

Conversations from Below: I

The scene is set in a bedroom - well, of course, there are at least a hundred ways of looking at any scene; but since the most usual way is the physical, we will begin with that. The scene is set in a bedroom. A rather plain bedroom and not a particularly tidy one. It is littered with books and papers, shoes and slippers and various other appurtenances of physical life. On the corner of the bed is a maid between twenty and thirty, if not rather older (or even, perhaps, a little younger). She appears to be deep in thought.

If one were to look at the scene in another way - a way beyond the physical (not so much above it as below it) - one would see a snake. It slithered a little while ago into the room, and beginning at her ankles, it has wrapped its coils about the whole length of her body. She, of course, is quite unaware of it; and the snake seems only slightly aware of her. Its business is not exactly with her. But to understand that, we will have to look at our scene in another way again.

If we see the scene as the snake sees it - a way much further below the physical - we will see that the snake is concerned with a little stream

or trickle that seems to be flowing out of the heart of the maid. But as we look down the stream, we will see that it is flowing not into the room, but into a landscape: a dark and dreary landscape, which seems heavy with a sort of dull laziness. And we see also that as the trickle flows on, it becomes a little river, overhung by strange trees which, in that twilight look something like willows, except that their outlines are not clean and clear, but strangely heavy and blurred, as though they had been moulded from some greasy black wax that would not set properly.

But unlike other rivers, this one flows slowly and lazily where it is young and slender, meandering widely, first in one direction and then in another, seeming to have no particular destination and to care nothing for when or whether it arrives. But as it becomes older and broader, so its pace becomes faster and more determined, forcing a path through all obstructions with an urgency that rises towards the end to something like desperation. And the end? Why, at the end it flows not into the wide sea, but comes to a great weir, vast and terrible, where it crashes over the edge into the awful nothingness of a black and bottomless abyss. A picture

that might have been conjured up in the imaginations of those sailors of former times who believed the earth to be flat, and feared that they might sail over the edge of the world.

If we have talked of this river as though it were a living creature, we have not been far wrong, for if we look at it in another way, it is a snake. And as soon as we have adjusted our vision so as to see it as a snake, why, the whole focus seems to swirl and flicker, showing it now as a snake, now as a man, now as a maid, now as a demon, all claws and lashing tail.

For this creature or river is the false self of the maid, which seeks always to lead her by gradual degrees downstream, first this way and then that, but always away from the bright, bright light of perfection. There is one other place where the stream flows rapidly, and that is at the very beginning, where it is out in the open and exposed directly to the light. There it turns and twists, far more like a snake than a river, spurred to violent activity by its fierce determination to get back into the dark.

For some time now, the maid has been making her way upstream, and now, as the false self (whose name, if it had a name, would be Shlitt) is explaining, she

is coming dangerously close to those narrow rapids. But quiet! We have already missed some of its words:

... but I just don't understand it, Klagen. She has had every advantage. She has lived in a world absolutely dominated by materialism. Their "great issues" are all to do with money and politics and what they call "society". And she had perfect freedom - there was no need for treason. She could have been a capitalist or a socialist, an artist or a philistine, a humanist or a cynic - and all the time she would never have taken a step upstream. But she is questioning everything - everything.

Klagen: Calm down, Shlitt, calm down. I hope you don't let her call it "questioning". When she questions religion, that is "questioning". When she questions the orthodoxies of materialism, she must be taught to call it "personal opinion", or better still, "wishful thinking".

Shlitt: No, no, she is past that stage now. I can't befuddle her mind with verbal tricks any more.

Klag: My dear Shlitt, human minds are so made that their minds can always be befuddled by verbal tricks - or practically always. If our subject is past the particular stage I have mentioned, then rest assured, there will be dozens of subtler strategies suitable to whatever stage she has reached. Your trouble is that you having things

too easily up till now, so you give up as soon as you run into a spot of difficulty. The battle isn't lost yet - it has hardly begun.

