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Introduction

This new issue of *Esoterica* features as its lead article John Richards's extensive and groundbreaking analysis of Appalachian folk magic in relation to Protestant Christianity. A professor at West Virginia State University, Richards, in "Folk Magic and Protestant Christianity in Appalachia," not only surveys the literature in the field, and the primary forms of folk magic in the Appalachian region, but also offers a compelling and innovative thesis about folk magic as intimately bound up with regional forms of American Christianity.

Yet this is not the only important new article in this issue. In "The Dionysian Body: Esotericism in the Philosophy of Norman O. Brown", Melinda Weinstein offers the first full-length article on this well-known scholar, showing how much Brown was indebted to and drew on Western esoteric traditions. Despite Brown's reputation and influence as author of books including *Life Against Death* and *Love's Body*, this is the first article to analyze his work in depth.

Still another innovative article is Eric G. Wilson's "Hermetic Melancholia and the Suffering of Androids," in which he explores themes very prevalent in contemporary films—the themes of androids or puppets—and he reveals their hidden relationship to Western esotericism, in particular to the work of philosopher and magus Marsilio Ficino.

What's more, in "Magical Dream Provocation in the Later Middle Ages," Frank Klaassen explores the complex topic of medieval dream literature and its relationship to visions as well as to dream divination as a form of medieval magical practices. Finally, this issue also features book reviews, including Claire Fanger on a new critical edition of the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, and Arthur Versluis on Mark Sedgwick's *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*. This is one of our richest issues yet.

With this, its eighth volume, *Esoterica* is significantly changing

its format. This current issue will be available in pdf download format via a secure server through Michigan State University's Office of Research and Graduate Studies. We preserve our practice of offering illustrated color covers for each article, but we have switched from html to pdf format because the journal requires at least some modest revenue stream. Initially, the journal will be available only in electronic format as pdf files that you can print out, but presently we hope to announce a professionally printed book version of the journal as well. In the past, we have made do through University support, but it is time for the journal to support itself. By purchasing a copy of *Esoterica*, the entirety of your contribution will support the journal and thus research in the field of Western esotericism. These are important new developments, and we trust that our readers will join us in supporting these new endeavors as well as this field of study more broadly. And we encourage you to consider donating to the journal via the link on our website. Your donation is tax-deductible if you're a United States citizen, and like the subscription revenue, your donation will be used *in its entirety* to support the journal and related endeavors in this new and growing field of study. We thank you for your encouragement, very much appreciate your support, and hope you enjoy this new issue of the journal.
—Arthur Versluis, Editor

Folk Magic and Protestant
Christianity in Appalachia
John Richards

Folk Magic and Protestant Christianity in Appalachia

John Richards
West Virginia State University

Introduction

The mountains of rural Appalachia have long been regarded as a land of mystery and magic. In many ways, it is a place frozen in time. Omens, ghost stories, portents, superstitions, curses, cures, and protections are simply a part of everyday life. The people of rural Appalachia, however, rarely use terms like "folklore" or "folk magic" to describe their beliefs and practices. Instead, these beliefs and practices are merely regarded as "the old ways." They represent the inherited knowledge and wisdom from past generations. For the rural Appalachian, there is nothing odd or unusual about these practices; they are just the way certain things are done.

Although most research has focused on cataloging and preserving Appalachian folklore and folk magic, there have been a few attempts to explain and interpret the origins and purposes of this tradition.[1] Fischer (1989), for example, claims that much of the folklore was brought from Ireland, Scotland and the north of England, while the folk magic was an eclectic body of beliefs constantly growing by borrowings from Indians, Africans, Germans, and other cultures. According to Fischer, the magic of this region was remarkably secular in its nature and purposes. Cavender (2003), who largely concentrated on the study of Appalachian folk medicine, agrees with Fischer's analysis as to the origins of Appalachian folk magic and medical knowledge. However, Cavender, in discussing the Southern Appalachian folk medical belief system, recognizes the existence of two domains of knowledge in the more traditional sense: a naturalistic domain

and a magico-religious domain. Butler (1990) proposes that the origins and development of folk magic in Appalachia can be traced to the folklorization of magic and the development of popular religion in early American society. A more recent interpretation of Appalachian folk magic, made popular by McCoy (1997), is that it is a true surviving remnant of ancient European religions. Strivelli, for example, who runs a website called "Pagan Traditions," designates Appalachian folk magic as the "Appalachian Granny Magic Tradition." And, in so doing, she defines Appalachian folk magic as a "denomination of the ancient religion of Witchcraft."[2]

In addition to folk magic, the Appalachian region has been long associated with the values and beliefs of conservative Protestant Christianity. In fact, religion is such a pervasive part of Appalachian culture that it has been said that "One must understand the religion of mountaineers before he can begin to understand mountaineers."[3] Considering the importance of the relationship between religion and magic in general, and religion and the worldview of the Appalachian people in particular, it is surprising how little attention the above interpretations have paid to the relationship between Protestant Christianity and Appalachian folk magic. The purpose of this article is to examine some of the parallels between religious and magical beliefs and practices in Appalachia. I argue that the Protestant Christians and folk magic practitioners of Appalachia do not form two separate communities. Instead, they form a single community with the same history, shared values, and a common worldview. As such, the central theme of this paper is that Appalachian folk magic cannot be understood apart from the Protestant beliefs and practices that characterize Christianity in the Appalachian region. To this end, I first define the Appalachian region, then examines the history, beliefs, and practices of Appalachian folk magic and several interpretations that have been made of these beliefs and practices. Finally, it examines the major characteristics of Protestant Christianity in Appalachia and concludes with a comparison of the history, beliefs, practices and practitioners of religion and magic in Appalachia.

The Appalachian Region

Before we can discuss the folk magic and religion of Appalachia, it is necessary to define what is meant by the Appalachian region both geographically and culturally. Appalachia, as defined by the 1965 federal legislation that established the Appalachian Regional Commission, is a 200,000 square mile region that follows the ridge of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to Northern Mississippi. It includes all of West Virginia and parts of twelve other states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

However, when one thinks about the Appalachian culture, this is not the geographic region that usually comes to mind. Using both topographic and socioeconomic criteria, Raitz and Ulack (1984) define the boundaries of Appalachia differently than the Appalachian Regional Commission. They found that "the mental maps of Appalachia among "insiders" (native residents), "cognitive outsiders" (those who lived in Appalachia but did not consider themselves "Appalachian"), and "residential outsiders" (those who lived outside the region) varied."[4] As defined by Raitz and Ulack, and many of the insiders queried in their study, Southern Appalachia includes much of the middle and all of eastern Tennessee, the Blue Ridge Mountains and Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, much of western and all of eastern Kentucky, western North Carolina, southern West Virginia, northern Alabama, northern Georgia, northwestern South Carolina, and much of the Piedmont of North Carolina and Virginia.

According to McCauley (1995), Campbell's 1921 "map of the region best represents the geographic range, especially the central areas, in which we find mountain religious culture at its most pronounced." Campbell's map extends from northern West Virginia to northern Alabama and includes parts of Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. This same region also best exemplifies the geographic area most associated with traditional Appalachian folk magic.

European settlers first started arriving in the Appalachian

region during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Authors such as Kephart (1922) and Campbell (1969) cited a wide range of songs, stories, beliefs, behaviors, and speech patterns as evidence that Appalachian culture can be traced back to Ireland. In fact, Appalachia has traditionally been perceived as a region settled and overwhelmingly shaped by people of Scotch-Irish ancestry.[5] As Tyler Blethen points out, however, "Earlier studies that used surname analysis to calculate the Scotch-Irish percentage of the post-Independence population at 60 to 70 percent have been challenged by recent findings informed by a more sophisticated understanding of the massive historical migration of surnames throughout the British Isles and Ireland." Recent studies have revised the estimates downwards "with some placing the Scotch-Irish portion as low as 20 to 30 percent."[6] The other European immigrants that settled the region included significant numbers of English, German, French, Welsh, and people of African descent. Furthermore, as Drake notes:

> When Europeans came into these mountains, the Cherokee dominated the Southern Appalachians by means of a loose confederacy held together by ties of language, kinship, trade, and custom. Alien and hostile groups surrounded the Cherokee—the Creeks, Catawba, and Chickasaws mainly to the south, west, and east. Although most shared a common Temple Mound culture, they were of different language traditions. After the year 1600, until about 1780, the Cherokee were the dominant power in the Southern Appalachias.[7]

Therefore, it can be argued that Southern Appalachia since the Revolution has been shaped by ethnic and cultural diversity. However, as Blethen notes, "even the lowest estimates of Scotch-Irish ancestry still acknowledge this as the largest single group in Appalachia, and as such it played a powerful role in shaping the region's culture."[8]

Appalachian Folk Magic and Medicine

The history of Appalachian folk magic and medicine can be traced to a couple of major events: 1) the arrival of European settlers in the Appalachian region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and 2) the folklorization of magic in early American society. Among scholars there appears to be a general consensus that the European settlers from Ireland, Scotland, northern England, and Germany were mostly responsible for bringing folk magic and folklore into the Appalachian region.[9] For the most part, these immigrants were poor Protestant farmers from highland regions seeking to flee Europe to escape religious persecution and economic hardship. Along with their techniques of mixed farming, language, and religious beliefs, these immigrations also brought with them a rich collection of folk music, folk tales, as well as folk magical and medical practices. Many of these practices can be traced back to the Celtic ancestors of these European immigrants.[10]

A second historical event which led to the development of Appalachian folk magic was the folklorization of magic in early American society. According to Butler:

> By traditional accounts, magic and occultism died out in the eighteenth century: the rise of Enlightenment philosophy, skepticism, and experimental science, the spread of evangelical Christianity, the continuing opposition from English Protestant denominations, the rise in literacy associated with Christian catechizing, and the cultural, economic, and political maturation of the colonies simply destroyed the occult practice and belief of the previous century in both Europe and America. Yet significant evidence suggests that the folklorization of magic occurred as much in America as in England. As in England, colonial magic and occultism did not so much disappear everywhere as they disappeared among certain social classes and became confined to poorer, more marginal segments of American society.[11]

Butler (1990) cites numerous reasons such as intellectual

change, increasing Christian opposition, and government coercion that contributed to the suppression of occult and magical practice among the social elites and contained it within the poorer segments of society. Butler states that, "Although upper social classes largely abandoned occultism, other colonists continued to believe in witchcraft, astrology, and the ability of wise men and wise women to find lost objects and cure diseases."[12] He also gives numerous examples of what he considers the folklorization of magic in the Appalachian region. In addition, Butler clearly acknowledges the magical knowledge brought to America by the European settlers and his position should not be considered as contradicting the above position that Appalachian folk magic can largely be traced back to the early Scotch-Irish, British, and German immigrants. In fact, there is sufficient evidence that both of these historical processes were occurring simultaneously to shape Appalachian folk magic.

In surveying the Appalachian folk magic tradition, it is possible to extract the following general characteristics about the beliefs and practices. Appalachian folk magic is:

1. Spiritual

Underlying the Appalachian folk magic tradition is a nature-based Christian spirituality. It is neither rooted in a belief in animism nor pantheism, but rather more closely resembles a belief in natural theology. Although God is viewed as both immanent and transcendent, He is not identical with creation. The observation and contemplation of nature leads one to deduce God's divine plan and existence, whereas, God reveals Himself to us through prayer and scripture. In the former we approach God, while in the latter God approaches us. The themes that unite these two spiritual approaches for the Appalachian folk magic practitioner are direct experience and practical results. In the former approach, all that is required on our part is a proper spiritual understanding of the natural signs, omens, and cures that are all around us. For example, an Appalachian folk healer would consider the fact that jewelweed, a natural cure for poison ivy, is often found growing next to poison ivy as a sign of God providing for humans through

nature. However, the latter approach demonstrates that healing does not occur as a result of the acts of the healer alone and/or the agent being used. Therefore, cures are almost always accompanied by the recitation of short prayers or the reading of short Bible verses.

For the Appalachian folk magic practitioner, the otherworld is all around us. We exist in a world inhabited by little people, ghosts, spirits, demons, and angels. Yet, most of us are taught to deny the existence of the otherworld and its entities from the time we are small children. Following in the footsteps of their Celtic ancestors, Appalachian folk magic practitioners regard natural openings or doorways as sacred places—the portals between worlds. Caves, lakes, stones with naturally occurring holes (holey or hag stones), graveyards, and mountain tops are all believed to be places where one can glimpse into the spiritual world. Since the spirituality of the Appalachian folk magic practitioner is so far interwoven with nature it would be incorrect to think of this spirituality as an organized system of mystical beliefs or practices. It is simply a way of living as one with God by how you perceive nature and treat others during the everyday routines of life.

2. Eclectic.

Appalachian folk magic and medicine are eclectic in that they borrow from several different ethnic and cultural traditions. Another historical occurrence that contributed to the development of Appalachian folk magic was the cultural influence of both Native Americans and Africans. Fischer, for example, claims that Appalachian folk magic "was an eclectic body of beliefs, constantly growing by borrowing from Indians, Africans, Germans, and other cultures."[13] For the most part, the influence of these cultures has been specifically associated with folk medicine. However, as Snow points out, it is "not always possible to identify a particular belief or practice as distinctly "African" or "European" or "Native American" in origin due to parallel but independently conceived folk medical knowledge such as, for example, belief in imitative and contagious magic, witchcraft, and sorcery."[14] As such, not only is it often difficult to identify the particular cultural

origin of folk practice, but it also often difficult to distinguish folk medical and magical practices.

In the case of Native Americans, it has been well documented that there was extensive contact and intermarriage between the Cherokee and the Europeans who settled Southern Appalachia.[15] And, it is highly likely that much of the Cherokee folklore and medical knowledge was communicated to the European settlers through these intermarriages. Cavender asserts that "The Cherokee and other Native Americans shared with Euro-Americans several treatment modalities, such as sweating, purging, vomiting, and fumigation, but the reasoning underlying their use was not the same."[16] In fact, he claims that the Native American influence on Southern Appalachian folk medicine appears to be confined mainly to medicinal plants indigenous to the New World. Even though knowledge of folk medicine is the most obvious crossover between the European settlers and the Cherokees, there is substantial evidence that there was a crossover in the area of folklore as well.[17] In many cases, Cherokee concepts such as the "Little People" became incorporated into Appalachian folklore.[18]

As with the Native Americans, the primary influence that African Americans had on the development of Appalachian folk magic was in the area of folk medicine. According to Cavender, "Though the African influence on Euro-American folk medicine seems negligible, sources indicate that Euro-Americans sought the assistance of African American practitioners of conjure, 'juju,' 'rootwork,' 'gophering,' and 'voodoo' for health and other problems".[19] Several other researchers, such as Puckett (1926), Hyatt (1970), and Berendt (1994), have documented the use and influence of hoodoo practitioners on the white settlers of the Appalachian region. It appears to have been a popular belief among the white settlers that African Americans possessed extraordinary healing power or knowledge. Though never a major slaveholding area, or perhaps because of that fact, the Appalachian mountains became the home of some African Americans as a number of black settlements emerged.

The Appalachian folk magic tradition can, therefore, be seen as having been shaped by a plurality of cultural influences. In

addition, the Appalachian folk magic tradition can be seen as embracing a variety of customs, practices, and beliefs and is not simply restricted to what are usually considered folk magical practices. Along with folk magic and folk medicine, folklore, superstitions, and traditional activities and customs are also vital parts of the Appalachian folk magic tradition.

3. Family or Clan Based.

Another general characteristic of Appalachian folk magic is that the folk magical knowledge appears to be family or clan based. Both Weller (1965) and Jones (1994) point out the importance of familism as an Appalachian value. For the Appalachian region, the family provides the foundation upon which community life is built. The family gives the Appalachian people a sense of continuity with the past, as well as, a sense of solidarity in the face of adversity and social change.

With respect to folk magic and medicine, one usually acquires his or her knowledge from a family member. In most cases, this relative will either be a parent or a grandparent. In *Aunt Arie: A Foxfire Portrait*, (1983), for example, Arie Carpenter recounts many of the herbal and home remedies that were taught to her by her mother. According to Aunt Arie, "Mommy learnt me lots about th'doctorin business."[20] In addition, gifts, such as the ability to heal are often viewed as an inherited trait. Elder members of extended families, with either a knowledge of folk medicine or a natural gift of healing, will often assume responsibility for the teaching of others. Also, the relationship between extended families and folk magical and medical practices often accounts for the contradictions that one encounters in terms of superstitions, as well as alternative types of practices for healing the same or similar afflictions.

4. Geographically Centered.

In the Appalachian region family and place tend to go hand-in-hand. The people of Appalachia are inclined to regard the mountains as a place of mystery and magic. As one of the oldest places on earth, the Appalachian Mountains are a source of beauty, creativity, inspiration, and wonderful secrets. Yet, they are also a

source for many forms of evil, danger, and exploitation.

The people of Appalachia rarely identify themselves as "Appalachian" or, for that matter, with any ethnic classification such as Scotch-Irish, English, or German. Instead, as Milnes (2005) observes, the people of Appalachia tend to identify more with place rather than ethnicity—in particular people tend to identify with their States. It is common to hear someone say, for example, "I'm a West Virginian, born and raised." And, within States people tend to identify with their counties, which tends to carry a specific meaning in terms of family lineage and socio-economic status within the State. Folk magic practitioners will often associate places where particular plants or stones can be found with specific counties. In addition, some places have a reputation for either being haunted or a place of spiritual power such as caves or prayer stones.

5. Nature Oriented.

Another category of Appalachian folk magic is nature lore and rules for farming. As Gainer notes, "People who lived close to the soil learned to interpret the language of nature."[21] In reference to rules for farming, he further observed that

> There were also numerous rules for carrying out the work on the farm and about the house. There were rules for planting, for harvesting crops, and for preparing them for preserving through the winter months. There were rules for the treatment of livestock and other domestic animals. In early days farmers kept in their minds a knowledge of the various signs of the zodiac, but in later years an almanac became an important item in every household. Many crops were to be planted according to the phases of the moon. Crops that developed underground had to be planted in the dark of the moon. If potatoes were planted in the light of the moon, they would have beautiful vines but small potatoes.[22]

Examples of nature lore would include:

Cows at peaceful rest in the evening indicate rain before morning.
Lightning in the north is a sign of dry weather.[23]

Examples of rules for farming include:

Plant corn when the dogwood is in full bloom.
Plant late cucumbers when the sign is in the twins.[24]

6. Oral and Written Tradition.

Appalachian folk magic has been typically considered to be an oral tradition. It should be noted, however, the importance that almanacs have played in this tradition.[25] Of particular importance has been the continued influence of *The Farmer's Almanac* with its astrological advice for planting crops and taking care of animals. Both family Bibles and recipe books also have been found to be storehouses for home remedies, folklore, and superstitions. A number of books are used by folk magic practitioners and have become associated with the Appalachian folk magical tradition. Perhaps the most famous book is John Hohman's *Pow-Wows or Long Lost Friend*, which is a collection of folk magic and remedies associated with the Pennsylvania Dutch tradition. Another, well-known and often used, book is *Back to Eden* by Jethro Kloss. This book is a compilation of inexpensive remedies for prevention and treatment of disease and sickness, based on natural habits of living, by using the Bible and nature to return to God's original plan for maintaining health. Other lesser known, and less often found, books include *The Black Pullet*, *The Book of Magical Talismans* by Elbee Wright, *The 6th and 7th Books of Moses*, and *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus*.[26]

7. Experimental.

Appalachian folk magic is also experimental and adaptable in that as knowledge and technology changes over time, so does its practices. Fischer (1989) notes how such things as railroads and umbrellas became incorporated into Appalachian superstitions and

folk magical practices in the twentieth century. Many over-the-counter medications have become mainstays of the folk medicine practitioner. The folklore of the region has also come to embrace such things as the Mothman, UFOs, Men-in-Black, the Braxton County Monster, and so on.[27]

8. Practical.

Appalachians tend to pride themselves on being practical, down-to-earth, people with good common-sense. Although there is a definite spiritual element to the folk magical practices of the region it tends to be centered on the here-and-now realm of family, friends, and nature rather than on the transcendent realm of the divine. Folk magic practices are directed towards health, relationships, acquiring good luck and avoiding bad, crops, weather, and animals. The practices are not designed for spiritual awakening or consciousness-raising because it is believed that to evolve spiritually one need do nothing more than follow the Bible as a rule and guide for one's life and live in harmony with nature as God intended.

9. Unified System

Scholars who attempt to gather folklore or trace the ethnic origins of Appalachian folk magical traditions tend to treat such things as folk medicine, folklore, superstitions, and so forth as separate topics. This type of division does not reflect the Appalachian mindset. Gainer (1975) who published one of the earliest studies of Appalachian folk magic, includes "ghostlore," "superstition," and stories about "witchcraft" right beside sections on "folk cures" and "nature lore and rules for farming." For the most part, Appalachians would consider all of these areas as belonging to the Appalachian folk magic tradition. Also, there is often found some degree of specialization with respect to the practitioners of Appalachian folk magic. The fact that Appalachian folk magic embraces various types of folklore along with practices and rituals calls into question whether it is a purely practical system. Instead, another possibility is that this folklore serves to communicate a certain set of values or worldview to which the

practices and rituals are connected.

The following collections represent the scope of the Appalachian folk magical tradition, but since the people incorporate these beliefs and practices into their everyday way of life they would not think of them as belonging to separate divisions or categories. In 1957, Hand published a collection of Appalachian folkways that he categorized into fourteen divisions, one of which includes native witchcraft and folk magical practices. This was one of the earliest collections of Appalachian folk magic practices. Many of these practices were very similar to those attributed to witchcraft and many of them reflect a belief in astrology. In a number of cases it is somewhat difficult to distinguish between magical practices and superstition. Some of the practices that resemble witchcraft include the following:

> Wet a rag in your enemy's blood. Put it behind a rock in the chimney. When it rots your enemy will die.
> Take seven hairs from a blood snake, seven scales from a rattlesnake, seven bits of feathers from an owl, add a hair from the person you desire, a bit of nail paring, and cook these for seven minutes over a hot fire in the first rainwater caught in April. Sprinkle the concoction on the clothes of the person to be charmed. It cannot fail.[28]

Practices that opposed the use of witchcraft included:

> If you want to keep witches away, lay a straw broom in the doorway.
> To kill a witch, draw a heart on a holly tree, and drive a spike into her heart for nine mornings.[29]

Practices that reflected a belief in astrology included:

> Never castrate stock when the sign of the zodiac points to the loins. Bleeding will be profuse … Altering hogs is best when the zodiac sign is in the head [Pisces].
> Never gather fruit in the watery signs, or in the new moon,

because the fruit will spoil. [30]

Some practices that are difficult to distinguish from superstitions included the following:

> If your ears burn, someone is talking about you; throw salt in the fire and they will have a toothache.
> If you set your shoes together straight, you will prevent bad dreams.[31]

Other miscellaneous practices included:

> Three drops of your own blood, fed to another, is an effective love charm.
> If you carry a lock of hair of a person, you will have power over that person.[32]

Perhaps the best known aspect of Appalachian folk magic is its herbal and folk medicine component. This is largely the result of the growing popular interest in alternative forms of medicine in general and herbal remedies in particular. The most comprehensive study to date has been Anthony Cavender's *Folk Medicine in Southern Appalachia* published in 2003. Although many of the folk cures make use of common plants and herbs that grow in the fields and woods, there are a number of medical practices that could probably best be described as superstitious cures. In order to give you an idea about folk cures, if one is suffering from diarrhea then he or she might try one of the following techniques:

> Boil a lady-slipper plant in water. Strain the water and drink. (Gladys Queen)
> Get some soot off the back of the chimney. Put a teaspoon of that soot in a glass of water. Let the soot settle out and drink the clear water. (Flora Youngblood)
> Pull up some blackberry roots and clean them and boil them. Strain and drink the water.[33] (Florence Carpenter)

Practices that could be considered superstitious cures would include the following:

> A woman in labor should hold salt between her hands.
> Put sugar on the window to make the baby come.[34]

Appalachian folklore, which often deals with mystical, magical, and supernatural themes, is an integral part of the Appalachian folk magic tradition. The folklore of the region can, for the most part, be traced back to Ireland, Scotland, and northern England. However, many German and Native American stories have also survived in Appalachia. Richard Chase (1971, 1976), Ruth Ann Musick (1965, 1970, 1977) and Patrick Gainer (1975) were among the first scholars to gather and record these folk tales. In *Green Hills of Magic: West Virginia Folktales from Europe* (1970), Musick divided these folktales into three broad categories: 1) animal tales; 2) ordinary folk tales; and 3) jokes and anecdotes. She further subdivided the category of ordinary folk tales into tales of magic; religious tales; romantic tales; and tales of the stupid ogre. Gainer, on the other hand, in *Witches, Ghosts, and Signs* (1975) divided the folklore into ghostlore and witchcraft.

Byers (1999) distinguishes the following seven general categories of Appalachian folklore: 1) Fairy Tale; 2) Legend; 3) Fable; 4) Myth; 5) Tall Tale; 6) Supernatural Tale; and 7) Preternatural Tale. Fairy tales typically deal with "little people" of the supernatural world, such as fairies, elves, spirits, pixies, gnomes, dwarfs, brownies, and leprechauns who usually help the human hero in the tale by using an act of magic that resolves a problem or conflict. Legends are simply stories that distinguish a person, place or event. Fables are short tales that usually involve animal characters and have either an implicit or explicit moral message. Myths explain the origin, characteristics, and processes of natural phenomena, such as the origin of the world, humans, or death. Tall tales are exaggerated accounts about situations or events and often involve humor and satire. Supernatural tales involve situations or beings beyond the normal

experience or knowledge of humans characterized by encounters with ghosts, spirits, or apparitions. And lastly, preternatural tales are supernatural tales about the dark and diabolical sides of the unknown which involve witches and witchcraft, demons and devils, incantations of magic, spells, sorcery, and curses.[35] Although all of these categories of folk tales can be found among the Appalachian people, the Fairy Tales, Supernatural Tales, and Preternatural Tales are the ones most directly relevant to the Appalachian folk magic tradition.

Just as folklore and folk medicine are an important part of the Appalachian folk magic tradition, so are superstitions. Like other aspects of Appalachian folk magic, many of the superstitions that the mountain people embraced can be traced back to their European ancestry. Even to this day many of these superstitions serve as guidelines for daily living in rural Appalachia. A couple of examples from the numerous lists that Gainer collected are as follows:

It is bad luck to kill a cricket.

If a bird flies in the window, someone in the family will die.[36]

Practitioners

There are many different types of practitioners in this tradition, both male and female, and authority can either be inherited or acquired as a gift from God or the Devil. Perhaps the most famous type of practitioner is the "Granny Women." This term is often used interchangeably with the terms "Healer" and "Herb (or Yarb) Doctor," which usually designated women but could also refer to male practitioners. According to Gainer, "There were certain people who became knowledgeable in the use of herbs for medicines. These herb doctors were usually women called 'granny women.' Their knowledge was handed down to them from other generations, and some of it had been learned from the Indians."[37] Traditionally, Granny Women often served as midwives and they were believed to possess psychic and prophetic abilities.

Witches form another category of practitioner within the Appalachian folk magic tradition. Belief in witchcraft is prevalent throughout the rural Appalachian region. In general, rural

Appalachians distinguish between what is known as the "white art" and the "black art." Gainer notes that:

> There are certain people who are said to be gifted with powers to do things which ordinary people cannot perform. They have the power of healing, of finding underground water, of finding lost articles, of prophesying, and of communicating with the spiritual world. This power to perform beneficent acts is sometimes called the 'white art;' it has nothing in common with the 'black art,' the name given to witchcraft. The white art is considered to be a special gift from God.[38]

Granny women, healers, and herb doctors would be considered to be practitioners of the white art. Water witches, those who have the gift for locating underground water, are also practitioners of the white art. Those who have denied God and sold themselves to the devil for his service are referred to as witches, and it is commonly believed that becoming a witch is an unforgivable sin. Those who possess the God-given power to break the spells of witches are known as "witch doctors" or "witchmasters".[39]

Another type of practitioner is the "storyteller." With the arrival of the people came the beginnings of Appalachia's oral history—the storytelling. Storytelling served as both a form of entertainment and a way of preserving traditional knowledge. Stories about ghosts, witches, and unusual events were among the favorites of early settlers and are still among the favorites of rural Appalachians today.

"Conjure doctors" are self-appointed or self-trained healers who "relied on charms, spells, amulets, exorcism and some sort of hocus pocus…"[40] These alleged healers claim to be able to charm away warts, cool raging fevers, draw the fire from burns, stop bleeding, or cure headaches often by either the laying on of hands or reciting magic words. Even though mountain people commonly regard conjure doctors as frauds, their services have been widely accepted largely due to the fact that they do not charge a fee. The more serious minded Appalachian practitioners will occasionally mimic or laugh about the techniques of conjure doctors. Also, it is not uncommon for serious practitioners to send

rude or condescending people to conjure doctors with their medical complaints.

"Seerers" are individuals, usually female, who are said to possess the "gift of second sight," or sometimes just called the "gift." The gift, which is most often inherited from the mother's side of the family, can manifest itself in a number of ways, such as clairvoyance, the ability to see the dead, the ability to see auras, being able to see into the otherworld, and so forth. Tales and legends of second sight go back to the British Isles before the time of the European immigration to Appalachia and many "seers" trace their gift back to that time.[41] Perhaps the best known seer in Appalachia is a fictional character, Nora Bonesteel, who was created by the Appalachian novelist Sharyn McCrumb. Nora is based on a real person, Charlotte Ross, who is a Professor of Communication Studies at Appalachian State University. Using anecdotes from Ross, McCrumb has interwoven fact and fiction to create both culturally and historically accounts of Appalachian folk magic in general and the gift of second sight in particular. Among the most notable of McCrumb's novels to include stories about second sight are *The Rosewood Casket* (1996), *The Songcatcher: A Ballad Novel*, (2002), and *Ghost Riders* (2003).

Interpretations of Appalachian Folk Magic

In general, Appalachian folk magic is a difficult subject to study, let alone interpret. One reason is that it is largely based on an oral tradition and the information tends to vary both temporally and geographically. What's more, the knowledge is usually kept within family and clan systems, and "outlanders" are not easily trusted. These, and other, difficulties have led most scholars to specialize in only one or two aspects of the tradition. However, it is possible to identify four general interpretations in the scholarly and popular literature on the subject. A discussion of each of these interpretations follows.

Fischer refers to the folk magic of the Appalachian region as "experimental sorcery or secular superstition."[42] According to Fischer, "It consisted mainly in the pragmatic use of conjuring, sorcery, charms, omens, spells, potions, incantations, and popular

astrology to change the course of events, or to predict them".[43] From Fischer's perspective, Appalachian folk magic constitutes nothing more than "a simple set of homespun superstitions, designed for use by small groups of unlettered people."[44] He went on:

> The magic of the backcountry was remarkably secular in its nature and purposes. It retained vestigial beliefs in the Devil, witches, stars and planets. But mainly it sought to control worldly events by the manipulation of worldly things. Backcountry magic was highly materialistic, experimental and empirical in its nature. Its ancient rituals and homespun remedies were mainly a device by which these people struggled to understand and control their lives in the midst of many uncertainties of their world.[45]

As Fischer explains it, the people of Appalachia simply had no better system of understanding and coping with the secular uncertainties that surrounded them.

Butler (1990) proposes that the origins and development of folk magic in Appalachia can be traced to the folklorization of magic and the development of popular religion in early American society. Butler cites numerous reasons such as intellectual change, increasing Christian opposition and government coercion, which contributed to the suppression of occult and magical practices among the social elites and contained it within the poorer segments of society. In time, these practices became part of what Butler calls "popular religion." According to Butler:

> The term popular religion in this context means no less and no more than the religious behavior of the laypeople. It is defined by its clientele rather than by its theology, by its actors rather than by their acts. In the period I am discussing, popular religion was not necessarily anticlerical or anti-institutional, nor was it necessarily rooted in occult or quasi-pagan folk customs. Popular religion was what the laity made it. In some historical instances it emerged as anti-institutional, anti-

clerical, occult or pagan. In others it became closely linked to religious institutions and leaders – to ministers and churches, rabbis and synagogues, and others.[46]

By the time of the antebellum period, Butler notes that several magical beliefs and practices had become folklorized in the Appalachian region.

Cavender (2003), who primarily focuses on Appalachian folk medicine, proposes an interpretation that could apply to Appalachian folk magic in general. With respect to Southern Appalachia's folk medical belief system, Cavender suggests the existence of two domains of knowledge in the more traditional sense: "a naturalistic domain that conforms to Foster's [1978] definition, and a magico-religious domain".[47] According to Foster's (1975) model of folk medicine, the naturalistic domain is based on the premise that health is determined by maintaining a balance in the body of insensate elements such as body humors. "Use of the term 'magico-religious' is meant to capture all supernaturally based beliefs and practices relevant to both the cause and treatment of illnesses not thought to be caused by sensate elements."[48] It is important to note that Cavender's model is an emic construction and he observed that "these two knowledge domains were not mutually exclusive, perfectly discrete domains in the minds of Southern Appalachians".[49] He states that illnesses thought to be naturally caused were treated by magical means and that, in some cases, it was impossible to determine whether a particular treatment was magically or naturally based.

A recent interpretation of Appalachian folk magic that was made popular by McCoy (1997) is that it is a true surviving remnant of ancient European religions. According to McCoy, the folklore and magic that was brought to the Appalachian mountains from Scotland, Ireland and England reflected the medieval beliefs of their homelands, which in turn had roots in the Christian pagan spiritualities of Western Europe. McCoy, however, asserts that "Those with working knowledge of Anglo-Celtic magick will easily be able to see these roots in the spells of Appalachia, though it will also be clear that mountain magick has developed its own

earmarked traits over the centuries, ones often at variance with modern Pagan magickal practices."[50] As such, McCoy lists the following eleven specific characteristics usually found in mountain magickal practices and folk beliefs:

1. A division of all that exists into distinct and warring camps of good and evil.
2. A sense that all things have their own sentient quality, be they plant, animal, or inanimate object, and that their intent for good or evil can be made manifest.
3. A strong belief in the influence of the Christian Devil.
4. An acceptance that magick is real and that it can be worked for either good or evil purposes.
5. The belief that certain individuals are blessed with paranormal powers and that their magick is always more powerful than that of a layperson.
6. A sense of fatalism in the face of dire circumstances, particularly during severe illness or intrusion by outsiders into the local way of life, conditions which no amount of magick can completely cure. (Fatalist thinking is the first cousin of predestination, a spiritual legacy left to the mountain people through the Calvinist theology prevalent in the early Scottish Protestant churches.)
7. That the resting places of the dead are places wherein evil may lurk, but which contain great magickal powers which can be harnessed by the brave.
8. An underlying magickal philosophy which says it is wicked to work magick for monetary profit or to gain power over another individual, though the latter condition is frequently ignored, especially in matters of romance and inter-family quarrels.
9. The acceptance of the reality and potency of magickal curses.
10. The belief that nature provides omens and portents of the future, and these are to be heeded by the wise.
11. An emphasis upon actions, rather than upon thought and will power, as the ultimate magickal catalyst.[51]

Since McCoy's work was published, Strivelli has designated Appalachian folk magic as the "Appalachian Granny Magic Tradition" and, as such, she defines it as a "denomination of the ancient religion of Witchcraft."[52] According to Strivelli, "fertility, and the worship of Mother Nature, Jack Frost, Father Winter, Chloe, Spider Grandmother, Demeter, and such varied deities continued in the Appalachian region, staying a current part of the people's faith, rather than becoming a mythic memory as such 'nature worship' did elsewhere."[53] In fact, she claims the "The Craft" is "more accurately preserved in Appalachia than even in Ireland or Scotland."[54]

In general, the above interpretations either do not examine Appalachian folk magic from a holistic perspective or they neglect or minimize the people's worldview and the relationship between folk magic and religion. Fischer, for example, completely ignores the spiritual dimension of Appalachian folk magic and totally dismisses the possibility that the rural Appalachian people might have a cohesive and unified worldview. Much of his claims that Appalachian folk magic is secular and based on an ignorant understanding of nature and the world is derived from certain "lethal and brutal" cures he collected. What he fails to take into account is the type of practitioner who conveyed the information and role of humor in Appalachian folk magic. It makes a major difference as to whether the information was given to him by a yarb doctor or a conjure doctor. Furthermore, Appalachian folk magic practitioners use humor in ways similar to Native American and other shamanistic traditions.[55] Butler tends to focus more on the history and process of how certain magical practices came to be accepted by the Appalachian people, rather than explain what these practices meant to the Appalachian people. His broad definition of popular religion seems to sidestep the real significance of the relationship between folk magic and religion for the Appalachian people. Cavender does look at the subject from an emic perspective and he does account for religious beliefs, but he limits his research to the folk medicine aspect of Appalachian folk magic. In addition, he appears to fail to give an adequate explanation of why the naturalistic and magico-religious domains

are not mutually exclusive in the minds of Appalachians. This is largely because, as we shall see, the people of Appalachia do not operate under two separate and distinct worldviews—a magical worldview and a religious worldview. With respect to McCoy, she ignores the cultural and religious influences that conservative, Protestant Christianity has had on the Appalachian region. Other writers such as Rago (1995) have traced the Appalachian Granny Woman tradition back to pre-Christian Europe without defining it as a branch of witchcraft. Forbes shows a connection between midwives and the practice of witchcraft in early Europe, but he notes that, "Then as now, good deeds went unnumbered, and we must presume that law-abiding midwives, if not unrewarded, still were usually not mentioned."[56] Most rural Appalachians would consider any New Age or neo-Pagan interpretation of their practices as something evil or from the Devil. In order to understand the Appalachian folk magic tradition, it is necessary that one examine it holistically and take into account the worldview and religious beliefs of the Appalachian people.

