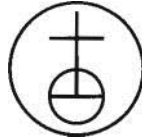


TRANSFIGURATION

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CATHAROSE DE PETRI



SECOND EDITION

1995

ROZEKRUIS PERS - HAARLEM - THE NETHERLANDS

International School of the Golden Rosycross
Lectorium Rosicrucianum
Baknessergracht 11 — 15, Haarlem The Netherlands

Translated from the 3rd Dutch revised edition 1994
Original title:
Transfiguratie,
first edition published in The Netherlands in 1958

ISBN 97890 6732 159 4

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Haarlem, The Netherlands — London, U.K. — Bakersfield, U.S.A.

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Introduction

This booklet is to provide its readers with:

'a lamp unto the feet that gives its light to everyone',
so that, when they study it,
they will gain some insight into how
a liberating, upward path may be experienced,
in and through life in matter.

CATHAROSE DE PETRI

I

Transfiguration

Transfiguration is a gnostic method of accomplishing the endura, which is the process of completely replacing the mortal, separative, earth-born human being with the original, immortal, divine being, the true Spirit-Human-Being intended by the divine plan of creation.

It could be that some people cannot help feeling a sense of disappointment at this statement, because in a little corner of their minds they still harbour the thought that, through transfiguration, they might somehow be able to preserve their own selves. This is because they put their own interpretation on the words of Jesus the Lord, which they think mean: He who is willing to lose his life through the endura shall keep it through transfiguration. However, since transfiguration and the endura go hand in hand, what will be kept according to Jesus' words cannot possibly involve any aspect of the dialectical being.

Nevertheless, the endura does not mean simply being dead, as seen from the viewpoint of nature. The dialectical ego, as the personality-system's centre of consciousness, may be dissolved and gone, while the candidate's old

physical vehicle is still alive. Disintegration of matter, the dissolution of the personality-system, can occur later, preferably much later. For it is very useful to be able to go on using the old personality in the service of the holy work, to fish people out of the sea of life in the nature of death.

No, the endura is the process of calling the soul to life, and entrusting it with the guidance and government of one's entire state of being, neither wanting nor being able to do anything else than to accept this leadership unconditionally.

In this way, the candidate becomes like Paul, for he enters the state in which he can say: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives within me: By saying this, the candidate does not mean that within his I of nature some kind of a Christ-aspect is hidden, but he is referring to the soul that has been awakened and reborn in his micro-cosm.

Not a single vestige of the dialectical consciousness can be preserved on this path. Eventually, only the life of the old personality-system remains, and it is maintained for as long as is possible and necessary under the guidance of the reborn soul. This situation is reflected in the gospel story of John the Baptist and Jesus the Lord who exist for a long time as two separate beings, until the former has completed the task allotted to his personality. So we can see now that what is 'kept' is the soul, which remains eternally alive in what Lao Tzu calls 'Tao'.

But if, in Jesus' words, there is something to be 'kept, then it follows that, conversely, this something can also be lost. 'He who is willing to lose his life for My sake shall keep it: These words imply that if one remains unwilling to follow that path, then the life-process will operate in reverse, in a fatal sense. Then it will be: He who wishes to keep his life (in the ordinary sense), shall lose it.

So it is possible for a microcosm to be denatured if, in the end, it proves unwilling to walk the path of soul-liberation. The sevenfold atom of the Lotus will then be detached from the microcosm, which will be dismantled and all its components returned to their source.

So the path of the endura through transfiguration is a logical, natural and noble path, and the only way of lifting the curse of our existence and reaching a reliable solution to the human problem.

If we stress this point it is because, throughout the ages, the path of the Gnosis has always been discredited as a very unnatural one. But following the path to which we are called by God can never be unnatural, even though appearances may often point to the contrary.

Only think of the processes of metabolism, so widely understood nowadays. It has been proved that every cell in our bodies is periodically replaced. The body's entire structure is renewed every seven years, and by the time one cycle of renewal has come to an end, another one has already begun. This metabolic process gradually slows down as we advance in years and our vitality decreases,

until sclerosis and other forms of degeneration set in. Inevitably the time arrives when the mechanism definitely ceases to work and the metabolism reaches its inevitable end. The result is zero, absolutely zero, so it goes without saying that there is no question of this kind of death ending in victory.

