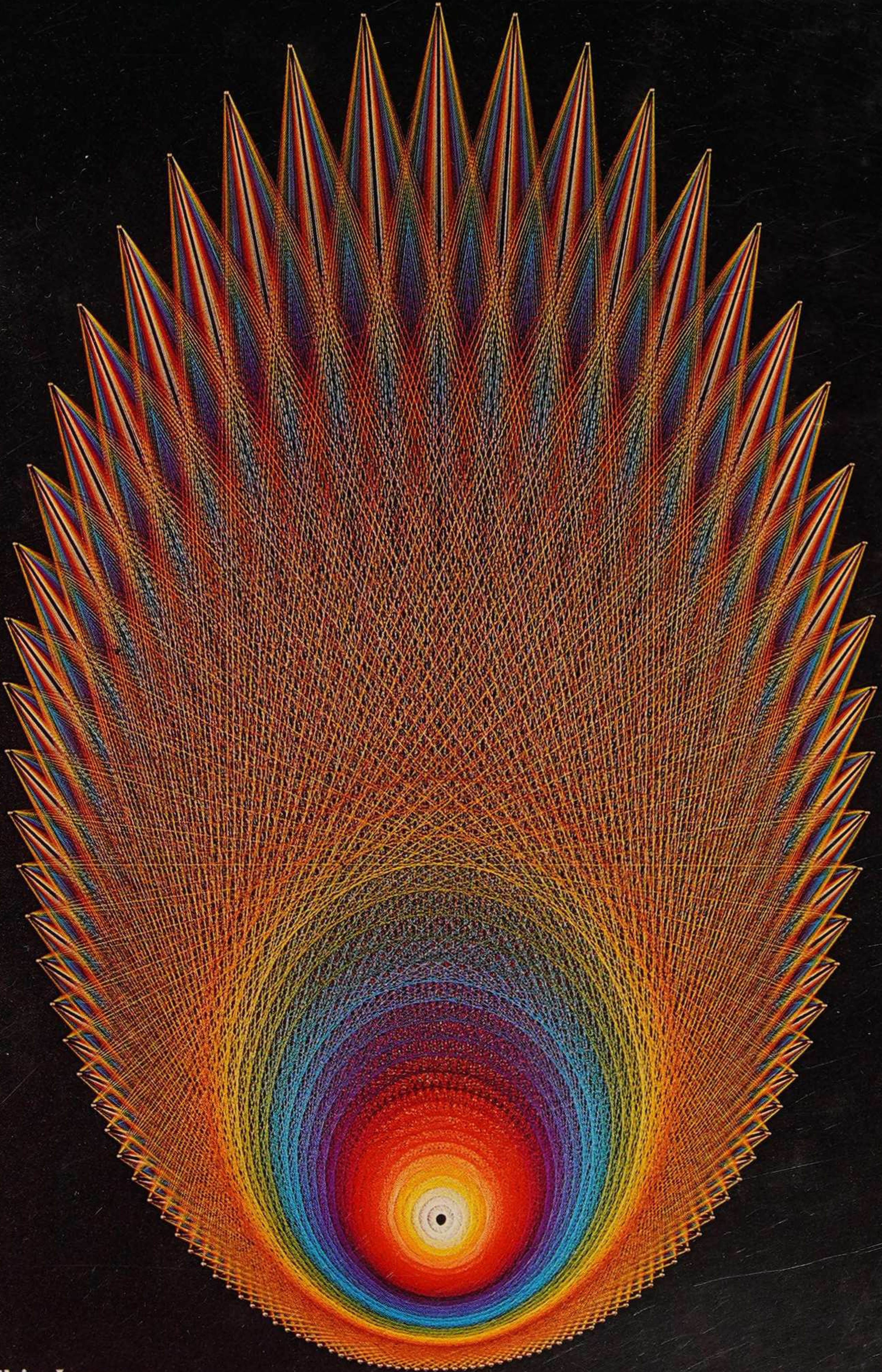
PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING



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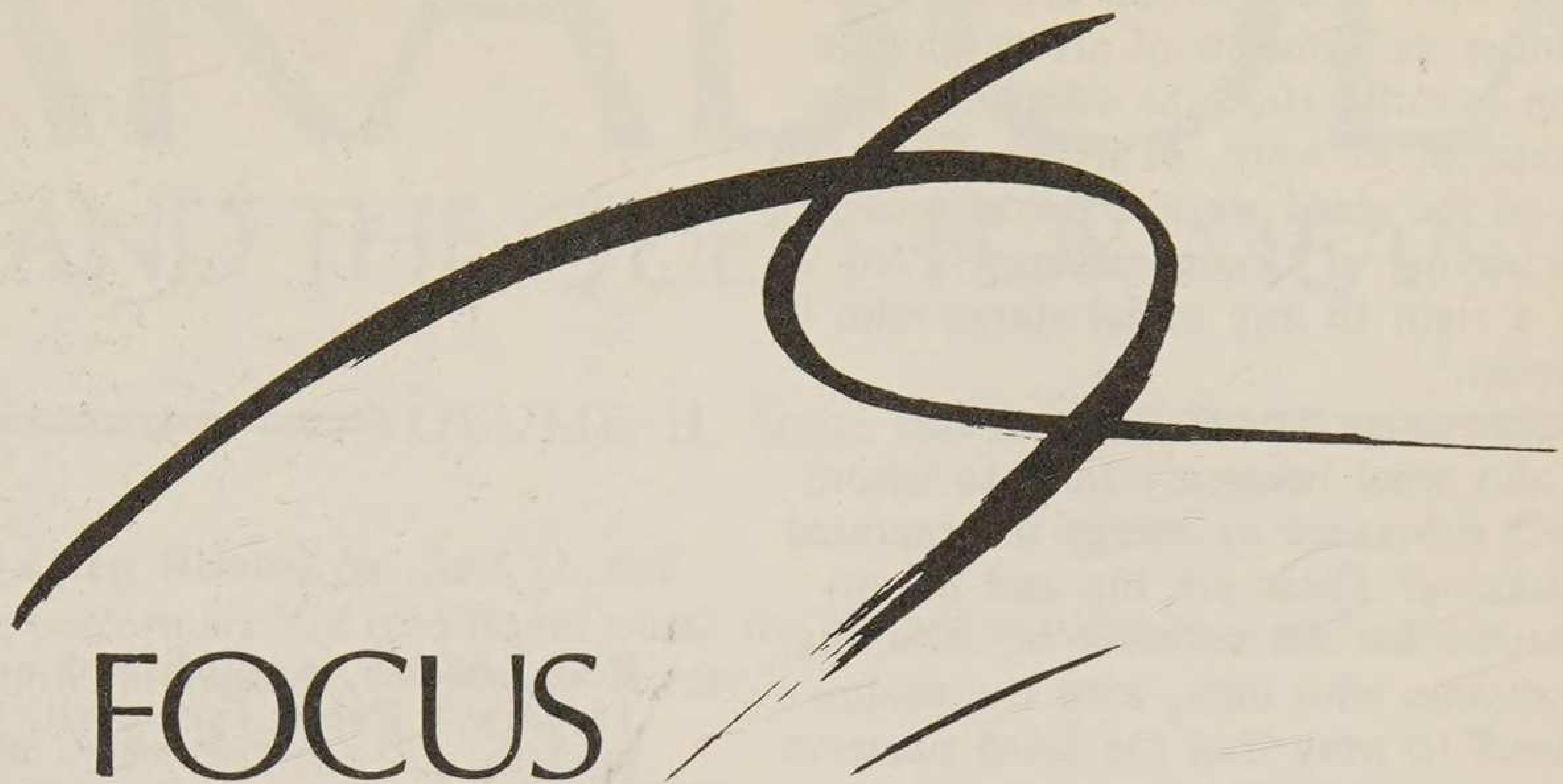

FOCUS

If the door through which we pass out of this life is mysterious, equally so is the door by which we enter it. Though we have all come through it— and those who believe in reincarnation say that we have passed both doors countless times— that part of consciousness which we call memory cannot contain the experience. Our coming is as unknown to us as our going. What was our beginning? We never know and are always looking, because where we came from, and how, and why, conditions our present situation as the present determines the future. Our lives make sense only if they have an aim, if they follow a direction from their beginning toward their end. We need to know the starting point; we cannot be, like Danny Kaye's song, a-story-that-begins-in-the-middle-for-the-benefit-of-those-who-came-in-in-the-middle. Our stories about ourselves and the world reach back for that starting point: "Once upon a time..."— "In the beginning..."

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth... And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..."

Every race, every people has a story of their beginning. There are countless creation myths, differing widely in the imagery of their description, yet with a recurrent idea of many levels of existence: of patterns repeated in different worlds in shifting forms. The laws of these patterns of repetition and the process of their transformation from level to level, from galaxy to snowflake, are a kind of cosmic mathematics, as suggested by the cover of this issue and the story about it by Kenneth Phillips. These laws are the structure of a continuing process, and the patterns they create are in movement; the repetition is not static but alive in a continuous regeneration.

Genesis tells of the covenant the Creator made with His creation: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." The pattern of cycles, the rhythm of alternation and renewal, the rise and fall of the seasons and of man's breathing, the reflecting patterns of molecule and planet, seem to show enormous, interlocking relationships; what appears is a cosmic ecological system. What then is the use and function of man? He was made to nourish God, according to the Popol Vuh; he is a resonance, a vibration of the creating sound, in the view of the Dogon myth described by Daniel Whitman, that in its turn, on its smaller scale, creates. He is the balancing force between light and darkness, between good and evil, in the Zoroastrian myth of Asha, re-examined in Dr. Gardner's study of *Moby Dick*. Genesis says that he is the image of God; he is made to reflect and echo the Ruler of all things in his dominion over his own little world, where he acts as a sort of surrogate ruler and creator. And in every civilization that has remembered its mythic beginnings and acknowledged its origin in a higher level, the "creation" man is capable of, in art, in craft, in every manual work and manifestation, is considered a service or help to the divine.

From this point of view, man's possible creation is an imitation, a reflection of the sacred, of the higher level, of another world or worlds of meaning— the other universes of discourse that Rabbi Schachter shows us.

And either we must say that human creation is not only what we call art, or we must enlarge the concept of art to include all human manifestation, to admit the arts of relationship, of work, of living. With this meaning of the word we can better understand the saying of Coomaraswamy: "No man has a right to any social status who is not an artist."

So what is an artist? What do we "make," and what necessary (and to whom necessary?) substance or energy is generated by our making? These are big and important questions for the searcher for meaning, and for anyone who feels, with the psalmist, the need to pray that the Lord preserve his going out and his coming in.

D. M. Dooling

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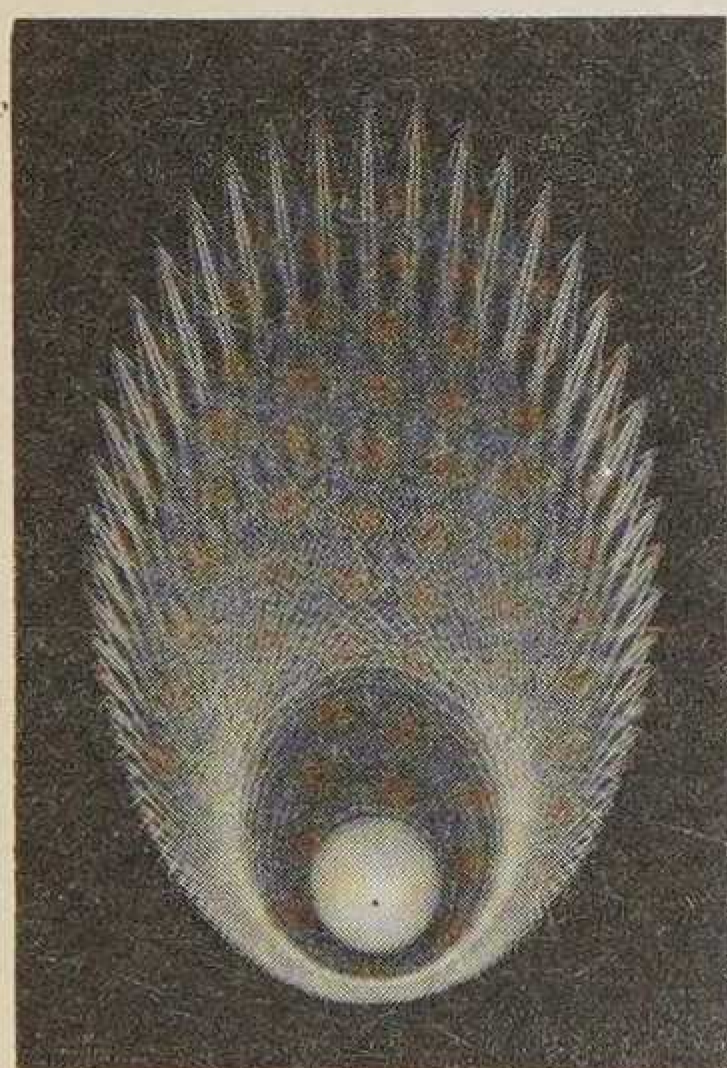

On the Cover

Spring, 1977

An original String Mandala, by John R. Eichinger, copyright 1976: *Spectrum Comet.*

Publisher and Editor-in-chief: *D.M. Dooling*

Editors: *Robert A. Anderson, Lorraine Kisly*

Epicycle Editor: *Paul Jordan-Smith*

Contributing Editors: *John Loudon, John A. Miles, Jr., Winifred Lambrecht*

Consulting Editors: *Joseph Epes Brown, Frederick Franck, Barbara G. Myerhoff, P.L. Travers*

Managing Editor: *James C. Odell*

Associate Editor: *Karyn F. Chao*

Illustrations: *Carole Kowalchuk*

Photo Research: *Rhea Loudon*

Typography: *Karyn F. Chao*

Subscriptions: *Ellen Draper*

Accounting: *Catherine Scholten*

PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

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FULL CIRCLE: A READERS' FORUM

This section is for the free expression of opinions, ideas, observations, and the like, on subjects within *Parabola's* milieu. Contributions may and often should relate to material published in earlier issues, but they need not. Please send contributions to: FULL CIRCLE, *Parabola,* 150 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10011.

Parabola will not leave me alone, so I ask myself what is it doing for me? I must confess that every time it arrives and I go through it, I feel as if I had been given a very large, rich and slightly indigestible meal. Then I come back to the feast again, perhaps hungrier this time, or emptier, and there is more room to taste one of the dishes which I thought I did not like.

At the very least the material you offer arouses questions. I think what I most appreciate in *Parabola* are the articles which are not explanations, but wonderings out loud. "Have you ever wondered why the hero can understand the language of the birds and the flowers?" someone once asked me. But in spite of not wanting to be told what things mean because I want to find out for myself, I am very grateful to your contributors because they sometimes throw light on my own search for meaning.

The articles which strike home most directly are the myths themselves in your Epicycle form, and the descriptions of first-hand experiences. The article by Amiotte touched me deeply, although it was about something which, as a very European Englishwoman, I thought was "absolutely not my cup of tea." Whereas Evelyn Eaton gives a definition of initiation in the first paragraph of her article, the overriding impression received from Amiotte's account brought home to me that the first requirement in order for initiation to take place is nothing more mysterious (and yet so very mysterious) than the need for a man to relate himself once again more truly to nature, to re-cognize "what was already known but had been forgotten," "to find his own original face, the face that was his before he was born," in the words of Hui-Neng.

As for the Epicycles, another question raises itself here; the difference between *reading* something and *hearing it told.* It seems clear that in each case the material falls on a different part of me. How many of us can tell these myths to our children without a book? How important is it to be able to *tell* stories?

Jenny Koralek
London, England

Paul Jordan-Smith responds:

Since the questions *Epicycles* raised for you are precisely my own, the very ones which have helped guide my own investigations into oral traditions, I can only add to them, I am afraid, not answer them. Why does the attention span of adults seem so limited, next to that of children, when it comes to listening? What thread is broken when a book comes between me and the children to whom I am reading? Even when I falter and hesitate in *telling* a story, the connection seems much stronger. And, by no means last or least, how much does the *quality* of the material in the story affect my ability to tell or to listen to the story?

Paul Jordan-Smith
New York, N.Y.

I appreciated seeing Ursula LeGuin's article, but your blurb in the table of contents is atrocious. Is it so hard to call Ms. LeGuin "one of America's most discriminating writers," rather than "one of the most distinguished and discriminating sci-fi writers?" The term "sci-fi" is a poor choice. Labeling people is always a curse upon both their houses, the labeler and the one being labeled — should I call *Parabola* one of the nation's least up-to-date *news* magazines? I think you see my point. A major quibble for a minor mistake, I agree. One word from perfection.

The epicycles are interesting. I just finished reading and researching about the Maya and Aztec cultures and religions, so the Quetzalcoatl story is welcomed. Or Kukulcan, as the Maya called him. The *Popol Vuh* and the *Title of the Lords / History of the Cakchiquels* are fascinating works (though I'm not sure of my spelling on the second one).

I like *Parabola.* I receive and read a great number of magazines, and I think a new and better course of action is beginning to appear, including magazines such as your own, *Quest*, and a few others; this was formerly delegated only to amateur magazines, to people who weren't trying to reach a large audience. I wish you the best of luck with your publication, and hope to continue to see it improve, thrive, and live. Thank you for the experience.

Neil Kvern
Cataldo, Idaho

In the midst of so much erudition, I find myself reading *Parabola* with one hand always at the ready for the dictionary, aware—acutely—at every moment of my intellectual poverty. I feel irritated as I translate whole blocks of text into language I can grasp, and in the end consider cancelling my subscription.

In the issue Fall/1976 my reward came in the

form of an article that touched not just my mind but my heart as well. It was the article on friendship by Robert E. Meagher. I read it in the midst of the serious illness of an old friend. An urbane, witty, utterly indestructible old friend. This article was written just for me, reopening the whole world of friendship, reopening *me*.

And so, *Parabola*, all is forgiven. There is a kind of tightrope between mawkish sentimentality and ice cold intellectuality. It is as if you are feeling your way there and helping me to feel my way. Please renew my subscription.

Jean Martine
Greenwich, Conn.

I would like to take this opportunity to correct an unfortunate typographical error that appeared in my review of Chögyam Trungpa's *The Myth of Freedom*. On page 115, you mistakenly cite, "Actually, param means other (side or shore), and it is a Sanskrit participle meaning gone." The proper reading should be, "Actually, param means other (side or shore) and *ita* is a Sanskrit participle meaning gone." It is essential to identify *ita* as the verbal form (in this case, in feminine usage). Also, I am a specialist in *South* Asian Buddhism (not Southeast).

Further, I should like to add that I thoroughly enjoyed your interview with Gomang Khen Rinpoche and Nechung Rinpoche, but that the real highlight of the article is your conversation with Robert Thurman. His comments regarding Buddhists and Buddhism in America are clear, insightful, and, from my perspective (as one who has been studying Buddhism in America for several years, and is completing a book on the subject), quite correct.

Charles S. Prebish
University Park, Pa.

I would like to share with you who make this fine publication possible my gratitude and my enthusiastic support of your work. Of particular interest to me was the epicycle "The Voyage of the Argo." In some way, that story with its image of the clashing rocks and the peril of the passage touched off a series of thoughts and feeling associations so unexpectedly and so strongly, that I found myself reexamining my way of regarding myths. What struck me from the first was that this passage of the crew of the Argo in a very real way was connected to my life. There was something in the story that resonated with my own experiencings, great and small. Called to mind were moments of dashing through a closing subway door...or slipping through an intersection just as the light changed to red. There was something in the passage of the Argo that I was finding in my own moments of passage.

More and more it appears to me that myth is rooted deeply in an understanding, in experience and awareness. But how far the understanding goes in myths remains a real question. Each time a myth unfolds another dimension, I am left with the feeling that there is still more there to be seen and understood. No longer can I leave it at a quick reading, thinking that what I have found is all that is there. There's gold in these here hills!

Looking forward to future prospecting expeditions, I remain; a very interested subscriber.

Paul E. Dixon
Sudbury, Mass.

I just received my first copy of *Parabola*, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

Since I spent a year in Japan, had done some study of Noh drama previously, and saw quite a number of Noh plays, I appreciated Mr. Franck's article on the subject. It recalled to me much of the pleasure and the power evoked by performances of Noh. There is one thing about the article I did not care for, though, and that is Mr. Franck's denigration of Kabuki. Since I watched a number of Kabuki plays also, and found them to be a very rich and often moving theatrical form, I resent the comparison to a "*Playboy* centerfold." In my opinion, this intellectual snobbism does not belong in this article or indeed in *Parabola*. I hope it can be avoided in the future, as I find it very counter-productive to what I believe your magazine is trying to do — to re-establish myth as a very meaningful part of contemporary existence. It certainly is not to be reserved for an intellectual elite. If I am not correct in my interpretation of your purpose, I am not interested in receiving any more copies of the magazine.

Hope Cobb
Princeton, N.J.

Frederick Franck responds:

I have fullest understanding and sympathy for your passionate defense of Kabuki. I hope, however that, your indignation cooled by the accusations of intellectual snobbery you let fly at me and threats of defection hurled at *Parabola*, you will now quietly glance over my "The Liturgy of Noh" once again. I am sure you will detect then the purely experiential nature of what I wrote and drew—drawing and intellectual snobbery just do not mix.

You will also realize that the unflattering partisan overstatement you object to is part of a quoted snatch of conversation, in which I counter an absurdly insensitive assertion with an outcry as passionate as your own: the outcry of a lover who hears his peerless beloved demeaned by an intolerable comparison with a lesser mortal! Only by isolating it from this context could you have misread it as a calm, considered judgement on the merits of Noh and Kabuki. Reflecting on it—for your accusation, however mistaken, is a serious one—it struck me that you might have been less shocked had I compared Rembrandt's nudes with Boucher, Bougereau or even Dali's. Letting "nudes" by these painters pass my inner eye, I started to wonder: is their view of the humanness of the naked body not many more lightyears removed from Rembrandt's enlightened, compassionate eye, than from the sensual entertainments offered by the contemporary mass media?

May I assure you that, sharing your concern for *Parabola*, I cannot detect the slightest symptom of its being infected by intellectual arrogance.

Frederick Franck
Warwick, N.Y.

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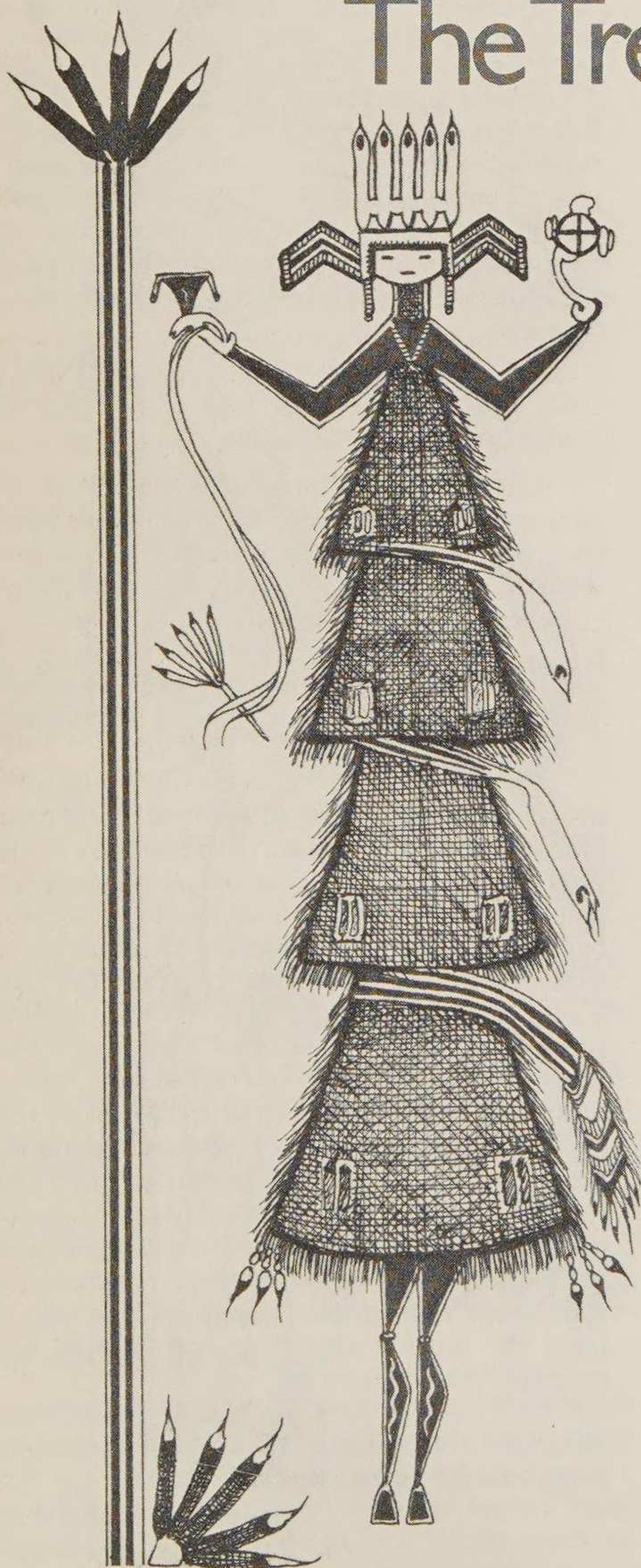
The Trees Stood Deep Rooted

by Sam D. Gill



Some time ago, I went to hear Indian elders speak about public education programs for Indians. An old Papago man was among them. When his turn came he rose slowly, and with deliberation began to speak. His style was formal and bore an air of certainty, though for his meaning I had to await the English interpretation. He began with the creation of the Papago world, by telling how Earthmaker had given the Papago land its shape and character. He identified the features of that creation with the land on which he had always lived, as had his father and all his grandfathers before him. Pausing in his story he asked how many of us could locate our heritage so distinctly. Then he went on to tell the stories of Iitoi, a child born in the union of earth and sky, who had acted as protector and teacher of the Papago under the name Elder Brother. He told of the way of life of the Papago people, a way of life they have always enjoyed.

It was perhaps fifteen minutes before he began to speak directly to the subject of education, but the old man had been talking about education all along. He was demonstrating to his audience a basic prin-

ciple in education: knowledge has meaning and value only when placed within a particular view of the world. He was utilizing the way of his people by consulting the stories of the creation for the proper perspective from which to speak. There was power in his words and his statement was convincing.

As a Papago elder, this old man understood the power of relating the stories of creation. Papago culture abounds in songs and poems ritually uttered in order to provide sustenance and to maintain the Papago way of life. They are the gifts of the gods, not the works of man. Some are attributed to Iitoi who used them to win battles against enemies. The Papago identify the ruins which are found throughout their southern Arizona desert homelands as the villages of these enemy peoples. The Papago people have songs and poems which they recognize as capable of affecting nearly every aspect of life. The feeling of the power the people find in these words is captured in the beautiful lines of one of their sacred poems.

With my songs the evening spread
echoing
And the early dawn emerged with a
good sound.
The firm mountains stood echoing
therewith
And the trees stood deep rooted.[1]

The Papago are not unique among native Americans in recognizing a kind of performative power in the language of their songs, prayers, and poems. In his eloquent address, "Man Made of Words," N. Scott Momaday said, "Whenever the Indian ponders over the mystery of origin he shows a tendency to ascribe to the word a creative power all its own. The word is conceived of as an independent entity, superior even to the gods." According to Momaday, the native American "locates the center of his being within the element of language ... It is the dimension in which his existence is most fully accomplished. He does not create language but is himself created within it. In a real sense, his language is both the object and the instrument of his religious experience."[2]

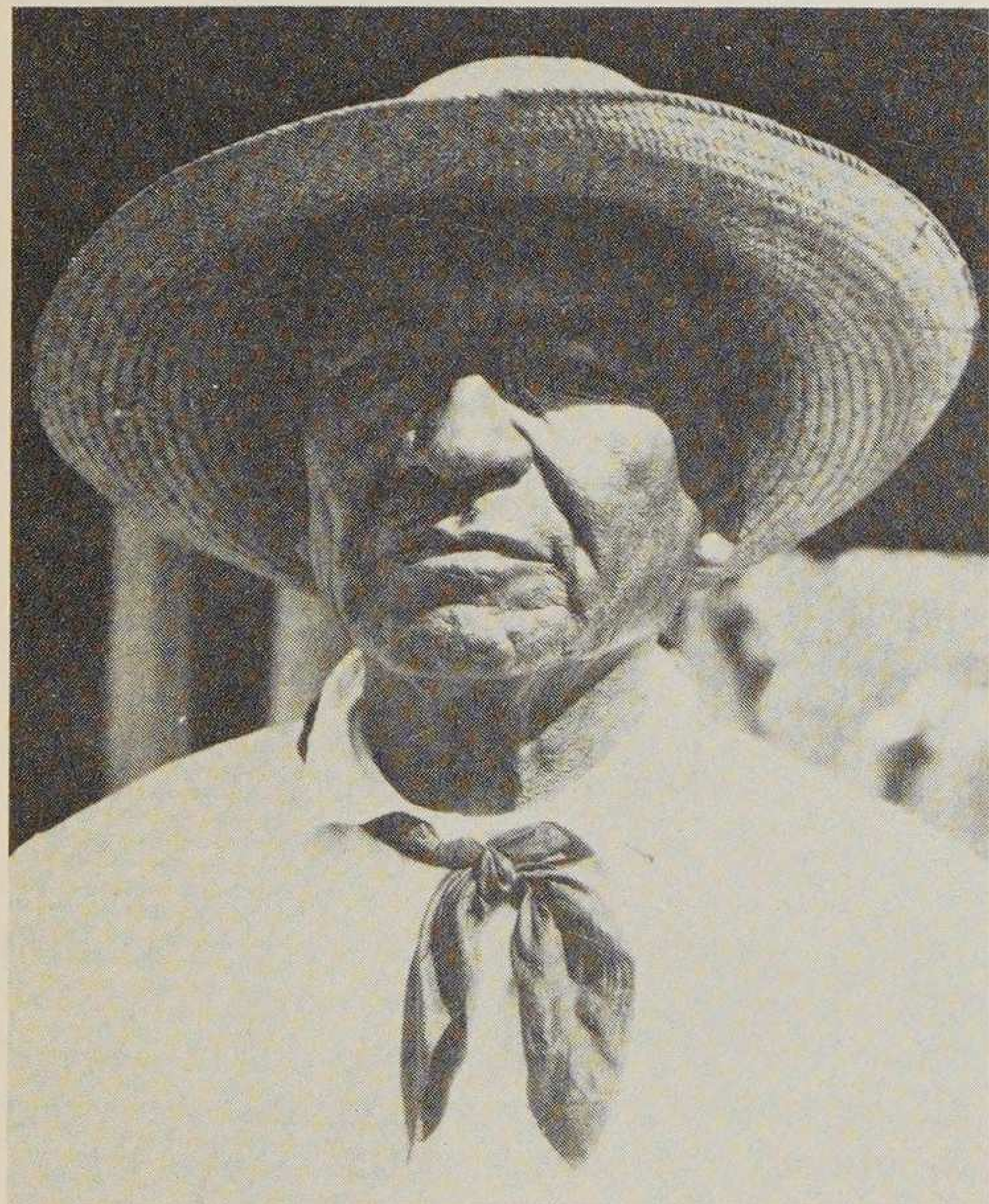
The repetitive nature of native American prayer and song has caused some observers to declare them to be merely the recitation of magical formulae. This is a view to be guarded against. The magic of the word lies mainly in the fact that it is capable, through image and symbol, of placing the speaker in communication with his own being and with the whole world. Native Americans do not restrict language to its capacity to describe the world: they recognize that, from one perspective, it is the world.

There seems to be a remarkable link between the stories of origin and the lifeways of native Americans. It seems to me that this link is the language of ritual that constitutes native American religious traditions. The events of creation are somehow paradigmatic, and the knowledge given in the creation stories permeates the life of the people.

To the Navajo, the world was not created by some powerful earth-making god, but through the creative powers of thought and the ritual language of song and prayer. Indeed, thought and speech were personified prior to the creation of the world. They arose from the sacred bundle out of which all creation was to come and they were said to embody the powers of the bundle. They took the form of a young man and woman of such radiance and beauty that they could scarcely be looked upon. While they were to be present in this form for only a brief time, it was told that they would always be

near to the world, for theirs are the powers that sustain life. Their names are often rendered in English as Long Life Boy (thought) and Happiness Girl (speech), reflecting the Navajo view that their names are synonymous with the highest measure of life.

The Navajo ceremonial, Blessingway, demonstrates how the Navajo envision the way thought and speech became manifest in the creation of the world and in the sustenance of life. Of the twenty-five or thirty major ceremonial ways known to the Navajo, Blessingway is generally recognized as fundamental to all others; it is an indivisible body of myth and ritual and a whole religious ideology. The Navajo name



Manuel Ortega, Chief of the Papagoes, 1920

for Blessingway, *hozhooji*, reflects the pervasive ideology of creation that supports this ceremonial; a literal translation would be something like, "the way to secure an environment of perfect beauty." The occasion for the first performance of a Blessingway ceremonial was the creation of the Navajo world; consequently, the ways of creation are the model for all versions and all performances of Blessingway. It is because Blessingway is the way of creation that it is called the backbone of Navajo religion and is recognized as the source and pattern of the Navajo way of life and thought.

In Blessingway mythology, the first act in the creation of the world was the building of a ceremonial structure in which the ritual acts of creation could be performed. A version of Blessingway, therefore, is performed on the occasion of the construction of a new Navajo house. But Blessingway is also incorporated into all other ceremonials as the first-performed rite in order to "bless" the structure in which the rituals are to be carried out— whether the occasion be marriage, the need for rain, or difficult or imminent childbirth. In the mythic prototype, the humanlike beings who were performing the ritual began to construct the ceremonial house. Significantly, these humanlike beings who preceded the creation of the world are known by the Navajo word *yati'ii*, which means "speaker." They readied the support poles and leaned them into position. As the support poles were readied and dropped into place, songs named them and described their placement and significance.

Along below the east, Earth's pole I first lean into position
As I plan for it it drops, as I speak to it it drops, now it listens to me as it drops, it yields to my wish as it drops.
Long life drops, happiness drops into position ni yo o.[3]

And below the south, Mountain Woman's pole is leaned into position, followed by Water Woman's pole below the west and Corn Woman's pole below the north.

The house described in this ceremony provides the pattern for the common Navajo conical-style hogan. It serves the Navajo both as a place of residence and as a ceremonial structure. But the song identifies this simple four-pole substructure with

the pillars that support the Navajo world. The foundations of the poles are located below the horizon in the four cardinal directions. Each pillar is named and given the power to sustain life through its identification with long life (thought) and happiness (speech). The commonplace Navajo home is at the same time the structure of the entire Navajo world.

This linkage between the most commonplace and the most ethereal, made through ritual language, is illustrated even more powerfully in the imagery, found in a Navajo Nightway prayer, of the house whose structure is composed of the life forms of the earth:

House made of dawn,
House made of evening twilight,
House made of dark cloud,
House made of male rain,
House made of dark mist,
House made of female rain,
House made of pollen,
House made of grasshoppers.[4]

Each line focuses the mind on an image of the finite, material, domestic dwelling only to explode that image into fantastic dimensions by identifying its composition with unexpected building materials. A unity is achieved through the lines in their creation of an image of a living universe.

The ideology of Navajo sandpainting also illustrates the way in which creation is fundamental in Navajo life. Paintings made of crushed vegetal materials or ground minerals and rocks are ritually constructed and used as part of several Navajo ceremonials. Hundreds of them have been recorded and their designs and meanings are remarkably complex. Without accounting for all the occasions in which sandpaintings are used, the ritual acts performed upon them, or the various scholarly interpretations made of them, it can be shown that the efficacy of the sandpainting act is derived from the events in the creation of the Navajo world.

In the Blessingway myth it is told that after the "speakers" built the creation hogan, they entered it and proceeded with the creation. From the sacred bundle they took pieces of white shell, abalone, turquoise, and jet. With these materials they constructed representations on the floor of all forms of life that were to be in the Navajo world. These forms of life were personified as holy people having humanlike forms. The ritual construction was like a sandpainting. Each holy being represented was given identity by its dress and placement relative to the others. The resulting design was not a physical model of Navajoland, but rather a map of the Navajo religious conception of the world.

The creation concluded with the intoning of a long prayer to these holy people, who represented the life forms of the earth. The prayer associated and identified them with the physical universe and consequently effected an indivisible unity between the symbolic world of the ceremonial hogan of creation and the nonsymbolic world of the Navajo, a unity of the spiritual and the material. A world had been made using only simple materials and the creative powers of thought and speech. Based on this model, Navajos continue to perform acts of creation through the power of symbolic representation in sandpaintings and the ritual language of song and prayer.

Following the creation, the life forms known as Dawn and Evening Twilight went on a tour to inspect the new world. Upon ascending mountaintops to gain a vantage point, they found the scene around them to be extremely beautiful. This state of pristine creation is articulated by the Navajo people in many ways and it stands as the inspiration and measure of Navajo life. Life is envisioned as a journey down a road. It is deemed a good life if the traveler is surrounded by an environment of beauty comparable to that of the newly created world. Most Navajo prayers conclude with a passage describing this good life:

With beauty before me may I walk
With beauty behind me may I walk
With beauty above me may I walk
With beauty below me may I walk
With beauty all around me may I walk
As one who is long life and happiness
may I walk

In beauty it is finished.
In beauty it is finished.

Through the utterance of the prayer one is placed once again on the good road, so that it may be said with confidence and feeling, "In beauty it is finished."

There is yet another way to show how the events of creation are paradigmatic for Navajo lifeways. This centers on the importance in Navajo culture of the possession of a mountain-soil bundle. After the world was created, but before it was made suitable for habitation by Navajo people, a girl-child was created. Her parents are said to be the beautiful youth and maiden, Long Life Boy and Happiness Girl. This child had the remarkable ability to grow older through time, to reach old age and to repeat the cycle of life again and again. Because of this she was called Changing Woman. Changing Woman was given a sacred bundle containing objects and powers that created the world. The bundle was the source of her own existence, since her parents were the personification of the powers it held. Changing Woman was also taught the creation rituals. With the bundle and the Blessingway songs and prayers, Changing Woman at once holds and represents the powers of creation. She personifies the perfect beauty secured in the creation. She is identified with the newly created earth. She is the source and sustenance of all life. She is time. She is the mother of the Navajo people.

After her birth, Changing Woman used her creative powers to make the earth ready and suitable for the Navajo people. She created the plants and animals and cleared the world of the monsters who had come to threaten human life. Having made the earth a suitable place, she created the Navajo people. Her final act before departing from the Navajo world was to pass the knowledge of Blessingway on to the Navajo people. In doing so, she charged them with the responsibility to maintain the world in its state of perfect beauty by the use of Blessingway. She warned them that the Blessingway songs should never be forgotten, for Navajo life depends upon them.

Changing Woman is wholly benevolent and of such beauty that she is rarely represented in any visual form in Navajo ceremonials. But she did show the Navajo how to make a sacred bundle modeled on hers; this was the origin of the mountain-soil bundle. It is made with soil ritually collected from the four sacred mountains which stand in the quarters of the Navajo world. The soil from each mountain is wrapped in buckskin. Maintaining the directional orientations, these four bags are placed around stone representations of Long Life Boy and Happiness Girl. A buckskin is wrapped around all this and the bundle is secured.

The mountain-soil bundle is the nuclear symbol in Blessingway. Many Navajo families keep them as guides to the Navajo way of life and as sources of long life and happiness for the family. The bundle symbolizes the powers of creation, the source of life, and the perfect beauty established by Blessingway.

Navajo people often refer to the relationship of their many ceremonial ways as the branches of a tree which extend over every occasion, bearing and protecting the Navajo way of life. They identify Blessingway as the trunk of this tree which supports all other ceremonial branches. This tree stands deep rooted in the creation of the world.

Certainly the Navajo are not representative of all native American

peoples, nor should they be considered typical. Even in the American Southwest, the Navajo are only one among many cultures which contain a wide variety of lifeways and religious practices. While there is tremendous diversity within native American cultures, certain general observations may be drawn from the Navajo example.

We have seen that the Navajo find in the story of their origin a symbolic paradigm for their lifeways and religious practices. The myth of origin serves at once as a prototype for a ceremonial performance and as a wellspring of philosophy and world view. A distinctive characteristic of this symbolic paradigm is the way in which it unifies the mythical and physical geographies, the ethereal and the commonplace, and the spiritual and the material. Frequently the best-known passages from native American literature are ones that illustrate this correlation. Often these passages describe an association of four or six directions with colors, animals, birds, eras, and certain qualities or temperaments. Such well-defined patterns have suggested that native Americans live in simple harmonious integration with the world around them. Old Black Elk recalled for Joseph Epes Brown the words White Buffalo Cow Woman spoke as she gave the sacred pipe to the Oglala Sioux:

> *With this pipe you will walk upon the Earth; for the Earth is your Grandmother and Mother, and She is sacred. Every step that is taken upon Her should be as a prayer. The bowl of this pipe is of red stone; it is the Earth. Carved in the stone and facing the center of this buffalo calf who represents all the four-leggeds who live upon your Mother. The stem of the pipe is of wood, and this represents all that grows upon the Earth. And these twelve feathers which hang here where the stem fits into the bowl are from* Wanbli Galeshka, *the Spotted Eagle, and they represent the eagle and all the wingeds of the air. All these peoples, and all the things of the universe, are joined to you who smoke the pipe— all send their voices to* Wakan-Tanka, *the Great Spirit. When you pray with this pipe, you pray for and with everything.*[5]

In light of the Navajo views of creation and with passages like Black Elk's before us, we should re-examine the common assumption that native Americans are simple children of nature. I believe we will find this view erroneous. Native Americans have shown themselves to be masters of

survival in an environment which has often been reluctant to nurture them, but their lifeways can scarcely be called the simple following of natural instincts. It seems almost the opposite. The Navajo, for example, look upon no living thing as simply natural, as a product of some impersonal system of natural law. Life is dependent upon holy people who were created in the beginning and who stand within all living things. Black Elk described a comparable Sioux belief when he attributed the unity of all living things to *Wakan-Tanka*, the Great Spirit. Native Americans can hold a person-to-person relationship with their environment because in their view of creation the power of life, which is a person, is united with and identical to the physical living world. The nature of these personal relationships is not determined by the aspirations of ego as much as by patterns established in the stories, songs, and prayers which comprise their traditions.

There is also a tendency to assume that the symbolic paradigms which arise from the stories of creation represent the native American view of the permanent status of their world. But these patterns of perfect beauty serve more as an objective and a measure in life than as a description of it. Underlying these global representations of the ideal are infinitely complex principles of relationship which determine and direct the lifeways. In the whole range of human action nothing is exempt. In other words, for native Americans all human action is continually measured against traditional patterns so that the way life is experienced is dependent upon how it is lived.

It is through a tradition of formal ritual acts that native Americans relate to the world, find the significance of life, and uphold the responsibility for maintaining order as it was given to the world in the beginning. From the native American view, their ritual acts are creative acts of the highest order, since the object of their creation is the world itself. This may well be the greatest contrast between native and non-native American views of life. A prevalent non-native attitude is to associate ritual and tradition with lack of innovation and creativity. Twentieth-century art forms illustrate this attitude. It is an age of happenings, chance events, and shapeless forms designed to be independent of the past and tradition. It is an ego-centered culture seeking noble achievements and separate realities. This view is alien to native Americans for they have accepted the charge of responsibility for performing the acts upon which life and reality depend.

The native American view of human creativity is based in religion, not in art. Such a stance is not void of excitement and illumination, for it is the creative genius of the native American way of life to see the uncommon in the common, to find the ethereal in the mundane. Theirs is the way longed for by Artur Sammler, the protagonist in Saul Bellow's novel, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, who said, "And what is 'common' about 'the common life'? What if some genius were to do with 'common life' what Einstein did with 'matter'? Finding its energetics, uncovering its radiance."[6] Deep rooted in creation, native American traditions energize the common life.

NOTES

[1]Ruth Underhill, *Singing for Power: The Song Magic of the Papago Indians of Southern Arizona* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968).

[2]Public lecture by N. Scott Momaday, "Man Made of Words," Claremont College.

[3]Leland C. Wyman, *Blessingway* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1970).

[4]Washington Matthews, *Night Chant, A Navajo Ceremony*, American Museum of Natural History Memoirs, Vol. 6 (New York: 1902).

[5]Joseph Epes Brown, ed., *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Clinton, Massachusetts: The Colonial Press, Inc., 1971).

[6]Saul Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (New York: The Viking Press, 1969).

The Legacy of the Ancestors

by P. L. Travers

"In the Nothingness Yhi stirred in her dream, waiting for Baiame, The Great Spirit. He came and woke the world. 'No, no!' cried all the evil spirits. 'Sleep, sleep, sleep!' But Baiame had already spoken the word and animals and insects and birds awoke and began to creep out of their caves; death came to life in the lakes and rivers; fish swam up to the surface. Yhi began her pilgrimage to North, South, East, and West, and trees, grasses, stones, and mountains sprang up in her footsteps. Then Baiame said: 'My thought needs form. I will give it my own.' So it was that man was made."

This is a pretty enough aboriginal story— each tribe has its own version— but perhaps a little too coherent, too obviously worked upon by missionaries in order to fit the thought of a paleolithic race into their own schemata. There are tales of devout clerics in the Australian bush robing naked bodies in Christian garments, crowning fish-oiled heads with flowers and performing marriage and baptismal services over persons already— by fact of birth and benefit of totem— religiously dedicated to the spirits of iguana, emu or wattle, and who, after the ceremony, promptly returned to their familiar allegiances.

Anthropologists are constantly on the lookout for evidence of where the original Australians came from, but so far have not found a single folk tale that gives a clue to their migration. Are they survivors of some primitive race that could have inhabited a vast Antarctic continent of which South America, South Africa and Australia may once have formed a part? Do they derive from a Dravidian people driven from the Indian Deccan, who drifted in bark boats to the Northern Territory and eventually overran the continent? These questions are for experts, men of science. What we are pursuing here is organic and essential stuff— how they lived, what they believed, the substance of the folk. If one thinks of the Caduceus of Mercury, it is possible— all symbols being multisided, giving off light in every direction— to equate the central winged rod with names, dates, and carbon tests, and the two intertwining serpents with what the legend-making mind has done with historical material. Scientific fact and intimate personal experience together converge upon the truth.

Fortunately we have a great body of intimate matter relating to the Northwest, Western and Southern tribes, in the writings of Daisy Bates who, like her near-contemporary, Mary Kingsley, in West Africa, went to live among the natives in a state of what can only be called communion. Anthropology is the study of man, and all true women, even without benefit of scientific training— and Daisy Bates was a journalist, not a scientist— are natural anthropologists. For thirty-five years, from the turn of the century onward, she shared the life of the aborigines, living amid their nakedness clad in neatly tailored Edwardian garments, veiled toque, high-heeled shoes and clean white cotton gloves. Mary Kingsley, equally fastidious sartorially, in Victorian cape, bonnet and elastic-sided boots, once pursued into the African jungle a member of the Fang tribe who had shot at her with a musket, crying with anthropological fervor— and, clearly, some feminine curiosity— "But why? Just tell me why!"

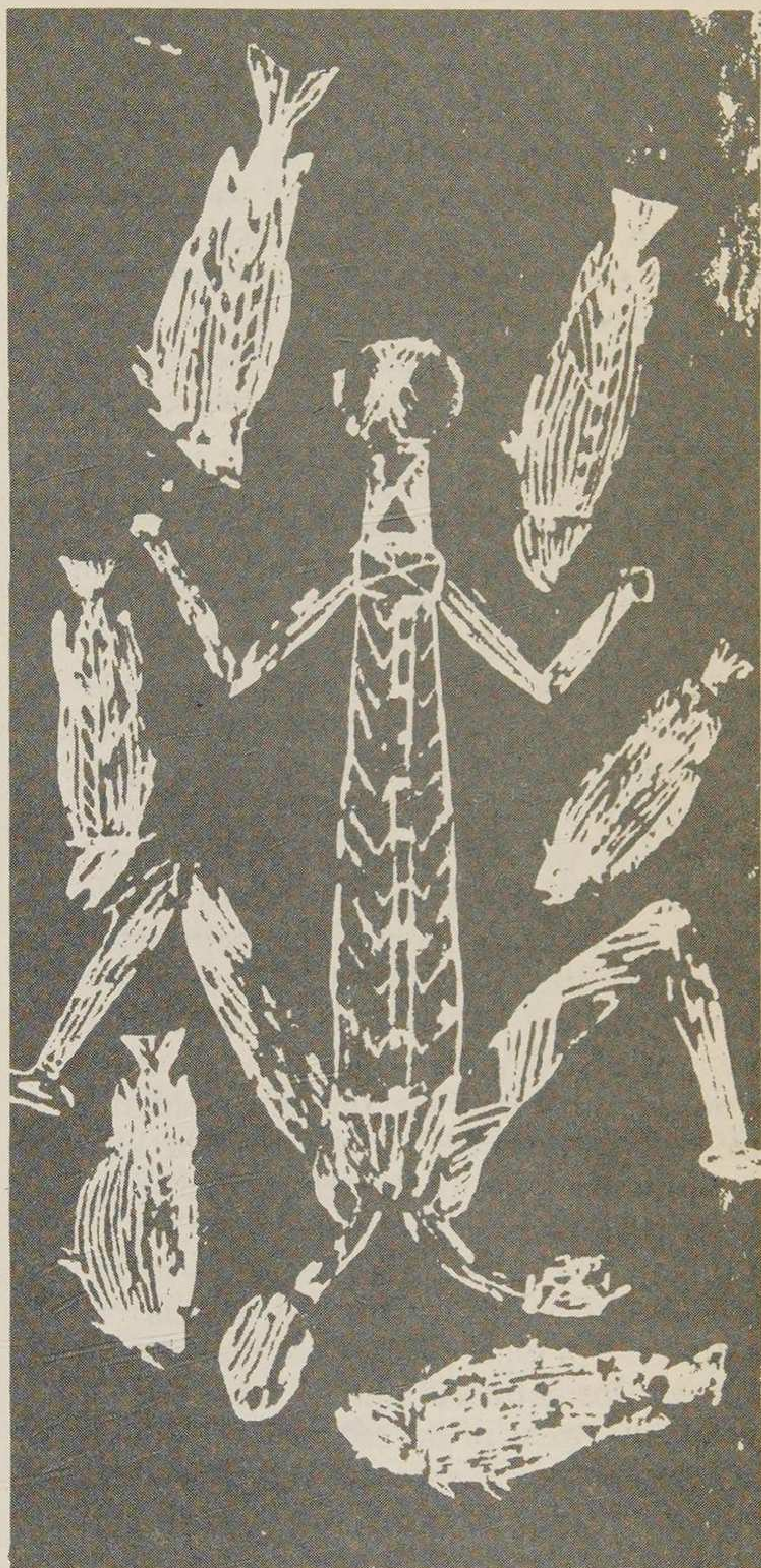
There was no "why" in Daisy Bates. She simply "sat down"— an aboriginal word for camping— and listened to what the

aborigines had to tell, never imposing her own intelligence and beliefs upon them but waiting patiently for separate pieces of information to form themselves into a coherent whole. The stories sometimes took years to emerge. And since "whites" were originally held to be the returned spirits of aboriginal ancestors, it was not difficult for her to persuade them that she was *mirroo-jandu*, or magic woman, and one of the twenty-two wives of Leberr, an ancestor who lived in the Dreamtime. This idea of the Dreamtime (or Dreaming), called variously *Yamminga*, *Nyetting*, *Dhoogoor*, *Ungud*, is central to the thought of all the Australian tribes. Any relative farther back than a grandfather or farther forward than a grandson was held to be in the Dreamtime— which was not, in fact, time at all, but rather timelessness; space, too, and spacelessness; matter, spirit, life and death, everything and always.

