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THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN THE WORKS  
OF HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

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by

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## Abstract

Religion in the widest sense is acknowledged to be a fundamental element in Hofmannsthal's writings, but an account of the nature of the beliefs underlying his works as a whole is still needed. Chapter I concentrates on his essays, letters and notes and examines his usage of certain religious words and concepts: faith; Christianity, the Bible and the Church; revelation; the concept of an "other reality"; myth; religion; God; and spirit. The central concept discovered is that of a spiritual dimension both underlying and transcending the phenomenal reality of everyday experience. The nature of this dimension and the ways in which it can be apprehended are explored.

Chapter II seeks to establish a definition of mysticism and to show that Hofmannsthal's emphasis on the unity of all things has its roots in personal experience of a mystical nature, expressed in his early poetic works and in the essays of the succeeding decade. His later, more socially oriented works express the desire for a realisation in the external world of the truths intuited. His eclecticism in seeking illumination of his experience in a wide variety of religious, mystical and psychological writings is examined, together with the absence of any specific framework of interpretation, and the implications of this are explored through an analysis of Der Turm.

Chapter III deals with Hofmannsthal's search for lasting values and for an understanding of the problem of evil, and explores the ideas of the highest good as a full involvement in life, with its constant process of

interrelation and renewal; and evil as the obstruction of this process, through blindness to the true nature of reality, or as a flaw in the overall harmony. The co-existence of Hofmannsthal's concern for moral issues and his mystical belief in the unity of all things is discussed.

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## Introduction

In considering the religious element in Hofmannsthal's works, I am using the term "religious" in its widest sense. A fair definition is that given by William James, who describes the religious attitude as "the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto."<sup>1</sup> This kind of religious attitude is fundamental to Hofmannsthal's works, and prominent in the memories of many who knew him. R.A. Schröder, for example, writes of "das Wirklichste ... was uns Nachbleibenden die Gestalt des abgeschiedenen Freundes, was sein unter uns verbliebenes Werk am hellsten und seelenhaftesten verklärt ... : Frömmigkeit."<sup>2</sup> He is clearly not referring only to Hofmannsthal's specifically religious works, which make up a very small proportion of his writings, but to something which characterises and illumines the whole body of his work. My aim is therefore to explore what kind of "Frömmigkeit" this could be.

For Schröder this quality was predominant in his memories of Hofmannsthal as a person as well as in his works. It is necessary, however, to make a distinction between his personal attitude or convictions and the religious content of his works: these cannot be assumed to be identical. Lernet-Holenia comments that "die dichterisch-religiöse Bekenntnis fehlt so gut wie ganz bei Hofmannsthal,"<sup>3</sup> and, while this may seem to be an overstatement in view of the strong religious core in his works,

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1. The Varieties of Religious Experience, p.53
  2. 'In memoriam Hugo von Hofmannsthal', p.593
  3. H.A. Fiechtner, (ed.), Hugo von Hofmannsthal<sup>2</sup>, p.274

it is certainly true that they cannot be treated as a confession of faith. Andrian recounts how Hofmannsthal himself said, in reply to a remark about his religious plays, that "die Elemente seiner Dichtung, auf die ich anspiele, seien nur als dichterische Requisiten und keineswegs als Beweise persönlicher Überzeugung zu werten."<sup>4</sup> Our primary concern must be with the religious content of his works and its function and consequences within them, but clearly insights into his personal attitude, as it emerges from letters and notes and to an extent from his essays, can be of considerable help in reaching an understanding of this.

It is necessary also to ask why Hofmannsthal should choose to make use of such "dichterische Requisiten" and of the religious language and symbolism that occur with increasing frequency in his later works. Dorothee Sülle, in her analysis of the use of religious language in secular literature, has pointed out that the effect of this is not, as one might expect, to empty the words of their religious content, but rather to add a "sacred" or spiritual dimension where it would otherwise be lacking: "was genetisch Säkularisierung heisst, müsste funktional als Sakralisation beschrieben werden."<sup>5</sup> It will become clear that the uncovering of such a spiritual dimension within the realm of everyday experience is certainly a part of Hofmannsthal's purpose.

He rarely uses religious vocabulary in its traditional sense, and is indeed often hesitant to use terms that are

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4. Fiechtner<sup>1</sup>, p.63  
5. Realisation, p.85



too specific. For Erika Brecht this was characteristic of his attitude: "am bedeutendsten und unaufhörlich im Hintergrunde spürbar war ihm eines: 'Das Höhere' nannte er es vorsichtig und ein wenig abschwächend."<sup>6</sup> Some reasons for this caution will become apparent later when I consider Hofmannsthal's attitude both to religious tradition and to abstract thought in general. One consequence is that reminiscences such as Erika Brecht's, or that by Schröder quoted above, tend also to be rather vague on this point, stressing the importance of the spiritual element but giving no indication of specific beliefs. Walther Brecht does attempt a description of the spiritual intuition underlying Hofmannsthal's works: "eine gewisse Ahnung der mütterlichen Einheit alles Lebens. Ein dem religiösen eng verwandten Grundgefühl, fast ein mystisches Grundwissen."<sup>7</sup> Although he has identified one important factor in the mystical awareness of the unity of all things, he still gives the impression that he is groping for an adequate definition.

Hofmannsthal was of course living in a period and a culture where religious, and in particular Christian belief was very much taken for granted, rather than being a matter for discussion.<sup>8</sup> Much of the religious element in Hofmannsthal's writings can no doubt be attributed to such cultural presuppositions, either to their influence on him or to his awareness of their presence in the audience for whom he was writing. I shall, however, show that there is in his attitude to spiritual things a deliberate

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6. Erinnerungen an Hugo von Hofmannsthal, p.16

7. Grundlinien im Werke Hugo von Hofmannsthals, p.170

8. A point stressed by Lernet-Holenia (Fiechtner, p.274)

eclecticism of approach that reaches far beyond his own culture. In his later works there is also a clear desire, arising out of his continuing concern with moral issues, to direct attention to the existence of spiritual reality and spiritual values.

This basic religious element in Hofmannsthal's works has been discussed by many critics. Perhaps in recognition of the importance to him of Austrian culture and tradition, the assumption has often been made that it is fundamentally Christian. E.R. Curtius, for instance, claims that in Hofmannsthal's search for "gültige Bindungen", "die Weisheit Asiens [konnte] eine Station und ein Sinnbild sein - aber nicht Heimat und Lösung. Sie konnten nur in der Offenbarung gefunden werden, die an Abend- und Morgenland ergangen war: im Christentum. Dahin weisen Hofmannsthal die Überlieferung von Volk und Boden; dahin seine neuplatonische Geistesform; dahin ein geheimer Ruf, dem er folgen musste."<sup>9</sup> Others who share this view are Grete Schaeder, Walther Brecht, Hederer and Hestermann.<sup>10</sup> We shall see that this assumption does not do justice to the complexity of Hofmannsthal's ideas, and most later critics take a wider view.<sup>11</sup> There can,

9. 'George, Hofmannsthal und Calderon', p.199

10.e.g. G. Schaeder, Hugo von Hofmannsthal und Goethe, p.170

W. Brecht, 'Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Ad me ipsum und seine Bedeutung', p.344

E. Hederer, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, p.56

O. Hestermann, Das mystische Element im Werke Hugo von Hofmannsthal's, pp. 4, 147, 157

All see Hofmannsthal's later works as increasingly Christian in outlook. Hederer and Hestermann consider that the religious plays and other later works are evidence of Christian conviction - Hederer even while acknowledging that Hofmannsthal himself states that Christianity appears in his works as "eine(r) Ordnung unter anderen."

11.e.g. G. Erken, Hofmannsthal's dramatischer Stil, p.166

however, still be a danger that as the relationship of elements in his works to other religious or philosophic ideas is explored, the work is apparently reduced to the level of an expression, not of Christianity, but of the particular idea under consideration. An example of such a restricted interpretation is Ernst's discussion of Karma in Der Turm.<sup>12</sup> I shall therefore attempt to uncover the concept of spiritual reality which underlies Hofmannsthal's works as a body, rather than concentrate on the particular systems and symbols of which he makes use in individual works or groups of works.

We cannot expect "das Religiöse" to be expressed plainly and directly when it is, as Hofmannsthal put it, "geformt zum verhüllenden stummen Dichtwerk."<sup>13</sup> I shall therefore give initial consideration to his essays, together with notes and letters, in order to clarify the religious outlook which underlies his writings at different times during his life. I shall examine his usage of

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- E. Ernst, Studien zum religiösen Problem, pp.24f, 89f, 98, 125ff  
 " " 'Hugo von Hofmannsthal und der "Begriff Asien"', p.267  
 P.C. Kern, Zur Gedankenwelt des späten Hofmannsthals, p.91  
 F. Mistry, 'Towards Buddhahood', p.337  
 " " 'Die beiden Götter', p.9  
 H. Zelinsky, 'Hugo von Hofmannsthal und Asien', p.534

Erken and Ernst draw attention to the inadequacy of assuming a Christian context in Hofmannsthal's writings, even in Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater. While Kern relates his ideas to "Lebensphilosophie" and contemporary irrationalism, Ernst, Mistry and Zelinsky concentrate on parallels to Eastern thought, both Ernst and Mistry stressing the importance to Hofmannsthal of analogies and interrelationships between different religious systems.

12. In Studien zum religiösen Problem and 'Das Karma-Thema und der "Turm"-Stoff'. See pp.81f below.  
 13. Letter to Pannwitz, in Mesa, No.5, p.35

certain words and concepts from the religious sphere and his attitude to certain traditional aspects of religion, exploring references to faith; Christianity, the Bible and the Church; revelation; the concept of an "other reality"; myth; religion; the Divine; and spirit. In spite of the difficulty, indeed impossibility of constructing any fixed framework of belief from such references, I believe that it is possible to build up a useful overall picture, and that the very vagueness and fluidity of definition that will be discovered is an essential element in this.

The picture which emerges then becomes the basis for a wider consideration of Hofmannsthal's works, among which, in addition to the specifically religious Jedermann and Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater, Der Turm will be seen to be particularly important, as the fullest unfolding of his ideas in dramatic form and the clearest demonstration of their implicit problems. Two features of his outlook will come to stand out clearly, though their interrelationship is complex: the essentially mystical nature of his concept of spiritual reality, and its essential role in coming to terms with the moral issues that so deeply concerned him.

## I. Religious Language and Reality

### 1. Faith: its sources and object

The concept of "Glaube" is one that has an increasing importance for Hofmannsthal. He uses the word very little in his early writings, and the reference is then to a traditional Christian belief which the society of his day has for the most part left behind, as in the statement, "Uns pflegt Glaube und Bildung, die den Glauben ersetzt, gleichmässig zu fehlen."<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest significant instances of the word occurs unexpectedly in the play Silvia im Stern (1907) where, although without specifically religious reference, it is used in a way which prefigures ideas later developed by Hofmannsthal. The Adjunkt, unable to trust or be certain of anything, says "Ein Mann hätte ich sein müssen! ein ganzer Mann ... Glauben das ist es! ... Glauben das springt aus der tiefsten Seele hervor, wie der Mord, wie die tiefste Lust."<sup>2</sup> The implication is that what counts is the depth of conviction with which a belief is held, rather than its truth.

In Jedermann, too, Hofmannsthal has chosen to give a significant role to "Glaube", rather than following the more traditionally Catholic model of Everyman,<sup>3</sup> but the concept does not seem to become important to him till the war years. Then we read, for instance, that "Wer glaubt, dem wird die

1. PI, p.43 (1891)

2. p.100, N39 (1907)

3. The figure of "Glaube" and her role in Jedermann's salvation has been taken over from Hans Sachs' Hecastus. For a detailed examination of the relationship of Jedermann to Hofmannsthal's sources and the implications of this, see J.J. Parker, The development of the Everyman drama from Elkerlyc to Hofmannsthal's Jedermann, Ch. 10

Welt anders,"<sup>4</sup> and "Ohne Glauben an die Ewigkeit ist kein wahrhaftes Leben möglich."<sup>5</sup> There are many references in the Buch der Freunde, where we again find the idea that "Durch Glauben wird Leben erst zum Leben, auch in seinen zartesten Gliedern."<sup>6</sup> This is the kind of faith that issues in spontaneous action and has the power to transform life. The Adjunkt's words also suggest a link between belief and wholeness, and this idea is also developed later. We find that faith both demands and creates wholeness: "Der Glaube hat nur einen Gegenstand, ebenso der Unglaube. Beide gehen auf das Ganze,"<sup>7</sup> and "Erleuchtung: das ohne geglaubte Ganzheit zu leben unmöglich ist - dass im halben Glauben kein Leben ist."<sup>8</sup> The central importance of faith is again clear, but so far there is little indication of what its inspiration might be.

At about the same time as Silvia im Stern, the word "glauben" makes another significant appearance in the essay 'Der Dichter und diese Zeit' (1906). Hofmannsthal seeks to define it "in seiner vollen religiösen Bedeutung", but nevertheless expresses the same underlying attitude as did the Adjunkt's words (quoted above) in a secular context. He describes it as "ein Fürwahrhalten über allen Schein der Wirklichkeit, ein Eingreifen und Ergriffensein in tiefster Seele, ein Ausruhen im Wirbel des Daseins."<sup>9</sup> It is something irrational which, though issuing in outward action, depends solely on inner experience and conviction, not

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4. A, p.173 (1915)  
5. A, p.228 (1916?)  
6. A, p.49 (1922)

7. A, p.46 (1922)  
8. PIV, p.411 (1927)  
9. PII, p.294f (1906)

external "reality", and this remains characteristic of the concept throughout Hofmannsthal's writings. In 1916 he writes in "Österreich im Spiegel seiner Dichtung", "In den Naturtiefen, in denen das Volk wohnt, gleichwie in jenen dunklen Tiefen des Individuums, wo zwischen Geistigem und Leiblichem eine fließende Grenze aufgerichtet ist, dort ist nicht Reflexion und Erkenntnis, dort sind Wollen und Glauben zu Hause."<sup>10</sup> In addition to the dissociation of belief from reflective thought, this statement also indicates a close connection between "Glauben" and "Wollen", which is confirmed elsewhere in Hofmannsthal's later writings. We are told in the Buch der Freunde that "Glaubenskraft abnimmt bei geminderter Willensstärke,"<sup>11</sup> and a character in Das Theater des Neuen even claims that "Die Begriffe Glauben und Wollen sind vertauschbar."<sup>12</sup> Belief is an affirmation of what we will to be true, rather than of what we find to be true, and itself affects our perception of reality. Such statements as "Alles Geglaubte besteht, und nur dieses,"<sup>13</sup> suggest that the power of faith may go even beyond the subjective sphere to determine objective reality. There is certainly one realm where it is indispensable, and Hofmannsthal affirms that "alles Geistige lebt nur kraft des Glaubens."<sup>14</sup> The fact of belief is of great importance, and it is associated with the ideas of wholeness, eternity and non-rational intuition. Beyond this, its basis and the nature of its object appear to be unimportant, or at least unspecified.

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10. PIII, p.349 (1916)  
11. A, p.16 (1922)  
12. LIV, p.411 (1926)

13. A, p.37 (1922)  
14. PIV, p.307 (1925)

There is certainly nothing in Hofmannsthal's references to the Christian heritage of his own culture to suggest that this faith should be equated with Christian belief. In three essays written in 1891, "Maurice Barres", "Das Tagebuch eines Willenskranken" and "Zur Physiologie der modernen Liebe", Christianity is presented as something which modern society needs to leave behind, in spite of a nostalgic fascination. It is related to asceticism and "Klostersehnsucht",<sup>15</sup> to "Sehnsucht nach der Heimat"<sup>16</sup> and "verlorene(n) Naivität";<sup>17</sup> things which imply an unwillingness to face up to change and the realities of modern life. After this date Christianity, like the general concept of "Glaube", appears in an increasingly positive light. It is not, however, the uniquely Christian elements that Hofmannsthal affirms; rather he continually relates Christian belief to other religions and mythologies and to ancient Greek culture. He refers, for example, to "eine Welt, die gleichzeitig antik, ja mythisch und doch durch und durch christlich, ja englisch anmutete."<sup>18</sup> This quotation from an essay of 1894 indicates that the view of Christianity as one among many expressions of spiritual truth is present from a very early stage in the development of Hofmannsthal's thought, even though it is elaborated more in later writings. He stresses that even a work such as Jedermann is simply making use of this traditional story as one possible vehicle of expression, writing of it, "Habe mich der christlichen Mythe wie einer anderen bedient."<sup>19</sup>

15. PI, p.10 (1891)  
 16. PI, p.22 "  
 17. PI, p.22 "

18. PI, p.194 (1894)  
 19. HB 2, p.81 (1905)



Christianity has, however, a special value as the basis of the European culture which is founded equally on "die Antike". In a letter to Strauss, Hofmannsthal states that "das Christentum zusammen mit der Antike ist's, worauf wir alle ruhen."<sup>20</sup> These are in fact not two distinct elements but inextricably bound up together, for "der Geist der Antike" is "die eine Grundfeste der Kirche und aus dem zur Weltreligion gewordenen Christentume nicht auszuschneiden."<sup>21</sup>

Hofmannsthal saw the younger generation of 1924 as caught up in:

zwei Strömungen des Denkens und Fühlens ...: einer mehr christlichen oder mystischen, das Zusammenströmen aller Dinge in Gott erkennenden, sozusagen über dem Rationalen schwebenden, und einer mehr antik, ja orientalisches heidnischen, welche von der grandiosen Erfassung des sinnlichen Lebens her zum Begriff des Schicksalhaften gelangt, und die gleichsam unterhalb des Rationalen in dunklem Bett dahinströmt. Nicht aber so, als ob beide Richtungen einander ausgeschlossen hätten: vielmehr gingen sie ineinander über.<sup>22</sup>

There is no firm division between the Christian and oriental currents of thought, and the "Christian" current is characterised as supra-rational and recognising the unity of all things in God. Hofmannsthal's concern is always with aspects which Christianity shares with other religions, rather than with the specific teachings of the Christian Church. It is also worthy of note that while his references to faith, religion<sup>23</sup> and God<sup>24</sup> increase significantly during the war years, specific references to Christianity actually disappear almost completely during this period. The spiritual sources of hope to which Hofmannsthal is seeking

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20. Strauss BW, p.468 (1922)    23. See section 2(b) below  
21. PIV, p.316 (1926)        24. See section 3 below  
22. A, p.311

to draw attention are never directly related to the Christian faith.

His references to the Bible itself reveal a very similar attitude, for it is always mentioned in conjunction with other books which are given the same importance. Apart from one or two early negative references, for example to the gospel stories which, like all "Mythologie und Legende und erstarrte Symbolik", must be brought to life by the artist,<sup>25</sup> the symbolism of such books is seen as conveying deep meaning. Goethe's West-Ostlicher Divan, for instance, is compared to the Bible because it is "eines von den Büchern, die unergründlich sind, weil sie wahre Wesen sind, und worin jegliches auf jegliches deutet, so dass des inneren Lebens kein Ende ist:"<sup>26</sup> their significance comes from the richness of their symbolism and their power continually to unlock new levels and aspects of truth. Hofmannsthal refers to the timeless quality of such books: "etwas Urewiges ..., eine Urerinnerung - Griechenland und Rom und das arabische Märchenbuch und die Bibel."<sup>27</sup> Like Homer, the Bible is "ausserhalb der zeitlichen Bestimmtheit und ... der nationalen Beschränkung" and has a special relationship to European culture.<sup>28</sup> In accordance with his view that the classical and the Christian heritage are closely intertwined within that culture, Hofmannsthal freely fuses together allusions to the Bible and to Greek mythology, for example: "Wie der gehetzte Hirsch ins Wasser, sehnte ich mich hinein in

25. PI, p.130 (1893)  
26. PIII, p.159 (1911)

27. PIV, p.251 (1925)  
28. PIII, p.87f (1912)



"eine nordisch-protestantische Steifigkeit und Ungeselligkeit."<sup>35</sup> (Hofmannsthal was, after all, "katholisch geboren."<sup>36</sup>) The Church influences culture, literature and national character, and like the State it is one of the "realen Mächte des Lebens."<sup>37</sup> But the idea of "die Kirche als das Reich Gottes auf Erden" is "ideology",<sup>38</sup> and Hofmannsthal even warns Ria Schmuylow-Classen, "Hüten Sie sich vor allem, was eine Form hat, ob es der Katholizismus ist oder die sozialistischen Ideen,"<sup>39</sup> a warning consistent with the distrust of rigidly formulated dogma discussed below.<sup>40</sup> There is no suggestion of looking to the Church as a source of divine revelation.

Where then does revelation come from? It does come, for it is the material out of which the traditional forms of religion have been created: "alle Frömmigkeitsformen stammen aus Offenbarung, alle Konventionen aus dem geistigen Erlebnis von Individuen."<sup>41</sup> Once the insight has become a fixed concept, however, the result is the worship of a lifeless image, "Anbetung eines eidolon, Sinnbildes, das einmal für einen Menschen lebendig war, ... durchflammende Offenbarung des göttlichen Geheimnisses der Welt gewesen ist."<sup>42</sup> The meaning of such a revelation cannot be preserved in words or external forms, but can only be grasped in the immediacy of the individual's living experience: "das allein Wissenswerte, das Sinn des Daseins, ist aus jeder einzelnen tiefsinnig erfassten Erscheinung des

35. A, p.63 (1922)

36. Fiechtner<sup>I</sup>, p.297

37. PI, p.338 (1901)

38. PI, p.338 (1901)

39. BI, p.243 (1898)

40. See section 2(c) below

41. PIII, p.369 (1916)

42. A, p.105 (1893)

Lebens zu verstehen, d.h. in einer blitzartigen Offenbarung für den Moment zu erhaschen."<sup>43</sup> Here the revelation is the product of a deep personal response to an individual external phenomenon, and it seems that these experiences can arise only out of such an interaction between inner and outer reality. Hofmannsthal quotes from Goethe:

Alles was wir Erfinden, Entdecken im höhern Sinne nennen, ist eine aus dem Innern am Aussern sich entwickelnde Offenbarung, die den Menschen seine Gottähnlichkeit vorahnen lässt. Es ist eine Synthese von Welt und Geist, welche von der ewigen Harmonie des Daseins die seligste Versicherung gibt.<sup>44</sup>

There is, however, also a link between revelation and art, perhaps as the means through which its insights can be communicated in a living way. We read, "dass in Bildern, wie in den wundervollen Werken der Musik, Offenbarung und Erlebnis enthalten ist,"<sup>45</sup> and in his "Ad me ipsum" Hofmannsthal refers to "die Offenbarungen durch die Ausübung der Dichtkunst empfangen."<sup>46</sup>

In the passage from Goethe quoted above it is the harmony of all existence and man's "Gottähnlichkeit" that are revealed. Elsewhere we read of a recognition "der Alleinheit der Dinge, der Weltenharmonie, wie eine Offenbarung, nicht der Wissenschaften, sondern der Religion."<sup>47</sup> That which is revealed has none of the specific nature of religious dogma (which may, however, be a later, fossilised form of it). It is "Harmonie", "Alleinheit", "Gottähnlichkeit", "der Sinn des Daseins." These are the ideas that emerge from an attempt to identify the object of faith and

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43. Karg BW, p.58 (1894)

46. A, p.238 (1926)

44. PI, p.220 (1894)

47. PI, p.26 (1891)

45. PI, p.168 (1893)

revelation.

Hofmannsthal makes few other direct references to revelation, and it is of note that almost all are very early in date, though the first quotation above, from "Die Idee Europa" (1916), shows that he continued to see such moments of intuition as the basis of religious belief. As the focus of his concern shifts in his later writings from immediate experience to a broader understanding of the worldview which springs out of it, we find that the things that are revealed: unity, harmony and symbolic meaning, retain their central importance.

These ideas are all embraced by the concept of an "other reality", which is described by Peter Berger as a fundamental category of religion. This other reality is "one of ultimate significance for man, which transcends the reality within which our everyday experience unfolds."<sup>48</sup> Such a concept is in fact found throughout Hofmannsthal's works, and though the language which expresses it is religious by implication, rather than directly so like the terms already considered, the concept will be found to be central to an understanding of his religious outlook. In writings of widely differing date we find the world of our everyday reality presented as essentially symbolic of something beyond: "Alles was ist, ist, Sein und Bedeuten ist eins, folglich ist alles Seiende Symbol" (1893).<sup>49</sup> Perceived in the right way, everything in life is a symbol, and we become aware of this in moments, "wenn wir das

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48. A Rumour of Angels, p.14 49. A, p.106 (1893)

Seiende so gross anschauen, dass sich uns dahinter der Abgrund des wahrhaft Seienden entschleiert" (1925).<sup>50</sup> It is this response to surrounding reality which enables it to become the vehicle of revelation.<sup>51</sup>

Direct references to this "other reality" are, however, fairly few in Hofmannsthal's earliest writings, and tend merely to stress the symbolic nature of the world, as grasped in such moments of revelatory understanding, rather than to specify in any way what lies behind it. Writing of his early experiences in "Ad me ipsum", he describes the "pre-existential" sense of being "Angehöriger einer höchsten Welt",<sup>52</sup> and then the state of separation which follows:

Der Dichter, aus jener höchsten Welt, deren Bote der Tod, herausgefallen:  
(Er, der Liebhaber der höchsten Schönheit, hielt was er schon gesehen hatte nur für ein Abbild dessen, was er noch nicht gesehen hatte und begehrte dieses selbst, das Urbild, zu geniessen.  
Greg. v. Nyssa)<sup>53</sup>

This quotation from Gregory of Nyssa also appears as a motto at the beginning of "Ad me ipsum"<sup>54</sup>, which implies that it does not only apply to "der ambivalente Zustand zwischen Prae-existenz und Leben,"<sup>55</sup> but is relevant to the whole, and that the search for the "Urbild" is a continuing one. At the point in Hofmannsthal's development where the moments of intuitive vision seem to cease, the symbolic understanding of reality becomes a conspicuous theme in some of the essays of the early 1900s, a pattern we shall

50. PIV, p.281 (1925)

51. cf quotation from Karg  
BW above, p.19f

52. A, p.213 (1916?)

53. A, p.214

54. A, p.213

55. A, p.216

find again when considering his attitude to mysticism.<sup>56</sup> Because the exploration of this theme is part of Hofmannsthal's attempt to reach an understanding of his own experience, it acquires importance at an earlier date than the other more directly religious concepts examined above and in the next section, which do not occur with significant frequency until the war years, when his primary aim is to communicate his understanding of reality to others.

