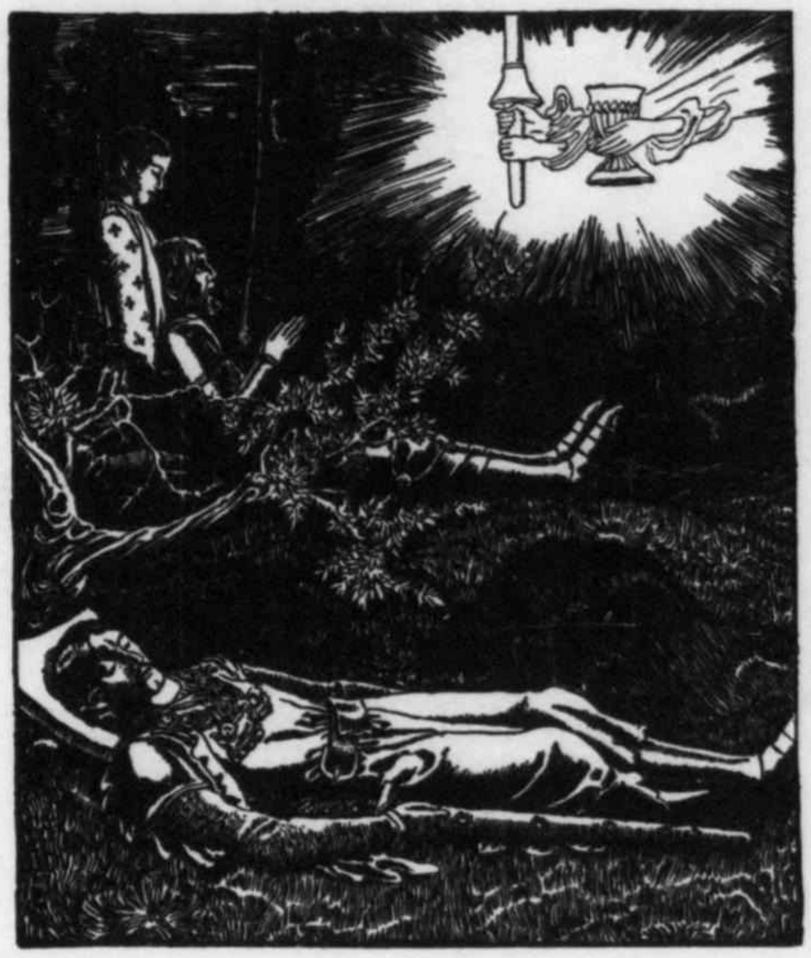
"Brothers and sisters," said the first witch, "the old chief grew well."

"Someone was watching us," said the second witch.

"Someone was listening from the cedar tree," said the third witch.

"If anyone is in that tree now," said the fourth witch, pointing her finger, "let them fall dead."

Retold by Joseph Bruchac



Sir Launcelot's Dream/Arthurian

Sir Launcelot rode for the rest of the day without meeting further adventure, until about evening time, when he came to a bare and naked knoll covered with furze bushes. Here, in the midst of that wild, he beheld an ancient ruined chapel, and he said to himself, "Here will I rest me for the night." So he rode around that chapel, seeking for the door thereof, but he could find no door upon any side of the chapel, but only windows, very high raised from the ground. Then Sir Launcelot said, "This is a very strange chapel that it should have no doors, but only windows so high that I cannot enter by them. Now I will rest here and see what is the meaning of this place."

So saying, he dismounted from his horse, and lay down beneath a thornbush that was not far distant from the chapel.

Now, as Sir Launcelot lay there, a drowsiness began to descend upon him, and though he could not sleep yet it was as though he did sleep, for he could move nor hand nor foot. Yet was he conscious of all that passed about him as though he had been wide awake. For he was conscious of the dark and silent vaults of sky, sprinkled all over with an incredible number of stars, and he was conscious of his horse cropping the herbage beside him in the darkness, and he was conscious of the wind that blew across his face, and that moved the corner of his cloak in the silence of the night time. Of all these things was he conscious, and yet he could not move of his own will so much as a single hair.

Anon, whilst he lay in that wise he was presently aware that some people were approaching the chapel in the darkness, for he heard the sound of voices and of the feet of horses moving upon the road. So, in a little while, there came to that place a knight and an esquire. And the knight was very sorely wounded, for his armor was broken and shattered by battle, and the esquire sustained him in the saddle so that, except for the upholding of the esquire's arm and hand, he would have fallen prostrate down upon the ground.

Then Sir Launcelot, as he lay in that waking sleep, heard the knight say to the esquire, "Floradaine, is the chapel near at hand, for mine eyes are failing and I cannot see." And the esquire wept and he said, "Yea, Lord, it is here. Sustain yourself but for a little and you will be there."

Therewith the esquire drew rein and he dismounted from his horse and he lifted the knight down from his charger, and the knight groaned very dolorously as the esquire lifted him down. Then, breathing very heavily and with great labor, the knight said, "Floradaine, is there a light?" And the esquire said, "Not yet, Messire." Again, after a little, the knight said, "Is there yet a light?" And again the esquire answered, "Not yet, Messire." And again, after awhile, the knight said for the third time, "Floradaine, is there yet a light?" And this time the knight breathed the words, as in a whisper of death. Then of a sudden the esquire called out in a loud and joyful voice, "Yea, Lord, now I behold a light!"

All this Sir Launcelot beheld in that waking dream, and though it was in the darkness of night, yet he beheld it very clearly, as though it were by the sun of noonday. For he beheld the face of the knight that it was white as of pure wax, and that the sweat of death stood in beads upon his forehead. And he beheld that the esquire was young and fair, and that he had long ringlets of yellow hair that curled down upon his shoulder. Then when the esquire said that he beheld a light, Sir Launcelot beheld the windows of the chapel that they were illuminated from within with a pale blue lustre, as though the dawn were shining in that chapel. And he heard the sound of chanting voices, at first very faint and far away, but anon ever growing stronger and stronger as the light from the chapel grew stronger. And those voices chanted a melody that was so sweet and ravishing that it caused the heart to melt as with an agony.

Then the walls of that chapel opened like a door and a light shone forth with a remarkable lustre so that it illuminated the face of that dying knight, and of the page who upheld him. And at the same time the song burst forth in great volume, as it were a thunder of chanting.

Then forthwith there came out of the chapel a bright shining spear, and two fair hands held the spear by the butt, yet Sir Launcelot could not behold the body to whom those two hands belonged. And after the spear there came forth a chalice, and two fair, white hands held that chalice, but neither could Sir Launcelot behold any body to which those hands belonged. And the chalice seemed to send forth a light of such dazzling radiance that it was as though one looked at the bright and shining sun in his glory.

Then Sir Launcelot was aware that this was the Holy Grail of which he was in search, and he strove with all his might to arouse himself, but he could not do so. Then the tears burst out from his eyes and traced down his cheeks in streams, but still

he could not arouse himself, but lay chained in that waking sleep.

So the chalice advanced toward that knight, but the knight had not strength to reach forth and touch it. Then the esquire took the arm of the knight and raised it, and he raised the hand of the knight so that the hand touched the chalice.

Then it was as though Sir Launcelot beheld the virtue of the Grail go forth from it, and that it passed through the hand of the wounded knight, and that it passed through his arm and penetrated into his body. For he beheld that the blood ceased to flow from that wounded knight, and that the color flooded back into his cheeks and that the light came back into his eyes and that the strength returned to his body.

Then the knight arose and he kneeled down before the Grail, and he set his palms together and he prayed before the Grail.

Then, slowly, the light that had been so bright from the Grail began to wane. First the spear disappeared, and then the hands that held it disappeared. Then, for awhile, the Grail glowed with a faint, pallid light, and then it, too, vanished, and all was dark as it had been before.

So Sir Launcelot beheld the vision of the Grail, but as in the vision of a dream as I have told it here to you. And still the tears rained from his eyes, for he could not rouse himself to behold it with his waking eyes.

After this the knight and the esquire approached to the place where Sir Launcelot lay asleep, and the esquire said to the knight, "Messire, who is this man, and why sleepeth he here whilst all these wonders pass him by?" And the knight said, "This knight is a very sinful man, and his name is Sir Launcelot of the Lake." Quoth the esquire, "How hath he sinned?" To which the knight replied, "He hath sinned in this way. He had a beautiful and gentle lady, and he deserted that wife for the sake of Queen Guinevere. So his lady went away and left him, and anon she gave birth to Galahad, and in that birth she also gave her life. So Sir Launcelot betrayed his wife, and because of that betrayal he now lieth sleeping, and he cannot waken until after we are gone away from this place."

Then the esquire said to the knight, "Messire, behold; here this knight hath a good, strong horse. Take thou this horse and leave thine own in its stead. For this horse is fresh and full of life, and thine is spent and weary with battle." And the knight said, "I will take that horse."

Then, after they had gone, Sir Launcelot bestirred himself and awoke. And he would have thought that all that he had beheld was a dream, but he beheld the worn and weary horse of the knight was there, and that his horse was gone. Then he cried aloud in great agony of soul, "Lord, my sin hath found me out!" And therewith he rushed about like a madman, seeking to find a way into that chapel, and finding no way.

So when the day broke he mounted the worn and weary horse that the knight had left, and he rode away from that place and back into the forest; and his head hung low upon his breast. When he had come into the forest and to the cell of the hermit thereof, he laid aside his armor and he kneeled down before the Hermit of the Forest, and confessed all his sins to him. And the Hermit of the Forest gave him absolution for

these sins, and he said, "Take peace, my son. For although thou shalt not behold the Grail in thy flesh, yet shall God forgive thee these sins of thine that lie so heavily upon thy soul."

Then Sir Launcelot arose chastened from his confession. And he left his armor where it lay and assumed the garb of an anchorite. And he went away from that place, into the remoter recesses of the forest. There he dwelt in the caves and in the wilds, living upon berries and the fruits of the forest. And he dwelt there a long time until he felt assured that God had forgiven him. Then he returned to his kind again; but never after that day was he seen to smile.

From The Story of the Grail and the Passing of Arthur, *by Howard Pyle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933).*

The History of Susanna/Apocrypha

There dwelt a man in Babylon, called Joacim; and he took a wife, whose name was Susanna, the daughter of Chelcias, a very fair woman, and one that feared the Lord. Her parents also were righteous, and taught their daughter according to the law of Moses.

Now Joacim was a great rich man, and had a fair garden joining unto his house; and to him resorted the Jews, because he was more honorable than all others.

The same year were appointed two of the ancients of the people to be judges, such as the Lord spake of, that wickedness came from Babylon from ancient judges, who seemed to govern the people. These kept much at Joacim's house; and all that had any suits in law came unto them. Now when the people departed away at noon, Susanna went into her husband's garden to walk.

And the two elders saw her going in every day, and walking; so that their lust was inflamed toward her. And they perverted their own mind, and turned away their eyes, that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgments. And albeit they both were wounded with her love, yet durst not one shew another his grief. For they were ashamed to declare their lust, that they desired to have to do with her. Yet they watched diligently from day to day to see her. And the one said to the other, Let us now go home; for it is dinner time.

