

## 2 REALITY IDEAS (ESOTERISMS) IN ROUSSEAU (1712–1778) WITH COMMENTARIES

<sup>1</sup>In all the great humanists we find esoterisms, ideas from the causal world. It is part of their mission in life to mediate such ideas. It is often the meaning of their incarnation that they should afford mankind some small contribution to the knowledge of life. They must have conveyed at least one immortal idea, unless their incarnation was not only bad reaping. In those humanists who have been able to perform their mission under good reaping conditions, we may ascertain many superhuman insights.

<sup>2</sup>The esoterician finds what is axiomatic in the production of the mystics and humanists. In the future these pearls will be removed from their deficient setting and be presented to the contemplation of those who are interested in the revelation of the ideas through the ages.

<sup>3</sup>The incarnations or temporary personalities of the heralds are part of the non-essentials. Generally, they are very deficient instruments. Very little of the underlying latent capacity finds expression. And the masses cannot understand even the personality, which is a product of heredity, external circumstances, “temporary” conditions of life, a complex of unsolved contradictions. The esoterician is not the least interested in the personality of the departed genius, in all that which goes on ringing orgies in the gossip concert of social life, where atonalism is the ideal. He knows moreover that we shall all render account, not only of every vain word uttered, but also of every consciousness expression that restricted and poisoned life.

<sup>4</sup>The only lives worth depicting are the incarnations as saints of emotional geniuses and the manifestations of avatars. From them we receive knowledge of life. They are models to be imitated, suitable examples of ideals and idols. The causal geniuses live in their works, and it is in the sanctuary of their works that we should visit them. From them we receive knowledge of reality. For only causal vision makes it possible to see reality such as it is in the worlds of man. The “savage” brings his infallible perception of mere visible things from the animal kingdom and refines it to a sharpness that we never more attain until we have acquired causal objectivity. As man’s attention becomes increasingly introvert, is directed to emotional and mental consciousness expressions, he loses the faculty of observing that external physical reality which does not command his interest any more. The reacquisition even of that which we have once mastered to perfection requires renewed work in each incarnation. The humanist who was once a saint may demonstrate horoscope qualities that cause him deep suffering and the disapproval of those around him who do not understand him. We miss only that which we once possessed and which we, for that very reason, can realize and understand to be invaluable. The humanists miss most of the all the ability of emotional lawfulness, which they perhaps believed they could not lose. Everything must be reacquired. It is when we are finally able, in one single incarnation, to reconquer all the human perfections which we have acquired little by little that we can be made disciples of the planetary hierarchy.

<sup>5</sup>Humanists are intellectual discoverers of causal ideas, listeners to the delightful messages from that world of superconsciousness. Those who have not had opportunities of doing this themselves, greet these revelations with the joy of recognition and in so doing demonstrate that they have reached the same stage of development. As Goethe so aptly expresses it: “You resemble the mind you understand,” an utterance that has of course been misunderstood.

<sup>6</sup>Much of what Rousseau wrote is part of what is fictitious and illusory. It has had an enticing and misleading effect, with fatal consequences. In the midst of all these immature and unfinished things there is suddenly seen a gleam of something perfect and polished. Those intuitive revelations from the world of ideas merit to be preserved for future generations. The misleading things which have caused sufficient suffering should fall into oblivion. The following also includes some statements which are part of mankind’s intellectual heritage, cannot be too often repeated, and are gladly emphasized by the esoterician.

<sup>7</sup>Rousseau never found his way about in life. Like most people under similar circumstances, he blamed civilization for this. He thought that man is good by nature and is corrupted by civilization. Therefore, he preached a “return to nature”, not understanding that, in view of the clans that have made up the great majority of those incarnating during these last centuries, this must imply a return to the stage of barbarism. He really almost got more than he bargained for.

<sup>8</sup>At times Rousseau was obsessed with the drawbacks of that so-called culture and science which he had before his eyes. He even went so far in his contempt for the superficiality and frivolity of the aristocracy of his day that he declared reason worthless, a thinking man a degenerate animal. As he saw it, culture and philosophy had helped to deprave men.