Shlitt: But what must I do?

Klag: Well, we must watch the situation carefully and adjust our strategy as we go along. It is important to keep the campaign going on several fronts at once. We can start by launching a heavy bombardment on the materialist front.

Shlitt: But that's what I've been trying to do.

Klag: Yes, but how?

Shlitt: With arguments, of course - opening her up to all the arguments against the existence of any non-physical reality.

Klag: Yes, I thought as much. Listen, Shlitt, arguments are sometimes all right for bolstering up materialism when it is already accepted - even then they are just a frill, a superfluous luscery. But when materialism is even slightly in doubt, clear thought is our worst enemy. You know as well as I do that there are no real arguments against non-physical reality. Let me give you a principle. It is one word that should be engraved over the gates of Hell in letters of granite. The word is fuzz. Never forget it.

Shlitt: But what does it mean?

Klag: It means that you must never let your subject's mind be clear. All her thoughts

and arguments must be fuzzed. Succeed in that and your path is clear. Fail and you have not the smallest hope.

Shlitt: How does that apply in this case?

Klag: My dear Shlitt, fuzzing is the very essence of materialism. Materialism means making your subject believe that everything has its origin in physical matter, without ever asking where physical matter has its origin. Materialists believe that everything has a cause. Now either matter has no cause, ~~in which case the cause must be outside matter (since nothing can be the cause of itself)~~. in which case their system breaks down; or else it has a cause - in which case the cause must be outside matter (since nothing can be the cause of itself). So their system breaks down either way. Don't you see how fuzzed a mind must be if it fails to realize that? You wouldn't think it would work, would you? But it does. We've had some of the best human minds eating out of our hands just by a bit of fuzzing.

Shlitt: But if they're really intelligent...

Klag: Intelligence comes second. Don't you understand that? Once the false self is in control of a subject, the subject is filled subconsciously with the correct feelings of terror and hatred towards the terrible light of the Divine. She will not be aware of it (and it is very important that she does not become so).

But all her beliefs will be designed to shield her from that light. Her intellect, which is, after all, simply one of her many attributes, will be used like all the others in furthering that end. And that brings us to another all-important principle. Whether she believes in religion or not, you must never let her see its true importance. Always encourage her to think of it as a part of life, as one aspect or dimension of things.

Never let her realise how every action on the physical plane has both causes and effects on the spiritual. It is easy enough, for incredible as it may seem, she is practically blind. At all she can see are the physical things around her. Only occasionally does she get the tiniest glimpses of the rest of the world. And usually it is easy enough to convince her that they are just "imagination".

If she is a materialist, never let her horror of the Divine become conscious. Let her believe that she "hardly gives religion a thought".

Shlitt: But this doesn't apply to my case.

Klag: It is important that you understand the basic principles. But you are quite right. Let us get down to practicalities. As I have said, there is no point in arguing for materialism, but there are plenty of other ways of going about it. You can simply take advantage of her

near-blindness. Make her concentrate on the things about her, show her how real they are. And try to convince her that since she can't see spiritual things, they don't exist.

Shlitt: But that's nonsense - it makes no sense at all!

Klag: I know, I know. But you'd be surprised how often it works. A good blast of that trick at the right moment (timing is very important in these matters) can often succeed where months of patient work have failed. It isn't foolproof, but do keep trying it: - it takes no effort, and you never know when you might score a surprise hit.

Shlitt: Good, I will try that.

Klag: Now alongside that, you must work in some other tricks. One of the best is to pester her with the idea that religion is "out of date" that "you can't believe in that these days". When a really well-trained materialist hears about religion, she says (or thinks, if she has fallen into the deplorable habit of politeness) "But this is the twentieth century!" Of course, that makes about as much sense as saying "But this is Tuesday morning". But keep fuzzing, and she will never notice. Now with your subject, you may not yet be able to fuzz the whole issue. She probably will ask exactly what that means. But you must still fuzz. Let the answer be something vague about "modern

"science" or a "more advanced civilisation". For Hell's sake, don't let her seriously start asking what particular proven facts of modern science contradict religion. If she does that, you're finished along those lines.

