Marino (*Dicerie Sacre*, 1614). Dramatists transported this same science onto the Elizabethan stage in plays that were either wholly imbued with it (William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 1610) or which ridiculed it (Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, 1610). The list of works is too numerous to mention, from the Baroque Boehme-like poetry of Johannes Scheffler's (alias Angelus Silesius) *Cherubinischer Wandersmann* (1675), to the extremely popular *Comte de Gabalis ou entretiens sur les sciences secrètes* (1670) of Montfaucon de Villars to the explicitly alchemist theatre of Knorr von Rosenroth (*Conjugium Phoebis et Palladis*, 1677).

In painting, the canvases of Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450–1516; "The Garden of Delights," ca. 1510) and of Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1520–1569; "Dulle Griet," 1562) have to this very day not yet revealed all their secrets. Two seventeenth-century pictoral representations deserve special comment. The anonymous painting called "The Virgin Alchemist" in the church of Saint-Maurice in Rheims, which probably dates from the beginning of the seventeenth century, can be viewed with both hermetist and numerological interpretations. Secondly, there is the kabbalistic altarpiece "Turris Antonia" (or *Didactic Painting of Princess Antonia of Würtemberg*) painted at Bad-Teinach (1663/1673). Both these paintings are still found in their original locations. Besides, some books which are not explicitely esoteric sometimes contain illustrations inspired by these traditions; for example, in the *Icones Biblicae* (1627) of Matthieu Merian a picture (reprinted in the Lutherian Bible of Strasburg, 1630) represents the Wedding at Cana in a setting alluding to the Rosicrucian teachings and the Philosophical transmutation.

CHAPTER THREE

ESOTERICISM IN THE SHADOW OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

I) SUNBURST OF THEOSOPHY

A) At the Dawn of Illuminism

Translated into German in 1706, the *Corpus Hermeticum* is treated as a subject for scholarly presentations in late-Germanic humanism (See *Bibliotheca Graeca* by J.A. Fabricius, 1708/1727). Shortly before, Gottfried Arnold, himself a theosopher and sophiologist, had produced a copious review from the more or less "heretical" mystics and esotericists (*Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie*, 1699/1700); he was followed by lengthier and more critical developments, devoted to the Kabbalah, Pythagoreanism and Theosophy by Jacob Brucker *Historia critica philosophiae*, vol. II and IV, 1743). Thanks to editions or exegeses of Boehme's works by J.G. Gichtel and J.W. Ueberfeld in Germany and by D.A. Freher and William Law in England, the Boehmian movement is thereby passed on into the eighteenth century. The "Bible of Berlebourg" (1726/1742) contributes to disseminating it within the pietist milieu which is poised to accept it. It is also in Berlebourg that Hector de Saint-Georges de Marsais publishes his theosophic works (*Explication de la Genèse*, 1738) which were influenced by that "Bible," by Boehme, Madame Guyon and Pierre Poiret. Due to an inspiration which is simultaneously pietist and alchemical, *Le mystère de la Croix* (1732) by Douzetemps at times had comparable tones. However, on the fringe of this theosophy with mystical leanings there appears another, in the wake of what is at once Boehmian and Paracelsian, closer to the occult sciences. The initiatory societies will be considerably influenced by this theosophy oriented towards magic. It is represented especially by three major works in German: *Theo-Philosophia Theoretico-practica* (1711) by Samuel Richter (alias Sincerus Renatus); *Aurea catena Homeri* (1723) by A.J. Kirchweger; and *Opus mago-cabbalisticum et theosophicum* (1735) by Georg von

Welling (alias Salwigt), which we know was to influence Goethe. Finally, about 1730, modern Freemasonry, called speculative and born in London in 1717, introduces the myth of the death and resurrection of Hiram into its rituals; hence this is a discourse that will fall in with the esoteric interpretations. Thus, in the thirties there appear, mainly on the continent, systems or "Rites" (rituals) consisting of High Degrees (i. e., degrees which are superior to the three standard degrees of Apprentice, Fellow Craftsman and Master Mason and which constitute what is called "blue" Masonry or "Craftmasonry") very propitious to accepting an esotericism with connotations that are sometimes chivalric or Christian, sometimes "Egyptian" or neopagan.

B) The Great Theosophers

The years between 1770–1815 correspond to what is apropriately called in French "Illuminisme" (in the esoteric sense of the word). Let us consider here those whose lives or works are completed before the end of the First Empire, a time when theosophy shines with all its fire. In 1745, the Swede Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), a celebrated scientist and inventor, interrupts his specifically scientific activities as a result of dreams that arrive suddenly transforming his inner life. He immerses himself in study of the Scriptures and composes his *Arcana coelestia* (1747/1758) followed by numerous works. Swedenborg presents his visions using images and figures, intended to formulate a kind of descriptive geography of celestial spheres and spiritual worlds. His work contributes much to spreading to a wide public the idea of universal relationships, ranging from Nature to Man and from Man to God, which are presented as a complete series of hierarchical levels; in the natural world, every object, even the most minuscule, "corresponds" to something in the spiritual world, without solution of continuity. His colorful but somewhat rough style is off-putting to many readers (e.g., Kant criticizes Swedenborg on philosophical grounds in *Träume eines Geistersehers*, 1776), yet no other theosopher has exerted more conspicuous influence on nineteenth-century literature. During the seventies, his writings began to be transmitted widely, through translations and synopses. The majority of other great theosophers place little value on Swedenborg, whose Christology seems questionable, but Swedenborgianism inspired some Masonic rites, and in 1787 prompted Anglican ecclesiastics to create a religious sect called the New Church, which is still flourishing today.

Encouraged by his reading of Boehme and the Kabbalah, the Swabian Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702–1782), a Lutheran pastor, philosopher of Nature, and alchemist, makes himself the exegete of Swedenborg, from whom he distances himself. Oetinger represents eclectic scholarly esotericism. For him, *magia*, the loftiest of sciences, is a method used to study the relationship between earthly and heavenly forms. Everything is "physical" ("Corporeality is the end, the goal, of God's works."), but only a "superior physics," linked to

an ongoing hermeneutic of Nature and the Scriptures, provides us with the keys of knowledge regarding the way in which the Divine and Nature interpenetrate (*Biblisches und emblematisches Wörterbuch*, 1776; *Oeffentliches Denckmahl der Prinzessin Antonia*, 1763). By means of an exposé on the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria, Oetinger makes Hasidism, which is spiritually close to pietism, known to the German pietists. Less a physicist and kabbalist, Michael Hahn (1758–1819) is still a great theosopher along the lines of Boehme, and his works on the androgyne and the Sophia remain classics of the genre. Not very mystical, barely influenced by Boehme and more popular through his writings, Karl von Eckartshausen (1752–1803) of Munich hardly owes anything to these Germans. His exceedingly rich work (of which *Zahlenlehre de Natur*, 1794, and *Die Wolke über dem Heiligthum*, 1802, are a part), frequently translated and reproduced in numerous languages, even today continues to touch varied readers and alchemists. The Alsatian Friedrich-Rudolf Saltzmann also published a theosophical work in German in the early years of the nineteenth century, but this enjoyed a more limited reception (*Es wird alles neu werden*, 1802/1810).

