

Universality of the Image

by

Lorna Marsden

Lorna Marsden is a Quaker whose writings are not only well known by Friends but are widely read by those with theological interests in other denominations and other faiths.

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THE IMAGERY OF THE INTERIOR LIFE

The standpoint that I take in this address is that of finding quite inauthentic any idea that it is possible to separate the experience of the interior life from the experience of the universal. If the suggestion has anywhere arisen among Universalists that the aspiration towards universalism *in itself* makes their own interior life more accessible to them, I hope to show this, from my point of view, to be mistaken. Nor can a superficial eclecticism evoke insight at the level of the universal. These questions are more complex than may at first appear.

In his editorial in the January/83 issue of *The Universalist*, Arthur Peacock gives an important warning. He says, "it is not our mind alone that is to attain the summit, but our whole being." (I assume he means the words "the summit" to apply to spiritual awareness). He also says, "There is a constant danger of our . . . assuming that to *understand* a spiritual truth is the same as to possess it."

With those two statements I agree. *But*, in between them, Arthur Peacock says, "the mind may race ahead of the will and the feelings, and may have to turn back to help them." Again, that sentence, "the mind etc." does not for me carry conviction. If we *possess* a truth, we are surely suffused by it, we *live* it and the elucidation of it by our mental faculties is to me something supportive, perhaps, but quite ancillary.

This has been understood by Buddhism. In the philosophy of Madhyamika Buddhism in particular it is stated categorically that the Real is not accessible to reason. The Real is identical with *prajna*, which we can translate as intuition. (Incidentally, the realisation of this links with Heidegger's contention that we have *come* to the end of the usefulness of traditional Western meta-physics.)

So that it is not, to me, a question of the mind "racing ahead of the will and the feelings", but the contrary. The mind works on the prior divinations of the human spirit. Out of these prior divinations the mind produces the working forms of its abstractions. It builds a skeletal framework that will hold together the edifice of an interpretation of the world that has first shaken the imagination.

Stand at the east end of the nave of York Minster and look towards the west doorway. The heart-lifting beauty of what you see is constructed of great pillars and soaring arches precisely measured to sustain weight and height. But it is also the visible achievement of a vision beyond

measure, a vision which informed the work of its embodiment at every stage as the breath informs the living body. The glory is primal, here made visible by the following action of the calculating painstaking mind. Structures like York Minster celebrate and embody the dynamic power of the human imagination. It is this power which directs the hand of the mason so that he builds to the glory of God.

In Genesis 1 God said first "Let there be light." Afterwards he saw that the light was good and separated it from the darkness. This is not superstition, to be dismissed as belonging to the mental childhood of the human world. It is an image of timeless truth.

In his article Arthur Peacock then goes on to say, in my opinion truly, that "the object of religion is the transformation of consciousness."

What bearing have these distinctions on our subject - The Interior Life and the Universal? The deepest bearing - for the interior life in my understanding of it is not concerned with the fascinations of cerebral activity but with that region of our existence which has been named the life of the spirit - which to William Blake (a prophet for *our* time) was the Poetic Genius, or Jesus the Imagination, or Fourfold Vision.

Then let us consider what is really meant by the interior life. The achievements of psychology, of anthropology, sometimes of archaeology, have opened doors for us on to an expanded understanding of those processes within the soul of humanity which have evoked within all civilisations the symbols and rituals of worship, of legend, of poetry, of all art. All these things were activated by, and filled with, a felt meaning for thousands of years before our contemporary analysis of them.

We now know that the wells from which these activities spring - the activities of art and religion - lie deep within the human psyche. The individual human being draws on those mysterious intimations which may be evoked within his personal responses to the world. But he also draws on an imagery which has belonged through many cultures to the history of the whole human race. In their changing outward forms these two reservoirs of wisdom, which have been named the personal and the collective unconscious, repeat and repeat the essential stages of the journey of the human spirit from the intuitive visions of childhood, through the Waste Land of dereliction (which Blake called 'experience') towards the surrendered self.

