

Easter Address

Franklin Merrell-Wolff

March 29, 1970

Easter is one of the Christian festivals, and as is characteristic of days that return again and again, one is apt to have to cover the same ground over and over again. I shall try to cover that part very briefly and say something additional. Actually, it is not originally a Christian festival, but what the Christians would call a pagan festival. But in as much as the Christian use of the word 'pagan' is generally pejorative and I do not intend to be pejorative with respect to the thought of the non-Christians that antedated the Christian development, I'll say it was originally a non-Christian festival which has roots that can be traced back at least as far as ancient Egypt. It is connected with the vernal equinox just as Christmas is fundamentally connected with the winter solstice; and the original meaning is, apparently, the coming to life again of nature after the death of winter. The egg comes into the picture because the egg represents that from which new life comes, rather obviously; and the rabbit comes into the picture because of certain ideas the Egyptians had about the rabbit. They connected it in some way with the moon and that was associated in some way with the fact that the rabbit is born with his eyes open. But these things seem to me rather superficial. The fact that nature has come back into life again was very important with the ancients. It is the upwelling of life, and it's not hard to see that Easter was originally a fertility festival. However, as often has happened in the history of Christianity, symbols that were common with other peoples were taken over by the Christian authorities partly as a device to propagandize or proselyte these peoples by saying this, your festival, has this real meaning; and that meaning was associated with the resurrection of the Christ as everyone knows very well.

The death by torture of the Christ with the subsequent resurrection has usually been taken in a literal sense, but there is really a more fundamental meaning attached to it because in the mystic stories of all the great Illuminati there is one form or another this same pattern—death by torture and resurrection again. It is a reference, in fact, to something that happens in the process of Mystical Awakening. He who goes through this process, which we generally call Realization, does experience something akin to a kind of death and then a rebirth. It's death in the sense of a terminus, temporarily, of a certain mode of consciousness and awakening of another mode of consciousness involving a radical inversion, and therefore the death symbol is appropriate—death being understood not as a terminus, but a phase or process which we may call inversion. One form of the inversion is this: that whereas our ordinary consciousness appears to be a function of an ego which is like a point in a surrounding environment of things or phenomena, and very small there, after passing over the point of discontinuity or inversion, the self may be realized as like a great sphere which contains the universe rather than being contained by it. There is a blackout point at that point of discontinuity. Consciousness vanishes for a moment and is reborn. I've been through this many times. I've studied it. I've tried to keep a continuity of consciousness through that point of discontinuity and found it impossible. The simple effort produces an effect of dizziness, even slight nausea. It is, in a certain sense, a death and a

reawakening on another level. And that I would say is the real reference in this symbolism one finds throughout the literature where the Illuminati are represented as dying, being tortured to death generally, and then being reborn. There is a frequently repeated experience involving pain, psychological pain, that one finds through the literature; it is even spoken of as an agony. But it is followed by an experience of enormous delight, the diametric opposite, which is beyond our power to represent. The mystics generally speak of it in terms that seem extravagant, very flowery language. It sounds like exaggeration, but, as I've been through the process, I'll say to you it is not exaggeration. And while I use terminology that is not spectacular, it is really more radical because I speak of it as though it were a moving from a finite kind of consciousness to something that is literally infinite. And while that's not flowery, it's more extreme than the most flowery statement, actually, if you know what the word 'infinite' means to the mathematician.

Now, Christ stands as a redeemer—one of the redeemers, and this implies that Easter has a particular connection with the problem of redemption. There actually is no problem of greater importance; but we do not conceive of the redemption in the sense that traditional Christians do. In the traditional sense man needs to be redeemed because of sin, and sin being defined as a violation of the will of a supposed extracosmic deity. And there is also the conception that there is an original sin connected with the events in the Garden of Eden with which you are all familiar, which damns everybody who is a descendent of that supposed original pair. We do not hold to such conceptions. We do not grant that sin in this sense exists, but in place of it we hold to the doctrine of *karma*, namely, that there is a law, which is ultimately the law of equilibrium, which sustains all the universe and all creatures within it, and that any tension by a voluntary act that tends to strain that law produces a reaction, a balancing effect. There can be a force or tendency in one that goes against the order of equilibrium, and then a corrective comes. The corrective may be painful or it may be delightful. There is a general tendency to say that if the corrective is painful it's bad *karma* and if the corrective is delightful it's good *karma*. But I challenge this use of terminology. *Karma* is never bad. It's a corrective principle. If the *karmic* consequences of an action are unpleasant, it's because that unpleasantness is necessary to teach a lesson; and if that lesson is learned, then the unpleasantness disappears. The unpleasantness is merely a teacher, and therefore good. There's no such thing as good and bad *karma*. There is such a thing as comfortable and uncomfortable *karma*.

