



# pentagram

Lectorium Rosicrucianum

‘From what matrix, from what matter, will man be reborn?’

Hermes replies: ‘From the Sophia which thinks in the silence.’

This matrix, this matter of the Sophia, this primordial substance exists far beyond the turmoil and ruin of our field of existence. The Sophia – that is the original wisdom – is in the silence, that is, in the free original space, and every particle of this substance is charged with great, divine forces, with the ideas of the logos. That is the seed of the only good.

When this seed, the substance of the Sophia, gains access to the silenced thinking, the original human being will breathe in the Sophia. Then, on the basis of this thinking, the astral body will begin to live, on the basis of the astral body, the etheric one, and on the basis of etheric one, the physical body. This is how transfiguration begins.

J. van Rijckenborgh

## Wisdom that thinks in the silence

**Life and work of George Robert Stowe Mead**

**Echoes from the Gnosis**

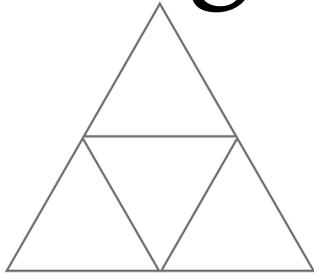
**A few thoughts about ‘The Voice of the Silence’**

## ‘Your God – My God’

*A discourse about the unity and the multitude*



# pentagram



Swallowed up by our hectic life, how often do we not sigh: 'I do not live, but I am lived.' In the first article, the gnostic, Jan van Rijckenborgh (1896-1968), shows that we are lived by the aeons, twelve power concentrations that, although they stem from the past, absolutely neither disappeared nor intend to disappear. They continuously keep us occupied. In this context, the author emphasised that the only possible escape from them is: going up into a 'thirteenth aeon', a special and pure, magnetic field, like the Pistis Sophia from the gospel of the same name.

This brings us to the theosophist and gnostic, George Mead (1863-1933), who translated, among other things, the Gospel of the Pistis Sophia. The three following articles are texts of a symposium, held at conference centre Renova on 28 November 2009, titled 'Voices of the Silence'. It was devoted to him, to H.P. Blavatsky and to the book *The Voice of the Silence*, which is sometimes called a gem. These lectures were preceded by 'texts about silence from world literature', a few of which have been included in this issue.

After having received a taste of the nature of silence, the last article 'Your God, my God' offers a meditation that was presented in the temple of the Rosycross. In it, we read among other things: 'The one is never seen, it can only be deduced from the multitude. Yet, the one is more real than the multitude.'

The editors hope that you will be able to taste the one message from everything presented in this issue: 'Seek, O Soul, to win sure knowledge of things by learning to know their existence and their essence. And know: it will not be possible for you to stay in this world, and it will not be possible for you to take with you anything of it. Grasp then the knowledge of simple things, and abandon composite things.'

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*a discourse about the unity and the multitude*

Cover: Because of its delicate form, its fragrance and its subtle beauty, the rose is a particularly appropriate symbol of the life of the soul that cannot be described by words. In an oriental legend, a white rose is the beginning, a gift from the most high. Its beauty carried away a nightingale, who nestled against it. It sang for it its highest song, but the thorns pricked in its chest, and the rose coloured red. The sun healed rose and wound and surrounded it with golden shine, the colour of absolute perfection

# the special power of the thirteenth aeon

after J. van Rijckenborgh

Suppose that we have a certain image in mind and agree that we will continuously maintain this image throughout the years; that we will instil it in our children and will hold up the same image before all who want to go with us; that artists will draw, paint and sculpt it; and that poets will express it. Then we will be able to imagine how aeons are formed in the astral sphere. They are projections of continuous streams of human desires and thoughts, which are ultimately vivified to the extent that they can control and dominate humanity.

These aeons, whose power continuously increases because we human beings continuously nourish them, rob any gnostically inclined person entering the astral sphere from his light power. Usually, this occurs every night in every pupil, once he entrusts his body to the rest of sleep. This has important consequences for all who take their pupilship seriously, amongst other things the logical and compelling demand that we withdraw from the astral sphere of our nature. Every time a person enters there during the hours of the night, he discovers (see Pentagram 2, 2010), that he suffers the extremely fatal influences of this field. The obvious question will be: 'How can I become free from them? How can I protect myself from these influences?'

In *The Books of the Redeemer, the Pistis Sophia*, it is explained that after his resurrection, Jesus the Lord travelled, from below upward, through all

the spheres and realms of our universe, clothed with the glorious light of the original mystery, and that he robbed all archons and aeons, the power principles and power concentrations of this nature, of a third of their power. This means that the grip of archons and aeons on the magnetic brain system will increasingly diminish and will wholly end at a certain moment.

**THE PAST ALWAYS SPEAKS IN US** Since the dawn of the fall of the microcosm, we have experienced an enormously long development. The history of this past is recorded in the magnetic system of our auric being and the sum of this past will always speak through our magnetic brain system. We are bound to this past, which is billions of years old and which our microcosm itself has helped build and maintain. And it is absolutely clear that all archons and aeons made their voices heard in us from time to time, and that many of them control our whole being now.

Our biological-intellectual being, our natural state, wholly depends on them. Currently, they determine our state of culture in this life and our relationship with it. This state of culture includes the arts, the sciences and religion as well as the social conditions and aspects of a political, social and economic nature.

Also the whole state of our character, all our biological instincts and needs, the expressions of our will and our individual behaviour are controlled and determined by them, so that we

The astral sphere of ordinary life is filled with unholy forces, the so-called aeons, which may be described as forces of nature. Linguistically, the word aeon means: course of the times, unmeasured period of time. This concept explains what aeons are in the context



of the astral sphere: astral effects that have been formed through very long periods of time and have become very powerful. They are, for instance, projections of human desires and thoughts, which were nourished for such a long time that they were ultimately vivified in the astral sphere. In gnostic texts from antiquity, they are invariably divided into twelve groups.



**Young person with fragrant ointment and cloth, symbol of purification and devotion. Relief in formal court style of the Achaemenid kings, found in the royal dwelling of Xerxes in Persepolis, sixth century BC**

## The origin of an aeon according to Goethe

A quarter of a century ago, Hans Christoph Binswanger (80) analysed the modern economy in his book *Money and Magic*. He did so on the basis of two plays, which Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) wrote about the sixteenth-century alchemist Faust, who sold his soul to the devil in exchange for omnipotence.

An eminent poet, Goethe anticipated the challenges and dangers of the emerging economy. Faust is the human being, who strives for happiness and satisfaction. However, nowhere does he find what the devil had promised him in exchange for his soul: neither in making gold, in alchemy, or in his love for Gretchen, which was closely linked with passion, or in his journeys through the mythical realm of the spirits.

At the end of his life, Faust receives money to reclaim a piece of land on the sea by surrounding it with a dike. The price of changing the world into economically useful land is paid by the elderly couple, Philemon and Baucis, whose cottage is lovelessly sacrificed to the project of land reclamation.

But at the moment that Faust believes he has reached the goal of his desires, he is blind. What he hears is not the digging of the labourers for the reclamation of new land, but the digging of his own grave. The fact that Mephistopheles nevertheless does not get hold of Faust's soul, is related to the optimistic view of humanity of Goethe, who sees evil as the dynamic part of the power that realises what is good, or in Mephistopheles' words: '[It is a] part of the power that always wants what is evil, but always creates what is good', '[It is a] part of the darkness, from which the Light originates.'

should not only conclude: 'you are from this nature,' but also: 'you are from the aeons of this nature, and under the current conditions, the aeons actually determine your nature.'

WE CREATE OUR OWN GODS Therefore, we once again ask the question: 'What and who are these archons and aeons, as they are called in the gnostic teachings?' They are power principles and power concentrations, certain electromagnetic tensions and relationships that occur in this world. We give the following example: You find yourself on a wholly uninhabited and inhospitable island. There is no house, no clothing, no fire. You are only a biological being with a biological consciousness, who is for the first time aware that he exists. The world in which you exist is harsh, cold, hostile and immeasurably cruel. Therefore, self-maintenance develops, the struggle for life. You cannot avoid it: it is the fundamental law of nature.

On the basis of this fundamental law, the mental consciousness gradually begins to develop. It begins with the memory that records the negative results of the struggle for life, with the intention of developing the thinking on the basis of the experiences of the memory in order, with their help, to be able to turn the negative results of the struggle for life into positive results.

Every human being is busy working hard to achieve positive results in this nature and, on the basis of his biological needs, this is at this

moment, as you will now understand, first of all an activity of the brain. A person makes a mental plan, a plan for self-maintenance. When this mental conception has been accomplished and he time and again continues working on it, it will grow in his respiration field and will preoccupy him at a certain moment. Then he becomes obsessed by his plan.

Then an archon has been created, a nature god. According to a certain formula, the rays of a part of the electromagnetic field of nature are transformed into an individual electromagnetic principle, living in a microcosm. The individual nature god has been born!

When more people become involved in the plan for self-maintenance, together they create an enormous nature god. In this way, a large, transformed, electromagnetic field develops, the power of which is much stronger than that of the individual archons. With this stronger power, the plan of self-maintenance can now be partially realised. The nature god, the archon, is praised for this success and the construction is continued in three ways:

- a worship for the archon develops,
- religious art develops to support this worship,
- and science develops, because the initial results were only partial.

Therefore, people continue to exert themselves for the perfection of the plan. This shows how

Goethe explains the fact that Faust is ultimately saved by higher powers with the words: 'We will save him, who always exerts himself by striving.'

