



ESSAYS
JULIUS EVOLA



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TRADITION

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THULE: THE MYSTERY OF PREHISTORIC ARCTIC

It is very characteristic that, within a whole group of very recent research on prehistory, ancient ideas are reappearing that until yesterday were considered pure myths.

One of these ideas refers to the legendary primordial land of the Hyperboreans. Having cast doubt on the supposed certainty that only ape-like humans lived in prehistory, researchers have approached the question of our origins with a new and open-minded perspective, even suspecting that the Stone Age was already witness to a true civilization of a higher, symbolic-spiritual type. Distinguished researchers have taken up this idea as a “working hypothesis.” for a grand synthesis, have now taken up that very idea. The primordial homeland of a highly civilized prehistoric white race, so much so that it was considered “divine” by the ancients, was said to be the Arctic, the North Pole, the fabulous Hyperborea.

The paradoxical appearance of this thesis disappears as soon as we remember what physics teaches us about the phenomena resulting from the so-called “precession of the equinoxes.” Due to the inclination of the Earth’s axis over time, there is a shift in climate on Earth. If coal has been found under the polar ice, this means that there were once forests and fires in that area. The Arctic region would not have frozen over until a later period. One of the names for *Asgard*, home of the “gods” and original homeland of the Nordic royal families according to Scandinavian traditions, is “green island” or “green land,” in modern German *Grünes-Land*, hence *Greenland*. But this land, as its name suggests, seems to have had lush vegetation until the time of the Goths and was not yet completely frozen. But there is more: in the Arctic ice region, recent expeditions by the Canadian Jenness, the Danes Rasmussen and Therkel, and the American Birket-Smith have made some truly remarkable archaeological

discoveries: deep beneath the ice, they have found remains of a civilization far more advanced than that of the Eskimos and even older, prehistoric layers. This civilization has been given the name of the *Thule* civilization.

Thule is the name given by the Greeks to a region or island in the far north, which is often confused with the lands of the Hyperboreans, from whence the sun god Apollo, i.e., the god of the Dorian-Achaean races who actually descended from the north to Greece, is said to have come. Plutarch says that in Thule, the nights lasted only two hours for about a month: this is precisely the “white night” of the northern countries. And if other Hellenic traditions call the northern sea the Cronide Sea, that is, the Sea of Kronos (Saturn), this is a significant indication, since Kronos was conceived as one of the gods of the Golden Age, that is, of the primordial age, the age before humanity.

Now, if we go to America, in the Aztec civilizations of Mexico we find such remarkable correspondences that they extend even to names. In fact, the ancient Mexicans called Tlapallan, Tullan, and even Tulla (the Greek Thule) their primordial homeland. And just as the Greek Thule was referred to the solar Apollo, so too is the Mexican Tulla considered the “House of the Sun.”

But let us compare these Mexican traditions with those of the Celts. If the distant ancestors of the Mexicans came to America from a Nordic-Atlantic land, Irish legends tell us of the “divine race” of the Tuatha de Danann, who came to Ireland from the West, from a mystical Atlantic or Nordic-Atlantic land called Avallon. These would therefore appear to be two forms of the same memory. The two civilizations would correspond to two radiations, one American and the other European, originating from a single center, a single vanished location (the myth of Atlantis), or rather frozen in time. But there is more, in the sense that, if we move into the field of modern positive investigation, we find elements that could very well agree with these legendary echoes. In fact, on the European Atlantic coast (especially in the

so-called Madéleines culture), there are clear traces of a real civilization and a type of humanity—the so-called Cro-Magnon man—which appears to be far more developed than the almost animalistic races of the so-called “glacial man” or “Mousterian” who inhabited Europe at the time. The fragments of this civilization that have come down to us are such that researchers say that Cro-Magnons could well be defined as the Hellenes of the Stone Age. Now, could this Cro-Magnon race, which appeared enigmatically in the Stone Age along the Atlantic coast among inferior and almost ape-like races, perhaps be the same as the Tuatha de Danann, the “divine race” that came from the mysterious North Atlantic land mentioned in the Irish legends? And could the myths about the struggles between the “divine races” and the races of “demons” or monsters be interpreted as fantastic echoes of the struggle that took place between those two races, between the Cro-Magnon men, “the Hellenes of the Stone Age,” and the animalistic “Mousterian” men?

Returning to traditional memories, it is not only the Greeks and Americans who remember a primordial Arctic homeland. According to the Iranian memories of the Avesta, the original and mystical homeland of the Aryans, conceived as the “first creation of the God of Light,”—the *aryanem vaêjô*—was a land in the far north, and indeed it is said that at one time winter lasted ten months of the year, just as in the Arctic regions. This is therefore a very precise memory of the freezing that occurred with the precession of the equinoxes in the northern regions: a memory that is also reflected in that of the “terrible Fimbul winter” that broke out at the end of a certain cycle, or “world,” in ancient Scandinavian traditions. But even in India there is mention of a luminous island or land located in the far north, the *çveta-dvîpa*, and a race from the far north, the *uttara-kura*; the same memory is found in Tibet, in the myth of the mystical northern city of Chandhala; in the Far East, Liezi refers to the tradition of the land located ‘at the far north of the northern sea’ and inhabited by “transcendent men,” and so one could continue with many

other references, so consistent that one wonders whether the presence of a common motif among peoples so different and distant from each other can be attributed solely to “chance.”

So much for traditional memories. These very ideas have now been taken up in a truly mammoth scientific investigation which, bringing together a complex set of results and special investigations—such as those of Frobenius, Herrmann, Karsts, etc.—has set out to force the issue of origins. We are referring to the work dedicated by the scientist Herman Wirth to the *Aurora of Humanity*. This is not a “theosophist” or an imaginative amateur, but a technician whose expertise in philology, anthropology, paleography, and related disciplines cannot be questioned.

In short, the results of Wirth’s research are as follows: in the most distant prehistory—around 20,000 BC—a large, unified white race with a sun cult, driven from the polar region by freezing conditions, migrated southwards to Europe and America, but above all to a land that has since disappeared, located in the North Atlantic. From this land, it subsequently moved, during the Paleolithic period, towards Europe and Africa, thus moving from west to east. It penetrated the Mediterranean basin, creating a cycle of closely related prehistoric civilizations, including the Egyptian, Etruscan-Sardinian, Pelasgian, etc., not to mention others that new waves would have founded in their advance across the continent until they reached the Caucasus and then beyond, to India and China itself. Thus, what was believed to be the ‘cradle of humanity’, the Pamir plateau, would be only one of the fairly recent centers of radiation of a much older race. The Aryan and Indo-European races, the ‘homo europaeus’ in general, would already be derived races and to a certain extent already mixed in comparison with older and purer strains, the ‘Hyperboreans’, to whom the memories, symbols and even prehistoric rock carvings relating to the ‘conquerors from large foreign vessels’, from the ‘axe’, the ‘sun’ and the ‘sun man with

raised arms'. A mysterious unity would thus bind together a group of great civilizations and ancient religions that flourished where, until yesterday, the animalistic cave man was supposed to have lived.

In a nutshell, this is the strange and evocative concept that, drawing on the world of myth, is now coming to light: the Arctic, the first homeland of humanity, or rather of civilization in the highest, "solar" sense.

And since symbol calls symbol, we will end by recalling this. Even in Roman times, the idea of the northern region as a mystical land, inhabited by the "father of the gods," by the deity of the first age or golden age, and the idea that the Arctic day, almost without night, was not unrelated to the eternal light that surrounds the immortals, such ideas were still so alive in Roman times that, according to the testimony of Eumanzio, Constantius Chlorus led an expedition to the north of Great Britain, confused with the legendary *Thule* itself, not so much out of a desire for military glory as to reach the land "closest to heaven" and almost to foresee the divine transfiguration that heroes and emperors were believed to undergo upon their death.

Now, these same regions, which would have seen the dawn of humanity, which would hold the mystery of a race of primordial white conquerors whose symbol, the axe, is also found in the Roman symbol of the fasces; these same Nordic-Arctic regions, from Iceland to Greenland to North America, are the same ones that yesterday the Italian wing flew over victoriously, in an undertaking that something fateful has therefore wanted to link enigmatically to places of primordial grandeur.¹

Il Corriere Padano (Ferrara), January 13, 1934.

Notes

1. The reference is either to the Atlantic cruise of the squadron of 25 seaplanes, led by the then Minister of Aeronautics Italo Balbo, which departed on July 1, 1933, and arrived in New York on the 19th, or, more likely, to the two flights over the South Pole in airships led by General Umberto Nobile in 1926 and 1928, respectively with the *Norge* and the *Italia*, the second of which ended tragically with the adventure of the *Tenda Rossa*.

INDO-EUROPEAN RELIGIOSITY

Introduction

The text presented below is particularly valuable in that Evola rejects the views of a friend of his, the young and talented Adriano Romualdi, who died tragically at an early age, and by extension those of Romualdi's teacher, the German thinker Hans Günther, an important researcher and proponent of biological racism.

What both authors maintain is adherence to a common heritage of Europeans that transcends particular nationalisms, which they call Indo-European, and they provide us with a series of characteristics that, according to them, are specific to this race. Evola, while agreeing with much of the value attributed to these characteristics, makes it clear in this text that he is not racist and that such values, while they may have manifested themselves (even better than in other cases) among these peoples, are not exclusive to any particular race but are part of the heritage of humanity as a whole. In other words, he does not believe in the existence of superior races and considers that the phenomenon of decadence is not racial in nature, as the product of certain forms of miscegenation, but rather forms part of the misuse that certain communities may have made of their freedom.

Secondly, he considers that the term race only has positive value because of its selective nature within any community, representing that condition peculiar to certain elites who naturally possess certain values that others must acquire through long learning. It is not, therefore, a category specific and common to a particular people, in this case the Indo-European, but something that appears in an excellent and paradigmatic form only in some.

The third value of this text is Evola's rejection of the idea of Indo-Europeanism conceived as a doctrinal foundation to be used by the peoples that make up a particular community of nations, which today has come to be called the European Union. Evola scorns such a possibility and considers that it is not a racial ideal of superiority that can give unity to his continent, but rather the complete rejection of the democratic ideal, even conceived in racist form, so that true men of race, the elites, are the ones who effectively govern. Today, the breakdown of European unity and the imminent collapse of the monetary system on which it is based are proving him right in his skepticism, expressed 41 years ago, regarding the ideal of Europe, which was also held at the time by Indo-Europeanists.

* * *

In the previous period, the movement in power in Central Europe upheld the just demand that a political struggle cannot be complete if it is not based on a worldview. The term that was to become a stereotype, *Weltanschauung*, meant the general attitude that man should assume not only towards the world and life, but also in relation to ethical and spiritual values, in such a way as to encompass in a certain way the same religious problems. And to carry out this struggle on a higher plane, it was thought that the best formula was a return to the origins, that is, a return to the ideas and ways of feeling that were known before the factors that shaped the latest civilization and led it toward Spengler's (spiritual) "decline" of the West manifested their full power.

Often, however, this orientation took on a 'racist' aspect. There was talk of 'Aryanism', of Nordic-Germanic heritage, and of similar things. The danger of a narrowing of horizons due to racism, as well as to a unilateral and biased use of ideas for purely Germanic purposes, became abundantly clear. This is evident in a book that was widely read in the Third Reich, *The Myth of the*

Twentieth Century by Alfred Rosenberg, which was essentially a compilation based on highly heterogeneous third-hand materials. We have fewer reservations, however, about the research of a specialist, Professor Hans Günther, author of numerous works on ancient races and civilizations, including those of Greece and Rome. Worth mentioning is an essay in which he attempted to define the fundamental worldview and religiousness of the Indo-European peoples, remaining detached from political contingencies. This essay was republished (in a sixth edition) even after the war and has now appeared in Italian translation by Adriano Romualdi and Carlo Minutoli. The original title of the work was *Frömmigkeit nordischer Artung*, meaning ‘Nordic religiosity’; the Italian title, however, is *Religiosità indoeuropea*, a modification that we consider appropriate and which allows us to avoid the various reservations that would have to be made about the author’s thesis due to the use of the term ‘Nordic’. ‘Indo-European’ is a much broader concept in that it encompasses different lineages and civilizations belonging to the white race, including its Asian manifestations (the Indo-Europeans of Iran, India, etc.), which are also taken into consideration by Günther, even if we are left with the inconvenience of the thesis that the original core of all these civilizations was of “Nordic” origin. Even granting that this term must be understood here in a particular way, with reference to migrations of primordial peoples, so as not to apply merely to the Nordic-Scandinavian or Germanic-Northern populations of more recent times, there cannot be any doubt that there are some misunderstandings in this regard.

These may be partly due to the extensive “Essay on the Indo-European Problem” by Adriano Romualdi, which appears as an introduction to Günther’s text and is more than twice as long. It is a very serious monograph, with extensive and varied documentation that takes up everything that has been said about Indo-European origins based on philological, anthropological, ethnic, historical, and cultural research, while maintaining the Nordic thesis with a notable racist accent.

Regardless of this, however, we believe it is appropriate to stick to the proper meaning of the term ‘Indo-European’, which is not unrelated to what prompted the current Italian translation of Günther’s essay. This refers to the attitude of reviving the demand for a ‘struggle for world conception’ in a framework that is no longer Germanic-National Socialist, but European. Romualdi writes on this subject (p. 6):

“All of us, and in particular we, the new generation, feel that we are at a historical crossroads. The old national perspectives, as we were educated, are crumbling around us everywhere. The self-sufficiency of the Italian, French, or German homeland, and with it the particular Italian, French, or German interpretation of history, does not exist and must no longer exist. Nationalists without a nation, traditionalists without tradition, we all seek to recognize ourselves in a broader homeland and tradition.”

In this regard, the Indo-European idea is once again proposed, either as a myth of common origins or as an idea capable of giving meaning to a European or Western unity that is not reduced to a shapeless conglomerate. But it is precisely for this reason that the connotation ‘Nordic’, despite any precision that may be made, appears to be ambiguous. Since the majority cannot be linked to any concrete reference, it is even obvious that it is precisely the Nordic European peoples (unfortunately including the Germans themselves at this point) who are currently the last to feel such demands and to embody this type of worldview.

But at this point, it is necessary to say something about Günther’s essay. In general, it should be emphasized that it would have been appropriate to stick primarily to a morphological consideration, reducing racial factors to a minimum, i.e., defining only a certain form of values and ways of feeling and behaving, presenting it above all as an “ideal.” Indeed, a well-founded methodological objection could be raised against Günther, emphasizing how he often moves in a vicious circle. He

acknowledges that the sources of his research cannot be constituted by material provided by the Nordic peoples in the strict sense, since even ancient Germanic conceptions have been altered by foreign, Celtic, and 'Druidic' influences, and even the quintessential Nordic mythology, that of the Edda, would be of very little use as a true document of the Nordic spirit. Günther considers as better sources those that can be gathered from the ancient Hellenic, Roman, Iranian, and partly also Hindu worlds, within which he nevertheless operates a certain discrimination: he isolates certain elements from others that are present but cannot be referred to an idea that is fundamentally preconceived in an *a priori* form as 'Nordic' (or 'Aryan' or 'Indo-European'), referring them to foreign influences, racial alterations produced by crossbreeding, etc.: a procedure equivalent to what in logic is defined as begging the question. Such an objection would lose some of its force if it were an essentially 'morphological' approach. Günther's references therefore refer essentially to 'elites', and here it is worth noting that it is in the elites that the values of the original race, bearer of a superior worldview, would have been preserved. This is how Günther puts it (p. 116):

"In truth, much of what is described to us as part of the Indo-European religion is nothing more than the expression of lower castes who had learned to express themselves in the Indo-European language,"

which is a sign of the aforementioned procedure of discriminating *a priori*. There is therefore no doubt that the author has idealized and generalized greatly, remaining silent about everything that did not conform to his thesis.

As for the characteristics that, according to Günther, are not Indo-European, we find the conception of a transcendent God whom one approaches servilely and out of fear, as well as the conception of man as a mere "creature."

“Since he is not the servant of a sovereign God, the Indo-European does not pray prostrate on his knees, but standing, with his eyes toward heaven and his arms outstretched.” (pg. 122)

He has a feeling of connection and familiarity with the divine, with the ‘gods’. For him, the world is not ‘created’, but eternal, ‘without beginning’ and without end. He does not know a dualism between ‘this world’ and ‘the other world’, at least not the dualism through which the former is devalued in relation to the latter and only the latter concentrates the spirit. Partly as a consequence, there is not even a sense of contrast “between the perishable body and the immortal soul, between the flesh and the spirit.” He would therefore lack ‘redemption’, as well as sin, salvation through the work of a ‘Savior’ and not as a “self-redemption of the soul that purifies itself and immerses itself in the depths of its own being” (such would be the orientation of Indo-European mysticism), as that overcoming of the passions in which the path of early Buddhism and also of Stoicism consisted. As for ‘sin’, in the Indo-European way of thinking, the concept of ‘guilt’ is replaced by that of responsibility, which a ‘noble soul’ is capable of assuming.

For the Indo-European, the world would have been conceived as order and as *kosmos*, as a whole formed by a higher ratio. But this characteristic does not seem to us to agree very well with the other one, also indicated by Günther, relating to an ‘agonistic’ conception: the world as an arena of permanent struggle, in accordance with the ‘hereditary and congenital vocation for combat’ on the part of the Aryan or Indo-European. Indeed, this second conception clearly presupposes a dualism, not the existence of a universal rational order, but also the presence of something antithetical to it, the *kosmos*, against which to fight. Greater reservations are then imposed by the idea, which we believe to be erroneous, that the Indo-Europeans

“always had an inclination to see in the force of Destiny something superior to the gods themselves, especially the Hindus, the Hellenes, and the Germans” (p. 129).

We do not see how such an idea can be founded, which, in any case has prevailed in areas not considered strictly Indo-European (such as in the late Etruscan and Pelasgian civilizations, which were non-Hellenic, and Bachofen was able to show the Pelasgian, non-Hellenic origin of what Günther would call ‘non-Nordic’ in ancient Greece, which resented that dark fatalistic idea). Günther, on the other hand, preserves it because it serves to indicate, as a further characteristic of Indo-European man, the acceptance of destiny or remaining unshaken in the face of it:

“proud fierceness with which one accepts the Destiny that befalls one’s own existence, which one faces standing upright, thus remaining true to oneself” (pg. 131).

For the rest, Günther seriously undermines the heritage of Indo-European spirituality by denying and ignoring what we might call the “dimension of transcendence” in the human order no less than in the divine (where Destiny reigns and not supreme freedom), without taking into account, *a priori*, multiple and unambiguous testimonies to the contrary. Fortunately, Günther has not insisted on an earlier thesis, according to which the “Nordic” Indo-Europeans only when they emigrated to Asia and found the climate and environment unbearable were determined to reverse their original impulse of “affirmation of life” for one that was fundamentally alien to their race (*artfremd*), that of freeing themselves from life, now understood as “pain.” In fact, a fundamental Indo-European ideal has been that of the ‘Great Liberation’, of the conquest of the Unconditioned (for example in early Buddhism), of the departure from the ‘cycle of generation’ (in Hellas).

This has been the case because certain ‘racist’ concerns have prevailed in Günther, which, despite everything we have just mentioned, have inevitably given his interpretations a naturalistic

character. Thus, for example, he denies the fact that in the Indo-Aryan tradition the “way of the gods” (*deva-yana*), which leads to the Unconditioned, was contrasted with the “way of the fathers” (*pitri-yana*), which is that of those whose destiny is to perpetuate themselves in the life of their lineage here below.

This is where the consequences of the presumed inseparability of body and soul make themselves felt, ultimately restricting any higher conception of immortality. Ultimately, Günther ends up reducing spiritual horizons to an ‘immanent immortality’ (ephemeral), which consists of perpetuation and continuity in the lineage and race to which a subject always belongs, which “in the order of generations perpetually produces life” (p. 147). Although he attempts to mitigate this, Günther ends up seeing pantheism, which implies a denial of all true transcendence, as a fundamental feature of ‘Aryan’ religiosity (we find in him the expression ‘inspired naturalistic pantheism’), which amounts to arbitrarily degrading it, as well as upholding a suspicious ‘cult of life’ as its counterpart. It is important to bear in mind that a sacralizing conception of the world, which was characteristic of the origins and must be said to be traditional in a general sense, should not be confused with “pantheism” and should in no way be upheld as a prerogative solely of the “Aryan” or Indo-European peoples.

It is in the field of ethics that Günther’s characterizations are most convincing. He speaks of the ideals of firmness and greatness of spirit, of a natural self-control, of an equally natural sense of distance and non-promiscuity, of distrust of any abandonment of the soul and therefore of disorderly, yearning mysticism. In addition, there is a sense of honor, a disposition toward fidelity and loyalty, a sense of proportion, conscious dignity, and humanitas in the classical sense, a love of truth, and a repugnance for all lies. Freedom is an ideal, but in the perspective indicated by Goethe’s saying:

“Everything that frees our spirit without raising us to greater mastery over ourselves corrupts us.”

The ethics articulated in such values would be ‘natural’ to Günther in Indo-Europeans, not linked to external precepts (just as Indo-European religiosity would be ‘natural’ and not determined by ‘revelations’).

This can only be agreed with in part, but with reference to a non-racist conception of race. Being ‘of a race’ in a higher sense finds it natural to act and behave in a certain way, without external references. But here we are not talking about something that is specific to the Indo-European ‘race’. Such natural ethical qualities of the ‘man of race’, to give an example, are also present among other peoples (it suffices to refer to the traditional nobility of Japan), and the mention of the ‘traditional’ is not something extrinsic; in this respect, one can also consider that which becomes congenital on the basis of a rigorous tradition. As for ‘nobility’, let us note in passing that it is quite curious that Günther frequently speaks of the spirit and noble ethics of a ‘peasant aristocracy’ (in any case, one would have to speak of a feudal aristocracy). Here we seem to perceive the echo of a ‘racial’ slogan of Hitlerism, ‘blood and soil’, by which, in the name of a certain ‘rootedness’ and a certain politics, the previous myth of the original Aryan races as emigrant hunters and conquerors eager for great distances and distant horizons was liquidated.

We have already mentioned that in order to isolate the “Nordic” elements, Günther had to systematically blame postulated racial contamination due to crossbreeding and denaturing exogenous influences for everything in Indo-European societies that, even if present in fact, did not correspond to the same values and behaviors. Once again, this betrays the underlying biological racism, which takes very little account of the fact that mixing is not the only factor of alteration, since processes of involution, decadence, and collapse are possible even in the context of maintaining sufficient original blood integrity. We noted at the outset that precisely the current, mostly “Nordic” peoples, who have remained more Nordic than the others, are particularly insensitive to the “Nordic” ideals as

defined by Günther. In the historical context, it suffices to recall this example. Günther considers the spirit of the Protestant Reformation to be foreign to the 'Aryan' line because of its exaggeration of the concepts of sin and the irredeemably corrupt nature of man, of trusting in faith alone, of the need for grace freely granted by God, and of human servitude (*servus arbitrium* - Luther). Well, the Reformation took root above all among the Germanic and Nordic peoples, while the peoples further south or west, who are considered to have been more altered by interbreeding, remained resistant to it.

Towards the end of his essay (p. 172), Günther writes:

“With the 20th century, the Indo-Europeans began to fade from the world of spirituality and history. Today, everything in the music, art, and literature (one should add: morality and the prevailing political forms) of the 'free West' that is considered particularly 'progressive' no longer reflects an Indo-European spirituality.”

This seems fair to us, but only if we are able, as we said, to define what is Indo-European in essentially morphological and general terms, without strict ethnic-racial references. As for the overall capacity of 'Indo-European' values (also with the aim of overcoming alterations, unilateralities, or obvious idealizations of the type mentioned above) to operate as a new Western supranational solidarity and unity, given the current times we are living in, we are extremely skeptical, contrary to what Romualdi says: we do not believe at all that any suitable ground for resonance and crystallization can be envisioned.

Moreover, a similar sentiment seems to be expressed by Günther himself in the preface to the latest edition of his interesting essay (pp. 105-106), when he refers to “our times, in the era of the decline of the West, Spengler says: ‘Even if what remains in the Western European world were to perish due to the lack of true Indo-Europeans of race, that is, of true Westerners, there would still remain a feeling rooted in the traditional Indo-

European spirituality, that feeling which was already present in the last Romans, *Romanorum ultimi*, in an empire that was no longer 'Roman' the feeling of unbreakable character in the face of destiny... for which Horace already exhorted: *Quocirca vivite fortes,—fortiaque adversis opponite pectora rebus!*"

Such an attitude, which can only be adopted by a few and perhaps be modulated mainly in the sense of detached impassivity, seems to us more realistic than any optimism with a 'nostalgic' background (in the negative sense given to this term in relation to a certain aspect of certain Italian political orientations), with the corresponding new evocation of Nordic origins.

Il Conciliatore, August 1970.

THE TREE, THE SERPENT, AND THE TITANS

One of the most varied symbols of tradition, both in terms of time and space, is the Tree. Metaphysically, the Tree symbolizes the universal force that creates manifestation, just as the energy of a plant, manifested in its trunk, branches, leaves, and fruit, originates from its hidden root system. Moreover, in a higher context, the tree is associated on the one hand with the idea of immortality and supernatural knowledge, and on the other hand with the representatives of fatal and destructive forces, such as dragons, snakes, and demons. In addition, there is a whole group of myths in which dramatic events surround the Tree, and behind their allegories lie very deep meanings. Among these, the story ending with Adam's "fall into sin" is widely known. Now that we have touched upon the general nature of the symbolic elements, we can return to the larger whole of which they are only a part, in order to identify the various forms in which these ideas can take shape.

Already in the Vedas and the Upanishads we encounter the "World Tree," which is sometimes depicted upside down, expressing that the source of its power is "above," in "heaven." ¹ Since the drink of immortality (*soma* or *amṛta*) is an extract of the Tree, and since even approaching it has an inspiring effect and results in a vision that transcends time and resembles a synoptic memory of the inexhaustible forms of existence, and since Yama, the god of the underworld (who was also considered the king of the primordial state), lives in the thick branches of the tree²—we immediately encounter the combination of the above-mentioned elements and ideas. We also find all this in Iran, in the tradition of the two trees: one, according to the Bundahes, contains all seeds; the other hides the drink of immortality (*haoma*) and spiritual knowledge.³ This immediately brings to mind the two trees of paradise in the Bible: one is the tree of life, the other the tree of knowledge. The first is equivalent to what in Matthew's

Gospel (XIII. 31–32) is likened to the kingdom of heaven, which springs from the seed that man has sown in his own symbolic “field,” and then reappears in St. John’s Apocalypse and, above all, in the Kabbalah, where the “mighty and powerful Tree of Life,” from which “Life from above” flows, is covered with a “dew” that has the power to resurrect the “dead”; that is, all this corresponds to the immortalizing power of the Vedic *amṛta* and the Iranian *haoma*.⁴

Assyrian-Babylonian mythology also knew a “Cosmic Tree” that stood in Eridu, the “house of the deep,” or, in other words, the “house of knowledge.” However, in these traditions, we would like to draw attention above all to the various connections between symbols, as this will be of great help to us in the following: the Tree can also be understood as the personification of a goddess, as the prototype of the great Asian goddesses—Ishtar, Anat, Tammuz, Cybele. Here we find the idea of the female aspect of universal power, which is represented by the Tree. This principle is reinforced not only by the myth of the goddess to whom the oak tree was sacred at Dodona (which, as a place of divination, also represents the principle of spiritual knowledge) but also by the Hesperides, who are the guardians of the tree whose fruit has a symbolic value similar to that of the “Golden Fleece” and is just as capable of granting immortality as the tree of the Irish Meg Mell, where the female presence is also noticeable. In the Edda, the goddess Idun guards the apple of immortality, Yggdrasil, and in the case of the cosmic tree, we again encounter the central symbol: this is the Tree that hides the source of all wisdom, at the roots of which the symbolic dragon can also be found.⁵ Finally, according to a Slavic legend, there is an oak tree on the island of Budzsán guarded by a dragon (this dragon is, on the one hand, the equivalent of the biblical serpent and, on the other hand, one of the monsters attacked by Jason in the garden of the Hesperides), which is also the home of the female principle called “Dawn Virgin.”

There is another interesting variation on the meaning of the Tree: as a dominion, or universal Empire, it appears in the stories of Ogier and John the Priest, which we have already discussed elsewhere.⁶ In these narratives, the Tree often appears in two forms, one as the Sun Tree and the other as the Moon Tree.

The Hermetic tradition encompasses the entire primordial symbolic tradition and leads to similar associations. The symbol of the Tree is very prominent in alchemical texts: it surrounds Bernardo of Treviso's "source," that is, it hides the symbol of the Universe, the Ouroboros, in its center.⁷ This is Mercury, the first principle of Hermetic activity; it also corresponds to the "Divine Water," or the "Water of Life," which resurrects the "dead," enlightens the Children of Hermes, and is also identified with the "Lady of Wisdom." On the other hand, however, it corresponds to the Dragon, the power of "dissolution" and destruction. The Tree of the Sun and the Tree of the Moon are also hermetic symbols, often depicted with crowns in place of the fruits.

This quick overview of an infinitely expandable material thus shows the unbroken tradition of arboreal symbolism representing universal power and usually depicted in the form of a female being; it is related to the accumulation of supernatural knowledge, the ability to make something immortal, and the power of an empire; but it is also associated with the idea of danger, which can take various forms and, in accordance with different intentions, truths, and ways of seeing, further complicates the myth.

There are two possibilities: on the one hand, the Tree can be understood as a temptation that causes downfall and condemns those who surrender to it to damnation; on the other hand, it can be seen as an object of conquest that makes the brave who dare to tackle it into gods, even divine beings, or dragons, and sometimes even transfers divine character and immortality from one species to another.

Thus, the knowledge that Adam sought to acquire in order to become “like God,”⁸ and which he failed to obtain, so that he was suddenly cast into the depths and deprived of the Tree of Life by the very one whom he wanted to make himself like, was the same supernatural knowledge that Buddha acquired under the Tree, defeating Mara’s power, who, as another tradition says, won the lightning from the god Indra in battle.

Indra, as the leader of the gods, took the *amrita* from a previous race, sometimes described as gods, sometimes as titans. They are the *asuras*, who enjoyed the privilege of immortality through the *amrita*. Odin (with his self-sacrifice on the tree), Heracles, and Mithras achieved similar triumphs. After making symbolic clothes for himself from the leaves of the tree and eating its fruit, Mithras defeated the Sun.¹⁰ In the archaic Italian myth, the king of the trees, Nemi, marries a goddess (Tree = Woman) so that he can always defend himself. His power and position could be transferred to anyone who discovered how to strike him and “kill” him.¹¹ In Hindu tradition, spiritual realization is associated with cutting down and toppling the Tree of Brahma with the “powerful weapon of knowledge.”¹²

Agni, who seized a branch of the Fa in the form of a hawk, was wounded: a plant sprouted from his fallen feather, whose sap is the “earthly *soma*.” This may be a vague reference to the fact that his undertaking was inherited by another species—an earthly species. Prometheus also carried out his deed for the same species, and then fell, was chained, and became the victim of an eagle or hawk tearing at his flesh. And while Heracles—as the prototype of the “Olympian” hero—frees both Prometheus and Theseus, the new incarnation of the heroic hero of heavenly origin, Jason, despite his success in obtaining the Golden Fleece hung on the tree, he meets his death under the wreckage of the Argo, which, being made of the oak of Dodona, once again represents the power that can be taken away. Similar to this is the story of Loki in the Edda, who obtained both apples of immortality guarded by

the goddess Idun; As for the Chaldean Gilgamesh, he gathered the “great crystal fruits” in a forest whose trees “resembled the trees of God,” and then found the path that had been closed to him by a feminine power guarding it.¹³ The Assyrian god Zu, striving for supreme dignity, made himself the master of the “tablet of destiny,” that is, the master of prophetic knowledge, but Baal, after catching him, turned him into a sacrificial bird and banished him to a mountain peak, as had happened to Prometheus.

The myth thus tells of a dangerous and fundamentally uncertain symbolic undertaking. In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, and especially in the legend of the King of the Trees, gods or exceptional humans are seen as the possessors of a power which, together with divine attributes, can be passed on to anyone who knows how to acquire it. In this respect, the primordial power is female (Tree = Goddess), prone to violence, and thus, as the Gospels say, can also be used to attain the “Kingdom of Heaven.” Some of those who try break through and triumph; others, experiencing the fatal effect of the same force, pay for their audacity with their lives.

When we begin to interpret such a story, two opposing possibilities arise: the magical-heroic and the religious. According to the first, those who fail in the myth are simply beings whose perseverance and luck were insufficient to meet the challenge. The second, religious approach has a different meaning: here, misfortune becomes sin, and the heroic attempt becomes sacrilege. The deed is not cursed because of its failure, but because of itself. Adam is no longer the man who failed in an endeavor in which others triumphed, but rather the man who committed a sin, and what happened to him was the only thing that could have happened. So he had no alternative but to seek punishment and, above all, to give up the desire that had led him into this venture. The fact that the defeated think of recapturing what they have lost or cling to the dignity they believe they deserve for their

actions is, in a religious view, the most reprehensible form of “Luciferianism.”

But the religious point of view is not the only one. As Bound pointed out, this is, contrary to royal tradition, a humanized and degraded version of priestly tradition; and it has no higher legitimacy than the other—the heroic point of view—which has always been present in the ancient East and West and whose spirit is best reflected in the Hermetic tradition. Indeed, one commentary¹⁴ interprets “Hermes’s staff” as a symbol of the union of the son (Zeus) with his own mother (Rhea, the symbol of universal power), whom he pursued and then took for himself after killing his father and claiming his kingdom; and “philosophical incest” throughout the entire Hermetic literature. Hermes is in fact the messenger of the gods, but he is also the one who takes the sceptre of rulership from Zeus, the belt from Venus, and the tools of his allegorical craft from Vulcan, the god of “earthly fire.” In Egyptian tradition, according to later authors, Hermes Trismegistus, newly clothed in triple greatness, merges into the figure of one of the Kings and Masters of the primordial age, who gave humanity the principles of a higher civilization. The precise meaning of all this cannot escape anyone’s attention.

The tradition reported by Tertullian, which can also be found in the Syrian-Arab alchemical Hermeticism, points to the same thing. Tertullian¹⁵ speaks of the “accursed and useless” operations of nature, the secrets of metals, the properties of plants, the power of magic spells, and those strange teachings that extend all the way to the interpretation of the stars. This, then, is the corpus of magical-hermetic science that the fallen angels revealed to man. These ideas go back to the Book of Enoch; moreover, in the context of this more ancient tradition, they are present in a more complete form and, in the religious interpretation, even more one-sided. In Enoch,¹⁶ among the Ben Elohim, or fallen angels, who descended on Mount Hermon, there is a race of the Awakened and the Watchers who came down to teach mankind (similarly to how Prometheus “taught all the arts to mortals”¹⁷),

and, as Mereskovsky has shown,¹⁸ there is a clear parallel to this in the Book of Jubilees.