This is the perennial direction of the inward journey, and it is of its nature universal - found in its varied forms and figures throughout the history of mankind.

If the founding of a Universalist Group, deliberately so named, is an attempt to repudiate the symbolic forms which orientate this human journey it will lack reality - it will become as sterile as that modern form of so-called humanism which imagines a complete foundation for human living can be established by ethics and reason. But if the forming of a Universalist Group is an effort to make articulate the profound unity of mankind's spiritual search, in the light of the past as well as of the present - and covering the whole spectrum of human insights - then that is a quite different matter. (Rightly or wrongly, I have imagined that both these attitudes exist in the Universalist Group.)

The symbol, the image, expresses a correspondence that is real. The myth presents truth in terms inaccessible to the logic of the discursive mind, but accessible always to the imagination. (Allegory, incidentally, *is* not the same.) These symbols, these images, well up from the depths of the interior life. Ultimately they are authenticated by the experience, not simply of this culture or of that, but of all cultures.

To reject the basic symbols of Christianity (or any other religion) because of the failures of religious institutions is an act of blindness. It is also to experience a kind of deprivation which I believe to be dangerous to the future of mankind, perhaps as dangerous as the threat of nuclear disaster; indeed, if one looks deeply enough, *related* to the threat of nuclear disaster.

As illustration in the field of imagery, let us take the central Christian image - the Cross.

Today, the lives of most Western people have been extended horizontally beyond anything known to our forebears. Yet at the same time Western life as a whole has lost the heights and depths of what might be called its vertical dimension. It is in the interaction of these two planes that human life acquires meaning and purpose in terms that reach beyond the sensational or the exercise of the analytical reason. The intimations aroused by the interaction of the horizontal and the vertical planes of human living are found in what the early Quakers called 'the heart'. They are found also in the origins of cult and liturgy, in art and poetry, in legend, and in visionary ecstasy. The point of intersection of the two planes of human living - the horizontal and the vertical - is expressed in the image of the Cross, which in its horizontal plane receives the impact of the world and in its vertical plane is rooted in suffering and aspires to heavenly joy.

The impasse into which our technological society has moved arises from the prevailing conviction that the horizontal plane is all and the vertical plane illusory. In recent years, at last, an awareness of the inner realities of our situation is *beginning* to be articulated among scattered groups of people everywhere. But - for the most part, and with a frightening blindness - our Western society still thinks human need can be adequately fulfilled by amelioration of external circumstance or remedial so-called therapies concerned with superficial psychologising.

The loss of that dimension of meaning which is contained and expressed in imagery and symbol leads to a trivialisation of life where the achievement of "happiness" is seen as quantifiable and equated with what is called 'success'. Here, in this way of life, the cathartic experience of deep joy and deep sorrow is evaded. Here, the road to the creativity of an inner illumination is closed and we enter a Waste Land without egress.

So that we find the philosopher Heidegger writing prophetically in his work *The End of Philosophy*, of the terrible forcing upon the earth of the ravages of a technology blind to the true calling of humanity. He says - "It almost seems as if the being of pain were cut off from man under the dominance of the will, similarly the being of joy. Can the extreme measure of suffering bring a transformation here?"

That is the voice of a philosophy which in its revolutionary insights continually touches the level of poetry. In this work there is felt, though unnamed as such, a new search for God. Such work meets, though it does not overtly acknowledge this, the symbolic truths that are shaped out of the unconscious.

Indeed, that short passage from Heidegger relates implicitly to the symbolism of the Cross. Written out of the dilemma of these times it contributes to that transformation of consciousness which may arouse again in the contemporary community an awareness of the Spirit. Though it makes no direct reference to these things, it evokes for me, and presumably for others, the unconscious wisdom of humanity which has emerged in legend and imagery. The roots of the endeavour that summons us do not lie in ethical decisions to remedy the ills of the world. They lie much deeper - where the ground of human aspiration is a response from that primal abyss whence the *direction* of life emerges. These roots lie in the mystery of creation, of Being, of good and evil, of the darkness and the light, of the gods we form in the image of ourselves. In short, of that interior life which goes on within us at a level that is hidden and more primal than that of analytical enquiry.