How different it is, though, if one fulfils the endura through transfiguration! This process, too, affects the metabolism, but then in quite a different way. Through transfiguration, all the atoms and cells of the personality-system are changed and charged with Mercury-power, the power needed to become an immortal human being. Through this metabolism the dialectical personality gradually loses its nature-born character and the whole being is transformed. The Mercury-power is concentrated mainly in the head sanctuary, where it modifies practically all the organs of the brain, resulting in a new faculty of consciousness.

This transformation goes on unfolding with extraordinary potency until, at its peak, almost everything that typifies the dialectical self has disappeared. It has lost its hold on the microcosm. It can no longer maintain itself. It has been neutralised.

At the same moment, the fiery body of the soul-being is set free, as if driven by a mighty fire. In this way, as a result of the new process of metabolism, the pilgrim loses the distinctive aspects of his dialectical self and, at the same time, his true self is reborn. Then, having fulfilled

his task, the pilgrim can depart as a genuine servant in a death that has brought the one true life.

And that is why we are asking you to come with us on this path that leads upwards to a certain victory.

II

The Sleep of the Body

'The sleep of the body is the soberness of the soul, the closing of the eyes is true vision'. Hermes Trismegistus

Because of the many obstacles that hinder your progress on the path, and because of the extent to which it can help deepen and clarify your insight into how to remove them, we would like to introduce you to an ancient wisdom whose origin is lost in the mists of time. It is the Upanishadic wisdom, which is closely related to the wisdom of Hermes, and dates back to a time even before the Hindu peoples invaded the lands of the Indus.

The word 'Upanishad' means 'the unveiling of hidden spiritual knowledge so that ignorance may be overcome'. This implies that those who wish to read and understand the Upanishads need a key that will open up what is hidden. And what else could this key be than the soul, the possession of a new soul-quality? So the wisdom of the Upanishads is intended only for those who are standing on the path to soul-birth and who seek to neutralise the obstacles they meet on the way.

Here is a brief extract from one of the most powerful Upanishads:

‘Having delighted himself in the waking-state of the soul, and having seen good and evil, he hastens back to the point of entry and beginning, to the dream-life.

An eagle circles aloft until he becomes weary; then he folds his wings and sinks down into his nest. Even so does the soul-being hasten back to the state in which, asleep, he feeds desires no longer and sees no more dreams.

The human being has veins called ‘hairs; gossamer-fine as a hair divided a thousandfold. These are filled with white and blue and yellow and green and red. If it seems to him that someone is trying to kill him, or that he is likely to be overpowered, or that he is being pursued by an elephant, or that he is falling down a precipice, then he perceives things thus because he is imagining, in his ignorance, that he is himself some terror that he saw when he was awake.

Only when he imagines that he stands in unassailable divinity is he truly in his highest world. Then he is pursued neither by good nor by evil, for he has passed beyond all the sorrows of the heart. He has passed beyond seeing and although, in that state, he does not see, yet nevertheless he sees truly, for there is no cessation of the seeing of the seer, because of his imperishability.’

The pupil who has advanced in the gnostic mysteries to

the point where the new soul-state has been reborn has become a dual being. On the one hand he is a soul-being, and on the other he still exists in the state of his natural birth. Such a pupil needs to know how to reap the benefits of that state of being, for his soul-state gives him the power to escape completely from the dangers connected with the turbulence of his nerve-ether. For the mercy granted to the soul-born one is that the sleep of his body can become the waking-state of his soul.

The soul-born person who devotes himself, in total surrender, to the Living Body of the Gnosis, will certainly be able to spend the greater part of the night in the new astral field of the School, which is 'his highest world'. In the serenity of that field the soul-born human being absorbs the knowledge and strength he will need to walk his path and accomplish his task when, a few hours later, he has to return to his delusive existence in the nature of death, wrapped and confined in his nature-born cloak.

The purpose of the soul's nightly sojourn in the new astral field of the School, in the Golden Head of the Living Body, is to familiarise it with the great delusion and confusion it will experience during the coming hours of physical wakefulness. It is to enable the soul to study these things from an objective point of view, so that it will no longer be victimised by them.

So the conditions of life are completely reversed for the soul-born person: the soberness of the soul, the waking-state of the soul, becomes his waking life, while everyday

life in the body becomes his dream-life. That is why it is said in the Upanishads:

‘Having delighted himself in the waking-state of the soul, and having seen good and evil, he hastens back to the point of entry and beginning, to the dream-life, [the daily sojourn in the body]

And just like the eagle yearning for its nest, so the soul, too, longs for a speedy return to its true resting place. But this return of the soul to its true home depends on the extent to which it is able to function in the body of delusion.

