

A Key to the Enigmas of the World?

A brief consideration of the philosophy of P. D. Ouspensky

BY THE EDITOR

“THE conduct of the man of the world,” wrote Pico della Mirandola in 1485 to his friend Ermolao Barbaro, “is quite dissimilar from that of the philosopher, as also are the things he eats and the words he utters. The philosopher employs these things merely to minister to necessity, but the man of the world for the sake of appearance. If this were not the consideration of the latter he would not be a man of the world, and if it were the affectation of the former he would not be a philosopher. Had Pythagoras been able to live without food, he would have abstained even from herbs; had he been able to communicate his thoughts by looks, or by some other method not involving speech, he would not have spoken at all, so much did he shun the adornment and embellishment of language” (Pico della Mirandola: *Opera*, Basel, 1572 pp., 351 ff.). There must, indeed, be many who wish that all philosophers had been as wise as Pythagoras and used few instead of many words! Yet the philosopher must use words if he is to have any hope of communicating his wisdom to others. The only alternative is the exercise of mysticism in one form or another, the mystic experience being in itself an ineffable experience, not communicable in words, except by the negative (apophatic) method which describes what it is *not* (*via negativa*).

Mysticism is in fact potentially inherent in the Pythagorean dialectic with its dualism of spirit and matter and its emphasis on the need of the soul to liberate itself from the confinement of the body. We may go further and say that, whether acknowledged or not, in all philosophy which starts from man as the central key to the understanding of the world there is an element or seed of mysticism. The ultimate mysteriousness of the universe, which is infinitely greater than the human philosopher, always beckons him to assume the rôle of a mystic. In this situation, of course, where autocentric man comes face to face with the frustration of his finiteness, the inadequacy of language for the purpose of philosophical explanation becomes a problem. Human language, however wonderfully developed as a vehicle of expression, is descriptive of what man knows and experiences. It is beyond its scope to describe what is beyond the scope of the human horizon. Precisely at this point, however, the poet takes over from the philosopher, or rather assumes the philosopher's mantle, and attempts by means of image and innuendo to adumbrate that which ordinary speech is unable to express. The furthest refinement of this endeavour may be seen in the “symbolist” movement, whose aim is to suggest to the imagination intimations of the beauties and vistas of an eternal realm towards which finite man intuitively feels. This may be described as a sort of poetical mysticism.

In this essay it is my intention to take a look at the system of philosophy propounded by P. D. Ouspensky in his book *Tertium*

Organum, which has the subtitle "A Third Canon of Thought : A Key to the Enigmas of the World" (English Translation, London, 1949). By way of explanation of this title it is necessary only to observe, firstly, that the term *ὄργανον* (*organum*) is hallowed by long tradition as the title of a group of works on analytical logic by Aristotle, whose pioneering work in this field won him acclaim as the "Father of Logic"; and, secondly, that in 1620, more than nineteen centuries later, the Englishman Francis Bacon published his *Novum Organum*, the title of which referred back to the original *ὄργανον* of Aristotle and implied an advance upon it and upon the medieval system of logic constructed on the Aristotelian foundation. Bacon maintained that the categories and syllogisms of Aristotle did no more than examine what was already known and offered a new method of inductive logic (still encumbered, however, by some of the impediments of scholasticism) as a means to the investigation and discovery of new facts. And now, in our own century, Ouspensky has produced the third definition of reality, a "system of higher logic", which he claims supersedes and embraces all previous systems. "I have called this system of higher logic *Tertium Organum*," he explains, "because for us it is the *third canon*—third instrument—of thought after those of Aristotle and Bacon. The first was the *Organon*, the second, *Novum Organum*. But the *third* existed earlier than the first" (*op. cit.*, p. 236; the italics in all quotations are Ouspensky's).

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The temporal priority of Ouspensky's "higher logic" rests on his claim that its formulae were given in the ancient Hindu scriptures long before Bacon and Aristotle. "The higher logic," he explains, "existed before *deductive* and *inductive* logic was formulated"; and this higher logic, he says, may be called "*intuitive* logic—the logic of infinity, the logic of ecstasy". It was recaptured and received its most precise and complete formulation, we are told, in the book of the neoplatonist Plotinus *On Intelligible Beauty*. The possessor of the secrets of this *tertium organum* "may open the door of the world of causes without fear", Ouspensky assures us. He complains, however, that "for some strange reason" this higher logic, which has existed from time immemorial, "*has not been recognized as logic*".

