

FATHER ERNETTI'S CHRONOVISOR

THE CREATION AND
DISAPPEARANCE OF
THE WORLD'S FIRST
TIME MACHINE

PETER KRASSA



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FATHER ERNETTI'S ^{9/12}
CHRONOVISOR:
The Creation and Disappearance of
the World's First Time Machine

By Peter Krassa

Translated from the German by Miguel Jones

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FATHER ERNETTI'S CHRONOVISOR:
THE CREATION AND DISAPPEARANCE OF
THE WORLD'S FIRST TIME MACHINE by Peter Krassa
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A Note on the American Edition of *Father Ernetti's Chronovisor*

The American edition of *Father Ernetti's Chronovisor* has been significantly revised and expanded over the original German edition of *Die Schicksal ist vorherbestimmt* (*Your Destiny is Foretold*) by Peter Krassa.

This is due to the fact that certain documents which were not available to Mr. Krassa have come into the hands of the American editors. In particular, these include a transcript, edited by Professor Giuseppe Marasca, of the Latin text of the fragment of Quintus Ennius' tragedy *Thyestes* which was obtained by Father Pellegrino Ernetti.

This document in particular contained new and valuable information which necessitated its inclusion in the English-language version of *Father Ernetti's Chronovisor*. The analysis of that information prompted the American editors to take parts of the book in directions which the creator of the original German version of the book, Mr. Peter Krassa, could not possibly have envisaged, but which build additional new knowledge on the foundations he has laid.

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The Creation and Disappearance of
the World's First Time Machine

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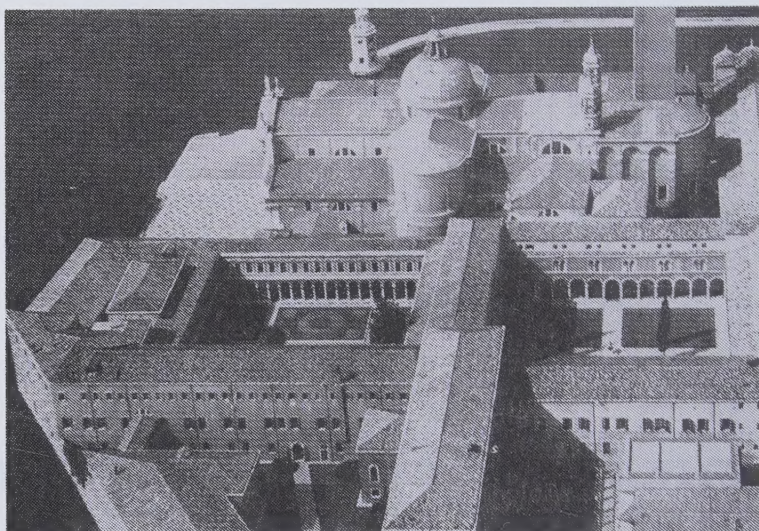
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Illustrations

Facing Page One: (1) San Giorgio Maggiore; (2) Father Pellegrino Ernetti;
(3) The Face of Christ. Page 58: Diagram of a Chronovisor.



The Basilica and Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice



Father Pellegrino Ernetti



The Face of Christ in the Photo

Prologue

THE RETURN OF THE ETHER

For century upon century, thinkers believed that there could be no such thing as an absolute vacuum—that there could not be Existence without Something. They imagined that the cosmos was filled with a universal substance, called—in the past few centuries—the ether. This substance, which was essentially different from matter though not exclusively spirit, filled every nook and cranny of the universe where there was Nothing Else—including all the spaces between the stars.

The ether *had* to exist; if it did not, how could energies and forces be transmitted from one sector of the universe to another? How could there be “attraction at a distance”—gravity? How could the photons making up sunlight travel from the sun to the earth if there were no medium for them to travel through?

In 1887, a landmark experiment by two Americans, Albert A. Michelson and Edward W. Morley, seemed to disprove once and for all that the ether existed. It had been assumed that, as the earth moved through the universal ether, there would be a detectable difference between the speed of a light beam aligned with the earth's direction of motion and that of a perpendicular beam, just as the speed of a swimmer on a river depends on whether he is swimming with, against or across the current.

The famous Michelson-Morley Experiment measured both kinds of beam and discovered they were flowing at exactly the same speed. There was no “slowing-down” medium; there must be no ether.

In an article in the *New York Times*, in February, 1999, “Ether Re-emerges as the Je Ne Sais Quoi of Physics,” Malcolm M. Browne writes:

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“Then in 1905 came relativity theory and an entirely new way to look at space. With the birth of relativity theory it became clear that there was no need for ether as a propagating medium for light waves; space-time itself—the four-dimensional framework of the universe postulated by relativity—was the tableau across which all physical effects could play, including the transmission of light.”

But today, scientists are beginning to think that they may have made a fundamental error in tossing out the concept of the “ether.”

After all, given that the ether was somehow fundamentally different from matter, why should they have assumed that it would necessarily slow down anything, including light beams?

Moreover, scientists are beginning to accept the presence in the universe of certain phenomena that behave very much as if they were the ether.

Modern quantum field theory asserts that, in Browne’s words, “intangible quantum fields fill everything in the universe, including the voids inside atoms and the immense space between galaxies. Every conceivable type of particle capable of existence has its own field extending throughout the universe, and when any point in the field is ‘excited’—tweaked with energy—it creates the field’s associated particle.” This is merely the ether in a different guise, says Dr. Frank Wilczek of the Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, N.J.

The late physicist David Bohm postulated the existence of what he called the implicate order—a deeper and non-local level of existence from which our entire universe springs. Dr. Bohm wrote, “Every action starts from an intention in the implicate order. The imagination is already the creation of the form; it already has the intention and the germs of all the movements needed to carry it out. And it affects the body and so on, so that as creation takes place in that way from the subtler levels of the implicate order, it goes through them till it manifests in the explicate.”

Modern-day astrophysicists increasingly speculate that those vast stretches of interstellar space which seem to be devoid of matter or conventional forms of energy actually seethe with activity. This activity is called zero-point energy, and consists of the immense ebb and flow of “virtual particles” flickering in and out of existence; if any of these,

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in the nanosecond of its virtual existence, acquires energy from some outside source, then it continues to exist; otherwise, it disappears.

And astrophysicists have known for some time there is far too little “visible matter”—matter that can be detected directly—in the universe to account for the powerful gravitation of galaxies, galactic clusters and other large scale bodies. In fact, there is only 10 percent as much as there should be. The nature of the gravitating substance, called “dark matter,” is unknown; but one thing seems clear: “Empty” space is anything but empty. The ether lives!

Stretching back over the millennia, there have been many legends about the all-pervasive ether and its powers. It was thought to be the medium of thought as well as of physical phenomena. It was believed that the ether steadily accumulated all the thoughts of the universe that were ever thought, and all the words of the universe that were ever spoken. This gave rise to the idea of the “akashic records,” an etheric storehouse of all the events that have ever happened to mankind—and, if the particular culture permitted such a belief, to all the other species in the universe as well.

It was believed that man, totally in touch with the etheric substance within himself, once flew like a bird through the ether of the universe. It was believed that he had once known how to pull the energies of the conscious, thinking stars and planets down through the ether to the earth, to use for his own purposes.

If we doubted that the ether existed, and are beginning to think once more that it does, might we one day soon begin to discover that the akashic records exist as well, and that we can fly through the ether like birds to once again access them?

Father Ernetti's Chronovisor: The Creation and Disappearance of the World's First Time Machine, is the story of a man who, in our own century, flew through the ether in his chronovisor and accessed the akashic records.

Or did he?

It's up to the reader to decide.

**Browne, *New York Times*, Op-Ed Page.
Talbot, 84.**

Chapter One

A MONK IN VENICE

There is no city in the world more beautiful than Venice, and no view in Venice more beautiful than sunrise from the basilica and the Benedictine abbey on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore.

The sun brushes against the tower and façade of the church, as Mark Helprin says, "in a warm flare of orange, ochre and white, as the hesitant blue dawn over the Adriatic is cleared of all but the most tentative of clouds. These have red underbellies, or gold, and are grouped together in long luminous strings like golden willow branches."

The golden sunlight streams across the blue Grand Canal curving between the island of San Giorgio Maggiore and the main island of Venice, and glances gloriously off the bell tower rising above the domed roof of the eleventh century Church of Saint Mark—one of the world's great triumphs of Byzantine architecture.

This is the view that Father Pellegrino Maria Ernetti would have enjoyed on almost every morning of his adult life. Rising at 5 a.m., as is the custom among the Benedictines, he would have passed through the cloisters on his way to and from the holy office of Matins and seen the sunlight filling up with its golden glow the grounds of the San Giorgio Maggiore church and abbey.

Father Ernetti had arrived as a postulant at the famous Benedictine monastery on Oct. 28, 1941, two weeks and one day after his sixteenth birthday. In those days, the sunlight illuminated an abbey that was in a state of some deterioration. This was not due to the extreme age of the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore, which had been

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constructed almost a thousand years before, beginning in 982 A.D., at the height of the millennial fever sweeping through Europe at the end of the tenth century. It was not due to any lack of zeal on the part of the Benedictine brothers, whose devotion to the maintenance of their monastery was known to be impeccable. Rather, it was because Napoleon Bonaparte, having conquered Italy in 1797, and having taken captive and humiliated two popes, had set about in 1807 to expel all the monks in the country from their monasteries. He hadn't quite succeeded; along with others, a group of brothers at the San Giorgio Maggiore Abbey had insisted on staying. Their numbers had not been sufficient to maintain the abbey in the way that was required.

Through the Italian wars of independence of the nineteenth century and through the hardships of the First World War, the situation had not improved appreciably. Still less had the brothers been able to look to the proper upkeep of their monastery during the dangerous decades of the 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s, when the Fascist dictatorship of Benito Mussolini had promised the Italian people glory and had given them ruin and defeat as the ally of Adolph Hitler.

The worn-down look of parts of the abbey could not have affected Pellegrino Ernetti any more than it affected the other postulants. They lived in a timeless world of beauty, discipline and learning. Beauty: there rose up alongside the abbey, more carefully preserved, as a work of art, the bold and magnificent structure of the Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore. This splendid example of Mannerist architecture had been completed in 1576 by Andrea Palladio, arguably the greatest architect of the late sixteenth century. It presented to the world the intricate façade of a tall, narrow temple front superimposed on another low and wide one; within, in the choir, hung a number of masterpieces of High Renaissance Italian painting.

One of these paintings, executed in 1592-1594, was the last major work of the celebrated Venetian artist Jacobo Tintoretto. It was a 19-foot by 12-foot, almost overpowering, representation of *The Last Supper*, one in which peasants and angels jostled for room with Jesus and the disciples. Pellegrino Ernetti would have been able to look at this painting every day that he was at the abbey. It's hard to overestimate the effect it must have had on him: Some decades later, he

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would tell friends that, with the help of a group of scientists, he had developed a device that had enabled him to journey back through time and witness the actual last supper of Jesus Christ.

The healthy discipline of the Benedictine monastery wouldn't have permitted the postulant Ernetti to linger long over great works of art. The monks were shepherded into Matins at 5:30 a.m. They were sent to breakfast at 6:30. They were not allowed to talk at breakfast, during which a brother read to them, usually in Latin. It was the same with the other meals, nor could they speak with each other much until early evening. After breakfast they would hurry to their classes; these classes, very often given in Latin, and with Latin texts, continued throughout the day, punctuated only by meals, by a brief break, and by the ceaseless litany of the holy offices. Most of the evenings were spent in prayer and study.

For the postulant, classes in the first years consisted primarily of church history and theology, of the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and of Latin and Greek. Pellegrino Ernetti seemed to shine amidst this learning. His ear was as sharp as his mind. He acquired an outstanding knowledge of Latin. The Gregorian chant has long been a specialty of the Benedictines of the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore: Pellegrino was immensely drawn to this music; he wanted to sing it, to direct it, to understand it. Many years later, he would do all three. He would do more: the Benedictine father, having become a priest and musicologist, would discern in the intricate patterns of archaic music long-forgotten structures which, partaking of the form of higher planes of reality, would help him to leapfrog back in time to periods in the distant past. Help him, only; certain techniques of modern science would have to be wedded to this ancient knowledge. Ernetti would begin to acquire these techniques at the midpoint of his apprenticeship at San Giorgio Maggiore, when, with his customary passion, he threw himself into the study of general science, then of physics.

His final years were a complex mixture of science, musicology, Greek and Roman literature and Scripture, and much else. He read widely, and his superiors did not always know what he was reading. He was ordained a Benedictine priest on August 14, 1949, almost

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eight years after he had first entered these august quarters bordering on the splendors of Venice. Now he was free to roam a little. Along with carrying out his pastoral and manual duties, he journeyed somewhat, sampling a variety of other courses in physics and musicology, and in other subjects.

Early 1952 found him working with the distinguished Father Agostino Gemelli at the latter's electro-acoustical laboratory at the Roman Catholic University of Milan. For Father Ernetti, it would be a transforming experience.

Helprin, 292.

Chapter Two

IN THE LABORATORY OF
FATHER GEMELLI

The end of that summer in Milan, Father Ernetti turned 27. What kind of a man was he? What was his demeanor? Already, he had acquired the steeliness of resolve which would carry him through so many unusual endeavors. To those who did not know about his projects, the Benedictine monk seemed perfectly normal—very harmless, really. He moved inconspicuously, almost to the point of invisibility, among his colleagues and friends, as if he did not wish to be noticed in the least. He was always calm. His voice was extraordinarily soft; while he was talking, he fixed his eyes upon you with the greatest kindness. His whole demeanor bespoke a vast and quiet dignity.

This outer calm masked an inner steel. Father Ernetti had huge funds of inner strength and a will of iron. The gentle-seeming Benedictine priest was a man of a rectitude that was unbending and a conviction that was unswerving. Once he had set his mind on something, nothing could deviate him from his chosen path.

The steeliness of resolve would gain him a great deal. In later years, you would not think, looking at this benign if sharply alert figure, that he had learned secrets of great importance that almost nobody else on our planet was privy to—or had been for centuries. You would not realize there was method to his seeming calm, that the inconspicuousness he was at pains to cultivate permitted him to work without interruption, undisturbed, on projects which demanded his entire soul, and which would have tested the resolve of anyone.

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An extraordinary event took place in the laboratory of Father Gemelli in 1952 which would determine the shape of those projects. Father Agostino Gemelli was not only a distinguished scientist, but one of the founders of the Catholic University of Milan and president of the Pontifical Scientific Academy in Rome. He and Father Ernetti were collaborating on music research, working together in the physics lab with oscilloscopes, filter systems, and other electronic gear in an effort to find ways to produce clearer singing voices.

For years, Father Gemelli had often silently called upon his deceased father for advice when he faced crisis situations. He had never received a conscious reply from his father, but things seemed to work out; it was one of those reassuring rituals that everyone uses to get through tough times.

Or so he thought. On September 15, 1952, while Father Gemelli and Father Ernetti were recording a Gregorian chant, a wire on their tape recorder kept breaking. Exasperated, Father Gemelli looked up and asked his father for help. To the two men's amazement, his father's voice, recorded on the tape recorder, answered: "Of course I shall help you. I'm always with you."

The two men stared at each other, shocked. Father Gemelli began to shake. Sweat broke out on his forehead. Was this the Devil?

But Father Ernetti's scientific curiosity was piqued. He calmed Gemelli. "Come, come," he said, "let us try the experiment again." They did. This time, a very clear voice, filled with humor, said: "But, Zucchini, it is clear, don't you know it is I?"

Father Gemelli stared at the tape. No one knew the nickname his father had teased him with when he was a boy. He realized then that he was truly speaking with his father—although his joy at his father's apparent survival was mixed with fear. Did he have any right to speak with the dead?

Eventually, the two men visited Pope Pius XII in Rome. Father Gemelli, deeply troubled, told the Pope of the experience. To his surprise, the Pope patted his shoulder. "Dear Father Gemelli," he explained, "you really need not worry about this. The existence of this voice is strictly a scientific fact, and has nothing whatsoever to do with spiritism. The recorder is totally objective. It receives and records

only sound waves from wherever they come. This experiment may perhaps become the cornerstone for a building for scientific studies which will strengthen people's faith in a hereafter."

The good father was somewhat reassured. But he said as little as he could about the experiment until the last years of his life. Pellegrino Ernetti did not hesitate to discuss it heatedly with others.

Father Ernetti came back to Venice in 1953. If there had been any doubt that he would take up permanent residence at the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore, the doubt had been dissolved by the bestowal on the island and its facilities of a great blessing. In 1951, the distinguished Venetian industrialist and philanthropist Count Vittorio Cini had set up the Giorgio Cini Foundation on the island, named for his son Giorgio, who had been killed in a plane crash at the age of 29. Until the mid-1950s, the mission of the foundation consisted in restoring the basilica and abbey. Then, beginning in 1956, new facilities were added intended to house lecture halls, conference rooms, libraries and an open-air theatre in the Greek and Latin model. All these would go to make up the Foundation's multicultural, international Institute for Cultural Collaboration.

Initially, there were four research institutes, the largest comprising four sections: art history; literature, music and theatre; Venetian society and state history; and Venice in relation to the East. The greatly enhanced cultural resources of the island would ensure that the gifted Father Ernetti stayed on at the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore through the years. His services were required at the literature, music and theatre center; moreover, across the Grand Canal, not far from Saint Mark's Square, stood the Benedetto Marcello Conservatory of Music, an already famed institute which would take on Father Ernetti as a full-time lecturer in archaic music. The growing assets of the Cini Foundation's libraries would nourish his passion for archaic music and enhance his learning. In 1978, the Antonio Vivaldi Italian Institute became part of the Cini Foundation and the Music Institute was established as an independent body; eventually, Father Ernetti would teach a course at the latter institute on archaic music. Today, if you enter the Music Institute library, you will find, prominently displayed,

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four of his earlier works: *Parola, Musica, Ritmo* [*Words, Music, Rhythm*], published in 1961, and Volumes One, Two and Four of his vast and definitive *Trattato Generale di Canto Gregoriano* [*General Treatise on Gregorian Chant*], published between 1958 and 1964.

But this is to jump ahead of our story. During those early years, Father Pellegrino Ernetti was consumed by other, more mysterious interests. Let us turn our attention to those.

Brune and Chauvin, *A l'Ecoute de l'Au-Delà*, 108-109.

Chapter Three

ENCOUNTER ON
SAN GIORGIO MAGGIORE

If Father Pellegrino Ernetti had not lived in a place of great and Byzantine beauty, it is doubtful that we would have the following extraordinary account of the enigmatic Benedictine, based on a chance encounter on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in the early 1960s.

Father François Brune is a theologian and author who teaches at the Sorbonne, in Paris. He has written several books on theological themes, including *Pour que l'homme devienne dieu* [*That Man May Become God*] (1992), and *Christ et karma: la réconciliation?* [*Christ and Karma: Reconciliation?*] (1992). He has also written books on parapsychological themes, including *En Direct de l'Au-Delà* [*Live from the Beyond*] with Rémy Chauvin (1993), *Les Morts Nous Parlent* [*The Dead Speak to Us*] (1994), a bestseller in France, and *A l'Ecoute de l'Au-Delà* [*Listening to the Beyond*] (1999) again with Rémy Chauvin, a revised and expanded version of *En Direct de l'Au-Delà*.

In *En Direct de l'Au-Delà*, Father Brune tells us how, when he had completed his studies in Holy Scripture at the Biblical Institute in Rome, he decided to return to France the long way round, via Venice on the Adriatic, in order to see the world-famous Byzantine art and architecture of that famous city of canals.

It was while he was visiting the basilica and abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, he tells us, that he first encountered “seemingly completely by accident” a strange and compelling figure: Father Pellegrino Maria Ernetti.

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They were standing together on the little pier that lies at the bottom of the path leading down from the basilica, waiting for the *vaporetto*, the passenger motorboat, that would ferry them the short distance across the Grand Canal to St. Mark's Square.

They fell into conversation. "I don't remember how it began," writes Father Brune, "but it was probably with some highly philosophical remark from one of us about the unpredictability of the weather or the *vaporettos*. Then he was asking me, more out of politeness than interest, where I was from and what I was doing there."

Father Brune explained that he had completed his studies at the seminary in Rome, and was there to see the sights. This elicited an interested response from Father Ernetti. They compared backgrounds. Brune discovered that Father Ernetti had studied as many ancient languages as he had. They were soon knee-deep in questions of scripture and theology. Father Brune shared with Father Ernetti his annoyance at "those new interpretations of scripture that see them as no more than just collections of symbols, with no relation to the real facts, including even those of the life of Christ."

Father Ernetti responded with a few muttered syllables to the effect that there existed a mysterious machine that could very easily reduce all these fine talkers to silence.

Father Brune looked at him in puzzled silence.

Then Ernetti added that, since the esteemed French brother would soon be teaching at a large monastery of his own, and wouldn't have any more time for himself, perhaps he would be interested in coming around to Father Ernetti's room here at the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore, tomorrow afternoon, so that the two could discuss these matters at their leisure.

A machine that could reduce all these fine talkers to silence? Father Brune was mystified. Whatever could Ernetti mean? The Frenchman gladly accepted the Benedictine priest's invitation. They were soon swiftly crossing the Grand Canal together in the little *vaporetto*. The conversation shifted to other topics. Arriving at the Piazza di San Marco, they parted cordially and took their separate ways.

The next day, Father Brune was on his way back to the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in the same *vaporetto*.

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He hadn't stopped wondering: what had Father Ernetti meant by this mysterious machine?

Father Ernetti greeted him warmly and took him around to his quarters. Father Brune looked about him with some curiosity. The monastic cell couldn't have been more than 12 feet by 12. A huge and ancient desk took up much of the space in the center. Piled high on its top were books in many languages, files, pens and paper, sheet music. Two antique telephones flanked a rickety typewriter. An appointment book lay open, crowded with appointments.

In the center of the desk gleamed a small brass cross, the symbol of the Benedictine Order.

Father Ernetti proceeded to tell Father Brune the most incredible story that the French author-priest would ever hear.

The Benedictine began by telling him the story of the extraordinary incident that had taken place in the experimental physics lab at the Catholic University of Milan, when he and Father Gemelli had been filtering harmonics out of Gregorian chants and had heard the voice of Father Gemelli's late father speaking. Father Ernetti told Brune that the incident had set him to wondering what happened to the harmonics once they were eliminated. Were they annihilated, or were they just eliminated from the recording? Ernetti thought, as a scientist, that they had to continue to exist in some way. And if this were true of the harmonics of a Gregorian chant, why shouldn't it be true of all the sights and sounds the human race had ever generated? After all, it had been true of the voice of Gemelli's deceased father.

Ernetti told Brune he had discussed the matter with a number of other physicists. Some of them had been quite interested. Little by little, he had assembled a team of scientists. The team had undertaken to carry out in the utmost secrecy one of the most extraordinary projects ever conceived by the mind of man: to build a machine that could penetrate back into the mists of time and recapture the sights and sounds of mankind's vanished past.

Their efforts had not been in vain. They had built the chronovisor. It had extended its sensory apparatus back into the past, and brought back photos and recordings from times which were no longer there.

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Father Brune was mesmerized. Father Ernetti spoke with passion and conviction. Brune asked: Who invented this chronovisor?

No one person, replied Ernetti. It had been a joint creation. The physicist Enrico Fermi—one of the creators of the atom bomb—had played a seminal role. So had a disciple of Fermi; so had a Japanese Nobel Prize winner in physics. A distinguished Portuguese physicist, Professor de Matos, had been involved—but Ernetti did not really want to name names. But German rocket scientist Wernher von Braun had also been around.

“How exactly did you come upon the principles that made the chronovisor work?” asked Brune.

“Virtually by accident,” answered Ernetti. “The basic idea was very simple. It was just a matter of stumbling upon it.”

If the basic concept was so simple, said Father Brune, perhaps the chronovisor had been invented before; perhaps it would be reinvented.

“No, no!” protested Ernetti. “That would be practically impossible! It would take an incredible stroke of luck.”

Father Brune reflected as how this might be true. After all, few physicists were working at such an advanced level—though in this day and age that was changing; physicists were increasingly examining the paradoxes of time travel. He asked Ernetti, “Do you mean you can see back into wherever time you wish?”

“Yes!” replied the Venetian priest enthusiastically. “We can see into any time and place with perfect clarity.”

What, asked Father Brune, had they seen so far?

They had begun, declared Ernetti, by trying to tune in on one of Mussolini's speeches. They had captured images of the Italian dictator giving a speech in Rome; so much documentation and footage existed on Mussolini that Ernetti was certain it had really been he.

Next, they set the chronovisor's dials farther back in time, attempting to recapture the sounds and images of one of Napoleon's speeches. Here again, Ernetti was sure they had succeeded: “We had a good enough knowledge of his features and enough documents at our disposal that we were able to find our way to him.” Ernetti thought they had observed Napoleon giving the speech in which he proclaimed Italy a republic.

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The chronovisor team now traveled much farther back in time, to ancient Rome. A succession of images unfolded before them. First, there was a bustling fruit and vegetable market in the time of Emperor Trajan (98-117 A.D.). Next, they watched the great Roman lawyer, orator, politician and philosopher Cicero (106-43 B.C.) giving a speech to the Roman senate in the year 63 B.C. The speech had been the first of the four Cicero had delivered against Catiline and the "Catilinian Conspiracy." To refresh Father Brune's memory (the speeches are well-known today), Father Ernetti recited the first two lines: "*Que usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? Quam diu etiam furor iste tuus nos eludet?*" "In heaven's name, Catiline, how long will you take advantage of our forbearance? How much longer yet will that madness of yours make playthings of us?" Ernetti said he had noticed slight differences in the Latin pronunciation of Cicero's time as compared to the Latin taught in schools today: "They didn't pronounce 'ae' like two separate vowels; they just pronounced the long 'a.'" Cicero's speech had been magnificent: "His gestures, his intonation: how powerful they were! What flights of oratory!"

Next, the time-travelers "dallied," as Ernetti put it, "at a playlet." The year was 169 B.C.; they watched part of a tragedy, *Thyestes*, written by the "father of Latin poetry," Quintus Ennius. It was a play, explained Ernetti, that is now almost wholly lost to us; only 25 fragments, a line or so each, have survived. The priest-musicologist had listened keenly to the 'archaic music' accompanying the play.

"Have you been able to reconstruct what you heard?" asked Father Brune.

"Yes," replied Father Ernetti enthusiastically. "Since we heard and saw everything, text, choruses, music, I've been able to publish the entire text of that tragedy." This was a fascinating period in the literary history of ancient Rome, he had added; Latin, influenced by Greek, had just then been detaching itself from its dialects and roots and taking shape as a major literary language.

Brune and Chauvin, *En Direct de l'Au-Delà*, 191-196.

Chapter Four

GAZING INTO THE FACE OF CHRIST

Father Brune had found all of this exceedingly remarkable and interesting. He was anxious, though, to get to what he thought was the real reason for their meeting. "Tell me, Father," he asked, "when you invited me here, we were talking about the life of Christ. Were you able to go back to the life of Christ?"

"Yes, certainly," the priest replied calmly.

"And—?"

For the first time, Father Ernetti was silent. Was he unsure whether to reply? wondered Brune. Was he gathering his thoughts?

The Venetian priest resumed: "At first we tried to recapture the images of the day of Christ's crucifixion. But we had a problem. Crucifixions, as awful as they were, were commonplace in Christ's time. People were nailed to the cross every day." Amid all these crucifixions, the chronovisor hadn't been able to narrow in on the crucifixion of Christ. "It also didn't help that Christ wore a crown of thorns, because, contrary to popular belief, it wasn't unusual to be punished by having a crown of thorns put on your head."

The chronovisor team had been obliged to go a few days further back in time. They had settled on the last supper of Christ. They had stayed with that awesome event, following Christ forward in time. This was the year 36 of the Christian era, Ernetti added; in the lives of the chronovisor team, it was January 12-14, 1956.

"We saw everything," said Father Ernetti simply. "The agony in the garden, the betrayal of Judas, the trial—Calvary."

The scientist-priest now declared that Jesus was already disfigured when He was led before Pontius Pilate. It was from this point on that they had followed His progress: "We saw the climb up Mount Calvary, all the stations of the cross." Father Ernetti said that the interventions of the churchmen of the Middle Ages had distorted the story somewhat. "Christ never fell," he declared. "And He did not carry the whole cross by Himself; that would have been far too heavy. He carried only the horizontal crossbar attached to His shoulders. His feet were tied to the feet of the two other condemned men who were crucified with Him."

Father Ernetti repeated that Christ had been greatly disfigured. "The scourgings had torn pieces of His skin off. You could see right through to the bone. But according to Roman law the condemned prisoner had to arrive at the place of execution still alive. So the soldiers pulled Simon of Cyrene out of the crowd and ordered him to help Jesus carry the cross. We saw the whole scene which is described in the Gospels."

Ernetti explained that this was another example of how the piety of medieval scholars had led to a distortion of the facts. "In the seminary, they used to make us read uplifting texts urging us to follow the example of Simon of Cyrene and to abandon ourselves to helping Christ carry the cross like Simon did. But when we observed it actually taking place, we saw clearly that Simon didn't really want to help. The Roman soldiers had to make him."

Father Brune asked if they had witnessed the station of the cross where Veronica washes Christ's face. There was a legend according to which a woman named Veronica washed Christ's face after He had fallen for a second time, at the 'Seventh Station of the Cross.'

"No," replied Ernetti. "Besides, as you know, that story isn't in the Gospels."

He continued: "When Christ arrived on Calvary, He looked around at everyone who surrounded Him. Some were hurling invectives at Him. When Christ looked around, the same thing took place as had taken place in the Garden of Gethsemane: the crowd fell backward, Jews, Greeks, Romans, everybody. Only Mary the Mother of Christ, and John and the other two Marys remained where they stood."

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“Neither His mother Mary nor Saint John wept at the foot of the cross. The other two Marys wept. Here again, you didn't have the *stabat mater*, the sobbing mother, as is described in the earliest accounts. Mary was not *lacrimosa*; she was not tearful.”

The chronovisor team was able to overhear some of Christ's words on the cross that are not preserved in the Gospels. At one point, Christ said, “This hour is yours.” At another, He spoke words which had the sense of, “Now that I am exalted, I will draw everyone unto me.” The seven words of Christ on the cross had been accurately reported by the Gospels, said Ernetti. Each time that Christ spoke, He looked around, and everyone became silent. His face was sorrowful, but always noble; you could call it sacred.

Sometimes, the words of Christ rounded out the Gospel texts as we know them. Other times, Christ's expressions while He was speaking clarified the meaning of a well-known passage. When He said, “I thirst,” the Jews had misconstrued His words; He had been speaking of spiritual thirst. These words had followed His statement, “I will draw everyone unto me.” Christ had been speaking of His eagerness to bring our souls unto Himself. In the same way, when He said to the robber, “Truly, I say unto you, today you will be with me in Paradise,” Ernetti believed that Christ had meant that paradise was within Himself. After His famous statements, “Woman, behold, your son” and “Behold, your mother,” Christ had added, in addressing Himself to John: “And where are the others? Why have they abandoned me?”

“I don't believe,” said Father Ernetti, “that Christ died of asphyxiation on the cross due to the weight of His body pulling down on His lungs, though that is what many doctors believe. Right up to the last moment, we didn't see Him struggling with His breath.”

It was Father Brune's turn to be silent.

After a moment he asked: “What about the resurrection? Did you witness that as well?”

“Yes,” the Venetian priest replied emphatically. “And it is very difficult to describe. We saw it as if in silhouette, as if it were a shape seen through a thin film of illuminated alabaster—as if we were seeing it through a crystal.” It was actually in this manner, said Father Ernetti, that they had witnessed, little by little, the last days of Christ's

life, beginning with the Last Supper and concluding with His appearance after the Resurrection.

“Was it like watching a movie?” asked Brune.

“No,” said the Venetian priest thoughtfully, “not entirely. It was in three dimensions with sound and motion. But there was no color. If you were filming this today, you would certainly use color film.”

Father Brune had a burning question: Had the chronovisor team brought back any record of this experience?

“Yes,” replied Father Ernetti. “We filmed it—losing the fine detail, of course, but filming it was the only way to preserve it. We later showed the film to the Pope, who at the time was Pius XII. Other people were present at the showing, including the President of the Republic, the Minister of Public Instruction, and members of the Pontifical Academy.”

Where, Father Brune wanted to know, was the chronovisor now?

“We disassembled it,” said Father Ernetti. “It is hidden in a safe place.”

“But why hide such a discovery?” exclaimed Father Brune. “One that could turn the world topsy-turvy! One that could restore faith to a world where it is eroding away little by little every year!”

Father Ernetti’s reply was one which he would repeat very often in the years to come. This would not be the last time that Father Brune would hear it: “This machine can tune in on everyone’s past completely, leaving nothing out. With it, there can be no more secrets; no more state secrets, no more industrial secrets—no more private lives. One day we tuned in on preparations for a holdup. We were able to alert the police in time for them to get there and prevent it. Yes, the chronovisor would turn the world topsy-turvy, as you say—but in ways that would strike fear into the hearts of certain groups of people. The door would be wide open for the most fearsome dictatorship the world has ever seen. We ended up agreeing to dismantle our machine.”

“But,” Father Brune protested, “without bringing everything out into the open, couldn’t you use the chronovisor to make certain discoveries regarding the history of humankind; then, the authenticity of those discoveries could be confirmed by, say, making certain excava-

tions afterward. That way, the world would at least have proof that your machine had actually existed.”

“We’ve already done that,” replied Father Ernetti, “with the famous Dead Sea Scrolls. You know, of course, that it was a shepherd chasing a stray goat into a cave who stumbled on the first texts. But it was the chronovisor that allowed us to pinpoint the other caves in Qumran where the Gnostic Gospels were found. At one point the Americans even came to see us. I met with their Ambassador to Italy; we signed a protocol in which they undertook to give our chronovisor full credit as the source when they published the texts. But, as far as we know, nothing came of this. Only silence.”

No matter that the chronovisor had been disassembled, Father Brune declared: Might Father Ernetti still be able to give him some idea of the physical processes which had enabled this miraculous device to resurrect the past?

Father Ernetti was willing to supply a few details, but only a few. The chronovisor consisted of three components, first, a multitude of antennae, which were able to pick up every conceivable wavelength of light and sound. These antennae were made of alloys consisting of three metals in all, but Father Ernetti would not divulge their names.

The second component was a species of direction finder, activated and driven by the wavelengths of light and sound which it received. You could set it to a given place, date and even person of your choice. Once engaged, the machine homed in automatically on these coordinates, over however long a period of ‘chronovisor’ time was needed. The third component was an extremely complex array of recording devices, which made possible the recording of sound, and particularly of images, from any time and any place.

Father Brune had one last question for Father Ernetti: Had the chronovisor team ever thought of using the fantastic possibilities of this prodigious device to explore our entire universe, either by setting the direction finder to unknown faraway worlds or to unknown faraway times—or both at once? It would be a kind of SETI project, but a less expensive one and perhaps a more effective one—

Father Ernetti’s eyes lit up. He was visibly excited by the vistas Father Brune had opened out before him; you might have imagined

that this was how he had looked when he was first dreaming the chronovisor into existence. He admitted to Father Brune that he had not considered this possibility. But, he reflected slowly, it just might be possible to do as Father Brune had suggested, and with a minimum of modifications...

He became silent. After a few more minutes, the interview was over.

Father Brune concludes his account in *Live from the Beyond* by declaring that, "I left the monastery dumbfounded, overwhelmed. Had I dreamt this? Had Father Ernetti? But it was nothing I had ever dreamt. I would talk to Father Ernetti a number of times again in the years to come. Each time, he would tell me the same story in answer to my questions, varying here a detail, adding there a clarification.

"Father Ernetti was too much of a man of faith to lie. We discussed many other subjects, of a strictly religious nature. If anyone was truly a man of God, Father Ernetti was.

"He was a bona fide scientist," concludes Father Brune. "There was nothing of the mythomaniac, the compulsive liar, about him. Moreover, his basic conception of the machine—as I would later discover—had much in common with certain notions which have come to us notably from the Far East regarding the akashic records. That notion also finds a counterpart in what certain especially gifted mediums have been able to perceive through psychometry; that is, by touching objects—a further indication that this notion is not at all absurd."

This encounter had begun a friendship. Father Brune will have more to tell us about Father Ernetti.

Brune and Chauvin, *En Direct de l'au-Delà*, 196-201.

Chapter Five

PROFESSOR MARASCA WANTS A RIDE

Father Brune wasn't the only person Father Ernetti talked to.

Little by little, beginning in the late fifties, the stories began appearing here and there in the Italian press: A Benedictine priest, working at the San Giorgio Maggiore monastery in Venice, also a musicologist, had invented a machine called a chronovisor which enabled him to travel into the past. A group of eminent scientists was helping him with this machine.

The stories were not the result of inadvertent leaks. Father Ernetti was energetically spreading them about, not only in private conversation, but increasingly in appearances at conferences big and small on paranormal phenomena.

Always, at the end of his speeches, he would caution his audiences that the full details of the chronovisor could never be revealed. When they asked him why, he replied that mankind could not be trusted with this invention, that if it fell into the wrong hands—which it surely would, given the generally untrustworthy nature of human beings—this would result in the greatest tyranny the world had ever known, since the chronovisor bestowed upon its possessor the power to peer into every nook and cranny of every life that had ever transpired on our planet.

The same man who made these statements was daily delving deeper into the intricacies of archaic music. At the Benedetto Marcello Conservatory of Music, he held perhaps the only endowed chair of archaic music in the world. ('Archaic music' is that prevailing in the Western world from the tenth century B.C. to the tenth century A.D.

'Polyphonic' denotes more than one sound at once; 'prepolyphonic' or 'archaic' music denotes a succession of single sounds. Gregorian Chant, emerging in the sixth century A.D., is a type of archaic music.)

To be a scholar in the field of archaic music meant knowing what the greatest minds of the ancient world had thought about music. It meant knowing Latin, Greek and the modern European languages. Ernetti immersed himself in modern music as well. He confided to friends that he was fascinated by the modern idiom; he wondered to what extent it contained lingering traces, unconscious recreations, of archaic music.

He directed the choir of the Benedictine abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore, and others choirs as well, in the performance of archaic music, notably the Gregorian Chant. Recordings were made of 62 of these performances. Many of these records are available today.

The Benedictine priest was steadily producing a remarkable volume of scholarly work. In late 1958, the first volume of his *Trattato Generale di Canto Gregoriano* (*Gregorian Chant: A General Thesis*) appeared under the auspices of the Cini Foundation's Institute for Cultural Collaboration. Father Ernetti projected twelve volumes in all. Volume four of the *Trattato*, published in 1964, contains a bibliography of 130 items. There is a vast complexity of subject matter in these books. The handling of the theme is encyclopedic and definitive.

At almost the same time as the fourth volume of the *Trattato* was garnering praise, the French religious monthly *l'Heure d'Etre* (*Hour of Beingness*) was reporting, in its July, 1965 issue, that Father Pellegrino Ernetti and a team of top scientists were continuing to work in the strictest secrecy on a "chronovisor," or time-traveling device, and that it continued to be the case that no details could be released about this marvelous invention.

How could this be? How could a priest who had published a thousand definitive pages on as complex and sensitive a subject as the Gregorian Chant turn around and commit an egregious fraud? Could there really be something to the chronovisor? There *had* to be something to the chronovisor!

Those who informed themselves about such matters knew that Ernetti had worked with Father Gemelli. They knew that the Bene-

dictine was considered to be, and considered himself to be, one of the founders of the Instrumental Transcommunication movement. Along with everything else, Father Ernetti had a serious reputation as a scientist. He strove to maintain that reputation, especially with publications. A typical example was an article, admittedly for the general reader, which appeared in the Jan.-Feb., 1966 issue of *Civiltà delle Macchine: Rivista Bimestrale di Cultura Contemporanea* [*Machine Culture: Bimonthly Review of Contemporary Culture*]. The article was about the “L'oscillografo elettronico”—the electronic oscilloscope.

This article by Father Ernetti attracted the usual attention—and more. The senior abbot of the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore was not in the habit of recommending Father Ernetti's non-musicological works to people. This time, he made an exception. A letter appeared at the Abbey from one Professor Giuseppe Marasca, of Jesi, near Ancona. The letter sought an introduction to Father Ernetti. The abbot instead wrote back recommending to Professor Marasca the upcoming article in *Civiltà delle Macchine*.

Professor Marasca was about to enter Ernetti's life in force.

Reading the papers one morning in 1966, Giuseppe Marasca came across an article that felt exactly like manna from heaven.

The article was more of a diatribe than a story. That past weekend, the reporter had attended a PSI Conference sponsored by the PSI/Astrology magazine *ASTRA*. A certain Father Ernetti, a priest from Venice, had claimed in his speech to have proof that he had traveled back in time. The proof was the reconstituted text of a play, called *Thyestes*, by the Latin poet Quintus Ennius, which Father Ernetti had listened in on while it was being performed near the Forum, in Rome, in the summer of 169 B.C.

The play had not survived to modern times. Father Ernetti had been able to “capture the vibrations” of this drama using a time-machine; he swore he had brought back the entire text.