In the essays of this transitional period, we find that three categories of people are united in their view that the world around them is a symbol, not reality: "Dem Kind ist alles ein Symbol, dem Frommen ist Symbol das einzig Wirkliche und der Dichter vermag nichts anderes zu erblicken."<sup>57</sup> Children are still in close relationship "zu der Unendlichkeit, aus der sie herzustammen scheinen,"<sup>58</sup> the realm of a higher reality they have only recently left behind. As we shall see, symbolic understanding is fundamental to the poet's art,<sup>59</sup> while "der Fromme" sees that the meaning to which the symbols point is essentially a religious one. For those who perceive things in this way, a pair of swans can become messengers of the divine, "die eigentliche Hieroglyphen, ... die lebendige geheimnisvolle Chiffren, mit denen Gott unaussprechliche Dinge in die Welt geschrieben hat."<sup>60</sup> In later years Hofmannsthal still sees such an outlook as the essence of religion: "es sieht ja nur der ohne Schrecken die Fülle des Lebens, der in allem und jedem das Gleichnis begriffen hat; hier ist

56. See Chap. II. section 2

57. PII, p.102 (1904)

58. PI, p.354 (1901)

59. Below, p.26

60. PII, p.102 (1904)



Religion, und nicht im masslosen Höher- und Tiefer-  
 Wollen."<sup>61</sup> To view the world like this is to discover that  
 "hinter allem ist ein Höheres, noch geheimer aber auch  
 lichter,"<sup>62</sup> and that this hidden higher reality is active,  
 the ultimate basis of everything that happens: "ein Etwas  
 ..., auf dem alles Geschehen ruht und das geheimer ist als  
 Kausalität."<sup>63</sup> Indeed, one has not only transcended  
 causality, but, like the Beggar in Das Salzburger Grosse  
Welttheater, has reached "eine Ebene, wo die Verteilung  
 der Macht und der Glücksgüter ihm als eine gleichgiltige  
 Sache erscheint."<sup>64</sup> In fact the solution to all human  
 problems lies in this realm so far beyond our everyday  
 concerns, "jenseits des Menschenlebens, immer im Bereich  
 der die Welt über dem Abgrund des Nichts haltenden leben-  
 digen Kräfte."<sup>65</sup>

It is this realm into which Hofmannsthal is escaping  
 in his early poems, "in Adlersluft und abgestorbner Ruh."<sup>66</sup>  
 Yet although he emphasizes throughout his writings that  
 "die wahrhafte Wirklichkeit im Nicht-Da, in der Ferne, im  
 Ungreifbaren sich auswirke,"<sup>67</sup> the realisation soon comes  
 that this reality, however intangible, cannot be isolated  
 from the material world. It is rather another dimension  
 which gives that world a new meaning and is only discovered  
 through deep involvement with it. The soul "erlöst sich  
 ... vom Stofflichen, nicht indem sie es verschmäht, sondern

61. PIV, p.185 (1923)  
 62. Bodenhausen BW, p.118  
 (1910)  
 63. A, p.79 (1922)  
 64. A, p.298 (1923?)

65. Quoted by Burckhardt,  
 Fiechtner<sup>2</sup>, p.140 (1920)  
 66. GLD, p.80 (1896)  
 67. PIV, p.185 (1923)

indem sie es mit solcher Intensität erfasst, dass sie hindurchdringt."<sup>68</sup> Hofmannsthal wrote to W. Brecht that even during the "visionäre Vorgänge" of his youth, the transformed object was "nicht ausserhalb der Natur, sondern ganz natürlich, aber in einer schwer zu beschreibende Weise erhöht und verherrlicht."<sup>69</sup> In the Chandos letter similar experiences are described, which fill "irgendeine Erscheinung meiner alltäglichen Umgebung mit einer überschwelenden Flut höheren Lebens wie ein Gefäss,"<sup>70</sup> and through this transformed perception make him aware of the presence of an infinite reality.<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, it seems to be impossible to apprehend "das wahrhaft Seiende" in itself, apart from the material phenomena which, rightly perceived, point us to it: "'Am farbigen Abglanz haben wir das Leben', nur in Symbolen, nie eigentlich können wir das Leben fassen."<sup>72</sup> The inter-relation of this world and the world beyond can be seen from two of Hofmannsthal's statements about Ariadne auf Naxos. Ariadne finds that Bacchus "zaubert ihr in dieser Welt das Jenseits hervor:"<sup>73</sup> for those who experience the power of love, "es zaubert sich selber die Welt hervor als ein Diesseits und Jenseits zugleich."<sup>74</sup> There is nothing that cannot be the vehicle of this kind of revelation, for nothing is merely the product of material causality: "es liegt allem Geschehen, auch dem scheinbar materiellsten, ein geistig Bewegendes zugrunde."<sup>75</sup>

68. PII, p.294 (1906)

69. George BW, p.234 (1929)

70. PII, p.15 (1902)

71. PII, p.17 (1902)

72. DII, p.515 (1903)

73. Strauss BW, p.130 (1911)

74. PIII, p.139 (1912)

75. PIII, p.236 (1915)

But because a symbolic understanding of the world is necessary to grasp this, the vital task of poetry, and of all art, which functions through symbols, is to point to this higher reality. "Die Poesie auf ihrer höchsten Stufe zeigt auf ein Etwas hin, auf dem alles Geschehen ruht und das geheim ist als Kausalität."<sup>76</sup> The poem "wovon unsere Seele sich nährt" is the one in which we find this combination of present reality and awareness of the transcendent, "ein Jetzt, ein Hier und zugleich ein Jenseits, ein ungeheueres Jenseits."<sup>77</sup> Hofmannsthal wrote to Burckhart about his own aim in Der Turm: "es handelt sich in diesem Stück immer darum, das ein Vorderes, Greifbares da sei, eine Action, fasslicher, concreter Act - und zugleich, dass hinter dieser sich ein Höheres, Geistiges, Allgemeines, schwer Sagbares, gleichermassen von Schritt zu Schritt enthülle und beglaubige."<sup>78</sup> This higher reality can never be expressed directly, in art or in life: "Was der Dichter in seinen unaufhörlichen Gleichnissen sage, das lässt sich niemals auf irgendeine andere Weise (ohne Gleichnisse) sagen: nur das Leben vermag das gleiche auszudrücken, aber in seinem Stoff, wortlos."<sup>79</sup>

The symbolic is the eternal: Hofmannsthal writes of "einem ewigen, d.h. zeitlosen, symbolischen Stoff,"<sup>80</sup> and he also links "das Symbolische und Metaphysische",<sup>81</sup> for the symbol expresses all that is beyond our earthly

76. A, p.79 (1922)

77. PII, p.110 (1904)

78. Burckhardt BW, p.140 (1923)

79. PI, p.286 (1897)

80. Strauss BW, p.421 (1919)

81. Strauss BW, p.444 (1920)

experience. When something has been given symbolic form, "das lebt ewig: Kunstwerk, Symbol, Mythos, Religion."<sup>82</sup> Myth and religion are placed alongside art and the general "symbol", which is also an essential element in the other three. In fact, by examining the concepts of myth and religion introduced here, as I shall in the next section, we find that all four forms of expression are closely interrelated as the vehicles of revelation of another reality.

## 2. Eternally living form

### a) Myth

Hofmannsthal sees the artist as both reviving and creating myth; for example, Swinburne's "Atalanta in Kalydon" is praised for its "wunderbare(r) Verlebendigung des erstarrten Mythos."<sup>83</sup> While, however, "der Mythos ist, was die schaffende Phantasie niemals entbehren kann,"<sup>84</sup> it is not only ancient mythology which has this vital role; this statement refers in fact specifically to "das Volk", a concept seen as so powerful that a worldview based on it becomes "gross, einheitlich, mythisch." The myth gives meaning to the chaos of human experience, and the artist participates in this: "Indem der Künstler so die Formen ihres banalen Sinnes entkleidet, steht er wieder in seiner eigentlichen Lebensluft, ein Mythenbildner inmitten der chaotischen, namenlosen, furchtbaren, leuchtenden Wirklichkeit."<sup>85</sup> Ancient mythology is therefore only one

82. PII, p.28 (1902)  
83. PI, p.117 (1893)

84. PI, p.342 (1901)  
85. PI, p.170 (1894)

possible source of the artist's material, and Hofmannsthal writes of the "Gleichgültigkeit des Stoffes: eigenes Inneres oder Mythen und Sagen, Novellen und Historien wie bei Shakespeare."<sup>86</sup> As an expression of timeless truth it is, however, something to be taken seriously. Referring to his plans for an opera about the exiled Greek gods, Hofmannsthal wrote that it would be "meilenweit von Meilhac und Halevy, denn es sind Götter und ich glaube an sie."<sup>87</sup>

European culture has its own mythology:

Es gibt eine gewisse zeitlose europäische Mythologie: Namen, Begriffe, Gestalten, mit denen ein höherer Sinn verbunden wird, personifizierte Kräfte der moralischen oder mythischen Ordnung. Dieser mythologisch-historische Sternenhimmel spannt sich über das gesamte Ältere Europa.<sup>88</sup>

Hofmannsthal himself indicates some of the concepts and figures of this mythology. The basic metaphor of Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater, for instance, the idea of the world as a stage on which each person has a divinely ordained role to play, "gehört zu den Schatz von Mythen und Allegorien, den das dreizehnte und vierzehnte Jahrhundert ausgebildet und der späteren Zeit Übermacht haben."<sup>89</sup> The modern generation expresses itself through new mythological figures and events: "Unsere wahren heroischen Mythen, an denen unser Gemüt tiefer und gespannter wird, wie anderen Geschlechtern ihres an ihrem Homer und Plutarch," are such things as Schiller's death, Goethe's old age, Kleist's collapse, Hölderlin's madness.<sup>90</sup> Modern man also relates to Napoleon as "einer aktiven mythischen Gestalt,"<sup>91</sup> while

86. PIII, p.353 (1916)

87. Kessler BW, p.244 (1909)

88. PIV, p.193 (1923)

89. PIV, p.145 (1922)

90. PIV, p.116 (1922)

91. PIV, p.59 (1921)

Brecht's Baal is said to be "der Mythos unserer Existenz, die elementare Erfassung unseres Daseins. Der Mensch von heute geht durch alles durch, er saugt alles Lebendige in sich, um schliesslich zur Erde zurückzukehren."<sup>92</sup> These figures and situations express modern man's experience of the force of destiny and his understanding of the nature of human existence.

Looking back at Shakespeare, Rembrandt and Homer, Hofmannsthal defines the deepest need of the present age: "zu schaffen ihrem Da-Sein Atmosphäre; ihren Gestalten den hellen und dunklen Raum des Lebens; ihrem Atmen das Mythos,"<sup>93</sup> and so to create a sphere within which life is perceived to unfold in a meaningful way. The process of creating myth must continue, so that modern society as a whole can be understood and experienced in this way: "Das Gesellschaftliche kann und darf man nur allegorisch nehmen. Hier lässt sich das ganze Gesellschaftliche der neueren Zeit ... als eine grosse Mythologie zusammenfassen."<sup>94</sup> Riches and poverty, for instance, can be seen as "die beiden grossen mythischen Potenzen welche unsere Zeit beherrschen, Vorratsbecken ungeheurer Metaphern."<sup>95</sup>

The reference to actual experience is essential, for "mythisch ist alles Erdichtete, woran du als Lebender Anteil hast."<sup>96</sup> Poetry alone does not create myths, which must be rooted in living experience. "Die Taten" are the other element "in welchen der innerste Gehalt einer Gemeinschaft sich auswirkt," and "nicht ohne diese beiden

92. LIV, p.412 (1926)

93. PII, p.174 (1905)

94. A, p.27 (1922)

95. Germanic Review, 36 (1961)  
p. 55 (1907)

96. A, 34f (1922)

Genien [poetry and action] entsteht ein nationaler Mythos."<sup>97</sup> In "Ad me ipsum" Hofmannsthal writes, "ohne Taten und Leiden der Individuen entsteht kein Mythos: daher bedürfte es der Vorgänge seit 1914, damit die Mächte sich zum Mythos gestalten."<sup>98</sup> Amid the terrible events of war, the encounter with reality had the depth and power which can give birth to myth. Hofmannsthal's visit to Greece made him realise that the ancient myths, too, were not only true as "Erzeugnisse der harmonischsten Einbildungskraft," but arose out of real human experience: "es ist mehr, als wir wussten, von der Magie in ihnen, die unmittelbar aus dem Wirklichen auf den Menschen eindringt."<sup>99</sup> In this way true myth speaks very powerfully, "zugleich mit der Gewalt der Wahrheit und der Zaubermacht der erfundenen Fabel."<sup>100</sup>

The myth then opens up a realm of deeper meaning, supra-individual and timeless, behind these events and experiences. It is the myths, sagas and "Märchen" "worin sich das Verhältnis des Volksgemütes zu den ewigen Mächten ausspricht."<sup>101</sup> Lord Chandos describes them as "die Hieroglyphen einer geheimen, unerschöpflichen Weisheit."<sup>102</sup> The power to create myth and to reveal this hidden truth flows from a view of the world for which "alles lebendig, alles zum Sinnblide wird."<sup>103</sup> Although Hofmannsthal sometimes refers to "Mythen und Allegorien",<sup>104</sup> the symbolism of myth does not function in the same way as allegory and the image presented cannot be simply

97. PIII, p.343 (1916)  
 98. A, p.233 (1921)  
 99. PIV, p.158 (1922)  
 100. PI, p.325 (1901)

101. PIV, p.376 (1926)  
 102. PII, p.9f (1902)  
 103. PI, p.406 (1901)  
 104. e.g. PIV, p.145 (1922)

translated into conceptual language. "Mythos ist Gestalt, nicht Allegorie der das Spruchband aus dem Munde hängt."<sup>105</sup> In the letter to Alfred Roller from which this statement comes, Hofmannsthal makes the central importance of "Gestalt", communicating directly rather than through analytical concepts, very clear: "das Gestalt da sein, und dass nichts ungestaltet, Chaos, dahinter bleibe, das ist der Sinn alles Mythos,"<sup>106</sup> and "das Vieles in ihnen inbegriffen sei, nichts aber begrifflich aufgefädelt, das ist das a und o mythischer Gestalten."<sup>107</sup>

The comprehensive nature of expression through mythical figures also emerges very clearly from these statements. In an early note, Hofmannsthal presents the desire for completeness and unity as fundamental: "Der tragische Grundmythos: die in Individuen zerstückelte Welt sehnt sich nach Einheit. Dionysos Zagreus will wiedergeboren werden."<sup>108</sup> The myth creates unity from chaos, and is able to embrace all apparent duality and conflict. "Im Mythischen ist jedes Ding durch einen Doppelsinn, der sein Gegensinn ist, getragen: Tod = Leben, Schlangenkampf = Liebesumarmung. Darum ist im Mythischen alles im Gleichgewicht."<sup>109</sup>

It is human experience that is expressed through myth; for those who have the necessary insight, "wird das eigene Dasein mythisch: Sinnbild des menschlichen Lebens."<sup>110</sup> Hofmannsthal told Carl Burckhardt, however, that he had given up the psychological approach to mythology: "Auch

105. HB 3, p.186 (1922)

106. " "

107. " p.187

108. A, p.106 (1893)

109. A, p.35 (1922)

110. PIV, p.310 (1926)



ich habe einst versucht, auf dem Wege der Psychologie in die Mythen einzudringen. Das lag in den Jahren, die ich damals miterlebte. Den Weg bin ich später nicht mehr gegangen."<sup>111</sup> The myth adds a further dimension to human experience, going beyond the sphere of psychology.

Another indication of a development in Hofmannsthal's attitude to myth can be found in his references to mythical figures in his own works, for example, "Das Mythische. Der Abenteurer ein mythische Figur. Desgleichen Ariadne. Das Mythische in höherer Sphäre realisiert in Helena."<sup>112</sup> In a conversation with Walther Brecht about Die Ägyptische Helena, Sigismund, the Byzantine Emperor, Elektra and Odipus are added to the list,<sup>113</sup> and part of the meaning of "in höherer Sphäre" is explained: "Was vorschwebte in der Elektra und im Odipus, war dies! Damals war ich noch zu burckhardtisch, historisch-philologisch ... Was im Abenteurer vorschwebte, die Verbindung eines tieferen Sinnes mit dem Bühnenmässigen, habe ich hier erreicht."<sup>114</sup> Thus Hofmannsthal sees himself as participating in the artist's continuing concern with the creation and renewal of myth, so that through the figures on the stage a greater reality is communicated, unifying and transcending normal human experience.

The belief in the power of myth to express powerfully just such a transcendent reality remains constant throughout his writings. In addition, however, to the development traced here by Hofmannsthal himself in his ability to

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111. NR, 1954, p.356f (1923) 113. Fiechtner<sup>1</sup>, p.341 (1927?)  
112. A, p.240 (1926) 114. " p.342

understand the nature of myth and to make effective use of it, there is also a noticeable increase in references to the topic in his essays and letters in later years. By far the greatest number of such references occur in the writings of the 1920s, a period when Hofmannsthal was urgently seeking means of uncovering unity and meaning within a disintegrating society.

b) Religion

In 1892 Hofmannsthal told Marie Herzfeld that up to then, "alle Religionen ihm nichts gewesen als schöne Mythologien,"<sup>115</sup> which does not seem to put too high a value on either. His early references, though they may be positive, are always in the context of discussing other people: he writes of Barres' hero, torn between "Goethescher Religion der Harmonie mit der gesunden Natur und indisch-christlichem Kult des Leidens,"<sup>116</sup> or of the "tiefen und bedeutungsvollen geistigen, das heisst auf englisch: religiös-moralischen Hintergrund" to Laurence Oliphant's life.<sup>117</sup> His comments on Lafcadio Hearn's chapter "Die Macht des Karma" help to clarify his attitude:

Das ist Philosophie, wenn ich nicht irre. Aber es lässt uns nicht kalt, es zieht uns nicht in die Ode der Begriffe. So ist es wohl Religion. Aber es droht nicht, es will nicht allein auf der Welt sein, es lastet nicht auf der Seele. Ich möchte es Botschaft nennen, <sup>118</sup> freundliche Botschaft einer Seele an andere Seelen.

Religion, while better than the cold abstractions of philosophy, clearly conveys the idea of rigid and burdensome dogma, and so Hofmannsthal prefers not to use the term.

115. Fiechtner<sup>2</sup>, p.57  
116. PI, p.51 (1891)

117. PI, p.53 (1891)  
118. PII, p.124 (1904)

The word comes to acquire a wider meaning, however, and Hofmannsthal develops a concept of non-organised, non-dogmatic religion which is itself a "freundliche Botschaft" to the soul of modern man. In 1915 he wrote to the Svenska Dagbladet, "Es kommt darauf an, dass eine neue Autorität erstehe, dass diese Autorität nicht in administrativen Formen verkörpert werde, sondern in rein geistigen, in Übereinstimmung mit dem Wiedererwachen des religiösen Empfindens und dem latenten Bedürfnis der Massen nach Verehrung;"<sup>119</sup> but although religion took on a special significance in the war-time context, Hofmannsthal's concern with it in fact continued to grow throughout his life. He found among the younger generation an increasing number who were filled with "einer neuen und nicht dogmatisierten, aber bebenden und pulsierenden Religiosität,"<sup>120</sup> as they attempted to find some kind of order and meaning in the midst of political and spiritual catastrophe.

A religious understanding must still be sought, even though the traditional forms have been found wanting, for religion meets a fundamental need. It is "die tiefere Schicht der menschlichen Seelen, die nach neuen - es muss das Wort gesagt werden - religiösen Bindungen begehrt,"<sup>121</sup> something which will break through "ins Absolute, ins Religiöse."<sup>122</sup> Hofmannsthal has an explanation for the exclusive claims of particular religions:

Jede wahrhaft grosse geistige Erscheinung ist Übermenschlich und macht für den, der sich ihr hingibt, alles übrige entbehrlich, bis ans Ende der Zeiten: das ist die Wurzel der durch ein Individuum geoffenbarten

119. A, p.365f (1915)

120. A, p.312 (1924)

121. PIV, p.76 (1921)

122. PIV, p.77 (1921)

Religionen und ihres Anspruches auf Orthodoxie.<sup>123</sup>  
The original revelation, however, as we have seen above,<sup>124</sup>  
is reduced to a formula by succeeding generations and loses  
its force, so that new forms of expression must be sought  
for religious truth.

Hofmannsthal often uses the term "religious" in a way  
which seems to equate it with another concept, for example,  
"die Einheit der Welt, das Religiöse";<sup>125</sup> "mit einem  
mythenschaffenden oder religiösen Auge";<sup>126</sup> "diesem  
religiösen oder allegorischen Spiel";<sup>127</sup> "einer im Tiefsten  
transzendenten, also religiösen Nation";<sup>128</sup> "meine Antwort  
war ... dichterisch oder religiös";<sup>129</sup> "das Gebiet der  
Religion (der hohen Sittlichkeit)."<sup>130</sup> With the exception  
of "Sittlichkeit", these are all concepts which we have  
already considered - myth, allegory, poetry, unity, the  
transcendental - and they are clearly all closely inter-  
related.

Religious belief is not dependent on external  
phenomena<sup>131</sup> nor bound by their laws: "Auf eine Überwindung  
des Kausalreiches läuft diese wie jede religiöse Auffassung  
hinaus."<sup>132</sup> Yet it is in harmony with those laws, for  
"ohne anthropomorphische Bildlichkeit sprechen die Gesetze  
der Erhaltung der Energie die gleiche Ahnung aus, die den  
geheimnisvollsten Ahnungen der Religion nicht wider-  
spricht."<sup>133</sup> This "Ahnung" refers to Robert Lieben's

123. A, p.34 (1922)  
124. p.19  
125. A, p.234 (1922)  
126. A, p.314 (1924)  
127. A, p.299 (1923?)  
128. PIV, p.26 (1920)

129. A, p.297 (1923?)  
130. A, p.257 (1928)  
131. See above, pp.13f  
132. PIII, p.365 (1916)  
133. PIII, p.152 (1913)

perception, as he touches the infinite, of "sein Selbst  
 ..., auf einem unzerstörbaren Thron sitzend."<sup>134</sup> This is  
 not a concept of religion which views man as the humble  
 recipient of grace from above: rather, "alle Himmel und  
 Unterwelten aller Religionen [sind] aus dem menschlichen  
 Innern erbaut."<sup>135</sup> Religion is the product of human  
 culture, so that Hofmannsthal can refer to "unserer  
 geistigen Welt (ohne welche die religiöse nicht sein  
 kann)."<sup>136</sup>

It is because of this that religion and poetry are so  
 closely linked. Poets must believe, in the fullest  
 religious sense, in that to which they give form: "ihre  
 Visionen sind die Punkte, die ihnen das Weltgebäude  
 tragen."<sup>137</sup> At about the same time Hofmannsthal noted that  
 "Die Dichter sind die einzig Religiösen unserer Epoche: sie  
 halten sich an das, woran sie zu glauben vermögen."<sup>138</sup>  
 While he might not make such sweeping statements in later  
 years, he still asserts that "den höchsten dichterischen  
 Produkten wird eine Art von religiöser Funktion zuge-  
 billigt,"<sup>139</sup> for great literature reveals the sphere of  
 transcendent meaning behind our daily reality. So Goethe  
 can be a "Stiller auch des religiösen Bedürfnisses,"<sup>140</sup> and  
 the contemporary interest in Hölderlin such that "man ...  
 fast eher von einem religiösen Phänomen sprechen möchte als  
 von einem bloss literarischen."<sup>141</sup> It is in fact with  
 reference to Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater, where the

134. PIII, p.152 (1913)

135. A, p.36 (1922)

136. PIV, p.316 (1926)

137. PII, p.295 (1906)

138. A, p.141 (1905?)

139. A, p.61 (1922)

140. PIV, p.77 (1921)

141. A, p.312 (1924)

solution to society's problems is presented within a very traditional religious framework, that Hofmannsthal wrote, "Meine Antwort war nicht optimistisch, aber auch nicht pessimistisch, sondern dichterisch oder religiös."<sup>142</sup>

The answer can be neither pessimistic nor optimistic because both poetry and religion are concerned with something outside the sphere of life in which such categories have meaning. "Der Innerste Kern ist Verherrlichung jenes Hohen in uns, der inneren Freiheit, die gleichbedeutend ist dem Schöpferischen und Abglanz des höchsten Schöpfers," and this provides "die Antwort auf der höheren Ebene,"<sup>143</sup> the plane which the Beggar reaches, where power and money no longer matter. Freedom from this aspect of society is important: "Hinter den Rücken des Geldwesens zu gelangen, ist vielleicht der Sinn der moralischen und sogar religiösen Revolution, in der wir zu stehen scheinen."<sup>144</sup>

Here we enter the sphere of moral values, such as are represented in Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater by "Weisheit", who unites "alles ..., was wir an Hohem, Unselbstischem, Gott-Gleichem in uns tragen, sei es nun aus religiöser oder aus profaner Tradition."<sup>145</sup> In "Die Idee Europa", Hofmannsthal links Europe's religion with the European concept of "Humanität".<sup>146</sup> But religion for Hofmannsthal is far from being a code of ethics, which must always relate to the phenomenal, individuated world of human society. He speaks of "wahrhaft religiöser Verantwortung" in the context of universal synthesis<sup>147</sup> and

142. A, p.297 (1923?)

145. A, p.297 (1923?)

143. Strauss BW, p.468 (1922) 146. PIII, p.375 (1916)

144. A, p.59 (1922)

147. PIV, p.412 (1927)

"kosmischen Bindungen",<sup>148</sup> which can only be experienced as the realm of spiritual reality is glimpsed beyond the everyday world. And it is not Europe but Asia, with its emphasis on mysticism, which is the "Urquell der Religionen".<sup>149</sup> Hofmannsthal wrote of Goethe that "seine Sittlichkeit ist aus religiös erfasstem Natursinn abgeleitet."<sup>150</sup> Morality, like religion as a whole, is not something to be expressed in narrowly defined concepts.

c) Form and Reason

Hofmannsthal declares his own lack of interest in abstract thought in some early letters, describing himself as "nach der abstrakt philosophischen [Seite] zumindestens nicht geweckt und ausgebildet."<sup>151</sup> He is not particularly concerned with "das abstrakte Erkennen des Daseins," which he sees as the province of theology.<sup>152</sup> Thirty years later, too, he tells Andrian that he is unable to appreciate his book on the Catholic world-view,<sup>153</sup> based on the development of an abstract argument.

It is not just that he finds the abstractions of theology uncongenial, however; there is also a value judgement involved, as we have found expressed in his comments on the fate of original revelation. He criticises Tolstoy, for instance, because in his works, "traten die Formeln des vorhandenen Christentums an Stelle einer letzten geheimnisvollen Eigenwahrheit, einer visionären Wahrheit, die zu geben einem Dostojewski verliehen war."<sup>154</sup>

148. PIV, p.397 (1927)  
149. PIII, p.365 (1916)  
150. PIII, p.363 (1916)  
151. BI, p.154 (1895)

152. BI, p.168 (1895)  
153. Andrian BW, p.385 (1926)  
154. PIII, p.490 (1908)

The old concepts cannot convey this "Eigenwahrheit", and so there is a continual need for new means of expression: "Sich loswinden aus den Banden der Begriffe ... Und dann das Bilden neuer Begriffe, mächtiger vielbeschwörender Zauberworte, deren letztes, einfachstes, Gott weiss, Gott ist."<sup>155</sup>

This attack on ready-made formulae and "Begriffe", which can never convey the essence of reality, runs throughout Hofmannsthal's works. D'Annunzio is praised because "nicht dürre Begriffe sind in ihm die Korrelate der äusseren Dinge, sondern etwas vom Hauch und Wesen der Wesen;"<sup>156</sup> amid the confusion of modern life, contemporary journalists are only able, "mit Begriffe zu hantieren, hier das Zerklüftete noch mehr zu zerklüften;"<sup>157</sup> the poet who gives pride of place to "den abgezogenen Begriffen des Verstandes" finds that, "seine Arbeit entfernt sich auf immer von der Arbeitsweise der Natur."<sup>158</sup>

"Das Begreifen des Lebens" involves a quite different kind of understanding, a perception of the interrelation of all things which is unattainable by reason: "Dass aber alle, alle Dinge im Dasein ... wesensgleich sind, jeder Einwirkung auf einander fähig, und in einem gewissen, geheimnisvollen moralischen Zusammenhang stehend, ... das mit der Seele zu spüren, nicht mit dem Verstand, das nenn ich ungefähr das Begreifen des Lebens."<sup>159</sup> Rationalistic, analytical thought is the wrong kind of thought, but to reject this is not to reject "das eigene denkende

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155. A, p.104 (1893)

158. PIV, p.171f (1922)

156. PI, p.211 (1894)

159. Karg BW, p.58f (1894)

157. PIII, p.67 (1911)



Selbst",<sup>160</sup> for, "an unseren Gedanken hat der Wille weit mehr Anteil als der Verstand."<sup>161</sup> So the freedom of one's thoughts must be guarded and the danger avoided, "das Denken völlig unter den Begriffen zu ersticken,"<sup>162</sup> for such concepts are "Träger der gedanklichen Mechanisierung."<sup>163</sup> Thought must be linked to action, not tied to formulae: "Es gibt keine anderen Gedanken als notwendige oder schädliche. Die notwendigen sind die, welche mit Betätigung in einem näheren oder ferneren ... Zusammenhang stehen ... Man kann auf keine Formel hin leben."<sup>164</sup>

Hofmannsthal warns that, "Wir sind immer in Gefahr, das Leben an die Institutionen zu verlieren, an die Abstraktionen, an die Worte (auch die sind Formen)."<sup>165</sup> Yet although here abstract forms are the threat to life, Hofmannsthal elsewhere rejects abstraction because it is without form, referring to an "Urtrieb, 'der das Übermenschliche greifbar vor sich sehen will und tiefen Abscheu hegt vor jeder formlosen Abstraktion'."<sup>166</sup> The need is for something concrete, and the solution to this apparent contradiction is to be found in the living "Gestalt" which figured so prominently in Hofmannsthal's conception of myth.<sup>167</sup> In the Neue deutsche Beiträge Hofmannsthal declared the aim:

so wollen wir alles dessen enthalten, worin mehr der ungezügeltere Hang zur Abstraktion und eine begrifflich überzüchtete Sprache wirksam wird als ein tätiges Vermögen. Wir wollen uns durchaus an die Gestalt halten ... Wir vermögen nur die Gestalt zu lieben, und wer die Idee zu lieben vorgibt, der liebt sie immer als Gestalt. Die Gestalt erledigt das Problem, sie

160. PIV, p.315 (1926)  
 161. A, p.38 (1922)  
 162. PI, p.228 (1895)  
 163. PIII, p.360 (1916)

164. BI, p.242f (1894)  
 165. PIV, p.519 (1929)  
 166. PIII, p.449 (1921?)  
 167. See p.31 above

beantwortet das Unbeantwortbare."<sup>168</sup>

He writes of those who fail to find this solution: "Wer nicht gestalten kann, schleppt den Prozess der Begriffe von einer Instanz zur andern. In der Gestalt erst ist das Problem erledigt."<sup>169</sup> "Gestalt" as living form is contrasted with the fixed concept which imposes the form of a particular viewpoint on any idea or situation to which it is applied.