On its return to the body of delusion, the soul is immediately confronted in the most intimate way with the nerve-ether, with the ‘archaeus’, the karmic currents in the nerve-fluid. For the soul descends into the nature-born body via one of the cranial nerves and, in the fully awakened state, it occupies a central position in the head and heart sanctuaries. So it would be difficult to imagine a closer contact between the soul and the archaeus.

Hence the words: The human being has veins called ‘hita; gossamer-fine as a hair divided a thousandfold. These are filled with white and blue and yellow and green and red’. For the nerve-ether shows all the colours of the spectrum, depending on the quality of the emotions, thoughts, desires and activities of the will. And generally one of the colours predominates, as an original karmic accent.

Into this sea of nerve-ether, into this pool of the past, the soul descends every morning on waking. Is it any wonder, then, that people in whom the soul is weak or absent are completely at the mercy of their nerve-ether? What a mercy it is that every day the soul-born person is granted a new opportunity to escape all dangers.

Let us explain, then, how this opportunity is given to every dedicated, soul-born pupil. During the night, when the nature-born body is asleep, the souls of such pupils are permitted to spend a certain amount of time, which may be longer or shorter, in the highest aspect of the Living Body, the Golden Head.

To understand what happens there you will need to know what the soul really is. Usually, we say that the soul is the awakened rose of the heart. However, while these words are good enough to serve as an indication, they should not be regarded as a definition.

The rose, or the primordial atom, is the latent principle of the true, original human being that slumbers in the heart of every microcosm. So it is logical that the rose will be sevenfold; it will possess seven aspects and seven basic, fundamental needs. Hence the Living Body of a gnostic Brotherhood, of a gnostic mystery school, will also need to have seven aspects, corresponding to the seven material aspects of the soul-world. Because, if the rose is to bloom, it must be nourished in a sevenfold way.

Once the rose-bud within you has opened its petals in the warming radiance of the Living Body's three ideation-

energies, it will also need to be nourished with the four other foods: the pure thought substance, the pure astral substance, the original ethers and even the substance of the universal plane.

If it is possible to charge the soul in this sevenfold way, the further manifestation of the soul-vehicle will cause no problems. It will be merely a matter of time, and — as you should keep clearly in mind — a matter of neutralising the resistance of the archæus.

So do realise what a tremendous mercy it is that you have been permitted to enter such a Living Body, and understand why, time and time again, you are advised to dedicate yourself to that Living Body in total surrender. Even a child could see that this is essential.

Only if there is total harmony and unification between the rose of the soul and the Living Body will the soul's magnetic seeking and the Golden Head's magnetic attraction create the conditions necessary for the soul to be able to spend some time each night in the inner sanctuary of the School. The gates of this sanctuary are wide open to all of you; anyone who fulfils the conditions may enter.

Now we can go into what happens during the soul's nightly sojourn in the Golden Head.

When the soul enters the inner sanctuary of the School it remains connected to the nature-born system and the microcosm by means of a fluidic thread. Whilst respiring in its own soul-world, the soul receives through that

thread a panoramic image of the life-state of the nature-born person with whom it is connected. It sees the problems, the various situations in which the person is involved, the quality of his archæus, and so on.

This information is of great importance and interest to the soul, since it is the soul that will have to guide and help the nature-born personality along the path of transfiguration, provided, of course, that the personality turns over the guidance of his life to it. Then the entire system will eventually be enabled to bring the way of the cross to a good end.

And now we are going to say something to which we want you to listen very carefully indeed. If the pupil has allowed the state of peace to fill his archæus; if he has descended into the silence, then the time will come when the soul can exercise a strong guidance over him, despite the fact that during daytime it lies immersed in his nature-born personality.

The signature of mortal life is delusion, unreality, and it will keep on victimising the pupil as long as his soul has not yet been set free.

That is why the Upanishads talk about how it seems as if people try to kill him, or that he is being pursued by an elephant, or that he is falling down a precipice. He thinks he is awake, but in fact he is in a state of delusion, and that is why he imagines that he is undergoing all these terrors.

But if a person lets himself be guided and prompted by

the soul, he will go his way from the cradle to the grave in the absolute conviction that 'nothing can happen to me without the will of my heavenly Father', or, to put it in the words of the Upanishads, 'I stand in unassailable divinity'. Then, wherever he may find himself, and whatever his predicament, he will always be living, quite literally, in the world of the liberating life.