The reporter was incensed by the speech. In his article covering the *ASTRA* PSI conference, he tore into Father Ernetti. How could the good father have had the nerve to toy with the intelligence of the audience by making up such a ridiculous story? How could he have

dared tell them that, through the agency of some dubious time-traveling device called a "chronovisor," he had the capability to pluck out of the akashic records all the sights and sounds of the vanished past?

Professor Marasca was not put off by what Father Ernetti had said. On the contrary: he was captivated. This Benedictine father had accessed the akashic records! Every last morsel of the description of Ernetti's speech, Marasca devoured like a starving man.

Professor Marasca was the principal of the Amadeo di Savona Middle School, in Jesi, near the city of Ancona, midway along the east coast. He taught Latin at the school; in this subject he took a passionate interest. There was another area that engaged his attention even more passionately, and that was PSI phenomena. Most of all, he was fascinated by the idea of the akashic records. He was convinced they existed. His great desire was to prove this to the world.

That weekend, Marasca wrote Father Ernetti a letter. He begged the Benedictine to allow him to join him in his researches.

The letter was delivered to the right place, the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore, but perhaps into the wrong hands: those of the senior abbot. The abbot himself wrote a reply to Professor Marasca; it is doubtful that Ernetti ever saw Marasca's letter. In cordial tones, the abbot urged the middle school principal to be on the lookout for a new article by Father Ernetti, "L'oscillografo elettronico" ["The Electronic Oscillograph"], which would soon be appearing in a cultural review called *Civiltà delle Machine* [*Machine Culture*]. The abbot was sure that Marasca would enjoy it.

That was all he had to offer.

Marasca was unsure how to take this letter. There was nothing he could do but wait for the article to come out. He waited; it appeared; he read it with a growing sense of exultation, certain that here was, indeed, a man with whom he could share his interests and, perhaps, his researches. Marasca now informed himself about Ernetti, as much as he was able. He learned that the Venetian monk had worked with Father Agostino Gemelli on experiments involving the Gregorian Chant. Gemelli had been on the staff of the Catholic University from 1919 until his death in 1959. Marasca had gone to that school; he knew Gemelli by reputation as a pioneer in the field of instrumental

transcommunication who would not have worked with anyone not of the highest caliber.

Professor Marasca had a news story, saved from the papers, that he was anxious to tell Ernetti about. It concerned a rich American, James Kid, who had died recently, and who had stipulated in his will that his entire fortune—four billion dollars!—should be left to anyone who could prove scientifically that the soul existed. Marasca thought that perhaps he and Father Ernetti could collaborate on such a project.

This large sum of money—and his own genuine, all-absorbing passion for the paranormal—emboldened Marasca to telephone Father Ernetti. He made the connection; he introduced himself; he immediately broached the subject, putting it to Father Ernetti in this way: “When we die, the sounds we make and the images we present are preserved in the ether; doesn’t that constitute proof of something which you and I already believe: that our souls survive after death?”

Ernetti’s response was terse. Marasca was surprised and taken aback. He had thought that Father Ernetti would at least recognize the kindred spirit that he, Marasca, was. He had not expected haughtiness. The Benedictine’s response had been: “We didn’t just pick up pictures of people. With the help of the chronovisor we also picked up scenes from everyday life, particularly in ancient Rome. We didn’t just see men and women; we also saw houses, trees, and animals. Is one then to conclude that animals possess souls? That trees and houses possess souls?” Marasca had not known what to say. Ernetti had finished up: “No, that just won’t do. But believe me, there are other arguments which will prove the existence of God and the reality of life after death.”

Professor Marasca was hardly content with this answer. He had envisioned a more esoteric conversation; he had longed to hear a word or two about the chronovisor. The thought of the chronovisor inspired him to continue to strive to gain Father Ernetti’s confidence, if even by long-distance. By dint of many phone calls and letters, and then, after a while, visits to the monastery on San Giorgio Maggiore island, he was able to accomplish his purpose: He and Ernetti became friends. And then, one day, as he and the priest were sitting

together in the Benedictine's cell, Ernetti agreed to answer a few questions about the chronovisor.

The good father talked. He opened out to Marasca dangerous vistas of daring accomplishment. Once the initial concept had been decided on, the chronovisor had been extraordinarily difficult to build. Such was its size, such was its complexity, that several of the attachments—the antennae array, for example—had been extremely difficult to position. There were, as well, the ever-present dangers of radiation poisoning. Several members of the crew had fallen ill on account of the etheric rays...

In short, Father Ernetti subtly hinted to Professor Marasca that—and he did not use these words—the chronovisor was a machine that you really ought to avoid if you possibly could.

The contacts between the two men intensified. Marasca's intelligence, his knowledge of Latin and of paranormal phenomena, were such that Ernetti seemed to relax more and more in his presence. One afternoon—when Marasca was once again on a visit to the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore—Ernetti startled him with an inquiry:

“Pardon me for asking, my dear friend; but do you have any heart problems?”

“No,” replied Marasca, puzzled. “Not at all. Why do you ask?”

“Because I promised you that, when the time was ripe, I would show you my machine.” The Benedictine paused, then added: “When everything is in place and we're getting underway, you may find the actual demonstration rather frightening.”

Marasca started to reply. Ernetti cut him short. “Because, my friend, when the sounds and pictures start issuing from the chronovisor, they can really shake you up.”

Marasca was at a fever pitch of anticipation. For some time now, he had been jotting down every hint that Father Ernetti had dropped about the chronovisor. He had been adding his own comments. He was working the whole thing up into an essay to be called *In the Underbrush Between Physics and Metaphysics* [*Fra Ginepro tra Fisica e Metafisica*]. Now he decided to clear the decks before the upcoming demonstration. He would finish up everything and have his mind completely free when he and Father Ernetti stepped aboard the chronovisor!

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Ernetti had talked just a little to him about the reconstructed text of the Latin drama *Thyestes*, which he said he had fetched back from 169 B.C. using the chronovisor. As a Latin scholar, Marasca had been extremely interested in this manuscript from the start. He now asked the Benedictine if he could have a copy. He knew that 25 fragments of the play had come down to modern times, preserved by the commentators Cicero, Probus and Nonius. Marasca wanted to incorporate these fragments into Ernetti's reconstituted text, and then incorporate Ernetti's text into his essay.

The priest immediately agreed. "Of course," he said, "I'll give it to you." He added: "With my equipment it's actually possible to tune in on any text, whether it be in Greek or Latin or ancient Egyptian."

The next time Marasca visited Father Ernetti, the priest handed him, in a box, a bundle of papers tied together with a string. There was no discussion of this gift; Ernetti handed him the box, and then immediately went on to something else.

Marasca hardly dared bring the subject up during the weekend. When he arrived home, he could hardly bring himself to open the box. He acted almost with paranoia, with a strange sort of jealous possessiveness. He glanced at just a page or two, and saw that Latin words were written upon them with a pencil. He took the box and placed it in a very large metal strongbox in his bedroom. He locked the box.

From time to time, he would open the box and steal glances at the pages. It took him a very long time to accustom himself to dealing with the text as if it were a normal text. His relationship with Father Ernetti went on, but they did not talk about the fragments from *Thyestes*. Nor did they talk about the chronovisor; it was almost as if Ernetti, in having given the reconstructed text to Marasca, felt that he had fulfilled some sort of obligation, and that he need no longer talk about the more esoteric aspects of his life.

This was all right with Marasca; there was so much more to talk about; Ernetti was so well-versed in subjects like Latin literature and Holy Scripture and modern science and, in particular, musicology.

Putting the text of *Thyestes* into organized form became a secret passion for Marasca, a sort of periodic visit to a sacred site known only to himself. He worked with enormous care. We do not know

what he had to start with; but there came a point when he thought that he had finished. This may have been as many as six years after he had first met Father Ernetti. During this time, Marasca had told no one about the chronovisor or about the priceless manuscript he kept hidden in his strongbox.

Now he was seized with a desire to tell the world.

He thought better of this; he thought it wiser to say nothing. But a sudden desire to emerge from anonymity got the better of him. He let word slip; somehow, it managed to slip into the newsrooms of a few of Italy's more sensational tabloids. A particularly determined reporter, Anita Pensotti, of the illustrated weekly *Oggi*, telephoned him again and again asking for an interview. Finally he agreed to see her. She traveled out to Jesi. It did not take her long to coax Marasca out of his customary reserve. She had heard about Father Ernetti's chronovisor, but she hadn't heard about the *Thyestes* fragment. He told her everything.

He told her he had in his possession something absolutely priceless: a lost manuscript from a vanished age.

Naturally, Pensotti wanted more details about the chronovisor that had mysteriously ferried *Thyestes* up from the distant past. Marasca was silent. "Professor," Pensotti went on relentlessly, "didn't you ever try to find out from your Vatican comrade just how the chronovisor was able to pick up the sights and sounds of 2,000-year-old events?"

Marasca did not want to answer this provocative question. He couldn't deny to her that he had tried to inveigle some answers out of Father Ernetti—but Ernetti hadn't answered him, not really. Marasca had become very fond of this Venetian scientist-priest; he believed in the Benedictine. Now he groped for words. He told Signorina Pensotti: "I believe that all the scenes were reproduced with a fair degree of fidelity on a TV screen. Father Ernetti took notes from this, and then he wrote those notes out in intelligible form."

Anita Pensotti wrote a story which was published in *Oggi*, and which attracted a considerable amount of attention. Professor Marasca himself attracted a considerable amount of attention. But he was loath to show anyone the reconstructed text of *Thyestes*, upon which he had lavished so much care over the years. Perhaps he secretly

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feared that it might be shown to be not entirely authentic; perhaps, and this is far more likely, he had come to regard the manuscript as a sort of sacred relic, as his own Holy Grail—as a token of friendship from the God of Time Travelers and His distinguished representative.

Not surprisingly, since he wouldn't show anyone the manuscript, the story died down. Some years later, he passed several copies of the play along, including two to Father François Brune, in Paris.

What were the contents of this manuscript?

A copy has come into the hands of the editors of the American edition of *Father Ernetti's Chronovisor*.

It contains many surprises, some of them extraordinary.

We will examine this text in English.

First, though, let's find out something about its author, Quintus Ennius, the father of Latin poetry.

Chapter Six

THE FATHER OF LATIN POETRY
AND HIS *THYESTES*

Quintus Ennius was born in 239 B.C., in Rudiae, now Rugge, in Calabria in the heel of Italy. Calabria faces across the Ionian Sea; it had long been influenced by Greek culture. Calabria had its own language, Oscan. Ennius grew up speaking three languages, Latin, Greek and Oscan. He described himself as having "three brains" which helped him to adapt Greek plays to Latin and give them a local flavor.

Quintus Ennius lived in stirring times. When he was 21 (in 218 B.C.), Hannibal invaded Italy. The Carthaginian general crossed the Mediterranean from Carthage in what is now Libya, fought his way up through Spain and France—then Roman provinces—and crossed the Alps in the dead of winter with 10,000 soldiers and several hundred elephants. This was one of the most amazing military exploits in all of history. It enabled Hannibal to invade Italy from the north.

The Carthaginian general was a strategic genius who waged war against the Romans on their own soil for 15 years. He was finally driven off in 203 B.C., but not before he had inflicted tremendous damage on the Romans. The war went on until Hannibal was defeated on his own soil by the Roman general Scipio Africanus, who received that name because of his victory over Carthage.

Quintus Ennius fought in this war, as did most able-bodied Romans, including slaves. He distinguished himself in battle, became known to his leaders for his eloquence as a poet, and in the end became a friend of Scipio Africanus.

Ennius' best-known work is an historical epic, the *Annals*, which tells the story of Rome from its beginnings up until Ennius' day. The last of its eighteen books is based on the Calabrian's personal experiences on the battlefield. The *Annals* was originally longer than Homer's *Iliad*; today, only 600 lines survive.

Ennius wrote at least 20 plays in his lifetime, but only fragments of these have survived. The trilingual Calabrian was not necessarily an original poet; almost all of his plays are based on Greek models, and most of these models have not survived at all.

Ennius not only wrote an epic poem and 20 or so plays. He was a gourmand, obsessed with food and drink, who wrote a manual called *On the Art of Pleasant Eating*. The poet Horace would later write that Ennius "never sallied forth to sing of war [write poetry] unless he was drunk." Ennius himself said: "I never poetize unless I have the gout." Gout is acute arthritic pain caused by obesity and overeating.

Ennius' *Thyestes* is about eating, and about an unusually horrible meal. The poet died shortly after it had been performed, in the fall of 169 B.C. Was skullduggery involved in Ennius' death? Was there a connection with *Thyestes*? In the last months of his life, the poet seems to have fallen out with the all-powerful Roman Consul M. Porcius Cato. Cato was a religious ascetic, who objected bitterly to Greek cultural influence, and to luxury and overindulgence in general. The consul was not happy that Ennius did not believe the gods were divine; he could not have been happy with the ghastly subject-matter of *Thyestes*. Ennius is said to have died of the gout; there clings to his death the faintest odor of consular outrage which may not have been suppressed.

What is *Thyestes* about? Why did Father Ernetti bring this play, and not another, back with him from the past?

In telling his story to Father Brune, Father Ernetti spoke as if he and the chronovisor crew had just happened to tune in on Quintus Ennius' *Thyestes*.

In the 1970s, when Father Ernetti's time travel tales were receiving considerable attention in the Italian press, some journalists wondered if the Benedictine had sought out the tragedy of *Thyestes* be-

cause of some special quality in its musical accompaniment. This was a reasonable assumption, since Ernetti was a professor of archaic music.

That is likely not why *Thyestes* was the play that he brought back. The scientist-priest had no good reason to suppose that the musical accompaniment of *Thyestes* would be any different than the light musical accompaniment which usually comes along with a Latin drama.

Did Ennius' tragedy hold any other intrinsic interest for him...?

The story of *Thyestes* is about an unspeakable atrocity. It is the story of a man who ate his own children for dinner.

If the crime has any mitigating factor, it is that its perpetrator, Thyestes, didn't know what he was doing. He was tricked into this deed by his own brother, Atreus.

In Greek legend, the story of Thyestes and Atreus is only one rung in a ladder of iniquities leading straight down to hell. Thyestes and Atreus were great-grandsons of the father of the gods, Zeus. The lore of antiquity has it that they belonged to the royal family which ruled over the Greek city of Argos in the Peloponnesian peninsula. Greek literary history contains a great deal of unspeakable disaster. The "House of Atreus" received more than its fair share.

A persistent theme of Greek tragedy is that the sons must pay for the sins of their fathers. Often, it is the gods themselves who have tricked the father into committing the sin. Still, even though the fault does not lie entirely with him, the sons must still pay for the father's sin. Almost always, in the process of paying, they are drawn into committing a sin themselves—for which their own sons must pay. The process goes on in this way.

We find this pattern in the story of Thyestes and Atreus. Their story actually begins some generations back, long before the limited dramatic action that was allowed the Greek and Latin dramatist, where everything had to take place in 24 hours. The story begins with Tantalus, the son of Zeus and a mortal woman, Pluto. The gods admitted Tantalus to their banquet and enabled him to become an immortal by eating their food. The best-known version of what happened next is that Tantalus murdered his son, Pelops, and served him

up to the gods at the next banquet. Tantalus wanted to know if the gods' omnipotence extended to their being able to tell if they were eating human and not just animal meat.

At the banquet, only the goddess Demeter was fooled, taking a bite out of Pelops' shoulder. The other gods were outraged. Tantalus was condemned to an eternity of standing up to his chin in water which receded whenever he bent forward to drink it; and close to a fruit-laden branch which bent away whenever he reached out to pluck it; from this story came our verb "to tantalize." The gods brought Pelops back from the dead by boiling him in a pot. They gave him an ivory shoulder to replace the one that Demeter had eaten.

We next find Pelops determined to win in marriage the hand of Hippodamia, the daughter of Oenomaus, King of Pisa in Elis. Oenomaus tells him that he can have his daughter only if he defeats the king in a chariot race. Pelops bribes the charioteer of Oenomaus, Myrtilus, to remove the lynch pins from the wheels of his master's chariot. This Myrtilus does, with the result that the king's chariot crashes out of control during the race and Pelops wins; it has not hurt the latter that he is driving winged horses given to him by Poseidon, the god of the sea. Pelops refuses to pay Myrtilus the bribe he has promised him; instead, he casts him into the sea, where the charioteer drowns. Dying, Myrtilus curses Pelops and his descendants.

Those descendants are his sons Thyestes and Atreus. By this time, Pelops has founded the "Pelopid dynasty" at Mycenae. When Pelops dies, the two brothers seize the throne, which they are forced to share.

The only complete version of the Thyestes story that has come down to us is that of Seneca, the great Latin writer who lived in the first century A.D. Let's continue with the story as Seneca sets it forth for us in the 'Argument' of his *Thyestes*:

"PELOPS, the son of Tantalus, had banished his sons for the murder of their half-brother, Chrysippus, with a curse upon them, that they and their posterity might perish by each others' hands. Upon the death of Pelops, Atreus returned and took possession of his father's throne. Thyestes, also, claimed the throne, and sought to gain it by the foulest means. For he seduced his brother's wife, Aerope, and

stole by her assistance the magical, gold-fleeced ram from Atreus' flocks, upon the possession of which the right to rule was said to rest. For this act he was banished by the king.

"But Atreus had long been meditating a more complete revenge upon his brother; and now in pretended friendship has recalled him from banishment, offering him a place beside himself upon the throne, that thus he may have Thyestes entirely in his power."

This is more or less where the action of Quintus Ennius' *Thyestes* picks up. Atreus had decided to settle the score once and for all by tricking Thyestes into committing an unclean or sacrilegious act which would make him permanently taboo in the eyes of the citizens of Argos. First, he lured Thyestes home. Then he murdered two of Thyestes' sons, boiled them in a cauldron, and served their flesh to his brother at a feast celebrating Atreus' return to the kingdom. Quite unawares, Thyestes ate the flesh of two of his own children. Atreus served him a goblet containing his children's blood. Still unawares, Thyestes drank it down.

Atreus now brought the severed heads of the two children out on a platter, telling Thyestes what has happened. Thyestes vomited up the meal and pronounced an irreversible curse on Atreus and his house. Later, Aegisthus, a son of Thyestes who had been spared, killed his uncle in revenge and presented the kingdom to his father.

We will see that the Ernetti *Thyestes* fragment contains material very different from this.

Seneca, 91.

Chapter Seven

THE ERNETTI FRAGMENT

The Ernetti *Thyestes* fragment has been translated into English for the American edition of *Father Ernetti's Chronovisor* by Dr. Katherine Owen Eldred. Dr. Eldred holds a Ph.D. in Classics from Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey. She is currently Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, where she teaches a postgraduate course in Seneca's *Thyestes*.

There are two main surprises in the text of Dr. Eldred's translation. The first is that the play is only 121 lines long. This is only ten percent as long as a normal Latin drama, which ran to 1,200 lines. Father Ernetti spoke as if he had reconstructed the entire tragedy.

The second thing we notice is that this fragment contains no part of the banquet scene which we have just described. It contains a very different scene—one that does not appear in the Seneca version of *Thyestes* either.

Translator and editor E.H. Warmington writes in his Loeb Library *Remains of Old Latin* Introduction to the collected fragments of Quintus Ennius's *Thyestes*:

“What models Ennius used for his *Thyestes*...we do not know; and the stories about Thyestes were various. There are traces of a Euripidean origin. My reconstruction is based on the belief that the play had two scenes—one at the court of Atreus, the other at the court of Thesprotus; it appears that Ennius made a greater impression with the second part of his play.”

Dr. Katherine Owen Eldred says that the Ernetti *Thyestes* text appears to be a long fragment of a scene in which Thyestes approaches the Delphic oracle and asks for something. It is not clear, she says, what he is asking for; and this scene not only does not appear in Seneca's *Thyestes* but Dr. Eldred knows of no fragment of *Thyestes* in which it appears.

Professor Eldred introduces her translation of the Ernetti *Thyestes* fragment with the following remarks (her translation is interspersed with commentary; terms which are not made clear in this introduction are made clear in the commentary):

The passage appears to be a 120-line excerpt from a prayer to the Delphic Oracle. Thyestes approaches the oracle, together with the Chorus, Menelaus (the son of Atreus), Thesprotus (an unknown king), Euripilus (a servant?), Plebanus (meaning "Roman commoner," and probably the leader of the Chorus) and Quintus (who is probably the same person as Plebanus). The group petitions the oracle to answer some question of Thyestes'; what the question is, we can only guess, but since Thyestes later curses Atreus, it probably concerned Thyestes' return to Argos.

The Chorus speaks most of the supplication. Most of the Chorus' prayer takes the form of a hymn to Apollo, telling the story of his birth and his attributes as the Sun-God and the god of song. When it becomes clear that Apollo, in the person of the oracle, refuses to listen to Thyestes, the group begs the Muses to convince Apollo to listen, and when the oracle continues to refuse, Thyestes curses Atreus.

Now, to the text of the play.

Thyestes: The Ernetti Fragment

Chorus

Come, speak, gentle Muse,
And shed light upon my song;
Let my mind grasp the breeze of your airy grove,
That you might praise my madness.
I will sing to Apollo,
And you, shining from that high point, whom all call Jupiter,
gaze upon this Roman Everyman. [5]

Lines 1-5: The Chorus prays to the Muses, to Apollo and to Jupiter. The word "furor," or madness, is startling in this context: The gods do not praise "rage," and to use madness in this prayer seems improper.

[?]tius

Golden lute,
Glory of Apollo!
The Muses, their hair in ordered tresses,
Hear that you were given dancing meters.
Singers follow you silently while you compose hymns,
You quench eternal fires of calamity, [10]
and Delphian Apollo himself charms me and leads me on (FR.
353).
And there he thinks, considers, ponders in his own mind what he
should do (FR. 349).

Lines 6-12: An Unknown continues the prayer begun by the Chorus. Lines 11 and 12 are genuine Ennian fragments (Loeb numbers 353 and 349). Apollo is praised in his role as the god of music.

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Chorus

Golden lyre, honor of Apollo and the Muses,
Strike the chords and compose a prelude to our hymns.
May I obtain my aims easily from my spirit, so that it may discern
The life-sustaining prize (FR. 350). [15]

*Lines 13-15: Line 15 is a genuine Ennian fragment (Loeb number 350).
Its meaning is unclear.*

Thesprotus

Your appearance will be equal to the life you lead;
Lest excessive care bear you down, life is brief;
All things, having decayed, will be utterly destroyed.

*Lines 16-18: Spoken by Thesprotus the king. The lines appear to be moral
advice (to Thyestes?).*

Thyestes

Favorable fortune does not endure in human affairs,
Which rush into cruel evils when a god stands in opposition, [20]
As when a ship, its sails having been torn away,
Is submerged in the waves of a vicious sea.
I, grandson of Tantalus, son of Pelops— who in the past won
Hippodamia
From Oenomaus the king, his father-in-law
(This wedding was plunder) (FR. 356-7)—
I do not wish that my friends come to me, from that place to this
one (FR. 358) !
Lest my touch or shadow cause injury to their fortunate state
(FR.359).
What great strength of wickedness holds fast in my body (FR.360) !
[27]
Alas, this my fortune that rolls every evil upon me (FR. 362) !

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Truly, my fate now fails me more than my noble birth (FR. 363).
For indeed a kingdom was ready for me: thus you might know [30]
From what place, from what wealth, from what matters
My lapsed fortune fell (FR. 364-5) !

Lines 19-31: This speech of Thyestes contains seven genuine Ennian fragments (Loeb numbers 356-60, 362-363). Thyestes laments his fallen state, from royalty to penniless exile.

Chorus

Climb this Parnassian slope,
That looks afar from twin peak,
And move, Pierides, your song,
You who dwell on the snowy cliffs of Helicon. [35]
Tell the Pythian, honored with arrow and golden locks,
Phoebus, powerful with the lyre, whom Latona, his mother, bore
Near the celebrated pool, supporting herself on a gleaming olive
branch.

*Lines 32-38: Delphi lies on the south flank of Mount Parnassus; the Parnassian slope in these lines refers to Delphi. The Muses were also known by the name Pierides, seeing as the Muses were located at Pieria, just north of Mount Olympus. The Muses are also identified with Mount Helicon, south of Mount Olympus. Apollo is called "Pythian" in these lines, another name for Delphic Apollo, from the name of the serpent he slew to gain the oracle (the Pytho). Here begins the story of Apollo's birth and coming-of-age. The name "Latona" is a Latin variant on "Leto," the mother of Apollo and Artemis; the olive-tree referred to is found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (6.335), written in the early first century A.D. The late appearance of the olive-tree as a motif in the birth-story of Apollo argues against the authenticity of the Ernetti fragment.*

Quintus

The entire pole burned and the aether,
The path of the winds, groaned,

And great Ocean embracing the earth [40]
 Shut in the faint-hearted anger of Nereus.

Lines 39-41: These lines describe either the reaction of the heavens at the birth of Apollo, or (more likely) the state of the heavens before Apollo took possession of the chariot of the sun, regulating light and darkness, heat and cold, throughout the world. The Greeks conceived of Ocean as a circle of water around the world. The faint-hearted anger of Nereus may refer to Nereus' unhappiness at the unregulated burning of the heavens. There is a legend that when Thyestes ate his children the sun was so shocked it was distracted from its course and began to rise in the east instead of the west. "The entire pole burned and the aether..." may also be a reference to the perturbations caused to our planet by the erratic motion of the sun.

Thesprotus

Then the god, leaving behind the Cynthian island,
 Came to the famous parent of oldest Ceres, the son of Triton,
 Upon the Attic hill.

Lines 42-44: The meeting of Apollo and Jupiter. Ceres is the Italo-Roman goddess of growth, usually identified with the Greek Demeter, though her origins are extremely obscure. A festival, the Ceralia, celebrated in Rome, and a priest of Ceres, the flamen Cerealis, both testify to the antiquity of the cult at Rome. If Ceres is to be identified with Demeter, then the reference to "the famous parent of Ceres" makes no sense, as Demeter was the sister of Zeus/Jupiter.

Chorus

And the lyric flute sounded sweetly, [45]
 An echo, one dweller of the mountains, was singing at the same
 time,
 Phoebus, paean to Phoebus, Io Phoebus!

Lines 45-47: Phoebus = Apollo.

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Thyestes

He reveled with joy
Knowing the immortal counsel of his father.
We have sung hymns from earliest times about his joy, [50]
And all from the beginning.
As many seers (who) dwell in the Cecropian city,
So many Bacchus has driven wild with the touch of his thyrsus.

Lines 48-53: Line 51 is a puzzle; it must refer to the earliest hymns sung to Apollo and the subject matter of those hymns (i.e. the meeting of Apollo and Zeus), but the meaning is unclear. Thyestes' shift to Bacchus as the subject of his song may indicate some instability in Thyestes: a reference to Bacchus, the god of wine, in the middle of a song to Apollo is unusual, especially since the reference concerns seers driven mad by the thyrsus (wand) of Bacchus. Typically Bacchus used the thyrsus to stir up the Maenads, cf. Euripides, Bacchae.

Plebanus

Come, powerful tripods of Apollo,
Light up the course, your spirit driving the prophet, come,
Breathe your spirit into the oracle. [55]

Lines 54-55: The Plebanus calls to Apollo.

Chorus

Why is it, I implore you, that you will not allow me to approach?
(FR.361). [60]
For as you shake your locks, bound together with purple ivy,
The great wide earth meets your step.
But you, Latona, breathing sweetly [59]
Bring your son down to Gaia with his whispering arrows.

Lines 56-60: Here is the first hint that something will go wrong. The oracle is ignoring the suppliants. The Chorus then pleads with Latona, the mother of Apollo, to bring her son to the oracle. The words "whispering arrows" refer to another attribute of Apollo: His arrows bring death, cf. Iliad, Book I.

Thyestes

And you preserved the center of the earth,
 At that time when your temple had been violated;
 In storm and snow they destroyed the chains of barbarians.
 And now, Phoebus, preserve this eternal city and citadel
 Dedicated to the gods, [65]
 And you, goddess, powerful and most swift Muse of the Cretans,
 Save the dwellers of this city and their offspring;
 With the priests of Bacchus standing nearby,
 Both of you, willingly be favorable to the Roman state, ferocious in
 war,
 And to all the victories of that state.

Lines 61-68: Thyestes continues his hymn to Apollo. Possibly, lines 61-62 refer to the attack on Delphi by the Persians in the Persian War in 480 B.C. or the attack by the Gauls in 279 B.C., but the temple suffered little damage in either attack. Alternatively, the lines may refer to the destruction of the temple by fire in 548 B.C. or by earthquake in 373 B.C. The goddess of line 64 may well be Artemis, as the word "Muse" is a guess from an illegible word in the manuscript; Artemis was also associated with arrows, and Apollo is said to have chosen Cretans as the first priests of Delphi. Again, Thyestes refers to Bacchus.

Euripilus

The god does not hear you; there is no mercy for your prayers at hand!

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Menelaus

The Parnassian maidens, with glowing hair [70]
And graceful breasts, charmingly
Turn away from the misery belonging to mortal men.

Chorus

O Muses, born from high Jupiter,
Allow Phoebus to hear clearly these wretched men;
The hateful and black day hastens away from them, [75]
But always the divine embraces of the immortals are yours,
And Phoebus shines with his own splendor
And passions and desires burn.

Lines 70-78: Menelaus believes the Muses are turning away from the suppliants; the Chorus begins to appeal directly to the Muses.

Euripilus

The god does not hear: There is no mercy for your prayers at hand!

Menelaus

The shining light of the Muses, [80]
With ivory thighs and milk-white arms
And breasts swollen like the mountains of Hellas,
Hold Apollo enchanted, drenched with desire, charmed by rosy lips,
So that he is unable to hear clearly the prayers of mortals. [85]

Lines 80-85: Menelaus suggests that Apollo has been distracted by the Muses.

Thyestes

Wings of Nemesis, under which alone the world stands,
Goddess of white light, born from Dis,

You who repress and confine death with splendid silence,
 Weary of savage and violent men,
 Under whose chariot the treacherous and black lot of mortals rolls:
 [90]

Goddess, offer a kind ear to my miseries, and through you,
 My vows and prayers having been taken up,
 May blessed Apollo shine upon us.

Lines 86-93: Thyestes appeals to Nemesis, the goddess of retribution or moral agency. Traditionally, Nemesis was said to have been born from Night; here she is born from Dis (Pluto, or Hades).

Plebanus

O Muses of high and eminent Parnassus,
 Do not move Phoebus away from our vows, [95]
 Virtuous maidens, daughters of famous Jupiter.

Lines 94-96: The Plebanus appeals again to the Muses.

Thyestes

May Atreus perish in a shipwreck [FR. 366] !
 May he, fixed on the highest, sharpest rocks, disemboweled [FR.
 367],
 Suspended over a vast expanse, sprinkling the rocks
 With gory disease and black blood [FR. 368], [100]
 May he have no grave, no haven for his body [FR. 369],
 Where his body may rest from evils,
 When his human life has been lost [FR. 370].
 And indeed, may Phoebus not be beside him and a cause for de-
 struction be nearby!

Lines 96-103: Thyestes curses Atreus, imagining for him the fate of Prometheus, who was chained to a rock, his liver eaten daily by an eagle and regrown at night until he was freed by Heracles. Thyestes further

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wishes that Atreus' body be unburied. There are five genuine Einnian fragments in these lines (Loeb numbers 366-370).

Thesprotus

Behold, see you, the gods who hold the power to move those above
and those below [FR. 371], [105]

They come together in peace among themselves, they bring har-
mony [FR. 372]

And they will grant wide borders to the Roman race throughout the
world,

Year after year to each man

They will give a lifelong, hoped-for, benevolent fortune.

Lines 104-107: Thesprotus begins a hymn to the gods of the upper world and the underworld, claiming that those gods will grant extensive borders to the Roman people. The relevance of these lines to the preceding one hundred lines is unclear.

Chorus

Nourishing father of the dawn, on snowy hill,

You who rule the rosy swift chariot of horses,

And restore mortal men, with your golden hair, [110]

And through the immense spaces of heaven

You shine with glowing rays beyond counting, and the earth,

The sphere full of light you drive around,

And the flowing tongues of your flames bear lovely day.

Through you the circle of silent stars

Accompanies the Olympian lord,

Leading a chorus and celebrating sweetly in song, [115]

The happy chorus of Phoebus, with hollow tortoise-shell

And joyous flute and melodious pipe.

Selecting shining veils

He proceeds, with snowy-white cows in the number one hundred.

Through you my peaceful mind rejoices,

While you traverse the immense spaces of the heavens,
 Illuminating the minds of mortal men: [120]
 May you be present, willingly, to those who govern the race of
 Romulus.

Lines 108-121: The Chorus sings a hymn to Apollo in his role as god of the sun (108-114) and in his role as the god of song (115-117). The tortoise-shell of line 116 refers to the lyre, first invented by Hermes using the shell of a tortoise, and later given to Apollo. Line 118 refers to the sacrifice of a hecatomb—one hundred cows—to the god.

Here the fragment ends.

According to Dr. Eldred, there are a number of reasons why the Ernetti *Thyestes* fragment may not be authentic. She is skeptical at best. For one thing, a number of words in the text do not really appear in the Latin language till at least 250 years later. The verb *praeludere* (“to shed light”) occurs several times in the fragment; but the only occurrences of this word which have come down to us are about 250 years later than Ennius (in the work of the epic poet Statius).

For another thing, says Dr. Eldred, there are certain words which are reused in this text; and, though certainly hymns follow a formula that reuses words and phrases, the words repeated here seem to her to be more indicative of a limited Latin vocabulary—which was certainly not the case with Ennius.

What particularly troubles Dr. Eldred is the fact that, of the 24 fragments of Ennius' *Thyestes* which have been preserved for us by later commentators such as Cicero, Nonius and Statius, more than half show up in the Ernetti *Thyestes* piece.

Since the Ernetti *Thyestes* playlet is only one-tenth the probable length of the complete *Thyestes* by Ennius, it might have been expected that, on the average, about 10 percent of the fragments would show up. Here, 65 percent of the fragments show up—about seven times as many as you might reasonably expect.

Moreover, adds Dr. Eldred, “this text uses some of those fragments in ways I don't think Ennius' play did.”

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It is easy to imagine that the Ernetti *Thyestes* fragment was put together by someone with a very good knowledge of Latin who wove as many of the fragments as he or she could into the final text.

Dr. Eldred says that the fragment does have some literary distinction: "Some of it is quite good, some if it is okay, and none of it is bad." But this is due in part to its containing a good many fragments actually from Ennius, and these are always good. It definitely has literary distinction, though, she says— "especially if it was written by a dilettante in Latin who was trying his hand at hymnic verses!"

According to Dr. Eldred, we do not really know enough to speculate on how much musical accompaniment this supposed portion of Quintus Ennius' *Thyestes* might have contained. There was probably a certain amount, she thinks, but it probably played a role more like that of the sound track in a film; it was not at all prominent.

Could it possibly be that the brilliant and distinguished Father Ernetti, who had so very much going for him, felt somehow compelled—with the help of Professor Marasca?— to fabricate a brief Quintus Ennius play relying heavily on the 24 lines that have come down to us through other authors?

This is certainly possible. But Father Ernetti may be wholly innocent of fabrication. There may be other reasons why the Ernetti *Thyestes* fragment exists.

Let us begin our speculations by examining the concept of the chronovisor. Was Father Ernetti really able to obtain sounds and pictures from ancient Rome? How did his chronovisor work?

As we will see, there are those who think they know.

Seneca, 91

Warmington, 346-347.

Chapter Eight

THE MEMORY OF MATTER

Pellegrino Ernetti was a professor of archaic music. Might his knowledge of ancient music have played a role in any way in the construction of a chronovisor?

Certainly, the peoples of ancient Greece and Rome thought about music very differently than we do. Nobody today would suggest that the stars and planets, as they move through the heavens, give forth music. But that is exactly what the ancients thought.

The universe was constituted very differently for them than it is for us. The ancients believed it consisted of nine hollow crystalline spheres set one within the other. At the very center was our earth. Then came the sphere in which was embedded the moon. Not only did the moon go around the earth, but an entire crystalline sphere, transparent except for the moon, enclosed the earth and moved around it. Next came the sphere of the sun, then those of the five known planets. Then came a single sphere containing all of the fixed stars. Last was a sphere called the "Primum Mobile," or "First Mover." God made this sphere move, and it made all the others move.

The ancients believed that, as these spheres moved, they created a music, called the music of the spheres.

It wasn't easy to hear this music. The Greek philosopher and mystic Pythagoras (c.560-c.480 B.C.) was thought to have been the last human being able to hear the music of the spheres. Pythagoras made important innovations in mathematics and astronomy; he also invented the first ratios for music, based ostensibly on the eternal music he was actually able to hear. The composition of an earthly

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musician was good to the extent that it conformed to these celestial ratios. To hear good music was to hear the way the universe was constructed.

There was a fairly quick falling off from the rigor of Pythagoras' view. The Greek philosopher Plato (428-347 B.C.) believed that, in the words of Milton, "certain sirens sit one upon each of the circles of the heavens and hold spellbound gods and men by their most honey-sweet sound." Plato also seems to have believed, with Pythagoras, that, in the words of Gretchen Ludke Finney, "each planet had the characteristics of the god whose name it bore, and sounded a music that possessed these characteristics. The music of the sun was thought to be grave and earnest, that of Venus voluptuous. Saturn, Mars, and the Moon had only voices, not music. These moods were imitated in musical modes."

Plato's student, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), was something of a sceptic, not believing that any human being had ever heard, or ever could hear, the music of the spheres. He was not sure that this music, resonating through the universe, had or could have the influence on humans that many others thought it had.

We know that Father Ernetti was very interested in the thought of Aristotle's great pupil Aristoxenus, who lived in the fourth century B.C. and who did much to codify the laws of ancient music. Aristoxenus found the ratios governing music, invented by Pythagoras, too archaic and restricting; he didn't necessarily believe that Pythagoras had heard the music of the spheres quite rightly. Aristoxenus launched an empirical inquiry into what music really sounded like, into how it was really played, into the component parts it really had. He points us in the direction of music as it is rather than as how it should be.

Aristoxenus still believed that music was somehow a reflection of the unchanging structure of the universe. He would have shared a second great belief of the ancients about music: that it had tremendous power. Music could move physical objects, and even bring people back from the dead. Finney writes of certain very popular Greek legends that, "When Orpheus descended into Hades and revealed his power [by playing his lute] to give life to the dead, or when by his song he moved trees and rocks or tamed wild beasts, and when Arion caused

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stones to build the walls of Thebes, they performed miracles that gave many future centuries cause to wonder. If certain philosophers agreed with Clement of Alexandria that Orpheus and the Theban, too, 'under cover of music...outraged human life, being influenced by daemons, through some artful sorcery,' occult philosophers argued that demons and magic are not necessarily evil. At all events, Orpheus and Arion demonstrated that music could cause not only ecstatic death but could restore life..."

The great Italian Renaissance scholar Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) translated the ancient texts containing these accounts and many others, and came to believe that by using music (among other tools) we could draw down from the stars and planets the power of the music they gave forth. To this end, he "composed and sang songs, which he called for various reasons 'Orphic.' They were intended to be like those sung by Orpheus and to possess similar powers....The mode fitted a particular planet, and attention was given to the daily position and aspect of the stars."

Ficino also believed, with the ancients, that music was communicated to us both down from the heavens and between humans on earth through the *pneuma*, or spirit, which pervaded all the universe and gave life and motion to everything, cementing all parts into a whole. The *pneuma* pervaded our souls; it was, in fact, synonymous with the ether.

Did any of these beliefs—with which Father Ernetti would have been utterly familiar, being a student of archaic music—influence the Benedictine in the conception or creation of a chronovisor?

Ernetti said, at an ASTRA PSI conference, that, "Every human being traces from birth to death a double furrow of light and sound. The same applies to an event, to music, to movement. The antennae used in our laboratory enable us to 'tune in' on these furrows: picture and sound....With the help of such a hypothetical document, one could reconstruct every human in all his deeds and speech, of course, only when one was able to find access to all these unusual treasures."

The Venetian monk believed that all that we said and did was preserved in the akashic records. He may have been strongly influ-

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enced in this by the belief of the ancients that music, for one, was a reflection of a divine music. All that we said and did was somehow connected to the eternal, and therefore far less perishable than we might think.

According to the ancients, the astral power of the heavens could be drawn down and stored in receptacles such as stones. Ernetti's reading of the ancients would inevitably have led him into the reading of occult lore; did he learn, for the proper functioning of the chronovisor, to draw down powers from the heavens which would facilitate its contacts with the akashic records? These are things about which Ernetti, as a Roman Catholic monk, could certainly never have spoken. But there has been speculation among some that he dabbled in alchemy and the occult arts to achieve the extraordinary things he claimed to have achieved.

Father Luigi Borello is a priest, a physics professor, and a member of the Tibéri Academy of Rome. From time to time, in the 1970s and 1980s, he spoke briefly with Father Ernetti on the subject of the chronovisor. Father Borello's dream has been to build a similar chronovisor. He maintains the Benedictine priest believed sense perceptions are accessed, processed and stored not only by animals and human beings but by all of inanimate nature as well. In Borello's opinion, Ernetti believed the sights and sounds of history were preserved not only in the fallible minds of humans, but in the less subjective media of plants and even of stones.

