

Boris Mouravieff

GNOSIS

BOOK ONE
The Exoteric Cycle

STUDY AND COMMENTARIES
ON THE ESOTERIC TRADITION
OF EASTERN ORTHODOXY

*Translated by S. A. Wissa,
edited by Robin Amis.*

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‘This is wisdom which we preach among the perfect, yet not the wisdom of this age nor of the leaders¹ of this age, which will become nothing. We preach the wisdom of God, mysterious and hidden, which was foreordained by God before all ages for our glory, a wisdom that none of the leaders of this age have ever known.’

(I Corinthians ii: 6–8.)

1. In the original: *nor the Archons of this aeon*. *Novum Testamentum graece et latine*. Textum graecum recensuit, latinum ex Vulgata. Tertio editio critica recognita. Published by Frédéric Brandscheid, Fribourg, 1907, Vol. II, p. 258.

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S. A. Wissa

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THE LANGUAGE OF GNOSIS:
FOREWORD BY THE TRANSLATOR

When translators have translated complex and elaborate literary or philosophical works into other languages, they often make excuses for not giving their readers the original with all its shades of meaning, its subtleties and intonations. The translators of scientific works never do this, as they are certain they have been able to translate the complete content. But although Gnosis is a work of esoteric philosophy — with all the shades of meaning that this implies — its author, Boris Mouravieff, has insisted on its scientific precision and on the rigorous scientific method which has been followed throughout. He says in the twentieth chapter of the second volume, Gnosis II:¹ *‘Just like positive science, this Gnosis is systematic; it is the same as the other knowledge in its systematic arrangement of the Cosmos, in its ensemble as well as in its smallest parts.’*

Gnosis describes the Cosmos and man with equal precision. Wherever both consider the same subject, its method is systematized in exactly the same way as in positive science. Because of this precision, I have sometimes found it necessary to translate the French text word for word, sacrificing elegance in favour of precision.

The three volumes of Gnosis, like the scriptures, are built on the principle that no special terminology is used — just as the gospels were written in Greek and not in Hebrew, which was the ancient sacred language. At the same time, some of the words used have been given very precise meanings which remain the same throughout the book. The only exceptions to this consistency, says the author, are in old translations made by enlightened men.

These special terms are sometimes explained by notes. I have not hesitated to employ words now little used in the English language, but which prove exactly suitable, such as the word ‘ensemble’ — which means exactly the same in both languages, and ‘notion’, which once meant the same in French and English but which is now much less used in English, and often in more narrow ways. Here it is used in its original breadth of meaning.

Two other words should also be brought to the notice of the reader. These are ‘gamme’, translated by ‘gamut’, and ‘échelle’, translated by the word ‘scale’.

The author has stipulated that the use of simple terms does not exclude a rigorous precision of meaning. (Chapter II, p. 12) This is particularly true concerning certain important French words: ‘savoir’ and ‘connaître’, which

1. P. 262 of the French text.

are more or less indiscriminately translated by the English term 'to know', but which have very different meanings in French. If the reader refers to the sixth paragraph of the first chapter he would read: '..knowledge leads us towards power.' 'Knowledge' here is the translation of the French word '*connaissance*', which derives from the verb '*connaître*'. If we turn to the third paragraph of the second chapter we would see that: 'one can know without understanding, while the reverse is not true' and also that: 'to understand is to know with something imponderable added to it'. Here again, 'to know' translates the French verb '*savoir*'.

We deduce from these two facts that since Knowledge (*connaissance*, not *savoir*,) leads us towards Power, and since knowledge (*savoir*) is nothing but a preliminary step towards understanding, *savoir* is a kind of inferior knowledge which, though indispensable, neither leads to Power, nor is in itself Understanding. Considerations like this have shaped the translation of this book, sometimes involving a choice between accuracy and elegance. These often difficult choices are summarized in the translation notes that follow.

Translation Notes

As the Translator's introduction says, because of the specialized nature and precise terminology of the French original, we have found considerable difficulty in translating certain French words, particularly where modern English uses one word for meanings clearly differentiated by different terms in the French. The most important examples are summarized below, and sometimes also indicated by footnotes to the text:

Niveau / *Niveaux*: Levels in the psychological or anthropological sense: 'Abaissement de niveau mental'.

Translated: Level–Levels.

Conflicts with:

Echelle / *Echelon* —

Echelle: ladder used in a sense of stepladder or sometimes in a different sense as a graduated scale.

Translated: Scale.

Echelon: rung, used in the sense of level (that is static, i.e. it is already there), rung, step—of a stair: one level above another; rank in a hierarchy.

Translated: Step.

This in turn conflicts with and must be differentiated from:

Gamme, in the sense of musical scale of several different but related notes. Translated by gamut — a forgotten English word for a 'musical scale', which is rare but technically correct, if not previously used quite in

the way in which *gamme* was used by the author. The use of this word *gamut* actually originated in French with Guido d'Arezzo (Klein's Etymological Dict. says '*Gamut, n., range of musical sounds from gamma (the lowest) to ut (the highest) — Coined by Guido d'Arezzo. Fr.*') This word also has more than one meaning in the book, and refers in general to a sequence of events developing according to a musical scale.

Translated: *gamut*.

Octave: octave as a complete musical scale from Do to Do.

Translated: *octave*.

Plan: The French word 'plan' is used in what appears in English in two ways, one equivalent to the English term 'plane', the other in the everyday English sense in which an action is preceded by a plan, or as in the Fr. phrase, 'le plan de la creation'. This fortunate double meaning in French does not translate well in English.

Translated: *plan* OR *plane* as appropriate.

Words for road, path or track, intentionally differentiated by the author.

Voie: translated way,

Chemin: translated path,

Sentier: translated track.

Words for knowledge and understanding.

Savoir and related words describe knowledge that is 'outside ourselves', information that we may or may not understand.

Translation: knowledge, to know.

Connaissance and related words refer to knowledge which we contain ... the knowing of that which is outside us by that which is within.

Translated: Knowledge, to Know.

These two forms of knowledge are often distinguished in the text by footnote reference to the French.

Comprendre is understanding. This is within us and is limited by our capacity.

Translated: to understand, understanding.

Savoir-faire is knowledge we can successfully put into practice.

Translated: *savoir faire*.

Older English words brought back into use.

The author distinguishes in French between: *idée* and *notion*, often using 'notion' where normal loose use of English would use 'idea'.

We are doing the same in English.

Translated: *idea* and *notion*.

He uses the word '*ensemble*', (as in '*tout ensemble*'), to describe a loose mixture or combination of different components, often in contexts in which looser use of English would use the word 'whole'. To be precise we have translated this by 'ensemble', correct but now rarely used in English.

Translated: ensemble.

He distinguishes this from various derivatives of the word '*integral*', which translates loosely into the English words 'whole' or 'complete'. In this text these words are used by the author to achieve greater precision, and his meaning has direct links to the mathematical idea of integration.

Translated: DERIVATIVES OF integrate.

Constataion: French words that exist in English, but are very little used:

A group of words including '*constate*' and '*constatation*', which are used here with very precise meaning.

Translated: 'constate', 'constated' and 'constatation'.

Psychique: The French word '*psychique*' is translated throughout the book as 'mental', used in the same sense that Descartes distinguished mind from body, so that mind and mental refer to the ensemble of intellectual, emotional and instinctive processes. It is used in this way to avoid the occult connotations now attached to the English word 'psychic' — this usage is marked by footnotes. Where the word 'mental' is used without a footnote it directly translates the French 'mental'.

Translated: mental; '*centres psychique*' translated as 'mental centres'.

Because of their importance, certain of these translations will also be referred to by footnotes.

A number of more general footnotes have been added by the translator and editor. These are marked 'Tr.' and 'Ed.' respectively.

Sadek Alfred Wissa, December 1989

FOREWORD

People interested in esoteric matters will probably have read the book by P.D. Ouspensky, published posthumously by his next of kin, titled *Fragments of an Unknown teaching*.¹ The ideas found in that book were gathered by the author from 'G'.² 'G' indicates in that text what is the basis of his teaching: 'for the benefit of those who know already, I will say that, if you like, *this is esoteric Christianity*'.³

It is curious in these conditions that the title speaks of an unknown teaching. The Christian Esoteric Tradition has always remained alive within certain monasteries in Greece, Russia, and elsewhere, and if it is true that this knowledge was hermetically hidden, yet its existence was known and access to it was never forbidden to those seriously interested in these questions.

If some passages of the book give the impression, in certain respects, of a syncretic gathering from different traditional teachings,⁴ I have no doubt that — in their essentials — the system disclosed by the fragments that form Ouspensky's work originates from revelations issued by that *Great esoteric Brotherhood* to which the Apostle St Paul alluded in his Epistle to the Romans.⁵ These fragments are therefore drawn from a genuine source. Yet — as correctly indicated by the title — Ouspensky's book contains only fragments of a tradition which, until recently, was only transmitted orally. And only a study of the complete⁶ tradition can give access to the Revelation.

My own relations with Ouspensky, who I knew well, were described in an article of the review *Synthèses*.⁷ I must reaffirm here that although Ouspensky had a spirited desire to publish his book during his lifetime, he always hesitated to do so. I myself had stressed strongly the danger of fragmentary disclosure, and uncertainties in the exposition of certain essential points. The fact that *Fragments* was only published after the death of the author, more than twenty years after it was written, supports these assertions.

1. *Fragments d'un enseignement inconnu*, Paris, Stock, 1950. (*In Search of the Miraculous: fragments of an unknown teaching*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1950.)

2. *Fragments*, p. 6. Footnotes have been amended to refer to the English version of *Fragments*. The original references to the French text have been retained thus: [p. 22].

3. *Ibid.*, p. 102 [p. 154] Italicized in the original text.

4. *Ibid.*, particularly p. 15 [p. 35].

5. Romans viii: 28–30.

6. Fr. 'ensemble'.

7. Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Brussels, Editions Synthèses, issue 144 — November 1957.

* * *

The study presented here is directly drawn from the Eastern Christian Tradition: the sacred texts, the commentaries written around these texts, and especially from the *Philokalia* which is, above all, the same teaching and discipline, transmitted by fully authorized individuals. We will find certain similarities between the contents of this study and Ouspensky's book, since the sources are in part the same, but attentive examination and comparison will, above all, show the incomplete character of that book — its deviations from the doctrine. We all know the importance of diagrams in the Esoteric Tradition. They have been introduced to allow the transmission of this knowledge through the centuries in spite of the death of civilizations. Errors on the background of a particularly important diagram⁸ were exposed in the previously mentioned article in *Synthèses*. What else should we say of the place given to man in the diagram called 'Diagram of Everything living'?⁹ After several considerations aiming to show the 'nullity' of the man who has not esoterically evolved — the very small place which is his in the Universe — in that artificially complicated diagram he has been placed at the level of the Angels and Archangels. This means he has been shown in the Kingdom of God — represented by the superior inverted 'L' — even though Christ categorically affirmed that entry into the Kingdom of God is closed to those who have not been *born anew*.¹⁰ This second Birth is the object and goal of esoteric work. According to the New Testament,¹¹ the place of *exterior* man, man who has not, so far, produced fruit; whose latent faculties are yet to be developed, is in fact found in that diagram between the two inverted 'L's', where he forms the link between visible and invisible worlds.

There is something else graver still: the concept of the *mechanical-man* has as a consequence his irresponsibility.¹² This is in direct contradiction to the doctrine of sin, repentance and salvation which form the basis of the teaching of Christ.

* * *

The greatest genuine faith, human intelligence, and goodwill, are not sufficient to prevent errors and deviations in everything that touches the domain of Revelation but is not totally inspired by it. The errors and deviations of *Fragments* attest to the fact that the book was not written at the orders of, and under the control of, the *Great esoteric Brotherhood*. This means that the facts on which the book was based have a fragmen-

8. *Fragments* p. 204 [p. 289].

9. *Ibid.*, p. 323 [p. 451].

10. John iii: 3, ff.

11. Mark iv: 11.

12. *Fragments* p. 19 [p. 41].

tary character. In the esoteric realm, all fragmentary knowledge is a source of danger. The works of ancient writers, such as St Ireneus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius of Cæsarea, who wrote about the heresies of the first centuries of our era, confirm this. We learn, for example, that certain gnostic schools, seeing the imperfection of the created world, and without searching for the reason for the existence of these imperfections, have, by a shortcut of thought, jumped to conclusions such as the feebleness of the Creator, His incompetence, or even His evil nature. Thus the incomplete is the true source of all heresies. Only what the Tradition calls the *Pleroma*, which means *Plenitude*, including *Gnosis*¹³ in its totality, offers a guarantee against all such deviations.

13. Ephesians iii: 18–19; *Didachè*, *passim*; St Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, *passim*, etc.

PREFACE

Esoteric studies help us to make sense of the evolution of man and of human society. This explains the increasing interest these studies have aroused in cultivated circles. Yet, paradoxically, many Europeans who feel drawn to these researches turn their eyes towards the non-Christian Traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism and others. It would certainly be exciting to compare esoteric thinking in these different systems, because the Tradition is One, and whoever delves deeply into these studies will not fail to be struck by this essential unity. Yet to those who desire to go beyond pure speculation, the problem appears in a different light. This unique Tradition has been and still is now being presented in multiple forms, each meticulously adapted to the mentality and spirit of the human group to which its Word is addressed, and to the mission with which this group has been charged. For the Christian world, the easiest way; the least difficult way to reach the goal, is to follow the esoteric Doctrine which forms the basis of the Christian Tradition. Actually, the thought of a man who has been born and formed at the heart of our civilization, be he Christian or not, believer or atheist, is impregnated with twenty centuries of Christian culture. It is incomparably easier for him to begin his studies starting from this environment, rather than to adapt to the spirit of an environment different from his own. Transplantation is not without danger, and generally gives hybrid products.

We might add this: that all the great religions which have issued from the one Tradition are messages of truth — *otkrovenie istiny* — yet each of them addresses itself only to a part of humanity. Christianity alone has firmly announced its œcumenical character right from the start. Jesus said ‘*and the Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony unto all nations.*’¹ The power of the prophecy of the Word, as expressed in this phrase, cries out after twenty centuries: the Good News, first taught to a restricted group of disciples, has since been effectively spread over all the earth. This prodigious expansion is due to the fact that the Christian Doctrine, in its perfect expression, aims at a general resurrection, while other doctrines, even though they belong to the Truth, essentially aim at individual salvation and are therefore only partial revelations of the Tradition.

Thus this teaching is fundamentally Christian.

*
* *

The Christian esoteric Tradition is based on the Canon, the Rites, on Menology, and lastly on the Doctrine. The latter is an ensemble of rules,

1. Matthew xxiv: 14.

treatises and commentaries given by the doctors of the Œcumenical Church. These texts were in large part assembled in a collection called the *Philokalia*.² In addition to these *sources*, there are isolated writings by other ancient and modern authors, religious and secular.

Most of the writings of the *Philokalia* were intended for people who had already acquired a certain esoteric culture. One can say the same for certain aspects and texts of the Canon, including the Gospels. It must also be noted that, being addressed to all, these texts cannot take account of the abilities of each person. This is why Bishop Theophan the Recluse, in his preface to the *Philokalia*, insists on the fact that without help *nobody*³ can succeed in penetrating the Doctrine. This is also why, together with written sources, esoteric science conserves and cultivates an oral Tradition which brings the Letter to life. Oriental Orthodoxy has known how to keep this Tradition intact by applying the absolute rule of Hermetism in each particular case. From generation to generation, ever since the time of the Apostles, it has led its disciples up to mystic experience.

If hermetism has provided a safeguard for nearly twenty centuries, it must be said⁴ that circumstances have now changed. At the current point in history, as at the time of the Coming of Christ, the veil has been partially raised. Therefore, for those who want to advance beyond book knowledge, which never goes beyond the domain of information; for those who intensely seek the true sense of life, who want to understand the significance of the mission of the Christian in the New Era, the possibility will exist of initiation into this divine Wisdom, *mysterious and hidden*.⁵

*
* *

We have turned to the Slavonic text of the scriptures each time the meaning given by other versions appeared to present certain obscurities. This is for two reasons. The first is that the translation into this language was made in an era still rich in sacred exegeses, where the spirit of the texts remained close to their original meaning. The second is the fixed nature of the language: the Slavonic languages, Russian in particular, remain very close to the old Slavonic language, the language which is still in use in the divine services of the Orthodox religion in the Slav countries.

2. The Russian edition was issued in 5 quarto volumes, published under the supervision of Bishop Theophan the Recluse by the Saint Panteleimon Monastery on Mount Athos.

3. Underlined in the original.

4. Fr. 'constater'.

5. I Corinthians ii: 6-8

As for the antiquity of the Slavonic text, one can say this: it is generally attributed to Constantine the Philosopher, better known under the name of St Cyril, and to his brother St Methodius, both learned Greeks from Salonika who knew the Slavonic language perfectly. So, arriving in Chersonese of Tauric, St Cyril found in the ninth century that the Gospels were already written in this language. It is, therefore, infinitely probable that they were written in a period when the forms remained alive — as stated by the Apostle St Andrew, who taught Christianity in Russia in the first century of our Era.⁶

The fixity of the language is an equally important element if one wants to go back to the original sense of a given text: it is known that the fixed nature of the Coptic language allowed Champollion, starting from the liturgic formulae of this language, to establish the equivalence between Coptic writings and Egyptian hieroglyphics. The old Slavonic language has remained alive and has undergone few modifications to the original: the ritual formulas in particular are strong evidence of this fact. That is why the Slavonic text of the New Testament, as well as writings of ancient authors translated into that language, have particular importance for the seeker today.

6. The Slavonic text is also frequently quoted in the following works: *Unseen Warfare*, translated into English by E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer, London, Faber and Faber Ltd., *Early Fathers from the Philokalia* and *Writings from the Philokalia* — same translators and publisher.

INTRODUCTION

Homo Sapiens lives immersed in his everyday life to a point where he forgets himself and forgets where he is going; yet, without feeling it, he knows that death cuts off everything.

How can we explain that the intellectual who has made marvellous discoveries and the technocrat who has exploited them have left outside the field of their investigations the ending of our lives? How can we explain that a science which attempts everything and claims everything nevertheless remains indifferent to the enigma revealed by the question of death? How can we explain why Science, instead of uniting its efforts with its older sister Religion to resolve the problem of Being — which is also the problem of death — has in fact opposed her?

Whether a man dies in bed or aboard an interplanetary ship, the human condition has not changed in the slightest.

Happiness? But we are taught that happiness lasts only as long as the Illusion lasts... and what is this Illusion? Nobody knows. But it submerges us.

If we only knew what Illusion is, we would then know the opposite: what Truth is. This *Truth would liberate us from slavery*.¹

As a psychological phenomenon, has Illusion ever been subjected to critical analysis based on the most recent discoveries of science? It does not seem to be so, and yet one cannot say that man is lazy and does not search. He is a passionate searcher ... but he misses the essential; he bypasses it in his search.

What strikes us from the very beginning is that man confuses moral progress with technical progress, so that the development of science continues in dangerous isolation.

The brilliant progress that has come from technology has changed nothing essential in the human condition, and will change nothing, because it operates only in the field of everyday events. For this reason it touches the inner life of man only superficially. Yet from very ancient times it has been known that the essential is found within man, not outside him.

*
* *

We are generally in agreement in thinking that humanity has arrived at an important turning point in its history. The Cartesian spirit which destroyed scholastic philosophy is now in turn being left behind. The logic of history demands a new spirit. The divorce between *traditional*

1. John viii: 32.

knowledge, of which religion is a trustee, and *acquired* knowledge, the fruit of science, threatens to make sterile the Christian civilization which in origin is so rich with promises.

Yet it is an aberration to believe that Science by its very nature is opposed to Tradition, and it must also be firmly stressed that Tradition does not include any tendency opposed to Science. On the contrary, the Apostles foresaw the prodigious development of science.

Thus the celebrated formula of St Paul: *Faith, Hope and Love*,² summarizes a vast programme of evolution for human knowledge.³ If we examine this formula in relation to its context⁴ we see that the first two terms are temporary, while the third is permanent. According to the Apostle it was appropriate to the epoch in which it was expressed,⁵ and its significance has had to evolve with time. This has happened just as predicted by St Paul. Science⁶, and knowledge⁷ in a general way — called on to replace Faith and Hope, which defined the limits of what was accessible to the mentality of the epoch when he taught — have since then known extraordinary development. He therefore adds: *Now that I have become a man, I have put away childish things.*⁸ This is how the passage from Faith to Knowledge is described. St Paul then specifies that this last, although necessary in evolution, is not a final state, as it is incomplete by nature. He adds that *when that which is perfect is come, that which is incomplete disappears.*⁹ The perfect is Love, which unites in itself the accomplishment of all virtues, of all prophecies, of all mysteries, and of all Knowledge.¹⁰ St Paul insists on this point and ends by saying: *seek after Love.*¹¹

It is by the joint efforts of traditional science, based on Revelation, that is, on Faith and Hope, and of acquired Science, the domain of positive knowledge, that one can hope to fulfil the programme traced out by St Paul, and finally attain Love in its integral meaning.

One of the reasons for this book is to develop the postulates of traditional Science, so as to bring out their links with positive Science.

2. I Corinthians xiii: 13. The third word is definitely *Love* and not *charity*. The distinction is important. *Love* is a noumenal power, while *charity* is only a certain attitude that constitutes one of the many manifestations of Love. (Ed. Although charity is derived from 'caritas', the Latin word for love.)

3. Fr. 'savoir'.

4. *Ibid.*, 1–12.

5. 'Now' says St Paul, verse 13.

6. *Ibid.*, 9 ff.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, verse 11.

9. *Ibid.*, verse 10.

10. I Corinthians xiii: *passim*.

11. I Corinthians xiv: 1.

The author is convinced that only the synthesis of these two branches of knowledge can now resolve the problem of man, and that on this solution depends the solution of all other contemporary problems.

* *

According to the Tradition, human evolution, after a long prehistoric period, continues in a succession of three cycles: the Cycle of the Father, which history knows only incompletely; the Cycle of the Son, which is now reaching its end, and lastly the Cycle of the Holy Spirit, which we are now approaching.

Anthropology traces the emergence of *homo sapiens fossilis* back forty thousand years from the present epoch. Life was then characterized by the matriarchy which had sprung from the system of collective marriage. Fourteen thousand years ago approximately, with the emergence of *homo sapiens recens*, the regime of the *matriarchal tribe* gave place gradually to that of the *patriarchal tribe*, characterized by polygamy. That was certainly progress, even though this system was still marked by bestiality. In that system, women were in the condition of living merchandise, yet these ancient tendencies prevailed for a long time.

Aristotle bears witness, to this when describing the attitude of the well-to-do classes towards the question of woman. He says that they kept legitimate wives to beget citizens according to the law, courtesans for pleasure, and concubines for daily use. A concept like this leaves little place for Love.

Jesus introduced into human relations something practically unknown before Him. For the law of the jungle: *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*,¹² He substituted a new commandment: *that ye love one another*.¹³ This produced a revolution in relations between man and woman: Love was introduced into social life. The 'merchandise' of previous times now obtained civic rights, although certainly not integrally nor immediately. Nevertheless, the principle of reciprocal choice in love was established. That was the emergence of *romance*.

* *

The *romance*, by which Christian society expressed the principle of reciprocal choice, reached its climax in the Middle Ages. In spite of the decline it has known since then, and in spite of a current tendency to return to regressive forms of relation between the sexes, it still remains the avowed ideal of our society. Is it not exact, then, to speak of the death of *romance*? A revolution is occurring silently which will replace the *free romance*, distinctive mark of the Christian era, with the *singular romance*

12. Exod. xxi: 24; Deut. xix: 21; Lev. xxiv: 20.

13. John xiii: 34, xv: 12; I John iii: 11.

characteristic of the era of the Holy Spirit. Liberated from servitude to procreation, this romance of tomorrow is called on to cement the indissoluble union between two strictly polar beings, a union which will assure their integration in the bosom of the Absolute. As St Paul says: '*Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor man without the woman in the Lord.*'¹⁴

The vision of such a romance has haunted the highest minds for thousands of years. We find it in platonic love, the basis of the singular romance in the myths of the Androgyne man; of Orpheus and Euridice; of Pygmalion and Galatea... This is the aspiration of the human heart, which cries in secrecy because of its great loneliness. This romance forms the essential aim of esoteric work. Here is that love which will unite man to that being who is unique for him, the *Sister-wife*,¹⁵ the glory of man, as he will be the glory of God.¹⁶ Having entered into the light of Tabor, no longer two, but one drinking at the fount of true Love, the transfigurer: the conqueror of Death.

Love is the *Alpha* and the *Omega* of life. All else has only secondary significance.

Man is born with the *Alpha*. It is the intention of the present work to show the path which leads towards the *Omega*.

Boris Mouravieff

14. I Corinthians xi: 11.

15. *Ibid.*, ix: 5.

16. *Ibid.*, xi: 7.

GNOSIS

Volume One

FIRST PART

MAN

CHAPTER I

(1)

Positive philosophy studies man in general; abstract man. Esoteric philosophy concerns man as he is¹: the investigator is the object of his own studies. Starting from the constation that man is unknown, his target is to make himself known to himself — as he is, and as he might become under certain conditions.

The final object of positive science is the same in principle, but the efforts are diametrically opposed. Starting from the centre, positive science extends, specializes, and so diverges towards the periphery. At the limit each point forms a separate discipline. Esoteric science begins from the multiplicity and variety observed on the periphery accessible to our senses, and moves towards the centre. It tends towards a more and more general synthesis.

The method of esoteric science is the same as that of positive science: observation, critical analysis of the given observations, and rigorous deduction from the established facts.

In spite of this similarity of method, there is a difference of application due to the personal character of most esoteric work. This does not always permit demonstration of the results of specific life experiences, nor allow public debate on their validity. This is why we apply this method here with the same rigorous objectivity, but in the opposite direction: in positive science we admit a postulate if we cannot refute it; here we would refute something if we do not find facts or phenomena to confirm it.

(2)

In Western civilization the interior life of the individual, with all its richness, finds itself relegated to a minor role in existence. Man is so caught up in the toils of mechanical life that he has neither time to stop nor the power of attention needed to turn his mental vision upon himself. Man thus passes his days absorbed by external circumstances. The great machine that drags him along turns without stopping, and forbids him to stop under penalty of being crushed. Today like yesterday, and tomorrow like today, he quickly exhausts himself in the frantic race, impelled in a direction which in the end leads nowhere. Life passes away from him almost

1. Fr. 'l'homme concret'.

unseen, swift as a ray of light, and man falls engulfed and still absent from himself.

(3)

When we ask someone who lives under this constant pressure of contemporary life to turn his mental vision towards himself, he generally answers that he has not enough time left to undertake such practices. If we insist and he acquiesces, he will in most cases say that he sees nothing: Fog; Obscurity. In less common cases, the observer reports that he perceives something which he cannot define because *it changes all the time*.

This last observation is correct. Everything is in fact continually changing within us. A minor external shock, agreeable or disagreeable, happy or unhappy, is sufficient to give our inner *content*² a quite different appearance.

