PARABOLA

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MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

HOLY WAR

Jonathan Cott René Daumal S.H. Nasr
Adin Steinsaltz P.L. Travers

VOLUME VII, NO. 4

PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

HOLY WAR

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Cover: "Manjusri Bodhisattva," Javanese, 14th century.

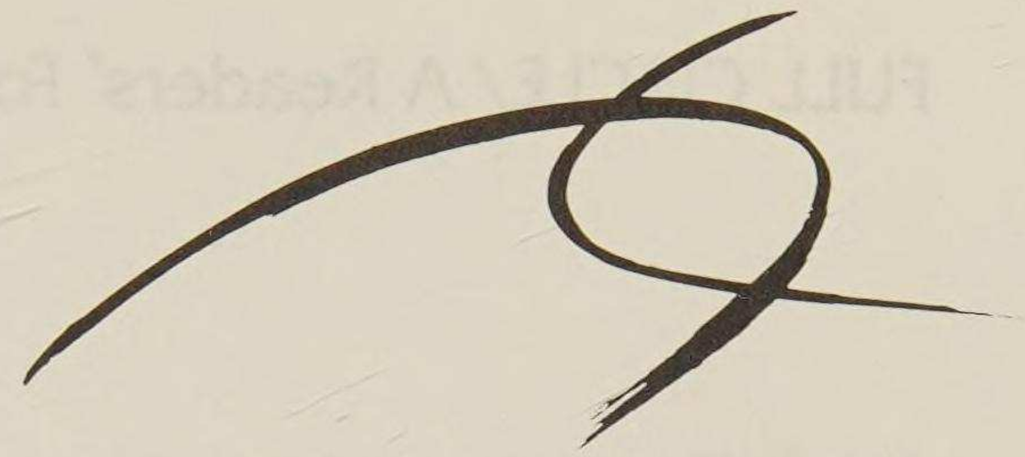
Inside Cover: "Angel" from the facade of Angoulême Cathedral, Charente.

A favorite story in my family tells how one of my sisters, contemplating her teen-age children, announced, "I didn't have the children I expected to have." I suppose the same thing might be said of the offspring of the mind as well as the body, and PARABOLA is no exception; not that it has disappointed its parent, but certainly it has surprised her. Nearly seven years after its appearance and with a readership multiplied many times over, PARABOLA is no longer a child, and has a character and a will of its own. It often insists, for instance, on a change in our intended themes when they don't follow closely enough its own train of thought; sometimes it accepts the most unexpected material, and refuses an article we had hoped to print. So I am relieved of any anxiety about turning over its direction—which could only be insofar as PARABOLA itself permits—to other hands, especially to a pair which have helped to tend it since its birth.

This does not deny my unbreakable ties with the magazine, nor my continued dedication to the aim outlined in the Focus of its first issue: the never-fulfilled search for the hub of the wheel, the central point of truth where the traditions meet and which all the myths illuminate. PARABOLA and I continue to believe, that "conviction and quest are not only not incompatible, they are essential to each other." We don't expect ever to answer our questions but we do expect to go on asking them as long as we live. Everyone on our newly-arranged masthead contributes to that asking, including the Founding Editor—who expects also to be busy with a series of PARABOLA books, as well as the programs of talks, films, and music that have already been launched, and who now happily turns over the podium to our new Editor and Publisher, Lorraine Kisly.

—D.M. Dooling

FOCUS



When we hear the word "war" today, it seems as though it could have no possible positive connotations. It brings up in us either fears of nuclear holocaust, or feelings of helplessness and fury about the waste of human life in Vietnam, in Northern Ireland, in the Middle East. "Holy wars" are perhaps the worst, meaning little more to us than a justification for atrocities, a sanction for fanaticism and brutality. Yet the holy men and the poets, the central myths and the great traditions do not shrink from war. They invoke it, urging us to battle.

In our time, when the need for peace seems more desperate than ever before, the call for inner war, the injunction to carry on a struggle inside ourselves, rings true. We recognize that while we individually and collectively appear to wish for peace, we are nonetheless in conflict within and without. There seems to be no doubt that the unexamined and unresolved conflicts in us have a relationship to the chaos which we see so clearly about us. René Daumal in this issue speaks of two wars—one which we simply undergo, which rages around and through us without our participation, and another which we perceive clearly and enter willingly. It is only when we are engaged in the inner warfare, he says, that we can be at peace with others.

In preparing this issue we have seen that from the earliest myths of war in heaven to the teachings of the Desert Fathers on the spiritual warfare inherent in each individual, we can only seem to avoid conflict and struggle. From the beginning of time, we are told, powerful forces must confront and oppose each other before any purpose of consequence can come into being. Myths from every culture speak of gods and heroes whose aim is supported and hindered by allies and enemies, whose resolve is tested by difficulty and clarified by struggle. Forces of creation are opposed by those of destruction, forces of life struggle with those of death.

It is not easy to see how insights we are given about the interplay of forces on a cosmic scale apply on the level of the individual. It is difficult, first of all for us to see what is at stake in our own lives, and to accept struggle as necessary and vital to our becoming in reality what we are now only potentially. For this we would have to see our own being as a battleground, itself a field of powerful forces always in movement, always serving one or another possibility.

We can see at least the inevitability of struggle once we set out to accomplish an aim ourselves. Only then are the lines more clearly drawn, the impulse countered by a resistance threatening it. While many things just happen, nothing we ever set out to do is achieved without persistent effort. And there are some goals, Adin Steinsaltz points out in his essay, that by their nature can never be attained but only enlarged as they are approached. In regard to the most challenging and highest possibilities in us, it is as though we are only able to see a further step once the first steps have already been made.

The fact of outer war, the war which we undergo, has been the backdrop during the planning of this issue. Persistent questions about why human beings kill one another and why we are threatening the existence of our species have been inescapable. While these questions have not been addressed directly in every article, the relationship between the state of the individual and the kind of world in which he lives is implied on every page. Many of the causes of outer war may always be a mystery, but it is less likely that a remedy will be found for any of them if the war inside, the one we can know something about, is not faced and fought.

—Lorraine Kisly

FULL CIRCLE/ A Readers' Forum

Laurens van der Post and P.L. Travers lament that we of technological abundance are mythologically destitute. Their conversation entitled "Where Will All the Stories Go" (Vol. VII, No. 2) deals with we dreamers—bushmen, shamans, technicians, chiefs—and our myths. Van der Post and Travers feel that although a universal wealth of myth is available to all men, techno-man seems to have grabbed only the gloss. They point out that Tolkien had accentuated techno-man's love of heroic fantasy and pulled him away from true mythology. In his own behalf, he answered critics often and colorfully with statements similar to the following lines from his poem "Mythopoeia."

> . . . though we dared to build
> Gods and their houses out of dark and light,
> and sowed the seed of dragons—'twas our
> right. . . .

Though it worries van der Post and Travers that Tolkien has manipulated mythology, I think they should admit that techno-man in his world of "grab for all the gusto" may need to be trapped and tranquilized by a masterful yarn before he can begin to comprehend his own deep need for myth. Tolkien's stories are a confectionary mythology, but they bring us closer to dreaming and seeing than the assembly line, the office, or Capitol Hill.

A secretary too frantic to see Mantis might be fascinated by a dragon long enough to stop typing and hear the "tapping." An executive who believes myths are something published by the competition will be more apt to hunt carriwitchets than witchetty grubs. Granted, these people will have been snared by a tapestry rather than a golden thread, but the thread is there nonetheless, linking us all. Writers like Tolkien may show us dragons because they know us, but they also lead us beyond. They lead us to a point where, if we look carefully and humbly, we see the dancing dragon is just a reflection on the ripples of a mysterious pool, in the center of which Mantis rides on a leaf quietly waiting for us to collect our universal inheritance.

Katherine C-S Kallstad
Placitas, New Mexico

P.S. I know it is not on the diet of pure myth, but thanks to P.L. Travers for bringing Myrrdin back in "Speak, Lord." Following the conversation with van der Post, it was a reassuring dessert.

The conversation between Laurens van der Post and P.L. Travers (Vol. VII, No. 2) was difficult for me to enjoy, and disturbing because I have long considered P.L. Travers one of my heroines, and a kindred spirit. I found their statements about Alex Haley's *Roots* to be very shortsighted and to reveal a lack of insight into the myth system of Afro-Americans. The psychic and spiritual cauldron out of which Afro-Americans come produces a need for historical validity which *Roots* provided. In addition to that, the archetypes which were part of the *Roots* story provide a sense of continuity and identity which has been missing, and which the dominant culture has never provided for Afro-Americans. While we have always had our folk material, to quote from the article itself: "these stories are becoming unavailable to the people who need them most." This statement is tragically applicable to the Afro-American experience.

Let me also state that the novel *Roots* and the television presentations are very different, and the aesthetic distinction was not made clear when van der Post called it "appalling, phony, and untrue." While *Roots* does not fit the kind of allegorical and sym-

bolic use of "the dream" which the conversation addresses, it spoke in a powerful way to millions of Afro-Americans and does not deserve the kind of arrogant putdown it received in this interview.

In addition to this I could not get by Mr. van der Post's comment on the rock paintings "which no human being had ever seen—I mean the words in the European sense," without an old familiar ghost whispering in my ear, "he means white men." *That* insensitivity in tandem with the *Roots* comments made me wonder.

Linda Brown Bragg, Ph.D.
Greensboro, North Carolina

P.L. Travers replies: I am honored to be one of Linda Brown Bragg's heroines and would like to say that because of her letter, so gently taking up the cudgels, she is one of mine.

It is true to say that no television serial ever entirely validates the book from which it stems; perhaps, indeed, it cannot, being so much the coarser medium. But I should like to point out that the Cauldron spoken of in "Where will all the stories go?" is the world *cauldron, known to all mythologies and dealing solely with mythology, not with sociology or history—though these processes, to achieve a people's identity and continuity, may, and indeed should, dip their fingers into it. If we lose touch with our folk material—and it is up to us, no one else, to preserve it—we, in some way, lose touch with ourselves. So, by allowing the stories to become unavailable, they are being lost to the blood stream. Nevertheless, like the past, they are there and intact, ready to be fished up by anyone with the necessary patience and enthusiasm.*

As an Australo-European whose ancestors wore woad, later became enslaved by the Romans, still later mingled with the invading Saxons, and at last were overcome by William the Conqueror, I have a world of story—or fish, if you like—available to me. So it must be with Miss Brown Bragg. But where can I find it, that shape-changing cauldron stuff to which she is so richly the heir—where, along with the human heroes, Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit have their African counterparts in Brother Jackal and Brother Hare? To be just, a huge book of African stories was published in the U.S., and in England the tales have become sufficiently popular to be in a variety of paperbacks. I had similar Australian stories in my youth, and one of my best childhood memories is of hearing the sound of the Corroboree deep in the crowded bush. I longed then to be free of my white cloud (see Blake) so that I would have the right to see it and join in the chanting. I think it must have been from some such music in the cauldron that the spirituals evolved their beautiful nostalgic cadences.

Of course, I cannot speak for Sir Laurens van der Post. But I would doubt if there is in the world any other man who has done so much to ease the plight of the Bushmen or collected, and published, *so much of their precious mythology. By learning from them, and sharing with others his discoveries, he has revealed their nobility. So that whatever of the past—or, in the Jungian sense, shadow-stuff—has been so retrieved, it can be embraced and given its rightful place by the hearth.*

Black, white, red, yellow—our stories are all in the cauldron. Let no ghost whisper otherwise.

P.L. Travers

ERRATUM

In "The Vision of the Rose" (Dreams & Seeing, Vol. VII, No. 2), excerpted from *Archetypes* by Elemire Zolla, an editing error confused the opening of the second paragraph on p. 74, which should have read: "From Galatina the traveller in search of healing rituals turns to the Iranian desert. I happened there once to ask a Zoroastrian priest. . . ."

The Strife of the Spirit

by Adin Steinsaltz

Translated by Michael Swirsky

Peace of mind has come to be regarded in our time as one of life's highest ideals. Clergymen, leaders of cults, psychologists, advertisers—all seem to agree that this is the thing most to be desired. And of course all of them are in some measure prepared to provide it. Rest and relaxation are no longer the exclusive province of resorts and sanitariums. Peace of mind is regarded, not merely as something pleasant and desirable, but as a spiritual ideal and significant life goal, the final achievement to which various schools of thought and meditation aspire.

The reasons for this longing for tranquillity are not hard to find. Modern life, particularly in its characteristic urban form, is beset by political and economic upheaval, insecurity and fear. It is an unquiet life. Global tensions impinge not only on the body politic and its functionaries but on each individual citizen. People in general, even those most concerned with peace of mind—be it for themselves or as a "commodity" to be sold to others—have very high *material* expectations, which in turn necessitate ceaseless striving. The shattering of accepted values and the distrust of established frameworks create confusion and changed, sometimes contradictory, expectations. All this makes modern man tense, pressured, discontented. Hardly anyone escapes this stress or the measure of difficulty it adds to life. Home, family, friends, and good works all gradually disappear or are drastically altered in form, and to the extent that they survive at all they tend themselves to become sources of tension and competition. Thus, beyond all the internal and external turbulence, what man seeks is tranquillity, relaxation, and peace, at least with himself. The almost physical need for quiet and surcease quickly received legitimation and even reinforcement from psychology, philosophy, and religion. Tension and stress of all kinds have come to be seen not only as discomfiting and harmful but as morally invalid. Peace and quiet have become the great motive forces of all striving, including the spiritual.

Of course, the quest for peace in all its forms is quite ancient, as old as mankind itself. So too is the elevation of peace as a supreme value. Nevertheless, there is still room to question the notion of peace of mind and its place in the hierarchy of human needs. What, first of all, does it really mean? One important definition is provided by the Jewish sages in the context of a lengthy discussion of the many virtues of peace: "The Holy One, blessed be He, found no vessel but peace which could contain all blessing." This beautiful passage, which makes peace the very basis of all good things, goes on to make a telling distinction: peace is a vessel which can contain blessing, but it can also contain nothing at all, can be an *empty* vessel. Here is a truth with wide applicability, be it in the international or the interpersonal realm, or in the life of the individual soul. Peace with no content, meaningless tranquillity, rest without sanctity—all are empty vessels. At best, the emptiness is soon filled with positive content. In all too many cases, however, the empty vessel becomes a repository for whatever comes along. In the absence of anything else, rubbish and abomination can fill the void. It is the same with empty peace of mind: the tension and pressure seem to be gone, but nothing positive comes to take their place. A vacuum results, an existence devoid of effort or thought which is in no sense better than what preceded it. A life of vain struggle can be relieved of pressure and anxiety and yet remain as vacuous and meaningless as before. Furthermore, while stress is likely (particularly when unremitting) to be unpleasant, it has the potential of achieving meaningful, valuable change. An equilibrium from which stress has been eliminated can be a terminal state, a condition from which all further development is likewise excluded—in short, the peace of death.

The notion of peace of mind as a supreme value, as a standard by which to judge all other aspects of life, is worse than inadequate. It carries with it the real danger of apotheosizing emptiness and negation—negation of good as well as evil, release from achievement as well as from stress. The Torah's identification of life with good

and death with evil (Deuteronomy 30:15) is cast in different, less exalted and more down-to-earth imagery in the Book of Ecclesiastes: "Better off the living dog than the dead lion" (9:4). And the reason given has to do with the potential for change, however bitterly expressed: "For the living know that they shall die, while the dead know nothing at all" (9:5). In other words, as long as there is activity, as long as there is struggle—however lowly, however reduced to the level of the "dog's" struggle for bare existence—it is better than the empty tranquillity of death, the peace which contains nothing and points nowhere beyond itself.

The underlying issue here has to do with the positioning of a scale of values. As soon as there is some kind of ordering leading to a final goal—be it material, spiritual in a broad sense (knowledge, truth, love), or specifically religious (divine enlightenment, etc.)—one must judge each situation and each action, not according to its "comfortableness" but according to whether or not it is likely to bring one nearer to that goal. In our case, peace of mind may come as pleasant relief to one sorely pressed by the exigencies of life; but as long as he aspires to more in life than escape, such peace cannot be for him an end in itself. Inner tranquillity and turmoil, relaxation and tension, must be judged in light of the ultimate goal. And there are goals which cannot be attained except through struggle waged within the soul.

The path of inner conflict is neither easy nor pleasant. Every struggle, first of all, carries the risk of an undesirable outcome. Every attempt to reach a higher level of existence, to break out and ascend, entails not only the possibility of failure to rise but also the possibility of falling even lower than the point where one began. Then too, no spiritual ladder can be ascended without constant effort, tension, and anguish. In many ways, this struggle is between different and often opposing values. But in a much broader sense, it is an ongoing struggle between the given, present reality and that which has not yet come into existence but waits to be created. The inertia of what already exists is always the great enemy and can never be fully overcome. The never-ending conflict between the existent and not-yet-existent is at the root of man's whole inner struggle.

In fact, it is in the nature of inward, as opposed to outward, political or economic struggle, that it knows no termination, no clear-cut end point at which victory or defeat can be pronounced. There may be brief pauses for rest or changes of pace along the way, alternations between stretches of acute, violent exertion and stretches of slower, more measured progress; but there is no real conclusion. Not only are the goals of spiritual struggle loftier and more difficult to attain than other kinds of goals; they are enlarged by the very process of achieving them, by the inward growth of the struggler himself. Thus, when quiet overtakes the spiritual struggle, it is in itself a sign of backsliding and descent. There can be no greater danger to one laboring to reach a higher spiritual and moral plane than the feeling that he has achieved it. Such feelings of self-satisfaction generally indicate a blurring of the vision of the goal itself.

In every serious discussion of spiritual matters there arises from time to time the question of whether man is capable of reaching any goal whatsoever except through such protracted inner conflict. This is not just a theoretical question. In fact, everyone whose life is oriented toward goals beyond his present reality, goals which are not simply the direct and natural outcome of his present way of life, is already involved in such a conflict. Is there no alternative? For most of us, the answer is no. There does not appear to be any magical way, without deception, to resolve, conclude, and thus dispense with the inner struggle.

True, there are in this world people with extraordinary gifts who are able to bring the opposed forces in their own souls into genuine harmony with each other, harmony which these forces energize rather than undermine. But such abilities result, not

from following any particular teaching or path, but from rare inborn attributes. The latter are not unlike other sorts of native endowments—natural beauty, for example, which radiates from every movement and gesture and needs no artificial enhancement; or genius in a particular discipline, which is reflected in nearly total mastery. People with such endowments do need to make a certain effort, but it is mainly to avoid spoiling what they already possess. There are, likewise, rare cases of people especially gifted in the moral realm, and here too, the quality is not one which can be achieved by any sort of exertion. Of course, many who are not particularly gifted are responsible for significant and even decisive achievements in this realm, but never without effort or by taking an easy way. The extraordinarily talented are like rare works of nature—orchids or birds-of-paradise—whose character is something to marvel at and enjoy but not imitate. Nor do such people usually reach the same heights or depths as others in their grasp of truth. For there are certain precious insights which cannot be acquired except through tribulation, things born of struggle and effort which can never be harmonized, and it is the pursuit of these which makes for the highest levels of aspiration. It is, in any case, the unavoidable lot of most men to choose, not between turmoil and tranquil perfection, but rather between a harsh struggle to find themselves and a degeneration which in the last analysis offers no peace of mind either. Instead of waiting for a miraculous rescue, let a man take the other path, the only meaningful one, and prepare himself to do battle within.

Part of the preparation lies in this very recognition, that without inward strife there can be no life, that what a man endures is no mere "punishment" being exacted of him as an individual but the way of all men. And in a wider perspective, man's inner struggle is part of the larger process of life itself. On one level, the struggle within the human soul is likely to be between good and evil, while on another level it is between the natural (animal, biological) and supernatural (divine) elements in the human makeup. Taking yet a broader view—and one which does not contradict but complement the picture already presented—it is a struggle in cosmic terms between chaos and Creation, or, in physical terms, between entropy and life. In a sense, all physical existence represents the struggle of mute form to preserve itself, its weight, its volume, its component elements; and the same is especially true of life forms, whose very being is a perpetual process not only of maintenance but of metabolic transformation, not only of self-preservation but of growth. This ceaseless tension between being and nothingness is no mere epiphenomenon or superstructure but part of existence itself, at all levels and in all manifestations. It is thus impossible for man to escape this tension or negate it entirely. It can be ignored or not recognized, but there is no release from it.

Indeed, man's question should not be how to escape the perpetual struggle but rather what form to give it, at what level to wage it. The tension of existence is to be found even in a molecule of inarticulate matter; in man, as in all living creatures, there are the tensions of biological growth and change. He can live his life and carry on his struggle entirely on that plane. If he does, that too will be the plane on which his spiritual life is lived, for even at its basest, human life cannot be lived without consciousness. At whatever level man struggles, there will his consciousness be involved. What differentiates the saint from the lowly creature of instinct, cunning, and cruelty is not the life-tension within him but the level at which his conscious being joins the struggle he must wage for survival. The choice between good and evil is preceded by an even more fundamental choice: whether to give spiritual or moral expression to the contradiction inherent in one's humanness or to try to ignore that contradiction. Difficulty and tension, bitterness and pain, are to be found as much in the ash heap as in the heavens. Each human being must decide where to take his stand and fight his battle.

Holy War

by René Daumal

Translated by D.M. Dooling

I am going to write a poem about war. Perhaps it will not be a real poem, but it will be about a real war.

It will not be a real poem, because if the real poet were here and if the news spread through the crowd that he was going to speak—

then a great silence would fall; at the first glimpse, a heavy silence would swell up, a silence big with a thousand thunderbolts.

The poet would be visible; we would see him; seeing him, he would see us; and we would fade away into our own poor shadows, we would resent his being so real, we sickly ones, we troubled ones, we uneasy ones.

He would be here, full to bursting with the thousand thunderbolts of the multitude of enemies he contains—for he contains them, and satisfies them when he wishes—

incandescent with pain and holy anger, yet as still as a man lighting a fuse,

in the great silence he would open a little tap, the very small tap of the mill of words,

and let flow a poem, such a poem that it would turn you green.

What I am going to make won't be a real, poetic, poet's poem, for if the word "war" were used in a real poem—

then war, the real war that the real poet speaks about, war without mercy, war without truce would break out for good in our inmost hearts.

For in a real poem words bear their own facts.

But neither will this be a philosophical discourse. For to be a philosopher, to love the truth more than oneself, one must have died to self-deception, one must have killed the treacherous smugness of dream and cozy fantasy. And that is the aim and the end of the war; and the war has hardly begun, there are still traitors to unmask.

Nor will it be a work of learning. For to be learned, to see and love things as they are, one must be oneself, and love to see oneself as one is. One must have broken the deceiving mirrors, one must have slain with a pitiless look the insinuating phantoms. And that is the aim and the end of the war, and the war has hardly begun; there are still masks to tear off.

Nor will it be an eager song. For enthusiasm is stable when the god stands up, when the enemies are no more than formless forces, when the clangor of war rings out deafeningly; and the war has hardly begun, we haven't yet thrown our bedding into the fire.

Nor will it be a magical invocation, for the magician prays to his god, "Do what I want," and he refuses to make war on his worst enemy, if the enemy pleases him; nor will it be a believer's prayer either, for at his best the believer prays "Do what you want," and for that he must put iron and fire into the entrails of his dearest enemy—which is the act of war, and the war has hardly begun.

This will be something of all that, some hope and effort towards all that, and it will also be something of a call to arms. A call that the play of echoes can send back to me, and that perhaps others will hear.

You can guess now of what kind of war I wish to speak.

Of other wars—of those one undergoes—I shall not speak. If I were to speak of them, it would be ordinary literature, a makeshift, a substitute, an excuse. Just as it has happened that I have used the word "terrible" when I didn't have gooseflesh. Just as I've used the expression "dying of hunger" when I hadn't reached the point of stealing from the food-stands. Just as I've spoken of madness before having tried to

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Translated by D.M. Dooling from the original French text, "La Guerre Sainte," in the collection, Poésie Noire, Poésie Blanche *by René Daumal,* © *Editions Gallimard (Paris), 1954. Reprinted with permission of Editions Gallimard and J. Daumal.*

consider infinity through a keyhole. As I've spoken of death before my tongue has known the salt taste of the irreparable. As certain people speak of purity, who have always considered themselves superior to the domestic pig. As some speak of liberty, who adore and polish their chains; as some speak of love, who love nothing but their own shadows; or of sacrifice, who wouldn't for all the world cut off their littlest finger. Or of knowledge, who disguise themselves from their own eyes. Just as it is our great infirmity to talk in order to see nothing.

This would be a feeble substitute, like the old and sick speaking with relish of blows given and received by the young and strong.

Have I then the right to speak of this other war—the one which is not just undergone—when it has perhaps not yet irremediably taken fire in me? When I am still engaged only in skirmishes? Certainly, I rarely have the right. But "rarely the right" also means "sometimes the duty"—and above all, "the need," for I will never have too many allies.

I shall try to speak then of the holy war.

May it break out and continue without truce! Now and again it takes fire, but never for long. At the first small hint of victory, I flatter myself that I've won, and I play the part of the generous victor and come to terms with the enemy. There are traitors in the house, but they have the look of friends and it would be so unpleasant to unmask them! They have their place in the chimney corner, their armchairs and their slippers; they come in when I'm drowsy, offering me a compliment, or a funny or exciting story, or flowers and goodies—sometimes a fine hat with feathers. They speak in the first person, and it's my voice I think I'm hearing, my voice in which I'm speaking: "I am . . . , I know . . . , I wish . . ." But it's all lies! Lies grafted on my flesh, abscesses screaming at me: "Don't slaughter us, we're of the same blood!"—pustules whining: "We are your greatest treasure, your only good feature; go on feeding us, it doesn't cost all that much!"

And there are so many of them; and they are charming, they are pathetic, they are arrogant, they practice blackmail, they band together . . . but they are barbarians who respect nothing—nothing that is true, I mean, because they cringe in front of everything else and are tied in knots with respect. It's thanks to their ideas that I wear my mask; they take possession of everything, including the keys to the costume wardrobe. They tell me: "We'll dress you; how could you ever present yourself properly in the great world without us?" But oh! it would be better to go naked as a grub!

The only weapon I have against these armies is a very tiny sword, so little you can hardly see it with the naked eye; though, true enough, it is sharp as a razor and quite deadly. But it is really so small that I lose it from one minute to the next. I never know where I stuck it last; and when I find it again, it seems too heavy to carry and too clumsy to wield—my deadly little sword.

Myself, I only know how to say a very few words, and they are more like squeaks; while *they* even know how to write. There's always one of them in my mouth, lying in wait for my words when I want to say something. He listens and keeps everything for himself, and speaks in my place using my words but in his own filthy accent. And it's thanks to him if anyone pays attention to me or thinks I'm intelligent. (But the ones who know aren't fooled; if only I could listen to the ones who know!)

These phantoms rob me of everything. And having done so, it's easy for them to make me feel sorry for them: "We protect you, we express you, we make the most of you, and you want to murder us! But you are just destroying yourself when you scold us, when you hit us cruelly on our sensitive noses—us, your good friends."

And an unclean pity with its tepid breath comes to weaken me. Light be against you, phantoms! If I turn on the lamp, you stop talking. When I open an eye, you disappear—because you are carved out of the void, painted grimaces of emptiness. Against you, war to the finish—without pity, without tolerance. There is only one right: the right to *be* more.

But now it's a different song. They have a feeling that they have been spotted; so they pretend to be conciliatory. "Of course, you're the master. But what's a master without servants? Keep us on in our lowly places; we promise to help you. Look here, for instance: suppose you want to write a poem. How could you do it without us?"

Yes, you rebels—some day I'll put you in your place. I'll make you bow under my yoke, I'll feed you hay and groom you every morning. But as long as you suck my blood and steal my words, it would be better by far never to write a poem!

A pretty kind of peace I'm offered: to close my eyes so as not to witness the crime, to run in circles from morning till night so as not to see death's always-open jaws; to consider myself victorious before even starting to struggle. A liar's peace! To settle down cozily with my cowardices, since everybody else does. Peace of the defeated! A little filth, a little drunkenness, a little blasphemy for a joke, a little masquerade made a virtue of, a little laziness and fantasy—even a lot, if one is gifted for it—a little of all that, surrounded by a whole confectioner's-shopful of beautiful words; that's the peace that is suggested. A traitor's peace! And to safeguard this shameful peace, one would do anything, one would make war on one's fellows; for there is an old, tried and true formula for preserving one's peace with oneself, which is always to accuse someone else. The peace of betrayal!

You know by now that I wish to speak of holy warfare.

He who has declared this war in himself is at peace with his fellows, and although his whole being is the field of the most violent battle, in his very innermost depths there reigns a peace that is more active than any war. And the more strongly this peace reigns in his innermost depths, in that central silence and solitude, the more violently rages the war against the turmoil of lies and numberless illusions.

In that vast silence obscured by battle-cries, hidden from the outside by the fleeing mirage of time, the eternal conqueror listens to the voices of other silences. Alone, having overcome the illusion of not being alone, he is no longer the only one to be alone. But I am separated from him by these ghost-armies which I have to annihilate. Oh, to be able one day to take my place in that citadel! On its ramparts, let me be torn limb from limb rather than allow the tumult to enter the royal chamber!

"But am I to kill?" asks Arjuna the warrior. "Am I to pay tribute to Caesar?" asks another. Kill, he is answered, if you are a killer. You have no choice. But if your hands are red with the blood of your enemies, see to it that not a drop spatter the royal chamber, where the motionless conqueror waits. Pay, he is answered, but see to it that Caesar gets not a single glimpse of the royal treasure.

And I, who have no other weapon, no other coin, in Caesar's world, than words—am I to speak?

I shall speak to call myself to the holy war. I shall speak to denounce the traitors whom I nourished. I shall speak so that my words may shame my actions, until the day comes when a peace armored in thunder reigns in the chamber of the eternal conqueror.

And because I have used the word war, and because this word war is no longer, today, simply a sound that educated people make with their mouths, but now has become a serious word heavy with meaning, it will be seen that I am speaking seriously and that these are not empty sounds that I am making with my mouth.

—Spring, 1940

The Spiritual Significance of Jihād

by Seyyed Hossein Nasr

> "And those who perform *jihād* for Us, We shall certainly guide them in Our ways, and God is surely with the doers of good." (Quran XXXIX; 69)
>
> "You have returned from the lesser *jihād* to the greater *jihād*." (*Hadīth*)

The Arabic term *jihād*, usually translated into European languages as "holy war," more on the basis of its juridical usage in Islam rather than on its much more universal meaning in the Quran and *Ḥadīth*, is derived from the root *jhd* whose primary meaning is "to strive or to exert oneself." Its translation into "holy war," combined with the erroneous notion of Islam prevalent in the West as the "religion of the sword," has helped to eclipse its inner and spiritual significance and to distort its connotation. Nor has the appearance upon the stage of history during the past century, and especially during the past few years, of an array of movements within the Islamic world, often contending or even opposing each other and using the word *jihād* or one of its derivative forms, helped to make known the full import of its traditional meaning, which alone is of concern to us here. Instead recent distortions and even total reversal of the meaning of *jihād* as understood over the ages by Muslims have made it more difficult than ever before to gain insight into this key religious and spiritual concept.

To understand the spiritual significance of *jihād* and its wide application to nearly

every aspect of human life as understood by Islam, it is necessary to remember that Islam bases itself upon the idea of establishing equilibrium within the being of man as well as in the human society where he functions and fulfills the goals of his earthly life. This equilibrium, which is the terrestrial reflection of Divine Justice and the necessary condition for peace in the human domain, is the basis upon which the soul takes its flight towards that peace which, to use Christian terms, "passeth understanding." If Christian morality sees the aim of the spiritual life and its own morality as based on the vertical flight towards that perfection and ideal which is embodied in Christ, Islam sees it in the establishment of an equilibrium both outward and inward as the necessary basis for the vertical ascent. The very stability of Islamic society over the centuries, the immutability of Islamic norms embodied in the *Sharī'ah* (or Divine Law), and the timeless character of traditional Islamic civilization which is the consequence of its permanent and immutable prototype are all reflections of both the ideal of equilibrium and its realization. The teachings of the *Sharī'ah* as well as works of Islamic art reflect that equilibrium which is inseparable from the very name of *islām* as being related to *salām* or peace.

The preservation of equilibrium in this world, however, does not mean simply a static or inactive passivity since life by nature implies movement. In the face of the contingencies of the world of change, of the withering effects of time, of the vicissitudes of terrestrial existence, to remain in equilibrium requires continuous exertion. It means carrying out *jihād* at every stage of life. Human nature being what it is, given to forgetfulness and the conquest of our immortal soul by the carnal soul or passions, the very process of life of both the individual and the human collectivity implies the ever-present danger of the loss of equilibrium and in fact of falling into the state of disequilibrium, which if allowed to continue cannot but lead to disintegration on the individual level and chaos on the scale of community life. To avoid this tragic end and to fulfill the entelechy of the human state, which is the realization of unity (*al-tawḥīd*) or total integration, Muslims, as both individuals and members of Islamic society, must carry out *jihād*; that is, they must exert themselves at all moments of life to fight a battle both inward and outward against those forces that if not combatted will destroy that equilibrium which is the necessary condition for the spiritual life of the person and the functioning of human society. This fact is especially true if society is seen as a collectivity which bears the imprint of the Divine Norm rather than an ant heap of contending and opposing units and forces.

Man is at once a spiritual and corporeal being, a microcosm complete unto himself; yet he is the member of a society within which alone are certain aspects of his being developed and certain of his needs fulfilled. He possesses at once an intelligence whose substance is ultimately of a divine character and sentiments which can either veil his intelligence or abet his quest for his own origin. In him are found both love and hatred, generosity and covetousness, compassion and aggression. Moreover, there have existed until now not just one but several "humanities" with their own religions and moral norms, and national, ethnic, and racial groups with their own bonds of affiliation. As a result the practice of *jihād*, as applied to the world of multiplicity and the vicissitudes of human existence in the external world, has come to develop numerous ramifications in the fields of political and economic activity and in social life, and has come to partake, on the external level, of the complexity which characterizes the human world.

In its most outward sense *jihād* came to mean the defense of *dār al-islām*, that is, the Islamic world, from invasion and intrusion by non-Islamic forces. The earliest wars of Islamic history which threatened the very existence of the young community came to be known as *jihād* par excellence in this outward sense of "holy war." But it was upon returning from one of these early wars which was of paramount importance in the survival of the newly established religious community, and therefore of cosmic significance, that the Prophet nevertheless said to his companions that they had returned from the lesser holy war to the greater holy war, the greater *jihād* being the inner battle against all the forces which would prevent man from living according to the theomorphic norm which is his primordial and God-given nature.

Throughout Islamic history, the lesser holy war has echoed in the Islamic world when parts or the whole of that world have been threatened by forces from without or within. This call has been especially persistent since the nineteenth century with the advent of colonialism and the threat to the very existence of the Islamic world. It must be remembered, however, that even in such cases when the idea of *jihād* has been evoked in certain parts of the Islamic world, it has not usually been a question of religion simply sanctioning war but of the attempt by a society in which religion remains of central concern to protect itself from being conquered either by military and economic forces or by ideas of an alien nature. This does not mean, however, that in some cases, especially in recent times, religious sentiments have not been used or misused to intensify or legitimize a conflict. But to say the least, the Islamic world does not have a monopoly on this abuse, as the history of other civilizations, including even the secularized West, demonstrates so amply. Moreover, human nature being what it is, once religion ceases to be of central significance to a particular human collectivity, then men fight and kill each other for much less exalted issues than their heavenly faith. By including the question of war in its sacred legislation, Islam did not condone, but limited, war and its consequences, as the history of the traditional Islamic world bears out. In any case the idea of total war and the actual practice of the extermination of whole civilian populations did not grow out of a civilization whose dominant religion saw *jihād* in a positive light.

On the more external level, the lesser *jihād* also includes the socio-economic domain. It means the reassertion of justice in the external environment of human existence, starting with man himself. To defend one's rights and reputation, to defend the honor of oneself and one's family is itself a *jihād* and a religious duty. So is the strengthening of all those social bonds, from the family to the whole of the Muslim people (*al-ummah*), which the *Sharī'ah* emphasizes. To seek social justice in accordance with the tenets of the Quran, and of course not in the modern secularist sense, is a way of reestablishing equilibrium in human society — that is, of performing *jihād* — as are constructive economic enterprises, provided the well-being of the whole person is kept in mind and material welfare does not become an end in itself; provided one does not lose sight of the Quranic verse, "The other world is better for you than this one." To forget the proper relation between the two worlds would itself be instrumental in bringing about disequilibrium and would be a kind of *jihād* in reverse.

