

CONTEMPORARY FIGURES

NO. 3: EUGENIO D'ORS

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ANGELS

About fifty years ago general opinion held that Theology was a dead science. Among those who nevertheless studied it were Harnack and Cardinal Mercier. These two represented their respective schools: on the Protestant side Theology had become confused with the History of Theology, while on the Catholic side, even those who were not content with interminable repetitions did not believe that through thought could they attempt to approach divine problems, but were content to reconcile Thomistic Scholasticism, sanctioned by the Church, with the provisional truths of experimental science. "Critique" quite naturally dominated all thought, and a point was reached when even the possibility or the hope of an original thought was eliminated from Theology.

Things have changed: what we could barely have hoped for has happened before our very eyes. Foundations for new buildings of this order have been laid, and several of these are quite worthy of our attention. Recent Lutheran thought has produced Karl Barth, up to recently Professor at the University of Bonn, and his great influence is acknowledged by the general public; not only is his influence felt in Protestant circles, in Germany and in Basle, his native town, but also in France, where he is much read and listened to. (During April 1934 he gave three lectures in Paris on Revelation, the Church, and Theology, while a new review, *Hic et Nunc*, is influenced by Barth's philosophy.) On the other hand the Catholic philosopher, Rademacher, will be up for discussion this year at Pontigny. And it is here that Eugenio d'Ors, whom we all knew to be a philosopher and art critic, reveals himself as a theologian.

The characteristic of this renovation—like unto the *Metaphysicher Frühling* announced by Peter Wust—is the retention of orthodoxy in the unveiling of hitherto undreamed of horizons. For Karl Barth, whose influence is daily gaining among the best of the young Protestant clergy, the Bible is quite another thing than a mere well from which to draw commentaries, nor is it a mere compendium of symbols. He accepts it and studies it literally, but he regards this written revelation in the character of a first letter destined to open a correspondence and which shall be followed up by further exchanges. It may be compared to the first session of a congress: procedure is established;

man says, on such and such a condition I will listen to you, and from then a dialogue is established.¹

Karl Barth's doctrine—very orthodox in Protestant eyes because he respects the Bible from a formalist point of view and restricts the liberty of its interpretation—does not allow the mind great liberty or research. Reconciling the desire for liberty that characterises Protestantism with a respect for dogma, this believer, who makes no reservations and for whom God has not revealed everything, "is playing perhaps the last card of a religion about to be mistaken for free-thinking"² and diluted in it. Arnold Rademacher attempts to create a fundamental guide to Christian life, capable of expressing and theologically justifying the religious activist type, a guide to be derived from a tension between religion and life, which he considers healthy and "the key to richer meditation on the relations of earthly things."³ Purely as theologians, Barth and Rademacher treat the problem of the divine generally. Eugenio d'Ors, on the contrary, has only treated one side of this science up to the present: the doctrine of the angels. But this doctrine, based on fundamental truths, has become a complete system and therefore out-rules, even in the mind of the most superficial reader, a suspicion of mere dilettantism or of a literary fantasia into unexplored domains on the part of the author. The theories expressed by Eugenio d'Ors, as a Catholic philosopher and theologian,⁴ follow, like all other theories since the Christian humanism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Platonic and Augustinian traditions.

His idealism, which is contrary to Aristotelean and Thomistic empiricism, is expressed by dialectics whose novelty demands a brief comparison with those of Plato and Hegel. In Platonic idealism contraries are conceived as illusions, as all is covered by the unity of substance. True science is only related to substance, and therefore excludes time, and leaves to private opinion the concept of changing and contradictory appearances. Hegel re-establishes the importance of time, and by it is able to conciliate contraries: thesis, antithesis and synthesis are succeeding stages. D'Ors tries to eliminate time again,

¹ It must be made clear that this "procedure" is not to be taken literally. Man cannot impose his will on God. With regard to the sacred text, he must wait "until this text becomes a witness of the revelation." Karl Barth, *Revelation, Church, Theology*, Paris, 1934. Among the works of K. B. translated into French we must note *La Parole de Dieu et la Parole Humaine*.