Binswanger's vision on this tragedy is fascinating. He focuses, amongst other things, on the scene of inventing and creating money, which occurs in the first act of *Faust II*, when the titular hero stays at the court of the German emperor. To provide the bankrupt emperor with new financial resources, the devil, Mephistopheles, has banknotes printed with the emperor's signature. The collateral is the wealth (raw materials) that can still, although not mined, be found in the soil of the empire. In this way, something without intrinsic value (paper) is turned into currency, into a stimulus for the economy. In Binswanger's words: 'The economy is the continuation of alchemy by other means.'

The recently reprinted book *Money and Magic* begins with the sentence that particularly *Faust II* 'is of a hardly understandable topicality', because in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Goethe anticipated that of which all of us are nowadays convinced, namely that the growth of the economy is the most important standard of the outward development of humanity. 'Particularly in times of credit crises,' Binswanger explains, 'Goethe's masterpiece is a key text.'

## Yet, is humanity able to act differently? Does everybody not maintain these archons and aeons?

the arts, the sciences and religion stem from the primary biological, human self-maintenance.

We may approach this discovery in two ways: as a believer or as a non-believer. However, these two points of view only refer to a difference in taste. You like one archon and someone else likes another. You only believe in yours and not in his.

**THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE ARCHONS** Due to the large amount of mental nourishment that they receive, the archons grow unbelievably fast. There is a law that everything that is equal is combined, even if there is mutual strife. The described electromagnetic conceptions will be combined on a higher level, if their vibrations are equal. The power principles are combined into power concentrations. In other words, the archons are combined into aeons. Aeons are clouds of archons with the same vibration.

And when we consider an archon a small-scale nature god, it will be clear that on a planetary level, an aeon must be a nature god on a universal scale, an intercosmic god.

In this way, you will be able to imagine how, from below upward and on the basis of the biological instincts, urges and needs of humanity, ultimately the whole universe, will be populated by mighty powers that will control all of nature through a counternature, provided a period of humanity lasts long enough.

A counternature? Yes, because all those archons

and aeons are proof of the tremendous distress and the fundamentally miserable state of humanity. Yet, is humanity able to act differently? Does everybody not maintain these archons and aeons?

We should now consider a solution for or a liberation from this problem. There are two solutions: a negative one and a positive one. In this nature, there are groups of very fundamental, electromagnetic radiations, which rotate and make themselves felt with a certain periodicity. By the awakening of the archons and aeons, these radiations and their influences are dispersed and pulled from their orbits.

In this way, the electromagnetic transformations generated by humanity, cause disharmony in our field of life. You know that this disharmony is unceasingly demonstrated and means an aggravation of life. The gods, created by humanity itself, offer their help, which is, however, not without drawbacks. You may be able to imagine that, as the fulfilment of the plans of humanity is always only partial, the culture of the archons and aeons continues, in fact, must continue. Due to this continued cultural development, the disharmony with the basic magnetic field will also increase. This will continue until a crisis, until a limit.

The fundamental magnetic field of this world is closely linked with the whole universe, and as this link is stronger than the whole coherent

cloud of the aeons, this will not, when the critical point approaches, result in a fading of the universal forces into the aeonic ones, but in the very opposite, in a great cleansing. Something like that already occurs in the universe.

The radiations and effects of the aeons created by humanity, besiege the basic field of nature by sustained culture. The result is that the power of the aeons is emptied. One results from the other. When the aeons are robbed of one third of their power, this means, amongst other things, that the earthly magnetic field becomes detached from its archons and aeons. Then they are no longer able to exert power nor are people able to exert power through them. You may perhaps think: 'That is fantastic!' But do you realise whether or not you have something else to replace it? When the work of the aeons is neutralised, humanity will return to the primordial beginning of dialectics, to the biological starting point.

The harmony of the fundamental powers in this universe will then be restored, the human being will be as before and the artificial culture will have been removed. The naked biological human being will remain; civilisation will be destroyed.

In the Pistis Sophia, spheres are also mentioned. These spheres of the archons and aeons are natural forces, but they cannot be explained on the basis of the nature of the universe, although they are created and activated with the help



of laws of this universe. We may consider the archons and aeons electromagnetic transformers, created by humanity. They force all magnetic streams of this nature to allow themselves to be transformed, channelled and changed by them.

Then an absolutely natural, periodic electromagnetic conflict develops in the universe. Once the power of the archons and aeons begins to extend beyond a certain limit, an intercosmic revolution develops to restore the disturbed equilibrium that is linked with all galactic systems. One of the results of such a conflict is that the archons and aeons are robbed of one third of their power, as this is called by the Pistis Sophia. This means that the link between

## ‘Your gold is not my gold’

In the arch-Faust, Faust is an alchemist. In the emerging economy, in which the creation of money plays a central role, Goethe saw a continuation of alchemy, although by different means. Printing banknotes has a certain magical character.

Binswanger says about it: ‘A characteristic of magic is that something happens easily, without any effort, very quickly and virtually unlimited. Think in this context of the magician, who in no time makes a seemingly unlimited number of pieces of cloth appear from his sleeve. Instead of making gold from lead, the modern economy makes money from paper. In the modern economy, this creation of paper money is creating value without a natural countervalue, without limitations.’

Goethe shows this through Mephistopheles, who inspires Faust to convince the emperor to have paper money with his signature printed (see box I). Mephistopheles, as part of the power ‘that always wants what is evil’, expects that this will ultimately lead to inflation and chaos. However, Faust uses the money to develop new land, thus stimulating the economy. In this way, he belies Mephistopheles’ expectation, ‘who always wants what is evil, but always [through him] creates what is good.’ Those who invest the newly created money, convert it into value, into reality. That is the alternative of inflation, and Faust’s dream can apparently continue. It is also a perfect mirror of our existence.

In Faust, the emperor grants the banks the privilege to issue banknotes, thus creating paper money. This still happens: nowadays, the banks have a state license to work with ‘money of account’. The state supports this to the extent that everyone can convert this

humanity and the archons and aeons is broken. A magnetic vibration, wholly foreign to humanity and of a totally different wavelength and tensile power, breaks the links that have existed for thousands of years between the magnetic systems of the brain and the auric being on the one hand and the nature gods on the other.

The result is that humanity is wholly detached from its mental creations, so that the ascending line of culture is turned into a descending line. The work of the aeons, that is, the culture of humanity, is then annulled and humanity returns to a primordial starting point. This is accompanied by a total loss of memory, because the whole web of magnetic points in the auric being and the personality evaporates, until the human being ultimately becomes the primordial human being of yore.

This continues to a biological minimum. The whole universe, our nature, has been cleansed of archons and aeons, and then, at a certain moment, a new cultural period will begin. The wheel begins to turn upward again to the top, and then turns downward again. How often would the human being, as microcosm, not have experienced this development?

THERE IS A WAY OUT You will understand that this return is an extremely dramatic development. A human being will go to a limit and then return to his starting point. In the process, he creates gods and while he creates and serves them, he is also busy preparing their death.

If we want to escape this tragic development, which we, as microcosms, have already undertaken so many times, we should turn to the other path: The path of the thirteenth aeon. The thirteenth aeon is the only one that is not robbed of its power during moments of crisis and the inevitable turning points in world history. In this way, the thirteenth aeon and all belonging to its system will be able to continue their development through culture.

THE ESSENCE OF THE THIRTEENTH AEON A certain part of humanity is responsible for the creation of this thirteenth aeon. To understand this, we may use the following example as a hypothesis: There is a person who, on the basis of a multitude of experiences, of suffering and sorrow, has had enough of his tears and grief.

He has discovered that all efforts in this nature are in vain. He has discovered that everything that is to come, has already existed during the past centuries. Therefore, he has tasted of this world and ascertained its true nature. Consequently, he correctly surmises that this cannot be the goal of human existence. He believes that a mistake underlies the all-manifestation as he knows it. Then he begins to work on a plan. He makes a mental conception of the liberation from this apparent nature of death. This plan implies the readiness to make any sacrifice for the fulfilment of the plan, even the sacrifice of his own life, of his own self.

fictitious money into cash, into legal tender. At a certain moment, Goethe makes Faust say: ‘I acquire dominion, property.’ Money of account becomes property, reality.

Man has made himself master of creation. At a certain moment, he also includes the control of the forces of nature in his dominion. Faust dreams of being able to use the power of ebb and flow as a permanent, unlimited and never-ending source of energy, because, he argues, once someone controls the forces of nature, he will be able to create ‘value’ without having to work for it; he will be able to live in this nature forever.

In his wager with Mephistopheles, Faust places time. He will lose ‘his time’, when he tastes ‘the sublime moment’. He thinks that Mephistopheles will never be able to satisfy him and that the moment will never arrive that will seduce him to say ‘Stay, you are so beautiful’. When he nevertheless seems to succeed, because he believes himself to be able to control the forces of nature, Faust forgets himself, experiencing his ‘sublime moment’ and indeed says: ‘Stay, you are so beautiful.’

The other side of this coin is that the control over nature leads to a disturbance of the environment. Goethe wanted to represent this by the expulsion of Philemon and Baucis from their idyllic existence on the beach, the symbol of the border with the higher world. We are inclined to see this as disturbing the natural equilibrium, but it actually concerns the original human nature: immortal, belonging to another world, in the garden of the gods, a field of spiritual and unsullied life, in which the forces of nature develop according to the lines of force of what is spiritual.

In alchemy, the philosopher's stone was the instrument to make gold from lead. In Faust, it is capital that functions as the philosopher's stone: the amount of 'dead' money is always increasing.

In a certain sense, he speaks about the dynamic aspect of the capitalist system, and therefore, about our nature. Our economy, just as our nature, does not have an end; we will never finish it; we will never achieve happiness, because it is contained in uninterrupted progress. However, this latter aspect is an illusion on the material plane. True progress is only possible on the level of the soul, in the form of the development of the consciousness.