Protestant Christianity in Appalachia

The Appalachian descendents of European settlers have religious roots in a variety of traditions, most of which can be described as left-wing Protestant.[57] The English settlers, who were dissenters from the Church of England and the Scotch-Irish settlers, who were Presbyterians that followed the religious revolution John Knox began in the Church of Scotland, both shared the Calvinist doctrines of unconditional election to the ranks of the saved and limited atonement for individual sin. Milnes (2005) notes the highly influential, but often neglected, impact of the German Lutheran and Anabaptist churches—with their non-Calvinist theology—on the Appalachian region.

During the era of the American Revolution, the predominant religion in Appalachia tended to be Presbyterian Calvinism.[58] However, very few of the settlers were church members and organized religion was not the standard. Although centered in New England, the First Great Awakening of the eighteen century did leave a mark on religion in Appalachia in the form of creating

a tradition of revivalism and an increased emphasis on experience and feeling, which eventually led to a split of Arminianism from Calvinism. The doctrine of Arminianism argues that God allows human beings to exercise free will in accepting his grace and, therefore, atonement is limited only to those who chose to accept grace.

Perhaps the biggest influence on religion in Appalachia occurred at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the Second Great Awakening, also known as the Great Revival, which swept its way from Kentucky through Southern Appalachia. According to Albanese, the revivalists brought religious fervor and messages of faith and contrition to the region, which in turn inspired people to actively seek salvation.[59] McCauley (1995) notes that the Appalachian people were more open to revivalism than the earlier Home Missions, set up by mainstream denominations, which ignored the values and traditions of the people.[60] Many Presbyterians and Baptists joined with Methodists in holding religious revivals called camp meetings in spite of former two groups belief in Calvinist predestination. At these gatherings people would share testimonies of intense, emotional, religious experiences which later became a defining characteristic of the Appalachian religious tradition. With an increased emphasis on religious experience, many of the Presbyterians, who were originally New Side Presbyterian immigrants from Ulster[61], converted to Baptist and Methodist churches and the number of Baptists and Methodists soon outnumbered the number of Presbyterians in the Appalachian region.[62] This rise in church membership, along with the denominational shift, led to the Presbyterian ideal of an educated clergy being replaced with part-time, uneducated lay ministers, who preached from their hearts under the power of the Holy Spirit.

With the advent of lay ministers, many of the churches in Appalachia refused to be affiliated with organized denominations, which led to sectarianism, so that sects, sub-denominations, and independent churches became another characteristic of Protestantism in Appalachia. As the major Protestant denominations became more national and institutionalized, they

moved more towards formality and became less accepting of personal experiences with the supernatural. As a consequence of this development, many rural Appalachians began to join or form various denominations and sects of Protestant Christianity which have become collectively known as "Appalachian Mountain Religion." According to McCauley:

> Appalachian mountain religion is one of the very few uniquely American regional traditions to which Protestantism in the United States can lay claim. It is made up of church traditions found almost entirely in the region's mountains and small valleys. Generally, they do not exist beyond Appalachia, except through out-migration. These church traditions, nearly invisible to the outside world and to much of the Protestant mainstream even within Appalachia, make up what is exclusive to religious life in Appalachia. Moreover, they have had profound impact on the overall religious character of Appalachia, extending their influences even into large, urban, and broad-valley mainline Protestant churches in subtle, indirect ways. However, mountain church traditions are scarcely influenced by the presence of American Protestantism in Appalachia today. Mountain religion embodies the distinctive religious ethos of Appalachia. The Appalachian churches of American Protestantism are affected by that ethos—although many mainstream Protestant clergy in Appalachia, native, and 'foreign,' would disclaim this—for it permeates Appalachian culture well beyond the doors of the mountain 'church house."[63]

And what is that ethos that permeates Appalachian Mountain Religion? Loyal Jones, in allowing the people of Appalachia to speak for themselves, identified a number of common theological beliefs which permeate the Protestant denominations throughout the region. With respect to God, Appalachians tend to believe that he is All-Knowing, All-Powerful and Just, but at the same time God is remote and unapproachable. However, it is a common belief that one can hold conversation with God through Jesus.

Another common Appalachian belief is that Satan is real and not just a metaphor for evil. According to Jones, "Mountain people take the Bible at its word and believe that Satan is roaming the world today, tempting people, turning them away from God, just as in biblical times."[64] In terms of the human condition, Jones notes that Appalachians view humans as a spiritual being encased in a physical body. As physical beings humans are born with a sinful nature, but through the act of salvation they can realize their spiritual nature in this life and enter into Heaven in the life to come. As strict Trinitarians, Appalachians believe that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are ever-present and constantly active in the world. Jesus is seen as a personal Savior and intercessor between humans and God. He is the one who hears and answers our prayers and pleads our cases before God. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter sent by God to humans. The Holy Spirit is the animator or bringer of life and is connected with the soul of each person. It is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus accomplishes his works on earth.

Religion, however, is not just a system of beliefs to Appalachians. It is their central value, which connects all aspects of their lives. In reference to Appalachian religion, Humphrey remarks:

> The 'hope and promise of the gospel' surrounds believers with the mountains of the Lord, as God surrounds them with the beauty of land, water, sky, plants, animals, and people. 'My place' in the religion of Zion includes land, home, family, kin, community, and, for many, church and graveyard…It is the experience with plants, animals, people, and the seasons of the year that make all of this 'my place.' There is a sacred bond to one's geographic place.[65]

According to Humphrey, the people of Appalachia believe that there is a relationship between the theme of Zion in the Bible, as a mountainous place of great beauty and eternal peace, and the Appalachian mountains. Humphrey continues:

> For the people of the Religion of Zion their land, their place, is a gift from God, who has given them many passages of Scripture as evidence of the favored status of the land and the promise of eternity to come—in this place. The present mountain landscape has been assimilated to the geography of the Bible, to the geography of the new creation in Christ.[66]

Aside from sectarianism, camp meetings, and a lay ministry, Arminianism is a common characteristic of the region, even though Appalachia still maintains a strong tradition of Calvinism. The Holy Bible, as literally interpreted, is the foremost standard of religious authority for most Appalachian people. In addition, these preferences and beliefs are manifested by a number of practices such as speaking in tongues, faith healing, exorcisms of the possessed by means of the Holy Spirit, prayer cloths, decorating cemeteries for the deceased, preaching and singing in "the Spirit," and so forth. Many of the people who follow Appalachian Mountain religion still practice the ways of folk magic, especially nature lore, superstitions, and herbal healing. They believe that God gave people certain gifts to help others and that the knowledge of their ancestors represents a kind of wisdom rather than ignorance.

Folk Magic and Protestant Christianity in Appalachia

Hammond (1970) asserts that no matter how magic and religion are defined, the distinction between them can't be easily maintained. According to Hammond, attempts to define magic as a distinct entity are the factitious results of ethnocentric classification. This claim seems to be especially true in the case of traditional folk magic and religion in the Appalachian region. In attempting to compare and contrast the beliefs and practices of Appalachian folk magic with those of Appalachian Protestant Christianity it would be difficult to draw a line of demarcation on any type of magico-religious continuum. For one thing, both Appalachian folk magic and religion share a common historical development. This is largely due to the fact that the practitioners of traditional folk magic were ardent believers in the Appalachian

brand of Protestant Christianity. As such, there formed a common worldview where the efficacy of folk magical practices and the efficacy of religious rituals are, for the most part, indistinguishable from one another.

It was during the Great Revival that the folk magic beliefs and the Protestant Christian beliefs of the rural Appalachians began to merge into a cohesive worldview. Three historical events played a particularly important role in this development: 1) evangelical conversion rituals conducted by revival ministers; 2) the proliferation of itinerant, or circuit riding, preachers who shared their personal experiences with the supernatural; and 3) the influence of Native American and African cultures on core values and beliefs of the Appalachian people. According to Butler (1990):

> Evangelical conversion ritual also paralleled occult practice in eighteenth-century America. The laity approached both cunning persons and ministers with numerous fears, doubts, and problems. Wise men and women recast complaints about birth, money, background, and disputes in astrological and occult terms capable of solution through geomancy, chiromancy, metoposcopy, horoscopes, or divination. Clergymen recast these problems in a Christian context. Their inquirer's real problems concerned salvation.[67]

This recasting of problems in a Christian context did not cause a separation between folk magic and the Protestant Christianity of the region for several reasons. First, the early European settlers in Appalachia were devoutly religious people who brought with them a rich tradition of folklore and folk magic to the mountains.[68] As such, they did not view Christianity and folk magic as opposing belief systems. Secondly, there was not an organized Church hierarchy with formal doctrines to define the correct and incorrect beliefs and practices.[69] And thirdly, both ministers and lay people alike were practitioners of various forms of folk magic. Although many of the folk magic practices seem to have become folklorized as Butler claims, the people appear to have interpreted these practices through the lens of their Christian beliefs to fit into their

worldview that the supernatural is a part of everyday life.

This idea is supported by the role that itinerant, or circuit riding, ministers played in shaping the religious views of rural Appalachians. According to Butler, "Early Methodist itinerants invoked the dream-world images already endemic in post-revolutionary society."[70] He further points out that Methodist itinerants had great faith in the ability of dreams to predict the future. Some charismatic Methodist itinerants, such as Lorenzo Dow, encouraged listeners to trust the supernatural revelations contained in dreams and also encouraged their audiences to believe that they could "locate lost and stolen objects, raise the Devil, and perhaps cure diseases."[71] These claims not only served to reinforce the folk magic worldview that the supernatural is present in the here and now, but they also legitimized and gave a Christian foundation to this worldview.

Even though Appalachia became a meeting ground for a number of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, there appear to be several core values that these groups held in common. In comparing the values of early black Appalachians with those of the Cherokee, Perdue observes that:

> Both emphasized living harmoniously with nature and maintaining ritual purity; both attached great importance to kinship in their social organization; and both were accustomed to an economy based on subsistence agriculture. African and Cherokee relationships to their environments reflected similar attitudes toward the physical world. The spiritual merged with the environmental. Common everyday activities, such as getting up in the morning, hunting, embarking on a journey, and particularly curing illness, assumed for both races a religious significance, and even topographical features were invested with religious meaning.[72]

The values that Perdue ascribes to the Africans and the Cherokees were very similar to those already held by the Appalachian settlers and, as such, they tended to reinforce, if not influence, the beliefs of the Appalachian people. The values that emphasize kinship and the environment are very similar to

the values of “familism” and “love of place” that Jones (1975) ascribed to the Appalachian people. With respect to the spiritual and religious beliefs of rural Appalachians, Lippy (1999) holds that:

> Two features of popular religiosity especially recur in much of Appalachian mountain religion, although they are expressed in a variety of ways and often in language different from mine:
>
> 1. A sense that the world of everyday life is a realm of power, an arena where supernatural forces of good and evil are operative. Popular religiosity revolves in part around gaining access to divine supernatural power that assures triumph over the forces of evil.
> 2. An understanding that life transpires simultaneously in two dimensions of time, the present and the future, and on two levels of reality, ‘the here and now’ and the hereafter. For those trapped in Enlightenment modes of thinking, in each case the former element is identified with empirical reality and represents all that can be known. But for those imbued with power, the future beyond this life that will come on a higher plane not only transcends empirical reality, but is far superior to it.[73]

In reference to herbal and magical medicine of the European settlers, Africans, and Native Americans of Appalachia, Kirkland, et. al. observes, “While each of these groups maintained its own unique medical tradition, culture contact led to a diffusion of certain beliefs and practices across system boundaries; the expansion and eventual dominance of Christianity has given each a common theological underpinning.”[74] Even though the Appalachian people acknowledge the existence of a transcendent, supernatural realm, there is also a strong belief that the supernatural is present and active in the realm of everyday life. This belief can even be traced back historically in terms of the religious beliefs and practices of the early European settlers.

Gainer, in discussing Appalachian beliefs about folk magic, remarks:

> Among the people in the community where I grew up there was a strong belief in the reality of the supernatural. Anything out of the ordinary was likely to be accepted as a spiritual manifestation, or a warning of some dire event to happen. There were numerous warnings of death, and messages from the spiritual world were common. This attitude was not a result of ignorance, but a sign of people's strong faith in God, who had many mysterious ways of informing people how to live. After all, if spirits communicated with living mortals in biblical times, could they not do the same today?[75]

In a similar vein, Gainer points out that "Almost without exception, the people who told ghost tales to me believed in their actual existence. A common preface to the tale is the statement: 'Now this really happened'."[76] In collecting ghost stories from coal miners in rural West Virginia, Musick found that a common motif was that, after a mining disaster had occurred, "victims were saved, protected, and sometimes even led to safety by a helpful ghost or spirit of a fellow miner who had died in a previous mining accident and returned as a protector or rescuer."[77] Many miners to this day will swear as to the reality of these stories.

It would be incorrect to think of the Appalachian people as having two separate and distinct worldviews—a folk magical worldview and a religious worldview. Instead, there is only a single shared worldview held among the folk magic practitioners and the followers of traditional Appalachian religion. In this worldview there is no distinct boundary between the sacred and the secular. God is seen as being both immanent and transcendent. He continues to operate in the lives of people through the Holy Bible, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and nature. In this worldview it is possible for the devout believer to communicate with God though prayer. As such, it is a world where personal sanctity is valued over doctrinal orthodoxy and local spiritual unity is valued over universal uniformity. All of life is viewed as being sacramental,

where the Presence of God is affirmed in even the smallest and most routine of everyday tasks.

The idea of a common worldview is especially evident when one examines the beliefs of practitioners of folk remedies and magical medicine. Rehder (2004) notes that "folk remedies, with their rich and mysterious ways, offer the belief, or at least the possibility, that the concoctions will work. Religious belief systems, whether organized denominations or independent groups, work from the position of faith that they too will work for the believer."[78] C. F. "Catfish Man of the Woods" Gray (1917-2003) was a well-known, fifth-generation, Appalachian, herb doctor who acquired most of his herbal knowledge from his grandparents and Native Americans. In diagnosing and providing cures for people, Catfish combined a folk theory of astrology with herbal medicine. He believed that "Yahwah" forced him to carry on his family's herbal tradition and he never charged for "doctoring people." According to Catfish, "I prayed for God to give me all the knowledge it takes to teach people everything about herbs that can be taught. Don't think anything about me. It is God who makes me know what to do"[79]

L. "Tommie" Bass (1908-1996), was another widely known and admired Appalachian herb doctor who had lived and practiced in North Carolina. In an exhaustive study of Bass's work Crellin and Philpott note that "Religion is not a conspicuous feature of Bass's practice, but as he recounts his belief that God provided the herbs of the field for a purpose, it is clear that religious faith is one of the many components of the herbal tradition in which he practices."[80] Bass's worldview is reflected in the following

> He holds that God's hand is readily seen throughout nature, and that God's creation of animals and plants is totally good: 'All natural things, like herbs, are good, even the weeds of the field.' Nature and God, for Bass, are virtually synonymous. He often remarks that 'when the good Lord made the world everything was perfect, until he found out he did not have anyone to operate it. So he took some of the herbs and made Adam.' Bass believes that an ever-present God is similar to

Indian concepts of plant spirits.[81]

Two Granny Women who were interviewed for this article, "Granny" Morris, a 93 year old African-American woman, and "Grammie" Anderson, an 88 year old white woman, are both from West Virginia and both have been practicing Baptists all their lives. Granny Morris is pursuing an undergraduate degree in sociology and plans on entering seminary in the fall of 2005. Grammie Anderson is a widow, who helps take care of her family, church community, and the elderly. Both Granny and Grammie have served as midwives and herbal healers. They both said that there was nothing special about them; that they were only assisting in carrying out the work of God. Finally, both Granny and Grammie emphasized the role of prayer in healing.[82]

In terms of more magically oriented practitioners, Lee Gandee, a well-known Hexenmeister from Appalachia, in his autobiography, *Strange Experience: The Autobiography of a Hexenmeister* (1971), makes frequent references to his Christian beliefs, Christian elements of his practice, and the Christian efficacy behind his folk magic. Likewise, Janet Rice, a renowned Appalachian fortune teller and folk magic practitioner, maintains that God and his angels are the source of her magical gifts. In reference to miracles, God, and prayer, Rice (2002) remarks:

> People ask me all the time if I believe in miracles. I most certainly do. Miracles come to people in different ways, but I believe that all things, including miracles, come from God. Prayer plays a big role in bringing miracles to people. When people pray urgently, help always seems to come. Sometimes it comes in the form of another human being, and sometimes it comes directly from God and the angels.[83]

With respect to practices, a few examples will illustrate the common worldview held by both Protestant Christians and folk magic practitioners. At the foundation of both the folk magical and religious practices are faith and prayer. As was mentioned earlier, many folk magic practitioners make frequent use of Hohman's

Long Lost Friend, and the prayers which accompany the magical and healing practices (Wentz, 1993). The use of Psalms, as a form of prayer, is also common among both folk magic practitioners and religious faith healers. Faith healing is one of the practices that is often associated with both religion and folk magic in Appalachia. According to Cavender:

> Faith healing involves an act of solicitation, such as individual and communal prayer, and the laying on of hands. The faith healing tradition is also evident in the belief that some individuals serve as instruments of God's healing power. Included within the diverse group of faith healers are not only preachers, evangelists, and others who are believed to have a God-given gift for healing by the laying on of hands, but also folk healers like bloodstoppers and burn doctors who maintain that God works though them. [84]

Cavender goes on to relate the practice of faith healing in Appalachia to beliefs about disease causation. Cavender claims that while Appalachians accept naturalistic explanations many believe that the ultimate cause of disease is a violation of God's law. For him the poor, with their fatalistic worldview, tend to explain illness and other misfortunes as a punishment from God or a test of their faith. Moreover, he asserts that the "radical fundamentalists" of Appalachia maintain that the Devil and demons are active agents of disease causation.[85]

Other practices that blur the distinction between folk magic and religion include the use of prayer cloths, prayer stones, and madstones. The advent of prayer cloths can be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth century when the Mormons used prayer handkerchiefs. As Griffith remarks, "Later on towards the 1880's Mormon leaders became embarrassed about what they saw as a folk magical practice and it began to fade out."[86] From the beginning of their history, however, Holiness evangelists and Pentecostals began using the handkerchiefs as well. The main scriptural justification, invoked by both Mormons and Pentecostals, was Acts 19: 11-12: "And God did extraordinary miracles by the

hands of Paul so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick and disease left him and the evil spirits came out of him." Just as power becomes identified with material objects such as talismans or amulets in folk magic, prayer cloths represent a form of mediated grace. According to Griffith:

> The evangelists would take a handkerchief and pray fervently over it, maybe pray so hard that they would be sweating. They'd wipe the sweat of their brows onto the handkerchief, and then send it off to someone as a sacramental object of divine grace and prayer. This handkerchief itself was thought to be a vehicle of these prayers. We think of prayer itself in the Protestant tradition as being above materiality. But these objects themselves were thought to be saturated with a kind of power through these signs of intensive prayer.

Since the power itself resides in the cloth, it does not matter if the recipient is a believer or non-believer.

The use of prayer stones and madstones also cross the boundary between folk magic and religion. Both of these objects are used by folk magic practitioners for the purpose of healing. Prayer stones consist of a white or clear pebble and a black pebble gathered from living (running) water. The stones are prayed over and then given to the afflicted person to place under his/her pillow. The black stone wards off evil, while the white stone aids in healing. If the illness is psychological the white stone will cause the afflicted person to dream of the needed answers. If the affliction is caused by the Devil or a demon, then the white stone will begin to turn dark. Again, the power is within the stones and it is not necessary for the afflicted person to be a believer.

Madstones are rare substances used to treat snakebites and bites from rabid "mad" animals. They have a long history and can be found in many cultures.[87] Although many substances have been used as madstones, the one most often associated with Appalachia is the bezoar or calcified hair ball found in a deer's stomach. The process includes the stone being placed on the bite and then soaked in milk or water. When the milk or water turns green, the poison

was believed be out.[88] A prayer, usually from Psalms, is usually read while the healing action is taking place. Much like the prayer cloths and prayer stones, the healing power of the madstone is believed to reside in the stone itself.

Conclusion

For the most part, interpretations of Appalachian folk magic have either ignored its religious dimension or divided it into two separate, yet overlapping, dimensions—magical and religious. From the beginning of their history, however, folk magic and Protestant Christianity have fused in rural Appalachia to create a unique and consistent worldview. When we examine the history, beliefs, and practices of Protestant Christians and folk magic practitioners in Appalachia we discover that they are the same group of people. Hence when it comes to this group it would be incorrect to talk about a secular, magical worldview and a spiritual, religious worldview. There is only one shared worldview between them, which is the Appalachian brand of Protestant Christianity.

Furthermore, Appalachian folk magic is made up of a variety of ethnic and cultural traditions, as well as a number of closely related areas such as folk medicine, folklore, superstitions, nature lore, and so forth. In order to fully understand the Appalachian folk magic tradition it is necessary to examine these traditions and areas from a holistic perspective. In order to understand Appalachian folk magic, it is necessary to examine the values of the people, how they perceive the world, and the relationship between folk magic, religious beliefs and nature. As Burchill, Crider, Kendrick, and Bonner (1993) point out, "Folklore and superstitions in the reaches of rural Appalachia were as strong as religion and passed from generation to generation. One did not question beliefs as old as the mountains but took them as facts of life and let them be."[89] In the mindset of the traditional Appalachian it is a fact that the everyday world is one of magic and mystery and that God bestows miracles on a daily basis. After all, this was the way things were in Biblical times and why should we think that it should be any different today?

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The Dionysian Body: Esotericism in the Philosophy of Norman O. Brown

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The Dionysian Body: Esotericism in the Philosophy of Norman O. Brown

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Surprisingly little has been written about the work of Professor Norman O. Brown (1913-2002), one of the twentieth-century's most provocative philosophers of the human condition. My research for this article yielded fewer than twenty-five citations: some reviews of his most famous works, *Life against Death*, and *Love's Body*, a few articles, and a few chapters and references in books concerning the nineteen-sixties or psychohistory.[1] Many of the sources consider his influence on American counterculture. In these works he is described as a guru fomenting the sexual revolution of the era by calling for the abolition of repression and for the dissolution or end of genital sexuality. He is usually described alongside Paul Goodman or Herbert Marcuse. In sources that consider Brown's contribution to psychohistory, commentators generally restate his departure from Freud. They describe his critique of sublimation, for example, or his stress on the primacy of a pre-Oedipal, rather than Oedipal phase in the formation of the ego. As Stuart Hampshire observes in Brown's obituary in *The New York Times*, Brown is a "victim of Marx and Freud."[2] None of the extant scholarship addresses Brown's particular form of thought in its own right.

The most striking feature in the extant commentary on Brown is the exaggerated and figurative responses he inspires in his commentators. Maurice Richardson describes *Life Against Death* as a "running dive off the Freudian springboard into History's deep end."[3] To Philip Pomper, Brown's work is "the last bite of the apple," and ultimately, the provenance of an "isolated

spiritual elite."[4] To Roger Kimball, Brown is "William Blake with a Ph.D." whose "great gift" is "infusing mystic pronouncements with radical, anti-bourgeois animus and febrile erotic charge."[5] To Frederick Crews, Brown's arational vision of Reality is "ingenious nihilism" where "Nothing remains for us to do but pluck our insipid lutes within a Oneness which is now devoid of content."[6] Only two writers, Susan Sontag and Christopher Hill, really urge us to read Brown's work. Hill calls *Life against Death* "strong meat" and Brown's "ruthless, not to say, rash pursuit of logic to conclusions," "provocative and disturbing," and "not to be missed."[7] For Sontag, *Life Against Death* is an "all-important" reinterpretation of Freud and the first major attempt since Nietzsche to develop an "eschatology of immanence."[8] With the exception of Hill and Sontag, every writer, even if he or she admires Brown's virtuosity as a theorist, eventually concludes that his perspective is either too "Romantic" and "utopian" or "gnomic" and "nonsensical" to be practical as an avenue toward human fulfillment or social change.

I believe that the critics stridently reject Brown's perspective because they lack a formal system for assimilating his insights. My purpose here is to demonstrate that Brown's habit of mind or mode of investigation, as well as the objects of his investigations are conspicuously esoteric. But while aspects of Brown's work clearly conform to the features of Western esotericism outlined by Faivre, Hanegraff, and Versluis—such as his emphasis on Imagination, Transmutation and Gnosis—an investigation of Brown's work on its own terms yields patterns intrinsic to his thought that might allow us to further refine their typologies.[9] Indeed, Brown's work can be a touchstone for our discourse as we clarify the interdisciplinary boundaries of our field. To this end, I claim here that Brown as esotericist sees unity instead of duality. In all his work, he reconciles antitheses. He is anti-dualistic, and therefore, in Western terms, arational. As esotericist he also strives to make perceptible the noumenal hidden essence of an object through a transformation in perception. The objects of his analyses are also esoteric, that is, *hidden* or secret, the original, pre-Homeric function of Hermes as magician in *Hermes the Thief*,

the unconscious, veiled under the conditions of general repression, in *Life Against Death* , and in *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis*, Dionysus, the god both manifest and hidden.

I. Magic

Though critics find little connection between Brown's first book *Hermes the Thief*, published in 1947, and his later books, I believe that *Hermes the Thief* introduces patterns in Brown's thinking that can be seen in his later work. *Hermes the Thief* is a brilliant analysis of the evolution of the god Hermes as his evolution coincides with the development of Greek trade. Brown is distinctively esoteric in his intention to transform and renew our perception of the objects of his analyses, in this case, the Homeric "Hymn to Hermes," and the pre-classical cultures of Greece. Using the Hymn as the basis of his analysis, he makes us see the old as new and the primitive as urbane. In beginning from the premise that the Hymn is a late addition to an evolving mythology rather than a source, he works against traditional perceptions of the Homeric times as less sophisticated than classical times. He corrects a tendency in classical scholarship, from the earliest Hellenistic mythography to his present period, "to reduce the dynamic contradictions of Greek mythology in its vital period to a dull, flat consistency."[10] Although the Hymn is written in the Homeric period, "the primitive origin of the myth does not prove that the Hymn itself is the product of a primitive environment."[11]

As esotericist, Brown aims to unify "the bewildering variety of roles" of the god Hermes in literature, iconography, and cult practice from pre-history to the classical period. Hermes is paradoxically the god of theft, but also the "giver of good things,'" the god of seduction, oath-making, the boundary-stone, the agora, craftsmen, merchants, pioneers, and unskilled laborers.[12] In the 7th century Hymn, a late addition to his mythology, he is an infant with supernatural powers who steals Apollo's cattle and then craftily conceals the evidence. As an infant, he also invents the tortoise-shell lyre, which he gives to Apollo as compensation for his theft. The depiction of Hermes as infant and as inventor

of a particular musical instrument links the god to an emerging merchant class in the ancient world "making inroads to spheres formerly presided over by Apollo."[13] The strife between Hermes and Apollo reflects the strife between this rising economic class, with its new "acquisitive individualism," and the elite.

In his search for Hermes' earliest identity, the hidden common denominator in all of his roles, Brown surveys synchronically and diachronically Hermes' most frequent epithets, *dolios* and *klopē*, trickster and thief, in Homeric, Archaic, and Classical texts. Moving forward, he looks at changes over time in the meanings of these words, and moving backwards he traces the history of concepts back to their Indo-European roots "so that modes of thought and behavior can be uncovered that are obsolete in Homer."[14] Brown finds that the characteristic that unites all of Hermes' roles is "stealthy action." Brown goes further though in that he shows how Hermes is, in his earliest pre-historic manifestation, a magician. Because in all of his extant myths "Trickery is never represented as a rational device but as a manifestation of magical power," Hermes becomes a Trickster and a thief in later in his mythology.[15]

Brown combines in *Hermes the Thief* a Marxist commitment to material history and the esotericist's aim to make it new. He presents in *Hermes the Thief* (and he will develop throughout his career) a phenomenology of magic as the ability to make it new. Since Hermes represents the craftsperson, Brown sees magic in *Hermes the Thief* in material terms. Magic is the craftsman's feat of transforming raw material into products:

> The relationship between primitive craftsmanship and magic, although difficult to define is admittedly close. Primitive magic is a technology of sorts; its aim is the manipulation of the external world. The primitive craftsman supplements his technique with magical practices and success at his craft is taken to indicate possession of magical powers.[16]

As in his later works, Brown is distinctively anti-dualistic in *Hermes the Thief*. He collapses the distinction between secular and

sacred. He shows how forms of *kleptein*, to deceive or to remove secretly, are also applied to magical acts, also associated with "the stealthy" in ancient Greek texts. In the Hymn, for example, Hermes "the stealthy-minded" (*klepsiphronos*) makes the cord Apollo uses to lead away his recovered cattle magically take root in the ground through action at a distance. Dolios, another of Hermes' frequent epithets, which in the classical period means tricky, also carries implications of magic in its earlier forms. Forms of *dolios* are used to describe Circe and Calypso's use of magical binding formulae, and to describe Proteus' ability to shapeshift, both skills practiced by Hermes. Brown finds the link between magic and the evolution of ancient Greek commerce in another important word in the cult of Hermes. Hermes as *kerōdos*, giver of good things. In the classical period *kerdos* as noun means "economic gain" or "profit," and as adjective, *kerōdos* means "good at securing profit." *Hermes agoraios*, Hermes of the marketplace, in the classical period is the god of profit and the cunning intelligence it takes to get the best possible price for one's handiwork. As the Greek economic system shifts from trade between villages at the Herm or boundary stone, to trade in a marketplace, the meaning of words related to *kerd* oscillates between "gain" "trickery" and "skill." In its earliest, Indo-European form, *kerdos* is associated with magic:

> Its Sanskrit root is krtya, meaning "a doing," especially a magical practice, and to the Irish cerd, meaning a craft, or craftsman, with special reference to the craft of the smith and the poet. In this root the combination of "trickery," and "technical skill" is joined by a third notion, that of "gain" which results from "trickery" or skill.[17]

Brown unites the variety of Hermes' roles, and he also collapses the distinction between the sacred and secular in his account of the shift from trade on the boundaries between villages to trade in the agora between 1500-500 BC. By the classical period the Greeks had secularized their commerce; nevertheless, trade, the point of contact and exchange between oneself and a stranger, especially primitive trade on the boundary in the earliest period of

Greek history is “deeply impregnated with magical notions.” “The city agora is a sacred area and inevitably contains temples” Brown observes, “in primitive trade on the other hand, the exchange is itself a ritual act.”[18] During the pre-Homeric period, the stranger is a potentially hostile force. The boundary where strangers meet is a place of heightened significance and risk requiring magical safeguards. In the classical period, when the economic system has completely shifted from trade at the boundary to sale in the city agora, Hermes gains the epithet *agoraios*, and comes to represent the trickiness it takes to make a profit as well as skill in craft. Throughout his evolution, Hermes is affiliated with those who cross boundaries, for Brown, the emerging third estate of the pre-Homeric period, the craftsmen, merchants, and pioneers who cross the village line to obtain raw materials and goods for their crafts.

In the 1940’s, Brown is a classical scholar working in a Marxist framework, so in *Hermes the Thief* he ties all transformations in the god’s mythology over time to changes in the material economy. Even if Brown’s outcome is materialist, his philology in *Hermes the Thief* is esoteric, I would say, because he shows us that the old is really new. He begins his analysis by challenging a tendency to see the archaic period as primitive, and the hymn a reflection of a primitive cattle-raiding society. Instead, we should view the sixth century artifact as a sophisticated response to a complex, dynamically changing society. When Hermes, on the day of his birth steals the cattle of Apollo, with the aid of magic, we should view Hermes as a socio-psychological type. He represents a contemporary tension between an insurgent merchant class, represented by Hermes, and an entrenched and resistant aristocracy, represented by Apollo. For Brown, “The hymn projects into the mythical concept of the divine thief an idealized image of the Greek lower classes, the craftsmen and the merchants.”[19] “The whole emphasis in the mythology of Hermes is on mental skill and cunning, stealthiness, as opposed to physical prowess.”[20] Though his outcome is materialist, he investigates in the spirit of the esotericist; he finds unity in Hermes’ various roles, he emphasizes change, and he undermines assumptions that have governed his field of study.

II. Union

Brown's aim in *Life Against Death,* as in *Hermes the Thief*, is to "open up a new point of view." In this case, his goal is "to renew psychoanalysis, and through psychoanalysis renew thought on the nature and destiny of man."[21] Brown turns to Freud at this stage in his career because "Psychoanalysis claims to be a breakthrough through phenomena to the hidden noumenal reality, at least with regard to knowledge of ourselves."[22] As in *Hermes the Thief*, Brown is interested in that which embodies an open/hidden dialectic, in this case, the "noumenal unconscious," a "chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement," which discloses itself indirectly in neurotic symptoms, dreams, and errors.[23] The most salient characteristic of this "noumenal" unconscious is its drive for unity. The noumenal unconscious, driven by the pleasure principle seeks unity as a mode of being as a well as unification with others.

For Brown, unity is the hidden basis of reality, the key to personal happiness, and the precondition of a healthy society. In all of his work he begins from the premise that there is a hidden, underlying unity to all phenomena and that the dualisms that govern Western modes of perception—the distinction between soul and body, spirit and matter, self and other—are provisional mental constructions. In *Life Against Death* he seeks to unify the self by bringing the soul and the mind back to the body. He argues throughout his career that religious and philosophical discourse separates soul from body and makes spirit superior to matter. Enlightenment rationalism especially, as exemplified by Descartes in the *cogito*, separates mind from body, with devastating consequences. To Brown it is an "insane delusion that the true essence of man lies in disembodied mental activity."[24] He believes that "we are nothing but body…life is of the body and only life creates values; all values are bodily values."[25] Because of his insistence on the body, Brown is not mystic in the traditional sense. He does not advocate flight from reality, or longing for the next world as a means to happiness. Instead he poses an alternative mysticism, Dionysian body-mysticism, "which stays with life,

which is the body, and seeks to transform and perfect it."[26]

Rather than being a Romantic, or an Utopian, Brown is more truly described as mythic and esoteric. He identifies Dionysus as the archetype of his body-mysticism because Dionysus reconciles opposites in his mythology: mind and body, self and other, life and death, east and west, animal and man, god and man, and male and female. In his conflict with and mastery of Pentheus in the *Bacchae*, Dionysus most clearly reflects the inevitable victory of the noumenal unconscious over quantifying, categorical rationality. Dionysus also signifies for Brown an irrepressible animating energy at the root of being, that by nature overflows. Brown achieved considerable notoriety in 1959 for calling for an erotic approach to reality, an approach based "not on anxiety and aggression but on narcissism and erotic exuberance."[27] In his call to return the soul to the body, to bring play back to work, to deconstruct the sexual organization of the body, and to integrate "Dionysus," the drunken principle of unity" into the daily life of the mind-body, Brown is not advocating anarchy or even sexual liberation, as he was frequently misconstrued, especially since one of the most radical claims in his book is that genital sexuality and even gender itself is a deformation of the body. Brown is interested in a mode of perception that recovers a primal sense of unity with the world, without rejecting the lived experience of separation and dying. Brown is looking for a this-world, body-centered, concrete sensual philosophy that reconciles mind-body dualism, while staying with the body. A Dionysian body, governed by an androgynous, all-Body Eros, rather than an ego that restricts libidinal energy to a specific zone would be noumenal, akin to the diamond body of the Taoists, or the hermaphroditic ideal of Rilke. Life is then experienced as "complete and "immediate."[28] The Dionysian then is not a higher mode of consciousness, but a more radical experience of presence. In accepting the life of the entire body, including its death, we magnify life.[29]

Brown finds in Freud's polymorphously perverse and genderless infant a model for primordial bodily unity. Indeed, for Brown "our whole repressed and hidden ultimate essence lies in infantile sexuality." Brown urges us to let go of our prejudices, and

accept infantile sexuality for what it is: “The pursuit of pleasure obtained through the activity of any and all organs of the human body.”[30] Distorted and denied by the ego, this repressed infantile erotism comprises the noumenal unconscious. The ego comes into being at that moment when infant discovers that it is separate from the mother. The infant’s inability to accept separation from the mother, which is also for Brown an inability to accept death, produces a neurotic ego, an ego that “negates” reality. Because the ego does not accept separation and death, the ego creates substitute gratifications, sublimations, in order to avoid the feelings of anxiety that accompany feelings of separation. The result is a kind of half-life, a “more active form of dying,” an inability to truly engage in the present.[31] In sublimation, because the ego acts as a crucible that desexualizes the id, and in effect, separates soul from body, we find the origin of a dualistically structured consciousness: “The history of childhood is the history of the organism caught in an ever-widening sequence of dualisms, which it vainly seeks to overcome, till in the end, after a final climactic struggle, it acknowledges defeat and acquiesces in its own permanent impairment.”[32] For Brown, sublimation is bodily energy desexualized and displaced upward: the activity of a soul divorced from the body.