<sup>9</sup>Rousseau hastened the French Revolution more than anyone else of the popularizing so-called philosophers of enlightenment. How completely he was misunderstood is best seen in the fact that he is generally considered to be the one who made the loudest proclamations of democracy and equality. But to him, equality meant the abolition of all hereditary privileges, equality before the law, everyone’s right to free competition. It did not in the least mean that all were equally capable or talented. He was very well aware of the great differences there are in respect of development. The idea of democracy he relegated to the sphere of irremediable chimeras and superstitions. Besides, he made the common error of judging other people according to himself in his very declaration that all human beings are good by nature. This can possibly be said of those in whom the basic tendency of the innate individual character is attractive, although also those people easily are influenced to the worse in a hateful environment.

<sup>10</sup>Rousseau’s *volonté générale* (general will) presupposes a unitary will and is of course impossible in a democracy where will is divided; where everybody wants to rule and also believes himself able to. Not until the will to unity dominates can the nations unite. There are good grounds for the assumption that this was what Rousseau actually meant, since in other connections he demonstrated the absurdity of democracy. “General will” is synonymous with “will to unity”.

<sup>11</sup>In the sayings given below, Rousseau stands out as a humanist. A few brief commentaries are added to those formulations of his that are more coloured by his times. (The translation is not literal but rather free to allow for a better expression of the intended meaning or in case similar statements from different places have been brought together into one sentence. The quotation marks have been added only to prevent confusion with the commentaries added.)

<sup>12</sup>Rousseau writes:

“I exist and I have senses through which I am being influenced. Everything that I apprehend as being outside myself I call matter. All those parts of matter which I perceive as being united into individual creatures I call bodies. Therefore, the disputes of the subjectivists about inner and outer are none of my concern.”

<sup>13</sup>Even these simple, irrefutable statements show that Rousseau possessed common sense of a high grade, unaffected by all the efforts made by the subjectivists to transform objective reality into subjective notions. Such efforts are instances of the general perversion of life: the desire to make things what they are not. According to esoterics and also according to common sense, everything is above all what it seems to be. It stands to reason that it is in addition something different and more.

<sup>14</sup>“Man is made of two kinds of matter: a physical kind and a superphysical kind, or body and soul.”

<sup>15</sup>This is completely esoteric. The “soul” is the envelopes of the monad in higher worlds, and those envelopes are made of the matter of those worlds.

<sup>16</sup>The physicalist, anyone who has no experience of worlds other than the physical, can only ascertain that existence is a trinity of matter, motion, and consciousness. He cannot determine whether this consciousness of his can also belong to superphysical matter. If they are fully honest and have learnt to tell the difference between what they know and what they do not

know – that is to say, what they believe – most people would probably admit that what is invisible, what is superphysical, is a matter of belief for them.

<sup>17</sup>“I am as certain of the existence of the universe as I am of my own existence. Whether this world has always existed or was formed once or how it came into existence I do not know and need not know. I am convinced that the universe is ruled by a mighty, good, and wise will, that the universe is a unity, that everything serves an aim. But of course I cannot prove this.”

<sup>18</sup>That much could probably be endorsed by the cultural individuals, being uncorrupted by the sophisms of subjectivisms. It is part of their innate instinct of life, as it were. That instinct forces us to go on seeking without growing weary, seeking everywhere, and prevents us from getting stuck in any one of the untenable systems of thought produced by ignorance. Then it depends on everyone’s latent fund of experience, level of development, acquired abilities, and of course mission in life what results this endeavour to orient oneself will yield.

<sup>19</sup>“We are unable to form a conception of the immense machinery of the universe. We cannot figure out how it is constructed. We know neither its laws nor its meaning. We do not know ourselves; we know neither our inner nor our outer nature. We do not know whether man is a simple or a composite being. Impenetrable secrets surround us on all sides. Our explanations for the unexplored are products of the imagination of our ignorance. Everyone forms his own ideas of that which he cannot know. Although we know only a fraction of the whole, we believe ourselves able to settle what this is in itself and what we are in relation to it. When I had realized this, I learnt that I should restrict my researches to that which was of direct interest to me and not worry about all the rest.”