If the passage from Heidegger relates essentially to the Cross, this is not surprising, for the truth of the Cross is universal. The sacred tree is not found only in Christianity where we find also its counterpart in the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It is found in the stories of a whole series of hanged or destroyed gods who were instruments of renewal and resurrection - Attis, Mani, Odin, Osiris, and so on.

Thus we find Goethe saying - "In a true symbol the particular represents the universal, not as a dream or shadow, but as the living and instantaneous revelation of the unfathomable" - and the

symbol is defined by Nietzsche as “the language of the universal”. I have tried to present it, also, and ineluctably, as the language of the interior life of all mankind.

It is for all these reasons that I find the attempt to demythologise Christianity mistaken.

Ancient legends and stories play out on the screen of the mind the journey of the human spirit towards God and they speak with the same voice at every time and in every place. It is only the modulations that change.

Buddhism looks consciously beyond speculative metaphysics, finding the ultimate secrets of human enlightenment in the inner world of man. For Buddhism, the Real is transcendent to thought, is experienced on the plane of intuitive vision. Here, we begin to move from the unconscious and its archetypal symbols into the world of mysticism. This is a world where in the end the symbol largely though not entirely dissolves and we enter an experience whose universality is unquestioned by all who have experienced it. The mystic of East or West reaches the same place - where he finds in the resolution of his identity its affirmation - the supreme paradox of our existence.

The mystic seeks not nothingness, not annihilation, but *awareness*. At the height of this awareness he becomes both his true self and more than himself. He becomes the Whole, the All, God.

To turn from the traditional in the conviction that one is thereby turning towards the universal is to step into illusion. To seek to tear away the foundations of the specific culture into which we have been born in the name of aspiring to a world culture is to enter a cul-de-sac. On the contrary, it is deep within our own culture that we shall find the world. This is what the Platonic philosophers called the *memoria*. This ‘memory’ moves, not here or there more than elsewhere, but within the whole human race. It is within this ‘memory’ that is the memory of nature, of the movement of Life, that truth is disclosed to us. It is the fount of that kind of illumination which can see the world in a grain of sand and eternity in an hour.

In this connection I should like to mention, very tentatively, the ideas illustrated in holography. These ideas exemplify the perception of the whole as contained in each part. Scientifically, holography is new. The perceptions of which it is a kind of analogue are old. They have been found not only in the intuitions of poetic vision, but in religious or mystical insight, and in philosophy, e.g. Leibniz, or long before him, Nicholas of Cusa. It is now being suggested scientifically, apparently, that the containment of the whole in the parts may be a property of nature.

These thoughts emphasise the subtlety, the infinite complexity of the mutual involvement of mind and matter which may be seen in the end as indivisible. Here the ancient awareness of the particular and the universal as one extends into the realm of scientific knowledge. Already the idea of the supernatural is vanishing.

Listen to this from a Hindu Sutra – “In the heaven of Indra there is said to be a network of pearls so arranged that if you look at one you see all the others reflected in it. In the same way, each object in the world is not merely itself but involves every other object, in fact *is* in every other object.”

All great art is a celebration of what we have called God. The Quakers are surely right when they say that all life is sacramental - and the idea of a secular society of human beings is a contradiction in terms. A completely secular society will move inevitably towards death. It will do so because it has lost the Whole, the universal, and it will not find it again by trying to synthesise on a discursive level the moral aims of the categories of thought of a number of different religions. The religious vision is not morality. It is an impassioned response to the mystery of existence at the level of anguish and joy.

The truths of religion are not to be confined in its institutions which have been corrupted by their

association with temporal power, or by their assimilation to such 'doctrines' as the Protestant work ethic, or worldly success, or an immutable social order, or an equally immutable hierarchy. Official religions have succumbed to these things. But this does not destroy the pristine vision, or the truth of those images which endure precisely because they contain perennial human truths and are fashioned from the depths of human experience. To this the body of doctrine erected by, and confined within, the distortions and limitations (and even the truths) of theology are totally subordinate.