If we follow up this interior observation, this introspection, without prejudice, we will soon constate, not without surprise, that our 'I', of which we are so consistently proud, is not always the same self: the 'I' changes. As this impression becomes more defined we begin to become more aware that it is not a single man who lives within us but several, each having his own tastes, his own aspirations, and each trying to attain his own ends. Suddenly we discover within us a whole world full of life and colours which until now we had almost entirely ignored. If we still proceed with this experience, we will soon be able to distinguish three currents within that perpetually moving life: that of the vegetative life of the instincts, so to speak; that of the animal life of the feelings; and lastly that of human life in the proper sense of the term, characterized by thought and speech. It is almost as if there were three men within us, all entangled together in an extraordinary way.

So we come to appreciate the value of introspection as a method of practical work which permits us to know ourselves and enter into ourselves. As we gradually progress, we become more clearly aware of the real situation in which we find ourselves. The inner content of man is analogous to a vase full of *iron filings* in a state of mixture as a result of mechanical action. Every shock received by the vase causes displacement of the particles of iron filings. Thus real life remains hidden from the human being due to the constant changes occurring in his inner life.

2. Fr. 'contenu intérieur', linking with the author's use of 'content' later in the book.



Fig. 1

Even so, as we shall see later, this senseless and dangerous situation can be modified in a beneficial way. But this requires work; conscientious and sustained effort. Introspection carried out relentlessly results in enhanced internal sensibility. This improved sensibility in its turn intensifies the amplitude and frequency of movement whenever the iron filings are disturbed. As a result, shocks that previously were not noticed will now provoke vivid reactions. These movements, because of their continuous amplification, can create a friction between the particles of iron so intense that we may one day feel the interior fire igniting within us.

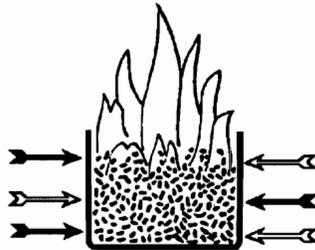


Fig. 2

This fire must not remain a harmless flare-up. Nor is it enough that the fire smoulders dormant under the ashes. A live and ardent fire once lit must be carefully kept alight by the will to refine and cultivate sensitiveness.

If it continues in this way, our state can change: the heat of the flame will start a process of *fusion*³ within us.⁴



Fig. 3

3. Fr. 'soudure'.

4. Mark ix: 49; I Corinthians iii: 11-13; I Peter i: 7; iv: 12.

From this point on the inner content will no longer behave like a heap of iron filings: it will form a block. Then further shocks will no longer provoke interior change in man as they did previously. Having reached this point he will have acquired a firmness; he will remain *himself* in the midst of the tempests to which life may expose him.

This is the perspective before those who study esoteric science. But to reach the state which has already been described, we must from the beginning rid ourselves of all illusion about ourselves, no matter how dearly held; an illusion of this kind, if it is tolerated at the start, will grow en route, so that suffering and additional effort will be necessary in order to rid ourselves of it at a later date.

As long as man has not reached the point of *fusion*, his life will be in effect a factitious existence, as he himself will change from moment to moment. Since these changes will occur as a result of external shocks which he can almost never foresee, it will also be impossible for him to predict in advance the exact way he will change internally. Thus he will live subject to events as they occur, always preoccupied by constantly 'patching up' ('replastering'⁵). He will in fact progress toward the unknown, at the mercy of chance. This state of things, named in the Tradition *The Law of Chance*, or *The Law of Accident*, is — for man as he is — the principal law under whose authority he leads his illusory existence.

Esoteric science indicates the possibilities and the means of freeing oneself from this law. It helps us to begin a new and purposeful life; first to become logical with ourselves, and finally, to become our own master.

But to begin effectively on this way, one must first clearly see the situation as it is. A parable found in the most ancient sources permits us to get a clear picture of this, and so keep this condition in mind.⁶ It is the parable of the *Coach*.

This image represents the characteristics of man by a coach. The physical body is represented by the coach itself; the horses represent sensations, feelings and passions; the coachman is the ensemble of the intellectual faculties including reason; the person sitting in the coach is the master.

In its normal state, the whole system is in a perfect state of operation: the coachman holds the reins firmly in his hands and drives the horses in the direction indicated by the master. This, however, is not how things happen in the immense majority of cases. First of all, the master is absent. The coach must go and find him, and must then await his pleasure. All is in a bad state: the axles are not greased and they grate; the wheels are badly fixed; the shaft dangles dangerously; the horses, although of noble race, are dirty and ill-fed; the harness is worn and the reins are not strong. The

5. Fr. 'replâtrage'.

6. Fr. 'à l'esprit'.

coachman is asleep: his hands have slipped to his knees and hardly hold the reins, which can fall from them at any moment.

The coach nevertheless continues to move forward, but does so in a way which presages no happiness. Abandoning the road,⁷ it is rolling down the slope in such a way that the coach is now pushing the horses, which are unable to hold it back. The coachman, fallen into a deep sleep, is swaying in his seat at risk of falling off. Obviously a sad fate awaits such a coach.

This image provides a highly appropriate analogy for the condition of most men, and it is worth taking as an object of meditation.

Salvation may however present itself. Another coachman, this one quite awake, may pass by the same route and observe the coach in its sad situation. If he is not in much of a hurry, he may perhaps stop to help the coach that is in distress. He will first help the horses hold back the coach from slipping down the slope. Then he will awaken the sleeping driver and together with him will try to bring the coach back to the road. He will lend fodder and money. He might also give advice on the care of the horses, the address of an inn and a coach repairer, and indicate the proper route to follow.

It will be up to the assisted coachman afterward to profit, *by his own efforts*, from the help and the information received. It will be incumbent on him from this point on to put all things in order and, open eyed, to follow the path⁸ he had abandoned.

He will above all fight against sleep, for if he falls asleep again, and if the coach leaves the road again and again finds itself in the same danger, he cannot hope that chance will smile upon him a second time; that another coachman will pass at that moment and at that place and come to his aid once again.

(4)

We have seen that the practice of introspection leads us very quickly to the constation that our inner life changes at almost every instant. Man pretends however to have an orderly continuity of ideas, and to be consistent in his actions — because life requires him to give this impression. He cannot without great difficulty evade this necessity. His given word, agreed commitment and spoken vow bind him in spite of all the continual changes which he has just discovered within himself: changes which explain to him the underlying causes of his difficulties, of his inner and outer conflicts, and of the many failures which mark his life.

7. Fr. 'route'.

8. Fr. 'chemin'.

Man reacts as much as possible against this constant pressure of the difficulties and obligations which weigh him down. As for the changes within him, he generally compensates for these by instinctive reactions: a fixed attitude to each situation. He wants at all costs at least to appear logical with himself and master of his actions. Thus, whenever a stroke of luck or an unsuspected success happens to him, he tries to persuade his circle of friends — and indirectly to persuade himself — that he is not at all astonished; that he had predicted the sequence of facts a long time ago, and that all had been calculated in advance. In cases of failure he throws the blame on others, on events, and on circumstances in general.

It is because the friction between the particles of *iron filings* produces a disagreeable sensation in us that we feel the need to get rid of it. The movement of the *iron filings* stops when we find a solution and so ward off the shocks received. The discovery of a culprit will allow us this relief. As a result man appears to us to be constantly preoccupied with his interior patching up,⁹ which in time becomes almost wholly automatic within him.

(5)

In this situation we must ask ourselves how we can define these inner changes? What it is that changes?

Speaking of himself, man says: 'T'. This is perhaps the most enigmatic and least defined term in human language. Speaking of his body, man treats it as a third person, which is correct. When he speaks of his Soul he again treats it in the same way as a third person. By this he affirms that he is neither body nor soul. Although it appears at first to be paradoxical, so common is this that it applies to the majority of human beings. Yet if man is neither body nor Soul, then what is Man?

What is this 'T' which he feels within himself — and to which he tries so hard to give at least a semblance of rational continuity?

It is, properly speaking, nothing but the particles of iron filings, whose relative position one to another changes all the time, and which in their ensemble represent our 'T' within us. This 'T' is not constant; it takes on a multitude of different aspects, yet it is this same 'T' with which man as he is born on Earth evolves in life.

Not only is this same 'T' neither constant nor permanent, but it is also multiple, since each of the three men who co-exist within man, and of whom we have spoken, is equally a composite subject. As this is so, our 'T' is the ensemble of a multitude of little 'T's, each relatively autonomous and

9. Fr. 'replâtrage'.

with a tendency to act in its own way. Such is the nature of the 'I', *legion*, as it is put in the Gospel.¹⁰

If we come back to the question: 'What is man?' we can now give a precise answer: it is the *Personality*. In other words it is Mr. X identifying himself with that psychic organism which resides within him and which offers nothing stable, or at least very little stability; which changes in reaction to impressions received, whether agreeable or disagreeable — and even in response to physical shocks.

Jesus said: '*Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also.*'¹¹ But who can do this? Only he who has dominated the bestial and instinctive reactions within him and who has consequently mastered the mechanical movement of the iron filings. What prevails in primitive man is '*an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.*'¹² The purpose of this (Gospel) formula is to protect the particles of iron filings from ungoverned reaction: to remain ones own self in a state of unruffled inner calm after having received a slap on the cheek. Turning the other cheek is only possible to a being who is truly master of himself. The Scriptures offer a number of examples which illustrate the urgent necessity that man should become master of himself.

(6)

To reach this it is necessary for us to study the structure of our Personality. Here, as everywhere else, Knowledge¹³ leads to power.

Let us return once again to the image of the three men who co-exist within man. In reality, three main currents act in our mental¹⁴ life: intellectual, emotional¹⁵ and motor-instinctive. Although not clearly delineated, for reasons we shall see later, these divisions correspond to our thoughts, our feelings, and to our senses and sensations.

The centres of gravity of each of these three modes of our mental¹⁴ life are situated in the brain, the heart and the loins: but this description must not be taken too literally. Whenever an impulse is received by or emanates from one of these three centres, the other two, although they take part in it, generally adopt a passive attitude. This happens in such a way that the one who is in command at any particular moment speaks in the name of the Personality in its ensemble, and therefore represents the man as a whole.

10. Mark v: 9; Luke viii: 30.

11. Matthew v: 39; Luke vi: 29.

12. Exodus xxi: 24; Deut. xix: 21.

13. Fr. 'Connaissance'.

14. Fr. 'psychique'.

15. Fr. 'émotif'.

Further on, this state of things will be examined in detail. For the moment let us try to fix these ideas by means of a diagram which will be completed gradually as our studies continue, and will serve as a progressive instrument for this work.

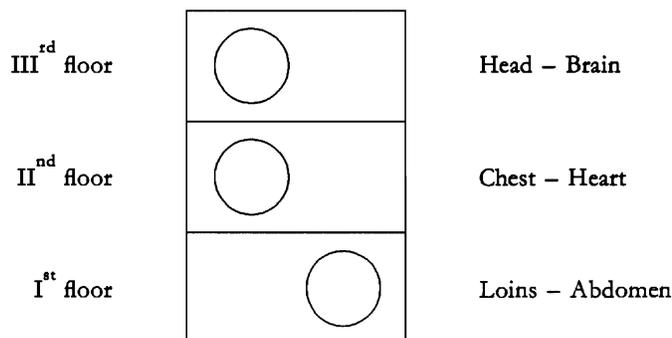


Fig. 4

These three centres, which represent the three currents making up our mental¹⁶ life, each have a double function: reception and expression.¹⁷ From this point of view the system is admirably conceived; each centre in its own domain perfectly meets the needs of man's inner and outer life.

Let us bear in mind that the theory of the functions and locations of the mental¹⁶ centres is merely a convention in the sense that these are centres of gravity. We think mainly with the head, but not exclusively. It is the same with our hearts, in which we locate our emotional centre. The motor centre governs instinctive life as well as movement and all mental¹⁶ activity: its action is thus distributed¹⁸ throughout the body. For reasons which will become clear later, however, we locate this on the 'first floor', which corresponds to the loins and abdomen.

(7)

The human Personality, this ever-changing ensemble¹⁹ of iron filings, is not destined to be inactive. The opposite is true; the mental¹⁶ body is an organism created²⁰ to play a predetermined role, but it is not generally employed for this purpose. The reason for this is that we use it as strangers,

16. Fr. 'psychique'.

17. Fr. 'manifestation'.

18. Fr. 'répandue'.

19. Fr. 'ensemble': used throughout the book to describe a combination whose constitution and/or structure remains changeable — a 'mixture', not a compound.

20. Fr. 'conçu' - from v. 'concevoir'.

without knowing it, without having studied it, and without having understood it.

For each one of us, esoteric studies start precisely with the study of the content, structure, and functioning of the Personality.

Let us define accurately the mental functions of the three centres:

- *The Intellectual Centre* registers, thinks, calculates, combines, researches etc.;
- *The Emotional Centre* has for its domain the feelings as well as refined sensations and passions;
- *The Motor Centre* directs the five senses, accumulates energy in the organism through its instinctive functions, and with its motor functions governs the consumption of this energy.

The motor centre is the best organized of the three centres. While the other two centres are neither complete nor organized before the gradual growth and development of the child, the motor centre is fully functional at conception. It is thus the most mature and the best organized. It is also, so to speak, wisest, although it does make mistakes.

Conversely, the other two centres place us in the most grave difficulties. They are anarchistic, often overstepping each other's domain and the domain of the motor centre in such a way that the latter becomes disorganized.

In fact, we have neither a pure thought nor a pure feeling: nor are our actions pure. Everything in us is mixed and even entangled, often by all sorts of *considerations* which either come from the intellectual centre, tarnishing the purity of our feelings by its calculations, or from the emotional centre, which clouds the calculations of the intellectual centre.

Because of this, unless we have first deeply studied the structure of our Personality, it is impossible to create any order in our mental²¹ life or to make it emerge from its state of continual anarchy and its profound senselessness. It is by this study that the searcher can go on to regulate and tune this organism.

There is no other way to reach the goal except by working on oneself by self observation.

21. Fr. 'psychique'.

CHAPTER II

(1)

Simple ideas are the most difficult to grasp. They escape us because the extreme complexity of our minds makes us complicate everything. It is only simple ideas and formulæ that matter in life.

Let us now consider the relation between these notions: to *know*, and to *understand*.

We can know without understanding, but we cannot understand without knowing. It therefore follows that *understanding* is *knowing* to which something imponderable is added. We are touching on a problem which is simple but at the same time can raise great difficulties.

We pass from *knowing* to *understanding* to the measure that we assimilate *knowledge*. The capacity for assimilation has its limits: man's capacity to *contain*¹ understanding differs from person to person.

This problem concerns what we call the *being* of a person. It is one of the basic notions of esoteric science. It has several facets. In the terms that concern us here, *being* is demonstrated by a person's capacity for assimilation.

Knowledge is widespread everywhere. However, it is external to us. Understanding is within us.

If we pour the contents of a bottle into a glass, the latter can only contain an amount equal to its capacity. Any more will overflow. That is exactly what happens with us. We are only capable of understanding within the limits of our capacity to contain understanding within our *being*.

Jesus said to His disciples: *'I have yet many things to say unto you but ye cannot contain them now.'*²

To be able to evolve, in the esoteric sense of the term, we must above everything else constantly seek to enhance our *being*; to raise its level.

(2)

The Gospels do not use specialized terminology. That is one of the reasons for their popularity: they are accessible to all. The Christian Esoteric Tradition follows their example and tries to avoid specialized vocabulary: this would cause additional difficulty in following a path

1. Fr. 'contenir': in the sense of 'ability to contain': man's 'capacity to contain' understanding is both finite in amount, and can vary, as the volume a glass can contain is fixed for a particular glass but can vary from one glass to another.

2. John xvi: 12. Taken from the Slavonic text, which uses the word 'contain' instead of 'bear'.

which is already difficult enough. The scriptures start from the principle that if we take the trouble to ponder them deeply, *everything* can be expressed without having to refer to neologisms. Nevertheless, it is necessary to define clearly the meanings of the words used.

In the first place, we must specify what the Tradition means by *Consciousness*³ and its derivatives. In modern language as well as in philosophical literature we attribute varied meanings to the word consciousness; it is sometimes qualified by additional attributes. We find, for example, expressions such as ‘super-consciousness’, ‘cosmic consciousness’, etc.

In esoteric science we attach maximum significance to the term *Consciousness*: that which touches the divine plane. Bishop Theophan the Recluse, one of the most fully authorized commentators, said: ‘*The way to perfection is the way to Consciousness.*’

He therefore does not attribute the current meaning to the word ‘Consciousness’.

We do not possess *Consciousness*. What we call consciousness is only one of its derivatives, but it is all that is accessible to man as he is born of woman.⁴

All in all there are four levels of consciousness: Consciousness — called ‘absolute’ — and its three derivatives:

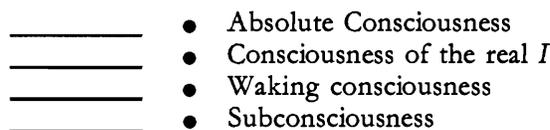


Fig. 5

Starting from the bottom we have in the first instance subconsciousness. This is the twilight consciousness which we have for example during sleep, where it controls the organism without being interrupted. This subconscious direction of certain functions of our bodies continues during the waking state.

The domain of subconsciousness is vast and very little about it has been studied. We sometimes treat it as if everything that does not enter waking consciousness is in the subconscious. We not only attribute the reflexes and the general functions of instinctive life to it, which is correct, but also the lightning ideas which come from higher spheres and which we call by vague terms such as: *intuition, sixth sense* etc., which is erroneous. The reason is that we consider waking consciousness, clear consciousness as it is sometimes called, to be the peak of consciousness.

3. Fr. ‘conscience’.

4. Matthew xi: 11.

Esoteric science however distinguishes two levels⁵ of consciousness higher than waking consciousness. We do not have these by right of birth, nor do we acquire them by normal education or instruction. But they can be reached as a result of special efforts properly directed.

The first higher level is that of *self consciousness*: alternatively called the *consciousness of the real 'I'*. Above that, there is the level of *Consciousness*—in the full sense of this word.

From bottom to top we can define the four levels in other terms, as follows :

- 1) *Subconsciousness* is the twilight consciousness of the body. Its force does not depend on the cultural level of the individual. We often find that elementary or primitive beings have a much stronger consciousness of their bodies than intellectuals.
- 2) *Waking Consciousness* is the daytime consciousness of the Personality. Putting pathological cases aside, its scope and its amplitude⁶ develop with the cultural development of the individual: it is the *subjective* consciousness of 'I'.
- 3) *Consciousness of the real 'I'* is the consciousness of the *Individuality*, otherwise described as *objective* consciousness of the individual 'I'.
- 4) *Consciousness* is absolute consciousness: the consciousness of the Absolute.

(3)

We shall return to the question of *Consciousness* further on, when we are better armed to sense and understand the true meaning of this word. As for the *consciousness of the real 'I'*, we can now form a certain idea of this, even in its passive form. We know it as the only *permanent* point which exists within us, hidden behind our ever changing personality; always dragged along by the torrent of our thoughts, our feelings, our passions or sensations, which pass through it and involve the whole man in unpremeditated acts which he himself would later condemn. This permanent point is the impartial *Referee* within us who judges our own acts; the *Referee* whose soft voice is often obscured by inward uproar or by events. Although weak and passive, this evanescent form of the consciousness of the real 'I' is always just and *objective*.

The doctrine of sin and of our responsibility for our acts would have no meaning if, when we come face to face with temptation, the consciousness of the real 'I' did not give us a warning of danger.⁷ On the other hand, it is this presence within us which makes it possible for us to evolve

5. Fr. 'niveaux'.

6. Fr. 'ampleur'.

7. That is why we cannot say that man who is not yet esoterically evolved, *exterior* man, may be regarded as free of responsibility (cf. P. D. Ouspensky, *Fragments*, p. 19 [p. 41.]).

esoterically⁸ in the deepest sense which, as we have already seen, is evolution towards *Consciousness*.

Because the real 'T' does not manifest itself in man as he is born except in passive form, this inner *Judge* does not pronounce his verdict except where the personality itself submits its acts for his evaluation.

(4)

In modern life, contact with the real 'T' is rather exceptional. Man, however, pretends to be 'T', as if able to act at the level of consciousness appropriate to this 'T' whose attributes he would possess: attributes such as ability to judge the consequences of his acts, the constant exercise of a will of his own, the ability to do, and a bearing appropriate to a being who is consistent with himself.

An objective examination of facts would be enough to belie these pretensions. Let us consider, for example, the way we commit ourselves to undertakings. It is clear that they are not always kept. If they are respected, it is often at the price of struggles within ourselves.

In reality, we do not act at the level of consciousness appropriate to the real 'T', but at the level of waking consciousness, which belongs to the 'T' of the Personality. We identify ourselves with this 'T' no matter what facet it presents. Its instability thus models our attitudes. At a given moment, a little 'T' or a group of little 'T's that compose the Personality decides on something, and acts. Then it makes way for another little 'T', or for another group of little 'T's, which disapproves of the action taken and of its consequences. The changes caused by the entry on the scene of different combinations within the Personality can sometimes be so radical—especially if we have acted under the influence of a particular passion, of a violent feeling, or on the basis of erroneous calculation—that it appears to us as if a foreigner had acted in our place. We do not recognize ourselves in most of these decisions, which we bitterly regret.

(5)

There is thus a considerable gap between what man generously attributes to himself, that is, the qualities of the real 'T', and what is properly his. Yet to reach the level of consciousness which corresponds to this real 'T' is in the realm of possibility, of hope, as the Apostle Paul has said. But before what he pretends he already possesses can become his,

8. Nothing could be born from nothing. There must be a seed for a plant to be born: Matthew xiii: 31; Mark iv: 31; Luke xiii: 19.

man must carry out a considerable amount of conscious work upon himself.

(6)

As long as man remains sure of himself, despite all the evidence, the more he is still satisfied with himself, the more he continues to live in the absurd and inconsequential, taking his desires and illusions for reality. He must pass through a serious bankruptcy and a moral collapse,⁹ both of which he must constate and accept without seeking to patch them over.¹⁰ It is only then that we start to search, and only then that we discover the reasons for working on ourselves, and only then do we acquire the necessary strength to do so. This is true for all the world. There is only one exception: that of the *just*, for whom such work is a joy; as they are just, it is not necessary for them to constate such a bankruptcy. But who among us is just? Who, even, is of good faith?

In one way or another we are all corrupted. Even though everyday experience shows us the contrary, man thinks of himself as being of a certain importance. This opinion is the consequence of a deficiency in our judgement. In fact, we are all in the same boat. Even though they are different, for each one of us the algebraic sum of our qualities and of our defects is nearly the same. We must not be under false illusions: the amount of this sum is not large. It is an infinitesimal, and as such tends towards zero, which is Death.

To create a *unity* from this 'infinitesimal', based on latent faculties we pretend to actually possess, is what esoteric science expects of those who study it. It considers them at the start as sick people to which the principle proclaimed by Jesus applies: '*They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.*'¹¹

(7)

The problem of making a unity of oneself, starting practically from nothing, brings us once again to examine the question of *being*, but in a slightly different way. It acts, to use the language of the Alchemists, by a *transmutation*, a transformation of our factitious existence — whose value is no more than potential — into real existence. This happens through realization of that potential. It acts by progressively raising the level of

9. Fr. 'écroulement moral'.

10. Fr. 'sans tentative de replâtrage'.

11. Matthew ix: 12; Mark ii: 17; Luke v: 31.

our *being*. This work is to be done in stages according to a definite programme.

We recognize four distinct levels of *being*, correlated with the four levels of consciousness: a higher level of *being* and three lesser ones.

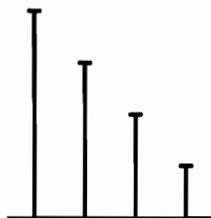


Fig. 6

As with consciousness, the higher level of *being* rests upon lower levels. The lowest of all levels belongs to every living body, but extends over a wide scale of values. Certain animals, especially among the higher mammals, touch the next higher level, that of humans.

Thus, for example, most mammals can and do have *representations* of objects and phenomena, a function which properly belongs to the lower level of human waking consciousness. But they can go no further; they do not have the faculty of generalization by which man forms his notions.

The third level of *being*, which corresponds to the consciousness of the real 'I' is that of esoterically evolved men, properly called *alive*: that is, of those who have acquired permanent, unshakeable real 'I'. Lastly the fourth level belongs to the perfect or complete man: he who has arrived by his esoteric development at the summit of evolution possible within the conditions of our planet.

(8)

The question of *being* is closely linked to the problem of power. We have already indicated that a man who has nothing within him but an unstable, changeable and factitious 'I' has not — and can never have — any continuity of ideas or of behaviour. That is why he cannot *do*.

We have already established the relation which exists between the notions: *to know* and *to understand*. It is now the time for us to establish the relation between the notions: *knowledge* and *savoir-faire*.¹² We can easily understand from what has already been said that there is no possibility of passing directly from *knowledge* to *savoir-faire*. We generally explain the failure of our attempts to act as due to lack of will. That is not correct. It is

12. Tr. Here the French text gives 'savoir et savoir-faire': 'savoir' translates as 'knowing'; 'savoir-faire', already part of the English language, refers to 'doing'.

CHAPTER III

(1)

We find the Personality between the body and the Soul.¹ Though tied to both, it is generally more attached to the former. We have also constated that the 'I' of whom we speak every day corresponds to the Personality, known by our name.

The question that faces us next is how we may know² what the Personality is in itself. We certainly feel it within us. We are aware of its attitudes, its desires, and its actions; but we are not at all able to represent it.

Thinking about oneself evokes a certain image; of a clothed body, or a face which strives to be dignified and charming. This image is only a reflection of the Personality. If we want to discover the latter, we have to penetrate more deeply, and only introspection would permit us to discover its true face. Introspection leads us to discover that there exists a sort of little 'nebula'³ within us. This is insubstantial, or almost so, but is gifted with the capacity for experiencing and thinking, for feeling emotion, and for action. An exercised and sustained attention permits us also to constate that this 'nebula' is mobile: it is sometimes found in the brain, and sometimes it descends to the heart and sometimes to the solar plexus. After a violent impression is made—for example after some great terror—it can move downward through the whole body to the feet. In such cases, everything goes on as if it had abandoned the general direction of the body, which it governs when it is situated in the brain,⁴ in order to act on a local plane only, in reflexes of a very elementary nature. Once the emotion has passed, this 'nebula' normally re-ascends to a place in the higher part of the head. We then say that the person has come back to himself.

Contemporary man however, worrying more about the question of appearances⁵ than about that of being, caught up in circumstances, always absent from himself—or falling during his hours of idleness into a drowsy satisfaction—can no longer feel the pulsation of life within him. To make such fundamental discoveries, he must make efforts, must exercise, and must practise inner observation.

1. Fr. 'Ame'.

2. Fr. 'savoir'.

3. '*Kloube*' in the Russian texts of the Tradition.

4. Fr. 'dont elle dispose lorsqu'elle se situe dans le cerveau'.

5. Fr. 'paraître'.

The Personality depends on the physical body much more than we generally admit. A localized and somewhat severe pain is sufficient to relegate all our generous ideas and all our refined feelings to the background of consciousness. On the other hand, when some person is capable of mastering his pain and continues to carry out his work in cold blood, such an attitude is considered heroic, for such behaviour reveals an exceptional character.