All of those external forms of *jihād* would remain incomplete, and in fact contribute to an excessive externalization of human beings, if they were not complemented by the greater or inner *jihād* which man must carry

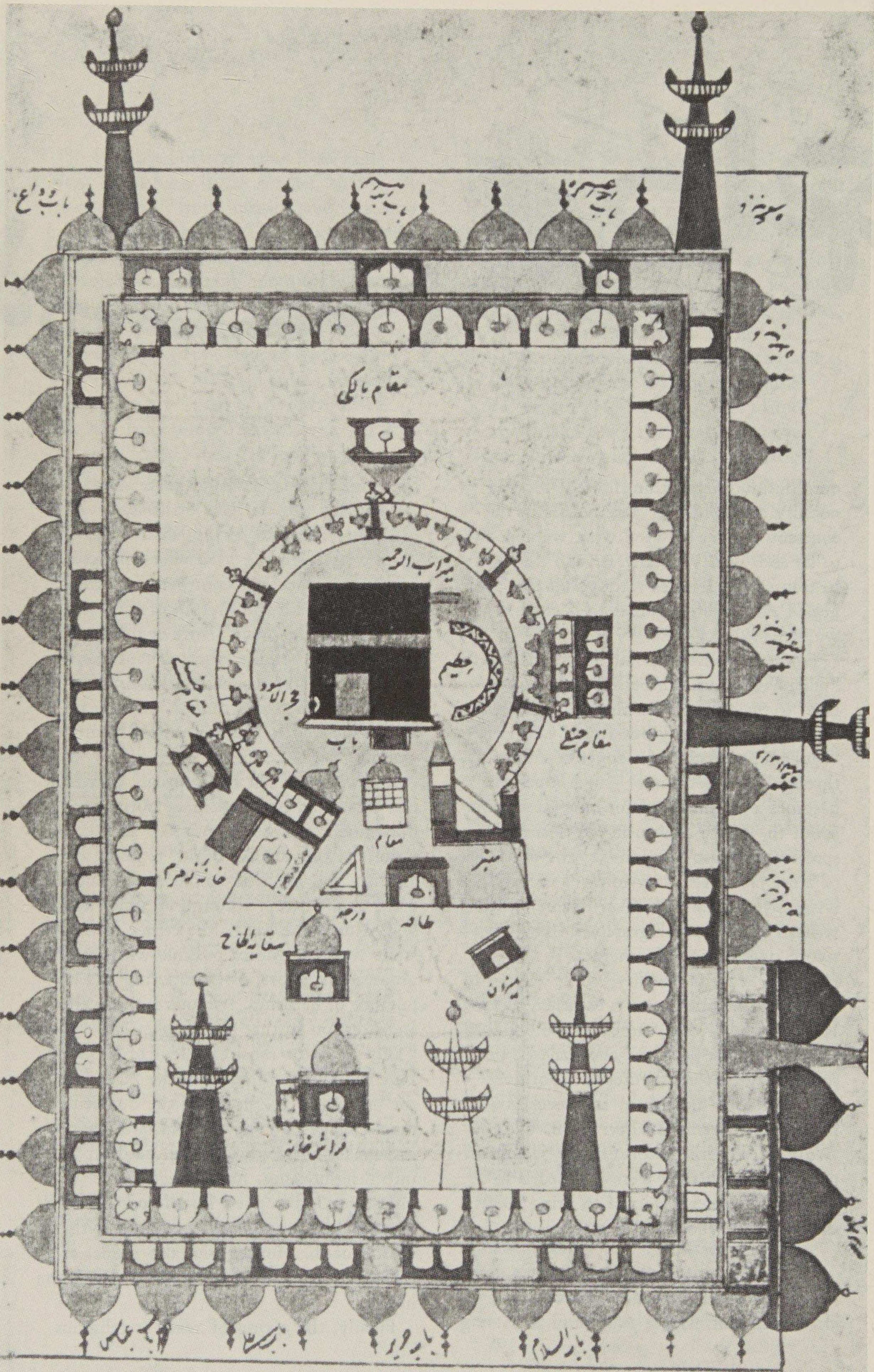
out continuously within himself, for the nobility of the human state resides in the constant tension between what we appear to be and what we really are and the need to transcend ourselves throughout this journey of earthly life in order to become what we "are."

From the spiritual point of view all the "pillars" of Islam can be seen as being related to *jihād*. The fundamental witnesses, "There is no divinity but Allah" and "Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah," through the utterance of which a person becomes a Muslim, are not only statements about the Truth as seen in the Islamic perspective, but also weapons for the practice of inner *jihād*. The very form of the first witness (*Lā ilāha illa'Llāh* in Arabic) when written in Arabic calligraphy is like a bent sword with which all otherness is removed from the Supreme Reality, while all that is positive in manifestation is returned to that Reality. The second witness is the blinding assertion of the powerful and majestic descent of all that constitutes in a positive manner the cosmos, man, and revelation from that Supreme Reality. To invoke the two witnesses in the form of the sacred language in which they were revealed is to practice the inner *jihād* and to bring about awareness of who we are, whence we come, and where is our ultimate abode.

The daily prayers (*ṣalāt* or *namāz*) which constitute the heart of the Islamic rites are again a never-ending *jihād* which punctuate human existence in a continuous rhythm in conformity with the rhythm of the cosmos. To perform the prayers with regularity and concentration requires the constant exertion of our will and an unending battle and striving against forgetfulness, dissipation, and laziness. It is itself a form of spiritual warfare.

Likewise, the fast of Ramadan, in which one wears the armor of inner purity and detachment against the passions and temptations of the outside world, requires an ascetism and inner discipline which cannot come about except through an inner holy war. Nor is the *ḥajj* to the center of the Islamic world in Mecca possible without long preparation, effort, often suffering and endurance of hardship. It requires great effort and exertion so that the Prophet could say, "The *ḥajj* is the most excellent of all *jihāds*." Like the knight in quest of the Holy Grail, the pilgrim to the house of the Beloved must engage in a spiritual warfare whose end makes all sacrifice and all hardship pale into insignificance, for the *ḥajj* to the House of God implies, for the person who practices the inner *jihād*, encounter with the Master of the House, who also resides at the center of that other *Ka'bah* which is the heart.

Finally, the giving of *zakāt* or religious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دروازہ
طاقہ
سنایا فتح
میزاب
فراش خانہ
باب علی
باب السلام
باب الزیارہ
باب عمرہ

tax is again a form of *jihād*, not only in that in departing from one's wealth man must fight against the covetousness and greed of his carnal soul, but also in that through the payment of *zakāt* in its many forms man contributes to the establishment of economic justice in human society. Although *jihād* is not one of the "pillars of Islam," it in a sense resides within all the other "pillars." From the spiritual point of view in fact all of the "pillars" can be seen in the light of an inner *jihād* which is essential to the life of man from the Islamic point of view, and which does not oppose but complements contemplativity and the peace which result from the contemplation of the One.

The great stations of perfection in the spiritual life can also be seen in the light of the inner *jihād*. To become detached from the impurities of the world in order to repose in the purity of the Divine Presence requires an intense *jihād*, for our soul has its roots sunk deeply into the transient world which the soul of fallen man mistakes for reality. To overcome the lethargy, passivity, and indifference of the soul, qualities which have become second nature to man as a result of his forgetting who he is, constitutes likewise a constant *jihād*. To pull the reins of the soul from dissipating itself outwardly as a result of its centrifugal tendencies, and to bring it back to the center wherein resides Divine Peace, and all the beauty which the soul seeks in vain in the domain of multiplicity, is again an inner *jihād*. To melt the hardened heart into a flowing stream of love, which would embrace the whole of creation in virtue of the love for God, is to perform the alchemical process of *solve et coagula* inwardly through a "work" which is none other than an inner struggle and battle against what the soul has become in order to transform it into that which it "is" and has never ceased to be, if only it were to become aware of its own nature. Finally, to realize that only the Absolute is absolute and that only the Self can ultimately utter "I," is to perform the supreme *jihād* of awakening the soul from the dream of forgetfulness and enabling it to gain the supreme principal knowledge for the sake of which it was created. The inner *jihād*, or warfare seen spiritually and esoterically, can be considered therefore as the key for the understanding of the whole spiritual process, and the path for the realization of the One which lies at the heart of the Islamic message seen in its totality. The Islamic path towards perfection can be conceived in the light of the symbolism of the greater *jihād* to which the Prophet of Islam, who founded this path on earth, himself referred.

In the same way that with every breath the principle of life, which functions in us irrespective of our will and as long as it is willed by Him who created us, exerts itself through *jihād* to instill life within our whole body, at every moment in our conscious life we should seek to perform *jihād* in not only establishing equilibrium in the world about us but also in awakening to that Divine Reality which is the very source of our consciousness. For the spiritual man, every breath is a reminder that he should continue the inner *jihād* until he awakens from all dreaming and until the very rhythm of his heart echoes that primordial sacred Name by which all things were made and through which all things return to their origin. The Prophet said, "Man is asleep and when he dies he awakens." Through inner *jihād* the spiritual man dies in this life in order to cease all dreaming, in order to awaken to that Reality which is the origin of all realities, in order to behold that Beauty of which all earthly beauty is but a pale reflection, in order to attain that Peace which all men seek but which can in fact be found only through the inner *jihād*.

EPICYCLE

Beowulf

From Hero Myths & Legends of the British Race, *by M.I. Ebbutt. Reprinted by permission of George G. Harrap & Company.*

In the fiftieth year of Beowulf's reign a great terror fell upon the land: terror of a monstrous fire-dragon, who flew forth by night from his den in the rocks, lighting up the blackness with his blazing breath, and burning houses and homesteads, men and cattle, with the flames from his mouth. The glare from his fiery scales was like the dawn-glow in the sky, but his passage left behind it every night a trail of black, charred desolation to confront the rising sun. Yet the dragon's wrath was in some way justified, since he had been robbed, and could not trace the thief. Centuries before Beowulf's lifetime a mighty family of heroes had gathered together, by feats of arms, and by long inheritance, an immense treasure of cups and goblets, of necklaces and rings, of swords and helmets and armor, cunningly wrought by magic spells; they had joyed in their cherished hoard for long years, until all had died but one, and he survived solitary, miserable, brooding over the fate of the dearly loved treasure. At last he caused his servants to make a strong fastness in the rocks, with cunningly devised entrances, known only to himself, and thither, with great toil and labor of aged limbs, he carried and hid the precious treasure.

When this solitary survivor of the ancient race died, his hoard remained alone, unknown, untouched, until at length the fiery dragon, seeking a shelter among the rocks, found the hidden way to the cave, and, creeping within, discovered the lofty inner chamber and the wondrous hoard. For three hundred winters he brooded over it unchallenged, and then one day a hunted fugitive, fleeing from the fury of an avenging chieftain, in like manner found the cave, and the dragon sleeping on his gold. Terrified almost to death, the fugitive eagerly seized a marvelously wrought chalice and bore it stealthily away, feeling sure that such an offering would appease his lord's wrath and atone for his offence. But when the dragon awoke he discovered that he had been robbed, and his keen scent assured him that some one of mankind was the thief. As he could not at once see the robber, he crept around the outside of the barrow snuffing eagerly to find traces of the spoiler, but it was in vain; then, growing more wrathful, he flew over the inhabited country, shedding fiery death from his glowing scales and flaming breath, while no man dared to face this flying horror of the night.

The news came to Beowulf that his folk were suffering and dying, and that no warrior dared to risk his life in an effort to deliver the land from this deadly devastation; and although he was now an aged man, he decided to attack the fire-drake. Beowulf knew that he would not be able to come to hand-grips with this foe as he had done with Grendel and his mother: the fiery breath of this dragon was far too deadly, and he must trust to armor for protection. He commanded men to make a shield entirely of iron, for he knew that the usual shield of linden-wood would be instantly burnt up in the dragon's flaming breath. He then chose with care eleven warriors, picked men of his own bodyguard, to accompany him in this dangerous quest. They compelled the unhappy fugitive whose theft had

begun the trouble to act as their guide, and thus they marched to the lonely spot where the dragon's barrow stood close to the sea-shore. The guide went unwillingly, but was forced thereto by his lord, because he alone knew the way.

When the party reached the place they halted for a time, and Beowulf spoke to his little troop: "Abide ye here, ye warriors, for this is not your expedition, nor the work of any man but me alone; wait till ye know which is triumphant, for I will win the gold and save my people, or death shall take me." So saying he raised his great shield, and, unaccompanied, set his face to the dark entrance, where a stream, boiling with strange heat, flowed forth from the cave; so hot was the air that he stood, unable to advance far for the suffocating steam and smoke. Angered by his impotence, Beowulf raised his voice and shouted a furious defiance to the awesome guardian of the barrow. Thus aroused, the dragon sprang up, roaring hideously and flapping his glowing wings together; out from the recesses of the barrow came his fiery breath, and then followed the terrible beast himself. Coiling and writhing he came, with head raised, and scales of burnished blue and green, glowing with inner heat; from his nostrils rushed two streams of fiery breath, and his flaming eyes shot flashes of consuming fire. He half flew, half sprang at Beowulf. But the hero did not retreat one step. His bright sword flashed in the air as he wounded the beast, but not mortally, striking a mighty blow on his scaly head. The guardian of the hoard writhed and was stunned for a moment, and then sprang at Beowulf, sending forth so dense a cloud of flaming breath that the hero stood in a mist of fire. So terrible was the heat that the iron shield glowed red-hot and the ring-mail on the hero's limbs seared him as a furnace, and his breast swelled with the keen pain: so terrible was the fiery cloud that the Geats, seated some distance away, turned and fled, seeking the cool shelter of the neighboring woods, and left their heroic lord to suffer and die alone.

Among the cowardly Geats, however, there was one who thought it shameful to flee—Wiglaf, the son of Weohstan. He was young, but a brave warrior, to whom Beowulf had shown honor, and on whom he had showered gifts, for he was a kinsman, and had proved himself worthy. Now he showed that Beowulf's favor had been justified, for he seized his shield, of yellow linden-wood, took his ancient sword in hand, and prepared to rush to Beowulf's aid.

Holding on high his shield, he plunged into the fiery cloud and moved towards his king, crying aloud: "Beowulf, my dear lord, let not thy glory be dimmed. Achieve this last deed of valor, as thou didst promise in days of yore, that thy fame should not fall, and I will aid thee."

The sound of another voice roused the dragon to greater fury, and again came the fiery cloud, burning up like straw Wiglaf's linden shield, and torturing both warriors as they stood behind the iron shield with their heated armor. But they fought on manfully, and

Beowulf, gathering up his strength, struck the dragon such a blow on the head that his ancient sword was shivered to fragments. The dragon, enraged, now flew at Beowulf and seized him by the neck with his poisonous fangs, so that the blood gushed out in streams, and ran down his corslet. Wiglaf was filled with grief and horror at this dreadful sight, and, leaving the protection of Beowulf's iron shield, dashed forth at the dragon, piercing the scaly body in a vital part. At once the fire began to fade away, and Beowulf, mastering his anguish, drew his broad knife, and with a last effort cut the hideous reptile asunder. Then the agony of the envenomed wound came upon him, and his limbs burnt and ached with intolerable pain. In growing distress he staggered to a rough ancient seat, carved out of the rock, hard by the door of the barrow and said: "Do thou, O dear Wiglaf, bring forth quickly from the cave the treasures for which I lose my life, that I may see them and be glad in my nation's wealth ere I die."

Thereupon Wiglaf entered the barrow, and he flung down the treasures—magic armor, dwarf-wrought swords, carved goblets, flashing gems, and a golden standard—at Beowulf's feet, so that the ancient hero's dying gaze could fall on the hoard he had won for his people. The dying champion roused himself to say, as he grasped his kinsman's hand and looked at the glittering heap before him:

"I thank God eternal the great King of Glory,
For the vast treasures which I here gaze upon.
Wyrd has swept all my kin, all the brave chiefs away!
Now must I follow them!"

These last words spoken, Beowulf fell back, and his soul passed away, to meet the joy reserved for all true and steadfast spirits. Wiglaf, as he mourned over his dead lord, resolved that no man should joy in the treasures for which so grievous a price had been paid—the cowards who deserted their king should help to lay the treasures in his grave and bury them far from human use and profit.

The Geats, bitterly grieving, fulfilled Wiglaf's commands. They gathered wood for the fire, and piled it on the cliff-head; then eight chosen ones brought thither the treasures, and threw the dragon's body over the cliff into the sea; then a wain, hung with shields, was brought to bear the corpse of Beowulf to Hronesness, where it was solemnly laid on the funeral pile and consumed to ashes.

There then the Weder Geats wrought for their ruler dead
A cairn on the ocean cliff widespread and lofty.
Then in that cairn they placed necklets and rings and gems
Which from the dragon's hoard brave men had taken.
Back to the earth they gave treasures of ancient folk,
Gold to the gloomy mold, where it now lieth
Useless to sons of men as it e'er was of yore.
So all the Geat chiefs, Beowulf's bodyguard,
Wept for their leader's fall : sang in their loud laments
That he of earthly kings mildest to all men was,
Gentlest, most gracious, most keen to win glory.

The War for Peace

by Norris Merchant

War!—should one engage in it, when its ravaging is so unfair, and so indiscriminate? The warrior Arjuna posed the question at the beginning of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, on a battlefield where hostilities were about to commence. In the *Gita*, the god Krishna urged— Go ahead! He overcame the reluctance of the diffident young leader, who, nevertheless, had compelling reservations. Think of the multitudes who would be killed on both sides, even my own relatives, Arjuna argued. But the god preached carrying through with war's task. Arjuna was a *Kshatriya*, a member of the knightly and soldier caste. The god ordered him to fulfill his combatant's duty—but without attachment. Besides, Krishna explained, there is no death. Slaughter, much like riches, with their alleged consolatory power (in truth, vapidities), or the delights of rule or desire, is only another of matter's illusions. *Spirit* never dies—and the individual, if he should discover that, can become the agent of the ultimate Reality, which is the real, if unperceived, motive and goal of battle, as it is of the workman's struggle for perfection, the lover's longings and the saint's austerities.

Modern interpreters commonly see in the *Gita*'s account not a glorification of actual warfare, but a parable of the struggles of the inner life. Gandhi, for one, found sustenance in this Hindu narrative so very precious to him ("To me the *Gita* became an infallible guide of conduct," he wrote in his *Autobiography*) by interpreting the *Gita*'s "war" as the spiritual battle between light and darkness. The god urged participation, struggle, overcoming resistance—meaning that the laggard, the hesitant, or the backward-turning must overcome self and be determined to fight on toward higher ethical development in the advance towards God.

Whether allegorically or literally perceived, there is no doubt that the *Gita*, more so than other scriptures, echoes with cries of armed hosts gathered for combat. It opens on the field of Kurukshetra, site of a massive, pre-historic battle where—as in other great epics of its age—deity actively intervenes. Its cogent spiritual arguments proceed against a backdrop of overpowering force. Even the subtle fervor of contemplation, recommended in certain memorable passages, or the ecstasy of personal love for Krishna, described as one valuable road to Truth, unfolds against the *Gita*'s compelling foreground of awesome power. The crowded battle scene readied for carnage suggests similitude of the Divine to the most titanic and even cruel collective energies of humanity—but so does the great vision of the god in the full resplendence of his godhead, granted to the pleading Arjuna in the *Gita*'s eleventh chapter. For a moment at that point nature was made to stand in abeyance, and human weakness was put aside. Celestial grace enabled the young soldier to "see God"—and live. Arjuna achieved the staggering sight of an Omnipotence both horrible and exhilarating, as if "the light of a thousand suns" suddenly burst inside a mortal cranium, it is true, but he also viewed human victims driven, moth-like, to the magnetic divine light—like the very soldiers who were to fall in the ensuing combat—human heads literally crushed on the fangs of the multi-faced, miraculous-monstrous image of supernal power. Here transcendent Love revealed itself as, also, inexorable fate, presiding over the destruction of fleeting generations of deluded mankind, in their transmutations.

The *Gita* exemplified one mode of sublimating the human experience of war into a universe of richly symbolic religious meaning. The *Iliad*, likewise, centuries before,

had portrayed a fierce Mediterranean struggle between Mycenae and Troy as a religiously significant contest involving divine participation. But the *Iliad* concerned itself primarily with the actual war. The physical combat was not pushed to the background, as in the *Gita*, to make room for discourse on modes of spiritual ascent. Nonetheless Iliadic heroes were divinely sponsored, their pathos consisting partly in illusions of invincibility—frequently wrecked. While heroes ridden by *hubris* imagined they could determine the outcome of the struggle, the real fate of the combatants originated elsewhere—among divine powers, usually arbitrary in their alignments, but often tenderly empathetic with the desires of an obsessed mankind to emulate Olympian might. However polytheistic its structure, the *Iliad*'s gods and heroes alike must bow to the ultimately decisive Being, represented by Zeus as arbiter of fate.

The Old Testament, of course, whose documents, like the *Gita*, stem from the first millennium B.C., represents a third early narrative including wars and conflicts intertwined with symbols of greater-than-life import. Old Testament epic moves crucially through the dividing line between the pre-historic and semi-mythic record of a people's development into actual history. The rebellion, exodus, combats, and captivity of a nation become the occasion for an unfolding moral drama. Moving out of the shadows of half-remembered legends and misty occurrences put down in song and tale, the text advances toward veritable records, progressively endowing history itself with mythic stature. Here "warfare," spiritual or material, becomes a people's collective struggle towards a redemptive expectation variously delayed, reversed, or encouraged by historic contingencies and the nation's response to them.

Was war only botched meaning—an irrational canard? Did servitude, humiliation, brutalization, being carried away by foreign conquerors, argue against life's purpose? Are they simply arbitrary hazards fueling hopelessness? The Hebrew accounts denied such reactions by overlaying the untoward event with supertemporal meaning. Historical tribulations turned into valued sacred expository. Temporal passions, the crimes of tyrants, subjugations, revolutions, earthly longings, punctuated by cruel intermissions of hope, became the grist of revelation. "O God, our fathers have told us the tale," a psalmist wrote, "of your doings in ancient years, how you did plant them,

evicting the pagans. . . . My King, my God, it was you by whose command Jacob was conqueror!" Joshua's advance with his cohorts into the promised land, the fall of Jericho, the subsequent building of a securing monarchy, and the extension of the kingdom and its alliances under David and Solomon, were historic actions said to radiate transhistoric purpose, models for future generations' God-ward, messianic push. Even such modest collisions—at least, by comparison with later incendiarism—as the Hebrew disruption of local Philistine power in Canaan, became fraught with exemplary heroic drama, to be garnered, in fact, even thousands of years later by Puritan schoolchildren nourished on a Biblical pedagogy.

Events of war, then, already inherently rousing in their nationalistic appeal, were allied to manifestos of the Ultimate. But they were merely preparatory; *future* edification was at stake.

The Christian era, inheriting this sacral pageant of struggle, would come to look forward, in its own scriptural projections of future apocalypse, to time's most stupendous combat of all, that of Armageddon

(Megiddo), a consummation of aeons supposed to be staged near the spot where King Josiah's forces fell to the armies of the Egyptian Necho in 621 B.C. Armageddon came to denote a terminal showdown; and Western history has offered over-many opportunities for appropriating the symbol to immediate political passions.

Given so remarkable a lineage in works accorded sacred status—added to the fact of their continuing and increasingly devastating role in history—war, strife, and conflict have lived on to further embroider modern accounts of meaning and social development. In the prehistoric, semi-legendary settings of the *Gita* and the *Iliad* (as in the Old Testament's quasi-historic-moving-into-history tales of exodus, the conquest of Canaan, establishment of monarchy, and the Babylonian captivity), ancient struggles acquired, from inspired writers, a posthumous splendor. In the modern world, chastened by the Enlightenment and become somewhat more rigorous in its historic analyses through the advent of early social science, myth allied with scientific models of historic change has provided leverage for social transformation, including revolution, and counter-revolution.

Marxism, for instance, has elaborated this legacy of allegedly predestined struggle as inherently social—in this case myth has impregnated the *secular* sphere, and Marxian trappings, in accord with their time of origin and the nature of a perceived class enemy, have thus been ostensibly atheistic.

Shall war, the ultimate contradiction, destroy? The Tao once suggested the *unity* of opposites. Marxism, recasting Hegel's dialectic, argued their historical *synthesis*. Negation, seen from one perspective as the threat of nothingness, can become, from another, possibility, opportunity. The Hebrew tradition, and Christianity, already implied this fertility of opposition, long before. Were God's people kept in slavery? Their emancipation would be the pretext of great deeds and a re-fortified mission. Carried into captivity, they could steel themselves, and with the assistance of prophets, turn back toward neglected ideals, in fact *universalize* an ethical witness.

Even Christianity's "original sin," that darkest doctrine asserting aboriginal pollution, paradoxically brought forth the contradicting "good news" of Redemption, causing Augustine's joyful outburst, "O *felix culpa*!"—"O happy fault!" The worst that could happen had only brought forth "the best."

Marxism, secularizing such a dialectic of opposites, saw in a conflict of classes (and, in some more recent theorists, of ethnoclasses, and class-nations) the precondition of an expected transcendence of conflict—a prerequisite, in fact, to the beginning of *actual* history, lived by a reintegrated species.

War, summary of evils, has nonetheless at one or another time been made the occasion of spiritual insight; redemptive tidings. Not uncommonly, as well, it has accompanied cultural cross-fertilization and "leaps" in productivity, inventions, and heroism. (Could the Renaissance have been conceivable—economically, aesthetically, culturally—without the previous, and unappetizing, Crusades?) Can war *still* serve, as in the *Gita, Iliad*, and the Old Testament and the New Testament's Apocalypse and modern political eschatology, as backdrop or foreground to a profoundly spiritual message—prelude to the restoration of fresh values and a brilliant, novel humanization?

Nuclear war, challenging the entirety of biological life and existence on earth *per se*, even consciousness's brief episode on this planet, becomes at once history's hugest evil and its most powerful challenge. As the engines of international suicide are dragged to the settings of new Kurukshetras, turned Armageddons, and as supernations array themselves in gene-molesting nuclear armor and sky-violating particle beams, what message may Krishna enjoin—at the end of an aeon? May not war, dialectically regarded, having attained its ultimate in nihilating capacity and toxic promise, be finally demythologized—replaced by a Myth-become-Reality?

That Myth-Reality-To-Be remains the "messianic" expectancy: a united world, spiritually drawn together. To take hope

from the reserve of myth impelling our Western tradition means to expect a radically altered character of international life. Meanwhile, the proliferation of scientific models of social transformation, along with the technical abilities that can now assist human integration, supports the possibility that science and myth may at last fruitfully meld to carry the earth beyond history's dangerously crackling fault line.

Is war doomed? As history moves towards the consummation of its leading myth in *reality*, war stands, happily, endangered.

Liberationist theology has invoked such powerful symbols from the religious past, in fact, in order to advance to immediate and constructive historical fulfillment. To it the "Kingdom of God" can no longer simply be posed as a compensation for the injustices of earthly existence in a realm beyond the senses. Rather it becomes one's constantly sought goal—a reordered earth. Did Moses not lead his people in massive withdrawal from Pharaonic slavery to a genuine identity in a land of promise? In like fashion the "exodus"—psychological, spiritual, economic—of *every* oppressed group into autonomy receives its symbolic paradigm.

Latin American liberationist writers of Catholic vintage (Gustavo Guttierez, Enrique Dussel, among them) would seed the "Promised Land" quite literally and materially—in the face of exploitive economic power and even of retrograde religious establishments preaching conformity, or abnegation. Liberation theology leads to practical efforts to renovate imbalanced societies, throwing aside the husk of a vivid world waiting to be born, beyond nationalism, murder, and predation. It necessitates the teaching of dignity and worth to the lowly, including peasants and Indians—on the model of Paolo Freire's literary campaigns—and it demands the repair of top-heavy societies in which an unwarranted privilege weighs down upon strata crushed into subhumanity. It involves bringing past symbols of redemption—including that of the Exodus—into contemporary, enfleshed fact. Ingress into the land of promise shall be universal, or it is meaningless.

Included in this "messianic" enterprise, quite essentially of course, is the pulling together of a fragmented earth, marked in its evolution until now by the "war of all against all." To Teilhard de Chardin, Christian evolutionary, the achievement of planetary unity loomed as a *biological* goal, a necessary moment in the passage of humanity from the chrysalis state towards that "liberty of the sons of God" proclaimed in the New Testament's Pauline documents.

"The age of nations is past," Teilhard wrote. "The task before us now, if we would not perish, is to shake off our ancient prejudices, and to build the earth."

Teilhard's Christianity did not accept "wars and rumors of wars" as an irreversible fact, but foresaw the coming fruition of promises once garbed in inspired metaphors. The religion of humanity's childhood had projected the forthcoming transfiguration of the planet, and the integration of our species into the future using figurative, poetic terms—the only expressions employable before the progress of science and human self-understanding had provided a practical vocabulary for implementing profound changes on the earth. How would Teilhard, or the prophet of unity as Krishna, urge the diffident warrior to throw himself into the fray, to help initiate such a world turn-around?

Teilhard would answer:

> At present most men still merely understand strength, the key and symbol of violence in its most primitive and savage form of war.
>
> But let the time come, as it will, when the masses will realize that the true human successes are those which triumph over the mysteries of matter and of life. At that moment a decisive hour will sound for mankind, when the spirit of discovery absorbs all the momentum contained in the spirit of war.
>
> —*Building The Earth*

Teilhard's prophecy has the ring of Nietzsche's previous adjuration to "men of knowledge" that *they* become the true "robbers and conquerors," that is, that robbery, conquest, and aggression be sublimated into

the heightened and exhilarating struggles of the mind.

The "moral equivalent of war," thus, becomes intellectual and spiritual quest—not just exploration of the universe, understood as the "true country of mankind" (Teilhard's phrase), but knowledge-gathering in the deepest sense. "The time has come to realize that [this] research is the highest human function, embracing the spirit of war and bright with the splendor of religion."

Teilhard's thought, like liberationist theology, and the complementary teachings of India's evolutionist sage and apostle of planetary solidarity, Sri Aurobindo Ghose, represented the merging of material and spiritual. Its momentum derived from a tradition urgently centering on historical development. The passage of world society itself from the "darkness" of division and war to the "light" of unity and peace has become the essence of spiritual-historical truth. Great mythological events, propellers of culture in the pre-scientific age, have found in such spokesmen their practical comprehension.

To Martin Buber, religious Zionist, Zionist socialist, existentialist philosopher, and Biblical scholar, the rebirth of Israel omened such a transmutation. But he warned that a strict ethical surveillance would be mandatory, for a people-in-transition. True, the "ingathering of nations" expected at the human summit of messianic realization would be the final transcending of the chauvinisms that have scarred history's preliminary epoch of suffering and dismemberment. Nevertheless a paradoxical intensification of national zeal at the very moment when it has become humanly irrelevant does not excuse hope's caretakers from pushing toward their ultimate goal—larger than all tribes or nations. Those who tend the flame of the ethical during a terrible transit, Buber reminded, may seem only a remnant, but the aim, inexorable and waiting, lies beyond power and domination in the old sense, indeed beyond all previous social policies and human divisions. Thus Buber enjoined the liberating moment that shall eventually strike for all: Arab, Jew, Christian, Muslim, agnostic, Soviet, African, American . . . human . . . the merged ingathering of a *human* nation, millennially foreseen as a "Kingdom of God."

The late German philosopher Ernst Bloch, researcher of Utopia, embodied in himself such a human convergence. "Christian, Marxian, atheist, Jewish," as Bloch described himself, he brought together personally the diverse strains of messianic heritage. As a religious atheist he deeply treasured the Biblical lore of redemption. Bloch charted the progress, and setbacks, of faith's expectations throughout Western history—fully subscribing to the belief that *symbols* would ultimately be enfleshed (see his *Principle of Hope*). The "messianic" reality, for Bloch, was more than Utopia— it was the indispensable requirement. It would result as much from social action, vitalized by age-old promises of religious myth and symbol, as from a newly scientific comprehension of the progress of society and the emancipation of its productive forces and classes. A multiplex revolutionary foresaw the coming death of poverty, injustice, *war*.

From his wretched cell in Flossenberg concentration camp, a Protestant theologian, Dietrich Bonhöffer, had, in 1945, already evoked images of a looming time when things "spiritual" would have merged into matters "profane." The religious dualisms of the past having proven impotent to resist an insane hypertrophy of nationalism, patriotism, and nihilism in Germany, a new spirituality, required of a saner future, would move out of the rigid institutions of alienation into every day, into "life-as-lived," the quotidian. The sundered structures of a world impaled would have to be succeeded by the call to "living for others" in the *secular*, as sacred truth, come alive, empowers humanity to build a truly human order. The core of dogma, disembodied teachings subscribed to by people now disoriented in the face of nihilist attack, must become "human," realized in the actual world.

The nations, like Bonhöffer, wait, in *their* death cells, for the decision.