But is this so strange? What in fact Ouspensky has sought to do is to conduct us out of the realm of logic, as normally understood, into the realm of mysticism which is beyond and above logic. And, once again, language immediately becomes a problem; for logic is bound to language: it must be communicable and demonstrable. "In reality," we are advised, "the ideas of higher logic are *inexpressible* in concepts. When we encounter such an inexpressibility it means that we have touched the world of causes" (*ut supra*). Granted this, the cynic might be tempted to observe that it would seem a futile occupation to write a book about a logic which is inexpressible! Having penetrated to this private paradise, the wise man would surely be better advised to observe silence rather than by uttering contradictions claim as logical that which is self-evidently illogical or alogical.

Yet, like the poet, the philosopher feels constrained to bear witness to that mysterious beyond of which he has some intuitive perception. Recognizing, then, "the insurmountable obstacle of our language . . . we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that all attempts to express *superlogical* relations in our language will seem absurdities, and really can only *give hints* at that which we wish to express". Accordingly, "it is impossible to express in words the properties of the world of causes. Every thought *expressed* about them in our ordinary language will be *false*. That is, we may say in relation of the 'real' world that '*every spoken thought is a lie*'. It is possible to speak about it only conditionally, by hints, by symbols". Ouspensky even goes so far as to say that very often truth can be expressed only in the form of a lie (pp. 239 ff.). This, of course, quite literally makes nonsense of language—and it is something very different from the *via negativa*. That is why he is able to say that in this "real" world, the world of causes, nothing is finite, but everything is infinite and everything is the whole, indeed that it is the world of the unity of opposites. Coupled with this is the unreality of our world. It must not be concluded, however, that that world and our world are two different worlds, but that it is our perception of the world which is at fault (p. 242).

Ouspensky seeks to illustrate and clarify his position by reference to the discipline of mathematics, and particularly to the distinction between two kinds of mathematics: on the one hand the mathematics of finite and constant numbers, and on the other the mathematics of infinite and variable magnitudes. Of these, the former is depreciated as being concerned with the phenomena of an artificial universe, whereas the latter is praised as being concerned with the noumena of the world as it really is. Taking as an example two segments of a line, one an inch in length and the other a mile in length, Ouspensky explains, on the basis of the Euclidian definition of a point as having position but no magnitude, that there is an infinite number of points in each segment, and consequently, since infinity is not susceptible of degrees of greater and less, in transfinite terms both segments are equal. Extending the example now to a square: the number of lines in a square is infinite and the number of points in each line is infinite; from which the conclusion is drawn that "the number of points in a square is equal to infinity multiplied by itself an infinite number of times". Yet while "this magnitude is undoubtedly infinitely greater than the first one . . . at the same time they are equal, as all infinite magnitudes are equal". Further, a cube constructed on the square "consists of an infinite number of squares, just as a square consists of an infinite number of lines, and a line of an infinite number of points". But though on these premisses the number of points in the cube is infinity cubed, infinity cubed is neither more nor less than infinity squared or than simple infinity; which "means that an infinity continues to grow, *remaining at the same time unchanged*" (pp. 224 f.).

There is no attempt on Ouspensky's part to deny the fact that the axioms of the "new mathematics" appear as absurdities, namely, that "a magnitude can be not equal to itself", that "a part can be equal to the whole, or it can be greater than the whole", that "one

of two equal magnitudes can be infinitely greater than another", and that "all different magnitudes are equal among themselves". By way of comment it may be remarked, firstly, that to communicate in this way is not to communicate at all; secondly, that in any case Ouspensky has confused the issue by applying the techniques of the "old mathematics" to the elaboration of the "new mathematics"; and, thirdly, that in the nature of the case infinity can never be plural, but only singular (to speak of "infinity multiplied by itself an infinite number of times" is, at best, a tautology—the cynic would retort that it is to say nothing at all). The lesson that Ouspensky draws from his mathematical excursion is that "in nature there are no *finite*, constant magnitudes, just as also there are no *concepts*. The finite constant magnitude and the concept are conditional abstractions, not reality, but merely the sections of reality, so to speak". And again: "We ought always to remember that our entire three-dimensional world does not exist in reality. It is a creation of our imperfect senses, the result of their imperfection. This is not *the world* but merely that which we see of the world. The three-dimensional world—this is the four-dimensional world observed through the narrow slit of our senses. Therefore all magnitudes which we regard as such in the three-dimensional world are not real magnitudes, but merely *artificially assumed*" (p. 227).

