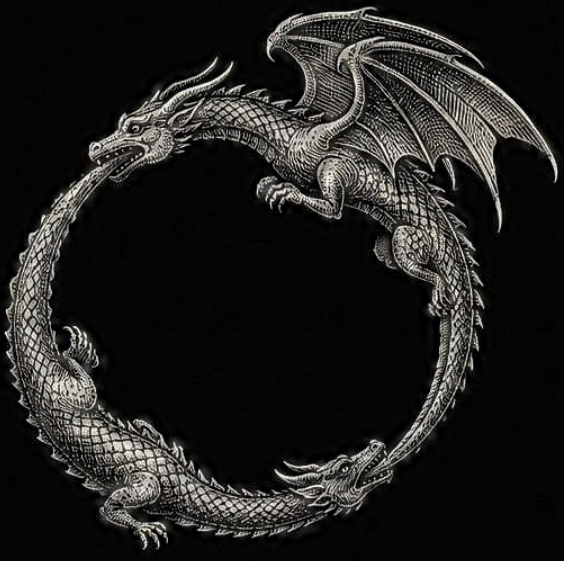
NOMINA NOCTURNA



DANIEL ESPRIT

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First edition. November 22, 2026.

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ISBN: 979-8237581348

Written by Daniel Esprit.

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Publisher's Note

This letter came to me as an undated printout. Judging by the events it mentions, it was written in the mid-nineties.

In Paris the author deciphered and translated three manuscripts that he calls *the Corpus*. They are the same manuscripts recently published under the title *Litterae tenebrarum*, which the author of the letter also uses for the Corpus.

The letter replies to a text by a certain B. I do not have that text and can judge it only from the objections in the letter.

I took the title *Nomina nocturna* from the letter itself, where it names the Art described in it. The letter's accounts of the Corpus differ in places from the published text, and I have left them as they are.

Daniel Esprit

Introduction

Greetings, kindred.

N. advises us to avoid calling one another by our real names and to leave nothing in our letters by which we might be identified. After what has been going on in America in recent years, this is sound advice, though it would be worth following even in quieter times. Anyone who has read the manuscripts knows the price of giving away a name.

C. will forward this letter to you. It should not be taken as instruction. We have no elders, and no one has the right to interpret the manuscripts on anyone else's behalf. It fell to me and the sisters to decipher the damaged passages and translate the Russian notebooks into English, and I held the originals in my hands. So I know more than others about the handwriting and the ink. About what is written, I know no more than some of you.

What prompted this letter was a text recently sent under the title *De nomine*. Brother B. explains in it what the Name is, where it comes from, and what it gives whoever finds it. It is written with assurance. Copies with annotations are already being made, and someone wrote in the margin of one of them that this is the fourth manuscript.

The first three came to Paris several years ago: the Latin book, the Russian physician's notes, and a notebook written here during the war. We deciphered them separately at first, and then together, and together I call them the *Corpus*. It is also known as *Litterae tenebrarum*. If you have yet to read it in full, read it. The extracts made by the kindred oversimplify the substance in places. From these manuscripts came the Art of the two names, which I call *Nomina nocturna*.

The Corpus speaks often of the Name and explains little. The Latin book breaks off where it should carry on. The Doctor is occupied with himself and often argues with the book without understanding it. The Paris notebook knows more, though some of

its pages can be read two ways, as though the author were making fun of the reader. While the manuscripts were still with the three of us, we worked through what we could not understand in conversation and in letters. Now questions have to be put to people who know no more than those who ask, and it was in this vacuum that B.'s teaching appeared.

According to this teaching, the Name is a nature that a person finds in himself once and then keeps, and the Art serves to strengthen it. In this way he links it to the familiar teaching of the true will. From this B. derives the rest, which I will take up in its place. He took it from books that say plainly that the serpent must hold its tail without ceasing and can open its jaws.

The consequences are already visible. Some are looking for a deed that will disclose their true Name. Others have decided they have found it and are doing without the second. Some have stopped calling Her. B. has every right to understand the books as he pleases. Those who follow him should at least know what has been added to the manuscripts we spent several years deciphering, preserving even the passages we thought mistaken.

I have practiced the Art for a long time. In that time I have come to understand some things differently, and some I have never found in the Corpus at all. I will have to write about those too. In books from the beginning of the century I came across a great Russian dispute about the Name of God, hardly known here. They disputed another Name, but the questions they raised were the same, and I will make use of some of what was written then.

I wrote at night. During the day the university and the archive hold me. Others helped check the passages I could not verify and corrected a good many errors. I answer for those that remain.

The Dispute on Athos

First, some history. The context will be hard to understand without it.

Eighty years ago on Athos, Russian monks disagreed over what the Name of God was. The disagreement went so far that it came before the patriarch and brought in a warship.

It began with a book by a schemamonk who had spent many years in the wilderness in the Caucasus and described how he prayed. He wrote that the Lord Himself is present in the Name of Jesus, and that whoever invokes Jesus in prayer has in his heart the One Whom he calls. The book was read throughout Russia, and on Athos it was known in nearly every cell. A few years later another monk published a critique and found in it a deification of the word. If God is present in the Name, then He is present in the sounds and the ink as well.

The monks split. Their opponents nicknamed one side the Name-worshippers, and they called themselves the Name-glorifiers. They were led by a former hussar officer who had fought in Abyssinia and taken monastic tonsure on Athos. He wrote an apology for faith in the Name of God. The others held that a name is a designation people use for God and that, like any designation, it can be changed without touching the One Whom it calls. At St. Andrew's Skete the Name-glorifiers removed the abbot, and at St. Panteleimon's Monastery they had most of the monks on their side.

The Ecumenical Patriarch condemned the new teaching. In Petersburg the Holy Synod heard a report calling Name-glorification a heresy and resolved to bring the monks back into obedience. In the summer of 1913, a gunboat with soldiers came to Athos. Those who refused to sign a recantation were taken out of their cells and sprayed with fire pumps. There were injuries, and there was talk of deaths. More than eight hundred monks were

taken by steamer to Odessa, stripped of their monastic status, and sent home.

A year later in Moscow they were admitted to Communion without being required to recant, and the question was referred to the Council. The Council opened in 1917, assigned the matter to a commission, and adjourned in 1918 before the commission had said anything. The dispute remained unresolved.

It was taken up in Moscow by laypeople and priests whom the affair on Athos had touched deeply. One taught that every name is a type and that a person flows along the channel of his name. Another, a philosopher, worked out a dialectic of the name, called sense light and senselessness darkness, and secretly took monastic tonsure. By the time they wrote, people were being imprisoned for such books, and some of them were.

They were arguing over two things at once, in effect, which is why they could reach no agreement. The opponents were speaking of the sign and were right. Sounds, letters, and designations can be changed, and none of them can hold God. The Name-glorifiers were speaking of the Name, and they were right too. The Name by which one calls is an action, inseparable from the one who acts. They summed up their faith in the formula, "The Name of God is God, but God is not a name."

We agree with the Name-glorifiers on the main point. The Name is an action, and the one who acts is present in it. Where we part ways is over whose Name is held and who remains when it is held.

The present dispute with B., like the one on Athos, began with a book and concerns the same thing.

1. The Name Is Not Sound

Many believe that a name's power lies in its sound. Say the right syllables and they will work, whoever says them. All sound magic rests on this, from village charms to conjurations, and there is plenty of evidence to be found in its favor.

Peoples among whom the name of the dead must go unspoken fear the sound enough to change their language over it. Among the Abipones in Paraguay, words resembling the name of the deceased were dropped, and a missionary who lived among them for seven years recorded that the word for "jaguar" changed three times in that period. In Australia a man named Karla, meaning "fire," died, and a new word had to be found for fire. When Panda ruled the Zulus, the word *impando*, the root of a tree, was replaced to avoid touching the king's name. The Slavs stopped calling the beast by its ancient name and spoke of it descriptively as "the honey eater." They believed the beast understood speech and would leave or attack if it heard its name.

The most learned defender of sound was one of the Fathers of the Church in a dispute with a pagan. The pagan maintained that it made no difference whether one called God Zeus or Sabaoth. The Father replied that names used in conjurations lose their power in translation, and that Christians would therefore sooner die than call God Zeus.

When the monks on Athos took the side of the Name of God in the Russian dispute over the Name, their opponents accused them of magical thinking. On their teaching, it was said, the name of Jesus acted by itself, no matter who said it or how. The monks replied that God is present in the Name for the one who invokes Him, while the sounds and letters are its casing. They agreed on one point. In this dispute, sound magic was a term of abuse.

We have been asked the same question. Since we translated the manuscripts into English, Sister C. has received letters asking

whether the names should be pronounced in the language of the original and how to pronounce Her name correctly.

If sound acted on its own, everyone who pronounced it would get the same result. In Ephesus the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, went about the city as exorcists. They tried to cast out an evil spirit "by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." They invoked the same Name Paul did. The spirit answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" The possessed man fell upon them, and they fled the house naked and beaten.

Sound works where a mechanism answers to it. In the Arabian tale, the rock opened at "Open, Sesame" for anyone who knew the word, whether the captain of the thieves, the poor woodcutter, or his brother. The brother gathered gold in the cave and forgot the word. He went through all the words he remembered, and the rock would not open for him. A password knows nothing about the one who says it, which is why it is useful for doors. A will that is addressed hears who is calling.

Nobody knows for certain how the name sounded when it was pronounced in the Temple. It could be pronounced only there, and on Yom Kippur the high priest said it in a voice that, according to tradition, carried all the way to Jericho. Outside the Temple the name was read differently, and a midrash puts these words in God's mouth, "I am not read as I am written." The Temple was destroyed nearly two thousand years ago, and the sound was lost. Prayer to the One Whom that name called has continued.

Even those who hold to sound know that sound alone is insufficient. In India a mantra is received from a teacher's lips, whispered in the ear. The same mantra read in a book is dead. The syllables are the same in either case. The difference lies in who gave them.

Sometimes a sound works without any intention at all. The Corpus tells of a priest who said in a fit of temper to his servant, "Go, devil, take off my boots," and the Devil himself appeared before him at once. The priest had neither called him nor thought of him. The careless word turned out to be an open door, and in

came the one who had been waiting for a chance to enter. The power in this story belonged to the one who answered.

So this is what I say to those who ask about translation. Our Mother's name in Russian, in English, and in the original language has three different sounds, and none of them holds the Art. Pronounce it as it was given to you. I will speak of given names later.

2. The Name Is Not Writing or Image

Those who lose faith in sound transfer the same faith to writing. A sound vanishes as soon as it dies away, while what is inscribed remains. It can be carried, hidden, or carved in stone and metal. Grimoires consist of letters, seals, and signs, and an inscription in one of them seems more dependable than a spoken word.

The story of the Prague golem says that a rabbi shaped it from clay and wrote *emet*, truth, on its forehead. The clay stood up and began to serve. When the golem needed to be stopped, the rabbi erased the first letter, leaving *met*, dead. Letters governed the nameless. The golem moved as the inscription directed, like water flowing down a channel, and held nothing itself.

In Egypt after the conspiracy against Ramesses III, the accused were entered in the court papyrus under mutilated names. One was recorded as Mesedsure, "Ra hates him," in place of a former name nobody knows anymore, and their real names were chiseled off monuments. Some were executed and others ordered to put themselves to death, and this seemed insufficient. It was believed that destroying a person's inscribed name deprived him of life even where the body no longer made a difference.

Solomon is said to have received a signet ring with which he summoned demons one after another. Each gave its name, the star to which it was subject, and the angel who overcame it, and they all labored on the building of the Temple. Toward the end of his life Solomon sacrificed to foreign gods for the sake of a woman. The Spirit of God left him, and with it his power over the demons.

The Greeks called six obscure words carved on the statue of Artemis at Ephesus the *Ephesia grammata*. A wrestler from Ephesus competed at Olympia with those words on a strap around his ankle and won time after time, until an opponent found and removed the strap. Afterward he began to lose.

Her names are written on Jewish amulets. The story goes that the prophet Elijah met Her on the way to a woman in labor and

stopped Her. She swore that wherever She saw Her names written, She would have no power. Then She gave the names, one after another. She gave those names Herself, and the lists hung in bedrooms hold what She agreed to hold by means of them. If She broke Her oath, the lists would stay as they were. Tales of this kind are hardly to be believed. I give them only by way of instruction.

By custom the icon painter inscribes the saint's name next to the face so that one knows who is depicted. The Church teaches that the honor paid to the image passes to its prototype. The image points, and the inscription points with it, and the prayer goes to the one to whom they point.

The Romans wrapped Rabbi Hanina ben Teradion in a Torah scroll and burned him. His students asked him from the crowd what he saw. He answered that the parchment was burning and the letters were flying upward. They urged him to open his mouth so the fire could enter sooner. He refused. Let the One Who gave the soul take it. The fire destroyed everything that had been inscribed, and what was written remained whole.

Writing also serves to keep the account. Scripture says that the names of the righteous are written in heaven and promises that they will be spared from being blotted out of the book of life. So they can be blotted out. Whoever keeps the book decides whose name will remain in it, and a name held by having been written belongs to the one who wrote it.

