

RENÉ GUÉNON

THE REIGN
OF QUANTITY

AND THE SIGNS
OF THE TIMES

Translator

Lord Northbourne

SOPHIA PERENNIS

HILLSDALE NY

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CONTEMPORARY INTUITIONISM

IN THE DOMAIN OF PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY, the tendencies corresponding to the second phase of anti-traditional action are naturally marked by the importance assigned to the 'subconscious' in all its forms, in other words to the most inferior psychic elements of the human being, something particularly apparent so far as philosophy properly so called is concerned in the theories of William James as well as in the 'intuitionism' of Bergson. The work of Bergson has been considered in an earlier chapter, in relation to the justifiable criticisms of rationalism and its consequences formulated therein, though never very clearly and often in equivocal terms; but the characteristic feature of what may be called (if the term be admissible) the 'positive' part of his philosophy is that, instead of seeking above reason for something that might remedy its insufficiencies, he takes the opposite course and seeks beneath it; thus, instead of turning toward true intellectual intuition, of which he is as completely ignorant as are the rationalists, he appeals to an imagined 'intuition' of an exclusively sensitive and 'vital' order, and in the very confused notions that emerge the intuition of the senses properly so called is mingled with the most obscure forces of instinct and sentiment. So it is not as a result of a more or less 'fortuitous' encounter that Bergson's 'intuitionism' has manifest affinities, particularly marked in what may be called its 'final state' (and this applies equally to the philosophy of William James), with 'neo-spiritualism', but it is as a result of the fact that both are expressions of the same tendencies: the attitude of the one in relation to rationalism is more or less parallel to that of the other in relation to

materialism, the one leaning toward the 'sub-rational' just as the other leans toward the 'sub-corporeal' (doubtless no less unconsciously), so that the direction followed in both cases is undoubtedly toward the 'infra-human'.

This is not the place for a detailed examination of these theories, but attention must at least be called to certain features closely connected with the subject of this book. The first is their 'evolutionism', which remains unbroken and is carried to an extreme, for all reality is placed exclusively within 'becoming', involving the formal denial of all immutable principle, and consequently of all metaphysics; hence their 'fleeting' and inconsistent quality, which really affords, in contrast with the rationalist and materialist 'solidification', something like a prefiguration of the dissolution of all things in the final chaos. A significant example is found in Bergson's view of religion, which is set out appropriately enough in a work of his exemplifying the 'final state' mentioned above.¹ Not that there is really anything new in that work, for the origins of the thesis maintained are in fact very simple: in this field all modern theories have as a common feature the desire to bring religion down to a purely human level, which amounts to denying it, consciously or otherwise, since it really represents a refusal to take account of what is its very essence; and Bergson's conception does not differ from the others in that respect.

These theories of religion, taken as a whole, can be grouped into two main types: one is 'psychological' and claims to explain religion by the nature of the human individual, and the other is 'sociological' and tries to see in religion a fact of an exclusively social kind, the product of a sort of 'collective consciousness' imagined as dominating individuals and imposing itself on them. Bergson's originality consists only in having tried to combine these two sorts of explanation, and he does so in rather a curious way: instead of considering them as more or less mutually exclusive, as do most of the partisans of one or the other, he accepts both explanations, but relates them to two different things, each called by the same name of 'religion', the 'two sources' of religion postulated by him really amounting to

1. *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion.*

that and nothing more.² For him therefore there are two sorts of religion, one 'static' and the other 'dynamic', alternatively and somewhat oddly called by him 'closed religion' and 'open religion'; the first is social in its nature and the second psychological; and naturally his preference is for the second, which he regards as the superior form of religion—we say 'naturally' because it is very evident that it could not be otherwise in a 'philosophy of becoming' such as his, since from that point of view whatever does not change does not correspond to anything real, and even prevents man from grasping the real such as it is imagined to be. But someone will say that a philosophy of this kind, since it admits of no 'eternal truths',³ must logically refuse all value not only to metaphysics but also to religion; and that is exactly what happens, for religion in the true sense of the word is just what Bergson calls 'static religion', in which he chooses to see nothing but a wholly imaginary 'story-telling'; as for his 'dynamic religion', the truth is that it is not religion at all.

