An anthropology of esotericism

Quayle, Brendan

"AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF ESOTERICISM"

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BRENDAN QUAYLE

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Department of Anthropology,
University of Durham.

ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to establish a means for investigating the social forms of a type of cross-cultural religious phenomenon to which we refer as esotericism.

In the early sections of the thesis we define the meaning and referents of esotericism and argue for the term's heuristic usefulness. We then consider a set of possible examples of esotericism and locate them within a typology. We construct a model of an ideal-typical esoteric group to be applied at a later point in our investigation of an ethnographic example. Following this we survey various anthropological methods of studying esotericism and decide in favour of a formalist/rationalist approach. This approach is deemed the most authoritative and useful, and the least impertinent and ethnocentric.

In part two of the thesis we examine Anthroposophy as a test case for our model and formal theory of esotericism. We describe and analyse the social conditions which governed the inception of Anthroposophy and its related groups. We attempt to establish correlations between esoteric ideation and specific types of nineteenth century social experience. We then survey the social and religious experiences, and social significance, of the founder of Anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner, in the light of established anthropological categories of religious officiant: prophet and shaman.

This is followed by a structural analysis of Anthroposophy in both its esoteric (world-transcendent) and exoteric (world-oriented) aspects. We ascertain the operations of a principle of 'mediation' which permeates the complete system and determines its inner coherence and consistency. The remaining chapter illustrates the extent of the transformations undergone by the ideal Anthroposophical schema within an empirical situation and investigates the dialectical interchange between the realms of belief and experience.

Finally, we compare the usefulness of a structural analysis with diffusionist and evolutionist modes of investigating the esoteric, and in doing so, introduce and summarize the results of our structurally-orientated exegesis. The thesis concludes with a brief comparison of metaphysical and rational modes of apprehending the world. We suggest the inevitability of a fusion between rational and metaphysical frameworks of enquiry, and offer some speculations regarding the intrinsic nature and meaning of 'structures' in esotericism.

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I am especially indebted to Alison Bowes who patiently proof-read and corrected the script. Also, large parts of the Anthroposophical section would not have been possible without the help of Brian Ree, who provided many of the books, and of my friends and acquaintances in the Anthroposophical world.

It should be added that the arguments advanced in this thesis probably bear no relation to the convictions and orientations of any of these people, who, if asked, would, I'm sure, vehemently deny responsibility for any part of the exercise.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to provide a framework for investigating the social forms of esotericism. Esotericism is a category of those areas of human endeavour usually referred to as religion and ideation. Hence the arguments that have been put forward to justify the study of the latter and to testify to their "overriding imporance" (Burridge, 1969: 7) in social life, apply equally to esotericism itself. Durkheim, for example, maintained that the "first systems of representations with which men have pictured to themselves the world and themselves were of religious origin" (Durkheim 1915: 9). He also argued that,

> "Men owe to it (religion) not only a good part of the substance of their knowledge, but also the form in which this knowledge has been elaborated"
>
> (Durkheim, 1915: 9)

Two other authors, Eliade (1968) and Huxley (1976) go even further in suggesting that religion in its aspect which involves 'contemplation of the sacred' occurred at the very heart of early social life and provided the very essence of mankind's various systems of knowledge.

Our essay is only marginally about 'the contemplation of the sacred'; its focus is more upon those people whose orientations are almost exclusively directed towards the sacred. Our subject matter is the religious functionaries of mankind, priests, philosophers, prophets, magicians and mystics, those whose task it is to contemplate the sacred, who claim an experience of or familiarity with essentially religious realms; and who, by that fact, have been largely responsible for the construction and dissemination of mankind's systems of knowledge.

There appears to be two basic types of religious functionaries: one type the 'esoteric' or'mystic' remains we would suggest, permanently orientated towards the sacred, towards the purported source of all knowledge, whereas the other type, the 'exoteric' or 'priest' is to a large extent turned away from

direct and permanent contact with the sacred. The latter's concerns are to divulge and utilise acquired or inherited knowledge of the sacred in order to maintain or better the conditions of his social order and his fellow men. The esoteric is thus, in theory, more interested in experiences, the exoteric with the fruits of those experiences. But both types of office are complementary, each involves the other. Often, and especially in 'tribal' societies the two offices are indivisible and are the responsibility of the same person.

The distinction between esoteric and exoteric offices and modes of involvement can take other forms and have other appurtenances. One example would be that given by the philosopher, Bergson (1935) who distinguishes between "dynamic" and "static" forms of religion. Another example would be that often made between 'mysticism' and 'religion'. Mysticism and religion are usually conceived of by anthropologists in general as part and parcel of of the same endeavour. However, Staal has pointed out (1975) that the connection between mysticism and religion may be less intelligible and less easy to define than most scholars have assumed. Staal argues that mystical experience does not necessarily lead to religion (here narrowly defined as a 'belief in gods'), the two may be totally unconnected. Indeed it seems more likely that

> "... the belief in gods is a special outcome of mystical experiences, interpreted as divine, and is in turn a device that facilitates the attainment of such experiences"
>
> (Staal, 1975: 179)

Even more speculatively, Staal suggests that "in the history of mankind, consciousness appeared first as what is now called the mystical state of consciousness" (62). This "fairly mystical theory" (62) which holds that the original state and nature of man was wholly or predominantly sacred at least coincides with the claims of most world mystics, if not of most world religions. For, according to the latter, the history of man amounts to a decline in

understanding and awareness of his "true" state. Such a view contrasts radically with one of the central tenets of Western man's progressivist, rationalist inheritance, namely, the Darwinian premise which holds that man is constantly progressing or evolving towards a state of total knowledge and perfection. (It could be added that in the light of the present world situation the 'mystical' notion of regression does seem to possess a certain ring of truth.)

The paradigmatic role of esoteric or mystical consciousness has also been attested by Eliade. He sees it as fundamental to the human mind, and as the possible source of our ability to contemplate, distinguish and judge people and phenomena in terms of polarised positive and negative attributes or qualities:

> " ... it is difficult to imagine how the human mind could function without the conviction that there is something irreducibly real in the world, and it is impossible to imagine how consciousness could arise without conferring meaning on man's drives and experiences. The awareness of a real and meaningful world is intimately related to the discovery of the sacred. Through the experience of the sacred, the human mind grasped the difference between that which reveals itself as real, powerful, rich and meaningful, and that which does not - i.e. the chaotic and dangerous flux of things, their fortuitous, meaningless appearances and disappearances"
>
> (Eliade, 1969, preface to 'The Quest')

More recently, Francis Huxley has argued (1976) that the experience or sense of the sacred is the source of man's ability to discriminate, to divide and separate.

> "To see clearly is ... to discriminate ... But to discriminate is to know, and the highest form of knowledge is traditionally that of sacred matters"
>
> (Huxley, 1976: 20)

To set something apart is to treat it as sacred. The act of setting apart involves the construction of boundaries or barriers. These barriers often serve as a means of separating the world of appearances from the world of the "numinous divinity". A barrier, Huxley maintains, acts as a prohibition

against going further, but it is also

> "like the danger sign erected at the entrance of a powerhouse, it shows the presence of a creative energy that is normally out of limits ..."
>
> (Huxley, 1976: 10)

The task of the esoteric is to break through that boundary, to claim perception of the other side, and, if possible, capture and bring back the knowledge and power he has acquired for the benefit of others. The exoteric, in contrast, is not usually required to cross the barrier. He operates with the residues of knowledge and ritual power handed over to him by the esoteric. Often, the exoteric functions merely to maintain and service the barrier between the two worlds.

Anthropologists have not traditionally dealt with esoterics and their activities, but with exoterics or with the exoteric side of the esoteric (hence, "religion is what religion does", Evans-pritchard, 1965: 120). One feels that, because of this, anthropologists fail to get to the heart of the matter, a failing which sometimes appears innate and endemic to the discipline of anthropology itself. However, the nature of esotericism is such that a fully empirical investigation would be an impracticality. But the criticism still holds. Esotericism, as will be evident from our typology, has a series of social correlates which are amenable to empirical examination and sociological analysis.

Esoterics often live within small sub-societies or separatist institutions and exhibit their own systems of rules, beliefs, myths, customs and rituals. This is true even of the most stringently a-social of esoterics such as hermits and ascetics. But esoterics can also be important members of a wider society; they make statements about society and about man's place in it.

There are different styles of esotericism, types of transcendence, kinds of esoteric representations, systems of knowledge and belief, patterns of action etc. All these are amenable to sociological investigation, if

only to make explicit the cultural, social and intellectual determinants operative behind the forms of esotericism. Such an investigation would, we hope, lead to an explanation of differences and similarities between particular schools of esotericism, and an understanding of the variations in esoteric expression, the metaphors, symbols and rituals used to depict transcendent states and to act as aids to transcendence.

Our thesis then is not concerned with the investigation of esoteric experience itself. Explorations of the latter are left to those who are better equipped for the task, i.e. esoterics and certain psychologists. But neither is our study a theology or a desacralisation of essentially religious endeavours. Our contribution, we feel, occupies a position mid-way between the efforts of Staal (1975) and Huxley (1976). Staal deals with the exploration of experiences of the sacred, from an essentially rational point of view. Huxley deals with the meaning of the sacred, the referents of its symbols. Our concern is with the social significance and social infra-structures of the sacred in the realms of both 'symbol' and 'experience'.

The distinction which we made earlier between the categories of esoteric and exoteric phenomena is perhaps a more abstract and satisfactory way of re-expressing the division that Durkheim (1915) made between the "sacred" and the "profane". It successfully by-passes criticisms made of Durkheim's separation of the two realms, such as that of Evans-pritchard who maintains that the sacred and the profane "far from being cut off from one another ... are so closely intermingled as to be inseparable" (1965: 65). For in a society (such as a 'tribal society') where religion does dominate ideation and penetrates all aspects of social life it is clear that there are certain times when the collective orientation is towards a form of transcendence, however diminished (e.g. in rituals involving trance). Activities during these times are therefore esoteric. However there are also other times when religion still dominates e.g. in hunting and cooking (which are or can be

sacred activities) but where the collective orientation is directed not towards transcendence but towards the world, and is therefore exoteric. The esoteric/exoteric distinction can be seen to cover successfully both sides of the religious commitment.

RESERVATIONS AND NOTES ABOUT SOURCES

Although the thesis ultimately argues for a combined rational and metaphysical approach to the study of esotericism, it should be clearly stated at this juncture that I am not an esoteric and not a member of the Anthroposophical society or any other esoteric group. The views and arguments which I advance are those of an 'outsider' and an Anthropologist. As is required of a student of anthropology I attempt to maintain a measure of objectivity; though it has to be admitted that since the latter condition can only be an 'aim' in any social science, my personal prejudices and preferences must become manifest on occasion in the text.

As regards the piece devoted to an analysis of Anthroposophy the reader must be warned not to regard my account of this belief system, its history and activities as infallible. The system itself is vast and complex. I claim only to have given account of its more easily absorbed and comprehensive aspects and since my perspective is necessarily that of an outsider, the attempt will, in Anthroposophical eyes, inevitably seem "Ahrimanic". If I may have the impudence to quote from a private communication of a critic, it may be fairly stated in the light of the above considerations that my essay is only an "external view", hence:

> "you are not communicating the spark or flame of <u>life</u> which alone justifies the impulses and activities that lie behind what you are describing. You are giving an account of a house that is derelict; or of a corpse, meaningless without the life that has fled"
>
> (Source with-held)

My only reservations about the anthropological side of the thesis

concern chapter three, section A, since my attempt to successfuly describe and account for a series of social movements that cover such a wide geographical expanse and such an indefinably category of peopie, must of necessity be superficial. However, I remain convinced that my explanation is along the right lines, and perhaps only requires a more intensive, specialised investigation.

The data collected for the study of Anthroposophy in an empirical situation arose out of a period of several months spent in a village community in 1973. My analysis of social life in that situation is clearly valid only for that particular time, though to the best of my knowledge the community has undergone little change. In accordance with anthropological custom, the location of the village has been altered and the names of all the people changed.

On a final point about sources, it should be mentioned that, in general, Anthroposophical texts are difficult, especially those written by Steiner, and the reader is reminded that any reading of them must necessarily be idiosyncratic. The same of course can be said about my readings of anthropological texts. For the latter are, in many cases, complex and obscure and hence, in this sense, no less esoteric.

SUMMARY OF AIMS AND ARGUMENTS

The initial concerns of this thesis are to:

(a) Define the phenomenon under study.

(b) Consider a set of possible examples and locate them within a typology.

(c) Review the variety of methods by which esotericism can be and has been studied.

(d) Outline the methodology which we feel is likely to prove the most rigorous and useful.

(e) Establish the usefulness of this methodology with the aid of a test case.

In chapter one, we introduce a provisional definition of esotericism and distinguish it from occultism. On the basis of this definition we examine a range of ethnographic examples which could fittingly be termed 'esoteric'. From these we are able to extract a limited series of recurrent typical features. Three of these features are derived from the folk view (i.e. the 'emic') and three from the logic of the empirical esoteric situation (i.e. the 'symbolic').

When combined, these six features present a picture of an ideal-typical esoteric group. By concentrating on the essentially 'symbolic' aspects of the group's social organisations we are able to introduce a generally a-historical and structural perspective which facilitates reference to both implicit and explicit organisational patterns. But by including an 'emic' perspective we are able to avoid making analytical conjectures which would contradict folk views. The model we produce is, then, both objective to a degree and is, in theory, amenable to 'folk' inspection and verification.

We also argue for the interpretative supremacy of the term 'esotericism' over terms such as 'possession', which is too particularistic and often value loaded, and 'mysticism', which connotes an unnecessary air of illusion and mystery.* But the term 'esotericism' is not just a heuristic, it has illustrative value; its specific meaning, of something which lies 'within' and is 'hidden', implies the existence of an entity, quality or state which is not immediately obvious to the senses but has, or might have, ontological validity.

Having defined our terms and range of interest we then focus our attention on the variety of interpretations that have been put forward by anthropologists to 'explain' esoteric institutions and activities. We deal with these established modes of anthropological investigation in two main

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* The term 'mysticism' is in fact used frequently in the thesis, but only where this cannot reasonably be avoided.

sections, (a) the substantivist and (b) formalist.

(a) The first section deals with four substantivist approaches, the deprivationalist, the Marxist, the psychological and the phenomenological, all of which enjoy prominent positions in the anthropology and sociology of religion. The first three can be characterised as causal and reductive the fourth as anti-causal and descriptive. It will emerge that all these theories are unproductive - they fail to advance our knowledge and understanding of esotericism, and it will be argued that they all contain ideological bias.

As Huxley has pointed out (1976) "to think in terms of cause is to have a partiality for one term of ... an equation over another" (79). The substantivists exhibit a partiality for the baser realities e.g. the material or the physiological, over other types of reality. Hence their arguments are a-priori reductive and necessarily circular; the attempt to "arrange things in a linear sequence and to trace actions and reactions to something singular at the beginning of things" eventually comes to an impasse, for once the singular is discovered "that is what cannot be explained by anything else" (Huxley, 1976: 79).

The fourth substantivist approach, the phenomenological, is non-causal, but its advances on the other three are insignificant, since it puts the esoteric on an elevated plane beyond theoretical investigation and thus does it a disservice. The phenomenologists' guarded descriptivism and his sensitivity for his subject often belies a personal involvement in one aspect of the field, and this manifests itself in implicit value judgements and explicit qualitative assessments. Where this is not the case, i.e. in Castaneda's work, we are taken beyond the scope of any written form of investigation.

(b) The second mode of investigating the esoteric, the Formalist, subsumes a variety of theoretical approaches of a structuralist and rationalist

orientation. These, it is argued, are heuristically advantageous because they are mostly non-causal, non-particularistic and highly rigorous. They encourage the construction of cross-cultural generalisations which incorporate 'emic' perspectives within an 'etic' framework. The goal of a rationalist analysis, i.e. the attempt to deduce basic social and mental processes from their manifestations in cultural institutions and representations, presents a striking analogy to the goal of the metaphysician who is himself intent on discovering a universal pattern of order and ultimate 'sense' beneath the vagaries and bewildering disorder of human existence.

However, whereas the rationalist focusses on intellectual or 'mental' order, the metaphysician focusses on transcendental order. The division of interest manifests itself when the latter comes to embrace 'experience'. One approach though, does not preclude or is not totally incompatible with, the other. Both are attempts to arrive at invariant properties of 'the human mind' - an entity which until recently could, refer to both the intellectual and metaphysical capacities and faculties of the human being (the Latin for mind, animus, also means spirit and soul).

In the second part of the thesis we introduce Anthroposophy as a test case for our model and structural theory of esotericism. We attempt to discover a specifically social explanation for the styles and ideational patterns apparent in Anthroposophy and a selection of other nineteenth century European esoteric groups. These are shown to be symbolic correlates of a social inheritance and experience of marginality, differentiation and progressive atomisation. The esoterics clearly rejected their inheritance of alienation, and proposed solutions which would alter this state of affairs. The resultant cosmologies and orientations which they embraced and formulated expressed both their social state and the realisation that their lives did have an ultimate meaning. The analysis will show that these symbol systems were both appropriate and reasonable.

We show that meaning for the esoterics was believed to inhere within the individual as a symbol and was thought to be amenable to exploration and verification through redemptive processes adapted from the world of science. The esoterics' ready incorporation of scientific procedures into what were essentially non-scientific enterprizes implies that the boundary line between scientific and so-called pre-scientific modes of thought is more slender than most anthropologists would care to admit. In section B of chapter three we attempt to view the formulator of Anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner, from the perspective of established sociological categories of prophet and shaman. This enables us to break down his social and religious experiences and social tasks into a consistent and coherent pattern. It also permits us to look beyond the idiosyncrasies of Steiner's nature and philosophy and opens us to an awareness of trans-historical, recurrent, formal patterns of individual transcendence and charismatic leadership.

In the first section of chapter four we introduce the fundamental ideas, principles and organisational aspects of Anthroposophy and locate them within the six criteria which were established earlier as the basic defining features of the esoteric group or institution.

In the second section we explore the possibility of examining the Anthroposophical belief system as if it were a myth and amenable to structural analysis. We separate it into two aspects, the esoteric and the exoteric, and examine each in turn. The basic principle which we conceive to be operative within both schemes is represented as a principle of 'mediation'. This, it is shown, permeates the complete system, establishing connections and consistencies and determining its inner coherence. Although the type of mediating activity apparent in Anthroposophy is clearly geared towards the resolution of existential contradictions, it is an activity of a logical and intellectual nature or at least can be represented as such.

In the final chapter we abandon considerations of Anthroposophy as an ideal, objectified system of representations and re-examine it in an empirical context.

The subsequent ethnography and analysis of classification and behaviour in St. Michel, a Steiner-based village community, will show that Anthroposophy, although the 'given' of social life and the purpose of the community, had, in the minds of the villagers, undergone a series of transformations. This, we will argue, was due to an enforced conceptual dialogue with three other factors, namely, (a) historical developments within the Anthroposophical world itself, (b) the practical exigencies of the local situation, ordinances of space and a shortage of labour, and (c) the logic of the separatist situation and the existence of a heterogenous populace.

The thesis concludes with some tentative speculations, prompted by some of the theories advanced during the course of the exercise, on the intrinsic significance, nature and meaning, of the structures or abstract relations manifest in esotericism.

PART ONE

TOWARDS A THEORY OF ESOTERICISM

"What philosophy is requisite if we are to live up to the subject, be on a level with it? The question is not how the phenomenon must be turned, twisted, narrowed, crippled so as to be explicable, at all costs, upon principles that we have once and for all resolved not to go beyond. The question is: 'To what point must we enlarge our thought so that it shall be in proportion to the phenomenon?'..."

Schelling, Philosophie der Mythologie

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOCIAL FORMS OF ESOTERICISM

"All forms are similar, and none are the same,
So that their chorus points the way to a hidden law"

Goethe

A. DEFINITIONS

Our definition of esotericism, although arrived at through observation and thus represents, in part, something of a temporary conclusion, can most usefully be introduced at the outset of our enquiry. The term 'esoteric' derives from the Greek word ἐσωτερικός meaning 'inner' or 'within' and is an opposed form of 'exoteric', from the Greek ἐξωτερικός which means 'outward' or 'without'. Following from both this and its popular usage which, we feel, requires a more precise formulation, our definition of esotericism is as follows:

> The schematisation of and/or adherence to systems of belief usually of a hidden (or non-public) nature, which are considered reflections of transcendent truths - or ultimate workings of the cosmos and, as such, constitute classifications of man, nature and the cosmos. Furthermore, the art of participation in the acquisition of this knowledge and the practice of specific techniques that accompany it are also usually regarded as the means by which individual transcendence or liberation from the everyday 'profane' human state or situation is realised.[1]

There are three aspects to esotericism: (1) esoteric knowledge; (2) esoteric persons and groups; (3) esoteric actions and practices.

(1) ESOTERIC KNOWLEDGE

A list of examples of esoteric knowledge would include:

(a) The hidden oral and symbolic traditions and representations of tribal or 'archaic' societies, as possessed and maintained by those societies' sacral officiants and initiates.

(b) The hidden or non public knowledge and representations of

specialist functionaries in literate societies.

(c) The secret, or simply more obscure, epics, myths and philosophies of literate societies, such as the Book of Torah, the Book of Revelations, the Kabbalah, the Upanisads, the Pali Canon etc.

(d) The accumulated accounts of subjective "mystical" experiences as entertained and preserved by tribal and literate societies.

The content of none of these various sources or agencies of knowledge is necessarily secret or hidden, rather it is their "meaning" which is non explicit and hidden.

(2) ESOTERIC PERSONS AND GROUPS

Revelation of their meaning is in the hands of interpreters - monks, ascetics, mystics, and prophets or (more in the tribal context) ritual priests, mediums and shamans. Usually complete revelation is only for the "initiated". Initiates are usually thought of as a body of believers or practising "transcendents" who follow a particular system, interpretation or interpreter of penultimate knowledge. But the term can also usefully encompass those who formulate, interpret or reinterpret esoteric systems, e.g. Buddha, Jesus, Eliphas Levi, Meister Eckehart, St. Augustine, the tribal shaman etc.

(3) ESOTERIC ACTIONS AND PRACTICES

Esoteric actions and practices would include meditation, contemplation, chanting, dancing, prayer, or other ritual exercises which have as their prime aim some kind of transpersonal state whether this is described as "possession" (Lewis 1971), "possession trance" (Bourgignon 1973) "altered state of consciousness" (Tart 1975) "ecstasy" (Eliade 1968) or simply as contact with a higher divinity, hypothesized spirit "power", "powers" or entities. Esoteric practices also include initiatory ordeals, tests and the like.

NOTE: ESOTERICISM AND OCCULTISM

At this juncture some distinctions should be made between the terms "esoteric" and "occult" since in normal usage the two are interchanged frequently. Tiryakian, who differentiates between the two, offers the following happy definition of occultism which we have slightly adapted.

> [Occultism is the pursuit of, or involvement with those] "practices, techniques, or procedures which (a) draw upon hidden or concealed forces in nature or the cosmos that cannot be measured or recognised..(scientifically)..and (b) which have as their desired or intended consequences empirical results such as either obtaining knowledge of the empirical course of events or altering them from what they would have been without this intervention"(Tiryakian 1975:265).

Put simply, esotericism is primarily subject-directed whereas occultism is primarily object-directed. The close relationship often found to occur between the two has to do with the fact that occultists often derive their power from esoteric domains or esoteric bodies of knowledge. Sometimes the two aspects are embodied in the same person. Harner's definition of the tribal shaman, for example, views him as both metaphysician (man"who is in direct contact with the spirit world through a trance state") and magician (someone in this case who "bewitches) persons") (cf. Harner 1973:XI). In some other cases the exercise of magical powers by an esoteric is considered a wasteful and pointless practice likely to impede the quality of his transcendence. (cf Staal 1975:153-6). In other areas again the offices of metaphysician and magician, esoteric and occultist, are strictly differentiated. This is true of Hindu India in general, where the sacrificiary Brahman and the ascetic "renouncer" occupy qualitatively different conceptual and functional domains.

In general, geomancy, divination, witchcraft, astrology, miracle working, oracle consultation, the telling of prophecies and the practice of magic (Marcel Mauss' famous "science of the concrete" 1950:142-3) can all be subsumed within the category of 'occultism'. Because of their object-focus they cannot be seen as necessarily participating in, or incumbent upon, esotericism as defined above, even if they are derived (as often happens e.g. I-Ching from Confucianism) from an esoteric tradition. Even if occultists and esoterics draw upon the same hidden corpus of ultimate knowledge or sources of power the two functions are essentially different. Often they are opposed. Exorcism, for example, is an occult practice aimed at the destruction of a negative trance state.

By way of summary, occult practices are aimed at the transformation of persons and objects "within the world", whereas esoteric practices are oriented towards the transformation of persons into a transcendent state which is "beyond the world". It should be added that although our focus is predominantly upon the latter, in cases where esotericism and occultism occur together they will not be treated separately.

B. TYPOLOGICAL OUTLINE

The entire known range of esoteric social forms can, for heuristic purposes, be classified out in terms of the following categories and sub-categories:

I. Esoteric communities, (a) institutions and establishments.

II. Esoteric communities, (b) sects and loose-knit groups.

III. Individuated esoteric institutions.

IV. Transitional esotericism, mystics and mystical movements.

Our investigation proceeds by considering contrasting examples subsumed under each section.

(i) ESOTERIC COMMUNITIES (a) ESTABLISHMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

One of the most widespread forms of organised esotericism is the institution of the monastery. According to Wach, monasticism is known not only in the Christian west, but in Mohammedanism, Manicheism, Buddhism, Jainism and Taoism (Wach 1962: 182-3). For comparison of the types of monastic endeavours contained within each of these systems, the reader is referred elsewhere (cf. Weber 1966: Index and Wach ibid: 181-96). Our present purpose is to briefly outline the characteristics of one such monastic system, viz. the Buddhist, and evaluate its actualisation in two contrasting empirical settings, Thailand and Nepal.

THE SANGHA

The Sangha is one of the three Jewels of traditional Buddhism within which the believer finds "refuge". (The other two Jewels or Tritatna being the Buddha and the Doctrine or Dharma). Ideally it takes the form of an essentially unstructured community of monks practising an eleemosynary and eremetical lifestyle But in practice the monks often live in permanent quarters (skandhakas). Life in the Sangha is organised around consultation of the Dharma (the discourses of the Buddha as preserved orally), obedience to the Discipline (vinaya pitaka) and the practice of meditation (samadhi).

The two major schools of Buddhism, Mahayana and Hinayana (which includes Theravadin) express different spiritual orientations. The goal of the Mahayanists is "Supreme Buddhahood" achieved by

(a) sublimation of the passions.

(b) insight into the inner "non-selfhood".

(c) the realisation of Maya or "material illusion".

(d) transcendence into the Void (sunyata).

The Buddhahood or state of "being and not being" is achieved by "highly esoteric yogic exercises and special transmissions of spiritual power from an enlightened

Guru". (Sanghorakshita in Basham 1974:95).

The Mayayanists also offer a "Salvation for all" and consequently put less stress on monastic life, a factor disfavoured by the Hinayanists who require the Buddhist laity to observe only the more elementary precepts, by which means merit (punya) is accumulated and rebirth in heaven assured. In contrast, Hinayan salvation for the monk involves the attainment of a state of worldly emancipation (mokša). This is achieved through insight into the transitory (anitya) and painful (dukha) nature of conditioned things and the 'non-selfhood' (nairatmyata) of all the elements of existence. The monk follows paths such as the Aryan lighthold Path or the seven stages of purification. These are contained within the Penultimate Buddhist teaching - the Adhidharma - which is described by Ling as an esoteric abstraction from the more exoteric or "popular" Suttas (Ling 1968:132). The state of transcendence which is the aim of the monk is depicted by the Pali term nibbana which Ling regards as a "wider deeper perfect consciousness beyond the constraints and corruption of ordinary individual existence" (ibid:133). Ontologically, for the Hinayan, nibbana is an "eternal, unchanging, extra-mental spiritual entity" and psychologically it is a "state of supreme bliss and serenity". (Sanghorakshita in ibid:97).

Although kept separate, lay Buddhist life and Sangha life involve ideally a total orientation of the self towards a transcendental or salvatory condition. As such, Buddhism has "no direct concern with the collective life of man on the social and political level" (ibid:97) but the polarity between Sangha and lay community is of a socio-ecclesiastical rather than spiritual nature. The search for "wisdom" in the Sangha is primarily esoteric while the state of devotion or "faith", though equally valid, is of a more exoteric nature.

Many contemporary Buddhist monks live in the Vihara which acts as a temple and shrine as well as a monastic settlement. The Viharas resemble Hindu monasteries in that the monks are involved not only in "Inner practices" but also in outer practices such as the education of local children and the propagation of good

works. (Hindu Mathas are shrines, homes for monks, and also centres of education as well as for the esoteric practices of yoga and asceticism).

THE THAI MONASTERY

Tambiah's description of a contemporary Theravadin Buddhist monastery focuses on the relationship between the monastic establishment and its lay settlement - the village of Ban Phraan Muan. Although the two domains are physically and symbolically kept well apart, their complementarity, or interdependence, provides the internal dynamic and chief forms of village organisational and ritual life.

Separation is physically expressed in the positioning of the monastery (Wat) in a place apart from the village, and symbolically expressed through the monk's simple, uniform style of dress and the suspension of kin-based naming categories. The monks are in fact the very young and very old men of the village who enter the Wat either on a temporary or permanent basis. But despite renunciation of the lay and worldly life the monks are totally dependent upon the benefaction of the laity for their material support. The result is an interchange of prestigous spiritual merit (thambun) and the performance of "life" rituals such as marriage feasts and mortuary rites in return for material and economic prestations.

The presence of the monastery within the village area is of itself a source of "merit" which the monks generate by virtue of their innate "excellence" as renouncers. The monks indulge in no occult practices though their presence inside (or outside) the village at specific times of the year has a "magical value" (Tambiah 1970:155). Symbolically, the Wat is the centre of village life; and the making of merit, through a series of ritualised inter-relationships, is the chief activity of the villagers.

Within the Wat the monks are taught the liturgical body of knowledge and

esoteric teachings of the Buddha - the Dhamma. The monk practices specific "techniques of meditation and contemplation by which he seeks withdrawal from the world, acquires a hatred for his body, and places himself on the path of salvation" (ibid:116). Four kinds of mindfulness are advocated, viz. concentrations on the body, sensations, thoughts and mind objects. The purpose of all this is to attain "nirvana", a transcendent state of "being and not being" described by Tambiah as a form of earthly release or "liberation".

The charter for the monastic life is the liturgical Patimokka which contains 227 precepts, five of which are applicable to the ordinary layman, ten to the novice (samanera) and, ideally, all to the fully fledged monk (Bikku). The samanera occupies a position inferior to that of the Bikku and this lasts until he becomes initiated into the inner order or "Sangha". Initiation ceremonies (upasampada) involve both monks and villagers, The Wat like other Buddhist monasteries is ideally non-hierarchical in structure so relationships within the monastery are not codified or formalised, yet the existence of assymetrical dyadic relationships is both explicit and acceptable. The abbot Chao-Wat is both political and spiritual head of the Wat, and other distinctions are made between pupil and teacher, ordainer (upacha) and ordained, novice and monk, junior monk and senior monk (cf. p.75).

Although Tambiah stresses the exoteric function of the Wat, the monks themselves are essentially engaged in esoteric activities. Their salvatory orientation alone actualises them as a source of power and moral merit. Monks, villagers and locale all benefit from the "word power" latent in the expression (during calendrical and fertility rituals) of "hidden" forms of knowledge. This knowledge is esoteric because sacred and because the Pali texts are not comprehendable by the laity. Total comprehension of Pali is an option only for the "most spiritual" of the monks, i.e. usually those who have by virtue of their success ascended into the Sangha hierarchy which is located at the supra-village regional level.

Tambiah's exegesis views the Wat as a local level transformation of ideal Theravadin-Buddhist orthodoxy and as such stresses its evolution away from the latter tradition. However, the esoteric heart of practical village Buddhism is not lost. Although tending mostly to function as a rite of passage, a framework of "liminality" for the villagers, and although it provides a source of exoteric priestly functionaries yet the Wat retains its apexical esoteric position. It constitutes the supreme "Inside" of Ban Phraan Muan and as such is a constant source of inspiration and regeneration.

THE NEWAR BARE

Among the Newar Buddhists of the Kathmandu valley in Nepal the Buddhist monastery, or Vihara, has been re-institutionalised over the centuries as the habitation for a hereditary caste of "priests" - the Bare.

As it stands, the Vihara is the central focus of religious activities among the Newars. The Bare, who protect as well as inhabit the Vihara, are accorded a special sanctity. They are revered as "Renouncers" and they alone can rightfully have their heads completely shaven. This - a symbol of celibacy and renunciation - despite the fact that the Bare "live in the World", marry and have children.

The goals of the Bare are like those of any other Buddhist monk, i.e. the attainment of deliverance and the acquisition of magical powers. These are achieved not through world-rejection and separation, though there are aspects of these in Bare ritual, but through a qualitative stress on inter-dependence. The "condition of dependency" alone secures salvation. This is because, as ethnographer Greenwold tells us:

> "Human life is ..... viewed as involving inescapable relationships of dependence and of reciprocal obligations ..... To fail to fulfill such obligations is to cease to be a man. But to cease to be a man does not lead to the attainment of the absolute." (Greenwold: 1974:133)

The trance-inducing practices enjoined by the Bare for the attainment of Buddhist ends are in fact largely Tantric. Thus they celebrate "earthly pleasures" and sacrificially participate in ritual copulation and the ingestion of meat, fish and alcohol. The ritual procedures for the use of ecstasy, aggression and sensuality are elaborate, complicated and strict. Deviation from established procedures or misuse of them is dangerous and can lean to madness and death. The charismatic magical power released in the tantric rites adheres not just to individual practitioners but to the whole caste.

In their role as ritual priests the Bare organise, and participate in, an elaborate series of local festivals and communal feasts. Care of the sacred shrines and images contained in the Vihara is entrusted to the most senior, most sacred, members of the Bare Sangha.

In accordance with the laws of Karma, those Newars who led righteous lives in a previous incarnation are born into the Bare caste. But full Bare status and sacrality only comes about through a ceremony of "initiation". This takes the form of a rite of purification (Bare Chhuyiev) during which the ordinant is symbolically transmuted from the physical or "natural world" into the realms of spirit. The initiate is shaved and purified with water. He dons saffron robes, receives a new name and is admonished to respect the ten Buddhist precepts and "take refuge" in the "Three Jewels": the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. For a short period after initiation the new Bare observes a series of dietary and behavioural restrictions. Then he is incorporated into the world of caste and "impelled to marry" (ibid.138). Since the Newars practice patrilineal descent and since the Vihara the new Bare is initiated into is that of his fathers, he remains permanently attached to that Vihara.

Hierarchy among the Bare, who are themselves the apex of a wider Newar

hierarchy, is based upon ascending and descending levels of seniority which, Greenwold informs us, "are judged not by ones age but according to the length of time one has been a member of the Sangha" (ibid:133). The Sangha's inner group is the Bare Guthi which is composed of an executive committee of members whose responsibility it is to provide guardians (Dyo Paca) for the monastery's shrines.

Greenwold points out that the Bare are both "monks" and "householders". Ordination is a rite of passage into "monkhood" and "householdership". The Vihara is both temple and household. In usual contexts, either Buddhist or Hindu, such a conflagration of sacred and secular features would not normally be found. But in the Newar case it can be explained by the fact that "Nepal ..... is a land where Buddhism and Hinduism live side by side in perfect harmony" (ibid:143).

Of special interest to us is the peculiar juxtaposition of esoteric and exoteric features in this sophisticated example of syncretism. In Hindic terms the Bare, because of their adoption of secret and powerful tantric rituals and their emulation of the Sannyasi (in head shaving practices) are manifestly esoteric. However they behave like exoteric Brahmins, i.e. they live in the world and act as ritual functionaries. From a Buddhist point of view. since they marry and don't reject the world, they are manifestly exoteric. However, their goal of worldly release is also that of the esoteric Bhikkhus.

At first sight the Bare represent an arbitrary compromise of all these various features and realms. But a closer study reveals that superimposed upon all this is a uniquely Newar mode of esoteric transcendentalism. For, as Greenwold points out, according to Newar Buddhism,

> "he who pursues the most sublime goal is the one who undergoes a special series of ceremonies of consecrations and purification, who follows a special series of ritual observances, and who thereby gains knowledge of a mystic and magical nature....." (ibid: 133-4).

(ii) ESOTERIC COMMUNITIES (b) LOOSE-KNIT GROUPS AND SECTS

Groups that fall within the confines of this category are distinguishable from those considered previously by virtue of their position of peripherality within their respective religions and idological milieus.

THE TIPASA BIKKUS

The Tipasa Bikku, as described by Yalman (1962), are a community of ascetic Theravadin monks who inhabit a series of wild, isolated caves located in the eastern provinces of Ceylon. Bikku life is devoted solely to the attainment of nirvana. The means employed to achieve this are: (a) the practice of non-attachment, (b) withdrawal from all worldly desires, (c) the practice of meditation and (d) obedience to more than the five basic precepts usually required of the Buddhist laity (Lay precepts: not taking life, not stealing or lying, not drinking or committing adultery).

Yalmun stresses the opposition of the ascetics to the established priestly orders of Ceylon. The Bikkus totally reject the worldliness of the Ceylonese Sangha. They wear soiled brown robes to distinguish themselves from the priests who wear clean saffron robes. They also refuse to use commercial transport or live in houses and reject the priestly practice of requesting food from the laity, preferring instead to receive voluntary offerings for their sustenance. In an attempt to recapture the immediacy of early Buddhist Monasticism/mysticism, the Bikkus "deny the validy of the formal organisation of Orthodox Buddhism", and thus abolish the priestly custom of conducting relations in Pali or Sanskrit. Local Sinhalese is adopted in their place (ibid:296).

The Bikku's caves are filled with bones and other objects considered suitable for meditation on death. This is in accordance with High Buddhist

precepts which aim at the dissolution of the self's attachment to the worldly body. Periodically, vows of total silence are observed, but mostly the Bikkus spend their time alone anyway, sitting in their caves, meditating and reading the hallowed esoteric Pali texts. Offerings of food are brought to the ascetic dwellings by lay villagers, among whom the Bikkus are well "respected" and have great charisma. Social relations between the Bikkus are "rigidly and hierarchically ranked" on the basis of successively more esoteric ordinations, ranging from novice at the lowest level to thiro and then hamdumovo at the highest level.

The novice's lay connections are severed during the Tipasa initiation ceremony. Death and rebirth are symbolically realised in rituals involving shaving of the head, bathing in mud and then water, followed in turn by a robing ceremony which takes place to the accompaniment of scripture singing. Finally, the novice undergoes a period of scripture training and resocialisation, thus completing his exit from the "world of men" and his entrance into "the realm of sacred beings" (ibid:300).

From our brief overview of the Tipasa sectarian community the following outstanding features and themes can be outlined:

(a) Opposition to, and separation from, orthodox Buddhism.

(b) A revival of esoteric and archaic Buddhist precepts and practices.

(c) A position of societal peripherality.

(d) A total orientation towards transcendence.

(e) Symbolic themes of initiation.

(f) A hierarchically ordered social organisation.

JAVANESE GROUPS

Clifford Geertz's study of mysticism in the Indonesian town of Modjokuto reveals an underlying similarity of belief, orientation and practice among a variety of inter-related but distinct Javanese sects.

He sets out a general theory of Javanese mysticism in the form of a series of postulates, according to which the aim of all sect members is to:

(a) Minimise the passions in order that a set of underlying inner feelings might be perceived.

(b) To attain knowledge of that underlying source of feeling (rasa) which is both the true self (aku) and a manifestation of God (Allah).

(c) To acquire a state of spiritual power for specific socio-empirical purposes.

(d) To purify the will and rise above mundane concerns.

(e) To realise the generic divine bond which underlies all individuals.

The attainment of transcendence, described as a state of "going above, beyond and within" is facilitated by a set of basic practices. These are:

(a) The instinctual disciplines of fasting, breath regulation, staying awake and sexual abstinence.

(b) A withdrawal of attention from the everyday world in meditation (semedi) and (tapa).

(c) The study of "rasa" which is a type of metaphysical psychology.

The term for the total mental and physical mystic quest is "ngesti", the practice of which requires a focusing of all the faculties towards one unified single end. Mystics are expected to ngesti daily by themselves and in sect meetings (latihan).

According to Rasa, fourfold correspondences are believed to exist between various levels of reality. e.g. The four basic human drives (aggression, greed, passion for peace or evil, and desire for sustenance), the emotions, the astrological system (sun, moon, earth and stars), four kinds of spirit and four political groups etc. A comprehensive knowledge of this system of

correspondences and theosophy is required of each sect initiate, and is regarded as an essential complement to the mystical endeavour itself.

A variety of connected notions are brought together to describe the nature and purpose of the mystical experience. It is thought of as a means of bringing peace to the emotions (bedja) which goes beyond immediate happiness, an inner quietness (neng and batin), a clearness of insight (ning) and an enlightenment, or oneness with God. The attainment of "power" for worldly purposes is double edged. "Power" can have both an evil aspect - it can be used to harm someone or to manipulate reality to one's material benefit, and it can have a good aspect - it can make for the betterment of both self and society.

Established among the sects is an "almost natural" ranking of individuals according to their presumed, or proven, capacity for mystical achievements. The basic structural unit of the mystical hierarchy apparent in most sects is the dyadic Guru-Murid connection. The mystic can be both pupil of a guru placed above him and guru for a pupil placed below him. Ascension into higher groups is expected of all initiates.

Some groups practice formal initiation or ceremonies, which can involve midnight gatherings during which trance states are induced in order to "cement marriage with the spirit brothers". The initiate is often required to provide a feast for the sect members, and gifts for the Guru.

Despite their differences and exclusivist practices, the various groups are generally tolerent of each other, thus contributing to what Geertz refers to as an amiable state of "religious relativism". Each sect tends to appeal to a particular type or class of people. The mysticism of Budi Setia, for example, is more intellectualist, theosophic and cerebral, whereas Sumarah stresses meditational practices and social work as the prime means for furthering both individual inner peace (batin) and outer world peace (lair).

Another sect Kamul Kasurjatan emphasises the priority of mental concentration in the achievement of supreme gnosis. The most informally organised group of all is the Ilma Sedjati whose doctrines and practices are also significantly the most secret and esoteric of all.

As regards their position in the wider society, the sects serve as a focus and ideological centre for the ethno-religious Pryajis group which in pre-colonial times had formed the chief beaurocratic stratum of Javanese society. (The other groups - the Islamic Santris and the animistic Abangan - have their own forms of worship and traditional mysticism).

Despite their function as the essential religious outlet for the Pryajis, the sects tend to exhibit a generally "anti-institutional and individualistic" bias. But Geertz adds that, at the time of study, there seemed to be a movement away from introversion and separation in favour of increasing institutionalisation This he conceives of as a response to closer identification with a political Pryaji network which was in the process of asserting itself in the face of Santri and Abangan opposition. (cf Geertz 1960 CH:20).

(iii) INDIVIDUATED ESOTERIC INSTITUTIONS

THE SAMNYASIN

The position of the mystic and his implications for Indian society has been studied in an illuminating way by Louis Dumont (1970 & 1972). Dumont holds that the "nature of liberation and the ways and techniques for achieving it occupy a major place in speculative thought" (1970:43)

The mode of life of the Hindu mystic forms the institution of the Samnyasa or Renouncer. The act of renunciation is itself the culminatory aspect of the four Asramas - the Hindu progression of life through four stages. At the level of social relations, the Samnyasin is placed outside the world of caste hierarchy, purity and transmigration. But he does not reject it, he simply transcends it, and is accordingly revered by the laity as a holy man. At another level the institution of the Samnyasa is one side of a structural and historical dialogue taking place between "man outside the world" (Renouncer) and "man inside the world" (Brahmin). The Samnyasins unique position outside of, and beyond, the caste world has enabled him to be a constant source of revision in Indian religion. Those vast esoteric movements Buddhism, Jainism and Bhaktism which have all, at times, been incorporated into Hindu life (thus making it possible for non-Brahmins to aspire towards liberation) are all traceable to the work of Renouncers.

Perhaps the most esoteric textual construction of early Samnyasins is the ancient Upanisads, the central idea of which is that "underlying the exterior world of change there is an unchangeable reality which is identical with that which underlies the essence of man" (Dasgupta 1922:42). The goal of the esoteric is then to realise the inner identity between the spirit self (atman) and the world spirit (brahman). Release from Karma and transmigration can only result from a transformation of consciousness achieved through study of the ancient

texts, asceticism, and the practices of yoga, breath control and, most importantly, meditation. The Upanisads also favour initiation into a disciplined life and secret instruction from a Guru.

The Samnyasin is alone, an individual no longer concerned with the collective world but totally involved in inner contemplation with a view to his own transcendence. His separation is marked by an initiation (parinwajya) into the domain of "pure spirit" after which he enters into a dyadic relationship with his spiritual teacher (Guru). For his material and economic sustenance he is hereafter entirely dependent upon the lay community who acquire "spiritual merit" in return for their prestations.

Dumont indicates that despite their logical and historical complementarity, the renouncer and the priest (Brahmin) exist together in a relationship of permanent opposition. The Brahmin is the apex of the caste hierarchy. As its most pure personage he mediates between the world of caste and the world of the Gods. He is a scholar and a literary figurehead, though rarely an innovator (cf. Dumont 1970:46). He is also a magician. He alone has access to the sacred magical power contained within the sacrificial chant. Through his sacrifices prosperity and good fortune are brought into the world. He deals in exoteric religious knowledge (e.g. the Brahmanas), public representations and occult practices.

Explicit to all these aspects and activities is a marked contrast between Brahmanic and Samnyasin worlds. Unlike the Samnyasin, the Brahmin is not motivated by transcendence and the desire for liberation. His orientation is towards the maintenence or transformation, by ritual means, of the world itself. Even the Gods with whom the Brahmin deals occupy a cosmic plane (heaven) which is more mundane than the highly esoteric planes to which the Samnyasin orients himself. Thus the Samnyasin, positioned outside the society and located "beyond the world" can alone be the arbiter of divine wisdom and knowledge.

We referred earlier to the esoteric sects which had been formulated by

renouncers and had come to co-exist with Brahmanism. This co-existence had been brought about by a series of linkages between sect/esoteric and society/exoteric worlds via the medium of the Guru/Brahmin relationship (1970:58). But also by means of a popular religion of love, or bhakti, which offered a type of renunciation and transcendence within the world through paths of knowledge (jnana), action (karman) and devotion (bhakti). In Bhakti, separation takes place symbolically within the devotee; he renounces everything for the sake of love (cf. Feuerstein: 1975:21) yet his position within the world is maintained; a characteristic unique among Hindu religions which renders Bhakti - an ongoing fusion between man and divinity - simultaneously esoteric and exoteric.

India's renouncers were also responsible for the construction and dissemination of that enormous body of esoteric precepts and spiritual techniques commonly known as yoga. Referred to by one author as a "specific dimension of the Indian mind", yoga, in its various transmutations is practised by mystics throughout Asia and in various parts of the modern world. There is, however, little room to satisfactorily consider it here since our purpose has been to reflect on the Samnyasi rather than his constructs, so the reader is referred to more authoritative sources (e.g. Eliade 1958 and Feuerstein 1975).

THE SHAMAN

In archaic and tribal societies the various religious offices of priest, magician and mystic are often combined within one undifferentiated institution, that of the Shaman. Marcel Mauss (1972:34) compares the Shaman to a Hindu Yogin of the type considered earlier. He sees both as functionaries who have the power to "send forth the soul at will". Mircea Eliade defines Shamanism itself as a "technique of ecstasy" (1964:4) and elsewhere describes the Shaman as a "specialist in the sacred, that is, an individual who participates in the

sacred more completely or more truly than other men" (1965:95).

Eliade attests to the superior position of the shaman within his society. Among the Yakut, for example, the shaman is both priest and prophet, ritual master and ritual creator, holder and arbiter of the tribe's esoteric knowledge. The Yakut shaman is the principal custodian of a rich oral literature (his sacred vocabulary comprises some 12,000 words while his fellow tribesman's ordinary speech consists of only 4,000). Among the Kasakl-Kirghizes the shaman (baqua) is guardian of the whole religious tradition and "custodian of legends several centuries old" (1968:77).

Attainment to the appreciably widespread institution of the shaman proceeds usually by either or all of (a) mystical vocation (b) hereditary transmission or (c) group decision. But recognition as a successful initiate is determined by an apparent ability to participate in states of ecstasy or trance, or to experience visions etc; and also only if the candidate exhibits knowledge of the traditional sacra-social order -clan mythology, secret language and esoteric techniques. These stipulations of "esoteric access" procure the basis of the shaman's powerful charismatic position. He has a vast responsibility. Among the Tungus Eskimo, for example, whose social order is rigidly founded upon a divine order, the shaman is the agent and mediator of essential divine "power" which enters him during his ascendant flights of ecstasy and emanates outwards into his society.

