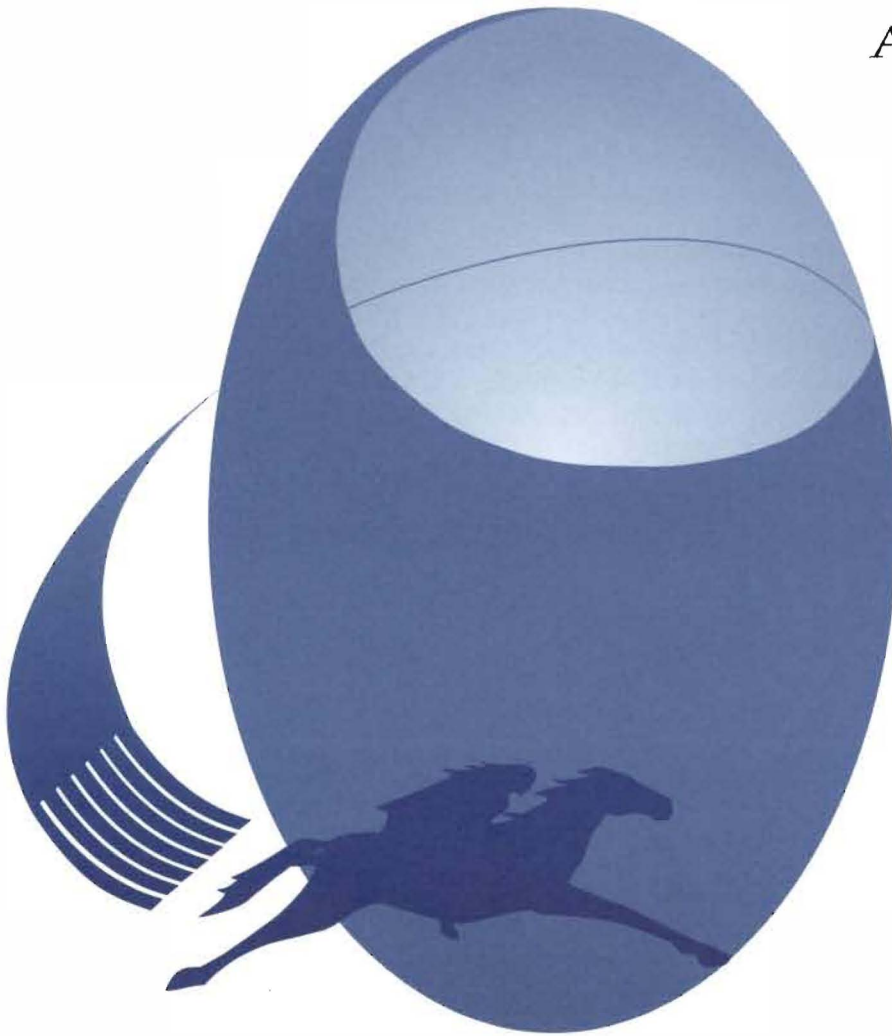


FOHAT

Volume X, Number 4

Winter 2006



*Ammonius Saccas:
Defending a
Theosophical
History*

*The Dark Side
of Organ
Transplants*

*The Sacred Web:
Recapping the
Edmonton 2006
Conference*

A Vehicle for the Ancient Wisdom Tradition

This magazine is an invitation for followers of all traditions to enter into a dialogue whose goal is Truth and whose means is Universal Brotherhood.

FROM A COLLECTION OF QUOTATIONS COMPILED BY MARK JAQUA

The Past! What is it? Nothing. Gone! Dismiss it. You are the past of yourself. Therefore it concerns you not as such. It only concerns you as you now are. In you as now you exist, lies all the past. So follow the Hindu maxim: "Regret nothing; never be sorry; and cut all doubts with the sword of spiritual knowledge. Regret is productive only of error. I care not what I was, or what anyone *was*". I only look for what I am each moment. For as each moment is and at once is not, it must follow that if we think of the past we forget the present, and while we forget, the moments fly by us, making more past. Then regret nothing, not even the greatest follies of your life, for they are gone, and you are to work in the present which is both past and future at once. - W.Q.J.

- Quoted in *Canadian Theosophist*, 1-15-1950

We have entered on the dim beginning of a new era already. It is the era of Western Occultism and of special and definite treatment and exposition of theories hitherto generally considered. We have to do as Buddha told his disciples: preach, promulgate, expound, illustrate, and make clear in detail all the great things we have learned. That is our work, and not the bringing out of surprising things about clairvoyance and other astral matters, nor the blinding of the eye of science by discoveries impossible for them but easy for the occultist. The Master's plan has not altered. He gave it out long ago. It is to make the world at large better, to prepare the right soil for the growing out of the powers of the soul, which are dangerous if they spring up in our present selfish soil. It is not the Black Lodge that tries to keep back psychic development; it is the White Lodge. The Black would fain have all the psychic powers full flower now, because in our wicked, mean, hypocritical, and money-getting people they would soon wreck the race. This idea may seem strange, but for those who will believe my unsupported word I say it is the Master's saying.

- William Quan Judge, *Irish Theosophist*, Vol. III, January 1895
and *Theosophia*, No. 140, Fall 1974

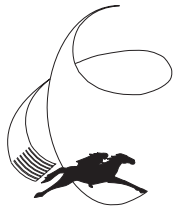
What of the darkness? What of the light? They are one to those who see. How plain these matters are in higher moments, how drearily obscure at other times. This will show you the value of higher moments, perhaps, and what those always living in them enjoy.

Be what you love. Strive after what you find beautiful and high, and let the rest go. Harmony, sacrifice, devotion, take these for keynotes, express them everywhere and in the highest possible way. The beauty of a life like that, the power of it, who can measure or set bounds to?

- Attributed to William Quan Judge
From *Theosophia* No. 141

In ethics all these religions are the same, and no new ethic is given by any. Jesus was the same as his predecessor Buddha, and both taught the law of love and forgiveness. A consideration of the religions of the past and today from a Theosophical standpoint will support and confirm ethics. We therefore cannot introduce a new code, but we strive by looking into all religions to find a firm basis, not due to fear, favor, or injustice, for the ethics common to all. This is what Theosophy is for and what it will do. It is the reformer of religions, the unifier of diverse systems, the restorer of justice to our theory of the universe. It is our past, our present, and our future; it is our life, our death, our immortality.

- Closing words of an address delivered by W. Q. Judge, April 17, 1894,
before the Parliament of Religions, San Francisco, California



FOHAT

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HAPPY



HOLIDAYS

The Orthodox - Heterodox Tension

In this issue of *Fohat*, John Robert Colombo in his article "Traditionalism in Edmonton" introduces an idea that is latently present in most of the articles of this issue. How can we hold on to the truths of our traditions while at the same time add new truths and deepen our understanding of older truths? On the one hand there is the danger inherent in orthodoxies of their sliding into religious fundamentalism, and on the other hand we have heterodoxies with their inevitable gravitation towards secular materialism. Is there a right relationship between the orthodox and the heterodox that will allow the two to work together within the human psyche dynamically spurring it on towards spiritual truth?

The truth of any assumption must be tested with the human heart. Our intuition is a product of the interaction between the human heart and the brain-intellect, and when we learn to quiet our brain-intellect we can reflect the insight of the heart onto that brain-mirror made spotless. This is the assumption of this editorial and what is to follow will stand or fall on whether the reader accepts or rejects this assumption. In the same way all persons who are neither blind nor color-blind can agree that a particular color is "red", there will come a time in Man's far distant future where he will sensorially intuit a statement to be true or not true. Man will be able to detect whether the "vibrations" of a particular statement or thesis are in harmony with its archetypal father. If it does not harmonize closely enough, then it will be the duty of the word-artist to beautify the object under consideration to reflect more perfectly its spiritual principle.

J. Ramón Sordo, in his article "Concerning Ammonius Saccas", looks at how assumptions are used injudiciously in the world of historians. Sordo looks at how one historian creates an entire argument based on an assumption as to when Ammonius was born. Such an assumption is not the type of assumption whose truth can be brokered by the human heart. This assumption must find its harmony with the written records of the past. If Man had evolved to the point where he could check the Akasic records, then might the human heart come into play, but that is not the case at this time. Sordo points out that not only is there no justification given for this assumption based on the historical record, but also that a look at the historical record actually undermines the assumption. If this is the case then why would any historian argue otherwise? If not motivated by some new evidence for the assumption, then there must be some other motivating force, else why write? In such a case we must ask *cui bono*—who benefits? Some institutional orthodoxy has won out over simple truth. What made the article compelling was that although the assumption had no foundation, the arguments were perfect. The reader's mind sympathizes with the elegance of the arguments and their conclusions and is distracted into overlooking the falsity of the assumption.

Rogelle Pelletier in her article, "To live, To LIVE, To LIVE!", on organ transplants looks at the whole world of hidden assumptions. Research scientists seem to believe, in the words of one researcher that "Few would argue any longer that organ transplantation *per se* crosses any ethical boundaries. Its benefits, balanced against an almost certain fatal outcome in its absence, are simply too compelling." Pelletier goes on to show that where this assumption might have some legs in the mechanistic world of scientific materialism, it falls flat on its face when you introduce a spiritual hierarchy. In addition, the assumption overlooks the frequent fatal consequences to the organ donor and how this is made fuzzy by arbitrary legal definitions of death. We all like to help others, and this is the sentiment that is being played upon by advocates of organ transplants. However, when you are given the full story, even without the metaphysical consequences, does organ transplantation still sit easy with one's intuitions? In addition, given what the scientist claims above, has the belief in the ethical goodness of organ transplants become a societal orthodoxy?

When we speak in terms of orthodoxy, we are often referring to religious orthodoxy, articles of faith. The collective mind of the members of a particular religion make of their common intuitions on spirituality a set of articles of faith upon which they all agree. Invariably into this set of intuitions are placed articles that are not true but rather politically expedient for that certain religion. Consequently, the orthodoxy becomes a barrier for those who bring their own intuitions to bear on it. This leads to a breaking away from the group orthodoxy and as more and more people break away, a heterodox society is established. Each individual is responsible for his own personal orthodoxy while at the same time feeling the challenge of the competing orthodoxies of the rest of the community.

The dynamic is now set up. Each individual of the community has broken from institutional thought in favour of truth. Yet, for a community to act, it must agree on some things. Consequently, the orthodoxies of each member are challenged by the heterodox community in which they live. Each member must decide which articles of faith are not negotiable, and which ones their intuitions are less sure about. The members of the community are driven to introspection and debate in order to agree on how to proceed. The institutional orthodoxies that compete in a community of truth seekers must cease to exist at some point or else purge themselves of any self-serving articles if they wish to survive.

The Theosophical Society was set up to appeal to a community of truth seekers. If it was not successful on this attempt, there will be other attempts where the efforts of this past attempt will add to the success of the effort to come. Then the orthodox and the heterodox will be the engine that drives humanity to a glorious future.



Letters to the Editor:

“The Betrayal of Judge”, Fall 2006

This article vindicates W.Q. Judge, while condemning Katherine Tingley as a by product. I don't see an author shown for the article. Reason?

My familiarity with the character of Katherine Tingley, has been garnered from an association with those who knew her. Principally, Emmett and Carmen Small, Gordon Plummer, Boris de Zirkoff, Iverson Harris, etc. Her chief detractors have been Alice Cleather and Robert Crosbie, the latter perpetuating a negative aura that infects the ULT, exactly as the negativity about WQJ in the Adyar Society. Each of these odious traditions diminishes their respective group.