His so-called 'dynamic religion' in fact contains none of the characteristic elements that go to make up the definition of religion: there are no dogmas, since they are immutable or, as Bergson says, 'fixed'; no more, of course, are there any rites, for the same reason and because of their social character, dogmas and rites necessarily being left to 'static religion'; and as for morality, Bergson starts by setting it aside as something quite outside religion as he understands it. So there is nothing left, or at least nothing is left but a vague 'religiosity', a sort of confused aspiration toward an 'ideal' of some description, rather near to the aspirations of modernists and liberal Protestants, and reminiscent in many respects of the 'religious experience' of William James, for all these things are obviously very closely connected. This 'religiosity' is taken by Bergson to be a superior kind of religion, for he thinks, like all those who follow the same tendencies, that he is 'sublimating' religion, whereas all he is

2. So far as morality is concerned, it is not of special interest here, but the explanation of it proposed by Bergson is of course parallel to his explanation of religion.

3. It is worthy of note that Bergson seems to avoid the use of the word 'truth', and that he almost always uses instead the word 'reality', a word that in his view signifies that which undergoes continual change.

doing is to empty it of all positive content, since there is nothing in religion compatible with his conceptions. Such notions are no doubt all that can be extracted from a psychological theory, for experience has failed to show that any such theory can get beyond 'religious feeling'—and that, once more, is not religion. In Bergson's eyes 'dynamic religion' finds its highest expression in 'mysticism', which however he does not understand and sees on its worst side, for he only praises it for whatever in it is 'individual', that is to say, vague, inconsistent, and in a sense 'anarchic'; and the best examples of this kind of mysticism, though he does not quote them, could be found in certain teachings of occultist and Theosophist inspiration. What really pleases him about the mystics, it must be stated categorically, is their tendency to 'divagation' in the etymological sense of the word, which they show only too readily when left to themselves. As for that which is the very foundation of true mysticism, leaving aside its more or less abnormal or 'eccentric' deviations (which may or may not strike one's fancy), its attachment to a 'static religion' he evidently regards as negligible; nevertheless one feels that there is something here that worries him, for his explanations concerning it are somewhat embarrassed; but a fuller examination of this question would lead too far away from what for present purposes are its essentials.

To return to 'static religion': so far as its supposed origins are concerned, it will be seen that Bergson trustfully accepts all the tales of the all too well known 'sociological school', including those that are most worthy of suspicion: 'magic', 'totemism', 'taboo', 'mana', 'animal worship', 'spirit worship', and 'primitive mentality', nothing being missing of the conventional jargon or of the accustomed trivialities, if such expressions may be allowed (as indeed they must be when discussing matters so grotesque in character). The only thing for which he is perhaps really responsible is the place he assigns to a so-called 'fable-making function', which seems to be much more fabulous than that which it seeks to explain: but he had to invent some sort of theory to allow of the comprehensive denial of the existence of any real foundation of those things that are commonly treated as 'superstitions', a 'civilized' philosophy, and more than that, a 'twentieth-century' philosophy, evidently considering that

any other attitude would be unworthy of itself. In all this there is only one point of present interest, that concerning 'magic'; magic is a great resource for certain theorists, who clearly have no idea of what it really is, but who try to find in it the origin both of religion and of science. Bergson's position is not precisely that: he seeks for a 'psychological origin' in magic, and turns it into 'the exteriorization of a desire that fills the heart,' and he makes out that 'if one reconstitutes by an effort of introspection the natural reaction of man to his perception of things, one finds that magic and religion are connected, and that there is nothing in common between magic and science.' It is true that later on he wavers: if one adopts a certain point of view, 'magic evidently forms part of religion,' but from another point of view 'religion is opposed to magic'; he is clearer when he asserts that 'magic is the opposite of science' and that 'far from preparing for the coming of science, as has been supposed, magic has been the great obstacle against which methodical learning has had to contend.' All that is almost exactly the reverse of the truth, for magic has absolutely nothing to do with religion, and, while admittedly not the origin of all the sciences, it is simply a single science among the others; but Bergson is no doubt quite convinced that no sciences can exist other than those enumerated in modern 'classifications', established from the most narrowly profane point of view imaginable. Speaking of 'magical operations' with the imperturbable self-assurance of one who has never seen any,⁴ he writes this remarkable sentence: 'If primitive intelligence had begun its dealings with such matters by conceiving principles, it

4. It is most regrettable that Bergson was on bad terms with his sister, Mrs S. S.L. MacGregor Mathers (alias 'Soror Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum') who might have been able to give him a little instruction in such matters. [S.S.L. MacGregor Mathers, author of *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, was a leading figure in various occult organizations in the early twentieth century, primarily in England, and is known especially for his role in the founding of The Order of the Golden Dawn, whence the 'initiatic' name given for his wife derives. Mrs Mathers was herself very active in all these matters. For a time the Order of the Golden Dawn attracted a number of figures who became well-known in later years, including William Butler Yeats (on whom both of the Mathers exerted a strong influence for a time) and Arthur Edward Waite. Ed.]