Speculative, abstract thinking appears to be unnatural; for instance, the "Fundierung der Sittlichkeit in der höchsten Abstraction, die schliesslich in Kant wurzelt" is contrasted with the natural and spontaneous Austrian morality.<sup>170</sup> As already quoted, reflection has no place in the innermost depths of being where "Wollen und Glauben" are to be found.<sup>171</sup> Even where abstract thoughts do have a positive role, they are only the secondary products of the creative processes which take place in these depths:

Zuweilen gehen einem abstrakte Gedanken über die eigene Arbeit, ihre inneren Zusammenhänge und die Fäden auf, die zwischen der Arbeit und dem Ganzen der Welt laufen, - und erleuchten die Gestalten so unerwartet von oben, dass sie aus flachen schattenhaften zu plastischen Gebilden werden: dieser erhellende Gedankenblitz ist aber vielleicht nur die Begleiterscheinung eines tieferen Vorgangs; in der Tiefe des Gemüts organisieren sich die Gestalten und die Handlung, ziehen Lebenselemente und Kräfte in sich und dieser Vorgang wirft nach oben hin ein Wetterleuchten."<sup>172</sup>

Ultimately the effect is to devalue all the insights of reason, not only thought which is rationalistic and too

168. PIV, p.144 (1922)

169. PIV, p.126 (1922)

170. PIII, p.341f (1916)

171. Above, p.14

172. Silvia im Stern, p.113, N81 (1907)

rigid or abstract. A straightforward statement, for instance that "die Seele des Künstlers sich in symbolischen, den begrifflichen Ausdruck entzogenen Ideen zu Äussern strebt,"<sup>173</sup> can take on deeper implications when the meaning of "symbol" is defined as "das sinnliche Bild für geistige Wahrheit, die der ratio unerreichbar ist."<sup>174</sup> A symbol obviously cannot be grasped by reason, but now it seems that this applies to "geistige Wahrheit" too. We are also told that, "Wer das Gesellschaftliche anders als symbolisch nimmt, geht fehl,"<sup>175</sup> and in general that, "Situationen sind symbolisch; es ist die Schwäche der jetzigen Menschen, dass sie sie analytisch behandeln und dadurch das Zauberische auflösen."<sup>176</sup> There does not seem to be much scope left for reason. This has consequences for Hofmannsthal's attitude to religion, as will be seen, but in the meantime we know that we cannot expect to find his religious beliefs fitting any theological or philosophical system. These can never express a "geistige Wahrheit" which depends on an inner illumination in the depths to which the symbol speaks. Dogmatic pronouncements are out: "C'est la profonde ignorance qui inspire le ton dogmatique."<sup>177</sup>

This attitude is in tune with contemporary currents of thought and related to the ideas of "Lebensphilosophie". The emphasis is on living experience, while systematic thought is mistrusted in religion as in other spheres. William James writes that, "What keeps religion going is

173. PI, p.202 (1894)  
 174. PIV, p.49 (1921)  
 175. A, p.21 (1922)

176. A, p.14 (1922)  
 177. A, p.17 (1922)

something else than abstract definitions and systems of concatenated adjectives, and something different from faculties of theology and their professors. All these things are after-effects, secondary accretions upon those phenomena of vital conversation with the unseen divine."<sup>178</sup> Lafcadio Hearn states, "That as mere doctrine religion will ultimately pass away is a conclusion to which the study of evolution leads; but that religion as feeling, or even as faith in the unknown power shaping equally a brain or a constellation, can ever utterly die, is not at present conceivable."<sup>179</sup> Such statements reflect what Francis Schaeffer, in his analysis of modern thought, has called a "divided view of truth",<sup>180</sup> whereby the rational and logical have become completely separated from the sphere of faith and meaning. Hofmannsthal himself describes such a dichotomy: "dem ewigen-Gegensatz in der Menschenwelt zwischen dem, was auf dem Triebhaften und der ahnenden Erkenntnis ruht - worunter alles gehört, was mit Kunst und Geschmack zu tun hat, auch die Schönheit der Lebensformen und das Geziemende - und dem, was allein in Fassungen, die der Verstand anordnet, bestehen kann und zu uns spricht: die ganze auf Begriffen ruhende Bildung, Wissenschaft, Schule und Staat."<sup>181</sup>

The old structures of knowledge have been revealed as hollow by the relativising process of contemporary thought, and have no bearing on the universal religious impulse which Hofmannsthal feels to be the result of this very

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 178. The Varieties of Religious Experience, p.437

179. Kokoro, p.243

180. The God who is there, p.53

181. PIV, p.210 (1924)

predicament of modern man. Form, in its positive sense, does have a role to play in this "religiousness", but not formula:

Eben weil alles überwunden ist, und ein angstvolles Fühlen des Abgrundes, der unter den Dingen ist und unter den Theoremen und unter den Erkenntnissen, uns durchzieht wie ein beständiger Schwindel, eben darum ist allem unserm Tun eine latente Religiosität beigemischt, ein Drang nach dem Form-Gebenden, Leben-Verleihenden, nach dem, was nirgends an der Materie, auch nicht an der geistigen Materie, an der Formel, haftet: nach Gott."<sup>182</sup>

### 3. The Divine

Since theology, abstract thought and formalised religious systems cannot help, how is the "Drang nach Gott" to attain its end and how can the "unseen divine" and the "unknown power" to which James and Hearn refer be known? We have already seen that when earthly phenomena are viewed as symbolic a "higher reality" is revealed which underlies them, the "Urbild" behind the beautiful images of this world, and that this way of viewing life is for Hofmannsthal the essence of religion.<sup>183</sup> "Das Gespräch über Gedichte" expresses the view that "wir lösen uns auf in den Symbolen", becoming aware of our essential unity with the rest of the world, and that this experience is of the same nature as the act of symbolic identification involved in ritual sacrifice.<sup>184</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, however, in the passage quoted by Hofmannsthal,<sup>185</sup> implies that it is possible "das Urbild zu geniessen", to arrive at a direct knowledge not dependent on symbols. In Hofmannsthal's own writings there is no indication of such

182. PIV, p.29f (1920)  
183. See pp. 21ff above

184. PII, pp. 103ff (1904)  
185. A, p.213. See p.22 above

a knowledge, but a number of other ways of knowing the divine are suggested.

At the beginning of the "Vorspiel für ein Puppentheater", the poet undergoes some kind of mystical experience of oneness with the plants and animals he sees, and even with the stars, and through this he becomes aware of "ein unsichtbares Du".<sup>186</sup> Through his meeting with the old woman, however, he receives a new understanding:

"Meinesgleichen! Das sind die Boten, die du an mich sendest,"<sup>187</sup> and a new resolution to enter into "Menschenwelt und -leben",<sup>188</sup> so that human involvement appears as another, by implication deeper, way of knowing the unseen "Du". But, "Du selbst bleibst mir ewig stumm."<sup>189</sup>

Although these words are not addressed to God in the normal sense, the old woman interprets them as a prayer. Here, then, there is no direct communication. "Der Priesterzögling" is also told, in the words of the Koran, "Mich kannst du nicht sehen; aber schau gegen den Berg, wenn du ihn wirst sehen unbeweglich an seinem Ort, wirst du mich sehen."<sup>190</sup> This is, however, the true way of perceiving the mountain, and indeed all natural phenomena; for the initiated it is at the same time also a perception of God.

Oneness and involvement are the key to knowledge, whether with animals and natural objects or with one's fellow men. One way to involvement is suffering. "Der Schmerz ist die wahre Einführung ins Dasein," because it

186. DII, p.492 (1906)

187. DII, p.495

188. DII, p.496

189. DII, p.495

190. DIII, p.493 (1919)

makes us aware of the connections that exist between people,<sup>191</sup> of the effect that each has on others. Hofmannsthal looks for a redeeming feature even in the intense sufferings of the war years, writing for example of "Leiden als göttliches Prinzip", described by Meister Eckhart as "das schnellste Tier, das zur Vollkommenheit trägt."<sup>192</sup> He always presents suffering in a positive light. In the Buch der Freunde he quotes Georg Büchner's words, "Wir haben nicht zu viel, wir haben ihrer zu wenig, denn durch den Schmerz gehen wir zu Gott ein."<sup>193</sup> The religious significance of suffering is clear here, and the importance of this idea for Hofmannsthal is confirmed by the fact that these words are also quoted in Der Turm<sup>194</sup> and in his notes for Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater.<sup>195</sup> Sufferings, like the artist's colours, can draw us into the eternal realm<sup>196</sup> and reveal something infinite.<sup>197</sup>

What then is this eternal and infinite reality which is known through symbols and suffering, and how far is the use of the word "God" appropriate in referring to it? It has been pointed out that Hofmannsthal usually avoids direct reference to God, and Erika Brecht attributes this to the distrust of ready-made concepts we have already noted, which she sees as rooted in the contemporary climate of thought: "Kaum jemals hat er dieses Wort 'Gott' ausgesprochen oder geschrieben, das lag nicht im Sprachgebrauch seiner Generation mit ihrem tiefen Misstrauen

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 191. PI, p.361 (1901)  
 192. PIII, p.381 (1916)  
 193. A, p.33 (1922)  
 194. DIV, p.99

195. KHA X, pp.135, 154 (1919  
 and 1921)  
 196. PII, p.357 (1908)  
 197. PIII, p.170 (1914)

gegen fertige Begriffe und Ausdrücke."<sup>198</sup> She nevertheless considers that the "Mittelpunkt seines Wesens ... war nichts als Hinstreben zu Gott, Ruhen in Gott."<sup>199</sup> Inge Schiller also refers to Hofmannsthal's avoidance of the word "Gott" and his preference for expressions such as "das Höchste", "das Tiefste"; "das Unendliche", "Absolute", "Wortlose", "Namenlose"; "das Sein", "die Wirklichkeit."<sup>200</sup> It is certainly true that he favours such terms and can be hesitant about the word "Gott". He writes to Strauss about "ein dort Gesuchtes, Gefundenes an Aufschwung, Emporklettern zu ? --- nun zu 'Gott',"<sup>201</sup> and to Schnitzler, "In solchen Stunden ... alles drängt sich in eine letzte Ahnung hinein: ich nenne sie Gott - und Sie vielleicht nennen sie anders."<sup>202</sup> However, although in such cases Hofmannsthal is clearly anxious not to use the word "God" in a facile way which will be assumed to refer simply to the traditional Christian concept, he sometimes finds that it is the only word which has the power to convey his meaning, and in fact it occurs quite often in his writings. An examination of his usage does help to clarify this rather nebulous concept.

The word is naturally used in Hofmannsthal's plays where it is appropriate to the character who is speaking, and reference to God is clearly essential to the specifically Christian Jedermann and Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater and also in the historical context of Der Turm. In addition it plays a striking role in some of the

198. Erinnerungen an Hugo von Hofmannsthal, p.80f

199. Ibid., p.80

200. Art und Bedeutung des Religiösen, pp.15ff

201. Strauss BW, p.194 (1912) 202. Schnitzler BW, p.311(1928)



comedies. For Cristina and for the Marschallin in Rosenkavalier everything happens "in Gottes Namen", and for Mandryka, "vor Gott und vor den Menschen", so that the presence of divine power behind human life is continually implied. The early Der Kaiser und die Hexe, too, ends with a prayer to the Lord who gives life to all.<sup>203</sup>

But it is of course in the letters, notes and essays that the clearest indication is to be found of the meaning Hofmannsthal wishes to attach to the word "Gott". The idea of oneness is central here too: oneness with the world, with life, with oneself. Hofmannsthal writes in an early note, "Auf der höchsten Terrasse eritis sicut Deus, fähig aus allem etwas zu machen, denn für Gott, der die Welt ist, ist keine Bildung schlechter Stoff,"<sup>204</sup> and even "'In sich selber verliebt', ich mein halt ins Leben, oder wohl auch in Gott, wie man will."<sup>205</sup> The concept is highly fluid, defined only by its association with ideas such as creativity and life.

During the war years he begins to use the word more frequently than before. He describes wartime experiences as "ein dunkler Traum, durch dessen Finsternisse doch Gottes Licht hinzuckte, Gottes Atem hinwehte,"<sup>206</sup> and as a continual "Näher, mein Gott, zu dir!"<sup>207</sup> Such references are clearly an attempt to point people to a spiritual reality behind the situation as a source of encouragement and hope. But although the word may be used because of its effect on ordinary people, for whom it has such

203. KHA III, p.207f (1897)  
204. A, p.125 (1895)  
205. Karg BW, p.83 (1895)

206. PIII, p.176 (1914)  
207. PIII, p.265 (1915)

powerful traditional connotations, it should not be assumed that it had acquired a more traditionally "Christian" meaning for Hofmannsthal himself. In "Die Idee Europa" he writes, "Der Gottesgedanke hat sein tieferes Wesen darin, dass alle Mannigfaltigkeit und Gegensätze der Welt in ihm zur Einheit gelangen ... daher umschwebt ihn Friede, Sicherheit, allumfassender Reichtum."<sup>208</sup> The essential element is still unity and the overcoming of distinctions, even the distinction between opposites. Hofmannsthal's concept of the divine is no closer to that of orthodox theology than in his earlier years, and has the same all-embracing character as then.

The supreme expression of this theme of oneness with and in God is found in "Die Statuen", with its final question, "Wenn das Unerreichliche sich speist aus meinem Innern und das Ewige aus mir seine Ewigkeit sich aufbaut, was ist dann noch zwischen der Gottheit und mir?"<sup>209</sup> Man and God seem to have exchanged their traditional roles, so that God has become dependent on man. Elsewhere, Hofmannsthal asks, "Wer umgrenzt einen Menschen? ... Ein Mensch und ein Gott, wo ist die Grenze?"<sup>210</sup> The fluidity of the concept, the fact that it merges continually with others, is an essential part of it, and clear distinctions are impossible.

In an experience such as that described in "Die Statuen", it is the reality encountered which matters, and the words used in the attempt to communicate it may seem

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208. PIII, p.378 (1916)  
209. PIII, p.42 (?)

210. PII, p.143 (1905)

unimportant. People may, like Balzac's characters, "suchen und finden Gott, ob sie ihn beim Namen nennen oder nicht."<sup>211</sup> But from the beginning Hofmannsthal is very much aware of the power of the word itself, referring to the creation of "mächtiger vielbeschwörender Zauberworte, deren letztes, einfachstes Gott weiss, Gott ist."<sup>212</sup> From this results not only its suitability for wartime exhortations, but also his own need to make use of it. The word is powerful but vague, one among a number of "fast grenzenlose Begriffe" and "ungeheuren aber vagen Worten" to which a writer may give life.<sup>213</sup> For Hofmannsthal, in fact, the concept would surely lose its power if it acquired a specific and rigid definition.

The passage from the study of Hugo to which reference has just been made suggests that the artist has a special insight into the divine nature and a special function. There are paintings, too, in which one sees "wie Gottes grosse wesenlose Natur einem tiefsinnigen Künstler vorkommt."<sup>214</sup> But the poet in particular has as his medium the words which are "Engel und Boten Gottes"<sup>215</sup> and "versiegelte Gefängnisse des göttlichen Pneuma, der Wahrheit,"<sup>216</sup> and he is able to revive their former symbolic power. The clearest expression of the artist's special relationship to the divine is, however, Hofmannsthal's Beethoven speech, where the references to God are remarkably frequent, reflecting his desire to convey the depth and power of Beethoven's music. Beethoven

211. PII, p.394 (1908)  
 212. A, p.104 (1893)  
 213. PI, p.336 (1901)

214. PI, p.212 (1894)  
 215. A, p.126 (1895)  
 216. A, p.105 (1893)

is "Stellvertreter des Menschengeschlechtes", and his function "dass er hinaufgehe vor Gott, wie Moses, und Gott von Angesicht zu Angesicht sehe."<sup>217</sup> Schiller's aim is described as, "den Prozess der Menschen führen vor Gott,"<sup>218</sup> and both he and Beethoven are taking over the role of the old prophets. The artist is also called to express the divine reality in a human medium, whether music or words, bringing back from God's presence "das Wort des Lebens ... das Wort, das selber Gott ist: die unmittelbare Magie"<sup>219</sup> and striving for "ein Aussagen von Gott."<sup>220</sup> He thus acts as mediator between God and man, in both directions.

All this, however, tells us little of what God is like, being mainly concerned with the relationship of the divine to man and the world. Even this is problematic, for the "relationship" sometimes appears to be in fact identity. We are told that "das Göttliche sich unmittelbar in unserer Nähe offenbart,"<sup>221</sup> and that God wants to be known.<sup>222</sup> Yet he (if one can use the term for something so impersonal) is known only indirectly, symbolically, or through involvement in life and its sufferings, in which he is present as some kind of ordering and uniting power.

Even in Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater we find the same picture, of which unity is a central element. This does not only emerge from the words of the Beggar, who finds himself "bei Gott in aller Dinge Mitt."<sup>223</sup> "Weisheit" also addresses her prayer to:

217. PIV, p.16 (1920)

218. PIV, p.18

219. PIV, p.19

220. PIV, p.22

221. A, p.13 (1922)

222. A, p.34 (1922)

223. KHA X, p.50 (1922)

Du aber, Leben über allem Leben,  
Du wunderbar Gericht, das in den Dingen ruht"<sup>224</sup>

and O du, des Namen ich vor Zittern jetzt nicht nenne ...  
Du, der du Alles bist."<sup>225</sup>

She even hesitates to use the name "God". Hofmannsthal himself admits that this God is quite different from the traditional figure of the Prologue. Writing to Fritz Viehweg to explain why the "Meister" did not appear in a later version, he says, "Jener Gott, zu dem sich im Höhepunkt des Spiels jenes Gebet der Weisheit aufschwingt, kann nicht als eine naive Gestalt im Vorspiel sichtbar gemacht werden."<sup>226</sup> In trying here to express the deepest spiritual truths, Hofmannsthal inevitably depicts the divine reality as he himself sees it, something which cannot be represented by a figure on stage any more than by an abstract theological concept.

In the first section of this chapter the object of Hofmannsthal's faith was described as an "other reality",<sup>227</sup> and there is a close connection between this spiritual dimension and the idea of the divine explored here. The fundamental idea of oneness with all life and universal immanence is found in both concepts. The spiritual element both unites external phenomena and overcomes personal isolation. Hofmannsthal discovers during his visit to Greece that everything around is "so gesondert und so verbunden ... durch den Geist selbst,"<sup>228</sup> and on another occasion he experiences "Einsamkeit, Angst des Individuums - und die völlige Überwindung beider durch den Geist."<sup>229</sup>

224. KHA X, p.47

225. KHA X, p.58

226. Quoted in: Nehring, Die Tat bei Hofmannsthal, p.145 (1926)

227. See pp. 21ff above

228. PIV, p.154 (1922)

229. PIV, p.259 (1925)

The divine ordering power behind worldly events can equally well be described as "das Geistige, Mächtige, welches dem Allgemeinen lebenerhaltend innewohnt."<sup>230</sup> Not only do the two spheres have much in common, but an awareness of the spiritual realm is a prerequisite of religion. Hofmannsthal refers to "unserer geistigen Welt (ohne welche die religiöse nicht sein kann)."<sup>231</sup>

Like the divine reality itself, the spiritual dimension cannot be known through reason. The "Höheres, Geistiges, Allgemeines" which is behind the action of Der Turm cannot be perceived rationally, but only through the imagination.<sup>232</sup> Dogmatism has no place in this realm, but rather seeking and questioning.<sup>233</sup> In fact the spiritual in man involves him in a continuous quest for reality, and will not be satisfied with anything less: "Der Geist sucht das Wirkliche, der Ungeist haftet am Unwirklichen."<sup>234</sup> In another sense it must pass beyond reality, for "Geist ist überwundene Wirklichkeit. Was sich von der Wirklichkeit absentiert ist nicht Geist."<sup>235</sup> This same statement stresses, however, that without this confrontation with reality the spiritual cannot exist. Finally we are told that reality is itself "geistige Schöpfung".<sup>236</sup> Some of this apparent contradiction is due to the fact that "reality" has two meanings. While it normally refers to the world of everyday life, it can also signify a higher spiritual reality, in comparison with which the everyday world appears unreal, merely a symbol of the other. Yet it

230. PI, p.384 (1901)  
231. PIV, p.316 (1926)  
232. Burckhardt BW, p.140  
(1923)

233. A, p.43 (1922)  
234. A, p.35 (1922)  
235. A, p.44 (1922)  
236. PIV, p.315 (1926)

is clear that the relationship between the two must be a close one, and the necessary involvement of the spiritual in the world is borne out by the fact that, like the divine,<sup>237</sup> it is known through suffering. "Was Geist ist, erfasst nur der Bedrängte."<sup>238</sup>

Closely connected is the question of the relationship between the spiritual and the material. On the one hand there is a situation of conflict, for the spiritual "gerät in einen Streit mit der Materie" wherever it is established.<sup>239</sup> On the other hand it cannot survive in isolation: "Im Höchstvergeistigten noch ist es die Naivetät, das irrational Körperhafte, wodurch das Geistige Bestand hat."<sup>240</sup> We are told that "in Wahrheit ist Geist das dem Leben unbedingt Verantwortliche, so hoch er sich auch über das Leben erhebe."<sup>241</sup> It is hard, however, to reconcile this responsibility to life with the claim that not only "kann das Geistige seiner Natur nach in das alltägliche Dasein nicht einbezogen werden", but "es will und soll ja dieses Dasein aufheben."<sup>242</sup> The superiority of the spiritual certainly stands out from these statements, whether its relationship to the material world appears as interpenetration, transcendence, or conflict. This same problem has also emerged in our consideration of the divine, and it will become even more acute when Hofmannsthal's outlook is examined from the point of view of mysticism.

Vagueness of definition is of course as much a potential source of confusion for the words "Geist" and

237. See pp.45f above  
238. A, p.37 (1922)  
239. PII, p.416 (1910)

240. A, p.43 (1922)  
241. PIV, p.143 (1922)  
242. PIII, p.329 (1916)

"geistig" as it is for "Gott", not only in Hofmannsthal's writings, but in much of contemporary German literature. Michael Hamburger has described it as one of the "established phantom words"<sup>243</sup> and attempted to pinpoint some of its shifting meanings, ranging from plain intelligence to the numinously spiritual.<sup>244</sup> It is clearly another word which has great evocative power, and which invariably conveys something above the level of ordinary life. Hofmannsthal also seeks, however, to give it religious associations, for instance by the subtle transformation of a Bible verse, "Wo aber der Geist der Herr ist, da ist die Freiheit."<sup>245</sup> In Hofmannsthal's view of the nature of reality there is no distinction between the realm of the spiritual in general and that of religion, and the word "Geist", which recurs so frequently as part of his ideal of human culture, in fact expresses much the same ideas as more specifically religious terms. "God" and "spiritual reality" often seem to be interchangeable, expressing the same basic concept even though the terminology varies in different contexts.

I have therefore shown how the central concept of Hofmannsthal's religious outlook is that of a spiritual dimension underlying and at the same time transcending the phenomenal reality of everyday experience, a dimension characterised by unity, harmony, timelessness and freedom from material causality. It is experienced through deep involvement with the world around, which expresses it in

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243. From Prophecy to Exorcism, p.22

244. Ibid., p.85

245. PIV, p.44 (1921). cf. II Corinthians 3, v.17, "Wo aber der Geist des Herrn ist, da ist Freiheit."



symbolic form, but cannot be grasped by reason or precisely defined. This conviction about the nature of reality, arising initially out of moments of intuitive vision, is present throughout Hofmannsthal's works, but it is from the turn of the century onwards that specifically religious language begins to play a significant role in his expression of it. There is a very marked increase in the use of such language during and after the war years, when he is consciously seeking the means to awaken an awareness of the spiritual realm in others.

The unity of all things is one of the most important elements in this concept of reality, and this points to the connection between Hofmannsthal's outlook and that of mysticism. When his ideas are considered in the context of mysticism, the complex relationship of the divine and the human, and of spiritual and material reality, does become clearer, as does also the nature of the implicit problems. This is therefore the purpose of the next chapter.

## II. Hofmannsthal and Mysticism

### 1. What is mysticism?

Much has been written about Hofmannsthal's mysticism, and many critics have seen it as fundamental to his writings. Hestermann considers that Hofmannsthal's "Weltverstehen sich auf die Versöhnung der Gegensätze und die immanente Einheit alles Seienden richtet," and that his experience of this unity was of an essentially mystical nature,<sup>1</sup> while Metzeler claims that, "mit Mystik ist letztlich alles und jedes in seinem Werk in Beziehung zu bringen."<sup>2</sup> Mysticism can be seen as an essential element in every category of Hofmannsthal's work. Borchardt, for example, describes his lyric poems as "aus der göttlichen Entzückung in das Herz der Dinge entstanden,"<sup>3</sup> whereas Exner is concerned with the essays when he writes, "Der sogenannte mystische Moment harmonisiert und orchestriert das karge prosaische Grundschema."<sup>4</sup> Hofmannsthal himself asks, "Kann uns die Komödie schmackhaft sein ohne ein Hauch von Mystizismus?"<sup>5</sup>

Both Hestermann and Metzeler emphasize the need for a wide definition of mysticism, and Hestermann considers that the basic definition is that given by Evelyn Underhill: "the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order, whatever be the theological formula under which that order

1. Das mystische Element im Werke Hugo von Hofmannsthals, p.1

2. Ursprung und Krise von Hofmannsthals Mystik, p.24

3. Prosa I, p.152

4. Schweizer Monatshefte, 41, p.192

5. A, p.77

is understood."<sup>6</sup> We have certainly found this tendency in Hofmannsthal's works, and a wide definition is clearly needed in view of the undefined nature of his religious concepts and his distrust of any systematic theology. Indeed, since mystical experience by all accounts defies verbal expression, it seems wise to be rather wary of all definitions. But a closer examination of what mysticism actually is can avoid some of the confusion often found in discussions of its relevance to Hofmannsthal.

Basic to any concept of mysticism is the experience known as "unio mystica". Analyses of this tend to concentrate either on the subject, the mystic himself, and offer some kind of psychological interpretation; or on the object, that with which he is united, whatever it may be - a division which seems singularly inappropriate when describing a state in which all dualities are overcome. For a full account it is obviously necessary to consider both: that is, in the present case, to discover both the nature of Hofmannsthal's mystical experience and the identity of the object which comes to be known. One fundamental question in considering these aspects is that of the relationship of Hofmannsthal's mysticism to aesthetic and religious experience.

Mystical writers use many devices in their attempt to express the inexpressible. Symbolism, allegory and realism are mingled together, and paradox and tautology abound. To the writer's problems of expression must be added the reader's problems of interpretation: for instance, the

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6. Mysticism, p.x

religious beliefs of the interpreter will often determine whether a particular passage is taken allegorically or literally. It is therefore important not to look at a piece of mystical literature in isolation from its background, when it can easily become distorted. The difficulty where Hofmannsthal is concerned is that his mysticism is not presented within the framework of any single system of belief; in fact he draws on the widest variety of religious, philosophical and psychological material in his attempts to express and elucidate both his experience and the convictions arising from it. Somehow these diverse elements must be reconciled in a way consistent with his development as revealed in his works.

Seyppel in his article draws a distinction between the absolute and the relative mystic: "Der absolute Mystiker inspiriert sich am Mystischen, wird Heiliger und verschwindet aus unserem Blickfeld; der relative Mystiker inspiriert sich an Mystik, wird nicht Heiliger, aber schöpferischer Schriftsteller."<sup>7</sup> If the definition of an "absolute mystic" involves his disappearance behind a veil of silence, we may well ask how we would know that one had ever existed. Certainly those who are generally considered the greatest mystics seem to have found no difficulty in combining their sainthood with the literary expression of their experience: one need only think of St. Teresa of Avila or St. John of the Cross. In fact in most cases mysticism is combined not only with literary but also with practical activity: the mystic seeks to communicate to

7. DVJS, 35, p.164

others the love of God which he has experienced in union with him. Tauler even claims that the state of mystical contemplation should fill up no more than an hour of the mystic's day, and is critical of those whose desire is only to enjoy permanently the delights of union with God. Nor is this combination of mysticism and involvement in the world confined to Christianity, with its traditional emphasis on social concern; it is found even in eastern religions, with their fatalistic attitude to the evils of earthly life. The ideal of Mahayana Buddhism, for example, is not the attainment of Nirvana, but its renunciation after attainment in order to return to the world and lead one's fellow men to salvation.