The intimate dependence of the Personality on the physical body, in which it resides and functions, leads logically to the conclusion that one must act through the latter to discover it, study it, and finally act on it. That is why all mental⁶ exercises require physical training. The principle is general; its application nevertheless varies and depends on the method of the esoteric teaching. In the present essentially psychological method, physical training is reduced to the absolute minimum, but we cannot altogether do without it. We shall limit ourselves now to giving sufficient information — if followed — to enable us to resolve the first problem of physical training: to find the most suitable body posture for these mental exercises. Millennia of experience show that only a single posture meets this need. Leaving details aside, the posture must place *the head, the neck and the spinal column in one single straight line—and this line must be vertical*. Except in certain special cases which will each require other precise instructions, this rule must be strictly observed whether we are standing or sitting. Before we begin the mental or psychological exercises, we must discover this posture and familiarize ourselves with it. For Westerners who exercise at home, the most practical way is to sit on a hard seat 25 to 35 centimetres high, legs crossed, preferably right over left, palms flat and facing downward on the knees. This is one of many variants of that posture traditionally called the *posture of the sage*.

Here are some complementary indications: the muscles must be completely relaxed, the head high and the shoulders naturally pushed back, the waist curved in such a way that, viewed in profile, the spinal column would present a slight convexity directed forwards. The eyes can either be opened or closed; at the start it is preferable to leave them closed, because if they are left open without special training, they tire very quickly and interfere with the exercise. We must strive to reach this posture daily and regularly. Regularity of training, and the choice of a fixed time to practise, are the necessary conditions. *Tendencies accentuate themselves*, says an esoteric law; and again: *a rhythm increases results tenfold*. Yet one must not proceed too quickly. That is why another traditional maxim says: *'make haste slowly'*.

6. Throughout this chapter, 'mental' translates the French 'psychique'.

Once these conditions have been fulfilled, this posture must be practised in the morning before breakfast, initially for a maximum of two or three minutes. The duration must be prolonged slowly but progressively, always subject to the express condition that one must be able to maintain complete immobility, eyes included, during the whole exercise.

Here a question arises: What criterion⁷ will let us know the moment when we have found the *posture of the sage*?

The answer in simple terms is: a feeling of restfulness. A quarter of an hour holding the correct posture gives a sensation of being rested that many consecutive hours of sleep cannot give.

Once the posture has been found, and not before—an operation which, depending on the individual, may demand weeks or months—we can start the exercises whose aim is to obtain a feeling of the ‘nebula’.

It must be made clear that the *unit of measure* of time is individual and varies, particularly with age. This basic unit for each person is the interval between two heartbeats when the body is at rest. One must acquire the interior memory of this unit, of this heartbeat, because the rhythm of esoteric exercises is always regulated in accordance with it.

The first exercises are done in the following manner: inhale during four heartbeats, hold your breath for four heartbeats, then exhale similarly during four heartbeats. This movement must be executed harmoniously, without sudden changes. A shiver may appear; constant persistence in these exercises will eliminate it at a later time. It is the same if great distress appears. On the other hand, if we feel somewhat ill, even if it is nothing but a slight cold or fever, the exercises must be interrupted.

As for the result, it varies in its appearance in each individual case: with some it is acquired almost immediately; with others, at the end of a long period of training. But he who achieves the result easily can lose it just as easily, while he who reaches it by means of sustained work will possess it firmly.

(3)

The first sensation of the ‘nebula’ generally comes during the third phase of the exercise, that is, during exhalation. One feels it passing through the larynx, and all along the thyroid gland. The sensation is agreeable. Afterward, if the ‘nebula’ can be felt from the top of the head down to the heart and beyond, the student will know that he has taken a big step forward.

7. Fr. ‘moyen de contrôle’.

Feeling the 'nebula' within oneself is already much, but it is only the first step. We have said above that, with certain qualifications, it is the Personality which makes itself felt within us in this way. On the mental plane, the 'nebula' thinks, feels, acts and changes constantly, yet a direct sensation of it gives a hazy impression of a cloud-like mass of amorphous character. This impression is false.

The personality is an organism. As such, it has a structure. But we miss this structure because we neither know⁸ nor study it. Our attention is constantly being held by exterior facts and events, and by the mechanical reactions which they provoke within us.

The first attempts at internal observation have already led us to distinguish three foci of mental life, represented by the three centres (Fig. 4). It must be understood that these three centres are not physical points or organs, located in exactly determined places in our bodies. They are more in the nature of *centres of gravity* for each of the three currents of our mental life. Even this is not an altogether exact definition. For example, the motor centre takes an active part in all physical and mental movement. When thought initiates movements within us, the motor centre is present and regulates the motor element of the phenomena. It is the same for feelings, passions, sensations etc. Thus a discovery made by the intellectual centre with the aid of the motor centre, is immediately communicated to the latter, then transmitted to the emotional centre, where it provokes corresponding reactions. That transmission can also take place in a different order. That is how Archimedes, transported with joy by the discovery of the principle which bears his name, ran around the town of Syracuse shouting: '*Eureka!*': thought; emotion; movement. That shows that the three mental centres which embrace, regulate and express the life of our Personality, and also constitute its structure, are not autonomous.

Persistent introspection will later allow us to constate that each one of the three centres is divided into two parts: positive and negative. Normally these two parts act in conjunction with one another: for they are in fact polarized as are the double organs of the body, which duplicate the same function or participate in the same work at the same time; our arms for example. That division of the centres, a reflection of the universal polarization, allows them to establish *comparisons*: to consider both sides of problems posed to them. The positive part of each centre looks — one might say — to the head, and the negative part to the tail of these problems. The centre as a whole constructs an appropriate synthesis and draws its conclusions, inspired by the constatations made by each of the two parts.

8. Fr. 'connaissans'.

An example is the process of critical analysis. It is therefore totally erroneous to consider that the names of these parts indicate a beneficent or harmful role depending on whether they are positive or negative. These terms do not imply any value judgement—any more than the constation of positive and negative charges upon elementary particles.

If we consider the functioning of the motor centre, we can perceive that these parts are inseparable one from the other, in their structure as well as in their action. With certain reservations we can say that the positive part of this centre corresponds to the ensemble of the instinctive functions of the psycho-physical organism of man, and its negative part to the motor functions. In other words the motor centre is in the full sense of the word the manager of our bodies: it must equilibrate the energies that it accumulates by its positive part with those that are consumed by its negative part.

This symmetry—this polarity—is to be found in the two other centres.

Constructive and creative ideas are born in the positive part of the intellectual centre. But it is the negative part that evaluates an idea, that takes its measure, so to speak. It is on the basis of this functional polarity that this centre, as a whole, judges.

It is the same with the emotional centre, the action of the negative part opposes the positive part, which at the same time completes it, for example permitting the centre as a whole to distinguish the agreeable from the disagreeable.

We can nevertheless misuse the faculties of the negative parts. This negative abuse is a real danger. The case is obvious as far as the motor centre is concerned, yet here physical exhaustion acts as a control, intervening to stop excessive consumption of energy. When it comes to the other centres, the misuse of the negative parts takes much more insidious forms, which entail more serious consequences for our minds⁹ as well as our bodies. That is how the negative part of the intellectual centre nourishes jealousy, afterthoughts, hypocrisy, suspicion, treachery, etc. The negative part of the emotional centre receives all the disagreeable impressions and serves as a vehicle for negative emotions, for which the keyboard is very large, ranging from melancholy to hate. We shall have occasion to go deeper into the problem of negative emotions. Their destructive role is generally unknown, but represents one of the major obstacles to esoteric evolution.

9. Fr. 'psychisme'.

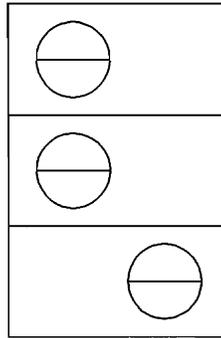


Fig. 7

The structure of each centre is not limited to two divisions: positive and negative; each half is further divided into three sectors. This is done in such a way that if the previous diagram were completed in this way it would appear as shown below:

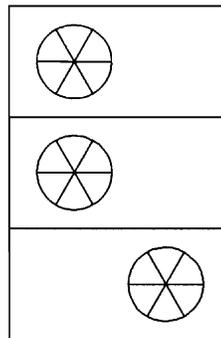


Fig. 8

In every centre there is therefore as much on the positive side as on the negative; one sector of each possesses the characteristics of that centre in a pure state. In the intellectual centre are sectors which are purely intellectual — positive and negative; in the emotional centre sectors which are purely emotional — positive and negative; in the motor centre sectors which are purely motor — positive and negative. Beside the pure

sectors we find composite sectors which are, so to speak, the representatives of the two other centres. In their ensemble the sectors are:

For the intellectual centre:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1) pure intellectual | } | positive and negative |
| 2) emotional-intellectual | | |
| 3) motor-intellectual | | |

For the emotional centre:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1) pure emotional | } | positive and negative |
| 2) emotional-intellectual | | |
| 3) emotional-motor | | |

For the motor centre:

- a) positive part
 - 1) pure instinctive
 - 2) instinctive-intellectual
 - 3) instinctive-emotional
- b) negative part
 - 1) pure motor
 - 2) motor-intellectual
 - 3) motor-emotional

There are in all eighteen sectors, which in their ensemble form the structure of the Personality.

Thanks to this system, none of the three centres — pathological cases excluded — can act in a purely autonomous manner. Through the sectors representing the two other centres, the whole system moves in unison. It goes without saying, however, that the participation of two centres in the work of another is always coloured by the latter's character.

As we can see, the system of the centres is complex but answers perfectly to all needs. It allows us to perceive all the psycho-physical elements of the Universe, to react to the impressions so received, to reach concepts, and to proceed to complex operations.

(5)

Study of the structure of the Personality allows us to deal with a problem which plays a big role in esoteric science, that of human types. If it is true that every man in some way represents a unique factor in the universe, it is no less true that human types repeat themselves. Human types recur

even more often than is commonly believed. In fact, there are not many of them, but only three basic types.

These types are distinguished by the preponderance in the Personality of one or the other of the three mental centres: the man who is predominantly intellectual; who thinks, calculates and researches; the man who is emotional above all; who is sentimental, artistic, romantic; lastly the man of action. In the Doctrine we name them as follows:

- *man 1* — is he whose mental centre of gravity abides in the motor centre;
- *man 2* — is he whose centre of gravity resides in the emotional centre;
- *man 3* — is he whose centre of gravity resides in the intellectual centre.

Man as he is born of woman must belong to one of these three fundamental types, to which all of humanity belongs, regardless of race, caste or class. This is a law of Nature. It is not given to men to escape from it and to change at whim from one type to another.

We shall see however that other types exist, superior to the three fundamental types. But apart from quite exceptional cases, man cannot belong to one of these higher types by right of birth. Their creation is the outcome of a long process of gestation to which Jesus alluded while talking to Nicodemus, when He said that man must be born anew. To rise to these levels one must make continuous and sustained conscious efforts in accordance with rules established millennia ago by esoteric science.

CHAPTER IV

(1)

The *exterior* man¹ has three 'T's: the 'T' of the body (physical), the 'T' of the Personality (mental²), and potentially the real 'T' (spiritual). Theoretically, the real 'T' should have assumed the responsibility for commanding the whole system. But since the fall of Adam, the real 'T', in its aspect as the inmost heart,³ has been relegated to the background of consciousness, dominated by the mental² 'T' of the Personality. The latter, who commands by default, so to speak, lacks unity. Changing, floating, multiple, he can only act in a disorderly manner. Thus the 'T' of the body, who should normally obey the mental² 'T', frequently imposes his own purposes upon the latter. The usual example of such domination is that of adultery, due to sexual attraction without any spiritual ties.⁴

In reviewing in our lives different examples of the connections between the three 'T's, we would certainly profit by meditating once again on the symbol of the *coach*, which offers many analogies in this vein, all of them profoundly instructive.

(2)

In the waking state we employ the 'T' of the Personality. During sleep, we lose awareness⁵ of this 'T'; the 'T' of the body then takes its place.⁶ Of course, the purely physiological functions have a continuity of character. It is only when man sleeps, that is to say when the mental² 'T' has vanished and does not interfere any more in the activities of the 'T' of the body, that the latter can act on its proper plane, knowingly⁷ and without hindrance.

It is the motor centre which serves as the organ of manifestation for the 'T' of the body⁸. As for the mental² 'T', the 'T' of our Personality, this normally expresses itself through the emotional and intellectual centres. In the majority of cases it uses these centres in an improper manner, and it

1. Mark iv: 11.

2. Fr. 'psychique'.

3. Fr. 'for intérieur'. Translated as 'conscience' or 'inmost heart' depending on context.

4. Not to be confused with the calculated exploitation of sexual attraction by the intellectual centre of the Personality in order to attain definite goals.

5. Fr. 'connaissance'.

6. We should note here that the 'T' of the body does not completely disappear even in states such as lethargy, anæsthesia or coma.

7. Fr. 'à bon escient'.

8. We shall see further on that it is not the only one to fulfil this function.

frequently intervenes in the functioning of the motor centre. The immediate result of this state of things is the illogicality of our mental⁹ life, because the 'T' of the body competes with the 'T' of the Personality. The latter, being multiple has not — and cannot have — any logical continuity either in its ideas or its actions. Man thus spends his life swinging from action to reaction and from reaction to action.

The broken¹⁰ succession of our lives is well known. Often it forms the complex tissue of the works of novelists and dramatists. In the Tradition, in this context, we often evoke the image of three men co-existing in each man: one who thinks, another who feels,¹¹ and a third who acts.

We can describe their interference¹² in domains that are not properly theirs; interferences which in different situations can be natural or unnatural, salutary or harmful. Unnatural interferences are always harmful and are the cause of a large part of our interior and exterior conflicts. Such interferences, sometimes mild but more often violent, are aggravated still more by the fact that the centres, because of their division into sectors, can never act in an autonomous manner, although each one of them claims to impose itself upon the others. Thus the stronger the action taken by one of the centres, the more powerful the mechanical compulsion¹³ suffered by the other two — pathological cases excluded.

(3)

The 'T' of the Personality is composed of a considerable number of little 'T's, forming different groups which take turns at ruling our attitudes and actions. How then can we reconcile this chaotic state with the continuity it provides, even if only apparently, to our mental⁹ life? Three elements are found to form the basis of this apparent continuity:

- our name;
- experience, as fixed by memory;
- the faculty of lying to ourselves and to others.

The *name* we bear corresponds to the 'T' of the Personality, that is to say to the ensemble of the particles of iron filings, regardless of the relative positions they occupy. After adolescence a man's name also represents his image of himself in his waking state.

He sometimes attaches to this an ideal image of himself: an image of what he aspires to be or to become.

9. Fr. 'psychique'.

10. Fr. 'décousu'.

11. Fr. 'éprouve les sentiments'.

12. Fr. 'immixtion'.

13. Fr. 'entraînement mécanique'.

That is why he holds on to his name as he would to a life-raft.¹⁴ In effect, everything that exists has a name; without a name one cannot imagine any existence, mental¹⁵ or physical, real or factitious.

In the case of man, his name and his Christian name cover the ensemble of what we can define as his own universe—in its material elements as well as its imaginary ones. He often considers these latter to be real.

Memory is a direct function of the *being* of the individual. The higher the level of *being*, the better the memory and the greater its capacity to contain. Loss of memory, which causes the notion of the name and the ensemble that is attached to it to be forgotten, makes a madman out of a normal man: the sense of continuity is no longer present.

The *faculty of lying* is the third element in our factitious life. It helps substantially to give it a semblance of continuity. We can easily realize the role played by this faculty of lying if we imagine what our existence would come to if this possibility were taken away. Life would become impossible, due to the shocks and conflicts which we would have to face. In this way, lies serve as *buffers*,¹⁶ like the buffers of railway carriages which soften shocks. It is this faculty of lying which makes our lives less of a battle, and contributes greatly to the impression of continuity life gives us. We are brought back once again to the fact that we attribute to ourselves faculties which we do not possess — except as possibilities for development: we pretend to be truthful because telling the truth and living a truthful life are possibilities which can become real; but they can do so much later, after we have worked hard and long upon ourselves. In the meantime we are condemned to lie. Whoever denies this only testifies to our difficulty in facing the truth.

(4)

We must linger a while on the question of lying, a question of great importance to which we must return more than once. The faculty of lying is a function of our imagination, a creative faculty. Before we create anything we must imagine what it is we wish to create. This gift belongs only to humans. Animals never possess it.

It is thanks to this gift of imagination, a divine gift, that we have the faculty of lying. We lie for different reasons, wishing generally to ameliorate situations which seem to us unbearable or difficult to accept. Lies thus open the way for mechanisms of rationalization or of justification, which are ways of 'patching up'. We shall see further on how the entangled behaviour of persons round about us provokes many shocks, creating

14. Fr. 'planche de salut'.

15. Fr. 'psychique'.

16. Fr. 'tampons'.

difficult and sometimes insoluble situations of human relations, veritable *Gordian knots*. It is thus in the utmost good faith that we resort to lies.

This being so, the attitude of the esoteric Doctrine towards lying is clear and realistic. It does not require us to stop lying from the start, because nobody can carry out such a resolution. However, if man cannot stop lying to others, the same cannot be said as far as he himself is concerned. He is therefore asked to stop lying to himself—and this in a definite way. This requirement is absolute, and we can easily understand why. The objective of esoteric work is the march towards *Consciousness*, which means towards *Truth*. It would be a *contradictio in objecto* to try to approach the truth while continuing to lie to ourselves or to believe in our own lies. We must therefore eliminate any attempt to lie to ourselves: on this point no compromise can be tolerated, no excuse admitted.

But while in our present condition we cannot live without lying to others, we must at least be conscious of our lies.

There is, nevertheless, another recommendation which we can make in this domain. In the ensemble of our lies to others, tolerated esoterically, we must exercise ourselves to distinguish between those lies which are indispensable or inevitable, those lies which are simply useful, and those which are not. The Doctrine asks those who study it to fight energetically against those useless lies.

It is only by training of this nature that we shall progressively be able to master the rooted tendency to lie which exists within us. Every attempt to hurry things, so far as lying to others is concerned, though it be a noble attempt, is doomed to early failure. We live in a world which is immersed in lies and moved by lies. It is to be noted that the Decalogue, which imposes observable commandments on man, does not forbid him from lying except in a small sector of human relations; that of bearing false witness, and also in situations where he is already badly predisposed to someone.¹⁷

(5)

It is also necessary to guard against a variant of the habit of lying to ourselves, one which we commonly adopt from early childhood and against which we must fight by every means. This variant is widespread because at first glance it appears to us to be a positive attitude. Such an attitude can normally be adapted easily to any case; used in spoken language or in writing; in mundane conversation, or in a thesis for a doctorate, it is betrayed by the phrase: '*yes but...*'. This in itself does not imply any harm when it is used. On the contrary, such usage is helpful and even indispensable in discussions, controversies and pleadings — where we

17. Deuteronomy v: 20.

resort to it quite frequently. However when applied to ourselves and for our own benefit, with the aim of softening a shock, or rediscovering our inner peace after we have sinned, or excusing our actions or faults, this idiom crystallizes within us over a period of time to create a true *auto-tranquillizing mechanism*. It is to be noted that the effects of this mechanism are not to be compared with 'sang-froid', or the ability to answer well and quickly, or those of inspirations¹⁸ from consciousness. On the contrary, it is a true mechanism of mental anaesthesia, founded on a refined and disguised lie. It sows hypocrisy in man towards himself.

This *auto-tranquillizer*, like all other moral buffers, must be destroyed.

(6)

Let us now return to the study of the 'T' of the Personality. It has been established that this 'T', as it is, is shifting *sand*. As used in the Gospel,¹⁹ the image of sand and that of *legion* are both very near reality. For what we take to be our 'T' is, in fact, a mixture of a number of little 'T's. In the Personality each little 'T' or group of little 'T's enters the scene according to circumstance. There are many possible combinations between these 'T's, but their number is limited: it can be calculated.

We have seen that, according to the Tradition, man possesses three mental²⁰ centres, each divided into six sectors. This raises the number of the Personality's various organs of consciousness to eighteen. Every little 'T' is nothing but a fractional consciousness of the Personality, that is to say, of the 'ensemble' of the mental²⁰ 'T', which for the moment thinks of itself in that way. Applying algebraic calculations to the possible combinations of three, two and one which can arise from the three centres and their eighteen sectors, we find that the number of these combinations amounts to nine hundred and eighty seven.

This fractional form of consciousness betrays the deficient state in which the Personality is generally found. Let us say for the moment that this fractional consciousness that arises in man is one aspect of these many possible combinations of sectors which at every moment play a part in the receipt of impressions and in the expression of desires, feelings and opinions.

These groupings generally occur in threes or twos; it is rather rare that one sector alone participates in a mental²⁰ state. As long as the fusion of the particles of iron filings has not occurred, these nine hundred and eighty seven possible combinations of the centres and their sectors give birth to an equal number of partial states of consciousness of the Personality. Each

18. Fr. 'éclairs de la conscience'.

19. Mark v: 9; Luke viii: 30.

20. Fr. 'psychique'.

affirms itself as—and at that moment thinks of itself as—the complete 'I'. We must bear in mind that we are dealing here with these little 'I's of whom we have talked many times before.²¹

The various combinations incessantly made and unmade within us by the little 'I's weave the fabric of our lives; their outcome is harmful. This life, the iron filings in the vase (Fig. 1), keeps continually modifying itself in an anarchistic way. It is dominated by outside events, and lacks the interference of a pre-established plan by which it may attain a premeditated goal. This reminds us of the phenomenon of wave interference or white-caps,²² which we can graphically represent by intertwined sinusoids.

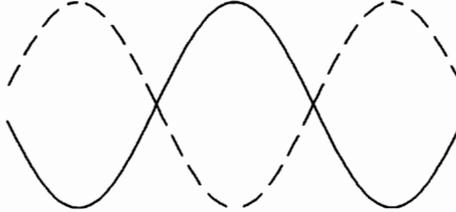


Fig. 9

This phenomenon results in a draining exhaustion which can lead a man to death. Later, we shall see the problem from a different point of view, which will better explain the cause of ageing and death. From the esoteric point of view, *death is bankruptcy*.²³ The friction between the iron filings which occurs in our everyday lives is not intense enough to kindle an interior fire sufficient to transfigure the whole *being*—which would permit him to vanquish Death. Such friction is however more than enough to totally exhaust the reserve of vital forces and so bring on death. It is to such cases, among others, that the words of Revelations apply:

I know that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and have gotten riches and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art a wretched one, and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see.²⁴

21. Some psychologists have reached objective findings which are, in fact, quite close to the number we have calculated. Thus Sheldon and his co-workers have gathered, by empirical methods, 650 *traits of character* which have been commonly admitted (cf. Guy Palmade, *La Caractérologie*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1953, p. 91).

22. Fr. 'houppée'.

23. Fr. 'la mort est une faillite'.

24. Rev. iii: 15–18.

CHAPTER V

(1)

The formation of the three mental¹ centres in the Personality is not synchronous with their development.

The *motor centre* is already highly developed in the newborn. Its *positive instinctive* part grows and forms itself while still in the mother's womb, beginning at conception, and continuing throughout pregnancy in such a way that at birth it functions at its normal rhythm. After this it will no longer be subject to qualitative change. On the other hand, the *negative motor* part of this centre is much less developed. It can be said that if the instinctive part of the newborn functions at around 75% of its normal output, the percentage for the motor part only reaches 25%, and this almost totally devoted to the internal processes of the body. Throughout growth, before and after puberty, this part of the motor centre not only develops quantitatively, but qualitatively. In addition, all the *savoir-faire* of the bodily 'I',² from the time the infant takes his mother's breast until he performs the most complex movements, must be complemented at every step³ by qualitative development. This development continues throughout life.

The *emotional centre* in the newborn is characterized by its purity. As long as the child has not learned how to lie, he retains the marvellous faculty—proper to this centre—of spontaneously discerning the true from the false over a very wide range of experience. With time, education, and all that is instilled in the child, this centre is deranged and this faculty lost, to be found again only much later as a result of esoteric work, special exercises, and sustained efforts. It must also be noted that the emotional centre in the newborn is generally much less developed than the motor centre, and that commonly during the life of man 1, 2 or 3, *exterior* man, it does not develop like the two other centres.

Although education⁴ is a major preoccupation of families and public authorities, the emotional development of the child is almost totally left to chance. In our contemporary civilization, this leads to an extraordinary impoverishment of our affective lives. Even in the eighteenth century, the Abbé Prévost notes:

1. Fr. 'psychique'.

2. Fr. 'moi physique'.

3. Fr. 'en chaque cas'.

4. Fr. 'l'instruction'.

‘There are few people who know the full force of the different movements of the heart. The vast majority of men are only sensitive to five or six passions, in the circle of which their lives are passed and which define the boundaries of their imaginations. Take away love and hate, pleasure and pain, hope and fear, and *they will feel nothing*’.

He further added:

‘But persons of a nobler character can be moved in thousands of different ways. It seems that they can receive ideas and sensations which surpass the ordinary norms of nature.’⁵

The development of the emotional centre is the principal object of esoteric culture. We shall see later that it is only through this centre that man can find the key which will open the door to give him access to a higher life.

The *intellectual centre* is in an embryonic state in the newborn. It goes through an intensive development which continues for the length of life, very often taking hypertrophied form in our civilization.

Man’s shaping is almost exclusively the shaping of his intellectual centre through instruction, personal experience, and analytical or constructive work, whether original or compilatory.

(2)

The intellectual centre in the child is a *tabula rasa*. It can be compared to a system of gramophone discs which have not yet been recorded. The system is vast, well regulated, and provided with a mechanism — that of association — by which any disc arriving at its end automatically releases a second, the contents of which are related to the first. A record which turns as someone speaks can similarly provoke in us — again by association — the release of an equivalent record. In general this is how dialogue is born and sustained.

This procedure is mechanical. We can easily observe this in any conversation between a number of persons who know each other slightly. Such an interchange necessarily falls to an elementary level of the most banal interests: weather, political news, or the city. We hear these records being played, turning continually and passing from one person to another, each with their faces congealed in a grimace which — we commonly agree — gives evidence of an amiable attitude.

The recording continues practically forever, as the disc library is vast and the recording apparatus very sensitive. When a person speaks, it is generally easy to distinguish whether his records are playing or whether he speaks from some deeper part of himself. In the latter case, he uses a pictorial, rustic and sometimes awkward language; in the former he speaks in a singing tone of voice. It is important to make these observations upon

5. Abbé Prévost, *Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (Payot, Paris, 1926) pp. 96–7.

ourselves, in order to be able to constate such variations of speech. One moment it is 'I' who speaks then, unnoticed, it is no longer I; a recording from the past begins to play in me. A curious thing: once a record has been started, it is almost impossible to stop it before it has run through its content.

There are discs which we should carefully preserve, while others should be re-recorded. A special series of discs sometimes concerns the techniques of one's work. Everyone in his everyday work unconsciously creates a collection of such discs, which he uses for the needs of his profession.

Beside these recordings are others whose contents are without sense: they do not correspond either to needs or facts. This category includes for example anecdotes and what seems to the speaker to be witty conversation.