It was against this backdrop of the Dreamtime, the ever-germinating myth, that the drama of aboriginal life was played out for Daisy Bates. Tribe after tribe converged on the eight-foot tent that was her home— never to enter it, etiquette on both sides would forbid that— but to pour out their hearts. She became for them Kabbarli, the grandmother, to whom it was safe to tell tribal laws and disclose the secrets of dance and ritual that their own women must neither see nor know on pain of instant death.

She, too, tells a story of Baiame, but a Baiame shorn of Biblical overtones, an old gigantic ancestor lying asleep with his head on his arm who was one day to wake and gobble up everything that lives. This Baiame did not create the world. It was, quite simply, *there*— the tale goes no farther back than that— a flat, featureless, naked land on which the ancestors, by crossing and re-crossing it, raised up hills, rivers, stones and trees. Moreover, it ended at the horizon. A person coming to the perilous edge might lose his footing and be lost, descending, like Hopkins, the frightful gulf, the "Cliffs of fall, no-man-fathomed."

It was data such as these that Kabbarli, tucking Galileo away in a pocket, had to appear to accept. She was to look in vain for a father figure up in the sky. In *her* tribes, as



she called them— allowing for the possibility that other tribes might have different beliefs — the only deity was a serpent god, or *woggal*, who dominated earth and heaven and punished evildoers. She kept her own counsel, treated the serpent with respect and watched the effect of its rule upon the people. Foreknowing, perhaps, the yet unwritten words of her countryman, W.B. Yeats, "For ceremony is name of the rich horn/And custom of the spreading laurel tree," she very early understood that for the aborigine, custom creates law and that to follow the patterns of behavior prescribed by the ancestors and to live as the heroes did in the Dreamtime sustain both man and the earth. "Within his own tribal laws," she wrote, "the

aboriginal is bound hand and foot by tradition; beyond them he knows no ethics." Everywhere, however, she found the basic doctrine of pre-existing souls, or life-germs, which referred to everything in nature— man, wombat, wild cherry, eagle. All was one, and one flesh. Kangaroo could be mother or brother, curlew or acacia a true-born sister. And Daisy Bates accepted all, not in any sense "going native" but, while keeping the winged rod in mind, letting the two entwining serpents do their work within her.

The story of Kabbarli is an anthropological elegy. She knew that her *boggarli* (grandsons) were a dying race— if not into oblivion at any rate into the sepulcher of white government. "The aboriginal," she wrote, "can withstand all reverses of nature, except civilization." So she spent her life birthing them peacefully into their death and preparing their memorial. She nursed the sick, fed the hungry from her meager store, encouraged the efforts of the old to get back to the place of their birth, lest their spirit trespass on strange country and the way be lost, at the moment of death, to the land of Kur'an'up— an island in the Western sea, not so far, one notes philologically, from the Irish Tir nan Og. She learned by heart the songs of one group and taught them to another and handed on the *bamburu*, the crudely marked letter-sticks that were their only attempt at written language— a type, perhaps, of the Celtic ogham. She gathered and hid from the female members of the tribes the freely-given totems, the cult images she had seen raised on high by the elders before the prostrate warriors, primitive wafers at a primitive mass. Alone among women she became a spectator at the bloodletting, blood-drinking initiations of the young men and stood her ground, when mothers and sisters fled, at the dread voice of Nalga, the Bull-roarer, to look upon whose spirit means death. She was present at ritual corroborees and learned by heart the Dreamtime chants of which the aborigines no longer knew the meaning. She sat by, containing her abhorrence, when they killed and ate their newborn infants, while noting at the same time that cannibalism was sometimes performed as a funeral observance in honor of a deceased adult. Eater and eaten, all was one and Daisy Bates looked on without weighing, without imposing shame or guilt on a race that knew of neither.

And when at last she had to leave them— even Kabbarli, to their surprise, could not last forever— with the totems, her notes and her set of Dickens packed into kerosene cases, she stood among them at a railway siding distributing, for the first time, money, calling each one by his native name and, to save them from "heart crying," singing *Now the Day is Over*. Her simplicity, as it had always been, was a reflection of their own.

So the train would have carried her away, not in their minds, to a distant city, but simply into the Dreamtime. They would go back to their tribal lands and pursue for a time their antique ways, settling nowhere, neither sowing nor reaping, subsisting on what the earth provided— opossum, mallee-leaf, wichetty grub. But before long they would find themselves strangers in their

pristine world, their honey-groves trampled by the white man's herds, their ritual places desecrated. How would the earth fare, they must have wondered, with no one to propitiate the spirits in caves and lakes and hills? In the course of time, they would find themselves in reservations and eventually in tailored suits and parliamentary lobbies. A handful of the invading race, belatedly consulting its conscience, would demand for them a place in society— even encourage them to want it— collect the totem boards for museums and display the sacred grounds to tourists.

Lacking the old life-giving ritual, the antique images slept. The stories lost their sacred meaning. What Platypus said to Bandicoott and the exploits of the sugar-glider became amusements for white children. A race unchronicled for millenniums had stepped from timelessness into time and is now in the history books. And to be enshrined in the history books is to be, though numerically alive, mythologically dead. What was passing has passed.

But nothing is ultimately lost, as the aborigines themselves would once have known. Death on one plane may be life on another. In dying into law and order they have left a legacy behind for anyone who will take it— could it perhaps be modern man?— a gift from the ancestors, the concept of the Dreamtime. We need it. Dare we make the claim and shoulder the consequences? Faced with, or rather sustained by, the Dreamtime we could live in our existential world of fact, explanation and certainty, our darkened-by-brightness kingdom of knowing, in contact with our Unknowing. It could place us in the context of myth and remind us of what we like to forget— that life does not open and close like a book but is open-ended, mysterious, incapable of solutions. The dates on tombstones tell us little. They are segments of one unknown whole. The "original face" of the Zen koan takes no account of birth or death; if once, it must be always. Before and after are subjective concepts, they relate to serial time. The Dreaming is objective Now, the everlasting nonexistence from which existence rises. If the aborigine's service to it was to live in *participation mystique* with stones and trees and ancestors, an entity only in so far as he was a member of a tribe, our service, perhaps, is to become aware of our separate, detribalized, individual selves. "He who knows himself knows God," said Jalal al-din Rumi, making the further unspoken assumption that God himself, knowing all, also needs to be known. To pursue this requires a dimension of myth, and for myth to exist it is necessary that between one second and another time must have a stop. It is in this nonmoment of wakefulness that man is on terms with paradox. The past, irreparable and gone, can be repaired by the present; harlot alone is the true virgin; Nirvana and Samsara are one; from the point of view of the farther side, *this* is the Other Shore.

Given this legacy of the Dreamtime it is we who must waken the images, absorb their ambivalent power and explore them in ourselves— cannibal, totem and taboo, the wild man and the sage. We have to become our own ancestors— no great feat in terms of myth— and receive from ourselves the Dreamtime teachings. They will tell us, again mythologically, that what is irreconcilable is at the same time reconciled; that our profane, desacralized life— a lawful process in linear time— is the seeding ground of the sacred; that if I forget thee, Jerusalem, Jerusalem nevertheless is there; that rock is gold that does not know itself; and that in the darkness of Kali Yuga fallen light is renewed.

From the book *BLUES OF THE SKY*: Interpreted from the Original Hebrew Book of Psalms
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Drawing by John Swanson

Psalm 19

The universe unfolds
the vision within:
creation

stars and galaxies
the words and lines
inspired with a hand

day comes to us
with color and shape
and night listens

and what is heard
breaks through deep silence
of infinite space

the rays come to us
like words
come to everyone

human on earth
we are the subjects
of light

a community
as it hears
the right words

creating time
the space of the sky
the face of the nearest star

that beats like a heart
in the tent where it sleeps
near the earth every night

then rises above the horizon
growing in our awareness
of the embrace

of inspiration
we feel as we turn
toward the warmth

starting at the edge of the sky
to come over us
like a secret love we wait for

By David Rosenberg

love we can't hide
our deepest self-image
from

nobody holds back that fire
or closes the door
of time

words My Lord writes shine
opening me
to witness myself

conscious and unconscious
complex mind
warmed in an inner lightness

that moves me
to the simple beat
of time

testimony
of one author
speaking through history's
pages

commanding my attention
bathed in light
around me

clean perfect notes
hearts play
make us conscious

we become the audience
amazed we can feel
justice come over us

our minds become real
unfold
the universe within

silence becomes real
we hear
clear words

become the phrasing of
senses

lines of thought
stanzas of feeling

more lovely than gold
all the gold in the world
melting to nothing in light

sweet flowing honey
the right words
in my mouth

warming your subject
as he listens
breaking through his reflection

his image in the mirror
what mind can understand
the failure
waiting in itself

silent self-image
created in the dark alone
to hold

power over others!
but justice comes over us
like a feeling for words that
are right

absolutely
a mirror is pushed away
like a necessary door

we're free to look at everything
every shape and color
light as words

opening the mind
from nightmares of social failure
desperate routines

we're inspired above
the surface parade
of men dressed up in power

we see the clear possibility
of life growing

to witness itself

let these words
of my mouth
be sound

the creations
of my heart
be light

so I can see myself
free of desperate symbols
mind-woven coverings

speechless fears
images hidden within
we are the subjects of light

opening to join you
vision itself
my constant creator.

The Wisdom of Festival by David Johnson

Contemporary reactions to the paralysis of institutional religion are often fragmented, faddish, experimental, diverse, sporadic— and occasionally as oppressive as the lifestyle which led to the reaction in the first place. Nevertheless something vital is lost in the life of a people when it no longer celebrates, when time is measured only by the clock. We need to take a fresh look at how *festival* has functioned, at how, throughout history, it has served to bring sacred and secular, individual and community, together.

For societies dependent on farming it was crucial to know the seasons. And it is out of a need to harmonize the activities of men and women with the life of nature, to know when to plant or harvest, that we also speak of the "seasons" of the heart. We know that fertility, the ground of all life, is not constant. Despite the monotonous dependability of the modern clock, the nature of the life-flow it monitors is cyclic, rhythmic, periodic. Certain times stand out; certain days are set aside. Periodic renewal is deep in man's consciousness; and in traditional societies, it too was correlated with patterns in the heavens— the cycles of moon and sun.

One of the most remarkable of the ancient festivals of simultaneous natural and personal renewal was the Babylonian new-

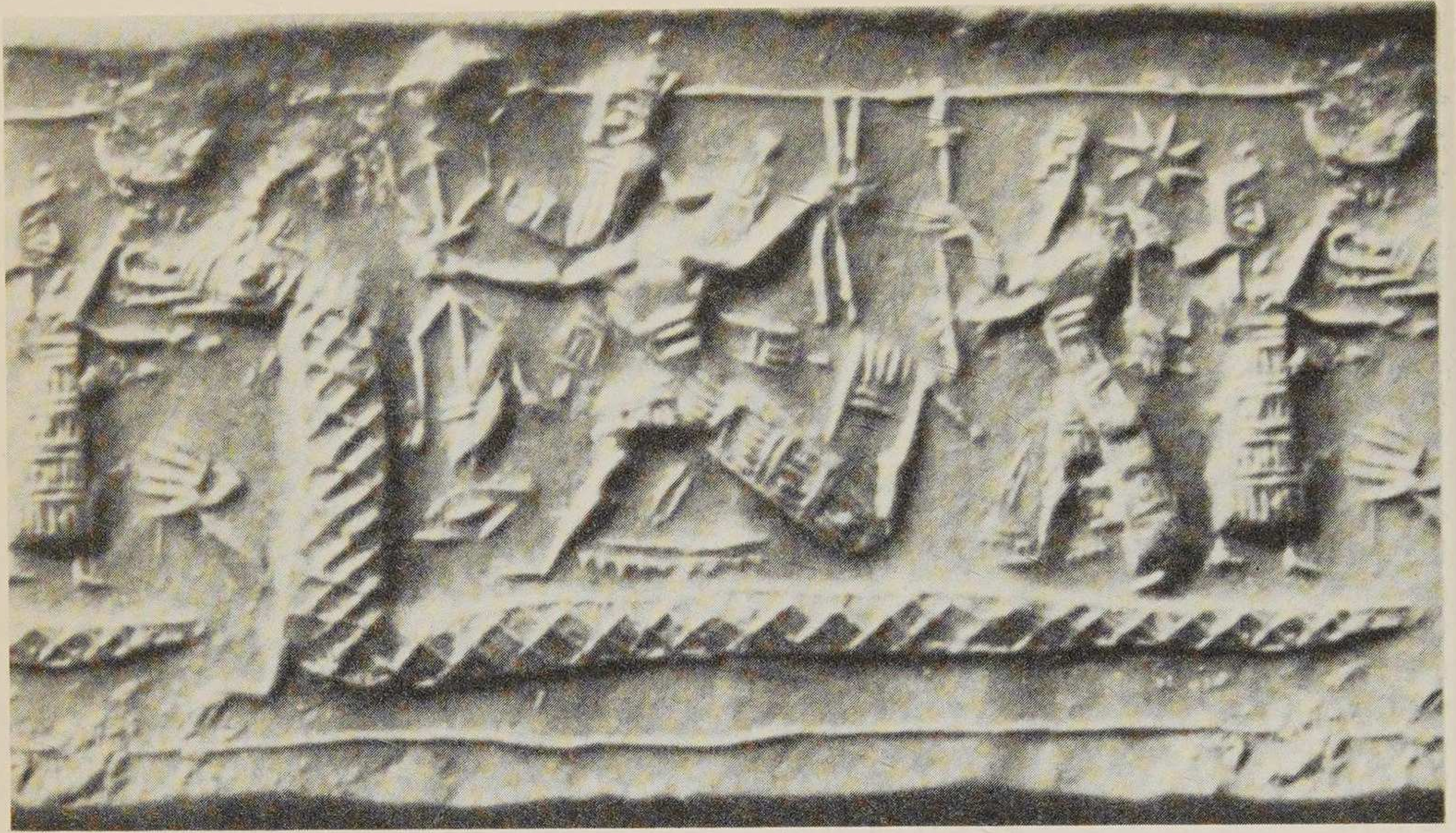
year festival, *Akitu.* Originating with the Sumerians prior to 2,000 B.C., *Akitu* was celebrated regularly in the principal cities from that time until 484 B.C., when it was stopped by the Persian emperor Xerxes. Not only is the antiquity of *Akitu* significant with its influence on the Judeo-Christian tradition, but with Sumer we find a fundamental, transitional period in history. With perhaps the first empire in history, we witness the development of the basic institutions of "civilization"— the ones we are still learning to live with: the growth of cities (several with over fifty thousand inhabitants); the specialization of labor; the hierarchy of rulers, intellectuals, and priests; the development of written records, libraries, courts of justice, measurement, astronomy, a common calendar; and a rich literature more than one thousand years before the Bible or the *Iliad.* It was the function of myth and ritual to bind the rich farm land of the rural areas to the capital city, and to bind the city to the temple, the palace and the deified ruler. The primary goal of the new-year festival was to harmonize the cycles of earth, rural and urban, with the cycles of heaven.

Early in the Sumerian period this festival was probably celebrated twice a year corresponding to the two growing seasons, but eventually it settled at the return of rains near the vernal equinox, the month of Nisan (March/April). It lasted twelve days, with each day having its prescribed ritual activities. The rich symbolism of the rites gradually unveiled once more the primordial interdependence of all life: how the lives of gods and humans, plants and animals, are interwoven.

The first five days recognized the end of a cycle, celestial as well as terrestrial. The drought of winter meant also that man had strayed and was alienated. Prayers were directed to the great god and hero Marduk, who at the year's end was imprisoned in the mountain. They asked Marduk, whose eyes pierced the universe, to turn his face toward Babylon. On the evening of the fourth day the great creation epic, the *Enuma Elish*, was recited. This myth served as a paradigm for the entire festival, in much the same way as the account of the Exodus from Egypt shapes the Jewish Passover. The *Enuma Elish* was a dramatic scenario for the festival, for the process of renewing the cosmos. The sense here is not of a commemoration or anniversary: the festival reproduces the event. The myth and the rite participate in the actual renewal; the new year is created. Language and act meet at the most fundamental levels of conception.

The creation epic, which was recited several times during *Akitu*, and probably retold around the dinner table and before bed, recounts how the first gods came into being, the commingling of sweet and salt waters— Apsu and Tiamat. One aspect of Tiamat, the mother of all, can be pictured as those stagnant, fetid waters out of which life swarms, like insects from a marsh. It is no wonder that a conflict develops with the active, young gods always on the go. An intrigue brings Apsu's death, and Tiamat, enraged by the death of her consort, attaches the Tablets of Fate to Kingu, makes him general, and with a following of monsters and demons, sets out to destroy the assembly of gods. Marduk is chosen by the assembly to be supreme commander of the defending forces. His weapons show him to be an ancient storm or weather god: lightning, the four winds, hurricane, the storm-chariot. He boasts that Tiamat is merely a woman, and with her defeat the sun god (the patriarch) is reaffirmed. Kingu and Tiamat are slain and Marduk fastens the Tablets of Fate on his own breast, and completes the creation of the cosmos by fixing the two halves of Tiamat as earth and sky, and by ordering the firmament and the constellations. Creation means to separate, to name, to order, and to provide divine surveillance— gods are given the various jobs necessary to keep the cosmos running. Finally man is created from the rebel Kingu's blood. A shrine is built, with a throne and a bedchamber. A testimonial banquet for Marduk climaxes the celebration. All of these events prefigure the central activities of the festival itself.

On the fifth day the temple was cleansed, sprinkled with holy water from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and fumigated with incense. Herodotus tells us that two and one-half tons of frankincense were used on the great altar of Bel (Marduk) during the festival. Meanwhile the king went through a curious rite: he was officially devested by a priest, struck on the face, and forced to his knees in penitence, where he confessed that he had been loyal to Babylon and kind to subordinates. In a ritual litany Marduk answered by renewing his vows to protect and provide. The king



Marduk attacks the sea-serpent Tiamat in this Babylonian relief

was reinvested, and again struck on the face to bring tears— probably symbolic of the impending fertilizing rain or semen.

Outside the temple, life was topsy-turvy, the chaos before creation. People rushed about searching for Marduk, asking where he was hidden. A condemned criminal was temporarily enthroned as a carnival king; masters and servants exchanged roles in the households; there was sexual license.

With the release of Marduk from the mountain, however, the events of the *Enuma Elish* could be played out. The gods assembled, and on the ninth day, anxiety and confusion were transformed into joy. Marduk was elected supreme, and doubtless his defeat of Tiamat was ritually re-enacted. The creation once again took place. A triumphal procession with priests and statues of the gods passed down a gala avenue between thousands of cheering people, down to the barges, across the Euphrates to a special new-year house (the *Bit Akitu*), which was a microcosm of the earth's renewal: rich courtyards, trees, gardens. The next day gods and men joined in a feast, sitting down together. After the banquet that evening, back in the temple, Marduk and the goddess Sarpanit, the king and a priestess, consummated the festival in a sacred marriage— probably at the summit of the ziggurat, the top of the mountain— on a couch surrounded by greenery, purified by the smoke of cedar.

The fields and flocks were now fertile, the barrenness of winter gone. The rain coming down to earth gave promise of *resurrection*, the coming of new life.

One final act remained, involving Marduk's Tablets of Fate, and their role in the myth. The destiny of the new year must be divined. Babylonians were famous for their astrologers; each major temple had a library of astronomical-astrological material. Besides the stars, their seers read the behavior of animals and birds, entrails, oil on water; and like the famous priest-doctors at Epidaurus, they used dreams in special dream rooms to cure the sick. As one final act to offset the precariousness of climate and empire, the festival ended with the Fixing of Destinies— the next twelve months were cast. The following day the statues of the gods returned to their homes, and the work of the new year began.

One way to talk about the effects of a traditional festival is to conceive the different ritual acts and objects as series of centers from which reverberations move outward, like the concentric ripples from pebbles thrown in a pond. The objects are common, everyday objects. What is different is the context, the festival environment— the pond— and the reverberations— the outward moving circles. The first step toward creating this milieu involves exclusion: logic, skepticism, calculated fact are left outside the festival gate. Ordinary

life and ordinary, chronometric time come to a stop. Within the most serious dimensions of "play," within the realm of the all-possible, the multilayered festival is lived out.

In terms of the grand scheme of things, for example, *Akitu* was a sociopolitical drama with cosmic consequences; its purpose was to harmonize populace and king with the cycles of nature and heavenly bodies— to promote the fertility of these realms. The reinvestiture and sexual invigoration of the king as Marduk was therefore one such vibrant center.

There were, and are, many other less dramatic, but invaluable benefits essential to the communal life. Food and music are two basics of festival; they provide the occasion for reconciliation in the community. *Akitu* was popularly known as the feast of the gods. Some of the oldest mores in the ancient Near East involved codes of hospitality and food; the sharing of a meal constituted a bond, as in "there is salt between us." Enmity was set aside. Within the festival, quarreling members of the family were reconciled; enemies became friends. Communal histories were retold, genealogies were brought up to date. At the heart of festival was community, and its vibrant center was the feast, where both gods and humans participated.

But that sounds almost too staid or sedate for a festival, and we need to go one step further. Festival means *excess*. With common sense and daily life set aside, with ordinary boundaries broken or stretched, with the reversal of ruler and ruled, self and buried self— then we have dancing, yes, but all night; and feasting means more than a sandwich and a Coke. But to what purpose? Is going beyond the habitual and practical to the excessive merely a cathartic, a necessary release after a year of "sticking to it"? I believe that there is a larger purpose served; the festival pattern of fast and feast fits into a larger paradigm which undergirds the human spirit, as well as the vegetative world and the turn of seasons. On one side of the spectrum we find the valued qualities of the everyday, workaday world, which are determined by survival: hard work with hand to the plow; saving enough seed for next year's crop; storing food for periods of scarcity; consuming moderately— with at least one eye to the future. The hospitality which led families in the Near East to set an extra place for the possible guest during festivals. The secularization of food then is the TV dinner eaten alone. Secularization is the denigration of those basics of food and drink, song and dance— the means by which we relate to ourselves and others in the spirit of joy and thanksgiving.

Of course, just as *any time* can be festive, so any place can be used for coming together. But traditionally human beings have needed to set off both times and places for special activities, to designate a spot where human history might grow. The family home is one such place, but there are also others which are particularly sacred for a community, places of epiphany or enlightenment. Historically sanctuaries were built in those places, or on those spots: from small altars to dolmen stones and megalithic chambers, which seem to act like sacred tuning forks for the area. A local deity, god or goddess, might have resided there. But even today certain locations retain peculiar vitality and vibrancy. Pilgrimages are still made to them, places where babies are christened, couples are married, sacred days are celebrated— where the dead are blessed on their journey.

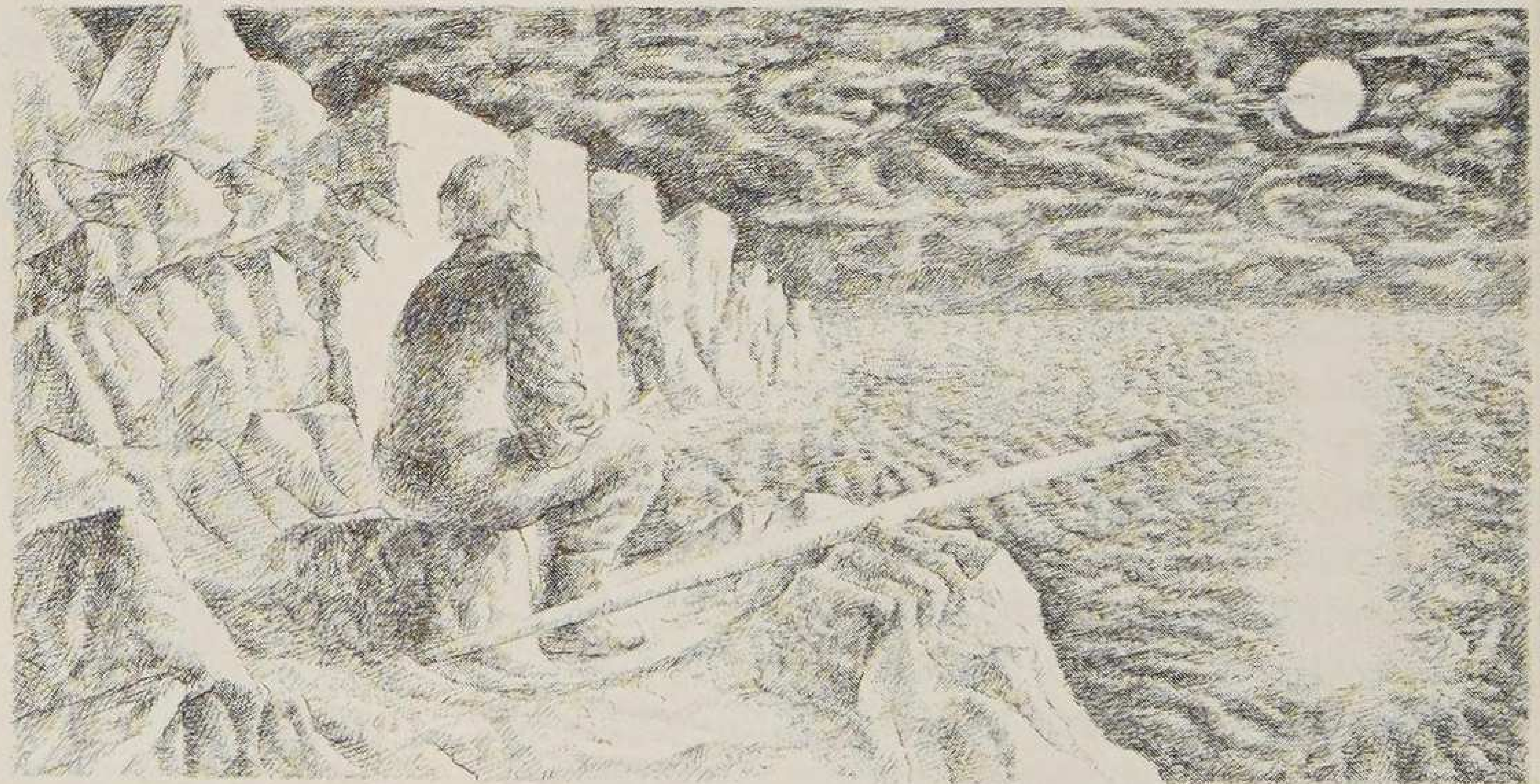
We ask of a place what we ask of time: what comes together here, what converges here? Is this a place where body and soul are reunited, where family and community are healed and revitalized? At the base of festival and holiday, sacred times and places, sacred rites and stories, are the simplest and most fundamental acts, the very acts by which body and spirit are sustained: when we eat with one another, when we speak and listen, love and play, sing and dance. One thing is not the same as another, one time or place is not necessarily equal in meaning or significance to another. There are places and times which have traditionally stood out, when people out of need and joy, have gathered together to celebrate. It would not be wrong then to associate festival (and sacred time) with those occasions when people get together to participate in the most basic of human activities— eating, drinking, dancing, and singing— in order to gain the most salutary and vibrant goal: relationship.

The White Seal Maid

On the North Sea shore there was a fisherman named Merdock who lived all alone. He had neither wife nor child, nor wanted one. At least that was what he told the other men with whom he fished the haafbanks.

But truth was, Merdock was a lonely man, at ease only with the wind and waves. And each evening, when he left his companions, calling out "Fair Wind," the sailor's leave, he knew they were going back to a warm hearth and a full bed while he went home to none. Secretly he longed for the same comfort.

One day it came to Merdock as if in a dream that he should leave off fishing that day and go down to the sea-ledge and hunt the seal. He had never done such a thing before, thinking it close to murder, for the seals had human eyes and cried with a baby's voice.



Yet though he had never done such a thing, there was such a longing within him that Merdock could not say no to it. And that longing was like a high sweet singing, a calling. He could not rid his mind of it. So he went.

Down by a grey rock he sat, a long sharpened stick by his side. He kept his eyes fixed out on the sea where the white birds sat on the waves like foam.

He waited through sunrise and sunset and through the long, cold night, the singing in his head. Then, when the wind went down a bit, he saw a white seal coming far out in the sea, coming towards him, the moon riding on its shoulder.

Merdock could scarcely breathe as he watched the seal, so

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Drawings by Lloyd Bloom

by Jane Yolen

shining and white was its head. It swam swiftly to the sea-ledge and then with one quick push it was up on land.

Merdock rose then in silence, the stick in his hand. He would have thrown it, too. But the white seal gave a sudden shudder and its skin sloughed off. It was a maiden cast in moonlight with the tide about her feet.

She stepped high out of her skin and her hair fell sleek and white about her shoulders and hid her breasts.

Merdock fell to his knees behind the rock and would have hidden his eyes, but her cold white beauty was too much for him. He could only stare. And if he made a noise then, she took no notice but turned her face to the sea and opened her arms up to the moon. Then she began to sway and call.

At first Merdock could not hear the words. Then he realized it was the very song he had heard in his head all that day:

Come to the edge,
Come down to the ledge
Where the water laps the shore.

Come to the strand,
Seals to the sand
The watery time is o'er.

When the song was done, she began it again. It was as if the whole beach, the whole cove, the whole world was nothing but that one song.

And as she sang, the water began to fill up with seals. Black seals and grey seals and seals of every kind. They swam to the shore at her call and sloughed off their skins. They were as young as the white seal maid, but none so beautiful in Merdock's eyes. They swayed and turned at her singing and joined their voices to hers. Faster and faster the seal maidens danced, in circles of twos and threes and fours. Only the white seal maid danced alone, in the center, surrounded by the cast-off skins of her twirling sisters.

The moon remained high almost all the night, but at last it went down. At its setting, the seal maids stopped their singing, put on their skins again one by one, went back into the sea one by

one, and swam away. But the white seal maid did not go. She waited on the shore until the last of them was out of sight.

Then she turned to the watching man, as if she had always known he was there, hidden behind the grey rock. There was something strange, a kind of pleading, in her eyes.

Merdock read that pleading and thought he understood it. He ran over to where she stood, grabbed up her sealskin, and held it high overhead.

"Now you be mine," he said.

And she had to go with him, that was the way of it. For she was a selchie, one of the seal folk. And the old tales said it: the selchie maid without her skin was no more than a lass.

They were wed within the week, Merdock and the white seal maid, because he wanted it. So she nodded her head at the priest's bidding, though she said not a word.

And Merdock had no complaint of her, his "Sel" as he called her. No complaint except this: she would not go down to the sea. She would not go down by the shore where he had found her or down to the sand to see him in his boat, though often enough she would stare from the cottage door out past the cove's end where the inlet poured out into the great wide sea.

"Will you not walk down by the water's edge with me, Sel?" Merdock would ask each morning. "Or will you not come down to greet me when I return?"

She never answered him, either yea or nay. Indeed, if he had not heard her singing that night on the ledge, he would have thought her mute. But she was a good wife, for all that, and did what he required. If she did not smile, she did not weep. She seemed, to Merdock, strangely content.

So Merdock hung the white sealskin up over the door where Sel could see it. He kept it there in case she should want to leave him, to don the skin and go. He could have hidden it or burned it, but he did not. He hoped the sight of it, so near and easy, would keep her with him. Would tell her, as he could not, how much he loved her. For he found he did love her, his seal wife. It was that simple. He loved her and did not want her to go, but he would not keep her past her willing it, so he hung the skin up over the door.

And then their sons were born. One a year, born at the ebbing of the tide. And Sel sang to them, one by one, long, longing wordless songs that carried the sound of the sea. But to Merdock she said nothing.

Seven sons they were, strong and silent, one born each year. They were born to the sea, born to swim, born to let the tide lap

them head and shoulder. And though they had the dark eyes of the seal, and though they had the seal's longing for the sea, they were men and had men's names: James, John, Michael, George, William, Rob and Tom. They helped their father fish the cove and bring home his catch from the sea.

It was seven years and seven years and seven years again that the seal wife lived with the man. The oldest of their sons was just coming to his twenty-first birthday, the youngest barely a man. It was a gray day, the wind scarce rising, that the boys all refused to go with Merdock when he called. They gave no reason but "Nay."

"Wife," Merdock called, his voice heavy and grey as the sky. "Wife, whose sons are these? How have you raised them that they say 'Nay' to their father when he calls?" It was ever his custom to talk to Sel as if she returned him words.

To his surprise, Sel turned to him and said: "Go. My sons be staying with me this day." It was the voice of the singer on the beach, musical and low. And the shock was so great that he went at once and did not look back.

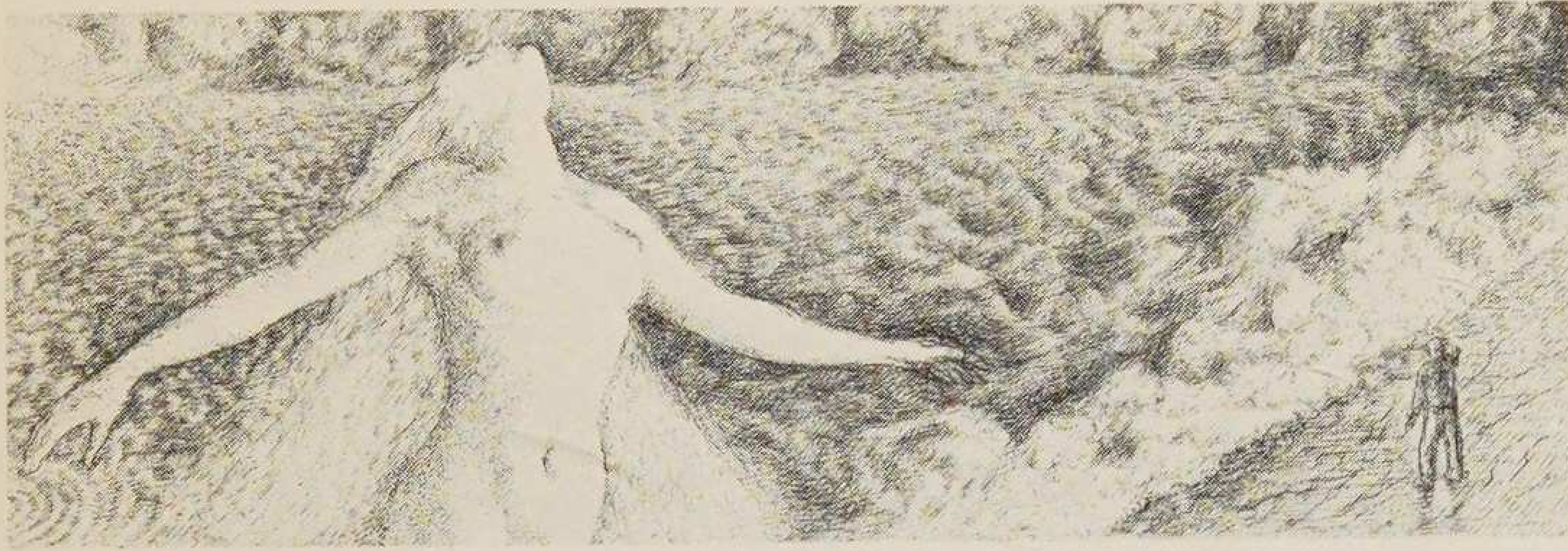
He set his boat on the sea, the great boat that usually took several men to row it. He set it out himself and got it out into the cove, put the nets over, and never once heard when his sons called out to him as he went, "Fair Wind."

But after a bit the shock wore thin and he began to think about it. He became angry then, at his sons and his wife who had long plagued him with her silence. He pulled in the nets and pulled on the oars and started towards home. "I, too, can say nay to this sea," he said out loud as he rode the swells in.

The beach was cold and empty. Even the gulls were mute.

"I do not like this," Merdock said. "It smells of a storm."

He beached the boat and walked home. The sky gathered in around him. At the cottage he hesitated but a moment, then pulled savagely on the door. He waited for the warmth to greet



him. But the house was as empty and cold as the beach.

Merdock went into the house and stared at the hearth, black and silent. Then, fear riding in his heart, he turned slowly and looked over the door.

The sealskin was gone.

"Sel," he cried then as he ran from the house, and he named his sons in a great anguished cry as he ran. Down to the sea-ledge he went, calling their names like a prayer: "James, John, Michael, George, William, Rob, Tom."

But they were gone.

The rocks were grey, as grey as the sky. At the water's edge was a pile of clothes that lay like discarded skins. Merdock stared out far across the cove and saw a seal herd swimming. Yet not a herd. A white seal and seven strong pups.

"Sel," he cried again. "James, John, Michael, George, William, Rob, Tom."

For a moment, the white seal turned her head, then she looked again to the open sea and barked out seven times. The wind carried the faint sounds back to the shore. Merdock heard, as if in a dream, the seven seal names she called. They seemed harsh and jangling to his ear.

Then the whole herd dove. When they came up again they were but eight dots strung along the horizon, lingering for a moment, then disappearing into the blue edge of sea.

Merdock recited the seven seal names to himself. And in that recitation was a song, a litany to the god of the seals. The names were no longer harsh, but right. And he remembered clearly again the moonlit night when the seals had danced upon the sand. Maidens all. Not a man or boy with them. And the white seal turning and choosing him, giving herself to him that he might give the seal people life.

Ishmael on Watch
by John Fentress Gardner

I see a whale in the South-sea drinking my soul away.

—William Blake, in *America*, 1793

Moby Dick is said to be the most intensively studied book in American literature. Though it sold few copies and was scornfully treated by many of those critics who bothered to take notice of it when it first appeared in 1851, it began to come into its own in the 1920s. Since then, it has received numerous scholarly interpretations, been assigned to countless English classes in high school and college, and become generally recognized as having something of great importance to say to the modern person about the condition of his soul and his society. Many readers, indeed, have had the feeling that the tragedy of the *Pequod* under Captain Ahab is a warning of some kind to the American ship of state.

My own acquaintance with *Moby Dick* came at the age of nineteen. I was captivated equally by its strength and by its beauty. It was for me full of portents and presentiments, expressed in language of extraordinary power. I did not get far in trying to lift the mystical truths I sensed on every page, so I left them in, simply reading and rereading many passages as they stood, until I had virtually memorized them.

The soul of youth responds to high daring, melancholy, ambition, anger, and wild defiance— especially when they are "judgmatically" salted and peppered throughout with a robust, skeptical, workingman's humor. The youthful hope for beauty is wounded by what it meets at every turn in the ugliness of an industrial civilization; its hope for love cannot fail to suffer from the routine, quarreling, and competitiveness that make up so much of ordinary life. Above all and underneath all, there is in most young persons a self-esteem and self-concern that are bruised by the indifference of the rest of humanity, all of whom have, of course, their own concerns.

These conflicts between subjective idealism and objective reality are the very signature of young life trying, and failing, to

find itself at home in the world. They explain why *Moby Dick* tallies with the experience of many an adolescent; and who would want to say that in this meaning of the word he has entirely outgrown adolescence?

* * *

"As everyone knows, water and meditation are wedded forever," says Melville at the very outset of his story, and possibly the most important fact to remember about *Moby Dick* is that it takes place on the water. Somehow water contains mysteries toward which we land-bound human beings feel ourselves drawn. In it we sense possibilities of enlargement, even enlightenment. Though firm land supports the sense of self for which we are grateful, what man does not also seek self-forgetfulness and self-transcendence? For these we look to water. Water opens perspectives of an inward kind. It helps one to a broader, deeper capacity of realization.

Meditative, imaginative forms of knowing bear the same relation to water as the logic of everyday bears to solid ground. Water is the symbol of the creative power of thought that sometimes fills us like a tide, lifts us out of everyday preoccupations, and opens our vision to more spiritual forces, presences, and events. To make an extended journey on the face of the greatest of all waters is therefore to venture, at all risk, into the unknown wonders of the soul, of nature, and of destiny.

Historically, the self-conscious, reasoning mind has arisen as an island may rise from the sea, out of the impersonality of dreaming instinct and impulse. In this sense, the primitive water-consciousness is a thing we have done well to leave behind and below us. On the other hand, there is reason to believe that a higher kind of water-consciousness will be required by the future. The mentality with which our present world is managing its affairs has grown stiff and hard. It is drying out and cracking. It thirsts for new life, new powers of insight and creativeness. One has the impression, from this perspective, that Melville's state of mind while writing *Moby Dick* was partly of the past, partly of the future. It was in part a subnormal dreaming consciousness, yet also a supernormal kind of prophesying.

So there are waters and waters, just as there are whales and whales; and these are no ordinary waters in which "Leviathan"— no ordinary whale— "comes floundering down upon us from the headwaters of the Eternities." Let us by means of a contrast drawn from ordinary experience try to develop a feeling for what goes far beyond the ordinary. This we must do, if we are to follow Melville. His epic opens with the effort to conjure for us a sense of the water that lies behind water. He has in mind the water of creative spiritual life in the cosmos.

We know that modern man, lifted out high and dry, as it were, from the flowing, instructive life of nature, is a self-conscious, self-directing, not to say self-centered person. Each person tends to be a law unto himself. In this sense, he may be compared to a stone whose force of coherence holds it together as a thing in itself, apart from and excluding other things. We know that our attention moves outward into the world from that center point in ourselves that we call the self or ego, and this self is not content until it has brought the ceaseless flux of events to a standstill: that is, has "fixed" it in a definition or a law.

But static concepts are not the only way in which we show our preference for fixity. We are also accustomed to confirm our feeling for reality through that most material of the senses, the sense of touch. Our "understanding" wants always to plant its feet on the bedrock of physically tangible evidence. Because I sense, for example, that my writing paper rests on the blotter, the blotter on the desk, the desk on the floor, the floor on the foundations of my house, the foundations on subsoil, and subsoil on the center of the earth, I feel that I understand the facts of my situation, and that all are well based.

But when we begin to inquire in this way about any kind of physical reality, there always remains another step to be taken. Once we have grounded a preliminary fact in more basic facts, have dug down to the root-fact on which all others appear to rest— in the case of the paper on my desk, down to

the undoubted earth— can we refrain from asking further: "On what does the root-fact— presently, the solid earth-mass itself— rest?" And now we come face to face with a nonfact, for the inconceivably ponderous earth is not resting on anything at all! This enormous rock appears to be floating like a feather in the universal ether.

Suddenly, we are disoriented. The ever-more-solid basis from which we were accustomed to draw our sense of assurance has evaporated. To discover what continues to hold things in place, we can no longer think in the manner of stones that always settle toward the final bottom. There is no such bottom. There is only empty "context." Not substance but relationships are what count now. These relationships no longer point inward toward the earth-center, but outward to all parts of the world-periphery. The unspeakably heavy earth-ball floats serenely in a sea of mere relationships. "O, vast Rondure, swimming in space!" exclaimed Whitman. "How like a whale!" might have been Melville's rejoinder.

When we leave earthbound experience and venture imaginatively into cosmic space, we must accustom ourselves to a new way of looking at things. This new way derives its assurance from the feeling of buoyancy, even as the old way was reassured by solidity and weight. With this buoyant new consciousness we can appreciate what it means for the earth to swim in the world ether— and we can begin to reconsider events on the earth itself that we had hitherto studied only in the old way. In floating on Walden Pond, Thoreau said he felt lifted in such a way that he could believe himself set free from gravity and placed in orbit as a small world in space— the other worlds being felt no longer as out there afar but as his neighbors.

We could, of course, evoke in other ways the same feeling for the water world to which imaginative consciousness opens: for example, by trying to realize what confronts us when we stand before any living plant. We observe then how its branches and leaves extend more or less parallel to the earth, holding out their arms, as it were, against the pull of gravity. They stand so not only for the moment but throughout the long day and night, and for indefinite periods of time; not only without fatigue, but with ever-mounting vitality! We ourselves could not begin to match their performance.

In learning to walk our own way on our own feet, we have lost the secret that permits

stalk, stem and leaf to be upborne by the sea of cosmic relationships. Our self-centered human way always calls upon *personal* strength; and personal strength, cut off from the flood of universal life, soon tires.

Yet Thoreau knew that it is possible to be a modern man, retain individuality, and yet learn, at a higher level than that of the plant, to regain buoyant rapport with the All. His experience at Walden Pond is a good preparation for Melville's great adventure. "Men of little faith stand only by their feet," said Thoreau; "When most at one with nature, I feel supported and propped on all sides." Nature grows, evolves, transforms itself, begets new life, within the all-sustaining buoyancy of the universal context; and life is to be apprehended only by a consciousness that has reestablished its cosmic rapport. The "ethereal tides" that Emerson spoke of are those of this inward, living thought, and it is through this kind of thought, he said, that man is caught up into the Universe.

If we may assume, then, that this whaling story means to launch us on what, for poetic imagination, become the seas of inward experience, what is the nature of the quest upon which we are to embark? For what shall we keep our weather eye peeled? On the third page, Melville offers the clue. In embarking upon the great ocean, he says,

when the last bit of land has dropped wholly out of sight, a man is likely to feel overtaken by a "mystical vibration": somehow he stands before, or in the very midst of, the mystery of existence; existence in general, but also his own in particular. Melville is reminded of the Greek myth of the fair youth Narcissus,

> *who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the un-graspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.*

This is the key! In what sense is the story of self-enamored Narcissus the story of Ahab also, in his fatal fascination with Moby Dick?

To answer this question, we must understand one peculiarity of imaginative experience. The imagination is fluid and makes fluid. It turns all things to self-transforming water. But water is a mirror, and like a mirror it reverses whatever it reflects. In genuine imagination as in many dreams, this strange reversal takes place. We discern that what seems to us, as dreamers, to be approaching from outside is actually welling up within ourselves. The man who, during the day to come, will be in danger of bursting out and visiting his anger upon someone else is before he wakes warned of this danger by the dream-image of a terrifying black bull that has broken from confinement and is about to run *him* down.

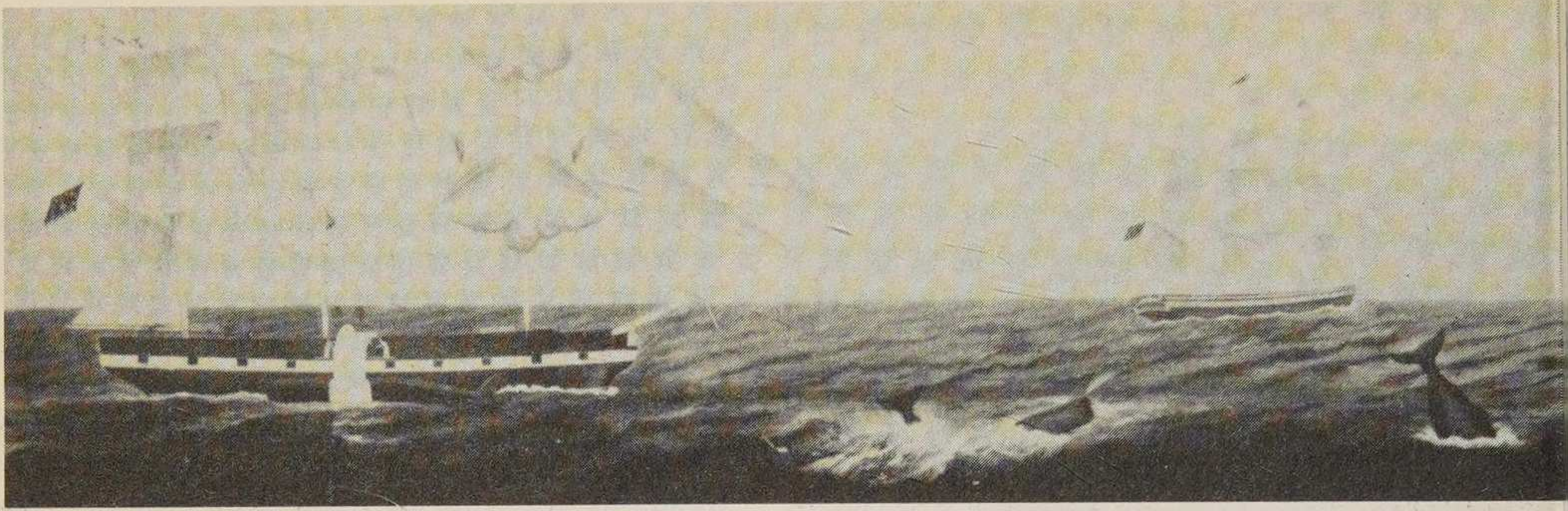
What Narcissus saw in the mirror pool of his imagination was the secret of his own destiny: who he was, and how and why he was so. This revelation overwhelmed him through the self-love it awakened. He could not hold himself back from the fatal wish to plunge into the well-springs of his own nature. We may well believe that the resulting self-immersion left him as one dead to the rest of the world. But Melville was like Narcissus, in being profoundly concerned with himself. He was irresistibly drawn to dive for ever deeper levels in his own soul. As Hawthorne testified in dismay on the basis of his personal contact with Melville, he was what we may call a metaphysical plunger.

Melville's early years of seafaring gave him ample chance to indulge the over-mastering propensity to brood. Through words he puts into the mouth of Ishmael, the narrator of *Moby Dick*, we get an idea of what no doubt had often transpired when he took his turn standing watch aloft at the masthead. Though his assigned task was to look outward for physical whales in the physical ocean, he appears to have used these occasions to look inward for imaginations swimming through the bottomless waters of thought. In this enchanted mood, Melville says, the conscious spirit "ebbs away to whence it came; becomes diffused through time and space; like Cranmer's sprinkled Pantheistic ashes, forming at last a part of every shore the round globe over..."

The capacity to dwell as Melville-Ishmael did in living thought is not skull-centered and brain-based, but world-centered and body-free. It is a self-sustaining spiritual activity. Emerson speaks of the need an abstract thinker has for "periods of isolation and rapt concentration": "almost a going out of the body in order to think." He says this experience is no more nor less than "the ravishment of the intellect by coming nearer to the fact"— any fact in God's world. This ravishment is the lifting of the soul out of its body-based egocentricity. The soul of man then follows its "centrifugal tendency," finds "passage out into free space," and is enabled to "escape the custody of that body in which he is pent up, and that jailyard of individual relations in which he is enclosed." Whitman, in *Leaves of Grass*, testifies to the same experience: "I loosen myself," he says, and "pass freely...I fly the flight of the fluid and swallowing soul..."

Melville continues his characterization of how the susceptible consciousness of the narrator of the story, young Ishmael as he stood another watch on high, was lifted out of itself by the unlimited ocean at his feet.

> *No resolution could withstand it; in that dreamy mood losing all consciousness, at last my soul went out of my body; though my body still continued to sway*



as a pendulum will, long after the power which first moved it is withdrawn.

But Ishmael had the security of his perch on the mast to hold him intact. He was aloft in the air, but still aboard ship; else his experience might have been the one Melville ascribed to poor, lost Pip, the castaway black cabin boy who during a chase jumped from his whale boat and was soon left a mile behind, completely alone on the sea. Pip was rescued, but his soul was swallowed up by the boundless waters. His self was sucked out of itself. Though his finite body survived, "the infinite of his soul" was drowned; that is, it could not recover itself from its overexpansion. Unable to regain a firm self-possession, a proper footing on earth, after having been transported into the cosmic world of living thought, the boy went mad.

Let us now turn our attention to Ahab— who said that Pip bore the same relationship to him "as the circumference to its center." Pip represents the extreme of the "centrifugal tendency" Melville felt in his soul. Ahab represents the extreme development of its opposite, the centripetal pull. Because both were extreme, both came to madness: "One daft with strength, the other daft with weakness," as the old Manxman said.