would soon have had to give way to experience, which would have demonstrated their falsity.' One can admire the intrepidity of this philosopher, shut into his private room, and well protected against the attacks of certain influences that undoubtedly would not hesitate to take advantage of him as an auxiliary no less valuable than unwitting, when he denies *a priori* everything that does not fit into the framework of his theories. How can he think that men were stupid enough to have repeated indefinitely, even without 'principles', 'operations' that were never successful, and what would he say if it should be found, on the contrary, that experience 'demonstrates the falsity' of his own assertions? Obviously he does not even imagine the possibility of anything of that kind; such is the strength of the preconceived ideas in him and in those like him that they do not doubt for a single instant that the world is strictly confined within the measure of their conceptions (this in fact being what allows them to construct 'systems'); and how can a philosopher be expected to understand that he ought to refrain, just like an ordinary mortal, from talking of things he knows nothing about?

Now it is particularly worthy of note, and highly significant as regards the reality of the connection between Bergsonian 'intuitionism' and the second phase of anti-traditional action, that magic, by an ironical turn of affairs, is now cruelly avenging the denials of our philosopher. It has reappeared in our days, through the recent 'fissures' in our world, in a form that is at once the lowest and the most rudimentary, in the disguise of 'psychic science' (the very thing that some people prefer to call, rather unfortunately, 'metapsychics'), and it succeeds in securing admission thereto, while avoiding recognition not only as something very real, but also as destined to play a leading part in the future of Bergson's 'dynamic religion'! This is no exaggeration: he speaks of 'survival' just like any common spiritist, and he believes in a 'deepening of the range of experiment' making it possible to come to a 'conclusion as to the possibility and even the probability of a survival of the soul' (what exactly does that mean, and is it not apparent that he is thinking of the phantasmagoria of 'psychic corpses?'), but without the possibility of knowing whether it will be 'for a time or for ever.' But this last annoying limitation does not prevent him from proclaiming in

dithyrambic tones: 'No more than this is needed in order to turn into a living and active reality a belief in a life after death such as is met with in most men, though it is usually verbal, abstract, ineffective. . . . Indeed, if we were sure, absolutely sure, of survival we could no longer think of anything else.' The ancient magic was more 'scientific' than this, in the true sense of the word, if not in the profane sense, and it had not the same pretensions; but in order that some of its most elementary phenomena should give rise to interpretations of this kind it was necessary to wait for the invention of spiritualism, which could not come to birth until a late stage of the modern deviation had been reached. It is in fact the spiritualist theory concerning such phenomena, that and nothing else, that is finally accepted by Bergson, as it was by William James before him, with 'a joy' that makes 'all pleasures pale' (this incredible statement, with which his book ends, is quoted word for word). His 'joy' establishes for us the degree of discernment of which this philosopher is capable, for as far as his good faith is concerned, that certainly is not in question, and profane philosophers are usually not suited to act otherwise than as dupes in cases of this kind, thus serving as unconscious intermediaries for the hoaxing of many others: but apart from that, talking of 'superstition', never before has there been so good an example of it, and it is this fact that gives the best idea of the real worth of all the 'new philosophy', as its partisans are pleased to call it!

THE MISDEEDS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

IN PASSING FROM PHILOSOPHY TO PSYCHOLOGY it will be found that identical tendencies appear once again in the latter, and in the most recent schools of psychology they assume a far more dangerous aspect, for instead of taking the form of mere theoretical postulates they are given practical applications of a very disturbing character; the most 'representative' of these new methods, from the point of view of the present study, are those grouped under the general heading of 'psychoanalysis'. It may be noted that, by a curious inconsistency, their handling of elements indubitably belonging to the subtle order continues to be accompanied in many psychologists by a materialistic attitude, no doubt because of their earlier training, as well as because of their present ignorance of the true nature of the elements they are bringing into play;¹ is it not one of the strangest characteristics of modern science that it never knows exactly what the object of its studies really is, even when only the forces of the corporeal domain are in question? It goes without saying too that there is a kind of 'laboratory psychology', the end-point of the process of limitation and of materialization of which

1. The case of Freud himself, founder of 'psychoanalysis', is quite typical in this respect, for he never ceased to declare himself a materialist. One further remark: why is it that the principal representatives of the new tendencies, like Einstein in physics, Bergson in philosophy, Freud in psychology, and many others of less importance, are almost all of Jewish origin, unless it be because there is something involved that is closely bound up with the 'malefic' and dissolving aspect of nomadism when it is deviated, and because that aspect must inevitably predominate in Jews detached from their tradition?

the 'philosophico-literary' psychology of university teaching was but a less advanced stage, and now no more than a sort of accessory branch of psychology, which still continues to coexist with the new theories and methods; to this branch apply the preceding observations on the attempts that have been made to reduce psychology itself to a quantitative science.