Technological progress and the unrestrained use of raw materials needed for it, constitute a threat to humanity and in this way imply their own and our end. We are like Faust, who discovers that he had let nothing stand in his way to realise his economic project: eternal happiness in this nature. Investment bankers, too, considered themselves masters of the universe, a role with which they were unable to cope.

This resulted in the current financial crisis. We rather resemble the other hero of Goethe, the sorcerer's apprentice. We evoke forces that we are unable to control. Like Faust, we believe ourselves to have achieved sustainable economic growth and unceasing increase of material wealth. That is the thread of the human tragedy. But: your gold is not our gold, the true alchemists said.

What does this person therefore do? He creates an archon, not an archon to maintain nature, but an archon to escape from nature, to surpass nature. Moreover, he discovers people who are like him. They also seek the purpose of life. He makes them participants in his plan of salvation. They become involved in it and expand his archon. Inevitably, all such archons, developing wherever in the world, will at a certain moment merge into one aeon. The thirteenth aeon has been created, although still very feeble and of an earthly nature.

What will happen now? Obviously, the new aeon will physically interact with all the members of its community. The magnetic powers, transmuted by the plan, drive to culture, to action and therefore to results.

However, these results are not yet satisfying. What is the reason for this? The transmuted, electromagnetic tensions have not yet been withdrawn from the field of ordinary nature and can only lead to results that are typical of this field of nature.

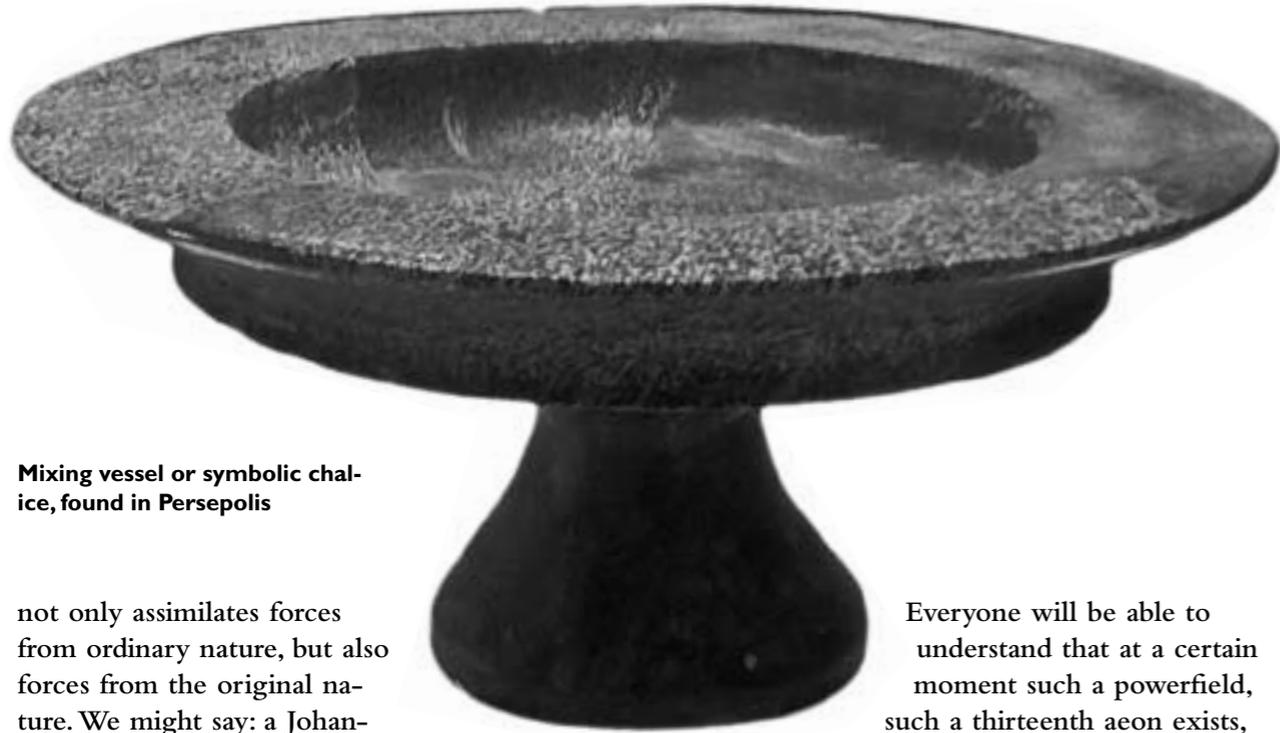
LONGING FOR SALVATION RESULTS FROM INSIGHT However, the community of the plan of salvation does not lose heart, but rather it presses on. Without changing the foundation of its philosophy, it makes corrections to its considerations, and due to its experiences, it deepens its philosophy on the basis of the experienced facts. After all, the moment will arrive when

He makes a plan that implies the readiness to make any sacrifice, even the sacrifice of his own life, of his own self



the community discovers that, if it is to succeed, the electromagnetic forces of this nature cannot be used as a working hypothesis. Consequently, while this community is looking up into the vastness of the universe, a mighty longing for another fundamental life power develops.

The first longing for salvation has developed from insight. From this first longing for salvation, the first direct, though still elementary, contact with the Gnosis, with the divine nature that cannot be explained from ordinary nature, has been born. Immediately, the thirteenth aeon



**Mixing vessel or symbolic chalice, found in Persepolis**

not only assimilates forces from ordinary nature, but also forces from the original nature. We might say: a Johannine aeon is born. A peculiar change occurs in the bodies of those who belong to this new community. The magnetic systems of auric being, head and heart tie in with this. It is a situation in which certain paths are physically, structurally and fundamentally made straight.

This development continues and this obviously occurs by leaps and bounds. Apparently, there is progress. A new joy irradiates the community, although I-centrality still plays tricks on it. Quite a lot is needed of ravaging, experience and new group unity, before the ego of the human personality is sidelined. However, through the sustained efforts of the community, the thirteenth aeon becomes ever more and ever better attuned to the divine magnetic circle. And simultaneously, it increasingly loses its earthly properties. In accordance with this culture, the thirteenth aeon exerts ever more influence on all who are attracted by its sphere.

Everyone will be able to understand that at a certain moment such a powerfield, such a thirteenth aeon exists, containing countless archons as well as a very large community, which are in the world but which, when it matters, are no longer of the world. Their electromagnetic quality and nature has become such that no longer anything earthly can be found in it.

Now it is also clear that, when the described moments of crisis arrive and all the archons and aeons are robbed of a third part of their power, the thirteenth aeon cannot be robbed of anything, because it does not transmute magnetic forces. It does not force ordinary nature. It is therefore left undisturbed, as well as all participants belonging to its sphere. Therefore, when in ordinary nature, a cultural period approaches its end, the cultural development of those belonging to the thirteenth aeon will continue and become ever stronger. For the rest of humanity, the wheel turns downward to the starting point,

This group does not leave humanity to its own devices, because it is not focused on its own salvation. This salvation has already been achieved!

and when a new day of manifestation begins and humanity laboriously approaches its cultural period again, the situation in the all-manifestation has nevertheless somewhat changed. This is because, during the previous day of manifestation, there was a large group belonging to the thirteenth aeon, a group of redeemed ones. This group does not leave humanity to its own devices, as it is not focused on its own salvation.

This salvation has already been achieved! Self-maintenance does not exist in it! This group is focused on those who are still of this nature. It sends out messengers, prophets and enlightened ones to call them. When these called ones then turn to the Johannine path on the basis of experience, they only have to link their community with this universal community, as the new link of a chain.

In the *Pistis Sophia*, it is said: 'If they invoke the mysteries of the magic of those who are in the thirteenth aeon they will accomplish them well and surely because I have not taken away power from that region.' ☸

Sources:  
**Hans-Christoph Binswanger,**  
*Money and Magic, A Critique of the Modern Economy in the Light of Goethe's Faust.* University of Chicago Press, 1994  
 This article is based on *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis and its call in the eternal now*, part I, chapter 17 and a fragment from *The Mysteries of the Pistis Sophia*, chapter 28



## Towers of silence

Lost in the sand of the wide desert of ancient Persia, these towers of silence can be found in many places. For thousands of years, worshippers of Ahura Mazda buried their dead here. In their view, they returned in this way the body, which was after all a gift from the elements, to the elements, and the Light to what is of the Light.

Himself being without beginning or end, Ahura Mazda formed the first invisible and intangible matter by the power of his thinking. This is the ideal form of all worlds that were to be born: it is the Deity himself. It is the garment of the Deity himself, and his original creatures were clothed in this garment, equally immovable and intangible.

This first matter lives, is living, thinking and feeling. From this first matter stem our world and from these sublime Light figures our humanity. The origin of the world and humanity are based on the fact that something spiritual is present in matter!

The mode of life of the followers of Zoroaster depends on three elements: correct thinking, correct speaking and correct acting. In this way, the human being is able to bridge the chasm between our world and the first matter.

# Voices of the Silence

Renova symposium fall 2009



# hermes trismegistus

*H.W. Longfellow*

Still through Egypt's desert places  
Flows the lordly Nile,  
From its banks the great stone faces  
Gaze with patient smile.  
Still the pyramids imperious  
Pierce the cloudless skies,  
And the Sphinx stares with mysterious,  
Solemn, stony eyes.

But where are the old Egyptian  
Demi-gods and kings?  
Nothing left but an inscription  
Graven on stones and rings.  
Where are Helios and Hephaestus,  
Gods of eldest eld?  
Where is Hermes Trismegistus,  
Who their secrets held?

Where are now the many hundred  
Thousand books he wrote?  
By the Thaumaturgists plundered,  
Lost in lands remote;  
In oblivion sunk forever,  
As when o'er the land  
Blows a storm-wind, in the river  
Sinks the scattered sand.