Father Ernetti is on record as declaring that inanimate objects do not "have souls." But Borello suggests he believed the world of inert matter played a crucial role in the preservative functions of the akashic records. Are the "akashic records" somehow spread throughout all of the physical world and all of us—a kind of Internet of the spirit?

In an article entitled "Matter Speaks," published in *Arcanes* for June, 1974, Luigi Borello addressed the issue of whether matter could really store sense impressions.

In an introduction to the article, the *Arcanes* editors make clear that Borello has "based his ideas on the theories advanced by Father Ernetti to the effect that pictures and sounds of everything that has happened continue to exist in space and may be harvested in the same

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way as we harvest pictures of nebulae billions of light-years away, thereby observing not only what exists today but also what existed a billion years ago. 'Chronovision,'" the editors add, is the long-time "dream" of Father Borello, such chronovision being the capability, given the appropriate instrumentation, of seeing and hearing what lies in the memory of inert particles."

Did Father Ernetti somehow use the chronovisor to access sense impressions buried in matter? Borello believes the answer may be yes. He begins his article by claiming that inert matter is capable of memorizing in exactly the same way as "the neurons of our brain are capable of memorizing." The priest theorizes that, on the subatomic level, the process is identical for both animate and inanimate beings. He continues:

"Space is a continuum in which emptiness does not exist. Each time the sounds or the images of an event strike matter, they are transformed into a static energy which, under certain conditions, may be retrieved. This static energy constitutes a new form of energy, unknown to us till now."

Borello believes it is this "new form of energy" that Father Ernetti accessed. He continues: "The principle is simple. Animals are not alone in having a memory. The impression of a light signal or of a sound would also—according to a number of researchers—remain recorded in inanimate matter. A stone records without even having organs with which to 'communicate.'

"A stimulus (heat, light or sound) strikes the sense organs on the surface of a stone in exactly the same way [as it does the sense organs of the human]. The problem is to learn how to decipher these messages which have been stored in a structure that has neither eyes nor a mouth."

Father Borello concludes his article by stressing, as did Father Ernetti, the great dangers accompanying any future 'chronovision.'

"Is 'chronovision' the radio of the future? For now, we can hardly begin to imagine how many things this new method of research will enable us to uncover. The thought is enough to make you shudder.

"In the new product I have just described, I catch a glimpse of a 'phonovisor' from which no secrets can be kept, since we would be

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able to relive the past without, for all of our efforts, being able to foresee the future.”

Father Borello's contention that “matter has memory” may not be nearly as absurd as, on very first sight, it appears.

We hardly have any idea at all what memory really is.

In *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, 1995), Canadian philosopher Ian Hacking argues that there is really no such thing at all as memory in the sense of a storage container. He believes that the notion of memory is a political construct, which arose at the end of the nineteenth century when a number of French researchers investigating split- and multiple-personality patients invented the concept because they didn't want to use the word “soul” to describe where the other part of the personality, or the other personalities, were stored when they were not present. Thus the concept of memory as a storage container was born out of a turf battle between science and religion for the right to define what “happened” to “memories.”

In our time, it's becoming increasingly clear that memory is “stored” in no particular part of the brain. We've all heard of cases where people have lost huge segments of their brain due to surgery or injury—including the part once supposed to store memory—but have still retained most of their memory (and most of their other functions). Writing in *The Anomalist No. 7*, Colin Bennett cites the extreme case of the brain damage suffered by Kelvin Page when he was working in a steel factory in Kent, England, in 1991. “A steel rod, heated to 700 degrees centigrade, shot off its cooling-bed and pierced his skull. Though his frontal lobes suffered serious damage, he survived; he did, however, suffer serious personality changes.” Bennett quotes Rupert Sheldrake quoting E.R. John that, “in general, after traumatic head injury, ‘memory and skills return at a rapid rate during the first six months, with recovery sustained at a lower rate for up to 24 months. Defects in sensory, motor, and cognitive functions caused by brain injury due to penetrating wounds are characterized by an enormous resiliency of function in the great majority of cases, ultimately leading to little or no detectable defect.’” It almost seems as if memory is so

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redundant that every memory is “stored” countless times, and not just in the brain but in every part of the nervous system.

In the same issue of *The Anomalist*, in an article entitled “Transplant Memories,” Dr. Michael Grosso tells us that, “In a paper provocatively called: ‘Is Normal Memory a Paranormal Phenomenon?’ the British parapsychologist John Beloff began by reviewing the criticisms of the storage model of memory. Picture yourself scanning your memory to match a name with a face. Suddenly you recall the name. What happened? Is there an internal scanning device that searches through all your brain traces until it recognizes the right one? But how can this scanning device locate, recognize, and activate the right trace unless it already remembers it? Attempts to explain memory through traces seem circular. No wonder philosophers like B. Russell and L. Wittgenstein were prepared to doubt whether memory involves any brain traces. In their view, memory was direct awareness of past events. This, of course, sounds suspiciously similar to what parapsychologists call retrocognition.

“Beloff takes a different tack; for him, it seems reasonable to suppose the brain does leave specific records of experience. Storage he accepts but retrieval, he thinks, presents insuperable problems. He argues that the number of possible associations that might ‘trigger’ a memory is infinite; a mechanistic model of retrieval could never cover all the possibilities. Beloff thinks psychokinesis helps us locate and activate our memory traces. The sheer intention to match the name with the face is enough: direct mental action on the right trace, wherever or however complex it may be. Memory, like psychokinesis, is goal-oriented. In that sense, according to Beloff, ordinary memory is a ‘paranormal phenomenon.’”

The real subject of Dr. Grosso’s article—transplant memories—is a new phenomenon of our times that wreaks havoc on all previous theories of memory. Dr. Grosso writes that, “growing numbers of people who undergo organ transplants tell of acquiring tastes, habits, attitudes, and specific recollections appropriate to their dead donors.” He cites the case of Clare Sylvia, recounted in the book, *A Change of Heart*. Clare reported that “after her heart and lung transplant she suddenly had cravings for foods she never liked before such as beer, green

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peppers, and chicken nuggets. Later, when she met her organ donor's family, she learnt that the young man who gave her a new heart was indeed fond of those foods, and was actually carrying a container of chicken nuggets when he died. Tim, the donor, was possessed by a constant craving for action during his life; Clare, after her transplant, became unaccountably restless, and felt urges to travel in a manner quite unlike her pre-transplant self. She also found herself having dreams of beautiful women and flirting with other women; prior to her operation, she had no homosexual leanings."

Dr. Grosso can only say in conclusion—echoing other researchers—that: "Transplant memories suggest that memory may occur apart from any coding, storage, and retrieval nervous system. We haven't the foggiest notion of how to make sense of this."

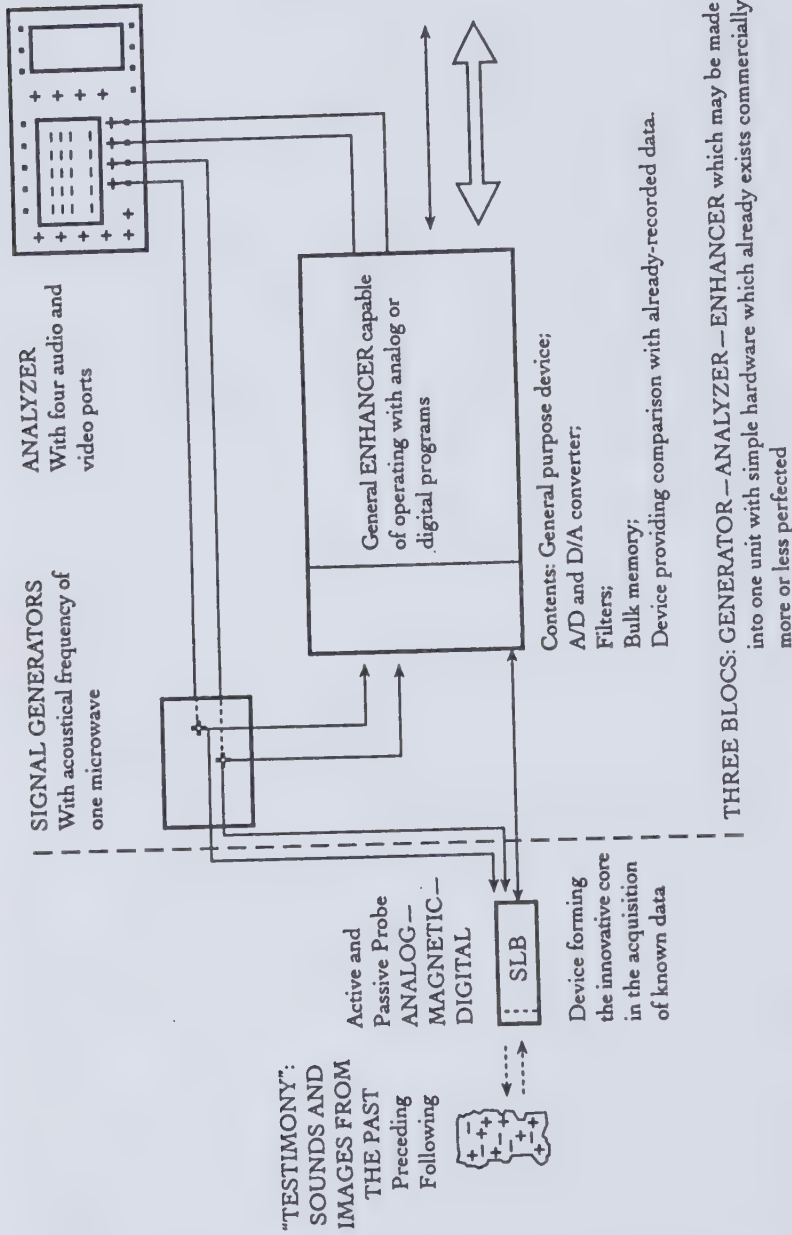
It seems as if memory has very little connection with our body at all. Why then should we reject a stone as a possible recipient and retainer of memories simply on the grounds that (we think) it doesn't have a brain?

Just how non-local *is* memory, anyway? Does it float in a kind of psychic or mental mist around us? Does it extend to the farthest reaches of the universe? Do we access all memories, including personal ones, from the akashic records? Do stones?

Father Borello's article, "Matter Speaks," appears in an anthology, *Dimensioni sconosciute [Unknown Dimensions]*, edited by Paolo Benda and published by Edizioni L'Artistica, in Arezzo, Italy, in 1995. The anthology also contains an extraordinary reconstruction by the editors of what a "chronovisor" might actually look like, based on the assumption that it would serve to retrieve memories from the world of inanimate objects.

This construct also assumes that memories are stored in the form of infinitesimally small memory "traces"—so small that to reactivate them from inanimate objects would involve dealing with "electrical charges corresponding to a millionth of a fraction of the charge of an electron." The first step would be to "elaborate," or "enhance" these charged memory traces until they had reached a threshold where they could be "seen" by a computer or by an oscilloscope.

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WHAT THE CHRONOVISOR MAY HAVE LOOKED LIKE

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The key to this “chronovisor-technology” is the comparison of the now enormously-enhanced memory trace with literally millions of other different sounds and images in millions of combinations, stored in the computer. Working on the principle that “like attracts like,” the editors of *Unknown Dimensions* assert that, when the trace is matched with a sound/image extremely close to it in identity, the memory trace will be reactivated; it will appear on a screen. A close likeness would be enough for the memory trace to manifest itself in the form which it had held in the past. That original form would not be distorted by the millions of “sound-image memories” with which it was being compared and which were constantly impinging upon it.

The editors of *Unknown Dimensions* offer many remarkable insights in their article on “reconstructing the chronovisor.” A diagram, based on that presented in Paolo Benda’s anthology, appears on the facing p. 58. For more information, the cura dell’Autore Ediciones L’Artistica, in Arezzo, Italy, should be contacted.

People once thought it was absurd to think that inert matter could store memories. We are no longer so sure. In the contemplation of a chronovisor may lie the keys to opening many another startling new vista.

Milton, 1102-1103 (*Prolusions: On the Music of the Spheres*).

Finney, 184.

Ibid., 179.

Ibid., 185.

Ibid., 180.

Benda, 57-60.

Bennett, 106.

Ibid., 104.

Grosso, 75.

Ibid., 71,

Ibid., 73.

Benda, 60-68.

Chapter Nine

FATHER ERNETTI CAN BE DIFFICULT

Father Ernetti had always been a little difficult. As the years went by, he became more so, especially on the subject of the chronovisor.

Over the years, researchers had been taking more and more of an interest in some of those subject areas about which Ernetti possessed a knowledge—the extent of which was tantalizingly unclear to his listeners. If, back in 1952, he was a pioneer in the field of instrumental transcommunication, other pioneers were coming along, to plough the field that he had sowed and to sow even vaster fields.

Two in particular had become famous as trailblazers. They were Friedrich Jürgenson and Konstantine Raudive.

One day in 1959, Friedrich Jürgenson, a Russian-born former opera singer (at La Scala in Milan), painter and film producer, who was living in a villa near Stockholm, had gone into the countryside to record the singing of finches on his battery-operated tape recorder. When he played the recording back, he was surprised to hear, interspersed with the chirping of the birds, a trumpet solo ending in a fanfare.

He went back into the woods, recorded the chirping again, listened to the tape again—and got another surprise. This time, it was a voice speaking to him in Norwegian and advising him to record the cries of night birds in Norway. He was mystified; Jürgenson was a highly competent observer who had made documentaries on the Vatican and the ruins of Pompeii, one of the former being honored by Pope Paul VI; he knew he had been completely alone when he had made the tape recording.

As Brune and Chauvin tell it in *A l'Écoute de l'Au-Delà*: “A month later, while he was preparing a radio program on ‘Princess’ Anastasia,

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voices in Russian appeared on the tape. To his stupefaction, they called him by his first name. Then he heard other voices, speaking in German, Italian...among them, he thought he recognized the voice of his mother, who had died four years before.”

Now Jürgenson began to carry out systematic experimentation. This went on for four years, during which he successfully recorded a huge number of similarly extraneous voices. Listening carefully to the voices, he discovered that they spoke different languages and often changed to different speech patterns in mid-sentence. Longer phrases sometimes had improper structure or grammar, or the sentences were so compressed or stretched out that they were almost unintelligible.

Jürgenson became convinced the tapings contained sounds which he could correctly interpret as messages from his deceased relatives and friends. Uncannily, the voices seemed to respond to the filmmaker's comments. They periodically mentioned his name. He began to hold conversations with them by recording questions and later searching the tape for answers.

In 1967, Jürgenson published his findings in a book called *Voices of the Dead*. He'd become convinced that the tape recorder was acting as an electronic link between himself and the realm of the deceased.

Toward the end of 1964, roughly the same experience happened to Konstantine Raudive, a Latvian-born parapsychologist and former psychology professor who also lived in Sweden. One day, Raudive was called to the telephone while making a tape-recording. He got up hastily and left the tape-recorder running. When he got back he had to rewind the tape to see where he had left off. He was astonished to hear, on the heels of the last words he had recorded, the voice of his dead mother calling him by his nickname: “Kosti, Kosti!”

Raudive found out about the work of Jürgenson shortly thereafter. He immediately embraced Jürgenson's discovery, viewing it as an opportunity to prove through empirical scientific means that some form of life existed after physical death. The two men collaborated in researching these so-called “electronic voices” until 1969, when differences led them to part company.

Raudive continued to investigate the phenomenon, ending up with more than 100,000 recordings in all. Discovering that voices could be

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detected in the white noise between radio frequencies, he pioneered the technique of attaching his tape-recorder to a radio; this technique of Raudive's is now standard practice among TCI researchers. Raudive claimed to have recognized many of the voices on the tapes, and that some of them were the voices of very famous people. These latter contacts included Adolph Hitler, Carl Jung, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Eventually, Raudive produced a huge volume called *The Inaudible Becomes Audible* (1968), which came complete with a tape of some of the voices he had recorded. He claimed that he was visited by NASA engineers a short while after the publication of the book. They would not tell him why they were there, Raudive reported, but examined his experiments minutely and asked "unusually pertinent questions."

Thanks to Jürgenson and Raudive, research into instrumental transcommunication acquired great impetus. It continues to germinate new developments to this day; these are discussed at length in Chapter 24.

In the late 1970s, the compelling and mysterious world of ITC began to impinge once more upon the life of Father Ernetti; at this time, the homegrown Italian brand of ITC known as "psychophonia" was beginning to become a part of the broader European instrumental transcommunication movement. Unfortunately, his brushes with ITC at the end of the 1970s would only serve to cast into sharper relief the more difficult aspects of Father Ernetti's character.

A series of letters appearing in the columns of the magazine *Giornale dei Misteri [Journal of Mysteries]* in the summer of 1980 tell a perplexing story. They chronicle the difficulties of a group of dedicated men of good will in dealing with the elusive Father Ernetti and his chronovisor. All of these men were deeply involved in the study of paranormal phenomena, especially psychophonia.

Annunziato Gandi was the director of the Giorgio Gandi Foundation Phonograph Museum, which housed recordings of famous people and famous voices and was located at the Rava Oratory in Venice. He had been active in the study of psychophonia since its beginnings in the late 1960s. A close friend of his, and no less zealous in his

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attempts to unravel the mysteries of ITC, was Count Lorenzo Mancini-Spinucci, the bearer of a distinguished name and the owner of property in Venice and Udine.

Count Lorenzo Mancini-Spinucci (or Mancini) was a seminal figure in the instrumental transcommunication movement in Italy. He was an engineer, who had founded the Society for Psychophonia in Udine in the mid-1970s. Udine was only 70 miles northeast of Venice and just a stone's throw from the Yugoslavian and Swiss borders—an ideal place for an international conference, and where Mancini would stage several. The first joint international paranormal phenomena and ITC congress organized from Udine took place in Caldarola, with Friedrich Jürgenson and Konstantine Raudive as the guests of honor.

For a later conference at Udine, Mancini tried to get Father Ernetti as a speaker. He didn't know the Benedictine personally, but he had heard about his early work with Agostini Gemelli in sound. The dealings of Mancini and Ernetti were brief and confusing. At first, the Benedictine had seemed amenable to giving a talk. Then, abruptly, he had written to Count Lorenzo Mancini that he couldn't be there, he had to "go abroad," there was work of a special nature to be done—he mysteriously slipped a word, "chronovisor," into his letter.

This was the first time the count had heard about Ernetti's machine of notoriety. The Benedictine had now definitely gotten his attention. At the end of the Udine conference, Mancini confided to his friend Annunziato Gandi his disappointment at not having been able to get Father Ernetti to speak. Gandi informed him that he knew Ernetti personally. Mancini asked his friend if he could arrange a meeting between the three of them at the count's house in Venice, and as soon as possible.

The meeting took place. The titled engineer/ITC researcher was captivated by the Benedictine monk. The meeting seemed to be a triumph. Father Ernetti had agreed to speak at the PSI/ITC congress to be held in October, 1979, at Fermo, 200 miles down the coast.

Annunziato Gandi and Count Lorenzo Mancini did not raise the subject of the chronovisor with Ernetti. They gave him *carte blanche* to speak on anything he wanted. Privately, they hoped he would allude to the now-legendary ITC happening which had taken place in Father

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Gemelli's lab; they hoped that perhaps he would give the audience his latest thinking on the matter.

They prayed that he would electrify his listeners with just the barest mention of the chronovisor.

Gandi was liaison man for the upcoming conference. He remained in telephone contact with Ernetti. Soon, the scientist-priest phoned him to tell him the title of his address would be *Eschatology in the Bible, in Philosophy and in Religion*. A 75-page text, typed by his secretary, would shortly be in the hands of the conference organizers.

Gandi and Mancini-Spinucci were delighted, though a little bewildered. Eschatology—its ancient Greek roots mean “discourse about last things”—is the study of those ends which God may have designed for man, from the point of view of the different religions. It was not precisely a theme for a talk at a conference on paranormal phenomena. But then, it was a splendid catchall title; who knew what gems about the chronovisor Father Ernetti might be able to let gleam forth, if only for a minute, in the guise of speaking about the ends of God for man.

Suddenly, problems developed. The conference program came for proofing. Only 40 minutes had been allotted to Father Ernetti. Seventy-five pages on eschatology could not be delivered in that time. Something had to be done.

The count would later confide to Gandi that it hadn't been smooth sailing from the start. Ernetti had declared at the initial meeting that he would speak only if all the other speakers were “professionals.” As Gandi would later put it, in one of the letters appearing in *Misteri*, “Father Pellegrino had made it clear to Mancini that one of the fundamental conditions of his participation was that there would be only scientists present, and no one who was not scientifically competent, were they even parapsychologists.”

Mancini had not been unprepared for this. When he had been trying to get Ernetti for the Udine conference, the priest had written him that, “in parapsychology, everything is suggestive to the point of exasperation and hysteria, all the more as there is no objective scientific basis whatsoever.” So, as Mancini would later write, “I wasn't

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surprised when he told me at first he didn't want parapsychologists but only authentic scientists."

But, at that initial meeting in Venice, the count hadn't taken Ernetti all that seriously. At a conference on parapsychology, who *was* a professional, anyway? It was such a fledgling field.

A compromise had been worked out—or so it had seemed to Mancini: Ernetti would speak first, and then he could leave the conference if he wanted to; he wouldn't have to hobnob it with the non-professionals.

The problem for the count when he saw the program was how to give Ernetti the time that he needed. But it turned out that Ernetti had somehow also gotten a copy of the program. He telephoned Mancini—and the count discovered that Ernetti had been in deadly earnest from the start. For now he declared that he wouldn't give his speech if there were any parapsychologists present at the conference at all. As Mancini later described it, in a letter published in *Misteri*:

"I received a call from F.E. imposing on me, very late, an unacceptable condition—not as far as time was concerned, but regarding people: the elimination of all parapsychology (at a parapsychology conference), or his non-participation."

There was consternation in the Venetian home of Count Lorenzo Mancini-Spinucci. The organizing committee of the conference was called in. It was obvious—and immensely regrettable—that they could not accede to Father Ernetti's demands. But the count had one final suggestion. In the letter which he now wrote to Father Ernetti, the text of which was also published in the columns of *Misteri*, he said:

"So as not to lose you by disappointing your numerous admirers, may I suggest an alternate procedure? I could ask the engineer Carlo Trajna, a very dear friend, to stand in for you, [and give your speech, and I could] let him give his own talk a few days later. Might we be able to find another, later, place for you at our conferences? I ask you this to show you that we are open to all of your requests and intend to try to respect them."

Count Lorenzo Mancini received no reply from Father Ernetti. The Benedictine's place on the program was cancelled.

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The count and his friend Annunziato Gandi would never know what to make of all this. Gandi would indicate, in a letter appearing in *Giornale dei Misteri*, just how astonishing it was in the light of all that everybody knew about Ernetti:

“Everyone knows that it was always Father Ernetti who sought to help other people and other organizations when it came to organizing conventions and congresses. All I need to say is that he lives on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, which is the location of the Giorgio Cini Foundation, the seat of ongoing national and international congresses and conferences. Everyone knows of his uprightness, we all know that the privilege of wearing his habit wasn’t for sale to the highest bidder, not his habit as a religious man, not his habit as a scientist—not his habit as a man of integrity who doesn’t suffer fools gladly.”

Finally, Sergio Conti, a PSI researcher not directly involved, wrote a letter to Annunziato Gandi which also appeared in *Giornale dei Misteri*. Conti began by pointing out the basically bizarre and inappropriate nature of two of Father Ernetti’s actions. The first was his proposal to give a speech on eschatology at a conference on parapsychology—and with the knowledge that his audience must be eagerly awaiting revelations about the chronovisor.

The second was, in Conti’s words:

“F.E. (engineer Mancini said this, and has confirmed that he said it) asks as a condition of his being present at the congress (on parapsychology) that he doesn’t want any parapsychologists to participate. Give me an idea, Mr. Gandi, of what you would think of a biology congress which excluded all biologists? Feel free, along with the readers, to pass judgement on such a bizarre excuse!... I don’t know F.E. personally, I don’t therefore have the right to pass judgement on his person, but I can still express an opinion.”

Brune and Chauvin, *A l’Ecoute de l’Au-Delà*, 110-111.

Gandi, 68.

Conti, 68.

Mancini-Spinucci, 68.

Chapter Ten

THE OTHER FACE OF JESUS CHRIST

During the last two decades of his life, nothing came back to haunt Father Ernetti more persistently, or brought more opprobrium upon him, than his assertion that he and the chronovisor crew had watched Christ dying on the cross and brought back a photo to prove it.

The photo is a simple one: It shows Christ's head, eyes wide and looking upward soulfully, mouth closed and firm. It is a little blurry.

At a certain point, this photo somehow got into the media.

As far as anyone can remember, it first appeared in Milan's *Domenica del Corriere*, for May 2, 1972, in an article entitled "Inventato la macchina che fotografa il passato" ["Invented: A Machine that Photographs the Past"] by Vincenzo Maddaloni.

It was next reproduced as a photo accompanying a letter by Armando Baione published in *Giornale dei Misteri*, Issue Number 17, for August, 1972.

There was little time for readers to savor the uniqueness of this photo. It seemed as if the August issue of *Giornale dei Misteri* hadn't been out for a day before there appeared in *Giornale's* offices a letter from Alfonso De Silva. When the editors opened the envelope a photo fell out. It was the head shot of Jesus on the cross allegedly taken from the chronovisor—except in reverse image.

Alfonso De Silva explained in his letter that he had purchased this photo for 100 lira in the gift shop of the Sanctuary of Merciful Love [Sanctuaire de l'Amour Miséricordieux] in the town of Collevaenza, near Todi, not far from Perugia. He explained that it was a photo-

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graph of the face of Christ on the cross on a woodcarving adorning the sanctuary. The woodcarving was by a Spanish sculptor named Cullot Valera.

The editors compared this photo with the one published in the August issue. The two photos were identical, except that one was the mirror image of the other. The photos were published side-by-side in the October, 1972 *Giornale dei Misteri*, Issue Number 18.

No readers wrote to assert that these were not the same photo.

The two photos appeared next in French writer Robert Charroux's *Le Livre du Passé Mystérieux* [*Book of the Mysterious Past*], published in 1973, and then in the English-language version of that book, *The Mysterious Past*, appearing in 1974. Father Ernetti's photo of Christ taken from the chronovisor, and the reverse-image copy of that photo taken from the Christ on the wooden cross of the Sanctuary of Merciful Love in Collevaleza, were now receiving widespread distribution.

In parapsychological research circles, there were murmurs of consternation, then of disapproval, concerning Father Ernetti's claims.

The French UFO magazine *Lumières dans la Nuit* [*Lights in the Night*] published the photo in its Summer 1975 issue. The editors had somehow not heard of the very inexpensive photo available in the gift shop of the Sanctuary of Merciful Love. The photo accompanied a translation of the article by Vincenzo Maddaloni on the chronovisor which had appeared in the May 2, 1972, edition of *Domenica del Corriere*. The *Lumières* article was billed as an open and friendly interview with Father Ernetti. Along with the photo, it featured a diagram of the circuitry of the chronovisor, which Father Ernetti had given to Maddaloni to help him follow the father's explanations.

A Frenchman named Jean Sider read the story in *Lumières dans la Nuit*. He became incensed. Sider knew about Father Ernetti; for a long time now, he had been keeping a file on this faintly sacrilegious Benedictine. Sider was a devoted Catholic; the photograph of Christ on the cross had infuriated him. He went back over his file on Ernetti, then checked around for other, more recent sources.

It didn't take him long to come across Charroux's book. Sider wrote a scalding letter to *Lumières dans la Nuit*, enclosing a copy of the photo of Christ's face on the sculpture hanging in the Sanctuary.

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The UFO magazine had received other complaints. It dropped the story like a hot potato.

The tale of the chronovisor photo fraud did not go away. It simmered and steeped among *aficionados* of the paranormal for many years. A whole decade later, *Lumières dans la Nuit* tried to take the story up again. This was in its July-August, 1985 issue. An editor wondered briefly what had become of the Venetian scientist-priest Ernetti and his intriguing chronovisor.

This brief remark stirred up a whole new storm. It was as if the readers of *Lumières dans la Nuit* had never forgotten nor forgiven the insult to their intelligence of an Italian monk trying to tell them *both* that he'd traveled back to the crucifixion *and* taken a snapshot of the dying Christ. In the September-October issue, the UFO magazine published a typically distressed letter, by Bruno Mancusi of the Canton of Wallis in Switzerland. "When the story of Father Ernetti and his photos of the past taken with his chronovisor first appeared," Mancusi wrote more in sorrow than in anger, "a certain mystery mercifully enshrouded them. In the interim, the story has been largely forgotten, even in Italy. It is sinful to once more recall it to memory."

Bruno Mancusi's sad, pained letter fired up Jean Sider's anger. He was even madder now than he'd been ten years before. Sider arranged a meeting with Mancusi. It's not known what the two discussed. But it is clear, from an article which Sider had published in the next *Lumières dans la Nuit* (Nov.-Dec., 1985) that—with or without the help of Bruno Mancusi—he had figured out exactly what, or who, was behind this shameful hoax perpetrated by the Venetian priest.

It was the Devil.

Sider wrote:

"I fear this story is too good to be true.... [It] must, in my opinion, be placed in the category of a deliberate attempt to confuse people, or even of a deliberate attempt to deceive people. I'm not accusing Father Ernetti of being behind such a deception; instead, I prefer to believe that he has been duped by a very skillful manipulator, one who, for reasons which have yet to be made clear, has still not been identified." Sider thought that it would be a very long time, if ever, before mankind built a machine like the chronovisor. This was not

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because of any inability on the part of our species to solve the technological problems. It was because mankind would always fear the tremendous evils to which the chronovisor could easily become a party.

Sider's position was remarkably like Father Ernetti's.

During all the years of this controversy, which periodically erupted among members of the religious or the parapsychological research community, Father Ernetti uttered hardly a word of explanation. In a 1996 issue of *Paracelsus* magazine, Jean Sider delivered another salvo against Father Ernetti and the chronovisor photo, even though the good father had been dead since April 8, 1994.

In this same issue of *Paracelsus*, Father François Brune did his best to compassionately defend his friend Pellegrino Ernetti. He did not sidestep any of the issues. He tried to look at the whole picture as thoughtfully and as openly as he could. Father Brune called his article, "Some Clarifications on the Chronovisor." He revealed that in the last year of Ernetti's life he had asked the Benedictine about the chronovisor and the photo, and Father Ernetti had responded frankly.

Father Brune also tries to shed light on another great enigma of Father Ernetti's career: his almost complete silence, over almost the whole last decade of his life, with respect to the assertions of high adventure in the astral realms which had brought him so much notoriety. This silence seemed to come upon him suddenly, after he had talked about the chronovisor with an unusual degree of forthrightness at the ASTRA PSI/Astrology conference at Riva del Garda in 1986.

These issues Father Brune weaves together in his article, speaking now of Ernetti's silence, now of the photo, now of the chronovisor.

Father Brune begins by reasserting that, in his eyes, Ernetti was "not only a man of science, but a man of God as well."

He sets forth the only three hypotheses which can be considered regarding Father Ernetti and the chronovisor:

- He was an out-and-out, quite conscious liar;
- He was a compulsive liar, a mythomaniac, not really in control;
- He did everything that he said he did.

Brune says that he himself carefully compared the photo of Christ "authenticated" by Father Ernetti with that of Christ sculpted in wood

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by Culot Valera at the Sanctuary of Merciful Love. He says there's no doubt in his mind they are one and the same photo.

The Parisian author-priest speculates that the Vatican had been growing nervous for some time over Father Ernetti's assertions. Brune reveals some aspects of Vatican policy: "...when a Benedictine monk makes revelations of such a magnitude, he must have the authorization not only of the father superior of his monastery or abbey, but also of the superior general of his order; very often, he needs the direct authorization of the Vatican."

Brune believes this may be why, increasingly in the months leading up to his sudden silence, Ernetti sometimes didn't show up at a congress at the last moment; he may have failed to have gotten the Vatican's permission at the last moment.

Brune believes we can be sure that, at a certain date—the Parisian father doesn't know when—Ernetti was strictly forbidden, on his oath of obedience, to talk any longer about the chronovisor. At this point, says Brune, the Venetian priest would have found himself on shaky ground.

"On the one hand, he wouldn't have been able to go back on what he'd already said, because that would have damaged not only his own reputation but the reputations of the church authorities who had permitted him to speak.

"On the other, it would have been most unwise for him to reveal that his superiors had forbidden him to speak, as that would only have provoked the media to put pressure on those superiors to explain."

Father Ernetti would have found himself completely unable to respond to a single charge or allegation made against him. To divulge even the most minor detail would have immediately made him the prey of a hundred more questions. Any answer he gave would necessarily have to be purely evasive, intended only to dampen curiosity.

Little by little, his entire story would have been discredited—which would have been exactly what the religious authorities wanted. This would have been the only way for Father Ernetti to resume a normal life—a life which, the father had told Brune, had been far from normal during a certain period when the American and Russian intelligence agencies had taken an interest in him and sent spies to shadow

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his every move. For a year-and-a-half, Ernetti told Brune, he hadn't been able to leave the monastery without two bodyguards.

Brune contends that any vow of silence imposed on Ernetti would have prevented him from making statements about the photo of Christ. To go back on anything he'd said before would have been to place in an unfavorable light those superiors who for so long had let him say what he said. Brune allows that this whole situation is most perplexing. He recalls that, as late as 1993, Ernetti admitted to a Spanish reporter that the photo had not come from the chronovisor; the story had appeared in *Mas Alla*, Number 51, for May, 1993, on page 41.

The Parisian priest reveals that, when the Benedictine had less than a year to live, Brune had asked him about the compromising photo of Christ. Ernetti's reply had been infinitely disingenuous and resourceful: "He explained that he was aware of the other photo, aware that it was the work of a Spanish sculptor. He also said he knew that the Spanish sculptor had carved his Christ according to the instructions of a certain Spanish nun, that this Spanish nun had been a mystic who carried the stigmata of Christ on her body and was consumed by ecstatic visions of Christ's Passion.

"Father Ernetti then explained that this mystical Spanish nun had eventually gone to Italy to live, and that it was there that Father Ernetti had gotten to know her.

"This Spanish nun is now deceased," Ernetti had concluded.

Ernetti seemed to have assumed that Father Brune would understand the rest. The Parisian priest does not dwell on this in his article. We can assume that Father Ernetti is tendering the following explanation: The ecstatic vision of Christ's Passion which the mystical nun had enjoyed was a vision of Christ dying on the cross on Golgotha. This was the vision she had communicated to the Spanish sculptor; following her instructions, he had sculpted on the face of the Christ on the wooden cross the very features, the very expression of Christ, which she had seen in her vision.

That vision had been a true vision of reality. It was as if the mystical nun from Spain had actually been there, on that afternoon, on Golgotha. She had gazed into the face of Christ as it had actually looked as He hung dying on His cross.

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Somewhere nearby, Father Ernetti had gazed into that same face, peering out of the chronovisor and opening the shutter of his camera.

Father Brune does not labor this point. He passes over it. He has one more bewildering revelation to make about Father Ernetti, based on what would be the last interview between the two old friends, on November 1, 1993, five months before Father Ernetti died.

During this final encounter, Brune had told Father Ernetti about the long account of him which he had written based on their first meeting on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore so many years before. Brune had told Ernetti that this account would be appearing in his upcoming book, coauthored with Rémy Chauvin, *En Direct de l'Au-Delà*. Was that all right? Brune asked.

Father Ernetti paused, and looked at him. Then he asked Brune to warn him ahead of time if the book ever came out in Italian. "I would like," the Benedictine declared, "to write four or five pages by way of explanation."

The interview wasn't over. Father Ernetti had something more to tell Father Brune before the two of them parted. It was important.

A month before, on September 30, 1993, Ernetti had responded to an invitation from the Vatican. He had gone to the Vatican City with the two surviving scientists of his chronovisor team. He had given a presentation on the chronovisor. Four cardinals and an international committee of scientists had been in attendance.

"We told them everything," said Father Ernetti.

Those were the last words Father Brune ever heard him say.

Brune, 27-29.

Chapter Eleven

SATAN'S CATECHISM

There's one more facet of Father Ernetti's character to be considered if we are to begin to understand this infinitely complex and bewildering man.

Father Ernetti was an exorcist.

He was a renowned caster-out of the devil.

His reputation as an exorcist had spread far and wide through Italy.

If you wanted the musicologist-priest to liberate you or one of your loved ones from a demon, you had to make the journey, which took on just a little bit the trappings of a pilgrimage, to the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore. We do not have the exact figure, but during the lifetime of Father Ernetti thousands of the suffering faithful made this journey. The services of the Benedictine priest in Venice were greatly in demand.

Major exorcisms like the one melodramatically portrayed in the movie *The Exorcist* (1971) have been rare in our century. But "minor" exorcisms have been a feature of the Roman Catholic Church for many centuries, and of other churches as well.

Martin Ebon writes, in *The Devil's Bride*: "Neither possession nor exorcism is without grave risks. The exorcist himself is in danger of psychic contagion; he may 'catch' the demon as one catches a communicable disease; the element of contagion is often rather strong, and there are several cases of nuns experiencing possession as if a demonic epidemic had struck the nunnery. Official exorcism rites, of the Roman Catholic Church as outlined in the *Rituale Romanum*, and by the Anglican church as recently as 1972, emphasize the need for

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mature responsibility on the part of the priest, as well as diligence in ruling out psychophysical illnesses that might mimic possession. But while there are numerous cases on record that show exorcists as virtually guiding the demon or devil into statements that comply with ecclesiastical concepts, it would be wrong to assume that all similarities are due to such patterns of suggestion.”

Ebon adds that, “Dr. Henri F. Ellenberger, interviewed in *Psychology Today* (March 1973), linked exorcism with psychotherapeutic technique. He stated: ‘Man always has made therapeutic use of the unconscious; shamans and medicine men of primitive societies used it. The unconscious has two traditional therapeutic uses. In the first, the healer brings out aspects of the patient’s unconscious and uses them to cure him. Exorcists did this when they caused a supposedly latent possession to appear and cast out the induced spirit along with the disease. In the other form, the healer cures his patient by using a state of ecstasy that he brings about within himself (this is the method of some shamans who travel in the spirit world to recapture a soul supposedly escaped from its body). These healers often go through long periods of “initiatory illness” to learn their craft.’”

Monasteries are not designed to foster feelings of lightheartedness. Despite the splendid basilica rising up alongside, the Abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore can impart a sense of oppression when viewed from the outside—especially if you are trudging up the path on the way to your exorcism. When you enter this Benedictine hermitage and pass through its corridors on your way to a particular cell, that sense does not readily dissipate. Love and devotion, and not physical surroundings, are what bring joy to the heart of a Benedictine brother.

Entering Father Ernetti’s cell-like room, you immediately knew you weren’t here to have a good time. A Benedictine monk’s cell is typically small, as we’ve already noted; hardly 12 feet by 12. The furnishings are not modern, nor are there many.

The enormous old desk in the center of the room—at least 200 years old, according to some—was forbidding in appearance, especially if it were piled high, as was usually the case, with a jumble of books and papers. It wasn’t always easy to see the small brass cross gleaming in the middle.

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Moreover, you could sense the moment you entered this little room that Father Ernetti's attitude toward demons was severe. The Benedictine priest maintained the unwavering conviction that the word "evil" did not just stand for something; evil absolutely and unequivocally existed. "Lucifer" wasn't just a personification; Lucifer was real.

This literalness of attitude made Father Ernetti a most effective exorcist. That was the chief reason so many sought him out. In the relevant circles at the Vatican, the Benedictine's effectiveness as an exorcist was acknowledged with approval. In the mid-1970s, the Conference of Bishops in Rome had even commissioned him—perhaps commanded is a better word—to set his techniques down on paper in the form of a set of guidelines. The exorcist had immediately honored this request, and the results had been published; Father Ernetti called his book *Satan's Catechism* [*La Catechesi di Satana*].

In *Satan's Catechism*, Father Ernetti laid bare the methods employed by Satan to ensnare the souls of men. The scientist-priest declared that there was a certain progression. First, the Lord of the Underworld invaded the home of his intended victim. You could expect to experience this visit in the form of certain paranormal events taking place within your four walls. Chairs would move of their own accord; dinner plates would fly through the air and shatter against the wall; windows would fly open all by themselves, in the complete absence of any breeze. These paranormal happenings taking place inside your own home were the unmistakable sign of the presence of the Dark One; they were intended to soften you up for the coming possession—such was the conviction of Father Ernetti as set forth in his *Satan's Catechism*.

The visits by the Dark One weren't arbitrary. Father Ernetti had no doubt that souls thus afflicted had brought these sufferings upon themselves, that they had sinned grievously in some way. It was hard not to take *Satan's Catechism* seriously; Father Ernetti wrote with such conviction; you knew he was highly experienced in these matters. So you were all the more inclined to believe him when he now told you that your sufferings had only begun: Ernetti knew for certain that those whom Satan possessed, the Lord of Darkness meant to drive insane.

