A Mystic in the Modern World

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The life of the poet George William Russell (1867-1935) — better known by his pseudonym "AE" — was distinguished by his many and varied services to his country and his countrymen. Refusing to seek fame by making himself a master in a single field of endeavour, he achieved a balance between the contemplative and active ideals, and acquired such nobility of character that many of his friends felt that only a few endearing foibles detracted from his perfection. Katharine Tynan, for example, declared while he was still alive: "the peace of God which passeth understanding lies all about him";[1] in a similar vein Maurice Joy recalled after his death:

> . . . when one walked with him, all human as he was, along an Irish country road in the moonlight, one at least [sic] could understand why it was that on the road to Emmaus the hearts of certain fishermen burned within them.[2]

The source of all that he was is to be found in his mystical experiences and practices, and by studying the course of his life it is possible to understand how, despite his archaic world-view, he was able to fit perfectly into the twentieth century.

AE was born in 1867 in the northern Irish town of Lurgan, Armagh, which was famous for the ferocious hatred between its Protestant and its Roman Catholic inhabitants. He long afterwards described how "at any time a chance word might provoke a battle, and a whole horde of wild fanatics lying in ambush might rush out of the doors at a signal given, and in the name of God try to obliterate His image on each other's faces."[3] His father belonged to the Episcopalian Church of Ireland, but having strong evangelical leanings used sometimes to attend Primitive Methodist services, and Dr. Monk Gibbon has suggested that AE may have been influenced by the mystical strain in the Nonconformist tradition; he was certainly alienated from the churches by the sectarian bitterness he witnessed.

In 1878 the Russell family moved to Dublin and about three years later AE took a decisive step in the direction of religious independence. He was walking along a country road during a holiday in Armagh when he began to ponder the problem of divine retribution and within a few minutes he concluded that God had no right to punish him for not doing what he had never promised to undertake.[4]

About the time that he met the young W. B. Yeats in mid-1884, AE was undergoing a spiritual awakening that turned him from a talented, high spirited schoolboy longing to devote his life to art into a shy, withdrawn mystic profoundly involved with the incorporeal world. In two autobiographical volumes, **The Candle of Vision** (1918) and **Song and Its Fountains** (1932), he describes how waking dreams of astonishing power and beauty would overwhelm his consciousness, and how he became aware of an incalculably ancient self within him, the bearer of base and noble desires and of an immemorial longing for reunion with God, or the Spirit. At the same time it seemed to him that nature was quivering with a strange transparency which showed it was the home of spirits akin to this newly discovered self. Not long after, without conscious effort on his part,

[1] *Twenty-five years: Reminiscences* (London: Smith, Elder, 1913, p. 248.
Joy recalled after his death:

[2] "Ireland's Modern Mystic," *New York Herald Tribune,* 6 Feb. 1938.

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[3] *Irish Homestead,* 15 Oct. 1910, p. 849.

[4] A.E., *Song and Its Fountains,* London: Macmillan, p. 90; George Moore, *Ave,* London: Heinemann, p. 158.

he began to see radiant visionary figures in what he later believed were especially favoured regions of Ireland. When this gift first came to him, he saw only what he afterwards called Shining Beings, tribes of spirits who moved uniformly as though under the control of a single mind. Later he was enchanted by the beauty of many-coloured figures of a higher order, who took the forms of the ancient Irish deities, and these he came to refer to as Self-luminous Beings. On one occasion he and another seer were standing some distance apart when they saw the same godlike form and each hurried excitedly to tell the other of the vision.[5] He began to recover what he believed were memories of past lives, and at times his visions were illuminated by a light so dazzling that when he returned to normal consciousness even the sun seemed dull.