Consider the times. Judge dead, the Society split, Adyar in the grip of Besant and Leadbeater fomenting inane fantasies inimical to Theosophy by 1900, the future bleak. Only in breakaway America did a flicker of hope remain. Forget arguments of succession by WQJ to Tingley. Time has shown her to have been the best to carry on the tradition. By strength of presence, an uncanny ability to see into people, a philanthropic nature, and unrelenting dedication, she drew quality people together at Point Loma. When one is aware of all the factors, that community could *only* have occurred when and where it flourished. The result should be obvious, the major contributors to real Theosophy *all* came from Point Loma in the 20th century. Even ULT owes its existence to Robert Crosbie, a former Point Loma member, rumored to have been ejected by Tingley for plinking at rabbits with a pellet gun. Narrow exponents of theosophy criticized her Greek theater in which the myths and traditions were played out and explained as allegories as in the Mysteries of old. They saw her as too autocratic and monetarily irresponsible. Perhaps so, but look at the results. Idiosyncrasies color us all, is that justification for rejection? Mahatmas often selected those who could provide some needed aspect, though imperfect personally. Look at Mabel Collins, or Hume, etc. As to Alice Cleather, refer to BCW XIV, p.521:

Mrs. Cleather was an outstanding musician and orator with a penchant for total dedication that allowed for fewer variations in theosophy than her contemporaries, as well as possessing a fearless and adamant outlook.

Cleather believed that *her way* was the only *correct* way, and abandoned the movement to work on her

own, having little interaction after teaming with Basil Crump.

On a related subject, G. de Purucker was living in San Diego, conducting classes in *The Secret Doctrine*, when visited by WQJ on April 11, 1894. I have seen a letter written in green ink on 6x9 stationary describing the meeting, and which states that Judge took G. de P. into the esoteric section without probation at that time. April 16th WQJ addressed the Religious Parliament in San Francisco. In 1897, while in Switzerland, it was G. de P. who told Tingley of the Point Loma property.

Richard Robb
San Diego, CA

“Chelas and Truth”, Fall 2006

Referring to *Fohat* (Fall 2006) I wish first of all to commend you for an exceptionally interesting and exciting issue. In particular the paper on “Chelas and Truth” impressed me, perhaps the more so because it brings up topics and teachings we have been concerned with in our own study group.

However, having stated the above, I was dismayed to read the letter from C.H. Collings included in the article on “The Betrayal of W.Q. Judge” and feel compelled to make at least a few comments in defense of Alice Cleather.

In all fairness I hasten to add that the HPB Library was approached by the editors and gave permission for its publication, which publication does not detract in any way from the worthy content of *Fohat*, but may even add enhancement. One should not hold back from printing what one believes to be the truth because of personal sentiments, for in secrets that are kept hidden there often lurks the scorpionic sting. Expression of diverse views are a stimulation to search deeper and examine one's possible fixity of mind.

Alice L. Cleather as a loyal and perceptive pupil of HPB has always been an important example to me. I admire her great strength in remaining true to her convictions, her courage in speaking her truth when it was contrary to the popular opinions of the time, and her clear insight into the real mystical heart of

the theosophical teachings. As an occultist her intuitions and explanations are of great value.

Mr. Collings is anything but impartial in his assessments, and though I can sympathize with his ardour in defending the teacher in whom he has great trust, I take exception to the vehemence of his statements in regards to ALC. He speaks of her as bitter. Bitter she was not: disappointed — yes — in the failure of theosophists to recognize the unique opportunity offered by HPB, in which failing she included herself, as expressed on p.26 of *H.P.Blavatsky As I Knew Her*.

We are looking back in retrospect on a drama where all the parts have been played, and it is easy to pass judgements. At the time, all the pieces were separated, distances more spread out, communications took longer, and the individual players were unaware of the inner psychological changes driving the other. After the death of HPB there was confusion, especially among those who had lived within the magnetism of her aura. When a great light goes out the shadows become active entities. It was a necessity in the atmosphere of that period following for those who understood the inevitable reactions from the dark forces to speak out. ALC saw it as her duty to oppose forcibly in strong words the mistaken concepts and misdirected actions of the later theosophical leaders, in order to keep alive the original spirit of the movement initiated by the Mahatmas.

Perhaps she was hard on Judge, but she did have great respect for his position as an occultist. We each have our favourite translations of the *Bhagavad Gita* and I was told that ALC particularly valued the version by Judge. It was because she trusted his opinion that she turned to Katherine Tingley, and she merely presents this assertion as a fact. It is not for me to speculate whether WQJ really did fall under the spell of Tingley's mediumship or not. It has been asserted by other theosophists that her hypnotic skills were powerful, and ALC speaks of her own psychic struggle under that influence. Mr. Collings seems to be desperately weaving intricate webs of attributing suspicious motives to plain innocent statements, but perhaps that too was a practical need at the time. I do believe he is genuinely motivated in clearing away some of the negativity surrounding Judge when few others were ready to do so.

In my opinion the article redeems itself in finishing with the long description by Jasper Niemand of one man's spiritual journey through inner commitment.

This has always been an immensely inspiring explanation for me of how to put into practice the self-induced and self-devised efforts outlined in the third fundamental proposition of the *SD*. Consequently I agree wholeheartedly with the fact that WQJ's name being suggested as a guiding force shows the high standing he occupies on the evolving path of the eternal pilgrim.

Actually this whole section is the very essence of what ALC lived and taught. In her books she speaks of the great cycles converging at the end of the 19th century, and expresses the opinion that the departure of HPB before that occasion indicates the withdrawal of the Mahatmas' direct contact with the T.S. as an organized body. In spite of what Mr. Collings rather superciliously suggests, this does not mean that she was so shortsighted as not to recognize the possibility of contact at the individual level. On the contrary, as printed in *The Canadian Theosophist* (April 1936) she writes:

Any one may become a Chela at any time, within himself. Everyone of us (who is earnest and true) has a Master: One whose hand lifts the veil when the Voice, or call of the Soul, becomes strong enough to be heard. Logically and actually the relation of Master and disciple must exist, for the soul in each one of us is a part of the Ray proceeding from the Star ("whose ray thou art"), which is the Master. All these matters have nothing to do with the personality, which must be got under, and the consciousness drawn inwards and upwards into unison with that of the inner self or Soul (not even the Ego, but the "budding" soul). When aspiration within becomes intense enough, then the flame is lit automatically in the inner world, and is seen by the invisible Guardians of the Race. But never mix up the personality in all this, especially in the Kali Yuga. H.P.B.'s warnings are surely clear enough. The Way to the Masters can never be closed — how could it! But it is not so much a "way" as a becoming, assimilating Their natures, i.e. drawing help from Their plane of Being, in order to encourage the growth of our own inner Being. Study what They are, and strive to let it sink in to such an extent that this Ideal covers our Leit-motif. One-pointedness is here to be realized and much has to be abandoned, even *hope* — *for the personality*. For the goal is to become "a mere beneficent force in Nature", as H.P.B. says.

Joan Sutcliffe
Toronto, ON

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To live, to LIVE, to LIVE!¹

Organ Transplants and Cellular Memory

Rogelle Pelletier

Ancient medical texts describe attempts to replace external parts of the body as early as several hundred years BCE. Attempts at transplantation of organs in recent history first proved successful in 1954 when a kidney taken from a twenty-four year old man was transplanted into his twin brother. Thus began the modern era of organ replacement. With the development of DNA screening and immunosuppressant techniques and drugs, virtually any body part can now be transplanted. While the medical ethics of organ transplants are questioned in some quarters, at least one research scientist believes that

Few would argue any longer that organ transplantation per se crosses any ethical boundaries. Its benefits, balanced against an almost certain fatal outcome in its absence, are simply too compelling. The discussion now centers around what society can or should do to increase the supply of donor organs.²

Many are in total agreement with this perspective, especially in the West where fear of death and the dogma that 'you only live once' prevail. While scientific/medical researchers strive to ease the misery of diseases, it seems that emphasis on extending life through the technology of transplantation has reinforced the refusal to accept death as a natural part of life's journey. However, many aspects of transplantation need to be examined. For example, from the purely physical perspective of cadaveric (now called 'deceased') harvesting, concerns exist as to when actual complete death of the donor body occurs. Despite these concerns, as the need increases for organs there are movements currently at work trying to declare a person clinically dead ever sooner. In desperate attempts to help the living, there seems to be more willingness to disregard the importance of the dying process for the one *departing* but not necessarily yet *departed*.

Numerous examples reveal how workers relocating cemeteries in various parts of the world have found scratch marks in the covers of caskets and twisted remains that indicate the bodies obviously were not dead when they were buried. With embalming this is less likely to happen now (although it does not remove the question of whether or not people are totally dead prior to the embalming process). There are also many reports of near-death experiences (NDEs) on record where persons were presumed officially dead but were not. One particularly unusual inci-

dent is that of Dr George Rodonaia, a psychologist in the Soviet Union who was murdered. Two days later as medical personnel began cutting into him during an autopsy, he opened his eyes and returned to life "with a very vivid NDE, one that transformed him from an atheist to a believer".³

It became imperative after the heart transplant surgery performed by Dr Christiaan Barnard in 1967 to establish a definition of death that would allow the harvesting of organs before the dying process damaged them. In August 1968 the Harvard Medical School set up a thirteen-member Ad Hoc Committee to Examine the Definition of Brain Death. A series of reflex tests, called the Harvard Criteria of Brain Death Test was proclaimed.⁴ Death was redefined as irreversible coma with no discernible central nervous activity and "brain death" was subsequently incorporated into laws in various countries. Recently however, the Harvard Medical School admitted that the concept of brain death "fails to correspond to any coherent biological or philosophical understanding of death". In the UK it has now been suggested that people should be allowed to donate their organs when they become "neurologically devastated or imminently dying", without first being declared dead.⁵

In *The Nasty Side of Organ Transplanting* author Norm Barber opens chapter 1 with the following disturbing sentence: "Transplant surgeons just like movie vampires and Frankenstein doctors, like their bodies fresh and not quite dead."⁶ Further on, Dr Phillip Keep, a consultant anaesthetist in the UK is quoted as saying:

Almost everyone will say they have felt uneasy about it. Nurses get really, really upset. You stick the knife in and the pulse and blood pressure shoot up. If you don't give anything at all, the patient will start moving and wriggling around and it's impossible to do the operation. The surgeon always asked us to paralyse the patient.⁷

The author adds that at another hospital it was discovered that the nurses recorded the time of death at the *end* of the harvesting as if the donor had come in to the harvest room alive, and that "even surgeons are sometimes heard to say that the patient 'suffered brain death' one day and 'died' the following day". Brain death is referred to as a legal and medical fiction by a professor of Neurology and Pediatrics from

the University of California (Los Angeles) School of Medicine. Author Norm Barber further states:

Medical and government authorities in the United Kingdom are now trying to stifle professional debate and public knowledge by telling medical staff in the government health system not to define death and avoid terms like “brain death”. The new term is “certified dead” which avoids uncomfortable medical definitions that are difficult to defend or explain. Death is then when a doctor says the patient is dead, regardless.

In 2005 a new organ harvesting policy was being considered in Canada and other countries to expand “the limits of ‘ethics’ in organ transplants” to include cardiac arrest patients. This has now apparently become the principal source of organ donation in the U.S. and Europe. Donation after cardiac death involves patients who are terminally ill and on life support. In some regions “life support” includes intravenous hydration and tube-feeding.* It is argued that it is in fact the removal of the vital organs that causes the death of the donor, and there has been wider publicity in Canada about the fact that organ donation requires that the donor be “alive” when the extraction occurs. There is a major concern that “the need to wait until the patient is no longer using his organs is being overlooked in the rush to get fresh organs to transplant patients”.⁸

One can only imagine the after-death states resulting from such a traumatic demise! In *The Mahatma Letters* KH wrote:

The man may often appear dead. Yet from the last pulsation, from and between the last throbbing of his heart and the moment when the last spark of animal heat leaves the body — the *brain thinks* and the *Ego lives*, over in those few brief seconds his whole life over again. Speak in whispers, ye, who assist at a death-bed and find yourselves in the solemn presence of Death. Especially have you to keep quiet just after Death has laid her clammy hand upon the body. Speak in whispers, I say, lest you disturb the quiet ripple of thought, and hinder the busy work of the Past casting on its reflection upon the Veil of the Future.⁹

Most of us think of physical death as total disembodiment. In the process of disembodiment, the brain is the last organ to die but even after the heart “dies” there remains a point of connection in the heart to “the active Akasa still functioning in the brain and producing the panorama of the past life’s experiences”. The point in the heart vanishes an instant before the last strand of the life-thread is irrevocably snapped and disappears.¹⁰ At that moment there is a separation of the three lower principles (physical, pranic, astral) from the middle principle (kamic) along with the higher triad (Manas-Buddhi-Atma),

with these last four being in Kama-Loka (the realm of desires) awaiting the second death (freeing of the higher triad to a higher state of consciousness — Devachan). Meanwhile, the physical is disintegrating atom by atom in the surrounding elements — or at least it *should* be.