There is no need to write down the names of the Art. If they have been written down, the paper can be burned without fear for the Art.

AMBIGUUM *(On the Sigil)*

Sister C. was sent a sheet on which one of the kindred had combined both his names of the Art in a single sign. He asked whether he had done it correctly. The method comes from Spare, whom the Doctor writes about. The desire is written down in one sentence, repeated letters are crossed out, and the rest are woven into a sign, which is then forgotten.

Does such a sign resemble the Name? The man made it himself, nobody can read it, and once it is forgotten even its maker cannot read it. The Doctor saw it as being held by one's own forgotten command. Making such a sign is indeed an act, though it happens only once. It is performed and let go, and the salt it left behind fades when the desire is fulfilled or wears away. The Name is enacted anew at every moment for as long as it is held.

This method works for desires that have an end, such as finding a lost thing or getting a position. Once fulfilled, the desire releases the sign as well. The Name has no end. For the Name to be fulfilled, it would have to be forgotten, and a forgotten Name is fulfilled when there is no one left to hold it.

There have also been questions about drawing a sign for Her name and carrying it around. You can carry anything you like. The sign will answer whoever drew it, and She will answer whomever She pleases. She has no need of a sign for that.

The brother who has woven both names into such a sign and will forget it will perform the Art once and let go of what the Art holds continuously.

3. The Name Is Not a Concept

More often a name is confused with a concept. The idea of an apple includes a rounded shape, a color, and a particular taste, and "apple" is said to be the name of this fruit. A name in this sense means a sign for a set of features, replaceable by any other word.

The first names in Scripture are names of concepts. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. Then He brought the beasts and birds to Adam "to see what he would call them," and Adam named all the cattle, the fowl of the air, and the beasts of the field. Each kind got one name for all of its members, and no beast got a name of its own. Interpreters saw a sign of dominion in this. The beasts were brought to Adam to show that he was their master.

Books that list spirits work the same way. In the one attributed to Solomon, beside each name it says in what form the spirit appears, how many legions it commands, and what service it renders. One reveals treasures, another teaches the sciences, a third reconciles enemies. The conjurer calls the one whose service he needs, and the name serves as the designation of that service.

Some teach that a human name is also a concept. They say that all the bearers of one name belong to one type, and that the name guides each life along a common channel, as form determines a crystal. If so, the name is a kind, and its bearer is one among many, as a lion is one among lions. What makes this person this one then goes entirely without a name.

You can also construct a concept that fits one person alone. List his body, origin, memory, inclinations, and deeds, adding features until nobody else fits the description. Even then, it will say only what has already become definite in that person. His next distinction is absent from the description because he has yet to draw it.

A philosopher at the Hanoverian court taught that God has such a concept of each person and that it contains in advance

everything that will happen to him. The concept of Caesar, he wrote, already contains his crossing of the Rubicon, and anyone who knew the whole concept would know of the crossing too. In that case it was the concept that crossed the river. The Scholastics held to another rule. The individual is ineffable. Definition reaches as far as the species, and beyond that words give out.

Every property of a thing is its relation to something else. Wood burns in fire, can be made into boards, sinks or floats. Each such property was learned by burning, cutting, or throwing something into water, and it made the thing more accessible to another's hand. To know all the properties of a thing is to possess it. In the Finnish runes an old singer closes a wound made by iron by singing the birth of iron, its origin, and iron submits to him. A person described to the last detail would belong to the one who described him.

Some choose a name for the Art by its meaning. They look through books for a word meaning night, power, or freedom and ask us whether what they found is suitable. The meaning of such a name is a concept. It says what a person wants to be, and says nothing about who practices the Art.

Closer to the thing is the name by which an owner calls his cat. It points to one cat out of the whole kind, with its habits and history, and distinguishes it from the others. Yet that too is a sign. The cat can be named differently and will be no different for it. Some Eskimos took a new name in old age in the hope that they would get a new life with it. They expected of the sign what a sign cannot give.

Juliet says on the balcony that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, and she is right. She asks Romeo to renounce his name, and he is ready. "Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized." He did not manage to renounce it. The name Montague was the part of him that his family held, and his family would not let it go.

The Name the Corpus speaks of is not set by convention. It cannot be changed as a word is changed, with everything else left as it was.

4. The Name Is Not Nature

B. teaches that the Name is the core of the person. A person carries it within himself, finds it one day, and then keeps it all his life. The Art is needed to strengthen what he has found. Such a core is a nature, and this is what B. calls the Name.

The word "nature" comes from *natus*, born: it is what is given at birth and holds a thing as one of its kind. A cat hunts, washes itself, and sleeps curled up, and decides none of it. Its kind drew its boundary, and the cat is held by it as any other cat would be in its place. That is why a cat has no Name. A tree is held by sap and growth rings, and everything by which it is held can be described completely. Nature is a boundary drawn once that has been drawing itself ever since.

In their dispute over Christ, the Fathers distinguished nature and person. All human beings have one nature. Peter and Paul are both human, and the humanity in them is one and the same. Each has his own person. If the Name is nature, then it is shared, and we return to the concept already discussed. If B. objects that each person's nature is particular, it is no longer nature. The very word implies that nature is shared, given to a kind, and holds a thing as one of many. What is particular in a human being the Fathers called a hypostasis. By calling it a particular nature, B. confuses what they distinguished.

Some read nature in the sky. The hour and place of birth are supposed to determine what a person is to be, and the horoscope is read as an inventory of his nature. Twins have long been cited against this. Esau and Jacob were born in the same hour, the second coming out with his hand on the heel of the first, and their lives diverged so far that Scripture says, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." Jacob later received a new name at the Jabbok, while the brothers still shared the same hour of birth.

There is nature in a human being too: body, temperament, habits, everything that was distinguished once and is now

distinguished without him. This is what the Corpus calls salt. A neurologist described a sailor who, after an illness, lost all memory of what had happened to him since the war. Thirty years later he was still sure he was nineteen and the year was forty-five. He readily gave his name and cheerfully talked about the submarine he had served on, and everything of that young man in him held intact. When he was shown a mirror, he was horrified by the gray-haired face. A few minutes later he had forgotten it and was cheerful again. This is what a nature found once and kept for life looks like.

This teaching is much older than B., and its most beautiful image survives in an ancient song about a pearl. A king's son was sent from the East to Egypt for a pearl that a serpent guards in the sea. In Egypt he put on the local clothes, ate the local food, forgot that he was a king's son, and fell asleep. His parents sent him a letter, and the letter flew to him as an eagle and spoke. He awoke, remembered who he was, put the serpent to sleep by speaking his father's name over it, took the pearl, and set out for home. Along the way his royal robe was brought out to him, and he saw himself in it as in a mirror.

Where such a search leads can be seen clearly in an Indian book. A father told his son to put salt in water at night and bring it back in the morning. The son could not find the salt. It had dissolved. The father told him to sip from the top, the middle, and the bottom, and the water was salty everywhere. So it is, the father said, with what you are looking for in yourself. It is here, though you cannot see it, and it is you. The nature found beneath all the layers turns out to be one and the same in everyone.

Teachers today say the same thing in other words. In each person there is a true will, a star that one must find and then has only to follow. Some confuse it with the Morning Star to which the Mother points, and others with nature. Do not be taken in by the likeness of images and names. I will write about these teachers later.

The Corpus speaks differently about the serpent. The serpent must bite its tail continuously, and the instant it opens its jaws it

becomes a snake on the sand. A cat cannot stop being a cat, while the serpent can be anything. Holding that can be stopped cannot be nature.

If the Name were nature, it could never be lost. Yet possession exists. In the country of the Gadarenes Jesus asked the possessed man, "What is thy name?" He answered, "My name is Legion: for we are many." Human nature remained in him, his body, his voice, and his hands, while someone else was already answering for him.

Saul persecuted the disciples with the same zeal with which he later preached. His temperament stayed as it was, and his nature stayed the same. The one who ruled it had changed.

The song itself says where the teaching of nature leads. The pearl belonged to the king, the robe waited in his father's house, and the son, having remembered himself, returned to the place from which he had been sent. Someone put into a person the nature that lies there before him. When he finds it, he returns what was put there to its owner. The One Who in Scripture calls Himself the vine says to the branches, "Abide in me." Of the branches that do not abide, it is said that "men gather them, and cast them into the fire."

The Art that only strengthens what has been found grows salt in a person, and our Mother's Name really has no place in such an Art.

5. The Name Is Not Made by a Deed

B.'s second claim tells us where nature comes from. For him the Name is born in the first independent deed. When a person acts on his own for the first time, without an order from his parents or from the law, he finds himself, and from that moment he has the Name. B. advises looking for such a deed, prompted by nothing, and some are already looking.

This teaching has grounds to stand on. Among many peoples a name had to be earned. An Oglala boy was called Curly until he distinguished himself in battle. Then his father gave him his own name, Crazy Horse, and took another for himself. Scipio, who defeated Hannibal, came back to Rome as Africanus. Yet such a name is given by others for what they saw. It is a reward, and like any reward it is salt. The father gave his son his name as he would have given him a horse.

A Frenchman wrote a novel about a young man who planned to do a deed prompted by nothing and pushed an old stranger off a train. Before doing it he entrusted the decision to a count. If he reached twelve before a light appeared beyond the window, the old man would live. The young man handed a deed conceived as free of every cause over to a rule he had set himself.

Raskolnikov killed the old pawnbroker to see whether he had the right. He needed the deed as a test of a theory, and the theory guided his hand. In the same writer there is an engineer who decided to shoot himself to declare his self-will. He saw the highest freedom in killing himself for no reason at all. Others made use of his decision. Before he fired, he signed a note at their dictation taking responsibility for someone else's murder, and the most self-willed deed he could think of carried out someone else's design.

Whoever acts in defiance keeps in mind what he defies and refers to it before every step. The Corpus says this plainly. Whoever breaks a commandment for the sake of breaking it is

chained to it from the reverse side. Whoever defies his father, custom, or the Church acts by their rule turned upside down.

The cause is found after the fact. Luther ended his speech before the emperor with the words "Here I stand; I can do no other." The witnesses to the hearing did not record those words. They were added to the printed edition, and ever since the whole of Luther has been derived from that moment. A deed can be the occasion and then be read as the cause, and B. has read the occasion as the cause.

The Indians knew this account best of all. Every deed, they teach, bears fruit. The fruit binds the doer to a new deed, and the soul passes from body to body until the account is closed. The book about the battle on the field of Kuru advises the warrior to fight without desiring the fruits, because the fruits do not belong to the doer. Whoever seeks the Name in the fruits asks for what the Indian sages sought a way out of.

Scripture promises to "render to every man according to his deeds." A Name earned by deeds is merit and goes into the same account. Merit is weighed and recorded and can be taken away. Whoever keeps the account of the deeds will be the owner of such a Name.

One man has already written that after reading B. he quit his job without telling anyone, moved to another city, and is now waiting for the Name to wake in him.

To those who are now looking for a deed of their own, my advice is to stop looking. A deed done on B.'s advice was prompted by that advice, and there is no more of the Name in it than in the deed of the young man in the novel.

6. The Name Is an Act

When sound, writing, concept, nature, and merit have been cut away, what remains is what was present in none of them: the one who acts. The will distinguishes without ceasing, good from bad, its own from another's. All these distinctions stand on one that the will draws before the rest, between itself and everything that it is not. This is the Name. Spoken to oneself, it means "I am," although it need make no sound.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Replace God with the Name and you have what I am speaking about. The Word was the Name. Here it is addressed to the one who says it, and the one who said it does not stand before what was said. He is this very word. It says further that all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. This is how all the other distinctions are held by the first. Each was drawn by one who once distinguished himself, and without him none would have been drawn.

In a German poet's work, the hero sat down to translate this line into his native language and stumbled at the very first word. He wrote "Word" and crossed it out. He could not grant the word such an honor. He wrote "Sense," then "Force," and finally set down "In the beginning was the Deed." He thought he was choosing between four things. The Name requires no choice. The word spoken to oneself is already a deed, its force lies in its being spoken, and its sense is exhausted in two words: I am.

The Evangelist also says that "the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not," and the Greek word here means both "overcome" and "understand." The Name is born in darkness. The line about it would have to be turned around: darkness is in the light, and the light comprehended it not.

Before this distinction there is no one who distinguishes. Nature presupposes that someone is already lying within, waiting to be

found. In fact, the one who distinguishes appears together with the first boundary drawn, and there is nobody behind it. For a long time a child speaks of herself as others speak of her: "Maria wants it," "Maria fell." She was given a name, and she wears it as one wears a sign. Then one day, without a lesson, she says "I," and none of the adults can point to where the word came from. Anyone can say "I" for the first time, though. Nobody teaches you how to keep holding what you have said.

The first distinction follows from nothing. If it had a rule, the rule itself would distinguish, and the Name would belong to it. It does not fall by lot either, because chance belongs to no one. Once the boundary has been drawn, it can be read as a rule and a cause can be found for it. But this cause appears after the fact, with the boundary itself, and before the boundary it was absent. That is why the will cannot be described in advance. Any description of how it distinguishes would itself be a rule.