Interior observation of this phenomenon would reveal a whole repertoire of such records. A discovery like this would offer us the opportunity of working to control the release of a particular type of recording, and so try to eliminate it completely.

For that, we must first start to distinguish these from useful discs which have some purpose. This is done by analysis of their contents, and by the inner 'taste' which causes them to be played, as well as by the characteristic intonation that they give to the voice. Thereafter, we must try to catch the exact moment of their release. It is in that precise moment — we shall see later on why this is so — that it is possible to control these recordings and eliminate those which are useless.

(3)

Experience confirms the evidence that the child identifies himself with the 'I' of the body. The Personality is found to be obedient to this 'I' and still very underdeveloped. The proof of this is that he speaks of himself by evoking his own name, which is an attribute of the Personality. He speaks of himself in the third person, exactly as an adult who identifies himself with his personality treats his Soul as a third person. The Soul is as much of a stranger to the *exterior* man as the Personality is to the child, but this is not true of his body, even though he treats it in the third person. Indeed, although less apparent, the obedience of the Personality to the 'I' of the body frequently continues in adults.

Having become conscious of this bondage, someone who devotes himself to esoteric practices seeks to overcome it. He may have recourse to dangerous processes to attain this end. Thus it happens that certain esoteric Orthodox, Muslim and Hindu techniques make the mistake of using mortifications which are excessive and surpass the limits of good sense. We forget that the body is the horse which we are called upon to ride⁶ for the

6. Fr. 'chevaucher'.

whole of our lives; an instrument which cannot be replaced. Certainly it must be trained, disciplined and kept in its place, which is to be obedient; but it is nonetheless true that it must be suitably cared for and maintained. The result to seek in this domain is always a state of discipline which compromises neither health nor vigour.

We must tune the instrument which emits discordant sounds, not cut the strings to stop the cacophony.

(4)

The formation of character occurs at the same time as the growth and development of the mental⁷ centres in man. We have seen that the Personality is made up of little 'T's, each in turn based on⁸ one of the possible combinations of the centres and their sectors. These little 'T's form the iron filings which under certain circumstances — *friction* and *fire* — can be radically transformed by what we have called *fusion*: this is when the character of man can be considered to be finally formed. It is only then that the following ideal qualities are acquired: firmness in man; gentleness⁹ in woman. These are then gained not momentarily — only until a new storm — but in permanent form, although always coloured by the given qualities of the individual¹⁰ nature. As long as the *fusion* is not complete, what we call the character can be compared to a tent erected on a sandy beach, open to winds and tempests. In reality, this character represents — in the ensemble of the small 'T's — a grouping of a number of them having in common certain factors such as: innate disposition; education; training; common or personal interests¹¹ on every level of consciousness, especially the sub-consciousness, and lastly accidental associations. Such groupings can be constituted on very different bases, and the strength of the bonds uniting the little 'T's can make a fragile federation out of them, or may constitute a partial fusion between them. The latter can be produced in different ways: either in the form of an annular or lateral *crust*, or in the form of *lumps*.



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

7. Fr. 'psychique'.

8. Fr. 's'affirme'.

9. Fr. 'douceur'.

10. Fr. 'personne donnée'.

11. Fr. 'attractions'.

In the first case, the character shows a certain degree of constancy but is rather superficial both in form and in appearance. This situation¹² is not uncommon in Anglo-Saxons and generally among Germans. Such a nature in man has principles, but essentially it is rather too pragmatic. In the second case the orientation of character is more rigid. This case occurs more frequently among the Latin¹³ peoples. With time, this type of character has turned towards the cult of formal logic and the formation of a Cartesian spirit.

The third category is no longer characterized by the formation of a single group of particles amongst¹⁴ the little 'I's, but has two groupings, like *lumps* in the middle of a fluid mass.

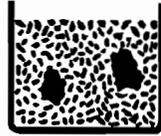


Fig. 12

Such cases are often found among the Slavs and the people of the Near and Middle East. The presence of two groupings instead of one simply tends to make the ensemble of the Personality more fragile and excessively concerned to defend the individual's personal interests.

On the other hand, this structure makes him 'bilateral', therefore more objective and consequently more understanding.

When there are two *lumps*, one constituted by little 'I's of an emotional character and the other by little 'I's of an intellectual character, if an interior or exterior shock occurs, close collaboration is established between these two groupings. For a time they form a single block. The character becomes particularly firm for that period; capable of taking decisions or keeping up a heroic fight. In ordinary conditions the character of these human groups is such that interest, adventure or money do not constitute a sufficient stimulus to break the equilibrium between the two *lumps* and provide the impulse to work for complete *fusion*. They must always be magnetized by some disinterested motive: ideas, beliefs, doctrines, devotion, trust etc. Occasionally the formation of two *lumps* has a negative result: man then becomes hesitant, incapable of taking a decision as he always finds as many arguments in favour of abstention as of action. Russian literature offers more than one example of human types of this class, particularly in the novels of Dostoevsky. The simultaneous crystallization of two *lumps* in the

12. Fr. 'cas'.

13. Fr. 'romanité'.

14. Fr. 'au sein'.

mass of little 'T's can provoke a split in the Personality. There even exist cases of formation of three *lumps*, but these are classified as pathological cases, and deep examination of these does not enter into the scope of the present study. It is sufficient to note that generally the formation of three *lumps* and more leads to complete dissolution of the Personality.

The Emperor Alexander I of Russia¹⁵ offers a classical example of Personality schism.

(5)

Let us now examine the position the Personality of the adult occupies in relation to the real 'T', our innermost self; that supreme, equitable, impartial but passive *judge*. We can represent this relative position in the figure below:

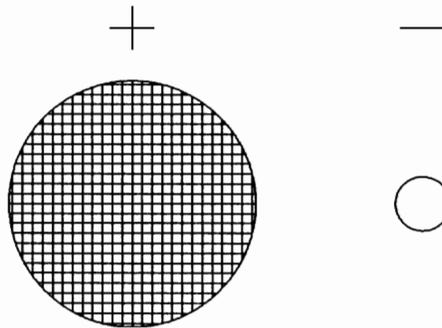


Fig. 13

The circle on the left represents the 'T' of the Personality—the ensemble of the little 'T's—which is in fact a *Non-I*. The circle on the right is the real 'T'. In man 1, 2 or 3, the Personality dominates. It is the Personality which acts, while the real 'T' who, since the fall of Adam, occupies a very passive position in man, must bear the consequences of those acts. The Personality follows its own goals and acts as it likes, often transgressing against the principles and maxims of the real 'T'. This observation permits us to grasp

15. Third Emperor of the Holstein-Gottorp dynasty. Son of a half-madman (Paul I. assassinated); grandson of a degenerate (Peter III assassinated); great grandson of Charles-Frederick, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, an alcoholic. The reports of contemporaries of Alexander are very strange. Thus, Lagerbjörk, Swedish ambassador, said of him: 'the Emperor Alexander is as subtle as the point of a needle, sharp as a razor, false as the surf of the sea'. We should also recall the words of Napoleon: 'It would be difficult to have a brighter mind than Alexander, but I am convinced that he is missing a part therein and it is impossible to find out which one it is.' Lastly, N. K. Schilder, the best biographer of the Emperor, said that: 'it was usual for him to have two ways of thought for everything'. Alexander hated all people who had guessed the state of his personality, of which he was undoubtedly aware. He hid this duality, but always ended by the most complete negation of what he professed, as he did of his most sacred ideals.

the profound meaning of the words of the Apostle St Paul: *'I do not do what I will and I do what I hate.'*¹⁶

This is the situation of any man who goes through life in ignorance of his latent faculties, that is to say, of real Life.

His factitious existence is only a *loan*: it is temporary and ends with death, according to the divine word: *'for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.'*¹⁷

What is the sense and purpose of such an existence? We cannot find an exact answer to this question until we examine it in a large context—that of the life of the Cosmos. We shall then understand the meaning of human life, and its objective '*raison d'être*' *in relation to the economy of the Universe*. On the other hand, looked at from the individual point of view—subjectively—such an existence seems absurd. Great minds have always seen this and clearly said it. Pushkin cried: *'Marvellous gift, useless gift, life, for what purpose were you given to us?'*

Here we are touching on the great problem of Death. The more man identifies himself with his Personality, the less he thinks of death. Contrary to all evidence as he sees everything die all around him, man has no spontaneous feeling of his mortality. Though gifted with fertile imagination, man can conceive of his own death only with difficulty. An effort is needed in order to come to the idea of one's own death, and to create its image. All man can imagine in this respect is to evoke the image of his own corpse: he can never exclude from this representation the observer who contemplates this image. This fact is known, and certain authors have seen it as proof of our immortality. There is in this a fragment of truth. Without his being aware of it, the mental effort of representing his own death detaches man a little, unaccountably not only from identification with his own body, but also from his Personality—so that he identifies himself, partially and for a few instants, with his real '*T*'. Otherwise, the latter remains neglected, generally forgotten somewhere in the deepest parts of our waking consciousness—which is the consciousness of the '*T*' of our Personality, accompanied by the consciousness of the '*T*' of the body.

This exercise is useful and even necessary. In Esoteric Orthodoxy, it is imposed on students together with the *prayer of Jesus* as a daily exercise, under the title of *remembrance of death*. Death is the only *real* and unique event which happens to us without fail. In other words, constantly bearing in mind the idea of death approaching nearer every day is a concrete means of facing an implacable reality—before which all the joys and all the worries of the Personality fade. It is thus that one learns that in effect: *'all is vanity and torments of the mind.'*¹⁸

16. Romans vii: 15.

17. Genesis iii: 19.

18. Ecclesiastes i: 14; ii: 17. Quoted according to the Slavonic texts.

(6)

The situation is without outcome as long as man, regarding himself as a Personality, identifies himself with his relative consciousness, making the aims and the interests of the latter his own. For '*broad is the road that leads to perdition*'.¹⁹

But where then is: '*narrow is the gate and strait the road that leadeth unto Life*'?²⁰ Our brief examination of relations between the Personality and the real 'I' shows where we must search for the answer. Whoever seeks escape from this factitious existence — who has measured its vanity — must concentrate his efforts on this point. All hope is here.

(7)

Starting from these constataions, esoteric science no longer views man *as a given fact*,²¹ but as a *possibility*. It indicates that the biological, psychological and moral growth and development of the *exterior* man stops spontaneously at a certain level. It is true that in every field man continues to act and even to act in a constructive manner on the higher levels²² of his waking consciousness — and especially in his profession: he can make discoveries; he can render substantial services to society; *but as he is, he can no longer raise the level of his being*. As a result of this, the process of degeneration immediately acts without relenting: it starts with the physical body, and leads to ageing and then to death.

The *narrow road leading to Life* offers the possibility — which is real — to reverse²³ the situation represented in the previous figure (Fig. 13). This is done by introducing a continuous and *permanent attachment* between the Personality and the passive real 'I', so as to render the presence of the latter constant in the field of action of the Personality. Then, with time and according to the intensity of efforts, the situation can undergo a complete change: the more²⁴ the real 'I' — like the *grain of mustard seed*²⁵ — takes root in the mental²⁶ life which was until then dominated by the Personality, the more the latter is subjected, little by little, to the will of the *judge*. Identifying himself with it, man will rediscover his real 'I' in all its integrity and permanence. *For him*, life then loses its factitious character, to become

19. Matthew vii: 13.

20. Matthew vii: 14.

21. Fr. 'donnée'.

22. Fr. 'plans'.

23. Fr. 'renverser'.

24. Fr. 'au fur et à mesure'.

25. Matthew viii: 31; Mark iv: 31; Luke viii: 19.

26. Fr. 'psychique'.

logical and factual. This new condition can be represented by the figure below, which shows an essential difference compared to the previous one:

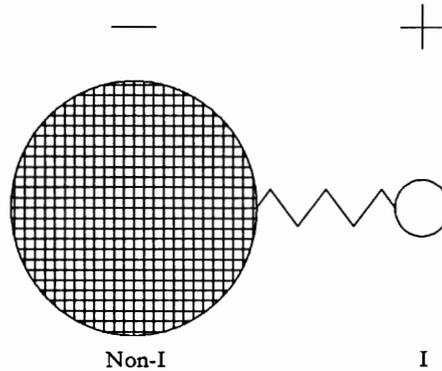


Fig. 14

The permanent link which must be introduced between the Personality and the real 'I' is *esoteric Knowledge*.²⁷ The knowledge and savoir-faire that it permits us to acquire represent the *philosophers' stone* of the medieval mystics. They are capable of provoking in man the *transmutation* to which he aspires.

The great difficulty — which makes this road narrow and painful — consists in the fact that for the Personality this transmutation results in the loss of its dominating position: it must bow and submit. What makes the problem even more difficult is that the Personality must accept the new situation in advance; more, it must aspire to it; must wish for it ardently. As we have already said, the real 'I' remains in a passive state in the *exterior* man. For the Personality, the prospect of the emergence of that 'I' and its permanent presence in daily life entails the loss of free choice, and it reacts sharply. In the best cases this reaction is not continuous but is revealed by reactions which may become dangerous. This is the effect of the arrogant pride²⁸ of the Personality, which wants to continue to assert itself as supreme authority. We can now better understand that to successfully enter the narrow path — that is, esoteric work — the man-Personality must accept in advance (the need) to pass through moral bankruptcy.²⁹ As long as he is self-satisfied, he must be considered *rich* according to the Gospel, and we already know that it is '*easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*'³⁰

27. Fr. 'Connaissance'.

28. Fr. 'orgueil'.

29. Fr. 'faillite'.

30. Matthew xix: 24; Mark x: 25; Luke xviii: 25.

In the discovery of this road lies the true meaning of our lives: this wonderful gift, otherwise useless according to Pushkin. This gift gives us a possibility. We are called by the voice of our innermost heart³¹ to realize this gift. But to succeed we must work ceaselessly, for fear of not succeeding in time. One must work, says Jesus, '*while it is day: the night comes when no man can work.*'³²

If we keep the image of death constantly in our minds, we will appreciate with bitter regret the value of each lost day.

31. Fr. 'for intérieur'.

32. John ix: 4.

CHAPTER VI

(1)

We now stand very close to the domain of esotericism proper. The Apostle St Paul said: *'Make sure that nobody makes prey of you by philosophy or by mere deceit, depending on human tradition derived from elements of nature and not according to Christ — for only in Him the whole fullness of the Divinity lives bodily. Only in Him is all complete, since He is the source and the power of it all.'*¹

This passage is important. In it the Apostle establishes a fundamental distinction between positive philosophy on the one hand, based on the speculations of what he calls *carnal intelligence*,² on a tradition which is purely human in origin, and on the other hand the higher knowledge³ whose unique source, he says, is Christ. For St Paul, carnal intelligence is none other than that of the Personality — dominated in cultured circles by an education which is predominantly intellectual. In spite of all its refinements in the art of reasoning, this intelligence cannot go beyond the limits of agnostic rationalism. Enclosed within this circle, human reason does not know⁴ and will never know³ what lies beyond these limits: *'ignorabimus'*, says R. Virchow.

This distinction between the human knowledge³ accessible to our Personality and higher knowledge³ coming from the divine plane stands out in a very striking manner when we compare the following texts of St John the Apostle. The affirmation: *'No man hath seen God at any time'*⁴ seems to be in flagrant contradiction to the words of Jesus, quoted elsewhere by the same evangelist: *'If a man love Me, he will keep My word: and My Father will love him. And We will establish a dwelling in him.'*⁵ And in Revelations: *'Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come unto him and will sup with him and he with Me.'*⁶

We can find many similar quotations from Holy Scripture to give weight to these texts, but we need only go back to the definition given by St Paul the Apostle of these two kinds of knowledge, which apparently have no common measure: *'Now the animal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of*

1. Colossians ii: 8–10. From the Slavonic text.

2. *Ibid.* 18.

3. Fr. 'savoir'. 'Know' and 'knowledge' throughout this chapter translate 'savoir' and its derivatives unless annotated otherwise.

4. John i: 18.

5. *Ibid.* xiv: 23. Cf. I Corinthians, iii: 16—'Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God is dwelling inside you?'

6. Revelations iii: 20.

*God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are but spiritually judged. But he that is spiritual, on the contrary, judgeth all things, and he himself is judged by no man.*⁷

The agreement between these texts permits us to affirm that the Apostles made a fundamental distinction between two different kinds of knowledge: the first relative, limited, knowing nothing about the second, and that second absolute, unlimited, encompassing the first. St Paul the Apostle attributed the first to the man he called *animal*, the other to the man he called *spiritual*.

What is meant by these two species of human beings? Is there no way by which the *animal* man can become a *spiritual* man?

We can also say that these texts confront us directly with the problem of the essential difference in quality between human wisdom and divine wisdom. What is left is to know if it is possible to be initiated into this divine wisdom, and how — or at least how to begin to approach it.

(2)

We have seen that the real 'I' rarely manifests in man, and in general does not do so unless the Personality asks him to. His attitude is similar to that of a Judge who remains in his court without seeking to pronounce sentence; whose passive attitude is opposed to the Personality's active attitude. We have also seen that if we introduce the bond of *esoteric knowledge* between the Personality and the real 'I', their reciprocal positions can very gradually become reversed. The real 'I' then becomes active and the Personality, as well as the 'I' of the body, submit themselves entirely to the real 'I', who becomes the undoubted and absolute master.

This reversal of the situation is characterized particularly by an inversion of man's attitude towards his own desires. Previously he *willed for that which he yearned for*; from now on, he *will yearn for what he first wanted*.

The more he progresses in esoteric knowledge, the more the seeker objectively constates within himself the undeniable realization of that change. The more he advances on this way, the deeper and more extensive the change becomes. Conversely, whenever the seeker constates such a phenomenon within himself, he will know he is progressing and be able to measure his progress.

(3)

Let us now examine through which organs the real 'I' manifests in man, and how one can widen and intensify its manifestation.

7. I Corinthians ii: 14–15.

Beyond the three mental⁸ centres of the Personality — which from now on will be called *lower centres*— we have within us two other higher centres, independent of the physical body and of the Personality. In ensemble, these two higher centres truly represent our Soul, of which our current language speaks in the third person. Their presence in our innermost heart, and the rarity of the impartial and objective messages that we are able to receive through the medium of these centres, give us our impression of the real 'T' as a Judge residing in his courthouse. But we shall see in an instant that this aspect of the real 'T' is not unique. Far from it; the doctrine of the higher centres will not only resolve the apparent contradictions in the texts quoted above, but it will also help us penetrate the meaning of a number of other obscure points in the Holy Scriptures, in the Tradition, and in life. What is even more important; it will allow us to understand ourselves better.

While the lower centres in the *exterior* man are not fully⁹ developed, the higher centres are perfect and work at full capacity. But as we are, we cannot receive more than a negligibly small part of their communications. The reason for this is that man views himself as nothing but Personality. This illusion has as its immediate effects, pride, egocentricity and egotism. These form a kind of screen, only allowing the most rudimentary messages from the higher centres to pass, although their communication continues non-stop. They *knock at the door*; but it is for us to *hear the voice and open*.

(4)

If we leave the picturesque language of St John, we can say that the deficiency of our lower centres is the reason why we do not receive the communications of higher centres. We have already seen that the motor centre is the only one of the three lower centres which functions almost normally. This is important: because this centre plays a part in all our mental activity, we must use it to achieve our esoteric ends. Its incomplete development hinders it from fulfilling this role, so we must educate it. In the same way the intellectual centre must be constantly awakened by all sorts of shocks and impulses. Being the slowest of the three, it has a natural tendency to drowsiness and inaction. Goethe used to say; '*Man is weak, he falls asleep all the time...*' The higher stages in the education of the intellectual centre, as with the motor centre, are achieved by appropriate esoteric exercises which are a necessary complement to theoretical study.

Among the lower centres, the emotional centre is worst off. In our civilization — as we have already observed — it generally receives neither

8. Fr. 'psychique'.

9. Fr. 'intégralement'.

rational education nor systematic training. Its formation and development are now left to chance, since religious education today has been largely intellectualized and rationalized. All sorts of *considerations* dictated by worldly wisdom and mundane vanity; the habitual practice of lying — especially to ourselves — and hypocrisy, from which no one is totally exempt, imprint dangerous distortions on the emotional centre. Frequently struck by a feeling of inferiority and by the need for compensation, its usual motivation; accustomed as it is to judge and to criticize everybody and everything; surrendering itself to a strangely voluptuous enjoyment of negative emotions; this centre becomes unrecognizable. It degenerates to the point where it becomes the *instrument of destruction* of our *being*, which it accelerates on its way towards ageing and death.

The two higher centres work much faster than the lower centres. Of the latter — as we have already said — the slowest is the intellectual centre; the motor centre is slightly faster, but the fastest of all should have been the emotional centre if it were not in that deranged state of which we have just spoken. It generally works in slow motion, at the same pace as the motor centre.

(5)

The schematic arrangement of man, when completed by including the higher centres, appears as follows:

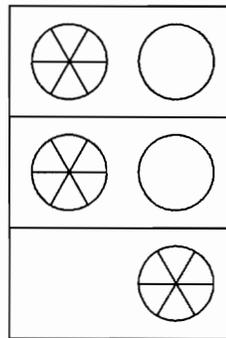


Fig. 15

The higher emotional centre is to be found at the level of the heart, and the higher intellectual centre at the level of the head. Their functions are different. In the Tradition they are sometimes called the eyes of the Soul. Thus, St Isaac The Syrian said: *‘While the two eyes of the body see things in an identical way, the eyes of the Soul see differently: one contemplates the truth in images*

*and symbols, the other face to face.*¹⁰ In other words, messages received through the higher emotional centre can be translated into pictures or language, but they always take the form of images or symbols. This is the case, for example, with the Book of Revelations. In its ensemble this text is unintelligible if one studies it only by means of the lower centres. To grasp its true sense, it must be read with the help of the higher emotional centre. It is thus that it was revealed to St John on the island of Patmos, and it is only thus that we can understand this most important communication. It is true that the 'I' of the Personality can read it, but he will only understand a very small part of it; the grandiose meaning of these magnificent visions will remain hidden from him. As for communications received through the higher intellectual centre, they are of such a transcendent nature that there is no way in which they can be translated into human language.

We do not register the messages of the higher centres, which are ceaselessly working in us at full capacity. This is not only because our lower centres are under-developed, but also because they are not equilibrated. We must therefore apply ourselves to stimulate the growth of the Personality within us, and to equilibrate and regulate the work of our three centres. By the intensive practice of self-observation,¹¹ we must try hard to distinguish the work of each centre within us, then the work of their two parts, and lastly of their sectors. So we enter within ourselves.

If by appropriate exercises we can succeed in completely developing and perfectly equilibrating our lower centres, we shall be able to establish a permanent tie with our higher centres. Such a tie will be established gradually, starting from the lower emotional centre. The further the latter is purified and developed, the better it will acquire its normal rhythm. This is what will allow contact with the higher emotional centre. Later on, through the latter, it will make contact with the higher intellectual centre.

As no direct link exists between the lower intellectual centre and the higher intellectual centre, the intellectual culture which is the almost exclusive basis of our education cannot lead us to higher levels of consciousness. In spite of the refinement of his intelligence, no matter how extensive or deep the knowledge¹² he acquires, *exterior* man remains enclosed within the circle of reason. Escape is possible only via the heart; that is why the cultivation of our emotional life dominates the attention, the pre-occupations and the obligatory efforts demanded by esoteric teachings. However, if a purely intellectual culture, rational and positive, cannot lead us directly towards the higher planes of Life, one must not think that it is useless. From the esoteric point of view, it retains its full value, and will

10. *Philokalia*: St Isaac the Syrian, 82nd/72nd sermons.

11. Fr. 'introspection'.

12. 'connaissance'.

be of great help when *Individuality* is formed within us. But we have to begin at the beginning, that is to say, with the training of our hearts and the refinement of our emotional lives. On this point Theophan the Recluse, an authority on this matter, has been quite categorical. He said: '*There, neither dignity nor erudition would be any help.*'

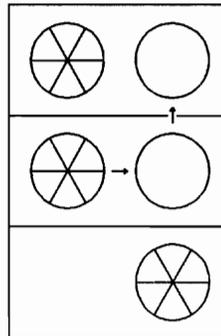


Fig. 16

Access to the higher emotional centre is access to the level of consciousness of the real, individual 'T'. Access to the higher intellectual centre raises us to the level of Consciousness — that is, to participation in the universal 'T', through the *interior communion* it permits. This is the end of all possible evolution for man under terrestrial conditions. But what a tremendous prospect. The Apostle St Paul says this about it: '*And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, to them that are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew He foreordained to be similar to the image of His son, that He might be the firstborn among a multitude of brethren.*'¹³

To sum up: our higher centres are two divine sparks: one issues from the other: the higher emotional centre — spark of the Son — and the higher intellectual centre — spark of the Father in his consubstantial aspect of the Holy Spirit. We should now better understand the profound meaning of the texts quoted at the beginning of this chapter, as well as the essential difference, described by St Paul, that exists between human philosophy and human tradition on the one hand, and the esoteric Tradition on the other.

If we now seek to encapsulate in one idea the path we have to walk from birth to the summit of esotericism, we can conceive it as the evolution of the 'T', always taking new forms without annihilating the old.

13. Romans viii: 28–29.

There are four levels of the 'I' which correspond to the four levels of *being* and of *consciousness*:

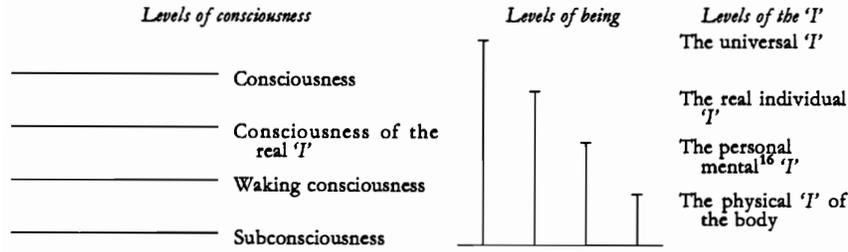


Fig. 17

Gabriel Derjavine defines this evolution in his famous formula: 'I am worm, I am slave, I am king, I am God.'

(6)

What has been said above should lead us to ask ourselves what is the meaning and mission in evolution of the Personality; this fine and complex organism which nevertheless is a 'Non-I'; with which we identify ourselves and from which we should be able to detach ourselves at the price of particularly painful efforts.

We must remember that it is since the fall of Adam that the spiritual man, having become an animal man, has lost contact with his higher centres, that is to say, with the *Tree of Life*, by giving pre-eminence to his lower centres, that is, to the *Tree of Knowledge*¹⁴ of *Good and Evil*. Nevertheless, by means of the Personality and of its three centres, we possess within us—in either embryonic or developed state—all the elements of which the Universe is composed, which the Orthodox Tradition calls the 'World'. These elements are represented by corresponding parts of our Personality.

As he gradually acquires mastery and control of his Personality, man, with the aid of this complex instrument, succeeds in Knowing¹⁵ the Universe in all its parts—and in establishing conscious and organic links with it. This occurs according to the principle of Plato which says that: 'Like can neither be grasped nor understood except by like.'