There is certainly something more than a mere question of vocabulary in the fact, very significant in itself, that present-day psychology considers nothing but the 'subconscious', and never the 'superconscious', which ought logically to be its correlative; there is no doubt that this usage expresses the idea of an extension operating only in a downward direction, that is, toward the aspect of things that corresponds, both here in the human being and elsewhere in the cosmic environment, to the 'fissures' through which the most 'malefic' influences of the subtle world penetrate, influences having a character than can truthfully and literally be described as 'infernal'.² There are also some who adopt the term 'unconscious' as a synonym or equivalent of 'subconscious', and this term, taken literally, would seem to refer to an even lower level, but as a matter of fact it only corresponds less closely to reality; if the object of study were really unconscious it is difficult to see how it could be spoken of at all, especially in psychological terms; and besides, what good reason is there, other than mere materialistic and mechanistic prejudice, for assuming that anything unconscious really exists? However that may be, there is another thing worthy of note, and that is the strange illusion which leads psychologists to regard states as being more 'profound' when they are quite simply more inferior; is not this already an indication of the tendency to run counter to spirituality, which alone can be truly profound since it alone touches the principle and the very center of the being? Correspondingly, since the domain of psychology is not extended upward, the 'superconscious' naturally remains as strange to it and as cut off from it as ever; and when psychology happens to meet

2. It may be noted in this connection that Freud put at the head of his *The Interpretation of Dreams* the following very significant epigram: *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo* (Virgil, *Aeneid*, vii, 312).

anything related to the 'superconscious', it tries to annex it merely by assimilating it to the 'subconscious'. This particular procedure is almost invariably characteristic of its so-called explanations of such things as religion and mysticism, together with certain aspects of Eastern doctrine such as *Yoga*; there are therefore features in this confusion of the superior with the inferior that can properly be regarded as constituting a real subversion.

It should also be noted that psychology, as well as the 'new philosophy', tends in its appeal to the subconscious to approach more and more closely to 'metapsychics';³ and in the same way it cannot avoid making an approach, though perhaps unwittingly (at least in the case of those of its representatives who are determined to remain materialists in spite of everything), to spiritualism and to other more or less similar things, all of which rely without doubt on the same obscure elements of a debased psychism. These same things, of which the origin and the character are more than suspect, thus appear in the guise of 'precursory' movements and as the allies of recent psychology, which introduces the elements in question into the contemporary purview of what is admitted to be 'official' science, and although it introduces them in a roundabout way (none-theless by an easier way than that of 'metapsychics', the latter being still disputed in some quarters), it is very difficult to think that the part psychology is called upon to play in the present state of the world is other than one of active participation in the second phase of anti-traditional action. In this connection, the recently mentioned pretensions of ordinary psychology to annex, by forcible assimilation to the 'subconscious', certain things that by their very nature elude it, only belong to what may be called the 'childish' side of the affair, though they are fairly clearly subversive in tendency; for explanations of that sort, just like the 'sociological' explanations of the same things, are really of a 'simplistic' ingenuousness that sometimes reaches buffoonery; but in any case, that sort of thing is far less serious, so far as its real consequences are concerned, than the

3. Incidentally it was the 'psychist' Myers who invented the expression 'subliminal consciousness', which was later replaced in the psychological vocabulary for the sake of brevity by the word 'subconscious'.

truly 'satanic' side now to be examined more closely in relation to the new psychology.