Blake said of his poems that their authors were "in eternity" - meaning that in his act of composing he was a vessel for something that was at once himself and not himself - the visitation of the god, if you like.

The world of spiritual vision, of the inner life, is a multiplicity. It is through multiplicity that we discover unity, the Whole. There is no other way.

In his book, *General Introduction for my Work*, Yeats said - "My Christ, a legitimate deduction from the creed of St Patrick as I think, is that Unity of Being Dante compared to a perfectly proportioned human body, Blake's Imagination, what the Upanishads have named "Self": nor is this unity distant and therefore intellectually understandable but immanent, differing from man to man and age to age . . ."

We may not any longer need a particular religious cult - but what we do need is an awareness of the living source from which a particular cult derives, a consciousness of that primal inspiration which created the gods as a dynamic and continuing movement of the human spirit. In the coming to an expanded consciousness of the contemporary community this inspiration may take forms which we can't yet perceive. But what will create these forms will be a recognition that whatever the transformation the springs of the interior life are fed from ancient wells. They are so fed because in mankind's search for truth these wells provide a single source from which arise the streams and rivers of changing cultural history.

The Indian Rig Veda tells us that truth is one, though the different sages call it by many names. The Pure Consciousness Sect in China (the Wei Shih Tsung), the Mahayana Buddhists, the Taoists, all see the individual and the universal as one. The Upanishads tell us that we should worship with the idea that God is one's Self (atman). "This - the Self - is the footprint of the All; . . . But whoever worships another divinity than his Self, supposing 'He is one, I am another' knows not."

And William Blake said - "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God."

In this context should we not also remember that Jesus said the Father is in me and I in the Father. He, Jesus, is ourselves, the divine humanity.

At this historical moment we are witnessing a dangerous disintegration - a process of destruction which can only be halted if we turn to those sources of wisdom which lie deep within the nature of our humanity and which belong to our species as a timeless inheritance - our *memoria*. Our future will be barren if we do not understand that the Whole and the part are inseparable, that the shared secrets of our existence, our search for truth, lie deep within us and grow from one root, that every moment of time is the mirror of eternity.

We do not need to travel the world over to encounter the world. At the single point where we *are* the world is there. The universal is more than a destination. It is there already at the point of our setting out. Not only in the ineffable experience of the visionary, but also within the changing historical forms of its expression, the true interior life *is* the universal. It cannot be otherwise.

GEORGE FOX AND THE LIGHT WITHIN

What is mysticism? It is an interior state in which there is an intuitive contact (eventually a oneness) with what is greater than the self - that which we have named God, the Absolute, the All; a sense of fusion with fundamental Being. This union is in itself both a mode of existence and a mode of knowledge. It is immediate and timeless. It is not attained by an exercise of the will. It is an expectancy of, and a surrender to, an invasion of the spirit.

The distinctive Quaker mysticism is in its origins a mysticism mediated by Christ. Many Friends today evade this truth. However, it is an historical fact, which has become in some ways an ambiguous fact. What we have to remember today is, I think, the significance for us that Fox's Christ was the Christ in the heart. Also, that Fox's attitude was the antithesis of the notion of no salvation except through the Church.

The philosopher Kant said that 'our inner experience is possible only on the assumption of outer experience'. I suppose what prophecy and mysticism are saying is the opposite of this - that there is within us an echo, a summons, from that Paradise from which we are in exile and which illumines for us our contact with the outer world. Also, for Kant, religion was essentially morality. For the mystic who reaches mysticism's ultimate experience, the world of the spiritual is a cosmic order of which the physical world is the reflection, and morality becomes an incidental offshoot.

For those of us who see the ongoing significance of the Quaker faith in its prophetic and mystical origins, it is disconcerting to find that in our book of Christian Faith and Practice the index of subjects contains no heading under either mysticism or prophecy. Is this, one wonders, an illustration of how far Quakerism has strayed from its roots? Is it a pointer to what sometimes seems in contemporary Quakerism to be a refusal to face up to what is asked of us by our history? Certainly, to pursue the idea of the prophetic and mystical nature of the Society of Friends it seems necessary to bypass the later manifestations of Quakerism and to return to its early days. This I propose to do in an attempt to link the Quaker spirit with the imperatives of our present times.