This is the objective meaning and place of the Personality in the evolution of the 'I': by a kind of *conscious identification* which is the fruit of appropriate exercises of concentration, he who seeks will succeed in Knowing¹⁵ the exterior 'Non-I' by means of the interior 'Non-I', that is

14. Fr. 'connaissance'.

15. Fr. 'connaître'.

16. Fr. 'psychique'.

to say, by means of his Personality. This procedure, to which we shall return later, will give him access to powers. 'Try to penetrate inside the inner cage and you will see the outer cage, (the Universe), for both are one.'¹⁷

(7)

We can now better understand and define the notion of *esotericism*. By esotericism, in the precise sense of the word, we mean facts and acts which are accessible to higher centres, that is to say, to the field of consciousness of the real 'I', and of Consciousness itself. In the broad sense of the word the accepted notion of esotericism is extended to include the two steps that give access to this field: it first embraces *exotericism*, characterized by discarding belief in the Personality as of permanent value, and then *mesotericism*, which is the first stage of approach to the real 'I'. In the following figure these three degrees of esotericism are drawn as three concentric circles outside which the 'wilderness'¹⁸ is found: that zone where *exterior* man lives in subordination to his Personality.

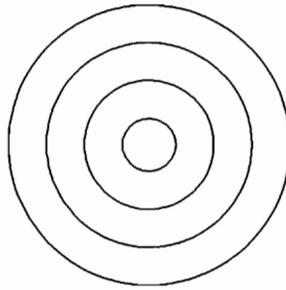


Fig. 18

Seen in perspective, the previous figure would appear like this:

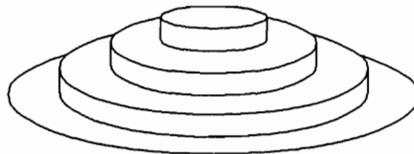


Fig. 19

Let us now examine from the practical point of view how man can reach esotericism; by what means he can work towards the aim of establishing

17. *Philokalia*: St Isaac the Syrian, 2nd/30th sermons.

18. Fr. 'brousse'.

permanent connections which will make it possible for him to evolve. The problem is treated in the Tradition by the help of the diagram below. In esoteric teaching this figure could be said to be *the most important*. It incorporates a multitude of ideas; far more than the comments we are about to give. That is why we must return to it often and meditate upon it.

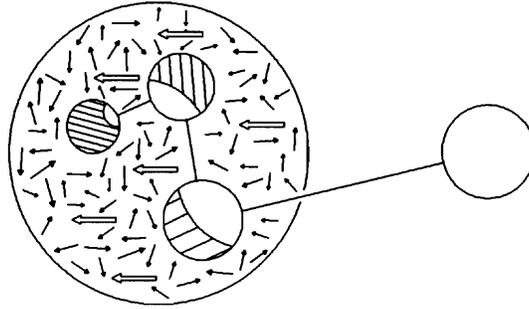


Fig. 20

The black arrows represent influences created within life by life itself. This is the first variety of influence by which man is surrounded. These are called 'A' influences. We will notice that they are distributed almost equally over all the surface of the circle of life. As in the case of all radiant energy in nature, their effect is inversely proportional to the square of the distance; thus man is subject most of all to arrows influencing him from those immediately around him. He is pulled every instant by the way they act at that moment.

The influence of the 'A' arrows on *exterior* man is imperative; driven, he wanders in the circle of his life from birth to death, following a broken line which is sometimes subject to dangerous changes of direction.

The ensemble of 'A' influences forms the *Law of Chance* or *Law of Accident*. Man is subject to its rule, yet if we examine the figure more closely we will perceive that each black arrow is counterbalanced, neutralized in some other part by another arrow equal in force and diametrically opposed, so that if we had left them to effectively neutralize each other the resultant force would have been equal to zero. This means that in their ensemble the 'A' influences are illusory in their nature, although the effect of each one of them is real, so that *exterior* man takes them for reality.

The white circle represents the *esoteric Centre*, located outside the general laws of life.

The white arrows represent influences called 'B'. These influences are thrown into the turmoil of life and originate from the esoteric Centre. Created outside life, these arrows are all oriented in the same direction. In their ensemble they form a sort of magnetic field.

Since 'A' influences neutralize each other, 'B' influences actually constitute the only reality.

The small circle with the shaded lines represents man, who in this figure is taken in isolation. The oblique shaded lines signify that the nature of *exterior* man is not homogeneous: it is mixed.

If man spends his life without distinguishing between 'A' and 'B' influences, he will end it as he started, one could say mechanically, driven by the *Law of Accident*. However, according to the nature and the intensity of the resultant forces to which he is subjected, it can happen to him to make a brilliant career, in the meaning the world gives to this expression.

Yet he will come to the end of his days without having either learned or understood anything of *Reality*. And *earth returns to Earth*.

In life, every being is subjected to a sort of competitive test. If he discerns the existence of the 'B' influences; if he acquires a taste for gathering and absorbing them; if he continually aspires to assimilate them better; his mixed inner nature will slowly undergo a certain kind of evolution. And if the efforts which he makes to absorb the 'B' influences are constant and sufficient in force, a *magnetic centre* can be formed within him. This *magnetic centre* is represented in the diagram by the small white space.

If this centre once born in him is carefully developed, it takes form, and in its turn will exercise an influence over the results of the 'A' arrows which are always active, deflecting them. Such a deflection may be violent. In general it transgresses the laws of *exterior* life and provokes many conflicts in and around man. If he loses the battle, he emerges with the conviction that the 'B' influences are nothing but illusion: that the only reality is represented by the 'A' influences. Slowly the *magnetic centre* which had been formed within him is reabsorbed and vanishes. Then, from the esoteric point of view, his situation is worse than the one he had started with, when he was just beginning to discern the 'B' influences.¹⁹

But if he emerges a winner in this first struggle, his *magnetic centre*, consolidated and reinforced, will draw him to a man having a 'C' influence stronger than his own, and possessing a stronger *magnetic centre*. And so on in succession, the last man being in connection with another having an influence 'D', who will be his link with the Esoteric Centre 'E'.

Henceforth in life, that man will no longer be isolated. He will certainly continue to live as before under the action of the 'A' influences, which for a long time will continue to exercise their power over him; yet little by little, thanks to the effect of the influence of the chain 'B'-'C'-'D'-'E', his *magnetic centre* will develop. To the measure of its growth, the man will escape the dominion of the *Law of Chance* and enter the domain of *Consciousness*.

19. This is the example pointed out in the parable of the unclean spirit and the empty house. Matthew xiii: 43-45. Cf. Hebrews vi: 4-8; II Peter iii: 17.

If he reaches this result before his death, he can say that his life was not lived in vain.

(8)

Let us now examine a different version of the same diagram:

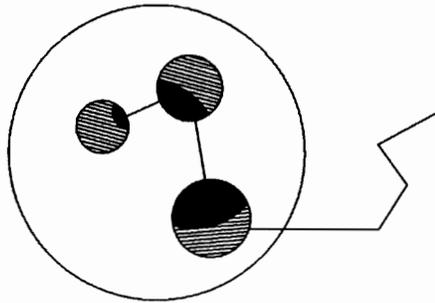


Fig. 21

This second figure, with black *magnetic centres*, represents the situation where man deludes himself and, believing he is absorbing 'B' influences and making the necessary selection all the while, he in fact absorbs 'A' influences, those of the black arrows that are in some way parallel to the white arrows of the 'B' influences. This will put him into contact with people who possess *magnetic centres* of the same nature: who are themselves duped or who dupe others, and who have no direct or indirect link with the esoteric Centre.

(9)

A last remark. What guarantee can man have that he will not dupe himself and that he will not fall into the latter situation? The answer is simple. The purity of the *magnetic centre* must be scrupulously maintained from the start and all through his evolution.

(10)

Let us repeat once more that the comments given about this diagram are not exhaustive. Other comments are still possible, and those who persevere in studying the doctrine are urgently invited to meditate on this image so as to go still deeper.

If they do, they will become aware that this figure includes a whole series of laws of human life, which are treated in the Gospel in the form of parables, images and allusions.

CHAPTER VII

(1)

We shall now examine the changes produced, in that mental¹ organism we have called the Personality, as a result of the appearance and growth of a *magnetic centre* within us. In a general way, one can say that the radiance of this centre will assist in efficiently perfecting the development of the lower centres. Under its banner,² relations between the three centres will be radically modified, and this will strongly influence a man's life. In turn, this will lead to certain repercussions in his relations with those around him.³

We have seen that the system of sectors is such that the three centres are permanently interdependent. As a result, every movement of one or other of them automatically leads to a response in⁴ the other two. Because of this, as long as the mental¹ life of the individual is composed solely of various combinations and movements of the lower centres, man can neither have a pure thought, nor a pure feeling, nor can he take any final⁵ decision. Because of the way these mechanical ties operate, everything is mixed up within him. Certainly the *response* of the other centres does not have the same strength of movement as the centre where an action originates. Nevertheless, in ordinary circumstances man cannot ignore⁶ them. This phenomenon, accompanied by a varied amount of under-development and derangement in the centres and their sectors, is the cause of the doubts and inner conflicts in which man struggles so often. In addition, these bundles of mechanical ties have a specific significance, playing a positive role in the mental¹ life of the individual. Taken in ensemble, they constitute the organ—or better still the instrument—of *morality*. Given that, in *exterior* life, the voice of the real 'T' is weak and rarely heard, man, almost constantly identified with the 'T' of the Personality, can and often does act without taking the words of this secret⁷ voice into account, even if he repents later. In practice, under these conditions, the mechanical ties between the three centres are the only brake on his ungovernable greed.

This moral instrument is moulded to fit the traditions of milieu and family. It is shaped from birth onwards by education. Clearly, without

1. Fr. 'psychique'.

2. Fr. 'égide'.

3. Fr. 'entourage'.

4. Fr. 'replique des'.

5. Fr. 'nette'.

6. Fr. 's'en débarrasser'.

7. Fr. 'intime'.

this instrument, the organization of social life in all its forms is unthinkable. Yet because of its nature, it cannot guarantee good and equitable human conduct; to ensure its own existence in times of peace, human society has always been obliged to have recourse to constraint and the application of penalties: necessary remedies, since morality will never be strong enough to curb the extreme and anarchistic tendencies of the Personality. The latter, in effect, lacks that kind of consciousness that the practical studies of religion describe as the *fear of God*.⁸

(2)

In view of the above, we can easily understand that morality is not identical to Consciousness.⁹ The former is a kind of substitute, not based — like authentic Consciousness⁹ — on spontaneous, simple and direct judgement, but on an ensemble of *considerations*. Among these, race, civilization, the times, class, the environment, and single or multiple personal motives, all play their role. Thus the notion of what is moral changes as a result of variations in the elements that form it. So we can distinguish the morality of a cultivated man from that of a savage, the morality of Roman society from that of the Middle Ages, and the latter from that of our present times. We must not believe, however, that morality *progresses*, becoming ever better with the passing of time. From the esoteric point of view, the notion of progress as we habitually understand it has no absolute value. The fruit of the efforts of Personalities who are themselves shifting sands, progress does not in itself give any guarantee of permanence. Our experience of recent wars and revolutions has given us irrefutable proof of the extreme fragility of everything which until the XIXth century — at least among civilized peoples — was seriously considered to be the unshakeable foundation of human morality.

The mechanical ties between the centres can be represented very schematically, as shown on the following page (Fig. 22).

In *exterior* man, these ties are normally sufficiently solid to function throughout a lifetime. Nevertheless, under the conditions of our feverish and somewhat unbalanced modern life, these ties, particularly the one between the intellectual centre and the emotional centre, are somewhat slack. Sometimes we even observe them to be severed. For the individual, this rupture results¹⁰ in the loss of all notion and sense of morality.

8. Job xxviii: 28; Psalms cx: 10; Proverbs i: 7, ix: 10; Eccles. xii: 13. We must warn the reader here that throughout the present text, the numbering of the Psalms follows the Slavonic text of the *Bible or Books of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, 1762 edition (see bibliography).

9. Fr. 'conscience'.

10. Fr. 'entraîne'.

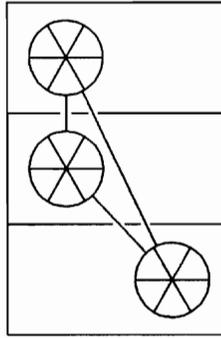


Fig. 22

Alteration of these ties, relaxation or even disappearance, produces a whole series of psychological phenomena. The process is essentially characterized by a hypocrisy which becomes more and more pronounced; it culminates in the complete rupture of these ties, making the man an amoral person.

(3)

We have said that the emergence of the *magnetic centre* can provoke a profound change in the mental organism. Having reached a certain degree of growth, this centre establishes direct ties—no longer mechanical but conscious—with each of the three centres, as shown by the diagram below:

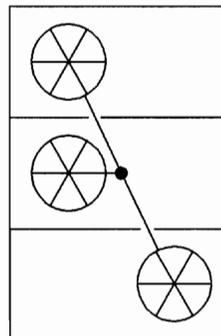


Fig. 23

When these new ties are sufficiently consolidated they replace the old ties, which fall away. From now on, man regains the capacity to have pure thoughts and pure feelings, no longer adulterated¹¹ as a result of the

11. Fr. 'mélange'.

mechanical interdependence of the centres. From this point, each centre will be able to work independently¹² but under the strict control of the *magnetic centre*, which ensures their coordination.

Thus, acting on our *moral nature*,¹³ the emergence and growth of the *magnetic centre* will result in progressive replacement of the elements of this moral nature by corresponding elements of Consciousness. We then stop being the victims of impulsive movements, and our reactions to impressions and shocks become more and more reflective and conscious. However, one must not think that such a radical transformation of both inner and outer life can come about abruptly. Excluding very rare exceptions, which concern the *just*¹⁴ by nature — this evolution seems a long process, an uninterrupted combat with a series of successes and falls. More than once, he who searches will fall into crises of discouragement; more than once it will seem to him that he is being driven beyond the limits of his own life; he will sometimes feel crushed under the burden of the tests¹⁵ and difficulties against which he will be pitted during his search. This can be understood when we know that esoteric science in its teaching goes far beyond simple information. Its purpose, in fact, is nothing less than the *transformation* of the very being of those who study it, a concern completely outside the scope of positive science. Because it generally deals with those of the *unjust* who nevertheless aspire to the light, it calls on them — in the words of St Paul, to: ‘*Put off the old man, and put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him.*’¹⁶ In every case where esoteric science offers *all*, it demands *all* in return. One must pay all. It is impossible to reach the *True* by the path of lies or hypocritical games, because in this case we seek to *be*, rather than to *appear to be*.¹⁷ It is at this level of ideas that one must search for the underlying meaning of the fearful story of Ananias and Saphira that St Luke told in the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁸

(4)

This is how things appear, seen from below: from the point of view of the Personality, which acts on the maxim: ‘*This is mine and so is that*’. A sage once said that God smiles when He hears man reasoning in such a way. Seen from above, things can be viewed in a totally different light. The

12. Fr. ‘isolément’.

13. Fr. ‘nature morale’.

14. Fr. ‘juste’, righteous or ‘just’.

15. Fr. ‘épreuves’.

16. Colossians iii: 9–10; Ephesians iv: 22–24.

17. Fr. ‘paraître’.

18. Acts v: 1–11.

Personality of the *exterior* man is mortal. Consequently, all the values to which it normally aspires are temporary: are indeed *lent* to him. Being perishable, they are therefore illusory.

Esoteric science indicates the path towards the *permanent*. To reach the latter, man is asked to detach his heart from the perishable, which drags him towards the abyss. According to the words of Jesus, it sells him *pure gold* — which he cannot recognize — against his false money which he thinks authentic. Man, afraid of being duped, hesitates and so suffers. In this we find the origin of the great misunderstanding (that recurs) when human life is taken in a personal way. The whole of the Gospel is here. It is addressed to those who aspire to Life.

'If any one wants to ignore it let him ignore it' says St Paul.¹⁹ He will be excluded from the *narrow way*, to fall back into the *broad way* which — as we know — will lead him toward Death.

Now, and only now, can we better understand the sense, as well as the absolute necessity of the indispensable requirement common to all religions and to all esoteric traditions: *humility*.

Let us first define the notion of *pride*,²⁰ its opposite. In the esoteric sense *pride is the affirmation by the Personality of his primacy in relation to the real 'I'*. In *exterior* man, such an attitude is natural. If he succeeds in life, that will confirm him in this attitude. But the esoteric law is explicit. God says: *'I stand at the door and knock.'*²¹ Meaning that every man is always kept under permanent pressure coming from the esoteric Centre in the form of 'B' influences.²² However, man must *open the door* by his own efforts; in other words, he must discern and assimilate these influences, then the Personality, surmounting its proud nature, must bow²³ to and accept the primacy of the real 'I'. It must do this in advance by an act of faith and of hope, *not knowing exactly where it will lead.*²⁴ We are therefore invited to 'put our trust in God'.²⁵ This is the role of humility as the *sine qua non* condition for any practical²⁶ esoteric work. From this we will be able to grasp the meaning of the old maxim that: *'God resists the proud, but is gracious to the humble.'*²⁷ Never must we understand this in a metaphoric sense. The Personality which habitually commands in man, together with the 'I' of the body, must bow in front of the real 'I' and give him homage.

19. I Corinthians xiv: 38.

20. Fr. 'orgueil'.

21. Revelations iii: 20.

22. Cf. Fig. 20, Chapter VI.

23. Fr. 'se plier'.

24. Hebrews xi: 8.

25. Fr. 'faire crédit'.

26. Fr. 'constructif'.

27. James iv: 6; Proverbs xxix: 23; I Peter v: 5.

To reach that, the great obstacle to be overcome is described thus: Illusion, thinking it is reality, takes Reality for illusion.

The power of Illusion acts in man particularly by means of his sexual centre, or more exactly, at its expense. Ignoring the ties between the

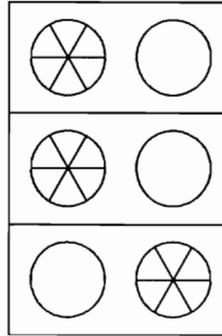


Fig. 24

centres, man's complete structure appears as follows:

The sexual centre is analogous to the higher centres: it is indivisible, does not have a negative part, and is not divided into sectors. But the lower intellectual centre or the lower emotional centre — or both together — can usurp part of its energy. This produces negative phenomena, among which we list confusions between the unreal and the Real, as well as all the many manifestations of intransigence.

If we resist such tests,²⁸ the 'I' of the Personality will be more and more frequently displaced to reside in the *magnetic centre*. Conversely, the more that 'I' remains in this (magnetic) centre and identifies itself with it, the more the growth of this centre will progress.

When the *magnetic centre* finally takes shape, it establishes an undisputed authority over the three centres of the Personality. He who was man 1, 2 or 3 becomes man 4. Throughout this stage of his evolution such a man will have the task of recognizing the mode in which each of these three mental²⁹ centres is functioning, assigning its proper role to each of them, and equilibrating them. This is how the *magnetic centre's* growth is perfected and how its development commences. The latter is a function of conscious efforts to develop the lower centres up to their limits. The further this development is continued, the more the *magnetic centre* absorbs the lower emotional centre, at the same time identifying itself more and more with the higher emotional centre. Once the three lower centres are fully developed

28. Fr. 'à l'épreuve'.

29. Fr. 'psychiques'.

and equilibrated, the *magnetic centre* once and for all³⁰ identifies itself with the higher emotional centre, dragging with it the lower emotional centre which it finally absorbs. From now on the lower emotional centre, with the *magnetic centre*, will form an integral part of the higher emotional centre.

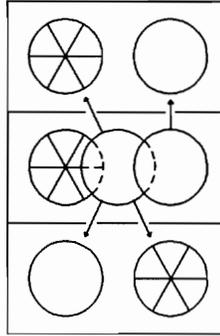


Fig. 25

This union³¹ realized, he who has carried out this work on himself will become man 5.

In contrast to men 1, 2 or 3 who are called *exterior* men, men 5, 6 and 7 are *interior* men.³²

By establishing a link between the higher emotional centre and the higher intellectual centre, man 5 will become man 6, after which all that will be left for him to do is to consolidate the results. This consolidation is the last stage of esoteric evolution.

The tasks for each stage of evolution can be defined as follows:

- Man 4 — to recognize the existence of the three lower centres, make them grow and develop to the limit, and regulate their functioning;
- Man 5 — to acquire new faculties and powers;³³
- Man 6 — to develop the faculties thus acquired to their utmost limits;
- Man 7 — to consolidate the results obtained.

This consolidation is obtained by the sublimation of sex.

30. Fr. 'définitivement'.

31. Fr. 'jonction'.

32. Romans vii: 22.

33. These are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I Corinthians xii; xiv, *passim*.

When we consider the completed figure of man (Fig. 24), we must keep in the back of our mind that the same figure from a slightly different angle will appear as follows:

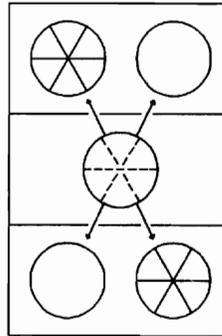


Fig. 26

This is the schema of a man who has become complete and immortal in accordance with the meaning of the words of St Paul: *'We shall not all die but we shall all be changed.'*³⁴ The higher emotional centre, now placed in the centre of the figure, has absorbed the lower emotional centre. The significance of the dotted lines in this—as well as the link with the sexual centre—will be explained later.

(5)

Men 1, 2 or 3, driven by the energy of the sexual centre freely flowing through the three centres, make do with the provisional 'I' of the Personality, an unstable 'I'; changing; illogical with himself; leading³⁵ a factitious existence. The situation is completely reversed when—crossing the stage of man 4 successfully—the dedicated searcher becomes an *interior* man: 5, then 6 and finally 7:

- Having become man 5, he becomes permanently³⁶ conscious of his *real 'I';*
- Having become man 6, he attains permanent *Consciousness;*
- Having become man 7, he is liberated by obtaining a true *Will.*

'I'—*Consciousness*—*Will* constitute the triple objective of esoteric science, and these are the reward for efforts made consciously by the searcher.

34. I Corinthians xv: 51.

35. Fr. 'implique'.

36. Fr. 'il accède d'une manière permanente'.

Here ends the esoteric evolution possible to man in the conditions of terrestrial humanity.

It is by this evolution that animal man can overcome Adam's Fall, can become a spiritual man, and so be initiated into divine wisdom.

(6)

An important note: In spite of the strict requirement for humility we must not fall into the other extreme and go so far as to neglect our mental 'T', despise or ill-treat him. Equally, we must not neglect, despise or ill-treat our bodies by submitting them to excessive mortifications. All we have to do is to give them the value which is properly theirs, and stop attributing to them supreme authority or the qualities of the real 'T'. At the same time we must fight by every means against the spirit of self-complacency, knowing that the 'T' of the Personality is only a *provisional* 'T'; itself perishable. If we obstinately identify ourselves with this, we reaffirm that we are still subject to the *Law of Accident* and that we are in fact steadily walking on the path toward Death.

Without going to such an extreme, we must treat our Personality—the provisional 'T'—and our body in which it lives, as a good horseman treats his horse. It is in looking after this 'T'—while training him—that we will be able to travel the long path which leads to our goal. And before each effort is made we must measure our forces. The horse does not know where the horseman is going, he alone is responsible for both.

SECOND PART
THE UNIVERSE

CHAPTER VIII

(1)

Parallel to the study of man, we have seen that esoteric science studies the Universe. In this way it guards against separating man from his organic context. It envisages man within the ensemble of life on Earth; an element of the planetary world gravitating around the Sun, one of the stars of the Milky Way, our world, born inside the manifested Absolute, Who assures its existence and its subsistence.

The fact that man by his actions is more and more inclined to isolate himself from the Earth — walking on soles of shoes, travelling in cars, trains or planes — ends by creating in his subconsciousness the idea that he is separate from Nature. Yet in spite of all the machines created or to be created he will never cease being an integral part of Mother Earth, because everything in the Universe is living, and forms part of an ensemble. This is the underlying reason why it is necessary to study the Universe while studying man.

The Orthodox Tradition considers the Universe to be a living being. Origen, in *The Principles*, compares it to an immense organism, the Soul of which is God. This conception has been conserved almost intact in the esoteric Tradition; we find it expressed in an abridged way in the liturgical prayer and responses called the *Great Ektenia*.¹

Of old this conception was shown in a diagram; starting from God as the Soul of our Soul, and gradually reaching to God Who contains within Him everything that exists. This diagram is made up of twelve concentric circles: starting from the centre, these represent the elements given in figure 27.

This double conception of the unique God — as the Soul of our Souls, and as God embracing the Universe created by Him — is characteristic of esoteric Orthodoxy. We also find it in the Gospels and the Apostles, but it generally passes unnoticed. We have already mentioned it, while quoting St Isaac the Syrian about the identity of the internal and external cages.²

In connection with the preceding we could quote the speech made by St Paul in Athens. St Luke reports it in the following words:

...All the Athenians, as well as the strangers living with them, did not find pleasure in spending their time, except in saying or listening to something new.

Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus said:

1. Ektenia — Russian for litany.

2. *Philokalia*: St Isaac the Syrian, 2nd/30th sermons.

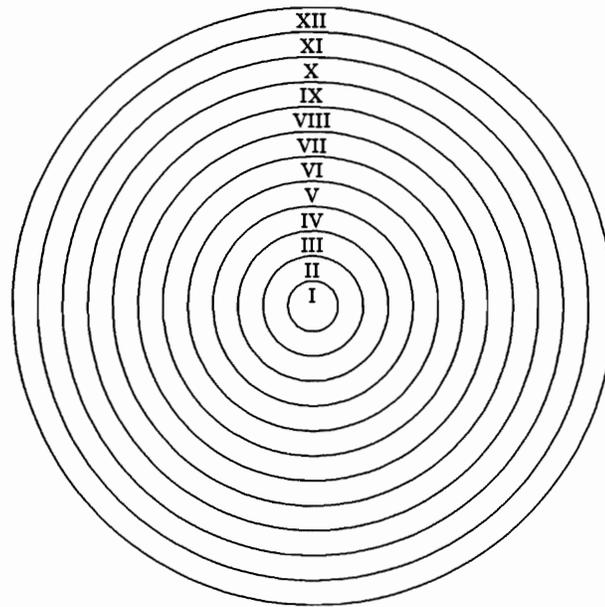


Fig. 27

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| I. God, Soul of our Soul | VIII. Our planet |
| II. Soul | IX. Our solar system |
| III. Man | X. Milky Way, our Galaxy,
our World |
| IV. Room | XI. All the Worlds, like and
unlike |
| V. House | XII. God who encompasses all |
| VI. City | |
| VII. Country | |

'Athenians, in all things I perceive that ye are particularly pious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, *To the unknown god*.

'What therefore ye venerate without knowing; I have come to announce to you.

'The God that created the Universe and all things therein, he being Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with men's hands; nor does He require to be served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He Himself gives to all life, and breath, and all things.

'He has made all men *issued from the same blood*, to dwell on the whole surface of the earth, having pre-determined the duration of times, and the boundaries of their habitations.