Brown might also be considered a foundational thinker in the field of esotericism because he draws on the work of Jacob Boehme in his understanding of the human condition. In seeking an alternative to sublimation, “real instinctual gratification,” Brown draws on other esoteric sources as well: “the Christian Pauline notion of the spiritual body, the Jewish cabalistic notion of Adam’s perfect body before the Fall, and the alchemical notion of the subtle body.” These models, which unite in Boehme, Brown’s chief model, offer a form of body-mysticism that recognizes an “indestructible allegiance” to the pleasure principle: “the potent demand in our unconscious both for an androgynous mode of being and for a narcissistic mode of self-expression, as well as the corruption in our current use of the oral, anal, and genital functions.”[33] But in uniting the polymorphously perverse body with the paradisical body, Brown goes beyond the “ambiguously

immaterial" forms of his model. Boehme's visions lack materiality because of his mystic's refusal to accept a body that dies. Human Perfectibility, the Dionysian body-ego—the body satisfied—depends upon the ego facing death. This unifies the life and death instincts, and recovers the ego's original nature as the sensitive surface of the entire body. Brown unites in the Dionysian Body the id, "the knowledge of the active life of all the body," and the ego," the mental projection of the surface of the body."[34] The result is an hermaphroditic ideal, an erotic, playful approach to reality: concrete, sensual, lived experience guided by the pleasure principle: the unification of the self, and union with others.[35] The human body becomes "polymorphously perverse, delighting in that full life of all the body which it now fears." "The consciousness strong enough to endure full life would be no longer Apollonian but Dionysian-consciousness which does not observe the limit, but overflows; consciousness which does not negate anymore."[36] The result is the resurrection of the body, the "transformation of this bodily life into play."[37]

The unification of soul, mind, and body, id and ego translates into practical terms as exuberant lived experience expunged as much as possible of neuroses. The healthy, unified individual would exist in a state of radical presence liberated from an obsessive regard for the past or the future. The healthy individual would "delight in the active life of all the body." Guided by the pleasure principle, or "erotic, creative self-enjoyment," the healthy individual would not deny the body, repressed by Western rationality, which elevates mind over body, and reason over instinct. The activity most pregnant with the noumenal unconscious or life instinct is play.[38] In a life governed by the pleasure principle the dichotomy between work and play is overcome: "In play life expresses itself in its fullness; therefore play as an end means that life itself has intrinsic value."[39] Finally, the healthy individual would embrace death and integrate the knowledge of death into his or her daily experience. The inability to live in the body, the denial of death and the drive to sublimate, which is the desire to be immortal, keeps experience at a distance. In practical terms, as a way of living, the reconciliation of life

and death is “the possibility of activity (life) which is also at rest.”[40] The “condition of equilibrium or rest of life that is a full life unrepressed and therefore satisfied with itself and affirming itself rather than changing itself.”[41] The closest correlate to the Dionysian body, in which the life and death instincts, the ego and the id are unified is the Taoist tradition of doing-not-doing, where the do-er is so consumed with his activity that he does not have an awareness of time. In Brown’s formulation, life becomes an “Eternal Sabbath,” because the death instinct no longer drives one to change the self and make history.

As esotericist, Brown devotes much of his life to sundering the mind-body distinction endemic to Western culture and in challenging the integrity of the self as a discrete, separate entity from others. From *Life Against Death* to his final essays published in *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis*, Brown weaves an alternative concept of self-hood that is indebted to the esoteric philosophies of Spinoza, Giordano Bruno and Whitehead’s philosophy of organism. Brown absolutely dissolves the boundaries of the self—recognizing the “individual” as we know it to be an illusion: a largely linguistic reality buttressing a bourgeois investment in private property, the social contract, moral responsibility, and even the myth of amorous love (romantic love, writes Brown, is an affect, an amalgam of learned responses). The underlying principle of unity latent in the polymorphous human being finds its analogue in the principle of unity underlying the species. “The reality of our life, the reality of which we are ignorant, the reality which we do not want to accept, is our fluid membership and causal interdependence in the intercommunicating world of bodies.”[42] Self and other are mutually constitutive as part in relation to whole: “Real individuality is the full presence of the whole in every part: in Giordano Bruno’s formula, ‘wholly in the whole and wholly in every part of the whole.’”[43] Like Blake, Spinoza and Bruno, Brown believes that humans are not discrete bodies idenitified by form, function, and purpose but energy systems, “ratios of motion and rest, interacting affecting, and being affected,” “complicated energy systems in complex interaction with other energy systems.”[44]

> In this philosophy of organismic materialism the idea of purpose is replaced by the idea of process (immanent necessity), the idea of a self-expressive totality (God = Nature) expressing itself by self-differentiating individuation. Individuals have no independent, substantial existence; to realize the real potentialities of any individual thing is to activate it as a partial expression of the whole. Individual existence means to interact with the rest of existence in a flux of communicative exchange (the process). At every level individuality is constituted by being a whole composed of constituent individuals, itself in turn a constituent part of a larger whole."[45]

Central to Brown's work is his conviction that community is the salvation of our species. His ideal for the species is "the maximalization to the greatest possible degree, of the communist principle" – the mass revelation that we are all one body—Love's Body.[46] Isolation, atomization, the quantifying sensibility of Western rationality is a threat to the individual and to the species. The perfection of the individual and the fulfillment of personal happiness rests in the union of the individual with other bodies. For Brown, death makes us seem like individuals when we are actually collective parts of one body. Indeed, citing Dante, Brown observes that the human species, made in the image of God, is most like God when it is unified.[47] Brown's vision of the collective human body is not totalitarian as one critic argues. His view of unity is in direct contrast to that established by the social contract which limits individual power in the interests of social cohesion: "The 'common consent' which establishes the social contract" writes Brown, "has nothing to do with the ideal unification based on the discovery of our identical human nature and common good. The ideal unification, which is the only real unification, does not surrender or diminish the powers of conjoining individuals but on the contrary is their expansion."[48] Brown never loses faith in the power of communitas. But he seeks political and social action guided by the pleasure principle, which unifies, as opposed to the

reality principle, which separates. The goal is an expansion in power for each *part* and the simultaneous expansion in power of the whole.

III. Mystery

In *Life Against Death*, Brown aims to transform our perception of the unconscious by shifting the vantage point from which it has been habitually viewed: instead of "instinctual dualism" between the life and death instincts as Freud insists, he sees "instinctual dialectics."[49] In reconciling opposites, we recover the lost body of childhood and live more fully. It is not that the object changes, it is that our perception changes, and we, rather than the object, are made anew. *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis*, Brown's last book, is a collection of essays spanning 1960-1990. It begins with the essay, "Apocalypse: The Place of Mystery in the Life of the Mind," and ends with "Dionysus in 1990." In the first essay, as in all of his work, Brown calls for renewal, in this case the renewal of the mysteries. By mystery, he does not mean a sense of wonder, for him, the source of philosophy, and therefore a sublimation, but rather the secret and occult. He is referring to elements of ancient mystery religions: initiation, secrecy, communitas and Divinity as an experiential phenomenon for the individual and the group. The essay, originally delivered as an address to Phi Beta Kappa graduates of Columbia University is, ironically, a critique of academia. Brown criticizes specifically a "bondage to books" within the university.[50] For Brown, an over-reliance on books creates a dependence on second hand views. One sees with the eyes of the dead. Bookishness makes one a "satellite" instead of a "system."[51] The goal is to make "the eyes of the spirit…one with the eyes of the body."[52] Instead of abandoning the university altogether, however, Brown calls for the recovery of the academy of earlier days—the Academy of Plato in Athens, the Academy of Ficino in Florence."[53] In these mystic academies, Ficino and Plato "understood the limitations of words" and "drove us on beyond them, to go over, to go under, to the learned ignorance, in which God is better honored and loved by silence than by words, and

better seen by closing the eyes to images than by opening them."[54] This alternative arational mode of knowing Brown calls Dionysus, the divine spirit of enthusiasm. This "holy madness," enthusiasm, ignites a "divine fury" that overcomes mind-body dualism. Students experience

> the ecstacy and abandon of disencumbered minds, when partly by innate love, partly at the instigation of the god, they transgress the natural limits of intelligence and are miraculously transformed into the beloved god himself: where, inebriated by a certain new draft of nectar and by an immeasurable joy, they rage, as it were, in a bacchic frenzy.[55]

As in his other works, Brown is advocating an alternative, arational mode of knowing that unifies body and spirit. For our purposes here, Brown's use of the term esoteric can be helpful to us as we further refine our field. By esoteric, Brown means specifically the secret and the exclusive:

> Mysteries are unpublishable because only some can see them, not all. Mysteries are instrinsically esoteric, and as such are an offense to democracy: is not publicity a democratic principle? Publication makes it republican—a thing of the people. The pristine academies were esoteric and aristocratic, self consciously separate from the profanely vulgar.[56]

The position that mysteries are unpublishable makes Brown's promotion of mystery a direct attack against the very institution in which he is speaking. For this reason, Brown opens the address with the dilemma of whether he should reveal that which is secret: "I didn't know whether I should appear before you—there is a time to show and a time to hide; there is a time to speak and also a time to be silent."[57] He challenges the graduates' complacency in their honors and even their confidence in their sanity. As in *Life Against Death*, Brown begins from the premise that a dualistically structured psyche is essentially mad. In the Dionysian body-ego, he offers an alternative mode of madness as a solution: blessed

madness, entheos, enthusiasm… "holy madness." In "the fire of enthusiasm even books lose their gravity." It is not that students should stop reading, Brown writes, quoting Pound, but that "Man reading should be man intensely alive. The book should be a ball of light in one's hand."[58]

Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis represents Brown's thirty-year interest in mystery, its manifest/hidden nature, its god Dionysus, and the ability to see and experience mystery presently. In the final essay, "Dionysus in 1990" Brown returns to his interest in historical process. He expands his former Gnostic vision of being as eternity to include the Heraclitean view of the life principle as seeking to spend its energy. For Brown, all life is Heraclitean fire, consuming and being consumed endlessly. The dilemma humanity faces is whether this energy shall be spent "gloriously" or "catastrophically."[59] This address, delivered to students in the History of Consciousness program at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1990 is essentially a critique of late twentieth century capitalism. Reconsidering his earlier view of the reconciliation of id and ego as a "complete" state of being, he recognizes in 1990 that there is no such thing as satis-faction; there is no such thing as enough. He recognizes also (in answer to critics of his idealism or utopianism), "that the world will never be a safe place; it will never be a pastoral scene of peace and pleasure."[60] To Brown, we are suffering not from a repressed longing for death but from excess of life. How shall we spend the energy? The problem, Brown argues, is not in the forces of production, as they were for Marx, but in the forces of consumption. Brown identifies Dionysian processes in Capitalism: "Its essential nature is to be out of control: exuberant energy, exploiting every opportunity," but without the supporting Dionysian body ego, capitalism is neurotic."[61] In 1990, in the context of global capitalism, Brown discerns an even more destructive form of sublimation, "the predominance of vicarious entertainment" in the "life of the masses":

> what Blake would call spectral enjoyment—everything on TV; the lifestyles of the rich and famous offering vicarious

> participation in spectacles of waste; spectator sports offering vicarious agonistics; democracy restricted to mass voting for media stars.[62]

The excesses of late twentieth century capitalism promote sublimation. Life is held at an even further remove. The way out, finally, for Brown, is another vision of unity: the recognition that we are one body with the collective problem of surplus consumption.

Brown continues to maintain his faith in the possibility of unity while retaining a Marxist sensibility in "Dionysus in 1990." He seeks the reconciliation of the antithesis between the mystic and concrete in his hopeful vision of humanity in the electronic age: "polymorphous intercommunication between all bodies and the maximilization to the highest possible degree of the communist principle."[63] Rather than "Romantic" or "Utopian," Brown is esoteric in his emphasis on the reconciliation of opposites as an avenue to Truth. "The Point to be arrived at" he writes in *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* is the coincidence of opposites—"Love Hath Reason, Reason none."[64]

IV. Conclusion

Ultimately for Brown, Dionysian consciousness is poetical consciousness. Magic, the power to make it new, is not only the crafting of material objects, but also the exercise of the poetic imagination. As esotericist Brown aspires to lead his readers to a truth that is beyond logic. Ultimately, his faith lies in poetry. Poetry subverts reason and leads one to a truth beyond logic and words through figurative mechanisms: ambiguity, irony, paradox, exaggeration, and "the revivifying power of metaphorical troping." He advocates a new kind of thinking, "a poetic kind of thinking." [65] When life becomes poetic, things lose their concrete literality and become theophanies. In his last work, an unpublished lecture delivered in 1993 at Boston University, Brown calls for a new sense of time, and even a new sense of the new. He introduces

the idea of chance into the historical process, going beyond the Christian idea of eternity and the Nietzchean idea of eternal recurrence. Instead of "nothing happens for the first time" as in *Love's Body*, now, "everything happens for the first time. That is the meaning of chance…"[66] Brown is pushing here, as he did in *Love's Body* for an even more radical sense of the present; at the same time, he eschews literalism. For Brown, "The full meaning of concretely embodied experience is not limited to the literal but is polysemously symbolic."[67] This makes existence noumenal. In his final formulation of the human condition:

> Each of us is not a human being, but only the symbol of a human being. We are not individuals; we are pieces—tesserae, tokens, or tallies—temporary repositories of value in a game of chance. Paraphrasing Lucretius: the life that mortals live is not their private property: it is more like a torch transmitted in a relay race.[68]

Brown consistently challenges in his work an Enlightenment understanding of the historical process as a movement from darkness to light. Truth is always hiding or veiled. As he shows in *Life Against Death*, the unconscious is essentially darkness, and yet the id and its pleasure principle are the absolute essence of the human being. Darkness, for Brown, is the grain of reality.

I believe that Norman O. Brown is a foundational figure in the field of esotericism. He anticipates as early as 1957 the methodological questions we face as we establish our field in 2005. First, if the esoteric implies something hidden or secret, available to the few rather than the many, how shall we transmit this field in an academic context? Secondly, does the scholar of esotericism take the emic or etic approach, i.e. that of the participant, or the observer, in relation to his or her subject? One scholar has suggested a middle ground between the emic and etic approach—that of sympathetic observer. Hardened materialists, as most of Brown's critics are, are not going to be sympathetic to the theophanic reality he enjoins. At the end of *Life Against Death*, Brown addresses the emic vs. etic approach in his promotion of

“utraquism” in the sciences. Utraquism is

> the required combination of analysis of the subject and analysis of the object: If science is really to remain objective, it must work alternately as pure psychology and pure natural science, and must verify both our inner and outer experience by analogies taken from both points of view.[69]

I believe that for Brown the task is to overcome dualism within the self as one approaches the object of study. This is different from a purely analytical vs. purely participatory approach. In overcoming dualistic thinking, as well as dualistic being, we make ourselves available to irony, ambiguity, paradox, and exaggeration, the modes by which the hidden is made manifest. In his resistance to eschatological trends (thinking in terms of progress or decline), and in his final emphasis on eternal change and chance in the world here and now, I believe Brown shows us the way we can separate esotericism from religion or mysticism as we continue to demarcate our field. His mode of thought challenges fundamental assumptions about his object; he makes us see the old as new; he sees unity and dynamism where others see difference and stasis, he emphasizes the world here now. Rather than being a “victim” of Marx and Freud, Brown moves beyond Marxism and Psychoanalysis in his formulation of a Dionysian body. He sees in Dionysus (and in Dionysian consciousness as expressed in poetry), the “massive breakdown of categories of traditional rationality still accepted as authoritative in Marx and Freud.”[70] Through a dialectic that reconciles life and death, we can make it new. This dialectic does not confer upon the things of the world newness; instead, it renews our consciousness and bodies so that we are made new. “And the Power which makes all things new, Brown says, is magic.”[71]   One must approach the object with belief, not faith, but belief: with a radical openness that subverts distinctions at all levels, and makes all things new.

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NOTES

[1] See bibliography.

[2] Douglas Martin,"Norman O. Brown Dies; Playful Philosopher was 89," *New York Times on the Web*, October 4, 2002. http://query.nytimes.com/.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Philip Pomper, *The Structure of Mind in History* (New York: Columbia University Press,

1985), 140-141.

[5] Roger Kimball, "The Marriage of Marx and Freud," *The New Criterion*, December 1997, 5-6.

[6] Frederick C. Crews, "The World Dissolves," *The American Literary Anthology 2* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1968), 130.

[7] Christopher Hill, "Luther and Freud," *The Spectator*, December 1959, 831.

[8] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1961), 262.

[9] Arthur Versluis presents an overview of Esotericism as an academic discipline in "What is Esoteric? Methods in the Study of Western Esotericism," http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/Volume IV . In this article, Versluis presents the field as it stands today. Currently, Antoine Faivre's six-point typology for identifying esoteric phenomena are 1)Correspondences and Interdependence 2)Living Nature 3)Imagination 4)Transmutation 5) Praxis of Concordance and 6) Transmission. Arthur Versluis amends Faivre's typology to include gnosis. For Versluis, specifically Western currents of esotericism involve "direct spiritual insight either into hidden aspects of the cosmos, (cosmological gnosis) or transcendence (metaphysical gnosis). "Wouter Hanegraaff, on the other hand, has challenged the use of typologies altogether, calling for an empirical approach, where the "empiricist scholar seeks as much as possible not to apply a priori ideological constructs to esoteric subjects, but rather to approach his or her subject with an informed, open,

and so much as possible, neutral mind" (Versluis 1-2). The current ASE definition emphasizes the marginal and essentially critical position of esoteric worldviews in relation to dominant philosophies, religions, etc.

[10] Norman O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1947, 1990), 93.

[11] Ibid., 74.

[12] Ibid.,45.

[13] Ibid., 90.

[14] Ibid., 29.

[15] Ibid., 11.

[16] Ibid., 20.

[17] Ibid., 23.

[18] Ibid., 39.

[19] Ibid., 75.

[20] Ibid., 6-7.

[21] Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death* (Middletown: Wesleyan University, Press, 1959), xx.

[22] Ibid., 94.

[23] Ibid., 175.

[24] Ibid., 34.

[25] Ibid., 293.

[26] Ibid., 310.

[27] Ibid., 307.

[28] Ibid., 175.

[29] Ibid., 109.

[30] Ibid., 30.

[31] Ibid., 160.

[32] Ibid., 116.

[33] Ibid., 310.

[34] Ibid., 159.

[35] Ibid., 133.

[36] Ibid., 308.

[37] Ibid., 36.

[38] Ibid., 237.

[39] Ibid., 33.

[40] Ibid., 95.

[41] Ibid., 90.

[42] Norman O. Brown, *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 129.

[43] Ibid., 138.

[44] Ibid., 136.

[45] Ibid., 126.

[46] Ibid., 198.

[47] Ibid., 140.

[48] Ibid., 139.

[49] Ibid., 180.

[50] Ibid., 6.

[51] Ibid., 5.

[52] Ibid., 6.

[53] Ibid., 2.

[54] Ibid., 3.

[55] Ibid., 2.

[56] Ibid., 3.

[57] Ibid., 1.

[58] Ibid., 6.

[59] Ibid., 189.

[60] Ibid., 190.

[61] Ibid., 189.

[62] Ibid., 197.

[63] Ibid., 198.

[64] Ibid., 171-172.

[65] Ibid., 173.

[66] "Love Hath Reason, Reason None." A lecture given at Boston University, December 15, 1993: Boston Colloquium for the Philosophy of Science, in honor of Professor Robert S. Cohen. Unpublished essay cited with permission from Thomas N. Brown.

[67] Brown, *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis*, 168.

[68] Brown, "*Love Hath Reason*," 11.

[69] Brown, *Life Against Death*, 315.

[70] Brown, *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis*, 180.

[71] Ibid., 4.

Hermetic Melancholia and the Suffering of Androids
Eric G. Wilson

Hermetic Melancholia and The Suffering of Androids

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Introduction
The Esoteric Uses of the Android

Ever since Victoria Nelson published her book on the spiritual scope of puppets,[1] many of us have been re-thinking our relationship to creatures generally ignored or even excoriated by esoteric thinkers. These creatures are those artificial beings frequently interpreted as aberrations of natural or supernatural orders, those automatons and robots usually viewed as violations and perversities. After Nelson, we can now study these humanoids with clearer heads. Indeed, we discover that these androids share the qualities of Nelson's puppets—that the simulated human is vessel of sacred connection as much as principle of spiritual alienation, holy device as well as horrible machine.

If the android is both a realization of spiritual perfection and a violation of spiritual law, then it can also be a marker of psychological harmony and discord. On the one hand, some have fashioned androids to overcome divorce from the divine. These ambitious makers hope that their technologies will salve their aching souls. They believe that meditation on an inhuman machine will empower them to transcend human limitations and become as gods. Hungry to transcend ego, these artificers are capacious creatures; they approach mental and emotional fullness. On the other hand, some have concocted artificial humans to conquer separation from a beloved human. These aspiring magi trust that a simulated creature will substitute for their loss. They think that affection for an animated mechanism will enable them to return to the status quo before their bereavement and to become once more a simple human being. Fixated on their egos, these makers are often

selfish men close to psychological fragmentation.

To explore the psychological dimensions of android-building is to sound two diametrically opposed kinds of longing—esoteric yearning for transcendence of self and exoteric desire to fulfill the ego. On the transcendent side of the spectrum, one discovers the psychological basis for the Gnostic quest for the *anthropos*, the perfect androgyne untroubled by space and time; for the Kabbalistic journey toward the *Adam Kadmon*, the flawless human beyond fear and desire; for the alchemical endeavor to find the philosopher's stone, principle of eternal life. On the egotistical extreme of this line, one finds the psychology behind the scientist's attempts to create a human machine more alive than an organic being; the technologist's essays to exchange supple, contingent, and lithe specimens for rigid, predictable, and brittle systems; the consumer's hunger to mechanize his life, to surround himself with gleaming surfaces instead of bloody messes.

In analyzing the psychology of android-building in the following essay, I study this spectrum running between Gnostic holiness and gothic horror. I draw on Marsilio Ficino's theories of hermetic melancholia and Freud's ideas of dysfunctional depression. I invoke Heinrich von Kleist's divine puppets and E.T.A. Hoffmann's demonic automatons. I meditate on both the sacred and the sordid possibilities of mummies and golems and robots. I hope for a yield as simple as it is unsettling. I want to understand why humans have fallen in love with dead machines and hated thriving organs.

Saturday in the Park

Spike Jonze's film *Being John Malkovich* (1999) intimates a troubling undercurrent of puppetry. Moving mannequins may not, after all, provide merry escapes from the difficult world but might rather highlight the day's most painful yearnings. The intricately realistic puppet shows of Craig Schwartz, the film's protagonist, emphasize the enduring agitations of human existence. A puppet alone in a room bursts into a disturbing lament born of his isolation. Marionette forms of Heloise and Abelard from separate chambers pine for erotic contact. These displays of puppetry,

brilliant and moving though they are, undercut the expectations we bring to the marionette show—those hopes for a mild, slightly ribald respite from the rigors of the daily grind.

The puppet is most often associated with the child. Probably most of us recall going to a park of a summer Saturday afternoon, sitting on the bright green grass, and watching the shenanigans of puppets. Perhaps a version of the old Punch and Judy routine, harmlessly violent and vaguely libidinous, whipped us into belly-laughs. Possibly a gentler sort of show, a rendering of Aesop or the Bible, warmed us into sentimentality. This more didactic marionette feature likely resembled the puppets we watched on television—the Muppets or Howdy Doody. These and other instances of puppet merriment make it hard for us to accept Jonze's more troubled visions, his use of diminutive mannequins to figure the glooms of the human soul.

But it is precisely our conventional expectations toward puppetry that grant aberrant marionettes their uncanny power. Associating the puppet with joy, we feel disoriented when we behold a mannequin doubling human angst, or, worse, evil. This latter situation—the sinister puppet—has in recent years become increasingly prominent. Possibly drawing from the famous 1963 *Twilight Zone* episode in which the doll Talky Tina kills an oppressive stepfather, Tom Holland's *Child's Play* (1988) features as its monstrous villain a child's doll, Chucky, animated by the soul of a recently slain serial killer. Throughout this film and its sequels, audiences are treated to the weirdness of the child's doll coming to murderous life. The same eerie conflict between innocence and experience informs another spate of puppet horror pictures. Beginning in 1989 with David Schmoeller's *The Puppet Master*, this sequence of pictures (totaling, according to my count, seven volumes) also draws for its effects on the creepy antagonism of the marionette, its blending of sweet nostalgia and dark magic.

The puppet and the moving doll, its sibling, are microcosms of the android, a life-size mannequin that resembles the human being. The diminutive puppet differs in significant and obvious ways from the larger android. However, this smaller mannequin shares with the android important characteristics. Both constitute

artificial humans seemingly come to life. Both fascinate the child in us keen on harmless magic, the escapism of the fantastic. Both stoke our worries over the blurring of living and dead. The puppet and the android comprise reminders of a paradise from which we have fallen and toward which we yearn. They also prove signs of our horror of collapsing categories and our faith in meaningful distinction. To ponder the puppet is to enter into the psychology of the android, the sadness of lost grace and gloomy hope.

These animated mannequins, regardless of size, reveal the secret and duplicitous origin of our fascination with humanoid machines. We yearn for their unaffected grace. We fear their awkward weirdness. In unveiling our hidden fixations on mechanical doubles, these human-like contraptions manifest our more general vexation in relation to all machines: our entrapment between loving efficient pistons and loathing aloof metal. Since the industrial revolution of the romantic age, this double bind has been especially troublous. Now, in an age that has pushed the industrial threat to human sovereignty to the digital threat to human identity, this bind is more pronounced than ever. We love what undoes us; we hate our essential familiar. To study the android is to get to the core of this classic case of sleeping with the enemy, this self-annihilation inherent in the age of living machines, this transcendence and this suicide.

Kleist and the Puppets of Paradise

In "The Puppet Theatre" (1810), Heinrich von Kleist meditates on the uncanny theology of marionettes. The piece features a famous dancer, Mr. C., describing to an unnamed narrator the elegance of puppets. Against convention, C. claims that these mechanical dolls dance with more grace than humans for this reason: inanimate figures lack the "affectation" that thwarts the aesthetic designs of men and women.[2] Freed from the self-consciousness that forces humans to *think* about what they are doing, puppets never lose their perfect "centre of gravity" and thus are unhindered by the "inertia of matter."[3] In this way, puppets, seemingly dumb stuff, approach gods, intelligent spirits. Here, C. claims, is "where the two ends of the round earth meet"—where

the absence of consciousness meets complete consciousness.[4]

C. clarifies this theory by invoking the "third chapter of Genesis," the account of the fall of man. He claims that dancing puppets recall the innocence of Adam and Eve before they ate from the tree of knowledge. Human dancers, however, suffer from the post-fall experience: melancholy self-consciousness. C. suggests that there exist two paths by which fleshly dancers—and all women and men—might return to the graceful state from which they have declined: a backward and a forward way. The backward path requires a return to unthinking matter, the unconscious puppet; the forward way necessitates an ascent to total consciousness, the condition of a god.[5]

C. exemplifies this double vision in two ways. Two lines "intersecting at a point after they have passed through infinity will suddenly come together again on the other side." Likewise, the "image in a concave mirror, after traveling away into infinity, suddenly comes close up to us again." C.'s conclusion: "When consciousness has . . . passed through an infinity, grace will return; so that grace will be most purely present in the human frame that has either no consciousness or an infinite amount of it, which is to say either in a marionette or in a god."[6]

If the puppet can reveal a potential grace, and thus provide an ideal of untroubled unconsciousness, it can also mark the human being's distance from this same elegance, and therefore constitute a reminder of the fall. Moreover, as a symbol of one pole of redemption—the lack of self-awareness opposing (yet agreeing with) complete self-consciousness—the puppet reveals not only the human's separation from innocence. It also shows his painful limbo, his hovering between two inaccessible alternatives: unknowing and total knowledge. Pulled between Adam unfallen and Adam restored, people are doomed to double longing, nostalgia for dumb matter or omniscient spirit.

This is the duplicity of the puppet. On the one hand, it intimates the double path of redemption, the way back and the way forward—the bliss of the idealized childhood (retrospective dreams of thought and deed harmonized) and the joy of adulthood realized (prospective reveries of self and consciousness reunited).

On the other hand, it hints at a twofold mode of alienation, the distance from pre-fall innocence and the separation from post-rapture experience: the unrequited nostalgia for graceful ignorance (the sad yen for bodily unity) and the unfulfilled hope for effortless knowledge (the gloomy gaze toward mental oneness). In inspiring visions of happiness, the former strain is likely to cause melancholia, for it reminds us of what we have lost and what we cannot recover. In inducing feelings of bereavement, the latter current might result in exhilaration—the quest for infinity that elevates finite life. Whichever way the puppet pushes, there is weirdness—the strangeness of disorientation, the eeriness of fevered longing.

Now we likely imagine more unsettling encounters with puppets, no more displayed in green daylight but in the chiaroscuro of twilight. In the curious gloaming, the marionette theater fades into the mystery of the fall. The wondrous leaps and dives of the wooden figures, not vexed by gravity or yearning, hint at the gestures of Adam—God's fine figurine—before he lapsed. But in recalling this fluency, the marionettes also remind the people in the gloomy rows of what they have lost and what they must suffer. The unaffected forms enjoy a unity between being and knowing that Adam lost when east of Eden he was cast. Still burning near the flaming blades of the cherubim, this first being of flesh was doomed to hurt in a gap between hunger and wholeness. In this rift we still ache, and long for a moment when matter and mind might once more merge. This instance never comes, and we begin to believe it never will. Saddened, we vow never again make our way in the shadows toward the marionette stage. But while trying to ignore the beautiful dolls, we envision the sinister side of puppetry: the solitary manikin after the show suspended between ceiling and floor. This is the sadness on the faces of all discarded humanoids, no matter what their size, a register for our own melancholy hovering between matter and spirit. We see in the alienated puppet the emptiness of abandonment mixed with the silent hope that someone might come.

The Melancholy Android and Sacred Technology

People require spiritual technologies to help them overcome this aching paralysis, this endless vacillation between dust and deity. Most settle for the prayers, rituals, and icons that their religions offer, modes of worship that might carry over to the grace of the garden or the omniscience of the divine city. However, some especially wounded souls, burdened with excessive sensitivity to the rift between matter and spirit, need more than the temporary poultices of orthodox piety. They want immediate identification with either unfallen Adam or Adam restored: the perfection of unknowing, or perfect knowledge. They create artifices unsanctioned by orthodox laws: humanoid machines that move with no thought of stumbling and prophetic androids attuned to the world axle. Sad over their alienation from the divine, men have concocted mummies that might carry them from the pain of time to the western land of the stately dead; statues capable of drawing down and voicing gods; alchemical homunculi that marry spirit and matter; golem approximating Adam before he fell; automata untouched by messy emotions.

But these same sacred machines frequently fail to redeem. They often exacerbate the melancholia that they were designed to assuage. Automata suggest that there is little difference between human and machine. The golem can turn murderous. The diminutive homunculus is a reminder that man is a speck of matter trying to contain cosmic consciousness. The talking statue manifests the cruel duality of body and soul. The mummy proves an uncanny return of this horror: all that seems alive is dead.

The psychology of the android, like that of the puppet, oscillates between miracle and monster. The humanoid machine is vehicle of integration and cause of alienation, holy artifice and horrendous contraption. The android is fully sacred, *sacer*: consecrated *and* accursed. It is a register of what humans most desire and fear, what they hate in life and what they love in death. To track the psychological dimensions of the humanoid is to sound Western what is constant in the Western soul informed by Plato's pining for eternal forms and Augustine's heart that will not rest on sordid earth. This questing for the mind of the humanoid is also a

search for the intense core of our contemporary identity crisis, the Platonic and Augustinian conundrums made horrifically new in the digital age. What is the difference between artificial and real? How can we know this difference? Who is the agent that knows in the first place?

The place to begin this analysis of the melancholia behind the creation of androids is the work of Marsilio Ficino, the fifteenth-century philosopher and translator. The meditations of Ficino lead us into the labyrinths of noble melancholia and its connection to statues that might come to life. This relationship between sadness and stone itself takes us to the strange world of late antiquity, the cradle of the wildly eclectic hermetic texts, dialogues, and tractates devoted to the lacerations and cures of the soul. The *Hermetica*—which Ficino translated into Latin and made a cornerstone of his thought—constitutes a nexus not only between East and West (Alexandria and Rome) but also between ancient Egyptian mummification and early modern golem.

Ficino's Noble Melancholia

The Florentine philosopher Ficino thrived on the interstice between melancholy and magic. Born under the sign of sad Saturn in 1433, Ficino spent his life brooding over relationships between matter and spirit, being and knowing, fall and redemption. The results of these constant meditations were *The Book of Life* (1489) and a translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (c. 200-300 A.D.) from Greek to Latin. The former is a psychological treatise on the connection between melancholy and genius as well as a manual for how to avoid becoming overwhelmed by black bile. The latter is a second- and third-century collection of eclectic philosophical dialogues influenced by an ecstatic mix of spiritual movements, ranging from Egyptian theurgy to Neoplatonism to Gnosticism. These dialogues focus on links between matter and spirit and on ways that pious men might channel spirit into matter. Together, these works lay the foundation for psychological theories that illuminate the sadness of android-building. To establish this ground, I shall first describe Ficino's notions of melancholia and then connect these notions to the animated statues of the hermetic

tradition.

As Frances Yates explains, Ficino, a deep classical scholar, was aware of a question asked in *Problems*, a work from the fourth century B.C. often attributed to Aristotle[7]: "Why is it that all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly melancholics, and some of them to such an extent as to be affected by diseases caused by black bile?"[8] As Ficino knew, this question moved against the grain of the prevailing theory of melancholy, emerging from Hippocrates and Galen in the ancient world and solidified by Hildegard of Bingen and Avicenna in the medieval period. This traditional theory saw melancholy as a condition of fearfulness, moroseness, misanthropy, or madness caused by an overabundance of the most sinister of the four humors, black bile. Aware of more positive visions of melancholia in Euripides and Plato, Aristotle's disciple countered this unfavorable perspective. In the plays of Euripides, the most extreme symptoms of the black disease—delusion and dread—often vex great heroes. The madness of Heracles, Ajax, and Bellerophon results not from petty moroseness but from brilliant defiance.[9] Plato developed this idea further when he associated frenzy, *furor*, with visionary ecstasy. In the *Phaedrus* (c. 380 B.C.), Socrates admits that frenzy is perhaps an evil, but it also is much more: "we receive the greatest benefits through frenzy. . . in so far as it is sent as a divine gift."[10] Hence, although Plato did not connect melancholy with holy madness—he in fact related the black disease to moral weakness—he married the main symptom of melancholy to greatness.

A leading exponent of the "rebirth" of classical ideas, Ficino recovered this tradition of noble melancholy in his *Book of Life*. According to Ficino, melancholy is most likely to afflict not sullen neurotics but profound scholars. This is so for three reasons. First, meditative souls are born under the planetary influences of Mercury, "who invites us to begin our studies," and Saturn, "who works them out and has us stick to them and make discoveries." These planets pass to their children their natures: coldness and dryness—characteristics necessary for calm, lengthy study but also traits of black bile, associated with the frigid, desiccated core of

the earth. To this heavenly cause of scholarly melancholy, Ficino adds a natural one. In pursuing knowledge, the scholar must pull his soul from "external to internal things, as if moving from the circumference to the center." To penetrate to the center of his being, he must remain "very still," must "gather [himself] at the center." Fixed on the middle of his being, he dwells in a place very much like "the center of the earth itself, which resembles black bile." One with the earth's middle, the scholar descends to the "center of each thing." Delving to the core, he paradoxically rises to the "highest things," for the dark axis of beings is in accord with melancholy Saturn, "the highest of planets." The human cause of the scholar's melancholy is inseparable from the heavenly and natural causes. Influenced by Saturn to migrate to the center, the scholar contracts his own being and thus dries and freezes his brain and heart, turning them "earthly and melancholy."