What is more, in Enoch (LXIX. 6–7), it is Azazel (or Gadreel), the “deceiver of Eve,” who taught humans the use of the weapons of death, that is, metaphorically speaking, who instilled in them the spirit of war. In this context, we are familiar with the myth of the Fall: the angels were carried away by their desire for the “woman.” However, we have already explained what “woman” means in relation to the Tree. If we examine the Sanskrit term *sakti*, which in a figurative sense means God’s wife and at the same time his power, our interpretation is further confirmed. These angels were therefore seized by a “desire” for power: they united with it, fell, and then descended to earth, to a higher point on the earth (Mount Hermon). From this union came the Nephilim, a powerful race (or, as the Giza papyrus calls them, the Titans). They are figuratively described as giants, but the words of the Book of Enoch shed light on the supernatural nature of their power (XV. 11): “They have no need of food, they do not suffer from thirst, and they are free from (material) perception.

The Nephilim, the “fallen angels,” are therefore none other than the “Titans.” They are “those who watch,” and in the Book of Baruch (III. 26) they are the race called “victorious and warlike.” This is the race that ignited the spirit of militancy and heroism in humans, shaped their arts, and passed on the mysteries of magic to them.²¹ When examining the alchemical-hermetic tradition, what could be more decisive evidence than the explicit repetition of texts belonging to the earliest traditions? A Hermetic text reads: “The ancient and divine books teach, says Hermes, that certain Angels were captivated by their passion for women. They then descended to earth and taught the workings of Nature. They are the ones who compiled the Hermetic works, and from them comes the first tradition of this Art.”²² The word *chemi* itself—which comes from *chema* (from which alchemy and chemistry also derive)—appears from the earliest times in connection with just such a tradition in the papyri of the XIIth

Dynasty. But what is the meaning, the significance of this Art, the Art of the “Children of Hermes,” the Royal Art?

In the biblical myth of the Tree, according to religious understanding, God’s words are as follows: “Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. But he will not stretch out his hand to take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’” (Genesis 3:22). Two details can be distinguished here: first, the recognition of the divine rank that Adam definitely possessed; and second, a veiled reference to the possibility that this realization could have been transferred to the plane of the universal force symbolized by the Tree of Life, which would have meant the confirmation of his immortality. In Adam’s ill-fated adventure, the personified God was unable to prevent Adam’s first act, but he subsequently managed to block the second possibility: the flaming-sword-wielding Cherub stood in his way to the Tree of Life. The Orphic myth of the Titans has a similar meaning: they are the ones who “devoured” God, then lightning struck them and they withered away from “thirst that burns and destroys”—and this thirst can be seen as an equivalent symbol of the vultures tearing Prometheus apart. In Phrygia, Attis mourns “the grain cut while still green,” that is, his “castration”; he mourns the loss of his strength and power, which corresponds to the blocking of the path to the powerful tree in the middle of Paradise and the chaining of Prometheus to the rock.

But the flame has not yet been extinguished: purified, it has been transferred to the secret tradition of the Royal Art, which certain hermetic texts unambiguously identify with Magic; and this is what leads, at the price of “terrible struggles,” to the creation of the second “Tree of Life” in the lost place,²³ or to the “center of the Tree standing in the middle of the earthly Paradise”;²⁴ that is, it enables the recovery of the ancient courage that characterized the Olympian Heracles (Prometheus’ anti-Titan liberator), Mithras (the conqueror of the Sun), and the one who was called the “Lord of Men and Gods” in the Buddhist East.

The Royal Art is distinguished by its inevitability. In connection with Tertullian's above-mentioned statement, Serthelot considers it important to note: "Scientific law is certain and impartial; knowledge of nature and the power derived from it can be used for good or evil"—and this is fundamentally opposed to the religious view, which subordinates everything to pious dependence, fear of God, and morality. He continues: "The first traces of this conflict can already be found in the hostility towards (hermetic) science expressed in the Book of Enoch and by Tertullian."²⁵ And he is right: for although Hermetic science is by no means identical with the natural science with which Berthelot would identify it, the amoral and coercive character which he recognizes in the latter is also characteristic of the former. In this regard, one of Ripley's maxims is very apt: "If the principles by which a man lives are true and his actions are governed by those principles, the result must be certain; and this is the only real secret of the Hermetic philosophers."

Agrippa, quoting Porphyry, speaks of the inevitable power of "rituals," which directly compel the gods, defeat them, and force them to descend; he adds that magical formulas compel the occult energies of astral beings to intervene, although they do not understand prayers and act solely out of natural necessity.²⁷ Plotinus takes a similar view: the effect is produced by the act of prayer itself, according to a fixed relationship, and is not effective because a group of beings manifests some consideration or attention toward the person praying.²⁸ Zosimus writes in a commentary: "Experience is a great teacher, because through trial and error, life teaches us what is most likely to lead us to our goal."²⁹

Hermetic art is therefore a method that has necessary consequences and which, if desired, can be applied to spiritual forces with the help of supernatural means (the symbolic hermetic fire is often called unnatural or supernatural), but always with the exclusion of any religion, morality, or absolute dependence. In other words, it is a law that consists of a natural,

albeit unknown, determinism between cause and effect. Returning to the line of tradition, to those who “guard,” who plundered the Tree and made the “woman” their own, the weapon of “heroic” symbolism is, as we shall see, whatever it may lead to in the spiritual world, destined to possess higher values than those it possessed before.³⁰ And this is what is incomprehensible from the religious expression of “sacred”, but all the more accessible from the—and a king, a crowned being, and the royal color (purple) are always found at the end of the hermetic-alchemical Work; and the royal and sun-like metal, gold, as already mentioned, forms the center of this symbolism.

As for those who have been reintegrated through this “Art,” the terms used in the texts are unambiguous. “Autonomous, incorporeal, and kingless,” as Zosimus calls the Philosophers, “guardians of centuries of wisdom.”³¹ They stand above fate.³² “Higher than men and immortal,” says Plebechius of his master:³³ “Free and master of Life,” he possesses “the power to command the angelic race”—such will be the later tradition all the way to Cagliostro.³⁴ Plotinus already spoke of the recklessness of those who enter the world, that is, those who took on flesh (we have seen that this is related to the meaning of “falling into sin”).³⁵ Agrippa³⁶, on the other hand, speaks of the fear that consumed man in his natural state—that is, instead of being inspired by fear, he became vulnerable to it because of his “fall into sin.” “This fear, as God’s mark engraved in man, causes all to be subject to God and to recognize Him as the highest order, as the bearer of that nature which the Kabbalists call *pahad*, the left hand and the sword of the Lord.”

But there is something else here: the “two natures” that rule man, reminiscent of the secret of the “Tree of Good and Evil.”³⁷ The teaching is found in the Corpus Hermeticum: “Man is not to be despised because he is mortal; on the contrary, mortality broadens his possibilities and power. Because of his dual nature, he has a dual role: he was created in such a way that he encompasses both the earthly and the divine.”³⁸ “So we are not

afraid to say the truth: the real, true man is greater than the gods of heaven, or at least equal to them. For it is not God who leaves his own world to come to earth, but man who ascends to heaven to measure it... Therefore, we dare to say that man is a mortal God, and a heavenly god is an immortal man.”³⁹

This, then, is the “new race” that the Royal Art of the “Children of Hermes” created on earth, lifting up and quenching the thirst of the fallen, restoring strength to the weak, and giving the “eagle”, and bestowing Olympic, or rather royal, dignity on those who were titans. In a mystery text belonging to the same world of ideas in which Greek alchemy also found its initial expression, it is stated that the “Light of Life” mentioned in the Gospel of John is the “mysterious race of perfect men unknown to previous generations”; this is followed by a reference to Hermes: the text says that at the temple of Samothrace there are two statues of naked men with their arms raised above their heads and their penises erect, as in the statue of Hermes at Cille,⁴⁰ representing Adam, the primordial Man, together with the reborn Man, “who possesses exactly the same nature as the first.” Furthermore: “First, the blessed nature of Man is above; then the mortal nature is below; and finally, the race of the Kingless rises up to where the goal of many aspirations lies, Mariam.”

“This blessed and imperishable being dwells in all that exists, explains Simon Magus, but hidden, potentially, and not actually. He is the one who is, was, and will be; who dwelt above in uncreated power; who dwells below, having been born from a mirror image (reflection) that appeared in the flood; and who will be above, at the side of infinite power, when he makes himself completely like himself.”⁴²

And we find the same teaching everywhere in the texts of the Hermetic tradition.

Notes

1. Cf. *Katha Upanisad*, VI. 1; *Bhagavad Gita*, XV. 1–2; X. 26.
2. Goblet D’Alviella, *La Migration des Symboles*, (Paris, 1891), pp. 151–206.
3. Jacna, IX. and X.
4. Zohar I. 226b; I. 256a; III. 61a; III. 128b; II. 61b; I. 225b; I. 131a.
5. See D’Alviella, op. cit.
6. Evola, *Il Mistero del Graal*.
7. See the Hermetic ex-libris published by L. Charbonneau-Lassay in *Regnabit*, vol. 3–4, 1925. In the center of the Tree is the Phoenix, symbol of immortality, which refers to *amrtára* and *haomára*.
8. See Genesis III.1, kk.
9. See Weber, *Indische Studien*, III. k. p. 466.
10. See F. Cumont, *Les Misteres de Mithrai* (Brussels, 1913), p. 133.
11. This myth is one of the gems among the large amount of material collected by G. Frazer in his famous work *The Golden Bough*.
12. *Bhagavad Gita* XV. 3. (A more accurate translation of this passage would be: “with the mighty axe of bondlessness”—translator’s note)
13. The parallel with the garden of the Hesperides is obvious. The text, which is incomplete, does not preclude the later development of the adventure. In the best-known version of the Epic of Gilgamesh, the undertaking is unsuccessful: while Gilgamesh is asleep, the plant that grants immortality—

which he obtained beyond the waters of death upon reaching the land of the king of the “primordial state”—is stolen from him.

14. In Athenagoras (XX. 292), certain parallels can be observed with the heroic legends of Heracles: the rope with which Rhea was bound was called “Heracles’ noose.”
15. Tertullian, *De Cultu Fem.* I. 2b.
16. Book of Enoch, VI. 1–6. VII. 1.
17. Aeschylus, *Prometheus*, 506.
18. D. Mereshkowskij, *Das Geheimnis des Westens* (Leipzig, 1929), IV–V. chap.
19. Kautzsch, *Apokryphen und Pseudopigraphen*, (Tübingen, 1900) II. k. 47.
20. Explaining a passage from the Bible (Ter. IV. 2.), Fabre D’Olivet (*Langue Hébraïque rest.*) considers “woman” to be identical with the symbol of “generative power.” There is a special relationship between certain characteristics of Hermetic art, which will be discussed later, and Tibetan symbolism, in which Knowledge is again represented by a “woman,” while “method” and “art” are represented by a masculine figure embracing the former in allegorical coitus. (See *Shricakrasambhara*, A. Avalon. London, 1919. XIV, 23.) Dante (*Covivio* II. XV. 4.) calls the “Philosophers” the “lovers” of the “woman”, and in the symbolism of the “*Fedéli d’Amore*”, the woman also symbolizes *gnosis*, esoteric knowledge.
21. According to earlier beliefs, as Hesiod also referred to, the “guardians” are identical with the beings of the primordial state, the Golden Age, who never die but make themselves invisible to the people of later ages.

22. Collected texts: Berthelot, *La Chimie au moyen-age* (Paris, 1893) II. 238. A similar tradition can be found in the Koran (II. 96), which speaks of two angels, Hartur and Marut, who “fell in love” with “woman” and who, after their descent, were said to have taught magic to humans while suspended upside down in a pit. This latter detail may have a similar meaning to the inverted Vedic *Fa*, which is rooted “in the heights.”
23. C. Della Riviera, *Il Mondo Magico degli Heroi*, (Milan, 1605) pp. 4, 5, 49.
24. Basilius Valentinus, *Azoth* (Manget, II, p. 214). In S. Trismosin’s *Aurum Vellus* (Rorschach, 1598), a telling illustration shows a man climbing a tree, with a symbolic river crossing the trunk. References to Heracles, Jason, and their heroic deeds are very common in the texts, but what is even more emphasized is the sometimes unexpectedly invoked spirit of Prometheus.
25. Berthelot, *Les origines de l’Alchimia* (Paris, 1885), pp. 10, 17–19.
26. Filalete, *Epist. de Ripley*, VIII.
27. Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia*, II. 60, III. 32.
28. Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV. 42, 26.
29. Berthelot, *Collection des Alchimistes Grecques*, (Paris, 1887) vol. 2, p. 284.
30. We must remember that this superiority is an attribute of the special attitude of the heroic, since it is ultimately related to it. In other words, we are talking about periods in which the primordial tradition, together with its descendants, was obscured. From a purely metaphysical point of view, the essence of all authentic initiation is the reintegration of man into his “original state.”
31. Berthelot, *Colleciton*, II. 213

32. Berthelot, Colleciton, II. 229
33. What the alchemists knew about the attainment of immortality against the will of “God” can be found, for example, in Geber, who says in his Book of Compassion (Berthelot, *La Chimie* v. III. 173): “If he (God) placed elements that are different from each other (in man), it was because he wanted to ensure the extinction of the created being. Since God did not want any being other than himself to live forever, he imposed on man the burden of the inequality of the four natures, which leads to his death, the separation of the soul from the body.” The same author elsewhere (The Book of Steps, Berthelot, *La Chimie*, v. III. 147–148) proposes the restoration of man’s disturbed nature, a new kind of existence, “so that he may no longer die,” because “beings never change themselves once this balance has been restored.”
34. See the index of the journal *Ignis*, 1925, pp. 277, 305.
35. Enneads V. IX. 15.; cf. V. i. 1. In the Corpus Hermeticum, we find a striking analogy to “leaving the spheres,” in the same sense that Lucifer (Böhme, *De Signatara*, XIV. 40) left the harmony of the world.
36. See above.
37. This is equivalent to what appears in the initiatory writings of medieval knights as “the possession of the two swords.”
38. Corpus Hermeticum IX. 4. Cf. Böhme, *Morgenröte im Aufgang*, XI. 72. “The soul of man seems even deeper than that of the angels, because it is both heavenly and hellish”—and he adds: “For this reason, it lives in great danger in this world.” The Sepher Yezirah (chap. VI) compares the state of the heart to that of a “warring king.”
39. Corpus Hermeticum, X, 24–25.

40. In fact, it forms a schematic “Y,” which is the sign of the “cosmic Man” with raised hands, one of the basic symbols of the Hyperborean and North Atlantic traditions, which in the Germanic-Scandinavian traditions has remained as a rune, the rune of life and of the Living.
41. Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, V. 8. This Mariam obviously corresponds to the symbolic “woman” possessed by the “Philosophers,” and this is the “Virgin” of whom D’Espagnet writes (*Arcan. herm. philos.* Opus, 58.): “Take a winged Virgin, who was fertilized by the seed of the First Man, but who nevertheless preserved the glory of her virginity untouched.” This “winged Virgin” naturally possesses the same qualities as Rheia, the only *saktija* or “power” aspect (she is the one whom Zeus, after killing his father—D’Espagnet, the “First Man”—takes for himself, that is, makes his own mother his wife). Moreover, the Kabbalah says that the King, that is, Yahweh, entrusts all his power to the Matrona, who is also the King’s wife (*saktija*) and whom Moses also “took” (Zohar II. 144b, 145a; III. 51a).
42. Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, VI. 17.

ON THE “DIVINITY” OF THE MOUNTAIN

In an editorial published in the magazine of the C.A.I., S.E. Manaresi has effectively highlighted a point that we cannot overemphasize today: the need to overcome the limiting double antithesis, consisting on the one hand of the man of learning, bloodless and separated—in his “culture” made up of words and books—from the deepest forces of the body and of life; and on the other hand, the man who is simply athletic, developed in a purely physical and athletic discipline, healthy but deprived of any higher point of reference. Beyond the one-sidedness of these two types, today we are seeking something more complete: a type in which the spirit is transformed into strength and life, and physical discipline, for its part, becomes the channel, symbol, and almost “rite” for spiritual discipline. Manaresi has also had the opportunity to say on many occasions that among the various sports, mountaineering is surely the one that offers the widest and most immediate possibilities for gender integration. In reality, the grandeur, silence, and power of the great mountains naturally incline the spirit toward that which is not exclusively human, bringing the best of us closer to the point where the physical ascent, with all that it presupposes in terms of courage, self-improvement, and lucidity, and an inner elevation become integral and inseparable parts of one and the same thing. Now, it may be interesting to point out that these ideas, which are now beginning to be emphasized by leading figures who are guiding the best of the new generations, simultaneously reach a background of ancient tradition... something that can be called “traditional” in the broadest sense of the term. Although the ancients knew mountaineering only by way of exception and in an entirely rudimentary form, they nevertheless possessed in the most vivid way the sacred and symbolic meaning of the mountain, and the idea, in this case symbolic, of climbing the mountain and living on the mountain as something characteristic of “heroes,” of “initiates,” of beings—in short—who were considered to have

transcended the limits of the common and gray life of the “plains.”

In these pages, therefore, a brief reference to the traditional concept of the divinity of the mountain, taken outside of symbols, in its internal sense, will not be out of place: because this will allow us to define and clarify something of the internal and spiritual aspect of those vicissitudes, of which the description or technical account of mountaineering represents only the external aspect and, we might almost say, the *caput mortuum*.

The concept of the divinity of mountains comes, in a uniform manner in both the East and the West, from the traditions of the Far East to those of the Aztecs of pre-Columbian America, from the Egyptians to the Nordic-Germanic Aryans, from the Hellenic to the Iranian and Hindu: in the form of myths and legends about the mountain of “the gods” or about the mountain of “the heroes,” about the summit of those who “are carried away by ecstasy,” or about the places where mysterious forces of “glory” and “immortality” are found. The general basis for the symbolism of the mountain is simple: the earth is assimilated to everything that is human (as, for example, in the ancient etymologies that derive “man from humus”), the culminations of the earth toward the sky, transfigured into eternal snows—the mountains—must spontaneously present themselves as the most suitable material for expressing through allegories the transcendent states of consciousness, inner overcoming, or the appearances of supra-normal modes of being, often represented figuratively as ‘gods’ and deities. Hence we have not only mountains as “symbolic seats”—let us note—of the “gods,” but we also have traditions, such as those of the ancient Aryans of Iran and Media who, according to Xenophon, did not know temples for their divinity, but precisely on the summits; on the mountain peaks they celebrated worship and sacrifice to Fire and the God of Light: seeing in them a place more worthy, grandiose, and analogically closer to the divine than any construction or temple made by men.

For Hindus, the divine mountain is, as is well known, the Himalayas, a name that in Sanskrit means “The Seat of the Snows”; in it, Meru is, specifically, the sacred mountain. Here we must take two points into account. First of all, Mount Meru is conceived as the place where Shiva, imagined as the “great ascetic,” carried out his meditations, after which he struck down Kama, the Hindu Eros, when he tried to open the spirit to passion. On this supreme summit of the world, still untouched by human feet, we see how, in the Hindu tradition, the same idea of absolute asceticism, of the virile purification of a nature already inaccessible to all that is passion and desire, and therefore “stable” in a transcendent sense, coincides. Thus, in the ancient Vedic formulas for the consecration of kings, we see precisely the image of the “mountain” representing the solidity of the power and *imperium* that the king will assume. On the other hand, in the Mahabharata we see Arjuna ascend the Himalayas to achieve spiritual exaltation, it being said that “only on the high mountain could he have attained divine vision”; in the same way that Emperor Yudhisthira heads for the Himalayas to consummate his apotheosis and ascend to the “chariot” of the “king of the gods.”

Secondly, it should be noted that the Sanskrit expression *paradesha* means high region, supreme region and thus, in a specific material sense, mountain height. But *paradesha* can be etymologically assimilated to the Chaldean *pardés*, from which the term “paradise” derives, which passes, in theological forms, into successive Hebrew-Christian beliefs. In the original Aryan idea of “paradise,” we therefore find an intimate association with the concept of “heights,” of summits: an association which, as is well known, is clearly found again in the Doric-Achaean conception of “Olympus.” In this latter regard, something must be said about the Hellenic traditions concerning those “raptured on the mountain.” It is well known that the Hellenes—like almost all ancient Aryans—had an evidently aristocratic conception of the afterlife. Hades, that is, a residual and larval existence after death, deprived of true consciousness, in the underground world of shadows, was

conceived as the destiny of a few—those who had in no way elevated themselves above ordinary life. Immortality, apart from that of the Olympians, was a privilege of the “heroes,” that is, an exceptional achievement of a few superior beings. Now, in the most ancient Hellenic traditions, we find that the immortality of the “heroes” is specifically deduced from the symbol of their ascent to the mountains and their “disappearance” in the mountains. Thus, the mystery of the “heights” returns because, on the other hand, in this same “disappearance” we must see a material symbol of a spiritual transfiguration.

To disappear, or “become invisible,” or “be carried away into the heights,” is not something to be taken in a literal sense, but essentially means to be transferred, in a virtual way, from the visible world of particular bodies to the common human experience, to the supersensible world in which “death does not exist.”

And this tradition is not found only in Greece. In Buddhism, there is the “Mount of the Vate,” where men who have attained spiritual awakening “disappear,” called by Majjihimonikajo “more than men, undefeated and intact beings, unattainable by desires, redeemed.” The Far Eastern Taoist traditions, originating in Mount Kuen-Lun, where legendary “royal” beings are said to have found the “drink of immortality,” are similar to what we find in the traditions of Eastern Islam concerning the “rapture” on the mountain of beings who united the initiation of purity and were carried away to the peaks upon their death. The ancient Egyptians spoke of a mountain (the *Set Amentet*) crossed by a path, along which beings destined for “solar” immortality reached the “land of triumph” where, according to a hieroglyphic inscription, “the chiefs who preside over the throne of the great god proclaim eternal life and power for them.” Across the Atlantic, in pre-Columbian Mexico, we find, with remarkable agreement, the same symbols: essentially, in the great mountain of Culhuacan, or “curved mountain,” because its summit slopes downward, expressing the fact that height was conceived as a “divine” point that nevertheless retained connections with the lower regions. According to these

ancient American traditions, certain Aztec emperors disappeared without a trace on a similar mountain. Now, as is well known, this same theme is found in the legends of our Western Roman-Germanic Middle Ages: certain mountains, such as the Kuffhauser or the Odenberg, are the places where certain kings were “raptured” certain kings who would attain symbolic significance, such as Charlemagne, King Arthur, Frederick I and II, who, in this way, “would never have died” and would await their hour to manifest themselves visibly. Also in the cycle of the legend of the Grail is the “mountain” in Montsalvat, which, according to Guénon, can be given the meaning of “Mountain of Health” or “Salvation”; the battle cry of medieval chivalry was *Mont-joie*, and in a legend that has no historical basis but is nonetheless rich in spiritual significance, the fact of having passed through the “mountain” was the action that preceded the sacred and Roman “imperial” coronation of Arthur. We cannot dwell here on the specific inner aspect of these latter symbolic myths, especially those concerning the “lost” kings who will reappear, a subject which we have dealt with exhaustively elsewhere; but we will note, in general, how the theme of the mountain as the seat of immortality returns, and how it also returns to the ancient Hellenic tradition concerning “heroes.”

We will say a little more about two points: the mountain as the seat of *haoma* and “glory,” and the mountain as Valhalla.

The Iranian term *haoma*, equivalent to the Sanskrit *soma*, expresses the aforementioned “drink of immortality.” In those ancient Aryan doctrines, there is, in this regard, an association of diverse concepts, partly real and partly symbolic, partly material and partly susceptible to being translated into terms of actual spiritual experience. Hindu traditions, for example, speak of *soma* as either a “god” or the juice of a plant capable of producing particular effects of exaltation, which were held in spectacular esteem by rites of internal transfiguration capable of providing a foretaste and, we might almost say, a presentation of what

immortality means. Well, for the same reason that Buddha does not come to compare the state “that is neither here nor there, neither coming nor going, but quiet illumination as in an infinite ocean” (*nirvana*) in the high mountains, so we in the Yajna read that the mysterious *haoma* grows in the high mountains. In other words, we again find the association of the idea of heights with the idea of an enthusiasm capable of transfiguring, exalting, guiding towards that which is not only human, mortal, and contingent. And so from Iran we move on to Greece, where in the early Dionysian period we find the same theme, inasmuch as, according to the most ancient testimonies, those who were carried away by the “divine fury of Dionysus” during the festivals were dragged to the wild peaks of the Thracian mountains as if possessed by a strange and overwhelming power arising from the depths of their own souls.

But there is something else that rectifies what may be decomposed and not completely pure at the “Dionysian” level; this is the Iranian concept expressed in the Yasht regarding the mountain, “the mighty Mount Ushi-darena,” which is, moreover, the seat of “glory.”

It should be noted that in the Iranian tradition, “glory”—*hvarenó* or *farr*—was not an abstract concept: on the contrary, it was conceived as a real and almost physical force, although invisible and of “non-human” origin, generally carried by the luminous Aryan race but, eminently, by the kings, priests, and leaders of that race. One sign testifies to the presence of “glory”: victory. “Glory” was attributed a solar origin, inasmuch as the sun was seen as the symbol of a luminous entity, triumphing over darkness every morning. Transposing these concepts to *sub species interioritatis*, “glory”—*hvarenó*—therefore expressed the property conquered by the dominant races or natures, in which superiority is power (“victory”) and power is superiority, “triumphantly,” as in the solar and immortal beings of the sky. Well, this is what is said in the Yashts, that not only does the *haoma* plant—of the “Dionysian”

states—“grow” on the mountain, but that the most powerful mountain, the Ushi-darena, is the seat of Aryan “glory.” We come to the last point: the mountain as Valhalla.

The word Valhalla (Walhöll) is well known throughout the works of Richard Wagner, in which, however, the ancient Nordic-Scandinavian concepts of the Eddas, from which Wagner draws much of his inspiration and which are susceptible to deeper meanings, are distorted and “literalized” in many places.

Valhalla literally meant “the palace of the fallen,” of which Odin was the king and chief. It is the concept of a privileged place of immortality (here, as in Hellenic traditions, for ordinary beings there is nothing after death but a dark and mediocre existence in Niflheim, the Norse Hades), reserved for the noble and essentially for heroes who have fallen on the battlefield. Almost like the saying that “the blood of heroes is closer to God than the ink of the wise and the prayers of the devout,” in these ancient traditions, the most pleasing cult and sacrifice to the supreme deity—Odin-Wotan or Tiuz—and the most fruitful in terms of otherworldly rewards consisted of dying in war. Those who fell for Odin were transformed into his “sons” and immortalized alongside the deified kings in Valhalla, a place often assimilated to Asgard, the city of the Aesir, that is, of the luminous divine beings in perpetual struggle against the *Elementarwesen*, the dark creatures of the earth.

However, the very concepts of Valhalla and Asgard originally appear in direct relation—once again—to the mountain, to the point that Valhalla appears as the name of Swedish and Scandinavian peaks and ancient mountains, such as Helgafell, Krosshòlar, and Hlidskjalf, which were conceived as the seat of heroes and deified princes. Asgard often appears in Edda as Glitnirbjorg, the “shining mountain,” or Himinbjorg, where the idea of mountain and that of luminous sky, of celestial luminosity, merge. Thus, the central theme of Asgard remains that of a towering mountain, on whose icy summit, above the clouds and

snow, an eternal light shines. Thus, the “mountain” as Valhalla is also the place where the self-styled *Wildes Heer* bursts forth and returns to settle. This is an ancient popular Nordic concept, expressed in the highest form of an army commanded by Odin and made up of fallen heroes. According to this tradition, the heroic sacrifice of blood (what in our Roman traditions was called the *mors triumphalis*, and by which the initiate victorious over death was assimilated to the figure of heroes and victors) also serves to increase with new forces that irresistible spiritual army—the *Wildes Heer*—which Odin, god of battles, needs to achieve an ultimate and transcendent goal: to fight against the *ragna rökker*, that is, against the destiny of the “darkening” of the divine that corresponds to the world of distant ages.

Through these traditions, united in their inner meaning and not in their outer mythological form, we thus arrive at the highest concept of the cycle of myths about the divinity of the mountain; and we will affirm that we personally find, in our nostalgic memories of war in the high mountains, almost an echo of this distant reality. The seat of dawn, of heroism, and, if necessary, of heroic transfiguration through death, the place of an “enthusiasm” that tends toward transcendent states, of a naked ascent and a triumphant solar force opposed to the paralyzing forces that darken and brutalize life... Such is the symbolic feeling of the mountain among the ancients, resulting from a circle of legends and myths endowed with great uniformity, of which those cited are but a few chosen from a very long list.

Of course, it is not a question of dwelling on anachronistic evocations, nor is it a question of curious searches for mere historical erudition. Behind the myth and behind the symbol conditioned by time there is a “spirit” that can always revive and find effective expression in new forms and new actions. This, precisely, is what matters. That mountaineering should not be equivalent to the desecration of the mountain; that those who, darkly driven by an instinct to overcome the limitations that

suffocate us in the mechanized, bourgeois, and intellectualized life of the “plains,” go up high in courageous physical effort, in lucid tension and lucid control of their internal and external forces, over the rocks, ridges, and walls on the brink of the sky and the abyss, toward the icy clarity... that those who are always able to rekindle themselves today and act luminously according to those deep sensations that remain at the roots of the ancient mythological deifications of the mountain: this is the best augury that can be made for our younger generations.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE EAGLE

The symbolism of the eagle has a 'traditional' character in a higher sense. Dictated by precise analogical reasons, it is among those that testify to an 'invariant', that is, a constant and immutable element within the myths and symbols of all traditional civilizations. However, the particular formulations that this constant theme takes are naturally different depending on the race. Here we can say immediately that the symbolism of the eagle in the tradition of the Aryan peoples had a distinctly "Olympian" and heroic character, which we propose to clarify in this paper with a group of references and comparisons.

The "Olympic" character of the symbolism of the eagle is already evident from the fact that this animal was sacred to the Olympian god par excellence, Zeus, who in turn is nothing more than the particular Aryan-Hellenic (and later, as Jupiter, Aryan-Roman) representation of the deity of light and royalty venerated by all branches of the Aryan family. Zeus was in turn associated with another symbol, that of lightning, which should be remembered, because we shall see that in this way it often completes the symbolism of the eagle itself. Let us also remember another point: according to the ancient Aryan view of the world, the "Olympian" element is defined above all in its antithesis to the Titanic, telluric, and even Promethean element. Now, it is precisely with the thunderbolt that Zeus strikes down the Titans in the myth. Among the Aryans, who experienced every struggle as a kind of reflection of the metaphysical struggle between Olympian and Titanic forces, considering themselves a militia of the former, we also see the eagle and the thunderbolt as symbols and insignia that thus contain a profound and generally overlooked meaning.

According to the ancient Aryan view of life, immortality is something privileged: it does not mean simple survival after death, but heroic and regal participation in the state of

consciousness that defines Olympian divinity. Let us establish some correspondences. The view of immortality just mentioned is also characteristic of the ancient Egyptian tradition. Only part of the human being is destined for eternal heavenly existence in states of glory—the so-called Ba. Now, this part is depicted in Egyptian hieroglyphics as an eagle or a sparrowhawk (due to environmental conditions, the sparrowhawk is a substitute for the eagle, the closest support offered by the physical world to express the same idea). It is in the form of a sparrowhawk that, in the ritual contained in the Book of the Dead, the transfigured soul of the dead strikes fear into the gods themselves and can utter these proud words: “I have risen in the likeness of a sparrowhawk or a divine eagle, and Oro has made me a partaker of his spirit, so that I may take possession of that which corresponds to Osiris in the other world.” This superterrestrial legacy corresponds exactly to the Olympian element. In fact, in Egyptian mythology, Osiris is a divine figure who corresponds to the primordial “solar” state of the spirit, which, after undergoing alteration and corruption (the killing and dismemberment of Osiris), is restored by Horus. The dead achieve immortal indument by participating in the restorative power of Horus, which leads back to Osiris, causing the “resurrection” or “recomposition” of Osiris.

At this point, it is easy to see multiple correspondences between traditions and symbols. In Greek mythology, it is understood that beings such as Ganymede were abducted from Zeus’ throne by eagles. In ancient Persian tradition, King Kai-Kaus attempted to raise himself to the sky in a Promethean act with the help of eagles. In the Indo-Aryan tradition, it is the eagle that brings Indra the mystical drink that will make him lord of the gods. The classical tradition adds a striking detail here: according to it, although inaccurately, the eagle was the only animal that could stare at the sun without lowering its eyes.

This clarifies the role of the eagle in some versions of the Promethean legend. Prometheus appears not as the one who is truly qualified to take possession of the Olympic fire, but as the

one who, remaining 'Titanic' in nature, wants to usurp it and make it something no longer belonging to the 'gods' but to men. As punishment, in the versions of the legend to which we refer, the chained Prometheus has his liver continually devoured by an eagle. The eagle, sacred animal of the Olympian god, associated with the lightning bolt that strikes down the Titans, appears here as a figure equivalent to the fire itself that Prometheus wanted to make his own. It is, in other words, a kind of immanent punishment. Prometheus does not have the nature of the eagle, which can stare unpunished and 'Olympically' at the supreme light. The very force he wanted to make his own becomes the source of his torment and punishment. And here we find a way to understand the inner tragedy of various modern exponents of the doctrine of titanic superhumanism, obsessed and victims of their own ideas, starting with Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, and with particular regard also to the characteristic heroes of the latter's novels.

Returning to the world of myth, we find a variant of the Promethean myth in ancient Hindu tradition. Agni, in the form of an eagle or sparrowhawk, tears a branch from the cosmic tree, repeating the gesture that Adam performed in the Semitic myth to "become like the gods." Agni, who is himself a personification of fire, is struck. However, from his feathers falling to the ground, the seed of a plant arises that will produce the 'earthly soma'. But *soma* is equivalent to ambrosia, the symbolic substance that induces and propitiates participation in the 'Olympian' state. The structure of the Aryan myth, albeit in a more convoluted form, repeats that which we have already analyzed in the Egyptian myth (the obfuscation of Osiris, resurrection by means of Horus). We can speak of a Promethean attempt that failed at first, then was "rectified" and became the seed of a just realization of the same end.

In the Iranian-Aryan tradition, the eagle often appears as an incarnation of the "glory" of the *hvarenô* which, as we have

mentioned on other occasions, was not an abstraction for those races, but a mystical force and a real power from above, which descends upon rulers and leaders, makes them partakers of the immortal nature and testifies to them with victory. This “glory,” personified by the eagle, cannot tolerate violations of the masculine ethics of the Mazdean tradition. Thus, the myth tells us that in the form of an eagle, it departed from King Yima when he contaminated himself with a lie. On the basis of such correspondences of meaning and symbols, the role played by the eagle in ancient Rome appears in a particular light. The ritual of Roman imperial apotheosis is the first evidence and a clear confirmation of the adherence of Roman culture to the Olympic ideal. In this ritual, the flight of an eagle from the funeral pyre symbolized the passage of the soul of the dead emperor to the state of “god.” Let us recall the details of this ritual, which was repeated following the example of the original one celebrated upon the death of Augustus.