'That they should seek God, though He is not far from each one of us. Would they not have felt Him? Would they not have found Him? For by Him we live, by Him we move, by Him we exist.'³

3. Acts xvii: 21-28. Translated from the Slavonic text. The italics are the author's.

(2)

The astronomical world which we observe from our planet appears as it does because we see the body of the Universe from the inside. We do not view it in its ensemble because our observations are made and interpreted on our own scale,⁴ infinitesimal in relation to the ensemble. What misleads us is the distances between the stars, which are foci of living matter, and particles of the universal organism. Seen in an internal perspective they appear immense, yet the density of the Universe in its ensemble is analogous to that of our bodies. Man in the Universe resembles a micro-organism in the human body. If we could become microbes, we would see our bodies from within — similar to the starred skies full of galaxies which would be our organs. On the other hand, if we could become immense and see the Universe on its own scale,⁴ we would see it as a living body. This is the effect of the *Principle of Relativity*.

(3)

What then is the meaning of human life in this Cosmos as we know it? Man's existence has two main purposes:

— as an element of the universal organism, it serves the aims of the latter;

— as an isolated individual, he can pursue his own aims.

To better understand why and how these two objectives are bound together, let us take an example:

The position of man in the Universe is analogous to that of a cell in the human body. Each cell is a part of an organ which, in its turn, is an element of a group of organs that assures proper accomplishment of some definite function of the organism.

From this point of view, let us examine the lot of a cell in our bodies. It is subject to two categories of laws. To simplify, let us say that it is placed under the rule of two laws.

The first keeps the cell in its place. In esoteric science we call it the *General Law*. The second leaves a certain liberty of action for the cell, and is called the *Law of Exception*.

The first law, which is conservative, ensures that the organ of which this cell is a part accomplishes its function with no impediment. To this end, the first condition is that during their lives the cells which compose the organ fulfil the role given them. This law obliges these cells to remain in their own places, to complete their work, and to dedicate their lives to it.

4. Fr. 'échelle'.

It is evident that if this law did not keep the cells of the body within the limits of each organ, if it did not oblige them to fulfil their function, the latter would not be able to exist. Thus this law is beneficial; by ensuring the existence of the organs, it permits the whole body to endure.

We know, however, that the total removal of certain organs of the body is compatible with survival. In the current state of our knowledge it even seems that removal of some of them leads to no serious functional inconvenience. Even more; the organism tolerates partial resection of some organs without compromising the roles played by the latter in the general economy. This shows that the disappearance of a few cells, an infinitesimal part of an organ, goes unnoticed: its functioning is not impaired. As the essential role of the *General Law* is to watch over continuity of function, this disappearance passes unnoticed by it. Therefore it places no further obstacles. Symbolically, one can say that cells which escape from this law now enter the domain of the *Law of Exception*.

This escape of a few cells is a phenomenon which occurs constantly. All our cells from the epidermic to the nervous are constantly renewed according to different and variable rhythms. In addition to this renewal from within, there are also disappearances, compensated or not compensated for by new units.

Up to this point, the analogy with what happens to man because of the *General Law* and the *Law of Exception* could be taken as complete.

But it stops here, at least as regards the present state of our knowledge. In this activity of life, of migrations and of cellular death, there is no justification for thinking that the passage from the *General Law* to the *Law of Exception* results from any conscious actions of the cells.

For man it happens differently.

As a cell of humanity, man forms part of organic life on Earth. This life in its ensemble represents a very sensitive organ of our planet, playing an important role in the economy of the solar system. As a cell of this organ, man finds himself under the influence of the *General Law*, which keeps him in his place. In fact, this law leaves him a certain margin or tolerance. It allows him some *free movement* within the limits it sets. Within these boundaries, which are very limited objectively although subjectively they appear vast, man can give free rein to his fantasies and his ambitions. Without going too far into the definition of these limits and detailed description of the components of this *General Law*, we can say as an example that one of those factors is hunger: the servitude of working to assure our subsistence. The chain: sexual instinct; procreation; and the care of parents for their children, is another factor. The esoteric maxim that applies to this aspect of life is conceived thus: *carnal love is necessary for the general good*. Lastly, fear in its many forms constitutes the third group of factors in question. On the whole, the permitted margin for *free movement* tolerated by the *General Law*

is limited by something best described in a term less scientific than colourful: bourgeois happiness. Careers in every branch of human activity; fortune; family; love; honours etc.; all are subject to the *sine qua non* condition of unconditional if only subconscious acceptance of the inevitability of *Death*.

As long as man accepts the principle of the final annihilation of his Personality without a fight, he can carry on in life without attracting the increasing pressure of the *General Law* upon himself.

The case is totally different if he struggles to surpass the limits which it imposes. He then runs against the action upon him of this Law and its derivatives. It acts simultaneously on several planes: physical, mental and moral. Its action on the moral plane is conceived by man, since time immemorial, in the form of a personification: *the Devil*.

In the orthodox Tradition demonology occupies a considerable place. We find there practical constataions, fine and profound observations on the highly sophisticated and insidious forms that the *Devil's* action takes in very varied circumstances, in which it goes as far as using the good faith of humans for its own ends.

We will also find precious advice, based on accumulated experience over the ages, which is particularly helpful to students of esoteric science; because once the first positive results are obtained those students will unmistakably run up against the active opposition of the law and the *game of the Crafty One*.

It must be realized that in placing himself under the aegis of the *Law of Exception*, man goes against the *General Law*, which he is even called upon to overthrow, if only on the individual scale. He must not forget — under penalty of 'surprise attack' — that salvation depends on victory over the *Devil*, which as we have said, is the personalized moral aspect of the *General Law*. This is so even though this, being a cosmic law, is naturally a divine law. One must not be afraid, as the *Law of Exception* is also a divine law:⁵ in choosing it, man continues to serve the interest of the whole, but differently and in an incomparably more efficient manner. During his fight against the first law, he is subject to tests that often take the form of temptations. In orthodox Doctrine deep studies are devoted to this theme. As stated above, they contain precious advice of a practical nature, details of which we cannot cover in this present work. We are however permitted to draw attention to the indirect nature of diabolical action. If, aiming straight towards his goal, which is liberation and salvation, the seeker successfully overcomes the obstacles and by this shows proof of a strength that would permit him to defy the authority of the *General Law*, the latter will begin to act upon him indirectly, generally by the mediation of his near

5. One must not forget that Jacob fought for a whole night against the Angel, overcame him and received the surname of *Israel* from him; this means: '*who fought against God*,' or '*strong against God*.'

ones if they do not follow the same path: this action occurs on the moral plane, and often takes emotional forms appealing to his most noble, generous and disinterested sentiments: to his charity; his obligations; his pity. It impels him down blind alleys, insinuating that he will thus be returning to his duty, that by so doing he will go on walking in the right path, etc. This will clarify the profound saying of Jesus that: *'A man's worst enemies are those of his own household.'*⁶

(4)

Let us now repeat, because it is important, that esoteric work is by its nature a revolutionary work. The seeker seeks a change of state: to overcome Death and attain Salvation. This is the goal given to this work by the Scriptures and by the Apostles. As St Paul says: *'If ye live after the flesh, ye must die.'*⁷ But do not forget what else he says: *'We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed.'*⁸

The man who lives passively under the first law, insensibly and without being aware of it — even as an excellent citizen — involves himself in *'The broad way that leadeth to destruction;'* he who chooses the *Law of Exception* takes: *'The narrow road that leadeth unto Life.'*⁹

(5)

Starting from the Absolute as the initial focus of life, the Universe comprises a vast scale of elements, spreading in many branches to the outer *crust*; the *epidermis*, represented by the ensemble of the satellites of all the planets.

Before we start the study of the structure of the Universe, it would be better to summarize the conditions of Creation. Orthodox Tradition teaches that the Universe was created by a *sacrifice of God*. We shall understand this postulate better if we consider that it differentiates between the state of *manifested* Divinity and that of *unmanifested* Divinity — which is therefore limitless and free from all conditions.

God's sacrifice is *Self-limitation* by manifestation. What are the conditions of this limitation? They are three in number: the Universe is created in *Space*, in *Time* and then in *Equilibrium*.

6. Matthew x: 36.

7. Romans viii: 13.

8. I Corinthians xv: 51 — already quoted.

9. Matthew vii: 13.

The three fundamental conditions of Creation manifest in the Universe in the form of three basic principles of life: the static, dynamic and neutralizing principles.

Anything in creation can be analysed and studied in the light of these three principles, which appear in a way analogous to that described while talking about the conditions of creation of the World. They apply uniformly to all levels of the Cosmos.

If we take the creation of an enterprise as an example, we would be able to say that first the idea must be conceived as possible, the project studied, and plans drawn up. All this is based upon the Static principle. Then we pass on to realization, in accordance with the Dynamic Principle. Each principle acts in the manifested world according to an appropriate law, which will be studied later.

In practice, an enterprise created in this way risks collapse if the directors do not take into consideration the third principle, that of Equilibrium, and carefully apply it to their creation. The *principle of Equilibrium* must be followed from the first studies of the project, all through realization of the latter, and must be strictly adhered to during the whole course of the enterprise. In a very general way we can say that the promoters — in whatever branch of human activity — must primarily maintain equilibrium between the efforts which the enterprise requires for its creation, and the means at their disposal for that realization. If we deal with scientific studies — and this applies equally to esoteric studies — we must also maintain equilibrium, but in a different manner: in this case, the plan for the studies must correspond to the nature and structure of the object studied.

(6)

In talking about the creation of the Universe, it is necessary to mention the notion of *Eternity*. We generally have an erroneous idea of this. Habitually, we portray Eternity to ourselves as a prolongation of Time to infinity. Eternity is not Time; it is, so to speak, perpendicular to Time. It follows that it is not infinite, but limited: the Tradition places the end of Eternity and the end of the World together. We thus praise God in His pre-eternal state. In the *kontakion* of Christmas we sing:

The Virgin this day gives birth to the Pre-existent,
And cavern Earth brings forth the Inaccessible,
Angels and shepherds sing praises,
As the Magi walk with the star,
For us is born the boy child, the pre-eternal God.¹⁰

10. Translation from the old Slavonic Text.

As for the end of the World, we portray it to ourselves in the form of the *Accomplishment*, which, according to the words of Jesus, is the *Announcement* of accomplished works and facts.

(7)

Two of the three fundamental principles of Creation, *Space* and *Equilibrium*, offer no danger for the created Universe. It is not the same where *Time* is concerned. Being a dynamic principle which underlies all action—including creation and every realization—it implies the certainty of final annihilation for everything created. In this connection, we may remember the myth of Chronos devouring his children.

To palliate this menace, by the action of Time, the divine Wisdom introduced a device to avoid the immediate destruction of the created world. This acts through one of two laws, the basis of which we shall study in the following chapters, in their principles; their working; and their effects. For the moment it will be enough for us to say that, thanks to this artificial law, the forward flow of Time is closed off into cycles, and this eliminates its destructive effects—of course within certain limits. So Time will not work in straight lines but ‘turns’ in a curve.

These cycles close and repeat themselves. Thanks to this cyclic action, the Universe itself and all the elements of which it is composed can endure. Every element follows its own cycle. The Ancients were well aware of this law; their philosophy never admitted straight lines; it was based on the cyclic principle.

(8)

Let us now try to give a general picture of the structure of the Universe. Here are the elements of what we call in esoteric science the *Ray of Creation*, more rarely called the *Cone of Creation of the World*.

We can draw its figure in the following manner. *Earth* has the *Moon* for a satellite. That is the limit; the last rung of Creation, after which there is nothing. The moon—like the satellites of the other planets—has no satellite for itself.

Directing our sight towards the centre, we find that the Earth is part of the *planetary World* which gravitates around the *Sun*, the master of our system. The *Sun* is one of the many stars of the galaxy known by the name of the *Milky Way*, a system to which the whole of the solar system belongs. We know that the Milky Way is not unique of its kind. In the sky we can detect other galaxies similar to ours, and we can equally suppose that there are other worlds that would not resemble it. These large units in their

ensemble constitute *All the Worlds*: the whole content of the Universe, which gravitates around what we call in the Tradition the *Central Sun*: the Absolute, that is to say, God manifested.

The figure looks as follows:



Fig. 28

We shall continue to use this diagram. It is quite convenient for developing and clarifying our reasoning. We must not forget that it represents only one ray of creation, not the whole Universe. Nor must we forget that the Universe as a whole is analogous in its structure to a tree where, starting from the root—the Absolute in our figure—a whole series of branchings extends out to the foliage, of which one leaf would be analogous to the moon in our *Ray*.

If we want to construct a figure that would be closer to reality, we must locate all the levels of figure 28 one inside the other, including them all inside one large circle, which would represent the Absolute—in whose bosom lives all that exists—embracing the whole.

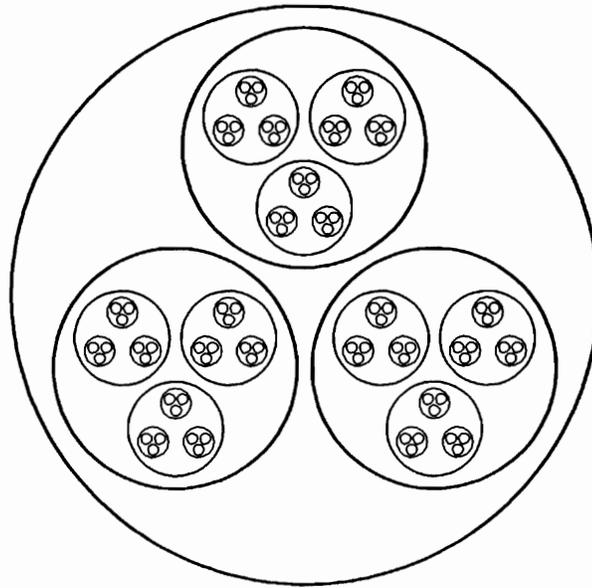


Fig. 29

Note: For technical reasons graphic representation in this figure stops at level 5.

CHAPTER IX

(1)

We have described the three basic conditions under which the Universe was created. We shall now study the two fundamental laws that rule over all that exists and lives, at all the steps¹ of the created Universe. The first of these laws conditions the existence of everything that fills the Cosmos, whether it be beings, objects, or events.

The second fundamental law rules over every action and every movement, particularly the process of life in all its forms, up to the most subtle and most intimate movements of thought and feeling.

These two fundamental laws are omnipresent and all-penetrating: nobody and nothing can escape them.

(2)

In esoteric science the first law is called the *Law of Three*. Its definition explains its name:

Definition: *All that exists, exists as a result of the converging action on the same point at the same time of three forces: passive, active and neutralizing.*

We will note that the three forces reflect the three basic conditions of creation of the Universe, of which we have already spoken. As such, they represent the manifestation, inside the created Universe, of the three conditions of creation as conceived by the non-manifest Divinity in the pre-existence of the world. The *passive force* is a derivative of the *static* condition: Space. The *active force* is a derivative of the *dynamic* condition: Time. Lastly, the *neutralizing force* ensures the maintenance of Equilibrium in all the Universe, on every plane, and at every step.¹

Naturally, as they are forces, these three forces are active. Their names express the role that each of them plays in the co-operation which gives birth to the particular phenomenon being considered.

Seen from that angle, life in the Universe is nothing but a perpetual process of creation in every domain, on every plane, and at every step.¹ In addition, for each event, large or small, important or insignificant, an act analogous to the First Creation of the entire Universe is reproduced, with all proportions maintained; in this act, as we have said, the three forces act as a replica of the three conditions which conceived the created Universe before its manifestation.

1. Fr. 'échelons'.

The classical example which the esoteric schools give to represent the play of the three forces is bread. To make bread we must have flour, fire and water. In this example, flour is the conductor of the passive force, fire of the active force, and water of the neutralizing force.

Here we must make it clear immediately that the substance which serves in one case as conductor for the passive force, may in other cases be the conductor for the active force, and in a third situation, a vehicle for the neutralizing force.

Let us examine these alternations in another classical example, that of the conception of a child. The woman appears here as a passive force, the husband as the active force, and carnal love as the neutralizing force: if these three conditions are present, conception becomes possible. If we pass from the carnal plane to the moral plane, we see that the situation is reversed. It is the woman who acts — or is rather called to act — being the source of inspiration as the active force, whereas man — when cooperation on this plane is fertile — figures as the passive force. In the same way that on the physical plane the woman bears the fruit of love through her pregnancy, brings it into the world, nourishes it, and educates it, on the moral plane it is the man who conceives the inspired idea or, fertilized by the woman, develops it inside him, and lastly brings it into the world in the form of some work, or more generally in the form of a creation.

The primordial character of the passive force can be illustrated by numerous examples. Let us take the case of a purchase: the offered merchandise constitutes the passive force; the need or desire of the purchaser intervenes as active force, and the price paid for the object acts as neutralizing force. In a more general manner, the offer intervenes as passive force, demand as active force, and payment as the neutralizing force.

That the passive force is a force, and as such possesses an active character, is demonstrated quite clearly, particularly on the psychological plane; active as it may be, feminine seduction represents the passive force in love novels. Where the third or neutralizing force is concerned, it often escapes our observation — either due to the bipolar character of our minds, or because of its own nature — which can in many cases leave it unobserved. It also sometimes plays the role of catalyst — far less conspicuous than the binding tie which is the most fundamental role of the neutralizing force.

According to the way the three forces act through matter, the Tradition makes the following distinctions:

When a substance serves as a conductor for the *passive force*, we call it *Oxygen (O)*; when it serves as a conductor for the *active force* we call it *Carbon (C)*; when it serves as a conductor for the *neutralizing force* we call it *Nitrogen (Azot) (N)*. When considered independently from the forces of which it is the conductor, the substance is called *Hydrogen (H)*.

If the junction² of the forces remains sterile, this means that in the esoteric sense their co-operation was not complete.³ The fault could arise from one of the three forces, from two of them, or even from all three. Analysis in the light of the law in question can greatly assist in determining the one or many causes of failure. For example, with the same good flour, the bread can be bad or inedible if we have added too much water—or not enough—or if the flame was weak or too high.

The last constation allows us to grasp the sense and effect of a subsidiary law of the *Law of Three*. We see that with the same flour—the passive force in our example—we can experience failure due to a defective sharing of the active force (Fire), of the neutralizing force (Water), or of the two together. This would lead us to the conclusion that the action of the active and neutralizing forces must be regulated in accordance with the content of the passive force, which influences the reaction here as the stable element; a mathematical *constant*. The passive force contains all the *possibilities* for creating the phenomenon, while the active force intervenes as the *realizer*, and the neutralizing force as the *regulator*, of the relations between the two other forces, determining the dosage for both in an optimal way. This explains and justifies the fact that pre-eminence in the phenomenal world is attributed to the *passive force*.

Let us note here that this pre-eminence is a direct result of conditions at the first Creation. To pass or cross from the non-manifested state—a *monopolar* one, concentrated on the unique consciousness of *Self* within which the Divinity remains before the Creation of the World—the *first Idea* which makes⁴ the Divinity come out of the state of non-manifestation to become manifest, is necessarily that of the *You*. This idea, conceived by the divine sacrifice of Self-limitation, has Love, a neutralizing force, for third force. In language accessible to humans, St John expressed it by saying: ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.’⁵ We can see that, in itself, the attitude of the manifested Absolute is regulated in accordance with the passive force—the World: the universal *You* envisaged as an *object* of His solicitude.

Thus, from the beginning of Creation, the divine existence becomes bipolar, Love being the neutralizing force which sustains relations between the universal ‘*I*’ and the universal ‘*You*’.

2. Fr. ‘concoirs’.

3. Fr. ‘intégrale’.

4. Ed. Although a correct translation of the French, the English word ‘makes’ has overtones of compulsion that do not apply here and would in fact be a serious theological error.

5. John iii: 16.

It is important to look for and find many examples of the action of the *Law of Three*. This should not only be done to convince ourselves of its validity, but also to accelerate the re-education of our intelligence on an esoteric basis.

We know that the structure of the lower intellectual centre is bipolar. This structure is perfectly adapted to that of what in the orthodox Tradition is called the 'World'. This 'World' consists in ensemble of the 'A' influences of which we have spoken earlier (Chapter VI, figure 20). It is the world in which we live, which appears to the human Personality as the only reality, but is in fact relative or even illusory. We have examined the figure showing the 'A' and 'B' influences, (Fig. 20) and as we have already stated, all the 'A' arrows have counterparts which neutralize them. This symbolizes the creation of the world, starting from *Zero*, by division into two groups of forces, equal in power and diametrically opposed in direction.

The bipolar structure of the intelligence, an exact counterpart of the structure of the 'World', allows man to study and recognize all the 'A' influences, to orient himself in their immediate and furthest field of action, to apply his abilities to it in order to search, calculate, combine, intervene, act and even to create within the limits of the field of action of these influences.

We know, however, that this 'World' is, in fact, illusory; that the 'B' influences represent the only imperishable reality in life. Has not Jesus said: *'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where rust and worms consume, and where thieves break through walls and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume and where thieves do not break through walls nor steal.'*⁶

It is well understood that it is a question here of two worlds which interpenetrate each other: the world constituted by the ensemble of 'A' influences – 'earth'; and the esoteric world – 'heaven', formed by the 'B' influences.

By studying the play of the three forces attentively, the searcher will train himself to recognize the action of the 'A' and 'B' influences, and distinguish between them. This is one of the essential elements of that re-education of which we spoke earlier.

(4)

Let us, however, be very careful not to give the distinction between 'A' and 'B' influences too narrow an interpretation. 'A' influences act through the *General Law*, and therefore conform to the Divine will. We already know one reason for their being: to serve the interests of

6. Matthew vi: 19–20.

the Ensemble. Yet let us not forget that everything is relative. He who studies esoteric science must not naively oppose 'A' influences. That would only succeed in bringing catastrophe. This was Don Quixote's instructive experience — so wrongly understood. 'A' influences play a positive role in the economy of the Universe. They combine with devastating force to oppose anyone who tries to attack them directly in their ensemble. The task of the seeker is different. Instead of trying to annihilate the 'A' influences, or to carve out a path between them for himself by his exploits, while continuing his esoteric education, he should instead escape their grasp.

It is important to understand that we can never attain this goal by our own forces. It is by absorbing 'B' influences — divine influences from a higher level,⁷ which are consequently more powerful — and by putting full trust in them, as well as by giving proofs of capacity and devotion, that we shall be liberated from the dominion of these 'A' influences — which are ruled by the *General Law*, assisted by the *Law of Accident*.

He whose efforts are crowned with success — who attains higher levels⁸ of *being* — is immediately utilized to share in the management⁹ and growth of a given level¹⁰ of the lower forces of the Cosmos.

In general he will have to accomplish — as a mission — a task in the domain of the 'A' influences. Above all, this work will require study of the bipolar world. Intelligence is the only tool we possess with which to achieve this end. This is its real reason for being, as well as the reason why its structure exactly reflects the world of the 'A' influences. This instrument thus allows man, in accordance with Plato's principle, to grasp and know¹¹ the *similar by the similar*.

Knowing¹² this, the student of esoteric science must guard against falling into the extremes expressed in some teachings; he must neither despise nor neglect his intellectual faculties. The intelligence must be developed and sharpened up to the limit of what is possible, and thought must become sharp as the point of a needle. But it must not be forgotten that the Personality, in spite of its complex structure and its many abilities, is nothing but an instrument, whose functioning remains purely mechanical. It is for this reason that in esoteric matters it does not know,¹³ and will never know anything with certainty. By its nature agnostic, and concerned with phenomena, it is limited by form and function to three dimensions. It

7. Fr. 'niveau'.

8. Fr. 'niveaux'.

9. Fr. 'gestion'.

10. Fr. 'échelon'.

11. Fr. 'connaître'.

12. Fr. 'Sachant' — from 'savoir'.

13. Fr. 'sait'.

is incapable of exceeding these boundaries, but sincerely takes the world of 'A' influences as the only reality.

(5)

Knowing about the *Law of Three* allows us to be fully aware of the complex structure of the *Ray of Creation* (Fig. 29).

At the start, the Absolute assumes the first aspect of His manifestation. He is One, and the three forces reside united within Him. This is the traditional doctrine of the *Holy Trinity, consubstantial and indivisible*. Seen from below upwards, the Trinity is allegorically called the *summum bonum*, which crowns the Universe, then conceived as a *Pyramid*.

The three forces of the Absolute, the three *Hypostases* of the Trinity, endowed with autonomous will, but interdependent, create the phenomenal Universe and everything it contains. At the first step¹⁴ they create the *Worlds*. These *Worlds*, whose existence is no longer consubstantial, since they are separate, depend directly and entirely on the will of the Absolute, the three forces of whom they maintain in a state of disjunction.

Created by these three disunited forces, these *Worlds* are yet continually penetrated by the three forces in a consubstantial state proper to the Absolute in His manifest state.

Aiming at the development of the *Ray of Creation* from above to below, creation still follows the same process. Each world is created by the three forces proper to it, and is equally subordinated to the authority of the forces that rule over the preceding steps,¹⁵ from which it issues.

Each of these creative forces represents a group of laws of the same order, and these laws will condition the world belonging to a particular step,¹⁴ and make it perform its function. This allows us to complete figure 28 by means of a scale,¹⁶ which will represent the number of groups of rectifying laws all along the *Ray of Creation* (Figure 30 opposite):

Such a hierarchy of laws is none other than a hierarchy of competence and power.

Descending from step¹⁴ to step, until we reach the *crust* of Creation, the will of the Absolute penetrates everything and all beings in the Universe—down to the most primitive organisms, and still further, to the most inert matter, which the Tradition designates by the term *stone*.

14. Fr. 'échelon'.

15. Fr. 'échelons'.

16. Fr. 'échelle'.

Absolute	○	1
All Worlds	○	3
Milky Way	○	3 + 3 = 6
Sun	○	3 + 3 + 6 = 12
Planetary World	○	3 + 3 + 6 + 12 = 24
Earth	○	3 + 3 + 6 + 12 + 24 = 48
Moon	○	3 + 3 + 6 + 12 + 24 + 48 = 96

Fig. 30

(6)

What is the significance of the numbers in the preceding figure? They represent the conditions or forces of Creation; in other terms, the laws or more exactly categories of laws under which each step¹⁷ of the *Ray of Creation* is placed. Unity belongs only to the Absolute, and this number 1, indivisible although it contains the consubstantial Triad, represents and means the *liberty* of God. All that proceeds from Him progressively loses its liberty, meaning that it is found to be subject to a number of laws — or categories of laws — which becomes greater and greater. A being making his way through the *Ray of Creation* from the Absolute to the Moon would be more and more bound; we, who are on Earth, are bound by 48 groups of laws, a number which is in itself enormous. For *exterior* man we must add to these 48 groups of laws — under the influence of which the Earth pursues its existence — the laws relative to organic life on Earth, with other laws resulting from human society, and the organs and cells of that society: races, castes, families etc. We live in a ‘wilderness’ of laws and that is the reason why in spite of a certain forward impetus, our lives run up against all sorts of obstacles. Salvation consists precisely in progressive liberation from subjection to this large number of laws. In each case, although one must not trample over these obstacles, one must at least go around them. Esoteric science also says: ‘*We cannot fight against the laws which tie us by successively attacking each of them; by this procedure we will never attain anything.*’ We might perhaps need a thousand consecutive lives to get the required result in this way. We must therefore evade this state of things in its ensemble, and then there is a chance. What is it? We will discover in the following chapters.