What Ouspensky means when he asserts that "our entire three-dimensional world does not exist in reality" is more fully expounded in the earlier part of his book. "Space and time," he says, "defining everything that we cognize by sensuous means, are in themselves just forms of our receptivity, categories of our intellect, the prism through which we regard the world—or in other words, space and time do not represent properties of the world, but just properties of our *knowledge* of the world gained through our sensuous organism". It seems unjustifiably hasty, however, to conclude that "from this it follows that the world, apart from our knowledge of it, has neither extension in space nor existence in time", but that "these are properties which we add to it" (p. 11). Still more drastic, if possible, is the assurance that "our ignorance of things in themselves does not depend upon our *insufficient knowledge*, but is due to the fact that by means of sensuous perception we cannot know the world correctly *at all*. That is to say," Ouspensky continues, "we cannot truly declare that although now we perhaps know little presently we shall know more, and at length shall come to a correct understanding of the world. It is not true because our experimental knowledge is not a *confused* perception of a *real world*. It is a *very acute* perception of an *entirely unreal world* appearing round about us at the moment of our contact with the world of true causes, to which we cannot find the way because we are lost in an unreal 'material' world. For this reason the extension of the objective sciences does not bring us any nearer to the knowledge of *things in themselves*, or of *true causes*" (p. 13). It is perhaps not surprising, then, to receive the further assurance that "matter is as much an abstract conception as are truth, good, and evil" (p. 26). The invoking of Kant and Berkeley is scarcely legitimate at this point. We are conscious rather of being haunted by the shades of Mrs. Baker

Eddy and Madame Blavatsky (the latter of whom is indeed cited with approval).

On the analogy that a point is the cross-section of a line, and a line the cross-section of a plane, and a plane the cross-section of a solid, we are invited to regard the solid as the section of a four-dimensional body, "and our entire three-dimensional space as a section of a four-dimensional space" (p. 30), and thence to infer that "when we shall see or feel ourselves in the world of four dimensions we shall see that the world of three dimensions does not really exist and has never existed: that it was the creation of our own fantasy, a phantom host, an optical illusion, a delusion—anything one pleases excepting only reality" (p. 98). But it must be asked whether this argument in fact leads us anywhere. What justification is there for supposing that the four-dimensional world is the world of reality and not just a section of the world of five dimensions, and therefore altogether unreal, and the five-dimensional world the section of the world of six dimensions, and so on *ad infinitum*, with the consequence that the only reality is that there is no reality whatsoever? After all, we have been invited to enter the realm of the infinite: if we assign a limit to dimensionality are we not relapsing into the finite?

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This brings us back to the question of language. If everything perceived by the senses and conceived in the mind is unreal and false, and all logic is but the logic of delusion, then language too is a deception and the vehicle of falsehood—so much so that Ouspensky insists that inexpressibility is "the sign of the truth, the sign of reality", and that, *per contra*, "that which can be expressed cannot be true" (p. 108).

If this is really the situation, man would appear to be in a most alarming dilemma. Ouspensky, however, claims to have resolved every problem. The solution he proposes may be described as a form of gnostic mysticism. It is gnostic because Ouspensky affirms that the meaning of life ("the eternal theme of human meditation") consists in *knowledge* (p. 192). And this gnosticism, like its earlier manifestations, is essentially esoteric; it is available to the few only. The majority are like brainless monkeys!

The enormous majority of the population of this globe is engaged, in effect, in destroying, disfiguring, and falsifying the ideas of the minority. The majority is without ideas. It is incapable of understanding the ideas of the minority, and left to itself must inevitably disfigure and destroy. Imagine a menagerie full of monkeys. In this menagerie a *man* is working. The monkeys observe his movements and try to imitate him but they can imitate only his visible movements; the meaning and aim of these movements are closed to them; therefore their actions will have quite another result. And should the monkeys escape from their cages and get hold of the man's tools, then perhaps they will destroy all his work, and inflict great damage on themselves as well. But they will never be able to create anything. Therefore a *man* would make a great mistake if he referred to their 'work', and spoke of them as 'we'. Creation and destruction—or more correctly, the ability to create or the ability to destroy—are the principal signs of the two types of men (pp. 205 f.).