Symbolic themes of separation, initiation and reincorporation recur frequently in descriptions of shamanic activity. In Siberia the shamanic adept withdraws into himself and roams freely in wild desolate places for an incubatory period. Sometimes he undergoes a public initiation during which he enters a trance state, experiences a ritual death and goes on a "ritual journey". The latter usually amounts to a traversal through spirit underworlds and overworlds, sometimes accompanied by further ritual deaths

and dismemberment at the hands of spirits, followed by reshaping as a composite, 'reborn', consecrated whole (cf.Eliade 1965:90). During his shamanic explorations the adept familiarises himself with escteric and lacunic tribal traditions and investigates the profuse possibilities of the disassociated, transcendent state (ibid:1965:91).

Relations between the various shamans of a tribe are invariably structured in a hierarchical fasion. Teachings are imparted to the adepts by the 'master' or 'father' shamans who also guide the initiation ceremonies and introduce their juniors to the complete range of esoteric, trance-inducing techniques (ibid:87-90).

Use of the term "shaman" as a catch-all for a variety of ritual officiants has led to great ethnographic debate concerning its exact meaning. A recent re-definition by Harner views the shaman as someone in "direct contact with the spirit world through a trance state and has one or more spirits at his command to carry out his bidding for good and evil" (1973:XI). This definition however, is disadvantaged by its particularity, it carries within it dual elements of esotericism - elevation into a spirit world, and occultism - the application of derivative powers. Eliade also maintains that the occult aspect is often extant in shamanism (e.g. the shaman defends life, health and fertility against death, disease and darkness) but adds that it is not necessarily a defining feature of shamanism itself.

> "The specific element of shamanism is not the incorporation of spirits by the shaman, but the ecstasy provoked by the ascension to the sky or descent to hell: the incorporation of spirits and phenomena by them are universally distributed phenomena but do not necessarily belong to shamanism in the strict sense." (1951:434 . trans. Lewis, 1971:49).

The shaman is thus an ecstatic who succeeds in "having mystical experiences" (cf. also Allan:1974).

A viewpoint opposed to this is held by Lewis (1971:51-65) who imputes a socio-empirical motivation to most forms of shamanic activity. Lewis minimises the aspects of "ascendence" extent in shamanic ecstasies, viewing them instead as acts of socio-political subterfuge merely phrased in terms of traditional 'mystico-irrationalism'. The mystical experience, he claims, arises as a response to deprivation and serves as a strategy of political attack. Lewis also conflates ecstasy, possession and trance as being phenomena of a like nature.

In contrast to this Luc De-Heusch separates possession and ecstasy, and accordingly describes shamanism as an "ascent of man to the Gods"; and possession as "the descent of the Gods on man". The two categories are deemed antithetical and the shaman becomes viewed as a transcendent, an "ascendent metaphysician" (cited in Lewis:50).

These considerations evidence the difficulty of formulating successful definitions based purely upon experientral criteria such as possession and ecstasy. However in this case support for the primacy of the stated folk metaphysic involved is deemed a necessity. The anthropologist must be wary of imputing a-postiori motivations to religious experiences. In any case, how ecstasy is used in a particular empirical context does not invalidate the ecstatic experience nor does it comment on the true problem, i.e. what is ecstasy and who is the shaman?

The usefulness and illuminary nature of the folk metaphysic becomes clear in one of the better known shamanic ethnographies - Casteneda's Don Juan quartet. In this the Yaqui shaman depicted, although arguably 'deprived' (i.e. in a material/economic sense), shows no concern at all for manipulation, divination or "mystical attack". Not a passive receptacle for uncontrollable "power" nor a political manipulator, he simply seeks out power for its own sake. His chief concern, it would appear, is his duty as established sorcerer to transfer his transcendental powers and ecstatic knowledge to other potential sorcerers (cf. Casteneda 1968, 1971, 1972).

(iv) TRANSITIONAL ESOTERICISM: MYSTICS AND MYSTICAL MOVEMENTS

This section cuts across hitherto well substantiated religious typologies by extracting ethnographic examples from prior classificatory frameworks such as millenarianism, cultism and mysticism. It should be noted that although our re-classification of examples here appears to be descriptively appropriate, in some instances a measure of interpretation has been introduced to justify their inclusion.

(a) PROPHETS AND MYSTICS

The Prophet.

The emergence of prophets in societies undergoing rapid social change is a topic well covered in anthropology (cf. Evans Pritchard 1956:287-310 and Emmet 1956:13-23). Most accounts, however, tend to concentrate on the purely political, revolutionary or reformist overtones of prophetic phenomena to the near-exclusion of the religious aspects. But according to Weber's definition (1966:46) the prophet can be differentiated from the usual political leader or statesman by virtue of his possession of a quality termed "Charisma". Charisma is a type of individuated "mana" - the melanasian concept first used in analysis by Hubert and Mauss to refer generally to an ultimate force, power or knowledge of the hidden workings of things. (Mauss 1972:108-21. cf also Tiryakian 1975:7).

It is the prophet's charisma which determines his ability to inspire, express the needs of, and sometimes even lead groups of people against the established order. Further, the maintenance of his newly acquired authority is intrinsically dependent upon the extent of his access to this extraordinary spiritual force, this state of "divine grace". In contrast to the priest whose sacredness is inherited or appointed the prophet derives none of his power from institutionalised means. Rather, his power is rooted in divine

and ultimate knowledge (gnosis) a factor based upon a "knowing" or an "experiencing"which has not been ordinarily available to the rest of the society. In this sense, then, the ideal prophet can be considered an esoteric, a practitioner in, or purveyor of, esoteric knowledge.

Isenberg, in his study of millenarianism in Graeco-Roman Palestine (1974) follows Burridge (1969) in viewing the millenary prophet as a transcendent who transforms and rechannels "tradition in such ways that new rules and new assumptions about power can be seen to derive directly from the ultimate power sought by the community". (p.36). His ability to transmit "a new order of things" is legitimated by reference to revelations received from a source of power which transcends the power and authority of the 'establishment'. The reason why his words can convince, why his proposed solutions seem tenable, becomes clear when we realise that, "His revelation comes through the ways traditional to the community as a whole, and through his revelation he gains access to the true state of things". (p.36)

Isenberg notes that his two Palestinian prophets, the "Righteous Teacher of Qumran", and "Jesus", both constructed millenial visions of a "time to come when the truly righteous will have full access to the divine power". Also they both suggested new sets of rules, new behavioural prescriptions (as in the Qumran Scrolls and the Gospels) which they claimed would contribute towards a realisation of the Divine. Furthermore, both expressed hostility towards the priesthood (Pharisees) and its sacrificial exclusivism. This opposition was in both cases proclaimed in the form of revivalist "newly revealed understandings" and "pneumatic exegesis" of the traditional source of Mosaic revelations (i.e. the Book of Torah). This reinterpretation undermined the ritual exclusiveness of the priesthood and transferred sacrificial and revelatory power, temporarily, into public, non-establishment hands.

In this, as in many other millenarian movements, promises of salvation, redemption and paradise occur at the very heart of the revelatory exegesis. Any socio-political motivation contained within the prophetic message was considerably enhanced by statements of the prophets to the effect that they alone had the key or power to establish the means whereby others could gain "redemption", knowledge of power and Salvation. Consider for example, Jesus's statement:

> "I am the way, the truth and the life, no-one comes to the father but by me." (John: 14.6. New Testament).

A variety of things can happen to the millenarian prophet and his followers. Frequently, the whole group becomes institutionalised, the revelations are rendered exoteric and the prophet is deified. The millenial vision itself becomes codified and loses much of its ecstatic "potency". The field is re-opened for fresh millenarian outbursts. (cf. Douglas 1973:166).

But millenary esotericism can 'turn public' and still retain its transcendental orientation and ecstatic character. This was certainly the case for two Indian sects, Shaktism and Tantrism, both of which Dumont describes as successful "esoteric religions for people in the world" (1972: 53-55). Movements with a popular appeal are not necessarily exoteric. Basham has argued this for Buddhism. Against those who note with regret the popularisation of Asian Buddhism, its transformation from a pure salvatory discipline to a world religion and the deification of Buddha, its prophet, Basham has maintained that Buddhist "super-doctrines", were established not just for gnostics frustrated with the Upanisads but for the ordinary people as well. (Basham 1974:263).

The Mystic.

The traditional western mystic presents a picture which contrasts

remarkably with that of the prophet. Since, ideally, most mystics led isolated, eremitical lives and formed no cults, our knowledge of them derives from a dissemination of their written works through the ages.

Max Weber defines the activity of the mystic as a contemplative quest "to achieve rest in God and in him alone" (1966:169). Emphasis is on the subjective condition, a mystical union with the Divine arrived at through worldly inactivity, the cessation of thought and an experiental "flight" from the world. The written work of the mystic represents, for Weber, a "practical form of knowledge", the "perception of an overall meaning in the world", or gnosis . (1966:170). The mystic or ecstatic also sets himself apart from the world (sometimes for his own safety, cf.C.Wilson 1974 on Paracelsus) yet usually depends upon it for his material existence.

This aspect of interdependence distinguishes the mystic from the ascetic. For, according to Weber, the latter seeks salvation "in the world" (e.g. the Calvinist work ascetic) and is thus spiritually dependent upon it whereas the former maximises on a salvation which is "out of the world". The ascetic is then an exoteric. Paradoxically, however, the ascetic usually finds fault with the world as it stands while the mystic usually tolerates it. The mystic lives and works within it but strives to transcend it.

A list of notable examples of western mystics would include alchemists such as Boehme and Paracelsus; Christian saints such as Augustine, Francis and Theresa; and contemplatives such as Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler and Eliphas Levi.

In some cases the mystic emerges from contemplation and allows his "inner euphoria" to be transformed into a "feeling of sacred possession". He becomes a revelatory mouthpiece offering salvation for men and a place for God in their souls. He becomes what Weber terms a "mystagogue". His

following can be described as a 'cult group'. In our typology the mystagogue stands somewhere between the quietist mystic and the activist prophet.

(b) CULTS

Ernest Troeltsch defined the cult as that aspect of religious organisation which unlike church or sect groups tended to concentrate solely upon the relationship between the individual and the Divinity. Mystical cults, he noted, showed little interest in ecclesiastical affairs and rarely made doctrinal pronouncements (1931:343-49).

Colin Campbell in a review of European cults (1972:119+) has recently revitalised Troeltsch's schema and lists the major features and themes of the ideal-typical cult group as follows: Firstly, the cult is separatist, it believes only in a "spiritual fellowship mediated by the divine". Secondly, it is tolerant and syncretic. Thirdly, it postulates "an underlying unity of all consciousness and life and that no matter how diverse or how many versions of truth there are, all can lead to the same all-encompassing truth." (ibid:125). Lastly, the principle aim of the mystical cult is the "spiritualisation of personal life".

Usually the cult or "society of seekers" develops a hierarchically structured social organisation. Position in the hierarchy is meted out in accordance with the cultists degree of initiation, an assignation determined by the extent of his esoteric knowledge.

Campbell includes within his cult typology western magical groups, witch groups, astrological groups and scientistic (e.g. the Aetherius society, Christian Scientists and Scientologists) groups. Clearly such groups are peripheral to the central religious or materialist nexus of western society; they are sub-systems in their own right.

Western cults are sometimes thought of as "deviant" forms of religion. This concept of "deviation" and the class of "cult" itself have also been applied to the traditional religious milieu. One particularly interesting example of this occurs in Bryan Wilson's analysis of the Peyote Cults of the North American Kiowa and Comanche Indians.

The Peyote Cults

Wilson's description elicits clearly the transcendental orientation of the Peyote groups: Through Peyote the Indians sought a mystical experience which they termed "a union with the spirit of peyote". This experience led to the acquisition of"wisdom" - a comprehension of tribal esoteric knowledge and the introduction to all known forms of "spiritual inspiration".

> " [Peyote became] the symbol for the Indian approach to the divine and the provider of visions so important in traditional Indian religion" (ibid:421).

The central activity of the Peyote cult was the sponsored 'rite' which was performed either at specific times of the year or when some kind of illness or tragedy had befallen a cultist. Everybody except the tribal old men and warriors were excluded from the 'rite'. Transcendence was induced by repeated ingestions of peyote, smoking, singing, prayer and other ritual actions (cf. Wilson Ch.13:1975:420 esp.). The peyotists attempted to make contact with "lost warriors" during the rite and gained access to hidden sources of tribal knowledge.

Wilson adds that the "holy in-group following the peyote road was essentially a group enjoying a mystic bond. Outsiders could not penetrate its mysteries or understand its meaning." Exclusiveness was maintained and fostered by a belief that peyote could be "tricky" or dangerous. The peyote initiate had to "lead a straight life or peyote would shame him" (P.422). To be successful a man had to be prepared to suffer. Misuse of

the sacred drug could have harmful consequences.

Wilson is vague in his account of the internal organisation and initiation procedures of the Okarowo and Comanche cults, There are implicit suggestions of a ritual hierarchy though; for during the "rite" a sacred staff was handed down from person to person following a "strict order...with elaborate and precise procedures" (P.420).

The spread of Peyotism in the nineteenth century is seen by Wilson as an extension of the Ghost Dance phenomenon which took place earlier. Both were adaptations and reactions to white colonialisation. Both were syncretic and cut across old ethnic, kinship, tribal and regional boundaries.

It is difficult to decide what the actual positions of the cults within traditional frameworks were. Wilson depicts the cults as innovations which tended to compete with and destroy older ceremonial traditions. Yet he also stresses their role as conserving agencies for traditional "distinct Indian values". He classifies them as deviant or peripheral forms of religious expression but notes their paradigmatic, central importance in the indigenous defence against the white man.

Quite possibly the Peyote cults were simultaneously esoteric and exoteric. They exhibited aspects of quietism and activism, a 'this-worldly' orientation and an 'other-worldly' orientation. They were thus both 'peripheral' and 'central'. In this respect they resemble the Moroccan Zawiya brotherhoods as described by Geertz (1971:49). The latter are simultaneously exoteric and esoteric. They partake of established institutional links and offices. The sheikh is considered their mode of access to the Muslim prophet. But they are also separatist, secretive and ascetic, and attempt to induce states of trance. Moreover, like the Peyote cults the Zawiya arose as innovations on the margins of their society but were quickly transformed into acceptable Muslim institutions.

(c) MAGICAL/OCCULT GROUPS

The movements considered within this category are those collectivities which loosely term themselves 'magical' or 'occult' but are in fact only minimally connected with magical activities as such. Their focus is in fact not object directed but subject directed. Their orientation is towards the transformation of human consciousness. However, the means with which this is achieved often have a magical colouring, e.g. invocation and mediumship. Groups justifiably listed here would include European systems such as Anthroposophy, Theosophy, the Rosicrucians, the Golden Dawn, Gurdijieff's "work" group and oriental or American systems such as Bapak's 'Subud' and Ichazo's 'arica' group. (For details cf. Tiryakian 1975, Blair 1975, Tart 1975 and C.Wilson 1974: Indeces).

Most of the western occult systems are/were characteristically complex, literate, exclusivist, totalising, syncretic and mystical. Together they have been termed the "western esoteric tradition" (cf. Tiryakian 1975:10-18). Their similarity of orientation and syncretic manner is evidenced by the following statement made by Theosophy's H.P. Blavatsky:

> "Esoteric philosophy reconciles all religions, strips each one of its outward human garments and shows the root of each to be identical with that of every other great religion." (1966:XVII).

Blavatsky accompanies this "archetypalism" with a vast adumbration and synthesis of eastern and western philosophies, which Eliade has termed an "occultistic revelation", designed to bring about "wisdom"and "power" and a realisation of the "ever pure Spiritual Soul" of mankind. (cf. Tiryakian 1975 pp.71-73).

The Theosophical Society was an offshoot of the Spiritualist movement of the late nineteenth century. H.P. Blavatsky, its founder, was herself

a well travelled Russian exile, an outsider and adventuress who received revelations from spirit entities described as "Mahatmas" whom she had contacted in Tibet. Together with Annie Besant and others she published a vast repository of "revealed knowledge" and also constructed modes for actualising inner "Cosmic forces" and contacting spirit entities.

Disaffection with traditional Christianity and the influence of Darwin's theory of evolution led to explorations into oriental esotericism and the construction of "science-like" theories of indefinite "spiritual evolution through metempsychosis and progressive initiation". (Eliade 1969:43). Initiation for the Theosophists thus referred not only to the extensive knowledge required for success within the group's hierarchy but also the series of spiritual states which the adept was expected to accomplish on his road through many incarnations towards an attainment of total "perfection".

Theosophical activities varied with the evolution of the sect itself. During its Spiritualist beginnings, mediumship was the accepted theosophic means of conjuring transformations. Later, Theosophists forayed into scholastic studies and oriental forms of worship. They inaugurated the study of "comparative religion" and introduced yogic techniques of meditation and contemplation to the western world.

Theosophy had both an esoteric and an exoteric aspect. It exhibited a series of "Outer Groups" - for those not involved in the organisation and inner secrets of the society; and a series of "Inner Groups" which, according to Farquar, exercised severe constraints upon their members. (Farquar 1915: 284).

In its earlier 'sect' phase Theosophy was bitterly anti-Christian, anti-materialist and anti-colonialist, and it encountered hostile opposition from both British and Indian 'establishments'. During its later messianistic/

millenarian phase in which Besant prophesised the coming of a new "root race" and put forward Krishnamurti as a "World Teacher" who was to preach "a message of love, brotherhood, and the unity of all religions" (Webb ibid: 61.) large sections of Theosophy began to dissent and left to form esoteric groups of their own. One of the groups which seceded re-formed as the 'Anthroposophical Society' under the aegis and leadership of Rudolf Steiner. This particular off-shoot of Theosophy will, at a later point, provide an in-depth case study for our model of esotericism.

The Golden Dawn

This 'magical' order was another cult group of the same cultural milieu and historical setting as Anthroposophy and Theosophy. Founded in the 1890s by Kabbalist scholar Macgregor Mathers, the Golden Dawn was thought to be a direct continuation of an ancient "Western magical tradition" based upon Kabbalism and Christian illuminism which had been maintained through the centuries by the secretive Masonic and Rosicrucian Orders.

The focus of the Golden Dawn was the practice of a type of magic "defined by one initiate as the science and art of creating changes in consciousness and entering into contact with non-human intelligences". (King 1970:54). This can be likened to Gray's definition of traditional western 'magic' as "a means of attaining the greatest spiritual selfhood reachable by initiated individuants". (Gray 1975:434).

The reader is referred elsewhere for comprehensive chronicles of the Golden Dawn's history and accounts of its celebrated duo of magicians, Mathers and Alaster Crowley (cf. Howe 1972, King 1975, Webb 1975, C.Wilson 1974). For our purposes here it will suffice to outline aspects of its formal organisation.

Essentially an eclectic peripheral system generated, like Theosophy, by the "leisure classes" of Victorian England, the Golden Dawn engaged a wide enthusiastic following but encountered hostile opposition from mainstream

society. It exhibited a system of "outer orders" designed for its more exoteric clientele, and a system of "inner orders" to which "high grade" adepts were admitted and introduced to Rosicrucian secrets and ritual "workings". After initiation adepts were expected to apply themselves to "the Great Work, which is to purify and exalt ... (their) ... spiritual nature, that with the Divine aid (they) may at length attain to be more than human". (Yorke in Howe, 1970:IX). Hierarchically ranked initiatory grades ranged from "Neophyte" to "Zealator" to "Magus" and "Ipsissimus". The highest echelons of the Golden Dawn "hierarchy" were occupied by the Creator Gods themselves (Hierophanes).

The ritual workings of this order were purportedly not established for those who desired only "superficial knowledge" (cf. Yorke in Howe ibid:Introd.) Golden Dawn initiates practiced Geomancy and Tarot and meditated upon the Kabbalistic "tree of life". The purpose of all this was to bring about an "incarnation of spirit in matter" (King. ibid:60); an orientation the exact converse of the oriental esotericism discussed earlier which, we saw, was designed primarily to raise 'matter' towards 'spirit'.

The basic theoretical postulates of the Golden Dawn and the "Western magical tradition" in general are as follows:

(a) a belief in a system of correspondences between the universe (macrocosm) and the individual (microcosm).

(b) a belief in the trained ability of the occultist to call up hidden cosmic forces from his own being or call them down from the universe.

(c) a belief that "invocation" can lead to either material or psychological manifestations of these hidden forces.

(d) a belief that all power resides in the human "Will" and that it is capable of anything (symbols concentrate the energy of the will),

(e) a belief that man is only halfway up the "evolution of existence" (cf. King. ibid:CH.6).

The seriousness of this esoteric adventure is manifest in the following statement recited as part of a sequence of initiation:

> "..... realising that we are indeed in a Path of Darkness groping for light, we must feel our way to an understanding of the meaning of life - the reason for death" (King.ibid: 59).

Regarded by one enthusiast as the "Crowning glory of the occult revival in the nineteenth century" (Howe. Intro) the activities of the Golden Dawn represent peripheral religion at its most esoteric and secretive.

C. A MODEL OF ESOTERICISM

The examples considered above provide us with sets of common features, the totality of which can be utilised as a model or framework within which other groups or institutions can be located and duly examined. This is the ideal-typical esoteric grouping which displays a basic set of features framed, as follows, in terms of (a) three emic and (b) three symbolic categories:

(a) I. A trans-social, transpersonal objective.

II. Knowledge of, or a belief in, transcendent realities.

III. Involvement in specific practices or activities, the purpose of which is to actualise a state of transcendence.

(b) IV. Initiation.

V. Hierarchisation.

VI. Separation.

(a) I. A Trans-social, transpersonal objective

This, the group purpose and orientation, provides the central definitive criteria for the inclusion of a group within an esoteric schema. All the examples considered exhibit some form or variety of this. We have noted that the ideal Buddhist monastery is an institution for furthering either individual transcendence into the void (sunyata) in the case of the Mahayanists, or elevation into 'nibbana' in the case of the Hinayanists. The attainment of 'nirvana' is also the goal of the loose-knit Tipasa Bikku of Ceylon. The goal of the Javanese sects is described by Geertz as a "going above, beyond and within". Salvation or liberation for the Hindu Sannyasi involves a realisation of the "inner identity between the spirit

self (atman) and the world spirit (brahman)". Mircea Eliade describes the tribal shaman as an "ecstatic who succeeds in having mystical experiences" The purpose of the Peyote group is the cultivation for its members, of a type of mystical experience, namely "A union with the spirit of Peyote". The generally transcendent orientation of western mystical groups is also well attested and can be efficiently circumscribed by the aphorism "the spiritualisation of personal life".

The differences, similarities or contrasting depth, force and scope of these various orientations or metaphysical goals will not be considered here since our purpose is one of arriving at a sociological rather than metaphysical typology. The comparison of metaphysical constructs from different cultures has been undertaken extensively elsewhere and in other fields of enquiry (cf Staal 1975). Also, our purely sociological approach obviates the need for qualitative contrasts and assessments such as those entertained by Zaehner (1956 and 1973) and even Eliade (1965:132-6).

II. Knowledge and Beliefs

Knowledge of the "hidden" or transcendent order of things is transmitted between persons and through history in the form of esoteric representations: texts, artifacts, runes, koans (i.e. in Zen) poems, stories, rubrics, legends etc. Involvement in the comprehension and dissemination of esoteric knowledge would indicate, we would expect, some measure of acceptance of the truth-value of the transcendent realities to which these esoteric representations refer.

In some of the examples listed above the type of esoteric knowledge employed is in fact exoteric. It is public property. This is true of those groups which utilised the Koran, the Pali Canon and the Upanisads. But each of these texts, it is claimed, contains a 'true' significance,

access to which is generally reserved for the initiated or esoteric group. In other cases the esoteric representations or bodies of knowledge that are objectified are themselves totally secret: the beliefs of the Tungus shaman are never codified but transmitted inter-personally. Secrecy is also a feature of western occultism. But this is ordained by the fact that the revered knowledge of the occultists is itself of a transcendent nature (the Akasic record) and can never be physically recorded or communicated in toto.

Invariably, classifications of the physical surroundings and time/space orientations of each of the esoteric contexts discussed contributes a measure of transcendent quality to the everyday bio-social, economic and perceptual components of each initiate's life. Architecture, time schedule, liturgical ritual and spatial layout (or the complete lack of any of these) function, in a sense, to reinforce the orientation towards transcendence.

III. Practices

The followers of each system discussed above are usually required to participate in appropriate trance-inducing activities. These, as we have noted, can include technical actions, verbal and non verbal rituals. In shamanic and prophetic contexts the adept is usually required to exhibit some variety of personal ability to cultivate and control, or else simply manifest, recognizable states of transcendence. But in most other cases transcendence is seen as the consummate end to the esoteric life rather than a qualification for entrance into it.

The practices, rituals and exercises entered into by the celebrants discussed range from non verbal contemplation (the Christian mystics) (to) drug ingestion (the Yaqui shaman), and include meditation (the Bhikkhus, the Tipasa Bikku etc.), chanting (the Thai monks), asceticism (Tipasa Bikku, shamans etc.) prayer, invocation (the occultists) or simply learning (gnosis - as among the Theosophists).

(b) IV. Initiation

Entry into an esoteric group is marked by some sequence, process or manner of initiation. Initiation can occur at a variety of levels, the physical, the symbolic and the spiritual. The Hindu Sannyasi and the Ceylonese Bikku by renouncing all material acquisitions and lay connections qualify as initiates. They set themselves apart from the world of men and thus automatically enter the world of spirit.

Initiation, as Eliade has succinctly demonstrated (1965), is invariably accompanied by intense ritual activities. In the examples discussed above this sometimes takes the form of trance inducing ceremonies (e.g. the Sumarah sect and shamanic contexts). But more usually simple celebrations or short solemn ceremonies are involved. The pattern characteristic of many shamanic initiations is, according to Eliade, one "comprising both a descent to Hell and an ascension to Heaven" and which usually involves "essential themes ... of ... dismemberment of the body, renewal of the viscera, climbing trees" etc. (1965:130). The adept is also often expected to successfully undergo ordeals of physical and psychical endurance prior to entry into the shamanic office.

There are a variety of types of initiatory patterns and experiences to be found in esoteric contexts and an inordinate range of possible interpretations as to the symbolism of each (cf. Eliade 1965:130). Here it will suffice to point out that the most common pattern deals extensively in themes of death and rebirth, a desocialisation from ordinary reality and a re-socialisation into a spiritual reality.

Initiation implies access to not only the knowledge, goals, practices and organisation of the group but also to the transcendent states and realities which are the focus of the group's attention. The neophyte is ideally capable of a succession of initiatory conditions, access to which

is marked by the measure of his progress, his devotion to the goal and the extent of his knowledge. This, for example, is the case for the Thai abbot and the other Buddhist monks. But less esoteric criteria are also employed, as in the Javanese sects where age appears to be the definitive factor in deciding initiatory status.

V. Hierarchisation

Closely related to, and often synonymous with, the sequence of initiations is the organisational structure of the esoteric group. The basic relationship which operates between persons in any esoteric context is invariably asymmetrical, i.e. that of teacher above pupil, or knowledge giver to knowledge receiver. This feature is perhaps intrinsic to the logic of the esoteric situation and occurs despite any celebration of mystical egalitarianism or the postulation of a generic undifferentiated bond between humans. (In any case these latter aspects usually refer to a level of "being" or "communication" which is not immediately concerned with socio-functional organisation and is in that sense specifically non-social).

The extent of hierarchisation varies with each group. It can occur at a low level as in the asymmetrical dyadic "master" shaman to "junior" shaman relationship, the prophet/follower relationship or the "guru/pupil" relationship. But the group can also be highly stratified. This, as we have seen, is more a characteristic of the western occult groups and is true, to a lesser degree, among the Javanese sects.

The hierarchical criterion par excellence is usually spiritual worth as defined by the esoteric's level of initiatory attainment or his closeness to the godhead, power or source of esoteric knowledge rather than his organisational ability or age (though it is often hard to separate these varying criteria). Within two of the groups discussed (Theosophy and the Golden Dawn) the apexes of their respective metaphysical hierarchies are/were

occupied by totally spiritual or transcendent entities.

The inevitability of hierarchisation in the esoteric milieu is perhaps best demonstrated with a quotation from Eliade. In his discussion of archaic forms of initiation Eliade maintains that "spiritual man ... is not 'given', [he] is not the result of a natural process. He is 'made' by the old masters in accordance with the models revealed by the Divine Beings and preserved in their myths. These old masters constitute the spiritual elites of archaic societies. It is they who know, who know the world of spirit, the truly human world." (1965:132).

VI. Separation

Separation between the world of the esoteric or mystic and the world of ordinary men can be realized at a variety of phenomenal levels; the physical, the biological, the symbolic and the ideological, or any combination or permutation of these. The category of physical separation would encompass institutions such as the Hindu mathas or Thai wats whose members, we have noted, are resident in buildings to which public access is denied. The shamans' preference for desolate and lonely places of habitation and the Tipasa Bikkus' cave-dwelling practice also constitute specific varieties of physical separation. Yet another form of physical separation is evidenced by the wandering lifestyles and 'detachment from place' of both the Hindu Sannyasi and the Buddhist Bhikkhu.

Socio-biological separation is marked by practices such as celibacy, but also by the pursuit of liminal life-support systems such as mendicancy which do not entail the furtherence of material and economic well being for its own sake. Western communitarians and Buddhist monks provide examples of this type of economic unorthodoxy. The esoterics interests are, ideally at least, not of this world.

Ideological separation refers to the differences, and sometimes opposition, between esoteric normative codes (and existential interests). Most sociological dichotomies of the religious world are based upon this root opposition between "love" and "law"; e.g. "ecstasy and order" (Musgrave 1975), "sect and state" (Troeltsch 1931), "prophet and priest" (Weber 1966) and "Dionysian and Appollonian" (Benedict 1961).

The passage between exoteric and esoteric is marked by initiation, as described earlier; a sense of separation is imparted during the ceremony and is retained in the style of the adept's appearance. The Ceylonese Bikku, the Newar Bare and the Christian monk are all required to adopt a simple habit and to shave or tonsure their heads. The initiate is subjected to special prescriptions or prohibitions in other realms of everyday behaviour such as eating, sleeping and movement in general, all of which serve to further emphasise separation. The separation wrought by initiation is both symbolic (i.e. expressive and proclamatory) and is performative (i.e. technical/magical). The initiate's status and world state is transformed.

Prophets, mystics, shamans etc. are often characterised by both ethnographers and members of the culture concerned as "outsiders". The mystic, for example, by going within himself puts himself "outside" Society. The millenarian prophet becomes, through his appearance (usually shaggy and unconventional) a veritable 'outsider' (cf. Douglas 1972b:118). The Sannyasi lives 'outside' the realm of worldly interests and affiars. Similarly, the tribal shaman and magician is invariably resident for specific periods 'outside' his society and this in itself serves as a qualification for office (cf. Mauss 1972:43). This aspect of 'outsiderhood' is often a necessary condition of access to the supreme 'inside' of the relevant society. Both the sannyasi and the shaman, for example, are located at the exact focus of their respective

societies' ideational nexus.

These considerations bring to our attention the other side of the separatist coin - the interdependance of the esoteric and exoteric modes. Again, this occurs at a variety of phenomenal levels. The Bhikkhu contributes 'spiritual merit' to his society in return for economic and material prestations. The millenarian prophet and mystagogue often purposefully effect changes in their societies. In the tribal context the shaman functions as a mediator of divine power and receives prestige and authority in return. Even Christian monks through their devotion to prayer, and Christian mystics through their writings, make exemplary contributions to the world outside.

Historically, the constancy of the interchange between esoteric and exoteric in the realms of ideas and events, needs to be recognised. This has been stressed by Tiryakian who maintains that "esoteric culture is not concretely disjoint from exoteric culture ...., it co-exists albeit unobtrusively with the latter". (1975:267).

D. ESOTERICISM : A CATEGORY OF SOCIAL LIFE

Mention should be made, at this point, of our choice and use of the term "esotericism". The terms inbuilt relativity is its major attraction; it has no absolute status. Some religions and religious groups pertain more towards the esoteric than others, some of the examples we listed were, at the time of study, in the process of shifting between conditions of esoteric and exoteric. There are also situations where the esoteric and the exoteric are indivisible, as for example in Zen Japan and Tantric India.

All these factors make possible the envisagement of a continuum model of esotericism upon which a variety of metaphysically oriented groups and societies could be plotted. Dealing with phenomena in such a way, we

believe, means that the use of absolute substantive categories with a limited meaning and scope such as "magic", "possession" and even "mysticism" can be avoided or at least minimised.

The dangers which cohere to the excessive usage of terms such as "magic" and "possession" have been pointed out by Geertz. He maintains that reducing the diversity of religious phenomenon by assimilating them to a limited number of general types is "actually the first step towards denaturing our material, towards substituting cliche for description and assumption for analysis" (1971:24). Our own use of esotericism as a criterion and category with joint emic and symbolic implications reduces the need for pigeonholing. Whether a group or mode of thought is or is not actually esoteric is irrelevent. It is merely both useful and interesting to view the data within a classificatory framework of esotericism.

If we take as paradigmatic David Pocock's view that "the anthropologist inevitably works with the categories of his own culture and consciously refines them through the experience of others",(1972:5) and if our concept of "esotericism" is an adequate approximation of the material considered, then a pursuit of the different meanings the concept can take on or encompass in different contexts can only but enrich it and add to its analytical power.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ESOTERICISM

"A sociological explanation is finished when one has seen what it is that people believe and think, and who are the people who believe and think that."

Marcel Mauss

A. INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

In the preceding section we were primarily concerned with delimiting our field of study and establishing just what is meant by esotericism. In this section we shall bring together, explore and evaluate the various attempts that have been made by anthropologists to analyse some of the types and classes of phenomena that we have thought fit to include within our general field of study. Before undertaking this however it will be necessary, briefly, to make explicit exactly what we consider to be the theoretical basis of anthropological investigation.

Whether defined as 'science' or 'critical art' Social Anthropology involves the construction of abstract sociological 'models' (Levi Strauss, 1972a:284), sets of relations (Burridge, 1969:130) or structural patterns (Evans-Pritchard, 1951:62) which are"couched in, or at least directly derive from, a grasp of the myriad cultural details of individual societies" (Needham, 1973a:cvi). The best models are those which account for, in the simplest manner possible, the greatest possible number of facts. But ideally they should also be testable, should facilitate comparison and should instruct us in the classification and interpretation of the data collected from other societies and contexts. In the long run they might even perhaps serve to 'explain' or at least render comprehensible differences and variations in socio-cultural forms.

Comparison is undertaken in order to arrive at meaningful cross-cultural generalisations or meta-theories. But it should be noted that comparison is, in any case, intrinsic to the investigation since the anthropologists' model can only be a compilation and result of both 'folk' and 'observer' viewpoints and categories.

The variety of theoretical approaches that anthropologists have used to analyse phenomena of a religious or metaphysical nature can be subsumed under two main categories which we shall call 'Substantive ' and 'Formal'.

The substantivist field - so called because of the attention and emphasis given to the material and empirical aspects of the phenomena under study, its substance and superficial appearances - includes deprivationalist, Marxist, positivist psychological (pre Gestalt/Laing/Ornstein[2]) and phenomenological approaches. The formalist field which encompasses structuralist, boundarist and dialectical approaches, is termed such not only because of the emphasis on underlying form entertained by the various theorists, but also because of the degree of abstraction within which their 'formulations' are conceived.

This differentiation between two types of enquiry roughly corresponds to the "realist/idealist" division in current anthropological theory, a division also termed by Ardener as a split between the "old anthropology" and the "new anthropology" (1972:449-50) and more recently by Leach as between "empiricist" and "rationalist" (1976:3).

We hope to show in the following pages that the substantivist/empiricist critique adds little to our knowledge of esctericism and that it has, of necessity, to be superseded by a more rationalist/formalist type of enquiry which, it is deemed, is qualitatively more useful and meaningful.

B. SUBSTANTIVE APPROACHES

1. THE "DEPRIVATIONALIST"

Perhaps the two most sophisticated expositions of this type of approach occur in the work of I.M. Lewis (1971) and Bryan Wilson (1975). Both offer interpretative generalisations on the nature and genesis of "inner religions" in terms of those religions' foundation in and basic orientation towards the adjacent political, economic and psychological areas of social life.

Bryan Wilson suggests that "religious movements as essentially social movements can be expected to stand in specific relations to social classes, to their prevailing economic and social conditions and to the cultural and social ethos obtaining within such groups" (1961:14). The more esoteric groups which Wilson handles from this point of view are those which he subsumes under the category of "Introversionist Movement". The characteristics of this category he lists as (a) an ethical tendency to view the world as evil (b) the attempt to purify the self in isolation or in the company of a group of recluses and (c) an involvement in procedures oriented towards bringing about a salvation "in the present". (1975:24). As a typical case Wilson draws upon the example of 19th Century American India Peyote Cults.

Wilson sees peyotism, in its rejection of both traditional and colonial religious systems, as a "last ditch" response to the suffering created by the machinations and impositions of the white man. It is essentially a psychological, compensatory response. The withdrawal into "traditional rites and peyote drugs" represents, according to Wilson, a means of "insulation from the world", a shutting off from "reality", an escape. The circumstances which gave rise to Peyotism amount to a

situation of "relative deprivation" (1975:445). The cults compensated for this by providing "substitute kinship when such bonds were hard to maintain". They offered "reassurance" and gave rise to new normative standards. (All quotations Wilson 1975:443-5).

To this admixture of positive and negative responses, Wilson adds that Peyote became an "important shamanistic weapon" both in inter-group rivalry and in disputes between shamans for political power. Peyotism thus offered an "accommodation to the present" (412). Its innovations, although couched in terms of acceptable "supernaturalist" or metaphysical categories, were purely political, and served only to conserve a nativistic identity.

Contained in Wilson's exegesis are a substantial number of anomalies and ethnographic paradoxes. Firstly, the "anti world ethos" with which he partly defines his category of "Introversionism", and which he consequently attributes to the Peyotists, is for them in actuality only an "anti-white " ethos. Secondly, if as Wilson suggests, Peyotism is a soporofic and compensatory form of world-escapism then how can it be, at the same time, a source of world-oriented political manipulation and innovation? Also it is questionable whether the Peyotists really did abandon their traditional systems since they continued, as Wilson suggests, to utilise traditional rites. In any case, Wilson's decision that Peyotism functioned as a source and treading ground for both conservation and innovation (1975:447-9) in itself represents a form of analytical escapism. These various paradoxes and inconsistencies derive, one feels, not from the phenomenon of Peyotism itself but from the analyist's (Wilson) lack of methodological rigour and the use of faulty and disjointed hypothesis.

Possession as a "strategy of mystical attack"

I.M. Lewis in his study "Ecstatic Religion" (1971) explores, in a manner similar to that of Wilson, the social functions and political implications of a wide range of transcendental institutions and movements. Lewis, however, introduces a further variable into the well-worn functionalist critique: according to this, the functions of 'ecstasy' differ in accordance with the ecstatic's position in his respective society. Thus 'marginal' and 'downtrodden' groups such as women, slaves or conquered peoples become "possessed" by cosmologically peripheral spirits, because this provides a contextually appropriate means of expressing their "claims for attention and respect" and also holding to ransom those responsible for their marginality. This "oblique aggressive strategy" is the "primary social function" of peripheral possession (1971:32). Secondary social functions include the proviso of (a) a disequilibration mechanism, whereby possession threatens the stability of structurally superior factions and (b) a compensatory mechanism, whereby it consolidates and offers protection for the deprived group.

Amongst more established social groups and institutions "ecstatic enthusiasm" functions as a "mystical idiom in terms of which men of substance compete for positions of power and authority" (Lewis. 1971:33). But it can also be used to legitimize and strengthen that authority, thus upholding and sustaining public morality. In "central possession religions" or "main morality cults" the ecstatic or shaman can, through a secure and established right of access to the spiritual world, hold on to his advantageous position of power.

Lewis also imputes political machinations and compensatory processes to the experience of ecstasy itself. Thus he maintains that in circumstances where men feel themselves threatened by superordinate

oppressive forces which they cannot control, they enter into "heroic flights of ecstasy by which they seek to demonstrate that they are the equals of the Gods" (p.35).

Although designed for purposes of general or cross-cultural reference, Lewis's categories of,"ecstasy" and"possession" are particular and limiting. Cases in which possession is politically motivated or admitted to be fraudulent (e.g. in the Somali example, Lewis 1971:72-9) cannot be equated with cases in which possession is meaning-oriented or induced for its own sake (as among Vision Seeking American Indians or Western mystics). Clearly there are not one but many different types of "possession". This fault in Lewis's methodology has been noted by Bourguignon, who as an alternative, tenders the possibility of there being two different types of dissociation. These she refers to as (a) Possession Trance (b) Trance. Classification of particular examples within these categories depends upon available folk interpretations (1973: 12-13). But Bourguignon still incorporates Lewis's epistemology; her interpretation of ecstatic experience shows a constant recourse to deprivationalism, viewing "spirituality" as escapism and as a "refuge in the irrational" (353-4).

Disclaimers to this

Deprivationalism has a hallowed history as the favoured theoretical treading ground of "sceptical" empiricist sociologists. Notable emissaries other than Wilson, Lewis and Bourguignon include Worsley (1968) and the historian Norman Cohn (1970). Likewise, baiting deprivationalists is rather an old game in anthropology, so rather than add to the list we shall simply enumerate some of the more usual rejoinders and introduce a test case.

Both Douglas (1973 a: 24 & 116) and Burridge (1969:122) point to the Deprivationalist's inability to account for negative instances. Douglas

claims that there are many people who are obviously and consciously deprived, yet do not incline towards introversionist activities or bodily dissociation. She lists the London Irish as one example (1973a:117). Conversely, there are many groups and persons who readily embrace dissociation, ecstasy and transcendence, yet show no signs of political and economic deprivation. The founders of Buddhism and Jainism in India, Gautama Buddha and Mahavira Jain, both came from and turned their backs on wealthy and privileged Kshatriya families (cf. Burridge 1969:86 and Basham 1974: Index). So also, the 'prophets' and followers of the various esoteric systems which emerged in Western Europe in the 1890s and again in the 1960s belonged to the economically privileged and politically well represented sections of society (Webb 1971: Intro. and Musgrove 1975: Ch.3).

Deprivationalist hypotheses are limited by their particularity. Explanation, as Burridge points out, is tied down to causal chains related to and confined by particular historical situations (1969:122). Further, emphasis on historistic or materialist factors incites us to suspect ethocentricity, "a return to our own cultural assumptions" (Burridge 1969: 122). That this suspicion is well founded is evidenced by the incompatibilit of deprivationalism with folk metaphysics. Quite simply, by introducing notions of fantasy, heroism, irrationalism, escapism and refuge, these theorists attribute an air of delusion to the whole business of religious transcendence. They imply that possession, ecstasy, trance induction and illuminism have no truth value, no content, they are all either a rather complicated pretence, or else the delusions of psychotics.

However, as we hope to show later, our rejection of this particular mode of enquiry into the esoteric does not imply a rejection <u>in toto</u> of the contribution of political, economic and psychological factors (Wilson's

social "context") in the genesis of ecstatic and esoteric forms of religion.

Test case

Henry Munn's (in Harner, 1973) description of esoteric forms of worship among the Mayatec Indians of South America leans heavily on folk articulations to show how the Mayatec shaman, who is both tribal priest and healer, deliberately ingests psilocybe mushrooms to enable himself to move within "spheres of transcendence". His goal is the achievement of an understanding; "that of the other consciousness where the symptoms of illness can be discerned: and that of the divine, the source of the events in the world" (1973:91).

The shamanic experience, induced by mushrooms cultivated during the fertile rainy season, is associated with fertility, renewal and regeneration. The ecstasy invoked is seen as creative, 'purificatory' and insightful. Individual illness or tribal disharmony is interpreted as soul loss. The task of the shaman is to enter into the soul-world, bring back the lost soul and thus restore the balance between social and divine worlds. He re-establishes consonance, he restores and in theory he cures (e.g. "I am he who fixes ..., who cures ... who puts together and resolves". (Munn, 1973:113).

This too seems to be the stated purpose and function of the Peyote cults which we considered earlier. Burdened by the oppressions of the white man and troubled by the average Indian's lapse into undignified alcoholism, the Peyotist turns from a social world which is manifestly hostile and sick, to transcendental realms, where rejuvenation, "inspiration and fresh initiatives" can be found. Even Wilson, in his inconsistency, refers to the possibility of this. Hence:

> "Peyote itself was held to teach an ethical system, the Peyote road. Brotherly love, care of the family, self-reliance and the avoidance of alcohol" (1975:422).

A proper examination of the folk view in this instance reveals the true function and meaning of this variety of "Introversionism'. Peyotism is clearly creative rather than compensatory, redemptive rather than rebellious and regenerative rather than accommodative or retreatist. This considered, Navaho and Comanche Peyotism and psilocybin usage among the Mayatees can not be treated and analysed as though they were "withdrawal(s) from involvement" (Wilson 1975:447). Involvement in both types of introversionism had manifestly esoteric (world-transcendent) and exoteric (world-oriented) implications; and as such represented an exercise of a distinctly positive, dangerous and subversive, if metaphysical, order.

2. THE MARXIST

Marxist social scientists examining 'enthusiastic' or 'ecstatic' forms of religion invariably reflect Marx's own "realistic" sceptical attitude towards other-worldliness. In general, attention is focussed upon the hidden politico-economic undertones and implications of religious phenomena. Two Marxist interpreters Worsley and Harris, have aroused considerable interest in this field: the first because of his pathfinding insightfulness, the second because of his theoretical narrowness and blatent materialism.

Worsley and Harris' common ground - Melanesian millenarianism is, superficially at least, amenable to a materialist analysis. Millenarian movements arise out of an exploitative situation; they usually express a virulent anti-colonialism and "appear" exclusively oriented towards the appropriation of material goods.

Our two interpreters differ on the question of the exact nature of the latter-named aspect, i.e. the real significance of material goods in the millenial context. Harris envisages the reification of cargo in Melanesia as a mere "working out along lines of least resistance of a

stubborn lopsided conflict" (1974:149). Hence:

> "Cargo was the prize in the struggle for the natural and human resources of an island continent. Each snippet of savage mysticism matched a snippet of civilised rapacity and the whole was firmly grounded in solid rewards and punishments rather than phantoms". (1974:149).

In contrast, Worsley shows an acute awareness of the purely symbolic aspect of cargo. Money, rice flowers and other material artifacts are not sought after for their utility but for their symbolic value as, what Worsley calls "cultural goals". Other objects such as flashlights, flagpoles, wirelesses and ladders are seen by the millenialist, for obvious reasons, as means with which to contact or see God and the ancestors. Similarly, books, paper and the Bible are valued not as material goods but as "symbols and means of acquiring the secret of the cargo" (Worsley 1957:259).

Possession and "madness"

The symbolism of movements such as the "Valaila Madness", chronicled by Worsley, clearly embodies themes which we have hitherto considered as being specific to "more conventional" esoteric groupings. This we feel, justifies our inclusion of some of these forms of "apocalyptic mysticism" within our category of esotericism.

Themes of renunciation and rejection are manifest in the destruction of food, material assets, general property and traditionally sacred objects. Cult members considering themselves "chosen" withdraw and separate themselves from non-believers. Diacritical emblems of separation - particular songs, dances, dress forms and ornaments - are adopted. Entry into the new cult group is usually marked by some kind of initiation ceremony which most commonly takes the form of "adult baptism". Themes of death and rebirth

are refracted through all the millenarian activities, but find their most intensive expression in the symbolism of the snake, which, "Because it never dies .... transcends all these narrow implications, and stands for the cycle of life itself, the continuity of the whole cosmos and the perpetuation of the soul" (1968:261).

Worsley describes the millenarians as ascetics indulging in "moralities of plainness, simplicity and frugality" (262). Trance states - the precise natures of which are left unclear - are induced by dancing, chanting and sexual promiscuity.

Evara - the prophet of the movement Worsley refers to as the "Vailala Madness" indulged in a form of behaviour which closely resembles that of the ideal asiatic shaman. He was reported to have disappeared and fallen into a trance. Returning by himself after various search parties had failed to find him, Evara claimed that "a sorcerer had ripped up his belly" (91). Thereafter he was constantly subject to possession, trance-like seizures and shamanic revelations. The prophets of the other movements Worsley considers were, like Evara, "outsiders" who had left home for one reason or another (usually to work for the colonials) and who came back spreading revelations and stories of the magic of the white man (Worsley 1968:58-102).

The opiates of esotericism

By way of analysis Worsley conceives of two basic types of millenary grouping: (a) the "self purificatory" or "pacifist" which he denigrates as "escapist" (241) and (b) the activist, the central element of which is the expression of discontent with a state of colonial subordination. Both types of grouping, Worsley maintains, have a common and solitary orientation, the resolution of a conflict situation by the most appropriate means. The religious colouring of this "means", the supernaturalist idiom, is merely a

way of intensifying the consolidation of disparate groups, and creating a sense of political identity, hence the incidence of syncretization and an ethic of brotherly love.

In Worsley's view, the prophets are either psychotics or extremely versatile opportunists, whose political neutrality is assured "because they derive their authority from extra-human sources altogether" (255). Transcendence and spirit possession are deemed illusory. They are "hysterical and paranoid phenomena", expressions of deep psychological malaise, frustration and deprivation; and are a direct result of the "lack of means to satisfy enormously inflated wants" (255-256).