² Eu. d'O., *Glosario*, 1934.

³ Ref. Arnold Rademacher, *Religion et Vie*. Ed. de la Cité Chrétienne, Bruxelles. Also the review *La Cité Chrétienne*, of Brussels, influenced by Father Maurice de Backer.

⁴ On Eu. d'Ors, his ideals, ref. *La Littérature Catholique d'aujourd'hui*, by Forst de Bataglia, Vienna and Fribourg, Herder; and on his religious ideals ref. the lecture given by Mathilde Pomés to the Cercle Marceau, December 21, 1934, put into article form by C. Rodriguez Pintos for the *Courrier Philosophique d'Eu. d'O.*, No. 2, Autumn 1934.

and to do so had recourse to Socrates' irony. One of the current or, better still, common forms of irony consists in not advancing an idea without making reservations, to insinuate the objection in the affirmation, which is not, contrary to general belief, the procedure of a frivolous mind. We need only give this irony a metaphysical value to see that every thesis contains in itself its antithesis. It contains it *marginally* because thought is based on hierarchy and order, but nevertheless it contains it; and the synthesis is not left to the future, but is expressed at once. In this system thought is not demonstrative but assertive. It is, essentially, a dual dialogue. Consequently an image for a mind that thinks in images is not contradictory to substantial unity.¹ While certain doctrines have done away with form in the name of substantial unity (Spinoza is one of the best examples) and while certain others—empiricism—only retain form by sacrificing substantial unity, in ironic thought, in dialogue thought, form does not exclude the essence nor does the essence exclude form.²

Gabriel Marcel attributed the moral confusion of the contemporary world to the fact that we are accustomed to think of reality as a body of relative matter, individuals as mere links, and to ignore substance.³ Eugenio d'Ors agrees with Marcel in this matter. From the moment the general line of his system became concrete (about 1925) he directed all his thoughts to "substance" and to re-introducing substance into the most important domains of philosophy: philosophy of history and philosophy of the individual.

On the historical side our author has written *The Science of Culture*,⁴ which is equally distant from empiricism, where history is but a procession of facts and figures, and from Hegel, in whose eyes history is only a drama reflected in the mind itself. In *The Science of Culture* d'Ors retains only enough historical matter to follow the progressive development of certain *constants* that he designates by the alexandrine term of *eons*, which he studies and defines. Thus the eon of the Empire forms a category into which all the imperial conquests will fall. In

¹ Metaphysics and drawing can be interrelated; according to Eu. d'O. there exists a "functional identity" in these two subjects. On this matter ref. F. Lefebvre, *Une heure avec. . .* 5 series.

² "What fascinates and what is essentially right in Nietzsche's intellectual thought is that individuals as well as nations, culture, entire epochs, present themselves to him in the form of images. . . . He describes each character according to exterior appearances, or better still, he found the visible world to be the key to the invisible, and sustains his thought on the reality of the symbol." L. Klages, *Los Principios de la Caracterologia*. This definition of Nietzsche's thought can also be applied to Eugenio d'Ors.

³ *Le Monde Cassé*, Paris, 1933 (referred to by Eu. d'O. during his lectures at the University of Geneva).

⁴ Parts of *The Science of Culture* have been published in the *Revue des Questions historiques*, 1934, preceded by an appreciation by Eugene Marsan. Eu. d'O. gave a series of lectures at the University of Geneva during 1934 on the same subject. Ref. also an article by L. Israel entitled *Eugenio d'Ors contra Paul Valéry* in *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, September 1934.

the same manner Goethe's eternal feminine becomes a historical constant.

With regard to the philosophy of the individual the most outstanding characteristic of Eugenio d'Ors' doctrine is that he not only believes in a spiritual substance behind the acts of the mind, but also in a substance placed outside of time: *the angel*. Thus, through the study of personality the author of this doctrine arrives at the doctrine of the angels.