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You knew the process was seriously underway when you started hearing voices in your head. The voices spoke to you with greater and greater frequency, at any time of the day or night. This malevolent disruptive maneuver on the part of Satan was designed, insisted Father Ernetti, to blot out any and all advice coming to you from the outside. When this stage of the possession set in, the afflicted person was unable to think clearly; he or she was unable to feel, or smell, or taste. Paradoxically, these unfortunate souls suddenly found that they possessed miraculous powers. They spoke in unknown tongues; they described events which had taken place hundreds of years in the past and which they could not possibly know about.

These were, insisted Father Ernetti, only a few of the symptoms alerting the exorcist to the unmistakable presence of the powers of evil. In addition, possessed persons might find themselves performing tremendous feats of strength; they would become convinced that no feat of physical strength was beyond them. They might begin to speak in obscenities, with a growing vulgarity and forcefulness which suggested they might be coming dangerously close to starting to worship the Devil.

Such were some of the vehement strictures of *Satan's Catechism*, which Father Ernetti did not lose sight of when he carried out his exorcisms.

Naturally, the scientist-priest had his detractors when it came to this fervent practice of casting out the Devil. Those detractors even came from the ranks of his own Benedictine brothers. They wondered if sometimes he might not be confusing the symptoms of possession with the symptoms of physical illness. They tried to point this out to him.

Father Ernetti wasn't listening. What they had to say did not deter him one bit from going about his self-appointed rounds of exorcising the demons from his flock. He wasn't sure the medical profession itself was entirely free of contagion from the Dark Forces. He even went so far as to suggest that the coldness emanating from some of its members respecting his exorcisms wasn't entirely dissimilar to the coldness he often felt emanating from Satan in the course of his exorcisms.

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The exorcisms did not cease. They went on till almost the final days of his life. The Vatican always seemed to be pleased by the effectiveness of this caster-out of the devil. It was perhaps a subject that his closest friends among the priesthood were not anxious to take up with him at any great length; there was, after all, so much more you could profitably discuss with Pellegrino Ernetti.

It is tempting to speculate that, in every one of his exorcisms, Ernetti was really attempting to drive out of himself a single, huge demon—the demon that caused him to make up huge fibs about a chronovisor.

If such a “demon” had actually been within him, he probably couldn’t have afforded to recognize it consciously.

He would have tried to drive it out of everyone around him, with increasing vehemence as the years went by.

In fact, Father Ernetti did become more vehement through the years. We are told that, even as the good priest lay on his death bed, he would try to rise up to perform yet another exorcism.

Jean Sider, who has previously been mentioned in connection with his rage at Father Ernetti’s claiming to have taken a photo of Christ on the cross, would have agreed with the diagnosis that Ernetti himself was possessed. In fact, Sider was certain—he often declared this—that it was Satan himself who drove Father Ernetti to make the assertions he did.

Against the vituperation of Jean Sider, we must set the praise of Father François Brune for his Benedictine brother. Brune, who knew Ernetti for over 30 years, and whose own academic credentials and accomplishments were on a par with those of the Venetian priest, describes, in the *Paracelsus* article from which we have already quoted, in what high esteem Father Ernetti was held by everyone. Father Brune writes that:

“...I saw clearly that, in Italy as elsewhere, immense prestige was accorded him as a man of science....He published numerous works in his specialty, archaic music, which he was the only one in the world to teach as a full-time conservatory professor....People came to consult with Father Ernetti from all over the world. Once when French Presi-

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dent François Mitterand was passing through Venice, he made a point of visiting Ernetti. Father Ernetti was a man of great learning, literary as well as scientific. He had an equally good reputation as an exorcist, working, as is natural in this field, in collaboration with psychiatrists. These psychiatrists would not have sent him their patients had they thought he was suffering from mythomania....It was clear to me also, from the magazine articles I read, that, even when his interlocutors justifiably became a little impatient with Father Ernetti for not answering their questions, they continued to hold him in the highest esteem. None of them ever questioned his competence nor his honesty.”

Given Father Brune's words, we must look elsewhere for a solution than that this brilliant and complex man was possessed by a lying demon of truly Satanic stature, a devil so frightening that Father Ernetti himself couldn't acknowledge its presence.

The answer may lie in the relationship between on the one hand an exorcist and his powers, and on the other the astral realms and astral light wherein, according to so much occult lore, the akashic records can be found.

Ebon, *The Devil's Bride*, 18.

Ibid., 20.

Chapter Twelve

MESMERISM AND EXORCISM

According to Franz Mesmer—thought, not quite rightly, to be the discoverer of hypnosis, though he gave the word “mesmerize” to our language—and other occultists such as Eliphas Lévi, the exorcist owed his power to the amount of astral fluid which he could readily invoke in himself (it was Mesmer’s disciple the Marquis of Puységur who developed hypnosis).

Mesmer believed that we all possess what he called “animal magnetism.” As the twentieth century nears an end, it’s all too easy to belittle the accomplishments of this man who seems to stand halfway between superstition and science. As “Zolar” points out in *Zolar’s Book of the Spirits*, Mesmer was a tremendously well-educated man for his time. Born in 1734 near Lake Constance in Germany, he was raised in the country, where he attended a monastic school from the ages of 8 to 14. Mesmer was an excellent student, but he preferred to ramble along the banks of the Rhine observing the seasonal changes. Though he dropped out of theology at the University of Dillingen in Bavaria after four years, he went on to the larger Bavarian University of Ingoldstadt where he studied physics, mathematics, astronomy, and ancient and modern languages, ending up, apparently, with a doctorate in philosophy. At Ingoldstadt, Mesmer also studied astronomy, which was just then becoming a separate discipline from astrology; this was probably when he read Paracelsus and accepted the belief in the reality of planetary influence. Mesmer next studied law at the University of Vienna for one year; then he went on to the Faculty of

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Medicine in Leiden, Holland, where he obtained, at the end of six years, the degree of Doctor of Medicine, with highest honors.

Mesmer's Latin doctoral thesis was on the purely physical effects of the sun's rays on living organisms, based on a study of Newton's laws of gravity. Mesmer contended that a "certain subtle spirit" pervaded all material life; to this force, or fluid, animating all living bodies, he first gave the name of "animal gravitation," then, later, substituted the term "animal magnetism." He believed sickness was caused by a disharmony between the ebb and flow of this universal fluid in a living organism and its ebb and flow in the surrounding environment.

Early in his practice, Mesmer learned of the new use of magnets to effect cures. He obtained a number of magnets of different shapes and sizes and tested them on his patients. The young doctor met with immediate success. He was able to report cures in apoplexy, epilepsy, hysteria, melancholia, and fitful fever. He soon discovered that not just steel magnets but almost anything—metals, paper, silk, stone, glass, water—served as a conductor for animal magnetism.

The story has often been told of how Mesmer, having moved to Paris and become famous for his "magnetic" cures, was asked in 1775 by Church authorities to travel to Munich, Germany, to investigate the practices of a Bavarian exorcist named Johann Joseph Gassner who healed patients by casting out demons in the name of Jesus.

In *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, Wouter Hanegraaff tells us that Mesmer's "intervention was successful. He rapidly convinced not only the Cardinal, but the Munich Academy of Sciences as well, that (Hanegraaff here quotes Ernst Benz) 'such experiments should be ascribed neither to deception, nor to supernatural miracles, but to nature.'" Mesmer was able to convince the religious and scientific authorities in Munich that, "The diseases cured by Gassner were caused, not by the influence of demons, but by a disharmony in the body which hindered the flow of the invisible fluid; if Gassner was a successful healer, this was simply because he happened to possess an excess of animal magnetism, which enabled him to restore the balance in his patients and thus to heal them. In short: without knowing it, Gassner was really a mesmerist [used Mesmer's techniques] who mistakenly attributed illnesses to demons and healings to Jesus."

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The upshot was that, ironically, though Mesmer was able to persuade the authorities that Gassner was not dealing in the black arts but using natural processes, the Bavarian exorcist was forbidden to continue his healing practice, while Mesmer was made a member of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences.

The connection which Mesmer clearly established between animal magnetism and exorcism would contribute to the German doctor's own downfall some years later. Colin Wilson describes Mesmer's controversial medical/magnetizing practices in Paris as follows:

"He would enter his treatment room in a lilac silk dressing gown, carrying a long magnet, which he would point at patients as he passed. He would go into the next room and begin to play a magnetized piano. The patients would form a chain—men alternating with women—and press their thighs to increase the magnetism. Soon, people would have convulsions, and collapse on the floor. Since magnetism was performed with hands, and the thighs were a sensitive area, they had every opportunity of trying out their animal magnetism on one another, all in the cause of medical science. Assistants would take away some of the more violently affected to the Crisis Room, where further animal magnetism was applied to bring on a climactic convulsion. Everyone believed totally in Mesmer's theories, for only ardent belief could justify these orgiastic activities. It was a delightful way of loosening repressions, and the treatment was understandably successful."

Wilson is probably overemphasizing the sexual aspect of Mesmer's practices. But the fact remains that, because of the generally controversial nature of his work, within a few years Mesmer had, to quote Hanegraaff, "created his own mass hysteria in Paris, comparable to Gassner's not only in popularity but also because of the striking similarity between the outward phenomena of exorcism and of mesmeric trance. This time, it was Mesmer's turn to be denounced as a fraud by the scientific and medical authorities. In both cases, the controversy raged less over the effectivity of the treatment than over the question of whether the phenomena should be explained by natural or supernatural influences."

Mesmer's personal fame waned quickly. He died in exile in 1815. The Marquis de Puységur revised his theories and kept his name alive.

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Mesmer had been formally investigated by two weighty committees; one result was that medical science of the time totally rejected the notion of the physical reality of “animal magnetism,” denying that its effects came from a “vital fluid” diffused everywhere throughout the universe. Instead, to quote “Zolar,” the profession ascribed Mesmer’s cures to “the imagination of the patients, the pressure of hands and fingers, or the imitation of the behavior of other patients.”

Mesmer was an important figure. Eliphas Lévi, in *The History of Magic*, asserts that “Mesmer is grand as Prometheus; he has given men that fire from heaven which [Benjamin] Franklin could only direct.” The psychiatrist Henri F. Ellenberger thought the historical importance of Mesmer’s discovery couldn’t be overstated; Hanegraaff writes:

“Ellenberger, in his monumental history of dynamic psychiatry, does not hesitate to compare Mesmer with Columbus: both discovered a new world although both, also, ‘remained in error for the remainder of their lives about the real nature of their discoveries.’ Ellenberger is referring to the split which eventually occurred in mesmerism between those who followed Mesmer in ascribing the effects of mesmeric treatment to an invisible fluid of ‘subtle matter’ (the magnetic force), manipulated by the healer; and those who explained the same effects in psychological terms. This second interpretation led from mesmerism to hypnosis and became crucially important for the development of modern psychiatry, on the one hand, and of new forms of ‘religious psychology,’ on the other.”

Madame Helena Blavatsky summed up the achievement of Mesmer in unequivocal terms. She saw his contribution as mainly derivative, though stemming from a great tradition of hidden knowledge, and she linked his concept of animal magnetism with that of the “indestructible tablets of the astral light”—the akashic records. The following passages are from the 1972 abridged version of *Isis Unveiled* (1877):

“The doctrine of Mesmer was simply a restatement of the doctrines of Paracelsus, Van Helmont, Santanelli, and Maxwell the Scotsman; he was even guilty of copying texts from the work of Bertrand and enunciating them as his own principles.

“We find among the twenty-seven propositions laid down by Mesmer in 1775, in his *Letter to a Foreign Physician*, the following:

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“1. There exists a mutual influence between the heavenly bodies, the earth, and living bodies.

“2. A fluid, universally diffused and continued, so as to admit no vacuum, whose subtility is beyond all comparison and which, from its nature, is capable of receiving, propagating, and communicating all the impressions of motion, is the medium of this influence.

“3. This reciprocal action is subject to mechanical laws, unknown up to the present time.

“4. From this action result alternate effects which may be considered a flux and reflux.

“5. It is by this operation (the most universal of those presented to us by nature) that the relations of activity occur between the heavenly bodies, the earth, and its constituent parts.

“There are two more which will be interesting reading to our modern scientists:

“6. The properties of matter, and of organized body, depend on this operation.

“7. The animal body experiences the alternate effects of this agent; and it is by insinuating itself into the substance of the nerves, that it immediately affects them.”

Blavatsky continues: “There are two kinds of magnetization; the first is purely animal, the other transcendent and depending on the will and knowledge of the mesmerizer, as well as on the degree of spirituality of the subject and his capacity to receive the impressions of the astral light. Clairvoyance depends a great deal more on the former than on the latter. To the power of an adept...the most positive subject will have to submit. If his sight is ably directed by the mesmerizer, magician, or spirit, the light must yield up its most secret records to our scrutiny; for, if it is a book which is ever closed to those ‘who see and do not perceive,’ on the other hand it is ever opened for one who wills to see it opened. It keeps an unmutated record of all that was, that is, or ever will be. The minutest acts of our lives are imprinted on it, and even our thoughts rest photographed on its eternal tablets. It is the book which we see opened by the angel in Revelations, ‘which is the book of life, and out of which the dead are judged according to their works.’ It is, in short, the MEMORY of GOD!

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“The oracles assert that the impression of thoughts, characters, men, and other divine visions appear in the aether. . . . In this the things without figure are figured,’ says an ancient fragment of the *Chaldean Oracles* of Zoroaster.

“Thus ancient as well as modern wisdom, vaticination [oracular prophecy], and science agree in corroborating the claims of the kabbalists. It is on the indestructible tablets of the astral light that is stamped the impression of every thought we think and every act we perform; and the future events—effects of long forgotten causes—are already delineated as a vivid picture for the eye of the seer and prophet to follow. . . .”

Henri F. Ellenberger, for all his fine appreciation of Mesmer, never doubted that this first mesmerist was completely in error about the nature of his discovery. For Ellenberger, the rejection of the notion of “animal fluid,” and the rapid evolution of Mesmer’s basic concepts, shorn of their literal interpretation, in the direction of modern-day psychology and psychiatry, were giant steps forward in medical science.

But when Mesmer died in 1815 only the religious and scientific authorities of the time had rejected his notion of a literal “vital fluid” which permeated the entire universe, including not least its inhabitants. The popular imagination would not let go of this notion; the common man believed he could feel its bracing and energizing truth. Fortunately, and for unexpected reasons, the concept of vital fluid would undergo a renaissance at mid-century.

Zolar, 1-5.

Hanegraaff, 432.

Wilson, *The Occult*, 284.

Lévi, 398.

Hanegraaff, 431.

Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (Gomes), 40-41.

Chapter Thirteen

MASTERS OF THE FLUID

On October 7, 1855, at Marine-Terrace, the Hugo estate on the Channel island of Jersey, Charles Hugo, eldest son of Victor Hugo, placed his forehead against the forehead of his friend the publisher Paul Meurice. With his left hand, Charles clasped Meurice's left hand. He put his right hand on Meurice's shoulder.

The two remained in this position for ten minutes. Then, slowly, Charles' right hand, which held a pencil above a piece of paper, wrote: CAPTIVE SOULS.

Victor Hugo was present. "Soul," he asked, "who are you? What can we do for you?"

Another ten minutes passed. Then Charles' right hand wrote: TO HELP ME, LOVE ME.

Charles wrote in his diary the next day: "I had the weird feeling that my hand didn't belong to me any more, that it was being moved by a will absolutely external and foreign to my own. Nothing can be stranger. You are aware of the action, but not that you are willing it to happen. It is as if your hand were enchanted."

In the middle of 1858, at the Benedictine monastery in German Switzerland where he attended school as a day student, Oswald Wirth, future author of books on the Tarot and on Stanislas de Guaita, knelt down with a schoolmate in the grass beside the school. The two faced each other. Wirth took both his friend's hands in his.

Earlier that day, his schoolmate had shown him an insect bite on his leg that wouldn't go away. A month before, in the monastery library, Wirth had read a magazine article called *Wonder Doctor* which

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told of healings effected by voluntarily invoking the emission of a "vital fluid" transmissible from one organism to another. Wirth had been fascinated by the concept. Now he was using the techniques described in the article to try and make his friend's insect bite go away.

Wirth asked his schoolmate to look straight at him while energetically wishing for the insect bite to go away. The future writer summoned up all his own willpower to make the malady disappear. Freeing his right hand, he lightly stroked the sensitive area on his schoolmate's leg for about two minutes.

Wirth later wrote: "The effect of this procedure was to make the itching go away, a result which didn't seem to come entirely from our imaginations, since the inflammation now looked quite different. Moreover, my comrade was sure he had felt something happen to him. We both marveled at this, and hurried to renew the experiment [in other areas]."

In the second half of the nineteenth century these scenes, and others like them, were being repeated all over Europe. When medical science threw out the notion of animal magnetism in the early part of the century, the man in the street did not lose interest in Mesmer's teachings nor leave off trying to invoke in himself the vital fluid to heal and cleanse. Such practices continued unabated; it was as if the human need to use these energies, given a green light by Mesmer, could not be put back in the box. In the late 1840s, an event occurred which was to regitalize interest all across Europe in the vital fluid. This was the introduction of American spiritualism, with its belief in a spirit world willing to communicate with the living. Alan Kardec seized up the movement and turned it into spiritism, with the additional belief that the "perispirit," a sort of astral body comprised of the vital fluid, was the bridge between the living and the dead. Animal magnetism had a new lease on life.

The new religio-occult movement took the upper crust of European society by storm. Probably, the French needed the diversion from the oppressive realities of the Napoleon III regime. Whatever the causes, 1853 became the *annus mirabilis* of spiritism. Grasset, in *The Marvels Beyond Science* (English translation, 1910) quotes Bersot's account of "these heroic ages of turning tables:"

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“It was a passion and everything was forgotten....It was a beautiful period, a period of first enthusiasm, of trust and ardor that would lead to success. How modestly triumphant were those who had the ‘fluid!’ What a shame it was for those who didn’t have it! What power there was in spreading a new religion! What love existed between adepts! What wrath prevailed against unbelievers!” “The fluid” had become the buzz word of an entire social class.

Artists and intellectuals were a part of this. The full extent of Victor Hugo’s channeling experiences is just now becoming known. In political exile on Jersey island, the author of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, his family, and his fellow exiles were intensely involved from mid-1853 to late 1855 in “table-tapping” seances. They communicated with allegedly well over 100 spirits.

It was thought that the more vital fluid you had, the better you were at being a medium; the seance enthusiasts at Marine-Terrace had no trouble deciding Charles Hugo had the most fluid, since, usually, the seances proceeded not very well, or not at all, when Charles wasn’t there. At first, Victor Hugo thought his son alone was responsible for the content of the seances; in mid-September, 1853, the author told Charles, “It’s quite simply your intelligence multiplied five times by the magnetism that makes the table act and makes it tell you what’s in your mind.” Not long afterward, however, Victor decided that actual spirits played a crucial role in the seances. “The fluid” remained a preoccupation; a session for that autumn typically began as follows:

Victor Hugo: “Of us four, who has the most fluid?”

Unnamed spirit: “Adèle.”

Victor Hugo: “Mother or daughter?”

Unnamed spirit: “Daughter.”

Victor Hugo: “After her?”

Unnamed spirit: “Auguste [Vacquerie].”

Victor Hugo: “After him?”

Unnamed spirit: “Victor.”

A dozen years later, on the Channel island of Guernsey, Victor would boast to the young French professor Paul Stapfer of the superabundance of magnetic fluid coursing through his veins. “You’re wrong to deny the effectiveness of magnetism,” he told his startled friend.

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"It's no joke. It's a fact acknowledged by science and studied scientifically. When he was little, my son François had insomnia. We tried all the usual ways of getting him to sleep, to no avail. His state of health became so grave we feared we were going to lose him.

"I made some magnetic passes over him. He slept for 15 hours without waking up. The sleep was so restorative, it was so good for him, that the only thing our wondering doctor could tell us was that he'd been cured, and the doctor didn't know why. My child said to me: 'Oh, Papa, go on! More! More! It makes me feel so good!'"

Hugo told Stapfer about an experiment he'd carried out successfully several times: "You suspend a ring at the end of a piece of string from your hand, dangling it over a pail of water. You support your wrist firmly on the table so your hand doesn't shake. You command the ring to turn first in one direction, then in another—then to strike the rim of the pail. You have to *will* the ring to do these things, with every ounce of energy you have. And the ring really does execute every one of these movements....Tapping tables are a reality. What right does science have to deny *a priori* facts just because the explanation escapes it?"

On another occasion, Hugo told Stapfer that he considered as real and not imaginary the "invisible threads that tie our souls to things." The pantheistic philosophy of Victor Hugo's early poetry is everywhere evident. Later, the poet-dramatist's sense of a World Soul animating all things became so intense that he refused to harm animals, would not snip flowers and credited rocks with feelings. In *Philosophy: Beginning of a Book: Second Part* (1861-62), one of the prefaces dropped from *Les Misérables*, Hugo declared unequivocally that, "In everything that nature produces, there is an ingredient that makes all the difference and which science does not possess: the vital fluid...Nature, with its two mysterious levers, the blood's combustion and electrical fluid, animates every muscle of every living being at every moment and in every way." In early chapters of *The Man Who Laughs* (1869), Hugo implies that the hero of his novel is really "the soul," by which he means the "effluvium" or the "ether"—the vital fluid writ large in the universe. Describing a storm at sea, he writes, typically—the refrain runs throughout the book—: "We try to explain everything by

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the action of wind and wave; yet there is a force in the air which is not the wind and a force in the waters which is not the wave. That force, in both air and water, is the effluvium....Effluvium alone is fluid. The wind and the wave are only impulses; effluvium is a current." With such statements, Hugo, remarkably, anticipated Theosophical Society Madame Helena Blavatsky's great work, *Isis Unveiled*, by eight years: The hero (or heroine) of that work is also "the ether."

For Victor Hugo, the experience of the coiling and uncoiling of the vital fluid was almost always a positive one. He believed his two-and-a-half years of encounters with the spirit world on Jersey increased his creative powers fivefold. He wondered if these experiences had not given him the extra energy needed to complete the monumental *Les Misérables*, published in 1862. In all of his later works, as critics are just now beginning to become aware, veiled references to the etheric fluid weave a deeper pattern of vital energy.

Oswald Wirth, on the other hand, seems to have been captured by the dark side of the etheric fluid. He never really departed from the path set for him by his early reading of *Wonder Doctor* in the Benedictines' library; but that path increasingly took him into the shady thickets, bramble patches and poison ivy of the nineteenth century spiritistic movement. His life (in *Stanislas de Guaita*) provides a fascinating glimpse into the great popularity of the notion of "vital fluid" in his time and the huge variety of uses to which believers tried to mold the fluid for their own personal aims. Ultimately, Wirth's life is something of an object lesson in how not to use your animal magnetism.

Following up on his early interest, Wirth became a member of the Société Magnétique de France (the French Magnetic Society) at the age of 20. Here, he says, he learned a great deal about hypnotism from the writings of du Potet. Called to London, he took up with the "magnetizer" Adolphe Didier. He tells us Didier taught him how to feel the fluid at his fingertips, however small an amount, once the "current" had been set up between himself and another person. He learned how to make himself completely passive so that his fund of vital fluid could find its own way, revealing to him the problem areas in the other person without his restricting its movement.

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Back in France, Wirth acquired, he says, “quite a reputation as a mesmerist” during his military service. This led him to a serious misadventure with the fluid. A civilian who was certain he couldn’t be hypnotised challenged Wirth to put him under (hypnotism at the time had more the sense of “invoke the vital fluid” in someone). Wirth accepted the challenge. He writes that he “set about ‘charging him up.’” After some time, Wirth’s efforts seemed to be having no effect—because, he assumed, of the “rebelliousness of the ‘magnetizee,’” who was delighted to have proven that, as he had claimed, he could not be hypnotized. Wirth left the barracks where the session had taken place without giving the subject any further thought.

Three months later, Wirth learned his subject had died. He really had invoked the vital fluid, even if that hadn’t been evident. Without Wirth there to monitor him “the blowhard, thinking he had nothing more to fear, had stopped trying to hold in check the fluid accumulating in him. The swift invasion of that energy within him produced a heavy sleep of more than 24 hours, then periods of deliriousness.”

Wirth continues: “The unfortunate fellow’s friends lost their heads, never thinking of calling me, especially as they’d been fearful of the purported demonic nature of my skills. My victim never regained his mental balance, and I was held responsible for his death, which was actually due to consumption brought on by alcoholism.

“I should have brought him out of whatever state I’d put him in, but his assurances persuaded me to neglect taking that precaution.”

From then on, says Wirth, he took the vital fluid seriously, no longer attempting “experiments meant to convince unbelievers. I had concluded that it was forbidden to play around with magnetism. I decided that from now on I would use my fluid only to cure the sick!”

Wirth did, in fact, achieve some cures in the coming months which surprised even himself, including causing a malignant tumor to disappear. He might have continued along this positive path, had he not met Stanislas de Guaita; the former student of Benedictines fell under the spell of this morphine addict of no little intellectual achievement who had been a disciple of Eliphas Lévi.

De Guaita’s dark passion was to dabble in the black arts of the etheric substance. Wirth, who should have known better, willingly

followed him in these dangerous pursuits. The two quickly became involved in a lethal vital fluid slinging match with others—a match which lasted for a decade and is well-chronicled in the annals of occult lore. In this psychic war, De Guaita and Wirth joined forces with Edouard Dubus, a poet addicted to both morphine and magic, and “Sar Merodack” Josephin Peladan, a novelist and—in the opinion of most—all-round charlatan. The enemy was a defrocked priest named Joseph-Antoine Boullan who had declared himself the “head priest” of a sinister, alternate “religion” called the Church of the Carmel, and Boullan’s middle-aged housekeeper, sexual companion (and Priestess of the Carmel and the Apostolic Woman), Julie Thibault.

Wirth and his companions declared psychic war on Joseph-Antoine Boullan, calling him a monster of evil; considering the dubious paths upon which they now were treading, it was quite an exercise in hypocrisy. Wirth and de Guaita insinuated themselves into Boullan’s Church of the Carmel, disguising their identities and passing themselves off as potential acolytes. As part of their initiation, Boullan taught them lethal spells and incantations. The two immediately left and returned to Paris, setting up an “initiatory tribunal” with Dubus and Peladan. It swiftly found Boullan guilty of Satanism and sentenced him to death.

Terrified that the group was using against him the occult spells which he had taught Wirth and de Guaita, Boullan sent equally allegedly lethal counterspells hurtling through the ether. A dark period of psychic warfare began. At one point, the novelist J.-K. Huysmans was drawn in; Boullan performed what he called “magical operations” to protect Huysmans from the spells cast by de Guaita and Peladan. Huysmans began to be troubled by what he called “fluidic fisticuffs”—blasts of cold air which struck at his face at night and affected his cat at the same time. The spells and counterspells mounted up, becoming more and more elaborate and grotesque; the whole affair came to a head on January 3, 1893, when—six years after psychic war had been declared—Boullan suddenly fell dead. Huysmans’s friend the journalist Jules Bois accused de Guaita of having killed Boullan with black magic. De Guaita challenged Huysmans and Bois to a pistol duel; it was eventually fought between de Guaita and Bois. No one was seriously injured, but Bois later told strange stories about “a horse myste-

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riously halted on the way to the dueling-ground and a bullet magically prevented from leaving a pistol-barrel.”

By now the dark and shabby affair had run its course. Edouard Dubus was committed to an insane asylum. Stanislas de Guaita died of a drug overdose at 27. Oswald Wirth lived to a relatively old age, writing books on a range of occult subjects; if he engaged in further black fluidic activities, he wrote and said absolutely nothing about them.

The bizarre “Sar Merodack” Josephin Peladan’s career still had some way to run. He had established an “alternate” Rosicrucian Society, and continued to organize a succession of artistic salons in Paris, lecturing on how to paint “in the occult manner.” He produced several occult plays, including two that would have caught the attention of Father Pellegrino Ernetti; he claimed they were the missing works of the great Greek dramatist Aeschylus.

Masson, IX, 1487 (*Procès-Verbaux*).

Wirth, 47-49.

Grasset, 12-13.

Chambers, 29.

Ibid., frontispiece.

Ibid., 250.

Stapfer, 148-149.

Ibid., 151.

Masson, XII, 58 (*Philosophie: Commencement d'un Livre, Première Partie*).

Ibid., XIV, 73 (*l'Homme Qui Rit*).

Ibid., 74.

Wirth, 49-53.

Ibid., 97-107, 135-147.

Chapter Fourteen

BRIDE OF THE ETHER

If Jesus Christ was the incarnation of God, Helena Blavatsky was the incarnation of the astral fluid. The founder of the Theosophical Society streamed through life throwing off psychic feats like sparks and assimilating and disgorging occult knowledge as if she were a walking edition of the akashic records. She surmounted physical reality with such apparent ease you might have thought she was not made of physical matter at all, but of some lighter, stronger etheric substance.

In an age of lingering sexism, racism, militarism and elitism—the second half of the nineteenth century—Madame Blavatsky crashed through all the barriers. The women of her day were not thought to be particularly worthy of education; she became fluent in nine languages, including Russian, French, English, German, Arabic, Hindustani, Georgian, Sanskrit and Italian. In most of them she could be as eloquent as an angel or as salty as a sailor, and she had smatterings of many others.

In her time, upper class women were barely allowed to walk outside their estates except when chaperoned by their father or husband; Helena literally ran away from home—and an unfortunate three-month marriage—when she was 18. By her mid-40's, she had gone around the world more than once, always traveling alone. She spent extended periods of time in Mongolia, India, Ceylon, Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Syria, North and South America, Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, England, and probably Tibet; in-between times, she stayed with her family in Russia.

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It wasn't usual for female children of the elite to become superb horsewomen, and certainly not at 14. At that age, Helena could outrace all the serfs on her grandfather's estate; often, she rode horses that were only half-broken. In her early 20s, or so she claimed, she was a bareback rider in a traveling circus.

Blavatsky was a revolutionary in every fiber of her unladylike being. Later in life she enjoyed telling people how she had fought on horseback beside Mazzini at the battle of Mentana in 1867 in the Italian wars of independence. She liked telling them that she had had her horse shot out from under her twice, and she especially liked showing her guests the scars from the five sword and gunshot wounds she had received during the battle.

If it was acceptable in those times for a woman to play the piano, it was less so for her to perform publicly—which, apparently, is what Blavatsky did. And although, of course, it was acceptable for women to manifest psychic phenomena (they were still considered to be the hysterical half), it was certainly showing a high degree of presumption for a woman to found a worldwide organization—the Theosophical Society, in 1875—which sought (with some success) to investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humankind.

Finally, Madame Blavatsky was going well beyond the limits of what was required of a woman when she wrote two books, both 1,500 pages long, one of which, *Isis Unveiled* (1877), is a portrait of the ether in all its manifold guises through the ages, while the other, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), is a description of how, from the beginning of time, that etheric substance composed and recomposed itself through long and tumultuous ages of creation into the physical universe that we now know—and, not least, into ourselves.

In the foreword to K. Paul Johnson's *The Masters Revealed* (1994), Cornell Professor Joscelyn Godwin writes that Madame Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society “stand at the crucial historical moment when it seemed possible to unite science and occultism, in a ‘divine wisdom’ (*theosophia*) for the modern age. In *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine*, and, most of all, in the fourteen volumes of her *Collected Writings*, Blavatsky emerges as certainly the most learned, if not always the wisest woman of her century.”

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Helena Blavatsky's straightforward nature, and her hatred of all forms of oppression—including that of the Christian/Roman Catholic Church—made her many enemies, and those enemies found ways and means of totally belittling her achievement. Even Britain's Society for Psychical Research, which might have been expected to be sympathetic to her aims, investigated and supported claims of two of Madame Blavatsky's employees in India that she had used fraudulent magical practices to promote the Theosophical Society. These charges stuck for almost a century, and only in the past two decades has it become clear that Blavatsky was no fraud and that it was those who brought the charges against her who had engaged in fraud.

Helena Hahn was born in the Ukrainian town of Ekaterinoslav (later Dnepropetrovsk), on August 12, 1831. She came honestly by her bent toward learning and achievement: Her maternal grandmother, Princess Helena Pavlovna, a member of the illustrious Dolgorukov family, was an excellent artist and musician who spoke five languages fluently and pursued distinguished careers in both botany and archaeology. Blavatsky's mother, Helena von Hahn, had managed to become a successful and popular novelist by the time of her sudden death at age 28. Blavatsky's father was Peter Hahn von Rottenstern, a colonel and a member of the lesser Russian-German nobility; his ancestors had been known for their immense personal courage in battle.

The sickly, tiny baby who became Madame Blavatsky was almost consumed in flames at her own baptism. The baptism was held on the afternoon of her birth; she was so frail she was not expected to live. Near the end of the long ceremony, held in one wing of the mansion, a candle-holder—a little girl—sat down sleepily on the floor. As a family member later told the story: "The sponsors were just in the act of renouncing the Evil One and his deeds, a renunciation emphasized in the Greek Church by thrice spitting upon the invisible enemy, when the little lady, toying with her lighted taper at the feet of the crowd, inadvertently set fire to the long flowing robes of the priest....The result was an immediate conflagration, during which several persons—chiefly the old priest—were severely burnt. That was...[a] bad omen, according to the superstitious beliefs of orthodox Russia; and the

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innocent cause of it—the future Madame Blavatsky—was doomed from that day in the eyes of all the town to an eventful life, full of...trouble...”

From earliest childhood, Helena communed with “beings” she called her “hunchbacks” and playmates. Her sister Vera wrote, “When a child, daring and fearless in everything else, she got often scared into fits through her own hallucinations. She felt certain of being persecuted by what she called ‘the terrible glaring eyes’ invisible to everyone else, and often attributed by her to the most inoffensive inanimate objects...she would shut her eyes tight during such visions, and run away to hide from the ghostly glances thrown on her by pieces of furniture or articles of dress, screaming desperately, and frightening the whole household. At other times she would be seized by fits of laughter, explaining them by the amusing pranks of her invisible companions...”

“...For her, all nature seemed animated with a mysterious life of its own. She heard the voice of every object and form, whether organic or inorganic; and claimed consciousness and being, not only for some mysterious powers visible and audible for herself alone in what was to every one else empty space, but even for visible but inanimate things such as pebbles, mounds and pieces of decaying phosphorescent timber.”

Helena could be wildly sociable, playing merrily and aggressively with her friends (she preferred servants to her fellow aristocrats); then, suddenly, she would disappear into her room for days on end, burying herself in her studies (always of her own choosing) to the exclusion of everyone and everything else. She was by turns rebellious and intractable, generous and frank. She could not obey social conventions, and had a disconcerting habit of looking people straight in the eye and telling them when and where they were going to die.

When she was 11, her mother, greatly beloved by all the family, died. The family moved to the estate of her maternal grandfather, Prince Pavel Dolgorouki, in Saratov, Russia; the Prince had died when Helena was seven. Prince Pavel was a distinguished military officer, who had played a key role in the Russian army under the Empress Catherine II; he had also been an important figure in the Masonic

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movement, and had amassed a library containing hundreds of books, many of them quite rare, on alchemy, magic and all the occult sciences.

This library would be a place of refuge and ecstatic learning for Blavatsky during her teenage years. She would spend whole days and nights there. "I had read... [all the books] with the keenest interest before I was 15," she later told friends. The library was reputed to contain an unpublished manuscript by the legendary Count de St.-Germain (who was said to be hundreds of years old) accurately foretelling the course of the French Revolution. Paul Johnson speculates that this manuscript "inflamed her imagination with the idea of mysterious adepts manipulating occult undercurrents of European politics."

Occult library and horseback riding aside, Blavatsky found the chaperoned life on her grandfather's estate insufferable. Finally, her need for independence couldn't be suppressed any longer. But it burst out wrong-headedly, and may have been why Helena abruptly married, at 17, Nikifor Blavatsky, a czarist general and provincial governor 24 years her senior.

According to her aunt, Blavatsky married not to escape her home, but out of an overabundance of defiance. Nadyezhda A. de Fadeyev wrote: "...[Helena] cared not whether she should get married or not. She had been simply defied one day by her governess to find any man who would be her husband, in view of her temper and disposition. The governess, to emphasize the taunt, said that even the old man [Nikifor V. Blavatsky] she had found so ugly, and had laughed at so much, calling him 'a plumeless raven'—that even he would decline her for a wife! That was enough: three days after she made him propose, and then, frightened at what she had done, sought to escape from her joking acceptance of his offer. But it was too late."

The family was appalled, given the huge discrepancy in their ages. The wedding took place on July 7, 1849, shortly before Helena's eighteenth birthday. It was a gala affair, with scores of guests, including 20 dashing Kurdish horsemen who had once ridden under Nikifor's command. The youthful bride refused to consummate the marriage. The couple quarreled fiercely for three months. It was decided that the unmanageable Helena "should be sent to join her father" in Odessa.

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She was dispatched with a maid and an old manservant to board a steamer at Poti, on the Black Sea. Helena slowed the journey down so much that the three literally missed the boat. She bribed the captain of another boat, the *Commodore*, to take them all to Kerch. When they arrived, Blavatsky stayed on board, sending the servants ashore to find an apartment. Then she disguised herself as a cabin boy and continued on with the boat to Constantinople, where she disembarked triumphantly, free at last.

Madame Blavatsky's life, already very unusual, now became unique of its kind. It is hard to chart her progress in those early years. She seems to have been driven by a spirit of adventure and a burning desire to unearth the secrets of alchemy wherever they could be found around the globe. Orientalist Albert Leighton Rawson wrote that he encountered her in Cairo, in early 1851, where she had been studying for three months with the famed Coptic magician Paolos Metamon. She seems to have gone from Cairo to Paris; this was the heyday of the "table-turning" craze; Alfred Percy Sinnett, who would become the great friend of the Theosophical Society, wrote that while there she met "many literary celebrities of the day, and...a famous mesmerist." At the end of 1851, she was in London studying piano.

It was in London that something of immense importance to her whole life happened. The Swedish Countess Constance Wachtmeister, with whom Blavatsky lived near the end of her life, has left this account: "...During her childhood...[Madame Blavatsky] had often seen near her an Astral form, that always seemed to come in any moment of danger, and save her just at the crucial point. H.P.B. had learnt to look upon this astral form as a guardian angel, and felt that she was under His care and guidance....In London, in 1851..., she was one day out walking when, to her astonishment, she saw a tall Hindu in the street with some Indian princes. She immediately recognized him as the same person that she had seen in the Astral."

Wachtmeister says the Hindu signaled Blavatsky not to come near. She returned to the park the next day. The Hindu reappeared, and this time approached her. He told her he was in London on an important mission and needed to meet her. "He then told her how the

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Theosophical Society was to be formed, and that he wished her to be the founder. He gave her a slight sketch of all the troubles she would have to undergo, and also told her she would have to spend three years in Tibet to prepare her for the important task."

Blavatsky is said to have left shortly thereafter for Tibet. She later claimed she entered the country and studied there for three years with the Hindu master whom she had met in London and now called Mahatma Morya, or M. Her claim is hotly disputed to this day; it was virtually impossible for foreign women to enter Tibet at the time. But Mahatma Morya had assumed a permanent role in her life, or at least her account of it. The "Hindu" would appear and reappear time and again, usually in astral form. H.P.B. would receive letters which she claimed had come from him; the delivery was usually via the astral plane. A second "Mahatma," Koot Hoomi, soon entered her life, and would play a similar role. The charisma of these two "Mahatmas," whatever their true nature, would one day help Blavatsky attract adherents to the Theosophical Society.

That Society was still a long way off. In the mid-1850s, Blavatsky traveled to Canada, the U.S. and South America, apparently spending much time with the native peoples of these countries. She returned to Europe via Cape Horn, Ceylon and India; it was at this point, she said, that she had spent time in Tibet. She returned to Russia and her family, then sojourned for awhile in Germany. From 1860-1865 she lived and traveled in the Caucasus, experiencing a severe physical and psychic crisis which, she would later claim, left her once and for all in full control of her psychic and mediumistic abilities. She then undertook further trips to the Balkans, Greece, Egypt, and Italy. Returning to Asia, she went on to Greece, from whence she embarked by ship for Cairo; the ship, the *Eunomia*, carrying gunpowder and fireworks, blew up in mid-voyage. Of the 400 passengers, only 17 survived. Blavatsky lost all her money and possessions. She would recall swimming through a sea of disembodied heads and limbs.

The year 1872 saw Blavatsky in Cairo again. She was trying to set up a spiritistic "closet of miracles"—public seances where you paid to hear the spirits speak. She apparently had trouble finding good mediums. This exploit would bring opprobrium upon her. Emma

The World's First Time Machine

Coulomb—who, years later, at Theosophist headquarters in India, would accuse Blavatsky of fraud—then in Egypt, wrote of her unsuccessful efforts to attend this “closet of miracles;” she was asked to try again the next day: Of that next day, she wrote:

“I called again when the closet was ready, but what was my surprise when, instead of finding the kind spirits there to answer our questions, I found a room full of people, all alive, and using most offensive language toward the founder of the society, saying that she had taken their money and left them only with this, pointing at the space between the wall and the cloth, where several pieces of twine were still hanging which had served to pull through the ceiling a long glove stuffed with cotton, which was to represent the materialized hand and arm of some spirit. I went away, leaving the crowd as red as fire, ready to knock her [Blavatsky] down when she came back. Later on I met her again, and I asked her how she came to do such a thing; to which she answered that it was Madame Sebire’s doings (this was a lady who lived with Madame Blavatsky), so I let this matter drop. I saw that she looked very unhappy.”