Humanity, we are told, is in need of a new morality the basis of which

will be "superior knowledge". The consequences of the gnostic process for human society are charmingly described in the following terms :

On the basis of this *new morality* will occur a great division, and those few who will be able to follow it will begin to rule others, or they will disappear altogether. In any case, because of this new morality and those forces which it will engender, the contradictions of life will disappear, and those biped animals which constitute the majority of humanity will have no opportunity to pose as men any longer (pp. 206 f.).

To the inquiry as to what this new or higher knowledge is and how it is attained the answer comes that "the new knowledge is *direct knowledge*, by an inner sense" (p. 209). We are advised, moreover, that since common "objective" knowledge does not study facts, but only the perception of facts, other forms of perception or receptivity are necessary which will enable us to transcend the three-dimensional sphere. Immediacy of knowledge is available, says Ouspensky, in the state of absolute consciousness (*turiya*) of Hindu philosophy or (what is the same thing) the ecstasy of which Plotinus writes.

It is here that we encounter the mystical element of Ouspensky's solution. As advocated by Plotinus, the absolute knowledge which he pursues is superior to reason and indeed independent of reason ; it is achieved by means of intuition ; and it involves the identity of the mind knowing with the object known. This ecstatic experience, says Plotinus, conducts us not only to the vision of God but, more than that, to identification with God :

When we see God we see Him not by reason, but by something that is higher than reason. It is impossible, however, to say about him who sees that he sees, because he does not behold and discern two different things (the seer and the thing seen). He changes completely, ceases to be himself, preserves nothing of his I. Immersed in God, he constitutes one whole with Him ; like the centre of a circle, which coincides with the centre of another circle (pp. 214 ff. ; the Plotinus passage is from the *Letters to Flaccus*).

The most important preparatory step towards the attainment of this goal is for us to break free from "the chains of our logic".

This [says Ouspensky] is the first, the great, the chief liberation toward which humanity must strive. Man, throwing off the chains of 'three-dimensional' logic, has already penetrated, in thought, into another world. And not only is this transition possible, but it is accomplished constantly. Although unhappily we are not entirely conscious of our rights in 'another world', and often sacrifice these rights, regarding ourselves as limited to this *earthly* world, paths nevertheless exist. Poetry, mysticism, the idealistic philosophy of all ages and peoples, preserve the traces of such transitions. Following these traces, we ourselves can find the path. Ancient and modern thinkers have given us many keys with which we may open mysterious doors ; many magic formulae, before which these doors open of themselves. But we have not understood either the purpose of these keys or the meaning of the formulae. We have also lost the understanding of magical ceremonies and rites of initiation into mysteries which had a single purpose : to help this transformation in the soul of man (p. 231).

In his plea for the establishment of an experimental methodology of philosophical investigation, propounded in the *Novum Organum*, Francis Bacon stressed the importance of recognizing and then eliminating various "idols", as he called them—classified as "idols of the tribe", "idols of the cave", "idols of the market place", and "idols of the theatre" (it is not necessary to explain here the precise significance of this classification). Ouspensky likewise speaks of "idols" from which we must liberate ourselves "in order to pass to an understanding of the multi-dimensional world", and the chief of these he describes as the idol of "duality". For Ouspensky, "duality" (or "dualism") is altogether incompatible with the idea of "monism". The concept of monism affirms "the fundamental unity of everything which exists" and consequently implies "the impossibility of constructing any axioms, which involve the idea of opposites—of theses and antitheses—upon which our logic is built". This latter is the idol of duality which must be eradicated as a hindrance or obstacle in the way of the attainment of true knowledge. It is a component of the chains of our logic from which we are urged to break free. Ouspensky expounds his position more fully in the following terms :

The fundamental axioms of our logic reduce themselves to identity and contradiction, just as do the axioms of mathematics. At the bottom of them all lies the admission of our general axiom, namely, that every given *something* has *something* opposite to it; therefore every proposition has its anti-proposition, every *thesis* its *anti-thesis*. To the *existence* of anything is opposed the *non-existence* of that thing. To the existence of the world is opposed the non-existence of the world. *Object* is opposed to *subject*; the objective world to the subjective; the I is opposed to the Not-I; to motion—immobility; to variability—constancy; to unity—heterogeneity; to truth—falsehood; to good—evil. And in conclusion, to every *A* in general is opposed *Not-A*.

The recognition of the reality of these divisions is necessary for the acceptance of the fundamental axioms of the logic of Aristotle and Bacon, i.e., the absolute and incontestable recognition of the *duality of the world*—of dualism. The recognition of the *unreality* of these divisions and that of the unity of all opposites is necessary for the comprehension of *higher logic* (pp. 238 f.).