<sup>20</sup>Rousseau takes a quite correct attitude to the unexplored. We need not hold any views on things we cannot possibly know anything about. It is better to doubt than to believe blindly, better to be ignorant than to hold false views, better to be a skeptic than a fanatic. It is necessary to learn to distinguish between what one knows and what one does not know. It is wise not to believe anything in matters where we are not obliged to have an opinion, in matters we have not examined ourselves. False views make us impervious to right views. The standpoint of the agnostic is much preferable to the constructions of ignorance, which cannot agree with reality but which prevent our profiting by the facts ascertained by research. It is quite another matter if some former initiate, thus a person who has latent knowledge of the esoteric mental system, when renewing his contact with it immediately realizes that it is valid.

<sup>21</sup>“The philosophers cannot set me free from my useless doubts and cannot solve my problems. I then chose to follow the path indicated to me by my common sense. If it leads me astray, the fault is mine and then I have learnt something.”

<sup>22</sup>This is right instinct of life. We learn more from our own mistakes than from those of other people. Everyone has his own latent fund of experience, and his own mistakes spring from the insufficiency of that fund.

<sup>23</sup>“All religions are good and useful. What separates them can be left aside. The worship of the heart – loving god above everything and one’s neighbour as oneself – is the essential part of religion. To serve the supreme being is not to spend one’s life kneeling in prayer, but to perform the duties that life has laid upon us. It is better not to have a religion at all than a faith by which we deceive ourselves and others.”

<sup>24</sup>These sayings are nothing but esoterisms.

<sup>25</sup>“The world order is good. Otherwise it would produce chaos. He who is able to do everything can only desire what is good. Where everything is good there is no injustice. It is the conviction of the existence of a supreme being that affords an aim to life and faith in its justice.”

<sup>26</sup>This saying is as simple as it is ingenious. Regrettably, they have undermined the whole of this ground for trust in life and divine justice through the doctrine of divine arbitrariness, wrath, and infernal punishments.

<sup>27</sup>“To raise myself to a state of happiness, power, and freedom I meditate on the world

order and admire with gratitude the wisdom that is revealed therein. I, who should love that order above everything else, cannot desire it to be different, to be changed for my sake.”

<sup>28</sup>Nor would a cosmos be up to much, if it were so badly organized that we ignorant and selfish beings could improve the world order through or whims and desires.

<sup>29</sup>“The soul survives the body. I am convinced of this by the facts, among others, of the triumph of evil and the oppression of the just in this visible world. Such a manifest contradiction, such a glaring discord makes it impossible for me to doubt man’s immortality. The end of this life cannot be the end of everything. In death is to be found the solution of this seeming injustice.”

<sup>30</sup>His latent knowledge shines through, his certainty that everything abides by the Law, and that there is a law of sowing and reaping.

<sup>31</sup>“Man is free to think and to act. Providence did not give me my reason then to prohibit me from using it. To deny reason is to blaspheme providence. Man is free in his actions thanks to the freedom of the soul.”

<sup>32</sup>Man is free when he has emancipated himself from the fictions of his ignorance and his inability to apply the knowledge, from everything to which he has attached himself through his consciousness expressions in his past.

<sup>33</sup>“Providence cannot be blamed for man’s actions. Providence does not desire evil. Evil arises through man’s abuse of the freedom he has. Man can choose between good and evil. There is no other evil than that which man causes or that under which he suffers, and he is the originator of both.”

<sup>34</sup>Only the man who has attained the stage of humanity can see as clearly as that. When, at the stage of ideality, man’s knowledge of reality is expanded, this problem becomes even deeper. Evil is the denial of unity, a result of the repulsive basic tendency. This tendency must be transformed into attractive. We are here to have experiences and to learn from them. This is how individual character develops. For this development to take place in harmony with the laws of life, the individual must learn to consider two fundamental factors of life: law and unity. For life is law and unity.