So when they were gone out, they parted the one from the other, and turning back again they came to the same place; and after that they had asked one another the cause, they acknowledged their lust; then appointed they a time both together, when they might find her alone. And it fell out, as they watched a fit time, she went in as before with two maids only, and she was desirous to wash herself in the garden; for it was hot. And there was no body there save the two elders, that had hid themselves, and watched her.

Then she said to her maids, Bring me oil and washing balls, and shut the garden doors, that I may wash me. And they did as she bade them, and shut the garden doors, and went out themselves at privy doors to fetch the things that she had commanded them; but they saw not the elders, because they were hid.

Now when the maids were gone forth, the two elders rose up, and ran unto her, saying, Behold, the garden doors are shut, that no man can see us, and we are in love with thee; therefore consent unto us, and lie with us. If thou wilt not, we will bear witness against thee, that a young man was with thee; and therefore thou didst send away thy maids from thee.

Then Susanna sighed, and said, I am straitened on every side: for if I do this thing, it is death unto me; and if I do it not, I cannot escape your hands. It is better for me to fall into your hands, and not do it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord.

With that Susanna cried with a loud voice; and the two elders cried out against her. Then ran the one, and opened the garden door. So when the servants of the house heard the cry in the garden, they rushed in at a privy door, to see what was done unto her. But when the elders had declared their matter, the servants were greatly ashamed; for there was never such a report made of Susanna.

And it came to pass the next day, when the people were assembled to her husband Joacim, the two elders came also full of mischievous imagination against Susanna to put her to death; and said before the people, Send for Susanna, the daughter of Chelcias, Joacim's wife. And so they sent. So she came with her father and mother, her children, and all her kindred.

Now Susanna was a very delicate woman, and beauteous to behold. And these wicked men commanded to uncover her face (for she was covered) that they might be filled with her beauty. Therefore her friends and all that saw her wept. Then the two elders stood up in the midst of the people, and laid their hands upon her head. And she weeping looked up toward heaven; for her heart trusted in the Lord.

And the elders said, As we walked in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, and shut the garden doors, and sent the maids away. Then a young man, who there was hid, came unto her, and lay with her. Then we that stood in a corner of the garden, seeing this wickedness, ran unto them. And when we saw them together, the man we could not hold; for he was stronger than we, and opened the door, and leaped out. But having taken this woman, we asked who the young man was, but she would not tell us; these things do we testify.

Then the assembly believed them, as those that were the elders and judges of the people; so they condemned her to death. Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, O everlasting God, that knowest the secrets, and knowest all things before they be: Thou knowest that they have borne false witness against me, and, behold, I must die; whereas I never did such things as these men have maliciously invented against me.

And the Lord heard her voice.

Therefore when she was led to be put to death, the Lord raised up the holy spirit of a young youth, whose name was Daniel; who cried with a loud voice, I am clear from the blood of this woman.

Then all the people turned them toward him, and said, What mean these words

that thou has spoken? So he standing in the midst of them said, Are ye such fools, ye sons of Israel, that without examination or knowledge of the truth ye have condemned a daughter of Israel? Return again to the place of judgment; for they have borne false witness against her.

Wherefore all the people turned again in haste, and the elders said unto him, Come, sit down among us, and shew it us, seeing God hath given thee the honor of an elder.

Then said Daniel unto them, Put these two aside one far from another, and I will examine them.

So when they were put asunder one from another, he called one of them, and said unto him, O thou that art waxen old in wickedness, now thy sins which thou hast committed aforetime are come to light. For thou hast pronounced false judgment, and hast condemned the innocent, and hast let the guilty go free; albeit the Lord saith, The innocent and righteous shalt thou not slay. Now then, if thou hast seen her, tell me, under what tree sawest thou them companying together? Who answered, Under a mastick tree. And Daniel said, Very well; thou hast lied against thine own head; for even now the angel of God hath received the sentence of God to cut thee in two.

So he put him aside, and commanded to bring the other, and said unto him, O thou seed of Chanaan, and not of Juda, beauty hath deceived thee, and lust hath perverted thine heart. Thus have ye dealt with the daughters of Israel, and they for fear companied with you; but the daughter of Juda would not abide your wickedness. Now therefore tell me, under what tree didst thou take them companying together? Who answered, Under an holm tree. Then said Daniel unto him, Well; thou hast also lied against thine own head; for the angel of God waiteth with the sword to cut thee in two, that he may destroy you.

With that all the assembly cried out with a loud voice, and praised God, who saveth them that trust in him. And they arose against the two elders, for Daniel had convicted them of false witness by their own mouth; and according to the law of Moses they did unto them in such sort as they maliciously intended to do to their neighbor; and they put them to death. Thus the innocent blood was saved the same day.

Therefore Chelcias and his wife praised God for their daughter Susanna, with Joacim her husband, and all the kindred, because there was no dishonesty found in her. From that day forth was Daniel had in great reputation in the sight of the people.

The Seven Mateinnu/Lenape

Long ago, there were seven *mateinnu*. These men had grown very wise after years of fasting and dreaming. They had been blessed with power from The Great *Manito,* The Creator. They knew the herbs for curing and were able to do many things to help the people. They could often see things which were about to happen and tell

people what to do to prepare. However, because the seven *mateinnu* were so wise, everyone came to them to ask for help. People began demanding so much of them that the wise men finally decided to hide themselves so that they would have some peace.

"Everyone knows what we look like," said one of the *mateinnu*. "How can we conceal ourselves?"

"Let us change ourselves into rocks of different shapes," said another of the wise men. Then, because they had such power, they did just that. They became seven large stones and the people passed by them without knowing who they really were.

So things continued for a long time. In the village, though, there was a young man with very good eyes. This young man always saw the things which others missed and he also paid close attention to his dreams and tried to lead a good life. One night a dream came to him and told him to go to the place in the forest where there were seven stones and look closely. The next morning, the young man did just that. He went to the place where the seven stones were and looked at them very closely. The longer he looked at them the more they looked like old men. Finally, the young man leaned close to one of the stones.

"Grandfather," said the young man, "are you well?"

"Yes, Grandson," answered the stone. "Thank you for asking."

Then the young man began to speak with the stone. Soon the other stones, which had been silent for a long time, joined into the conversation. They told the young man things which would be useful for his people and when he returned to the village he was able to do good deeds with his new knowledge. The next day he went again to talk with the seven *mateinnu*.

So things went for a time. Then others from the village began following the young man and saw where he went. They observed him speaking to the stones and realized the seven stones were the seven lost wise men. Now others came to the stones and tried to speak to them. The stones would only speak to that young man who had looked closely enough to see them, but they were bothered by all the visitors. Finally, when the young man came alone to see them one day, the *mateinnu* changed back into human shape.

"Grandfathers," said the young man, "I am glad to see you."

"Thank you, Grandson," said the seven *mateinnu*. "But we have taken our human shapes once more because we are going away. As it was before, the people are giving us no peace. Use the knowledge we have given you well."

Then the seven wise men went away. It is said that they went further into the forest and changed themselves into seven cedar trees. They were trees of such perfect shape and size, though, that before long people noticed them and decided they were the seven wise men. They began to come to the place where the *mateinnu* were in the shape of trees. They came in such numbers that once again the seven *mateinnu* had no peace. That was when The Great Manito took pity on the *mateinnu*. He lifted them up into the sky and changed them into the stars. To this day you can see them, the stars the Lenape call The Seven Wise Men, The Pleiades.

Retold by Joseph Bruchac

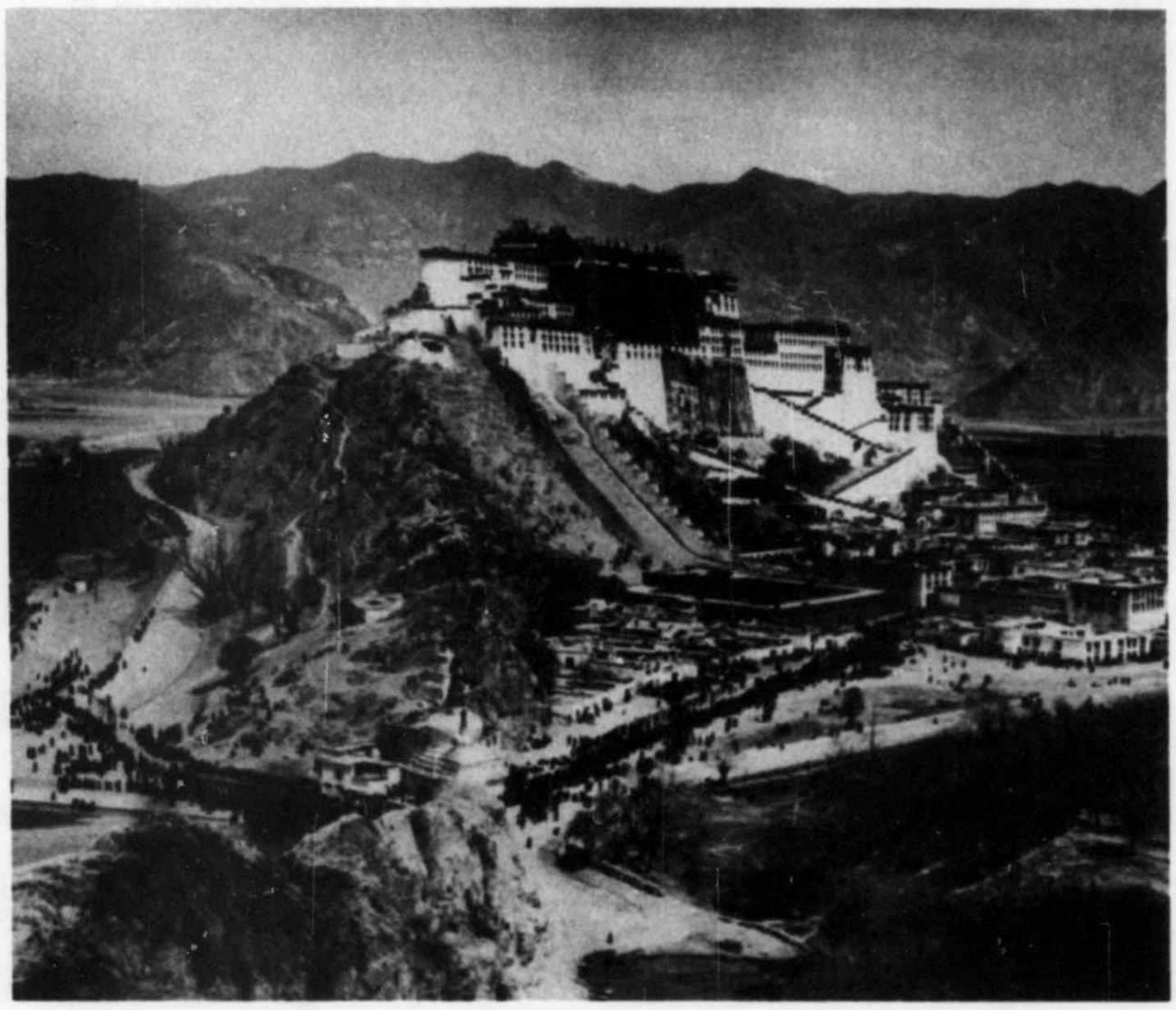
CURRENTS & COMMENTS

FILMS

Rare and stunning archival film footage of traditional Tibet and Tibet under Chinese rule can be viewed on two noteworthy new video tapes, **"Tibet: The Lost Mystery"** and **"Tibet: The Bamboo Curtain Falls."** Originally aired in England as part of the BBC's "The World Around Us" series, these two films were compiled from several hundred hours of archival material—nearly all in color—filmed in Tibet between 1929 and 1980.