In France, Martines de Pasqually (1727–1774), founder of the theurgical Order of the "Elected Cohens," is the author of the *Traité de la réintégration des êtres*, one of the masterpieces of modern theosophy. Under his influence, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803), the so-called Unknown Philosopher, writes *Des erreurs et de la verité* (1775), *Tableau naturel* (1781), followed by *L'Homme de désir* (1790), *Le Nouvel homme* and *Ecce Homo* (1792). During a trip to Strasbourg (1788/1791) he strikes up a friendship with Saltzmann, who reveals Boehme to him. Other works of theosophy permeated with Boehmism follow (*Le Ministère de l'Homme-Esprit* and *De l'Esprit des choses*, 1802). Saint-Martin is not only an emulator but also undoubtedly a great French writer, and the most important Christian esotericist of his time, whose influence, directly and indirectly, has never ceased to spread. He has left behind interesting correspondence not only with Masons, but also with Elected Cohens, such as J.B. Willermoz (cf. *infra*) and with people spiritually closer to him like the Bernese Niklaus Anton Kirchberger (1739–1799). Also taking his place in the gallery of famous theosophers is Jean-Philippe Dutoit-Membrini (1721–1793), the author of *La Philosophie divine* (1793), and a thinker who owes nothing to Saint-Martin. Finally, in the last years of the century and the Empire period we see a philosophy of Nature of the esoteric type (cf. *infra*), especially in Germany.

C) Faces of Illuminism

Completing this gallery are other figures won over to theosophy, but marked by forms of devotional esotericism or notable peculiarities. First we have the engaging Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801). A pastor in Zurich, curious about supernatural phenomena, he does not disregard theurgy. When the

opportunity presents itself, he practices mesmerism and develops ideas characterized by a naturalist christology (*Aussichten in die Ewigkeit*, 1768/1778), but he is especially remembered as the great modern theorist of physiognomy (*Physiognomische Fragmente*, 1775/1778). Certainly no other German language thinker since Luther maintained a correspondence as monumental as his. Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling (1740–1817) resembles him because of the importance of his correspondence and his interest in parapsychological phenomena (*Theorie der Geisterkunde*, 1807). Communication with the spirit world is also a focal point for Johann Friedrich Oberlin (1740–1826), a pastor of Steinthal in Alsace. In Russia, Ivan Vladimir Lopuchin (1765–1815) left behind a small pearl of theosophic literature (*Quelques traits de l'Eglise intérieure*, 1791), translated and republished several times and close to hesychasm because of the techniques regarding posture which he teaches in it. A translator of Boehme, Swedenborg, Eckartshausen, and Jung-Stilling, Lopouchine is also the founder of a journal, *Le Messager de Sion* (1807/1817), which is inspired by the teachings of the Russian Martinist Freemason, Nikolai Novikov (1744–1718).

Beyond these avenues of esoteric Christian spirituality, Illuminism contains others of somewhat neopagan direction. If Antoine Fabre d'Olivet (1767–1825) writes *La Langue hébraïque restituée* (1810, published in 1816/1817), it is not out of Judeo-Christian zeal, but rather out of concern to discover the origin of language; his *Vers dorés de Pythagore* (1813) attempts to show the existence of a lost universal Tradition. Less philosophical and markedly encyclopedic in nature is the survey produced by Court de Gébelin (1725–1784), *Le Monde primitif* (1773/1784), which is one of the first attempts to rediscover through various well-known traditions what will later be called the primordial Tradition. Finally, Egyptology furnishes both the initiatory framework and the settings for numerous discourses and esoteric practices, from the novel by the Abbot Jean Terrasson (*Sethos*, 1731) to the *Nouvelles recherches sur l'origine et la destination des pyramides d'Egypte* (1812) by A.P.J. de Vismes, and works devoted to "Egyptian" forms of Masonry (cf. *infra*), *The Magic Flute* (the opera by Mozart, 1791), and *Kostis Reise* (1795) by Eckartshausen.

II) FROM THE ARTS OF READING TO THE ART OF SUBTLE FLUIDS

A) Permanence of Occult Sciences

Thanks to a few erudite treatises, the Christian Kabbalah survived in the first half of the century. Initiated by the Christian Kabbalist Christian Fende and the Jewish Kabbalist Koppel Hecht, Oetinger writes his famous "didactic picture" of 1763, an interpretation of the esoteric altar that was painted during the preceding century and preserved in the church of Bad-Teinach (cf., *supra*). Pythagorism and Hermetism continued their course without ever really being interrupted (numerous Neopythagorean writings, as we see in works such as *Les Voyages de Pythagore en Egypte* by Sylvain Maréchal in 1799, and the new German translation of the *Pimander* in 1781). In the popular context of the salons and of the "carrefours," the period of Illuminism (the name given to the theosophically oriented trend of the time) favors the reign of individuals expert in the exploitation of a taste for the supernatural, like the Count de Saint-Germain (1701–1784) and Joseph Balsamo (*alias* Cagliostro, 1743–1795). The powers that gullible contemporaries attribute to them reflect a general craze for the occult sciences, borne out in particular by the numerous editions of the *Grand* and the *Petit Albert*, by copious literature on vampirism, which was especially widespread from 1732 until the *Traité sur les apparitions* (1746) by Dom Calmet, and by the numerous debates on sorcery. When one does not believe in the supernatural, one likes to entertain colorful illusions, hence the appreciation for robots and for entertaining experiments of physics. One captivating and unsettling individual personifies the diverse forms of this state of mind on the eve of the Revolution: the Frenchman Alliette (*alias* Etteilla), who is a combination of charlatan and theosopher as well as alchemist (*Les sept nuances de l'oeuvre philosophique*, 1786), one of whose claims to fame is having contributed to making known the divinatory Tarot. A little later, even more in the domain of Agrippa, a compilation destined to be a great success heralds the occult literature to come: *The Magus* (1801) by Francis Barrett (alongside whom we can cite Karl Joseph Windischmann, *Untersuchungen über Astrologie, Alchemie und Magie*, 1813).

In France especially, music becomes the object of esoteric speculation, and results in printed works, and also as in the "pianos of colors," described by Father Castel in 1740 and by Eckartshausen in 1788. Saint-Martin is the only one in the century to perfectly integrate a speculation developed on music in a theosophical treatise (*Des erreurs*, 1775, and *De l'Esprit des choses*, 1802), but one must forget neither A.P.J. de Vismes (*Essai sur l'homme, ou l'homme microcosme*, 1805) nor the first research done by Fabre d'Olivet. Finally, it is a time of intense activity for illuminated prophets: during the Revolution, Suzette Labrousse, Catherine Théot; at the close of the Empire, Mademoiselle Le Normand; in England, Richard Brothers; in Germany, Thomas Pöschl; elsewhere, a great many others.

B) Alchemy, the Dark Side of the Enlightenment and the Light Side of Mythology

The advance of chemistry, which definitively acquires its status as a scientific discipline, already foreshadows the irremediable decline of operative alchemy, but interest remains alive and literature remains plentiful, even after the publication of Lavoisier's works (1787/1789). In Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, the articles "Alchemy" and "The Alchemist" by Maloin are quite favorable.