Shlitt: For a little while, anyway.

Klay: Quite right. You can often use their forgetfulness to your advantage, and reopen issues a little later that they have quite successfully dealt with before.

Shlitt: But aren't there any specific examples I can give her?

Klay: Well, again, try to be as vague and general as possible. There aren't any real scientific facts that support materialism, but there are individual scientists who happen to be materialists. Of course, that is nothing to do with the fact that they are scientists - they would have been materialists in any case. But provided you keep fuzzing, you can use them in a vague way to give the "authority of science" to materialism.

But it is usually better to be more general than that. Her whole society is materialistic. Try to make her feel that a society which has moonflights and electric lights must know better in all things than ancient religious societies (the sort of history they teach her makes even the earlier patriarchal civilisations seem more primitive than they were). Don't let her consider the fact that just as

a plumber probably knows little about metaphysical philosophy, so a society which is very proficient at technical and physical things is likely to be backward in spiritual matters. Fortunately we have long ago erased the knowledge of the ancient matriarchal societies, which were so far advanced in spiritual knowledge that they were able to produce all the benefits of material technology without machines and factories and laboratories.

Only a tiny few of them have the smallest fraction of that ability now, and they can easily be dismissed as fakes and frauds if they are so foolish as to make themselves public.

She does still believe in what they call "progress", I take it?

Shlitt: Yes, but she is becoming a little sceptical.

Klay: Be very careful about that. You must keep her believing in "progress" - and keep it as vague as possible. The human race "coming of age" is a very good phrase - it suggests a vague analogy with their individual growth patterns and means absolutely nothing in practical terms. The less it actually means, the less it can be questioned and criticised. So long as you keep her hooked on the progress-myth, materialism is always in with a chance. But that's not all; you'll see later how it can be useful to us in all sorts of ^{other} ways, even if we can't get

her back to materialism.

Shlitt: You mean we haven't lost if we can't get her back to materialism?

Klag: Lost? Not by a long shot?! In the modern world, materialism just happens to be the handiest weapon - but there are plenty of others. We got on perfectly well for centuries without materialism, you know.

Of course, it would be very nice if she could be converted back to materialism, but it doesn't really matter. The main purpose of the campaign on the materialist front is not that at all.

Shlitt: Then what is it?

Klag: Well, there are various purposes.

Firstly, it will help to keep her mind off the real spiritual issues. Secondly, if we can keep her hovering on the brink through doubts and difficulties, never really choosing one way or another, she will grow weaker after a little while, and the current will gradually pull her back downstream. Thirdly, even if she does choose the religious path, we will be able to use the vestiges of materialism - or even her attempts to disprove materialism - to prevent it from being a real approach to that awful light. I may have to go into that later, but I hope not.

Shlitt: I think she may will try some religious "experiment" in the near future.

Klag: Yes, that is not unusual. If at all possible, direct her into some form

of Christianity. If you can get her to worship God in a masculine form, that is half the battle. We brought about the present materialism in human societies by weaning them slowly from the Divine Image, to a masculine form of it, and then weaning them off that altogether. Fortunately, being half-blind, it is easy to confuse them about this. They cannot see the spiritual weakness of the masculine image, although they can sometimes feel it. Besides, we have had all of the Christian sects in our pocket now for a long time, and have guided them into a worldly mentality. In the last century we had them all on respectability and thrift and capitalism; now it's all social justice and "liberation" and "personal relationships". A few slip through the net, of course, but for the most part they are all floating nicely downstream. Fix their hearts on transient things, and let them give no thought to the Eternal. That's the secret - then it doesn't matter whether they call it "religion" or not. But in the name of all that's unholy, keep her eyes turned from the dazzling image of the one Goddess.