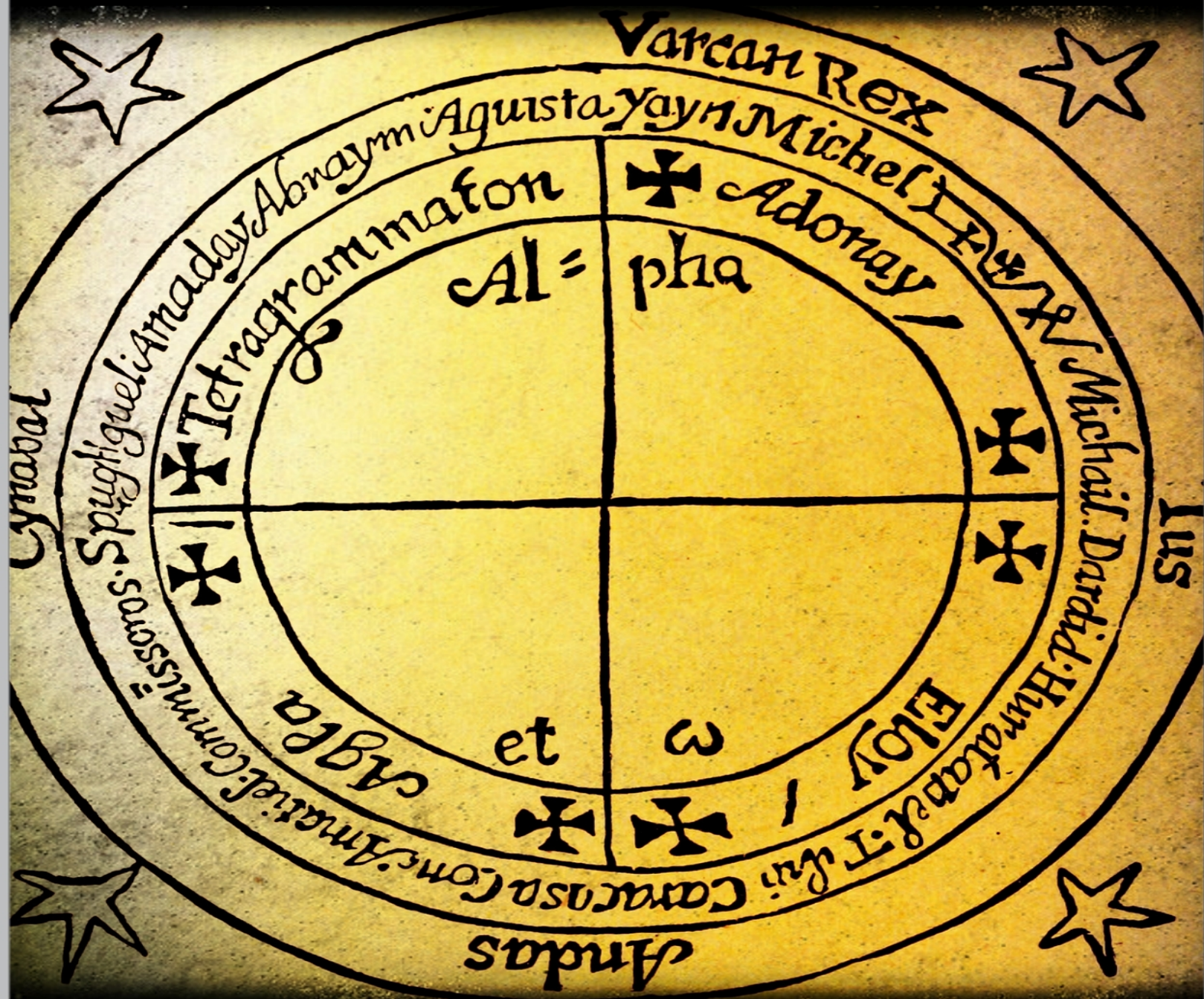


PARADOXES OF THE HIGHEST SCIENCE

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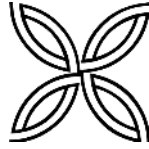


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PREFACE TO THE 1922 SECOND EDITION

MANY paths lead to the mountain-top, and many and diverse are the rifts in the Veil, through which glimpses may be obtained of the secret things of the Universe.