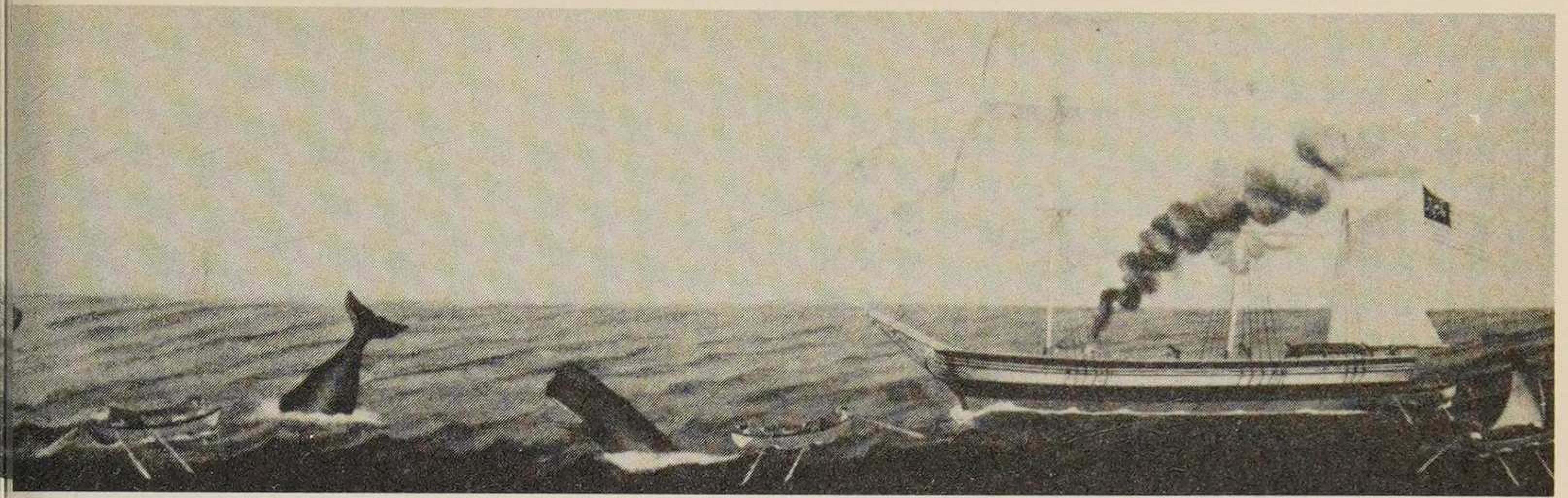
All of Melville's writing is based upon polarities of this kind. The legendary white whale is the projection of two opposite kinds of experience in the soul of Ahab. What precisely were those experiences? Can they be translated from the language of water to the language of land— that is, from images to concepts?

Narcissus looked into the pool, saw himself, and was fatally attracted. Ahab looked into his much larger pool, and was equally obsessed by what he saw. He saw the essential in himself as a great white whale; but since, as we shall try to make clear, the essential in him was *the conflict between two polarically opposite tendencies*, the whale that obsessed him also partook alternately of two natures. This unsuspected duality has introduced confusion into all simplistic attempts to interpret what was going on between Ahab and Moby Dick. We may begin to appreciate what is involved if we visualize a certain sequence of experiences known to many a young man of modern times. Let us observe an "Ishmael" before he turns into an "Ahab."

Our hypothetical young man starts life as an idealist. He is ardent, ambitious, proud. He feels in himself giant possibilities. If he has the stature of a Melville-Ishmael, the young man may, indeed, be quite filled and overwhelmed with dreams of beauty and grandeur. Yet this young romanticist is not at home either in himself or in the world, for he is given also to doubt and despair. We see him brooding morbidly, self-absorbed, ready to be hurt. Let us imagine the efforts of this highly endowed but somewhat morbid young man to make a place for himself in the conventional world. He may, of course, ignore the outside challenge and launch ever further into his private dreams of the ideal. On this tack, he will soar and expand until he becomes a Pip, too disoriented to judge and too weak to do anything about the mysteries— or are they illusions?— in which his spirit dwells.

If, however, the young man takes his way at least partly into the "real" world, he will be shocked by what he encounters there. He will feel opposed by both persons and circumstances. He will be profoundly repelled by the customs of society, the prevailing culture, the economic order. He cannot get on in such a world. If he is an Ishmael who has the makings of an Ahab in him, his early pride turns to resentment; his early ambition becomes the desire for revenge.

Have we not in the middle of the twentieth century seen countless smalltime Ishmaels on the way to becoming smalltime Ahabs? Of course, the manifestations are



milder, and made milder still by the drugs that are unmanning modern youth; but we need only look to the much celebrated split, the mutual contempt and even enmity between the recent hippie generation, the flower children, the dropouts, and their elders of the establishment. And, for that matter, this discrepancy between an older generation that has been stupefied and hardened by the world, and the incoming generation that at first bears higher impulses in itself, certainly did not begin in our century. A hundred years ago, Thoreau was a dropout, an Ishmael: "I have lived some thirty years on this planet," he said, "and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me anything to the purpose."

We can picture the young Ahab starting out with a purely spiritual idealism and ambition. He is, as it were, born of light and he aspires to the light; but the light darkens into fire. The original light and the eventual fire mingle confusingly: in the words of the mature Ahab: "Oh, thou clear spirit of clear fire," he exclaims, "of thy fire thou madest me, and like a true child of fire, I breathe it back to thee." He sees himself as Lucifer, the angel who started as the high bearer of light but who fell to become the spirit of fiery pride.

Corresponding to what we might call the younger Luciferic phase of Ahab's soul, we are shown the White Whale in his glorious aspect:

> *A gentle joyousness— a mighty mildness of repose in swiftness, invested the gliding whale. Not the white bull Jupiter swimming away with ravished Europa clinging to his graceful horns; his lovely leering eyes sideways intent upon the maid; with smooth bewitching fleetness, rippling straight for the nuptial bower in Crete; not Jove, not that great majesty Supreme! did surpass the glorified White Whale as he so divinely swam.*

Such a whale mirrors the part of Ahab's idealism that sought to approach the primordial powers of beauty and truth that made the world, yet that partook also of ambition and pride. But to the older, embittered Ahab, the whale swimming before him in the seas that mirrored the radically changed condition of his soul was a fundamentally different creature. He was, indeed, the very epitome of "intelligent malignity," whose reflection was to be seen in the "vast, involved wrinkles" of his forehead, the "terrors of his submerged trunk," and "the wrenched hideousness of his jaw."

This monster is the image of Ahab's own attitude; but this attitude is borrowed in turn from the accepted concepts of that adult world which shattered his youthful idealism, the concepts scientific materialists have put forward of the nature of the universe man lives in.

Ahab, in his original longings, his early spiritual ambition, his will to glory, is antique: a Prometheus, a Lucifer. But in his later, thwarted longing and wounded pride he accepts a modern inspiration. He enters upon the ruthless will to power, power as served by the cold-blooded intellect. He is assimilated by a principle that stands wholly opposite to Lucifer. As Lucifer is a spirit of warmth and light, though a false one, this other being is a spirit of cold and darkness. The scope of this article does not permit me to show, as I intend to do elsewhere, the strong evidence that the mysterious but compelling story of Moby Dick is rooted in the religious concepts and world-conception of ancient Persia; but in order to give a name to this cold and dark spirit, let us take that of the Zoroastrians and call him Ahriman.

Lucifer holds man aloof from the common humanity of earth existence: makes of him a starry-eyed, world-estranged, overheated spiritualist. Ahriman sucks man

too deeply into the earth experience: makes of him a shrewd, heartless and power-seeking materialist. What must be found is the golden mean, the way that lies between them. But to balance the forces of light and darkness, as Melville strove unsuccessfully to do, what is necessary is a triadic rather than a dualistic world view. The third reality, the harmonizing, reconciling, purely human factor, is to be looked for in, or through, the heart. That inspiration of the center which stands in freedom between the polar opposites that ever draw a man off-balance with himself, Melville thought to find, (as he acknowledged at the conclusion of his earlier book, *Mardi*,) in Christ as the true representative of man. In *Mardi*, Melville calls Christ "Alma," and the Mardian who in this book represented highest wisdom felt his search had led him aright when he found Alma. But Taji, the Ishmael of *Mardi*, remained unreconciled. Something in him demanded that the quest be continued and intensified. The result we have in *Moby Dick*.

It remains to ask why many commentators have felt that the parable of Ahab and the whale has also epic dimensions that go far beyond the moral development of a single individual; why, indeed, it should be studied for prophetic clues to the destiny of the West, particularly our own America. In order to test the hypothesis that *Moby Dick* is in a real sense the epic of America, let us begin by assuming it. The *Pequod* then becomes the American ship of state. Aboard is a polyglot mixture of nationalities, rising from a "mongrel" base of renegades and castaways, symbolized by the anonymous crew, through several grades of those who begin to carry responsibility, personified in the petty officers, Flask, Stubb and Starbuck; and commanded at last by one whose overweening, obsessive, ever-intensifying purpose

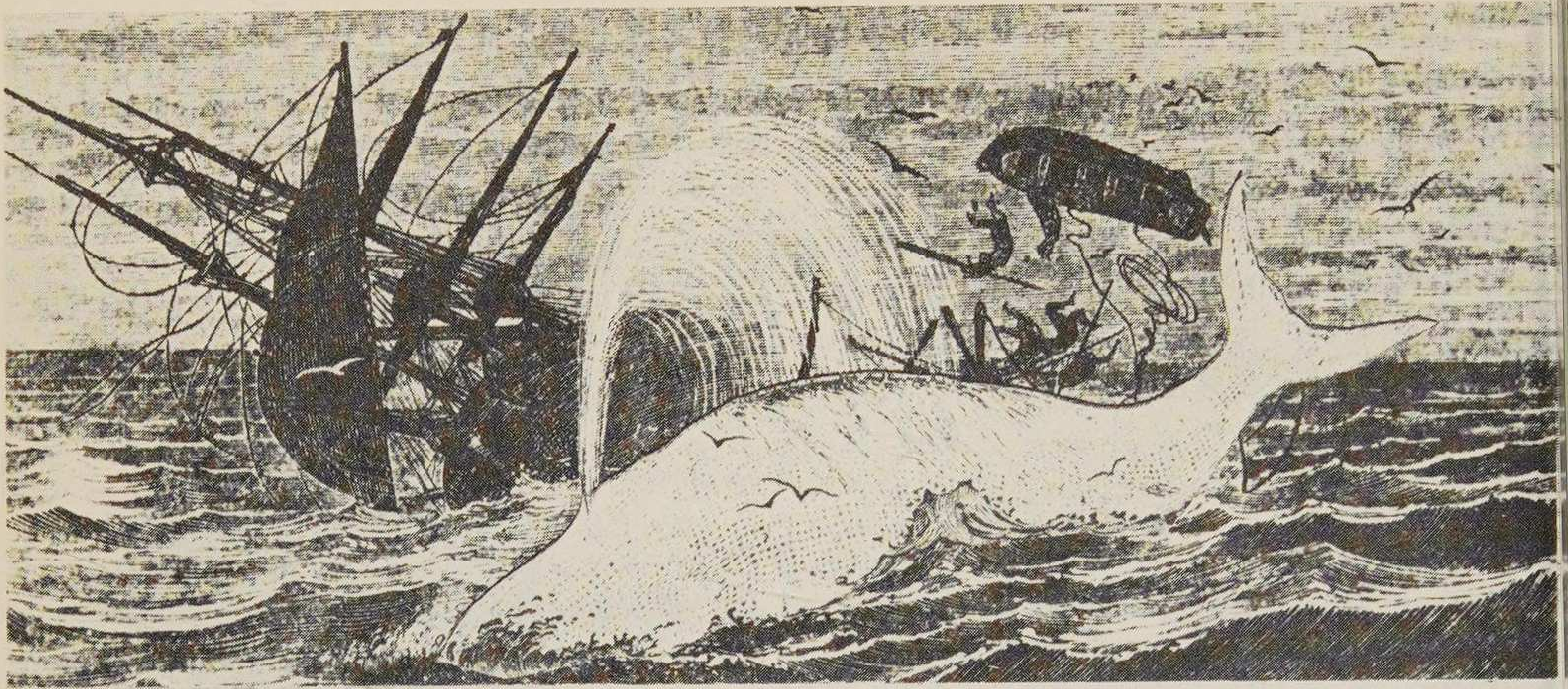
either enlists or sweeps aside all other wills. The good ship America carries a proletariat, a petit bourgeoisie, and an uppermiddle, cultured, ruling class. It includes so-called advanced peoples, who do not distinguish themselves (the mates), and peoples called primitive because they remain closer to the origins of life (the harpooneers), but who comport themselves with distinction.

Just below Captain Ahab is the first mate, Starbuck. Starbuck is the finest kind of American; shrewd and sound, industrious and skillful, practical and pious. He has the instinct of goodness, is moderately well educated, is courageous but not crazy. Why is Starbuck so helpless before Ahab? Why does Ahab's purpose so completely dominate both Starbuck, as the most advanced type of

responsible, idealistic, goodhearted American, and the primitive harpooneers (the red man, Tashtego; the black, Daggoo; the brown, Queequeg; even the "tawny," Fedallah)? The answer in the case of the harpooneers is simply that they do not participate in the structure of authority. In the case of Starbuck, the answer is that his "mere unaided virtue or right-mindedness"— a relic, residue or extract of Christian morality passed down through ever more secular generations and growing progressively more wooden and weak— is no match for the Luciferic-Ahrimanic drive of possessed Ahab.

Let us suppose the reason the whole ship's company could be swept along by Ahab, regarding his mad quest as their own, is that all are partly moved by the spirit that threatens to capture our own time; and that Ahab represents this same spirit. How shall we identify the quality of being and striving that dominates Western civilization, that carries all before it, regardless of the fears or preferences that may at times make some of the passengers want to jump ship? Is it not the pride of the predatory intellectual, which is bent upon harnessing and exploiting nature through the instrumentality of an ever more godless science and ever more rapacious technology? When science becomes all brain and will, leaving out the heart; when it no longer allows itself to be taught by art or religion; when the scientific training of intelligence asks for no corresponding progress in moral and human development; then an Ahab mentality rules. Then Ahriman, behind Ahab, is in charge.

"Pure intellect," said Emerson, "is the pure devil." There can be no question but that cold-blooded technical thinking— pure abstract brainwork— aspires to become captain of the modern ship of state, especially in the West. Quite generally, those who excel in this kind of thinking are accorded elite



status, both in and after their schooling. Though often they are not yet the leaders, quite as often the leaders must look to them for guidance. Their tendency is to ignore qualitative values, to be impatient of the rights of individuals, and to trample on the rights of nature.

In the image of Ahab, Melville shows us how "That certain sultanism of his brain... became incarnate in an irresistible dictatorship." It is not far-fetched to believe that the practical, prophetic instinct in Melville discerned over a hundred years ago how swiftly the modern world is moving toward dictatorship, an unprecedented dictatorship not only over the externalities of life but over the private mind and will as well. The artists, ministers, teachers, scientists, businessmen, statesmen of the last century have proven quite unable to halt this fatal trend. At their best, they are Starbucks: "morally enfeebled" in their "mere unaided virtue and right-mindedness."

The key words here, of course, are "mere unaided." In our time, what is unaided becomes mere. Ahab is filled alternately with the inhuman, anti-human impulses of Lucifer and Ahriman. He is thereby robbed of his free identity, and of all hope for human love or happiness; but his power is not mere. It is aided— in the sense that superhuman agents work through him. *Moby Dick* was prophetic in showing that times were coming when men must once again reckon with the supernatural. The battle of good against evil is becoming ever more explicit; and those who wish to fight on the side of the good must want, and seek, and learn to receive help, in a modern way, from the living spirit of goodness. To use the appropriate mythic analogy, those who would fight Leviathan, the dragon power, should pray for inspiration and courage from Marduk-Michael, wielder of the sacred sword and spear.

Melville has told us that he dreaded lest his story be taken for "a monstrous fable, or still worse and more detestable, a hideous and intolerable allegory." He knew it was not a fancied fable but a true myth that was working itself out in his imagination, and that it unfolded according to a necessity rooted in the very nature of things. He embellished it from time to time, from this aspect and that, with such comments as might serve to hint its depths; but he did not presume to give it any final interpretation, for he sensed that the meaning of the whale went beyond Ahab's personal destiny. Its overtones and undertones sounded, like those of every true symbol, on many levels, cosmic as well as human. The riddle of mankind's relationship to the cosmic whale, after all, is at least as old and as enigmatic as the story of Jonah, which Melville made the prelude to his own rendering.

Perhaps it is not far-fetched to think of the whale as the earth itself. The earth swims and browses through the cosmic ether-ocean, yet it is the dwelling place of man. We men, whose origin is on high, find ourselves consigned to it for a term, for its sake and our own. To be swallowed up, as it were, into this whale's belly provokes us mightily to self-knowledge and self-conquest. We are either so bewildered, frightened, or misled as to forget our origin; or we strive our utmost to remember and realize it. Out of the fish's belly, we pray with Jonah:

> *Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O lord my God.*

The whale can carry us down and down, or it can rise with us and deliver us safely.

Through the voyage of the *Pequod* Melville shows what happens when mankind as a whole sets out under the command of a ruthless intelligence, an arrogant will, to dominate and exploit the earth that was given to it for quite another purpose. The *Pequod's* task was to hunt down the creature who of all beings on earth best symbolizes the innocence and abundance of nature's primordial energy. The hunting, killing, stripping, and boiling down with its own fire of the ever-diminishing whale population is as exact a picture as one could find for the main task that so-called productive— actually consuming— modern civilizations have set before themselves. Once upon a time there were many whales and few whalers, even as in the Arctic there have always been many caribou and some wolves. A symbiotic relationship favorable to both sides could possibly be maintained. But as men grow smart, bold, greedy and uncaring, they invent technical improvements to kill whales faster, with less effort. The whales grow scarcer; the hunt intensifies. Technology now dominates the operation of whaling.

Returning once more to the mirror that life itself holds up to man, we see technological civilization— which is to say, many aspects of modern America as exemplified in the ship *Pequod* under Captain Ahab— approaching the mirror of fate in a predatory, merciless, coldly cruel manner. The image that advances therefore from within the mirror, the incalculably vicious whale, symbolizes the changed aspect of nature as henceforth she may be expected to present herself, with increasing intensity, to her attackers. As attackers, we are met by the picture of nature malignant, nature gone berserk. If one wonders how such a phenomenon could happen, he should ask those who study weather, nutrition, public health, and ecology. He should follow the sequence that permits, or requires, that loss of fertility must follow the overuse of chemical fertilizers; that as fruits and vegetables are brought to greater external perfection, they must lose in taste, keeping-qualities and nutritive value; that intensive use of pesticides and antibiotics must result in more virulent pests and disease organisms; that the triumphs of irrigation must result in salinization of the earth and lowered water tables. He should wonder why the victories over infectious disease, of which we are so proud, are accompanied by the increase of all types of degenerative disease: cardiac, muscular, skeletal, glandular, nervous. He should consider, in general, what may be called the paradoxes of technical progress.

A civilization that prefers quantity to quality, substance to form, may expect to meet its nemesis in cancerous overgrowths of all kinds: whether of bodily tissues, of population, of government, of cities, of corporations, of automobiles, or of money. Honoring only matter, it will be overwhelmed by its own refuse and pollution. Believing only in the physical senses, it will be overtaken by sensualism. A civilization built upon a scientific method and technical attitude that seek many kinds of testimony, but never that of the heart, will meet its nemesis typically in heart failure. America suffers acutely from all of these paradoxes, and we know that in particular it is one of the most unhealthful nations in the world precisely for the human heart. Taking *heart* in its highest symbolic meaning as well as physically, questions of heart are the issue for America.

It is well known that in the end Ahab loses his life to the whale, who also rams and sinks the *Pequod.* We are led to see that if it comes to a showdown, cosmic nature will surely humble man's willfulness. Nature will rebel; man's predatory arrogance will find itself crushed by a greater power that man himself makes relentless. But the precise picture that Melville gives us of this last event is worth remembering. As the stove ship subsides into the remorseless sea, her three masts are still for a moment visible, topped by the three pagan harpooneers. As we watch the American Indian, Tashtego, strike a last blow to nail Ahab's torn flag back to the top of the mainmast, we see a swooping, intercepting sky hawk— the "bird of heaven" who may be the Pacific Ocean's nearest representative of the American eagle— caught beneath the hammer and carried down with the ship. The prophecy is fatal, but only for an America that would allow itself to be commandeered all the way into the future by a mentality that values power above love.

EPICYCLES

Myths, Stories, Parables

In the Very Beginning *is a retelling of those portions of the* Popol Vuh, *the sacred book of the Quiché Maya, which tell of the creation of man.*

In the Very Beginning

In the very beginning, there was only the still sky and the still sea. Nothing moved, and there was no sound because there were no living creatures. There was no earth and no sun or moon to give light. Only God was surrounded with His own light, and He was in the heart of the still, dark sky and in the heart of the still, dark sea. In the sky He was called Hurricane, the Heart of Heaven; and in the depths of the water, where He seemed to shimmer as if covered by green and blue feathers, He was called The Feathered Serpent.

And God planned about making life and light. He knew that man and the dawn must appear together. He planned to make man so that the light could dawn.

First He said: "Let the emptiness be filled! Let the earth appear!"

And the earth appeared, with mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, grass and trees and vines. But there was still no sound in the darkness.

Then God said: "Shall there be only silence under the trees?"

Then the animals appeared, the deer and the birds and the snakes and the jaguars and all the others, and God gave them all their places to live and told them to speak each in his own way. So they began to call and sing and hiss and snarl and scream, each in his own way; but they couldn't speak to each other, or understand each other. God saw that they couldn't talk together and they couldn't say any of His names, and He saw that that wasn't enough.

So God said: "I will try again. You animals are not able to speak to each other nor to Me; so it will be that you will kill each other. But I need a creature who can speak to Me, who can know me and obey Me and love Me. It is nearly time for the dawn to come. I will make man out of mud."

He made some men out of mud. But they were very soft and limp and couldn't see. They could speak, but what they said didn't make sense. When they got wet they couldn't even stand up. God saw that they were no use, so He broke them up and said: "I will try again."

Then He made men out of wood. The wooden men were better; they could walk and talk. They built houses and had children, and there were very many of them. But they were dry and yellow, and their faces had no expression, because they had no minds nor souls nor hearts. They beat their dogs and they burned the bottoms of their cooking pots. They had forgotten how they were made, and could not remember any of the names of God. So He said: "These men will not do either. I must destroy them also."

And He sent a great flood, and the houses of the wooden men fell down. The wooden men wanted to escape, but the animals they had starved and beaten, and cooking pots they had burned, and the trees whose branches they had chopped off, all turned against them and wouldn't help them. Only a few of them escaped from the flood, and it is said that their descendants are the monkeys.

And still it hadn't dawned; and God wanted to make real men when the dawn came and the sun rose.

He thought about it, and He saw that the earth and the sky were not yet ready and that there were things that had to be done before the sun could move and make light and man could be made. He saw that He had to send two parts of Himself to put things in order. These two needed two sons of their own to help them, but at last all was ready, and the two sons entered the sun and moon to make them move.

Then God said: "It is time. I need men on the earth who will know My names, who will obey Me and love Me; and that will nourish and sustain Me."

He pondered deeply and discovered the way to make man.

He found a beautiful valley full of many plants and fruits, and He took ears of yellow corn and of white corn and ground them into meal. With the corn meal He made nine kinds of liquor, and these became man's strength and energies. With the dough of the meal He shaped the body. And He made four men, very strong and handsome.

While the men slept, he made four women very carefully, and when the men woke, each found at his side a beautiful wife. And they were very happy when they saw their wives.

The Creator said to the four men:

"You are alive. What do you think about it? You can see, and hear, and move, and speak. Do you like it? Look at the world! Try to see!"

The men looked and they were able to see the whole world and everything that was in it. They could see the whole sky. They could see everything. They began to give thanks to the Creator.

"Thank you for our life!" they said. "We can see, we can hear, we can move and think and speak, we feel and know everything, we can see everything in the earth and in the sky. Thank you for having made us, O our Father!"

Then the Creator was troubled, for He realized that these men could see too much and too far, so that they would not really be men,

but gods. He saw that He had to change them so that they could be what He needed. So He leaned down and blew mist in their eyes and clouded their vision, like breathing on a mirror, and from then on nothing was clear to their sight except what was close to them.

The four men and their wives went up on a mountain and waited for the dawn. First they saw the shining face of the great star, the Morning Star which comes ahead of the sun, and they burned incense and unwrapped three gifts to offer to the sun.

And then the sun came up.

Then the puma and the jaguar roared, and all the birds stretched their wings and sang, and the men and their wives danced with joy because the sun had risen.

Tales of a Demon is adapted from the *Vetala-panchavimshati*, or *Twenty-five Tales of a Vetala*, a cycle of stories embedded in the eleventh-century Indian epic known as *The Ocean of Stories*, by Somadeva. The "Tales of a Demon," twenty-four in number, are all riddle stories which were used for religious instruction by the Buddhists and others; their antiquity antedates the *Ocean of Stories* by several centuries. Subsequent issues of *Parabola* will each carry a Tale together with King Trivikrama-sena's answer to the previous riddle. Readers are invited to try their wits at an answer and to send in proposed solutions.

Tales of a Demon

In his previous tale, the Vetala perched on the back of King Triple-Victory told of the adventures of King Chandravaloka, who encountered a vengeful and bloodthirsty demon while traveling through a forest. The demon spared the King's life only on the condition that he bring to the demon a Brahman boy of seven to take his place. The boy must come willingly, and be held firmly by hand and foot by his parents. The King undertook to supply the victim, and managed to find just such a boy through the offer of a substantial reward to the parents. The boy was brought before the demon, and held firmly to the ground by his parents, while the King himself prepared to slay him for the demon. Suddenly the boy laughed in the faces of all present, and in their astonishment, they abandoned the sacrifice and each participant went his own way. The question put King Triple-Victory by the demon in the corpse is: why did the boy laugh?

"Is there no end to your senseless chatter, pestiferous one?" replied King Triple-Victory when the Vetala had posed his question. "How can there be the slightest mystery to this tale? It is hardly worth answering, and yet, as my task must be finished (since I am bound by oath to it), I will answer. The boy laughed, of course, because he saw the absurdity of his situation: all present—the demon, the King, the boy's parents— were so deluded by their love of the body that each behaved in a manner precisely opposite to that which their station in this world demands of them: The Brahman demon, who should have been the boy's protecting deity, was ready to devour him; the King, who should have been first to surrender his life for the protection of his subjects, sought only to save his own skin; and the boy's parents were themselves devoured by greed. In the face of all this, the Brahman boy said to himself, "To think that everyone should be so deluded, led so much astray for the sake of the body, which is perishable and transitory! Why should they have such a strange longing for continuance of the body, in a world in which Brahma, Indra, Vishnu, Siva and all the other gods must themselves one day perish?" Out of his joy and wonderment, which sprang from his own

enlightenment, he laughed: out of his joy at feeling that he had accomplished his aim, out of his wonder at beholding the marvelous strangeness of their delusion."

At once, and with only the faintest inward sigh of weariness, King Triple-Victory turned his steps back towards the Simsapa tree, into the branches of which the Vetala had once again transported the corpse. With the resolution that is the mark of the truly righteous man, that most noble King again climbed into the branches of the tree and cut down the corpse. Again he hefted the corpse onto his shoulders, and again he set his feet on the path back to the Mendicant Kshantisila. He had not gone more than a few steps, however, when the Vetala spoke once more through the lips of the corpse:

"Ah, most resolute of aspirants of heaven! Truly your fortitude and determination are lessons to us all! How wearisome must be this grim task, and yet how calmly, and with what forbearance you carry it out! And yet even the most determined and single-minded of creatures are in need of refreshment on the way! Allow me then to cool your brow with this short but incomparable tale:"

THE LION

There lived once in the town of Pataliputra a most noble man, Servant-of-Vishnu, truly a Brahman among Brahmans, who was married to a woman as well suited to him as the oblation is to the fire. In time, this worthy pair were parents to four sons, all of whom became in time ardent students of the Vedas, passing their childhood thus cradled in the arms of wisdom.

Alas, the gods choose among those of the earth those whom they wish for companions, without regard for the needs of those who are left behind: and thus it was that Servant-of-Vishnu and his wife were taken up into heaven, leaving their four sons in a most miserable state of poverty. Unable to make a living (for they had not learned how to make the food of the Vedas into sustenance for the body), the four decided to throw themselves upon the mercy of their relations, and in due course they came to the city of Yajnasthala, where their maternal grandfather lived.

When they arrived, they learned that their grandfather had died some time since, but they were taken into the care of their uncles, who gave them shelter and food and thus afforded them the means to continue their Vedic studies. Matters continued in this wise for a time, but the pauperhood of the four brothers finally became an irritation to their uncles, who grew to despise them and neglected to provide them with the necessities of life.

Thus it was that one day the eldest brother joined the other three and, in tones of profoundest despair, told them of his day's adventure:

"Well, my brothers! We are in a fine state of affairs, are we not? Yet not we, but Destiny alone is the shaper of our fates: not even our uncles can be blamed, for they themselves act only in the manner decreed for them: how can they do otherwise? Today, as I was wandering about in a state of great agitation and distraction, I chanced to pass by a cemetery. Within the walls, lying on the ground, was a corpse, its limbs so relaxed in death that it was with

envy that I exclaimed, 'Behold the bounty of Death! For here is one whom Death has freed from hunger, want and deprivation. Here is a man who starves no more, thirsts no more, suffers no more from the blows and calumnies of his neighbors and relations! O fortunate and blessed creature, permit me to share your bliss!' So saying, I seized a rope that lay nearby and, tying it to the branches of a tree, with the other end fastened securely about my neck, I attempted there and then to cast in my lot with the happy dead. I lost consciousness when I came to the end of that rope, but in that state, unbeknownst to me, the rope broke and my wretched life was returned to me. I came to my senses lying beneath the tree, and beside me knelt some compassionate traveler who fanned me with the hem of his robe. He said to me: 'Friend, why do you permit yourself to be so plunged in despair? Truly it is said that joy springs from good deeds, and pain from evil deeds. Therefore, if you are in pain, strive to perform good deeds: do not seek the pains of hell by suicide.' So I abandoned my design and came away here. Now I am resolved to trouble my uncles no further, but instead to take up hermitage beside some sacred river, and perform such austerities that mere poverty will seem to be a blessing beside them. For you can see by my tale that Destiny will not permit a man even to die, if it is not in her design."

When the eldest brother had finished speaking, his younger brothers said, "Dear Brother, you are, it would seem, wisest of all of us. Why do you trouble yourself so much merely because you are poor? Do you not know that riches are fleeting and transitory, that they pass away like an autumn cloud? Fortune, like a fickle woman, may be carried off but never guarded: better it is to secure for oneself some accomplishment or other by means of which riches repeatedly may be bound and led home by force."

Then the eldest brother replied, and said, "My Brothers, your words are some comfort to me. But what accomplishment should we acquire?" Then they all thought together and finally agreed that each should seek some magical power or other, and, after deciding upon a meeting-place one year hence, they separated, going east, west, north and south.

At the end of a year, they met again at the appointed place, and asked one another what science of magic each had acquired in the past year.

"I have learned this marvel," said the first of them, "that, given but a single bone of any animal, I can immediately produce the rest of the bones and cover them with flesh." Said the second, "And I have learned how to cover the flesh of any animal with the appropriate skin and hair." The third said, "When the bones, flesh, skin and hair of any animal have been produced, I am able at once to assemble the limbs in the appropriate places, and to provide the animal with organs of sense." And the fourth brother said, "Given any animal, with bones and flesh, skin and hair, with organs of sense and with its limbs properly developed and disposed, I am able to endow it with life."

When they had thus exchanged with one another their achievements, the four brothers became so excited that they immediately rushed off to a nearby forest to try their skill. There they found a bone, with which the first proposed to display his skill, without knowing to what animal the bone belonged. Now the first brother was able, with this single bone to reproduce all the other bones, and to cover them with flesh. The second brother then stepped forward and, after uttering the appropriate incantations and performing the right ceremonies, covered the flesh with skin and hair. The third brother then performed his office by bringing all the limbs together and endowing the animal with the organs of sense. The fourth brother then stepped forward and, using his magical powers, endowed the creature with life. Then it was that the animal rose before them: an enormous lion, with dense and shaggy mane, a mouth of formidable teeth, and with great hooked claws. No sooner had it risen than it charged the four brothers and slew them on the spot, then afterwards retired, glutted, to the forest.

Thus we see that Destiny, if it be not propitious, cannot be overcome by an accomplishment, however painfully acquired. Indeed, such achievements may actually bring destruction. For the tree of valor bears fruit only when it is watered by wisdom and protected by common sense.

"Tell me now, most worthy King," said the Vetala when he had finished his tale, "which of these four was most guilty in respect of the production of the lion which slew them all? Tell me quickly, and do not fail to answer lest your head burst into a thousand pieces."

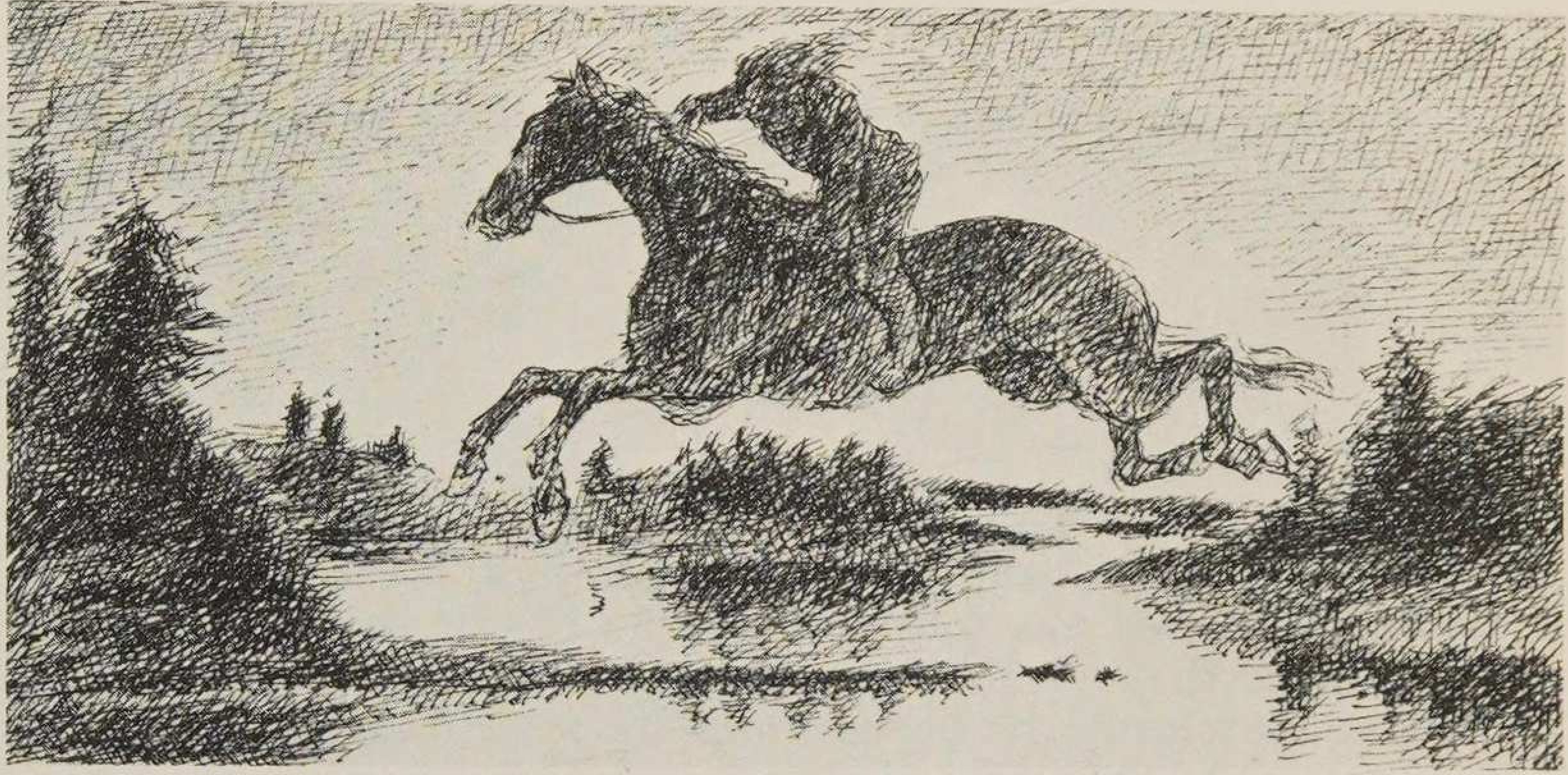
This tale of the creation is adapted from Elias Lonnrot's Kalevala— *three distinct versions of the Finnish epic known as the* Proto-Kalevala, Old Kalevala *and the* New Kalevala.

The Creation of the World: From the Kalevala

This is a tale of the beginning of things.

For thirty summers, for thirty winters, lay steadfast old Vainamoinen in his mother's womb, until he got bored. Never in those thirty years had he seen the moon, never the sun, never the Great Bear rising above the heaths of Kaleva. He prayed: "Moon, free me; Sun, deliver me; Great Bear, guide my steps out-of-doors so that I may look upon you." But, since they did not yet exist, he got no answer, the man of Slack Water Farm. Since he had no answer from them, he decided to free himself, crawling on hands and knees, clawing his way out over the threshold and into the courtyard.

When he was born, that splendid old man, it was night: dark as the North in winter it was when he stepped over the courtyard to the smithy and took up his hammer. With a handful of straw he fashioned a horse, a peastalk stallion to ride over the heath. Gently he stroked it, patting the hide, admiring the broad flanks. Then, up he gets onto its back, settling his thighs astride, riding along easily. Over the farms of Kaleva he rides, over the cold heaths in the night on his peastalk stallion. Now over the sea steps the horse, running lightly and swiftly: not a drop touches the horse's hocks, even the hooves do not get wet.



By the shore of the sea sits a squint-eyed old Lapp, come down from the North, nursing whatever grudges he has from old, bearing ill will against steadfast old Vainamoinen. By his side he carries a fine crossbow, a bow made of iron, with a back made of copper. He has adorned it with gold, chased it with silver. His three-feathered arrows he has whittled and hardened, annealed them with a serpent's black venom. The feathery cord of the bow comes from the hairs of the Devil's own gelding. By the shore of the sea, with his quiver of arrows, with his stout and beautiful crossbow he sits.

And now he looks up, sees the man of Slack Water Farm riding the waves on his peastalk stallion. He grasps his crossbow in grim joy, lays his hands on his quiver of arrows and mounts a bolt, the best of his arrows, against the cord. He sets the stock against his right cheek, against his ear he can feel the iron, the three-feathered shaft is against his cheekbone. "Stay!" cry the women, his wife and his mother beside him. "Do not shoot Vainamoinen, conquer your wrath. He is related, the son of your aunt." Even the spirits, the three spirits of Nature, forbid the slaying, but the grim-faced old Lapp does not obey. He says, "If the hand goes up, let the arrow go down; if the hand goes down, let the arrow go up."

So the first arrow was shot as his hand went down. Up went the arrow, as he had said: it went into the sky, it seemed even to split the rainbow. The second shot went down as his hand went up: deep into the Earth it went, nearly killing the Earth, breaking the ground, splitting the sandy ridge by the shore of the sea. But the third arrow went true, it found its mark in the shoulder of the peastalk stallion, in the withers, behind the left foreleg. Into the sea it plunged, and the man of Slack Water Farm with it. "Let that be your death," said the man from the North, the squint-eyed old Lapp.

In the dark sea, in the Northern Ocean, steadfast old Vainamoinen drifted. For seven summers, for seven winters he drifted, splashed along for eight years on the surface, on the open expanse of the sea. Above him was the dark sky, below him the flowing waters. As he floats along, as he drifts here and there, the man now and then lifts his head, to see where he is, and where he lifts his head islands magically come into being. Where he swings his hand, he arranges a headland, and his feet make deep the places for fish.

Out of the Finnmark high above Earth, there came flying an eagle. Out of the North, down from Lapland it came, looking, searching, trying to find a place to nest. To the east, to the west it flew, appraising the land for a suitable place. From high above it looked down, saw old Vainamoinen's knee, like a grassy hummock, rising out of the sea. The hair was thick on his knee like last year's turf, a good place to land, a suitable place to nest for the eagle of Finnmark. Circling, circling, downward it came, down to the hummock, to the knee of the man from Slack Water Farm. It rustled about in the weeds, scratched out a nesting place in the withered grass, settled down and made a nest, there on his knee. Six eggs it laid, and a seventh of iron, then it sat and brooded, warming the top of the knee. Old Vainamoinen felt his knee burning, his leg heating up. He twitched his knee, made his limbs tremble, and into the water the eggs rolled from the nest, cracking to pieces on the reefs of the sea.

Then old Vainamoinen rose up on his elbows, saw the eggs in their ruin, and said: "Let the lower half of the egg be Mother Earth! Let the top half be the heavens above! Let whatever is white in the egg gleam palely as the moon! Whatever is yellow, let that shine as the sun! And whatever is left, the fragments of shell, let them be stars in the sky, the Great Bear and the others to guide the night travelers!" So said the great singer, the old man of Slack Water Farm and heaths of Kaleva!

As Retold by Paul Jordan-Smith

The Game of Asha *is adapted from several tales from the Pahlavian* Khwatai-Namak *as related by the tenth-century Persian poet Firdausi.*

The Game of Asha

It is told in the old legends how, one day, when King Vishtaspa was returning from a victorious campaign, he came upon a circle of men sitting beneath a tree and listening with rapt attention to a venerable old man who sat in their midst. The king, who was then a young man, was curious to know who the old man was, and so dispatched a servant to find out. Upon his approach the circle of men gave way to the servant, who discovered that the old man was the great teacher Zarathustra, and that the circle of men who listened to him were his disciples. All this was duly reported to King Vishtaspa, who, it is said, demanded that the sage be brought before him.

"I am told that your name is Zarathustra," said the king when the Teacher was before him, "and I am also told that you are the wisest man in the world. If that is so, I demand as your king that you immediately instruct me and explain to me the laws of nature and the universe. But please do not be long-winded, for I am in a hurry to return to my palace, where there are many important matters of state awaiting me."

Zarathustra looked thoughtfully at the king for a moment and then, bending down, he picked up from the ground a grain of wheat. Holding it respectfully between thumb and forefinger, he bowed low before King Vishtaspa and offered him the grain. The king took it in his hand and the Great Sage explained: "Your Majesty, all the laws that govern heaven and earth may be read in that which you now hold in your hand. The forces of good and of evil are there, and all that you have asked may be answered by conferring with this grain of wheat. I offer you this book, which you may take with you and read at your leisure."

But King Vishtaspa, seeing the smiles on the faces of the sage's disciples, decided that Zarathustra was mocking him. He threw the grain of wheat to the ground and rose up proudly in his saddle.

"I came respectfully and I asked for your guidance because I was told that you were the wisest man in the world. I can see now that you are nothing more than a country bumpkin who has not learned good manners. You cloak your ignorance behind exaggerated ways; I was foolish to have wasted my time here." So said the king. Then, wheeling around on his stallion he rode away.

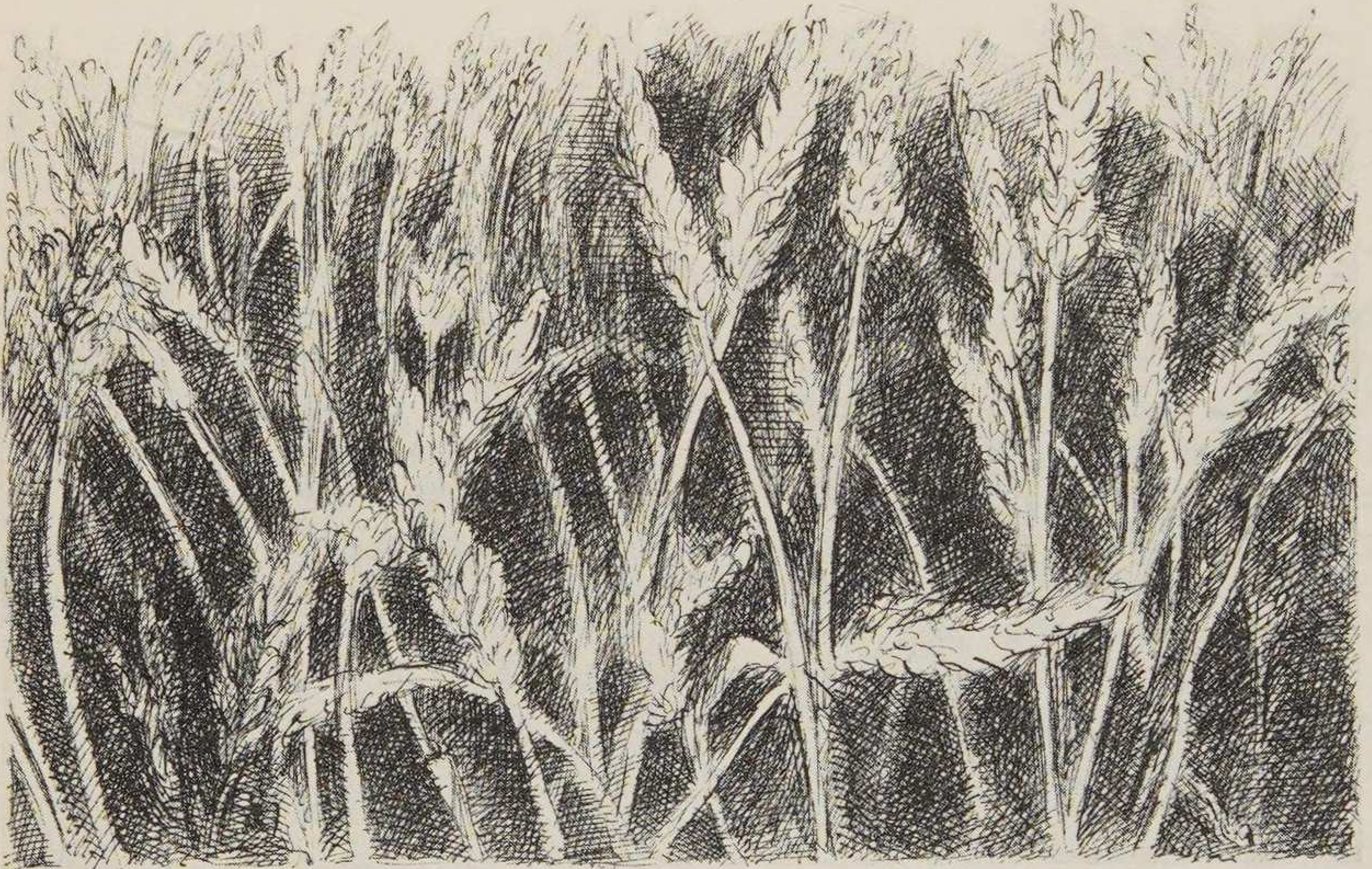
As the king and his retinue departed, Zarathustra knelt and retrieved the grain of wheat. "I shall keep this grain," he said to himself, "for one day the king will need it, and it will be his teacher."

Many years passed, and the fame of Zarathustra grew with every year. Nor did the fame of King Vishtaspa lessen: always victorious in battle, becoming ever richer with every new alliance, he spent his days in luxury and abundance. But his nights became ever more sleepless with every increase of his fame and wealth. "I live in luxury." he thought to himself, "yet who has decreed that it shall be always so? One year the farmer's harvest is rich, and the next year hailstorms are his ruin. Shall I be always so blest with victory? Will my downfall be the greater as my fame and fortune increase? Surely the laws which govern the poor govern also the rich— and who is He who made these laws? How shall I learn the will of God, so that I may measure my fame proportionately, and know the number of my days?"

Night after night these and other questions perplexed the brain of King Vishtaspa and troubled his sleep. At last, pondering his encounter with the Great Sage years earlier, he decided once more to beg instruction, this time in terms quite unlike those he had set as a young man on horseback.

"Great Teacher, I humble myself before you," he wrote to Zarathustra. "I regret thoroughly the pride and thoughtlessness of my youth, and see now how foolish it was to have asked for answers to imponderable questions in so short a space of time. Please accept my regrets and humble me with a visit, that I may learn from you, or at least send a disciple to teach me." Then he wrapped the letter, together with a gem of great value, in a fine linen cloth and dispatched it to the Teacher.

In a few days, the messenger returned from Zarathustra, bringing his



answer to the king: "Your Majesty is very kind, but a gardener has no use for jewels, and so I am returning it. The cloth I shall keep, for it will be useful in protecting certain of my plants against the cold of winter." Together with this letter, wrapped in a leaf, was the grain of wheat. "I am too old to journey far from my garden," the sage continued in his letter, "but the king is too noble to receive one of my disciples in my place. Therefore, I am sending, not a disciple but my own teacher, one who has taught me all that I know about the universe."

It was not long afterward that among those sitting in a circle in the garden of Zarathustra was one who had lately been accustomed to what many men regard as more royal circumstances: but he was content now to watch an old man draw figures in the sand, and to move about on these figures various common pebbles, such as those with which children through the ages have played.

On one such figure was depicted the Unity of All: the seasons and the energies of the stars, the sun, the earth and man, the points of the compass and the elements. In all, eight vertical lines were drawn, intersected by another eight at right angles to the first. Around the whole was drawn that most stable of figures, the square, so that the figure was composed of a square containing sixty-four smaller squares, eight to a side. Now the Great Sage demonstrated how the universe is permeated by the forces of good and evil, just as time may be divided into night and day. So every other square was as dark as night, and the dark and light squares alternated over the whole figure.

And now the Great Sage chose with care various pebbles of strange shape, some of them dark, others light. In all, thirty-two pebbles were chosen, some tall and others small, as if representing greater and lesser powers in the universe. Sixteen of the pebbles were dark, sixteen were light in color. Eight of each group of sixteen were almost identical in size and shape, and the other eight seemed almost to form four pairs of identical figures; and yet in truth, each of the sixteen pebbles was unique. Now, he began to give them names,

and with each name he showed how each represented a force or an agent in the universe, each force or agent of light balanced by one of darkness. The forces and agents of light he called Ahuras and Fravashis, the latter being represented by the eight smaller, almost identical pebbles. Counterbalancing these, among the forces of darkness, were the Devas and Khrafstras. Of each group of sixteen, one Ahura and one Deva was lord of the other fifteen. Among the lighter forces, this was Ahura Mazda and among the darker, Ahriman.

Each of the figures moved in the universe in its own peculiar and unique fashion. The Fravashis and the Khrafstras, for example, always moved forward, one square at a time, except for their initial movement, when they were allowed to move two squares forward, or when, upon encountering an alien force diagonally ahead of them, they were allowed to capture that force by displacing themselves one square forward and one square to the side. Although these eight agents looked alike, each had its own name. Among the Fravashis were, for instance, the Sun, Water, Air, Food, Man, Earth, Health, and Joy. Counterbalancing these among the Khrafstras were Darkness, Impure Water, Impure Air, Impure Food, Inferior Man, Barrenness, Disease, and Sadness.

Of the Ahuras and Devas, Power and Peace, and their dark opponents, Weakness and Violence, moved only in straight lines vertically or horizontally. Love and Work, and also Hatred and Idleness, moved in a manner quite distinct from all the others, namely one square in any direction and one square obliquely. Wisdom and Eternal Life, Ignorance and Death moved only in straight lines, but always obliquely, one of each pair always only on dark squares, one always on the light. Among the Ahuras, the Preserver, and among the Devas, the Spoiler, moved with great power and flexibility— in straight lines always, but in any direction, to the eight points of the compass. Of Ahura Mazda, the Creator, and of Ahriman, the Destroyer, we have spoken, except to note that each could move in any direction, but always one square at a time, in accordance with the will of that power himself. For the wise king will always send to battle his agents, so that he may better plan his defenses and attacks.

Day after day, in that garden, the Great Sage demonstrated with his pebbles the laws of the universe and the great struggle between the forces of light and darkness. And King Vishtaspa was delighted to learn a method wherein he might discern not only the forces which govern the universe, but perhaps, one day, even the will of God.