Moreover, this perpetual thinking, a movement between circumference and center, external and internal, exhausts the "spirit." To continue in its difficult motion, the tired spirit requires the nourishment of thin blood. The spirit's consuming of lighter, clearer blood leaves the remaining blood "dense, dry, and black." Together, these causes of scholarly melancholy separate mind from body. Obsessed with "incorporeal things"—invisible interiors, vague interstices, and tenuous middles—the melancholic dwells on the threshold between soul and body. Holding to the "bodiless truths" of the invisible, he turns his body in a "half soul"; unable to escape body entirely, he remains partly corporeal.[11]

Ficino, a student of Plato, does not believe that the melancholy thinker should engage in endless vacillations between boundary and center, depth and height, body and soul. He holds that the dejected philosopher should end in spiritual tranquility—find rest on the still point of the spiritual axis, in the untroubled air of Saturn's sphere, in the palaces beyond space and time. Yet, until the thinker achieves these unearthly *topoi*—if ever—he must suffer the pain of his special genius, his double sight: mania. Recalling the theories of Plato and the Aristotelian author of *Problems*, Ficino admits that "the poetic doors are beaten on in vain without rage," that "all men . . . who are distinguished in some faculty

are melancholics."[12] In his *Book on Life*, Ficino hopes to ease the pains of this *furor* without extinguishing its lights, to instruct the sad genius to channel his nervous disposition into salubrious directions. He offers remedies for debilitating melancholy, most of which center on the idea that Saturnine interiority can be counter-balanced by exteriority. The sullen philosopher might eat foods associated with the social impulses of Jove or the amorous designs of Venus. He might surround himself with colors imbued with joviality and flirtatiousness. He might, through the aid of magical talismans, draw nourishment from Jupiter's conviviality and Venus's libido.[13]

***The Lacerations of the* Poimandres**

This last therapy for melancholy connects to Ficino's work as a translator of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. This ancient text made it into Ficino's hands by way of Cosimo de Medici, who in 1460 had attained a copy from Byzantium. Cosimo and Ficino thought that they had discovered a great treasure: a document espousing the wisdom of Hermes Trismegistus, the Thrice-Great Hermes, an Egyptian sage believed to be older than Moses and Plato. Cosimo ordered Ficino to cease his present task, a translation of Plato from Greek to Latin, and to go to work without delay on the more important translation of the philosophical father of Platonism and Judaism. For the next three years, Ficino carried the Greek over into Latin, believing all the while that he was transcribing the oldest truths in the universe.[14] Unaware of what would become known in the sixteenth-century, that the *Corpus Hermeticum* is actually a gathering of second- and third-century works set down by many anonymous hands,[15] Ficino would have been especially moved by the *Poimandres*, a meditation on the creation of the cosmos and the nature of man.

The *Poimandres* is a dialogue between the mind of God and Hermes Trismegistus. As the *Poimen Anthropos* (the shepherd of men), the heavenly *nous* attempts to lead Hermes from his physical limitations to metaphysical freedom. This he does by illuminating the origin and nature of the cosmos and man. In the beginning, Poimandres—"Life and Light"—sent his creative word to organize

dark, seething chaos into an lucent, harmonious cosmos. Next, Poimandres, being "bisexual," gave birth to a second mind, a demiurge who combined with the *logos* to separate the seven planetary orbits, reflections of eternal reason, from the mundane planet, nature devoid of reason. Poimandres next created man, a "Being like to Himself" capable of dwelling in the spiritual sphere of the demiurge, his brother.[16]

This primal man, the *anthropos*, a perfect copy of his eternal father, knew the mysteries of the seven orbits. He sent his gaze down through their circlings until he broke through the lowest sphere, that of the moon. Man beheld nature, and nature saw man. She "smiled with insatiate love of Man" and revealed to him, in the mirrors of her waters, "his most beautiful form," the "form of God." Man witnessed his gorgeous image imbedded in the mundane surface. He fell in love with the planet. He "took up his abode in matter devoid of reason." Nature "wrapped him in her clasp, and they were mingled in one." This is why, says Poimandres, all particular, earthbound men, offspring of this primal union, are, in contradistinction to all other creatures, "twofold": mortal "by reason of his body," and immortal "by reason of the Man of eternal substance." Double, humans are controlled by destiny and able to control all things. A sub-lunar man is slave and master. He is asleep and awake. He is carnal and consecrate.[17]

This split in man between eternal mind and temporal matter, further aggravated by a later severance between male and female halves, leaves earthlings in chronically awkward positions. Unlike gods, purely immortal, and unlike animals, thoroughly mortal, humans are pulled by opposing poles: matter bent on seducing spirit into its warm though deathly rhythms, mind keen on escaping matter to ever-living realm beyond the stars. Likewise, in contrast to gods whose spiritual wants are fulfilled and animals for which physical satisfaction is enough, men and women are incomplete. Soul thwarts the unthinking urges of body; body stymies the pristine quests of soul. Conflicted and hungry, most men, as Poimandres claims, descend into ignorant sensual pleasure. Led "astray by carnal desire," setting "affection on the body," earthlings delve into the "darkness of the sense-world" and

suffer the "lot of death." A few men, however, strain to extricate themselves from profane motion and rest in the sacred stillness of the "Good which is above all being." To identify with the "Life and the Light," his true self, the pious seeker must reverse the error of the *anthropos*. He must "loathe the bodily senses" of dying earth and love the invisible mind beyond the planets.[18]

But, as Ficino would explain sixteen years after he translated these ideas, denying the vibrancy of the senses is melancholy work that can only be undertaken by a melancholy philosopher. The Saturnine man is skeptical of outward appearances. He suspects that their warm, moist flows, their organic vitality, are at best illusions hiding deeper truths, at worst invitations to consume drafts of death. He is compelled to pull away from lubricious surfaces, to contract inward to cold, dry regions where nothing moves: the frigid core of the earth, chilly pages in the midnight, Saturn ringed with ice.

However, as Ficino makes clear, this extreme interiority, this drive toward the inanimate, is exhausting and dangerous. It threatens to drain the thinker of vitality, to reduce him a husk. He cannot forsake organic energy entirely. He must balance his spiritual attraction to petrifaction with a bodily desire for the charms of Venus or the conviviality of Jove. This effort at redress places the philosopher on a delicate threshold between stillness and motion, inorganic and organic. Though he may find occasional contentment on this boundary, he is generally doomed to dejection. As long as he is trapped in a soft shell desirous of nature's waves, he will, despite his frozen core, be torn between unquenched metaphysical thirst and physical need he cannot satisfy.

Therapeutic Statues in the **Aesclepius**

While the melancholy philosopher can temporarily fortify his ruined genius by channeling Venus and Jove, he can escape his wound permanently only by healing the vicious split between body and soul. This emancipation can be achieved through two distinct modes, one based on ascent, the other dependent upon decline. As Ficino learned in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the first way of liberation begins when the body dies. For pious men who have

experienced "gnosis" of the true relationship between their souls and the eternal Mind, death reverses the fall of the first man. The body falls away from the skyward soul and returns to the gross elements from which it came. Meanwhile, the soul rises through the seven planetary spheres, shedding a particular type of earthly ignorance as it crosses each orbit. Eventually, this soul enjoys consummation: total identity with God and the good, light and life.[19]

This paradigm troubles traditional notions of life and death, happiness and sadness. Organicity, the rhythm of the physical world normally associated with life, becomes death, the decay of space and time. The inorganic, the soul untouched by nature and often connected to death, turns into life itself, eternal vitality above corrosion. To be tied to a warm body is to be imprisoned. Floating in a cold space is freedom.

In another text ostensibly by Hermes, the *Aesclepius*, Ficino encountered another healing technique. This dialogue between Hermes and Aesclepius, in Western circulation before Cosimo attained the *Corpus Hermeticum* and well known to Ficino, meditates, like the *Poimandres*, on the relationship between soul and body. In contrast to the vision of the Shepherd of Men, this text proclaims that man's double nature actually makes him superior to gods. Hermes says that man's "two substances," "one divine, the other mortal," render him not only "better than all mortal beings" but "also better than the gods, who are made wholly of immortal substance."[20] Enjoying a more expansive awareness than the gods, man is able to command the gods, call them down to earth. This he does through magic capable of initiating decline: the descent of the divine into dirt.

This practice requires that the melancholy philosopher fashion statues of gods that he can then animate with a divine afflatus. Just as God made other gods in his eternal image, certain pious men "fashion their gods in likeness of their own aspect." This stone anatomy—stiff and inorganic, as cold and dry as the sable soul—turns into a magnet drawing down from the heavens the Mind of God. Charged, it becomes "living and conscious" and able to do "many mighty works": predict the future, inflict and remove

diseases, dispense woe and weal "according to men's deserts."[21]

The paradigm of descent also blurs time-honored distinctions. Like the ascent detailed in the *Poimandres*, the decline in the *Aesclepius* suggests this: what normally passes for life, thermal oscillations, are deathly; what generally intimates death, cold shapes of marble, are vital. Likewise, just as the *Poimandres* questions the traditional distinction between joy and happiness, so the *Aesclepius* maintains that what often translates to dejection—the split between soul and body—grants the power to draw deities to dust, while what is often a sign of joy—unified consciousness—is divorced from the marriage between opposites.

The general similarities between these hermetic texts quickly open into important differences. The *Poimandres* exudes a Gnostic atmosphere, a sense that matter is inherently botched and beyond redemption. The Shepherd of Men claims that the eternal, boundless, omniscient soul is trapped in body, a realm of decay, contraction, ignorance. Awareness of this tension between soul and body breeds a melancholia that can be relieved only through the transcendence of matter—the partial transcendence of asceticism, the total transcendence of bodily death. The cosmic rift between soul and body is beyond repair. Only beyond the cosmos can one find health.

In contrast, the *Aesclepius* operates in an alchemical environment, a domain in which matter is the womb in which spirit born and thus the ground of redemption. Hermes believes that the fall of immortal energy into the mortal coil offers the possibility of a capacious, though painful, double vision. To become conscious of this two-fold perspective is to become a melancholy magus desirous of marrying the great antipodes of the universe. This healing union arises through the animation of matter with spirit, statues with gods. The gap between time and eternity is momentarily closed. In the mire of the mundane, one finds the jewel: the philosopher's stone, the sacred illuminating the profane, the profane bearing the sacred.[22]

As Ficino suggests in his *Book of Life*, this latter, alchemical mode is more appealing to the earth-bound philosopher than is the Gnostic way. Close to the *Aesclepius*, Ficino claims that

melancholy awareness of the conflict between body and soul is not a sad result of an inherently botched cosmos but a rich inspiration for holy magic. He also follows this hermetic dialogue in stating that one way to heal the melancholy wound is to channel appropriate spirits to ailing matter: the warm Venus to the cold soul, the convivial Jove to the dry disposition.

Yet underneath Ficino's positive theories of melancholy lurk negative currents. Though Ficino's melancholy philosopher appears to be attuned to the vital flows necessary to ameliorate the hurting cosmos, he is at his core cold and dry, motivated and sustained by Saturn's ice. Likewise, even if the sad philosopher in the *Book of Life* seems able to animate matter with spirit, he is finally, as a student of the *Aesclepius*, fixated on dead things: inanimate statues. These are the disturbing paradoxes of the melancholy magician who crafts sacred statues. Though desirous of life, he is in love with death. Though hungry for the currents of spirit, he is obsessed with stone.

Freudian Melancholia and Narcissism

If Ficino's Hermetic melancholia points to the hopeful longing behind Kleist's puppets, then Freud's psychology of sadness reveals the reverse: a neurotic love of death that fixates on wooden folks. Like Ficino, Freud believes that melancholia can grant men "a keener eye for truth than others who are not melancholic." But Freud also maintains that the price for this sight is high: perpetual dread, self-loathing, obsession with corpses.[23]

In "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), Freud argues that melancholy, like mourning, is based on the loss of a beloved entity—a real lover, an ideal condition. But while the work of mourning eventually redirects love to another object and ends the pain of loss, the labors of melancholy never cease, for the melancholic, instead of releasing the lost beloved, *identifies* with it. Unconsciously, the melancholic turns his feelings concerning the lost other toward his own ego. These sentiments are a mixture of love and hatred—affection for the lost object's virtues, disdain toward the pain caused by the object's removal.

Loving the object, the melancholic incorporates it into his ego;

hating it, he loathes himself. For Freud, this self-hatred is the mark of the melancholic. What is really unconscious sadism toward the lost other becomes overt masochism. This "extraordinary fall in. . . self-esteem" results in a sense that the ego's every action and thought is inferior, shameful, sinful. The predictable result of this anxiety is "sleeplessness and refusal of nourishment, and by an overthrow, psychologically very remarkable, of that instinct which constrains every living thing to cling to life."[24]

This is the dark underside of Ficino's philosophical melancholia. Though the sad philosopher enjoys a more profound vision of life's lacerations than does the happy man, he also struggles to overcome suicidal urges. He sleeps and wakes with a sense of irrevocable loss. This loss can be the loss of a particular beloved—a mother or a father, a friend or a lover. It can be the lasting absence of a pristine state, possibly a childhood idyll, potentially a dream of Eden. Whatever the form of this bereavement, it always resolves into a loss of blissful unity, harmony with self, other, cosmos.

The Freudian melancholic, like the sad soul of Ficino, longs to heal his lacerations by reconnecting to some pristine concord. However, in contrast to the Hermetic melancholic who quests for union with the divine, Freud's despondent patient becomes angry at the source of his loss. Incorporating this source into his own being, he comes to loathe that part of himself that loves the lost person or state. If he should try to recover this state or person through creating an artificial copy—an automaton resembling his lover or a statue that looks like Adam—he will hate the unnatural form as much as he loves it, will view it as a monster as much as a miracle. His creation will not be a pious, self-effacing emanation of a hunger for cosmological unity. It will be a neurotic, narcissistic projection of his yearning to possess the one thing that has been lost.

A Brief Typology of the Android

Thus far, I have used terminology loosely, roughly equating moving puppets, statues that talk, and the mannequins a twentieth-century neurotic might make. Now, before continuing to introduce

the mental life of the android, I should clarify my concepts. "Android," "synthetic human being," forms a general category instanced by several particular examples. Puppets, dolls, and statues in human form; mummies and homunculi and golem; human automatons and robots—all of these are subsets of the android, similar in kind yet different in degree. Though each of these humanoids, is, properly speaking, an android, each instances one of the three main types of artificial human: the humanoid made uniformly of stiff, inanimate, natural material; the humanoid crafted uniformly from flexible, possibly organic material; and the humanoid created with blend of unyielding, dead, possibly synthetic parts and pliable, living, potentially organic parts. One can respectively designate these types as the mummy, the golem, and the automaton. The category of the mummy includes androids comprised of dead things: mummies, of course, but also puppets, dolls, and statues. The division of the golem subsumes androids made of living earth: golem, obviously, but also homunculi. The automaton classification includes those humanoids combining the stiff and the soft, the synthetic and the organic, the dead and the living: automatons, clearly, but also robots.

These categories are not only differentiated by bodily composition. They are also distinguished by psychological condition. The category of the mummy is beset by melancholia over this conundrum: the hunger for eternal *physical* life forces one to become obsessed with dead things—with corpses that might gain reanimation, inanimate stone that could serves as spirit's vessel, lifeless wood preserving the face of the deceased. The golem class is agitated by a different sort of sadness: a desire for undying *spiritual* existence that results in bitterly vexed attempts to transcend matter through matter. Both the golem-maker and the creator of the homunculus attempt to approximate the unfallen Adam beyond space and time by delving into grossest parts of the physical world—moist dust that might cohere into a giant, and semen-soaked mud that might grow into a little fellow.

The category of the automaton is connected to another sort of gloom. Not bent on horizontal transcendence beyond yet dependent upon time, not keen for vertical transcendence above

but contingent upon matter, the fashioner of automatons and robots wishes to replace to avoid the contingent fluxes of the organic world by surrounding himself with predictable machines. However, to achieve this mechanical paradise, he must mimic the organic world he loathes, must imitate with his cogs the laws by which cells thrive. This double bind offers the automaton maker the possibility only of ironic transcendence: an escape from changing matter based on the laws of matter and thus doomed to fail even as it gestures toward inaccessible stasis.

The Spectrum of the Android: From Gnostic to Gothic

These three types of android constitute a spectrum, flanked on one side by divine mummies and holy statues grown from noble, spiritual melancholia—the longing detailed by Ficino—and on other side by weird automatons and robots emerging from neurotic, physical melancholy—the gloom described by Freud. The two extremes of this spectrum –whose midpoint would feature the golem-maker caught between the spirit he loves but cannot achieve and matter he loathes but requires—can conveniently be termed the "hermetic" and the "neurotic."

The Hermetic magician attempts to transform his sadness into sacred technologies; the wasted neurotic converts his dejection into profane substitutions. The Hermetic melancholic rises to religious ecstasy, his soul flowing out into the animated android. The nervous type falls into secular frenzy, his mind fervidly trying to repossess the beloved that his copy mimics. The Hermetic maker is charitable, wishing to vanquish his ego to become one with the primal Man, *anthropos*. The edgy craftsman is selfish; he wants to incorporate into his ego the particular woman or state from which he has been divorced. The magician aspires to be a *g*nostic, a reconciler of body and soul, an engineer of eternity.[25] The neurotic turns gothic, a compulsive wrecker of soul and body, a mad scientist unconsciously concocting horrors.

This spectrum of androids begins in the sacred and ends in the sacred—the sacred as holy, the sacred as accursed. On the gnostic side of the continuum, the region devoted to knowledge of and participation in the spiritual abyss, the sacred takes an uncanny

form. According to Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1927), the uncanny (*unheimlich*) is a mode of exploration in which the familiar becomes unfamiliar and the strange turns intimate. Sometimes, after a thinker has long meditated on the Being generating and sustaining all beings, he on a certain day, perhaps when he is bored or in reverie, feels the common things fall away. The everyday objects—this particular volume of Proust, that grocery list—become crepuscular, ghostly, weirdly inaccessible.

At the same time, the invisible ground of these existences strangely arises, becomes, though still unseen, palpable, attractive, luminous. In a flash, the thinker *knows*. What he thought were the integral components of his life, the familiar objects comprising his particular biography, are superfluous, strange others seducing him from the essential. Likewise, what he suspected to be the mysterious dream, the primal abyss of Being, is the hidden core of his life, the most intrinsic principle. Extended into this nothing, this abyss—not this or that—he is unsettled, insecure. Yet because this nothing is everything, the absence generating all presences, the thinker is also reassured, buoyed by a profound vision of the origin. This uncanny eruption is gnosis, intuitive knowledge of the whole.[26]

If the Hermetic statue is a vehicle of the gnostic uncanny, holy vision, the neurotic manikin is a site of another kind of uncanny, the gothic: accursed experience. In his 1919 essay "The Uncanny," Freud offers a psychology of horror. A moment of terror is caused by an unexpected eruption of a fear that has long been repressed. The return of the repressed is uncanny, a troubling mixture of unfamiliar and familiar. On the one hand, the repressed material is shocking, monstrous, for it has long been hidden and forgotten. On the other hand, this same underground energy is intimate and integral because it has been an essential force of organization and motivation.[27]

Envision a man in a secular age, alone in a poorly lighted museum, who witnesses an inanimate doll come to life. He is horrified at the spectacle, but he undergoes a déjà vu, as if he has many times before suffered this same moment. He has. The

animated doll embodies an archaic fear of the dead coming to life. It blurs the categories essential for a rational civilization. Because the man in the museum, a rational adult in a secular society, has long repressed this primitive, occult fear, the doll catalyzes in him repulsion and attraction. He is repulsed by an eruption of the intractable; he is attracted by a revelation of his own depths.

The Android's Continuum: Mummy to Automaton

The movement from divine mummy to demonic automaton corresponds to a historical development. The androids that fall into the class of the mummy tend to belong to the ancient world—the middle and new kingdoms of Egypt, the classical and Hellenistic periods of Greece, the late antiquity of Rome and Alexandria. The humanoids in the golem category generally come from the European worlds of the Middles Ages and the early modern period—from the medieval visions of Abraham Abulafia and Eleazer of Worms, from the renaissance ideas of Paracelsus and Rabbi Loew. Automatons emerge in the next phase of Western history: the scientific revolution and the enlightenment, when Descartes and de la Mettrie were opining that men are engines, when Vaucanson was crafting his mechanical duck and von Kemeplen his automatic chess-player.

This temporal movement is a dramatic action. As Western intellectual history becomes increasingly secular and rational, melancholy becomes decreasingly noble, androids less and less holy, and the uncanny decreasingly gnostic. The obverse is also true: as minds in the West turn decreasingly religious and intuitive, depression descends to disease, humanoid machines metamorphose into horrifying wonders, and the uncanny becomes gothic. The great turning point of this development is the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. From the days of the ancient Egyptian priests to the time of the early Renaissance magi, the various forms of androids—mummies and talking statues and homunculi and golem—were largely viewed as religious technologies, modes for overcoming the split between soul and body. During the seventeenth century, the period of Bacon and Descartes, the

humanoid machine began to lose its holy density and started to gain an almost exclusive scientific signification. Even though this century constitutes a fecund hybrid of occult passions and rational pursuits, it in the end spawned the age of reason, the eighteenth century, when scientific gadgets took the place of the artifices of eternity. The mechanical automaton edged out the esoteric android.

This picture of straight historical development from religion to science does not tell the whole story. Certainly the Egyptian priests and Hellenic statue makers and medieval Cabbalists and early modern alchemists were committed to a scientific understanding of the laws of nature and mechanics, to the idea that they could penetrate and harness the cosmos. Likewise, the automaton builders of the seventeenth-century were struck by the religious overtones of their creations, by the idea that their mechanically concocted Adams might replace the organic one of old. This overlapping of the extremes of the continuum opens into several pairs of opposites that structure android building through its historical changes. In each period, an android can be either a *realization* of cosmic law, a return to the perfection of the unfallen human, or a *violation* of universal dictate, a blasphemous affront to the way things are.[28]

Whether or not the humanoid is miracle or monster depends on the values placed on the *inorganic* and the *organic*. If the inorganic is ascendant, then the undying, unemotional android will be an ideal. However, if the organic is predominate, then the artificial, inhuman robot will be aberrant. Depending on the culture in which the android is built, the machine can be either a way of *integration* or a mode of *alienation*. The humanoid might reconnect its maker with the spiritual perfection from which the world has fallen. It might sever its creator from the natural laws that he should imitate.

As I have suggested, the romantic age of the early nineteenth century was beset by an especially troubling mixture of these extremes. Faced with the horrific yet exhilarating possibility that the industrial machine might take the place of man, this age inevitably loathed mechanisms as much as it loved them. This

vexed obsession—a consuming fixation on the various android types and their sundry significations—has, not surprisingly, persisted into our digital age and become even more intense. In a time when the very distinctions between organic and inorganic as well as integration and alienation have become blurred, the android in its heterogeneous forms serves as a critical register of our secret longings and terrors. Regardless of historical period or enduring type, we must keep this closely in mind: whether creaking in ancient Egypt or humming in renaissance France, the android is our familiar and our contemporary.

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In Book Seven of *The Republic* (360 BC), Plato pictures an ancient version of the modern cinema. Imagine men in a dark cave manacled so that their heads can face only the wall opposite the entrance. Behind these men burns a fire. Between the fire and these inmates rises a low wall. This wall resembles a screen one might find at a puppet show, the barrier between audience and puppeteer. Above this screen, artifacts ceaselessly move, carried back and forth by men behind the wall. Stone birds and fish, tigers and a bull glow over the scene, sometimes silent, other times singing out animal sounds. Likewise, statues of human beings make their way to and fro on the stage—tall like Achilles, lithe and slim such as Patroclus, like Homer himself cautiously blind. Sometimes these shapes speak words that men would say. Often, though, they oscillate soundlessly as ghosts. All the imprisoned men can see are the shadows these artifacts cast on the dim surface. These sad prisoners are doomed for their lives to witness simulacra of simulacra in a lurid hallucinarium—to watch a never-ending film in a theater that will not close.

But there is hope for liberation. On an unexpected day, one of these chained men might be freed. Unaccustomed to light and objects, he would at first behold the fire and the puppets with pain and confusion. Later, after he had for a time sat by the flames and played with the manikins, he would turn toward the cave's mouth and become curious over the even brighter sights

beyond the dimness. He would grope into the blinding sun and the bewildering blur of colored birds. If he were hungry to know about this new world, he would endure the doubt until he realized that the wings fluttering in the dawn are real, the ideal forms that the puppets in the cave only copy. Now wise, but still saddened by his wasted life, he might remember with nostalgia his time as a puppet watcher, and wonder if these artificial forms were sacred vehicles that pointed him to the truth. In another mood, he might regretfully think that these gloomy dolls formed pernicious obstacles to his quest for truth. This man would never forget his life with the puppets. He would continue to be hounded by visions of wooden gods and demons made from blocks. His dreams would be divided between mummies fumbling in their tombs and metallic men gliding over surfaces that shine.[29]

NOTES

[1] Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets* (London and Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002).

[2] Heinrich von Kleist, "The Puppet Theatre," *Selected Writings: Heinrich von Kleist*, ed. and trans. David Constantine (London: J.M. Dent, 1997), 413.

[3] Kleist, 413.

[4] Kleist, 414.

[5] Kleist, 414.

[6] Kleist, 416.

[7] Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 1979), 61.

[8] Quoted in Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), 18.

[9] Klibansky, Panofsky, Saxl, 15-16; Yates, *Occult,* 61-2.

[10] Quoted in Klibansky, Panofsky, Saxl, 16-17.

[11] Marsilio Ficino, *The Book of Life*, trans. Charles Boer (Dallas:

Spring Publications, 1980), 6-7.

[12] Ficino, 8.

[13] Ficino, 60-4, 66-9.

[14] Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964), 12-14.

[15] Yates, *Giordano*, 398-403.

[16] *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings Which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*, ed. and trans. Walter Scott (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), 15-21.

[17] *Hermetica*, 121-3.

[18] *Hermetica*, 125-7.

[19] *Hermetica*, 127-9.

[20] *Hermetica*, 337.

[21] *Hermetica*, 339-41.

[22] Kathleen Raine in *Blake and Tradition* (Princeton: Bollingen Press of Princeton Univ. Press, 1968) offers a useful distinction between Neoplatonism and alchemy that helps clarify the difference I am here drawing between Gnosticism and alchemy. Though important differences exist between Neoplatonism and Gnosticism—as Plotinus himself pointed out—the basic anti-materialism of both constitutes an abiding similiarity. One can with justice substitute Gnosticism for Neoplatonism in the following passage from Raine: "The great difference between the Neoplatonic and the alchemical philosophies lies in their opposed conceptions of the nature of matter. For Plotinus and his school, matter is mere mire, the dregs of the universe, a philosophic 'non-entity' because incapable of form except as it reflects intelligibles. To the alchemists spirit and matter, active and passive, light and darkness, above and below are, like the Chinese yin and yang, complementary principles, both alike rooted in the divine. The *deus absconditus* is hidden and operating in matter, no less than He is to be found in the spiritual order" (118).

[23] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholy," *The Nature of*

Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva, ed. Jennifer Radden (Oxford and London: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 285.

[24] Freud, "Mourning and Melancholy," 283-9.

[25] Here I am using "gnostic" (lower case) in a slightly different sense than "Gnostic" (upper case). "Gnostic" (upper case) signifies any of the various anti-materialist, dualistic visionaries thriving in Alexandria and Rome in the second and third centuries. "Gnostic" (lower case) points to a spiritual adept from any historical period who believes that soul and body can be reconciled, that matter can be redeemed through spirit. While both "gnostics" and "Gnostics" are similar in kind—both maintain that the origin of the cosmos is not a harmonious One or an orderly Jehovah but an ungraspable abyss containing yet transcending all oppositions—they are different in degree—the ancient Gnostic tends to place the abyss beyond the material cosmos while the gnostic is prone to locate the abyss within the visible universe. In other words, while both Gnostic and gnostic believe that life originates in a transcendent yet immanent abyss, the latter generally yearns for the transcendent nature of the abyss while the former is content to embrace the abyss's immanent currents. The Gnostic is similar to the Neoplatonist (though Gnostic and Neoplatonist are different in important ways) in degrading matter for eternal spirit while the gnostic corresponds to the hermetic alchemist in celebrating matter as the necessary opposite of spirit.

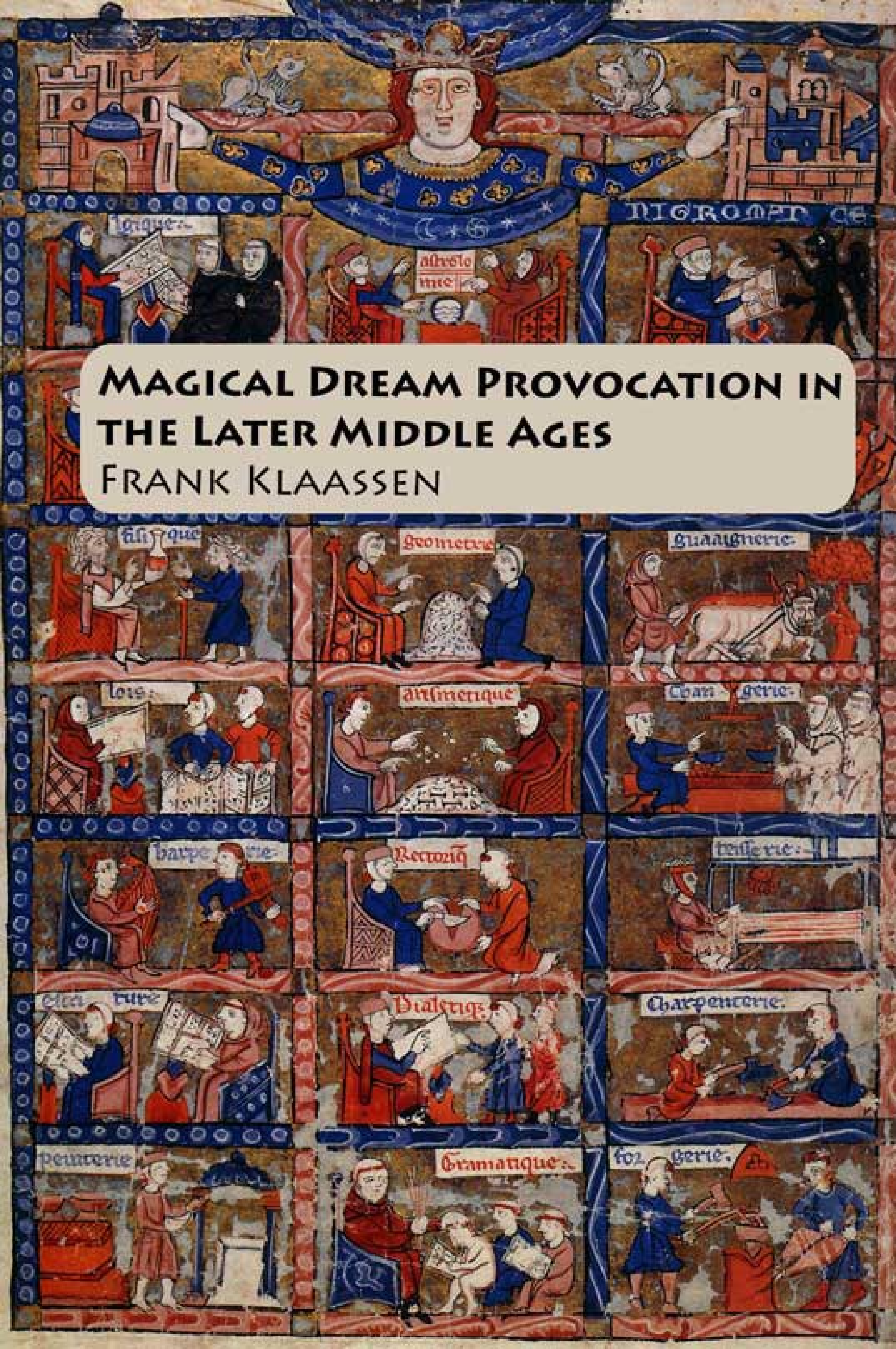
[26] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1996), 176-7. For another discussion of this interplay between familiar and unfamiliar in relation to the exploration of Being, see Heidegger's "What is Metaphysics?" *Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. and intro. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 91-112. Of course, Heidegger's emphasis on generosity toward the strangeness of the particular thing is ironic in light of his ties to Nazism, a violently dictatorial system. Several recent books have explored Heidegger's complex, troubling relationship to the Nazis: Julian Young's *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997); Tom Rockmore's *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1997); Hugo

Ott's *Heidegger: A Political Life*, trans. Allan Blunden (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Hans Sluga's *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and the Politics of Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993); Tom Rockmore's and Joseph Margolis's edited collection, *The Heidegger Case: On Philosophy and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1992).

[27] Freud, "The Uncanny," Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 17 (London: Hogarth, 1959), 217-252.

[28] I owe this important distinction to Professor Pranab Das of Elon University and the Templeton Foundation. He develops this difference in his soon-to-be-published manuscript *From Apples to Apes*, a study of the historical relationship between holism and mechanism.

[29] Plato, *Republic*, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Bollingen Press of Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), 747-52 (lines 514a-520d).


MAGICAL DREAM PROVOCATION IN
THE LATER MIDDLE AGES
FRANK KLAASSEN

Magical Dream Provocation In the Later Middle Ages

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The historian of dream literature, Steven Kruger, attributes the medieval ambivalence with dreams to their "middleness."[1] They are physical but also supra-physical, they are legitimate points of contact with the divine but also illegitimate divinatory devices, they may be inspired by angels or demons, they may reveal high reality or deceive him with "thick-coming fancies." Medieval Europeans were no different from any other world culture in regarding dreams as significant points of contact with the numinous. Divinely inspired dreams could provide powerful otherworldly visions; Kruger analyses rich examples from medieval literature such as the autobiographical dreams of Herman of Cologne's *Opusculum de conversione sua*[2].

Yet given the complex medieval ideas about dreams and a literary landscape full of examples of powerful, otherworldly, and life-altering dream visions, the works of dream divination seem oddly flat and controlled. Works like the *Sompnia Danielis* provide a systematic and relatively inflexible key for interpreting dream symbols in dreams that have already happened. Such interpretive keys focus on relatively mundane matters such as whether to begin an enterprise, and also are limited by the fact that one would have to wait passively for a dream to occur. However, the more dramatic and less controlled literary and biblical antecedents are not without practical analogues. Hidden in the manuscripts of illicit magic we may find a hitherto untreated practical literature of dream divination. Unlike the examples discussed by Kruger and others, this literature sets out to provoke specific kinds of dreams. In some cases, the operations use dreams to determine specific kinds of information, while in others they seek dreams of an overwhelming,

even life-altering, kind which involve experiences of the numinous or the transfer of spiritual and intellectual gifts. They also do not reduce the interpretive process to a symbolic key, but most often leave the door wide open to individual interpretation (with all the associated problems that involves). They also may seek dreams in which the subject directly communicates and interacts with other-worldly beings. Finally, the texts of formulaic dream interpretation and dream provocation occupy distinctive locations in the library of magical literature. The more formulaic dream texts tend more often to be associated with image magic and *naturalia*; the more open-ended dream provocation rituals tend to be associated solely with the literature of ritual magic.

As a point of entry into the relationship between dream literature, dreaming, and illicit magic in the later middle ages, we will begin our examination with two manuscripts. In the margins of an late eleventh- or early twelfth-century manuscript in Copenhagen we may find a fairly lengthy necromantic operation for communicating with spirits through a boy medium.[3] The text, written in a fourteenth-century hand, also includes rules for operation such as one commonly finds in necromantic works: the ways to purify oneself, the appropriate ritual observances, and the hours appropriate for various operations. What interested me was not the text itself, which is not particularly remarkable, but the fact that the main text of the volume was Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. It seemed possible that there might be some connection between this classic work on dreams and the necromancer's marginalia. However, on closer examination this did not appear to be the case. The necromantic marginalia begins at the last part of chapter 15 and extends to the first part of chapter 19 of Macrobius, chapters which concern the cosmos, giving particular attention to the stars, planets, zodiac, and milky way. This relatively straightforward cosmology includes a discussion of meridians, the horizon, eclipses, roundness of the earth, and the comparative sizes of the celestial spheres. Aside from a short section in the necromantic piece on the appropriate times for magical operations, which might be loosely connected with cosmology, there appeared to be no convincing link to the

main text especially since the Macrobius chapters did not concern astrology as such.