Elsewhere, writing about victims of violent deaths (which organ harvesting in numerous instances certainly appears to be), KH wrote:

The majority—neither very good nor very bad, the victims of accident *or violence* (including murder)—some *sleep*, others become *Nature pisachas*, and while a small minority may fall victims to mediums and derive a new set of skandhas from the medium who attracts them. Small as their number may be, their fate is to be the most deplored.¹¹

The Mahatma’s words relate to actual death and the possibility of attraction to the physical realm of the two-principled (prana and astral) ‘shell’ of the deceased, particularly those of a more materialistic nature. (See: *Fohat*, IX:4, Winter 2005, “Death: The Dying Process and Thereafter” pp.84-86, 94-95.) What, therefore, could possibly be the ramifications for donors who are not only ‘not quite dead’ in the first place but, in addition, whose organ(s) have been given an extended life, usually to multiple recipients. In many ways organ transplants include an element of mediumship.

An example of the effects on the after-death states where an organ transplant is involved is the following. An individual in the circle of this writer’s acquaintances sees in the astral. A five-year old girl in the care of this individual’s neighbour was awaiting a liver transplant. An organ was found when a boy a few years younger was killed in a farm accident. Following surgery, the astral body of the boy was seen in the vicinity of the girl, still attached to his liver by a cord. Over the next months, the little girl began displaying aggressive tendencies and other behaviours out of character from prior to her surgery. My acquaintance could see that the little boy’s astral was becoming enmeshed with the little girl’s physical/astral, until it became difficult to differentiate one from the other.

Early theosophical writings are very explicit about the serious consequences of mediumship, that is, of offering an *Upadana* (vehicle) for the shell and extending its life. Left to its own cycle it will weaken, break up and fade away, blending with the ethers surrounding our earth. However, by not allowing this to proceed naturally and providing a physical connection (similar to the one just lost), a thirst for life is awakened. A new set of skandhas is thereby set in motion “with far worse tendencies and passions than was the one they lost”, in other words, ad-

* Withdrawal of which is apparently not uncommon in the practice of passive euthanasia.

ditional karmic circumstances and consequences¹². KH explains that “the *Skandhas* represent not only a material but also a set of mental and moral qualities”. As to future incarnations:

All the future of this new body will be determined thus, not only by the *Karma* of demerit of the previous set or group but also by that of the new set of the future being.¹³

Those who have died of natural causes at their appointed hour suffer fewer consequences as a result of their shells being drawn to this so-called second life (the negative consequences being mostly the medium’s in this instance). The same cannot be said of “*suicides* and those *killed by accident*”.

As to the victims of accident . . . Unless they were so good and pure, as to be drawn immediately within the Akasic *Samadhi*, i.e., to fall into a state of quiet slumber. . . until their natural life-term is finished, when they find themselves born in the Deva-Chan — a gloomy fate is theirs. Unhappy shades, if sinful and sensual they wander about — (not *shells*, for their connection with their two higher principles is not quite broken) — until their death-hour comes.¹⁴

Further on KH adds:

Hence one of such Egos. . . who either killed himself or was killed by some accident. . . would have to pass in the *Kama Loka* not “a few years”. . . as an Elementary, or rather an “earth-walker”; since he is not, unfortunately for him, even a “*shell*”. . . . And, woe to those whose *Trishna* [desire for life] will attract them to mediums, and woe to the latter, who tempt them with such an easy *Upadana*.¹⁵

In response to *Student’s* questions about some of the dangers at séances *Sage* (HPB) explained that

elementaries — half dead human beings . . . fall upon the people like a cloud or a big octopus, and disappear within them as if sucked in by a sponge. That is one reason why it is not well to attend them in general.¹⁶

This absorption of the astral remnants of the transplanted organs likely accounts for the phenomenon of so-called “cellular memory” which is often one of the after-effects of the surgery. Books have been written about the experiences of some organ recipients. The most famous, *A Change of Heart* by Claire Sylvia details how her tastes, habits and interests changed following her heart and lung transplant in 1988. A health-conscious dancer/choreographer, she had an irresistible urge to go to a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet for chicken nuggets upon leaving the hospital. She became more aggressive and impetuous, which was uncharacteristic of her, and she developed an interest in motorcycles. She later learned that her donor was a young male who had died in a motorcycle accident. He apparently loved chicken nuggets and some were found in the pocket of his

jacket when he was killed. Among the many on record who have undergone similar experiences: the recipient of the heart of a drowning victim who is now afraid of water; the male teenager who received the heart of a fourteen-year old female vegetarian, possibly anorexic gymnast and who is now often nauseated around food; the three-year old heart recipient who recognized his former parents; the man who received the heart of a young classical violinist and developed an interest in listening to classical music.¹⁷

The explanation lies in the evolution of physical ‘life-atoms’ as we humans strive towards divinity. G de Purucker explains it this way:

It is well to remember in this connexion that in each succeeding rebirth into earth-life you pick up the same physical life-atoms which were yours in your former incarnations because they belong to you; they are your children and are impressed with your karman; in a sense they are the bearers of your physical karman. . . . [T]hese physical life-atoms are returning to you, and you cast them forth again, and they will return to you again and again, and they will accompany you through eternity, growing as you grow, evolving as you evolve. This is because they are your children, the offspring of your essence; they follow in your train . . . so it is on every plane. . . .

The reunion of the physical life-atoms to the reincarnated entity is inevitable; you cannot help yourself. You have to take up the life-atoms whose faces you have dirtied in the past, and wash them clean. It is a part of your karman, and you may be thankful that it is so; for if you had to work with the life-atoms belonging to someone else, you would be in a very disagreeable situation indeed.

It is true . . . that life-atoms from each of us are passing through the bodies of all others constantly, but they are not permanent in location, they are in transit. They learn from you, and you learn in a sense from them; but it is on your own physical life-atoms that you mostly feed and it is through these that your body grows in bulk and weight; and you take . . . very few alien life-atoms. . . .

Our life-atoms are parts of us, not so much ‘attached’ to us, but are integral parts of our stream of karmic existence, prānic children of the Brahman within each one of us, which is for each one of us respectively the inner god. . . . It means that you have practically the same body that you had in your last life: somewhat evolved, somewhat improved, somewhat better to be sure: but the same ‘dear old body’ which you so loved — you have it again! . . .¹⁸

H.P. Blavatsky points out in *The Secret Doctrine* that

as the *individual* Soul is ever the same, so are the atoms of the lower principles (body, its astral, or *life double*, etc.), drawn as they are by affinity and Karmic law always to the same individuality in a series of various bodies, etc., etc.¹⁹

To this she adds in the accompanying footnote regarding monadic memory:

The collective aggregation of these atoms forms thus the *Anima Mundi* of our Solar System, the *soul* of our little universe, each atom of which is of course a *soul*, a monad, a little universe endowed with consciousness, hence with *memory*.

G de Purucker does state that when the body breaks up at death, its life-atoms composing it transmigrate through the kingdoms of Nature and are attracted to entities with the same rates of vibration. He refers to this as psycho-magnetic attraction, which is also the basic definition of heredity. These life-atoms are eventually “attracted back by the dominant magnetic pull of the Reincarnating Ego to whom they belonged in the preceding earth-life”,²⁰ adding further elsewhere that

The life-atoms are moved . . . by the great forces of the Universe, and hence they follow their instincts, their psycho-magnetic attractions, precisely as the magnet-needle points to the north. . . . They follow automatically the karmic attractions and the karmic movements which motivate them, and consequently no mistake can be made by them.²¹

HPB specifically indicates above that the atoms of each principle are re-drawn to the same individual. Here she also writes that “the Occultists are consistent with their doctrine of Spirit and Soul when speaking of *memory* in every atom”. Reference was made earlier to skandhas reflecting karma. In *The Key to Theosophy* Blavatsky quotes from Buddhist teachings and lists five *Skandhas* or attributes. These are: material qualities (form or body), sensation, abstract ideas, tendencies of mind, and mental powers:

Of these we are formed; by them we are conscious of existence; and through them communicate with the world about us.

She adds that *memory* is one of these attributes.²²

In “Psychic and Noetic Action” Blavatsky writes:

Occultism regards every atom as an “independent entity” and every cell as a “conscious unit.” It explains that no sooner do such atoms group to form cells, than the latter become endowed with consciousness, each of its own kind, and with *free will to act within* the limits of law. . . . [M]emory has no seat, no special organ of its own in the human brain, but it has *seats* in every organ of the body.²³

Paracelsus writing on the close sympathetic relationship between the remnants of the body and the astral form, helps to explain why the astral memory of the young boy’s body was still visibly attached to his liver, as also the so-called “cellular memory” effect in so many transplant organ recipients. Writing about life-essence in the body of man he stated:

Even the ignorant knows that man has a heart and lungs, a brain and a liver and stomach; but he thinks that these organs are independent things, that have nothing to do with each other; and even our most learned doctors are not aware of the fact that these organs are only the material and bodily representatives of invisible energies that pervade and circulate in the whole system; so that, for instance, the real “liver” is to be found in all parts of the body, and has its herd in that organ which we call the liver. All the members of the body are potentially contained in the centre of the vital fluid, which has its seat in the brain, while the activity which propels it comes from the “heart”.²⁴

Elsewhere he writes: “As each of the component parts has its own life, so it has its own death.”²⁵

As outlined above by G de Purucker, the strongest karmic psycho-magnetism will attract the life-atoms to the new incarnation. Memories of one organ, but with two participants in its lifetime, could possibly result in two individuals sharing the life-atoms of a particular organ in future. There would tend to be a psycho-magnetic link between the two. With input from an external source, namely the thoughts of two (separate) incarnated individuals interacting upon each other, the possibility of neurological disorders or mental dysfunctions resulting from this commingling of the life-atoms and their accompanying memories cannot be ruled out. Consider the effects of organ harvesting from the body of a child who almost immediately reincarnates into the same family circle, shortly after some of his vital organs have been transplanted to another body. Although it does not really matter what happens to the physical body after death, upon re-entry into incarnation all the parts (in the time and space which applies to the incoming individual) are required for the entity to be fully functional. In the case of transplantation, organs that should have died with the body are kept alive beyond their time. Karma is altered and skandhas added to the mix.

Equally unnerving is experimentation with xenotransplantation, which is defined as “the transplantation of living cells, tissues or organs from one species to another.”²⁶ During the last decade pigs are being bred with human genes in the hopes of fooling the human immune system into accepting a foreign organ. This is in fact creating animals that are part human, supposedly for the benefit of humanity, but definitely NOT to the benefit of the transgenic animals which are born with various physical abnormalities.²⁷ Transplanting animal parts into humans can only eventually result in physical alteration of the body and probable deformities as humans regress to animal tendencies and features. The “Island of Dr Moreau” may not be quite the fiction we supposed it to be! It is imperative that medical researchers and practitioners eventually admit the reality and vital

importance of the invisible influences that are part of all life forms.