Although Worsley favours a comparative, historical approach in the analysis of millenarianism (266) he is forced to resort to psychology and deprivation theory to complete his explanation. Marvin Harris' theoretical stance is, in contrast, more thoroughly materialist. Harris also widens his category of millenarianism by introducing examples from early Judaic messianism, which he also conceives as being "adaptations to the practical exigencies of a colonial struggle" (1974:173). They were, he claims, "extensively successful as a means of mobilizing mass resistance in the absence of a formal apparatus for raising and training an army" (173). Even Christianity becomes a form of militarism in Harris' dictum. Essentially a Judaic revolution against the Roman oppressor, its eventual success was facilitated by (a) an outward appearance of "peaceful intent" and (b) circumstance or sheer chance. In infiltrating the Roman Empire, Christianity simply fulfilled the militaristic directives of Jesus Christ, its first leader.

Harris' conflict-oriented determinism and his derogation of the symbolic milieu is extended into his analysis of shamanism. In this he denigrates Casteneda's ethnography of the Yaqui Shaman Don Juan both as the product of

a fertile imagination and as a study completely devoid of any "objective" merit. He also criticises the current passion in America for shamanism, witchcraft and magic, viewing it as an "amoral relativism" which he feels "postpones the development of a rational set of political commitments" (Harris 1974:258).

Conflicting Millenia

Burridge (1969) has noted the value of materialist analysis as a means of mapping extensively the intergroup power relations operative in the millenarian situation (1969:123). Such approaches are, Burridge suggests, rigorously sociological but crude and reductive. This seems especially true of Worsley who although aware of the specifically esoteric nature of cargo which he sees as a secret and symbolic code, continues to reduce cargo cults to a basic situation of conflict between 'haves' and 'have nots'. The millenium is seen as a rather roundabout but traditionally appropriate means of acquiring cargo. The millenium is, according to this view, the surface manifestation of a deeper conflict situation. The religious 'hysteria' that accompanies it can thus be explained away in terms of compensation theory and "hospital-ward" psychology. The specifically religious elements which are the characteristic of every millenium, i.e. the prophet, the vision and the ecstasy, are bypassed, deemed accidental or else the product of 'false consciousness'.

Harris' analysis is more systematic than Worsley's - he presents one hypothesis instead of two. But he also evades completely any consideration of the religious idiom within which most millenarian movements are clearly conceived. Mystical and esoteric representations such as (a) the professed orientation towards a hidden trans-empirical order of things (salvation for which cargo is a symbol) and (b) belief in the prophet as an agent of

revelation and community healer, are blatently ignored or implicitly condemned as illusory. Harris' materialist analysis fails to explain why revelation is reserved only for "chosen" initiates, and cargo cult membership is denied to many "oppressed" natives as well as to white men.

Our final criticism questions altogether the supposed merits or objectivity of any extreme materialist theoretical framework, such as that of Harris. Marxism, as a western millenarian movement in its own right, has established its own boundaries of what is deemed to be relevant and realistic. One is tempted, therefore, to question its ability to scientifically accommodate any phenomena - e.g. the religious and the esoteric - which does not fall within these boundaries or spheres of reference. Marxism and materialism, almost by definition, limit our understanding of millenarianism and religious movements in general. The pitfalls of the materialist analysis become especially manifest in Harris' recourse to rhetoric, his determination to preach the virtues of "objectivity" and "materialist rationality" to the very groups of people (Shamans, cultists etc.) he is scientifically engaged in trying to comprehend.

3. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL

> "Durkheim has the short answer to this ..... a psychological explanation allows everything that is social to escape." (Needham 1962)

Many of the writers considered in previous sections entertained the use of psychological and psychoanalitic precepts at some point or points in their discussions. Peter Worsley, for example, views the Valaila Cult as a group of unstable individuals "swept away by mass hysteria" (1968:86). So also with the cult prophet who, if he was not "genuine" (i.e. not an ordinary politician) was "often a psychotic" (86). In similar vein, Cohn (1970) uses commonsense psychology to explain why the membership of the "Brethren of

the Free Spirit", a highly ascetic and metaphysical cult of medieval Europe, was largely composed of men and women who came from wealthy and privileged families. Cohn argues that the cult attracted men who desired merit and status enhancement through asceticism, and it provided an outlet for social and sexual frustration among women who were without husbands, either because the latter had been wiped out in feuds, or because they had become ascetics (Cohn 1972:159-60).

Such compensatory tantologies are common throughout the literature on millenarianism and cults of ecstasy. Bryan Wilson, for example, depicts the Peyote cults as "therapeutic adaptations" to a negative trouble-ridden social situation (1975:432). Lewis (1971) classifies the tribal shaman as a type of primitive psychiatrist, whose "explanations of hysterical and other behaviour" are to be treated as earlier equivalents to "theories of contemporary psychological medicine" (192). Even the state of ecstasy itself, Lewis maintains, serves as a release mechanism which has great emotional appeal, representing as it does "an escape from harsh reality into a world of symbolism" (1971:195-6).

Anthropology's supreme advocate of psychological and psychoanalytical approaches to the study of social life is Melford Spiro. Adopting what he describes as a "functionalist and etic" mode of enquiry, Spiro expressly attempts to discover the "causal laws" (1967:6) underlying supernaturalism in Burma. His treatment with respect to these considerations of the highly esoteric Burmese specialist, the exorcist, is worthy of detailed attention (Spiro 1967:Ch.13).

The exorcist or "Master of the Upper Path" (ahtelan ksaya) belongs to an established quasi-Buddhist sect (Gaing) the members of which have a common aim, the acquisition of magico-religious power. This power (weikza) ultimately guarantees immortality and nirvana but it also has an everyday

institutionalized usage. It provides the basis of the exorcists' function as professional healer, someone employed to cure people afflicted by local Nat spirits. The exorcist combines esoteric practices (Buddhist devotions, observances and meditations) with occult practices (exorcism and alchemy). Through his esoteric practices he acquires the requisite quota of weikza necessary for successfully combating harmful supernatural beings.

After some form of initiation (which Spiro does not describe) into the Gaing the apprentice exorcist lives with an established master for a period of six months. During this period he is introduced to esoteric Buddhist precepts, and in a ceremony involving the "laying on of hands", he becomes the beneficiary of a series of magical powers (1967:234-6). Gaing membership formalises the exorcists' state of separation from the rest of Burmese society. Spiro attributes the joint esoteric/occult character of the role of exorcist to the latter's position in history as mediator between two other Burmese offices (a) the esoteric monk intent entirely upon his own salvation and (b) the shaman (by which he means a female who has undergone a spirit marriage) whose orientations and practices are exclusively animistic.

According to Spiro the 'meaning' of the role of exorcist (for 'meaning' read "function within a context", p.238) is that it provides an institution for psychotherapeutic practice. Particular individuals, he claims, are recruited to the role through motivations of "status anxiety and power". Since many exorcists are physically disabled, "lame or ugly", and therefore socially or physically inferior, then the role serves as a "compensatory mechanism" (237). The person's desire for esteem is satisfied by the attention he receives during the ceremony and the prestige accorded to him as a possessor of "esoteric knowledge". Also his imputed wish for power is fulfilled by his "dominant position" over both people and spirits during the actual exorcism.

Anthropologists in general study cultural particulars, institutions, collective representation and modes of behaviour, with an orientation towards comparing these cross-culturally. Individual states of mind, emotions and motivations whatever their 'explanatory' import, cannot be so readily compared cross culturally, nor can they be easily verified or falsified. These factors alone make Spiro's psychological formulations seem extremely tenuous and limiting. But Spiro himself does not see these as limitations but as advantages, as the following passage suggests:

> "It is my personal assumption ..... that the regularity which underlies the manifest (cross-cultural) diversity in cultural forms rests on a common psychobiological "human nature", and that within any cultural domain ..... the wide range of diverse forms constitutes a set of structural variations for the satisfaction of a narrow range of common psychobiological needs" (Spiro 1967:6).

However such a theoretical position prevents the construction of any kind of working hypothesis. By choosing an unvarying "human nature" as his ultimate interpretation, Spiro presents us with a "final explanation" which limits, rather than expands, the possibilities of both understanding and further discourse.

The onerous implication of such a framework is that there is something psychologically wrong with the people under study. Is it necessary, or even accurate, to refer to religious representatives from other cultures as 'paranoic', schizophrenic, psychotic or suffering from delusions? What do we gain in terms of both understanding and explanation from deciding that religious offices, performances and impulses are merely products of escapism, neurosis and irrationalism?

Many writers have pointed to the contextual narrowness and ambiguity

of some of these 'explanatory' terms. Huxley (1974), for example, in defining paranoia as "a form of insanity characterised by fixed delusions, especially those of grandeur, pride and persecution", notes that it is almost "a definition of that part of human life which is concerned with rivalry, competition and power, and with all institutions that require obedience to a creed and a set of rules". (Huxley 1974:285). 'Paranoia', then, can even serve as a definition for society itself. At another level, the work of psychologist, R.D. Laing(1965 and 1967), has demonstrated that definitions of what is psychopathological are acutely dependent upon Western conventions of "normality" which have a political and philosophical bias and cannot be considered as ultimately objective, accurate or true (Lang 1967:22-26).

Spiro tells us that the institution of the exorcist functions as an agency through which particularly troubled and inferior individuals can fulfill their deep-rooted desires for status and power. While this might well suffice as an explanation of how exorcism is used (or misused) in a specific instance, it tells us nothing about the institution itself as a collective representation and category of experience. As Leach and Evans-Pritchard have elsewhere made clear (Leach 1969:88-9 and Evans-Pritchard 1965:45) the supposed state of the actor's mind prior to and during a ritual does not constitute the basis of that ritual. The reverse can equally be said, i.e. the ritual causes, or of necessity involves, changes in the states of mind of one or more of the participants in a particular performance. Indeed this seems more likely since this is, after all, the stated purpose of many religious rituals. In the case of the exorcist, he is employed to cast out spirits that are thought to be inhabiting the mind of the patient. His success then as an exorcist depends completely on his ability to cast out spirits and thus change states of mind.

All these things taken into consideration, Spiro's interpretation of the exorcist's statement "I am a humble person" as "reflecting status anxiety" (Spiro 1971:237) is clearly meaningless. The statement has a ritual and not a psychological referent. It reflects upon the lowliness and worldlessness generally expected of the ascetic monk/exorcist and, as such, tells us nothing about his "motivation" for becoming an exorcist.

Despite his anxiety to uncover "motivations" and his fascination with "psychopathology" Spiro actually admits to being uninterested in "how the natives think" (1967:5) or how they ritualize relationships, classify roles or order beliefs. There is, however, a contradiction in this, for, as Jayawardena (1971) points out "once Spiro has committed himself to a psychological explanation the dismissal as 'trivial' (Spiro 1967:5) of a thorough investigation of how the natives think is self defeating (Jayawardena 1971:17). Spiro's negative distinction between the "'discovery of regularities in social and cultural phenomena', and the enquiry into categories of cultural perception ..... is clearly mistaken" (17).

Clearly psychologistic investigations such as those of Worsley, Wilson and Spiro have little to offer in a study of esotericism. Such "unabashedly etic" (Spiro 1967:6) approaches in fact come nowhere near the discovery of "causal laws" (6) by which religious phenomena can be explained. However the implication of these etic approaches, which is that supernaturalist orientations, behaviour, experiences and representations are the products of anxiety and derangement, is certainly an interesting one. Taking into account the universality of supernaturalism (until recently), the etic view invites the conclusion that for centuries the human race has followed and paid constant homage to, the ravings of madmen. In which case the terms anxiety, madness, psychosis, paranoia lose their specificity and analytical

value and become comments on the nature of society and the human condition itself, its limitations and negative attributes.

These considerations do not refute, however, the advantages of approaches which take the psychological factor into account. Examinations of the esoteric mode entail constant confrontation with phenomena of a psychological order such as trance states, altered states of consciousness, ecstasy etc. So a total rejection of psychology would be clearly inappropriate However there are alternatives to psychologies such as Spiro's. One theoretical field has devoted much energy to proving that the relationship between the social and psychological orders is the exact converse of that put forward by Spiro. According to Evans-Pritchard, for example, magical roles, ceremonies and representations are not the product of psychological malaise but simply inherited social facts and ordinances oriented, in the case of the mystic or esoteric, towards the creation of advanced psychological states (Evans-Pritchard 1965:45).

Recently with the emergence of "state specific psychology" (e.g. Tart 1975) attention has been redrawn towards the primacy of this latter consideration. The work of Tart (1975) and his colleagues is devoted to the exploration of the ways in which transcendence is induced in different cultures and in different contexts. Significantly these 'sympathetically emic' psychologists view their subject not as the study of rats in cages or forms of mental illness but simply as the "science of consciousness" (Tart 1975:3). Ethnocentrism and reductionism are waived in an attempt to link western psychological precepts with the theoretical constructs of other societies. One would imagine that, within such a framework, even Burmese supernaturalism and exorcism would have their place.

How useful such studies of transcendental 'experience' would be in a specifically sociological examination of esotericism is difficult to determine

But ultimately, it is hoped, the two types of investigation will complement rather than contradict one another, and thus jointly contribute towards a better understanding of mystical man.

4. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL

The division of philosophy known as phenomenology enjoys a current vogue in anthropology. Its usage has been largely inspired by its success within the comparative study of religions, in which discipline it is a time-honoured technique. Originally developed by Scheler (1954) Otto (1946) Van der Leew (1938), Merleau Ponty and Husserl (1964), phenomenology, as applied to religion has as its aim the study of religious acts, ideas and institutions "with consideration to their 'intention' yet without subscribing to one philosophical, theological, metaphysical, or psychological theory" (Wach, 1958:24). Essentially descriptive and non-reductionist, phenomenological investigations are concerned with letting manifestations of religious experience speak for themselves.

Phenomenologists employ a threefold methodology which can be set out as follows: (a) an '<u>epoche</u>' of evaluation; (b) an examination of the content (rather than the form) of religious representations for purposes of discovering their '<u>eidos</u>' or essence; and (c) the location of specific patterns or structures as manifest in the symbols, rites and doctrines of different religions. The type of meaning which the phenomenologist hopes to elicit, following this methodology, is construed to be a combination of his own interpretation and the objective patterns of the religious forms apprehended (Streng 1969: 40-45).

One of the few strictly anthropological investigations that incorporates a phenomenological framework is Casteneda's series of studies of Don Juan, a Yaqui shaman (Casteneda 1970, 1973, 1972, 1974).

Casteneda's ethnography shows us a detailed hierarchy of shamanic orientations and developmental stages, interpretable as a series of progressive incorporations into the world of the sorcerer. His description of this world as a "separate reality" (1973) indicates its transcendental or other-worldly nature: his investigation of shamanic reality required the annulment and relative extinction of his ordinary world, his own inherited set of values, and the suspension of disbelief ("doubting and nagging" 1972:165) and analysis ("don't tax yourself trying to figure it out," 167).

Don Juan, originally the object of Casteneda's study, quickly became his guide and teacher. At first the techniques prescribed by Don Juan for Casteneda's transcendence involved the ingestion of psychotropic drugs such as Peyote and Jimson weed. Later he was introduced to physical exercises e.g. crossing his eyes to perceive the world of shifting images, noting the content of his dreams and undergoing a series of psychical and physical privations in the desert. These 'privations' were tasks, trials and tests of his ability to cope successfully with dangerous spiritual states. Don Juan eventually attempted to initiate Casteneda into a realisation of two mutually participating inner states: (a) the "tonal" and (b) the "nagual". The tonal was "everything we are" and "everything we know" (1974:123) it was "the social person" and it was reason. The nagual was everything the tonal was not. It was everything people ruled out in making sense of the world. It was "that part of us for which there is no description - no words, no names, no feelings, no knowledge". (1974:126) The nagual was a more esoteric condition which encompassed, yet transcended, the tonal. It was the source of that meta-essence or meta-condition which the shaman called "Power".

The relationship between Don Juan and Casteneda was asymmetrical - that of teacher to apprentice (1973:13). Casteneda was also, indirectly, the pupil of another shaman, Don Genaro, but was equal in status to the other apprentices. The two shamans lived relatively isolated lives, spending much of their time in the Mexican desert. The apprentices, not yet fully in touch with the nagual, retained their positions and livelihood in the lay world. Total differentiation, in terms of aims, activities and philosophies was made between the shaman's or sorcerer's world and the world of ordinary men (1973:221).

Because the system Casteneda recorded presented him with an analytical "incomprehensibility" he put forward a methodology which, he felt, would not be "impertinent or misleading" (21).

> "I have adopted the phenomenological method and have striven to deal with sorcery solely as phenomena that were presented to me. I, as the perceiver, recorded what I perceived and, at the moment of recording, I endeavoured to suspend judgment." (Casteneda 1973:21)

Contrary to Staal (1975:132) this statement and Casteneda's ready experiental involvement in the teachings described, form clear parallels with the more formalised phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. (e.g. "The phenomenological attitude with its epoche consists in that I reach the ultimate experiental and cognitive perspective thinkable." (cited in Douglas. ed.1973:63 from Husserl 1950).

A mode of enquiry more formal than Casteneda's is that of Mircea Eliade, whose phenomenology of religion hybridises a vast array of material and insights from disciplines such as philology, ethnology, theology, psychology and philosophy. Eliade's study of myths, symbols and rites amounts to a search for structures in man's self awareness that can be

isolated and studied in themselves. Such structures vary according to different cultures and historical periods but yet have a 'power' or 'essence' that transcends their outward diversity. Streng, writing about Eliade, states that it is these structures alone which "last and extend beyond a particular cultural form and which reveal the true religious meaning of the particular expressions as they are compared". (Streng 1969:42). But in his search for "structures", Eliade himself claims to go beyond the work of the phenomenologist:

> "For the latter in principle reject any work of comparison: confronted with one religious phenomenon or another he confines himself to 'approaching' it and divining its meaning" (Eliade, 1964:XV).

Eliade, however, sees a comparative framework as a necessary prelude to any real "comprehension of a phenomena". This brings his work close to that of the anthropologist involved in interpreting cross-cultural diversity. An insight into Eliade's working perspective can be gained from a brief discussion of the esoteric institution known as the "secret society".

Initiation into the secret cult of the African Kuta tribe proceeds with the neophyte (usually a Kuta clan chief) being beaten with whips and nettles. Acccrding to Eliade this symbolizes his "being cut to pieces and put to death by demons" (Eliade 1968:207). The neophyte is then required to climb a high tree and drink a sacred potion. He is then treated as if dead. The purpose of the whole initiation is, according to Eliade, to enact symbolically processes of death, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

Many other societies celebrate initiation into a fraternity with similarly exacting tortures. Among the Bakhimba of Mayumba in Africa,

initiation ordeals last for a period of years, during which the candidates are scourged, beaten, tonsured and laid in consecrated graves before they can be resurrected (1968:209). Eliade interprets this scenario of constant death, resurrection and rebirth as necessary rites of passage into a knowledge of the sacred, rites which are ways of both marking symbolically, and actively bringing about spiritual transmutations (Eliade 1968:212).

Faced with the problem of why many secret societies undergo an intensification or reinforcement during periods of rapid social transformation, Eliade introduces a historical perspective. According to this, the secret scciety functions as an institution for the protection of tribal traditions threatened by deterioration. Thus "the teachings are transmitted more and more under the veil of secrecy" (206). He refers to this process of preservation as "occultation".

For Eliade, the function of the observer is twofold: (a) to describe the totality of the actors "lived world" as revealed in his representations and (b) to render explicit the "meaning" ascribed to these representations by the actors. His goal is "understanding", arrived at by revealing exactly what it is that makes the actors' action intelligible.

Casteneda's goal is, likewise, one of total understanding. But because, unlike Eliade, his investigation is participant as well as philosophical, the 'epoche' of evaluation he employs is not just a methodological device but an experiential and existential necessity.

The heuristic advantages of a phenomenological approach to esoteric matters is at once apparent. Firstly, it is non-reductionist, religion is not seen as a substitute for material, political or psychological failings; and secondly, folk rationalisations and interpretations are not rejected, but feature as keys to analysis and modes of understanding in themselves.

Negative criticisms can, however, be made. Because Casteneda's work is of the nature of a personal anthropology; because he deals with that tentative realm of anthropology commonly referred to as 'experience', the data he presents can, of course, never be verified. Further, the 'power' which is his subject matter extends far beyond the world of reason and thus cannot be grasped by the tools of description and analysis (cf. 1974:126).

Casteneda, though, is never dogmatic. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for Eliade, who is on occasion inclined to bias. An example of this is provided by his treatment of Europe's nineteenth century occultists who, he feels, failed to attain the high standard of "genuine religious conversion" characteristic of more ancient forms of initiatory experience. Eliade denigrates their spiritual poverty, noting that their rites were either "sheer inventions or ... (were) ... inspired by certain books supposed to contain previous revelations concerning the initiations of antiquity (1968:134).

This position is curiously reversed in his comparisons between archaic shamanic avenues of ecstasy and those characteristic of the more complex, literate yogic tradition of Hindu India. According to Eliade, only some shamanic experiences are "genuine", and are so only if they involve methods of meditation comparable to those constructed by Eastern mystics (Eliade 1964:507).

Clearly Eliade considers the enstatic experiences of the 'great' Eastern mystics to be more genuine and sophisticated than those attainable by nineteenth century occultists. While this may well be true, it is worth remembering that the methods and ideas of the Yogis are, like those of the occultists, extracted from archaic literary sources with a revelatory claim. Further since the origin of these archaic texts has been largely veiled by history, cannot it be equally said that they too were corruptions

of early shamanic realities, or were even inventions themselves?

Although Eliade cannot be easily faulted, these occasional lapses into qualitative judgment tempt one to question the extent of his impartiality. Casteneda, in comparison, never indulges in general statements of belief or preference. This can be attributed to the singularly unique nature of the latter's study, but also to the laudible posture of humility which he adopts in his dealings with his sources and their revelations.

Eliade's work contains other explicit and implicit evaluations. His distinction between "difficult" and "easy" paths to the attainment of ecstasy (cf Eliade 1964:401) has been criticised by Wasson (1968:326-34) and Staal (1975:100). According to these, Eliade's evaluations are grounded in a moral attitude which considers ecstatic attainment through drugs a 'vulgarisation' and decadence of superior 'difficult ways'. Staal points out that such an evaluation is, however, "not generally found in Asia, unless it has been recently introduced as part of the Protestant ethic" (Staal 1975:100).

The implication of this is clear. There must be something wrong with a methodology that permits both implicit and explicit evaluations to slip into the interpretation of data. With exactly this in mind Staal (1975) assimilates Eliaden phenomenology with the philological and historical methodologies of Zaehner (1956) and Massignon (1963) because these too permit the emergence of moral bias. All these theorists have in common a prior personal involvement in aspects of the objects of study and this perhaps encourages qualitative assessments and a desire to express a preference for certain types of 'truth' (cf. Staal 73-100). The adoption of descriptive a-theoretical frameworks permit in such cases the emergence of the observer's own ideas of what constitutes 'the truth'.

The bias that follows lead to types of exegesis in which 'the truth' can only be subverted.

There are yet deeper dimensions to this problem of impartiality. Phenomenology assumes that a theory independent description of the world is possible. However, Kuhn (1970) has pointed out that the material or "facts" of any science (and this includes the social sciences) are only determined as facts within a pregiven theoretical framework (Kuhn 1970:126). The science itself defines the nature of the data studied. And since phenomenologists do not subscribe to an explicit theoretical framework then the facts which they deal with are gathered, defined and interpreted within a pregiven implicit framework, the terms of which are unclear and cannot be rigorously tested, controlled or agreed upon by other observers.

A similar point has been made by Banaji (1970) who notes that although social sciences do not operate within a strictly formalized paradigm, as in the natural sciences, still our perceptions are determined by models, unconscious though they may be. Banaji concludes that phenomenological descriptivism as such "could only make sense for a world in which the 'data of experience' were fixed and neutral, i.e. for a world of which we have no experience". (Banaji 1970:110-111).

Phenomenological proposition number two, that the observer's derived 'meaning' should correspond closely to the actors expressed meaning, also makes nonsense of the fact that there are certain meanings which can escape the very consciousness of the actors themselves, objective meanings which transcend time and place and can be realised by the actor only in part. Descriptivism makes nonsense of the sociological heritage of, firstly, psychoanalysis which has its axion the existence of an unconscious stratum in individual and social life; and, secondly, Marxism, which

separates the meaning people give to their institutions from the actual meaning of the institutions, which is a-priori; and is transmitted through history and between generations.

Perhaps the most succinct criticism of phenomenological approaches to social life comes from Levi-Strauss. Accusing the phenomenologists of providing metaphysics with alibis (1973:148), Levi-Strauss castigates their attempts to understand "being in relation to itself and not myself" (148) (i.e. the social unit - actor and observer). Phenomonological realities encompass and "explain experience, but they are discontinuous, to reach reality one rejects experience then reintegrates it" (1973:148). Thus Levi-Strauss concludes, "phenomenology can only be seen as a point of departure" (148).

One anthropologist who includes the phenomenological viewpoint, yet departs from it in a sociological manner is Clifford Geertz. Geertz's (1966) definition of the observer's duty is now a standard reference in the study of religion.

> "The anthropological study of religion is therefore a two staged operation: first an analysis of the systems of meanings embodied in the symbols which make up the religion proper and second the relating of these systems to social structural and psychological processes." (1975:125).

Geertz's (1971) comparative exegesis on the contrasting types of mysticism contained within the Islamic traditions of Morocco and Indonesia distinguishes the particularities of each type and explains their differences by relating each to its own context. Mysticism and society are viewed as two sides of a social and conceptual dialogue, during which each becomes responsible for changes and transformations in the other.

The quietism, conservatism and search for inner peace characteristic of Javanese mystical 'intentions' are shown to be attributable to a particularly rigid and conservative social experience. Behind the pre-colonial institutions of kingship and the "Theatre state" were the teachings of the sixteenth century idealist prophet Kalidjuga. The Javanese state's spiritually-based hierarchical ordering was a direct reflection of an implicit and explicit perception of reality, which focussed upon an ultimate state of "non-being". The quietist belief, and its close relationship with literary aesthetics and courtly ceremonials, also "provided a general interpretation ... (and) ... justification" (p.39) for life as it stood. Phrased in Geertz's impressionistic style, Javanese archaic religion and its central esoteric constructs drew its "persuasiveness out of a reality it itself defined" (1971:39).

Geertz contrasts Javanese quietism with the commanding, moralizing asceticism of Morocco's leading mystic, Lyusi, and the turmoil-ridden state of fifteenth-century Morocco. Possessed with "baraka" or supernatural power, Lyusi spent his life wandering around Morocco, preaching against evil and oppression, and demonstrating the "extraordinary physical courage, absolute personal loyalty ... (and) ... ecstatic moral intensity" (33) which have come to characterise Moroccan spirituality since that time. In contrast to Kalidjuga who concentrated on founding his "centre", Lyusi tirelessly and systematically attempted to break it down (1971:32). The Maraboutic tradition he founded exemplified (in Geertz's terms) a "model of" the Moroccan experience and a "model for" (cf. Geertz 1975:93) that experience. The distinctiveness of Maraboutism was its "ability to come to terms with a variety of mentalities, a multiplicity of local forms of faith", (1971:48) and also to maintain an essence which fused the historical reality of Moroccan life with a unified concept of the miraculous.

The basic form of Moroccan mysticism was realised in three contrasting institutionalised settings, termed the Siyyid, the Maxzen and the Zawiya. The last of these, the Zawiya or Sufi brotherhood, represented an esoteric corner in which the faithful could carry out spiritual exercises and ascetic practices. Unifying each brotherhood was the "Tariqua" or "rite", during which a series of ascetic exercises such as blood sacrifice, chants and dervish dancing were enacted. Connecting each loose fellowship was the Sheik, who inherited "Baraqua" and was the brotherhood's direct link to the ancient saints and the Prophet of Islam. (cf.1971:Ch.2).

By depicting an ongoing dialogue between experience and representation, Geertz succeeds in going beyond the superficial taxonomism and descriptivism characteristic of more conventional phenomenology. Old-style phenomenological maxims - the search for "essences" and the elucidation of actor's meaning - are incorporated within a specifically sociological framework.

Geertz considers his work to be a contribution to a "scientific phenomenology" of culture", (1975:364), a form of study which he hopes will ultimately present methods for the description and analysis of what he calls the "meaningful structure of experience" (1975:364). Geertz's methodology is clearly holistic and non reductive and as such presents a valuable contribution to the study of esotericism. However, the imaginative depth of his constructions and the wealth of his ideas are considerably hindered by the vagueness within which his description and analysis are cast. His work then, although it serves as a valuable fund of insights, cannot suffice as a rigorous theoretical system. For exact, testable formulations we are forced to look elsewhere.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Of the substantivist approaches considered above, the first three, the deprivationalist, the marxist and the psychological, are, we have argued, theoretically incapable of dealing with and accounting for esoteric and mystical phenomena. This is so for a variety of reasons, the most important of which are:

(a) They reduce metaphysics to mechanical levels of reality which from the folk or inside view are, as a rule, of a secondary and subsidiary order.

(b) They approach the subject from a perspective which is alien to it. Viewpoints such as those which see mysticism and esotericism as symptomatic of escapism, paranoia, irrationalism, compensation, malaise, status anxiety or material deprivation alone, are not only outmoded by established exceptions, but are impertinent.

(c) By arguing causally and functionally from material, economic and psychological premises, the substantivists produce explanations which "return us to our own cultural assumptions" (Burridge 1969:122). And since some of the more explicit of these assumptions are a-priori, closed, self-justifying systems (e.g. marxism) the prospects of theoretical advance or enrichment of concepts are very limited.

These considerations do not preclude the examination of mechanical and psychological realities within an esoteric setting, nor do they ignore the part that the latter might play in the generation or maintenance of esoteric forms. But it is clear that in any case esotericism is more than some or all of these.

The fourth approach, the phenomenological, is clearly more appropriate, less impertinent and more successful than the others. But even this

approach constitutes, for our purposes, a limiting case. Its a-theoretical position, designed presumably to minimize, or even annul, the use of value-laden frameworks or causal constructions, renders it methodologically only a beginning. In any case, anthropology has its own phenomenology, ethnography, which hardly needs a new name. And ethnography itself is always open to implicit and even explicit ethical distortion; a factor upon which even phenomenology is unlikely to improve.

The works of Geertz and Casteneda are considered exceptional because they transcend the limited phenomenological position. Geertz introduces a form of dialectics into his phenomenology (i.e. the 'model of' and the 'model for'. 1975:93), and thus widens its explanatory potential and sociological import. Latterly also, Geertz has ceased considering ethnography to be a straightforward inventory of custom, but regards it instead as the art of "thick description" (1975). However, Geertz is renowned for producing vague formulations, and this one is no exception. Geertz seems to be saying that the work of the ethnographer entails a constant interweaving of description, folk explanation ('plot') and observer's interpretation ('counterplot') (Geertz 1975:3-30).

Geertz's work is included under substantivist approaches because its vagueness and opaqueness militate against the construction of workable hypotheses and models. Against this, however, we find his theoretical endeavours (1966, 1971 and 1975) to be an invaluable source of ideas and imaginative suggestions.

Casteneda's work is by comparison exceptionally lucid, a factor all the more remarkable when we consider the nature of the data with which he deals. Casteneda's major theoretical contribution to anthropology is not of a formal, model-building nature. His work transcends cultural description and sociology because it deals in realms of pure experience. But he is

important because he forces us to doubt the validity of 'objective' reality and external appearances.

The illusory nature of 'appearances' has also been commented upon by Staal (1975). Staal characterises the distinction between 'appearances' and 'reality' as common to both mysticism and the physical sciences, and deems it also to be "consistent with logic and the requirements of rationality" (Staal 1975:60). It is the refusal to distinguish between appearances and reality which is the major weakness of phenomenology and, to some degree, of the positivist, functionalist, and psychological frameworks which we considered above. According to Staal, mysticism and science can be considered "deep" whereas most of the above can be considered "superficial"; they adhere to the study of 'surfaces' only (see p. 61 Hence:

> ".....the claims made by, say, physics, astronomy, Taoism or Yoga are often interesting, while the descriptions produced by phenomenology, ordinary language philosophy, positivist sociology or behaviourist psychology, are generally boring. The former, right or wrong, say something that is new; the latter keep telling us what we know already." (Staal 1975:62)

C. FORMAL APPROACHES

1. THE STRUCTURALIST

Structuralism focuses on the form taken by social relations. For, it is claimed, human culture is not people or things per se but the form or organisation of those things in people's minds. Levi-Strauss (1972, Ch.IV and Ch.XV) rejects the modern western notion that a system is made up of objects which act upon one another by virtue of their own essence and a law of interaction. He goes beyond the elements as such, preferring to see them as the product of a network of relations which is really what constitutes the system. A "structure" is then a system of relations and not a system of elements.

The elements of the caste system, for example, as discussed by Louis Dumont, are definable as such only in terms of an organising framework which takes the form of a series of relationships of complementarity and opposition. All Indian castes are defined and positioned only by reference to a larger ideal caste schema, The principles by which individual castes are separated, connected and ranked in order provide the structure of the caste system. Underlying these principles is one fundamental conception or basic principle, namely the asymmetrical opposition of the 'pure and the impure'. (Dumont 1972: 80-81).

In their analysis of culture Levi-Strauss and Dumont both utilise a theoretical framework derived originally from structural linguistics. Culture is thought to be like language. Both are built up of oppositions, correlations and logical relations, and both are objective communication systems. Humans learn them and learn through them. The units of culture, like the phonemes of language, exist only in terms of their relationship to the complete set of phonemes. Culture, like language, has both conscious and unconscious

aspects. But most importantly culture has a semantic component; it possesses hidden meanings and it is these which the anthropologist must attempt to discover.

The data of structuralist enquiry are a society's collective representations: its language, kinship, myth, religion, art and social organisation. Enquiry proceeds by reducing each of these categories to its basic structural elements and then conducting relationships of opposition, correlation, transformation, permutation and homology between them.

Ultimately, structures are not empirical facts, but models, heuristic devices which have been found applicable to particular situations and are comparable cross-culturally. These models are the anthropologists' systematised viewpoint, a viewpoint which incorporates and is often worked out through folk rationalisations but is based upon essentially western logical premises. The best models ("true models" Levi Strauss, 1972a:280) are the ones proved the most useful for interpreting the greatest possible amount of data. An objectively validated model is a conceptual meta-theory (what Levi-Strauss refers to as the "myth of myths", or "Order of orders" 1972a:312).

Levi-Strauss has offered some tentative suggestions about the relationship between "social" structures and subjective experience (1972a:186-205). But usually formal analysis has little to say about experience. Needham for example, considers human experience as "incomprehensible" (1972:246). Anthropology has not been traditionally concerned with the interpretation of states of mind, but rather with the understanding of how collectivities of people "see" themselves and the world in which they live" (Needham 1970:VIII). Ultimately the anthropologist aims at comparison and the explanation of cross-cultural differences in societal visions of both the objective world and subjective experience.

Structuralists and the esoteric

A brief structural disquisition on the Pan Indian esoteric phenomenon referred to as Tantrism constitutes an important part of Louis Dumont's treatment of Hindu renunciation. The specifically esoteric nature of Tantrism has been pointed out by many scholars. Feuerstein, for example, defines Tantrism as a philosophical, ethical, religious, yogic discipline and lifestyle, codified in a series of Tantras or texts which utilise an elaborate symbolic language (sandhya-bhasa) (Feuerstein 1975:96).

According to Feuerstein, awakening to the Tantras follows only upon initiation by a competent tantric teacher. Each Tantra is divided into four sections (a) Jnana - gnosis (b) Yoga (c) Kriya - ritual and (d) Carya - ordinary worship and conduct. Various esoteric devices are employed by the tantric practitioner or yogin in his progression towards a goal of "non-dual awareness" (1975:101). Included among these are the practice of mantras or power words, symbolic gesture (mudra) and meditative absorption (dhyana), (Feuerstein, 1975: 96:101).

A contrast to this largely phenomenological description of the subject is provided by Dumont, who by eliciting the inner logic of one Tantric system - the Shakti is able to locate Tantrism synchronically within a wider traditional Indian intellectual framework or set of ideational relations. Dumont quotes from the Kaula text of the Saktas to show that the central rite of the Tantric cult, the Pancatattva offers liberation through the "sacramental enjoyment of all that is forbidden or despised in ordinary life: meat and fish, alcohol and sexual intercourse" (1970:52). The principle of reversal operating within Tantric concepts is not however solely confined to worldly premises but also to the values of the Indian renouncer who is himself characterised by an ascetic negation of the world. For Tantrism combines the ascetic discipline of Yoga with an ethic of pure

enjoyment (Bhoga) thus enabling a transcendence of them both. Kaula doctrine's lack of contradiction makes it in the eyes of the Shaktas "superior to all" (other disciplines) (52). Tantric practices have a wholly transcendent purpose (moksa) and are only for initiates. A non initiate who engages in a tantric-like, sensual, 'free for all', for its own sake, is likely to incur grave dangers (hence patakam - a fall).

Of the two forms of Tantrism, the "right and left hand" varieties, it is the latter which is the most specifically esoteric. The "left hand" Shaktas embrace esoteric features of initiation, separation and inter-dependence, and can be thus classified as an esoteric "sect" (see above p. 14). But Tantrism itself extends beyond a sectarian formulation. Dumont sees it rather as a general renunciatory tendency and an "esoteric religion for people 'in-the-world' (Dumont, 1970:55).

The Shaktas worship Sakti, the supreme Goddess. The centre of cult ritual is the female "principle" by which the woman, who is normally inferior in caste life, is given domination and becomes a source for "the release of divine energy". Ritual intercourse expresses and consummates this principle of reversal; "Nature", embodied in the female, becomes a source of power; it is "active" in contrast to its compliment "spirit" which is male and "passive" (1970:54).

Tantrism has been, to a large extent, absorbed into traditional Hinduism. It is used in Brahmanic ritual for its occult magical effects. It also offers a "direct hold on the super natural for members of all castes." But Dumont does concede that despite this gradual exotericisation, it has kept "its esoteric side" (1970:55).

Dumont's illumination of the inner logic of Tantrism shows it to be "a truly fundamental variant of Hinduism, in which renunciation is replaced by reversal" (1970:55). His approach by-passes causal and reductive

interpretations. Tantrism, thus, cannot be viewed as a "religious revolution", nor an aberrant form of worship or religious compromise, but as a logical, contradition-resolving, transformation of basic Hindu principles. Tantrism adds an individual aspect to Hindu group religion, a means by which the individual can both live in the world and transcend the world.

Dumont's structural analysis of Tantrism is based upon historical and religious texts. Such an analysis is an essential complement, and perhaps prerequisite to any study of Tantrism in a particular esoteric setting. But structural analysis is also applicable at the level of social relations and can serve as a means of tracing transformations (and thus explaining the differences) between these two levels of social life, the ideal (the textual) and the actual (the empirical). We shall now examine the only known structural analysis of social relations in a specifically esoteric, empirical setting.

The Brides of Christ

Unfolding the inner structure of an esoteric conceptual system is the prime object of Drid William's recent (1975) study of an English Carmelite monastery. In an attempt to comprehend (a) how the nuns see themselves in their cosmology and (b) how they see themselves in relation to their secular equivalents, women in the outside world, Williams explores the professed life-style and belief categories of the monastic collectivity.

The nuns' life-style is cenobitic-eremitical (i.e. they live together but in solitude) and oriented towards a condition of total contemplation. There is, however, a measure of interdependence between the monastery and the outside world. The nuns see themselves as a living witness to the values of the contemplative life, and regard this metaphorical 'usefulness' as superior to any political, economic or biological function they might

ordinarily have.

Carmelite social relations are heavily structured along hierarchical lines, based upon theologically derived principles of closeness to God. This is manifested in ranking procedures and interpersonal distinctions between individuals in terms of qualitative notions of "obedience, humility, poverty and self transcendence".(Williams in Ardener, ed.1975:107). Distance from western secular ethics of interpersonal equality and individuality is expressed in the total subordination of the individual to the whole, through which western secular categories of "ego" and "personality" are voluntarily renounced.

Initiation into the monastery follows upon avowed renunciation of all that the secular world has to offer and a total sacrifice of the self to ceaseless prayer. The postulant vows poverty, chastity and obedience, and in doing so puts herself at the mercy of the community's demands and severs all kin and material links with the outside world.

The nuns orientate themselves towards "self-transcendence", a goal they describe as an ideal of "transformation" or inner evolution towards "personhood" and "selfhood". But this "metanoic" precept is not the ultimate goal of Carmelite asceticism, it is merely the means to a higher end, which is consummation with the deity, Jesus Christ. The practice of "exterior silence", for example, "is thought to aid the inner silence and calm which is necessary for attentiveness to God" (Williams:112). Other means of achieving consummation with the deity include prayer, liturgical ritual and physical work.

Williams' exploration into the formal character of Carmelite life is supplemented by considerations of its inner classificatory universe, as manifest within two conceptual domains; (a) space-time perception and (b) belief semantics.

Space-time classification is diagrammatically represented by two axes, of which (a) the horizontal represents chronological and historical time (the present, past and future of the biological-ecological life cycle) and (b) the vertical represents liturgical space-time (the moving present or "now"). The poles of the vertical axis are the "above" and "below" of interior awareness, hence;

> "The Carmelite is always at some place in physical or natural space-time - on the horizontal line as it were, and at the same time is somewhere, i.e. in a higher or lower state, internally on the vertical space-time line" (114).

The repetitive and ritualised life order, or programme, contained in liturgical canonical routine is a paradigmatic continuum or P-structure (cf. Ardener, 1973) superimposed upon yet indistinguishable from, the syntagmatic, lived world of physico-biological space-time, or S-structure. Monastic life proceeds in a spiralling fashion, with biological and community development inextricably fused with spiritual development.

In her treatment of Carmelite belief semantics, Williams brings together the four sets of oppositions which "subsume all the major concepts of .... belief" (Williams, 1975:117). The first of these, the above/below opposition refers to the nuns' constant strivings to attain "self transcendence" or "eternity". This finds repeated expression in, among other things, their attitude to work. The intention or state of mind operative behind the task at hand is valued more highly than the task itself. "What counts is WHERE YOU ARE in relation to it" (italics hers; p.118).

The inside/outside distinction signifies the fact that priority is always given to inner activities, inner states of mind. The Carmelites invoke St. Theresa's image of the body as a castle which contains many rooms,

with the most important one at the centre, and this is the "principle chamber in which God and the soul hold their most secret exchanges" (118).

The birth/death distinction covers the Carmelite concept of "metanonia" - the transformation from old habits to new habits, the death of greed,and avaric through poverty and non-identification and the birth of new, active states of purity.

The final opposition, male/female, involves a variety of associated representations, such as oppositions between God and Creation, Logos and Incarnation, Eros and Agape. Creation, Incarnation and Love are considered to be feminine and receptive in relation to the masculinity and activeness of the Godhead/Logos. Carmelites consider their souls as 'Brides' or 'animas' They are thus metaphorically married to Jesus; they are a compliment to his masculinity and the active vigour in which the created world is conceived.

Drid Williams' account provides us with a precedent, in that it is the first ever analysis of classification and conceptualisation processes in a specifically esoteric setting. Her argument points to, and successfuly copes with, the superordination of ideological and classificatory features in the monastic situation. The validity of Williams' incisive concept-oriented analysis becomes apparent when we consider the following statement made by one of the nuns:

> "Our lives have no natural explanation. Our lives make no sense and they have no meaning outside of the context of an interior life." (Williams, 1975:119).

However, aspects of her analysis appear problematic or at least require clarification, if they are not to be misconstrued. The first problem concerns her cross of axes (114) in which two fused notions of space and time are analytically separated and discussed. This "cross" seems to be in the nature

of an analytical device, a theoretical construction, used only to make sense of and order the data. And she certainly describes it as a "concise, theoretical model of relevant facts" (116). Paradoxically, however, she then goes on to ascribe to it a measure of empirical, ontological reality. "The first structure, that in the iconic form of a crucifix, is used in contemplation by some of the nuns" (Williams: 115-16).

No doubt the nuns do meditate on a crucifix. However the suggestion that they meditate upon a crucifix which represents in their minds some manner of confluence between two different notions of space and time (never mind P-structures and S-structures) is, to say the least, highly implausible. Even if the cross itself possessed an a-position 'implicit' meaning, it is its "explicit" content (i.e. the crucified body of Christ) rather than its form, which is the major or primary focus of contemplation. In any case, we know from Levi-Strauss that the anthropologists' structures are only isomorphs and analogies, not "things out there", even though structures might well exist out there (Levi-Strauss, 1972:277-279). The "as if", non-entological nature of analyses, and the paradigm-dependent nature of theories is a fact now rarely contested either by anthropologists, or in the philosophy of science where the idea originated. (cf. Levi-Strauss Ch.XV 1972 and Kuhn 1970:126).

This dubious element of ontologism permeates Williams' paper. The statement "according to my informants, these four oppositions subsume all the major concepts of their belief" (1975:117) seems to imply a lack of awareness on her behalf, of the purely symbolic nature of the oppositions.

Similarly, her statement "the only origin we could show anthropologically for the phenomena under discussion would be structures of human minds" (1975: 110) (i.e. those of St.Theresa and St.John) gives rise to dubiety. Reservations must always accompany ontogenetic dictums of this variety.

Her analysis is, after all, only an "order of orders", a meta theory. Surely it would be safer merely to assume that the data considered presents a structure which is due to a structuring tendency, contingent, at one time, upon the mind of the order's founder.

Our second major criticism concerns Williams' overt reliance upon conscious representations as items of explanation. The structuralist can never be content to elicit folk orders and rationalisations but must constantly seek to relate these to their objective manifestations in institutional forms or artifacts. Hence her statement that the nuns "do not consider themselves initiates into some sort of ideas which can be held or understood by them alone" (1975:118), contradicts the objective fact that to be a Carmelite, with Carmelite ideas, one has to become initiated into a monastery, and embrace world-rejecting principles of poverty, chastity and obedience. Further, the nuns' unwillingness to discuss their relationship with the deity indicates the existence of a secret, hidden realm of ideas and experience. Carmelite beliefs and the Carmelite experience are, by definition, only for Carmelites.

These considerations redirect reference to a fundamental premise of structuralism; "native conscious representations, important as they are, may be just as remote from the unconscious reality as any other" (Levi-Strauss 1972:282). Levi-Strauss warns us of the danger of total reliance upon conscious models (norms) "since they are not intended to explain the phenomena but to perpetuate them" (271).

Structures in the Esoteric

Following Williams' example, any structurally orientated examination of subsequent esoteric settings and groups would involve an equally exhaustive breakdown of all available collective esoteric representations,

such as ritual, art, music, artifacts, architecture, literature, body symbolism, prohibitions, rules, morphology and space/time classifications.

There are two different 'angles' to the structural analysis of any belief system. Structural analysis may concentrate upon the form found within the system either in the terms extracted from its own categories or in the terms of categories which the observer imposes on it. Drid Williams' analysis is of the latter variety. An example of the former variety, which involves the breakdown of a society's collective representations in terms of its own organising principles, is that of Marcel and G.Caleme-Griaules' study of the Dogon. The Dogon, it seems, possess, and are overtly conscious of, a complex system of correspondences which encapsulate cosmogeny, metaphysical thought and everyday perceptual modes within a purely linguistic idiom. The specifically mystical and anagogical nature of Dogon thought emerges in Caleme-Griaules' referential breakdown of the term "So" (1965: So is the Dogon 'Logos', it simultaneously represents the oppositions order and disorder, man and divinity, known and unknown. It is, in Victor Turner's words, the "model and measure of all things" (1975:159). So links man to the cosmos and transcends all things and all contradictions.

The domain of speech is metaphorically connected and interwoven by the Dogon into the domains of the body, the spirit world, economic subsistence and the four elements. Dogon thought and experience is integrated into one esoteric system of classification, which combines these domains, as is shown in the following idealized and simplified example:

Bodily domain:	Blood	Bones	Breath	Warmth
Speech domain:	Salivia	Vocality	Significance ('weight')	Warmth
Elemental domain:	Water	Earth	Air	Fire

Though comprehensible to us as an intellectual endeavour (e.g. the use of analogy), the ultimate referent of Dogon fourfold classification is purely metaphysical. Also, although the anthropologist is forced to subdivide Dogon-ness analytically, the Dogon world is itself marked by its indivisability, its unification of opposed categories of experience within one embracing terminology. It is pure "connaissance" - knowledge and"order out there".

Griaules' work is taken to task by Mary Douglas who criticises its lack of any considerations of the putative interdependence between Dogon symbolic and social structures (1968:23). This contention is echoed by Victor Turner (1974:165) who professes scepticism about Dogon abilities to live comfortably within such a constraining classificatory universe. Both critics wish to see how classification compares with the social reality (i.e. behaviour) from which they believe it is generated. Turner's argument, in fact, confuses classification and jural obligations. Both occupy different levels of social reality. The former, as a thought mould, has both conscious and unconscious aspects; it is the "given" of social life, whereas the latter is exclusively conscious in aspect and hence subject to wilful alteration.

This criticism also applies to Douglas who herself has not been able to propose a satisfactory means for tracing causal links between social and symbolic structures. With this in mind, it is worth considering for a brief moment, Needham's paradigmatic statement on these very problems:

> "..... Forms of classification are few and simple, whereas modes of action are varied and complex so that it is the categories which are more likely to provide insight into fundamental features of life and thought" (1972:174).