AE had to come to terms with these experiences, for which there was no explanation in the culture with which he was familiar. By a series of accidents he became acquainted with Gnosticism and the Upanishads, and, together with his friend Yeats, was gradually drawn into a circle of young Dublin intellectuals who were just then falling under the spell of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophy. This intellectually brilliant synthesis of Vedanta and Buddhism with Platonism, Hermeticism and Kabbala revived the pre-scientific world picture of a cosmos thickly inhabited by spiritual beings and a creation built upon a sevenfold pattern harmoniously repeated on every plane of existence from the heavenly hierarchies to the colours of the spectrum. Rebels alike against the church and the laboratory, the young Theosophists rejoiced in a glorification of man which credited him with the capacity to realize unimaginable powers and a divine nature. They believed the heavenly bodies to be controlled by spirits, emanations of the Logos, and they replaced the moralising of the parson's sermon with the recondite ethics of the Vedas and the Bhagavadgita.

For four or five years AE pondered over his personal illuminations in the light of mystical writings ranging from the Hindu scriptures to Emerson. At first he read few of the specifically Theosophical books that absorbed the attention of his friends, and he refused to join the Dublin branch of Madame Blavatsky's Society, since he held that any merely human organisation was certain to become corrupt.[6] It was probably in 1889 or 1890 that he finally adandoned his early ambition to become a painter, and resolved to devote all his energies to the pursuit of spiritual and occult disciplines. Belatedly joining the Theosophical Society, he took a post as a bookkeeper in a Dublin drapers and joined a resident community of young disciples known as the Household. Here, from 1891 to 1897, he dedicated his life to the new faith.

The serious Theosophist may pursue either the mystic or the occult path. The mystic attempts in traditional fashion to blot out and transcend the personal self or natural man so that the Spirit may act unimpeded through him. The occultist, by contrast, seeks to purify and strengthen his individual ego and to acquire supernatural powers and knowledge through the practice of elaborate rituals involving chants and symbols. AE, who was unambiguously a mystic, distrusted some of the occult practices of Yeats ,and according to one acquaintance thought that the attempt to impose one's will on men or spirits was unethical.[7] He utterly rejected spiritualism.

In later life AE always acknowledged an outwardly unimpressive American Theosophist named James Pryse as his **guru** or personal teacher. During 1895 this man resided in Dublin, probably at

[5] W. Y. Evans Wentz, *The Fairy Faith in the Celtic Countries,* London: Oxford University Press, 1911, pp. 65 f.

[6] Alan Denson, ed., *Letters from AE,* New York, London, Toronto: Abelard-Schuman, pp. 6-9.

[7] Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats* 1865-1939, 2nd ed., London: Macmillan, 1962, p. 72.

the Household, where he trained his disciple in Yoga meditations and mystic lore including (since he knew Greek) the esoteric meaning of the New Testament. Both men had psychic powers and one of Pryse's favourite methods of instruction was to visualise an image, often a representation of a stage of spiritual development, which AE was then able to see and to draw.[8]

In later years acquaintances of AE, observing that he constantly quoted the same few aphorisms in his writings and conversation, sometimes assumed that he was a smatterer in philosophy and mysticism. His contributions to the **Irish Theosophist** from 1892 to 1897 prove that his study of these subjects was in fact extensive, and that his approach was subtle as well as passionate. An analysis of his early articles, his poetry, and **The Candle of Vision** in the light of Madame Blavatsky's **Secret Doctrine,** and Pryse's **Apocalypse Unsealed**[9] — a book he intensely admired — shows that his acceptance of Theosophical doctrine was almost total. It is clear from the late verses "To One who wanted a Philosophy from Me" (**The House of the Titans,** 1934), that he did not realise the degree of his own Theosophical orthodoxy. In only a few minor details was he ever at variance with Blavatsky's teachings.

Theosophy furnished AE with a complete explanation of his spiritual experiences and a metaphysical map into which he was able to fit all his concepts, though it is not possible to be sure that his visions or his memories of them were uninfluenced by his Theosophical studies.