However well-intentioned organ donors may be (and ignorance is *never* an excuse according to the Mahatmas), how seriously is organ transplantation messing with the natural process? Is this retarding the progress of humanity by confusing even further the current process of its evolution? The transplanted organ carries the life-atoms and, therefore, the astral imprint of the donor body. The recipient body is tricked by artificial means (anti-rejection drugs) to

accept the alien part. The organ having been part of a former whole, carries its own level of vibration of the body it originally supported. From an occult perspective, forcibly introducing an 'alien' organ into another human body appears to be a type of black magic — not unlike vampires which seek to prolong their life as long as possible. Tanha, which is defined as the thirst for life, when carried to the extreme of organ replacement rather than through the refinement of one's own atomic elements by right living, is not the destiny of a humanity aspiring to spirituality. ☞

- ¹ "The 'Elixir of Life'" by G[odolphin] M[itford] F.T.S., *The Theosophist*, Vol. 3, March 1882, p.141.
- ² "Organ Transplantation: Exploring the Boundary Between Technology and Ethics" (Chapter 7) from *At War Within* by William R. Clark, Oxford University Press, 1995, www.wrclarkbooks.com.
- ³ "Are Organ Transplants Metaphysically Contraindicated" by Michael E. Tymn, www.beyondtheveil.net/organs.html, originally published in *The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research*, July 2001.
- ⁴ "An Invented Death" Chapter 1 from *The Nasty Side of Organ Transplanting* by Norm Barber (2nd Edition, 2003), www.geocities.com/organdonate/AAACH1AnInventedDeath.html?200615.
- ⁵ "Brain Death is Not Death" by Dr David W Evans, www.geocities.com/organdonate/BrainDeathIsNotDeath.html?200520.
- ⁶ "An Invented Death", Chapter 1 from *The Nasty Side of Organ Transplanting* by Norm Barber, www.geocities.com/organdonate/AAACH1AnInventedDeath.html?200615.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, Chapter 2 "Donors May Need Anaesthetic".
- ⁸ *The National Post*, September 16, 2005 (Canada.com) and www.lifesite.net/ldn/2005/sep/05091604.html and . . . ldn/2005/feb/05021106.html and . . . ldn/1999/April/99042301.html.
- ⁹ *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, 2nd edition, Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1975, pp.170-171.
- ¹⁰ *Fohat*, IX:4, Winter 2005, "Death: The Dying Process and Thereafter". Also: "Abridgement of Discussions Upon Theosophical Subjects", *Echoes of the Orient*, Vol.2, compiled by Dara Eklund, San Diego, CA: Point Loma Publications, Inc., 1980, p.432.
- ¹¹ *The Mahatma Letters*, p.136. *Pisachas* (Sanskrit) are kamalokic shells and elementaries. See also: *Fohat*, IX:4, Winter 2005, "Death: The Dying Process and Thereafter".
- ¹² In extreme cases, the thirst for physical life at any cost can lead the entity to eventually be drawn even to the wombs of animals and be born as such animals in an effort to fulfill their craving for continued physical existence. See *Esoteric Teachings: G. de Purucker, XII, Death and the Circulations of the Cosmos - II*, San Diego, CA: Point Loma Publications, Inc., 1987, p.112.
- ¹³ *The Mahatma Letters*, p.113.
- ¹⁴ *The Mahatma Letters*, p.109.
- ¹⁵ *The Mahatma Letters*, pp.112-113.
- ¹⁶ *Blavatsky: Collected Writings*, Vol. IX, Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1974, p.107.
- ¹⁷ *The Heart's Code* by Paul Pearsall, Ph.D. New York: Broadway Books, 1998, 228 pp + Glossary, Endnotes, Bibliography and Index. See also "Organ Transplants and Cellular Memories", *Nexus*, 12:3, May-June 2005, pp.27-32, 80-82 and www.nexusmagazine.com/articles/CellularMemories.html.
- ¹⁸ *Esoteric Teachings: G. de Purucker, VIII, Gods, Monads, Life-Atoms*, San Diego, CA: Point Loma Publications, Inc., 1987, pp.30-31. See also p.38.
- ¹⁹ *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, Theosophical University Press, Pasadena, CA, 1970, p.672.
- ²⁰ *Esoteric Teachings: G. de Purucker, VIII*, p.37.
- ²¹ *Esoteric Teachings: G. de Purucker, VIII*, p.40.
- ²² *The Key to Theosophy*, Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1972, p.129.
- ²³ *Blavatsky: Collected Writings*, Vol. XII, Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1980, p.365.
- ²⁴ *Life of Paracelsus* extracted and translated by Franz Hartmann, MD, Keegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 2nd edition, pp.218-219. Paracelsus lived from 1493-1541.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.195.
- ²⁶ "Alternative interpretations of the same data: flaws in the process of consulting the Canadian public about xenotransplantation issues" by James R. Wright Jr. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, July 9, 2002, 167(1), p.40.
- ²⁷ "What's Wrong With Xenotransplantation?" www.crt-online.org/wrong/html.

TRADITIONALISM IN EDMONTON

John Robert Colombo

My wife Ruth and I attended a two-day conference in Edmonton that came and went with little or no media coverage but that was nevertheless meaningful and significant to serious people. Its proceedings should be of particular interest to Theosophists because the sessions were devoted to a discussion of Traditionalism, a metaphysical movement that focuses on the perennial philosophy, one that has also been called primordialism. Its metaphysical principles are deeply embedded in man, in nature, in earth, and in the heavens.

Here are a few details. The conference we attended was called "The Sacred Web: Tradition in the Modern World." It was held at the Myer Horowitz Theatre on the campus of the University of Alberta in Edmonton on Saturday and Sunday, September 23 and 24, 2006. Its final day coincided with the first day of Ramadan.

It is amusing to note that the registration fee was originally set at \$150, so I sent the sponsors twice that amount for seats for Ruth and myself. Two weeks before the commencement of the conference we received an email to the effect that "a major donation" had been received and that the registration fee had been lowered to \$20 per day (\$10 for seniors and students with ID). I was relieved that the conference had not been canceled! But two questions immediately occurred to me. First, who was the anonymous donor? Second, were advance registrations low? I never did learn the answers to those questions but we willingly accepted a rebate cheque for \$220. So we were able to attend the two-day function for \$80. (It should have been \$40, as we are seniors, but never mind.) Whatever the right amount, we regarded it as a great investment as well as a great saving. There is a saying that no worthwhile initiative goes unrewarded; that was certainly true in this instance.

What follows are the notes that I made during the proceedings, combined with some of Ruth's observations. Please note that words, phrases, and sentences enclosed within quotation marks are not necessarily the verbatim words uttered by the speakers, but an approximation or a condensation of the points that were being made. There are plans to publish the proceedings of the conference, so this commentary on the *philosophia perennis* will be supplanted by the *ipsissima verba*. In the meantime, I hope these notes will give the interested reader something of the force and *flavour* of the two days.

Let me add only that the interpretations are mine and mine alone.

I will reserve a description of the constitution of the audience until after I have reviewed the proceedings. The audience was put into a meditative state of mind and emotion with a brief musical performance titled "Jugalbandi: A Dialogue between Traditions" which featured three performers playing traditional instruments from the Middle East and India: *bansuri* (flute), *ney* (stringed instrument), and *saragni* (flute). The compositions immediately put me in mind of the moment about four years ago that I stepped into the Desert of Rajasthan and felt lost in the vastness of creation.

The welcoming address and the introductory remarks were conveyed by M. Ali Lakhani who over the two days introduced and thanked all the contributors. He did so with the right degree of masterful modesty. He briefly discoursed on the special meaning given to the word Traditionalism, which focuses on the "sense of the Sacred," the timeless nature of Truth, its transcendent nature, and the form of initiatic religion. He noted that an outer disharmony reflects an inner malaise, one especially characteristic of this century.

Mr. Lakhani, a man of compact build, is elegant in manner and precise in speech. An Ismaili Moslem, he was born in Kent, England, is a graduate in law from Cambridge University, and conducts a legal practice in Vancouver. Noting the absence of a scholarly journal devoted to Traditional studies, he founded the semi-annual journal *Sacred Web* in Summer 1998. It specializes in the publication of scholarly and semi-popular articles on the principles of primordialism, as it is sometimes called. I have been a subscriber to the journal for the last four years.

It was a coup to have as the first presenter HRH The Prince of Wales. Prince Charles videotaped a special message to the conference at St. James Palace on July 18. (The text appears in the current issue of *Sacred Web*.) It is not general knowledge but certainly not a hidden fact that Prince Charles has been influenced by the ideas behind Traditionalism. Indeed, he is the patron of the Temenos Academy in Ashford, Kent. He also reads *Sacred Web* and the other semi-annual journal *Sophia*. Prince Charles mentioned both publications in his address; indeed, at times his enthusiasm for *Sacred Web* sounded uncomfortably close to a sales pitch! He spoke movingly about "creative imagination" and about Traditionalist ideas which consti-

tute “a critique of the false texts of modernity” and about “the knowledge of the heart,” a formulation favoured by Traditionalists and Sufi poets like Rumi. He noted with regret the recent death of Martin Lings, a noted Traditionalist. Then he referred to Sir Martin Rees, the Astronomer Royal, who has warned mankind about the environmental crises that are facing the natural world today. He quoted (from memory) lines by T.S. Eliot that ask the question, “Where is the life we have lost in living?” Prince Charles spoke directly to the camera in one continuous take that lasted about fifteen minutes: quite an accomplishment. His last words were beautifully chosen: “I can only wish you a most harmonious conference.”

The keynote address was delivered by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who is recognized to be the world’s leading contemporary Traditionalist thinker. He thus takes his place alongside the three founders of the metaphysical, philosophical, and religious movement: René Guénon (1886-1951), Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), and Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998). Dr. Nasr is a man of considerable presence and commanding erudition. Born in Iran, he was educated in science and philosophy in the West, initiated in the East, and enjoyed the especial favour of the late Shah of Iran. He could be described as “living in exile” (in the metaphysical sense to be sure) except that he seems to be at home in the capital cities of the world where he is in great demand as a speaker, writer, and spokesman. He is now in his seventies and a professor at Georgetown University. One of his lesser-known accomplishments is contributing the foreword to a book of photographs of Iran taken by the late Toronto photographer Roloff Beny. He is of average height, is balding, has a light beard, and while he speaks with extraordinary fluency, he occasionally betrays some signs of exhaustion. He explained that his cardiologist had warned him that if he insisted on lecturing he should do so sitting down. He compromised: he stood while he lectured but sat while he received questions. For his presentations he dressed dramatically, all in black.

Dr. Nasr titled his talk “The Recovery of the Sacred.” He affirmed the importance of the present conference by noting that it is the first such international gathering to be held in North America and the second in the Western Hemisphere. There was an earlier one in Lima in 1985 and he had spoken there. He briefly outlined some typical Traditionalist concerns, notably the need to recover the Sacred in the world today. The Traditionalist does not yearn to return to the past, but does yearn for “the past in which the Sacred was present.” He stressed the paradox: “Nothing is more timely than the timeless.” Evil is related to the manifestation of the Sacred. He quoted a philosopher who observed that “knowledge of substance is the substance of knowledge.” Modern man has largely

lost his sense of the Sacred, yet its lingering “taste” persists. Our verticality is a sign of the Sacred in us. There is no Traditional civilization that lacks its sense of beauty and there is no metaphysics without the expression of beauty. Beauty may be considered the presence of “pure knowledge.” “Where there is no error there is no truth.” “The heart of the believer is the throne of God,’ according to the Muslim saying.”