The Abbé Louis Constant, better known by his nom de plume of ÉLIPHAS LÉVI, was doubtless a seer; but, though his studies were by no means confined to this, he saw only through the medium of the kabala, the perfect sense of which is, now-a-days, hidden from all mere kabalists, and his visions were consequently always imperfect and often much distorted and confused.

Moreover, he was for a considerable portion of his career a Roman Catholic priest, and as such had to keep terms, to a certain extent, with his church, and even later, when he was unfrocked, he hesitated to shock the prejudices of the public, and never succeeded in even wholly freeing himself from the bias of his early clerical training.

Consequently he not only erred at times in good faith, not only constantly wrote ambiguously to avoid a direct collision with his ecclesiastical chiefs or current creeds, but he not unfrequently put forward Dogmas, which, taken in their obvious straightforward meanings, he certainly did not believe--nay, I may say, certainly knew to be false. It is quite true that, in many of these latter cases, an undercurrent of irony may be discerned by those who know the truth, and that in all the enlightened can sufficiently read between the lines to avoid misconceptions. But these defects, the ineradicable bias of his early training, the very narrow standpoint from which he regarded occultism, and the limitations to free expression imposed on him by his position and temperament, seriously detract from the value of all Éliphas Lévi's writings.

Still, he was an eloquent and learned man, and sufficiently advanced in occultism to render all he wrote on this subject interesting and more or less valuable to earnest students of the Mysteries; and I have, therefore, thought that fellow-searchers for the Hidden Truth would be well pleased to obtain access to some important and hitherto unpublished writings of this great kabalist.

Hence this translation, which, although absolutely without pretensions to literary merit, yet does, I hope and believe, everywhere fully and faithfully reproduce the obvious meanings of the author, leaving, in all cases,

where this is so in the original, an inner meaning discernible by those who KNOW. If in many places the language appears constrained and awkward, this has arisen from the necessity of preserving intact the exoteric and esoteric meanings, which our author so loved to combine in his epigrammatic sentences.

An eminent occultist, E. O., had added a few notes to the MSS. before it reached my hands, and these, which I have reproduced (though some of them will seem scarcely relevant to the uninitiated), merit the most careful attention. I too have here and there ventured a few remarks, which must be taken for what they are worth. I do not always agree with E. O., and, though perfectly aware that my opinion is as nothing when opposed to his, I did not think it honest to reproduce remarks, which I could not concur in, without recording my dissent.

For the rest, any reader who, interested in these Paradoxes, yet feels uncertain at their conclusion that he has fully grasped the author's meaning and desires to know more of this, may with advantage study Éliphas Lévi's other works, viz.--

DOGME ET RITUEL DE LA HAUTE MAGIE.

HISTOIRE DE LA MAGIE.

LA CLEF DES GRANDS MYSTÈRES.

LA SCIENCE DES ÉSPRITS.

LE SORCIER DE MEUDON.

FABLES ET SYMBOLES.

Each one of these amongst, it must be admitted, a mass of irrelevant and I had almost said trashy matter, redeemed only by a grace of style necessarily lost in any translation, throws some light upon each one of the others; and no one with any natural capacity for occultism can study these carefully, along with what is now published, without clearly apprehending our author's views. These, however limited and imperfect, were yet, to a great extent and so far as they went, correct, and were moreover, if nothing else, far in advance of most existing and accepted exoteric cosmogonies, theogonies and religions.

One word more: Occultism has its Physics and Metaphysics, its practical and theoretical sides. Éliphas Lévi was a theorist and, if we may judge from the nonsense given in great detail in his *RITUEL DE LA HAUTE MAGIE*, profoundly ignorant of its practice. Of the Physics of Occultism nothing of any great value can be gathered by the uninitiated from his pages, though reproducing, apparently without by any means fully comprehending them, phrases and ideas from the older Hermetic works; secrets, even pertaining to this branch, lie buried, like mutilated torsos, in his writings. But where the Metaphysics of Occultism are concerned his works are often encrusted with real jewels that would shine out far more clearly into the soul of the uninitiated but for his persistent habit of laying on everywhere coats

of Roman Catholic and orthodox whitewash, partly in his earlier days to avert the antagonism of the church, partly to avoid shocking the religious prejudices of his readers, and partly I suspect, because to the last some flavour of those prejudices clung even to his own mind.

To those then who desire to acquire proficiency in Practical Occultism, who crave long life, gifts and powers, and a knowledge of the hidden things and laws of the universe, a study of Éliphas Lévi's books would be almost time wasted. Let them seek elsewhere for what they want, and if they seek in earnest they will surely find it.