This was not the first time—and absolutely not the last time—Blavatsky would be accused of fraudulent practices.

The year 1873 saw Helena Petrovna Blavatsky beginning to come to earth, if such a turn of phrase could ever be applicable to her. She disembarked in New York City and set up shop as a medium. By now she had acquired a certain international fame; the New York newspapers had greeted her coming with excitement and anticipation. Lengthy articles described her moves. High society lined up to attend her seances. Along with the usual spiritualist phenomena, the participants were fascinated by spirit writings which appeared on the walls in an unknown language that, to this day, no one has deciphered.

Madame Blavatsky very soon lost interest in the “spiritualist department store” she had set up. She had never placed much stock in what the spirit voices had to say, anyway. It was at this moment that Henry Steel Olcott stepped into her life.

Olcott was a lawyer and journalist who had served as a colonel in the American Civil War and was now a reporter for the *New York Daily*

Graphic. He had distinguished himself sufficiently in his careers to be one of a panel of three men appointed by the government to investigate Lincoln's assassination. When Blavatsky met him, he had turned his reportorial talents to the investigation of an abiding interest: the occult.

He and Blavatsky hit it off immediately. He captivated her with his alert inquiring intelligence and his great competence. Because of him, she changed her attitude to the opposite sex almost overnight; Helena began to exude a certain feminine charm and kindness that no one had ever seen in her before. For his part, Olcott was fascinated by her passionate nature, so much so that she only had to suggest mildly that he become her manager for him to immediately leave his wife and three children (the marriage had not been a happy one) and assume that role in her life—one that he would fulfil for years to come. They often lived in the same building, but never quite together; their relationship remained a superbly platonic one. Olcott never ceased to tirelessly and effusively express his admiration for "this marvelous woman." In October, 1874, the two founded the "Miracle Club." In 1875, its name was changed to the Theosophical Society.

The word "theosophical" comes from the Greek word *theos*, meaning "God," and the Greek word *sophia*, meaning "wisdom." Theosophy differed from "philosophy" (*philos* means "love of") in that it subordinated the rigorous logic of traditional philosophy (which nonetheless was supposed to remain a part of theosophy) to the free flow of fantasies and the imagination. The goal of the Theosophical Society was to attain to a knowledge of the higher world which was "revealed" rather than arrived at through argumentation; it aimed at a kind of direct, godlike illumination. The Society's other two goals were to form a nucleus of what it called "the universal Brotherhood of Humanity," without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour, and to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.

As the new society's recording secretary, it was Madame Blavatsky who determined its ideological orientation. She decided to relegate any interest in occult phenomena to the background. She called in two special advisors: the Mahatmas Morya and Koot Hoomi. "I

am only a medium," she always claimed, explaining that her job was merely to accurately record the illuminations afforded by these two Mahatmas. Blavatsky now launched upon a period of even more intense activity than ever. The Society attracted a great deal of interest, especially through the promotional efforts of Olcott and Blavatsky. It also attracted much controversy. That controversy was greatly compounded when Blavatsky's first book, *Isis Unveiled*, was published in 1877. It sold the 1,000 copies of the first printing in ten days, a phenomenon at the time. The New York *Herald-Tribune* considered the work to be one of the "remarkable productions of the century." For the most part the public loved it, though some took issue with its anti-clerical tilt. On the whole, the savants of the day, while acknowledging the breathtaking breadth and depth of learning in Blavatsky's book, savaged it for the utterly uncritical way in which she had thrown everything together in one heap, from the merest lunatic rumors to solid learning gleaned from well-known texts. Embroiled in these controversies, exhausted and distracted, Blavatsky decided that a clearer line of communication with the Mahatmas—who, after all, provided all the information—would be created if they moved as close to them as possible. To that end, she and her manager, Olcott, would travel to India and set up the Theosophical Society in that ancient seedbed of great religions. The decision was made; they set sail in late 1878—Blavatsky had become an American citizen on July 8 of that year—and arrived in Bombay in February, 1879.

Madame Blavatsky's life now becomes so rich and dense that it is impossible to chronicle it briefly. The founders launched the influential *Theosophical Journal*, then traveled extensively through India, establishing many important local contacts. In May, 1882, a huge estate was bought in southern India at Adyar, near Madras, and Theosophical Society headquarters were moved there at the end of the year.

Helena was totally convinced of the importance and necessity of her mission. Settled in Adyar, she called herself a "machine under full steam." She was certainly that—though her outer appearance hardly gibed with her glittering inner lights: she now weighed 230 pounds and some referred to her as the "old hippopotamus;" always indifferent to clothes, she wore the same bright-red flannel blouse for months;

and she was a prodigious chain-smoker who often settled her nerves with marijuana.

But all could see that this did not matter; despite her volcanic temper which alternated with her volcanic charm, Blavatsky accomplished a prodigious amount. Her writings, widely disseminated, primarily by the organs of the Society, would amount to fourteen volumes beyond her two great books; through numerous visits and alliances with Hindu religious and secular leaders, she would attract much attention to the Society and make its influence felt both in India and the U.K. There was always great controversy, and great ups and downs. But the Society moved forward, opening minds to long-forgotten vistas of the soul which were now urgently needed to counterbalance the numbing encroachments of modern technology.

The magnificently vital and brilliant Madame Blavatsky was finally brought to ground by accusations of fraud which were leveled at her in India, and which, taken up by the press worldwide, were supported by Britain's influential Society for Psychical Research. K. Paul Johnson sums up the circumstances in *The Masters Revealed*:

“[In 1884]...charges of fraud against Madame Blavatsky were made that year by two disgruntled employees, Alexis and Emma Coulomb, who claimed to have participated in fakery of psychic phenomena aimed at proving the Mahatmas' existence. Among the Coulombs' charges were that the Shrine was designed to allow letters to be inserted through a sliding panel in the back, making it seem that they materialized inside it paranormally. Their accusations led to an investigation by Richard Hodgson, sent to India by the Society for Psychical Research. He concluded that the Masters were nonexistent and all their alleged phenomena fraudulent, but Theosophists rejected his report as based on lies by the Coulombs. For the past century, opinion on the Hodgson report has been polarized between those who regard it as definitive proof of fraud and those who reject it as totally unjust.”

It is becoming clear today that Madame Blavatsky was not guilty of fraud in the Adyar affair. The report of the Society for Psychical Research was hastily put together and hastily approved, with great

prejudice against Blavatsky; the Society, however unconsciously, wished to crush the theosophists and their leader. At stake was the power to legislate the truth about psychic reality; what was involved was psychic politics—psychic wars. Caught between a jealous, establishment Society for Psychical Research on one side, and two jealous, self-righteous co-workers on the other, Blavatsky had no chance. Her inner fortitude was such that she did not dwell on the matter over-much; but the Theosophical Society would be broken as a viable force to mold the world.

Sylvia Cranston tells us, in *H.P.B.*, that in 1986—a century later—the SPR “issued a press release stating that ‘the exposure’ of the Russian-born Occultist, Madame H.P. Blavatsky by the SPR in 1885, is in serious doubt, with the publication in the SPR Journal (vol. 53 April 1986) of a forceful critique of the 1885 report,’ by Dr. Vernon Harrison, a ‘long-standing member of the SPR.’”

Cranston quotes the press release:

“Central to the case were two sets of disputed letters. One set, provided by two dismissed employees of The Theosophical Society at its headquarters in India, were supposedly in the handwriting of Madame Blavatsky and implicated her in fraudulent psychic phenomena. The other set, were ostensibly written in support of The Theosophical Society by members of an oriental fraternity, popularly called Mahatmas. Dr. Hodgson accepted the genuineness of the first set [but] argued that the Mahatma Letters were spurious productions by Madame Blavatsky and occasional confederates. Dr. Harrison, on the contrary, suggests that it is the incriminating letters that are forgeries, concocted by the ex-employees for revenge; while the bulk of the Mahatma Letters, now preserved in the British Library, are not in Madame Blavatsky’s handwriting, disguised or otherwise.”

Cranston also quotes from an interview Charles Johnston had with Blavatsky in London in the spring of 1887. Johnston was a founder of the Dublin Theosophical Society, who later taught Sanskrit at Columbia University in New York. In the course of the interview, Blavatsky asked Johnston if he had read the report of the Society for Psychical Research. Johnston has left us this account of his thoughts at the time:

“Yes, I read the Report. But I knew its contents already. I was at the meeting when it was first read, two years ago. But, as far as I could see, [Hodgson] had never really investigated any occult phenomena at all; he simply investigated dim and confused memories about them in the minds of indifferent witnesses. [SPR Head Myers] came down among us after the meeting, and smilingly asked me what I thought of the Report. I answered that it was the most unfair and one-sided thing I had ever heard of, and that if I had not already been a member of your Society, I should have joined on the strength of that attack. He smiled a kind of sickly smile, and passed on.”

But Blavatsky finally left India, though the Society she left behind continued to make its influence felt to some extent. She spent periods of time in parts of Europe and finally settled in London; in 1888, her second great work, *The Secret Doctrine*, appeared. She died on May 8, 1891, worn out at 59 and finally succumbing to a host of illnesses which she had ignored for the last two decades of her life.

During her lifetime, Helena Blavatsky was often accused of sexual promiscuity, even of sexual perversities. She was said to have had a deformed son by the Prince Emile de Wittgenstein, when she was a ‘demi-monde’ in Paris in 1857 or ‘58; the son was supposed to have died in Kieff in 1868. There were rumors that she had been married many times.

All of these rumors were untrue and slanderous. It is true that she married twice. The first time was with Nikifor Blavatsky, whom she did not see again after three months; the second time was with Michael Betanelly, a Georgian from the Caucasus, in New York, in 1875. This marriage also lasted only a few months; Blavatsky married Betanelly because he was infatuated with her, she couldn’t get rid of him, and he threatened to commit suicide if they didn’t marry. This marriage, too, was unconsummated.

Blavatsky’s most stimulating relationships with men were superbly platonic ones, such as that with Henry Steel Olcott. She may well have remained a virgin all her life—at least as regards mating with normal, earth-bound men. She often told people she had fallen off her horse while a bareback rider and had suffered an injury that made

it impossible for her to have children; the implication was that it also made it impossible for her to have sex.

Blavatsky may have been truly married only to the immense and vibrant astral energies which rose and fell within her, and to their manifestation as powerful guardian entities which followed and protected her all of her life. Her sister Vera tells an eerie story of a wound which Blavatsky had suffered and which had reopened while she was staying with her father and sister at a country house at Rugodevo, in Russia, in 1859:

“[But] the quiet life of the sisters at Rugodevo was brought to an end by a terrible illness which befell Mme. Blavatsky. Years before, perhaps during her solitary travels in the steppes of Asia, she had received a remarkable wound. We could never learn how she had met with it. Suffice to say that the profound wound reopened occasionally, and during that time she suffered intense agony, often bringing on convulsions and a death-like trance. The sickness used to last from three to four days, and then the wound would heal as suddenly as it had re-opened, as though an invisible hand had closed it, and there would remain no trace of her illness. But the affrighted family was ignorant at first of this strange peculiarity, and their despair and fear were great indeed. A physician was sent for...; but he proved of little use, not so much indeed through his ignorance of surgery, as owing to a remarkable phenomenon which left him almost powerless to act through sheer terror at what he witnessed. He had hardly examined the wound of the patient prostrated before him in complete unconsciousness, when suddenly he saw a large, dark hand between his own and the wound he was going to anoint. The gaping wound was near the heart, and the hand kept lowly moving at several intervals from the neck down to the waist. To make his terror worse, there began suddenly in the room such a terrific noise, such a chaos of noises and sounds from the ceiling, the floor, window-panes, and every bit of furniture in the apartment, that he begged he might not be left alone in the room with the insensible patient.”

The sexual innuendos in this passage are uncanny and unmistakable: it as if the female sexual organ were opening periodically, though “near the heart,” to receive the male; but the male comes in the form

of a hand of dark, pure, etheric energies which, caressing it, is the personification in flesh of the astral energies that guard and love Blavatsky in her tumultuous journey through life.

It was on the subject of these energies that Helena Blavatsky, as much their earthly bride as Mary was the bride of God or Leda the consort of Zeus, would write in her two great books, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*.

Johnson, xv.

Ibid., 39-40.

Ibid., xv.

Caldwell, 21-22.

Ibid., 25-26.

Johnson, 19-20.

Caldwell, 28.

Cranston, 36.

Johnson, 36.

Cranston, 105

Caldwell, 45-46.

Johnson, 2-3.

Cranston, 265, 328.

Ibid., 375.

Ibid., 133.

Caldwell, 36-37.

Chapter Fifteen

PORTRAIT OF THE ETHER

It is not quite true to say that Madame Blavatsky's masterpieces *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* were channeled to her—that is, dictated by discarnate entities, whatever that may mean. But her books were written in a most unusual manner. It is almost as if a committee of discarnate adepts were sitting in the stacks of the main library of the akashic records, waiting at her beck and call to take over her body and write for her, or deliver to her akashic proto-copies of books, both lost and in print on earth, that she might need to take a look at.

In autumn, 1875, Blavatsky spent time at the home of Cornell Literature Professor Dr. Hiram Corson, in Ithaca, New York. In 1910, Corso jotted down his recollections of her methods of creation:

“She continually filled me with amazement and curiosity as to what was coming next. She had a profound knowledge of everything, and her method of work was most unusual. She would write in bed, from nine o'clock in the morning, smoking innumerable cigarettes, quoting long verbatim paragraphs from dozens of books of which I am perfectly certain there were no copies at that time in America, translating easily from several languages, and occasionally calling out to me, in my study, to know how to turn some old-world idiom into literary English...She herself told me that she wrote...[down quotations from books] as they appeared to her eyes on another plane of objective existence, that she clearly saw the page of the book, and the quotation she needed, and simply translated what she saw into English....The hundreds of books she quoted were certainly not in

my library...and if her quotations were from memory, then it was an even more startling feat than writing them from the ether....”

Blavatsky wrote a great deal of *Isis Unveiled* with Henry S. Olcott, who sat across a table from her correcting drafts. We are hard-put to doubt this former Army colonel and first-rate journalist, who was well-enough respected by his peers to be chosen one of a three-man committee investigating Abraham Lincoln's assassination, when he writes, in *Old Diary Leaves*:

“Her pen would be flying over the page, when she would suddenly stop, look out into space with the vacant eye of a clairvoyant seer, shorten her vision as though to look at something held invisible in the air before her, and begin copying on her paper what she saw...I remember well two instances when I, also, was able to see and even handle books from whose astral duplicates she copied quotations into her manuscript, and which she was obliged to ‘materialize’ for me, to refer to when reading the proofs, as I refused to pass the pages for the ‘strike-off’ unless my doubts as to the accuracy of her copy were satisfactory.”

On one occasion when Olcott refused to okay the pages, Blavatsky replied, as Olcott writes: “‘Well, keep still a minute and I’ll try to get it.’ The far-away look came into her eyes, and presently she pointed to a far corner of the room, to an *étagère* on which were kept some curios, and in a hollow voice said: ‘There!’ and then came to herself again. ‘There; there; go look for it over there!’ I went, and found the two volumes wanted, which, to my knowledge, had not been in the house until that very moment.”

Olcott located the quotations, made the corrections, and then, at Blavatsky's request, returned the two volumes to the place on the *étagère* where he had found them: “I resumed my seat and work, and when, after awhile, I looked again in that direction, the books had disappeared!”

Olcott says the manuscript pages from Blavatsky were in three or four different handwritings, markedly different from each other but internally consistent. “Most perfect of all were the manuscripts which were written for her while she was sleeping. The beginning of the chapter on the civilization of ancient Egypt (vol. i, chap. xiv) is an

illustration.” One night, they both left off their work exhausted at 2 a.m.; Olcott writes that, “The next morning, when I came down after my breakfast, she showed me a pile of at least thirty or forty pages of beautifully written H.P.B. manuscript, which, she said, she had written for her by— well, a Master, whose name has never yet been degraded like some others. It was perfect in every respect, and went to the printers without revision.”

The books produced by these methods—*Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*—were huge accretions of learning, shot through with curious and sometimes splendid insights. Blavatsky was accused of being hugely derivative in these works, not to say of having hugely plagiarized. But she meant to be derivative. She writes in *The Secret Doctrine*:

“As well charge Renan with having stolen his *Vie de Jesus* from the Gospels, and Max Müller his ‘Sacred Books of the East’ ... from the philosophies of the Brahmins and Gautama, the Buddha. But to the public in general and the readers of *The Secret Doctrine*, I may repeat what I have stated all along, and which I now clothe in the words of Montaigne: GENTLEMEN, ‘I HAVE HERE MADE ONLY A NOSEGAY OF CULLED FLOWERS, AND HAVE BROUGHT NOTHING OF MY OWN BUT THE STRING THAT TIES THEM.’”

Caldwell writes that “*Isis Unveiled* outlines the history, scope and development of the Occult Sciences, the nature and origin of Magic, the roots of Christianity, the errors of Christian Theology and the fallacies of established orthodox Science, against the backdrop of the secret teachings which run as a golden thread through bygone centuries, coming up to the surface every now and then in the various mystical movements of the last two thousand years or so.”

Blavatsky saw herself as a clearinghouse for all of the sacred texts ever created by humanity, from our time back through the most ancient of known documents, and then still farther back, to books beyond books, to sacred writings which are evanescent, ethereal, living representations of the essence of things and not books at all—to, in fact, the proto-book of the akashic records. She begins both *Isis Un-*

veiled and *The Secret Doctrine* with reference to a single, primordial, virtually archetypal text. The two texts seem to be different for the two books; but, in *The Secret Doctrine*, the first seems to be subsumed into the second, which Blavatsky calls "*The Book of Dzŷyan*." The founder of Theosophy tells us that even now she can see this proto-book, written in the "*Sinŷar*" language, as she saw it in the library of the Mahatmas in Tibet and as she sees it in astral form in her mind's eye. Before her eyes is, "An Archaic Manuscript—a collection of palm leaves made impermeable to water, fire, and air, by some specific unknown process—is before the writer's eyes. On the first page is an immaculate white disk within a dull black ground. On the following page, the same disk, but with a central point..."

With this description, we have, on the one hand, the impression of being in a world, not of language at all, but of symbology, of suggestions of the essences of things; what Blavatsky sees, she sees with her soul, and—since we do not see with our souls, at least, not yet—she can convey only the grossest of approximations to us.

On the other hand, Blavatsky does seem to be making reference to a particular book; and, in our day, some scholars believe they have found that book. K. Paul Johnson explains: "Although there have been efforts to identify it [*The Book of Dzŷyan*], for example by Gershom Scholem who thought it a Kabbalistic text, none has succeeded in relating its contents to those of known sources. The most promising development occurred in 1983, when David Reigle, a student of Tibetan, recognized that HPB's citation of the 'Books of Kiu-te' as the source of the stanzas refers to the Tibetan Kanjur, a multivolume set of Buddhist scriptures. Ranbir Singh had this translated by his scholars into Sanskrit, which HPB knew well according to Swami Dayananda's testimony."

Blavatsky wastes no time in broaching the subject of *Isis Unveiled*, one culled from all the "secret doctrines" of the ages; she writes that, "A conviction, founded upon seventy thousand years of experience, as they allege, has been entertained by Hermetic philosophers of all periods that matter has in time become, through sin, more gross and dense than it was at man's first formation; that, at the beginning, the human body was of a half-ethereal nature; and that, before the fall,

mankind communed freely with the now unseen universes. But since that time matter has become the formidable barrier between us and the world of spirits. The oldest esoteric traditions also teach that, before the mystic Adam, many races of human beings lived and died out, each giving place in its turn to another.”

Isis Unveiled quickly becomes a portrait of the ether. This ether has a thousand and one names; Blavatsky gives us a few of them:

“Those who have not given attention to the subject may be surprised to find how much was known in former days of that all-pervading, subtle principle which has recently been baptised the ‘universal ether.’

- the Chaos of the ancients;
- the Zoroastrian sacred fire;
- the *Atas-Bebram* of the Parsis;
- the Hermes-fire;
- the St. Elmo's fire of the ancient Germans;
- the lightning of Cybele;
- the burning torch of Apollo;
- the flame on the altar of Pan;
- the inextinguishable fire in the temple on the Acropolis, and in that of Vestra;
- the fire-flame of Pluto's realm.

In the process of discussing the many guises of the ether, Madame Blavatsky introduces the subject of the cosmic catastrophes which, according to occult lore, have decimated our earth periodically. She will have much to say about the “*Sidereal year*”—the huge, cyclical movement of the earth among the stars, determined by the precession of the equinoxes, which takes place over a period of more than 25,000 years and which was thought by the ancients to trigger, when it came full term, geological catastrophe.

It is because of these periodical purgings that we have lost so many of our ancient sacred writings. These destructions by fire and water have destroyed whole races of peoples, those constituting the “root races,” of which we are the “fifth” (Blavatsky's root-race system is extremely complicated, and includes innumerable “sub-root races” along with parallel phenomena and “before and after” root races). In

the "Anthropogenesis" second half of *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky describes these root races in detail, and we encounter the theme again and again in the 14 volumes of her *Collected Writings*. Colin Wilson provides as good a brief summary as possible of this vast and strange subject, writing:

"According to her later doctrine—sketched only briefly in *Isis Unveiled*—man is not the first intelligent dweller on earth. The first 'root race' consisted of invisible beings made of fire mist. The third race was more solid and lived on an island continent called Lemuria—or Mu—in the Indian Ocean, and consisted of ape-like giants who communicated telepathically and lacked the power of reason. The fourth race lived in Atlantis, and achieved a very high degree of civilization. They were destroyed by natural cataclysms; the last part of Atlantis, an island called Poseidonus, went down after a battle between selfish magicians and the people of an island called Shamballah. Our present race is the fifth root race, and—where matter is concerned—we are the most 'solid' so far. This means that we find it far more difficult to express the power of the spirit; yet matter also enables us to be far more potentially creative than earlier root races. The root races—the sixth and seventh—that will follow ours will again be more ethereal.

"How does she know this? According to Madame Blavatsky, the universe is permeated by a kind of psychic 'ether' called Akasha (which, in Hindu philosophy, means simply space). This psychic ether explains, for example, the operations of telepathy and clairvoyance which are 'waves' in the ether. It also *records* everything that has ever happened, and these 'Akashic' records are available to clairvoyants and mystics....She adds that anyone who can read the records of the past can also read the future, since it is already present in embryo."

The Secret Doctrine, published in 1888, is every bit as remarkable as *Isis Unveiled* in its treatment of "the ether," and takes the story a great deal farther. It describes the descent of being into matter. It is also a portrait of the ether, but a portrait of the ether in the process of assuming its guises.

In her second book, Blavatsky tells us that the true story of the ether begins much farther back than she can ever begin it. This is

because, though the ether is fundamental and primordial, it is simply the first fundamental, primordial substance which, however grossly and inaccurately, man is able to begin to think about at all. Behind and beyond the ether lie multiple stages of unimaginably purer and purer essence, stretching back to the ineffable One which is the universe in all its purity and at its very beginning (this is in itself a very poor description, since the One could have had neither Beginning nor Purity, in that that would make it the Many and not the One).

In principle, the “secret teachings” of Blavatsky contain no new revelations; on the contrary, they are filled with quotations, which were taken—as can be proven—from very rare, older writings. For her source material, Blavatsky consulted at least 100 of these works, which were based on a further approximately 1300 written documents.

In actuality, *The Secret Doctrine* takes a much more daring leap backward in time or, indeed, out of time altogether. Perhaps it is through the daring engendered by her learning combined with her visionary imagination; perhaps channeling is involved; but Blavatsky does no less than tackle the ultimate question of philosophy:

Why is there Something and not Nothing?

At the beginning of *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*, “New Age” philosopher Ken Wilbur writes: “It is flat-out strange that something—that anything—is happening at all. There was nothing, then a Big Bang, then here we all are. This is extremely weird.” The ancient Greeks called this the problem of the One and the Many. They, and Plato in particular, wondered how it was that the One—the Godhead—being complete in itself, had any need to become the Many. Plato addresses this problem in the *Parmenides*; all the philosophies of the Far East address it as well. To cite one example, in Kashmir Shaivism, the question is asked, why is it that God, being Chitvilasananda—bliss, conscious knowledge, and energy—has need of being anything more? Why did He have to become the physical universe (the question of how it is that the One initially differentiated into the threefold nature of bliss, conscious knowledge, and energy is considered pointless to ask; only direct illumination can provide the hint of an answer). The seers of Kashmir Shaivism, and of many

other ancient Far Eastern religions, go on to seek to explain, with varying degrees of success, the necessary descent of the physical expression of being—the illusions of Maya—down the ladder of increasing grossness to mankind itself.

Blavatsky focuses, in her presentation of *The Book of Dz̄yan*, on the creation of our Solar System, and the migration, down through the outer planets to the inner, of the subtle spirit which over the course of inconceivable aeons will become our species. She makes it clear that the descriptions in these stanzas, or “slokas,” are a template for all the other stages of creation in the universe: “The Stanzas, therefore, give an abstract formula which can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to all evolution: to that of our tiny earth, to that of the chain of planets of which the earth forms one, to the Solar Universe to which that chain belongs, and so on, in an ascending scale, till the mind reels and is exhausted in the effort.”

Stanza one, comprising nine verses in all, describes a state of Oneness which cannot be expressed in words insofar as words imply the Many. Therefore, it must be described in terms of what it is not (all of the following Stanzas belong to the “Cosmogogenesis” section of *The Secret Doctrine*):

1. THE ETERNAL PARENT WRAPPED IN HER EVER INVISIBLE ROBES HAD SLUMBERED ONCE AGAIN FOR SEVEN ETERNITIES.
2. TIME WAS NOT, FOR IT LAY ASLEEP IN THE INFINITE BOSOM OF DURATION.
3. UNIVERSAL MIND WAS NOT, FOR THERE WERE NO AH-HI TO CONTAIN IT.
4. THE SEVEN WAYS TO BLISS WERE NOT. THE GREAT CAUSES OF MISERY WERE NOT, FOR THERE WAS NO ONE TO PRODUCE AND GET ENSNARED BY THEM.
5. DARKNESS ALONE FILLED THE BOUNDLESS ALL, FOR FATHER, MOTHER AND SON WERE ONCE MORE ONE, AND THE SON HAD NOT AWAKENED YET FOR THE NEW WHEEL, AND HIS PILGRIMAGE THEREON.

The World's First Time Machine

Stanza Two is a description of the solicitation (quite unknowable, however beautifully expressed) by the One of that which will enable it to begin the descent into the Many—a descent the necessity of which seems to be belied by the very nature of the One.

1. . . . WHERE WERE THE BUILDERS, THE LUMINOUS SONS OF MANVANTARIC DAWN? . . . IN THE UNKNOWN DARKNESS IN THEIR AH-HI PARANISHPANNA. THE PRODUCERS OF FORM FROM NO-FORM — THE ROOT OF THE WORLD — THE DEVAMATRI AND SVABHAVAT, RESTED IN THE BLISS OF NON-BEING.

2. . . . WHERE WAS SILENCE? WHERE THE EARS TO SENSE IT? NO, THERE WAS NEITHER SILENCE NOR SOUND; NAUGHT SAVE CEASELESS ETERNAL BREATH, WHICH KNOWS ITSELF NOT.

3. THE HOUR HAD NOT YET STRUCK; THE RAY HAD NOT YET FLASHED INTO THE GERM; THE MATRIPADMA HAD NOT YET SWOLLEN.

Blavatsky says these early verses of this Stanza (there are six verses in all) deal only with our planetary system, and that the “Builders,” the “Sons of the Manvantaric Dawn,” are, in this context, the architects of our planetary system, and “are also called the ‘Watchers’ of the Seven Spheres.” Later on, she states that “...what is called ‘unconscious Nature’ is in reality an aggregate of forces manipulated by semi-intelligent beings (Elementals) guided by High Planetary Spirits (Dhyan Chohans), whose collective aggregate forms the manifested *verbum* of the manifested LOGOS, and constitutes at one and the same time the MIND of the Universe.”

These statements have made Blavatsky beloved of adherents to the Erich von Daniken “ancient astronaut” school of thought (there continue to be many believers in von Daniken’s theory, particularly in the German-speaking countries); Blavatsky writes as if the spiritual energies on their way to becoming man are guided by extraterrestrial beings, who will stay with humankind during its first long aeons on our planet (the spiritual energies have somehow come via the moon).

Stanza Three (what follows is only a small portion) represents, according to Blavatsky, the equivalent of the first chapter of *Genesis*, describing as it does the first infusion of divine life into the earth:

1. THE LAST VIBRATION OF THE SEVENTH ETERNITY THRILLS THROUGH INFINITUDE. THE MOTHER SWELLS, EXPANDING FROM WITHIN WITHOUT LIKE THE BUD OF THE LOTUS.
2. THE VIBRATION SWEEPS ALONG, TOUCHING WITH ITS SWIFT WING THE WHOLE UNIVERSE AND THE GERM THAT DWELLETH IN DARKNESS: THE DARKNESS THAT BREATHES OVER THE SLUMBERING WATERS OF LIFE.
3. DARKNESS RADIATES LIGHT, AND LIGHT DROPS ONE SOLITARY RAY INTO THE MOTHER-DEEP. THE RAY SHOOTS THROUGH THE VIRGIN EGG, THE RAY CAUSES THE ETERNAL EGG TO THRILL, AND DROP THE NON-ETERNAL GERM, WHICH CONDENSES INTO THE WORLD-EGG.
4. THEN THE THREE FALL INTO THE FOUR. THE RADIANT ESSENCE BECOMES SEVEN INSIDE, SEVEN OUTSIDE. THE LUMINOUS EGG, WHICH IN ITSELF IS THREE, CURDLES AND SPREADS IN MILK-WHITE CURDS THROUGHOUT THE DEPTHS OF MOTHER, THE ROOT THAT GROWS IN THE DEPTHS OF THE OCEAN OF LIFE.

To jump ahead in our exploration of *The Book of Dzyan*: the founder of the Theosophical Society claims that the first verse of Stanza Five provides us with a hint of the answer to the great question of philosophy: Why did the One become the Many? She quotes the words of the philosopher Hegel, that “the Unconscious evolved the Universe only ‘in the hope of attaining clear self-consciousness,’ of becoming, in other words, MAN.” Blavatsky further explains, in connection with Stanza Five, that “in order to become a divine, fully conscious god—aye, even the highest—the spiritual primeval INTELLIGENCES must pass through the human stage.... This explains also the hidden Kabalistic meaning of the saying: “The Breath becomes

a stone; the stone, a plant; the plant, an animal; the animal, a man; the man, a spirit; and the spirit, a god.”

The relevant verse is unusually mysterious—even by the standards of *The Book of Dzyan*:

I. THE PRIMORDIAL SEVEN, THE FIRST SEVEN BREATHS OF THE DRAGON OF WISDOM, PRODUCE IN THEIR TURN FROM THEIR HOLY CIRCUMGYRATING BREATHS THE FIERY WHIRLWIND.

There are many more such stanzas and verses; those quoted above at least impart the flavor of the strange and inscrutable *Book of Dzyan*. Relying on these stanzas, Blavatsky goes on to make statements which are very contemporary in their “New Age” connotation. She asserts that intelligent races roamed the earth thousands, in fact millions, of years before the time that geologists generally propose. She stretches the credulity even of ancient astronaut theory proponents by stating that intelligent life arrived on our planet as far back as 300 million years ago! How did it survive the hostile conditions then prevailing? Blavatsky claims that the first two-and-a-half root races were “the *primeval, ethereal man of the Occult teachings*,” they consisted of an “*astral body within the physical*,” and seem to have dwelt in rocks and plants—which is why *The Book of Dzyan* calls them “boneless.” Physical humanity emerged 18 million years ago—at the time when the matter of our planet assumed its present “density,” having evolved through the aeons from an initial state of pure etheric being.

Entering into this degree of physicality meant that we would inevitably, and necessarily, lose touch with our astral beings. Blavatsky asserts that, “As the ‘coats of skin’ of men thickened, and they fell more and more into physical sin, the intercourse between physical and ethereal divine man was stopped. The veil of matter between the two planes became too dense for even the inner man to penetrate. The mysteries of Heaven and Earth, revealed to the Third Race by their celestial Teachers in the days of their purity, became a great focus of light, the rays from which became necessarily weakened as they were diffused and shed upon an uncongenial, because too material soil.

With the masses they degenerated into Sorcery, taking later on the shape of exoteric religions, of idolatry full of superstitions, and man-or hero-worship. Alone a handful of primitive men—in whom the spark of divine Wisdom burnt bright, and only strengthened in its intensity as it got dimmer and dimmer with every age in those who turned it to bad purposes—remained the elect custodians of the Mysteries revealed to mankind by the divine Teachers.”

These “divine Teachers” were the Holy Men of the third root race of the Lemurian period, who, when that continent foundered, made certain their knowledge was preserved so that their counterparts in the Atlantean period might relearn it and become in their turn its custodians. In our age, that of the fifth root race, Madame Blavatsky is only the most modern of a long line of such “Secret Doctrine” custodians.

Why have Lemuria and Atlantis completely disappeared? Blavatsky tells us that global catastrophe, coming at the end of each 25,868-year *Sidereal Year*, purges the earth of a particular race or sub-race. She writes that, “since Vaivasvata Manu’s Humanity appeared on this earth, there have already been four such axial disturbances; when the old continents—save the first one [the first continent occupied by the spirit of man was indestructible]—were sucked in by the oceans, other lands appeared, and huge mountain chains arose where there had been none before. The face of the Globe was completely changed each time; the survival of the fittest nations and races was secured through timely help; and the unfit ones—the failures—were disposed of by being swept off the earth.”

Are we soon to get a chance of regaining our astral identities? Blavatsky has written that the sixth and seventh root races will see a movement back toward our true spiritual nature as astral beings. Much of what the founder of the Theosophical Society wrote more than 100 years ago puts her in the same camp as those who, like the protagonists of *The Celestine Prophecy*, today look to an upcoming refinement of the earth’s density and an accompanying lightening of our physical being—provided that we have known the proper spiritual way to prepare ourselves for such a lightening. Whatever the immediate future holds, Blavatsky states clearly that we cannot rest content

with our gross natures, and must recollect that we are finally made of astral stuff; the thrust of *The Secret Doctrine* is finally that, as the sixth and seventh root races unfold, we will—or we must—make that recollection our ultimate reality.

Madame Blavatsky has been concerned in her two great works to reveal to us the presence and the power of the etheric substance, which can be harnessed for the purposes of even our gross fifth root race. We'll see in the next chapter that, even in her time, such harnessings were struggling to see the light of day, against all the assembled weight and power of orthodox science.

Caldwell, 68, footnote.

Ibid., 73-76.

Ibid., 16.

Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine I* [Unabridged], xlvi .

Caldwell, 15-16.

Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 3.

Johnson, 203.

Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (Gomes), 3.

Ibid., 29-30.

Wilson, *Psychic Detectives*, 82-83.

Wilbur, vii.

Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, 15.

Ibid., 19-23.

Ibid., 29-31.

Ibid., 34-36.

Ibid., 54.

Ibid., 182-183.

Ibid., 215.

Ibid., 229-230.

Chapter Sixteen

POWER OF THE ETHER

It seems to have been more than mere synchronicity. At the time Madame Blavatsky's writings were at the height of their popularity, inventors began to claim that they had discovered ways to harness the ether. One such inventor was John Keely. Modern-day researchers into alternate energy sources, looking back at the Keely story, believe the inventor had stumbled upon something so important that the tycoons of more conventional power sources felt his discoveries had to be suppressed.

It's alleged that, in 1887, a remarkable experiment was performed in the presence of twelve mining industry magnates in a small laboratory in Philadelphia: A local inventor named John Keely disintegrated blocks of gold-bearing quartz in just seconds by placing them in contact with a machine he held in his hand. Apparently, each block crumbled into fine dust in which the particles of gold could easily be discerned.

A somewhat less credible sequel is that the experiment was successfully repeated in that Catskills Mountains, with, allegedly, the result that the magnates abandoned their mines. Their action had serious repercussions on the gold market.

Such is the story as it appeared in the September, 1888 issue of *Le Lotus*, the journal of the French Theosophical Society. Is the story true? No independent corroboration has come down to us, and the report aroused little interest among scientists.

But there can be no doubt that John Ernst Worrell Keely (1827-1898) was a man of unusual learning and unusual personal power—

and that he may actually have harnessed the powers of the ether. A musician and a carpenter by trade, Keely so impressed a group of investors with his many inventions that they set up the “Keely Motor Company” to help Keely to develop a motor that would run on sound and other forms of vibration.

Keely seems actually to have developed the prototype of such a device. Madame Blavatsky wrote at some length on Keely in *The Secret Doctrine*. She asserted that each of Keely's creations depended on “a capacity inherent in [Keely's] nature,” so that its application was somewhat limited. Blavatsky told a story which modern Keely researcher Dale Pond has recently verified. The founder of the Theosophical Society wrote: “At one time the shareholders of the Keely Motor Co. put a man in his workshop for the express purpose of discovering his secret. After six months of close watching, he said to J.W. Keely one day: ‘I know how it is done, now.’ They had been setting up a machine together, and Keely was manipulating the stopcock which turned the force on and off. ‘Try it, then,’ was the answer. The man turned the cock, and nothing came. ‘Let me see you do it again,’ the man said to Keely. The latter complied, and the machinery operated at once. Again the other tried, but without success. Then Keely put his hand on his shoulder, and told him to try once more. He did so, with the result of an instantaneous production of the current.”

In the recent *The Coming Energy Revolution*, Jeane Manning writes that Keely's machines “depended a great deal on what he called the ‘vibration tones’ of the builder—the person's breathing and brainwave rhythms. It was as if a violin could only be played by the person who made it.” She explains that, decades ahead of his time, Keely conceived of the atom as an atomic orchestra, composed of vibrating parts producing multiple tones. What made Keely unusual, in the light of that notion, was “his ability to act as the conductor of this atomic orchestra, his ability to get the atom to do his bidding.”

Researcher Dale Pond claims that Keely discovered more than forty of what he called “fundamental laws of nature.” He produced a great number of invention prototypes the names of which still act like red flags to professional debunkers, including Disintegrator,

Sympathetic Transmitter, Vibratory Accumulator, and Tubular Resonator. The author of the 1888 *Le Lotus* article wrote that Keely once wrapped a wire around an iron cylinder weighing several tons, then connected the wire to a machine he had invented. When an electric current was passed through the machine, he was able to lift the cylinder with one finger and carry it as lightly as if it were a cork. "In this way he carried in one hand," says the article, "a 500-horsepower machine from one end of his workshop to the other, without even making a scratch on the floor. The astounded engineers said that they couldn't have transported it without a derrick, which would have required removing the roof of the workshop."

The article continues, "He recently applied his special energy device to optics. With three wires placed over the lens of a microscope, he made its magnification power the equal of the great telescope at Lick Observatory, the largest in the world...Why haven't our astronomers and opticians hurried to examine Keely's microscope?"

But it continued to be true that Keely's inventions would only work if he were present, and in direct or indirect physical contact with them. This circumstance helped, of course, fuel arguments that he was a fraud. As the years went by, the inventor simply could not produce a reliable motor for the Keely Motor Company. In 1879, the company faced bankruptcy—not only on account of Keely; his business partners had coolly manipulated and controlled the company stock, not always to good ends. To fend off the bankruptcy, Keely signed a complicated consolidation agreement wherein he agreed to perfect two other inventions. When he failed to do so, a group of stockholders sued him; as a result, Keely spent some time in jail in 1888. Eventually, the company failed, and Keely disappeared from sight. Most of his writings vanished after his death, perhaps stolen and destroyed by other industrialists who feared Keely's insights into cheap and easy sources of energy might one day put them out of business.

Madame Blavatsky saw enormous potential in what Keely was doing. She praised him a man who "was, and still is, at the threshold of some of the greatest secrets of the universe; of that chiefly on which is built the whole mystery of physical forces." She declared that Keely was able to operate his inventions because he could generate a

“sympathetic vibration” by tapping into an “Inter-Etheric Force and Forces” long known to occultists. Keely seems to have sensed these energies within himself. He’s alleged to have talked often, though sometimes not very clearly, in terms of the “etheric force,” the “*prima materia*” of alchemists, and the mass, sum and substance of those elementary forces which corresponded to the vibratory wave.

Blavatsky may have been right about Keely. But, knowing how great a struggle it was for her to promote the ideas of the Theosophical Society, she must also have been grimly aware of the suppressive social forces that Keely would have to fight against all of his life with no assurance of success.

Charroux, *Masters of the World*, 218.

Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine I* [Unabridged], 562.

Manning, 31-34.

Charroux, *Masters of the World*, 219-221.

Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine I* [Unabridged], 555-566.