In spite of this, one finds many references to "der absolute", "reine" or "echte Mystiker", and to the "true mystic", as Evelyn Underhill calls him. They are particularly frequent in Metzeler's Ursprung und Krise von Hofmannsthals Mystik and Hederer's Mystik und Lyrik, and also in Hestermann, although he does point out the link between the "vita activa" and the "vita meditativa", and relates this to the way Hofmannsthal's "Der Zurückgekehrte" finds through mysticism a new strength for practical affairs.<sup>8</sup> The danger of such terms is their implication that the mysticism of lesser mortals, who do not rise to the heights of sainthood, is not "genuine". There is of course a difference between the man who is primarily a mystic, devoted to the religious life, and who writes merely in order to communicate to others the insights he

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8. Op. cit., pp.97ff

has gained, and the man who is primarily a writer, for whom mystical insights are simply one aspect, however important an aspect, of the personal outlook expressed in his writings. But this difference is grossly exaggerated when such a writer, or indeed any other secular mystic, is contrasted with some ideal "absolute" mystic, totally removed from the sphere of earthly activity. Such a state would seem from the point of view of most mystics to be not only impossible to attain in this life, but even undesirable, unless for the sake of purely selfish enjoyment. But the mystic claims to have received a vision of the ultimate foundation and meaning of life, something in which selfishness has no part: the experience is rather that of the loss of self in any ordinary sense.

Such generalised statements are clearly inadequate when dealing with such a complex subject, but the fact that they can be made at all presupposes a considerable common element in mysticism's many and varied manifestations. All writers agree on the fundamental nature of the "unio mystica", in which Underhill's harmony with the transcendental order is experienced to the point of identity. It is, however, begging the question to say that this union is with God. Mystical experience is independent of the dogmatic context within which it is presented, and demands no specific religious or intellectual framework. In order to give expression to his experience and be able to communicate it, or in order to come to a rational understanding of it himself, the mystic makes use of the terminology in which his own beliefs, or those of the community in which he finds himself, are normally expressed.

Alternatively, he may choose a poetic form of expression, preserving the irrationality of the experience. But this is incidental to the fundamental experience of the absorption of one's individuality into a wider reality.

It should, however, be borne in mind that this wider reality with which the mystic is united is not necessarily the same reality in every case. There is a distinction between experiences which are described primarily as union with the totality of nature, and those which are seen as union with a personal God, or with an impersonal absolute, during which the natural world is left behind. It is of course possible that a religious person who has a "natural" mystical experience of this first kind may find the experience so overwhelming that he concludes it must be an experience of God, and in such ways the mystic's choice of terminology may help to obscure real differences. If the common element in mystical experience is the loss of the self as it becomes united with something greater, other elements, including the nature of that something, may differ. R.C. Zaehner, who seems to be alone in pointing this out, comments:

This conquest of the ego by another unconscious "centre" was formerly rightly called possession ... Now, if we grant that this state is one of possession either by an external agency (angel, devil, etc.) or by an internal "autonomous complex", there is no reason to believe that this agency must in all cases be the same ... The differing nature of the agency would account for<sup>9</sup> the distressingly various "fruits" of the ecstasies.

Since this agency, which I have earlier described from a different viewpoint as the object of the experience, may

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9. Mysticism, sacred and profane, p.102

vary, its nature clearly cannot determine the validity of a particular mystical experience or the degree to which it is typical. The common characteristics of mystical experience leave the question of its object wide open, though certain very general beliefs are implied.

One is the claim that, for such union to be possible, man in his innermost self must be of the same nature as the transcendental reality with which he is united. His aim then becomes the discovery of this true inner self and identification with it. (This is sometimes linked with a belief in a pre-existential state of union with the divine.) Even Christian mystics seem to share this belief in the "divine spark of the soul", as Eckhart called it. Where mysticism is of a pantheistic nature, man is seen as essentially one with the whole universe. The implication is also there, however, that as the true reality is this underlying unity, there is something unreal about the phenomena of the world themselves.

William James lists four characteristics of mystical states:<sup>10</sup>

1. Ineffability.
2. Noetic quality. The mystic has gained not just an enriching experience, but new insights and understanding.
3. Transiency.
4. Passivity. The mystic has a sense of being "grasped and held by a superior power", or even of "the abdication of the ego to another centre", as

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10. The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp.371f



Zaehner puts it.<sup>11</sup>

Related to this is a characteristic which F.C. Happold adds to the list: the conviction that the ego is not the true self, but rather that the true self is something universal and divine. He also refers to the sense of timelessness involved in the experience, and the resolution of every duality in an all-embracing oneness, including those between man and deity, and good and evil.<sup>12</sup>

Those who demand something more of mysticism than the features outlined above turn out to be onesided in their emphasis; for example, Evelyn Underhill's book may be general in theory, but in practice it concentrates on Christian mysticism. It will be seen that all these features are to be found in some degree in Hofmannsthal's mysticism.

## 2. Mystical characteristics in Hofmannsthal's works

We have already seen that the concept of oneness is fundamental throughout Hofmannsthal's works and is inseparable from his understanding of spiritual reality.<sup>13</sup> He states:

Als junger Mensch sah ich die Einheit der Welt, das Religiöse, in ihrer Schönheit; die vielfältige Schönheit aller Wesen ergriff mich, die Kontraste, und dass alle doch auf einander Bezug hatten. Später war es das Einzelne und die hinter der schönen Einheit wirkenden Kräfte, das ich darzustellen mich gedrungen fühlte, aber von dem Gefühl der Einheit liess ich nie ab.<sup>14</sup>

In his early years he writes of experiences such as, "Ich

11. Mysticism, sacred and profane, p.102

12. Mysticism, pp.46-50

13. See for example pp.20, 31, 45, 48f and 52 above.

14. A, p.234

föhle das Leben wieder sehr stark und die grosse Einheit aller seienden Dinge, und auch die Einheit der Vergangenheit mit der Gegenwart."<sup>15</sup> Later statements are more theoretical in nature, for example, "Der Gottesgedanke hat sein tieferes Wesen darin, dass alle Mannigfaltigkeit und Gegensätze der Welt in ihm zur Einheit gelangen."<sup>16</sup>

This emphasis is in tune with the ideas of the time, and need not be interpreted in terms of mystical experience. Many of Hofmannsthal's early statements can be seen as describing a unified totality of the purely material world, such as was presented by Mach's phenomenalism, and all conform to the general synthetic and relativistic trend of contemporary philosophy, as is illustrated by a passage such as, "ich glaube, wir haben diese Unterscheidung zwischen Aussen und Innen, zwischen Kern und Schale, von uns abgetan, und sie mit anderen Dualismen bei den hinter uns liegenden Jahrhunderten liegenlassen."<sup>17</sup> But Hofmannsthal's rejection of antithetical thinking as outmoded is never based primarily on an appeal to philosophical ideas: his conviction is the product of his own inner experience. He writes to Andrian that, "mein inneres Leben macht aus Menschen, Empfindungen, Gedanken und Büchern eine wirre Einheit, ... und man spürt auf einmal, dass die Scheidung von Geist und Sinnen, Geist und Herz, Denken und Tun eine äusserliche und willkürliche ist."<sup>18</sup>

During the 1890s references to this essential unity of all that exists abound, not only in letters where

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15. Karg BW, p.73 (1895)  
16. PIII, p.378 (1916)

17. A, p.330  
18. BI, p.94

Hofmannsthal is seeking to convey to his friends the way in which he experiences the world, as in those to Karg and Andrian quoted above, but particularly in his poetic works. In poems such as "Lebenslied"<sup>19</sup> or "Gute Stunde"<sup>20</sup> it is an underlying conviction; in others it is more directly spelt out, as in the last three stanzas of "Manche freilich."<sup>21</sup> Claudio in Der Tor und der Tod speaks of his boyhood when he "meinte aufzuschweben in das All,"<sup>22</sup> and Death confirms that this experience is an element in "jeder wahrhaft grossen Stunde" of a human life, when "du, hingebend dich im grossen Reigen,/ Die Welt empfindest als dein eigen."<sup>23</sup> The youth in "Der Jüngling und die Spinne" sees himself reflected in everything around while in his initial intoxicated state, but does not lose this sense of oneness on his awakening to the true nature of life. This indeed occurs only because he participates in the suffering of the insect:

Vor meinen Augen tut sich die Gewalt,  
 Sie tut sich schmerzhaft mir im Herzen innen, 24  
 Sie hat an jeder meiner Fibern Halt."

This vision of unity is a recurring theme in Das kleine Welttheater, and in "Ad me ipsum" Hofmannsthal sees the line, "Ein-Wesen ist daran wir uns entzücken" as the key to this work.<sup>25</sup>

There is of course no direct evidence in these poetic works that the underlying conviction of a unified reality has its roots in mystical experience, though the letters of the period make clear how much it was an essential part of Hofmannsthal's personal perception of the world. He does,

19. GLD, p.12f

20. GLD, p.79

21. GLD, p.19

22. KHA III, p.69

23. KHA III, p.71

24. GLD, p.38

25. A, p.225

however, indicate in an essay written in 1894 that he saw the creative process as the outcome of a mystical illumination: "dieser plötzlichen blitzartigen Erleuchtung, in der wir einen Augenblick lang den grossen Weltzusammenhang ahnen, schauernd die Gegenwart der Idee spüren, dieses ganzen mystischen Vorganges, der uns die Metapher leuchtend und real hinterlässt."<sup>26</sup> The word "mystisch" occurs in a number of essays written at about this time, sometimes in a very loose sense which probably simply reflects contemporary usage, as in "Gestalten mit einer fast mystischen Traurigkeit in den sehnsüchtigen Augen".<sup>27</sup> Sometimes, however, as in the description above of the birth of the metaphor, it indicates that a new perception has been given of the nature of the totality of things: the "noetic quality" identified by William James.<sup>28</sup> Even Swinburne's eroticism can open up a new understanding of life, for it is "so mystischer Eindringlichkeit, dass er im Bilde der Liebesrätsel die ganzen Rätsel des Lebens aufzufassen scheint."<sup>29</sup>

Such references reveal an acceptance of the validity and significance of mystical illumination and of its tendency to issue in artistic expression. The essays of the succeeding decade, however, seem to take over from the poetry of the early years as the medium through which Hofmannsthal's conviction of the unity of all things is expressed, and the claim "dass wir und die Welt nichts verschiedenes sind"<sup>30</sup> is a recurring theme. In particular

26. PI, p.191  
 27. PI, p.194  
 28. See p.63 above

29. PI, p.119  
 30. PII, p.105

four essays of this period give accounts of experiences that are clearly mystical in character, though in only one is the evocation of this the primary aim. In the case of the Chandos letter, indeed, Hofmannsthal emphasises that his motivation in writing it was not the desire to communicate his inner experience: "ich ... bekam Lust, etwas in diesem Sprechton [des 16. Jahrhunderts] zu machen und der Gehalt, den ich, um nicht kalt zu wirken, einem eigenen inneren Erlebnis, einer lebendigen Erfahrung entlehnen musste, kam dazu."<sup>31</sup> The impact of the experience on the person concerned and the strength of the convictions about the nature of reality which flow from it nevertheless stand out very clearly in all these essays.

Chandos writes of his earlier years, when he felt himself to be identified with the whole of nature and all opposites to be united in an all-embracing whole: "Mir erschien damals in einer Art von andauernder Trunkenheit das ganze Dasein als eine grosse Einheit: geistige und körperliche Welt schien mir keinen Gegensatz zu bilden, ebensowenig höfisches und tierisches Wesen, Kunst und Unkunst, Einsamkeit und Gesellschaft; in allem fühlte ich Natur ... und in aller Natur fühlte ich mich selber."<sup>32</sup> The isolated moments of revelation of his subsequent experience still involve an awareness of a "mich und die ganze Welt durchwebende Harmonie"<sup>33</sup> and of an overwhelming "Gegenwart des Unendlichen."<sup>34</sup> His account of the rats in the cellar is a striking expression of the absorption of

31. BII, p.100

32. PII, p.10f

33. PII, p.18

34. PII, p.17

the self into another reality.<sup>35</sup> The extent to which Chandos is the passive recipient of a revelation which is quite outside his control also emerges very clearly as he describes himself riding through his estates, looking longingly for any humble object which might become the source of a fresh vision.

The theme of identification with animals also occurs in "Das Gespräch über Gedichte", where, because of the essential oneness of humanity and the world, the man is able to identify with the animal he sacrifices and experience "dass sich sein Dasein, für die Dauer eines Atemzugs, in dem fremden Dasein aufgelöst hatte."<sup>36</sup> The transience of the experience is stressed. Gabriel continues, "Das ist die Wurzel aller Poesie," and in this essay Hofmannsthal is concerned to show how "perfect poems" are born out of such moments, moments in which "was niemals da war, nie sich gab, jetzt ist es da, jetzt gibt es sich, ist Gegenwart, mehr als Gegenwart; was niemals zusammen war, jetzt ist es zugleich, ist es beisammen, schmilzt ineinander die Glut, den Glanz und das Leben."<sup>37</sup> Hofmannsthal clearly sees the most powerful poetry as flowing out of experience of a mystical nature, and implies the need for such a loss of self through Goethe's injunction, "Stirb und werde!"<sup>38</sup>

The "Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" contain several descriptions of such momentary revelations, particularly the last two, where the visual impact of colour, in art or nature, becomes the vehicle through which "das Wortlose,

35. PII, p.16f  
36. PII, p.104

37. PII, p.112  
38. PII, p.111

das Ewige, das Ungeheure sich hergibt."<sup>39</sup> Through Van Gogh's pictures his awareness of disintegration in himself and society is replaced by a new sense of wholeness and purpose. The sudden inexpressible vision of unity is made more explicit in his account of watching a ship in the harbour: it is "Vergangenheit, Zukunft, aufschäumend in unerschöpflicher Gegenwart," and "dies heilige Geniessen meiner selbst und zugleich der Welt ... dies Doppelte, dies Verschlungene, dies Aussen und Innen, dies ineinanderschlagende Du."<sup>40</sup> Both temporal and spatial divisions have been swallowed up in the all-embracing wholeness.

By far the fullest account of such an experience is, however, to be found in "Die Statuen", which describes Hofmannsthal's experience while looking at the statues of the "Korai" in the Acropolis museum, during his visit to Greece in 1908. Throughout the account there is a growing conviction of oneness; with the statues: "Es war ein Verwobensein mit diesen, ein gemeinsames Irgendwohinströmen";<sup>41</sup> with his surroundings: "Ist denn nicht in der gleichen Weise auch der Vorhang dort, der leise weht, ein wehender Teil von mir?"<sup>42</sup>; and finally with God himself: "wenn das Unerreichliche sich speist aus meinem Innern und das Ewige aus mir seine Ewigkeit sich aufbaut, was ist dann noch zwischen der Gottheit und mir?"<sup>43</sup> Hofmannsthal emphasises the timelessness of the experience: "Nichts von der Bedingtheiten der Zeit konnte anklingen in der Hingenommenheit, an die ich mich verloren hatte; sie war dauerlos und

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39. PII, p.355

40. PII, p.355

41. PIII, p37

42. PIII, p.39

43. PIII, p.42

das, wovon sie erfüllt war, trug sich ausserhalb der Zeit zu."<sup>44</sup> Yet there is also an awareness that, "Ich sehe dies nicht zum erstenmal, auf irgendwelcher Weise, in irgendwelcher Welt bin ich vor diesen gestanden, habe ich mit diesen irgendwelche Gemeinschaft gepflogen,"<sup>45</sup> implying some kind of pre-existential union. At the same time the experience is essentially transient and outside his control: "Da verlischt schon dies in ihre versteinernen Gesichter hinein, es verlischt und ist fort."<sup>46</sup>

In other aspects, too, the experience fulfils the pattern typical of mysticism.<sup>47</sup> The loss of self leads ultimately to the discovery of the true inner self: "Dieses Selbstvergessen ist ein seltsam deutliches Geschehen ... Ungemessen mich abwerfend, auflösend, werde ich immer stärker: unzerstörbar bin ich im Kern."<sup>48</sup> Hofmannsthal also becomes aware of the true reality behind the superficial, phenomenal reality of the statues themselves: "Diese Oberfläche ist ja gar nicht da - sie entsteht durch ein beständiges Kommen zu ihr, aus unerschöpflichen Tiefen."<sup>49</sup> Like all such experiences, it is beyond verbal expression, "ein namenloses Erschrecken"<sup>50</sup> and "dieser unsagbare Aufschwung."<sup>51</sup>

Some of these features have a special significance in Hofmannsthal's works, for instance the belief in pre-existence, a concept which in western thought is found particularly in Neo-Platonism. The individual existence is

44. PIII, p.37

45. PIII, p.36

46. PIII, p.37

47. See pp.63f above

48. PIII, p.40f

49. PIII, p.41

50. PIII, p.36

51. PIII, p.37



seen as emanating from some kind of universal life-force or spirit with which it was previously united. In achieving unity with the universal spirit, the mystic is simply returning to that from which he came and to which he ultimately belongs. Hofmannsthal's concept of pre-existence is original in that the state extends actually into the period of life on earth, which begins with a time of absorption in the "Sphäre der Totalität"<sup>52</sup> before the individual becomes aware of his role in the sphere of social interaction. There are parallels here to Wordsworth's ideas as expressed in the "Ode on intimations of Immortality", though for him the early experience "of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower"<sup>53</sup> is only a rapidly fading memory of the reality known before birth.<sup>54</sup>

Hofmannsthal also attaches great importance to the discovery of a timeless realm, in which past, present and future are one and the transience which characterises the things of this world is overcome. Thus the problem of "die Unbegreiflichkeit der Zeit: eigentliche Antinomie von Sein und Werden"<sup>55</sup> is resolved. Hofmannsthal describes Das Bergwerk zu Falun as an expression of the soul's attempt, "der Zeit zu entfliehen in das Überzeitliche", as it is drawn into "das Reich der Worte worin alles Gegenwart."<sup>56</sup> Although this suggests that it is poetry which has the power to create this timeless realm, for Hofmannsthal this very power of poetic language is essentially something mystical. He writes in a note on Andreas of "das mystische

52. A, p.225

53. Poetical Works, Vol.IV,  
p.284

54. Ibid., p.281

55. A, p.217

56. A, p.241

Element der Poesie: die Überwindung der Zeit."<sup>57</sup>

The experiences Hofmannsthal describes, and which form the background to much of his early poetry, fall clearly into the category of "natural" mystical experience, involving union with the totality of nature rather than with a personal God or an impersonal absolute. In view, however, of the nature of Hofmannsthal's concept of spiritual reality and of the divine, as explored in Chapter I, this does not prevent him from seeing his mysticism as something fundamentally religious. The core of his understanding of religion is after all the vision of all reality as one.

There is no reason why this should be made explicit in poems or essays which are in no way setting out to analyse the underlying experience. Lord Chandos, of course, specifically rejects a religious interpretation of what has happened to him, but admits that this is part of the personal crisis he is undergoing, during which earthly as well as religious concepts have lost their meaning.<sup>58</sup> The aim of this essay is to explore the style of the period; that of "Das Gespräch über Gedichte" to say something about poetic creativity; and that of the "Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" to say something about contemporary European society, and the religious implications of mystical experience are therefore not appropriate or relevant. There are, however, hints of a spiritual dimension: the argument in "Das Gespräch über Gedichte" hinges on the understanding of ritual sacrifice, and the "Zurückgekehrter" relates his experience to Rama Krishna's awakening, "das Erlebnis, das

57. KHA XXX, p.111

58. PII, pp.11f

ihn aus den Menschen aussonderte und einen Heiligen aus ihm machte."<sup>59</sup> In "Die Statuen", where Hofmannsthal is simply communicating his own experience of Greece and the understanding gained from it, the religious aspect is made very clear through his final identification with the divine reality.

### 3. Mysticism and involvement

Hofmannsthal's later writings are of course far less concerned with the direct expression of mystical experience and insights. He no longer focuses on the self either in isolation or as merging into the unified totality of existence, but rather on the sphere of social interaction and active involvement in life, through which the self discovers a new individual identity within the whole. Hofmannsthal's statement that in spite of his change of emphasis he never lost his sense of underlying oneness has, however, already been noted,<sup>60</sup> and Chapter I has shown how this awareness, rooted in mysticism, does indeed run throughout all his works.

For Hofmannsthal there is no conflict between mysticism and active involvement in the world: the "Zurückgekehrter", for instance, points out that his experiences of sudden illumination have brought him to the very place "wohin du auf dunklen Wegen immer gelangst, wenn du tätig und leidend lebst unter den Lebenden."<sup>61</sup> This sharing of a common goal emerges very clearly from two passages in "Ad

59. PII, p.353

61. PII, p.357

60. A, p.234 (see p.64 above)

me ipsum". The first refers to "Die Intro-version als Weg in die Existenz. (Der mystische Weg)." <sup>62</sup> The second is clearly presented as an alternative:

Der Weg zum Sozialen als Weg zum höhern Selbst: der nicht-mystische Weg.

- a) durch die Tat <sup>63</sup>
- b) durch das Werk
- c) durch das Kind

To understand how introversion can be a way into "existence", it is necessary to see this statement in the context of the quotation from Silberer's study of mysticism which follows:

Wer sich der Introversion unterzieht ... gelangt an einen Punkt, wo sich zwei Wege trennen ... Die Gefahr wird augenfällig, indem der Held zumeist einen scheinbar ganz kleinen Fehltritt tut und dann unerhörter Mühen bedarf, um diesen einzigen kleinen Fehler gutzumachen. Noch ein unrechter Schritt, und alles wäre verloren gewesen. <sup>64</sup>

Silberer postulates certain elementary psychic forces in man, which become redirected and sublimated as both the individual and humanity as a whole develop, normally a slow process. Mysticism is a short cut to the "farthest goal of sublimation", <sup>65</sup> as is indicated by its symbolism. Many symbols, such as those drawn from the sexual sphere, clearly reveal the original orientation of the impulses involved; for instance, the theme of incest with one's mother, which becomes in some mystical writings a picture of the desire for spiritual rebirth. Because the process has been so condensed, it is especially liable to remain incomplete or to become perverted.

The mystic by his introversion releases these

62. A, p.215

63. A, p.217

64. A, p.215

65. Problems of mysticism and its symbolism, p.256

fundamental powers within him, but he has entered into an ambivalent realm and may easily become trapped and enslaved by the forces which, properly directed, would carry him to his goal. The presence of such threatening forces is plainly to be felt in works such as Das Bergwerk zu Falun. Margaret Jacobs, in her essay on this play, has described it as expressing "the fascination and horror of a mind descending to a mysterious region of itself, to the mine or abyss of the self, where anonymous experience may prove to be divine or devilish."<sup>66</sup>

All mystical writings warn of the danger of falling victim to diabolic powers. Hofmannsthal himself quotes Moritz Heimann's statement that, "Der Mystiker stellt die Hingabe am höchsten, gleichgültig ob ans Gute oder ans Böse."<sup>67</sup> Silberer's two ways also refer to the potential positive or negative results of introversion. The negative possibilities he sees as magic, involving the loss of the self to one's passions which demand constant satisfaction, and even schizophrenia. He explains that, "If the libido remains suspended in the wonder realm of the inner world the man has become but a shadow for the world above."

There is, however, a positive alternative:

If the libido succeeds however in tearing itself loose again and in pressing on to the world above, then a miracle is revealed; this subterranean journey has become a fountain of youth for it, and from its apparent death there arises a new productiveness.<sup>68</sup>

In this way introversion can in theory become a "Weg in die Existenz".

66. Norman (ed.), Hofmannsthal, Studies in Commemoration, p.79

67. A, p.36

68. Op. cit., p.270

It follows that in turning away from the introverted mysticism of his earlier works, Hofmannsthal is not calling in question the validity of mystical experience as such. Rather he is working out the practical implications of a growing awareness of the dangers inherent in such an exclusive attitude. He sees these dangers, as expressed by Silberer, reflected in the situation of many characters in his early works: Oedipus, Elektra, the Emperor in Der Kaiser und die Hexe, Elis Fröbom.<sup>69</sup> Above all he has realised, "dass das mystische Erlebnis zur Onanie erniedrigt werde, wofern nicht der strenge Bezug auf das Leben gesucht,"<sup>70</sup> that is, it becomes both self-centred and fruitless.

Hofmannsthal chose his motto for "Ad me ipsum" from the lengthy passage from Gregory of Nyssa's Vita Mosis quoted by Konrad Burdach in his "Faust und Moses."<sup>71</sup> This must indicate that he felt Moses' quest for the "Urbild" to be relevant to the whole of his work. The passage, however, does not only describe the mystic way symbolised in Moses' ascent of the mountain, but places its main emphasis on his active life in the world, and so also presents a balance between these two aspects. The mystic's activity in the world is an expression of his sense of oneness with the hidden reality which underlies worldly events and is at work in them. Eckhart described this as "Wirkeinheit". The truths intuited in mystical experience need to be realised in the external world, and the desire for this realisation is reflected in Hofmannsthal's later, more

69. A, p.215f

70. DIII, p.493

71. Sitzungsberichte der Königlich-Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1912, pp.397-401

socially oriented works, with their emphasis on harmony and synthesis. He wrote to Pannwitz of his desire to bring the two spheres of the mystic's vision and everyday existence together through the medium of comedy: "in ihr kann ich meine Elemente zusammenfassen: das Einsame und das Soziale. Das Mystische und das Dialektische, Sprache nach innen und Sprache nach aussen."<sup>72</sup> The reality thus presented is one which will be satisfying to the "whole man" on whom Hofmannsthal places such emphasis.

This aspect will be explored in more detail in Chapter III, when we consider Hofmannsthal's concern with the ethics of social action and involvement and discover the close connection between his moral values and his mystical view of the nature of reality.

#### 4. Mysticism and eclecticism

Mysticism does not become a subject of Hofmannsthal's essays until the pre-existential awareness of the "Sphäre der Totalität"<sup>73</sup> has been finally left behind, and with it lyric poetry.<sup>74</sup> In this situation, Hofmannsthal begins to follow up with interest other accounts of religious experience of a mystical type, by writers such as Lafcadio Hearn, William James, Konrad Burdach and Herbert Silberer. He first mentions reading Hearn's Kokoro in a letter to Georg Franckenstein dated 27.7.1902,<sup>75</sup> and according to Michael Hamburger his copy of The Varieties of Religious Experience is dated 1908.<sup>76</sup> Ellen Ritter points out that

72. Mesa, no.5, Autumn 1955, p.26f

73. A, p.225

74. See p.67 above

75. BII, p.78

76. 'Hofmannsthals Bibliothek', Euphorion 55, 1961, p.29

Hofmannsthal's early notes in his copy of Kokoro show an interest in "den persönlich erfahrbaren psychologischen Erkenntnissen", whereas the later ones are concerned more with "den allgemeinen, grundlegenden Einsichten."<sup>77</sup> This suggests that he is at first seeking parallels to his own experience and insights, but later feels a need to interpret both in a wider context. It also coincides with his growing interest in religion in general, and his increasingly positive attitude towards it.

The context within which he comes to present these insights is, however, very wide indeed, and clearly not that of a particular established religion or mystical philosophy. He refers to Paracelsus and Böhme, Novalis and Blake; to oriental sacred writings and to psychological works. He makes use of them all as providing different symbolic expressions of the mystic's vision, in the same way as he elsewhere chooses, for instance, a historical setting because of the ideas and attitudes it symbolizes. (This eclecticism is also a reflection of his continuing interest in tracing the underlying connections between all ages and parts of the world.) He turns more often to the writings of contemporary psychologists than to the great mystics of the past, but it is of course precisely the traditional mystical writings that psychologists such as Silberer and James are trying to interpret. The point is that Hofmannsthal does not want an interpretation which is tied to traditional religious forms, but is seeking through the medium of modern psychology one that will be of

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77. Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, 1972, p.198



universal human application.