A second example may be found among the books belonging to John Erghome, and subsequently to the library of his monastery, York Austin Friars. These represent one of the most significant collections of magical works known to have been held in any medieval library. One volume in particular identified in the catalogue as A8 362 and catalogued under the heading "*Libri supersitiosi*" contains a rich and diverse collection of magical works including talismanic, demonic, and angelic magic.[4] Almost all the works explicitly instruct the reader in magical operations; however, a few stand out as non-magical works. The presence of most of these may be easily explained. A large number of works of astrological image magic occur in the volume which are heavily astrological in their cosmology and operations and are commonly associated with works of *naturalia*. (See for example items c., n.- r., ai.- am., and ao.) As one might expect, some of the non-magical works concern astrological or cosmological matters. Works explicitly concerning theoretical questions surrounding magic and cosmology are the *Theorica artis magice in 56 capitulis*, most likely al-Kindi's *De radiis stellarum*, and *Tractatus de operibus et occultis actionibus naturalium*, most likely Thomas Aquinas' *De occultis operibus naturae*. *Liber Hermetis de celo et mundo* suggests cosmological matters with strong links to magical practices. *Exceptiones horarum a Ptholomeo decripte* and *De iudiciis astrorum* clearly concern astrological questions. The books on geomancy are an interesting but not unusual addition to the manual as are the experiments with which the volume concludes. The latter might well be magical or even necromantic experiments. One of the features of this codex which stands out, however, is the presence of two works on dreams, namely items a., *Liber sompniarii Ybin Cyrin'* and e., *De sompno et visione*.

In order to understand the presence of these works, let us begin with the ordering of the texts within the manuscript. The position of these two works at the beginning of this volume cannot be regarded as particularly significant. Even if the first position in a codex could be considered a privileged one, there is

evidence that this volume is a composite, comprising the work of several scribes so the position of any work must be regarded as, at least potentially, being a matter of chance.[5] However, the fact that they do not appear side by side and are separated by a work on astrology and a work on image magic suggests a number of things. Had the works appeared together, their presence might be accounted for simply as a matter of chance. One or two gatherings containing texts on dreams might have been inserted by a compiler without regard to any larger coherence of subject matter or as a separate but related topic. Yet they appear separately, which suggests, at least, that dreams were considered an integral part of the subject matter of the surrounding texts. We should also note that the second work by al-Kindi, the *De radiis stellarum* also appears separated from his *De sompno et visione* suggesting that this latter text does not appear simply due to a common authorship.

The surrounding works also give us some clues as to the scribe's or compiler's attitude. It has been elsewhere demonstrated how the works in this volume are not randomly ordered. Rather, they are clustered according to subject matter into two groups: the more mystically oriented ritual magic texts and the texts associated with *naturalia* and astrological image magic. So it is reasonable to ask how the dream texts fit into this larger structure. The work by ibn-Sirin is followed by judicial astrology, and astrological image magic. Al-Kindi's work on dreams comes next, followed by what is probably Thomas Aquinas' opuscule on the efficacy of astrological image magic, a hermetic cosmological work (which I have not identified), and al-Kindi's *De radiis stellarum*. The works by Aquinas and al-Kindi both concern the question of astrological image magic, although the al-Kindi text is much more broadly concerned with the connections between all forms of magic and stellar rays. So it appears that these works on dreams were considered continuous in some way with the literature on astrology or perhaps more broadly, *naturalia*. It is also worth noting that the second work on dreams occurs next to two of the major medieval works of magic theory and one (apparently) cosmological work. This suggests that these texts may occur together due their common concern with theory, and this is borne out by the contents

of the works on dreams both of which have surviving witnesses.

The ibn-Sirin text provides a short introductory discussion which insists that dreams must be interpreted differently depending upon the time of year and the person dreaming, whether it is summer or winter, whether the dreamer is male or female, king or commoner, rich or poor.[6] Following this, the author provides lists of dream symbols and their varying interpretations. In short, it provides some vaguely theoretical material but is primarily a practical work systematically organized and with a clear interpretive scheme. Al-Kindi's *De sompno et visione* concerns key theoretical questions surrounding dreams. It provides a brief but in-depth discussion of dreams, employing his characteristic blend of neoplatonic and Aristotelian ideas, but also showing Galenic influence. Thus, dreams and magic coincide in this cluster of theoretical or cosmological works by al-Kindi, Aquinas, and Hermes, items d-g. It is also worth noting that the catalogue describes item h, a work of geomancy, as having a theoretical section.

Given the strange, fluid, symbolic, and emotional nature of dreams, it might seem logical that dream divination would be more commonly associated with works of ritual magic, which emphasize visionary experience, contact with the divine, and the infusion of information or wisdom from demonic or angelic sources. Another logical place for works on dreams might even have been the preceding volume in the catalogue which lists a wide variety of prophetic texts.[7] Yet Erghome's volume does not fall into this pattern, apparently connecting the literature on dreams with astrological image magic and *naturalia*. The larger exercise of analysing Erghome's volume is thus twofold. First, I will examine the dream provocation exercises in works and collections of illicit magic to demonstrate the broader coherence of magic and dreams as a common subject. Second, I will attempt to resolve the question of why the works on dreams appear where they do in Erghome's volume. I then would like to return to the Copenhagen manuscript for a second look.

*   *   *

The broader connection of literature on dreams with magic is not particularly surprising since dream divination was commonly understood as a significant subdivision of magical or superstitious practices. In every western tradition, dreams were understood as a potential point of contact with the divine and this is certainly the case with Judaism and Christianity.[8] Dreams were also commonly employed as divinatory devices in the middle ages as attested by the extensive literature on dream interpretation in the medieval period. At the same time, dream divination practices were also viewed with considerable suspicion and consistently condemned. In the fourteenth century dream divination was still being used as a catch-all term for all forms of magic. The anti-magical work by Augustinus Triumphus, *Contra divinatores et sompniatores*, did not merely concern divination and dream interpretation. Rather, the work conducts a thoroughgoing condemnation of magical practices in general. Yet this association was more than just a taxonomical convenience.

Dreams are also an almost ubiquitous presence in the practice of illicit magic. Although they are scattered throughout the magical literature, dream divination texts form a significant part of the literature on dreams. They also take a fundamentally different approach from the interpretive literature, which might be best characterized as passive. Like the ibn-Sirin text we have just discussed, these texts do not set out to make you dream, but rather help you to interpret a dream you have already had. Far more commonly, magical texts seek to provoke dreams. In addition, the traditional dream interpretation literature takes a formulaic approach to dream interpretation assigning a limited and fairly precise meaning to a dream based on its contents. The approach to dreams in the magical literature, especially ritual magic, is far less restrictive. Finally, while traditional dream interpretation texts concern themselves with relatively mundane matters and do not make strong claims for dreams as a point of contact with the divine, ritual magic texts seek demonic, angelic, and divine visionary experiences.

Manuscripts of ritual magic very frequently include the provocation and use of dream visions. A work on the uses of the

psalms in circulation in ritual magic circles includes the use of the fourth psalm for dream provocation. The psalm advises the reader to spend the night in quiet meditation, asks to see the light of God's face, and concludes with the author lying down to sleep secure in God's protection. The magical ritual involves writing a portion of the psalm with certain magical characters on a tile or potsherd (*testa*). This is then to be placed under the sleeper's head. No indication is given as to why the operator might want to dream, what kind of dream it might be, what the operator might do with it, or how it might be interpreted.[9] Sometimes more task-specific texts will occur, such as operations for finding treasure.[10] In one particularly interesting example, in Rawlinson D. 252, the operator can seek information concerning theft from a dead man who will appear in his dream.[11]

The last two examples seek information on a particular subject, but ritual magic texts very frequently sought information, gifts, or enlightenment of a more general or open-ended nature. In another passage in Rawlinson D. 252 we find an operation bearing the evocative title "Concerning the old bearded man (*de sene barbato*)." The ritual described purports to bring on a vision of an old man who will appear and reveal things. After extensive performances, including prayers and the creation of a complex magical figure, the text concludes, "then take yourself to bed and an old, bearded man will come to you who will respond to you concerning everything."[12] While one is left to infer the identity of the old man, the prayer, addressed to God, refers to him as a messenger (*nuntius*) whom God is to send, so the assumption would appear to be that he is an angel. A similar, but perhaps more dramatic, example may be found in Harley 181, a sixteenth-century manuscript. The last text in the collection is a variation on the notory art, entitled *De arte crucifixi*. The operator is instructed to fashion a wooden cross which is to be consecrated and put in a secret room under certain ceremonial conditions. After a programme of prayers, the operator will receive a dream vision in which a wide array of information may be provided by Christ.

And if you proceed well in this operation and do it regularly,

> there will sometimes appear to you, even when not asked for, the crucified Christ, and he will speak with you, face to face, just like one friend to another, instructing you concerning many truths from which you will be able to know the truth of every uncertain question either for you or for someone else. For, through this art the past present and future, the counsels and secrets of kings, the rites of spirits, the sins of men, the status of the dead are known. We will even be able to know hidden thoughts and their actions, the happening of future things, a hidden treasure, a thief, a robber, health of a friend or enemy. Through this experiment you will easily attain the fullness of the arts, alchemy, medicine, theology and the remaining sciences and arts, the mineral powers, the powers of stones, the power and the bindings of words, the offices and names and characters of spirits, good and bad, the properties of creatures and other things in the world which are knowable.[13]

The previous two examples also highlight another feature of ritual magic dream provocation: direct experience of the numinous. The most dramatic and complex of the medieval dream invocation texts, the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, uses similar techniques and purports to render to the operator a vision of God in his Glory.[14] The complex ritual takes twenty-eight days to perform and involves, fasting, abstinence, communication, confession, along with repetitive prayers and rites. The goal of dream visions also may be found in the traditions of the *Ars notoria*. Attributed to Solomon, the texts seek the infusion of spiritual and intellectual gifts and are based upon the biblical story in which Solomon received such gifts while sleeping in the temple.[15] John of Morigny's account of his experience with the *Ars notoria* makes it clear that he often used the prayers of this text to induce dreaming, although it is not clear in all cases whether his visionary experiences took place in waking or dreaming states.[16] A necromantic version of the notory art, the first passage in CLM 849, the necromancers manual edited by Richard Kieckhefer, provides an interesting twist on this tradition, by calling upon demons for instruction.[17] Undoubtedly modelled upon

an *Ars notoria*, it promises knowledge of the liberal arts, employs Hebraic sounding angel names, and seeks to achieve its goals through dream visions. In all of these cases direct experience of the numinous is emphasized and the operations seek information of an un-specified, general, or mystical kind.

Very much unlike the literature of dream interpretation, such as the *Somniale Danielis* which imposes fairly strict systems of interpretation upon dreams, this literature leaves a good deal more room not only for what the dream might concern, but how it might be interpreted. It might involve the acquisition of information, skills, general knowledge, or spiritual gifts, or even speaking directly with a numinous being, a demon, an angel, or Christ himself. In most cases the authors seem relatively confident that the readers will be able to extract clear and useful information. At the same time, they recognize the problem of interpretation of visions in general. The literature of ritual magic often includes operations for interpretive skills of various kinds although it is clear the operators do not seek an interpretive 'key' but rather interpretive ability.[18] In a section of a fifteenth-century necromantic manual at Florence, a text discusses what gifts may be requested through prayers to the planets and dream interpretation is identified as one the gifts one might receive through invocations to Jupiter.[19]

So in a wide variety of ways the use of dream visions is very much in keeping with the larger nature of ritual magic. In particular, dream provocation in this literature maintains the higher level of indeterminacy associated with ritual magic operations such as the use of visionary technologies, reflective surfaces, transparent substances, flame, and human mediums. It will also be clear that this dream literature should properly be treated alongside works like the *Sompnia Danielis* in any discussion of medieval dream provocation as a distinct genre and approach to dreams. What is perhaps harder to understand, is the way in which dream provocation relates to magic of a more explicitly 'scientific' nature, such as the literature of astrological image magic, and this brings us back to the second of the two manuscripts with which we began. The compiler or compilers of the volume belonging to John Erghome do not locate the works on dreams next to the classic

work of dream provocation, the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, which occurs later in the codex. Rather the explicit works on dreams appear clustered with astrological image magic and *naturalia*. Why?

The first and easiest explanation is that works of image magic also include operations for provoking dreams. Their ubiquitous presence in magical literature may be in part explained by the fact that, unlike an attempt to achieve invisibility, an operation for dreams had a fair chance of achieving results however ambiguous. Yet the genre of astrological image magic seems to have been interested in dream operations of a specific kind. In particular, we may discern a more restrictive quality in the operations. In one example, the work of images attributed to Thetel, a text of ancient origin, probably deriving from late antique Greece, commonly begins with a sculpted stone for dream provocation.

> If you should find sculpted in a stone a man seated above a plough, long bearded and with a curved neck, having four men lying in/on [his?] neck, and holding in [his] hands a fox and turtle-dove, this sigil, hung about the neck, has power for all plantings and for the discoveries of treasures. This is the artifice of it. Let him take pure undyed black wool, just as nature has produced it, and make therefrom a pillow; and similarly let be filled with wheat chaff a cushion which may be placed on top of the pillow. Let him sleep on [it] and he will dream of the treasures of every region in which he will have been and how he is able to have them.[20]

The dream provoked in this section is relatively restricted in its operation – something which is characteristic of the genre. Astrological image magic operations tend to be very task-specific; the dream relates strictly to the discovery of treasure. In addition, unlike the treasure-hunting dreams in ritual magic manuscripts where a specific spiritual or divine entity speaks to the operator, this dream appears simply to provide information, perhaps visually. There are also examples of manuscripts where charms for dreams accompany image magic texts.[21]

A second explanation for the association of formulaic dream interpretation with image magic in Erghome's volume must begin with patterns of collection evident in other manuscripts. The standard texts on dream interpretation do not occur in ritual magic collections. Rather, they very frequently may be found collected with astrological image magic or other simple and task-specific magic such as the use of charms. A late medieval manuscript in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge combines charms, the *Secretum secretorum*, and the *Somniale Danielis*.[22] Digby 86 and Corpus Christi College Cambridge 405 both combine experiments, charms, and formulaic dream interpretation texts. Boston, Boston Medical Library 7, the medical miscellanies of the early sixteenth-century doctor, John Scalon, and a volume held at St Augustine's Abbey Canterbury include both works of dream interpretation and astrological image magic.[23] And among the books of Hartman Schedel we find a single volume which included with the *Somniale Danielis* numerous works on natural wonders (mostly concerning stones), geomancy, alchemy, and astrological image magic.[24]

So the Erghome volume follows a common pattern in which collectors somehow associated dream interpretation texts with astrological image magic. The reason for this appears to be that both of these genres were often regarded as part of the literature of *naturalia*, that is, works on natural philosophy, natural wonders, secrets and recipes, medical literature, and astrology. Further, this association appears to be related to scholastic discussions concerning the underlying processes of dreaming on the one hand and astrological influences on the other. An informal survey of manuscript catalogues confirms what Martin has suggested, that dream interpretation texts commonly travel with works of medicine, astrology, and other related topics.[25] As Kruger has demonstrated, the late medieval perspective on dreams was very heavily influenced by the Aristotelian concern with physical and psychological processes. That so many collectors evidently regarded dream interpretation as related to the literature of *naturalia* strongly suggests the influence of this theoretical tradition. Most probably, scribes regarded dream interpretation texts as similar to other works on the natural world because the

scholastic analysis to a large degree discussed dreams as natural, physical processes. In a similar way, Astrological image magic texts overwhelmingly travel with works of *naturalia*. They are also commonly associated with scholastic theoretical works concerned with the question of whether they may operate according to natural (as opposed to demonic) processes.[26]

In both cases it is unclear whether the scribes believed the texts to be legitimate. In some volumes these interests even appear to cross over. For example, Erlangen, Universitätsbiliothek 434 includes not only two practical works on astrological images and the *Secretum secretorum,* but also a scholastic work on dreams *De pronosticatione sopmniorum*. [27] Other manuscripts have similar patterns.[28] In the same way Erghome's volume includes two theoretical works by al-Kindi, one concerned with astrological images and the other with dreams. It also contains a theoretical works by Thomas Aquinas on magical images. In addition, the volume contains practical works on both astrological images and dream interpretation. In this sense it is an entirely unsurprising, if singular, volume. I suspect further investigation would demonstrate that, very much like the case of astrological image magic, the formulaic literature on dream divination existed in a tense relationship with theoretical material with which it commonly travelled.

All of this may, I think, shed some light now on the manuscript with which I began, the necromantic experiment in the margins of Macrobius. While it is true that the necromantic ritual may have been written in the margins of this text because the scribe regarded the cosmological details in the main text as related to the experiments, there is no clear and direct connection between the operation of the necromantic ritual and the text beside which it appears. The rules for operation list some times or astrological conditions necessary for operations, yet these are a small and relatively insignificant portion of the full text. In addition, the experiment does not require or benefit from further explication which conceivably might be provided by the main text, nor do they expand obviously on any part of it. In fact, one might be well justified in regarding the presence of this marginalia

purely as a matter of chance. Where better to tuck away a dubious little magical text than in the middle of an old and somewhat unfashionable book? Naturally, this may be the case. Yet there are also good reasons to take a second look.

As we have seen, dream provocation forms an important part of the literature of ritual magic. This alone may be explanation enough for the evident interest the scribe took in the Macrobius commentary: why, for example, he might have chosen this book rather than another. Another reason for choosing Macrobius might be that the *Dream of Scipio* describes precisely the same kind of dream which ritual magic texts sought. Rather than providing some specific information in a visual manner, the dream involves direct and extended contact with the numinous in which fundamental information about the future and the nature of the universe are revealed. To put it in Macrobius's terms, the *Dream of Scipio* is an *oraculum* that involved direct contact with an other-worldly speaker.[29] The dream operations in texts of image magic or the interpretive methods of texts like the *Sompnia Danielis* might be compared more closely to a *somnium* (where truth is couched in fiction) or a *visio* (where truth is communicated through a vision of mundane events). (*Somnium* is the term John of Morigny most commonly uses to refer to his visions.) If I am correct in this interpretation, the scribe of the necromantic text was interested in the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* as a dream text rather than as a cosmological work.

There are also other reasons for believing that Macrobius' general perspective on dreams may account for the presence of the necromantic experiment. In particular, far more than any other text commonly available in the late middle ages his approach to dreams is consonant with the approach that ritual magic texts take towards dreams and the way in which they employ them. Scholastic writers maintained the possibility of divinely inspired dreams, preserving the biblical and traditional Christian perspectives; however, as Kruger has demonstrated, the twelfth-century influence of Aristotle and Aristotelian commentaries raised the possibility that dreams are never divine in origin.

Perhaps more crucially, the Aristotelian emphasis on the

psychological and somatic derivation of dreams brought about an increased concern with the processes by which dreams came to be.[30] Scribes evidently regarded dream interpretation texts (and astrological image magic) as similar to other works on the natural world because the scholastic analysis to a large degree discussed dreams as natural, physical processes. In comparison, ritual magic texts and the dream texts they contain reveal no interest in such theoretical questions or, in fact, almost any aspect of the larger literature of *naturalia*.[31] Thus not only does the subject of Macrobius' commentary relate more directly to the visionary orientation of ritual magic, it may also be that Macrobius, who was entirely unimpeded by the objections of Aristotle and scholastic commentators, was regarded as more sympathetic to the intellectual perspective of our glossing necromancer.

In conclusion, then: texts of magical dream provocation need to be included in any assessment of dreams in the middle ages. Partly this is due to their relatively significant manuscript presence, but this attention should also be motivated by the kinds of differences they show from the more formulaic works of dream interpretation. Rather than passively awaiting dreams, they seek to provoke them; going well beyond the sin of despair, which drives the sinner to trust in dreams rather than God's providence, they tempt the divine.[32] Rituals for dream provocation sought not only direct and powerful experience of the numinous in the form of visions of angels, Christ, and God, but even the transfer of spiritual and intellectual gifts. Their far more open-ended approach to dreams no doubt afforded the possibility of more complex and engaged interpretation of dream data, but it also made their operations susceptible to the great interpretive difficulties associated with any visionary experience.

Like other works of illicit magic, dream divination appears to fall into two genres: one often associated in manuscripts with scholastic discourse, and one in which scholastic questions about physical processes appear to have been largely irrelevant. In the end this powerfully confirms Kruger's argument that the influence of the Aristotelian model was far from overwhelming in the later

middle ages. The simultaneous presence of scholastic assumptions and works of dream divination in manuscripts suggests, as in the case of astrological image magic, that scholasticism may have triumphed as a discourse—as a way of approaching texts—but not to the exclusion of works which potentially ran counter to its assertions. A significant current of dream lore persisted in ritual magic texts with little reference to the scholastic concern with natural processes and fundamentally concerned with *oracula*: powerful and direct visionary interaction with the divine.

Abbreviations:

T Thorndike, Lynn. *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*. New York,: Macmillan, 1923.

TK Thorndike, Lynn, and Pearl Kibre. *A Catalogue of Incipits of Mediaeval Scientific Writings in Latin*. Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1963.

(Footnotes)

[1]Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[2] Kruger, 154-165.

[3]København (Copenhagen), Kongelike Bibliotek Ny kgl. S. 218.

[4] See K.W. Humphreys, ed., *The Friars' Libraries* (London: British Library in Association with the British Academy, 1900), pp. 86-88. I cite here the entire entry from the catalogue.

a. Liber sompniarii Ybin Cyrin' in 8 partibus et pars in cifra (Humphres identifies this as Achmet (Ahmed) ibn Sirin, *Oneirocriton*, prob. tr. Leo Tuscus as in Oxford Bodl. Digby 103)
b. liber qui intitulatur de iudiciis astrorum (Humphreys suggests this may be al-Kindi but also notes that the title is common.)
c. 9 ymagines extracte de libro veneris [*Liber veneris*]

d. brevis tractatus quatuor capitulis de sompno et visione (Humphreys identifies this as al-Kindi, tr. Gerard of Cremona.)
e. tractatus de operibus et occultis actionibus naturalium (Humphreys suggests Thomas Aquinas, *De occultis operibus naturae*, which seems probable.)
f. liber Hermetis de celo et mundo distinctus in 6 partes
g. theorica artis magice in 56 capitulis (This is almost without question al-Kindi, *De radiis stellarum*]
h. flores coniunctionis veritatis geomancie distinctus in theoricam et practicam
i. introductorium ad geomanciam docens terminos artis
k. tractatus de penthagono Salomonis
l. tractatus ad inclusionem spiritus in speculo
m. opus capitis magni cum aliis capitibus pertinencibus
n. tractatus ymaginum secundum mouimentum planetarum et operacionibus eorum (Humphreys suggests Belenus, de imaginibus septem planetarum)
o. tractatus ymaginum Gyrgit filie Circis de opere ymaginum distincus in theoricam et practicam
p. Hermes de ymaginibus
q. idem in alio tractatu de ymaginibus
r. tractatus Hyllonii de arte ymaginibus
s. tractatus de nominibus angelorum et effectibus eorum
t. vinculum Salomonis
u. tractatus de valeriana
x. tractatus de spiritu cibile
y. tractatus de capite Saturni
z. liber Honorii diuisus in 5 tractatus (This is certainly *Sworn Book of Honorius*.)
aa. tractatus ad habendam loquelam cum spiritu et effectum eternum
ab. aliud opus preciosum ad magnum effectum
ac. liber rubeus qui aliter dicitur sapiencia nigromancie

ad	experimentum bonum sortis
ae.	tractatus Fortunati Eleazari de arte euthontica ydaica et epytologica (Humphreys identifies as Eleazar of Worms or Salomon, *De quatuor annulis*. This work is commonly attributed to Solomon.)
af.	tractatus de nominibus angelorum ordine forma et potestate et mansione
ag.	tractatus de Floron
ah.	tractatus qui dicitur secretum philosophorum diuisum in 7 partes secundum quod pertractat 7 artes
ai.	liber veneris in tres partes diuisus (This is certainly *Liber veneris*. A work of astrological image magic commonly attributed to Hermes.)
ak.	liber ymaginum Aristotelis
al.	tractatus Hermetis de ymaginibus
am.	alius tractatus ymaginum
an.	exceptciones horarum a Ptholomeo descripte
ao.	fforme ymaginum in singulis signorum faciebus
ap.	ffinis artis notorie veteris
aq.	ars notoria noua completa
ar.	multa experimenta

NOTES

[5]For a more complete discussion of this codex see Frank Klaassen, "English Manuscripts of Ritual Magic 1300-1500: A Preliminary Survey," in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 3-31.

[6]T II 291-3.

[7]The volume contained prophecies attributed to Merlin, Robert d'Uzès, and Jean de Bassigny in addition to Joachite material. Humphreys, 86.

[8]Kruger cites the biblical stories of Joseph and Daniel (Genesis 37, 40, and 41; Daniel 2, 4, 7-8, and 10-12) and Joseph (Matthew 1:20-24, 2:13, 2:19-22).

[9]*Ad sompnium prouocandum. "Cum inuocarem te exaudisti me deus." Scribe hunc psalmum in testa usque "dum clamavero ad eum" cum hiis karacteribus et pone sub capite cuius vis, et dormiet*. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 89, Sup. 38. f. 315r-325v. The same text appears in another Italian manuscript, Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 89, Cod. 41, f. 94r. The somewhat modified and abbreviated version which appears in Oxford, Bodleian, Rawlinson D. 252, ff. 125r-126r, demonstrates the diffusion of this text. The full text of the fourth psalm reads [Jerusalem Bible]: God, guardian of my rights, you answer when I call, / when I am in trouble, you come to my relief; / now be good to me and hear my prayer./ You men, why shut your hearts so long, / loving delusions, chasing after lies? / Know this, Yahweh works wonders for those he loves, / Yahweh hears me when I call to him. / Tremble: give up sinning, / spend your night in quiet meditation. / Offer sacrifice in a right spirit, and trust Yahweh. / 'Who will give us sight of happiness?' many say. / Show us the light of your face, turned toward us! / Yahweh, you have given more joy to my heart / than others ever knew, for all their corn and wine. / In peace I lie down, and fall asleep at once, / since you alone, Yahweh, make me rest secure.

[10]The very last folio of Oxford, Rawlinson, D. 252 contains a

prayer for a dream vision (Ad visionem in sompno (f. 162r-v.)). Unfortunately, as it occupies the last folio of the original manuscript, it is badly worn. Although very short, it is similar to an *Ars notoria* in the sense that it seeks a dream in which an angel appears to reveal things. The initial prayer asks for information about "this thing", indicating that the reader is to fill in the specifics, but it gives no clue as to what the thing might be (*ut doceant et respondeant michi rectam veritatem istius rei N.*). The plural would be more suggestive of the general form of knowledge sought through the *Ars notoria*. Although otherwise badly mutilated, that last page contains a prayer, which evidently makes request concerning a treasure. One fragment of its text seems to imply that gold, silver, or gems are to be transferred from their hiding place. *(...[de?] aliquo loco thesaurum Afferat scilicet Aurum Argentum aut gemmas...* f. 162v.) Thus, it appears likely that the "thing" mentioned in the first section was simply treasure, and unlikely that this was a figurative way of speaking about a storehouse of knowledge.

[11][67] *Ad habendum verum responsum de aliquod furtum. In primis vade decim diebus lune ad sepulturam alicuius hominis nouiter defuntis , dicendum: 0 thow John, John, John. make the redy in apparence vn to me. Et ego coniuro [MS doniuro] te, spiritum Asacel, qui es custos corporum mortuorum... vt licenciam impetres a summo creatori... vt anima istius... vt appareas ista nocte michi in sompnis, ita vt sine fallacia vel fraude dicat michi quod possim habere perfectam noticiam de isto furto... [67v] Postea accipias aqua[m] ysopi qui super foueam tribus noctibus et proici ac de ilIa aqua cum ramusculo ysopi super foueam cum costo musco. Et postea dicas sic: Surge tu... et veni loquere mecum in tercia nocte... Than stope downe and take of the erth at the ded mannys hede and bynd it in a lynyn cloth wyth the sedull wrytyn wyth all the parcelles [?] of the theffit and where it was done and stolyn. And than ley it vndyr yowyr ryght ere. And wyth in x. nyghtes ajiyr ye schall swyr spede. And ajiyr that ye have sped do a masse for the sam sowlle and say ajiyr that De profundis.* Oxford, Rawlinson D. 252, ff. 67r-v

[12]*Deinde pone te ad lectum et ad te veniat senex barbatus qui tibi*

de omnibus respondebit. f. 99v.

[13]*Et si bene in operatione processeris, ipsamque in consuetudinem duxeris, apparebit tibi CRUCIFIXUS interdum etiam non rogatus, loqueturque tecum ore ad os, sicut amicus ad amicum, docens in pluribus veritatem a qua poteris scire omnis questionis dubie veritatem, vel pro te vel pro alio. Nam per hanc artem cognoscuntur preterita, presentia, et futura, consilia et secreta regum, rita spirituum, peccata hominum, status mortuorum. Etiam scire poterimus occultas cogitaciones, et earum actiones, eventum futurorum, thesaurum absconditum, furem, latronem, valetudinem amici et inimici. Complementum artium, Alkimiam, medicinam, theologiam, reliquasque scientias vel artes, mineras vires, virtutes lapidum, vim et colligationes verborum, officia et nomina spirituum, atque karacteres bonorum et malorum, proprietatesque creaturarum, ceteraque in mundo scibilia per istud experimentum leniter consequeris*. Harley 181, f. 80 v.

[14] For a description of this operation see Robert Mathiesen, "A 13th-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the Sworn Book of Honorius of Thebes" in *Conjuring Spirits: Texts and Traditions of Medieval Ritual Magic*, ed. Claire Fanger (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 143-162. The text has also been edited by Gösta Hedegȯrd, *Liber iuratus Honorii: A Critical Edition of the Latin Version of the Sworn Book of Honorius* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002).

[15]Jean-Patrice Boudet, "L'ars Notoria Au Moyen Age: Un Résurgence De La Théurgie Antique?" in *La Magie (Actes Du Colloque International De Montpellier, 25-27 Mars 1999)*, ed. A. Moreau and J.-C. Turpin, III (Montpellier, 2000). Claire Fanger, "Plundering the Egyptian Treasure: John the Monk, his *Book of Visions*, and its Relation to the Notory Art of Solomon," in *Conjuring Spirits* (cited above), 242-249.

[16] For John's account of his experiences see John of Morigny, *Prologue to Liber Visionum [c. 1304 - 1318]*, Claire Fanger and Nicholas Watson, transl. ed., and intr., in *Esoterica* III (2001): 108-217 (http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIII/Morigny.html). For more information about this text see Fanger, "Plundering

the Egyptian Treasure," and Watson, "John the Monk's *Book of the Visions of the Blessed and Undefiled Virgin Mary, Mother of God*: Two Versions of a Newly-Discovered Ritual Magic Text," in *Conjuring Spirits* (cited above),163-215.

[17]CLM 849, 3r-5v. Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, pp.193-196.

[18]See Frank Klaassen, "Religion, Science, and the Transformations of Magic: Manuscripts of Magic 1300-1600" (PhD, University of Toronto, 1999), 139-178.

[19]*Petes a Ioue ea que in eius diuisione constituit, ut sunt petitiones virorum sublimium, potestatum praelatorum, sapientum predictorum, legum iudicum bonorum virorum, somniorum interpetratorum (sic), heremitarum, philosophorum, regum eorundem filiorum, et omnes istis similes requies ab eodem.* Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 89, Sup. 38, 29v.

[20]*Hic est preciousus liber magnus signorum cethel, atque secretus quem fecerunt filii israel in deserto post exitum ab egipto secundum motus et cursus syderum.... Si inveneris in lapidem sculptum virum sedentem super aratrum longibardum ceria (sic) [ceria for cervice? London, British Library, Sloane 1784, f. 5r has ceruicem curuatum] curvata, habentem in collo quatuor homines iacentes, et teneat in manibus uulpem et turturem, hoc sigillum, ad collum suspensum, ad omnes plantationes valet, et ad invenciones thesaurorum. Argumentum cuius est: accip[i]at lanam nigram puram absque tinctura ut eam natura produxit et fac inde culcitam facere, [qua] palea tritici impleatur, et puluinar similiter, quod super culcitam ponatur, et desuper dormiat et sompniabit omnis thesauros regionis in qua fuerit et qualiter eos habere poterit.* Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 193, f. 30r.

[21] See for example Vaticano (Cittá del), Biblioteca Apostolica, Vat. Lat. 10803 which contains numerous image magic texts and, at f. 64 charms for dreams.

[22]Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum CFM 30.

[23]The books of John Scalon: Ashmole 346. In Ashmole 340, ff. 64-85, Scalon's hand records astrological tables through twenty-two folios. Ashmole 391, ff. 1-16, includes another set of works in his hand, principally astrological medicine and an astrological

interpretation of the dreams of Daniel (ff. 3v-5). The manuscript held at St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury is numbered 1545 in the published catalogue. Montague Rhodes James, *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), 375.

[24]Nurnberg, Hartmann Schedel, 822, 20 - 28. The catalogue entry reads as follows: "*Libri quinque mineralium et de lapidibus Alberti Magni. | Albertus Magnus de mirabilibus mundi. Flos natura- | rum Geberi. Tractatus de | distillationibus et quinta essencia. | Liber mathematicalis, in quo li- | ber iudiciorum Messahalla, me- | thodus archani sublimis Dei et | certum iudicium secundum scienciam geomantie, | puncta astrologirum de arte sigillandi. | Practica geomantie per varias que- | stiones. Liber geomancie de signi- | ficacionibus figurarum in qualibet domo. | Libellus expositoris veridici som- | niorum Danielis. Iterum liber de somniis Danielis; in pergameno. Nigromancia Michaelis Scoti | et consecracionum cum questione disputata | de arte magica.*" The book is Classified among '*Libri naturales et mathematici.*' Paul Ruf, ed., *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz*, (München, 1918 (reprint 1969)), 831-2.

[25]The following list should be taken as a rough indicator only since it does not take into account volumes which may have been assembled at a later date. Codices containing works on astrology, natural philosophy, and dream interpretation: Leiden, Bibliotheca Academiae Lugdono-Batavae Voss. Lat. o. 52 and Erfurt, Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek, Amplonian Collection, Quarto 387. Medical codices including dream interpretation: Bern, Burgertbibliothek, Cod. 556; Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, Hs 673; Oxford, All Souls College 81; and London, British Library, Sloane 475; and Vaticano (CittB del), Biblioteca Apostolica, Pal. Lat. 1321. Astrological codices containing dream interpretation: Budapest, Országos Széchényi Könyvtar 59; Erfurt, Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek, Amplonian Collection, Quarto 21 (also includes medicine and chiromancy); and Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 5239 & 5239*. Weather prediction and dream interpretation: Trebon, Statni Archiv, 18 contains works on dreams and weather prediction. Lapidary and

dream interpretation: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 466.

The same position has been taken by Laurence Martin who has noted that most of the late medieval manuscripts of the *Somniale Danielis* are collected with works of a 'scientific' bent. Lawrence Thomas Martin, "The *Somniale Danielis*, An Edition of a Medieval Latin Dream Interpretation Handbook," (PhD, Wisconsin-Madison, 1977), 28-35.

[26]For a discussion of astrological image magic theory from al-Kindi to Ficino see Nicholas Weill-Parot, *Les images astrologiques au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance Speculations intellectuelles et pratiques magiques (XIIe-XVe Siecle)* (Paris: Champion, 2002). On the scholastic interests of scribes of astrological image magic, see Frank Klaassen, "English Manuscripts of Ritual Magic 1300-1500: A Preliminary Survey," (cited above, note 5), and "Medieval Ritual Magic in the Renaissance," *Aries* 3, no. 2 (2003): 166-199.

[27]Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. 434 contains the following: ff. 10v-14, Albertus, *De pronosticatione sopmniorum* (This is either a section of Albert's *De somno et vigilia,* entitled *De divinatione per somnum* or a work by William of Aragon. Thorndike lists this as William of Aragon, *De somniis et visionum prognosticationibus*. TK 1040. T II, 300-2. This could also conceivably be Albertus Magnus, *De somno et vigilia*, in Borgnet (ed.), *Opera omnia*, IX, book 3, treatise I, chapter 1, p. 178. The chapter heading is *De divinatione per somnium.*); ff. 119r, Aristotle, *Secretum secretorum*; ff. 148v-194r, *De sculpturis lapidum*; and ff. 149r-150r, Ptolemy, *De imaginibus*.

[28] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 7337 contains both image magic texts and extensive theoretical material on dreams. Works on dreams attributed to Albertus Magnus (ff. 161-165), Hippocrates (ff. 170-174) and Galen (ff.174-175) occur together with numerous works on magic and divination including *De somnis et oraculis* (ff. 141-161) attributed to Leo Tuscus, probably *Oneirocrition,* a work on dream divination.