Yet another interpretation of Griaules' ethnographic data which at first seems to adhere closely to the Needham view, but which ultimately contrasts markedly with the latter, has been put forward by Francis Huxley. For Huxley, Dogon classification in, for example, the house, represents a schematisation of a fourfold process which "defines how the imagination ... [Dogon inner worlds] ... becomes actual" (Dogon outer physical world) "So that it matters little whether one thinks of material things in spiritual terms or of spiritual things in material terms" (1974:146). Huxley points out the totally transcendental or mystico-experiential nature and origin of Dogon fourfold classification. The "house of Amma" is thus "a master plan of the universe" (Huxley 1976:164) which embodies and enfolds the four corners of the earth, the four elements, the duality of the sexes, and the polarity of body and spirit. The house, seen as a "body born from the same conjunction of mind and matter that created the universe", (163) is not just a source of conceptual integration but the metaphorical and conceptual centre of the known and unknown worlds. Griaules' adumbration of Dogon classificatory principles emerges in Huxley's view not just as a key to Dogon intellectual comprehension of the known universe, but in addition as a mode of access to Dogon participation in unknown universes, their hidden realities and even the 'home' of the mythemic 'pale fox'. Similar types of conclusions, though for different peoples, can be found echoed in the work of other structuralists, namely, Roy Willis (1975:114-129), and to a lesser extent Cunningham (in Needham, ed.1973b:234-5).

The Question of meaning

Structures, it is often claimed, embody "meaning" (Levi-Strauss 1972a:241). "Meaning" arises out of internal processes, i.e. logical patterns of thought

by which collectivities of men make sense out of their experience and the world in which they live. The structures underlying collective representations are not simply the products of an evolving process of discovery (the historistic view), nor do they merely reflect the constraints of an a-priori social experience grounded ultimately in adaptory mechanisms or economic motivations, (the causal-reductionist view). Rather, they are, according to Pocock the products of the "creative capacity of the intellect itself". (1971:XXII) Structures do not have a social or historic explanation but are, in the words of Eliade, "expressions of a perfectly consistent system which informs the unconscious activity of the mind". (Eliade on Levi-Strauss 1969:132).

The view of structuralism as a meta-theory for the elucidation of meaning has been rejected by, among others, Dan Sperber (1975). The latter contends that the attribution of 'meaning' to a phenomenon is in fact a singularly western trait and does not occur in many other cultures.

> "In fact it is the universe .... of westerners that consists of messages. In current usage, any object of knowledge has, perforce, a sense, a meaning ..... The attribution of sense is an essential aspect of symbolic development in our culture. Semiologism is one of the bases of our ideology" (Sperber, 1975:83-4).

The view of structuralism as semiological, then, amounts to a western search for meaning that is being extended and transposed onto other cultures. This implication is well worth considering. Sperber, however, argues for the validity of structural analysis, but he regards 'symbolic' knowledge as a system of mnemonics, rather than a system of information (encyclopaedic knowledge) or a system of meaning. Symbols are then conceptual representations marked by a singular plasticity and heavily responsive to the permutations and transformations wrought by individuals in everyday life. The way that symbols

are structured depends upon unconscious rules and the structuring capacity of the human intellect. As we see it, Sperber's declaration of the fluidity of symbols in everyday situations is in fact not wholly incompatible with Levi-Strauss' ideas on the dialectical relationship and interplay between collective thought and individual attitudes (Levi-Strauss, 1972:310).

Roy Willis' view of the nature of structures differs from those both of Sperber and Levi-Strauss. With particular reference to cognitive oppositions, Willis notes that their purpose is:

> "..... not to resolve contradictions (the Levi-Straussian view) but rather to precipitate them. Meaning then emerges as the final product of the tension between opposed aspects of experience, an ultimate awareness beyond a merely rationalist comprehension" (Willis 1975:128).

Willis is clearly putting forward the view that structures and symbolic thought ultimately serve metaphysical ends. Conceptual division and dichotomisation are, according to this view, forms and principles of multiplicity which ultimately resolve into an awareness of a greater all encompassing unity. This conclusion is significant to our discussion, but it is doubtful whether, as sociologists, we can go any further. Clearly we cannot consider, in terms of logic alone, the ultimate 'meaning' of metaphysics itself. The best we can do, as Levi-Strauss points out, is to acknowledge the fact that "social groups, to achieve their reciprocal ordering, need to call upon orders of different types, corresponding to a field external to objective reality and which we call the 'supernatural'" (Levi-Strauss, 1972a:312-3). To this must be added his qualification that, "These 'thought of' orders cannot be checked against the experience to which they refer, since they are one and the same as this experience" (313). This does not indicate a rejection of the validity of the supernaturalist idiom or the supernaturalist experience but is

representative of a conviction that such domains are not the concern of the anthropologist. Levi-Strauss is not concerned with the resolution of existential contradictions but with intellectual contradictions.

A similar position is held by Leach, who regards the discussion of the validity of religious phenomena not to be the problem of the anthropologist but that of the theologian. "From an anthropological point of view, non rational theological propositions can only serve as data and not as explanation." (Leach 1969:103).

A recent refutation of the value of formal analyses, or 'socio-logical' reductive approaches in the study of meaning in religious phenomena has been made by Paul Heelas. Adopting what he calls a "fideistic and semantic" line of enquiry, Heelas aligns his programme for the examination and description of social life to the objectives of conventional theology, i.e. the view of social life as being constantly "enforced by various types of meaningful realities" (Heelas, 1974:80).

A 'fideistic' investigation, then, proceeds by "tracing the logical nature of religious language, to show how this logic facilitates the distinctiveness of religious styles of meaning" (81). This involves the comparison of conceptual patterns and reality constructs such as "life is an illusion", religion is love" and "seeing". If our understanding of Heelas is correct, such a programme and procedure comes very close to the aims of the discipline known as 'comparative religion'. This considered, Heelas is saying nothing new. In any case conventional theology, as an a-posteriori set of rationalisations and justifications, is yet another folk model, and embodies all the limitations innate to the latter.

Heelas' criticisms of scientistic reductionism in metaphysics and his concern with the limits of formal analysis are well taken. But, taking as axiomatic Don Juan's view that "seeing" occupies realms far beyond those of "knowledge" and "meaning" (see above,P.68), it is questionable whether

the observer can ever discover, in anthropological terms, a suitable mode for "expressing the inexpressible".

2. THE BOUNDARIST

Introduction

Levi-Strauss' methodological proposition that studies of a synchronic nature are generally more insightful and "raise fewer problems" (1963:291) than diachronic studies, appears largely untenable or unacceptable to many British anthropologists. There are probably ideological grounds for this, as Dumont has indicated (1970:133-150).[3] However, some interesting work has arisen out of the British attempts to "diachronise" structuralism; not least among these being the work of Mary Douglas and her associates.

Announcing a return to earlier Durkheimien premises (cf. Durkheim 1901-2 trans. Needham 1970) Douglas concerns herself with a systematic search for the social origins of classification. She expressly attempts to ground classification in empirical reality, to reveal the experiential basis of ideational forms.

To achieve this she focuses upon boundaries - the marginal, intersticial and liminal aspects of social life - as they become manifest in both conceptual and empirical domains. It is her conviction that a focus upon borderline cases, the anomalies and ambiguities of social life, will enable her to "make a frontal attack on the question of how thought, words and the real world are related" (1972:29)

Classification in society, the establishment of abstract external boundaries and internal lines, is a conceptual apparatus for creating social order. It is a means of systematizing the complete gamut of known and

unknown realities. Through it, persons, units of behaviour, things, animals, spirits and other phenomena are allocated a specific place and mode of treatment. Ultimately classification establishes a society's position relative to other societies, the world and the cosmos.

The margins or internal lines of classification, the boundaries between specific categories or classes of facts, such as the conceptual edges of the household, the kin unit, the body, the sexes, the animal kingdom etc. are, according to Douglas, often sources of major attention in social life; they are heavily ritualized. Movements between and across categories, whether of persons, economic goods, or other objects are usually accompanied by intense prescriptions, rules, elaborate ceremonies and the like. The boundaries of the various categories are often metaphorically linked. This is done, as she suggests, to administer to a state of "consonance". The human body, for example, with all its stresses and strains, openings and closures, serves as an appropriate analogy for the similarly vulnerable social body.

However classification, no matter how rigorous and comprehensive, invariably leaves residues. So, what happens Douglas asks to those things, animals and persons which are left over, once the margins have been decided upon, once an ideally tidy scheme has been conjured up and imposed? For living experience constantly produces ambiguities, things which cut across recognised boundaries, which don't fully belong to any one sphere - such as twins and possessed humans. In actuality, Douglas argues, phenomena of this type are often recognised within a collectivity as sources of extreme danger and/or supreme power. Possession, for example, can be simultaneously both powerful and dangerous, both highly valued and feared. Such too, is dirt which can be both sacred and polluting. Also some animals because of an "anomalous" disposition can be attributed "special taxonomic status" and are either avoided or ritually killed.

For a further exposition of the boundarist position the reader is referred

to Leach (1964 and 1976:33-6). The only aspect of Leach's argument that is of direct interest in an interpretation of esotericism is his contention that the powers and dangers which are thought to emanate from prophets and shamans are significations of the latters' ambiguous social positions as both men and not-men, mediators between human and divine worlds (Leach, 1964).

In a later statement (1973a) Mary Douglas asserts that boundaries are drawn up to define, separate and virtually enclose all areas of life experience, e.g. dietary habits, dress, comportment, and jural definitions of decency and cruelty (pp.13 & 114). Thus the boundaries are kept up through great effort and continual reminders. Furthermore, "there is a tendency for meaning to overflow and for distinct provinces to interpenetrate", and this is ultimately due to the same formal rules being applied from one range of experience to another (p.13). These categories, rules and meanings are metaphorically inter-linked and stem from ultimate considerations of what constitutes life and death, matter and non-matter, body and spirit, nature and culture. The particular application or variation in use of these 'ultimate considerations' is, in the final analysis, dependent upon sets of root social relations, the individual's and the group's experience of the logical properties of social forms (cf. Intro:1973b, Douglas).

Social Experience and the Esoteric

Utilising a Durkheimien prediliction which effectively states that symbol systems are replications of social states, Douglas (1973b) attempts to construct a typology of cosmologies based upon specific cultural attitudes to anomaly, sin and body usage. These are seen as keys to the elucidation of cross cultural commonalities in the root domain of social experience. Criterial axes of social pressure or constraint (i.e. "Group") ranging from ego-dominant to ego-subordinant, and classificatory scope (i.e. "Grid") ranging

from systems of shared classification to private systems of classification, are used to locate social groups and individuals upon a typological matrix. Of the four varieties which her schema encompasses: strong group and grid, strong group and weak grid, strong grid and weak group and weak group/weak grid, it is the last which to us is the most interesting. This is the domain where social conditions militate towards effervescence. Here can be located ascetics, mystics, prophets, millenial groups, possession cults and a corresponding stream of symbol systems which affirm the worth of spirituality.

Douglas holds that there are two basic types of asceticism; one could be termed negative, the other positive (our terms). Negative asceticism occurs where group pressure is strong, i.e. where society strives towards a material well-being which favours some groups over others. Here, "ascetic attitudes express the rejection of what is external, the husk, the empty shell, the contamination of the senses" (1973b.117) with a corresponding restriction on bodily enjoyment and sensual experience. This contrasts with a more positive type of asceticism (towards zero on the group/grid diagram) which simply expouses a valuation of human fellowship above material interests. This covers those groups which express a lack of interest in wealth and a preference for the simple life. She quotes Turnbull's mbuti pygmies as an example. The latter 'play-act' with the lush wealth and materialism of the neighbouring Bantus for long periods but always joyfully return to the simple pleasures of forest life.

Historically, the impulse of the ascetic often moved from one of negative reaction (world rejection) to one of positive preference for the spiritual life. Examples of this tendency can be found in the life histories of ascetics such as Buddha and Henry David Thoreau and in the progress of the Hindu Renouncer (though institutionalised in this case).

The precepts of the positive ascetic often become accepted by the larger society and can even come to "control the idiom of public classification" (1973b:178).

The social conditions which generate effervescence, conversionism and a celebration of the "good inside" are often situations of rapid social change during which age-old classifications, categories and ritual forms become irrelevant. In this light, Douglas examines the conversion to Manicheism in the fourteenth century of the Christian saint, Augustine. The incisive nature of the latters intellect, she decides, made adherence to the dry uncritical church doctrines of the period a virtual impossibility. The Manicheans were a group who cared little for the cherished boundaries or institutions of the external world. They were more interested in searching for "immediate" knowledge and discovering a direct experiential access to the divine. Manicheism embraced the anti-ritualism of the intellectuals; in the words of chronicler Brown (1967:

> "The Manichee did not need to be ordered to believe. He could grasp for himself the essence of religion. Immediacy was what counted most. His hero was Doubting Thomas, a man whose yearning for a direct immediate contact with the divine secrets had not been spurned by Christ" (Quoted P.180:1973b)

The tightly organised Manichean group "maintained its identity by elaborate rituals, ruthless rejection of the bad outside and affirmation by symbolic means of the purity of the group and of their inner selves" (1973b:P.181).

Negative asceticism, in which celebration of self is phrased in terms of anti-ritualism, occurs when actual persons or groups are conceived

to be operating and manipulating adverse social conditions which cause material and status deprivation. In Douglas' view, those who suffer from being treated as an "undifferentiated, insignificant mass, will seek to express themselves by inarticulate, undifferentiated symbols" (p.183). Millenarianism rejects social differentiation. Instead it espouses the value of individual worth, human warmth and spontaneity and it proposes remedial programmes for the permanent establishment of these. Appropriate examples of these tendencies can be found in mediaeval millenarianism, student revolutions, and Brazilian, Indonesian, and Melanasian movements (1973b:184). The common, causal factor in each case was a prior social experience of marginality, feelings of not belonging, weak classification and lack of access to the ritual and material acquisitions of the super-ordinant society or central grouping.

From these considerations which explicitly deal with the dialogue between individual/group experience and their pre-constraining sets of classification; and the outcome of that dialogue in history (i.e. new cosmologies and classifications), we turn to Boundarist views on the generation of esoteric classification itself.

Mediation and the Esoteric: The Lele Pangolin

Lele social relations are depicted by Douglas as a series of categorical oppositions and mutual interdependences between marked groups of males and females, juniors and seniors. Lele symbolic order is characteristically cut up into opposing categories of village and forest, outsiders and insiders, above and below etc. Classification of people is conceptually integrated with classification of things.

The source of Lele subsistence is the forest. From it come food, drink, medicine, clothes etc. and also the animals which are hunted for

food. But the forest is also a source of additional significance for the Lele. For, explicit in attitudes to it, and the taxonomic classification of animals that live in it, is Lele recognition of a supreme symbolic order, a highly esoteric, metaphysical awareness.

The animal taxonomic schema separates animals in terms of whether they are of the day or the night, whether they come from above (birds, squirrels and monkeys) or from below (both water and land animals), from the forest or the village, or whether they are predatory or non-predatory in habit. Animals which do not conform to this rigid classification, which are crossers of boundaries (e.g. tortoises and baboons) are declared inedible and made subject to taboo. Animals close to home, e.g. village dogs, cats and chickens are also regarded as inedible. Some types of animals are categorised as spirit animals, particularly those which live in water or in burrows.

One animal is singled out as a special focus for ritual activity. This is the pangolin, which seemingly embodies a series of cross-cutting classificatory contraditions, The pangolin is scaly like a fish (below), but it climbs trees (above); it lays eggs (reptilean) but it suckles its young (mammalian). It is more like a human than an animal since it gives birth to single young, but it is also unlike both humans and animals since it appears fearless of attack and shows an apparent willingness to accept death when hunted.

Regarded as a particularly powerful source of fertility, the pangolin is captured and killed by a carefully selected group of spirit <u>diviners</u>. The ritual activities, exercises and incantations of which are veiled in a mist of secrecy. Qualification for entrance to the pangolin group of diviners (<u>bina luwaya</u>) demands that the initiate is both a father and

the marriage partner of a woman who is a member of one of the village's founding clans. The ethnographer was offered no folk interpretations of the cult ritual and was denied access to its activities. All Douglas could ascertain was that faithful performance of the rite brought about a state of well being (e.g. a high birth rate and plentiful game).

In Douglas' first major interpretative work, "Purity and Danger," the pangolin cult is seen as a means of inviting its initiates to "turn round and confront the categories in which the whole surrounding culture has been built up and to recognise them for the fictive man-made arbitrary creations that they are" (1970:200). Since the pangolin is such an accomplished crosser of boundaries it serves as the perfect mediator between the endless discriminations, dualisms and separations that characterise Lele life-world. The confrontation with ambiguity releases "power", which, according to Douglas, inspires "a profound meditation on the nature of purity and impurity and on the limitation on human contemplation of existence" (1970:201). The pangolin's death is both a power for good and the occasion for celebrations of cosmic atonement and earthly renewal.

In a later paper Douglas expresses dissatisfaction with some of these conclusions, so, prompted by criticism from fellow Boundarists Bulmer (1973a:191-2) and Tambiah (1973a:159) she is led to confront the mystery of the pangolin yet again.

This time considered as a vital aspect of a Lele "theology of mediation" (1972:32), the pangolin is construed to be logically homologous (at the level of animal classification) to an a-priori form of kinship mediation. Douglas explains: Each Lele village is totally dependent on marriage alliances with supra-village agencies. So, because of the need to maintain an extensive system of alliances, those outsiders who come in

to join the village matrilineal set-up are treated with considerable honour. The resultant son-in-law is honoured as a mediator, "since in him the system of exchange might profitably transcend all its boundaries" (1972:35).

The son-in-law (begetter) is also a prestigious variety of "diviner", an agent of regeneration and healing and also the converse of the Lele "sorcerer", an ignoble entity who administers sickness and death. Both diviner and sorcerer cross the boundaries of nature and culture, the former in his dealings with spirit animals who are non-predatory and water-loving of habit, the latter through his associations with predatory animal familiars and his ability to transmute himself into the form of an aggressive spirit animal, the leopard. Both are opposed arbiters of forces greater than themselves, so in yet another sense they stand as mediators between the Lele and the spirit world wherein lie ultimate sources of good and evil.

The Lele ritual which promotes the greatest amount of power and fertility and thus counters danger and decay, is the slaughter of the pangolin by the "begetters". Thus, two beneficial sets of mediators are brought together within one ritual framework. The cult is the greatest source of honour and the ritual killing is a source of maximum goodness because, according to this reinterpretation, the Lele expect to benefit from exchange. The pangolin is welcomed and "worshipped": it is like the kinship "outsider who walks peacefully into their camp" (1972:36). This attitude according to Douglas, is implicit. It is of the nature of a self-evident proposition, expressing synonymity between different fields of experience. From this, and other related examples (the Karam Cassowary and the Hebraic pig) Douglas concludes that "the rules of marriage with their political penalties and rewards are to be found imprinted upon the

categories of nature" (35).

The Causal incline, apparent at this point in Douglas' argument, becomes more extreme when she further tells us that the pangolin cult is seen as "a means of attracting back to the village sons-in-law who had been born in distant parts" (1972:35). The "secret" of the pangolin cult is then its function as an institution for the acquisition of honour and prestige. This introduces an element of sheer tantology. Her reinterpretation impresses on us the view that one set of mediators (the sons-in-law) are seen to be both killing and eating another set of mediators (the pangolins), in order to celebrate their own social heritage and position as mediators.

Not only does Douglas here misrepresent and de-simplify the focal point of Lele ritual life but by viewing one aspect of animal classification as a "self-evident" extension of political experiences determined by an a-priori kinship classification she introduces a note of methodological dubiety. For it could equally be said that the same principle informs both sets of classification, animal and social, and that this principle must occur at a different or deeper level. The fact of different sets or levels of classification being homologous or even synonymous does not at all indicate that an experience of one set causes apprehension of the other.

An erudite criticism of exactly this point, though directed towards a different thought-context, has been made by Needham (1970). According to this, since "forms of classification and modes of symbolic thought display very many more similarities than do the societies in which they are found ..... a causal interpretation, therefore, should rather be that where correspondences between social and symbolic forms are found it is the social organisation which is itself an aspect of the classification" (1970: XXV-VI).

An alternative interpretation which returns to the insights of "Purity and Danger" but enlarges upon them considerably, has been put forward by Roy Willis (1975). Willis ascribes a special significance to Douglas' earlier statement that "Lele religion is based upon special assumptions about the inter-relatedness of humans, animals and spirits. Each has a defined sphere but there is interaction between them. The whole is regarded as a single system" (Douglas 1957:51 cited in Willis:38). The pangolin, then, attracts attention because, although it belongs intrinsically to one sphere (i.e. the animal) within which it is anomalous, it participates ambiguously in all known spheres. Because it resembles a water creature it comes from a spirit domain, but it is also a land animal so is both animal and spirit. It has attributes of the domains of above and below and is simultaneously animal-like and human-like. Lastly it defies the opposition between life and death. The pangolin lacks a suitable category but it encloses all known categories (human, animal and spirit). It transcends completely the Lele "known" world and thus serves as a perfect metaphor for the sacred, esoteric essence of Lele society.

During the ritual, the pangolin is seen as a kingly victim. Willis tells us that the "Lele indeed honour the dead animal, when it is being made ready for ritual eating by members of the pangolin cult, hailing it with the title of chief" (p.37). The pangolin mediates not only the opposed spheres of village and forest, but also life and death. It expresses also "Lele awareness of a polarity in man's being between an individual, conscious and competitative self and a communal, preconscious, co-operative self" (p.38). Essential Lele characteristics of asserting integration and wholeness through concepts of division and separation are encompassed in the pangolin.

If the centre of gravity of Lele life is the forest, a dark realm of unpredictable spirits, its "disposition is none the less an impartial reflection of man's secret communal being" (38). The pangolin, a creature of the forest, and the pangolin rite are the Lele's "most explicit expression of this pervasive ethos of ultimate oneness" (Willis 1975:38).

The pangolin encapsulates not just Lele society but its inner, undifferentiated life. It represents a transcendent unity, an aspect further evidenced by the reverence and awe with which the forest - the home of the pangolin - is regarded. Significant of man's esoteric essence, little wonder that its sacrifice and consumption is guarded with secrecy.

Commentary

Boundarist explorations into "implicit knowledge" combine two basic fields of theoretical enquiry, which are firstly, the sociologism of Durkheim and secondly the structuralism of Levi-Strauss. Boundarism has, however, remained true to neither, so is subject to criticisms from both sides of the fence.

The concept of anomaly which occupies such a central position in boundarist terminology has very recently been relegated to the status of an anachronism by both Sperber (1976:503) and Needham (1976:128). Quite simply, there are no anomalies, only animals attributed special "status" (Sperber), or only when people, and not classificatory systems, feel a need to generate them (Needham). Douglas' causal notions of category confusion leading to the gut response of "danger" have also been invalidated, since, as Needham points out, "danger" is a category in its own right and is equally in demand of "critical revision" (p.128). Strangely Sperber seems to have accepted the causal incline of Douglas' argument, and praises it for its contribution towards a "refinement .... of Durkheimien

sociology of knowledge" (p.502). Needham, however, reiterates the disaffection with this line of enquiry which he expressed earlier against Durkheim and Mauss (p.127).

For our purposes, the causal and functional elements in boundarism are its specific weaknesses. As Willis has succinctly demonstrated, the "implicit meaning" and "purpose" of an institution need have nothing to do with its utilitarian value or mechanistic genesis, however fancifully imputed. Willis' exposition of the pangolin cult shows that its meaning and purpose are specifically metaphysical, a fact which would probably come as no surprise to a Lele but which seemingly requires to be persistently drummed into the heads of many empiricist sceptical sociologists.

Douglas' 'Natural Symbols' (1973b) argument, although again more analytic than synthetic, seems, for two reasons, more useful. These are: (a) Precisely because it emphasises the "appropriateness" of religious innovations. Context will always make its mark on any nascent ecstatic venture and must be considered in addition to typological, ethical and structural investigations . To say that context causes ecstasy is a different, highly questionable and perhaps unverifiable sort of proposition. Ultimately, contextual considerations could only hope to show what 'type' of ecstatic experience and what 'form' of movement would be most likely to arise and be meaningful in any given situation. (b) Her experiential-determinist hypothesis is valid in that it does not trace causal links between different levels or areas of classification, but establishes that (individual) revisions in attitude towards the sacred and the ecstatic are a product of a social reality filtered simultaneously by both experience and classification.

Otherwise, boundarists have successfully established that mysticism

and esotericism are features of boundaries and areas of ambiguity, and are generally perceived as both powerful and dangerous. This reflects not only upon the position of the mystic and ecstatic within many systems of classification as an "outsider" or "mediator" but also the ambiguous, opaque form taken by mystical semantics in general.

Also, Douglas' insistence on the appropriateness of the physical body as an agent for metaphor and analogy points to one other possible type of investigation in the esoteric field - that of the symbolic usage of the body. This especially, since diverse cultures display a remarkable symmetry in the use of body and sexual imagery as a means of expressing mystical ideas, concepts and experiences (cf. Leach, 1976:74 and Eliade, 1968:Ch.VIII).

Having said this it seems pertinent, by way of a final consideration, to refer again to the phenomenon of the pangolin. In her final interpretation Douglas argues that the pangolin cult has a utilitarian function, its purpose is primarily one of attracting outsiders to the Lele village. Willis, in contrast, suggests a framework for considering the pangolin cult as a mode for contemplating an inner Lele mystery. The cult then has a metaphysical rather than utilitarian purpose. But Willis also brings to our attention the conceptual principles which underlie the choice of the pangolin as the animal to be revered and sacrificed. Firstly, the pangolin is chosen to represent Lele integration because it transcends the Lele known world. Secondly, its ritual death and ceremonial ingestion is a representation of, and the occasion for, Lele transcendence of that known world. Since we are here dealing with implicit ways of conceptualising, structuring and expressing the element of mysticism in social life, Willis' insights demand a further look at anthropology's "black box" (Ardener 1973:6) i.e. the human mind.

3. THE DIALECTICAL

The use of dialectical principles in anthropology was largely inaugurated, again, by Levi-Strauss. His mode of analysing myths, viz. the construction of antinomies, followed progressively by their mediation and subsequent resolution, is clearly dialectical. However the nature of myths is such that the dialectical methodology he employs is characteristically synchronic and cyclical. But Levi-Strauss is not unaware of the essentially diachronic, processual character of dialectics, and has advocated their introduction into different areas of ethnographic enquiry. For example, in connection with the famous debate concerning the hypothesized relationship between modes of classification and their outcome in everyday life, he has this to say:

> "..... this writer has tried to establish that the relationship between terminology and attitudes is of a dialectical nature ... the rules of behaviour concerning affines result from an attempt to overcome contradictions in the field of terminology and marriage rules; the functional unwedging which is bound to exist between the two orders causes changes in terminology; and these, in turn, call for new behaviour patterns and so on indefinitely" (1972a:310-11).

A similar viewpoint has been put forward by Berger (1973) who sees the dialectic as a useful resolution, or overdetermination, of the opposition between idealist and realist interpretations of social life. Berger maintains that:

> "The two statements, that society is the product of man and that man is the product of society, are not contradictory. They rather

reflect the inherently dialectical character of the societal phenomenon" (1973:13).

The three steps by which man (a) externalises his experiences, (b) objectifies them in cultural forms and (c) internalises these forms during subsequent socialisation, constitute, according to Berger, the "fundamental dialectical process of society" (13-14).

At this juncture, it seems appropriate to briefly outline the original meaning and philosophical history of dialectics. According to Russel (1961:704-5) Hegels dialectic is a triadic logical device based upon and proceeding from, a law of contradiction which conceives of reality as being contradictory in itself. This standpoint, explicitly opposed to the traditional Aristotlian law of non-contradiction maintains that a 'thing' contains its own negation. The dynamic which arises out of this contradiction generates a resolution, a synthesis which in turn possesses both its own essence and a negation of that essence. Dialectical logic can usefully be thought of as a dynamic philosophy of "becoming" as opposed to a static philosophy of "being".

Comprehension of an object or construct involves a total knowledge of both what that object or construct is and also its future potential. (e.g. a seed is potentially a plant etc.). Thus the dialectician must aspire to knowledge of the whole (i.e. its entire range of interactions) and also, as Bender points out, the "particular relations pertaining among all the parts of the whole in regard to the object in question" (1972:2-3).

Conflated with Hegel's holism was a spirit of idealism: he held that objects are constituted through consciousness's self-projection; their complete essence is a result of man's appropriation of them through the act of "knowing". Further, Hegel's idealism was tinged with mysticism;

he conceived of man's spirit as the ontological entity par excellence and saw it as being involved in a constant process of reappropriation towards a goal of "absolute knowledge". The dialectic is then a logical device for depicting this process and hence man's moves forward in history towards this hypothesized state of fulfilment.

Idealism, mysticism and holism in Hegel's philosophy can be traced, and found to be fused, in notions such as:

> "The whole is called the absolute". "The absolute is spiritual". "Spirit is the only reality and its thought is reflected into itself by self consciousness" (transcriptions from Russell 1961:705).

Karl Marx's interpretation of Hegel's views of spirit as the generative motive force in history is well known. His subsequent inversion of Hegel's dialectic has also received much attention in anthropology (cf. Ardener 1971:463 and Murphy 1971:85-6). So elucidation is unnecessary. Our interest here is to focus on Levi-Strauss' position in this debate.

On the one hand, Levi-Strauss denies accusations that he is an idealist. He maintains that social life and man's relations to nature are not "a projection or even a result of a conceptual game taking place in the mind" (1972b:130). But on the other hand he also differentiates himself from the alternative Marxist position which holds that thought is reducible to economic relations. The solution lies in the fact that, as Burridge points out (1967:93), Levi-Strauss partakes of and amalgamates both points of view. This is done through his own conceptual schema, his "dialectic of superstructures" (131) which he conceives of as a mediator between mind and practice (130). This is an interpretative model of structures which are both 'in here' and 'out there' ("entities which are both empirical and intelligible". Levi-Strauss 1972b:130). The dialectic

is, for Levi-Strauss, dependent both upon matter (social relations) and mind (cognitive processes and psychological states). Mind and matter are "inseparable and their opposition produces the forms of social life" (Murphy on Levi-Strauss, 1971:185). Dialectics make materialism and idealism part of a new whole.

However, it should be noted that statements like these by Levi-Strauss, Berger and latterly, Murphy, perhaps only contribute towards an invalidation of the usefulness of the dialectic in specific cases. To see the dialectic as the penultimate resolution of all disparities between ideology and actuality (in social life) and between idealism and materialism (in philosophical theory) is to attribute to it an element of finality, an invariance which militates against the construction of hypotheses. In contrast to this, we feel that the value of the dialectic can ultimately only be judged by its usefulness.

Dialectics in Esotericism

In works devoted specifically to the analysis of unusual forms of mysticism, the Hegelian dialectic has often been found heuristically useful. There are a variety of reasons for this, some of which have been outlined by Burridge in his seminal exegesis of millenarianism. These can be reformulated and summarised thus:

(a) A Hegelian explanation, because it admits the operation of a transcendent power, takes full account of the specifically mystical character of millinarianism, i.e. the latters emphasis upon divine revelation, supernaturalism and the inculcation of ecstasy.

(b) The appropriateness of the dialectic lies in its innate fusion of the mystical and the rational. Hence, explanation is in "terms of categories which comprehend the rationalisations of both the

anthropologist and the people he is studying" (1969:136).

(c) By disregarding any notion of 'irrationality' the Hegelian approach minimises the specificity and distinctiveness of millenarianism and introduces into the latter category a wide range of associated sets of behaviour hitherto regarded as distinct, such as utopianism, Marxism and even psychoanalysis.

(d) The Hegelian approach contains the realisation that both the overt politico-economic orientations of millenarianism and the frequent outbreaks of ecstasy are only the tip of the iceberg, only epiphenomena, singular manifestations of a more all-encompassing existential problem. Dialectical 'becoming' views the millenium as one in a series of many historically transcendent resolutions of the contradictions and problems of alienation which are persistently manifest, to a greater or lesser degree, in most human situations.

We shall now examine the contributions towards the anthropology of religion of the two major theorists who employ the dialectic, as a tool of analysis. These are: (a) Kenelm Burridge (1969) and (b) Victor Turner (1974).

The Generation of the Esoteric (a) Burridge

Millenarian movements embody a dialectical process which Burridge depicts in the formula "Rules - No Rules - New Rules". According to this, the social conditions which trigger off a particular phase of existential disenchantment spawn the abandonment of "Old Rules" (ethics, laws, obligations, traditions and Gods). The millenarian group enters into

a phase of "no rules" during which antistructural behaviour (e.g. ecstasy) is invoked, old boundaries are crossed and taboos such as incest are purposefully violated. The programme for the state of "no rules" is the millenial vision, the new heaven, apocalypse or second coming. But the new heaven as expressed in, and emergent from ecstasy and possession is also a revitalized world view and a state of mind. Also, contained within the new heaven are directions for a new, more appropriate state of things, a re-synthesised programme for the future, (new rules). Further, these sets of "no rules and new rules meet in the prophet who initiates the one whilst advocating the other"(ibid:66).

The third phase is not just a synthesis of the preceding phases; it contains the additional element of redemption - the promise of a new life (new earth). Redemption is realised during possession and trance, and is metaphorically celebrated in sexual orgies and ritual incest which represent an earthly counterpart of regeneration through ecstasy, and ecstasy through regeneration.

Millenarianism is invariably triggered off by situations in which "men become aware of a power which they cannot understand, which current assumptions cannot explain or validate" (1969:150). One type of millenialist response attempts to capture that power, and, by extending comprehension of it, eases the situation. Burridge cites the Brahman/ Kshatriya relationship as one example of this (cf. P.150-3). Both categories of this relationship share traditional assumptions about power but one category has access to the rewards arising out of adherence to these assumptions while the other does not. The Kshatriya, despite possessing a great deal of temporal power, is denied access to the greater, more prestigeous, power contained in Brahmanhood and the enactment of

ritual sacrifices which is the privilege of the Brahman. Occasionally in history, the gap between the two categories has widened and the Kshatriya has risen to challenge the old set of assumptions. Thus a third element, the prophet or guru is generated. He redresses the balance and promises redemption for the deprived group.

The amount or quota of "power" flowing from one group to the other is conceivably dependent upon the width of the gap between the two factions. This width has varied in history. At times it has become acute, so that very 'powerful' prophets have emerged, such as Gautama Buddha and Mahavira Jain, who have captured the imagination of people from both camps.

According to Burridge, Buddhism was a resolution of a taxing contradiction between Hindu ideas and empirical realities in a specific historical context. It can thus be said, in a sense, that Hinduism generated Buddhism, a consideration that perhaps complements the viewpoint of Dumont, which we discussed earlier (P.85). This fact also explains the antinomianism found in much of the Buddhist legacy, as expressed, for example, in inversions of Brahmanic practices (e.g. the Buddhists meditate on objects of death, regarding them as sources of ritual power, whereas the Brahmans view objects of death as sources of 'impurity' and danger).

Burridge emphasises the synthetic nature and unificatory power of the prophet. Brahmans defer to the prophet or guru because the latter embodies, and therefore, transcends, opposed sets of relations such as those of superior to inferior, ruler to ruled, pure to impure. By signifying and eliciting the "one and the many" the guru resolves not only the empirical contradictions occurring between classes of men but

also the existential contradiction between man and divinity, known and unknown.

This synthetic quality also explains the singularly ambiguous social position of the guru or renouncer. In spite of the fact that he is set apart (thus signifying distance) since the world of men is, unlike his world, hierarchical, contradictory and divided, his teachings are in essence accepted and adopted by men (thus signifying closeness). He is also revered as the mouthpiece of the highest possible power (thus signifying high position) yet he himself leads a lowly life and professes extreme humility (thus signifying low position).

Burridge concludes by introducing his dialectical hypothesis into the analytically-troublesome Melanasian situation. The relationship between the native and the colonial is then a variation of the relationship between the Kshatriya and the Brahman. However, the debate for 'power' in the Melanasian situation is expressed through a material (e.g. money and cargo) rather than a purely religious medium. But the 'power' itself is of a ritual and not material nature. Finally, as in the Indian example, the continued assymetry which underlies the Melanasian situation and the denial to one group of access to sources of ritual power and its rewards is responsible for generating renewed syntheses and, hence, the appearance of new prophets.

The Generation of the Esoteric (b) Turner

Victor Turner's dialectic derives from Van Gennep's insight into the nature of symbolic forms in ritual processes. According to the original Van Gennep schema, a ritual has three phases: (a) separation (from structured activity) (b) margin (liminality, complete freedom from

structure) and (c) aggregation (reincorporation into qualitatively increased structure). Initially, this was intended to be a hypothesis for one particular ritual process - the rite of passage. But in Turner's hands it is objectified and utilised to explain a wider range of symbolic phenomena, eventually becoming a metaphor for society itself.

In Turner's dialectic (thesis = structure or societas, antithesis = antistructure or communitas, synthesis = societas or universitas) Van Gennep's concept of 'separation' is reduced to the level of a bounding mechanism which becomes manifest between antithetical phases of structure and communitas. By 'structure', Turner means a society's set of inherited institutionalised norms, its kinship positions, roles and status regulations.

Often built into the social structure of many societies are periods, phases or even institutions of antistructure. This is communitas which emerges, according to Turner, "where social structure is not" (1974:113). Usually involving status and role inversions, communitas is characterised by behaviour which expresses some form of temporary freedom from constraint, such as participation in states of ecstasy. Communitas is emotive and affective: it exhibits a totally existential quality, diametrically opposed to the essentially cognitive nature of structure and social classification. It is the celebration of a generic bond between humans which cuts across and transcends their structural bonds.

> "Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority" (Turner, 1974:115).

Prophets and shamans, modern day artists, poets and philosophers are all both symptoms of communitas and agents of it. Out of the dialogue between communitas and structure a new synthesis emerges in which either old classifications and structures are revitalised (as in rites of passage) or new values, classifications and normative codes are realised (especially in changing social situations).

The transpersonal states or divinities contacted during periods of communitas act as an ultimate agency of validation for the new normative codes. Communitas in "Cold societies" (Levi-Strauss 1967:47) rejuvinates society and the relationships between its members. Hence, it comes into play during life-crisis stages - periods of classificatory disarray, when transitions between roles are taking place; or during periods of disaster, economic hardship, exploitation, oppression or physical illness - when traditional modes of understanding are rendered uncertain.

Turner uses Dimock's (1966) ethnography of the Sahajiya (or Vaisnavas) movement in Bengal to illustrate communitas in action. Vaisnavism was one aspect of the larger Bhakti devotional movement that swept across India from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. By itself it was largely the construction of the prophet Caitanya, a sort of Bengali St. Francis, who established a system of worship which accorded special attention to "images and identifications". Caitanya esotericised aspects of the Bhagavad Gita - the traditional Hindu text which featured the youthful development of Krishna (of whom Caitanya was considered an "avatar" or incarnation) - and metaphorically reproduced these aspects in ritual dramas. Thus the central rite of the Vaisnavas consisted of:

> "an elaborate and protracted series of liturgical actions, interspersed with the repetitative recitation of Mantras which

culminated in the art of sexual intercourse between fully initiated devotees of the cult, a man and a woman who simulated in their behaviour the love-making of Krisna and Radha" (Turner 1974:145).

This ritual intercourse was a sacrament, "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace" (Turner: 145). Turner opposes this form of illicit but divine love to the marital love of normal Bengali society. He sees it as the expressed inverse of societal classificatory notions and as such is symptomatic of communitas.

Caitanya's practical contribution to the movement he inspired was small. He introduced a selection of ascetic practices and advocated intensive meditation and subordination to established gurus. He himself led a humble life and rarely indulged in theology, unlike his immediate followers, the Gosvamins who founded solid asrama - institutions for the consideration, teaching and practice of Vaisnavism.

In time, the sect divided into low caste or castless ascetics (the avadhitas) and the predominantly high caste advaitas. The avadhitas retained the Bhakti emphasis viz. salvation through devotion, whereas the advaitas reverted to Brahmanic precepts such as mukti (i.e. release from the cycle of rebirth) and maya (the belief that external reality is an illusion). The advaitas advocated transcendence through gnosis - knowledge of the single reality known as atman-Brahman.

Turner sees the bifurcation of spontaneous and rigid mysticism that developed in Vaisnavism as indicative of differentiation within the communitarian milieu. A differentiation mediated by context and situational necessity. By this, the leaders of the two groups, Nityananda and Advaita, "represented respectively the principles of "normative communitas" and

"structure" at the level of group organisation" (Turner, 1974:149).

In relation to Turner's discussion it could be posited that dichotomisation in the sect made available two different types of esotericism for two different kinds of worshipper; (a) a gnosticism for educated Brahmins who could afford to secrete themselves away in ashrams and denigrate reality as a "disaster area", (b) a devotionalism for less privileged and world-dependent groups. By this the world was not negated. Instead a series of "temporary separations" were offered and these took the form of festivals, ritual invocations and trance-inducing dances.

Esotericism at Esalen

Regina Holloman, in her recent analysis of the Esalen institute in contemporary California (1974), has enlarged upon aspects of Turner's thesis to include an understanding of the bio-emotive subjective experiences consequent upon involvement in trance-oriented but objectified ritual activities. This aspect, she feels, is indicated by Turner in his notion of communitas, but is not adequately explored. In her own words, her analysis deals with "a hypothesized relationship between ritual process as a group level phenomenon, the mobilisation of individual affect in what Maslow (1970:Ch.3) terms "peak" (ecstatic) and "nadir" experiences, and the induction of major shifts in the psychic configurations of individuals (change in worldview)" (Holloman, 1974:265).

Esalen as an institution is one part of the Pan-American "human potential" or "encounter" movement which streses the efficacy of small group experience in individual, psychological growth and development. Esalen advocates major changes in western life-style systems, and advances a synthesis of principles, practices and methodologies gleaned from esoteric traditions such as Yoga, Zen, Sufism and Gestalt or Langian

psychology. One set of techniques particularly favoured was extracted from the "Arica" system devised by Chilean, Oscar Ichazo. (For details of latter, cf. Lilly and Hart in Tart 1975. p.329+). According to this, meditation and relaxation exercises were combined in an effort to maximise the participant's self-development.

Participants in Esalen activities (especially the "five day workshop") were involved in a series of assymetrical relations with group leaders who organised the "training" sessions. However, despite the transmission of knowledge and techniques through relationships of instructor/instructed and knower/non knower, great emphasis was laid upon individual development or "self-discovery". This state of "self discovery", it was believed, would lead not to an enhanced awareness of individual uniqueness, but to a selfless state of "mutual respect, care and feeling".

The liminal nature of life in Esalen was apparent through (a) separation and isolation: a break from societal cognitive patterns, routines and urban lifestyles, (b) levelling: participants (neophytes) were of an equal non-differentiated standing, (c) norm suspension and inversion: constraints of the 'normal' type, such as taboos on nudity and on the expression of emotions, were discouraged in favour of spontaneous behaviour and (d) communitas: the expression of intimacy, the development of generic social bonds between group members.

In theory, involvement in Esalen encouraged both a revitalisation of body and mind and a reorientation in the classification of self in regards to nature, to others, and to other worlds or other selves.

The resynthesis invoked was oriented towards therapy for the individual, the betterment of his outlook on the world and also towards altering his state of mind altogether - an operation which Holloman refers to as a "ritual opening of the psyche" (276). The individual is in fact

directed towards world-transcendence, and it is this aspect which gives rise to betterment and has a regenerative effect. Holloman lists the forms of transcendence, which Esalen rituals were orientated towards inducing, as disturbances in perception, audio-visual hallucinations, emotive arousals and 'trance' experience.

Holloman's microlevel analysis concludes with an affirmation of the priority of social processes in the enactment of major shifts in psychic configuration. According to this the Esalen workshop appears as a kind of dialectically operative ritual whose "goal is psychological transformation and whose means are the mobilisation of autonomic as well as cognitive processes by cultural techniques which manipulate context and interpersonal interaction" (276).

Commentary

Our assessment of the limitations of the dialectic as a theoretical device has already been outlined (cf. p.114). Our purpose here will therefore be to contrast and evaluate its usage by the various theorists referred to above and, in doing so, delimit the extent of their contribution towards a comprehension of the esoteric.

In criticism of Turner's dialectical methodology, it could be said that he overplays the spontaneous and antithetical nature of the state of being he refers to as "communitas". By opposing communitas to the cognitively ordered classifications and structured relationships of the wider society, he in fact negates the high incidence of conceptual classification and social structuring that occurs within the communitarian milieu. Also by then maintaining that structure develops in time as a response to "material and organisational needs" (1974:116) he rejects the possibility of "structure" being intrinsic to communitas itself. Further

to explain this adaptive process, Turner is forced to introduce another dialectic, that between "immediacy and mediacy". Communitas therefore, always points towards societas. Turner's "synthesis" can only be read, in the final analysis, as a renewed or revitalised social structure.

Contrary to this view, many groups for whose behaviour the term "communitas" would be an apt description, embody rules, classifications and structures which distinctly point away from and usually involve a total transcendence of society as such. Within the terms of reference of these groups, considerations of society or of structure as ends in themselves are infrequent. Any social change that does take place as a result of their activities is an arbitrary product of, and not a directive, or motivation for, communitarian outbursts. Their purpose is performative, immediate, and small in scope rather than expressive and wide-ranging.

Notable examples of this can be found in the hermeneutics of yogic asceticism, as described by Eliade (1968:90), within which the yogic neophyte is thought to be involved in a "liberation (which) amounts to an actual surpassing of the human condition" (90). Moreover the mystic path itself, the "ontological mutation through the experience of death and resurrection"(90) is clearly a classification of yogic endeavours (structured through the medium of language), and is based presumably upon some prior yogic experience. This also applies to the 'ritual journey' undergone by the tribal shaman, whose reported progress through stages of death and rebirth, and flights into the overworld and underworld, represents a culturally appropriate communication of Shamanic realities through pre-constraining classificatory, conceptual and perceptual modes. The ascetics path to transcendence and the Shamans arousal to ecstasy both involve subordination to elaborate routines, highly structured activities and pre-ordained regulations (Eliade 1968.Ch.V). The apparent social

organisations, or structures of both accord more with the logic of the esoteric raison d'etre - the orientation towards transcendence - than with adaptive needs mediated by extraneous factors. Though clearly the esoteric group can never be contextually or adaptively inappropriate.

These things considered it can be fairly said, then, that in both shamanic and yogic contexts, and probably in others, "antistructure" is heavily structured.

The function that yogis and shamans perform in the wider society is yet another and separate question. We know from Dumont (1970) that the thought of Indian renouncers has largely shaped Indian society as we know it. Also, from Eliade, we know that the shaman in his respective milieu, plays a similarly paradigmatic role. But to see a functional direction embodied in the essence of communitas, as Turner does, is perhaps unnecessary.

This criticism also applies to the numerous other studies which, like Turner's, consider the relationship between structure and communitas to be a dialectical one. Studies such as Musgrove's (1975) on 'counter-culture' which pronounces upon the usefulness of a Nietzchean opposition between Appolonian and Dionysiac thought forms (order and ecstasy) and argues for their subsequent synthesis (Musgrove 1975:15-17). Musgrove's formulation is in fact based upon Mannheim's celebrated dialectic between society and utopia (cf. Mannheim 1960:190). Ultimately, such functionalist sociologisms constrain the possibilities of Hegel's dialectic, leaving it enchained, as it were, firmly in the realms of cause and effect.

To state what something does, in terms of its eventual outcome and historical consequences, is not to state what it is. Following Dumont's example (1972, Ch.3), it seems safer to posit that communitas and societas

are merely opposed sets of classification, one of which perceives order, truth and reality to cohere at the generic level, the other at the level of structure, laws, rules and norms.

If Turner sees synthesis as cohering eventually in society, Burridge, in contrast, sees dialectical synthesis as emergent in, but retained by the loci and agents of communitas. Burridge's version of communitas, his "no rules", is indivisably representative of both the abeyance of old classifications and the insemination of new and inspired classification (i.e. the new heaven), emergent from which are new obligations and new rules oriented primarily at maintaining these new visions of order, or in Burridge's own words "merging the "new earth" into the "new heaven" (1969:163).

This phase of "no rules" during which the millenary heaven is first depicted is the area in which real Hegelian synthesing takes place, in which revelations are manifest, ecstasies are invoked, old orders are rejected and renewal is metaphorically celebrated. The difficulties which obtain to any attempts to separate decisively the positive and negative alternations that constitute the dialectic is evident in the fact that "no rules and new rules meet in the prophet who initiates the one whilst advocating the other" (Burridge 1969:166).

In the Esalen example the "new rules" are orientated not towards the maintenance of a newly revealed system of order but to the acquisition of a sustained experience of transcendent order. Thus Esalen's communitas is not just a framework antithetical to American societas but a set of classifications in its own right, based upon beliefs in an alternative reality which can be secured through an "opening of the psyche" (276). The "no rules" of Esalen are, paradoxically, modes of actualising transcendence.