But by those who, careless of such things, desire only to grapple with and assimilate the highest and ultimate TRUTHS of Occultism more may perhaps be gleaned from his pages by thoughtful study, than from those of any writer, past or present, whose works are readily accessible to the world.

To such seekers I say, study Éliphas Lévi's works as a whole and ponder over them. Doubtless they are encumbered by a mass of what, but for the elegance of the diction, would deserve to be set down as twaddle. Doubtless our Abbé was a true Frenchman, often aiming more at felicity of expression and neatness of antithesis than at the simple truth, and ever ready to jump from the sublimest spiritual truth to some cynical mundane jest by no means always in the best possible taste. Doubtless too he perpetually wastes time (for most modern readers) in

slaying over again the already defunct bugbears, bogies and monsters of the Roman Catholic Church.

But none the less had he much real occult learning, and this, though in a purposely bewildering, inconsecutive and incoherent form, he put piecemeal on record in his various works.

Truly, though wrapped by his eloquence in cloth of gold, not an inviting heap! Yet, despite the mass of shells and sand and ancient fishy odours, the pearls are there for those who truly seek. A hint in one work, a bantering falsehood in one passage, will explain veiled truths in others; to those who strive hard to grasp them his real meanings will become clear; and though the labour be considerable and the results, even when obtained, imperfect and requiring to be supplemented elsewhere, the trouble will not have been wasted; and those who have advanced thus far will assuredly find unexpected help in completing their task.

THE TRANSLATOR

FOREWORD TO THE 1922 SECOND EDITION

THERE appear, in the early volumes of The Theosophist, several fragments called "Unpublished Writings of Éliphas Lévi." "Éliphas Lévi" was the French Abbé Louis Constant, a priest who left the Roman Catholic Church to devote himself to Kabbalistic Mysticism. One of these "unpublished writings"--which however was not printed in The Theosophist, but separately as a pamphlet, in the series "Theosophical Miscellanies"--was commented upon in footnotes by "E. O.", "Eminent Occultist." Éliphas Lévi's essay, together with E. O.'s footnotes, was then published, and the present publication is a reprint of this "Theosophical Miscellany" printed in Calcutta in 1883.

There would be no point in reprinting this old "propaganda literature" of the early days of the Theosophical Society, but for the fact that "Eminent Occultist" is the Master of the Wisdom now well known

among Theosophists under the initials "K. H." It is in a footnote of the Master, in 1883, that first appears in Theosophical literature the assertion that Jesus Christ lived a century B. C. Surely nothing could be more beautiful about woman's rôle in life than what He says in the last of His footnotes.

Reading these notes of the Master has inspired me and given me an insight into His mind. I have urged their republication, hoping that others may receive from them what I have received.

C.J.

SECOND PREFACE

The history of western magic started about 4000 years ago. And since then it has been adding something to western magic. Originally, the Latin word *magus* nominated the followers of the spiritualist-priest class, and later originated to elect 'clairvoyant, sorcerer' and in a judgmental sense also 'magician, trickster'. Thus, the initial meaning of the word 'magic' was the wisdoms of the Magi, that is the abilities of attaining supernatural powers and energy, while later it became practical critically to deceitful wizardry. The etymological descriptions specify three significant features in the expansion of the notion 'magic':

1) Magic as a discipline of celestial natural forces and in the course of formation 2) Magic as the exercise of such facts in divinations, visions and illusion 3) Fraudulent witchery. The latter belief played a significant part in the Christian demonization process. The growth of the western notion 'magic' directed to extensive assumptions in the demonological and astrophysical argument of the

Neoplatonists. Their tactic was grounded on the philosophy of a hierarchically ordered outer space, where conferring to Plotinus (C205–C270 AD) a noetic ingredient was shaped as the outcome of eternal and countless radiation built on the ultimate opinion; this in its chance contributed to the rise of psychic constituent, which formed the basis of the factual world. Furthermore, these diverse phases of release came to be measured as convinced forces, which underneath the impact of innocent and evil views during late ancient times were embodied as humans. The hierarchical cosmos of Iamblichus simply demonstrates the legitimacy of this process. In his work, the Neoplatonic cosmology has initiated a channel through the syncretism distinctive of the late antiquity and in the essence of Greco-Oriental dualism. Superior productions are taken closer to inferior ones by various midway creatures. The higher the site of the mediators, the further they bear a resemblance to gods and whizzes; the minor they are, the nearer they stand to the psychic-spiritual part. The aforementioned group of intermediaries has been settled in order of series on the origin of cosmic gravity. Proclus (c410–485 AD) has described the system of magic origin conversed above in better aspect: in the hierarchical shackles of cosmic rudiments the power and nature of a firm star god disturbs everything mediocre, and with growing distance