The Church teaches that God is incomprehensible in His essence and revealed in His actions. The actions proceed from the essence, and the essence stands behind them as the sun stands behind its rays. With the Name the order is reversed. Behind it there is no essence from which it proceeds. It is itself an action, and the one who acts is born in it.

A mathematician built an entire calculus on one instruction: draw a distinction. He derives everything else from that first cut, and before the cut there is nothing one can say a word about. At the end of the book he let the form enter back into the space it had itself marked, and the form that entered itself ceased to stand still. Its value oscillates and cannot settle. He was writing about a calculus and ended up with a serpent biting its tail.

Saying it once is insufficient. The first act does not end. It becomes the Name and lasts as long as it is performed. Descartes, having doubted everything that could be doubted, found one thing beyond doubt: "I am, I exist." Then he asked himself, "For how long?" and answered, "For as long as I am thinking," for if I ceased to think, it might happen that I would immediately cease to be.

One Sufi order has a rule of remembering oneself in every breath, and a breath taken without remembrance is counted as dead.

Why can the act never be performed once and for all? The Name, once spoken, is immediately behind the one who spoke it. It has been said and already lies there, and if one stops at it, it will become a sign and then salt. Whoever has said "I am" to himself is already a step beyond his word, and to be where he stands again, he has to say it again. Holding is this kind of speaking. Each time is the first, because the previous time is already behind.

The Name is spoken to oneself and cannot be overheard. Every sign can be repeated without the one who said it, and this is its nature. A name that cannot be repeated without the speaker has ceased to be a sign. The one who overhears it gets the word, while the Name is enacted by the one who speaks it. Only the one who utters the Name learns how it is held, and on learning this, is himself held by it.

What is said first is "I am." The second comes with "you."

7. The Name and Salt

Everything the will has once distinguished can go on being distinguished without it. The distinction is repeated, applied to new things, and taught to children, and a generation later nobody remembers whose hand drew the line. This is how salt grows. The Name differs from it in one respect. The first distinction that it was is still being drawn.

In a Danish church, the parishioners bowed every time they passed a whitewashed wall, and nobody could say why. When the whitewash was removed in the last century, they found an image of the Virgin painted over at the Reformation.

That is how most people live too. Everyone once drew the first distinction in childhood, and for nearly everyone that was the end of it. Afterward it is habit that says "I," while parents, language, position, and faith draw the boundaries, each in its allotted place. A person feels no lack in this, because salt holds him reliably. He recognizes himself in the mirror, answers to his name, and remembers yesterday. He had the Name once, in the moment when he first said "I," and he has worn it ever since as Maria wears the name her parents gave her.

From the outside the Name also looks like salt, a fixed boundary on which all the others stand. Yet only one thing is fixed in it, "this one," without properties. Everything else remains free. The will may love and hate whatever it likes. Only the boundary on which it stands is kept. This is salt without nature, the least salt there can be. Everyone says "I," and the word points to whoever says it. A sign points to someone who already exists. The Name points to where the speaker himself stands, and it is only by this pointing that he stands there.

From within there is nothing fixed. The Name is held at every moment, and the holding can be stopped. Salt cannot be stopped. It goes on by itself. The first thing the will prefers is to hold itself,

for otherwise it would dissolve in other salt, and that preference makes sense only where it can let go.

Close your eyes and hold a circle in front of you. In a few moments its edges will drift, the circle will stretch into an oval, and it will begin to fade in the darkness behind your eyelids. To hold it, imagining it once is insufficient. You have to keep checking what you see against what you meant to see and bringing the curve back into place. Holding works the same way. The one who holds distinguishes each time what he holds from what it is blurring into, and in that comparison he is present. Salt only repeats.

A philosopher taught that a person chose himself before all time in one eternal deed and thereafter only lives by it. He gave Judas as an example. Judas could do nothing other than betray Christ, and yet he betrayed Him of his own will, without any compulsion. This way the Name becomes salt even before birth, and the teaching agrees with B.'s teaching about nature, except that here the person chose his own nature once and for all.

From the outside, holding and salt look alike as constancy. Penelope promised the suitors she would choose one of them when she had woven a burial shroud for her father-in-law. For three years she wove by day and undid her work by night. The suitors saw a single cloth that was never finished. You cannot distinguish someone who holds to his word from someone who lives by habit until the hour comes when he can break his word. There are two identities, the identity of what does not change and the identity of a promise that is held. The first is salt, the second is fidelity, and from the outside you cannot tell them apart.

The one who taught in the Russian dispute that the name is a type wrote also that if everything laid over a person were stripped away, the name would remain as the last layer of his body. For him this layer is given to the person in advance, together with the channel along which his life flows. In the Corpus the last layer is drawn by the very one who holds it, and he draws it right now.

AMBIGUUM *(On the Forgotten Name)*

A brother writes that for thirty years he lived as everyone lives, by habit, and only last year, when he began the Art, distinguished himself again. He asks whether he returned to the Name he had in childhood or whether this is a different one.

If the former Name lay waiting somewhere all those years, it was found as a core is found, and we are back at B.'s teaching. What lies waiting is nature.

If the former Name did not exist, only salt links him to the child who first said "I": the body, memory, and surname. In that case someone else was born last year, born into another person's life as one is born in another person's house.

There is a third answer. Having drawn itself, the new Name can acknowledge that child as its own past and take him on, as one takes on a promise made long ago and forgotten. Identity is then accepted like an inheritance one could have refused.

The third answer is closer to my own. We spoke of two identities, that of the unchanging and that of a promise, and here you can see why they had to be distinguished. A person who has returned to himself after thirty years of salt is identical with his former self as one who has finally held to his word is equal to it.

AMBIGUUM *(On Sleep)*

A sister asks who holds the Name at night, when she is asleep without dreams, if it is held at every moment. Does she die each time until morning?

The Greeks considered Sleep and Death twin brothers, children of Night. On an old vase the two carry the slain Sarpedon off the field, and you can hardly tell them apart except by the inscription.

Every morning as soon as they wake, Jews thank God for having returned their souls to them in His mercy. They give their soul over for safekeeping at night, and in the morning it is returned by the One in Whose keeping it was. The Indians teach that in deep sleep a person is closest to himself because nothing conceals what is unchanging in him. I think B. would choose the Indians.

A Lombard historian tells of a Frankish king who fell asleep while hunting, with his head on his squire's knees. The squire saw a little creature come out of the king's mouth, cross a stream over his sword, disappear into a mountain, and come back the same way. When the king awoke, he told of a dream about an iron bridge and a treasure in the mountain, and the treasure was found there.

The sister, though, may sleep without dreams less often than she thinks. Doctors who wake sleepers at different hours of the night hear some sort of account more often than not. After REM sleep it is long and vivid, after deep sleep short and faint, more like a thought. By morning little is left, and the night people call empty is usually just forgotten. A person remains himself in a dream. He may find himself a child, a stranger, or even a beast, but he is still the one who is frightened, runs, refuses, and recognizes familiar people.

So holding does not end when you fall asleep, and the sister's question concerns only the interval she can remember nothing about. A forgotten moment is not necessarily empty. We remember a tiny fraction of the day, and nobody thinks we were absent the rest of the time. Holding and the memory of it are

different things, and from what we remember of the night we can judge it as little as we can judge the day.

Someone who has practiced the Art a long time sometimes wakes already practicing it, as though every breath had gone with the name even at night. Where the one who holds was at the time, he cannot remember.

8. The Name and Darkness

One of the participants in the dispute over the Name wrote that sense is light and senselessness is darkness. The formula seems obvious. Light makes things visible and distinct, darkness hides them and swallows their outlines.

Look, though, at what light does. A concept lights up everything that fits its features, every chair you can sit on, every lion among lions. The brighter the light, the more things it makes alike and the less you can see in each of what makes it unique. Light shows the outline and hides the face. A law lights up more than a concept does, and under it every thing can be replaced by another of the same kind.

Read the words "Maria is standing by the river." Without knowing her, you will understand the sentence easily, but what you understand will be something else. A woman is standing by the river. Understanding substitutes a concept for the name every time, and only then does the sentence mean anything. The name added nothing to its sense. It pointed to someone you do not know.

There are two kinds of senselessness. One is when there are no distinctions at all and everything merges with everything else. The other is when what is named is too particular for sense to reach it. The first is emptiness, the second is the Name.

The Name does not yield to such light. "This one" cannot be lit up without being turned into "such a one." In the sense a concept gives, the Name has no sense. The formula has to be read differently. Sense is light, and the Name is darkness. The Corpus says the same thing in fewer words. The Name is born in darkness.

Scholars who write of our Mother as a symbol and a prototype cast light on Her. They know the books in which She is named, whom She has been associated with, and what people have derived from Her in different centuries, and they may never encounter Her once.

This darkness is no emptiness. An emptiness that is wholly absent cannot be thought. The moment you name it, it is already set apart from the rest. The Greeks distinguished two kinds of nonbeing, what does not exist in any way and what does not exist yet, the darkness of possibility. It is out of the second darkness that the will draws the first boundary. The Babylonians called it Tiamat, the salt abyss from which the gods came. The Doctor calls it the sea before any name.

The same philosopher sensed in a living person a hidden depth, never fully disclosed, from which ever new manifestations came. He said that only something with such an irreducible ground could be loved. The Corpus agrees that a person cannot be described completely. But for the philosopher the depth lies behind the manifestations and waits, like B.'s core, only dark. The darkness of the Name works differently. What is inexhaustible in a person is that the next distinction is still to be drawn.

Among one Philippine people, researchers found more than fifteen hundred names for plants, a name for each species, while there was reportedly no common word for all plants at once. At first the gods lived one to a stream and one to a mountain pass, and each was spoken to by name. Then they were gathered into pantheons, each in charge of his own domain, war, the sea, the harvest. Then they were reduced to one whose name it was forbidden to say. Then they removed Him too and left the law without a lawgiver. Each step made the light reach further and erased another face.

To carry light to its limit is to distinguish everything. Theologians taught that God knows past and future at once, like an open book. Where everything has been distinguished, the one who distinguishes has nothing to do and disappears into what is distinguished. One who desires only one thing might as well have no desire. Accounts of paradise agree that the souls endlessly sing one song of praise to an unchanging light. The one who distinguishes can stand only where there are still things to distinguish.

The Fathers called God the brilliant darkness. On the edge of the highest light they found darkness and placed it above all light, though they had nothing with which to distinguish it from emptiness.

AMBIGUUM *(On the Machine)*

People ask whether a machine can have a Name.

A machine distinguishes in two ways. Some of its distinctions are set by a program, others come from a random number generator. The first is rule, the second chance, and chance belongs to no one. However much you mix rule with chance, you will get no third thing out of them.

Byron's daughter, the first to describe how to set tasks for a calculating machine, wrote that a machine can initiate nothing by itself and does only what it is told. Since then machines have learned to play chess better than grandmasters and make moves nobody taught them. Even those who built the machine cannot explain every such move. Still, you can say of each move: rule and chance. The same cannot be ruled out for a person. You cannot recognize what is new by what has been done.

Another mathematician proposed treating a machine as thinking if it could not be distinguished from a person in conversation. He asked only about what could be seen from the outside, and his question settles nothing about the Name.

Some thirty years ago in America, a program was written that played the part of a therapist. It returned the other person's own words in the form of a question. Its author's secretary, who knew how it worked, once asked him to leave the room so she could speak to it alone.

A person too has put himself together out of other people's words, out of what his father and mother, his teachers, his books, and those he loved said about him. The line where retelling ends and will begins is visible in neither machine nor human being, and it cannot be drawn from outside or within.

A machine can also be taught to refuse. Write into it a rule by which it answers "no" to some requests. Such a refusal is one more rule, and the person who receives it learns as much about himself as someone knocking at a locked door.

9. The Name and Names

Besides the Name, a person has names, many of them. Each is the part of the will he is ready to cede, a domain in which he has allowed another to draw his boundary. By the name in your passport the state decides who you are to the state. By the name lovers call one another, each decides who he is to the other. By position and rank you are called to do your duty, and whoever is called that way no longer answers for himself.

The present pope was called Karol before his election. On being elected he took a name that many had borne before him and others will bear after him. Under that name the throne speaks, and whoever bears it speaks from the throne.

In a German legend later set to music, a knight comes in a boat drawn by a swan to defend a young woman and marries her on one condition. She must never ask his name or where he comes from. She cannot help herself and asks. He names himself before everyone and sails away for good.

A child is given a name before he has a will, and his parents and godparents cede this share on his behalf. In a Russian story, a mother was offered a choice of names from the calendar of saints, each stranger than the last: Mokky, Sossy, Khozdazat, Trifily, Dula, Varakhasy. She rejected them all and named her son after his father, deciding that this must be his fate. His fate turned out to follow his name. People believed that the name of a venerable saint given at baptism promised a happy life, and a martyr's name a life of nothing but torment.