Theosophy and the philosophies it incorporated taught AE that only God or the One had absolute existence: all else, even the Logos, was **maya.** It ascribed the existence of apparent multiplicity to a series of seeming emanation from the Absolute, beginning with three primal hypostases — the Logos or Divine Mind, the Archaeus or spiritual ancestor of matter, and the Light of the Logos or Divine Energy. From these all beings and objects were said to be derived, from mineral substances to the gods or **devas** corresponding to the Judaeo-Christian angels. The heavenly bodies, including the earth, were animated by planetary spirits contained within the Logos, and the bodies of these spirits — the astronomical globes — had their source in the Archaeus. All things were explained in terms of an eternally recurring cycle comprising an apparent outbreathing from the Absolute, a descent of Spirit through all the realms of multiplicity, and Its return into the One. Into this system AE was able to fit all the bewildering phenomena of his experience. The Shining Beings of his vision, Theosophy told him, were elemental spirits of the Mid-world, while the Self-luminous Beings were gods of the Heaven-world, the beautiful plane of existence where the soul reaped between incarnations the rewards of its good deeds. The light brighter than the sun's was the Light of the Logos and emanating from a manifestation of the Spiritual Sun, one of the first manifestations of the Absolute in the world of form. The visionary fountains of energy which he saw in the most spiritual parts of Ireland were likewise outpourings of the Light of the Logos on the plane of the earth, and he would see the same force radiating from men in firelike plumes.

AE's excitement over this all-comprehending philosophy is reflected in his prose and verse. A number of his phrases usually taken as vaguely poetic have in fact precise philosophical meanings. The Divine Darkness or the Holy Sepulchre is the undifferentiated Absolute, while the Ancient of Days denotes the Logos in Its first, unmanifested form (the Father of the Christian Trinity). For the outbreathed Manifested Logos (the Son regarded as the Creator) he employed a number of terms: the Magician of the Beautiful, the Shepherd of the Ages ,the Lamp of the World, the Ancestral Self, and Brahma. The

[8] *Canadian Theosophist,* August, 1935, pp. 164-166.

[9] In a letter to Pryse, 16 Oct., 1923.

Mighty Mother or the World Soul is the Archaeus, a source of beauty and compassion. The Light of the Logos (the Holy Ghost) is the Great or Holy Breath. Lastly, the Ancient One or Earth Spirit is the planetary spirit of our globe. From a literary viewpoint many of AE's poems are somewhat marred by incessant references to colours, but these had for him symbolic meanings based on an unpublished chart in which forty-nine of them represent the powers emanating from the Logos. Examples occur in the many descriptions of sunrise and sunset in which he dwells on a sapphire, amethyst and other hues which adorn the sky. Dawn and twilight are traditionally considered favourable times for concentration and meditation as the tranquillity of the atmosphere tends to still the mind's natural restlessness, and the colours mentioned symbolise the spiritual powers or qualities associated with the turning points of the daily cycle.

During the early years of the Household, AE seems to have been totally uninterested in public affairs. He afterwards liked to say that in his youth he was so ignorant of politics that he could not have named the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, yet for much of his life he was well known as a member of that small but important section of the Protestant community that made the nationalist cause its own. Awakened to the greatness of the Gaelic literary inheritance by Standish O'Grady's retelling of the heroic myths, he had begun by the spring of 1895, as his articles in the **Irish Theosophist** show, to interpret some of these legends as allegories of the mystic way. He quickly came to believe that the Druids had been great initiates, the Brahmins of ancient Ireland, who had conducted Mysteries capable of fostering in prepared candidates the birth of the spiritual man. His political nationalism had its origins in his conviction that Ireland, the repository of wisdom from sunken Atlantis, had been from time immemorial a spiritually favoured land destined to be the scene of a great revelation.