"Tibet: The Lost Mystery" documents the history of Tibet from 1904 through 1949 by means of footage shot by a succession of British diplomatic missions to Lhasa. Through the use of clockwork and standard cameras they recorded the street life of the Tibetan capitol, garden parties, monastic debates, and religious festivals, as well as rare footage of the State Oracle and of the current Dalai Lama's arrival in Lhasa in 1939. "Tibet: The Bamboo Curtain Falls" is compiled from both Chinese and Tibetan sources and includes footage of the Dalai Lama's visit to Peking in 1954, astonishing Chinese newsreel coverage of the invasion and of the 1959 Tibetan uprising, and a film record of the Dalai Lama's flight to India. Also included are extracts from the eleven hours of footage photographed by the first delegation of the Tibetan Government in exile during a three-month tour of Tibet in 1979.

Both films, running fifty minutes each, are available in V.H.S. and Beta format from Orient Films, 631 Winslow Way West, Bainbridge Island, Washington 98110. For further information, telephone (206) 842–1114.



BOOK

The Festival of India concludes its remarkable year-long celebration of Indian culture in mid-June. Until then, scores of museums and other institutions throughout the country will continue to present myriad exhibitions and performances representative of the complex life and heritage of India. An official record of the many activities of the Festival is now available in a recently published book, **Festival of India.**

With 223 illustrations, most full-page and 204 in color, *Festival of India* contains a dazzling array of photographs and text from exhibitions organized by more than thirty-five of the Festival's participating museums. In 240 pages the book touches upon almost the entire panorama of cultural development in India: from early sculptures to modern-day terracotta, from ancient religious images to handmade toys, from the splendor of the sixteenth-century courts to the bustle and color of contemporary fairs, from the miniatures of the Mughal era to modern Indian painting. A short essay written by each exhibition's curator or a prominent scholar accompanies the illustrations provided by each institution, while a separate section spotlights the Indian performing artists and the musical, theatrical, and film events now touring the United States.

Festival of India is available for $35.00 (full-cloth hardcover) from Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 100 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011. For further information, please telephone (212) 206–7715.

TOUR

From February 18th through March 19th music lovers throughout the United States will have the opportunity to enjoy what the sponsoring Asia Society describes as "the most authentic presentation of traditional Chinese music ever to appear on an American stage." Beginning in San Diego and winding up in Honolulu, seven artists from Beijing's Central Conservatory of Music will visit thirteen cities, performing solo and ensemble works of Chinese classical and folk music on the *pipa* (Chinese lute), *erhu* (two-stringed vertical fiddle), *dizi* (bamboo cross flute), *xiao* (Bamboo vertical flute), *gin* (zither), *ruan* (four-stringed round guitar), *sheng* (mouth organ with seventeen bamboo pipes), and *xun* (ocarina), as well as on various percussion instruments.

The program played by the ensemble will span several centuries of traditional instrumental music from several regions of China. For more information on this rare presentation of "the music of silk and bamboo," telephone the Asia Society at (212) 288–6400, ext. 275 or 280. ■

Being Straight with the Medicine

THOMAS BUCKLEY

Straight with the Medicine: Narratives of Washoe Followers of the Tipi Way
As told to Warren L. d'Azevedo. Illustrated by Kenneth J. Carpenter. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1985. Pp. *ix* + 52. Paper. $5.95.

All grammars leak.

—Edward Sapir

For several years I was the student of a "High Man," a "complete person" in the Yurok Indian tradition. In the early 1970s he was curious about the stir the "Don Juan" books of Carlos Castaneda were creating among his students, myself included. We were all reading these tales of the Yaqui shaman and his non-Indian student, Castaneda, with great fervor. One summer, our teacher decided that he wanted to go through some of these books—the first three of them—with us. We were camped in an arid divide in California's coastal mountains. During the heat of the day it was good to relax in the shade of the pines that grow there, from time to time reading aloud and talking about the books.

The high man liked his colleague Don Juan a good deal, though he found the student, Castaneda, hard to take. "I'd just kick him out," he said on more than one occasion, exasperated by the novice's seeming dimness. The possibility that Castaneda was using a literary device, setting his fictionalized persona up as a foil to Don Juan's wisdom, was not relevant to our teacher, a practical man. Still, he thought, Castaneda might have some potential as a "man of Knowledge": Don Juan must be keeping him around for *some* good reason? "We'll see," he said when we'd

finished the third book. "If he writes another one we'll know he didn't make it."

"The things that really matter/ Don't mix with idle chatter," the jazz man Mose Allison sings in *I'm not Talkin'*. My teacher was more blunt: "Whiteman explain too much."

It would be nice to sit in that heat with the old man again, and to go through another book, *Straight with the Medicine*, with him. I suspect that he would have appreciated what the seven Washoe men had to say to the anthropologist Warren L. d'Azevedo about their "Tipi Way," and that he would have found companionship in their carefully recorded voices. Like my teacher, these men seem as practical as they are thoughtful; people who know what can be said and what cannot, and when to stop talking; reliable witnesses, not only to their own Way, but to the limits of talk as well.

The Tipi Way takes its name from the Plains-style lodges in which members of the Native American Church, the "Peyote Church," customarily hold their Meetings. The narratives in this book were gathered either during such Peyote Meetings or as responses to d'Azevedo's questions about them. Native American Church use of peyote, a psychotropic cactus, is both rigorously disciplined and intensely contemplative. The seven narrators thus speak from a perspective of inner realization, gained through hard practice.

In this sense their talk is esoteric, pointing beyond itself to things that can only be known within. It is not that the thirteen narratives in the book are obscure or abstruse or esoteric in any of the usual senses; they are all very straight. Yet this straightness, this practicality and groundedness of discourse, is itself esoteric. It communicates things that are neither beyond its concrete specifics nor limited by them.

I don't know all the meaning of my songs. I don't try to figure out what them words mean. Plenty old Indian songs like that. I just try to sing them good. I just know my own feelings. I just sing the songs like a tune . . . it carries my thoughts out. Some songs have a happy sound. Some songs got sad kinds of sounds. But that's just the way you feel about them when you hear them and sing them. You know what it means, that's all. You don't have to talk about it. You know when a song is good.

It is no contradiction that the Washoe witness does not "know all the meaning," in the sense of being able to

talk about it, to explain it, yet "knows what it means," in the sense of not *having* to talk about it, to explain it to others—or to himself. Sometimes, "not-talkable-about," "not-explicable," is part of the meaning. Yet here's the rub; we will talk.

Powerful as the idea of bearing silent witness is, such witness seldom manifests as pure silence. The Buddhist Patriarch Bodhidharma, silent before the wall of a cave for nine years, was a rare bird indeed, and the purity of his silence is thus of mythological proportions, however grounded in historical fact. Finally, even he broke silence out of compassion, responsibility to others.

The talk of the witness to truth breaks pure silence, yet points back into it, beyond explanation, beyond discourse itself. This kind of talk, on the edge of silence, tends toward the concrete, although the tendency can move in apparently diametrically opposed directions. The first is allusive, overtly paradoxical, seemingly nonsensical:

I am the silence that is incomprehensible
and the idea whose remembrance
is frequent.
I am the voice whose sound is manifold
and the word whose appearance is
multiple.
I am the utterance of my name.[1]

The other is utterly sensible, transparent, plain: the Zen master's "Drink your tea!" For all their difference in style and tone, they have much in common. Both deal in concrete imagery—things as real and solid as the truths they witness—and both shun explanation of this imagery, abstraction from it in terms of some more generalized scheme.

Sometimes these two means for saying what seems beyond speech come together in little stories—slight, apparently trivial, often absurd, often funny. They are, virtually invariably, stories about this concrete world, and too light to be called "myths." The joke in such little stories—those of Nasrudin, the Sufi sheikh, come to mind—often hinges on the absurdity of the human need to hear what is not sayable.

The closest my teacher ever came to kicking *me* out—and it was mighty close—was over such little stories. He had some anecdotes about his own childhood and youth and a few songs that he wanted to pull together into a book, to share with people. He asked me to help him. "Whiteman" that I am, I quite naturally added a few explanatory com-

ments, in Editor's Footnotes, and "cleaned up" the language a bit, trying to make it "more clear" for the reader. My teacher's response to the typed draft of "his" book that I showed him was, "You flunk." It took a while to figure out just what I'd flunked.

If the immediate witness to truth tends to the concrete, on the edge of talk and silence, our retreat from that edge and that truth alike is sounded in registers of the abstract, in explanation. In this retreat, which we of course intend as an advance, as a "clearing up," we climb the scales with vigor, through "power" to "The Sacred," "The Holy," to "Ultimate Concerns" to "Hierophanies." Finally, at these dizzying heights, the true note of the immediate witness, like Ummon's "shit-wiping stick," can contribute nothing but a little texture, though in fact that stick catches us upside the head.[2]

This is the irony of explanation: Those who would explain the witness's meaning can never know it better than does the witness himself. And if the witness chooses not to explain, not to talk further, it is because explanation further conceals his meaning, rather than clarifying it.

My teacher was not anomalous, among native American thinkers, in his interest in books—Castaneda's and his own. The natives have long since gone literate—if not always strictly speaking, at least in the sense that they consciously live in a real world of which books are a real part. Usually appreciative of well-recorded substantive facts about their own cultures—good descriptive ethnographies and histories, for instance—these readers seldom seem taken with non-Indian's explanations of those facts, in my experience at least. This was also the case, for example, when an Anglo archaeologist showed a Navajo elder his new textbook. The archaeologist showed the elder the book's pictures of prehistoric stone points found in Navajo country, while describing his scientific account of their origins. The elder was not impressed. "Whoever wrote it just thinks about it and just makes a theory about it," he said. He knew differently: "The horny toad makes it [the points]."[3]

Various non-Indian scholars and popularizers have offered a range of explanations, interpretations, and evocations of the Peyote Way and of its institutional embodiment, the Native American Church. Scholarly and novelistic approaches have assayed peyote and its use among Indians from, alternately, ethnographic, historical, sociological, and psycho-pharmacological vantages, in terms of comparative religious typologies, and from a romantic perspective rooted in the exoticism of de Quincy and Coleridge. While some of these efforts—

James Slotkin's empathetic accounts of Menominee peyotism, for example—have earned the respect of Native American Church members who have read them and whom I have talked with, these readers—again, in my own, limited experience—find this literature generally impoverished, letting escape that which is most vital to the tradition. The authors usually get the facts right, but seldom seem to know what those facts mean to the people who live them out.

In *Straight with the Medicine*, editor d'Azevedo takes a different approach to communicating what these facts mean.

He writes that he "felt it an obligation" to let his Washoe Indian teachers "speak for themselves." While others have included extracts from native testimony in their works on peyote, such testimony, in the form of complete, verbatim narratives rather than synthetic paraphrases or excerpts, forms nearly the whole of this book. These are accompanied by a brief, nonintrusive preface in which d'Azevedo summarizes his methods in recording and transcribing the narratives.