17. Fr. ‘echelon’.

(7)

Since the hierarchy of laws is none other than the hierarchy of power, the more we are bound, the less power we have. But we must change the way in which we understand the notion of power. In esoteric science, *power means liberty*.

Every time we contract some commitment in life, we submit ourselves voluntarily to a new group of laws which administers the domain in which this commitment is made. We do not give this sufficient thought, often none at all, especially when we are young. We can say that man spends the first half of his life making agreements, and the second half of his existence asking himself how he can live with them.

(8)

The initial creative force, the neutralizing force that ties the universal *You* to the Absolute *I*, is *Love*. Although always identical in essence, this force of Love penetrates the whole Universe from top to bottom—and vice versa—taking different form at each step¹⁸ of Creation. St John said clearly: *‘God is Love.’*¹⁹ Inversely we could say: *Love is God*. The apostle concluded: *‘He that loveth not, has not known God.’*²⁰ *Love*, a divine Hypostasis, manifests in the Universe as the force of renaissance and perpetual renewal.

(9)

The life of the Universe is organized according to a strict and perfect Order. All that appears to be disorder or anarchy, looks this way to us because of our deficiencies in perception and judgement. The major part of the ‘B’ influences evade us. Yet in the economy of the Great Universe, each being or phenomenon has its place. Each, knowingly or unconsciously, serves in the attainment of a precise goal.

These are the essential characteristics of the first divine law, the *Law of Three*.

18. Fr. ‘échelon’.

19. I John iv: 8.

20. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER X

(1)

We have established that, in the World created by the play of the three forces, the *Law of Three* reflects the three fundamental conditions of Creation: static, dynamic and equilibrium. We could never stress the importance of this law enough. Everything that exists in the Universe, in fact or in potential, exists only by grace of the combined action of these three forces.

We shall now study the second fundamental law: the *Law of Seven*. This law applies neither to the creation nor to the existence of things and phenomena in space, but to their evolution in Time. It concerns the action of all types¹ of movement on all planes at all the steps² of Creation.

To understand the *Law of Seven* better, and to realize its importance, we must examine another aspect of the problem. We have seen that while he lives in such a jungle of laws, the only chance man has is to put himself under the authority of the *Law of Exception*, an esoteric law which permits him to escape from the *ensemble* of 'A' influences whose action in the external world strikes our inner world directly. As an *action*, this evasion also falls under the empire of the *Law of Seven*.

In accordance with this law, as we shall see in a moment, every action is subject to one or more changes in direction and as a consequence is in principle doomed to failure. However, by analyzing the action of the *Law of Seven*, we shall grasp the character of these deviations, and their necessity from the objective point of view. We shall learn how it is possible to combat these deviations and continue in a constant direction in pursuit of our goals.

(2)

The nature of the *Law of Seven* and its objective necessity result from the destructive character of Time, the second condition of Creation. By virtue of this principle, everything which is born or created — man included — is doomed to annihilation. The Universe itself ever since its creation has also been threatened with annihilation through the action of Time. It has been necessary ever since to face up to this danger. The *Law of Seven* represents the means by which the destructive action of Time is to a certain measure neutralized.

1. Fr. 'catégories'.

2. Fr. 'échelons'.

A movement cannot be dissociated from its duration. As all action is either an exterior or an interior movement, every action takes Time. The *Law of Seven* consists precisely in the fact that any movement, once launched, undergoes a deviation at a certain moment and then, after going a certain distance in the new direction, another deviation, then yet again. If the initial impulse is strong enough, by its last deviation after tracing a Hexagon the movement comes back to the point where it started. Thus, under the influence of the *Law of Seven*, every action generated in the Universe unfolds in cycles (Fig. 31).

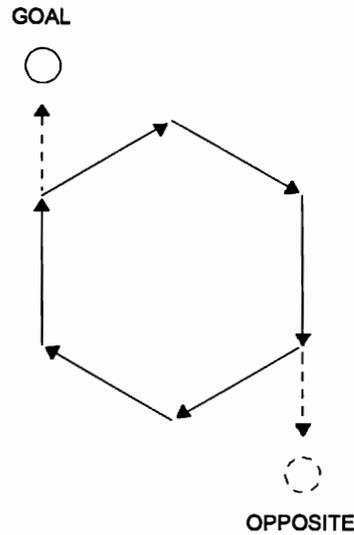


Fig. 31

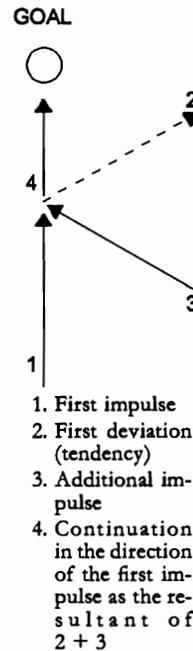


Fig. 32

While the *Law of Three* is a natural law, the *Law of Seven* is artificial. If it does not neutralize the destructive action of Time completely, it at least moderates it by imposing successive curvatures on every action or movement to close them into cycles. In the beginning, Time itself will be found to curve, deviating from a straight line so that it closes off into a great Cycle which encompasses all subordinate cycles. Because of the *Law of Seven*, annihilation does not occur in the first cycle, nor in following cycles until the force of the initial impulse is exhausted. In the meantime, the law makes it possible to revive any movement which is losing its energy

and its speed, by imparting supplementary impulses to it at opportune moments and points (Fig. 32).

The Great Cycle, which circumscribes Time from the first impulse of divine manifestation until the *Accomplishment*, that is, the end of the World, is conceived in the Tradition as *Eternity*. Eternity, as we have indicated previously, is thus not infinite. Like any other created thing, it is limited. It embraces all Manifestation, and contains in itself the accomplishment of all possibilities and of all promises.

The curvature of Time — the result of the *Law of Seven* — makes even this return to its point of departure after circumscribing the polygon of Eternity. Thus considered, as we shall see later, Eternity has a certain *duration*, of the order of 2.10^{15} earth years. These considerations on the curvature of Time and of all movement — including any physical, mental or moral action whatever its nature — permit us to give a definition of the *Law of Seven*.

Definition: *Any movement that begins in a given direction undergoes a deviation at a certain moment.*

Conversely: *For a movement going towards a definite goal to continue without deviation in the same direction, it is necessary to impart to it adequate additional impulses at specific moments and points.*

Corollary: *If left to itself, by the third deviation a movement which follows a definite direction is found to be going in the diametrically opposite direction.*

These are the essential characteristics of the *Law of Seven*.

(3)

In human activity on the moral plane, the above corollary is found to apply at every moment. How much blood has been shed in the name of the Son of God who preached Love? How much cruelty, violence and imprisonment has been imposed by revolutions in the name of liberty and fraternity? We can multiply these examples endlessly.

At the moments when they occur, these deviations almost always escape notice. We continue to imagine that we are following the same direction though, without realizing it, we are insensibly led to take the opposite direction. At that moment our action on the moral plane automatically receives a new impulse, which comes from the reaction of those around to the original impulse. The more vigorous it is, the more 'avant-garde', the more 'revolutionary', the stronger the reaction by the *principle of Equilibrium*. In this way the movement in the opposite direction, called in common language the *reaction*, has such unexpected force that it sometimes pushes the promoters of the initial action back to well behind their point of departure. That is almost always the case with political doctrines.

To *consolidate* the first success, the second impulse must allow its *exploitation*. History gives many examples of the necessity of this second impulse: where it has been lacking after battles are won, the war has often been lost.

We must point to another effect of this law. We have seen that one must pass by two consecutive deviations to reach a direction opposite to the initial movement. This means that to maintain the initial direction of a movement, and ensure the success of an enterprise, one must foresee two consecutive additional impulses.

(4)

To take a step forward in the study of the *Law of Seven*, and so understand why it was given this name, we must take a look at the relation between *matter* and *energy*, and also at the nature of the cyclic movements that characterize them.

Contemporary positive science has established the close relation between matter and energy, a fact known to esoteric science since time immemorial. Today, it is no longer an impudence to say that matter is only a static form of energy — whose nature is above all dynamic. Certain phenomena which have been known from time immemorial already allowed clear perception of that notion: *spherical lightning* or the fireball, for example, which possesses certain characteristics specific to matter, such as volume and colour. But the state of knowledge in the past century did not allow productive study of this phenomenon; it remained relatively unnoticed due to its rarity. The recent progress of positive science has led to the rediscovery, if not in every detail³ at least in part, of ancient traditional knowledge, particularly in the field of the relations of matter–energy. Traditional esoteric science envisages the manifestation of all energy as a form of cyclic vibratory movement. It further teaches that matter is composed of a relatively restricted number of *nuclei* of different qualities, and is analogous in nature to *spherical lightning*. These nuclei are animated by cyclic vibratory movements of varying frequency and amplitude. Here the Tradition introduces a notion of density which is applicable to energy as well as to matter. Finally, it establishes the law according to which: *the density of matter and the density of vibrations are inversely proportional*.

Always in accordance with that traditional teaching, the quantity of *nuclei* in matter, nuclei which to be precise are matter itself, is minimal. The volume occupied by an object, whatever it may be, is filled by what we call the very fast *traces of motion*: movement of a limited number of nuclei. All depends on the density of these movements and their speed. The

3. Fr. 'intégralement'.

heavier and more sluggish the vibrations, the larger the number of nuclei needed to constitute a body, and vice versa. We know that speed of movement is capable of modifying the physical characteristics of matter. For example, when we rotate a light piece of paper on a spindle at five to six thousand revolutions per minute, it becomes capable of sawing a piece of wood. At this frequency our piece of paper appears as a disc, although it is in fact square. If we increase the speed of rotation much beyond that mentioned above, the disc, as it turns, will take on for our senses the characteristics of a solid object at rest. We would then be able to touch the sheet of paper, without the risk of having our hands sawn off.

In the light of this theory the structure of matter appears analogous to that of the Universe, which we observe 'from the inside', with the rotation of the star systems. We have spoken of this already (Chapter VIII, p. 67) and have said that if — by reducing ourselves to the proportions of an infinitesimal being—we were able to observe our bodies from inside, as we observe the body of the Universe, we would perceive nothing different. The structure of the Universe is strictly uniform on every scale,⁴ with reservations due to the application of the *principle of Relativity*.

(5)

The Tradition considers all movement as an acceleration or reduction of vibrations of the same order. It rejects the idea of stability, since everything that exists does so as a result of movement, and is found in a perpetual state of movement. The same body can accomplish — and generally does accomplish — several movements at the same time. Thus our planet Earth is animated by a great number of motions, of which twelve are considered primary. As to our satellite the Moon, it is endowed with about a hundred. On the mental⁵ plane, and even on the physiological plane, we can often observe an ensemble of opposed components in one and the same pattern of movement: one part progresses, the other regresses; nothing can properly be said to be stable. From the esoteric point of view, stability is unthinkable; it is fiction. The only stability which may be admitted is *stability in movement*: this phenomenon is of the first importance, as it is this which has permitted the creation of matter as we know it, in its three forms.

4. Fr. 'échelon'.

5. Fr. 'psychique'.

(6)

We will now look at the action of the *Law of Seven*, in movements in which vibrations increase. In this case, the consecutive deviations we have spoken of at the beginning of this chapter will create a discontinuity. This discontinuity intervenes in the propagation of all movements, though they can and do seem to us progressive and uninterrupted. In this context, let us examine the musical octave, whose structure perfectly reflects the *Law of Seven*.

By *octave*, we mean the doubling of vibrations. The musical scale⁶ is located between the limits of an octave, and comprises seven tones and five half-tones. The missing half-tones are positioned as indicated by the arrows in the following figure:

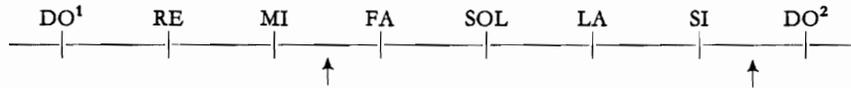


Fig. 33

The first is found between the notes MI and FA, and the other between SI and DO². Let us now see the way the vibrations progress, which, as we have said, occurs discontinuously. The following diagrams show this discontinuity, expressed in fractions and whole numbers on the one hand, and in the curve of discontinuity of a musical octave, on the other.

DO	1	—	24	₃
RE	9/8	—	27	₃
MI	5/4	—	30	₂
FA	4/3	—	32	₄
SOL	3/2	—	36	₄
LA	5/3	—	40	₅
SI	15/8	—	45	₃
DO	2	—	48	

Fig. 34

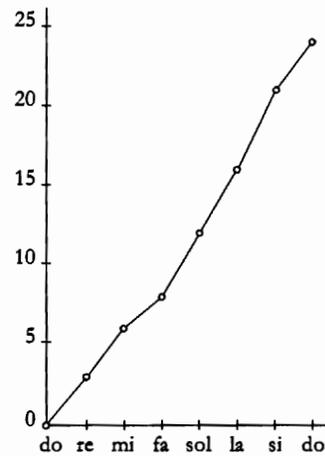


Fig. 35

6. Fr. 'gamme' — see Translator's notes.

(7)

We have said that every existing phenomenon exists in Time, and that consequently it is movement. All movement, as a function of Time, takes place under the dominion of the *Law of Seven*; otherwise under the *Law of Octaves*. The action of the Absolute, who created the Universe—the existence of which is assured on every level⁷ by the *Law of Three*—is itself also developed in Time according to the *Law of Seven*.

The *Ray of Creation*, in its progress from the Absolute to the satellites of the planets—to the moon in our case—must necessarily follow a descending sequence of the octave. In the Tradition, it is called the *Great Octave* or the *Cosmic Octave*. It is a *descending* octave:

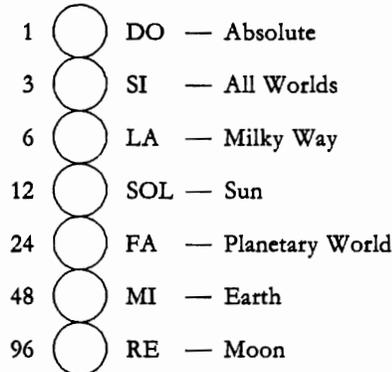


Fig. 36

(8)

The esoteric teaching, formerly reserved for the initiated only, was known not only in the Orient but also in the Occident. We can see the evidence of this by analyzing the names of the notes of the musical scale,⁸ established, as we know by, Guido of Arezzo, an Italian Benedictine (c.995–1050). To do this, he utilized the hymn to St John the Baptist, composed two centuries previously by Paul Diacre or Warnefrid, a historian of Lombardy (740–801). The latter was a secretary to the king of Lombardy, Didier, and after that lived at the court of Charlemagne, then in that of Benevent, to retire finally to the monastery of Monte

7. Fr. 'échelon'.

8. Fr. 'gamme'.

Cassino, where he ended his days. The hymn to St John the Baptist goes like this:

UT queant laxis
REsonare fibris
MIRA gestorum
FAMuli tuorum
SOLve polluti
LABil reatum
Sancte Johannes⁹

We see that this hymn was composed by Paul Diaconus in hermetic form. Such a procedure was always favoured in esoteric teaching. Comparative study of the diagram of the *Great Octave*, and the hymn of Paul Diaconus, leaves no doubt that he knew this diagram quite well. So did Guido of Arezzo who, two centuries after Paul, chose that hymn amongst all others to introduce it into the musical gamut.¹⁰

We can even see for ourselves why Paul Diaconus utilized the syllable *UT*, instead of *DO*, to designate the first note. We should carefully note that he conceived this hymn as an *ascending gamut*,¹⁰ although the *Great Octave* naturally represents a *descending gamut*.¹⁰ From the meaning of its content, this hymn tends from the lower to the higher, from the coarse to the fine, in other words, from the human plane toward the divine plane. But he stops, without reaching the latter, at the note *SI*, consecrated to St John the Baptist. Let us say in passing that the Precursor enjoys a very particular veneration in the Tradition, and is placed above the Apostles. On certain Byzantine icons he is represented as winged, having two heads, one quite normally placed on his shoulders while the other, which is similar, is severed and bloody, and he bears it with his own hands on a platter.

If Paul Diaconus had wanted to prolong his hymn by one more line, he would have had to consecrate it to Jesus, and consequently to start it from the syllable *DO*. But he did not do that. His eminently human gamut,¹⁰ having begun with man as he is, *born of woman*¹¹ in all his imperfection, could obviously not start with *DO*, which really stands for *Dominus*. He chose the syllable *UT*, from the word *Uterus*, the organ of gestation, precisely in order to underline that imperfect condition which is as common to all the devout as to all men, in order to direct them on the track of St John, of whom Jesus said: *'Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.'*¹²

9. This is the translation of that hymn: 'That your trusting believers may, with all the sinews of their soul, sing of the marvels of your life, to purify their soiled lips (of sin), O St John.'

10. Fr. 'gamme'.

11. Matthew xi: 11.

12. *Ibid.*

Thus, *UT—Uterus*—symbolizes the door of birth according to the flesh and *SI*, the door of the *second Birth*, according to the Spirit, without which *man cannot see the kingdom of God*.¹³ The ascending gamut of Paul Diacre thus comprises an *octave of regeneration*, going from birth on earth to birth in the heavens.

That is the explanation of this hymn, closely conforming to the sense of the mystical traditions of the past.

(9)

An exhaustive examination of the names of the notes that form the musical octave shows direct correspondence with the notes of the *Great cosmic Octave*, as can be seen from the following diagram:

1		DO — God. The Absolute manifest. The central Sun	<i>DO</i> minus
3		SI — Starry sky. Ensemble of all Worlds	<i>SI</i> dereus orbis
6		LA — Our Great World; the Milky Way	<i>LA</i> cteus orbis
12		SOL — The Sun	<i>SOL</i>
24		FA — The Planetary World, to which antiquity attributed direct influence on our destiny	<i>FA</i> tum
48		MI — Earth, our imperfect world, under the mixed rule of Good and Evil	<i>MI</i> xtus orbis
96		RE — The Moon, ruler of human fate according to the Ancients	<i>RE</i> gina astris

Fig. 37

(10)

Let us return to the problem of *matter—energy*, to clarify the question of atomic structure as it is understood by esoteric science. We have seen that the first manifestation of energy appears in the form of a cyclic intra-atomic vibratory movement. This movement, animating a certain number of nuclei, forms *matter*. If we can say in effect that these moving nuclei form *matter*, then we must not forget that they themselves consist of energy in a static form. Conversely, *energy* is no more than matter taking dynamic form. The disintegration of the atom gives a clear example of such a transformation. On the other hand, we have named spherical lightning as an example of the concentration of dynamic energy in the form of nuclei.

13. John iii: 3.

This process is the converse of the first, and can be compared to the phenomenon of atomic fusion.

We have also mentioned that the structure of matter is subject to the *principle of Equilibrium*, and that its density is inversely proportional to that of the internal vibrations which animate it. This serves to introduce into our studies the notion of the *atom*, as described in the Tradition. According to the classical definition, the atom is that particle of any element which is said to be simple; which can be divided no further if it is to keep all those chemical properties which determine the various ways in which it combines with other bodies. Esoteric science has a different notion. Here it is:

Definition: *The atom is the smallest particle, the last division of any given substance which integrally conserves all its properties: physical, chemical, mental and cosmic.*

We can see that this definition is closer to that of the *molecule*, even though it also goes beyond that.

We therefore recognize atoms of various compound bodies as well as the atoms of those elements which chemistry considers to be simple. For example, (there is) an atom of water, an atom of air etc... In correlation with the cosmic properties of the atom thus defined, esoteric science recognizes various *Orders of Matter*, classified according to the density of the typical atoms that correspond to every level¹⁴ of the *Great Octave*. Given this conception, it does not in principle admit any opposition between *Matter* and *Spirit*. If we oppose one to the other, it is as a convention for simple convenience, in the same way that astronomy continues to utilize Ptolemy's system for its practical aims, while pertinently aware that it is the system of Copernicus that more exactly reflects reality. From the point of view of esoteric science, which is in principle monistic, *all is matter* in the manifest world. Matter is a manifestation of energy, which is no more than a form of Spirit. In a hymn which has been preserved in Orthodoxy, the attributes of the Holy Spirit quite clearly show this form of thought:

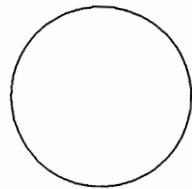
King of Heavens, Comforter
Spirit of Truth, *Omnipresent*,
All Filling,
Treasure of Saints,
Dispenser of Life,
Come and abide in us,
Purify us from all pollution
And save our souls, O good one!¹⁵

14. Fr. 'échelon'.

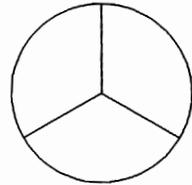
15. Translated from old Slavonic, with author's italics. The author notes that this concept of the Holy Spirit is represented in the form of Fire (Acts ii: 3) and is analogous to *Agni* in Hinduism. We should also note that in Greek the terms *spirit* and *air* are homonyms (*pneuma*), as are the terms *spirit* and *breath* (*doukh*) in old Slavonic.
Fr. 'ô Bienheureux'.

This said, we can understand that only the atom of the Absolute is really simple and consequently indivisible: here a single nucleus of Energy-Spirit vibrates at maximum intensity. It is the lightest atom; in esoteric science its matter-density is taken as *unity*. Then, coming down the *Ray of Creation* step by step, the vibrations progressively lose their speed. It follows that, at each successive note of the *Cosmic Octave*, the constitution of the atoms will require more matter: the atoms become more and more heavy and inert. As we shall see hereafter, the typical atoms of each level reflect the form of Creation in accordance with the *Law of Three*, as described above (Chapter IX, p. 81, Fig. 30; Chapter X, p. 89, Fig. 36), in such a way that the density of these typical atoms follow the notes of the *Great Octave*, and can be represented by the figure on the following page.

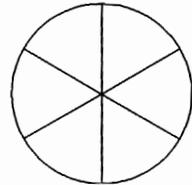
Positive science only considers four of the seven levels of cosmic matter: it studies the level of the Earth integrally; a large proportion at the level of the Moon, and in gradually lesser proportion the levels of the Planetary World, and the Sun. As yet it does not possess any means of perceiving or knowing the three higher levels. The atoms of the Planetary World — as defined above — already appear in some way hypothetical. As for the Sun, we know very few things concerning that star. But the progress of positive science has placed us today on the eve of important discoveries in this field, as in our knowledge of our satellite. We will be surprised to learn that, objectively, the Sun has an altogether different appearance from the one we perceive, and that the Earth, seen from the Moon, appears altogether other than what we make of it.



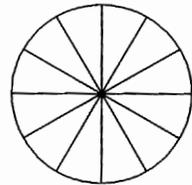
The atom of the *Absolute*: the only indivisible atom



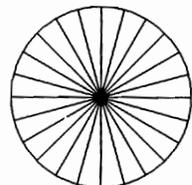
The atom at the level of *All Worlds*



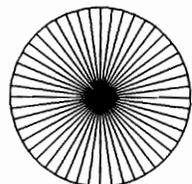
An atom of the *Milky Way*



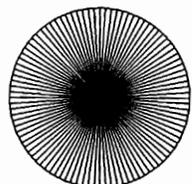
An atom of the *Sun*



An atom of the *Planetary World*



An atom of the *planet Earth*



An atom of the *Moon*

Fig. 38

CHAPTER XI

(1)

The *Law of Seven* is a general law, which governs all categories of motion, conscious or mechanical, that occur in the created Universe. This means that every movement or creation develops through a gamut.¹ In each gamut, this natural progress is subject to deviation. It slackens and sometimes stops at the intervals between DO and SI, and between FA and MI. This is the deeper meaning of the notion of *Destiny* as understood by the Ancients.² According to them, Zeus himself did not escape its rule. In fact, the actions of the Absolute in his creative work, which follow the *Ray of Creation*, are also subject to this law. Like every creative work, this action follows a descending gamut. For the will of the Absolute to pass to the stage of manifestation, and then descend through every step of the *Ray of Creation*, down to the final point which is RE, the Moon, it was and still is first necessary to fill the interval between DO and SI. Then it is necessary to neutralize the tendency to deviate, caused by the sudden slowing in its progress between FA and MI.

The first interval is filled by the will of the Absolute. In fact, by His creative will, which manifests at this point as a conscious effort, giving the first impulse to a premeditated and predetermined creation. This creative force, as we have already said, is *Love*. As for the interval between FA and MI of the *Great Octave*, it is equally filled by the will of the Absolute, but no longer directly, as in the first case. This will acts here in the second degree, but always as a creative force of *Love*. It appears at this stage on a lower plane,³ corresponding to the interval we are talking about. This complementary outpouring of forces, in its place and at a cosmic moment, allows that first creative action to continue its development without impediment.

The two diagrams that follow reflect, on the one hand the *plan of Creation* (Fig. 39), and on the other hand its *application* (Fig. 40).

Technically, in the execution of the cosmic plan, the transmission of creative energy across the second interval is realized by the introduction of an *auxiliary lateral Octave*, which starts from the Sun: the SOL of the *Great Octave*. With the creation of the Planetary World, the SOL of the *Great Octave* begins to resound as the DO in this *lateral octave*.

1. Fr. 'gamme'.

2. Tr. A study of mythology should clarify for the reader whether the ancients in their use of the notion of destiny actually referred to these intervals, or simply revealed in this word the inevitability of change for everything in time.

3. Fr. 'plan'.

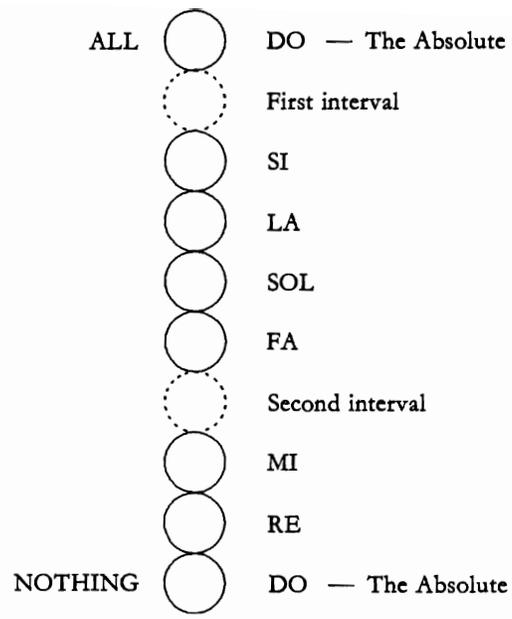


Fig. 39

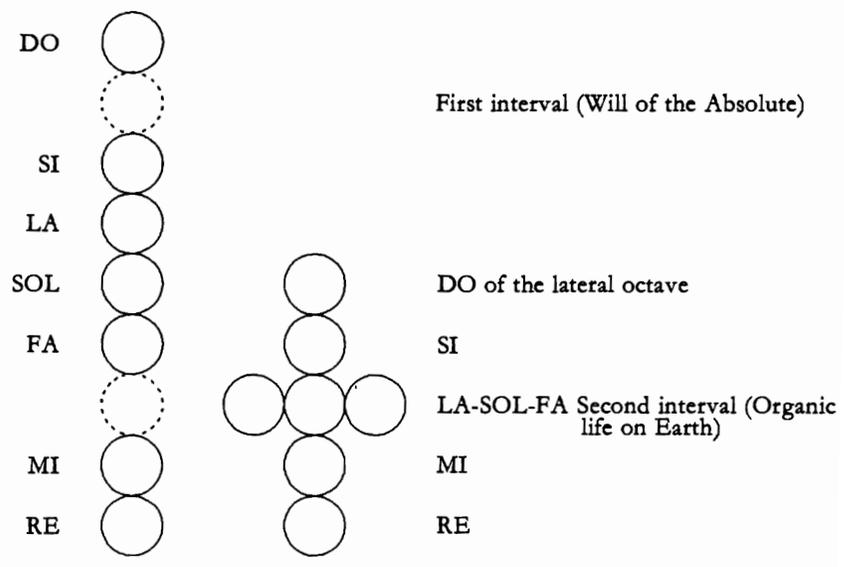


Fig. 40

(2)

Before going any further, it is appropriate to comment on the sense and purpose of the *lateral octave*, in its ensemble, and then to establish the proper significance of each of the notes that compose it.