Many critics have explored the various elements assimilated by Hofmannsthal as he builds up a framework of understanding for the mystical view of reality he is seeking to express, though even when we know him to have read a particular author, it is often difficult to distinguish a conscious assimilation from a naturally similar pattern of thought. Miles, for example, in his study of Andreas, traces parallels between Hofmannsthal's view of memory and that of Bergson, Heidegger and in particular Kierkegaard,<sup>78</sup> and Lenz explores the influence of Bachofen.<sup>79</sup> Grete Schaeder has pointed out how Hofmannsthal could find in Schopenhauer the same symbolism of life as a dream, a play or a preestablished harmony which he also found in the Neo-Platonic tradition.<sup>80</sup> Many others have compared his ideas with Neo-Platonism, pointing

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78. Hofmannsthal's Novel Andreas, pp.87-96. The common core is the concept of memory as the means by which the past becomes part of the reality of the present. In pointing to the parallels between Hofmannsthal's development and Kierkegaard's scheme of three stages (the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious), Miles also stresses the link between the central role of memory in the ethical stage and Hofmannsthal's concept of "Treue".
79. Hugo von Hofmannsthals mythologische Oper "Die ägyptische Helena", p.17ff. This influence is seen particularly in Hofmannsthal's view of Helena and Menelas as representing the polar opposites of East/West, matter/spirit, amoral natural forces/human morality: however, in contrast to Bachofen, Hofmannsthal does not present the ethical and spiritual as a superior development, but depicts the union of both aspects in the marriage of Helena and Menelas.
80. 'Hugo von Hofmannsthals Weg zur Tragödie', DVJS, 1949, p.312f. She sees Hofmannsthal as seeking to unite the religious and humanistic/psychological interpretations of these symbols.

to such elements as the emphasis on the spiritual realm and the concept of pre-existence and anamnesis, and Breugelmans has summed up the relationship in his "Hofmannsthal im Platonismus der Jahrhundertwende."<sup>81</sup> Some have commented on the possible influence of Nietzsche, which has been explored in detail by Meyer-Wendt.<sup>82</sup> Others, such as Heselhaus in "Calderon und Hofmannsthal"<sup>83</sup>, have tried to define the attraction of Calderon's world-view for Hofmannsthal, as does also Ernst, for example in his Studien zum religiösen Problem im "Salzburger Grossen Welttheater" und in den "Turm"-Dichtungen Hugo von Hofmannsthals.<sup>84</sup>

Ernst's particular concern is with Hofmannsthal's interest in eastern religion, and he shows clearly the inaccuracy of categorising the later works as Christian.

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81. Hofmannsthal-Forschungen I, pp.16-35. He shows how Hofmannsthal is often closer to Plato than to later Platonic tradition, and how many of his related ideas in fact have their source in oriental philosophy or contemporary idealist thought in general.
  82. Der frühe Hofmannsthal und die Gedankenwelt Nietzsches. He identifies many echoes of Nietzsche in Hofmannsthal's early poems and essays as well as direct references to his influence in letters and notes, though in seeking parallels he tends to emphasise Hofmannsthal's concern with the process of "Werden" at the expense of the complementary aspect of "Sein".
  83. Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen, 191, pp.3-30. He points to Calderon's concern with the theme of awakening to oneself and to spiritual truth through experience of the world, emphasising however the contrast between Calderon's world with its prescribed theological framework of interpretation and that of Hofmannsthal's figures.
  84. p.204. The common element is seen not in any specific religious understanding but in the all-embracing nature of the perspective from which the world is viewed.

He himself, however, tends to view Hofmannsthal's ideas too exclusively from the perspective of oriental religion, particularly in his interpretation of Der Turm as an expression of Karma, basing this on an early note of Hofmannsthal's.<sup>85</sup> This concept of a Karma which entails that "die blosse Existenz des furchtbaren Geschehnisses 'Sigismund' wie ein Pestherd auf das ganze Land [wirkt],"<sup>86</sup> is in fact far from identical with the oriental one, according to which Karma is rather the sum of the individual's actions which determine his own future incarnations. Freny Mistry is also concerned in several of his articles with Hofmannsthal's relationship to eastern religion, but avoids the temptation to oversimplify, stressing, for example, that he is using oriental tradition to shed light on one aspect only of Sigismund's complex character.<sup>87</sup>

Many of Hofmannsthal's concepts are, like that of Karma, personal, related to but clearly diverging from a variety of possible sources, for example, that of the pre-existence of the soul. As Ernst himself points out,<sup>88</sup> this idea is dubious from a Christian point of view, even in the form in which it occurs in Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater. The souls are not called into being by the Master, but already exist, "ohne jedes Merkmal des Geschlechtes, des Alters oder der Person,"<sup>89</sup> before they are allotted their earthly bodies and roles; a picture corresponding to

85. See the above and also "Das Karma-Thema und der 'Turm'-Stoff bei Hugo von Hofmannsthal", WW, 1971, pp.14-24

86. DIII, p.426

87. "Towards Buddhahood: some remarks on the Sigismund figure in Hofmannsthal's 'Turm' plays", Modern Language Review, 1974, p.337

88. Studien zum religiösen Problem, p.27

89. KHA X, p.16

the Platonist doctrine which was condemned by the church. Such a form of existence is expressly denied by Calderon's figures, who claim on entering that, "we have no soul, no sense, no mind, no potency" and exist purely as thoughts in the mind of God, until he gives them breath.<sup>90</sup>

The pre-existence of Hofmannsthal's souls does not, however, in any way imply an eastern concept of reincarnation or transmigration of souls. He denies that this is the explanation of the soul's inner knowledge, which comes rather from its participation in a greater spiritual reality, and writes:

Ist aber mit dieser Seele alles gesagt? Hier liegt es: nicht Seelenwanderung - aber wir sind nur ein Teil von etwas, das in uns lebt, aber nicht nur in uns - wir sind wie einer in einer wandernden Schar - dies: "Cherub und grosser Herr ist unser Geist".<sup>91</sup>

Of vital importance for the whole of life is "die innere Landschaft, die die Seele aus ihrem Zustand vor der Geburt mit in die Welt bringt."<sup>92</sup> The landscape is built up of many elements, and in this idea of an aggregate Hofmannsthal's concept of the soul is close to that of the East, even though the elements are derived not from previous existences but rather from that supra-individual reality of which it is a part. In the "Ansprache gehalten im Hause des Grafen Lanckoroński", Hofmannsthal refers to "die aufgesammelte Kraft der geheimnisvollen Ahnenreihe in uns, die übereinandergetürmten Schichten der aufgestapelten überindividuellen Erinnerung."<sup>93</sup> It is this which enables us to respond to the beauty around us, and here

90. Masterpieces of the Spanish Golden Age, p.372

91. A, p.261

93. PII, p.30

92. A, p.35

Hofmannsthal seems to be clearly echoing Hearn, for whom "the first deep sensation of beauty known to the individual is not individual at all", but rather "something inherited from innumerable ancestors."<sup>94</sup> The various elements in the soul may also be in conflict and need to be reconciled, as will be seen in the discussion of Der Turm below.

Bollnow sees Hofmannsthal's mysticism as a variant of the idea of an "alles durchwaltendes Gesamtleben", which has been a characteristic of German thought since the time of Herder, and which since the Romantic movement has often been linked with mysticism,<sup>95</sup> an idea which regained prominence at the end of the nineteenth century through writers such as Nietzsche and Dilthey. Bollnow is also able to show that the interpretation of mystical experience in an aesthetic rather than a religious framework is a development within the stream of mystical thought, and the result of general cultural changes. By Hofmannsthal's time art, rather than an active existence, had come to be seen by many as the highest expression of human life. It was therefore art through which the meaning of life and the underlying life-force was to be revealed. William James wrote in 1902: "We are alive or dead to the eternal inner message of the arts according as we have kept or lost this mystical susceptibility."<sup>96</sup> We have already seen many examples of how for Hofmannsthal mystical experience is linked with aesthetic experience and creativity,<sup>97</sup> and also

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94. Kokoro, p.59

95. "Zum Lebensbegriff des jungen Hugo von Hofmannsthal", Archiv für Literatur und Volksdichtung, I, 1949, p.50

96. The Varieties of Religious Experience, p.374

97. See for example pp.67, 69 and 72 above.

the special role he attributes to the artist in revealing the divine reality.<sup>98</sup>

Hofmannsthal also, of course, draws very widely on Christian teaching and symbolism, and clearly sees these as one source of illumination. Such Christian elements may be the basis of a whole work, as in Jedermann and Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater; the means of adding a further dimension to a situation, as are the parallels suggested between Sigismund and Christ in Der Turm; or merely the evocative echo of a Biblical quotation in an essay.<sup>99</sup> As I have pointed out in my introduction,<sup>100</sup> many critics have traced the Christian themes in Hofmannsthal's works, making comments such as R.A. Schröder's on Die Frau ohne Schatten: "Sinn und Gehalt der transzendentalen Fuge, in der Hofmannsthal an den vier Personen seiner Märchen-erzählung den Gedanken des Opfers und der Wandlung durchführt, [sind] vollkommen christlich."<sup>101</sup> But in fact these themes: death and rebirth, sacrifice, the value of suffering, are in no way exclusively Christian. They deal with the kind of fundamental truths of human existence which are expressed in all the great religions, and are particularly emphasised in mysticism. There is nothing in Hofmannsthal's writings of the elements which are distinctive to Christianity: belief in Christ as the unique Son of God and Saviour, and in salvation and regeneration as the free gift of God through the Cross. This is of course to be expected in view of Hofmannsthal's concept of

98. See for example pp.26 and 50f above

99. e.g. PII, p.10 (quoted above, p.17f); PIV, p.44 (above, p.55)

100. See p.9 above

101. NR, 1929, II, p.588

the relation of Christianity to other religions<sup>102</sup> and his rejection of all fixed dogma.

He would, however, have been most familiar with these elements in the Christian embodiment which is part of European culture, and this was also the form in which they could be most easily communicated to fellow-Europeans. It does not necessarily follow, therefore, that the prevalence of Christian elements in his writings reflects the degree of importance he attached to them as an expression of spiritual truth. One must also avoid the trap of reading Christianity - or any other religion - into what are merely religious concepts in a general sense. It is misleading to interpret any of his works from the standpoint of any one religion, philosophy or psychological theory.

Hofmannsthal's concern with the universal elements of mystical experience inevitably means that he concentrates on the mystic's subjective experience rather than on the "object" with which unity is achieved. This latter could indeed only be identified within some specific religious or at least philosophical context, whereas the subjective state of mystical ecstasy appears to be very similar in all ages and cultures. The conclusion reached by Ada Schmidt in her examination of Hofmannsthal's mysticism is that for him the mystic's vision reveals:

another dimension of the empirical world, a dimension which interrelates the elements of life so that reality forms a meaningful whole. This dimension is alluded to by such words as "the infinite" or "the beyond", words used for their valuative connotations rather than any precisely restricted denotations.<sup>103</sup>

102. See p.15ff above

103. Neophilologus 50, 1966, p.443

We have already noted Hofmannsthal's tendency to use such words to refer to the sphere of the divine.<sup>104</sup> They are intended to conjure up the vision in the mind of the reader, not to define it, but of course what they conjure up will depend very much on his personal associations. In order to give a concrete reality to that which he is seeking to communicate, Hofmannsthal turns not to the clearly defined terminology of a specific system of thought, but to the symbolic power of living form.

Knowledge which is obtained essentially through a process of identification will inevitably present problems of verbal communication, since the degree of distance between the knower and the known is lacking which is necessary for conscious recognition and expression. So the world threatens to become "ein Reden des Unbegreiflichen zu unserer Seele, oder ein Reden unserer Seele mit sich selbst."<sup>105</sup> Hofmannsthal is of course well aware of this problem. He acknowledges that that which has been identified with the self, and so become simply a reflection of the self, must also be recognised as a separate entity, a Thou with which a relationship can be established. This applies to the material world and to other people as much as to the divine reality. Only through such a process is true union possible, union with things as they really are. This gradual realisation of the independent existence of things and people, that "die Welt besitzt sich selber,"<sup>106</sup> is an important element in Hofmannsthal's early writings.

104. See p.47 above  
105. Karg BW, p.82

106. GLD, p.38



As has already been noted, the development of his thought generally leads away from the inner world of the self towards the world of "das Einzelne", of individuation and interaction.<sup>107</sup> Introversion alone is not enough, even where mystical experience itself is concerned, as he explains in the fifth "Brief des Zurückgekehrten":

wenn alles in mir war, warum konnte ich nicht die Augen schliessen und stumm und blind eines unnennbaren Gefühles meiner selbst geniessen, warum musste ich mich auf Deck erhalten und schauen, vor mich hinschauen?<sup>108</sup>

The mystical awareness arises out of the meeting of inner potential and external reality. But God himself appears to be left out of this development, remaining inseparable from the soul of man or from the world, through which he is known as the indwelling spiritual reality. He is not perceived as having independent existence: Hofmannsthal is content with the assertion that, "wir sind nur ein Teil von etwas, das in uns lebt, aber nicht nur in uns."<sup>109</sup> "Das Unendliche"; "das Wortlose"; "das Absolute"; the pronoun required is plainly not "du" but "es". The only kind of separation from God which does occur in Hofmannsthal's works is that which in his later years is seen to be caused by society's pre-occupation with materialism, so that contact with the spiritual dimension seems to be lost, a situation most clearly presented in Der Turm. But for those who have not cut themselves off in this way, knowledge of the divine is still a matter of mystical union.

Probably the most concrete definition that can be offered is that suggested by Bollnow, who claims that

107. See p. 74 above  
108. PII, p.355

109. A, p.261

Hofmannsthal's mysticism, like that of his contemporaries, has as its object union with "das Leben", a kind of universal creative force.<sup>110</sup> Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos, for example, describes the revelation he receives through the objects of his surroundings as that of "einer Überschwelligenden Flut höherer Lebens."<sup>111</sup> This idea becomes increasingly spiritualised as the emphasis of Hofmannsthal's works shifts from "die vielfältige Schönheit aller Wesen"<sup>112</sup> to a concern with spiritual values, culminating in his demand "dass der Geist Leben wird und Leben Geist."<sup>113</sup> But it is still no more clearly defined than in the days when he could simply equate "sich selber", "Leben" and "Gott".<sup>114</sup>

Hofmannsthal is not in fact interested in considering what this spiritual or divine reality might be in itself, but only needs an awareness of its presence as a guarantee of the unity and meaningfulness of life. He affirms the existence of a spiritual element in man and a purpose within human existence, an outlook which is in fact ultimately anthropocentric. This is of course always a potential development of mysticism, with its merging of the human and the divine. Hederer, in his Mystik und Lyrik, points out that mystical thought has concerned German thinkers for centuries as a philosophy "in dem die Frage nach Sinn und Geltung Gottes zusammenfällt mit der Frage nach Sinn und Geltung des Menschen,"<sup>115</sup> and William James, who sees all religion as mystical, even puts forward the

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 110. Archiv für Literatur und Volksdichtung I, 1949, pp.50-  
 111. PII, p.15  
 112. A, p.234  
 113. PIV, p.412  
 114. Karg BW, p.83: (62  
       see p.48 above  
 115. p.116

claim that all religion is anthropocentric.<sup>116</sup> So in Hofmannsthal's exploration of mystical writings, the primary impulse is to understand man and his experience, not to learn about God. As already noted, even his "Das alte Spiel von Jedermann" argues, in defence of the continuing value of the play, not that it contains some fundamental, non-dogmatic religious truth, but that it is "menschlich absolut",<sup>117</sup> expressing the human need to strive after higher things.

The objective content of his mysticism seems ultimately to amount to a rejection of rationalism and materialism and an affirmation of some kind of spiritual dimension, in which the dualities and conflicts of the phenomenal world are resolved and its apparent chaos is unified and given meaning. This mysticism which is unanchored to any conceptually formulated understanding of the universe, whether religious, philosophical or scientific, is no isolated phenomenon but rather a typical product of current trends of thought. Francis Schaeffer, for instance, describing the effects of the contemporary reaction against an age of rigidly rationalistic thinking, shows how modern thought has evolved a kind of mysticism which is a "mysticism with nothing there."<sup>118</sup> Here there is a clear echo of Hofmannsthal's description of Chandos as a "Mystiker ohne Mystik",<sup>119</sup> a formula which Hoppe, for one, considers also sums up Hofmannsthal's own mysticism.

Kern raises the question of whether Hofmannsthal's

116. Op. cit., p.497  
117. PIII, p.115

118. The God who is there, p.55  
119. A, p.215

emphasis on the irrational threatens the objective validity of his view of reality, asking "wie weit der Durchbruch zur Wirklichkeit und in die Existenz tatsächlich in einer Form vollzogen wurde, die nicht nur subjektiv, dass heisst für das Subjekt Hofmannsthal, sondern allgemein verständlich und verbindlich war."<sup>120</sup> Hofmannsthal found a response to his ideas in spite of this potential problem because in the atmosphere created by contemporary "Lebensphilosophie" this attitude was shared by many others. It may be, however, that his disinclination to formulate any systematic and coherent framework for his mysticism is one cause of his ultimate failure to find something solid enough to stand up to the challenge of the monolithic materialism whose threatening power is felt in Der Turm.

##### 5. Mysticism and "Der Turm"

Hofmannsthal himself describes Der Turm as "mystisch".<sup>121</sup> Its effectiveness ultimately depends on the communication of a view of reality which is essentially that of mysticism, and some of the implications of such a conception of reality emerge very clearly from the play.

One obviously mystical aspect of Sigismund's experience is his sense of oneness with the universe: "Das Ganze bleibt bei mir immer und niemand wird mirs entwenden."<sup>122</sup> He identifies both with the external world and with the spiritual realm, and his relationship to each of them changes, both within the action of the play and between

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120. Zur Gedankenwelt des späten Hofmannsthal, p.26f

121. A, p.370

122. DIV, p.140

Hofmannsthal's two versions (of 1925 and 1927), but by the end of the play there is no doubt about which is primary. The dying Sigismund (of the first version) says: "Ein Mensch braucht keinen geringeren Raum als die ganze Welt, um in der Wahrheit da zu sein - aber ich habe zwanzig Jahre in einem hohlen Stein gewohnt und ein Wort kannte ich nicht: Sehnsucht. Denn wo ich bin, da dringe ich ein und bin gegenwärtig und herrsche."<sup>123</sup> It is the inner spiritual unity which is fundamental, and enables "true existence" to be attained in any situation.

This emphasis on the spiritual has been inculcated upon Sigismund by the teaching of Julian, who boasts: "Hab ich dich nicht erzogen, will sagen: gezogen nach oben, heraus gezogen aus der Tiernatur, ... und dein Angesicht nach oben gerissen zum Gewölb des Himmels, dahinter Gott wohnt?"<sup>124</sup> He expresses this idea in terms of two of the symbolic motifs which recur throughout Der Turm and in Hofmannsthal's work as a whole. The first is the picture evoked by the Renaissance Neo-Platonists of man situated midway between the animal and the divine, both of which are his own inner potentialities. The second is the implied reference in the phrase "Gewölb des Himmels" to the stars as symbols of the spiritual realm. As for another Renaissance thinker, Paracelsus, the stars symbolize fundamental powers of the human spirit, whose home is not on this earth, "der nicht in uns wohnt und seinen Stuhl in die oberen Sterne setzt."<sup>125</sup> It is the sight of the stars, in Hofmannsthal's early notes for Das Leben ein Traum,

123. DIV, p.200  
124. DIV, p.92

125. Quoted by Hofmannsthal, A, p.120

which first communicates to Sigismund the existence of spiritual reality, and gives him the desire "das Königreich zu erwerben, das über diesen Sternen ist ( ... sich ein mystisches Königreich in der Einöde schaffend),"<sup>126</sup> and the Sigismund of Der Turm clearly attaches a similar meaning to them. Right at the beginning he tells the doctor, "In mir drin ist ein Stern. Meine Seele ist heilig."<sup>127</sup> To the doctor this is a sign that spiritual depths have been awakened within him.

But in spite of this awakening, it is not clear that Julian's boast is justified. When he makes this claim, Sigismund is still in a state of confusion about his own identity - the doctor explains that, "Die Grenze ist verwirrt zwischen innen und aussen," so that "die ganze Welt auf ihm liegt"<sup>128</sup> - and about the distinction between animal and spirit. Having both these potentialities within him, he feels himself to be one with both, and has to ask, "Wo ist mein End und wo ist dem Tier sein End?"<sup>129</sup> The result is confusion: "Ich brings nicht auseinander, mich mit dem [the crucified Christ] und aber mich mit dem Tier, das aufgehangen war an einem queren Holz ..." <sup>130</sup>

Like his counterpart in Das Leben ein Traum, alternating between states of "Angst und Verkleinerung" and "Megalomanie",<sup>131</sup> Sigismund has at the beginning of Der Turm no stable relationship with the external world: alternately dominated and dominating, he cannot understand its nature because he does not understand his own:

126. DIII, p.428  
127. DIV, p.27  
128. DIV, p.25

129. DIV, p.88  
130. DIV, p.88  
131. DIII, p.429

Es wächst alles mit mir zusammen. Unken und Asseln,  
Mauern und Turm. Es ist alles bald gross bald klein,  
dass mir schwindelt. Ein Strohalm wie ein Balken  
legt sich auf meine Seel, zerquetscht sie. Einen  
Turm, einen Berg blas ich vor mir hin wie Staub, so -  
ist meine Seele so stark? <sup>132</sup>

He has not yet understood Julian's teaching: indeed, analogies are continually made which place him among the animals whose nature he is supposed to have left behind. He has still not learnt how to cope with this aspect of his nature, as is seen in his own brutal killing of the creatures in his cage.

The doctor sees that "nur Wiedergeburt heilt einen so Zerrütteten."<sup>133</sup> But before rebirth must come death, and it is the drinking of the sleeping draught that gives Sigismund this essential spiritual experience of death, not only because he believes he is dying, but because he accepts it in a spirit of complete self-surrender and in affirmation of suffering as the glory of man, who has "nicht zu viel Leiden und Schmerzen, sondern ihrer zu wenig."<sup>134</sup> It is this experience which enables him to understand the nature of the world, as he himself tells those around his deathbed: "Ihr sehet nicht wie die Welt ist. Nur ich, weil ich schon einmal tot war."<sup>135</sup>

The experience produces an ecstatic state, in which Sigismund grasps by mystical intuition the answers to all the problems that had previously troubled him. He is given a new understanding of his relationship to the world, which he can now accept as existing within him: "Hier innen sind die vier Enden der Welt; schneller als der Adler flieg ich

132. DIV, p.86  
133. DIV, p.46

134. DIV, p.99  
135. DIV, p.202

von einem zum andern, und doch bin ich aus einem Stück und dicht wie Ebenholz: das ist das Geheimnis."<sup>136</sup> At the same time, his inner spiritual self is now protected from all invasion: "Es glaubt der Mensch, er tue Übel an seinesgleichen oder gut: aber wer berührt das Innere? Das ist unberührbar."<sup>137</sup> He is no longer worried about the identity of his father: "Mein Vater ist ja bei mir."<sup>138</sup> He can now accept his father's presence as a spiritual reality in a way that he could not when asked to do so by his foster mother, for then he was interested only in his "leiblicher Vater."<sup>139</sup> Before, he complained, "Mein Vater hat kein Gesicht."<sup>140</sup> Now he sees him "von Angesicht zu Angesicht."<sup>141</sup>

Nevertheless, Sigismund's problems are not over, as is shown by the scene that follows between him and the King: his mystical intuition of his father's presence has not equipped him to deal with his real father. Nor has Julian's teaching enabled him to understand the nature of the external world. Julian claims, "Einen gewaltigen Magier habe ich aus dir gemacht, gleich Adam und Moses! denn ich habe das Wunder der Sprache in deinen Mund gelegt,"<sup>142</sup> but language is not enough where there is no experience of the reality which it expresses. Sigismund has only learnt the extent of his "Unkenntnis": "Ich kenne, was ich nicht sehe, weiss, was fern von mir ist."<sup>143</sup> All the same, it is by essentially magical means that he tries to realize his aims, asserting his spiritual power against

136. DIV, p.98  
 137. DIV, p.98  
 138. DIV, p.98  
 139. DIV, p.87

140. DIV, p.83  
 141. DIV, p.99  
 142. DIV, p.93  
 143. DIV, p.92



the debased form of power he finds in the King. The actions by which he attempts to control the situation are symbolic, not practical: the kiss of peace he demands at the beginning, the act of overpowering his father which he believes is sufficient in itself to establish him as king. He has to learn that a world which is governed solely by material force and materialist concerns will not respond to what is outside this sphere; that it is only involvement, not magical action, which can speak to the world and actually achieve anything. (In the second version even this has become impossible.)

This experience teaches Sigismund that he cannot simply impose his values on the external world or expect it to correspond to his ideals, a lesson which is brought home above all by his father's failure. Basilius, both as King and as Sigismund's father, has become a symbol of God the Father, or at least his representative, the wielder of divine power on earth. The words of the peasant woman point to this,<sup>144</sup> and Julian, in preparing Sigismund to meet the King, actually says, "Vater, Schöpfer Himmels und der Erde! Von Angesicht!", after first describing him simply as "das Höhere".<sup>145</sup> When Sigismund finds out the true nature of the King's power and its involvement with evil, the King becomes "Satan".<sup>146</sup> He expected the world order to correspond to the spiritual order of which Julian had taught him: it does not, and his first reaction is anger at the destruction of what he believed in.

144. DIV, p.88f  
145. DIV, p.116

146. DIV, p.123

Later he realizes that the divine is to be found within himself. This was the implication of his words while under the influence of the sleeping draught, but it is only after his return to the tower that he is able to understand his vision. He now tells Olivier, "Ich bin mein eigener Vater und Sohn und lebe mit mir in Eintracht."<sup>147</sup> The mystic does not need parents to be reborn: he is his own father because, as Silberer explains, "he creates a new man(himself) out of himself with a merely symbolic mother, therefore with peculiar self-mastery, without the co-operation of any parents."<sup>148</sup> Christian mystics have reconciled this position with the idea of an external God by seeing rebirth as the act of the Holy Spirit, but there is no sign that Sigismund tries to do any such thing. Spiritual reality is to be found within - and is therefore unassailable, whatever may happen in the external world. By living on the level of this reality, Sigismund can be "Herr und König auf immer in diesem festen Turm."<sup>149</sup>

It is the affirmation of this reality, the inner reality of dream and vision, as against that of external phenomena, that Sigismund has above all learnt from his experience. He tells Olivier that the truth which alone enables him to exist as a spiritual being is the knowledge that, "Wir wissen von keinem Ding wie es ist, und nichts ist, von dem wir sagen könnten, dass es anderer Natur sei als unsere Träume."<sup>150</sup> This does not make him essentially

147. DIV, p.151

148. Problems of mysticism and its symbolism, p.322

149. DIV, p.140

150. DIV, p.154

different from those who have remained on the level of their lower nature, those with "Stiernacken" and "Zähne eines Hundes."<sup>151</sup> The difference is one of understanding: "Ich bin wie ihr seid. Aber ich weiss, und ihr seid ohne Wissen."<sup>152</sup>

Other characters confirm this view of reality. The Grand Almoner claims that the world cannot provide "eine Stunde wahrhaftigen Lebens."<sup>153</sup> The doctor tells Julian that his dreams are revelations of truth: "Die Stunde zwischen Nacht und Tag ist es, wo die Gottheit, den Schein von Wirklichkeit grässlich scheidend, an uns herantritt."<sup>154</sup> Olivier rejects all vision and proclaims "ein nüchterner Tag",<sup>155</sup> but Sigismund tells him, in their confrontation at the end of the second version, that he is blind to true reality because his eyes are fixed on the phenomenal: "Du vermagst nicht zu schauen, weil deine Augen vermauert sind mit dem was nicht ist."<sup>156</sup> In the first version he uses these same words to Julian,<sup>157</sup> in response to Julian's accusation that he has turned out a total failure - which in worldly terms, at that moment, he is. But despite all appearances, in the words of the doctor, "die Welt wird nicht vom Eisen regiert, sondern von dem Geist, der in ihm [Sigismund] ist. Er ist ein gewaltiger Mensch."<sup>158</sup> Through his visionary power, the spiritual truth symbolised by the stars can be realised in him:

Da ich gewaltiger Mensch eins bin mit den Sternen, so lehrtest du mich, darum warten sie wissend auf mein Tun. Aus meiner Brust gebäre ich ihnen die Welt, nach

151. DIV, p.151  
152. DIV, p.154  
153. DIV, p.65  
154. DIV, p.43

155. DIV, p.458  
156. DIV, p.445  
157. DIV, p.158  
158. DIV, p.459

der sie zittern ... - ihresgleichen in Auserwählung  
ist eines träumenden Menschen herrliche Brust, die aus  
sich selber die Welt schafft, geniessend ihres inner-  
sten Selbst.<sup>159</sup>

The stars, like his father, are no longer something above and beyond him: he is one with them, even to the extent that they depend on him.

Sigismund has gained a new spiritual strength, and a new understanding of the nature of the different forces at work in himself and in the world and of how to cope with them. In the second version, he finds that the only possibility left is to keep himself uncorrupted by the dark powers which have been let loose in the world. In the first version, it is precisely because Sigismund is aware of the existence of the spiritual dimension and its unassailability that he is enabled to act within the world. He can speak the language of the world because he lives "unter den Sternen auch am lichten Tage"<sup>160</sup> and knows he is playing a part in an eternal conflict. His clearer understanding of the situation means that he can succeed where others fail.

Julian dies a failure, but Sigismund has progressed beyond him. He has a source of inner strength that Julian lacks, which he expresses in a symbol typical of mysticism: "Du quälst dich, dass ein Ader in dir aufgehe, von der du trinken könntest. In mir aber fliesst es ohne stocken."<sup>161</sup> And he has reached the point where, armed with this strength, the mystic is able to renounce his isolation and go out into the world in service.