The Church has always been wary of the veneration of the angels, even going so far as to forbid it at the provincial council of Laodicea. This prohibition was, naturally, only directed against the idolatrous cult practised by certain sects and where the possibility of a return to paganism was apparent. Limited to veneration—veneration as opposed to adoration—the cult of the angels meets with approval in the eyes of orthodoxy. Any suspicion attached to it is the result of what we might call a "series" of depreciation, the key to which Eugenio d'Ors gives us when he tells us that the belief in angels has little by little lost its intellectual character under the attacks of the "*baroque*": the Franciscan ideal representing one of its first manifestations. Primitively a symbol of knowledge, the angel has become a symbol of innocence, a childish symbol,¹ and to-day—when the Church, nevertheless, would have to defend itself less against a relapse towards paganism than against sterile belief and a tendency towards theism and abstraction—the cult of the angels has fallen to a very low level. The belief in the guardian angel—although it be a dogma—is restricted to infantile mythology and does not appear to express anything more than a poetical truth comparable to that which is drawn from the legends of St. Nicholas or of Father Christmas.

The eminently intellectual attitude of our philosopher did not, therefore, appear to lead him to such a subject, except by the study of iconography. But Eugenio d'Ors is very careful to explain that he is not abandoning the intellectual plane, and that by intellectual methods, through reason and argument, he holds that he can approach, by deduction, this belief which he considers to be one of the bulwarks of the intelligence against mysticism.

Various methods of thought help to found his belief. In the metaphysical order, the angel is considered as an indispensable intermediary between the soul and God. Divine intelligence not being able to descend to the level of the individual, all acts (prayer, for example) that are intended to interest this intelligence in our person would be ineffectual if we were not able to present ourselves in a

¹ Since the Renaissance iconography mirrors this attitude: the angel becomes "pretty"; Cupid succeeds Niké. No less fatal to this belief in the angels is the "romantic serafinism," the identification of the angel with the feminine. We might add that one of the characteristics of Eu. d'Ors' reaction is his hatred of all deviation from the doctrine of the angels towards spiritism, theosophy, etc. . . .

generic form before the divine intelligence. Also, each one of us is not only an *individual* but a *person*, in other words an archetype, a being containing a generic quality. Even the very words *personality* and *person* indicate this truth; we form not only an *ego*, but something more: a being in which the individual and the species are mixed. And here it is important to remember that according to the theologian's definitions, the angel is precisely the being in which the individual exterminates the species, becoming whole.¹

A French Dominican Father one day asked Eugenio d'Ors the following question: "Under what form does the union between the angel and the human soul during the earthly existence of man present itself to you?" Eugenio d'Ors replied: "To me this union is realised in the same manner as the union between the body and the soul during that same earthly life. Man, as an individual, is composed of body and soul. Man, as a person, is composed of body, soul and angel. It is a kind of 'functional' union. It can be compared to marriage. The marriage bed of the soul and body is called the 'subconscious mind' or approximately *instinct*. The marriage bed of the soul and the angel is called the 'superconscious mind' or again approximately, *vocation*."²

This word vocation—allowing us to go from the metaphysical order to the psychological order—is used by Eugenio d'Ors in a very wide sense. Vocation for him does not only mean religious vocation, nor even the inclination towards a certain walk of life, but is used in a wider sense to indicate the predetermination of our ultimate self. Vocation is a call directed from our very infancy, from the depth of our minds, to all our thoughts, so that they may become organised and united. The proof of this phenomenon was made clear to Eugenio d'Ors by his experience as an author. In his notes, written day by day for nearly twenty years, under the general title of *Glosarios*, he allowed himself great liberty of choice as far as subject-matter was concerned. (It also pleases him to remember that philosophy is not an end in itself.) He was faced with apparent disorder. But when he re-read these notes, written fifteen or twenty years before purely as commentaries, he found that they were quite ready to form part of a system. I like to picture this philosopher, at the moment of his discovery, as a worker who finds with surprise that after making various parts for a long time, he can, with these, make a great machine, and who wonders, not without emotion, what unknown being in him had conceived and designed this harmonious and complex whole.