A 'satanic' character is revealed with particular clarity in the psychoanalytic interpretations of symbolism, or of what is held rightly or wrongly to be symbolism, this last proviso being inserted because on this point as on many others, if the details were gone into, there would be many distinctions to make and many confusions to dissipate: thus, to take only one typical example, a vision in which is expressed some 'supra-human' inspiration is truly symbolic, whereas an ordinary dream is not so, whatever the outward appearances may be. Psychologists of earlier schools had of course themselves often tried to explain symbolism in their own way and to bring it within the range of their own conceptions; in any such case, if symbolism is really in question at all, explanations in terms of purely human elements fail to recognize anything that is essential, as indeed they do whenever affairs of a traditional order are concerned; if on the other hand human affairs alone are really in question, then it must be a case of false symbolism, but then the very fact of calling it by that name reveals once more the same mistake about the nature of true symbolism. This applies equally to the matters to which the psychoanalysts devote their attention, but with the difference that in their case the things to be taken into consideration are not simply human, but also to a great extent 'infra-human'; it is then that we come into the presence, not only of a debasement, but of a complete subversion; and every subversion, even if it only arises, at least in the first place, from incomprehension and ignorance (than which nothing is better adapted for exploitation to such ends), is always inherently 'satanic' in the true sense of the word. Besides this, the generally ignoble and repulsive character of psychoanalytical interpretations is an entirely reliable 'mark' in this connection; and it is particularly significant from our point of view, as has been shown elsewhere,⁴ that this very same 'mark' appears again in certain spiritualist manifestations—anyone who sees in this no more than a mere 'coincidence' must surely have much good will, if indeed he is not completely blind. In most cases the psychoanalysts

4. See *The Spiritist Fallacy*, pt. 2, chap. 10.

may well be quite as unconscious as are the spiritualists of what is really involved in these matters; but the former no less than the latter appear to be 'guided' by a subversive will making use in each case of elements that are of the same order, if not precisely identical. This subversive will, whatever may be the beings in which it is incarnated, is certainly conscious enough, at least in those beings, and it is related to intentions that are doubtless very different from any that can be suspected by people who are only the unconscious instruments whereby those intentions are translated into action.

Under such conditions, it is all too clear that resort to psychoanalysis for purposes of therapy, this being the usual reason for its employment, cannot but be extremely dangerous for those who undergo it, and even to those who apply it, for they are concerned with things that can never be handled with impunity; it would not be taking an exaggerated view to see in this one of the means specially brought into play in order to increase to the greatest possible extent the disequilibrium of the modern world and to lead it on toward final dissolution.⁵ Those who practice such methods are on the other hand without doubt convinced of the benefits afforded by the results they obtain; theirs is however the very delusion that makes the diffusion of these methods possible, and it marks the real difference subsisting between the intentions of the 'practitioners' and the intentions of the will that presides over the work in which the practitioners only collaborate blindly. In fact, the only effect of psychoanalysis must be to bring to the surface, by making it fully conscious, the whole content of those lower depths of the being that can properly be called the 'sub-conscious'; moreover, the individual concerned is already psychologically weak by hypothesis, for if he were otherwise he would experience no need to resort to treatment of this description; he is by so much the less able to resist 'subversion', and he is in grave danger of foundering irremediably in the chaos of dark forces thus imprudently let loose; even if he manages

5. Another example of such means is furnished by the comparable employment of 'radiaesthesia', for in this case also psychic elements of the same quality very often come into play, though it must be admitted that they do not appear under the 'hideous' aspect that is so conspicuous in psychoanalysis.

in spite of everything to escape, he will at least retain throughout the rest of his life an imprint like an ineradicable 'stain' within himself.

Someone may raise an objection here, based on a supposed analogy with the 'descent into hell' as is met with in the preliminary phases of the initiatic journey; but any such assimilation is completely false, for the two aims have nothing in common, nor have the conditions of the 'subject' in the two cases; there can be no question of anything other than a profane parody, and that idea alone is enough to impart to the whole affair a somewhat disturbing suggestion of 'counterfeit'. The truth is that this supposed 'descent into hell', which is not followed by any 're-ascent', is quite simply a 'fall into the mire', as it is called according to the symbolism of some of the ancient Mysteries. It is known that this 'mire' was figuratively represented as the road leading to Eleusis, and that those who fell into it were profane people who claimed initiation without being qualified to receive it, and so were only the victims of their own imprudence. It may be mentioned that such 'mires' really exist in the macrocosmic as well as in the microcosmic order; this is directly connected with the question of the 'outer darkness',⁶ and certain relevant Gospel texts could be recalled, the meaning of which agrees exactly with what has just been explained. In the 'descent into hell' the being finally exhausts certain inferior possibilities in order to be able to rise thereafter to superior states; in the 'fall into the mire' on the other hand, the inferior possibilities take possession of him, dominate him, and end by submerging him completely.