The body of the dead emperor was enclosed in a coffin covered in purple, carried on a golden and ivory litter. It was placed on a pyre erected in the Campus Martius and surrounded by priests. Then the so-called *decursio* took place, which we will describe shortly. Once the pyre was set alight, an eagle freed itself from the flames, and it was believed that at that moment the soul of the deceased symbolically rose to the heavens to be welcomed among the Olympians. The *decursio*, mentioned above, was a race of troops, horsemen, and leaders around the emperor’s pyre, on which they threw the rewards they had received for their valor. This ritual also has a profound meaning. It was an Aryan and Roman belief that the true decisive force for victory lay in the leaders; that is, not so much in the leaders as persons, but in the supernatural, “Olympian” element attributed to them. For this reason, in the Roman triumph ceremony, the victorious leader took on the symbols of the Olympian god Jupiter and went to the temple of this god to return the laurels of victory, thereby expressing the true author of the victory, quite distinct from his

merely human part. In the *decursio*, a similar “remission” took place: the soldiers and leaders returned the rewards that commemorated their courage and victorious strength to the emperor as the one who, in his “Olympic” potential, now on the verge of liberation and transhumanization, had been their true origin.

This leads us to examine the second testimony of the “Olympic” spirit of Romanity, similarly marked by the Aryan symbolism of the eagle. It was a classical tradition that whoever the eagle landed on was predestined by Zeus for high destinies or royalty, thus indicating the “Olympic” presupposition of the legitimacy of one or the other. But it was also a classical tradition, and then specifically Roman, that the eagle was a sign of victory, which likewise highlights the “Olympic” presuppositions of the very concept of struggle and victory, namely the idea that through the victory of the Roman people, it was the forces of the Olympian deity, the god of light, that were victorious; the victory of men, a reflection of that of Zeus over anti-Olympian and ‘barbarian’ forces, was foretold by the appearance of Zeus’s own animal, the eagle.

This is the basis for properly understanding, in relation to profound meanings of traditional and sacred origin, and not empty allegories, the role that the eagle played among the insignia of the Roman armies, near the *signa* and *vexilla*, from the very beginning. Since the Republican era, the eagle had been the emblem of the legions in Rome - it was said: “one eagle per legion and no legion without an eagle.” In particular, the insignia consisted of an eagle with outstretched wings and, in addition, a thunderbolt between its talons. This rigorously confirms the “Olympian” symbolism already mentioned: the sacred animal of Jupiter is the sign of his own strength, of the thunderbolt with which he fights and exterminates the Titans. It is worth noting that the insignia of the barbarian troops did not feature an eagle: in the *signa auxiliarium*, we find sacred or “totemic” animals,

referring to other influences, such as the bull or the ram. Only in a later period did these signs infiltrate Roman culture itself, associating themselves with the eagle and often giving rise to a double symbolism: the second animal added to the eagle in the insignia of a given legion was then related to a characteristic of that legion, while the eagle referred to the general symbol of Rome. In the imperial period, however, the eagle, from a military insignia, often became a symbol of the Imperium itself.

We know the role that the symbol of the eagle played in the subsequent history of the Nordic and Germanic peoples. This symbol seems to have almost abandoned Roman soil for a long period and migrated among the Germanic races, so much so that it appears to many as an essentially Nordic symbol. This is not accurate. The origin of the eagle, which still appears today (1941 - ed.) as the emblem of Germany, has been forgotten, as it was also the emblem of the Austrian Empire, the last heir to the Holy Roman Empire. This Germanic eagle is simply the Roman eagle. It was Charlemagne in the 9th century who, on the verge of declaring the *renovatio romani imperii*, took up its fundamental symbol, the eagle, and made it the emblem of his state. Historically, therefore, it is nothing other than the Roman eagle that has been preserved to this day as the symbol of the Reich. However, this does not prevent us from thinking, from a deeper, super-historical point of view, that there is something more to it than a simple import. In fact, in Norse mythology, the eagle already appeared as one of the sacred animals of Odin-Wotan, and just as this animal was added to the Roman legion insignia, it also appeared on the crests of the ancient Germanic chiefs. It is therefore conceivable that while Charlemagne, in adopting the eagle as the symbol of the resurrected empire, had essentially ancient Rome in mind, he was simultaneously, without realizing it, reviving a symbol of the ancient Aryan-Nordic tradition, which had survived only in fragmentary and twilight form among the various tribes of the invasion period. In any case, in subsequent history, the eagle ended up having a purely heraldic

value, and its deeper and more original symbolic and moral meaning was forgotten. Like many others, it became a symbol that outlived itself and was therefore susceptible to serving as a basis for very different ideas. It would therefore be absurd to suppose the presence, even if “somnambulistic,” of conceptions such as those mentioned here wherever eagles are seen today in European signs and emblems. Things may be different for us, heirs of ancient Roman civilization, and then for the people who stand beside us today, heirs of the Roman-Germanic empire. Knowledge of the original meaning of the Aryan symbolism of the eagle, the resurrected emblem of both our peoples, could indeed mark the highest meaning of our struggle and connect it with the commitment that is repeated in it, to a certain extent, the same story in which the ancient Aryan people, under the Olympic sign and evoking the very Olympic force that exterminated dark and titanic entities, could feel themselves as the militia of influences from above and assert a superior right and a superior function of domination and order.

THE NUMBER THIRTEEN AND THE ELECT

A point made by Guénon, which is of fundamental importance for a whole new direction in ethnological and folkloric studies, is that the “primitiveness” and “spontaneity” commonly assumed in the folk traditions, customs, and legends of lower social strata and populations is nothing but a fairy tale. In all this, with very rare exceptions, we should rather see the involutive and degenerative form of elements and meanings that originally belonged to a higher plane. The same so-called popular “superstitions” are to be considered in this light: the name itself, in its etymology, says it: superstition means survival, that which subsists and survives. Popular superstitions are often remnants of previous higher concepts that are no longer understood and have therefore degenerated and subsist, so to speak, as something mechanical and lifeless, which continues to exert a certain influence, to enlist irrational and instinctive forces of faith for a kind of atavism, without the ability to provide an intelligible explanation.

We would like to give a single example here, which is sufficient to clarify the point. Everyone is familiar with popular superstitions relating to the number thirteen. They are common to more than one nation. The number thirteen has an ambiguous nature: it is a number of both misfortune and good luck. The element of misfortune, of bad luck, almost always predominates (and, as you will see, not by chance). But the other aspect is also present: the number thirteen is also a lucky number, so much so that we often see it featured even in modern pendant amulets, worn partly in jest and partly seriously by our contemporaries, especially women. Where did this belief or “superstition” come from?

Most people would be astonished to learn of its origin. We must refer to nothing less than ancient traditions of a metaphysical, sacred, and even imperial nature. The starting point

is the symbolism of the number twelve. Twelve is a kind of “sign” that is always found wherever there is a great historical tradition of a “solar” nature, and this is for specific analogical reasons. The zodiac is made up of twelve signs, which define the solar cycle. A complete cycle of the sun comprises twelve phases, defined by the zodiacal constellations, to which, in this way, were attributed twelve ways of being and, from another point of view, twelve functions of ‘solarity’ in the cycle in question. Therefore, by analogy, and in mysterious ways, the traditions that in ancient times were believed to embody a “solar” function on earth and in history always allow us to find the “symbol” of twelve. Thus, there are twelve divisions in the most ancient Aryan code, that of the laws of Manu, twelve great gods and the Hellenic *Amphictyony*, the members of many Roman priestly colleges (the *Arvales* and the *Salii*, for example, and the same is the number of the *lictors*), the divine heroes of the Aesir of Midgard in the Norse tradition, the disciples of Lao Tzu in the Far Eastern Taoist tradition, the members of the ‘circular’ council of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, the principal knights of King Arthur’s court and of the Grail, the symbolic labors of Heracles, and so on. Christianity also reflects the same order of ideas: we find the twelve apostles—but, in addition, the Thirteenth. In the assembly of the Twelve, the Thirteenth is the one who embodies the solar principle itself and is therefore the center and supreme head of all; the others, in relation to him, correspond only to functions and aspects derived from the solar cycle of the tradition, civilization, or religion in question.

This gives us what we need to understand the number thirteen as a positive, beneficial, “solar” number. How it is, more properly, a number of good luck, but possibly also of bad luck, appears from the following.

A tradition may have undergone a darkening, a decline, whereby the forms remain, but the supreme force that should permeate and animate them has withdrawn. One of the most

expressive symbolic forms of this stage is the assembly of the twelve, in which, however, the thirteenth is missing. If we refer to the medieval formulation of these ideas, we find the very interesting figure of the round table at which the twelve knights sit, but which also has a thirteenth seat, which is empty. This seat is called the dangerous seat. No one can sit there without facing a terrible trial. The seat is reserved for a chosen knight, predestined, better than any other in the world, who in chivalric novels has different names, sometimes Galahad, sometimes Parsifal, sometimes Gawain. The special qualification of this knight gives him the right to occupy this seat, that is, to embody the supreme solar function and to be the leader of the twelve and therefore of the tradition or organization or cycle to which the twelve belong. Any other knight who, without being worthy, wanted to occupy the thirteenth empty place would find his misfortune there: he would be struck by lightning or the ground would open up beneath his feet. However, even when such phenomena occur, the chosen knight remains unharmed. He often appears as the one who knows how to repair, unlike any other, a broken sword, a clear symbol of the very decadence that his coming must put an end to. Thus, it becomes clear how the number thirteen can be simultaneously lucky and unlucky. The aspect of misfortune must naturally prevail, for the reason that, on the level now indicated, it is natural that most of those who dare to occupy the thirteenth place are not up to the test.

Judge from this example what can exist, in a dull, nocturnal, subconscious form, in popular superstitions. The power of superstition is nothing more than the automatization and materialization of what was originally connected with spiritual meanings.

The Middle Ages were the last period in the West when traditions such as those relating to the number twelve, the number thirteen, and the dangerous place still retained meanings of this kind. To feel the distance between them and their superstitious survival, we will mention this again: in our book, //

mistero del Graal e la tradizione ghibellina dell'Impero, we have documented and demonstrated that the chivalric legends now mentioned had a close connection with the political-spiritual problem of the Ghibelline empire. The hero of the Grail, who was supposed to restore a mysterious fallen kingdom to its former glory and who is identified with that chosen knight who can sit fearlessly in the empty "dangerous seat," the thirteenth seat, is none other than the ruler whom the whole Ghibelline world awaits for the end of all usurpation and for the full realization of the Holy Roman Empire in the world: He thus corresponds, more or less, to Dante's mysterious Dux and Veltro, who had much more to do with the traditions mentioned above than is commonly believed, while Richard Wagner distorted their true meaning in the most pitiful way.

But this hope, as we know, was disappointed. After a brief culmination, there was a collapse: the Renaissance, humanism, reform, the anarchic and violent growth of nations, absolutism, and finally revolution and democracy. It can therefore be thought that today, more than ever, the thirteenth place is empty. The symbol it contains corresponds strictly to that of the well-known Ghibelline emperor who never died, who sleeps a centuries-long sleep and waits for 'the time to come' to reawaken and fight, at the head of those who have not forgotten him and who are loyal to him, the final battle.

Il Regime Fascista, August 9, 1939.

THE SACRED CHARACTER OF KINGSHIP

Every great “traditional” cultural form was characterized by the presence of beings who, through their “divinity,” i.e., through an innate or acquired superiority over human and natural conditions, appeared capable of representing the living and effective presence of the metaphysical principle within the temporal order. Such was the nature of the *Pontifex*, the “bridge-builder” or “path-builder” between the natural and the supernatural, according to the deeper meaning of his etymology and the original value of his function. Furthermore, according to tradition, the pontiff identified himself with the *Rex*, in accordance with the prevailing concept of a royal divinity and a priestly kingship (cf. Servius, *Ad Aened.*, III 268: “*Majorum haec consuetudo at rex esset etiam sacerdos et pontifex.*” The same can be said, as is well known, of the ancient Norse tribes). The “divine” kings thus embodied in a permanent state that life which is “beyond life.” Through their existence, by virtue of their “pontifical” mediation, through the power of the rites entrusted to their authority and the institutions of which they were the originators or supporters, spiritual influences radiated out into the world of men, which permeated their thoughts, intentions, and actions, forming a protective wall against the dark forces of inferior nature; which gave order to all life, making it suitable as a fertile basis for the realization of higher things; which consequently created the general conditions for “prosperity,” for “well-being,” for “happiness.”

The foundations of the authority of kings and rulers, that for which they were revered, feared, and glorified, was essentially this sacred and superhuman quality in the ancient worldview, understood not as empty rhetoric but as reality. Just as the invisible was perceived as a prior and higher principle than the visible and temporal, so too was such natures immediately recognized as having primacy over all and the natural and

absolute right to rule. What is lacking in all traditional cultures and only becomes a feature of a subsequent and already declining period is the lay, worldly, purely political idea of kingship and therefore also that of a primacy based either on violence and ambition or on natural and worldly qualities such as intelligence, strength, skill, courage, wisdom, concern for the material common good, and so on. Even more foreign to tradition is the idea that power is transferred to the king by those he rules; that his laws and authority are an expression of the consciousness of the people and subject to their approval. At the root of all temporal power was rather the spiritual authority of a quasi “divine being in human form.” In the *Mānavadharmśāstra* (VII, 8), the king is described as a “great deity in human form.” The Egyptian king was considered a manifestation of Ra and Horus. The kings of Alba and Rome personified Jupiter, the Norse Odin and Tiuz, the Assyrian Baal, the Iranian god of light, and so on. The idea of a divine or heavenly—as we shall see, above all a solar—descent is common to all pre-modern traditions of kingship. *Bāsileis ieroi*: the king—more than a human being, a sacred cosmic being—possesses the transcendent power that sets him apart from every mortal, enabling him to bestow gifts on his subjects that are beyond human reach and enabling him to give effect to the traditional ritual acts which, as we have said, and in which the elements of true “government” and the supernatural supports of the entire traditional way of life were recognized. Conversely, in Greece and Rome, the king could no longer be king if he proved unworthy of the priesthood, for which he was *rex sacrorum*. He was the first and highest executor of the rites for that entity whose temporal fall he was at the same time. That is why kingship prevailed and was considered natural. It had no need of material power. It imposed itself first and irresistibly through the spirit. “Glorious is the dignity of a god on earth,” says an Aryan text, “but difficult to attain for the inadequate: worthy of being king is only he whose mind rises to such heights.”

In tradition, the sun symbol essentially corresponded to royal divinity. The king was accorded the same “glory” that belongs to the sun and light—symbols of the higher nature—when they triumph over darkness every morning. “As king, he ascends the throne of Horus (the sun) of the living, like his father Ra, every day”; ‘I have decreed that you shall rise as king of the south and the north on the throne of Horus, like the sun, forever’—these are phrases that refer to the ancient Egyptian kingship. Incidentally, they correspond exactly to the Iranian ones, where the king is said to be “of the same race as the gods,” he “has the same throne as Mithra, he rises with the sun,” and where he is called *particeps siderum*, “lord of peace, salvation of men, eternal man, victor who rises with the sun.”

This solar “glory” or “victory,” which thus determined the nature of kingship and its right from above, was not limited to a mere symbol, but identified itself with a real and creative power, of which the king as such was regarded as the bearer. In ancient Egypt, the king was also called “fighting Horus”—*hor âhâ*—to denote this character of victory or glory of the solar principle embodied in the king: in Egypt, the king was not only of “divine origin,” but was also “installed” as such and then periodically authenticated by rites that represented the victory of the sun god Horus over Typhon-Seth, the demon of the inferior realm. Such rites were believed to have the power to draw “strength” and “life” to themselves, which supernaturally “enveloped” the king’s abilities. But the ideogram *uas*, “power,” is the scepter carried by the gods and kings, an ideogram that in older texts stands for another scepter in the shape of a zigzag, in which one recognizes the zigzag of lightning. The royal “power” thus appears as a manifestation of the heavenly power of lightning; and the combination of the signs “life force,” *ânshûs*, forms a word that also refers to the “flaming milk” that nourishes the immortals, which in turn is not unrelated to the uraeus, the divine flame that is sometimes life-giving and sometimes destructive and whose symbol surrounds the head of the Egyptian king. The various

elements thus converge exclusively in the idea of a “non-earthly” power (or fluid)—*sa*—which consecrates and authenticates the victorious solar nature of the king and which “rushes” from one king to another—*sotpu*—forming an unbroken “golden” chain of the “royal family” that is destined to rule [One of the names of the Egyptian kings is “Horus made of gold,” where gold refers to the “solar” fluid from which the “imperishable body” of the immortals arises: equivalent to the above-mentioned “milk of flames” and the “power of lightning,” both of which are also strengthened by the sun’s flame and refer to the king. It is interesting to note that glory figures as an attribute of God in Christian tradition—*gloria in excelsis deo*—and that, according to mystical theology, the vision of “beatitude” is fulfilled in “glory.” Christian iconography tends to spread it as a halo around the heads of saints, reflecting the meaning of the royal Egyptian uraeus and the rayed crown of the Iranian-Roman kingship.

According to Far Eastern tradition, the king, the “son of heaven”—*t’ien—tze*—, i.e., the one not born according to the laws of mortals, has the “heavenly mandate”—*t’ien—ming*—, which also includes the idea of a supernatural real power. The nature of this power “from heaven” is, according to Lao-tze, *tun*—without—*tun* (*wei—wu—wei*) or immaterial action through presence. It is invisible like the wind and yet has the irresistible force of a natural power: the powers of ordinary men, says Meng-tze, bend beneath it as the blades of grass bend beneath the wind [On the nature of the “virtue” possessed by the king, cf. *Dschung-jung*, XXXIII, 6, where it is said that the secret actions of “Heaven” reach the utmost degree of immateriality—“they have neither sound nor smell,” they are delicate “like the lightest feather.” On doing without doing, see *ibid.* XXVI, 5–6: “People who are perfect in the highest degree resemble the earth in the breadth and depth of their virtue; in the height and splendor of their virtue, they resemble heaven; in their extension and duration, they resemble space and time, which are without limits. He who lives in this glorious perfection does not show himself,

and yet he reveals himself, like the earth, through his beneficence; he does not move, and yet he brings about manifold change, like the heavens; he does not act, and yet he brings his works to ultimate perfection, like space and time.” Further down—XXXI, 1—it is said that only such a person is “worthy of possessing the highest authority and commanding men.” Anchored in this power or “virtue,” the ruler in ancient China was indeed the center of every other thing or energy. It was believed that not only the glory or misery of his empire depended secretly on his behavior (it is the “virtue”—*te*’—of the ruler, rather than his example, that makes the behavior of his people good or evil), but also the orderly and favorable course of natural events themselves. His function as the center implied his perseverance in that inner, “victorious” way of being that was spoken of and which may correspond here to the meaning of the well-known expression “immutability in the middle.” But if this is the case, no power can arise against his “virtue” to disrupt the traditionally ordered course of human and even natural things. In every normal event, therefore, the ruler had to seek the ultimate cause and secret responsibility for it in himself.

More generally, the idea of sacred interventions through which man, with his hidden powers, maintains the natural order and, so to speak, renews the life of nature, belongs to the earliest traditions and very often interferes with the idea of kingship itself. That the first and most essential function of the king consists in performing those ritual and sacrificial acts which constituted the center of life in the traditional world is, in any case, an idea that persists in all regular forms of tradition, up to the Greek cities and Rome [Aristotle (*Pol.* VI, 5, 11; cf. III, 9): “Kings derive their dignity from being priests of a communal cult.” The most important act performed by the king of Sparta was the offering of sacrifices; and the same could be said of the first Roman kings and then also of the rulers of the imperial period.], by creating the aforementioned inseparability of royal dignity from the sacrificial and pontifical. The king, endowed

with supernatural powers, a divine being, naturally appeared as the one who was directly capable of unfolding the power of the rites and opening the way to the higher world. In those forms of tradition in which a special priestly caste appears, the king, if he corresponds to his original dignity and function, therefore belongs to it, namely as its head, *pontifex maximus*. Conversely, when we find among certain peoples the custom of deposing or removing the head of the tribe in the event of failure—for this failure was regarded by them as a sign of the decline of the mystical power of “fortune,” which gave one the right to be head—we find here an echo of something which, albeit in forms of materialistic degeneration, leads us back to the same train of thought. And among the Nordic peoples, up to the time of the Goths, where the principle of royal divinity remained untouched (the king was called Ases, the proper name of a certain category of Scandinavian gods), an unfortunate event, such as a famine, a plague, or a crop failure, if not exactly as the absence of the mystical power of “luck” associated with the king, then at least as the effect of something the king must have done that prevented the objective effectiveness of his power.

The king was therefore required to preserve the symbolic and solar characteristics of the *invictus*—*sol invictus*, *ēlios anīketos*—and thus maintain a state of unshakeable and superhuman centrality, which corresponds exactly to the Far Eastern idea of “steadfastness in the middle.” Otherwise, the power, and with it the function, passed to the one who proved that he knew better how to draw it to himself. Already here we can point to one of the cases in which the idea of “victory” becomes a junction of different meanings. For those who understand it correctly, the legend of the King of the Forest of Nemi, whose dignity in a time of kingship and priesthood passed to the one who succeeded in surprising and “killing” him, is highly significant in this context. Frazer’s attempt to trace manifold traditions of the same type, which exist pretty much everywhere in the world, back to this very legend is also well known. Of course, the “trial” as a physical

fight—even if it never actually took place—is only the materialistic reduction of something that has a higher meaning. In order to grasp the deeper meaning hidden in the legend of the priest-king of Nemi, one must remember that, according to tradition, only an “escaped slave” (i.e., esoterically understood, a being who had escaped the shackles of inferior nature) after first coming into possession of a branch of the sacred oak tree. But the oak is equivalent to the “tree of the world” in many other traditions and is a fairly common symbol used to denote the primal force of life, expressing that only a being who wants to share in this force can seek to wrest the dignity of Rex Nemorensis. As far as this dignity is concerned, it should be remembered that the oak tree and also the grove whose “rex” was the priest-king of Nemi were associated with Diana, and that Diana was even the “mistress” of the king of the forests. The great Asian goddesses of nature were often symbolized by sacred trees in the ancient traditions of the Oriental middle classes: in which we discover, among the symbols, the idea of a kingship derived from marriage or mating with this mystical “life” force—which is also that of transcendent wisdom and immortality—embodied both in the goddess and in the tree. Thus, the legend of Nemi takes on the general meaning that we find in many other myths and legends of tradition, namely that of a “victor” or “hero” who, as such, takes possession of a woman or goddess in place of the rex, who in other traditions appears in the indirect meaning of a guardian of the fruits of immortality (the female figures in relation to the symbolic tree in the myths of Heracles, Jason, Gilgamesh, etc.) or in the direct meaning of a personification of the secret powers of the world and of life or of superhuman knowledge (cf. J. Evola, *La tradizione ermetica*, Bari 1931, pp. 13–25. Some ancient traditions relating to a “female” origin of royal power can sometimes be interpreted in this way. Their meaning is then exactly the opposite of that of the “gynecocratic” view, to which we may return on another occasion.—On the connection between the divine female, the tree, and sacred

kingship, see also the passages in the *Zohar* [III, 50b, III, 51a—also II, 144b, 145a, with reference to Moses as the husband of the “matron”], where it is said that “the way that leads to the great tree of life is the great matron” and that “all the power of the king resides in the matron,” since the “matron” is the “female” form immanent in the deity; the one who later, among the Gnostics, often corresponds to a female symbol as the “Holy Spirit” [the virgin Sophia]. In Japanese tradition, which continues unchanged to this day, the origin of imperial power is traced back to a sun goddess—Amaterasu Omikami—and the core element of the ceremony for the ascension to power—*dajo sai*—is given by the relationship that the king establishes with her through the “presentation of the new food.” As for the “tree,” it is interesting to note that it also remains connected to the idea of the emperor in medieval legends: before his death, the last emperor will hang his scepter, crown, and sword on the “dry tree,” which is usually located in the symbolic region of the presbyter John, just as the dying Roland hangs his unbreakable sword on the “tree.” Further similarities: Frazer pointed out the connection between the branch that the escaped slave must break from the sacred oak tree of Nemi in order to fight the king of the forest, and the golden branch that allows Aeneas to descend into the underworld as a living person, i.e., to be initiated into the invisible world as a living person. Now, one of the gifts that Emperor Frederick II receives from the presbyter is a ring that makes the wearer “invisible” [i.e., immortal and invisible: in Greek tradition, the immortality of heroes is often synonymous with their transition to immortal life] and which brings “victory”: just as Siegfried in the Nibelungen defeats the “divine” Brunhild through the symbolic virtue of making himself invisible and leads her to the royal wedding bed.).

Remnants of traditions in which the themes contained in the archaic legend of the King of the Forest recur remain, incidentally, until the end of the Middle Ages, if not longer, and are always linked to the ancient idea that legitimate kingship has

a tendency to manifest itself in specific and concrete, we might say “experimental,” way. A single example: before the outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War, Venice demanded that Philip of Valois prove his actual right to wear the royal crown by one of the following means. The first was victory over his adversary, with whom he would have had to fight in a tournament, which indeed brings us back to Rex Nemorensis and the mystical authentication of every “victory” (On another occasion, we will shed even more light on the view that we encounter here—as, more generally, in the “trial by combat” of certain medieval chivalry—only in a crude materialistic form. According to tradition, the victor was only such insofar as he embodied superhuman energy; and superhuman energy was embodied in him insofar as he became the victor: two moments in a single act, the convergence of a “descent” with an “ascent.”) The two other means are described in a text from that period: “If Philip of Valois is, as he claims, the true king of France, he should prove it by exposing himself to hungry lions, for lions never wound a true king; or else he should perform the miracle of healing the sick, as other true kings are wont to do... In case of failure, he would be considered unworthy of his crown.”

The supernatural power revealed in victory or in thaumaturgical virtue can therefore also be found in times such as those of Philip of Valois, which were already considered “modern” era, cannot be separated from the traditional idea of true and legitimate kingship. The thaumaturgical virtue is also confirmed by tradition in the Roman emperors Hadrian and Vespasian (Tacitus, *Hist.*, IV, 81; Suetonius, *Vespas.*, VII). Among the Carolingians, we find traces of an idea according to which the soteriological power has a material effect, as it were, even in the royal robes. Beginning with Robert the Pious, through the kings of France, and from Edward the Confessor to those of England, until the age of the revolutions, the thaumaturgical power was then transmitted through the dynasty, initially extending to the healing of all diseases, later limiting itself to some of them, and

proving itself in thousands of cases so much so that, according to Pierre Mathieu, it appears “as the only lasting miracle in the religion of Christians.” Among the spiritual influences that affected the heroes whose cult was celebrated in Greece, the prophetic virtue was often counted alongside the soteriological virtue. And even if one disregards the actual assimilation of individual persons to them, the idea remains that “what brought the kings into such veneration was mainly the divine virtues and powers that were present only in them and not in other men.” Joseph de Maistre writes: “God literally appoints kings. He prepares the royal families; he lets them flourish in a cloud that conceals their origin. Finally, they emerge, crowned with glory and honor; they establish themselves, and that is the greatest sign of their legitimacy. They rise up of their own accord, without force from one side and without explicit negotiation from the other. There is a certain magnificent calm that is not easy to describe. Legitimate usurpation—that seems to me the most apt expression (were it not too bold) to describe this kind of origin, which time soon consecrates.” (In Iranian tradition, too, there was a belief that the nature of a royal being would inevitably prevail sooner or later.) De Maistre’s passage refers to the custom of symbolic veiling with a cloud, which was traditionally used, especially in Greece, on stolen and immortalized “heroes;” in addition, the ancient mystical idea of victory is evident here, insofar as, according to De Maistre, “establishing oneself” is the “greatest sign of the legitimacy” of kings.

Deutsches Adelsblatt, March 4, 1933.

THE EMPEROR JULIAN

It is encouraging to come across scholarly works that go beyond the prejudices and distortions that characterize most contemporary historians' views. Such is the case with Raffaello Prati, who has translated into Italian and introduced to the public the speculative writings of the Roman emperor Julian Flavius, collectively titled "*Of Gods and Men*."

It is noteworthy that Prati used the term "Emperor Julian" instead of the predominant expression "Julian the Apostate." The term "apostate" is hardly appropriate in this case, since it should rather be applied to those who abandoned the sacred traditions and cults that were the true soul of Rome's ancient greatness and accepted a new faith, which was not that of the Roman or Latin stock but of Asian and Jewish origin. Thus, the term "apostate" should not characterize those who, like Julian Flavius, dared to be faithful to the spirit of tradition, seeking to reaffirm the solar and sacred ideal of the empire.

Reading the published texts, which were written by Julian in his tent between long marches and battles (as if trying to draw new energy from his spirit to face eventual difficulties), should be of benefit to those who follow the current of opinion that defines paganism, in its religious components, as more or less synonymous with superstition. In fact, Julian, in his attempt to restore Tradition, opposed Christianity with a metaphysical vision. Julian's writings allow us to see, behind the allegorical and external elements of pagan myths, a substance of superior quality.

Julian is very direct when he writes:

"Whenever myths about sacred matters are absurd according to rational thought, being shouted out loud, as they were, they call us not to believe them literally, but to study them and follow their hidden meaning... When the meaning is expressed incongruously, there is a hope that men will neglect the most

obvious (apparent) meaning of the words, and that pure intelligence may ascend to an understanding of the unequivocal nature of the gods that transcends all current thoughts.”

This should be the hermetic principle employed by those who study ancient myths and theologies. However, when scholars use derogatory terms such as ‘superstition’ or ‘idolatry,’ they demonstrate that they are closed-minded and disingenuous.

Therefore, in the re-evaluation of the ancient sacred tradition of Rome attempted by Julian, it is the esoteric view of the nature of the “gods” and their “knowledge” that ultimately matters. This knowledge corresponds to an inner realization. From this perspective, the gods are not portrayed as poetic inventions or abstractions of philosophical theologies, but rather as *the symbols and projections of transcendent states of consciousness*.

Thus, Julian himself, as an initiate into the mysteries of Mithras, saw a close connection between a higher knowledge of oneself and the path leading to the “knowledge of the gods”; this is a noble goal that did not prevent him from saying that even dominion over the lands of Rome and the barbarians pales in comparison.

This brings us back to the tradition of a secret discipline through which self-knowledge is radically transformed and strengthened by new powers and inner states, which are symbolized in ancient theology by various *numina*. This transformation is said to occur after an initial preparation, consisting of living a pure life and practicing asceticism, and finally receiving special experiences that are determined by initiation rites.

Helios is the power to which Julian dedicates his hymns, whose name he even invokes in his last words, when he dies at sunset on a battlefield in Asia Minor. Helios is the sun, which is not conceived as a physical body, but rather as a symbol of a

metaphysical light and a transcendent power. This power manifests itself in humanity and in those who have been regenerated, as sovereign *nous* and as a mystical force from above. In ancient times and even in Rome itself, through Persian influence, this force was considered to be strictly associated with royal dignity. The true meaning of the Roman imperial cult that Julian attempted to restore and institutionalize above and against Christianity can only be appreciated within this context. The central motif in this cult is: the authentic and legitimate leader is the only one endowed with ontological supernatural superiority and who is the image of the king of heaven, called Helios. When this occurs (and only then), authority and hierarchy are justified; the *regnum* is sanctified; and a luminous center of gravity is established, which draws to itself a number of humans and natural forces.

Julian longed to realize this “pagan” ideal within a stable and unified imperial hierarchy, endowed with a dogmatic foundation, a system of disciplines and laws, and a priestly class. The priestly class was supposed to be led by the emperor himself, who, having been regenerated and elevated above mere mortal conditions thanks to the Mysteries, simultaneously embodied spiritual authority and temporal power. According to this view, the emperor was regarded as the Pontifex Maximus, an ancient term revived by Augustus. The ideological assumptions underlying Julian’s vision are:

- 1) nature is understood as a harmonious whole permeated by living but invisible forces;
- 2) a monotheism professed by the state;
- 3) a body of “philosophers” (it would be more appropriate to call them *wise men*) capable of interpreting the traditional theology of ancient Rome and updating it through initiatory rites.

This view stands in stark contrast to early Christian dualism, exemplified by Jesus' phrase, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." This phrase ultimately led Christianity to refuse to pay homage to the emperor in any role other than that of a ruler. This refusal was occasionally seen as a manifestation of anarchy and subversion, and culminated in state persecution of Christians.

Unfortunately, the time was not ripe for the realization of Julian's ideal. Such a realization would have required the active participation, through synergy, of all strata of society as well as a relaunch of the ancient *Weltanschauung* in more vibrant terms. Instead, within pagan society there was an irreversible separation between form and content.

Even the consensus that Christianity had achieved was a fatal sign of the decline of the times. For a large majority of the people, talking about gods as inner experiences or considering the above-mentioned solar and transcendent principles as necessary requirements for the empire was nothing more than fiction or mere "philosophy." In other words, what was missing was an *existential* foundation. Furthermore, Julian deluded himself into believing that he would be able to transform certain esoteric teachings into formative political, cultural, and social forces. Due to their true nature, however, these teachings were destined to fall solely within the purview of restricted circles.

This should not lead us to conclude that, at least in principle, there was a contradiction between Julian's vision and the ideal of a state forged in the application of these spiritual and transcendent elements. The very historical existence of a succession of civilizations that were centered on a "solar" spirituality (ranging from ancient Egypt and ancient Iran to pre-World War II Japan) should demonstrate that this contradiction does not actually exist. It should rather be said that Rome, in Julian's time, already lacked the human and spiritual substance capable of establishing the connections and relationships of participation that

characterize a new living hierarchy capable of creating a totalitarian imperial organism worthy of the name pagan.

Dimitri Merezhkovsky's famous text, *Death of the Gods*, admirably and evocatively captures the cultural atmosphere of Julian's time with its omens of a *decline of the gods*.

After a long hiatus, some elements of the ancient Tradition were destined to resurface. Thanks to the emergence of the Germanic dynasties on the stage of European history, it became possible to speak once again of *restauratio imperii*, in the form of the medieval Holy Roman Empire. This is especially true if we consider the Ghibelline tradition, which sought to claim for the Empire, against the hegemonic demands of the Church of Rome, a supernatural dignity no less than that enjoyed by the Church itself.

In view of this, it is important for a closer examination to take into account *what was hidden* in chivalric literature, in the so-called imperial *legend*, and also in other documents. I have attempted to gather and interpret all these sources adequately in our work *The Mystery of the Grail and the Ghibelline Tradition of the Empire*, published in 1937.

Roma, March 17, 1972.

ROME AND THE “SOLAR CHRISTMAS” OF THE NORDIC-ARYAN TRADITION

Among other things, the doctrine of race should lead to two results of no small importance on the spiritual plane: first, with a return to the origins, it should bring to light the deeper meanings of traditions and symbols that have been obscured over the millennia, so that only scattered fragments have survived, decayed into customs and conventional festivals. Secondly, and not unrelated to this, the doctrine of race should reawaken sensitivity to a living conception of the world and nature, limiting the power of the rationalistic, profane, scientific, and phenomenological conception that has seduced Western man for centuries. And, in relation to this living and spiritual sense of things and phenomena, the best points of reference can be found above all in the “solar” and heroic conceptions that the most ancient Aryan traditions had in common.

Very few suspect that the festivals of these days, which even today, in the age of skyscrapers, radio, and large crowds, are celebrated in cosmopolitan cities as well as in trenches, war machines, and fighting masses, continue a remote tradition, taking us back to the times when, almost at the dawn of humanity, the upward movement of the first Aryan civilization began; a tradition in which, moreover, it was less a particular belief of men that was expressed than the great voice of things themselves. In order to say something about this, we must first recall a fact ignored by many, namely that originally the date of Christmas and that of the beginning of the new year coincided, this date not being arbitrary but connected to a precise cosmic event, the winter solstice. The winter solstice falls on December 25, which is the date of Christmas as we know it today, but which originally had an essentially “solar” meaning. This is still evident in ancient Rome: the date of Christmas in ancient Rome was that of the rebirth of the Sun, the invincible god—*natalis solis invicti*.