The fact is that some scientists presume to see in it a realm of poorly explored investigation; common people see it as a source of immediate wealth; and ardent rationalists consider it to be the practice of charlatans. For part of the general public alchemy has a supernatural aspect which primarily concerns the manufacturing of gold, i.e., "operative" alchemy. As before, it is often difficult to distinguish this from "spiritual" alchemy, which presents itself as a form of gnosis. From out of a very significant editorial production (albeit one from which the tradition of fine illustrations has disappeared), let us consider three aspects. The first concerns the fashion of enjoying collections of treatises. After those by J. J. Manget (cf. *supra*) there appear, this time in the vernacular, the *Deutsches Theatrum Chemicum* (1728) by Friedrich Roth-Scholtz, the *Neue Alchymistische Bibliothek* (1772) by F.J.W. Schröder, and still others. Added to this production, we now find the need to discuss alchemy in terms of historiography (Nicolas Lenglet-Dufresnoy, *Histoire de la philosophie hermétique*, 1742), detailed bibliographies (Roth-Scholtz, *Bibliotheca chemica*, 1727) and dictionaries (Dom Pernety, *Dictionnaire myth-hermétique*, 1758). A second aspect is the production of an alchemical reading of narratives of Greek and Egyptian mythology, either by reducing the ancient "Fables" to an allegorical discourse whose sole intention was to provide a coded description of the processes of transmutation (typical in this regard are the *Fables égyptiennes et grecques dévoilées*, 1758, by Dom Pernéty), or by interpreting this mythology on several levels in a nonreductionist way, by following a hermeneutic of a theosophical character (for example Hermann Fictuld, *Aureum Vellus*, 1749, and Ehrd de Naxagoras, *Aureum Vellus*, 1753, both in German and Anselmo Caetano's *Ennoea*, 1732/33, in Portugese). These two types of exegesis have their precursors (Michael Maier especially). Theosophers like Saint-Martin (for whom the heuristic value of alchemy does not exceed the material level) approve of the second no more than the first. A third aspect of alchemy in the time of the Enlightenment is its diffuse but obvious presence among scientists and philosophers of Nature, who are more or less won over to Paracelsism, such as Herman Boerhaave, J.R. Spielmann, Johann Juncker and, of course, Oetinger. This connection foreshadows the Romantic *Naturphilosophie*.

C) *Animal Magnetism*

According to one of the most widespread ideas in alchemical thought, matter contains a light or an invisible spark whose nature is that of the Word, of the Creator of light on the first day. This fiery principle of universal character, halfway between the natural and the supernatural, is of great importance in western cosmologic conception. It has assisted interpretation of the Platonic

idea of the Soul of the World in several directions and has become diversified in innumerable themes and motifs. Widespread in the eighteenth century, the tendency to mix experimental research and speculative thought now fosters its reappearance under two new forms. During the previous century, researchers (Rudolf Gockel and Athanasius Kircher among them) became enthusiastic about phenomena of magnetic and electric nature. During the time of the Enlightenment, certain philosophers of Nature close to Oetinger develop a "theology of electricity." They are, in particular, J. L. Fricker, G.F. Rösler, and Prokop Divisch (*Theorie der meteorologischen Elektrizität*, 1765). If the theosophic character of their speculations is evident, it does not apply completely in the same way as those of the Swabian doctor Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815), and yet during his lifetime, mesmerism left no esotericist indifferent.

In order to research the cause of universal gravitation, Mesmer postulates (from his doctoral thesis *De influxu planetarum in corpus humanum*, 1766) the existence of an invisible fluid that flows everywhere and that serves as a vehicle for mutual influence among heavenly bodies, Earth, and living things. After having first treated with the application of magnets (a procedure done again later by Charcot), then with palpation, he spells out a therapy that consists of having people sit next to each other around a tub filled with water, iron filings, and sand. They communicate with the tub by means of iron rods or ropes and thus form "chains": the "magnetism" is thus made to pass from one or several healthy people also seated around the tub into the ill person or persons. Settling in Paris in 1778, Mesmer enjoys quick success, but he at the same time clashes with a lack of understanding on the part of official medicine. Magnetism takes hold in the provinces while becoming tinged with occultism: in Strasbourg with A.M.J. de Puységur, in Lyon with J.B. Willermoz, in Bordeaux with Doctor Mocet, in Turin with Doctor Giraud whose friend, Nicolas Bergasse, clarifies the doctrine in a *Théorie du monde et des êtres organisés* (1784). Mesmer also bestows an initiatory character on his activities by creating a "Society of Harmony" in 1783 whose numerous symbols are drawn from the Masonic tradition. In 1785 he writes: "We are endowed with an internal sense which is in relation to the entire universe"; an idea which will have repercussions among the German Romantics; all the more pronounced since the internal "sense" of Kant looks impoverished when compared with what, in Mesmer's domain, signifies an unfolding of the possibilities of Being. Animal magnetism is not only a fashion or an isolated episode with no future, but one of the vivid events of culture at the twilight of the Enlightenment, in the subsequent *Naturphilosophie*, in literature, and in the history of dynamic psychiatry up to and including Freud.

III) A CENTURY OF INITIATIONS

A) Templar Strict Observance and Rectified Scottish Rite

It is obviously the high degree rites that contain the most esoteric content, therefore Anglo-Saxon Freemasonry is less esoteric in character. Let us review the most important of these rites, without stopping to ask ourselves each time whether or not they have "Masonic legality" in the eyes of English authority (a complex question that extends beyond the current framework). We begin with two of the most studied rites. The first is the system created by Baron Karl von Hund around 1750, called Templar Strict Observance. It claims to be a filiation of the Order of the Temple disbanded by Philip the Fair. This Strict Observance will remain the most important Masonic system in Germany until the eighties. In France beginning in 1754, Martinès de Pasqually (cf. *supra*) established a distinctive Rite called the Elect Cohens, which was not Masonic *per se*, whose vocation was theurgical and whose ritual was operative-magical. Pasqually created "temples" for his rite in several cities in France and in the sixties he conferred the Cohen initiation upon Jean-Baptiste Willermoz (1730–1824), a native of Lyon, who was also initiated into the Strict Observance. He himself with the help of other Masons of Lyon, began in 1777/1778 to develop a Masonic rite whose symbolic system was largely dependent on Martinesist "Cohen" philosophy, although its calling was not theurgical. The result of this work was the Order of Beneficient Knights of the Holy City (the sixth and final rank of the Rite), the ensemble of the six grades that form the Rectified Scottish Rite. At its inception, it was linked to the Strict Observance and it rapidly created Lodges in France, Italy, Switzerland, and Russia. At the end of the seventies, two of the leading personalities of the Strict Observance, Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick and Prince Charles of Hesse Cassel, passionately interested in esoteric science, decided to call together representatives of the Strict Observance to a large Masonic Convention for the purpose of reflecting upon the origin, nature, and aim of Freemasonry. Ferdinand sent circulars to several individuals to prepare the ground (Joseph de Maistre, initiated into the Rectified Scottish Rite, responded to it with his famous *Mémoire* of 1780). The Convention met at Wilhelmsbad in July and August of 1782. There they abandoned the myth of Templar filiation, and the Willermoz system received worldwide acceptance. This Convention was important event because on this battlefield could be seen two categories of Masons confronting each other: one group directed towards various forms of esotericism, the other—also numerous in the Strict Observance—taking their inspiration from the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Under the name of "Martinism" the Rectified Scottish Rite quickly won adherents in Russia, where the Gold- und Rosenkreutz (Golden Rosy-Cross) Order also made its way, and where Nicolai Novikov (1744–1818) is a central figure in this double movement.

B) Other Masonic (and Para-Masonic) Systems

We must distinguish between Christian or Western rites (to which the Rectified Scottish Rite and the Strict Observance belong), of a medieval and chivalric type, whose referential "Orient" is the Holy Land, Jerusalem; and the somewhat neopagan Egyptian Rites, although sometimes the boundaries are blurred, and, of course, a person may belong simultaneously to several of these Rites. In 1777, the order called the "Golden Rosy-Cross" which was formed in the seventies in Germany, creates a merger among all its Lodges or "Circles" while assuming the name "Golden Rosy-Cross of the Ancient System" and granting nine high degrees, each marked by an alchemical symbolism. With the accession to the throne of Frederick William II (1786), who was a member, the order entered a period of dormancy without ever actually being banned. Its editorial activities mark the esoterism of the end of this century (cf. for example, the *Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer*, 1785/1788, a collection of very beautiful engravings and texts).