We eschew the whole conception that any man can destroy himself simply by finite actions, that he can invoke a penalty that lasts throughout the whole of infinite duration. But, rather, the consequences are proportional to causes, that the suffering that comes from willful actions that are contrary to decent codes are exhaustible in time, and that when lessons are learned, actually, out of such experiences as, say, the experiences of an alcoholic, who certainly has violated good moral practices, there actually may come an opportunity, as in the case of the ex-alcoholic who works to save many other presently existing alcoholics. And he had to go through that experience before he would have the understanding of the alcoholic sufficient to be able to help them. One who has never had such experiences, in general, can't help an alcoholic, nor can he help a drug addict. So, out of *karma* that may seem painful and which most people call bad, there may come a positive good. We take this view; and that the law corrects things. But while this would suggest that the whole universe and all creatures within the universe including man and the gods and the animals are subject to this law, and that therefore it operates

autonomously, there is a sense in which there can be the intervention of those which we call the redeemers—the Christs or the Buddhas.

To understand in what sense redemption may be necessary, I'll have to go into something of the philosophy. The world in which we live which the Buddhists call *Sangsara*—or which we might call the domain of phenomena, of objects before consciousness such as mountains, trees, and houses, and so forth—is a domain in which there also is craving. One craves, beyond his needs, food, and many, many possessions, particularly, more money than he needs for his functioning. Craving possesses man, and that craving leads on to other conditions in the phenomenal world. He comes to death, and has not through death departed from the phenomenal world, but finds himself in a subtle phenomenal world. First of all, what the Tibetans call the *bardo*, and then in phenomenal orders pleasant or painful—we call the pleasant ones heavenly and the painful ones hellish—in which he again deals with the seeming of an environment—again, possibly the appearance of mountains, other visible entities, buildings, and so forth—all of which, however, are projections, unconscious projections out of his consciousness, out of him. He doesn't know he's projecting, but he is. He's not dealing with reality as it is in itself. And here he exhausts his *karma*—be it of a painful form or of a pleasant form, delightful, and so on—and then he comes back into rebirth and faces conditions that are the result of past *karma*, not necessarily only the past life, but of all the series of lives through which he has past in a vast period of time, proceeds to crave again, and to suffer again, and repeats the process, circling endlessly in this phenomenal order of which the gross world is merely the more densest form and the subtle worlds beyond death are less dense, but all phenomenal.

Well, after an individual entity may have circled for millions of years and exhausted all the values in that system, he may feel the yearning for release; and release is possible. The one thing we've got to remember, and here is a problem, that causes set up in the phenomenal order, *Sangsara*, produce effects that are also in the phenomenal order, and therefore lead to no escape from the phenomenal order. That's why yoga is very difficult. I'm not talking about *hatha* yoga, I'm talking about real yoga. *Hatha* yoga only serves the office of perfecting a physical body and ultimately being able to die or not to die at will, and it takes so much effort that you have no time for anything beyond that. We're dealing with a much more fundamental problem. How does one break out of this squirrel cage in which humanity together with all creatures are bound? You die; go into a subtle order that's phenomenal; perhaps spend what would seem like a thousand years there; come out again; die again; be born again; die again, a thousand times and more; and you've exhausted all of the interest in it and you want to get out.