With it, as the day of the new sun—*dies solis novi*—the new year, the new cycle, began in the imperial era. But this “solar Christmas” of imperial Rome, in turn, refers to a much more remote tradition of Nordic-Aryan origin. After all, Sol, the sun god, already appears among the *indigetes*, that is, among the deities of Roman origins, received from even more distant cycles of civilization. In reality, as we shall see, the solar religion of the imperial period was largely a revival, and almost a rebirth, unfortunately altered by various factors of decomposition, of an ancient Aryan heritage.

Pre-Roman Italic prehistory is already rich in traces of this solar cult: solar chariots, radiated discs, radiated stars, crosses of all kinds, not excluding hooked crosses engraved, for example, on archaic axes found in Piedmont and Liguria. In this way, we can see the passage, in ancient Italy, of the same tradition, which left similar traces from the Stone Age along all the routes of the great Anno-Western and Nordic-Aryan migrations. Symbols, signs, hieroglyphs, rudimentary calendar or astral notations, figurations on vases, weapons or ornaments, enigmatic arrangements of ritual stones or caves, and later, rites and myths that survived in later civilizations, if studied according to the new points of view proper to the spiritual and racial investigation of the world of origins, provide concordant and unambiguous evidence not only of the presence of a unified solar cult as the center of the civilization of the primordial Aryan peoples, but also of the special importance that the “Christmas” date, i.e., the winter solstice on December 25, had for them.

To avoid misunderstandings, however, it would be well to remind a certain class of readers of what we have already had occasion to point out here, namely, that when speaking of a prehistoric solar cult, one should not think at all of inferior forms of a “naturalistic” and idolatrous religion. It is a myth that ancient humanity, and especially that of the great Aryan race, superstitiously deified natural phenomena. The truth is that

antiquity conceived natural phenomena essentially as tangible symbols of higher, spiritual meanings—more or less as supports spontaneously offered by nature to the senses in order to perceive these transcendent meanings. That things may sometimes have been different among the less educated members of a given ancient people can be conceded, but this is clearly as inconclusive as the not uncommon fact that bigoted superstitions have survived even in some Christian cults among certain uneducated and fanatical populations in the South. Having thus cleared up a well-known misunderstanding, the symbolic meaning of archaic expressions such as “light of men” or “light of the fields”—*landa ljòme*—given to the sun, must be clear, and it can also be understood that the entire course of the sun during the year, with its ascending and descending phases, was likewise presented in terms of a grandiose cosmic symbol. In this solar cycle, the winter solstice constituted a kind of critical point, experienced with particular drama in the period when the original Aryan tribes had not yet left the regions where the Arctic climate and the nightmare of a long night had set in. Under these conditions, the point of the winter solstice—the lowest point of the ecliptic—appeared as the point at which the “light of life” seemed to be extinguished, setting, sinking into the desolate and frozen earth or into the waters or among the dark forests, from which, however, it immediately rises again to shine with renewed brightness.

Here a new life arises, a new beginning is made, a new cycle opens. The “light of life” is rekindled. The “sun hero” rises or is born from the waters. Beyond the darkness and deadly frost, a rebirth, a liberation is experienced. The symbolic tree of the world and of life is animated with new strength. It is in relation to all these meanings that, already in prehistoric times, thousands of years before the Common Era, a number of rituals and sacred festivals celebrated December 25 as the date of the birth or rebirth, in the world as well as in man, of the “solar” force. Little is known about the fact that the traditional Christmas tree, still in

use in many countries and partly also in Italy, but in the form of a children's game or, at most, a tradition of good middle-class families, is a residual echo of that ancient, severe Aryan and North-Aryan tradition. Such a tree, made from an "evergreen," *semper virens*, that is, from a plant that does not die in winter, pine or fir, reproduces the archaic tree of life or of the world, which at the winter solstice is illuminated with new light, as expressed by the candles that adorn it and are lit on that date. And the 'gifts' with which the tree is laden—today, simple gifts for children—actually represented the symbolic 'gift of life' given to the solar force that is born or reborn. But the moment when the *semper virens*, the plant that never dies, is renewed and illuminated is, in primordial symbolism, also the moment when, as has been said, the 'solar hero' rises from the waters in the same way that, according to a ritual that continued until the Ghibelline Middle Ages after playing an important part in the legends surrounding Alexander the Great, the cosmic tree is also a 'solar' tree with an intimate relationship with the so-called 'tree of the empire'—*arbor solis, arbor imperii*.

This leads us to consider another very interesting aspect of the traditions in question, for which we would like to refer in particular to ancient Roman culture. Mithraism, or the cult of Mithras, as is well known, is the late form taken by the ancient Aryan-Iranian (Zoroastrian) religion, in a formulation particularly suited to a warrior mentality. When this cult spread throughout Roman society, under Aurelian the date of the "solar nativity or winter solstice," December 25, was identified with that of the celebration of *Natalis Invicti*, that is, the birth of Mithra, considered a "solar" hero.

As mentioned above, it would be very superficial, if not downright crude, to speak *sic et simpliciter* of "imports" or "Eastern influences": the East at that time was a very complex entity, which included very heterogeneous elements—but among them, undoubtedly, there were also important and uncorrupted

parts of the most ancient spiritual heritage of the Aryan and Indo-European peoples. With regard to the relationship that was established between Mithras and the Roman “solar Christmas,” a well-known scholar rightly pointed out that this did not lead to an alteration, but rather to a renewal of the Roman calendar according to its ancient astronomical and cosmic aspect, which it had had in the early days of Romulus and Numa and which gave the festivals the meaning of great symbols in the coincidence of their dates with great epochs in the life of the world.

After that, it is important to examine the attribute of *invictus-aniketos*—given to Mithra—to the solar hero—and to the solar force itself in the new Roman conception. It is a “triumphal” attribute. In the original Aryan-Iranian and related traditions, it is the attribute of all celestial nature and, eminently, of the sun, as the light that conquers darkness, the luminous force of the heavens over which the forces of night and the dark earth will never prevail. But in Rome, we see that the same epithet *invictus* becomes an imperial, caesarian title, and we know that Mithraism, rather than being the cult of an abstract deity, sought to “induce,” so to speak, the same quality of Mithra in the initiates through a certain transformation of their nature. This clearly shows a tendency to understand the “solar” attribute in a symbolic and analogical way, so that it can be applied to man and, properly speaking, to mark the type and ideal of a higher humanity—not to say a “superhumanity.” Just as the sun rises, perpetually victorious over darkness, so too, in a perpetual inner victory over mortal and instinctive nature, a being is fulfilled, whom a mystical virtue renders, in the normal course of events, eminently suited to the function of king, leader, or guide. This is how Mithra, the “solar hero,” was venerated in Rome as a *fautor imperii*; this is how an intimate relationship is established between solar symbolism and the ideas of kingship and empire in their highest form. This relationship was particularly prominent in the heroic traditions of the ancient Aryan peoples, and we have already discussed it here in relation to the mystical doctrine of

“glory.” Not wishing to repeat what has already been said, we will limit ourselves to recalling the presence of the same meanings in ancient Rome. The *victoria Caesaris*, that is, the mystical triumphal force that, in the symbol of a statuette, was transmitted from one Caesar to another, exactly reflects the most ancient Aryan-Iranian traditions concerning kingship and the so-called *hvarenò*: for, as we have already said in the article just mentioned, the *hvarenò* was a mysterious “solar” force of invincibility and “glory” that invests leaders, making them something more than mere men and testifying to them precisely through their victory.

An ancient Roman effigy of Sol depicts this symbolic god with his right hand raised in a “pontifical” gesture of protection and his left hand holding a sphere, symbol of universal dominion. In another image, however, the same god can be seen handing the globe to the emperor, accompanied by inscriptions referring precisely to the “solarity” of Rome’s stability and imperium: *Sol conservator orbis*, *Sol dominus romani imperii*. Another particularly interesting medallion bears the laureate image of the emperor on the front—with his head surrounded by the *semper virens*, the imperishable foliage—and on the back the sun god with the sphere, but also, nearby, a hooked cross (which we therefore also see in ancient Rome) and the inscription: *solī invicto comiti*, meaning: to the sun god, invincible companion. Another image preserved in the Capitoline Museum shows us the association of the symbol of *Sol sanctissimus* with the eagle, the fateful animal of Rome, which was also thought to be the one from which the transubstantiated spirit of the dead emperors was symbolically drawn from the funeral pyre in heaven. Similar evidence could easily be multiplied. It is not unreasonable to say that they speak to us of a true ‘divine solar mandate’ as the living soul of that imperial Caesarean function, which, for us, in the ancient world, was a kind of last flicker of archaic meanings that were gradually lost.

In the ancient Roman week, the ‘day of the sun’ was the ‘day of the lord’—and this meaning has survived in later times in the term Sunday, from *dominus*, lord, as well as in the Germanic designation *sontag* or English *sunday* for the same day of “feast,” which has literally preserved the meaning of “day of the sun” and, with it, the reflection of the ancient Aryan solar conception. Something of the wisdom of the beginning seems to have been preserved in some way in the present-day celebration of Christmas, even though the celebration of the new year has become dissociated from it. The symbolism of light remains—remember, for example, the words of the prologue to the Gospel of John: *erat lux vera, quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum*—as well as the attribute of “glory,” which appears a little further down. In monumental traces of the early Romanesque period, the symbol of the cross itself is combined with that of the sun.

In the Aryan and North-Aryan traditions, and in Rome itself, the same theme had not only a religious and mystical significance, but also a sacred, heroic, and cosmic one. It was the tradition of a people to whom nature itself, the very voice of things, spoke on that date of a mystery of resurrection, of the birth or rebirth of a principle not only of “light” and new life, but also of *imperium*, in the highest and most august sense of the term.

ASPECTS OF DEATH IN ROMAN CULTURE

Our understanding of the ancient world, among our contemporaries and, above all, among various “specialists,” is hampered by the assumption that ancient man had more or less the same problems as modern man and sought, like us, solutions in the form of “theories” and conceptual formulas. This is a completely erroneous assumption: the ancient mentality, in its specificity and particularity, cannot be reduced to rationality; it had other forms of knowledge, in which symbols and myths, not concepts or “theories,” served as means of expression. Here we must reject a second prejudice of modern interpreters: the prejudice that myth is merely a different, imaginative, and primitive expression of the same meanings that modern man expresses through concepts. Once again, it is something else entirely: the basis of myth was essentially states of consciousness; it referred to “experiences,” not logical constructions.

A young Italian scientist of Hungarian origin, Angelo Brelich had the merit of recognizing this point with perfect clarity—a point that could not be more disturbing to the “ignorant competence” of specialists—in his monograph on Aspects of Death in Roman Culture (*Aspetti della morte nella Romanità*), published in Italian by the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Budapest. He arrived at some very interesting conclusions, which are worth mentioning here. In order to grasp what exactly the truth was about the *post-mortem* in imperial Roman society, Brelich did not rely on this or that formulation of the “philosophers” of the time, but above all on the vast material of tomb inscriptions and Roman funeral rituals: an authentic and direct expression of living tradition, of the general “spiritual form” of the ancient Romans, unadulterated by speculative superstructures. Thanks to serious documentation and intelligent exegesis, Brelich discovers a kind of development of ancient Roman views on the *post-mortem*: distinct ideas that can be

arranged in a series. The starting point is the idea of death as a special state; a colorless, eternal, silent, dark form of existence, without pleasure or pain: Hades, the world of the Manes. It is important to emphasize that this is something different from both immortality and annihilation. The ancient Romans thought of death as a “mode of being”: the dead continue to exist, but no longer as life, but as a state of death.

But it is here that a new element appears in many testimonies taken from tomb inscriptions. There is a paradoxical relationship between the symbols of the state of death, as reduced and extinguished life, and those of a kind of unbridled life, more or less associated with the elemental forces of generation, growth, cosmic fertility, and indomitability: phallic symbols, Dionysian symbols, telluric-Demeterian symbols. It is as if life becomes overflowing after death, acquiring greater intensity and becoming frenetic. This brings us closer to a kind of “apotheosis”—deification—of the dead.

How does this view fit in with the previous one? It seems that these are either two aspects of the same process or an alternative, a possibility of duplication offered by the *post-mortem*. Individuation, form, separation: these are the characteristics of common existence. Death cancels them out: it erases form, individuation, limits, and this aspect is reflected in the “larval” conception of the state of death. But what does man receive in exchange? Life. A life that seems superior, unlimited, richly exuberant. “What is expressed in the use of symbols of life and fertility on tombs,” writes Brelich, ‘is what is found in surplus in amorphous, individuality-less life in relation to human existence.’ This is the second aspect. But Dionysian ecstasy is also a way of getting rid of individuality. The ancient Dionysian man ardently desired self-destruction: a desire for death that was a desire for a full and total life. The path that led to death was, for him, that of the intensification of life; and this is where the meaning of the ancient “sacred orgies” lies: in all the frenzied forms of a life lived to its extreme limit, a path was also conceived towards something

“more than life,” and therefore towards effective immortality, since these forms already contained a kind of active destruction of individuality. Funeral feasts, however, originally had more than one feature in common with Dionysian orgies.

However, the fact that Dionysianism had an initiatory character—from which it followed that it could only consider immortalization as a privilege, and not as something natural and “general”—leads us to believe that the Roman views on the state of death were not so simple, but ultimately envisaged the real possibility of a double destiny. Brelich himself eventually acknowledged this: “It seems that ancient man felt suspended between two possibilities: one consisting in falling, in death, among the larvae, the shadows, the Manes; the other consisting in rising to the totality of life, which, in turn, we have seen, is again a state of death (in relation to conditioned life). Those who want to escape the first path throw themselves into the possibilities of intensification and elevation of life.”

Moreover, insights into higher and more positive states emerge from other accounts. The terms *securitas* and *quies*, very frequently associated with the state of death, refer to the positive aspect of “non-existence”; they are attributes of immutability and eternity. But these attributes also appear as titles of the Roman Caesar, considered a divine being: *securitas Augusti*, *quies Augusti*. According to Roman tradition, however, the divine power embodied in Caesar is only released at the moment of death, and only then does it completely transform him into a god: the imperial “apotheosis,” the deification of Caesar, originally presupposed his death, the abandonment of individuality, necessary for the unveiling of the higher form beyond the person. The attributes mentioned above are linked to the idea of eternity: *perpetua securitas*, *aeterna quies*.

A number of tomb inscriptions also reveal similar ideas: the dead pass into a divine sphere, transforming themselves into a certain god, whose existence or human “life” then necessarily

resembles a kind of reduced manifestation. It is therefore the process of imperial apotheosis that is repeated.

The result of this whole investigation is interesting. The ancient Roman would therefore have been unaware of the ideal of individual survival, of a kind of continuation of the human and finite mode of being. The Roman “placed the state of death either below life or above life, but never identified it with life.” Something is destroyed, “man” is destroyed; and on this point, even the common people in ancient Rome had no doubts. After that, there is either a descent into the extinct forms of a larval survival, or an elevation to the mode of being of a god who has overcome the crisis of Dionysian destruction.

Such was the vision of the *post-mortem* that Rome experienced outside of any “theory,” and even into the Augustan period. It fits perfectly with the conceptions of Indo-European cultures: Hades and Olympus (Greece), *Pitri-yâna* and *Deva-yâna* (India), Niflheim and Walhalla (Nordic peoples), etc., are only different ways of expressing the same vision, which is clearly aristocratic and heroic in nature. Only the confused images that appeared in connection with the humanistic and plebeian disintegration of the traditional Aryan world led to a belief in generalized, i.e., democratized, immortality, in which personal survival is promised to every soul, while the ancient representations of the afterlife—symbolic expressions of a science of the various states of consciousness—were transformed into moralistic instruments used to contain the human animal by frightening or flattering it with the idea of otherworldly punishments or rewards.

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A GLIMPSE INTO THE AFTERLIFE UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF A TIBETAN LAMA

One of the points on which there is a clear contrast between the attitudes that have prevailed in the West and those that have been preserved—though not always in pure form—among almost all the peoples of the East, concerns the concept of death.

According to Eastern teachings, the human state of existence is but a phase of a rhythm that comes from the infinite and goes towards the infinite. Death, in this respect, is not tragic: it is a simple change of state, one of many that an essentially suprapersonal principle has undergone in its development. And just as earthly birth is considered a death with respect to previous, non-human stages, so earthly death can have the meaning of a birth in a higher sense, of a transfiguring awakening. But in the teachings referred to, this latter idea does not remain, as it does among us, in an abstractly mystical dimension. It acquires a positive meaning from a special tradition relating to an “art of dying” and a science of the experiences to be expected in the afterlife.

The most characteristic expression of this tradition is found in some Tibetan texts recently brought to the attention of the Western public through the translation of Lama K. Dawa Samdup and Evans Wentz. The most important of these texts is called *Bardo Thödol*, a term that can be roughly translated as “Teaching to be heard in relation to alternatives” (*Bardo*). Indeed, the central idea of this doctrine is that the destiny of the afterlife is not univocal; the afterlife offers different possibilities, paths, alternatives, in such a way that, in this regard, the attitude and action of the soul of one who has already been a human being are of fundamental importance.

What is striking about these teachings is their absolute sentimentality, their almost operating room style, due to their

calmness, precision, and lucidity. “Mystery” and anguish have no place here. Not without mistake, the translator has spoken in this regard of a “traveler’s guide to other worlds,” that is, a kind of Baedeker, a guide to other worlds. The dying person must keep their spirit calm and steady; with all their strength, they must fight not to fall into a state of “sleep,” coma, or fainting, which would only be possible if we have already devoted ourselves to special spiritual disciplines in life, such as yoga. The teachings that are then communicated, or which he must remember, are more or less as follows: “Know that you are about to die. You will experience this or that sensation in your body, you will feel these forces as if they were escaping you, your breathing will stop, one sense after another will cease—and then, from deep within, this state of consciousness will burst forth, you will be seized by vertigo, and these apparitions will form as you are carried out of the world of bodies. Do not be afraid, do not tremble. Instead, you must remember the meaning of what you will experience and how you should act.”

The highest ideal of Eastern traditions in general is “liberation.” Liberation consists of achieving a state of unity with the supreme metaphysical reality. Those who, even though they aspire to it, have not been able to achieve it in their lifetime, have the possibility of reaching it at the moment of death, or in the states immediately following death, if they are capable of an act that almost makes one think of the violence used to enter the kingdom of Heaven, which is also mentioned in the Gospels. Everything would depend on an intrepid and fulminating capacity for “identification.”

The premise for this is that man, in his deepest nature, is identical not only to the different transcendent forces symbolized by the different divinities of the pantheon of those traditions, but also to the Supreme Being himself. The divine world would have no objective reality different from the Self: the distinction would be a mere appearance, a product of “ignorance.” We believe ourselves to be gods, while we are nothing but sleeping gods. But

when the body falls, the veil of “ignorance” is broken and the spirit would have—after a brief phase of fading corresponding to the psycho-physical compound—the direct experience of these states or metaphysical powers, starting from the so-called “Light-flash,” states and powers that are nothing but its deepest essence.

Then an alternative arises: either one is capable, through an absolute impulse of the spirit, of “identifying” oneself, of feeling like that Light—and then “liberation” is achieved, the “sleeping god” awakens. Or, on the other hand, one is afraid, one backs down, and then one descends, passing on to other experiences in which, as if by a shake of a kaleidoscope, the same spiritual reality will no longer present itself in that naked and absolute form, but in the guise of personal and divine beings. And here the same situation, the same alternative, the same test is repeated.

There would be two degrees, strictly speaking. First, calm, powerful, luminous divine forms would appear; then, terrible, destructive, threatening divine forms. In either case, according to the teaching in question, we should not be deceived or frightened; it is the same mind that, almost like a hallucination, creates and projects before itself all these figures: it is the same abysmal substance of the self that objectifies itself with the help of the images that were most familiar to a dead person. Therefore, it is readily accepted that the Hindu will “see” Hindu deities, the Muslim the Islamic God, the Buddhist one of the deified Buddhas, and so on, these being varied but equivalent forms of a purely mental phenomenon.

It all has to do with “the one who has departed” (the dead person) managing to destroy the illusion of a difference between himself and such images and maintaining, so to speak, his cool head. This is not so difficult, however, the further he moves away from the starting point of his posthumous experiences under the impulse of dark and irrational forces. Indeed, it is more difficult to recognize oneself in a god who takes on the appearance of a person and who was always worshipped as a distinct being than

in a form of pure light; and it is much less likely that identification can then take place in the face of “terrible” deities, unless we have devoted ourselves to special cults in life. The veil of illusion thus gradually becomes thicker and thicker, in a progressive diminution equivalent to a decrease in inner light. It falls, and we approach the destiny of passing once again into a finite and conditioned form of existence, which, moreover, is not necessarily earthly, as those who crudely and simplistically assume the theory of reincarnation as dogma would have us believe.

But those who “remember” would have possibilities until the very last moment; the texts in question indicate spiritual actions by means of which it is possible to “open the womb” or, at least, to “choose”—choose the plane, the place, and the mode of the new manifestation, of the new state of existence, from among all that, in a final and supreme moment of lucidity, would be revealed to the vision of the dead. The reappearance in the conditioned world would take place through a process which, in these Tibetan texts, shows a remarkable similarity to various positions in psychoanalysis, and which would imply an interruption in the continuity of consciousness: the memory of previous supersensible experiences is erased, but in the case of a “chosen birth,” the impulse, the direction, is nevertheless maintained. Thus, we have a being who, even though he finds himself once again in the situation of experiencing life as “a journey in the hours of the night,” is animated by a higher calling, is driven by a force from above, is not one of those vulgar beings destined to “be lost like an arrow shot into the darkness,” but a “noble” being who will be driven by an impulse stronger than himself toward the same goal that he failed to achieve in the first test, but which he will now, as a new power, face again.

Unique perspectives open up with these teachings, based on a millenary tradition. Whatever may be said about them, one thing is certain: with such teachings, horizons are broadened in such a way that the darkness, tragedies, and contingencies of this human life cannot but be relativized. What, in a kind of nightmare,

could be considered definitive may be nothing more than an episode in relation to something stronger and higher, which does not begin with birth and does not end with death, and which may even be the beginning of a higher calm and an incomparable, unshakeable security in the face of every trial.

La Stampa, December 1943.

THE PROBLEM OF IMMORTALITY

From an initiatory point of view, the question of surviving death and immortality itself arises strictly from the point of view of experience and reality. According to this, the first question to be clarified is precisely whose experience it is to survive or not to survive death. Obviously, this cannot be some kind of abstract entity formulated philosophically or theologically, but only that which is concrete in human beings, in other words, what can be called living consciousness. This is an individualized consciousness whose self-experience derives practically from its unity with a given psychophysical organism and, in general, from sensory experience.

However, the survival or immortality of such a consciousness cannot be stated as a self-evident fact. First of all, it must be taken into account to what extent the capacities of this consciousness, including those that form the basis of its organic unity, are subject to the influence of bodily contingencies. We can see that consciousness is already weakened in dreams by the reduction of sensory perception, and only the reduced forms characteristic of most dreams remain. There are diseases that attack this organic unity of consciousness in stages: the disease progresses and regresses, to such an extent that apparent recovery reawakens the feeling of life, only to return to its normal course. In fact, it could be said that in these cases, the person experiences successive rebirths and deaths. In such cases, as the disease progresses, the person experiences a kind of death experience, or at least comes close to it, in an analogous way to what mathematics calls “approaching a limit,” anticipating the emergence of a feeling: the feeling of being swallowed up and disintegrating.

There is no doubt that where consciousness is fused with animal vitality, it would be unreasonable to hope for anything else. The problem must therefore be posed in a different way: we must examine in which cases and under what circumstances we

can actually speak of something in humans that is different from and more than the “living consciousness” mentioned above. On this point, the initiatory teaching differs decisively from the vast majority of religious views (at least as far as their exoteric meaning is concerned), because it does not raise the problem of survival in an abstract way and at a general level, i.e., in general terms for human beings, but takes into account the various possibilities and conditions of survival.¹

If, when we say “I,” we do not mean the organic and centralized consciousness mentioned above, then we can accept that something survives the crisis of death, the absorption into death. Just as the physical organism does not disintegrate into nothingness at death, but first gives rise to a corpse, and then to the products of the decomposition of this corpse, which obey certain chemical and physical laws, so we must assume that approximately the same is true of the human “psychic”: death is survived for a certain period of time by a kind of “psychic corpse,” a “copy” of the deceased, which in certain cases can also be a source of manifestations. In fact, these are manifestations of either the “psychic corpse” or, if it has already disintegrated in the meantime, its remains, which spiritualism cites as “empirical” evidence of the soul’s survival, even in cases where a keen eye would convince us of the opposite. The mechanical nature of these surviving and now impersonal forces does not preclude their manifestations from sometimes being extremely intense. This is the case, for example, when deep emotions, passions, and inclinations awakened during life persist until death. These forces then carry the empty image of the deceased, occupying, as it were, the place of the “I,” just as they did during life, albeit to a lesser extent. In such cases, however, we are dealing with “elementary” actions that have nothing in common with what we might call the spiritual personality of the deceased.²

This latter expression requires explanation, as it is clearly more than what we have called “living consciousness.” On an ontological level, it is self-evident that not only humans, but any

other being of any nature, cannot have any kind of existence, not even an illusory one, without some kind of connection to a transcendent principle. From an initiatic point of view, we can say that we perceive ourselves as the reflection of a higher principle, so that the aforementioned conditionality of actual consciousness can be regarded as something that arises between the reflected object and the agent in which the image of the object is formed. There is a close connection between the two, which determines and even creates what in Hindu terminology can be called the “elemental self,” or more correctly, the “samsārai self”; in classical terminology, this corresponds to the nous as a function of the spirit—the imperishable Olympian principle.

If a mirror is broken, the object reflected in it is not affected, but the reflected image disappears. If the outcome is clearly negative, then the phenomenon of death must also be interpreted in this way, that is, as we have said above in connection with living, actual consciousness. In such a case, everything that has the nature of the human “self” does not survive death. More correctly, a real change of state occurs, and with the exception of the aforementioned ghost and psychic residue, which are automatisms that have remained due to the force of inertia, the actual life of the “samsara self” is reabsorbed into a subpersonal trunk, which is a kind of “organism root.” On this plane, a *sui generis* continuation of life is again conceivable, for this organism, which gave life to a certain specific body, can also give life to another body. When a given psychophysical aggregate and the mirror image of the self that this aggregate carries within itself disintegrate, this force continues to live on, albeit latently, as a kind of potentiality, and can reignite in a new combination, but this time as a new individuality, a new being. Of course, in this case we are not talking about a biological species or tribe, nor about a being in the sense of being created through procreation, through the transmission of the same blood. Those beings that are different manifestations of the aforementioned organism-root appear, with very few exceptions, as completely separate from

each other and completely alien to each other. The connection between them, lacking any material basis, is imperceptible and unrecognizable to physical perception. This is enough to say on this subject, because an explanation of the connections between the various types of heredity would take us too far from our subject.

The purpose of this brief explanation is simply to dispel misunderstandings about reincarnation. What appears to refer to this in various archaic texts, contrary to the opinion of many contemporary “spiritualists” and theosophists, does not correspond to any esoteric teaching, but is nothing more than a symbolic and popular expression of a doctrine whose actual meaning is very different. The assumption that a “*samsaric* self”—which roughly corresponds to the “self” for the vast majority of people—can be reborn is self-contradictory. This is because the relative identity of such a “self” exists only as a function of a given psychophysical organism, that is, a specific combination of factors, which, once disintegrated, does not reappear as identical to itself. So what continues in a series of existences is not the product, but the force that creates it, i.e., the aforementioned subpersonal potency. In other words, if we designate the “I”s that have taken shape in the various existences of the series as “A,” “B,” “C,” etc., then who is reborn in “B” is not “A,” and who is reborn in “C” is not “B,” and so on, but rather the force operating in “A” manifests itself continuously in “B” and “C.” Continuity is represented solely by this force, and this force is not an “I” and is not a living consciousness. Moreover, if by some miracle “A,” that is, the “I” of a given series of existences, could see “B” and “C,” that is, those who are its “reincarnations,” they would appear just as alien to it as anyone else, or any other “I” separate from it in space.

The spiritual personality has little to do with the plane on which reincarnation can be true, i.e., the plane of *samsara* (which corresponds to the world of “Waters” or the Hellenistic “cycle of

necessity”). We may briefly mention here that it is therefore legitimate to be suspicious of any teaching that emphasizes the idea of “reincarnation”; indeed, it can be assumed that the practical purpose of such teachings is precisely to lay the foundation for a direction that is completely opposite to that of “liberation.” There is no doubt that there are special experiences that can serve as some kind of proof for the doctrine of “reincarnation”—but these must be interpreted! Nowadays, and especially in the West, such experiences are very rare, because the individual “I” is taking on increasingly rigid forms and becoming more and more closed in on itself. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that the individual “I” some kind of momentary rupture, or that initiatory practices suspend this limitation, so that those in whom this occurs gain some kind of knowledge of the deepest roots of their own existence; this is in fact the *samsara* consciousness, which can also take on the appearance of memory. Memories of other existences can indeed be found in the deep, subpersonal core, those of beings who appear as the fading manifestations of an exhausted core in a series of essentially unrelated “I’s.” This is therefore the only adequate interpretation of the momentary shift of individual consciousness and of a *sui generis* descent into hell; however, in some cases this can be just as regressive as it is—at least virtually—super-individual. For no matter how far the boundaries of individual consciousness are pushed, in such a case the waking consciousness would naturally weaken, just as in a dream, and all experience would cease. For what is considered normal and common in the West today, namely that the “I” has only one earthly life, has been mitigated in the East by echoes of states prior to *samsara* semi-consciousness. If this is not a case of regression or the remnants of some kind of completely fixed and determined consciousness, then *samsara* consciousness must be regarded as a form of initiatory consciousness. We know that when early Buddhist texts speak of the vision of “multiple lives,” this vision is clearly linked to higher states of contemplation; it is an experience that presupposes what we might call a “shift.”

And here we arrive at the central core of the problem of the initiatory survival of death, as well as to the doctrine that deals with the conditioned nature of this survival and immortality. In relation to the “I,” we spoke of a mirror that is self-evidently bound to that in which it appears. If we assume an upward movement from the mirror image towards the origin of the mirror image, this is not possible without a certain separation, a certain reversal, a certain detachment (which also means a change of state, even a profound crisis). This results in a situation more or less similar to death, namely the disappearance of the familiar support provided to humans by physicality and *samsara* vitality. This initiatory death, which the person in question, having been given the power to endure the awareness of death, carries out as a kind of experiment, can indeed be regarded as actual death.⁴ Those who have passed through this death have ceased to be human beings; their “I” is no longer a reflection, but on the contrary: existence. What they have achieved is the “spiritual personality.” Their consciousness no longer sinks or dissolves without the support of the body and sensory experience. Thus, the condition for surviving death can be considered positively realized and, in certain cases, can even be put to the test. Under certain conditions, a state can be induced in which it becomes possible to say: “Everything that belongs to the world of the senses has ceased to exist in me, but I feel that my consciousness is clear, pure, and transparent.” As for the specific nature of the initiatory metamorphosis, it suffices to recall the consternation caused by the statement made in Greece by a member of the “enlightened” in Greece that the fate of a criminal initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries after death was not even comparable to that of a man named Epiminondas, who was considered the most virtuous and excellent man.

It should be noted here that conscious survival after death is not equivalent to immortality. This question brings us back to the theory of worlds and states of existence, as well as to the law of “cyclicity.” Suffice it to say here that, in an absolute sense, only

the Unconditioned, the principle beyond all manifestations, is immortal. There is therefore no other immortality than the “Olympian” immortality in the highest sense, which results from union with the Unconditioned. Those who have fulfilled the conditions for surviving death can strive to achieve this highest goal, but it is by no means certain that they will achieve it. During life, it is possible to strive for the complete “liberation” that makes one immortal, and there is also a possibility for this at the moment of death. For the initiated knowledge and consciousness, which, unlike ordinary consciousness, survives death, other possibilities also open up.⁵ From the point of view of immortality, however, it is crucial to burn away any tendency to strive for this or that superhuman “position”—be it “angelic” or “heavenly”—for from an initiatory point of view, all these are still part of manifestation, that is, they belong to the conditioned and not to the unconditioned, not to the “eternal” nature. Even if the struggle for immortality were to take place in a magical *loka*, it is our duty to resist the organisms with which we come into contact (and which are the personifications of the given modifications of existence), by exerting greater intensity in the direction from which these influences come than they do. Here, the basic principle applies that as soon as a relationship arises, it does not mean domination and then identification with a certain state of being. At the peak, however, even if one follows the path of magic, the force must be transformed into pure light for the sake of the “Great Liberation.”

In fact, it is important to make a clear distinction between those who survive death and the immortal, on the one hand, and the vast majority of people, on the other; this is a distinction recognized not only by initiatory schools but also, albeit on a symbolic level, by almost all archaic religious formations. The assumption that everyone has an “immortal soul”—which, incidentally, is imagined as a model of the individual “I” in its current state of consciousness—is a real ideological delusion, even if its usefulness as opium for the masses is sometimes undeniable.

It is not the “soul” that survives death and is capable of immortality, but the spirit as nous, as a supernatural element. But it is pointless to speak of such an indestructible and eternal spirit as long as there is no connection, no continuity between the consciousness living in samsara and such a principle. The “soul” can only survive death if it joins the “spirit” and, in Agrippa’s words, becomes a solid and imperishable soul. This is the *metabolé*, this polarity shift, which is the starting point of initiation. At this point, the soul relies on the supernatural being instead of the natural being and integrates into it. Thus, a new form is created, like an indestructible body of light, which cannot be touched by death. This body corresponds precisely to the force that manifests itself on the planes of existence through certain metamorphoses, in accordance with the various “insights” and “dignities” of the initiate. Similarly, everything that is integrated from the actual consciousness into the “solid and imperishable” soul, which according to Agrippa is also the active principle of all higher magic, is saved from death and forms a continuous substrate.

In connection with the initiatory doctrine of immortality, some believe that when we deny what corresponds to the Christian concept of the “immortal soul” that is valid for all human beings, we “overshoot the mark.” For even if we acknowledge that immortality as an actual experience is not a given for human beings, but only a possibility, this does not, as they say, preclude the existence of eternal principles in human beings that have always existed and been at work in them, without however ever entering the world of consciousness.

This objection can be answered by saying that even if these eternal principles did exist, the “I” would still not be aware of them and would therefore be even less able to relate to them and identify with them—so that, from a positive and experiential point of view, i.e. from the point of view of the consequences for one’s own immortality, everything would happen as if these principles did not exist. This would be similar to the materialist

consolation that even if the “soul” falls asleep in death, the matter that constitutes man remains and is indestructible.

A table can exist, and I either know of its existence or I do not. However, the same cannot be said of the “I.” For, on the one hand, the “I” does not exist, and on the other hand, the consciousness of the “I” does not exist; rather, the substance of the “I” is consciousness itself, and its existence is conscious existence. That is why it is impossible to think that something remains of the “I” after its consciousness ceases, in the same way that a table remains regardless of whether I continue to look at it or not. As soon as consciousness and the sense of self-identity cease, the “I” also ceases, and whatever remains of it, whether material or spiritual, eternal or not, is in fact no longer it.