Then good and evil will follow him no more, because he has risen above all the sorrows of the heart. He has overcome death, for there is no cessation of the seeing of the seer, because of the imperishability of the all irradiating, all pervading, all conquering soul.

III

The Celestial Realm

Have you ever thought about what a tremendous influence can emanate from a Spiritual School; an influence that can affect the whole of the world and mankind?

A mystery school is designed specifically for people who really want to walk the path and who, together, wish to form God's people. However, the Spiritual School also fulfils another function for, by means of its third magnetic field, it exerts a decisive influence on the whole of human existence. This aspect of the Brotherhood's tremendous work of liberation should never be underestimated. We are often so absorbed in the primary aim of the process of liberation that we tend to forget the wider aspects of the School's helping work.

The influences and effects of the third magnetic field are often discussed in the School, but there is much more that could be said about its full implications and side-effects.

Did you know that by applying the method of not-doing, by practising all aspects of self-surrender, you are living and acting in an extremely revolutionary way with respect to the whole dialectical nature-order? And did you

know that, if a sufficient number of people were to begin to walk the paths shown by the School, then this alone would be enough to transform the face of the world in no time at all, to say nothing of the ultimate effects of the third magnetic field's radiation? Even if less than one percent of the world population were to practise Wu Wei, not-doing, this small minority would be capable of changing the whole social, political, economic and religious structure of our society, and the results would be ideal, seen from a dialectical point of view. And did you know that there have actually been periods in history when such situations really did prevail?

In the history of ancient China there were times when so great a number of people were following in the footsteps of Lao Tzu that ideal conditions developed throughout the country, to the extent that people called it 'The Celestial Realm' and came from all over the world to study its political system.

But the result was that things very quickly went wrong. Things would have deteriorated in the end, anyway, because such ideal conditions are only a temporary phenomenon caused by the radiations of the Spiritual School. But when people tried to trace the causes of this resurgence in the political system rather than in the practice of Wu Wei, prosperity was bound to come to an early end.

We can all see how quickly the present world-order is rushing towards its end. Situations of extreme distress and despair are multiplying daily. These are the signs of the end. They are caused by the presence of an increasing number of magnetic lines of force that cannot be explained from ordinary nature.

But it is not at all inevitable that the close of this day of manifestation should be marked solely by situations of misery, greater and more widespread than ever before.

The end of this day of manifestation does not have to be characterised by a descent into bestiality and barbarism, for if that were the case, mankind would ultimately be left in such a brutalised state that any renewed attempt at deliverance in a new day of manifestation would be hampered by the most fundamental, structural difficulties. It would be better if the end were to take place during a period of widespread moral and mystical resurgence.

That is why it is such a blessing that the Spiritual School is able not only to care for the liberation of all the entities who have entrusted themselves to it, but also to create new opportunities for everyone else in a 'celestial realm' which, although it is only a temporary phenomenon, creates the psychological conditions in which the hope of ultimate freedom can be born.

Imagine a person who faces his end in a mood of utter misery and desolation. And imagine a person who faces his end in an atmosphere of happiness. The former would

be immersed in egocentricity, and so blinded by hatred, resentment and fear, that there would be no knowing what reckless acts he might commit. The latter, experiencing happiness but realising its fragility, would be much more susceptible to the touch of the Gnosis.

That is why it is a privilege to be allowed to testify that the practice of Wu Wei will enable the Spiritual School and its brothers and sisters not only to depart from a perishing world, but also to give those who are left behind some measure of the earthly happiness they seek. In this way an atmosphere of happiness will prevail, providing the conditions in which those still left behind can be found and saved by the Gnosis.

So, lift up your hearts and be comforted by the thought that, by positively practising your pupilship, you will be not only helping yourself, not only serving the School, but also serving humanity, in the most practical way.

IV

Tao

*Containing all within itself, the Way is the primal cause. It was, is, and shall be, in all eternity. Its omnipotence borders on space and time and from its Logos the world-soul has come forth**

The Way is the primal cause: This idea is confirmed by all the mysteries, because it is from the holy, divine forces that true life proceeds. And this true life will go on existing throughout eternity. But for us, the most important thing is that we have to gain participation in that eternal life, to see it and know it once more.

It is for this reason that true life radiates a beam of light, power and beauty into the world of mortality. This beam serves as a bridge over which we can cross, so that we can enter again the original land of the Father.

The pupil who is following this 'Way', or is, to put it in our terminology, 'admitted into the new life-field', knows that the world of space and time still borders on it.