Unlike the Indian sage who, when asked to describe *Brahman* ("unchangeable eternal cognition"), "was simply silent—that was his answer" (p. 249), Ouspensky endeavours to communicate to us some information concerning the "world of noumena". He tells us, in the first place, that "time" must exist spacially in that world, that is, "temporal events must exist and not happen. . . . Effects must exist simultaneously with causes. That which we name *the law of causality* cannot exist there, because time is a necessary condition for it. There cannot be anything which is measured by years, days, hours—there cannot be before, now, after". Further, "there is neither matter nor motion". There is nothing that is measurable in terms of distance or position. There is nothing that could possibly be weighed or photographed, or expressed in the formulae of physical energy. There is nothing which has *form*, *colour*, or *odour*—nothing possessing

the properties of physical bodies". Again, "there is nothing dead or unconscious. Everything lives, everything breathes, thinks, feels; everything is conscious, and everything speaks". Just as our mathematics cannot be applied in that world, "because there is nothing finite", so also from the standpoint of our logic, the laws of which cannot act there, "that world is *illogical*." Moreover, "the *separateness* of our world does not exist there", since "*everything is the whole*" and every part and particle "lives a life which is *one with the whole* and includes *the whole* within itself". It follows that "in that world the *duality* of our world cannot exist. There *being* is not opposed to *non-being*. Life is not opposed to *death*. . . . *Everything subjective is objective, and everything objective is subjective*. That world is the world of the *unity of opposites*" (pp. 241 f.).

It is in this world that we are invited to seek the anodyne for "that feeling of the insolubility of the main questions concerning the aims of existence". The use of the pronoun "we", however, must not be interpreted in a comprehensive sense: it refers only to the fortunate few who possess an innate capacity for advancement. Accordingly, we are advised that within the designation "man" a distinction must be made between two entirely different categories, "those capable of development and those incapable", that "the new conception of humanity disposes of the idea of equality", and that "humanity will need soon to divide the 'progressing' from the 'incapable of progress'—*the wheat from the tares*". We are assured that "this is the key to the understanding of our life" and that it has been known for centuries by those few among men who have enjoyed and developed the capacity to achieve *cosmic consciousness* (pp. 279 f.), otherwise known as the "Brahmic splendour", which is "capable of transhumanizing a man into a god" (p. 289). Ouspensky, indeed, announces the nearness of "the new humanity" and of the coming of "a new master", proclaiming that "the future belongs *not to man, but to superman*, who is already born, and lives among us". The new humanity will be "truly a higher race" whose members are possessors of "the higher consciousness". In fact, "not only will this race be, but it already is". Already it has its own "established pass-words and countersigns". And this new race "will judge the old races" (pp. 295 f.).

Though only open to those who possess the inner capacity for this transcendental experience, there are various paths that lead to the gateway of the cosmic consciousness: occultism, mysticism, asceticism, yoga, neoplatonism, narcosis—and also epilepsy!

Among the illuminated élite a place is found for the apostles John and Paul. This honour is accorded them on the strength, it seems, of a single sentence in the writings of each which Ouspensky finds himself able to harmonize with the central features of his own doctrine. The statement of John (or of the angel whom he records as having uttered it) occurs in the Apocalypse: it affirms (in the version accepted by Ouspensky) that "there shall be time no longer" (Rev. 10: 6). This affirmation excites him because we know, he says, "that in this very thing, *in the change of the time-sense*, the beginning of the fourth

form of consciousness is expressed, the beginning of the transition to cosmic consciousness". He admits that we cannot now be certain what this sentence was intended to mean when it was originally written (and this admission inevitably has the effect of placing a question-mark against the position of the author of the Apocalypse among the enlightened few). "Did it mean precisely what we are now able to construe in it", he asks, "—or was it simply a bit of verbal art, a rhetorical figure of speech, the accidental harping of a string which has continued to sound up to our own time, through centuries and millenniums, with such a wonderfully powerful, true, and beautiful tone of thought? We know not now, nor shall we ever, but the words are full of splendour, and we may accept them as a symbol of remote and inaccessible truth" (p. 303).

