

LETTER XVI

The Tower, Arcanum of Construction

Quotations for Reflection

However, it is the body which, rightly, has more reason to be ashamed of the soul inhabiting it, than the latter of the body. For the body is a miracle of wisdom, harmony and stability, which does not merit scorn but rather the admiration of the soul. For example, can the soul boast of moral principles as stable as the body's skeleton? Is it as indefatigable and as faithful in its sentiments as, for example, the heart, which beats day and night? Does it possess a wisdom comparable to that of the body, which knows how to harmonise such opposing things as water and fire, air and solid matter? Whilst the soul is torn by opposing desires and feelings, this "contemptible" body knows how to unite opposing elements and make them collaborate: the air that it breathes, the solid matter of food, the water that it drinks, and the fire (warmth) that it produces unceasingly within it... (page 433)

Positive asceticism does not struggle against the body but rather against the seed of evil in the soul, for the sake of its reunion with God. (page 435)

St. Martin gave his coat to a poor man not because he wanted to make his body suffer from the cold but rather because he wanted to put an end to the suffering of his neighbour, whose body was deprived of protection against the cold. St. Anthony went into the desert not in order to make his body suffer but rather in order to be alone in the presence of God... Positive asceticism is therefore the exchange of good for better. (pages 435-6)

A "garden" is thus a state of the world where there is cooperation and equilibrium between Spirit and Nature, whilst a "desert" is a state of immobile passivity both of Nature and Spirit, a "jungle" is the state of activity of Nature alone, and a "town", lastly, is that of activity of Spirit alone. (page 440)

The primordial and eternal mission of mankind is thus to cultivate and maintain the "garden", i.e. the world in a state of equilibrium and cooperation between Spirit and Nature! What a world of content is found enclosed in seed form in this statement! May spiritual light—moral and practical, mystical, gnostic and magical—radiate forth when one opens one's heart and mind to the touch of this seed-statement! (page 440)

Purgatory is therefore the state of the soul where the actions, opinions and aspirations of the past life are seen in the true light of day of trans-subjective consciousness. No one

judges it; it is the soul itself who judges itself in the light of a completely awakened conscience. (page 444)

To exalt oneself or to abase oneself, to specialise oneself in order to gain temporary advantages or to be moved only by the hunger and thirst for truth, beauty and goodness, to *build* a tower or to *grow* “sleeping and rising night and day...without knowing how”—here is the choice that every human being, every community, every tradition or spiritual school, *must* make. (page 449)

The “good news” that the world received more than nineteen centuries ago is in no way that of successful surgical operation of freedom from suffering; no more is it that of the successful construction of a tower attributed to man—small though the tower may be, or of unparalleled grandeur, i.e. “reaching up to heaven”; but rather it is that of *resurrection*—the great alchemical operation of the successful transmutation of the human being. (page 451)

Hermeticism has nothing to do with the desire to have “ready made answers” to all questions, obtained with minimum effort and maximum result. Its “questions” are *crises* and the “answers” that it seeks are *states of consciousness* resulting from these crises. (pages 452-3)

The marriage of opposites is a principle of universal significance. This is *not* a compromise that one contrives, but rather the *cross* and the magic of the cross. It is thus that the “true Self” is united to the “lower self” in the human being, where the “lower self” is the cross of the “true Self” and the “true Self” is the cross of the “lower self”. The two poles of the human being then *live in the presence* of one another, the result of which is an alchemical process of gradual approach to one another. (page 454)

The parable of the lost sheep is well known. One generally understands it as portraying the care of the good pastor for the particular soul—and without doubt it does this. Nevertheless, one can, by analogy, apply it also to the inner life of the soul—its desires, aspirations, vices and virtues. If one does this, if one considers—by analogy—each particular force in the soul as a “sheep”, one arrives at the understanding that the soul’s faults and vices are not, fundamentally, monsters but rather, lost sheep. (page 455)

We all have the mission of finding and bringing back to the flock (i.e. to the soul’s choral harmony) the lost sheep in ourselves. We are missionaries in the subjective domain of our own soul, charged with the task of the conversion of our desires, ambitions, etc. We have to *persuade* them that they are seeking the realisation of their dreams in a false way, by showing them the true way. It is not a matter of commandment, but rather of the alchemy of the cross, i.e. making present an alternative way for our desires, ambitions, passions, etc. It is a matter, moreover, of the alchemical “marriage of opposites.” (pages 455-6)

To meditate is to think in the presence of God—just as to pray is to speak in the presence of God. (page 456)