* The poem quoted in this chapter was inspired by the Tao Te Ching. It is taken from: Teh, universele bewustwording, parafrazen op de Tao Teh King van LaoTse, by C. van Dijk, Amsterdam 1934.

*The straight way is: vibrating in its rhythm,
with every breath avowing the being of the All,
immersed in its luminous spiritual light
so that nothing can be save all-inspiring will.*

The pupil stands on the straight way, the path that leads to the liberating, new life without any detours or by-ways. And the rhythm of this liberating pathway is around and within him; it is like a song of the Lord, like a gentle, silver-toned melody. It is like the river of God flowing through the eternal city.

One breath is equal to a heart-beat. Breath causes the life-blood to flow through the veins. And now, with every new breath, the pupil is aware of his unity with the divine universe. His whole being longs for it and there is but one, divine, all-inspiring will, which carries him along and urges him forward.

*Discernment proceeds from recognition;
the inner essence is reflected in the phenomenon.
Cohesion forms the block of granite,
and thus perception forms before our eyes.*

The natural result of this is that the pupil will now enter a new field of sensory perception. He learns `discernment, which means that he sees, he experiences the divine touch. And since he has entered the new field of perception, he will naturally begin to live out of it, and the

results of this are bound to be evident. The divine being will be reflected in this wondrous pilgrim.

The power of cohesion will be demonstrated before the candidate's eyes. Just as the law of cohesion keeps the atoms of a granite block together, so this same divine law will cause the pupil's new being to be built up into a structure of great glory.

*O great power by which forms are ensouled,
through which the oak arises from the tender seed;
which causes the wheels of heaven to whirl
and from the dark mud brings forth the Lotus-flower.*

And so the feast of awakening continues. The oak-tree rises upward from the tender seed of renewal. Is not this giant of the forest the symbol of the pupil's link with the holy, universal Spirit? And does not the lotus, that delicate, white and pure flower rising out of the mud, symbolise the holy spirit-spark flowering within the pupil, the awakening of the latent rose?

*Thus does every mortal seek what will restore
his link with the forgotten word;
and when, at times, a subtle chord vibrates,
he recognises the divine design,
and reverence will fill his being.*

With us, you are seeking the forgotten word of power, the

'Open, Sesame' of the mysteries, and sometimes a faint suggestion of the forgotten word reaches you. Your whole being is moved by it and just for one, fleeting moment you 'know, you see, face to face, the divine plan for you as a fallen child of man. But:

*When once the light has pierced the darkness,
and man discerns his place in the universe,
then the word can germinate which, when uttered,
will free him from the earthly vale of tears.*

When you break through from understanding to actual awareness, and you see your position in this vast field of terror, a great mercy has been granted to you because then the word, the holy word, which until now you had perhaps heard only as a faint suggestion, is able to germinate in you, as the divine seed. With this seed germinating in your heart sanctuary you will break through all the limitations, through your circle of existence, through all the fetters of consciousness, soul and matter. The prince of this world will lose all power over you. And in this way, the following words will become a logical, scientific certainty:

*The Way begets and makes 'It' grow;
develops, nourishes and perfects,
ripens and protects,
causing death and flowering, in an unending cycle.*

*It is the power that governs all things,
possessing nothing but its own, deep life.
In not-doing, it breathes eternity;
it is the mystery, never defined.*

Before our consciousness stands the radiant figure of the human being who has laid aside every aspect of dialectical nature. He has died and risen again. In not-doing, he breathes eternity.

The human being of this nature is always full of action; he always wants to do things! The pilgrim on the path will gradually learn the mystery of Lao Tzu's term: `not-doing. He will no longer allow the ego to predominate, for it is He, the Lord of all Life, who fashions both the willing and the doing in him.

When the pupil is once more linked with `It, with the path, with Tao, with the Gnosis, he is bound in voluntary obedience to the Eternal, to the Kingdom of God within him, to the Jesus-state within him. And then it will be the Other One, who cannot be explained from this nature, who does what is done, who lives and who is. The I-being has departed; it has died and will never again exist, in all eternity.

Together, let us resolve to walk this path of eternity. Come with us through the Eternal Doors, to Eternal Life!

The Fivefold System of Sanctification

Chuang Tzu, one of Lao Tzu's most renowned followers, writes in one of his works:

'He who realises his folly is not so very foolish any more, and he who knows that he lives in delusion is no longer so very far astray. He who is profoundly misguided will not be able to shake off his blindness, and he who is profoundly foolish will never become discerning, however long he may live.