Now, it is possible, for there are those entities, namely, Buddhas or Christs. I'm using the term 'Christ' as equivalent to that of Buddha. Etymologically it doesn't mean the same thing; it means the anointed with oil, whereas the word 'Buddha' means Enlightenment and is also used to represent those entities that have attained Enlightenment. But when we say Buddha, we do not exclusively mean the Great Buddha that was named Gautama, or Sakyamuni, or Siddhartha—one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest entity associated with our present cycles covering thousands of years; and there's reason to believe that he appeared as Christ, as well as other figures. I use 'Christ', however, as referring to the same thing, namely, the Enlightened One. Now,

Enlightenment means having attained the power to break out of this endless cycling in *Sangsara*, or the phenomenal order. There are those entities, it is said, who having so broken out, accept the non-phenomenal order, which is a state of simply inconceivable delight. I'm not talking through my hat, because I know it. You cannot imagine it: a state of primordial wisdom, delight, and love. Those who accept this, enter into a state that we call a locked-in or fixed *nirvanic* state, and we regard those who so accept as spiritually selfish. There's another possibility in the case of one who has reached that point, that he may turn back for the end of working so that these other creatures—not merely human, but both human and subhuman, and even more than human—may be helped to also be released from the endless circling.

Now, one who seeks release from the *sangsaric* order may, by his merit won over perhaps several lifetimes, win the attention of a Buddha—in this case those that we call the Buddhas of Compassion because they have renounced the selfish enjoyment of the *nirvanic* state for the themselves—and it is possible for such a one to initiate, or by induction, the candidate who has won the right to his attention into the *nirvanic* state. The *sadhaka* in the world, thus, does not win to the *nirvanic* state by his merits or demerit. He wins the attention of one who can initiate him into the *nirvanic* state. That is the office of the Christs and the Buddhas of Compassion.

Now, Easter has a particular bearing because we associate Easter with redemption. And this points out the sense in which redemption is necessary—not redemption from an original sin on the part of Adam and Eve; not redemption from even individual sinning against the supposed arbitrary rulings of an extracosmic God; but redemption from an endless circling in the phenomenal order, from an endless craving which produces suffering. And the redeemed state is, first of all, a *nirvanic* state, but it can be more than that. There is a possibility, it's very hard to find anywheres in the literature, that instead of simply abandoning the phenomenal order—I'm not now speaking of those that renounced the *nirvanic* state only, but I'm talking of something that's a little more subtle, and you'll have trouble to find any reference to it in the literature, though there is a reference in certain manuscripts—where the goal is no longer merely a *nirvanic* departure, an abandonment of a valueless universe, but one in which there is established a joint or combined Consciousness which is able to function in the phenomenal and the *nirvanic* at the same time. This is very difficult to attain because it implies the participation in two types of consciousness at the same time that in the beginning appear as wholly incompatible. Your *nirvanic* Consciousness is not a consciousness of an environment. You might think of it as a Consciousness where Consciousness is its own object. It's not the Consciousness of a Self, or subject. It is a Consciousness that is completely pure, pre-existent, and the source from which comes all selves and all worlds—worlds being but the phenomena before Consciousness.

Now, the entity who has attained such a state is in the fullest sense of the word, free, liberated; and he is free to play a part in the game of phenomena, of world formation—a process of rendering manifest that which is implicit in the Pure Consciousness. This Pure Consciousness is inexhaustible in its potential. In other words, a potential infinite. And there's nothing inherently wrong in producing a phenomenal order, a producing of something which seems external to us as objects; and objects include all worlds, all universes, all galaxies, as well as the smaller things. What is the trouble is that if

one is playing with these objects, he gets caught in them. He becomes attached. He becomes a craver. It's like a professional actor who has performed a certain part and then goes through the experience of a permanent identification with that part. If actor *a* is playing part *b*, and then becomes convinced that he really is *b* and not merely acting *b*, then he's caught in a delusion. And that we may liken to the condition of this humanity in this world. They played a part and forgot that they were simply actors, and identified themselves with the parts that they took on, and then became bound in an endless circling governed by *karma*. One who does not become thus deluded, may play as much as he pleases with the game of world formations, of creations of all sorts, producing the beauties that he knows or senses, rendering them explicit, manifesting the potential so that it becomes explicit. That is all permissible and involves no need of a redemption so long as the player does not forget who he is and thinks he's merely the part which he's playing.

This is a short talk, but I think that's enough; and it lays down certain principles that identify our conception of redemption as they contrast with the traditional Christian, which I think is a distortion, a very great distortion of what Christ meant himself. That'll be enough for today.