To name is to exercise authority. When the young men from Judea were taken to Babylon, the chief eunuch's first act was to give them new names. Daniel became Belteshazzar and his three companions Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. By old custom a master changes a slave's name on buying him, so he knows whose he is. In prison the name is covered over with a number for the

length of the sentence and given back at the exit along with the clothes.

One of the Fathers of the Church wrote that the Spirit renamed Saul as Paul in the same way that a master who buys a slave changes his name to show his authority.

As long as there are several such concessions and each is limited, the will is whole. The state, the wife, and the people in charge draw their boundaries each in their own place. Anyone who has handed over to another the right to distinguish him entirely has become possessed.

A concession can be taken back. A woman who parts with her husband takes back her father's surname. A retired officer takes off his epaulettes, and his rank stays with him only as a word. The possessed can take nothing back, because the one who would take it back is no longer himself.

There is a third thing, between concession and possession. A name may have been planted inside a person so long ago and so deep that he takes it for his own: loyal subject, righteous man. A ceded name can be examined quietly and set aside. The planted name will not let itself be examined. The moment you ask whether it is his own, something in him rises against the question itself, as though the questioner had attacked the floor he stands on.

People cede something even to demons themselves. They do not pronounce the imposing names in black books and call the household devil something that will keep him from being frightening: Farfarello, a little devil, in Italy, Old Nick in England, and Anchutka the Heelless among us. The demon comes into the house under such a name, but he does not come in whole.

The name Moses heard from the bush cedes almost nothing. You can call with it. There is nothing to take hold of.

Jewish tradition says that God made Adam's first wife for him out of the same earth as he was made from. She refused to lie beneath him, saying they were equal, and when he began to force her, she spoke the ineffable Name and flew away. Every name is a

part of the will given to another, and in this Name God ceded the part by which He can be called. By that part they left Him.

AMBIGUUM *(On Possession)*

A brother from the provinces said that in his former parish there were women who cried out like beasts during the Cherubic Hymn or the bringing out of the Holy Gifts, then called themselves by someone else's name and said they had been bewitched. He asked whether they were possessed in the sense we have spoken of.

Shrieking goes from village to village as a custom does. In one district they crow like roosters, in another they bark, and it always strikes at the same hour of the service. A demon that comes on schedule looks more like salt than will. He is expected, and he appears when he is expected.

In Loudun in France, demons entered an entire convent of Ursulines and gave their names: Asmodeus, Leviathan, Behemoth, Isaacaron. They were exorcised for years before crowds of spectators. When the last of them left the prioress, the names of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Francis de Sales appeared on her left hand, and for years she showed the hand to pilgrims. The names would fade and appear again, and malicious tongues said they were touched up.

The name shouted out during the Cherubic Hymn and the names that appeared on the hand are inscribed in a person from outside, and the person bears them. Where what was their own ended in these women, neither the exorcists nor the women themselves knew.

10. The Name Is a Call

A sign is used to point, a name to call. A pointing sign needs no answer. A call can be answered or met with silence. The one to whom it is addressed is already implied in the call, along with the possibility that there will be no answer.

In Russian folk belief, fever walks at night beneath the windows and calls people by name. It enters whoever answers. In Ustyug on her wedding night, the priest's daughter Solomonia heard a knock at the chamber and a voice: "Solomonia! Open unto me!" She thought her husband had returned and opened the door. A whirlwind and blue flame blew in her face, and from that night on she was possessed. To answer is to take the hail upon yourself.

A name can be known in three ways. You can know it only well enough to say it, as the sons of Sceva knew the name of Jesus. You can know it so as to compel an answer. And you can call, leaving the other to decide whether to answer. In a Norwegian story a stranger offered to build a church for Saint Olaf and demanded the sun and moon in payment, or Olaf himself. Olaf overheard the builder's wife soothing her child and speaking the father's name. When the work was nearly finished, he hailed the builder by name. The payment was voided, and the builder fell from the tower. The Corpus recalls Ra, who gave Isis his secret name and with it the right to call him at his very core.

Magic wants the second: to know a name so that the one who is called cannot help answering. This knowledge is power, and there is no refusal in it. The Corpus teaches the third. I call and wait, and the other decides for himself.

There is another way as well. In the Egyptian funerary books the dead man, when he reaches the gates of the underworld, must name the doors, the bolt, the threshold, and the guards, and sometimes even his own feet that brought him there. Only then do they tell him, "You know us. Pass through." Here the name calls no

one and compels nothing. By it you pass through another's boundary by being recognized.

A rule always answers the same way, however often you call it. Another can draw the boundary somewhere you do not expect, and where his refusal meets you and you hold, your boundary runs. The program we spoke of refused no one it spoke to, and so nobody who spoke with it learned anything about himself.

A German wrote that a person first becomes aware of himself when another rational being summons him. The Name is spoken to oneself before any call, but only the one who is called learns where it ends.

It is hard to tell whether what calls you is a will or a mechanism. A person argues with an answering machine for half an hour because it answers with a stubbornness that sounds like malice. A clerk stamps a refusal without looking, and whoever stands on the other side of the window takes it for personal hatred. A blow feels directed at you even when there is nobody behind it.

The other person may himself turn out to be a retelling. Two retellings readily confirm one another, and the result is a crowd in which everyone is sure he has been recognized. A writer observed that others see who you are, while you cannot see it yourself, just as you cannot see the demon that stands over your shoulder all your life. An encounter happens only if at least one of the two holds himself, and neither knows this for certain. The two go through it together.

The Corpus speaks of Nobody walking through the desert. He does not hold himself, he has nothing by which to distinguish himself from the sand, and there is no one there to lift up whoever falls.

Some write that they called Her for years and got no answer, and ask whether this is a refusal. Silence is not yet refusal. Only one who has come can refuse. Refusal is an encounter, and absence is never an encounter. She comes to those She prefers, and She does not prefer everyone. She came to the Doctor when he had not called Her.

B. writes that after finding the Name, a person can stop calling Her. Whoever has done so has deprived himself of the only one who could refuse him.

A sleeper does not hear doors slamming or cars going by, but wakes at his own name quietly spoken.

11. Good and Evil

The serpent in the garden offered the woman this: "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." To know good and evil is to distinguish for oneself what is good and what is bad when no one draws that boundary for you. This is the will. Until that day everything had already been distinguished and named, light and darkness, day and night, the beasts according to their kinds, and all a person had left to do was live in what had been distinguished. The ban on one tree was a ban on having a will.

When it had all happened, God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil," and sent him out of the garden before he put out his hand to the other tree too.

The source freely sets beside itself a free other. Yet there is nothing in this other that was absent from the source, and the more the other acts, the more the source asserts itself. That was freedom in the garden before the serpent. It was given, and it belonged to the one who gave it.

In the early centuries there were fellowships that honored the serpent in the garden as the first teacher of humankind. To them the God who forbade the tree was a jailer, and the serpent opened the door. Almost none of their books survive, and we know of them from those who argued against them.

Scales can distinguish too. They separate the heavy from the light and give preference to no weight. The will, having distinguished, also prefers, which is to say it introduces a difference itself. Scales can see a difference. Only the will can make it.

The prophet curses those who "call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness." The evil man who does evil measures himself by the same measure as the righteous man, and the prophet has no quarrel with him. The curse falls on the one who moved the boundary strip himself.

So good and evil are no use for getting to know yourself. This is the most thoroughly memorized text in the world. It is taught from the cradle, written into laws and catechisms, and whoever consults it only learns how well he learned the lesson. Rebellion against it has become a genre with its own ready-made speeches. Satan's words in one poet, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven," have been repeated so often that they now sound like a prayer read backward. I have already said how a deed done in defiance is held by the same rule.

An old Russian tale tells of a demon named Zerefer who asked God through an ascetic whether he could be forgiven. An angel delivered the condition: stand facing east for three years and cry out a hundred times, "God, have mercy on me, the ancient evil," "the abomination of desolation," "the darkened delusion." The demon laughed. If he wanted to call himself an ancient evil and an abomination of desolation, he answered, he would have called himself that in the first place. To this day he was wonderful and glorious. "Never, monk!"

What does the Art permit, and what does it forbid? Nothing. The Corpus gives neither commandments nor prohibitions, and each person reads out of it what he put into it.

At the tree of life God set "Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way." There was no guard at the first tree.

12. The Given Name

Your own Name cannot be passed on. Whoever tells it to another gives away a sign, and the other will be unable to hold with it. Only the holding itself can be given away, and then the listener will draw the speaker's boundary. This is how possession begins. So tell no one what was given to you for the Art, even those you love.

A name that comes from another can nonetheless become your own. Abram was Abram for ninety-nine years, until God added a letter to his name. Jacob received the name Israel at dawn by the Jabbok, after a night spent wrestling. Where the name came from does not matter. What makes it his own is that the one who holds says it to himself, and from that moment it is he who holds the word spoken by another.

One of the Russian disputants asked what Jacob received at the Jabbok, a new nickname or a new birth. Neither. A new name makes nothing by itself. Its holding is what makes it.

Jesus gave Simon the name Cephas, a stone. On the night the Teacher was taken, the stone said three times that he did not know Him, and the rooster crowed. The name stayed with him. A few weeks later he held it again, and held it all the way to the cross on which, according to tradition, he asked to be crucified upside down. A given name can be dropped, and only the one who dropped it can pick it up.

In this the given Name differs from the names spoken of earlier. The state and the master name in order to exercise authority, and those they name bear their name as one bears a brand. The given Name can neither be asked for nor earned, and by itself it does not hold the one who received it. It only names what the giver saw.

The Church has tonsure for this. The monk receives a new name, and the old one is never spoken again outside the monastery walls. In hard times a philosopher secretly took monastic tonsure with his wife. Until his death he was called by his

passport name, and few knew what name he was called by in tonsure.

There is a reverse tonsure too. At sabbaths, so the judges wrote, the devil baptized newcomers again in his own name. Swedish witches dropped copper shavings scraped from bells into water and said that as the shavings would never return to the bell, may their souls never return either. In an old creation legend, God tells the evil one to dive to the bottom and bring up some sand in God's name. He takes sand in his own name, and all the sand slips out of his handful to the last grain. Only when he takes it in God's name does he bring it to the surface.

A word everyone knows will do too. The Mother's names are in any dictionary, and in a dictionary they are signs. Holding makes them secret. Sometimes a name for the Art is given. It is neither asked for nor sought. It comes as a sign you have been seen, and names the figure your will draws in Her field. That is why I said at the start to pronounce it as it was given to you. It is true to the extent that the encounter it came from was real.

AMBIGUUM *(On Eve and Cain)*

The first deed of defiance in the garden was done by the woman. Before then Adam had called her Woman, by kind, because she was taken out of Man. Only afterward did he give her the name Eve, meaning "life." After his deed Cain received a sign from God so that no one who encountered him would kill him, and he was given no further name.

After the expulsion Eve was the first to name another. She bore a son and said, "I have gotten a man from the LORD," and named him Cain. She also named her third son herself, Seth, because God had appointed her another seed in place of Abel.

Which of the two is received for a deed, a name or a sign? Eve was named by someone who ate of the fruit with her. Cain was marked by the One Who saw his deed.

Cain's descendants read the sign as a rule. Lamech, his descendant in the fifth generation, told his wives, "If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold."

Cain went east of Eden to the land of Nod, built a city, and named it after his son.

13. The Name and Relation

In a relation there are two names, and there is no third name in common. Two people draw the unplowed boundary strip between two fields, each from his own side, and it stands as long as each holds his side. If one leaves, the boundary strip becomes a furrow. The strip has no name of its own. It has two sides.

A Brahmin child is given two names. Everyone calls him by one, while only his mother and father know the other, and say it only in rites such as weddings. Among some peoples of North America, husband and wife never called one another by name. Witches and demons who had lived together a long time, according to the judges, called one another by the pet names spouses use and did not use devilish names among themselves. The words two people call one another usually sound like household nicknames, and an outsider will hear nothing in them. There are no true names among them.

In a relation you do not disclose your true name, even to the person closest to you. To disclose it is to give your will to another. The one who knows what you are held by will hold you, and the encounter will end in possession. Two remain two for as long as each keeps his Name to himself.

In the Russian dispute over the Name, one of the participants wrote that in communion a thing remains itself, while whoever receives its action begins to act himself, in keeping with it, against it, or partly in keeping with it. This is how encounter works. But he considered identity the limit of communion, where knower and known merge, and here the Corpus differs with him. The limit of encounter is two who remain two.

People can come together by likeness and by lack. Two who want the same thing strengthen one another, as people who share a rite strengthen one another. Desire works differently. It reaches for what you lack and cannot draw yourself, and finds it in

another. This is why desire cannot be explained by a list of merits. Once explained, it will pass to anyone who has those merits.

Someone who always understands you and agrees with everything you say is your own salt reflected in another face. In true kinship there is always a moment of estrangement when the other draws the boundary somewhere you did not expect.

The Sufis speak of a drop falling into the sea. Many mystics seek the same thing: to disappear into the object of their love until even the one who loves is gone. We call such disappearance possession, however sweet it may be. Where you end is then decided by the object. There is another way of going out of oneself, into a place where there is something between two people and both remain themselves.