Why this truth should be described as inaccessible if it is conveyed through the medium of this sentence, is not clear. Be that as it may, however, a few minutes of research spent on the exegesis of the Greek text might have led Ouspensky to form a sober estimate of its significance; for it is generally agreed among scholars that what this verse is saying is nothing more or less than that there shall be *delay* no longer, in which case it has resounded through the generations with a tone quite different from that imagined by him and is illegitimately claimed by him as a prop for his system. But even if John had intended that there should be *time* no longer, no more than a casual perusal of the Apocalypse as a whole (not to mention the other Johannine writings) would have been sufficient to warn him against the folly of hoping that in John he had discovered one friendly to this notion. Yet so important does he regard this sentence that he prefixes it, together with the Pauline extract, in capital letters, to this volume, *Tertium Organum*.

The words he cites from the apostle Paul are, he says, "even more startling by reason of their *mathematical* exactness". By his own confession he read them, not in their context, that is, in the Bible, but in a tome devoted to occultism where they were adduced as a direct reference to "the fourth measure of space". The portion quoted reads: ". . . That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height". Had Ouspensky turned up this passage (Eph. 3 : 17 f.) for himself, instead of lifting it from a foreign context, he would have found that Paul adds immediately to the section already quoted: "and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3 : 19)—words which might have been expected to rouse his enthusiasm to still greater heights, since he might well have thought that to speak of knowing that which surpasses knowledge and being filled with all the fulness of God appeared to vindicate his doctrine of transfinite values and properties. He is well satisfied, however, with the fragment he has culled. Ignorant, it would seem, that Paul is speaking of comprehending and knowing the love of Christ in all its dimensions, he interprets the comprehension of breadth and length and depth and height in an absolute sense. "What is it," he asks, "but the *comprehension of space!*" Convinced as he is that "the comprehension of the mysteries of space is the beginning of the higher comprehension",

Ouspensky concludes therefore that the apostle's desire is that those to whom he is writing should comprehend what space is !

Further, Paul's mention of "saints" in this same passage leads Ouspensky to expound his understanding of the connection between "sanctity" and the knowledge of space. He defines sanctity as "the state of the spirit liberated from the *duality* of man, from his eternal disharmony of soul and body". Yet he admits to being puzzled that this penetrating connection should have been made by the apostle Paul—"that strange man : Roman official [!], persecutor of the first Christianity who became its preacher, philosopher, mystic. . . . Is it *this* that he wanted to say? We do not know". Indeed, he sees grounds for doubting it :

None of his contemporaries ever united sanctity with the idea of comprehension of space ; and in general there was no discussion at all about 'space' at that time, at least among the Greeks and Romans. Only now, *after Kant*, and after we have had access to the treasures of thought of the Orient, do we understand that the transition into a new phase of consciousness is impossible without the expansion of the space-sense (pp. 303 f.).

Paul therefore is no more assured of a place among the illuminati than was John. In any case, even a superficial acquaintance with his writings would have been sufficient to show how totally incompatible his thought is from that of Ouspensky. It is evident that any dictum, however unsuited it may be intrinsically, will serve as a peg on which to hang a theory.

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There is no need to emphasize that the syncretistic theosophical pasticcio which Ouspensky offers us is in its essentials the gnostic "mixture as before". It was gnosticism which constituted the first deadly threat to the survival of the Christian faith. It was against its false dualism, its lethal concept of the "eternal disharmony of soul and body" that John was contending when he wrote his epistles and his gospel ; for gnosticism undermined the reality both of the incarnation and of the sufferings and death of Christ, and also of His bodily resurrection and ascension. So John affirmed : "The Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth ; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (Jn. 1 : 1, 14). He records how the risen Jesus invited sceptical Thomas to touch and feel for himself the scars of His suffering, and explains that his gospel was written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (Jn. 20 : 26 ff.). "By this you know the Spirit of God," he admonishes : "every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you have heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already" (1 Jn. 4 : 2 f.). Again, in 2 Jn. 7 : "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh ; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist".