The Benedictine Antoine Joseph Pernety (1716-1796) managed to become acquainted with the Golden Rosy-Cross in Berlin, where he became established from 1767–1782 in his capacity as librarian of the Royal Library of Frederick William II: the small sect of "Illuminés" that he led then devoted itself to oracular practices entailing questioning the "*Sainte Parole*" ("Holy Word"), a kind of hypostasis of the Supreme Intelligence. Pernety left Berlin in 1783 and settled in Avignon, moving his society to a mountain not far from there, called "Thabor." The Polish starost Thaddeus Grabianka, who had been a member of this for several years, formed a dissident group in Avignon called The New Israel, with Octavio Capelli, the "Man-God," as leader, who received communication from the archangel Raphael. The French Revolution dispersed the Illuminés of Avignon; a large number of important personalities in Europe will become members of this.

Let us cite nine initiatory societies that fall under the jurisdiction of this first category: the "Swedish System," founded around 1750 by Karl Friedrich Eckleff; the Order of the "Blazing Star," whose founder is Théodore Henri de Tschoudy (1766); the System of Johann Wilhelm Zinnendorf (1770), inspired by the Swedish System; the Clericat, a creation of Johann August Starck around 1767; the Philalèthes, beginning in 1773, the first Masonic institute for research of an esoteric character (Savalette de Langes, its most important figure, formed in 1785 and 1787 in Paris an international interallegiant Lodge destined to share all possible knowledge dealing with esotericism and Masonry). Then we have the Brothers of the Cross, a Rite founded by C.A.H. Haugwitz around 1777; the Asiatic Brethern, for Austria and especially the south of Germany (a creation of Heinrich von Ecker-und-Eckhoffen around 1779); the Primitive Rite of the Philadelphians, founded by F.A. de Chefdebien in 1780; and the Illuminated Theosophers, patterned after Swedenborgianism, important in England and the United States (a Rite

born via the impetus of Bénédict Chastanier around 1783). Finally, we have the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, established in France in 1801; and the Order of the Orient, founded in 1804 and organized in 1806 by B.R. Fabré-Palaprat under the denomination the Johannine Church of Primitive Christians, which is a neo-Templar Order. Counting the three systems cited in the preceding heading (Strict Observance, the Elect Cohens and the Rectified Scottish Rite), we find no less than fourteen that pertain completely to esotericism. This is also the case of six others of "Egyptian" character, which are: the African Architects, a creation by Friedrich von Köppen around 1767; the Hermetic Rite, established around 1770, inspired explicitly by the teachings of Hermes Trismegistus; and Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite, which dates from 1784. The dawn of the Empire in Italy sees the appearance of the Rite of Misraïm (albeit not very "Egyptian"), brought to France by the Bédarride brothers, followed in 1815 by the rite of Memphis, to which one must add the Mages of Memphis, created at the end of the eighteenth century. But these twenty rites do not represent a complete list. . . .

C) Initiation in Art

Literature fosters fertile ties with Illuminism, which are sources (among others) of the literary genre labeled "the fantastic" (in this respect *Le Diable Amoureux* of Jacques Cazotte, 1772, marks a turning point). The century abounds with fictional works of an occult or supernatural nature: bearing witness to which are new editions and translations of the *Comte de Gabalis*, or a collection of imposing dimension such as *Voyages imaginaires*. Some of these works are humorous or parodic (Mouhy, *Lamekis*, 1737; T.G. von Hippel *Kreuz- und Querzüge*, 1793). This output, stimulated by *Séthos* (1731, cf. *supra*), exploits initiatory themes. Sometimes it is serious and pertains to esotericism, especially when the purifying experience is stressed (the *Relation du Monde de Mercure*, in Volume XIV of the *Voyages imaginaires*, and the *Confessions du comte de C[agliostro]*, 1787, can be categorized as being half-way in between), a characteristic of a number of novels and stories beginning in the latter part of the eighteenth century, mostly in Germany: Jean Paul, *Die unsichtbare Loge*, 1793; J.H. Jung-Stilling, *Heimweh*, 1794; Eckartshausen, *Kostis Reise*, 1795; Goethe, *Das Märchen* or *The Green Serpent*, 1795 (his magnificent poem *Die Geheimnisse*, of Rosicrucian inspiration, dates from 1785); Saint-Martin, *Le Crocodile*, 1799; Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, 1802; E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Der goldene Topf*, 1813. In the Masonic stream, Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute* (1791) and Zacharias Werner's play *Die Söhne des Thals* (1802/1804) are two of the best-known works.

William Blake (1757–1827), poet, engraver and bard of creative imagination (*The Marriage of Heaven and Earth*, 1793; *Visions of the Daughter of*

Albion, 1793) burns in the alchemic furnace of his genius contributions from Hermetism, Swedenborg, and the philosophy of Berkeley, transmutes them into a dazzling hermesian work, which really falls under the heading of esotericism, but which, at the same time, defies any possible classification. We could cite many more authors in the English domain, such as James Thomson, author of *The Seasons* (1726/1730) whose works are marked by Hermetism. More than anyone else in the tradition of German Romanticism, painter Philipp Otto Runge is the closest to theosophy, especially to Boehmenism (cf. his painting "Der kleine Morgen," 1808). Lastly in Italy we are indebted to Prince Raimondo di Sangro di San Severo (1710–1777), from whom Cagliostro received instruction, for the astonishing "Hermetic monument," the San Severo Chapel in Neaple.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM ROMANTIC KNOWLEDGE TO PROGRAMMATIC OCCULTISM

I) THE ERA OF *NATURPHILOSOPHIE* AND THE GREAT SYNTHESES

A) "Nature" Philosophers During Romanticism (1790–1815)

A new way to approach the study of Nature appeared during the last decade of the eighteenth century—a unique trend that would dominate for some fifty years. This was the *Naturphilosophie* which, broadly speaking, was particularly a component of German Romanticism. In several of its representatives it takes a form that relates directly to esotericism. In its most general form it was, according to F.J.W. Schelling (1775–1854), a temptation to bring to light what had been continuously repressed in Christianity: to wit, Nature. Various factors contributed to this breakthrough. First of all the persistence of *magia* among physicist-philosophers (like Oetinger), more generally that of esotericism throughout the course of the eighteenth century. Then came the influence of French naturalism (e.g., Buffon, D'Alembert), which was not devoid of speculation on the life of matter or on the Anima Mundi. There was the work of Kant in which some thought they found a universe produced by the imagination through the synthesizing and spontaneous activity of the mind. There was also the new popularity of Spinozism, which tended to consider Nature as something spiritual and the Spirit, hearth of energy, as the source of the whole of the finite universe. Finally, there was the climate proper to the pre-Romantic period: on the one hand, infatuation with everything relating to magnetism, galvanism, electricity (Galvani's experiments in 1789, Volta's battery in 1800); on the other hand, bold syntheses, tinged with esotericism, in important *Kultur*-philosophers like J.G. Herder (1741–1804), one of the forerunners of the movement.

Here are the three common denominators or essential characteristics of *Naturphilosophie*. 1) A conception of Nature as a text to decipher by correspondences. Nature is filled with symbolic implications; its signification resides outside itself, so much so that rigorous science is only a necessary point of departure for an inclusive grasp of invisible processes, i.e., a "nature naturing." 2) A taste for the living concrete and for a plural universe. *Natur*-philosophers are all more or less specialists (chemists, physicists, geologists, engineers, physicians), but specialists whose thought rises to eclectic syntheses and tries to embrace a polymorphic world comprised of different levels of reality in its complexity. The compartmentalization of Nature into separate categories, characteristic of a mechanist imaginary, gives way to the attempt to grasp the whole animated by dynamic polarities. 3) The identity of Spirit and Nature, considered as two seeds of a common root (matter and Nature rest on a spiritual principle, for Spirit inhabits them). By the same token, knowledge of Nature and knowledge of oneself go hand in hand. A scientific fact is perceived as a sign, the signs correspond, concepts borrowed from chemistry are transposed into astronomy or human feelings. We can understand why animal magnetism was the object of passionate interest.