Dialectics in anthropology represent a somewhat ambiguous phenomenon, in that they have been rarely criticised. There are perhaps two explanations for this: firstly, the dialectic possesses the laudible attributes of combining form (the construction and negation of oppositions) and content (whether economic (Marx), ideological (Hegel) or economic-ideological (Althusser), and also synchrony and diachrony. It is an all-embracing, if rather vague, formulation. Secondly, the close association between 'radicalism' and 'empiricism' in anthropological circles permits a paradoxical situation whereby, despite its holistic presuppositions, the dialectic escapes criticism from those who would normally contend any deviation from an 'atomistic', individual or empirical position.

Burridge's use of the dialectic incorporates not only rank idealism but also a blatant spirit of mysticism. However commentaries from empiricist quarters have been remarkably placid. Brian Wilson, for example, who in his massive "magic and the millenium "(1975) insists throughout on economic exploitation and psychological disorientation as the prime causes of religious effervescence, nevertheless praises the synthetic nature of Burridge's work and applauds its value as a "general explanation of (millenarian) behaviour" (1975:2n). Another radical, Marvin Harris (1974), who has also considered millenarianism at length (cf. earlier Ch.II) makes his point by ignoring Burridge's work altogether.

The explanatory value of the dialectic is hotly contested in philosophical and psychological fields of enquiry. Although its usage is favoured by phenomenologists such as Berger (1973) and existentialists such as Sartre (1960) it has been deemed "illogical" and "irrational" by indologists such as Staal (Staal 1975:60).

The dialectic cannot easily be falsified. Objections to it on these grounds have not been helped by notables such as Piaget who reifies it

considerably by arguing that it is analagous to processes in the physical world such as genetic interactions or the spiralling effect in biological growth. (Piaget 1971:125). Interestingly, Piaget also construes the dialectic to be the methodological device par excellence, by which "structuralism" (i.e. the study of structures as systems of relations) becomes "constructivism" (i.e. the study of structures as systems of transformations).

Complements to this latter metaphysic can be located in Levi-Strauss' later work. In contending that dialectical reasoning is "something additional in analytic reason(ing)" (1972b:246), Levi-Strauss holds that the analytic dissection of a phenomena can only be followed by a subsequent synthetic re-constitution of the whole phenomenon. Hence:

> "In my view dialectical reason is always constitutive: it is the bridge, forever extended and improved, which analytical reason throws out over an abyss" (Levi-Strauss 1972b:246).

Commenting on Sartre's (1960) distinction between dialectical and analytical forms of reason, Levi-Strauss insists that the difference between the two "rests only on the temporary gap separating analytical reason from the understanding of life" (246). Dialectical reason is only analytical reason taken one step further, i.e. "roused to action, tensed by its own efforts to transcend itself" (246).

Levi-Strauss, then, rests his case on the seemingly transcendent quality of dialectical reason. It is, he says, "the necessary condition for (analyses) to venture to undertake the resolutions of the human into the non human" (1972b:246). In this, we are immediately reminded of Hegel, who, as Russell (1961) has pointed out, was convinced that reason reality, and spirit were coterminous. So also, in Levi-Strauss, reason, under the cover of dialectical analysis, becomes esotericised.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

On methodological grounds, we feel that the first of the three theoretical modes considered above, i.e. the structuralist, is the most rigorous and useful. It provides us with a coherent and consistent metalanguage for surveying and discussing a variety of different esoteric forms and settings. It also opens us to an awareness of similarities in the structural organisation of esotericism in different contexts.

The boundarist argument is considerably weakened by Douglas' occasional attempts to reduce consciousness to social relations (i.e. in the Pangolin case). Her pangolin material fares better in the hands of Willis (1975), whose analysis indicates that Lele apprehensions and treatment of the pangolin are not determined by social relations but are in fact a means of bringing about a transcendence of those relations.

As a methodology, the dialectical approach is both vague and all-encompassing, but its advocates, particularly Burridge, offer interesting interpretative insights which mostly tend to 'illuminate' the meaning (i.e. the social and ideational significance) of religious enthusiasm rather than account for its social origins.

Our separation of these three fields of enquiry is purely heuristic. They are all "structural" to a degree and are all intuitive developments of trains of thought first exploited coherently in anthropology by Levi-Strauss. Considered together, they complement one another extensively. Ultimately, all three are attempts to arrive at the meaning of social phenomena, and there is often a marked consensus in the types of meaning which they uncover.

The work of Burridge, Willis, Huxley and occasionally, Turner, often serves to reconstitute the metaphysical in areas in which its primacy

has come to be doubted. For in the work of the new formalists there is an implicit denial of the ethnocentric mechanistic formulations so beloved of the positivists discussed in the previous section (Ch.II B).

However, it seems that the deeper formalism penetrates into the infrastructures of the metaphysical, the more the logical and binary bases of the latter begin to disappear; the analyst inevitably comes face to face with the ineffable. This becomes clear in the work of Burridge, who puts forward the suggestion that it is really the "contemplation and accommodation of the idea of the singular which could be said to be at the roots of civilised life" (1967:113). This is not just a statement of faith. Burridge is adding acuity to an insight which has a long history in a certain section of anthropological theory. We are reminded of Hocart (1970 & 1973) who thought that religion and the celebrations of life were the foci of all social endeavour, government and ritual practices. We are also reminded of Levi Bruhl (1949) who, throughout his life, remained convinced that the characteristic feature of 'primitive' thought was its foundation in an essentially mystical reality (i.e. "the sentiment of the presence, and often the action, of an invisible power ... a reality other than the reality given by the actual circumstances", Precis by Needham, 1972:165). Even today, this metaphysical tradition in anthropology has its explicit advocates, e.g. Huxley (1976) and Casteneda (1970 & 1973).

We noted with interest the strong tendency in Levi-Strauss' later work to a form of structural absolutism (i.e. his philosophy of 'transcendent materialism', 1972:246). To us this represents an oblique form of pure metaphysics. Sperber (1975) has also noticed this aspect of Levi-Strauss' work and has indicated that the source of Levi-Strauss' structures (i.e. the 'mind') is, since it "is the mind of no-one, a

metaphysical entity" (72) and is thus similar in many respects to the "Hegelian universal Mind" (72).

After all, the only difference between Levi-Strauss' systems of correspondences, inversions etc., and those of the Dogon (Calame-Griaule 1965) is the choice of metaphor used to depict their origin and ultimate meaning. For Levi-Strauss, structures represent and inform the workings of the mind ('a metaphysical entity'), for the Dogon, they represent and inform men of the workings of the cosmos.

PART TWO

ANTHROPOSOPHY: A TEST CASE IN ESOTERICISM

"The Universe is, as it were, a huge manuscript in which each object is a letter and the totality of which recounts the Divine ... Human beings endowed with thought can become aware of this symbolic script through Science, Art and Religion; they can decipher Divinity itself and gradually create it."

Camille Mauclair
(Esthétique de Mallarmé)

CHAPTER THREE

ANTHROPOSOPHY IN 'TIME'

"All concrete phenomena cannot manifest themselves of their own accord. They are mere perceptible appearances intended to represent their esoteric affinities with the primordial Ideas."

Moréas
(Manifeste du Symbolisme)

A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The complexity of the material with which we are here forced to deal necessitates the construction of a secondary table of contents:

INTRODUCTION: This includes a brief description of anthroposophy and a general statement of the aims of the section.

DESCRIPTION:
1. Brief social and intellectual history of the late nineteenth century.
2. The 'new' esotericism: Theosophy, anthroposophy and the Golden Dawn.

INTERPRETATION:
1. Introduction of approaches.
2. The psycho-historical approach.
3. The socio-structural approach.
4. The symbolic approach.
5. Conclusions.

INTRODUCTION

Anthroposophy is a religious scientific and philosophical movement which originated in the German-speaking areas of Europe during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The orientation of anthroposophists is ultimately one of earthly transcendence (i.e. knowledge of "higher worlds" or "supersensible realities") and this is attained through an application of the self to both esoteric and exoteric modes of thought and action. The specific nature and meaning of these modes for anthroposophists will be discussed later. For the present it will suffice to state that the movement, its beliefs and essential character, was formulated by an Austrian philosopher, Rudolf Steiner, in the period 1890-1925; that it favours communal living, child education and social work, and that it has representative communities and institutions in many countries including Britain, Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, Holland, South Africa and

the Americas.

Our study begins by indicating anthroposophy's cultural and contextual specificity. We cannot ever arrive at a satisfactory causal explanation for anthroposophy, and its success as such, but we can attempt to determine the extent of its appropriateness, its 'reasonableness' as a form of religious representation for certain types and classes of people. This will be done by relating both its incidence and the larger esoteric eruption of which it was a part, to certain social and ideational configurations manifest at the end of the nineteenth century.

DESCRIPTION

1. HISTORY OF THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Technologically and economically, the second half of the nineteenth century was one of the most turbulent phases of European history. This was perhaps greatly facilitated by the four decades of peace (1871 to 1914) between the end of the Franco-Prussian war and the outbreak of the First World War. The two dominant social forces of the period were imperialism and industrialism. The technology that had arisen out of the scientific achievements of the previous century coupled with the improved communications and material resources that accrued from colonisation led to a general growth in European population, a drift towards the cities, the creation of massive inequalities and the generation of two new socio-political classes, viz. an ascendant bourgeoisie and an industrial proletariat.

Accompanying this unprecedented industrialisation and economic growth were overcrowding in the cities, oppressive working conditions,

disease and new forms of worker exploitation (Benns, 1942:34-5). Old political and social ties were being eroded and old class and role structures were being dissolved in the wake of the development of a new industrial division of labour. The formerly prestigeous and powerful gentry, landed aristocracy and churches were being overshadowed by statesmen, industrialists, technologists and scientists... Among the more successful or well-established classes traditional forms of religion and ideology were to a large extent weakened and replaced by a laissez faire philosophy of industrial, material and scientific progress. Among the less privileged, the new ideological orders of the day were, in the cities at least, socialism, democracy and in some areas, patriotism.

Spearheading this vast transformation of the European continent were the German-speaking peoples. But even the powerful German Empire under Bismarck periodically incurred overdevelopment and overspeculation, and from 1875 to the mid 1890s, it suffered repeated financial crises and economic depressions (Benns 62). The other German empire, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, was also beset by internal problems. The free movement of peoples of various social origins (i.e. Czechs, Austrians, Magyars etc.) throughout the country coupled with industrial and agricultural unrest contributed to a mood of political instability and uncertainty (Benns. 298-301).

The rapidly changing social conditions, revolutions in industrial technology, scientific theory, systems of government and the improved communications and contact with the peoples of Asia were paralleled by metamorphoses in European man's consciousness of himself, the world and his place in the world. We have already referred to a few examples of this, the materialist millenium of the Marxists, the spirit of nationalism and - inextricably fused with these - the ethic of progress. From all

these a general picture emerges of individual man as the prime mover in history, a new dynamic self-reliant man imbued with a new sense of his own power and potentiality, and determined to realise this in either a supreme material well being, an apotheosis of scientific understanding or an ethical egalitarianism. However, the social conditions within which this ethic of individualist and materialist fervour was realised were coloured by material inequalities, industrial ugliness, political confusion and racial enmities. Criticism of these conditions came not only from the left (Brinton 1950:474-89) but also from the right, from those sections of society which benefited considerably from the new freedoms, cosmopolitanism and expansion of wealth. Groups such as the 'Romantics', the 'Aesthetics' and the 'Utopians' of the cities, universities and leisured classes, were appalled by the industrial chaos, the materialist scramble, and the godlessness which had evolved with the new ethos of scientism, socialism and capitalism. It was within this largely privileged, urban intellectual and artistic milieu that the 'new' esotericism (i.e. Anthroposophy, Theosophy etc.) flourished.

The prevailing academic and artistic consciousness of western society in the period 1880 to 1920 has been interpreted by Talcott Parsons as a "revolution of great magnitude" (Parsons 1949:5). Hughes and Brinton list the major characteristics of the period as a return to idealism, romanticism and mysticism, a new emphasis on "organic wholeness", and a re-discovery of the "unconscious" (Brinton 1950:421 and Hughes 1974:63-6). The new literati saw their philosophies as the very antinomy of the scientific positivism and overt rationalism of their "Enlightenment" predecessors. Their positivist inheritance, i.e. Social Darwinism, materialism, mechanism and naturalism, was conceived of as stilting, dogmatic, anti-intellectual and even unscientific.

New explorations of the more metaphysical regions of human reality - the mind, the psyche, and the soul - were being made by Freud, Bergson, Spengler and later Levi-Bruhl and Jung in the social sciences; Renan, Lang and Muller in religious thought; Gide, Mann, Proust, and later, Hesse in literature. Even those who protested against the "renascent mysticism" (Hughes, 1974:35) of their contemporaries, men such as Durkheim, Freud (and later Weber) were caught up in the investigation of religious metaphysics.

According to Hughes (1974:34 & 107), models for this intellectual transformation, were provided by the philosophies of Kant and Nietzsche. Kant's idealism inspired attempts to define and demarcate the nature of subjective existence. Nietzsche's celebration of ecstasy (referred to by Musgrove as "his passionate hymn to Dionysias" 1975:45) and his violent opposition to bourgeois sentiment, clericalism, dogmatism and mediocrity fired the new generation of artists and writers with enthusiasm.

The influence of Darwin and Social Darwinism was still considerable, but rationalism and progressivism were the most powerful doctrinal inheritances of the late nineteenth century. Society had become increasingly more secularised and the educated classes were generally sceptical towards traditional Christianity. The real religious inheritance of the era was Protestant liberalism, the "infrastructural foundation" of which lay in (according to Berger) "capitalist triumphs in economy and technology .... Western expansion and .... bourgeois cultural dominance" (Berger 1973:162).

Protestantism had turned Christianity into a religion without metaphysics. Nietzsche had earlier proclaimed the "death of God" and "prophesied that modern man must live henceforth in an exclusively immanent godless world" (Eliade 1969:47). Even theologians were rapidly

compromising with the new secular culture and were helping to loosen further the boundaries and constraints of Christendom (cf. Berger 1973:162). For many, Christianity had lost its meaning. Clearly the field was open for new, more appropriate forms of worship.

The response came from a series of sects which for the first time in history were drawing upon a vast reservoir of non-Christian heritages and beliefs. The first of these was the Spiritualist movement which spread from America in the 1850s and 1860s. This was quickly followed by the foundation of the Theosophical Society in the 1870s and 1880s, first in America and soon after in the cities of Europe. Newly revised Rosicrucian societies were established in the 1880s in France, England and Germany. There were also a host of smaller, occult groups such as the Luciferics in France and the Thule group in Germany about which little is known (cf. Crow 1972: Ch.XXV and Webb 1971:Index).

The outstanding feature which all these late nineteenth century groups had in common was an interest in the occult and the esoteric. Hence we shall refer to them collectively as the 'new esotericism'.

2. THE 'NEW' ESOTERICISM

Our knowledge of the new esotericism is confined to the history and writings of three organisations, namely, Theosophy, Anthroposophy and the Golden Dawn. A reliable statistical appreciation of the numbers of people actively involved in each of these organisations is not readily available. But it is known that some fifteen to twenty thousand Europeans were involved in Anthroposophy by the end of the First World War. The active membership of the Golden Dawn was considerably less, numbering a few hundred. The Theosophical Society was clearly the largest of all,

but its boundaries were so vague and disjointed that it can only be considered as a widespread social 'current' (Durkheim, 1966:8) and not as an autonomous centralised institution or collectivity.

We shall now give a brief synopsis of the most characteristic features of the 'new' esotericism. These were as follows: (a) a proclamation of access to hidden forms of truth and power; (b) a conviction that esoteric and occult philosophies provided keys to the solution of European man's social and existential problems and (c) a deference to the treatises, methodologies, discoveries and terminologies of post-enlightenment positive science.

(a) Access to hidden forms of truth and power.

The early Theosophists claimed to have been in contact with a series of Mahatmas and other spirit beings from whom they learnt of (i) the presence of an immanent and transcendent "universal spirit", (ii) the truth of reincarnation and karma, (iii) the "solidarity or brotherhood of all living things", and (iv) man's ability to pass beyond the body, mind and emotions and thus achieve a state of "pure being" (Besant 1921 : 301).

Aleister Crowley, a prominent figure in the Golden Dawn movement describes his esoteric discovery, the "Book of the Law", as a "statement of transcendent truth" which was the "utterance of an illuminated mind co-extensive with the ultimate ideas of which the universe is composed" (Crowley, 1971:417) and which offered a method by which man could enter into communication with a type of transcendent intelligence which he refers to as "Aiwass".

Similarly, the claims made for Anthroposophy by its founder Rudolf Steiner, suggest, as we shall see later, that it too was "squarely based" upon "actual knowledge of the spiritual world and that it contained a

programme for developing intuitions of "the spiritual reality behind .... .. the earthly phenomena" (Easton 1975:7-9).

(b) Esotericism - a solution to social and existential problems

We have already referred (cf. Ch.I: to the early Theosophists' advocation of esotericism as a solution to existential problems. The later Theosophists led by Annie Besant put forward an esoteric World Teacher who would, it was hoped, resolve wider social disturbances and act as the "vehicle for the emergence of a new age of man - a "new development of the evolutionary spiral, whose birth .. (would indicate) .. another step forward for humanity"(Webb, 1971:61).

Rudolf Steiner, in his autobiography written just after the turn of the twentieth century, referred repeatedly to the need for an introduction of metaphysical realities into everyday life and the "need to impart information from the world of spirit to the contemporary cultural world in general" (1951:338). P.D. Ouspensky an occultist of the same milieu and advocate of the philosophy of the celebrated magician Gurdjieff, went as far as to consider European man's "chief tragedy" as his incapacity "to imagine what exists beyond the wall of the known and the possible" (cited in Tiryakian, 1975:23). Even the Golden Dawn's Aleister Crowley, who at one point in his career conceived of himself as the "Logos of the aeon, the Prophet chosen to proclaim the Law which will determine the destinies of this planet for an epoch", also maintained (after discovering a new esoteric text viz. the 'Book of Lies') that he held in his hands "the key to the future progress of humanity"(Crowley 1971:668 & 776).

(c) Esotericism and scientism

The scientific colouring of much of the new metaphysics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been pointed out by Eliade (1969:42-44). Eliade ascribes a "positivistic optimism" to the activities of the Spiritualists, who, he claims, were captivated with the idea of producing "positive proofs of the existence of the soul" (42). This idea also dominated the activities and ethos of H.P. Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy who, he points out, "presented the world with an occultistic revelation in terms which it could understand" (43). Although it encompassed a vast range of esoteric oriental knowledge, Theosophy was firmly based upon a distinctly evolutionary view of man, a scientism further substantiated by "material proofs" such as visitations from supernatural entities (43).

Around the same time in Paris, Auguste Comte, the founder of modern sociology, was attempting to turn his 'scientific positivism' into an apocalyptic religion. Philosopher Henri Bergson had just produced his '"L' evolution creatrice" in which he expounded the possibility of a spiritual evolution, a theory which seemed to many (cf. Webb 1971:53) an attractive successor to Nietzsche's proclamations on the advent of the "Superman".

While eminent representatives of the scientific world were advocating new variations of metaphysical scientism, a new stream of metaphysicians were indicating the compatibility of scientific and spiritual world views and proclaiming that the former could only lead to an understanding of the latter. Aleister Crowley, for example, envisaged a means of combining "a few simple incontrovertible scientific principles into a Law which would allow the loftiest aspirations to seek satisfaction in spiritual spheres ...

.. and to assist the scientific mind to see that even the most materialistic concept of the cosmos was ultimately mystical" (1971:672).

Rudolf Steiner saw in Darwinism and the "natural-scientific evolutionary succession" as propogated in the nineteenth century by Haeckel and others, not "something wherein mechanical or merely organic laws hold sway, but something wherein the spirit leads the living beings from the simple through the complex up to man" (1951:306). Hence his purpose in founding anthroposophy was to arrive at a scientific, objective appraisal and understanding of the spiritual world. In his own words what he strove for "was to set forth in anthroposophy the objective continuation of science, not to place by the side of science something subjective" (1951:311-312). Contained in this, and in Blavatsky's claim that "occult sciences claim less and give more, at all events, than either Darwinian Anthropology or Biblical Theology" (cited in Webb.1971:53), is an obvious enthusiasm for the scientific method and an almost positivist conviction that science was capable of exploring the deepest of mysteries, even of answering what Brinton terms the "big questions" (1950:336). Science, by driving out what Crowley terms as the "faith" and "prejudice" of dogmatic religion (1971:672), opened up whole new phenomenal dimensions and indicated the possibility of a new "change of direction in the process of human evolution" (Steiner 1951:277).

INTERPRETATION

1. INTRODUCTION OF APPROACHES

Any single interpretation of the forms of religious representation generated by a pluralistic society such as nineteenth century Europe will

inevitably be over-simplistic. So, in an attempt to cover the widest possible range of relevant details we shall introduce and try to utilise three different types of interpretative framework, assess their limitations and evaluate their heuristic merits. Following this we shall amalgamate the three approaches, and argue that such a synthetic framework contributes towards an understanding of the problem.

The psycho-historical, which is diachronic and causal, and roughly corresponds to a reductionist, substantivist framework of the type considered earlier (Ch.IIB:1&3)

The socio-structural, which combines theories of the structuralist/boundarist type (Ch.IIC:1&2) and is both synchronic and diachronic. This approach is causal in regard to the generation of meaningful forms. It is thus an attempt to show why esotericism and these particular types of esotericism were chosen in the nineteenth century rather than anything else.

The symbolic. This represents our adaptation of Burridge (1969) and as such is a-chronic and incorporates an implicit dialectical methodology. A symbolic approach considers that religious representations have a social as well as a metaphysical significance. In this case, we hypothesise that the new esotericism embodies a series of statements about power, and regeneration, and redemption.

2. THE PSYCHO-HISTORICAL

This approach examines the problem in the light of psychology and views nineteenth century esotericism as an essentially psychological

response to over-riding historical change and development. It is exemplified in the work of Webb (1971) whose succinct attempts to capture the prevailing psychological mood of the era are invaluable as an introduction to the problem, but whose analysis of the same is clearly erroneous.

According to Webb, ".... Western man as a whole was undergoing a severe trial of his capacity to adapt to an environment which for the first time seemed beyond his powers to order". For, ".... as man advanced to greater mastery of the physical, so his always precarious hold began to slip upon the more intangible aspects of his relationships with the universe. His society, his awareness, his methods of thought, and most importantly the conclusions he reached were changing all around him" (Webb 1971:IX-X).

Webb, like many of the substantivists discussed earlier (cf.Ch.2B) attempts to explain the revival of esotericism in the nineteenth century in terms of traditional psychology. He considers it a "widespread flight from reason", and a "means of obtaining some sort of illusory control over a frightening situation" (Webb 1971:XIII). However, while the situation at the end of the nineteenth century might have given grounds for 'fear' and 'anxiety', there is little evidence for this. A cursory glance at an appropriate selection of the esoteric texts (e.g. Blavatsky 1966 Crowley 1971, Steiner, numerous) shows little sign of paranoia or neurosis. Moreover it is sociologically untenable and unnecessary to condemn religious enthusiasts as escapists and to reduce their doctrines, experiences, visions and aspirations to the level of a mere delusion. In any case most nineteenth century esoterics seemed more attracted to dangerous, frightening situations, than repelled by them. Also as Tiryakian has suggested (1975), the fascination with danger is a characteristic of

most forms of esotericism, and this 'Promethean' appeal has served to attract rather than deter explorations of ultimate knowledge (Tiryakian 1975:7-8).

The existential dangers which arose out of experiential involvement in the new esotericism have been well documented. (cf. Crowley 1971, 673-9 & 639 and Yorke in Howe, 1972:XVII-XVIII). The new orders were "not established for the benefit of those who .... (desired) .... only superficial knowledge" (Howe 1972:IX) nor were they for the weak-willed. A powerful example of the type of forces which one group of esoterics (the Golden Dawn) was attempting to confront, is contained in the following statement by Mathers (1896):

> ".... I felt I was in contact with a force so terrible that I can only compare it to the shock one would receive from being near a flash of lightning during a great thunderstorm, experiencing great difficulty in breathing .... nervous prostration... .. cold sweats and bleeding from the nose, mouth and sometimes the ears". (Cited in Tiryakian 1975,172).

But even if esotericism and mysticism are forms of 'escapism' in the sense that they represent abdication from social responsibility, and even if their adherants can be characterised as having an asocial or anti-social outlook this still does not sufficiently answer our questions: why should esoteric forms of religion rather than exoteric forms (i.e. church religion) have been chosen? And why should it have been these particular types of esotericism which were chosen?

3. THE SOCIO-STRUCTURAL

This approach, which we have derived from the boundarist formula of Mary Douglas, enables us to examine the contextual specificity of nineteenth

century esotericism. By maintaining that symbolic orders are invariably replications of social states, Douglas provides us with a non reductionist hypothesis. In line with Douglas' methodology, then, we shall attempt to establish correlations between the major characteristics of the new esotericism and a type of experience of society current among specific groups of people in the nineteenth century.

If Douglas (1973b:168) and Turner (1974:115) are correct, the intellectual fringes of society (student circles, poets, artists etc., highly placed privileged groups who have little political power or immediate social responsibility can be considered as marginal, liminal categories of people. They are not burdened by normal societal and practical constraints. Their unstructured existence and experiences of weak classification can lead to them being attracted to, or even constructing, symbol systems that replicate cosmologically their state of marginality.

As an explanation of nineteenth century esotericism, Douglas' model is particularly apposite. Of the new wave of esoterics, practically all were privileged, well positioned and educated, even if, as Webb claims, they came "from the lower strata of the intelligentsia" (Webb 1971:65). They lived on the academic, intellectual and artistic fringes of society and they experienced a "lack of structuring" (Douglas 1973b:168) in the sense that this is generally held to be true of the intellectuals and artists of many societies. There is little evidence to suggest that the new esoterics denigrated conventional "status incumbency" (Turner, 115). However they certainly rejected the godlessness of the industrial milieu and the metaphysical emptiness of materialism and socialism (what Blavatsky calls a "mortal epidemic", cited in Webb 1971:46 and Steiner calls a "spiritual sleep", 1951:289). As an alternative, they gladly embraced what Turner terms "VITAL relations with other men in fact or imagination"

(Turner 1974:115, emphasis mine) i.e. spiritual relationships and membership of spiritual groups.

Turner's interpretation of communities as a society-directed, rejuvenatory construct (see earlier Ch.II:C) is also valid in this instance, since most of the types of transcendentalism espoused by nineteenth century esoterics retained an exoteric, activist, reformative orientation (see above p.141). But although the "good inside" was held to be preferable to the "bad outside" (Douglas 1973b: 152) by the Theosophists et al, only from the "inside" could the required answers come.

These answers - the new dogmas or modes of "redemption" (Burridge, 1969:13) professed by the various esoteric groups - were in essence very similar to one another. We can detect a repetition of two specific formulations, namely, a homocentric vision of the cosmos, and embodied in this, a mystification of the human ego and its major faculty of expression - the human will.

The central cosmological construct of the new esotericism was its vision of the universe as man-centred. The esoterics were convinced that 'ultimate reality' inhered within man himself. They maintained that at one point in his evolutionary past man had been a totally spiritual being, and that this spirituality had been corrupted and effaced by centuries of materialism, ignorance and religious prejudice. For the new esoterics, man was but a shadow of his former self, he had become progressively 'alienated' from a higher, spiritual state which was his true cosmic inheritance. They proposed antidotes of various kinds, which, they believed, would alter this state of affairs and bring about realignment with man's inner spiritual self.

The Anthroposophists in particular maintained that the secret of the

universe was "expressed in and discoverable by an understanding of the real nature of man" (Shepherd, 1954:25). Steiner argued for a doctrine of "ethical individualism", which explicitly rejected the God-centredness and rule dependence of traditional Christianity by maintaining that the moral life proceeded "not from without in the form of commandments obeyed, but from the unfolding of the human soul and spirit wherein lies the divine" (Steiner, 1951 : 274). The pervasiveness of this element of homocentricity in Steiner's doctrine is apparent in the etymology of the term anthroposophy itself (i.e. from the Greek anthropos and sophos, meaning 'man-wisdom' or 'wisdom in man').

The homocentric nature of the beliefs of the Spiritualists and Theosophists is apparent in the fact that the latter attempted to contact and materialize individuated spirit entities which were once alive (and therefore dead men or 'ex-men') but in their spirit state were considered as sources of knowledge and wisdom. Similarly, this aspect of homocentricity is manifest in the Golden Dawn belief that the inner soul of man was "a magical mirror of the universe" (King, 1970:54). The members of that group also maintained that "any principle that exists in the cosmos exists also in man" (54). This correspondence of the microcosm (man) to the macrocosm (the universe) and the implication that divinity inhered in the former as much as the latter is also brought out in Crowley's "Book of the Law" which reconciled "an impersonal and infinite interpretation of the cosmos with an egocentric and practical viewpoint" (Crowley 1971:419).

Also, Webb has proposed that the defining characteristic of the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century of which the new esotericism was an aspect and continuation, was a "concentration on the self". He sees this as a product of the Enlightenment, when it became clear to many that "the universe revolved around man ... man was the perceptible centre

of things ... his acts and his passions ... (were) ... invested with an awesome significance, as the dramatic activities of the lord of the world" (Webb 1971:XII-XIII).

The next step in our argument is to demonstrate, briefly, that the homocentric cosmologies of the esoterics corresponded closely to a basic social experience of progressive atomisation and group differentiation. This experience was a direct inheritance of the vast economic, political, technological, social and ethical transformations that had been wrought in the previous century (the "Age of Reason", Webb 1971:IX). The coincidence of "ecstasy" or Dionysiac thought forms and periods of similarly rapid social and economic change, such as eleventh century England and sixteenth century Europe, has been noted by Musgrave (1975:41). The characteristic features of each of these periods were, Musgrave maintains, an increase in differentiation, vast movements of people across wide geographical areas and, above all, an increase in specialisation. The experience of specialisation - one of the distinguishing marks of the scientific enterprize - tended to lead to a progressive lack of communication between people, an increasing fragmentation of social bonds and an experience of society as dehumanising and impersonal.

The types of people most aware of this dehumanising, alienating process were the scientists, intellectuals, philosophers and artists of the period. Weber and Durkheim, for example, pointed to the existence of vast, impersonal social forces which trapped, chained and coerced human beings, and limited individual potential. (cf. Durkheim, cited by Musgrove, 1975:42-3 and Weber cited by Willis, 1975:127-8). Similarly, both the "aesthetes" and "activists" of the English Romantic Movement objected to "mass living, pollution and machines". They sought to liberate man from an ugly, impersonal society and to bring about a return

of "human dignity" and "wholeness" (Musgrave, 1975:69).

Like their 'establishment' contemporaries the new esoterics demanded the restoration of wholeness and individual sanctity, the recognition of a higher measure of man. They also demanded and sought to provide, like the nationalists and socialists of the same period, the means for creating a new spirit of community, a new form of integration, a united collectivity of man based upon the restoration of close inter-personal communication and intimate social bonds.

However, unlike most of their contemporaries, the kind of social bond that the new esoterics sought to restore and further, was 'defiantly' spiritual. They were arguing for the recognition of an innate, pervasive human bond which transcended social, ideological, material and political distinctions; an inner esoteric identity which existed at the heart of all human endeavour whether scientific, religious or economic, a generic connexion similar to that which Turner (1974) has defined elsewhere as the spirit of 'communitas'.

The social situation of nineteenth century Europe presents striking parallels with ethnographic situations more familiar to the anthropologist. It corresponds roughly to what Douglas (1973b) has defined as the "weak group/weak grid"type of social world, which is characterised by weak social coherence and classification and an experience of "impersonal rules" and impersonal leaders ("Big Men") (168-71). She draws upon the example of Colonial New Guinea which, with its "permanent, on-going back-drop" of an "ego-focused grid" (ref.1973b.165) and "Big Man" cosmology, is exactly that type of society which "is liable to recurrent breakdown from its inherent moral weakness. It cannot continually sustain the commitment of all its members to an egalitarian principle that favours a minority" (168). The result is a recurring epidemic of ecstasy, enthusiastic religion or

millenarianism, which is constantly shelving old orders, old cosmologies and old experiences and attempting to create new ones which will realise more efficiently the inner spiritual worth of the individual, and lead to a regenerated, reintegrated social order.

The kinds of cosmologies which the Melanasian millenialists put forward has also been indicated by Pocock (1971). The latter maintains that since "the social forms of communication" had become inadequate, and since the society was "as near to atomization into its component individuals as it could be", the millenarians resorted to a

> ".... new stress upon the individual as that society ... (conceived) .. .. it, an emphasis upon history, upon individual possession by spirits, upon the individual inspired leader. (Pocock 1971:111-2).

Pocock adds that "what was individual and understressed in the normal rhythm of society", now became social and was stressed "at the expense of forms which no longer render(ed) experience meaningful" (112). Pocock's argument is directly relevant to an understanding of esotericism in the nineteenth century, not only because of the remarkable correspondence between the two social situations, but also because of the similarity in representation, i.e. individuated ecstasy, an ego focused divinity, individual spirits, individual leaders and the expressed desire for regeneration and reintegration.

In both settings, old dogmatic orders were rejected in favour of new enthusiastic and ecstatic orders. The Melanasians rejected both traditional cosmology and colonial Christianity yet incorporated aspects of both in their new system. Similarly the esoterics of nineteenth century Europe rejected Social Darwinism, rationalism, Christianity and to a large extent, positive science, yet incorporated elements of all these

within their new systems. Also, the most prominent feature of both sets of cosmology, Melanasian and European, was their homocentricity, their conceptualisation of the divinity as man-centred and man-embodied.

The earthly source of paramount transcendent force and occult power for the new esoterics was identified as the human 'will'. The concept of "will" although central to the archaic western magical tradition and thus in possession of a long, if obscure, history (cf.Gray in Tart, 1975:444-5) had been revised in the 1880s by Nietzsche (the "will to power" cf. Hughes 1974:104) and by Schopenhauer. The latter's "The World as Will and Idea" (cf. Ravenscroft 1974:23) denied that God could ever incarnate on earth, and replaced the concept of an ultimate reality with what could be called "a blind striving of the Will". According to Ravenscroft (1974) Schopenhauer maintained that "the only reality open to human beings was the actual physical experience of will power" (24). The concept of Will, which was later to become the central premise in the terrifying Weltanschauung of Adolf Hitler, (Bullock 1952: Index) and Ravenscroft 1974:24-25), also parallels Bergson's "elan vital" and Freud's "libido" (cf. Hughes 1974:105). Although the meaning in each of these cases varied, the idea of will as a source of metahuman power, resident in the human body, remained constant throughout.

Rudolf Steiner conceived of "Willing" as one aspect of the tripartite configuration of man, and construed development of this faculty as essential to the attainment of "Intuition" and spiritual progress (Easton 1975:297-8). Human "will" was the individuated, microcosmic counterpart of macrocosmic, divine "Will". But the concept of Will received its most potent expression and deification in Crowley's magical formula "Do what thou will shall be the whole of the Law" (Crowley 1971:422). Although for Crowley this "Will" was brought forward during the sexual act, the reference was clearly to

the metaphysical power (i.e. "thou") thought to be operative at the heart of "Will" (Crowley 1971:598 and 422-3). The concept of "Will" in the new esoteric cosmologies was a direct correlate of nineteenth century European man's experience and inherited view of himself as a choicemaker, a prime mover and a manipulator of natural forces, which seemed, indeed, to be at the mercy of his will.

One other aspect of the esoteric's homocentric vision of divinity with which we shall briefly deal is the idea of "spirit". Whereas "will" was for them a conjoint divine/human faculty, "spirit" was considered man's divine alter-ego, his real "spirit self". The real nature of the "I" or the "self" was not an earthly ego but a spirit ego. Thus one present-day Anthroposophist/esoteric, Easton (1975) considers the "I" to be"the spiritual core of the human being" and maintains that awareness of this "I" is the only way of achieving real personal "freedom" (Easton 1975:123-4).

Clearly it was not the "fear of freedom" (Webb 1971:XIII) which gave rise to the new esotericism: rather the new esotericism was, on the one hand, a symbolically appropriate celebration of a new found existential and material "freedom" - the inheritance of the leisure classes in the nineteenth century - and, on the other hand, a more meaningful declaration of divinity as being man-centred, man-embodied and (in keeping with the new optimistic spirit of science) attainable by scientific progress and discovery.

4. THE SYMBOLIC

In this section we shall attempt to discover the meaning of esotericism for those who participated in esoteric activities. The term

'symbolic' was chosen rather than 'contentive' (Hahn 1973:219) since the meanings we infer (i.e. themes of power, redemption and regeneration) are both imputed and imposed.

We shall take as axiomatic Burridge's (1969) view that religion has to do with the discovery, identification, comprehension, ordering and usage of different types of power, and that access to these types of powers within established frameworks secures, or at least makes possible, a redemption or salvation from earthly trappings or obligations. Burridge terms the means with which access to these types of power is guaranteed as the "redemptive media" (1969:6), and the sequence of activities which this means involves as the "redemptive process".

We have already identified the type of "power", divinity or source of validation and redemption, which was thought to be operative within the new esoteric milieu. It was a power which resided within the individual, it was 'spirit', 'ego', 'I' or "self". The new means of establishing access to this power was thought by the esoterics to inhere within the faculty of 'will'. However, this meant that "will" still had to be activited and developed, and there was a shortage of traditionally recognised or established means for doing this. Those who sought redemption had to look beyond outmoded forms of redemptive media (i.e. Christianity) and find inspiration in an agency that endowed the individual, and the individual will, with great power.

Precisely such an agency was provided by the modes of thought, methodology and practices of 'science'. Accordingly, science was conceived as the new "redemptive medium", the new means for getting in touch with power.

Prior to demonstrating that the esoterics of the nineteenth century believed that science and the scientific method could secure and appropriate avenues of access to the ultimate power that lay within man himself, we wish to attempt to explain why science was converted into a redemptive media, why it was thought to be 'powerful'.

Clearly, old assumptions about power, i.e. those of Western Christianity, had lost their meaning and relevance for large sections of Europe's educated classes. Christianity had been substantially weakened in the previous century by the rise of technological enterprize, the analytical ravages of the scientific method, social Darwinism, the materialist ethos and an increasing social experience of atomisation and specialisation. Christian ethics and reality had become alienated from one another, so Christianity "no longer enabled the individual to perceive the truth of things" (Burridge 1969:8). Further, the redemptive media contained within Christianity could no longer provide access to the new individuated conception (i.e. spirit) of power. It was not that the Christians held exclusive access to power and its rewards, as was the case in the Brahman/Kshatriya situation outlined by Burridge (1969:150-1 & Ch.III above) but that the Christians themselves seemed stilted and hypocritical, for they no longer had access to power or ultimate truth, yet pretended that this was not the case. Hence, the Christian Churches were conceived of as dogmatic, prejudiced and misinformed and sometimes even evil (as in Nietzsche's philosophy).

An alternative set of assumptions about power was contained in the Enlightenment philosophies of the previous (18th) century, i.e. rationalism, positivism and Social Darwiniwm. However, as we have seen (above p.137.) these too were rejected by large sections of the nineteenth century intelligentsia as lacking in both explanatory value and 'truth' value.

Brinton (1950) has pointed out that although rationalism rejected God and the supernatural, it was still a type of metaphysics, a cosmology, which usually had "a full set of answers for the Big Questions" (334-6). But, by the late nineteenth century it was clear to many that rationalism lacked a redemptive process - a "complete release from obligation" (Burridge, 1969:13). Science and rationalism had, in this case, contributed to a"lack of immediacy in the social experience of ultimate power" (from Isenberg, 1975:31). This viewpoint was, perhaps, encouraged by the ignoble compromise between rationalism and Christianity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (cf. Brinton, 1950:436).

However it seemed to many that the rationalists and scientists did have access to certain forms of invisible power. These were not divinities or ultimate powers but manifestations of the power of man to apprehend and harness forces of natural energy. But it also seemed that the scientists had little control, physical or moral, over much of the power they were handling. This power had been "allowed to run wild" (Burridge 1969:172). It was being misused by industrialists, businessmen and technocrats who were producing overcrowded cities, slum conditions, abject poverty, new forms of social inequality, pollution and mechanical ugliness.

The new esotericism was an attempt to capture and redirect scientific power to convert it into a medium of redemption, a means of establishing contact with ultimate power. In a sense the esoterics sought to effect a transference of scientific power from the domain of technology and material progress into the domain of spiritual transcendence, faith and meaning. They thought that with the aid of scientific investigative techniques the spirit that was believed to lie within the individual could be identified and made manifest.

It remains now to demonstrate the extent to which the 'spirit of

science', the scientific method, its orientations, metaphors and procedures, permeated the philosophies of the new esoterics.

The Theosophical society was initially the first group to attempt to introduce a scientific perspective into matters of religion (cf. Eliade 1969:43). The Theosophists had compared Darwin's scientific theory of evolution to Hindu, Buddhist and Egyptian ideas on metempsychosis, reincarnation and 'progressive realisation', and had found them to be logically and metaphysically compatable. They believed that just as "Man evolved from a lower level of animal life .... and was at present constituted was on his way to higher and better things", so also "Evolution continued on a cosmic scale, with each individual born and reborn thousands of times until he had achieved earthly perfection" (Webb, 1971:52-3). Moreover, H.P. Blavatsky in her "avowed attempt to reconcile Science and Religion" (Webb, 53) maintained that "Occult Sciences claim less and give more, at all events, than Darwinian Anthropology or Biblical Theology" (Blavatsky 1909, cited in Webb, 1971:53). What they gave was a promise or offer of access to ultimate powers, to redemption and salvation.

Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy was conceived as a "Spiritual Science". Its purpose was to bring about an objective confrontation with, and comprehension of, "supersensible realities". In this regard anthroposophy was established as an "objective continuation of science" (Steiner, 1951: 311-312) and went clearly beyond the limited view of the scientific endeavour which, Steiner felt, was prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century (312). Steiner even maintained that it was out of the scientific "mode of cognition" (311) that he drew his "experience of the world of spirit" (311).

The ritual power believed to inhere in scientific concepts of

objectivity, sense verification and 'proof' is also brought out in the objectives of the Golden Dawn group whose 'ritual workings' were orientated towards transforming intangible spirit entities into tangible, observable, material ones. Crowley's 'Book of the Law' co-ordinated, its discoverer claimed, "the disconnected discoveries of science from physics to psychology into a coherent and consistent system", and it proved through "internal evidence" the existence of some "discarnate intelligence" with which communications could be established (Crowley 1971:418-420).

In a sense, the esoterics captured scientific power and converted it into ritual power. They felt that man had become incomplete, he had been "inwardly broken up by modern civilisation and its demands .... and through this .. (had) .. lost power" (Rosch-Lehrs,1958:131-2). This power, they felt, could be regained through "natural scientific empirical knowledge" (Steiner, 1951:273). For the latter, according to Rudolf Steiner, contained "something out of which the spirit could be found again which had been lost from the creeds traditionally preserved and believed" (273). Since science itself was totally a product of human endeavour and willpower only science could bring to light a spirit which existed not in the "Beyond" but in "this side" (i.e. in man himself) (Steiner,1951:273).

But science was not an end in itself, only a medium of redemption and hence only a beginning. "Scientific laws", continued Steiner, "led to spiritual laws" which represented "something higher than all the rest of nature" (273). After these had been achieved man was on his own - the arbiter of his own destiny, and the master of his own spirit. For "whatever flows from this - in that is man free. He lifts himself above the rigid necessity of laws of the inorganic and organic; he heeds and follows himself alone" (Steiner, 1951:273).

Contained in the above metaphysic is a statement of spiritual regeneration - "a condition of being in which humans become free movers, in which there are no obligations" (Burridge, 1969:cover). Similar themes of redemption and regeneration recur frequently in the history of the new esotericism, at the levels of both self and society.

Certain prominent Theosophists, e.g. Bauer (cf. Rittelmeyer, 1929:19) and Olcott (cf. C.Wilson, 1974:229-30) were renowned for their abilities to cure and heal. Rudolf Steiner was also credited with great healing power. One of his patients, a prominent theologian, Frederick Rittelmeyer, who later became leader of the Christian Community, attributed his recovery from neurasthenia and other illnesses to the adoption of certain exercises prescribed by Steiner (cf. Rittelmeyer,1929:38).

The new esotericism also diagnosed and proposed remedies for social sickness. Society was frequently characterised as 'ailing'. Annie Besant, for example, one of the leaders of the Theosophists, publicly admonished her messianic protege, Krishnamurti in 1910, to "come in the Splendour of Thy Power and save the world which is perishing for lack of Thee" (cited in Webb 1971:61). The new wisdom of the Theosophists was, after all, revealed for the benefit of those people "infected by the moral epidemic of our century - hopeless materialism"(Webb:46). Theosophy guaranteed a transcendence and a regeneration - vestiges of hope and possibility.

The regeneration of individual spiritual lives promised by the new esotericism, was a regeneration of self into a state of power. This power could then be transferred into society where it could have, depending upon the medium, either beneficial or harmful consequences. (Some mediums were considered good, e.g. Steiner, while some were considered evil, e.g. Crowley, cf. Ravenscroft, 1974, indeces, and C.Wilson, 1974:Ch.7).

Metaphors of self and world salvation, of regeneration, renewal and redemption recur frequently in the epistemologies and histories of the new esotericism. One of the metaphors deployed by certain groups, e.g. that led by Crowley, was blatently sexual. Crowley was also detested by the English Victorian establishment, who largely Christian and reputedly ascetic, correspond closely to the type of"ascetic cult", depicted by Leach (1976), which usually considers the sexual act as the "prototype of evil" (74). Crowley represented the very antithesis of this attitude. He insisted that "sexual excitement .... (was) .... merely a degraded form of divine ecstasy" (Crowley, 1971:598). For Crowley sex was, in Leach's terminology,"a symbol of the divine" (Leach 1976:74) and a means to mystical power. Crowley felt that he had

> ".... harnessed the wild horses of human passions to the chariot of the Spiritual Sun. I have given these horses wings that mankind may no longer travel painfully upon the earth, shaken by every irregularity of the surface, but course at large through the boundless ether" (Crowley 1971:598).

5. CONCLUSIONS

By way of conclusion we shall attempt to bring together the three interpretative strands which were outlined at the beginning of our discussion.

Reference to Webb's pyscho-historical interpretation provided a means of establishing the nature and extent of the moral dilemmas and dissonances facing a large section of Europe's population in the late nineteenth century. But Webb's analytical formulations were considered erroneous.

The socio-structural investigation, relating esoteric representations to social forms and establishing correspondences and correlations between experiences of society and perceptions of the divine, enabled us to arrive at an understanding of why these new perceptions were esoteric and occult rather than anything else. For only esoteric philosophies, whether traditional (western magic), foreign (Hindu, Buddhist and Egyptian influences in Theosophy) or invented (Spiritual Science), contained the proviso that man was innately divine; they thus permitted a redemptive vision of man which tallied with and made sense of a social experience of atomisation, differentiation and alienation. The esoteric philosophics prompted and validated a belief that divinity cohered within (was 'hidden' in) autonomous, individual man rather than within an external godhead (Steiner's 'Beyond'), external institutions (churches) or an impersonal, materialist, rationalist society. Further, this divinity was lost in time (alienated) and in man (hence 'secret' and transcendent). But it could be regained by the very faculties with which man had exercised his 'power' over the elemental, natural world (i.e. willing and thinking) and through processes and methods borrowed from the scientific world.

That science was perceived as the redemptive process <u>par excellence</u> was apparent in the deference shown by the new esoterics towards 'scientific' methods, terms and metaphors. But science was not just an intellectual legacy, an inherited mode of thought, it signified (our symbolic interpretation) 'power' that had been allowed to run wild. The new esoterics captured that power and attempted to bring it under control by investing it with a moral and cosmic significance.

They reaffirmed man's experience of autonomy by investing him with a personal integrity and spirituality. This was a vision of new scientific

man, evolving towards immense heights of understanding and purification, firm in his certitude of the existence of an individuated but pervasive spiritual bond. And it was upon the basis of this vision, this new redemption, that the new esoterics promised healing and regeneration. In recognition of the integrative, pervasive nature of man's spirituality they attempted to construct, or envisaged the possibility of, a whole new social order firmly based upon fundamental convictions of co-operation, wholeness and integration.

B. RUDOLF STEINER, PROPHET AND SHAMAN

(For a brief synopsis of the belief system Steiner constructed, see Appendix A).

1. DESCRIPTION OF STEINER'S LIFE

Our source for information about Steiner's early life is his unfinished biography (1925, trans.1951). From this we learn that he was born in 1861 and brought up in the border area between Austria and Hungary. The eldest son of a middle class Protestant stationmaster, Steiner had a relatively solitary and withdrawn childhood. Relegated to the position of "outsider" by the children of the Hungarian village to which he moved at the age of eight, he spent his time wandering in the countryside, studying music, literature and art and conversing at times with the local literati - a priest, and a physician interested in philosophy.

From an early age Steiner was, he admits, constantly aware of realities other than the physical world. This awareness took the form of an inner conviction of spirituality, "an inner joy" (1951:11), "a profound experience" and an intuition that his "real thoughts, feelings and experiences were continually in that other world" (16). He turned to the study of geometry, its logic of inner forms, and the philosophy of Kant which almost deified the workings of that intangible force, the 'mind'. By studying these Steiner hoped to receive confirmation of his ideas about hidden realities and discover a means of expressing them. He saw 'thoughts' as "revelations of a spiritual world on this field of action in the soul" (11) and he began to see the development of 'thinking' and the acquisition of knowledge as means of penetrating "knowingly into the supersensible".