The Lake

by Jonathan Cott

Taken from a longer poem

One day I walk by the lake
One day I sit by the lake
One day I stand by the lake
One day I lie by the lake

—Yuan Hüng-tao (trans. by Jonathan Chaves)

When you live on a lake, you share yourself with silence, little sounds, moving thoughts

What is said over there is heard over here

The lake by day is like your mind at day
The lake by night is like your mind at night

The sea's murmuring
The stream's babbling
The lake's stillness

(To write down a lake thought, you have to lose the lake mind)

I sit here and become you

(Sometimes I'm thinking of the lake and sometimes of you)

A lake makes you think that the whole world is present

(Half of the lake reflects all of the mountain)

Everything turns towards a lake

The lake reflects the universe

The lake accepts the universe

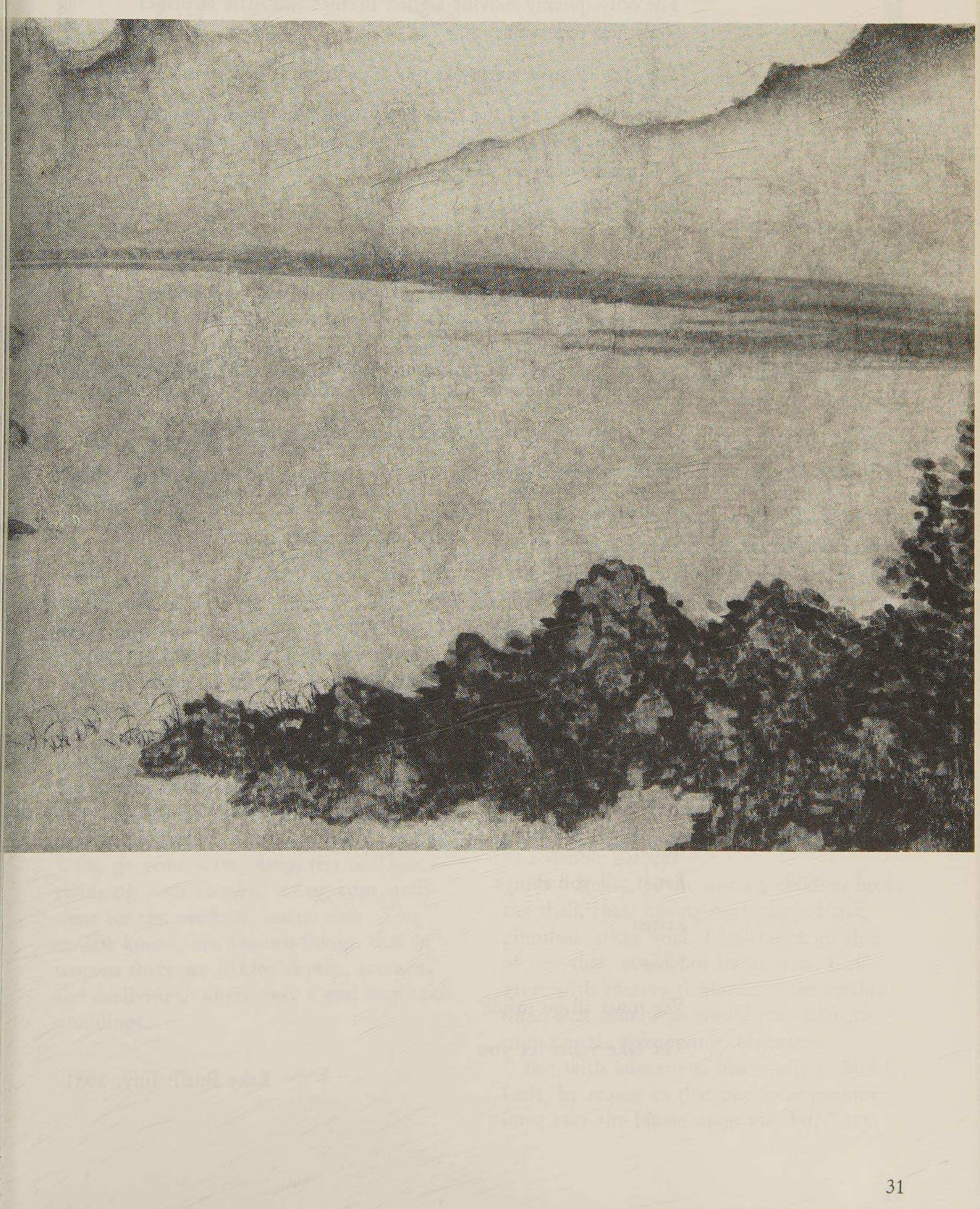
The lake is where we once lived
(and then we were born)

You must share the lake with other creatures
(we are all part of it)

Living by a lake changes the way you look at things, changes the way you live

(Money is useless on a lake)

The lake's colonizers: swimmers, rowboats, motorboats, waterskiers



A lake welcomes visitors from the sky—planes, birds, clouds

A lake likes the moon over her

The lake is like a planetarium projecting the night sky

The Big Dipper leans over the lake as if tc scoop it up

The only quickly moving lights: fireflies and little airplanes
(and their reflections)

The lake changes slowly as moon and clouds and stars pass by

Once, the lake and the stars lived together. Separating, the lake realized that by reflection it could keep the stars always in her
("There are stars in your soul")

By day the lake forgets

The lake: causeless, reasonless, bottomless, rootless

In the beginning, says the *Rig-Veda*, there was only water,
and in the water a living germ. Out of this, with the first
awakening of desire, came the living seed—you and me

("The origin of creation is the desire of creation"—Simon Magus)

Over the water, two dragonflies are mating in the air

After making love by the lake, you become all the sounds you hear

One speaks softly by a lake

(The softer you speak, the clearer you hear)

A lake is devoted to listening

You can hear it dreaming

At night, by a lake, cars sound like jets

When it's quiet, you can hear the stream inside the lake

(Late at night, I waken to the sounds of the lake in my body)

A lake is devoted to breathing

You can smell the sounds of a lake

Let it tell you things

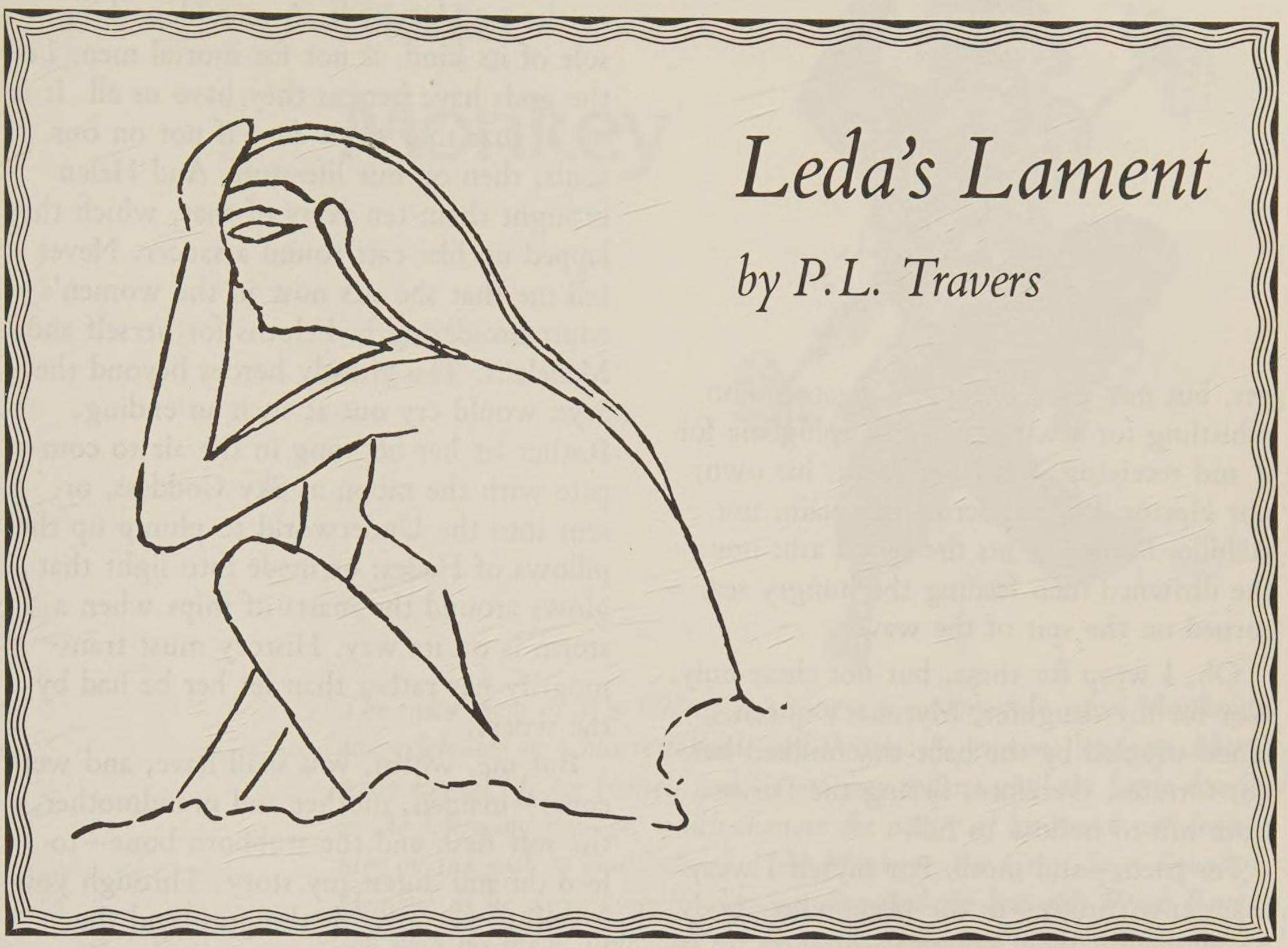
Listen

Now

We must all go inside

The lake waits for you

Lake Buell: July, 1981



Leda's Lament

by P.L. Travers

Illustration by Joyce Searle

> Did she put on his knowledge with his
> power
> Before the indifferent beak would let her
> drop?
>
> —W.B. Yeats, "Leda and the Swan"

I was young then, a mere piece of the world, easy with love, virgin of soul, a thing single and unmixed, for all Tyndareus' tumbling and seed already sown.

Do not upbraid me, maidens, arrogant analogues of my youth, who tell me I should not have walked by the river. Had it been high on the strong hills or among the forests with their scalloped oak-leaves or upon the pavements of the sea, he would have found me. Eternity had me in its eye.

So, go your ways, daughters of Time, swinging your minikin loving-cups, sufficient for the needs of mortal men. You cannot know, not Heaven-found, that in women there are hidden depths, cataracts and declivities, where only a god may take soundings.

And well for you that this is so, for if you forfeit the ecstasy, so also do you miscarry of the travail.

I knew, when they brought me the birth-stool, that what I awaited was god-begotten; that the cramped earthlings, ruddy Castor and Clytemnestra, would be thrust headlong out of the nest—as sparrows by a cuckoo's child—to let the exorbitant egg emerge. But who would have thought so frail a thing, received by the gentling, waiting hands, would crack with a roll of prophetic thunder? Or that I, eased of the nine-month weight, would turn from Helen and Polydeuces and weep for what was come upon me—the burden of a double nature?

For I knew, as the shining children broke the shell, that, having been clipped and plumbed to the void, I had taken on that of him that would not let me rest. Congress with Heaven demoralizes the earthly mind that otherwise would play with its toys, vestal, unknowing, blameless.

But with awareness, blame arises. And I, Leda, by reason of that one swan-moment, must take the blame upon me. For Troy,

yes, but not Troy only; nor Agamemnon whistling for a wind, offering Iphigenia for it and receiving, from her death, his own; nor Hector dragged across the plain; nor Achilles heaped in his fire-blood ash; nor the drowned men feeding the hungry sea, turned on the spit of the wave.

Oh, I weep for these, but not these only. Nor for my daughter, Mycenae's queen, blood-stippled by the babe that milked her; nor Orestes, therefore, fleeing the Furies from hill to hollow to hill.

For them—and more. For myself I weep that, unwittingly—in the place where body comprehends body, where flesh stores up its own wisdom—what had been done in the green wood should leave its mark on the dry.

Oh, are living and dying not enough? Must we also endure the pain of knowing—the knowing that brings in its train Unknowing and makes us ask, without hoping for answer, "Who am I? What is my purpose?" Why through me, Leda, should the fuse have run that, exploding, toppled Ilium's towers and made of Sparta a name of shame? Must cause ever carry on its back effects so much greater than itself, as a grain of sand carries the sea?

Would you beguile me, comforters? As well put cheek to a mummy's cheek! True, I have sons picked out as stars and have given birth to a matchless woman whom all men name the World's Desire and lust for in their dreams. But will a star spread a bed for me or bring me a mantle against the cold or heap a cairn at my grave-place? And the world's desire should be for Heaven or else no Heaven is. A matchless thing, sole of its kind, is not for mortal men. Let the gods have her, as they have us all. It is on us that they grow fat—if not on our souls, then on our life-stuff. And Helen brought them ten years of that, which they lapped up like cats round a saucer. Never tell me that she sits now in the women's court broidering bed-cloths for herself and Menelaus. The ghostly heroes beyond the Styx would cry out at such an ending. Rather let her be hung in the air to compete with the moon as Sky Goddess, or sent into the Underworld to plump up the pillows of Hades; or made into light that glows around the masts of ships when a storm is on its way. History must transmogrify her rather than let her be had by the worm.

But me, worm, you shall have, and welcome—maiden, mother and grandmother, the soft flesh and the stubborn bone—to feed on and digest my story. Through you it will come up with the grass and the knowing bees be privy to it so that, humming, they may bruit it forth and let the world learn of the new time coming.

For, outworn heart in a time outworn, my ending foresees another ending. Here will I sit, worm, till you take me, and tell strange stories of the death of gods; how they will, all of them, depart, back into him that rayed them forth. And of how he, too, son of Earth and Time, will, plump with their forces, himself depart.

But where depart? Indeed, worm, there is no place that is not this place. Everywhere is here. It is all one. Nothing is lost. Age follows age as breath follows breath. God follows god as the day the night, new foot exact to the old footprint. So, may it not be that Zeus—the all-trickster, cold-hearted, self-sufficing—has only to stoop to the sandal's latchet of the One that is to come—he who, among the ten thousand things, is acquainted with love and sorrow?

And may there not arise a poet who, pondering an ancient tale, will ask himself the question:

"Did he, the white Swan sailing her inward waters, put on, before he let her drop, her humanity and her grief?"

EPICYCLE

Monkey

The rascal hero of Wu Ch'eng-en's sixteenth century folk novel Monkey *is also celebrated in Chinese folktale and theatre. A generous braggart, Monkey seeks eternal life for himself and his monkey cohorts until the battle described in the following passage, which changes the nature of his search and leads him on the path to Buddhahood. Here Monkey—the Great Sage Equal of Heaven, as he styles himself—has just disrupted the heavenly Peach Banquet, and with his magic confounds the heavenly forces sent to arrest him. At last the magician Erh-lang approaches . . .*

When the small monkeys at the entrance to the camp saw Erh-lang coming, they scuttled inside and made their report. Monkey seized his metal-bound cudgel, donned his golden breastplate, put on his cloud-treading shoes and golden cap and rushed out to the gate, glaring about him. "What little captain are you and where do you hail from," shouted Monkey, "that you dare come here and challenge me to battle?" "Have you eyes with no eyeballs, that you fail to know me?" shouted Erh-lang. "I am the Jade Emperor's nephew. I have come now by his Majesty's command to arrest you, rebellious groom-ape that you are! Your hour has come." They closed over three hundred times without reaching a decision. Erh-lang exerted all his magic power, shook himself hard and changed into a giant figure a hundred thousand feet high. His two arms, each holding aloft a magic trident, were like the peaks that crown Mount Hua, his face was blue and his teeth stuck far out, the hair on his head was scarlet and his expression malignant beyond words. This terrible apparition advanced upon Monkey, aiming a blow straight down upon his head. But Monkey, also using his magic powers, changed himself into an exact counterpart of Erh-lang, save that he held above him a single gigantic cudgel, like the solitary pillar that towers above Mount K'un-lun, and with this he fended off Erh-lang's blow. But Monkey's generals were completely discomfited by the giant apparition, and their hands began to tremble so much that they could not wave their banners. His other officers were in panic and could not use their swords.

When Monkey saw his followers scatter, his heart fluttered, he abandoned his giant form and fled as fast as his feet could carry him. Erh-lang strode after him with huge steps, crying, "Where are you off to? Come back this minute, and I will spare your life." But Monkey fled faster than ever to his cave, where he ran straight into the brothers. "Wretched monkey, where are you running to?" they cried. Monkey, trembling in every limb, hastily turned his cudgel into an embroidery needle, and hiding it about his person, changed himself into a fish, and slipped into the stream. Rushing down to the bank, Erh-lang could see nothing of him. So he changed himself into a cormorant and skimmed hither and thither over the stream. Monkey, looking up out of the water, suddenly saw a bird hovering above. He released a few bubbles and swam swiftly away. "That fish letting bubbles," said Erh-lang to himself, "why did it make off like that when it saw me? I'll be bound it's Monkey, who has changed himself into a fish." And swooping down, he opened his beak and snapped at him. Monkey whisked out of the water, and changed himself into a freckled bustard, standing all alone on the bank. Seeing that he had reached the lowest possible stage in transformation, for the freckled bustard is the lowest and most promiscuous of creatures, mating at hazard with any bird that comes its way, Erh-lang did not deign to close with him, but returned to his true form, and fetching his sling, shot a pellet that sent Monkey rolling. Taking advantage of his opportunity, Monkey rolled and rolled down the mountain side, and when he was out of sight he changed himself into a wayside shrine; his mouth wide open was the door-opening, his teeth he turned into door flaps, his tongue into the guardian Bodhisattva. His two eyes were the two round windows; he didn't quite know what to do with his tail, but sticking up straight behind it looked like a flag-pole. When Erh-lang arrived at the bottom of the slope, he expected to find the bustard that he had toppled over, but instead he only found a small shrine. Examining it closely he noticed the "flag-pole" sticking up behind and laughed, saying "That's

Monkey, that is! He's trying his tricks on me again. I have seen many shrines, but never one with a flag-pole sticking up behind. No doubt about it, this animal is playing one of his games. He hopes to lure me up close to him, and then he will bite me. He won't get me that way. I'll clench my fist and bang in the windows first. Afterwards I'll kick down the doors." When Monkey heard this he was horrified. "That's a bit too much," he said to himself. "The doors are my teeth and the windows are my eyes. If he kicks my teeth and bangs my eyes, that won't be nice." So saying, he made a tiger-spring and disappeared into the sky.

Vaiśravana looked in his mirror and burst out laughing. "Make haste, Erh-lang, make haste," he cried. "That monkey has made himself invisible, decamped and made straight for your River of Libations." When Erh-lang heard this he picked up his magic lance and fled towards the River of Libations as fast as he could.

Now as soon as Monkey reached the river, he changed himself into the exact image of Erh-lang and went straight into Erh-lang's shrine. The guardian demons of the shrine could not tell the difference and bowed low as he came in. He examined the incense-smoke, and was looking at the votive paintings round the walls, when someone came and announced "Another Erh-lang has arrived." The guarding deities rushed out, and could hardly believe their eyes. "Has a creature calling himself the Great Sage Equal to Heaven been here?" the real Erh-lang asked. "We've seen nothing of any Great Sage," they said, "but there's another holy Erh-lang inside, examining the incense-smoke."

He rushed in, raised his three-pronged, two-bladed magic lance, and struck at Monkey's cheek. Monkey dodged, and the two of them, cursing and fighting, edged towards the shrine-gate and out into the mists and clouds, struggling as they went, till at last Monkey was driven to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, where

the kings of the Four Quarters were keeping strait guard. The brothers came to meet Erh-lang and surrounded Monkey, pressing about him on every side.

Meanwhile in Heaven everyone was wondering why a whole day had passed without any news from Erh-lang. "Would your Majesty," asked Kuan-yin, "permit me and the Patriarch of Tao to go down in person and see how things are going on?" "Not a bad idea," said the Jade Emperor, and in the end he and the Queen of Heaven as well as Kuan-yin and Lao Tzu all went to the Southern Gate of Heaven and looked out. They saw the great cordon of heavenly troops, and Vaiśravana standing half way up the sky, holding a mirror, while Erh-lang and his brothers pressed round Monkey, tussling fiercely with him. "That Erh-lang, whom I proposed, hasn't done so badly," said Kuan-yin. "He has hemmed the Great Sage in, though he has not yet taken him prisoner. With a little help, I think he could manage it." Lao Tzu produced from his sleeve a magic snare. "This," said he, "is called the Diamond Snare. In old days, when I left China, converted the barbarians of the West and became a god, I owed my success entirely to this snare. It comes in handy for keeping off all manner of dangers. Let me throw it down on to him." Standing at the gate of Heaven, he cast his snare, and it went rippling down straight on to Monkey's head. Monkey was busy warring with Erh-lang and his brothers, and did not notice that a weapon was falling upon him out of the sky. It hit him just on the crown of the head, and toppled him over. He scrambled to his feet and fled, pursued by Erh-lang's dogs, who went for his calves, so that he stumbled again. Lying on the ground, he cursed, saying, "That has done for me! Why can't you go and trip up your own master, instead of coming and biting Old Monkey's legs?" He twisted and turned, but could not rise, for the brothers were holding him down. Soon they

had bound him tightly with ropes, and severed his lute-bone with a knife, so that he could not transform himself.

Lao Tzu drew in his snare, and the Emperor told the demon-king Māhābali and a contingent of heavenly troops to hoist Monkey up and bring him to the executioner's block, where he was to be cut into small pieces.

Monkey was brought to the place of execution, where heavenly soldiers bound him to a pillar and began to hew him with axes, stab him with spears, slash him with swords. But all this had no effect whatever, and presently the Southern Pole-star sent for the spirits of the Fire Stars to come and set him alight; but they were quite unable to burn him. The thunder spirits hurled thunderbolts at him; but this had even less effect. "I don't know where the Great Sage got this trick of inviolability," said Mahābāli to the Jade Emperor. "It's not surprising," said Lao Tzu. "After all, he ate the peaches of Immortality, drank the wine of Heaven and stole the Elixir of Long Life; five bowls full, some raw, some cooked, are all inside him. No doubt he has worked on them with Samadhi fire and fused them into a solid, that makes his whole body harder than diamond, so that he is very difficult to damage. The best thing would be to bring him to me. I'll put him in my Crucible of the Eight Trigrams and smelt him with alchemic fire. In a little while he will be reduced to ashes, and I shall recover my elixir, which will be left at the bottom of the crucible." So Monkey was handed over to Lao Tzu, and Erh-lang was rewarded and went back to the River of Libations.

When Lao Tzu got back to the Tushita Palace, he untied Monkey's ropes, removed the blade that was stuck through his lute-bone, pushed him into the crucible, and told his servant to blow up a good fire. Time passed, and at last the forty-ninth day came, and Lao Tzu's alchemical processes were complete. When he came to the crucible to take off the lid, Monkey looked quickly up and jumped straight out of the crucible, uttering a piercing cry and kicking over the crucible as he jumped. He rushed out of the room pursued by Lao Tzu's ser-

vants, all of whom he tripped up, and when Lao Tzu clutched at him, he gave him such a push that he went head over heels. Then he took his cudgel from behind his ear and, armed once more, ran amok in Heaven, frightening the Nine Planets so much that they locked themselves in, and the kings of the Four Quarters vanished from the scene. This time Monkey hit out recklessly, not caring whom he struck or what he smashed.

The noise of the combat reached the Jade Emperor who in great consternation sent two messengers to the Western Region to see if Buddha could not come and help. When they had recounted Monkey's misdeeds and explained their mission, Buddha said to the Bodhisattvas who surrounded him, "You stay quietly here in the Hall of Law, and don't relax your yoga postures. I've got to go and deal with this creature who is making trouble at the Taoist court." But he called on his disciples Ananda and Kāśyapa to follow him. Arriving in Heaven, they heard a fearful din and found Monkey beset by the thirty-six deities. Buddha ordered the deities to lower arms and go back to their camp, and called Monkey to him. "After all," he said, "you're only a monkey-spirit. How can you delude yourself into supposing that you can seize the Jade Emperor's throne? You exceed yourself, and will surely come to a bad end. Submit at once and talk no more of your nonsense. What magic have you got that would enable you to seize the blessed realms of Heaven?" "Many," said Monkey. "Apart from my seventy-two transformations, I can somersault through the clouds a hundred and eight thousand leagues at a bound. Aren't I fit to be seated on the throne of Heaven?"

"I'll have a wager with you," said Buddha. "If you are really so clever, jump off the palm of my right hand. If you succeed, I'll tell the Jade Emperor to come and live with me in the Western Paradise, and you shall have his throne without more ado. But if you fail, you shall go back to earth and do penance there for many a kalpa before you come to me again with your talk."

"This Buddha," Monkey thought to himself, "is a perfect fool. I can jump a hundred and eight thousand leagues, while his palm cannot be as much as eight inches across. How could I fail to jump clear

of it?" "You're sure you are in a position to do this for me?" he asked. "Of course I am," said Buddha.

He stretched out his right hand, which looked about the size of a lotus leaf. Monkey put his cudgel behind his ear, and leapt with all his might. "That's all right," he said to himself. "I'm right off it now." He was whizzing so fast that he was almost invisible, and Buddha, watching him with the eye of wisdom, saw a mere whirligig shoot along.

Monkey came at last to five pink pillars, sticking up into the air. "This is the end of the World," said Monkey to himself. "All I have got to do is to go back to Buddha and claim my forfeit. The Throne is mine." "Wait a minute," he said presently, "I'd better just leave a record of some kind, in case I have trouble with Buddha." He plucked a hair and blew on it with magic breath, crying "Change!" It changed at once into a writing brush charged with heavy ink, and at the base of the central pillar he wrote, "The Great Sage Equal to Heaven reached this place." Then to mark his disrespect, he relieved nature at the bottom of the first pillar, and somersaulted back to where he had come from. Standing on Buddha's palm, he said, "Well, I've gone and come back. You can go and tell the Jade Emperor to hand over the Palaces of Heaven." "You stinking ape," said Buddha, "you've been on the palm of my hand all the time." "You're quite mistaken," said Monkey. "I got to the end of the World, where I saw five flesh-coloured pillars sticking up into the sky. I wrote something on one of them. I'll take you there and show you, if you like." "No need for that," said Buddha. "Just look down." Monkey peered down with his fiery, steely eyes, and there at the base of the middle finger of Buddha's hand he saw written the words "The Great Sage Equal to Heaven reached this place," and from the fork between the thumb and first finger came a smell of monkey's urine.

It took him some time to get over his astonishment. At last he said, "Impossible, impossible! I wrote that on the pillar sticking up into the sky. How did it get on to Buddha's finger? He's practicing some magic upon me. Let me go back and look." Dear Monkey! He crouched, and was just making ready to spring again, when Buddha turned his head, and pushed Monkey out at the western gate of Heaven. As he did so, he changed his five fingers into the Five Elements, Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth. They became a five-peaked mountain, named Wu Hsing Shan (Mountain of the Five Elements) which pressed upon him heavily enough to hold him tight. But in his mercy he appointed a guardian spirit to watch over the mountain. "When he is hungry," he said, "give him an iron pill to eat. When he is thirsty, give him verdigris to drink. When the days of his penance are fulfilled, there will be one who will come to rescue him."

ARCS/

Fiery Light

Nothing is so apt to challenge consciousness and awareness as being at war with oneself. One can hardly think of any other or more effective means of waking humanity out of the irresponsible and innocent, semi-slumbering condition of the primordial state of mind and of bringing it to a state of conscious responsibility.[1]

The gigantic catastrophes that threaten us are not elemental happenings of a physical or biological kind, but are psychic events. We are threatened in a fearful way by wars and revolutions that are nothing else than psychic epidemics. At any moment a few million people may be seized by a madness, and then we have another world war or a devastating revolution. Instead of being exposed to wild beasts, tumbling rocks, and inundating waters, man is exposed today to the elemental forces of his own psyche. Psychic life is a world-power that exceeds by many times all the powers of the earth. The Enlightenment, which stripped nature and human institutions of gods, overlooked the one god of fear who dwells in the psyche. Fear of God is in place, if anywhere, before the dominating power of psychic life.[2]

The stirring up of conflict is a Luciferian quality in the true sense of the word. Conflict creates the fire of affects and emotions, and like every fire it has two aspects: that of burning and that of giving light. Emotion is on the one hand the alchemical fire whose heat brings everything to light and whose intensity omnes superfluitates comburit *(burns up all superfluities), but on the other hand emotion is the moment where steel meets rock and a spark is thrown off. Emotion is the chief source of all becoming-conscious. There can be no transforming of darkness into light and of apathy into movement without emotion.*[3]

—C.G. Jung

There never was a struggle or a battle which required greater valor than that in which a man forgets or denies himself.

—Meister Eckhart[4]

Dov Baer, the Maggid of Mezeritch, said to his disciple the holy Rabbi Zusya that in the service of God he should learn three things from a child and seven things from a thief. From a child he should learn (1) always to be happy; (2) never to sit idle; (3) to cry for everything one wants. From a thief he should learn (1) to work at night; (2) if one cannot gain what one wants in one night to try again the next night; (3) to love one's co-workers just as thieves love each other; (4) to be willing to risk one's life even for a little thing; (5) not to attach too much value to things, even though one has risked one's life for them, just as a thief will re-sell a stolen article at a fraction of its real value; (6) to withstand all kinds of beatings and tortures but to remain what you are; (7) to believe your work is worth while, and not to be willing to change it.

—The Wisdom of Jewish Mystics[5]

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!

—Robert Browning[6]

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

—Romans 7:19–23

An anecdote of Hasidic origin will help to illustrate my point. The rebbe *is asked the following question by a pupil, referring to Deuteronomy 6:6:* And

these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart. *"Why is it said this way?" the pupil asks. "Why are we not told to place them* in *our heart?" The* rebbe *answers that it is not within man's power to place the divine teachings directly in his heart. "All that we can do is place them on the surface of the heart so that when the heart breaks they will drop in."*

—Jacob Needleman[7]

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that lovest son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me.

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

—Matthew 10:34–39

The handbook of the strategist has said:
"Do not invite the fight, accept it instead,
Better a foot behind than an inch too far ahead,"
Which means:
Look a man straight in the face and make no move,
Roll up your sleeve and clench no fist,
Open your hand and show no weapon,
Bare your breast and find no foe.
But as long as there be a foe, value him,
Respect him, measure him, be humble toward him;
Let him not strip from you, however strong he be,
Compassion, the one wealth which can afford him.

—Lao-Tzu[8]

It is a venerable way and plain, but hard and difficult for the soul to go in that is in the body.

For first must it war against its own self, and after much strife and dissention, it must be overcome of one part; for the contention is of one against two, whilst it flies away, and they strive to hold and detain it.

But the victory of both is not like, for the one hasteth to that which is Good, but the other is a neighbour to the things that are Evil; and that which is Good desireth to be set at liberty, but the things that are Evil love Bondage and Slavery.

And if the two parts be overcome, they become quiet, and are content to accept of it as their Ruler; but if the one be overcome of the two, it is by

them led and carried to be punished by its being and continuance here.

This is, O Son, the Guide in the way that leads thither; for thou must first forsake the Body before thy end, and get the victory in this contention and strifeful life, and when thou hast overcome, return.

—The Divine Pymander of Hermes[9]

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

And prevailed not; neither was there place found any more in heaven.

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

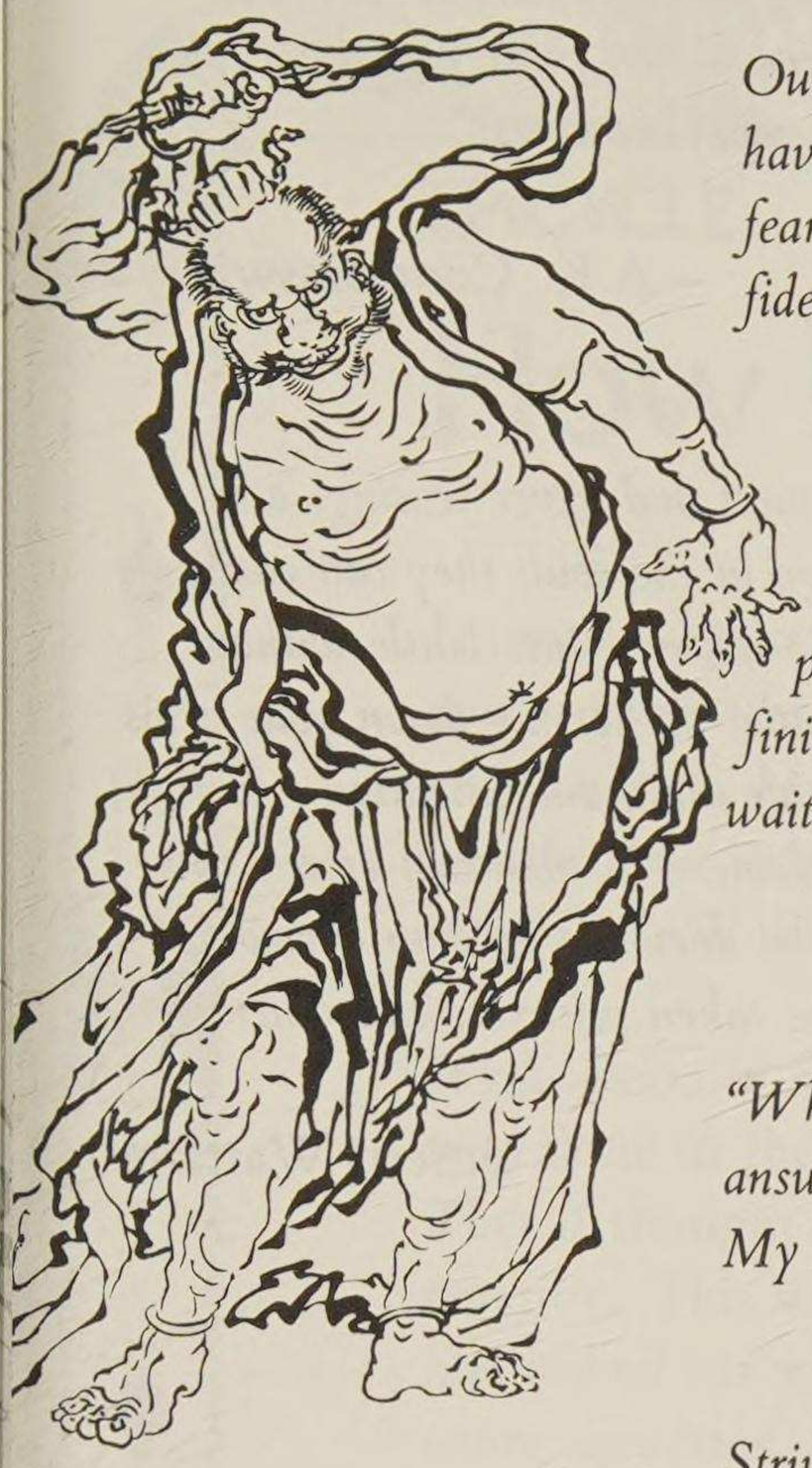
And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

—Revelations 12: 1–17



Our lot as men is to learn and one goes to knowledge as one goes to war; I have told you this countless times. One goes to knowledge or to war with fear, with respect, aware that one is going to war, and with absolute confidence in one self.

—*Carlos Castaneda*[10]

To know the reality of war is the Pythagorean harmony, the unity of opposites; it is the plenitude of knowledge of the real. That is why you are infinitely privileged, because you have war permanently lodged in your body, waiting for years in patient fidelity until you are ripe to know it.

—*Simone Weil*[11]

"Where is the sure faith that burns up all phantoms?" God most High answers them, "As I have said, the animal soul in you is your enemy and My enemy.

Take not My enemy and your enemy for friends.

Strive always against this enemy in prison; for when he is in prison and calamity and pain, then your deliverance appears and gathers strength."

—*Rumi*[12]

"To renew" applies when we are fighting with the enemy, and an entangled spirit arises where there is no possible resolution. We must abandon our efforts, think of the situation in a fresh spirit then win in the new rhythm. To renew, when we are deadlocked with the enemy, means that without changing our circumstance we change our spirit and win through a different technique.

It is necessary to consider how "to renew" also applies in large-scale strategy. Research this diligently.

—*Miyamoto Musashi,* A Book of Five Rings[13]

No one will deny that the battleground on which the psychomachy must be fought out to a finish is within you, or that, where Christ fights, there also must his enemy, the Antichrist, be found. Neither will anyone, "superstition" apart, be likely to pretend that the Temptations of St. Anthony, as depicted in art, can be regarded otherwise than as "projections" of interior tensions. In the same way that Picasso's "Guernica" is the mirror of Europe's disintegrated soul, "the hell of modern existence," the Devil's horns and sting are an image of the most evil beast in man himself. Often enough it has been said by the "Never-enough honoured Auncients," as well as by modern authors, that "man is his own worst enemy." On the other hand, the best gifts for which a man might pray is to be "at peace with himself"; and, indeed, for so long as he is not at peace with Himself, he can hardly be at peace with anybody else, but will "project" his own disorders, making of "the enemy"—for example, Germany, or Russia, or the Jews—his "devil." "From whence come wars

and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even from your lusts [pleasure, or desires, Skr. kāmāh*] that contend in your members?"* (James 4:1).

—A.K. Coomaraswamy[14]

So this spiritual warfare of ours must be constant and never ceasing, and should be conducted with alertness and courage in the soul; they can easily be attained, if you seek these gifts from God. So advance into battle without hesitation . . . Even if you are wounded in battle, do not lay down your arms and turn to flight. Keep only one thing in your mind and intention—to fight with all courage and ardor, since it is unavoidable. No man can escape this warfare, either in life or in death. And he who does not fight to overcome his passions and his enemies will inevitably be taken prisoner, either here or yonder, and delivered to death.

—Unseen Warfare[15]

FOOTNOTES

[1] C.G. Jung, *Psychological Reflections*, ed. and comp. Jolande Jacobi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Raymond Bernard Blakney, trans., *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1941), p. 240. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

[5] Unterman, ed., *The Wisdom of the Jewish Mystics* (Sheldon Press, 1976).

[6] Robert Browning, *The Complete Works of Robert Browning* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1981).

[7] Jacob Needleman, *Consciousness and Tradition* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982), p. 156. Reprinted by permission of The Crossroad Publishing Company.

[8] Witter Bynner, trans., *The Way of Life According to Lao Tzu* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), p. 70. Reprinted by permission of G.P. Putnam's Sons.

[9] Dr. Everard, trans., *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus* (San Diego: Wizards Bookshelf, 1973), p. 2. Reprinted by permission of Wizards Bookshelf.

[10] Carlos Castaneda, *A Separate Reality* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), p. 110.

[11] George A. Panichas, ed., *The Simone Weil Reader* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1977), p. 87. Reprinted by permission of David McKay Company, Inc.

[12] A.J. Arberry, trans., *Discourses of Rumi* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1972), p. 72. Reprinted by permission of Samuel Weiser, Inc .

[13] Miyamoto Musashi, *A Book of Five Rings*, Trans. Victor Harris, (New York: The Overlook Press, 1982), p. 81. Reprinted by permission of The Overlook Press.

[14] Roger Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy 2: Selected Papers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 27–28. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

[15] E. Kadloubovsky and G.E.H. Palmer, trans., *Unseen Warfare* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1952), pp. 110–111.

EPICYCLE

How Evil Began

Inyan *is the first spirit who is the rock of the earth. From him and his powers everything was created; but in creating, he shrank and became hard and powerless.* Mahpiyato, *the sky, is the source of all wisdom and power, and the great judge over all.* Maka *is the earth,* Wi *and* Hanwi *the Sun and Moon.* Wakinyan *is Inyan's companion;* Ksa *is the spirit of wisdom.*

Inyan stood in the circle of the spirits and said, "Long ago, when I was alone in the darkness, my soft, shapeless body was all-powerful. Then I thought I would bring pleasure to myself by making the first creation. This was Maka. She was young and had many big plans. She lashed me with insults until I agreed to the beginning of all other creations. Her big plans resulted in things that were for the best. She is now the most gracious of the gods, the source of comfort to me and a fine companion for the daughter of the great spirit. Because of her, all creatures exist. But none of them are subject to her. The result of all her desires is pleasing to all. It has pleased the great spirit to create the Pte people to be servants of the spirits. Now I pray you, Mahpiyato, to make creatures that are a little inferior to the Pte people. They will be subjects of Maka and do what she says."

All the spirits said "*Nunwe*," and Mahpiyato said, "*Ho*."