All that was needed for this knowledge of an angelic presence to spring from the analysis of spiritual activity was suitable ground. This, thanks to the transformation undergone by the science of psycho-

¹ Ref., on this matter, the letter from the Abbé Lacaze in the *Courrier philosophique d'Eu*, d'O., September 1934.

² E. d'O., *De l'existence et l'assistance des Anges*, Part III.

logy during the last century, was fully prepared. Traditional psychology identified mind with the conscious—a true identification from the days of Descartes, when the one was defined by the other. Later on it was found that beyond regions of the conscious there appeared an infinitely vast region of spiritual life far beyond the scope of the most earnest introspection. From the very beginning this region was called the unconscious. "But here," says Eugenio d'Ors, "is where an error was made." We can easily substitute the term *unconscious* for the term *subconscious*. The two were held to be more or less synonymous.¹ Thus this region beyond the conscious is considered to be inferior, to be less important, although it is deeper. Language, generally a good guide, laid a dangerous trap from which it was impossible to escape without great mental effort. Let us make this effort. The human eye cannot distinguish objects without the existence of a certain intensity of light: its inferior limit being nearly total darkness, and its superior limit the moment when it is blinded by brilliant light. In the same way the lucidity of the conscious is bound on one side by a certain incomprehensible diffusion (the subconscious) and on the other side by excessive light, a region of blinding unity, and which is called, in the terminology of Eugenio d'Ors, the *superconscious*. In this superior region, being is not considered to be a sheaf of relations, the sum total of thought, a succession of events, but an immutable substance. A guiding substance: the Guardian Angel.

Barely had he enunciated this concept (there is no doubt about it, he fully deserves the title of the *restorer of the angels*) Eugenio d'Ors found the consequences to be enormous and destined to transform life. During the lectures given by Eugenio d'Ors in Switzerland last year, to which he brought much of his research matter, the application of the doctrine of the angels to the various spheres of intellectual activity—from portrait painting to biography²—was gone into with more detail than in his letters. On the question of biography the preface written by the author for *Fernando e Isabel, Reyes Catolicos de Espana*,³ gives us a first glimpse of his ideas on this subject. He says, that having to write a life of Goya and having gone over the questions connected with this work, he perceived the existence of a principle of unity in the human mind superior to the conscious, and he therefore understood that the real problem besetting the biographer consisted less in relating episodes subject to time than in *defining* a person. In other words, we must go directly to the "superconscious" and "capture" the angel.

¹ During the Spring of 1930 Eu. d'O. suggested to P. Desjardins the following subject to be set up for discussion at Pontigny that summer: *Are the terms "unconscious" and "subconscious" synonymous?* This was abandoned because of André Gide's objections.

² In Berne, Eu. d'O. spoke on the *Secret of Biography*, in Geneva on the *Secret of Portraiture*. He lectured on this same subject in 1933 before the P. E. N. Club of Brussels.

³ N.R.F. 1932. Also *Vie de Goya*, N.R.F. 1928.

If the conscious were the sum total of the mind no man could have a better biographer than himself. But this is not so. It mostly happens that a biographer knows more about his subject than the subject himself, owing to the fact that a good biography is not a mere relation of facts but a definition, not a story, but a key to a symbol, in which we agree with Eugenio d'Ors. In the same way a good portrait must reveal something more essential than the physical contours of a face, or even its "psychology" as some say. But the most amazing aspects of this doctrine appear in the attempts made by Eugenio d'Ors to create a general soteriology. In Religious Science terminology "soteriology" usually represents the theory of the redemption by Christ. Eugenio d'Ors applies it to a general system, both scientific and practical, embracing everything connected with the protection of one spirit by another; for example: pedagogy, medicine, the sacrament of penance and, to a larger extent, the revealing of the angelic element in a soul.¹ Following the lesson of Socrates, he offers us a new medium for studying life; soteriology shall preside over the rebirth of the angel.