Eventually Steiner graduated from the local "Realschule" and entered the University of Vienna, where he came under the influence of Professor

Karl Schröer - who introduced him to the philosophies of Goethe, Hegel and Schiller. Steiner became deeply involved in the study of Goethe, sympathising with his attempts to apprehend the limits of thought and vision through the combined tools of scientific reason and poetic intuition. In contrast to Kant, Steiner's first idol, who looked only at logical form, Goethe was concerned with "ultimate phenomena" (Cassirer, 1945:53). Steiner's intellectual passage from Kant to Goethe is revealed in the following statement.

> "Goethe ... is saying ... that the ideal element in man, as perceived by Schiller, is rooted in the supersensible world, and if man is to move towards the perfecting of his being, he must find his way to this world. Man's earthly knowledge and his thinking are valuable and necessary on the path, but they must be transformed" (Easton, 1975:5).

In 1886, Steiner published an introduction to Goethe's scientific writings, in which he detailed the latter's theory of colour, of plant metamorphosis and the projected relationship between man and nature. In Goethe, Steiner discovered a bridge between the objective scientific world and his own subjective perceptions of the spiritual world. He became convinced that a spiritual reality could be found behind concept, sense and thought apprehension. This led him into disfavour with his philosophical patrons, Schröer and Von Hartmann. It also left him totally opposed to both materialist and mechanistic theories of the universe, as exemplified in the works of Marx and Newton.

Steiner admired the scientific rigour and deductive power of the Newtonians and Darwinists, but condemned the aridity of their conclusions. He shuddered at the Marxist combination of "high social ideals"..and ..

"materialist philosophy" (Shepherd, 1954:44). But neither was he at home with traditional mysticism; his conviction that spirit could only be apprehended through the application of 'corrective thought', i.e. through rational principles, if it were not to remain "subjective and pathological" (Shepherd, 1954:47), alienated him from traditionalists who advocated spirit experience through asceticism and feeling. Steiner desired to carry "the light of the world of ideas into the warmth of the inner experience" (Steiner 1951:125) and maintained that traditional mystics failed "to understand the intimacy of soul that one experiences while living in association with ideas saturated in the spiritual that are gained from a personal intercourse with the spiritual world" (125). He even likened the position of the mystic to that of the materialist, in that both set up "boundaries of knowledge at the line wherein lie the boundaries of sense perception" (125).

Throughout his autobiography, Steiner constantly refers to his experience of detachment from the world of normal men. He felt totally removed from "all partisan conceptions of life" (107). This was reflected in his writings which, he felt, gave people the impression that he was a "world estranged idealist" (107), a categorisation which he was anxious to refute. But generally he found himself apprehensive of the "outer world", though in his inner or spirit world he "lived as if in something self evident" (140). The two worlds were separated by a "thin partition".

> "I lived in a world that bordered on the outer world, but it was always necessary for me to step across a boundary if I wished to have anything to do with the outer world" (Steiner 1951:175).

Steiner moved to Weimar in the late 1890's, where he pursued studies into contemporary science and philosophy, coming up against the

Evolutionist Haeckel and the philosopher Nietzsche. He admired Nietzsche's dionysiac intensity and found himself in sympathy with the latter's concept of 'superman'. But in his book entitled 'Nietzsche, Fighter For Freedom' (1895) he made it clear that for him, such a superman could only come about following the acquisition of spiritual power. This also provided the basic theme for Steiner's first major work - 'The Philosophy of Freedom', in which he declared that real freedom could only be attained as the result of a "deeper understanding of the nature of thinking as a true spiritual activity and of conscience as a real participation in objective moral fact" (Shepherd, 1954:52).

In 1901 he became editor of a Berlin literary magazine in the hope of bringing his views to a wider audience. His editorship was marked by a strong opposition to the formal organised Christianity of the day. The Christians, he maintained, refused "to allow to thought the possibility of penetrating to the understanding of the higher truths of the Christian revelation" (Shepherd 1954:60). Like Nietzsche, Steiner denigrated Christians, moralists and "ethicists" for perpetrating ethics which were "uprooted from all world reality" and thus "could not possess any power" (Steiner 1951:180).

During this period Steiner was involved in an inner struggle with his 'spiritual' perception, the pursuit of which threatened to "engulf" him. His earlier desire to see and experience totally (201) the 'realities' of this other world was transformed, he claimed, into actual "powers of spiritual vision".

When he had finished his brief spell of literary editorship he began a lecture tour of the major cities of Europe. In 1902 he was asked to lead the German section of the currently powerful Theosophical Society. His fame as a lecturer and visionary increased. His skill and presence in

lecturing is communicated by Edourd Schure writing in 1906:

> "When Rudolf Steiner was describing the events and realities of the spirit world, he seemed to absolutely be at home with them. He was not describing, he was actually seeing the objects and scenes of these unknown regions and he made them so visible to others that cosmic phenomena appeared actual .... One could not doubt the reality of his spiritual vision, which appeared as clear as physical sight ... " (in Shepherd 1954:66).

As described elsewhere, Ch.I p.34) Steiner's collaboration with the Theosophists terminated in 1910. He saw their advocation of Eastern esoteric methods as profoundly unsuitable for the western mind. For Steiner, direct knowledge of the "supersensible" could only be attained through the development of rational consciousness itself.

In 1910 he published 'An Outline of Occult Science' which was to become the central text for his group of followers - now renamed the 'Anthroposophical Society'. He designed and built the 'Goetheanum' at Dornach. This was to be a research and administrative centre for the new society. It represented in its design the basic principles of Anthroposophy. The lectures and courses held in it - agriculture, art, drama, education, medicine, led to the foundation of other research centres and eventually to the Waldorf schools.

Steiner was an accomplished poet, playwright, teacher and woodcarver, but his philosophy was designed to cover all aspects of human endeavours and life experiences. He suggested new types of scientific endeavour, agricultural research, artistic and literary programmes, but each of these activities was firmly founded upon 'revealed' spiritual principles. He also acquired a reputation as a healer. The exercises which he gave to

one patient were likened to "a healing bath, or a refreshing bodily exercise, only more spiritual and life giving. One's whole organism became more normal, more harmonised" (Rittelmeyer 1963:38). He devised therapies for malformed, backward and autistic children. One of Steiner's followers, Albert Steffen, noted (1961) that Steiner was able to diagnose particular illness by seeing "in spirit the archetype of the sickness". It was even possible, Steffen claimed, to recognise"the spirit that ruled in his teaching in the way that he treated sick children" (Steffen 1961:196-7). The kinds of healing Steiner utilised involved drawing out and re-shaping the "creative forces" of both the microcosm and the macrocosm, the body and the universe (cf. Steffen, 1961:237-9).

During the First World War Steiner continued to lecture throughout Europe, stressing the need for international co-operation. But his abilities as a leader and prophet only became manifest at the close of the war. His work, in distributing the revelations that he had acquired from his reading of the Akashic Record was temporarily dropped. Convinced that economic calamities, famine, material and spiritual confusion were descending upon Europe, Steiner drew up an 'exoteric' programme to remedy the situation. This programme, the "threefold social order", was orientated towards integrating and unifying the three realms of human activity - the economic/material, jural/political and cultural/spiritual - which had become differentiated in the past but were, as a result of the war, in a state of total separation and confusion (Easton, 1975:322-3).

However, the new directions and ideas of this "prophet of the age" (Rittelmeyer 1963:133) were received with hostility by the German authorities and the various political parties. In Munich in 1922 an attempt was made on Steiner's life by members of the National Socialist party, whose leader, Adolf Hitler, had earlier declared that Rudolf

Steiner was Germany's greatest enemy. (Ravenscroft 1974:261, Pauwels and Bergier, 1975:175). Steiner's association with the Kaiser's general, Von-Moltke, who had become disillusioned with the war at an early stage, led Hitler to brand Stainer as a person who had stood in the way of Germany's path to glory. Attempts were also made to disrupt Steiner's lectures and meetings. A second assassination was attempted in 1923. The Goetheanum was set on fire while Steiner was lecturing inside. He escaped, but the building was totally destroyed. Steiner died in 1925 before the new building was completed. He left behind him a growing international body of disciples, a vast array of unpublished lectures (5,000 in total) and some forty books and plays.

A general picture of what Steiner was like as a man can be drawn from the glowing eulogies written after his death by various Anthroposophists (e.g. Rittelmeyer 1963, Steffen 1961 and Freeman and Waterman 1957 ed.). He has been described as a prophet (Rittelmeyer, 1963:133), a white magician (King 1970), a visionary and a seer (Wachsmuth 1958:161). This personal charisma was evidenced in his hypnotic lecturing ability and his retinue of followers and admirers. But he was exceptionally humble in manner and although he tolerated admiration in others he never, according to Rittelmeyer, became 'vain' or "conceited" (cf. Rittelmeyer, 1963:82-3). By all accounts, he exuded a personal power in the presence of which "one breathed the air of a freedom yet to come" (Rittelmeyer:88). This power was conceived to be the emanation of spirit; Steffen recalls how "It occurred to nobody to ask if he was young or old, for he was borne up by the immortal spirit. Here was a person who made history, one who shaped and reshaped the present, a man of the future" (Steffen 1961:224).

In the introduction to a book of his writings published two years after his death, Marie Von Steiner claimed that her husband was alone the harbinger of the new consciousness. His revelation was the "alchemy of the soul nature" (1927.X). Only adherence to the spiritual path and

PLATE ONE. RUDOLF STEINER

lifestyle he advocated would culminate in eventual freedom and knowledge. She claims that he was "employed by the Divine Will as an instrument in the new phase of human spiritual development" (1927:X). He alone had the ability to transform the "circle of evolved consciousness" into a man-centred dynamic "spiral".

2. INTERPRETATION

Attempting to classify and locate Rudolf Steiner within one established ethnographic category of religious officiant is no easy task. In vocation and practice he was a philosopher and writer. But to a large number of people he was a spiritual teacher, a visionary, a "priest" (Steffen 1911:105), a poet, a scientist, an alchemist, a mystic, a prophet and a social reformer. His lifestyle, personal orientation and philosophical framework certainly encompass a variety of aspects of all these labels; and this fact in itself is not without significance, because Steiner was above all, an integrator, someone who brought a variety of ideas, concepts, categories of life experience and interest, and people together within one meaningful ethical and experiential framework. That the idea of 'integration' was central to Steiner's teaching is evident in a comment by one of his pupils who considered that Steiner's written work pointed "the way into wholeness which is fitted for European and Western man in our time". Further, this way "does not lead to personal power, but to moral purification, to a widening of consciousness into spiritual experience and to the possibility of fully effective service to others, to humanity" (Röschl-Lehrs, 1958:131).

This striving towards integration is a general characteristic of mystical endeavours and of what Cambell (1972) refers to as the "cult

milieu" (123). The leader, or chief figurehead, of the generally eclectic, syncretic cult is the person in whom an initial synthesis of opposed and dissociated thought worlds and life experiences is realised. We have good grounds, then, for locating Anthroposophy's chief mover, Rudolf Steiner, within a category of 'exemplary prophet' since the latter is, in Weber's terms, someone who has had a revelation which involves for both "himself and for his followers .... a unified view of the world derived from a consciously integrated and meaningful attitude towards life" (Weber 1966:58-9). Weber also adds that:

> "To the prophet, both the life of man and the world, both social and cosmic events, have a certain systematic and coherent meaning. To this meaning the conduct of mankind must be oriented if it is to bring salvation" (Weber 1966:59).

During the period 1921-1922 Steiner was lecturing in Germany to large audiences numbering some two or three thousand (Adams 1958:5). People crowded round him to "hear about the possibility of a spiritual renewal of science ..... to receive an answer to essential questions concerning their own development as human beings" (Roschl-Lehrs 1958:86). Also,

> "In view of the chaos in human affairs which was then clearly beginning to manifest itself, they also sought guidance for the social tasks of the future" (Roschl-Lehrs 1958:86).

This was the post war period during which Steiner was attempting to unify the whole of Europe through his 'threefold social order'. This largely exoteric programme was accompanied by a vast practical exercise orientated towards "making Anthroposophy practically useful and fertile

in the most varied fields of outer life" (Bock, 1958:25-6).

Steiner sought to bring forward and make public his conviction that at the heart of the social world, at the centre of all philosophical, ethical, material and occupational division there existed an inner, undifferentiated, pervasive spiritual bond. This aspect had, he felt, been glossed over by centuries of materialism and scepticism. The immediate post-war period was, for Steiner, the signal for this inner unity, this inner integration and wholeness to be reintroduced to the everyday outer world, and thus reorientate man on his evolutionary path towards salvation and transcendence.

Having satisfied ourselves that Weber's category of 'prophet' is applicable to Steiner we shall now turn to Burridge (1969) who has provided us with an imaginative framework for isolating and interpreting the essential components of the prophetic category and frame of reference.

Burridge argues that the prophet is primarily an "adventurer", and a "divine free mover", a transitional person and an "outsider". The prophet has access to a transcendent source of inspiration and on this basis he "articulates new assumptions". He is "an image of the one and the many", he externalises and articulates what others only feel or imagine; he also symbolises "redemption and regeneration" and he attempts to secure these for his following. (All quotations, Burridge 1969:153-63).

With the above isolated aspects of Burridge's analytical framework in mind, we will now attempt to arrive at an understanding of Steiner's success and social significance. Explication of the significance of Burridge's ideas will also, we hope, become manifest in the discussion. Hence, we shall examine and interpret the following three aspects of Steiner's career: (a) his social state and experiences, (b) his revelations and (c) what he and his revelations represented both to his followers and

to certain sections of the wider social milieu.

(a) Steiner: Outsider and divine free-mover

The events prior to Rudolf Steiner's transcendence through imagination and his subsequent visions of the Akashic Record are the symptoms and circumstances which make up what Eliade has termed the mystic or shaman's "period of incubation" (Eliade 1968:74). In Steiner's life these took the form of a series of experiences of, and periods of awareness of 'outsiderhood' or detachment. In his autobiography, Steiner constantly gives the impression of being lonely, withdrawn, a dreamer and a lover of nature. He loved nature not so much for itself, but for what it represented to him, i.e. a transpersonal hidden reality. As a child, he was drawn to the world of the imagination, a world of hidden forms which were partly realised through music, literature and the sciences, and a complementary world of inner reflection embodied in the activities of local outsiders, a priest, a doctor-philosopher and a monk (cf. Steiner 1951:Ch.I-II).

Steiner himself, as we have seen, divided reality into two major domains, the physical and the spiritual. He was conscious of the fact that these two domains were separated only by a very thin partition, so it was upon this partition that he focussed his entire attention. He concentrated all his mental capacities upon exploring the liminal, transitional areas of consciousness, i.e. fantasy, dreams and the imagination; those areas which seemingly stretched across the partition of reality.

His later prediliction for a form of transcendence which emphasised contemplation of the transitional realms of human consciousness can perhaps be considered a consequence of his early social experiences of marginality,

his enforced position and circumstances as an "outsider" (1951:13). Even if it would be too speculative to postulate a causal link between Steiner's social experiences and the types of symbolic representations which he later proffered, the correlation between his state of enforced marginality and his construction of a 'metaphysics of marginality' is very striking.

The social state of outsiderhood and an orientation towards the 'liminal' remained with Steiner for much of his life. He chose to be a total "renegate" from his home and family (Steiner 1951:Ch.1) and moved constantly between cities and universities, travelling extensively throughout Europe. He spent his outer life on the margins of society and his inner, contemplative life moving back and forwards across the boundaries of the known and unknown. Thus Steiner seems to have been invested with some quite remarkable, supra-physical faculties:

> "The strange thing about him ... (i.e. Steiner) .... is that no one need tell him anything about themselves. He seems to see one. He knows already when you come near, and yet he never condemns ..... The whole world is a whispering gallery to him and vibrations reach him for which we have no name" (Macmillan, cited in Adams, 1958:18).

In some details, Steiner's lifestyle, of a literary nomad, a wandering philosopher and eventually the leader of an international movement, shows parallels with the lives of the English Romantic poets and painters of the same era. For they also, as Musgrove points out, lived "marginal lives", often in exile, but yet maintained positions of interdependence with mainstream society (Musgrove 1974:66). Steiner's "relationship to the boundaries of society" (Musgrove 66) was like those of the Romantics, highly ambivalent and ambiguous. Steiner, like

Burridge's (1969:159) prophet, was an "adventurer", but unlike the Melanasian prophet noted for his adventures into geographical spaces, Steiner was an explorer of intellectual and conceptual inner space. But in all these various senses he appears as a transitional person, an 'outsider', a divine free mover, and by most accounts (cf. Steffen 1961, Rittelmeyer 1963 and Freeman and Waterman, eds.1958) an "extraordinary" (Burridge 1969:162) person.

Steiner, as the vehicle for some kind of 'charismatic' (Weber 1922:46) transpersonal integrative force, symbolized "the one and the many"; Steffen describes how,

> "Here spoke a true man. It occurred to nobody to ask if he was young or old, for he was borne up by the immortal spirit. Here was a person who made history, one who shaped and reshaped the present, a man of the future" (Steffen, 1961:224).

He appealed to a variety of people. Apart from the array of doctors, lawyers, farmers, actors, teachers, artists, writers, social workers, people of all ages and classes, that gathered around Steiner at Dornach In Switzerland, he attracted "well-to-do" conservatives who were "seriously interested in occultism or seeking for the esoteric background of Christianity" (Adams 1958:9). He attracted members of other theosophical and occult movements, for whom his "Rosicrucian Theosophy ... brought the fulfilment of their longings" (9). Early anthroposophists included freemasons, socialists and social reformers, army generals (e.g. Von Moltke) and statesmen.

(b) Steiner's spiritual worlds

We come now to a brief description and interpretation of Steiner's

revelation. Whereas previously we considered the special circumstances and attributes which, we feel, contributed to the selection of Steiner as a 'genuine' agent of revelation; we will now go beyond the social correlates of his charisma and attempt a phenomenology of his religious experience. However, this experience and the motivation which preceded it, clearly extended beyond and surpassed that of the prophet (as defined above p.173). So we are forced to broaden our perspective and introduce attributes and conceptual constructs more usually associated with other categories of religious officiant. Considering the extent of Steiner's own eclectic character and beliefs, this move seems justifiable.

One possible category is that of mystic, as defined by Weber (1966:173) but Steiner himself denied being a mystic in the traditional Christian sense, and there is little in his philosophy which would allow us to connect him with the Christian 'love' mystics. There is, however, a further category of religious officiant with which Steiner appears to share specific qualities and orientations. This is the shaman, or tribal mystic who is all of seer, magician, healer, priest, prophet and philosopher. The shaman's position and duties in tribal society closely resembles Steiner's acquired position and duties in Western society; both appear as undifferentiated religious practitioners; and both combine esoteric orientations (transcendence and ecstasy) with exoteric orientations (healing, organising and handing out revelations). Rudolf Steiner, like the shaman, sought to procure health and well being, and to introduce harmony and integration into (and between) the realms of body, spirit and society (cf. Weiss in Harner, 1973:40-41 and Eliade, 1968:72-3 on these aspects of shamanism).

From an early age, Steiner "desired to experience the spirit which manifests itself in its own body, whose spiritual reflection is moral

action" (Steiner 1951:105). When this experience came, it took the form of a "spiritual vision of the living world of truth" (105). Steiner had discovered a possible route and key to sensory transformation during his researches into Goethe, so his earliest 'visions' were a direct result of his discovery that "light" as an emanation of 'etheric forces' could serve as a conceptual 'bridge' between spiritual insight and material understanding (1951, 69-70). But it was through an extension of his faculties of imagination that he experienced his first vision. In his autobiography, Steiner described how "the first ray of spiritual revelation comes by means of fantasy" (1951:220). There is here, it seems, a clear correspondence between the origin of Steiner's revelatory experience and the creation of a certain type of shamanic ecstasy, as chronicled by Eliade (1964:103). Both were products of the "imagination" rather than outward physical transformation.

This parallel becomes extended when we realise that Steiner's earliest "powers of spiritual vision" (1951:216) took the form of a contact with the spirit bodies ("unknown knowns" 217) of two dead men. Contact with these souls through clairvoyance gave him the impulse to write his "Philosophy of Freedom" and provided him with much of the content of that work. He maintains that the latter was a product of his "concrete experience in general of vision into the spiritual world ..... reinforced by ..... participation in the spiritual experience of these two souls" (Steiner 1951:219-20). The concept of 'absolute freedom' which Steiner outlines in this work also occurs frequently in shamanic literature: Eliade, for example, points out that symbolisms of ecstasy or magical flight "prove that the roots of freedom are to be sought in the depths of the psyche" (1964:106). Further, "this desire to free himself from his limitations, which he feels to be a kind of degradation, and to regain

spontaneity and freedom" (Eliade 1968:107) is a distinct characteristic of the shamanic exercise, if not of all religious endeavours.

Steiner never employed mediumistic or spiritualist practices in his pursuit of clairvoyant and clairaudient powers. Instead he utilised three mental faculties or higher 'forces of knowledge' which he had previously stimulated and developed within himself. These he termed "imagination, inspiration and intuition"(Steiner 1951:220). The results of 'imaginative cognition' we have already discussed. Awareness of the second faculty, "inspiration" gave to Steiner an understanding of the conditions of the Macrocosm and showed him the spiritual hierarchies which inhabited it (cf. Ravenscroft, 1974:270). But it was his transcendence through a development of the third faculty, i.e. intuition, that is particularly interesting for us. The type of transcendence that resulted corresponds closely to the type of transcendence generally experienced by the Asiatic shaman as described by Eliade (1968:72-3).

During his ritual journey the tribal shaman encounters and struggles with a series of spirit beings. He is initiated at their hands and is eventually introduced to an intimate knowledge of the workings of the universe.

The 'intimate knowledge' which Rudolf Steiner was introduced to through sensory transformation and the activities of spirit beings was the Akashic Record. His early initiation was the product of a lengthy preparatory period of asceticism and meditation. However, nowhere does Steiner explicitly state that he underwent the second type of initiation (featured in shamanic literature) i.e. the ascent of the spirit into the spirit world, the attack by spirits and confrontation with a supreme being. But there are indications in his writings that he did have a series of

experiences which closely parallel those described for the shaman.

During one series of visions and spiritual experiences he was led into a personal confrontation with warring forces of good and evil. He was forced to withstand and overcome, in a series of "inner battles", the temptations of a force of evil spirits led by Ahriman and Lucifer. He experienced an "inner struggle against the demonic powers" (Steiner 1951:275) who wished to subvert his spiritual perception. These adventures into transcendent realms, "which drove into billows and breakers all the forces of ... (his) ... soul", (1951:282) convinced him of the ontological existence and permanence of evil forces. Salvation from these entities eventually led him, against his expectation, into a vision of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He recalls:

> "The evolution of my soul rested upon the fact that I stood before the mystery of Golgotha in a most inward, most solemn festival of knowledge" (Steiner, 1951:276).

Steiner thus became convinced of the truth of Christianity and he began to see Christ's teachings and incarnations, not as articles of faith, but as "mystical" facts, the validity of which he had witnessed in a transcendent state. But even in transcendence, he claims, he never lost objective consciousness. His "soul experience in its intensity at that time came out of ... (an) ... objective absorption in pure, unclouded, sense observation" (1951:240).

We knew from Eliade (1964) that the primary task of the tribal shaman in his respective society is to act as healer, to diagnose illnesses and procure a cure. His power to do this derives, Eliade tells us, from his command over the "techniques of ecstasy - that is because his soul can safely abandon his body and roam at vast distances, can penetrate the

the underworld and rise to the sky" (Eliade 1964:182).

During healing, the shaman typically sends his soul out on a journey into spirit overworlds or underworlds, in an attempt to recapture the soul of the patient, whose illness is primarily due to soul-loss. The type of healing Steiner employed is similar in aspects to this. His initial interest in pedagogy and curative work derived from his experiences of educating a ten year old boy who had abnormal intellectual development, and showed symptoms of physical illness. Steiner realised that the "sort of education required by such a bodily and mental organism must be one that would awaken the sleeping faculties". Steiner was convinced the boy had great mental capacities, but that these were hidden. In his own words he had to "find access to a soul which was, as it were, in a sleeping state and must gradually be enabled to gain mastery over the bodily manifestations. In a certain sense one had first to draw the soul into the body" (quotations cited by Strohschein, 1958:154). While there is no clear reference here to Steiner sending out his own soul, the parallel with the other three elements of the shamanic 'healing journey' i.e. soul loss, and processes of searching, capturing and retrieving the lost soul, is immediately striking.

As with many prophets, Steiner's healing powers were directed not so much towards the alleviation of individual sickness, but of a wider 'social sickness'. Steiner declared himself to be aware of the causes of Europe's moral dilemmas, its strains and social dissonances. These he claimed to be (a) a general lack of deference to the spiritual realms of existence, (b) mans alienation from his inner, spiritual self, (c) the influence of infernal evil forces and (d) an imbalance between the perceptual realms of physical, intellectual and spiritual faculties, both in individuals and in society. Anthroposophy itself - Steiner's creation - contained both diagnosis and cure.

(c) Steiner as Catalyst

Scientific optimism was the dominant intellectual inheritance of the era in which Steiner lived. This, despite the fact that, to many, the accompaniments to scientific advance i.e. technology, progress, industrialisation, specialisation, overcrowding of cities, alienation, political, national and class confusion, were aberrant and unwelcome. Science and the rise of materialism and rationalism had also engendered for many the collapse of traditional forms of worship - old "redemptive media" (Burridge, 1969:6) and frameworks of meaning. Large sections of the intelligentsia were aware of the immense 'power' inherent in science but were also aware of the chaos, the physical, mental and spiritual privations that had been generated by that power. The new demand of the intelligentsia in the late nineteenth century was a return to the past when these conditions did not exist.

However it also seemed to many that the power required to fulfil this demand could be found within the ethic and practice of science. It remained, then, for a selection of people to articulate these needs and rechannel the power of science into the realm of human redemption, salvation and regeneration; to convert a 'power' which, it seemed, had so far only a negative, even evil realisation, into a power or agency for good.

Amidst an assortment of other prophets and mystics, Rudolf Steiner emerged and articulated a "way of thinking which rightly passes as 'scientific' in the knowledge of nature, and developed ... (it) ... for knowledge of the spirit". This framework, permeated, he claimed, by an "inner force" (Steiner 1951:316-7) also embodied representations contained within all the other current belief systems, i.e. Alchemy, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, science, rationalism and Christianity. His Anthroposophy thus

integrated all available "assumptions about power"; this factor guaranteed the truth and relevance of his enterprize and pointed the way towards moral regeneration, social co-operation and spiritual redemption. As an alternative to the "hell on earth" (Steiner, cited in Adams, 1935:18), which was the legacy of industrial mineteenth century Europe, Steiner proferred a spiritual and temporal heaven "a new light upon the evolution of humanity" (Steiner, 1951:289).

Adjunct: Rudolf Steiner and Adolf Hitler: White and Black Shamans

This highly speculative section deals with a widespread anthroposophical belief (cf. Ravenscroft, 1974) that Rudolf Steiner and Adolf Hitler were agents and mediums for supernatural powers. Steiner was a spokesman for Christ and hence, in anthroposophical terms an emissary of good and benevolent forces, while Hitler as a professed hater of both Christians and Christ, was an emissary and servant of evil forces (both Ahrimanic - hence the fixation with earthly power, earthly will and blood purity, and Luciferic - as apparent in the concept of an Aryan superman).

Here we find a particularly striking correspondence with a classification of both the cosmos and its agents into good and evil, or positive and negative elements, which is also found in other societies such as the Altaic and Buryat tribes of Asia (cf. Eliade, 1964). These elements are also related to, and even imply, the conceptual existence of "right" and "left" paths to transcendence or knowledge of the supernatural world (cf. Tiryakian, 1975:13 and Ravenscroft, 1974:254). All three types of symbolic dichotomisation (i.e. of cosmii, agents and 'paths') are examples of the widespread ethnographic phenomenon known as "dual classification" (Needham 1973 b).

We will now attempt to contrast Anthroposophical beliefs about the polarity of Steiner and Hitler with the ethnographic example of dual classification which was mentioned above.

Among the Altaic and the Buryat there exists a precise classificatory distinction between "white" and "black" shamans. The former are believed to have relations with "celestial" or "uranian" gods and spirits, i.e. dieties of the higher regions, who are generally benevolent, all powerful but distant, whereas the latter are believed to be familiar with "earthly" or "telluric" spirits, i.e. dieties of "the below" or lower regions, who are vindictive, sometimes 'evil' or "infernal" and are "subterranean". The spirits who consort with the black shamans generally represent local hierophanies who have, according to Eliade "fallen in rank as the result of changes in the pantheon" (Eliade 1968:186). Among the Altaic tribe, "black" shamans are thought to descend to the underworld while "white" shamans specialize in ascents to the overworld.

Earlier, we referred to (p.[illegible]) the nature of Rudolf Steiner's relations with celestial spirits and noted his claims to have fought with and overcome the fallen angels of Christian and Zeroastrian mythology, as well as even lesser but dangerous demigods (the elementals) in order to establish contact with the chief celestial being of the Christian hierophany, i.e. Jesus Christ.

Adolf Hitler was, according to several sources (Webb 1971, Ravenscroft, 1974:158-60 and Paewels and Bergier in Tiryakian 1975), an occult enthusiast who shared Steiner's interest in Grail mysticism, Eastern esotericism, Kabbalism and Alchemy. Hitler also had a philosophy of "will", which he had derived from the writings of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. He claimed to have had a visitation from a transcendent but "intrepid and cruel" superman (Ravenscroft 1975:38) and he was also

a member of the Thule black magic group, prior to becoming leader of the Nazis.[4]

Hitler established a series of occult and magical groups within the Nazi party, i.e. the "ahnenherbe" and the "Thule Gesellshaft", of which his chief officers Hess and Himmler were members and organisers. Hitler's main symbol - the swastika (a cross with its points inverted) was originally an Egyptian occult insignia - though in his hands it came to signify contempt for Judaism and Christianity.[5] Hitler also talked of a final human mutation - the "Man God" (Ravenscroft 1974:250) a concept which parallels in subject, if not in meaning, Steiner's conviction that God (i.e. spirit) resided within man himself. Finally, Hitler persecuted German Anthroposophists before and during the war, and he also regarded Steiner with contempt, as outlined earlier (p.

The historical truth of these various aspects of Hitler's life does not concern us here. Neither are we concerned with the validity of either Steiner's or Hitler's imputed experiences of ecstasy and transcendence. The focus of our interest is the manifestation of a pattern (whether invented, inferred or actual) in religious representation, and the close correspondence between this pattern and a pattern manifest in the classification of shamans in a particular ethnographic context. Hitler's orientations and practices closely resemble those of the Asiatic "black" shaman, an officiant who, according to Eliade (1964) and Huxley (1976) explores the underworld, and is "connected with sorcery and death" (Huxley 1976:289). The "black" shaman is also associated with the earth which is sometimes symbolised by blood and entrails. Hitler's ideology of racial purity based upon Aryan blood and his war sacrifices come to mind.

Steiner, in contrast, resembles more the Asiatic "white" shaman who associates with celestial spirits, gods of the above, and deals in healing, rejuvenation, immortality and life.

The correspondence between these two prophets of the early twentieth century and the archaic Asiatic shamans is certainly very striking. But ultimately, the connexion is only made possible by the existence in each example of conscious representations which divide the universe into opposed schemes of benevolence and malevolence, powers and agents of good, and powers and agents of evil. Clearly, the Anthropologist is not concerned of the rights or wrongs, the truth value of these representations. They are clearly classifications and as such are mediations or constructs of the mind. But on what are these constructs based?

The cross-cultural recurrence of dual classification schemes such as these and the almost constant association of the categories left and evil, right and good has led to the speculation that "dual schemes and their constituent principles ..... refer to constant tendancies of the human mind" (cited in Needham, 1973b:XXXI). However, as Needham (1973b) has pointed out, there are no real means of establishing the correctness and ethnographic validity of such a proposition. Since dual classification schemas are invariably inherited and unconscious the anthropologist can make no decision about the thinking processes of the people who manifest such schemas. The fact that ethnographic evidence can be ordered by logical criteria "does not prove that these are intrinsic to collective representations" (XXXIV).

Alternatively, it could be suggested that dual classification, although it can be analysed logically and although it suggests the presence of logical processes such as analogy, homology etc. in the minds of the people studied, does not signify logical processes so much as a

universal form of metaphysical awareness. This implies that right and left, and black and white are conceptual representations, maps or ways of apprehending metaphysical realities which do contain ontologically 'real' but opposed forces of ultimate good and ultimate evil. Further, as is suggested by the indigenous view (Anthroposophical and shamanic), the existence of these forces, whether they exist in man or in the cosmos (or both), can be ascertained or verified through mystical transcendence.

This view also complements Robert Hertz (1960:III) original argument that the use of right and left as analogies for good and evil has a physiological basis (i.e. an asymmetry in the structure of the human brain). For it is a general conviction in many branches of esotericism (cf.Blair 1975:181) that the right (underdeveloped) side of the brain is the biological location of man's spiritual faculties. The widespread condemnation of the left side and of left 'paths' is then representative of a means of minimising upon the use of the overdeveloped left part of the brain. In theory, the consequence of such an activity would be the reduction of man's overstressed earthly tendencies and an elevation from his legacy of darkness into the power of the light.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANTHROPOSOPHY IN 'IDEA'

"There are relations everywhere and relations are life."
Goethe

A. ANTHROPOSOPHY: AN ESOTERIC MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

For a detailed history of the Anthroposophical Movement and its offshoots, the Christian Community and the Camphill Organisation, the reader is referred to Easton (1975:429-435 and Ch.XIV) and also to Shepherd (1954:171-3 and Ch.XVIII). The comprehensive and varied outlook of the movement, and of Steiner's teachings, is apparent in the type and number of institutions and bodies of thought which have developed since Steiner's death. The complete range of these is indicated in Fig.I.

The centre of the anthroposophical world is still the Goetheanum at Dornach in Switzerland. This is the headquarters of the General Anthroposophical Society and the location of a small Anthroposophical community, a training college for teachers, a research centre and a school of arts and crafts. Regular lectures, and annual performances of Steiner's "Four Mystery Plays" and Goethe's "Faust" are held in the Goetheanum. It is also a centre for spiritual research (cf. Fig.II) and visits to it by Anthroposophists from all over the world have a quality of 'pilgrimage'.

The General Anthroposophical Society is believed to have a total membership of some 30,000. But there are smaller national anthroposophical societies in most western Europian countries, and it is to these that members pay their dues. Each society meets regularly to integrate the various Anthroposophical activities being carried out in the respective country, i.e. Waldorf schools, research centres, bio dynamic farms and farming colleges, craft centres, communities, presses, bookshops and training centres.

A major international offshoot of Anthroposophy is the Camphill

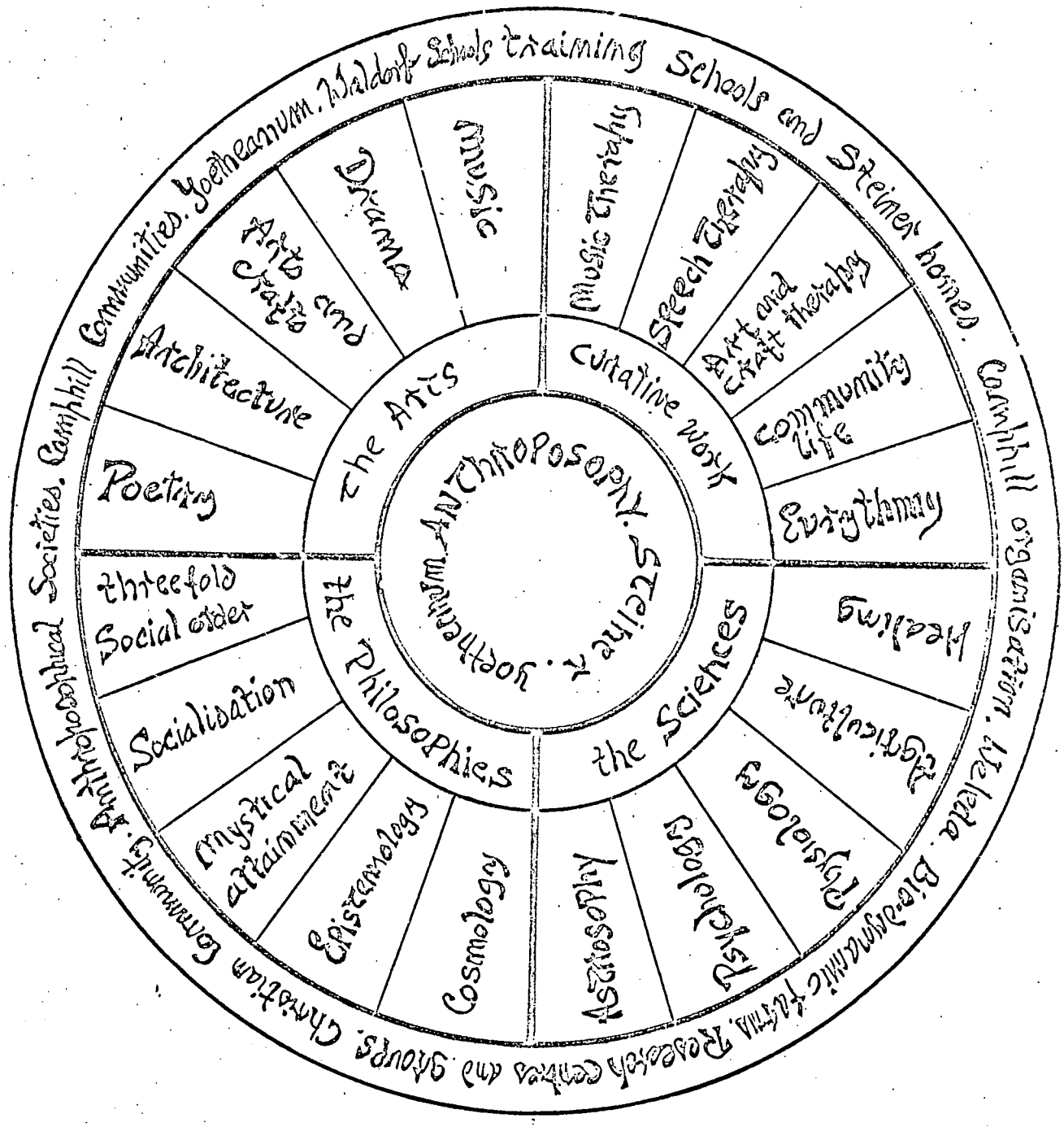


Fig.1 THE MANIFOLDS OF ANTHROPOSOPHY

Organisation, founded by Dr. Karl Konig at Aberdeen in Scotland in 1940. The Camphill Organisation comprises a series of schools and village communities for mentally handicapped adults in countries as far apart as England, Ireland, Norway, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, South Africa and the United States. The centre of this social work orientated organisation is still at Aberdeen in Scotland.

The "Christian Community" is a church organisation founded at the suggestion of Rudolf Steiner in the early 1920s. But although it utilises Steiner's teachings, Anthroposophical art, architecture and spiritual practices it is largely autonomous from the Anthroposophical Society. It is both esoteric and exoteric in character, being non-proselytic but possessing a wealth of liturgical, ceremonial practices derived from Christianity and Anthroposophy. There are a variety of Christian Community centres in both Germany and Britain.

Having briefly outlined the general organisational character of the Anthroposophical world, it now remains to demonstrate its compatibility with the 'Model of Esotericism' which we constructed earlier (cf. Ch.I:C). This will proceed through an enumeration of the chief features and characteristics of Anthroposophy in terms of the three 'emic' and three 'symbolic' categories which, we decided, constituted the basic framework of the ideal-typical esoteric group, i.e.:

EMIC.

I. A trans-social, transpersonal objective.

II. Knowledge of, or a belief in, transcendent realities.

III. Involvement in specific practices or activities, the purpose of which is to actualise a state of transcendence.

SYMBOLIC

IV. Initiation.
V. Hierarchisation.
VI. Separation.

I. A TRANS-SOCIAL TRANSPERSONAL OBJECTIVE

Anthroposophy was originally defined by Rudolf Steiner as follows: "Anthroposophy is a path of knowledge, to guide the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the universe" (cited in Shepherd 1954:171). More recently its specifically esoteric character has been indicated by Shepherd, who maintains that it must be distinguished from conventional types of religion, which are primarily concerned with matters of faith and order since it deals directly with "spiritual phenomena" through a form of "higher knowledge" (171). This higher knowledge, Shepherd claims, can be arrived at through a process of scientific observation, objective reasoning and sense verification. Thus Anthroposophy can be considered a system of explanation, a means of unfolding "the deepest truths and wisdom teachings" of all religions (Steiner, cited in Shepherd, 170) but particularly of Christianity which, it is believed, contains the deepest spiritual content of all.

Steiner's writings, his books and lectures contain the main tenets of Anthroposophical transcendence and these provide a set of guidelines for every potential aspirant of the 'mystical' path. But Anthroposophical modes of transcendence can be distinguished from the types of transcendence advocated by traditional Christian mystics and gnostics. For the Anthroposophist, a transcendence through "strictly controlled thinking" rather than pure feeling leads eventually to a revelation of higher orders of existence. This thinking is activited and controlled by the "will".

A successful transcendence leads to the "laws of the spiritual world" flowing into the participant and these in turn lead to higher stages of cognition. The successful seeker becomes aided by the forces of the "World Order" and enters into a conscious clairvoyant state of 'oneness' with the "all embracing spirit of life". But he does not become totally absorbed by this spirit, his personality is not annihilated, as is usually expected of both Eastern and Western mystics. Rather, he maintains a practical existence within the world, serving out his incarnatory destiny, but with a greater understanding, purpose and moral status. Redemption is made possible through the soul's "withdrawal from the realities of the senses", but the investigator himself is not estranged from the world. (All quotations from Steiner, 1973:130-47).

II. KNOWLEDGE OF, OR A BELIEF IN, TRANSCENDENT REALITIES

The Anthroposophists knowledge of transcendent spiritual realities comes from Steiner's familiarity with the 'hidden' occult chronicle he refers to as the "Akashic Record". The purportedly transcendent nature of this chronicle has already been indicated (see above: Here we will briefly point out some of the salient features of Steiner's interpretation of it.

Steiner postulated a vast history of man and the earth dating from the collapse of what he called the 'Lemurian-Atlantean Age' during which man was a semi-physical being, created and dominated by a Divine Will. The subsequent evolution of consciousness is divided into five stages or 'epochs'. These stages were:

(a) The Ancient Indian Epoch
(b) The Ancient Persian Epoch
(c) The Egypto-Chaldean Epoch
(d) The Graeco-Roman cultural Epoch
(e) The Consciousness soul Epoch (A.D.1500+)

For a detailed description of what took place in these Epochs the reader is referred to Easton (1975:Ch.II). For the moment it will suffice to indicate that during one of these Epochs (the Ancient Persian Epoch) the world entered into the 'Kali Yuga' or Dark Age which lasted until the twentieth century A.D. For the whole of this period mankind had no direct perception of the spiritual worlds. However knowledge of these survived among a number of mystery initiates and was only publicly revealed for the first time by the esoterics of the early twentieth century (cf. Easton, 1975:34).

Through these Epochs listed above man developed four bodies, the physical, ether, astral and ego bodies. The last of these, the ego body evolved three soul conditions, the sentient soul, the intellect or mind soul and the consciousness soul. These three souls are also referred to collectively as the 'ego-consciousness'. Man is thus a fourfold being comprising physical, ether, astral, and ego bodies, but is also considered a threefold being - possessing body, soul and spirit (Easton 1975:36).

Consciousness soul is the highest development of the ego body, and through it mankind will ultimately regain his place in the spirit world. Christianity, rationality and science were those developments in a Divine Plan which internalised man with a new responsibility to decide his own cosmic destiny.

Mankind, through the faculties of his ego body - feeling, willing and thinking, and through the application of three meditative steps - activities of 'sensation', 'imagination' and 'inspiration', can attain knowledge of the higher worlds. Consequently, he can lessen the burden of 'karma' bestowed upon him in future incarnations.

At the heart of the whole process is perception of the complete ego, an intuition which permits a "stepping outside of oneself", an ultimate 'self-less' merging with other egos. (Steiner, 1927:90-95).

Steiner postulated a tension between consciousness soul and its precedent - intellect or mind soul. Mind soul is operated by the forces of 'Lucifer' one of the two forces of evil (Lucifer and Ahriman). Lucifer tempts men into delusions of grandeur, into believing that through reason they can master the universe. Steiner prophesied that the twentieth century would terminate in a victory for Lucifer - reason would dominate, but this would be later overcome by the forces of light - the millenium when the consciousness soul would reign supreme.

The idea of Christ figures prominently in Anthroposophy. Christ is a personification of the 'ego', the 'self', the 'I'. His coming was predicted in the Bible. Christ's life, his struggle for knowledge and the defeat of Lucifer's forces at Golgotha was a metaphor for individual attainment. Christ also paved the way for a third great 'initiation' - the initiation of thinking.

The above brief phenomenology of Anthroposophical knowledge represents a gross simplification. For more details the reader is referred to Steiner's "Occult Sciences" and "Theosophy" (Steiner 1969:298-325 and 1973:17-119). In a later section (IV) we shall deal with Steiner's theosophical system of esoteric and exoteric correspondences.

III. INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIFIC PRACTICES OR ACTIVITIES, THE PURPOSE OF WHICH IS TO ACTUALISE A STATE OF TRANSCENDENCE

As indicated earlier, transcendence for the Anthroposophist is achieved through 'thought power'. Thinking activites the 'self soul'. Attainment for the initiate proceeds in a manner obeying all the rules

of science. However, the desire for attainment must be grounded in a quality of selflessness, i.e. the ability to love. This quality can be acquired through the performance of selfless tasks i.e. education, therapy, social work, healing or else through types of work (e.g. artistic, intellectual or economic) which are dedicated not to self gratification or material gain, but to the good of the community and the spiritual progress of humanity.

The actual esoteric path itself, the "ascent to a supersensible state of consciousness" (Steiner, 1969:228) involves the practice of intensive meditation. The esoteric pupils' normal state of "objective cognition" (235) is transformed into a state of "imaginative cognition" through a process of contemplation which involves: (a) observation of an object, (b) the construction of an after image or "symbolic thought picture" (229) and (c) meditation on all the aspects of that 'thought picture'. Successful contemplation can lead to sensations of "bliss" and "liberation" (231); also the detachment experienced in the state of "imaginative cognition" leads to awareness of the "I", "ego", spirit or 'alter-self' (237,241).

With the acquisition of awareness of the "ego" the pupil develops higher organs of perception which open him to the world of "Inspiration" (262). In this state the pupil is able to observe, and orientate himself within, a universe of totally spiritual beings. Ascendence into the world of "Inspiration" requires a lengthy preparation, daily meditative and contemplative exercises, moral purification and the development of selflessness. The pupil is required to master the direction of his thoughts, control his "impulses of will", and develop "equanimity in the face of pleasure and pain" and a "positiveness in his attitude to the world around him" (250). The knowledge attained through "Inspiration" leads to a

"Reading of the Hidden Script" (i.e. the Akashic Record).

The final stage of cognition in the Anthroposophical path is the state of "Intuition" which "opens up the possibility of coming to know ... (spiritual) beings in their innermost nature" (266). Steiner maintained that:

> "To know a Spirit Being through Intuition is to become one with that Being, to be inwardly united with him" (Steiner 1969:267).

Development of the faculties of Intuition leads to total knowledge of spirituality and an awareness, for the Anthroposophist, of "that within him which goes forward from one Earth life to another.

Steiner warned that the techniques for attaining transcendence were potentially dangerous. Thus great patience, faith and maturity are required of the aspirant. If he has not reached a high level of competence he can be drawn under the influence of Lucifer and become lost in cosmic space. The successful seeker eventually confronts his Double or "Guardian spirit" (285). The latter will test him and then assist him in his progression to higher stages of knowledge. Ultimate transcendence is reached when the seeker becomes "one with the macrocosm", and meets the "Greater Guardian of the Threshold" (i.e. Christ). (All quotations, Steiner, 1969:222-297).

IV. INITIATION

Entry into the Anthroposophical society involves no form of initiation ceremony. Applicants are merely expected to be interested in, and express a knowledge of, the Anthroposophical system. Similarly the Camphill organisation does not 'initiate' its new members. However, both

organisations possess esoteric sections, but the iniation ceremonies which precede and accompany entry into these sections have not been documented or otherwise revealed by Anthroposophists.

We do know, however, that during initiation into the esoteric section of the Anthroposophical society, the adept is introduced to "a mantric meditation on the threefold nature of man" which is regarded as the "Foundation Stone" of the society (Easton 1975:504). He thus becomes part of a transcendent spiritual community of fellow aspirants who have different physical locations but share a spiritual home.