It is said that, to reward Zarathustra for teaching him the Game of Kings, the Game of Asha, King Vishtaspa promised Zarathustra anything he desired. Zarathustra replied that he wished only to be paid in kind: let a single grain of wheat be placed on the first square of the board of sixty-four squares and two on the second. On the third let there be placed four, and on the fourth, eight, and so on simply doubling on each square the number of grains on the preceding square. Charmed by this modest request, King Vishtaspa ordered his servants to fulfill the promise... We invite our readers to tell us why it was never fulfilled.

As Retold by Paul Jordan-Smith

Watunna *is the sacred tale of the Ye'kuana Indians of Venezuela, which tells of the perilous and arduous process of creation and the perpetual struggle with the forces of destruction. There are actually four cycles in the whole process, each guided and shaped by its own tutelary spirit, the* damodede, *spirit messenger of the ineffable Creator, Wanadi. We live in the third cycle; the fourth is yet to come, which, since it is not yet, may not be told. The following is a translation by David Guss from* Watunna: Mitologia Makiritare *by Marc de Civrieux, Monte Avila Editores, C.A., Caracas, 1970.*

Watunna

SERUHE IANADI
The First Messenger

There was *Kahuña*, Heaven. The Kahuhana lived there, just like now. They are good and wise people. And they were in the beginning too. They never died; there was no sickness, no evil, no war. The whole world was Heaven. No one worked and no one looked for food; food was always there, ready.

There were no animals, no demons, no clouds and no winds. There was light. In the highest Heaven was Wanadi, just like now. He gave his light to the people, to the Kahuhana. He lit everything, down to the lowest place, down to the Earth. Because of that light the people were always happy. They had life, they couldn't die. There was no separation between Heaven and Earth. Heaven had no door like it does now. There was no night, like now. Wanadi is like a sun that never sets. It was always day; the Earth was like a part of Heaven.

The Kahuhana had many houses and villages in *Kahuña* and they were all filled with light. No one lived on the Earth. There was no one there; nothing, just the Earth and nothing else.

Wanadi said: "I want to make people down there." He sent his messenger, a *damodede*. He was born here to make houses and good people, like in Heaven. The *damodede* was the spirit of Wanadi. He was the first Wanadi of the Earth, made by the other Wanadi who lives in *Kahuña*. That other Wanadi never came down to Earth; the one that came was the spirit of the other.

Later on, two more *damodede* came here. They were other forms of Wanadi's spirit.

The first Wanadi to come was called Seruhe Ianadi, the Wise. When he came, he brought knowledge, tobacco, the maraca and the *wiriki*.* He smoked and he sang and he made the old people. That was a long time before us, the people of today.

When that spirit was born, he cut his navel-cord and buried the placenta. He didn't know. Now, the worms got into the placenta and they started to eat it. The placenta rotted. As it rotted, it gave birth to man, a human creature, ugly and evil and covered with hair like an animal. It was Kahu. He has several names; he is called Kahushawa and Odo'sha. This man was very evil. He was jealous of Wanadi; he wanted to be master of the Earth; because of him, we suffer now, we are hungry, there is sickness and war. He is the father of all the Odoshankomo. Now, because of him, we die.

When the ancient Wanadi's placenta rotted, Odo'sha sprang out of the Earth like a spear. He said: "This Earth is mine. Now there'll be war. I'll chase Wanadi out of here."

He misled the people who had just been born; he taught them to kill. There was a man fishing. He had many fish. Odo'sha told the others: "If you kill him, you will have many fish."

They killed him. Odo'sha was happy. Then the people were changed into animals as punishment.

Because of Odo'sha, Seruhe Ianadi couldn't do anything on the Earth. He went back to Heaven and left the old people as animals with Odo'sha. He didn't leave any of Wanadi's people on the Earth though. That was the end of the first people.

The birth of Kahu [Odo'sha] on the ancient Earth is a sign to us, the people of today. When a baby is born, we must never bury the placenta: it rots, the worms find it, a new Odo'sha will come again, like in the beginning, to hurt the baby, to kill it. Like what happened when Odo'sha fought against Wanadi for control of the Earth. When a child is born, we put the placenta in a nest of white ants. There it is well protected: the worms can't get it. Now we can bury the nest of white ants.

That was the story of the old people. That's all.

*Small magic stones made of quartz crystal.

NADEI 'UMADI
The Time of The Second Messenger

Later on, the other Wanadi, the one that never left *Kahuña*, thought— "I want to know what's happening on Earth. I want good people living down there."

So he sent a second Wanadi, a *damodede* called Nadei'umadi. When he got there, he thought: "The people are going to die now because Odo'sha is here. Because of Odo'sha they're sick. They're dying. But I'm here now. People are going to be born again soon. Through my power, they're going to live again. Death isn't real; it's one of Odo'sha's tricks. People are going to live now."

The new Wanadi wanted to give a sign, a show of his power. He did it to show us that death isn't real. He sat down. He put his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. He sat there in silence, thinking, dreaming, dreaming. He dreamt that a woman was born. It was his mother. She was called Kumariawa. That's the way it happened. That mighty man was thinking and smoking. In silence, he was blowing tobacco, dreaming of his mother Kumariawa. That's the way she was born. He made his own mother. That's the way they tell it. He gave birth to her dreaming, with tobacco smoke, with the song of his maraca, singing and nothing else.

Now Kumariawa stood up. And Wanadi thought: "You're going to die." So Wanadi dreamed that he killed his mother. She was born full-grown, big like a woman. She wasn't born like a baby. And right away she died, when he dreamed her death, playing the maraca and singing. It wasn't Odo'sha who killed her but him himself. He had a lot of power when he thought. When he thought: "Life." Then Kumariawa was born. When he thought: "Death." Then she died. Wanadi made her as a sign of his power, of his wisdom. He knew that that wasn't real. Death was a trick.

The new Wanadi had *Huehanna*. He brought it from *Kahuña* to make people with. He wanted new people for the Earth. He wanted lots of people. *Huehanna* was like a great ball, huge and hollow, with heavy shells hard as stones inside it. It was called *Huehanna*. Inside *Huehanna* you could hear noises, words, songs, laughter, screaming. Many people were in there talking. You couldn't hear anything else. You couldn't see anything either. All the people from Wanadi were in there, not born yet. He brought them from Heaven down to the Earth. They were happy. That's why they were singing and dancing and making so much noise before being born. Wanadi wanted *Huehanna* opened on the Earth so its good and wise people could spread over it. "They will die," he thought, "because Odo'sha is here. He doesn't want them to live. He doesn't want good people. He's going to make them sick. He's going to kill them as soon as they leave. But soon I'll bring them to life. They'll be born again and they won't die."

Wanadi killed Kumariawa as an example. He did it to bring her back to life again. He wanted to show Odo'sha his power. He was the ruler of life; his people can't die. And when he killed his mother, he thought: "She's dead. She'll come back again soon. She'll live again just as my people will live again. Because Odo'sha will kill them as soon as they are born from *Huehanna*. But through my power, they will live."

After he killed Kumariawa he went hunting. When he left, he said, "I'm going." He called Kudewa and asked him to help bury the woman. It was the first burial. They buried Kumariawa in the ground. "I'm going," he told Kudewa. "I'm going hunting. I'll be back soon. Guard the grave. Kumariawa is going to reappear in this spot. When she comes out, it will be a signal for the people to leave *Huehanna* and live. Guard my mother's body. Don't let Odo'sha get near it." Now Wanadi called his nephew, Iarakaru. "Watch *Huehanna*!" he called out as he left.

Wanadi forgot his *chakara*; that's where he kept his power, his tobacco, his cigarettes. He kept the night in the *chakara* too, because at that time, they didn't know about the night. There was only light on the Earth like in the Heavens. It was all one world, Heaven above and daylight here below. When Wanadi got tired, he opened the *chakara* and stuck his head inside and slept. Hidden sleep, the night, was in there. That's the way he slept. When he got up he closed the *chakara* again and shut the night inside.

Wanadi had warned Iarakaru: "Never play with the *chakara*. It's my power! Be careful! Don't open it! If you do, the night will get out."

When Wanadi left, Kudewa kept guard over Kumariawa. Kudewa kept watching the ground to let out a scream when it began to move, when the body began to rise again. "Call me right away. Shout and I'll come," Wanadi told him when he left.

When the ground began to move, Wanadi was far away. Kudewa saw a hand stick out, Kumariawa's arm. The earth opened. He turned into a parrot and began to shout and scream the warning. When Wanadi heard him, he came running to see what his new mother looked like. He came running to see if the *Huehanna* had burst. As he ran, night fell. All at once, EVERYTHING went dark. Suddenly, the WHOLE world went out and Wanadi was running through the night. "They opened the *chakara*," he thought. "Iarakaru did it." And that's just what happened. Iarakaru was too curious. Someone said to him, "Open it!" It was Odo'sha. He didn't see him. He just heard him, like in a dream. "Open it!" Odo'sha said.

"You'll learn the secret." It was as if Iarakaru was dreaming. At first he didn't dare. And then he did it. "What's this secret hidden in Wanadi's *chakara?*" he thought. "I want to see. I want to smoke and be powerful like Wanadi. I want to meet the night." So he opened the *chakara* to look inside and right away the night burst out. The Sky hid itself. The light went out over the Earth.

That's the way darkness came to our world. It was Iarakaru's fault. It didn't exist before that. I didn't see it. But that's the way it's told.

When it burst, Iarakaru was like a blind man. He could see neither Heaven nor Earth. He was terrified. He ran through the darkness, not like a man but rather like a white monkey. And he remained like that. Changed as punishment. He is the grandfather of all the *iarakaru* (white monkeys) that exist today. He was the first one. He gave them their form. As soon as they were born, the monkeys took his form. Because of this, they are called *iarakaru*, all children of that same Iarakaru, the one who let out the night long ago. He was Wanadi's nephew and he was punished. That's the way they tell it.

When Wanadi went hunting, Odo'sha thought: "That man has power. He wants to make his own people on the Earth. He thinks the Earth is his. He thinks he owns everything, that his people are going to be born, that it's always going to be light. He left that woman's body on the Earth and he thinks, 'She's dead but she's going to live again. *Huehanna* will open.' He left guards to warn him when the signal comes. I don't like it. The Earth is mine, not his. I'm not going to let Kumariawa out of her corpse, nor the people in *Huehanna*."

Then Odo'sha hid. He spoke to Iarakaru as in a dream. He said, "Open the *chakara*!"

When it was open, he was happy. "Now it's dark. The night is mine. No one will live. I am the ruler of the Earth."

He had his own people. They could see and move and do lots of things in the dark. Wanadi's people couldn't see. They couldn't do a thing, just be scared and nothing else. This really made Odo'sha happy.

Odo'sha sent a hairy dwarf named Ududi to watch the grave. Ududi told him: "She's coming out!" Odo'sha heard him and knew what to do. He pissed in a gourd. He gave it to Makako and sent him to the woman's grave. Makako was like a small lizard. He ran with the gourd full of urine. Kumariawa split the earth and began to rise.

The little lizard threw the gourd. The urine bathed the woman. Odo'sha's urine was like a poison, seething with fire. It scorched the body. The flesh was roasted. The bones fell apart. The parrot kept on screaming and the earth closed. "It's done," said Makako, when he returned to Odo'sha.

When Wanadi arrived, he found darkness, ashes, bones, cinders, the monkey gone, the parrot silent, the *chakara* opened. "I can't do anything now," Wanadi thought. "There's no flesh, no body. Life will not return. There's no light. The Earth is no longer mine. Now men will die."

Then he went to find *Huehanna*. It was still there. They were talking inside. The unborn people were screaming in fear. They hadn't been born. They hadn't died. They weren't anything yet, like in the beginning. They couldn't be born. When he burned the woman, Odo'sha went with Makako to open *Huehanna*, to smash it to pieces, to kill the people about to come out. They found it and fell on it with their clubs but nothing happened. They couldn't do a thing to it. *Huehanna* was as hard as a stone with its thick shell. They couldn't break it. So they just left.

Wanadi found *Huehanna*. When he picked it up, he heard the voices inside. It made him sad. "They'll have to wait now," he thought. "I'm going to hide them." He went to the mountain *Waruma hidi*. He hid *Huehanna* with all its people still to be born, in this mountain.

It's waiting there, in peace, since the beginning of the world, and it will stay there until the end. When night came, Wanadi hid *Huehanna*. The good people inside haven't been born yet, nor have they died. There, in *Waruma hidi*, they are waiting for the end of the world, for the death of Odo'sha. Odo'sha is the ruler of our world, but he is not eternal. He will die when evil has disappeared. Then Wanadi will return to the mountain *Waruma hidi* once again. The light from Heaven will shine once more. We will see Heaven from here as in the beginning. Wanadi will come looking for *Huehanna*. The good, wise people who couldn't be born in the beginning will finally be born. He will tell the people of Wanadi that the time has come. In the place called Warumana, they are waiting. I haven't seen it. But that's what it's called.

Wanadi left the Earth in darkness. He left and went back to Heaven. He took Kumariawa's skull and bones with him in a palm basket. He threw his mother's bones into Lake Aku'ena, which is in Heaven, and the woman came back to life once again. And she's living there in Heaven till this day.

Now I haven't seen her. But that's the way it's told.

ATTAWANADI
The Messenger of Our Time

When that man came, there was no light. The old ones lived in fear, they hid like animals. They couldn't move, they couldn't see anything. They had to find food, water, but they couldn't that way. They were living with Odo'sha, in misery, in hunger. Odo'sha frightened them, he made them sick, he killed them. The other Wanadi blew on a *wiriki*; and so Attawanadi was born.

That man was a new Wanadi; he was the third *damodede* of the other Wanadi who shines in the highest Heaven. He was sent from *Kahuña* to see what was happening on Earth, to make people once again, people of Wanadi, good and wise. He made *Shi*, the sun, *Nuna*, the moon, and *Shidishie*, the stars. They were like people and lit up this Earth's new Sky. The real Sky couldn't be seen any more. Because of Odo'sha, the light up there, the light from the other Wanadi, no longer came down. That's why the new Wanadi made this sun for us, to make it light for us during the day. When the new Wanadi came, it dawned again. The old ones rejoiced; one by one they came out of their caves to look at *Shi*, the new sun, the new day. Then they knew that Wanadi had returned. Now Earth has its own sun. You could see a sky above the Earth again, the Earth's own sky. You couldn't see *Kahuña*, the true Sky anymore, like in the beginning, nor the Kahuhana, the ones who live in the Sky. Now the Earth has its own sky. "It's done," that man said. "Now the Earth has its sun, its moon, its light." Then the old ones rejoiced.

The ancient people gathered around the new Wanadi. They complained about Odo'sha: "There's hunger," they said, "misery, sickness, death." They were like animals, they had animal bodies. When they wanted to, they took their human forms again. They had nothing: no cassava, no water, no clothes, no houses, no arrows, no bows, no hammocks. Nothing, except misery and fear, like the animals.

Wanadi saw Iarakaru, the white monkey. He was skinny now, he was complaining too. "You're to blame," said Wanadi. "This suffering's your fault. You're thin as punishment; that's the way you'll stay, your children and your grandchildren too."

That man thought: "I'll make a good Earth again. I'll remake everything, like in the beginning. I'm going," he said. "I'll be back soon." Now he went to *Kahuña*, to the house of Iamankave, mistress of food, keeper of manioc. He asked for food for the Earth. Iamankave said "Fine." She sent a messenger down to the Earth with lots of cassava. Now they ate. They rejoiced when the man from *Kahuña* arrived with the cassava.

Then Odo'sha came. He was furious. "Wanadi's returned again," he thought. "He wants to be master of the Earth again."

There were two children, a boy and a girl. When Wanadi went to Heaven to look for food, Odo'sha went to trick them, disguised as

Wanadi. "I'm Wanadi," he said. "Now I'll teach you how to fuck." And he taught them. That's why they did it. Before that, they didn't know how, the old ones never used to fuck. When they started, they got sick, they got punished. The Kahuhana with the cassava didn't come back again. They were left without food again. A lot of them died.

When Wanadi returned, he said: "Okay. What am I going to do now? Those first people are ruined. They only hear Odo'sha now. They don't want to be people of Wanadi anymore. I'll make new people, real people."

He built his house on *Wana hidi*, a mountain on the Kuntinama. It was the first house. That spirit made it for himself, as a sign for the people. Then he made another, and another, and another— for the people. He showed men how to make their houses, not like animals anymore, but like people. He made lots of houses, he made villages. That's why they call him Attawanadi (House-Wanadi).

When Wanadi made his house on *Wana hidi*, Odo'sha came, looked at it and made another one just like it right in front of that one. "Okay," said Wanadi. "I have to do everything quickly before Odo'sha ruins it."

Wanadi set new people down beside him in *Wana hidi*. They were twelve men called *Wanadi sottoi* (people of Wanadi). They were very strong and wise. Odo'sha had lots of people of his own in his house too, the *Odoshankomo* (demons). They were evil, they wanted to destroy Wanadi.

Wanadi sat down, silent, calm, without eating, without doing anything. He put his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands. He was just thinking, dreaming. He began to dream, dreaming, dreaming. That's the way he did everything. "This is what I dream," he would say. "I'm dreaming: there's lots of food."

No food came. Odo'sha was right in front of him; he didn't want it. He began dreaming evil. He answered Wanadi with evil.

"I dreamed: we have cassava," said Wanadi, dreaming.

"This is my dream: much hunger," answered Odo'sha. He was answering with evil.

"I dreamed this: I killed five deer," said Wanadi, dreaming.

The other one answered: "No. I dreamed before you. I dreamed: there's nothing to eat. Many people are dying." He answered with evil.

"I'm dreaming: there are *conuco*, there's lots of yucca. I'm cutting down the yucca, there is a great harvest," Wanadi said.

"Here's how I dreamed first," answered Odo'sha. "Many sick people. They're going to die."

Wanadi couldn't do anything because of Odo'sha. He became angry. "We're leaving," he told the people. "We can't stay here with Odo'sha. We'll live separately." "Good," they said. They left.

They went to *T'ruma achaka*. Wa'de lived there in a cave. "We're fleeing from Odo'sha," they told him. "That's why we came."

"Fine," said Wa'de. "You can stay here."

They stayed. Wa'de was good. He was the Grandfather of all the Sloths; whenever he wanted to, he'd put on his sloth body. When he left the Earth, he left his form here, for the sloths of today.

Wanadi built a house for Wa'de in *T'ruma achaka* and left his people there. He went to make other houses, to make more people for the Earth. "I'm going," he said. "I'll be back soon."

He took his blowgun to hunt along the way. As he was walking, he met a jaguar. He ran, he built a platform. The jaguar came up behind him. It wanted to eat him. Now he killed the jaguar with his blowgun. Now the jaguar got up again. It was a spirit. It couldn't die. Wanadi left. Then he dreamed he was killing birds. He really did kill birds; he brought them back to Wa'de's house.

"I'm back," he said. "I bring you food." They were happy. They ate the birds.

"On my way a jaguar leapt out," Wanadi said. "It wanted to eat me. I killed it with my blowgun; it fled."

"Sure it wasn't one of Odo'sha's tricks? It wasn't Odo'sha as a jaguar that you met?" said Wa'de. "When you go out, don't go as Wanadi."

"Fine," said Wanadi. Next time he went out as a hunter, old and dirty, not as Wanadi.

Now he met Odo'sha as the real Odo'sha. Odo'sha looked at him; he didn't know who it was. "You haven't seen Wanadi, have you?" he asked.

"Who's Wanadi?" he answered, "I don't know him."

"The one who used to live in *Wana hidi*," said Odo'sha. "He ran away. I'm trying to find him. You haven't seen him, have you?"

"Who's Wanadi?" Wanadi answered. So he fooled Odo'sha. Odo'sha went the other way, searching and searching. He didn't come back again.

Wanadi went back to his house in *T'ruma achaka*. He dreamed about more birds, he arrived with more birds. His people were happy when he returned. The twelve men ate once again.

"On my way, I met Odo'sha," said Wanadi. "He was asking about Wanadi. 'Never heard of him,' I said. He's far away now—looking, looking."

"Good," said Wa'de. "That's very good. Now, from now on, don't go out as Wanadi."

Wanadi changed himself and went out again. He went as a hunter, old and dirty. He walked a long ways off, smoking, playing his maraca, making houses, making new people.

Odo'sha was still lost, still fooled. One day he came to ask at Wa'de's house. "No, he's not here. We don't know him," they said. He went off looking again. He couldn't find Wanadi; he didn't know where to look.

Now, Attawanadi made many fine houses and good people. He made us too. He is our Wanadi, the one of this world now, of all the people still living here. On Mount *Tukui hidi*, on the Upper Orinoco, he made a great house, an *atta* called *Tukuina-madi*. Then he went to the river called *Farimi* (Uraricoera). He made two houses, two villages called *Farimina* and *Wanahu hidi*. Then he made another in *Ua'iante* (*Auyan tepuy*), another in *Kanukuna* (Mount Canuco), and another, and another, and another.

He made new people to populate the villages. He took dirt; he formed it into people. Then he sat down, he dreamed: "It's alive." He was smoking and playing his maraca. That's how the new people were born, those of the Earth today. First a man was born on Mount Deku'hana, in the headwaters of the Ara'hame. He was made with dirt from the mountain; that's why he was called Deku'hana, like us, his grandchildren. He was the first of the Deku'hana. Mount Deku'hana was where we began.

Now, on Mount Sipapo, he made another man called Fiaroa with red dirt, but he washed him with muddy water. That man was stained, like his grandchildren who are alive today, the *Fiaroankomo* (Piaroa Indians). They're good people, people of Wanadi like us.

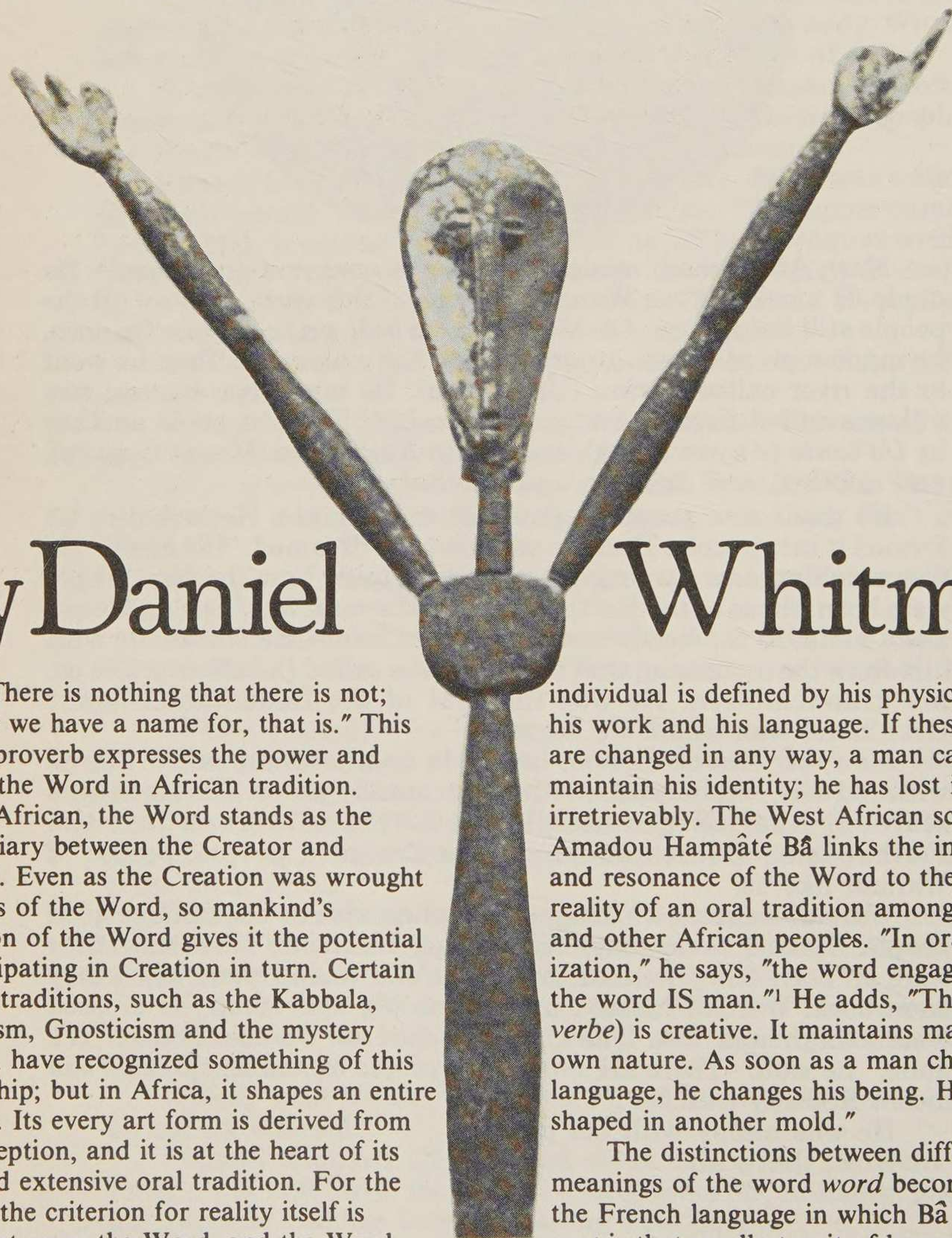
Wanadi went on walking, to see where else he could make good people. Makas, Iavaranas, Warekenas, Haniwas, Makushis, they were all born. They were all good. Odo'sha wasn't there when they were born. Wanadi crossed mountains big and small, he crossed waters high and low. Then, he returned to Wa'de's house. "It's done," he said. "There are lots of my people on the Earth. Odo'sha didn't find my trail."

He was happy with his people.

Now, that's all.

Africa and the Word

by Daniel Whitman



"There is nothing that there is not; whatever we have a name for, that is." This Yoruba proverb expresses the power and place of the Word in African tradition. For the African, the Word stands as the intermediary between the Creator and mankind. Even as the Creation was wrought by means of the Word, so mankind's possession of the Word gives it the potential of participating in Creation in turn. Certain Western traditions, such as the Kabbala, Chassidism, Gnosticism and the mystery religions, have recognized something of this relationship; but in Africa, it shapes an entire aesthetic. Its every art form is derived from this perception, and it is at the heart of its ritual and extensive oral tradition. For the African, the criterion for reality itself is contingent upon the Word, and the Word upon thought: thought creates the Word even as the Creator did.

Among the Fulani of West Africa, an individual is defined by his physical aspect, his work and his language. If these elements are changed in any way, a man cannot maintain his identity; he has lost it irretrievably. The West African scholar Amadou Hampâté Bâ links the importance and resonance of the Word to the social reality of an oral tradition amongst Fulani and other African peoples. "In oral civilization," he says, "the word engages man, the word IS man."[1] He adds, "The word (*le verbe*) is creative. It maintains man in his own nature. As soon as a man changes his language, he changes his being. He becomes shaped in another mold."

The distinctions between different meanings of the word *word* become clearer the French language in which Bâ writes. *Le mot* is that smallest unit of language which has any referent meaning. *La parole* is the spoken word in particular. *Le verbe* is the Word; it is that aspect of language which

ıkes on an active role, and becomes ıstrumental in the process of creation. It is ' *verbe*, for example, which is referred to in ıe Gospel of John, "The Word was made esh and dwelt among us." [1:14]

In a traditional African context, 'here no distinction is seen between the ıcred and the profane, the three ıeanings fuse, giving both special ignificance to the everyday word, and irect access for every man or woman to ıe Word. Does a society which cherishes ıe Word create and sustain an oral radition, or does an oral tradition ıstill a sensibility to the Word among society? This becomes a moot question for ıâ, for in any case:

> *In this country where, for millennia, only sages have had the right to speak, in this country where the oral tradition has had the stature of the holiest writings, the word* (le mot) *has become God.*[2]

The power of the Word here has other unctions besides the sacred, and reaches into he utilitarian and the profane. Because it is the Vord which gives a human being an identity ›eyond that of inanimate matter, the dis- inction allows both that the medicine man onfer identity on the new-born baby and hat the sorcerer remove identity from the ıdult enemy. Jahnheinz Jahn explains the lifference in terminology between *kintu* (pl. ›*intu*) "thing," and *muntu* (pl. *bantu*) "human ›eing," as essentially a matter of one variable: *Vommo*, or, the Word.[3] A new-born baby is ı *kintu* until it has a name conferred upon it, ınd as such it is not mourned if it should die n infancy. Only as it receives a name does it ›ecome a *muntu*. By the same token, magic ınd medicine are ineffectual without Nommo. What the witch does to the victim is to take ıway the Nommo, the humanizing, creative force, rendering him a *kintu*, or *zombi.* Such a fate is the worst that can befall a person. Medicine, likewise, can be administered only with the Word, if it is not to be a mere placebo. In the realm of art, the role of the artist is to take the simple *kintu*, which might consist of a block of wood, and apply the Word to it (as well as his craftsmanship) so that it can emerge as *kuntu*, or "modality."

Nommo makes the passage from *kintu* to *muntu* possible. It in fact constitutes the qualifying difference between the two. But Nommo, while it is the Word, is at the same time much more. The Dogon myth which explains the genesis of Nommo associates it as well with the water and fiber, in which form it was given to mankind. Nommo is no less than the power of order over disorder in the world, and as such is expressed not only in the form of speech, but also of weaving and cultivation, its two related arts.

This myth is available to us through the words of Ogotemmêli, a Dogon sage from the village of Lower Ogol, who was interviewed in the 1940s by a French ethnographer over a period of thirty days.[4] According to Ogotemmeli's account, the creator Amma made the Earth out of a lump of clay. Amma was lonely and desired to have intercourse with his creation. He sought to do so with the clitoris, a termite hill, but the clitoris rose up to display its masculinity, thus rendering defective the first intercourse. Amma eventually had union with the Earth after excising the termite hill, only the offspring was not the set of twins that had been intended. Instead,the product was the solitary jackal, who became the symbol of man's difficulties with God. The jackal eventually was to receive knowledge of the Word, but not the ability to use it, other than by his paw-marks. It was the jackal's premature exposure to the Word which led to

all the difficulties implicit in the Western myth of the tower of Babel.

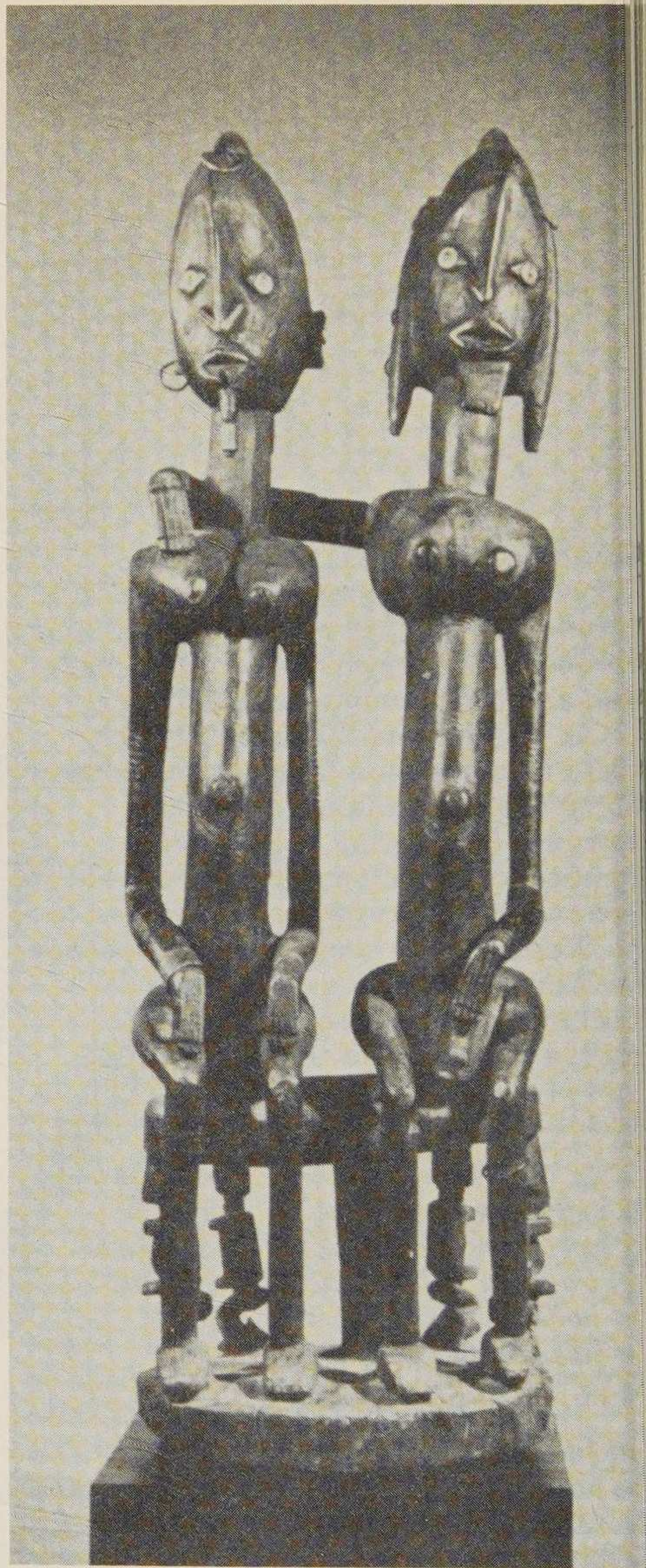
Amma's second intercourse was more successful. It produced the Nommo, a set of twins who became God's agents on Earth. Referred to in the singular, they represent one perfect pair. Nommo's first act as the Creator's agent on Earth was to recognize its mother, the Earth, as naked and speechless as the result of Amma's first, imperfect union with her. Nakedness and speechlessness are seen as two complementary aspects of the same state of disorder. The remedy of the Nommo was to descend from Heaven to Earth, bringing with them fibers pulled from plants already created in the heavenly region. Thus, the close association among the Dogon people between weaving and the Word: fibers to clothe, words to render articulate; the words came in the form of fibers and *vice versa*. Together, they combated the state of disorder in the world.

The fibers, moreover, were accompanied by a channel of moisture, which is associated with the moisture the mouth makes during speech. Speech, fiber, and liquid, then, became three equal components of the same ordering process.

It was when the jackal, son of God, desired to possess speech, that an incestuous union with the Earth resulted, leaving disorder once again in the world. It is important that this moment, which corresponds to the Fall in the Bible, is associated with the inappropriate dispersal of the knowledge of speech and the Word.

Since it was clear by now that twin births could go wrong (the jackal was proof of that), the Nommo set about to create human beings so as to allow the dual nature of the soul to express itself within one living creature, rather than depending on two. Human beings replicated the perfect pair of twins, by having each a dual nature: in the male, the female soul was located in the prepuce (and had eventually to be removed during circumcision). In the female, the male soul lay in the clitoris, which was to be removed during excision.

New Nommos were formed by new unions between Amma and the Earth, forming eight "ancestors." Each of the eight had to enter into the Earth's womb after birth and speak to her from within, in order to be released, now imbued with Spirit. The second through sixth Nommos added to the population of those speaking the language of Amma, but did not alter the nature of that



Dogon primordial coupl

language. In order to be altered it had somehow to be bestowed on humanity, for it was in humanity's use of it that its more mature form was to emerge. This could not occur until a seventh Nommo pair came along, because the number seven implied perfection ("holiness," the West might say). Seven represented the union between four, the feminine element, and three, the masculine. The seventh Nommo, being the most perfect ancestor, was able to come into closest contact with mankind, and was in fact

the agent of mankind's learning of the Word. The first Word had been that imperfect one which the jackal had uttered after incestuous union with the Earth; the Word of the seventh Nommo was the second Word. Now mankind was finally equipped to surpass the jackal in knowledge and technical skill.

The way in which the seventh Nommo imparted the Word to mankind was through the technique of weaving. The seventh Nommo spat out eighty threads of cotton from his/her teeth, and the teeth acted as the teeth of a weaver's reed. It was by putting the Word in the form of a technical process that the Nommo made it comprehensible to mankind. To this day, the Dogon word *soy* has three meanings: *the spoken word, woven material,* and *seven,* referring to the seventh Nommo. The Dogon also file their teeth to recall the sharp teeth of the seventh ancestor.

Lébé, the eighth ancestor, was at the same time the oldest man, and as such he was the first to use and codify speech such as we know it today, coming from the mouth rather than the loom. The third Word was this form of speech, as well as the language of the drum. It was the language of the drum, in fact, which brought in the new age.

Words and the Word are important to the Dogon for a multitude of reasons, but particularly because they represent the means by which regeneration can take place. It was through the Word that the Creator fashioned the Nommo, and likewise through the Word that Nommo created mankind. An eternal consequence is that the human mother receives words through two apertures: the ear and the sexual organ. What she hears influences the being in her womb. Bad words enter the ear and pass to the throat, liver, and then the womb, adversely affecting her offspring. Good words also enter through the ear, but then pass directly to her sexual parts where they encircle the womb, providing the moisture which is necessary for procreation:

> *Thus, at the very beginning of human life is to be found a divine germ which lies waiting in the womb of every fertile woman. It is shaped by the Nommo; but the living matter of which it is composed is produced by human action. All good words, whether spoken by the mouths of men or women, enter the bodies of all women, and prepare them for future mating and childbirth.*[4]

Not only the Dogon, but their neighbors, the Bambara, see a close association between weaving and the Word. According to the Bambara myth, mankind's ancestors, created by Faro, began worshipping a false god, Pemba. When they saw their folly and turned back to Faro, Pemba retaliated by introducing death to mankind. Faro was unable to combat the death which Pemba had introduced, but he was able to alleviate man's suffering by bestowing on him the power of speech. Like the Nommo of the Dogon, he taught this power through the technique of weaving. He taught women the art of spinning by the example of the bird making its nest (subsequently introducing the spindle to facilitate the task), and to the man he taught the art of weaving by the example of the spider. Weaving has remained among the Bambara as the "Words of Faro," even as it is among the Dogon "the creaking of the Word," like the creaking of a loom.

Christianity altered but did not diminish the African's relation to the Word. Among the Bwitist cult of the Fang of Gabon, the parrot, *kos*, is a holy bird because it was *kos* who brought the Word to man. His tailfeathers, according to Bwiti legend, were dipped in the blood of the beaten Christ. In the practice of the Church of God in Christ

(South Africa), the preacher is judged by the power of his words and the energy of their expression.

More pertinent than the Christian syncretic movements, however, is the special character of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa— both because Islam became more firmly established there than did Christianity, and also because it allowed a higher degree of faithfulness to the truly African traditions. Again in the works of A. H. Bâ, we find a discussion of Islam as it is tempered and adapted by the African mind. The character of this particular Islam has been altered to make it suitable to the same mentality which values the Word above all else.

"Cease to be what you are, and forget what you know," says Tierno Bokar, an African Sufi who is Bâ's spiritual master.[1] Truth, the greatest goal that a life may have, becomes accessible only by emptying and thereby opening oneself. "A full calabash can receive no fresh water," Tierno says of the limpidity of soul necessary in order for truth to be received. In a progression towards an even plane "my" truth expands to become "your" truth, so that ultimately it may become THE truth. Only through the gradual "forgetting of the self" may this process come about.

Other triads are present in Tierno's conception, and "perfect" Islam consists of a union of three elements. One set of such elements is *shari'ah* (law), *tariqa* ("the path"— perhaps best explained as a version of karma), and *haqiqa* (truth). The life which merges these three elements will be the most fulfilled possible. This particular triad is a Sufi adaptation of the original set down by Mohammed himself, at the time of the foundation of Islam. Mohammed's triad consisted of *Islam* (outward practices), *Imam* (inner faith), and *Ihsan* (perfect actions in accordance with God's will).

In a third triad, Tierno Bokar examines the three forms of light in the World, and again finds them hierarchically arranged. The first is the light we obtain by rubbing and making combustion; the second is the sun and its derivative energy sources (coal, petroleum, etc.); the third is that of God, which is:

> *... a darkness more brilliant than all other lights taken together. It is the light of truth. Those who have the good fortune to approach it lose their identity, and become what a drop of water becomes when it falls into the River Niger, or rather, into a sea which is infinitely more vast in breadth and depth.*[2]

In Tierno Bokar's system, we find the same duality inherent in the Sanskrit formula *Sat Nam*: "name" and "truth;" the one implies and makes accessible the other. It is by the Word ("name") that all was created. And likewise, by the Word that man can approach his highest, most ambitious purpose for being on the planet, which is the attainment of Truth:

> *It is by the power of the Word* (le verbe) *that all was created. In bestowing the Word upon man, God delegated to him a share of the power of creation. It is by the power of the Word that man, as well, creates. As for the religious principle itself, it is a spark which is pure, purifying and invariable, as much in time as in space. God made it a part of man's spirit at the moment when He gave him the Word* (la parole).[2]

Much tradition has been lost in present-day Africa, where modernity often takes precedence over other considerations. However, current artistic expression shows that the Word has retained its primal importance even within art forms which, borrowed from the West, would not seem to lend themselves to that same system of values. In the various art forms, there may be a blending of dance, music, and even sometimes of pure ritual, but always under the guidance of the spoken word which becomes both the source and goal of expression. The plastic arts as well are within the context of Nommo, which can transform each art object from *kintu* to *kuntu*, from the inanimate slab of stone, wood, or ivory to a being imbued with the force of life. This perhaps becomes clearer in the recent novels and poetry that have come out of Africa in the past two decades. We see in the poetry of Aimé Césaire, for example, a use of the imperative voice which Jahnheinz Jahn sees as an activation of Nommo:

> *Let come the colibri! Let come the*
> *sparrow hawk!*
> *Let come the break of the horizon!*
> *Let come the dog-faced baboon!*
> *Let come the lotus, the bearer of the*
> *World!*[3]

The use of the imperative here parallels the Creator's use of the Word in creating. The things which we see because of hearing or reading the poem occur because the poet has commanded them to occur. It is Nommo, says Jahn, which makes poetry and not sculpture the primary African art. What happens during an African poem is the opposite of what happens, say, in a European surrealist poem, for where the European surrenders to the Word and allows it to overwhelm him, the African asserts his dominance over it. It is the Word, and only the Word, which allows him to take on full being as a human.

Novels such as those of Camara Laye reflect this same sense of the importance of dominion over the Word. In *Dark Child*, Camara's autobiography, he recalls how as a child he observed his father smelting gold:

> *But if my father never actually spoke, I know that he was forming words in his mind. I could tell from his lips, which kept moving while bending over the pot. He stirred the gold and charcoal with a bit of wood that kept bursting into flame and had constantly to be replaced by a fresh one.*
> *What words did my father utter? I do not know. No one ever told me. But could they have been anything but incantations?*[5]

In a later novel, Camara further illustrates the distinction between *kintu* (the object) and *kuntu* (the process of creation, directed by the Word), showing the inferiority of *kintu* to *kuntu*. A man making an ax explains:

> *... this will be the sum of everything I have ever learnt; it will be like my life, and all the effort I have made to live it well ... There will always be axes that are finer and more deadly; more murderously sharp than any I can fashion ... yet I go on forging it. Perhaps I can do nothing else, perhaps I am like a tree which can bear only one kind of fruit ... But as for the ax itself...*[6]

The ax itself it would seem is of no importance; it is the process of *making* the ax which holds all the significance. By experiencing its own transformation from a slab of stone to a fashioned product, the ax undergoes the transformation from *kintu* to *kuntu*, which imitates the Creation of the world. The agent which allows this to happen is the Word, for the Word provides the only distinction between *kintu* and *kuntu*. The imitation of primal Creation is to the African— as it was to the European alchemists— more crucial than the creation of any particular gross object.

For the African artist, whether he be a sculptor, poet, novelist, or musician, the art object has significance and value only to the extent that its creator has dealt with it through Nommo. Not all the novels or poems emerging from the continent reflect this, of course, for Western influence has played a certain role in forming aesthetic patterns in Africa, and a much greater one in the destruction of traditional modes of expression. What is surprising is that traditional expression in the arts has remained so nearly intact as it has and that it shows itself even in *genres* (such as the novel and written poetry) which originate wholly in the West, and which African artists have simply borrowed for their own purposes. Even in these instances, the Western forms are often used to express the uniquely African thought patterns about the Word and about the overriding importance in art of the process as opposed to the result— an emphasis that is inimical to the Western forms in which it is expressed.

Yet however rightly we insist on the traditional attitudes in which the African relates himself to the creative power of the Word, we need to see that the acknowl-

edgement of this power and of the sacredness of man's connection with it has been a basic part of human understanding all over the world. The notion of the Word as a gift from God, providing mankind with unprecedented power, we find in the West among the ancient Greeks. One linguist sees symbolic affinities between words and fire, and suggests that the true theft of Prometheus was not fire, but speech. In the Hebrew tradition, the word for God (*Elohim*) unites the hidden subject (*Mi*) with the hidden object (*Eloh*). So the very creation of the *Elohim* reunites two elements which have fallen into duality in the temporal world. "Only in His name do we discern the promise of ultimate unity, the assurance of man's release from the dialectic of history."[7] The Name, or Word, appears once again with primal significance.

Adam and Eve knew the primal language imparted by God prior to its loss during the construction of the Tower of Babel. Before the Fall, Adam was able to use it as God's agent on earth, in the numerous acts of creation delegated to him, and which he performed by means of the Word.

In the Gospel according to John [1:14] it is said that "In the beginning was the Word ... and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Here, leaving the Hebrew tradition, we see how the Word can be seen to have objective, material bearing, and we see as well how the Word is applied as an agent of creation. A.H. Ba quotes the opening lines of John (*"In principio erat verbum et verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Verbum"*), to demonstrate the close parallel between his own, Islamicized African system of beliefs, and the Western one.

In the late Middle Ages, Jacob Boehme's Illuminist theory further refined the Christian approach to the word. According to Illuminism, God had uttered only a single Word since the Creation. Within that Word could be found the essence and all the secrets of creation. However, since the catastrophe of the Tower of Babel, mankind had lost contact with it, and language only served to obscure it further. Silence became man's only hope of rediscovering the primal language which Adam and Eve had known.

So the European at certain moments has had the same awareness of the Word as the African. The poet Rimbaud endows his *"Alchimie du Verbe"* with much the same sense as in Césaire or other Africans. Martin Luther knew that "the Word and the Word alone is the vehicle of Grace." One anthropologist, in fact, sees so much similarity between the Dogon myth and cosmology and those of certain Neo-Platonist, Gnostic and Kabbalistic sects of the West, that he feels the Dogon myth may be derived from the latter as a result of actual contact between the two cultures.[8]

It is perhaps in art that we can best see the true differences between the African and European approach to the Word. For the European, the Platonic idea exists apart from and prior to man's reasoning. The image exists in and of itself; the artist merely alludes to a presupposed reality which has an existence separate from man. This is the process suggested by the term *mimesis*. For the African, an image cannot exist independent of man, for it is man who permits the image to exist by creating. The creation takes place precisely through the use of Nommo.

An important ramification of this is that, although the Kabbala and the teaching of John may have recognized the power of the Word in much the same way as the African tradition, they perceived its force as accessible only to the few. While some groups in Africa perform select initiation in the Western sense, the power of the Word is nevertheless accessible to everyone. *"Logos* becomes flesh only in

Christ," as John says, "but Nommo becomes 'flesh' everywhere."[3] In the Old Testament it was only God the Father who was enabled to create light by saying "Let there be light!" But according to the African perception, not only Amma had that power but every *muntu*, every human being, once the seventh Nommo had bestowed the Word upon mankind.

But both African and European sense the importance of some primeval disappearance of the pure language of truth. Once, one word sufficed to set man's creative powers into motion; why then did language lose its concise form to become dispersed, multiplied and altered throughout the world? How did there become a thousand ways to "say" the same thing? The Western idea was that this was due to humanity's excessive pride, and the proliferation of tongues was brought upon them as a just punishment. Did the West come to this belief because of its greater awareness of the variation among languages? Or from the conviction that the pre-Babel state, where God and Adam shared the immediacy of a single form of expression, can never be recaptured? The sense of tragedy implicit in the Babel story is in any case more acute than in the African jackal myth, which explains the corruption of language in terms of error and accident rather than of deserved punishment. Interestingly, both myths see the degradation of language as mankind's most urgent problem.

However we may seek to answer these questions, the existence of the Kabbala and similar Western traditions is a reflection of a sense of loss. Despite the occasional Rimbauds of modern times, who work and experience in relative isolation, the sense of *Logos* was lost in Europe because of the West's more highly developed empirical knowledge of the confusion of *Logos*. But this greater knowledge of the extent of the confusion fostered, on the other hand, an ignorance of the regenerative power of the Word. The knowledge of confusion was a loss of innocence, separating the West from the Word's creative force. Nommo is that unhampered power, accessible to any human being. Perhaps in fact it is Nommo upon which hopes for the survival of the Word may be based.

NOTES

[1] Amadou Hampâte Bâ, *Aspects de la civilisation africaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972). Translation (from the French) of all Bâ materials are my own.

[2] Bâ and Marcel Cardaire, *Tierno Bokar, le Sage de Bandiagara* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1957).

[3] Jahnheinz Jahn, *Muntu: the New African Culture,* translated by Marjorie Grene (New York: Grove, 1961).

[4] Marcel Griaule, *Conversations with Ogotemmêli* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

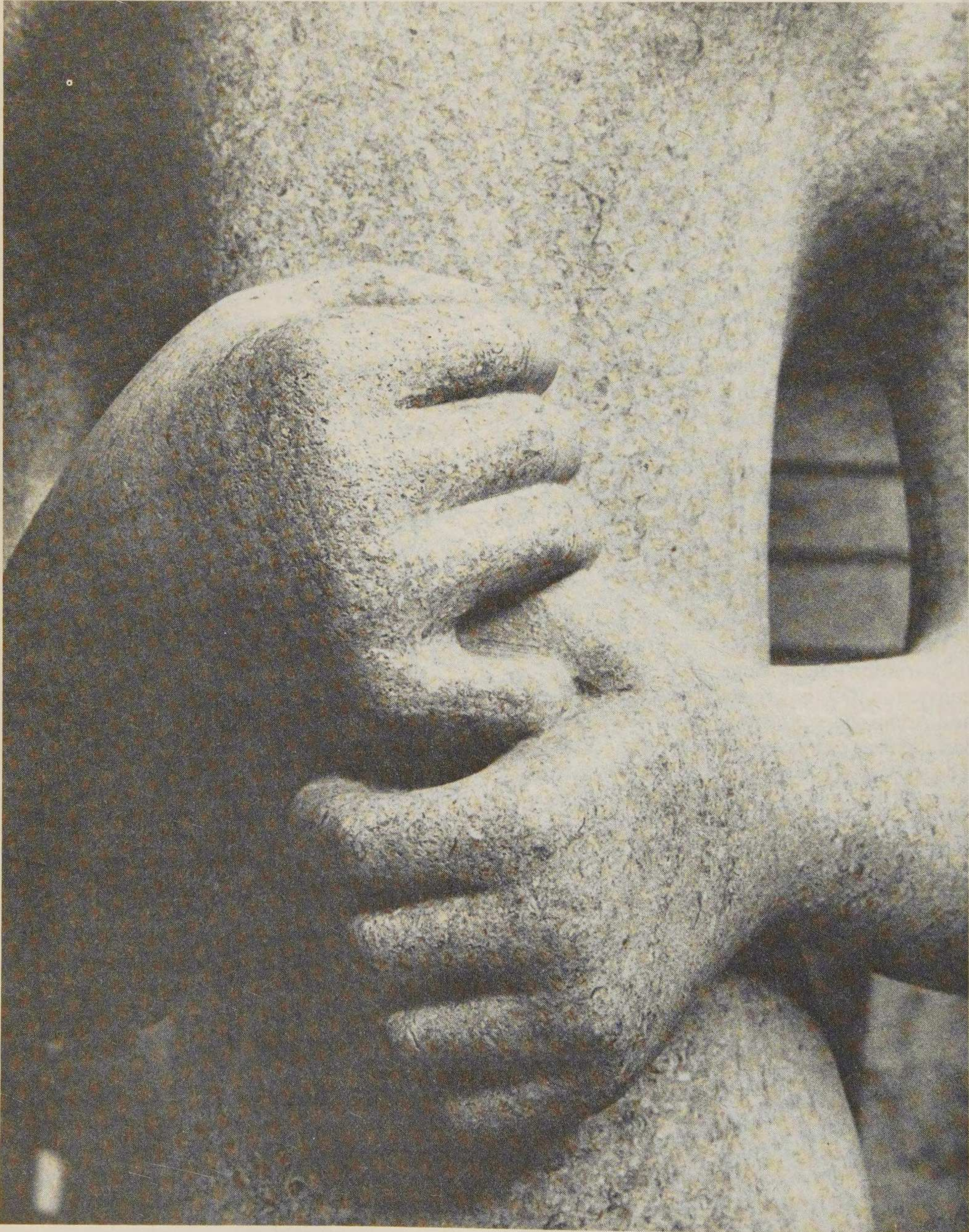
[5] Camara Laye, *The Dark Child,* translated by James Kirkup and Earnest Jones (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1954).