If we look about us, it seems evident that a rising tide of contemporary change is seeking everywhere those forgotten shores where the sense of the spiritual has offered to mankind a landfall of meaning, aspiration and illumination of which our present world is in dire need. This change, this search for the spiritual *is* happening. And those of us who are Quakers and mindful of the open horizon which we claim for the Society, are aware that in this claim we have an established attitude of mind which could move easily with such change. These changes are undermining the foundations of institutional and entrenched religion and yet they are, at the same time, profoundly spiritual.

For many of us a consciousness of this has put a brake on any concentrated interest in the ecumenism of the conventional churches, and turned our attention in the direction of the awakening that is taking place in secular man - and also in the direction of the growing interest in Eastern mystical thought.

This is not to forget that the Quaker faith is grounded in a deeply Christian vision. But it was a Christian vision of a new kind. Moreover it has a relevance to contemporary exploration of the meaning Christianity can have for today. Implicit in George Fox's declarations is a recognition that the Christ, the Incarnation, is brought to birth within us by the power of the divine Light. This Light is accessible to all, unmediated, needing neither priest nor ritual - but only the individual response. For Fox the mystical relation with God is direct. Because it is direct, because the received Light is the same for all men and women, it creates a unity, a harmonious community. That is the basis of the foundation of the Society of Friends.

It is noticeable that among the early Quakers there were women of outstanding quality who

shared equally in the work both in England and abroad. They too suffered persecution, imprisonment and even death. Fox's first follower was one of these women, Elizabeth Hooton. But the qualities displayed by Fox himself - a genius which covered both ecstatic conviction and sound commonsense - were rare in so powerful a combination. It does seem as though without him the Society of Friends might never have come into being. In fact, the form of our Society today reflects, though much less strenuously, this confluence of an inward and an outward expression of faith, in what might be called, in its beginnings, a lay order.

If, today, Friends could become such a lay order, what might they not do in the strength of their early inheritance? But this requires the courage to face change, and to discern where change lies.

Also, in the waiting silence of the gathered meeting there was among early Friends a total openness to what moved *within*. In the impact of this inner experience there was both joy and power. Out of it arose spontaneously an intuitive understanding and love of all created things. This profound experience went beyond, and superseded, the need for outward ritual, doctrine, or priest. *But* it only came when it had been preceded by a revelation in the Light - a revelation which included that of the accompanying darkness which the Light also revealed.

Thus Quakerism was not based on a sentimental illusion, but on an illumination of the polar realities of life. In this, it anticipated by roughly 200 years, some of the insights formulated by modern psychology. This aspect of Fox seems to have been insufficiently appreciated.

Moreover, the Light was for Fox the final authority both for the individual and for the church. As Rachel Hadley King points out, this attitude was unique in its time. The Light can be equated with the Spirit. In the Christian tradition the equivalent is the Holy Ghost - a part of the Trinitarian conception which is largely bypassed by Fox. For Fox, Christ himself was held in the heart - the heart being for him the centre of all spiritual experience.

Also, he saw the Day of the Lord as gloriously at hand - and it took place not in some remote apocalypse but within the soul of man.

This Day of the Lord would not be achieved without struggle, or without a kind of violence. Fox described the action of God within the soul as a 'hammer' against evil. (Satan *choosing* to fall from heaven - as in the traditional Miltonic view.) God for Fox was not beyond good and evil, but wholly good. This might be considered a conservative element in Fox, whose attitudes were otherwise radical. Yet he can say in one profound passage which in its implications looks far ahead into the evolutionary ideas of today - 'and the Light that lights every man that comes into the world, the natural lights were made by it, the sun and moon and so forth. And men that are born blind are enlightened with that Light which was before the sun was, before all things were made' This is a mystical vision and for Fox the light is supernatural.