the impact slowly becomes weaker. The Humanists approached the Platonic notions from the outlook of the bequest of late antiquity, and were thus first familiarized to the Neoplatonic form of the doctrine. And since Ficino's work has been inscribed in the spirit of emanation theory, and the author has been persuaded of the existence of the higher and lower spheres of magic and powers defined in Picatrix, he claims that planets and cosmic movements have much to do with power and magic spirit. Today's occult marketplace also offers, in addition to books, multifarious paraphernalia for practicing magic: amulets, talismans, pendulums and magic rods. Though added with modern essentials and pseudoscientific advices to give some weight to the fundamentals, they are nothing but the leftovers of the western ethnicities of magic.

PARADOX 1. RELIGION IS MAGIC SANCTIONED BY AUTHORITY

MAGIC is the divinity of man conquered by science in union with faith; the true Magi are Men-Gods, in virtue of their intimate union with the divine principle. They are without fear and without desires; they are dominated by no falsehood; they share no error; they love without illusion and suffer without impatience, for they leave all to happen as it may, and repose in the quietude of the eternal thought. They lean upon religion, but religion does not weigh on them; religion is the Sphinx which obeys, but never devours them. They know what religion is, and they feel that it is necessary and eternal.

For debased souls religion is a yoke imposed, through self-interest, by the poltrooneries of fear and the follies of hope. For exalted souls religion is a force, springing from an intensified reliance in the love of humanity.

Religion is the collective poesy of great souls. Her fictions are more true than Truth itself; vaster than Infinity; more lasting than Eternity; in other words, they are essentially paradoxical.

They are the dream of the Infinite in the Unknown, of the Possible in the Impossible, of the Definite in the Indefinable, of Progress in the Immutable, of Absolute Being in the Non-existent.

They are the ultimate rationale of the Absurdity, which affirms itself, to deny doubt; they are the science of foolishness, the embrace of Folly and Knowledge. They are the cries of the eagle mounting above the clouds, the roar of the lion of the Apocalypse, that takes to itself wings and flies away; the bellowing of the bull beneath the sacrificial knife, and the never ending moan of mankind before the portals of the tomb.

For man, God is, and can only be, the ideal of man. In himself, he is the unknown, but in his revelation, at once divine and human, he is paradoxical man, the substantial without substance, the personal without definition, the immutable which transforms itself but has no form, the omnipotent ever struggling with the weakness of man, the serenity which thunders, the mercy which damns, the infinite goodness which tortures, the eternity which perishes; an infinite contradiction; the abyss of the human heart, serving as a world for an insatiable and terrifying idol; the cruelty of Nero, the policy of Tiberius

drinking the blood of Jesus Christ,

1

a pope emperor, or an emperor antipope, the king of kings, the pontiff of pontiffs, the executioner of executioners, the physician of physicians, the liberator of the free, the inflexible master of slaves.

God is everywhere the ideal of those who ignorantly adore him; ferocious amongst savages, instinct with human passions amidst the Greeks, an Oriental despot for the Jews, jealous and merciless for the Ultramontanes as a celibate priest. One and all create a personage whom they endow in an infinite degree with their own characteristics and their own defects.

2

Every man adores the God whom he has made for himself in his own image, or has allowed authorities, who have more or less an interest in his ignorance and weakness, to impose upon him. To adore in fear and trembling is almost to hate, though the fear disguises the hate; to adore fearlessly is to love.

True piety, which is the foundation of religion, is the exaltation of love, for love raised to a high pitch admits no longer the barriers of the possible; the impossible is its dream, and miracle, for it, reality. What would avail a religion that did not give us the infinite? What is Protestantism with its sacrament devoid of reality?

3

Sad as an extinguished taper or a dismantled church! How can the bread consecrated by the word represent Jesus Christ if it be not Jesus himself? What folly if the Christ be not divinity! A fine piece of worship, truly, to chew a mouthful of bread--alas for him who cannot feel the necessity for miracle here. One can love a human