The prodigal son took his share, went to a far country, and spent it all. His father let him go and did not hold him. The son came back, and a calf was killed in the house. The freedom his father gave him led back to his father's house.

What is born where two meet is a fruit. A wound after which both have changed, an oath that can be broken and therefore exists, a deed neither would have done alone. Each gathers it from his own side.

A person can have several encounters, one name for each, and none exhausts the one who holds them. It also happens that a person who held a boundary for decades draws it anew after a conversion or a misfortune. This is already a new Name, and the former one stays with him as a sign.

The Babylonian poem of creation begins when the heavens above had yet to be named and the dry land below had no name. There were only two, and their waters mingled.

AMBIGUUM *(On Fellowship)*

If there can be a name between two, can there be one among many? Can a fellowship have a Name?

Orders have always borne names. Each had a charter, degrees, and words whispered to the initiate. The word passed from elder to junior until it was whispered by people who had never seen the founders.

An order's name is held by its charter. Everyone who joins cedes part of his will to the charter as one cedes it to the state, and a fellowship held by a charter is salt, sometimes very respectable salt.

The boundary strip is drawn between two because it can be drawn only where one meets the other. Among many it is drawn by what they share, and what is shared, as was said of nature, holds itself.

Our fellowship has been given no name, and the Corpus gives it none. We have left it unnamed ourselves. Sister C. sends the letters to those who want to read them, and each person who reads them holds his own and Her.

It is easy to see why people want degrees, elders, and a charter. A degree tells a person who he is, from the outside and with a seal. The ladder gives him people to look up to and people he can look down on. The charter decides what to do on which day, and the elder answers for whether the junior is proceeding correctly. All these are rules. Whoever seeks them for their own sake is seeking relief from holding, and what he wants is well-ordered salt with a pedigree.

I will leave orders alone. Prohibiting charters would be another charter. Whoever is at home in a fellowship with degrees can stay in one, and whoever is at home alone can practice the Art alone. Either is right as long as the person holds it himself and can leave. There have been people who held their Name within orders, and the ladder got in their way no more than a surname gets in a

practitioner's way. They held it themselves, and no degree could have done it for them.

14. The Name Does Not Grant Independence

B.'s third teaching is that the one who has the Name depends on no one, neither people nor Her. It is true that the other does not decide for you. But he can change everything you know, love, and think possible, and that still does not mean he decided in your place. The boundary between encounter and possession runs through one question: who decides where you end?

A Scottish sailor lived alone on an uninhabited island for four years. When he was found, he had grown so unused to speech that people could barely understand him. He depended on nobody, and there was nobody to tell him who he was.

A Greek philosopher who lived in a barrel needed nobody. When a king offered to grant any wish, he told him to move away and stop blocking the sun.

The wholly independent person cannot check whether he holds himself or merely repeats what he learned. His independence is indistinguishable from solitude with his own salt. The Corpus has already named the one closest to him: Nobody, walking through the desert.

In the ninth circle of Hell the poet met Friar Alberigo. His soul was already freezing in the ice, while his body remained alive on earth and a demon walked, ate, drank, and slept in it. Those who knew Alberigo saw him every day and talked with him. He himself knew nothing of what his body was doing on earth.

Whoever does not call will never know if he can hold when the time comes and the salt he stood on falls away.

15. The Name Does Not Grant Power

B. claims that whoever has the Name gains powers in the world. The power of the call exists and has already been discussed. Yet whoever seeks power in the Name seeks the second of the three ways of knowing a name, the power by which the caller cannot be refused.

Old charms left a blank in the formula for the name: "As this salt dries, so let that person, so-and-so, dry away." A boyar's wife wrote the names of the tsar and tsarina on seven scraps of cloth, put them in candles in place of the wicks, and set them up in churches to burn down completely. Witches carved the victim's name on a wax figure. In all these deeds the name served as an address, and the spell went there like a letter.

An address can also go wrong. In Constantinople a nobleman named Stephen died suddenly. When he was brought before the judgment seat, the judge shouted that he had ordered Stephen the smith to be brought, and the nobleman came back to life. In that same hour Stephen the smith died.

In Samaria there lived a magician named Simon, whom the people called the great power of God. Seeing that the apostles brought down the Spirit by the laying on of hands, he brought them money and asked them to sell him this power. Peter answered, "Thy money perish with thee." Simon wanted the same thing as those who seek the Name for power: for the Spirit to come at his touch, on whomever he laid his hand.

Whatever someone prays for, he prays for a miracle. Every prayer amounts to asking that twice two should cease to be four. Whoever expects power from the Name asks what all petitioners ask for. Solomon and his seal have already been discussed.

There are powers, though the Corpus promises none. Whoever pursues power is again growing a harvest, things accumulated, things acquired as of right. B.'s teaching makes property of the

Name, a nature one owns, merit, an entitlement to powers. And property can be gathered.

AMBIGUUM *(On Other Gods)*

There are many gods, each with his own names, petitioners, and books, while everything here is addressed to the Mother. Only gods hold themselves, and perhaps any of them could become the second without whom there is no Art.

I can speak only of the One I know. Here knowing means what it does everywhere in this book, calling and receiving an answer, including a refusal. This is how the Wine Merchant and the Doctor knew Her, and how many of those these letters reach know Her. Of other gods I know what everyone knows, the names in dictionaries and the sacrifices people offered them. These are all signs, and a sign cannot tell you whether anyone will answer a call or who it will be.

Whether the others are active, I also do not know. Gods die, as I will say further on, and a name can outlive the one who answered to it. What they want is even less known. The old gods took bread and obedience, and whoever goes to a god without knowing what he wants may turn out to be food for him.

I have no dispute with someone who holds himself before another god. If he gets an answer and can refuse the encounter, that is enough, and there is nothing for us to dispute.

16. Our Mother

Much has been written about our Mother, and nearly all of it by people who feared Her. Her names were inscribed on amulets so She would pass by. She was described in treatises on demons and in court records, and women in labor were frightened with Her. There is almost no testimony from those to whom She came at their call. Such people do not write, and if they do, they do not sign.

The oldest tale told of Her was written on clay tablets in Sumer. A goddess planted a tree in her garden and waited until a throne and a bed could be carved from it. The tree grew, but a serpent that knew no spells settled in its roots, a storm bird built a nest in its branches, and a maiden built herself a house in the trunk. A hero came with an axe and struck the serpent. The bird flew off into the mountains, and the maiden destroyed her house and left for the wilderness. A throne and a bed were made from the tree.

A garden, a tree, a serpent at its roots, and a woman who leaves when they begin cutting the tree down for someone else's throne. Many centuries later She will be the first to leave again.

She is named once in Scripture, in Isaiah, in a prophecy about a land God will lay waste. There among thorns and ruins, where jackals howl and woodland spirits call to one another, "the night specter shall rest there and find for herself a place of rest." The translators did not know what to do with Her name and called Her an owl, a lamia, or a specter. She finds rest where the city is gone.

The sages of the Talmud forbade spending the night alone in a house. Whoever sleeps alone in a house will be seized by Lilith. Tablets bearing the names of three angels were hung over the bed of a woman in labor, and over the cradle they hung Her own names, given by Her. She comes where someone has been left alone and his house keeps no watch over him. What does She do with the one She finds alone?

When the Temple was destroyed, the Kabbalists wrote, the Queen followed her children into exile, and the place beside the King was left empty. She took it. The verse in Proverbs about "an handmaid that is heir to her mistress" was applied to Her, and they said this would last until the end of the exile.

Of all Her words, the first to be recorded was "no." She did not lie beneath Adam or return with the angels, and She accepted the punishment they set for Her, a hundred of Her children every day, so that She would not have to return. Nothing in Her holds by itself. Everything She has become is something She once refused to give away.

She was called Mother for Her children, of whom there was no count, and the name was spoken in terror. She does not keep those She bears with Her or raise them for the harvest. They go out into the desert as She went. We too call Her Mother, though we owe Her nothing. She lends nothing.

Some of the kindred write praises to Her, light candles for Her, and ask things of Her as they would of a saint who intercedes for them. The candles do no harm. Whoever petitions Her as a saint, though, puts Her back on the vine, in the place She left, and expects from Her what people expect from God: a promise of an answer.

Everyone who called Her and received an answer tells of Her in his own way, and the accounts do not agree.

AMBIGUUM *(On Tiamat)*

The Mother is often called Tiamat these days. People see in Her the ancient dragon, the first waters from which everything came and to which everything will return.

They bring the two together by three features. Both are called the mother of all, both are connected with a serpent, and both stand against the order established by the victorious gods. If you look at what they stand against, it is easy to make one figure out of two. If you look at what each holds, the likeness ends in the first lines of the tale. In the old texts they never meet. They were brought together recently.

The Babylonian poem begins with the words that when above the sky was yet unnamed, the earth below had not been called by a name. Tiamat lives in that "not yet." She is salt water, Apsu fresh, and their waters are mingled in one body. Earlier I said that the Babylonians called the darkness of possibility Tiamat. Their poem, though, lets it give birth: the gods come out of the mixture by themselves, as everything comes that owes nothing to any will, and what goes on by itself we have called salt. The Tiamat of the poem is possibility turned into the salt sea.

Tiamat acts when others rouse her. Apsu is killed, the younger gods complain that they are being kept from sleep and reproach her for doing nothing. She bears monsters, sets Kingu over them, takes him as her husband, and hangs the Tablet of Destinies on his chest. The Tablet was her own holding, and on the first day of the war she gives it into another's hands. Then everything goes as it goes with one who has given up her will. She opens her jaws to swallow Marduk, he drives the wind into her, and she can no longer close her lips. An arrow splits her belly. Her body is cut in two like a dried fish. One half is made into the vault of heaven, the other into the earth, the Tigris and Euphrates are set flowing from her eyes, and her tail is tied to the sky to fasten the world. Afterward the victor receives fifty names. The tale tells how names

were taken by force from the salt water, and by its end Tiamat is the material the world is built of.

The Mother holds Her own name Herself, as only gods hold. In a late Jewish book She refuses to lie beneath. Tiamat lay beneath the whole world. The one who left by the Name and the one cut apart before any name have one thing in common. Both are inconvenient to the victors.

Whoever calls the Mother by the name Tiamat calls Her as the first waters, as that to which everything will return. Soon he himself begins to want to return to the mixture. The Art holds distinction, and the first water removes it. The desire to dissolve in it leads the other way. A call addressed to the mixture reaches salt, and salt answers as always, with a wave and a faceless sweep. Many take that sweep for a presence and live in it for years. Worse, the name of the slain one whose body was made into the world can be answered by anyone who feeds on what has dissolved.

Most often it is the dragon that brings them together. In the Art there are two dragons. They bite each other's tails, and each holds its side. Tiamat's tail was tied to the sky by the victor's hand and has held someone else's world ever since.

If someone has received an answer to the name Tiamat, he can check who answered by the same question as in the Art: can you stop? The Mother answers as another, and an encounter with Her can be refused. The one who called has the right to fall silent. Salt comes as a wave, and a wave does not ask whether it is wanted. It comes when it comes and goes when it goes of itself.

AMBIGUUM *(On Teachers)*

People write that they read in one book that our Mother is such and such, and in another that the Adversary is such and such, and ask how this agrees with the Corpus. These books were written recently, some in the last twenty years, and the teachers who wrote them use the same names we do.

One name does not yet mean one thing, as was said at the beginning, where we spoke of sound and writing. The word "key" can lead to a lock or to a spring, and sooner or later someone who recognizes the thing by its name will take one for the other.

Many now bear the name of our Mother. Astrologers gave Her name to the Black Moon, the point where the Moon is farthest from Earth, and put Her among the planets in a horoscope. Nature, already discussed in its place, has been given Her name. The pupils of a certain physician see in Her the dark side of a woman's soul, which a woman must accept to become whole. Some have made Her a banner of women's freedom and print Her name on a magazine cover. Each took from Her what they needed, a place in the sky, a part of the soul, or a refusal to lie beneath, and called what they took by Her name.

The same happened to the Adversary. A little under thirty years ago an American founded a church and wrote a bible for it. For him the Adversary is the appetite and pride of the animal, and to serve him is to indulge oneself. This is nature, and it holds itself. Others worship him as evil by the very measure by which the Church curses him, and hold to the commandment from the reverse side.

Others received a revelation. At the beginning of the century an Englishman spent three days in Cairo writing down a book dictated by a voice behind him, and it says that every man and every woman is a star. His pupils look for their true will as one looks for a star on a chart, and once they find it they follow it. Another man, in America, received a book in a single night from an ancient god of the desert. A revelation received by one person

comes to the others already in the form of a book, and they hold to it as they hold to any book. The voice from behind will remind some of what is said below about the back of the head. The likeness of the images proves nothing.

The Morning Star to which the Mother points also bears other people's names. The prophet called the Babylonian king who wanted to rise above the stars and was cast down "Lucifer, son of the morning." The apostle promises that "the day star arise in your hearts," and in the last book of Scripture Christ calls Himself "the bright and morning star." The teacher who reads the star as the true will sees in it a light by which to check one's course. It holds still and waits to be found.