It is also universal grace. If men respond to the Light, power and salvation are always given. (This contrasts with the cruelties of both Calvinism and Puritanism, and with the doctrine of election which was prevalent in Fox's time.) Conversion for the early Quaker is always *convincement*, personally achieved in the power of the Light.

The quality of the mysticism of the early Quakers led them out into action in the world. Their prophetic spirit not only proclaimed first the recognition and then the conquest of evil; it also *enabled* that conquest. Quakerism has been called ethical mysticism - a phrase that does not seem to me sufficient. For implicit in the mystical experience is a passing into a region of insight which is not itself ethical but *out of which* the ethical arises. This was particularly seen in Penington whose early mysticism led him towards a God who was beyond good and evil in contrast to Fox, though in his contact with Quakerism this was later somewhat submerged. Yet there is a passage in Penington which was published in 1650 which seems to reflect his earlier visionary state. In this he refers to the 'creature' which means all created things. 'In the present state of the creature, under the present law of the creature, according to the judgement of the eye of the creature, everything is unlovely: and he that sees them not to be so, falls short of the

perfection of the creaturely eye. But come deeper beyond this state, beneath the law: look with a true eye, and there you shall find all this unloveliness pass away, and an excellency appear, that the creature could never so much as imagine or dream of. And now come back with this eye into the present state of things, and behold then through the true glass, and you shall see them all new here also, and very far differing from what you did or could take them to be in your creaturely apprehension'.

This is a fruit of the mystical experience, which offers a new form of seeing, it is paralleled in George Herbert (in his poem *The Elixir*): 'A man that looks on glasse, On it may stay his eye; Or if he pleaseth through it passe, And then the heav'n espie.' This was written some years before the passage from Penington but is roughly contemporary. Not in this case by a Quaker, it contains precisely the same mystical vision, the possibility of a new form of sight. It expresses an experience of spiritual sight to which elements in our contemporary world are seeking to return - in an effort to emerge from the shadow of a reductionist blindness. Sight, true sight, reveals to the mystic an ultimate glory on the world.

The early Quakers were concerned with *now*. The Light - to them the Light from Christ, mystically experienced - itself opened away of action. Fox lived in the present - the eternal now. He said 'wait in the Light' which becomes both the means and the end, and brings all into unity. Eternal life is now - and salvation consists in the entry into that which is unchanging.

His practical emphasis was prophetic. The Day of Visitation, the Day of the Lord was already happening in the soul - was there as judgement, now. This was where his emphasis lay - not in some remote and final judgement day.

Thus Fox's basic insights might have been received and accepted quite separately from the idea of the historical Jesus. Fox and the early Friends in general did not themselves consciously make this separation. Apparently they did not see to what extent it was implicit in their approach. Fox did not bridge the gulf between the experience of the inward Christ and the alleged historicity of the Christian faith any more than the churches have done. Perhaps at that time this was impossible. But this too is a point underplayed by the Society of Friends although in my opinion of great importance at the present time, where the doctrine of the church is in crisis.

However, Fox came very near to our contemporary possibility of seeing the figure of Jesus as the Christ, as a projection of human need, as a symbol of truth. One of Fox's gifts to us is that he prepared the ground in directions which make of the Quaker faith a place of sanctuary against closed horizons, and a place of exploration from which we can enter on new ground. What was implicit in Fox, moves towards a form of explicitness today - the psychological understanding of the projections of inward experience into the outward images of the religious life. Because of the mystical basis of his faith in the modern world, the Quaker is not only in a position to meet the mysticism of other religions, but also to meet the searchings of the spirit within a so-called secular world where the historicity of the incarnation of the Son of God can no longer be literally received - but where the deep meaning of the Christian myth continues to be profoundly relevant.