If three men are walking together and one wanders from the path, they will still be able to reach their destination, for the foolish one is in the minority, but if two of them lose their way, they will not reach their destination because the erring ones are in the majority.

'Today, now that the whole world lives in delusion, I am unable to persuade people to take the right direction, even though I exhort them to do so. Is this not pitiful?'

These words show us the meaning and purpose of insight, the first step of the fivefold universal Gnosis.

However, gaining insight in the gnostic sense does not

mean merely the acquisition of information, merely gaining some idea of the scope of a problem. Gnostic insight, as the first step on the path, means first and foremost: self-unmasking.

Hence the words of the ancient wisdom: 'He who realises his folly is not so very foolish any more, and he who knows that he lives in delusion is no longer so very far astray'. For the person who discovers his own folly and sees the veils of delusion that envelop him will experience a growing desire to be free of all that folly and delusion. As a result of the first step, which is the step of self-discovering insight, the second step, yearning for salvation, will be felt as a need.

A person who lives in delusion will never be able to shake off his blindness; he will not even feel the need to do so. A person who is blinded by deception is living in delusion, for he will be quite convinced that his delusion is reality.

So what a blessing it is to be permitted the grace of realising one's own folly! Coming to that realisation proves that one has begun to tear apart the straight-jacket of delusion.

The human soul has five aspects, five states of being, five fluids. The fivefold universal Gnosis corresponds with these five aspects, for each step of this fivefold system of sanctification provides for the purification and transformation of one of the soul-fluids. In addition, each step exerts an influence on all the other soul-fluids, to prepare them for their own particular development.

The blood is the basis for the whole process; a change in the blood causes openness. That is why the path of *insight* brings about purification of the blood. A change in the hormonal fluid follows closely on this alteration of the blood, causing *yearning for salvation* to flood throughout one's being like one great sigh. Thus the serpent-fire is prepared, and from the source in the sacral plexus an urge towards *self-surrender* is felt by the ego, and its tremors are carried by the blood throughout the system. And then, how can it be otherwise than that the nerve-fluid will impel the whole being to new action, to *a new way of life*, following the divine paths. This, in turn, will give rise to the fifth and final step, for the sevenfold astral consciousness-fluid is beginning to change, so that the *rebirth of the soul* will become a fact.

So what a privilege is granted to the person who discovers his own folly in the unmasking light of the Spiritual School! The alchemical working-places of the Spiritual School are like laboratories in which the properties of various substances are investigated, for in these working-places, the pupil is placed in retorts filled with the discovering light of the Brotherhood. And blessed is the pupil who proves capable of reacting, as if with a new sensory faculty. For if he does not react, he will remain trapped in dialectical folly and will never become discerning no matter how long he may live.

Finally, we would like to consider one more aspect of the

grace made available through the activity of the Spiritual School. Suppose that, despite every effort, one third of the pupils present in the alchemical working-places of the School were to react negatively because, for whatever reason, they lacked the necessary basis of insight, whereas the other two thirds reacted positively. Well, then it would be possible for the two thirds who understood things in the right way to carry the other third along with them to the goal. 'If three men are walking together and one wanders from the path, they will still be able to reach their destination'.

But the proportions may not be reversed in such a way that those who are deviating from the path are in the majority. This shows the great importance of group unity, for a small, resolute group can be a ceaseless blessing to countless people.

He who enters the processes of soul-rebirth will grow in radiant grace with God and man.

VI

The Vicissitudes of Fortune

Chen Wu said to Sune-shu Au, 'Lord, you were prime minister three times and took no pride in it; three times you were removed from this position and did not show disappointment. In the past I did not quite trust you, but now I see how regularly and calmly your breath passes through your nostrils. How can you thus control your mind?'

To this Sune-shu Au replied, 'Wherein did I excel others? When I was elected to the office, I thought it ought not to be refused. When the office was taken away from me, I thought it ought not to be retained. I considered that the fact of receiving or losing did not make me what I am, so there was no reason for disappointment; that was all. Wherein did I excel others? And besides, I did not know whether the honour was meant for my high position or for my person. If it devolved on my position, it was not meant for me. If it was for me, it had nothing to do with my position. Beset as I was with these uncertainties, and all things considered, I had no way of discerning whether people had a high or a low regard for me'.