Glancing at the diagram which represents the *Cosmic Octave*, we can constate that no intermediary body between the Absolute and the Sun is substantially different in its nature. In fact the notes SI—All Worlds—and LA—The Milky Way — our World — are composed of bodies at various stages of their existence, (formation, maturity, senility or death), but wholly similar or at least analogous to our sun. As we shall see later, the Sun, as well as all the stars of the astronomical Universe — each the sun of its own system — represent an ensemble. Between the Absolute and this ensemble, considered by the Tradition to be the body of the cosmic Christ,⁴ there does not exist any intermediate body that is different in its nature. We find nothing but various groupings of bodies that all have the same solar nature. This is why the Spirit of this integral solar body has been considered to be the consubstantial Being of the Absolute, *begotten not created*, the Son of God,⁵ the cosmic Christ as we said. His manifestation in our *Ray of Creation* appears precisely because the SOL of the *Great Octave* resounds as the DO of the *Lateral octave*, which is indissolubly joined to this *Ray of Creation*. The *lateral octave* is the conductor of life in the Universe, in all its different forms. Spirit of the Sun, Christ *lives*;⁶ He comprises within Himself the fullness of solar, planetary and satellite lives in all their forms, present, vanished or to come.

This gives us a general sense of the *lateral octave*. Let us now see how this source of life, issuing from the Sun, manifests itself through the notes SOL FA, MI and RE of the *Great Octave*, as well as through the notes SI, LA, SOL, FA, MI and RE of its own octave.

(3)

Here let us guard ourselves against being too astronomical or astrophysical in our view of the Universe. We only partially perceive cosmic phenomena, to the measure of our limited perception. As we are *exterior* men, the mental element in the life of the Universe escapes us; to be more precise, we have no objective notion about it. Lacking the

4. Ed. 'Christ Pantokrator' in Orthodox terminology.

5. Cf. the *Credo*.

6. John xiv: 19.

knowledge,⁷ we are reduced in this domain to beliefs: positive, that is to say emotional or religious; negative, and either rationalistic or atheistic.

In fact, we know very few things about our Sun, about its many functions, or about the influences by which it governs the three remaining notes of the *Great Octave*, especially MI, the note of our planet.

(4)

To better understand the action of the gamut in general, let us take an example from everyday life. We shall see from this that man always instinctively seeks to surmount these intervals, at the moment of origination, as well as in the course of realizing his projects.

We know that, to act with some chance of success, we should follow a plan carefully worked out in advance. What is the esoteric meaning of this principle? It is twofold: the first (sense) is known to all; it responds to the requirements of the *Law of Three*, which governs all creation; the second aims at materialization of the project — its implementation. The latter necessarily follows the *Law of Seven*.

Let us take an example in a field which is strange to no one, that of government. We know that a law is normally accompanied by one or more decrees of application, which are directly linked to it. These play the role of neutralizing force between the DO of the law, an active force, and a passive force, SI, where the execution of the measures implied in the law begins.

As a general rule, execution depends not on the (legislative) authority which sanctioned the law, but on a subordinate authority, as with the Son in the *Great Octave*. It is precisely this 'authority of second instance' which is charged with realizing the affair to the end, starting from the note SOL, which has behind it the notes SI and LA, representing the accumulation of mental and biological resources, and before it the note FA; material means of all kinds which are put at its disposal.

In the normal development of administrative action, the note MI shows the first results. In the note RE, the success is stabilized to permit the reaping of the final fruit. The fruit appears as the DO of the following octave, then fully engendered and capable from now on of independent life and development.

Theoretically, this is evolution in accordance with the *principal Octave*. However, the well conceived law, the happy choice of executive authority, the opportune accumulation of the necessary mental, biological and material support, cannot make creation advance beyond the note FA. It is only by means of the *lateral octave* that the action can, in practice, be taken

7. Fr. 'savoir'.

on to an objective result which, as we have seen, is only attained at the note DO of the octave which terminates the *secondary octave*.

The *lateral octave* starts with the note DO, which issues from the note SOL of the *principal octave*. This signifies that the 'authority of second instance', the SOL of the *principal octave*, takes the initiative of executing the planned law within the limitations of the legislation. This authority does not have total freedom of action; it is limited to a plan and made exact by decree. But within the limits defined by these, we await its initiative. If we do not commit the error of interfering in its acts, the secondary authority will act within the fixed frame as absolute master: in its own domain the DO of the *lateral octave* is analogous to the DO of the *principal octave*.

After having established the plan on a correct basis and collected the necessary means to execute it, the talent of the supreme executive lies in the judicious choice of his collaborators. In return,⁸ the collaborator must bring his talents to fruition in every aspect of his life, particularly that of esotericism.

We can now understand that Jesus had this aspect of the *Law of Seven* in mind when He pronounced these words, which look odd at first sight: 'For to him who hath shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he has,'⁹ or more exactly: 'that which he thinks he has.'¹⁰

Man acts in his life under the authority of the *Law of Seven*, of course without knowing it. It is only when, shocked by the difficulties which erupt into his path without visible cause, and only by accumulating experience through successive failures, that he searches empirically for the way to overcome these difficulties.

(5)

Strengthened by the preceding, someone who has studied esoteric science can and must better understand the *comedy of life*, in which pretentious blind men lead other more modest blind men towards an abyss which will engulf both.¹¹ Once he knows this then, within the limited independence left to him after the commitments he has undertaken, and which still bind him, he will have the possibility of warding off the harmful effects of the 'A' influences. In the net of 'A' influences of which our life is woven, it is among the 'B' influences that he will find the necessary impetus to fill the two intervals in each gamut he begins — or to which he falls

8. Fr. 'en revanche'.

9. Matthew xiii: 12; Mark iv: 25.

10. Luke viii: 18.

11. Matthew xv: 14; Luke vi: 39.

victim. The *object* of their play, he must become *subject* before he can make himself *master*.

What eludes most of us is that, after we have begun our esoteric studies, we still continue as before, living and acting in the same *comedy of life* — produced by the 'A' influences. It often seems to us that, merely by pursuing such studies, we are already liberated. This is a mistake! We can also go to the opposite extreme. We must beware of following the example of Don Quixote, who persisted in attacking these 'A' influences head-on in all their forms, particularly as windmills. The seeker must learn how to master these influences, especially those which become factors in the film of his personal life. He will achieve this by drawing a complement of energy from the source of the 'B' influences, which he must utilize in his 'life' in strict obedience to the demands of the *Law of Seven*. For that, he must make himself recognize all the gamuts¹² — at least all the principal ones — of which he is either agent or victim, and in the midst of which he finds himself at every moment. This is the first part of his work, which corresponds in principle to *knowledge*.¹³ The second part, no less important, corresponds in principle to *savoir-faire*. Having objectively recognized his place in the gamuts he meets at any given moment, he will next proceed to relate this data to the practical means at his disposal, in ways consistent *with a chosen or perceived aim within the esoteric plan*. Then the *savoir-faire* will gain force, allowing the seeker to act in two ways. He must first draw on the necessary energies at the source of the 'B' influences, to apply them later to the gamuts of 'A' influences of which he forms a part. This is done in a strictly realistic spirit, free from all hypocritical tendencies, all mechanisms of self justification, and, above all, free from all lying about himself. This last condition is indispensable to success. In every case which is subject to the *Law of Seven*, the period of application will bring conscious efforts into play by introducing *lateral octaves*, in a way analogous to that by which the *lateral octave* introduces itself into the *cosmic Octave*.

We must say immediately that, even if these conditions are strictly observed, only rarely does one reach the desired result without making many mistakes of appreciation or application. We must be one of the *just*¹⁴ by nature not to make mistakes, nor persevere in errors. The unjust, the proud¹⁵ — and this is the general case — fall again into their mistakes, because they think they alone are just, so consequently that they are right while others, as well as circumstances, are wrong. In their pretentious

12. Fr. 'gammes'.

13. Fr. 'savoir'.

14. Ed. In Orthodox monastic thought represented by the Greek word 'dikaios'; just or righteous man.

15. Fr. 'les orgueilleux'.

blindness they even go so far as to distort the facts in a deliberate way. The adage 'so much the worse for the facts' (or in an English version: 'my mind's made up, don't confuse me with the facts') has become famous.

He who studies esoteric science must watch, and take care not to return once again to the crowd, nor, 'like everyone else', to follow that broad way which leads to the abyss.

(6)

Let us return to the study of the first *lateral octave*, which is linked to the *Cosmic Great Octave*.

We shall first repeat that its DO, issuing from the SOL of the *Great Octave*, appears here as the Absolute. It is, as we have said, the *Christos*, the *Anointed* of the Absolute I, the *Second Logos*, *Spirit of the Sun*, shining by his own light,¹⁶ begotten not created, and consubstantial with the Father.

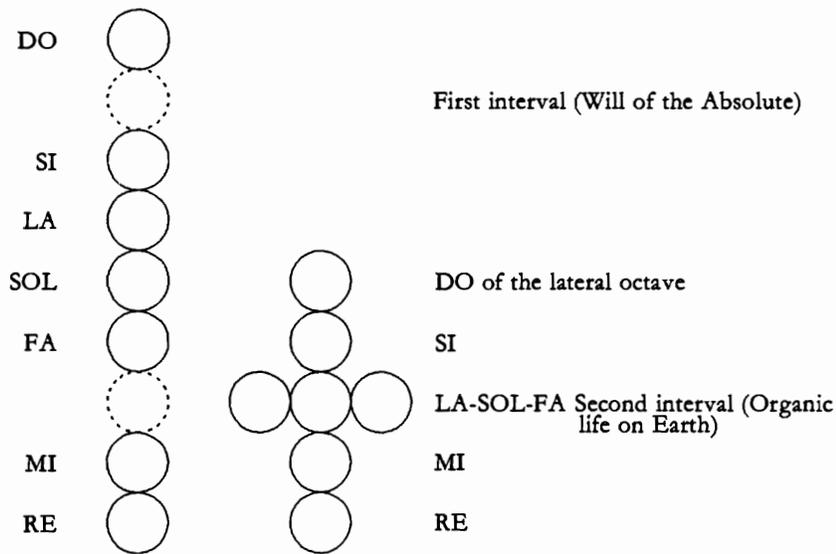


Fig. 41

The DO of the *lateral octave* represents the Absolute of organic life on Earth, the livening principle of the Sun. In other words, all the elements of organic life on Earth in their manifested or latent state—up to their limit of

16. Matthew xvii: 2.
Ed. 'As a lighted lamp needs no other light to make it visible, so the Self, being consciousness itself, needs no other source of consciousness to illuminate it.' Shankaracharya, *Atma Bhoda*.

possible development, and without a single exception — depend on the Sun. The interval between DO and SI of the *lateral octave* is filled by the creative will of the Absolute II, analogous to that of the Absolute I of the *Great Octave*, which is Love.

Issuing from the Absolute II, this creative and conscious force intervenes as neutralizing force between the active force DO and the passive force SI, belonging to the ensemble of the Planetary World. As a result of the converging action of these three forces, the necessary condition for the existence and development of organic life on the surface of planets appears. It occurs on Earth as the atmosphere.

The three notes: LA, SOL and FA, represent the three forms of organic life: man, fauna and flora. The notes MI and RE of the *lateral octave* represent the livening influence of the Absolute II, penetrating the planet Earth and its satellite respectively, through the *station of transmission* LA-SOL-FA.

We have already said that the notes of the *Great Octave* SI, LA and FA represent mental, biological and material elements respectively, put at the disposal of the Son for the accomplishment of the Creation begun by the Father. That is why Jesus said that: '*All things whatsoever the Father hath are Mine*',¹⁷ because — He said elsewhere — '*I and my Father are one*.'¹⁸

(7)

The note SI of the *lateral octave* corresponds to the creation, organization and preservation of the atmosphere of planets, as in the case of the Earth. With time, the atmosphere changes its structure and composition to conform to the evolution of the planet. An atmosphere is the *sine qua non* condition of organic life, characterized by respiration. Even more, it is the conductor of all kinds of terrestrial and extra-terrestrial influences including planetary, solar and cosmic influences whose radiation penetrates the atmosphere, and which are absorbed by respiration. Man is ignorant of many of these influences, which when absorbed by respiration immediately penetrate into the blood, and then pass through his organs and so through all his psychological centres.

The following three notes of the cosmic *lateral octave*, LA, SOL and FA, in their ensemble, make up *organic life on Earth*. FA corresponds to vegetable life, SOL to animal life, and LA to human life. Yoked together, these three notes constitute an organ of the planet, a kind of highly sensitive membrane, a *station of transmission* for the creative energy which issues from the Absolute I, which reaches it by the mediation of the Absolute II. It is by

17. John xvi: 15.

18. John x: 30.

means of carnal love—the note SOL of the *lateral octave*—and by perpetual rebirth, that this organ is maintained, evolves, and assures the transmission of the creative energy from the Absolute I across the interval between FA and MI of the *Great Octave*. The notes MI and RE of the *lateral octave* merge with those of the *Great Octave*, and are represented by the body of the Earth and that of the Moon respectively. The action of the two notes, MI and RE of the *lateral octave*, manifests as development of these two bodies.

In broad outline, this is the meaning and role of the cosmic *lateral octave*.

(8)

We were perhaps able to notice that, while filling the interval between FA and MI of the *Great Octave* by its action, the *lateral octave* itself was equally compelled to undergo a slowing down or deviation in the interval between its own two notes, FA and MI. How is this filled? When we have acquired certain background information which will enable us to approach the problem more effectively, we shall come back to this important question.

(9)

This brief analysis of the functioning of the *lateral octave* allows us to comprehend certain major problems in a new light; problems which occupy all minds, such as the overpopulation of the earth, the problem of food supply considered on a global scale, the general organization of human society, the cosmic significance of the wars of the past, and their role in the future, and even problems such as interplanetary and interstellar navigation.

CHAPTER XII

(1)

We have studied the structure of the Universe in the form of the *Ray of Creation*, its constitution according to the *Law of Three*, and its functioning in accordance with the *Law of Seven*. Already, this first study of the *Cosmos* allows us to understand all the depth of this term, to which the Ancients rightly attributed meanings of Order and Beauty. In previous chapters we have pictured the Universe in terms of the order underlying its creation and functioning. We have seen that this order applies in a strictly uniform manner. A vehicle of the will of the Absolute, it rules the Universe as much in its ensemble as in its smallest parts. This confirms the ancient esoteric formula: '*As above, so below.*' Now we are going to begin studying the Universe from the point of view of the *life* which animates it, given that its structure as we studied it, in some way constitutes the mobile framework¹ of the Universe. This will permit us to understand better, if still only partially, the ineffable beauty of the *Cosmos*.

Let us not forget that our capacity for representation is limited. Even the richest of the images we strive so hard to form are flat and colourless. In the environment in which we live, we cannot — without calculation and without special training — fully comprehend the measure of these continual changes, since our perceptions tend to register stereotypes of the objects surrounding us. We are thus normally transported to a static world of two dimensions, although in truth we belong to a three-dimensional world, evolving in Time, and including still higher dimensions — hidden from us so that we have no direct² perception of them. The representation of the Universe and its life which we can form for ourselves — penetrated, from the infinitely large to the infinitely small, by the perpetual vibration of Love — that representation will always be flat, banal, and will never reflect its ineffable beauty except from afar and in a purely conventionalized way. It is only by means of progressive evolution, after attaining the level of *being* of man 4, and then crossing the threshold to become man 5, that direct contemplation of the *Cosmos* becomes accessible to us in its twin aspects of Order and Beauty.

Yet the efforts of *exterior* man to grasp this order and beauty are not in vain. They are even indispensable. It is the same as in studying positive science; one must *learn first* to *understand* later.

It is in this spirit that we should approach the present chapter.

1. Fr. 'charpente'.

2. Fr. 'spontanée'

(2)

How can we visualize the Universe to ourselves, while taking these factual reservations into account? The *Tree* is one image. Jesus used it, speaking of himself as the stem of a vine, with his disciples as the branches.³ We can visualize for ourselves the 'tout ensemble' of the *Rays of Creation*, forming the branching crown of a tree... a triple root from which trunk and branches spring. This skeletal figure is covered with buds which give rise to leaves, flowers, and finally fruit. The tree is alive, and carries throughout its branches the varied manifestations of that life: manifestations that are interdependent, useful, even indispensable to one another since they ensure the existence, growth and development of the ensemble. Even though this image is far from being perfect, it is convenient, and we shall refer to it more than once. Its imperfection is that the different parts — at their different levels of the *Tree* — do not exactly resemble each other. If the branches resemble the trunk, and the twigs resemble the branches, the flowers, leaves and stalks have a totally different appearance from the 'wood'.⁴ The life of the cosmos also has many levels, with seven principal ones; all seven levels of its manifestation are conceived in the image of the first,⁵ in the heart of which the six others live. All in all, there are seven cosmoses, or more exactly, seven orders of cosmoses — of which the triple root is one — existing and living one within another following the branching of the *Rays of Creation*.

With time, this ancient teaching, which linked each *Ray of Creation* to a musical scale⁶ of seven cosmoses, was partially forgotten or intentionally distorted. The enciphering of esoteric science has always been practised; the *Pentateuch* and the *Gospel* bear witness to that. But while hiding the exact meaning of the Doctrine, the ancients took care to impart to the profane — in one form or another — part of the truth that appeared to be a complete and systematic explanation. Thus through centuries and even millennia, through bygone and extinct civilizations, they gave the would-be-seekers of the future sufficient indications to incite them to deeper investigation.

(3)

An abridged version of the ancient teaching concerning the *Seven Cosmoses* has been given to us, notably in the Cabbala of Rabbi-Ben-Akiba, who speaks of two cosmoses: the small cosmos symbolizing

3. John xv: 5.

4. Fr. 'charpente'.

5. Genesis i: 26-27

6. Fr. 'échelle'.

man, and the large cosmos, symbolizing the Universe. The complete analogy between the *Microcosmos* and the *Macrocosmos* — to use the Greek terminology — reflected the whole paradigm of Genesis quoted above: ‘*man created in the image of God and after His likeness,*’⁷ a thesis which clearly admitted the principle of the unity of the World. At the same time, this teaching was limited to describing two cosmoses, while the complete doctrine, as said, considers not just two cosmoses, but seven cosmoses which together form a complete cycle of life in perpetual rebirth.

It should be noted that the system of *Seven Cosmoses* contains within itself all that exists, that is to say, the integral Being which we conceive — much too astronomically — as the Great Universe. On the other hand this system comprises everything that touches the life of this Being, all his organization, and all his manifestations. This is important to remember, as it is from this fact that *Knowledge*, in the full esoteric sense of the term, necessarily starts: by the study of this system — with the obligatory condition that the study of the parts is always done in relation to the ensemble.

(4)

The form of the system of *Seven Cosmoses* is shown again with the *Macrocosmos* forming their ensemble:

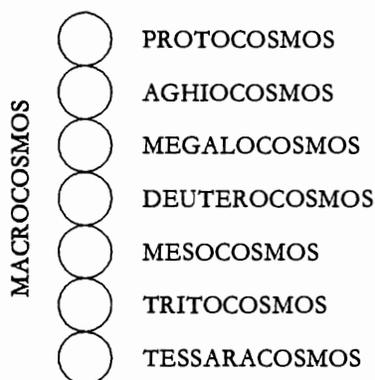


Fig. 42

Here are the primary data for this doctrine.

Each cosmos is a living being. Each is three-dimensional like the *Microcosmos* — that is to say man — and, like him, lives in Time. Each cosmos is limited⁸ by the two neighbouring cosmoses, and this triad of

7. Genesis i: 26-27; v: 1-2; ix: 6.

8. Fr. 'déterminé'.

successive cosmoses forms a complete unity. This does not, however, create watertight barriers between the triads since — and this is important to remember — the central cosmos of a given triad forms both an inferior element of the triad above, and a higher element of the triad below.

Concerning the *Ray of Creation*, we have already said — and this applies to the integral ensemble of the *Macrocosmos* — that the different cosmoses inside it are ruled by identical laws. But their application to each, although analogous, is not absolutely identical. Let us note in passing that action may be taken in a particular cosmos according to the laws of another cosmos. The classical example of such an action is, on the one hand, diseases of bacterial or viral origin, and on the other the active fight against these diseases by means of vaccination, serotherapy etc. This is the mixing of two cosmoses in each other's domain, that of man, and that of micro-organisms. The mixing of the laws of the higher cosmos in human life is rarer, or seems to us to be so. This involves phenomena which we call *miracles* in our current language.

(5)

Let us now proceed to a comparative examination of *the notion of Cosmoses* and of the *Ray of Creation*.

If the *Rays of Creation* are picturesquely defined as the boughs of the Great Tree which is the Universe, a tree of which the triple root is the manifested Absolute, then the *System of Cosmoses* appears as the life on these same boughs.

This life issues from the same triple root, the Absolute I, on Whom it is entirely dependent.

It is there, at the start, that the *Rays of Creation* and the *System of Cosmoses* join. This permits us to identify the Absolute I with the *Protocosmos* or *First Cosmos*.

We see that our *Ray of Creation* shows only a single bough, along the length of which the life of different elements of the *System of Cosmoses* emerges.

(6)

Here we have to stop for a few instants to prevent an error of conception which might be inspired by this image of the *Tree*. By analogy, certain aspects of this image can help us grasp our object better, but it does not represent all the agreements⁹ between the *Ray of Creation* and *The System of Cosmoses* at all levels. Our mental laziness, and a permanent tendency to drowsiness — the *inertia of matter* which is

9. Fr. 'l'ensemble des rapports'.

to new concepts — impels us to hasty conclusions and unfounded generalizations. Let us not forget that analogy is not similarity; even less is it identity. We must use all symbols with circumspection, and warn ourselves not to exceed the limits of agreement between the diagram and the object studied.

We have judged it opportune to give this warning, as with the study of the *System of Cosmoses*, we enter more and more the domain of new notions. On the other hand, the novel character of these notions, whether learned or conceived, requires conscious effort from anyone. In a certain way, this is a creative effort. It is the relatively heavy matter of our brains which always resists this effort. One can symbolically say that each new conception leaves a trace on the surface of the brain. The more the thought which forms this conception is new and striking, the deeper the groove it imprints on the brain. To fix this groove requires concentration of attention and thought. The thought must become fine and sharp, like the point of a needle. Then it will trace grooves deep enough that they do not fill up immediately, so that it is possible for the cerebral matter to do its work of fixation.

Meanwhile, this process runs up against two obstacles. First is mental fatigue, resulting in exhaustion of the reserves of forces necessary for the concentration desired. We shall see later that in *exterior* man this reserve is minimal. He generally lives at the limit of his nervous forces. Absorption of energy is almost immediately balanced by expenditure of the same magnitude. This semi-permanent exhaustion of the necessary energies drives man to abandon the path which leads him to the new and the unknown, and his thoughts slide back into paths they have taken before, a process which requires neither conscious effort nor concentration. The second obstacle arises from the fact that the cerebral matter itself resists this sharpened thought which, like the point of a needle, wounds it.

Hasty conclusions, easy generalizations, and slogans are the common techniques by which the dull and inert side of human nature continually tries to make the seeker abandon research into the domain of the new and the unknown ... which requires, as we have said, *conscious and creative* effort.

To fight against this double obstacle, which creates different difficulties for different people, but which we must all face, a practical method is recommended — whose object is also double. On one hand, it provides exercises which help us to accumulate force, and so build up reserves of energy. On the other hand, it provides exercises whose aim is to refine the working of the cerebral cells. These cells — endowed with the greatest permanence within the limits of the life of the body — can be educated. Their sensitivity can attain an almost miraculous acuteness. A noble nature is distinguished by the degree of refinement of its cells. Therefore, evolution is in principle possible for all; the door is wide open. But to make this

leap requires persistent, conscious and creative effort, without which the refinement of the cells stops. In general it stops when the formation of the individual is achieved. Life then begins to exploit this formation, leading all too often to a sort of mental sclerosis, a 'hardening' of the brain, which makes man lose more and more of his capacity for adaptation and that—the strongest reason for acuity — in the domain of the unknown.

Without mentioning other causes, to which we have already referred, and to which we shall return later, the ideas and facts exposed in this passage explain why esoteric studies are the birthright only of the minority who are preoccupied by things of the spirit and are capable, like the knights of the Grail,¹⁰ of *conquering knowledge*.¹¹

(7)

We have constated that, at root, the *Ray of Creation* and the *System of Cosmoses* are one and the same. Immediately after (this beginning), differences begin. The relationship between the steps¹² in the first and that between those in the second are different. In the *Ray of Creation*, these relationships vary, following the variations in the gamut;¹³ in the *System of Cosmoses*, they are constant.

The relationships between neighbouring cosmoses are the same as those between an infinitesimal quantity and an infinitely large one. Because of the *Law of Seven*, this relationship never attains its limit, that is, *Zero to Infinity*, which would necessarily result in the rupture of the chain, and the breakdown of the system.¹⁴

Let us now try to understand the meaning of the names attributed to the different echelons of the *System of Cosmoses*.

We have already talked about the *Protocosmos*, and about the Absolute. The next two degrees, the *Aghiocosmos* and the *Megalocosmos*, are attached respectively to the notes SI and LA of the *Great Octave*, meaning, to All the Worlds, and the Milky Way of the *Ray of Creation*. These two steps¹² represent the psychological and physiological life of the *Macrocosmos*, the Great Universe, viewed as a living Being. As we are, we certainly cannot conceive a notion of this, or picture exactly to ourselves what we have just said. This kind of knowledge¹⁵ and comprehension cannot

10. The *Holy Grail* or 'Sangreal'; from *sang-real* = *sang royal* (Fr. 'sang' – blood) the cup from which Jesus drank at the last Supper when he said: 'This is my blood, the blood of the Covenant which is poured out for many for the remission of Sins' (Matthew xxvi: 28; Mark xiv: 24). The legend says that Joseph of Arimathea kept that cup and later took it to Brittany. (Ed. Or to Britain, according to British legend.)

11. Fr. 'savoir'.

12. Fr. 'échelons'.

13. Fr. 'gamme'.

14. Cf. P. D. Ouspensky, *Fragments*, p. 206 [p. 292], where one finds this notion.

15. Fr. 'connaissance'.