



Who Is "Satan" and Where Is "Hell"?

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That in this day and age, when "for most people religion has become an archaic and impossible refuge,"¹ men no longer take either God or Satan seriously, arises from the fact that they have come to think of both alike only objectively, only as persons external to themselves and for whose existence no adequate proof can be found. The same, of course, applies to the notions of their respective realms, heaven and hell, thought of as times and places neither now nor here.

We have, in fact, ourselves postponed the "kingdom of heaven on earth" by thinking of it as a material Utopia to be realized, we fondly hope, by means of one or more five-year plans, overlooking the fact that the concept of an endless progress is that of a pursuit "in which thou must sweat eternally,"² — a phrase suggestive less of heaven than of hell. What this really means is that we have chosen to substitute a present hell for a future heaven we shall never know.

The doctrine to be faced, however, is that "the kingdom of heaven is within you," here and now, and that, as Jacob Boehme, amongst others, so often said, "heaven and hell are everywhere, being universally extended.... Thou art accordingly in heaven or hell.... The soul hath heaven or hell within itself,"³ and cannot be said to "go to" either when the body dies. Here, perhaps, the solution of the problem of Satan may be sought.

It has been recognized that the notion of a Satanic "person," the chief of many "fallen angels," presents some difficulties: even in religion, that of a Manichean "dualism" emerges; at the same time, if it be maintained that anything whatever is not God, God's infinity is thereby circumscribed and limited. Is "he," Satan, then a person, or merely a "personification," i.e., a postulated personality?⁴ Who is "he," and where? Is he a serpent

¹ Margaret Marshall in *The Nation*, February 2, 1946.

² Jacob Boehme, *De incarnationis Verbi*, 11.5.18.

³ Jacob Boehme, "Of Heaven and Hell," pp. 259, 260.

⁴ "Person cannot be affirmed... of living things... bereft of intellect and reason... but we say there is a person of a man, of God, of an Angel" (Boethius, *Contra Evtychen* II). On this basis, Satan, who remains an angel even in hell, can be called a Person, or indeed, Persons, since his name is "Legion: for we are many"; but as a fallen being, "out of his right mind," in reality a Person only potentially. Much the same could be said of the soul, viz. that there is a Person of the soul, but hardly that the soul, as it is in itself, is a Person. Satan and the soul, both alike invisible, are only "known," or rather "inferred," from behavior, which is just what "personality" implies: "personality, that is the hypothetical unity that one postulates to account for the doings of people" (H. S. Sullivan, "Introduction to the Study of Interpersonal Relations," *Psychiatry*, T, 1938).

Who Is "Satan" and Where Is "Hell"?

or a dragon, or has he horns and a poisonous tail? Can he be redeemed and regenerated, as Origen and the Muslims have believed? All these problems hang together.

However the ultimate truth of "dualism" may be repudiated, a kind of dualism is logically unavoidable for all practical purposes, because any world in time and space, or that could be described in words or by mathematical symbols, must be one of contraries, both quantitative and qualitative, for example, long and short, good and evil; and even if it could be otherwise, a world without these opposites would be one from which all possibility of choice, and of procedure from potentiality to act, would be excluded, not a world that could be inhabited by human beings such as we. For anyone who holds that "God made the world," the question, Why did He permit the existence in it of any evil, or that of the Evil One in whom all evil is personified, is altogether meaningless; one might as well enquire why He did not make a world without dimensions or one without temporal succession.

Our whole metaphysical tradition, Christian and other, maintains that "there are two in us,"⁵ this man and the Man in this man; and that this is so is still a part and parcel of our spoken language in which, for example, the expression "self-control" implies that there is one that controls and another subject to control, for we know that "nothing acts upon itself,"⁶ though we forget it when we talk about "self-government."⁷ Of these two "selves," outer and inner man, psycho-physical "personality" and very Person, the human composite of body, soul, and spirit is built up. Of these two, on the one hand body-and-soul (or -mind), and on the other, spirit, one is mutable and mortal, the other constant and immortal; one "becomes," the other "is," and the existence of the one that is not, but becomes, is precisely a "personification" or "postulation," since we cannot say of anything that never remains the same that "it is." And however necessary it may be to say "I" and "mine" for the practical purposes of everyday life, our Ego in fact is nothing but a name for what is really only a sequence of observed behaviors.⁸