[6] Camara Laye, *The Radiance of the King*, translated by James Kirkup (New York: Collier/Macmillan, 1971).

[7] George Steiner, *After Babel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[8] Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1974).

Man the Maker:



Reflections on Human Creativity

The point of view of traditional societies (such as most of those called "primitive," as well as— for example— ancient Egypt, medieval Europe, and Oriental civilizations before the twentieth century) gave quite a different role to art and the artist from the one taken for granted in the present day. It was much closer to what we might call the mythic viewpoint, which sees the relationship of man the maker and God the Maker in a very definite manner, and so looks upon human creativity from another angle. The artist was not thought of so much as creating his works as of being created by them. The work of a man's hands— in crafts and daily work as well as art, for there was once no difference between them— was his way of serving and of collaborating with his Creator. Art was the means by which men could reflect the divine creation; the artist was God's instrument, and his works were the coded messages from above to below.

In the next pages, *Parabola* presents a selection of statements about art which we think represent the traditional point of view, which like tradition itself persists through all times and all societies, even those as inimical to it as our own.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

How is the form of the thing to be made evoked? This is the kernel of our doctrine, and the answer can be made in a great many different ways. The art of God is the Son "through whom all things are made": in the same way the art in the human artist is his child through which some one thing is to be made. The intuition-expression of an imitable form is an intellectual conception born of the artist's wisdom, just as the eternal reasons are born of the Eternal Wisdom. The image arises naturally in his spirit, not by way of an aimless inspiration, but in purposeful and vital operation, "by a word *conceived* in intellect." It is this filial image, and not a retinal reflection, that he imitates in the material, just as at the creation of the world "God's will beheld that beauteous world and imitated it," that is to say impressed on primary matter a "world-picture" already "painted by the spirit on the canvas of the spirit." All things are to be seen in this eternal mirror better than in any other way; for there the artist's models are all alive...

Girl (Detail), 1931: Henry Moore

The artist's spirals are the forms of life, and not only of this or that life; the form of crozier was not suggested by that of a fern frond. The superficial resemblances of art to "nature" are accidental; and when they are deliberately sought, the art is already in its anecdotage. It is not by the looks of existing things, but as Augustine says, by their ideas, that we know what we proposed to make should be like...

What do we mean by "invention"? The entertainment of ideas; the intuition of things as they are on higher than empirical levels of reference. There can be no property in ideas, because these are gifts of the Spirit, and not to be confused with talents: ideas are never made, but can only be "invented," that is "found" and entertained. No matter how many times they may already have been "applied" by others, whoever conforms himself to an idea and so makes it his own, will be working originally, but not so if he is expressing only his own ideals or opinions. It is true that if the artist has not conformed himself to the pattern of the thing to be made he has not really known it and cannot work originally. But if he has thus conformed himself he will be in fact

expressing *himself* in bringing it forth. Not indeed expressing his "personality," himself as "this man" So-and-So, but himself *sub specie aeternitatis*, and apart from individual idiosyncracy. The idea of the thing to be made is brought to life in him. In this way too the human operation reflects the manner of operation *in divinis*: "All things that were made were life in Him." [1]

LEONARDO DA VINCI

The painter must be solitary and consider what he sees. He must converse with himself. He must select the quintessence of whatever he sees. He must act as a mirror that changes into as many colors as there are things placed before it; if he does this, he will be as a second Nature.

The divine nature of the painter's science transforms the painter's mind into an image of the mind divine, since he, with free power, proceeds to the production of various entities, divers animals, plants, fruits, lands, regions, and so forth.

G.I. GURDJIEFF

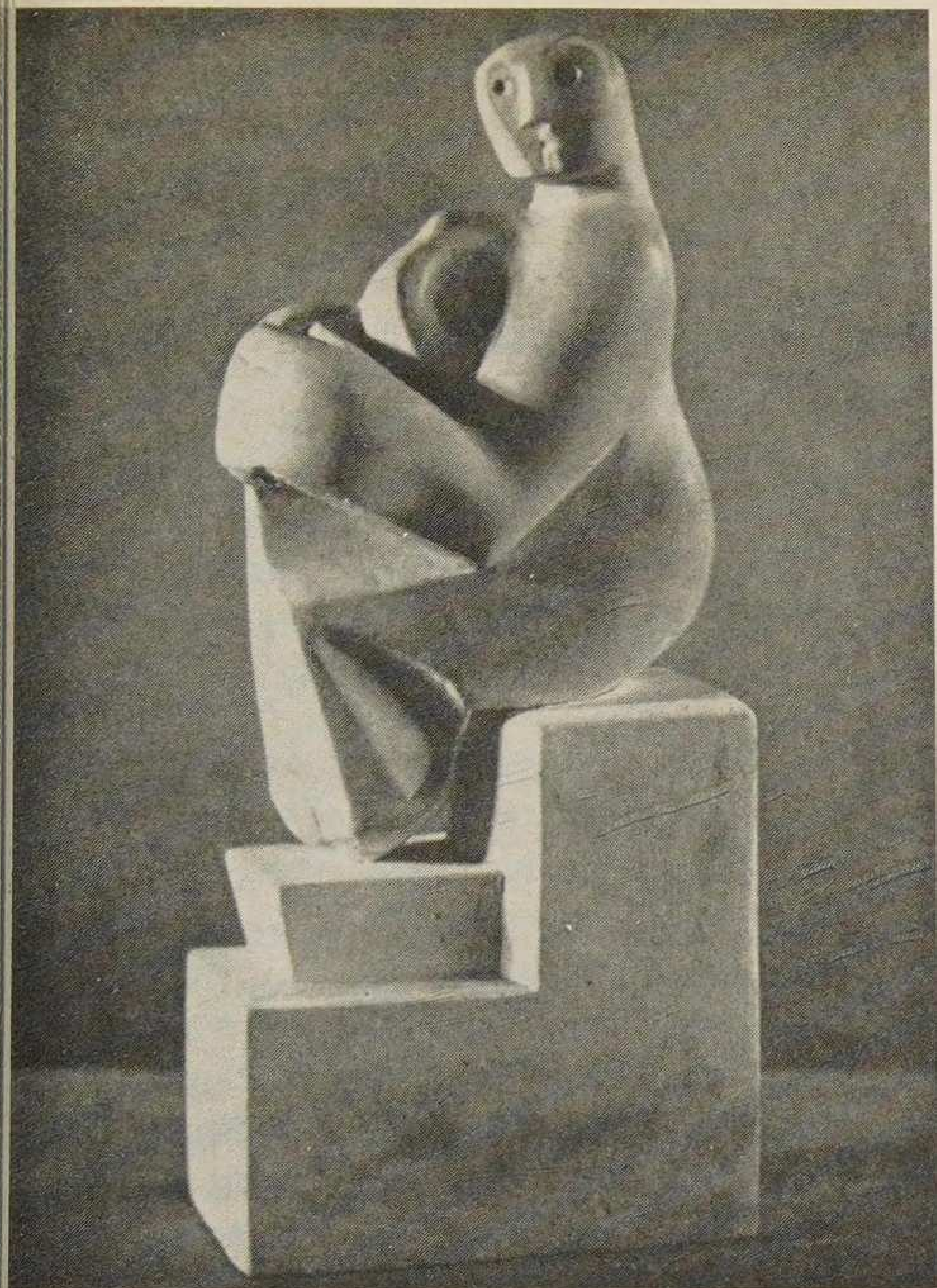
There are two kinds of art, one quite different from the other— objective art and subjective art... You say— an artist creates. I say this only in connection with objective art. In relation with subjective art I say that with him "it is created." The difference between objective art and subjective art is that in objective art the artist really does "create," that is, he makes what he intended, he puts into his work whatever ideas and feelings he wants to put into it. And the action of this work upon men is absolutely definite; they will, of course each according to his own level, receive the same ideas and the same feelings that the artist wanted to transmit to them. There can be nothing accidental either in the creation or in the impressions of objective art.

In subjective art everything is accidental. The artist, as I have said, does not create; with him "it creates itself." This means that he is in the power of ideas, thoughts and moods which he himself does not understand and over which he has no control whatever. They rule him and they express themselves in one form or another. And when they have accidentally taken this or that form, this form just as accidentally produces on man this or that action according to his mood, tastes, habits, the nature of the hypnosis under which he lives, and so on. There is nothing invariable; nothing is definite here. In objective art, there is nothing indefinite.

G.I. Gurdjieff in *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* by P.D. Ouspensky, copyright 1949 Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

"Working after Nature" has in such a high degree made that which is into a task for me, that only very rarely now, as by mistake, does a thing speak to me, granting and giving without demanding that I reproduce it equivalently and significantly in myself. The Spanish landscape drove this attitude of mine to its extreme: external world and vision everywhere coincided as it were in the object; in each a whole inner world was displayed, as though an angel who embraces space were blind and gazing into himself. This world, seen no longer with the eyes of men, is perhaps my real task. *(letter to Ellen Delp, 27 October, 1915.)*



Henry Moore, 1928

MICHELANGELO

In order to imitate to some extent the venerable image of our Lord it is not sufficient merely to be a great master in painting and very wise, but I think that it is necessary for the painter to be very moral in his mode of life, or even, if such were possible, a saint, so that the Holy Spirit may inspire his intellect... And even in the Old Testament God the Father wished that those who only had to ornament and paint the Ark of the Covenant should be masters not merely excellent and great, but also touched by His grace and wisdom, God saying to Moses that He would imbue them with the knowledge and intelligence of His Spirit so that they might invent and do everything that He could invent and do.

D.H. LAWRENCE

It needs a certain purity of spirit to be an artist, of any sort. The motto which should be written over every School of Art is: "Blessed are the pure in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." But by "pure in spirit" we mean pure in spirit. An artist may be a profligate and, from the social point of view, a scoundrel. But if he can paint a nude woman, or a couple of apples, so that they are a living image, then he was pure in spirit, and, for the time being, his was the kingdom of heaven. This is the beginning of all art, literary or visual or musical: be pure in spirit. It isn't the same as goodness. It is much more difficult and nearer the divine. The divine isn't only good, it is all things.

WILLIAM BLAKE

Reynolds Thinks that Man Learns all that he knows. I say on the Contrary that Man Brings All that he has or can have Into the World with him. Man is Born Like a Garden ready Planted and Sown. This World is too poor to produce one Seed. *(from "Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses")*

PAUL

What can be known about God is plain,
for God has shown it...
Ever since the creation of the world
his invisible nature...
has been clearly perceived
in the things that have been made.

Romans 1:19-20

MARIA-LOUISE VON FRANZ

There is a beautiful tale among the Australian aborigines which says that the bow and arrow were not man's invention. Instead, they say, an ancestor god turned himself into a bow and his wife became the bowstring, with her hands constantly round his neck, as the bowstring embraces the bow. So the couple came down to earth and appeared to a man, revealing themselves as bow and bowstring, and from that the man understood how to construct a bow. The bow ancestor and his wife then disappeared again into a hole in the earth. So man, like an ape, only copied, but did not invent, the bow and arrow.[2]

FRITHJOF SCHUON

Forms, even up to the most unimportant, are the work of human hands in a secondary manner only; they originate first and foremost from the same supra-human source from which all tradition originates, which is another way of saying that the artist who lives in a traditional world devoid of "rifts," works under the discipline or the inspiration of a genius which surpasses him; as a matter of fact, he is but the

instrument of this genius, if only from the simple fact of his craftsman's qualifications.[3]

God creates His own image, whereas man so to speak fashions his own essence, at least symbolically; on the principal plane, the inner manifests the outer whereas on the manifested plane, the outer fashions the inner, and the sufficient reason of all traditional art of whatever kind, is that the work should be in a certain sense more than the artist, bringing him back, by the mystery of artistic creation, to the proximity of his own divine essence.[4]

ALBERT GLEIZES

God made man in His image and in His likeness. The human act, in the image and likeness of the creative act, alone allows us to rediscover the Unity of God and Man... Only by active work Man *is*— work of the artisan or work of the contemplative— which focussing him on the whole of creation, identifies him immediately, by means of the "form" which he realizes, with the mystical body of the divine work.[5]

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

For every work (or act) of creation is threefold, an earthly trinity to match the heavenly.

First, (not in time, but merely in order of enumeration) there is the Creative Idea, passionless, timeless, beholding the whole work complete at once, the end in the beginning: and this is the image of the Father.

Second, there is the Creative Energy (or Activity) begotten of that idea, working in time from the beginning to the end, with sweat and passion, being incarnate in the bonds of matter: and this is the image of the Word.

Third, there is the Creative Power, the meaning of the work and its response in the lively soul: and this is the image of the indwelling Spirit.

And these three are one, each equally in itself the whole work, whereof none can exist without the other: and this is the image of the Trinity.[6]

HENRY MOORE

Beauty, in the later Greek or Renaissance sense, is not the aim of my sculpture.

Between beauty of expression and power of expression there is a difference of function. The first aims at pleasing the senses, the second has a spiritual vitality which for me is more moving and goes deeper than the senses.

Because a work does not aim at reproducing natural appearances it is not, therefore, an escape from life but may be a penetration into reality, not a sedative or drug, not just the exercise of good taste, the provision of pleasant shapes and colours in a pleasing combination, not a decoration to life, but an expression of the significance of life, a stimulation to greater effort of living.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

Whatever is made only to give pleasure, is, as Plato put it, a toy, for the delectation of that part of us that passively submits to emotional storms.

G.I. GURDJIEFF

Do not love art with your feelings.

ALBRECHT DÜRER

... verily, "art" is embedded in nature; he who can extract it has it. If thou acquirest it, it will save thee from much error in thy work... Therefore, never put it in thy head that thou couldst or wouldst make something better than God has empowered His created nature to produce. For thy might is powerless against the creation of God. Hence it follows that no man can ever make a beautiful image out of his private imagination unless he have replenished his mind by much painting from life. That can no longer be called private but has become "art" acquired and gained by study, which germinates, grows and becomes fruitful of its kind. Hence it comes that the stored-up secret treasure of the heart is manifested by the work and the new crea-

ure which a man creates in his heart in the hape of a thing.

GOLA MASKMAKER *(from western Liberia)*

I see the thing I have made coming out of the women's bush. It is now a proud man *jina* [guardian spirit] with plenty of women running after him. It is not possible to see anything more wonderful in this world. His face is shining, he looks this way and that, and all the people wonder about this beautiful and terrible thing. To me, it is like what I see when I am dreaming. I say to myself, this is what my *neme* [individual guardian spirit] has brought into my mind. I say, I have made this. How can a man make such a thing? It is a fearful thing I can do. No other man can do it unless he has the right knowledge. No woman can do it. I feel that I have borne children.[7]

MARTIN HEIDEGGER, *on the poet HÖLDERLIN*

"And signs to us from antiquity are the language of the gods." (Hölderlin)

The speech of the poet is the intercepting of these signs, in order to pass them on to his own people. This intercepting is an act of receiving and yet at the same time a fresh act of giving; for "in the first signs" the poet catches sight already of the completed message and in his word boldly presents what he has glimpsed, so as to tell in advance of the not-yet-fulfilled.

CHUANG TZU

The fishing net serves to catch the fish. Let us take the fish and forget about the net. The snare serves to catch the rabbit; let us take the rabbit and forget about the snare. Words serve to convey ideas; let us take the *ideas* and forget the words.

CHUANG HUAI-HUAN

Mind cannot continuously give to the hand and hand cannot consciously receive from the mind. Both mind and hand are one's own, but fail to grasp wonders when searching with intention. It is strange indeed! But when one's intention identifies the Spiritual Reality and his brushstroke conveys the depth of the unconscious, he will be transformed and merge with the Divine, and his creation will be limitless... His thoughtless thought penetrates the tip of his brush and his inner serenity permeates his whole being. When he pursues the spaceless and grasps the invisible it is as if the spiritual being were moving in and out. This is beyond what "words and images," "fishing net," and "snares" could contain.

MICHELANGO'S four stock comments in appraisal of other artists *(according to Bernini):*

This is by a cunning knave.
This is by a knave.
This won't bother anybody.
This is by a good man.

NOTES

[1] *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (New York: Dover, 1965).

[2] *Patterns of Creativity Mirrored in Creation Myths*, by Maria-Louise von Franz (Zurich: Spring Publications, 1972).

[3] "Concerning Forms in Art," by Frithjof Schuon in *Art and Thought*, ed. by K. Bharatha Iyer (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd, 1947).

[4] "*La question des formes d'art,*" by Frithjof Schuon in *Etudes Traditionelles*, Jan.-Feb. 1946.

[5] "Active Tradition of the East and West," by Albert Gleizes in *Art and Thought*. op. cit.

[6] "The Zeal of Thy House" quoted in *The Mind of the Maker*, by Dorothy Sayers (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976).

[7] "Mask Makers and Myth in Western Liberia," by Warren L. d'Azevedo in *Primitive Art and Society*, ed. by A. Forge (London, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1973).

Microcosm, Macrocosm and Mandala

by Kenneth L. Phillips

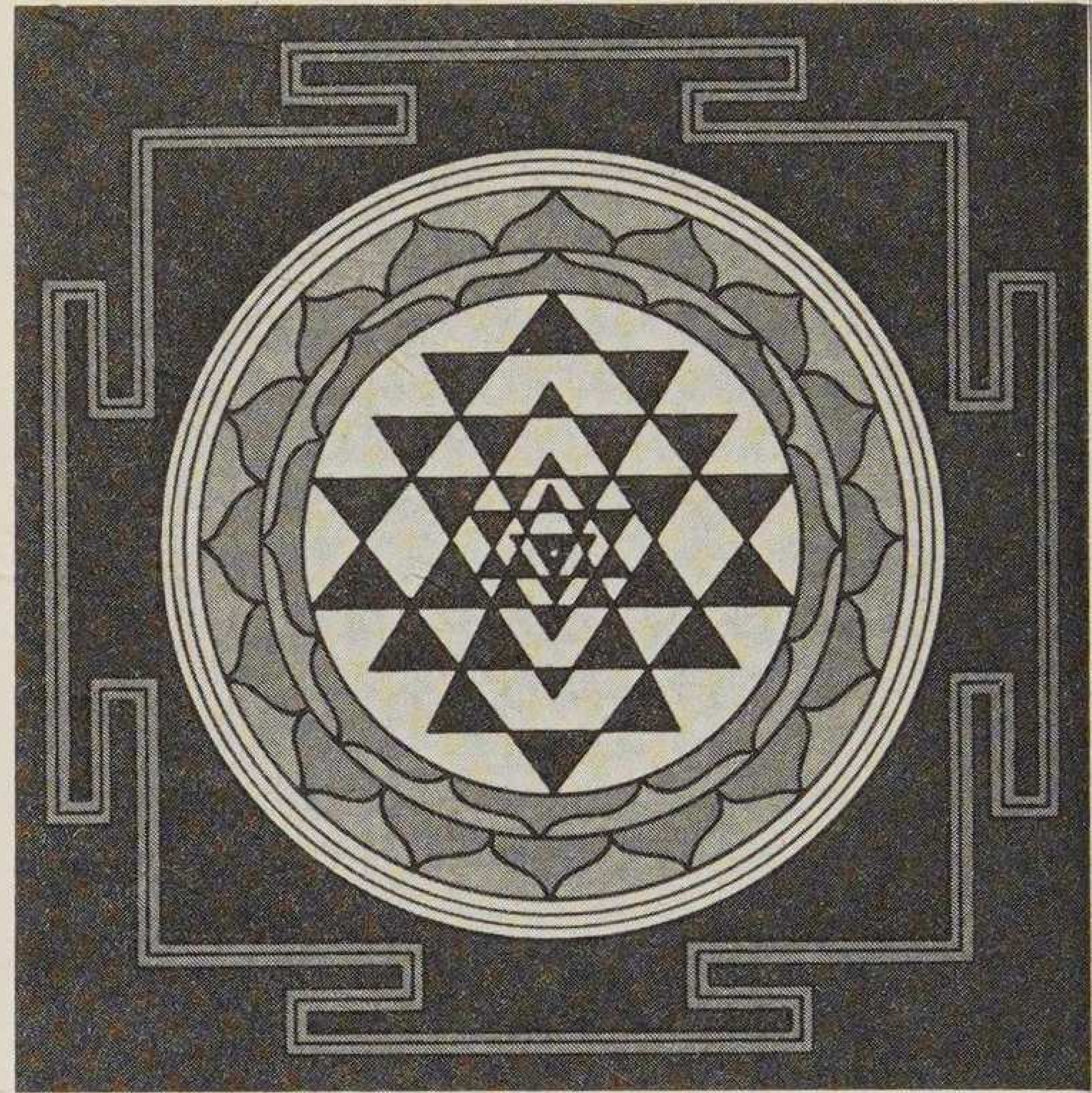


Figure 1

Behind the eye of the mystic, the poet, or the shaman, the notion of the universe as a highly energized mandala has long shimmered. Alive with continual change and composed of an endless number of smaller mandalic systems within it, the one facet of the mandala design which presents itself at very first glance is that of *balance*. The universe is balanced and undivided, the traditions say, and the mandala is the visualization of this principle.

But then too, to visualize, symbolize, and codify the relatedness of seemingly unrelated patterns of change has long been the business of the physicist, and this pursuit has recently come into the province of the ecologist as well. Universal patterns of change exist which are neither limited to one physical ecosystem or to a unique phenomenon, but define the relatedness of all events— whether affecting tidal changes on our seas or ionic alterations in the nucleus of a cell— regardless of their apparent distance from one another.

Mandalas are maps of these relationships of energy and matter and, by definition, employ concentric patterns in their design. The concentric form of the mandala also marks it as the most effective symbolic vehicle for transcending the gap between the microcosm and macrocosm. The universe is, in fact, a *multiverse* composed of many universes; and grasping the relatedness of the macrocosm and microcosm is the goal of both science and religion. For centuries, Eastern traditions have employed the meditative technique of "entering the mandala," whereby the practitioner, while in deep meditation, visualizes a mandala, and his entrance and movement through it. Different concentric colors and structures, for example, represent different energy levels and forms, such as those of the yogic *chakras*.

One of the most important and classical mandalas, whose origins date back at least to the eighth century A.D., is the simple, yet magnificent 'Sri Yantra (Figure #1) consisting of an interlocking matrix of nine triangles centered around the *bindu*, the centerpoint of the mandala, representing the acceptance of all and everything. The *bindu* is where the dichotomous opposites cease, by becoming unified, where dark and light, male and female, conscious and unconscious, creativity and receptivity all become conjoined in cosmic harmony and relatedness.

The 'Sri Yantra is a schematic diagram of creation, its network of triangles composed of five downward pointing triangles representing Sakti, the deity of the kinetic energies of the universe, and four upright triangles representing Siva, deity of the inert energies. According to tantric texts, the impulse of desire, *kamakala*, creates a wave or pulse, *spanda*, which vibrates as sound. The *bindu* is, in its first state of manifestation, conceived of as the nucleus of all potential, as supercondensed energy. As creation gets underway, the energy assumes a radius signaling the beginning of the operation of the two energy forms, the static Siva, and the dynamic Sakti.

All Original String Mandalas Copyright John R. Eichinger, 1977

Two points emerge representing these two manifestations of energy, thus forming the primary triangle. The three points of this primal triangle are thought to be the origin of the three basic vibrations or frequencies which influence all processes on earth, yet they all originate from one source. The triangle with its point facing downward is the first-level symbol for primordial desire in the creation process. It is the active component of evolution and creation. Its opposite, in tantric forms, predominates in the point or *para bindu*, representing the male principle. Creation is conceived of as being the outcome of the interaction of these two principles, symbolically represented by the point and triangle. The primary triangle at once represents the tertiary nature of creation and the characters of Sakti: creation/preservation/dissolution, and the young one/the beautiful one/the terrifying one. This trinitarian conception of creation is maintained throughout the development of the mandala.

Man's efforts at representing the ways of the cosmos via the mandala have not been by any means limited to drawings and other visual media. As early as 3000 B.C. mandalic forms appeared as man constructed his first cities in Sumeria, such as Kish. Such cities were to be models of the universe, which was considered neither flat nor round, but of the form of an enormous "world mountain," rising from an all-encompassing sea. In the center of such cities was the ziggurat a great pyramid-like, but usually rectangular temple tower built in ascending stages. The progressive levels of the ziggurat represented the orbits of the spheres, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, around the world mountain. Heaven and earth were considered the children of the primal sea, and were represented by the top and base of the ziggurat. On its summit was constructed a highly ornamented chamber to welcome and house a particular visiting deity. At least one set of stairs was provided for both the descent of the god and the ascent of the priest. The three-dimensionally concentric ziggurat, situated so that its base angles were oriented to the center of the earth, was generally surrounded by a high wall having four "gates," as are often seen in the mandalas of Tibet.

The mandala lives on, not only as a representation of the vastly more detailed knowledge we now possess concerning the way of the universe, but as a viable art form. The String Mandalas which follow, and the one on the cover of this issue of *Parabola*, are all the work of John Eichinger, who has been visioning and constructing mandalas since early childhood. There are no curved lines in any of the designs; the circularity of the images is an illusion created by the overlapping straight lines, made of thread; one layer upon the next is placed so that a particular progression of angles is formed. Each layer in each mandala is one piece of thread; though some of the mandalas may be composed of over 200,000 lines, they may have as few as fifteen pieces of thread. The interference patterns created by the layers are representative of the harmonics of music and light.

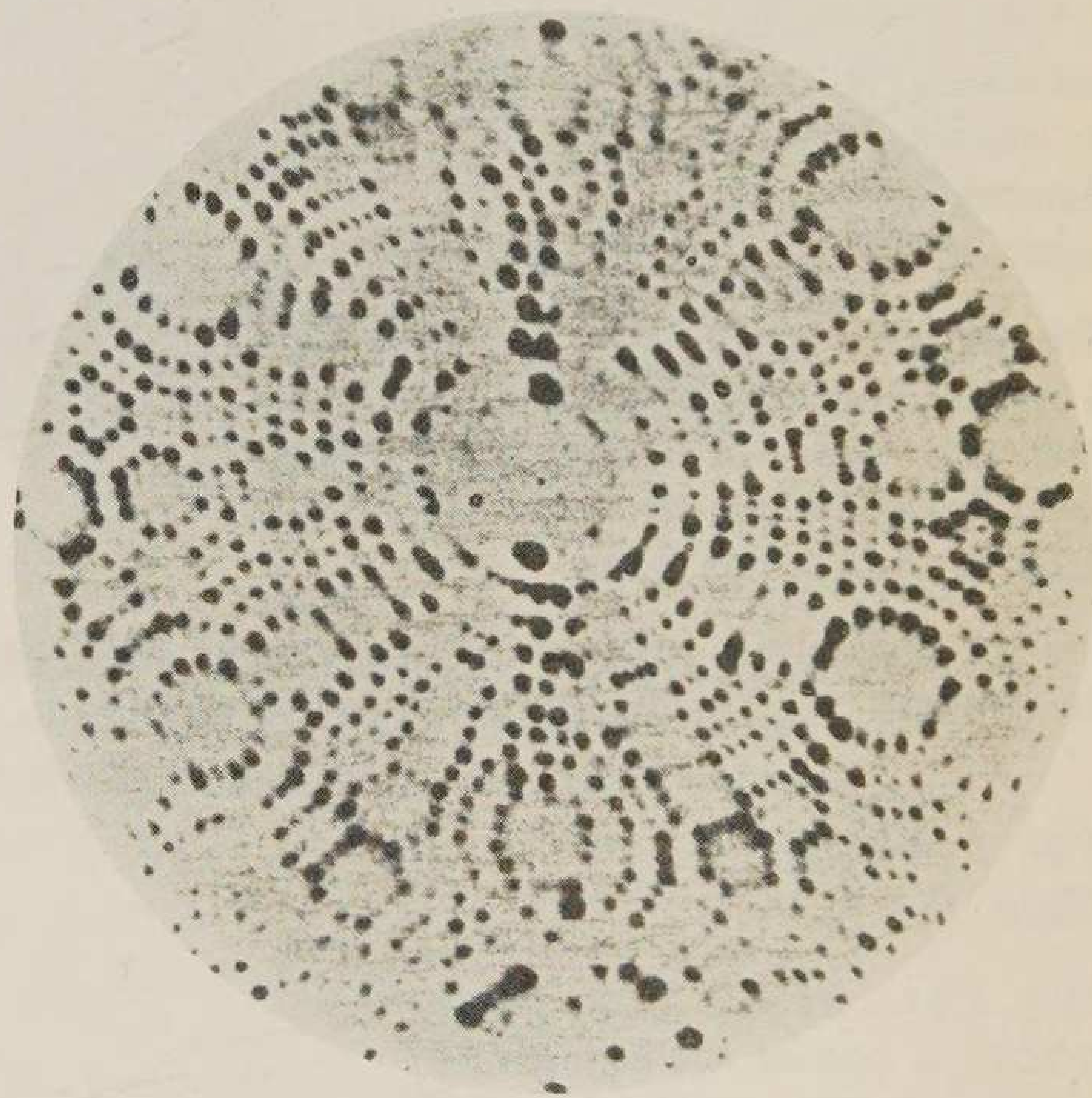
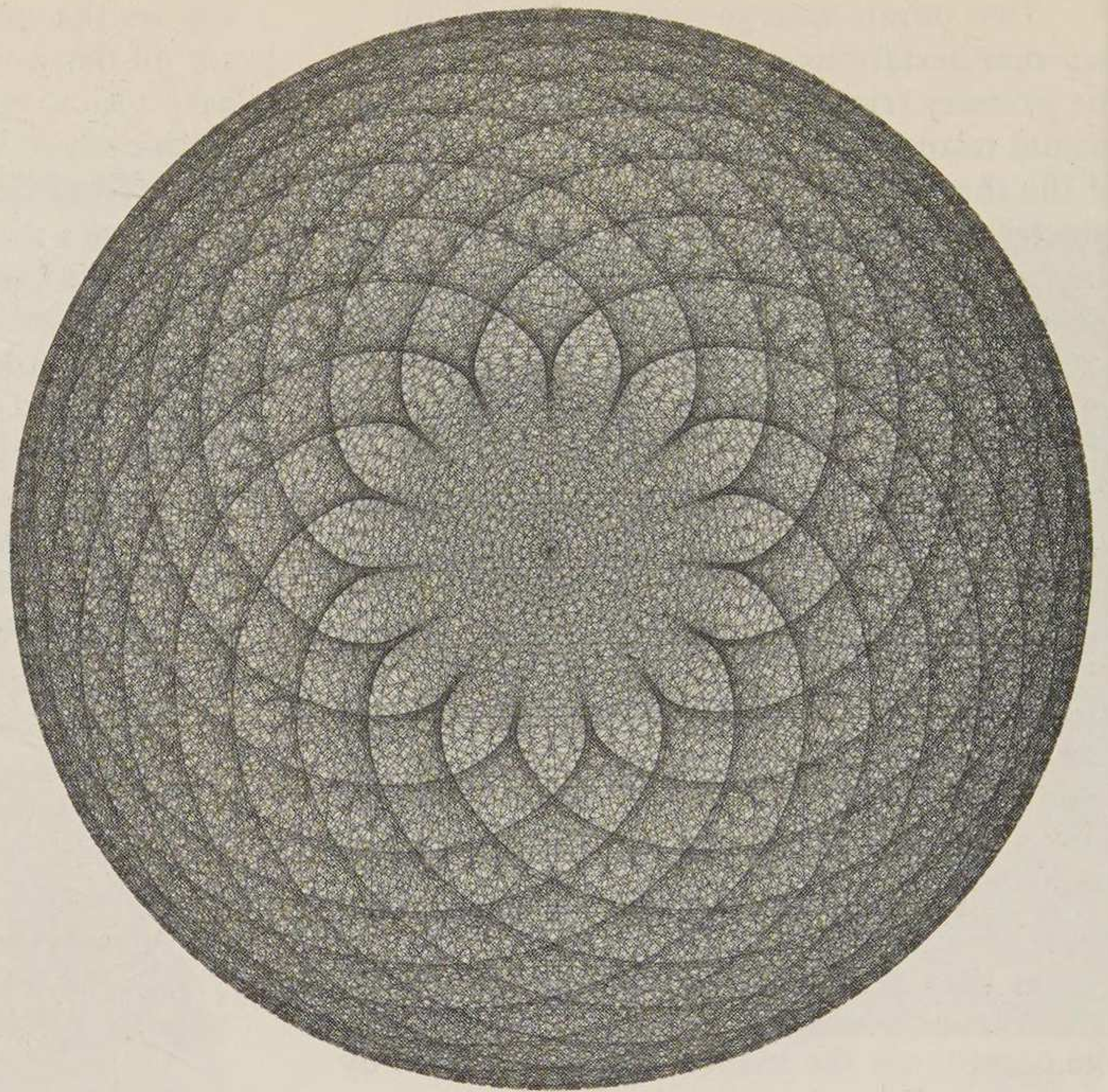


Figure 2

Since the evolution of consciousness as we know of it, man has been attempting to understand the origin of the universe, and has thus been confronted with the sometimes paradoxical task of finding a place of harmony and peace for himself, with nature. Not only is the mandala an invaluable means of understanding cosmogony, but this archetypal symbol also tells us much about the possible evolution of future man. Through history the mandala has conveyed one simple idea: regardless of whether it's through the ziggurat, or a high-energy particle trace in a cloud chamber (Figure #2), things and energy are naturally centered. Opposites per se do not exist exclusive of one another.

If we view the earth as a cell, a mandala, then we must likewise view our role in it as an active one.

White Light Lotus
Plate A

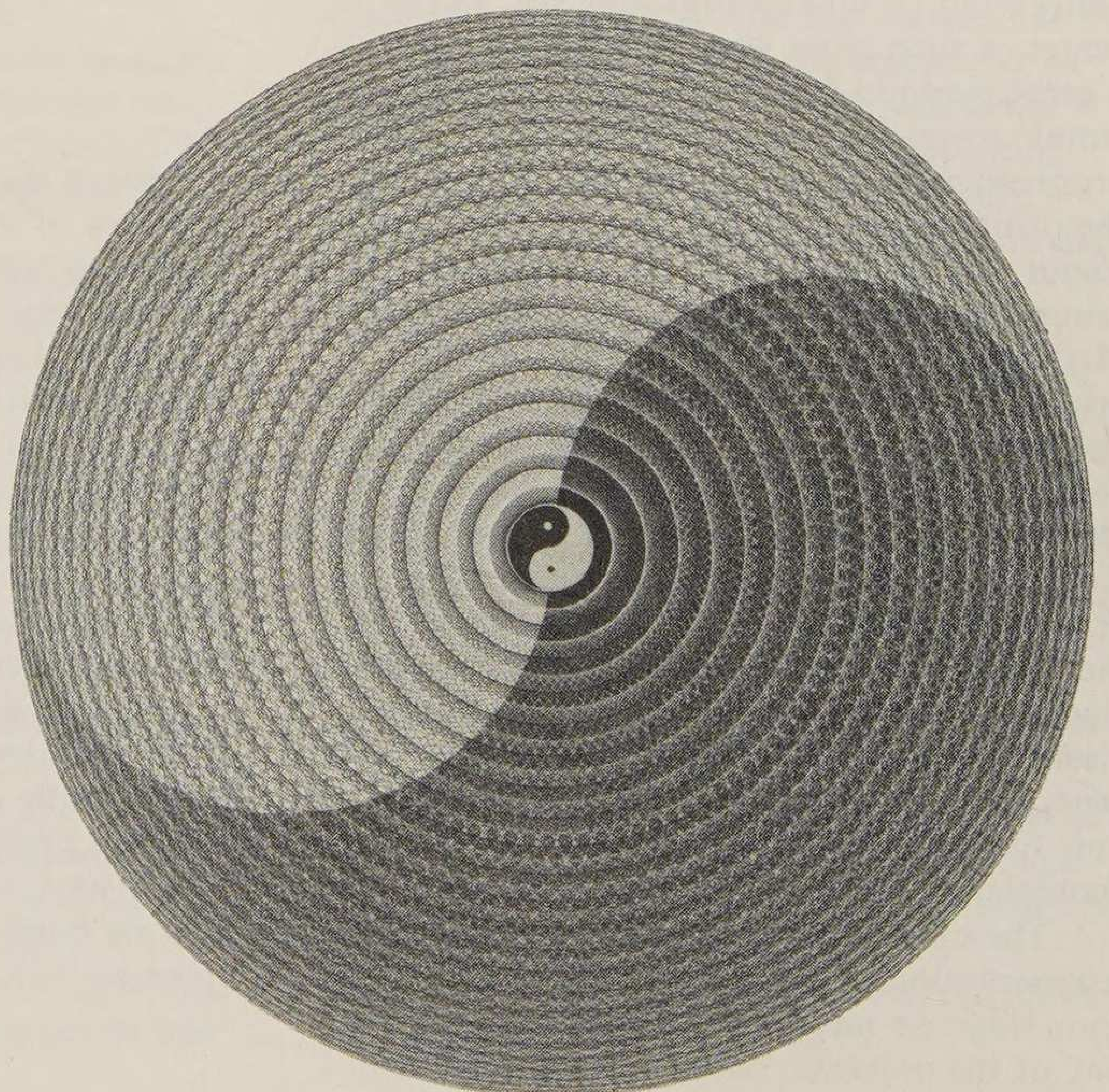


The White Light Lotus is monochromatic because at the center of consciousness it is believed that color ceases to exist. In its design fifteen rotations of the basic cardioid are formed, which create an inner sphere of higher energy. A cardioid is literally a map of the path of a fixed point on a circle which rolls around the perimeter of another circle. Ptolemy unknowingly drew this design in drawing the paths of the planets, as seen from a fixed point on the face of the earth.

This design appears frequently in nature, particularly in plant cells and their infrastructures. Crystals, including snowflakes, often resemble this form.

The lotus occupies an important symbolic position in religious symbolism, representing both the process of unfolding and of purification.

Yin / Yang
Plate B



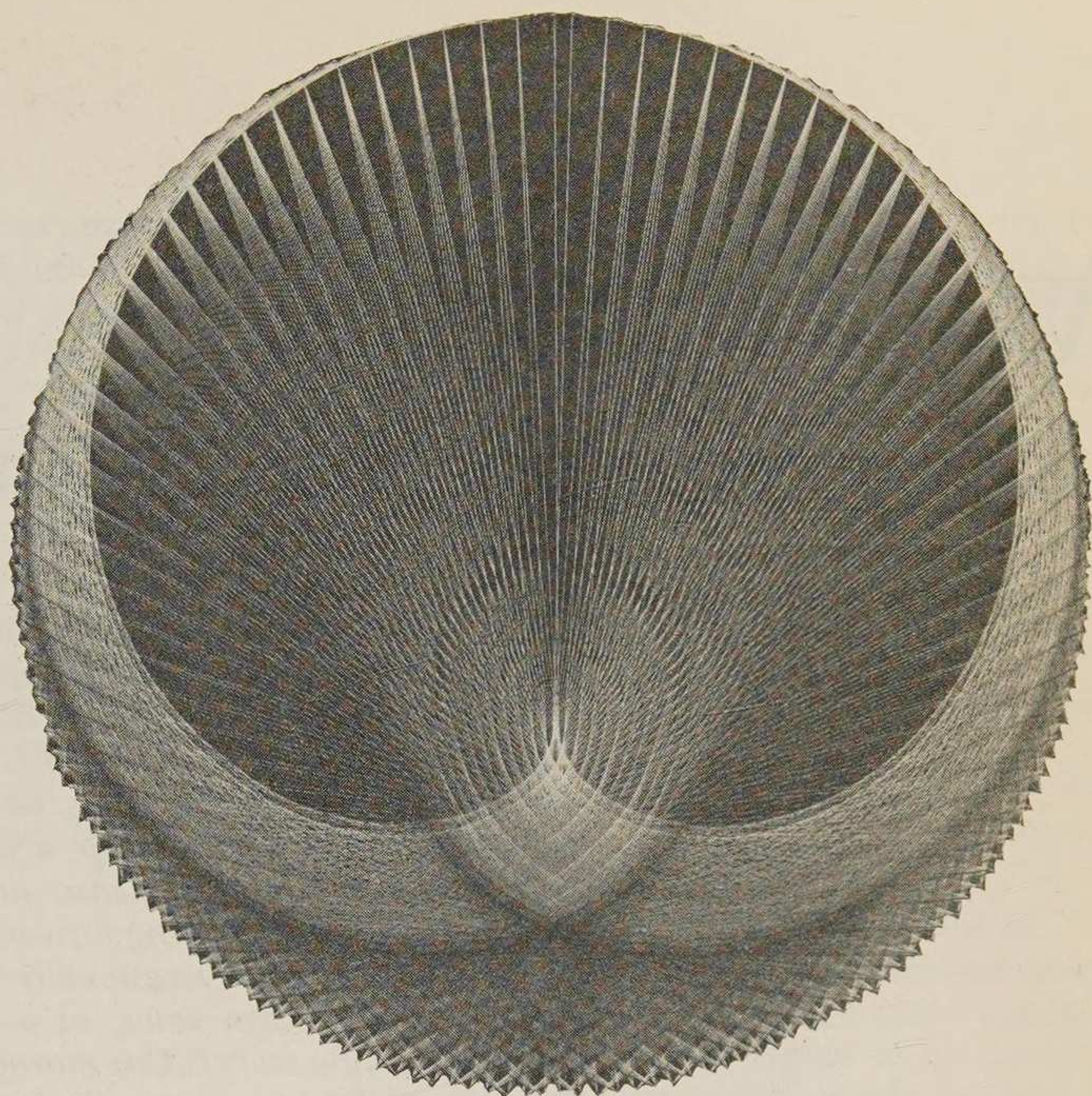
The *t'ai chi* or Yin/Yang symbol is one of the oldest and most traditionally rooted mandalic forms, representing the interdependence and unification of opposites.

In generating this particular design, alternating layers of black and white thread were superimposed over each other so as to create the illusion of circles. The chord length of each succeeding "circle" decreases, as does the space between the circles. Near the circumference the alternating black and white circles are spaced so closely that they appear to be grey, and blend into the background.

Yin and yang are often misconceived of as being two principles; they are one. In all yin there is yang, in all light, darkness, in all male, female, and so on. The symbol is a signpost reminding the *see-er* of his potential for centeredness.

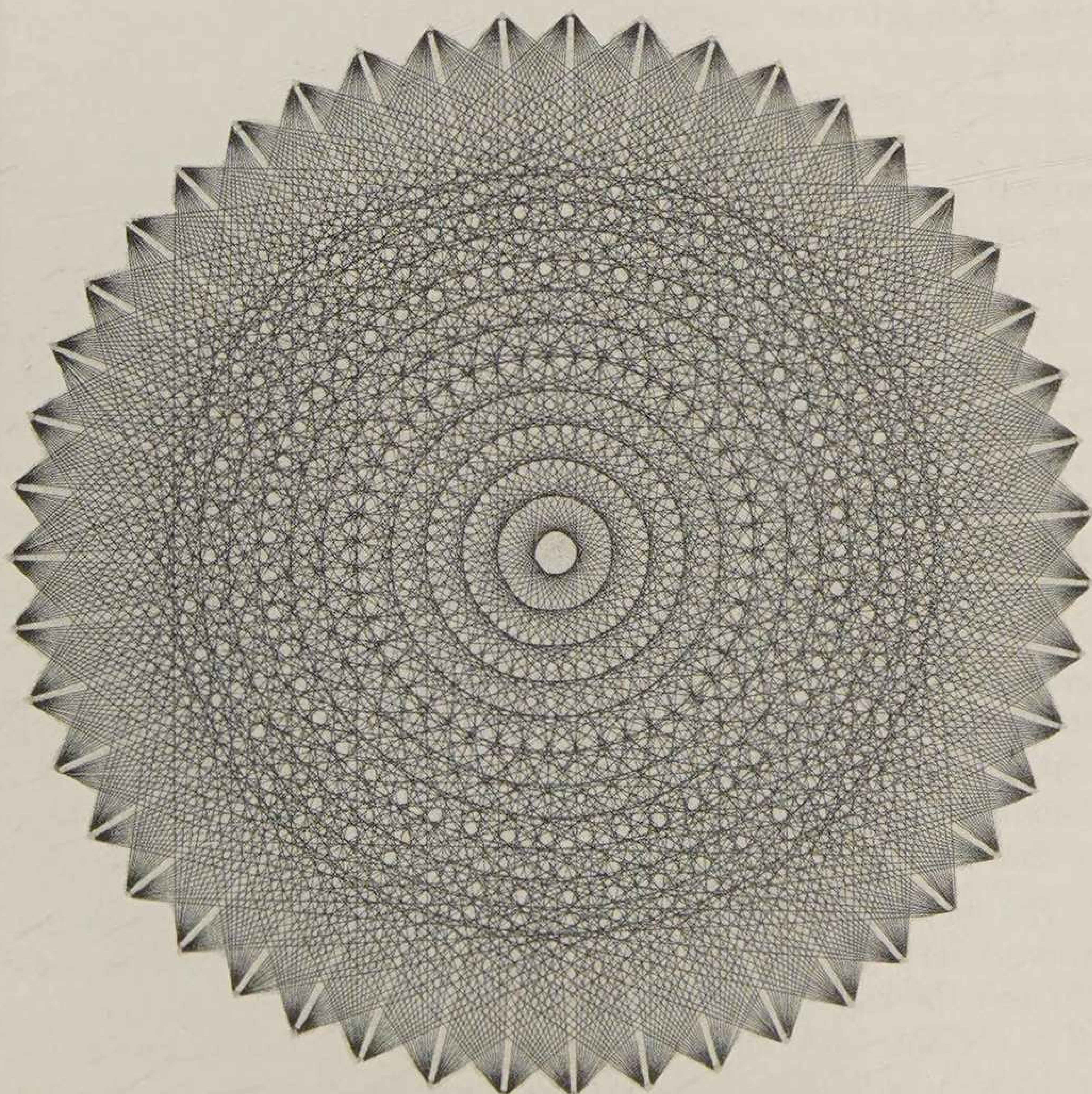
Curve of Consciousness

Plate C



This design, like the Yin/Yang, has a traditional origin, and is a map of the evolution of human consciousness, both in the case of the individual man, from childhood to old age, and in terms of the overall evolution of human consciousness. The centerpoint of the mandala represents the focal point, literally, of three realms of personal and global evolution: personal consciousness, collective transpersonal consciousness, and the most basic instinctual, primordial energy forms. Tracing the path of the line— from the center outward— portrays the evolution of consciousness both of the individual, from birth to death, and of the planet, as a whole.

The design was created using 180 points around the circumference. Using a mathematical function, the cardioid, which also describes the evolution of harmonics, a computer calculated the stringing sequence. Over nine thousand calculations were required to apply the twenty-seven hundred thread lines.



Ch'ien

Plate D

A simple mandala consisting of twelve concentric layers in monochromatic form, this piece clearly demonstrates not only the basic simplicity underlying the illusion of curvature, but the powerful ability of the mandala to convey an organic feeling of peace, symmetry, and harmony.

This structure is found in snowflakes, crystals, and polymers. Archetypally, it is one of several mandalas which might be called "Salutations to the Sun." It is named after the first hexagram of the *I Ching*, The Creative. This hexagram is composed solely of yang, unbroken lines and represents not only the creative energies, but power and energy unrestricted by anything in space.

Worlds of Discourse: A Conversation with Zalman Schachter

I met Reb Zalman Schachter at a conference on mysticism. My first impression was of size and speed— a big man emanating energy: a gown swirling with decisive rhythms, a tremendous beard, shining brown eyes, a swift smile. He wore a remarkable series of hats, different each day: one, out of a Renaissance portrait, of velvet and fur; a baseball cap; a yomulka that flew off backwards with his vigorous movements, just as the other head coverings threatened to be sent flying forward by a sudden gesture of rubbing the back of his head. Occasionally he broke into a beautiful Hebrew song in a rich warm voice, or a laugh followed by "... and that reminds me of a story!" One morning during the conference a well-known academician logically examined the pros and cons of mysticism for the whole period of time allowed for a dialogue between him and Schachter; with three minutes left for his share, Reb Zalman was reminded of a story by Kafka which ends: "You win!" "Yes, but only in parable." "No, you win in fact; in parable, you lose."

"Zalman Schachter has become something of a Jewish guru," Philip Mandelkorn has written of him. "For by his eclectic methods, intuitive sensitivity and outright chutzpah, *he has opened the doors of spiritual reawakening for literally thousands of thirsty souls in this time of Jewish renascence... He surely believes he has glimpsed a vision of a new age, now dawning, with Jews coming home to the faith, and the various religions weaving a harmonious pattern of holy brotherhood."*

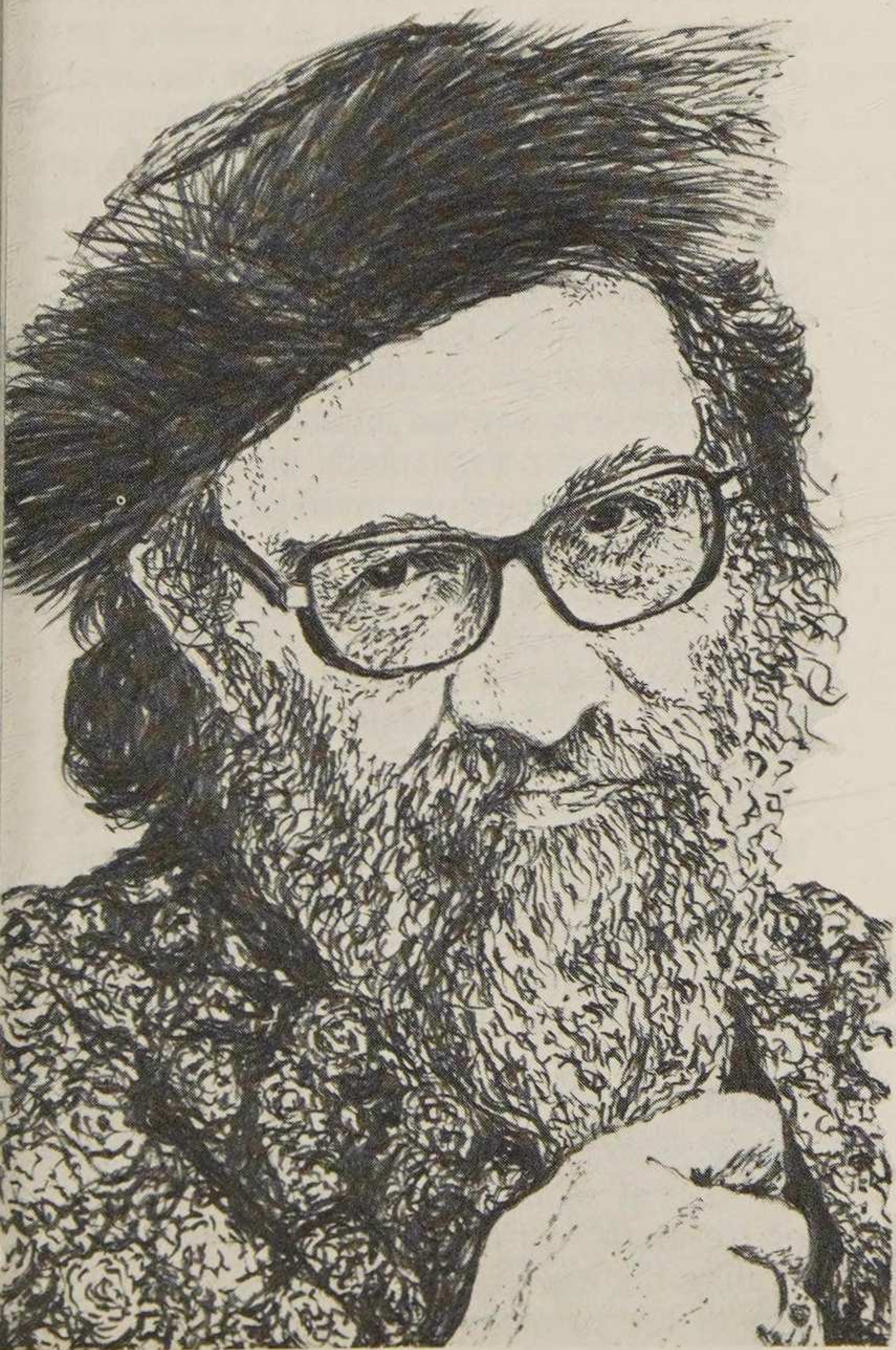
Reb Zalman was born in Poland in 1924. His youth and adolescence were passed in Austria, Belgium, and in an internment camp in France under the Vichy government. He was sixteen when he was released and came to the United States under the auspices of the Lubavitcher Chassidim, with whom he studied in Brooklyn and in 1949 was ordained rabbi at the age of twenty-two. For eight years he was a congregational rabbi in Massachusetts, but as time went on he became attracted to other spiritual ways and greatly interested in modern trends of thought, and his questioning led to a break with the Chassidic establishment. He followed his own path, studying, translating, and discovering his mission as friend and guide to Jews young and old who had lost— or never found— their way intc the heart of their own tradition.