In the care he has taken to record and transcribe the speech of the seven narrators accurately, as in the obligation he felt to let them speak for themselves in the finished book, d'Azevedo implicitly acknowledges that the voice of the witness is itself a part of the witness he bears. Certainly, his Washoe narrators understand this and teach it:

> Sometimes the words just don't come, because there is something holding them back. It don't do no good to just make something up. You just can't say it if you don't feel it right. The words don't come. If you just say anything to sound good, you might hurt somebody, or it might come back and hit you hard. You have to sit there and wait for it to come right out of your own body. Maybe it don't come. Then you know something is really wrong inside. You can't force it out. You just have to try to live right and then maybe it will come out of you some other time.

The living quality of the speech that d'Azevedo has reproduced makes excerpting from this book a difficult task. The sense of the narrations unwinds slowly and implacably, with nothing extra, concrete step by concrete step. The narratives are wholes, and the language itself is an integral, concrete part of the whole. Of course, the narratives communicate things in a more traditional sense, are about things, too; a wide range of things, in fact, cast in a wide

range of moods. There are "little stories" full of humor and irony, personal confessions rife with both bitter suffering and happy good will, a seeming survey of major symbolic elements of Tipi Way practice: "This Herb" (peyote), "My Outfit" (ritual gear), "Songs,"

"Feathers," "Praying." Yet the stories, like "Jesus and the Donkey," are not just entertainments, the confessions, like "Straight with the Medicine," not simply personal monologues, and the survey of ethnographic elements not exactly that. But at the same time, they *are* "just" and "exactly" and "simply" what they seem to be, too.

The narratives are nonabstract, nonanalytic, explain nothing. A man's discussion of the meaning of feathers in ritual practice does not generalize but, rather, soon shifts into a tale of his own experience with magpies. A speech, in a Meeting, that seems to "really" be about the meaning of fellowship, simply presents, objectively and disinterestedly, an outsider's case for his acceptance by the Church, cast in descriptive, biographical terms. We either get it or we don't, and if we don't there's certainly nothing more to say. It is rock-solid talk, about this hard rock world, poised precisely on the edge of silence, infinite discursive space.

While a good deal of these men's witness thus rings in the interstices of their talk, in the space in and around what is said, there are also more exoteric and readily explainable themes running through it, existing in that space, linking the separate narratives together. In his Preface, d'Azevedo wisely limits his exegesis to these themes.

The 1950s, when d'Azevedo recorded the narratives, were a time of especially deep social inequity and conflict for the Washoe as for other American Indians. Like others, the Washoe were assaulted from without by racism and imposed hardship, their very identity as Indians put in jeopardy. At the same time, divisiveness tore at the group from within. The coming of the Tipi Way in

the late 1930s exacerbated both orders of conflict. Federal authorities sought to repress the new Way, and traditionalists among the Washoe resisted it as well. Followers of the Way adhered to it with determination and courage, seeing in it a means for realizing longed-for unity and secure identity rather than a weapon to be wielded in further conflict: "We

don't want doctor power. We got the Tipi Way to show us how to help each other and live like real Indians on this fine earth."

The way through is voiced again and again in the narratives: abide the "Stranger," for he will take care of himself, one way or another; be honest with oneself and with Peyote, with the Tipi Way, alike, for "Everything depends on keeping straight with the medicine." To keep "straight with the medicine" is to do the best that you possibly can—for yourself, for the Stranger, for humankind. It is here that what seems a social message turns subtly to become a purely religious and esoteric one, subject to realization but not to explanation.

If we reduce the testimony of the seven Washoe narrators to a simple testament of good will and honesty we will not be untrue to them, for surely this is part of the witness they bear. But we will by no means have exhausted their meanings. In fact, we impoverish these, reducing them to a least common denominator, and miss the point. Like Peyote itself, the seven men's witness is strong medicine, and we do best to be straight with it, as d'Azevedo has been in bringing it to us, lest, somehow, it "kick back at" us.

While d'Azevedo collected these thirteen narratives in the 1950s they were not published until 1978, when Kenneth J. Carpenter typeset and printed an extremely limited edition by hand. Carpenter provided a small, lovely woodblock illumination for each narrative, as plain and unassuming as the narratives themselves. The 1985 Heyday edition is an offset facsimile of Carpenter's, in slightly reduced size, and it is a pleasing, carefully made book. There is broader historical significance in this little publishing history.

D'Azevedo dedicates the work to the seven Washoe narrators, to George Leite, and to Paul Radin—a clear lineal ancestor. Radin is notable, in the history of anthropology, in part for his effort to take American Indians seriously, and to recognize them as being smarter than himself in their own meanings. He lis-

tened to what they had to say, as coworkers and teachers rather than as scientific specimens and as subjects to be taught by anthropological experts. Radin recorded and published what they said, if not always in their own voices as d'Azevedo has done, at least fully and accurately, naming the native authors of the life histories, myths, and metaphysical statements that he brought together. Most seminal and productive in his thinking during the 1920s, Radin was in some ways ahead of his time, and his

work had limited influence in the emerging anthropological establishment of the era. His efforts themselves were deemed admirable but restrictive: too rife with lived poetry and individuality, too lacking in theoretical and explanatory power, too modest in their contribution to the modernist program of a new discipline seeking parity with the natural sciences.

By the later 1970s the modernist schemes of socio-cultural anthropology were felt, in some quarters, to be played out. Whatever failings the early Castaneda books had, as ethnography or as anthropological fiction, they indeed contributed to the growing perception, particularly among younger anthropologists, that the discipline stood in desperate need of a more complete acknowledgement of shared humanity, poetry, and subjectivity. What the anthropological linguist Stephen Tylor has dubbed a "post-modern anthropology" was coming into being, in which the anthropologist's privileged authority to define significance is to an extent relinquished, and understanding is seen to reside in and emerge from dialogue with the anthropologist's Other—the native. The native informant comes to be recognized as the "co-author" of understanding that he has always been. It is an intellectual climate in which Paul Radin and the handful of others working in the same way as he during his era would have been comfortable.

Radin taught us to be straight with the truth that native witnesses bear: to listen closely, to acknowledge the witness's integrity and wisdom, to learn something. D'Azevedo's book was published thirty years after its contents were gathered but, withal, in the ripeness of time, seconds that teaching. The slim volume can be taken as encouraging evidence that, however strong the "Whiteman's" penchant to "explain too much," he has been, all along, capable of learning something from those Others who have been, all along, quietly talking to him. It is a good book, authored by good people, coming at a good time.

NOTES

1. From "The Thunder, Perfect Mind," in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, James M. Robinson, General Editor. Harper & Row, 1977.
2. "A monk asked Ummon, 'What is the Buddha?' 'It is a shit-wiping stick,' replied Ummon." Mumonkan Case 21. In *Zen and Zen Classics*, Vol. 4, by R.H. Blyth. Hokuseido Press, 1966.
3. My thanks to Peter Nabokov, who found the transcript of this conversation in the American Indian Oral History Collection, University of New Mexico.

Thomas Buckley, a cultural anthropologist teaching at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, is a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA.

BOOK REVIEWS

Always Coming Home
by Ursula K. Le Guin. Music by Todd Barton. Illustrations by Margaret Chodos. New York: Harper & Row, Inc., 1985. Pp. 525. Paper (slipcased with cassette tape). $25.00.

Some places reach us in ways that go beyond our common assumptions about what inhabiting means, so that living in such a place is more appropriately described as living *through* it—just as we continue to exist through breathing. Even when we move elsewhere, that essential place is the one through which we live. It establishes the point from which we relate to everything else which is near or far, astonishing or blessedly ordinary. Ursula K. Le Guin's book *Always Coming Home* is about truly being in place and it allows us to understand a great deal about what such living can be like.

Le Guin's new book is a presentation that had to go beyond the boundaries of the novel as a form, which is, after all, a matter of writing bound to a history of conventions in writing. Even though certain authors challenge readers in astute and insistent ways to resist the impact of novelistic conventions as they read, the whole experience still works toward a certain unity of effect that is a matter of invention. Le Guin, though, went beyond the novel without abandoning it. She gathered it up into a fuller presentation of a way of life which includes oral stories, history, recipes, a new language, music (a tape comes with the book), even a "list of things that will be needed four days from now." Ethnographers will recognize many of the parts as having an organizational similarity to what they do as they try to describe cultures other than their own. But probably no ethnographer to date has been able to hold those parts together with just those exactly right details that are organic links bringing parts into a functioning whole. No doubt such ethnographic failures derive from the fact that ethnographers usually go outside their own places and try to record what they find elsewhere. Ursula K. Le Guin did something quite different. She went to her own formative place, listened to its many possibilities; then anchored firmly there, she let its past and its future merge, and described one point in the possible future of an already existing place in northern California.

The Kesh, the people of the Valley to whom Le Guin introduces us, do not yet exist. As she says, "they might be going to have lived a long, long time from now." Yet the Kesh and the Dayao are in no way alien. They represent altogether credible realizations of potential implicit in our current ways of living. "What was and what may be lie, like

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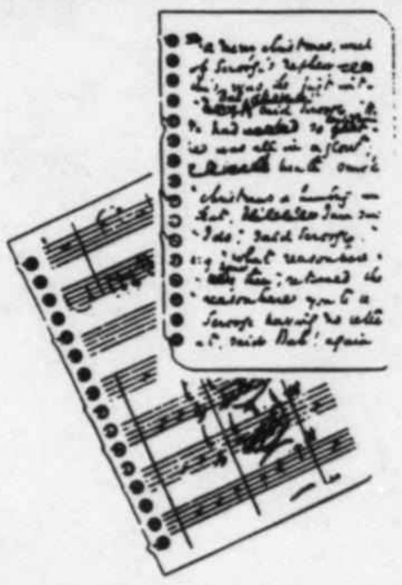
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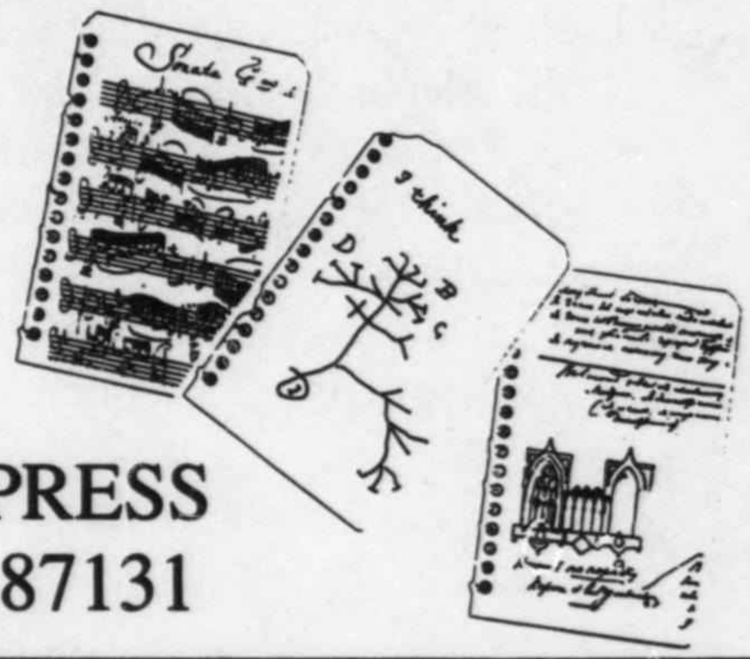

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children whose faces we cannot see, in the arms of silence. All we ever have is here, now." Le Guin never lets us forget the here or the now; she makes us look more closely at them, listen more attentively to them, as she does her "archeology of the future."