There was occasion in the previous paragraph again to use the word 'counterfeit'; the impression it conveys is greatly strengthened by some other considerations, such as the denaturing of symbolism previously mentioned, and the same kind of denaturing tends to spread to everything that contains any element of a 'supra-human' order, as is shown by the attitude adopted toward religion,⁷ and

6. The reader may be referred here to what has been said earlier about the symbolism of the 'Great Wall' and of the mountain *Lokâlôka*.

7. Freud devoted a book specially to the psychoanalytical interpretation of religion, in which his own conceptions are combined with the 'totemism' of the 'sociological school'.

toward doctrines of a metaphysical and initiatic order such as *Yoga*. Even these last do not escape this new kind of interpretation, which is carried to such a point that some proceed to assimilate the methods of spiritual 'realization' to the therapeutical procedures of psychoanalysis. This is something even worse than the cruder deformations also current in the West, such as those in which the methods of *Yoga* are seen as a sort of 'physical culture' or as therapeutic methods of a purely physiological kind, for their very crudity makes such deformations less dangerous than those that appear in a more subtle guise. The subtler kind are the more dangerous not simply because they are liable to lead astray minds on which the less subtle could obtain no hold; they are certainly dangerous for that reason, but there is another reason affecting a much wider field, identical with that which has been described as making the materialistic conception less dangerous than conceptions involving recourse to an inferior psychism. Of course the purely spiritual aim, which alone constitutes the essentiality of *Yoga* as such, and without which the very use of the word becomes a mere absurdity, is no less completely unrecognized in the one case than in the other. *Yoga* is in fact no more a kind of psychic therapy than it is a kind of physiological therapy, and its methods are in no way and in no degree a treatment for people who are in any way ill or unbalanced; very far from that, they are on the contrary intended exclusively for those who must from the start and in their own natural dispositions be as perfectly balanced as possible if they are to realize the spiritual development which is the only object of the methods; but all these matters, as will readily be understood, are strictly linked up with the whole question of initiatic qualification.⁸

But this is not yet all, for one other thing under the heading of 'counterfeit' is perhaps even more worthy of note than anything mentioned so far, and that is the requirement imposed on anyone who wants to practise psychoanalysis as a profession of being first

8. On an attempt to apply psychoanalytical theories to the Taoist doctrine, which is of the same order as *Yoga*, see the study by André Préau, *La Fleur d'or et le Taoïsme sans Tao* [Paris: Bibliothèque Chacornac, 1931], which contains an excellent refutation of the attempted application.

'psychoanalyzed' himself. This implies above all a recognition of the fact that the being who has undergone this operation is never again the same as he was before, in other words, to repeat an expression already used above, it leaves in him an ineradicable imprint, as does initiation, but as it were in an opposite sense, for what is here in question is not a spiritual development, but the development of an inferior psychism. In addition, there is an evident imitation of the initiatic transmission; but, bearing in mind the difference in the nature of the influences that intervene, and in view of the fact that the production of an effective result does not allow the practice to be regarded as nothing but a mere pretence without real significance, the psycho-analytic transmission is really more comparable to the transmission effected in a domain such as that of magic, or even more accurately that of sorcery. And there remains yet another very obscure point concerning the actual origin of the transmission: it is obviously impossible to give to anyone else what one does not possess oneself, and moreover the invention of psychoanalysis is quite recent; so from what source did the first psychoanalysts obtain the 'powers' that they communicate to their disciples, and by whom were they themselves 'psychoanalyzed' in the first place? To ask this question is only logical, at least for anyone capable of a little reflection, though it is probably highly indiscreet, and it is more than doubtful whether a satisfactory answer will ever be obtained; but even without any such answer this kind of psychic transmission reveals a truly sinister 'mark' in the resemblances it calls to mind: from this point of view psychoanalysis presents a rather terrifying likeness to certain 'sacraments of the devil'.

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THE CONFUSION OF THE PSYCHIC AND THE SPIRITUAL

THE ACCOUNT GIVEN ABOVE, dealing with some of the psychological explanations that have been applied to traditional doctrines, covers only a particular case of a confusion that is very widespread in the modern world, namely, the confusion of the psychic and the spiritual domains. Even when it is not carried to such a point as to produce a subversion like that of psychoanalysis, this confusion assimilates the spiritual to all that is most inferior in the psychic order; it is therefore extremely serious in every case. In a sense it follows as a natural result of the fact that Westerners have for a very long time past no longer known how to distinguish the 'soul' from the 'spirit' (Cartesian dualism being to a great extent responsible for this, merging as it does into one and the same category everything that is not the body, and designating this one vague and ill-defined category indifferently by either name); and the confusion never ceases to be apparent even in current language: the word 'spirits' is popularly used for psychic entities that are anything but 'spiritual',