There is undoubtedly a place within the framework of initiatic doctrines for a Self that corresponds to the *atma* of the Upanishads or the *purusha* of the Sankhya, of which the human “I” is only a reflection. Nevertheless, what a person experiences as a positive experience as “himself” is not such a Self, but the reflected “I.” If you like, let us not speak of the disintegration of the soul at the moment of death, but only of a reflection that is reabsorbed into the transcendent principle that projects it. In religious and pantheistic terms, one could say that this is the soul dissolved in God. Nevertheless, we must be aware that, even if we have said the same thing in different words, there is no continuity between the reflected “I” and the absolute Self, and from the point of view of the former “I,” the fact that its existence has been absorbed into the latter Self is tantamount to disintegration. Only then can there be a possibility of something different, if the active and conscious reintegration of the mirror image into its own origin has already taken place; and this is precisely the goal of the various stages of initiation.

As for the remaining elements, apart from the sediment and the psychic facsimile, which is also doomed to death, there remains what the Hindu tradition calls karma—about which

theosophists have said so many absurd things; but what is connected with karma has nothing to do with true immortality, for karma is the play of impersonal forces within the sphere of conditioned (*samsara*) existence. The relevant teaching is that just as a person can give life to another individual separate from himself through animal reproduction, passing on his racial-biological heritage, so too can his actions determine a force that can then cause another being to come into existence, whose characteristic features will be shaped by these actions. This is karma, and this is where the teaching comes from that when a person disintegrates into its various components, which return to their original tribe, what remains is karma. However, in this process, which is interpreted as the incarnation of the “immortal soul,” there is no basis for a self-identity or “I” continuity, because continuity is simply not possible on this plane. All we can speak of here is the familiar image of one flame igniting another; in this case, the fire remains the same: one flame ignites another, but from the perspective of the first flame, it is always just another flame. This is the ultimate meaning of the plane of karma. What we are talking about here is, in its own way, “physical” and does not affect the fate of the spiritual personality in any way.

However, it may be more interesting to examine the situation of beings, and thus of that group of “I’s” which can be regarded as the incarnation (but not reincarnation) and manifestation of a higher principle, and which wants to realize itself by entering the realm of conditioned and contingent reality, the “stream of existence.” In this case, each of these existences and “I’s” can be regarded as a kind of particular experiment that more or less approaches the goal. This could be depicted as a single team carrying out a series of attacks; the first lines rush forward, reach their target, and are then cut down and scattered. Then new ones follow: these more or less exceed the goal achieved by the first ones, until finally one of the waves of attack succeeds in achieving the original goal shared by all the other waves; the series then

comes to an end. Even if we take into account that the different elements of the group represent individual “selves” and particular existences, we cannot speak of reincarnation, because it is not a question of one wave continuing in another, but of it dispersing and exhausting itself if it fails to achieve its goal. Therefore, unity can only be spoken of in relation to the army as a whole, of which each assault team is only a part, and in relation to the unified intention that informed the individual actions toward this goal. Ibsen’s symbol for this is the “button maker,” who throws back the badly made buttons into the mass and tries to make better ones; this idea recurs frequently in the works of Gustav Meyrink, with precise references to initiatory aspects. The successful button and the last assault team, which finally achieves its goal after all the others have been cut down, would be the equivalent of the person in whom the aforementioned initiatory reintegration is realized and who is identical to the type of the Awakened One himself.

Notes

1. On the anticipated experience of death in connection with certain organ diseases, see J. M. Guyau, *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction*, Paris, 1885, Chapter I.
2. Other cases must also be taken into account here, where psychic residues and facsimiles are revived by the dark forces of the afterlife. This is the basis for explaining numerous metapsychical phenomena, many more than we might think. However, there is also the possibility of necromancy, in which the operator lends his life and "self" to a larva, snatching it out of its extinct state, even if only for a moment; the latter corresponds to Hades in the classical tradition.
3. The Gnostics aptly called this spirit imitation.
4. This is the meaning of the Hermetic "*separatio*," which often appears in the texts as a synonym for "mortification" and "death." In this context, we can also quote St. Paul's statement (Heb. 4:13): "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Furthermore, according to Origen (*Des principes* 3,3), the "soul of the body"—that is, the *samsaric* "I"—is the opposite of the spirit, and, as he says, it is the "darkness" of the soul, which is bound to "human blood." Compare this with the initiatory expression "cooling the blood."
5. This is described in great detail in the Bardo Thodol, or Tibetan Book of the Dead, and in part in the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

THE WORLD HAS FALLEN INTO A DARK AGE

It is more or less well known that while modern man has believed, and in part still believes, in the myth of evolution, ancient civilizations, almost without exception, and even savage peoples, recognized instead involution, the gradual decline of man from a primordial state conceived not as a semi-ape past but as one of high spirituality.

The best-known form of this teaching is Hesiod's myth about the four ages of the world—gold, silver, bronze, and iron—which correspond to successive stages of the aforementioned descent or decline. Entirely analogous is the Hindu teaching about the *yugas*, comprehensive and successive cycles, also four in number, which go from an “age of being” or “truth”—*satya yuga*—to a “dark age”—*kali yuga*. According to these traditions, the present times correspond to the epicenter of this last period: we find ourselves in the midst of the “dark age.”

Although the formulation of these theories is very ancient, the characteristics predicted for the ‘dark age’ correspond in a rather disconcerting way to the general characteristics of our times. This can be judged from some passages taken from the Vishnu Purana, a text that has preserved much of the treasure of ancient traditions and myths of India. We have limited ourselves to adding, in parentheses, some explanations and highlighting the most obvious correspondences.

To begin with:

“Races of servants, outcasts, and barbarians will become masters of the banks of the Indus, the Darvika, the Candrabhaga, and Kashmir... The leaders who will rule the earth, as violent natures... will seize the goods and their subjects. Limited in their power, most will rise and fall quickly. Their lives will be short, their desires insatiable, and they will almost ignore what pity is. The peoples of various countries, mixing with them, will follow

their example.” (These are the new barbarian invasions with the consequent introduction of the *virus* of materialism and the savage will to power characteristic of the modern West into civilizations still faithful to millennial sacred traditions. This process, as we know, is in full swing in Asia).

“The prevailing caste will be that of servants” (proletarian-socialist era: communism). “Those who own property will desert agriculture and commerce and earn their living as servants or in mechanical professions” (proletarianization and industrialization).

“Instead of protecting their subjects, the leaders will strip them of their possessions and, under fiscal pretexts, steal the property of the merchant caste” (crisis of private property and capitalism, communist nationalization of society).

“Health (inner) and law (in accordance with one’s nature) will decline day by day until the world is completely perverted. Only possessions will confer rank. The only motive for devotion will be concern for physical health, the only bond between the sexes will be pleasure, and the only way to success in competition will be fraud. The earth will be revered only for its mineral treasures” (industrialization to the extreme, death of the religion of the earth). ‘Priestly garments will take the place of the dignity of the priest. Weakness will be the only cause of obedience (end of the ancient relationships of loyalty and honor).’ ‘The race will be incapable of producing divine births. Led astray by unbelievers, men will insolently ask themselves: ‘What authority do the traditional texts have? Who are these Gods, who is the caste that holds spiritual authority’ (*Brahmana*)? ‘Respect for castes, for social order, and for (traditional) institutions will disappear in the dark age. Marriages in this age will cease to be a ritual, and the rules connecting a disciple to a spiritual master will no longer have any force. It will be thought that anyone, by any means, can attain the state of the regenerated (this is the democratizing level of modern claims to spirituality), and acts of devotion that can still be performed will no longer produce any results. Every order

of life will be promiscuously the same for all” (conformism, standardization). ‘He who distributes the most money will be lord of men, and family descent will cease to be a title of preeminence’ (overcoming of traditional nobility). “Men will concentrate their interests on the acquisition, even dishonest, of wealth. Every kind of man will imagine himself to be equal to a Brahmin” (prevaricating claims of free academic culture; arrogance of ignorance). “People will be terrified of death and will fear poverty: for this reason alone they will retain a form (an appearance) of worship. Women will not follow the will of their husbands or parents. They will be selfish, abject, uncentered, and deceitful, and they will attach themselves to dissolute men. They will become mere objects of sexual gratification.”

While the relevance of this prophecy from the *Vishnu Purana* is difficult to dispute, in order to understand its overall meaning, we need to have a sense of the point of reference, that is, what the origins were, the state from which humanity gradually declined. But what meaning could terms such as ‘age of being’ and ‘golden age’ have for most people today? Unfortunately, they will be reduced to simple, empty mythological and literary reminiscences.

In the text in question, it is worth noting two further reasons that somewhat mitigate the bleak prospects of the dark age. We will only mention them briefly. The first is the idea that those who, despite everything, are born in the *Kali-yuga* and recognize true values and the true law will reap supernatural rewards that would be difficult to achieve in easier times. “Heroic pessimism” would say Nietzsche, and this idea is not foreign to Christianity itself. The second point is that *Kali-yuga* itself, in order to fit into a larger cosmic cycle, will come to an end. Due to a factor that is not simply human, a general change will take place. This will be followed by a kind of regeneration, a new beginning. Let us hope that this will be the case and, above all, that we will not have to

reach the bottom of the slope first, with all the delights that the “atomic age” has in store for us.

Roma, January 14, 1954.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE OBLIQUE MAN

In the previous period, we formulated a theory of “spiritual races,” which sought to identify fundamental types and attitudes of human beings. To this end, we also referred to ancient traditions, which placed certain characteristics in symbolic relation to planets, deities, and elements: thus we spoke of the races of the solar man, the telluric man, the lunar man, the aphrodisiac man, the Dionysian man, and so on.

If we were to take up this line of study again today, we would realize that we had forgotten a special type, one that is currently more widespread than ever, a type we could call mercurial man or, more intelligently, the elusive human race (it is the same thing because “mercury” should be taken as a symbol of a fleeting, elusive, elusive nature).

The corrosive effect that the events of recent years—the end of the war and the post-war period—have had on the human soul is well known and, unfortunately, even more visible in Italy than elsewhere. But we can go even further in this regard. One could identify real psychopathological variations in the human type of the current period, general and uniform variations, found almost everywhere among European peoples and also in the United States, to the extent that one could almost speak of a new race: that of the elusive man.

To begin with, a “moral anesthesia” is enough to characterize the new post-war type in general. The concern not to ‘lose face’ and the basic sense of self-respect have almost disappeared. To be clear, it is not that previously everyone had a recognizable ‘character’. But even those who did not had a sense of what they should be and what a normal human being generally is. Well, this is precisely what is now lacking in a large number of people: they are in fact unstable, oblique, shapeless, elusive. They no longer

have a measure for themselves. Their moral sensibility is precisely “anesthetized.”

Indeed, when it comes to principles and a need for consistency and coherence, they often display an almost hysterical intolerance.

Moreover, the inconsistency mentioned above does not concern problems in the higher sense, which do not arise at every moment of life. It is characteristic even in the small things of ordinary existence. It is, for example, the inability to keep a commitment, a promise, the direction taken, a given purpose (to write, to telephone, to respond, to take care of a certain thing). The person in question is impatient with everything that binds them, that implies a commitment to themselves. That is, they say but do not do, or do something else, escape—and behaving in this way seems natural and unobjectionable to them. They are even surprised when someone takes offense and reproaches them for it.

The generality of such an attitude is worrying. In recent times, it has taken hold in social strata where, until yesterday, a quite different line prevailed: such as among the aristocracy and the artisan class. Shifting responsibility, making promises without keeping them, lack of punctuality, evasion even in small and stupid things, are also found here, very frequently. It is important to note that this is not done deliberately, for example, to unscrupulously pursue one’s own interests. No, it is done spontaneously, sometimes even to one’s own detriment, due to a genuine inner weakness. This is why many people whom we thought we knew well yesterday, and who were our friends, are now almost unrecognizable. It is, one might say, an “existential” fact stronger than themselves, so much so that they are often not even aware of it.

The phenomenon could also be followed in its repercussions on the psychic structure. The man of the “elusive race” suffers from a real psychological alteration. In this regard, Weininger’s

considerations on the connection between ethics, logic, and memory could be used. In a normal person, these three things are united, because character expresses the same internal coherence that is also manifested in logical rigor and in that unity of life that allows one to remember, to maintain a conscious connection with one's past. According to Weininger, it is precisely this unity of faculties that characterizes male psychology as opposed to female psychology, which is generally fluid, illogical, uncoordinated, and made up of impulses rather than logical and ethical rigor.

In this respect, 'the man of the elusive race' appears more woman than man. Other characteristic psychological traits, which counterbalance the aforementioned 'moral anesthesia', are impaired memory, forgetfulness, difficulty concentrating, often even difficulty following a tight and compelling line of reasoning, distraction, and jumping from one thought to another. These are clearly the effects of a partial disintegration which, from the level of principles and character, has spread to affect even the faculties themselves.

On the one hand, the phenomenon of collapse that usually follows prolonged tension (imposed on many by the war) and, on the other, the collapse of the values and ideals that were believed in until yesterday, are perhaps the two factors that, in addition to the general factors of every post-war period, have contributed to the formation of the elusive human type. Unfortunately, the phenomenon is real, and everyone can see it for themselves. The observation is certainly not edifying. The times that are coming are not exactly such that peoples, in whom such a rift has spread and taken on almost constitutional features, will be able to rise to the occasion. Let us hope that some energetic process of reintegration and prevention will intervene before it is too late.

Rivolta Ideale, May 29, 1952.

THE CRISIS OF MODERN SOCIETY

Among peoples who are called “primitive,” but who very often represent only degenerate and feral remnants of more ancient races and civilizations, a phenomenon that has often attracted the attention of observers is that of “societies of men.”

In such peoples, up to a certain age, the individual, in order to be considered a natural being, is left to the family and especially to maternal care, under the feminine-maternal sign, since in these societies everything that has only to do with the material, physical side of existence. But at a certain point, a change of state occurs. Special rites, known as “rites of passage,” often accompanied by a preliminary period of isolation and harsh trials, give rise, according to a pattern of “death and rebirth,” to a new being, who alone is considered truly human. In fact, before this, the member of the group, whatever his age, is considered to be one with women and children, indeed with animals themselves. Once the transformation has taken place, the individual is therefore incorporated into the so-called “society of men.” This society, which is both initiatory (sacred) and warrior in character, holds power within the group. Its rights are differentiated, as are its responsibilities and functions. It holds command. Its structure is similar to that of an “order.”

While in the last century there was a tendency to derive the state from the family institution, a more modern current has rightly seen its origin precisely in the phenomenon of the “society of men.” The scheme now indicated effectively contains the fundamental elements that define every properly specific political order, even with a clarity that one would seek in vain in the fragmented and degraded theories of our day about the origin of sovereignty. In this scheme, we first encounter the idea of virility in an eminent and spiritual sense, the quality of man as *vir* (as the Romans would say) and not as simple *homo*. Linked to this, as we have seen, is a “break in level” or change of state; in its simplest

expression, it is the detachment from the sensible, vegetative, physical plane. Then there is the idea of a specific unity, very different from any other of a 'naturalistic' character (such as the family, the simple 'people', etc.). Finally, there is the idea of power as something essentially connected to this higher plane, so that in its origin it was recognized as a force from above, a 'sacred power' (*auctoritas* and *imperium* in the ancient Roman idea).

Therefore, we can rightly consider all this to be "constants," that is, basic ideas that, in very different applications, formulations, and derivations, appear repeatedly in every major political organization of the past. Due to the processes of desacralization, rationalization, and materialization that have become increasingly pronounced over time, those original meanings had to be veiled and attenuated. But this must remain clear: where they are completely obliterated, even in a transposed and weakened form, even without an initiatory or sacred background, there is no longer even a true state, and every concept of what, in an eminent and traditional sense, is political reality, in its specific dignity and difference from all other spheres of existence, has been lost, in particular, with respect to everything that is merely economic or 'social' in nature.

With the age of revolutions, a major attack began in Europe against everything that could preserve the semblance of a 'society of men', and therefore against the very principle of politics, against that of all true sovereignty: to the point of a complete reversal of values and ideals. In fact, in one form or another, social ideologies have long reigned supreme, representing simply the anti-state and a kind of protest against the virile principle on the part of everything that, because it has to do with the simple physical life of a society, according to the aforementioned view of its origins, has a similarly "feminine" and promiscuous character. While honor, struggle, and domination are values for the "society of men," peace, economy, material well-being, the naturalistic life of instincts and feelings, and small security are values for the

simple “society.” At the extreme, hedonism and eudemonism stand in opposition to heroism, rank, and aristocracy.

In which currents of our day these inverted perspectives increasingly predominate, with the emergence of strata above which the “societies of men” rise, and with the demonism proper to all demagoguery, is more or less known to everyone. It would already be a great deal if the knowledge of the values briefly mentioned here served at least to make the true face and true meaning of these currents clearly recognizable.

Il Secolo d'Italia, May 31, 1952.

MAN IN AMERICA

In his classic work on capitalism, Werner Sombart rightly summed up the motto of capitalism in its final phase as: "*Fiat productio, pereat homo.*" Capitalist civilization in its extreme forms, essentially realized as a civilization of production, in which man has value essentially as an inventor of devices and producer of things. The lack of any consideration for the individual as a worker had defined those brutal forms of capitalism that gave rise, as a reaction, to the various forms of socialism.

Considering recent developments, we see a new phase emerging in the same direction. In the United States, we see a growing interest in the study of so-called "human relations in industry." On the surface, this would appear to be a correction; in essence, however, it is something that leads even further downhill. Here is what it is all about.

Capitalist entrepreneurs and company managers have realized that "human behavior" is a very important factor in production itself. In other words, they have realized that it is a mistake to neglect the individual in industry, his feelings, his motives, his life as a person, both in himself and in the system of relationships that make up a large factory. Why is this? Perhaps because of an unexpected interest in him as a human being? Not at all: because adequate studies have shown that neglecting all these elements results in a constant decline in the production and performance of the human animal.

Hence, there is a whole body of research and investigation into human relations in industry (we have at hand one of the most recent and comprehensive books: B. Gardner and G. Moore, *Human Relations in Industry*, Homewood, Ill. 1952), studies which, essentially based on so-called behaviorism (the theory of behavior), have set themselves the task of minutely analyzing the feelings and reactions of employees and workers in work

situations, with the specific aim of defining at the same time the best techniques for overcoming all factors that may hinder maximum productivity. Such initiatives are not taken by workers or trade unions, but by the companies themselves, assisted by specialists from various colleges. The most intelligent slave owners of antiquity must have taken similar care, concerned as they were with the vigor and morale of their workers.

Anyone who has not read a book on this subject cannot imagine the extent of this affectionate interest. No aspect of the worker's existence and psychology is neglected, and the investigation is not limited to his life in the factory but also covers his social environment and all his relationships. The various incentives and motivations are carefully studied, as are all forms of behavior and behavioral variations at various levels of the corporate hierarchy as a result of different types of work, organization, procedures, and regulations governing "interaction." Psychology leads more or less to psychoanalysis. Thus, in cases where the worker is engaged in habitual and repetitive work that does not require much attention, there is concern that his mind may wander, that he may think about other things, feeding ideas or expectations that may then negatively affect his performance.

Prevention—always in the care and interest of the company—extends to personal life, with the use of so-called "personnel counseling" becoming widespread in American factories. These are counseling centers where specialists try to alleviate anxiety, agitation, factors of psychological maladjustment, and the "complexes" of workers, whatever they may be, even offering advice on the most intimate aspects of their private lives, such as divorce, family decisions, etc., and anything else that may be worrying the individual and affecting their performance as a carefree productive animal. One of the most recommended techniques is the frankly psychoanalytic one of 'letting people talk', and the surprising results that can be achieved in terms of

performance through the ‘catharsis’ obtained in this way are highlighted.

It can be said that this is the equivalent of applied soul healing, always with the same disinterested aim. It is only a little strange that the sexual problem has not yet been sufficiently addressed in this way. But perhaps, once certain residual puritanical inhibitions have been overcome, companies will come up with the idea of employing special departments of young girls to ‘treat’ those workers who appear too nervous, irritable, and combative with ‘tension’ problems in the workplace: naturally, with precise instructions to the girls that they should be returned to their departments ‘unloaded’ and calmed down, but not exhausted, so that their performance does not suffer but is enhanced.

It is easy to see how all this does not represent an improvement in the problem of true human values—as we Europeans conceive them—in the ‘economic age’. Where, as seems to be the case behind the Iron Curtain, man is treated in no uncertain terms as a workhorse and his performance is ensured by a regime of terror and hunger, a rational culture of man as a performance animal is still possible, one which neglects no aspect of his inner life in order to eliminate all disturbing factors and direct everything towards the same end. Thus, little by little, man will not even notice where he has arrived and will even feel happy, and with the addition of sports, radio, and cinema, he will think he has reached—in the realm of democracy of the “Land of Freedom”—a peak of civilization never before dreamed of.

Il meridiano d'Italia, June 20, 1954.

“SERVICE TO THE STATE” AND BUREAUCRACY

A characteristic sign of the decline of the idea of the state in the modern world is the loss of meaning of what, in a higher sense, is service to the state.

Where the State presents itself as the embodiment of an idea and a power, political classes defined by an ideal of loyalty play an essential role, classes that feel a high honor in serving the State and, on this basis, participate in the authority, dignity, and prestige inherent in the central idea, to the point of differentiating themselves from the mass of simple, “private” citizens. In traditional states, these classes were mainly the nobility, the army, the diplomatic corps and, finally, what we now call the bureaucracy. We would like to make a few brief comments on the latter.

As it has defined itself in the modern democratic world of the last century, bureaucracy is nothing more than a caricature, a materialized, faded and out-of-step image of what its idea should correspond to. Even leaving aside the immediate present, in which the figure of the ‘civil servant’ has become that of a squalid being in perpetual struggle with economic problems, to the point of becoming the favorite object of a kind of mockery and bitter irony, even leaving that aside, the system itself has reprehensible features.

In today’s democratic states, these are bureaucracies lacking in authority and prestige, lacking in tradition in the best sense of the word, with a bloated, gray, poorly paid staff specializing in slow, listless, pedantic, and cumbersome procedures. A horror of direct responsibility and servility towards ‘superiors’ are other characteristic features; at the top, yet another feature is empty officiousness.

In general, the average civil servant today differs little from the general type of modern ‘laborer’; in fact, in recent times, ‘civil

servants' have taken on the very image of a 'category of workers' that follows others on the path of social and wage demands based on agitation and even strikes—things that are absolutely inconceivable in a true and traditional state, as inconceivable as an army going on strike at a given moment to impose its demands on the state, understood as a *sui generis* "employer." In practice, today you become a state employee when you are incapable of initiative and have no better prospects, in view of a modest but "secure" and continuous salary: therefore, in a spirit that is more than petty bourgeois and utilitarian.

And if, in low democracy, the distinction between those who serve the state and any private worker or employee is therefore almost non-existent, in the upper echelons the bureaucrat is confused with the insignificant politician and the "petty boss." We have "honorable" and "influential" people invested with governmental power, but more often than not without any real specific competence, who in ministerial reshuffles grab and exchange portfolios from one ministry or another, hastening to call in friends or party comrades, with less in mind than serving the state or the head of state than profiting from their own situation.

This is the sad picture that bureaucracy presents today. Technical reasons, the excessive growth of administrative structures and superstructures and of "public powers" may have an influence, but the fundamental point is a decline in standards, the loss of a tradition, the extinction of a sensibility, all phenomena parallel to the decline of the principle of true authority and sovereignty.

We are reminded of the case of an official who belonged to a noble family and who resigned when the monarchy in his country collapsed. He was asked in amazement, 'How could you be an official when you are a millionaire and do not need a salary? The astonishment of those who heard such a question was no less than that of those who asked it, because they could not conceive of any

greater honor than serving the state and the sovereign. And, from a practical point of view, this was not a matter of “humility,” but of acquiring prestige, “rank,” and honor. But today, who, more than the bureaucratic world itself, would be surprised and laugh if, say, in this spirit, the son of some big capitalist aspired to become... a “civil servant”?

In traditional states, the anti-bureaucratic, military spirit of serving the state was almost symbolized by the uniform that civil servants wore, like soldiers (note the desire to revive this idea in fascism). And in contrast to the style of the high-ranking civil servant who used his position for his own individual gain, there was, in them, the disinterest of an active impersonality. In French, the expression “*On ne fait pas pour le Roi de Prussie*” means roughly “you don’t do it when there’s no money in it for you.” It is a reference to what was, on the contrary, the style of pure, disinterested loyalty that characterized the climate in Frederick’s Prussia. But even in the first British self-government, the highest offices were honorary and entrusted to those who enjoyed economic independence, precisely to guarantee the purity and impersonality of the office, and, no less, the corresponding prestige.

As mentioned above, bureaucracy in the negative sense developed in parallel with democracy, while the states of Central Europe, having been the last to preserve traditional traits, also retain much of the style of pure, anti-bureaucratic ‘service to the state’.

Changing things, especially in Italy today, is a desperate undertaking. There are serious technical and financial difficulties. But the greatest difficulty stems from the general decline in standards, from the bourgeois spirit, from materialism and opportunism, from the lack of any idea of true authority and sovereignty.

Il Secolo d'Italia, March 31, 1953.

SOLDIERS, SOCIETY, AND THE STATE

It is well known that for modern democracies, “militarism” is a kind of bogeyman and that one of the slogans used by them in the last two wars was precisely that of the fight against “militarist states.” This is not entirely a propaganda ploy; even if today we see that democracies are forced to arm themselves to the point of being accused in turn of “militarism” and “imperialism” by communists, we must acknowledge that their slogan betrayed a real antithesis, which, before being that between two rival groups of nations, is that between two different conceptions of life and the state.

This antithesis concerns the different contribution of the military element compared to the bourgeois element, but also the different meaning and function that the former is recognized as having in the complex structure of a society and a state. The conception of modern democracies, closely linked to the ideas of the capitalist civilization of the Third Estate, is that the primary element in society is the bourgeois type and peaceful bourgeois life, a life determined by physical concerns for well-being, wealth, and comfort. Here, the military element has no political significance, and even when it is recognized as having its own ethics, democracies do not consider it desirable that this ethics should apply to the overall life of a nation. It is believed that “civilization” has nothing to do with that “sad necessity” and that useless “slaughterhouse” that is war, that “civic” and “social” virtues with “progress” and “humanitarianism” should be at the forefront, and not “warrior” virtues; the ideal of culture is liberal, restricted to intellectual domination. Anything related to discipline, war, and weapons is considered materialistic, the antithesis of thought, culture, and spirituality. More generally, it appears that democracies, despite universal conscription, tolerate only the “soldier” type, not the “warrior” type; the soldier, almost in the sense of “mercenary,” of troops who were paid by one city

or another to wage war on their behalf. In fact, in modern democracies, the military should simply be at the service of the “bourgeoisie” to continue political maneuvers “by other means” on the international stage, to defend it “from the aggressor,” and in more recent forms, to secure markets and raw materials for industry and capital in search of investment. The purely warrior, heroic element is not considered a value in itself; on the contrary, it is stigmatized as “militarism.” As for political life, it should be the exclusive preserve of politicians and parties [...]

Now, all this is opposed not so much by “militarism” or a government in the hands of “generals,” but by the truth of those who recognize the superior right of a warrior conception of life, with its own spirituality and ethics, to give form and tone to a particular type of civilization, society, and state. The fundamental point here is to recognize that while this “warrior” conception may have a specific expression insofar as it relates to war and the profession of arms, it is not reducible to that alone; it is capable of other expressions because it is a general “style” that can extend to other domains of all kinds, not excluding the economy and spirituality itself. In fact, ‘military’ values can be given prominence without this equating in any way to a reprehensible militarisation of existence. Love of hierarchy and discipline, relationships of command and obedience, a sense of honor and loyalty, a certain love of distance, specific forms of active impersonality capable of developing to the point of anonymous sacrifice, clear and loyal relationships, intolerance for empty words and mere discussion. [...]

How much of this has to do with the army and war is only a particular domain; the essential is rather a certain degree of spiritual tension, opposed to any ‘bourgeois’ life. [...]

Every normal civilization has considered war a natural phenomenon, dependent on the spirit in which it is experienced, accepted, and desired. It has been said, and rightly so, that war shows a nation the exact measure of what peace has meant to it;

that is, if peace for that nation is synonymous with a simple vegetative life, with prospects of cattle-like well-being, with petty morals and only that little bit of conformist discipline necessary for a bourgeois domestication of instincts. [...]

To make the masses march, given their general intellectual level, it is necessary to intoxicate them or deceive them with passionate ideological and propagandistic factors. [...] Traditional states (those stigmatized as “militaristic”) did not need this [...] in those states, the command of a leader and the appeal to the principles of loyalty and honor were sufficient. [...] It is in the age of democracy that war has degenerated, accompanied by an almost unknown exasperation and radicalism [...] moreover, wars appear to be increasingly triggered by uncontrollable factors, precisely because such are the interests and passions that predominate in democratized states. [...]

Civiltà, March/April 1974.

HITLER AND SECRET SOCIETIES

It is remarkable that in France several authors have researched the relationship between German National Socialism and secret societies and initiatory organizations, which are said to have inspired it, to the point of suggesting a “hidden background” to the Hitler movement. This thesis first appeared in the well-known book, rich in digressions, by Pauwels and Bergier, *The Morning of the Magicians*. In it, National Socialism was defined in terms of a union of “magical thinking” with technical science, going so far as to give it the formula “armored divisions + René Guénon,” a formula that must have made the bones of this eminent exponent of traditional thought and esoteric disciplines rattle with indignation in his grave.

There is already a misunderstanding to be blamed here, in that the magical element is often confused with the mythical, which may have nothing to do with the former. There is no doubt that “myths” played a part in National Socialism, such as those of the Great Reich, the charismatic leader, race and blood, etc., but in this regard it is appropriate to give the term “myth” the simple Sorelian meaning of ‘driving force’, of an idea endowed with a particular suggestive power (as, in general, those used by demagoguery are), without any ‘magical’ implication. Thus, for example, no one would sensibly think of attributing a “magical” component to myths used by fascism, such as those of Rome and the Leader, or to those of the French Revolution and communism itself.

The argument would be different in the case of a search for influences of a non-human order to which certain movements may have obeyed without realizing it. But this is not the case with the French authors mentioned above; they do not think of influences of this kind, but of concrete influences exerted by real organizations, albeit “secret” to varying degrees. There has also been talk of “Unknown Superiors” who allegedly instigated the

Nazi movement and used Hitler as their “medium.” It is not clear, however, for what purposes they would have done so; judging by the results, that is, by the catastrophic consequences that National Socialism had, albeit indirectly, for Europe, one would have to think of obscure and destructive ends, which would support the thesis of those who would like to trace the occult side of that whole movement back to what Guénon would call “counter-initiation.” But the French authors mentioned above have also put forward another theory, namely that the “medium” Hitler at a certain point emancipated himself from the “Unknown Superiors,” almost like a Golem, and that from then on the movement took a fatal turn. But then it would have to be said that these occult Superiors had indeed powers of foresight and very limited powers, since they were unable to stop the one they had used as their medium.

On a more concrete level, there has been much speculation about the origin of the essential themes and symbols of National Socialism, referring to pre-existing organizations to which, however, it is difficult to attribute an authentic and regular initiatory character. It was certainly not Hitler who invented Germanic racist ideology, the symbol of the hooked cross, or Aryan anti-Semitism. All of this had existed in Germany for some time. A book entitled *The Man Who Gave Hitler His Ideas* talks about Lanz von Liebenfels (he gave himself this title of nobility), a former Cistercian monk who had founded an order that already used the hooked cross and, since 1905, had published a magazine, *Ostara*, which Hitler certainly knew about and which clearly set out Aryan racist and anti-Semitic ideas.

But much more significant, in terms of the occult background to National Socialism, is the role attributed to the *Thule Gesellschaft* (“Thule Society”). Here, things are more complex. This society was an offshoot of a pre-existing *Germanenorden* (“Order of the Germans”) founded in 1912 and headed by Rudolf von Sebottendorff. Von Sebottendorff had been in the

East and in 1924 had published a strange little book on the *Operative Practices of Ancient Turkish Freemasonry*, which describes procedures based on the repetition of syllables, symbols, gestures, and “steps,” the purpose of which was the same initiatory transformation of the human being pursued by alchemy. It is unclear which Turkish “Masonic” organizations von Sebottendorff was in contact with, or whether he not only reported on these rituals but also practiced them himself.

Nor is it possible to ascertain whether they were regularly practiced in the Thule Society, which he directed: this would be very important in assessing the fact that many leading figures of National Socialism, starting with Hitler and Hess, were members of or had contacts with that organization. It is taken for granted that Hess was trained in the organization and that he in turn “initiated” Hitler in a certain way while they were in prison together after the failed Munich Putsch.

However, it should be noted that, rather than an esoteric aspect, what attracted people to the Thule Society was its relatively secretive nature, its use of the swastika as its emblem, and its marked anti-Semitism and Germanic racism. The assumption that the name chosen by that organization, Thule, attests to a serious and conscious reference to Nordic polar symbolism and the ambition of a connection with the Hyperborean origins of the Indo-European peoples should be taken with caution, given that Thule was considered the sacred center, located in the far north, of the primordial tradition. Indeed, a much more profane origin has been suggested, as Thule may be a deformation of “Thule,” the name of a place in the Harz Mountains where the “Order of the Germans” organized a conference in 1914 with the agenda of forming a secret racist organization to combat what was believed to be behind international Jewry. This line of thought was emphasized by Sebottendorff, head of the Thule Society, in his book published in Munich in 1933 entitled *Bevor Hitler kam* (Before Hitler

Came) to indicate what already existed before Hitler in the form of myths and ideology.

Thus, serious research into Hitler's initiatory connections with secret societies does not lead very far. As for Hitler as a *medium* and his magnetic power, some clarification is necessary. That the Führer owed this power to initiatory practices seems to us a fantasy; otherwise, one would have to absurdly suppose something similar with regard to the same psychic power possessed by other leaders, such as Mussolini or Napoleon. Rather, it must be assumed that once a collective movement has been awakened, a kind of psychic vortex is created which gathers around the person at its center, giving him a special aura that is particularly perceptible to those who are impressionable.

As for the quality of 'medium' (which, incidentally, is the opposite of an initiatory qualification), it can be recognized, with certain reservations, in Hitler, in that he appears in more ways than one to be possessed (this is the trait that distinguishes him, for example, from Mussolini). Precisely when he was whipping the crowds into a frenzy, he gave the impression that another force was carrying him, as if he were a medium, albeit of a very special and exceptionally gifted kind. Anyone who heard Hitler speak to delirious crowds cannot fail to have had this impression. Given our reservations about supposed "Unknown Superiors," it is not easy to determine the nature of this superhuman force.