Fox himself had forerunners, not only immediately in the worshipping groups known as Seekers, but also a century earlier - and in the work of the German mystic Boehme who died in the year Fox was born. There were also many who were dissatisfied with the way the Reformation had gone - those also for whom the subsequent separation of life into secular and religious spheres kept more or less separate, was unacceptable. Our own lives have been lived at a period when this process of secularisation has reached its peak. Now, we are discovering the first signs of a spiritual revival that moves towards that unity of life which to Fox was everything. Today, the world of the thoughtful and the sensitive resounds with the cry for a lost wholeness. What is this but a way of saying, as the Quaker also says, that all life should be sacramental? That God and man meet in the human spirit in the totality of its effort?

Surely all this reveals to us that our natural place as Quakers should be in the forefront of

necessary contemporary change. Do we realise this? Do we see that the longing for a return to a true *inwardness* - illustrated by the widespread recourse to Yoga and by the mounting interest in Eastern religions - is something to which we should be actively contributing? Not just within the seclusion of our own Society but in that secular world where an unlabelled spiritual revival is expanding the frontiers of awareness. Early Quakerism cultivated no cloistered virtue. It was a clarion call to the conquest of evil both within and without.

To the early Quakers the Light itself opened a way of action. Response to the Light, being always immediate, precluded temporising. The receiving of the Light was not a passive experience. It was an enabling power. Its recognition created reactions to the outer world at a deeper level than that of rationalising decision - at the level of a spiritual imperative which is a part of the whole man. This is how the early Friends withstood persecution and made their mark on the general society of the time.

Now, today, it is possible to see that principle, that experience within us which the Quakers called the Inward Light, as, in a sense endemic, though unpersonalised, throughout the unfolding of evolution - even, though without formulation, evolution's central impulse. It comes to *awareness*, apparently, only in mankind. But systems science itself has discerned altruistic behaviour in the very early forms which preceded and led to the appearance of life. What dawns there is perhaps the rudiments of that spiritual direction which, for us, as human beings and Quakers, is paramount; which evokes for its full manifestation a development of consciousness. In its purity this awareness precludes blind action. It therefore precludes tyranny and crude aggression. Fox saw the Light as supernatural. For us there is perhaps the dawning of a time when the division between the supernatural and the natural may be drawing to an end.

We are now moving into a period of history where the sense of the spiritual is reawakening quite independently of religious organisation. This is, as yet, a deep underground current whose force is increasing. It surfaces in small groups of people - sometimes acting in conditions where their activities might be considered subversive - but who are dedicated to the establishing of a new kind of society. In this new society, recognition of the primacy of spiritual values will create a new order. Though it is not so named, this is to me a manifestation of the working of the Inward Light. For Fox this Light was an experience centred on the Christ within. For the future its centring will perhaps bear other names. But it is the same Light - one and universal.

We need to understand the creative changes at work behind the disorders of contemporary society. We need to recognise and *oppose* the points at which these changes are refused. The deep disorder of our world is perhaps in itself the precondition for the emergence of a new order.

Thus the early Quaker stance in both its convictions and their implications is deeply contemporary. If elements of its language are difficult, they are entirely translatable. Fox's language was biblical because that was the general language of the time - in literature as well as in religion - and it was then widely understood.

But Fox believed that revelation would continue in new forms - that the world of the spirit was an open world. This too is part of our inheritance. It places us in the main current of the forward thought of our times, where the closed mind has become an impossibility to anyone of intellectual integrity.

In the proclamation of their message the early Quakers did not evoke any kind of outward authority. They uttered simply a prophetic call to the receiving of the Light. The end was joy - and above all, a unity with those who travelled the same road, the deep fellowship of the Society.

Today, the term the 'Inward Light' is used by many Friends with an extreme vagueness. To Fox its meaning was precise. It was equated with the Light of Christ within the spirit of man. The outcome of the receiving of the Light was a call to advance the work of God in history. Vital to the receiving of the Light was the openness of the heart. Christ, the divine in all men was that seed of God which, in his own words, George Fox felt 'to sparkle about him like innumerable

sparks of fire’.