Body, soul, and spirit: can one or other of these be equated with the Devil? Not the body, certainly, for the body in itself is neither good nor evil, but only an instrument or means to good or evil. Nor the Spirit - intellect, synteresis, conscience, Agathos Daimon - for this is, by hypothesis, man's best and most divine part, in itself incapable of error, and our only means of participation in the life and the perfection that is God himself. There

⁵ Plato, *Republic* 439DE, 604B; Philo, *Deterius* 82; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* II-II.26.4; St. Paul, II Cor. 4:16; and in general, as the doctrine is briefly stated by Goethe: "Zwei Seelen wohnen ach, in meiner Brust, die eine will sich von der andern trennen" (*Faust*, 1, 759). Similarly in the Vedanta, Buddhism, Islam, and in China.

⁶ *Nil agit in seipsum*: axiomatic in Platonic, Christian, and Indian philosophy: "the same thing can never do or suffer opposites in the same respect or in relation to the same thing at the same time," Plato, *Republic* 436B; "strictly speaking, no one imposes a law upon his own actions," *Sum. Theol.* 1.93.5; "because of the antinomy involved in the notion of acting upon oneself" (*svatmani ca kriyavirodhat*), Sankara on BG 11.17.

⁷ "Art thou free of self? then art thou 'Self-governed' " (*selbes gcwaltic* = Skr. *svarat*), Meister Eckhart, Pfeiffer ed., p. 598.

⁸ "How can that which is never in the same slate 'be' anything?" (Plato, *Cratylus*, 439E; *Theatetus*, 152D; *Symposium*, 207D, etc.). " 'Ego' has no real meaning, because it is perceived only for an instant," i.e., does not last for even so long as two consecutive moments (*naivaham-arthah ksanikatva-darsanat; Vivekacudamani of Sri Sankaracharya*, 293, Swami Madhavananda, tr., Almora, 3rd ed., 1932).

Who Is "Satan" and Where Is "Hell"?

remains only the "soul"; that soul which all must "hate" who would be Christ's disciples and which, as St. Paul reminds us, the Word of God like a two-edged sword "severs from the spirit"; a soul which St. Paul must have "lost" to be able to say truly that "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me," announcing, like Mansur, his own theosis.

Of the two in us, one the "spark" of Intellect or Spirit, and the other, Feeling or Mentality, subject to persuasion, it is obvious that the latter is the "tempter," or more truly "temptress." There is in each of us, in this man and that woman alike, an *anima* and *animus*, relatively feminine and masculine;⁹ and, as Adam rightly said, "the woman gave, and I did eat"; also, be it noted, the "serpent," by whom the woman herself was first beguiled, wears, in art, a woman's face. But to avoid all possibility of misunderstanding here, it must be emphasized that all this has nothing whatever to do with a supposed inferiority of women or superiority of men: in this functional and psychological sense any given woman may be "manly" (heroic) or any given man "effeminate" (cowardly).¹⁰

One knows, of course, that "soul," like "self," is an ambiguous term, and that, in some contexts, it may denote the Spirit or "Soul of the soul," or "Self of the self," both of which are expressions in common use. But we are speaking here of the mutable "soul" as distinguished from the "spirit," and should not overlook to what extent this *nefesh*, the *anima* after which the human and other "animals" are so called, is constantly disparaged in the Bible,¹¹ as is the corresponding *nafs* in Islam. This soul is the self to be "denied" (the Greek original meaning "utterly reject," with ontological rather than a merely ethical

⁹ It is unfortunate that, in modern psychology, an originally lucid terminology and distinction has been confused by an equation of the "soul-image" with "the *anima* in man, the *animus* in woman." The terms are even more misused by Father M. C. D'Arcy in his *Mind and Heart of Love* (London, 1946), ch. 7. Traditionally, *anima* and *animus* are the "soul" and the "spirit" equally in any man or any woman; so William of Thierry (cf. note 22 below) speaks of *animus vel spintus*. This usage goes back to Cicero, e.g., *Tusculan Disputations* 1.22.52, "neque nos corpora sumus . . . cum igitur: Nosce te dicit, hoc dicit, Nosce animum tuum," and v.13.38, "humanus . . . animus decerptus [est] ex mente divina"; and Lucius Accius (*fr.* 296), "sapimus animo, fruimur anima; sine animo, anima est debilis."

¹⁰ In all traditions, not excepting the Buddhist, this man and this woman are both equally capable of "fighting the good fight."