As for National Socialist "gnosis," that is, a supposed quasi-mystical and metaphysical dimension, it is necessary to recall the singular coexistence, in this movement and in the Third Reich, of "mythical" aspects with openly Enlightenment and even scientific aspects. In Hitler, one can find numerous references to a distinctly "modern" worldview, yet one that is fundamentally profane, naturalistic, and materialistic, while he simultaneously had faith in a Providence, of which he believed himself to be an instrument, especially with regard to the fate of the German nation. modern," yet ultimately profane, naturalistic, and

materialistic, while he simultaneously had faith in Providence, which he believed himself to be an instrument of, especially with regard to the fate of the German nation (for example, he saw his narrow escape from the assassination attempt on his headquarters as a sign of Providence). Alfred Rosenberg, the movement's ideologue, rejected the myth of blood, speaking of a "mystery" of Nordic blood that had sacramental value, but he was also the one who, when it came to Catholicism, accused every rite and sacrament of being a mystification, who, just like an Enlightenment thinker, took sides against the "obscurantists of our time" and attributed to the Aryan man the invention of modern science. Based on all this, it can be explained that when attention turned to runes, the ancient North Germanic symbols, they were revived on a purely emblematic level, almost as in fascism with certain Roman symbols, without any esoteric connotations. The Nazi program to create a superior man was influenced by a "mysticism of biology," again, by a predominantly scientific orientation: it could at most be a "superior man" in the Nietzschean sense, not at all in the initiatory sense.

The project of "creating a racist, religious, and military order of initiates gathered around a deified leader" cannot be considered that of official Nazism, as Alleau claims, who even referred to the Islamic Ismailis as antecedents. It was rather within the framework of the SS, which, it should be noted, was formed later in the Third Reich and had a position within it, that some signs of a higher plan emerged.

Indeed, the organizer of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, clearly intended to create an order comprising elements to be trained according to Prussian ethics and those of the ancient orders of chivalry, notably the Teutonic Order. For such an organization, he sought legitimacy or a seal of approval, which, however, he could not draw, as those ancient Orders had done, from Catholicism, which was openly opposed by the radical Nazi movement. Even without the possibility of any traditional connection, Himmler referred to the Nordic-Hyperborean

heritage and symbolism (Thule), without this being due to those “secret societies” mentioned above, but instead focusing (as Rosenberg did) on the research of a Dutchman, Herman Wirth, on the Nordic-Atlantic tradition (for which Wirth received subsidies from an office specially created by Himmler, the *Ahnenerbe*). This is not without interest, but there is no “occult background” whatsoever.

Thus, the overall assessment is negative. The limit of the digressions of French authors is constituted by the book *Hitler et la tradition cathare* by J. M. Angebert (published in Paris in 1970). Here we find the Albigensians (or Cathars), a sect of heretics that spread between the 10th and 12th centuries, mainly in southern France, with their stronghold at Montségur. According to Otto Rahn, they were destroyed in a “crusade against the Grail” (the title of one of his books: *Kreuzzug gegen den Gral*). What the Grail and its Templars have to do with this sect, characterized by a kind of fanatical Manichaeism that shunned the world and was opposed to earthly existence in the flesh and matter, to the extent that its followers sometimes let themselves starve to death or killed themselves by other means, is completely unclear. Well, it is suggested that Rahn (with whom we corresponded at the time and to whom we tried to show the arbitrariness of his arguments) was an SS member and that a German expedition had been secretly guarded in the Third Reich. After the fall of Berlin, a troop is said to have made its way to the Zillertal, near the Italian border, taking the object with them to hide it at the foot of a glacier, awaiting a new era.

In reality, there was talk of a commando unit, but it seems that its mission was less mystical, namely to save and hide the Reich’s treasure. Two other examples of where fantasy can lead when given free rein and subject to fixed ideas: the SS (which included not only military formations but also specialist scholars, etc.) organized an expedition to Tibet for mountaineering and ethnological purposes and another expedition to the Arctic,

apparently for exploration and also for the possible creation of military bases. Well, according to these imaginative interpretations, the first expedition was actually seeking a connection with a secret center of the Tradition, while the other was aiming to make contact with the occult Hyperborean Thule...

Il Conciliatore, October 1971.

THE MEANING OF THE SS ORDERS AND POLITICAL ELITES

In Italy, only a few aspects of the German SS are generally known, which are linked to the tragic events of World War II and are not the most suitable for understanding the true spirit of this unique organization. Even disregarding the left-wing farce of Nuremberg, where the entire SS was branded a “criminal association,” even its sympathizers know above all about the qualities that the SS displayed as an elite combat troop, while almost completely ignoring the political significance it had in the Third Reich. A few words on this subject will therefore not be without interest, since the SS fulfilled a need whose significance goes beyond the framework of simple Hitlerism.

The origins of the SS date back to a small select group (*Stabswache*) formed to protect Hitler in the early days of his struggle. In 1932, they were organized into a real corps, the so-called “black corps” (*Schwarzkorps*), distinct from the simple “brown shirts” or SA, which already numbered 100,000 men at the time of the seizure of power. Command then passed from J. Schreck to Heinrich Himmler, who remained its supreme leader, answerable only to the Führer. Because of their energetic and decisive action both against communism and within the party (especially in the repressions of June 30, 1934), the SS took on the role of “guardians of the National Socialist revolution.” They were given extensive powers and a very wide margin of autonomy, which allowed Himmler to develop systematic selective and organizational action. The acronym “SS,” as many know, derives from the initials of *Schutz-Staffeln*, which roughly means “protection squads.” In reality, the SS was to become the backbone of the Third Reich, the “Order” of National Socialism, a kind of state within a state, if not above the state.

Himmler himself described the spirit and ideal origin of his organization in the following terms. In all ancient states, he said, there has always been an “elite” made up of men ready to give everything for their prince, to defend and protect him, feeling particular pride and honor in doing so. Such was the hereditary nobility, which, already the support of the pure principle of political sovereignty, declined in the age of enlightenment, liberalism, and capitalism and was no longer equal to its former tasks. The problem today is to take up the same principle again and apply it appropriately to the new type of state. It was necessary to reshape an “elite” that would guarantee the stability and continuity of the newly established revolutionary order, strengthen its structures, and, on the basis of unconditional loyalty, be ready to crush anything that threatened it or had the character of deviationism.

Such is the ideal genesis of the “SS.” Himmler was keen to attribute to it the character of an Order, with various features reminiscent of the ancient orders of chivalry, including a character that was, in a certain sense, hereditary. To achieve this, he followed the following selection principles.

First of all, the racial principle. It is well known that in modern racism, not all ethnic elements present in a given nation have the same value and dignity. Among them, one is central, having a formative function, so much so that its prevalence or decline also conditions the rise or decline of the entire people. According to German ideology, for Germany this “superrace” corresponded to the Nordic blood and type. The first concern of the organizers of the “SS” was therefore to ensure that it accepted men of clearly “Aryan” origin (without even distant Jewish or colored ancestors), whose physical features were particularly close to the pure Nordic type.

This was the primary selection criterion. Given the mixing that has occurred throughout the history of every people, it is certainly impossible for physical characteristics to correspond

exactly to moral characteristics; thus, while “Nordic” moral qualities are more likely to be found in a physically Nordic man than in one with traits of other races, further considerations are necessary. Therefore, in addition to being physically fit, SS aspirants had to pass tests in which the internal qualities attributed to the Nordic blood had to be demonstrated. These were, so to speak, stress tests: the aspirant was often placed in special situations in which he could not help but show his true character.

In this regard, the first requirement to be demonstrated was loyalty. Himmler himself, on the occasion of the events of June 30, 1934, gave the SS the following slogan: “Man of the SS, your honor is your loyalty,” with obvious reference to a maxim of the ancient Saxon code: “Everything can be forgiven except betrayal.” Loyalty here is understood in a broad sense: it is loyalty to the leader and the cause, but also to the race and the fundamental principles of conduct, as was already the norm in the ancient chivalry. It was Himmler who wrote the following words on this subject, which do little to comfort the distorted and sinister image that some have of the SS in general:

“One sins against loyalty and honor not only when one damages one’s own honor or that of another SS member, but also and above all when one does not respect the honor of others, when one mocks things sacred to others, or when one does not intervene manfully on behalf of those who are absent, weak, or defenseless.”

After loyalty, obedience came as the basis for the training of the “SS” man. This obedience had to be complete and unconditional, no less than in the strictest monastic orders. It was said that when a Prussian officer swore on his flag, he no longer belonged to himself. This Frederick tradition was taken up by the “SS.” In the name of the Leader and the Idea, the SS man had to be ready for anything, “even to sacrifice his pride, external

honors, and everything that is personally dear and precious to him.”

He had to be able to restrain himself when everything urged him to act, just as he had to be able to act without hesitation, even in cases where he felt the strongest internal obstacles. Himmler considered this requirement of absolute obedience, among other things, as a corrective to the accentuated sense of self and freedom that the Nordic man possesses and which often acted negatively in him. It is clear, however, that this can lead to a certain inexorability, which is perhaps one of the reasons why, in certain circumstances, the actions of the SS appeared in a less than favorable light.

Other qualities required of SS men were loyal frankness, self-control (especially in the visible expression of feelings and gestures), and the ability to adhere inflexibly to what had been decided or promised. In this regard, the applicant was tested if necessary. For example, if he was known to indulge in alcohol or smoking, he was asked to give up this habit for a longer or shorter period of time, demanding his word of honor. If he did not give it, he was expelled; but if, having given it, he broke his word, “all that remained was the pistol,” that is, to kill himself (Himmler’s exact words).

Another case. It has been mentioned that the SS tended to develop as a hereditary body or order, like a *Sippenorden*. As the result of a physical and moral selection, its qualities as a Nordic elite were to be passed on to suitable descendants. This placed a further burden on the SS man. He was not free to marry whom he wanted. He had to subordinate his personal, sentimental, or sexual life to an interest that was already super-individual, choosing only women who offered sufficient guarantees of a non-degenerate or unaltered lineage. For this purpose, there was a special office in the SS. If the SS man was unable or unwilling to commit himself in this way, he was also expelled.

The trial period generally lasted a year and a half, naturally including military training. Then, through a solemn oath and the presentation of the “SS honor dagger,” one was accepted into the corps. A 1936 law required that every SS leader guarantee, under his own responsibility:

- 1) that no applicant would be accepted if they did not meet the specified requirements, even if they were his son or relative;
- 2) that each year, a quarter of new recruits should not come from SS families.

The second provision was intended to prevent the *elite* from crystallizing into an artificially closed group that could exclude qualified individuals. In other words, account was taken of the laws studied by Pareto, according to which a “circulation of the *elites*” guaranteed not only continuity but also the vitality and freshness of the core.

A curious definition (coined by Heydrich) of the SS is that of a “shock troop in the realm of worldview” (*weltanschauliche Stosstrupp*). On the negative side, it was an attack on the view of life expressed primarily by Marxism and Bolshevism, “the antithesis of all Aryan and Nordic values”; while on the positive side, it referred to a “return to the origins” that was a characteristic feature of the SS. The SS, in fact, sought to evoke the primordial, pre-Christian Nordic traditions in their symbols, metaphysics, and worldview, and a special cultural section, called *Ahnenerbe*, was tasked with studying them. This “dimension” was characteristic of the SS. Even the initials, stylized in a double zigzag sign, were identified with the so-called “runes of victory,” an ancient Nordic sign which, alluding to lightning, symbolized magical power, a force from above. And this was precisely the well-known sign carried on the banners and uniforms of the “black corps.” Indeed, the interest in the world of symbols and primordial traditions among the upper echelons of the SS

(starting with Himmler) was remarkable. It is worth mentioning that Himmler favored the studies of H. Wirth,¹ a well-known researcher in the field of symbols and myths, and that J. Evola was repeatedly invited to speak on such topics in SS leadership circles, where he found greater preparation and interest than he encountered in Fascist Italy, where, apart from a mere veneer, the routines of a deteriorated and tendentially “neutral,” bourgeois, or anti-Fascist intelligentsia continued.² The structure of the SS is more or less well known. There was the “secret state police” (Gestapo) as a political control body superior to any particular authority or person; in a special capacity, it took the form of the SD (initials of “security service”). There were also the “Death’s Head” formations and, finally, the Waffen SS, purely military formations, elite divisions that commanded the admiration of even their adversaries. But, overall, referring to the pre-war period, the fundamental character of the “SS” was that of an “Order,” a new political nobility that was racially, morally, and—in the aforementioned area of “worldview”—even spiritually selected, which aspired to form the backbone of the new anti-Marxist and anti-democratic state, controlling and supporting it with a kind of capillary network: since SS men were scattered throughout every domain, in diplomacy, bureaucracy, universities, industry, their status often amounting to a kind of investiture, often honorary and secret, conferred on people who were considered worthy of being added to the central core, the faithful guardian of the idea. The *Ordensstaatsgedanke*, that is, the ideal of a state ruled not by a “party” and even less by democratic politicians or Marxist labor representatives, but by an “Order,” was therefore at the basis of the SS, making it a bold attempt, whose significance, in our opinion, is not limited to recent German history and the cadres of Hitlerism.

Notes

1. On Herman Wirth, see *Ricerche moderne sulla tradizione nordico-atlantica*; J. Evola, *Aspetti del movimento culturale della Germania contemporanea*, in *I saggi della "Nuova Antologia"*, Padua, 1982, pp. 18-24, as well as the *Cenni bio-bibliografici*, edited by M. Eemans and R. del Ponte, in *Arthos*, XII-XIII, 27-28 (1983-1984), pp. 43-45.
2. On the relationship between Evola and the SS milieu, see now above all, edited by the "*Fondazione J. Evola*," Quaderno n. 33 dedicated to Julius Evola *nei rapporti delle SS*, Rome, 2000, as well as the dossier dedicated to Weisthor-Wiligit, in *Arthos*, n.s., IV, 7-8 (2000), pp. 241-265.

THE “NAPOLAS”

We believe it is interesting to provide an update on some new German initiatives aimed at taking on, in a particular political form, those tasks of “qualitative” education that in the previous era were essentially entrusted to a few private institutions. We will begin with a brief mention of the so-called “Napolas.”

Napolas is an abbreviation of *National politische Erziehungsanstalten*, which translates as ‘National Political Education Institutes.’ They had the following origin. Following the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was forced to abolish some officer training schools; in the immediate post-war period, the German government transformed them into the so-called *Staatliche Bildungsanstalten*, i.e., state educational institutions intended to take in young people in need or neglected by their families. These were state-approved secondary schools, where education followed mainly liberal and apolitical criteria and was complemented by fairly extensive sports training.

Once National Socialism came to power, these institutions were transformed again and gave rise to the Napolas. The Napolas, controlled by the new state, had strictly political and selective aims. They aim to take in particularly gifted young people and develop in them the qualities that will enable them to take on leadership roles, not necessarily in the army or the party, but in any field of life. This is a totalitarian concept, with particular emphasis on the strengthening of masculine qualities accompanied by a “social” awareness, a habit of considering one’s actions in relation to the community.

Indeed, the statements made to us personally during one of our visits by one of the general inspectors of these institutions are characteristic. He emphasized the distinction that must exist between private family education and political education. He contested that political education can be considered a further

development of the 'naturalistic' education that young people receive within the family. It is instead a distinct phase that has other premises and follows other principles, essentially that of the *soldatische Gemeinschaft*, of the community and solidarity that can exist between a warrior group. This is the role that the Napolas want to play: not as copies or continuations of the family. Young people must feel that they belong to a different and broader order, an order that has its own laws and morals.

While admission to the *Staatliche Bildungsanstalten*, i.e., the previous liberal forms of the institutions in question, was free and depended solely on the desire of the students, the Napolas only accept young people who have been recommended by lower schools and by the leaders of the Party's youth organizations for their particular and privileged aptitudes. Admission can take place at the age of 10 or 14, and the complete course lasts eight years in the first case and six in the second.

There is no fixed tuition fee for admission to these boarding schools. There is a voluntary contribution, according to the means of the family of the young person deemed worthy of admission. There is no possibility of repeating a class. If a young person proves to be inadequate in their studies or in another branch of education, they are dismissed without hesitation.

In the Napolas, too, with regard to physical training and character building, there are those "tests of courage" already mentioned in connection with similar institutions in Germany. For example, even the youngest pupils, those around 10 years old, are asked to jump into the water from a certain height, even if they cannot swim, while the older ones are asked to ride a lively horse without a saddle; their behavior is closely observed in "combat tests" and so on. This is the individual side. With regard to the individual in relation to the group, particular attention is paid to both camaraderie and leadership skills among peers and the associated sense of responsibility. To facilitate the development of these qualities, the principle of self-discipline,

i.e., order entrusted to the young people themselves, who are given power over a certain group of peers according to their qualities, is given a wide scope in the Napolas.

These qualities are also used to judge whether or not the young person is worthy of remaining in the institutes in question. Confirmation of admission takes place, in principle, after a trial year. However, the trial continues thereafter, and the young person must be aware that they can always be dismissed if they do not live up to the ideals of the Napolas.

As for technical instruction, it is not intended to be inferior to that given in other schools. In accordance with the idea of a total education, the aesthetic element is not neglected, with instruction not only in drawing and impressionistic painting, but also in singing, which has a not insignificant place here. The principle of entrusting pupils to young teachers who, due to their physical prowess, can also be their mentors or competitors or leaders in sports and group tactical exercises, which take place periodically and once a year with the participation of pupils from all twenty schools in the Reich, is also applied.

In terms of political education, the so-called 'casuistic' method is adopted. The exposition of abstract concepts is avoided, and instead young people are presented with concrete cases and asked to give their opinion. The aim is thus to encourage and refine a given sensibility rather than to inculcate generic patterns of political or social ideas.

A unique and bold initiative of the Napolas is to send students to live together, the younger ones with peasant families and the older ones with industrial workers' families, for a period of six to eight weeks. During this period, the young person is hired by these families as a wage earner, lives with them, and must support himself with his wages, as he is forbidden to receive money or parcels from his family. In such a communal life, the young people are able to refine their social awareness and gain a direct understanding of the problems of existence. They must even serve

as examples to the families and workers among whom they live, and they must not neglect to enlighten them on political issues and on what they have learned to feel in a living way about the ideas of National Socialism.

All this is done through an agreement between the Napolas and the *Arbeitsfront*, i.e. the so-called “German Labor Front,” a party organization that controls national labor and, in this case, is responsible for placing individual students in suitable environments for this new training. In the final years of the institute, educational trips abroad are organized.

Contrary to what one might think, upon completion of the course, the young people did not receive any special or privileged qualifications. They found themselves in the same situation as those who had attended a regular school, with no advantages whatsoever. The idea was that young people should be able to make the most of the superior qualities that this special, complex, and rigorous “elite” education had tested, confirmed, and developed in the struggle for life. These qualities must assert themselves, manfully and realistically, by their very nature, without the slightest favoritism, and lead the young man to the position of command to which they, in principle, make him worthy.

It is not without importance to note that the main elements governing the training of young people in the Napolas and controlling them are provided by the SS (short for *Schutz-Staffeln*), that is, by that Germanic “black” corps, which aspires to be a guard and almost an Order—in the ancient sense of an ascetic-warrior organization—of the National Socialist revolution.

Il Regime Fascista, May 27, 1941.

LETTER TO CARL SCHMITT

Rome, January 21, 1955

Dear Professor!

Thank you very much for your warm letter. I am delighted that the publication of my book on the Grail has restored our old relationship. I had already tried to get back in touch with you a couple of years ago, when Prince Rohan gave me your address, but my letter remained unanswered. Among other things, I told you how interested I would be in reading your essay on Donoso Cortès, even if only for my own perusal. Since I am considered the main proponent of the “Reaction” here, thank God, you can easily imagine how interested I am in your assessment of this personality.

Unfortunately, the name Ballanche is unknown to me. I can only explain the saying “*l’initié tue l’initiateur*” if it refers to the abstract, impersonal plane. In that case, it simply refers to two phases of the initiation process. In the first phase, the initiate is passive toward the initiator: he receives power from him. This is the phase that is characterized in Hermeticism by the moon (*Luna*) and water, and is also called *Albedo*. In a second phase, however, the initiate seizes this power, creates himself as a new center, and this becoming independent means, in a certain sense, the “killing” of the initiator on whom he was previously dependent. In Hermeticism, this is the solar phase, the work of fire, also called *Rubedo*, and this saying is very significant: first the mother gives birth to the son, but then the son conquers and kills the mother. Similar evidence can also be found in other traditions. The same meaning is reflected in the Ghibelline doctrine, according to which the ruler, after receiving the consecration (first phase), feels independent and superior to the initiators (the clergy).

Thank you very much for your interesting “dialogue”; I will come back to it. If you had any opportunity to write about my book on the Grail, I would be grateful to you for a practical reason: the decision of the same publisher to reprint my “*Erhebung wider die moderne Welt*” (Revolt Against the Modern World) will depend on the sales of the book, and I believe that the reappearance of such ideas in Central Europe would now be beneficial.

Are you still in close contact with Ernst Jünger? To be honest, I am not very impressed by his later work; I had to write a rather scathing review of his book “*Der Gordnische Knoten*” (The Gordian Knot), which, although brilliantly written (as always), contains nothing but ramblings.

With warm regards,
Yours sincerely

J. Evola
Corso Vittorio 197
Rome

P.S. I have been told about your collaboration with *Il Borghese*, but I have not seen the relevant issues. Unfortunately, here only *i borghesi* are trying to oppose communism, which is a lost battle from the outset. The people here (and not only here) have neither the intellect nor the race for a higher ideal.

LETTER TO ERNST JÜNGER

Rome, 17 November 1953

Dear Sir,

My name should be familiar to you, because I received a copy of *Heliopolis* with a dedication from Dr. Mohler, and also because we had many mutual acquaintances in the *Reich*, such as Prof. C. Schmitt and Baron von Gleichen.

I have been following your work with particular interest for some time and have often had occasion to refer to your works. Among these, I am particularly fond of those from your early period, up to *The Marble Cliffs*. It is in this regard that I am writing to you. I hope to be able to have *Der Arbeiter* translated into Italian. Given the similarities between the post-war period and the current situation, I believe that the issues raised in that book are once again relevant. Moreover, the solutions that were hoped for in the Reich and in Italy were mostly fictitious, surrogates, and ephemeral manifestations. I also hope that the book can still have a “reawakening” effect today.

We now face an obstacle, because I do not have the book and it is very difficult to find. Dr. Mohler even wrote to me that you only have one copy in your archives. However, perhaps you will be able to find someone among your acquaintances who could either sell the book or simply lend it for the period of analysis and translation, with a formal and personal assurance that it will be returned.

Also, who should we contact for the translation rights?

Please excuse this approach, but I was forced to take it due to the continuous postponement of the occasion when I would have had the honor of contacting you personally.

With particular consideration,
Yours sincerely

J. Evola
Corso Vittorio Emanuele 197
Rome

THE BLOODY BARON

F. Ossendowsky's book *Beasts, Men and Gods*, whose Italian translation is currently being reprinted, was already widely known when it was published in 1924. Of particular interest are the account of Ossendowsky's eventful journey through Central Asia in 1921-22 to escape the Bolsheviks, but also what he reports about an exceptional character he met, Baron von Ungern Sternberg, and what he heard about the so-called "King of the World." Here we would like to take up both points.

A myth had grown up around Ungern Sternberg in Asia itself, to the extent that in some temples in Mongolia he was worshipped as a manifestation of the god of war. A fictionalized biography of him was also written in German, entitled "I Command" (*Ich befehle*), while interesting details about his personality provided by the commander of his army's artillery were published in the French magazine *Etudes Traditionnelles*. We ourselves heard about Stenberg from his brother, who was to be the victim of a tragic fate: having escaped the Bolsheviks and reached Europe via Asia after all sorts of romantic vicissitudes, he and his wife were killed by a mad doorman when Vienna was occupied in 1945.

Ungern Sternberg came from an ancient Baltic family of Viking descent. A Russian officer, at the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution he commanded cavalry units in Asia, which gradually grew into a veritable army. With it, Ungern agreed to fight the red subversion to the last. He operated from Tibet, which he liberated from the Chinese, who had already occupied part of it, and entered into close relations with the Dalai Lama, whom he freed.

Things developed to such an extent that the Bolsheviks became seriously concerned and, after repeated defeats, were

forced to organize a large-scale campaign, using the so-called “Red Napoleon,” General Blucher.

After a series of ups and downs, Ungern was defeated, the collapse having been caused by the treacherous defection of some Czechoslovak regiments. There are conflicting versions of Ungern’s end; nothing precise is known. In any case, it is said that he knew exactly when his life would end, as well as some specific details, such as that he would be wounded, as he was, during the attack on Durga.

Two aspects of Sternberg are of interest here. The first concerns his personality, which was a mixture of singular traits. A man of exceptional prestige and boundless daring, he was also ruthlessly cruel and relentless towards the Bolsheviks, his mortal enemies. Hence the name given to him: “the bloody baron.”

It is said that a great passion had ‘burned’ every human element in him, leaving only a force indifferent to life and death. At the same time, he had almost mystical traits. Even before going to Asia, he professed Buddhism (which is by no means reduced to a humanitarian moral doctrine), and his relations with representatives of the Tibetan tradition were not limited to the external, political, and military sphere in the context of the events mentioned above. He possessed certain supernatural abilities: for example, there is talk of a kind of clairvoyance that allowed him to read other people’s minds with the same accuracy as he perceived physical things.

The second point concerns the ideal that Ungern cherished. The struggle against Bolshevism was to be the starting point for a much broader action. According to Ungern, Bolshevism was not a phenomenon in itself, but the final, inevitable consequence of the involutory processes that had been taking place for some time throughout Western civilization. Like Metternich before him, he believed—rightly—in a continuity between the various phases and forms of global subversion since the French Revolution. Now, according to Ungern, the reaction should have

started in the East, in an East faithful to its spiritual traditions and united against the looming threat, together with all those capable of revolting against the modern world. The first task would have been to wipe out Bolshevism and liberate Russia.

It is interesting to note that, according to some fairly reliable sources, when Ungern made himself the liberator and protector of Tibet, he had secret contacts with representatives of the main traditional forces, not only in India but also in Japan and Islam, in connection with such a plan. Little by little, this defensive and offensive solidarity of a world not yet affected by the materialism of subversion was to be achieved.

Let us now turn to the second topic, that of the so-called “King of the World.” Ossendowsky reports what the lamas and leaders of Central Asia told him about the existence of a mysterious center of initiative called Aghartta, the seat of the “King of the World.” It is said to be underground and, by means of underground “channels” beneath the continents and even the oceans, to communicate with all regions of the earth. As Ossendowsky heard it, this information seemed fanciful. It is to René Guénon’s credit that he brought to light, in his book *Le Roi du Monde*, the true content of these stories, not without pointing out the significant fact that in the posthumous work of Saint-Yves d’Alveydre entitled ‘*La mission des Indes*,’ published in 1910, certainly unknown to Ossendowsky, reference is made to the same mysterious center.

What must first be clarified is that the idea of an underground location (difficult to conceive, given the problem of housing and supplies, unless inhabited by pure spirits) must rather be rendered as that of an “invisible center.” As for the “King of the World” who is said to reside there, we are referred to the general concept of an invisible government or control of the world or of history, and the fanciful reference to “underground channels” connecting that headquarters with various countries of the earth must

likewise be dematerialized in terms of influences, so to speak, exerted from behind the scenes by that center.

However, taking all this in this more concrete form, various problems arise when we consider the current situation. The spectacle offered by our planet in an increasingly precise manner does little to support the idea of the existence of this “King of the World” with his influences, if these are to be conceived as positive and corrective.

The Lamas told Ossendowsky: “The King of the World will appear before all men when the time comes for him to lead all the good in the war against the wicked. But that time has not yet come. The most wicked of mankind have not yet been born.” Now, this is a repetition of a traditional theme known in the West since the Middle Ages.

What is interesting is that, as mentioned above, Ossendowsky was presented with a similar idea in Tibet by lamas and leaders of the country, with reference to an esoteric teaching. And the rather primitive way in which Ossendowsky reports what he heard, inserting it into the account of his travels, suggests that this is not his own invention.

Roma, February 9, 1973.

GENTILE IS NOT OUR PHILOSOPHER

You don't have to be anti-idealistic to be anti-Gentilian (and anti-Crocian). It can be said that it is only out of ignorance or intellectual provincialism that these "philosophers" have been taken seriously and admired in our country. One must not have studied directly (as we have done) the great systems of German transcendental idealism, one must not have known the immanent problems that led, for example, beyond Hegel, to the "second" Fichte and the "second" Schelling, to Schopenhauer and to von Hartmann himself, in order not to realize that Croce and Gentile are nothing but two poor epigones, whose only merit is to have led the positions of absolute idealism to absurdity, to a veritable speculative collapse.

We have given an exhaustive demonstration of this elsewhere. Here it will suffice to briefly indicate the central point, from which it can be seen how a coherent Gentilianism leads to a philosophy ignorant of inner renunciation or of the *fait accompli*.

The starting point of idealism was the so-called "critical theory of knowledge," which can be summarized in Berkeley's fairly self-evident "*esse est percipi*," that is, concretely, we can only speak of the reality of what I perceive, or think, or imagine, or, in any case, represent to myself. Thus, the knowing or thinking subject is placed as the central point of reference for all certainty. This subject becomes the universal "I think" in Kant, the transcendental ego in Fichte, and finally, in Gentile, the "Logos" or "self-concept" or "pure act." But here a real mystification intervenes: from the rather banal idea that we are closed within the circle of what, in one way or another, I think, experience, or suppose, we move to the idea that the ego, almost like a God, is the free, voluntary creator of all the content of such experience. The confusion between the ego as a simple knowing subject and the ego as freedom and will is evident and astonishing here. I can also say that what is perceived or represented does not exist

outside the act of my perceiving or representing it (“the world is my representation”), but as for saying (except within the very narrow limits of certain mental and cultural domains, and only partly social and historical) that what I perceive I have also “placed” there, freely and voluntarily—that is obviously something else entirely. Gentilianism gets away with this by means of the theory of ‘concrete will’ or ‘historicity of the spirit’, which is a genuine mystification. There are an infinite number of things that happen, but which I neither want nor desire at all. So what? So Gentile tells you that you only want them as an “empirical subject” and “abstract will”; instead, you want them perfectly as pure act-I, in whose “concrete will” and “historicity” the real and the desired, the act and the fact are one and the same. To such a fantasized I, I as an empirical subject (that is, what I really am) should conform. The result is this: in order to “immanentize” and bring back to a hypothetical transcendental I everything that exists, I am condemned to recognize as “mine” and “willed by me” even what I least want and simply suffer.

The only ethics that can be logically deduced from such a philosophy is therefore one that is ready to sanction every inner capitulation, every conformism, every cowardly acceptance of the *fait accompli*—with equal readiness, however, to accord the same recognition to tomorrow’s opposite *fait accompli*, when it succeeds in overtaking today’s.

Let us take a drastic example from the most trivial domain: the Gentilean subjected to torture should recognize that his “concrete will” is that of his tormentor, while his rebellious and suffering will is only that of his empirical and “abstract” self, for whom reality can be different from the will. At most, that Gentilian could console himself by thinking that this is a “negative moment” imposed by the spirit itself (without consulting the person concerned in the slightest) for a “dialectical overcoming.” And if the “empirical subject” in such circumstances were to leave us his life, equally “empirical,” his last consolation would be that

immortality which, for Gentile, is reduced to existing in the thoughts of others, in a “transcendental society” which is simply the earthly society of mortal men.

Needless to say, deleterious consequences can arise from this amateurish, conjuring philosophy when it enters the social and political realm...

Ordine Nuovo I, 4-5 (July-August 1955), pp. 25-30.

THE MYTH OF MARCUSE

The Marcuse case is interesting as an example of how myths are formed in our times. Today, even in Italy, there is a lot of talk about Marcuse: this is *de rigueur*, in order to be *à la page*, in certain “intellectual” circles on the fringes of café society, while elsewhere the myth is already beginning to decline. Thus, in Germany, after Marcuse was included, without his consent, in the formula of the three Ms (Marx, Mao, Marcuse) of the “student movement,” he seems to have been derided recently.

The strength of the Marcuse myth lies in having crystallized a confused impulse of revolt which, lacking principles, believed it had found its philosopher in him, without bothering to see clearly or to separate the positive from the negative in a serious study. In reality, Marcuse may have made a valid contribution to the critique of modern civilization, but in this regard he presented himself only as the epigone of a group of thinkers who had already begun it some time before, without offering anything substantial as a counterpart that could serve as a banner.

It is well known that Marcuse painted a bleak picture of the most technologically advanced ‘industrial society’ and the ‘consumer society,’ denouncing its forms of levelling, enslavement and oppressive conditioning, a system of domination which, in order to be bland, to avoid resorting to terror and direct imposition, and to achieve itself instead in the name of well-being, maximum satisfaction of needs and apparent democratic freedom, is no less ‘totalitarian’ and destructive than communist systems. The result is a ‘one-dimensional man’, or rather, a two-dimensional man, because what he lacks is precisely the third dimension, the dimension of depth. Marcuse also applies his analysis to specific areas and shows, for example, that “functionalism” has now invaded the field of speculative and scientific thought, removing all metaphysical character from knowledge and placing everything within an instrumental, elastic,

and all-encompassing “rationality” that is capable of overcoming all centrifugal and non-conformist forces.

With all this, Marcuse has said nothing really new. The antecedents of such a critique can already be found in De Tocqueville, J.S. Mill, A. Siegfried, and Nietzsche himself. We ourselves had pointed out the idea of the destructive convergence of the communist system and the American democratic system in the book *Revolt Against the Modern World*, published in Italy in 1934 and in Germany in 1935. We also spoke of two similar forms of levelling “totalitarianism,” one “vertical,” defined by direct pressure exerted by a visible power, the other “horizontal,” due to social conformism.

It can be said that Nietzsche had foreseen Marcuse’s development at the beginning of the century in the brief, incisive phrases dedicated to the ‘last man’: *‘the time of the most despicable of men is near, who no longer knows how to despise himself,’ ‘the last man of the teeming and tenacious race.’ ‘We have invented happiness, say the last men,’* they have abandoned *‘the region where life is hard.’* But what a different background lies behind these formulations of a true and rebellious aristocrat of another stature! Marcuse’s specific contribution boils down to a careful examination of the specific ways in which the technological civilization of well-being has been a systematic breeding ground for this race of “last men.” Furthermore, the demythologization of Marxist ideology is positive in his arguments (although, for obvious reasons, not always clearly marked): technological civilization eliminates Marxist proletarian protest; by increasingly raising the material standard of living of the working class, satisfying its needs and desire for bourgeois well-being, it swallows it up and incorporates it into the “system.”

All this seems to lead to a dead end. On the one hand, Marcuse speaks of a world that tends to become one of total administration that absorbs its own administrators, thus becoming autonomous (W. Sombart had already spoken of the

‘unleashed giant’ in reference to the involuntary developments of the other capitalism). On the other hand, he says that it is no longer appropriate to speak of “alienation” because we have a type of human being who has existentially adapted to his situation by making what he is coincide with what he wants to be, so that there is no point of reference for feeling “alienation.” Freedom in an unmutilated sense, different from that still allowed by the “system,” would have to be paid for at an absolutely exorbitant and absurd price. No one thinks of giving up the advantages of the civilization of well-being and consumption for an abstract idea of freedom. Thus, man would have to be forced to be “free.”