and the very name 'spiritualism' is derived from that usage; this mistake, together with another consisting in using the word 'spirit' for something that is really only mental, will be enough by way of example for the present. It is all too easy to see the gravity of the consequences of any such state of affairs: anyone who propagates this confusion, whether intentionally or otherwise and especially under present conditions, is setting beings on the road to getting irremediably lost in the chaos of the 'intermediary world',

and thereby, though often unconsciously, playing the game of the 'satanic' forces that rule over what has been called the 'counter-initiation'.

It is important at this point to be very precise if misunderstanding is to be avoided: it cannot be said that a particular development of the possibilities of a being, even in the comparatively low order represented by the psychic domain, is essentially 'malefic' in itself; but it is necessary not to forget that this domain is above all that of illusions, and it is also necessary to know how to situate each thing in the place to which it normally belongs; in short, everything depends on the use made of any such development; the first thing to be considered is therefore whether it is taken as an end in itself, or on the other hand as a mere means for the attainment of a goal of a superior order. Anything whatever can in fact serve, according to the circumstances of each case, as an opportunity or 'support' to one who has entered upon the way that is to lead him toward a spiritual 'realization'; this is particularly true at the start, because of the diversity of individual natures, which exercises its maximum influence at that point, but it is still true to a certain extent for so long as the limits of the individuality have not been completely left behind. But on the other hand, anything whatever can just as well be an obstacle as a 'support', if the being does not pass beyond it but allows itself to be deluded and led astray by appearances of realization that have no inherent value and are only accidental and contingent results—if indeed they can justifiably be regarded as results from any point of view. The danger of going astray is always present for exactly as long as the being is within the order of individual possibilities; it is without question greatest wherever psychic possibilities are involved, and is naturally greater still when those possibilities are of a very inferior order.

The danger is certainly much less when possibilities confined to the corporeal and physiological order alone are involved, as they are in the case of the aforementioned error of some Westerners who take *Yoga*, or at least the little they know of its preparatory procedures, to be a sort of method of 'physical culture'; in cases of that kind, almost the only risk incurred is that of obtaining, by 'practices' accomplished ill-advisedly and without control, exactly the

opposite result to that desired, and of ruining one's health while seeking to improve it. Such things have no interest here save as examples of a crude deviation in the employment of these 'practices', for they are really designed for quite a different purpose, as remote as possible from the physiological domain, and natural repercussions occurring in that domain constitute but a mere 'accident' not to be credited with the smallest importance. Nevertheless it must be added that these same 'practices' can also have repercussions in the subtle modalities of the individual unsuspected by the ignorant person who undertakes them as he would a kind of 'gymnastics', and this considerably augments their danger. In this way the door may be quite unwittingly opened to all sorts of influences (those to take advantage of it in the first place being of course always of the lowest quality), and the less suspicion the victim has of the existence of anything of the kind the less is he prepared against them, and still less is he able to discern their real nature; there is in any event nothing in all this that can claim to be 'spiritual' in any sense.

The state of affairs is quite different in cases where there is a confusion of the psychic properly so called with the spiritual. This confusion moreover appears in two contrary forms: in the first, the spiritual is brought down to the level of the psychic, and this is what happens more particularly in the kind of psychological explanations already referred to; in the second, the psychic is on the other hand mistaken for the spiritual; of this the most popular example is spiritualism, though the other more complex forms of 'neo-spiritualism' all proceed from the very same error. In either case it is clearly the spiritual that is misconceived; but the first case concerns those who simply deny it, at least in practice if not always explicitly, whereas the second concerns those who are subject to the delusion of a false spirituality; and it is this second case that is now more particularly in view. The reason why so many people allow themselves to be led astray by this delusion is fundamentally quite simple: some of them seek above all for imagined 'powers', or broadly speaking and in one form or another, for the production of more or less extraordinary 'phenomena'; others constrain themselves to 'centralize' their consciousness on inferior 'prolongations' of the human individuality,