Chapter Seventeen

THE PROFESSOR OF THE ETHER

Experts think that, had I.Q. tests existed in his time, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) would have scored 190. The future British social and political thinker was personally educated by his father, James Mill, who began teaching him Greek and Latin when he was three. In his early twenties, Mill experienced a profound “mental crisis;” overcome by depression, he came to believe that his education had been too narrow, intense and forced; he recovered gradually by reading all of William Wordsworth’s poetry.

The same thing seems to have happened to Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925)— except that, unlike John Stuart Mill, Steiner was hugely clairvoyant. Still, a similar emotional gap was left in the Austrian educator and Anthroposophical Society founder’s psyche by the forced march of his own precocious education, which included teaching himself Greek and Latin at 15 and editing the definitive “Weimar” edition of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s scientific works when he was only in his mid-20’s.

But, while John Stuart Mill let the poetry of the popular romantic poet William Wordsworth fill up the gap in his soul, Steiner let his immense psychic gifts flow in to fill up the place that should have been occupied by lovingly nurtured and nurturing emotions. For Steiner, the result would eventually be a series of books on the astral realm which, while brilliantly filled with complex insights into the nature of the afterworld, tend to put the reader off by their curiously forbidding nature, strangely devoid of emotional toning. Steiner, however great his contribution to the literature of the occult—and it was considerable—was never able to recoup his emotional losses.

He was always aware of them, and even when he was 35, and a respected scholar with a Ph.D. in epistemology (he had written his thesis on the philosophy of science of the German philosopher Johann Fichte), he could still be shattered when his close friend Moritz Zitter persisted in telling him that he was merely intellectualizing his feelings in his work and was so absorbed in his thoughts that he often appeared to be scarcely human. What devastated Steiner was the knowledge that this intellectualizing had taken place years before, and was now likely permanently embedded in his psyche. And, indeed, the early stunting of Steiner's emotions did continue to impoverish his otherwise worthy, well-meaning and sometimes startlingly insightful works.

Steiner, like Madame Blavatsky, was aware from a very early age of an all-pervasive spirit world. As a boy, he constantly received what he called "mental pictures"—images that conveyed nonphysical truths. Colin Wilson tells us that at the age of eight Steiner "was sitting in the station waiting-room when a female relative came in and began making strange gestures; Steiner knew intuitively that she was a spirit; the woman had committed suicide at the moment Steiner saw her." When a school friend died, Steiner unconsciously accompanied him into the world beyond.

Steiner also founded a radical school system called the Steiner or "Waldorf" schools, based on a new way of looking at the mind/body/soul relationship in students; and he was a gifted architect. In 1912, he founded the Anthroposophical Society. By 1900, he had been giving lectures at Germany's Theosophical Society; he had soon become a member, then its head. But Steiner, a fervent Christian, objected to what he saw as the Theosophical Society's rejection of Christianity. He also considered the Society to be too wedded to the ancient religious traditions of the Far East, and not open enough to the practical technological benefits of post-Enlightenment Europe. Headquartered in Switzerland, his Anthroposophical Society still flourishes, with scores of branches in countries around the world.

Beyond the society he created, Steiner is well-known for the more than 50 books he wrote. Early on, they were conventional treatments of mainstream art and culture. The more he became involved with the Anthroposophical Society, the stranger they became. Eventually,

he wrote almost exclusively about the “supersensible world”—the unchanging reality, imperceptible to our ordinary senses, of which he had been intuitively aware ever since he was a child.

Colin Wilson encapsulates the beliefs of anthroposophy as follows:

“...the human being is made up of four ‘bodies.’ The physical body is animated by the etheric body, which is visible to clairvoyants as the ‘aura’....Next comes the ‘astral body’ which, according to occultists, can leave the physical body under certain conditions. Above these is the ego, the principle of individuation. Man has slowly evolved these bodies after vast epochs of time, one by one....By working on these ‘lower’ bodies with his ego, man can create three higher bodies: a spirit consciousness, a spiritual body, and an ‘ultimate soul,’ what the Hindus call *atman*, whose nature is identical with that of God.”

To the late twentieth-century reader, Steiner’s books on the multidimensional cosmos in which, however unconsciously, we live and have our being, make strange reading indeed. They are clearly, even dryly—even achingly rationally—thought out. At the same time, they are not just abstract treatises but “How-to” manuals. Steiner insists that his books need not be understood by the mind, that they will work on us directly from the astral level; in the course of reading them, our soul will “know,” and evolve; our higher faculties will spontaneously begin to remember their identity with the etheric realm.

Maybe so; but the supersensible world that Steiner sketches is bleak and even rebarbative. The gifted Steiner, accomplished in many fields, may well be working some astral magic on us as we read—and anthroposophy has many distinguished followers who say that he does. But, to the average late twentieth century reader, the afterworld he unveils seems so sterile, and the complex interminable manipulations our spirit undergoes in its sunless realms so mechanical and joyless, that we may be forgiven for wishing there were some alternative to death. He makes many a modern reader want to dash off for sun, sand and a swim in the ocean rather than face this airless universe.

In painting his own portrait of the ether, Steiner espouses the “root race” theory of Madame Blavatsky. We began as spirit; through the slow and complex “congealing” of the etheric substance through the millennia, we have ended up as modern man. According to Steiner,

we started off in the form of a mineral on some “primeval nebula;” gradually, with the help of certain “sublime spiritual beings,” we descended down through the various planets of the solar system until we arrived on earth in the form of a cloud-like vapor. From this point, we began to acquire material aspects and gradually become the slaves of matter.

Eventually, we reached the third root race stage of the Lemurians, then the fourth root race stage of the Atlanteans. Steiner's lengthy descriptions of these states of being, in his *Cosmic Memory* in particular, make extraordinary reading. They are vivid, graphic, highly intelligent—hardly ever dull. He asserts with complete confidence that his powers as a clairvoyant (powers we could reawaken within ourselves by reading his books) are such that we can take his word for it: This is what Lemuria and Atlantis were really like. He writes about these vanished realms as if he were actually there, penning his words from the veranda of some hotel for visiting fifth root race humans.

Steiner's description of the third root race of the Lemurians reads like sophisticated and quite distinguished science-fiction. This species, much closer to the primal astral state than we are, by and large did not have the faculty of memory; while they had ideas, these ideas did not remain in their memory, and they did not have language. “Rather,” writes Steiner, “what they could utter were natural sounds which expressed their sensations, pleasure, joy, pain and so forth, but which did not designate external objects.”

The ideas of the Lemurians alone had far greater power than do ours to mold reality. With their powerful thoughts they were in direct telepathic contact with their environment—its animals, stones and plants—and with each other, and could impact that environment directly. They drew energy and information from all that surrounded them, using these to work their wills on the external world. Steiner explains that when the Lemurian “built something he did not first have to calculate the load-limit of a tree trunk, the weight of a stone; he could see how much the tree trunk could bear, where the stone in view of its weight would fit, where it would not. Thus the Lemurian built without engineering knowledge on the basis of his faculty of imagination with the sureness of a kind of instinct.”

This power of molding reality with the mind had to be trained. Will was the key ingredient; the more will you mustered, the greater your personal power. Steiner declares that, "If later the Atlantean was helped by his control of the life force, the Lemurian was helped by his mastery of the will. He was (the expression should not be misinterpreted) a born magician in all fields of lower human activities."

This was an extremely sexist root race. If the Lemurian male had to develop will, the Lemurian female had to develop imagination. If the male faltered in his lessons, he was punished with painful blasts of thought; if the female faltered in her training of the imagination, she was treated far more daintily.

The training courses—and the later exercise of the acquired skills—did not take place in houses: "The Lemurians did not have dwellings in our sense, except in their latest times. They lived where nature gave them the opportunity to do so. The caves which they used were only altered and used insofar as necessary. Later they built such caves themselves and at that time they developed great skill for such constructions...."

Despite the utter unhesitating confidence with which Steiner describes the eerie descent of man down from the reaches of outer space and through racial incarnations as Lemurian and Atlanteans, he does qualify his descriptions, explaining that, "While all possible care has been taken in the decipherment of the akashic Chronicle it must be emphasized that nowhere is a dogmatic character to be claimed for these communications. If, to begin with, the reading of things and events so remote from the present is not easy, the translation of what has been seen and deciphered [is not either]."

Recently, the brilliant and maverick American cultural philosopher William Irwin Thompson has taken a fresh look at Steiner's writings. Under Thompson's penetrating eye, the mega-sci-fi coloration of Steiner's root race extravaganzas begins to emerge in a new, fascinating, and useful light. Thompson writes, in *Imaginary Landscape: Making Worlds of Myth and Science*:

"When I first read Rudolph Steiner's *Cosmic Memory*, I could only take it as a form of mysticism that had absolutely nothing to do with

science. It was its own world, very much like science fiction, and, like science fiction, it could have various poetic truths, but one could not take its narratives as descriptions of our conventional world. Actuality, however, was just what Steiner was claiming for himself in his project of 'reading' the 'akashic record.' What, then, was one to make of descriptions of stages in human evolution in which the human body floated in the sea, or was not yet male and female but produced offspring singly from within itself, or was cold-blooded...One had to put Steiner in a separate file along with Cayce, Tolkien, and Castaneda, or with all the other alternate cosmologies that my generation of the 1960s liked to collect."

But Thompson has come to see Steiner's narratives in the context of our contemporary notion of "Gaia." The American philosopher accepts the notion of a Gaian planetary consciousness, that is, that our planet has been "consciously alive" from the beginning of time, with sentient life emerging over the millennia so that, in a sense, the earth would be able to reflect upon itself. In this context, the consciousnesses of us all have in some sense been present from the beginning, since all of us make up the consciousness of Gaia, or Mother Earth. It follows then that we all contain within ourselves, however obscurely sensed, the capacity of remembering everything that has ever happened on our planet.

Thompson wonders if Steiner may not be engaged in this kind of remembering. He speculates that the anthroposophist's *Cosmic Memory* stories are his remembering of the evolution, in the oceans, over millions of years, of prokaryotes (single-celled organisms without nuclei) into eukaryotes (single-celled organisms with nuclei), the latter destined to launch the all-important process of photosynthesis. Thompson wonders if it may be true that:

"If [Steiner] talks about the human body floating in the sea, and after the integration of the 'I' still having a number of parts that were still on the plant level, he is talking about the human body as the evolution of the eukaryotic cell and the vestigial plant parts as the organelles, such as the mitochondria. If Steiner says, 'Thus the first likenesses of man were eaters of animals and of men,' he is far back in time with the amoebas and protists, just as when he is talking about

how 'every human being could produce another human being out of himself,' he is talking about life at the state of the prokaryotic cell."

This is not reductionism; Thompson isn't dismissing Rudolph Steiner's images as "just cells." He seems to be suggesting, rather, that the prokaryotic cell is aflame with life and awareness, that that cell and its memories are a part of all of us and that we are all a part of that cell, and that it is Steiner's particular gift as a clairvoyant to be able to translate these vital, primordial impulses of life into contemporary human terms—however inadequate and garish that translation might necessarily seem to be!

Thompson, then, without formally espousing any theory of the "ether"—though the new, contemporary notion of "Gaia" does come suspiciously close sometimes to sounding like yet another incarnation of the ancient substance—has given the Austrian seer's writings a whole new lease on life. It may be that, working with the Gaian notions of James Lovelock, we will be able to tread with greater understanding and acceptance what have seemed to be the rather arid astral pathways of Rudolph Steiner, the brilliant founder of the Anthroposophical Society.

Wilson, *Psychic Detectives*, 88.

Washington, 248-251.

Wilson, *Psychic Detectives*, 90.

Steiner, *Cosmic Memory*, 71-86.

Thompson, 63, 65-66.

Chapter Eighteen

THE SLEEP OF THE ASTRAL SELF
PRODUCES MONSTERS

"The sleep of reason produces monsters."

-Francisco de Goya

At about the same time Victor Hugo was writing *The Man Who Laughs*, a new chapter was being opened in the examination of the "vital fluid." It even bestowed a new name upon the fluid.

In 1866-1867, an Austrian scientist, Baron von Reichenbach, published his first papers on "odic emanations." Dr. Karl von Prel, a German scientist, completed Reichenbach's work. From most accounts, von Prel was an unusually gifted scientist, both intellectually and in terms of intuition. Maurice Maeterlinck, telling the story in *The Great Secret* (1922), was convinced that neither Prel nor von Reichenbach had gotten the credit they deserved. He thought this just another case of wholly innovative science lagging behind what he called "official science" in terms of public perception—and also artfully suppressed by that official science.

Though not in the league of a Madame Blavatsky, Maeterlinck had an excellent knowledge of the many masks of the ether. This enables him to assure us that Reichenbach "really rediscovered the universal vital fluid, which is none other than the Akasha of the prehistoric religions, the Telesma of Hermes, the living fire of Zoroaster, the generative fire of Heraclitus, the astral light of the cabala, the Alkahest of Paracelsus, the vital spirit of the occultists, and the vital force of St. Thomas." Von Reichenbach, says Maeterlinck, rechr-

tened the vital fluid “od,” after a Sanskrit word meaning “that which penetrates everywhere.” The German scientist regarded the od as the “line of demarcation between soul and body....the secret quintessence of man” was “odic.”

According to Maeterlinck, von Reichenbach, von Prel, and a third researcher, Colonel de Rochas, thought of the od as in principle “the magnetic or vital fluid which at every moment of our existence emanates from every part of our being in uninterrupted vibrations. In the normal state these emanations or effluvia, whose existence was suspected, thanks to the phenomena of hypnotism, are ‘absolutely unknown to us and invisible.’” Maeterlinck asserts that, by carrying out a very great number of experiments, von Reichenbach was the first to discover that “the strength and volume of these emanations varied in accordance with the emotions, the state of mind, or the health of those who produced them; that those proceeding from the right side of the body are always bluish in color, while those from the left side are of a reddish yellow.” Von Reichenbach also discovered that the same emanations came not only from human beings, animals, and plants, but even from minerals. Von Reichenbach even “succeeded in photographing the od emanating from rock crystal; the od given off by human beings; the od resulting from chemical operations; the od from amorphous lumps of metal, and that produced by noise or friction; in a word, he proved that magnetism, or od, exists throughout nature—a doctrine which has always been taught by the occultists of all countries and all ages.”

Von Reichenbach came to even more startling conclusions, which Maeterlinck considers to be as good as scientifically proven by the German scientist. The author of *The Great Secret* says that Von Reichenbach established definitively that the odic fluid was the same as that which caused all psychokinetic phenomena, being capable, for example, of “lifting a table weighing more than two hundred pounds;” that it could “be conveyed from place to place;” that it “appeared to be indestructible;” and that it “contains and represents part of the personality of the hypnotic subject and in particular his sensitiveness to impressions.” All this had led Maeterlinck himself to conclude that “there is within us a vital principle which is not indissolubly bound up

with the body, but is able to leave it, to externalize itself, or at least in part, and for a brief period, during our lifetime.”

From all this, it seemed to Maeterlinck a logical next step to conclude that the odic fluid survived the destruction of the body; that it was immortal.

Maeterlinck's *The Great Secret* was published three years before the birth, on October 13, 1925, of Pellegrino Ernetti. Although already fighting a losing battle against “official science” and, in particular, freudianism, the concept of odic fluid which Maeterlinck describes in this book represents the most informed scientific opinion of the time about the immense parapsychical forces energizing humankind. It is a book which the young Ernetti, surely with a precocious interest in these matters—and surely a precocious reader—could well have read.

What drove Pellegrino Ernetti into the fold of religion, into the order of the Benedictines? Was it only piety and devotion, the love of God? Might it have been as well a passionate need to hold at bay the powerful odic forces already churning within him?

Blavatsky thought of the vital fluid as our own little portion of the akashic records—by its very nature connected to all the akashic records—coursing in all likelihood through the *qi* energy lines or meridians of our body. Was a superabundance of the vital fluid, increasingly unacknowledged by him as its forces grew more restive over the years, the source of much of what occurred to Father Ernetti?

The exorcist of the Middle Ages was the descendant, with a thin patina of Christianity added, of the shaman of ancient times. The shaman ascended in his astral body to higher, vaster levels of being to flush out the demons which made his patient ill. He often coursed through the astral planes in search of the soul of that client, or bits of that soul, which had fled before the invading demons. Plunging down into astral caves to retrieve the soul-bits hiding in terror, and up again into airier regions, the shaman flung himself through timeless realms beyond day and night. These were realms in which he could reach out and touch the accumulated knowledge of the universe.

It all sounds a little like Father Ernetti, cruising through the astral realms in his chronovisor, consulting the akashic records thanks to the extended senses of his time-traveling machine.

What other books, aside from breviaries and texts on music, filled the drawers of Father Ernetti's huge antique wooden desk? Sometimes, in conversation, he was known to let slip names like those of Eliphaz Lévi and Giordano Bruno and the like, brilliant thinkers who had trusted with the Devil and just missed being burnt at the stake—or not. It would not have been out of place, and certainly not beyond his capabilities, for the excellent Latin scholar who was Father Ernetti to read the works of his fellow countryman, the Renaissance mage Marsilio Ficino, who wrote textbooks on how to draw astral power down from the stars.

Did Father Ernetti, in the grip of the tides of astral fluid that flowed within him, dabble, not in the black arts, but in occult practices such as alchemy and astral magic? Did he, in this manner, seek somehow to give form and expression to the baffling energies which surged within him? Samuel Taylor Coleridge created *Kubla Khan* out of the depths of an opium dream from which he was rudely awakened by the ringing of the doorbell; it was the delivery boy. Did Father Ernetti, all unwittingly, create the chronovisor out of the troubled astral or alchemical dreams from which he was abruptly awakened by the ringing of the church bell to summon him to Matins?

There are complex places between confabulation and straightforwardness. They are places in which a man might honestly dwell who is impossibly torn between integrity and honesty and egolessness and devotion to a higher cause, on the one hand, and imaginative brilliance and uncurbable creative energy on the other—especially if that man is tormented by the imminence of genius. Did Father Ernetti, to save his very sanity, make compromises he could not afford to acknowledge even to himself? Was the chronovisor the tortured dream of the odic fluid, of Ernetti's astral self unusually powerfully in touch with all eternity? Was it the cover story that Father Ernetti had no psychic choice other than to accept, himself, as the reality?

We will focus on that question as soon as we have looked at the astral adventures of Thomas Edison, Baird T. Spalding, and Edgar Cayce.

Maeterlinck, 240-252.

Chapter Nineteen

THOMAS EDISON'S DEVICE TO CONTACT THE DEAD

The remarkable industriousness of genius inventor Thomas Edison (1847-1931) resulted in more than one thousand patented inventions and improvements. His famous inventions include the phonograph, the electric light bulb, the alkaline battery, improvements in motion pictures, and myriad electronic devices.

Forgotten now is Thomas Edison's apparatus to contact the dead.

Martin Ebon has provided an excellent account of this strange side of Edison's genius in his *They Knew the Unknown*. Ebon writes that, "Not until 1920, at the age of seventy-three, did Edison reveal his secret work in psychic research. He told his friend B. C. Forbes, later founder of *Forbes* magazine, the story that became a sensation: 'Edison Working to Communicate with the Next World (*American Magazine*, October, 1920).' The world press offered largely fanciful details of Edison's apparatus to communicate with the dead. A French newspaper even provided a diagram, which, of course, only Edison knew to be a fraud.

"The scientific world buzzed with rumors. *The Scientific American*, which published an authoritative interview with Edison, set the record straight. In an interview (October 30, 1920), Edison substantiated the basic details of Forbes's article and added his views on the possibility of life after death, much as they appear in his diary:

"If our personality survives, then it is strictly logical and scientific to assume that it retains memory, intellect, and other faculties and knowledge that we acquire on this earth. Therefore, if personal-

ity lasts after what we call death, it's reasonable to conclude that those who leave this earth would like to communicate with those they have left here.'

"I am inclined to believe that our personality hereafter will be able to affect matter. If this reasoning be correct, then, if we can evolve an instrument so delicate as to be affected, or moved, or manipulated by our personality as it survives in the next life, such an instrument, when made available, ought to record something."

Edison didn't think much of modern-day "table turning" and Ouija Board techniques:

"Certain of the methods now in use are so crude, so childish, so unscientific, that it is amazing how so many rational human beings can take any stock in them. If we ever do succeed in establishing communication with personalities which have left this present life, it certainly won't be through any of the childish contraptions which seem so silly to the scientist."

Ebon records that, in a biographical article in *Liberty* magazine published some years after the inventor died, Allen L. Benson, an acquaintance of his for many years, reports that fifteen years before he died the inventor's "mind turned toward the hereafter." Benson believed Edison's attempt to build a machine to contact the dead stemmed purely from scientific interest. He recalled that Edison had "wondered whether it might not be possible to make a machine that would enable the hereafter to prove itself without the aid of mediums or other living human agencies. If spirits could communicate directly with the earth, doubting would soon have to stop. Edison was a scientist and, as such, had a profound respect for facts. He might be wrong about the soul, a hereafter, and the possibility of conducting conversation between the two worlds. If so, he wanted to shift his course to fit the facts."

Martin Ebon wonders if Edison's interest in the survival of the human personality after death may have developed early in his life. He quotes a friend of Edison's family, John Eggleston, as writing that: "Thomas Edison's parents were Spiritualists. I have many times sat in circles in their home when this great inventor was a mere child." Whatever its origins in childhood, Edison's theoretical concept of life saw

it in terms of infinitely small particles of matter, combined in “swarms” much like bees in a hive, to constitute living creatures. He considered these submicroscopic units indestructible. His *Diary and Sundry Observations* contains this comment: “Life, like matter, is indestructible. There has always been a certain amount of life on this world and there will always be the same amount. You cannot create life; you cannot destroy life; you cannot multiply life.”

It is well-known that Edison believed in the reality of telepathy, both on account of experiments he carried out and because of what he felt in himself. He put the famed clairvoyant Bert Reese—known to sometimes mix sleight-of-hand in with his performances—through a rigorous series of tests. Reese passed them all with flying colors and especially impressed Edison when, as Martin Ebon writes, the inventor “went into the next building and wrote down this question: ‘Is there anything better than hydroxide of nickel for an alkaline battery?’” Edison later wrote that: “After having written this sentence, I took up another problem in my mind and gave all my attention to solving it, so as to throw Reese off the scent, if he was trying to read in my mind what I had written. I then came back into the room where I had left him with my men. The moment I entered the room, Reese turned to me and said, ‘No, there is nothing better than hydroxide of nickel for an alkaline battery.’ Reese was right, by the way.”

Edison seemed to possess telepathic powers himself. Joseph Dunninger, the famous mentalist with whom Edison corresponded frequently, noted that Edison had experiences “where he would concentrate on someone and they would come and see him—or concentrate on doing a thing and it would pass on to the person it was intended for without any verbal communication.”

Edison's belief that, as illustrated by telepathy, knowledge could be communicated without the use of any conventional media, would have left him open to the notion that the dead can communicate their thoughts. According to Martin Ebon, Dunninger also claimed Edison had actually shown him the mysterious apparatus for contacting the dead. There is no other record of anyone else ever seeing it, or even records of its construction during Edison's lifetime. By 1935, when Norman R. Speiden—later to become supervisory museum curator

at the Edison National Historic Site—searched for clues to this work, he found nothing. “We have never been able to find anything in Mr. Edison’s notebooks concerning this research, and have never found any apparatus that seemed to be constructed for this purpose,” declared Speiden, who speculated that Edison might have had in mind using a sensitive electrical valve or vacuum tube as the essential element for amplifying very delicate vibrations.

Martin Ebon concludes his account by telling us that Speiden’s researches were not in vain. To continue in Ebon’s words: “For he validated Edison’s own attempt to communicate at the time of his death—3:24 a.m., Sunday, October 18, 1931. Three of Edison’s associates noted that their clocks had each stopped simultaneously—at 3:24 a.m. The larger grandfather clock in Edison’s own laboratory stopped three minutes later. Edison, who was called ‘the Old Man’ by his men, had once recorded the popular song, *Grandfather’s Clock*, with the words: ‘...But it stopped, short, never to go again, when the Old Man died.’”

Ebon, *They Knew the Unknown*, 122-129.

Chapter Twenty

BAIRD T. SPALDING'S CAMERA OF PAST EVENTS

The orange deserts and red-brown mountains of the American Southwest offer great beauty to the sightseer and much hard work for the prospector. In the early 1950s, these compelling and arduous regions were the final stamping grounds of a man who, though his own description of his life was contradictory, fulfilled in that life, in the words of his biographer David Bruton, “a great destiny in a fabulous way.”

The man's name was Baird T. Spalding. He claimed to have invented, at the end of the last century, with famed engineer-inventor Charles Steinmetz, a “Camera of Past Events” able to peer into the past and photograph—along with much else—Jesus Christ giving the Sermon on the Mount.

Spalding was the author of the six volumes of *Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East*. For decades, these books have been best-sellers among Western readers seeking to imbibe the ancient wisdom of India. The first two volumes were published privately in 1924 and 1927; they sold steadily while attracting increasing attention. In the early 1930s, Spalding crossed paths with Douglas K. DeVorss, who had founded the DeVorss Publishing Company, in Los Angeles, in 1929. DeVorss republished the first two volumes of *Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East* in 1935, giving them a much wider distribution. At about this time Spalding produced a third volume. Volumes Four and Five appeared in 1948 and 1955. In 1997—44 years after Baird Spalding's death in 1953, allegedly at 95—ten boxes of his

correspondence and notes were unearthed by the DeVorss family; these were almost immediately put into print as the sixth volume of the series. The six-volume boxed set remains a bestseller among New Age enthusiasts today.

These six volumes tell an incredible story. Baird Spalding claimed to have been born in Kohocton, New York, in 1857, and taken to India at the age of four. While there, he said, he entered a preparatory school for university studies, graduating from university at the age of 17. He then went to California for two years and afterward to Germany, studying for eight years at the University of Heidelberg and then returning to California where he pursued postgraduate studies in archaeology at Berkeley and Stanford.

Spalding said he was member of a family that had lived and worked in India and the Gobi Desert for over three hundred years. He claimed that during a flood on the River Ganges his great-grandfather had come across a "book of gold" newly washed out of its ancient hiding place. The book gave the location of other books of gold and provided a concise history of a vanished civilization that had flourished in the Gobi Desert millennia before. The great-grandfather set up the "Spalding Foundation," then went in search of traces of this vanished civilization. According to his great-grandson, the Foundation engineers found the city in the Gobi after 19 years and "struck the ruins when they sank their first shaft."

Spalding had, he wrote, set out in 1894 with a research party of twelve on an expedition to the Himalayas. They were seeking the other books of gold and the ruins in the Gobi Desert. The expedition spanned three years and four countries, India, Tibet, China and Persia (now Iran). Spalding claimed that a great deal of the material in *Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East* had come from this research expedition. Its members met certain masters, or "elder brothers," who were said to assist in and guide the destiny of mankind. Meetings with the Great White Brotherhood were interspersed with encounters with Shambhala, Shangri-La, and a wide assortment of immortal beings.

The numerous teachings in the Spalding volumes were supposed to have originated with these masters or elder brothers. It is these

mystical but simple instructions for attaining to the godhead in oneself that account for much of the attraction of the Baird Spalding books.

From the time of the publication of the first book in 1924 till his death in 1953, Baird Spalding remained an enormously elusive and mysterious figure. Practically everything we know about him comes from Spalding himself, or from his publisher, Douglas DeVorss. DeVorss provided a biographical sketch in some of the volumes. He wrote that from 1935 to 1953 he traveled with Spalding to 200 cities, living with him 24 hours a day. "There was not a town of any size anywhere," he states, "...where Mr. Spalding couldn't walk in to someone's home and sit down to dinner."

Undoubtedly, Baird Spalding gave many lectures all across the United States for many years. He dropped numerous hints in these lectures about his extensive mining and forestry interests and his vast property holdings across the world. He gave the impression that he knew almost everyone notable in the world, and some of them very well. He could be most convincing. In the last three years of his life, a new theme entered his talks. He declared that during the last decade of the last century he had worked with celebrated engineer-inventor Charles Steinmetz to successfully invent a Camera of Past Events.

Volume Five of *Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East*, published in 1955 after Spalding's death, contains a full account of these claims. Spalding wrote that Steinmetz "drew the plans for that camera and we followed through and today we can say definitely that we can go into the past and pick up every past event. Of course, that becomes too cumbersome, but we select past events, and as I said, the scientists are admitting today and fully believing that we will go into the past events to the extent of a million years....We have been carrying on this work for over 40 years, first translating the records which we found in the Gobi, in Tibet, and in India, and this work has developed into an organization of about twenty-six men who are interested in and doing the work."

Spalding claimed that the group had actually taken pictures of the past. "Our first experience was with George Washington's inaugural address. That was in New York City at what is now known as Federal

Hall. In that picture you can readily discern every one of the dignitaries who were on the platform with him, and George Washington is walking back and forth before the group giving his inaugural address. . . . we have the actual picture, with George Washington's voice on the sound track. Everyone said for a time that it was a fake, because they claimed that we made it up in moving picture form. But it can now be shown with a regular moving picture mechanism."

The group aimed the Camera of Past Events much further back in time, photographing Jesus giving the Sermon on the Mount. "Now," wrote Baird Spalding, "we know that Jesus, the man, was no different than we are. We have a complete history of that family's life for over 2,000 years, and we know that it was a well-established family, that He was a man of great influence, a very definite character. He was a man six foot two, and standing in a crowd, you yourself would select Him and say, 'There is a man who will accomplish,' and He did accomplish. History is bearing those things out today and we are going back to this drama and getting the absolute words.

"We were very much interested in his whole life and we followed it through at great length....we have known the man for a number of years, and we know today that He never passed through death.

"We can show you in photography today that no one brought anything except the little boy with the five loaves and fishes. This isn't an allegory. If it were, we wouldn't find the boy there in that picture. Neither would we find the people there. All Jesus said was, 'Sit down and prepare for the feast,' and there was an abundance for all.

"Then again we have the instance where the disciple said to Jesus: 'Master, there is need for bread, yet it is four months to harvest.' His answer was, 'Look upon the fields, they are already white to harvest,' and they are, right in the picture.

"With those pictures we have been able to correct many mistakes.... We worked for eight years on the picture, the Sermon on the Mount, before we got the identity of the man, Jesus. We were always looking for a man of the description that da Vinci had painted."

Did Baird T. Spalding really help invent and use a Camera of Past Events? This is a claim that it has not been made easy for us to prove

or to disprove. The publisher states in Volume One of *Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East* (and repeats it in later volumes) that, "Both Mr. Spalding and Mr. DeVorss (who knew Mr. Spalding personally) died in the 1950s. All those who were associated with Spalding on his great Eastern tours have also now died. We are therefore without contact with anyone who has firsthand knowledge of the work, and the books themselves are now the only source of information. To our knowledge, there is no map available of the tour, and we know of no photographs. We have tried at various times to locate additional records, as well as camera information, but without success. We sincerely regret that we have no additional information to offer."

One man did manage to carry out an investigation of Baird Spalding's life. He was David Bruton, who in the last three years of Spalding's life knew the globe-trotting author as well as anyone. When Spalding died, on March 18, 1953, Bruton was named the administrator of his estate. He published a book on Spalding in 1954 called *Baird T. Spalding as I Knew Him*. DeVorss Publications reprinted the book in 1980.

Bruton says that Spalding was almost none of the things he claimed to be, but that nevertheless he was a man of unusual qualities who led a life of great achievement. The biographer tells us that Spalding was not, as he claimed, 95 years old, when he died alone of cardiac arrest in a motel room in Tempe, Arizona. Bruton says the police found two driver's licences on Spalding's body, one for New Mexico and the other for California; both gave his birth date as March 26, 1904. Bruton admits Spalding could have lied about his age to Motor Vehicle authorities, but he brings forward other proof to suggest convincingly that Spalding could not have been more than 80 at the time of his death.

Bruton says that Spalding had no extensive holdings nor property anywhere. He writes when the author died he had \$15.98 in his pockets, \$110.74 in the bank, and no fixed address. Spalding lived out of the 1947 truck he was driving and didn't own but leased. As administrator of Spalding's estate, Bruton was deluged by calls from Spalding's many creditors who were waiting for their money back or for profits from the numerous schemes into which Spalding had drawn

them, including some in which he'd gotten several investors in the same scheme to put up 50 percent each against Spalding's 50 percent.

Bruton says that Spalding never visited India except for a brief trip in 1935 probably arranged largely by the DeVorss publishing company. In India, claims Bruton, Spalding showed a marked reluctance to take his fellow travelers to certain places he had written about in his books. The biographer writes:

"According to my informants who made the India trip, Spalding had talked a great deal of his Rest Home on the Ganges River above Calcutta. He made it sound so fascinating that a group decided to go there and visit it. Before they docked, Spalding warned them the roads were impassable to the Rest Home and the only way they could get there was by horseback. There were several couples in the crowd and, naturally, if the ladies did not feel they could endure the strain of horseback travel, it was unlikely the men would insist on going. This was a pretty safe alibi for Spalding not wanting to go to the Rest Home. However, the unexpected happened and the ladies thought that seeing the Rest Home would be worth the hardships of the trip. Spalding became very angry at this, accused some of them of distrusting his word and finally said the Rest Home had been totally destroyed by an earthquake which plunged it into the river."

Bruton also says that at their very first meeting Spalding admitted to him that there was no Camera of Past Events—at least, not yet. "Spalding loosened up and began telling me of a camera on which he and others were working. He said it would photograph back through time and pick up actual scenes and sounds of historical events." Later on, Bruton writes as if Spalding has reasserted that the Camera of Past Events actually existed—though the biographer finds that his statements were contradictory: "We were discussing the Spalding 'Time Camera.' As we talked he told me of numerous pictures they had obtained. Finally, he said they had taken the picture of Jesus giving the Sermon on the Mount. When he contended that he did not know who it was because the man speaking did not resemble da Vinci's painting of the Christ, the sum total of all the questions I had intended to ask him was answered. How could he possibly live with Jesus for months on end and not know what He looked like?"

Yet Bruton by no means saw Spalding as just a fraud. He saw him as a man of remarkable and unusual abilities. "There was no end to Spalding's ready knowledge. I heard him repeatedly come up with the right answer on almost any topic, any place or any time. His memory feats were more than phenomenal; they were fantastic and unbelievable. When almost any name was put to him, Spalding would say, 'Well, I knew him well,' and immediately seize on a number of details in that person's life which almost invariably checked out."

Bruton believed that so comprehensive and accurate was Spalding's fund of knowledge that, if he had not acquired it in the ways he said he had (i.e., on expeditions to the Far East), he also couldn't simply have fabricated it. Bruton observes that Spalding seemed to be unusually malleable and open; he remarks that "everyone had a tendency to take Spalding over." From this observation he goes on to suggest that Spalding was a victim of what he calls "astral obsession." Bruton recounts how a "highly reputable gentleman who professes clairvoyant vision, and who had known Spalding for many years" told him in an interview that "Baird was under the control of three astral entities." These three controls were his grandfather Baird Spalding, an old miner, and a little child. The clairvoyant explained to Bruton that Spalding "did not know when his words were being dictated by a control and when they weren't." Well-versed in occult lore himself, Bruton thought this was a highly likely explanation, particularly in the light of certain of Spalding's other talents. The biographer speculated that, "A photographic mind, working in conjunction with astral controls, would certainly offer a phenomenal scope of combinations."

Bruton ended up wondering if, through these controls, and quite unwittingly, Spalding had not accessed a great deal of his knowledge from what is called by mystics the akashic records. He believed that, if the akashic records did indeed exist, then they constituted a valid source of information for Baird Spalding.

Spalding's extreme malleability and propensity to be taken over may have profoundly affected his relationship with his publisher, Douglas DeVorss. Bruton writes that DeVorss seems to have exploited Spalding, though precise details were hard to come by. He says DeVorss stated in public that Spalding's books had sold over a million copies in

the English language alone. But, reports the biographer, "Spalding claimed that DeVorss did not pay him any royalties for a period of thirteen years; further, that he never received anything for the Fourth Volume." Bruton adds: "I have no way of verifying these statements." It seemed that DeVorss had a contract with Spalding in which he agreed to pay him a certain monthly sum throughout his life. Reports as to how much that sum was varied widely. Bruton ended up not being able to square the alleged huge sales of Spalding's books with the apparent poverty of their author.

In events unfolding directly after Spalding's death, it became clear that DeVorss had developed a certain exploitative attitude toward his bestselling author. As administrator of Spalding's estate, Bruton was given a decree of distribution; mistakenly, the decree awarded all of Spalding's possessions to Bruton.

Bruton writes that DeVorss made tremendous efforts to keep the decree for himself. In handling Spalding's possessions, the publisher often shortchanged the author's estate. Bruton had to resort to a shouting match in a public restaurant to embarrass DeVorss into giving him back the decree.

Bruton ends his biography by asserting that an extraordinary concurrence of talent and events—both on this plane and the astral—enabled Baird Spalding to carry out a mission of no little importance. Bruton writes: "It seems... [his books] had to be put across by a man whom science would ignore and religion would not challenge.... People accepted him wholeheartedly because he told them what they wanted to hear.... something about his books confirmed an inner conviction each one feels about his ability to attain spiritual understanding."

It's easy to believe that some dark and implacable karma was hovering over the lives of Douglas K. DeVorss and Baird T. Spalding. Perhaps both men were protected from its full impact while Spalding was alive. When Spalding died, it burst forth in all its savage fury. A terrible and tragic fate quickly overtook Douglas DeVorss.

In July, 1953, his wife, Dorothy, died while giving birth to a daughter.

In September, Douglas DeVorss was shot to death in broad daylight in his own office.

The World's First Time Machine

Dorothy DeVorss's death came only a short while after she and her husband had moved into their new, \$50,000, 12-room home in Pasadena, California. The spacious new grounds became the scene of desolation and despair. DeVorss was inconsolable. Two months after his wife's death, a gardener at work near the DeVorss home said he saw him "seated in his garden, and he seemed to be sobbing, crying." This scene was repeated for many days and nights.

Unimaginably worse was to come for DeVorss. On September 24, at the age of 52, he was murdered in front of his bookkeeper in his offices in downtown Los Angeles.

Among the four women working for DeVorss in the street-level office lined with packed bookshelves was Hazel Mary Kruse, 45. Kruse had left the publisher's office in mid-July. She had become estranged from her husband of 27 years, and was fearful for her safety. DeVorss had installed her in his home as a housekeeper.

Shortly before 11 a.m. on Thursday, September 24, Kruse's husband, Walter Henry (Jack) Kruse, 53, a former Minneapolis mail carrier, entered the office of DeVorss Publications at 520 West 9th Street. The office was partitioned into three sections. DeVorss was seated at his desk in the center section, talking to his bookkeeper, Helen Ryman, who was standing at his right side.

Kruse marched straight into DeVorss' office. Without saying a word, he raised his revolver and fired four shots into the publisher at close range.

The bullets passed within inches of Ryman's cheek. Bleeding profusely, DeVorss rose from his desk and staggered into the rear office, falling near the back door.

Kruse ran out the back way; then, when two passersby saw him reloading his revolver, he ran back into the office and exited through the front door. Eight hours later, the gun-wielding killer turned himself in at a Los Angeles police station.

Located later that day by police at DeVorss' Pasadena home, Hazel Kruse, near hysteria, told officers her husband had been threatening to kill her and her children for years. "He was a psychopathic case," detectives quoted her as saying. "I have been afraid of him all through the 27 years of our marriage."

Sunny Widell, DeVorss' secretary, had been in the outer office when Kruse had come through. Widell told detectives the publisher had not even met Kruse until the Saturday before, when the estranged husband had come to DeVorss' office for the first time. The two had had an amicable discussion, though DeVorss had refused to tell Kruse where his wife was living.

According to Widell, on Tuesday Jack Kruse had intercepted Hazel Kruse and Doug DeVorss at a religious meeting to which DeVorss had gone to pick her up and take her home. Kruse had made a scene, the secretary stated. But, she continued: "Mr. Kruse came into the office again the following day, just yesterday, and talked to Mr. DeVorss and their conversation seemed to be pleasant enough."

Refusing to either admit or deny anything, Kruse was remanded to custody without bail. At his trial in late January, 1954, the former letter carrier testified he had bought a gun with the intention of only "scaring DeVorss into leaving my wife." The defendant insisted that he intended to fire a shot into the ceiling just to frighten DeVorss, but that, starting from when he entered the office, his memory was a blank until he saw the blood spots on his clothing some time later.

Hazel Kruse took the stand during the trial to deny any romantic involvement with DeVorss. She testified that "the only three men in my life" were Kruse, her own father, and her son—25-year-old James Kruse, then an engineer at Los Angeles-based North American Aviation.

On Feb. 4, the jury declared Kruse guilty of second-degree murder, the verdict carrying a mandatory five-year to life sentence. The convicted murderer was ordered to Chino State Prison.

On September 9, 1953—two weeks and one day before he was murdered—DeVorss had revised his will. He had left his entire estate to his three-month-old daughter Donna.

The publisher was also survived by an adopted son, Byron, 23.