When Chung Ni heard about this he said, 'Not even

the greatest sage could completely describe the true human beings of old, who could be neither tempted to extravagance by the most beautiful things, nor overpowered by the most dangerous criminal. Neither the Emperor Fu Hi, nor Huang Ti could compel them to friendship. Their deepest selves could be affected neither by life nor by death, even though both are important events, and even less could rank or gain affect them. With such a nature, they could pass through the Thai Mountain without obstruction, plunge into the deepest pool without getting wet, and occupy the lowest, most insignificant position without being humiliated. Theirs was the plenitude of heaven and earth. The more they gave to others, the more they had left for themselves'.

This quotation from the works of Chuang Tzu deals with the ups and downs of fortune that so often occur in the lives of dialectical human beings and can so completely alter their circumstances.

The hero of the story seems to be someone who is engaged in the process of soul-rebirth. His sublimity of soul kept him from exulting when he became prime minister, and from feeling disappointed when he had to relinquish the position. He carried out his social obligations and stepped down from his office when the time had come. His inner task was not in any way affected by all this. 'I considered; he said, 'that receiving or losing did not make me what I am, and that there was no reason for showing disappointment; that was all:

Indeed, he had risen above the vicissitudes of fortune and accepted each situation as it presented itself from day to day, and his soul's serenity remained undisturbed.

But let us now consider the situation of a person whose state of being does not allow him to rise above the vicissitudes of fortune, but who is fully involved in it and party to it. If such a person were to adopt an attitude similar to that of the ex-prime minister it would simply be a lie, an act, and not at all in keeping with the reality.

As long as the heart is not yet cleansed of its impurities, and tranquillity cannot yet prevail in the soul, the ups and downs of experience carve deep grooves in our lives, sometimes striking us like hammer blows.

Now in a situation like this, can one say, 'I don't care. I'm above all that. It leaves me cold. Not so much as my little finger is going to react?? Decidedly not! And if a person does, it proves either that he has not understood, or that he does not want to understand anything about the causes of his experience, and refuses to accept the consequences. Such an attitude is proof of stupidity, or pride, or self-preservation, or a combination of the three.

If you make a mistake and the Brotherhood corrects you — and such corrections always come through experience — you ought to accept the correction with humility and thankfulness, resolving to learn the lesson and accept all its consequences. If you as yet lack the wisdom of insight, then you should ask for insight and information on the path you need to follow. In this way, the inter-

vention in your fate will make a profound impression on your soul and the resulting chastening will contribute to the purification of your heart.

So in such situations it is still not possible to behave as the ex-prime minister did. His attitude was ennobled by the high quality of his soul. But if one were to copy this attitude without being ennobled to it, one's behaviour would only be an imitation, a pretence, from which the soul could derive no benefit. On the contrary, your behaviour would cause the build-up of even worse tensions, leading to explosions of fate which could ultimately shatter you, possibly to such an extent that for some time to come you would no longer have a spark of energy left for any worthwhile advancement on the path.

Every pupil is occasionally inclined to imitate the teachings given to him by the School, and so can easily delude himself into believing that he has long since `arrived. But the holy language always gives strong warnings against such behaviour.

In the story about Sune-shu Au he says that a person who is engaged in the process of soul-rebirth is immune from danger, 'and cannot be overpowered by the most dangerous criminal'. But one needs to remember, also, that if, for whatever reason, one's pupilship is only an imitation, one will be liable to fall prey to the first criminal encountered. These are facts you need to face, accepting that you still have much to learn from experience, and behaving in a way which reflects that acceptance.

Having read this, it may be that fear is disturbing your soul, for you may be thinking that 'as long as I have not overcome all the impurities of my soul and therefore have a great deal to learn from experience, I will remain vulnerable to by all kinds of depredations; to attacks from the reflection sphere, for instance:

But that doesn't need to happen at all! If you begin to walk the path and obey the law of the Kingdom in all humility, profoundly aware of your weakness, then your weakness will be neutralised, enfolded, in the strength of the Gnosis. If, in the distress of your experience, you reach out for help, your hand will be grasped.

However, if someone says, 'I will act as if I do not need help, he will not evoke the experience of help, but rather the experience of downfall.

Let us use the story of Sune-shu Au to deepen our insight!

VII

The Breath of Life

In one of his books Chuang Tzu wrote a chapter called 'Perfection. It reads as follows:

'My master Li Tzu said to Yin, the frontier guard, 'A perfect man moves under water without hindrance; he treads on fire without being burned and walks high above the ground without fear. May I ask you how he is able to attain such things?'

Yin, the guard, answered, 'It is by keeping the perfect breath; it cannot be attributed to skill or daring. Come, sit down, and I will explain.