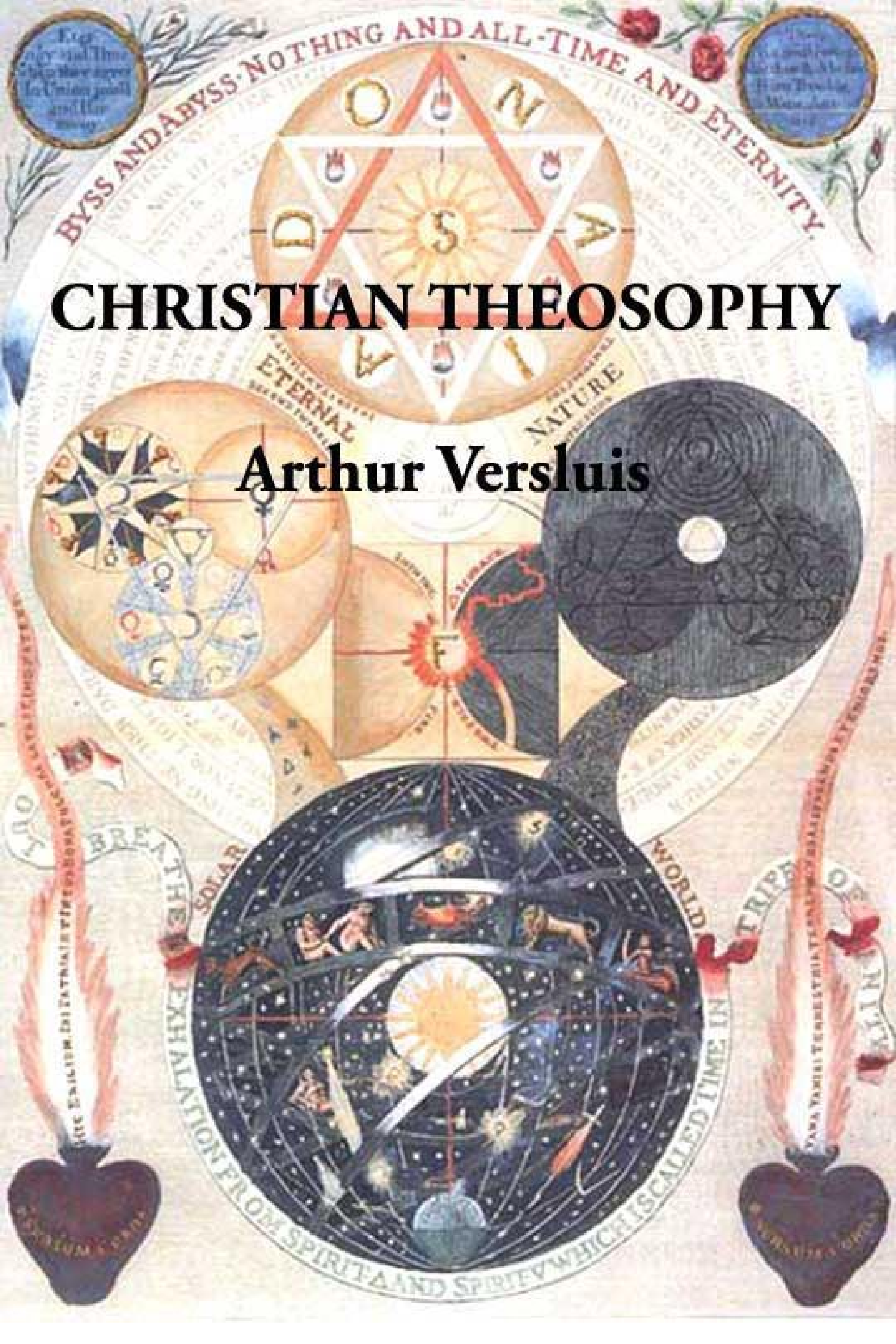
[29]Macrobius posits three types of dreams: two false (*insomnium* and *visum*) and three true (*oraculum, visio*, and *somnium*). Kruger describes the range of true dreams as existing in a hierarchy

of clarity and importance from the *somnium* (which is true but couched in fiction), to the *visio* (a revelation through a vision of mundane events) and the o*raculum* (in which an otherworldly speaker directly communicates with the dreamer). Kruger, 22-24.

[30] See Kruger, 83-122.

[31] See Nicholas Weill-Parot, *Les images astrologiques au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance Speculations intellectuelles et pratiques magiques (XIIe-XVe Siecle)* (Paris: Champion, 2002) On the scholastic interests of scribes of astrological image magic, see Frank Klaassen, "English Manuscripts of Ritual Magic 1300-1500: A Preliminary Survey," cited above, note 5 and "Medieval Ritual Magic in the Renaissance," cited above, note 26.

[32] See for example the critique of dream divination by Thomas of Froidmont discussed in Kruger, 83-4.


BYSS AND ABYSS · NOTHING AND ALL-TIME AND ETERNITY.
CHRISTIAN THEOSOPHY
ETERNAL
NATURE
Arthur Versluis

Christian Theosophy

Arthur Versluis
Michigan State University

À Antoine Faivre

Introductory Remarks

When one mentions the term "theosophy," many people still think solely of Madame Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society. But Blavatsky did not invent the word "theosophy," she simply appropriated it from the preëxisting Christian theosophic tradition.[1] This appropriation has created a great deal of confusion over terms. To clarify this confusion, we will need not only to define the differences, but also to trace the full extent of the theosophic tradition. As we will see, the Christian theosophic tradition represents a continuous and integral current that only recently has begun to be uncovered.

But let us begin with definitions. The word "theosophy" is sometimes used, by Scholem and by Corbin for instance, to refer to Jewish and Islamic gnostic currents, and this would be the broad sense of the word. Based on previous usage, and for our purposes, we loosely may use the term "Christian theosophy" to refer to Christian experiential gnostic traditions, but in the strict sense Christian theosophy refers to the current that begins with Jacob Böhme (1575-1624). Practitioners and representatives of the Christian theosophic tradition are called "theosophers." "Blavatskyan Theosophy" refers to the cosmological schemata of the Theosophical Society; "theosophist" refers to representatives of the Theosophical Society. One should maintain such distinctions so as to avoid confusion to the extent possible.

To make these distinctions concrete, we should begin with an example—that of the great twentieth century Russian theosopher Nicolai Berdyaev. Berdyaev wrote that he arrived at his Christianity not through habit or tradition, less yet from any

compulsion, but through “an intimate experience of the paths of freedom.” His faith, he tells us, “was won through an experience of the inner life of a most painful character.”[2] “I regard myself,” he continued, “as being a Christian theosopher, in the sense in which Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, Jacob Böhme, Saint-Martin, Franz von Baader, and Vladimir Solovyov were Christian theosophers.”[3] Here Berdyaev, as elsewhere, incontrovertibly reveals himself as part of the Christian theosophic tradition to which we are devoting our attention.

What does Berdyaev think about the Theosophical Society? In the same work in which he identified himself as a theosopher, Berdyaev devotes an entire chapter to the doctrines of the Theosophical Society. He writes quite unequivocally:

> Words often provoke a false association of ideas that do not conform to their ontological meaning. “Theosophy” is a word of this kind, for it may mean many different things. Contemporary theosophical movements have given it a debased significance and have made us forget the existence of an authentic Christian theosophy and a genuine knowledge of the divine. The theosophic tradition runs right through Christian history. . . . Mystical theology. . . has always been theosophical. . .
>
> But it is clear that contemporary theosophy is different from that of other ages. The spirit of Mme. Blavatsky or Mrs. Besant differs considerably from that of Heraclitus, Plotinus, Origen, Dionysius the Areopagite, Meister Eckhart, Jacob Böhme, Baader, or Solovyov. Its form is quite different; they belong to another type altogether. . . . “Cosmosophy” would be a much better name for it than “theosophy,” for it deals with nothing but the composition and development of the cosmos.[4]

Whatever one thinks of Berdyaev’s assessment, it is self-evident that in regarding himself as a theosopher, he seeks to completely separate Christian theosophy from the Blavatskyan Theosophical Society. And in his brief listing of Christian theosophers,

Berdyaev is right in tracing the lineage that runs from Dionysius the Areopagite through Eckhart and Böhme and Saint-Martin. It is precisely this lineage with which we are now concerned.

As I have elsewhere remarked, theosophy represents a paradigm with certain common elements that reappear even if various groups are wholly unaware of one another, including 1) the focus upon Wisdom or Sophia, 2) an insistence upon direct spiritual experience, 3) reading nature as a spiritual book, 4) a spiritual leader who guides his or her spiritual circle through letters and oral advice. These elements refer chiefly to the modern theosophic tradition that emerged with Jacob Böhme in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Antoine Faivre has pointed out the primary characteristics of Western esotericism more generally, which naturally hold for theosophy, a major current within the even larger stream of Western esotericism.[5] In fact, modern Christian theosophy arguably represents the confluence of many other currents, including alchemy, Jewish Kabbalah, chivalry, and the gnostic tradition represented by Eckhart and Tauler.

Often one finds theosophers listing the names of those whom they regard as previous theosophers, just as Berdyaev does in our quotations. In so doing, they situate themselves within an historical tradition, by implication placing themselves in the lineage of theosophers. Indeed, self-identification is one primary way of identifying theosophers. For theosophy—and on this one must be very clear—is not an organized sect but an experiential gnostic path within Christianity. As such, its adherents are open to gnosis where it is found, and are generally indifferent to artificial divisions between Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox. And they often draw on the gnostic current that stretches from the Ante-Nicene Fathers onward, beginning with Clement of Alexandria.

Antecedents

Clement of Alexandria is important to the theosophic tradition because unlike many of the Church Fathers, he insists on the importance of an authentic (not heretical) gnosis within the Christian tradition. In the *Stromata*, or *Miscellanies*, Clement writes that

> gnosis, to speak generally, a perfecting of man as man, is consummated by acquaintance with divine things, in character, life, and word, accordant and conformable to itself and to the Divine Logos. For by it faith is perfected, inasmuch as it is solely by it [gnosis] that the believer becomes perfect.[6]

Clement divides authentic from false gnosis, the latter being characterized by immoral behavior, the former by the highest morality. Clement of Alexandria, like Origen, represents a reference point for later theosophers because like them, the theosophers insisted that there is an orthodox gnosis within Christianity, that historical faith is not the only characteristic of that tradition.

Another early reference point for the later theosophers is Dionysius the Areopagite, whom we need not denigrate with the modern appellation "Pseudo," since it is entirely clear we are referring to the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, dated to some time in the fifth or sixth centuries A.D. Dionysius's works, including the enormously influential treatises on the "Divine Names," on "Celestial Hierarchy," and on "Ecclesiastical Hierarchy," also represent a common reference point for the later theosophic tradition. Here Dionysius differentiates between the *via negativa* and the *via positiva*, the way of transcendence through negation of images and the way of transcendence through affirmation of images. But contrary to popular supposition, these two are not in fact opposed to one another, nor even necessarily different paths, but instead are complementary and hierarchic in nature.

In "The Celestial Hierarchy," Dionyius directly addresses this question. Here he writes that one may begin with the affirmation of images—but proceeds soon enough to dissimilar images, because otherwise one runs the risk of vulgarization. People may mistakenly think that the divine consists literally in warriors in flashing armor, and so forth; hence dissimilar images are higher because they dissociate us from literalism and clinging to outward appearances. Out of such affirmations of dissimilar images emerges the *via negativa*, the transcendence of all images whatever

and entry into the "divine darkness." But "everything can be a help to contemplation," Dionysius writes.[7] In other words, the way of negation is not a rejection of nature and the world, but an affirmation of it; all that we see is an aid to realization of divine truth, which is nonetheless beyond all images and forms.

There is a third figure in the Christian tradition who figures in the emergence of the theosophic current, and that is Johannes Tauler (ca. 1300-1361). Tauler was in fact cited by some of the more modern theosophers, and a manuscript attributed to him circulated among the late seventeenth century theosophers in England. Tauler was attractive to some later theosophers because, like Dionysius the Areopagite and Clement of Alexandria, he insisted on direct experiential knowledge of divine things. Tauler insisted on true prayer, which is "a direct raising of the mind and heart to God, without intermediary." According to Tauler, true prayer is "a lifting of the spirit upward, so that God may in reality enter the purest, most inward, noblest part of the soul—its deepest ground—where alone there is undifferentiated unity."[8]

It is not uncommon to separate figures like Tauler and Eckhart from subsequent gnostics like Jacob Böhme or John Pordage, but let us look closely at this passage from Tauler. Alluding to Saint Augustine, Tauler tells us that

> the soul has a hidden abyss, untouched by time and space, which is far superior to anything that gives life and movement to the body. Into this noble and wondrous ground, this secret realm, there descends that bliss of which we have spoken. Here the soul has its hidden abode. Here a man becomes so still and essential, so single-minded and withdrawn, so raised up in purity and more and more removed from all things, for God himself is present in this noble realm, and works and reigns and dwells therein.[9]

We should keep the specifics of this passage in mind when we turn to modern Christian theosophy, tracing the course of its various currents, for Tauler's emphasis here on a "hidden abyss, untouched by time and space," his reference to a "secret," "noble,"

and “wondrous” realm in which God himself lives and works, these have their direct correspondences in the subsequent German, French, English, and American theosophic currents.

The Inception of Modern Christian Theosophy

The modern theosophic movement begins at the turn of the seventeenth century, chiefly in Germany, where one finds the most influential or seminal of the theosophic writers, Jacob Böhme. Böhme, ‚the ‘illuminated cobbler,’ came from Görlitz, a town near the border between Eastern and Western Europe. Böhme’s spiritual illumination came after a bout of depression, and it resulted in his first book, *Morgenröte im Aufgang, oder Aurora*, written in 1612. Böhme’s remarkable work provoked great wrath in a sour local Lutheran minister named Gregor Richter, and in fact Böhme was forbidden to write more. But he eventually developed quite a circle of followers, who asked him for advice, and so he came to write many more treatises.[10]

Görlitz had become a kind of center for those with mystical leanings, and Böhme’s own circle eventually included some remarkable people, among whom we should note Balthasar Walter, who had travelled to the Near East, (Arabia, Syria, and Egypt) in search of “Kabbalah, magic, and alchemy” during the late sixteenth century. Walter came to know Böhme after 1612, and stayed in Böhme’s house for several months during 1619 or 1620. Other important members of Böhme’s circle include Johann Huser, editor of an edition of Paracelsus’s works, Carl von Ender, a nobleman, and Dr Tobias Kober.

Eventually, Böhme produced a body of work that was to inspire the whole of subsequent theosophy. It is revealing that many later theosophers claimed their spiritual lives really began only with their discovery of Böhme’s vast body of writings[11] In 1618 Böhme began *The Three Principles of the Divine Being*, and between 1619 and his death in 1624, he completed numerous treatises and assorted other manuscripts and letters, including *Forty Questions on the Soul*, *The Signature of All Things*, and *Mysterium Magnum*, a commentary on Genesis, as well as various other works.[12]

We cannot here survey Böhme’s writings, which require each

reader to work with them individually over an extended period in order to reveal themselves. Böhme's *corpus* is richly complex and has a specialized Latin-based vocabulary rich in neologisms, so each reader will see different aspects of Böhme's insights.[13] But Böhme's works fuse alchemical, Paracelsian, and Hermetic terms with what we may call high German mysticism, so that his writing possesses extraordinary depth and range. Böhme insists throughout his writings that his readers directly experience for themselves the truth of which he writes. And indeed at the center of his works is spiritual rebirth.

Böhme, in his *Aurora*, elaborates on the process of spiritual rebirth. We are, he tells us, born into the darkness of physicality, "wherein Lucifer and his angels, as also all fleshly or carnal wicked men lie captive."[14] But we are also born into the astral realm, which is of a mixed nature, including both love and wrath contending with one another. This realm is characterized by the seven spirits, the outwardly symbolized by the planets, which color or condition the nature of existence. The devil, via wrath, can only reach halfway into this realm; the other half lies hidden from him and from us; and accordingly as we live our lives in love or in wrath will we live in this primordial element after death. But both love and wrath have their origin and transcendence in the third realm, the "holy heart of God," which is beyond all that could be said about it.[15]

Böhme sees the entire cosmos tinctured by love and by wrath, with humanity participating in both. The key to this participation is imagination, symbolized by Mercury. Mercury, representing the principle of consciousness, is in its proper or true nature the Word or Logos—that is, if Mercury is permeated with love, then it is the means of communication with, indeed, identity with the Divine. But when Mercury through imagination allows the wrath to manifest in it, then it becomes poisoned and poisonous; and this is the ordinary, or fallen human condition, our starting point.

Böhme discusses in many different ways the process of regeneration and spiritual illumination, one of these being in his *Signatura Rerum*, when he writes of the "philosophic work." Böhme here tells us that although "I in the outward man do yet live in my self-hood, therefore I must also die with the outward man in Christ's death, and arise and

live with him."[16] The philosophic work is the process of dying to selfhood and awakening the "inward man." This process, he tells us, is not one he will divulge in detail, but consists in the "heavenly essentiality" in its virginity permeating the soul's inward nature, transmuting one's wrathful and dead fallenness or disharmony into love's unity. He further remarks that "the poisonous mercurial, martial, and saturnine will and desire die in the blood of Venus in the philosophic work, and both enter together into death, and arise both together in one love, in one will."[17] The seven forms (marked by the planetary energies) must be transformed into one by love, even while remaining distinct; and in this way one's whole being is restored to paradisal wholeness, harmony, and unity.

I am emphasizing Böhme's insistence on spiritual regeneration and on the specific process through which one accomplishes this because this process is the heart of his work, and in turn reappears as the center of subsequent theosophy. Indeed, the specific process Böhme mentions here as the "philosophic work" recurs again and again in later illustrations and treatises, including those of Johann Gichtel in the Netherlands, and John Pordage in England, as we will shortly see. This process, which is explained using alchemical terms and images, is in fact the work of spiritual awakening through contemplation akin to what we see earlier in the writings of Eckhart and Tauler. Modern Christian theosophy, from Böhme onward, maintains a balance between imagery and the transcendence of imagery, the via positiva and via negativa.

After Böhme, the most important of the subsequent theosophers was Johann Georg Gichtel, (1638-1710) the often volatile "hermit of Amsterdam" whose collected letters of spiritual advice under the title *Theosophia Practica*, (1722) comprise seven volumes and several thousand pages. Although there is some repetition in his letters, even a cursory study will reveal Gichtel's authority on a wide range of subjects including spiritual alchemy, which draws explicitly upon Böhme's work. Gichtel and his friend Ueberfeldt edited the first major edition of Böhme's complete writings, published as *Theosophia Revelata* (1682/1730).

A more concise book, often also published under the title *Theosophia Practica*, but actually entitled *Eine kurze Eröffnung und*

Anweisung der dryen Principien und Welten in Menschen [*A Brief Opening and Demonstration of the Three Principles and Worlds in Man*] (1696/1779), is an important guide to Gichtel's spiritual understanding, and includes several illustrations that have been compared to Asian traditions of the *chakras* in the human body. Even though Gichtel's harsh rhetoric might well dissuade the casual reader, a closer examination of this treatise reveals that Gichtel simply is guiding the reader along the spiritual path that he has himself followed.[18] He seeks to show us how to go from the dark or wrathful world of fallen man to divinely regenerated man.

Gichtel's *A Brief Opening. . . of the Three Principles* is a very detailed work on theosophic praxis. Gichtel writes, in the preface to the first chapter, that he wants to show

> the first-created image of God before the Fall, which stands hidden in the spirit, which the author knows by praxis and [also will show] in the figures of the completed man, out of the new birth in Christ, which is to be developed in you.[19]

Gichtel's own struggle was difficult from early on, for in youth his unconventional spirituality brought him to the attention of church and city authorities, who

> mocked, insulted, and humiliated me, led me over the streets and wanted to force my head down, but because they could not ultimately agree, they finally took everything away from me and banned me eternally from the city.
> 48. So now I lay in a stinking hole, locked up, tempted by the devil and tested by gruesome doubts, so much so that I grasped a knife and would have, in order to save my anxious life from suffering, brought my life with a stab to a quick end.[20]

But instead of committing suicide, Gichtel experienced a vision that inspired him to follow a long and difficult path of poverty and spiritual struggle toward Sophianic illumination.

Gichtel's outward life began in Ratisbon, Germany, in March, 1638, and had three stages: from 1638 to 1664, when he began to

encounter difficulties with the clerical authorities in Ratisbon; from 1665 through 1667, when he moved about, staying for a while with the Protestant author Friedrich Breckling (1629-1711); and from 1668 to his death in 1710, the time during which he lived, wrote, and taught in Amsterdam. Most of our information about Gichtel comes from this last period, during which he established his community of the "Brethren of the Angelic Life," the *Engelsbrüder*, or the "Angelic Brethren," and became more generally known as a theosopher.

Gichtel's biography is Protestant hagiography: his biography is entitled *The Wonderful and Holy Life of the Chosen Champion and Blessèd Man of God Johann Georg Gichtel*, and includes numerous miraculous or paranormal events. Gichtel said he and his Angelic Brethren were supported by prayer and divine mercy—money or food or clothing simply appeared when they were necessary, generally donated by benefactors (there were rumors that Gichtel was a practicing alchemist). A querulous man, Gichtel had argued vociferously with nearly everyone he knew by the time he died, and it is at times difficult to reconcile this with his spirituality.

If Gichtel is certainly among the most important practical theosophers, Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714) is arguably the most important scholar among the theosophers. Arnold, an acquaintance of Gichtel's, fell in Gichtel's eyes when he married. Arnold's most important books were published in 1699/1700, and include his *Unparteiische Kirchen- und Ketzer-historie*, (4 vols.) and *Das Geheimniss der Göttliche Sophia* (1700). Arnold's "Impartial Church and Heretic History" is striking for its affirmations of authors traditionally deemed heretical, and thus raised some controversy after publication. His "Mystery of the Holy Sophia" is significant for its extensive scholarly treatment of this most central theosophic theme, and closely follows traditional Patristic and other sources on the topic of Wisdom.

Arnold was a scholar who sought to place theosophy within the larger context of the entire Christian tradition, and when one considers that Böhme and many of the other theosophers were dismissed by conventional Christians as heretical, one can see how Arnold's assessment of ancient and more recent heresies was a reaction against this contemporary dismissal. Arnold was

also known for his spiritual songs or hymns, some of which were published conjointly with his book on Sophia, and one can find his songs in an 1856 edition.[21] His last important theosophic work was *Theologia Experimentalis* (1714). Certainly it is fair to say that Arnold, in his historical method, was influential not only for pietist writers but also for his aim of creating an impartial assessment of Christian mysticism, anticipating much more recent efforts in this direction.

A number of other figures were more or less a part of the circles in which Gichtel and Arnold moved, and we should recognize two of the most prominent here: Friedrich Breckling (1629-1711) and Quirinus Kuhlmann (1651-1689). Breckling was originally close to Gichtel, but eventually they quarrelled and parted; Kuhlmann as an enthusiastic young man came into Gichtel's circle in Amsterdam, met Breckling, and travelled also to London, where he came into contact with the English theosophers of that time. Unlike the Gichtel, Kuhlmann sought to be an evangelist for Böhmenism, and travelled not only to Constantinople but to Moscow, where in 1689 he was burnt at the stake as a heretic on orders of Czar Peter the Great.

There are numerous figures who exist on the periphery of theosophy and yet may be said to represent currents of the theosophic stream. Pierre Poiret (1646-1719), for instance, edited numerous works of mystical theology. Another well-known figure is Angelus Silesius (1624-1677) [Johannes Scheffler], whose well-known *Cherubinischer Wandersmann* consists in short, pithy aphoristic rhymes. In 1657 appeared his *Heilige Seelenlust*, his "spiritually rich" poems on "spiritual longing of the soul." This work, like all Scheffler's writing, is pregnant with multiple meanings.[22]

Jewish Kabbala, itself theosophic, was undoubtedly formative for Christian theosophy from Böhme on. Its most important eighteenth century syncretic exponent within theosophy was Friedrich Christoph Œtinger (1702-1782), whose works represent an attempt to synthesize Kabbala—especially that of Isaac Luria—with the theosophical tradition of Böhme. Œtinger's works range from his *Aufmunternde Gründe zur Lesung der Schriften Jacob Böhmens* (1731) to his *Theologia ex idea vitae deducta* (1765) and *Biblisches und Emblematisches Wörterbuch*, (1765). Perhaps most

well known is his *Die Lehrtafel der Prinzessin Antonia*, (1763) in which he explains "the most important truths of the holy scriptures according to the knowledge of the Kabbala."[23] Œtinger also wrote about the visionary Emanuel Swedenborg's (1668-1772) writings in *Swedenborgs und andere irdische und himmlische Philosophie* (1765). We should remark here that Swedenborg was looked down upon by Böhmean theosophers like Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, who saw Swedenborg's visions as belonging mainly to the astral realm. At any rate, it is fair to say that Swedenborg himself stands outside the main current of theosophy, whereas Œtinger stands within it while drawing upon Swedenborg.

Antoine Faivre has pointed out that Christian theosophy is divisible into main currents. The Kabbalistic line of theosophy represented by Œtinger was carried on in the nineteenth century by Franz Josef Molitor (1779-1860), author of *Philosophie der Geschichte, oder über die Tradition,* (1854). What we may call magical theosophy is represented in, for instance, Georg von Welling's (1655-1727) *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum et theosophicum*, (1784) as well as by Karl von Eckhartshausen (1752-1803), whose writings range from *Ausschlüße zur Magie* (1788/90) and *Zahlenlehre der Natur* (1794) to the well known little work *Die Wolke über dem Heiligthum* (1802), in English *The Clouds over the Sanctuary*, a work closer to theosophy than to the magical-occult tradition of his early works.

But undoubtedly theosophy's greatest recent German exponent is Franz von Baader (1765-1841).[24] Baader is a grand unifying figure, joining science, religion, and literature, as well as all three traditions of Christianity (Protestantism [particularly theosophy], Roman Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy). A peerless aphorist, Baader is intellectually among the most stimulating and profound of the theosophers. The sixteen volumes of his collected works often are difficult and abstruse, but repay closer reading, not least because he joins scientific, religious, and literary concerns. In many respects, Baader was truly a renaissance man.

Born in 1765 in Munich, the son of a physician, Baader studied minerology under such luminaries as Alexander von Humboldt, and spent four years in England beginning in 1792, where he witnessed the social effects of the industrial revolution, especially the appearance

of a proletariat class. In 1796, he returned to Germany, where he was able through various chemical experiments to develop a patented formula for glass fabrication that brought him a substantial income. Obviously Baader came to theosophy from an unusually scientific viewpoint.

Termed by August Wilhelm Schlegel "Boehmius redivivus," or "Böhme reborn," a complimentary designation still indissolubly linked to Baader's name, Baader was a great reader of Böhme, Saint-Martin, and Meister Eckhart. Most famous as a theosopher, Baader's theosophic writings encompass an unusual range of subjects, from eros to politics to the meeting of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Eastern Orthodoxy.[25] His emphasis on *erotische philosophie* and on furthering a religious rather than merely materialist science is worthy of much further inquiry than it has yet received, although Antoine Faivre has made much headway in this sphere.[26]

But German theosophy does not end with Baader, however monumental his work was in joining countless fields. Baader remains the most towering figure on the German scene in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but there remain some noteworthy others, including Johann Jakob Wirz (1778-1858), one of the most accessible and charming authors in the whole of theosophic literature. Wirz almost never cites or even alludes to other theosophers; Sophia herself has been his guide and companion, and he writes directly of her, in stories or parabolic teachings that are perhaps most paralleled in world literature by Sufi works, what Henry Corbin called "visionary recitals." His divine inspiration began around the end of 1823, and he soon gathered a small group, called the Nazarene community, which emphasized a simple, humble, and pure way of life. Wirz believed his group incarnated an almost Joachimite "age of the Spirit," inspired and guided by divine Wisdom. To him, God is Father and Mother both, and he held that this mystery was the secret of "urrreligion" from time immemorial. A firm believer in the feminine aspect of divinity, Wirz held that the Virgin Mary was the "spiritual-corporeal daughter of divine Wisdom." Wirz's major writings were published as *Testimonies and Revelations of the Spirit Through Johann Jakob Wirz,* [*Zeugnisse und Eröffnungen des Geistes durch Johann Jakob Wirz,*] (1863-4).

After Wirz, we could also mention Jakob Lorber (1800-1864), a musician and conductor who, on the fifteenth of March, 1840, heard a voice that instructed him as follows: "Pick up your pen and write!" Write he did. His *Johannes, das großes Evangelium*, (1851-1864), comprises eleven volumes and some five thousand pages, a vast work that derived from his acting as a medium. In keeping with the spirit of theosophy, Lorber's circle founded neither church nor sect, although there still exists a group in Germany that maintains his books in print. Occasionally, extravagant claims have been made regarding Lorber's works; he is in my estimation on the periphery of the theosophic current.

We must also take note of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), who although he was undoubtedly the inheritor of the theosophic current we are here tracing, did not present himself as part of it. Indeed, one finds in his many books comparatively few references to Jacob Böhme or the other theosophers, even, for instance, in a work entitled *Theosophie: Einführung in übersinnlich Welterkenntnis und Meschenbestimmung* [*Theosophy: Guide to Supersensible Worlds*, 1922), one finds little to remind one of the theosophic tradition we are here discussing; instead, Steiner (a member of the Theosophical Society before his founding of the Anthroposophical Society) seems much more interested in astral cartography. Perhaps most revealing of Steiner's approach to theosophy is his work *Die Mystik im Aufgange des neuzeitlichen Geisteslebens* [*Mystics of the Renaissance and their Religion to Modern Thought*, 1912 trs.], which is devoted to Eckhart, Tauler, Böhme, and others, but is often dismissive, and downplays Steiner's indebtedness to them.

Another figure, somewhat enigmatic, is Karel Weinfurter, (dates unknown) a Czechoslovakian author of the early twentieth century whose work *Der Brennende Busch [The Burning Bush, 1930, 1949, 1957]*, went through numerous editions in German, and who also wrote *Mystische Fibel [A Handbook for Students of Practical Mysticism*, 1954, 1959]. Weinfurter's work was translated into English and published as *Man's Highest Purpose: The Lost Word Regained*, n.d. Weinfurter, unlike our other theosophers either before or after, alluded occasionally to Blavatsky's works, and to those of Annie Besant, but his primary source is a group of practical

mystics that met in Prague earlier in the twentieth century.[27]

Weinfurter explicitly drew on the work of J. B. Kerning (1774-1851), originally named Johann Baptist Krebs, an ardent Freemason strongly influenced by the theosophic current, whose books include such titles as *The Way to Immortality* and *Key to the Spiritual World.* Kerning also wrote *Historical Overview of Freemasonry*, so one can see how he represented a confluence of currents. Much on and by Kerning was brought to light and published or republished in 1902, at the behest of the Theosophic Lodge of the Blue Star, Weinfurter's group in Prague founded in 1891.[28] Weinfurter's group sought throughout Europe for spiritual guidance, and he claims to have ultimately found it, after having practiced numerous ascetic exercises and practices.

In his books, Weinfurter, whose group often originally met in the flat of Gustav Meyrink, the well known fiction writer, offers an unusual form of theosophy. He elaborates a tradition regarding a mystical alphabet and the use of Western "mantras," as well as offering a discussion of what we may call *metaphysiology.* According to Weinfurter, who drew extensively on what was available from newly translated yogic works like that of Patanjali, there is an orally transmitted Christian tradition of bodily concentration and awareness that corresponds rather closely to some forms of Indian yoga, as well as in other respects to ancient Gnosticism for that matter. Although Weinfurter is somewhat outside the primary current of theosophy, his work is certainly still worthy of further examination.

While Christian theosophy in general has remained a current separate from movements like the Theosophical Society, during the early twentieth century one did have several exceptions, among which were Weinfurter and the founder in 1886 of the German branch of the Theosophical Society, Franz Hartmann (1838-1912). Hartmann's group, the ITV [Internationale Theosophische Verbrüderung], was more rooted in the European esoteric traditions than, for instance, Annie Besant's Adyar group, as we can see from the kinds of books Hartmann published.[29] Hartmann published several books drawing extensively on the works of Jacob Böhme, with copious excerpts, and he also published a book on Paracelsus, this too with many direct quotations. In the latter work, Hartmann

defines *theosophia* as

> Divine self-knowledge. The true understanding. Supreme wisdom, acquired by practical experience by which it is eminently distinguished from merely speculative philosophy. Theosophy is not any new creed nor any system of philosophy; neither can it be taught by one person to another. It is not any knowledge relating to any external thing, but the self-knowledge of the awakened spirit in man.[30]

Hartmann's theosophy was very much rooted in the Christian theosophic tradition. In his book on Böhme, Hartmann concludes his introduction by affirming the books of Böhme as "the most valuable and useful treasure in spiritual literature."[31]

Among twentieth century theosophers, Leopold Ziegler (1881-1958) was arguably the most important, similar in scope to Graf Hermann Keyserling, but much more well read in and influenced by Christian theosophy, and instrumental in what has come to be called "East-West dialogue." Born in Karlsruhe, Germany, and a student at the University of Heidelberg, Ziegler first published *Die Metaphysik des Tragischen* [*The Metaphysics of the Tragic*](1902), in which he discussed the significance of suffering in human life, but more characteristic of his work is *Gestaltwandel der Götter* [*Transformation of the Gods*] (1920), *Überlieferung* [*Tradition*] (1936), and *Menschwerdung*, [*Becoming Human*] (1948), the latter two his main works, illustrating his focus on Buddhism and Christian theosophy, and on finding a course out of existentialism and nihilism into a spiritual understanding that affirms the whole of life. In *Spätlese eigener Hand* [*Late Harvest From My Own Hand*] (1953), Ziegler discusses the spectrum of Sophianic spirituality. Too little known today, Ziegler remains an important figure in twentieth century thought.

There are some important German scholarly studies including discussions of theosophy that we cannot overlook. All of these have in common an inclusion of and even an emphasis on the magical elements of this tradition or current. One major such study is Will-Erich Peuckert's *Pansophie: Ein Versuch zur Geschichte der*

Weissen und Schwarzen Magie (1956). Another is Karl Frick's vast multivolume surveys entitled *Licht und Finsternis* and *Die Erleuchteten*, (1975). Frick's work in particular includes reference to numerous figures not mentioned elsewhere, and what his study necessarily lacks in depth, it certainly makes up for in breadth.[32]

Finally, we may note three significant German figures of the twentieth century's second half: Ernst Benz (1908-1978), Gerhard Wehr (1931-), and Peter Koslowski (1952-). Ernst Benz is author of a vast number of articles and books, many of which focus on specifically theosophic subjects or authors. Gerhard Wehr has edited and republished popular editions of Böhme's works, and has also written books on Christian mysticism, including *Esoterisches Christentum* (1975/1995). But Peter Koslowski, in books like *Die Prüfungen der Neuzeit* (1989) has incorporated the theosophic current—particularly the works of Molitor and Baader—into a contemporary philosophic synthesis of great significance for us because it reveals how theosophy speaks to philosophical and spiritual issues of the present day, and is not simply a subject for retrospective perusal. Koslowski speculates that Christian gnosis can point the way for a true postmodern cultural renaissance. Thus, although somewhat muted in Germany in the aftermath of the Second World War, theosophy continues nonetheless, and will undoubtedly emerge again in new forms when the time is ripe.

English Theosophy

Although Böhme marks the beginning of modern theosophy, he was not the only theosopher at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Böhme was part of a larger circle of theosophers in the vicinity of Görlitz, but there was a broader movement of which his work is a striking instance. Exemplary of this is a manuscript entitled *Aurora Sapientia, or The Daiebreak of Wisdome*, dated 1629, that is by one hand attributed to Dr. John Dee, and by another to one Robert Ayshford, but is signed "P knowen in the Grace of God." This manuscript includes a number of letters revealing a theosophic circle in England much earlier than previously thought, one without direct allusions to Böhme, but nonetheless showing very similar references to the "three principles" and to "theosophie"

"to the service of the sixt Church att Philadelphia."[33]

As its title suggests, *Aurora Sapientiae* is concerned with the revelation of Wisdom, and its author exhorts us to read the cosmos, or *physisophia*, Scripture, and Man, in whom is hidden *theosophia*. He writes that through the "third Book," Man,

> wee maie learne to understand the theosophia, the secret and hidden wisdome of the Mysterie of God the Father, and of Christ, and of his Church. . . . withall the onlie whole and great Librarie of us all wherewith wee who are the Scholars of the true Wisdome ought to be contented.[34]

There is here no direct reference to Böhme, but its "three principles," its preoccupation with Wisdom, and its emphasis upon reading the book of Nature, put it in the ambit of the theosophic tradition.

The work's reference to the "sixt church att Philadelphia" is especially striking because less than half a century later there was another group of English theosophers that had gathered around Dr. John Pordage (1608-1681), later to be led by Jane Leade (1623-1704) under the name "the Philadelphians." Whether there is any historical continuity between these groups remains unclear, but certainly there is a parallelism in language and ways of thinking, similar to what Ioan Coulianu wrote about more broadly in his monumental *Tree of Gnosis* (1990).[35] Bluntly put, theosophic groups tend to think along similar lines, often quite independently of one another. *Aurora Sapientiae* represents a hitherto unremarked early instance of English theosophy.