So, what human substance can we count on and what ideas can we invoke for “global protest,” for the “Great Refusal”? Here, in Marcuse, everything becomes insubstantial. He does not want to attack technology but hopes for a different use of it; for example, to reach out to dispossessed and impoverished peoples and social strata. He does not realize that, given the premises, this would ultimately do them a disservice: it would eliminate their “protest” by absorbing them into the “system.” In fact, we see that the “Third World,” in liberating itself and “progressing,” does nothing more than take the advanced industrial society as its model and ideal, thus heading toward the same trap. Hence, too, the illusion of the Maoists: they stop at the “heroic” phase of a revolution that wants to make a clean sweep, as if this phase could be eternalized and as if it were possible to instill in the masses a constant contempt for the ‘putrid well-being of imperialist civilizations,’ if this were achievable (after all, China is not only that of the rowdy Red Guards who are enemies of political superstructures, but also that which is industrializing to the point of possessing the atomic bomb: all things that Marcuse includes in a ‘repressive civilization’). In Russia, we have seen how that “heroic” phase gradually gave way to a technocracy in which the prospect of bourgeois “well-being” is used as a stimulus.

Marcuse is certainly right when he says that we need to “redefine and resize our needs,” excluding those that are parasitic

and encourage the growing voluntary enslavement of man, and that we should curb overproduction. But by whom and in the name of what? Stopping the “unleashed giant” and containing the “system” would only be possible starting from a higher power, a political power superior to the economy, something that would horrify Marcuse, a sworn enemy of all forms of totalitarianism.

Marcuse is keen to point out that, for him, “the liberation of affluent society is not a return to healthy, vigorous poverty, moral cleanliness, and simplicity.” What he proposes instead is very similar to an insubstantial fantasy (with an obsessive complex of “pacification” at any cost), because he does not recognize any higher values as motivational reference points. To be convinced of this, one need only read his lesser-known book, *Eros and Civilization*. From this it is clear that the only man he conceives is that of Freud, a man constitutionally determined by the “pleasure principle” (*Eros, libido*) and by that of destructiveness (*Thanatos*); that any ethic other than the satisfaction of these impulses would be “repressive” and would become internalized in the so-called “Super-ego” (the inner tyrant), external inhibitions, and those linked to ancestral complexes. Marcuse outlines a whole sociology that derives every political and social structure from the Freudian man, in terms that are sometimes truly delusional.

In the name of what, then, would the “Great Refusal” be demanded, given that every heroic and ascetic principle is stigmatized and attacked with aberrant Freudian interpretations? Isn’t Marcuse’s ideal of ‘personality’, which he opposes to ‘revisionist’ psychoanalysts (Jung, Fromm, Adler, etc.), that of a *‘broken individual who has internalised and successfully utilised repression and aggression’* (sic)? One example for all. Hendrich spoke of an army that continued to fight *“without thinking of victory or a pleasant future, for one reason only, because the soldier’s duty is to fight and this is the only motivation that has meaning... it is another proof of the human will.”* Well, for Marcuse, this would be the height of alienation, the “complete loss of all instinctual

and intellectual freedom,” “repression becoming not the second but the first nature of man,” in a word, an “aberration.”

Any comment is superfluous. For Marcuse, freedom and happiness are one and the same, in Freudian terms, with the satisfaction of the demands of one’s own immutable instinctual nature, the element of “*libido*” naturally being in the foreground. All that Marcuse can envisage is a development of technology that gives man an increasing amount of free time, not subject to the “performance principle”; then he will be able to direct his instincts not toward those direct satisfactions that would be catastrophic for an orderly society, but toward vicarious or transposed satisfactions, in terms of play, imagination, an ‘Orphic’ (pantheistic-naturalistic with Rousseauian overtones) or ‘narcissistic’ (aestheticizing—this is the terminology used) order. These are more or less the same marginal fields that Freud had indicated, in terms of compensation and ultimately escape, in the case of the individual. Marcuse does not take into account the fact that technological society has already thought of systematically organizing these occupations of “free time,” offering people the standardized and stupid forms associated with sports, television, cinema, tabloid culture, and Reader’s Digest and the like.

To draw from all this a valid banner for the “Great Refusal” is of course ridiculous. What everything else depends on is the conception of man. The Freudian conception, followed by Marcuse, is aberrant. So if we take stock of the myth, the result is more or less this: a legitimate revolt, but without a positive counterpart and without hope. Thus, anarchy is the only logical outcome. Perhaps this is why Marcuse ended up getting booed in Berlin, certainly by the radicals of the protest. With the Marxist and working-class ‘protest’ now over, all that remains is the revolution of nothingness. It is significant that in the recent riots in France, the black flags of the anarchists appeared alongside the red flags of the communists, just as it is significant that in such demonstrations, and not only in France, there have been

instances of pure savage and destructive violence. It is therefore pointless to harbour optimistic illusions about the often fetishized “youth,” student or otherwise, if the basic situation does not change. A revolt without those higher principles that Nietzsche himself evoked in the valid part of his thought, not to mention the contributions of the exponents of a Right-wing revolution, inevitably leads to the emergence of forces of an even lower order than those of communist subversion, even if the latter tries to exploit them. With the eventual affirmation of these forces, the entire cycle of a doomed civilization would come to an end, unless a higher power arises or the image of a superior human type is reaffirmed.

A curious phenomenon worthy of examination is the influence exerted by “Maoism” on certain European circles, as it is not only groups of avowed Marxists who are involved. In Italy, one can even mention certain circles that claim a “legionary” experience and a “fascist” orientation, while opposing the Social Movement because they consider it non-revolutionary, bourgeois, bureaucratized, and ensnared by Atlanticism. Even they speak of Mao as an example.

This phenomenon prompted us to take the trouble to read Mao Tse-tung’s famous little red book in order to try to understand what could possibly justify such suggestions. The result was negative. Among other things, it is not even a kind of breviary written with any particular systematicity, but a heterogeneous collection of passages, speeches, and various writings spanning a long period of time. There is no question of a true, specific Maoist *doctrine*. What are we to think when, from the very first pages of the booklet, we read categorical statements such as this: “*The theoretical foundation on which all our thinking is based is Marxism-Leninism*”? This alone would be enough to dismiss the new gospel, where, moreover, the usual banal slogans of world subversion—“struggle against imperialism and its

servants,” “liberation of the people from the exploiters,” etc.—are found at every turn.

That being the case, if there are conflicts, differences, and tensions between Russian Soviets and Chinese communists, we must think that these are purely family quarrels, internal affairs of communism (apart from very prosaic realistic motives: the vast territories of Asian Russia that are coveted by overpopulated China). which should be of no interest to us, except for the hope that the two cronies will eventually kill each other.

What can exert an influence, therefore, is a pure *myth* of Maoism, which has no basis in precise ideological formulations, with rash questions and, above all, with emphasis on the so-called “cultural revolution” of the Red Guards. Let us examine the main components of this myth.

In some ‘pro-Chinese’ circles, mentioned above, ‘nationalism’ is considered the basis of Maoist doctrine. But apart from the fact that nationalism had already established itself with Tito’s ‘heresy’ of Tito and seems to be gaining ground among the many satellites of the USSR, the essential point is overlooked, namely that Maoism is essentially a form of ‘communist’ nationalism; its basis is a collectivist, mass, almost horde-like conception of the nation, not unlike the Jacobin conception. When Mao wants to fight the process of the concretization of rigid party-bureaucratic structures for a direct connection with the “people,” when he speaks of an “*army that does everything with the people*,” taking up the formula well known to us of “total mobilization,” he manifests more or less the same spirit, or *pathos*, of the masses as in the French Revolution and the *levée des enfants de la Patrie*, while the mass-leader binomial (the “cult of personality,” fought against in post-Stalinist Russia, is resurrected and strengthened in the person of Mao, idol of the Red Guards) reproduces one of the most problematic aspects of dictatorial totalitarianism. Communism plus nationalism: this is the exact opposite of the superior, articulated, and aristocratic conception of the nation.

But if it is a formula of this kind that attracts “pro-communist” groups who would prefer not to be Marxists, it is not clear why they do not instead refer to the doctrines of yesterday’s National Socialism, where this pairing was already present in the formula: ‘*Führer-Volksgemeinschaft*’ (leader + national community). We say ‘in theory’, because in practice, elements derived from Prussianism and the tradition of the Second Reich always made their corrective force felt in the Third Reich. And there was also plenty of ‘voluntarism’, another element that would define Maoism. There would have been no need to wait for Mao for the “active conception of war” as a “*means of affirming and triumphing over one’s own truth*”: as if before the advent of conscientious objectors, hypocritical pacifism, and the twilight of the warrior spirit and military pride, things had been thought differently in all the great Western nations. However, we need to look at things more closely and listen to what the great Mao says, verbatim: “*We fight against unjust wars that hinder progress, but we are not against just wars, that is, against progressive wars.*” There is no need to explain what “progress” means in this context: facilitating the advent of Marxism and communism in every people. Let us therefore also treasure the “active conception of war” for *our own* “just war,” which is the war to the bitter end against world subversion, while letting others vent their spleen by denouncing “imperialism” while extolling the “heroic Viet Cong,” generous Castroism, and so on, all nonsense good only for brains that have been “brainwashed.”

Here are some other elements of the Maoist myth. Maoism would trust in the new man as the maker of history and would take a stand against the technocracy in which both the USSR and America converge. The “cultural revolution” is said to be positively nihilistic, aiming at a renewal that starts from scratch. All these are just words. First of all, it is not to man that Mao properly addresses himself, but to “the people”: “*the people, the people alone are the driving force, the creator of universal history.*”

The contempt for the person, for the individual, is no less violent than in the early Bolshevik ideology. We know that in Red China, the private sphere, family education, all forms of individual life, affections, and even the self (if not reduced to its minimum expression and most primitive form) are ostracized. The integration (i.e., disintegration) of the individual into the “collective” is the watchword. The famous cultural revolution is, properly speaking, an anti-cultural revolution. Culture in the Western and traditional sense (even traditional Chinese: remember the Confucian ideal of *jen*, which could be translated as *humanitas*), that is, as a collective heteronomous formation, is being fought against.

Mao declared that he had taken as his point of support the destitution and poverty of the masses, which he said was a positive factor “because poverty generates the desire for change, the desire for action, the desire for revolution”: it is like “a blank sheet of paper” on which anything can be written. This too is rather banal, and no one would want to exchange such a situation for a ‘zero point’ in a spiritual, positive sense. What is characteristic of the initial, activist, euphoric phase of Maoism as a revolutionary movement may impress the naive, but no more than any other revolutionary movement. But such a phase does not constitute a positive solution; it cannot be perpetuated. What is interesting is not the starting point, but the goal, the direction, the *terminus ad quem*. Now, Mao’s statements are as numerous as they are precise, and in the “construction of socialism” he points to such a goal. Thus, far from being able to glimpse a regenerative revolution, with only “man” in view and starting from an anti-cultural zero point, we find a movement that is burdened from the outset by a heavy mortgage, namely that of Marxism. No sleight of hand can change this state of affairs, and it remains for Mao to explain how he reconciles the idea that man (as we have seen, the “man-people”) is the active subject of history, determining the economy itself, with the basic dogma of Marxism, historical materialism, which is exactly the opposite.

Anyone who feels attracted to a revolution that really starts from scratch, from a nihilism that rejects all the values of bourgeois society and culture, shows themselves to be naive if they know of no one else to inspire them outside of the great Mao. How much more valid points of reference could be offered, for example, by the ideas on “heroic realism” formulated outside of any Marxist instrumentalization and deviation by Ernst Jünger in the period following the Great War.

As for the other element of the ‘pro-Chinese’ myth, the anti-technocratic position that, starting more or less from Marcuse’s well-known analysis of the most advanced industrial societies, some would like to promote, this is an illusion. Did Mao not tend to industrialize his country to the point of securing the atomic bomb and stockpiling all the means necessary to help his “just war” in the world, thus setting himself on the same path that communist Russia found itself fatally compelled to follow, creating technological and technocratic structures analogous to those of bourgeois industrial societies? Beyond a fanaticism that cannot be maintained as a permanent state, we would really like to know whether Mao, if he could ensure for the masses of his followers and his people, revolutionary because, as he said, they are miserable, the living conditions appropriate to a “civilization of well-being,” would see them turn against all of China, which is indignant at the “putrid happiness of imperialist societies.” And if, hypothetically, a kind of asceticism could be aroused in an entire nation by values of the level of those of Marxism. The only conclusion to be drawn is that we would be faced with an almost unimaginable degree of regression and debasement of a certain portion of humanity. The complete inability to conceive of true values as opposed to those of the “civilization of well-being” and the “consumer society” is, after all, the characteristic of all the so-called “protest” movements of our day.

It would be easy to continue with observations of this kind. But the considerations made so far already indicate that the pro-Chinese infatuation is based on myths which, for those who

think things through to their conclusion and for those who refer to Mao's gospel booklet, appear to be without foundation. Those who, while claiming not to be Marxists or Communists, are influenced by Maoism, demonstrate anything but intellectual maturity; the nature of their "total protest" and their ostentatious revolutionary vocations is more than suspect if they can find no other points of reference.

Il Borghese, June 27, 1968.

OVERCOMING ACTIVISM

Introduction

Evola's Views on the Modern World: The Demon of Action

Here we present an important work by Julius Evola that we recently discovered: *Superamento dell'attivismo* (Overcoming Activism), which appeared on January 18, 1933, on the third page of the Cremona newspaper *Il regime fascista*, edited by Roberto Farinacci. This extremely significant work is new to Evola studies, as it is not even mentioned in the most complete bibliography of Evola's works published to date—the only one, moreover, that has attempted to list all of Evola's articles that appeared in Italian magazines with any claim to completeness.

As mentioned, this is a particularly interesting piece of writing, which, while it will certainly not surprise those who already read and know Evola, should be brought to the attention of those who still know little about him. The article we are presenting consists of a *pars destruens* and a *pars construens*, as is often the case in Evola's polemical writing: the modern "demon" of action without a center or direction is analyzed with particular effectiveness and incisiveness. The extreme relevance of these considerations, made almost seventy years ago, may perhaps surprise the reader: when Evola writes of material and passive action, driven from outside and directed towards the outside, he seems to be describing our contemporary society, and even more relevant is his reference to that secret action that no longer creates machines, banks, and companies, but men, ascetics, and warriors, proud beings who are masters of their own souls, free from all thirst, liberated. That type of action, that is, unbound and liberated from the yoke of passions and becoming, which becomes an end in itself, now the preserve of a few rare individuals. The action to which, in the

world of ruins that he condemns, it is only worth devoting oneself, and for which it is truly worth living.

It is easy to see how his thinking was avant-garde. Similar considerations, on a slightly different level, had been made the previous year by Ernst Jünger in his valuable essay *Der Arbeiter. Herrschaft und Gestalt*, which, not surprisingly, particularly interested Evola because of the similarity of their views, and to which he dedicated an essay after the Second World War, which has recently been republished for the Italian public.

Significantly similar are Jünger's views on the Age of Technology, on the *Arbeiter* who mobilizes the world through technology, and the indications that Evola provides on the attitude to adopt in this era in which speed is taken to its extreme consequences, action becomes paroxysmal, and all meaning seems lost. On this basis, it seems to us that the most brilliant consequences are those drawn from the thought of Evola (and also of Jünger) by Adriano Romualdi, undoubtedly the best exegete of the Italian philosopher, when he wrote:

“History is turning a page and the world of technology is conquering its space. To speak well or ill of this does not exhaust the problem: in the reality of the technological age, there is an ignorance of every other perspective, but also a spirit of rationality and mastery that fits into the context of a European tradition [...]. There is in science and technology an adherence to the inner style of the white man that cannot be denied. A style that has become obtuse, a vocation that has fallen into mechanical habit, but dominated by a desire for clarity [...]. Can we simply throw off the heavy burden of white civilization?”

The answer that Evola gives is simple, and consists in the true liberation of action from its constraints, in essentialization, which passes through the rediscovery of a traditional style and way of life: in what he calls “new classicism of action and domination.”

The hope is that the re-proposal today of the writings of Evola may have the truly valuable and significant function of transmitting to someone—even to a single person—an interest in that World of Tradition that Evola taught us to love.

* * *

It is difficult to dispute that activism is the watchword of the latest civilization. The exaltation and practice of action, and therefore of everything that is effort, enthusiasm, struggle, becoming, transformation, perpetual search, and tireless movement, can be seen emerging everywhere. And not only do we today have the triumph of action, but we also have a *sui generis* philosophy at its service, which, with systematic criticism and a powerful speculative apparatus, seeks to create alibis of all kinds and to throw contempt upon the values proper to every different point of view. Thus, in things, the modern eye becomes accustomed to increasingly neglecting the aspect of “being” and instead fixating on the aspect of “becoming,” “development,” “history”: “historicism” and ‘becoming’ set the pace for ‘activism,’ and we see that in the sciences themselves, principles that yesterday were considered immutably valid and intrinsically evident are today regarded as hypothetical assumptions to be tested in the light of the development of scientific knowledge; we see that in the same religions, a new type of exegesis takes no account of the claims to absoluteness and transcendence that dogmas and “revelations” presented and tends not to see in all this but moments of a becoming, of an immanent history of religious aspiration, not hesitating, on this basis, to proceed to the most contaminating humanizations.

In philosophy, this is even more evident. Pragmatism, voluntarism, actualism, etc., are currents which, albeit in various forms, all converge in a single motif which merely translates into speculation the very motif of today’s immediate life, its turmoil,

its fever for speed, its mechanization aimed at contracting every interval of space and time, its congested and breathless rhythm, which in Anglo-Saxon and especially American peoples reaches its limit. Here, the activist theme truly reaches a paroxysmal, almost pandemic climax, absorbing the totality of life in an acceleration that seems to know no bounds, while horizons are increasingly reduced to the dark and impure one of entirely temporal and contingent achievements, where the demon of the collective becomes omnipotent over beings deprived of all traditional support, paralyzed by a restlessness that goes beyond all limits, dominated by forces unleashed in many subpersonal and faceless ways that push them towards the “animal ideal” of a new Arimanic civilization.

In this way, things have reached such a point that for those who have not yet completely forgotten those ancient traditions that made up our true spiritual nobility, it is imperative to stop and take stock of the situation by returning to a higher point of view. And in reality, it is possible to criticize and react against the aforementioned orientation of the modern world, not in the name of stagnation or intellectual or aesthetic abstraction, but precisely in the name of action itself: by showing that the modern world, deep down, knows almost nothing about what action really is—what it exalts is only an inferior form of action—and that this is precisely where the deviation and the danger lie.

In reality, there is action and action; there is healthy activism and activism that is simply fever, exaltation, vertigo without a center, so much so that, far from testifying to strength, as is commonly believed, it indicates only impotence and incapacity. Today, under the guise of various philosophies of “life,” “becoming,” and “the irrational,” it is precisely this second kind of activism that we are dealing with; and for this reason, a return to a higher conception of action is necessary to restore balance and halt a process whose deleterious consequences are already all too visible.

We have lost the sense of what the opposition between the “natural” world and the “intelligible” world meant spiritually in our classical traditions. Movement—in such doctrines—was considered the principle of things of a lower nature, but movement as the “perpetual flight of things that are and are not” (Plotinus), as an inability to fulfill itself and possess itself in a law and a limit, to realize itself as a perfect act. The other world—the “intelligible world”—was not the world of non-action, but rather that of perfect action, an action that differed from the mode proper to “nature” in that it was devoid of desire and sufficient unto itself: as absolute action, having its own object and its own principle within itself. A supernatural, aristocratic ideal of action was therefore the soul of this anti-modern vision: but not only that. Anyone who came into contact with some of the traditional teachings of the Aryan East would perhaps be astonished at the assertion that everything that is movement, activity, becoming, change, belongs to a passive and feminine principle, while immobility, immutability, fixity are referred to the masculine and “solar” principle. And so they would not even be too aware of what the other statement means, that “the Wise man discerns non-action in action and action in non-action.”

This does not express quietism at all, but precisely the awareness of a higher, aristocratic ideal of activity, in relation to which common action becomes almost non-action. It is the idea that, in metaphysical-theological terms, is found in Aristotle’s doctrine of the unmoved mover. He who is the cause and effective lord of motion does not move himself. He arouses and directs motion, he awakens action, but he does not act, in the sense that he is not “transported,” he is not taken by action, he is not action, but rather a calm, impassive, and imperative superiority from which action proceeds and depends. This is why his powerful and invisible command could be called “acting without acting.” Faced with this ideal of dominated action, those who act out of impulse, passion, identification, desire, or restless need do not truly act, but are acted upon. However paradoxical

this expression may seem, theirs is a passive action. This is why, compared to the transcendent, superior, regally cold, purely determinative, ‘immobile’ world of the ‘Lords of Motion’, they resemble women: they move, they do, they create, they run, but the reason, the absolute cause of their action lies outside them.

Now, once we understand this traditional ideal of action and non-action, if we examine the true meaning of the activistic, voluntaristic, Bergsonian doctrines, etc. in vogue today, we find ourselves faced precisely with this inferior and passive form of action: what is exalted today is a blind and instinctive impulse, whereby one goes without knowing why one goes, without having the power to be other than what one is, to control oneself, to create within oneself a center, a limit, a light, an absolute reason. It is acting for the sake of acting, as it was spontaneity and “*elan vital*,” as an immediate and never resolvable necessity—even if it does not reduce itself to a more or less conscious desire to stun and distract oneself, to agitation and noise that betray a fear of silence, of internal detachment, of the absolute being of superior individuals—while on the other hand it sustains and foments in every way the revolution of man against the eternal.

Although necessarily incomplete, these considerations are sufficient to give a sense of the central point of reference. The turmoil of modern life, the unbridled multiplicity of forces and passions that it has evoked both in the order of society and in that of nature itself, over which man today, through technology, is gaining ever deeper control, should be matched by forces of centrality: forces of asceticism, command, absolute spiritual domination, absolute individuality, and absolute vision—forces that today, less than at any other time, we can observe around us. And it is futile to hope that this defect can truly be removed when action continues to be reduced to the single type of material and “passive” action, driven from outside and directed outward; when nothing else is seen and it is believed that inner action, the secret action that no longer creates machines, banks, and companies, but men, ascetics, and warriors, proud beings

who are masters of their own souls, free from all thirst, liberated, is not action but renunciation, abstraction, a waste of time. As long as this is the criterion, we can expect nothing but an ever-increasing vertigo, ever further from any center and any control other than the mutual dependence of parts of a monstrous machine running in vain, with no one left who can do anything.

If, in its fever to run, to go ever further like the thirsty or the hunted, the modern world does not realize that it is only realizing the extreme consequences of romanticism, then what can establish a new balance and not extinguish but integrate, centralize, and make masculine, solar, and active action can only be a re-evocation of what, in a broad sense, can be called the classical experience: love of the *cosmos* against *chaos*; of form against formlessness, of ethos against pathos, of clarity against darkness, of the distinct and the “Doric” against the promiscuous, the restless and the limitless.

The ideal of a new classicism of action and domination, animated by new contacts with the super-temporal, prepared by the values of a virile asceticism and an aristocratic superiority over simple ‘living’, is what we need today. It will slowly create new centers, qualities, and individualities—new in order to be “traditional” in the deepest and most vivid sense of the term—before which, by an irresistible natural law, the forces without center, without person, and without light that have emerged through the myth of action in recent times will inevitably bend and subordinate themselves to a better future.

Algiz 12 (1999), pp. 4-8.

OVERCOMING ROMANTICISM

The slogan is thus: Enough with 'human values', enough with romantic longing. This must above all be achieved on an inner level, which means: stopping, turning men back upon themselves, forcing them to find their own end and their own value within themselves. Let them learn once again to feel alone, without help or law, until they awaken to the act of absolute command and absolute obedience. Looking around them coldly, let them recognize that there is nowhere to "go," nothing to ask for, nothing to hope for, nothing to fear. Let them breathe then, freed from all weight, and let them recognize their misery and weakness in both love and hate. Let them rise again as simple, pure things, no longer human.

In the superiority of aristocrats, in the high elevation of souls who are masters of themselves, let them mock the murky greed with which slaves rush to the banquet of life. Let them determine themselves with an active indifference capable of anything according to a renewed innocence. The power to put one's life at stake and to fix the abysses with a smile, to give without passion, to act by placing victory and defeat, success and failure, pleasure and pain on an equal footing, springs from this very superiority that makes one dispose of oneself as of a thing in which the experience of what is stronger than any death and any corruption is truly awakened. The sense of the rigidity of effort, of the harsh "you must," no longer exists as the memory of an absurd obsession. Recognizing the illusion of all "providential plans," of all historicist ideologies, of all "evolutions," recognizing all "ends" and "reasons" as crutches necessary only for those who, even as children, do not know how to walk on their own, men will cease to be moved, but will move themselves. Being central in themselves, men by themselves and no longer specters, action will reemerge in its primitive, elemental, absolute sense.

It will be at this moment, when the poisoned fog of the romantic world has been lacerated, beyond intellectuality, beyond psychology, beyond the passion and superstition of men, that nature will reappear in its free and essential state. No heaven will gravitate over the earth anymore. Everything around will return free, everything will finally breathe. Here too, the great disease of romantic man, faith, will be overcome. To man thus reintegrated, new eyes, new ears, new audacities will then spontaneously open. The supernatural will cease to be a pale escape for pale souls. It will itself become reality, and will coincide with the natural. In the same clear, calm, powerful, disembodied light of a resurgent Hellenic simplicity, spirit and form, interior and exterior, reality and supra-reality will once again become one in the balance of the two terms, neither one superior nor inferior to the other. It will therefore be an era of magical realism: in the energies of those who believe themselves to be men, and do not know that they are sleeping gods, the energies of the elements will vibrate once again until they tremble with absolute illuminations and spiritual resurrections.

And then the other great human bond, that of faceless social amalgams, will also be overcome. Once the law that made them pieces of machines, stones chained in the impersonal cement of collective despotism or humanitarian ideology, has been defeated, individuals will be the beginning and end in themselves, each enclosed within themselves like worlds, rocks, peaks, clothed only in their strength or weakness. Each one a place, a combat position, a quality, a life, a dignity, a distinct, unparalleled, irreducible strength. Their moral code will be as follows: To impose oneself on the need to “communicate” and “understand” each other, on the contamination of fraternal pathos, on the will to love and feel loved, to feel equal and together, to impose oneself on this subtle force of corruption that breaks down and softens the sense of aristocracy and individuality. Incommunicability will be desired, in the name of absolute and virile respect: valleys and peaks, stronger forces and weaker forces,

one alongside the other or one against the other, loyally recognized in the discipline of the spirit, intimately inflamed though outwardly rigid and tempered like steel, which contains in magnificent measure the excess of the infinite: militarily as in a war enterprise, as on a battlefield. Precise relationships, order, cosmos, hierarchy. Strongly individualized and organized groups without intermediaries and without attenuation through actions, where some—men and races—will shine brightly, while others will fall silently. Above, solar and self-sufficient beings, a race of Lords with a vast, fearsome, distant gaze, who take only in superabundance of light and power, and in determined life they move toward an ever more dizzying intensity, yet always balanced in a supernatural composure.

Then, the romantic myth, that of “man” and “humanity,” will be no more. And in a world of clarity, the words of Nietzsche, the precursor, will resound: “How beautiful, how pure are these free forces, no longer tainted by the spirit!”

The Overcoming of Romanticism, pp. 109-111.

THE SCOURGE OF PERSONALISM

For a truly effective organization of nationally oriented forces, one of the prerequisites is the overcoming of personalism. Personalism is one of the unfortunate traits of the Italian people, especially in its intellectual strata, and today it persists and is even asserting itself among the groups closest to us in terms of ideals, with visible and deplorable effects of fragmentation, dispersion of energy, and distortion.

While the need of the moment would be for the discipline of forces coordinated in a compact bloc, with the idea and action itself in the foreground rather than individuals, there is still too often a tendency to go it alone, to form one's own little group, using ideas primarily to show off, to secure privileges, to create a certain sphere of influence. Thus, even if in reduced proportions, the evil of "hierarchism" tends to reappear; which, let us say without mincing words, is the antithesis of any true hierarchy, since true hierarchy knows no personalism, defining itself objectively by the authority that comes from adapting oneself individually to a principle and a function, and from willingly keeping everyone in their right place, without deviation, prevarication, or maneuvering.

At the same time, we see widespread mania for controversy, with a style of reactivity that we might almost call uterine. The two things are effectively linked: personalism and individualism are equally at their root. In order to highlight oneself, there is an almost hysterical need to attack one or the other, to counter formula with formula, slogan with slogan, even where calm and objective examination would easily show that the reasons for contrast are minimal, that the contrasts are not due to doctrinal and intellectual aspects, but essentially to an animus, an irrational and emotional factor. It is not recognized that, all things considered, what is at work here is simply an "inferiority complex," because those who are truly certain of their own worth

and that of their ideas do not feel the need to attack left and right in order to “assert themselves,” are not subject to uncontrolled reactivity, do not seek every possible excuse to have their say or to oppose others; instead, they go their own way, with a style characterized by intense focus and action directed toward what is essential and positive, not toward what is accidental and negative.

As we were saying, the effects of such an orientation are clearly anything but constructive. For example, in the press itself, we now see the emergence of one new periodical after another, almost always because one person or another wants to secure their own sphere of influence and “jurisdiction.” What other results would not be achieved, however, if these individual possibilities were organized in a unified manner, on the basis of a fundamental doctrinal clarification and, subsequently, a style of discipline committed to active impersonality? The system of “groups” defined by people’s interests rather than by real ideas, or with simple slogans instead of ideas, is so effective today that it engenders a fundamental suspicion in many people. Thus, it is almost impossible to conceive that there are free beings who go straight their own way. Instead, one wonders “who is behind him,” one tries to discover in the service of what interests, of what “combinations,” of what groups or factions the ideas one defends and the things one says stand. This leads naturally to gossip and rumor, to a descent into irrelevant intrigue and scandal, not least because this level lends itself better—once again—to controversy, attacks, and personal attacks. There is no point in giving examples that everyone knows. Nor is there any point in emphasizing how often such an attitude of suspicion and intrigue distorts things and plays into the hands of one’s opponents, placing all the emphasis on what for some may be only a means, and not at all the end or the decisive motive.

Sectarianism and the concept of “contamination” also belong to the same individualistic vision. For example, writing on one piece of paper rather than another often automatically creates incompatibilities, given the system of personality-based groups:

seeing what ideas are being defended, ascertaining whether a writer remains consistent with himself, and considering only this as essential and serious—this is difficult for many to do. Instead, people are expected to “form groups,” even when there is no real reason to do so, since the goals are the same once false “intransigence” has been removed: false because it is mainly based on people.

The distortions we have briefly mentioned are deplorable in any political climate. But at the present time, they are a luxury that we really cannot afford. The extent to which they can be eliminated or reduced on the basis of a new seriousness and intensity will also be that of real progress in the movement for national rebirth.

Rivolta Ideale, 1951.

THE RELIGION OF SCIENCE

“Scientism” is a kind of religion of science, of modern science, which is supposed to be capable of providing authentic knowledge of reality and, through its technical applications, of solving every human problem and leading us towards a bright future. This infatuation first appeared at the beginning of the century, even finding choreographic expression in the ballet “Excelsior,” which extolled the achievements of the science of the time and praised the victory of Reason and Science, instruments of Progress, over “obscurantism,” a victory that would also lead to universal brotherhood.

Despite everything that has happened in the meantime and despite the emergence of an immanent critique of science, such an attitude still persists in certain circles. Although Ugo Spirito (formerly a Gentilean and now a communist) is a philosopher of no account, he nevertheless offers us a characteristic example of persistent scientism. According to Spirito, science takes the place of metaphysics and philosophy, and since there is universal consensus on the truths of science, beyond all frontiers, so too can science be seen as the basis for the unity of peoples. It is regrettable that under the title *Tramonto o eclissi dei valori tradizionali?* (Sunset or eclipse of traditional values?), the publisher Rusconi has released a book in which Spirito is given a voice, even if a critical discussion by Augusto Del Noce is added. Del Noce basically places himself on the same intellectual level as Spirito and seems to know little about true traditional values. In our opinion, in such cases there should be no discussion at all, but rather a flat rejection of what the French call “*une fin de non recevoir*”: simply reject it.

However, the same publisher Rusconi has also recently published a book by Giuseppe Sermonti entitled *Crepuscolo dello scientismo* (Twilight of Scientism). Perhaps the title is not entirely

appropriate, because it is more of a “critique” of scientism; a “twilight” of it, as mentioned above, which is unfortunately not the case today (it should be noted, among other things, the value given to the myth of science by Marxism, communism, and “progressive” ideologies in general). Sermonti’s criticisms are valid and relevant, although not always original, and also extend to specialized fields. The book is worth reading because it dispels many of the fads of scientism that can take hold of the unwary.

Two aspects should be considered in taking a critical stance toward modern science. The first concerns the value of scientific knowledge, the second concerns its applications.

As for the first aspect, the value of science has long been relativized, not by outsiders but by epistemologists such as Poincaré, Boutroux, and Le Roy at the beginning of the century, and later by Braunschwig, Meyerson, and many others. Sermonti took up their arguments, making two points clear. Modern science (especially as a natural science) has been constructed and developed on the basis of a limiting (not to say mutilating) choice made in reality; in reality, it considers only what is measurable and translatable into mathematical formulas. The rest—everything that is qualitative, unrepeatable, and linked to meaning—it considers non-existent, irrelevant, “subjective,” and disruptive. The result is the creation of something abstract and even inhuman, to which no value can be attributed in a proper, concrete, and living sense: so much so that ultimate science, completely algebraized, has become incomprehensible outside a narrow circle of specialists.

Therefore, all “scientific” knowledge is detached from human experience; it is not an integration of it at all. The ultimate meaning of what I see, of every process and phenomenon—light, sun, fire, seas, sky, plants that bloom, beings that are born and die—is not made any more transparent. On the contrary, because scientific knowledge is responsible not only for this displacement of thought into an abstract sphere, but also for the general

“desacralization” of the world, the obscuring of what in it may have the character of a symbol, of a meaning, of a reflection of a higher order. Those whose minds have been filled with ‘positive’ scientific notions since school cannot help but develop a view that sees everything around us as lifeless and gray, and therefore acting in a destructive sense.

The reality is that modern science, rather than aiming at knowledge of the integral and traditional meaning, is informed by practical needs, by the impulse to dominate the world, and this is already evident in its procedures. The whole system of science—as we have already written—is “a net that tightens ever more around a *quid* that remains incomprehensible, for the sole purpose of subjecting it to practical ends.” And scientism finds its favorite alibi in everything that science has made possible in its technical applications; in fact, today science is not so much interested in knowledge as in being an effective tool for increasing well-being, wealth, and material power.

Now, leaving aside certain sectors, perhaps those of medicine and hygiene, we must consider the responsibility that science has had in building a society that has ended up looking like a mere consumerist and technological society, which is now provoking growing protests. In his book, Sermonti also considers these aspects. After all, there is nothing that does not have a price. We are not referring to the most conspicuous, and somewhat overemphasized, aspects of the potential catastrophes caused by the non-peaceful use of thermonuclear energy and the multiple forms of contamination affecting nature in the air, water, and soil. We must also bear in mind internal processes, in the context of the contributions made by science and technology to economic developments that have taken hold of mankind. We are referring to a situation in which products are not so much created to meet man’s natural needs as to arouse and feed the desires of the masses, given the proliferation of products on the market. This leads to the increasing conditioning of modern man (also highlighted by Marcuse), a conditioning which, however, is

accepted without question by the majority of our contemporaries, because for them, giving up certain comforts and conveniences is too high a price to pay for a greater degree of autonomy.