He looked back a century to the birth of Modernity or Modernism as the historical period is sometimes called. He sketched in the “landscape” of 1906, characterizing it as being dominated by “rationalism” and “irrationalism” along with “theosophy” (perhaps as an instance of a system of thought that is neither one nor the other). This was the sole reference made by any speaker to lower-case or upper-case theosophy. It was a concession to the fact that materialism does not *entirely* dominate men’s thinking, and perhaps an illustration of his statement is that “nothing would exist without some degree of truth.” Before the modern period the cosmos was seen as a Sacred place of hope. Since Galileo and the triumph of “scientism,” it has been depicted as dead matter, a spiritual void. There is no certain knowledge beneath the sun. “Science changes every ten years.” There is no place for consciousness in Modernity. Modern man believes that consciousness arises out of matter, whereas consciousness does not evolve; it devolves, being present at the beginning of the cosmos. Man is endangering the environment, a theme Dr. Nasr has been reiterating for four decades. There is an ecological crisis. “Canada will become the only liveable place on Earth. Canadians may like that, but not other people in the world.”

According to Dr. Nasr, Man must rediscover the Sacred within himself. He has not risen from animals but has descended from “perfect archetypes.” To this end he stands vertically. To rediscover the Sacred in history is to make short work of the “exclusivist eschatology” found among believers in the U.S. South, in Muslim countries, and in India. The Sacred must be recovered in all the traditional aspects of the social order which are being eroded by contemporary values. The values of monarchy, family, cast, and political institutions have to be continually reaffirmed. Dr. Nasr agreed with the Swiss Traditionalist Frithjof Schuon: “The worst king is better than the best president,” for the reason that kingship flows from an archetype but presidency does not. Reclaiming the Sacred in art and music means reclaiming beauty and regarding the arts as spiritual utilities, not secular luxuries. The Sacred in religion has largely been misplaced or lost. Dr. Nasr criticized the views of the Catholic expansionist Teilhard de Chardin, finding much of Vatican II in his theories, and then contrasted them with the need for views that are inward, esoteric. “The more orthodox, the more universal.”

Spiritual practice must be conducted by the “orthodox cadre.” (A couple of times he used the word “cadre,” an expression which, in English at least, is associated most often with Communist Party: cadre, the *apparatchiks* of the Party.) “It’s impossible to state the truth while error reigns.” One must discover “the god within” and “the revelation without.” He recalled the image of the spiritual path minted by Ananda Coomaraswamy: “All paths lead to the same summit.” He added that it is necessary to take *one* of those paths. (This image contrasts neatly with Krishnamurti’s “Truth is a pathless land.”) “Those who do not find are not real seekers.” “The opposite of orthodoxy is heterodoxy.” Dr. Nasr declared that today we need “the Andalusian model,” a reference to 14th century Spain which saw religious tolerance and mutual understanding among Christians, Muslims, and Jews; the flowering of religion and the arts; and the revival of Classical learning — all under enlightened Muslim rulers in Andalusia.

Dr. Nasr was an imposing presence at the conference; he was lauded and his presentations were applauded, though its contents were in no way remarkable, but they struck the right notes for the audience. His was a “hard act” to follow, but that was the lot of William C. Chittick. A lean and lanky American, Professor Chittick speaks and lectures with gusto and always finds a word or two to emphasize in each sentence. If Dr. Nasr spoke broadly, Professor Chittick spoke specifically: he read an academic paper on the way in which Chinese-speakers, upon being introduced to Islam, were able to relate its conceptions to the Classical formulations of Chinese thought. With Mencius it was easy to “seek for the lost heart.” With Confucius it was easy to “learn how to be human.” Muslim prophets were turned into Chinese sages, sages into prophets. Here was the *philosophia perennis* in action. The presentation was a worthy and interesting one, though it seemed somewhat specialized given the non-scholarly audience.

The afternoon session was advertised as a “Forum on the Future of Tradition,” but flight delays prevented some presenters from arriving in time, so the forum that was mounted might have been retitled “Exegesis as the Search for Truth.” Dr. Maria Dakake of George Mason University was the sole woman to present a paper. (It would have been helpful to have made more presentations by women on feminine as well as feminist spirituality.) She spoke on “The Heritage of Female Spirituality from the Traditionalist Perspective” by examining the story of Hagar, wife of Abraham, who became the first woman in the Bible to receive an “annunciation.” Islamic tradition tells us more than the Biblical account, for her declining years were spent living close to the Kaaba. She was passive with respect to Abraham but in her submissiveness and resignation to God she found exceptional virtue. Dr.

Dakake noted that God specially favours women who are mothers. The analysis was a portion of a longer paper that examined God’s relationship with four women, including St. Teresa and the Virgin Mary. Although God is one, God has made things in pairs. The gender dichotomy has biological, fraternal, and hierarchical consequences. She noted that Schuon observed that at times these consequences appear to be “excessively unilateral.”

“Tradition and Inter-Faith Dialogue” was the title of the talk by Professor Joseph Lumbard of Brandeis, a man of strength of character. The talk’s title sounds general but its analysis was specific, for he looked into the concept of Sonship and the concept of Trinity in Christianity and Islam. In Christianity, Jesus is “the only begotten son”; in the Koran, God does not have a Son. Perhaps it is not that simple because the precise physical nature of Sonship was the subject of debate by the Church fathers and various interpretations were repudiated by them as well as by Muslims before they became part of the Christian creed. If the formula runs “emanated but not procreated,” Sonship may be reconciled with Islam. Similar reasoning lies behind the notion of the Trinity. Both Christianity and Islam accept the unity of God, but if the Trinity is viewed as an “emanation” (perhaps in harmony with one or other of the ninety-names of God), it would be consonant with the spirit of the Koran.

Professor David Dakake, also of George Mason, spoke on “A Traditionalist Contribution to Christian-Muslim Inter-religious Dialogue: A Study of Two Perspectives on the Crucifixion.” Speaking with considerable ease, he dealt with the thorny issue of the Crucifixion of Jesus, the core of the Christian creed, which is denied by the Koran: “no murder, no crucifixion.” But is the Crucifixion really denied? Examining those passages that deal with the subject (“they did not kill him . . . they did not crucify him”), Professor Dakake noted that the key word is “they,” for it seems those passages refer to the claim of the Jewish elders recorded in the Christian Gospels that they themselves were responsible for the act, whereas theologically any Crucifixion that took place was not the responsibility of any one people or any one group of people. There is a great mystery here. It is the body that dies and not the spirit. Perhaps the interpretations of the Crucifixion may be reconciled in this fashion. Scholarship has its uses and consequences.

These three papers brought to my mind the story of the rabbi who came upon a sign on a door with these words of warning: “PRIVATE. NO ADMISSION.” He doubted their meaning and interpreted them as follows: “PRIVATE? NO! ADMISSION!” So he opened the door. Putting the joke to one side, these three exegeses may be seen as instances of the operation of the spirit of Traditionalism.

A Question and Answer session with Drs. Nasr and Chittick concluded the first day's proceedings. Questions were asked about "what to do" about the challenges of political and religious pluralism today and about the sustainability of the environment. Dr. Nasr had scathing words to describe attempts to study religion by secularizing it. He called this "miso-sophy" rather than "philosophy." Traditionalism views the natural world as an expression of the divine, so it is not there to be despoiled by man. Dr. Nasr mused that everything would be better "if Alfred North Whitehead was still teaching at Harvard."

He and Professor Chittick discussed the fact that the centre of the human being lies in the heart, "where our being is unified." Dr. Nasr said the heart is "the seat of the self which transcends mind and emotions." He expressed dismay that ideas like these seem not to have penetrated the minds of people in the Western world. "It seems impossible to change the minds of Americans," he exclaimed. "Give me CNN for one week and I will do it." This hyperbole generated a round of applause. "You can't do good without being good," he affirmed. Professor Chittick spoke about the Islamic perspective on evolution and how "every living being has a form, a direct divine form." The questions and answers were mainly philosophical and theoretical although a few dealt with pluralism, secularism, and religious exclusivism in the Western world. Neither speaker paused to consider the word "modern" itself, which has changed its meaning over the centuries: in Shakespeare's day it meant "mediocre."

The first contribution on Sunday morning was "Traditional Action in the Contemporary World" by Dr. Reza Shah-Kazemi, a compelling speaker and the author of a widely admired study of Imam Ali. (Mr. Lakhani is also an authority on Imam Ali.) He stated that the human being must "affirm the reality that is and reject what is not," and therein lies his salvation and ultimately that of society. This salvation will be accomplished by the Invocation of the Divine Name, which affirms the reality of God and confirms man's obedience to the Divine. Dr. Shah-Kazemi drew attention to some common misconceptions of Traditionalism. It is not concerned with the past; instead, it finds the Sacred in the past, metaphysical principles in the present, and transformative powers in the future. The Kali Yuga or Dark Age fosters pessimism; yet, as the late Martin Lings affirmed, "There is a message of hope at the last hour." The fascinating formulation was recalled: In the past, not one-tenth of the teaching could be neglected; in dire times, like ours, one-tenth must be honoured. "Each moment must be turned into a moment of mercy." As for the contemplative life, while it is true that "one hour of reflection equals seventy years of acts," it is necessary to detach oneself from the fruits of one's action. "Act

and be effaced in the act of acting." "A good act becomes part of the doer." Light is one of the potentials of oil. "What is potential becomes necessary, what is necessary becomes possible, and what is possible becomes essential." There was much more in this talk than can be conveyed here.

"The 'True Man': Myth or Reality?" was the title of Dr. Jean-Louis Michon's engrossing presentation, the first half of which was analytic, the second autobiographical. It is hard not to see Dr. Michon himself as a "True Man": a white-bearded Frenchman, in his eighth decade, with an avuncular manner and a twinkle in his eye. He sought in the spiritual legacies of all mankind an image of man that transcends time, place, and the distortions of culture. In the Kaballah, he is Adam Kadmon, aka Metatron, aka Adam the First Man in the Edenic World. In Christianity, he is Jesus, "true God and true man." In the Islamic tradition, he is "the Perfect Man," "mirror of God," a vital principle present in every man. Interestingly he found in the Ojibwa tradition a description of the "spontaneous man." (Privately he gave me the source for this conception, the anthropologist W.J. Hoffman.)

He noted, "In all bad things there is something good," and the good may be realized through initiatic institutions. He talked anecdotally about his own spiritual journey. As a young man he so much wanted to study Zen in Japan that he enlisted as a paratrooper! His life took him from Nancy, France, to the American University in Beirut, to Cairo, where he knew Guénon, to Switzerland, where he spent time with Schuon. He quoted a line of hope: "With persistence [or perseverance] we shall all be saved." He ended with the injunction: "Prepare for your encounter with God." Let me add that Dr. Michon brought French charm and European erudition to the conference and to primordial studies.

Michael Fitzgerald, a television producer and a sensitive presenter, offered a video program titled "Beauty and the Sense of the Sacred: Schuon's Antidote to Modernity." His spoken commentary wove into a seamless garment information about the life of Schuon and passages from his writings on esthetics. I have always found Schuon's essays on art to be vaporous, but when presented alongside exquisite images of Gothic cathedrals and the Alhambra, they were enchanting. There were also photographs of the chaste interiors of Schuon's residence in Bloomington, Indiana, with fine paintings and sculptures. (It struck me that my favourite painting — Rembrandt's self-portrait of 1658 now in the Frick — would be out of place here. Schuon's taste in art favoured the metaphysical.) Fitzgerald concluded by quoting a line from one of Schuon's last poems: "Blessed be those who through beauty are ennobled." Present in the audience was Madame Catherine Schuon, the

prophet's widow. In a brief conversation she expressed pleasure that her late husband's work was being acknowledged.

After Sunday's lunch break, Professor Caner Dagli spoke on "The Changing Nature of Power and the Traditionalist Response." His thesis was that in the West power means control: by the use of force (the nation state), by the economy (the corporation), and by ideas (the university and other institutions). These are "agents of the demon" for they seek to "control imagination" and they result in servility.