With these two terrible events, it seems that the strange and implacable destiny that brooded over the lives of Baird T. Spalding and Douglas K. DeVorss had spent its fury. Today, DeVorss Publishing, now located in Marina del Rey, flourishes in the hands of the family, publishing and distributing thousands of New Age books.

The Camera of Past Events of Baird T. Spalding seems not to have had a literal reality. It may instead have been the earthly personification of vaster astral realities—of a private access to the akashic records which Baird Spalding possessed without knowing that he possessed it.

This mysterious and inexplicable process may also have worked itself out in the life of Father Pellegrino Maria Ernetti.

Bruton, 11.

Spalding, Vol. VI, 17-18 (*Biographical Sketch*).

Ibid., Vol. V, 12-13.

Ibid., 23-29.

Ibid., Vol. I (*Publisher's Note*).

Bruton, 58.

Ibid., 93.

Ibid., 92-94.

Ibid., 66.

Ibid., 37, 118.

Ibid., 44.

Ibid., 38.

Ibid., 113, 118.

Ibid., 68-69.

Ibid., 86.

Ibid., 88-89.

Ibid., 128-129.

"Publisher Murdered; Suspect Held," 1: 2+.

"Lapse of Memory at Killing Claimed," 2:1-4.

"Man Convicted of Killing Publisher in Office, 2:1-6.

Chapter Twenty-One

EDGAR CAYCE AND
THE DAUGHTERS OF MEN

Edgar Cayce is the great exponent in the twentieth century of the "root race" theory. He was not cast in the same mold as Blavatsky and Steiner in terms of acquiring great knowledge. He does share their intimations of an all-pervading surround of spiritual presences. Cayce was immensely clairvoyant, so much so that he was able to read books by falling asleep with his head on them, successfully effect thousands of "remote" cures while in trance, and while in that state give thousands of readings, often about the root races and the subject's reincarnational affiliation with them.

His gifts were sensational, as any fair-minded account of his life will attest, and it is a sad commentary on the modern medical science community that it has not taken him far more seriously. Cayce was an unusually humble man, not a student at all (did you have to be, if you could imbibe the content of a book by sleeping on it, and if the astral world unfailingly answered all your questions?); and he does not seem to have had the kind of forceful personality that especially Blavatsky, but also Steiner to a degree, had in the promotion of their organizations around the world. His whole bent was toward selflessly helping others. This he did in full measure: Out of his ceaseless and pious labor grew the Association for Research and Development, founded in 1932 in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Cayce died in 1945, but the A.R.E. flourishes today, with his grandson Charles Thomas Cayce, now 57, in charge. The 14,000 readings which Cayce gave over a period of 45 years—many of them published in the over 70 books about Cayce now in

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print—were placed on a CD-ROM in 1993 and are available to the public at a cost of \$199.00.

We do not get a sense in Cayce's life and writings of the writhing, dynamic presence of the etheric vital fluid in its more spectacular manifestations. All that seems toned down by his Christianity and his humility. Where did he get his information from? He didn't answer that question with absolute conviction. He said that his information came from three different sources: his subconscious fetched information from the subconscious minds of all other persons; he was in touch with "discarnate entities" who sometimes called themselves angels, sometimes just 'beings'; and he spoke from a "hall of records," a term he used for a mystical realm where every deed, word or thought of humankind existed forever. His grandson Charles Thomas Cayce records that, "He said his mind seemed to travel on a beam of light, and moved to a place that looked like a Greek temple. A man would come out, and they would confer, and he would get a book with the information that he wanted."

We reenter with Cayce in his trances the realms of the lost root races of Lemuria and Atlantis. He channeled this information partly, he said, because great numbers of people in the twentieth century were reincarnated from Atlantis, and they needed to be filled in on that aspect of their karma. Cayce—or his spirit guides—maintained that there is an underlying connection between the disasters that befell Atlantis and those which will soon befall our civilization. Many Atlanteans, he claimed, have reincarnated to help us through these times of trouble. But it had all begun much farther back; it was as if the sins of one root race, or one sub-root race, were delivered upon the next. Cayce said he saw in trance five root races, and saw them in terms of color: white, black, red, brown and yellow. Asked why the number five was "selected for the projection of the five races," he replied:

"This, as we find, is that element which represents man in his physical form and the attributes to which he may become conscious from the elemental or spiritual to the physical consciousness. As the senses; as the sensing of the various forces that bring to man the activities in the sphere in which he finds himself."

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The Edgar Cayce readings recount, as do those of Blavatsky and Steiner, an initial creation as pure spirit and then the slow, painful entrapment in earth or materiality of these created souls or spiritual beings.

"In the period, then—some hundred, some ninety-eight thousand years before the entry of Ram into India, there lived in this land of Atlantis one Ameilius, who had first noted the separations of the beings who inhabited that portion of the earth's sphere into male and female as separate entities, or individuals. As to their forms in the physical sense, these were much rather of the nature of thought forms, or able to push out of themselves in that direction in which their development took place in thought—much in the way and manner as the amoeba would in the waters of a stagnant bay, or lake, in the present.

"As these took form by the gratifying of their own desire for that which builded or added to the material conditions, they became hardened or set—much in the form of the existing human body of the day, with that color as partook of their surroundings much in the manner as the chameleon in the present. Hence coming into that form as the red or the mixture peoples—or colors, better known later as the red race."

According to Cayce, the red race developed in Atlantis and with unusual rapidity. But strife arose because of the differences in quality of consciousness between those who had remained essentially spirit, and those who had projected themselves into a material body. This seems to have hastened the metamorphoses of yet more spiritual beings into physical form.

The trouble was that the physical body tended to generate corrupting feelings. Those corrupting feelings increased the physical density of the body: *"but with these transpositions, with these changes that came in as personalities, we find . . . the sons of the Creative force . . . looking upon these changed forms, or the daughters of men, and there crept in those pollutions, or polluting themselves with those mixtures that brought contempt, hatred, bloodshed, and desires of self without respect of others' freedom, others' wishes—and there began, then, in the latter portion of this period dissentings and divisions among the peoples in the lands."*

Some of Cayce's Atlanteans sound a little like Rudolph Steiner's Lemurians: *"...These took on many sizes as to stature, from that as may be called the midget to the giants—for there were giants in the earth in those days,*

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men as tall as (what would be termed today) ten or twelve feet in stature, and well proportioned throughout. The ones that became the most useful were those as would be classified (or called in the present) as the ideal stature, that was of both male and female (as those separations had been begun); and the most ideal (as would be called) was Adam, who was in that period, when he (Adam) appeared, as five in one—See?”

Ultimately, over the 45 years of his channeling, Cayce told basically the same story as Blavatsky and Steiner: of the gradual thickening and coarsening of the ether as it descends from its pristine, almost unconscious state, through its becoming more and more removed from the awareness of its own self and the ability to use its etheric powers, until finally it has become flesh-imprisoned, largely unaware twentieth century humanity.

It might be thought that Cayce, pious and utterly good Christian that he was, would have ended up creating a kind of prime exemplar of a Christianity-based “root race” theory. He didn’t, and the reason for this may be that such an exemplar already existed: The subject of the root races, so important also to Helena Blavatsky and Rudolph Steiner, is taken up, though apparently briefly, in the Old Testament.

This occurs in a short but often-quoted passage in the *Book of Genesis* (6,1-12). The passage tells us that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and came down to woo them. This was how the mighty men of olden-times were born—but there came a rush of evil along with them. This gave God second thoughts about having created the human race in the first place. He sent a flood, thereby destroying his handiwork, but allowing Noah and his family to survive.

In the context of presenting a comparative historical study of alchemy around the world, the great scholar of the history of Chinese science, Joseph Needham, expounds on this passage in Volume V:4 of *Science & Civilization in China*:

“We are here in the presence of a corpus of legend which filtered down from Jewish sources to Essenes, Gnostics and Christians suggesting to religious minds that all the sciences and techniques were really diabolical in nature, . . . the sources indeed of all evil, this traceable

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not so much to the 'sin of Adam' as to the disobedience of the 'Promethean' angels. And so we are led back to the apocryphal 'Book of Enoch,' one of the most interesting of the Jewish writings rejected from the canon, datable in its relevant parts at about -165, and preserved for us only in a number of Ethiopian versions."

Needham does not call this writing a description of the descent of the root races. But, along with the legend of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, the account does encapsulate the same parable of the narrowing down of the vaster organs of perception of mankind to their present-day withered form:

Needham gives us a version of the *Book of the Enoch*, as follows:

VI.

1 And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters.

2 And the angels, the children of heaven, saw and became enamoured of them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose wives from among the race of men, and beget us children.'

3 And Semjaza, who was their leader, said unto them: 'I fear that you will not in fact perform this deed, so that I alone shall have to pay the penalty of great sin.'

4 But they answered him one and all, saying: 'We shall swear an oath, and bind ourselves by mutual imprecations not to abandon this plan but to carry it through.'

5 Then swore they all together, and bound themselves upon it.

6 And they were in all 200, who descended in the days of Jared on the summit of Mt. Hermon, and by this name it was named because they swore and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it.

7 And these were the names of their leaders, Semjaza their commander, Arakiba, Aramael, Kokabael, Tamael, Araqael, Danael, Ezekael, Baraqael, Azazael, Armaros, Batarael, Ananael, Zaqael, Shamshael, Satarael, Turael, Jomjael and Sarael.

8 These were their decarchs.

VII.

1 And all the others together with them took unto themselves wives, each choosing for himself one, and they began to go in unto them and

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unite themselves with them, and they taught them spells and enchantments, and the lore of plants (lit. the cutting of roots), and showed them the (healing properties of) herbs.

VIII.

1 And Azazel taught men to fabricate swords and knives, shields and breastplates, making known to them the metals (of the earth) and the arts of working them. He also showed how bracelets and all kinds of ornaments could be made, teaching the use of cosmetic black, and the painting of the eyes, and the knowledge of all precious stones and of all coloring tinctures.

2 Semjaza taught enchantments and the knowledge of plant drugs (lit. the cutting of roots), Armaros taught exorcism and the breaking of spells, Baraqael and Kokabael taught astronomy and astrology, Ezeqael prognostication by the clouds, Araqael prognostication by the signs of the earth, Shamshael by the sun and Sarael by the moon.

3 And there arose much godlessness, and fornication, and men were led astray, and became corrupt in all their dealings.

VII.

2 And the women became pregnant, and bore great giants, whose stature was three thousand ells,

3 And who consumed all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them,

4 The giants turned against the men and women and devoured them.

5 So men began to sin against the birds and beasts, the reptiles and the fishes, and to feed upon one another's flesh, and to drink the blood.

VIII.

4 And as men perished, they cried out, and their cry went up to heaven...

VII.

6 Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones.

The general result of all this, writes Needham, was that "Michael, Uriel, Raphael and Gabriel brought the case before the Most High, significantly saying (IX. 6) that Azazel 'hath taught all unrighteousness on earth and hath revealed the eternal secrets preserved in heaven, which men were striving to learn...' Orders were accordingly issued

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for the arrest and eternal imprisonment of Semjaza, Azazel and the others. Here is where the prophet Enoch comes in. He is sent to read the sentence to the fallen angels (or 'Watchers,' as the text now calls them), and is asked by them to intercede in heaven; this he does, but unsuccessfully, and once again has to declare the irrevocable condemnation. Part of the address to the angels says (XVI. 3): 'You were in heaven, but all the mysteries had not yet been revealed to you, only worthless ones you knew, and now these in the hardness of your hearts you have made known to the women; and through these mysteries women and men work much evil upon the earth.'

To all this, Needham comments, most anti-mythically: "The whole legend is of extraordinary interest, combining, as it does, a terrifying parable of the evils which the uncontrolled use of science and technology can bring upon mankind, with the age-old fear of sex and sexual relations unauthorized by religion, i.e. by the social organization and knowledge of the period. Are not the societies for social responsibility of scientists still in the field against the giants today?"

Needham has been trying to discover the derivation of the word *chemistry* (and, by extension, *alchemy*). He has suggested, as a beginning hypothesis, that it derives from the word Ham. The flood of Noah may be equated with the times of geological upheaval which accompany—in the terms of Blavatsky, Steiner and Cayce—the transition from a higher root race to a lower root race; it is a flood, or a sinking beneath the sea, that marks the demise of the Atlantean root race and the "ascendancy" of our own. Any flotsam or jetsam of higher knowledge of the spiritual/astral nature of man is denied by the upcoming race of man, which, not so evolved as its predecessor, and deeply threatened by vaster spiritual dimensions, rejects this knowledge as evil.

Joseph Needham points out that there is at least one more account in the lore of highest antiquity of the rejection of the ancient wisdom which Cham, one of Noah's three sons, had been able to preserve with him on the Ark. Needham begins by retelling the account of John Cassianus (who wrote in about 428 A.D.):

"...Cham was expert in all the arts and sciences of the antediluvian generations, and wished to save this accumulated natural knowledge

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of mankind. However, Noah and his two other sons were so holy that it was not possible for Cham to bring into the Ark any handbooks on the ancient 'superstitious, wicked and profane arts,' so he inscribed them on metal plates and buried them underground. After the flood waters went down he succeeded in finding them again, and thus 'transmitted to his descendents a seedbed of profanity and perpetual sin.'" Needham continues with the account in Pseudo-Clement of Rome (fictional material written about 220 A.D.); here, he says, "Cham figures as the first great magician, handing down his technical knowledge to his sons, especially Mizraim, ancestor of the Egyptians, Babylonians and Persians, and finally being burnt to death by his own conjured star-sparks. Nor is the sexual element lacking, for it will be remembered that after the flood Cham was cursed because he had seen his father's nakedness, Noah being drunk and the weather doubtless hot."

In another variant of this legend, which Needham does not mention, but which cropped up from time to time in the poetry and prose of nineteenth century France, a race of giants, dwelling on earth with man, is entirely wiped out in the flood—except for a single member, Og, who manages to hitch a ride on the roof of Noah's Ark. We have no definitive version of Og's fate. But it is intimated that he was persecuted to death for his possession of "higher powers."

We've leapt far back into the past to discuss the notion of the 'congealing' of the higher, astral powers in the course of their descent into the races of man. Let's leap back to the present, and look at the "root race" experience of a man who was a contemporary of Edgar Cayce's.

That man is Father Pellegrino Ernetti.

Cayce, 55-57, 60, 63.

Needham, 341-343, 346.

Chapter Twenty-Two

THE ROOT RACES OF
FATHER ERNETTI

David Bruton saw Baird T. Spalding as in the grip of astral powers that, apparently, the author of *Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East* could no more deny than he could accept. Spalding's journeys, through the spaces of the Far East, through time with the Camera of Past Events, may have been the cover story that he was all unwittingly forced by his divided psyche to give to adventures with the akashic records which he could not acknowledge even to himself.

If this is so, then the stories of Father Pellegrino Ernetti and Baird T. Spalding are far from being just confabulation (as David Bruton intuited about Baird Spalding). These men are seers; they have seen a truth; they have been crippled, not in their perception of that truth, but in the expression that they are able to give it.

What drove Father Ernetti to piece together the fragments of *Thyestes* and present the results to the world as if it were an ancient, long-lost drama he had brought back on the chronovisor? If it was the unexpressed writhings of the astral currents in him that were behind this act, then there may be other meanings behind the *Thyestes* story besides those that we have looked at.

When we look at *Thyestes* again with this in mind, we notice something stunning: The *Thyestes* of Quintus Ennius is a parable of the very rise and fall of our astral being.

Likely there was "archaic music" in Ennius' play, but likely no more than in any other Latin drama of that period, and it probably

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wouldn't have been much more than a light "musical sound track" accompaniment.

It may be that Father Ernetti homed in upon the legend of Thyestes and Atreus because it held a far deeper meaning for the ancient world than anything we have talked about so far.

From earliest times, the dreadful banquet had been associated with a wrenching cosmic catastrophe.

The ancients believed that when the sun witnessed the misdeed of Thyestes, it was so shocked it dimmed its light earlier than usual, and then, the next morning, rose in the east instead of the west; till then, the east had been its setting-place.

In ancient times there were numerous dramatic versions of the Thyestes story. The only complete version we have is that of the Roman dramatist, philosopher and rhetorician L. Annaeus Seneca (4 B.C.-65 A.D.). Seneca devotes well over a hundred lines to describing what happened in the skies on account of the misdeeds of Atreus and Thyestes. The sun begins to dim when it sees Atreus cooking the slaughtered children for Thyestes' dinner. "Why," the Chorus asks the sun-god, "dost turn thy course and why dost blot out the day in mid-Olympus [midday]?... What cause from their fixed track has turned aside thy horses?"

Seneca tells us in his *Thyestes* that fear of the total destruction of the world seized mankind at this moment. The chorus chants, "Trembling, trembling are our hearts, sore smit with fear, lest all things fall shattered in final ruin and once more gods and men be overwhelmed by formless chaos..." Seneca describes the new position of the constellations on account of the shifting of the skies: "...Alcides' Lion, with burning heat inflamed, once more shall fall down from the sky; the Virgin shall fall to the earth she once abandoned, the scales of justice with their weights shall fall and with them drag the fierce Scorpion down..." And he describes Thyestes, horrified by the cosmic damage his act has wrought, asking Zeus to destroy the world and take him with it: "O thou, exalted ruler of the sky, ...set the winds warring on every hand,...these arms let loose and hurl thy fires."

There is just a whisper of all this in the Ernetti *Thyestes* fragment. In lines 38-41, the Chorus says: "The entire pole burned and the ether,/ The path of the winds, groaned,/ And great ocean embracing the earth/ Shut in the fainthearted anger of Nereus." In the Loeb Classical Library collection of Quintus Ennius's fragments, a line preserved from his *Thyestes* reads, "Look you on this that glows white aloft: all men call on it as 'Jupiter.'" Translator E. H. Warmington believes Ennius is implying in this line that the sun turned white with horror when it witnessed the misdeeds at the banquet.

Immanuel Velikovsky was certain that the Atreus/Thyestes story described a real event: the near-miss by a young planet Venus of our earth roughly 2,800 years ago; this arrested the rotation of our planet long enough to cause catastrophe. In *Worlds in Collision* (1950), he assembles other ancient references to the disastrous banquet, such as Plato's suggesting that the gods chose the motion of the sun "as a testimony in favor of Atreus[*s* being the rightful ruler of the Argive plain]," and stating that, "At certain periods the universe has its present circular motion, and at other periods it revolves in the reverse direction...." Velikovsky includes a line from a fragment of Sophocles' lost drama *Atreus*: "Zeus...changed the course of the sun, causing it to rise in the east and not in the west."

In a footnote in *Worlds in Collision*, Velikovsky writes: "Those of the Greek authors who ascribed a permanent change in the direction of the sun to the time of the Argive tyrant Atreus, confused two events and welded them into one: a lasting reversal of east and west in earlier times and a temporary retrograde movement of the sun in the days of the Argive tyrants." To this statement he later adds: "The traditions of peoples agree in synchronizing the changes in the movement of the sun with great catastrophes which terminated world ages. The changes in the movement of the sun in each successive age make the use by many peoples of the term 'sun' for 'age' understandable."

The association of the crime of Thyestes with a cosmic catastrophe is deeply embedded in Western culture. Seventeen centuries after Seneca, we find English poet John Milton making this link in his epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667). Milton describes the angels' tilting of the world on its axis to create the seasons, just as Adam and Eve are being

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expelled from the Garden of Eden (before Eve's sin and man's fall, one of the perfections of the world was that there were no seasons). The poet compares Eve's eating the apple with Thyestes' eating his children: "...*At that tasted Fruit/ The Sun, as from Thyestean Banquet, turn'd/ His course intended; else how had the World/ Inhabited, though sinless, more than now,/ Avoided pinching cold and scorching beate?*"

It is intriguing that Milton likens the "Thyestean Banquet" to a far greater catastrophe: that of the "Fall of Man." Immanuel Velikovsky believed, along with other researchers, that the cosmic turmoil in the Thyestes legend was all the more horrifying to the spectator of the drama in that it evoked in him—however briefly, and however quickly suppressed in terror—buried racial memories of a far more ancient and far greater catastrophe.

We've already seen, in Madame Blavatsky's discussion of the Sideral Year in *The Secret Doctrine*, that ancient and archaic (pre-historical) man believed that at the end of huge periods of time the earth came full circle in its journey through the cosmos; that then, in order to be renewed, it had to be virtually destroyed. This event was usually associated with the astronomical cycle of 26,000 years called the Sideral year, one caused by a particular wobble in the earth's axis bringing in its train what is called the "precession of the equinoxes." The ancients knew of this cycle because of their carefully-preserved observations of the heavens carried out over tens of thousands of years. It may be that they knew of cosmic hazards—such as storms of comets—which reoccurred in the same place in the regular swing of the 'Great Wheel.'

Velikovsky believed that, behind the more recent event of the shifting of the sun in its route as described in the drama of *Thyestes*, there was a far more terrifying allusion: to the catastrophic "ending" of the last Great Wheel.

How does all this relate to the *Thyestes* fragment of Father Ernetti?

These times of fire and flood, which erase life on earth so that our world can be reseeded, roughly correspond to the periods of transition from higher to lower "root races" as described by Madame Blavatsky and Rudolph Steiner. The deluge of Noah, for example, may

mark one of these transition points between 'Great Wheels;' and it may be synonymous with, or resonate to, the sinking of the continent of Atlantis which brings about the transition from the fourth root race of the Atlanteans to the fifth root race which is us, as described by Madame Blavatsky.

Did Father Ernetti, in his troubled dreams of the astrally-disturbed, perceive in the drama of *Thyestes* the sinking and coalescing of the astral planes into the lesser races of man?

Is the genealogy of the doomed House of Atreus a representation of the descent of the soul of man from astral glory to its brutal incarnation as technologist in our present century?

The story of Tantalus' murdering his son Pelops takes us back to the days of the ancient shamans, when our species still remembered its affinity with the gods. Mircea Eliade writes: "...let us note that the myth of renewal by fire, cooking, or dismemberment has continued to haunt men even outside the spiritual horizon of shamanism. Medea succeeds in having Pelias murdered by his own daughters by convincing them that she will restore him to life rejuvenated, as she did a ram. And when Tantalus kills his son Pelops and serves him at the banquet of the gods, they resuscitate him by boiling him in a pot; only his shoulder is missing, Demeter having inadvertently eaten it." The ivory shoulder of Pelops seems also to be an echo of those times. Eliade writes: "But bone also plays other roles in shamanic myths and rites. Thus, for example, when the Vasyugan-Ostyak shaman sets out in search of the patient's soul, he travels to the other world in a boat made of a chest and uses a shoulder bone as an oar. We should also cite in this connection divination by the shoulder bone of a ram or sheep, extensively practiced among the Kalmyk, the Kirgiz, the Mongols; by a seal's shoulder blade among the Koryak."

Today, shamans still claim to effect their cures through astral-traveling. It may have been that in the extremely ancient time from which their legends spring they were as much at home in the ether and the astral planes as they were on the surface of our planet.

The story of Pelops' courtship of Hippodamia, daughter of Oenomaus, King of Pisa, contains intriguing hints of the further slippage of the soul of man into an inferior root race, taking place as one

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great cycle ends and another begins. Oenomaus tells Pelops that if he wants Hippodamia he must beat himself, the king, in a chariot race. Pelops bribes the king's charioteer, Myrtilus, to secretly remove the lynch pins from his master's chariot. The king's chariot crashes, and Pelops wins the race and Hippodamia's hand.

The lynch pins that Myrtilus removed held the "great wheels" of the chariot in place. The wheels of the chariot spin loose in the race—in the same way as the Great Wheel of the cosmic cycle seems to spin loose, its lynch pins removed, when a cosmic conflagration sweeps across the earth. Pelops does not pay Myrtilus the bribe he has promised him. Instead, he has the charioteer thrown into the ocean, where he drowns. There may be a faint echo here to a temporary end caused to our species by a flood.

The theme of the descent into lower, more brutal stages of mankind is carried on in the story of Atreus' two sons, Menelaus and Agamemnon. Menelaus marries Helen and Agamemnon marries Clytaemnestra; both women have been born of the coupling of Zeus as a swan with a mortal woman, Leda. (Helen was hatched from an egg with her brother Castor; Clytaemnestra from a separate egg with her brother Pollux; there was a provocative legend in ancient times, recounted by W.B. Yeats in *A Vision*, of a third, lost egg produced by this union of Zeus and Leda.)

Helen is abducted by Paris; Menelaus and Agamemnon follow the two to Troy with an army, and the Trojan War begins. In the majority of myths, the "Great Year" of 26,000 years is divided into twelve less destructive—but still convulsive—cycles of roughly 2,000 years apiece (twelve being the number of signs of the Zodiac). William Butler Yeats, prompted by spirits who spoke to him through his wife's automatic writing, swept this cosmology up into his art and thought. He came to see the destruction of Trojan civilization in the eighth century B.C., which resulted in the ascendancy of Greek civilization, as one of the transition points between these 2,000-year-long cycles. The exploits of Menelaus and Agamemnon become, then, yet another, if relatively minor, expression of the transition of a higher root race to a lower root race—or, perhaps, of a higher sub-root race to a lower sub-root race.

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The ancient story of the fall of the House of Atreus can, indeed—perhaps not exclusively—be read as a representation of the descent of the spirit of man from the glory of astral being to the paucity of contemporary mortal being.

Ernetti, in the troubled astral dreams of his soul, might have been drawn to such a representation. It would be almost as if his soul were forcing him to remember something of very great importance to him.

There is none of the savage banquet scene in the Ernetti *Thyestes* Fragment, and only a part of the scene taking place at the court of Thesprotus—the scene in which Thyestes consults the oracle of Apollo. The dramatic action unfolds mainly in the divided soul of Thyestes, or in the words of the Chorus as its members supplicate the god.

Herein may lie the secret of why, if it was indeed the case, Father Ernetti was driven to recreate in his mind's eye this particular segment of a particular Latin drama. Likely there was “archaic” choral music in the scene, and perhaps more than in many other Latin plays; after all, the Chorus supplicating the gods is not entirely unlike the church choir singing praises to God in the course of the church service.

But that is not why Father Ernetti has come here. This second half of *Thyestes* is the polar opposite of the first. Here, Thyestes is not implicated in a hideous moment in mankind's plummet from the astral heights. Rather, he is seeking reintegration with his astral self. The question Thyestes strives to put to Phoebus Apollo—the question whose nature we aren't told—can surely only be a plea for the recovery of all that he has lost. Who *is* he? What is man? He—and his species—are beings who have been gods, and could be gods again, if only they could remember what they are, and act on that remembrance.

In this scene Thyestes wishes the oracle to tell him how he can once more ascend the ladder of being, from lower root race nature to higher root race nature, until he has once more become a being functioning out of his astral powers. Madame Blavatsky had a hundred words for those energies with which Thyestes—without quite knowing this is this question he is asking—wishes once more to be in total contact. He wants to come together. He wishes for wholeness: the lost Eden, the Self of Hindu philosophy which in fact we really are,

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and the means of ascension to which the seers of ancient India knew a thousand methods.

Where is Father Ernetti in all this?

From the depths of his tormented, astrally-challenged being, he has called up Ennius Quintus' *Thyestes* to get to the bottom of his own nature. Thyestes and Atreus are human beings as demons; their sins—their very natures—are to be exorcised. In the scene in Thesprotus' palace, we see what is really a kind of self-exorcism. Thyestes' unanswered question to Apollo may be his wishing for the god to drive out of him once and for all the great taint which is within him and which has been passed down to him by his fathers.

Thyestes seeks ascension. So does Father Ernetti. Thyestes wishes for all the demons to be driven from him. So does Father Ernetti. The reconstruction by the Benedictine of that portion of Quintus Ennius's *Thyestes* which takes place at the court of Thesprotus is Father Ernetti's awakening for a brilliant moment, from the sleep of the astral self which produces monsters, to the realization that his astral self is all he really is—and it is all the universe.

Seneca, 157.

Ibid., 159.

Ibid., 161.

Ibid., 177-179.

Warmington, 349 (*Thyestes* Fragment 351).

Velikovsky, 122.

Milton, 325 (*Paradise Lost*, X, 687-691).

Velikovsky, 122 (footnote).

Ibid., 124.

Eliade, 66

Ibid., 164-65.

Yeats, 50-53.

Warmington, 346 (*Thyestes*).

Chapter Twenty-Three

THE SOPHOCLES PROJECT

Most of us have heard of the Greek dramatist Sophocles, who lived in about 497-406 B.C. His best-known tragedy, *Oedipus Rex*, is considered by many to be the greatest work of literature ever created.

Dr. Margaret Anne Doody, Director of the Comparative Literature Program at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, writes, in *The True Story of the Novel* (Rutgers, 1997): “We must always remember how much of ancient literature has simply been lost—including authors held in the greatest reverence...as classics of our canon. Aeschylus wrote 90 plays; we have 7. Sophocles wrote 123 plays; we have 7. Euripides wrote about 65 plays, and we have 18. We have Aristotle to make generalizations about Greek drama for us, but of course we do not have all of Aristotle....We can draw no conclusions about the inferiority of works that did not ‘last.’”

What Dr. Doody means by her last statement is that just because a work didn't survive, doesn't mean it wasn't great. Many of the lost plays of Sophocles may have been superior to *Oedipus Rex*.

We've lost so many of these works because so few copies were made, with those that were usually being stored in huge collections which were very vulnerable to destruction in times of war.

If Julius Caesar hadn't fallen in love with Cleopatra, we might have many more of these masterpieces of antiquity. The Library at Alexandria was the greatest in the ancient world, with over half-a-million manuscripts. Caesar's wars took him to Alexandria in 47 B.C.; Plutarch writes, regarding this war in Egypt, that (*Life of Caesar*) “some

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say that it need never have taken place, that it was brought on by Caesar's passion for Cleopatra and that it did him little credit while involving him in great danger."

While Caesar was lingering with Cleopatra in the palace in Alexandria, an enemy general, Achilles, "involved Caesar in a full-scale war and one that was very difficult to fight....First of all the enemy dammed up the canals and he was in danger of being cut off from his water supply. Then they tried to intercept his communications by sea and he was forced to deal with this danger by setting fire to the ships in the docks. This was the fire which, starting from the dockyards, destroyed the great library."

If we were somehow able to acquire one of these lost masterpieces, how much would it be worth?

In 1985, the *Gospel Book of Henri the Lion*, one of the finest illuminated manuscripts in the world—and only one copy of which was ever made—was auctioned off at Sotheby's in London for almost \$12,000,000. At the time, this was the largest sum ever paid for a rare manuscript.

The *Gospel Book of Henri the Lion* was created in the twelfth century A.D. at the Abbey of Helmshausen for a medieval German potentate. It was only nine hundred years old.

Father Pellegrino Ernetti was passionately interested in the lost literature of the past. He could read Greek and Latin fluently. Why didn't he, if he were really able to travel back in time in the chronovisor, bring back not part of Quintus Ennius's *Thyestes*, but one of the lost plays of Sophocles?

Wouldn't he, as well as enriching the literary culture of the world, have been able to raise millions and millions of dollars for himself and the Order of the Benedictines?

What exactly would a lost play of Sophocles be worth today?

Dr. Christopher de Hamel is the world's leading authority on Latin, Greek and other early European manuscripts. Dr. de Hamel has a Ph.D. in history from Oxford University and is a cataloguer for Sotheby's in London. Sotheby's has a number of branches around the world, and is the leading auctioneer of rare manuscripts.

Asked what a recovered lost play by Sophocles might be worth today, Dr. de Hamel began by saying it was not impossible that such a discovery might be made; in the second half of this century, he said, a lost play by the master of Greek New Comedy, Menander (342-291B.C.), *Dyscolos*, had turned up, and is now in the Bodmer Library.

Assuming the manuscript of the lost play of Sophocles was clearly not a modern fake, the first thing to do, said Dr. de Hamel, would be to establish the attribution of the text. "There would be huge differences in commercial value between an unknown Greek play by a possibly identifiable author, and a lost and provably authentic work of Sophocles himself. Many plays even in antiquity were spuriously associated with the names of famous authors. Even if it had a contemporary ascription to Sophocles, that would not authenticate it, even if Sophocles was known to have written a text by that name."

Dr. de Hamel said that even if we were able to assert by stylistic comparison that the content of the play was consistent with the literary style of Sophocles, that would not be enough either. No one would pay a very large sum unless the attribution was unassailable, he said. "Think of the scholars who claim from time to time to have found 'lost' plays by Shakespeare, simply on the evidence of style. Quite simply, no one really believes them.

"Sophocles was immensely influential," he added. "A clever playwright in antiquity could have written in his style, and could have pretended it was the work of the master. Style alone would not do it."

Dr. de Hamel felt that what would be necessary would be to find authentic and known quotations from the play in other classical literature—tags, or sayings, without context, except 'as Sophocles says in his such-and-such.' He cited the case of Quintus Ennius: Though the Roman playwright's poems had been lost, it had been possible to reconstruct a good part of them from classical quotation. "If Virgil's *Aeneid* was lost now," Dr. de Hamel said, "we could probably reconstruct a great deal of the poem from classical allusions to it."

If someone were to bring in to an auction house a play with a title that Sophocles was known to have written, and if there were enough classical quotations from it to confirm that the auction house was dealing with that actual text, "then I think you are in the money."

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But there was, he said, a second major question concerning the manuscript itself: "Say it was a papyrus, excavated in Egypt, like the Menander [the *Dyscolos*], and, for example, from around the first century, like many papyri. Then you have problems. Egyptian law no longer allows the export of archaeological antiquities. A recently-found and smuggled papyrus would have very little value. If it is a papyrus, then it will have to have been demonstrably clear [of any connection] from Egypt—in some wholesome collection like, say, a little school library in North America—since, say, the 1930s. It would be best of all if we knew exactly where it had been found, and when."

Even still, added Dr. de Hamel, papyri are fragile. Some collectors were wary of them, for they were often damaged and difficult to handle, and you never quite knew if another one might not turn up from the desert.

Dr. de Hamel said that, bearing this in mind: "I think a new and authentic, complete and unpublished play by Sophocles, from a known site in Egypt, excavated in 1925 but not known till now, could be worth \$2,000,000."

But it might be possible, he said, to realize far more from a genuine manuscript of a lost play by Sophocles. This would be in the case of the manuscript being a ninth-century Carolingian codex on vellum. "That would change the picture completely," Dr. de Hamel declared. "You might think a first-century papyrus would be a better text than a ninth-century codex, but there is a vast market for codices. Papyri are chance survivals. Anything could turn up tomorrow.

"But we can measure the rarity of medieval books. An unknown Carolingian book would have to have remained out of sight for 1,100 years on a high shelf. That would be sensational. The existence of a lost text in a ninth-century copy would transform our knowledge of the reception of Sophocles. No one really collects papyrus; every major library in the world wants Carolingian books. Assuming all the same tests apply, a ninth-century copy could be worth \$6,000,000."

Was this not a rather low sum for what might be the greatest work of art ever created by man? Dr. de Hamel was asked.

"It would not be worth hundreds of millions," he replied. "I am the most prejudiced person in the world. I'd far rather have a new

Sophocles than yet another splodgy field by Monet, but most rich people want something more visual for a large sum of money. Most academics who read Greek could not afford a million dollars; many millionaires have not heard of Sophocles.”

It is obvious from Dr. de Hamel's statements that Father Ernetti and Professor Marasca could never have sold their reconstructed manuscript of *Thyestes*. Whatever the artistic merits of the text, it would have fallen far short of even the minimal tests of attribution. No one would have believed Father Ernetti and Professor Marasca's story of how the text was obtained. This must be why, finally, the custodians of the *Thyestes* fragment said so little about it and showed it to so few people. Its possession was a private thing, an extraordinary curiosity, to be enjoyed only by the possessor.

It seems, as has been discussed, as if Father Ernetti couldn't pick and choose where he would end up “in the past.” He couldn't have just gone back after a play by Sophocles; it seems that unconscious, personal, irrational—astral, so to speak—considerations dictated what would happen to the Benedictine once he launched himself on a chronovisor trip.

Is this true of everyone?

Given that we can “astral-travel” back to the past at all, might there be some individuals for whom it would be possible to travel back into time with the conscious intention of retrieving the overheard text of a particular lost masterpiece and bringing it back to an incredulous and fascinated humanity?

The answer may be yes.

The way to do it may be through past-life regression therapy.

Past-life regression therapy (PLRT) is a hypnosis-based technique by which we are aided to travel back to our supposed previous lifetimes. In the eyes of some, it has been demonstrated that a trauma in a past lifetime can seriously effect our behavior in this present life. A previous death by drowning, for example, might give us a horror of the sea in our present life. It very often happens that, on the hypnotist's couch, if we confront that past-life trauma and work it through, we can, as in this instance, overcome the horror of the sea.

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Perhaps it's all just a rather imaginative form of psychodrama, not a regression to a past lifetime. Whatever the case, such therapy often seems to work.

Many of the several thousand practitioners of past-life regression therapy today believe that, in the practice of PLRT, they are truly enabling the client to access past lives. But what or who is it that bridges the gap between our various lives? Our soul, perhaps. But, more practically speaking, is it our astral body that does the ferrying?

Many practitioners believe it is.

Chet Snow, Ph.D., of Sedona, Arizona, is one of the world's leading past-life regression therapists (he has practices in both France and Arizona). Dr. Snow holds a Master's degree in history and sociology from Columbia University, New York, and a Ph.D. in French history from the International Institute of Advanced Studies. He trained as a past-life regression therapist with Dr. Helen Wambach, one of the founders of the PLRT movement. Dr. Snow has himself developed a new branch of the profession, Future Life Progression.

For a number of years, Dr. Snow was involved in the regression of large groups of people supposedly back to their past lives. In the early 1980s, he worked with Dr. Wambach in California on a project that involved hypnotically sending several thousand persons back to fairly specific time periods, such as the eighteenth century. While they were under hypnosis and, it seemed, back in these eras, Drs. Wambach and Snow asked them all the same basic questions, such as: "What are you eating for supper?" or "What clothing are you wearing?" or "What kind of money are you using?"

The answers showed a much better than average correlation with what we know today about these historical periods. For example, the subjects regressed to the 1700s described using three-pronged forks to eat their evening meals; when they were regressed to a point following 1790, they correctly identified most forks as having four prongs.

For Drs. Snow and Wambach, this seemed to indicate some basic truth about the theory underlying past-life regression therapy. They also saw that it was possible to regress people back on conscious missions; their "past-life" hang-ups did not tend to get involved.

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In the mid-1980s, Dr. Snow became involved in an even more daring project of hypnotically-induced “astral” traveling using large groups of people. He, along with Dr. Wambach until her early death, began to “progress” into specified periods in the “future” thousands of persons who, while ostensibly in their future lives, were asked to report on what they were experiencing.

Over some ten years, several thousand persons took part in this “future progression” program. Dr. Snow was amazed to discover that those persons, a significant minority, who seemed to access a future lifetime, reported on one of only *four* possible futures.

If there were nothing to future-life progression (nor to past-life regression), you might have expected the number of different reported futures to equal the number of persons reporting. But this was not the case at all (the “four futures” were all post-catastrophe societies, very stripped-down, some more so than others).

Again, Dr. Snow felt that he had tentative proof that there was, for want of a better term, “astral” progression, and that there were future existences of the soul.

He also observed once more that, under hypnosis, persons could be directed to consciously perform missions to what appeared to be their other lives.

Dr. Snow was asked if he thought individuals or groups of persons could be directed, in the care of a past-life regression hypnotherapist, back to ancient Greece or Rome to try to reunite with a past-life they had lived in one of those eras. The aim would be for them to reenter a past life in which they had attended a performance of one of Sophocles’ lost plays—or a play by any dramatist, for that matter.

The ideal scenario would be for them to bring back to this present lifetime the content of one of those dramas, either by dictating all or part of it from the couch, or by remembering all or part of it afterward.

Dr. Snow replied that he thought that there was such a possibility.

He said that in the mass hypnotic regression and progression programs carried out by himself and Helen Wambach, they had advertised for volunteers. They did not use regular clients. This had cut

down on the number of persons who might find themselves caught up in a past-life trauma. The same recruitment method could be used for the "Sophocles Project."

Dr. Snow cautioned that very few people—perhaps only five percent of the population—had the capability, even given that they had managed to get back to ancient Athens or ancient Rome, to assimilate and repeat back under hypnosis any part of a text, be it in the original or translated into their current language. A rare kind of mental flexibility would be involved in doing this, he said.

Dr. Snow did not exclude the possibility that this could happen. He speculated about ways of increasing the odds that it would. Such a program might try advertising for people who were passionately interested in classical literature. "This interest might be a resonance for them from many past lives," he said. "They might actually have been an ancient Greek or Roman author." A strong emotional attachment to and love of the ancient literature might make for a good prospect, he suggested. On the other hand, a primarily intellectual attachment might hinder rather than help chances; feeling, rather than mind, was a key ingredient in the past- or future-life accession experience.

Dr. Snow felt that such a program "might want to bring in a good numbers of subjects from Greece or Italy" by advertizing for volunteers from those countries. He said that people "tend to reincarnate in the same part of the world" because of an attraction to that place stemming from an earlier lifetime or because of a problem to resolve bound up with an initial lifetime in that area. Using people from these areas might help to lessen the still-astronomical odds, he explained.