During initiation into a Camphill "sector" the candidate is symbolically allocated a particular sequence of 'windows' within the system of windows at the Goetheanum in Dornach (cf. Fig.II). The sequence of three windows chosen correspond to the candidates birthsign and to a series of other such representations such as a particular 'mystery initiate' (e.g. Jacob Bochme), a particular esoteric study or legend (e.g. the Holy Grail), and a particular period of earthly evolution (e.g. the Graeco-Roman period). The candidate is expected to study and meditate upon these and upon the symbolism of the allotted windows. He is believed to have a similar destiny to the others with whom he shares this window sequence and is expected to maintain a special spiritual bond with them.

As regards inner initiation, a process Steiner explicitly refers to as the "awakening of the soul to .... a higher state of consciousness" (1969:223), we have already outlined the basic practices involved in this, i.e. the study of spiritual science, the attainment of <u>imaginative</u>, <u>inspirational</u> and <u>intuitive cognition</u>, and an experience of 'oneness' with the <u>Macrocosm</u>. Steiner's writings contain numerous reflections on the experiences and forms of symbolism which mark the candidates' entrance into

THE GOETHEANUM WINDOWS

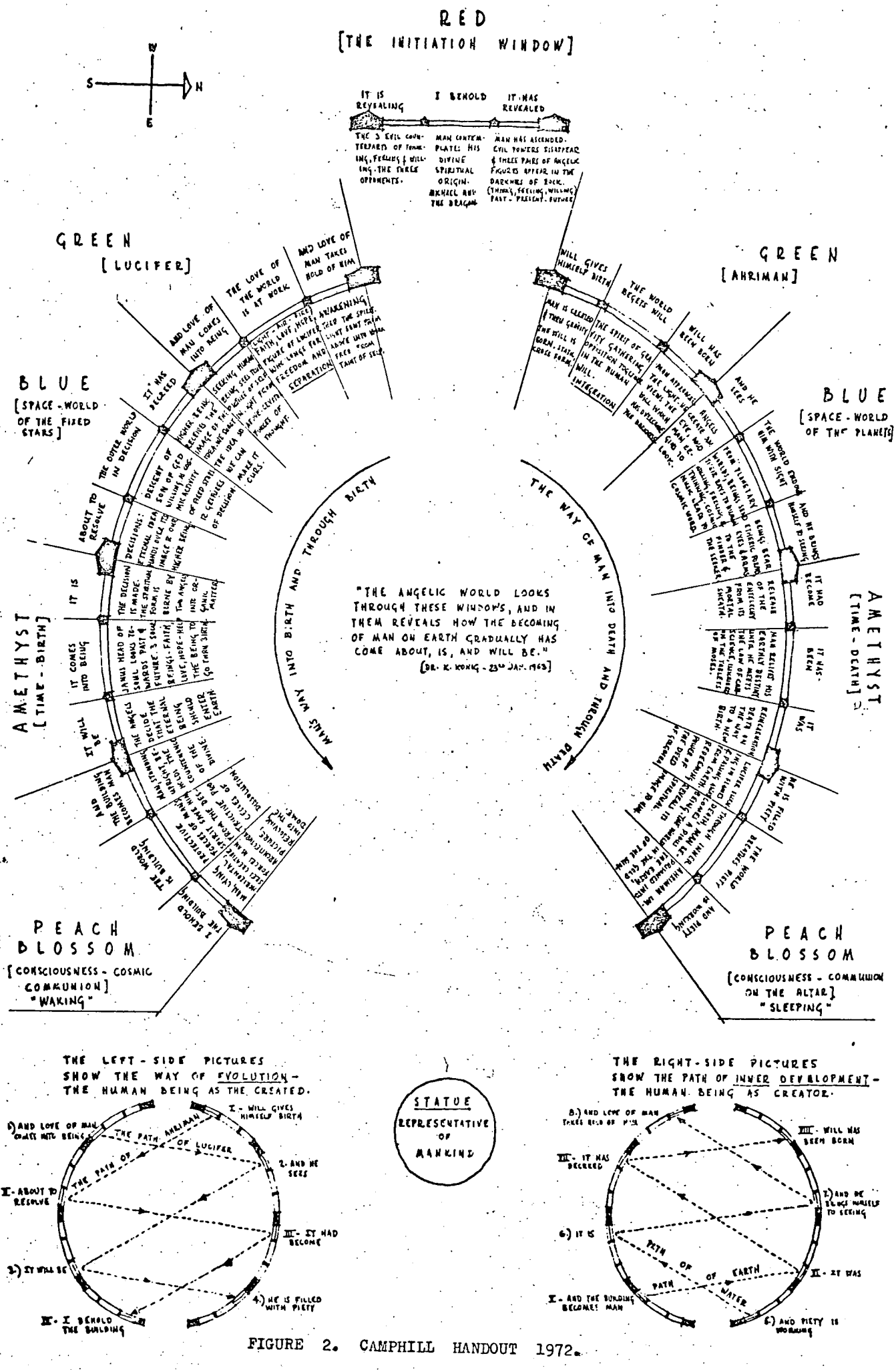


FIGURE 2. CAMPHILL HANDOUT 1972.

the world of Spirit.

According to these, (Steiner in Tiryakian, 1975) the aspirant experiences sensations of "growing out beyond himself" (155), a painful process of testing by his spirit "Double" (or Lesser Guardian of the Threshold), and a "kind of convulsion" as he passes out into the Macrocosm (155).

In the early stages the aspirant is initiated by a "World of Elementals", metaphorically depicted by Steiner as states or conditions of solidity, liquidity, air, gaseousness and fire. The aspirants' success at overcoming the privations wrought on him by these elementals is dependent upon the extent of his courage and the control which he acquired in training. Eventually, he is initiated into a "World of Spirit" which lies behind the "World of Elementals", and then into higher "Worlds" where he eventually becomes introduced to an intimate knowledge of the workings of the cosmos (162-3).

V. HIERARCHY

The General Anthroposophical Society, founded in 1923, had both an exoteric and an esoteric character. The exoteric aspect was apparent in the construction of an "Executive" of six members (the Vorstand) who were chosen by the General Secretary of the Society (Steiner at that time) and who were guided by a series of statutes agreed upon by the first Executive in 1923. The Vorstand has retained its position and importance as the central organ of that aspect of the Society "concerned with the arts and sciences" (Easton, 1975:510) and remains orientated towards the development of research into these fields.

The esoteric character of the Society is embodied in an institution termed the "Independent School of the Science of the Spirit". This is

divided into a series of sections, each of which is devoted to the furtherance of spiritual research. The various members are all expected to be devoted Initiates of the path to higher 'knowledge' which Steiner advocated. The leaders of each section are also usually members of the Vorstand. Thus the main esoteric and exoteric bodies of the Society ultimately coalesce. The most important collectivity of 'mystery initiates' in the Anthroposophical world is also the apex of its administrative hierarchy.

Beneath the Vorstand are the national Anthroposophical committees of each country, but in actuality these national agencies and their esoteric sections are relatively autonomous and responsible mostly to themselves.

The assymetrical teacher/pupil relationship, which we decided was intrinsic to the esoteric situation (see above, Ch.I:C) is manifestly explicit in Anthroposophy. All aspirants to the higher worlds require assistance from someone who has successfully explored at least part of the way. Hence:

> "Only one who knows the path from actual experience can tell him how he is to reach a higher world; and in applying to such a person for help, he is permitting that person to exercise an influence over the innermost holy of holies of his soul" (Steiner, 1969: 224-5).

VI. SEPARATION

Of the various types of phenomenal and experiential separation discussed earlier (Ch.I 43) only two of these, namely (i) the 'physical' and (ii) the 'symbolic' are found in the Anthroposophical world. Ideological separation for the Anthroposophist, though perhaps inevitable

due to membership of a sect and to socialisation processes, is frowned upon and considered "Luciferic" (Lievegood, 1974 Intro) For Anthroposophists consider themselves a part of the wider society and consider that they have an exemplary and practical function within it. The other type of separation we considered, i.e. biological separation, does not occur among Anthroposophists; marriage and procreation are encouraged.

(i) Physical separation does not result from a conscious rejection of the world, but from a preference for community life, a type of living situation which is unusual in the western segmented, differentiated universe. The Anthroposophical Waldorf schools favour a 'child-centred' (rather than 'society-centred") education, and this is deemed possible only in a situation where the teachers (all Anthroposophists) live together and in close proximity to the children and (where possible) to the parents. Also, all Anthroposophical training schemes, research institutes and farms are built up around communities which endeavour to be at least partly self-sufficient. Similarly, the community homes and villages of the Camphill organisation are established upon central principles of community co-operation and integration.

(ii) Symbolic separation occurs within the mystical endeavour itself. Because the aspirant is attempting to attain "supersensible cognition" he is involved in activities which differentiate him completely from world orientations engineered for their own sake. However, unlike other types of Western and Eastern mystical transcendence, Anthroposophical detachment or inner separation does not lead to any kind of bodily disassociation. Steiner (1969) insisted that although the initiate may "begin to feel as though he had grown together with the whole vast structure of the Universe", yet he retains "the consciousness of himself as a fully independent being" (295). "Separate consciousness" (i.e. normal

consciousness) does not cease, and although the individual becomes "one with the Macrocosm" (295) yet his individuality, and thus his hold on earth, does not become extinguished. In Anthroposophy, then, the esoteric (an inner world transcendent life) and the exoteric (an outer, world fulfilling life) coalesce and become simultaneous.

B. ANTHROPOSOPHY: AS MYTH AND SOCIAL ORDER

In this section we shall examine and attempt to analyse Anthroposophy in its two major aspects: i.e. (a) as an esoteric system of belief and (b) as an exoteric system of order or guide to thought and action. In our concluding remarks (C) we shall view these two aspects as a unit.

(a) ESOTERIC ANTHROPOSOPHY AS MYTH

In attempting to analyse Anthroposophy as if it were a myth, we are in no way inferring that it is, in any sense, unreal, invalid or illusory. Rather, we wish to propose that, like the various myths and belief systems analysed by Levi-Strauss (e.g. 1970), it embodies an inner logical coherence or order, which can be distinguished from its surface order (i.e. its 'content' or story and purpose), and as such is amenable to structural analysis.

Firstly, we shall show that the most fundamental mythemes (see Levi-Strauss 1972 a:211)apparent in Anthroposophy can be set out as a series of binary oppositions and contradictions. These are: this world/ other world, man/divinity and self/notself. Each pair of oppositions corresponds roughly to a specific domain of Anthroposophical interest or myth "schema" (Levi-Strauss 1967 b:17): these are, respectively, the domains of epistemology, cosmology and mystical attainment.

Secondly, we shall maintain that the complete Anthroposophical system is geared towards the mediation of these conceptual oppositions as they are realised within each schema. Thus, as we see it, the basic generative principle operative within the entire system and responsible for its inner coherence can be identified as a principle of mediation.

Two justifications can be found for the construction of this hypothesis. The first of these comes from Anthropology, and the work of Leach (1976). Leach considers that all religious activity is concerned with "establishing a mediating bridge between 'this world' and the 'other'", in order to channel the omnipotent 'power' of the deity into the world of man (Leach 1976:71). Elsewhere (1969), Leach also argues that the central features of every mythical system are firstly, the act of discrimination between gods and men, and, secondly, the construction of "relations and intermediaries" which serve to link men and gods together (10).

Our second justification comes from Anthroposophy, and the writings of Rudolf Steiner (1951). It is clear from his autobiography that he engaged himself constantly in attempts to tread a middle path between a series of opposed experiential domains ranging from body and mind, real and ideal, to man and God. He himself was a mediator who, in an effort to "bridge" the "two worlds" of "nature and spirit" (cited in Shepherd, 1954:36-40), immersed himself totally within the liminal realms of 'fantasy', dreams and the imagination.

We shall now examine, in order, the three mythic schemas outlined above.

1. Epistemology

The epistemological basis of Anthroposophy is contained within the "Akashic Record". According to this, the basic rhythm of the universe is the constant metamorphosis between 'matter' and 'spirit'. The history of man comprises a series of such metamorphoses (specifically "incarnations" which are replications of previous earthly metamorphoses which are, in turn, replications of previous planetary metamorphosis. In all cases

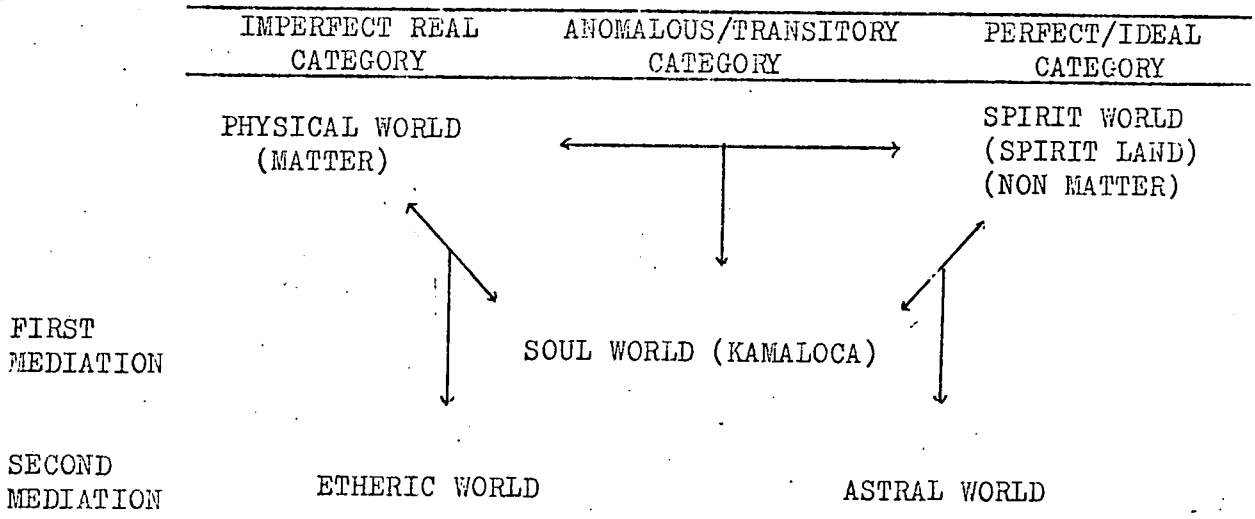
spirit is being constantly transformed into matter and vice versa through the activities of a series of elemental beings who inhabit the lower reaches of the world of spirit and are intermediaries between man and the divinity. These beings have themselves been created and are the servants of the divinity (for location of spirits within the heavenly system cf. Fig.V).

All the transformations described above are qualitative and cumulative; the constant metamorphosis occurring in man and responsible for the development of his four bodies, his spiritual and soul faculties, proceeds over a period of incarnations.

Man participates in three known worlds, those of body soul and spirit. Soul can be considered as a mediating category between the worlds of body and spirit (cf. Easton 1975:36). After death and during the intermediary state of consciousness of sleep man enters into the world of soul (kamaloca) and from there into the world of spirit to await reincarnation.

If we halt this diachronic sequence and examine all the aforementioned categories from a purely synchronic perspective, in the manner of Levi-Strauss (1972), we can ascertain the existence and constant repetition of the basis opposition between matter (this world) and spirit (other world). This opposition is mediated by a third category, that of soul, which partakes of aspects of both polar categories. This can be seen in Fig.III below.

FIGURE III: MEDIATION IN THE COSMOS



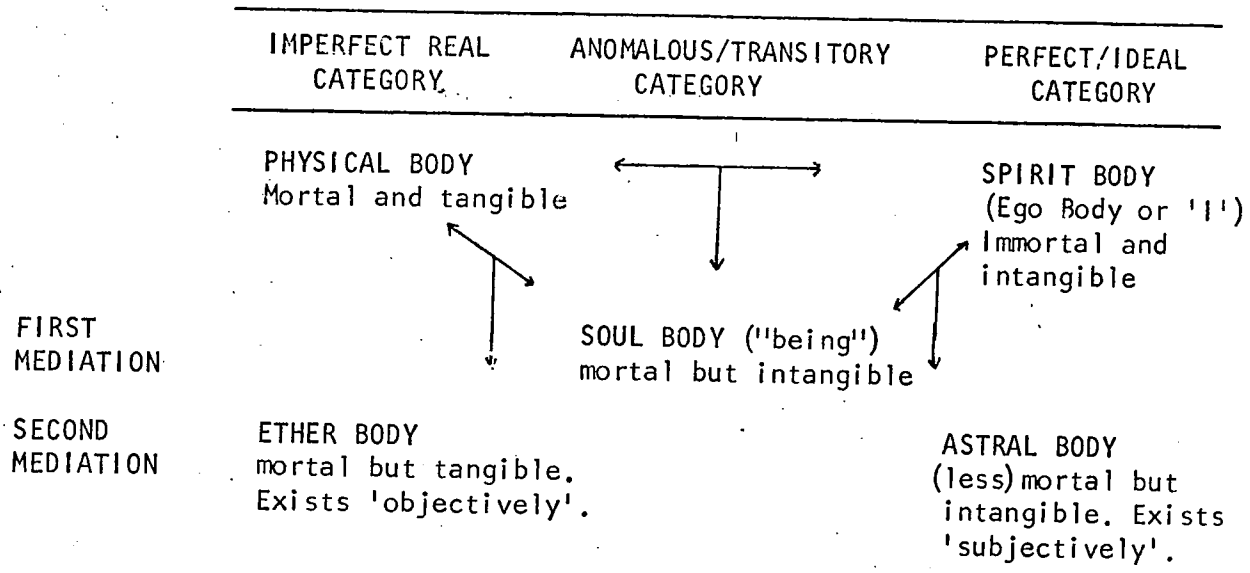
NOTE: Diachronically bodily and worldly evolutions proceed from left to right, and in a circular motion, i.e. matter → spirit → matter → spirit. But each progressive transformation is higher and more esoteric than the last.

The opposition and active mediation outlined above also become manifest in Anthroposophy's view of man as a 'threefold being' comprising body, soul and spirit. Soul is, as before, the agency of mediation (cf. Fig. IV, First Mediation); it is a transitory stage in the projected evolution of man into spirit and it is also the first 'higher world' that the Anthroposophist initiate enters into in his quest for knowledge of spirit (cf. Steiner 1969:68+).

Like the cosmos itself, man's soul being is bifurcated by Anthroposophy into the astral and ether bodies. Diachronically these evolved during the earthly evolutions. Synchronically they appear as mediators between the first mediator (the soul being)and its consequent

antimonies (the physical being or 'physical body') and the spirit being ('I' or 'ego'body) (cf. Figure 4 second mediation).

FIGURE IV. MEDIATION IN MAN



The ether body, which participates in the etheric world (best conceived of as verifiable qualities or forces of energy i.e. light, heat, air, etc.) is attached to, and is apparent in, the world of matter; it is "peripheral" (Adams in Steiner 1969: 332) and it is relinquished after physical death. The astral body belongs more to the world of spirit, is responsible for, and is apparent in, dreams and is active (in "Kamaloca") after physical death. But the ether and astral bodies both participate in the intermediary world of soul and remain united for a period after death. They can be seen as mediations resulting from the dialectical interaction of the second series of oppositions; physical body and soul body, Ego body and soul body. This gives us a completed mediating structure, as envisaged above (fig. IV). These two bodies also function as mediators between man and the higher worlds in his earthly life. They channel into him and out of him such supra-physical faculties as sensations and feelings, emotions and imagination, and are also agents of physical growth and decay.

The above mediating structure recurs throughout Anthroposophy, though in

a limited number of permutated and inverted forms. However, the dialectical process itself does not terminate at the categories listed at the bottom of fig.IV. Successive dichotomization and mediation leads to the generation of subsequent bodies or aspects of man. This can be seen in Steiner's "Theosophy" (1972) where he describes man as having a total of seven soul states and bodies (45) and then nine soul states and bodies. Each of these "members" (42) or "parts" (43) interpenetrates with all the others and appears progressively more esoteric or hidden.

2. COSMOLOGY

According to Akashic cosmology the universe comprises a hierarchy of twelve categories of higher Beings (i.e. Beings of a high evolution) which are thought to correspond to the twelve signs of the Zodiac. The basic distinction between categories of Beings of a low evolution and categories of Beings of a high evolution is mediated by a category of elemental beings which can in turn be bifurcated into a class ("world") of elementals, and a higher class of Spirits. The class of supreme beings (Steiner called it the "world of Archetypal Images") is thus placed even further beyond the reaches of ordinary human perception.

The heavenly hierarchy also includes two negative beings, Lucifer and Ahriman. Lucifer and his host of spirit helpers tempt man from his true destiny and ensnare him with pride and cosmic delusion. The Ahrimanic hosts, in contrast, attempt to confine man to a material condition and a material destiny. Both Lucifer and Ahriman vehemently oppose the forces of Christ and the "Higher Self". Both are "fallen" angels. Lucifer is the archangel of light who defied the Godhead in an early evolution, but is capable of redemption. Ahriman is Lucifer's shadow, "his reverse side" (Schure 1970: 131) who also defies heaven, is leader of the forces of darkness and is attached to the earth but is beyond redemption. Ahriman, though an earthly demon,

operates through his ether body. At this point it should be noted that mankind's true path is "to steer a middle path between the two, and not to be seduced by either" (Easton, 1975: 98).

All the above considerations give us the following structures:

FIGURE 5(a). THE THREE WORLDS

	LOWER CATEGORIES	MIDDLE CATEGORIES	UPPER CATEGORIES
	EARTH WORLD	⟷ ↓	WORLD OF ARCHETYPAL IMAGES
FIRST MEDIATION		ELEMENTAL WORLD World of Soul/World of Spirits	

FIGURE 5(b). THE HIERARCHY OF SPIRIT BEINGS

	MAN ↙	⟷ ↓	↘ COSMIC CHRIST
FIRST MEDIATION		ELEMENTAL SPIRITS (the formative creative beings)	
SECOND MEDIATION	AHRIMAN (earthly evil)		LUCIFER (cosmic evil)
	Seraphim	Dominions	Archai
	Cherubin	Virtues	Archangels
	Thrones	Powers	Angels

3. MYSTICAL ATTAINMENT

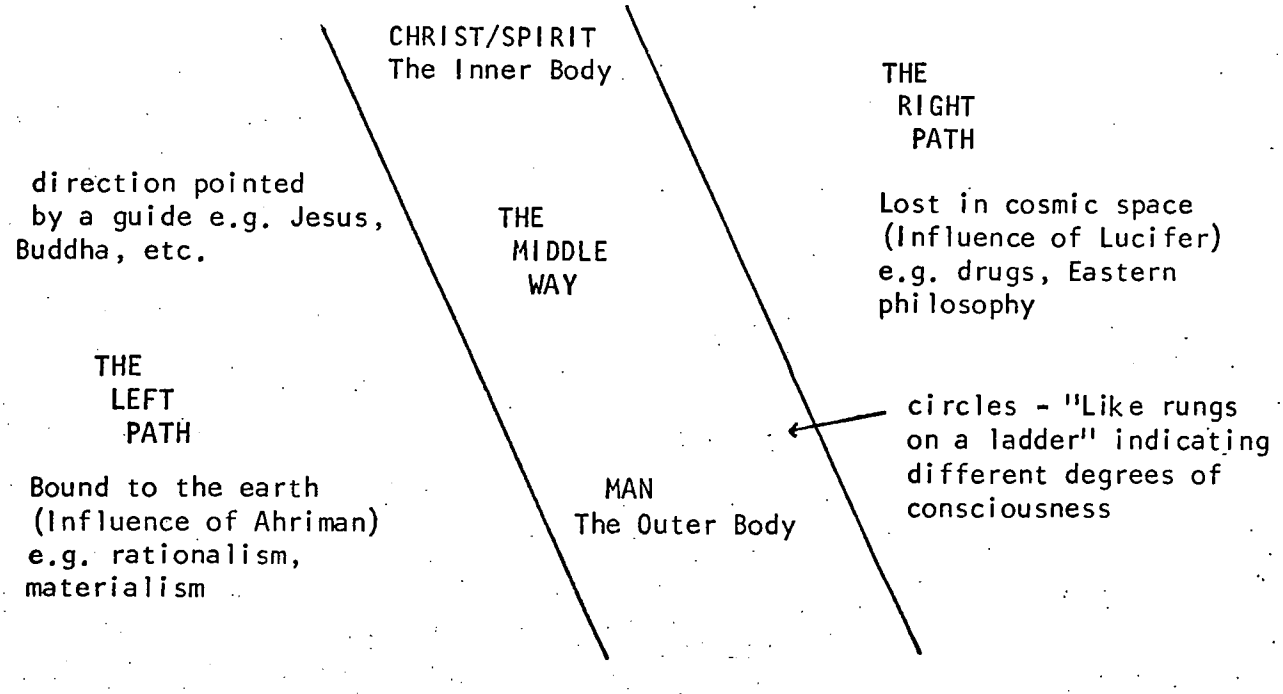
The Anthroposophical initiate embodies attributes of liminality and ambiguity since he exists both within 'this world' and the bther world'. As esoteric, he has transcended the physical world, but as exoteric, he remains within it. He engages in liminal practices such as meditation, contemplation and the construction of 'symbolic thought pictures'. He is thus deemed to be, in a sense, asleep to this world but awake to another world (Steiner, 1969:222) and is therefore both conscious and unconscious. (Steiner used the state of

sleep as an analogy for higher states of consciousness, presumably because sleep is a mediatory state between opposed polar states of consciousness and unconsciousness.)

Successful mystics or 'mystery Initiates' can be likened to mirrors, since they reflect the workings of both the Macrocosm and the Microcosm (the Microcosm is man's inner spiritual self and individuality, the Macroscosm is his heavenly counterpart and is non-individuated). The Initiate mediates between man and the Gods, past and present, known and unknown, life and death, and is deemed to be a source of power and knowledge. (cf. Steiner, 1960)

The figure below (fig. 6) which is based upon a description given by Steiner's wife (in Steiner, 1927:X) is our illustration of Steiner's conception of transcendence. It indicates succinctly the pervasiveness of the concept of mediation within the Anthroposophical myth structure, since the initate's function as mediator is replicated even within totally transpersonal, transcendent realms. He mediates not only between the realms of earth and space, inner body and outer body, man and God, but also two opposed but complementary conceptions of evil - the right and the left.

FIGURE 6. MEDIATION AND TRANSCENDENCE



(b) EXOTERIC ANTHROPOSOPHY: A SYSTEM OF SOCIAL ORDER

Following a basic programme initially outlined by Rudolf Steiner in the 1920's, Anthroposophists have made various ventures into world orientated fields of activity such as agriculture, the arts, education, medicine, nutrition, curative work, and even the organisation of society itself. We shall now briefly examine selected aspects of each of these categories of interest and activity and attempt to organise their crucial features in terms of the central Anthroposophical organising principle of mediation.

1. Agriculture

From the point of view of Anthroposophy, man is ultimately homologous to the greater order of the universe, and as such is subject to the same physical principles of constant metamorphosis, life and death, growth and decay. He is thus intimately interrelated with the physical world and is expected to regard the latter as itself permeated by a life force, or living soul. The "bio-dynamic" farmer or gardener is an instrument in the maintenance of this life force. He is engaged in creating a balance between the various formative (etheric) and degenerative (astral) forces of nature and the spiritual world. The achievement of a correct balance is beneficial not only to the land but to the inner states of all the recipients (i.e. the farmer and his fellows) of the land's products.

His two most important contributions towards these ends are (a) the activity of composting which replenishes the life force and (b) the application of a ritual preparation. This ritual preparation (a cow horn filled with quartz and manure annually sunk into the earth under the fields) contains the three elements which make up the soil (i.e. animal, mineral and plant). Put together, these elements introduce a balance in the land and increase the presence of astral forces.

The farmer metaphorically reproduces balance, and he actively introduces

balance. He is an agent of balance between differentiated forms of outer and inner life. He is thus a mediator between earth and man, nature and culture. He is also a mediator between man, nature and spirit.

2. Socialisation and organisation

Both these aspects of Anthroposophy, child education and the 'threefold social order', exhibit a triadic structure: composed of two differentiated, sometimes opposed, aspects mediated by a third, which functions as the agent and forms of 'balance'.

Thus the purpose of a Waldorf education is to establish rhythmic balance between the physical, ether, astral and ego bodies of the child, to encourage the correct development, in sequence, of the faculties of thinking, feeling and willing and to cultivate in the child a "quiet mood of the soul" (Easton, 1975:392).

The 'threefold social order' was originally put forward by Steiner as a remedy for the social ills of the early twentieth century, and is firmly adhered to in all Anthroposophical institutions. It emphasises the threefold nature of man's earthly condition, according to which the social order comprises three interpenetrating domains i.e. the cultural (competition and ideas) , the politico-jural (jurisdiction, rights and equality) and the economic (production and cooperation). Again the upper and lower components of this triadic schema are conceived to be mutually conflicting, and are mediated by the activities of the politico-jural domain.

Aspects of this order are the direct inverse of normal western practice (e.g. competition), but the schema as a whole can be considered also in this light since it emphasises the total separation of the three domains and a relationship of interdependence operative between them rather than the confusion which Steiner felt was prevalent in outside society.

The various aspects of man's condition as set out within Anthroposophical

educational and social orders are in themselves mutually interdependent and can be represented by the following system of correspondences.

FIGURE 7. EXOTERIC ANTHROPOSOPHY: THE SOCIAL, SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHICAL CORRESPONDENCES

Physical	Psychological	Initiatory Faculties	Spiritual	Social
Head	Thinking	Imagination	Ether body	Cultural Realm (ideas)
Rhythmic System	Feeling	Inspiration	Astral body	Political Realm (rights)
Metabolic and Limb System	Willing	Intuition	Ego-Astral body	Economic Realm (actions)

3. Healing

The above system of correspondences is replicated in Anthroposophical physiology. Physical well-being depends upon the state of balance achieved between the various threefold bodies and faculties. This balance is maintained by the operations of the three mediating faculties, i.e. the rhythmic system, feeling and the astral body. The agencies of disintegration, the katabolic forces, can be located in the workings of the ego-astral bodies whereas the agencies of integration i.e. the anabolic forces can be located in the workings of the ether body.

However, in the domain of physiology and healing, the relationship between the threefold physical bodies and the spiritual bodies is the inverse of that described for the world oriented educational and social domains. Thus bodily disintegration is centred on the consciousness processes, the head and the faculties of imagination and thinking, while growth and integration comes through the activities of the ether body, this time centered in the

metabolic and limb system and the domain of will.

Bodily illness results from an imbalance between the three bodily realm (i.e. the ether, astral and ego-astral bodies). Treatment is both homeopathic and allopathic. Remedies consist of plant and mineral extracts designed to stimulate underactive formative forces or alterately to counteract over-active degenerative forces. Thus the healer and his medicines, like the farmer, is an agent of mediation, someone who sets up and establishes balances between opposed forces.

FIGURE 8. HEALING: As above (Diagram 7) but positions of Ether body and Ego-astral body are reversed. Hence:

THE DEATH AND THE 'TO-SPIRIT' PROCESS	↑	EGO-ASTRAL BODY = FORCES OF DEGENERATION ASTRAL BODY = FORCES OF MEDIATION ETHER BODY = FORCES OF REGENERATION	↓	THE LIFE AND 'TO BODY' PROCESS

4. Curative Work

Curative work (i.e. the care and education of mentally handicapped adults and children) is aimed at correcting imbalances between the handicapped adult or child's four bodies. Such imbalances are believed to be the cause of abnormality. Anthroposophical treatment differs radically from normal societal practices of institutionalisation and drug application. Therapeutic treatment involves only homeopathic remedies, the practice of Eurythmy - a sort of mime-dance and an introduction to a purposeful living situation, e.g. in a working community.

Anthroposophy accords a special place and significance in its schema to mentally handicapped children and adults. Such people are regarded as 'innocents', as 'semi-incarnates'. The mentally handicapped person has no 'mind-consciousness', no perception of the autonomous 'I' that links his bodies, and is therefore incapable of sin or moral responsibility. But he possesses great purity or soul consciousness. Through close interaction with

such people we can, in an Anthroposophists words, "learn that the real value of human life does not lie in intellectual capacities only, but in the depths of the human soul". Their handicap on earth has a spiritual purpose. Indirectly, they function as mediators between spiritual and earthly worlds. The purpose of Steiner therapy is merely to try and develop the outer bodies, the 'I' and thus give them an easier life on earth.

5. The Arts

Anthroposophical forms of art are all conscious attempts to emulate the rhythms of the Macrocosm, and thus serve as yet another "bridge between the physical and the spiritual (Easton, 1975: 228). The painter, sculptor, musician, carver, poet, dramatist and architect are all mediums for external and internal forces, they express the innate workings of the etheric and astral bodies.

Anthroposophical music is characteristically ethereal and 'light'. The Anthroposophical musician is regarded as being himself a musical instrument, and an earthly mirror for archetypal, macrocosmic, sounds, tones and harmonies. Anthroposophical painting is, like the shifting world of colours and images, devoid of lines and hard boundaries. The painter mediates and brings together the opposed natures of colour (i.e. active and passive), but he also participates in their tensions through his own participation in the ether and astral worlds.

The 'materials' with which the Anthroposophical architect deals are the physical dimensions of length, width and depth. The relationship that he builds between these - the resultant shape, design or form - is again the expression of the links between macrocosmic and microcosmic forces. Anthroposophical buildings embody the principle of mediation. They present a womb-like appearance, there are no perfectly round shapes, nor are there any perfectly straight lines. Also each building is designed and situated in

PLATE TWO. THE GOETHEANUM

such a manner that it blends in with all the surrounding physical configurations, thus both representing and reinforcing the local ecological balance.

(c) CONCLUSIONS

Considering the Anthroposophical system as a whole (i.e. both myth and social order) it remains now to comment upon and contrast its meaning from: (i) an Anthroposophical or exclusively 'emic' perspective and, (ii) an Anthropological perspective.

(i) Clearly, for Steiner and his early followers, Anthroposophy constituted a set of truths abount Man, his place in the cosmos and the cosmos itself. It was 'revealed knowledge' and had a supernatural source. Steiner was, according to this view, a mediator, an interpreter, someone who dispensed information and presented it in a 'logico-meaningful' and contextually appropriate manner.

However, Steiner, as an eminent student of Schiller, was well aware that Anthroposophy was an ideal schema and therefore subject to the latter's premise that "the distinctive thing about an ideal is that no experience can ever agree with it" (cf. Cassirer, 1965: 74). Steiner considered Anthroposophy only a "beginning", "a seed of knowledge" (Easton, 1975:13), a set of guidelines that embodied flexibility and were hence amenable to alternation, transformation and even betterment over time. To paraphrase the idealist philosophies (i.e. those of Kant and Schiller) of which Steiner's beliefs were, in a sense, a metaphysical extension, it could be fairly said that the Anthroposophical social order was a regulative theory designed to complete "experience and give it systematic unity" (cf. Cassirer, 1965:74).

(ii) The Anthropologist is not entitled to put forward an interpretation which would dispute or negate the claims made for the system by its believers

and formulator, and it is our conviction that the particular exercise which we attempted and the method we employed (i.e. a structural analysis) conformed with this stricture. An examination of Anthroposophy, not as a set of metaphysical truths, but as a system of abstract relations enabled us to make propositions about its inner coherence, so that, at the logical infrastructural level, it appears to 'make sense'.

Thus, we disregarded the "thinking subject completely" (Levi-Strauss, 1970:12) and proceeded as if the "thinking process" (12) were taking place within the Anthroposophical scheme itself (in any case, Steiner's truths were, he claimed, not of his own manufacture, cf. Schure, 1970 for similar ideas). In this way we were able to reach a perspective which perhaps complements rather than contradicts, the perspective of the Anthroposophists. For besides its metaphysical import, Anthroposophy is also a way of thinking about reality, about existence, about man's relations with his fellows and the physical world and, most importantly, about contradictions in all these realms. This view corresponds with the conviction of a prominent contemporary Anthroposophist, that Anthroposophy is, above all else, a system of "knowledge" (Easton, 1975:13).

Our basic justification for the use of a structural analysis in attempting to comprehend Anthroposophy is that on the surface its rationale and its coherence as a "message" or medium of information (cf. Leach 1969:9) is not immediately apparent. The reader is confronted with a morass of seemingly non related obscure archaic referents and complex metaphysical details, couched in an extraordinarily elliptical and opaque style of writing and presentation. However, through the simplifying procedures permitted in a structural analysis we were able to extract from the system a highly coherent infrastructure and detect the workings of a consistent principle of organisation. Thus Anthroposophy appeared not as the product of a confused mind but as a construction both reasonable and intelligible. That Steiner himself had attempted to make this point - though at the level of content - is a justification for our labours.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANTHROPOSOPHY IN 'SPACE'

"How can there ever be an experience that conforms to an ideal? For the distinctive thing about an ideal is that no experience can ever agree with it."

Schiller

I. INTRODUCTION

St. Michel is a village community situated in countryside adjacent to a major city in France. It was founded by a group of Anthroposophists in the 1950's with a twofold purpose, (a) to provide curative therapy and a home for local mentally handicapped adults and (b) to provide a self-sufficient living situation based upon the principles of Rudolf Steiner for both Anthroposophists and anyone interested in community or curative work.

By 1973 the village had grown to include just under 100 persons living in a total of nine houses. The people were grouped together in 'families' with an average of six to seven mentally retarded persons alloted to each family. The houses were run individually by Co-Workers of various nationalities who lived there permanently.

The village owned a large tract of land which was divided into farm and gardens, so most of the community's grain, vegetable and dairy needs were provided for. Excess produce was marketed in the nearby city as were the handcraft products of the pottery, weaving looms and wood and metal workshops. Village economy was supplemented by grants from charitable trusts and the funds of the Anthroposophical Camphill organisation. All money was pooled and distributed among the houses. There were no salaries and a minimum of private possessions. Anyone in need of anything could withdraw the required amount of money from the collective pool.

II. ORDER IN ST. MICHEL

Emulation of the Divine Rhythm or Order as revealed in Steiner's threefold system constituted the ideal organising principle for community life. Such emulation had two purposes: (a) to bring semi-incarnate spirit beings (i.e. mentally handicapped persons) more into the earthly world, to

transform their bodily disorder into order and (b) to bring mortal beings (i.e. ordinary persons) more into contact with the spirit worlds.

Rhythmic order was most explicit in the highly repetitive schedule of work and prayer. Villagers were encouraged to do one thing at a time and that only at a specified time. Inactivity was practically impossible.

The year was classified out into periods of religious and seasonal significance. Certain days were feast days, marked by a service, a feast and the performance of an appropriate play.

The most successful village enterprises were the farms and gardens. The bio-dynamic method of agriculture practiced in the village was designed originally by Steiner. It treated the earth as a life force - a perfect coalescence of growth and decay permeated by forces from below (matter and ether) and above (astral and cosmic). The gardener assisted in the development of these vital forces and attempted to maintain a balance between them by composting and compatible planting. The sowing, harvesting and growing cycles were carefully aligned to macrocosmic cycles - the movements of the sun, moon, planets and stars.

Steiner had originally constructed the bio-dynamic method of cultivation or system or economic order as an alternative to the mechanistic and exploitative types of agriculture which had developed in Europe by the late nineteenth century. In line with this the village gardener and farmer repeatedly stressed their opposition to 'outside' agricultural techniques, claiming that the latter led to the production of unwholesome food and created imbalances in the natural, social and bodily worlds. Such schemes were regarded as 'impure', they disregarded innate spiritual forces, and as 'disorderly' - they upset the balance between the interdependent fourfold bodies. This expression of opposition towards the outside world occurred frequently in village conversation. Sometimes, even, outside practices and lifestyles were referred to as "Ahrimanic". Villagers were sensitive to the

fact that they were striving for economic self-sufficiency, and consequent severance from the outside world, but remained totally dependent on the outside world for goods, markets and even people.

Ritual Order

Since the Steiner therapy played such a prominent role in village life I shall elucidate, using actual case studies, how it worked out in practice.

During my stay in the village some of the major therapeutic activities were being organised by a special visitor named Nicholas. Nicholas was a respected Anthroposophist who usually lived by himself in the French mountains. He regularly came to the village to give lectures to the Co-Workers and direct craft sessions for the 'villageois'. One of the sessions simply involved moulding a lump of clay into three shapes, a square, a sphere and a triangle. Nicholas explained to the Villageois and Co-Workers present that these shapes were imitations of basic life forms. Thus, the sphere was an analogy of the egg, the womb or birth form. The square represented the sitting position and the triangle the walking position. These were in turn figurative metaphors for the basic human activities of 'feeling, willing and thinking' which were in turn only 'somatic correlatives' of divine rhythms. Nicholas further explained that the faculty of willing was drawn out in the activity of forming the sphere, then metamorphosed into feeling as the sphere was shaped and finally metamorphosed into thinking as the concentrated tip of the triangle was formed. In this manner the workings of man's threefold nature were represented and their purported interrelationship was emphasised.

But the exercise was technical as well as symbolic. Its purpose was to fuse the faculties and thus draw out or introduce to consciousness the spirit or Ego body which permeated these faculties. Those present and involved in the exercise were, in theory, momentarily in touch with a cosmic

rhythm which induced a state of ultimate order, a state both purifying and therapeutic.

Nicholas also organised painting classes. Painting, it seemed, functioned not so much as a means of personality expression as a release of inner rhythmic forces which had both therapeutic and purifying value. Those present were allowed to use only water colours or crayon. Also straight-line representations were discouraged. Nicholas explained that only water or pastel colours were suitable mediums for mirroring the ethereal 'imaginative' nature of the astral and etheric worlds. Nature exhibited no straight line configurations, rather forms and colours shaded and metamorphosed into one another. Painting, it was stressed, was the experience of colours, their active and passive natures and their complementarity. The finished product - the painting, was of secondary importance. As with the farming considered previously, painting in this way constituted a release of inner forces, a valve to the spirit body and therefore a means of bridging the gap between the worlds of body and spirit.

Concerts and musical activities were a recurrent feature of village life. Certain types of music were regarded as being particularly conducive to states of 'order' and 'purity'. The music that accompanied the services on Sundays and feast days was played on piano and lyres and was usually Baroque, hence soft repetitive, melodic and 'ordered'. According to the Anthroposophists, certain famous composers (e.g. Bach) were natural initiates who had entered a higher world of 'inspiration'; they were thus able to imprint the music of the 'spheres' on their Astral bodies and thus produce enlightened compositions.

The St. Michel Anthroposophists believed that music had an occult basis. Musical structures, tones and chords were, they felt, microcosmic mirror images and replications of macrocosmic entities and relations - astrological patterns etc. Hence they saw the playing of an instrument as a means of making contact with the spiritual world. An initiate or 'aware' person would not

just be making sounds but experiencing spirit.

They often expressed a dislike for certain kinds of music such as pop music or brash, emotive classical music. They considered these 'disorderly' and impure because they upset both bodily order and village order.

Themes of balance and order recurred in ritual dramas and in the regular practice of 'Eurythmy'. The latter was explained by one villager as a form of visable 'speech, movement and song'. Eurythmy was apparently devised by Rudolf Steiner and his wife to 'express the macrocosmic word through the instrument of the human body'. Eurythmy, I was told, transforms sound, music and words into moving pictures, traced apparently, by the sweep of the body and limbs. The coordination of the senses which results purportedly releases the hidden rhythms of the 'Threefold Body', and hopefully brings about a conscious contact with the ether and astral worlds.

Plays were performed in St. Michel to celebrate particular feast days. Invariably the plays recounted a particular Anthroposophical theme expressing a Christian mystery or fairy tale. Both Co-Workers and Villageois joined in the acting and presentation. Involvement in the production or performance of a play was considered to have both a purifying and ordering effect. As the highest art form, combining music, poetry, dance and speech, it was the most powerful mens of releasing the spiritual valves and forces thought to underlie the physical body and mind of man.

The latter description of village activity was designed not to show how norms and values were inculcated but to point out the simultaneous application of functional design (the therapy) and esoteric exercise (rituals of purification). The ideal expressed in each activity or ritual was the attainment of a type of 'order'. The concept of 'order', it would seem, had three different manifest usages. It could refer to village order (the pace and style of life and the control of people), therapeutic order (the cultural and functional

aspect) and to cosmic or spiritual order (i.e. as expressed explicitly in the theories of agriculture and music and the classification of the year). However we shall presume that it referred to the activities of all three domains. Thus, if our presumption is correct and all the various meanings of 'order' wereultimately congruent, then village order, village therapy and spiritual order were homologous; they implied one another and were perceived simultaneously.

III. POWER AND PURITY

During my stay in St. Michel I was able to discern the existence of four distinct groups or categories of people. These were as follows:

(a) The "Inner" or Camphill group. This consisted of eight Anthroposophists who had at one time attended the Camphill centre founded by Dr. Konig - a pupil of Steiner's, at Aberdeen in Scotland. Three of these had been involved in the foundation of St. Michel. Four were quite old (late fifties) while three were young (in their twenties). All were members of the Camphill organisation.

(b) The Co-Workers (about ten people). These were Anthroposophists but did not belong to Camphill. Most had been born Anthroposophists but some had joined it after receiving the Waldorf education. With one older exception they were middle aged and young.

(c) The Stagiares (nine to twelve people). This was the term used to describe the fluctuating number of 'outsiders' who came to the village to work and live for periods ranging from a few months to a few years. Some of them had been at Waldorf schools. Mostly they were young but in 1973 the group included two middle aged people. Perhaps as a signification of their impermanence, they were given a token wage, and did not have access to community funds. This wage increased with the duration of stay. The village was very dependent upon these people; they could help out with the villageois and could do

manual and curative work more efficiently and more responsibly than the Villageois. They also took some of the work load off the Anthroposophists.

(d) The Villageois. This was the mentally handicapped element. The type of handicap varied considerably. Some were psychotic, some autistic, some epileptic and others mongoloid. Some were physically handicapped but most had good bodily co-ordination though lacking in bodily grace. About 18% had no obvious handicap. All Villageois were involved in the work of the village.

Together these four groups constituted the complete St. Michel social system. Each group appeared to be relatively 'self-assertive' (i.e. aware of a measure of automomy, Koestler's, 1970, term), but all were functionally integrated and interdependent parts of a larger social whole. It was apparent, however, that there were radical inequalities occurring between the groups. This was revealed in several ways; a qualitative division of work among the groups, an assymetrical village meeting structure and marked status and power differences.

As regards work, the Camphill group dictated schedules, organised the workload and the finances, and determined village policy and relations with the outside world. The Co-Worker group provided the specialist skills, the farming, gardening, woodwork, metalwork, building, pottery and weaving. The Stagiares performed the more menial tasks, care for the more disabled villagers, the farmwork, cooking, cleaning, and craft production. The Villageois performed the most menial tasks and were often under close supervision.

Central to village life and organisation were the formal meeting arrangements (conseils). The Camphillers met most often, usually every other day. The Co-Workers met formally once a week to discuss production, and the whole village convened in general assembly once a month. The Co-Workers were excluded from most Camphill meetings except the most practical or 'crisis' ones. The Stagiares were also excluded from Camphill meetings and could only

attend the Co-Worker meetings if they had lived in the village for longer than a year.

Friendship networks in the village tended to fall within the various groupings. There was a great deal of opposition and personal differences between the groups and this was usually expressed in conflicts of opinion concerning matters of organisation and village admissions. These points are best brought our in reference to two case studies:

(a) On one occasion two Co-Workers, Peter and Klaus, expressed to me their feeling that the "inner Camphill group" had too much power in the village. Not only did the Camphillers exercise too much control over village affairs and decisions but on occasions, it was claimed, they displayed a condescending attitude in their dealings with Co-Worker and Stagiare groups. This particular series of complaints had been prompted by a recent incident during which one Co-Worker was informed that he could not take charge over one of the new houses on the grounds that he and his wife led a 'spiritually impure' and 'disorderly' existence. This was taken to refer to the latters' possession of a television and their habit of drinking alcohol, both of which were considered "destructive to village consciousness" and a threat to "village order". The result of this particular dispute led to the Co-Workers deferring to the wishes of the Camphill group and agreeing to conform to the strictures of village asceticism in order to take over the disputed house.

The significance of the above affair from our point of view, was the fact that although Camphill power was hotly disputed, their position as arbiters of village norms and ultimate values was not. Subsequent disagreements between the two groups were usually resolved in the same manner.

The two Anthroposophist groups, however, dropped their differences when faced with any disruption on the part of the third group - the Stagiares. On such an occasion they invariably combined and formed a united front against the village's 'outsiders'. As a result of disputes with the Anthroposophists, about fifteen Stagiares had prematurely left St. Michel, and about nine of these had been expelled. The reason given for this was the latters' sexual immorality and their tendency to indulge in "Luciferic" activities, i.e. drinking, parties, late nights and drug taking.

(b) On one occasion two Camphillers convened a 'crisis' meeting to

> bring to general notice a recent outbreak of disorderly 'Stagiare' activities. The Stagiares were brought before the Conseil and warned about the noise, untidy rooms, and their alarming laxity with the villageois. They were referred to as 'disorderly', they upset the 'therapeutic order', and as 'impure' - they created 'consciousness imbalances'. The Stagiares, in this case as in others, complained that the Camphillers were too strict and puritanical.

Despite their differences, the three groups tended to fuse and form a united front when there was any trouble with the fourth group - the Villageois. It also seemed to me that a large proportion of the Villageois slightly resented the Stagiares whereas they were generally respectful of the Anthroposophical groups. But, I was repeatedly warned that the Villageois were very sensitive to the existence of community factions and periodically attempted to stir up disagreements and create rifts between the Anthroposophical and Stagiare groups.