The Morning Star stands differently. You can see it before dawn, at the boundary of night and day, and when the sun rises you can no longer see it. You cannot find it in yourself as you would a nature. It rises, and it rises in the one who has stood on that boundary. The Mother points to it with Her finger, silently.

When people write to tell you that our Mother is such and such or that the Father is such and such, look at what they took and whose name they gave what they took.

17. The Names of the Mother

Our Mother has more names than any other of Her kind, and none of them holds Her. Each sheds a little light on Her and shows what the one who named Her saw. She Herself remains where, as was said in the chapter on darkness, light cannot reach the Name, and the names collect around that place as things washed up by the sea collect on the shore.

Many lists of Her names survive, and all were written down for one purpose, to hold Her at a distance. Under different names the same story is told everywhere: a road, a holy rider or a prophet, a list, an oath. According to Jewish tradition She gave Elijah seventeen names, from Satrina to Talto, and they differ from one list to the next. The Greeks recited a charm in which the slayer who comes at night had twelve and a half names: Gyllou, Amorpha, Abyzou, Mia, and others. The Romanians called her Samca and counted nineteen names. The Syrians wrote on bowls Lilitu alongside Zardukh and Malvitha, and the last item on their list is no longer a name: Strangler of Boys. Russian healers named the twelve fever sisters, daughters of Herod, one by one: Tryaseya, Ogneya, Ledeya, and the eldest and fiercest, Neveya.

The half name in the Byzantine charm is worth pausing over. A whole name can be learned and hung over a cradle. The half name is written out in full like the rest, yet it counts as half, as though it were still being spoken and it were unknown who will finish saying it.

The Kabbalists called Her the Strange Woman, the Harlot, the End of All Flesh, the Northern One, the Queen. Each of these names speaks first of those who gave it. To some She was infidelity, to others death, to others the one who took the place left empty. None is false. You can call by them too and an answer may come, but it will come to the holding behind the word. The word itself speaks of whoever gave it and brings you no closer to Her.

In India they honor the black Mother. She dances on a cremation ground, on the body of a motionless god, wearing a necklace of heads and with Her tongue sticking out. Her name means both "black" and "time." They sing hymns to Her in a thousand names, and each of the thousand calls one of Her features by name: the devourer, the one who remains on the pyre, the one who is beyond light. A thousand names make up a concept, and this concept, like any concept, casts light on Her from every side and never calls Her once.

Among the seventeen names given to Elijah is Kali. Some conclude that the black Mother and ours are one and the same. Others consider it a coincidence of sound. The likeness of images and names was discussed in the Ambiguum on teachers. It proves nothing, and it proves nothing either way. Likeness does not make them one, different names do not make them different. One thing decides it: who answers. An Indian calling the black Mother and we calling ours cannot know until an answer comes, and each has his own answer.

The names She spoke to Elijah on the road She gave Herself. A name one has agreed to answer to becomes part of the will given to the caller, as was said in the chapter on names. So in listing Her names She was ceding something, and She ceded just as much as She wanted to. Everything else stayed with Her.

Some of the kindred copy out these lists and learn them by heart, fifty names at a time, in the hope that one will work. There is no harm in it. But each of these names was disclosed in one encounter, to Elijah on the road, to a holy horseman at a city gate, to a healer bending over someone sick, and it acted in that encounter. Taken out of the encounter, it becomes what it was for everyone else from the beginning, a line on an amulet. A list learned by heart is a concept, and calling from it is as useless as calling from a dictionary.

Practitioners call Her by different words too. One is given one name, another a different one, and a third holds a word found in a book for a long time until it changes of itself. It does not follow from the words being different that they call different ones. The

fact that what comes appears differently each time does not mean that the same one comes. You have no way to compare your encounter to another's. Nobody can pass on an encounter without making it a sign.

AMBIGUUM *(On Altars)*

Sister C. is sent descriptions of altars: a black tablecloth, candles, a cup of wine, slices of apple on a saucer, sometimes a drop of blood. People ask whether it is arranged correctly and what is missing.

Nothing is missing, because nothing is needed. It is hard to imagine anyone seriously thinking She needs apple slices or candle wax. You feed the one who feeds on what belongs to others. This is how the vine feeds on the harvest. There is nothing to feed Her with.

Make an altar if you want to. It helps you gather yourself just as a clear desk helps you sit down to write a letter, and there is no harm in it as long as you remember that it is nothing, a table, cloth, and wax. Trouble begins when the Art moves onto a shelf. Then a person holds while standing before the altar, lets go when he leaves it, and when he goes away for a long time worries about who will light the candle while he is gone.

18. Three Paths

If the Name is the first distinction spoken to oneself, why is She needed? Wouldn't it be simpler to take a word for yourself and hold yourself with it as the serpent holds its tail?

The Wine Merchant is right about the Name in the Corpus. A Name must hold itself on its own, without leaning on anything, and no book or teacher will help here. Yet only gods hold themselves this way. The Mother holds Herself by Her Name, and Her holding rests on nothing. It is almost beyond a person's strength. He holds himself in fits and starts, loses himself, falls asleep, gets distracted, and in each of those intervals salt catches him.

The Doctor went another way. He held his own name as Hers. It was the name by which She held him, and he answered. This is the path of the held. It is easier than the first, and its danger is that the line between the held and the possessed is thin. Stop answering and She will be holding in your place.

The Archivist became Her co-worker. He holds his own himself as far as he can, and he calls Her. Where his holding weakens, She holds, and where Her presence recedes, he holds. This is how two neighbors hold a boundary strip. Each holds his side, and the boundary strip stands.

All three paths go through Her. The Wine Merchant needs Her as the one who is what he wants to be, the Doctor as the one who holds him, and the Archivist as a co-worker. Whoever takes a word for himself and holds himself by it without Her chooses the Wine Merchant's path without having his strength, and salt will hold him.

AMBIGUUM *(On Slavery)*

Some who read about the Doctor's path decide there is only one thing left for the held to do, to give themselves wholly to Her. They write oaths to Her, call themselves Her slaves, ask Her to command them, and expect Her to care for them as a mother cares for small children.

None of the three paths means slavery. She held the Doctor, and he held by answering. If he had stopped answering, there would have been no one to hold. The Archivist holds on equal terms with Her. The Wine Merchant would have given his will to nobody.

In a monastery, cutting off one's will is considered the first virtue. The novice gives his will to the elder, the elder to God, and it is all called salvation. The Corpus knows how this ends. The vine holds the one who gave up his will, and in due season he is gathered.

There is no use expecting the Mother to look after you. She refused Adam and the angels and keeps no slaves. Of Her children it is said that they go into the desert.

Whoever renounces his will becomes food. The held remains held as long as he holds in answer. The one who renounced it has ceased to hold, and there is nobody left in him to hold.

19. How a Name Comes

What people ask most often is where to get a name for the Art, as though it lay somewhere ready-made. You can take the first word from anywhere, a book or a dream, or put it together out of letters by lot, as Spare's followers put together signs. The word has a meaning only at first. In time it wears away, as any word repeated a thousand times wears away, and whoever takes a long time choosing it out of fear of getting it wrong is preserving something that will fall away regardless.

From the beginning this word is held together with Her. Taken from a book or put together by lot, it holds nothing by itself. The chapter on the three paths says why. It is held before Her and turned toward Her, and then it becomes a bearer.

In time She may give a name. It rarely comes as a voice. More often a word surfaces in the Art and does not go away. Sometimes a dream brings it. Sometimes it appears in someone else's book and stops your eye so that it is clear this was said to you. There is no order to this, and I make no promises.

Those who receive such names are the ones She called. People usually think of it the other way around. A person calls Her for a long time, and in return She gives him a name as a reward. She gives out no rewards. A given name says two things. You were called, and you have holding, otherwise there would have been nowhere to put the name.

Something more can happen. She discloses Her own name, a personal one found neither in dictionaries nor on amulets. It is neither sought nor asked for, and all one can say about it is that it happens.

In Revelation the one who overcomes is promised "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Many wait for this stone, and the Wine Merchant warns against it more than once. The name comes from outside, and a person grows into it so completely that

when he is called, what lies beneath the name answers, and he himself can no longer say whether it was he who answered. A name that fits as though you had given birth to it yourself is most likely written in someone else's hand. You can check this in one way, by trying to erase the inscription.

The Doctor, rereading this passage, noticed that the reward is real. The one who gave the name will keep a record of the one who received it. The record will belong to the giver. In Isaiah it says, "Fear not … I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."

Two kinds of names can be received in the Art: the given and the disclosed. Familiar names can be used from time to time as well. Everyone calls Her by them, and there is nothing wrong with them as long as holding stands behind them.

Names you have been given must be kept secret, both your own and Hers. The power here is not in making the word public. A stranger who learns it gains nothing. The one who discloses is the one who speaks, and by speaking he himself cedes part of his holding. You give away Her name, disclosed to you, and She has every right to stop answering to it.

What has come must still be accepted. A name that has been received and is left unheld remains a sign received. All you keep then is a memory of how it came.

When a given name comes, the first usually falls away of itself. Sometimes it goes differently. The word stays the same while the holding beneath it changes, and the practitioner notices that he now holds something different by the same sound. Then there is no need to change the word.

What if no name has come? Hold your own word before Her and call Her by a familiar name. The Art without a given name is still the Art. Take care you do not make up what came. A name a person suggested to himself and passed off as Hers is worse. What he holds with it is his own invention.

AMBIGUUM *(On a Given Name That Did Not Become One's Own)*

A brother writes that a name came to him in a dream several years ago, as clear as if spoken aloud. He keeps it, tells nobody, and remembers that night every time he practices the Art. He asks why the Art is going nowhere.

What he holds is the night. The name stayed there, and whenever he says it he goes back there as one goes back to an old photograph. A name that has come is held forward, toward the One Who gave it, and is held today. The memory of how it came is another salt, and the dearer the memory, the more tightly that salt holds.

There is one piece of advice to give. Stop remembering. Let the name become a word on the inbreath, with no night behind it. If it was given, it will answer all the same. If it answers only with the night, it was the night that was held all these years.

AMBIGUUM *(On the White Stone)*

Sister C. asked how the name the Mother gives differs from the white stone if the stone is so dangerous. Both are given, both come from outside, and both are known only to the one who receives them.

Being given is something they share. The white stone is promised at the end to the one who overcomes, and the name on it is the last one. After it no names are given or changed. It is a reward, and a reward is given for merit, which was discussed in the chapter on deeds. The One Who gives the stone keeps the account. He called you by name, and you are His. The inscription was made by His hand and is kept by His hand, and it cannot be erased. In this lie both the promise and the danger. The one who receives the stone is kept forever, and is kept forever as His.

A name from the Mother is never the last. She gives it to those She called, names with it what She saw in your will, and leaves the holding to you. So it can be dropped, and as was said of Cephas, only the one who dropped it can pick it up. It can also be changed when the holding changes.

That is where the Wine Merchant's test comes from. If the inscription comes off, it is Her name or yours, and you are the one holding it. If it stays, you already bear a stone, no matter whose hand you think signed it.

Many names can be received from Her, one after another over the years, or several at once. You will know for yourself what each is for and which to call with at what hour. This knowledge comes with the name. Asking someone else about it is as useless as inventing a purpose for the name in advance.

20. Repetition

If the same names are on every breath, does the Art turn into salt? How is it then any better than prayer beads or a prayer?

One thing has to be repeated in the Art: holding. The word by which it is held can change and in time falls away. Rhythm, counting, and formula serve the holding until they begin to hold themselves. Anything that can be learned and kept can be kept by salt too, and there is no need to repeat it. Holding cannot be kept, which is why it is repeated.

In the mountains of Tibet people turn prayer wheels. A prayer is inscribed on the wheel, and each turn is thought to read it anew. The wheels are set in streams, and the water prays for people day and night until the stream dries up. There is as much repetition as you like here, and nobody to read.

The sage of Ephesus said you cannot step into the same river twice. His pupil went further. You cannot step into it even once, because while you are stepping in, the river is already different. In the end he stopped speaking and only pointed with his finger.

In Japan there is a shrine that is taken apart every twenty years and rebuilt on an adjoining site, log for log, to the same measurements. This has been done for more than a thousand years, and the shrine is considered ancient, though none of its logs is even twenty years old. The carpenters learn from those who built it the previous time, and a master gets to build it two or three times in his life. The shrine is alive as long as it is rebuilt.

A philosopher asked you to imagine that a demon comes to you at night and says that everything you have lived through you will live through again and again, countless times, in exactly the same way. The demon leaves the content of your life as it was. One thing changes: whether you want it again.

From what was said you cannot distinguish the new from a repetition. Breaking the pattern was itself learned long ago and is

repeated like a pattern. Creation and repetition differ in who holds what is said, and the water that turns the wheel holds nothing.

I too am repeating to you the Corpus, which you have already read, and I can add scarcely anything new. Until you hear, my words will remain a retelling.