The Arizona-based PLRT practitioner believed it would be useful to consult a very good astrologer regarding prospective volunteers. "Many people who've been prominent in the military were born under the sign of Mars," he said, "and many actors under the sign of Venus." There was, Dr. Snow said, a complex grouping of signs which often cropped up in the horoscopes of literary persons; it might be helpful to recruit volunteers who had been born under that grouping.

Dr. Snow cautioned that the relatively small numbers of people who would have lived in the comparatively small centers of ancient Athens and ancient Rome, even over two or three centuries, seriously

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cut down on the chances of finding people who could access a past lifetime in these times and places.

He reiterated that, in any such program, Hippocratic Oath considerations would have to take a front seat. The therapist involved would have to make sure that he or she didn't mentally or emotionally harm anyone taking part in the project. Moreover, the therapist would have to ensure that those persons who could normally profit from past-life regression therapy got the treatment they needed; the therapist would only be able to devote so much time to the Sophocles Project.

Finally, Dr. Snow said, the Sophocles Project would have to be gigantic; a number of assistants would have to be employed to take over if subjects became disturbed, or to carry on the work of the therapist-in-charge with regard to the normal clientele.

He concluded that, although it was an incredibly long shot, there was certainly the possibility that the Sophocles Project could come up with a lost masterpiece by one of the great writers of antiquity.

Remote or not, the prospect is enticing. Choosing other than the *Thyestes* of Ennius seems not to have been an option for the tormented, brilliant Father Pellegrino Ernetti.

Plutarch, 882-883.

Doody, 31.

de Hamel, Personal interview.

Snow, Personal interview.

Chapter Twenty-Four

LIVE FROM THE BEYOND

Did Father Ernetti really bring back images from the akashic records? Whether he did or not, it seems that such pictures are increasingly being delivered to us, often in unsolicited fashion, as our century comes to an end.

One day in August, 1973, Professor Mario Rebeechi, of Finale Emilia, Italy, was sitting in front of his TV set when he heard voices coming through the speaker. This was odd; the set was turned off. Professor Rebeechi had a strong feeling that something important was about to happen. He spent the next few days huddled in front of the blank TV screen.

After a week, something did happen. First, hazy still pictures appeared it seemed of Finale Emilia. Then oddly-colored patches flitted across the screen; then, bizarre shapes. Finally, the faces of great Italian innovators appeared: Guglielmo Marconi; a very old Leonardo Da Vinci; a very young Galileo Galilei. Professor Rebeechi watched nonplussed.

On Oct. 14, 1978, Gigliola Della Bella stared in bewilderment as a series of family portraits glided across her turned-off TV screen. The pictures were vague at first, then quickly became sharp; profile shots at first, they were very soon face-on images. A picture of Bruno, the son of Mrs. Della Bella's neighbor Nanda Morelli, appeared; Bruno had died at 25. He wore the same scarf and leather jacket he had been wearing when he died. An old man appeared behind Bruno, greeting her with a slight wave while Bruno smiled.

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Two weeks later, a tape recorder left running beside the TV set announced to Mrs. Della Bella, in a voice like Bruno's, that he would appear to her again, that evening—though on the TV screen of another family. She surmised this meant the Morellis. Sure enough, that evening as she and the Morelli family sat in front of the latter's TV set Bruno reappeared and reenacted the same scene.

These mystifying encounters through electronic media are only two of thousands taking place with increasing frequency in Europe, the U.S. and other parts of the world over the past 30 years. They are the stock-in-trade of the Instrumental Transcommunication movement, one which has been recording the spirits of the dead ostensibly communicating via telephone, tape-recorder, radio, TV and computer screen, and even FAX machines.

Father François Brune, the Sorbonne lecturer and author of books on PSI phenomena who has written so compassionately and brilliantly about Father Ernetti, continues to be a leading reporter of ITC phenomena. In *Listening to the Beyond* [*A l'Ecoute de l'Au-Delà*] (1999), co-authored with Rémy Chauvin, he states that the experiences of Professor Rebecchi and Mrs. Della Bella are the first fully-documented and multiply-witnessed instances of "video" ITC (via TV or a computer screen) in the world (Father Brune adds that there are unsubstantiated stories of earlier such visitations in Brazil).

The author-theologian informs us: "Though France is somewhat of a latecomer to these researches, small groups are proliferating almost everywhere. '[ITC] Echos gathered in other countries even indicate the phenomenon is beginning to be taken seriously by those in power. On one of my trips I heard about a research group in Hong Kong. I'd also been contacted twice by Japanese TV crews, though nothing came of it. The time wasn't ripe. However, in July, 1997, Sao Paulo's *Folha Espirita* [the journal of the Brazilian ITC movement] reported that the Japanese had asked them for the rights to publish several of their transcommunication photos."

As Father Brune explains in his latest book that, "The fact is, it isn't just voices that are being heard with increasing frequency around the world. Appearances of pictures on TV or computer screens are multiplying in practically every country, sometimes in the form of

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silent still pictures, sometimes in words and movement. Color is making an appearance—often just a single color—...quite recently, right at the International Instrumental Transcommunication Conference in Treves.”

Unquestionably the movement is mushrooming. In September, 1992, 200 members attended the annual congress of the Association for the Study of Transcommunication, held at the Pullman Hotel in Luxembourg by the widely-respected TCI pioneers Maggy and Jules Harsch-Fischbach. On September 3, 1995, in Dartington Hall, England, 20 scientists and researchers from eight countries founded the International Network for Instrumental Transcommunication (INIT). If France is lagging behind in research into ITC, you wouldn't know it from talking to Jacques Blanc-Garin, president of the Infinitude Association, the most important French arm of the INIT. Blanc-Garin says his organization has 1,100 members and has had as many as 2,200 over the years.

In Italy, Spain, and Brazil—and Germany in particular —membership in local chapters of INIT is several times higher.

ITC researchers on the whole believe that the afterworld exists. They are seeking to confirm this belief by validating the spirit contacts coming through electronic media. In many cases, striking personal experiences have fostered these beliefs. When his wife died of cancer in 1988, Jacques Blanc-Garin—though a non-believer at the time—sought through ITC channels to make contact with her spirit. “I had to wait for about nine months,” he says, “and then she answered in a recognizable voice.” Blanc-Garin was so impressed and moved by his experience that, determined to share it with others, he founded the Infinitude Association.

Mark Macy, president of the American branch of INIT (and one of the founders of the international organization), survived a bout of colon cancer in 1988 with his life intact but his beliefs ragged. He decided to investigate what was known about the afterlife. Researcher George Meek showed him a letter from Meek's wife received by him via computer after her death in 1991. Impressed by this “hard” evidence, Macy went ahead with Meek to form the American Instrumental Transcommunication Association.

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Since the days of Jürgenson and Raudive, the TC instrumental tool of preference has been the tape-recorder, which is first allowed to record, very often with radio “white noise” in the background, and then, when played back, will sometimes mysteriously answer questions put to it.

As research into ITC has proliferated, this new genre of paranormal investigation has shown itself to be a tangled skein of apparently genuine contacts with spirits from the beyond, confused and ambiguous experiences, honest self-deception—and, perhaps, just the occasional fraud. What can't be doubted, by all accounts, is the honesty and dedication of its leading practitioners. Father Brune describes the Harsch-Fischbachs of Switzerland as persons who have dedicated “all their energies, and all their worldly goods—which are not great—to the service of ITC,” procuring appropriate equipment and “laboring with it night and day over the years.”

The Harsch-Fischbachs are close to the center of two of the most amazing—and most typical of the complexities of ITC —of these ongoing, European, technology-facilitated manifestations from the beyond: those of the “Technician” and of “Swejen Salter.”

The Technician is an entity with whom the Harsch-Fischbachs made contact with a tape-recorder about a decade ago. A spirit who claims to have never taken life and to be responsible for the well-being of our planet, the Technician has been transmitting “metaphysical” knowledge to the Harsch-Fischbachs ever since that first encounter. In the same period, the Luxembourg couple also made the acquaintance of another spirit of metaphysical bent: Swejen Salter. One day in 1988, they saw a message being spelled out on their computer screen by this latter entity, who later claimed she was female. Over the years, Swejen Salter explained that she “had a laboratory on the banks of the River of Eternity, on the planet Marduk, where she shared a house with Richard Francis Burton (1821-1880), the famous linguist and explorer. She said that on the River of Eternity there were 60 million deceased, who had come from Earth, or elsewhere, and who had all stabilized themselves at the age of 30, no matter what their age when they had arrived there. The River of Eternity was thousands of miles long (Marduk was as big as Saturn); it was the only

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river on Marduk, and somewhat resembled the river of Oceanus which the Ancient Greeks believed surrounded the earth.”

Chauvin explains that a major problem with this amazing story was that it had already appeared—without the character of Swejen Salter—in the classic 1970 Philip José Farmer science-fiction novel *Riverworld*.

Rémy Chauvin is as sure as Father Brune of the integrity of the Harsch-Fischbachs; he is certain they read the story of Marduk and the River of Eternity for the first time only when it was being typed out on their computer screen by Swejen Salter. But the complexities don't end here. In October, 1988, well-known French ITC researcher Dr. Ernst Senkowski came across a book entitled *Dialogue with the Beyond* by K.H. Jackel, published in Munich in 1984. Chauvin writes that, “Certain parts of the book were by Jackel; others were, ostensibly, channeled by a medium named Peter von Egloffstein from an entity who went by the name of Rabbi Élysée. A good portion of Rabbi Élysée's paragraphs were almost word-for-word like some of those communicated by the Technician.”

Chauvin has a possible explanation: “Swejen Salter probably doesn't clearly know where she is. She has found a ‘laboratory’ on the planet Marduk, and seems to feel that the inhabitants [of her world] are objects of an experiment undertaken by someone else.” Chauvin repeats an explanation offered by Father Brune: Swejen Salter sounds confused because the scientists' questions torment her with the possibility that at any moment these questions might “tear apart the web of her dreams, the incoherence of which perhaps she herself senses.” Swejen Salter's own explanation for why her story had previously been told by Philip José Farmer is that: “He must have been inspired when he wrote *The People of the River*.” In conclusion, Chauvin speculates: “Do there actually exist several other worlds, or several ways of accessing the same world? Who knows? In the case of the planet Marduk and of its strange inhabitants, you might say that this is a dream that has acquired an independent life and developed on its own.”

The more-than-human, all-too-human nature of the world of ITC phenomenon has been very much on display in the now-legendary story of German researcher Klaus Schreiber's receiving an ITC pic-

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ture of Austrian movie star Romy Schneider, several months after her death.

The internationally-known, stunningly beautiful Austrian actress died of a heart attack on May 29, 1982, at the age of 43. In November, while working in his lab in Aix-la-Chapelle, France, Schreiber seemed to hear Schneider talking to him through his closed-circuit TV. She announced a video ITC "comeback" by saying: "Klaus, Romy here. It's so beautiful! I'd like to come tomorrow afternoon. I'm going to reveal myself to you on video."

The next day, a white mass appeared on his black-and-white TV screen as Schreiber watched. It very slowly took the form of a woman's face in profile. Not till the end did it become clearly recognizable as the face of a youthful Romy Schneider, aged about 20.

This celebrity ITC photo became famous. It became the object of intense scrutiny. Fidelio Köberle was a German TCI researcher who had taken up the habit of trying to prove that the TCI results of many of his colleagues were fraudulent. Köberle ransacked the archives to try to prove that the picture received by Schreiber already existed.

At first he seemed to be successful. A clip from a 1958 Austrian film, *The Young Lady and the Commissar*, in which Romy only had a bit part, seemed to look just like the photo transcommunicated to Schreiber. Father Brune reports that a minute comparison of the images revealed discrepancies. A white patch appeared in one and not the other; Schneider's face was broader in one; the two photos had been taken from slightly different angles. Father Brune emphasizes Klaus Schreiber's high personal integrity, spontaneously attested to by every one of his co-workers.

The French theologian advances an intriguing theory as to why there was such a close resemblance between the film clip of Romy and the transcommunicated picture. He wonders if Romy Schneider in the afterworld had not gone, in a manner of speaking, to the akashic records, to rummage through the files and find an appropriate picture of herself to send to earth. Why did she send one that practically already existed here? Perhaps, ruminates Brune, it was, "a picture she particularly liked. Perhaps she wanted us to understand that she had found her youth again, as in the time when she was making the movie."

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Father Brune's ruminations and those of Rémy Chauvin in *Listening to the Beyond* make us wonder if Father Ernetti's world of the transcommunication of images from the akashic records might not be beginning to come true.

Brune and Chauvin, *A l'Ecoute de l'Au-Delà*, 112-113.

Ibid., 81-84.

Ibid., 160-161.

Chapter Twenty-Five

THE SECRET SCHOOL OF
WHITLEY STRIEBER

Father Ernetti's time-traveling adventures are strangely similar to those of Baird T. Spalding.

While Spalding watched the inaugural of George Washington, Ernetti listened in on key addresses by Mussolini and Napoleon.

Both gazed into critical moments in the life and death of Jesus.

Did Father Ernetti literally copy Baird T. Spalding's experiences? There is no record that the Benedictine traveled to the southwest United States any time in 1950-1953 and attended any of Spalding's lectures. This was one of only two ways in which, early on in his career, the Venetian priest could have heard of the Camera of Past Events; the other was through reading Volume Five of *Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East*, first published in the U.S. in 1955.

It seems unlikely that Ernetti would have heard of Spalding's camera at this early date, and even more unlikely that a man of his integrity would have consciously copied Spalding's chrono-itinerary.

There is another explanation: Perhaps astral time travel is possible, but perhaps it's possible only to certain junctures in the space-time continuum.

These junctures may have mysterious correspondances with those "periods between Great Wheels" the nature of which we touched upon in Chapter Twenty-Two. Perhaps the etheric/akashic realms through which we can move temporally only permit of exit and entrance at certain critical junctures between ages, when the very stuff of time itself, and of space as well, has become somehow malleable. Perhaps

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those gaps where one age reaches an end and a new one is poised to be born—times of fire, flood, of cataclysm—are “times” where little is fixed, where all is for some semi-timeless moment only pregnant with possibilities and probabilities.

Modern systems theory has a word, “bifurcation,” which refers to the crystallization into actuality of moments when the continuum is in such a state of flux that all possibilities seem to be open, from the birth of something dazzlingly, brilliantly and unexpectedly new to the sudden, unwanted and unexpected destruction of all that is.

Perhaps the word bifurcation can be applied to these times of the great choices of mankind (we are said to be now at such a juncture); perhaps these bifurcationary periods are the only times where the astral chrono-traveler can alight, if just for a moment, and then depart.

The birth and death of Christ, the signing of proclamations bringing great nations into being with this occurring toward the end of 2,000-year-long cycles—perhaps these periods replete with promise or the collapse of promise are the sole times when, freed for a moment from the usual inertial rigidities of the time-space continuum, the time-traveler can slip in and out of time.

Such a state of temporal affairs would explain the similarities between the astral chronotrips of Father Ernetti and Baird T. Spalding—chronotrips which both men seem to have conducted without full awareness of what they were doing, and from which both seem to have emerged with a cover story they did not know they had invented.

There is another time-traveler in this league whose astral time travels bear more than a passing resemblance to those of Father Pellegrino Ernetti and Baird T. Spalding. He is Whitley Strieber, the author of the sensational, bestselling *Communion*, published in 1987 and widely considered to be the most graphic and compelling description ever of the alien abduction experience.

In *The Secret School: Preparations for Contact*, published in January, 1997, Whitley Strieber revealed that he was also a time-traveler.

His travels through time began, he tells us in that book, in San Antonio, Texas, in 1954, when he was nine years old. Through that summer, he and a group of friends would sneak out of their homes

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every night at 2:00 a.m. and pedal their bikes to a wooded section called the Olmos Basin just outside the city.

Here they sat in a circle, in what Strieber calls a "Secret School," while a very old, very tall woman, wearing a monk's cowl, placed virtual reality helmets on their heads and sent them flying back through time to previous lifetimes or up through their present lifetime to the future. Strieber tells us that he traveled back to a lifetime in ancient Rome, in 43 B.C., where as a 15-year-old Greek slave he was part of a group of conspirators instrumental in helping bring the young Roman emperor Octavius to power.

That very same summer, Strieber says, he sped even further back in time to a vanished civilization in 10,000 B.C., where, as a member of that society, he watched in horror as global catastrophe overwhelmed the world.

Over the years since his summer school course in astral-body time travel, Strieber—who wrote that he also traveled forward to his own middle and old age—had come to the conclusion that the purpose of these lessons (alien, or "visitor"-sponsored, he thinks) was to teach him, and by extension all of us, to begin to live "outside of time." Only by learning how to ride on the backs of this our present life and our many other lifetimes, up to the future and back to the past, Strieber believes, can we acquire a crucially-important overview enabling us to deal with earth catastrophes which even now are poised to devastate our planet.

If Whitley Strieber's story of a revisit to a lifetime in ancient Rome seems literally incredible, there's no mistaking the high drama of that adventure. The 15-year-old Greek slave who helped tutor the teen-aged Octavius risked daily punishment to attend middle-of-the-night sessions (mysteriously analogous to the sessions of the Secret School) where he and his fellow conspirators hatched plots to help secure the position of Octavius after the assassination of his great-uncle Julius Caesar.

What cosmic and/or personal forces drove Strieber to alight at this particular juncture in time? One impetus, he believes, was the reincarnational link between the aged nun/alien/teacher of the secret

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school, and her previous lifetime as a beautiful young Roman woman who was a co-conspirator of Strieber, and with whom the young Greek slave was in love.

But the major energizing force, Strieber suggests, was the powerful links across time and space between (to use a word he does not use) the bifurcational nature of that time in ancient Rome, and the similar nature of our own time when, according to Strieber, we are facing grave decisions that can take our species either to disaster or expanded levels of reality.

There's a striking point of similarity between Whitley Strieber's time travel trips and those of Father Ernetti in the chronovisor.

In August, 1995, Strieber experienced a strange flashback, a kind of astral/visionary encounter that served as an addendum to his experiences at the Secret School some forty years before. As he explains it, "I had an experience that I think might have been intended to teach me something about the degree to which we can actually enter and affect the past."

The experience was an encounter with the orator and politician Cicero. This encounter was linked to Strieber's earlier experiences at the Secret School, when he accessed his former lifetime in Rome.

Father Ernetti told Father Brune that he and his chronovisor crew had listened in on Cicero delivering one of his most famous speeches; this was while they were on their way back to a distant past which would include sitting in on a performance of Quintus Ennius' *Thyestes*.

It seems like more than a coincidence that, out of all of the persons they could have encountered, both Ernetti and Strieber should have encountered Cicero.

Here is the compelling story, as Strieber tells it in *The Secret School*:

"The event happened in August of 1995, and may have actually been *part of* the effort that the...group was making to bring Octavius to power so many thousands of years ago.

"It involved communication with a man who was going to die in a matter of minutes, and—significantly—never could have had the opportunity to tell anybody what had happened. However, the few moments that I delayed him could well have been critical.

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“Cicero, the man with whom I had contact, was an orator and powerful member of the Roman senate. He was a leading champion of the republic and one of the principal opponents of Octavius. As the last defender of the Roman republic, he remains one of Western history’s most important figures. In the end, his ideas did not prevail, and he was assassinated by his young rival.

“The death of Cicero and the destruction of the republic were critically important to Roman history, and so also to our own. I knew, even before my journey backward happened, that something important was about to take place. As I was sitting at my desk in the middle of the afternoon, I began to feel a powerful, pulsing vibration go through my body.

“I went to a couch in our cottage at the resort and lay back. Now the vibration in my body rose to a tingling, which began sweeping through me like waves. It felt as if I was becoming, somehow, a thing of electricity. It seemed that I might actually lose my physical shape if I didn’t keep concentrating on it, as if I suddenly had to maintain a form that I normally could not change.

“Then I realized I was seeing somebody, a man in a toga. The vision appeared real enough to allow me to feel that I was back in Rome, but not in my Roman self. I was something else, an electric creature, a thing that seemed composed of pure ecstasy.

“At first I did not imagine who I was seeing. He appeared as a washed-out figure beside a wall with high windows in it. As he became clearer, though, I saw that he was dreadfully afraid, his complex face drained of hope. I was aware that I was standing in front of this man, and that I was wearing a tunic. I seemed smaller than him.

“I felt as if I was coming to this man with a message that was a sort of a gift, and that I could give it to him because his life was at its end and he would be compelled by his fate to keep my secret. It appeared that this degree of communication with the past would have been impossible if much more latitude than that had been allowed. It seemed terribly, terribly important that he never tell anybody about this...

“I said, ‘I’m here to tell you that you and your works are still remembered two thousand years in the future.’

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“He stared at me. His face went blank. A moment later there were cries echoing from somewhere and he went hurrying off. Then I saw him being ridden down at the edge of a woods by four soldiers. I remember these horsemen with their tunics and their distinctive arched saddles and how fast they seemed to ride as they raced to prevent him being carried into the dense woods by his slaves.

“Historically, Cicero was beheaded by soldiers of Octavius at the edge of a woods near his country villa. Had the old man lived, Octavius could never have achieved the degree of control that he did. Cicero's escape on that day might well have meant that he could have rallied forces to his own defence.

“I wonder if the moment that I delayed him was needed by the horsemen. If so, then the future changed itself in a massive way by simply injecting itself into a few seconds of the past.”

It is certainly true that Octavius was a towering figure, and that if he had not survived the world would be a far different place than it is today. Octavius, who became Augustus Caesar, was an immense bender and molder of reality. In *The Penguin History of the World*, J.M. Roberts speaks of him in the following terms: “Though no man is an empire, not even the great Alexander, its [the Roman empire's] nature and government were to an astonishing degree the creation of one man of outstanding ability, Julius Caesar's great-nephew and adopted heir, Octavian.... Sometimes one has the feeling that he invented almost everything that characterized Imperial Rome, from the new Praetorian Guard, which was the first military force stationed permanently in the capital, to the taxation of bachelors.”

In *A History of the Ancient World*, Chester G. Starr writes of Octavian that: “To a modern observer his restoration of order may appear simple, almost fated; but a study in detail of his career must leave one in amazement that he could master the plots against his life, the unruliness or incompetence of many of his officials, and the heavy pressures from his subjects to detour him from his chosen path.”

Do most time paths lead back to Cicero? And this because of the incredibly important pivotal role he played—or failed to play—in determining, at a particular juncture in history, what vast new directions humankind would take? Both Ernetti and Spalding also claimed to

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have seen Christ. Christ was born during the reign of Augustus Caesar. The death of Augustus came just 20 years before the crucifixion of Christ. The lifetimes of the two of them generated, as one 2,000-year-long cycle was giving way to another, immense and critically-important changes with which we are all still living.

The notion that the time-traveler, voyaging in astral body, or somehow through astral realms, can come to earth only in the malleable, probability-pregnant periods between great cycles of history, is further borne out by the second, equally riveting time-travel experience which Whitley Strieber seems to have had at the Secret School in the summer of 1954.

The author tells us that he also traveled back to a previous lifetime 12,000 years in the past, where he was a member of a major civilization about to be destroyed by the same catastrophic forces which Strieber believes are set to challenge our own civilization today.

The lost civilization Strieber visited seems to have been superior to our own. They understood that the catastrophe occurring to earth was cyclical. They sought to clone into the DNA structure of mankind a warning about this catastrophe cyclical in nature: a kind of genetic time-clock which would go off in the late twentieth century. Whitley's sessions at the Secret School seem to have been an expression of the sounding of that genetic alarm. The people of the year 10,000 B.C. were also seeking to warn twentieth century man of this catastrophe which apparently occurs every 12,000 years by naming, or renaming, the signs of the Zodiac in such a way that, in our day and age—as Pisces fades into Aquarius—the stars flash out to us an encoded message spelling out this disaster.

It was also because of a reincarnational link that Strieber was able to alight in this ancient age. More generally speaking, there was a similarity between the ages, enabling them to transcend the continuum and come closer together. But above all, or so the author tells us, the time-trip took place because the age which Strieber visited, near to collapse, represented a period when one great age was ending and another was beginning. Was it a place which time-travelers could enter because of a new and transitory, possibility- and probability-pregnant, malleability in the fabric of the space-time continuum?

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Are we now, at the end of the twentieth century, standing poised on the brink of such a bifurcationary moment? Is that the lesson we should take home with us from our perplexed and fascinated reading of the time-trips of Baird T. Spalding? Is that the message that Father Ernetti has bequeathed to us—the legacy of the sleep of the astral self which produced the brilliant chronovisor dreams of Father Pellegrino Maria Ernetti?

We'll find out soon enough.

Strieber, 139-142.

Roberts, 236.

Starr, 551.

Chapter Twenty-Six

A CONFESSION

*Editors' Note: In the course of preparing the American edition of **Father Ernetti's Chronovisor**, the editors made numerous inquiries in Italy. Over the course of time, we were contacted by someone who had heard of our inquiries but about whom we had not heard. Our correspondent told us that he was a distant relative of Father Ernetti's and that he had known him very well over the years.*

He asked us if he could send us a document pertaining to Father Ernetti, which he considered to be important, and which he thought we might be interested in publishing. This would be on condition of anonymity; he stipulated that we were not to reveal his name, nor anything about him, apart from what was in the document.

We agreed. The document arrived in our Florida offices a month later. There were two documents: the original in Italian, and a second careful translation into English.

In what follows, we are reprinting that document in its entirety. We have agreed to say nothing more about it or its contents than what the document itself actually reveals.

We have made efforts to determine the authenticity of this document and of its contents. We are not at liberty to say what paths we pursued in doing so. But we have reason to believe the document is authentic.

We herewith present it to the reader. We leave it to the reader to judge its truth or falsehood.

The Document

My father was a distant relative of Father Ernetti, and extremely fond of him. He visited the priest regularly every two or three months at the abbey of San Giorgio Maggiore. Almost from the day I was born, he took me on his visits to Father Ernetti when he could.

Over the years, Father Ernetti and I became very close. I called him Uncle Pellegrino. From the time that I was very little, he took a great interest in me. He always played with me on our visits. He played records for me and taught me about music. He taught me how to make music on a small lute which he constructed for me. I still have the lute. When I was in my early teens, I sometimes told him my problems, and he was always ready with loving, supportive help. After I left home I continued to see him once every five or six months.

During the last ten years of Father Ernetti's life, I married and had children. I lived some distance from Venice and I could not get to see him very easily. We talked on the telephone from time to time. We remained very close in our feelings.

One night a number of weeks before Father Ernetti died—I don't want to say when—I received a telephone call from him. His voice was low and quavering. That was when he told me he was dying. He asked if I could come and see him the next day. He told me that it might be the last chance he would ever have to see me.

I immediately went to Venice, very distressed.

When I entered Uncle Pellegrino's cell, something seemed to be very changed about the atmosphere. Uncle lay very still in his bed. It seemed like him, but in a way not quite like him. He called my name. I sat down beside his bed.

He told me that, the night before, he had thought he was going to die. He had become very ill and had lost consciousness. He had found himself following a white light, and being beckoned by someone whom he vaguely knew. He told me that he had had a "near-death" experience. When he finally regained consciousness the next morning, he realized that he had been in heaven. He felt very weak, and did not understand why he was still alive.

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He said that he had not told the nuns or the doctors about this. Instead, he had telephoned me. He realized that he had been told, during his near-death experience—and he remembered this when he woke up—some things about himself which he had forgotten for a very long time. They mostly had to do with this life. But during this experience he had also been told about a number of his other lifetimes, and that had opened his eyes to many things.

I remember very clearly his next words, before he asked me to begin taking notes: “____, I am very, very fond of you. Sometimes, I have presumed to think of you as my own son. I will not live much longer. I may even die tonight. Over the years, I have told you many lies. I wish now to rectify that. I wish to tell you the truth.”

He asked me to go to his big wooden desk, which had become so familiar to me over the years, and to get a pencil and a piece of paper from a drawer. I did so. I was very moved and upset.

“Now,” he said, as I sat down again, “I want you to take notes of what I say. If what I say is unclear, then please ask questions. I feel unwell. Sometimes I feel that what I am going to tell you is about to slip away from me. Sometimes, I feel that parts of it already have.”

He added that what I did with this information, once he had given it to me, was strictly up to me. It was his legacy to me. I should do with it what I willed.

He had talked to me from time to time over the years about his “Quintus Ennius” play and about his chronovisor. Now he told me that he had not really brought that play back on the chronovisor. He said that he thought he had composed the play himself, using many fragments that were preserved in the writings of other authors—but he could only very obscurely remember doing that.

He told me that he had always been fascinated, even obsessed, by Quintus Ennius’ drama of *Thyestes*, and that last night during his near-death experience—he was sure it was a near-death experience—he had learned why. It had to do with a previous lifetime he had lived in Rome at the time of Ennius.

He became silent.

I asked him to tell me about that previous lifetime. He said:

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"I was a boy who saw that play. There was one scene that was burned into my memory. I wanted to remember and relive the rest."

I asked him which scene he meant.

"The scene at the table. The cannibalism. My father in that lifetime was very cruel." He paused. "All during my present lifetime I have told people that I wanted to hear the music that accompanied Ennius' *Thyestes*. But that was not true. I want you to know the truth." He turned to me, "I said it to provide an explanation for an otherwise inexplicable obsession."

He was quiet then. Finally he said, very calmly and sadly:

"I did manage to build the chronovisor. And once it almost worked."

His mind seemed to wander. I asked: "Who helped you? Was it those scientists like you said? Was it Enrico Fermi?"

"I did know Enrico. He humored me. A very tolerant friend. I was alone in my belief. However, I was not mistaken."

I asked him if he had built the chronovisor all by himself.

"One person helped me. A student. Not known to history. He is a priest now, and he will remain very silent.

"This was not the first lifetime I devoted to my endeavor of building a chronovisor."

His mind seemed to wander again. I asked him to explain.

"It was a lifetime when I was a contemporary of Nostradamus. I knew him. He was an alchemist and a physicist. He, too, experimented with a chronovisor. It was he who taught me that it might be possible."

He stopped.

I asked him how this could be possible in a time when there was no electronics, no modern science of physics.

He answered very slowly and carefully, as if he had been thinking about his answer for a long time. But sometimes he faltered and could not complete his sentences. I could not get him to repeat himself:

"Nostradamus believed it could be done by changing the vaporous body, that the body could be transformed in such a way that it could slip easily between times. We felt that we could achieve the vaporous body through alchemy...in such a way that we felt we could

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change the experience and control it with the body. Chief among our concepts was that of a round room...a round chamber in which are placed the akashic records. Off of this chamber are a multitude of paths, like a sun and rays. We believed that the vaporous body could enter the chamber and go in any direction it wished. Each ray represents a different lifetime and a different time. In effect it is a clearing house."

He stopped for a very long while, and closed his eyes. I told him that this was making him very tired, and perhaps we should stop.

"No," he said, almost immediately. His voice seemed to grow stronger, "I wanted to tell you that, once, the chronovisor almost worked. It was a dark and gloomy day. I believe now that that was important. I sat within it and turned it on. The world spun around me. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw, also spinning, a circular room, lined with something resembling files. The machine slowed but would not stop. I believe now that the functioning of the chronovisor is dependent upon a very specific belief-structure. That very specific belief-structure involves a certain separateness from time. A distancing from regulated, structured religions. But that was difficult for me because I was a priest. I count the failure of the machine as my own failure.

"Let me tell you what my chronovisor looked like. It was a sphere much like a diving device, or one-man submarine, open at eye level in all directions. It was suspended by a cable, with a device that gave it free range of motion. It was made of a lightweight metal, an aluminum alloy. It was powered solely by thought energy.

"At first, it was believed that an oscilloscope was necessary. This was not true. It was sound that was critical to the construction. That is why the oscilloscope was put in. We knew that it was a vibratory energy that was involved. What we didn't know was that the energy was at a frequency far outside of our range of instrumentation. In this endeavour, I failed."

He stopped. Then, after a while, he went on:

"The alchemical information figured prominently. Time travel is a permutation. Space-time is no different from matter when viewed alchemically. When science dismissed alchemy, much potential was

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lost. The notion of density and frequency is crucial. I am sorry that I cannot be more specific.”

He stopped. His breath was labored. I was terribly worried for him. But then he went on again:

“There is one last thing that I must tell you. About the picture of Christ. You know it now: I lied. Today, last night, I have asked myself many times, why? The answer is: because I was hopeful that my chronovisor would work. I was always so optimistic.”

He stopped, and closed his eyes. “I have no more to tell you, my son,” he said. “All that I have told you is now yours. I have put it from me.”

I was crying. “How can I help you, Uncle?” I asked through my tears. “How can I help you now?”

“Build it for me,” he murmured softly.

“Please give me instructions, Uncle,” I pleaded with him. “I will try!”

“No, no,” he whispered. “My words were but the wistful desire of one who has failed. I shall return to try again.”

I continued to cry. It was as if he were sleeping now. Suddenly his eyes opened. He tried to sit up. He stared at me. It was as if he were seeing me for the first time. “____!” he cried out, “____, it’s you! I am so glad that you have come!”

It was as if he now remembered nothing of what had come before; as if he had come back entirely to his old self and forgotten everything of his near-death experience and everything he had learned from it.

I swiftly put away my notes. I told him nothing.
That is my story.

APPENDIX: Latin text of the Ernetti *Thyestes* Fragment

Chorus

Dic, age, Musa lenis,
meumque praelude cantum;
levi tui nemoris aura concipiat mens mea furorem
ut laudes, Apollini dicam, plebem tuque Rumuleam
aspice hoc sublime candens quem invocant omnes Iovem. (I)

[?]tius

Aurea cithara
Apollinis decus compositoque crine Musarum,
Te saltatores audiunt daturi choreas,
Te cantores sequuntur cum tacta hymnos praeludis,
Quae aeternos acuti ignes extinguis,
et me Apollo ipse delectat duotat Delphicus, (2)
ibique quid agat secum cogitat curat putat. (3)

Chorus

Aurea cithara, decus Apollinis atque Musarum,
excute chordas et nostros hymnos praelude:
impetram facile ab animo meo ut cernat vitale brabium. (4)

Thesprotus

Tua species aequabitur vitae:
nimiae ne te gravent curae; brevis vita:
omnia dilapsa absumentur.

Thyestes

Fortuna secunda non durat mortalibus,

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quae in saeva ruit oppugnante deo mala,
velut cum navis abruptis velis
male fidi in fluctus mergitur maris.

Tantalo prognatus Pelope natus qui quondam a socru
Genomao rege Hippodameam rapis nactus nuptiis,
Nolite hospites ad me adire, ilico istic!
ne contagio mea bonis umbrave obsit.

Meo tanta vis sceleris in corpore haeret! (5)

Eheu mea fortuna ut omnia in me conglomeras mala! (6)

Pol mihi fortune magis nunc deficit quam genus;

Namque regnum suppetebat mi, ut scias quanto e loco,

Quantis opibus, quibus de rebus lapsa fortuna accidat! (7)

Chorus

Hunc conscendite clivum Parnassium

Longe prospicientum iemino iugo

Vestrumque movete cantum, Pierides,

Quae niveas incolitis rupes Heliconias,

Pythiumque dicite decorem pharetra et aurea caesarie,

Phoebum lyrae potentem quem edidit Latona mater

Ad inclutam paludem glauca innixa oliva.

Quintus

Totusque polus arrisit infremuitque aether cursum vent

et magnus complexus Oceanus terras

timidam continuit iram Nerei.

Thesprotus

Tunc deus insula Cynthia relicta

ad inclitam venit Cereris primae

parentem Atticam in collem Tritonida.

Chorus

Et dulce resonabat libycus aulus,
una simul echo incola montium canebat:
Phoebe, paeana Phoebo, io Phoebe!

Thyestes

Exultavit ille gaudio
immortale sentiens patris consilium.
Quo ex antiquis circa temporibus paeana dicimus
omnesque aborigenae (8)
quotque vates incolunt urbam Cecropiam
quos Bacchus thyrsosuo tetigit.

Plebanus

Age, cortinas potens,
ignito curru, agente numine, adesto, animos inflans.

Chorus

Quidnam est obsecro quod te adiri abnutas? (9)
Dumque moves gradum cincinnes purpurea hedera nexus
immanis terra nata fit obvia.
At tu Latonia dulce aspiciens
sagittis filium Geae sibilantis caedisti.

Thyestes

Et tu terrae umbilicum servabas cum barbarum catervas
temerato tuo templo tempestate periere atque nive.
Et nunc Phoebe aeternam urbem arcemque dis dicatam servate
tuque diva, potens sagittarum Cretensium et celeberrima mur
huius urbis incolas eorumque prolem tutato;

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unaque Bacchi ministris volentes adsitis
reique Romanae bello feroci
tantisque auctae victoriis faveatis.

Euripilus

Deus non audit: nulla precantibus praesto clementia!

Menelaus

Parnasiae virgines fulgentibus comis
Venustoque pectore inlectum
a miseria averterunt mortalibus.

Chorus

O Musae, summo Iove natae,
sinite Phoebum miseros mortales exaudiat;
quibus iniucundus eheu avolat dies aterque
cum semper vobis sint divini immortalium amplexus,
collustretque fulgore suo Phoebus
flagrentque voluptate ac cupidines.

Euripilus

Deus non audit: nulla precantibus praesto clementia!

Menelaus

Fulgentia Musarum lumina
eburneo femora brachiisque lacteolis
turgidisque velut Helladis montes pectoribus
roseisque labellis inlectum voluptate perfusum
fascinatumque habent Apollinem
ut iam nequeat vota exaudire mortalium.

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Thyestes

Nemesis ales, per quam unam stat orbis,
glaucō diva lumine genita Dite
quae superbo silentio compescis arcesque letum,
efferos violentosque perosa,
sub cuius curru sors volvitur invidiosa et atra mortalium,
benignam praebas miseris aurem, perque te Apollo
votis precibusque susceptis
iam nobis felix affulgeat.

Plebanus

Excelsi summique o Musae Parnassi,
a votis nostris Phoebum ne demoveritus,
incluti Iovis filiae castae virgines.

Thyestes

Naufragio pereat Atreus!
Ipse summis saxis fixus asperis evisceratus,
latere pendens saxa spargens
tabo sanie et sanguine atro,
neque sepulcrum quo recipiat habeat portum corporis
ubi remissa humana vita corpus requiescat malia: (10)
ipse namque ne Phoebus adsit et praesto causa est!

Thesprotus

Eho tu di quibus est potestas motus superum atque inferum
pacem inter sese conciliant conferunt concordiam (11)
dentque fines Romanae immensos genti per orbem
singulis tutam optatam per annum fortunam benignam.

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Chorus

Alme pater aurorae, niveo cilio,
roseum qui regis volucrum currum equorum,
flavaque recreas coma mortales
perque immensa poli spatia
innumeris relucens radiis affulges lucidumque orbem
terram circumagis tuarum fluentia flammularum
amabilem generant diem. Per te silentium siderum chorus
dominum comitatur Olympum ducens choreas dulcesque concinens
cava laetus Phoebi testudine
tibiaque serena avenaque canora.
Selens glauca anteit numero cento niveis vecta iuvenis;
per te mens exultat benigna
dum ambis immensa poli spatia collustrans mentes mortalium:
volens adsis iis qui gentem moderantur Rumuleam.

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- 1) Probus, Ad Verg., Ecl., VI, 31.
- 2) Nonius, 97, 29.
- 3) Nonius, 369, 29.
- 4) Nonius, 261, 13
- 5) Cicero, Tusc., III, II, 25, Thyestes.
- 6) Nonius, 90, 13, Thyestes.
- 7) Cicero, Tusc., III, 19, 44.
- 8) Si deve leggere "omnesque ab origine"?
- 9) Cicero, De orat., III, 41, 164, Chorus.
- 10) Cicero, Tusc., I, 44, 107.
- 11) Cicero, Rhet. ad Herenn., II, 25, 39, Thesprotas.

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Blavatsky, Steiner, Spalding, Strieber—all claim to have peered into the mists of the past or future and to have penetrated into mankind's origins and his destiny.

In the middle decades of our century, an Italian Benedictine monk claimed to have made just such a journey. His name was Father Pellegrino Maria Ernetti. He was a priest and scientist and musicologist, one of the world's leading authorities on archaic music. He claimed to have yoked the insights of modern physics to the ancient occult knowledge of the astral planes to build, in secret, a time machine—the chronovisor. He asserted that, using the chronovisor as his eyes and ears, he had watched Christ dying on the cross and attended a performance of a now-lost tragedy, *Thyestes*, by the father of Latin poetry, Quintus Ennius, in Rome in 169 B.C.

Many have disputed Father Ernetti's claims, regarding which the Benedictine monk fell strangely silent in the last decade of his life. They say this distinguished scientist-priest was not telling the truth. But why would the brilliant Father Pellegrino Ernetti, so accomplished in other fields that his counsel was sought all over Europe, be driven to such a fabrication?

This American edition of *Father Ernetti's Chronovisor*, translated from the German, contains the first translation ever out of Latin of the text of *Thyestes* which Father Ernetti claimed to have brought back with him using the chronovisor. It, and other newly-discovered documents, contain astonishing revelations. They make it impossible to dismiss the claims of the strange, tormented and brilliant Father Pellegrino Ernetti.

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