Professor Waleed el-Ansary, financial adviser to the Grand Mufti of Egypt, spoke on "The Traditionalist Critique of Modern Economics." We need to liberate ourselves from "egocentricity" and then from "dehumanization" and "deskilling" of work in the contemporary world. He discussed the violent and coercive nature of modern society. There is no hierarchy of values (modern world: bottom up; spiritual world: top down). It pits secular values against Sacred values. It turns needs into wants, wants into tastes. It stresses "mono-utility." It offers high costs with low benefits. The abuse of man is mirrored in man's abuse of the environment. He praised the insights of the philosopher Wolfgang Smith and concluded that the real questions are "questions economists cannot answer *qua* economists" because they are philosophical questions.

Professor Harry Oldmeadow came all the way from La Trobe University, Melbourne, to deliver a rousing talk titled "Tradition Betrayed: The False Prophets of Modernism." He is a curly haired man given to the use of expressive language. He spoke about the initial difficulty of gaining academic acceptance for his thesis on Schuon. "The wisdom of the ages is not always welcome in the halls of the academy." One of his students called him not so much a teacher as "a wannabe preacher," and there is substance to this characterization. He noted the "spiritual crisis" of modern times and examined our "pseudo-mythologies" which maintain that "a stone can turn into Mozart." (If that is so, perhaps a rock can turn into rock music.) "The world of Traditionalism is a good which entails some evil. The Modern world is an evil which entails some good." "The sense of the Sacred is a nuisance in the Modern world!"

The Modernity that dates from the Renaissance is all of a piece. Professor Oldmeadow discussed the defining influences of four "mythographers." Charles Darwin had it wrong when he wrote that spirit emerges from matter when it is the other way round: matter emerges from spirit. (I felt he has not been reading much of Darwin, or even of neo-Darwinists like Stephen Jay Gould.) Karl Marx recognized only "material forces" and based his utopianism on materialism,

class struggle, etc. (He certainly took a simplified view of Marxist economics.) He quoted Sigmund Freud as saying that a man has to be unbalanced to discuss questions of meaning and the value of life because neither exists, and he presented Freud's view that art, philosophy, and religion are "science's enemy." (Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* is a more profound and disturbing work than that.) Friedrich Nietzsche was an "exciting, disturbing" man with a "profound soul" but he was "demented." The German philosopher preached relativism and exhibited the "Promethean hubris" that "we must become as gods." (I felt that Professor Oldmeadow rather appreciated Nietzsche's way of writing.) What these thinkers share is the premise of Modernism that "all views to date are wrong"; they show a contempt for traditional learning and the achievements of the past, regarding "originality" not as a return to origins but as novelty. He quoted the words of an unidentified swami: "God is. God can be realized. To realize God is the supreme goal of human life. God can be realized in many ways."

Professor James S. Cutsinger followed this performance with the following statement, "I believe everything Professor Oldmeadow has said. And yet" There was some laughter. A dapper, articulate man, he spoke on "The Noble Lie." He proceeded to read (very well) his own short story, a fabulation in which the spirit of Socrates appears to a present-day university professor who is attempting to prepare a paper to be delivered at a conference on the subject of "The Noble Lie." The short story was not all that short, and somewhat overwritten, but the analysis was philosophically sound, so that Socrates won all the verbal skirmishes. It seems that the only way to construct a paper on the subject of "the Noble Lie" is to tell a useful lie and then construct an entertaining dialogue around it. (I had expected that Professor Cutsinger would offer some discussion of dissimulation or deception: *kitman* or *ketman*, which Czeslaw Milocz took from Sufism to characterize "officialese" in his classic study of Communist ideology in *The Captive Mind*; or some analysis of Leo Strauss's views; but there was no extension of the notion.) What took me by surprise was that Professor Cutsinger used in place of the long word "esotericist" (pronounced "esso-terra-cist") the shorter word "esoterist" (pronounced "es-ought-erist"). Is this new?

The honour of being the final speaker fell on the broad but bowed shoulders of Huston Smith. The sage, born in 1919, is a beloved popularizer of studies of the world's religions. (It went unnoted, but among Professor Smith's achievements is the fact that he established the Department of Comparative Religion at Dalhousie University in Halifax.) Many concluding speakers will attempt to summarize conference proceedings, but Professor Smith chose to do something

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Concerning Ammonius Saccas

Part I

J. Ramón Sordo

Although the *Theosophical History Occasional Paper* Volume III, "Ammonius Saccas and his 'Eclectic Philosophy' as presented by Alexander Wilder" written by Dr. Jean-Louis Siémons, was published by Dr. James Santucci, editor of *Theosophical History*, in 1994, and the original paper was delivered by Dr. Siémons in London in 1988; the importance and timeless character of its content, despite the lapse of 18 years will be enough reason for a few remarks of mine concerning this important research.

Dr. Siémons' pioneering research is very well structured and has the merit of being the first and only inquiry into the sources of *The Key to Theosophy* by H.P. Blavatsky. However I would like to point out that notwithstanding all this, his conclusions are not really conclusive due to the fact that he was not able to substantiate the basis of his reasoning e.g., his assumption that Ammonius was born in the year 175 A.D.

A contrived date

How does he arrive at that date?

In p.20 he says: "The date of his birth is approximately 175 A.D." Then on p.21 Dr. Siémons says: "And Theodoret of Cyrus (an ecclesiastical writer of the 5th century) indicates that 'in the reign of Commodus [180-192] Ammonius left aside the sacks in which he carried wheat to embrace a philosopher's life'. How long were the years of training during the reign of Septimius Severus (193-211) we don't know."

Here we find the first methodological problem in the inquiry of Dr. Siémons. Theodoret of Cyrus does not give any precise date; he only gives a reference to the reign of Commodus. Theodoret was not a contemporary of Ammonius, he wrote in the 5th century A.D., but if provisionally we follow his reference, we have — from 180 to 192 A.D. — twelve years at our disposal to speculate about the probable time when Ammonius embraced "a philosopher's life". Dr. Siémons has taken the end of this period and to reinforce his idea he immediately adds: "How long were the years of training during the reign of Septimius Severus (193-211) we don't know." Dr Siémons is assuming that Ammonius was 17 years old in 192 A.D.; that is how he arrives at the year 175 as his date of birth. But with the same validity we could take the beginning of Commodus' reign and also assume that

by 180 A.D. Ammonius was 17 years old, and this would give us as his probable date of birth, the year 163 A.D. Thus at the end of the reign of Commodus he would be 29 years of age instead of 17. Furthermore in this speculation we should not forget that we are making two assumptions: (a) that the reference of a Christian father who lived two centuries after Ammonius is correct, and (b) that Ammonius embraced "a philosopher's life" when he was 17 years old.

But Dr. Siémons seems to have taken the year 175 A.D. as something established and fixed, whereas in reality it is a mere speculation proposed by him. Instead of maintaining an open mind he has closed any possible way of arriving at the truth in a matter in which we lack the necessary elements to give definite dates and definite facts.

In connection with this date, while analyzing Mosheim's main propositions (p.8), he makes the following bold assertion in square brackets:

3. The appearance of Ammonius Saccas, about the conclusion of this century [but, possibly, *later, as he has born ca 175*] was an important event
[Emphasis mine]

So he is taking for granted that Ammonius was born ca. 175 A.D., but he has nothing to support this, and the weakness of his premises invalidates most of his scholarly deductions based as they are in the fixity of that date.

The Church Fathers

Let us see the consequences of this methodological bias:

In p.15 Dr. Siémons writes:

Concerning the Church Fathers, he [Dr. Alexander Wilder] gave credit to the erroneous version of the *Encyclopedia*. Consequently he wrote (p.9 of his pamphlet): "Countenanced by Clement and Athenagoras in the Church, he [Ammonius] fulfilled his labor by teaching a common doctrine for all." Hence (*Key*, p.6): ". . . the great Philaetheian was supported and helped [. . .] by two Church Fathers, Clement and Athenagoras."

However, one moment of reflection reveals that this assertion of Wilder is untenable. Bearing in mind that the great Neo-Platonist **was born ca 175**, he must have been very young at the conclu-

sion of the 2nd century to be able to attract the attention of well established Christian masters like Clement (who was his senior by some 25 years), least of all to receive their approbation to carry out his plans *outside* of Christianity (while he was still perhaps a mere tyro in philosophy). [Emphasis mine]

Then in a footnote on p.15, Dr. Siémons develops his theory:

He already has affirmed that Clement of Alexandria was 25 years older than Ammonius, but if we — taking his own source of information — consider the equally valid hypothesis that he was born in 163 A.D., then, Clement was his senior by only 13 years. And if we take as another source the statement of HPB (in the Glossary of *The Key to Theosophy*, p.313), that Ammonius Saccas founded his school in 173 A.D. and we apply the same 17 years taken by Dr. Siémons, then the date of birth of Ammonius Saccas would go back to 156 A.D. and in that case Clement would be only 6 years his senior, assuming that he was born in 150 A.D., although that date is also very uncertain. Thus the whole reasoning of Dr. Siémons, being based on a very weak and rather personal assumption, is untenable.

In connection with Pantaenus Dr. Siémons says:

. . . Pantaenus who was at the head of the Alexandrian Catechetical School, until his bishop Demetrius sent him on a long missionary tour in India, *ca* 189 — at that time, Ammonius was about 14, **perhaps** still a Christian boy, working as a sack-bearer, carrying wheat on Alexandrian quays [Emphasis mine]

As we have said before, the source of information used by Dr. Siémons gives us 12 years to speculate. His argument is invalidated if Ammonius was 26 years of age at that date. We have to be very careful not to dogmatize with such meager information at our disposal.

Again referring to Clement's work *Miscellanies*, which he says were published

probably from 194 (when Ammonius was about 19) to a date *before* 202. . . Obviously in the year 200, Clement must have been a full grown master at the height of his literary career, occupying an important position as a thoroughly convinced defender of the Christian faith, whereas Ammonius, at the age of 25, was perhaps only emerging out of obscurity. (p.15n)

But the age of Ammonius — I repeat, using the same source of information — could be 31 instead of 19; and 37 instead of 25 and the whole story would change.

Then at the end of this footnote Dr. Siémons gives us his own story about the relationship between Ammonius Saccas and the Church Fathers inverting the statements of *The Key to Theosophy*:

The probability is far greater that Ammonius himself was influenced by the trio of Christian Fathers — particularly by Clement, whose lessons he may have followed as a catechumen than the contrary. Moreover, it is most unlikely that the famous disciple of Pantaenus should have readily changed his mind to adopt the doctrines of a young **apostate** like Ammonius, let alone to support him in his endeavor. (p.15n) [Emphasis mine]

Thus we see that in this case “one moment of reflection reveals” nothing when it is based on false premises, because the assumption of Dr. Siémons is not supported by any fact. The only basis he has to criticize Wilder and discredit the assertions in *The Key to Theosophy* is the date 175 A.D. established by himself in an arbitrary way. As he cannot prove this, the rest of his reflections fall to pieces.

Pot-Amun

In connection with Pot-Amun, Dr. Siémons points out the following:

Now, another confusion prompted Dr. Wilder to his choice, as he gave credit to the (long discarded) theory that the Ammonian School “had a beginning much earlier,” being traced by Diogenes Laërtius to an Egyptian prophet or priest named Pot-Amun, who flourished in the earlier years of the dynasty of the Ptolemies’ — this Potamon being unanimously acknowledged as a regular Eclectic. (p.14)

And in a footnote to the former, Dr. Siémons asserts that “In fact there is nothing in Diogenes Laërtius’ *Lives* about this mysterious Egyptian prophet named Pot-Amun” (p.14n).

Well, maybe there is not much about him but enough for a mysterious Egyptian philosopher. One important fact is that he is mentioned in the Prologue of the First Book showing that he was a real personage whose influence was alive at the time when the Prologue was written; even giving a short excerpt of his *Elements of Philosophy*, a work of Pot-Amun (See *Loeb*, Vol. I, p.23).