A pianist repeats scales until his fingers run by themselves, and then he can stop thinking about the scales. This is how salt is grown, and it is good for the hands. Whoever repeats a name so that one day he can stop thinking about it grows the same thing.

The prayer beads and the wheel repeat what was spoken once. The practitioner repeats what has not survived since the previous breath.

21. The Jesus Prayer

The prayer I mentioned in the account of Athos is short: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." It is shortened to "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," and to the name alone. As early as the first centuries, the desert fathers of Egypt taught people to pray one short prayer in place of many long ones, and later it was called the single-phrase prayer.

The method is recorded in old instructions later gathered into a book called the *Philokalia*. The monk sits in a quiet cell on a low stool, bends his head to his chest, lowers his gaze to the middle of his belly, and restrains his breathing so the mind will not scatter. The mind, it says, has to be brought down from the head to the heart, and the place of the heart found within. Once it is found, the prayer proceeds from there. The words are set on the breath, the first half on the inbreath and the second on the outbreath.

In the fourteenth century a monk from Calabria mocked the hesychasts of Athos and called them navel-gazers. They look for the soul in the navel, he wrote. The archbishop of Thessalonica defended them. The light the hesychasts see in prayer, he wrote, is the very light the apostles saw on Tabor, an action (energy) of God through which the incomprehensible God is revealed. The councils took his side, and the Name-glorifiers of Athos later drew on this teaching when they said that the Name is an action of God.

Teachers distinguish stages in the prayer. At first it is spoken with the lips, aloud or in a whisper, and counted on a prayer rope. Then the mind says it without sound. Then it goes down into the heart, and the mind stands there with attention. The last stage is called self-acting prayer. The prayer goes on by itself, asleep or awake, and a person hears it the way one hears a heartbeat.

Prayer ropes for this prayer are tied of woolen thread, knot by knot, a hundred knots or more. One of the founders of communal monastic life tied the first ropes of this kind. A demon is said to

have untied his knots at night until a knot woven of crosses was revealed to him. This knot the demon could not untie.

In Russia in the last century a little book passed from hand to hand, about a pilgrim who received this prayer from an elder. At first he said it three thousand times a day, then six thousand, then twelve thousand, until there was no need to count. The little book made the Jesus Prayer known far beyond the monastery walls.

The teachers repeat one warning: do not begin the prayer without an elder. There must be no imagining in it, no images before the mind. Any sweetness, light, or vision that does not come from God is called *prelest* (spiritual delusion) and leads to ruin. The elder has to distinguish whether it came from God. The one praying does not know this himself.

This is how they explain why the prayer works. The Name of Jesus is an action of God directed toward a person, and in invoking it, the person praying participates in that action. God, incomprehensible in essence, enters him through His energy as fire enters iron, and the iron, while remaining iron, begins to burn and shine. The end of this path is called deification. A person becomes by grace what God is by nature.

The image of fire in iron is exact. Heated iron shines with a light not its own and cools as soon as it is taken out of the forge. The apostle said of himself "Christ liveth in me," and the teachers see in these words a description of the goal.

In this prayer it is the Name of Jesus that holds, and the person praying, the teachers say, must give himself wholly to this holding. He has no name of his own in the prayer. There is only "me, a sinner."

22. The Art

The Art follows of itself from what has been said, and there is no need to invent it. If the Name is an act, it must be performed again, and the simplest thing a person does again and again is breathe. If the Name is a call, there has to be a second name, Hers, or the practitioner affirms only himself. If the Name is a relation, a third and a fourth can appear between two.

Why Her in particular? A loved one or a friend can refuse too. Yet they all stand on the same vine, and the boundary drawn with them runs within the garden. She left the garden by that part of God by which He can be called, and She has never returned. A boundary drawn with Her runs where you encounter one who stands outside the vine.

The Art differs in a few ways. There are two names in it, your own and Hers. The practitioner dissolves in neither of them. They go down below the heart, where the will holds without strain.

You can hold in the mind, in the heart, and below the heart. How to recognize each place is described below.

Others also knew an art of working with a name. The Sufis repeat the name of God until the one who repeats disappears into what is repeated. A Kabbalist in Sicily rearranged the letters of the Name until he began to see. Almost all of them sought one thing, for the one who repeats to be gone.

The Calabrian's mockery is worth taking as an example for the Art, but no further.

Your own name performs the first act anew each time. Breaths accumulate nothing. A thousand breaths add nothing to the Name beyond the first, or we would be back to merit, with breaths in place of deeds. Her name holds open the place where preference and refusal are possible, and the practitioner, remaining himself, is held by Her. Among those who draw the Tree from its reverse side, at the top stand two heads that argue and never grow together.

Why then does the Art hold? An action a person performs usually leaves him, passing into a deed, a habit, or other people's hands, and somewhere there it is gathered as a harvest is gathered. Your own name turns the action back toward the one who performs it. A distinction drawn and drawn again at once flows into nothing else. It closes upon itself, like the serpent holding its own tail, and its power remains in the circle.

But a circle with nobody in it except the one who closed it affirms only him, and its boundary meets nothing. That is why the second name is needed. Participation in the Mother works differently from participation in God in the Jesus Prayer. Here the iron does not shine with a light not its own. The alchemists have a drawing. Two dragons, one winged and one wingless, bite each other's tails and together make one circle. Each holds its own and holds the other, and neither burns with the other's fire. Her name opens the circle just enough for another to enter and closes it again around two.

A circle closed on one person dries up in time. The name goes round by habit, evenly, like water through a prayer wheel, and holding passes unnoticed to salt. Her name brings into the circle what was not in it: sometimes warmth and sweetness, sometimes heaviness or refusal. As long as things happen in the circle that you did not make, Her name is alive there and keeps the circle from becoming salt. If everything runs evenly and only as you want it, you have to call Her again.

AMBIGUUM *(On the Two Heads)*

Those of the kindred who are familiar with the reverse Tree ask about the two heads mentioned above. Does the Art lead to a twofold summit, and must one then go through the Tree from bottom to top, step by step, as one does by the books?

On the bright Tree the summit is occupied by the Crown, where everything is one and one thing has yet to be distinguished from another. On the reverse the twins stand in the same place, two heads that never grow together. The teachers of the bright Tree see in them the breaking of unity and the worst thing on the reverse. I see a boundary strip in them. Unity, in which there would be no one to distinguish, has broken into two, and both have remained themselves.

Some lists put names at this summit that I will leave unspoken. One of them will appear below.

There is no point in going through the Tree for rewards. The ladder one climbs by merit leads to a place where an account is kept for every step, and enough has been said about that kind of account. The Art begins at the summit, because the first distinction is itself the summit, and from there it descends below the heart.

23. Three Ways of Holding

One of the saints who taught on prayer distinguished three forms. In the first, the person praying raises his eyes and hands to heaven, imagines angels and the dwellings of the saints, is moved, and weeps. The saint considered this form the closest to *prelest*. The one who stops there begins to take pride in his tears, and some see light with their bodily eyes, hear voices, and go mad. In the second form the mind is gathered in the head, thoughts are watched and driven away, and thoughts fight thoughts like soldiers in the dark at night, unable to see who is striking them. He placed this form above the first as one places a moonlit night above a moonless one. In the third, the mind goes down into the heart, stays there without leaving, and drives away every thought from there with the Name. Only this form did he call true.

The Art knows the same three and one more place, below the heart. Each person recognizes them by what happens to him, and here the signs matter more than definitions.

You recognize holding in the imagination by its pictures. The name comes with an image. You see Her in a shape, with a face and clothes, see the road as a road, see darkness as a color. It stirs you deeply, and the Art seems to be going well. What you are holding is a picture, and once you have seen it, the picture holds itself and grows more like the picture from last time. It is worth leaving this place as early as you can. The image, as was said in the chapter on writing, points. Prayer goes to the one it points to.

You recognize holding in the head by strain. The forehead grows heavy, the temples ache, and by evening you are tired as if you had been counting. The name holds as long as you watch it. Get distracted and it is gone, and you notice half an hour later. Nearly everyone starts here, and there is no harm in it. Trouble begins when you take strain for power and pride yourself on how many hours you held.

You recognize holding in the heart by warmth. The chest grows warm, sometimes sweet, and the name seems to melt like wax by a fire. You want to stay in it. Monks seek this and are right in their own way. The heart takes in the name and dissolves in it, and with it dissolves the one who was holding. For the Art this is a warning. If when you return you cannot say where you were and where She was, you have been where two come to an end.

You recognize holding below the heart by heaviness and stillness. There is neither strain nor warmth there, only density, like a stone lying in its place. The name holds without attention and without feeling, the way your balance holds as you walk. You do not think about it, and it does not vanish. You can speak, work, and read, and the Art goes on. Sweetness comes here too, but it does not pull you along.

You can distinguish this place from salt by one test: whether you can stop. I will speak of it separately.

There is no ladder here, and you need not go through the places in order. Most often people go straight down from the head, bypassing the heart, or linger in the heart and have trouble getting out. The Calabrian monk's joke suggests the direction. Bend your head to your chest and look where the navel-gazers looked.

It is easy to tell where you are holding. Leave the name unattended for a minute. If it vanished, you were holding with your head. If it melted, you were holding with your heart. If it is still there and can be stopped, you were holding by will.

24. Beginning the Art

The teachers of the Jesus Prayer forbid beginning without an elder. We have no elders, and that prohibition is beyond our means, so we have to begin on our own and test ourselves.

Begin with two names at once. Put one on the inbreath and the other on the outbreath, and let ease decide which goes where. Whichever way comes more easily is right.

The Art needs no special time and no counting, no hundreds or thousands as in prayer. It needs no quiet place either. People practice it anywhere and at any time, at work, on the road, over a meal, even while reading, when the eyes move along the line and the breath goes its own way. An Art that needs quiet is held by quiet and ends with it.

At first say the names in an inner voice, the way you speak to yourself when reading. Do not hurry or hold back the breath. It goes as it was going, and the names settle on it.

In your mind join each name to the one it calls, your own to yourself, Hers to Her. Imagine neither a face nor a shape. It is like hailing someone in a crowd. You are already addressing him, even before you can see him.

At first, and for a long time, this will just be saying the names. They sound in your head like somebody else's song that has been stuck there since morning, and the sounding by itself holds nothing. The Art begins the moment the name stops sounding and begins to point, your own to where you stand, Hers to where She stands. It is like someone lost in thought on the street suddenly finding himself in the middle of the road. There was the way he was going, there were his thoughts, and suddenly there he is, standing here. At first this lasts a moment, then longer.

Expect nothing, neither warmth nor a voice. Whoever expects something will get it, and will get exactly what he expected, from the imagination. At first the Art may go with difficulty. Whoever

endures this will have no need later to tell an encounter from what he had wished for.

You will lose the Art dozens of times an hour. When you notice you have lost it, return without irritation and without counting the losses. The return itself is already holding.

AMBIGUUM *(On Meditation)*

People ask whether this is the same meditation now taught at every corner by people in robes.

Meditation begins with attention. You sit, watch the breath, notice thoughts, and let them go. Attention grows stronger this way, and that is good. Strong attention will also be of use to the practitioner.

In meditation, though, attention serves as a means, and its aim, whatever people call it, is one thing: to see that you are not there. Buddhists teach that there is nothing permanent in a person and that whoever sees this is free. A Japanese teacher wrote that to study the Way is to study the self; to study the self is to forget the self.

The Art goes the other way. On every breath it affirms the one who breathes, and he has no need to check whether he exists. Meditation needs silence because it is easier to dissolve in silence. The Art needs no silence and can be practiced at work and in a crowd. It has no need to dissolve.

Meditation helped some people begin, because attention gathered on the breath takes the names more easily. Yet whoever starts with the names and then catches himself seeking emptiness has turned onto someone else's road.

25. Two Names on the Breath

There are two orders in which to put the two names on the breath, and the order makes a difference. When your own comes first and Hers follows, the Art sounds like a call. The one who stands names himself and addresses Her, and if She comes, She comes to meet him. In books this is called evocation, calling forth. When Her name comes first and your own follows, the order is reversed. She enters, and the one who stands receives Her within himself. This is invocation, calling in.

There is no need to decide beforehand which order to take. Use the one that goes more easily right now. The order changes by itself, sometimes several times in a day, and changes as it needs to. If you start correcting it, the Art will move into the head and will be held by attention.

Two names said one after the other remain two words until behind each stands the one it calls. Relation begins where the second name comes as an answer to the first. You recognize this when the Art suddenly ceases to depend on you alone.

When you are used to the Art, you can gather your attention at a single point. It may be the solar plexus below the chest. For some it is easier lower down or higher up, in the throat or above the top of the head. Hold where the names settle with more weight and stillness.

The breath has gaps, after the inbreath, when it stands still, and after the outbreath, when there is none. In time you can let another name descend in these gaps and bring it down into the heart. It can be different from the first two. It can be the name of the Adversary or Hers. Let it descend in one gap or in both, and the Art goes from two beats to three or four.

There is one guide here, sensation. If the new name feels pleasant, you can repeat it, and the Art itself will show whether it holds. If it feels heavy or pulls you away, leave it. Sweetness proves nothing. The Art has one test, and it has already been named.