In the Proem to **The Secret Doctrine** Madame Blavatsky prophesied that a cycle of five thousand years would come to an end about 1897 and that there would then be a squaring of accounts between the races. Early in 1896 AE experienced a stupendous vision of a series of apocalyptic figures and scenes a Napoleon-like apparition, a divine child, the British monarch collapsing on the throne at Westminster, a giant being dealing out destruction over the breadth of Ireland, and the whole land illuminated with a serene and supernatural radiance.[10] Soon the inner circle of Dublin Theosophists was convinced that an Avatar, a semi-divine Incarnation who would be both ruler and teacher, was about to appear in Ireland, and throughout the summer they lived in a frenzy of expectation. Though their hope was not fulfilled, AE never forgot the vision that had overwhelmed him: in 1913, when Ireland was on the brink of civil war, he wondered whether the Avatar was at hand,[11] and near the end of the First World War, as the country was drifting into armed conflict with Britain, he admitted that he still scanned each new leader hoping to see at last the Napoleonic visage.[12]

From 1890 to 1897 AE devoted himself to a modern version of the contemplative life, but it was one of his fundamental beliefs that this life alone was incomplete. In 1896 he wrote to a friend about visionaries who saw "wonderful things" but to no purpose since they refused to "pass from vision into action"[13] and seventeen years later,

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[10] *Candle of Vision,* pp. 98-101; *Letters from AE,* pp. 17 f.

[11] E. R. Dodds, ed., *Journal and Letters of Stephen MacKenna,* London: Constable, 1936, p. 141.

[12] *Candle of Vision,* pp. 98-101; *Letters from AE,* pp. 17 f.

[13] Elizabeth A. Sharp, *William Sharp (Fiona Macleod): A Memoir,* London: Heinemann, 1910, p. 278.

when he was the editor of a co-operative journal, he warned his readers:

> A man cannot by any private devotion to his Maker escape the consequences of his neglect of his duty to his fellow-man. Such folk are spiritual blacklegs, with no policy of loyalty to their kind. They profess to love God. In reality, as St. John suggests, they are passionately in love with themselves.[14]

While he was a member of the Household, AE tried to live up to this conviction by his fervent efforts to win converts to Theosophy. By the autumn of 1897, feeling that the time had come to break away from his long established routine, he accepted a post in an organisation founded not long before to better the lot of the poverty-stricken and backward Irish farmers. A year later, despite his original intention of remaining celibate, he married. His new employer, Sir Horace Plunkett, summed up his aims in the slogan "Better farming, better business, better living." AE wholeheartedly accepted his threefold programme of organising the peasants into co-operatives for purchasing and marketing, promoting scientific agriculture, and uplifting the ugly, alcohol-sodden life of rural Ireland. Throwing off his shyness, he worked for eight years as a practical organiser in the countryside and as an administrator in Plunkett's Dublin office. In 1905, putting his pen to work for the same cause, he entered on the career which was to occupy the remainder of his working life. As editor of the **Irish Homestead** (1905-1923) and of the **Irish Statesman** (1923-1930), he constructed a theory of a co-operative social order and polity, and became an internationally famous journalist.

AE would be a remarkable man if only for the number and variety of his activities. His work for Plunkett did not prevent him from playing a full part in the Irish Renaissance. While continuing to write verse and, from 1904, painting regularly, he also fostered generations of grateful Irish poets, helped to organise the Irish National Theatre, and taught Theosophy to friends and disciples at the weekly meeting of the Hermetic Society which he himself founded. All of his activities were inspired by spiritual motives rooted in his beliefs.

For AE, selling butter and writing plays were equally vital to the work of nation-building. He believed that Ireland's creative artists would fashion her soul, while the co-operative movement would create the body through which that soul would find expression. When he forsook the contemplative life to go out among the farmers, he felt that he was bringing the Irish people one step nearer to human brotherhood, the promotion of which was the central aim of the Theosophical Society. More specifically, he felt that by rousing the peasants from their abject submission to the all-powerful moneylender, he was helping to refashion them in the heroic mould of their ancestors of the Red Branch and the Fianna, and beginning to make of them a race who could ultimately act as the bearers of the revelation that Ireland had been so long destined to transmit to the world. Though he said nothing of Theosophy to these most fervent Protestants and Catholics, he spurred them on to greater co-operative efforts by relating the legends of the Gaelic heroes.