Paul, it is true, speaks of a wisdom not of this world and of a consciousness beyond ordinary experience : "We impart a secret and

hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him', God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2 : 7 ff.). But this other-worldly wisdom was not imparted only to the few who were fortunate enough to have the inborn capacity to receive it; it was openly declared to all men wherever he went. Paul's message had nothing whatever to do with human capabilities; on the contrary, it affirmed the total inability of man to redeem himself and magnified the priority and the sovereignty of the grace and mercy of God. It is true that he saw the whole of mankind divided into two ultimate categories, not, however, inferior creatures and supermen, but the perishing and the saved, or believers and unbelievers; but the distinction is not based upon any worthy deed or faculty of man, but upon the response of man to the reconciling action of God in Christ Jesus. In the first place, indeed, there is no distinction at all between one man and another, since, as Paul says in a famous passage, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3 : 22 f.). And the universal plight of man calls for the universal proclamation of the Good News concerning Jesus Christ. Accordingly, Paul insists that in this respect also there is no distinction between one man and another : "the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows His riches upon all who call upon Him. For 'every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Rom. 10 : 12 f.). It is true, again, that Paul had at least one transcendental ecstatic experience during which he "heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter"; but this experience, though it transported him temporarily to a dimension ordinarily unfamiliar to mortals, was in no sense a redemptive experience, nor (though Ouspensky, if only he had been aware of the existence of this passage, would doubtless have conferred on the apostle the accolade of super-humanity) did it designate him a superman. The affliction of a "thorn in the flesh" taught him, rather, the infinite contrast between his own weakness on the one hand and, on the other, the all-surpassing power and the all-sufficient grace of God; so that he could write : "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12 : 2 ff.). One of the great lessons of Paul's life is that if the grace of God was sufficient for him who "formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted Christ" (1 Tim. 1 : 13) it is sufficient also for me and for anyone else in the world.

The perspective of the Gospel, moreover, includes a very definite cosmic consciousness. The background to this is in fact the biblical doctrine of creation, which at once means that the cosmic consciousness of Christianity and the "cosmic consciousness" of Ouspensky and his fellow-mystics are two entirely different things. To begin with, the Bible sees the perceptible material world not as an unreal cross-section of a transfinite real world, but as a real world which, as created by God, is a very good world and, furthermore, as a cosmos, a world of order, bearing the stamp of the divine purpose and intelligence. It

sees man, moreover, not only as a part of that creation but as its crown and lord, created in the image of God and entrusted with the mandate to subdue and exercise dominion over the rest of creation. It is the capacity to which this mandate is addressed that makes all cultural and scientific activity possible. The twofold fact that he belongs to a logical world, a cosmos, a universe, in which one fact leads on to another, and that he himself is made in the image of God explains his capacity to behave as an intelligent being, to engage in rational investigation of the nature of things, to promote cultural and scientific advancement, and to harness the elemental forces he discovers. He is placed, in other words, in a world that is intensely real and meaningful.

But the Bible also speaks of the fallenness of man and, with man, of the created order. The essence of the fall is rebellion against the sovereignty of God, refusal to glorify God and to be grateful to Him, the desire to be as God, indeed the determination to make God in the image of man. And all this is the greatest possible folly because it involves the futile attempt to overturn the whole of reality, the denial of the known truth about God and man, and consequently the disintegration of man at the innermost core of his being. The root of the human problem is not man's finiteness but man's fallenness—though fallen man constantly blames his frustrations on his finiteness. By turning his back on God, however, man turns his back on the only relationship that gives meaning to his existence. To deny the Creator, to affirm one's own self-adequacy, is to become lost. The disintegration of man at the heart of his being means also the disintegration of his understanding of the universe. He surrounds himself with the darkness of the unknown where chance, which is synonymous with chaos, reigns supreme; the approach of death faces him with the annihilation of all his powers and godlike pretensions; and consequently in his despair he welcomes the declaration, contrary though it is to all that he knows, that his world is illusory and unreal, death included, and that there is a way for him to transcend his finiteness and, by the achievement of "cosmic consciousness", to become one with the infinite realm of eternal spirituality.

The Christian Gospel, however, proclaims the re-creation not only of man but of the whole cosmos in Christ. In Christ fallen man is reintegrated and all God's purposes in creation are brought to fulfilment. There is no dualism between matter and spirit, body and soul. The whole man is redeemed, and all is moving towards the consummation of the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness dwells. By union with Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, the image of God is restored in man, and the believer, though his knowledge is still partial, has the assurance that in the coming eternity of glory he will know even as he is known. In Christ God reconciles the cosmos to Himself: this is the cosmic perspective of the Christian Gospel.