159.DIV, p.139  
160.DIV, p.174

161. DIV, p.159

Such action is an attempt to bridge the gap between two sharply divided orders of reality, or rather between reality and appearance. It is the division which Hofmannsthal saw expressed in the state of society around him, a society totally divorced from the spiritual dimension. In the play, one manifestation of this is the complete rift between the King and the Grand Almoner, the State and the Church. It is true that Basilius seems to seek guidance from the Church, but he is only interested in it when it confirms and supports his own selfish aims. Ignatius' attitude is quite plain: "Fahr hin, Welt."<sup>162</sup> He offers no message of reconciliation, but only judgement and rejection: "Nichts ist als das unerbittliche Gericht und die Sonderung der Spreu von dem Weizen."<sup>163</sup> The figure of the King himself, supposedly the representative of God, reveals the extent of the division. In Das Leben ein Traum, the King is described as the point where "Gottes Welt an unsre grenzet."<sup>164</sup> Where the monarchy has become an empty show, the inference is that God's world is no longer in touch with ours. The world is under the control of "das Olivierische", in the hands of which material things are no longer a potential revelation of the Divine Ground, but have become the instruments of Satanic power.<sup>165</sup> Those who stand for spiritual truth are isolated, cut off from the world, with which they can only be united through this lost divine element. The Sigismund of the second version is utterly isolated: "Ich bin allein und sehne mich verbunden zu sein."<sup>166</sup> Even in the first version he needs to tell

162. DIV, p.67  
 163. DIV, p.69  
 164. DIII, p.415

165. DIV, p.180  
 166. DIV, p.461

his followers, "Gebet Zeugnis: ich war da. Wenngleich mich niemand gekannt hat."<sup>167</sup>

They are to bear witness to the "Geist, der in ihm ist,"<sup>168</sup> the only form in which the divine can be known. The Grand Almoner himself gives Basilius a definition of God which reduces him to an inner directing and judging voice:

Ich werde dich lehren, was das ist: Gott! ... Ein Etwas spricht mit meinem Mund, aber wie aus dir selbst heraus, auf dich selber zielend ... Es verzweifelt hinter deiner Verzweiflung, durchgraust dich hinter deinem Grausen, und entlässt dich nicht dir selber, denn es kennt dich und will dich strafen: Das ist Gott!<sup>169</sup>

But Basilius can choose to ignore this inner divine voice that is part of his true self - and "God" is then helpless. In a character such as Olivier the voice is no longer heard at all.

Everything therefore depends on man's awareness of the spiritual forces within him - and the goal of those who have this awareness is ultimately an earthly one, the regeneration of human society. Sigismund, the representative of the spiritual realm, is a "quinta essentia aus den höchsten irdischen Kräften,"<sup>170</sup> and according to the doctor, the effect of the sleeping draught which produces Sigismund's mystical vision is to reveal "die wahre Glorie der menschlichen Seele."<sup>171</sup> The children at the end proclaim, "Gewaltig ist die Erde und gewaltiger der Mensch. Es ist sonst nichts da!"<sup>172</sup> Sigismund himself has

167. DIV, p.207  
168. DIV, p.459  
169. DIV, p.75

170. DIV, p.33  
171. DIV, p.53  
172. DIV, p.205

become a "Sternbild":<sup>173</sup> there is no need for anything more.

There are of course many references to God in the play (as is appropriate to the historical setting), but he has become a symbol for an inner potentiality of man. Those who have realised this potentiality, Sigismund and the children, do not need to talk about an external God. Many allusions to biblical passages suggest an analogy between Sigismund and Christ, whereas Olivier, representing the opposite potentiality of human nature, is referred to as Satan. There is a sharp division between those who fight "mit Gottes Hilfe" and those who fight "mit des Satans Beistand."<sup>174</sup>

The two sides each stand for a different concept of reality, since man's understanding of truth depends on the inner response he is able to make to it. The King, referring to the prophecy about Sigismund, asks, "Ist es Gott oder der Satan, der durch die Sterne redet?"<sup>175</sup> - but both are within man, and those who cannot find the voice of God within themselves will not hear it through the stars. The prophecy is not a message sent from without: in the notes on Das Leben ein Traum Hofmannsthal describes it as "eine Art Catena magica des bösen Gewissens nach aussen projiziert: er [the King] wusste, dass diese furchtbaren Dinge wahr waren - in der Idee wenigstens - weil sie aus dem Material seiner Veründigungen gemacht waren."<sup>176</sup> To the King's question as to whether the stars can lie,

173. DIV, p.208  
174. DIV, p.175

175. DIV, p.71  
176. DIII, p.432

Ignatius replies, "Wer sind wir, dass sie uns lügen sollten?"<sup>177</sup> The stars stand for truth, but the only truth which Basilius is capable of seeing is that of the evil in his own nature and its consequences: he cannot see beyond this because, like Olivier, his vision is obscured by the world of appearances. The Grand Almoner contrasts his restricted sight with that of the eye, "vor dem ist heute wie gestern und morgen wie heute. Darum kann die Zukunft erforscht werden und es steht die Sibylle neben Salomo und der Sterndeuter neben dem Propheten."<sup>178</sup> The man who is able to grasp the full message of the stars becomes, like the prophets, the bearer of divine truth.

How can this sharp division between good and evil, between those on the side of "God" and of "Satan", be reconciled with Hofmannsthal's rejection of antithetical thinking and with his mystical belief in the unreality of dualities? Synthetic philosophy leads ultimately to relativism, yet this is something which Hofmannsthal firmly rejects and there is certainly nothing relativistic about Der Turm. He is able to accommodate the division by seeing it in terms of two spheres of reality, empirical and spiritual. The world of sense, as for the Platonists, is a shadow (in itself real or unreal, according to how you look at it). It becomes a barrier, instead of a means of revelation, to those who take it for the whole of reality and do not recognize its nature as a shadow - or a dream. They have become blind to the truth.

Good and evil have therefore become a question of

177. DIV, p.72

178. DIV, p.72



different levels of existence: those of animal, man and spirit or, more directly, those of phenomenal and of ultimate spiritual reality. It is interesting to see how Jakob Laubach, discussing the conflict between good and evil as presented in La Vida es sueño and Der Turm, automatically changes his categories in turning his attention from Calderon to Hofmannsthal, and writes that "in der ersten Fassung hielt Hofmannsthal den Geist trotz innerster Versuchung noch für stark genug, um das Chaos zu überwinden."<sup>179</sup> Good and evil have become spirit and chaos.

The problem of good and evil in Hofmannsthal's works is discussed in the next chapter, but it must be considered here in so far as it relates to the mystical basis of Der Turm. The problem is that Hofmannsthal's mysticism conceives the divine as immanent in the world, but that this view cannot accommodate a real vision of evil such as Olivier represents and such as Hofmannsthal saw in contemporary society. It is no longer possible to speak in terms of "Gott, der die Welt ist."<sup>180</sup> "God" can only be saved by divorcing him completely from the world - with the result that he is effectively lost. This realisation is forced upon Hofmannsthal in the second version. The doctor prays at the end, "Eine Wendung, alldurchdringender Gott!"<sup>181</sup> but nothing happens: God is no longer "alldurchdringend" and no longer active in the world, present at most in Sigismund and his few faithful friends. He depended on man, and man rejected him. The first version, however, seeks to escape the final consequences of this divorce through its

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 179. Hugo von Hofmannsthals Turm-Dichtungen, p.82

180. A, p.125

181. DIV, p.462

exploration of Sigismund's relationship to the powers of "good" and "evil".

It is Julian himself, who has taught Sigismund to divide the "Tiernatur, die auf die Erde starrt" and the "Gewölb des Himmels,"<sup>182</sup> and who claims to have taught him the language which will make him a great magician, who then confesses in the conjuration scene, "Ich habe dich nicht die rechte Sprache gelehrt ... Die ich dich gelehrt habe, reicht nur für die Anfänge ... Hier, wo ich wohne, ahne ich erst die neue Sprache: die sagt das Obere und Untere zugleich."<sup>183</sup> Sigismund replies that, "Sie kommt schon auf acht Füßen zu mir,"<sup>184</sup> but somehow it does not seem to arrive. It is not he who ushers in the new kingdom in which harmony between "das Obere" and "das Untere" is achieved, but the Children's King. Sigismund is only a "Zwischenkönig",<sup>185</sup> unable to create on earth the new order of which he dreams, because he does not belong to the earth, a constellation outside the realm of time.

His acquaintance with the lower, "animal" level of existence is essentially one with evil forces, confirming the desire inculcated by Julian to reject everything in this sphere. The dark powers with which he becomes involved in the conjuration scene are powers familiar to him from his early life: as he says, "Du kannst nichts aus deinem Schoss schütteln, schwarzer Engel, womit ich nicht auf du und du wäre!"<sup>186</sup> He embarks on his final conflict with these in language which is clearly the language of

182.DIV, p.92  
183.DIV, p.186  
184.DIV, p.186

185. DIV, p.206  
186. DIV, p.182

magic, the only way he can obtain the kind of certainty he wants: he must dominate them by his spiritual strength. He succeeds: but he is unable to go further, to the point where (in terms of Silberer's ideas) potential evil is transformed into a power for good and the way is open for a return to an enriched and integrated life. He has had no chance to learn to understand the part which such elements do have in his nature, and that of all men, and is therefore unable to establish the spirit which he affirms in an earthly kingdom, as the Children's King does. The desire for spiritual domination has become a barrier to the achievement of full humanity, and Sigismund is destroyed by the destructive forces which he conjures up. His world is essentially a world of conflict and he is equipped to cope with this - but not with peace.

It is true that he tells the gipsy, "Ich bin auch mehr als einer:"<sup>187</sup> he has limitless inner potentialities which include powers of healing as well as of destruction. When the latter have been overcome, the former can be released, like the alcohol of which the doctor speaks, "im Innern unserer Muskulatur auftretend im gleichen Augenblick wo, vierundzwanzig Stunden nach dem Tod, Verwesung ihren ersten Hauch tut. Aus dem Heillosen die Kräfte der Heilung."<sup>188</sup> But the healing is to be brought by the children, who describe themselves as "Heilkräuter."<sup>189</sup> "Das ist encheiresin naturae,"<sup>190</sup> the power of Nature to unite what is divided into a fruitful whole, and first Sigismund, and the sharp division into two realms for which

187. DIV, p.184  
188. DIV, p.34f

189. DIV, p.204  
190. DIV, p.35

he stood, must die. He says of the Children's King, "Wer wohnt noch in mir, den ich nicht kenne?"<sup>191</sup> - an inner potentiality, but one which he does not recognize until, for him personally, it is too late. He cannot realize it himself.

It is this which makes the ending of the first version ultimately unsatisfactory, in spite of its power. There is still the feeling that the Children's King, however much Sigismund's labours may have been necessary for the establishment of his kingdom, has simply arrived on the scene from outside, and this is surely inadmissible where there is no externally active Providence and all achievement depends on the ability of man to realize his spiritual potentialities. In terms of this play, it must depend on Sigismund, the representative of mankind in its suffering and glory.

It is, of course, theoretically quite possible that there should be other people, in another place, who have not lost touch with spiritual values and so are able to take over and continue Sigismund's work; but it is not dramatically possible. The Children's King appears from somewhere quite external to the action of the play, and so becomes himself a *deus ex machina*, dropped from another world.

Because of this, the solution he offers seems to be the product simply of a blind faith in the future. It is certainly irrational, and as such belongs to the realm of

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191. DIV, p.205

"das Wortlose". The Children's King is not interested in what can be expressed in words: "Das was du nicht sagen kannst, das allein frage ich dich."<sup>192</sup> His appearance communicates symbolically, but cannot be made sense of in any way that can be given rational verbal formulation. But how can a human society be founded on the ineffable alone? - after all, "mit Reden kommen die Leut zusammen."<sup>193</sup>

Sigismund himself places the highest value on speech as communication: "Eitel ist alles ausser der Rede zwischen Geist und Geist."<sup>194</sup> This communication breaks down, however, when he is faced with "das Unterste nach oben gebracht."<sup>195</sup> Sigismund's and Julian's language cannot cope with this situation. "Was zu sagen der Mühe wert wäre, dazu ist die Zunge zu dick."<sup>196</sup> Julian sees that his hopes have been based on "das unrechte Wort",<sup>197</sup> and despairs. Sigismund, having risen above his teacher, still finds in his beliefs a source of inner strength, but Julian does not respond to "das Wort des Trostes in der Ode dieses Lebens" which he offers:<sup>198</sup> it has become incommunicable. Sigismund later succeeds in learning "die Sprache der Welt,"<sup>199</sup> but the unified language, which is to express "das Obere und Untere zugleich", has not been created, and nor has it at the end of the play: we are left only with the symbolic actions of the children. In the second version this is recognized, and the division between the two orders remains complete.

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192. DIV, p.206  
193. DIV, p.24  
194. DIV, p.138  
195. DIV, p.159

196. DIV, p.158  
197. DIV, p.158  
198. DIV, p.158  
199. DIV, p.174

Clemens Heselhaus, in his article on Calderon and Hofmannsthal, contrasts contemporary society with the "theologisch vollständig durchinterpretierten Welt" of the Barock period.<sup>200</sup> His particular reference here is to Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater, but the process he is describing, that of drawing on past expressions of faith to restore a sense of meaning to the modern "de-theologised" world, is clearly also to be seen in Der Turm, particularly in the use of biblical allusions and even in the use of such traditional concepts as God and Satan. But what was once meant literally is now used symbolically, for its "valuative connotations", and is not anchored to any account of reality by which the world can, in spiritual terms, be "durchinterpretiert". The complete, systematic interpretation has been left to the materialists, with nothing comparable to set against it or complement it.

Modern thought divides the world into the mechanistic, empirical sphere (for some the sum total of reality, for others ultimately unreal) and the sphere of meaning, or spiritual and moral values: the bridge between the two has been lost. The consequences of this for Der Turm are perfectly summed up by R.T. Llewellyn, who takes as his starting point Hofmannsthal's note, "Das was in der Epoche seit Kant an verändertem Weltgefühl lebt irgendwie gespiegelt im Sigismund:"<sup>201</sup>

Sigismund seems to act according to Kant's claim that words like God and soul are not objects of knowledge in the ordinary sense because they cover no distinctive sense-content, but that we nevertheless possess a notion of God within us and we can therefore act

200. Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen, 191, p.21

201. A, p.233

according to this "Ideal der reinen Vernunft" which forms the centre of our moral life. Thus in Der Turm Hofmannsthal presents (in part in the first version and totally in the second version) the situation of the believer in the Kantian world, the situation of the individual who acts in accordance with certain spiritual realities which he can hardly formulate in words. The second version could be described as a post-Kantian martyr-drama, as one enacted before an audience of unpredictable response by a martyr who is reluctant or unable to enlarge on the nature of his belief. And such a drama must inevitably promote a certain proportion of incomprehension and bewilderment.<sup>202</sup>

Hofmannsthal is therefore operating within a framework of thought in which the gap between the spheres of science and belief cannot be bridged except by a mysticism dependent on a Kierkegaardian leap of faith. At the end of the second version there is nothing left to be said: only the exemplary figure of Sigismund bears witness to spiritual values, isolated in the desert of materialism. Writing to Burckhardt, Hofmannsthal himself explains that the figures in the play express something which cannot be grasped by reason or expressed in any other, more direct way:

Es handelt sich in diesem Stück immer darum, dass ein Vorderes, Greifbares da sei ... und zugleich, dass hinter dieser sich ein Höheres, Geistiges, Allgemeines, schwer Sagbares, gleichermassen von Schritt zu Schritt enthülle und beglaubige - auch dieses gestaltet,<sup>203</sup> nicht rational wahrnehmbar, aber mit der Phantasie.

The symbolic figure may communicate the vision of reality for which he stands, or may arouse only "incomprehension and bewilderment". This, like the response to the message of the stars, will depend on the individual. There is justification both for a positive response, to the human values which the play affirms, and a negative response, since Hofmannsthal ultimately fails to find an answer to

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202. "Hofmannsthal's Nihilism", MLR 61, 1966, p.258

203. Burckhardt BW, p.140

the mechanistic threat, as is reflected in his continuing need to revise the play.

The search for paradigms

Chapter II has shown how some difficulties connected with Hofmannsthal's mystical world-view which emerge in the two versions of Der Turm are in part the consequence of the contemporary climate of thought in which everything had become relativised. Hermann Broch has described the situation in his Hofmannsthal und seine Zeit:

In demselben Jahrhundert hat das Christentum der alten europäischen Welt aufgegeben, und mit dem Zusammenbruch dieses Zentralwertes hat die Aufspaltung der menschlichen Welt in zwei Systeme in autonome Einzelwelten von denen einer das Weltbild der Welt ist, eingeleitet; mit anderen Worten, es begann die Abkehr von der Allgültigkeit der Welt durch die Kraft gesondeter göttlicher Heilungen.

The process affected not only religious and philosophical attitudes, but also the sphere of ethics, creating what Broch calls a "Wert-Vakuum". The vacuum of ideas into which people tried to fill the vacuum lacked coherence and solid foundation.

Within this context of ethical relativism and nihilism, there is no doubt that Hofmannsthal attached great importance to moral questions. In 1891, when he was generally considered to be an aesthete, removed from the world of ordinary life, Hermann Beer advised that among his contemporaries he was "der Einzige, der immer von moralischen Fragen handelt. Er sucht die Stellung des Menschen zur Welt, sucht Sinn und Bedeutung der Dinge, sucht Gewissheit für den Gang des Lebens. Er will Verantwortung"



### III. The Question of Moral Values

#### 1. The search for permanence

Chapter II has shown how some difficulties connected with Hofmannsthal's mystical world-view which emerge in the two versions of Der Turm are in part the consequence of the contemporary climate of thought in which everything had become relativised. Hermann Broch has described the situation in his Hofmannsthal und seine Zeit:

Im neunzehnten Jahrhundert hat das Dahinschwinden der alten europäischen Glaubenshaltungen begonnen, und mit dem Zusammenbruch dieses Zentralwertes hat die Aufsplitterung des umfassenden religiösen Wertsystems in autonome Einzelsysteme (von denen eines das l'art pour l'art ist) eingesetzt; mit anderen Worten, es begann die Auflösung der Allgemeingültigkeit der bis dahin in Kraft gestandenen ethischen Haltungen.

The process affected not only religious and philosophical attitudes, but also the sphere of ethics, creating what Broch calls a "Wert-Vakuum".<sup>2</sup> The assortment of ideas with which people tried to fill the vacuum lacked coherence and solid foundation.

Within this context of ethical eclecticism and relativism, there is no doubt that Hofmannsthal attached great importance to moral questions. In 1894, when he was generally considered to be an aesthete, remote from the world of ordinary life, Hermann Bahr claimed that among his contemporaries he was "der Einzige, der immer von moralischen Fragen handelt. Er sucht die Stellung des Menschen zur Welt, sucht Sinn und Bedeutung der Dinge, sucht Gewissheit für den Gang des Lebens. Er will Erweckung und

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1. p.48

2. p.59

Erbauung."<sup>3</sup> This is confirmed by Hofmannsthal's own early note, "Die Grundlage des Ästhetischen ist Sittlichkeit,"<sup>4</sup> and many critics have discussed the moral concern expressed in his early writings.<sup>5</sup> At this stage, however, he is still very much raising questions, seeking, as emerges strongly from Bahr's description, and showing how not to live rather than offering something positive. These works are therefore of limited relevance to my theme. In his later writings the underlying concern with ethical questions becomes obvious and possible answers are offered and explored, but this continuing preoccupation is never a matter of wanting to lay down some kind of moral law: he is concerned rather, as Bahr says, with the understanding of man in relationship to the world and to his fellows, and with finding a secure basis for this relationship. And such considerations do enter the moral sphere, because they belong to the sphere of values, which alone can give meaning to life and human relationships.

The most powerful challenge to the meaningfulness of human life is the fact of death, and Hofmannsthal's awareness of this challenge is shown by the way the problems of death, change and transiency constantly recur in his works. To counterbalance most effectively the universal negation

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3. Studien zur Kritik der Moderne, p.87

4. A, p.101

5. e.g.: Richard Alewyn in "Der Tod des Ästheteten" (included in Über Hufo von Hofmannsthal) points to the moral element in Der Tor und der Tod, in contrast to other contemporary works: W.H. Reyin "Die Drohung der Zeit in Hofmannsthals Frühwerk" shows how the answer to this threat is to be found in the ethical: Andrew O. Jaszi in "Die Idee des Lebens in Hofmannsthals Jugendwerk 1890-1900" traces the emergence of Hofmannsthal's awareness of the centrality of the ethical and its relation to the will and to action.

of death, a system of values must be able to claim a universal and lasting validity, such that it will not become meaningless after the death of the individual or the decline of the culture which affirmed it. This need for moral values as a counterbalance to death emerges clearly from the many works of Hofmannsthal's in which death itself, "die eigentliche Lebensprobe",<sup>6</sup> acts as the awakener, making the characters aware of their need for something in their own lives to set against it. Obvious examples of this are Der Tor und der Tod, Jedermann, and Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater, though a similar effect can also be achieved through the death of someone else, even of an animal.

Der Tor und der Tod, being entirely devoted to presenting this confrontation with death, should give a clear picture of the kind of awakening involved. Faced with the reality of death, Claudio for the first time becomes aware of the sphere of moral values as something with relevance to him: he wants his future life to be such, "dass Gut und Böse über mich Gewalt/Soll haben."<sup>7</sup> It is not that his life up till then could not be judged in such terms: Death himself passes judgement, calling Claudio "Du schlimmer Tor."<sup>8</sup> But Claudio himself was unaware of what was lacking in his life, which he now sees has been "ohne Kraft und Wert."<sup>9</sup> His recognition of "Treue" as "der Halt von allem Leben"<sup>10</sup> shows his awareness of the need for something lasting. The values which he now learns to affirm -

6. PIV, p.311

7. KHA III, p.73

8. KHA III, p.73

9. KHA III, p.78

10. KHA III, p.73

faithfulness, selflessness, love - are universal, and Death himself contradicts any idea that Claudio had not till then, in his state of isolation and remoteness from life, had the opportunity to recognize them:

Was allen, ward auch dir gegeben,  
Ein Erdenleben, irdisch es zu leben.  
Im Innern quillt euch allen treu ein Geist,  
Der diesem Chaos toter Sachen  
Beziehung einzuhauchen heisst ....  
Weh dir, wenn ich dir das erst sagen muss!<sup>11</sup>

The permanence of these values emerges even from a work such as Das Bergwerk zu Falun, belonging to a transitional period and ending in a way which does not make clear whether the timeless world of the mountain queen or that of Dahlj 's family is ultimately to be affirmed. The words of the father to his son offer something to set against the transience of ordinary human life:

Es schwindet alles, alles gleitet hin,  
Dein Leib bleibt dir nicht treu, kaum bist du noch,  
Doch dass du deine Lippe hast befleckt,  
Das bleibt, und w r die Lippe weggeschwunden.<sup>12</sup>

Such values are something fundamental to human existence. It was these which must be sought, according to Hofmannsthal's "Aufzeichnungen zu Reden in Skandinavien", by those facing death and destruction in the form of war in 1916, a time "in welcher so angstvoll diese Frage gestellt werden musste nach dem Letzten, das bleibt, nach dem Blutigen Ernsten, nach dem sittlichen Fundament der Wirklichkeit."<sup>13</sup> This question is also described as a demand for "der Bahn, dem Gesetz, dem Bleibenden" and for "dem Sein gegen ber dem Werden."<sup>14</sup> The implication is that it is the moral element

11. KHA III, p.72  
12. GLD, p.373

13. PIII, p.356  
14. PIII, p.356

in which something can be found which has lasting validity and is in fact the basis of all reality.

## 2. Traditional morality and Life

What, for Hofmannsthal, is the nature of these lasting values? On the surface they seem to correspond to traditional concepts of good and evil: this is true of those which we have seen to be advocated in Der Tor und der Tod, and these same qualities are affirmed throughout all the diversity of Hofmannsthal's work, whether in Jedermann, Der Turm, or on a lighter level in the comedies. Yet there are enormous differences between these works: can they in fact be fitted in to one system of values? The standards by which his characters are judged in the early works, including Der Tor und der Tod, are often unclear: death seems a very harsh judgement on Claudio by normal standards, and in any case it is suddenly transformed at the end into an experience of mystical exaltation. Jedermann and Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater are presented in a Christian framework, whereas Der Turm calls for new values and a new order that is not concerned about the old church tower that may come to grief during its creation.<sup>15</sup>

There is no doubt that Hofmannsthal does uphold these traditional values, but to find out what, for him, is of ultimate, absolute value a closer examination is necessary. I shall start by considering a work from a period of Hofmannsthal's life when he was conspicuously concerned with ethical matters, and in which the values affirmed are

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15. DIV, p.197

both of a traditional nature and such as recur throughout his work: the story Die Frau ohne Schatten, with its emphasis on love and self-sacrifice, marriage and the family.

The Empress in the story is seeking to attain full humanity. To achieve this she must learn self-sacrificing love, which involves the full recognition of the other, its object, as a person and in his or her individual nature. This is a necessary condition of entering into a true relationship, and is something that all the characters need to learn. Both husbands are faced with the accusation that they have "den Knoten ihres [their wife's] Herzen nicht gelöst:"<sup>16</sup> for Barak and his wife we see that this is finally achieved in the moment in which they are able to recognize each other fully and commit themselves to each other, releasing the wife from her self-centredness and Barak from an attitude which saw her only as a means to an end, the establishment of a family.

For the Emperor the barrier to a true relationship is the possessiveness of his love for the Empress, whom he sees as "die Beute aller Beuten,"<sup>17</sup> not as a person, and he shows the same attitude in his desire to possess the unborn children. They tell him that what is needed between them is not this kind of love but "die vollkommene Ehrfurcht."<sup>18</sup>

The decisive moment of the story is expressed in the Empress's words, "Dir, Barak, bin ich mich schuldig,"<sup>19</sup> declaring a sense of moral obligation resulting from an

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16. KHA XXVIII, pp.156 and 171  
17. DIII, p.155

18. KHA XXVIII, p.152  
19. KHA XXVIII, p.191

inner response to his character, as it has been revealed in his dealings with his wife. This new awareness involves the recognition both of an ethical demand and of a relationship, the mutual involvement inescapable in human existence. The Empress admits, "Wir sind Diebe und Mörder an ihnen geworden und alles Blut aus unseren Adern ist zu wenig, um gutzumachen, was wir an ihnen getan haben."<sup>20</sup> It is in the light of this discovery of human relationships and of the reality of ethical obligation that the Empress must finally make her choice whether to accept the shadow that has been obtained by "theft and murder" or apparently to sacrifice her beloved husband. She must take a conscious ethical decision, which, we have been told, will be "unwiderruflich", unlike the dyer's wife's passionate outbursts against her husband and children.<sup>21</sup>

At least, that is what we expect. But at the actual moment of decision we find the Empress torn between the two alternatives, not knowing what to do. Then "aus ihrer eigenen diamantenen Tiefe stiegen Worte in ihr auf, deutlich, so als würden sie gesungen in grosser Ferne; sie hatte sie nur nachzusprechen:"<sup>22</sup> the vital words which acknowledge her debt to Barak. There is no conscious choice between right and wrong: the answer comes from some unconscious inner principle.

The key to this scene is to be found in the conversation between the fisherman and his wife, whose words, though directly referring to Barak's wife, are equally

20. KHA XXVIII, p.179  
21. KHA XXVIII, p.186

22. KHA XXVIII, p.191

applicable to the Empress, who enters the cave expecting judgement and is confronted instead with the golden Water of Life. The wife asks, "Wer wird zu Gericht sitzen über dieser da?" and the reply is, "Das Wasser des Lebens." "Ja, kann es denn sprechen und ein Urteil verkünden?" "Nein, aber es verwandelt und das ist mehr!"<sup>23</sup> The characters and their actions are to be judged not by any moral code but by life itself, and the important thing is not that a judgement of right or wrong should be expressed but that the renewing, transforming process which Hofmannsthal calls "Verwandlung" should take place.

The significance of the family is also to be seen in this light, as an expression of this continuing, renewing process of life. The ultimate purpose of all these events is after all that the Empress should become a mother, which, even if it is not to be interpreted quite literally, clearly has symbolic value. It is true that a desire for the continuity of life through the human family is not enough in itself: Barak's wish for children is not enough to fit him for fatherhood. But this is because life works through relationships, through the relationship of full commitment to and union with another which is possible only on the basis of full recognition. Nothing can be achieved in selfish isolation, nor can the advantage of some be won at the expense of others.