To be sure, not all *Natur*-philosophers could be labeled esotericists.The epithet could only be partially applied to Schelling (*Weltseele*, 1798), who was, nonetheless, the most famous representative of this current.There is also esotericism when *Naturphilosophie* incorporates, exploits in a theosophic mode, a founding myth that is more or less still that of the "savior saved." It is the story of a captive light captured, so to speak, so that another light, remaining free all the while, comes in some way as an awakener. The knot of this theosophico-romantic narrative is there and is presented as an opposition between "light" and "heaviness," in which the latter is understood as a product in which primitive energies have been engulfed.The relationship to alchemy is obvious, so much so that Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* appeared from the beginning as an attempt to bring together the traditional givens of pansophy (cf., *supra*) and the spirit of Kantian philosophy.

Franz von Baader (1765–1841), a theosopher of Munich, towers over Romantic esotericism, and no doubt also over that of the entire nineteenth century. Although he is one of those who brought about German *Naturphilosophie (Beiträge zur Elementarphysiologie*, 1797; *Über das pythagoräische Quadrat in der Natur*, 1798), this represents only one aspect of his work. It is an important aspect since he was as far removed from Schelling's "naturalism" as from Hegel's "idealism," and therefore Baader never stopped affirming a position between the two which was rich in fruitful philosophical tensions. Called "Böhmius redivivus," Baader takes his place among the great hermeneuts of Boehme's writings, but his own extremely speculative discourse is devoid of the prophetic, brilliant inspiration so characteristic of Baroque theosophers and still discernible in Saint-Martin. Baader comments

at length on Saint-Martin's work and finds inspiration in it, keeping his distance all the while because of the importance Baader gives to Nature and alchemy. Themes like the androgyne, Sophia, the successive Falls, magnetism, and love are subjects to which he gives original, yet traditional, treatment representing a *summum* of everything essential in Christian esotericism (cf. e.g., *Fermenta cognitionis*, 1822/1825). Baader is not just an armchair philosopher. He is a mineralogist, and with Madame de Krüdener, is one of the propagators of the Holy Alliance during the period when Alexander I tended toward mysticism and esotericism. Baader's voice was heard in Europe in the liberal Catholic milieus.

Let us cite among several important representatives of this tradition those most attached to esotericism. First of all A.K.A. Eschenmayer (1770–1852), Friedrich von Hardenberg (alias Novalis, 1772–1801), and Johann Wilhelm Ritter (1776-1810). Then come G.H. von Schubert (*Abndungen einer allgemeinen Geschichte des Lebens*, 1806; *Symbolik des Traums*, 1814), I.P.V. Troxler (*Blick in das Wesen des Menschen*, 1812), Carl Gustav Carus (*Psyche*, 1848). Goethe is connected by and large to this tradition because of his scientific works on the metamorphoses of plants (1790) and colors (*Zur Farbenlehre*, 1810). The major contribution of *Naturphilosophie* to nineteenth-century science is the discovery of the unconscious (especially with Schubert and Carus). This is the Romanticism in which psychoanalysis plants its roots, and also the climate in which modern homeopathy was born with Friedrich Hahnemann (1775–1843).

B) Esotericism on the periphery of Naturphilosophie (1815–1847)

In Germany, translations of Saint-Martin (one by G.H. Schubert) were widely read in these milieus. Impressed by the influence of animal magnetism, Johann Friedrich von Meyer (1772–1849), a Frankfurt theosopher, whose own works were discreet and protean, and who was the first to translate into German the *Sepher Yetzirah*, touches on almost all of the occult sciences. His journal *Blätter für höhere Wahrheit* (1818/1832) is one of the most interesting documents of the period. Along with von Meyer, the poet Justinus Kerner (1786–1862) assures his glorious place in the history of metapsychia with the publication of *Die Seherin von Prevorst* (1830). In Germany three more works summarize and synthesize the history of "magic": *Zauberbibliothek* (1821/1826) by George Konrad Horst, *Christliche Mystik* (1836/42) by Joseph Görres, *Geschichte der Magie* (1822 and 1866) by Joseph Ennemoser. In France, Fabre d'Olivet pursued his work from a pagan perspective (*Histoire philosophique du genre humain*, 1822/1824, a grandiose fresco highly esteemed by occultists at the end of the century). After *La Clef de l'infini* (1814) by Höné Wronski, seekers of the universal keys, such as Giovanni Malfatti di Montereggio (*Anarchie und Hierarchie des Wissens*, 1845), were not lacking.

Simultaneously a man of the right and a person sympathetic to utopian socialisms, Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776–1847) was somewhat isolated, and he could have become a great theosopher. Among the French a magnificent figure of a Christian Hermetist stands out: Paul-François-Gaspard Lacuria (1808–1890), an abbot who wrote *Harmonies de l'Etre exprimées par les nombres* (1847), and who found in theosophy the key to music and arithmology. In the wake of Agrippa, Hortensius Flamel (*Le Livre d'or* and *Le Livre rouge*, 1842), probably a pseudonym of Eliphas Lévi, succeeded in combining Fourierism and esotericism. Swedenborgian theosophy is represented by Jean-Jacques Bernard, author of *Opuscules théosophiques* (1822), which is an attempt to fuse Martinism and Swedenborgianism. Edouard Richer and especially J.F.E. Le Boys des Guays (1794–1864) actively propagated the teaching of the Swedish master. Esoteric Messianism, brought from Poland by Adam Mickiewicz and André Towianki in the 1840s, greatly influenced Eliphas Lévi, as did another Pole, Höné Wronski (*Messianisme*, 1847). We note that in the period up to 1847, alchemy seems moribund despite *Hermès dévoilé* (1832) by Cyliani and the *Cours de philosophie hermétique* (1843) by Cambriel.

C) Esotericism in Art (1815–1847)

A natural complicity had formed between the Baroque imaginary and the esoteric frame of mind. The same happened with Romanticism, although the relationship was more obvious in Germanic countries than elsewhere. If the taste for synthesis and sorrowful sentiment on the limitations of the human condition are two major traits of European Romanticism and gnoses, it is the same for the myth of the Fall and the reintegration, an obsessive theme that traverses this Romanticism from one end to the other and all theosophical discourses. In France, Charles Nodier's particularly fantastic viewpoint, which brings together haphazardly the most diverse motifs, contributed to maintaining the public's appetite for a kind of Illuminism. Less of a dilettante, Balzac was inspired by Saint-Martin and Swedenborg (*Louis Lambert*, 1832, *Séraphita* and *Le Livre Mystique*, 1835). Esotericism in its most initiatory form was the subject of George Sand's *Consuelo* (1845). It is didactic and explicit in other novels, among which the best known are Alphonse Esquiros' *Le Magicien* (1836), and Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton's very rosicrucian *Zanoni* (1842). In the 1820s esotericism represents a significant part of Friedrich Schlegel's critical work. In the year preceding his death in 1831, Goethe wrote *Über die Spiraltendenz* and finished *Faust*. Theosophy colors, in an occasionally deep way, the *Carnets* of Joseph Joubert (1754-1824), which he kept assiduously from 1786 until his death.The posthumous writings (1840/1841) of the painter Philipp Otto Runge testify to the presence of esotericism within what was one of the most profound reflections on art. To be sure, magnetism was the object of numerous reflections on art and the subject of

numerous literary adaptations but these tended to fall under the jurisdiction of the fantastic (E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Der Magnetiseur*, 1817; Edgar Allan Poe, *Mesmeric Revelation*, 1844).