And this is why his book, *De la existencia y de la asistencia de los Angeles*, written in the form of letters addressed to a person tormented by solitude, could also be intitled *Introduction to Angelic Life*, like the letters written by St. Francis of Sales to Filotea.² Eugenio d'Ors goes still farther than the idea of "Constant Prayer" expounded by the Bishop of Geneva when he speaks of "Diaphonic Prayer," where a dialogue takes the place of an interior monologue.³ It is the re-awakening of the angel. And in a world gone askew, full of contrasts and absurd oppositions—"youth" and "age" being one of the most absurd—it would be most difficult to point out any more urgent need than this study of the eternal, than this "rhythmic," fruitful conception of human life, which according to Eugenio d'Ors is comprised of at least three periods of youth. One is young or old by mere accident: age, according to this pedagogy directed primarily to the middle-aged, does not correspond to time.

Let us follow this guide offered us so that we may follow this road leading to substance and immutable definitions; let us hasten to join in this dantesque journey, setting out from the black forests and reaching the upper regions of light.

PAUL HENRI MICHEL.

¹ In Spanish circles influenced by Eu. d'Ors' doctrine of the angels an "Obra de los Solitarios" was founded a few years ago, intended to bring moral comforts to those who had been completely abandoned—by families, friends, etc.—and who are more numerous than is generally believed. Recently there was talk of founding an order or congregation dedicated to this work. In Paris there is an "Œuvre des Oubliés" founded expressly for this work.

² For St. Francis of Sales according to Eu. d'O., see *Au Grand Saint Christophe*, Paris, 1930.

³ *De l'existence et l'assistance des Anges*, Part I.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor of the *Colosseum*.

SIR,

Since Fr. Herbert Rees, in his interesting comments on my article "Anglo-Catholic Aspects," seems to find ambiguity in my title and distortion in my treatment, perhaps I may be allowed to explain to your readers what I should otherwise imagine to have been obvious, that I was not attempting therein a systematic exposition of the Catholic tradition in the Church of England or an apologia therefore in face of Rome. My aim was much more modest, and is expressed in a phrase I used in one particular connection: "I am only reporting what I am convinced are the facts." Naturally any such report which was not completely colourless would be likely to appear idiosyncratic and must be, as I then admitted, controversial.

You have allowed Fr. Rees the opportunity, of which he has taken good advantage, to argue that the Catholic movement represents "the only continuous tradition within the Church of England." I rejoice to see this familiar thesis so ably presented and am particularly delighted by the admirable extract he quotes from Pusey's writings. I am thankful that my "distortions" should have drawn this competent piece of apologetic from Fr. Rees, even if it seems to me to have very little relevance as a criticism of my article. If it is a matter of interest to Fr. Rees, or anyone else, I may add that, like the vast majority of Anglo-Catholics, who are certainly not what has become technically known among us as "Papalists," I am "ready to accord both ecclesiastical primacy and high spiritual authority to the See of Rome."

But when Fr. Rees begins to talk about "Liberalism" and "Modernism," using these highly ambiguous words as vague terms of abuse, I do not find him so impressive. The only problem in this connection which really matters is not concerned with an "anti-dogmatic temper," which we can all unite in deploring, but is the question of how the Christian mind may be employed to interpret the dogmas on which our faith reposes. Since Fr. Rees has mentioned Charles Gore, I feel bound to say that on the issue of *Lux Mundi* versus its "Catholic" critics in the Church of England, I believe all that is best in my communion would now admit Gore to have been overwhelmingly right. It is the sort of spirit which took up then what are now almost universally recognised to have been indefensible positions in that controversy, that I believe to be behind many of those who now stigmatise their opponents as "modernists."

Without entering upon a debate with Fr. Rees on "the Catholic