Something unsubstantial, ghostly,  
Seems this Theurgist,  
In deep meditation mostly  
Wrapped, as in a mist.  
Vague, phantasmal, and unreal  
To our thought he seems,  
Walking in a world ideal,  
In a land of dreams.

Was he one, or many, merging  
Name and fame in one,  
Like a stream, to which, converging  
Many streamlets run?  
Till, with gathered power proceeding,  
Ampler sweep it takes,  
Downward the sweet waters leading  
From unnumbered lakes.

By the Nile I see him wandering,  
Pausing now and then,  
On the mystic union pondering  
Between gods and men;  
Half believing, wholly feeling,  
With supreme delight,  
How the gods, themselves concealing,  
Lift men to their height.

Or in Thebes, the hundred-gated,  
In the thoroughfare  
Breathing, as if consecrated,  
A diviner air;  
And amid discordant noises,  
In the jostling throng,  
Hearing far, celestial voices  
Of Olympian song.

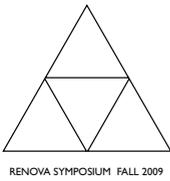
Who shall call his dreams fallacious?  
Who has searched or sought  
All the unexplored and spacious  
Universe of thought?  
Who, in his own skill confiding,  
Shall with rule and line  
Mark the border-land dividing  
Human and divine?

Trismegistus! three times greatest!  
How thy name sublime  
Has descended to this latest  
Progeny of time!  
Happy they whose written pages  
Perish with their lives,  
If amid the crumbling ages  
Still their name survives!

Thine, O priest of Egypt, lately  
Found I in the vast,  
Weed-encumbered sombre, stately,  
Grave-yard of the Past;  
And a presence moved before me  
On that gloomy shore,  
As a waft of wind, that o'er me  
Breathed, and was no more.

**From: *In the Harbor*, 1882**

<http://www.readbookonline.net/read/3050/12451/>



RENOVA SYMPOSIUM FALL 2009

# a life in the service of the word

The central theme of the fall symposium at Renova was ‘Voices of the Silence’. During this symposium, attention was also paid to George R S Mead, who 100 years ago, opened the Gnostic sources from the beginning of the Christian era. To the modern seeker of 2010, there expressive power is still very large, and we are glad to be able to present the addresses, given during this symposium, in this issue of the Pentagram.

Someone who writes essays about ‘The world soul’ at the age of twenty-nine and who, by the age of thirty, had published both a discourse about Orpheus as well as a translation of the Upanishads and a translation of Valentinus’ book the Pistis Sophia, translations that are still praised for their sensitivity and subtlety, may be said to have had a brilliant future ahead. However, the figure of whom we are speaking today, already had a history behind him at that age. History had placed him in the centre of the most spiritual environment of the century, and he would most certainly have wondered from time to time, how he had landed there.

George Robert Stowe Mead was an astute classicist, a young scholar and while Sanskrit was one of the languages he studied, he was eminently familiar with Greek and Latin. He was born in the south of England in 1862, and we may say from an early age, he had a ‘feel of gnosis’, a particular sense of pureness.

Born under the sign of Aries, he came with that fiery energy into contact with theosophy in 1883 by reading a recently published book about esoteric Buddhism, and a year later, he came into contact with HPB, as the group in London called Mrs. Blavatsky. As a twenty-two-year-old teacher, he spent every free holiday week and every summer with her. A few years later, he resigned from his job and became her personal secretary.

During those early years of theosophy, this great initiate, Mrs. Blavatsky, who was called the sphinx, entrusted the twenty-seven-year-old George Mead not only with the responsibility for all her correspondence, including the keys to her safe, but also with the editing of the magazine *Lucifer*, which at the time was the organ of the Theosophical Society. And once in a while, he had to roll her cigarettes.

To the older, seasoned board members of the society, who raised their eyebrows about it, Mrs. Blavatsky said: ‘Mind you; George Mead is the only true theosophist.’ In this way, they were rendered mute.

What is a theosophist? Nowadays, this name refers to a member of the Theosophical Society. However, the word ‘theosophia’ means ‘wisdom concerning God’ or ‘of God’. All who assembled under this name were seekers and were striving for divine inspiration and wisdom. The true members of the Theosophical Society loved this ‘wisdom concerning God’. Under the motto of universal brotherhood, their adage ‘tat tvam asi’ – ‘that is you’ – represented the unity with what is divine and with all living beings. They devoted themselves to the study of the Vedas and all other divine wisdom that, according to Blavatsky, consisted of six oriental systems and a western one: The gnosis. Preceding this somewhat orientally-oriented seeking of the Theosophical Society, there had also been, since the Enlightenment or rather

since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a large movement in Germany and Central Europe, which became known under the denominator theosophia. In 1710, for instance, Theosophia Practica was published, written by the famous Boehme editor, Johann Gichtel. People like Fichte in Berlin, Lopouchin in Moscow and Karl von Eckartshausen in Munich, were thinkers, renowned philosophers and authors writing about this enlightened theosophy.

This trace of Light, of directly experiencing God, was wholly outdated in matter-oriented, nineteenth-century science, and people resisted it as an adolescent would his parents. Without much ado, it was termed outdated and ridiculous and fanatically renounced. This approach was considered outrageous and scandalous by the religions and churches, regardless of whether they were Anglican, reformed or catholic: only the priest, the minister or the pastor could know what God meant.

Not so, according to George Mead. He took the trace further back, to the beginning of the Christian era, to a time when, as he established: ‘various theosophical brotherhoods were active: the brotherhoods of the gnosis, communities of striving and seeking people, which before, at the time of and after Jesus Christ professed the living religion of the redeeming Light. They were people who professed ‘theosophia’, and who wholeheartedly approached God’s wisdom. And all those people, he wrote in the book *The Mystery of the World*, have, without exception, experienced and sung about the ‘world soul’, and have tried to unite with it. After all, let’s be honest: about what else should they otherwise have had to speak? They glorified what truly is, and they did not worship its grosser and transient manifestations.’

What these people had in common, and what is important to us today, is that they, by their love for the Light and their mode of life, were able to experience God himself, the inner God, and indeed, to activate him. And this activity, this direct effect of the divine element in the

human being who had prepared himself, was referred to as ‘holy spirit’.

This is why we can nowadays understand the concept of ‘theosophia’ in a broader and more universal way, exactly as the former founders of the society of that name envisaged.

In this context, anyone who supports the idea of universal brotherhood and devotes himself to studying the relationship between the lofty divine and the human being may call himself a theosophist in the true sense of the word.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky called George Mead ‘the only true theosophist’ but not only as a witticism. Different than many members of the early Theosophical Society, he was interested in more than mere oriental wisdom; he considered it his mission to open the seventh stream of wisdom, the Gnostic one, and make it visible again. He was a very hard worker, but Blavatsky mainly gave him this title because of his mode of life. ‘In the great work’, Blavatsky wrote in her *Key to Theosophy*, ‘in the work of the liberation of the soul in the human being, there is no room for personalities’, no big egos can be used, but rather only people who are able to serve and make themselves subservient. George Mead was someone with such a high-minded mode of life.

Specialising in early-Christian literature and inspired by Blavatsky, he developed into an expert in the field of the hermetic teachings and the gnosis of antiquity. His works include studies of the spiritual principles of the Christian gnosis and of religion in the Greek-Roman world. He devoted all his energy to the study of Gnosticism, Hellenism, Judaism and Christianity.

Although he was similarly familiar with Buddhist ideas and published a translation of the Bhagavad Gita from Sanskrit, influenced by Blavatsky, he edited an English version of the Gnostic Gospel of the Pistis Sophia, the manuscript of which had been residing in the library

## Ever since, I suddenly no longer had a job, an income, a circle of friends, an outlet and readers

of the British Museum since 1785. He published this translation in 1890 as instalments in the magazine of the theosophists *Lucifer* (which Blavatsky had exclusively called as such to rub the Christian bourgeoisie the wrong way, and which, by the way, was mainly filled by articles written by Mead as its chief editor.)

Apart from the Pistis Sophia, for which a scholar like C G Jung personally travelled to London to thank Mead for his translation, the latter wrote a number of key works that would prove to be decisive for the development of western mysticism and the spiritual field of development of our time. The first one that appeared in 1900, was *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, the second one was *Thrice-greatest Hermes* that appeared in 1906.

Both works show the best that is to be found in this field; up to the present time, these books are quite readable, if you are not stopped by the slightly solemn English. The insights expressed 120 years ago, can still compete with later publications in the same field. They are devoted and skilfully written studies, one about the gnosis and the other one about the wisdom of Hermes. Mead demonstrated that this seventh stream of wisdom of the gnosis existed, and that, apart from many oriental sources that became available in his day, certainly western mystical sources could also be found. Thanks to his work of making the profound source texts available from the beginning of our era, fifty

years later J van Rijckenborgh was able to base his explanations relative to the path of the soul of Hermes' Arch- $\gamma$ -Gnosis as well as the Pistis Sophia on these texts.

As a right-minded supporter of the truth and a man of high ethical standing, George Mead was no longer able to reconcile the mode of life of some members who had joined the boards of the Theosophical Society, with his moral standards. Nor did he like the mumbo-jumbo with masters and occult phenomena. He considered all of this a big impediment to a spiritual quest.

This is why he did not comply with a request to become the president of the society, but devoted himself to his own studies, in which the writings about the gnosis from the first centuries of Christianity continued to play a major part. After a final incident, he was no longer able to accept the outward show, the self-imposed importance, and the spiritualistic and astral illusions and tricks used to impress people. In 1908, Mead left the Theosophical Society.

This was a very courageous deed, because ever since, he explained, 'Suddenly I no longer had a job, an income, a circle of friends, an outlet and readers.'