II) UNIVERSAL TRADITION AND OCCULTISM

A) From the Romantic Orient to the India of the Theosophical Society

At the end of the eighteenth century, images of India penetrated the Western imaginary. Above all, the Orient is one of the discoveries of Romanticism: Joseph Görres's writing on Asian myths (*Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt*, 1810), Friedrich Schlegel's on India (*Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder*, 1808). These were not about esotericism, and yet it is true that these works attest not only to the general interest in European myths, tales, and legends, but also fall under the spell of the Romantic pursuit of the One, a quest that will relaunch the idea of *perennial philosophy*, which is now extended to all traditions worldwide, and no longer focused only upon those of the Mediterranean world. The word "Tradition" appears in the German title of a landmark book by F.J. Molitor on the Kabbalah (*Philosophie der Geschichte oder über die Tradition*, 1827), followed by Adolphe Frank's *La Kabbale* (1843). In another scholarly work, Jacques Matter's *Histoire du gnosticisme* (1828), we find the first use of "ésotérisme" which has been located to date (by Jean-Pierre Laurant, 1990).To this corpus were added two further obsessive themes: the great pyramid (John Taylor's *The Great Pyramid*, 1858) and that of Druidism as the mother religion of humanity. A return to the hermetist current followed the speculations on the great pyramid. In 1866 Louis Ménard produced a *Hermès Trismégiste* (the French translation of major texts of the *Corpus Hermeticum* preceded by a landmark introduction). This book inspired new translations and glosses, works written for the most part by personalities affiliated with the Theosophical Society or with Rosicrucian Orders. Hermetist literature went naturally with the vogue for "tradition" which it either encouraged or stemmed from. Founded in 1875, the Theosophical Society favored the success of this idea of universal Tradition, which was increasingly termed "primordial," the better to define it as the mother of all other traditions. The founder (cf. *infra*) of the Theosophical Society contributed a great deal to it through her own works, which guaranteed this movement a great success (*Isis Unveiled*, 1877; *The Secret Doctrine*, 1888). At the end of the century the appearance of a science of comparative religion and the convocation of a large "Parliament of Religions" at Chicago (1893) encouraged the growth of believers in the Universal Tradition. It took the form of a best-seller in 1889 with the publication of Édouard Schuré's much translated and reissued *Les Grands Initiés*. There we find again five of the ancient "sages" of *perennial philosophy* as the Renaissance knew them but

now flanked by more exotic names. Schuré's list includes Rama, Krishna, Hermes, Moses, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and Jesus.

B) Appearance of Spiritualism and Occultism (1840–1860)

During the first half of the century animal magnetism was prodigiously popular and prolonged its existence by engendering different currents. As early as the end of the eighteenth century one of the original forms that magnetism took was to pose questions bearing on the supernatural to subjects who had been put in a state of magnetic sleep ("crisiacs" of J.B. Willermoz and the Chevalier of Barberin; later, practiced by J. Kerner, cf. *supra*). In 1848 a year after Andrew Jackson Davis's *The Principles of Revelation* (a great classic of mesmerist literature in the United States), spiritualism arose. The Fox sisters at Hydesville, also in the United States, questioned spirits through the intermediary of mediums, but these were no longer intermediary entities like angels, but spirits of the dead who respond, this time by the mechanical gimmick of tapping on a table in a preestablished code. Spiritualism had arrived, it conquered Europe and could now count millions of sympathizers. Its first important theoretician was H.L. Rivail (alias Allan Kardec, *Le Monde des Esprits*, 1857) who transformed it into a religion tinged with sentimentalism and rationalism. Coming on the scene at the same time as "classic" Anglo-Saxon fantasy literature and Marxism, the spiritualist movement does not belong to the history of esotericism properly speaking, but would be closely associated with it because of its wide influence and because of the problems it raised. Elevated by Kardec to the rank of a veritable dogma, the idea of reincarnation—rarely adopted by Anglo-Saxons—was in harmony with the egalitarian and utopian tendencies of the period.

There were some ambiguous relationships established between esotericism and the more picturesque socialist utopias. Perceptible in Alphonse Esquiros (*De la vie future du point de vue socialiste*, 1850) and in the Druidism of Jean Reynaud (*Terre et Ciel*, 1854), they appear clearly in Charles Fourier (1772–1837; *La Théorie des quatre mouvements* came out in 1807, but its real success came much later). It was the form, not the content of his discourse that brought Fourier, the "Ariosto of the Utopianists" close to the visionary theories of Swedenborg, or at least it sounded like a praiseworthy, albeit inadvertent, parody of the latter. After 1848, even more than before, Swedenborgianism itself was colored by humanitarian prophetism. The names of Hortensius Flamel (cf. *supra*) and Eliphas Lévi form a link between illuminated socialism and the esotericism represented by Louis Lucas (*Une révolution dans la musique*, 1849), J.-M. Ragon (*Orthodoxie maçonnique* and *Maçonnerie occulte*, 1853) and Henri Delaage (*Le Monde occulte*, 1851). These years were also highlighted by substantial alchemical essays by Mary Ann Atwood (*A Suggestive Enquiry into the Hermetic Mystery*, 1850), by a lovely

book by Frédéric Portal on *Les Couleurs symboliques* (1857) as well as by the first large anthology of theosophic texts, assembled by Julius Hamberger, a close disciple of Baader (*Stimmen aus dem Heiligthum der christlichen Theosophie*, 1851). This was also the period when Masonic literature made general use of the word "esotericism" (cf., e.g., E.-U. Marconis de Nègre, *Le Sanctuaire de Memphis ou Hèrmes*, 1849).

With Alphonse-Louis Constant (alias Eliphas Lévi, 1810–1875) appears the occultist current properly so-called. Levi's youth was devoted to utopian and humanitarian ideas leading to his imprisonment as a revolutionary. In 1852 he met Wronski and in 1854 with Bulwer-Lytton he evoked up the spirit of Apollonius of Tyana. He then became the principal exponent of esotericism in Europe and the United States. Awkward as a compiler, but admired as a synthetizer by many esotericists, this magus inspired conviction and came along at the right time (*Dogme et rituel de Haute magie*, 1854–1856; *Histoire de la magie*, 1860; *La Clef des Grands Mystères*, 1861). The year 1860 is an important date, because in addition to the publication of the *Histoire de la magie* Louis Figuier published *L'Histoire de le merveilleux* and Alfred Maury, *La Magie et l'astrologie*.

C) *Rise of Occultism in the Era of Scientism and the Permanence of Theosophy (1860–1914)*

One of the aspects assumed by the *philosophia occulta* in the course of its history is the occultist current. It is more a counter-current to the extent that vis-à-vis the triumph of scientism, it presents itself as an alternative solution. Generally occultists do not condemn scientific progress or modernity. Rather, they try to integrate it within a global vision that will serve to make the vacuousness of materialism more apparent.We recognize here an echo of the pansophic program and *Naturphilosophie*, but the new orientation differed because of its penchant for phenomena and demonstration as well as its attraction for the picturesque and fantastic, often cultivated for their own sake. The world had definitely become disenchanted.This said, we are not dealing with a homogeneous movement, but only a prolongation of the occult sciences before 1860, now confronting materialist positivism and now being linked by affinity to the Symbolist current.