The outlook of the Christian (to use philosophical designations) is neither that of the realist nor that of the idealist. He affirms the reality and the goodness of the created order and the validity of the logical, cultural, and scientific faculties of man; but at the same time he does not deny the partial and fallible nature of human knowledge

and the impermanence of the present eon. He affirms the coming of a state of glory and perfection which belongs to a dimension unknown in this age (though the twice-born man already has that glory within him, by the Holy Spirit, and has his gaze fixed on the full glory which is to be revealed); but at the same time he does not regard matter as evil or the body as the prison-house of the soul, for he knows that redemption in Christ embraces his humanity in its completeness, that body and soul together are to be glorified, and that the new heavens and the new earth are but the renewal of the original creation in which all its potentialities are brought to full fruition.

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In view of the occasion of this essay, it is fitting that the final word should be given to my honoured friend Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd. Quite apart from sentimental considerations, however, there is none better qualified than he to analyse and classify the system propounded by Ouspensky in his *Tertium Organum*. On the basis, then, of Professor Dooyeweerd's penetrating definition of the governing motive principles which have been operative in the different periods of philosophical history, it would be difficult to assign Ouspensky (though a man of our own century) a place in the modern category with its dialectical ground-motive of nature and freedom, or for that matter in the medieval category with its dialectical ground-motive of nature and grace, and quite impossible to discover any genuine affinity between his principles and the creation-fall-redemption ground-motive of biblical thought. The only category where he fits at all comfortably is that of pre-Christian Greek idealism with its dialectical ground-motive of matter and form. As Professor Dooyeweerd points out in the opening section of the third volume of his *New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, once philosophy had persuaded itself that nothing permanent was to be found in the phenomena perceived through the senses the attempt was made to pose the problem of identity and change on a metaphysical basis and "metaphysics began to seek a supra-temporal *substance*, possessing a permanence unaffected by the process of becoming and decay". Unjustifiably discounting the worth of what is given in the naïve experience of things, "metaphysical thought theoretically separated the structure of reality into the real metaphysical *noumenon* and the deceptive *phenomenon*". Thus, for example, the Eleatic philosopher Parmenides, "by seeking true reality in eternal, unchangeable, unmoved being, . . . declared all becoming and change to be a sensory phenomenon, which does not correspond to true Being". But, as Dooyeweerd observes, "the real origin of this Being is theoretical thought which identifies itself with its product: τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι" (*Op. cit.*, pp. 4 f.).

Ouspensky's position, as we have seen, leads him to deny the reality and validity both of sense perception and also of normal logical activity, and consequently to dismiss man's intellectual and scientific function as illusory and productive of results which are the contrary of the truth. Dooyeweerd has incisively indicated the folly of such a position when he says that "the denial of the objective sensory functions of empirical reality is tantamount to the denial of empirical reality

itself", and that, where physics is concerned, "this would mean the destruction of the basis of its experiments" (*Op. cit.*, p. 38). In this highly significant respect Ouspensky is willing to follow, and thereby tacitly to admit the validity of, the logic of our "dimension"! It is, further, tantamount to a denial of the *imago Dei* in man and all that it presupposes regarding his faculties. Dooyeweerd has also warned us of the danger of mysticism which, by its denial of the principle of creation, identifies "nature" with "sin" and wishes to escape from "nature" through the mystical experience of grace, and accordingly posits a radical dualistic separation between "nature" and "grace" (*Reformatie en Scholastiek in de Wijsbegeerte*, Vol. I, p. 36). This is said, in fact, with reference to "Christian" forms of mysticism, but, if "transfinite cosmic consciousness" is substituted for "grace", it applies with equal force to the mysticism of Ouspensky and his kind. We have seen, indeed, that Ouspensky affirms the *monism* of his system with considerable passion, but he is able to do so only by denying the reality of the "natural", "physical" world, and this means that the dualism he is so intent on disavowing is the dualism in which he is himself hopelessly entangled—even a superman when trapped in a net cannot disengage himself by the illogical device of denying the reality of the substance in which he is enmeshed.

By his unremitting and profoundly erudite labours Herman Dooyeweerd has, under God, bestowed an immense benefit on our own and on future generations, especially by demonstrating that it is only through submission to the biblical ground-motive of creation-fall-redemption that there can be a genuine reformation of philosophical thought and that all philosophy of whatever kind which is not governed by this principle inevitably becomes impaled on the dilemma of irreconcilable dualistic polarities. In other words, philosophy, if it is to have a true knowledge of man and the universe, must humbly place itself under the sovereignty of Almighty God and embrace the evangelical testimony that the *imago Dei* of creation which has been radically obscured by the fall of mankind is only restored to us in and through Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the world and the sole Mediator between God and man.