Along with him, another 700 members left. A year later, in 1909, George Mead and 150 friends founded The Quest Society, an organi-

sation devoted to comparative religious studies. The organisation based itself on objective, scientific facts, but was, above all, a society of seekers for the soul and the spirit.

Undoubtedly, George Mead in this way preserved the impulse of freedom that was under heavy pressure during the years after Blavatsky's death. It is the same impulse that Rudolf Steiner followed when he dissociated himself from the Theosophical Society in 1912 and continued autonomously with the Anthropological Society. Max Heindel, too, followed this impulse, when he left the society in 1906 and founded the Rosicrucian Fellowship. And also Krishnamurti's independent activities after 1929 can be explained by this impulse.

When George Mead left the Theosophical Society in 1909, he had already published the major part of his most important works about Greek-Egyptian spirituality. Since 1910, George Mead and his wife Laura, more in the background, published *The Quest* quarterly. In their society of the same name, they had meetings every other week, one week with the members, the other week to give lectures for interested people.

Mead wrote about it: 'There was no money. But there was something that was much better than money. There were numerous excellent articles and first-rate contributions – and all of them, labours of love. We were unable to afford to pay our workers even a penny. That is the true merit of *The Quest*; and as its editor, I am justly proud, even very proud, when I look at the list of my most valued co-workers, a list that could hardly be surpassed by any magazine that would have had to work with the same resources as we did.'

Indeed, in the magazine, *The Quest*, we see contributions by important authors, who understood that, under the mantle of secrecy and mysteries, 'the eternal wisdom' of the spiritual development of humanity actually lay hidden. Amongst those who contributed to *The Quest*

were Martin Buber (1878-1965), Gustav Meyrink (1868-1932), A E Waite, W B Yeats (1865-1939) and Gerhard Scholem (1897-1982). For eighteen years after Blavatsky's death, George Mead considered it not only a privilege, but also his task to keep the flame of an inner group burning in the context of the society, and he also continued to perform this task conscientiously in the Quest Society.

Between 1906 and 1908, he published the eleven volumes of his *Echoes from the Gnosis*. They present an overview of what happened around the Mediterranean during the first centuries of our era: amongst other things, the Hymn of Jesus, The gnostic crucifixion, the Hymns of Hermes, the Mysteries of Mithras and the Chaldaean Oracles appeared in them.

The life of Mead and his co-workers spanned a period that was characterised by a study of the most independent thinkers of the spiritual background of humanity. Simultaneously, there was a feverish seeking for the possible development of psyche and soul contained in them. This period extended from the world of ideas of Blavatsky to those of thinkers like Jung and musicians like Jaap van Zweden, who recently said in the TV program, *Summer Guests*, how his theosophical background had formed him. There have only been a very few pioneers such as G R S Mead who have had a special intuition for the gnosis – what Quispel called: 'feel of Gnosis' – and what modern Rosicrucians characterise as 'the opened rose of the heart'. He dedicated his life to the service of the liberation of the inner human being, the original spirit-soul human being. His sincerely seeking heart and his unshakeable conviction of the truth were confirmed by the 'knowledge of the gnosis'. His adage was: 'Know the Light, and befriend it.' ☺



**‘We are not yet capable of opening the eyes of our Spirit-Soul and of being absorbed by the contemplation of the imperishable and inconceivable beauty of The Good. You will only see it when you have learned not to talk about it, because the Gnosis of The Good is both divine silence and the stilling of all the senses.**

Twelfth book of Hermes  
Trismegistus, *The Key*,  
verses 13 and 14, with  
commentaries by J van  
Rijckenborgh

**He who has once found it, can no longer pay attention to anything else. He who has once beheld it, will no longer see anything else, nor can he listen to anything else, and even his body participates in this immobility. Where all physical perceptions and stimuli have vanished from his consciousness, he remains in tranquillity.’**

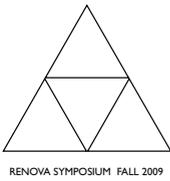
**The stilling of all the senses concerns at the same time partaking of the fathomless silence of the fundamental nature.**

**Then the Spirit-Soul, as Hermes calls it, wakes up and this Spirit-Soul, which is the unity of head and heart, experiences the intensity of an inner, immovable tranquillity. And in this silence, a fire is kindled in absolute mildness.**

**And the energy of this mild fire nourishes the whole physical system, so that the newborn silence, the inner peace, is reinforced.**

**In this way, our whole being is made ready for hearing the voices of the silence.**

Fayoem portraits belong to the heights of classical antiquity. They show a particularly artistic refinement, while they also achieve an individual expression that hardly occurred in antiquity. We may consider them the last and highest expressions of the consciousness of an era: shortly after, all these achievements seem to have been lost and the primitive art of the early Middle Ages presented itself, also in Egypt. In Greek-Roman times, sarcophagi and mummies in the region around El Fayoem in Egypt were adorned with these kinds of portraits of the deceased. The latter were always portrayed as they were during their lives, for which the artist ‘painted’ with a kind of pallet knife. This technique became known as ‘encaustic’, whereby hot bee’s wax was burned with natural pigments.



# echoes from the gnosis

There is an ancient tradition that says that there is a fascinating correspondence between the large and the small world. Have not all initiates always pointed out that every atom, of which our bodies are composed, have been 'borrowed' from the universe, and will also return to it? He who wants to become aware of it in any way; he who wants to penetrate it, will push all preconceived ideas aside. He will begin to look as a small boy or as a curious little girl, who does not know anything apart from having to be very perceptive and silent, if he wants to learn something.

And what does a modern scientist like Andrew Knoll, an astronomer at Harvard University, say? 'We are not separated from the universe,' he says, 'but by studying the universe we actually focus the mirror on ourselves. Science does not describe an objective universe somewhere out there and us here, as separated entities. We are part of this universe, elements that wholly behave according to the same laws that apply everywhere in the universe. Dust to dust and ashes to ashes; we are stardust, and we will be transformed to stardust.'<sup>1</sup>

What, then, is needed to be able to understand, to comprehend? The scientist says: 'It is difficult to know the truth; and if someone finds something that looks like what he was hoping for, he will have to check his methods twice as hard. The reason that a scientist has to study all those years, has to do projects and write

a doctoral thesis, is mainly because he has to learn to deal with himself, his methods and his expectations.

And what did the wise Ibn Tufayl (1105-1185), from the Spanish Al-Andalus, say almost 900 years ago:

'A lot of time is needed for finding the truth. We should not have anything else on our mind, and devote ourselves to its practice with our total interest. We found the truth, which we have ultimately penetrated, by diligently following the hints of the universal teachings. We have done so for so long, until we had a clear image of the truth, initially through research and theoretical contemplation, while, in a later stage, we have also been allowed to experience something of the blessed contemplation.'

And: 'If you are truly determined to do so and your decision to throw yourself into this task wholeheartedly is certain, you will praise your nocturnal journey in the morning; you will see your efforts rewarded, the Lord will have granted you satisfaction. I am [as your fellow traveller] at your disposal whenever you want, and to walk the path with you that will lead to the goal in the fastest way and that is best protected from accidents and dangers.'<sup>2</sup>

George Mead would have agreed with it wholeheartedly. He wrote in the first part of *Echoes from the Gnosis*:<sup>3</sup>

'For long I have been spending much of my time in a world of great beauty of thought and purity of feeling, created by the devotion and intelligence of one of the many theosophical fraternities of the ancient world. They called themselves disciples of Thrice-greatest Hermes, and sometimes spoke of their faith as the Religion of the Mind. They were prior to and contemporary with the origins and earliest centuries of Christianity, and they lived in Egypt.

What remains of their scriptures and what can be gleaned of their endeavour has been translated, in such fashion as I have been able to reproduce their thought and interpret it. The echoes of the Gnosis of Thrice-greatest Hermes are audible across the centuries for contemporary ears in fuller volume than before, and I hope in greater clarity.

It is no small thing – this Gnosis of ten-thousand-times-great Hermes, as he is also called in an ecstasy of enthusiasm, for it has as its foundation the Single Love of God. It endeavours to base itself upon the True Philosophy and Pure Science of Nature and of Man, and is indeed one of the fairest forms of the Gnosis. It is replete with Wisdom and Worship – the Religion of the Mind. It is in its beginning Religion, true devotion and piety and worship, based on the right activity and passivity of the Mind, and its end is the Gnosis of things-that-are and the Path of the Good that leads man unto God.'

And Mead continues:

'Do I claim too much for the Gnosis of Thrice-greatest Hermes?

I do but echo what He teaches (or rather His disciples).

The claim made is for the Gnosis, not for the forms of its expression used by its learners and hearers. All these forms of expression, the many sermons, or sacred discourses, of the disciples of this Way, are but means to lead men towards the Gnosis; they are not the Gnosis itself. All this however, is as a garment that hides the all-beautiful natural form and glory of the Truth.

What is of importance is that all these Theosophists of the Trismegistic tradition declare with one voice, a sweet voice, that carries with it conviction within, that there is Gnosis and Certitude, full and inexhaustible, no matter how the doubting mind, opinion, the counterfeit mind, may weave its magic of contrary appearances about us.'

The author explains that the cause of sham spirituality, and also doubt, is to be found in the fact that man has forgotten the idea of his two natures, and leaves the control of his life to the mortal figure. Mead explains: 'It is the little mind, the mind in man, the fate-procession, that creates external duality. The Great Mind knows that the without and the within

are twain in one, are self-conditioned complements, the one within the other and without the other at one and the same time.

In this Religion of the Mind there is no opposition of the heart and head. It is not a cult of intellect alone, it is not a cult of emotion alone. It is the Path of Devotion and Gnosis inseparably united, the true Sacred Marriage of Soul and Mind, of Life and Light, the ineffable union of God the Mother and God the Father in the Divine Man, the Logos, the Alone-Begotten of the Mystery of Mysteries.'