Walking in the place she knows best, she finds bits and pieces of what can be and, with the imagined voices of people to guide her, she hears how living yet to be might belong to her place in the Valley. The primary human voice in the book is that of Stone Telling, a woman who leaves the Valley of the Kesh to live for a time with her father's people, the Dayao. During those years away, she learns another way of life among people whose values are in utter contrast to those of the Kesh. The depth of that dislocation and its pain are reflected in a conversation she has with a friend who returns with her to the Valley. Her friend notes, "A Dayao man belongs to himself. He thinks everything else belongs to him, women, animals, things, the world." Stone Telling replies, "We call that living outside the world."

Having lived outside everything she had once understood, Stone Telling learns what it is to be within, to be

truly home. Most of that learning has to do with relationships and this fact points to the particular value of Le Guin's presentation which shuns the spectacular and enhances the ordinary. There is a mood that permeates the book as a lingering presence which I can only characterize as one that, from our current perspective, appears to be a kind of letting go.

Many years ago, reading one of Thomas Merton's essays, I was profoundly struck by his image of living with hands open, palms outward, always resisting the tendency to close, to grasp, to cut short and maybe to kill. The genuine but delicate discipline implied by that image continued to intrigue me and I thought about it again in relation to the letting go I was sensing in Le Guin's book, where all that this image of the open hand suggests is made concrete through description of richly various human interactions and emotions, not all of which are positive either. For instance, Stone Telling describes walking "the circle of human anger" and she says that she put her hands into water "but there was no washing away the stuff that choked up my heart and mind." Letting go is no easy matter but the Kesh have a culture that helps them remember to give without being intrusive.

Perhaps their culture is best described through its basic symbol, "two spirals centered upon the same (empty) space." A quotation from "The Serpentine Codex," one of the many documents which interrupt Stone Telling's story, notes how this symbol unified life. It was "a choreographic and gestural element in dance, and the shape of the stage and the movement of staging in drama were based on it; it was an organizational device in town planning, in graphic and sculptural forms, in decoration and in the design of musical instruments."

With this kind of "working metaphor" always available to them in practical ways, the Kesh manage considerably better than we do to avoid violence in human relations, the extended violence of wars and the more local violence that destroys contact between those who live together. At one point, Stone Telling observes that "people who make life into a war fight it first with people of the opposite sex." Having reduced other war-like tendencies, the Kesh have found that sexuality too fares better nourished in an atmosphere of respect and playfulness, both qualities which are exquisitely captured in the poems and in the often lusty oral literature that is included to help readers understand the total context of this culture.

Never attenuated embodiments of any philosophical or ideological notion, the Kesh have a hardy sort of verve and they dance a lot. In fact, dancing is one of the ways in which they come to know who they are. They have several ceremonial dances and seven major musical instruments all carefully described in "The Back of the Book," which is the section of data included for readers who like that sort of playing about with proper detail.

Stone Telling's story is only a part

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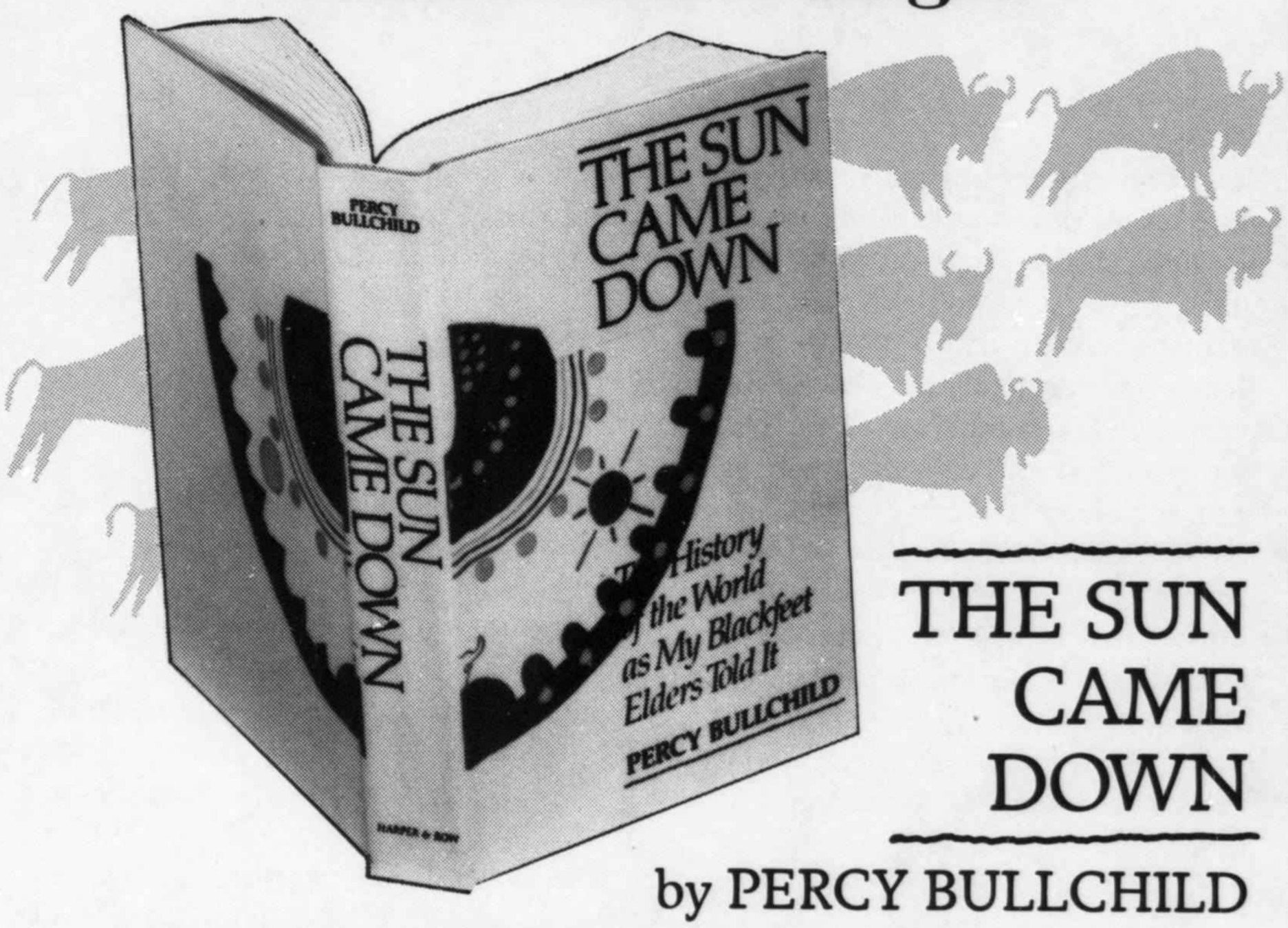

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of the whole, although it is the part that threads the others into a unity. Another set of recurring narratives features Pandora, the very Pandora we all know, the one who opened that box—and in her future with the Kesh that box is still very much open. She worries a bit and we get a different sense of what is in that famous box. She says that Prometheus told her that hope was at the bottom of the box; but, she says, she won't mind if it is empty "... if all there is in it is some room, some time. Time to look forward, surely; to look back; and room, room enough to look around."

Le Guin gives us room with her new book, space to look around, to grow in, to give to each other. Such space is hard to create. Sensing its possibility requires vision and getting it written down requires immense skill and craft. Le Guin has the necessary qualities. So do the composer Todd Barton and the artist Margaret Chodos who helped make *Always Coming Home* an event.

— *Elaine Jahner*

Elaine Jahner teaches in the English and Native American studies Department at Dartmouth College. She is the editor of Lakota Myths, *by James R. Walker, and is currently at work on a book examining cross-cultural literary criticism.*

Heaven's Breath: A Natural History of the Wind

By Lyall Watson. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985. Pp. 384. $19.95.

Lyall Watson, author of *Supernature* and *Lifetide*, likes to straddle the barbed wire barrier between science and religion, dipping his hook into both great oceans and reeling up exotic specimens for our edification. His encyclopedic study of the wind, no exception, telegraphs its catholicity in the very title: heaven and natural history hunkering down together like the proverbial lion and lamb. This, then, is natural history in a revolutionary vein. Right off the bat we learn that the composition of air "violates the laws of chemistry"; a bit later, that "nothing in physics or chemistry can account" for cell differentiation (Watson follows his itinerant wind wherever it blows). As for life itself, to Watson it's "an unnatural state" defying powerful cosmic laws. His "natural" history darts in and out of the supernatural, citing texts from most of the great orthodox religions and describing mythological and folklore motifs from around the world. At the same time, Watson buffets the reader with gales of scientific data about the 5600 million tons of air above our heads, information drawn from meteorology, climatology, biology, physics, botany, geography, and geology. *Heaven's Breath*, by courageously spanning the

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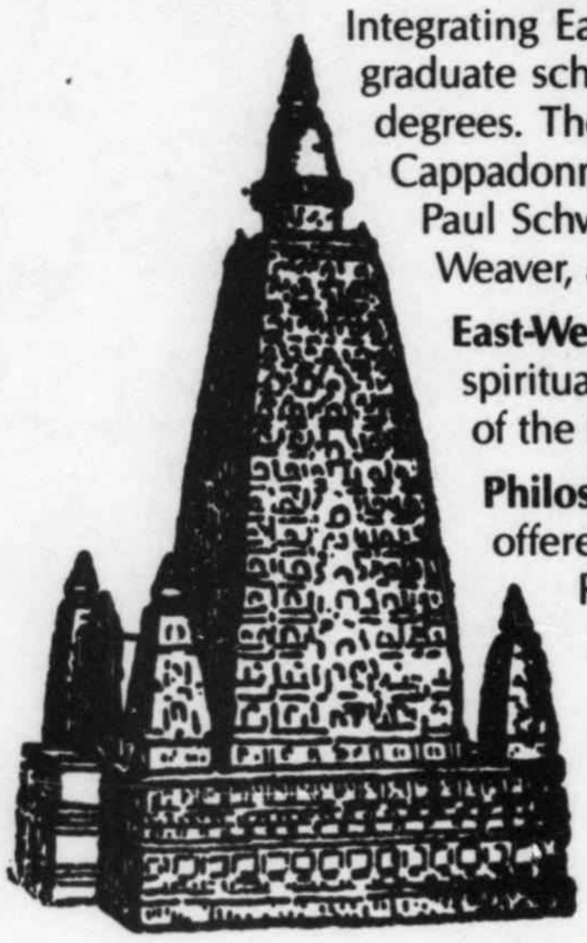

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gap between disparate sciences, and between science and the humanities, represents the sort of interdisciplinary approach so greatly needed in this age of proliferating pigeonholes. Sadly, it's also a mishmash of a book, and instantly forgettable.