“Potamon the Alexandrian lived not long ago. . .” we read in the *Lives*. Diogenes Laërtius is dated by some scholars in the 2nd century A.D. and by others like Dr. Siémons in the 3rd A.D. He says that “it is more probable that he [Pot-Amun] was born later, perhaps in the 2nd century [A.D.]” (p.14n) discarding the *Greek Lexicon Suidas* which says that Potamôn lived in the time of Augustus (63 B.C. / 14 A.D.) So Dr. Siémons lays aside some sources and takes others, and this is natural because all this is in the realm of conjecture.

It should be acknowledged that we have no certainty regarding the time when the *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* by Diogenes Laërtius were written. “His date,

for example, can be estimated only by what he included or left out. He has been variously dated in every century A.D. from the first to the fourth” (Herbert S. Long, Introduction to the Loeb Edition of D.L., Vol. I, p.xvi). We know very little about Diogenes Laërtius. “The rather motley, fluctuating impression produced by Diogenes’ book as a whole derives, not particularly from his own personality, but from the huge and variegated mass of source materials that he transmitted to us.” (Herbert S. Long, op. cit. p.xviii). “Diogenes has acquired an importance out of all proportion to his merits because the loss of many primary sources . . .” (Ibid., p.xix). “In compiling his biographical encyclopedia of Greek philosophy, Diogenes drew on a great many sources of varying quality. His work is especially valuable because . . . he quotes many earlier writers, often verbatim.” (David Fideler, *The Pythagorean SourceBook and Library*, Phanes Press, Grand Rapids, 1987, p.141). In his 10 Books, Diogenes Laërtius presents 83 lives of philosophers; most of them belonging to the centuries B.C. “He does not refer to Neo-Pythagorism nor — a more striking omission — to Neo-Platonism.” (Herbert S. Long, op. cit. p.xvi). We do not possess any original of the *Lives*, and according to Robert D. Hicks translator of the work into English (Introduction to the Loeb edition of 1925) the oldest MS of the *Lives* in possession of European scholars is the *Codex Borbonicus* which dates from A.D. 1200. “For we may reasonably assume” says the same authority “that a single stray copy, brought to light in the ninth century, was the parent of all extant MSS.” Furthermore the same expert acknowledges that “this work in 10 books is a compilation from earlier compilations” e.g. it is a compilation of older sources. “Diogenes is a veritable tissue of quotations from all sorts of authors. . . . Richard Hope counted 1,186 explicit references to 365 books by about 250 authors, as well as more than 350 anonymous references: that is an average of nearly three references to a page of the Oxford Classical Text edition” (Herbert S. Long, op. cit. p.xix). Thus the phrase “Potamon the Alexandrian lived not long ago. . .” not necessarily indicates the time in which Diogenes Laërtius flourished, but it could be an assertion written 500 years before him, and copied by him.

Then Dr. Siémons proceeds to give us a rather forced etymology of the word Pot-Amun:

On the rather common Greek name Potamôn (**re-calling** [?] Potamos = river), he [Wilder] has nothing to say concerning its Coptic or Egyptian derivation from Pot-Amun — possibly an etymology **imagined** by the learned Wilder. [Emphasis mine]

But the same could be said of Dr. Siémons derivation of Pot-Amun from a river.

Contrary to the speculations of Dr. Siémons, Blavatsky, quoting Wilder, “tells us that the name is

Coptic, and signifies one consecrated to Amun, the God of Wisdom” (*Key to Theosophy*, p.2n).

Concerning the influence of Neoplatonism on the Christian Church and the antiquity of Pot-Amun, HPB had the following to say:

As to Ammonius,

Countenanced by Clement and Athenagoras in the church, and by learned men of the Synagogue, the Academy and the Grove, he fulfilled his labour by teaching a common doctrine for all.’ (*New Platonism and Alchemy*, Alexander Wilder, p.18)

Thus it is not Judaism and Christianity that remodelled the ancient Pagan Wisdom, but rather the latter that put its heathen curb, quietly and insensibly, on the new faith; and this, moreover, was still further influenced by the Eclectic Theosophical system, the direct emanation of the Wisdom-Religion. All that is grand and noble in Christian theology comes from Neo-Platonism. [. . .]

Nor was the Eclectic Theosophical system — as some writers inspired by Rome would make the world believe — developed only during the third century of our era; but it belongs to a much earlier age, as has been shown by Diogenes Laërtius. He traces it to the beginning of the dynasty of the Ptolemies; to the great seer and prophet, the Egyptian Priest Pot-Amun, of the temple of the God of that name — for Amun is the God of Wisdom. Unto that day the communication between the Adepts of Upper India and Bactria and the Philosophers of the West had never ceased. (*H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, XIV, pp.305-306)

Moreover, taking in consideration the works of two important Egyptologists, Gustave Lefebvre and R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, we can assume that Pot-Amun was probably the last sage in a series of seers that flourished in Egypt in earlier times, all of them wearing the name of Prophets of Amun. Gustave Lefebvre, in his work *Histoire des Grands prêtres d’Amon dans Karnak* has shown the successive line of Prophets of Amun in Karnak; and Schwaller de Lubicz in his monumental book *The Temples of Karnak*, (Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont 1999) complemented that research with the reproduction of images of a series of statues of priests and Prophets of Amun extant in Karnak, going back to the 19th Dynasty: Rome Roy, First Prophet of Amun (at the end of the reign of Ramesses II, and reign of Seti II, p.699; Plate 375); Ramessesnakht first Prophet of Amun (20th Dynasty, at the time of Ramesses IV, p.690; Plate 356); Amenhotep, First Prophet of Amun, first high priest of Amun (20th Dynasty, at the time of Ramesses IX, p.699; Plate 374); Sheshonk First High Priest of Amun (22nd Dynasty, pp.692-693; Plates 358-359); Ahmose, High Priest of Amun (26th Dynasty, p.692; Plate 357); Mentuemhet, Fourth

Prophet of Amun (26th Dynasty, ca 660 B.C., p.716; Plates 442-443).

Therefore, this long tradition of Prophets, Hierophants, and Adepts in Egypt dedicated to Amun, the *God of Wisdom* (Theosophia?) being a historical fact supported by material evidence, gives credit to the assertions of Alexander Wilder and H.P. Blavatsky (*Key to Theosophy*, p.21) that “in the early days of the Ptolemaic dynasty” “lived Pot-Amun”, “an Egyptian priest” “consecrated to Amun, the God of Wisdom.” He taught the “Eclectic Theosophical system” or “Theosophy” in Alexandria — a Greek city on Egyptian soil — in which was prominent the Platonic philosophy which in its turn was derived in great measure from the Egyptian Wisdom, as can be shown by the next quotation:

Many philosophers and scholars of the ancient world, drawn thither by the fame of Egypt, came to her temples to receive both scientific knowledge and mystical illumination. Porphyry relates how Pythagoras . . . presented himself to the priests of Heliopolis, who sent him to those of Memphis, who in turn directed him to those of Thebes, where he was made to undergo hard painful trials. . . . According to Iamblicus, the sage of Samos spent twenty-two years in the temples of Egypt. There he studied the science of Numbers, which he afterwards taught with celebrated brilliancy to his disciples. Thales studied in the sanctuaries of Memphis. Democritus passed five years in the company of Egyptian priests, thanks to whom he made a thorough study of astronomy and geometry. Plato, accompanied by Eudoxus, spent thirteen years in Heliopolis, in whose temples both of them studied geometry, theology and the priestly science. The geographer Strabo relates how in Heliopolis he was shown the house where Plato and Eudoxus had stayed. (Solomon Lancri, *Occultism of Ancient Egypt*, The Blavatsky Lecture, 4: London, 1977, pp.3-4)

All the evidence presented above shows unmistakably, that it was not “a confusion” that “prompted Dr. Wilder to his choice,” giving “credit to the (long discarded) theory that the Ammonian School . . .” etc. etc., but his knowledge of the Occult tradition.

Until more information is discovered, the peripatetic way of reasoning will always negate the Occult tradition. For the moment the two positions are irreconcilable regarding Pot-Amun.

The Eclectics

Now turning to the Eclectics.

Dr. Siémons says that

Dr. Wilder’s enthusiasm led him to a number of **imprudent** generalisations and **wrong** assertions that he could have corrected by a direct reference to the original Grecian literature.

Examples may be given as follows:

1. His too *exclusive attribution to Neo-Platonists* of specific terms like *Eclectics* and *Eclectic Philosophy* (chosen as the title of his pamphlet) is the apparent result of **a series of confusions** or misinterpretations. . . . (p.13)
2. Taking for granted that the various denominations enumerated in the *Encyclopedia* (Eclectics, Analogetici [Analogeticists] and Philalethes [Philaletheians]) applied to the Neo-Platonists. . . . (p.14) [Emphasis mine]

This long quotation shows that Dr. Siémons is under the misapprehension that Dr. Wilder, one of the greatest American Platonists of the nineteenth century, knew nothing about the original Platonic and Neoplatonic literature and had to resort to the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia* to get his knowledge. But indeed he is not the only one to refer to the Neoplatonists as Eclectics. Isaac Preston Cory in the Introduction of his book *Ancient Fragments* published in 1826, talks the same way about the Neoplatonists:

In the third century, Ammonius Saccas, universally acknowledged to have been a man of consummate ability, taught that every sect, Christian, Heretic or Pagan, had received the truth, and retained it in their varied legends. He undertook, therefore, to unfold it from them all, and to reconcile every creed. And from his exertions sprung the celebrated Eclectic school of the later Platonists. Plotinus, Amelius, Olympius, Porphyrius, Jamblichus, Syrianus, and Proclus, were among the celebrated professors who succeeded Ammonius in the Platonic chair, and revived and kept alive the spirit of Paganism, with a bitter enmity to the Gospel, for near three hundred years. (*Ancient Fragments*, Isaac Preston Cory, first ed. 1826; photographic copy of 1832 ed. Wizards Bookshelf, Savage MN, 1975, pp. lii-liii. For the particulars of this philosophical transaction see Gibbon, [*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*], Ch. xl)

However we have to accept that there is a tradition written and unwritten about the School of Ammonius Saccas coming down from antiquity, not necessarily all recorded by the scholars, which refers to them as Eclectics, Philaletheians, Analogeticists and Neoplatonists. And here we encounter a paradox, Mosheim; an enemy of Neoplatonism collected many of the traditions of that school with the purpose of criticizing them. Part of his material went into the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*, and a Platonist like Wilder recognizing immediately the truths buried in the text, like a good Eclectic, took what he thought was true and discarded what he considered to be false. This is nothing new; it is the way that many texts of antiquity burnt by the Christian Church have been recovered. The originals were burnt but many of their tenets have survived in the works of their enemies. Dr. Wilder used this procedure, Blavatsky too. That is . . . continued on page 95

THEOSOPHICAL FRIENDS REMEMBERED

William Dallas TenBroeck

December 20, 1922 – September 2, 2006

W. Dallas TenBroeck was born in Hollywood, CA in a little house that is still standing to this day. His family moved to India while he was still very young and he spent most of his childhood and part of his adult years there. Dallas ran a book and print shop business started by his father. He travelled extensively in the Far East as a representative for a company that supplied college texts.

Upon his return to Los Angeles in 1969 he became closely involved at the United Lodge of Theosophists headquarters, all the while earning his living as an independent businessman. His retirement from the business world coincided with the emergence of the Internet. His whole thrust in life was to help spread the ideas of Theosophy through the teachings of H.P. Blavatsky and W.Q. Judge. He became very active on the Internet theosophical discussion groups where

he freely passed along theosophical ideas and information to as many people as possible.

Dallas always generously shared compilations of information he had culled from theosophical writings, sending them by mail and later electronically to anyone seeking information or who had posed a question on a particular idea. To the very end he worked to spread the philosophy which meant so much to him. Many individuals have expressed their appreciation of his kindness in this regard.

Dallas had innumerable contacts around the world, many of whom are very grateful to him for the valuable information he so freely disseminated. He, along with his practical Internet postings, will be missed.