And he continues:

'Seeing, then, that I have now much in mind of this Religion of the Mind, I would set down a few thoughts thereon, an impression or two that the contemplation of the beautiful sermons of this Master-Mind has engraved upon my memory.

The body of man must be regarded as a holy temple, a shrine of the Divine, the most marvellous House of God that exists, fairer far than the fairest temple raised with hands. For this natural temple which the Divine has wrought, is a copy of the Great Image, the Temple of the Universe in which the Son of God, the Man, dwells.

Every atom of every group of atoms, every limb and joint and organ, is laid down according to the Divine Plan; the body is an image of the Great Seal, Heaven-and-Earth, male-female in one.

But how few know or even dream of the possibilities of this living temple of the Divine! We are sepulchres, for our bodies are half-atrophied, alive only to the things of Death, and dead to the things of Life.

The Gnosis of the Mind thus teaches us to let the Life flow into the dead channels of our corporeal nature, to invoke the Breath of God to enliven the substance of our frames, that

so the Divine Quickener may first bring to birth in us our other self, our long-lost spouse. And then we may ourselves with ungrudging love bring our true selves to birth, so becoming regenerate or reborn, the Perfect Triangle, body-soul-spirit, jewelled with all three sparks of perfected manhood.'

But in all of this, this very flexible author, who always demonstrated a great subtlety concerning matters of the soul, continued that we should never lose sight of the practice of living in our world and society.

'The Gnosis itself is not conditioned by space and time; it is we who are conditioned by these modes of manifestation. He who is reborn into the Gnosis passes from man into the state of true man and Christ, or Daimon and God, as a Hermes would have phrased it, or of Bodhisattva and Buddha.'

Then Mead reaches the core of his discourse:

'Indeed, if I believe rightly, the very essence of the Gnosis is the faith that man can transcend the limits of the duality and become a consciously divine being. The problem he has to solve is the problem of his day, the transcending of his present limitations. The way to do so is not, I venture to submit, by exalting his present-day knowledge in science or philosophy or religion at the expense of the little he can learn of the imperfect tradition of the science of the past, handed on to us by a series of ignorant and careless generations. This is a poor diet for one who would be Gnostic.

It is very true that, speaking generally, we do know more of physical observation, the theory of knowledge, and many other things in the domain of appearances; but do we know more of the Gnosis than the Gnostics of other days? I doubt it.

But to return to the Gnosis: Devotion is God-Gnosis. True Piety is 'nothing else than the Gnosis of God', as Lactantius, quoting Hermes,

## Be then not carried off by the fierce flood, but using the shore-current, you who can, make for Salvation's port, and, harbour there

phrases it. This piety leads unto 'the complete or all-perfect contemplation,' and embraces the 'learning of the things-that-are, the contemplating of their nature and the knowing God'; or, in other words, the 'being taught the nature of the all and the Supreme Vision'. And that Supreme Vision, if I understand aright, is no rapt into regions beyond the sky, but a Seeing of the necessarily existing Being, the Good in everything. For the Master of this Way teaches his disciple concerning the Gnosis of the Good, that is the Gnosis of God, saying:

For only then will you upon It gaze when you can say no word concerning It. For Gnosis of the Good is holy silence and a giving holiday to every sense. It is the gaining of the 'all sense,' the 'all-encompassing intelligence.'

For neither can he who perceives It, perceive aught else, nor he who gazes on It, gaze on aught else; nor hear aught else...

And shining then all round his mind, the gnosis shines through his whole soul, and draws it out of body, transforming all of him to essence.

For it is possible, my son, that a man's soul should be made like to God, even while it still is in a body, if it does contemplate the Beauty of the Good.

This is the 'deification' or 'apotheosis' of a man; he becomes like unto God, in that he becomes a God. The Beauty of the Good is the Cosmic Order; and the mode of meditation was that of self-realisation whereby the soul is brought into sympathy with the Cosmic Soul.

And so again, in warning the multitude against the 'fierce flood' of ignorance, the missionary of the Gnosis exhorts them, saying:

'Be then not carried off by the fierce flood, but using the shore-current, you who can, make for Salvation's port, and, harbouring there, seek for one to take you by the hand and lead you unto Gnosis' Gates.

Where shines clear Light, of every darkness clean, where not a single soul is drunk, but sober all they gaze with their hearts' eyes on Him who wants to be seen.

No ear can hear Him, nor can eye see Him, nor tongue speak of Him, but only mind and heart.

With these brief indications of the Gnosis of the Mind, drawn from a wealth of like noble teachings, we bring to an end the first volume of these 'Echoes from the Gnosis,' in the hope that there may be some who will turn to the fair originals, and read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them.' ❀

1. Natalie Angier, *The beautiful basics of science*. London, Faber & Faber, 2008
2. Abu Barkr Muhammed ibn Tufayl, *Hayy Ibn Yazqan. Een filosofische allegorie uit Moors Spanje*. (A philosophical allegory from Moorish Spain)
3. G R S Mead, *Echoes from the Gnosis*.

We seek it, but do not see it;  
we call it subtle, colourless.  
We listen to it, yet do not hear it;  
we call it rare, soundless.  
We feel for it, but do not touch it;  
we call it tenuous, serene.

These three concepts cannot be fathomed,  
they therefore merge into the Unity.

When the unity is above, it does not illuminate;  
when it is below, it does not obscure.

Infinitely spread out – and unnameable –  
the unity returns to not-being.

It is called form of what is formless,  
image of what is imageless,  
it is called vague, undefined.

He who approaches it, does not see what it casts ahead.  
He who follows it, does not see what it leaves behind.

Keeping to the Dao of the primordial past,  
he controls the life of the present  
and knows the origin of what is old.

This is called following the thread of Dao.

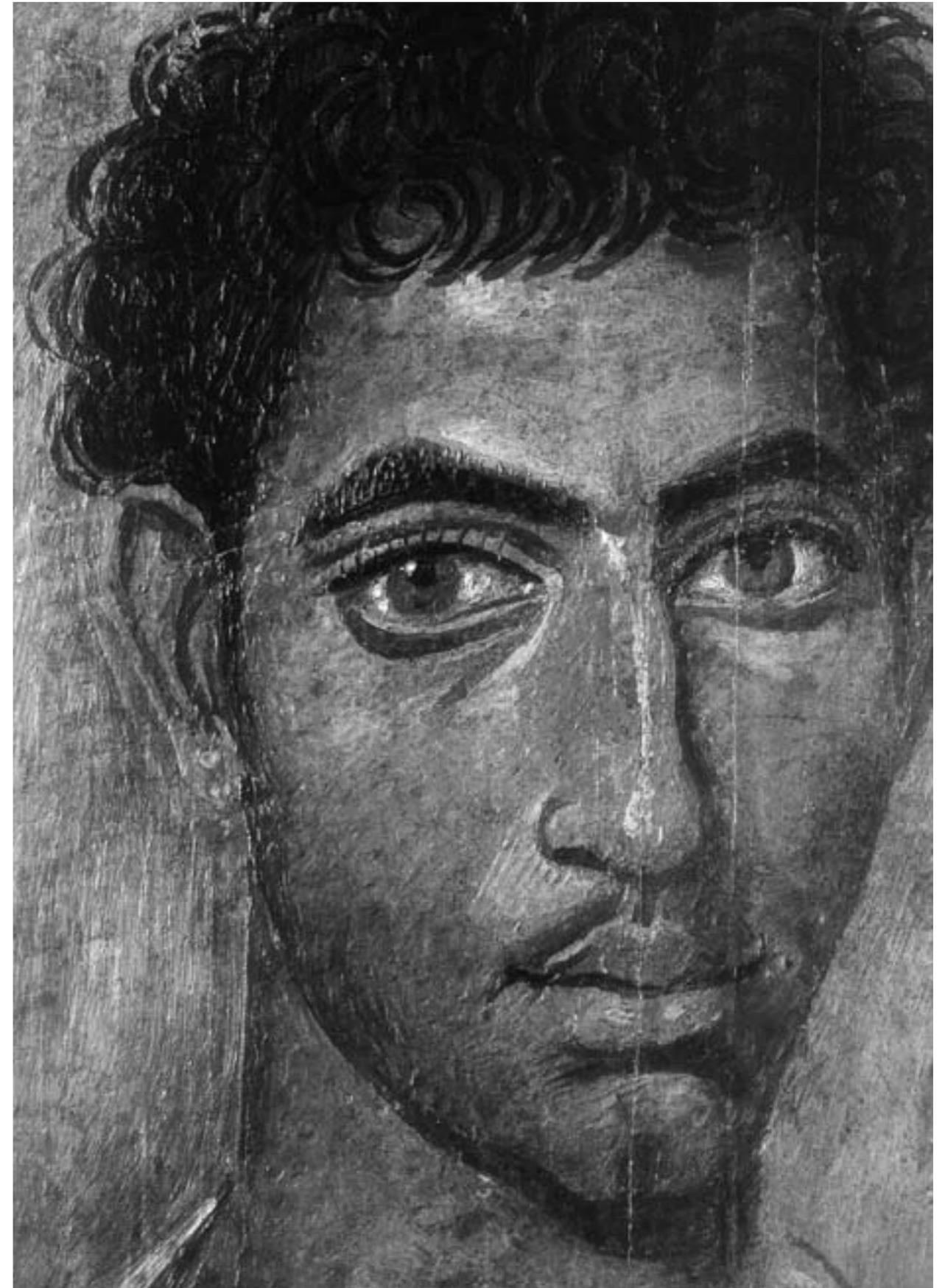
He who preserves this great image,  
the whole kingdom of the earth will flow towards him.  
Without suffering any damage,  
in rest and peace and serenity.