<sup>35</sup>“Uprightness and love are the principles according to which we can judge what is right and what is wrong. They constitute that principle of justice which I call conscience.”

<sup>36</sup>Here Rousseau mentions the two principles that Schopenhauer later made his own. So he, too, made conscience a positive principle of reason. Generally, by “conscience” is meant the dissuading instinct, the latent experience of mistakes made in life with their painful consequences.

<sup>37</sup>“Life is evil for the evil man, even if he is successful, and good for the good man, even if he is unhappy.”

<sup>38</sup>Such a thing can be said only by a humanist who has gained trust in life and stopped judging according to success and failure, who knows that everything serves the aim of life, which is always good, however it appears to us.

<sup>39</sup>“Everyone forms some idea of perfection and in so doing has an example to imitate.”

<sup>40</sup>From the ideals we hear about we choose precisely the one that belongs to our level of development. This means that we are our own lawmakers and judges.

<sup>41</sup>“Be honest and true. Learn to see that you are ignorant, and you will not deceive yourself and others. Perhaps I was always wrong. My intention, however, was honest and sincere. Nobody can do more. And the supreme being does not demand more from us than what we understand and are able to do.”

<sup>42</sup>An important principle of life is emphasized here. But it is probably applied only by those who have acquired the possibility of self-determination. At lower stages people must have simple rules to go by. We cannot leave it to the ignorance of life, which in addition is led astray by all the doctrines of hatred and superstition, to follow its whims and impulses. There

are risks involved in teaching those at the stage of barbarism such ideals and maxims as belong at the stage of humanity.

<sup>43</sup>“It is the most important thing for man to fulfil his duties.”

<sup>44</sup>The higher his level of development, the greater his understanding of the fact that all life is an endless series of duties of life to all and everything. To understand this right it is necessary to have esoteric knowledge and understanding of the meaning of one’s own incarnation.

<sup>45</sup>“When you forget yourself, you do yourself the greatest service.”

<sup>46</sup>This is the most difficult thing of all. Anyone who is always able to do so realizes the ideal of the saint.

<sup>47</sup>“The best natural constitution is the wise ruling the ignorant. Democracy is a form of government suited, not to men, but to a race of gods. There has never been and will never be a real democracy.”

<sup>48</sup>In any case this is impossible until those who are now at the stage of barbarism have reached the stage of humanity. It may be called the irony of fate that this very author did the most to provoke the French Revolution and the overthrow of society still going on.

<sup>49</sup>“In a community where everyone is dependent on the services of others, all have to make their contribution by their own work, not to lead a useless parasitical lives and only for amusements. This work of the most variegated description of course includes education, study, cultural work.”

<sup>50</sup>There was a time when only manual labour was regarded as work. Then there was a gradual realization of the fact that the researcher, discoverer, writer, artist is a worker as well. For them, the normal work day, which is increasingly shortened, seldom suffices. To this should be added the very uncertain prospects of getting paid for their work.

<sup>51</sup>“It is the teacher’s duty to make his pupil realize that reason is the supreme authority, that anyone who cannot think for himself falls victim to all manner of superstition or to the views of other people. Sterile learning is often an unnecessary burden. Education includes character building, the acquisition of love for work. The pupil should be able to tell the difference between what he knows and what he does not know, learn how to be calm, glad, invulnerable, unmoved by anything, not least by troubles.”

<sup>52</sup>Finally some of the maxims of the art of living should be cited, all of them worth remembering.

<sup>53</sup>“To give up freedom is to give up your quality of human being. Freedom is easy to lose and impossible to regain. Most people are apt to learn only in youth. When prejudice has been engraved the attempt at reform is vain. That man is rich who is contented. A cheerless home embitters life for everyone. The home should be an abode of joy. Man judges the future according to the present moment and his powers according to his success aided by luck. Anyone who takes up arms for the sake of enjoyment is like a wild beast that wants to tear another one to pieces.”

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