So Mahpiyato assembled all the spirits and all creatures that breathed on the world. In their presence he created the animals. He created them in this way. He took clay from the ground and a certain substance from the creatures. He mixed these and gave a portion of the mixture to each of the spirits. Then he commanded them to mold shapes, each having four limbs, but neither hands nor wings.

Wi and Hanwi molded shapes having horns and hooves. Maka and Woope molded shapes having claws and blunt teeth. Inyan and Wakinyan made shapes having claws and blunt teeth. But Unk was evil and mean, so she molded a shape without limbs. Mahpiyato then commanded Wakinyan to clothe each shape. He covered some with coarse hair, some with fine hair, some with fur, and some with a mixture of these. But when he came to the forms molded by Unk, she glared at him. So he clothed these shapes with slime or with scales.

When all were clothed, Mahpiyato commanded Wi to warm them, and he did so. But when he came to those covered with slime and scales, Unk glared at him. So he turned from them, and they remained cold.

When Wakinyan and Wi told Mahpiyato about the forms molded

by Unk, he said, "Unk, because you have disobeyed my command, and insulted my assistants, the creatures that you have shaped shall be cold as long as they live."

He then gave to each shape a *nagila* or a spirit so that each shape became a living thing. Then he commanded Ksa to instruct these creatures and he did so. Ksa told them that they were animals created to live on the earth and serve Maka. He taught a different language to each kind of animal, and also the one language spoken by all kinds of creatures.

But when he came to the shapes molded by Unk, he was puzzled. For they could not travel on the ground. So he told them that they were fishes. Because of their shapes, they must live in the waters. He said that because they lived in the water, they could not utter any sounds, nor hear any sounds. Therefore they would need no language.

Thus, animals were created on the land and fishes in the water.

After they had feasted, the spirits sat in their circle. Unk stood up and said, "Of all the spirits who rule in a kingdom, I alone have not been given the power to create a companion. Therefore I have chosen Unhcegi to be my companion. I demand that you accept him as my companion."

"You were created as a companion," said Mahpiyato. "Because of pity for you I have raised you above all the others. Be content with that. If you claim more than that you breed trouble for all of us."

"I have chosen Unhcegi and I shall stick with my choice," said Unk.

"Let Unhcegi be advised by Ksa and he may do well," said Mahpiyato.

"My companion shall not be advised by the deformed son of my enemy. The words of Ksa are boring. His shape makes him the object of ridicule for me and mine. I and my sons will advise Unhcegi," said Unk.

"Then he will win no favors with the spirits," said Mahpiyato.

"I ask no favors of anyone. I will take whatever I should have," said Unk.

"Then the others will take from you whatever they desire," said Mahpiyato.

"I will defend whatever I have with force. My son, Ibom, and my companion, Unhcegi, can withstand even my enemy, Wakinyan. I challenge the spirits to take away from me what I want!" screamed Unk.

"You separate yourself from all other spirits. Go from our circle and come to it no more," said Mahpiyato.

"Gladly! I leave a seat that is irritating to me. I am a spirit and

from now on I will rule myself. I ask favors of no one and I shall favor no one. Neither justice, nor mercy, nor pity shall hold me back. I shall delight in the deceit and misery of others. I shall promote lust and folly," said Unk. She left the circle of the gods in a rage.

Unk gathered her sons, Iya and Gnaski, her spouse, Unhcegi, and his offspring, the Unktehila. She said to them, "I am a spirit and my sons are the offspring of a spirit. I have chosen Unhcegi as my companion. Therefore he is the companion of a spirit. And our offspring are superior to any creations. I have been banished from the circle of the spirits and so were my sons. So I am obligated by no one, except by my own will. And therefore, I will now establish a circle of my own.

"You who are present here are assigned to seats in my circle. Ungcegi, you are the first on my right. Iya, you are first on my left. Gnaski, I appoint you as warden, and your seat is beside the entrance to my circle. The Unktehila shall sit on either side. My circle is opposed to the circle of the spirits. We will figure out how to destroy their plans and goals. I declare that Wakinyan is my enemy, and I will oppose his forces. I depend on the strength of Ibom and Unhcegi to do this. I despise Ksa and depend on the cunning of Gnaski to destroy his plans. We shall fear only Mahpiyato, for he is beyond our power. But he has given much of his power to other spirits, and we can frustrate them. Deceit, folly, and vanity are the means we will use to accomplish our plans. But, if we have to use force to be effective, we will do so."

"I am the largest, and I will serve you with all my strength," said Iya.

"Dear mother," said Gnaski, "You nursed me with trickery, and from your breasts I drew deceit. My parents nurtured me in cruelty. The lust given to me by yourself and your son protects me from shame. The words of Ksa which flowed through your veins have become my cunning and trickery. The soft qualities of the spirits, like love, mercy, and pity have no place in me. Instead, I am filled with revenge and hatred. I have neither honor nor respect for anyone. I do not fear Mahpiyato for he wished me to be as I am, and he permitted me to be your son. These are the qualities which I have. With them I will serve you."

In this way, the circle of evil spirits was formed.

—Retold by Vivian One Feather

From Ehanni Ohunkakan, *a collection of Lakota stories based on versions in the James R. Walker Collection at the State Historical Society of Colorado and retold at the Oglala Sioux Culture Center, Red Cloud Indian School, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, under the direction of Vivian One Feather.*

The Battle for Person in the Heart

by James and Myfanwy Moran

Fire is in all things, is spread everywhere, pervades all things without intermingling with them, shining by its very nature and yet hidden, and manifesting its presence only when it can find material on which to work, violent and invisible, having absolute rule over all things. . . . It comprehends, but remains incomprehensible, never in need, mysteriously increasing itself and showing forth its majesty according to the nature of the substance receiving it, powerful and mighty and invisibly present in all things.

—St. Dionysus the Areopagite

When asked what a person should do to reach holiness, St. Anthony said, "Become what you are." According to Eastern Orthodox tradition, the aim of spiritual warfare in life is to achieve just such a becoming.

Eastern Orthodox Christianity believes that man is a being made to live in the

great fire of the divine life and to participate in its energies, delights, and beauties. St. Peter speaks of human beings becoming "partakers" in the eternal life of God.

However, Orthodoxy believes that human personhood was not made to be in the divine life like a fish swimming in the sea, but to experience it more as God does. In the Holy Trinity, the divine life is conferred on and shared by the three persons only because they give it one to another out of love: divine life is a personal offering between them, given and received freely. Love never compels or seduces. It is humble. That is its beauty and its risk. Man's real greatness lies in the fact that his personhood was created to know this beauty and this risk. By receiving the divine life as a gift, and using its energies in his existence, man becomes God's intimate friend and co-worker in the creation.

Love, then, is no mere subjective emotion or feeling; no mere objective behavior or good deed. It is the very power, or driving force, of the human personhood. It is an energy with ontological reality and great creative force. It is nothing less than the spark of the divine fire which was meant to grow into a raging flame, provided that man uses it according to its true nature, to express the creativity and freedom of love. By "spending" this energy in that fashion, the personhood of a human being can grow from the image of God, or potentiality for divinization, into the likeness to God, or actuality of divinization. Each unique life would then express its fire differently, yet all lives would be drawn together into its communal feast and celebration. And the fire would dwell in spirit, soul, and body, and reach out to the rest of creation, releasing its potentiality to participate in the Kingdom. The Kingdom which begins in the Holy Trinity would extend, through man's free act of loving, to all that exists.

As a consequence of man's Fall, this active and sovereign love is almost, but not quite, dead. It is frozen. Thus the original image of God in man is put on ice; the growth toward the final likeness has been lost. The fallen personhood lacks fire: its spark is enslaved and burns only weakly.

A story from the Talmud tells of the son of a king who abandoned his inheritance and went far away. His father sent a messenger, asking him to come back. He answered, "I cannot." So the father sent another messenger, saying, "Come back as far as you can, and I will come to meet you there."

This story perfectly states how Orthodoxy sees the Incarnation. Christ is the Father's final messenger, His "only begotten Son," who comes to meet man where he is because man cannot come any further. And Christ comes not simply to justify us before the Father, but rather to restore us, heal us, rouse us. The Eastern Church Fathers said of this: "God became man so that man might become God."

This is the Orthodox meaning of redemption: Christ has rekindled in mankind the spark of divine energy, and thus made it possible for us to grow to completion by actively using this energy in our lives—to be aflame with it and united by it to the Holy Trinity and to all of mankind, and indeed to all creatures and things, in a single communion. St. Gregory Palamas said of this final transfiguration of the human personhood by divine fire that "God in all fullness comes to dwell in the complete being of those who are worthy of it." A statement of Christ preserved in the memory of the church declares: "He who is near me is near the fire."

But redemption is not magic. For it to be fulfilled in us, Orthodoxy believes, we have to be willing to co-operate with its gift of fire. Through the will, we bring our heart to God, with all its attributes, hungers, failings, to be changed by Him. This is what St. Gregory Palamas called "synergy" or "energy sharing." On the one hand, God's fire is necessary to re-kindle our spark, and so it makes a change in the heart we could not, by our own efforts, bring about. On the other hand, God cannot do it all, because our free will cannot be compelled, and our "yes" is shown by

our willingness to make efforts in order to pursue the change God makes in us. In that sense, we complete it by furthering its work.

These efforts to co-operate with redemption initiate one into what the Orthodox tradition calls spiritual warfare. For when the individual starts to make these efforts, he soon finds that it is impossible to give the heart to God or to his fellow man, because he discovers that he has in himself something that follows the road of the fire of redemption and something else that resists it. Jewish mysticism calls the former the "heart of flesh" and the latter the "heart of stone." When one has truly seen the existence of these two hearts, the purpose of the entry into their hidden warfare is also seen: to consciously and willingly "fight" to strengthen the heart of flesh and resist the heart of stone. This struggle is necessary in order to be able to move from the position where we are half-hearted and divided in heart, with respect to the holy fire and our spark of it, to a situation where the division in us is healed and we can truly be whole-hearted.

In effect, man has to see into his heart and be willing to confront what is there and struggle with what is there. The spiritual warfare between the heart of flesh and the heart of stone is inevitable, raging in the depths, but man's task is to enter it and take sides. To be unconscious of the battle is, usually, to sit on the fence and allow the outcome to go by default, for in the fallen state and fallen world the heart of stone tends to suffocate the heart of flesh.

Does this mean man should be fighting to get rid of the heart of stone (the idealistic and puritanical solution)? Or to rise above it (the romantic and esoteric solution)? Or suppress and contain it (the humanistic and rational solution)?

These ways do not work: none of them in the least affects the power of the heart of stone to inhibit love, and all of them in different ways dangerously diminish the power of the heart of flesh to love. For they are all ways in which the heart of flesh hardens itself by dealing unlovingly with the refusal of the heart of stone. Thus by following them, the heart of flesh actually grows harder and more akin to the heart of stone. This is the great danger of the spiritual life.

Orthodoxy teaches that whole-heartedness, or healing of the heart, cannot be achieved by imagining that we can triumph over the heart of stone. It is fundamental Christian belief that the devil cannot create anything, that evil in us is actually a distortion of something originally good, and cannot be thrown away but must be redeemed: the good must be reclaimed from evil. If we throw away the deepest evil, we also throw out the deepest good, and live by a "good" of our own invention which is only a sublimated or inverted evil.

Hence the real heart of all our efforts in synergetic cooperation with God's redemption is actually our repentence: the acknowledgment that evil has distorted good, and the willingness to change, and to suffer for that change, so that the good will be freed from evil.

Repentance entails bearing the lesser heart in the greater heart, inwardly, like a cross. But from this comes the strength both to love more and to resist what inhibits its love, to learn from it the virtues which are the strength of love: long-sufferance, patience, humility and courage. We become more merciful to other people without sentimentality, and more realistic without being judgmental. We learn to bear and forgive them. But by its bearing of the heart of stone, the heart of flesh also comes to see into and see through it, understanding its thoughts, images, and passions as they arise. Eventually, the heart of stone can be resisted not just outwardly, in behavior, but inwardly at its source. This bestows wisdom about the inner workings of the heart, and the ability to help others in their tangled web of flesh and stone.

What then is the good in us distorted by evil? In the Eastern Christian ascetic tradition, there are said to be three main expressions—which are both "faculties" and "energies"—of the spark of the fire of

divinity in human beings. The Desert Fathers call these:

> *Nous*, or the eye of the heart: "perception," or the intelligent aspect of the spark
> *Thymos*, or the vehement wrath of the heart for truth and against falsity, and the passion to act in and for the truth: "will," or the incensive aspect of the spark
> *Eros*, or the longing of the heart for ecstatic union with God and with all persons and creatures made by God (the East does not accept any distinction between *Eros* and *Agape*, for the former expresses only a more intense and ecstatic state of the latter): "desire," or the goal-directed aspect of the spark

In their unfallen, or original state, one can speak of the clarity of the *Nous*, the strength of the *Thymos*, and the power of *Eros*.

The fallen state of *Nous*, *Thymos*, and *Eros* is, at root, simple. But it has effects at every level of personhood—spirit, soul (psychological and sociological), and body (biological and physiological). At root this fallen state is passivity rather than activity, bondage rather than sovereignty. Instead of being expressions of activity and freedom, the three fires become passions which possess us, and so scatter, dilute, and weaken authentic passion. In the Greek language, "sin" means "failure" or specifically "failure to hit the mark"; the three fires fail to achieve the *telios*, or final end, for which they have been created. This means, also, that they wander off the mark into illusion.

Fallen *Nous*, or spiritual delusion, includes the following: beguilement by demonic lies and illusions; loss of reality; self-enclosure and self-preoccupation; indifference or blindness to the other; abstraction and passivity; narcissistic states and schizoid madness; projection and introjection; idolatrous, rather than iconic, images of the psyche.

Fallen *Thymos*, or spiritual pride, includes: self-will, self-righteousness, self-justification, and self-glorification; personal aggrandizement through ownership (riches, status, property); domination, or power over the other; calculation and manipulation; coercion and seduction; violent power, hostility, resentment; rubbing out "the fine wirey line of creation" (Blake) in brutality or sentimentality; sado-masochistic states and obsessional–paranoid madness; reaction formation.

Fallen *Eros*, or spiritual hedonism, entails: theft of the gift from the giver, or loss of communion; self-preservation and self-indulgence; meanness and luxury; devouring, or power through the other; impulsiveness and inundation; sloppiness and inertia; unsteady power, vanity, and avarice; hysteric states, or manic–depressive madness; sublimation.

It would seem clear that these three faculties and energies are akin, in their fallen state, to what the Buddhists call the Three Fires of delusion, hating, and grasping. However, whereas purification in Buddhism aims at overcoming fallen attachment by non-attachment, purification in the Christian East aims at restoring it to its true standing. In this it shares that radical, total, unreserved attachment God has for the persons he has called into existence. It is the egoism of attachment, in its fallen state, which must be renounced and overcome in order to free its personalness.

Restoring fallen attachment to its true standing is accomplished through "putting on Christ's yoke." It is as if his *Nous* teaches our eye to be singular so it can see reality, his *Thymos* teaches our will to be emptied of itself so it can act in and for the truth, his *Eros* teaches our desire to be purged of its devouring so it can live by communion. Christ said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

The concrete practices employed within the church for putting on Christ's yoke in the *Nous*, the *Thymos*, and the *Eros*, purify them, and hence reclaim their true purpose from their fallen functioning.

These practices constitute, along with the repentance that is their context and precondition, the Christian Way as this is seen and walked in Eastern Orthodoxy. Repentance, stilling the heart, self-emptying, and togetherness are the Four Pillars of Orthodox life.

Hesychasm: The Lamp of the Way

> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."
>
> "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light. but if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness."

The *Nous* is not the discursive reason or the modern "intellect." St. Makarius of Egypt called it the "eye of the heart"; St. Diadochus, the "innermost aspect of the heart." St. Isaac the Syrian called it the "simple cognition" by which one apprehends divine truth in immediate experience. But since for Christianity the divinity is someone, not something, and indeed God in Trinity, the deepest perception is of the ultimate reality of personhood. Moreover, to see personhood is primarily to see God as its origin; to see the personhood of human beings is to see it in and through God. As St. Anthony wrote, "When you see your brother, you see God."

Seeing is the beginning of love: without it as the first and fundamental step, love is spiritual delusion or psychological fantasy—either a blotting out of the other, or an activity of imagining it in images that owe more to the psyche than to their reality. To bear the reality of the other is among the hardest of all spiritual disciplines.

Hesychasm is practiced through what is called the "Prayer of the Heart" (or the "Jesus Prayer"). This is prayer of the "hidden man of the heart," in St. Peter's words, or the prayer that should be "unceasing," in St. Paul's words. Clearly, the conscious mind cannot pray in this fashion. *Hesychasm* therefore demands that we "take the mind down into the heart" and "pray with the mind in the heart." This way of praying combines the deepest cry to God, like that made by David in the Psalms, with meditational concentration, mindfulness, and attentiveness. The heart has to be stilled of its agitation, anxiety, and clouded state to stand in the presence of God, face to face. *Hesychasm* has techniques both for breath control (to bring consciousness out of the mind down into the heart), and for emptying the mind of its attachment to, and domination by, images. Overcoming the domination of images—not eradicating them—is a major part of the work in *Hesychasm*. Images have to be discerned in terms of their origin. Thus they are regarded as arising from three different sources: (a) the celestial archetypes, or *logoi*, of the authentic imagination by which it both sees the divinity hidden in things, and creates "iconic" symbols of that divinity; (b) the thoughts and impulses which are suggested by demonic forces; and (c) the forms, pictures, and patterns that express the psyche's unconscious and conscious image-formation process. The Desert Fathers did not regard psychic fantasy as the same order of problem as spiritual delusion, except insofar as the latter often works through the former: fantasy is not to be indulged nor allowed to compulsively direct the attention, however. On the other hand, when the *Nous* is more "discerning of spirits," the psyche becomes more clear and its image-formation process more iconic and less idolatrous.

Two other practices much ignored in modern Christianity, East and West, but that are essential to *Hesychasm* are fasting and alms-giving. Fasting is to overcome bodily inertia, the automatic reaction in us whereby the most "natural" action is also the easiest and weakest. Alms-giving is not charity. It is the means to, and the fruit of, the deepest and truest enlightenment of the *Nous*: the apprehension of not only the reality but also the value of persons, and indeed of all things.

But prayer is fundamental and always comes first. Without it, we remain in the dark and do not know what we are doing; all other efforts come to nothing.

Kenosis: The Sword of Truth

> "My judgment is true because I do the will of Him who sent me."
>
> "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled."

The *Thymos* is the strength of the will to act decisively on what the *Nous* has seen. The *Thymos* is described by the Desert Fathers as "vehement for truth and against falsity," and shows this discrimination in all its action. Thus its action has an incisive, as well as decisive, quality, like the Zen swordsman's cut, or the Zen calligrapher's stroke. There is no room for brutality or blind force here, but equally neither for sentimentality or cowardly hesitancy. Thus the *Thymos* is the arousing power of the will, the root power of personhood. It is a power inspired by fidelity to truth, and therefore one ready to declare itself and suffer for truth. This has a very specific meaning. In a world that fears love, and indeed wants to kill it, acting in and for its truth may have a very high cost. Christ acted from *Thymos* when he flogged the money-changers and threw them out of the temple; when he denounced the Pharisees; and when he accepted Crucifixion.

Though loving is an action of the will, this action must be made first to God before it can be made with any discrimination and strength to human beings. Without giving the will to God first we become victims or victimizers in our action toward others. Our action is paralyzed at the core or becomes merely an attack of one kind or another: a manipulation, a display of power.

Kenosis—self-emptying—is not a moral, but an existential, act of will. By becoming empty of its own self-aggrandizement, the will becomes like that silence out of which true sound comes. Humility and poverty signify a state of emptiness in which God's will can act in man's will. Zen Buddhism calls this the "Great Death," and Chassidic Judaism the "Reduction to Nothing." In such self-emptying, one not only surrenders his misery and schemes and self-pity, but even the very best in himself, so that God can transform it from temporal riches into eternal gifts. This action of God is not like a spirit taking possession of a medium, for when the individual becomes self-emptied and filled with God, he becomes truly himself and in full possession of his true will. We come into the freedom of our royal personhood.

All of life can become an expression of *Kenosis*: it is political as well as mystical. The church has provided the sacrament of confession so that there is a means to be truthful with God, and ourselves, on the level where we really are. Both the spiritual zeal whereby we become egoistic bullies in the name of attacking evil in ourselves or others, and the spiritual despair—called *accidie*—whereby we give up on ourselves or others due to that evil, are manifestations of pride, and betoken a failure of *Kenosis*. The Beatitudes describe a growth in *Kenosis* through successive steps; St. John of the Ladder has written of these steps in detail.

Sobornost: The Cup of Life

> "Greater love has no man than that he lay down his life for his friends."
>
> "He who finds his life will lose it; and he who loses his life for my sake will find it."

The *Eros* is that power of desire, or longing, by which we are drawn out of ourselves toward God and other persons. Eros both recognizes the beauty of personhood, and yearns for communion with that personhood as the only fulfillment of its deep hunger. St. Dionysus says that this power of love to draw man out of himself and into communion is its ecstatic quality. "Love . . . is ecstatic, making us go out of ourselves: it does not allow the lover to belong any more to himself, but he belongs only to the beloved." Does this mean ecstasy is a losing of oneself? No, it means that one ceases to be complete without the other. Life ceases to exist in self-preserved wholeness. Ecstasy also means that what *Eros* seeks is not a mere release of energy, but a meeting with the other, through contact with their energy. Ecstasy, in short, is the final fulfillment of synergy.

Since God is the source of personhood, our deepest desire is for communion with Him. But through God it becomes possible to give the heart to all persons, creatures, and things. Because God is the source of

that community of life where communion is its very center and where all persons, creatures, and things together find their hunger fed, the kingdom is the place where all are brought together by the life that feeds them. Giving the heart is not a romantic, lonely action of our own, but rather the entry into a community which exists prior to us, and so does not stand or fall by us. It lives. We stand by it, and fall when we refuse to stand upon it, depend upon it, be fed by it. We can rely upon it. It has ontological reality. It is not invented by any good will on our part, but our will is used to enter it.

What prevents men from entering this community, and sharing its life, is what the Desert Fathers call spiritual hedonism. From God, we want rewards, experiences, higher knowledge, deliverance from pain and infirmity and death, but not God Himself. From people, we want sex and food without any gratitude toward, and solidarity with, those who offer those gifts. This creates a world not of ecstatic communion, but of rape and pillage and plunder. It makes of *Eros* a devouring hunger which sucks everything down into its black hole, and yet is unfeedable; or a miser who measures out love meanly, fretting over fair shares and his rights, spending nothing of himself or his possessions for love. Christ has said, in the parable of the talents, that if we are generous with the finite, we will be replenished by the infinite; but if we are mean with the little we have, we will lose even this. That is the Final Judgment in Christianity. The church is the early embodiment of the divine kingdom: literally its body. *Sobornost*, or the togetherness of persons in the communion created by God, is the rationale of the church. Without it, the church is merely an association of isolated individuals. By practicing *Sobornost*, the church becomes the physical altar and the physical cup which is the earthly home of the Holy Trinity.

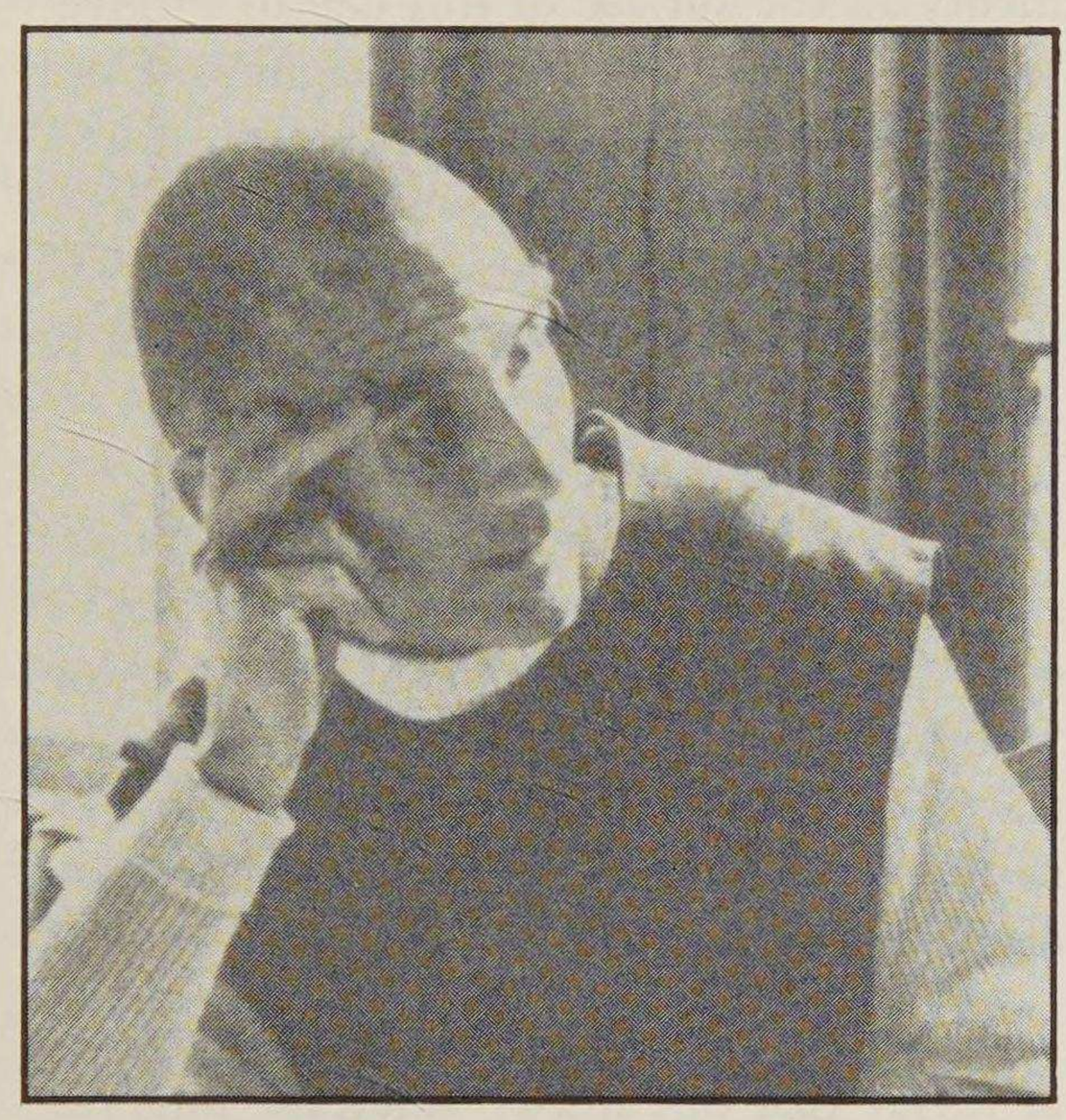
The outward, or political, dimension of *Sobornost* means putting into practice the mystical communion of the kingdom in a concrete way. It becomes very radical if we have faith in, or experience of, the depth of *Sobornost*. All of the extreme, and seemingly foolish, injunctions of Christ are enactments on the surface of this depth: forgive seventy-times-seven; if your neighbor wants your coat, give him your cloak also; if he asks you to walk a mile with him, walk two; if you do it to the least of these, you do it to me. If *Sobornost* has reality, then it can be practiced radically. Not only does it mean taking others' sorrows and joys as one's own, but also that togetherness must stand firm even if those others reject the gifts or abuse them. Anyone can love those who make him feel good, or who are attractive to him, but *Sobornost* means loving to the very end as Christ did, even to His death on the cross.

The Desert Fathers took *Sobornost* so far as to say that one must "vindicate" one's brother. By this they meant, first of all, that since love is something that wins people, rather than compels them, we can redeem each other by bearing with and suffering for each other. We redeem others, and they us, by radical bearing one of another: "What is forgiven on earth is forgiven in Heaven." Secondly, the Fathers mean that we should repent when someone offends us as if the offense had been our own against them. No matter what our brothers' offense against us might be, we must say to him and to God that the offense is not cause for their absence at the communion feast. For the final sanctity of *Eros* is shown in our inability to take joy in that feast if even one person is absent from it.

St. Isaac the Syrian describes this final *Sobornost* of *Eros* as the tenderness by which we weep for every person and creature, unable to bear their pain. These tears are the final fruit of Christian holiness, for they signify that love is "all in all" and has won us, totally. We live by love, no strings attached, no rewards, no stipulations, no reserves, no fears. We love and that love gives us life. It burns in us and is our ground, our wealth, our joy.

Become What You Are:

An interview with Brother David Steindl-Rast



I met Brother David Steindl-Rast, of the Roman Catholic Benedictine Order, at the San Francisco Zen Center's Edward Conze guest house where he was staying briefly on his way to a monastery in Big Sur. The setting was apt: Conze was a Westerner who became one of the century's great authorities on Buddhism, and the Victorian house has an inviting spaciousness, an unpretentious elegance and absence of clutter, yet real warmth—all of which fit the monk with whom I was to speak. To those who encounter Brother David now and again, he seems very much a man on the move, remarkably mobile for a monk. Yet despite all this travelling and speaking, he always appears a calm eye at the center of any storm of activity. To a passing observer, he might look disturbingly gaunt and ascetic, confirming popular prejudices about monks being world-haters. But as soon as he greets you, the illusion of severity vanishes: he is so warm and effervescent that you really want to learn how he packs so much alertness and delight into his life.

Originally from Vienna, Austria, Brother David has a doctorate in psychology and has been a monk for twenty-six years now; he currently lives in a small community, called the Grange, in Connecticut. He says that he is as much at home in a Zen monastery as in a Catholic one, and it's hard to think that he would not be at home anywhere. For he has a remarkable ability to be joyfully and wholly present: when he listens, he does nothing else; when the phone interrupts, he takes the call with full attention and delight; when he answers questions he does so with the kind of care and élan that make an interviewer's task a joy. More than many teachers I've met, the man is his message, and it is hard to imagine a more persuasive and attractive advocate for the Catholic monastic tradition.

Many people ask him whether the spirituality he embodies and presents is really the Catholicism that they've found so difficult to appreciate in other forms which they've encountered. But it may be that few people have so appropriated that tradition that they can express it with such simple grace.

—John Loudon

John Loudon: What does "holy warfare" mean to you?

Brother David Steindl-Rast: Today the notion of warfare is inseparable from that of alienation, whereas the very essence of spiritual warfare in the monastic tradition is the overcoming of alienation—what we call nowadays pulling or getting yourself together. And the monastic symbol for pulling yourself together is the belt, which monks wear in many different traditions. The aim is to overcome alienation from yourself, from others, and from God.

JL: What forces need to be overcome in this struggle against alienation?

BD: Well, in the classical discussion of holy warfare in the writings of the Eastern

Fathers of the early church, these forces are personified as demons. Even in the New Testament Paul says that it is not against "flesh and blood" that we are struggling, but against principalities and powers of evil. But it's not necessary to take these powers literally, in a fundamentalist way, and in fact to do so we probably would do an injustice to the early Fathers who wrote in those terms. They were no doubt as alert to the metaphorical nature of this imagery as we are, just as Buddhists have long known that the different hells in their tradition are best understood as mental or psychological states, not actual places.

JL: Can you give examples of some of these personified forces and some indication of how you might express them today?

BD: The three great forces that the Latin Fathers identified as the enemies against which we're battling are anger, lust, and laziness. The third one is called the noonday devil. It is in the middle of everything—of a day, of a life—that you can lose your resolve, that torpor can set in. When you're in the middle of swimming across a river, it's too far to go back and seems too far to reach the other side, and you are tempted to give up. Well, these three elements—anger, lust, and laziness—are precisely the three ways that we can fail to be present where we are, and the whole idea of getting yourself together is to be present where you are and, in the Christian context, to respond to the presence of God.

Anger really means impatience (as opposed to the righteous anger that is desirable in many circumstances). Impatience makes us get ahead of ourselves, reaching out for something in the future and not really being content with where we are, here and now.

Lust extends much wider than the sexual sphere, and essentially means attachment, attachment to something that is not present, or is not the appropriate thing right now.

And one by-product of laziness, of being victimized by the noonday devil, is sadness—not the genuine sorrow of compassion, but the lifeless *ennui* of never really being involved in the present, with what's happening.

If you would like another contemporary interpretation of the idea of spiritual warfare, there is C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*, in which he translates the tradition with great wit and insight into a modern idiom. It's all about struggling with the forces that are all around us in the world and within us and that distract us from being really unified, in one piece.

JL: When I was thinking about the theme of holy warfare, it occurred to me that there are military virtues—such as discipline, strength, courage, resolve, fidelity, and so on—which are also vital to spiritual growth. And especially the aspect of discipline, involving training and regular practice. What are the disciplines that have been developed that can be used against these devils today?

BD: The word discipline is very significant in this context, since it is not primarily a military term. The corresponding military term is regimentation. Discipline is a school term: the *discipulus* is the disciple, the pupil. Even the word pupil is apt here, because it is related to the pupil in our eye, the *pupilla*—the little doll, the little image of oneself that one sees in another's eye. This eye-to-eye contact is the essence of discipline: discipline is the attitude that you have when you see eye-to-eye with your teacher. Today especially people reject external regimentation, and are looking for a teacher that gives discipline eye-to-eye. The drill sergeant doesn't care if you are eye-to-eye with him or anybody else, just that you do what you are told. But discipline involves bringing out what is already within you. That's what the true teacher does. And the other virtues you mentioned have similar parallels. Fortitude or courage, for instance, is simply the resolve to overcome obstacles. Spiritual warfare involves the acquiring and implementation of the strengths and virtues needed to overcome obstacles.

JL: Discipline suggests to me habits of behavior and regular practices that the teacher would presumably teach. How does this

dimension relate to overcoming anger, lust, laziness?

BD: Within the monastery, which is my background and the essential environment that I feel comfortable with and know well, there is a particularly highly developed tradition of such training. In fact, the monastery can be understood precisely as a setting in which this discipline is cultivated. It is a place to which people go in order to get themselves together, again in the sense of uniting with themselves, with others, with God.

The two realms in which this discipline is cultivated are space and time, and the aim is that the whole of life should be brought together from alienation to fullness. With regard to time, for instance, there are in monasteries all sorts of bells, gongs, clappers, drums, and so on—all kinds of signals that tell you what it is time for. The struggle is within yourself to overcome your laziness, your attachments, your impatience in order to be truly wherever you need to be at any particular time. T.S. Eliot speaks of "Time, not our time," and he explicitly says this in relation to the Angelus bell that, in monastic life, rings three times a day—at sunrise, at sunset, and at high noon. The sun doesn't rise again or wait for you if you oversleep and don't get up when the bell rings. The sun rises and the bell rings, and you are to be there: your impatience can't make it happen before the right time; your attachment to staying in bed can't delay it; and you'll miss it if you're up but not really present, alert, attentive. If this sort of timeliness appeals to you, as it does to me, these signals are not a torturing regimentation but musical invitations, celebrations of particular moments.

The difficult aspect, of course, is the one expressed by St. Benedict in his Rule: "When the bell rings, stop everything. Don't even cross your *t*'s or dot your *i*'s, but go quickly." The challenge is to learn to respond immediately to whatever it is time for. Not to wonder whether you have time for it or whether you like it, but simply to respond when it is time. And the truth of this discipline is universal. For instance, in Taoism, the flow goes on and you can either be in tune with the flow or not. All these signals are simply means to get you into the flow, and the less you are in tune the more difficult the immediate responding is, the more obstacles you have to overcome to get with it.

With regard to space, the monastery is organized in such a way that there is a place for everything, and relatedly that everything is there, the monastery is self-contained. The ideal is wonderfully expressed in the Benedictine tradition by the famous plan of St. Gall, which is reflected more or less in many medieval monasteries. With everything there and a place for everything, you can be at home in your world, in the place where you belong. And belonging and getting yourself together are closely related. This sufficient world, which St. Benedict calls a workshop for the spiritual life, affords the spaces and the tools for working on yourself, transforming yourself, and in turn the world around you.

Novices always have difficulties with both aspects—time and space. When it is time for something, they often want to do something else; when this is the place to be, they often want to be somewhere else. And isn't this how it is for most people? The monastery also emphasizes neatness and orderliness; most visitors notice this immediately. There is a close relation between the struggle to put things in order within your self, within your life, and the ordering of the space around you. But novices find this hard to understand. They say, "We came here to learn spiritual matters, and what I'm told to do is how to put my shoes on, when to put them on and take them off, to put them down with the right one on the right side, the left on the left, and parallel, not toed in. What does that have to do with the spiritual life?" It has everything to do with it. That is the spirituality; it isn't something that you do just as a novice, and then graduate to spirituality. But it takes a long time to see that orderliness and cleanliness is not just cleaning

the room, but it is getting your life in order.