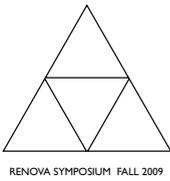
Music and delicious food  
will cause the sojourner to stop.

If Dao flows from the mouth, o how bland, how tasteless  
it is!

We look at it and do not see it;  
we listen to it and do not hear it;

We use it and it is inexhaustible.





# a few thoughts about ‘the voice of the silence’

In the year 1889, HPB wrote to her French friends: ‘My doctor wants me to take at least a fortnight’s rest. I need a change of environment.’ In the meantime, she had received an invitation to come to Fontainebleau, near Paris. The offer came from an American friend from Boston, Ida Candler, who lived there with her daughter. HPB stayed there for three weeks.

Shortly after she had arrived, she wrote two cheerful letters to her sister, Nadia, that the change did her a lot of good. Otherwise pushed in a wheelchair, she often walked ‘on my own not-borrowed legs!’ as she expressed it, between ‘enormous oak trees and Scotch pine, all of them with historical names. I simply lived in the forest for days.’

However, in esoteric history, the visit to Fontainebleau was remarkable not so much because HPB went there for a change of environment, but rather because she wrote the major part of *The Voice of the Silence* there. Perhaps the escape from the foggy, polluted London atmosphere contributed to her being able to write this valuable work.

Annie Besant mentioned HPB’s visit to Fontainebleau in her autobiography, in which she described the origin of *The Voice of the Silence*:

‘I was called away to Paris to attend [...] the great Labour Congress held there from July 15th to July 20th, and spent a day or two at Fontainebleau with Blavatsky, who had gone abroad for a few weeks’ rest. There I found her translating the wonderful fragments from ‘The Book of the Golden Precepts’, now so widely known under the name of *The Voice of the Silence*. She wrote it swiftly, without any material copy before her, and in the evening made me read it aloud to see if the ‘English was decent.’ Herbert Burrows was there, and Mrs. Candler, a staunch American Theosophist, and we sat

round HPB while I read. The translation was in perfect and beautiful English, flowing and musical; only a word or two could we find to alter, and she looked at us like a startled child, wondering at our praises – praises that any one with the literary sense would endorse if they read that exquisite prose poem.’<sup>1</sup>

Quite a lot has been written about *The Voice of the Silence*. The well-known scholar Dr. T. Suzuki, who had specialised in Zen-Buddhism, testified to the authenticity of this special work. He wrote about *The Voice of the Silence*: ‘Undoubtedly, Mrs. Blavatsky was to a certain extent initiated into the profound Mahayana teachings and then, as a theosophist, revealed what she considered suitable for the western world.’

And George Mead, the man to whom we already paid so much attention during this symposium, tells us that HPB invited him to read the manuscript of *The Voice*. He wrote: ‘I told her that this was the most impressive text in our theosophical literature; and contrary to my habit, I tried to express in words something of the enthusiasm that I felt. But HPB was not satisfied with her work and expressed her great worry that with her translation she had not succeeded to do justice to the original... This was one of her main character traits. She was never certain of her own literary work and cheerfully listened to any criticism, even from people who should have kept their mouths shut. Strangely enough, she was always most worried about her best

articles and works, and had most confidence in her polemic writings.’

*The Voice of the Silence* actually consists of three essays based on *The Book of the Golden Precepts* that was, however, unknown in the west. The first one is the title chapter, the second one is called *The Two Paths*, that of the eye and that of the heart, and the third one is *The Seven Portals*. Upon their publication, Blavatsky stated: ‘*The Book of the Golden Precepts* contains the wisdom that is compulsory in every school that wants to approach the universal life of the Spirit.’

When, after World War II, Jan van Rijckenborgh and his followers started over with the work of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, *The Voice of the Silence* was the first thing with which he confronted the consciousness of the striving pupils of that time. He said of this work: ‘*The Book of the Golden Precepts* is a book, the whole content of which was and is only revealed to the pupils of the serious inner schools. This is why the extract from it, *The Voice of the Silence*, could only be passed on to ‘the few’.

‘The few’ are those people who are prepared to do anything to approach the Light, the original kingdom, or the Gnosis, as we have already heard more than once during this day. They are the people who, in order to achieve this, are prepared to lose their ‘I’ in the service of the higher, divine human being, through the birth of the soul. We will now introduce you to the

particular beauty and the essence of *The Voice of the Silence*.

‘He who would hear the voice of *Nada*, the Soundless Sound, and comprehend it, he has to learn the nature of Dharana...’

Dharana is the absolute concentration of the soul on some inner subject; it is exclusively the higher directedness as meant by God, while everything that belongs to the external universe or to the world of the senses is wholly abandoned. The divine Other One can begin to speak in our life through the alchemical wedding, which is also the great mystery of the School of the Rosycross.

These precepts are exclusively for those to whom the dangers of the lower *iddhi* are foreign, in other words, they are meant for those who are willing to walk the path of the truly great ones, and who do not resist the stream of the divine intentions with rock-hard self-maintenance. When the learning human being has ceased assimilating the many things from the outer world of the senses, he will perceive the one. Then, as a mighty stream of light that cleaves the darkness of our earthly existence, an inner enlightenment will occur, of which mystical world literature speaks. Then the inner sound is heard that will wholly neutralise the outer one: the voice of *nada*, the soundless sound. Then the voice of the father will, in the heart, turn to the son, who is the Light, who was lost and was found again. Literally translated from Sanskrit, the title of this bril-



The road from Chailly to Fontainebleau. Painting by Claude Monet, 1864.  
H P Blavatsky wrote 'The Voice of the Silence' in the Bois de Fontainebleau

liant gem should be: 'The voice in the spiritual sound'. The very first chapter clearly summarises how a human being achieves knowledge and wisdom. He will pass through three halls to reach the 'valley of bliss': the hall of sorrow, the hall of learning and purification and thirdly, the hall of wisdom. At the time, J van Rijckenborgh devoted a number of conferences solely to this first chapter. A few lines may perhaps give us a good impression of the profundity of *The Voice of the Silence*.

'We, human beings, speak with each other and to each other by means of our time-spatial consciousness. However, if we, by dedicated striving and longing, succeed in liberating the soul, our own divine self will be able to resound in it again, and not until then can we speak of true thinking, that is, behold the purpose, the divine plan, and testify to it. Not until then can the human being be said to be one as to spirit, soul and body. Not until then will the path unfold for the disciple. *The Book of the Golden Precepts* now addresses the pupil's inner ear: 'If your

soul smiles while bathing in the Sunlight of thy Life; if your soul weeps inside her castle of illusion; if your soul struggles to break the silver thread that binds her to the Master; know, O Disciple, your Soul is of the earth.'

When the pupil stands on the path in this way, he will hear the voice of the silence for the first time. It is the voice of the inner God that speaks to him; the inner God, Krishna with the ancient Hindus, who was called 'Christos' by the early Gnostics. The voice of the Christos is the descending spirit which, through the soul, will be linked with the human being that has been generated in and through our nature! Nothing and no one will be able to do anything for a human being if this voice does not speak to him.

Therefore, the soul has a key position here. When the voice of the silence is heard, this voice will always act as a guide for the soul. And only when this guide is followed and obeyed, can the first dangerous stage be finished, because the voice speaks of a practise,

## If we allow ourselves to be dragged along by this continuous series of emotions, how would we then be able to be of eternity?

with which we are very familiar. For is it not true that there are many highs and lows in life in matter?

When a person is young, healthy and strong and is sailing with the wind, as it is called, and he is 'bathing in the sunlight of life', he sings in his body of matter – and who would begrudge him this? However, then a moment will arrive when he knows that he is caught in his castle of illusion. One moment, the human being wholly goes up into the noise of the world; the next moment, he listens to the roaring voice of the great delusion. And he is struck by hot tears of suffering, stunned by the many cries of distress and the tragic misery that force themselves on him. In this way, he has, at one moment, reason to approach life optimistically, while at the next moment, he is crushed due to the great terror. Who can deny this?

Then it is said in *The Voice of the Silence* that the inner voice of the Christos speaks to the person who is standing at the beginning of his path: 'Do not allow your soul to enter and go along with all these changing moods of the sensorial human being!' Do not become wholly absorbed by momentary joys or by momentary sorrow. If we allow ourselves to be dragged along by this continuous series of emotions, how would we be able to be of eternity?

Write in your heart: if your soul sways to the continuous stream of emotions and is struck by them from one moment to the next, it breaks

'the silver thread that binds her to the Master.' Then it is not possible for it to stand in the silence with him. Without being indifferent to the human development through the halls of learning and experience – for how would the soul be able to do so? – the soul should nevertheless liberate itself from any emotion of either joy or sorrow, always focused on the sublime link with the Light, with the Christos, well aware that in this way it, the soul, is best able to help forge the spirit, the soul and the body into a unity.

Then the word applies: 'But, O Disciple, unless the flesh is passive, head cool, the soul as firm and pure as flaming diamond, the radiance will not reach the chamber, its sunlight will not warm the heart, nor will the mystic sounds of the Akashic heights reach the ear.'

For when the soul is able to sing its new song within you, you will recognise in *The Voice of the Silence* the sounds and structure 'of the spiritual sound', a language that wells up from the one source of wisdom and life.

Look! You have become Light, you have become sound, you are your master and your god. You yourself are the object of your seeking: the unceasing voice that resounds through eternity, free from change, free from wrong behaviour, the seven sounds in one, the voice of the silence ☸

Annie Besant, *An Autobiography*.

<http://www.anandholap.net/Autobiography-AB.htm>

# ‘your god – my god’

To a Rosicrucian, a temple is like one ray of the great temple that is in the middle, one ray of the divine sun that embraces everything and everyone.