¹¹ Cf. D. B. Macdonald, *The Hebrew Philosophical Genius* (Princeton, 1934), p. 139, "the lower, physical nature, the appetites, the psyche of St. Paul . . . 'self,' but always with that lower meaning behind it"; Thomas Sheldon Green, *Greeks-English Lexikon of the New Testament* (New York and London, 1879), ("governed by the sensuous nature subject to appetite and passion"); "anima... cujus vel pulchritudo virtus, vel deformitas vitium est ... mutabilis est" (St. Augustine, *De gen, ad lift.* 7.6.9, and *Ep.* 166.2.3). On the other hand, the "Soul" or "Self," as printed with the capital, is Jung's "Self... around which it [the Ego] revolves, very much as the earth rotates about the sun... [its] superordinated subject" (*Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, London, 1928, p. 268); not a being, but the innumerable and indefinable "Being of all beings."

We are never told that the mutable soul is immortal in the same timeless way that God is immortal, but only that it is immortal "in a certain way of its own" (*secundum quemdam modum suum*, St. Augustine, *Ep.* 166.2.3). If we ask, *Quo-modo?* seeing that the soul is in time, the answer must be, "in one way only, viz. by continuing to become; since thus it can always leave behind it a new and other nature to take the place of the old" (Plato, *Symposium* 207D). It is only God, who is the Soul of the soul, that we can speak of as immortal absolutely (1 Tim. 6:16). It is incorrect to call the soul "immortal" indiscriminately, just as it is incorrect to call any man a genius; man has an immortal Soul, as he has a Genius, but the soul can only be immortalized by returning to its source, that is to say, by dying to itself and living to its Self; just as a man becomes a genius only when he is no longer "himself."

Who Is "Satan" and Where Is "Hell"?

application), the soul that must be "lost" if "it" is to be saved; and which, as Meister Eckhart and the Sufis so often say, must "put itself to death," or, as the Hindus and Buddhists say, must be "conquered" or "tamed," for "that is not my Self." This soul, subject to persuasion, and distracted by its likes and dislikes, this "mind" that we mean when we speak of having been "minded to do this or that," is "that which thou callest 'I' or 'myself,' " and which Jacob Boehme thus distinguishes from the I that *is*, when he says, with reference to his own illuminations, that "not I, the I that I am, knows these things, but God in me." We cannot treat the doctrine of the Ego at length, but will only say that, as for Meister Eckhart and the Sufis, "Ego, the word I, is proper to none but God in his sameness," and that "I" can only rightly be attributed to Him and to the one who, being "joined unto the Lord, is one spirit."

That the soul herself, our "I" or "self" itself, should be the Devil - whom we call the "enemy," "adversary," "tempter," "dragon," - never by a personal name¹² - may seem startling, but it is very far from being a novel proposition. As we go on, it will be found that an equation of the soul with Satan has often been enunciated, and that it provides us with an almost perfect solution of all the problems that the latter's "personality" poses. Both are "real" enough for all pragmatic purposes here, in the active life where "evil" must be contended with, and the dualism of the contraries cannot be evaded; but they are no more "principles," no more really real, than the darkness that is nothing but the privation of light.

No one will deny that the battleground on which the psychomachy must be fought out to a finish is within you, or that, where Christ fights, there also must his enemy, the Antichrist, be found. Neither will anyone, "superstition" apart, be likely to pretend that the Temptations of St. Anthony, as depicted in art, can be regarded otherwise than as "projections" of interior tensions. In the same way that Picasso's "Guernica" is the mirror of Europe's disintegrated soul, "the hell of modern existence," the Devil's horns and sting are an image of the most evil beast in man himself. Often enough it has been said by the "Never-enough honoured Ancients," as well as by modern authors, that "man is his own worst enemy." On the other hand, the best gift for which a man might pray is to be "at peace with himself"; and, indeed, for so long as he is not at peace with Himself,¹³ he can hardly be at peace with anybody else, but will "project" his own disorders, making of "the enemy" - for example, Germany, or Russia, or the Jews - his "devil." "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even from your lusts (pleasure, or desires, Skr. *kamah*) that contend in your members?" (James 4:1).

¹² Even the Hebrew *Satan*, "opponent," is not a personal name.

¹³ The Self we mean when we tell a man who is misbehaving to "be yourself" (Sophocles, *Philocletes* 950), for "all is intolerable when any man forsakes his proper Self, to do what fits him not" (*ibid.* 902-903).