So bringing things into order is the goal. Order is the disposition of things in which each gives to the other its room, its own proper place. That's the external aspect. The other is that order that springs from love: there's no other way of establishing order except through love. So spiritual warfare is radically unlike what we know as warfare, which is rooted in hate and alienation and leads to chaos.

JL: Besides the imagery of warfare, some people have compared spiritual discipline to athletic training. There is the talk, for instance, about becoming an athlete of Christ.

BD: Both the athletic imagery and that of spiritual weaponry occur in St. Paul, but the weapons he speaks of are faith, hope, and love. I am convinced that in the present world, in which peace and order are no longer possible through arms, it is best to change our spiritual vocabulary, because misunderstandings do arise on the popular level. I am much more comfortable with speaking about spiritual struggle, since that does not necessarily involve struggling against someone else. You can struggle up a mountain, or struggle to get your body in shape. It even applies to animals: a chick struggling to get out of the eggshell. Plants struggle to break through cracks in the concrete, and amazingly they manage to. And similarly, I prefer to speak of obstacles rather than enemies. *The struggle against obstacles*, I think, puts the essentials of the tradition of spiritual warfare into contemporary language that is proper and helpful.

JL: Do you think the spiritual path demands a special way of life?

BD: If by a special way of life, you mean a special place like a monastery, I would say no. But if the question implies making an effort, having to struggle, I would say yes. The difference between other animals around us and ourselves seems to be that dogs and cats and birds and other animals don't have to struggle to be good at what they are. But we human beings somehow have to struggle to become what we are.

JL: Our being is to become.

BD: Yes. We experience ourselves as unfinished, and we have to struggle to become a finished product. Actually, we're never completely finished; that's our glory and our agony. We remain open-ended.

JL: In contemporary Catholicism, and in the past as well, there seem to be two divergent paths: there is that of those who emphasize spirituality, spiritual disciplines and growth, and then there is the more general, popular path in which salvation is available through regular participation in the sacraments and the life of the church generally. The former way sees *becoming* a Christian as a lifelong task; the latter stresses fidelity to *being* a good Catholic. Can you say something about this?

BD: You speak of participating in the sacraments. At the heart of all the sacraments, especially the eucharist and baptism, is the celebration of the struggle of Christ through death to resurrection. If you really participate in the sacrament, it is impossible not to enter into that struggle. The whole idea of the sacrament is to go through that struggle yourself in communion with the struggle of Christ, to participate day by day and hour by hour in the struggle of dying into greater fullness of life. And the real issue is not whether there is one kind of life that allows for this acceptance of death that leads to fuller life, and so is a spiritual life rather than a run-of-the-mill life. No, the real question is to what extent within ordinary life we can wake up to the essential inner struggle of realizing the fullness of life. Going to church, sending your kids to Catholic schools, and so on, by themselves don't do anything; they're worthless, unless they lead you into, wake you up to that struggle.

JL: Since you participate in both the Christian and the Zen communities, do you think there is an ultimate difference between Christianity and Buddhism, and what kinds of differences do you see between the two?

BD: The point is, how ultimate is "ultimate"? There are many different levels. On

one level there are great cultural differences: the two traditions grew up in entirely different settings, and so are dissimilar in many respects. But the moment that you penetrate through the accidental cultural differences, you find a remarkable similarity. Sometimes now I cannot remember if I'm in a Christian or a Buddhist monastery. The atmosphere is very similar. Then you go deeper still, and you discover profound differences in approach, although it's difficult to put them into words. Basically, the Biblical tradition centers on the Word in the widest sense: the divine speaks to us, approaches us, and we have to respond; we're burdened with *respons*ibility.

JL: The Bible also emphasizes hearing over seeing.

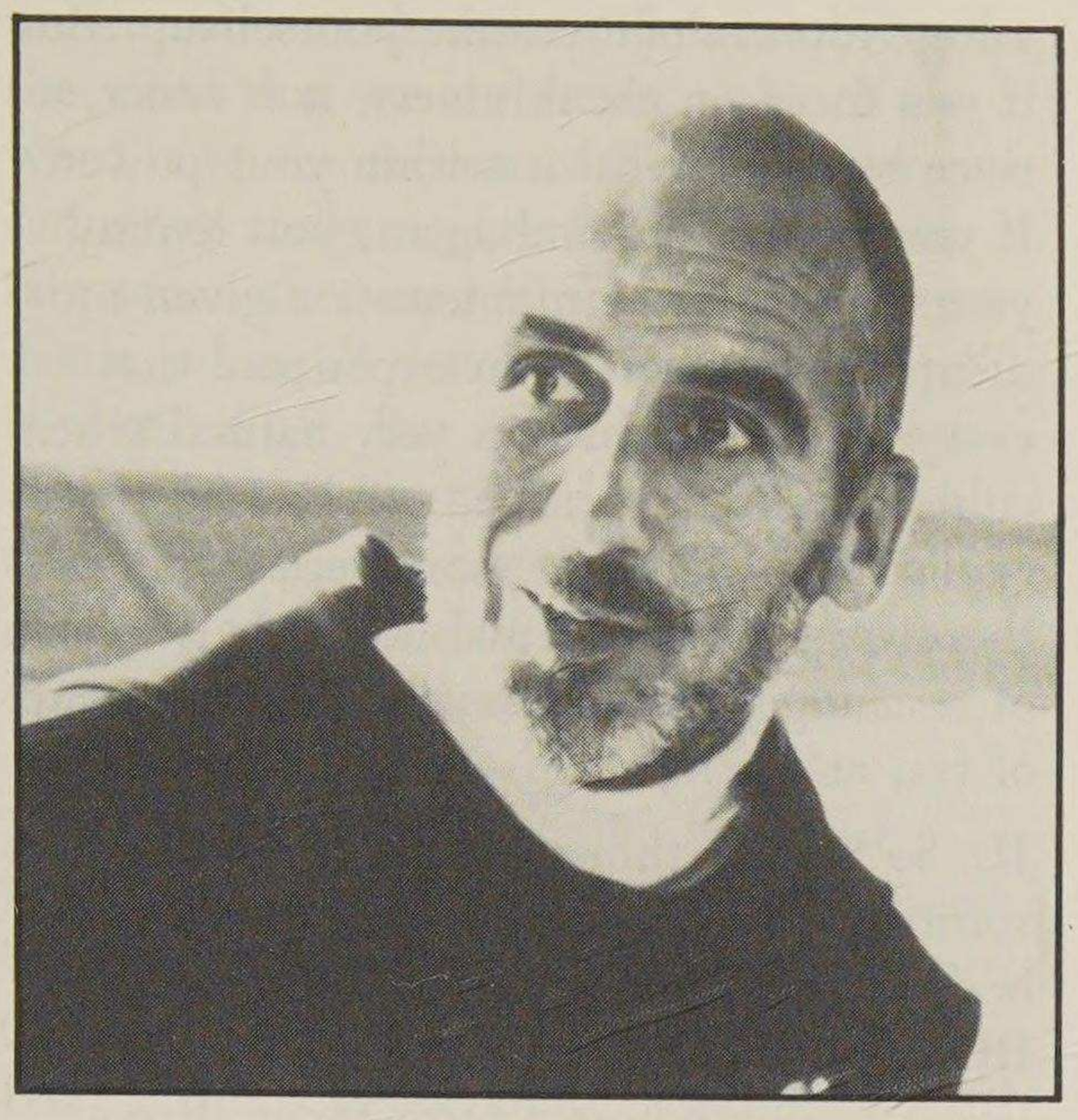
BD: And the reason for the emphasis on hearing is the call to live by the word of God, being nourished by it, responding to it. In Zen the stress is not on the word, but on the silence—the silence that is so profound that you can go down into it forever and ever. Openness, emptiness, void—all this permeates Zen. Of course, in the Christian tradition, the Word comes out of the silence and returns to the silence. But despite the teaching of the dark night of the soul and the like, the Christian tradition still stays very close to the Word. Though there are lots of words in Buddhism, they aim at silence. After everything is said and done, the Zen teacher will say, "Ah yes, but what a pity that we have to say anything at all." The saying doesn't really effect anything; what counts is the silence of practice. But then, if you go still deeper down, to what I think might well be the deepest level, you can experience communion and unity between the traditions, the complementarity of the Word and the silence.

JL: What is the connection between the life of contemplation and the call to social action in the world?

BD: You can't really be a contemplative, unless you also want to change the world. You want to change yourself, and that's where the struggle comes in. By changing yourself, you're beginning to change the world. In fact, you're changing the world much more by changing yourself than if you're running around blindly, involved in one cause after another. But the difference between what we call the apostolic and the contemplative orders, or vocations, is that the apostolic approach says, "We live in this world, we're responsible for it, and we have to do something to change the world for the better." The monastic answer is, "We are not strong enough to change the world in general. Let's change that little spot where we are. And let's put a wall around it and say this is as far as we go, as far as our strength reaches. And now within that narrow confine, let's change the world, make it more what it's supposed to be." That approach has its drawbacks, too, because it can become ingrown, its own private little affair. And the apostolic approach has limitations, because it can become so watered down that nothing spiritual remains. So we need the two; they are the poles of one continuum. People who are now engaged in apostolically changing the world need to come back periodically to a monastic environment where what they are trying to achieve everywhere is to a certain extent achieved already. And if the world could gradually become what a good monastery or Zen center is, that would be fine. The monastic communities can provide the strength, the encouragement to realize that true order can be achieved.

JL: Traditionally, Catholicism has emphasized that the contemplative life is valuable in and of itself, even if the effect on the outside world is not very immediate or direct, but with the faith that spiritual service of God would redound ultimately to the benefit of all of humankind. How would you translate that idea into contemporary terms?

BD: The problem is that all too easily you can think of the spiritual as the opposite of the material. But in authentic Christianity, the material is completely integrated with the spiritual. The essence of Christianity is incarnation. Spiritual is not opposed



to material, but to the unspiritual. It's better to speak of alive and dead. Spirit, "breath," means life. The unspiritual or "the flesh," as the New Testament puts it, does not mean the material, the bodily. Flesh stands for that which is dead and in the process of decay. So it's best to think of death not in the sense of negating life, denying life. Life-affirming and life-denying are what spiritual and unspiritual mean. So from that viewpoint, there is a struggle for more and more spirituality, but this spirituality does not deny the world and material things, but expresses itself in more and more beautiful transformation of the material world. Now and then you see a place where every roof tile and every door knob speaks of spirituality, and it reminds you that material things can be completely transformed.

JL: I asked you earlier if a spiritual life demanded a special way of life, and in the light of the distinctions that you've made, I'm beginning to think that what it actually comes down to concretely is how you spend your day. Of course, monks spend their day differently than people who drive trucks or work in offices and so on. How do you spend your day? And what principles that the monastic life has taught you might apply to people who live in the "ordinary world"?

BD: One doesn't go to the monastery to lead a different kind of life from the rest of people. The challenge of living according to certain principles is the same for everyone, and we all need to lead a special kind of life if we want to come truly alive. The monastic day starts with getting up earlier than most of would like to get up. So the struggle is right there at the start.

JL: Do you get up earlier because it is difficult, or because it's good to be up when the sun comes up?

BD: You never do anything, theoretically or ideally, just because it's more difficult. You do it in spite of it's being difficult, but for a good reason. The reason for getting up early is that these early morning hours provide a setting, a quiet, a silence that never comes again later in the day; there is something special going on in those early hours. And you're also there for the sunrise, dawn, which is very important: you celebrate the dawning of each new day. But it's a struggle to get up and to remain alert.

Then during the day, there are several times for prayer and times when we get together to celebrate important points in the day—high noon, sunset, night prayers at the end of the day. The rest of the time is spent studying or in manual labor. Manual labor is significant and everybody in the monastery takes part in it, including the

abbot. It's simply a part of life. It keeps you humble, down to earth (*humus*—the word that also gives us humor and human). Essentially, then, monastic life is dedicated to prayer, manual labor, and study.

JL: How much of this regimen can you take with you when you travel?

BD: It's very difficult, and that's why monks don't usually travel. The kind of prayer that I find most helpful, in place of the divine office that is chanted seven times a day in the monastery, is the prayer of the heart from the Eastern Christian tradition, which involves a kind of mantric repetition of the name of Jesus. But I try to restrict my travel, because it's so hard to take much of the monastery with you, although it's fine if I can stay in another monastery, such as Zen or Camaldolese [one of the Benedictine orders in the Roman Catholic church with a monastery in southern California].

JL: And how would you suggest that the values of that sort of structure be translated to people who live their whole lives in the situation you find yourself in when you're not in the monastery?

BD: There's no point in just imitating the externals. What one should and can take out of the monastic life is its very essence, and that is the grateful approach to life moment by moment, being grateful in everything you do. That means, for instance, an alertness to the character of every moment as a given moment, a gift. Every moment demands a response, and the basic Christian response is trust in the giver.

JL: But you can't have awareness just by wanting it, can you? There are people here at the Zen Center who have spent years and years of their lives trying to be more awake.

BD: That's true. But there are degrees of wakefulness. And people who have practiced for years and years may not realize that they have made great steps toward greater wakefulness. The difficulty in speaking about wakefulness is that when you are asleep you can't just wake yourself up. But if you focus on thankfulness, it is easier, since being grateful is within your power. If you do it again and again, you remind yourself that every moment is a given moment. Gratefulness is an experience that everyone has, and seems very natural when cultivated. Actually, it is emphasized more explicitly in Buddhist monasteries, where there are so many formal bows. It is a form of teaching us to receive everything—a cup of tea, another person—with gratitude.

JL: So this rhythm of gift and response is a spiritual practice, or at least a way that anybody can practice in any circumstances.

BD: Yes, and I don't think spiritual practice is too grandiose a term for it. If you really explore its larger implications, it is at the core of every spiritual practice, although it may be expressed in quite different ways.

JL: What is the importance of the dialogue between Christianity and Zen?

BD: These are traditions that seem to me to have a lot of future and that complement one another well. And what really interested me in Buddhist-Christian dialogue was the monastic dimension. I wanted to know in what sense Buddhists are monks like I am. And ultimately I've come to see that the monastic life isn't something that is especially connected to Buddhism or to Christianity, but is related to one's frame of mind, one's own inner bent.

JL: So it's an essential human vocation or option; in any culture or society there are going to be people who want to live this way?

BD: Right, and you could even think of it as an externalization of a dimension that is in every human being and is sometimes very strong in people who do not externalize it because of their life circumstances.

JL: You spoke about our always becoming and never reaching the end. What is it that one is supposed to become? What's the struggle for?

BD: As the Christian tradition sees it, each one of us is a unique word that is spoken, or a unique way of saying the one eternal Word of God. Each one of us is a word, and we become the word that we are by our response to all the other words around

us, human or otherwise. Thus we become the word that we are meant to be. If the word is in the process of being spoken, you can never really say it's finished. In a certain sense, the word is completed with my death, when all that I have made of my life is rounded off. But even then, the Cappadocian Fathers in the early church taught that heaven is not a static state, but a dynamic experience of moving deeper and deeper into the ultimate, and the ultimate can never be completely discovered.

JL: If you're playing tennis, I suppose that one person eventually wins in the end, but the joy of playing is not just getting to the end.

BD: That's a good point. The spiritual struggle is like learning to play tennis, with the muscle pain, the awkwardness, the frustration, and so on at the beginning. The element of playing is very important in spirituality, because otherwise you begin to wonder what all this struggling is for. The goal is partly the enjoyment; it doesn't come later, but within the very process of the struggle.

JL: What about the people who aren't even playing the game?

BD: I tend to be very trusting and to believe that even in people in whom we least see it, deep down there is that aliveness, that longing, that struggle, and it's just well covered over. My world view is not that there are a few people who really struggle and that the masses haven't awakened to their real calling. My view is that in some the process is more obvious and in others the process is more hidden. And that is a common view in monastic traditions, East and West. Both have stories of the spiritual master who is very accomplished and is having trouble finding a teacher of his own. And he is directed, in a dream or a vision or in some other way, to someone who is more advanced than he is, but is the last person you would have expected. In Buddhism it's a butcher for example, someone way down the spiritual line, whom you'd expect to have no spiritual consciousness at all. And in the Christian tradition it's often a merchant with a big family and no time to pray, just buying and selling all day. And all of a sudden the searching teacher discovers this is it, this is the one.

And the most urgent spiritual task today is one being waged by just such "ordinary people"—the struggle against nuclear arms, the struggle for peace, which means harmony among all things.

JL: What do you regard as your special vocation?

BD: Strangely enough, I really joined the monastery to spend the rest of my life there, and I am perfectly happy to stay there without going out at all. But I do accept invitations to speak or participate in events when there are not that many people available who are interested and experienced in an area, such as the Buddhist-Christian dialogue. And these days I'm more and more involved in working with people who are quite alienated from the Christian tradition, even though many of them were raised as Christians. I very much enjoy, for instance, workshops with New Age people, many of whom come out of a Christian background but have been away from it for a long time and are now ready to give Christianity a new look. They have a real need and longing to be reconciled with their roots. Much has to be thrown out and forgotten for good, but there also is a lot in the Christian tradition, if you grew up in it, that cannot readily be replaced by anything else. So you have to come to terms with it. Essentially, my vocation is simply to be a monk, but part of that is this sort of healing mission that not too many others are involved in.

JL: So your vocation is to live the Christian monastic life, and then to communicate what you discover in it?

BD: Really the latter part is more a matter of exposing myself to other people who have the monk within them, and haven't discovered it. One doesn't need to say much; it seems to be a help to find a monk who can be a catalyst for the monastic bent of mind that is in all of us.

War In Heaven

by Paul Jordan-Smith

What is the origin of struggle? Is it a mistake of the gods, or a necessary part of life? The Babylonian epic, *Enuma elish*, one of the most ancient Creation myths, begins:

When on high the heaven had not been named,
Firm ground below had not been called by name,
Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter,
And Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all,
Their waters commingling as a single body;
No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared,
When no gods whatever had been brought into being,
Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined—
Then it was that the gods were formed within them.[1]

Out of the void are brought forth the generations of the gods, including Anu, the sky-god and Ea, the god of earth and water. The story goes on to relate how the cavorting of the younger gods disturbs Apsu (the Abyss) and Tiamat, the monstrous primordial mother goddess. The older gods decide to destroy the younger, but Ea, learning of the plot, drenches Apsu with sleep, slays him, and proclaims himself supreme. He and his wife Damkina subsequently beget a son, Marduk, who takes up the cause of the younger gods when Tiamat is roused to avenge Apsu's death.

Tiamat produces eleven monsters,

Sharp of tooth, unsparing of fang
With venom for blood she had filled their bodies.

Chief of these is Kingu, to whom she gives the Tablets of Fate. The younger gods are all afraid to join the brood of Tiamat in battle, except for Marduk, who fills his body with battle-rage and stations the four winds as a net so that Tiamat might not escape. Then he goes forth to do battle.

After hurling various insulting challenges against one another,

Then joined issue Tiamat and Marduk, wisest of gods,
They swayed in single combat, locked in battle.
The lord spread out his net to enfold her,
The Evil Wind, which followed behind, he let loose in her face.
When Tiamat opened her mouth to consume him,
He drove in the Evil Wind that she close not her lips.
As the fierce winds charged her belly,
Her body was distended and her mouth was wide open.
He released the arrow, it tore her belly,
It cut through her insides, splitting the heart.
Having thus subdued her, he extinguished her life.

With Tiamat destroyed, her venomous brood were quickly subdued. Marduk then split her body in two, setting half up as the sky, and the other half as the earth. Then he established order in the heavens and conceived of a new creation:

Blood I will mass and cause bones to be.
I will establish a savage, "man" shall be his name.
Verily, savage-man I will create.
He shall be charged with the service of the gods
that they might be at ease!

The creation of man is accomplished by Ea, who fashions the new creature out of the blood of Kingu, the chief of Tiamat's demons.

So, it might be supposed, war in heaven came to an end. And so it did, so far as the cosmological aspect of the myth is concerned. Man—savage man—however was formed from the blood of a demon, and if the heavens were set in order, on earth the battle raged on, recapitulated annually in rites of the New Year, in which a period of ritual chaos culminated in the recitation of the *Enuma elish* and the re-establishment of order in the Kingdom.[2]

A similar polarity is present also in the Norse myths. To Gangleri's questions, "What was the origin of all things? How did they begin? What existed before?" the High One tells him that in the beginning, nothing existed except the Ginnungagap, or

Open Void. Then Just-as-High, the second of the three mysterious Kings in Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, tells him that before the earth was created, Niflheim was made, a northern land of mist and fog. The third king (called simply Third) tells him that actually the first world to exist was Muspellheim in the south, a land of fire guarded by Sart, who has a flaming sword and who, at the end of the world "will come and harry and will vanquish all the gods and burn the whole world with fire."[3] Gangleri asks about how man came into being, and is told of how the mists of Niflheim and the sparks out of Muspell mingled in the mildness of Ginnungagap and precipitated life in the drops of running fluid that rained into the Void. The first living creature was the frost-giant Ymir, who was suckled by a cow called Audhumla. The cow licked the salty ice-blocks in the Void, and out of the ice was released Buri, who had a son and daughter, Bor and Bestla. These were the parents of the first gods, Odin, Vili and Ve. As in the Babylonian myth, these younger gods then killed the older, the giant Ymir, and from his various parts fashioned the universe. They set sparks from Muspell in the heavens as stars and planets, and built earth—Midgard—out of Ymir's eyebrows. Then,

> When they were going along the sea-shore, the sons of Bor found three trees and they picked these up and created men from them. The first gave them spirit and life; the second, understanding and power of movement; the third, form, speech, hearing and sight. They gave them clothes and names. The man was called Ask and the woman Embla; and from them have sprung the races of men who were given Midgard to live in.

In the Greek cosmogonic myth, as in the Popol Vuh, man does not appear as a direct result of the War in Heaven. The struggle between Gaia (Earth) and her oppressive husband Ouranus (Sky) of the pre-Olympian pantheon is resolved by their son Cronus, a trickster-god, who castrates his father and assumes the throne of heaven. Cronus in turn becomes oppressive, devouring each of his offspring by the Titan Rhea as soon as they are born, because it had been foretold that he was destined to be supplanted by one of his own children. Rhea appeals to Gaia and Ouranos, who counsel her to hide her next child and substitute a stone in its place. The rescued child was Zeus. The battle between the children of Cronus, under Zeus, and the Titans (the offspring of Gaia and Ouranos, and their generations) is recounted by Hesiod in his *Theogony*. It is only after the battle, and the subsequent establishment of the Olympians—Hesiod's fourth generation of gods—that man was created. While there was a basic agreement among the Greeks as to the genesis of the Olympian gods, the story of man's creation had as many variants as there were islands in the Aegean sea, but the stories do not, in any case, relate man to the war between the Titans and the Olympian Gods.

Likewise, in the Popol Vuh, the struggle between Hunter and Jaguar and the Lords of Xibalba occurs before the creation of man. The opposition between the twin heroes, who dwell on the earth, and the lords of the underworld is heightened throughout the story of their struggle by a number of motifs and anecdotes which stress the joyous, life-giving qualities of the heroes, and the grim and deadly aspects of Xibalba. Hunter and Jaguar are in fact the descendants of One-Hunter and Seven-Hunter, who perished in an earlier skirmish, but who miraculously impregnate Xquic, a daughter of one of the Lords of Xibalba, after their death. Thus, the later heroes are the sons of both the lords of life and those of death. The struggle is depicted as an alternation of ball-playing and enduring various houses of doom. The final contest tells how Hunter and Jaguar are killed only to come back to life and demonstrate their invulnerability by putting various creatures to death—including themselves—and resuscitating them. The Lords of Xibalba demand that they too be slain and revived, and the heroes comply—with the first half of the request. Thus the lords of death are vanquished by the lords of life;

one is reminded of the words of the Russian liturgy: "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tomb bestowing life." But though the Lords of Xibalba are vanquished, Xibalba itself remains. The people of Xibalba are lowered in rank; no decent person will consort with them.

> The sinners, the evil ones, the sad ones, the unfortunate ones, those who give themselves up to vice, these are the ones who will welcome you.[4]

The polarity of the two realms remains; and man, it seems, must live his life somewhere in between.

From these and other creation myths two ideas emerge which define the process of creation itself. The first is that the One becomes manifold: out of Tao come the Ten Thousand Things. Gods generate gods, which create the cosmos, earth, all things living and inert, and man: the great chain of being, extending from the Supreme Lord of All to the meanest of His creatures: As Pope described it:

> Vast chain of being: which from God began,
> Natures aethereal, human, angel, man,
> Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
> No glass can reach; from Infinite to Thee.
> From Thee to nothing . . .

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Atman is depicted at first as existing alone, and being alone, he was afraid. Atman split himself in two parts, from which came man and woman, who produced the race of men. Through a subsequent series of transformations, the woman fled, changing herself first into a cow. The man pursued, as a bull, from the union of which came cattle. "She became a mare, he a stallion. She became a female ass, he a male ass," and so on, creating all living things in turn; from goats and sheep "even down to ants."[5]

The second idea which appears in the myths of origin is that of a primordial *opposition* of the forces of creation and destruction. To the plenitude of creation is opposed the devouring forces of destruction, reducing creation as continuously as it comes into being: war in heaven. Marduk vanquishes Tiamat, Cronus his father Ouranos, only to be deposed by his son Zeus, Hunter and Jaguar play deadly games with the Lords of Xibalba. All these conflicts appear in a sense the result of unlaw-

ful attempts by usurpers to wrest the lordship of the universe from the older gods; yet creation itself appears in most of these myths as an inevitable outcome of the struggle between two forces in a fundamental opposition. What is more lawful than the inevitable? The Zoroastrian conception of a dualistic creation is one of the most explicit expositions of the lawfulness of this opposition. The *Greater Bundahishn* relates how Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda) became Lord only after the act of creation, and how he saw that the aggression of Ahriman, The Destructive Spirit, would never cease. The two creations—those of Ohrmazd and of Ahriman—would be perpetually deadlocked as long as the aggression of Ahriman could not be neutralized.

> And by his clear vision Ohrmazd saw . . . that creation could not move on except through Time and that when Time was fashioned, the creation of Ahriman too would begin to move. And that he might reduce the Aggressor to a state of powerlessness, having no alternative he fashioned forth Time. And the reason was this, that the Destructive Spirit could not be made powerless unless he were brought to battle.[6]

Out of eternity—infinite Time—Ohrmazd then fashions finite Time, called "Time of the long Dominion" because by its discontinuity the creation of Ohrmazd is perpetuated. So long as only eternal Time existed, the two forces would not move. This suggests that the cyclical nature of Time—its measurability in human experience—is the means by which the created universe is maintained, and not only maintained perhaps, but made to grow, to evolve. This kind of time, the manifestation of which on earth appears both as a blessing and as a curse, is the dynamic behind the movement of creation, a kind of cosmic dialectic whose very discontinuity assures the continuity of all that exists.

What creation myths depict on a cosmic scale is recapitulated in most of the heroic legends of quest. The struggle of the hero with Minotaurs, dragons, sorcerers, and evil kings is the counterpart, on the human plane, of the confrontation between the Creator and the Destroyer, between the giver of life and the bringer of death. The sojourn in the land of Koschei the Deathless, to Tir-na-n'Og, Dilmun, the timeless land, the Island of the Blessed, demonstrate the rewards and dangers that fall to the hero who ventures into "Time out of Time." In certain tales—for instance, those of Gilgamesh, Orpheus, Inanna, Beowulf, Jason, and Theseus—one finds explicit references to the primordial opposition, and clues to the struggle in man which give meaning to his life in the larger sense, and indicate his place in the creation.

In the stories of Theseus, Beowulf, and Jason, the quest culminates in the struggle with a devouring monster. Theseus goes to Knossos to do battle with the Minotaur, to whom an annual sacrifice was made in the form of youths whom the monster devoured. Likewise Beowulf engages the monster Grendel, whose depredations have nightly brought about the deaths of the men of Heorot. Beowulf mortally wounds the monster, and later ventures into an underwater cave to destroy its mother. In quest of the Golden Fleece, Jason and the Argonauts sail to Aia, where the hero literally goes into the jaws of a dragon guard-

ing the fleece, to emerge victorious. In each of these familiar tales, the hero descends, as it were, into hell, crossing the forbidden threshold to the Land of No Return.

In the Central Asian epic of Alpamysh, particularly in the most archaic version of the Altaic peoples, the land of the bride

> lies at the end of the world ("where earth and sky meet"), from whence there is no return ("no traces lead back"). This country resembles the mythological Underworld. The way lies across a wide river which "cannot be flown over on a winged horse or crossed in a seven-oar boat." The hero is conveyed to the other side by an old ferryman in a bark coracle which is "high as a cliff" and so long that "one cannot ride from one end of it to the other in a whole day."[7]

The failures of Orpheus to bring back Eurydice, and of Izunagi to bring back Izunami from the land of the dead, show that even for the hero, success is not guaranteed. And lest it be thought that women are exempt from such perilous undertakings, one needs only to point to the most ancient prototype of the Orphic myth, the story of Inanna's Descent to the Nether world, seeking her faithless husband/lover Dumuzi. Inanna is put through an explicit ritual of mortification (in both senses of the word), stripped of her royal robes and jewels, and hung up on a stake to die. Her subsequent resurrection and return represents not so much a victory over her sister, Ereshkigal, ruler of the Netherworld, as the reward for an unyielding endurance.

In each of these stories, there is a fundamental opposition of the "two worlds of life and death," and in each, the hero is the one who brings about a relation between them, who crosses the threshold, passes through the Symplegades, ventures into the Labyrinth, descends into hell, in short, risks everything for the sake of the heroic struggle or quest. This is a theme which repeats itself again and again in myth and folktale; the multifarious progress of the heroic quest has been admirably delineated in Joseph Campbell's *Hero With A Thousand Faces*, and in the works of Mircea Eliade and Paul Ricoeur. In response to the call to adventure, the hero goes forth, encounters adversity and help, at last arrives in the Land of No Return from which, after enduring the ultimate test of his heroic will, he nevertheless returns, to emerge as king, redeemer, or saint.

But what do these struggles signify in the life of man, particularly since we are assured of our ultimate conquest—in this world at least—by death? If life is "time's fool," in Hotspur's dying words in *Henry IV*, "and time, that takes survey of all the world, must have a stop," how can even the active struggles of the hero, let alone the passive capitulation of ordinary mortals, have any meaning? Have the sufferings of the hero any more significance than the mundane irritations and adversities of those who refuse the call to adventure, or hear it not at all?

This question arises whenever we juxtapose the mythical accounts of creation and heroic quest with our experience of life. Whether one hears a call or not, we recognize at the very least the possibility that behind the "alarums and excursions" of life there might be more substance than we wish to acknowledge: that there might, in fact, be a question asked of us, to which a response is demanded, if not an answer. Because myths dramatize—and thus render more immediate—the immensity of the cosmic scheme, we see at once that mortal existence is imbued with meaning only to the degree to which it stands in relationship with a larger reality, of which it is but a part at the same time that it is a complete reflection.

That the significance of man's life cannot be evaluated on its own plane is a fundamental principle behind all religions, and is the rationale for every eschatological speculation. On the face of it, man's world is a closed one, a microcosm bounded by birth and death. If the life of man has any significance, it can only be found by reference to a scale larger than its own. What myths of creation indicate is that there was a Past, a time before the creation of man, and that there must also be a time after, a Future.

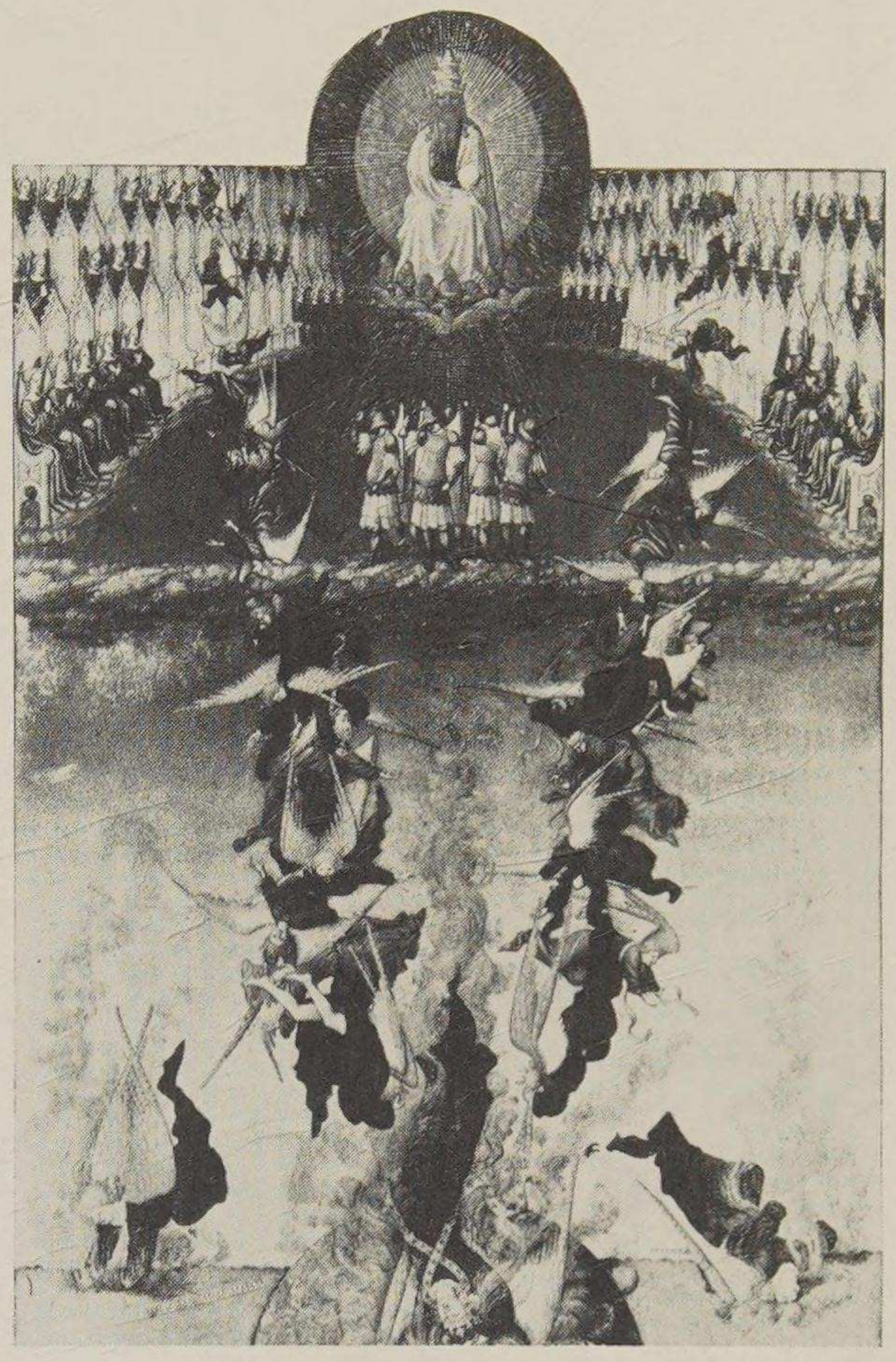
Man is quintessentially a creature that stands between, as indicated by his unique position with reference to the forces of creation and destruction, by his position in the chain of being, and by the temporality of his existence, between Past and Future. The presence or absence of a specific eschatology in any particular world view does not alter the fact that the world of man is very much smaller than the Whole. Even the most rigorous science, which attempts to exclude from itself all questions about significance, cannot escape from the fact that man's world is not coextensive with the Universe; this is a psychological no less than a biological and a physical reality. Indeed, a science which pretends to completeness frustrates itself by its own unanswered and demonstrably unanswerable questions, which by its own self-definition, it must nevertheless entertain. Behind all questions, religious or scientific, there remains the one Question: What is the place of man in the Universe? What is his role? Why are we here?

It is this question which is indirectly addressed in the *Ramayana*, particularly in the version encapsulated in "The Book of the Forest" of the *Mahābhārata*. The generations of the Hindu pantheon are far too intricate to summarize here, so it must suffice to say that besides the gods there was a race of demons—the Rākshasas—the chief of whom was Rāvana, grandson of "The God Prajāpati himself, the Self-existent, the ascetic lord creator of all the worlds."[8] Rāvana, a ten-headed demon unequaled on earth in strength, his brother Kumbhakarna, and his cousins undergo various austerities and mortifications for a thousand years, thus meriting the attention of Brahmā, who grants a boon to each, immortality being the only boon withheld.

Rāvana said:

May I never suffer defeat at the hands of Gandharvas, Gods, Asuras, Snakes, Kimnaras, and Ghosts!

Brahmā said:



You shall be in no danger from those you have mentioned, except from man. Hail to thee, I have so ordained!