What unity *Heaven's Breath* does possess lies in the author's reverence for Gaia, earth goddess of both ancient Greek mythology and postmodern ecology. A hypothesis first couched in scientific terms by chemist James Lovelock in the 1970s, but explicit in theological and philosophical traditions dating back thousands of years, suggests that our planet is a living organic being ("Gaia") whose intelligence unfolds in the interplay of wind, water, fire, and earth. Watson subscribes to this theory, which has found some currency among young scientists in recent years, and he refers to it with enthusiasm. On his theomorphic globe, the winds form the Great Mother's circulatory and nervous system. But ever the ecumenist, Watson also grants the wind a different, complementary role as the masculine spirit which inseminates or animates Gaia ("The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," Genesis 1:2). The wind's sexual and functional ambiguity grows con-

fusing at times, and Watson never really sorts it out. Despite his enrollment in the cult of Gaia, he seems bored with the psychospiritual aspects of air in motion; in a glaring oversight for such an amply researched book, he ignores entirely the role of "inner winds" in the Tibetan medical tradition. Instead, he prefers to compile copious lists: lists of species of clouds, of gods associated with the wind, of references to the wind in English literature, of battles in which the wind played a decisive role (one mischievous breeze confounded Persian troops in 480 B.C. and aided the rise of Greek civilization, while another doomed the Spanish Armada); lists that rush together in the mind like colliding weather fronts, besogging the memory; lists climaxed by a Dictionary of Winds, from *aajej*, a Moroccan whirlwind, to *zonda*, a hot, dry westerly wind of the Argentinian Andes.

Watson adorns his catalogs with some appealing speculations: for instance, that an airborne ecology, a "wind zoo" of hitherto unrecognized "aeroplankton," awaits discovery in the upper atmosphere. In the manner of Charles Fort or Robert Ripley, he relishes odd facts about wind, air, and atmosphere. Did you know that 50% of all heart attacks take place while the wind is blowing at least fifteen miles an hour? That fourteen million insects hover over every square kilometer of land? That there are reliable reports of showers of milk, blood, baked tiles, crabs, frogs, luminous jelly, bricks, and rosaries? That a tornado-watcher once saw an entire herd of cattle float serenely overhead (described as "the herd shot round the world")? You get the idea.

A worker ant of exceptional industry, Watson supplements these gee-whiz tidbits by piling up impressive mounds of wind-related information. He establishes the dramatic influence of the wind on our lives—its effect on blood pressure, adrenaline flow, basal metabolism, and other bodily functions; its role in the dispersal of humanity around the world, and the dispersal of mutating viruses that threaten humanity; its frightening power over life and death. He explains the difference between cyclones

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and waterspouts, the horse latitudes and the doldrums, between the *fohn*, the *mistral*, and the "malevolent" *Santa Ana*. We soar hither-and-yon on the gusts of Watson's impressive erudition, but to what avail? Meaning is everywhere hinted at, nowhere unveiled. According to Watson, wind—an invisible yet palpable event—is the outward manifestation of an inner force, and perhaps man's first experience of the ineffable. In Arabic, *ruh* connotes wind, breath, and spirit, while the Greek *pneuma* is both wind and spirit. But what does this all signify? Gaston Bachelard or Mircea Eliade might be able to tell us; there are no pointers here. This brightly painted cargo ship rocks fretfully in a becalmed sea, its hold stocked with wondrous facts that rot for lack of purpose. *Heaven's Breath* never reaches the promised shore, never even unfurls its sails into the sweet zephyr of a new understanding, the pedagogical counterpart of Shakespeare's glorious "we have laughed to see the sails conceive, and grow big-bellied in the wanton wind."

—Philip Zaleski

Philip Zaleski is a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA.

Zen and Western Thought
Edited by William R. LaFleur. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985. Pp. *xxiv* +308. $24.95.

This is a *radical* book, in both senses of the word. First, it goes to the root of the differences between Buddhist and Western (mainly Christian) thought. Second, in view of our "global age," it calls for profound reinterpretations of the two types of religious thought, and for new ways of expressing them in practice.

Masao Abe, a professor of Japanese philosophy, is a practicing Zen Buddhist very well versed in the history of Western philosophy. He wrote the essays that make up the book over an eighteen-year period, and some of the chapters were originally written in Japanese. At first, the book may give the impression of being purely "academic"—a detached, objective presentation of the fundamentals of Mahayana and Zen thought, compared with Western philosophy. However, in the later chapters the author's own voice increasingly comes through, turning the book into a powerful and personal contribution to dialogue with the world religions. The work succeeds admirably as both a book *about* religion *and* a religious book, a rare accomplishment in books written by academics.

There is considerable advantage, for a Western reader, in obtaining this kind of communication from "the other side," from a non-Westerner. Too often,

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books comparing Western and Eastern thought are written by Westerners harboring patronizing attitudes and grinding apologetic axes. In contrast, Abe seeks a sincere dialogue and, I suspect, unsettles some of his readers by emphasizing the differences, rather than the safe, consoling similarities, between Zen and Western thinking. More clearly than I have seen in other books of this type, Abe shows how the foundations for Buddhist and Western thought and religion are not the same. He discusses such figures as Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Whitehead, and Tillich (to name a few), drawing comparisons between them and Mahayana and Zen thinkers like Nagarjuna and Dogen. Basic differences are brought out: Western idealism *vs.* Buddhist emphasis on practice, homocentric *vs.* cosmological religion, Western negative understanding of "Nothing" *vs.* the positive Buddhist use of "Emptiness."

For example, Martin Heidegger interprets the classical Western dictum "Nothing is without foundation" ("Nichts ist ohne Grund") in a "Buddhist" way, emphasizing "Nothing" rather than "foundation." Doing so, Heidegger illuminates both Buddhist and Western thought. In his reading,

one feels the ground vanish under one's feet, along with habitual Western logic. For "Nothing" is precisely without foundation, it is not an objectified something, not a concept, not even the deprivation of Being. "Nothing" as a positive energy, the flip side of Being, conveys that everything is and is not—simultaneously. Clearly, this goes against the Aristotelian principle of contradiction, but so does a great deal of human experience. As Abe shows, Buddhist philosophy has long ago managed to break through dualistic thought, a philosophical step that Western thought still hesitates to take.

The author deals lucidly with such intricate problems, and he counters popular, Western misunderstandings of Buddhism; for instance, that "Emptiness" contains the "seed of Being," as some sort of potentiality within it. Western philosophy is stuck in dualistic frameworks: I and the world, subject and object, being and having, theory and practice, present and future. Zen, on the other hand, stresses egoless practice, foundationless unity and manifoldness, acceptance of dichotomies, and a sort of smiling acknowledgement of the hundred flowers blooming—and drooping.

Abe's criticism is not one-sided, however. While he criticizes the impasse of dualism in the West, he also chides Buddhism for its tendency towards uncritical acceptance, leading, he argues, to anarchy, nihilism, passivity, and indifference. Buddhism lacks a constructive, philosophical accomplishment—precisely the area in which the West has succeeded. Western philosophy, on the other hand, must overcome its dualistic thinking, egocentricity, and habit of imagining God as an eternal, unchanging, purely positive substance. It is necessary for the West, in particular, to realize its karma, its actions and their effects throughout history, on humankind. Far from advocating any easy way out for either Buddhism or Christianity (Abe's examples of world religions), the author calls on both to radically change themselves, to relinquish their respectively oriental and occidental character. Ultimately, such change must be political as well as religious and philosophical. Nation states must be abolished, mankind realized not quantitatively as a merely abstract collection of Homo sapiens, but qualitatively as "us."

This is strong medicine, and may not be greeted with cheers by the majority of Buddhists, Christians, or "world religionists." Nonetheless, the author's call draws on a central tenet of Buddhist thought. One's initial reaction may be that his political recipe is inconceivable, yet that is precisely the point. Instead of "inconceivable," one might say "unconceptable," that is, beyond concepts. And what is beyond conceptual thinking? Practice, the heart of Buddhism.

One senses Abe's patient exasperation with Western habitual thinking in his discussion with Christian missionaries attending a seminar on Zen in Kyoto, in 1974. Here, the religious and philosophical prejudices of the West are beautifully exposed. Another form of

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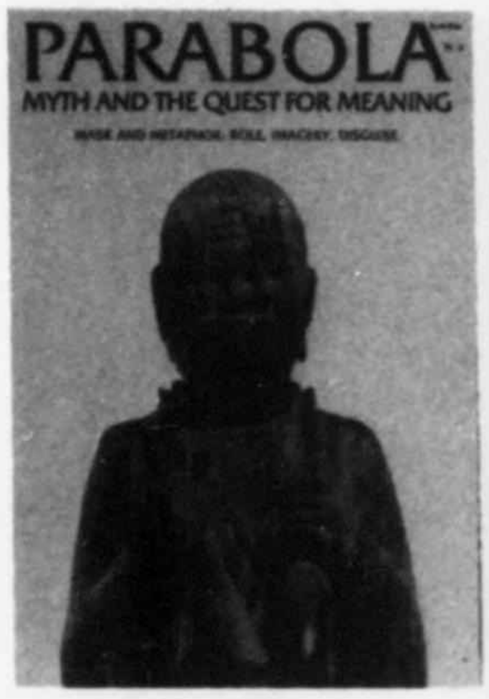

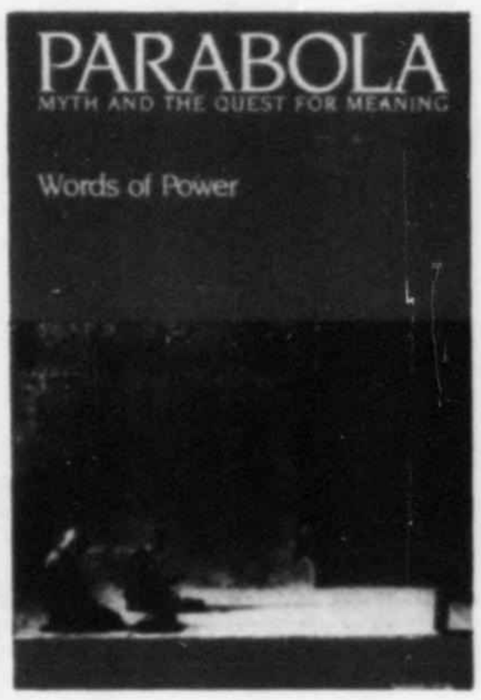

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exposure occurs in Abe's own inveighing against what he considers antireligious forces in the modern world, e.g. scientism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. I cannot fully agree with his demonization of these movements, but this is the only point where I have a quibble with Abe's message. To conclude: I highly recommend this book, and hope that a paperback, at a more affordable price, will soon be available.