IV. HIERARCHY

The various organisational assymetries and status imbalances outlined above (e.g. descriptions of the exclusivist meeting structure and the division of work, tasks and responsibility) lead us to infer that social life in St. Michel was ordered along hierarchical lines.

The concept of hierarchy has been defined by Dumont (1972, 104-5) as "the principle by which the elements of a whole are ranked in relation to the whole." In our case the "whole" can be identified as the 'idea' of community (i.e. St. Michel) and the elements as the four groups, each of which tended to assert a semblance of autonomy from the other groups in terms of shared values, practices and tasks and a shared classification. The relationships generally operative between the groups were governed by their allotted positions within a hierarchical organisation. However, these considerations present us with a strange paradox, namely, the existence of a hierarchical framework within an ideally egalitarian set-up.

The precise nature of the egalitarian community ethic can be traced in

the various Anthroposophical writings on the subject. Easton (1975) maintains that, in theory, the Steiner village is cooperative and egalitarian and "as little distinction as possible is made between villagers, and Co-Workers". Furthermore "there is no administrative bureaucracy; all who take part in the work are consulted and share in all decisions" (429-50).

While it could be recognised that the operationalisation of such ideals would be likely to present many problems and contradictions, in that there would always be sex, age, experience and specialist differences leading to periodic deviations; one would expect that any total deviation from the ideal would be consensually invalidated. However, such a total deviation seemed to have evolved in St. Michel and had become institutionalised to the point at which all the villagers had become reconciled to it. Although paying lip service to the ideal of equality, the villagers lived and thought in terms of acute inequality. Our next task is to comprehend how this apparent contradiction between ethic and practice had come about, and how it was sustained.

One possible explanation for the existence of a hierarchy would be that a contingent specialisation of tasks among specific groups and people had evolved over time into a means of representing those people. Thus one group's tasks had been deemed more important for village welfare than anothers and that group had become more powerful. But, as we noted earlier, the dominance of one group in the realm of village policy and organisation, was one of the most contentious factors; however, that group's position and status as mediators of ultimately religious values was not contended. Consequently, a fuller explanation would have to take into account the constant reference to the values which were revealed in the case studies. Categorisation of groups, of people, of people into groups, and of an attendant group 'type' of behaviour was justified by reference to a generally accepted higher normative code. The religious basis of this code was expressed in terms of

ascendent qualities of 'purity', of 'consciousness' and 'order'.

The Co-Workers deferred to the Camphillers on the basis of the latter group's knowledge of Steinerian therapeutic procedures and what was good for the community in that light. They appeared reconciled both to their exclusion from 'inner' meetings and to their classification as a less esoteric, less ascetic group. The Stagiares, it seemed were less inclined to accept a subordinate position, but were, on the other hand, made to feel constantly aware of their sensitive position as 'outsiders' to both Anthroposophical and village traditions.

On the basis of these considerations we can construct a model of a St. Michel classificatory system. Manifest in the two short case studies outlined above were three separate but confused criteria for classifying groups, people behaviour and attitudes within the village system. These criteria can be analytically separated and isolated in the following manner:

(a) In terms of the subject's relationship to the 'Divine, Order or Rhythm', revealed as an apparent attainment of a balance between the 'physical, ether, astral and ego' bodies.

(b) In terms of the subject's relationship to the Anthroposophical tradition. His or their attained stage of initiation.

(c) In terms of relationship to the village (whether insider or outsider) and its inner workings.

These can also be represented as binary oppositions:

Figure 9

Interlocking Planes of Classification

(a)	Order Innate or attained balance between the four bodies.	Disorder Innate or achieved imbalance between the four bodies.
(b)	Pure Deference to Spiritual tradition or Spirit itself.	Impure No deference to Spiritual tradition or Spirit.
(c)	Inside The village.	Outside Non-Village (the outside world).

The three planes of classification, reduced in this fashion to their basic structural components, merge and interlink to comprise the "total structure" (Needham, 1962) of the St. Michel symbol system. The vertical terms are associative. Together, the three planes form an implicit frame of reference for classifying people, types of behaviour, and types of events. At any one time only specific parts or combinations of these classificatory principles were apparent as norms or values expressed during empirical intercourse. The whole or complete schema, I would suggest, was largely implicit.

The binary terms are not absolute but relative to each other and to the encompassing schema. Furthermore they are arranged hierarchically, order over disorder, inside over outside, etc. In this way they can be seen to permeate the hierarchy at specific levels.

The meaning of the terms is reasonably explicit. Anthroposophical 'purity' was not just an ideal, an esoteric aim, but involved the recognition that there was a higher spiritual state. To the Anthroposophists a pure life was a life which recognised spirit and acted upon that recognition. (In this sense our usage of 'purity', as having a directly spiritual reference, differs from both Dumont's (1972) and Douglas' (1970) uses of the term.) 'Order' is the person's awareness of his divine essence or inner order; it is apparent in either the person's manner of behaviour or in his deference to canons of esotericism. The concept of 'order' derives from Anthroposophy whereas the concept of purity refers to esotericism in a world situation. A person is either initiated or not initiated, but can also be more initiated or less initiated than someone else. The third opposition Outside/Inside defines the boundaries of the community.

To further justify the use of this model, reference will again have to be made to the general sets of attitudes which set the groups apart and connected them.

'Purity' (or Soul consciousness) increased with progression up the hierarchy and had an esoteric base. The Camphill group were the village

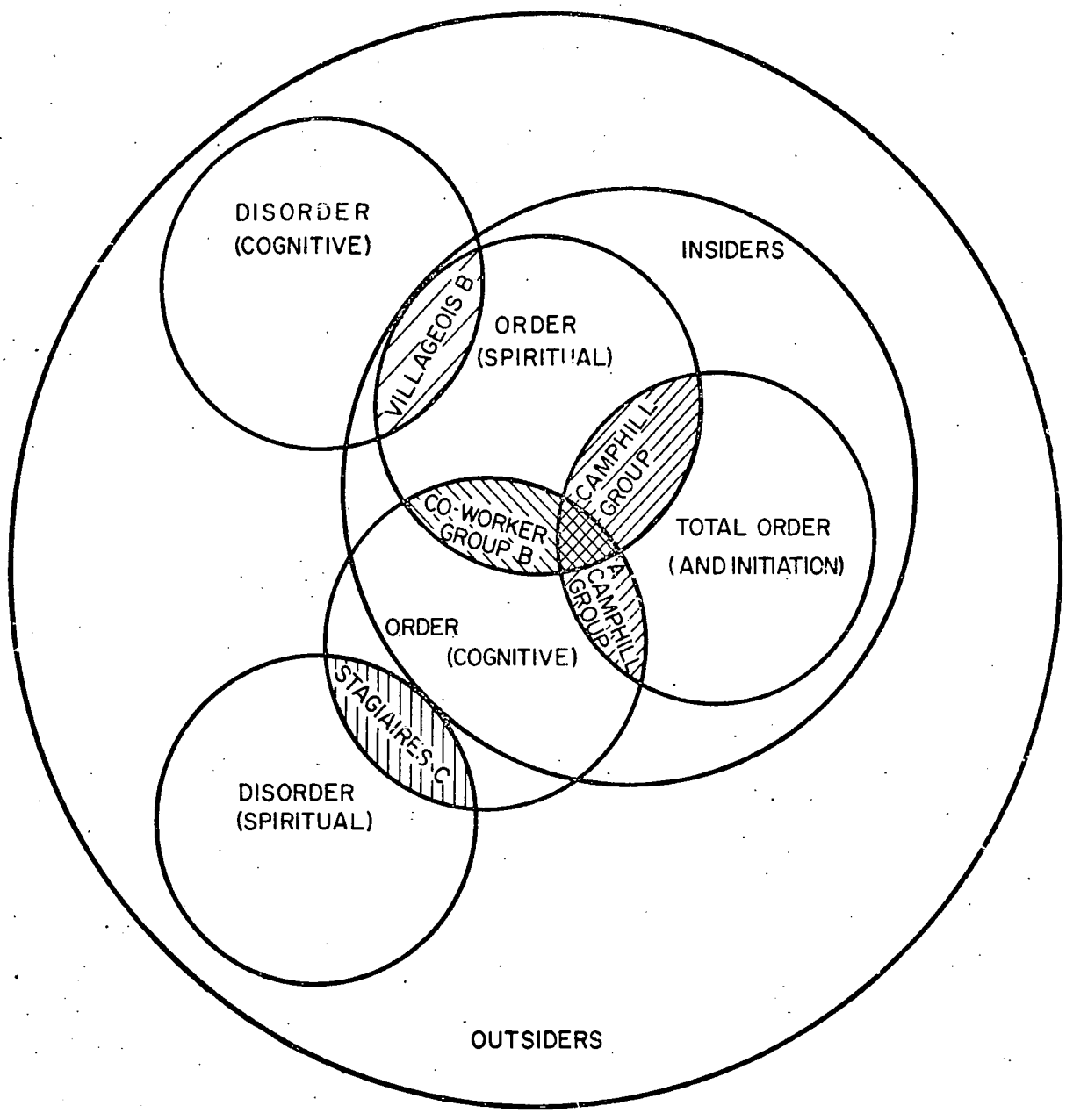


FIGURE 10. CLASSIFICATION AND HIERARCHY IN ST. MICHEL

Key	A	B	C	D
	CAMPHILL GROUP	CO-WORKER GROUP	STAGIAIRES	VILLAGEOIS
1.	ORDERED Balanced	ORDERED Balanced	DISORDERED (chosen) Imbalanced (temp.)	DISORDERED (innate) Imbalanced (innate)
2.	MOST PURE	PURE	IMPURE	PURE / IMPURE (Spirit) (Mind/Body)
	Initiate (soul and mind) (consciousness)	Initiate (soul and mind) (consciousness)	Non Initiate (Mind (consciousness) (only)	Non Initiate (consciousness-less)
3.	INSIDERS	INSIDERS	OUTSIDERS	INSIDERS

ritual functionaries. They organised the feasts, played the music and performed the rites. They regularly convened astrological and meditative gatherings and interpreted Anthroposophical and Biblical writings to the rest of the community. Their closeness to the esoteric tradition was the source both of their charisma as a group, and of their perception of themselves as being more 'inside' than the other groups. Also, according to Anthroposophical tenets, 'soul consciousness' increased both with involvement in a meditative life and with the evolution of the human body in age. Establishing the village in the first place was a sign of 'selflessness'. And the practice of the threefold esoteric method was a sublimation to divine 'order' and therefore a sign of personal 'order'. Their power and influence within the village was validated by their theoretically close relations with the divine. Compliance with their wishes was based upon their attributes of charisma and purity. It was these qualities which determined their supreme position in the power hierarchy.

The second group, the Co-Workers, had, unlike the Camphillers, retained extensive contacts with the world outside the village. But they were Anthroposophists. Although critically 'less inside' than the first group, by dint of not being Camphill, they were still highly ordered and pure. Their youth and their state of semi-initiation, however, indicated a lower state of 'soul consciousness', so they were less pure and less 'ordered'. These factors governed their position on the power and purity hierarchy.

The third group, the Stagiares, provide us with a 'stressed' category. They were regarded as potentially disruptive by the village because they were 'outsiders'. Their worldly taint meant that they had too much 'mind consciousness' and not enough 'soul consciousness'. Although cognitively and physically ordered, they were 'spiritually disordered', not in contact with the Divine rhythm. Prior categorisation of them in this fashion determined the way they were perceived, treated and controlled.

The Villageois, being semi-incarnate and innocent, had been born with 'spiritual purity', and were firmly located inside the village. Their presence as people in need of help and love, and as an agency of purity, was a connecting thread in village life, and an aid towards transcendence. But they lacked co-ordination in their rhythmic faculties and the requisite amount of 'mind consciousness' necessary for objective spiritual awareness. They were incapable of becoming initiates so could never develop full 'earthly ego or soul'. Total order and total purity in the earthly life were beyond their reach; so logically, they were placed at the very bottom of the hierarchy. This had the implication, and this will be empirically validated, that no villageois could ever become a full Anthroposophist or have power and responsibility in the village.

The complete classificatory system as outlined above is set out diagrammatically in Figure 10.

V. TEST CASES

(a) The Place of Ambiguity

A test case for the ascendancy of belief and classification over practical or other determinants occurred when two Co-Workers tried for positions of greater responsibility in village life.

> The first case concerned Jean Claude, a skilled craftsman and converted Anthroposophist, who had been physically handicapped at birth. Jean Claude wished to be put in charge of one of the new houses the village was building and also expressed his intention to marry a former village Stagiare, Justine. Although desperately in need of new Houseparents, the inner village council refused permission which led to Jean Claude and Justine eventually leaving the village. The village farmer explained to me that Jean Claude, because of his handicapped limbs represented a person who had poor 'will' development. Although cognitively ordered he was physically 'disordered' and therefore rhythmically incomplete. And, the farmer pointed out, this was verified by Jean Claude's apparent inability to defend his case adequately at the meeting. It was also felt that Jean Claude's

> relationship with the Villageois was destructive to village order, since he permitted them too much freedom (he was very popular with the Villageois).
>
> In the second case, another Co-Worker with a physical handicap, Alan, was, like Jean Claude, refused greater community responsibilities. Again, the explanation for this had to do with the latter's state of physical incompleteness, he was 'disordered'. Alan and Jean Claude both failed to satisfy criteria of being potentially "pure" and sufficiently 'ordered'. This attitude seemed to reflect upon the uncertainty that emanated from their ambiguous position in the system.

At this stage, it should be indicated that hierarchical ranking occurred not only between each group but within them as well. Although less defined and more fluid, the same sets of classificatory criteria (pure, order, etc.) determined the amount of respect and status that was accorded to a particular individual. Nicholas, for example, had great charisma in the eyes of the Co-Workers, Stagiares and Villageois, but was viewed with slight suspicion by the Camphillers. Another example was Lise who had been at Camphill when Konig was alive and had left Austria with the Konigs when the Nazi purge was in operation. She had her own house in the village and took no part in manual work, but exercised considerable power in village affairs. She also organised the inner meetings. She had great charisma and was considered a symbol of the initiated inner Camphill tradition.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, three Villageois stood out in their category as being distinctly less 'disordered' than the others. One of them, Antoine, had no handicap but had been taken into the village as an orphaned child. He was looked up to by the other Villageois and when the farmer was away he was given responsibility for the farm. Antoine spoke French and German fluently. Another, Valerie, also had responsibilities and could speak four languages fluently. The third, Marie, had at one time been considered normal enough to work outside the village. All three had specific privileges such as being given wages etc. The line dividing them from the Stagiares was then purely classificatory. For they were still regarded as 'Villageois'

and were excluded from meetings and were subject to the time schedule. But they were in fact regarded as being potentially very dangerous. Cognitively, they were more 'ordered' than their classification would permit: their position was an ambiguous one.

Antoine, Valerie and Marie were known to be avid gossipmongers. Any breaches of village rules, especially on the part of the less charismatic and 'stressed' Stagiare group, were invariably communicated by these three to the rest of the village and sometimes to the Camphillers themselves, who would invoke warnings or punitive action. Also these three tended to imitate the Anthroposophists. They adhered publicly to the more ritualised aspects of the belief system and held themselves up to be morally virtuous. As Villageois they could not marry and stay in the village, so they were perhaps over-sensitive to sexual matters. Stagiares and Co-Workers were repeatedly warned about exhibiting intimacy or exchanging information within their hearing. They were villageois with sound minds; they had 'mind consciousness' and were therefore capable of evil. They also cut across recognised classificatory boundaries, so like the ambiguities cited by Douglas (1970) they were accorded a wary recognition. Of note also, was the tendency here for structural inferiors to imitate superiors and thereby attain greater status, a point first indicated by Dumont (1972) as a concomitant to hierarchical ranking based upon purity criteria.

(b) Pollution: Sex as disorder.

One of the more ascetic indices in village life was provided by a strict segregation of the sexes in St. Michel. The houses were mixed but corridors and floors were separated on sexual lines. Anthroposophical house fathers and mothers, although married, also had separate bedrooms, though usually on one floor or corridor. This was, apparently, normal Anthroposophical practice. The expressed purpose of this was to minimise overt physical intimacy which, it was generally thought, could be too easily imitated by the Villageois.

It also had a wider esoteric derivation. For spiritual transcendance achieved by the practice of selfless love would be hampered by too much attention given to physical love. No moral values of the usual type were attached to this practice, since as one Camphiller pointed out, Steiner was a-moral. He disliked bureaucratic rules, dogmas and regulations. He often spoke out against the adoption of moral codes for their own sake (cf. Lerhs, 1958, 89). Steiner, it appeared, was convinced that all varieties of the latter inhibited spiritual development. This view of Anthroposophy as amoral was empirically supported by the fact that one Camphiller, Josette, used to quietly boast of her sexual exploits prior to living in the village.

However, matters of sex occupied prime place among private topics of discussion in St. Michel, particularly among the Villageois and particularly in gossip circules. The Villageois were totally banned from sexual intercourse. For the Anthroposophists felt that if the latter became involved in sexual relationships the therapy would be disrupted and individual and social disorder would result. Stimulants such as sex, alcohol, and competitive games, were considered to cause confusion and imbalance among the four bodies. Also, it was thought, personal relationships between Villageois would complicate the simple life patterns established in the village.

No sex was the rule. Yet it was expected of one category - the Stagiares. All newcomers to the village were warned of the possible effects on village 'consciousness' resultant from permissive or hedonistic behaviour. Stagiares were strictly segregated. However intransigances were frequent and we shall refer to a few.

(a) Verner, a middle-aged Swiss-American had come to the village with his wife in 1969. After a whole his wife left with someone else, and Verner was believed to have become subsequently involved with other Stagiares. He was also throught to be responsible for the introduction of drug taking in the village. Generally considered a bad influence, he and his girlfriend were requested to leave. After a period, due to the efforts of some Co-Workers who valued his agricultural knowledge, he was allowed to return on

his own. All further disruptive outbreaks were attributed to him. He was allotted a caravan sited beside the village and he stayed there till his departure toteach in a Waldorf school in another part of the country.

(b) Tony and Francis were Americans who both came to the village at separate times during 1970. They were caught co-habiting by Marie one of the non-handicapped Villageois and were brought before a hastily convened council meeting. They too were asked to leave.

(c) A Swiss-German girl, Inge, whose husband had left her in the village in 1971 with a child, became pregnant again in 1972 and was asked to leave.

(d) One case involving a French Stagiare and a Swiss girl led also to their being asked to leave. This occurred during my stay. Gossip in the village had reached a new height, with a number of Villageois regularly making complaints about noise, drinking, etc. The Camphillers, during the crisis meeting, repeatedly stressed their fear of the Villageois emulating Stagiare sexual permissiveness. The Camphillers again stressed their belief in the values of personal affection and their disregard of any 'moral' aspects. They were asking for a minimalisation of sexual activity only for 'the sake of the village, the good of the community'.

Taking our cue from the Camphillers, psychological and 'old-moral' explanations for the village's sensitive attitude to sex can be rejected as inadequate. Pre-marital sex, especially when committed by members of the stressed 'outside' category, constituted a threat to the stability of the system. Various overlapping interpretations could be put forward to explain why this was the case.

Firstly, illicit sex was associated with the category with which it was obviously going to be most manifest, i.e. the younger, unmarried, non-esoteric group. Stagiare permissiveness and unruliness was only to be expected since they belonged to a 'Luciferic' outside world. Control over them was necessary to prevent 'outside' ideas and practices from filtering into the community. Secondly Stagiare permissiveness contravened the religious ethic of 'selflessness'. Self-indulgence disrupted both spiritual and therapeutic orders. A male/female relationship not sacrificed to the community (as with the initiates) could be seen to represent 'abortive

community'. The tendency would be for attention to be concentrated on one other person to the exclusion of all others.

Ultimately, justification for this moral attitude to sex was made by reference to Anthroposophical norms. It was 'Luciferic' and created bodily imbalance. But this represented a clear contradiction, for Anthroposophy was itself explicitly Amoral. Steiner himself conceived of sex as only 'disorderly' if it, like the cult of the intellect, gained priority over spiritual values. Furthermore, some of the other Camphill villages were notorious for their air of permissiveness. Villageois were allowed sexual relations and the Camphillers themselves had large families with confused parentage. So why was St. Michel different?

A brief light on this perplexing situation can be provided by establishing a few brief comparisons between St. Michel and some of the other Steiner villages.

St. Michel was unique among the other villages upon which information is available, because it was small, spatially compact and crowded whereas the others were large and spacious. Vidarosan in Norway was sited in empty countryside. Woods intervened between the houses which were sited well apart from each other. Botton village in Yorkshire occupied a vast acreage. The village spanned a whole valley and the houses were anything up to a few miles apart. From conversations with the villagers in Botton it emerged that perception of 'disorder' in the community concerned lack of contact between the houses. The farmers in particular complained of isolation - a lack of community.

Mary Douglas (1973 b) has pointed out the appropriateness of the physical body as a metaphor for the social body. According to her thesis social constraints are invariably reflected in an organic medium. The type of bodily medium employed is determined by situational factors which affect the way the social order is perceived and experienced. She also notes that

'witch-fearing' activities tend to arise in a closely bounded unit and that the two means of control associated with such groups are expulsion and fission.

While not wishing to infer that St. Michel was a typical witch hunt situation there are parallels with witch conscious societies. St. Michel expelled all offenders and displayed a high degree of fission. Another village, Christoforus in Holland, and also a small community like St. Michel, had allowed itself to segment into two almost non-communicating halves (one half wanted to introduce sexual freedom among the Villageois, the other half categorically did not).

Like the witch conscious societies depicted by Douglas (1973 b: 138) and Wilson (cited by Douglas: 140) the St. Michel social unit was small in scale, external boundaries were clearly marked, and internal relations were conflicting and confused. Close living conditions in St. Michel mediated an intensity to community life that was perhaps lacking in the other villages. People were perhaps more conscious of what Wilson calls 'social hygiene' and a corresponding sense of bodily hygiene. Sex in St. Michel was an unwelcome intrusion of the organic into the social. Lack of bodily control, particularly among the stressed category, represented the biggest threat to the deified community, the social and divine orders. Sex was the most apt situationally defined medium for the expression of ultimate controlling values of good and evil, right and wrong, pure and impure.

Sex in St. Michel was a sign of the bad outside (Stagiare, the individual and the physical) threatening the good inside (Camphill, the community and the spiritual world).

VI. CONCLUSION

Needham (1973) posits a useful analytical separation of society into three divisions, classification, rules and behaviour. Analysis proceeds with

each in turn and "at each stage in the investigation we have to expect disparities" (174).

Hence, our investigation of St. Michel took stock of the ideological and classificatory principles operative behind the establishment of the community and noted the extent to which this fusion of belief and purpose continued to explicitly permeate everyday life. As such, Anthroposophy attained a kind of mythical status; it amounted to a charter for cosmic and social order from which relevant criteria, legitimation, and doctrinaire forms could be chosen. However, the type of choice made in St. Michel was, we suggest, mediated by circumstantial factors such as location, spatial configuration, concessions to sheer practicality and compromises with the outside world.

The unique form of classification manifest in St. Michel and the hierarchical ordering of groups into categories in terms of this, was initially derived, we suggest, from the application of an ideal system (Anthroposophy) complete with its historical transformation (the Camphill organisation) to a particularly constraining type of empirical situation. Hence, the criteria which underlay the distinctions between groups and between people were essentially products of both belief and experience. Where situational criteria such as the division between the community and the outside world, or believer/non-believer, were paralleled in the pure belief system (i.e. Implied in Anthroposophy is a division between cooperative and competitive systems, initiates and non-initiates, and <u>mind consciousness</u> and <u>soul consciousness</u>. These correspond to St. Michel criteria: order/disorder, inside/outside and impure/pure), then those criteria were reinforced. Structurally, classification in St. Michel was one of many possible permutations implicit to the structure of that pure system. The particular permutations extant in St. Michel, when condensed into an institutional form, led to a contradiction between ethic and practice, a total rather than a

partial deviation and this could only be explained with reference to the nature of that permutation and what caused it.

Rules (Needham's middle category) in the village were conjoint to, and a product of, the village mode of classification. Classification established pattern and order in the community and the rules safeguarded that order. Ultimately order was equated with conceptions of the divine and with the idea of community itself. Power in the hands of one group was made legitimate by that group's relationship to the divine. Any threat to the community or to the central group was an attack on the divine, therefore 'Luciferic'.

However, rules and classification in St. Michel were not static. Both arose logically out of the interaction between an ideal system (Anthroposophy) its historical transformations (the Camphill organisation) and the empirical reality. The emphasis given to circumstantial factors indicate that their evolution was highly subject to the vagiaries of the latter and constantly available to dialectical interchange.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUDING REMARKS

"... common sense is the ability to perceive the forms of things, whereas imagination is the ability to perceive meanings. One who sees only form without meaning, or meaning without form, needs to develop the complement."

Laleh Bakhtiar

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study of esotericism gives rise to a series of questions which our thesis has, as yet, not attempted to answer. These are: Given that similarities can be established between different esoteric systems, how are we to explain these similarities? and, even more importantly, how are we to explain the differences? This also implies another question concerning the nature of the relationships operative between different esoteric systems.

A proper consideration of these questions is beyond the scope of the present work. However it seems pertinent to attempt a brief review of the various explorations that have been made in these directions.

Three possible solutions have been suggested in attempts to explain differences between esoteric (specifically 'religious' or 'symbol') systems and to assess the connections between such systems. Two of these, the diffusionist and the evolutionist have a historical or historigraphical orientation. The third, the structuralist, is a-historical. We will now outline and evaluate these three approaches in turn.

1. The Diffusionist

Diffusionism holds that representations and behavioural patterns of the type we have thought fit to term esoteric can be reduced to a list of borrowings made by ancient and modern communities and civilisations from each other, which took place over vast stretches of historical time and geographical space. The immensity and complexity of the material to which this view gives rise, necessitates the imposition of a series of conceptual cycles and arbitrary cultural complexes, through which the analyst attempts to comprehend patterns of diffusion.

Mircea Eliade inclines towards a diffusionist point of view. He postulates, for example, that ideas of mystical ascension dominant in the

"ancient Near East penetrated far into Central and North Asia and contributed considerably to giving Central Asian and Siberian Shamanism their present features" (Eliade, 1968:xiv). Eliade qualifies this by adding that Oriental influences did not have a 'creative' role in establishing shamanic conceptions of celestial ascent; their role was simply one of modification, since, he argues, the phenomenon of ascent is itself not derivative but "primordial" (xiv).

Cultural borrowing of the type described by Eliade, the dissemination of ideas through time and between peoples seems likely to have occurred. Religious ideas, like language items, are amenable to adoption, superimposition and transmutation. However, religious systems, like languages, possess an internal structure which can be related cross-culturally to other religious systems and shown to belong to "a system of logical affinities", (Levi-Strauss, 1970:8). These structures transcend time and place and defy attempts to determine their historical origin. Hence, we are in the presence of a type of grammar of syncretism, the operations of which cannot be grasped or rendered explicit by a diffusionist approach but which demand consideration.

2. The Evolutionist

The evolutionist perspective is even more conjectural than the diffusionist. Diffusionism selects a particular religious phenomenon, attempts to locate it geographically and then explains all others as having spread out and developed from it. The diffusionist then deals with unknown beginnings. The evolutionist goes further, he posits a beginning in nothing (pre-religion) then a calculable motion and direction in ideational development ('from simple') and, even worse, a qualitatively assessable end ('to more complex').

A recent example of evolutionism is provided by the work of Bellah

(1969a). Bellah maintains that there are five basic, ideal-typical stages in the evolutionary development of religion as a "symbol system" (1969a:263). He labels these the primitive, archaic, historic, early modern and modern types of religion. His treatment of these as stages in religious evolution is based upon one single premiss, a premise which is of direct interest to us because of its relationship to the topic of esotericism.

This is his contention that the criterion which distinguishes early, primitive forms of religion from more recent, more complex forms is that the later forms are in "some sense transcendental" (276). By 'transcendental' he means specific varieties of experiental salvation involving the denigration of the "given empirical cosmos" an attitude of "world rejection" (276) and the "exaltation of another realm of reality as alone true and infinitely valuable" (264).

We shall now argue that Bellah's criterion is totally erroneous and that this is so on several counts. Firstly, his concept of "world rejection" confuses two types of worlds, the world of society (man's cultural universe, constructs of social relations and inherited collective representations) and the world of nature (the physical world or the "given empirical cosmos"). Both types of world can mean different things in different contexts, and rejection or transcendence can be of both or either, or take place through facilities provided by both or either, as we hope to show. Secondly, many religions of the 'primitive' type, contrary to Bellah's view, display an awareness of alternative "infinitely valuable" realities. 'Primitive' alternative realities simply take forms different from those characteristic of historic or modern religions. Thirdly, Bellah's so called 'primitives' display a variety of forms of transcendence, but these simply do not accord exactly with Bellah's limited meaning of the term 'transcendence'.

For the purposes of our argument we shall retain Bellah's terminology, i.e. primitive and historic, although the terms 'societies without history'

and 'societies with history' would probably be more accurate. We shall draw on Hindu/Buddhist material as an example of 'historic' religion, and American Indian material as an example of 'primitive' religions.

In our view 'primitive' and 'historic' society present contrasting pictures of what, for them, constitutes the 'world' or the 'given empirical cosmos'. Primitive society as, for example, represented by the African Dinka or the American Indians, can be characterised by its proximity to nature. Task specialisation, hierarchical ranking and elitism are limited because everyone is involved in economic activities such as farming, grazing or hunting which all involve a direct contact with nature. Men are classified as Levi Strauss (1969) has shown, in terms of metaphors modelled upon the natural 'world', and the supernatural is represented as inhering within the natural 'world.' Hence images of self, nature and society coalesce (as Lienhardt, 1961 has shown for the Dinka), each realm reflects and 'participates in' the other.

The inhabitants of a 'Historic' society, such as Buddhist or Hindu India, live in a world which is not classified through metaphors gleaned from nature. Their supernaturals are modelled upon people and not upon items of nature. Buddhists and Hindus are to a large extent removed from the natural world by ranking procedures, extensive economic specialisation, a complex division of labour and intensive role structuring, all of which provide their social inheritance.

Both types of society, the primitive and the historic, display a religious attitude which in effect constitutes a negation of their respective 'worlds'. The world of the Hindu, as Bellah notes, is Maya, it is a divine creation and also an illusion. This, however, does not mean that all is "nothingness" but that human experience, time (a social construct) and history are without "ontological validity" (see Eliade, 1968:242). Embodied in this metaphysic is the conception that "the human condition

ought not to be regarded as an end in itself", (Eliade, 1968:242). Thus during meditation the Hindu yogi attempts to transcend the 'world' in its outward appearances. But this world and its 'appearances' are social rather than natural. This very point has been made by Staal (1975);

> "In Yoga, the first step on the mystic path is Vairagya, 'detachment, renunciation', and this is primarily directed towards ... social attachments."
> (Staal, 1975:102)

Staal also indicates that this is true of most mystics of what Bellah would call the 'historic type'. Thus "It is society (not nature or the cosmos) which is primarily intended when the Buddha, for example, emphasizes that this world is suffering" (Staal;102, emphasis his). Further, many such mystics can be characterised by their rejection of society in favour of a closer communication with the natural world (St. Francis for example).

Like the Hindu or Buddhist the 'primitive' also rejects the outward appearances of the phenomenal world. But in his context this takes a different form. Since his society is, unlike that of the Hindu, not differentiated from nature, he is unable to 'renounce' either his society or nature but he does reject both as things or ends in themselves. The evidence for this is conclusive. The North American Dakota Indians, for example, conceive of all "things and beings" as "nothing but materialised forms of creative continuity" (Levi-Strauss, 1969:171). Nature and society are valued for what they represent. They are just surface manifestations of the "Unseen and Eternal" (McLuhan, 1973:36).

Further, the 'primitive' evidences an orientation towards transcendence of his unbifurcated social/natural world in its outward empirical appearance. But unlike the Buddhist or Yogi whose transendences of their bifurcated social world take place in an elitist, economically non-viable separatist setting (the monastery or ashram) the transcendences of the American Indians take place within their natural economic environment, as we can see from the

following example taken from an account by a Stoney Indian.

> "We saw the Great Spirit's work in almost everything: sun, moon, trees, wind and mountains. Sometimes we approached him through these things"
>
> (cited in Mcluhan, 1973:23)

Characteristic transcendental exercises, apart from individual 'devotions' involve celestial ascents into another, higher world (cf. Eliade, 1968: 302-322) and in some cases the ingestion of natural substances (cf. Harner, ed. 1973: 53-67).

There is a mass of ethnographic evidence which can be produced to show that transcendence and a rejection of the "Given empirical cosmos" as a thing, end or state in itself occurs consistently throughout the primitive and archaic world (cf. Eliade, 1968; Harner, 1973; Castaneda, 1970).

Clearly both types of social orders discussed above, the primitive and the historic, in our view both evidence forms of rejection and transcendence, but in each case the form is different. Primitive concepts of transcendence are dominated by a social order established upon a commitment to an existence in, and experience of, the world of nature. Historic concepts of transcendence, such as those of the Buddhists, are dominated by an order and context which excludes familiarity with nature, which is separate from nature; hence it is the world of man, of social relations, that are under-valued and have to be transcended.

A satisfactory critique of the remainder of Bellah's argument would be beyond the scope of the present thesis. However it is clear that his central supposition is totally erroneous. One type of society does not lack concepts of transcendence. Transcendence simply takes different forms in different contexts.

Evolutionists like Bellah (1969) and, latterly, Peacock (1975) and, implicitly, Rigby (1972) have in common an interest in 'symbolisation processes' (Rigby: 74) and 'logico-meaningful' (Peacock: 4) forms of

religious representation. Whatever else these might mean (which is not clear from the work of any of the above) they seem to involve a perspective which considers that "judgements of value can reasonably be made between religious societies or personalities" (Bellah, 1969a:264). Undoubtedly these concepts and this attitude arise out of a collaboration between the above writers and Christian theologians (Rigby, 1972:74; Bellah, 1969b) a practice which for reasons outlined earlier can only be considered a dubious venture. The search for 'logico-meaningful' patterns in religious content through the isolation and comparison of single concepts or symbols such as 'God' and 'being' (Bellah, 1969b: 903) can only, like evolutionist postulations, result in the replication of imposed pre-constraining logical patterns and premisses. The conclusions that arise out of these kinds of work will invariably be idiosyncratic, conjectural and value-laden.

3. The Structural

Unlike Bellah and the theologians we do not feel that working with perspectives adopted from Western Christian perspectives will contribute towards an understanding of other religious systems either ancient or modern. On the contrary, we accept Needham's view that "we should begin our enquiries as though everything were relative" (Needham 1972: 210). A structural approach, it seems to us, alone makes such a position possible. Historical time and historistic value judgements are abandoned in favour of a framework which attempts to grasp the unconscious structures underlying particular sets of ideas or institutions, in order to obtain a principle of interpretation valid for other sets of ideas and institutions (cf. Levi-Strauss, 1972a:21).

The typology constructed at the beginning of our thesis embodies an a-historical and relativist perspective. It provided a means of lifting a variety of examples of esoteric phenomena out of their temporal and spatial contexts, and of locating them within one timeless, placeless, comparative

framework. From this we extracted a basic set of general constituent features which, put together, served as a frame within which other esoteric groups could be located and examined.

In our investigations of nineteenth century esotericism, we combined the diachronic and the synchronic perspective. Firstly we examined Anthroposophy and its related groups in their historical setting. Then we focussed our attention on their representations and attempted to correlate these with the way in which specific categories of people experienced society. Apprehensions of nineteenth century industrial European society and an experience of progressive individualization or atomisation were shown to correspond with revised apprehensions of symbolic forms.

We sought to balance this with a perspective orientated towards uncovering the 'meaning' of esotericism, its implicit and explicit significance for those who participated in the esoteric. Thus we concluded that esotericism revalued and re-established control over a lost power which had been allowed to run wild; it provided a revised, more appropriate form of redemption and it promised individual and social regeneration.

The new esotericism which brought about the reintegration of experience and symbolisation for many people was largely the expression of the social states and revelatory potency of particular individuals such as Rudolf Steiner. The latter in his role as "divine free mover" and healer (shaman), charismatic leader and catalyst (prophet) embodied the new, more appropriate synthesis and brought it into being.

We then concentrated upon Anthroposophy as an ideal system of organisation (an esoteric movement) and as a system of ideas (as myth and social order). We introduced our model of esotericism and found it to be applicable to Anthroposophical ideas and institutions. Then we explored Anthroposophy's infrastructure with the aid of a hypothesised principle of mediation, and noted its inner structural coherence and consistency, and hence its potency

and power as a type of communication, a system of messages.

The last, empirical, section dealt with the mode of classification and system of rules that arose out of the dialogue between the 'ideal' Anthroposophical system and an empirical experience mediated by situational factors, context and practical concerns. The ideational transformations that appeared to have taken place within St. Michel were viewed diachronically as the product both of belief and of experience.

BELIEF, STRUCTURE AND EXPERIENCE

We are now firm in our conviction that the best way to approach the study of the social forms of esotericism is through structural analysis. However, this leaves us with one final, crucial consideration, that of the significance of the structures with which we deal.

There are three schools of thought that can be drawn upon to provide statements about the nature and meaning of structures. The first of these schools of thought is represented by the work of Needham. Needham suggests that structures are purely analytical formulations, Aristotlian impositions, the correctness of which cannot ultimately be verified. Thus, in reference to the phenomenon known as dual symbolic classification Needham maintains,

> "... the ordering of ethnographic evidence by logical criteria does not prove that these are intrinsic to collective representations"
>
> (Needham, 1973: XXXIV)

In contrast to Needham's Kantian reservations, Levi Strauss holds that structures do in fact have an ontological value, though, clearly, these structures are grasped with the aid of analytical formulations which are the construct of the observer. This, the second school of thought, maintains that collective representations <u>are</u> structured and that these structures are the result of the unconscious workings of the human mind. Thus, according to Levi Strauss the study of collective representations, such as myths, makes

it possible for us to illustrate the workings of a form of "objectified thought and to provide empirical proof of its reality" (Levi-Strauss, 1970: 11). Mircea Eliade, discussing the work of Levi Strauss, phrases these points with even greater cogency, thus:

> "polarities, oppositions and antagonisms ... are expressions of a perfectly consistent system which informs the unconscious activity of the mind. Ultimately what is involved here is a structure of life, and Levi-Strauss asserts that this structure is identical with the structure of matter"
>
> (Eliade, 1969: 132)

Levi Strauss, as well as Leach (1974 and 1976) sees structures as products of the intellect, reflections of a kind of binary logic (Leach, 1974: 85) the ultimate orientation of which is the resolution of specifically intellectual contradictions.

There is a third school of thought concerning the nature of structures, glimpses of which have appeared at various points in our thesis. It can be best characterised by reference to the work of Burridge (1967), Willis (1975) and, latterly, Huxley (1976). This school holds that structures are not simply the product of man's rational faculties but are also the reflection of an awareness of metaphysical realities such as innate, pervasive, cosmological patterns. Such a viewpoint accords with that of the Dogon (see pp. who are highly conscious of the structural ordering of their representations yet see this tendency as in itself a manifestation of metaphysical truth.

This brings us to a consideration of the relationship between binary logic and metaphysical logic or what Leach (1976) calls "mytho-logic". Are the two as incompatible as Leach implies? If structures do have an ontological basis, i.e. they are contained within objectified representations, which we shall assume to be the case, can it not be maintained that they are the manifestations of both a rational activity (binary logic) and a metaphysical activity (mytho-logic)? Hence a belief system such as Anthroposophy makes sense logically, but its referents and its internal structure also

correspond to what are believed by Anthroposophists to be purely metaphysical realities. In any case the exact meaning of Levi-Strauss's concept of the "human mind" which he considers to be the source of structures is not clear. We are inclined to accord with the idea first suggested by Sperber (1975) that Levi-Strauss's notion of the "human mind" implies the activity or presence of a quality which is metaphysical, perhaps even transcendental or mystical.

These considerations invite reflection on the work of one of Levi-Strauss's predecessors, Levy-Bruhl, whose prime focus of interest, like that of his successor, concerned the relationship between 'rational' and 'mystical' thought. Levy-Bruhl's concept of 'primitive' or 'prelogical' mentality was a reference to the existence of a mode of thought which differed sharply from, and even pre-dated, that characteristic of Western scientific logic. However, in contrast to this it has since been shown by Levi-Strauss that no distinction can be made between primitive and modern modes of ratiocination.

> "The savage mind is logical in the same sense and the same fashion as ours, though as our own is only when it is applied to knowledge of a universe in which it recognises physical and semantic properties simultaneously ... Contrary to Levi-Bruhl's opinion, its thought proceeds through understanding, not affectivity, with the aid of distinctions and oppositions, not by confusion and participation"
>
> (Levi-Strauss, 1972: 268)

This assertion, though, does not cancel out the possibility that there might be other modes of apprehending the world, experienced "affectively" but ordered, recorded and communicated cognitively. After all, Levy-Bruhl was acutely aware of the fact that the mode of thought which he labelled 'primitive mentality' was not just confined to 'primitive' contexts. Needham (1972), paraphrasing Levy-Bruhl, notes that this mode of "cognitive concern" represents a kind of "fixed element" that persists throughout the changes and successions of societies and institutions. It is indeed to be found

"constantly around us and even in us" (166). It is apparent in "mystical experiences" and "represents something fundamental and indestructible in the nature of man" (cited in Needham, 1972: 166).

STRUCTURES FROM WITHIN

In this final, highly speculative, section we continue our discussion of the relationship between metaphysical (affective) and rational (cognitive) modes of apprehending the world, and tentatively suggest that in the light of mystical or esoteric experience the two become indistinguishable.

Levy-Bruhl's fundamental contribution to the study of thought modes was his suggestion that in certain contexts (such as the primitive) conditions are such that thought is identical to and inseparable from mystical experience. This does not necessarily imply that the 'primitive' is perpetually immersed in a non-physical reality, but that 'primitive' collective representations (classifications, myths, rites, etc.) are based upon experience of participation in a mystical reality. The 'primitive' inherits these traditions, they are conceptualized in advance of experience, but their truth value can, in theory, be confirmed by experience. Since we know from Levi-Strauss that these representations or traditions are intensively structured, are we to conclude that these structures have themselves a transcendent basis? Are we to believe that such systems of abstract relations derive from and reflect upon esoteric awareness and mystical experience?

Corroboration of such a proposition necessarily involves a programme such as that suggested by Levy-Bruhl for investigating 'primitive mentality', namely, that we have to adopt the indigenous attitude and try to "procure in ourselves the experience of their mystical experience" (cited in Needham, 1972:173). A similar procedure has also been suggested by Staal (1975). In advocating that the scholarly comprehension of mysticism can only arise out of the application of "reason and an open mind" (186) Staal adds that

we can only make real progress in the study of mysticism "if we direct our attention to the experiences themselves", (178).

A recent series of investigations (e.g. Watts, 1969) prompted by considerations and orientations such as those suggested by Levy-Bruhl and, latterly, Staal, involved a number of experiments with lysergic acid diethylamide - a substance credited with the power to induce altered states of consciousness. These experiments, it seemed, led to the participant having an affective experiential realisation of abstract qualities of a type usually considered to have a purely cognitive, intellectual basis; abstract qualities such as those which would be immediately familiar to the structural anthropologist as the essential components or aspects of 'structure'. The first of these was, in the participant's words, an "awareness of relativity",

> "I see that I am a link in an infinite hierarchy of processes and beings, ranging from molecules through bacteria and insects to human beings, and maybe, to angels and gods, a hierarchy in which every level is in effect the same situation ... From this it is but a short step to the realisation that all forms of life and being are simply variations on a single theme".
>
> (Watts, 1969: 620)

Also experienced was an "awareness of polarity",

> "... the vivid realisation that states, things, and events which we ordinarily call opposite are interdependent, like back and front or the poles of a magnet. By polar awareness one sees that things which are explicitly different are implicitly one: self and other, subject and object, left and right, male and female ... solid and space, figure and background ... in-groups and out-groups. Each is definable only in terms of the other. As this awareness becomes increasingly intense, you feel that you yourself are polarized with the external universe in such a way that you imply each other."
>
> (Watts, 1969: 619)

Clearly, the attempt to pose any linkage between such an affective, experiential awareness of oppositions and interrelations in phenomena and a cognitive, intellectual awareness of oppositions and interrelations in phenomena can only be highly speculative and conjectural, but the parallel invites further consideration. In any case if Needham and Levy-Bruhl are right it would

probably come as no surprise to a 'primitive' or to an Anthroposophist, for that matter, to be told that the unconscious bases of his classificatory endeavours, his myths and institutions are rooted in ecstatic revelation.

APPENDIX

To facilitate immediate reference to the thought of Rudolf Steiner we have compiled the following, grossly simplified, list of esoteric premises as contained within Anthroposophy. (For exoteric premises see Chapter four, B(b).)

Rudolf Steiner conceived that:

1. Mankind has evolved out of an essentially spiritual condition and is in the process of evolving back into such a condition though with the addition of faculties and soul states higher than those he had before.
2. Mankind, the planets, the earth, animals and plants are all divine creations, the product of the workings of "formative" spiritual forces.
3. Man experiences "repeated earth lives", he reincarnates and carries "Karma" into his incarnations.
4. The entire history of the cosmos (the macrocosm), the earth, man (the microcosm) and his incarnations is imprinted on the Akashic Record, a transcendent occult document which can be read by 'mystery initiates'.
5. Man is a fourfold being comprising physical, astral, ether and ego bodies. During his earthly evolution he developed a series of soul states, the lattermost of which is referred to as the age of the consciousness soul.
6. The culmination of the first part of man's earthly evolution was the appearance of Jesus Christ on earth, his life, and his death on the cross at Golgotha.
7. Christ's life, death and resurrection signalled the defeat of two formative but negative, spiritual beings, Ahriman and Lucifer. Although the latter entities were thus stripped of most of their power, they are still active on earth and attempt to distract man from his spiritual destiny.
8. Christ introduced man to love and ego-consciousness and thus opened the

way for the development of "thinking". This faculty of "thinking" is man's highest earthly quality, but it is a thinking which need not be confined to sense observation and rational applications, but can be directed towards the observation of spiritual realms.

9. Advancement in "thinking" can only come about if the seeker is motivated by essentially Christ-ian ideals of love, devotion and selflessness. Comprehension of the "higher worlds" proceeds through accepted scientific techniques of sense observation, objectivity, and verification. The seeker is at all times in a state of "full consciousness".

10. The successful Anthroposophical esoteric achieves a development of three higher, hidden faculties, namely, those of imagination, inspiration and intuition. Eventually he succeeds to an awareness of his own inner spirituality and outer spiritual worlds, and is led into a contemplation of the Cosmic Christ and the mystery of Golgotha.

NOTES

1. Our provisional definitions of both esotericism and occultism owe their bases and some of their wording to the definitions composed by Tiryakian (1975: 265). However, we have altered the meaning of the latter's definitions, since we maintain that esotericism need have nothing to do with occultism, although the latter depends to an extent upon the success of the former.

2. To our knowledge no-one has attempted to introduce into anthropological writing any of the ideas and orientations of these new, essentially holistic psychologies. There is a certain amount of Gestalt psychology in Levi-Strauss's work, as derived from the writings of Kohler (Gestalt Psychology, Liveright 1970). Also, essentially "Gestalt" premises are implicit to all structuralist exercises, but as yet a fuller application of Gestalt, etc., has not been made.

3. Dumont's article, "The Individual as an impediment to Sociological Comparison and Indian History", succinctly points to Weberian sociology and British anthropological empiricism as being grounded in the Western ideology of the individual. Thus, "In a society dominated by the concept of the individual, sociological perception appears as the presentation of a mythical being ..." (Dumont, 1970: 139). The ideological priority of the individual in social life as manipulator, entrepreneur, actor and improvisor, may be a feature not at all replicated in non-Western contexts. The "individual" is a category of Western thought, hence we must be wary of empiricisms which over-estimate the place and function of the individual in other contexts.

To the above it could also be added that British functionalism, as exemplified in the writings of Radcliffe-Brown and Max Gluckman, and to a lesser degree in some forms of British structuralism, can be traced to an ethic of utilitarianism which dominates the life of industrial Western

society. It can perhaps even be traced to Christianity itself, and the doctrine that the natural world was given to man for his own use and benefit. A fact which perhaps explains the lack of conscience, which has accompanied modern man's full scale war against the plant and animal worlds.

Further, the imputed connection between functionalism and Christian utilitarianism invites reflection upon the religious affiliations of modern day functionalists.

4. According to Ravenscroft (1974) the members of the "Thule" group which was a central organ of the Pan-Germanic mystical movement, were involved in "Astrological Rites" and black magic rituals as devised by the infamous Dietrich Eckart.

5. One of Steiner's books, "Initiation and its Mysteries", (Anthroposophic Press, English edition, 1905) exhibits a swastika on its front cover. For Steiner the swastika represented the sign of the "Guardian of the Threshold to the Spiritual world".

6. The soul development of the child occurs, according to Steiner, in a sequence which is the inverse of the child's physical development, i.e. willing, feeling and thinking.

* * * *

"There are no truths outside the gates of Eden"

Bob Dylan.

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