Mārkandega said:

At these words Ten-headed Rāvana was satisfied, for the foolish man-eater despised humans.[8]

Subsequently, Rāvana wages war on the Gods and brings terror to them. With Agni (Fire) at their head, the gods seek shelter with Brahmā. They are told that Rāvana cannot be defeated by Gods and Asuras. Nevertheless, it has been ordained what must be done to subdue him, and Vishnu, the maintainer, has descended to earth at the behest of Brahmā, to accomplish this. Vishnu is incarnated in the person of Rāma, the eldest son of King Dasharatha. The remainder of the story of Rāma concerns his battle with Rāvana and the events that lead up to it. When at last they face each other on the battle-field, Rāvana looses all his rage and hurls weapon after weapon against Rāma, to no avail. Then

Rāma shot off the boundlessly powerful and dread arrow, which was to spell the death of

Rāvana, like the upraised staff of Brahmā. Enveloped in fiercely blazing fire, it set the chief of the Rākshasas afire with chariot, horses, and charioteer. And the Gods, Gandharvas and Cāranas rejoiced, seeing Rāvana killed by Rāma of unsullied deeds. The fine elements departed from the lordly Rāvana, for he toppled in all worlds by the power of the Brahmā spell.

So, by the grace of God, man, embodied in Rāma, is victorious. It is only a temporary victory, of course, one skirmish in the eternal battle between the gods and demons, but by this small victory Rāma is recognized as the rightful heir, and ascends to the place prepared for him before his birth. For the conquest of these monsters—or at least endurance against them, which represents perhaps the only true victory on the ontological plane—is to become master of time: not eternity, for that is timelessness, but Time of the Long Dominion. For man, the duration of life is the ultimate measure, on the earthly plane, of all time, and death is the force of destruction against which he must fight. Yet death closes all: no hero escapes death altogether. Jason, Theseus, and Beowulf all had their ends; so also Alpamysh and Orpheus. Inanna, a goddess, returned from the dead, though not without help from her faithful servant: but then, she is a goddess. But even the gods, in some mythologies, will have their day: at Ragnarök, the sons of Muspell will come riding out of the south, the bridge Bifrost breaking behind them, bringing about the destruction of all things. Even Odin will not survive, according to Snorri Sturluson, for the wolf Fenrir will swallow him.

Immediately afterwards, however, Vidar will stride forward and place one foot on the lower jaw of the wolf. On this foot he will

be wearing the shoe which has been in the making since the beginning of time; it consists of the strips of leather men pare off at the toes and heels of their shoes, and for this reason people who want to help the AEsir must throw away these strips. Vidar will take the wolf's upper jaw in one hand and tear his throat asunder and that will be the wolf's death.

Even so, say Snorri's three mysterious kings, there will be a new world, new gods, even a new race of men after Ragnarök. In the Hindu vision, even the very end of the Kali Yuga is not the absolute end, for again Brahmā will breathe out a new creation; Vishnu, asleep on the cosmic ocean, will dream a new dream and all will begin again.

In the face of cosmic cyclicality of such a scope as this, can man do nothing more than throw away the parings of his shoe-leather? It seems a despairing vision indeed, and small wonder perhaps that we have abandoned, in this enlightened day and age, the old stories, and have turned instead towards a universe that is not deocentric, nor heliocentric, or geocentric, but ego-centric. Perhaps it is better not to ask questions about the meaning of existence and man's place in the universe, lest we receive an answer we are not prepared to accept. When Lord Krishna reveals his true nature to the despondent warrior Arjuna, the hero is horrified and confused, for one moment Krishna appears as the creator, and in the next, Arjuna sees the armies of the Pandavi and Kauravi alike rushing into Krishna's all-devouring mouth. When Arjuna asks, "I would know you as you are in the beginning, for what you are set on doing I do not understand," Krishna replies:

> "I am Time, destroyer of worlds, matured—here resolved to swallow up the worlds. Do what you will, all these warriors shall cease to be."[9]

In the face of this soul-searing vision, the despair of life is brought to a head, but the counsel of Krishna is: you are a warrior. Don't turn from battle—fight! It is in essence the same counsel given Gilgamesh by Utnapishtim, and it differs radically from all the advice so quickly given the hero by others along the way. For what the Scorpion-men, the ale-wife Siduri, the ferryman Urshanabi, even his tutelary deity, Shamash, have all advised him is: give up your quest; "the life you seek you will never find." Instead, Utnapishtim—the ancient of days whose very existence belies the counsels of the others—tells Gilgamesh of his own trials, "a tale of the days before the Flood." Then he puts the hero to a further test: to prevail against sleep, "the picture of death," for the same span of time that he himself prevailed against the Flood and the wrath of the storm-god Enlil. Even after his failure, the hero receives a boon: the plant which will at least give youth in old age; and this is won through yet another test of endurance at the bottom of the sea.

Without a doubt, however, Gilgamesh is the prototype of the hero alive in Everyman despite his failures, struggling against the one invincible adversary, time, to achieve in himself something permanent, enduring—capable, perhaps, of living its own life, meeting its own struggles, after this one has come to an end. The hero is he, then, who has learned to wage perpetual war in himself against the forces of destruction, who has become a microcosm, a world unto himself.

> Now this Self, verily, is a world of all created things. Insofar as a man makes offerings and sacrifices, he becomes the world of the gods. Insofar as he learns, he becomes the world of the seers. Insofar as he offers libations to the fathers and desires offspring, he becomes the world of the fathers. Insofar as he gives lodging and food to men, he becomes the world of men. Insofar as he finds grass and water for animals, he becomes the world of animals. Insofar as beasts and birds, even to the ants, find a living in his houses, he becomes their world. Verily, as one would desire security for his own world, so all creatures wish security for him who has this knowledge.

In this light, the "call to adventure" with which the heroic quest begins, is also a call

to accept responsibility for creation. And it is plain that the boons granted to the hero are responsibilities as much as they are rewards. Kingship, wealth, the hand of the king's own daughter, represent on one level the material gains achievable in a material world, but no King, man of property, or husband (or wife), would deny the burden of his change of station. The threshold crossed after the endurance of great hardship implies a new role for the hero, of which the symbol *par excellence* is kingship. An Assyrian proverb has it, "Man is the shadow of the gods, and men are the shadow of Man; Man is the king, who is like a mirror of the god." Kingship is dominion: to be lord of one's world, to take it into one's care. The hero's world is broken—from within by treachery or disobedience, or from without by assault. After encountering adversity, and receiving help from a dwarf or a magical horse, the hero vanquishes the villain and claims the princess as his bride. But his troubles are not yet over, for an impostor attempts to take his place, or the remaining forces of villainy pursue him to the ends of the earth and back again. At last, the hero-deed is accomplished, the marriage and the kingship are secured, the hero returns triumphant. But it is not the same world which he left so long ago to which he now returns. The old order has been overthrown, and a new order must be established. The small world of the proto-hero is larger, beset with many more responsibilities, which, however, the hero is now prepared to meet. What was scattered to the winds must be brought back into the new dominion, and in the words of the song, "Everything old is new again."

But what is this? If the Act of Creation was an outpouring of plenitude, a making many out of one, does not this new movement of ingathering run counter to that of creation? Yet it is not an act of destruction either: for the action of Time, the destroyer of worlds, is annihilation, a making of nothing out of the plenitude poured forth into the void from above. Man, standing as always between life and death, is called to do more than simply hold these two forces apart from one another; the call to the hero is to bring them into relation with one another, and by so doing accomplish a re-creation, a replenishing of the plenitude. It is an act of renewal, rejuvenation, of regeneration of that which time continually seeks to annihilate. The gift of eternal life was denied Gilgamesh, but not that of renewal. That he lost the second gift was his own fault; it does not mean that others, no more intrepid, but certainly more watchful, cannot achieve this boon.

The action of the hero, his struggle against the forces of destruction, is uniquely human. No other creature is capable of this upward movement, of a reciprocal feeding of the gods. The two forces move in man, fashioned by the creator from the blood of a destroyer, or sprung from dragon's teeth sown by an ancestral being upon the oracular advice from above, or growing as trees out of the remains of the primordial frost-giant. The animals are part of the rest of creation, and this account from the Popul Vuh reveals that they cannot give the gods what they need:

> "Speak, cry, warble, call, speak each one according to your variety, each, according to your kind." So it was said to the deer, the birds, pumas, jaguars, and serpents. "Speak, then, our names, praise us, your mother, your father. Invoke then, Huracan, Chipi-Caculha, Raxa-Caculha, the Heart of Heaven, the Heart of Earth, the Creator, the Maker, the Forefathers; speak, invoke us, adore us," they were told.
>
> But they could not make them speak like men; they only hissed and screamed and cackled; they were unable to make words, and each screamed in a different way.

And so man was created, after several attempts. The mud men were no good, for although they spoke, they had no mind, and they quickly melted in the rain. The wooden men stood up well, and spoke and populated the earth, but they had no souls and they quickly ceased to care for their creator, and even for creation itself: they beat their dogs and burned the bottoms

of their cooking pots. They too were destroyed in a great flood. The third creation brought about mankind,

> and immediately they began to see all that was in the world. Then they gave thanks to the Creator and the Maker.

But these new creatures were able to know all, to see all, and the Creator and the Maker thought this might not be such a good thing. Men they were, but suppose they desired to become gods? Moreover, the dawn would come and the sun arise only if these new men reproduced and multiplied, imbuing the barren earth with the plenitude of the Creator. What if, knowing all, they decided not to do this? So, measures had to be taken to correct this new creation:

> Then the Heart of Heaven blew mist into their eyes, which clouded their sight as when a mirror is breathed upon. Their eyes were covered and they could see only what was close, only that was clear to them.

If man, then, is a microcosm, and the events of the Great Above are re-enacted in him, the same forces oppose each other in him as in heaven. But the movement of man's life is not the same as that of gods, or that of beasts. The gods need something unique which only man can give. But what is that? And how to find it? This is the true object of the heroic quest. One might say that the task of the hero is simply to be heroic, or to become heroic if he is not already so. It is not any particular deed or accomplishment that delineates him (or her) as heroic, but a special quality which is discernible in the account of his struggles and his quest. This is the quality of endurance, of persistence in the face of adversity, of an unremitting will to maintain his mediary role between the forces of Creation and Destruction. It is by remaining "in the middle," between the two worlds of life and death, in that place uniquely man's, that the hero brings into being a force necessary for the maintenance of all creation; and it is that force which feeds the gods. The outcome of the hero's struggles and hardships, on the personal plane, is of less importance than the fact that he struggles, that he remains in his place, for his failures do not make him any the less heroic, nor do his successes and rewards end his responsibility but rather increase it. The call to adventure may be said to be synonymous with the call to become fully human, and it is Everyman's, no less than the hero's, responsibility—in the words of Tennyson's Ulysses—"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

NOTES

[1] "Enuma elish," trans. by E.A. Speiser. Selection quoted by Mircea Eliade, *From Primitives to Zen, A Thematic Sourcebook of the History of Religions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

[2] See Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (Cleveland: New American Library, 1963); also Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

[3] Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 32.

[4] *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiché Maya*. English version by Delia Goetz and Sylvanus G. Morley from the translation of Adrián Recinos. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977).

[5] *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, trans. by Robert Ernest Hume, 2d. Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[6] *Greater Bundahishn*, I, 20–21, trans. by R.C. Zaehner; quoted in Eliade, *From Primitives to Zen*.

[7] Nora K. Chadwick and Victor Zhirmunsky, *Oral Epics of Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

[8] *The Mahābhārata*, trans. and edited by J.A.B. van Buitenen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), Vol. II.

[9] Bhagavad-Gita, XI, 32.

Kurosawa's Warriors

By Ruth McCormick

Retrospective of the Films of Akira Kurosawa
Japan House, 333 E. 47th Street, New York City, October 9–December 20, 1981.

A Book of Five Rings, subtitled "The Classic Guide to Strategy," was written by Miyamoto Musashi, a seventeenth-century samurai warrior who was the most celebrated fencing master of his time and one of Japan's best-loved popular heroes. Innumerable films have been made about him, and a novelized version of his early life, *Musashi*, written in the nineteenth century, is now available in this country. His own small book describes proper strategy in hand-to-hand combat, and more important, a philosophy of life influenced by Zen and eminently suited to the needs of a professional soldier. In the beginning, he notes:

> It is said that the warrior's is the twofold Way of pen and sword, and he should have a taste for both Ways. Even if a man has no natural ability he can be a warrior by sticking assiduously to both divisions of the Way. Generally speaking, the Way of the warrior is resolute acceptance of death.

In concluding, he sums up the spiritual dimension of the samurai's Way:

> To attain the Way of strategy as a warrior you must study fully other martial arts and not deviate even a little from the Way of the warrior. . . . Polish the twofold spirit, heart and mind, and sharpen the twofold gaze, perception and sight. When your spirit is not the least clouded, when the clouds of bewilderment clear way, there is the true void. . . . In the void is virtue, and no evil. Wisdom has existence, principle has existence, the Way has existence, spirit is nothingness.

Musashi's book was written during a period when wars were still possible, and his advice is meant for men to whom active combat was a way of life. Originally the samurai were the illegitimate sons of the Imperial family and the court nobility, who were trained in martial arts and sent into the countryside to "keep the peace." Over the centuries they intermarried with commoners and became a powerful caste unto themselves; the various clans were at constant war with one another and eventually supplanted the aristocracy as the real rulers of Japan. The Shogun, or Lord Protector, was the leader of the samurai class, and as such was the true ruler, while the Emperor became a shadowy, quasi-religious figure. The code of Bushido (the Way of the warrior) developed over a period that extended from the rise of the samurai class in the tenth century to the consolidation of the country under the rule of a single clan in the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1600.

There seems to be ample evidence, in literary and historical accounts, that samurai could be violent and cruel, ambitious and arrogant, narrow-minded and cloddish, but still, as with the American cowboy and the European knight, it is the ideal that lives on, and this ideal has probably had a more profound impact on Japanese culture than its counterparts have had on Western thinking.

Bushido lacks the emphasis on humility and pity for the weak that is stressed in Christian chivalry, and it is diametrically opposed to the "rugged individualism" of the American hero. The samurai would never consider, as would a Christian knight, sparing a weaker opponent in battle: he must show complete contempt for death, and he assumes a similar attitude on the part of his opponent. Suicide, far from being a sin, is preferable to dishonor of any sort. While Bushido teaches compassion for the poor and physically weak, the attitude

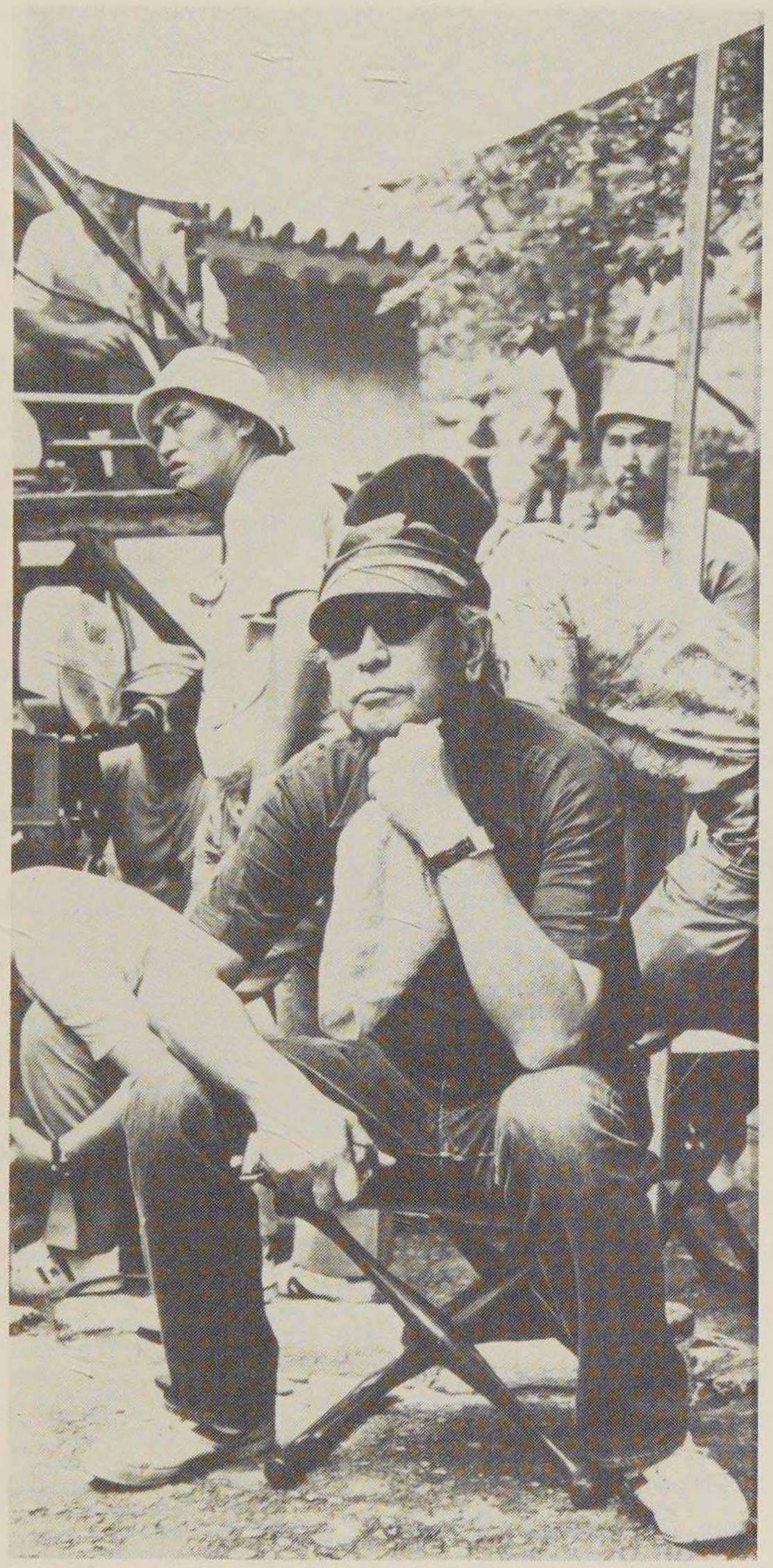
Kurosawa with actress Keiko Tshshima on set of Seven Samurai *(1954).*

arises more out of *noblesse oblige* than any feeling of identification. A warrior is no ordinary man, but one who is, through great effort, karma, or the will of the gods, expected to be impeccable, to transcend ordinary humanity. The reward of a good samurai is not material, but psychological: unlike the Christian knight, the samurai regards pride, self-esteem, and the quest for glory as distinctly positive, not negative, qualities.

Although the samurai is a warrior, he takes pride in his real, or spiritual, descent from the Emperor, and he is, therefore, expected to master poetry, music, the tea ceremony, and good manners. As Musashi points out, the Way of the sword and the Way of the pen are one. Of the many Buddhist sects, Zen was especially popular among the busy warriors of early times because of its stress on intuition and its denial that a thorough study of the scriptures was necessary for salvation. Although certain sects preached an afterlife similar to that of Christianity, and others a reward system based on karmic rebirth, personal survival after death remained an open question, and was seldom dwelt upon: a more certain reward was a moment of enlightenment in a transient life.

There is no Cult of the Lady in Bushido. Because the Imperial Family is said to be descended from the Sun Goddess, there has always been an inherent respect for the strength of women in Japan—there are few pale, fragile heroines in the country's history or myth, and the samurai and their chroniclers seem never to have been under the delusion that women were either weak or stupid. As in most warrior societies, the sexes were usually segregated, but there has always been a small but notable number of exceptional women in Japan who followed the code of Bushido as carefully and as well as any of their men.

Most Westerners know what they know of Japanese culture and history through seeing films, and among those films, none are better known than those of Akira Kuro-



Kurosawa on location for Kagemusha.

sawa, who has probably given many of us our introduction to the samurai. More than any other major Japanese film director, Kurosawa has shown a consistent preoccupation with samurai and their ideals, whether he gives us "real" samurai or the doctors, policemen, bureaucrats, and businessmen who people his films set in modern times. In fact, Kurosawa has been criticized in his own country for his "elitism" and "old-fashioned sentiments." Kurosawa's heroes, whatever their historical or social class, are special people—people who become excellent through acts of will and courage; they become warriors.

This is not at all the case in the hundreds of *jidai geki* (period) films made since the end of World War II by other Japanese directors, few of which have attempted to portray samurai in anything but the most clichéd terms: young heroes of simple origins who become "samurai" by mastering a martial art, usually swordsmanship, and battling against bona fide samurai—lords and vassals who are portrayed as corrupt bureaucrats or bloodthirsty brutes—and, just as in the most simple-minded Western romances, winning the hand of a pretty young woman of more virtue than intelligence—after, of course, buckets of blood have been spilt.

Kurosawa, on the other hand, has tried consistently to probe his country's history and its present and to understand what is positive about the warrior code *per se*. In spite of his own leftist political beliefs and his open acknowledgement of the influence of Western (particularly American) films on his own work, an admiration of and nostalgia for samurai values (courage, selflessness, strength of will, love of beauty, and acceptance of death) infuse almost every film he has made.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in his best film—and certainly the best film ever made about Bushido—*The Seven Samurai*. The film is set during the period of civil wars between samurai clans in the sixteenth century, and the samurai—or at least six of the seven, at any rate—are professional warriors who have become *ronin* because their clans have suffered defeat. Although they are now poor, they are gentlemen by birth and education, and they agree to help a peasant village fight back against marauding bandits not so much for the money, which is minimal, or because they feel any affinity for the peasants, who are, in their eyes, for the most part crude and ignoble, but because it seems to them to be the correct thing to do.

They are organized by Kambei, a small man with the bearing of a Shogun, whom we first see cutting off his topknot, the symbol of his class, in order to convince a madman who has kidnapped a child that he is a priest. The seventh samurai, Kikuchiyo,

is actually a peasant who has stolen a dead samurai's papers. Kambei realizes immediately that Kikuchiyo is an imposter—he is much too uncouth in speech and manners to be a trained warrior—but eventually he accepts the young man because he admires his courage and spirit.

After several bloody skirmishes, the bandits are defeated, but four of the seven warriors lose their lives. In the end, the farmers go back to the fields to continue the work they have always done, and the samurai become superfluous. As Kambei notes, leaving the town with his two surviving comrades, "We lose again." When there are no more battles to be fought, there is no further need for warriors, whereas there must always be people to farm the land. His tone is one of quiet resignation, denoting not only his political insight, but also his spirit of Bushido—his acceptance of the transience of life, of what Musashi would call the void.

In *Sanshiro Sugata*, Kurosawa's first film, an idealistic young man pursues perfection and enlightenment in the art of judo; the following year in *The Most Beautiful*, the director presents a vaguely propagandistic piece about women defense workers during World War II, with a heroine who finds herself through hard and selfless work. Both films are manifestations of a warrior-like search for excellence.

But lest Kurosawa be accused of advocating the feudalistic spirit, he next made *The Men Who Tread on the Tiger's Tail*, which pokes gentle fun at the samurai code by introducing a comic touch into one of the most celebrated tales of chivalry from Noh and Kabuki drama, *The Subscription List*. Three later films also treated samurai with less than classic solemnity: *The Hidden Fortress* is an almost slapstick approach to a samurai adventure tale, though it does feature a young noblewoman who dresses as a boy and shows all the guts of her warrior ancestors; and both *Yojimbo* and *Sanjuro* presents a slovenly, masterless samurai who is—at least on the surface—far from the perfect knight.

In these four films, Kurosawa spoofs the traditional *chambara* (sword film) genre, but rescues what he sees to be the true samurai spirit. A real warrior is contemptuous of outward appearances, laughs at death, excels in martial skills, and does his duty when he must. He helps those weaker than he, not necessarily because he likes or respects them, but because it's the right thing to do under the circumstances.

Non-samurai characters in Kurosawa's films also often behave in the same manner. The heroine in *No Regrets for Our Youth* is a professor's daughter who abandons the comforts of city life for rugged existence on a farm to assist her dead husband's parents. The alcoholic doctor in *Drunken Angel*, exhausted by thankless work in a slum clinic, similarly takes it upon himself to save a young hoodlum from physical and moral disease. Both the widow and the doctor do what they feel is correct, without any hope for material reward—a theme that recurs again and again in later films not specifically about samurai. In one way or another, protagonists sacrifice themselves for the sake of duty to a higher good.

The policeman in *Stray Dog* risks his life to retrieve his stolen gun—just as a samurai would to regain his sword, in order to save face. In *High and Low*, a millionaire sacrifices his entire fortune in order to redeem the son of his chauffeur, who has been kidnapped in his own son's place. In *The Bad Sleep Well*, a young executive throws away a business career to avenge his father's murder, just as in *Scandal* a young artist spends his last yen to clear his good name in a suit against a cheap tabloid newspaper. The bureaucrat in *Ikiru* decides, on learning that he is fatally ill, to risk derision and dismissal from his plum government job—two things unthinkable for the average middle-class Japanese—in order to do something meaningful with the little influence and time he has left.

All of these Kurosawa characters go beyond the demands of traditional morality in order to pursue a higher good, and in the process, become "ennobled." They are no longer ordinary people, but "warriors" in

the sense that Miyamoto would thoroughly endorse. As is pointed out by eighteenth-century Buddhist writer Yamamoto Tsunetono in his *Hagakure*, another book on the samurai code currently available in English translation, the samurai should become "pure and simple . . . wishing heart and soul for one's cause." This spirit need not mean dying for one's lord and clan on a battlefield, but rather, dying to one's self, and thereby, in the Buddhist sense, attaining a higher level of enlightenment. This is a very different concept from the Christian notion of charity; it relies less on pity and compassion than on desire for spiritual perfection. It is more often honor than love, in any Christian sense of the word, that motivates these characters, and they become stronger, if not happier, because of their choices.

Therefore while a valid case can be made for Kurosawa's humanism and his progressive political views, it must be noted that all of his most arresting characters are heroes who transcend the ordinary people around them. It becomes obvious that although the director is a compassionate man, he has never given up the lofty ideals by which he, as a child of the samurai class, was raised. Though his films are full of empathy for the oppressed—the "simple" people—and though his villains are almost all men in positions of authority (the Macbeth figure in *Throne of Blood*, the corrupt merchants in *Yojimbo*, the self-important young samurai in *Sanjuro*, the corporate elite in *The Bad Sleep Well*), it is the "special" people who rise above the crowd and gain our respect and adulation. In this sense, Kurosawa is as much an elitist as Musashi.

Kurosawa's last three films give ample testimony to this particular blend of populism and elitism. In *Dodeskaden*, the director examines the world of the urban subproletariat, without intervention by doctors, policemen, or samurai—a theme he had dealt with earlier in his faithful, and very successful adaptation of Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths*. *Dodeskaden* presents a loosely interwoven group of stories about the inhabitants of a wretched slum, where everyone except a philosophical old artisan has given up any realistic hope of a better existence. Although there are moments of beauty, warmth, and humor, the characters seem oddly abstract, and lack the gutsy realism of similar people in Kurosawa's earlier films—perhaps because there is no heroic figure, and the director had no Gorky to structure his vision of people living without codes or ideals. It is possible that since the characters lacked these ideals, they were never real to Kurosawa himself—that he is, in fact, at a loss when confronted with a world in which enlightenment and honor have become impossibilities.

On the other hand, *Dersu Uzala*, his next film, has at its center a true Kurosawan hero in the person of an intrepid old Mongolian hunter, one of the last of a dying breed of men able to live in total harmony with untamed nature. Dersu becomes a "warrior" in the same sense that Carlos Castaneda's Don Juan is a warrior, without the attendant metaphysics. He is at home in the world of the gods, and can face them without fear. *Dersu Uzala* is also the most Shinto-like of Kurosawa's film: it can be said without hesitation that the Asian Dersu is the custodian of holy secrets that the Russian Arseniev, Kurosawa's surrogate, has, because of "Westernization," forgotten. If Dersu, as Rousseau's "natural man," embodies a populist/humanist concept, Dersu the hunter/shaman is the impeccable warrior *par excellence*, and the film is a nostalgic paean to the beauty of the natural world and the sense of enchantment which modern technology has driven from it.

With *Kagemusha*, his most recent film, Kurosawa turns to the world of the real, historical samurai for the first time in eighteen years. It is set in the era of the warring samurai clans of the sixteenth century. Whereas *Seven Samurai* depicted that world through the eyes of dispossessed *ronin*, *Kagemusha* sees it from the vantage point of the clan leaders who fought for supremacy. It is one of the rare post-war films to treat these warlords (*daimyō*) not only sympathetically, but realistically. The great lords Shingen, Nobunaga, and Ieyasu (whom Americans also know from the *Shogun* series on tele-

vision) become recognizable human beings, rather than historical waxworks.

The story of these historical characters is well-known, but Kurosawa intervenes with another of his heroes, a thief who looks so much like one of the lords that he becomes Shingen's "shadow warrior" double.

When the warlord remarks to his brother Nobukado, who has discovered the thief, that it might be unseemly for such an immoral person to portray him, the thief, who has been silent, comes to sudden life: "You call me a criminal?" he demands of Shingen. "I only steal to stay alive, whereas you've killed hundreds to achieve your ambitions." The great warrior (who was also, history tells us, a Buddhist priest) thinks for a moment, and then admits that this is true—he is a scoundrel. He has killed thousands, including one of his own brothers, and has imprisoned his own father, but all in the hope that he might unify the country and stop the wars once and for all. His tone is humble and matter-of-fact, and he tells his brother that the thief has shown honesty and courage, and might prove useful to the clan. A bond of affinity is established between the two men, and a process of transformation begins which is in substance the same as that in which Kikuchiyo, in *Seven Samurai*, becomes a true warrior under the tutelage of Kambei.

When Shingen is mortally wounded, he counsels the clan to keep his death a secret for three years; he has faith enough in his followers and believes they can still prevail, but knows that it is his name that inspires fear in the enemy. This means that the thief must "become" Shingen twenty-four hours a day; only a small circle of trusted vassals will know that he is not the lord. At first, he refuses, but the "spirit" of Shingen has touched him, and he suddenly relents, tearfully offering his services to the amazed vassals. The imposter is successful, convincing even the lord's two mistresses and small grandson (in each case, after a brief, amusing sequence of doubt) that he is the real thing.

For three years the Takeda clan is victorious, but one day the Kagemusha, who has totally internalized Shingen, decides to ride a horse which no one but the warrior had ever been able to handle. The horse is not fooled, promptly throws him, and the game is over.

Kagemusha is an anti-war film, but it is also, and more so, a dirge for the fallen samurai ideal. It is a profoundly sad film, in the sense that John Ford's *Cheyenne Autumn* is sad; the cavalrymen, the Indians, brave warriors all, are gone from the earth. Kurosawa is a socialist in love with what was best in the samurai. This love is glowingly evident in his portrayal of them. Shingen (and eventually, the thief) is a lion of a man, but shows himself to be gentle, cultured and contemplative. His vassals, especially a doughty old general, are portrayed as strong, tough, graceful, witty and likeable, and, as in *The Seven Samurai*, their sense of camaraderie is inspiring and eventually, heartbreaking. Even Shingen's rivals—the plump, affable future Shogun Ieyasu and the ferocious, witty Nobunaga—are depicted lovingly.

According to Kurosawa in the program notes to *Kagemusha*, his samurai "go toward death as if it were a kind of festival." "I don't wish to give the impression that war is beautiful. That's an extremely dangerous attitude. When I shot the battle scenes, I concentrated on making them as realistic as possible. But out of that horror—weirdly and absolutely involuntarily on my part—a beauty emerged. A terrible beauty." It is obvious that Kurosawa is dedicated to this terrible beauty, which is as evident in the determination of the doomed old man in *Ikiru* as in *Seven Samurai*. Quite the opposite of a reactionary nostalgia for a feudal past, this is the beauty of humanity's best possibilities, combined with a tragic sense of the inevitability of death. It is what Kurosawa has learned from the best of the samurai, and it is his gift to the world.

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Notes on the Cosmic Nanny

By Jonathan Cott

Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane
By P.L. Travers. New York, Delacorte Press, 1982. Pp. 91. $9.95.

> Under cherry trees
> there are
> no strangers.
> —Issa*

"I'm a mere kitchen maid in the house of myth and poetry," P.L. Travers once said. And it was in this house that she discovered (the author dislikes the word "created") one of the most extraordinary characters of twentieth-century literature—the proper, prim, unexplaining, and unexplainable nanny, Mary Poppins.

Appearing as if heaven-sent at the front door of the Banks family's Cherry Tree Lane house (blown in with the wind) and flying home- and heaven-wards in several ascensions (the last in an apotheosis of light), this Oddity, this Misfit, this Great Exception—as Mary Poppins is variously referred to throughout the four volumes that reveal her unsettling activities and uncanny being—is nothing less than a cosmic nanny. Whether she is showing the Banks children the Park inside the Park or the world turned upside down, talking to a dog or a starling, or dancing with the starfish or the sun, Mary Poppins has the character of a functionary incarnated from above, appearing as a kind of combination fairy godmother, guardian angel, shamaness, priestess, witch, and guru who, using every moment as a moment of instruction, teaches us to watch, to wait, to wake up, and to strive to become what we are. As a gnostic text says of Mary Magdalene, "She speaks as a woman who knows the All."

"If you are looking for autobiographical facts," P.L. Travers once said, "*Mary Poppins* and my other books are the story of my life." The author has always expressed an aversion to biography and autobiography ("What porridge John Keats had doesn't matter"). But when we realize that Mary Poppins and P.L. Travers are both, in fact, *servants*, we might begin to see in the above statement a certain truth beyond its seeming willfulness. In any case, the "real" house in which the mythical and poetic Mary Poppins came to light was one that P.L. Travers lived in sometime during the early Thirties when she was convalescing from an illness—a house the author describes briefly in her autobiographical note for *The Junior Book of Authors*:

> The house was a small old thatched manor, mentioned in Doomsday Book, and the Sussex countryside that spread out round it was full of history and legend. But I did not need these to excite in me the atmosphere of fairy tale for I had soaked myself in that all through my childhood and had, as it were, borne it along with me till my grown-up years. I have always thought Mary Poppins came then solely to amuse me and that it was not till a friend saw some of her adventures written down and thought them interesting that she decided to stay long enough for me to put her into a book. I never for one moment believed that I invented her.

*Translated by Lucien Stark and Takashi Ike-moto.

> Perhaps she invented me, and that is why I find it so difficult to write autobiographical notes!

To convalesce in this context means to return to childhood (isn't that in fact what we do psychologically when we rest after illness?), becoming smaller in order to grow stronger. And it must have been with the heart and mind of a child that P.L. Travers came across Mary Poppins (who, for her part, seems to have discovered her author at the same time), for she is a character who apprehends the world with, in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's beautiful phrase, an "infantine familiar clasp of things divine."

Significantly, it is from the perspective of the Banks children, not of the adults, that we observe Mary Poppins flying up the bannister in her first appearance. But only a few chapters later, these same children are no longer able to fathom the language of their new-born twin brother and sister or that of their infant sister Annabel in *Mary Poppins Comes Back*: "Slowly I moved at first, always sleeping and dreaming. I remembered all I had been and I thought of all I shall be. And when I had dreamed my dream I awoke and came swiftly." The Taoists considered infancy to be the perfect moment, since a baby was identified with the Tao. The rest of us quickly forget the way and language of sunlight and stars, of starlings and wind; only the Great Exception remembers, and, as one of the children affirms in *Mary Poppins Opens the Door*, "she's a fairy tale come true."

To P.L. Travers, fairy tales are myths "fallen into time and locality." And this, in fact, is the way Mary Poppins appears, falling from the skies with her parrot-headed umbrella, white gloves, and carpetbag. "Had she lived in another age, in the old times to which she certainly belongs," the poet AE once told P.L. Travers, "[she] would undoubtedly have had long golden tresses, a wreath of flowers in one hand, and perhaps a spear in the other. Her eyes would have been like the sea, her nose comely, and on her feet winged sandals. But, this being *Kali Yuga*, as the Hindus call it—in our terms, the Iron Age—she comes in the *habiliments* most suited to it."

Like all fairy tales, Mary Poppins seems to have been always present and with us—"She who is before all things." The author writes in her "Afterword" to *About the Sleeping Beauty*:

> Perhaps we are born knowing the tales, for our grandmothers and all their ancestral kin continually run about in our blood repeating them endlessly, and the shock they give us when we first hear them is not of surprise but of recognition. Things long unknowingly known have suddenly been remembered. Later, like streams, they run underground. For a while they disappear and we lose them. We are busy, instead, with our personal myth in which the real is turned to dream and the dream becomes the real. Sifting all this is a long process. It may perhaps take half a lifetime and the few who come round to the tales again are those who are in luck.