His methods are indeed eclectic, too muchso for some tastes. He combines with Judaism the practices of Christianity, Zen, yoga, and Islam (he claims to be a Sufi sheikh of Pir Inayat Khan's sect as well as a Chassidic rabbi.) His devotion is to humanity and to the G-d, as he would write it, of all religions. He is in the forefront of the ecumenical, charismatic movement which is kindling so much

fervor today.

Rabbi Schachter's learning is as undeniable as his devotion. He has taught at Brandeis and Boston universities and was for ten years on the faculty of the University of Manitoba, heading the Department of Judaic Studies there. In 1975 he was appointed Professor of Religion in Jewish Mysticism at Temple University, where he is now teaching. He lives with his wife and several of his pupils in a big house in Philadelphia and keeps up a tremendous schedule of lectures, classes and travels, talks and workshops, human relations and divine worship, with the joyous energy of the born ecstatic.

Among his many translations and publications are a recent book, Fragments of a Future Scroll: Hassidism for the Aquarian Age, *published by Leaves of Grass Press in Germantown, Pa., and an album of two records with translations from Reb Nahman of Bratzlav, who was one of his great sources of inspiration and the great grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov, founder of Chassidism.*



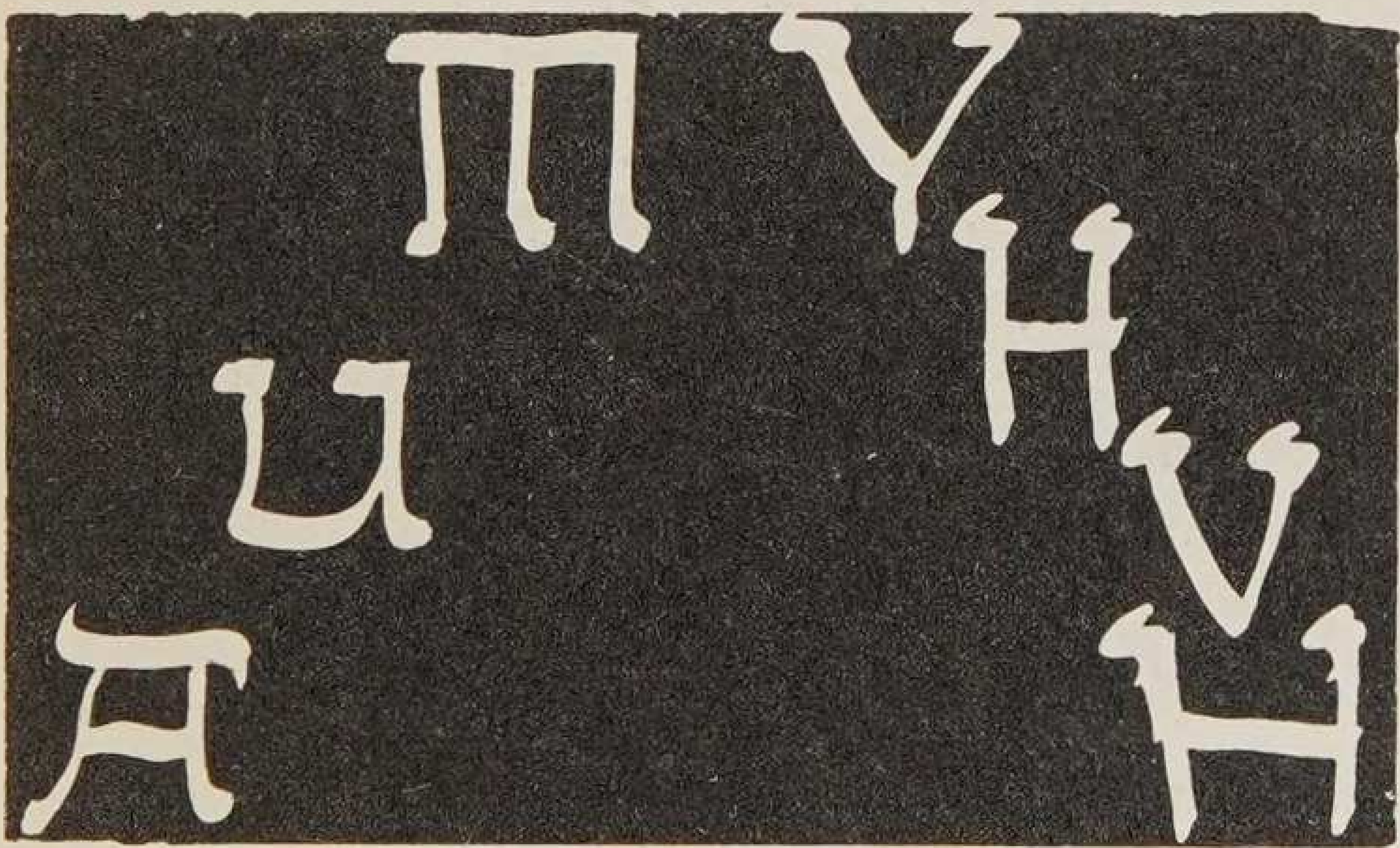
D.M. Dooling I was very interested in your meetings last night, and I noticed how many of the people there were quite young. It is such an important aspect of life nowadays, this fact that young people are looking so hard for something. Would we agree that one thing they are looking for is a mystical approach to God? What would you say that there is for them now in Jewish mysticism especially?

Zalman Schachter I don't think that it is mysticism as we talked about it before the Second World War, or what Aldous Huxley and Frithjof Schuon had in mind. What young people today are looking for by and large is more of an empirical way of getting to God. It's not that they exhausted all the ways that traditional and spiritual-direction literature have prescribed, and come to the place where one has to "transcend the borders of the senses," to quote St. John of the Cross; but they found out that a lot of religious rhetoric was propaganda, was used to manipulate people, didn't deliver what it promised. So the move has gone away from a contemplative mysticism that lost itself in the infinite, to a kind that is very blue jeans-like, that says: "If it works, it has got to work for me." So the stress now is all on how to do it; it isn't the mysticism of *what is it* or *how to love it*, but of *how to do it*. The yogis and the swamis were saying, "We don't have a new religion to give you, what we have is a kind of science: a science of the spirit." That had an impact. And there has been a fantastic proliferation of how-to-do-it methods, from Arica to EST— and I don't want to say

anything against them, because I've found that there are some people who do get through by the unlikeliest methods.

So, in this plethora of possibilities that are around today, what has Jewish mysticism got to offer to young people? Three or four things come to mind. Let me start with the hardest one: the mysticism that allows you to stay tuned to the infinite even in concentration camps. You can't quite do that with Hinduism, by saying *maya*, by wanting to move out of this space; it has nothing to say about how *this* world can be transformed. But the statement that this world *can* be transformed has a great deal to say to young people.

So the first idea that I would like to illustrate is that when people say *AUM* according to the Upanishads, one moves from the world of *A* to the world of *U* to the world of *M*, higher and higher and higher.



When you look at the Divine Name of Judaism: *Yod*, *He*, *Vav*, *He*, the movement is the other way— it is bringing the divine *down*. It isn't possible to have one without the other, because they are parts of one system. So the open way that yoga manifests is in this movement up, openly; in the hidden way, it brings it down. That is the true esoteric part of yoga. In Judaism the open way is to bring God down; the esoteric way is to go up, so as to be able to bring Him down. So that which is hidden from view is the secret of the path. Our notion really is that on the manifest plane we want to bring the divine down. We have become expert on how to be in touch despite bad conditions; that is a very heavy thing and it seems to me that with the problems the world has, this becomes really important. Transport yourself for a moment to eastern Europe and see someone like Tevye the milkman, who has a life that is pretty bitter, and yet gets into situations where he can still talk to God in this face-to-face way. That is one important thing.

Second, we know what to do with time. We don't have to escape to eternity in order to be able to find the spiritual; because for us the law of alternation works. The Sabbath is the alternation when we come up from the weekday situation. I used to say to parents who were upset about their children dropping out, "The reason they drop out completely is that they never saw you drop out on Sabbath." The Jewish way is that for six days you are square but you are a hippie for the seventh— which means you get into food in a really essential way, family life is very strongly emphasized, we are in touch with our senses; yet it is all vis-à-vis God— our sense life doesn't have to be separated from Him.

So we live more with time; and Professor Heschel was right when he said that the Jew lives less in space than he does in time. Shabbat is the punctuation of time, the signification of time. I haven't yet seen any other group of people that knows how to experience one day out of the week in such a way as to move so totally out of the everyday into the more mystical flight of the Sabbath. So I think that is a very important element that Judaism has to offer.

Next, since we mention the Torah: How do I discern God's will? How do I tap His wisdom? What is that pool of knowledge that flows down, in God's generosity, in teaching, in Torah? By not being dogmatic, allowing everyone to connect with the whole pool of this knowledge which is that mosaic which people connect with. So we have avoided the one-person syndrome: it isn't one Mohammed or one Jesus or one Paul or one Buddha who designates truth. Moses doesn't really play such a part, he is just one of so many. So we say that Jesus of Nazareth was one of so many people, including his martyrdom; Gautama was only one of the so many enlightened beings and

avatars that have passed through our life; and to take one out of context and build the whole thing around him doesn't suit us too much.

On the other hand, we want to learn the material of this teaching and apply it, practically, to daily life, even to food and food packaging. This kind of concern about what God wants, even about such details, connects with the idea of how we can tap His wisdom, and shows that yes, one can, and one can make a blessing and get in touch with that wisdom, work on it, interact with it. So the word *covenant* is important. We talk about the covenant: "Are you in the covenant?"— which is a way of saying: "Are you in the reciprocal relation of Creator and creature?"

There are other things in Judaism, but I will leave it with these just now.

DD. You were speaking of young people being more interested nowadays in the "how to do it," and I think that's very true. I suppose that always, not just in this generation, youth wants to "do," and certainly one of the favorite words today is "creativity." It's a word I'm very suspicious of, because it's one that people usually fool themselves with; yet surely there is some kind of creation that is possible, and maybe necessary, for human beings. What do you think is the real possibility of creativity for us?

ZS. Torah and Shabbat make good connections with creativity. On Shabbat you don't go to the store, you don't go to work, not even work for God— even that should be playful, restful, relaxed. Worship is more fun on Shabbat. So creativity enters in this amazing idea of how to make routine exciting. Let's say you have to make the same soup week after week, but each time you put a different herb in it and it becomes a different soup. So creativity for the human being cannot be to make the substance, make the being itself, but comes into the form and shape and decoration one gives to it. We always are just the arrangers, not the composers, when it comes to creativity.

DD. What about what you were speaking of last night, the service that man can perform for Torah: the constant renewing, the reanimation that his attention and energy bring to it?

ZS. That is part of it! It has to do with the stress, you see? Everything that I am involved with has to have an element of consciousness. I touch the mezuzah when I walk out of the door of this room. It means I want to stop, just arrest my step for one moment as I leave the room, connect with the Ever-Abiding as best I can for that moment, and then move on. So on the outside nothing becomes visible except that gesture. Now it is also possible that this gesture becomes empty— as in most religions the gestures have a way of becoming empty. Then creativity is the way in which we constantly infuse the gesture with awareness, so that it shouldn't be empty.

For instance, the Sabbath comes; what do we do on the Sabbath? We have a custom here in this house that we write to each other Sabbath letters. Nowhere in Jewish spiritual-direction literature do you find anything like that. But somehow we found that living together, routine takes over in such a terrible way that we never tell each other how much we care to live with each other and how much we care for each other. So before the Sabbath we sit down and write each other love letters. When the sanctification of the wine and the bread is said, one of the children takes the letters around; and it feels really good to give and receive a warm letter that says "I care." Now, that is where creativity comes in and Torah gets renewed each time; because the next generation maybe in their Sabbath practice will say, "We received as tradition that on the Sabbath we must write a letter." So all those goodies that people invented along the way, which were produced by their eagerness to try to bring more of God into awareness and relation— that is where creativity comes in.

DD. There is another angle which interests me. A number of creation myths suggest

that God created man through some necessity of His. What could be this part man has to play? It seems you touch on it when you say that man maintains the life of Torah by—

ZS. Embellishing it with consciousness.

DD. Yes. But what really *must* he do? If God made man because He needed him, does man fulfill this need of God's willy-nilly, so to say? What is this need?

ZS. I don't know if I can answer that without spelling out a kind of hermeneutics of reality. When we speak of Torah, it works the same way as the Divine Name with its four letters. Each letter represents another universe of discourse. So the lowest letter, *He*, represents the discourse of karma yoga, of action. The *V* is the world of Yetzirah, which means formation; the upper *He* is creation. The plane of formation, *Vav*, is the feeling plane; it has a new language, new laws, different from the laws of the plane below.

The upper *He* is the mental level, the world of B'riyah, where the contemplative is, where if I love God at all it is *amor Dei intellectualis*— I love Him with my intellect; whereas on the plane of *Vav* I love Him with my heart, and on that of the lower *He* I love Him with my action. So each plane has a different law.

You asked: on what plane does God need us? We can't say He needs us on the mental level; that is where all the "omni's" are— God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, all those superduper words. He doesn't need us. On the level of the lower *He*, if I feed God I am involved in idolatry; if I put real physical food before God, who can't eat it, I make a mistake. It is on this *Vav* plane (and it is here where most of Western language is deficient), the plane of heart, the plane of feeling, that God is hungry. So when the question is raised as to what is our input into the relation with the divine which keeps the universe going, the answer is that we feed feeling into God.

The deep intuition feels that God is lonely: He is the only being of His kind— Its kind, Her kind; one can't find a decent pronoun that is personal but not masculine or feminine— and on that plane God is in solitary confinement in eternity. He can't get out and has no one to be with. For all the bliss that may be worth, it also creates a certain despair: will God ever be able to share with anyone? So what can we do? We can entertain God; God wants to be loved, He wants to be entertained. There is no purpose for this world on the plane where God is the Pleroma; there it is so full that nothing is needed. The lack that God needs to have filled comes on the plane of feeling, in this world of *Vav*, where one can say that God is hungry— hungry for that energy that comes from the heart.

Now how do we give heart energy to God? At one time we solved that with sacrifice. Mary had a little lamb, and everywhere that Mary went the lamb went too. Then Mary did something that separated her from God; she "sinned." The time came for her to get "at-oned," to get close to God again. So she took her lamb in which she had invested a lot of love and care and offered it as a sacrifice, saw it consumed in fire and with it all the pain that went along with the love that was offered. What does God get out of that? Something He can't get from any other being but man: relationship. Neither angels nor other beings have that which makes them capable of saying *no* to God; man can stand up in front of Him, sometimes even correct Him, say, "What You are doing is wrong." So when he says *yes* it becomes much more signifi-

cant. That is considered to be the food of God.

The whole sacrificial element was bound up at first with the things that were offered; then the Temple was destroyed and we couldn't do it that way, and we tried to find the verbal formulae that would allow that feeling to be given to God. When someone says "I love you," it may not be new information; I told you that yesterday and the day before, so why say it again? The answer is that it is not for information, it is a vehicle for carrying feeling. And so all the worship and liturgy is a vehicle for feeling. We want to take the entire palette of feeling and offer it to God, including our despair, our sadness. If you look at the calendar you see that we have happy holidays and sad ones, we have mourning and lamentation days, because this entire range of feeling we want to give to God.

Now I think this is what our experience is, concerning loneliness, and concerning the possibility of transcending things whenever there are people around who are able to touch us. We can read books to keep the brain fed, we can do exercises to keep the body happy, but the feeling can't be happy in a vacuum. So the I-Thou relationship is in the conjunctive universe; and the conjunctive universe is in the *Vav*. That letter *Vav* is always used as a Hebrew conjunction: this *and* that, *haze* v *hazot*. It works the same way in the Upanishads too, where the *U* world, which is between the *A* world and the *M* world, is a conjunctive. Now, the secret of that conjunctive is what one may say man provides. God makes the universe; people make those ligatures. Your work on *Parabola* is like that; your journal finds fragments of the human spirit all over the world and brings them together between two covers. That is one way of connecting those fragments so that the future's scroll will incorporate the whole works. These are ligatures that only people can provide. Take them out and you have a jumble; put them in and it makes sense. Those ligatures are a function that I call *signification*.

Reality is *so* vast, and nothing seems to connect, and then you bring someone with a mind and a soul who contemplates all that and says *Aha!* and each time he says *Aha!* it is as if another set of ligatures connected.

DD. Then you see this function of man as being the connecting element not only with God but between all the different levels of

life?

ZS. Yes; he's a ladder. Let me show you how it works out. If I take those four letters of the Divine Name and draw them one on top of the other, they take on the appearance of head, shoulders and arms, spine, pelvis, and legs. And out comes something that says, "Man is made in the image of God."

Now how does God go about becoming Person, from the infinity of infinities? How does he focus into personhood? Isaac Luria, the sixteenth-century Kabbalist, teaches that the first flash God ever got on personality was something glorious: "Let there be person! Let there be this focus of awareness, of volition, of feeling— let there be that! And let us call it Adam Kadmon"— that stands for *maximus homo*, primal man. But between primal man and real man there is a lot that has to happen.

On the basis of the Zohar and other teachings (or, in more spiritual language, on the basis of revelations that he received), Luria realized that there is a level on which the Gnostics are right: this world is a calamity, it is a tragedy. All the stories of the Fall mean that we are in a post-calamity world; when we arrive on the scene, earth has already been ravaged. This calamity occured at the time of the "breaking of the vessels"— this is the language used by the Kabbala. God started to work on his relationship with man with the whole range of colors of the palette, but the colors didn't mix. He began with love and then he put

rigor into the world, but rigor and love didn't mix: the surface tension between them was so great that in order for rigor to develop, love had to be shattered— almost as if that early love got broken by the anger that was behind rigor. So what happened to all the pieces of love? There are fragments all over the universe that get lodged here and there, in high things and low things. A love poem, a psalm, a devotional song— all these are sparks of that original love.

But rigor doesn't give the world a way in which it can live; there isn't room to move. So God brings the next attribute, mercy; and that breaks through everything, and of course rigor shatters. And wherever there is a moment of awe of God, or that total rigor we have to pass through when we die, there is a spark of the original rigor. Compassionate mercy breaks rigor; but mercy is so good that sometimes it takes away initiative, and doesn't allow anyone to do anything. There can never be structure with mercy around, and God wants to have some structure; so mercy gets shattered. And wherever there is an act of pure grace, or where one person forgives another, it is the discovery of a spark of that original bit of mercy. So then there is structure; but structure becomes overweening, like the Tower of Babel: everything must obey the needs of structure; and it gets broken down by aesthetics, by beauty. *Netsah* gets broken by *Hod*. So there are fragments of structure around and sometimes we pick one up and make something work.

Then comes the next attribute, which is *Yesod*, communication. Because beauty can be hollow; sometimes it fails to convey anything, to communicate, so it gets broken for the sake of communication; and communication gets broken by that negation called *Malkhut*, which is the negation of all positives, the universal solvent. Everything gets dissolved again in *Malkhut*. Even *Malkhut* gets broken because God can't have life being constantly dissolved. But the fragments of *Malkhut* that are left allow for transformation; and what life is doing is picking up pieces of *Malkhut* in order to dissolve and recycle.

That world of calamities is called the world of *Tohu*, chaos; and man's task, says Luria, is to build the world of *Tikkun*, by fixing the world up. What happens is like making a stained-glass window, after those big sheets of glass, blue and red and all colors, are shattered; we put it together, and the lead that joins the pieces is our significance, as it were.

So in the end we put it so together that now there is another kind of rhyme and reason, and there is a blending possible among the various attributes. So says Luria that is the purpose of the creation of man.

"All these are the things that God created in order to do." End of Chapter 1, Genesis. Read it not: "in order for God to do," but: "in order for man to do." He gives us a world which lacks just enough of perfection that we have got a lot of things we can do with it. So we get our significance out of living by trying to put things together. Each time we do it we ask: "Is that the way you want it, God?" and the answer comes, "No, not quite." So we take it apart and put it together again. So as history proceeds, each time we may put it together a little bit better, but we have as fallout a lot more problems— we see our activity creates a lot of junk. Up till now we thought we could throw the junk away, but now we see there is no place to throw it. So once more, we are learning about *Malkhut*— how to dissolve things, how to recycle, how to reconnect them.

Teilhard de Chardin sees the world like this: first there is this earth; there is no life. It begins like a vine, putting out creepers, and it fills itself with life, the biogenesis of life. Then this life gets conscious—

DD. He doesn't explain how. That's where I stop; how can consciousness come from unconsciousness?

ZS. It comes from someplace. Whereas the medieval people said God created the world out of nothing, the Kabbala said there isn't any such thing as nothing. Nothingness is negation of *something*. So if God creates, he can only make it out of Himself— because He fills it all, there is nothing that is

devoid of Him. Even this table has to be God, having forgotten that it is God— imagining that it is a table and so acting as a table.

The rabbis teach how, when a child is conceived, an angel descends into the womb and teaches the child the Torah. Every time the baby kicks it is saying: "Oh, wow! What a neat insight that is!" and that is why the mother is so proud and says, "Look, look, how he's kicking!" So when the time comes for the child to be born, the angel is holding a light over his head but then he strikes him on the upper lip, on that little groove line under the nose, and the child forgets everything; so when it comes out into the world, the first scream means: "Oi, did I know so much, and look what I've forgotten!"

DD. That's a different slant on the idea of the primal scream!

ZS. From that moment the child sinks more and more into the body, which isn't capable yet of expressing that fullness, so it has to disappear into amnesia. But each time we learn something "new," or come to a "new" understanding, it is really a "reminder" of what the angel taught us. Maybe I should add that it is also said that the angel can't teach the new being the entire Torah, because pregnancy lasts only nine months and Torah requires a whole year; so each child only gets three quarters of it, and that is why we don't all remember the same parts of truth. And that is also why teachings that we didn't receive from the angel are not acceptable; they don't fit, and we reject them like a tissue reject. Sometimes we can't connect with a teaching that comes from our own tradition, and sometimes we need to take something from another teaching because it is closer to what we got from the angel.

DD. But don't you think that people *do* accept teachings that don't fit them? You say all teachings are good; do you really think that? Don't you think that there are complete fakes and charlatans among the many gurus inhabiting our planet at the moment, and don't you think that they do harm people and spoil possibilities for them?

ZS. Yes. I believe that. I agree with you. But sometimes the problem is in the application rather than in the teaching. Teachers can be of the body type or the head type or the heart. Moses was the former, Michelangelo's man of action. Buddha is usually depicted as a roly-poly viscerotonic, the heart type, and Jesus as the lean, Grunewald cerebrotonic, but I would rather see them the other way round; because for the Buddha, the answer is right or wrong knowing, and Jesus is very much the heart teacher. So if the guru is a heart person and someone comes to him with a head problem, if he is not a true, wise, universal, *big* guru he may give heart medicine for a head problem, and it will be poison. It may be true advice, but the person can't use it. Not everybody can be helped by being given a mantra; some people need to be put on a strict diet.

DD. I am thinking of gurus who are neither of the heart nor the head, but only of the pocketbook!

ZS. It is true that that is happening. It shows how great the need is, that people are willing to part with hard cash in inflationary times just to attend a weekend and be called asshole. The moment you franchise it, you put enlightenment out on the counter like McDonald's hamburgers. There isn't enough input. If a follower of Maharishi Mahesh gives me a mantra without sharing with me, without finding out anything about me, the mantra may turn out to be a monkey wrench in my machinery rather than the thing that will put me together.

DD. What is to protect people— or how can they protect themselves?

ZS. *Caveat emptor!* A little bit of common sense; doubt. Doubt is the best ally I have against sham. One of the things that caused my break from the system from which I came, Habad Chassidism, was that doubt was not permitted. I raised some very heavy questions, and when I was told they were bad questions and that I should put them out of my mind and submit again to a system, I felt it was time for me to graduate.

DD. In connection with Chassidism, and with what are called the right-handed and the left-handed paths, where do you consider Jewish mysticism really to lie?

ZS. The exoteric system will domesticate mystics provided they will be voices for the right-handed path. The right-handed path wants to make sure that the whole rational-legal establishment of religion will be supported rather than corroded. The left-

He Shin Aleph

Woman

Shin Yod Aleph

Man

handed path is the one that corrodes the legal-rational establishment's way by moving via the charismatic, the impetuous; so the Apollonian is the right-handed and the Dionysiac is the left-handed way of doing things, the way of charisma, of the child, of the fool. The left-handed path is so freaky, it throws one into such dangerous experiences, that one gets into great anxieties going in this way. By the right-handed path, I can't get back to the Garden of Eden except by going all the way around the globe; by the left-handed path, I can go directly to the Garden of Eden, but it turns out that there is this angel with a flaming sword who won't let me in; and I feel great anxiety the closer I get to the flaming sword, which has to do with ego-dissolution.

Part of the left-handed way has to do with sex. There is no greater metaphor than sexual union for the union between man and God; the Zohar and all the mystics of the past speak of being a lover of the Beloved, of shaping oneself reciprocally with the Lover. On the other hand, there is nothing that can so separate a person from God as sex— if it makes me feel that I am the god and there is no other, or that as long as we love one another that is all that matters. Sex that is a manifestation of ego is not kosher; but in that which says that God loves me through her, and her through me, and we both are melting in the pool of this divine love, the ego becomes transparent and consciousness becomes a threesome consciousness.

This is the way the teaching says it: the word for *man* is spelled *Aleph*, *Yod*, *Shin*; the word for *woman* is spelled *Aleph*, *Shin*, *He*. The two *Alephs* and the two *Shins* are the same for man and woman; the difference is that there is a *Yod* in the male and *He* in the female. *Yod* and *He* make the word *YA*, which is found in Hallelu*ia*, and which is one of the divine names and the beginning of the four-letter name (*YHVH*). If *YA* is taken out it leaves *Aleph Shin*, which is the word for fire; but when *YA* is left in, when God is there, man becomes a man and woman becomes woman. Without God all we can bring is just fire, which burns out and leaves ashes.

The left-handed path brings God into the things of life, into the bed and into food, for instance: if I enjoy food because it is there only for me to enjoy, then the ego becomes a barrier; but if I allow myself to become transparent I can lend God my palate; so whatever is delicious in the world, if I enjoy it as a transparent being I can enjoy it for Him.

Another meaning of sex, which is in Hinduism, in Sufism, and of course in the Kabbala, is that my real desire is for union with God, it is to make love to God; but God in His grace and wisdom denies me contact with Him except through others. So my partner in love is one in whom I can see the divine principle of femininity, and she can see in me the divine principle of masculinity. If I say: "I want you to love *me*, not the God in me," I become opaque, and fall; and that is the danger of the left-handed path. There is the flaming sword, and I feel anxiety; and that anxiety is what brought a lot of ideas about celibacy into religion— fear of allowing that danger. But there is no life where there is no danger.

DD. Would you say that what is really alive in Jewish mysticism now is in the left-handed path?

ZS. Not quite. If I say the left hand is alone, it is chaos. For instance, this delight I feel while eating on Shabbat, offering it all to God, can easily get into an eating orgy; finding God in every person in sex can lead to a sexual orgy. There have to be

limits so that I don't transgress, so that it isn't corruption and vice that are energized, instead of the love of God. I sometimes use the terms silly and serious: serious is right-handed, silly is left-handed. Serious needs silly very badly, because otherwise it is all work and no play. But silly must not become the rule for more than one day. Silly always has to be the tickler of serious in order to keep serious awake; but serious has to keep a roof over silly's head. If the left hand and the right hand collaborate, as they must in everything, then the experience of the past is kept alive. You see, I really believe in tradition; I believe, however, that tradition is what a group of souls leave behind so that when they become reincarnated they don't have to learn from the beginning of the alphabet again. There is a depository of the teaching; the *magisterium*, the *depositum fidei*. The next time we come back we find it here. Now into whose hands do we entrust it? It is the parable of the talents again; we find the most conservative investors and give them the trust fund to manage. So the *depositum fidei* gets handed to the most conservative people, and that is the right-handed-path element. But when we come back, if we are wise, we realize that while we entrusted it to the right people, the money isn't there to stay in the trust fund, it is there to be used.

What souls leave behind in order to find again, that is what I think is tradition; therefore I don't think I should throw anything out of tradition— I need the whole junkyard, well catalogued and available— because what one generation can't use, another may need and can find again. The nineteenth century couldn't stand mysticism— at least, in the West; it needed to get to rationalism, it had to get rid of so much mystification and the way people were manipulated by it. And of course we can't allow mysticism to be an opiate, as Marx called it, that we give people in order that they should not think or function rightly. The nineteenth century did a good job; but they threw out a lot of baby with the bath water. It would have been wonderful if they could have said: "Now we don't need mysticism, but we still want to keep a living school of the ancient past," as for instance in eastern Europe Chassidism kept mysticism alive. Now, after the two world wars, the world is looking into the blazing H-bomb and saying: "We can't continue on this path, we have got to do something else." So this old way that was lying dormant all of a sudden blossomed. It was like spring in Manitoba where I used to live: the buds on the bare trees get thicker and then seem to burst into leaf. After World War II we first had existentialism, then the beats, then the whole greening of America and the optimism that came with that; and now there is a very rich bed for all those mysticisms to flourish again.

DD. So what do you think people are specially needing now?

ZS. I think people are starving for fantasy. What Aldous Huxley called the antipodes of the mind— if I don't go there from time to time, I live an impoverished life. If I go to the fantasies of TV, they are all commercialized—

DD. Is it fantasy we need, or myth?

ZS. I think fantasy is the way to get into myth. If I say that thinking leads me to reason, to a system of philosophy, and sensing leads me to experience, and feeling is the response to experience, in the same way I would say that fantasy is the door into myth. You remember that fantastic parable by Kafka about the man who couldn't understand parables? We need a door to get in. For most people, the door has been slammed in their youth. Most teachers don't know how to make use of the energy of fantasy— or any of the youthful energies, for that matter. I was working with a group of high school kids who were so full of pepper they couldn't sit still. Instead of trying to make them be quiet, I said, "Let's say the Sanctus moving our arms like this: *Holy*, with the arms crossed; *Holy*, with the arms lifted; *Holy*, raising them as high as possible; then turning in a half circle, with the arms out, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory! Holy, Holy, Holy— " and for five minutes the whole place was transformed, by giving a channel to the energy that was there—not asking it to change, but to make a connection. In the same way, fantasy is the door to myth because it exercises that element that our teachers exorcized from us as youngsters.

DD. Where would Chassidism stand today, for instance, on the subject of fantasy?

ZS. When Chassidism first appeared, its opponents said that antinomianism was raising its ugly head: "Here is this Ba'al Shem Tov telling people to be free and happy;

this leads to leaving the law and following one man. We don't want that." So Chassidism tried to avoid the Scylla of form and the Charybdis of antinomianism. It came first as a middle road between silly and serious.

DD. But now it has become serious, hasn't it?

ZS. And the reason for it is that the people who were supposed to take care of serious stopped taking care of it. Orthodoxy is always necessary in order to keep the right-handed element together. But orthodoxy fell apart; it didn't have any vitality any more. So the only place where vitality was left was in Chassidism, and Chassidism had to man the bastions, as it were. And while it does that, and it teaches people how to keep the forms, it has very little energy left. The left-handed way only shows itself in opposition to the right-handed way; so if Yeshiva University and all the orthodox people would do their job, then Chassidism could do more of the left-handed things— dance in the streets, celebrate, stop people and ask them outrageous questions. But there isn't the energy. So it's not perfect. But it helps just to recognize that the growing edge is never in the center of the tree, it's always on the outside. Conservatives want to be in the center where it's safe; but the new development, the new life, the new juice is on the growing edge. Chassidism used to be on the growing edge, but now having opted for keeping the structure, or the centrist position, it's crazy people like myself who are on the circumference, on the growing edge. And it means we have to stay in touch with other such crazies in other traditions and have a new kind of devotional dialogue with them, in which we learn so much from one another. This helps some of what we have to do now, which is to bring back things that Judaism had, but has lost, like the mantra. We had a martial art, for instance— a form of belt wrestling; there are echoes of it left— but we lost it, and I think I know just when and why. We had fertility rites, many things, that were thrown out the door for one reason or another, and they come back in through the window, but in disguise. We need to get back what we have lost. The Christians can gain a great deal, I think, from rediscovering sacred dance; some people are trying to bring it back into Christian worship. The Sufis have it, and among the Chassidim you see some dancing.

DD. This brings up an interesting point about the interdependence of the right- and left-handed paths, in the art and ritual of all the traditions. The prescribed movements of the sacred dance, the sacred dance of the Mass, for instance, or of many other rituals, the repetition of the mantra, the chanting— when do they become empty forms? There is no blueprint for that, of course.

ZS. Yes, there is, and no, there isn't. Here again there is a curve— worship has to have a curve. It has to go up from the prayers at the foot of the altar until I go to the Kyrie, the Gloria, the consecration and consuming of the elements. Most of the time it just stops abruptly and falls down. Obviously it is necessary to descend with prayers, with thanksgivings—

ZS. To make the full parabola, in other words.

ZS. Right! That's the word. Now the feminine is very strong in the descent; the masculine does the initial arousing, gets to the top and then collapses. The feminine knows how to maintain and to bring it to fruition and to take it down. This is why if women are going to be priests, I would want a man to lead the first part of the Mass, and a woman the second part. Climbing the mountain is masculine; descending, and entering the cave, is feminine. The rising part of the curve is masculine and the descending is feminine. And the reason the world is in such a mess is because we haven't had feminine "priests" take us gently down and connect us again to earth in a loving way. We can be taken up the mountain and left stranded there, and if there is no right coming down, we just suddenly fall down, and there is no re-entry. I can't stress enough the importance of that. It takes me back to what we were talking about at the beginning: the purpose of creation. God is very good at doing the masculine thing (at least the way we understand that now)— Heaven loving the earth; it is the earth responding to Heaven for which man was created. One might say that in all mysticism the function of the human being is seen to be the feminine, the beloved, the responder to God, who is constantly saying to Him, "Come, build a home with me. You have taken me up the mountain, given me the great vista; now come down and build a cabin and help me raise a child."

So I think the function of man is to be woman!

I feel women teachers are such a necessity. Only one Chassidic master was a woman; and there was one Rabi'a in Sufism, but the trouble was the men couldn't leave her any space.

DD. Must it be necessarily two different people, "man" and "woman"? Couldn't it be two different forces in the same person that bring the energy up, and down?

ZS. Agreed. That opens another aspect: it was my father who taught me how to be a man in the world; my mother taught me how to love. What flowed between my mother and me is what allows me to meet people in love; what flowed between my father and me allows me to function in the world. What flowed between my mother and my sisters allowed them to be women in the world, and what flowed between my father and my sisters allowed them to love.

DD. What is it really to be men and women in the world? Going back to the idea of the functioning of the human being in the continuing process of creation, what is "duty" in the sense of behavior, of action in life, of a way of living?

ZS. I think it has to do with communication between people, and the feeling that is communicated. For instance, two people meet for the first time— like you and me. They may be worlds apart in their upbringing and education and ethnic background; but sometimes there is a door open between them and they recognize each other as fellow conspirators in the universe. And they feel something special about each other. We need fifteen or twenty words for "love"; C.S. Lewis points out the different qualities that the Greeks expressed in words like *philios*, *agape*, *eros*—

DD. I'm told the Quechua Indians had a hundred and twenty different words for love.

ZS. Marvelous! Wouldn't it be great if we could get such a vocabulary into print, with all its nuances and connotations? It's the same thing with *soul.* English is such a poor language; that word has so many connotations, and we need to be as precise as the Eskimos are about different kinds of snow. So the problem is how to key our communication so it should be familiar and not too familiar, so it should be friendly but not too vulnerable, because we don't know each other's virtue-vice combinations and I may touch some button inside of you that will make you turn on me. There are so many land mines hidden in the human psyche that can blow up and that we have no notion about; there are so many dangers. We need to learn to give each other signals of how we are inside, so we can let go safely when things aren't right, and we have to make room for each other's ups and downs; we have to have relations that are strong enough so that true feeling can show. Every relation calls for a kind of covenant, a sort of contract, implicit or explicit. With the majority of people we don't have the explicit contract to stay with truth, but we do have it implicitly.

And of course we need not only communication from the head but from the heart— nonverbal communication, an exchange of emotional energy, and sometimes an even higher, spiritual energy. We haven't the vocabulary to describe that in words; but I think that in the next fifteen or twenty years we are going to sharpen this kind of communication very much.

And that reminds me of a story: Someone asked Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz: "How can we pray for someone else to repent when this prayer, if granted, would curtail another person's freedom of choice? Is it not said by the rabbis that everything is in Heaven's hands, except the fear of Heaven?" Rabbi Pinchas answered: "What is God? The totality of souls. Whatever is in the whole can also be found in the part. So in any one soul, all souls are contained. If I turn, in *t'shuvah* [which means the turning, or returning, to God or to our inmost Selves] I contain in me the friend whom I wish to help, and he contains me in him. My *t'shuvah* makes the him-in-me better and the me-in-him better. This way it becomes so much easier for him-in-him to become better."

TANGENTS

Parabola presents reviews of two recent films about great religious teachers, both of which caused a great deal of controversy before their release but curiously little since they have come before the public. We believe that the very fact that these films were made is an indication of a need— a need to make a statement about Islam, about Christianity? A need for a new approach to the teachings, or to the Teachers? What is this need, and was it answered by the making of these films? NBC thinks that ninety million people watched *Jesus of Nazareth*; the producer estimates 400,000 for *Mohammad: Messenger of God*. Were they impressed, or disappointed? Is it actually possible to present what *Parabola* calls a myth— that is, a symbolic statement of eternal truth— in a factual, historical form? Did either of these films bring an *idea* in a fresh way, to be food for our times, or did they only remind us of what we have heard before?

FILMS

Mohammad: Messenger of God

A Filmco International Production
Producer/Director: Moustapha Akkad
Cinematographer: Jack Hildyard
Screenplay: H.A.L. Craig

This inconsequential extravaganza conveys very little of the meaning of Islam, but it tells us a thing or two about the modern world. For one thing, it shows how little you can get for twenty million dollars these days: a B Middle Eastern western with some luscious desert photography and a cast of lavishly costumed thousands. Too, it betrays the stupidity of terrorism: by holding the movie hostage, the Hanafis made a quite forgettable movie memorable and may have ensured its box office success via the inverse logic that whatever these terrorists are against must have something good going for it. And perhaps most pointedly, it raises once more the question of why religious films are almost uniformly awful. Part of the problem must be the aim of such movies. In this case, the obvious purpose is to tell the story of Islam in a way that will appeal to a mass international audience, and necessarily what you get is a religious lowest common denominator: a melodramatic history lesson, providing a rudimentary, Sunday school-level introduction to the origins and development of Islam and the teaching of Mohammad.

In short, this big-screen, Eastmancolor, Panavision production is Arab/Islamic propaganda gone Hollywood. Presumably it presents what rich and powerful Arabs, who pumped a small fortune in petrodollars into it, wish the world to think about Islam: that it is a heroic victory of monotheism over benighted paganism; that it is friendly with Christianity and Judaism; that it has been in the vanguard of racial and sexual equality; that it champions the oppressed; and that it is immensely successful. The story runs from the first secret meetings of young idealists with Mohammad through the flight to Medina, the wars with Mecca, and the ultimate victory through the word to spectacular shots of modern mosques and minarets all over the world and tens of thousands thronging modern Mecca.

With its good guys/bad guys plot, epic battle scenes, stereotyped characters, speechifying dialogue, and big-budget cinematography, scenery, and music, it is the Arab/Islamic answer to *The Ten Commandments, Ben Hur, Lawrence of Arabia*. The point being: see folks, we have just as good a story as you and can make a multimillion-dollar spectacular of it too.

But there is more silliness in this movie than even Cecil B. DeMille would allow, and I don't mean just that Mohammad's followers always wear white and look earnestly righteous, while the pagans wear dark clothing and invariably look surly and unhappy. There is, for instance, the handling of the character Mohammad: even though the script repeatedly emphasizes that he was a man among men and not divine, the movie honors Islamic tradition by never having him appear or say anything. But director Akkad keeps Mohammad as the central character, and when people look at him and talk to him, they look reverently straight into the camera, and never of course get a response. The effect on the movie-watcher is ludicrous: I kept looking ahead of me to see if Mohammad was sitting silently in the front row. Another case is the treatment of women. Their equality with men is emphasized, but the only woman with any prominence and force is Hind, the embodiment of evil paganism, vigorously misplayed by Irene Pappas as a Greek tragic antiheroine.

I could go on— the movie does for almost three hours— but there's slaughter enough in the film's plot. Suffice to say, this is not the Koran nor the lofty spirituality of Islam, but a caricature of them: on that, at least, the Hanafis have a point. It's simple-minded propaganda served up as a falafel epic.

John Loudon

TELEVISION

Jesus of Nazareth

Directed by Franco Zeffirelli
An NBC-TV colorcast, 8-11 P.M., April 3 and 10, 1977

The difficulty of Christian faith is that it turns not simply on adherence to an intellectually, ethically, or emotionally compelling world view but on one's interpretation of the significance of certain historical events— specifically, the life and death of the man Jesus of Nazareth. It is probably for this reason that attempts will continue to be made to tell the story of his life despite the clear evidence that the documents which have come down to us concerning him are not biographies in the modern sense but highly complex apologetic-theological constructions. Franco Zeffirelli's six-hour film *Jesus of Nazareth* is such an attempt.

It starts off badly. The hour-and-a-half elaboration of the entirely symbolic infancy narratives threatens the worst kind of literalism. Drawn-out embellishment of the story of the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod Antipas, Herodias and Salome threatens distortion for the sake of sensationalism. Robert Powell's (as Jesus) soulful eyes and hollow cheeks leave hope for little more than painfully predictable sentimentality. But one scene did save the first night's viewing for me: that of the telling of the story of the prodigal son, the merciful father, and the jealous elder brother in the crowded home of Matthew the tax collector, as Jesus' more respectable friends listened at the door, unwilling to associate with "sinners"— climaxing in a restrained and moving reconciliation between Andrew, the brother of Peter, and Matthew.

The second night picked up on the promise of that scene. No doubt New Testament scholars will find things to criticize in the film. Nevertheless, the figure who emerges as the story progresses into the heart of his adult life is that of a compelling teacher of love and forgiveness— a man without fear, so confident is he of his intimacy with God, whom he calls, and invites others to call, "Father." True to the Gospel apologetic, this man is claimed to be the anointed one of God, the awaited one, bringing salvation not in the expected sense of political revenge and triumph but as a new order of compassion among all men and women based on recognition of universal sinfulness and reconciliation with a merciful God. Robert Powell's fragile physical appearance gives way to a luminous intensity, conveying the strength of inward conviction and of what Kierkegaard called "the passion of faith."

The scriptwriters (Anthony Burgess, Suso Cecchi d'Amico, Franco Zeffirelli) introduce an interesting interpretive element in the saying of John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes *unto himself* the sins of the world." This theme is elaborated in the confrontation between Jesus and Barabbas, who is portrayed (by Stacy Keach) as a Zealot seeking the violent overthrow of the Roman authorities. Urging love and forgiveness on the angry Barabbas, Jesus says: "I have come to take on my

shoulders the sins of the world. He who would follow me must do the same." This is no sentimental, Pollyanna-ish love, but clear-eyed compassion born of acceptance of what Jung has identified as "the shadow." Unable to hear it, Barabbas goes his violent way.

The scriptwriters have drawn most on the Gospel of John, presenting Jesus as the bringer of life and light, through spiritual rebirth by the power of God. In witness of this, the raising of Lazarus is presented with admirable restraint, accenting its symbolizing of the power of Jesus to recall the dead to life.

The central dilemma of the early Christians and of their literature was the execution of Jesus. The attempt to explain this event as the working out of divine purpose and the fulfillment of ancient prophecy is the dominant motif of early Christian apologetic and hence of the Gospels. This literature was composed in an atmosphere of extreme tension among Jews who did and Jews who did not accept Jesus as Messiah. This fact of Jewish-Christian history, transmitted to an increasingly gentile church, has led to centuries of tension and persecution, and is, some have said, fundamentally responsible for the Holocaust. Volumes have been written on the passion narratives and on the trial of Jesus.

It seems to me that this highly sensitive area has been approached with great care by the producers of this film. The Jewish leaders are portrayed as men seriously concerned for the fabric of their faith and the unity of their people. Jesus is portrayed as one obedient to a power that transcends final definition. The identification of Jesus with the suffering servant of Isaiah is explicit testimony to the divine reversal of all "reasonable" values. The emphasis in the depiction of his death and resurrection is, as it should be, not on who did it but on its signification, the reconciliation of God and world and the consequent release of new life among women and men. Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum has called the film "a major breakthrough in the filming of the life of Jesus," one which "consciously sought to portray first century Judaism in a warm, faithful and sympathetic light."

In summary, then, this film is, with slow start and occasional lapse, an intelligent and well-performed presentation of the essentials of the New Testament proclamation. It does not ask new questions or resolve old ones. In its depiction of the adult life of Jesus, however, it does not offend by overemphasis of the nonessential or by oversimplification of the ambiguous. Its primary focus falls not on the wonder of his works nor on the pity of his sufferings, but on the transformative power of his teaching— a teaching told in parable and symbolic deed, in the terms and images of ancient Hebrew heritage. Apart from its relationship to its parent source, the Christian religious experience cannot be adequately understood. The exploration of that relationship in mutually respectful terms has at last begun. If the sympathetic tone of this film contributes in any way to that effort, it will have been well worthwhile.

Melissa Kay Wood

REVIEWS

No Souvenirs Journal, 1957-1969

By Mircea Eliade. Translated from the French by Fred H. Johnson, Jr. New York: Harper & Row, 1977. Pp.xiv + 319. $15.00.

By Mac Linscott Ricketts.

With the publication of this book, readers of English for the first time are given a glimpse (or rather, a generous view) into the private life and personal thought of Mircea Eliade. The renowned historian of religions who seems extraordinarily reticent about speaking "personally" in his scholarly writings, forcing his readers to look between the lines for his own beliefs, appears very differently in this volume. Readers will be surprised at Eliade's candor here, being afforded insights into both the man and his writings previously unavailable to those who read only English.

No Souvenirs is a translation of part of *Fragments d'un Journal* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), which in turn was a translation from Rumanian, Mircea Eliade's mother tongue. The French book included Eliade's Paris sojourn, 1945-55, which the publisher of the English translation has chosen to pass over. *No Souvenirs* deals only with those portions

f Eliade's journal written after his coming
) the United States in 1956. This volume
ıight then have been entitled *American
ɔurnal*, except that large portions of it
ere written while Eliade was in Europe
uring the summers. Also included are two
ravel diaries" recording Eliade's
npressions on visits to Japan (1958) and
1exico (1965).

Eliade began to lift the veil on his
ersonal life and thought as early as 1953
ɔr the benefit of his compatriots in the
umanian diaspora, in an autobiographical
ssay published in *Caete de Dor*, a Parisian
umanian exile paper. Subsequent issues of
iis mimeographed publication contained
xcerpts from his journal, from the years
941 onward. More extracts appeared in
ter exile periodicals; and in 1966 Eliade
ublished the first volume of his
utobiography, covering his life down to
928 when he embarked for India at age
1. Evidently Eliade felt free to share his
onpublic life with those closest to him, his
llow-exiles, but not with others; or
erhaps he was simply waiting to be asked.
s he states more than once in *No
ouvenirs*, he has not tried seriously to
ɔromote" his books.

Eliade had to leave all his personal
apers written before 1941 in Rumania and
/as unable to recover them after the war,
/hence the title *No Souvenirs*. We learn
ıuch about earlier periods of Eliade's life,
owever, thanks to the book's many
lashbacks. The author is continually
eminded of his adolescence, youth, and
arly adulthood in Rumania and India. In
his fashion, and with the aid of the
reface, the reader is able to reconstruct a
ood part of Eliade's life story. Eliade lives
nost vitally in his own "mythical past."
ike *homo religiosus* who abolishes time
nd escapes from the terror of history by
eturning to the time of origins, so Eliade
eems to go for refuge to the Rumania of
lessed memory. Virtually all his literary
vorks composed since 1945 have their
etting in that mythical geography— which
s, Eliade declares, "truer" than the actual
vorld of Bucharest then or now. Yet to say
hat Eliade has allowed himself to be
ngulfed by his reveries would be wide of
he truth, as many other portions of the
ournal make obvious. He is very much
live in the present and concerned about
he future. Memories loom large in these
ages because, as the author tells us, he
eeps a journal for the very purpose of
providing himself with a means of
preserving the past and evoking memories
of it in the future.

Despite the highly personal nature of
this book and the drawbacks of this literary
genre (disjointedness, references to persons
and places unknown to the reader, etc.), *No
Souvenirs* is a delight to read. Besides
musings on themes of scholarly books and
articles in progress, the book is full of
anecdotes both humorous and sad, of
accounts of fantastic dreams, of reactions to
meetings with the famous (Jung, Teilhard
de Chardin, Tillich, Bultmann, Conze,
Pettazzoni, Altizer, Allen Ginsberg,
Campbell), and the obscure (undergraduate
and graduate students, "hippies," a woman
who thinks she is God, etc.), of encounters
with animals (a noisy nocturnal tomcat, a
friendly Chicago squirrel), commentaries on
authors whose books he is reading currently
(on an amazing variety of subjects), of
accounts of epiphanic moments when
something is revealed to him, of
observations on American life and manners,
and of candid assessments of his own
writings, both scholarly and literary.

The reader of *No Souvenirs* soon
learns of the great importance of literature
in the life of this man. Goethe is his
supreme model, Papini his inspiration; one
or the other of these two is mentioned on
almost half the pages of the book. He
admits freely that the only writing he really
enjoys doing, aside from the journal, is
fiction (most of which still awaits
publication in English translation). It is
through this medium that he hopes to
create a new "mythology" of a sort that will
make other worlds accessible to Western
man in a way religious myth once did. Yet
he ascribes an equally important role to his
writings in history of religions: he sees
himself "among the rare Europeans who

have succeeded in revaluing nature by discovering the dialectics of hierophanies and the structure of Cosmic religiosity." For this work he has "sacrificed 'literature'...to try to lay down a new way of understanding *homo religiosus*. In a certain sense, I too [like Beranos] have 'witnessed' in a religious war that I knew in advance to be lost."