Böhme became reasonably well known in England by the middle of the seventeenth century primarily through the efforts of men like John Sparrow, Humphrey Blunden, John Ellistone, and Charles and Durant Hotham. But it was in John Pordage, a minister until he was forcibly removed from his post due to charges of heresy, that Böhme found his greatest English expositor and fellow visionary. Written in English, the manuscripts now lost, Pordage's vast works like *Göttliche und Wahre Metaphysica* [3 vols.] (1715) are now found only in German translation, and detail his visionary experiences, his cosmology, and his process of spiritual alchemy.

In his work entitled *Sophia* (ca. 1675), (in a passage later excerpted by the great French theosopher Saint-Martin), Pordage explains how it is that one breaks through into spiritual illumination. The soul continually seeks to rise upward and break through the wall separating it from the heavenly principle. But eventually it realizes that it cannot so ascend, and

> because it thereupon finds that through *ascending* out it had been constantly misled and had missed its goal, that it is not on the right path ([even] if it were privy to revelations and glimpses of the heavenly countenance). It realizes that the Wisdom of God. . . can be attained [only] through *descending* and sinking into one's own inward ground, and no longer seeking to rise out of oneself.
>
> Whereupon it now thus sinks into itself and before it the gate of Wisdom's depths is opened directly and in the blink of an eye, and it is led into the holy eternal principium of the lightworld in the wine-cellar of the New Lebanon, in the new magical Earth wherein the Virgin Sophia or the Virgin of God's Wisdom appears and announces her message.[36]

This "new magical earth" bears a striking resemblance to what Henry Corbin wrote of Islamic visionary Sufism in his book *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*. Indeed Corbin was himself influenced in his interpretations of Islamic theosophy by his earlier familiarity with Christian theosophy.[37]

Surrounding Pordage were a number of significant figures, including Thomas Bromley, (1629-1691), whose *The Way to the Sabbath of Rest* (1650/1692/1710) represents an enduring classic elaboration of the stages in the spiritual transmutation of an individual in a theosophic community.[38] Much of this work is published in *Theosophia: Hidden Dimensions of Christianity* (1994), and in *Wisdom's Book: The Sophia Anthology* (2000). Bromley wrote about the process of spiritual transmutation that he himself, and the little circle around him and Pordage, had experienced:

> And they that are in this near Union, feel a mutual Indwelling

> in the pure Tincture and Life of each other: And so, the further we come out of the animal Nature, the more universal we are, and nearer both to Heaven, and to one another in the Internal; and the further instrumentally to convey the pure Streams of the heavenly Life to each other, which no external Distance can hinder: For the Divine Tincture (being such a spiritual Virtue, as Christ imprinted into the Heart of the Disciples with whom he talked after his Resurrection, making their *Hearts to burn within them*) is able to pierce through all Distance, and reach those that are far absent; because it is not corporeal, nor subject to the Laws of Place or Time.[39]

Bromley here discusses a kind of spiritual communion characteristic of theosophic communities, focussed as they are on contemplative practice.

The theosophers, unusual for their time, were as willing to be led by a woman as by a man, and so Pordage was succeeded as leader by Jane Leade, whose visions were recorded in numerous books published around the turn of the eighteenth century, with titles including *The Revelation of Revelations* (1683), *The Laws of Paradise*, (1695) and *A Fountain of Gardens*, [3 vols.] (1696-1700). Leade's visionary revelations, and her insistence on the doctrine of universal restoration (*apocatastasis*) were opposed by some other theosophers, including her contemporary Johann Georg Gichtel. Also in Leade's circle were Anne Bathurst; the brilliant scholar of Hebrew, Francis Lee (1660/1-1719; Richard Roach, (1662-1730) active in establishing the Philadelphians; and Dionysius Andreas Freher, (1649-1728) known for his commissioning of various esoteric theosophic illustrations and for his commentaries on Böhmean doctrines, nearly all of which remain unpublished.[40]

Initially, under Pordage, this English theosophic circle was quite reclusive and intent on contemplation, but Jane Leade and her companions established a slightly more formal association under the name 'The Philadelphian Society,' including a loose charter and organizational structure. The Philadelphians published a journal called *Theosophic Transactions*, and even attempted a kind of evangelism, including an unsuccessful attempt to establish their association on

the continent in Germany.[41] Often seen as associated with French millennialism, then current in England, the Philadelphians were poorly received in England, at some points even being physically and verbally attacked by small mobs. Of course, many Continental theosophers saw such efforts at theosophic evangelism as less than wise; Gichtel, for example, vociferously opposed establishing what would amount to just another sect.

No discussion of English theosophy is complete without mention of William Law (1686-1761) the well known Anglican author whose deep indebtedness to Freher and Böhme is not always mentioned, not leat because Law himself rarely called attention to their influence on his writing. His most well known work is *A Serious Call* (1729); and his *The Spirit of Love* (1752/4) is certainly influenced by theosophy.[42] Law was born in King's Cliffe, Northamptonshire, and was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, of which he became a fellow in 1711. Law's life is in some respects interestingly parallel to that of Dr John Pordage. Like Pordage in the previous century, Law refused to swear allegience to King George I in 1714. A Non-juror, Law was forced to resign his college position and kept from other public positions as well. Law then lived in Putney, near London, at the home of Edward Gibbon from 1727 to 1737, where he tutored the historian Gibbon's father. In about 1740, Law moved back to King's Cliffe, where he lived a celibate and quiet life shared with Hester Gibbon, the historian's aunt, and Mrs. Hutcheson, a rich, pious widow. Law's later years were spent studying Böhme and writing in relative seclusion until his death in 1761.

In the latter years of his life, Law attracted a sort of Protestant monastic community of lay people that, situated at King's Cliffe, was renowned for its generous charity. Law and an anonymous patron established a poorhouse for young girls, teaching them to read, knit, sew, study the Bible, and attend church. He was also responsible for establishing an almshouse that fed and clothed the poor. Indeed, Law and Mrs. Hutcheson gave away to the poor all but a tenth of their income. Law awoke every day at five a.m., and spending much of his day reading in his large library of mystical authors, writing, and praying.

Law was succeeded, in some respects, by James Pierrepont Greaves

(1777-1842), who had been a London merchant, but accepted bankruptcy before he was thirty, and lived thereafter on a small stipend. He travelled to visit the renowned educational pioneer J.H. Pestalozzi in Switzerland, where he lived for eight years, after which he returned to England and became active in educational reform there, as well as in large-scale charity efforts, and in theosophic practice. His posthumously published books, taken from his voluminous diaries and papers, include *Letters and Extracts from the Manuscript Writings of James Pierrepont Greaves*, (1845) and *The New Nature in the Soul*, (1847). Greaves, as I point out in *The Hermetic Book of Nature* (1997), was especially influential for the American Transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Bronson Alcott, particularly the latter. It is no coincidence that one of Greaves's English educational experiments was called the "Alcott House."

After Law and Greaves, English theosophy in the nineteenth century owes something to the person of Christopher Walton (1809-1877), who came from a Methodist family background, and who, having happened across John Wesley's anthology from William Law's writings, came eventually to the works of Böhme, and then Freher and all the other theosophers. By trade a goldsmith and jeweler, Walton devoted his money and efforts to the furtherance of theosophy, bringing out a book entitled *Notes and Materials for an adequate Biography of the Celebrated Divine and Theosopher William Law* (1854/1856). A strange, voluminous work composed in tiny type and highly disorganized, *Notes and Materials* is nonetheless chock full of source materials from Freher and elsewhere, and includes some original contributions to theosophy by Walton himself, tinged to some degree by his interest in "animal magnetism" and similar phenomena.[43]

Mid-nineteenth century England also was home to a group of loosely-connected theosophers that included Thomas South (ca. 1785-ca. 1855), his daughter Mary Ann South (later Mary Ann Atwood; (1817-1910), Isabel de Steiger (1836-1927), and Edward Burton Penny (1804-1872) and his wife Anne Judith Penny (1825-1893). In some respects, one could refer to this time as a kind of English Renaissance in theosophy, for all of these people knew one

or had corresponded with one another; some had met at Greaves's theosophic group in Kent, others through corresponding via letters; and all of them published books. Important among these are Mary Ann South's *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* (1850 / 1918); Ann Judith Penny's *Studies in Jacob Boehme* (1912); Edward Burton Penny's translations of Saint-Martin's *Theosophic Correspondence* (1863) and *The Spiritual Ministry of Man*, (1864). Although some members of this circle, notably Mary Ann South and her friend Isabel de Steiger, lived into the twentieth century and during the founding of Blavatsky's Theosophical Society, like Charles Massey (1838-1905; author of *Thoughts of a Modern Mystic*, [1904]) their primary interest remained Christian theosophy in the tradition of Böhme. Another figure representing a *fin de siècle* Christian esotericism was Anna Kingsford (1846-1888), founder of the Hermetic Society, and author of *The Perfect Way* (1881).

The twentieth century also saw some representatives of theosophy in England, as well as some Böhmenist influence in widely known figures like Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941), whose classic works include the massive study *Mysticism* (1911) and the aptly named *Practical Mysticism* (1915). Underhill was not a theosopher in the strict sense (that is, in the tradition of Böhme, Saint-Martin, Baader, and the others) but she drew extensively on the works of Böhme, and cited Jane Leade, William Law, and other theosophers at some length as well. Lesser known, but also significant was G.W. Allen, vicar of Bretby near Burton on Trent, and editor of a theosophic journal entitled *The Seeker*. Another figure who brought Böhme into the public eye in England during the twentieth century is Robin Waterfield, whose selections from Böhme's works are prefaced by his own sketch of theosophical history and significance.[44] Finally, one must mention the remarkable Scottish independent researcher Adam McLean, who republished some important theosophic works, including Jane Leade's *Revelation of Revelations*, and though without formal academic training or position, is himself a repository of bibliographic knowledge.

French Theosophy

Theosophy is a movement whose main stream unquestionably flows through the German tradition, but its literature has been written in numerous languages, including French—and any account of primary literature must consider the remarkable French author Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803) whose spiritual life was early on influenced by the occult school of Martinez de Pasqually (1710-1774) but who attributed his spiritual rebirth and his profound later writings to his contact with the works of Jacob Böhme. Late in life, he learned German and translated Böhme into French. Saint-Martin, who wrote as '*le philosoph inconnu*', sought to combat modern rationalist and materialist reductionism with his many books, including *Des Erreurs et de la Verité* (1775), *Tableau Naturel*, (1782), *De l'esprit des Choses* (1800) and *le Ministère de l'Homme-Esprit* (1802), the last two of which translated theosophic thought into terms accessible to his contemporaries. Among the most delightful of Saint-Martin's works is his correspondence with the Swiss Baron Kirchberger during the French Revolution, testimony to the spiritual balance theosophy provided them during the most turbulent of eras. Saint-Martin did not come to the works of Böhme until relatively late in life; his early works were written from the perspective of his theurgic school, founded by Martinez-Pasquales, a sect that employed theurgic rituals and and "operations." This school, called Martinists, or later, *Elects Cohens*, fought vigorously the growing atheism of contemporary France, and in this battle Saint-Martin played a major role.

Saint-Martin's public role began with his books *Des Erreurs et de la Vérité, ou les Hommes rappelés au Principe universel de la Science*, (1775), and *Tableau Naturel des Rapports entre Dieu, l'Homme, et l'Univers* (1782). In these works Saint-Martin explained the traditional doctrine of correspondences between man and nature, and the idea of man as a microcosm. He sought to oppose the reductionist atheist assertion—which incidentally has by no means disappeared since—that religion originated in mere delusion inspired by a fear of nature's powers. His works alluded to the scriptures, but were couched in a parabolic Hermetic language that, because it referred to God, for instance, as the active intelligent

Cause, was designed to lead a materialistic, atheistic or scientistic readership back toward authentic religion.

It was not until the mid 1780's that Saint-Martin was introduced to Böhme's works, but he immediately recognized in the theosopher "the greatest human light that had ever appeared," and the revelation *in toto* of what he had glimpsed in his earlier theurgic school. From this time on, St. Martin's works and life were increasingly informed by Böhmean theosophy, seen especially in such books as *De l'Esprit des Choses, ou Coup-d'œil philosophique sur la Nature des Êtres, et sur l'Objet de leur Existence*, (1800), and *Le Ministère de l'Homme-esprit*, (1802). In the latter book especially, one sees Saint-Martin emphasizing the necessity for human regeneration in the Logos, which is the Gospel way and the simple key to wisdom—something not seen in the spiritism of the day nor in authors like Swedenborg. In his later years, Saint-Martin learned German and translated several works of Böhme into French, and there is in this a special symbolism.

For Saint-Martin's later works are also, in a different way, an effort to translate Böhme into modern terms. Here is a characteristic passage from *Le Ministère de l'Homme-esprit*, (1802) [*The Ministry of Spiritual Man*]:

> The original generation or formation of the planets and all stars was, according to our author [Böhme], in accord with the way that the wondrous harmonic proportions of Divine Wisdom have been engendered from all eternity.
>
> For when the great change took place in one of the regions of primitive nature, the light went out in that region, which embraced the space of the present nature, and this region, which is the present nature, became as a dead body, unmoving.
>
> Then Eternal Wisdom, which the author sometimes calls SOPHIA, Light, Meekness, Joy, and Delight, caused a new order to be born in the center, in the heart of this universe or world, to prevent and arrest its entire destruction.
>
> This place, or center, according to our author [Böhme], is the place where the sun is kindled. Out of this place or center all kinds of qualities, forms, or powers, which fill and constitute

> the universe, are engendered and produced, all in conformity with the laws of divine generation; for he admits in all beings and eternally in the Supreme Wisdom, a center in which a sevenfold production or subdivision takes place. He calls this center the Separator.[45]

If we were to characterize the overarching significance of Saint-Martin's work, beyond what we have here suggested, it would be to say that in him one sees how an extraodinarily chaotic social *milieu* like the French Revolution need not be a barrier to the theosophic path. For instance, Saint-Martin writes to his friend Baron Kirchberger that "I am freezing here for want of firewood," warns his friend that he must be careful what he puts into letters, and still finds room to discuss his own translation of Böhme's *Drei Principien* as well as his own marriage to Sophia.[46] When one recalls that Saint-Martin's father died during this time, and he himself was in some danger during the political upheavals of the time, the serenity of his correspondence on such matters as the works of Böhme, Gichtel, Pordage, Leade, and the other theosophers becomes all the more striking.

After Saint-Martin, Antoine Faivre notes that there are some other French authors influenced by theosophy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, among whom are Henri Coqueret, author of *Théosophie ou science de Dieu*, (1803) and Jean-Jacques Bernard, author of *Opuscules Théosophiques* (1822), Paul-François-Gaspard Lacuria (1808-1890), author of *Harmonies de l'Etre exprimées par les nombres* (1847), and Madame de Staël, who discusses theosophy in a chapter of *De l'Allemagne* (1820) entitled "Des Philosophes religieux appelés Théosophes," as well as Joseph de Maistre, who alludes to theosophy in his famous *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*.[47]

But none of these have the breadth or depth of influence that Saint-Martin had, nor his originality and genius for clear expression. Indeed, many represented more the influence of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), the Swedish scientist turned visionary, than the current of theosophy. This is the case with such authors as Bernard, Edouard Richer, and J.F. E. Le Boys des Guays

(1794-1864). Saint-Martin did have an arithmosophic mysticism that is also represented by Höné Wronski in his *La Clef de l'infini* (1814). But Saint-Martin's work included and transcended the themes of more cosmologically inclined authors.

If the central current of theosophy unmistakably runs through Germany from Böhme through Baader and right into the twentieth century with a figure like Ziegler, twentieth century scholarship on esotericism generally, and theosophy in particular, belonged very much to France. In scholarship on Jacob Böhme, there are two major French figures: Alexander Koyré, *La philosophie de Jacob Boehme*, (1929/1971) and Pierre Deghaye, *La Naissance de Dieu ou La doctrine de Jacob Boehme*, (1985). Koyré's study is widely regarded as one of the best twentieth century works on this seminal figure; in the latter half of the twentieth century, Deghaye, whose style of writing is strikingly direct, is undoubtedly among the most important interpreters of Böhme's works. There have also been some important shorter studies, notably Antoine Faivre's "Boehme en Allemagne" and other articles in two collections.[48]

There are a number of books in French on later theosophers than Böhme, including in particular Bernard Gorceix's *Johann Georg Gichtel: Théosophe d'Amsterdam*, (1975), an extensive study of this important theosophic figure. Another important book, this one chiefly on the English theosophers Pordage, Leade, and the others, is Serge Hutin's *Les Disciples anglais de Jacob Boehme* (1960). It is indicative of the state of scholarship on theosophy in the English speaking world that until recently, the only available discussion of the English theosophers was in French!

Without doubt the most important scholar of esotericism, with a particular emphasis on Christian theosophy, is Antoine Faivre. Faivre's books and articles are far too numerous to list here, but those searching for works in English ought to look first to two primary studies, *Access to Western Esotericism* (1994), a masterly encyclopedic survey of esotericism that includes also a very important introduction to and study of Franz von Baader, and its sequel, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition* (2000). Also important is the edited volume *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, (1992), which includes articles by Deghaye, Edighoffer, and others that cover

theosophic topics.[49]

We should also mention here the work of the specialist in Islamic esotericism, Henri Corbin. Corbin's focus, as is well known, was Sufism and Ismaili gnosis, but he interpreted these with an eye to the European theosophic tradition, specifically referring to such figures as Œtinger and Baader. Indeed, Corbin was not only a scholar of Islamic esotericism, but also a creative thinker in his own right, giving to us such concepts as the "imaginal," a realm intermediate between the material and the spiritual and to be distinguished from the imagination as fantasy. In creating such concepts, Corbin drew tacitly and sometimes explicitly, on the Böhmean theosophic tradition.

Russian Theosophy

Naturally, it is not possible here to discuss every Russian theosopher, but certainly we cannot consider the history of Christian theosophy without at least sketching the primary Russian figures, not least because they are so influential outside Russia. Chief among the Russian theosophers are four major ones, upon whom we will focus: Vladimir Soloviev, Sergei Bulgakov, Pavel Florensky, and Nicolai Berdyaev. These four figures, almost contemporaneous, are united by their emphasis on and development of what is called "Sophiology," that is, by the centrality of Sophia or Wisdom to their thought.

The first of these, Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900), whom J.D. Kornblatt terms "certainly one of the greatest Russian thinkers of all time," could be partly situated within the theosophic tradition.[50] Soloviev was born into a large and prominent Moscow family; his father was a well-known scholar, and his family had strong ties to Orthodoxy. At the age of nine, during a liturgy, Soloviev had the first of three visions of Sophia that were to define the rest of his life. After graduating from Moscow University in 1873, Soloviev attended seminary for a year, after which he went to England to study theosophy. There, he became familiar with the works of such figures as Pordage, Leade, and Law, whose influence on his work is as yet not at all thoroughly explored. In the British Library, he had a second vision of Sophia, who instructed him to

go to Egypt, where he had in the desert his third vision.

After his visionary quest, Soloviev returned to Moscow, where he delivered from 1877 to 1880 his *Lectures on Godmanhood*, and in 1880 he defended his doctoral dissertation. For a time, it appeared that Soloviev had a promising academic career, but eventually he was to be forced out of academe because of political indiscretions like urging clemency for the killers of Czar Alexander II. Thereafter, he spent his time writing, publishing, and lecturing, producing such books as *The Meaning of Love*, *Russia and the Universal Church*, and *The Justification of the Good*.[51] Much of Soloviev's writing has a somewhat abstract quality; the following is characteristic both of style and of ideas:

> It is this abnormal attitude towards all around us, this exclusive self-assertion or egoism, all-powerful in practical life even if it is rejected in theory—this contra-position of self to all others and the practical negation of these others—it is this which constitutes the fundamental *evil* of our nature.[52]

Soloviev clearly drew on Böhmean theosophy—as when he wrote of the "three modes of existence," his abstract version of Böhme's "three principles"—but he also was an original thinker, as here, when he insists on the transcendence of selfhood as the definition of deification.[53]

After Soloviev, the leading Russian Sophiologist was Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944), whose masterwork was *Unfading Light* (1917). Bulgakov's father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and so on for six generations, had been priests, but Bulgakov himself studied economy and law. In 1900, he published his first major book on capitalism and agriculture; shortly thereafter he and Nicolai Berdyaev, to whom we will turn momentarily, published together the journal *The New Way*, and then another, *Questions of Life*. This was a heady time in Russia, full of religious ferment and innovative thought, in which Bulgakov himself played a key role.

But in 1922 he was banished from the Soviet Union, and in 1925 he helped found the Paris Orthodox Theological Institute, where he served as chair of dogmatic theology. He died in 1944, a

controversial figure in Orthodoxy even though he insisted that his Sophiology, influenced by Böhme and Baader, was certainly not heretical. And Bulgakov's work does demonstrate that a synthesis of Orthodoxy and theosophy is entirely possible through Wisdom. In his book *The Wisdom of God*, (1937) Bulgakov held that "the future of living Christianity rests with the sophianic interpretaton of the world and of its destiny. All the dogmatic and practical problems of modern Christian dogmatics and ascetics seem to form a kind of knot, the unraveling of which inevitably leads to sophiology."[54]

Another figure we can't ignore is Pavel Florensky (1882-1937), although the degree to which he was influenced by theosophy is not even as clear as in the case of Soloviev or Bulgakov. Florensky was an enigmatic man, trained in the hard sciences and mathematics, inventor of a non-coagulating machine oil that he called Dekanite, yet also a man trained in the Moscow seminary, an art historian and a poet. It is as a theologian that Florensky became famous, chiefly for his masterwork, published in 1914 and entitled *The Pillar and Foundation of Truth*. Central to Florensky's thought are the concepts of antinomy and synthesis—that is, of duality resolved in a third. One may say that there is in Florensky's theology something mathematical, as in his technic there is something artistic and theological. It is a great pity, and yet another indictment of the totalitarian Soviet Union, that in 1937 he was murdered by the KGB after having been sent to a Gulag.

But the most original and important of the Russian theosophers—also the one most explicitly a theosopher—was Nicolai Berdyaev (1874-1948). Berdyaev was born to a well-to-do Russian family, his mother a princess of French origin, his father an officer in the Russian army. Never at home in school, Berdyaev nonetheless was a precocious reader, and lived an aristocratic life until he became something of a Marxist while living as a student in Kiev. In 1904, he moved to St. Petersburg, where he and Bulgakov published a journal entitled *The New Way*. During this time Berdyaev formed his thought, and became involved in the lively religious ferment of the time, meeting all of the major Russian members of the "New Religious Consciousness" that had emerged in people like Dmitri

Merezhkovsky and his wife, as well as many others. But in 1922, he and his wife, Lydia, moved to Berlin, and in 1924 they moved to Paris, where they were to remain thereafter in exile, and where Berdyaev was eventually to die.

As we saw earlier, Berdyaev called himself a theosopher in the sense of Böhme and Baader, and explicitly separated himself from the Theosophical Society, from Anthroposophy, and from similar movements. In his monumental dissertation entitled *Nicolas Berdyaev: Theologian of Prophetic Gnosticism*, (1948) Charles Knapp defends Berdyaev against the "serious" "prejudice aroused by the use of the term 'theosophy,'" pointing out that Berdyaev meant not the "modern eclectic system of thought . . . quite devoid of historic sense or real philosophic, theological, or scientific rigor," but "a mystical theology that has had its orthodox representatives in all ages of the church."[55]

But Berdyaev was not entirely Orthodox, as his friend Bulgakov was—influenced by Orthodoxy, Berdyaev was even more a theosopher, who sought in Christian theosophy a Christianity that speaks clearly to the modern world. The range of Berdyaev's work is remarkable, as can be seen in the collection *Christian Existentialism*, a pastiche of his writings on numerous subjects. His primary thesis, to which he returned time and again in his writings, is that the modern world (communist and capitalist alike) objectifies everything, quantifying and therefore separating us from all objects. The path of gnosis is the path of overcoming this disastrous and destructive dualism between subject and object that is at the root of evil.

Berdyaev's first book, written in a kind of visionary ecstasy, was *The Meaning of Creativity*, (1914), in which he outlined most of his major themes, including the nature of human freedom, the power of creativity, and the significance of mysticism. A much more mature work is his *Freedom and the Spirit*, (1935), in which he explicitly identifies himself as a theosopher, and in which the influence of Böhmean theosophy is quite evident. Berdyaev's life is recounted, along with many fascinating glimpses of well-known Russian and European figures, in his book *Dream and Reality* (1950), and perhaps the most mature statement of his philosophy is

to be found in his very profound book *The Beginning and the End* (1941/1952).

Berdyaev's writings were unjustly ignored during the last half of the twentieth century, even though nearly all of his works had been translated into English and published before 1960, and even though he is the most lucid, penetrating, indeed brilliant of all the Russian theosophers. Whereas Soloviev's work is often opaque and verbose, Berdyaev is a model of clarity, and although he is indebted to theosophy, he applies theosophy to the modern situation with great insight. It is typical, and outrageous, that a book entitled *Russian Religious Thought* could be published in 1996 and allude to Berdyaev with but a single sentence.[56] More just is the assessment of Knapp, who devoted more than five hundred pages to Berdyaev's work: "With a tremendous catholicity of mind, Berdyaev draws intellectual and spiritual power from a score of sources."[57]

Among those sources is certainly Jacob Böhme, from whom Berdyaev took his central concept of *ungrund*.[58] It may well be that Berdyaev was the first to recognize how critically important is *ungrund* to understanding not only Böhme, but the radical and longstanding errors of Western philosophy and cosmology from antiquity onwards. *Ungrund*, for Berdyaev, means the Divine centrum that precedes being, that indeed precedes even God, and is prior to all division or differentiation. *Ungrund* is the source of all existence, and the source also of our primordial human freedom, the essence of humanity and the means for our potential deification. Both ancient and modern philosophies committed the fundamental error of descending into objectification, for only *Ungrund* allows for a transcendence of this subject-object dualism.

In short, with Berdyaev we see a brilliant synthesis of theosophy with contemporary philosophy, combined by a penetrating mind. It may well be that Berdyaev's time is yet to come, for of all the theosophers we have discussed in this survey, Berdyaev is the one whose work is most applicable to the present era. And as theosophy is rediscovered by scholarship, and perhaps even renewed in yet another synthesis (as it takes on new forms to suit new conditions), one can have little doubt that this new synthesis

will draw heavily on Berdyaev and his insistence on the primacy of freedom, creativity, and gnosis in human life. For we have not seen the last of Russian theosophy.

American Theosophy

The history of American theosophy begins, of course, with emigration from Europe to America during the seventeenth century. The influence of Jacob Böhme has yet to be thoroughly charted, but his works, as well as those of some other theosophers, were carried over to the colonies very early on, chiefly by German Pietist settlers. The leader of the first Pennsylvanian group of theosophers was Johannes Kelpius, a remarkable, learned young man who led a group of German theosophers to England and then to Pennsylvania, where he headed the first theosophical community in the New World for fourteen years until his death in 1706. Often romanticized, and held by some to be a Rosicrucian, Kelpius was in fact a theosopher in the classical Böhmean tradition, whose life and primary works are well worth documenting here.

Kelpius was born in Denndorf, Germany, in 1670, and after studying at the Gymnasium, in 1687 went to the University at Tübingen, then to Leipzig, and finally to Altdorf, now the University at Helmstadt, studying theology. Since his father died when he was young, Kelpius was sent to the university by family friends. Important among others in his life were the renowned Professor Fabricius, Philipp Jakob Spener, and the Christian Kabbalist scholar Knorr von Rosenroth. Kelpius set sail for America with a group led by Johann Zimmermann(1634-1694), and when the latter died, Kelpius became head of the group, which then settled in Pennsylvania along the Wissahickon River.

The Kelpius settlement took no name, and said that they belonged to no denomination. But because their sermons or exhortations often referred to Revelation 12:1-6, they became known by other settlers, German or otherwise, as "the woman in the wilderness" community on the Wissahickon. A later manuscript of the Ephrata colony (which succeeded the Kelpius group) explained their unnamed way of life as follows:

> While giving up their souls to their Creator, and devoting their whole lives to a preparation of their hearts for the glorious inheritance prepared for the faithful, they mutually instructed each other, and cemented a bond of brotherly love and holy affection. They professed love and charity toward all denominations, but desired to live without name or sect. 'The Contented of the God-loving Soul' was the only name they acknowledged.[59]

This account suggests not only how they lived, but underscores their refusal to participate in sectarianism, a refusal characteristic of all theosophers. Kelpius, who died young, did not publish a great deal, but his treatise on prayer is a model of economy, and demonstrates quite clearly the profound parallels between his Protestant mysticism, the German Catholic mysticism that preceded the theosophers, and the Greek Orthodox mysticism that influenced them. For Kelpius affirms the different forms of prayer, and holds—like the mystics of other faiths—that

> Forasmuch as internal prayer is so weighty a point that one may call it the only means to attain perfection in this life and to kindle the pure and disinterested love in our hearts, and as all Christians. . . are called to this state of pure love and perfection, and will, by the power of this call, have the necessary grace offered to them to attain such a state: so this inward prayer suits all persons, even the most simple and ignorant, who are also capable of performing this order or manner of prayer.[60]

According to Kelpius, all Christians are called to the same inward form of prayer, the unceasing prayer of the heart.

The Wissahickon group was succeeded by another, this one at Ephrata, Pennsylvania, which was to have a long history. Central to the history of Ephrata was another German immigrant, Johann Conrad Beissel (1690-1768), who set sail for America in 1720, and was baptized in the Wissahickon River in 1724. Beissel gathered a small group around him and organized it into a semi-monastic community on the Cocalico River. It was to become

the most important of the American theosophic communities, famous for its music, reputed to be angelic-sounding, and for its ascetic ways of life and emphasis on prayer. Ephrata grew to be a very prosperous enclave, and eventually came to have (despite Beissel's disapproval) quite a number of businesses, including a printing press, a lumber mill, and many others. The printing press, run by Christopher Sauer [sometimes spelled Sower] brought out works by Gottfried Arnold and Thomas Bromley, among other theosophers, and was one of the more important presses in early America.

We possess much more documentation of Beissel's thought and writing than we do of Kelpius's, which perhaps explains something of Kelpius's mystique. In 1743, the press of Christopher Sauer brought into print one of the first Bibles published in America, and 1745 saw the publication of several books by Conrad Beissel, including *Mystische Abhandlung über die Schopfung und von des Menschen Fall und Wiederbringungen durch des Weibes Samen. . .* [*Mystical Treatise on the Creation, Fall, and Restoration of Man through the Woman's Seed*], and *Die Hohe Zeugnüsse*, [*The High Testimonies*], and *Die Weiderstellung Der Reinen Paradisischen Menschheit, oder des Jungfräulichen Ebenbildes Gottes. . . in einer Sammlung geistliche und Theosophischer Episteln*, [*The Restoration of the Pure Paradisical Humanity, or the Virginal Image of God. . . in a Collection of Spiritual and Theosophic Letters*], which includes thirty-seven meditations and sixty-seven letters on theosophic topics.[61]

Ephrata was important in theosophic history because it represented a documented, long-lived theosophic community whose significance has not yet been fully assessed.[62] But much of theosophic history in America remains underground, and indeed may never be known more widely. Certainly it is the case that theosophy's influence among German Pietist immigrants to America was substantial, and passed on from generation to generation. It is unclear to what degree this influence corresponds to the transmission of esoteric traditions more generally, but it is undoubtedly true that theosophy continued to be found on the periphery of American Anabaptist communities like the Amish

right into the twentieth century.

Theosophy was also influential in American Transcendentalism, although this fact is rarely recognized. Indeed, one nearly could term Bronson Alcott (1799-1888), author of *Tablets* (1868), *Concord Days* (1872), and *Table-talk* (1877), a theosopher. In *Concord Days*, Alcott includes a letter from the British theosopher Christopher Walton praising Böhme to the skies, and Alcott himself writes that

> Mysticism is the sacred spark that has lighted the piety and illuminated the philosophy of all places and times. It has kindled especially and kept alive the profoundest thinking of Germany and of the continent since Boehme's first work, "The Aurora," appeared. Some of the deepest thinkers since then have openly acknowledge their debt to Boehme, or secretly borrowed without acknowledging their best illustrations from his writings. . . he has exercised a deeper influence on the progress of thought than anyone since Plotinus.[63]

Alcott in turn influenced Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose essays—particularly the 1836 *Nature*—include some indebtedness to Böhme. All of these connections I detail elsewhere; suffice it here to say that theosophy certainly was one of the currents that fed into American Transcendentalism.[64]

Indeed, theosophy always has sprung up unexpectedly and almost irrespective of circumstance, in Europe, England, America, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere. One can distinguish, though, between more popular forms of theosophy, and more speculative forms. Exemplary of popular theosophy is a Southern American evangelist of the late twentieth century named Larry Hodges, a former welder who felt called to distribute (and preach based on) the writings of English theosopher Jane Leade. Hodges, who republished some of Leade's treatises, holds that her theosophic visions and prophecies refer not to Leade's own time, but to the late twentieth century. And Hodges is not alone; Böhme's influence in American Christianity continues, among others through the works of Norman Grubb.

There are a number of twentieth century American contributions to speculative theosophy or theosophic studies, beginning in the 1950's, when an American at Columbia University named Charles A. Muses published a perceptive book on Jane Leade's contemporary and spiritual son, Dionysius Andreas Freher, entitled *Illumination on Jacob Boehme* (1951), as well as a journal devoted to the works of Böhme. In 1999, Arthur Versluis published *Wisdom's Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition*, a general introduction to the theosophic tradition. In fact, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries saw something of an American renaissance in Sophianic studies, with the advent of feminist interest in Sophia, and books by Barbara Newman and Robert Sardello, in lectures and publications by Christopher Bamford, founder of Lindisfarne Press, and in an anthology compiled and introduced by Robert Faas, a clinical psychologist, as well as in the publication of numerous important source materials in this theosophic current.[65]

Given the burgeoning interest in Sophianic spirituality and in theosophy particularly, not only in scholarly but also in popular circles, we can well expect that the Christian theosophic current will continue to emerge, oftentimes in the most surprising places.[66] To return to the remarks of Nicolai Berdyaev with which we began—those remarks so sternly separating the Christian theosophic current from that of the Theosophical Society—we can see that indeed there is at least some truth in his assessment. Although there were some occasional links between the Theosophical Society and writers like Hartmann, such connections are circumstantial and, one may even say, accidental. For the Christian theosophic current is actually quite distinctive and, having traced its emergences and re-emergences thus far, we can be certain that we have not seen the last of it.

NOTES

[1]See Antoine Faivre, "The Theosophical Current: A Periodization," in *Theosophical History*, VII.5(1999): 167-207. In addition, see James Santucci, "On Theosophia and Related Terms," *Theosophical History*, II.3(1987): 107-110, and also Santucci, "Theosophy and the Theosophical Society," (London: Theosophical History Center, 1985).

[2]Nicolai Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, (London: Bles, 1935), p. x.

[3]Ibid., p. xix.

[4]Ibid., pp. 270-271.

[5]For an overview of the Western esoteric traditions, see Faivre's *Access to Western Esotericism*, (Albany: SUNY, 1994). Among Antoine Faivre's numerous publications on theosophy and related topics, see especially "Le courant théosophique (fin XV - XX siécle): Essai de périodisation" in *Politica Hermetica*, 7(1993): 6-41 and *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism* (Albany: SUNY, 2000). Also on theosophy see Antoine Faivre, *Philosophie de la Nature: Physique sacrée et théosophie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996) and Antoine Faivre and Rolf-Christian Zimmermann, eds., *Epochen der Naturmystik*, (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1979).

[6]*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989 ed.) II.538; Strom. VII.x.

[7]Dionsyius the Areopagite, *The Complete Works*, (New York: Paulist, 1987), "Celestial Hierarchies," 140c, p. 151.

[8]Tauler, *Sermons*, (New York: Paulist, 1985), Sermon 24, p. 89.

[9]Ibid., pp. 89-90.

[10]See Böhme, *Sämtliche Schriften*, 8 vols., Will-Erich Peuckert, August Faust, eds., (Stuttgart: Fromann, 1955-1961); see also in English, for example, Jacob Böhme, *Aurora*, (London: 1910), *Dialogues on the Supersensual Life*, W. Law, ed., (New York: Ungar, 1957), *Six Theosophic Points*, (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Mich.

P, 1958), and *The Way to Christ,* P. Erb, trs., (New York: Paulist P, 1978).

[11]See for instance Basarab Nicolescu, *Science, Meaning, and Evolution, the Cosmology of Jacob Böhme*, (New York: Parabola, 1992); and Peter Koslowski, *Die Prüfungen der Neuzeit*: *Über Postmodernität, Philosophie der Geschichte, Metaphysik, Gnosis*, (Wien: Passagen, 1989); see also Versluis, *The Esoteric Origins of the American Renaissance*, (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), in which I discuss in detail Böhme's influence on Emerson, Alcott, and American Transcendentalism in general. See also Versluis, "Bronson Alcott and Jacob Böhme," *Studies in the American Renaissance*, 16 (1993): 153-159.