This scheme of interrelation in fact goes far beyond the context of the two human families presented here. The wider context is depicted in the marvellous carpet woven by

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23. KHA XXVIII, p.182



one of the Emperor's children, in whose pattern "die Sichel des Mondes, die Gestirne, die Ranken und Blumen, die Menschen und Tiere ineinander Übergängen" and in which at the end the thread had to be "zurückgeschlungen ... in den Faden des Anfangs."<sup>24</sup> The girl explains that when weaving, "ich sehe nicht, was ist, und nicht, was nicht ist, sondern was immer ist, und danach webe ich."<sup>25</sup> It is this pattern, then, or rather the continuing, interrelating and renewing process of life which is expressed in it, which has permanence.

It has been made clear that this has a close connection with the realisation of love and selflessness in human relationships, but these are not in themselves of ultimate value. They have a part to play in a greater purpose, summed up at the end of the story when the unborn children sing their song of reassurance and the curse on the Empress's talisman is transformed into "Zeichen und Verse, die das ewige Geheimnis der Verkettung alles Irdischen priesen."<sup>26</sup>

It would seem, then, that life itself is the ultimate value by which Hofmannsthal's whole system of values is determined, and this is borne out by a consideration of other works. If we return to Der Tor und der Tod, we find that Death does not reproach Claudio with his self-centredness, but says that he should have learnt "Beziehung einzuhauchen" and that,

ich will dich lehren,<sup>27</sup>  
Das Leben, eh du's endest, einmal ehren.

24. KHA XXVIII, p.146  
25. KHA XXVIII, p.147

26. KHA XXVIII, p.196  
27. KHA III, p.73

Claudio's lack of concern for others is ultimately a sin against life. And although it is too late for Claudio to put things right by a new commitment to human relationships, he is apparently able to find the new life he longs for by surrendering himself to death itself and attaining instead a kind of mystical participation.

A work which again ends on a mystical note in a sphere far removed from ordinary human existence, but which is much closer in date and theme to Die Frau ohne Schatten, is Ariadne auf Naxos. The central concern of the opera is the mystery of "Verwandlung", and Hofmannsthal attempts to clarify the nature of this in the "Ariadne-Brief". The transformation by which Ariadne is released from "Erstarren und Tod"<sup>28</sup> into a new life is indeed the work of love, but love is important precisely because it has this releasing power. And the "Verwandlung" achieved by this means "ist Leben des Lebens, ist das eigentliche Mysterium der schöpfenden Natur."<sup>29</sup> Again, a high value is put on love because of its role in the service of life.

Hofmannsthal was well aware of the way traditional values have become problematic in the modern age, and observed, "So ist auch in dem System von Wertsetzungen, das den modernen Menschen ausmacht, ein neuer Wert - das Leben selbst - aufgetaucht."<sup>30</sup> This does indeed seem to be the basis for "Wertsetzung" in his own works. As Patricia Howe has commented, "There emerges from the works a concept of guilt as sin against life, as clinging to

28. PIII, p.138

29. PIII, p.138

30. A, p.204

what is dead or never had life, and a concept of salvation, whose means of redemption are living people, living relationships, a living purpose."<sup>31</sup>

It seems surprising that a concept such as "life", which in itself is highly ambivalent, should be taken as a basis for moral values. Life is what Hofmannsthal's early heroes, who find themselves standing outside it in isolation, are seeking, but though they have to find the way into life, "Verknüpfung mit dem Leben" is inevitably associated with "Verschuldung".<sup>32</sup> Life can also be seen as the motive force in the Greek plays, Odipus with its theme of murder and incest, and Elektra with its emphasis on blood and vengeance. Yet Elektra is itself linked by Hofmannsthal, in the "Reden in Skandinavien", with the search for permanent values, the "Suchen eines Gesetzes oder einer Bahn über dem Persönlichen", and he claims that "in Elektra ist das Gesetz, das primitivste, strengste, schon da: der Inhalt ist Hingabe an das Gesetz mit bewusster Aufopferung der Person."<sup>33</sup> The use of the word "primitive" shows that he is aware that his present understanding of "Gesetz" is something very different, but Elektra's thirst for vengeance is clearly intended to be understood not in terms of dark, frustrated passions, but as a defence of an order essentially moral in nature, which has been threatened by the unpunished crime of Klytämnestra and Aegisth.

The ambivalence remains, however, and is increased by

31. The theme of death in the works of Hugo von Hofmannsthal,  
p.84

32. A, pp.214 and 220

33. PIII, p.355

the all-embracing nature of the concept "life". Participation in the processes of life, acceptance of one's fate within that process, must involve the incurring of guilt. Two notes from Hofmannsthal's "Ad me ipsum" convey how inevitably the two are linked, suggesting that entering into life is equivalent to entering into guilt: he refers to both the "Ambivalenter Zustand zwischen Prae-existenz und Verschuldung"<sup>34</sup> and "der ambivalente Zustand zwischen Prae-existenz und Leben."<sup>35</sup> This need not be the spectacular guilt of an Oedipus: even the pure and spiritual Sigismund cannot avoid it when in the first version of Der Turm he agrees to leave the security of his isolated tower and involve himself in the active service of others.

### 3. The symbolism of the devil figure

So if life is to be the absolute positive value, the negative value which opposes it cannot be moral evil as normally conceived, even where this is obviously condemned. Evil must presumably be that which obstructs the process of life or refuses participation. At the same time it is not clear how this all-embracing concept can be related to the duality of good and evil implied in any system of moral values.

It is often hard to find any such sharp division between good and evil in Hofmannsthal's works, but there is one work where it is clearly present, as we have seen: Der Turm. Here we find two opposing worlds, the positive, spiritual one of Sigismund and the negative, materialistic

34. A, p.215

35. A, p.216

one of Olivier, and the contrast between them is expressed with the aid of religious terminology traditionally associated with good and evil, Olivier in particular being described as "Satan".

Der Turm is not, however, the only work of Hofmannsthal's in which a devil figure makes his appearance, and an examination of such figures and what they stand for is helpful in trying to define more adequately Hofmannsthal's concept of evil. In Jedermann we find a Devil who appeals to "Recht und Gerechtigkeit",<sup>36</sup> to a legal right to Jedermann's soul based on the facts of his life: he has been a "Schwelger" and "Verführer", "ungläubig", and an "Unterdrücker".<sup>37</sup> But Faith tells the Devil:

Vor dem Gericht, vor das er tritt,  
Bestehen deine Rechte nit,  
Die sind auf Schein und Trug gestellt,  
Auf Hie und Nun und diese Welt,  
Die ist gefangen in der Zeit  
Und bleibt in solchen Schranken stocken.<sup>38</sup>

The Devil is trapped within the bounds of "this world", that is, the material, temporal sphere, and is unable to understand that which transcends it - including the miracle of rebirth and renewal, that in Christ even Jedermann can become "in einem Augenzwinkern neu."<sup>39</sup> This renewing power is what is set against the rigid legal system which is not only the Devil's but also the normal earthly concept of justice, to which Jedermann himself appeals when he answers the debtor's plea for mercy by reference to "Vertrag und Rechte".<sup>40</sup> Jedermann is quite within his rights, yet one

36. DIII, p.89

37. DIII, p.88f

38. DIII, p.90

39. DIII, p.89

40. DIII, p.21

feels that he is in the wrong, that the situation should be met not by the rigid application of law but by the redeeming power of love, such as ultimately, in Christ's "Opfertod",<sup>41</sup> overcomes the Devil's case.

This idea is further developed in the figure of the Adversary in Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater. Again, his first concern is with rights: his first action is to defend World when she is reproved by the prophet,<sup>42</sup> he protests against the unjust way the roles in the play are distributed,<sup>43</sup> he appeals for "natürliche Gleichheit des Schicksals",<sup>44</sup> and tells the Beggar to claim that "Natur gibt mir und euch das gleiche Recht."<sup>45</sup> -He is also a doctor of logic<sup>46</sup> and asks philosophical questions about freedom and predestination.<sup>47</sup> His outlook is essentially rationalistic.

Like the Devil in the earlier play, he is bound by the logic and understanding of this world: he cannot understand the potentialities of the Beggar's role, or his conversion, which he tries to explain away by physical causes - but at the same time throwing his books away in disgust. Again, as in Jedermann, his outlook is reflected in the initial attitude of the central human figure: the Beggar himself says, "Hier schrei ich um mein Recht!"<sup>48</sup> But at the end the Beggar has a new concept of what is right, along with a new concept of freedom, as something not to be grasped at and "irdisch nicht zu benennen."<sup>49</sup>

41. DIII, p.89  
42. KHA X, p.12  
43. KHA X, p.20  
44. KHA X, p.19  
45. KHA X, p.34

46. KHA X, p.12  
47. KHA X, p.13  
48. KHA X, p.33  
49. KHA X, p.51

How far is this picture of the Devil to be found in Olivier, "der rote Satan"? There is the same emphasis on rights and on cold facts, and the same inability to see beyond the surface appearance of life, "weil deine Augen vermauert sind mit dem was nicht ist."<sup>50</sup> Like his two predecessors, he lives in an enclosed material world. His violence and brutality are something new: but this aspect is foreshadowed in Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater in the Adversary's attempts to spur the Beggar on to his act of destruction. Now this destructiveness is no longer hidden behind a veil of hypocrisy.

There are two aspects in which Olivier is contrasted with Sigismund: his violence and his commitment to the material sphere. In respect of both he is a barrier to the working out of life's purpose, by actual force, and by shutting out the dimension of reality through which the world participates in a higher order. Throughout, the Devil figure stands for the principle of opposition to life: that which ties down to rigid, static systems, and which sees only a superficial reality and so is unable to grasp the true meaning of life.

But there is also a development in Hofmannsthal's treatment of the figure: he shows an increasing awareness of social evil, and the whole concept becomes increasingly problematic. The Devil in Jedermann is a figure of fun. In Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater he disappears at the end, for he has no further role to play once the action has left the earthly sphere, but a question has been left

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50. DIV, p.445

unanswered. The injustice inherent in the social structure remains untouched, as the Adversary points out to the

Beggar:

Und Unrecht, wie's nur eh und je sich sonnte,  
In frechem Licht schlägt wiederum sein Rad, 51  
Und du im Walde wandelst Träumerpfad!

In the recognition that the more important revolution is that which happens within, the problem has been shelved, but in Der Turm the evil of society can no longer be put on one side in this way. Instead of a Devil who can disappear from the scene when his role is finished and who can be seen as simply part of the religious apparatus, evil is now embodied in a human figure. And there is no heaven in which even the Rich Man can be accommodated: Olivier must be overcome before the new kingdom of fulfilment and harmony can be established, and he is not to be got rid of so easily. Indeed in the second version he cannot be got rid of at all. Evil has become more powerful and more problematic, but in its nature it remains that which opposes life by obstructing its purposes and obscuring its meaning.

#### 4. The inner law

In the "Reden in Skandinavien", in which Hofmannsthal is very much concerned with the question of moral order, we find again this concept of an evil which is seen in terms of a materialistic and animal nature, bound to this world and its laws, and which must be overcome. Hofmannsthal calls for "eine Überwindung des Kausalreiches" and of "das

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51. KHA X, p.49



materiegefesselte tierische niedere, noch schlummernde Ich, das noch in der Natur steckt und das einzige Erlebnis der Materialisten ist. Aber wo das Ich Persönlichkeit wird, wird es selbst Gesetz und unterliegt nicht mehr dem Schrecken des Seins und der mechanischen Unfreiheit."<sup>52</sup>

This victory involves "Gesetz", yet we have seen that the idea of a fixed system of laws is something that belongs to Satan's "Weltanschauung" and is firmly rejected by Hofmannsthal. These "Aufzeichnungen" are largely devoted to showing how the call to seek after "dem Gesetz, dem Bleibenden"<sup>53</sup> can be reconciled with this rejection of all rigid systems. Hofmannsthal explains that "Gesetzlichkeit, ja Heiligkeit sind keine absoluten, von einem überweltlichen Gott ein für allemal aufgestellten Forderungen an das Übernatürliche Ich, sondern es sind die Formen, in denen der Mensch seine eigene naturgegebene Idee auswirken muss: ihre Verletzung ist nicht Sünde im christlichen Sinn und zieht nicht Strafe nach sich, sondern ist selbst schon Strafe, Verhängnis, Leiden."<sup>54</sup> The law is not lasting because it has been set up for all time by a power outside the world of change, but because it is the natural law of human development.

Understanding of such an inner law can never be based on an abstract definition, but can only come out of living experience. In "Ad me ipsum" Hofmannsthal explains the passage from Der Tor und der Tod quoted above:<sup>55</sup> "eine solche Stelle wie: 'Ich füg mich so, dass Gut und Böse über

52. PIII, p.365

53. PIII, p.356

54. PIII, p.364

55. p.114

mich Gewalt ...' heisst: Gut und Böse hat keine Gewalt: ich glaube sie nicht, weil ich sie nicht vom vitalen Urgrund des Erlebnisses her empfangen habe."<sup>56</sup> Good and evil are themselves meaningless apart from involvement in life. Yet the implication is also that all such involvement is in itself good, as the only way to life and growth.

In his essay on D'Annunzio, Hofmannsthal writes, "Ins Leben kommt ein Mensch dadurch, dass er etwas tut," and such action is "das einzige Gute,"<sup>57</sup> in spite of the fact that by entering into life D'Annunzio can now become "schuldig und unschuldig."<sup>58</sup> If action is intrinsically good even though it involves guilt, a redefinition of guilt seems to be called for, as the refusal to act and take the risk of stepping out into the sphere of life. There is indeed a risk involved, for "Tun ist sich aufgeben;"<sup>59</sup> the self has emerged from its protective shell and become vulnerable. But action is also one aspect of "der Weg zum Sozialen als Weg zum höheren Selbst."<sup>60</sup> Through interaction with the world, the self reaches this higher level by developing its inner potential to the full: "Der Mensch wird in der Welt nur das gewahr, was schon in ihm liegt; aber er braucht die Welt, um gewahr zu werden, was in ihm liegt; dazu aber sind Tätigkeit und Leiden nötig."<sup>61</sup>

The law that is to be sought is therefore that of self-fulfilment, attained through involvement in life regardless of the apparent guilt incurred. Each individual

56. A, p.241  
57. PI, p.274  
58. PI, p.273

59. A, p.217  
60. A, p.217  
61. A, p.9

must find "das Schicksalsgesetz seiner persönlichen Sendung."<sup>62</sup> There is in fact "ein einziges Hauptziel" for both individuals and the nation: "zu uns selber zu kommen."<sup>63</sup> Such a desire for self-fulfilment is not, of course, to be equated with selfishness: Hofmannsthal points out the difference between "lebe dir selbst" and "lebe dich selbst,"<sup>64</sup> that is, with one's true capabilities developed to their highest potential. In "Ad me ipsum" he equates "das Zu-sich-selber-kommen" with the attainment of "der höheren Existenz."<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, there is another side to the coin, for self-fulfilment is to be found in submission to the law, in fact in ultimate identification with it. The aim is "schliesslich Hineinnehmen des Individuums ins Gesetz, des Gesetzes ins Individuum, ohne Bezug auf die anderen, die Gesellschaft, ohne contrat social, sich eines wissen mit Gottes Gesetz."<sup>66</sup>

This oneness with the law is essentially an individual thing, involving the recognition "dass die Gesetze selbst bis zu einem vorher nicht gekannten Grad individuell sind," and that they are not arbitrary impositions because they are the laws of our natural growth, "teilhaft jeder zartesten Bewegung der Seele und des Leibes, vom Zufall nicht durch Starre und von der Willkür nicht durch Enge unterschieden, sondern durch ihre Deutbarkeit aus einer gemeinsamen Mitte."<sup>67</sup> This is clearly not the usual concept of law: there are no universal criteria of judgement, no

62. PIII, p.365

63. PIV, p.150

64. PIII, p.351

65. A, p.216

66. PIII, p.358

67. PIII, p.362f

standards which are prescribed for everyone. The question of how one is to find one's own law of self-fulfilment therefore remains open.

It has become clear that in spite of the importance of love and human relationships in Hofmannsthal's scheme of values, consideration of these does not provide the ultimate criterion of behaviour. The importance of love lies in the role it plays in the inner development of the individual: "Wenn Liebe einen 'Zweck' hat, transzendent gesprochen, so müsste es der sein, dass in ihrer Glut der beständig in innerste Teile auseinanderfallende Mensch zu einer Einheit zusammengeschmolzen wird."<sup>68</sup> We also know that the law is to be fulfilled, as quoted above, "ohne Bezug auf die anderen." The suggestion is almost that of a world of windowless monads, existing in a pre-established harmony which does not depend on them (even though their co-operation is voluntary) but on some undefined central, uniting principle, corresponding to what I have elsewhere called "life".

In spite of all Hofmannsthal's emphasis on "die Tat", it is clear that the final criterion is some kind of inner identity with this principle rather than the measuring up of one's actions to any normal ethical standard. In the Buch der Freunde Hofmannsthal writes, "Nicht der Täter wird unrein durch die Tat; nur die Tat durch den Täter"<sup>69</sup> and, "Wer älter wird, erkennt, dass man beständig schuldig bleibt, durch alle Lebensverhältnisse und Verkettungen hin;

68. A, p.48

69. A, p.13

doch wohnt auch in jedem Menschen seine Art von Unschuld."<sup>70</sup>  
In terms of "das Schicksalsgesetz seiner persönlichen Sendung", therefore, a man can maintain an inner innocence in spite of all apparent guilt, and it is this personal mission which it is his duty to fulfil.

The importance of inner attitude rather than outward deeds is confirmed by, for example, the end of Jedermann. The primary emphasis throughout the play has been on the ethical demands which Jedermann has failed to meet, but the question of his ultimate salvation or damnation is decided not on the basis of his works, on the evidence of which his condemnation would be inevitable, but by an inner transformation, expressed in the voice of Faith speaking "aus der Tiefe seines Herzens."<sup>71</sup> Again, in Die Frau ohne Schatten the central concern is not with "Gericht" but with "Verwandlung" and the decisive factor is the words that arise from the "diamantenen Tiefe" of the Empress's heart. From a strictly legal point of view, the Empress has indeed already won a shadow, that of the dyer's wife, but the outcome depends not on legal rights but on the inner attitude of both parties involved. What is so important about this kind of transformation is, as the fisherman explains, that "das goldene Wasser verwandelt das Unsichtbare."<sup>72</sup> The Empress's action, like the Beggar's in Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater, is visible only in its consequences.

This stress on inwardness is found above all in Der Turm. It is true that the Doctor says, "Es steht

70. A, p.13f  
71. PIII, p.131

72. KHA XXVIII, p.182

geschrieben: an ihren Werken werdet ihr sie erkennen. Denn das Werk ist die Frucht die wir bringen,"<sup>73</sup> but the value of works, as in the biblical passage to which he is referring,<sup>74</sup> is that they enable the recognition of the inner governing principle which has produced them, like the fruit of a tree which is produced as a natural result of the kind of tree that it is. The mystical insight that is granted to Sigismund after he has taken the sleeping draught is that, "Es glaubt der Mensch, er tue Übel an seinesgleichen oder gut: aber wer berührt das Innere? Das ist unberührbar."<sup>75</sup> External events do not affect that which is essential, a belief which Sigismund continually affirms in later conversations with Julian and Olivier. And in spite of the great contrast between Sigismund and Olivier, Sigismund tells him that there is no essential difference between them, but rather a distinction of inner insight and attitude.<sup>76</sup>

##### 5. Evil as misunderstanding

Sigismund describes this decisive factor as "Wissen", and throughout Der Turm evil is explained as resulting from an ignorance of the true nature of things. Basilius, Julian and Olivier are all told at different times that they are unable to see the truth because their vision is obscured by the world of appearances. Like "das materiege-fesselte tierische niedere, noch schlummernde Ich" of the "Reden in Skandinavien", their eyes need to be opened.

73. DIV, p.48

74. Matthew Ch.7, v.16-20

75. DIV, p.98

76. DIV, p.154 (See p.98  
above)

They are the victims of illusion, deception; even if it is self-deception.

This association of evil with illusion, with blindness to the reality which transcends the empirical world, has already been shown to be a feature not only of Der Turm but also of Jedermann and Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater, and in fact recurs throughout Hofmannsthal's works. In the early lyrical drama Der Kaiser und die Hexe we find another devil figure: not the devil himself, but the "Teufelsbuhle",<sup>77</sup> the witch, who also tempts by means of a world of deception. As the Emperor tries to escape her clutches, he finds that his life has become a web of lies in which the "Klang der Wahrheit"<sup>78</sup> is nowhere to be found. At this period in Hofmannsthal's life the illusion is of a different sort: the Emperor's failing consists in "ein Verwischen der Grenze zwischen Phantasie und Wirklichkeit also Lüge."<sup>79</sup> But evil still depends on a failure to understand reality. As early as 1891, in the poem "Sünde des Lebens", amid much general doubt as to the nature of good and evil, the same view is expressed as to the source of the latter:

Ich sah die Fluten der Sünden branden,  
Die wir ahnungslos begehen,  
Weil wir andere nicht verstanden,<sup>80</sup>  
Weil uns andere nicht verstehen.

This idea is echoed more than thirty years later in the Buch der Freunde: "Die Ich-Sucht vergeht sich nicht so sehr durch Taten, als durch Nicht-Verstehen."<sup>81</sup> In view of Hofmannsthal's belief in the inadequacy of reason, this is clearly not a lack just of intellectual understanding, but

77. KHA III, p.205

78. KHA III, p.187

79. A, p.231

80. GLD, p.482

81. A, p.21

rather a failure of the whole approach to life because of a blindness to its true nature.

The theme of illusion occurs again in another note for the "Reden in Skandinavien", based on a passage from Lafcadio Hearn. Our aim should be a process of purification,

durch welchen Teile der seelischen Zusammensetzung (Tendenzen, Impulse, Wähne, Illusionen, Zwangskomplexe) abgetan werden sollen. Und doch sind alle diese Elemente ererbte Bestandteile der Seele, des wahren Selbst, deren Tod gewünscht wird. Unser Hoffen geht darauf, dass die besten Elemente unseres Selbst immer höhere Verbindungen eingehen - bis zum Gewahrwerden der<sup>82</sup>- und Einswerden mit der absoluten Realität.

Illusions are something to be overcome during the process of self-fulfilment which is ultimately to be achieved in union with "absolute reality". Yet apparently they are themselves elements of the "true self", the aggregate of elements which constitutes the soul,<sup>83</sup> a statement reminiscent of the way in Der Turm both good and evil, the spiritual and the animal, often appear to be an inner potentiality of man which can be developed in either direction. In this idea could lie the explanation of how Sigismund can deny the existence of a fundamental distinction between himself and Olivier.

These undesirable elements, however, even though they are part of the "true self", must be shed before union with "der absoluten Realität" can be achieved, and can that which has no part in absolute reality be said to be real? The attempt to cope with the problem of the nature and

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82. Quoted in Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, NF XXII, 1972, p.199

83. cf. p.83f above



reality of evil by confining it to some lower, ultimately illusory level of existence provides no final solution.

6. The values of "Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater"

In the passage from which the above quotation was taken, Hofmannsthal maintains that this process is not confined to eastern religion but is also the aim of "das christliche Bewusstsein." It is interesting to consider how his system of values, as it has emerged so far, corresponds to the Christian framework of Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater, and how far the play remains faithful to values that have been traditionally held to be Christian.

At the beginning the angel explains that "Kern und Sinn" of the play about to be performed is expressed in the biblical text, "Du sollst deinen Nächsten lieben wie dich selbst, und aber deinen Gott, den sollst du lieben über alles," and that this is the meaning of the title of the play, "Tuet Recht! Gott über euch!"<sup>84</sup> The angel is answering Impertinence's protest that they do not know what the action of the play is to be: there is an obvious contrast here between this answer and the answer given to the same question in Calderon's play, that Law will be the prompter.<sup>85</sup> This does betray a difference in attitude to the idea of moral law, but it should be remembered that this verse was in fact used by Christ to sum up the meaning of the Law.<sup>86</sup> Hofmannsthal is in tune with Christian teaching in considering that to do right is not to conform one's

84. KHA X, p.16

85. Masterpieces of the Spanish Golden Age, p.375

86. Matthew Ch.22, v.37-40

actions to an external code of regulations but to let them flow from an internal principle, namely love.

The importance of selflessness and love is also brought out in Hofmannsthal's description of the character of Wisdom in the "Dritter Brief aus Wien": she unites everything, "was wir an Hohem, Unselbstischem, Gott-Gleichem in uns tragen,"<sup>87</sup> and emphasis is placed on the fact that she prays in the moment of danger not for her own salvation but for the Beggar's. She is the only character in the play willing to give alms to the Beggar, which she offers spontaneously, and to those who do not need material aid she gladly gives spiritual advice. Yet a closer analysis of the figures of both Wisdom and the Beggar, as the two characters whose lives are given the highest approval at the end, shows that the ethic of love and selflessness has no more absolute value here than in other works we have examined, but is there to serve a higher purpose.

Wisdom reaches out in love to those with whom she comes into contact, but she would prefer to avoid this contact altogether: "Mich ziehts, wo ich allein: in Einsamkeit zu beten!"<sup>88</sup> The King asks her to remain with him as a guide, but Wisdom replies that that would mean remaining "inmitten dieser Welt./Ich habe mich aus ihr in Ewigkeit gestellt."<sup>89</sup> The Beggar at the end expresses the same desire, wanting only to go off into the depths of the forest, "Dort liegen und in Lust/Mich ganz zu Gott zu

87. A, p.297

88. KHA X, p.25

89. KHA X, p.26

regen!"<sup>90</sup> In so doing he is, in Wisdom's words, "zum grossen Ziel gekommen":<sup>91</sup> he has achieved the highest aim of human life, to be found apparently in a passive state of union with God.

Great importance is of course attached from the beginning to action: the angel tells the Beggar's soul, "Die Tat allein ist Schöpfung über der Schöpfung"<sup>92</sup> and proclaims after he has renounced his act of vengeance, "Statt Untat ist jetzt Tat getan!"<sup>93</sup> By this "action" the threat of universal destruction, "die Drohung des Chaos an die geordnete Welt,"<sup>94</sup> is averted. The difference between the Beggar's deed and the normal concept of ethical activity lies not so much in the fact that it is really a decision not to act, for this decision does after all have a very real effect on the world around, but rather in that concern for this world and its inhabitants is not of primary importance. What matters is the Beggar's inner submission to the demands of his role, as expressed in the angel's command, "Nimm auf dich! Schmiege dich!"<sup>95</sup> By so doing he helps to preserve order: but this order is, after all, in many ways very corrupt. When the Beggar says, "Was schiert mich, was ihr habt? Ich bin so voller Freuden/Und will in Wald,"<sup>96</sup> he seems to have lost his earlier burning concern for his fellow have-nots. His soul cried out at the beginning, "Und wär ich Jakob. Es darf nicht gehandelt werden wie an Esau. Ich leid es nicht."<sup>97</sup> Now he is no longer troubled about the injustice and oppression

90. KHA X, p.49  
91. KHA X, p.49  
92. KHA X, p.21  
93. KHA X, p.48

94. A, p.296  
95. KHA X, p.22  
96. KHA X, p.49  
97. KHA X, p.20

inflicted on his brothers.

Earlier he told the Rich Man, "der Weltstand muss dahin, neu werden muss die Welt."<sup>98</sup> He repeats this again after his experience of illumination, but in renouncing the "Blut und Feuer" with which he earlier hoped to achieve it he seems to have renounced as well all practical attempts to work for it. Even if the religious context precludes action on a purely social level, his own experience shows how a change of heart and a new understanding of the meaning of life can be brought about through the love and witness of another, as it was for him by Wisdom's prayer. Could he not try to pass on this new insight? If he had offered his friendship and encouragement to the Rich Man a little sooner, perhaps the latter would not at the end of the play be fit only to kneel "tiefer unten, im Dunkel."<sup>99</sup> Indeed we have already seen how a practical concern for others is traditionally seen as the highest fulfilment of the mystic's calling.<sup>100</sup> Nor is it possible to argue that the Beggar is simply fulfilling a personal vocation which should not be judged by general criteria of human behaviour. Hofmannsthal, in writing to Strauss, makes clear that he is an "Everyman" figure and should not be expected to develop as an individual character.<sup>101</sup>

Yet the Beggar is given the highest honour in heaven, a clear indication that concern for the world, though shown by those who are in harmony with the Divine, is not of first importance. Wisdom, too, does not point to her

98. KHA X, p.36  
99. KHA X, p.66

100. See p.59f above  
101. Strauss BW, p.470

actions, or to the love she has shown in her life, when she is dying, but prays "Verklär mich ohne jegliches Verdienst."<sup>102</sup> This is a good Christian sentiment; but (unlike Jedermann) she does not need to make the Christian's appeal to the blood of Christ to compensate for her undeserving state. Her expectation of transfiguration presumably proceeds from a sense of her inner harmony with the Divine.