mistaking them for superior states simply because they are outside the limits within which the activities of the 'average' man are generally enclosed, the limits in question being, in the state corresponding to the profane point of view of the present period, those of what is commonly called 'ordinary life', into which no possibility of an extra-corporeal order can enter. Even within the latter group it is the lure of the 'phenomenon', that is to say in the final analysis the 'experimental' tendency in the modern spirit, which is most frequently at the root of the error; what these people are in fact trying to obtain is always results that are in some way 'sensational', and they mistake such results for 'realization'; but this again amounts to saying that everything belonging to the spiritual order escapes them completely, that they are unable even to conceive of anything of the kind, however remotely; and it would be very much better for them, since they are entirely lacking in spiritual 'qualification', if they were content to remain enclosed in the commonplace and mediocre security of 'ordinary life'. Of course there can be no question of denying the reality as such of the 'phenomena' concerned; in fact they can be said to be only too real, and for that reason all the more dangerous. What is now being formally contested is their value and their interest, particularly from the point of view of spiritual development, and the delusion itself concerns the very nature of spiritual development. Again, if no more than a mere waste of time and effort were involved, the harm would not after all be so very great, but generally speaking the being that becomes attached to such things soon becomes incapable of releasing itself from them or passing beyond them, and its deviation is then beyond remedy; the occurrence of cases of this kind is well known in all the Eastern traditions, where the individuals affected become mere producers of 'phenomena' and will never attain the least degree of spirituality. But there is still something more, for a sort of 'inverted' development can take place, not only conferring no useful advantage, but taking the being ever further away from spiritual 'realization', until it is irretrievably astray in the inferior 'prolongations' of its individuality recently mentioned, and through these it can only come into contact with the 'infra-human'. There is then no escape from its situation, or at least there is only one, and that is the total disintegration of the conscious being; such a disintegration is strictly equivalent in the case of

the individual to final dissolution in the case of the totality of the manifested 'cosmos'.

For this reason, perhaps more than for any other, it is impossible to be too mistrustful of every appeal to the 'subconscious', to 'instinct', and to sub-rational 'intuition', no less than to a more or less ill-defined 'vital force'—in a word to all those vague and obscure things that tend to exalt the new philosophy and psychology, yet lead more or less directly to a contact with inferior states. There is therefore all the more reason to exercise extreme vigilance (for the enemy knows only too well how to take on the most insidious disguises) against anything that may lead the being to become 'fused' or preferably and more accurately 'confused' or even 'dissolved' in a sort of 'cosmic consciousness' that shuts out all 'transcendence' and so also shuts out all effective spirituality. This is the ultimate consequence of all the anti-metaphysical errors known more especially in their philosophical aspect by such names as 'pantheism', 'immanentism', and 'naturalism', all of which are closely interrelated, and many people would doubtless recoil before such a consequence if they could know what it is that they are really talking about. These things do indeed quite literally amount to an 'inversion' of spirituality, to a substitution for it of what is truly its opposite, since they inevitably lead to its final loss, and this constitutes 'satanism' properly so called. Whether it be conscious or unconscious in any particular case makes little difference to the result, for it must not be forgotten that the 'unconscious satanism' of some people, who are more numerous than ever in this period in which disorder has spread into every domain, is really in the end no more than an instrument in the service of the 'conscious satanism' of those who represent the 'counter-initiation'.

There has been occasion elsewhere to call attention to the initiatic symbolism of a 'navigation' across the ocean (representing the psychic domain), which must be crossed while avoiding all its dangers in order to reach the goal;¹ but what is to be said of someone who flings himself into the ocean and has no aspiration but to drown himself in it? This is very precisely the significance of a so-called 'fusion' with a 'cosmic consciousness' that is really nothing but the

1. See *The King of the World and Spiritual Authority & Temporal Power*.

confused and indistinct assemblage of all the psychic influences; and, whatever some people may imagine, these influences have absolutely nothing in common with spiritual influences, even if they may happen to imitate them to a certain extent in some of their outward manifestations (for in this domain 'counterfeit' comes into play in all its fullness, and this is why the 'phenomenal' manifestations so eagerly sought for never by themselves prove anything, for they can be very much the same in a saint as in a sorcerer). Those who make this fatal mistake either forget about or are unaware of the distinction between the 'upper waters' and the 'lower waters'; instead of raising themselves toward the 'ocean above', they plunge into the abyss of the 'ocean below'; instead of concentrating all their powers so as to direct them toward the formless world, which alone can be called 'spiritual', they disperse them in the endlessly changeable and fugitive diversity of the forms of subtle manifestation (this diversity corresponding as nearly as possible to the Bergsonian conception of 'reality') with no suspicion that they are mistaking for a fullness of 'life' something that is in truth the realm of death and of a dissolution without hope of return.