Some strong personalities dominated a rather heteroclite crowd. In France, Dr. Gérard Encausse (alias Papus, 1865–1915), nicknamed the Balzac of occultism because of his voluminous work, put himself forward simply as a physician, investigator, and experimenter. His *Traité de science occulte* was published in 1888, the same year as the first issue of his journal *L'Initiation*. This was a watershed year that saw the founding of the "Society for Psychical Research" in London and several important initiatory associations (cf. *infra*). Papus with his friend from Lyons L.-N.-A. Philippe (1849–1905, called

"Maître Philippe") went to St. Petersburg on several occasions at the request of Nicholas II whom they initiated into Martinism. The man whom Papus called his spiritual master was Alexandre Saint-Yves d'Alveydre (1842–1909) who around 1900 invented a magical"Archeometer," a key to universal correspondences and authored penetrating studies on musical esotericism. Along with them let us also cite Stanislas de Guaïta and the Sâr Joséphin Péladan (1858–1918), who represent a somewhat literary occultism. Albert de Rochas (1837–1914), Charles Henry (1859–1926), and Albert Faucheux (alias François-Charles Barlet, 1838–1921) were more oriented toward philosophical or scientific speculation.

In Prague several centers of occultism were active around 1900. In Holland, occultism was well represented by Frederic Van Eden (*Het Hypnotisme en de Wonderen*, 1887); in Germany by Carl du Prel (*Studien aus dem Gebiete der Geheimwissenschaften*, 1894/1895) and especially Franz Hartmann (1838–1912). Moreover, most of these names are found associated with the history of contemporary initiatory societies (cf. *infra*), especially in Anglo-Saxon countries where association activities and erudition characterize the most impressive occultists. Among these we should remember at least three names: G.R.S Mead (1853–1933, editor of the *Corpus Hermeticum* 1906), William W. Westcott (1848-1925), Sir Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942). In Russia Piotr D. Ouspensky (1878–1947) had already written almost all of his work (*Tertium Organum*, Russian edition in 1911, English in 1920; *A New Model of the Universe*, a series of essays published separately in Russian in 1914, collected in English in 1931). In these we find occultism, a very interesting *Naturphilosophie*, considerations on the Tarot, dreams, etc. To all this we should add that astrology was fashionable again from 1880 to 1914, as can be seen from its enlarged place in occultist literature, by the appearance of numerous specialized works and by the work of extraordinarily well-known esoteric astrologers like William F. Allan (alias Alan Leo, 1860–1917).

Between occultists and theosophers the border is sometimes fluid because the greatest among the occultists, e.g., Barlet are theosophers as well, and theosophers like Rudolf Steiner, not prone to ignore the occultist current, integrate it in their own way. This was not the case with Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900), *Natur*-philosopher and sophiologist (*Conférences sur la théantropie*, 1877/1881; *La Beauté de la Nature*, 1889; *Le Sens de l'Amour*, 1892/1894). If that Russian theosopher distanced himself from occultism, that is less the case with the Austrian Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), polyvalent theosopher and *Natur*-philosopher. During his student years in Vienna, he was busy with the sciences in the wake of Goethe whose scientific works he edited (1883/1897). After that he continued to reflect on the esoteric import of the teachings of the genius of Weimar (*Goethe als Theosoph*, 1904; essays on *Faust* and the *Märchen* date from 1918). His voluminous production includes

drama, innumerable lectures, essays, and treatises (*Theosophie*, 1904; *Die Geheimwissenschaft im Umriss*, 1910). According to the Christocentric evolutionism that characterizes his thought, he intended to fully assume the acquisitions of the Western spiritual history with a view to their transmutation. He did not mean to return to a primordial Tradition where manifestations in the form of new divine avatars are passionately awaited. (That is why the Theosophical Society's presentation of young Krishnamurti as a Christ come back to earth in 1913 brought about Steiner's break with that society.) Humanity in its forward movement must always work at finding its balance between two poles: the cosmic forces of expansion (dilation of the being, aspiration toward the heights, but also egocentrism) and the forces of concentration (hardening, materialization). Reincarnation and "karma" function as instruments of liberation. Steiner called his system "Anthroposophy" to distinguish it from the teaching of the Theosophical Society, and gave that name to the Society he founded in 1913 (the *Anthroposophische Gesellschaft*).

III) ESOTERICISM IN INITIATORY SOCIETIES AND IN ART (1848–1914)

A) Masonic or Para-Masonic Societies

As we have seen, with the Masons it is especially in the higher degrees that esoteric tendencies can be expressed. Now, after the French Revolution most of the Masonic systems disappeared.The Rectified Scottish Rite, nevertheless, continued in Switzerland; the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite also stayed active, as did a section of "Egyptian" Masonry, chiefly because of the Rites of Memphis and Misraïm. But at the end of the nineteenth century, after this long period of latency "in sleep," we see the same phenomenon as a hundred years earlier, i.e., the creation and propagation of new societies of this type. In 1868 Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825–1875) founded the oldest Rosicrucian group in the United States, the Fraternitas Rosae Crucis. Somewhat later, in 1876, the Swedenborgian Rite of the "Illuminated Theosophists" (cf. *supra*) returned to Europe from America and spawned numerous Lodges. The Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia with a clearly Christian orientation and grafted on regular Masonry included high degrees inspired by those of the eighteenth-century Gold- und Rosenkreuz. Founded in London in 1867, this order was created by scholarly esotericists and occultists: Robert W. Little (1840–1918) and Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie (1833–1886). Bulwer-Lytton and Eliphas Lévi were honorary members, and W. W. Westcott was the Supremus Magus from 1891–1925.

In France, Guaïta and Péladan founded the Rose-Croix Kabbalistique in 1888 (it was to have many an explosion and fragmentation), and in 1891

Papus established a mixed *Ordre Martiniste*. (The adjective refers to Saint-Martin.) We saw that Nicholas II, open to occultism like the last Romanovs, became a member. In 1888 also, in Germany, there was the Esoteric Rosy-Cross of Franz Hartmann, in England the Order of the Golden Dawn (a neo-Masonic adaptation admitting women). Created by W.W. Westcott, W. R. Woodman, and S.L. MacGregor Mathers, the Golden Dawn found inspiration in the Kabbalah as well as the Tarot and gave a large place to ceremonial magic (which was not the case with the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia). Mathers' translation of *The Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage* (theurgic ritual of the seventeenth century) was not published until 1939. It is a ritual often practiced by the members of the Golden Dawn notably Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) who joined in 1898 and stayed in for two and a half years. Writer William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), who was initiated in 1888, directed it for several months. A. E. Waite joined in 1891. *The Stella Matutina* was a branch founded in 1903. Around 1901, Viennese occultist Carl Kellner (1850–1905) installed a *Ordo Templi Orientis*, a secret science research Lodge where Theodor Reuss (1855–1923) and Aleister Crowley also held leadership roles. Crowley's organization of the rituals gave them a sexual and anti-Christian cast. He himself created the parallel *Astrum Argentinum* in 1910, which was integrated into the *Ordo Templi Orientis* in 1912. Rudolf Steiner affiliated with *Ordo Templi Orientis* around 1905 and led the German branch, but left in 1914 to create his own Anthroposophical Society at Dornach, near Basel; his organization is devoid of Masonry (cf. *supra* and *infra*). Another important organization is the Rosicrucian Fellowship, established in 1907 by Carl Louis von Grasshof (alias Max Heindel, 1865–1919), with its large world center in Oceanside, California.

There were also circles, associations, and movements more or less independent of the initiatory groups properly so-called. Such is the Mouvement Cosmique, founded around 1900 by Max Théon. It was the continuation of a so-called Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, and started publishing in 1903 an enormous work called *Tradition cosmique* dedicated to the "primitive tradition." Some of these movements bring together Christian esotericists; this is the case with Anna Kingsford's Hermetic Academy (cf. *infra*), but it was chiefly a French phenomenon: Yvon Leloup (alias Paul Sédir, 1871–1926), a Papus collaborator, led the group called *Les Amitiés spirituelles*; Paul Vulliaud (1875-1950) founded the journal *Les Entretiens idéalistes* in 1906, as well as an artistic and literary movement of the same name; Jesuit Victor Drevon (1820–1880) and Alexis de Sarachaga (1840–1918) created the "Hiéron," a study center at Paray-le-Monial in 1873.