The pessimism of this last statement is echoed in a number of other memorable passages, but it is a pessimism only for the immediate future, though that era of darkness may last several thousand years. For in the long run Eliade holds to an optimism comparable (he says) to that of Teilhard: "Although I see man crushed, asphyxiated, diminished by industrial civilization, I can't believe he will degenerate, decline morally, and finally perish, completely sterile. I have a limitless confidence in the creative power of the mind."

The translation, on the whole, reads well, conveying the literary quality of the original, although there are problems due to the double translation. A number of Eliade's Rumanian writings are referred to by French titles which they have never borne, and certain Rumanian idioms are distorted: the "tufts of wicker" on p.4 are really clumps of willows, and the "blurred print" of p.12 should be pulp literature. It is to be hoped that future translations from the journal will be made directly from the original language. The division of the book into titled chapters is an improvement over the French format, and the new preface is very valuable. An index would have enhanced the usefulness of the volume.

Mac Linscott Ricketts is professor of religion at Louisburg College, and author of a number of articles on Eliade. He is co-translator of Forbidden Forest, *a novel by Eliade, to be published later this year.*

Cosmology Now

Edited by Laurie John, with an introduction by Sir Bernard Lovell. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1976. Pp. 168. $10.95.

The Rebirth of Cosmology

By Jacques Merleau-Ponty and Bruno Morando. New York: Arnold A. Knopf, 1976. Pp. xv + 284 + xvii. $12.50.

By Ninian Smart

The exploration of the universe is not just a scientific task. It touches us all. For we also, like people in earlier cultures, wish to see our place in the cosmos. We have certainly come a long way in the West since Biblical times, for as these two books well illustrate, the twentieth century's Einstein, huge telescopes, and above all radio astronomy, have provided us with a universe of truly amazing size. Let us look at one aspect of this.

Our own galaxy, which we see chiefly as the Milky Way, possesses about 100,000 million stars. Elsewhere there are at least a thousand million galaxies which are visible. Up to a quarter of all stars may have planetary systems. But even if it is only one in ten, and even if we take into account only one galaxy in ten (for some are at special stages in their evolution), we still may think of a million million million planetary systems (1,000,000,000,000,000,000). Is there then life elsewhere? It looks certain. We are not alone, but distances are vast and a light year is very little in the cosmos, so we shall never meet our neighbors.

I said we have come a long way since ancient or even medieval times. The blend of Greek and Biblical thinking that produced classical Christian cosmology, here explored in *The Rebirth of Cosmology* by the famous French philosopher Merleau-Ponty, envisaged man as at the center, with the sun, moon and other bodies moving around us, and with a backdrop of stars on an outer sphere. Aristarchus had proposed the theory that the sun is the pivot of our planetary system: but the other picture implanted itself grippingly upon the European imagination. Hence the upheaval caused by Copernicus and Galileo was formidable.

Now either the universe is infinite, as one school of modern astronomy considers

BOOKED FOR A NEW AGE

THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA
by H. Saddhatissa

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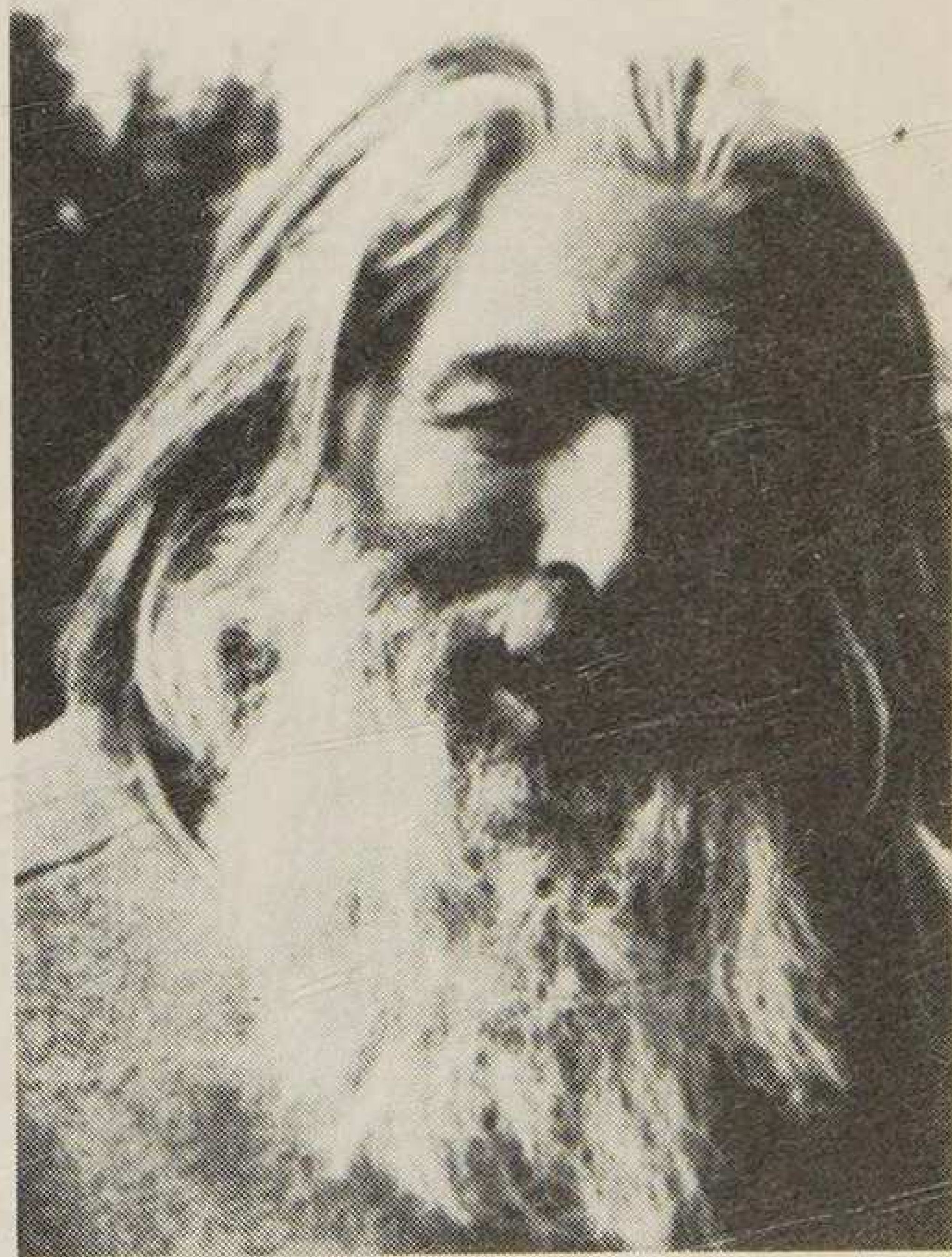

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it, or it is what is known as finite but unbounded. Imagine an ant on an orange. It never comes to any edge or boundary, but it can go all the way round and end up where it started. So it is a finite orange (for distances round the sphere are finite) but an unbounded one (there is no end to the ant's possible wanderings). Transmute this idea by thinking of space as curved and you have the most prevalent model of our universe. It follows that every place and no place is at the center. There is a complete democracy of locations. The ant might think his starting place was the center: but all other ants, with equally great and equally little justification, could think the same.

Combine the idea that there are living systems elsewhere and the notion that we no longer can claim any cosmic privilege in regard to where we live, and you find a disturbance of traditional Western thinking, and in effect a destruction of both the uniqueness of man and the feeling of being at the center of God's creative concerns. Modern cosmology is much nearer traditional Hindu-Buddhist conceptions, stressing the vastness and plurality of the cosmos. I am not saying that a reformulation of the Christian salvation story against a wider backdrop is impossible. But there is little doubt that some older Christian elements will have to go, if we are to take the faith in a seriously realistic way.

The collection here edited by Laurie John, arising from BBC talks, is an excellent guide to the latest thinking. It is largely intelligible to the layman, but without sacrificing rigor and relevance to the specialist. The essays illustrate the ongoing speculation and debate in the field. The universe is still inscrutable. Did it all start with a big bang, as Big Bang theorists maintain? If so, can we think sensibly about something going on before the Big Bang? Is it expanding uniformly? Have the laws of nature changed? Can Black Holes be explained according to presently accepted notions? These and many other issues have not been unambiguously resolved. Of the essays, all of which are good, the ones I found particularly interesting were those by Bondi, Ryle, Sciama, Narlikar and Taylor— already a chain of stars from the cluster of distinguished men Laurie John assembled for the collection.

The book by Merleau-Ponty and Morando, both French, is less satisfactory. The one is a philosopher, the other a scientist. The book becomes too mathematical for many, while it is probably not advanced enough for the student or expert. It does, however, exhibit the transition from ancient through medieval to modern cosmology, and in particular the break between Newton and Einstein.

Too often we think of the rift between ancient and modern; the rift between modern and modern is equally profound— that is to say, between classical physics up to around 1900 and the physics of the twentieth century.

Relativity theory opened up various possibilities about the universe. One was that it pulsates. Before the Big Bang there had been a collapse of a previously expanding universe, and so on in due course with our phase. And so on. It is reminiscent of the day and night of Brahma, when the universe after creation and dissolution goes into repose and then flares up again in a new evolutionary phase. The awesome picture painted by old India remains, transmuted. We may perhaps too take comfort in the thought that there is life scattered through the galaxies. Even if we kill ourselves in World War III there may be Shakespeare and Einstein analogues elsewhere.

Ninian Smart is visiting professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of The Religious Experience of Mankind.

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The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights: from the Winchester Manuscripts of Thomas Malory and other sources

By John Steinbeck. Edited by Chase Horton. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976. Pp. xiv + 364. $10.00.

By David A. Leeming

The first question that must arise in the mind of the reader of this incomplete "translation" of the *Morte d'Arthur* is why was it done at all, or more to the point, why, when Steinbeck himself seems to have let the whole project drop, did his literary heirs see fit to publish it? The greatness of Malory's work lies in its wonderful simplicity and one might well go so far as to ask why it needed to be "translated" in the first place when a few spelling modifications make it readily available to anyone who reads English. While it is true that the "modern" versions of Lanier and Strachey—versions intended for the eyes of "boys"—leave out the earthier aspects of the Arthurian story, the Caxton version, through which the story has become a part of our culture, does not. And in the still more complete text of the Winchester manuscripts, from which Steinbeck worked, Eugene Vinaver has, as Steinbeck himself wrote, "brought to the work...the feeling of wonder and delight so often lacking in a schoolman's methodology." Steinbeck's claim that he did the translation for "my own young sons, and for others not so young" is clearly inadequate.

The real answer to the puzzle lies in the appendix to the volume, where Steinbeck's correspondence with his editors on the subject of the Arthur project makes, oddly enough, some of the most interesting reading contained in the whole book. Here Steinbeck reveals— often in painful terms— the true nature of his commitment to that project. "As you have said," he writes to his editor, "'This is a never-ending search.'" And "...there is something in Malory that is longer-lived than T.H. White and more permanent than Alan Lerner or Mark Twain. Maybe I don't know what it is— but I sense it. And as I have said— if I'm

wrong then it's a real whopping wrongness." And elsewhere, "If when I've worked the summer away and fall—if it still seems dull, then I will stop it all, but I've dreamed too many years—too many nights to change directions."

Steinbeck himself was a modern day Lancelot on a personal quest. He sought to re-establish the glory of his Arthurian memories in his own idiom. But it did not work; the Grail remained elusive. Deprived of the costume which is Malory's language, the veil of archaisms and quaint, ambiguous phraseology, the world of "faerie" which is Malory's world turns into a pumpkin. Lancelot, Morgan le Fay, Balin, Merlin, Sir Kay, the Lady of the Lake— even Arthur himself— emerge out of proper context as petty, selfish, and untrustworthy prigs, pests and boors involved in a tiresome series of empty rituals. In fact, what stands out most in the Steinbeck translation is the kind of naturalistic scene such as the one in which King Arthur "with shamed and evil eyes" watched the sailing away of the little death ship filled by him, in a futile attempt to avoid his fated death at the hands of Mordred, with all the male babies born on May Day.

Steinbeck must have realized that his quest was a dead end; he started it in 1957 and eventually abandoned it for all practical purposes. He must have seen that without Malory the knights and deeds of his childhood lost their substance, that the magical life-giving energy of art became in his translation the empty shell of artifice. This is not to say that there are not fine moments in the Steinbeck version. There are. And perhaps this is what led his heirs to publish this half-completed, generally uninteresting adaptation of a great classic that did for English prose what Chaucer did for English poetry. So we come back to the original point; it should not have been published at all. It belongs with unpublished manuscripts available to those who would approach it as students of John Steinbeck and his life's quest rather than of King Arthur and his.

David Leeming is an associate professor of English at the University of Connecticut, where he teaches Myth, Religion, and Literature. His publications include Mythology *(Newsweek Books World of Culture Series),* Mythology: The Voyage of the Hero *(Lippincott) and* Flights: Readings in Magic, Mysticism, Fantasy, and Myth *(Harcourt).*

Myths

By Alexander Eliot. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976. Pp. 320. $39.95.

By W. Taylor Stevenson

This elegantly produced, beautifully organized, carefully documented, and clearly written book provides an excellent popular introduction to the appreciation and study of myth.

An opening essay by Mircea Eliade, "Myths and Mythical Thought," is a non-technical survey of the study of myth from the first part of the nineteenth century until the present. The work of the major scholars in this area is presented and evaluated in the brief, lucid way which shows the hand of a master.

The second essay, Joseph Campbell's "Myths from East to West," constitutes the real introduction to the remainder of the book. This essay, extensively supported with schematic maps, sets up a "geography of myths" (Africa, the Middle East, North America, etc.), and sounds the motif of Eliot's succeeding eight chapters:"...the mystery that speaks to us everywhere through mythic vehicles [is aptly epitomized]: 'God is an intelligible sphere, whose center is everywhere and circumference is nowhere.' That is the ultimate elementary idea, and the function of all [mythic-] ethnic ideas is to link...all the acts, thoughts, and experiences of our daily lives— individual and social— to this realization."

Eliot uses eight themes to organize the ensuing chapters: Creators of Nature and

Mankind; Worlds Above, Below, and Within; Bringers of Magic and the Arts; Animals, Monsters and Mythic Beasts; Lovers and Bearers of Divine Seed; Combat in Heaven and on Earth; Distant Quests and Mortal Tests; and Death and Rebirth. Each chapter consists of a very brief introduction to the theme, and the retelling of a large number of myths or legends pertinent to the theme drawn from a variety of cultures and traditions. These eight thematic chapters are related in detail to Campbell's geographic schema by means of an elaborate but unobtrusive system of cross-referencing.

A very important component of this book is its profuse and very careful use of illustrations to support the text within which they appear. The illustrations are typically arranged in a group of twelve or so; and each illustration is identified, commented upon, and explicitly or implicitly related to the others. Each of these sets of illustrations is, so to speak, a vivid "mini-essay" which supports very effectively the larger essay within which it is found.

In spite of the very considerable strengths of this book, it must be said that Eliot's desire to write a text which will be available to quite a broad spectrum of readers creates several problems. There is, for example, the frequent use of brief anecdotes about modern or contemporary figures. While this serves to "lighten" the more sustained expository sections, it may also strike some as distracting or even frivolous. Indeed, there is an unresolved tension in this book between seeing myth as profoundly important and seeing it as a fascinating collection of "gems in unforeseen settings." Or again, and more seriously perhaps, the quick drawing of comparisons between myths is sometimes misleading; e.g., Eliot's simply paralleling without comment the Genesis creation story with the Babylonian creation epic. On the other hand, these and related defects are outweighed by the serious and carefully executed intention of Eliot to induct the general reader into the worlds of mystery and wonder expressed in myth.

W. Taylor Stevenson is Professor of Philosophical Theology at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill., and co-editor (with Lee W. Gibbs) of Myth and the Crisis of Historical Consciousness *(Scholars Press, 1975).*

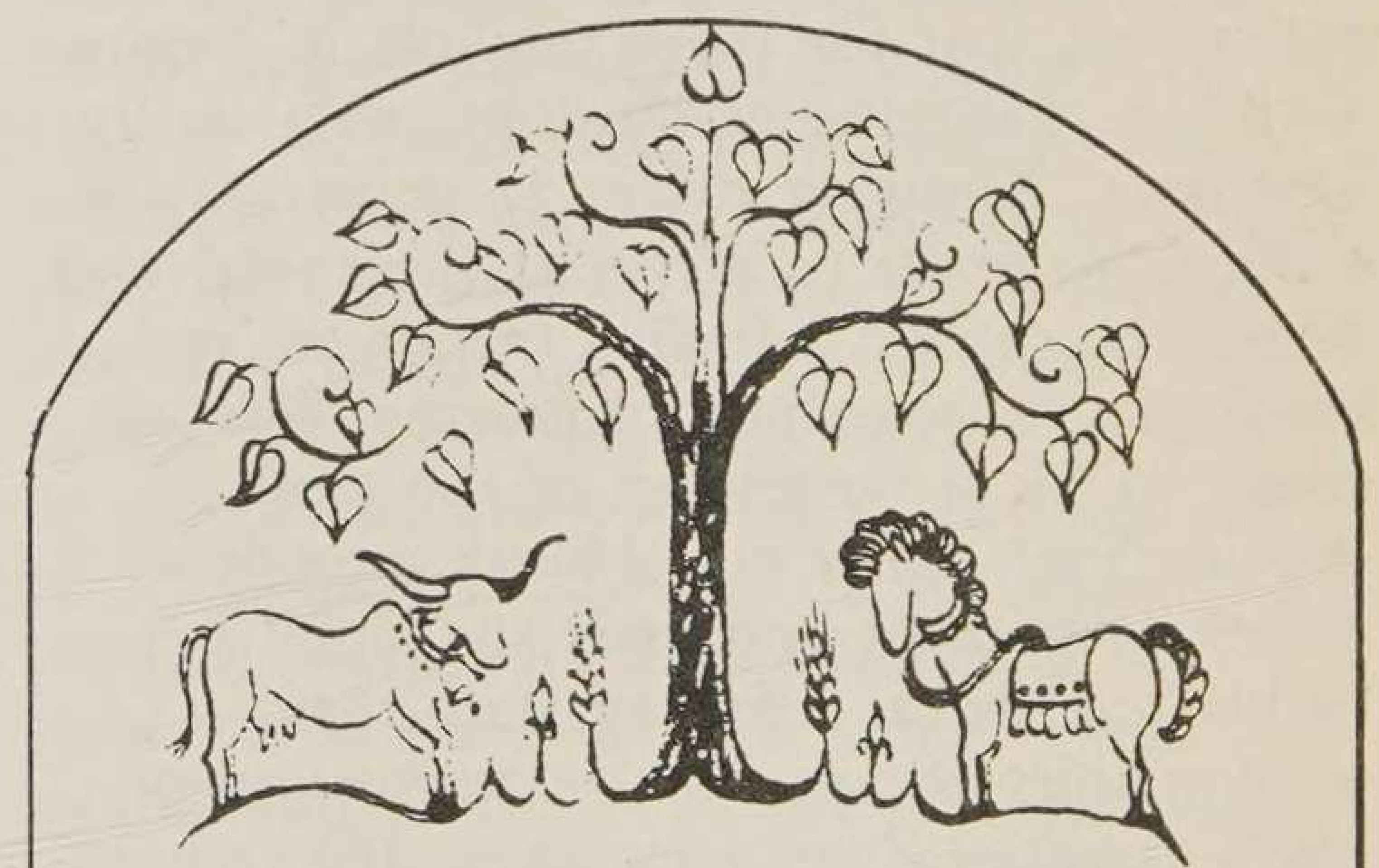
To Have or to Be?

By Erich Fromm. World Perspectives series: Volume 50. Edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen. New York: Harper & Row, 1976. Pp. xxiv + 215. $8.95.

By Dennis Lewis

Erich Fromm has long been a writer of "uncommon" sense. His books, including his classic *The Art of Loving*, have influenced many and exemplify modern "humanistic" thinking at its best. Concerned both with man's inner world, his hopes, fears, and possibilities, and with his outer world, the socioeconomic forces which shape him, Fromm strives in his writing to uncover the psychological and societal conditions that can bring real happiness and well-being. His new book, *To Have or to Be?*, sums up the major themes of his previous works, bringing into sharp focus what could well be the most urgent question facing man today.

For Fromm, a practicing psychoanalyst, the distinction between the "having" and "being" modes of existence "does not appeal



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to common sense." We have been so thoroughly conditioned by the "Great Promise of Unlimited Progress," the belief that the unbridled pursuit of pleasure, wealth, and domination over nature will somehow lead to happiness, that we are unable to discriminate "between purely subjectively felt needs and objectively valid needs." In our haste to conquer and possess, we have lost touch with our "reasons" and "individuality": our reason has turned into "manipulative intelligence," our individuality into "selfishness." We have become so estranged from both ourselves and the earth that "for the first time in history the physical survival of the human race depends on a radical change of the human heart."

With simple and compelling logic, and borrowing heavily from the "great Masters of Living," the Buddha, Jesus, Meister Eckhart, Marx, and others, Fromm analyzes fundamental differences between "having" and "being" in almost all spheres of life: knowledge, faith, love, joy, education, language, sex, time, mental health, human relations, property, consumption, economics, politics. About "knowing," for instance, he points out that for these thinkers it "begins with the shattering of illusions, with *dis*illusionment...Knowing means to penetrate the surface, in order to arrive at the roots, and hence the causes; knowing means to 'see' reality in its nakedness. Knowing does not mean to be in possession of the truth..." About "joy": "It is not a 'peak experience,' which culminates and ends suddenly, but rather a plateau, a feeling state that accompanies the productive expression of one's essential human faculties. Joy is not the ecstatic fire of the moment. Joy is the glow that accompanies being."

But it is to Meister Eckhart, the great German theologian and mystic, that Fromm turns most frequently. For Eckhart, true being is a radical state of "openness," a state in which one has overcome all Craving, even for God. This does not mean that a man should not possess or do anything, but that he should remain inwardly free in the midst of his life. Fromm quotes Eckhart as saying that the "active, alive man is like a 'vessel that grows as it is filled and will never be full.'"

Though Fromm interprets these and other such traditional ideas from a mostly psychological and social standpoint, comparing them to the ideas of Marx and Freud and ignoring their broader, mystical dimensions, he nonetheless makes clear that learning "to be" is the most radical revolution a man can undergo. He believes, however, that because character and society are so intimately bound up with each other, this revolution will be possible "only to the extent that drastic economic and social changes occur that give the human heart the chance for change and the courage and vision to accept it."

Central to Fromm's approach is his conception of religion. Man needs religion, a "group-shared system of thought and action that offers [him] a frame of orientation and an object of devotion," because of his complex brain and his lack of instinctive determination. Without such a system, he would only be confused by the many impressions that impinge on him, and his energies could not be integrated in a specific direction. For Fromm, religion is rooted in an existential need, not a metaphysical one. Man's religious attitude is a fundamental part of his character, "for we are what we are devoted to, and what we are devoted to is what motivates our conduct," even if we are not always aware of the real objects of this devotion.

From this point of view, every society has its underlying religion— our own society has seen both "industrial" and "cybernetic" religion— but not every religion is capable of bringing about "further human development, the unfolding of specifically human powers," such as reason, love, and awareness. What is needed today, says Fromm, is a "new, nontheistic, noninstitutionalized 'religiosity,'" informed by a "new humanistic science of Man." This science would bring together "experts" from all walks of life to determine our real needs: "which needs originate in our organism; which are the result of cultural progress; which are expressions of the individual's growth; which are synthetic, forced upon the individual by industry; which 'activate' and which 'passivate'; which are rooted in pathology and which in psychical health." Fromm believes that a society organized around man's real needs, for example his need for "sane consumption," would itself "be an expression of the 'religious spirit.'"

In discussing "the almost insurmountable difficulties" of creating such a society, Fromm points out that "our only hope lies in the energizing attraction of a

new vision." Yet he undermines the force of many of the ideas he presents by viewing them entirely from the humanistic perspective, a perspective more or less bereft of any sense of the sacred, of any search for a larger meaning and purpose to life. The ancient traditions, too, speak of discriminating between man's various needs, but they insist that this discrimination must come from our own deep wish to know the truth, and from the uncovering of a spiritual intelligence, an inner power of "seeing," which of itself can transform our lives. *To Have or to Be?* is a thoughtful and challenging book, but its value lies more in showing us the immensity of the question than in offering a possible answer.

Dennis Lewis is coeditor (with Jacob Needleman) of Sacred Tradition & Present Need *and* On the Way to Self Knowledge.

Namu Dai Bosa: A Transmission of Zen Buddhism to America

Edited by Louis Nordstrom. The Bhaisajaguru Series. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976. Pp. xxix + 262 + 26 illustrations. $18.00. Paper, $6.95.

By Richard B. Pilgrim

Namu Dai Bosa documents and celebrates an aspect of the development of specifically American Buddhism; that is, as the subtitle accurately suggests, *one* line in the transmission of Zen Buddhism in America.

Featuring selected writings from three central figures of the Rinzai Zen lineage, but including important contributions from the editor, the book ranges over a variety of topics in a variety of styles yet keeps either implicitly or explicitly to its central theme of transmission and development. Included are short talks on Buddhism generally and Zen specifically by Nyogen Senzaki (1876-1958), *teisho* or short "Zen talks" by Nakagawa Soen Roshi (1907-), a chronicle of the developments of this line through and by Simano Eido Roshi (1932-), and a survey of these people and events by the editor. In the process, and perhaps more because of than in spite of the variety mentioned above, one is introduced to an interesting, important and historic part of the dynamics of religious change, both within Zen Buddhism and within American culture generally. The words "Namu Dai Bosa" (lit. "Invoke [the] Great Bodhisattva") capture a part of this by suggesting on the one hand the presence of a "foreign" culture and religion in America, and on the other the adaptation of a central symbol and practice (see pp. xxiif, 135f) to an American context and growing tradition. Perhaps even more concretely, "Namu Dai Bosa" also indicates a particular place (the International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo Ji, a retreat center of the New York Zen Studies Society in the Catskill Mountains of eastern New York) which symbolizes and embodies Eido Roshi's particular vision of a "wider gate" (p. 195) through which an American Zen Buddhism might grow— a gate marked by the possibilities for a nonsectarian, "international," and primarily lay form of Zen.

The strength of the book, however, is less an explicit handling of the dynamics and possibilities than it is the story of the transmission and the direct expression of a "Zen Mind" itself, which, as some would claim, knows no cultures or changes. In this regard, the book does invaluable service in breaking the ground for a history of Zen in America and showing again the universal character of the Experience to which Zen points. The three featured writers, as well as the editor, share in this service and are all eminently qualified to do so, whether by training, status, spiritual attainment, or presence on the American scene. These qualifications are documented in the book and need not detain us here. The book is a flowering from within the Zen spirit and tradition itself, and not a secondary source from those outside or on the edges. As such, one can perhaps forgive the sometimes "rough" adherence to a central theme, or the fact that it makes no attempt to include in its story other important lines of transmission or prominent figures of Zen Buddhism in America. *Namu Dai Bosa* remains an early and important contribution to our understanding of the Buddhist presence in America, and a continuing expression of one of humanity's profoundest visions of human fulfilment.

Richard B. Pilgrim is assistant professor of religion at Syracuse University.

Song from the Earth: American Indian Painting

By Jamake Highwater. A New York Graphic Society book, Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1976. Pp. viii + 212. $19.95.

By David P. McAllester

Like myth and religion, the arts of any people are a window on their own separately developed ways of living and thinking. Traditional native American (Indian) graphic art, for example, is still largely one with religion, which also may include the literary, dance and musical arts. A Navajo sandpainting invokes the forces of nature as part of an elaborate ritual to re-establish harmony between man and his cosmos when illness or other indications show that something has gone wrong. An absorbing question is: can we expect to find any such reflection of their traditional cultures in the work of twentieth-century painters who happen to be of Indian descent?

Highwater's intent is to produce a popular discussion and catalogue of the new phenomenon of "Indian painters" in recent native American history. At the same time, he has the courage to address, head-on, the controversial question of "Indianness." It is valuable to hear his point of view since he, himself, is a member of the native American community.

The first part of the endeavor is, on the whole, successful. Like Dorothy Dunn's *American Indian Painting* (1968), and Clara Lee Tanner's *Southwestern Indian Painting* (1973), he limits his focus to the Plains and the Southwest where the strongest concentration of contemporary native American painting developed. Some discussion of the omission of West Coast and Canadian Indian work would have been appropriate. One has the impression of a book hurriedly put together. However, it is right for a popular work that his treatment is more condensed, lively and accessible to the non-professional reader than that of his two great predecessors. The illustrations are stunning and give one a direct sense of the development of the genre. The discussion of origins, schools and movements is standard but concisely done. There are occasional errors of fact, as in prehistory (*Homo sapiens* was certainly in Europe 25,000 years ago, pp.14-15) and ethnography ("quasi-

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Christian" is a poor characterization of the rites of the peyote religion, p.62), but overall, in its descriptive dimension, this is a valuable book.

The author deserves credit for facing "the storm of partisan dogma" surrounding the question of Indianness. There is no difficulty in identifying the aboriginal ethos, still evident where some degree of isolation from Euro-American values has been maintained. Highwater does so with a familiar series of native vs. "Anglo" contrasts: close to nature, rather than isolated from it; poetic and synthesizing, rather than scientific and analytic, etc. There is much truth in these clichés, and there is much of this kind of Indianness in the work of painters who depict hunting, ceremonial and other scenes from traditional Indian culture.

The change comes after World War II when many native American artists had traveled all over the world in the armed forces, studied at American universities and abroad, and began painting nudes and abstractions. There is also the paradox that the Indianness of the prewar painters received much of its definition from the non-Indian teachers and patrons who encouraged them (J.J. Brody, *Indian Painters and White Patrons*, 1971), and the irony that the most successful "modern," Fritz Scholder, owes his international reputation to his works on Indian subjects even though he does not consider himself to be an "Indian," culturally. The fact that he depicts Indians in unconventional, often grotesque modes, draws bitter criticism from some of the native American community.

Highwater delineates the question and does a service to it by including in his book the comments of a number of leading Indian painters. He sums it up in his last chapter: Indian painters, like any others, paint what is real to them. An idealized world of the Indian past was, and is, important to the intellectual and cultural survival of the "traditional" painters. The moderns bring the contemporary outside world into their work and in the techniques that they use to express their reactions to that world. Highwater rejects the notion of an "inborn native mystique" and also the idea that the use of new painting techniques necessarily breaks the continuity of native American sensitivity any more than it has in any other tradition of the arts.

This seems the rational and even obvious answer to the question of the survival of Indianness. But there is another motif conveyed by the writer as artist rather than as ideologue. It is in the title of the book, *Song from the Earth*, which seems derived from two of the interviews with the painters themselves: "...If I could sing probably I

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would have been a singer. But I'm a painter and so I have tried to sing with my paintings" (Blackbear Bosin, p. 164);"...It was as if we remembered our paintings, as if they had come before us like the plants out of the ground" (Fred Kabotie, p. 144). It is also in some of the captions with the illustrations: "...reflects the consummation of man and power, portraying the highest contact with the sublime..." (p. 112); "...a luminous sense of awe and mystery..." (p. 104); "...retains the mystic nature of his vision at the same time that it imparts an unexpected experimental thrust to Indian painting..." (p. 83).

Though he does not quite say so in his open argument, one can after all discern a certain allegiance, in spite of the author's disclaimer, to the Indian mystique and the original definition of Indianness. It is this that occasions the careful delineation of tribal origins with each biographical sketch and which, one suspects, prevents any non-Indian, no matter how well-informed and devoted to Indian subject matter, from being included in the book. The racial, as well as the cultural component, seems to go into the mix that plagues us all in the search for our identity.

David P. McAllester is professor of anthropology and music at Wesleyan University.

NOTICES

The Names: A Memoir

By N. Scott Momaday. New York: Harper & Row, 1976. Pp. 170. $10.00.

At age 43, N. Scott Momaday is too young to be writing memoirs, especially those which recall so little of substance. The memoir is a self-indulgent genre which is justified when it informs us about persons who have influenced our lives, or when it introduces us to persons whose lives form points of relation with our own. Momaday's work of nostalgia achieves neither aim.

If you are familiar with his Pulitzer prize-winning *House Made of Dawn* (1968) and his 1969 narrative of the Kiowas, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, you know what his new book is like: epigrammatic, dreamy, cushioned by silences. Momaday remembers the silences of his childhood as ethereal frames in which he lived and grew. He tries to recapture them, furnishing them through his imagination, but the result is vacuous. In effect, *The Names: A Memoir* is content-free. Nothing happens.

To be sure, the pages contain words and photographs, some of them lovely. As the title promises, there are names, and brief portraits of Momaday's white and Indian forebears. The races intermingle romantically, not without strife. Diseases and violence show their strength, and time passes across Momaday's beloved land. Still no person or event breaks through the silences to seize our attention.

Momaday illustrates the acculturative aspects of his first fourteen years: how he mastered English before learning Kiowa; how football, Christmas allowances, World War II, movies, school and Easter egg hunts filled more of his time than buckskin, giveaway dances, bows and arrows, the assumed symbols of his Indian heritage; how medicine bundles, the Sun Dance, pan-Indian festivals and peyote blended easily with the Roman Catholic churches of the Pueblos and the Rainy Mountain Baptist Church; how he adapted comfortably to white and Indian values alike, moving gracefully across the dividing lines. But nowhere does he describe how he managed to straddle the difficult boundaries where so many others failed. Neither does he detail his parents', teachers', or peers' influence on him. We never know what made Momaday typical or special. We seek to meet him; instead we encounter silences.

Christopher Vecsey

Fly By Night

By Randall Jarrell.
Pictures by Maurice Sendak.
New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1976. Pp. 40. $5.95.

> *At night David can fly.*
> *In the daytime he can't. In the daytime he doesn't even remember that he can. But at night, after his mother has put him to bed, he wakes up, sometimes.*

Dreams are fly-by-night images that sometimes are caught by the sharp edges of consciousness. Randall Jarrell's children's books haunt these borders of forgetting, the places between waking and dreaming. His

last book, *Fly By Night*, like his former ones, repeats the soundings of anamnesis, or perhaps what Maurice Sendak calls "looking-for-mama pain."

Sendak, too, certain that there must be more to life than having everything, creates in his drawings mythic places where everything *is* more: more palpable, more mysterious, more poignant, more amusing. The profound dimensions of Sendak's art enhance three Randall Jarrell stories, and poet and artist make a concert out of what happens at night.

In "The Animal Family," a mermaid leaves the sea to love the land, and to make for herself a home out of strangeness and a child out of wishing. "The Bat-Poet" reveals the loneliness of one who needs to see and say the experience of his reversed midnight— his own dream-time of the daylight world.

In "Fly By Night," eight-year-old David's floating into the mysteries of the back yard are very much an "in-body experience." Jarrell's stories are bodied with all the substantial thing-ness a poet can conjure, and Sendak's illustrations impress us with how very ponderous those fragile flights of imagination can be.

Waking into night, a metaphor for poetic consciousness or the awareness of the deep self, is not presented by Jarrell as a free, easy flight. Rather, David's naked flight is a restricted floating in which he is unable to close his eyelids, to speak, to touch. But he can see. He can see into the round yellow dream of his mother making pancakes; the dreams of the sheep,

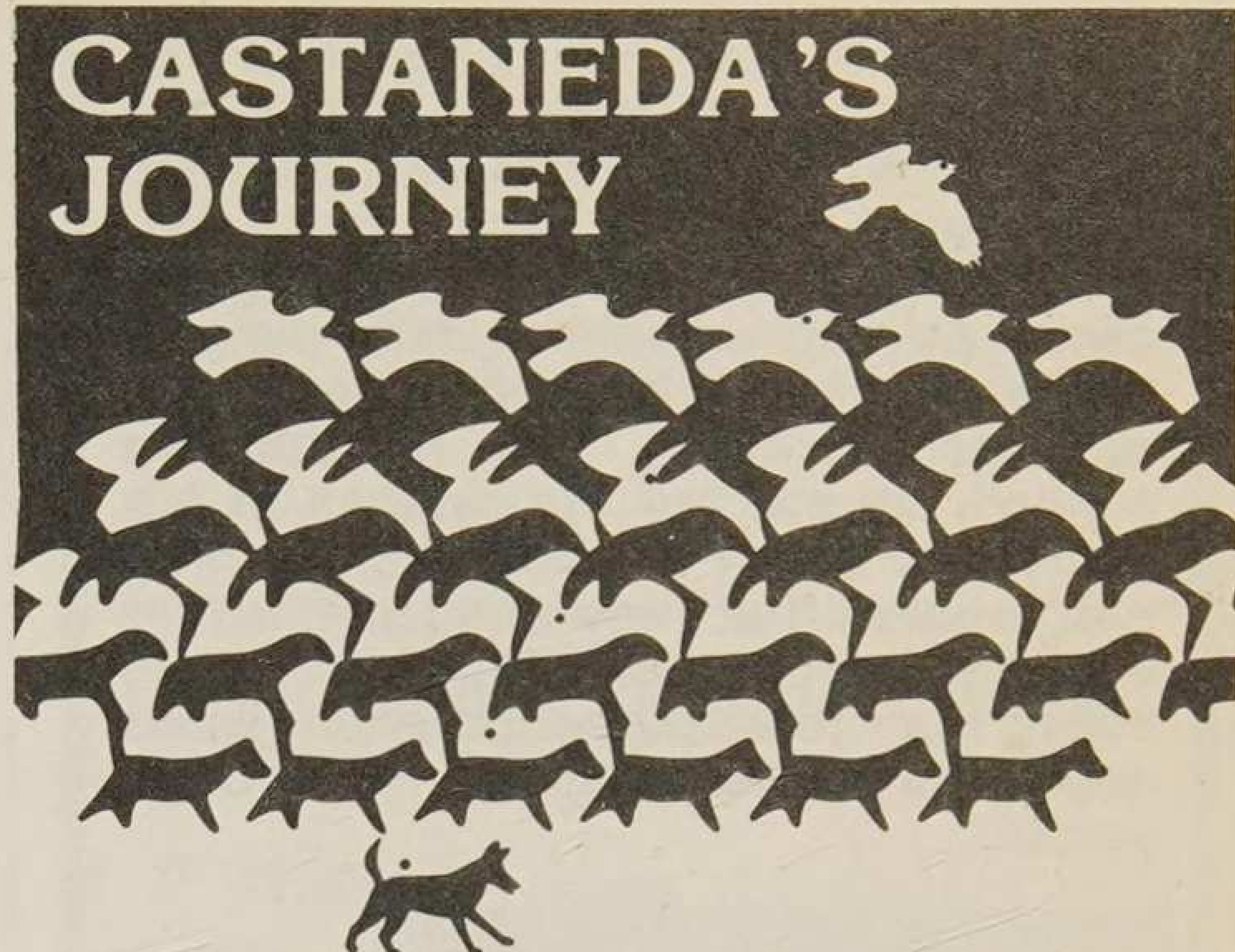
> *All of them except one are dreaming they're eating;*
> *that one is dreaming he's asleep.*

He sees how the night changes things,

> *Nothing is its own color: the moonlight makes each row of vegetables look like a long white stripe, and beside it is a black stripe, its shadow.*

Most of all, in the black and white woods, David hears the owl's bedtime story, in which an owl finds a sister and with great difficulty they return to their mother's nest. As the mother owl flies round David she looks at him like..., David sees how much the owl resembles..., but before he can think of his own mother the sunlight comes in to mask the dubious truths of the moonlit world. And in the bright distortion of daylight David comes down to breakfast, looks at his mother making pancakes, and his mother looks at him like..., and David longs for the knowledge, the memory of the owl. He just can't quite remember the strange, loving look the owl gave to her snow-white, sleepy children— that same look she gave to him from the black shadows— before he floated back to morning.

Sendak extends the play upon the near-memory of resemblances. In his first illustration a sparrow hovers above the head of the chow dog. In the last a sparrow hovers above the cat. The cat and dog both peer out at us with a similar expression. One of Sendak's tricks is to cause the reader, looking upon the face of the cat in the last picture, to wonder at its remote familiarity and almost recall that it is the face of the dog in the first picture. Or is it the owl's gaze, or the mother's, or that of the shepherdess, or the baby? It is through resemblances, these artists suggest, that we trip upon the night's primordial truths.



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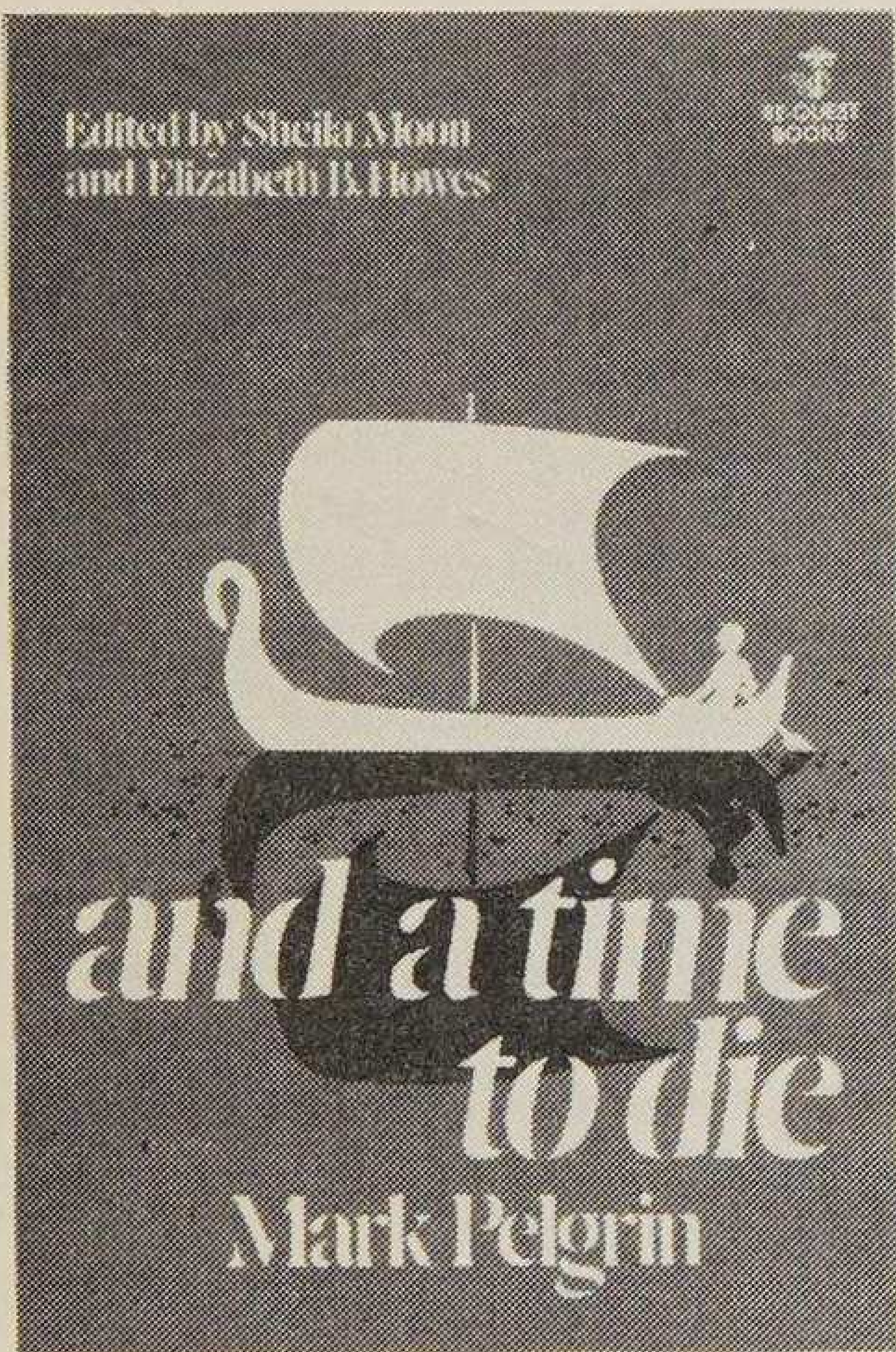

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How much does this design resemble the ancient "geometry" lesson Socrates gave to Meno when he told him:

> *be of good cheer and try to recollect what you do not know, or rather what you do not remember.*

Or, as David said as he began his flight into the back yard:

> *If I remembered in the daytime I could fly in the daytime. All I have to do is remember.*

And happy endings are but cozy forgettings.

Lynda Sexson

Religious Diversity: Essays by Wilfred Cantwell Smith

Edited by Willard G. Oxtoby. New York: Harper & Row, 1976. Pp. xxiv + 198. $10.00.

This short book is an excellent introduction to the general thought of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, the engaging thinker who has admirably synthesized in his life and work the roles of educator, Christian theologian, and historian of religions. Smith organized the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University, served as director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard, and is now McCulloch Professor at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

He is best known as an Islamicist, and as the originator of certain provocative ideas in religious studies. One idea is that the concept of "a religion," such as Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity, is a modern and a misleading abstraction, the only reality being the *faith* of individuals, compounded of cumulative tradition and per-

sonal experience. Several of these essays center around that theme and its obviously immense significance for understanding interreligious dialogue: not a confrontation of abstract absolutes, but rather a meeting of individual believers, which while it may be deeply influenced by traditions is in itself unique, subjective, imperfect.

A countervailing yet not inconsistent theme is the convergence of truth and the unity of humankind. Precisely because of the common humanity which underlies the abstractions of "religions" and "disciplines," it is possible (though not easy) for persons of different religious traditions and academic disciplines to understand each other.

Indeed, Smith believes, one of the most promising signs for the human future is that, through the "modernization" process— in which he is very interested— religious history and religious pluralism are now becoming self-conscious. The next important stage in Christian theology will come out of dialogue with the world religions; the generation of such late giants as Barth, Tillich, and the Niebuhrs was the last in which Christian thinkers could concentrate exclusively on explicating their own tradition and its interaction with Western thought. The new spiritual future offered by this self-conscious and creative pluralism may well break through some long-standing human difficulties.

In Smith's writing there is an almost eschatological glow, not very fashionable these days, about the human future. This is not to suggest any naive optimism, for he is fully aware of complexities and problems. Indeed, his writing displays not only fair-mindedness and hopefulness, but rare competence and intelligence. Still, one may question whether interreligious dialogue will play quite the future role he suggests, since the onset of such meaningful dialogue seems

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to be in a desperate race with the decline of religion, in the conventional sense at least, in many parts of the globe.

Religious Diversity is a brief but provocative introduction to an important thinker who has reflected deeply on the role of religion in the modern world.

Robert S. Ellwood, Jr.

Letters, continued from Page 4

I note a most regrettable oversight on pages 54 and 55 of the Winter issue of *Parabola*; the quotation from "In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching" is headed "From G. I. Gurdjieff" and at the end the source of the quotation is acknowledged, but *not the author P. D. Ouspensky*. I ask you, who would now know what Mr. Gurdjieff said in 1915, 1916 and 1917 if Mr. Ouspensky had not remembered it with his extraordinary understanding and very faithfully recorded it in "Fragments?"

Tania Nagro
Mendham, New Jersey

Parabola *agrees with Mrs. Nagro that this was a most regrettable oversight. The credit line on Page 55 should have read: From* In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching *by P. D. Ouspensky, copyright 1949 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. and reprinted with their permission.*

I have just read Bernard Hassan's letter in the Winter 1977 issue. I have no controversy to offer, yet I do want to share a rationale about the lack of furor in Full Circle.

For me, *Parabola* is a relief. A thoughtful, gentle survey into beliefs and rituals. Since I have

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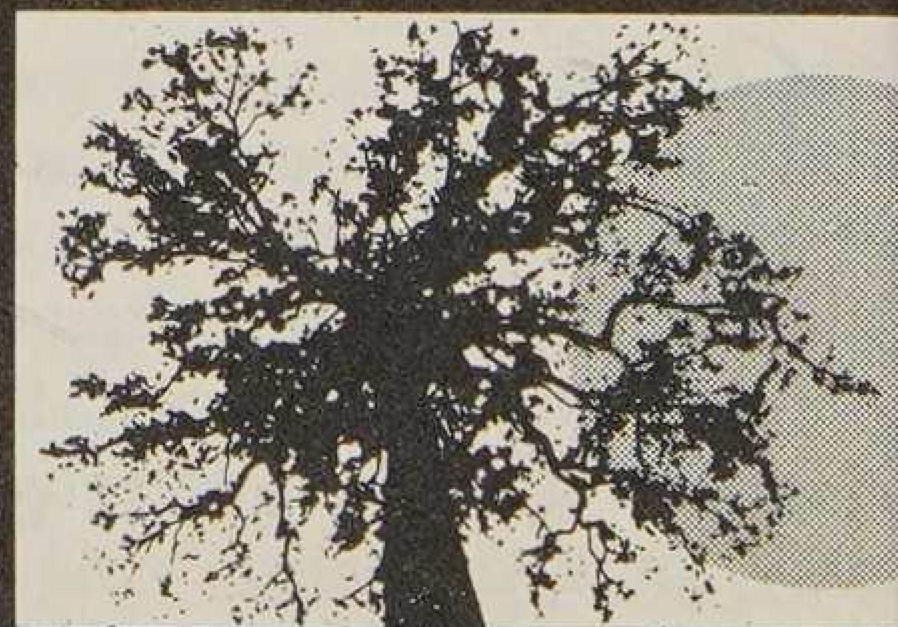

STUDIO SOUTH

come to the knowledge that my life and surroundings are shaped from my beliefs, I have felt a need to be selective in my reading— yet to examine where I stand. *Parabola* is a process for me. All belief systems are presented, thinking persons share their views— yet nothing is judged or presented as definitive. No conclusions are drawn.

This is an admirable service, one sadly lacking in today's media— where the powers that be have decided they must do our thinking for us.

So, for the present time, I read each issue and ponder. I have nothing to defend or attack— simply new viewpoints to consider.

I offer the hypothesis that most readers have a similar reaction— internal reconsideration, rather than external defensiveness.

That, to me, is a sign of fertile territory— one does not consider the garden apathetic because there is no surface change three days after the seeds are planted.

Give us a chance to accustom ourselves to being invited to ponder, rather than accept. For me, it is fecund and joyous.

And thank you for not permitting commercials to intrude in the main body of the magazine.

Tina B. Tessina
Los Angeles, CA.

I have read through two issues of *Parabola* (to which I have been given an appreciated subscription), and was especially interested in Travers' fairy tale material. I have been interested in and in love with fairy tales ever since I learned to read, and now continue the affair through creating new versions from the immortal substance of which they're made.

Am looking forward with interest to future *Parabolas*, and hoping that you will grow to fill that niche that is now only a gap between dying academia and the real searching for Truth that is yet but a persistent seedling demanding light and space in our minds.

Marti Gilbert
Edinburgh, Scotland

To the editors of *Parabola*, of noble virtue and excellent understanding:

On behalf of entire Tibetan refugee community, I would like to thank you for the excellent presentation of the words of Nechung Rinpoche and Gomang Khen Rinpoche in your magazine. This will be a great help to us, I am sure. I was especially impressed by wonderful drawings of the Rinpoches.

We have just been donated some land here in Dharamsala for the construction of a suitable temple for our work and have been asked to construct as soon as possible. So our work must go on, although it is very difficult. If you can help in any way, or can make any suggestions as to how we might proceed, please let me know. As I am sure you are aware, ours is a very ancient culture. Because of our "liberation" by the Chinese, however, it is in danger of being lost forever. We Lamas are not asking for help to preserve our tradition for

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ourselves; we are old, and will soon die. We want it to be preserved because we feel it will be of lasting benefit for many generations yet to come.