The Divine in Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater is obviously presented in terms of the Judaeo-Christian concept, but that it is nevertheless not so far removed from the power which appears in other works of Hofmannsthal's is evident from the fact that Wisdom can address God as "Leben über allem Leben"<sup>103</sup> and "Du, der du alles bist",<sup>104</sup> and also from his desire to see "ein lebendes, geheimes freies Wirken."<sup>105</sup> Through him the characters are bound together by an invisible "Verkettung" as in Die Frau ohne Schatten: they are described by the angel as "verbunden ... durch goldne Gnadenkette."<sup>106</sup>

As part of this chain of human life, even the Rich Man is not ultimately rejected. How can this be reconciled with the fact that the characters have been told to "do right" and to love both one another and God, since in all these respects he has failed? The "Master" states at the beginning, "Wahl ist ihnen gegeben zwischen Gut und Böse, das ist ihre Kreaturschaft, in die ich sie gestellt habe."<sup>107</sup> Man is therefore called upon to choose between

102. KHA X, p.59  
103. KHA X, p.47  
104. KHA X, p.58

105. KHA X, p.11  
106. KHA X, p.65  
107. KHA X, p.13

good and evil, but at the same time the implication is there that this is something restricted to the realm of earthly life and "Kreaturschaft" and that the Master and Creator himself is above these categories. Sense can be made of the ambivalent attitude expressed in the play towards questions of social evil only if it is seen that the values and concerns of the whole material world are in the ultimate unreal and that earthly events happen only "gleichnisweise ... und nicht für wirklich."<sup>108</sup> The Beggar is "auf eine andere Ebene gekommen"<sup>109</sup> and so is able to see this. As Arnold Bergstraesser has expressed it in his article, "The social drama is not ended by a solution inherent in itself, but by the Beggar's action which makes the values of the sphere of semblance visible as deceptive in the light of the sphere of truth."<sup>110</sup> God's plan is worked out on a different level of existence, so that in earthly affairs he can be content with "ein ungeheueres Gewährenlassen."<sup>111</sup> Suffering may even be necessary on the level of appearance: when the Beggar cries out in his anguish "Warum?", Wisdom replies, "Es hat sein müssen."<sup>112</sup> But those who have discovered "die inner Himmelsfülle"<sup>113</sup> are untouched by external evils, for they have accepted and so overcome suffering. For them the Adversary's protest that injustice continues to flourish while they are dreaming in the forest requires no answer.

It follows that when the Master says, "Damit sie sich entscheide, dazu hab ich der höchsten Freiheit einen Funken

108. KHA X, p.15

109. A, p.298

110. Germanic Review, 20,  
1945, p.273

111. KHA X, p.46

112. KHA X, p.32

113. KHA X, p.49

in die Kreatur gelegt,"<sup>114</sup> this freedom must in fact mean something rather more than the simple choice between moral alternatives implied by his earlier words quoted above. It is freedom that the Beggar has discovered at the moment of his conversion. His declared aim in retiring to the forest is to understand it more fully: "Ich will in wilden Wald, sie völlig zu erkennen,"<sup>115</sup> whereas if it were a question of freedom to choose between violence and non-violence, justice and injustice, one would expect him rather to explore it through involvement in society. On the new level he has reached, he is released from such polar opposites which are inherent in the created world, and his freedom, like Sigismund's, is freedom from all conditioning by external circumstances. He is therefore no longer concerned about the evils he has experienced. Kobel explains the nature of the choice he has made as follows: "Die Wahl zwischen Gut und Böse, die dem Menschen gegeben ist, kann ein Ja oder ein Nein zur Wahl sein, die ihm gewählt hat. Das Gut, das Rechte, das der Mensch tun kann, ist, dass er in gottgewollter Selbstwahl sich selbst wählt."<sup>116</sup> In this way the Adversary's antithesis between free will and predestination<sup>117</sup> is also destroyed. The role, with all its "predestined" sufferings, is accepted by a free choice, which has seen it as only the means to a higher end.

Within the religious framework of Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater the evils of this world can be overcome in the next, and a foretaste of the joy to come can be

114. KHA X, p.13  
115. KHA X, p.51

116. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, p.236  
117. KHA X, p.13

obtained even in this life by those who withdraw from "the world". When this framework is lacking, however, such evils cannot so easily be dismissed. Hofmannsthal himself faces up to the questions raised by the Adversary's protest in Der Turm. Sigismund, like the Beggar, finds peace and security in an inner spiritual realm which enables him to accept suffering as something which cannot affect his essential being. But he does not therefore conclude that the evil state of the world which causes such suffering can be ignored: even in the second version he feels a desire to help the oppressed masses who appeal to him for aid in their struggle. And in the earlier version he is prepared to make use even of the "Blut und Feuer" of the Beggar's vision, in a situation which, according to the Doctor's diagnosis at the beginning, can only be healed by iron and fire.<sup>118</sup>

As has already been noted, Hofmannsthal described the answer given in Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater to the chaos which threatened contemporary society as "nicht optimistisch, aber auch nicht pessimistisch, sondern dichterisch oder religiös,"<sup>119</sup> that is, not on the level of practical considerations, but belonging to another realm. Because in Der Turm he was trying to find an answer which, even if dependent on a spiritual dimension, would come to terms with the evils of society, he had to make the choice between optimism and pessimism, as reflected in the endings of the two versions. He could not solve the problem of the nature of good and evil by removing the characters to a

118. DIV, p.30

119. A, p.297



realm where all such conflict was resolved in harmony. The tragedy of the second version is that Sigismund cannot take the Beggar's way out. As Nehring has commented, "Innerlich ist er nicht weniger Täter als in der ersten Fassung des Dramas ... Aber erstmalig erscheint die Macht der Gegenwelt so stark, dass einem Menschen von aussen die fruchtbare Selbstverwirklichung unmöglich gemacht wird."<sup>120</sup>

#### 7. The ideal of harmony

Olivier, the representative of evil in Der Turm, is associated with the realm of "die Leiber und die Sachen", but this material realm is not evil in itself: the Utopian ending of the first version clearly takes place within this sphere. It is evil only when it is viewed as an autonomous mechanical world, indeed as the only world, and so obscures the spiritual dimension to which it is supposed, "gleichnisweise", to correspond. The ideal put forward at the end of the first version is of a material world sustained by a spiritual order: the two apparent opposites are to be reconciled in a situation which seems to fulfil Hofmannsthal's demand in the "Münchener Rede", "das der Geist Leben wird und Leben Geist."<sup>121</sup> "Leben" here is not used quite in the sense in which I have used it to indicate Hofmannsthal's highest value, which corresponds rather to this proposed synthesis of "Geist" and "Leben", at least in his later works. But even in the Greek plays the life force which is affirmed is not without a spiritual dimension. We have seen how Elektra's vengeance upholds a higher order which

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120. Die Tat bei Hofmannsthal, p.136

121. PIV, p.412

has been threatened by the murder of Agamemnon, and Hofmannsthal himself shows how Oedipus's story can be related to such concepts by the Hölderlin quotation with which he prefaces the play: "Des Herzens Woge schäumte nicht so schön empor und würde Geist, wenn nicht der alte stumme Fels, das Schicksal, ihr entgegenstände."<sup>122</sup>

Many of Hofmannsthal's works present this synthesis of spiritual and material elements as something to be sought after. Writing about Die Frau ohne Schatten, Hofmannsthal points out that at the beginning the human element is missing from the Empress's character: the point of the play is that in the third act, "die tierhaft-geisterhaften Elemente werden dann in einem höheren Medium zu einer neuen Wesenheit verschmolzen erscheinen."<sup>123</sup> In Andreas the hero has to learn "dass Geist u. Körper eines sind,"<sup>124</sup> and Maria and Mariquita must become one person again.

The clearest expression of this ideal is found in the notes for Semiramis and Die beiden Götter, where there is a plea for a synthesis of a more all-embracing kind than that simply of spirit and matter. We are told that Ninyas is "Geist und Liebe"<sup>125</sup> while Semiramis stands for "das Ungeistige, der Zwang, das Bestehende"<sup>126</sup> and for "Gewalt".<sup>127</sup> She is "Tun" and he is "Nicht-tun". Their conflict can only be ended by their union: "Wenn die Mutter und der Sohn in einem Haus wohnen, so wird der Anfang einer neuen Zeit sein,"<sup>128</sup> and "Nicht-tun und Tun auf

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122. DII, p.271

123. Strauss BW, p.253

124. KHA XXX, p.116

125. DIII, p.456

126. DIII, p.456

127. DIII, p.453

128. DIII, p.458

geheimnisvolle Weise vereinigt, darin liegt es (Laotse)."<sup>129</sup>

The ideal is a monarch who rules, but is able to do so "ohne Tun, d.h.: ohne Verbote, Zwang - also rein sittlich zu wirken."<sup>130</sup> The product of this synthesis, then, is seen as something essentially moral, and this morality would be, as always for Hofmannsthal, the result not of outward compulsion but inward impulse, in a world where "alle Anstalten und Massregeln zur Herstellung von Sitte und Ordnung überflüssig würden und jeder von selbst sich einem reinen und gerechten Leben zuwendete."<sup>131</sup>

These notes are of particular interest in relation to Der Turm. Hofmannsthal himself points out the close parallels between the figures of Ninyas and Sigismund, and the Sigismund of the first version seems to be aiming at the kind of synthesis which is suggested here, and which is finally realised under the rule of the Children's King. But the complementary figures, Olivier and Semiramis, cannot be equated in the same way, in spite of Semiramis' violent and "unspiritual" nature. For she is "immer in Angst, von Ninyas verschlungen zu werden, aufgehoben zu werden:"<sup>132</sup> she recognizes in him her other self, and the fact that they are complementary. Olivier does not recognize the existence of a spiritual realm: in Der Turm the split is total, and he must be destroyed before the new age can begin. The synthesis is not complete: something has been rejected.

Yet even in Die beiden Götter the relation of the new

129. DIII, p.471  
130. DIII, p.471

131. DIII, p.471f  
132. DIII, p.457

age to the union of mother and son is problematic: as described above it seems to have much more of Ninyas in it than of Semiramis. The problem arises with the attempt to make the synthesis produce something morally good, something "rein und gerecht" and related to "Sitte und Ordnung", since morality is meaningless if it does not approve some things and reject others. In addition, the attempt to account for the evils of this world by dividing it into two spheres, a phenomenal, material dimension and a spiritual one in which the conflicts of the other are resolved, does not make it any easier for Hofmannsthal to give a convincing picture of such a synthesis, for the spiritual realm inevitably acquires priority over the other. The ultimate invincibility of spirit is strongly emphasised in Der Turm, and in the Buch der Freunde Hofmannsthal writes, "Der Geist besiegt die Materie,"<sup>133</sup> in spite of having claimed in Andreas that "Geist und Körper eines sind."<sup>134</sup> In this way Hofmannsthal reflects the Platonic tendency to see the soul as more important than the body.

It has already been noted that in Hofmannsthal's works the human often merges with the divine, the spiritual or the animal.<sup>135</sup> Humanity apparently partakes in its essence of the realm of the eternal and infinite: we find references to "sein Ewiges, sein Rein-Menschliches, sein Unbedingtes"<sup>136</sup> and to "unserer kosmisch bewegten, Zeiten und Räume umspannenden Menschennatur."<sup>137</sup> Yet this realm is usually presented as that of the spiritual. In the

133. A, p.40

134. KHA XXX, p.116

135. e.g. pp.49 and 92ff above

136. PII, p.381

137. PIV, p.459

threefold system of material/animal, human, and spiritual/divine, priority is sometimes given to the spiritual and sometimes to the human (as in the passage about Die Frau ohne Schatten above). In the latter case the human element appears not as one element among three but as a synthesis of the other two. Such a synthesis, however, raises a moral problem. How is it, for example, that Sigismund, the defender of the spiritual realm who defeats "der rote Satan" Olivier, can also say in the grip of his mystical vision, "Engel und Teufel sind eins"<sup>138</sup> and tell Olivier himself, "Was arg und was nicht arg ist, wer entscheidet das?"<sup>139</sup>

Hofmannsthal is of course aware of the paradoxical nature of his position, for instance in a note in which he describes the re-integrated Maria and Mariquita, the whole woman who gives herself to Andreas, as "ohne Sünde sündigend - schon jenseits."<sup>140</sup> But "jenseits" seems to indicate that this paradoxical situation is possible because a state has been reached beyond sin and sinlessness, a state of harmony in which these opposites are reconciled. In another note on Andreas, Hofmannsthal quotes from Novalis: "Alles Ubel und Böse ist isoliert und isolierend, es ist das Prinzip der Trennung."<sup>141</sup> From this, evil appears as a flaw in the unity of the harmonious whole, rather than anything in the separated elements: as such it is something purely negative, and inevitably disappears when re-integration is achieved. It follows that, although

138. DIV, p.98  
139. DIV, p.152

140. KHA XXX, p.22  
141. KHA XXX, p.150

one of two such complementary elements as spirit and body may be seen as evil if it comes to deny the other and so becomes a cause of separation, this evil will only have reality as long as separation is maintained.

The nature of such a complementary relationship is expressed probably as clearly as it can be in the note about Andreas' discovery of the unity of body and spirit: "(er hat an den Dualismus fortwährend gelitten ...) nun lernt er hinter dem einen das andere - immer das eine als Träger des anderen fühlen."<sup>142</sup> But just as in the novel the idea of such a relationship was to find expression in the figure of Maria/Mariquita, so in many other works Hofmannsthal expresses it not by an abstract formulation but in a pair of complementary figures. "Auch dort wo Kontraste dargestellt sind ..., wie die heroische Elektra und die nur weibliche Chrysothemis, oder der starke Pierre und der schwache Jaffier, kam es mir immer darauf an, dass sie mitsammen eine Einheit bildeten, recht eigentlich eins waren."<sup>143</sup> In a letter to Strauss he sees it as the particular quality of his work "dass ich es auf Kontraste, und über die Kontraste auf Harmonie des Ganzen anzulegen weiss."<sup>144</sup>

But both characters in such a pair must be accepted on equal terms: neither is to be condemned, only the fact that they are divided, and neither approved at the expense of the other. Hofmannsthal himself makes this point in the "Reden in Skandinavien" when referring to Goethe: "In der

142. KHA XXX, p.116  
143. A, p.234

144. Strauss BW, p.125f

Gegenüberstellung Tasso und Antonio liegt seine Gerechtigkeit, - nicht auf seiten eines der beiden."<sup>145</sup> The idea of "Gerechtigkeit" recurs throughout his works, but on the basis of this it does not correspond to the normal concept of justice, which, though of course involving the full consideration of all opposing parties or viewpoints, also involves a final decision for one of them. The concept here is of a justice without judgement.

In this context it is helpful to consider Hofmannsthal's early prose piece entitled "Gerechtigkeit", although no explanation is given there of what it is to be "gerecht" according to the angel's demand. But we do know what it is not: the angel is scornful of the narrator's profession of an all-embracing love for, and sense of oneness with the world that surrounds him. If "justice" is not to be found in such an experience of mystical participation, it follows that it belongs to the realm of separation and individuation, and that recognition of this realm is necessary to attain it. Without recognition of the individual elements of which it is composed, harmony itself cannot be fully understood. This "justice", though, is to be contrasted not only with an outlook which sees all distinctions as blurred, but also with the blindness of selfishness. We have seen, for instance, how in Die Frau ohne Schatten the characters have to learn to recognize and respect each other in their full individuality before they can play their true part in the pattern of life.

In this work a whole group of figures is involved, but

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whether a pair or a group is concerned, the characters represent "kontrapunktische Notwendigkeiten,"<sup>146</sup> each a necessary part of the whole, and this can present problems. In a letter to R.A. Schröder Hofmannsthal recognizes that "bei meiner Art, die Welt zu sehen" it is difficult for him to see conflict, though he expects to overcome this problem where drama is concerned.<sup>147</sup> But without an awareness of conflict not only drama but also any kind of moral attitude threatens to collapse, since there is no real antithesis between good and evil. In the "Reden in Skandinavien" Hofmannsthal has been seen to reject the concept of law which lays down one thing as right and another as wrong in favour of a law of natural development and self-fulfilment. He there states that, "Die Gesetze sind in den Menschen, die Welt ist ihre in menschlichen Gestalten und Begebenheiten manifestierte Ordnung,"<sup>148</sup> and the problem emerges particularly clearly in this statement: such an order must surely embrace all that is normally held to be evil in the world. Strength is added to this conclusion by the way Hofmannsthal in these speeches sees the war itself as a necessary phase in the development of European culture towards the ideal. He may be well aware of all the particular evils involved in war, as is shown by his portrayal of it in Der Turm, but as part of "dem notwendigen Gange des Ganzen"<sup>149</sup> it must be affirmed. The attempt to discover a positive role for violence and suffering can indeed be found as early as the poem "Der Jüngling und die Spinne",<sup>150</sup> where the youth is seeking to come to terms with a "Life"

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 146. PII, p.44  
 147. BII, p.67f  
 148. PIII, p.363

149. PIII, p.361  
 150. GLD, pp.37-39



of which these things are an integral part.

Hofmannsthal finds the meaning of human existence in its participation in the activity of the universal force earlier described as "life", a force which unites the whole of reality into a harmony. The purpose of life for the individual is to find his own place within this harmony: for society it is to realize it in the social order, so that both dimensions of reality, the physical world and the world beyond, correspond. The artist has a role to play in this, one often attributed to him in German thought. Nietzsche, for example, in Die Geburt der Tragödie, describes his aim as, "die Betrachtung der Individuation als des Urgrundes des Übels, die Kunst als die freudige Hoffnung, dass der Bann der Individuation zu zerbrechen sei, als die Ahnung einer wiederhergestellten Einheit."<sup>151</sup> This ideal of harmony and unity represents for Hofmannsthal the highest value, and counteracts the threat of death most effectively by absorbing it into its own all-embracing pattern.

Death, suffering, and what is normally seen as guilt are all to be accepted as part of life, and guilt becomes redefined as sin against life itself, anything which interferes with the pattern and development of the whole. Selfishness, hatred and distrust are all causes of division and so fall into this category: thus far the values dependent on this ideal coincide with traditional ones. But even these negative things can be affirmed, by someone who

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151. Werke, Bd.III.1, p.69

shares this view of life, as complementary elements in the balance of the whole; as Rudolf Kassner does, for instance, pointing out that "Der Glaube treibt in's Unendliche, die Liebe lässt ineinanderfliessen, Zweifel und Hass begrenzen" and that both aspects are necessary, for "jede Harmonie beruht auf den grossen Gegensätzen von Ja und Nein."<sup>152</sup>

#### 8. "Mystical morality"

Hofmannsthal's values depend ultimately on what is really a mystical conception of reality, and the result is, as Patricia Howe points out, that "although Hofmannsthal repeatedly endows his heroes with moral obligations, the underlying purpose of his morality seems to be mystical."<sup>153</sup> The spheres of mysticism and morality are generally seen as providing a contrast in Hofmannsthal's works, his characters often being called back from the world of mystical participation to that of individuation and ethical activity. But the two spheres are interrelated, two dimensions of the same reality, the one borne up by the other. Hestermann indeed states categorically, "Die Antithese Mystisch-Ethisch gibt es bei Hofmannsthal nicht."<sup>154</sup>

Probably the clearest contrast between the two realms is that in Das Bergwerk zu Falun, where both are presented as a reality in the hero's experience. Yet even here we find that the Grandmother, the upholder of the values of family life, herself sees life in terms of a process of "Verkettung" of which she becomes aware through a kind of

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152. Die Mystik, die Künstler und das Leben, p.229

153. The theme of death, p.279

154. Das mystische Element, p.14

mystical participation: although blind, she is

drum nicht minder ganz: im Innern drängt  
Sich ein Gewinde, ein Gefühl empor, 155  
Verbunden alles wie in Blumenketten.

Elis, in his final choice, stands for a mysticism practised in a realm of selfishness and isolation: what is set against it also has its basis in mystical insights.

Hofmannsthal clearly attaches the greatest importance to the traditional values of love and selflessness, but with the difference that these are not to be practised primarily for the sake of the people concerned but because of their role in the realisation of the universal harmony. As Patricia Howe puts it, "the ultimate purpose to which one must cling is something much greater than the small aims of any of these individual lives," and "this greater purpose is life itself."<sup>156</sup> This idea of a greater purpose is of course basic to any religious outlook, but where values are dependent on an impersonal life-force rather than on the will of a personal deity, the individual inevitably seems to forfeit any ultimate importance.

Hofmannsthal sees the mystic's vision of universal harmony and the oneness of all reality as a vision of the good, so that value judgements are made on the basis of how far an action or attitude is in tune with it. But we have seen that this is something to which normal concepts of good and evil have no relevance, so the question arises as to whether values based on such a standard are in any sense moral. To derive moral criteria from one's understanding of the nature of reality - whether that understanding is

155. GLD, p.377

156. Op. cit., p.86

religious or scientific - is to fall into the "naturalistic fallacy" (the attempted deduction of what ought to be from what is) which has been discredited by recent moral philosophy.

There is much argument about the real basis and scope of moral values, but Warnock makes the point that, simply as a consequence of what the word "moral" means, "certain standards ... though they do not have to be accepted at all, must be accepted if the claim to be evaluating morally is seriously made."<sup>157</sup> Such standards must have reference to what is beneficial to people, in the world in which their actions and experiences take place (whatever one's idea of "beneficial" may be). Bertrand Russell distinguishes two kinds of good: "There is a lower mundane kind of good and evil, which divides the world of appearance into what seem to be conflicting parts; but there is also a higher, mystical kind of good, which belongs to Reality and is not opposed by any correlative kind of evil," a good which "belongs to the whole world as it is in reality."<sup>158</sup> But such a "higher good" has no relation to normal moral concepts: it is simply the whole of reality viewed subjectively as something positive. It is not a moral but a metaphysical good, and man who sins against it does not suffer from moral guilt but from the metaphysical limitations inherent in his finite nature. Through his experience of union with the whole of reality, the mystic transcends these limitations.

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157. Contemporary Moral Philosophy, p.68

158. Mysticism and Logic, p.27

For Hofmannsthal the highest good of human existence lies in man's full participation in "life", a concept which surely belongs to the metaphysical rather than to the moral sphere. There is, however, no doubt as to his continuing concern with the ethics of human actions and relationships within the everyday world, or his awareness of the evil pervading human society. Because he cares deeply about moral issues, he needs to find a vision of reality which will somehow account for the existence of evil and provide a basis for his belief in love and selflessness. In his works he explores different aspects of the problem and its possible solutions.

There may be a logical incompatibility between a belief in a universal harmony in which good and evil are swallowed up and a concern with practical everyday morality, but in practice the two often co-exist. Eastern religions freely combine pantheistic mysticism with high moral teaching. Neither mystical nor poetic understanding can be fitted into a logical scheme.

The co-existence of these two elements does, however, sometimes create tensions within Hofmannsthal's works, most notably in Der Turm. The evil represented by Olivier cannot be assimilated into a harmonious whole. Even in the first version the Children's King, who ushers in the new order of harmony and peace, says "Mir geziemt nicht, das Ubel zu sehen,"<sup>159</sup> and in the second version all reconciliation has become impossible. The reality of evil

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159. DIV, p.203

experienced in the actual world has for the moment obscured the vision of unity.

The belief in the unity of the whole is, however, firmly rooted in Hofmannsthal's mysticism, and the predominant concept is therefore inevitably that of a metaphysical good such as Russell describes, with evil explained away as a misunderstanding or a temporary flaw in the pattern. Because Hofmannsthal sees reality not as a static harmony but as the continuous flow of "life", human love and faithfulness do have a vital part to play since they are involved in the working out of life's purpose.

## Conclusion

In the preceding chapters of this thesis I have sought to show how, in spite of the undefined nature of the faith which Hofmannsthal affirms, there is underlying all his works a picture of reality of which the spiritual dimension is an essential element. It is this dimension which unites all things into a meaningful whole and transcends duality, material causality and time. It is revealed to those who have grasped the symbolic nature of the physical world, although only through a process of deep involvement with it; the symbols of art, religion and mythology point to the same hidden realm. In making use of religious language and imagery, Hofmannsthal is seeking both to express this understanding of reality and to suggest answers to the moral questions which concern him, such as the need to establish lasting values in the face of death, and the problem of the existence of evil.

His early understanding of such things is intuitive and empathetic, and is generally expressed without the direct use of religious language and symbolism. Such language and symbolism is, however, found to play an increasing role in his later works, as he seeks to clarify the insights gained, to explore moral issues more deeply, and in particular to discover means of communicating an awareness of spiritual reality. The terminology of religion is used essentially for its evocative and associative power, for Hofmannsthal believes that the kind of communication he is seeking can never be achieved through the abstractions of theology. For him all abstract

definition, whether theological, philosophical or psychological, is lifeless and restrictive. The vision of spiritual truth can therefore only be shared through the power of living symbols, from whatever sphere these may be drawn. In this way the religious function which Hofmannsthal attributes to all "higher" literary works<sup>1</sup> can be fulfilled, and his own growing desire to communicate this understanding realised.

His actual picture of reality, however, rooted as it is in mystical experience, does not change, and the vision of a realm of complete unity and timelessness remains constant as his emphasis shifts from inner experience to involvement in the processes of life, and as the directly religious element in his writings increases. It is because this vision remains unchanged that tensions emerge between the underlying concept of spiritual truth and some of the traditional words and images used to express it. It is therefore important to keep in mind Hofmannsthal's insistence that any religious or mythological material of which he makes use is chosen not for the sake of its specific emphasis or teaching, but because it has the symbolic power to evoke the "other reality" and in this respect has a universal significance. This reality has no name, "God" being only one possible way of referring to it, and cannot be known as an independent entity. It is its immanent presence, however, that imparts harmony and meaning to the chaos of human existence.

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1. See for example p.36 above.



There is therefore no sharp division to be made in Hofmannsthal's works between the introverted mystical experience of his early writings and the social concerns of the later ones. The later works are in fact exploring how the mystic's intuition of harmony and meaning can be realised in practice in the world of everyday experience, both on a personal level, as in for example Die Frau ohne Schatten, and within the whole of a society under threat, as in Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater and Der Turm. His concern with moral issues, although clearly present in such early works as Der Tor und der Tod, becomes an increasingly dominant theme as the war and the events which follow increasingly focus his attention on the destructive forces present in contemporary society.

A further tension then emerges in the ethical sphere between the fundamental mystical conviction of the oneness of all things and Hofmannsthal's acute awareness of the conflict between good and evil. This tension is resolved as far as is possible in the context of an all-embracing flow of "life"; within this all the individual actions to which such moral categories apply are absorbed into the harmony of the overall pattern. Evil becomes either a flaw in this pattern, or that which threatens to obstruct or obscure the onward movement of life; good is then the full participation in life's processes, in which not only love and faithfulness, but also death, suffering and guilt have a part to play as well. Such participation is in itself an entering into the realm of the mystic's vision.

The religious element in Hofmannsthal's works,

therefore, while individual in the sense that it does not belong to any one particular doctrinal or philosophical tradition, is nevertheless in tune with many attitudes of his day. For example, parallels have been traced in contemporary currents of thought such as "Lebensphilosophie" to his emphasis on irrationalism and rejection of antithetical thinking, his concept of the universal, creative and unifying power of "Life", and the mysticism that he presents without any interpretative theoretical framework.<sup>2</sup>

His treatment of religious elements also belongs to the tradition of Austrian writing, where the influence of the Baroque is still to be found. Its typical themes have been summed up by Donald Daviau as, "Tod, Verwandlung, Zeit, Vergänglichkeit, d(as) Leben als Traum, d(ie) Welt als Bühne und vor allem d(ie) Weltanschauung, besonders d(ie) Ideen von harmonia mundi und coincidentia oppositorum."<sup>3</sup> When making direct use of Baroque material, Hofmannsthal does of course give it his own original stamp, as has been seen in the case of Das Salzburger Grosse Welttheater and Der Turm: a transformation which reflects the contrast between his own understanding of reality and the all-embracing Christian worldview of his sources. The central images and themes of the Baroque are however all clearly recognisable in his works. Death, transformation and the overcoming of time all play an important role in his exploration of spiritual issues; the images of life as a dream and the world as a stage are both used by him to

2. See for example pp. 42f, 84 and 90f above.

3. 'Das junge und das jüngste Wien', p.82

express the relationship between physical and metaphysical reality; and the idea of universal harmony and unity is central to his whole religious outlook.

The conviction about the nature of reality and of true values that underlies Hofmannsthal's works is thus closely related both to the Austrian tradition of many generations and to widespread currents of thought in his own day. He was therefore able to see it as not merely a personal attitude but as something of universal validity, and in his later years as potentially able to provide the spiritual direction needed by a disintegrating European society.

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