[12]See Werner Buddecke, ed. *Jakob Böhme: Die Ur-Schriften*, Stuttgart: Frommann, 1963).

[13]On Böhme see Pierre Deghaye, *La Naissance de Dieu*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1985); Alexander Koyré, *La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme*, (Paris: Vrin, 1979); Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic*, (Albany: SUNY, 1991); on Böhme's predecessors see Alexandre Koyré, *Mystiques, spirituels, alchimistes du xvi siècle allemand*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).

[14]Aurora, xx.57; see also xx.50, and for the subsequent discussion of the three realms, xx.57-72.

[15]Ibid., xx.72.

[16]*Signatura Rerum*, xii.10.

[17]Ibid., xii.25.

[18]The first English translation of *Eine kurze Eröffnung* is available under the title *Awakening to Divine Wisdom* (St. Paul: New Grail, 2005).

[19]Gichtel, *Eine kurze Eröffnung*, preface, I.3,4.

[20]Ibid., III.47,48.

[21]See Arnold, *Sämmtliche geistliche Lieder*, C. Ehmann, ed., (1856).

[22]Angelus Silesius, *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, I.v.

[23]See Œtinger, *Lehrtafel der Prinzessin Antonia*, *Sämmtliche theosophische Schriften*, (Stuttgart: 1858) 2nd ed., I.86.

[24]See *Die Philosophie, Theologie und Gnosis Franz von Baaders: Spekulatives Denken zwischen Aufklärung, Restauration und Romantik*, Peter Koslowski, ed., (Wien: Passagen, 1993), esp. Antoine Faivre, "Franz von Baader und die okzidentale Esoterik," pp. 221-242.

[25]See Franz von Baader, *Sätze aus der erotischen Philosophie*, (Frankfurt: Insel, 1966), introduction.

[26]See Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism, op. cit.*, part of which is devoted exclusively to an examination of Baader's extraordinary writings.

[27]For Weinfurter's references to the Theosophical Society or its members, see *Man's Highest Purpose: The Lost Word Regained*, (London: Rider, n.d.), pp. 34, 43, 48.

[28]Weinfurter quotes liberally from Kerning's books in his *Man's Highest Purpose*. Kerning's works also include *Geschichtlicher Überblick über die Freimaurerei* (Lorsch: 1902), reprinted in Kerning, *Leben und Schriften*, (Lorsch: 1902). Franz Hartmann also presented Kerning's works in his *Lichtstrahlen vom Orient* (Leipzig: n.d.); see, too, Gottfried Buchner, *J.B. Kerning*, (Württemburg: Lorsch, 1902).

[29]See Karl Frick, *Licht und Finsternis*, (Graz: Akademische, 1978) II.305 ff.

[30]Franz Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrine of Paracelsus*, (New York: U.S. Book, 1891), p. 54.

[31]Franz Hartmann, *Personal Christianity: The Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, (New York: Unger, 1957), p. 44.

[32] I'll also note here Otfried Eberz's idiosyncratic *Sophia und Logos oder die Philosophie der Wiederherstellung*, (Freiberg: Rombach, 1976), a book that does not belong to the theosophic tradition, but does turn on Eberz's thesis about Sophia.

[33]Robert Ayshford, *Aurora Sapientia, that is to saie, The Daiebreak of Wisdome Of the three Principles and beginning of all in the mysterie of wisdome in which the ground and key of all wisdome is laid open,*

directing to the true understanding of God, of Man, and of the whole world, in a new and true triune wisdome Physisophie, Theologie, and Theosophie. tending to the Honour of God, Revelation of the true wisdome and to the service of the Sixt Church att Philadelphia By Her Minister called by the Grace of God to beare witness of God and of Jesus Christ, 1629; new edition published as *Aurora*, (St. Paul: New Grail, 2006).

[34]Ibid., Ch. 1, "Of the threefold Book of Wisdome."

[35]See Ioan P. Coulianu, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), originally *Les Gnoses dualistes d'Occident*, (Paris: Plon, 1990).

[36]See John Pordage, *Sophia: The Graceful Eternal Virgin of Holy Wisdom, or Wonderful Spiritual Discoveries and Revelations That the Precious Wisdom Has Given to a Holy Soul* (London: 1675), in Versluis, *Wisdom's Book: The Sophia Anthology*, (St. Paul: Paragon House, 2000), Ch. V. These paragraphs by Pordage also appear in the *Theosophic Correspondence* of Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, (Exeter: 1863), pp. 92-93.

[37]See Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth, From Mazdaean Iran to Shi'ite Islam*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977).

[38]See also *A catalogue of Mr. T. Bromley's Library*, (London: 1691). Bromley's *The Way to the Sabbath of Rest* was a popular work in England and in America, and was even translated into Swedish and smuggled into Sweden during the eighteenth century. It is worth noting that there was a close connection between theosophy and alchemy, as evidenced for instance in Edmund Brice's translation of Ali Puli, *Centrum Naturae Concentratum*, (London: 1696).

[39]See Versluis, *Theosophia: Hidden Dimensions of Christianity*, (Hudson: Lindisfarne, 1994), p. 199.

[40]See C.A. Muses, *Illumination on Jacob Böhme: The Work Of Dionysius Andreas Freher*, (New York: King's Crown, 1951).

[41]For an account of the Philadelphians' abortive missionary effort in Germany, see Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the*

Philadelphians, (Uppsala: Almqvist, 1948) pp. 114-135. See also B.J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*: *Behmenism and Its Development in England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), and Julie Hirst*, Jane Leade: A Biography of a Seventeenth-century Mystic*, (London: Ashgate, 2005).

[42]Much of the Rosicrucian movement also found inspiration in theosophy, and the deep affinities between Rosicrucian works—particularly the tables of correspondences and illustrations—and theosophic works remains an area ripe for further exploration. See Christopher McIntosh, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason*, (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

[43]See on Walton Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, (Albany: SUNY, 1995), pp. 235-241.

[44]See Robin Waterfield, *Jacob Boehme: Essential Readings*, (Wellingborough: Aquarian, 1989).

[45]From Versluis, *Wisdom's Book: The Sophia Anthology*, (St. Paul: Paragon House, 2000).

[46]Letter dated 4 Jan. 1795, in *Theosophic Correspondence*, (Exeter: Roberts, 1863), p. 153.

[47]See Antoine Faivre, "Le Courant Théosophique (Fin XVI-XX Siècles): Essai de Périodisation" in *Politica Hermetica* 7(1993): 6-41, esp. pp. 38-39.

[48]See *Jacob Boehme ou l'obscure lumière de la connaissance mystique* (Paris: Vrin, 1979), esp. pp. 135-154. See also Gerhard Wehr and Pierre Deghaye, *Jacob Böhme,* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1977).

[49] See also *Ésotérisme, Gnoses, & Imaginaire Symbolique: Mélanges Offerts à Antoine Faivre*, Richard Caron et al., eds., (Leuven: Peeters, 2001) and Antoine Faivre and Wouter Hanegraaff, eds., *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998).

[50]See J.D. Kornblatt and R. Gustafson, eds., *Russian Religious Thought*, (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1996), p. 27.

[51]Nearly all of Soloviev's works have been translated into English: see *The Antichrist*, W. Barnes and H. Hayes, trs., (Edinburgh:

Floris, 1982), *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, B. Jakim, trs., (Hudson: Lindisfarne, 1996), *The Meaning of Love*, J. Marshall, trs., (Stockbridge: Lindisfarne, 1985), *Russia and the Universal Church*, H. Rees., trs., (London: Bles, 1948), *The Justification of the Good*, N. Duddington, trs. (London: Constable, 1918), *War, Progress, and the End of History*, A. Bakshy, trs., (Hudson: Lindisfarne, 1990).

[52]V. Soloviev, P. Zouboff, trs., *Lectures on Godmanhood*, (London: Dobson, 1948), p. 166.

[53]Ibid., Lecture Six. 'Deification' is an Orthodox concept succinctly expressed in the saying that God became man so that man could become God.

[54]Sergei Bulgakov, *Sophia: The Wisdom of God*, (Hudson: Lindisfarne, 1993), p.21.

[55]Charles C. Knapp, *Nicolas Berdyaev: Theologian of Prophetic Gnosticism*, (Th.D. Diss., Toronto: 1948), p. 40.

[56]loc. cit.

[57]Op. cit., p. 7.

[58]On this topic, see Knapp, op. cit., pp. 275 ff. See Berdyaev's introduction to Jacob Boehme's *Six Theosophic Points*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1958); See also *The Destiny of Man*, pp. 25 ff.; *Freedom and the Spirit*, pp. 194 ff.

[59]See Sachse, Julius, *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia: Sachse, 1895) and *The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia: 1900), I.80-81.

[60]See Johannes Kelpius, *A Short, Easy, and Comprehensive Method of Prayer*, Christopher Witt, trs., (Philadelphia, 1761), p. 1.

[61]Sachse, III.176 ff., 238 ff.

[62]See Peter Erb, *The Pietists*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1983); see also Peter Erb's study of Ephrata.

[63]Alcott, *Table-talk*, (Philadelphia: Saifer, 1971 rpt. of 1877 edition), p. 132.

[64] See Arthur Versluis, *The Esoteric Origins of the American Renaissance* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001).

Hedegård, Gösta, ed. *Liber Iuratus Honorii: A Critical Edition of the Latin Version of the Sworn Book of Honorius*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002. 336 pp. $34.00 (paper). Reviewed by Claire Fanger

The *Liber Iuratus Honorii* or *Sworn Book of Honorius* is something of a key text, in the sense that it stands at a crossroads for many areas and disciplines; and yet there is still much about it that is unknown or insufficiently studied. A late medieval ritual including prayers intended to induce a vision of God as Adam and the prophets saw him, the *Sworn Book* stands at a crossroads between normal genres of paraliturgical prayer and condemned magic. It draws on many common Christian liturgical elements (the Litany of the Saints, Pater Noster, Ave Maria, and so on) but also the widely circulated and frequently condemned medieval angel magic text, the *Ars Notoria* (referred to by Hedegård by one of its alternative titles, the *Flores Aurei Apollonii,* hereafter FAA). Of all Christian texts of the period, the *Sworn Book* is probably the most outspoken in its defense of magic, its polemical Prologue heralding the more extreme developments in the positivization of magic shortly to occur in the occultist syntheses of the early modern period.[1] Beyond this, the *Sworn Book* has been noted more than once as a text which involves a possible late medieval confluence of Jewish and Christian theurgic practices[2] – an area in which information remains somewhat sparse and speculative, since to date (no doubt in part due to a deficit of modern editions of many potentially relevant theurgic and magical works in both Latin and Hebrew) virtually no comparative research has been done.

When so much of interest hangs in the balance around this work, the historian can hardly be anything but deeply grateful that the Latin text receives its first serious scholarly edition here, with the published version of Gösta Hedegård's doctoral thesis for the Department of Classics at the University of Stockholm. Indeed it is in some ways scarcely credible that the Latin text should have had to wait until 2002 to find its way into print. The edition is such a clearly competent piece of work, and so necessary to further study in the area, that is difficult to be deeply critical of it.

If it is true that some of the facts in Hedegård's book are already superceded, this should to be taken rather as indicating how rapidly work in this area is progressing than as implying any serious discredit to this edition, which, despite advances being made elsewhere in the field, will certainly remain useful and necessary for some time to come.

Hedegård's primary objective has been to establish a sound version of the text, and this goal is well accomplished. The edition is based on the Latin text available in three British Library manuscripts which contain the most nearly complete versions of the work, Sloane 3854, Sloane 313, and Sloane 3885. A fourth manuscript, Royal 17Axlii, containing a partial English translation, is also consulted. The text has apparatus at the back keyed to numbered paragraphs and sentences. The large boldface numbering of sentences I find slightly distracting, though on the whole the text is clearly and legibly laid out, and seems to be unusually well proofread. There is also a modest introduction (fifty-five pages) which does the necessary work of discussing the date and attribution of the work, the manuscript tradition, and the form of the text and the ritual. Hedegård here also provides some discussion of related texts (fascinating and all too brief), and lays out the principles for establishing the text and textual problems, and decisions pertaining to layout and critical apparatus. The text is usefully accompanied by a list of divine and angelic names at the back, and an edition of relevant portions of the FAA (based on Sloane 1712) as an appendix. Where the *Sworn Book* draws on the FAA the text is italicized.

Flaws in the edition pertain largely to things Hedegård could hardly have known since he did not have access either to the article on the *Sworn Book* published in 2002 by Jean-Patrice Boudet,[3] nor the doctoral thesis (then in progress but still incomplete) by Julien Véronèse on the *Ars notoria*.[4] Finished only in 2004, the Véronèse dissertation not only establishes critical editions for all major texts and textual elements of the *Ars notoria*, but also pushes much further towards a reliable dating of the different versions of the text, and amasses more evidence for the historical context of its origin and transmission than is available anywhere else. Through

the work of Boudet and Véronèse, it has been established that the version of the *Ars notoria* on which the *Sworn Book* drew is not the first text to appear, classified by Véronèse as version A (the text present in Sloane 1712) but a later elaborated and glossed version, *Ars notoria* B. This dependence on *Ars notoria* B has implications for the dating of the *Sworn Book* as well. Though indeed there is no substantial disagreement between the likely dating somewhat hesitantly suggested by Hedegård and that argued for by Boudet (both suggest the most likely time of composition of text is during the papacy John the XXII, 1316-1334), Boudet brings to bear additional evidence based in part on the relatively late emergence of the *Ars notoria* B text which radically strengthens the case for late dating. The most important consequence of these developments for the Hedegård edition is simply that, while the appendix and cross referencing to FAA remains useful a general way, the reader needs to bear in mind that passages noted in italics do not reflect everything going on between the author/compiler of the *Sworn Book* and the *Ars notoria*..

I have other regrets about the form of the edition, which again should not be taken to imply that it is not a strong piece of work on its own terms. The text is not annotated, nor sourced to any other text outside the FAA. Most readers will have little idea of the way the text draws on or relates to liturgical, biblical, exegetical and pseudepigraphic sources, all of which will be important ultimately in trying to reconstruct the milieu in which the text originated. Hedegård also does not address the issues surrounding possible Jewish influences on the text, nor the rather interesting ways that the *Sworn Book* author relates to Judaism outside of questions of influence. However as already noted, Hedegård does not have a deep concern with establishing this work in its historical context; his professed aim is simply to establish a sound critical edition of the text, and this he has done. While it is possible to regret the lack of more historical information, there is a corresponding payoff in that the text is available to us much earlier than would likely be the case otherwise.

In his brief review at Amazon.com, Joseph Peterson remarks that Dr. Hedegård is at work on an English translation of this text of the

Sworn Book; dare we hope that this translation will be sourced to more works than the Latin edition? While we wait to find out, we could do worse than peruse Joseph Peterson's online edition based on English manuscripts at the Twilit Grotto, which still remains a useful complement to Hedegård's work.[5]

NOTES

[1] For the positivization of magic from medieval through early modern periods, see entries on "Magic" in Vol II of the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, ed W. Hanegraaff, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), esp. "Magic III: Middle Ages" (Fanger/Klaassen) and "Magic IV: Renaissance-17th Century"(Brach). For an extended description of the defense of magic in the prologue and summary of the ritual, see R. Mathiesen, "A Thirteenth-Century Ritual to Attain the Beatific Vision from the *Sworn Book* of Honorius of Thebes" in *Conjuring Spirits*, ed. Fanger (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1998), 143-62.

[2] In particular R. Kieckhefer, "The Devil's Contemplatives: The *Liber Iuratus*, the *Liber Visionum*, and the Christian appropriation of Jewish Occultism" in *Conjuring Spirits*, cited above, and J.-P. Boudet, "Magie théurgique, angélologie et vision béatifique dans le *Liber sacratus* attribué à Honorius de Thèbes" in *Les anges et la magie au Moyen Âge,* ed. J.-P. Boudet et al., Actes de la table ronde de Nanterre (8 and 9 Decembre 2000)*, Mélanges de l'école Francaise de Rome* 114 (2002), 851-890.

[3] Cited above, note 2.

[4]"L'Ars notoria au Moyen Âge et à l'époque moderne. Étude d'une tradition de magie théurgique (XIIe-XVIIe siècle)," Paris X -Nanterre, 2004. This thesis is heading towards print but still not widely available.

[5]http://www.esotericarchives.com/juratus/juratus.htm; retrieved September, 2005.

Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), 370 pp.
Reviewed by Arthur Versluis

A few years ago, a colleague of mine published a book on the history of Southern conservatism in the United States, and when it was reviewed in one of the very magazines discussed in the book, the reviewer wrote that my colleague's book was what predictably happens when "one of them writes about one of us." Undoubtedly, the same phrase could be applied by most Traditionalists to *Against the Modern World*, the first major academic study of the phenomenon of Traditionalism. In addition to providing an extensive academic history of Traditionalism, this book raises a host of questions and issues for the thoughtful reader.

Sedgwick describes the ambit of his project this way:

> The Traditionalists who are discussed in this book constitute a movement in the loosest sense of the word. The Traditionalist movement has no formal structure, and since the late 1940s has had no central command. It is made up of a number of groups and individuals, united by their common debt to the works of René Guénon.[1]

He begins with a somewhat bewildering narrative of the convoluted path by which he became aware first of the existence of Traditionalists in Egypt and Russia. But his book as a whole moves step by step through the complicated biographical history that leads from late nineteenth-century France through René Guénon, and from him into the major twentieth-century schools of Traditionalism in the United States, England, France, Italy, and elsewhere around the globe. *Against the Modern World* also outlines the biography and works of Frithjof Schuon, and discusses in some detail the religious order that Schuon headed, as well as revelations in the 1990s that the order's practices reportedly included ritual nudity. Sedgwick's book introduces and analyzes some works and biographies of numerous Traditionalist figures

both well known and obscure. Without doubt, there will be more academic studies of the phenomenon of Traditionalism in the future, and those future scholars will be indebted to this book.

But it is surprising, upon reflection, that a book with the words "secret intellectual history" in the subtitle in fact suffers from a paucity of ideas—after all, the very thing that makes Traditionalism intellectually attractive to begin with. The book actually is much closer to biography than intellectual history, and while I cannot speak to the accuracy of Sedgwick's accounts of various authors' lives, the book is written in an engaging way. What surprises me is the relatively little space devoted to the signal ideas or broad doctrines held by various schools of Traditionalism—there is almost nothing in the way of quotations from the works even of Guénon. Perhaps the author thought it best to let Traditionalists, a prolific group, speak for themselves in their own works. However, by eliding many ideas, the book also elides much of this school's significant intellectual history and influence.

But Sedgwick does not stay only with the topic of what he calls "hard Traditionalism," meaning those who expressly identify themselves as Traditionalists, whether of Guénonian, Evolian, Schuonian, or some other school. He also introduces what he terms "soft Traditionalism," by which he refers to the many scholars or public figures whose work has been influenced by Traditionalist ideas. The question that naturally arises here is this: what does a term like "soft Traditionalism" mean in practice? For instance, it is true that the British poet Kathleen Raine was influenced at one time by the works of René Guénon. But I discussed Traditionalism with her in detail in the 1990s, late in her life, and she said that while Guénon was helpful at a certain point in her intellectual history, he belonged to a different era, and no longer was all that important. She had never been interested in Schuon's work, she said. And after her death, an editorial statement in the journal she founded, *Temenos Academy Review*, sought to differentiate clearly between the work of the Temenos Academy on the one hand—focused upon the spheres of literature, art, and the visionary metaphysics of figures like William Blake and Islamic scholar Henry Corbin—and Traditionalism on the

other.[2] There is a real distinction here, and it is not sufficiently addressed in *Against the Modern World*.

Still another problematic case of "soft Traditionalism" is far from the warm-hearted and delightful Kathleen Raine. One of the figures Sedgwick introduces is Alexander Dugin, a Russian author whose works on geopolitics and other topics were fairly widely dispersed within post-Soviet Russia, and who became an advisor to major Russian legislative, military, and executive leaders, including Vladimir Putin. Dugin also founded the Eurasia political party, and reportedly became increasingly influential in military and intelligence circles. Curiously, Sedgwick does not discuss Dugin's more extreme political writings, many of which were widely available on the internet in English translation, and in which Dugin appears to endorse mass violence and the destruction of the "decadent" West. Dugin (who seems to be more extreme than Sedgwick makes out) almost certainly read Guénon's *Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, for example, before creating his own unique kind of anti-modernism, but I do not think Guénon would recognize himself at all in Dugin's violent exhortations. Sedgwick notes that Dugin does not cite any Traditionalists in his major work on geopolitics, and so we have to recognize the difficulty an intellectual historian necessarily has in differentiating between influence and responsibility. Thus, for example, the mere fact that Dugin may have read this or that work does not make such a work or its author responsible for what Dugin becomes. Yet there is, presumably, a link. What does such a link or filiation mean?

I would not raise these examples, except for what some might see as an underlying implication that runs throughout the discussion of "soft Traditionalism" in *Against the Modern World*. One might read the book (wrongly, I trust) as asserting that one can and ought to hunt for signs of indebtedness to Traditionalism in influential authors from Eliade and Scholem to Raine or to Charles, Prince of Wales—and that such signs mark these individuals as being somehow outside the rationalist-empiricist pale. But we don't need more heretic-hunting of any kind. Rather, we should consider to what extent we ourselves are engaged in the (rhetorical?) battle

between modernism and anti-modernism, which really is the underlying dynamic of our era. It is much easier, almost natural, to attempt to claim the "high ground" of modernist rationalism and to dismiss "irrationalist" perspectives than it is to confront the possibility that there are important things to be learned from the critics of modernity, just as from esoteric, pre-modern, or, yes, traditional approaches to knowledge. At its best, *Against the Modern World* may represent an effort to go beyond the polemics of "us" and "them," though I do not think it fully succeeds in this regard.

The emergence of Western esotericism as an academic field is evidence that what Gershom Scholem termed "counter-history" is emerging into the light of day. Ours is an exciting time for those who wish to understand history in new ways. While it is important for scholars of counter-history to be discerning, it is at least as important to encourage a generosity of spirit, recognizing in this case that antimodernism, despite its darker manifestations, also has a bright side that is fundamental to the creative impulse in modernity. What contemporary creative work worth its salt does not reflect the tension between modernity and its critique? Traditionalism exemplifies this dynamic too, and one could argue that, rather than needing to hunt out anti-modernist "heretics," we could use a scholar here or there whose work was informed by a reading of classic anti-modernist works. There are Marxist scholars and Feminist scholars, Radical scholars and Conservative scholars—the list goes on. I suppose the Academy won't be too much in disrepair if, every now and then, it also includes a scholar or two sympathetic to traditional ideas or critical of modernity. Of course, we would certainly benefit, too, from those scholars in the tradition of irascible Thoreau—who, we will recall, wrote that he hereby resigned from any society that he had not joined.

We need scholars who are discerning and generous, sympathetic, yet not dogmatic, inquisitive and open to the adventure of exploration. What better region for such an individual to explore than "counter-history"? There's a lot more territory yet to cover. And I would encourage a range of approaches and presentations, for insistence upon only one, be it "rationalist," "reductionist," or

whatever, carries with it a whiff of the totalitarian, the very charge implicitly laid against Traditionalism itself. At the same time, the word "university" bears implications (including universals and universalism) of an implicit counter to prevailing modern tendencies toward intellectual fragmentation and disarray. It's true that many Western academics in the late twentieth century broadly rejected notions of universals or essences [universalism or essentialism], but who is to say whether the resulting intellectual and cultural fragmentation represented the far end of a pendulum swing that is bound to go back, perhaps is already going back in the other direction? Do we not already see such a pendulum swing back manifesting itself in theological/philosophical movements like Radical Orthodoxy? It is possible, after all, that Traditionalism, with its efforts to reconcile unity and multiplicity, traditional cultures and modernity, may point as much to the future as to the past. In any event, the works of its primary figures, including Guénon and Evola, remain worth the challenging reading that they present, and their intellectual, cultural, historical, philosophical, and religious significances await further consideration.

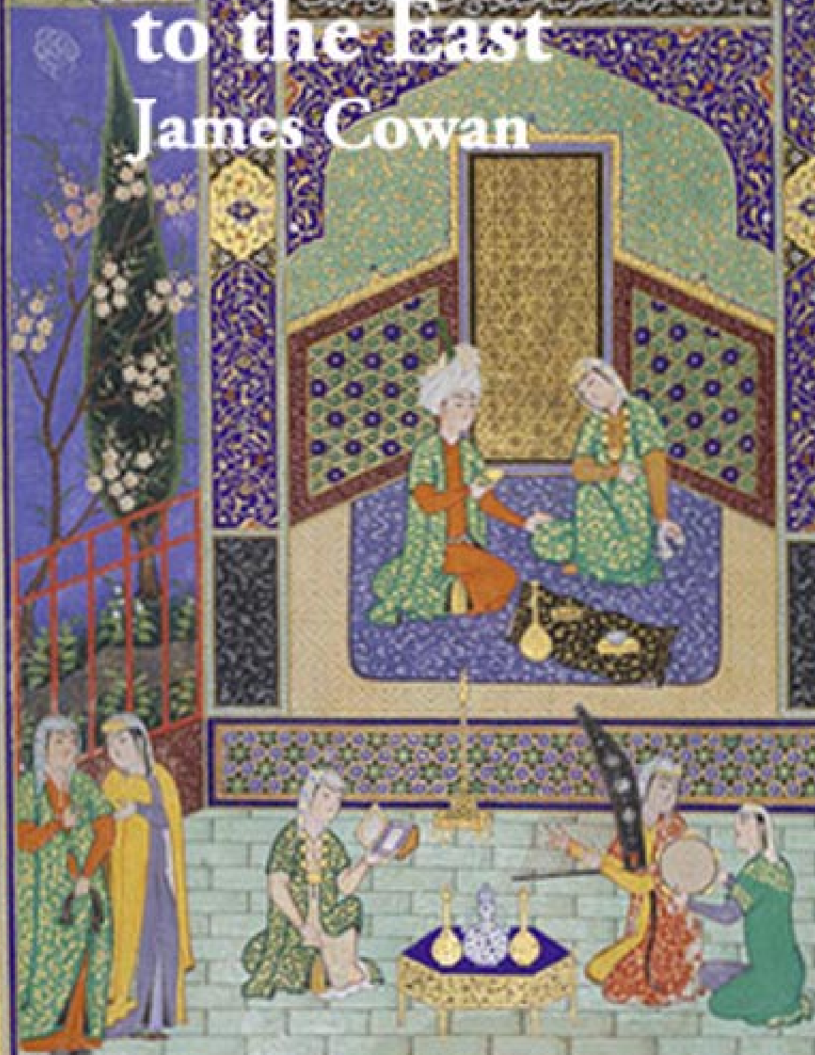
NOTES

[1] Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, p. 22.

[2] See *Temenos Academy Review* 8(2005): 5-11.

Journey to the East

James Cowan



Journey to the East

James Cowan

In 142- an Italian merchant named John of Pisa took ship to Jaffa in the Holy Land, en route for the East. He planned to join a flotilla of vessels leaving the Gulf of Akaba for Goa in India. There he hoped to purchase a cargo of cloves and cinnamon before returning to Pisa. Quitting Jaffa, he traveled overland to Damascus in order to join a caravan traveling to the Gulf. Unfortunately, when he arrived in that fair city, he was told that the season for desert travel had already concluded. John was forced to make a decision. Either he must bide his time until next year, or set out with his servant on a privately funded journey. The prospect seemed daunting enough. Still, the lure of purchasing a cargo of spices and so make his fortune became his overriding consideration. Hiring a small number of camels along with their handlers, John set out on a journey across what he assumed would be vast reaches of sand towards Akaba. Little did he know, however, that after receiving misleading information as to the exact route because of the mendacity of his guide, he would find himself about to take the wrong direction near the remote trading town of Asaphara. Instead of traveling south-east to the Gulf, John soon found himself wandering through an unknown land that would forever change how he saw the world.

Herewith is his account of what he saw in that land:

Realizing that I had been deceived by my guide, and knowing not how to return to Damascus, I decided to press on, trusting in the name of the good Lord to protect and succor us. What else could we do but tender ourselves into His care?

Soon we encountered naked men clothed only in the hair on their bodies. They were not aggressive but rather lewd in their every gesture. I was appalled when confronted by one of them in the act of copulation with a female member of his clan. He lay her over a rock, her buttocks pointing skyward, and penetrated her as if he were a plough and she the earth. I half expected her to cry out. Instead she whinnied like a mare in the company of a stallion. It seems that bestiality and licentiousness for these creatures was an act of bravado: their passions assumed the proportion of an extenuating and public demonstration of pleasure.

Passing beyond this land of barbarity and license, the first village that we encountered was populated by men who all seemed to be afflicted by a limp. It was strange to see them wandering towards their fields with one arm over their beasts of burden. At a distance they looked like centaurs with five legs, plodding forth to attend their crops. My servant, whose intelligence belied his worth sometimes, commented that these villagers had made their condition into a norm: each man vied with his neighbor in order to appear the greater cripple. All these men, I decided, were victims of a desire to seem less able than they were.

We soon journeyed through a narrow pass between rocky pinnacles. Here the sun barely reached the ground. Above us strange creatures of flight looped and glided among the crags. They were not birds so much as animals of indescribable countenance. Their droppings that rained down on us were sticky and black, like tar. A number of our cameleers were smitten by these missiles as we passed under them, and their skin rose in welts. No amount of swabbing with a solution of salt could alleviate their pain. The men informed me that it felt like they had been bitten by an adder. At night, as we lay about the fire, I could hear their cries of anguish. They were men mutilated by the excrescence of the devil.

On the other side of this pass we entered a wide plain blessed not

with the warmth and clarity of the sun, but with a miasma of bluish light. I cannot describe it other than to say that even our skin took on the hue of cobalt. We were, in a sense, men besmirched with the color of darkness. We wandered about as if blind to one another. I suspect we were. None of us wished to acknowledge that in our hearts we were like men denuded of the warmth of human kindness. It was as if we had shed all contact with our past. Now we were singular entities confronting the dark night of being, a Godless world stricken by harpies that were none other than ourselves.

Presently we came to a walled city. At first I thought it a mirage. When we approached the gates they opened unaided, swinging slowly backwards on iron hinges. Above the entrance birds of prey were perched on the wall, their talons as sharp as scimitars. Who among us was not fearful as we entered the streets of this city? Yet the people were indifferent to our presence. It was as if they could not see us. We had become shades in the eyes of men, mere ghosts afflicted with the disease of wandering. They allowed us to pass along narrow alleys filled with stalls in which men sat, their eyes glowing like coals. There was a vacancy in their expressions, as if these people had passed over and were now living out a replica of past lives. I was reminded of Our Lord's decent into hell: he alone could give back life to them and so refurbish their souls.

As we passed through these alleys I had the sensation of floating down a river on a raft. Everything slipped by so slowly that the life observed there seemed to be in a state of suspended animation. At one point we entered the Street of Scribes. Each booth was occupied by a man sitting cross-legged before his writing stool and pens. Behind him, rolls of parchment were piled one upon another. At one point a scribe withdrew a roll from his library and slowly unraveled it in order to read. I noticed at once that the text was written in an indecipherable language. Was it Sanskrit, Farsi, or indeed the letters of some Oriental alphabet that I had heard of from travelers but not seen myself? The truth was that for some strange reason I had lost the power to understand.

Then a scribe addressed me, reading from his scroll. That its indecipherable text was communicable astounded me. I heard his words echo around my mind like bees returning to the hive. His invocation was that of a pullulating stream of epithets: each one damned my body, my presence, indeed my very existence in no uncertain terms. I had become like scum floating on the surface of a cesspool. The scroll had ascribed to me all the characteristics of a maggot. I was there to cleanse the wound that I had inflicted upon myself.

Soon we found ourselves passing through a cemetery littered with open graves and coffins lying about on the surface. It was as if in this place alone the Resurrection had finally occurred. Skeletons were strewn on the ground, each a bundle of whitened bones. It all looked so familiar. I had no hesitation in believing that what lay before me was the detritus of the human condition. When it came down to it, I told myself, I, John of Pisa, am no more than a coalescence of moments as if crystallized in my present body and in these limbs. Time is of my essence. As it passes, so do I enter into a stage of demutescence that prefigures my transition into all the fluidity of death. Ah! I told myself. I long for this moment. I have become a remnant of who I am.

Our tiny caravan passed through the city without incident. Before us lay a shimmering heat-haze. It reminded me of a drunken forest, these empty columns of warmth. As we surrendered to its capacity for obfuscation, I allowed my thoughts to wander. I had started out on this journey to a far country to purchase spices in order to make my fortune. I had ventured forth from the security of my home in Pisa, braved danger on the high sea, and placed myself in the dubious care of brigands and thieves, only to find myself wandering aimlessly in a land without identity or purpose. It was a place where my capacity to make judgments and to assess the predictability of my observations had been called into question. I too had become a mirage, lost in the deep deception of nature at its most playful.

Then, when I sensed that it was no longer I who was traveling through the desert, but another - a disembodied being whose capacity for feeling had become increasingly tenuous – I started to believe that it was not I who had taken the wrong turning outside Asaphara. This 'other' who had done so was, in fact, a man who regarded himself as a successful merchant and an upright member of his guild in Pisa. But the truth was that I was no longer that person. I had become instead someone whose soul was abyssal, adrift now in the indwelling vagaries of the universe.

Could it be, I told myself, that this land through which we were traveling was in some way a dream? Could it be that what we thought we had seen or experienced along the way was but a distillation of all the places and people previously known? It occurred to me that I had been too ready to regard far-flung Arabia and its provinces as an alien land populated by my own prejudice and opinions, rather than by the emerging inwardness of my life. It was I who was seeing things differently and perceiving the world anew through the veil of appearance which I had previously accepted as its legitimate representation. Now at last it had been torn away. Now the true world was beginning to emerge from behind this deceptively real curtain of categories. Through a miracle, it seemed, I had survived the trap set by the schoolmen of old.

As our tiny caravan topped a rise, we recognized in the distance a low mountain filled with empty tombs. Needing to water our camels, as it has been some days since we had camped in an oasis, we decided to make for this mountain in the hope of finding a well. At dusk we shielded our eyes, looking for that elusive spring. It was then that I noticed a lone man descending from one of the caves with a water-bag over his shoulders. With luck, I thought, he would lead us to the Promised Land!

The man stopped when he saw us approach. We climbed down from our camels and made ourselves known to him through our inter-preter. The man, whose countenance was both remote yet

agreeably tranquil in its fixity and presence, offered to guide us to a spring nearby to water our stock. In turn, I volunteered to carry the man's water-bag back to his house, which I presumed was located in a village on the mountain. It was then that the man informed me that he lived a hermit's life dedicated to God. I was taken aback. I had heard tell of these anchorites of the desert, men who sought the company only of themselves and their God, but never expected to meet one so deep inside the land of Arabia. He then informed me that according to his knowledge of the terrain beyond this mountain, he alone lived 'at the edge of the world'. Nor did any man live beyond this point.

Hearing this, I was overcome by a feeling of melancholy. It was hard for me to accept that what lay beyond was a state of absolute emptiness, a dunghill of distorted and unruly forms. To turn back also seemed like a fool's choice. Nothing could persuade me from the belief that the country through which we had traveled so far would be as it had been, if ever we decided to return the way we had come. All of it had been the product of my mind's fancy, a terminal illusion and sleight-of-hand. I had allowed myself to be seduced by the idea of creating my own world when in reality its essential nature remained separate from all interpretation. Because of my encounter with the anchorite, I suddenly realized that what I had passed through was a macabre form of enchantment. This, surely, was the result a mental aberration on my part. If one was to remain in hell, it meant that one's punishment was to repeat ad nauseam *the incomplete gestures of one's life.*

I decided then that we had no choice but to press on, trusting in the good Lord to protect us. Emptiness, I concluded, was not so much a state of vacuity but the realization of what the schoolmen called a quintessence, whereby space, time, length, breadth and depth were finally translated into a lasting image of the Divine. It was true, I told myself, God does not see us or the world. He remains entrenched behind what is seen.

The manuscript ended at this point. There was no indication of how

John of Pisa had extricated himself from his strange peregrination across the harsh sands of the Arabian Desert and beyond. We have no idea whether he reached Akaba or made the voyage to Goa. One must presume that he did so, otherwise why would he have written down what he had witnessed? Unless, of course, it was all part of a deliberate attempt to confuse his readers about what he had actually experienced. It may be that John's escape into that vast prism of emptiness, where everything and nothing is so delightfully refracted, had turned out to be more rewarding than all the spices of India put together, for it had alerted him to the true nature and mystery of things. Perhaps he had learnt how to sleep, and so turn his mind away from the very existence of the world.

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