And in her essay "Only Connect," she adds: "The tales have to be told in order that we may understand that in the long run, whatever it may be, every man must become the hero of his own story; his own fairy tale, if you like, a real fairy tale." Since fairy tales reveal us to ourselves—just as the character of Mary Poppins, the "fairy tale come true," does—we return to them in order to remember and rediscover who we are. We must wake to and awaken the stories within us, much as the fairy tale prince rouses the princess from her sleep, thereby fulfilling what P.L. Travers sees as the essential mythical requirement—"the reinstatement of the fallen world."

This, simply, has been P.L. Travers's task. And she has gone about it by allowing the truths of story and rhyme to speak themselves and to dawn on and in us in ways we might never have expected. For the author instinctively understands that that which is often considered insignificant and despised may unexpectedly prove itself to be what is most valuable and revealing

(Cinderella, the Youngest Brother, the Fool). As she has discovered: "The stories have to be loved for themselves before they will release their secrets." And like the most devoted of spiritual maids, P.L. Travers attends to the stories through service and stillness—pondering, questioning, wondering—waiting on and for them—never forcing them—to reveal their noumenon. (Forcing someone to explain, as the Brothers Grimm's "Faithful John" suggests, petrifies one's being and meaning.)

And like P.L. Travers, Mary Poppins prefers to work by suggestion and indirection. As we are told in the latest Mary Poppins book:

> They [the Banks children] held their breaths, waiting for an answer. [Mary Poppins] looked at them for a long time and her blue eyes sparkled with it. They could see it dance on to her tongue, all agog to make its disclosure. And then—it danced away. Whatever the secret was, she would keep it.
>
> "Ah!" she said. And smiled.
>
> "Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!" repeated the Nightingale from its branch.
>
> And above, from every quarter of the sky, there came an echoing "Ah!" The whole world was ringing with the riddle. But nothing, and nobody, answered it.
>
> They might have known! She would not tell them. If she had never explained before, why should she do so now?

P.L. Travers's four Mary Poppins books—*Mary Poppins, Mary Poppins Comes Back, Mary Poppins Opens the Door*, and *Mary Poppins in the Park*—appeared in 1934, 1935, 1943, and 1952. These four major volumes in the canon were succeeded by two ancillary bibelots, *Mary Poppins from A to Z* and *Mary Poppins in the Kitchen*, in 1962 and 1975. They have now been followed—no point in asking why!—by *Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane*—a short (90 pages), beautiful coda to the entire series. A gathering together of the earthly and heavenly luminaries of the Mary Poppins universe (the Park Keeper, Miss Lark, Mr. Banks, Castor and Pollux, Orion, and Mary Poppins and her charges, among others), these characters find each other on Midsummer's Eve in the Herb Garden of the Park. And on this night of music, cherries, and magical herbs, when everything is possible ("even the impossible"), all the personages—"insubstantial luminous boys hand in hand with substantial children"—form a Grand Chain, "each hand taking the hand of each, and the big Bird flying among them. The top spun and the circle spun round it, and the Park round the circle, the earth round the park and the darkening sky round the earth. . . . The song would never be done, it seemed, and the top would never stop spinning. The circle of humans and constellations would go on turning forever."

(Inevitably, we recall the fantastic dances in the earlier Mary Poppins books participated in by the animals in the zoo; by Eenie, Meenie, and Mynie; and by the moon, sun, planets, and constellations. And all of these, in turn, may remind us of the Round Dance of Jesus described in the gnostic *Acts of John*, the Indian dance of Nataraja, or Rumi's whirling dance—"a greeting from the friends at the center of the heart.")

And as the night ends and Mary Poppins leads the Banks children home, they—knowing she will leave at any moment—ask her, "How shall we know how to find you?" while realizing, of course, that "wherever she was, she would not be lost." Because, as Mary Poppins says, "All that's lost is somewhere." Similarly, the appearance of *Mary Poppins in Cherry Tree Lane* reminds us that the cosmic nanny will always be with *us*. And just as the number five is said symbolically to comprise the four cardinal points together with the center, so this fifth Mary Poppins book might be seen to be the center and distillation of the entire canon.

Jonathan Cott is the author of the forthcoming book, Pipers at the Gates of Dawn: The Wisdom of Children's Literature, *which Random House will publish in the spring of 1983 and from which this review has been adapted.*

The Vision of Gandhi

By Gautam Dasgupta

Satyagraha
An opera by Philip Glass and Constance De Jong. Brooklyn Academy of Music. Nov. 26–28, 1981.

Several years ago, somewhere along the gently sloping hills of the lower Himalayas in northern India, an ashen-faced *sanyasi* draped in tiger skin and armed with a *Trishul* (trident) ran up to me to convey what seemed to be a matter of grave consequence. Without stopping to catch his breath and gesticulating wildly, he informed me of an impending Kali *yuga* that was soon to envelop all humanity in a global catastrophe. The gravity of his prognostication had impelled him to descend from his snowy mountain abode after years of meditation. Being young and romantic, I brushed off his ecstatic outcries as those of an anachronistic Tiresias. Science, after all, was the new god, and what place could old-fashioned divination hold against those marvels of technical ingenuity that sprung daily like thunderbolts from the Zeuses of the Western world? Who in those early days could possibly entertain the thought that the new era would eventually lead to the threat of nuclear extinction which hovers over us today like the ominous shadow of a life-denying mushroom-shaped cloud?

The *sanyasi*, dismayed at the world's indifference, is no doubt back at his solitary hermitage reciting mantras and living a life of quiet contemplation beside a glacial stream, at peace with nature and his Brahma. He is surely oblivious to those tiny conflagrations that erupt daily on our planet, bringing in their wake visions of demented politicians devising ploys and counterploys in their war rooms, while tense fingers rest on that fateful button which could send us all into the high, contaminated heavens. The hermit seeks a beloved reunion with his Creator through the power of self-knowledge; we, our politicians are fond of reminding us, are ensuring worldly fraternity through the power of atomic arsenals! To live under the scourge of war and death—the *memento mori* of yore has been transformed in our age into that faceless bureaucratized, technocratized monster called Power. We are its victims, and we continue to cater to that monster's whims regardless of Kafka's exhortations, which so accurately depicted the invisible, inexplicable, and ruthless nature of that Hydra.

Like Kafka's bug, our *sanyasi* wisely diminishes his being into the tiniest quotient of life so as not to partake in the power-oriented relationships of daily life. But today, should our leaders have their way, will the bug and the hermit survive? We are, as has been said, living in a post-apocalyptic age. The very consciousness of total annihilation is apocalyptic in its manifestations, and given that pervasive knowledge, what more can come after . . . except perhaps what Yeats once called the Savage God?

But at the very instant that Yeats felt compelled to make that remark after witnessing Alfred Jarry's parodic and horrific treatment of the tyrant Ubu Roi, a frail, bespectacled man in India by the name of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was injecting fresh blood into the tired and ancient image of what a leader ought to be like. During his lifetime, he was neither a savage nor a god, although after his death at the hands of an assassin, he increasingly was referred to as "Mahatma." He was powerful, although he never once wooed power. This "half-naked temple fakir," as Churchill called him, led an ascetic life inspired by

the great Indian religious texts and the writings of his mentor, Leo Tolstoy. Not unlike Kafka's regressive Gregor Samsa, Gandhi discarded all extraneous matter and thought from his body and soul, the more to fortify himself with those quintessential truths which comprise human love and cosmic beatitude.

Truth for Gandhi, however, was not an abstracted, philosophical concept. To understand the nature of truth, it had to be subjected to active tests in the world of the here and the now. The very title of his autobiography, *My Experiments With Truth*, suggests the *laboratorium mundi* where he would conduct his researches on the ontological and existential dimensions of truth. As he soon found out, truth was not simply a question of right or wrong. Truth, for Gandhi, was cognate with all life and life-endowing traits, and in its most vital

form emanated from the innermost core of the human soul that was at one with Nature and with God. Truth, or *satya*, was therefore synonymous with both life and peaceful existence. It was the fulcrum on which was balanced in gracious harmony the equally weighted poles of life at one end and peace at the other.

Gandhi's triumphant realization of his personal definition of truth—an abstract idea that was made corporeal by redefining it in moral and ethical terms for the secular age—led to his legendary conquests in the domain of "non-violent cooperation" and "*satyagraha*." Be it in South Africa where, early in his career and fresh out of law school, he fought for racial equality, or in India in its fight against colonial oppression, he never envisioned his struggles as a life-denying battle unto death. They were not to be conducted as a Muslim *jihād* or a bloody Crusade; they were to be fought on ethical grounds from which would emerge neither a victorious nor a vanquished race, but a new society respectful of human dignity.

And, contrary to the militant postures of other Indian compatriots who felt that his tactics were far too tame to effect any changes, Gandhi stuck to his principles *and* won. In his eyes, all forms of subjugation—racial, colonial, familial, secular—were seen as a lessening of a human being's moral and ethical purpose and potential. This reductive process was seen at work not only in the person subjugated, but also in the subjugator. And the "peaceful weaponry" of the *satyagraha* movement was trained on sights more elevated than the quotidian forces of the opponent. Victory, at no cost to truth, was to be won for moral purposes. The eventual victor, Gandhi felt, had to be God, the Brahma to which consecrating one's body and soul in the quest for true love of humanity was not to be viewed as a denying of the self, but as a martyrdom at the altar of all human endeavor.

Gandhi, while retaining his social and political conscience and being actively engaged in affairs of the world, succeeded in establishing a moral/spiritual code that made him supremely a Man among other mortals. He could incite millions to march with him, and yet he was a solitary being. He was as adept at negotiating treaties with viceroys and kings as he was in drawing land grant bonds between *zamindars* (Indian land owners) and *harijans* (the Untouchables of India). He would never ask of his millions of devotees what he himself was not willing to do. He spoke up for women's rights in a country that was unabashedly patriarchal. He extolled the virtues of self-reliance and spun his own cotton for the clothes that he would wear. He was fully cognizant of India's natural and physical resources, and strenuously argued for a national growth based on small cottage industries and handicrafts rather than a techno-industrial plan that was hurriedly pushed forth by Nehru and the young turks of the Indian National Congress after independence. And amidst all this, the man Gandhi was being gradually transformed through his selfless devotion and purity of inner strength into an unvanquishable myth. That most corporeal and physically "present" of leaders was rapidly turning into a sheer idea emblazoned with the banners of *satyagraha* and non-violent cooperation, the twin symbols of truth, love, and freedom that were to have repercussions throughout the world in years to come.

From the Alabama protests headed by Martin Luther King to the peace marches of the Vietnam era and those of today against the build-up of nuclear armaments, it was Gandhi who showed the way. His method of "peaceful militancy" has become the *modus operandi* of the ever-increasing numbers of protesters who are willing to defy the insane strategies of their governments. It is a measure of his monumental contribution to humanity that his name will be evoked so long as there are underprivileged, underfed, undereducated, and suppressed peoples willing to rise up for their due.

And as if to underscore the truth of that statement, the age of Reaganomics and the

mad dash for nuclear supremacy gave us *Satyagraha*, a Philip Glass/Constance De Jong opera that premiered in Holland during the fall of 1980. Its New York staging at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in November 1981 was greeted by a deeply appreciative audience on three consecutive nights. It appeared as if after the aggressive theatrical encounters of the avant-garde of the past decade and the academic compositions of many present-day composers, the audience was relieved to find before its eyes a work of such gentility and harmony of spirit. Although the creators of the opera are considered in some quarters high priests of the avant-garde, *Satyagraha*, while employing modernist aesthetic practices judiciously, stays endearingly with the vision of Gandhi in the years of his South African sojourn.

What emerges from the stately, minimal, and tableau-like staging of the opera is a grandiosity of humane feeling vibrantly underscored by the haunting, romantic, and rhythmic music composed by Glass. To add a further mystical, chant- or mantra-like component to the score DeJong's libretto, employs phonetically abstracted Sanskrit words from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Gandhi's favorite religious text. By drawing upon the sonorous interplay of open vowel sounds and aspirated consonants of Sanskrit, the libretto weaves in and out of the simple harmonic structure and nodal framework of the musical counterpart.

More to the point, however, is the subject matter of the opera and its treatment on stage, both from a narrative and directional point of view. In keeping with Gandhi's own sudden realization of his purpose in life, the opening segment finds him squarely placed between Lord Krishna and Arjuna on the Kuru battlefield. This ahistorical conjunction of time frames illuminates a decisive moment in Gandhi's life when he first read the verses recited by Krishna to Arjuna in the *Gita* exhorting the latter to do battle. Arjuna hesitates, realizing that the enemy camp is comprised of his relatives. He is then reminded of his sacred duty, and the battle commences. While taking to heart the call to sacred duty, Gandhi however could never resolve in his own mind the nature of that brief hesitant moment that Arjuna had faced on that mythic battleground. It was only after his long acquaintance with the writings of Tolstoy and the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore that he foreswore all thoughts of physical combat and embraced the notion of peaceful non-violence.

Satyagraha opens with this legendary sequence and soon moves into Gandhi's South African days. The rest of the opera adheres quite accurately to his struggles on behalf of discriminated Indians; its tripartite structure subdivides his personal history into the coming to terms with the fact of racial subjugation, his determination to fight against it, and his eventual victory. And above the stage proper, in time with each of the three acts, we witness the figures of Tolstoy, Tagore, and Martin Luther King, each providing a silent testimonial to Gandhi's vision. These juxtapositions serve to reinforce within an unbroken historical continuum the validity and significance of the Gandhian ideal.

Staged behind a scrim and lit with an otherworldly glow, *Satyagraha* is truly a spiritual testament to a man whose godlike piety was and remains a beacon in this age of secular anxiety. In his belief in the overriding strengths and virtues of an individual being, is it small wonder that the Gandhian ideal took root in the land of Emerson and Thoreau, and that the most loving artistic tribute to this world leader be made by two American artists, one a man and the other a woman? Soon, one hopes, all men, women, and children, "armed" with Gandhi's doctrine, will take to their hearts the simple virtues enunciated by the Mahatma and hand in hand hold back the Kali *yuga* for millennia to come.

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THEATER

An outstanding exception to the usual mid-summer theater doldrums in New York was the appearance in July of Jozef van den Berg's one-man puppet theater from Holland, brought here for one week as part of a bicentennial celebration of U.S.-Netherlands relations. Strength, vision, insight, and the ability to provoke profound questions in the heart of its audience are not generally attributes of pupper theater, but van den Berg's *Mother and the Fool* had all of them. Through masks and costumes and what seems like dozens of ingenious hand puppets, he peopled the stage with amazingly varied and believable characters. Van den Berg's art has great warmth, charm, and humor, but his genius lies in illuminating the dangers and possibilities of human life with sometimes shocking unsentimentality.

In performances of his *Message from One-Eye* for children, he brought on stage over a dozen children—some as young as two and three—and put a demand on them to carry roles requiring courage and bravery. It was touching to see the eagerness for the challenge in most of them. Van den Berg's theater for both children and adults is engrossing and unique, and we hope he will appear again soon in the U.S.

Experimental theater director André Gregory was no doubt encouraged by his widespread popular success as a film actor and co-scenarist for *My Dinner with André*—enough in fact to return to the New York stage for the first time in a half-dozen years, writing, co-directing and co-starring in *Bone Songs* this May at the Cubiculo Theater. A quiet, unassuming piece of theater-with-music, it drew upon Gregory's childhood, his long and happy (if at times a bit tempestuous, judging by what we see onstage) marriage with his wife Chiquita, and the wide range of aesthetic, philosophical, spiritual, and political concerns with which he lives. The work grew out of "two years trying in vain" to find a way of adapting Solomon's *Song of Songs* for the theater; the title refers to both that effort and a game the Gregory children played when André was small, called "throwing the bones."

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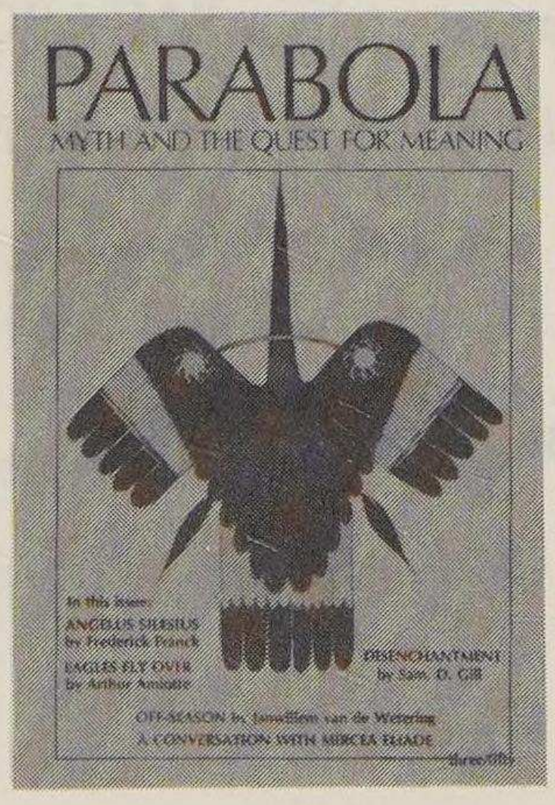

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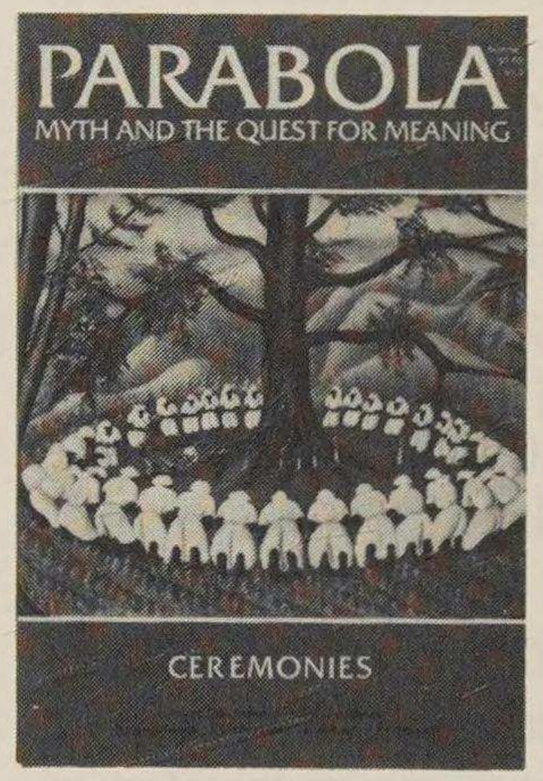

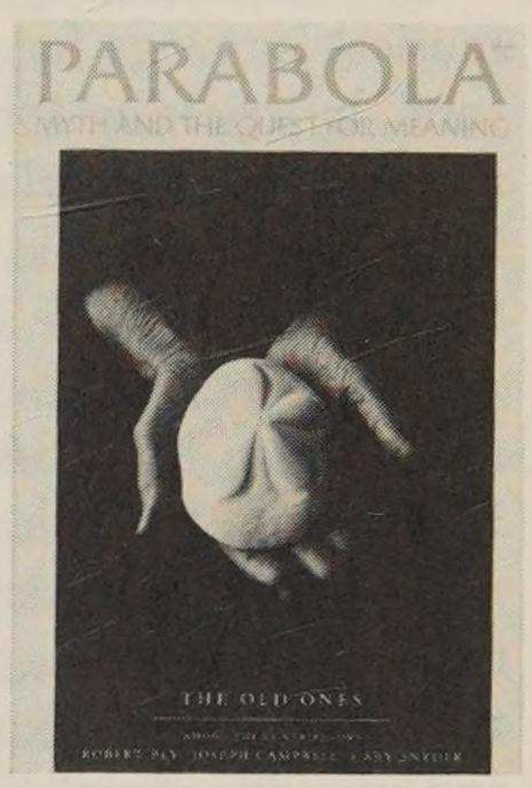

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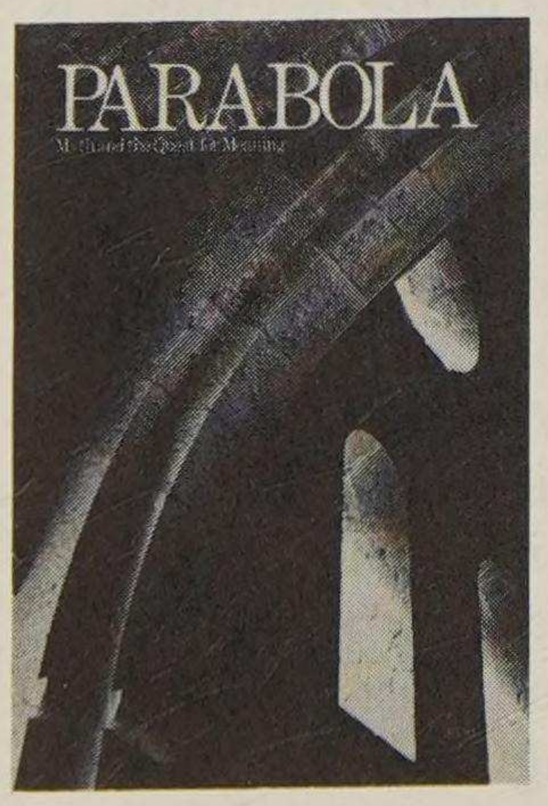

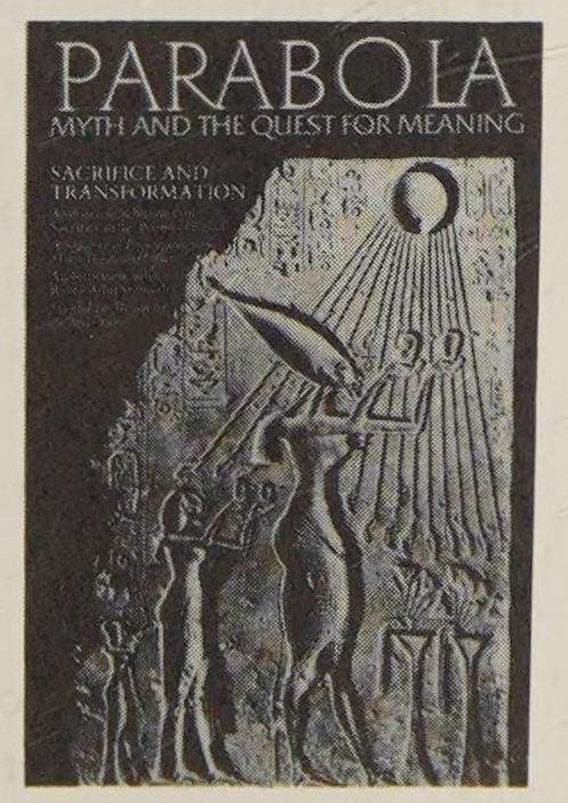

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The piece was a reworking of *Hers and His*, which Gregory had created for the Music-Theatre Group/Lenox Arts Center in Massachusetts the previous summer. In the New York revision, Gregory shared the stage and directorial credits with the quietly charismatic dancer/choreographer Twyla Tharp. Also vital to the collaboration was the original music of Simon Jeffes, founder of an exceptional music ensemble called the Penguin Cafe Orchestra, offering what Jeffes has said is an attempt "to develop a new musical language for our own time and culture" by rejecting "the complex developments of Western classical music" and turning to "what seemed the sweetest and most 'feeling' music there is in the form of African, Venezuelan, various minority musics from the USA (Cajun, Country Blues, etc.), Scottish, Irish, Caribbean and many other exotic and less exotic 'ethnic' musics." The production, which was presented in a small, experimental theater space and was done totally without fanfare (no press, no reviews), had an exceptional power: quiet, affirmative, self-contained. It's always wonderful when talents this big can get together to make something this small and special. It's exactly the sort of renewal that contemporary theater needs so desperately.

Music

The Asia Society will present "Music and Dance of the Silk Route" in their auditorium (725 Park Avenue in New York City) from October 31 to November 3. The program features performers from Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia and will introduce American audiences to the music and dance styles of several minority peoples of China: the Miao, the Uighur, and the Kergez. The troupe is on a tour of North America, having started October 3 in Hawaii, with stops already in California, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, Maryland, Philadelphia, the World's Fair in Knoxville, and Mexico City, and dates still to come in Washington, D.C. (November 5–7), Boston (November 9) and Montreal (November 12).

ECM Records has released Steve Reich's powerful new work, *Tehillim*, following its New York premiere last spring at the Metropolitan Museum and performances this fall by both Reich's own musicians at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and the New York Philharmonic at Lincoln Center—a prestigious, "classical" first for a composer of Reich's particular return-to-basics, multi-ethnic type of "new music" (unless you count the performances of Philip Glass's score for *Einstein on the Beach* at the Metropolitan Opera House). If anything, *Tehillim* is even more moving on record than live, having a clarity and assurance that didn't seem to come across quite convincingly at its premiere. In it, Reich explores the fascination he has had for the past few years with Jewish liturgical music, similar to what a cantor sings in a synagogue service, with two important differences: the vocalists are women, and the singing is not unaccompanied, but is a blending with the special melodic and rhythmic instrumental accompaniment that Reich has been working with for several years, incorporating many diverse ethnic inspirations. *Tehillim*, in fact, sounds at times very much like traditional Arabic music, with its gliding, micro-tonal vocals, its sparse and simple instrumentation, its thumping, hand-drum rhythms. It's a very special experience, one that reaches inward and outward, bringing the listener into its haunting circle of power.

Dance

Probably no choreographer in Western dance has ever understood the manifestation of holy war on the level of the individual as perfectly as Martha Graham. Virtually all her dances, since she started making them in 1926, are battles of the inner with the outer—the human soul struggling and searching for some sort of resolution, balance, affirmation. Modern dance is, at its very core, a representation of tension and release. Whereas ballet insistently denies gravity and works in defiance of it for its most spectacular airborne effects, modern dance never ignores its groundedness, its

earthy substance and weight.

But at the same time, curiously (but perhaps not so curiously at all) Martha Graham's dances have been working themselves up higher and higher into the air in recent years, finding a new lightness and radiance that befuddled critics can only refer to—somewhat uncomfortably in many cases—as "celestial" or "spiritual." But the truth is the new works are among the most power-packed artistic statements that Graham has ever made: the lightness works because, after fifty-six years of exploring the ground, Graham has the right to as much of the air above it as she chooses to take in.

When it was first announced, her new work "Dances of the Golden Hall" puzzled the dance public because it sounded, on the surface, like a retrograde step into the pseudo-ethnic kind of "oriental" exotica made popular by Graham's early contemporary, the late Ruth St. Denis. But "Dances of the Golden Hall" was, when seen, nothing of the kind. It was, instead, a ceremony of geometric simplicity, costumed in gold and awash in light, not imitative of any particular culture but having a tone, a flavor, a hint of the dancing of India and Bali; all in all, it managed to be both "religious" and sensual, like so many of Graham's finest works.

The other premiere, "Andromache's Lament," similarly sounded, from the program notes, as if it might be a retreat to the middle-Graham style, which was deeply rooted in personal interpretations of Greek mythology (usually from a woman's point of view, as in her full-length *Clytemnestra* and in "Cave of the Heart," her version of *Medea*). But again, the tone was light and elevated, not heavy and earthbound, and the look was new and forward-looking: based on the aftermath of the capture of Troy by the Greeks, the piece focuses on the widowed Andromache's farewell to her young son, also slated for slaughter. It is very much a woman's view of war, and very much the statement of an 88-year-old artist who has dedicated it to "world peace."

Graham was reportedly unhappy a few years back when she first revived her masterpiece, "Primitive Mysteries," a tour de force for thirteen women dancers; she is said to have stated at that time that she would not revive it again until she had dancers strong enough to do it right. This season brought that revival—and women with all the requisite strength—and the result confirmed that the dance is one of the most powerful evocations of such "primitive mysteries" ever put onstage—certainly at least in the Western world. Graham's program notes speak of "the adoration of the Virgin as experienced in the South Western Spanish-American culture," but this is, as she states, merely a "beginning." The dance, with its stern rigidity melting into first a fluid grace, then hardening again into a stomping circle-dance of breathtaking physical impact—taps into what all ritual, all ceremony, is about—a feeling that is not confined to any one religion, any one culture.

Graham's repertory is full of echoes of such a universal past: her 1978 "Frescoes," with duets for Isis and Osiris, Antony and Cleopatra; her Old Testament "Judith"; her "Herodiade," which she calls "a dance of choice . . . a glimpse into the mirror of one's being"; her "Seraphic Dialogue" for Joan of Arc as maid, warrior, and martyr; her solo "Lamentation" (now beautifully danced by Peggy Lyman); her strange and haunting "Dark Meadow," full of platonic references; her "Appalachian Spring" for the American primitives who carried their particular spirit ever-westward; and "Acts of Light," a 1981 work seen for the first time in New York and a piece full of prayerful expectation and an elevation of the spirit directly comparable to what ballet attempts for and with the body.

Graham has indeed brought dance from "modern" to mythic, from the regenerative strength and nourishment of earthly reality, into the numinous magic of an act of light.

Knowledge and the Sacred
By Seyyed Hossein Nasr. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1981. Pp. 341. $19.50.

Reviewed by Joseph Epes Brown

This remarkably comprehensive, indeed magisterial, exposition and analysis of sacred tradition as such, illuminated by innumerable expressions of traditional wisdom both primal and historical from East and West, constitutes Seyyed Hossein Nasr's basic text from which he delivered the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh in 1981. This event in itself is remarkable, and is a welcome sign of current re-evaluations of priorities. Heretofore these prestigious lectures (presented since 1889) tended to support exclusively those scientists, philosophers, and theologians of modernist persuasion. It was not until Nasr's recent appearance that an Oriental or Muslim—or indeed any exponent of that perennial wisdom, *sophia perennis*—has appeared within this lectureship, although the 1980 Gifford lecturer was Professor Åke Hultkrantz, director of the Institute of Comparative Religions at the University of Stockholm, who has been a leading exponent of new approaches to the evaluation and interpretation of the primal religious traditions, especially those of the North American Indians. This is, moreover, an area which Nasr has certainly not ignored in the present work, where he situates such traditions in their rightful place alongside the historical world religions.

The ten chapters of *Knowledge and the Sacred* unfold and develop in a brilliant and creative manner, each preparing for and then illuminating the next in such an organic way that at the conclusion of the total work one has the sense not just of having learned about the multiple levels and dimensions of sacred worlds, but of having experienced integrally something of the beauty and truth of such worlds. The persuasive mode of presentation is remarkably holistic. In coming full circle at the conclusion of this work, the reader has the sense of occasion, of a quality of experience which goes beyond the literal or external reading of a text. If there is validity to this sentiment, it may be due in part to the fact that the work was planned for oral presentation, and indeed was so presented. (The excellent footnotes, which almost constitute a book in themselves, were added later.) Within the perspective of traditional worlds, it is of course understood that communicative force tends to be identified with the immediacy of oral transmission over that of the written word.

The first chapter of this work, "Knowledge and Its Desacralization," may well be the most difficult. After establishing the relationship of knowledge to primordial Reality, which is *the* sacred and *the* source of all that is sacred, Nasr then traces man's alienation from this realm through progressive externalization. In this process that ultimate center of unitive knowing within man, the Intellect which is the Absolute Itself, is progressively replaced by the limited, reasoning faculty of the mind. In thus separating being from knowledge, the soul of man becomes dominated by all those divisive dualities of knower and known, inner and outer, spirit and matter, subject and object, and so forth. This is not to suggest that the reasoning faculties of the human mind have no place, but rather that an inversion of normal priorities has taken place so that the shadow or reflection is

given primacy over the Sun itself which alone makes the relative "reality" of the shadow possible.

In his second chapter Nasr defines the concept "tradition," which in the Western world is becoming increasingly accepted as a term for the totality of all those dimensions and expressions of the sacred which are becoming lost within the lives of men, and thus to the world, in ever accelerating manner. Prior to the reality or realization of loss, such a specific descriptive term need not arise due to the all-encompassing nature of a truly sacralized world. That is why to this day among certain relatively isolated peoples one cannot find a word for religion. It is not that they do not have or experience "religion," but rather that for them "religion" is not, as it has come to be for the modern world, a special segment of their culture, but rather embraces the totality of their lives. It is this all-encompassing sacralization of life that the term "tradition" has come to refer to. A truly traditional society, then, is as a circle at the center of which is knowledge and the unitive mode of knowing, which is of the Intellect; radiating out from this sacred center and source are the indefinite expressions or aspects of the particular society, each and all of which are extensions or particularizations of the sacred.

Once the language and the basic premises of Nasr's first two chapters are grasped, the remaining chapters elegantly unfold the many implications of tradition: the special necessity, efficacy, and power of sacred art forms; the necessity for the rediscovery and

revival of tradition; and the sacrificial pilgrimage that man today has before him in moving away from a fragmentary and increasingly arrogant promethean stance to rediscover and regain once again his or her true nature, joining together in one's being both heaven and earth. But there is no way to regain this stage of theomorphic being, Nasr asserts, other than through the grace and guiding means of legitimate sacred tradition, whether of East or West. As guidance, Nasr provides in text and footnotes ample references to leading exponents of sacred tradition of past and present, those who themselves were long established in tradition, and those in the modern secular world who have nevertheless rediscovered in integral manner that perennial wisdom, *sophia perennis*. In Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *Knowledge and the Sacred*, we have *A Guide for the Perplexed* to join that of Moses Maimonides of the Middle Ages and E.C. Schumacher of the present decade.

Joseph Epes Brown, a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA, *teaches in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Montana. He is the recorder and editor of Black Elk's* The Sacred Pipe.

A History of Religious Ideas
By Mircea Eliade. Translated from the French by Williard R. Trask.
Volume 1: From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 1979. Pp. *xviii* + 489. Paperback $8.95.
Volume 2: From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. Pp. *xiv* + 565. $25.00.

Reviewed by John Loudon

It is a pleasure to welcome the publication of the second volume of the English edition of Mircea Eliade's monumental *History of Religious Ideas*. This three-volume series represents, as Eliade himself suggests in the Preface to Volume 1, his final legacy to scholars and students in the field that he pioneered. What he has aimed to provide is a comprehensive, but necessarily summary, chronological account of the manifestations of the sacred throughout human history, with emphasis on the critical and especially the creative moments in various traditions. The volume's coverage is encyclopedic in depth and scope, and readers will marvel once more at Eliade's expertise in the primary and scholarly literature in virtually every area of the history of religions. He provides both a three-stage course in the entire history of religions, from preliterate humanity to the present day, and an indispensable reference series for anyone needing

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quick, accurate, *and* interesting information about the religious ideas of humankind. Each volume is outfitted with extensive critical bibliographies on all of the major topics discussed so that one can learn the sources of Eliade's information and can pursue the subject further. Truly a labor of love—both of scholarship and of the polymorphous richness of the religious dimension of human history—this multi-volume work should be an essential resource for serious students for generations to come. Rarely has a scholar of this range and penetration been so generous and conscientious in making available the fruits of his learning to readers beyond the classrooms in which the material was originally presented.

Volume 1 covered the origins and early developments of religious ideas and beliefs from preliterate expressions to the cult of Dionysus, with extensive treatment of the rise of religion in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, India, Greece, and Persia. Now Volume 2 traces the maturing of the religions of Ancient China, Hinduism, Iranian religion, and Judaism; surveys the remarkable diversity of Roman, Greek, and European religions; and chronicles and analyzes the rise of Christianity and Gnosticism and the triumph of orthodoxy. The third volume will complete the account up to the present stage of desacralization.

It is impossible, of course, to summarize the books, since the topics covered and information conveyed are enormous and they are written very compactly as interlocking sets of historical précis. All that I can do here is to venture some general observations and issue a few words of caution. It will be up to Eliade's fellow scholars and student users of this *History* to assess its accuracy on

points of detail, allocation of emphases, and interpretive stances.

Although lucidly written and expertly translated, the books do not make for easy reading: they demand careful and sustained study. Reading them must be very much like taking the courses on which they are based, and the rewards will be in proportion to the time, effort, extra reading, etc., that the reader can devote to them. The summary style of presentation, the wealth of information, and the relatively advanced level of discussion could well overwhelm the casual reader who comes to the *History* expecting something like, say, *The Sacred and the Profane*. However, those familiar with Eliade's more popular books will discover in these volumes a wealth of information and interpretation that fleshes out in comprehensive detail the basic patterns and principles that he has articulated throughout his career. One is able to see again and again how fundamental motifs such as cosmogonic myths, shamanism, nostalgia for paradise, the center of the universe, macrocosm/microcosm, primordial and historical time, and so on, are played out in an astonishing and complex variety of cultural and historical forms. And progressively there emerges a concrete awareness and appreciation of the fundamental unity of religious phenomena (structures, myths, symbols, etc.) and the inexhaustible diversity of ways in which they inevitably find expression. The upshot is a fresh realization of how little is ever new in religion, along with an enhanced ability to discern the inveterate religious patterns in all cultures, especially our own.