When AE began to edit the **Irish Homestead** in 1905, he worked on a prosaic level assembling technical information for farmers, analysing the balance sheets of co-operative societies, and using his considerable powers of invective to berate lazy, dishonest, and disloyal co-operators. His editorials, however, allowed him to put his intellect and inspiration to work to construct and propogate a detailed conception of a nobler social order. Plunkett had admirers and disciples in many countries — Theodore Roosevelt **was** one — and as the years passed AE came to feel that the co-operative ideal

[14] *Irish Homestead,* 13 Sept., 1913, p. 762; I John iv:20.

was gaining ground all over the world. The Theosophical doctrines which inspired his work and his hopes are sometimes reflected in his **Homestead** articles on such themes. Alluding covertly to the Planetary Spirit, he wrote in the issue of 7 January, 1911:

> As we read volume after volume showing these stupendous developments in three continents . . . this simultaneous motion of farmers towards co-operative action seems almost as if it were guided by the secret Ruler of the World. All of it practically was done in half a century . . . The yellow man and the brown man and the black man have also heard the summons to co-operate in their souls, and the coloured races can show as good results as the uncoloured . . . Is the world spirit laying down the foundations of a co-operative commonwealth, the federation of the world, to issue in a new era for humanity?

While AE found the inspiration for his work in the archaic world-view of Theosophy, he rapidly came to appreciate the importance of applying science to agriculture, and during his twenty-five years as an editor he constantly sought to convince his readers of this. After the Civil War of 1922-1923, he advocated the study of the natural sciences as an admirable antidote to the thoughtless passions of the young which drove them to unreasoning violence. Beatrice Webb, however, meeting him in 1918, noticed that he approved only of a limited acquaintances with science.[15] In fact he accepted scientific findings only in so far as he could fit them into his Theosophical world-picture: like Madame Blavatsky, he rejected the theory of human evolution from lower species. As late as 1924 he insisted that the teachings of **The Secret Doctrine** would be confirmed by science and archaeology[16] and in **The Interpreters** (1922), a study of the spiritual origins of political theories, he described a future age when scientists, having exhausted the materialistic analysis of nature, are about to recapture the power of the ancient sages to enter into direct psychic contact with the rays of the Logos penetrating and governing the universe.

Just as AE had to come to terms with science, so he had to find some compromise between his sympathy with fellow visionaries among the peasantry and his perception that their superstitions stood in the way of material progress. At the beginning of 1898 he met a stately old farmer named Caden More, who recalled how in his youth he had passed a night with the fairies in their palace beneath Mount Nephin[17] — to AE, one of the dwellings of the Self-luminous Beings. A few weeks later he alluded to Caden More in a Theosophical journal and took occasion to rejoice in the unfading presence of these gods:

> They may not come forth, but they draw to them every dreamy heart; at the waving of their magic sceptres the peasant becomes oblivious of his sordid lot and is haunted by immemorial hopes and desires.

In Ireland, he exulted, the Holy Spirit "will cry for ever its wild and wondrous story of beauty and immortal joy . . . "[18] On 19 December, 1899, AE spoke of Caden More in his address to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland:

> There is also a strange undercurrent of mysticism which is beautiful enough when it manifests itself in fairy and folk tales, but which lays many evils on the shoulders of invisible **powers**, which we usually attribute to microbes. For instance, a very respectable man told me that his pigs had all died. He found out that the sty "was in the way," by which he meant that it was in the path of the fairies.[19]

AE accepted the reality of both the microbes and the fairies or gods: almost certainly he believed that Caden More confused happenings on the physical plane with events in the Heaven-world.

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[15] Margaret I. Cole, ed., *Beatrice Webb's Diaries* 1912-1924, London: Longmans, Green, 1952, p. 132.