Ernest Pelletier

BOOK REVIEW

Theosophy in the Qabalah, by Grace F. Knoche. Pasadena, CA: Theosophical University Press, 2006, 179pp. Price \$11.95 US paper, \$17.95 US cloth.

Theosophical University Press has just published posthumously a book from the pen of Grace Knoche. Ms. Knoche's *Theosophy in the Qabalah* is a long overdue addition for *Secret Doctrine* study groups if our own local group is any indication. For students of *The Secret Doctrine* there has always been the difficulty of trying to master two different sets of terminology with Sanskrit and Qabbalistic terms seeking to confuse the mind of the poor beleaguered student. What Ms. Knoche manages to do with this book is to make simple the terminology of the Qabalah and juxtapose it against the more familiar Sanskrit system — at least for those who feel more comfortable with that system.

The book is laid out in a simple step by step process beginning with an "Introduction to Qabbalistic Literature". This introduction reminds the reader that H.P. Blavatsky described the Kabalah as "seven different systems applied to seven different interpretations of any given Esoteric work or subject." "Thus, if Kabalah as a word is Hebrew, the system itself is no more Jewish than is sunlight; it is universal" (*BCW* 7:268). After describing the relationship of the Qabalah with the Torah or Pentateuch and the Talmud, the chapter goes on to survey the origin of the modern literature that we have come to call Qabalah.

In subsequent chapters the emanation of the Sefirothal Tree is examined, looking into its various forms from different traditions around the world, and the Tree's triadic nature. The reader is introduced to concepts step by step, never feeling overwhelmed and if the reader is willing to put in some work, there is much to be accessed. Further chapters look at the four and seven planes of Nature or the four Worlds (Lokas) and the four corresponding Adams. The themes continue, in a manner not unlike *The Secret Doctrine*, where worlds are developed and then peopled by the Races and looking at the intimate relationship between both. Finally, sticking with the theme of correspondences, "The Fourfold Nature of Man" is explored and the journey inward back to the source of ALL.

The book also contains four appendices which include a "Hebrew Pronunciation Guide", a "Glossary of Qabbalistic Terms", a "Glossary of Theosophical Terms", and a list of "Zoharic Writings". Ms. Knoche has put together a valuable tool for students of theosophy wanting a good foundation in the dizzying world of Qabbalistic terminology.

Robert Bruce MacDonald

. . . **Sacred Web** continued from page 88

else. In fact, the subject he originally proposed to address was daunting: "Can God's/Allah's Infinite Goodness and Power Accommodate the Reality of Evil?" He said on reflection that this was "too easy," so he decided to share with the audience a work-in-progress titled "The Universal Grammar of World Views." He added that this might be "too difficult." He explained that his use of the word "grammar" was inspired by the notion of "deep grammar" advanced by his one-time MIT colleague, Noam Chomsky. Professor Smith recalled attending the inaugural session of the United Nations and being inspired by the hope that the institution would mark a "new beginning" for mankind. Instead, he stated, "As a United States citizen, I am deeply embarrassed our nation has flouted the United Nations." These comments received applause.

He stressed modern man's need for orientation: where we are and how we are to proceed. "I will brazenly attempt to lay out a road map to reality, the largest we can manage in thirteen pieces." The thirteen became fourteen, as the summary here shows. The words are mainly Professor Smith's, the summaries mine. (1) Reality is infinite. (2) The infinite includes the finite. (3) The contents of finitude are ordered hierarchically. (4) Causation is from top-down. (5) The one becomes the many, as infinitude descends into finitude. (6) Virtues ascend and merge, pyramids being our representations of them. (7) Virtues converge and establish world views. (8) The Great Chain of Being (Lovejoy's formulation) needs to be extended to include more spiritual levels: as above, so below; body, mind, soul, spirit. (9) Human beings cannot know the infinite, only intimations of it. (10) Intimations of the infinite have to be interpreted and there are four levels of exegesis: literary, ethical, allegorical, and anagogical. (He described the latter as the type that inspires you to aspire.) (11) Symbolism is the science of relationships of the multiple levels of reality. (12) There are two distinct and complementary ways of knowledge, the rational and the intuitive. (Here he gave special emphasis to Pascal's statement that "the heart has its reasons.") (13) As walnuts have shells that house kernels, a religion has an exoteric form that houses an esoteric content. (14) What we know is ringed around in darkness that is ringed around in light. "We cannot understand our situation any more than a single protein can understand a simple cell on a finger." He offered two contrasting or complementary formulae: "We are born in ignorance, we live in ignorance, and we die in ignorance." "We are born in mystery, we live in mystery, and we die in mystery."

With a few well-chosen words, Mr. Lakhani concluded the conference. He said that ways are being

explored to publish the proceedings and there are plans to continue the initiative of Edmonton.

So it is time for me to conclude this log of events and experiences. Some of the presentations assumed prior knowledge of the Koran, of Hadith, and of Sharia; others did not. Naturally I fared better with the latter than with the former. I am aware that my formulations of these presentations may be faulted, yet they should be judged in light of my aim, which is to convey the taste if not the flavour of these ideas and insights. So the conference was a "box of all-sorts" for Ruth and me. But was it a conference? It was certainly not an academic conference like the ones that we have attended in the past because there were no presenters who were critical of the critical perspectives on offer. So I view the event in terms of a colloquium, a platform for people of like mind to exchange research, reinforce mutual views, and encourage *les autres*.

The conference (or colloquium) met some of the daily needs of the members of the audience but certainly not some of their most pressing ones. Let me comment on the nature of the audience. We found its members to be an unexpected treat and a genuine treasure. Approximately 350 people were registered. It was a youthful, spirited gathering of people: mature, bright-eyed students and earnest, middle-aged couples from business and the professions. The attendees impressed us with their friendliness, intelligence, interest, courtesy, and dignity. Ruth and I numbered among a score of non-Muslim attendees. All the youthful volunteers were Ismailis. From what I could see, the majority of the Muslims in attendance were members of the Ismaili communities of Edmonton and Vancouver. (The Ismailis belong to the Shia wing of Islam; their *imam* is the Aga Khan, who is one of the few non-Canadian members of the Order of Canada; I have always found Ismailis to be the epitome of a progressive people.) Muslims in the audience were making considerable efforts to reconcile Islam with pluralism, secularism, and religious exclusivism. Unhelpfully and unfeelingly, I felt, Professor Smith dismissed the notion of "the clash of cultures" in favour of their "complementary" nature. (No doubt this may be justified *sub specie aeternitatis* but it is hardly helpful *nunc*.)

We noted that the presentations discussed the commonality or mutuality of interests among Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, and Moslems. Missing were overt references to Jews, Hebrews, Israelis, etc. It is true the Hebrew prophets of the scriptures were mentioned, and there were references to the Kaballah, but Israeli scholars were conspicuous by their absence. I do not recall hearing the word "Israel" spoken even once. This is Traditionalism? Are there no

Jewish perennialists? (Maybe there aren't; if not, why not?) Where, come to think of it, are the Canadian scholars of Traditionalism? (William Stoddart is a long-time resident of Windsor, Ont.)

No Muslim country was singled out for its share of shame or acclaim, except indirectly Dr. Nasr's homeland, Iran. I wonder if there was a tacit agreement to keep the proceedings free of politics — except for a little U.S. bashing and, as it happened, Pope-bashing. I was quite disappointed with Dr. Nasr's extemporized dismissal of Pope Benedict XVI's speech in Regensburg, Germany, September 14, when the Pontiff quoted an ugly characterization of the Prophet by a 14th century Byzantine emperor. "It set the Moslem-Christian dialogue back fifty years," Dr. Nasr complained; the audience applauded. At least twice he had explained it was not his writ to instruct Catholics or members of other religions on their beliefs. Yet I feel that as both a distinguished scholar and a man of discernment he owed it to this audience, if not to himself, to *allude* to the context in which the offensive passage was used, as well as to *suggest* that the responses in the Arab world were disproportionate if not unfortunate.

I am left with a few questions of my own. No. 1. Is there a special relationship these days between the Traditionalists and the Ismailis? Are members of both groups outcasts in the Islamic world (despite the fact they may be said to constitute its beating heart)? I may pose this question but I cannot answer it.

No. 2. Traditionalism sees itself as timeless; but in the contemporary world does it find itself playing the role of a new Bahá'í or a new Unitarianism? (I sense here a couple of "no" answers.) Is perennialism, in other words, a critique and a corrective? Does it, as Dr. Nasr suggested, in an intriguing image, provide

an aerial perspective, so that one is able to rise above ground level and regard from an aerial perspective the walls that enclose each initiatic organization — walls that protect the truth of one from the truth of another, walls that preserve one orthodoxy from another orthodoxy, walls that preserve any orthodoxy from heterodoxy, as the Talmud erects walls around the Torah. Thus each may have its own *magisterium*. (Here I am introducing the word Stephen Jay Gould has revived for the purpose of distinguishing the authority of religion from the authority of science; no Sacred science for him.) Again, I have no answer to this question but I can raise it.

Off and on since the early 1960s, I have been reading Guénon's books, and for the last four years I have been pondering the editorials, essays, articles, and reviews in *Sacred Web* and other books and journals. It was not until this conference (or colloquium) that I heard anyone ever *pronounce* the names Frithjof Schuon and Titus Burkhardt. (Watch out for the pronunciation of Titus!) So for forty years I saw Traditionalism as offering a critique of the largely veiled assumptions of the Western world. May I be forgiven for now seeing it as constituting, as well, a welcome critique of the largely veiled assumptions of the world of the Middle East? 🍷

John Robert Colombo is known as "the Master Gatherer" for his innumerable publications devoted to the lore and literature of Canada. He is the recipient of an honorary doctorate from York University and is a Member of the Order of Canada. He is the author, editor, or translator of more than 180 books, including studies devoted to the supernatural and the paranormal. He has devoted three books to the Anglo-French thinker Denis Saurat (who absorbed from childhood the folk traditions of the Pyrenees). Some recent publications include The Native Series (a set of six books devoted to Native studies) and The Penguin Dictionary of Popular Canadian Quotations.

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why we shouldn't be surprised to find in *The Key to Theosophy* quotations from Mosheim and the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*.

Dr. Siémons says that because Diogenes Laërtius "never spoke of Ammonius" in connection with the *Philaletheians*, the *Eclectics* and the *Analogeticists*, "it seems clear that he had in mind *other* philosophers of the past" (p.15). Yes, on this we agree completely with him, only pointing out that if Diogenes Laërtius does not speak of Ammonius Saccas it is because, as I said above, he wrote his *Lives* before Ammonius was born or was known; but he mentions the *Philaletheians*, the *Eclectics* and the *Analogeticists* showing their existence at that time in the past, and for some reason he puts them together. "These philosophers of the

past" as Dr. Siémons puts it, represent a long philosophical tradition to which Ammonius Saccas belonged, and it is from them — although we don't know who his master was — that he started his initial philosophical inquiry, launching later on his own school, and calling it with the various terms discussed above, which are in consonance with this tradition of many centuries.

As Blavatsky has remarked:

Between the secrecy imposed, the vows of silence and that which was maliciously destroyed by every foul means, it is indeed miraculous that even so much of the Philaletheian tenets has reached the world. (CW, XIV, p.313) 🍷

[To be continued in next issue of Fohat]

Fohat is the Steed, Thought is the Rider

It is the "bridge" by which the "Ideas" existing in the "Divine Thought" are impressed on Cosmic substance as the "laws of Nature." Fohat is thus the dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation; or, regarded from the other side, it is the intelligent medium, the guiding power of all manifestation. . . . Thus from Spirit, or Cosmic Ideation, comes our consciousness; from Cosmic Substance the several vehicles in which that consciousness is individualized and attains to self – or reflective – consciousness; while Fohat, in its various manifestations, is the mysterious link between Mind and Matter, the animating principle electrifying every atom into life. – Secret Doctrine I, 16



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