Whatever has form, sound and colour is a thing. How else could one thing differ from another? But none of those things can equal that which was before any of them. They are merely objects of sense. But the perfect is beyond form and beyond susceptibility to change. When a man attains to the perfect and continues therein, right to the utmost limit, how could any other thing oppose or hinder him? He would be able to occupy the place assigned to him without ever leaving it, and he would remain hidden in trackless time. Rejoicing, he would observe the activity that imparts to all things their beginning and their end.

By restoring his nature to unity, nourishing his vital energy and concentrating his essence, he will penetrate to the origin of things. In that state, in which his heavenly nature is contained completely within itself and his spirit is undivided, how could anything else penetrate?

Take the case of a drunken man who falls off a wagon. Though he may be injured, it will not be fatal. His bones and joints are the same as those of other men, but the injury he suffers is different, because his mind is undivided. He has no memory of boarding the wagon, nor of falling off. Thoughts of death or life, of terror or fear, do not enter his mind. Hence he faces danger without shrinking from it. He is capable of being in this state because he is completely under the influence of liquor. How much more intense this state would be if he were under the influence of his heavenly nature! The sage abides in his heavenly nature, and that is why nothing can harm him:

Every sincere pupil of the modern Spiritual School is striving for perfection, for sanctification. He is striving to rise above the barren regions of death and ascend into the new life, having sacrificed everything that belongs to the nature of death.

Those who walk this path of sanctification are freed from anxiety, worry and fear, and the nature-acons lose their hold on them. They walk in the light as He is in the light, and rise above the nature of death. How is this state attained? By keeping the perfect breath, the perfect breath of the Gnosis!

People who have been influenced by occult movements, or have practised eurhythmy, for instance, may think they understand these words. But such practices do not give access to the 'new life' in the sense meant by the Spiritual School. When Yin, the border guard, talked about 'keeping the perfect breath, he was certainly not referring to mere breathing techniques.

Only by following the path of the rose can one be linked with the breath of life, with the astral forces of the Gnosis. Via the rose of the heart, the sternum is made receptive to the new respiration and, in time, the brain's magnetic system will also begin to respire in the nature of eternal life. This process of change unfolds gradually, systematically and harmoniously. A person to whom it has been granted to live out of the divine breath knows that this is not achieved by the practice of exercises or techniques, and neither is it the result of courage or endurance.

Chuang Tzu gives us the following explanation: everything in this nature has form, sound and colour; it is a nature of forms in every shape and variety; it is the nature of space and time, in which every manifested thing is 'separate, even when it is 'the same'. No two creatures of space and time can be exactly the same. Even if two creatures replicate each other exactly, they are nevertheless separate from each other; they remain isolated, autonomous, and thus absolutely strange to one another. They are only objects of sense; they are phenomena, things.

When the human being has followed the path of return to the new life right to the end, he is perfect, and in that final phase there is not one part of him that is not totally beyond form and change, beyond all the aspects and phenomena of the order of time and space. It is not possible to form any image of such an existence, even though it is an actual state of being. Neither should we think of any kind of glorified form, for the new human being in his absolute state is an entity beyond form. Being unbounded, he exists in the illimitable.

Those who begin to inhale the perfect breath of life enter a process of growth that will lead them from the dialectical 'something' to the divine 'nothing'. Once engaged in that process, they become increasingly free of the limitations and phenomena of the form-world of time and space until, in the end, nothing can withstand them any longer. They will be able to occupy the place assigned to them without ever leaving it. Free of matter, free of the reflection-sphere, free of every dialectical sense-object, and yet an 'I am', they will remain hidden in trackless time.

By following the path of the rose and inhaling the perfect breath, the human being's original relationship with the Gnosis is gradually restored. So if a person is following the path of the rose, how could any other thing trouble him?

If you find this explanation too abstract, think of someone who is befuddled and benumbed by liquor. Thoughts of death or life, terror or fear, do not enter his mind. He

is without any fear, and even the worst things do not hurt him, because his consciousness has been clouded or driven right out by the alcohol he has consumed.

The candidate for the new life opens his gates to the light and power of the Gnosis, and over him comes the breath of life. And then he is so absorbed by it that he not only rises above all affliction, anxiety, worry, fear and limitation, but they also lose all power to harm him. He enters the peace of the soul.

May this sublime wisdom of 2500 years ago strengthen you in your resolve to walk the path that leads to life. He who walks the path is set free, for all eternity, in the hidden realms of trackless time.