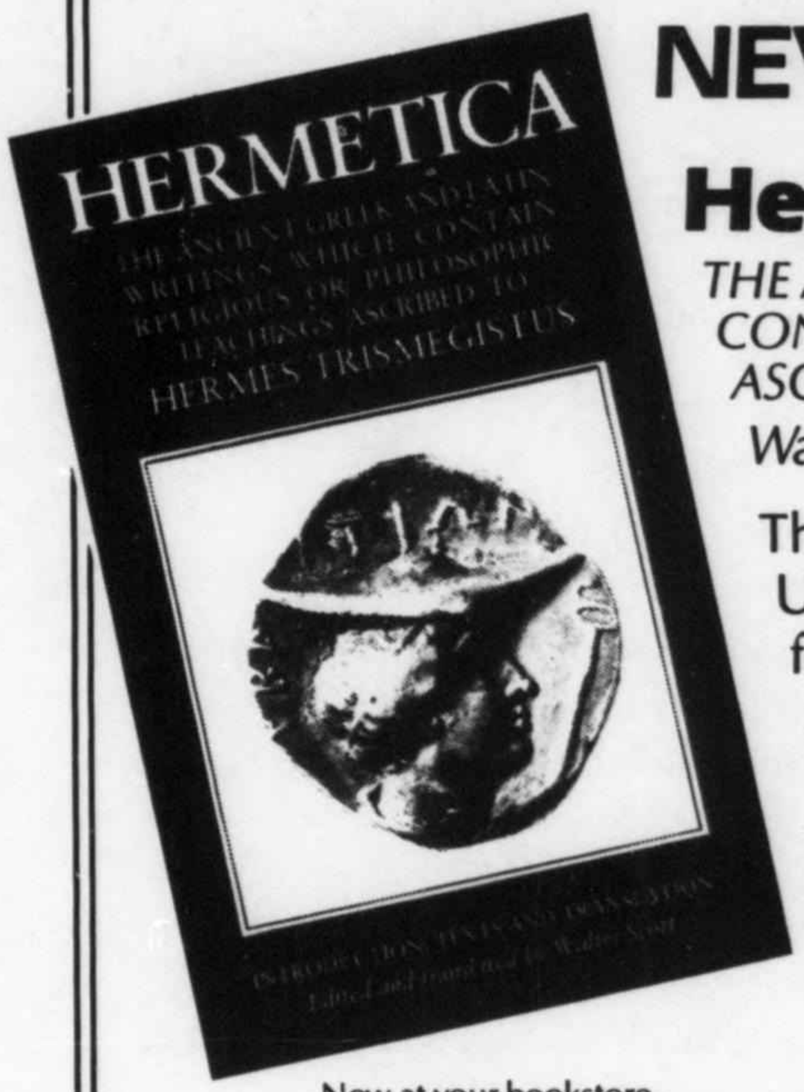
—Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley

Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley is a historian of religions at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro whose book Female Fault and Fulfilment in Gnosticism *will be published in the fall of 1986.*

Song of the Sky: Versions of Native American Songs & Poems
By Brian Swann. New Hampshire: Four Zoas Night House, Ltd., 1985. Pp. 147. Paper. $12.50.

Song of the Sky is alive. Page and print intervene so slightly in these ancient poem-songs that almost like the American Indians who created them, you will experience directly—and simultaneously—the beauty, harmony, and erotic magic of the wilderness.

Approach them slowly by scanning the whole. There are songs of love, war, healing; story and game songs, lullabies, segments of sacred ceremonies. Some poems have a familiar, literary form, reading from top to bottom. Others read from bottom to top, or move in circles—clockwise, anti-clockwise. Within the limitations of print, Brian Swann presents the poems in the thought-mode of the people who created them, a people who lived not "*close to* nature," but *centered in* it, vibrating in the harmonic web of its forces. Between the singer and the song there was no psychic distance, no "art" as Westerners know it. *Song of the Sky* requires participators rather than observers and, for Anglo readers especially, it is strange country. Take your bearings carefully from Swann's introduction, from Paula Gunn Allen's foreword and from Doris Hays's music (versions and text notes). They create the context—the resonance—for the songs, which includes vital cautions about culturally-biased



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responses.

Swann, who is Professor of English at The Cooper Union in New York City, says, "In many of these poems, I have tried to utilize the silence of space—silence plays an important part in Indian culture . . . . By using, much of the time, a 'concrete' approach, where shape creates tension and movement, I intended the poem to do its own dance in the shape it creates for itself." A fine example of this method (and of the necessity for "taking your bearings") is the "Yuma Deer Dance." Looking at its two concentric circles flowing over double pages, you may exclaim, "Where am I?"

In a note on page 124, Hays says that the Deer Dance, one of the principal cycles of Yuman songs, "is based on the belief that the deer has power over the animals mentioned in the song (as well as others not mentioned). Starting at right (top, reading down anti-clockwise) the journey of the deer is enacted . . . . The Deer Dance is usually held in the summer, at the time of the full moon. Both men and women dance, forming two circles round the basket drum, one circle going clockwise, the other anti-clockwise, one inside the other."

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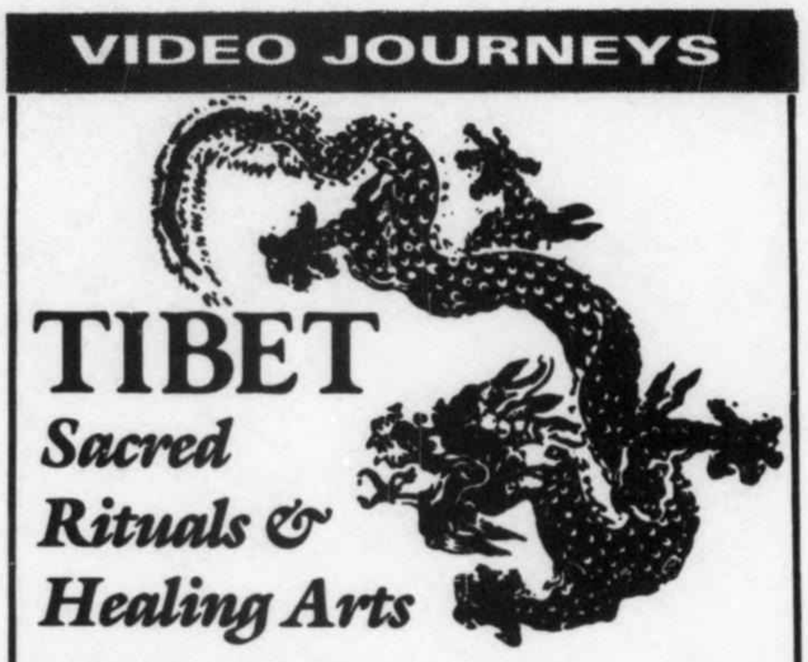

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Having thus oriented yourself, you can enjoy the full measure of the song. On the other hand, the conventional form of a poem may incline you to bypass its context. The "Hopi Butterfly-Dance" is an example:

We wrestle for
corn-blossoms . . .
We boys . . .
playing with
butterfly-girls . . .
We shall send upward
the young-girl-corn
thunder and corn
shall grow
together

A simple, vaguely sensual poem, if it is interpreted within the Western literary tradition. But listen to Allen, who speaks of her own people:

At Laguna Pueblo, long ago, the young women would gather to grind corn and the young men would station themselves at the doorway of the corn-grinding room to play flutes and sing . . . . Amid much giggling and blushing . . . a specially vital food was created. Corn is the name of the Goddess Iyetiko (Beautiful Corn Woman) and also of one of her sisters.

The Hopi Butterfly Dance is another example of the same ritual and understanding. Out in the fields where early corn grows, about the time the butterflies are hovering above the plants, young women go out and dance in the field. Young men go out and vie with one another over the women; sometimes they catch them. Hopi maidens wear their hair in a style called "butterfly whorls," and this signifies their power to attract generative power, unification and blessing.

Referring to such rituals as "fertility" rites, as many accounts do, avoids their dynamic of "erotic magic" and distorts their meaning. "The power and connections between the seen and unseen realities which ritual practices are aimed at manipulating is based on sexuality—its expression, repression, focusing and directing. The generation of power is the purpose of ceremony and the sexual nature of humankind is the

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most direct link between this and other orders of reality available to human beings."

Within this generation of power is the spark of the Creator, a light reflected in the star-like photons of atoms, a light which American Indians perceived in themselves and in every aspect of the wilderness. Such wonder evoked singing/dancing/rejoicing and it gave the Indians what Marius Barbeau described as "a mysterious twinkle in the eye." A kindred twinkle is in the eye of quantum physicists as they follow the atom full circle to an understanding American Indians have always had: *Everything in the universe is alive and connected!*

As this basic assumption takes hold in Western thought, standard form in everything from poetics to architecture is slowly changing. The linear mode is evolving to a holistic web. *Song of the Sky* is in the vanguard of this movement. Its resonances will intrigue the scholar as well as the general reader, although a fuller measure of songs from American Indians east of the Mississippi would have improved the balance of the whole.

The most important thing to remember is that *experiencing* this book takes time, time and an open heart. Having read/sung/rejoiced in *Song of the Sky*, you too may feel a twinkle in your eye.

—*Marilou Awiakta*

A Cherokee/Appalachian poet who lives in Memphis, Marilou Awiakta has published in Ms., *the* Greenfield Review, Southern Exposure, Sinister Wisdom, *and elsewhere. The U.S. Information Agency chose her books,* Abiding Appalachia: Where the Mountain and Atom Meet *and* Rising Fawn and the Fire Mystery *(St. Luke's Press) for the 1985 global tour of its show, "Women in the Contemporary World."*

The Sketchbooks of Hiroshige.
Text by Sherman E. Lee. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1984. Pp. 124 (two volumes, accordion-bound). $45.00.

At a certain time in his life, the French Impressionist painter Toulouse-Lautrec, for reasons known only to him, took to dressing in the clothes of a Japanese samurai warlord, bought at auction; Paul Gauguin thought enough of his colleague's strange apparel to mention it several times in his evasive correspondence, noting that he had no idea of what Toulouse was up to. If nothing else, Toulouse-Lautrec's preferred garments, mysterious as they were to his friends, constituted one of the Impressionists' few acts of open homage to another school of rebels, worshipped by Whistler, Van Gogh, Monet, Seurrat, and Gauguin and Toulouse-Lautrec

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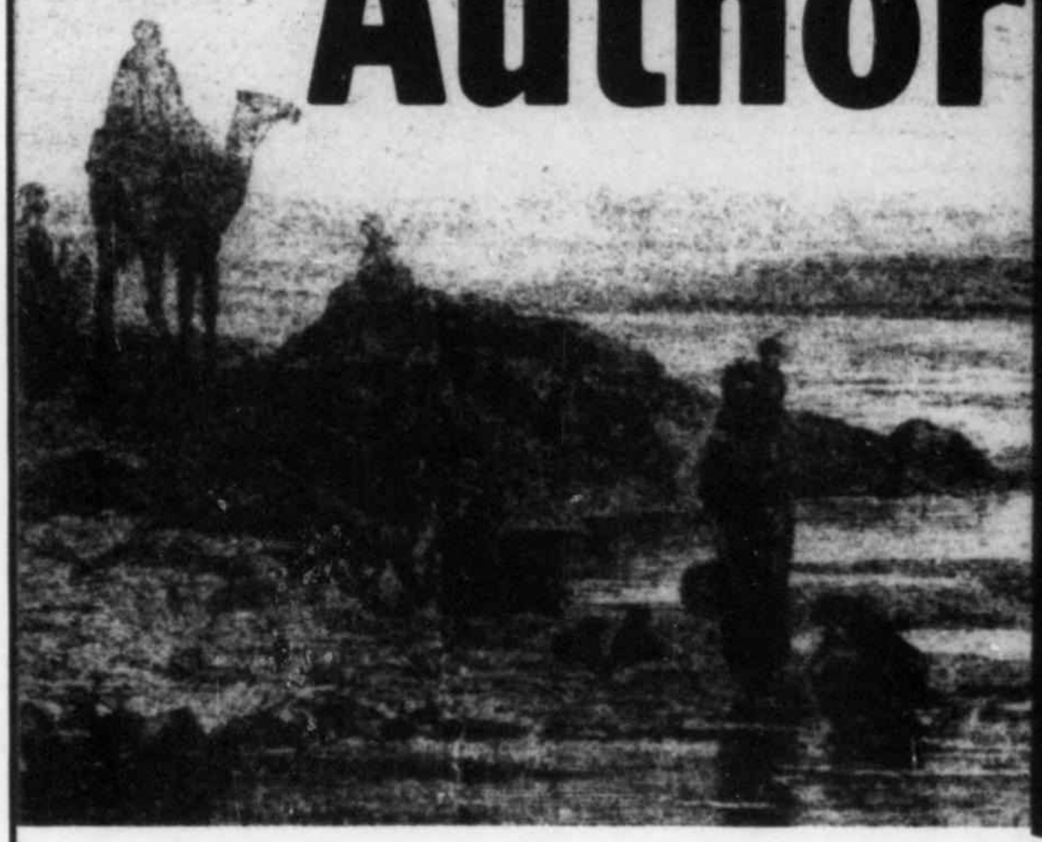

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themselves: the *ukiyo-e* artists of nineteenth-century Japan.