[16] Letter to Pryse, 2 March.

[17] *Letters from AE*, pp. 25 f.

[18] *Internationalists*, March 1898, pp. 103 f.

[19] *Journal* (of the Society), Aug., 1900, p. 519.

While AE did not find it difficult to adjust to the scientific bias of the twentieth century, he was never wholly at ease among a people passionately committed to Christianity, a religion which usually claimed to be the sole repository of ultimate truth. When he first embraced the belief that Ireland and its people had a sacred destiny yet to be fulfilled, he raged in public against the priests who kept their flocks as ignorant as themselves of the potentially godlike nature of man. In his pamphlet **Priest or Hero** (1897), he denounced them for crushing the manhood out of the Irish character with their threats of hell-fire, "a lie which the all-compassionate Father-Spirit never breathed into the ears of his children. . ." Yet a few months later, when he began to travel among the farmers, he acknowledged in many reports to the **Irish Homestead** the selfless devotion of country priest and minister to the material as well as the spiritual welfare of his flock. In reality his quarrel was not with Christianity but with some too narrowly orthodox and some unethical Christians.

In later life AE would complain to his close friends that while the religion of his countrymen had a flawless ethic, it had no psychology or cosmogony.[20] His interpretations of biblical passages alone are sufficient to make clear the petulance of this assertion: he regarded, for example, the third heaven of St. Paul (II Corinthians xii. 2) as the Brahma-loka or God-world of the Logos, invisible even to the sect and he suggested thtat Ezekiel (xxviii. 13-14) wrote of visionaries who were morally corrupted because of their attachment to the psychic body of the Mid-world.[21] When he spoke of "dark churches where the blind mislead the blind,"[22] he was condemning the clergy for their ignorance of the deeper meaning of their own faith.

On another level AE deplored the attention that the Irish churchmen paid to sectarian orthodoxy at the expense of ethics. He found that the dishonesty and corruption rife in the countryside were perpetuating poverty and debasing character; he even came across a gombeen man (moneylender) — a member of a class that usually made a great show of piety — who had sold candles of adulterated wax to his church.[23] Musing over the unchristian economic life of Christendom he wrote to Bernard Shaw:

> The reason Christianity had no hold in the state was that it itself was a reaction against a state religion, what Moses laid down as laws of the state were also laws of the Judaean God. Jesus broke up the ethical law by the ethical spirit and made men individualists. The next Avatar, let us hope, will be a social reformer, a state messiah laying down the laws of God as the laws of the state. . .[24]

Much of the evil in Christendom AE attributed to the habit, adopted by Tolstoy among many others, of interpreting the sayings of Christ in isolation from each other. "Almost every sentence in the Gospels," he warned, "contains the materials for a heresy against the whole spirit of the Gospels if it is taken by itself apart from the whole message."[25] Discussing an Irish reformer's project for a communal settlement in which defaulters would be forgiven until seventy times seven, he pointed to the command that the Apostles shake the dust of recalcitrant cities off their feet, to the scourging of the moneychangers, and to the saying "I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew x. 34); he then insisted:

> . . . it is quite possible, in accordance with the spirit of the Gospels, and absolutely without anger or malice, to get rid of an incorrigible idler or drunkard and to put such a person under discipline which will force him to come to some kind of self-restraint. . .[26]

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[20] A.E., *The Living Torch,* London: Macmillan, 1937, p. 45.

[21] *Candle of Vision,* pp. 84 f., 163.

[22] "Transformations," in *Collected Poems,* 1913.

[23] *Irish Homestead,* 15 June 1907, pp. 467 f.

[24] During the summer of 1916, quoted by kind permission of Mr. Diarmuid Russell.

[25] *Irish Homestead,* 2 Apr., 1910, p. 271.

[26] *Ibid.,* p. 271.