He who finds the Light in the temple, is able to elevate himself. Pulled up as if by the rays of the sun, he is able to perceive what is illuminated in his own being. Like the sun is the centre, the source of life, of all existence in the universe surrounding us, God is the source, from which all of this has been created. It is the Source that illuminates everything, through whom and from whom all things have come forth, and to whom everything must return.

LAO ZI, a Chinese philosopher, expressed this as follows:

*Through the One, the heaven is clear*

*Through the One, the earth is solid*

*Through the One, the spirits are luminous*

*Through the One, the ten thousand things have been created.*

Sooner or later, the moment will arrive in life, when we begin to think about reality and where it is to be found, about the existence of God and about our purpose as the creature man here on earth. Some people say that there is no other reality, that the world does not contain anything permanent, and consists, as far as we human beings are concerned, of fleeting experiences. What we see is the incidental product of a natural process. Others believe that the world has been created by a divine creator, who occupies himself with us human beings and who rewards and punishes.

Orthodox religion testifies to this. He who is unable to believe just like that, continues seeking for answers to questions like: Why is the earth a place filled with confusion? Why is there so much chaos instead of harmony, and why is there permanent suffering? Why is it that what is not divine is able to flourish everywhere?

Then the quest for Reality begins. When we look in the world around us, we see an enormous amount of forms: for example, horses, thousands of horses, all different, yet never-

theless of a fixed type, horse. Or a rose, or an oak leaf, available in enormous quantities, but always clearly recognisable as a rose or an oak leaf. Not two of them are identical, but the product is always according to one form, one type. This is the point of departure of our further contemplation, for here we see the one and the many. The problem is that the many can be examined extensively, because they are visible, but the one is never seen. Its existence can only be deduced from the many. Yet, paradoxically, the one is more real than the many.

EVERYTHING IS ‘GENESIS’ In the visible world of this nature, everything is continuously changing. Everything is being born or is dying or is moving somewhere in between. Nothing ever achieves perfection. Plato said: The phenomena of nature always ‘become’ and never ‘are’. The mysterious one. Our five senses tell us that the phenomena of nature are real, but the mind can argue that the one, which is continually creating and is always the same, may be called more real than its permanently changing products. Plato also wrote that all knowledge already exists in our innermost depths. We should turn from mental thinking to a higher form of thinking, called ‘reason’. Or, as gnostic philosophy teaches, we should learn to think with the heart.

The heart is always the centre, or the core of things. The same applies to the human heart. The heart is not only the motor of our life, but

## A DISCOURSE ABOUT THE UNITY AND THE MULTITUDE

it is also the source, in which we can find this most profound knowledge. The heart links us with the one, the mind brings us the many.

Master Eckhart, the German mystic, who lived between 1260 and approximately 1328, said:

‘God is everywhere and He is perfect everywhere. God alone moves in all things, in their essence... God is the innermost depth of each thing individually.’

And you undoubtedly know the familiar Sufi saying:

*God sleeps in the rock,  
dreams in the plant,  
moves in the animal,  
and awakens in the human being.*

WHO AM I? In our time, our knowledge of the multitude, of nature, is so vast that it may be called world-encompassing. With this knowledge, we may enter a new development, the development of a human being who discovers what an inner journey of discovery implies. He would then discover the true nature of his consciousness. From the multitude, he would seek the unity. Peter Russell, a contemporary scientist and thinker, has extensively investigated this and arrives at the following conclusions:

‘Trying to find our self is like shining a torch in a dark room, while you are looking for the light. Everything we find, are the different ob-

jects in the room, on which the light falls. It is the same as trying to look for the cause of all experiences. What I find, are the different ideas, images and feelings, on which my attention is focused. However, all of these are objects of experience and can, therefore, not be the cause of the experience.’

What is this ‘I’...? The conclusion of another thinker, Erwin Schrödinger, is that on closer inspection, you will discover that what you really mean by ‘I’, is the repository, in which experiences and memories are collected.

What does remain when the spirit becomes silent and when all thoughts, feelings, observations and memories, with which we usually identify, have ceased? Do we then approach the source, the nucleus, that which we really are? Mystics have sought in their inner being and discovered the true nature of the self. They stated that God is the essence of the self, the ‘I am’, without personal properties. ‘I am’ is also one of the Hebrew names of God, Yahweh.

Another word for God is the One. He who takes this One within himself as his point of departure, who has found God within himself, will receive a wholly new world view. When God is identified with the ordinary consciousness, this concept acquires a different meaning. We daily observe this around us in thinking, religion and experiencing God. This is where people think in terms of ‘your god’ and ‘my god’.



**The temple of Ephesus (see reconstruction above) was devoted to Artemis. She was the goddess of love and the personification of the moon. In the universal teachings, she is the symbol of the pure soul, the eternal virgin**

I-consciousness is the multitude. The I-person is continuously occupied with separating, dividing. He chooses this one as his friend and that one as his enemy. Often, yesterday's enemy is tomorrow's friend. And what one person rejects is accepted as good by another person.

Can two things simultaneously exist that are mutually exclusive? It is neither one nor the other. The human being goes so far in his separating and dividing into yes and no, good and bad, that he also attributes these foolish properties to his god. It is time to achieve insight, and to make your and my god merge into the One!

**A GOD-BEARING CLOUD** In *The Book of Mirdad*, Mikhail Naimy wrote the following about the creations of the human being and those of God:

'A crucible is the Word of God. What it creates, it melts and fuses into one, accepting none as worthy, rejecting none as worthless. Whereas a cribble is Man's word.

What it creates it sets at grips and blows.

Never be cribblers! For the Word of God is Life, and Life is a crucible, wherein all is made a oneness indivisible; all is at perfect equilibrium, and all is worthy of its author.

Never be cribblers, and you shall stand in statures so immense, so all-pervading and so all-embracing, that no cribbles can be found to contain you. Seek first the knowledge of The Word that you may know your own word.

For your word and God's are one except that yours is still in veils.'

## Never before have the possibilities to achieve new insight concerning these things been so great

The cribbles of the human being build the barriers and fences in the world.

Would he be unable to think and understand that his flesh and blood are not his alone, but that all these wonderful bodies have been constructed from the same elements?

That the earth, in which they dip their hands to cultivate, is the abode of all creatures populating it? That the light in the eyes of all is the same light, the life through which we see? That the lungs all breathe the same air? That the source in the heart was born from the same source? That the thoughts are shared in a sea of thoughts? That dreams are of all people? That they share joy and sorrow, and that it is the love of life itself, which makes every human being rise up again from the deepest misery...

Beware, therefore, of fences! You but fence in deception and fence out the truth. For, *The Book of Mirdad* continues: 'The Word, God, is the ocean; you the clouds. And is a cloud a cloud save for the ocean it contains? Yet foolish, indeed, is the cloud that would waste away its life striving to pin itself in space so as to keep its shape and its identity for ever. What would it reap of its so foolish striving, but disappointed hopes and bitter vanity? Except it lose itself, it cannot find itself.

A God-bearing cloud is Man. Save he be emptied of himself, he cannot find himself. Save you be lost forever in the Word, you cannot

understand the Word which is you – even your I. Ah, the joy of being lost!'

Never before have the possibilities to achieve new insight concerning these things been so great. We are free to choose, and are no longer bound to the spiritual tradition in which we were born. No, we have the whole spectrum of the wisdom of the world at our disposal. We learn about cultures, living at the other side of the world. We know the various traditions like Buddhism, Hinduism, the Sufis, the ancient Gnostics, the Hermetic wisdom, modern thinkers, former mystics... Has the longing for inner awakening ever been as great as it is now?

Magazines, movies and books about spirituality appear abundantly. Meditation and yoga, for all age groups and problems, seem to be a solution. Would this, if we were really to become aware of our true nature, finally signify a turn around?

Is the human being, used and formed as to his thinking in the multitude, able to turn around radically, so that what is spiritual, indeed God, is not cribbled by him and is not reduced to his own human standards by him? So that the well-known words no longer apply to him:

*In the Word was life,  
and the life was the light of men.  
The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it.*

## If a thing is simple, its way of action is necessarily simple and free from conflict

INSIGHT IS THE INDIVIDUAL NATURE OF THE SOUL In the writing *De Castigatione Animae* (The Admonition of the Soul), ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, we read:

‘I will describe your state, O Soul, for I have long been wondering of it. You say and profess that you would fain escape from misery and sorrow; but in reality, you seek after them and pursue them, and envy those who possess them. You say and profess that you desire happiness and joys, but in reality, you shun them and turn away from them, and refuse to set forth on the road that leads to them.

Such behaviour is in conflict with itself; it is such as can come only from a being that is not one and simple, but partakes of a mixture and combination of diverse elements. For if a thing is simple, its way of action is necessarily simple and free from conflict.

It is clear then that sense, being a composite thing, apprehends composite things; but intellect, being a simple and indivisible thing, apprehends simple and indivisible things. Mark then how thought, when it deals with composite, concrete things, abandons simple things and simple apprehension, which is apprehension of the real and the pleasure of true cognition.

But when it returns from them to simple things, and abandons things that are composite and mixed, then it apprehends things simple

and everlasting, and dismisses things that are composite and are bounded by limits of time.

This explanation makes it clear that the soul’s life is dependent on its departure from the physical world, and the soul’s death and lasting misery is effected by its abiding in the physical world. [...]

Seek O Soul, to win sure knowledge of things by learning to know their existence and their essence, but disregard their qualities and quantities. For the existence of a thing and its essence are simple, and there is nothing that intervenes between the soul and them; but the qualities and the quantities are composite, and are circumscribed by limits of space and time.

And know, O Soul, that it will not be possible for you, when you depart from this world, to take with you any knowledge of the world of composite things, as though such knowledge were separated from external things. Grasp then the knowledge of simple things and abandon knowledge of composite things.’ ❁