May the blessings of the triple gem be with you always.

Lobsang Jigmey
The State Oracle of Tibet
Dharamsala, India

Any of Parabola's *readers who wish to help with this essential work of the preservation of a great culture may send contributions directly to Lobsang Jigmey Rinpoche, State Oracle of Tibet; Nechung Monastery, Nazara House No. 93, K.B. Dharamsala, District Kangra, H.P. India.*

As a footnote to the "Dangerous Passage" and particularly in relation to the paragraph that reads: "Our nature is dual...And indeed we are caught between these two, pinched, sometimes even crushed, between their contradictions, as between two arms, or two leaves of a closing door," I would like to mention, even if it be in summary form, that during the Middle Ages, the conflict of man's dual nature, a soul and a body, a corruptible side and an incorruptible side, is best illustrated in the symbolic relationship between the Church and the State...

St. Bernard of Clairvaux offered a significant solution: The Church had not been instituted to indulge in legal and political matters...The Church, says St. Bernard, is the body of the annointed King, Christ, and the proper relationship between the two is that of the bride and the bridegroom. This marriage is not only the harmonization of the spiritual and the temporal powers, but when the process is internalized it becomes the fulfillment of a human being.

Yet, we are left with a question, where does the "sacred marriage" take place? and under what conditions?

St. Bernard gives a final answer: "O happy blackness that begets integrity of mind." What do these words mean?

Someone once asked a similar question to Meister Eckhart. The dialogue went thus:

"Is it my place to be in darkness?...But, sir, must everything go and is there no turning back?"

"Certainly not. By rights, there is no return."

"Then what is the Darkness? What do you mean by it? What is its name?"

"It has no name other than 'potential sensitivity' and it neither lacks being nor does it want to be. It is that possible (degree of) sensitivity through which you may be made perfect. That is why there is no way out of it."

Ramon Mujica Pinilla
New College
Sarasota,Fla.

The Sword of Shannara

By Terry Brooks. New York: Random House and Ballantine, 1977. Pp. 726. $12.95. Paper $6.95.

If a fairy tale is, in Campbell's words, "the primer of the picture-language of the soul," then a fantasy novel that exploits elements of the fairy tale should sear the heart. The best of the literature of the fantastic does just that, illuminating the inner reality of all humans.

What, then, can one make of a fantasy novel that lies heavily on the heart, obscuring instead of illuminating, making the reader as uneasy inwardly as if he had just eaten a heavy supper? Is it simply that the book is badly written? Or is there a further problem? In the case of Terry Brooks' epic fantasy *The Sword of Shannara* the bad writing is complicated by the loud echoes of undigested Tolkien. The reader is left with a case of literary indigestion.

Let me state it outright— I am a Tolkien fan. He knew his genre; he understood what years of folklore, legend and language lay behind his literary constructions; and he wrote like a poet. Brooks, on the other hand, offers up a quest tale with a company of elves, dwarfs, and men, and sentences such as: "Man has never been the great people he has fancied himself." When the book does not sound like a paraphrasing of *The Lord of the Rings* (the company of elves-dwarfs-men is led by a mysterious sorcerer; the company battles black, soulless winged creatures that were once humans and who now fight on the side of the dark lord; the good but mysterious sorcerer battles one of the winged creatures over a vast pit and they both fall in, but chapters later we learn the sorcerer has survived), it sounds a good deal like the *The Sword in the Stone* (the sword, imbedded in rock, can only be wielded properly by a son of the House of Shannara.) Fantasy writer Ursula Le Guin has suggested, in the pages of this magazine, that "Theft is an integral function of a healthy literature" but she never envisioned the extent to which author Brooks would borrow for his tome.

Yet it is not just the borrowing that

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MYTHS

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damns this novel. There are many adequate thieving sword-and-sorcery novels of the 95-cent variety that work. It is Brooks' language that finally does the novel in. It is a combination of Brooklynese and Cleaver. For example: *"You must be a stranger to do a dumb thing like that," he reprimanded the other in his deep bass voice. "Nobody with any sense plays around with the Sirens."* And earlier, the same unfortunate caught in a storm is described by Brooks in this way: *"It rained the entire time— a slow, chilling drizzle that soaked first the clothing, then penetrated into the skin and bone, and finally reached the very nerve centers so that the only feeling the weary body would permit was one of thorough, discomforting wetness."*

It would be easy to dismiss this if it *were* a cheap paperback, a sword-and-sorcery pulp. But this book is touted by its publishers as the first true epic fantasy since *Lord of the Rings*. It is already being translated into five languages, is a Literary Guild alternate, and has been lavishly illustrated by the Brothers Hildebrand whose Pyle-like paintings have decorated Tolkien calendars for the past few years. However, after plowing through the 726 pages of *The Sword of Shannara*, I found weariness had penetrated to my very nerve centers so that the only feeling my mind would admit was one of thorough, discomforting angriness.

Jane Yolen

The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion

By Thorkild Jacobsen. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976. Pp. 273. $15.00.

Thorkild Jacobsen has attempted what the late A. Leo Oppenheim claimed was an impossible task, a history of Mesopotamian religion. The great antiquity of Sumerian and Akkadian documents and the possibility that they may have shaped Greek and Biblical thought-forms give the task an importance for anyone studying myth— not just for the Assyriologist. True, the gaps in the historical record are great: archaeological, iconographical and documentary evidence is often inadequate, ambiguous or missing. More important, can the products of Sumerian court poets of the 3rd Millennium B.C.E.— the Sumerian myths and hymns— reveal the nature of complicated religious phenomena? Jacobsen's answer is yes. This book, the result of many years' work by an undisputed expert in the field, is an interpretation of nearly four thousand years of religious experience. Happy to say, it manages to be both learned and highly readable.

The method Jacobsen follows, giving a chapter first on key terms and dividing the religious literature of four millennia under governing "metaphors" (gods as providers, rulers, and parents), is strongly influenced by Rudolf Otto. Within the movement from one metaphor to the other Jacobsen also sees the gods, in the earliest period "intransitive" powers imaged in nonhuman forms, giving way to "transitive" powers (ruling, parenting, ordering the cosmos) and human forms.

Jacobsen's evidence is mainly the myths themselves— and he gives generous selections of the works in translation. His presentation is lucid enough that the reader does not have to be familiar with the scholarship on the subject; he reads the works differently from, say, Samuel Noah Kramer (e.g., in the Inanna/Dumuzi poems), and controversy is sure to spring up around many of his readings. But the work is an interpretation, and we can be happy that Jacobsen has avoided what Francis Bacon called the "monstrous altercations and barking questions" of academic debate.

Good cases in point are the interpretations of the Gilgamesh poems and of the creation poem, *Enuma elish*. They are impressively full accounts, and readers familiar with Jacobsen's earlier work will see that he has changed his mind on many important issues (e.g., the Enlil/Marduk problem in *Enuma elish*). He will not convince everyone, but his discussions are rich enough to be major advances in the literary criticism of the works. When he laments the brutalization that he sees emerging in 1st Millennium Mesopotamian thought, Jacobsen manages not only to be learned and clear but also to be moving: the truest measure, perhaps, of his achievement.

John R. Maier

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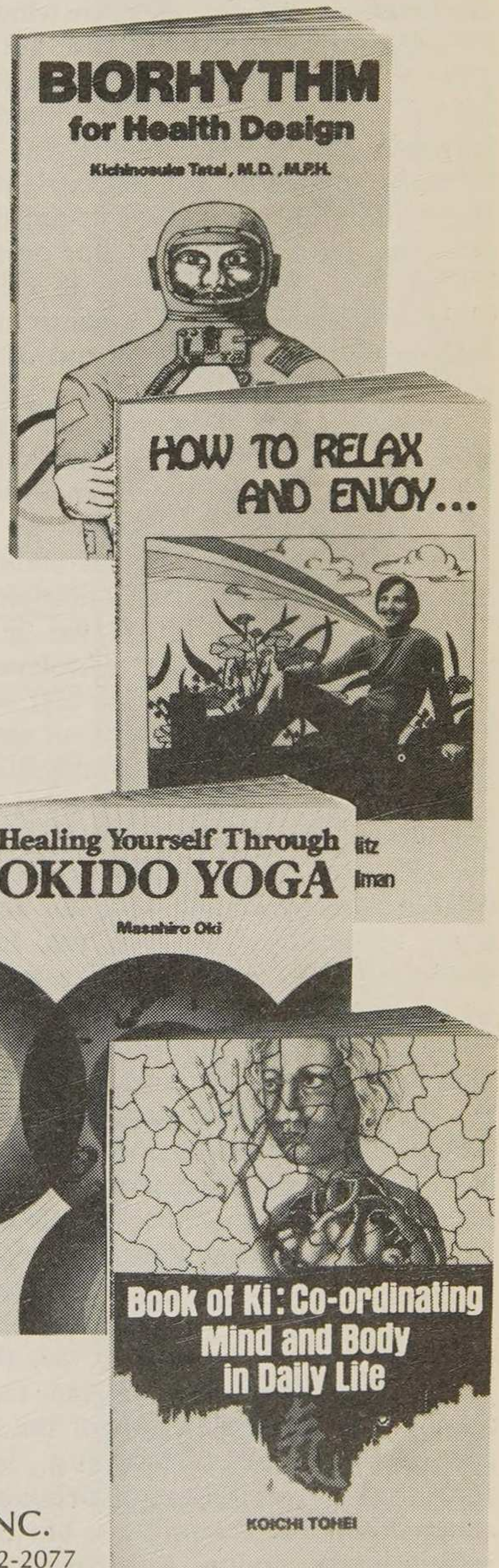

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The Joy of Sports

By Michael Novak. New York: Basic Books, 1976. Pp. xvi + 357. $10.95.

Are sports a religion? Michael Novak thinks so, and in this effusive book he makes a fervent profession of faith. "Sports," he writes, "are religious in the sense that they are organized institutions, disciplines, and liturgies; and also in the sense that they teach religious qualities of heart and soul. In particular they recreate symbols of cosmic struggle, in which human survival and moral courage are not assured." "Sports," he goes on, "are far more serious than the dramatic arts, much closer to primal symbols, metaphors, and acts, much more ancient and more frightening." And, in a final burst, "Sports are our chief civilizing agent. Sports are our most universal art form. Sports tutor us in the basic lived experiences of the humanist tradition. ...Sports, in a word, are a form of godliness."

Such exalted views may not square with the humble rewards of an evening at the bowling alley, or an afternoon in front of the TV, but for the moment let us grant Novak his vision. Because his main problem is not that he presses his philosophical claims too hard, but rather that he forgets philosophy and goes off on irrelevant forays into journalism. He clots his text with chatty little essays ("Sportsreels") on George Blanda, Vince Lombardi, Muhammad Ali, Sandy Koufax, Grantland Rice, Howard Cosell, etc. These, along with flashbacks to Novak's own modest athletic career, may establish his credentials as a fan and throw a sop to the fans who read him. But the end result, already suggested in the book's incongruous subtitle, *End Zones, Bases, Baskets, Balls, and the Consecration of the American Spirit*, is a jumble.

Elsewhere Novak roams across the American scene, taking speculative pot shots at various targets, from regional styles of football to similarities between "ethnic" and "redneck" culture. As a pop sociologist he is lively, provocative, and not afraid of making a fool of himself. His book is sloppily written, full of errors of fact (he thinks Otis Taylor played fullback and Thomas Aquinas wrote at the dawn of the twelfth century) and lapses of taste (e.g., labeling the contemporary school of debunking sportswriters as "the pricks"), but it has a certain messy vitality. And Novak's personal intensity, which lends the flavor of autobiography even to a chapter on proposed legal reforms in pro sports, fuses the book's disparate elements into a rough-and-ready unity.

At bottom *The Joy of Sports* seems to be a dithyramb from a failed jock. Who else would say things like "Very few philosophical-religious texts have as clear a ring of truth as a baseball smacked from the fat, true center of a willow bat"? Novak was right to see a vast analytic gap in the literature of sports— this last unravaged sanctuary of mythic life in America. Unfortunately, he himself was unable to fill it.

Peter Heinegg

Religion in Four Dimensions: Existential and Aesthetic, Historical and Comparative.

Text and Photographs by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1976. Pp. 490. $30.00. Paper $8.95.

Religion in Four Dimensions initially presents itself as a survey of the world's living religions, made especially impressive by its stunning photographs, including 183 color plates. If the book were judged only as a member of this genre, it would compare most favorably. Not only is there much information, both familiar and unusual; Kaufmann has also provided helpful trimmings, such as a simultaneous chronology of the world's great religions, an extensive bibliography, and a regrettably short chapter on "Landscape and Religion." With the exception of the chapters on Judaism, in which his enthusiasms and occasionally chauvinistic polemics go far beyond his appreciation of other traditions, his approach is imaginatively and respectfully empathetic. He insistently directs attention to what characterizes these religions as "living": the experiences, the environments, and the art works of their believers. Kaufmann argues for the priority of humanity as *the* religious concern; and the integrity of his argument demands not only the presence of the photographs, but also that Kaufmann himself should have taken them. The book succeeds precisely because, far from attempting an objective and "au-

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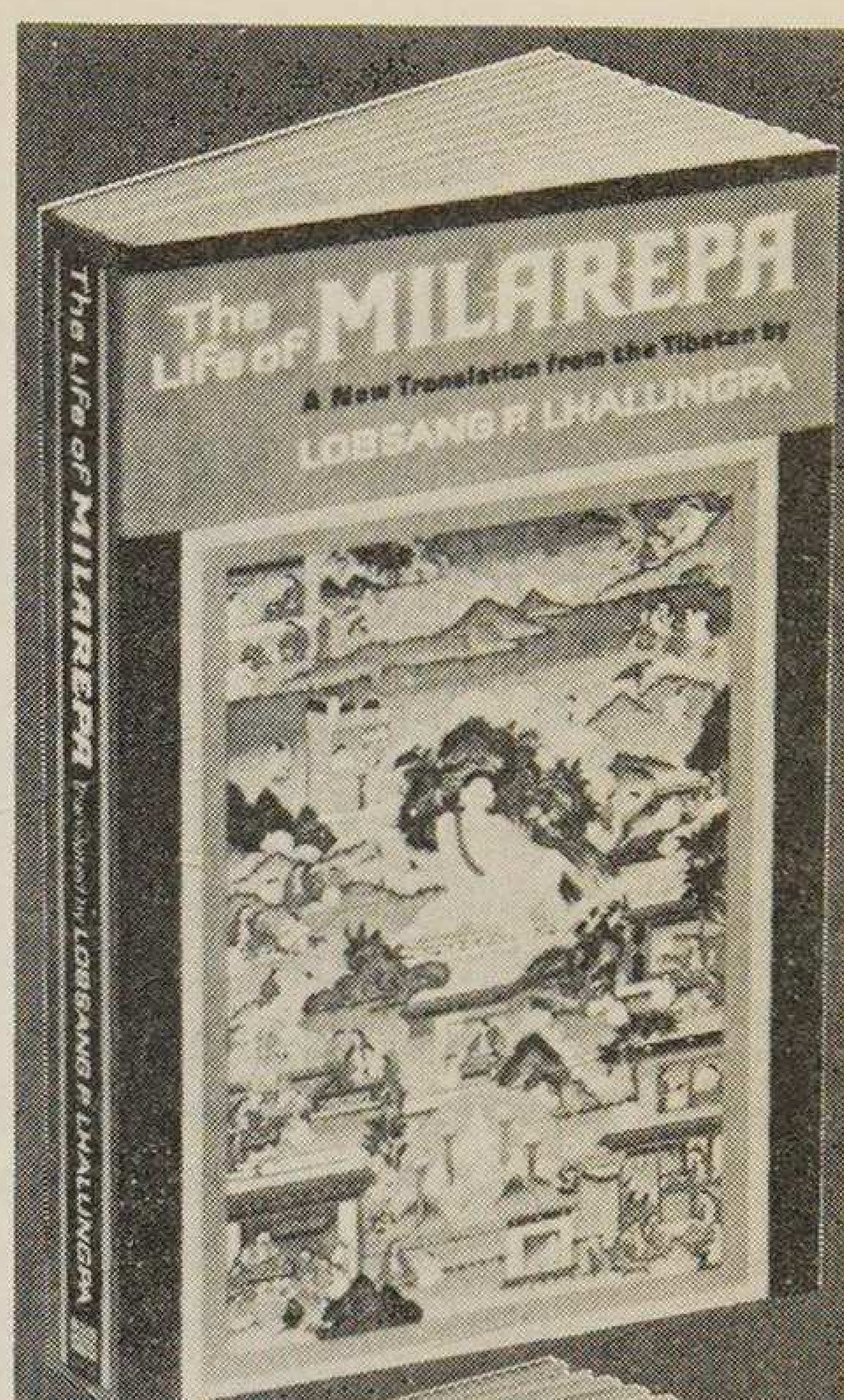

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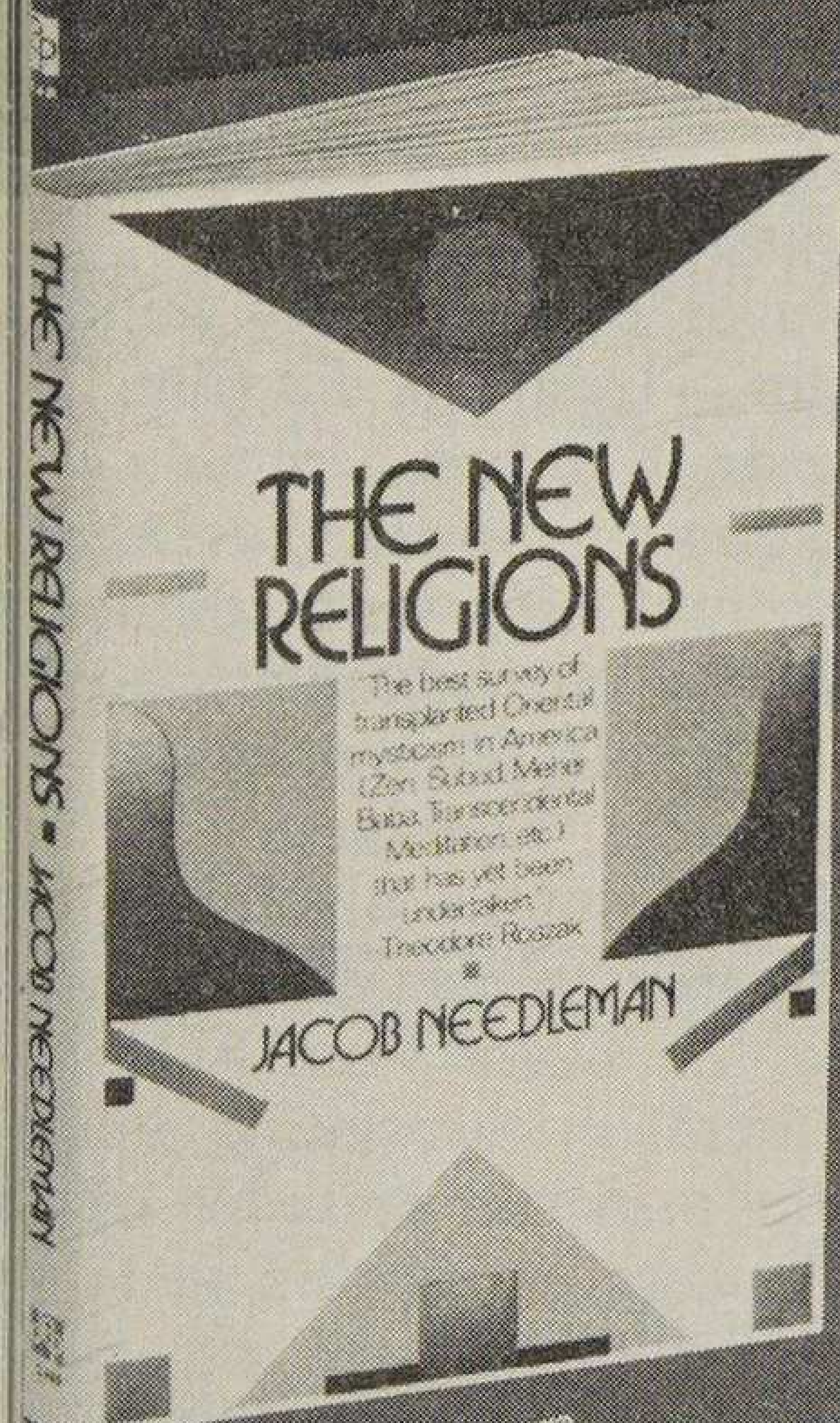

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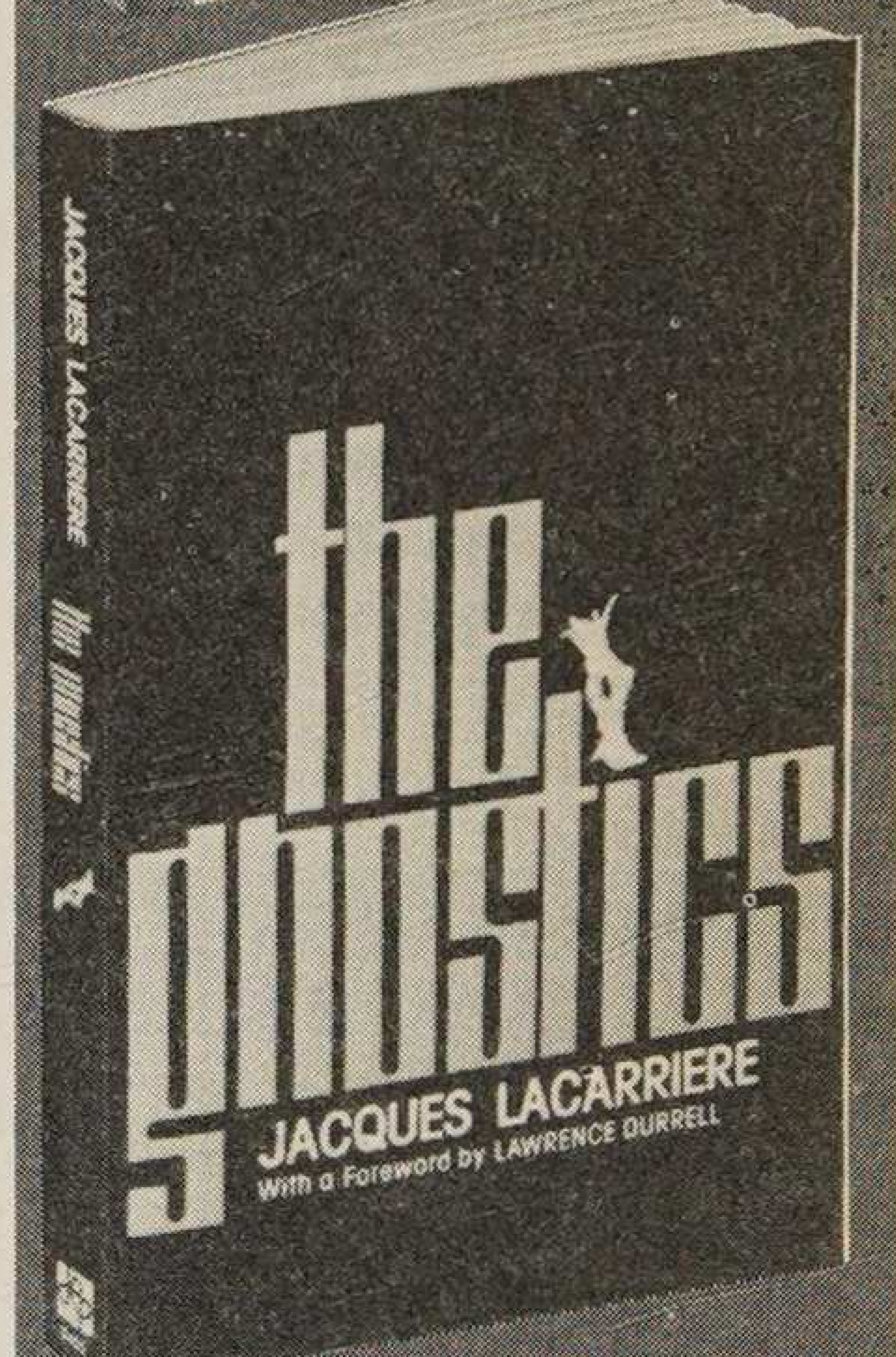

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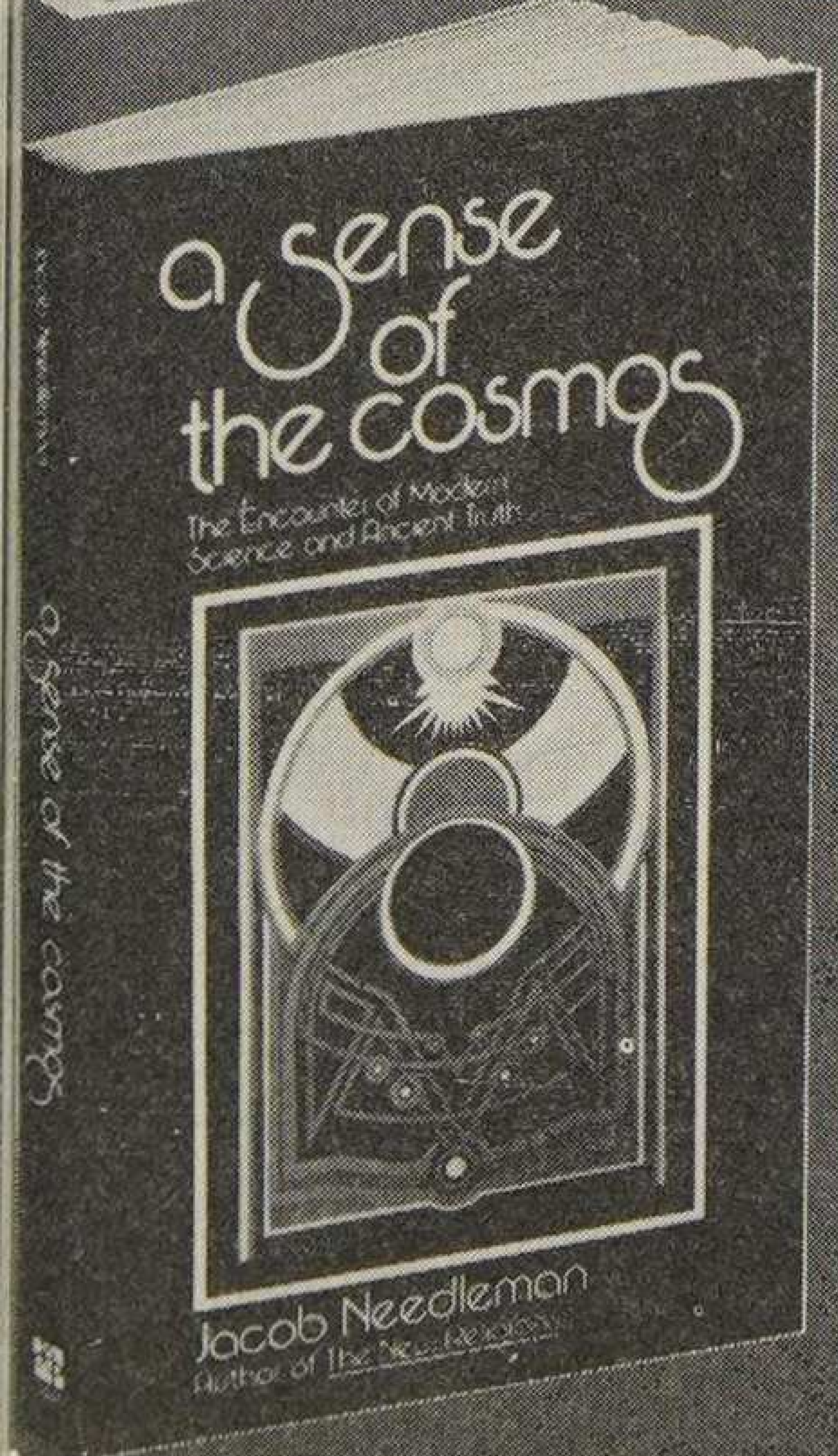

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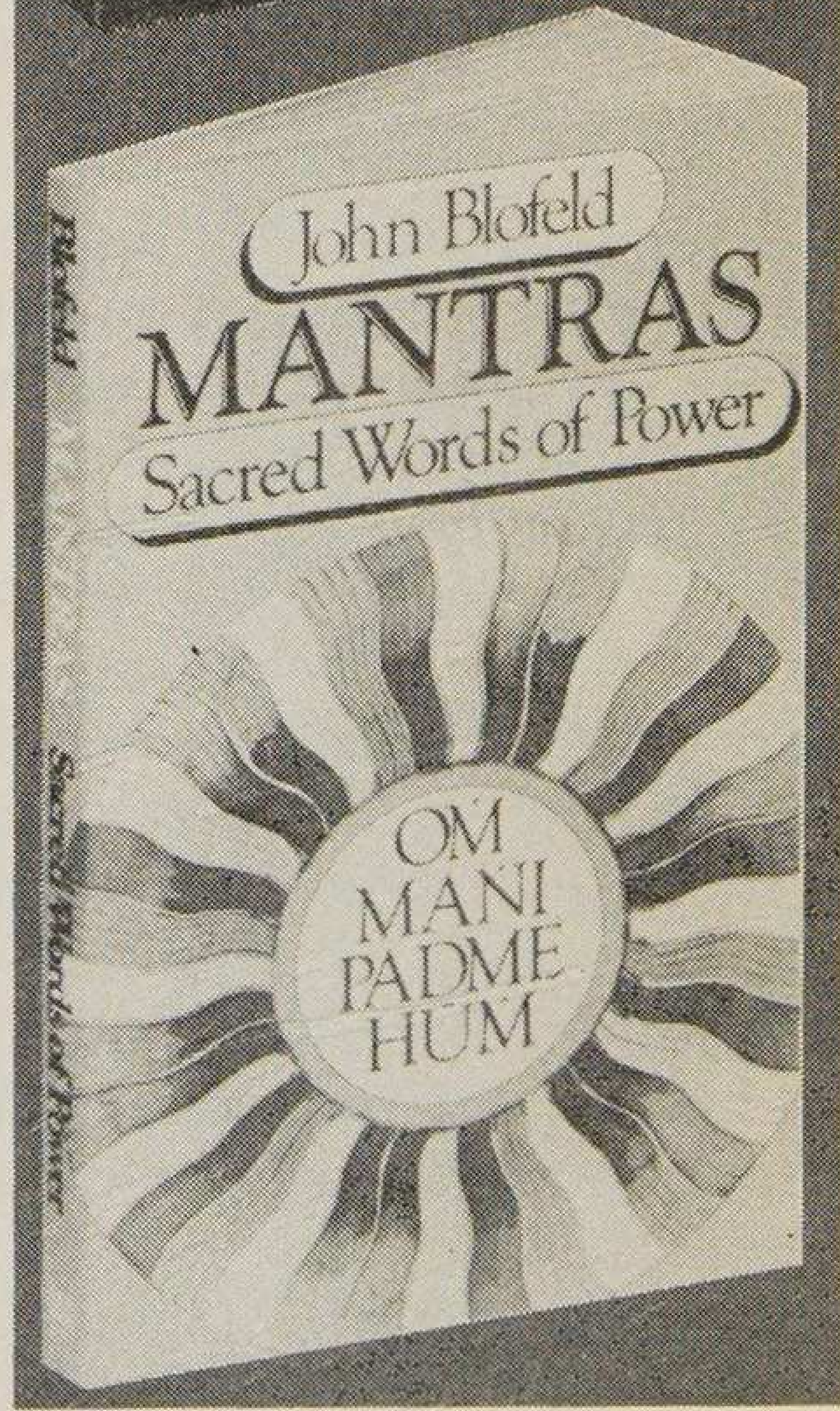

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thorless" survey, Kaufmann lets himself appear, even idiosyncratically, in the text. He records his odyssey in a way that is simply and openly personal, without becoming self-indulgent.

It is well that Kaufmann advises the reader of the four dimensions of his study in the title. They serve as touchstones throughout, so that the author's experiences are thoughtfully presented as well as passionately recalled. The scholarship and documentation are superb, and the information is selectively arranged to enhance the presentation. Kaufmann neither intends nor pretends to have produced a personal memoir, on the one hand, or a complete source book of religions on the other; rather, this is an outstanding lesson in the sort of real "sophistication" which ought to be possible in thinking about religion: namely, the informed understanding of religions which enables people to share their most deeply personal experiences in meaningful ways. It would be fortunate if this book were used in teaching at an introductory level, for Kaufmann has invested the study of religion with fresh excitement and a sense of discovery.

Amy S. Brill

Federico Fellini: The Search for a New Mythology

By Charles B. Ketcham. New York: Paulist Press, 1976. Pp. 94. $3.95.

Paulist Press has begun an important new series on religion and the arts called "The Mythmakers." As defined by Charles B. Ketcham, the author of the first volume to appear, *Federico Fellini: The Search for a New Mythology*, the series will be devoted to certain outstanding creative artists of our day whose works reveal a preoccupation with the realization that "the old symbols which have structured the lives and thoughts of Western culture are now ineffective and powerless, that we are beginning a new era in which these old symbols must be redefined or in which new symbols must be created or discovered." The purpose is clear and commendable; and if film is to be the principal (though not exclusive) artistic focus of the series, one could scarcely find a better subject to begin with.

Part One of *Federico Fellini* is devoted to a portrait of the artist as conscious subject, almost as nervous theologian. The exposition of Fellini's theoretical reflections on his work and on cinema today is based mostly on interviews with the director himself, and the collective picture that emerges is of a man with a depth of religious and intellectual insight that matches the imaginative flair of his films.

Part two is devoted to the films. (Ketcham, incidentally, is among those awaiting the return of Fellini's early genius, absent— they claim— from the six films after *8½*.) *La Strada*, Ketcham writes, shows us that life has a purpose, *La Dolce Vita* that a sacramental structure underlies that purpose, and *8½* that the salvation of self-affirmation is possible through grace. One can, it seems to me, find these meanings in the films without stretching the evidence. However, in exploring the sacramental structure of *La Dolce Vita*, Ketcham has been far too literal in associating *seven* sacraments with the principal episodes of the film. The symbolism of baptism in the fountain sequence with Sylvia, the sex goddess, is patent; in fact, the pervasive presence of water would seem sufficient for supporting a sacramental interpretation. Yet to see the organ interlude by Steiner or the hoax miracle as in any way indicative of confirmation and holy orders, respectively— to mention just two others—reads meaning *into* the film. The film's episodic sequence of seven days and seven nights has been noted time and again, but the mythic frame that is least strained in application is more obviously the phases of final judgment, in the Book of Revelation.

Fellini *is* searching. It is clear both from his films and from his conscious self-revelation. But what he has found, if we are to accept Ketcham's analysis of these three films, is neither a new mythology nor the beginning of one, but the visual equivalent of traditional Christian mythology.

John R. May

Correction

In the last issue of *Parabola*, Volume II, Issue 1, Michael Adam's recent book (published by Knopf) was incorrectly listed as *Three Ways to the East Within Us*. The correct title should have read: *Wandering in Eden: Three Ways to the East Within Us*. Our apologies to author and publisher.

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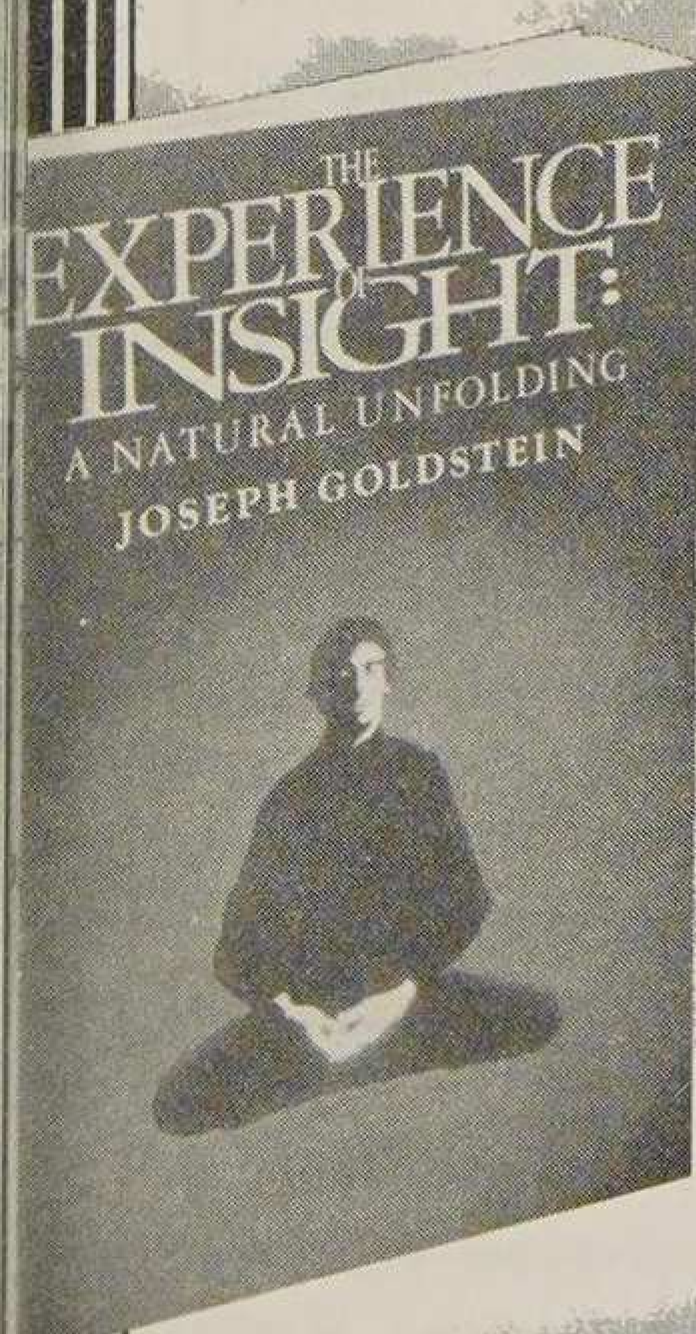

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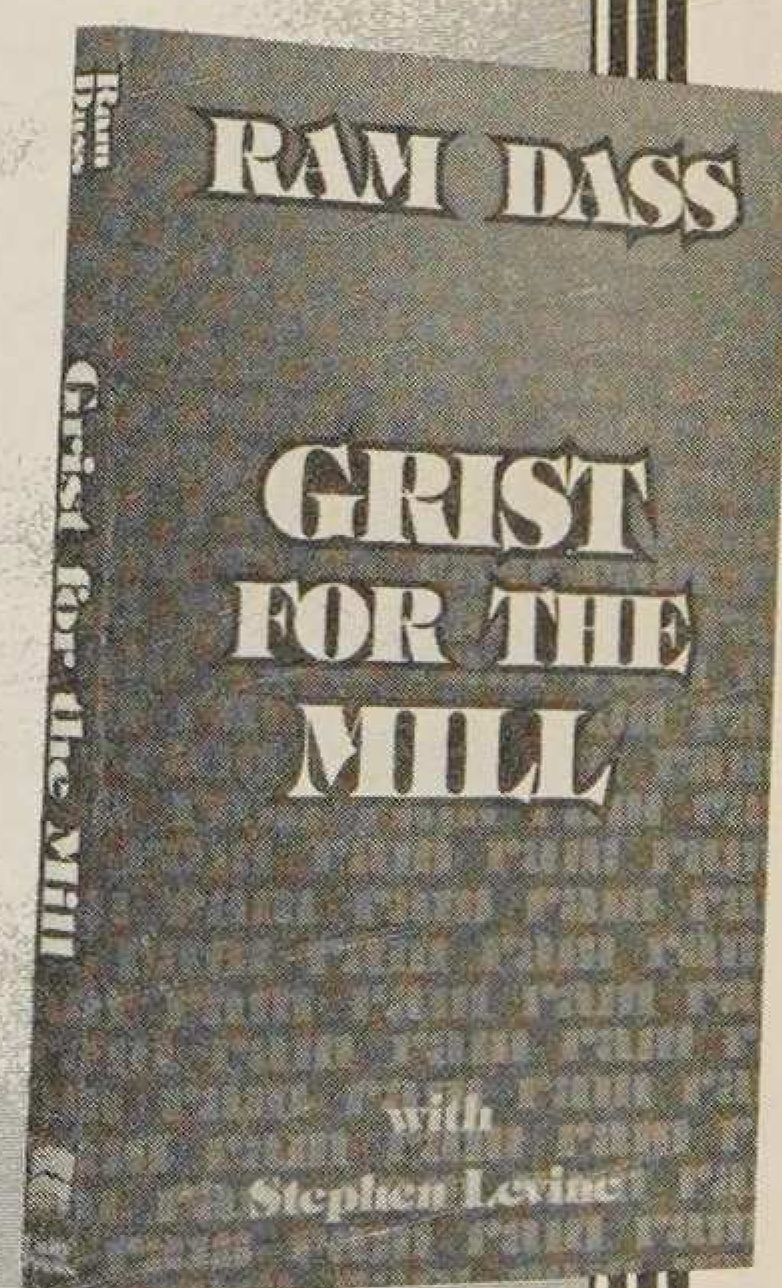

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Creative Meditation and Multi-dimensional Consciousness

By Lama Anagarika Govinda. Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1976. Pp. xxi + 294. Paper $4.95.

Rarely do we receive so great a gift of teaching as we have here been given by the erudite and venerable Lama Anagarika Govinda. This latest of his remarkable books, in every highly polished, deeply resonating line, clearly evinces the fact that it is written from the summit of a mountain of a lifetime of ardent dedication, profound study, and extensive practice. The view he shares with us is truly Himalayan in its panoramic splendor, yet through the lenses of his elucidations we can see the finest details of valleys and ranges and peaks with precision and clarity. His unique ability to combine deep personal experience with sharp intellectual rigor proves that a full heart and a clear head need not preclude each other. The Lama's technical command of the intricacies of the Buddhist meditational methodologies combined with the vividness of his elucidations that is born of his personal experience make this work uniquely valuable for students of meditation as well as highly illuminating for the general reader.

While in the first three sections of the book, the Lama methodically expounds the nature and techniques of "creative meditation," in the last three he ranges freely over the major aesthetic, religious, and philosophical questions, creating a set of twenty-four essays that are veritable gems of insight and clarity. Thus the actual reading of the book is itself a kind of "creative meditation," reaching a kind of climax in the third section, entitled "Meditation as Direct Experience and Spiritual Attitude," and then applying the attained insight to the details of life and death and transcendence, in the indispensable second stage of reintegration of universal and individual.

The process that the reader is gently brought through fits very appropriately with the Lama's critical achievement in clearing away the major misconceptions about "meditation," which he does by realizing the middle way of nondualism that is the essence of the Mahayana. To cite some central points; he states eloquently, "Meditation is not an escape from the world, but a means of looking deeper into it, unhampered by prejudices or by the familiarity of habit which blinds us to the wonders."; and "... those who believe themselves to have attained the highest state of divine union in subconscious or unconscious trance-states, only deceive themselves. Unless they are capable of integrating the experience of universality into their normal individual consciousness and of realizing it in their daily life, they have attained nothing worth striv-

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ing for." The highest tribute is thus paid to the Lama's significant and extraordinary achievement by reporting that, while most books on this subject tend to make the reader feel "left out" by creating an artificial sense of some remote idealized "state" only for the chosen, this book, without making any claims for itself, rather imparts a sense of worth and wonder immediately felt as being *universal.*

Robert Thurman

Blues Of The Sky: Interpreted from the Original Hebrew Book of Psalms

By David Rosenberg. A Poet's Bible series. New York: Harper & Row, 1976. Pp. 53. $6.95.

In an afterword to *Blues Of The Sky*, David Rosenberg writes:

> *The modern three-line stanza I was using echoed for me both the original parallelism of ancient poetry and the basically triadic construction of the blues, which in turn is derived from gospel spirituals, a form of American liturgy. As I thought of the latter, I recognized a similarity between the "stone-righteous" blues man and the psalmist: a resistance to superstition, cynicism, and self-righteousness, without the pretense of perfectly transcending them; a desire not to sound smarter than one is, and to let one's heaviest feelings resonate in a gentle irony and become lightened in a harmonics of repetition.*

One may judge, as I do, that Rosenberg has written poetry that successfully resists superstition and cynicism without feeling that, on the level of technique, he owes much either to Hebrew prosody or to the blues.

Rosenberg's experiment ("I was satisfied my versions were little translation experiments") is less an experiment in technique than in the avoidance of technique. It is a more or less conscious attempt to avoid cleverness and to speak simply. The psalmist himself, as Rosenberg understands him, was not a creator but a transmitter. He took a tradition with a language-life as well as a thought-life of its own and turned it into poetry. Despite the formal attribution of the Psalms to (most often) King David, Rosenberg regards them as essentially anonymous. Accordingly, the voice he seeks in translating them is the plainsong of anonymity.

The result is a book of lyrics which, if it were soup, would be consomme; if a day, a sunny day in a cool clime; if music, a clarinet across a courtyard, holding, mostly, to the continent middle registers.

I myself am used to an English Psalter with more grandeur than this, more stateliness; and when I read the Hebrew, I find, in addition, gristle and congestion and violence and even ugliness. There is no ugliness in Rosenberg. In his interpretation, the poignant opening verse of Psalm 137 becomes, affectingly enough:

> *Into the rivers of Babylon*
> *we cried like babies, loud*
> *unwilling to move.*

But the savage closing verse, a curse against Babylon, that I would translate,

> *Happy the man who tears your babies*
> *from the breast*
> *And flings them against a cliff,*

becomes for Rosenberg,

> *lucky man...*
> *who holds up your crying babies*
> *as if to stun them*
> *against solid rock.*

If I were interpreting the Psalms with Rosenberg's poetic freedom I would enhance the violence. But then for me, the violence is the heart of it. For Rosenberg, something else— a kind of tenderness, I think— is the heart; and thereon hangs all the glory and all the feebleness of "free" translation. Rosenberg thinks he has found a *different path* to the center. I think he has found a different center.

Jack Miles

PROFILES

Sam D. Gill teaches in the American Indian Religions Program at Arizona State University and is also the coordinator of the Native American Traditions group of the American Academy of Religion. His article, "The Shadow of a Vision Yonder," has appeared in *Seeing With the Native Eye*, published by Harper & Row. A book by Dr. Gill on Navajo iconography will appear later this year, published by Brill.

John Fentress Gardner is the author of *The Experience of Knowledge*, published in 1975 by the Waldorf Press. He is currently the chairman of the Myrin Institute for Adult Education in New York City. "Ishmael on Watch" is excerpted from his article, "Melville's Vision of America," which will be published in *Proceedings* of the Myrin Institute and subsequently become a chapter in a forthcoming book, *Heralds of the American Spirit*.

Daniel Whitman, a Ph.D. candidate at Brown University, has toured West Africa where he spoke with novelists and editors. He has been published in the journals *Ba Shiru*, *Kundalini Quarterly*, and *French Colonial Studies*.

David Rosenberg recently published a poetry translation of the Book of Job for Harper & Row and is now at work on translations from the Prophets.

David Johnson is an associate professor of English and director of the Creative Writing Program at the University of New Mexico. A book of his poetry, *Pilgrim Country*, has been published, and he is coeditor of the *San Marcos Review*.

Jane Yolen is the author of many books of literary fairy tales. Her collection *The Girl Who Cried Flowers and Other Tales* was nominated for the National Book Award. Her next book, of which "The White Seal Maid" is a part, is *The Hundredth Dove and Other Tales*, to be published this fall by T.Y. Crowell.

Kenneth L. Phillips is a lecturer, analytical psychologist and computer programmer. He is past director of the Eranos Conferences in Switzerland.

P.L. Travers, to our great good fortune, is a frequent contributor to *Parabola*. Best known as the creator of *Mary Poppins*, she has devoted a good deal of her life to studying, lecturing and writing about myth, fairy tales and legends. The first children's writer to appear on the Queen's Honors List, she recently accepted the award "on behalf of Lewis Carroll, Beatrix Potter, George MacDonald" and others.

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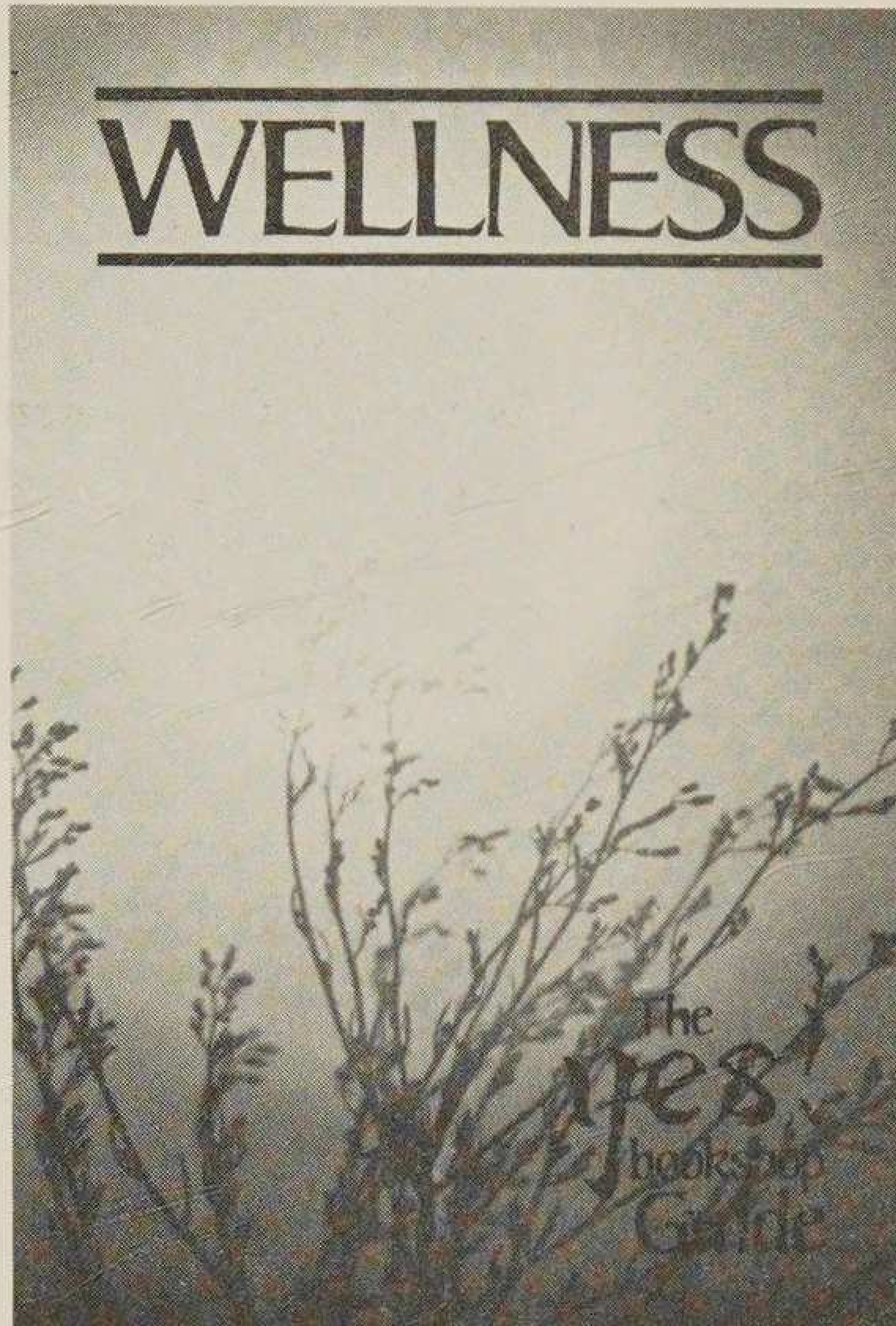

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