Obviously this is only a partial listing. It does not include properly constituted sects which would distract us from our purpose (despite the ritualistic

and esoteric aspect of at least one of them, the *Eglise Gnostique*, founded by Jules Doinel in 1890).

B) The Theosophical Society

Founded in 1875 in New York by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (known as H.P.B., 1831–1891), Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) and William Quan Judge (1851–1896), the Theosophical Society—having nothing to do with Freemasonry—has undergone variations in form and ramifications throughout its history. However, the latter have conserved the same common denominators: they do not propose any degrees or ranks of initiation; they teach no doctrine (despite the title of the book *The Secret Doctrine*, 1888); and H.P.B.'s books serve as reference (besides the above mentioned, there is also *Isis Unveiled*, 1877). When it was founded, the Theosophical Society established a threefold goal, respected by all branches that developed from it: a) to form the nucleus of a universal fraternity; b) to encourage the study of all religions, philosophy, and science; c) to study the laws of Nature as well as the psychic and spiritual powers of Man. Through its content and inspiration, it is largely an offshoot of Oriental spiritualities, especially Hindu, reflecting the cultural climate in which it was born. It was the wish of H.P.B. and her society to always show the unity of all religions in their esoteric foundations, and to develop the ability to become theosophers in those who so desired. The Theosophical Society, especially in the beginning, dedicated a large part of its activities to the psychic or metapsychic fields, so popular at that time.

H.P.B. left for India in 1878, founded her journal *The Theosophist* there in 1879, and installed the official headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, near Madras, in 1883. She was well-thought of by the natives of the country, who had little trouble detecting a very tolerant mind behind this movement. H.P.B. returned to Europe in 1885. After her death, the history of the Theosophical Society's branches became complex (the most interesting case probably being that of the United Lodge of Theosophists, founded in 1909 by Robert Crosbie). The diffusion of this movement is widespread on an international scale (it is now rooted in most Western countries) and favored by three factors. First, there is the presence of such remarkable personalities as Annie Besant (1847-1933) who became president in 1907, Franz Hartmann (founder of the German branch in 1886), and Rudolf Steiner (Secretary General of the German section in 1902). Just as he left the Ordo Templi Orienti, Steiner broke away from the Theosophical Society (cf. *supra*) in 1913, claiming that the inclination toward Oriental traditions did not seem to be quite compatible with the Christian, Western character of his own theosophy. Before him, Anna Bonus Kingsford (1846–1888)—an outstanding figure in the feminine, Christian esotericism of the seventies and eighties—made the separation for the same reason, and permeated her newly founded

Hermetic Society with Christianity (cf. her wonderful book *The Perfect Way*, 1881). By creating their own organizations, figures such as Steiner and to a lesser degree, Anna Kingsford actually helped contribute to the extension of the mother society's teachings, even though under a modified form. The second factor are the numerous links that the various branches maintained with most of the other esoteric societies; the International Spiritualist and Spirit Conference (1889) and the Masonic and Spiritualist Conference (1908) which met in Paris both represent and are good examples of these crossroads of ideas and tendencies (the divisions between most of the movements are not tight, and opposition and fulminating excommunications arise mainly within each group). The third factor is obviously the high percentage of artists who are known to have felt the influence of the Theosophical Society.

C) Esoteric Arts and Literature

Among the great French writers, Gérard de Nerval is the one who integrated the largest number of esoteric elements in his writings (*Voyage en Orient*, 1851; *Les Illuminés*, 1852; *Les Chimères*, 1854). The sonnet of Charles Baudelaire (*Correspondances*, c. 1857) became a kind of poetic "Emerald Tablet," and his texts on the creative imagination are akin to some of the most classical esoteric texts. The literature of Victor Hugo (1854) in *Les Contemplations* at times becomes that of a visionary theosopher (that same year Hugo's spirit is said to have conversed with the spirit of Shakespeare). In France, occultism found its best fiction writer in the person of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam (*Isis*, 1862; *Axël*, 1888), and some presence in Saint-Pol-Roux (1861–1940) (*Les Reposoirs de la Procession*, 1893). It inspired the spectacular saga of J. Péladan (L'Ethopée, 1886/1907). The exhibitions of the Salons of the Rosy-Cross, tied to the order founded by Péladan, correspond to one of the most aesthetically fertile periods of the occultist movement. Works by Félicien Rops and Georges Rouault were admired there from 1893 to 1898, and Erik Satie was present too. In Germany between 1843 and 1882, the work of Richard Wagner, which incorporated into the Belle Epoque the idea of music elevated to the heights of religion, always had (text and score) a privileged hermeneutical place for esotericists; however, if there is any esotericism, it is most often found in their interpretations. This remark can be applied just as well to the painter Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901) or to Gustave Moreau (1828–1898). Esotericism, however, is explicit in the architectual undertakings of Rudolf Steiner who, like Wagner in Bayreuth, created a *Gesamtkunstwerk* ("total artistic work," a very Germanic idea) in Dornach (in the vicinity of Basel). Construction of the building, the Goetheanum, began in 1913. Steiner's four dramas (1910/1913, *Die Pforte der Einweihung, ein Rosenkreuzermysterium* in 1910) are performed there, along with some of Edouard Schurés plays. Another example of *Gesamtkunstwerk* is the project

done by the composer Alexander Scriabine (1872–1915), a grandiose "mystery," which would have surpassed by far even the greatest ambitions of Wagner. He was unable to finish the work, but there is esoteric sensitivity throughout the remainder of his musical pieces. In Russia we have the poems of Alexander Biely (*Petersburg*, 1914), and in Sweden, August Strindberg's plays (*Inferno*, 1897). More so than in other places, especially during the Symbolist period, England and the United States had many who were writer and "magus" as well: A. Crowley, P.B. Randolph, A.E. Waite, Arthur Machen, and of course the great William B. Yeats, and Arthur Symonds (*Images of Good and Evil*, 1899).

CHAPTER FIVE

TWENTIETH-CENTURY ESOTERICISMS

I) GNOSES IN THE WAKE OF THE WESTERN TRADITION

A) Success of the "Traditional" Sciences

The traditional sciences (astrology, alchemy, and magic) remain very much alive, directly touching a vast public. Their activities, as much speculative as operative, have been practiced within innumerable initiatory associations and by individuals. The most popular is clearly astrology, queen of the arts of divination. What book store does not dedicate shelves to astrology taking over a large part of the section devoted to "esotericism" or "occultism"? Is there a newspaper that does not have its special columns of daily or weekly advice? This is because despite its most widespread aspect—predictions that are simplistic, clichéd, commonplace, utilitarian, or "astroflash"—astrology still responds to a more or less conscious need to find once more in our uncentered and fragmented world the *Unus mundus*, the unity of mankind and the universe, through an integral language based on the principle of similitude. When this need is conscious, when it opens out upon a reflection—on a veritable hermeneutics of "signs"—which integrates a praxis and a gnosis, then we may speak of "esoteric" astrology. After Alan Leo, numerous twentieth-century astrologers from Karl Brandler-Pracht (1864–1945) to André Barbault, including Daniel Chennevière (alias Dane Rudhyar, 1895–1985) deserve this adjective. Thanks to them, astrology is on its way to obtaining its own status at the heart of the humanities.

In the other occult sciences we observe this duality. The Tarot, a specific art since Eliphas Lévi, is the subject of an extensive literature, both scholarly and popular, and increasingly suffuses our culture. It has always served to tell fortunes, but through a hermeneutic of situations and characters, it also opens