AE's ambivalent attitude towards Christianity and the churches persisted into his old age. In the autumn of 1932 he was horrified by the barren, abject humility exacted from thousands of Irishmen who knelt in a public park at the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, for though he was a thoroughgoing puritan in matters of morality, he insisted that men were not slaves of Deity but "Children of the King."[27] Yet two years earlier, during a lecture tour in the United States, he had been delighted to find that the priests recognized that he was fundamentally on their side,[28] and in 1935, on his last visit to the New World, he spoke of the Christian faith as the sole and indispensable pathway to spiritual truth for the American and European who was not an intellectual.[29] Despite AE's unorthodox beliefs, his life was lived in perfect accord with the Pauline determination to overcome the egocentricity of "the natural man" (I corinthians ii.14) A few weeks after the outbreak of the First World War an American writer called on him in Dublin and was profoundly impressed by his vision of a civilization which was not based on the cultivation of personality that had seduced the Western world since the Renaissance and finally betrayed it into the disaster of mass destruction. Instead, he preached a social order of which the members would seek to transcend (not abdicate) the personal self.[30]

Theosophy provided AE with an alternative to the modern outlook on life, which he rejected. It enabled him to overcome the fragmentation which had shattered the unified world-view of earlier centuries, so that he could conceive of economics, politics, the arts, the sciences, and domestic life as parts of a whole, the aim of which was to uplift and transform the fallen soul of man, which had long ago drunk of the river of forgetfulness. This solution, which he was able to accept because of his personal experiences, cannot serve the majority of mankind, and the question of the nature of his mysticism remains open. It is possible to regard him as a romantic with an idealized and imaginative conception of the nature of man, a conception sustained by his faculty of hallucinatory vision. Another possibility has become apparent with the publication C. G. Jung's autobiography.

When Jung, in old age, collaborated with an editor to produce **Memories, Dreams, Reflections,** he insisted that it be excluded from his **Collected Works** since he did not regard it as scientific. In the light of this volume, however, it may be claimed that for the first time some of the classical mystical experiences have been undergone in their full intensity by a man whose scientific commitment was such that he was able to stand back in his detachment and question their objective reality. Like AE, he sensed in early youth the presence of an unknown, aged self within him, and encountered mental images which he was certain were not of his own creation. In later years he saw several visions, including, in 1913, one of northern Europe covered with blood, and was impelled by an inner urge to write fantasies, to paint, and to carve stone. Eventually in old age he experienced non-attachment and a feeling of being himself present in the natural objects that surrounded him. He had, too, psychic experiences involving telepathy, a vision of a scene from the past, and the projection of mental energy to split furniture, break metal and ring bells. Once, in Ravenna, he and a friend examined with deep interest ancient mosaics on the wall of a church; he afterwards found that the mosaics did not exist and concluded that they were an image projected from his unconscious and visible to his companion. Though he regarded his personal convictions as irrelevant to his work as a scientist, he came to believe in the possibility of an afterlife, of a metaphysical reality underlying the

[27] *Candle of Vision,* p. 24.
[28] Letter to Irene Haugh, 23 Dec., 1930.
[29] *Oriel Review,* April 1943, p. 97.
[30] Lloyd Morris, *A Threshold in the Sun,* New York: Harper, 1943, pp. 151-157.

psyche, and of a region of the unconscious functioning outside the limits of time and space. His psychology includes the theory that what is normally thought of as oneself, one's limited consciousness with the "ego" as its center, may through the process of individuation be transcended and superseded by the totality of the conscious and unconscious welded into a single entity of which the "self" is both the centre and the whole; this is an exact parallel to the fundamental assumption of mysticism, the existence of a higher self to be realised by the sacrifice of the natural man. Should Jung's beliefs be valid, it would seem probable that AE's visions — occasionally seen by others — were symbolic projections from his own psyche, that his mystical exploration was a descent into the unconscious, and that his religious search was the quest for individuation. Such an explanation leaves fundamental philosophical questions untouched: the very term "the unconscious," said Jung, is a confession of our ignorance.