I eagerly look forward to the publication of the third volume, since only with it can one see how the many emerging patterns

turn out. Even more importantly, in it Eliade will discuss the ways in which the reductionist and secularizing tendencies of modernity, together with the critical study of religions itself, have distinctly colored our whole view of the sacred dimension of human experience. Finally, Eliade has indicated that he hopes to follow up the third volume with one last book, a single volume that would present the essence of the three-volume series, presumably in a more interpretive and popular way. It would be wonderful if that one-volume summary could present (with apt examples, but leaving most details to the earlier volumes) his account of the essential elements of religious experience ("the unity of the spiritual history of humanity," as he calls it at one point) that find expression in all the religious traditions of human history.

John Loudon, a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA, *is Editorial Manager of Harper & Row, San Francisco.*

The Tao of Pooh
By Benjamin Hoff. New York: E. P. Dutton, Inc., 1982. Pp. 158. $8.95.

Reviewed by Fraser Snowden

> Manifest plainness,
> Embrace simplicity,
> Reduce selfishness,
> Have few desires.
> —Lao-Tse

Twenty years ago A.A. Milne's books about Winnie-the-Pooh and his animal cohorts Eeyore, Piglet, Rabbit, Owl, and Tigger proved to be a fertile series of literary Rorschach inkblots for Frederick Crews, whose *Pooh Perplex* offered us a batch of astute critical essays by pseudonymous authors operating out of Freudian, Marxist, Christian, and other perspectives. Now Benjamin Hoff, a young writer and musician who prunes trees for a living, has interpreted Pooh as a Taoist sage at heart. In the process, he has produced both a gentle appreciation of the beloved bear and a clear, very wise exegesis of the rudiments of Taoist philosophy.

In a series of imaginary dialogues with Pooh and others, along with judiciously selected quotes and drawings from the Milne books, Hoff teases out the essential themes of Taoism. He finds in Pooh a perfect exemplification of the Taoist notion of *P'u,* the Uncarved Block. "The essence of the principle of the Uncarved Block is that things in their original simplicity contain their own natural power, power that is easily spoiled and lost when that simplicity is changed." Pooh is simple, but he certainly is not simple-minded; he does not describe the Uncarved Block to the reader verbally. "He just *is* it."

Hoff has some wry comments to make about the regrettable fact that Taoism has

been interpreted in the West largely by pedants who miss the ineffable point of Taoism and who are "confused" about the virtue of ignorance. Like Owl, who pursues knowledge for the sake of appearing wise, they obfuscate rather than clarify, failing to recognize the simple truth that "there is more to Knowing than just being correct." (No doubt these same "Desiccated Scholars" will incorrectly write off the book here under consideration, ignoring it completely or perhaps terming it trendy and superficial, instead of plumbing the depths of its profound simplicity.)

The ostensibly nonsensical song "Cottleston Pie" turns out to offer a probing statement of the fact that "Things Are as They Are," a whimsical admonition to discern and respect our Inner Nature to avoid getting in trouble. "The first thing we need to do," notes Hoff, "is recognize and trust our own Inner Nature, and not lose sight of it. For within the Ugly Duckling is the Swan, inside the Bouncey Tigger is the Rescuer who Knows the Way, and in each of us is something Special, and that we need to keep."

In essence, the Way of Pooh is *Wu Wei*, the central concept of Lao-Tse's philosophy, which means non-deliberate action, appropriate response, spontaneity. Hoff observes that the Chinese ideogram *Wei* derives from the characters of a clawing hand and a monkey. "*Wu Wei* means not going against the nature of things; no clever tampering; no Monkeying Around." Winnie-the-Pooh embodies the spirit of *Wu Wei* and thus never has to make difficult decisions. In addition, he embraces the moral principle *Tz'u*, the compassion and caring that generates a courage that is not intellectual, but from the heart.

In contrast to Pooh is the pathetic figure of Bisy Backson, never content with the present, always wanting to be somewhere else, obsessed with the relentless passage of time, rushing head first into an ever retreating future. The Backsons of the world do not know Pooh's secret: an awareness of and full participation in the moment. On this point, Hoff provides a telling quote from *The House at Pooh Corner*:

> "What do you like doing best in the world, Pooh?"
>
> "Well," said Pooh, "what I like best——" and then he had to stop and think. Because although Eating Honey *was* a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you were, but he didn't know what it was called.

This is a splendid little text that reveals the profound Taoist seed of wisdom in the classic children's books about Pooh and the core of childlike simplicity implicit in the great Taoist texts of Lao-Tse and Chuang-

Tse. It is a delightful meeting of East and West which demonstrates that true wisdom transcends any particular expression of it. *The Tao of Pooh* is an invitation to return to the clear-eyed vision of the child and to celebrate the pure joys of everyday living.

Fraser Snowden teaches philosophy at Northwestern State University in Louisiana and does book reviews regularly for various publications.

Beyond the Post-Modern Mind
By Huston Smith. New York: Crossroad, 1982. Pp. 201. $14.95.

Reviewed by Peter Lamborn Wilson

No one who has read the works of the "traditionalists"—Coomaraswamy, Guénon, Burckhardt, Lings, Pallis, Nasr, Schuon, etc.—needs to read this work by Huston Smith. But that is why, presumably, Smith has written it. As a former M.I.T. professor, with impeccable credentials within the academic world, he can speak to an audience which does not, would not, and probably could not read traditionalist books. He can speak to educators and scientists. He can in fact preach to them.

In order to do this, Smith has chosen a tone of voice which is radically different from that of the traditionalists themselves. Where they are "magisterial," he presents himself as humble. Where they speak *ex cathedra*, he hedges his statements with nods to "other possibilities." Where they eschew the subjective, he uses the first person singular pronoun on nearly every page. Where they strive for a style between that of theologian and scholar, he is chatty, anecdotal. He presents an extremely engaging personality, and one is convinced that he is, as he claims, a "born teacher." Like a born teacher, he is at pains to assure the reader that "all this is very simple"—in fact, he even uses that phrase in introducing his critique of evolutionary theory.

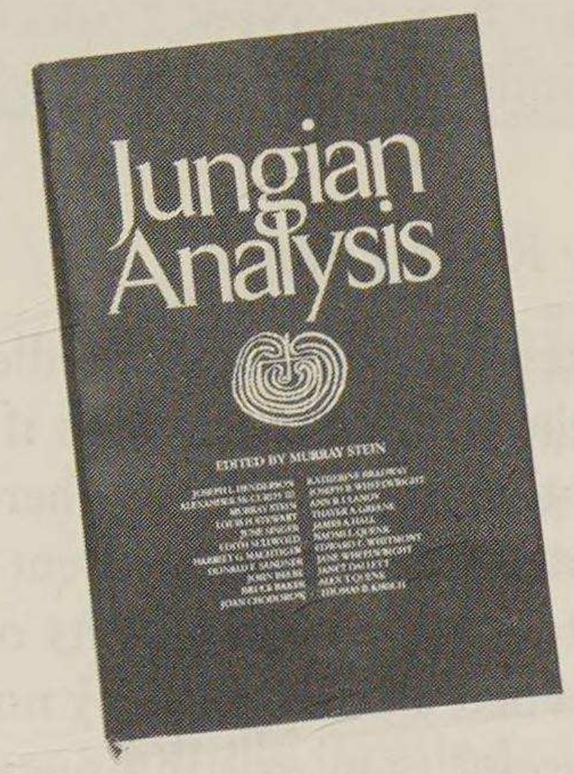
One senses that Smith is afraid of scaring off his audience. Bluff scientists are not going to listen to a "mere humanist" (in another book, Smith told the amusing story of a scientist who leaned over to him at a dinner party and said, "I've just figured out the difference between you and me. I *count*, and you don't!"). Nor will the average academic sit still for a text (like, say, one of the works of Coomaraswamy) that requires him to *think*. Smith even goes so far as to capitulate to the gender question, first by making use of the neologism "s-he," and second by pointing out that his wife helped him with the book. The traditionalists are generally not noted for their politeness to feminism. Nor are they much given to repeating over and over again (as Smith does in his attack on process theology) "I may be wrong, I may be wrong."

Beyond the Post-Modern Mind then is very definitely and quite openly an attempt to popularize the writings of a certain school of thought; the school in question is one of many that have criticized modernism and suggested something like a "Philosophia Perennis"; but by proclaiming himself such a staunch adherent of this one school in particular, Smith has led the reader to expect certain things (assuming that the reader *has* in fact read some Schuon, Guénon, etc.).

For example, one expects that Smith will attack Teilhard de Chardin with unrestrained vigor, since that is what the other writers of the school do. In fact, Smith did it once (in *Forgotten Knowledge*)—and surprisingly enough, in the present book, sets out to apologize for having done so. As usual, the context is anecdotal: an account of a symposium on Teilhard Studies to which Smith was invited. On page 127 he tells of a breakfast with Ewart Cousins, who "had been active in the Teilhard Society." Cousins convinces Smith to go easy at the symposium. "I could hear that," says Smith, "and it helped me as I turned back to Teilhard anticipating this conference. If we do not read him like fundamentalists . . . but instead read his 'science' allegorically and symbolically, we can see how his writings have healing power."

Another thing one might expect from Smith, and which in fact he does deliver, is a scathing attack on "scientism," the absurdly silly notion that philosophy can "know" nothing which "science" does not know. By now, this notion is pretty much a dead horse, and again Smith's apologies while beating it seem curiously out of place. The notion of a mechanistic universe, which Smith identifies as the "modern" mode of thought, has given way in his view to what he calls "post-modernism," which he identifies with moral and philosophical relativism, negativism. To be exact, he identifies a "Modern Western Mind-set" which includes post-modernism, and which in the traditionalist view must of course be transcended. One who is afflicted with this attitude should open his mind to spiritual possibilities, to traditionalism—and once having absorbed that, he should at once close it again. Such, in a nutshell, would seem to be Smith's message.

But Smith's own enthusiasms cannot help getting in the way of a too-systematic exercise in traditionalist dogma. The example of his "softness" on Teilhard has already been given. Another and far less turn-of-the-century enthusiasm of Smith's is for "frontier physics." Despite the careful apologies to any scientists in his audience, Smith does make a very strong attack on science. But he does it with a quiver-full of arrows borrowed from scientists. Relativity and quantum mechanics are indisputably the most exciting developments in twentieth century scientific thought, far outweighing in importance the maunderings of the logical positivists and their ilk. And Smith is quite aware, and quite moved, by the poetry of physics (and of modern biology as well,



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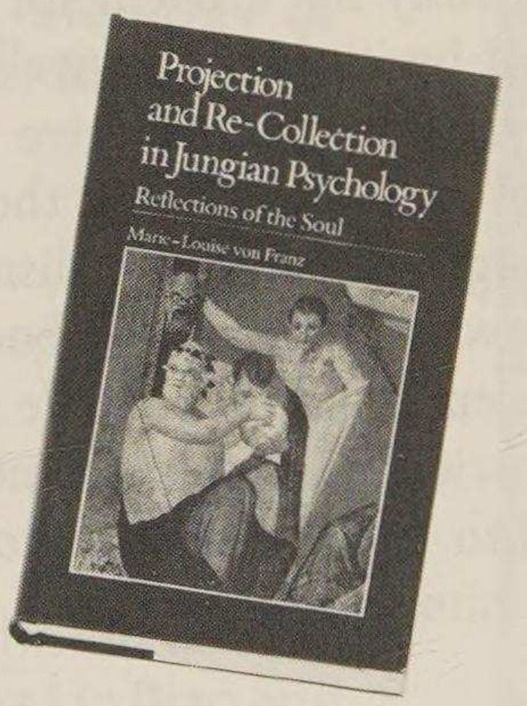

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which is not far behind physics in importance). In this as in his former books, Smith is at his best when he talks of the discoveries of modern science which in fact *do* weigh in on the side of an open-mindedness towards the "Perennial"—such areas of research as brain physiology, particle physics, LSD experiments, etc.

One feels that Smith also apologizes for liking such things—not, this time, to the scientists and educationists, but to his fellow traditionalists. This is a pity, and it is even more a pity that Smith does not make use of his M.I.T. experiences to work on a real bridge between science and tradition. Capra is the most articulate of those who have compared physics and "mysticism"—most of the material on the subject is unspeakably mawkish and ill-informed, and even Capra's work leaves much to be desired (which is only fair, considering how much new ground he was trying to break). Smith obviously has a talent for explaining science, and he is obviously well-grounded in metaphysics and comparative religion. One cannot help feeling that there are many apologiae for traditionalism in print, but very few really informed books about the new science and its possible relation with a consciousness-oriented mode of cognition. Smith has the ammunition for this work. Let him not be so shy as to hesitate in using it.

Peter Lamborn Wilson is the author of Angels *(Pantheon) and co-translator of a forthcoming collection of translations of Sufi poetry (Paulist Press). He has also written widely on Persian art and poetry and edited the publication* Sophia Perennis *from 1974–77.*

Consciousness and Tradition
By Jacob Needleman. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1982. Pp. 192. $14.95.

Reviewed by Roger Lipsey

For all his reputation, Jacob Needleman remains somehow undiscovered, as if he were a foreign author respected elsewhere but little translated here. This apparent injustice will surely be remedied in its own good time when a book perhaps no deeper or more graceful than existing ones happens to strike a note that the most prominent literary reviews and reviewers can hear.

Consciousness and Tradition, a collection of essays written over a period of fifteen years, will not be that book, although it demonstrates all of the author's qualities and in the bargain allows us to follow the author's growth, each essay a sort of tree ring marking a season of thought. The collection is splendid, but more in the nature of a breather between major works than such a work itself. Its essays deal in turn with philosophy, religion, psychiatry, medicine, the search for a wise man, the idea of the sacred, and the teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky.

There is satisfactory unity among the essays through the persistence of a theme that Needleman introduces as follows in the early pages:

> When we speak of awareness as something modern man has not yet tried, we are speaking of a strange and powerful intermingling: a deep immersion in human experience together with a radical separation from it. The essays in this book have turned out to be, almost without my intending it, efforts to reach toward this paradox. We are speaking here of a paradox in the heart of reality itself.
>
> How can that be? In any case, I wish to reserve the term "sacred" for that helping force which reconciles this contradiction in ourselves and in the universe. . . . (p. 5)

This passage speaks well for the book as a whole; its skill in expression, scope of ideas, and unshakeable hope are present throughout. The growth that can be traced

chronologically through these essays is of the ordinary kind—increases in skill and confidence—but also of a somewhat more than ordinary kind. In this category should be placed changes in knowledge and voice, which seem to confirm that seekers sometimes find.

Roger Lipsey is the author of the biography, Coomaraswamy: His Life and Work, *and the editor of* Coomaraswamy: Selected Papers, Volumes I and II, *in the Bollingen Series, Princeton University Press.*

Rasa, or Knowledge of the Self
By René Daumal. New York: New Directions, 1982. Pp. 128. Cloth, $12.95; paper, $5.95.

Reviewed by Kathleen Ferrick Rosenblatt

> From metaphysics and dance to the training of elephants and mechanics, for the Hindu, all doctrinal bodies are linked by a common goal, call it deliverance, consciousness, or unification; in learning archery or grammar one learns to know oneself.
>
> —"The Origin of the Theatre of Bharata"

As a young avant-garde writer of the Twenties, in league with the surrealists, René Daumal went beyond the kind of dabbling in mysticism and the occult that was fashionable for the period. At the age of sixteen, he taught himself Sanskrit and became familiar with the essence of Hindu philosophy through the writings of René Guénon. In 1932 he became press secretary

to Uday Shankar, a Master of Indian dance who was the first to introduce this art form to the West, and with him traveled to the United States. The influence of these teachers and of G.I. Gurdjieff, his spiritual master for thirteen years, gave Daumal an intimate knowledge of Eastern thought.

As a Westerner, poetry remained for Daumal one concrete mode of understanding and knowledge still accessible to modern man. In turning to India and the East, he found his beliefs confirmed regarding the importance of art and poetry as a means of transmitting truths that were otherwise incommunicable. The ancient texts affirmed his innate understanding of how the clarity of the poet's or musician's internal state determines the effectiveness of his art.

In this collection of essays on Hindu poetics, the title, *Rasa*, translates into English as "taste," "relish," or "savor:" the essence (*Atman* or soul) of poetry. Daumal summarizes the definition of *rasa* as follows: "Taste is the moment of conscience (and consciousness) that a true work of art should evoke in whoever has an interior being and a measure for judging; a moment of waking to oneself arising from a particular emotion provoked by a true work of art." This word "taste" best exemplifies the coordinated action of all three centers of a human being—mental, emotional, and physical (in communion with the written word, evoking a reality of sound and sense).

Daumal's genius made him the first Western writer able to penetrate Hindu writing and seek out the soul (*rasa*) of its art. He was so intrigued with the con-

cept of *rasa* that he discussed it in four different essays (two of which are excluded from this collection, but are found in the French collection of his essays on Hinduism). This perception of relish or taste permeates the Hindu texts collected here as well as Daumal's discussion of them. He translates two ancient treatises that expound the theory of *rasa*. The first is the first chapter of an ancient work on Hindu dramatic art by Bharata, *Natya-sastra (Treatises On The Theatre)*. It is a huge work on theater and dance compiled from the second to the sixth century A.D. Daumal chose the first chapter of this encyclopedic text, a mythic tale about the birth of theater, wherein the gods and goddesses, jubilant over the new art form, donate their services to it. The *Natya-sastra* is truly "sacred knowledge" packaged in pure delectation: a re-enactment of how things came about "in the beginning," which needs to be communicated "to skillful beings, beyond the fire of knowledge, who walk with daring and who have conquered inertia."

Daumal was receptive to this primal notion of theater as exercise and ritual rather than mere representation. His own works *(A Night of Serious Drinking* and *Mount Analogue)* have a mythic ritual structure underlying them. He thus passed on to us this exotic dish as an illustration of why Art was initiated as the "fifth Veda," why *rasa* was thought necessary to make the great truths palatable to our dull minds.

In Sanskrit, the word for poet and for priest is the same: "*kavi*." In ancient times the essentially sacred nature of poetry was in the domain of the priest; all poetry was basically prayer, and all prayer was poetic. The Veda itself was considered to be "Sacred Utterance" (Mantra), of divine origin and was, for the most part, transmitted orally. This was in keeping with the cosmological theory that sound (Vak) held a primordial place among the sensory qualities.

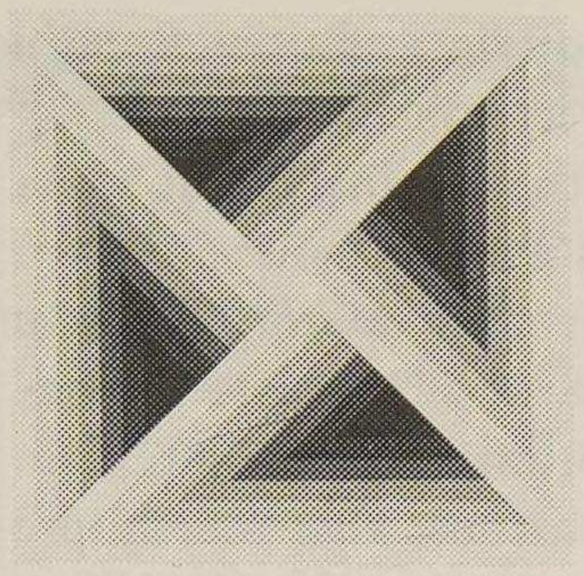
In his chapter "To Approach the Hindu Poetic Art" (1940) Daumal describes how the writing of poetry is a kind of yoga for the poet to discipline himself in order to become a better instrument for "supra-natural" functions. "By serving the (musical) Sound, one is serving the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva because they themselves are made from it." (*Satya Darpana*)

Daumal quotes Visvanatha, a seventeenth-century scholar of Hindu poetics, as saying "Art is not a natural activity of man," the word "natural" here connoting the idea of "automatic," *i.e.*, ordinary or undeveloped. The Hindu term for "natural" (*Prakriti*) describes a person "who has not created a self": he is as nature and environment have made him, with no effort at development on his part. *Prakriti* is contrasted with *Samskrita* which refers to one who has created an interior being, *i.e.*, "who is twice born." Language is also divided into *Prakriti* (ordinary language) and *Sanskrit* (sacred language).

Daumal himself believed that these qualities of true art can potentially emerge in poetry through the deliberate attempt at communion between the universe and the deepest self (*Tad-Atman*); he considers this communion to be the poetic act. If one strives for this communion, sensing one's inner self in each successive moment, it has the effect of heightening one's consciousness, immediately and cumulatively, as described in Daumal's translation of "Knowledge of the Self," an extract from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

If he knew himself,
if man could say: this is I,
by which desire, for which goal
would his body be inflamed?

He who has found himself, in whom being
buried in the depth of this death has
awakened,
He is all active, he is the author of all,
for him the world—he is, himself, the
world.



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This communion is in itself the source of relish; according to the following line of the Upanishads, relish can be found in every breath—if it is sought:

> Who indeed, would inhale, who exhale, if this
> ether were not Joy!
>
> Joy here, is the Deity himself, the Essential Excitant of the Relish (*rasa*)
>
> *Taittiriy upanishad*

Among the book reviews included in *Rasa* is Daumal's 1934 review of the latest translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. His writing is scholarly in the best sense of the word: elucidating the original meanings of words, while avoiding the "metaphysical sauce" of the "theosophistic sacristy." Again, the ancient author and Daumal bring us back to the confrontation of reality in each instant of time, of which death is an extreme but limited form, "after millions and millions of instants, which are the doors of consciousness, *open for us*, but which we have never noticed."

This theoretical concept of union between one's internal self with the great Self can be better understood by the concrete examples offered us in Daumal's two illuminating essays "On Indian Music" (1940) and "Concerning Uday Shankar" (1931).

Even before he had begun to read René Guénon or Hindu philosophy, Daumal understood that in order to attain this union one needed a constant act of negation: a continuous relinquishing of one's belief in one's personality, one's body, desires, beliefs, and memories, and to see one's "I" as separate from them.

Under the influence of Oriental thought, some of Daumal's early undertakings were quite unreligious, unorthodox, and iconoclastic. For a while, he believed along with the Surrealists that the exploration of dreams and the subconscious was in keeping with the Hindu esoteric tradition. But since Daumal was in direct touch with true masters as well as the original Vedic texts themselves, he was able to transcend an early dalliance with mind-altering drugs and psychic phenomena, and to isolate the occult features that promote a true internal transformation from those that merely promote a more pleasant, peaceable life. By 1935 Daumal could joke about all his exploits and intellectual endeavors in his satirical underworld tour: *A Night of Serious Drinking*. His years of spiritual initiation allowed him to remain active in the face of terminal illness and to write his greatest achievement, *Mount Analogue*.

In discovering India, Daumal had discovered his mother tongue in a double sense of the word: Sanskrit is the mother of all languages, based on a scientifically constructed grammar, and is the prototypal link between sound and meaning. He also found there a "language" that is a matrix (Latin: womb) of a complete world view. Daumal wrote that "the Sanskirt language is intimately linked with a whole architecture of life." The millennia of Hindu wisdom that fed Daumal and the keen insight that he brought to it create a confluence of energy that radiates from *Rasa*.

Even after fifty years of subsequent books on Oriental philosophy, these essays have a freshness and clarity of thought that is unsurpassed. It makes a difference when the author is fluent, expert, spiritual—and, a poet.

Kathleen Ferrick Rosenblatt is completing a doctoral thesis on René Daumal and Eastern thought for the University of Connecticut . She is a licensed acupuncturist in private practice in Santa Barbara, and is on the faculty of the California Acupuncture College in Los Angeles.

Animals and the Origins of Dance
By Steven Lonsdale. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1981. Pp. 192. $17.95.

Reviewed by Louise Steinman

Dancer Simone Forti, a pioneer in the study of "natural" movement, has written in her

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book *Handbook in Motion* (NY: NYU Press, 1974) about her experiences with animal-like movement:

> I held a large grasshopper in my open hand. It swayed from side to side as we gazed into each other's eyes. We sustained this alignment of sight through an exact correspondence in our movements, which created a certain resonance between us. We danced together like this for many minutes.

By observing and participating in the movement of a dog on her street, a polar bear at the zoo, or the grasshopper in the palm of her hand, Forti gained access to another world—and thereby, a deeper access to her self.

To experience our connection to the animal world is to reclaim a certain wholeness—both individually and collectively. While Forti exemplifies a contemporary artist in search of that wholeness, Steven Lonsdale's recent book *Animals and the Origins of Dance* is a thorough and provocative study of that lost wholeness. He compiles myths from many cultures to reveal the connection between animals and dance to the most basic rituals of human society.

The chapters follow the main themes of a human life cycle: birth (the movement of the snake associated with the rhythmic vaginal spasms of childbirth); initiation and puberty; the hunt (the dance the buffalo bull teaches the maiden); courtship and mating; fertility; and death. There are additional chapters on the varied meaning, from culture to culture, of dog, feline, horse, and bird characters.

Steven Lonsdale and Simone Forti use different methods. He reports as a skilled ethnographer; she articulates the revelations of felt experiences. The more "outside" approach by Lonsdale is indicated by his own response to the question, "Do animals dance?" He writes:

> The configuration and rhythmic regularity found in the behavior of certain animal species do correspond to our notion of an ordered choreography. However graceful and structured its movements are, the dancing animal is severely restricted by comparison with man, who can impose a seemingly infinite array of rhythmic patterns and shapes on his dances. Man is the supreme dancer.

That, of course, depends upon whom you ask. There are few dancers who don't seem restricted in movement compared to the sting ray in the Seattle Aquarium.

Lonsdale stresses the practical and magical advantages of imitating the animal in dance. It is in the act of transformation that animal dancers in various cultures "quest for their instinctive origins."

Lonsdale's book calls to mind several attempts by contemporary artists to explore our lost familiarity with animals. In *Turtle*

Diary, a novel by Russell Hoban, a middle-aged divorced man becomes obsessed with the giant sea turtles in the London Aquarium. He undertakes to sneak the turtles out of the zoo, transport them to Cornwall, and set them free. "I'm always afraid of being lost," the character says, "the secret navigational act of the turtles seems a sacred thing to me." Later this same character quotes from Eliade's classic book on shamanism:

> In the beginning, that is, in mythical times, man lived at peace with the animals and understood their speech. It was not until after a primordial catastrophe, comparable to the "fall" of Biblical tradition, that man became what he is today—mortal, sexed, obliged to work to feed himself, and at enmity with the animals. While preparing for his ecstasy and during it, the shaman abolishes the present human condition and, for the time being, recovers the situation as it was in the beginning. Friendship with animals, knowledge of their language, transformation into an animal are so many signs that the shaman has re-established the "paradisal" situation lost at the dawn of time.

Like Hoban, theater artist Meredith Monk has explored the image of the turtle in her recent opera, *Specimen Days*, in which a film of a walking turtle is juxtaposed between scenes. Her newest vocal work is titled "Turtle Dreams." As a solo performer Monk continues the lineage of the animal dancers Lonsdale discusses in his book, breaking the species barrier with sounds as well as movements.

Another image reminiscent of the "paradisal" times Eliade refers to was a photo in *The New York Times* recently in which a man and a bird are seen dancing together. The man is a scientist named George Archibald, the bird an endangered whooping crane. In an effort to get Tex to ovulate, Dr. Archibald spent seven days a week with her, helping to build a nest, look for worms, and frequently dancing the crane courtship dance. The photo of Tex and Dr. Archibald facing each other, several inches off the ground with arms and wings outstretched, is the kind of image myths are made of. Maybe Lonsdale will include it along with the other extraordinary photographs and illustrations in the next edition of his book.

Animals and the Origins of Dance is significant both for the breadth of information and for the care and elegance with which that information is presented. But in order to *feel* as well as *think* about the relationship of animals and dance to human expression, one should also read Forti's *Handbook in Motion*. Reading the two may well transform how a person sees animals.

Louise Steinman is a performer, director, and writer. She has been presenting her own work on

the West Coast since 1976 and recently appeared as a demon in Ping Chong's A.M./P.M. *She is writing a book about performance for Shambhala.*

Meditations through the Quran: Tonal Images in an Oral Culture
By Ernest G. McClain. York Beach, Maine: Nicolas Hays, 1982. Pp. 166. $12.95.

Reviewed by Joscelyn Godwin

To those who have not yet read Ernest McClain's two previous books, *The Myth of Invariance* and *The Pythagorean Plato*, I would say: Begin here. In this latest in what promises to be a continuing series of masterly works, McClain has entered a new dimension of his subject—which is, after all, comparative religion in the most rigorous sense of the term. He has been inspired by his meditations on the Quran to abandon, for nearly half the book, his earlier objective musico-mathematical studies of ancient texts, and to speak from his heart.

Never have I read a book on Islam by an outsider which has moved me so powerfully by its sympathy and insight, and by its love for the Islamic Revelation and its Prophet.

In the first two chapters, McClain writes on the Quran as a problem for both the West and the East. He attributes Western misunderstanding to an incapacity to appreciate a document which reveals its true purpose in being read and heard out loud in the original "beautiful music" of Quraish Arabic. "Such an attitude exposes sheer sound—tone, and the feeling tone evokes—as the real ground of communal meaning"—an attitude almost incomprehensible to Westerners imbued with modern philosophical values who have lost faith in the truth of ambiguity and the beauty of multivalent meanings. "If the West faces any real threat from Islam," McClain asserts, "it is because the Quran radiates a wisdom from man's pre-literate, pre-historic past in words which the ear of the simplest mind conveys to the heart with none of the delaying, inhibiting interference of thought." The Quranic problem for the East, on the other hand, lies in its possible use to further fundamentalism and bigotry when taken at only one level of meaning, forgetful of the differences (of which the West is keenly aware) between seventh-century Arabia and today. In this context McClain analyses the Islamic penal code and status of women with truly compassionate wisdom. As he says, "history proves that the Quran can either bind or release the creative powers of its believers," citing the glorious period of early Islam as a release, while leaving open the question of what we may expect tomorrow.

But this is only half the story. It was in 1974 that McClain stumbled on the "holy mountain" of archaic tonal symbolism, of which his previous books explored the foothills. Now, in a long appendix, he tackles Old Testament numerology from the standpoint of this mountain with its thick cloud cover, which is to the uninitiated eye a pattern of pebbles representing the multiplication tables of 5 and 3. I could not do justice to his findings in fewer words than he uses himself: suffice it to say that he maintains a mathematical and musical insight, granted perhaps in Sumer around 3700 B.C., gave a basis of invariant symbolic truth to all subsequent theological and cosmological speculations. Once discovered, this matrix can be seen as the "invariant myth" behind the mythologies that developed subsequently, detectable in the Vedas, in Babylonian and Egyptian theology, in the allegories of Plato (having presumably traveled from Babylon to Greece with Pythagoras), in the portions of the Hebrew Old Testament referable to a post-Babylonian source, in parts of the New Testament, and now in Islam.

The key here is the Ka'ba, that ancient sanctuary of pagan Arabia with its 360 idols and its un-cubic dimensions. McClain has recognized in these the simple proportions of 3:4:5—numbers which lie at the basis of the entire musical mythology—and concludes that "the transformation of the Ka'ba from central pagan symbol to central Islamic symbol is one of the most brilliant achievements of the Quran." He adds new meaning to the Muhammadan claim, "I bring nothing new." But the direct statements of the Quran emerge as a check

on the luxuriant musical symbolism with which the Old Testament is riddled—so much so that one is left wondering what historical reality does lie behind the latter's tales, and appreciating in a new light the Quran's corrected versions of biblical stories.

The subtitle, *Tonal Images in an Oral Culture*, seems to refer to the question with which I am left at at the end of the book. McClain has written on the one hand of a musical mathematics which must always have been an esoteric intellectual pursuit, and on the other of the direct, non-cerebral, and universal effect of the Quran as sounded. Is there any meeting-point between these two dimensions of tone? Perhaps they belong respectively to the wisdom of the head and the wisdom of the heart; and perhaps this is the reason why Islam can justifiably claim (as S.H. Nasr says on the cover) to be "a final revelation and synthesis of all . . . previous harmonic revelations."

Joscelyn Godwin is the author of Mystery Religions in the Ancient World *(Thames and Hudson, London, and Harper & Row, San Francisco: 1981). He teaches at Colgate University, Hamilton, New York.*

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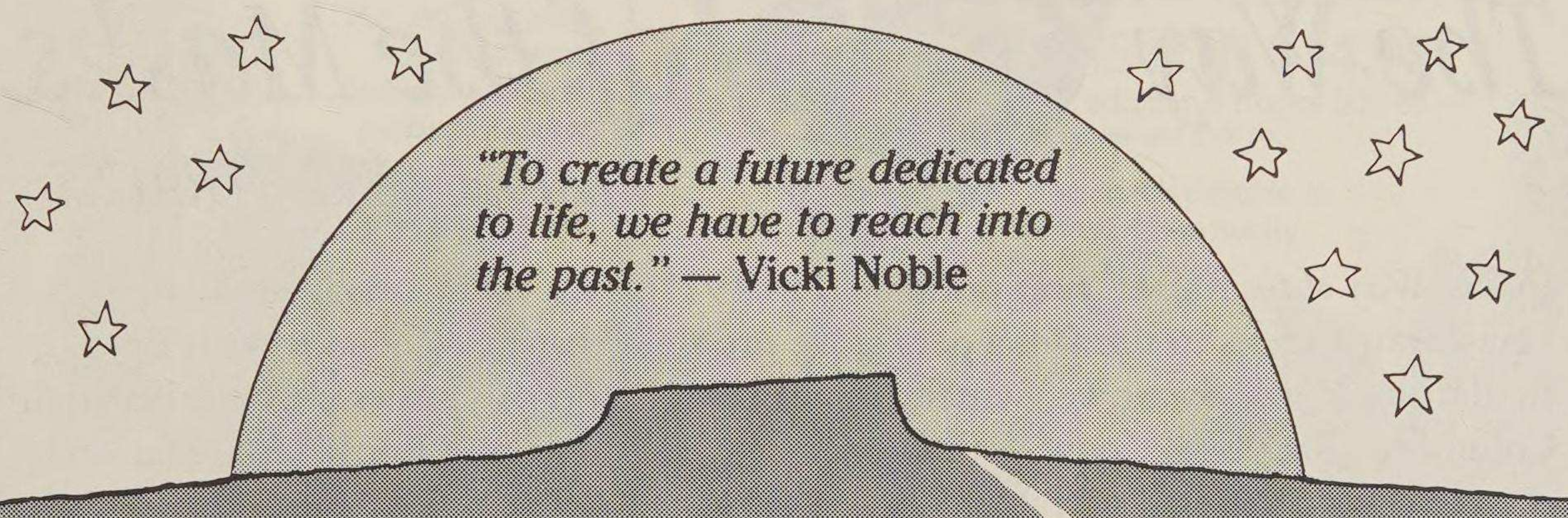

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Pages 33 & 34:

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Page 71: "Ravanna attacked by Hanuman," stone relief from Ankor-Vat.

Page 72: "King shooting winged lion," Achaemenian cylinder seal, Babylonian, 590-330 BC.

Page 73: "Monster on chain," a bronze Viking mold, from the collection of the Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm.

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PROFILES

Jonathan Cott, a new Contributing Editor to PARABOLA, is the author of *Beyond the Looking Glass* and the forthcoming *Pipers at the Gates of Dawn*. His interview with African novelist Chinua Achebe was in Vol. VI, No. 2 of PARABOLA.

René Daumal (1908–1944) was a French poet, philosopher, critic, and Sanskrit scholar. His best known works are *Mount Analogue* and *A Night of Serious Drinking*.

Paul Jordan-Smith is Epicycle Editor of PARABOLA.

James Moran is a London writer currently engaged in a comparative study of Eastern Orthodoxy, Jewish Chasidism, and Zen Buddhism.

Norris Merchant has taught and lectured widely at colleges and universities on art, literature, politics, and philosophy. He has reviewed for *The Nation* and *Commonweal* and recently delivered two lecture series, "Peace Versus War" and "Ideologies in Conflict," at Cooper Union in New York City.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is Professor of Religion and Islamic Studies at Temple University. His latest work, *Knowledge and the Sacred* is reviewed in this issue, and *Essential Writings of Frithjof Schuon*, which he has edited, is forthcoming from Crossroad.

Adin Steinsaltz is considered the world's leading Talmudic scholar. He has also lectured extensively in the United States and Europe, and is the author of *The Thirteeen Petalled Rose* and *Beggars and Prayers*, the latter a retelling of tales of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav. He has written *The Essential Talmud* (Basic Books) and is currently halfway through a proposed 35-volume complete edition of the Talmudic commentaries.

P.L. Travers is a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA and the author of the Mary Poppins series, the latest installment of which is discussed in the "Tangents/Reviews" section of this issue.