When Sermonti points out that, in the face of such developments, we should not think of technological fate but rather call on man to take responsibility, he is absolutely right. And, in our opinion, he is no less right in pointing to a new taste for sobriety and simplicity as the best means of returning to a normal way of life. Unfortunately, given the prevailing climate, one cannot fail to recognize the utopian aspects of this reasonable solution. Even recently in Italy, have we not heard politicians repeating over and over again that the only way to overcome the economic crisis is to increase production (based on increased investment)? Well, increased production requires not a reduction but an increase in needs, confirming the vicious circle mentioned above. More valid would be the image of Werner Sombart, who compared production and the modern economy, exacerbated by technology, to an “unleashed giant” that must be restrained at all costs in the name of higher human values.

Returning to Sermonti, it seems to us that his acute criticism of modern science and scientism lacks a positive justification, which would be the indication of a different type of knowledge (as did the traditionalist school, for example Guénon, Schuon, and Burckhardt). Secondly, reservations must be expressed when Sermonti accuses of “totalitarian despotism exercised over nature and the earth” and hopes that “consideration be given to them” so as not to become “unwelcome guests in the long run.” Certainly, a contemplative, conciliatory attitude towards the brutal technical exploitation of nature corresponds to a just need. However, we should strike a balance, avoiding ending up in an idyllic naturalism *à la* Thoreau, if not Rousseau.

Roma, 1971.

JEWISHNESS AND MATHEMATICS

Among the modern representatives of the mathematical sciences, a significant proportion of Jews have taken a rather peculiar and conspicuous direction. People generally do not know what to think of them. It seems that the anti-Semitic polemic encounters an obstacle that is not so easily overcome here. Mathematics has a reputation for being a completely objective and abstract science. What significance can a racially based evaluation have in this field? How can one seriously speak of Jewish subversion here? If one wants to remain fair and impartial, research seems hopeless.

In discussing the problem at hand, we will of course not address the achievements of Jewish mathematicians or their additional cultural and political activities. Albert Einstein's anti-German and strongly Zionist views, for example, are well known to everyone. Nevertheless, we must accept that Einstein's attitude had no bearing on his mathematical teachings or insights, for which he became famous. Taking this opportunity, it might be useful to clarify some misunderstandings surrounding the term "relativity." Those who are not competent in this field may easily fall into the error of considering this concept as incitement to anti-Semitism. The term "theory of relativity" has undoubtedly had an unintended but dangerous influence. It led laymen to believe that even science itself asserts relativity, the untenability of fixed points of reference, and the chaos of values and perspectives—in other words, the kind of modern mood to which Jewish "creations" and "discoveries" in other fields have contributed so significantly. However, things are different: Einstein's theory took generalized relativity into account in the world of physical phenomena only in order to eliminate it; the so-called "transformation equations" restore this theory only in order to arrive at the "constants," i.e., which are necessary for the definition of physical phenomena and which are completely

independent of the reference points of relativity. With this procedure, Einstein only succeeded in eliminating all empirical points of reference and constructing a completely abstract, mathematical-algebraic physics. In this physics, there are only numbers, equations, integrals, and differentials, i.e., only systems of stripped-down intellectual abstraction, while all intuitive ideas, all concrete experiences and images from the world in which we live are strictly banished. This is an excessive shift of physics toward mathematics. This is Einstein's specialty, but it is also characteristic of the aforementioned Jewish mathematicians. This brings us closer to the topic at hand, and we can now explore the significance of Judaism's attraction to abstract mathematics.

As in many other cases, we must start from the beginning. If we do not start from the recognition that today's world is so paralyzed by the confusion of values and, above all, by the degeneration of the spirit that the search for purer values and meanings seems almost hopeless, then we cannot see clearly even the most important questions of our culture. The Jews' attraction to mathematics stems from the secularization of some of the main features of their worldview, an attitude that was characteristic of Jews even in ancient times. However, this worldview cannot be correctly understood without knowing its counterpart, the ancient Aryan worldview. Let us therefore bear in mind that the ancient Aryan worldview rested on two main pillars: the idea of the "cosmos" and the idea of "solarity." The ancient Aryan-Hellenic idea was the cosmos (corresponding to the Indo-Aryan concept of "*rita*") as an organic worldview and conception of existence, i.e., life as order, as a natural and at the same time supernatural law. Of course, this was not "pantheism," but rather the recognition of deeper connections, so that every phenomenon and form of existence took on a symbolic, often even ritual significance in a higher sense. The ancient Aryan world did not know fragmented dualisms. Its highest ideal was Olympian, an almost natural supernaturalism, as an expression of the synthesis and identity of the two worlds. From this follows the second

main feature, “solarity.” The Aryan man experienced himself in connection with the primal force of existence; he lived two lives at the same time, or more precisely, life (*Leben*) and the life that transcends life (*über-Leben*). This was a state that did not lead to a paralyzing antinomy or tragic schism, but was dominated by the spirit, and the divine was not an afterlife accessible through withdrawal from the world, but the center of life in a deeper sense. This is the source of all the “central” and “radiant” characteristics that, in accordance with the analogy provided by nature, determine the meaning of “solarity.”

Let us turn to the worldview of the ancient Semitic peoples, and in particular to that of the Jews, and we will find that it has a characteristic that destroys the ancient Aryan synthesis between the world and the world beyond, and between life and the life that transcends life. At the forefront here is a dualism that sometimes displays extreme traits and destroys all inner peace, all balance, and all purity of perception. The body becomes “flesh,” understood as the root of “sin,” which is incompatible with the “spirit.” The world is no longer a divine order, no longer a cosmos, but something profane. Reality is mere materiality, and the spirit accordingly becomes something unreal, transcendent in a negative sense. Man becomes a “creature,” defined by a fundamental passivity that gives him a “lunar” nature—like the moon, he draws his light from a principle outside himself. This is why it is possible for the Jewish soul to hover forever between extreme materialism, raw sensuality, and a longing for “salvation,” for unattainable “holiness.” But even cultures that are not Jewish, but Semitic in general, show similar harmful divisions. Here we are thinking of Assyria and Chaldea, where Chaldea even offers us an important intellectual possibility for the research we are now engaged in.

As is clear from its mythology, Assyria has, on the one hand, violent, crude sensuality, cruel, and fiercely warlike, and on the other hand, a spirituality that culminates in female figures—

figures who ultimately surpass their divine male counterparts and belong to the group of Aphrodite-like royal women and great nature goddesses. It would be pointless to look here for the Olympian and heavenly Aryanism of solar and supernatural masculinity. In this context, the highest type of typically Semitic cultures is no longer the royal man, as in the ancient Aryans, but the priestly mediator.

This “decline,” which is a consequence of the Anar dualism, is already reflected in the spirit of the ancient Chaldean culture and gives rise to a special form of science, which is the ancestor of the science that concerns us. This is a priestly, mathematical-lunar science. It is an astronomical science that turns more to the planets than to the motionless celestial bodies, more to the Moon than to the Sun. Thus, the Babylonians considered the night to be more sacred than the day (the symbolism of the Sun and sunlight gave rise to the pantheon of great Aryan deities, from Dyaust to Zeus and Apollo); Sin, the moon god, ranks higher than Samas, the sun god. This ancient science is fundamentally inseparable from a fatalistic mood that can be recognized in the idea of the omnipotence of a foreign law, the ignorance of true transcendence, in short, the anti-heroic limitation bound to the spiritual nature. In Assyria and Babylon, even the calendar was based on the moon (in Egypt, it was the sun), which is not an insignificant detail. This view of existence so limited the Jews that the idea of immortality was completely unknown to them; only Sheol existed, where without exception all souls, including the “forefathers” and the priestly kings of Israel, lived in a shadowy, extinguished existence after their death; thus, a kind of Hades or Niflheim (Hel), which, unlike the Aryan wastelands, had no opposite pole, no place for the privileged immortality of “heroes.”

There is hardly any need to emphasize the destructive effect of such views, nor their ability to act as a disruptive ferment within the Aryan races and cultures. However, we are not examining the processes that led to the development of these views through various ethical and religious conflicts, but rather their effects on

the field of cognition. In place of a knowledge based on the idea of the cosmos, i.e., the living connection between nature and the transcendent, between life and spirit, there now stands a science defined by a contrary premise. Opposed to the materiality of nature are now lifeless laws and functions, which are first of a lunar-astronomical and later of a lunar-mathematical nature, and which are determined first by lunar-pantheistic harmonies and later, due to secularization, by universal-rational influences. From this root, the “tradition” of Jewish mathematics inevitably develops, which thus represents the harmful dissolution and complete negation of the ancient Aryan solar ideas.

Incidentally, it is characteristic that Pythagoreanism, where mathematics played a well-known and extremely important role, was already considered by the ancients to be a non-Hellenic or anarchaic phenomenon due to its significant emphasis on the female gender; that is, a return to the spirit of a Pelazgian-Asian culture that was typical of the pre-Aryan Mediterranean. Rome, conscious of its own deep and formative ideas, banished Pythagoreanism. It is also significant that the ancients associated Pythagoras with the Etruscans, that they emphasized this connection by banishing the commentaries on the book of Numa Pompilius, and that in Italy, Pythagoreanism spread most widely among those sections of the population where the Pelazgian element dominated—with the exception of the Etruscans—among the Sabines and in many tribes and cities of southern Italy. Pythagoreanism sought to revive a popular foundation that predated Rome, which Rome had subjugated as the representative of a “solar” culture and which was contrary to the Roman spirit. The same is true of the Etruscans. Seneca’s words, which reflect a widespread opinion in the Roman world, are well known: *Tuscos Asia sibi indicat*. The almost identical similarity between Etruscan and Chaldean methods of divination is just one of many signs.

But let us return to Judaism. Since ancient times, Judaism has developed a distinctly mathematical and intellectual worldview.

In no other tradition does the number play such an important role as in Jewish Kabbalah and, more generally, in the esoteric interpretations of the books of Moses found in the Zohar. Just as modern mathematics dissolves the empirical world into numbers, so Kabbalah dissolves the divine world; it makes numbers and letters (which also have numerical meanings) the building blocks of the most secret areas of transcendental metaphysics. Fundamentally, these speculations correspond to a higher aspect of Judaism, which was typically eradicated by rabbinical orthodoxy (Kabbalah is considered heresy by rabbinical-Talmudic orthodoxy). From an anthropological point of view, it can also be proven that the trend we call intellectualist is mainly represented by Sephardic Jews, i.e. Jews who, compared to Ashkenazim, were considered by Chamberlain, Drumont, Lapouge, and others to be among the noble nations of the Jews. Actual Sephardic Jews include Avicbron, Moses de León, Spinoza, León el Hebreo, Maimonides, Jacobi, and other representatives of the aforementioned trend.

In Spinoza, it is striking that the old, already Semitic lunar and fatalistic spirit that emerged in the Mediterranean remained unchanged for centuries. From the perspective of eternity—*sub spacie aeternitatis*—Spinoza's approach becomes equivalent to the “geometric quality” approach—*more geometrico*. The same way of thinking that is characteristic of geometric and mathematical thinking is applied in theology and philosophy with corresponding results: and thus leads to a fatalistic view of the world and God, where everything is explained as a strict chain of causes and effects, which automatically unfold, just like the qualities of numbers or geometric figures from their definitions. The “lunar” and deterministic spirit is so perfectly expressed in Spinoza that we would search in vain in cultural history for a comparable counterpart to the “solar” disposition.

In order to move from these ancient manifestations of the Jewish spirit to the modern Jewish representatives of the

“positive” mathematical sciences, we need only consider the process of secularization that has characterized the further development of Western culture. The old spirit lives on in new forms. As we have pointed out, Einstein’s theory is a borderline case of the dissolution of physics in mathematics, and its pure abstraction is a knowledge that, in order to achieve certainty, withdraws into a world consisting purely of algebraic relationships and completely indifferent to the concrete situations of human experience. To this we must add that the creation of Einstein’s theory was made possible by another Jewish reformer, Levi-Civita, who reformed infinitesimal calculus, just as the further development of Einstein’s physical-algebraic worldview is due to another Jew, Weyl.

The identity between the ancient Semitic spirit and its modern manifestation becomes even more apparent when we approach the realm of speculation. In this realm, Judaism is divided into two groups, both of which are closely connected to both terms of the Jewish dualism that arose from the disintegration of the ancient Aryan solar synthesis. On the one hand, we find Jews among the modern exalters of life, irrationality, development, the subconscious, and the almighty instinct—from Bergson to Simmel and Freud. On the other hand, Jews are also represented in a group that has embarked on a path of abstract rationalism, even a new mathematical Pythagoreanism. Benda and Meyerson also acknowledge that the so-called Marburg School—whose leading representatives, Hermann Cohen and Cassirer, were Jews—is extremely significant in this regard. Just as Kantian philosophy strove to reduce the conditions of possible experience to abstract *a priori* concepts, the Marburg School replaces concepts and Kantian *a priori* theories with numbers and algebraic functions. The organ of this philosophy is a kind of inherently unconditional “thinking” which, based on the principle of infinitesimality and a complete detachment from perception and perceptions, removes the entire field of mathematics and mathematical physics and believes that in this

way it correctly deals with most of the concepts and problems of the aforementioned philosophies. We can thus see how firmly the “tradition” in question has persisted among new forms over the centuries.

If we were to raise the question of evaluation, it is clear that the solution would encounter particular difficulties if we were to start from the standpoint of “modern” culture, for such a standpoint is nothing less than the standpoint of chaos. That is precisely why we need to return to the ancient traditions and oppositions we have already referred to, which give meaning to expressions such as “solar,” “lunar,” and so on. Such a turn will naturally be difficult for all “progressive” and “critical” minds. These minds are hardly able to see today that “progress” has set the Western world on a slope where only a fall is possible, and that in the final stages of this fall or regression of Western culture, views have emerged that are extremely similar to those originating in the soul of the Jewish people.

Ultimately, this is the only reason why Judaism has been able to exert such a decisive influence on “modern” culture. Judaism found fertile ground prepared in principle by involutory processes, and thus gained ground quite easily and accelerated the disintegration of factors that were already unstable and not entirely clear. Given this state of affairs, most “modern” thinkers see a certain confusion in the results of anti-Jewish debates; in some areas where abstraction and theory predominate, they fear that they will not be able to attack the Jews without “attacking themselves,” that they will question the significance and value of sciences that are not exclusively of Jewish origin. This fear is entirely justified. However, all this can be attributed solely to the alien and involutive way of thinking of European man—that is, to a very false “self” (*selbst*). The severing of the connection with the Aryan heritage, with the Aryan idea of knowledge and trade, with the Aryan conception of the meaning of life and human reason, makes all radicalism impossible and locks modern man into a labyrinth in which he will search in vain for points of

reference for the right struggle. What we have said about Jewish mathematics, its origins, and the spiritual disintegration associated with its origins may serve as an example and provide an opportunity for useful reflection. Judaism is associated with a form of decline in all areas. So when a Jew points to a danger that must be overcome first, he also shows us the direction in which the Aryan soul would naturally stray. When this deviation is overcome by an inner act, it will be possible to nip further declines in the bud and protect the Aryan people from the destructive influence of all foreign elements.

Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte. 1940.

THE THIRD SEX AND DEMOCRACY

Among the indications that the left-wing or communist *intelligentsia* never fails to provide us with generosity regarding its moral level, after its ill-concealed sympathies for Cavallero, theorist and militant (not original: Stalin had preceded him in his youth) of ‘revolutionary’ and ‘protest’ banditry and of ‘Che’ Guevara in the guise of a *gangster*, we can add their indignant comments on the ‘aberrant trial’ and conviction of Aldo Braibanti.

With *l’Unità* at the forefront, almost the entire Moravian and Pasolini clique mobilized, including Elsa Morante (who changed sex for the occasion: she declared herself a “poet” and not a poetess, see *Paese Sera*, July 17). ‘What is rotten about the Braibanti trial,’ it was said, ‘is not the existence of homosexuality,’ to which Braibanti converted his followers, ‘but the racist (?) ferocity against the third sex... the smell of lynching that his suspicion unleashes in environments where morality is identified with the most obscurantist and repressive moralism.’ (*l’Unità*, July 14).

Morante, who counts herself among “Italians of good will... among those, for example, who so often rushed to demonstrate against the Vietnam War,” refuses to see a crime in inducing young people to follow their own ideas, “deviating them from the morality still prevailing in some classes of Italian society” (for which our penal code has been called “old and classist”): knowing full well what these ideas are in this specific case. She defends the “choices” made against a society “which today I see as an aggregate of dead cells” and says that “if in the past I have not worked hard enough to help my fellow human beings, especially the youngest, to free themselves from these dead cells, it is my present and future intention to remedy this as best I can, for as long as I live.” Shortly before, he quoted “Nobel Prize winner André Gide, one of the many homosexuals who have

distinguished themselves in the history of civilization and culture.”

In terms of imprudence and intellectual aberration, we believe there is enough. The situation is even reversed: instead of considering the parts of society where the third sex and homosexual “choices” thrive to be rotten, that label is attributed to those who deplore and fight this decay. “Do not invoke the sacred right of everyone to convert others to their own ideas.” Certain ideas are like bacteria, like microbes; paralyzing them is no less legitimate than taking prophylactic measures in the field of bodily diseases. It is right that homosexuality should not be considered a crime in our (classist) penal code and that therefore it is not even a crime to promote it. But even beyond the strictly criminal and legal sphere, the preventive requirement mentioned above remains fully valid.

This can be easily recognized by anyone who, unlike the aforementioned squalid “intelligentsia,” thoroughly examines the meaning of homosexuality and the third sex. A very brief mention may serve as a guide.

In sexology, two forms of homosexuality are distinguished, one congenital and constitutional in nature, the other acquired and conditioned by psycho-sociological and environmental factors. The first form of homosexuality can be explained by ‘intermediate sexual forms’ (to use M. Hirschfeld’s expression). It is known that both sexes are initially present in the fetus and embryo. Only later does a process of “sexuation” take place, whereby the characteristics of one sex become predominant while those of the other sex atrophy or become latent, without however disappearing completely. There are cases in which this process of sexuation is incomplete, either in its physical or psychological aspects. It is then possible that the erotic attraction that is normally based on the polarity of the sexes (on heterosexuality) and that is all the more intense the more pronounced this polarity is, i.e., the more the man is a man and the woman is a woman,

may also arise between individuals who are of the same sex in terms of their birth certificate but not constitutionally, precisely because they are in reality “intermediate forms.”

In these cases, homosexuality is explainable and understandable: wanting to make a homosexual of this type ‘normal’, i.e. attracted to the opposite sex, would be tantamount to doing violence to them, to wanting them not to be themselves: therapeutic attempts in this direction have always failed. The social problem would be solved if these homosexuals formed closed communities, remained among themselves, and did not infect anyone who did not share their condition. There would be no reason to condemn them in the name of any morality.

But homosexuality is not limited to these cases. First of all, there have been homosexual males who were not effeminate or “intermediate forms,” including men of arms and individuals who were decidedly masculine in appearance and behavior. History, especially ancient history, attests to this. Secondly, there are cases of acquired homosexuality and those that psychoanalysis explains as “regressive forms.”

The first category is not easy to understand. Here we have every right to speak of deviation and perversion, of “vice.” It is not clear, in fact, what could erotically drive a truly masculine man towards an individual of the same sex. In classical antiquity, however, it is not so much exclusive homosexuality that is attested to as bisexuality (the use of both women and young boys), and it seems that the motivation was ‘to experience everything’. Even this is not clear, because apart from the fact that there was something feminine about *ephebes*, young boys, especially those who were favored, one could take up Goethe’s crude saying that “if you have had enough of a girl as a girl, she can always serve as a boy” (“*habe ich als Mädchen sie satt, dient es als Knabe misnoch*”). Even the motivation (sometimes found in countries such as Turkey and Japan) that homosexual possession gives a sense of power is not very convincing. The desire for domination can also

be satisfied with women, or with other beings, without erotic involvement.

Until recently, homosexuality belonged mainly to the world of aesthetic decadence (Wilde, Verlaine, Gide, etc.) and was sporadic; the “pleasure of experimenting with everything” may have played a significant role here. But today things are different; we are witnessing a rather massive advance of homosexuality and the third sex even in popular circles and others that had previously been fairly spared from this deviation. Here we must bring in another set of considerations, namely the possible influence of a given climate, a given environment.

We have recalled that the male or female individual must be considered as the result of a predominant sexual force which imposes its seal while neutralizing or excluding the possibility, originally coexisting in him, of the other sex, especially in the physiological field (in the psychic field, the margin of oscillation can be much greater).

Now, one might think that through regression, this dominant power on which sexuation depends, that is, being truly male or female, weakens. Then, just as politically, in a society where all central authority is weakening, all the forces from below, which were initially held back, can break free and resurface, so too in the individual there may be an emergence of the latent characteristics of the other sex and, therefore, a tendency toward bisexuality.

Il Borghese, August 1, 1968.

RELIGION AND SEX

In every great religion, two parts can be distinguished. The first, which can be called mystical or eternal, is directed upward, aiming to establish a certain relationship between man and the spiritual, transcendent realm. The second part can be called “social” or moral, and consists of a set of rules for conduct in life. While the first part is essential and forms the imperishable core of every religion, the second is, in a certain sense, accidental and changeable, because it is influenced both by the diversity of peoples and societies and by historical contingencies.

Making this distinction is important for general guidance and also in the interest of the religious tradition itself. In fact, it prevents criticism from striking at the higher, truly upward-looking part of a religion in times of crisis, when criticism reveals the relativity and changeability of certain norms and precepts that had previously been attributed the absoluteness of divine law.

This premise is necessary for the problem to which we wish to devote a few brief considerations here, namely, the conception of sex proper to the religion that has come to predominate in the West. This conception is affected by a confusion of domains, which is characteristic of Christianity and which the efforts of theologians have only partially succeeded in overcoming. This is a confusion between norms that have an ascetic purpose and, as such, are addressed to a small minority of the called, and norms that must instead apply to the world and the great masses. If we consider other religions—among which we can include Judaism, the ancient religion of Persia, Islam, and Brahmanism—we see that, with regard to the second domain, they were far from preaching and condemning everything related to the natural order. Since nature was conceived here as a divine work, the law given to those living in the world aimed at the sacralization of every activity, every impulse, and every institution, that is, at a reference to something higher which, in a certain way,

transfigured and gave a spiritual background to everything that is done. What Christian apologetics say about the “paganism” of non-Christian or pre-Christian religions, attributing to them a subordination to all that is “nature,” is mere fantasy, since it is well known to every scholar of the science of religions that, in those cults, sacred rites and norms accompanied every manifestation of life, both individual and collective. This also applies to everything related to sex and women.

In Christianity, especially in this latter regard, things have been different. It is clear that an attempt has been made to introduce norms into worldly life that have validity and meaning only on the ascetic level. If we wanted to give examples, we would be spoiled for choice. Thus, the precept of loving one’s enemy, turning the other cheek to those who slap you, not worrying about tomorrow, imitating the flowers in the fields and the birds in the sky, and so on, to the point where certain Catholics today, in a mood of “opening up to the left,” have wanted to see a Christian justification for pacifism, socialism, if not communism itself. All these rules may be valid as discipline for those who have ascetic vocations and for “holiness,” but certainly not for those who live in the world. They do not order a society, but simply make any society impossible. And, in fact, if Christian states have existed, there is still no Christian state, that is, one informed practically and rigorously by the supermundane principles of evangelical morality. Well, the same is true with regard to sex. One can condemn sex and set continence as an ideal from an ascetic point of view. But to make this a norm for life in the world is absurd. Once again, there is confusion between two distinct domains. In various ways, theologians have tried to attenuate the dualism between the natural world and the supernatural world that was characteristic of early Christianity. But with regard to sex, a hybrid and paralyzing position has been maintained: moralistic prejudice against sexuality, indeed a kind of “theological hatred” for it (Pareto), and the close relationship between sexuality and sin is a characteristic that has never been

lost in the religion that came to predominate in the West, which sets it in contrast to the other creationist religions mentioned above. In fact, as we mentioned, these religions sought to sacralize sexuality, not to repress it and brand it with fire.

The procreative function was often glorified by them as a reflection in man of divine creative power. What would appear blasphemous to any Christian, Islam contemplates divine invocations during the sexual act, ancient Iran went so far as to promise divine graces to those who gave themselves with the greatest ardor in lovemaking, well-known Hindu formulas in the union of the sexes involve cosmic and sacred symbols, and so on. And this is to say nothing of currents such as Dionysianism, which recognized mystical possibilities in the ecstasy of sex. It is well known that Plato himself placed the transport of *eros* alongside various kinds of divine, prophetic, and initiatory enthusiasm.

If we were to say that there is no trace of this in Christianity, we would only hear the reply that it recognizes marriage as a sacrament. But it is precisely here that we see the hybridism we mentioned earlier. First of all, marriage as a sacrament is a late development in the Catholic tradition. It only took this form around the 13th century and became obligatory as such only with the Council of Trent. But, in addition, marriage is conceived by Christianity as a *pis aller*, as a fallback due to human frailty, because, as St. Paul says, “it is better to take a wife than to burn.” Otherwise, it is chastity, abstinence, that is the ideal: not the “sacred union” but the “chaste union.” It is not clear what kind of union this would be.

This is confirmed by the idea that the sole purpose of marriage is procreation, that is, the most naturalistic and biological aspect of sexuality: indulging in it for any other purpose, even between spouses, would be a sin. It can therefore be seen that the sacramental character conferred on marriage does not lead to any change of plan, does not give—as in the aforementioned

orientation of ancient sacralizations—different, spiritual dimensions to the sexual experience taken in itself, leaving it as it is, a mere necessity of nature, and ultimately has a social significance: it sanctions the regime of a society that has found itself to be monogamous (here too we see the relativity of the purely social and moral part of religion, because it is well known that the Old Testament sanctioned polygamy), seeking to strengthen it through the principle of the indissolubility of marriage.

The result of all this in the Christian world was a brutal repression of everything related to sex, with a great deal of hypocrisy, until the barrier was broken. Thus today we are witnessing a kind of unleashing of everything related to sex and women, in the most primitive, pandemic, and dangerous sense. For this reason, a re-examination of the relationship between spirituality and sex is necessary.

Il Popolo Italiano, September 8, 1957.

THE FAMILY AS A HEROIC UNIT

One of the dangers threatening the reactionary currents against the forces of disorder and corruption that are devastating our civilization and our social life is that they will end up in forms that are little more significant than bourgeois domestication. The decadent nature of moralism in the face of every higher form of law and life has been denounced more than once. In reality, for an “order” to have value, it must not mean routine or depersonalizing mechanization. There must be forces that are originally indomitable, which preserve their nature in some way and to some extent even under the strictest adherence to discipline. Only then is order fruitful. To use an image, we could say that it is like an explosive or expansive mixture, which develops its extreme effectiveness precisely when confined to a limited space, while in the unlimited it almost dissipates. In this sense, Goethe was able to speak of a “limit that creates” and say that the Master is revealed in the limit. It should also be remembered that in the classical view of life, the idea of limit—*pèras*—was confused with perfection itself and was considered the highest ideal, not only ethical but even metaphysical. These considerations could be applied to various domains. Here we come to a particular case: that of the family.

The family is an institution that, eroded by the individualism of the latest cosmopolitan civilization and undermined at its foundations by the very premises of feminism, Americanism, and Sovietism, we would like to rebuild. But here too, the alternative mentioned above arises. Institutions are like rigid forms in which an originally fluid substance has crystallized: it is this original state that must be reawakened when the vital possibilities inherent in a given cycle of civilization appear to be exhausted. Only a force acting from within, such as meaning, can be creative. Now, to what meaning should the family refer, in the name of what should we want and preserve it? The usual,

bourgeois, and “respectable” meaning of this institution is well known to all, and it is less important here to point it out than to note how little support it could provide for the purposes of a new civilization. It may be good to protect what remains of it, but it is useless to hide the fact that this is not what is at stake, that this is “too little.” If we want to find one of the main causes of the corruption and dissolution of the family that has occurred in recent times, it can be found precisely in the state of a society where the family has been reduced to meaning nothing more than convention, bourgeoisism, sentimentality, hypocrisy, and opportunism.

Here too, only by turning directly and resolutely not to yesterday, but to our origins, can we find what we really need. And these origins should be accessible to us. This is particularly true if our Roman tradition of the family is among those that have given expression to the highest and most original concept of the family.

According to the original conception, the family is neither a naturalistic nor a sentimental unit, but essentially heroic. It is well known that the ancient name *pater* derives from a term that designated the leader, the king. The unity of the family already appeared, therefore, as that of a group of beings manfully gathered around a leader who, in their eyes, was clothed not with brute power but with a majestic dignity that inspired veneration and loyalty. This character is undoubtedly confirmed if we remember that in Indo-European civilizations, the *pater*—in addition to being the leader—was the one who exercised absolute power over his family, inasmuch as he was at the same time absolutely responsible for them before any higher hierarchical order. He was also the priest of his gens, the one who more than any other represented it before the divine, the guardian of the sacred fire, which in patrician families was a symbol of a supernatural influence invisibly linked to blood and transmitted through that same blood. It was not soft social feelings or

conventionalism, but something between the heroic and the mystical that founded the solidarity of the family or clan group, making it one thing according to relationships of participation and manly devotion, ready to rise up as one against anyone who harmed it or offended its dignity. De Coulanges was therefore right to conclude his studies on the subject by saying that the ancient family was a religious unit before it was a unit of nature and blood.

That marriage was a sacrament long before Christianity (as in the Roman ritual of *confarreatio*, for example) is perhaps already known to readers. Less well known, however, is the idea that this sacrament was not so much a conventional ceremony or legal-social formula as a kind of baptism that transfigured and dignified women, bringing them to participate in the same “mystical soul” as their husbands. According to an Indo-European rite, highly expressive as a symbol, before this, the woman had to belong to Agni, the mystical fire of the home. Now, the original assumption is no different, whereby the groom was confused with the Lord of the woman, and that relationship was established, of which bourgeois fidelity is but a decadent and weakened derivative. The ancient devotion of the woman who gives everything and asks for nothing is an expression of an essential heroism, much more mystical or “ascetic,” we might say, than passionate and sentimental, and in any case, transfiguring. According to the ancient saying:

“There is no special rite or teaching for women. Let her worship her husband as her god, and she will obtain her own heavenly seat.”

This is almost echoed in another tradition, according to which the Solar House of immortality was reserved not only for warriors who fell on the battlefield and leaders of divine lineage, but also for women who died giving birth to a child: in this, they were considered a sacrificial offering as transformative as that of the heroes themselves.

This could already lead us to consider the very meaning of procreation, if such a subject were not to take us too far afield. We will only recall the ancient formula according to which the firstborn was considered the child not of love but of duty. And this duty was, once again, both mystical and heroic in nature. It was not just a matter of creating a new *rex* for the good and strength of the family, but also of giving life to someone who could fulfill that mysterious commitment to their ancestors and to all those who made the family great (in the Roman rite, often remembered in the form of countless images brought out on solemn occasions), of which the eternal family fire was the symbolic equivalent. In this way, in many traditions we find formulas and rites that give rise to the idea of a truly conscious generation, of a generation not through a dark and semi-conscious act of the flesh, but with the body and at the same time with the spirit, giving—in the literal sense—life to a new being, for whom, in accordance with his invisible function, it was even said that by virtue of its nature, the ancestors would be confirmed in immortality and glory.

From these testimonies, which are just a few of the many that can easily be collected, there emerges a concept of family unity which, as it stands beyond all conformist and moralistic bourgeois mediocrity and all individualistic prevarication, stands equally beyond sentimentality, passion, and all that is brute social or naturalistic fact. A heroic foundation is what can give the highest justification to the family. Understanding that individualism is not a strength, but a renunciation. Recognizing a solid foundation in blood. Articulating and personalizing this foundation with forces of obedience and command, dedication, affirmation, tradition, and solidarity—we would even say warrior-like—and, finally, with forces of intimate transfiguration. Only then will the family return to being a living and powerful thing, the first and essential cell of that higher organism which is the State itself.

Fedeltà Monarchica, year X, no. 3, April 1970.

LIBERATION

It is a maxim of ancient wisdom that things and events never matter as much as the attitude one takes toward them and, therefore, the meaning one attributes to them. In a similar sense, Christianity itself, generalizing, has been able to speak of life as a “trial” and has been able to adopt the motto: *vita est militia super terram*.

In calm and orderly periods of history, this wisdom is accessible only to a select few, because there are too many opportunities to abandon oneself and settle down, to consider the ephemeral important, to forget the instability and contingency of what is irremediably so by nature. It is on this basis that what in the broadest sense can be called the bourgeois mentality and life is organized: a life that no longer knows heights or depths and develops into interests, affections, desires, and passions which, however important they may be from a purely earthly point of view, become small and relative from the super-individual and spiritual point of view, which should always be the reference point for any human existence worthy of the name.

Now, tragic and turbulent periods in history can cause, by the very force of things, a greater number of people to be led towards an awakening, towards liberation. And, ultimately, it is essentially by this that the deepest vitality of a race, its virility and its indomitability in a higher sense, is measured. And even today, in Italy, on that front, which no longer knows any distinction between combatants and non-combatants, in so many tragic circumstances, our gaze should accustom itself to turning in this direction much more often than is commonly the case.

From one day to the next, or even from one hour to the next, a bombing can take away your home, what you loved most and were most attached to, the very object of your most spontaneous affections. Human existence becomes relative—this is a tragic and

cruel feeling, but it can also be the beginning of a catharsis, the way to sense what alone nothing can ever affect, nothing can ever destroy. It must be acknowledged that, due to a complex set of causes, a superstition about the value of purely human, individual, and earthly life has stubbornly spread throughout the modern West, a superstition that was and is almost unknown in other civilizations. The fact that the West nominally professes Christianity has had minimal influence in this regard: the whole doctrine of the supernatural nature of the soul and of survival after death has not significantly affected that superstition, has not caused the evidence of what did not begin with birth and cannot end with death to have a practical effect on the everyday, emotional, and biological life of a sufficient number of people. Instead, people have clung convulsively to that stub, which is the short span of this individual existence, doing everything possible to ignore that such a grip has no more hold than a tuft of grass grasped by someone carried away by a wild current in order to save themselves.

Now, precisely because this evidence is resurfacing, not as something cerebral or 'devotional', but as a living fact and a liberating feeling, everything that is tragic and destructive today can have, at least in the best cases, a stimulating value. This is not insensitivity or misguided stoicism. Quite the contrary: it is a matter of knowing and nurturing a sense of detachment from oneself, from things and from people, which should instill a calm, an incomparable security and even, as mentioned above, an indomitability. It is like simplifying oneself, stripping oneself bare, in a disposition of waiting, with a steadfast spirit, for everything, while at the same time feeling something that goes beyond everything. And from this disposition will also come the strength to always start again, as if from nothing, with a new and fresh spirit, forgetting what has been or what has been lost, looking only at what is positive and creative that can still be done.

A radical destruction of the 'bourgeois' that exists in every man is possible in these troubled times more than in any other. In

these times, man can rediscover himself, he can truly face himself, accustom himself to looking at everything from the other side, so as to make important and essential again what should always be so in a normal existence: the relationship between life and “more than life,” between the human and the eternal, between the transitory and the incorruptible. And to find ways, without any emphasis or embellishment, for these values to be lived positively and translated into pure *strength* in as many people as possible in these hours of trial, this is undoubtedly one of the main tasks of the political and spiritual *elite* of our nation.

La Stampa, November 3, 1943—XXII.