The *ukiyo-e* school was born in the Buddhist tradition, and its name translates as an unmistakably Buddhist concept: "pictures of the floating world," that is, the world of sensory impression and experience that we take to be real. Its practitioners worked almost exclusively on publishers' commissions, and most of them, as Buddhists often are, were dirt-poor. One of the greatest of the *ukiyo-e* painters was Hokusai, a magnificent artist who toward the end of his life was reduced to begging for his daily meals. Another, equally poor, was Hiroshige.

Born Ando Tokutaro in 1797, Hiroshige (the pseudonym, one of the many he used, is thought to mean "made mad by water") was the son of the firewarden of Edo (now Tokyo) Castle. He inherited the position upon his father's death, and he worked at it for some fifteen years, secretly studying woodblock printing with the Zen artist Toyohiro, who taught him Western techniques of landscape and perspective that were then new to Japan. (The *ukiyo-e* school never enjoyed aristocratic patronage, in part because its practitioners admitted such foreign influences into

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their work, and in part because the ruling class was almost entirely Confucian, with a school of art, the Kano, all its own.) Hiroshige went on to surpass his master almost at once, and his collection of woodblock prints, "Fifty-Three Stations on the Tokaido" (the road from Tokyo to Kyoto), and later his "Eight Views from Omi," soon established him as a master of the genre, which based itself on direct, realistic representation of everyday life. Despite his popularity, though, Hiroshige remained poor. He took the vows of a Buddhist novice at the age of fifty, intending to devote himself to meditation, and he died eleven years later, a victim of the worldwide cholera epidemic of 1858.

Hiroshige's work became known in Europe almost immediately after his death, deeply influencing those who would later become the Impressionists. In the United States, Hiroshige's work received dissimilar attention, so that when Crosby Stuart Noyes, publisher of the *Washington Star*, donated some hundred Hiroshige prints to the Library of Congress in 1906, they were buried and forgotten in the vaults. Newly discovered, these prints have now been published as *The Sketchbooks of Hiroshige*.

The result is a masterwork, one essential to the library of anyone interested in Oriental art and culture. What the haiku poet Matsuo Basho (1644–1694) did for words, Hiroshige did for images, and his work is reproduced in admirably exact detail, carefully printed in the rich colors the artist used. Noyes's donation to the Library of Congress did not include any of Hiroshige's best-known work, such as the "Fifty-Three Stations" (now on traveling exhibit in the United States), but the content of the *Sketchbooks* is a fine introduction to the artist's work; Hiroshige's favorite subjects—the banks of the Sumida River, Mount Fuji, samurais and geishas, travelers, common people at their daily work, actors in the kabuki theater, characters from Japanese folklore, animals and fishes, the normal denizens of the "floating world"—are abundant in this collection, which is graced with a fine introductory text by art historian Sherman E. Lee and an equally fine foreword by historian Daniel Boorstin, the current Librarian of Congress, who is plainly

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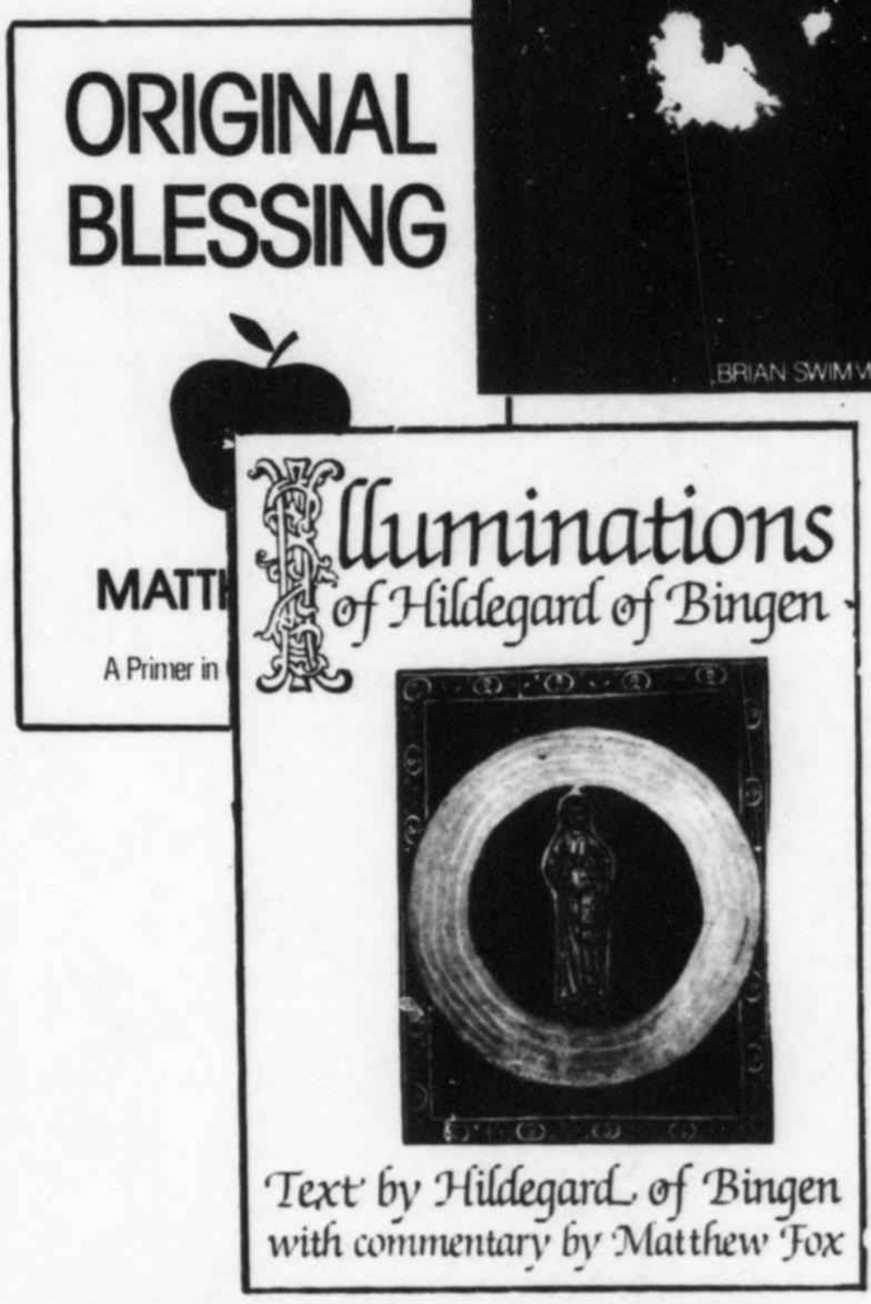

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embarrassed that Noyes's gift has gone unappreciated for so long.

Alan Watts, the long-time student of Oriental culture, has remarked in connection with *haiku no renga* poetry that what counts is not what is expressed, but what is left out. Watts's comment is apt here as well; Hiroshige's special talent lay in his ability to concentrate whole worlds into a frame empty of all but a few contours: a bureaucrat dreams at his desk, and Hiroshige reveals the intensity of his dream by sketching, in the uppermost corner of the frame, an almost completely hidden *futon* mat and a few trailing inches of a woman's robe. He presents a peaceful landscape, a foggy scene on the banks of the Sumida, that is as idyllic as anything a Neo-Classicist could imagine—but in a tiny detail in the foreground, a geisha looks worriedly at her customer, a reeling samurai who unquestionably has been at the *sake* for a bit too long. A woman's back faces the viewer, and behind her stands a curtain of rain; Hiroshige never shows us her face, but we know it is careworn simply by the slump of her posture and the calculated grayness of his print. A tremendous economy of details is in operation, and we can only marvel at it.

Hiroshige continues to exercise the attention and admiration of our best artists (Barry Moser's wonderful woodblock print, the roiling wave that graces the opening chapter of the Arion Press/University of California Press edition of *Moby-Dick*, is plainly taken from the tidal bore in Hiroshige's "Waves, Sail, and Flying Crane"), and his work is finally gaining the exposure that it deserves in this country. Braziller has done a fine job of bookmaking with *The Sketchbooks of Hiroshige*, releasing a work of art in its own right at an astonishingly low price. It is a delight to the hands, to the eye, to the mind, and it is fitting homage to the master of the floating world.

—*Gregory McNamee*

Gregory McNamee is editor-in-chief of the University of Arizona Press in Tucson. His work has appeared in the American Scholar, *the* Bloomsbury Review, Willow Springs, *and other journals.*

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PROFILES

Julio Cortázar was born in Brussels of Argentine parents in 1914. After World War I, his family returned to Argentina, where he worked as a translator and secondary school teacher until achieving his first major success as a writer with the publication of a short story collection, *Bestario*, in 1951. That year he moved to France, where he was to live until his death in 1984, in opposition to the Perón regime. His best-known work, *Rayuela* (1963; translated as *Hopscotch* in 1966) established him as one of the foremost Latin writers of the century.

Victor Danner is a professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University. A specialist in Sufism, mysticism East and West, and Arabic literature, he is the author of *Sufi Aphorisms* (Paulist Press), a translation of a thirteenth-century Egyptian mystic's work, and of *The Islamic Tradition*, due out later this year from Amity House.

Thomas A. Dooling graduated from Harvard College in 1963 and received his J.D. (Honors) from George Washington University in 1972. He practices law in a small town in Montana and is at work on a book about jurisprudence.

Basarab Nicolescu, a physicist specializing in the theory of elementary particles, is Supervisor of Research at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (Division of Theoretical Physics at the Institute of Nuclear Physics in Orsay, France). He is the author of *Ion Barbu—Cosmologia Jocului Secund*, and of *Nous, la Particule et le monde*, just published in France by Le Mail.

Richard R. Niebuhr is the Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard University. His most recent books include *Experiential Religion* (Harper and Row, 1972) and *Streams of Grace* (Doshisha University, 1983).

Padma Perera has published three collections of short stories, one in India, one in the United States, and the latest in England (*Birthday Deathday*, Women's Press, 1985). Her writing appears in the *New Yorker* and elsewhere.

David H.C. Read is Senior Minister of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, with which he has been associated since 1956. Previously, he was Chaplain of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and while in Scotland he served as Chaplain to the Queen. He is the author of over a score of books, the most recent of which is an autobiography, *This Grace Given* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985 [Volume I] and 1986 [Volume II].

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

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