This imagery, not specifically that of Christ of course, but of fire and light, is a universal imagery. It seems as though George Fox was instinctively aware of this. But the ground of his awareness was not in learning or scholarship. It was experiential. Its ground was the need of the human spirit, a need recognised and fed in his own experience - and after great dereliction. Caught and expressed in the idiom of his own historical time, George Fox's vision yet transcended time. In one of his epistles he said of the Light: ‘. . . this Light was before time and is in time’. Here is a call to the realisation of the world of the Spirit as transcendent to this world and yet active within it - the central paradox which activates all human aspiration, and which has been clothed in the myths of all different human cultures - our own myth being the Christian one.

But, contained in the early Quaker image of the Light, in the Quaker mystical experience, there is an acute awareness of the darkness. Listen to this passage from Fox's journal – ‘As the Light appeared, all appeared that is out of the Light; darkness, death, temptation, the unrighteous, the ungodly: all were manifest and seen in the Light. Then, after this, there did appear a pure fire in me . . . then the spiritual discerning came in to me.’

In the tradition of the West, the word 'discernment' expresses a distinguishing between true and false mysticism. It was not until Fox had seen what was revealed by the true Light - its answering darkness - that the ‘pure fire’ arose in him.

Here, three centuries ago, at the heart of the Quaker vision at the moment of its birth, lies the expression of a psychological insight which has only been mapped in our own time. Also in those days before modern psychological insights were even capable of formulation, the Light revealed to Fox ‘the natures of those things which were hurtful without were within . . .’ Here, surely, is Jung's ‘shadow’.

All Fox's statements have this stamp of a conception of inwardness whose expression is far more categorical and imperative than any found in mainstream religious attitudes, and which brought persecution on the Quakers. Here too, we have the origin of those Quaker attitudes which attract the searching agnostic of today, or the ‘humanist’ who finds something unsatisfying in the limitations of the so-called humanism.

Fox's trances, visions, and extra-sensory perceptions are one of the products of his turbulent and inspired temperament, but something different is evoked by the completeness, the absoluteness of his receiving of the Light. Here, all is balance, insight, deep psychological penetration - and, ultimately, vision. Here, too, is something that meets the searching spirit of modern man. To play down the mystical element in Quakerism, is to my mind, to betray its very roots. What is ethical is based on the primal vision, the revelation of the Light.

For Fox it was a supernatural Light. Now in our own day, we may be seeing a blurring of the border between what has been called natural and what has been called supernatural. We may end by needing different terms for these conceptions. What is certain is that the Light which Fox called the Light of Christ is something transcendent to our present condition. Striking on the receiving heart it kindles an answering Light, activating the hidden Seed, the Christ in the heart, the divine within the human - so that what is transcendent becomes also immanent, and the human spirit flowers.

This, as I understand it, is Quaker mysticism, and moreover, the heart of the Quaker faith. There is nothing here that cannot speak to our contemporary condition.

The mysticism of Fox is not that of the few great Catholic mystics of the mediaeval church. It is perhaps less profound. Certainly its tone is different, except perhaps sometimes in Eckhart. Perhaps Quaker mystical experience, a corporate experience unified in the fellowship of Friends, did not reach the spiritual heights and depths of the mysticism of St. John of the Cross, for instance. But I think it contained something new. Its mystical insight had its base in its

prophetic power. This combination speaks to us now, for it is founded on an openness of spirit whereby the Inward Light, manifested for Fox in the Christ risen in the heart, opens the way towards a contemporary interpretation of the meaning of Christ. Fox's Inward Light, is the same Light which we find in St. John's Gospel (predating the institutional church): '. . . the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' It is only now that we can perhaps see it as the same Light which is found in the Man of Light of Sufism, in the gnostic Pistis Sophia where Mary Magdalene speaks of her 'being of light', in Mani's particles of light dispersed in the creation – and in many other places in the religious history of mankind.

Fox had a splendid phrase – 'Stand in the Light'. In an age that did not acknowledge this, he knew that it was the same Light for heathen, Turk or Jew. Can we in our turn extend our awareness of where and how the Light falls? Wherever it falls the Light is one and in whatever way men and women may come to express it. To know this is to go on from Fox into the expanding human consciousness of the future.