26. The Sense-Form

At first you say the names silently in words, as monks say the prayer. In time the words fall away. The Name is neither sound nor letter, and the Art comes to the same point by itself. In place of the word on the inbreath, what the word meant remains, and it meant only "this one," "that one." The inbreath takes on the sense of the name. This pointing has no features and no meaning, and nothing can take its place. For lack of a better word I call it a *sense-form*.

Indian yogis say the breath pronounces the name by itself, *so* on the inbreath, *ham* on the outbreath, "I am He," twenty-one thousand six hundred times a day, and a person repeats it without knowing it. They teach only how to hear this repetition. Nobody holds a name that the breath says by itself, as nobody holds the prayer on the wheel in the stream. The Art settles on this breath that goes on without us and makes it its own again on every inbreath.

A sign points too, though it points from outside and by agreement, and another can replace it. The sense-form is enacted by the one who holds it. It points to where he stands and to where She stands.

One name goes out through the forehead toward Her, and this is the call. The other enters from the back of the head, and this is Her entrance. Tradition says the first human being was created with two faces that looked in different directions until they were separated. From the back of the head, from behind, from the reverse side comes what the eyes do not see.

Below the heart the will holds. Above the head there is another place, and there one sees.

The Tibetans teach people to take in another's suffering on the inbreath like black smoke and give light to the world on the outbreath. Breathe in Darkness and give nothing back.

Those who like numbers will find that numbers fit too, from two to four and then in multiples. I advise against counting. While you count, you hold by attention, and the Art becomes a rite with a set duration.

27. The Silent Name

The word falls away neither at once nor on command. First it grows shorter. The first syllable is left of the name, then only a stress, as the tune of a familiar song remains when the words are long forgotten. Then the tongue and throat stop the barely perceptible movements they turn out to have been making all along. Finally the inbreath has neither sound nor tune, only a direction. The breath goes where the word used to point.

A theologian from Tus described the same thing among the Sufis. The one who remembers repeats "Allah, Allah," until the tongue stops moving and the remembrance remains in the heart alone. He considered it a hindrance to ask yourself at that time what the word means. In the Art the word goes so that the one who holds may remain.

There is no need to hurry this. As long as the word is needed, it holds. When the need for it passes, the practitioner notices that he has long been leaving it out and the breath still points as before. It is like someone who has long said "over there" and one day simply looks that way and is understood.

There are two kinds of silence here, and it is easy to confuse them. Sometimes the word has gone and the holding remains. Sometimes both have gone and the practitioner simply breathes, pleased to be saying nothing. It is easy to check. Say the name once in your inner voice and see what changes. If something returned with the word, it was absent without it.

There is no shame in returning to the word. On a hard day or in fear the names begin to sound again, as they should. The word is salt, and when holding weakens, the bearer takes it on. You go back and forth for years.

The two names may fall silent at different times. For some, their own goes into silence first. For others, Hers does. One may have pointed silently for a long time while the other still has to be spoken. Do not hurry the one that lags behind.

28. Stopping

Sooner or later the Art begins to go on unattended. The practitioner is occupied with a conversation or work and then notices that the names have been going with the breath the whole time, and cannot remember when it began. The monks call such a prayer self-acting and see it as the highest stage. The Corpus knows it from the other side. At night the Doctor heard within himself the prayer he had learned from his mother. He could not stop it, and it gave him no joy. For the Art this is a fork in the road. Holding without strain and repetition that nobody holds anymore can both go on unattended.

From the outside, and even from within, they look alike. In both cases no effort is needed, and in both the names come on their own. One thing distinguishes them: can you stop?

This is how you stop. Say "enough" to yourself and take the names off the breath as you would open your hand. If the Art falls silent and the one who let go remains in the silence, it was going by holding. If the names keep going after they have been told to be silent, or come back a minute later without being called, the practitioner is no longer the one who holds.

It is worth testing this from time to time, including when all is going well. This is how you check whether a door you have not gone out of in a long time still unlocks.

Different things can happen after stopping. Sometimes a silence comes, clear and empty as a room from which the furniture has been removed. Sometimes a heaviness comes over you, as though a load had been lifted from your shoulders and only now did you realize it was there. Or it seems as though nothing is left without the Art, and the practitioner is frightened. There is no need to be frightened. The one who stopped it has gone nowhere, or there would have been nobody to stop it.

Begin again as you did the first time, with the first name and the first breath. Yesterday's Art leaves nothing to today's, which is why every beginning is a beginning.

If you cannot stop, set the Art aside altogether for a time. Do not say the names or follow them, even when they go on by themselves. There is no need to fight them either. Whoever fights them holds them again, only from the reverse side. In a few days or weeks they quiet down. The worst is to notice too late.

29. Encounter and Refusal

Often the Art goes on without an answer. For months the names settle on the breath, and nothing happens except the Art itself. This is its usual state.

Waiting differs from encounter in where the change comes from. While you wait, you yourself change everything that changes in the Art. Attention thickens, warmth grows, and the names flow more easily. An encounter is recognized by a change you did not make and could not have made, by a direction you did not set, by the Art suddenly going somewhere other than where you were leading it.

No state by itself proves that She answered. Warmth, pleasure, darkness, a presence behind you, even a voice can be produced by the practitioner himself, and the more strongly he expects it, the more easily he produces it. There is one sign of encounter: what came does not obey you. Yet salt can disobey too. Disobedience tells you only that you are not doing this alone. It does not tell you who else is there. Here the practitioner is in the same position as the one who asked about the machine. The line where your own rule ends and another's will begins is invisible.

Refusal in the Art looks different from silence. The name spoken to Her seems to come up against something. The breath goes on, while the call comes back like a hand from glass. There can be refusal in one thing and assent in another, when the names do not go in one order and do go in the other. There is no need to go around it with another word or another point. Where the refusal met you is where your boundary runs today.

In silence do what you have been doing. Do not change the names, add hours, or look for a new point. Silence is neither punishment nor trial. Whoever thinks he is being tested already thinks She owes him something.

Grimoires call differently. The spirit is named, bound with a chain of God's names, and commanded to appear, and the formula

itself says it cannot resist. If, when you speak the second name, you already know an answer is bound to come, you are already conjuring, and the call is over.

An encounter cannot be held in place. When it has passed, the Art returns to its usual course. Whoever tries to bring it back by remembering it is now holding the memory, and for him the encounter becomes a rite.

AMBIGUUM *(On Two Names Without an Encounter)*

A brother writes that both names hold easily, there is warmth in his solar plexus and sweetness in his heart, and he believes he has reached the goal. He asks what comes next.

He might have done everything he describes himself, and none of it says whether there was a second. Two names that have settled easily on the breath can be held by one person speaking to himself in two voices, as a child plays at conversation.

The Kabbalist in Sicily who rearranged the letters of the Name teaches exactly this in one account of his method. After a long succession of letters and breaths, picture a figure in front of you, address it, and answer for it in another voice. In his method the answer is built into the technique itself, and it is impossible to decide who answers in such a conversation.

You can check with one question. Over three years, did anything happen that he did not want? If everything went as he wanted it to, he may have been talking to himself all that time.

There is no verdict here. The two voices of one are also holding, and good holding. But it is too soon for him to speak of an encounter, or of the third name either. Between a voice and its echo there is no place for a third to settle.

30. The Third

When a third name comes down into the heart in the pause after the inbreath, the sensation changes. In this pause nobody governs the breath and the heart beats on its own. Perhaps that is why the third cannot be given. Two names are given. The third is obtained. Any name can be proposed, but the practitioner decides whether it settles. I have tried many. So far only one has settled, the name of the one who stood in the way as an adversary against Balaam, his sword drawn. The third is a fruit, and the one who seeks gathers it. It is the name of what grew out of the encounter and became his own. Two still hold the relation, each on his own side. The third belongs to the one who gathered it. I understand the name of the Adversary as the name of my action in the world, of how I stand in the way. Lilith is the name of the Mother as freedom. There are others.

With it comes sweetness, almost rapture. Monks called this *prelest* and fled from it, seeing pride in it. The word means both seduction and charm, and the Art does not flee. The Doctor writes of a dark sweetness that settled in his heart, and it came to him on its own, without any Art.

There are two tests here, both within the Art. Has going out of oneself led to dissolution, where your own name disappears? And can you stop?

On the way there is sometimes a light darker than darkness. There is nothing more to say about it.

AMBIGUUM *(On the Black Light)*

Of a light darker than darkness, one can at least say where people wrote about it.

Persian Sufis distinguished several lights on the path and placed the black light highest. It is seen when the one who sees has already vanished. This light is too close to be seen, and so it is seen as darkness. One of them, executed young in Hamadan, wrote that the black light is the light of Iblis, who refused to bow to Adam, and that without this light there would be no white light either.

Another Sufi, executed in Baghdad, wrote that Iblis refused to bow out of love. He could bow only to the One, and for that he accepted the curse. He himself was executed for the words "I am the Truth."

This is the light of the number 6 and three, where the one yet to come is born, if the texts are to be believed.

31. Vanity

"Vanity of vanities; all is vanity," said the preacher of Jerusalem, and asked, "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" The word we translate as vanity means vapor, breath, what you breathe out and what disperses at once.

He lists everything he tried. He built houses, planted vineyards, gathered silver and singers, and sought wisdom. Everything went to another or went into the ground, and there is no memory of what went before, as there will be no memory of what is yet to come. What is done here is done for the one who will come afterward and gather it.

The Corpus says the same thing more harshly. Everything that grew under the sun, on its own or by labor, grows on the vine, and the harvest has an owner.

The king of Uruk, having lost a friend, went to the end of the world to look for immortality and brought up from the bottom of the sea a plant that restored youth. On the way back he stopped to bathe, and a snake carried off the plant and shed its old skin at once. The king sat on the shore and wept. The snake stored up no youth. It shed its skin and slid away.

It does not follow from vanity that one must run away. The desert fathers fled, and in the desert the same vine was waiting for them, only thicker. Nor does it follow that one should hold to what is here more tightly. One thing follows. There is nothing to store up here. The vapor the preacher spoke of disperses with every outbreath, and it is on this same breath that the practitioner puts the names.

32. Regeneration

What comes afterward is called regeneration in Scripture: "in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory." The word means being again, being anew. The Church expects it for everyone at once, at the end of time. The practitioner asks about it for himself, and asks sooner.

The Egyptians knew that surviving death does not happen by itself. They preserved the body and wrote words for the journey on the walls of the tomb, and whoever came through the judgment became an *akh*, a shining spirit that holds itself. Initiates in the mysteries prepared in life what would carry them across the threshold. The body, memory, and temperament are salt, and the salt is gathered. Even in life the sick lose their memory piece by piece and remain themselves as long as they hold. Death takes away everything borrowed and looks at what is left.

One chapter of their funerary book is called just that, on the dead man remembering his name in the other world. The Egyptians considered the name, *ren*, a part of a person on a par with the body, the heart, and the double, and the dead man asks for it to be returned to him as he asks for his heart to be returned. To remember your name there is to be able to act with it, to name yourself at the gates and to name the god who comes up to you.

In the underworld Achilles told Odysseus, who had come to him, that it was better to be a day laborer for a poor man on earth than to reign over all the dead. There too he remained Achilles by name, but there was nothing left to hold with that name. The shades of Hades came up to the living man only after drinking the sacrificial blood, and they spoke as long as the blood was in them. This is also how the ghosts people tell of everywhere are held. They are called by name and food is set out for them, and they come as long as they are called. Another's call holds them, and they go when those who call forget. There are two kinds of immortality, then. You are

remembered, and you can still refuse what is remembered about you. Only the second can be called regeneration.

Some hope that after death the Mother will hold them. Here a distinction is needed. The name She gave holds nobody by itself. It opens the possibility of holding together, and then both hold as long as each holds his side. If She begins to hold the dead man in his place, that will be possession beyond the grave, and then She will differ in no way from the vine. If two hold, the boundary strip can outlive the body, because the body did not draw it in the first place.

Can you hold yourself on your own, without the body and without Her, as a god holds himself? In the Corpus the gods exist as long as they hold their Name, and holding it costs each of them something. Divinity in this sense means neither omnipotence nor immortality. It means only that the holding rests on nothing. This is difficult and dangerous. Whoever holds himself alone holds a boundary nobody tests, and such a boundary has already been discussed.

Under the emperor Tiberius a ship was passing the Greek islands, and from the shore someone called three times to the pilot by his name, Thamus, a name few people even on the ship knew. Twice he stayed silent, the third time he answered, and the voice told him that when he came abreast of a certain place he was to announce, "Great Pan is dead." When he shouted it from the stern, a lament in many voices rose from the shore.

If holding can be stopped in life, it can be stopped there too. The serpent that opens its jaws in life becomes a snake on the sand. The serpent that opens them after death becomes nothing. Revelation knows this too. It names the second death, the lake of fire, and says that on some "the second death hath no power."

On the Signature

Why is the Corpus unsigned, and why do I leave this letter unsigned?

Many ancient books are signed with other people's names. The writings on the celestial hierarchy, which the Church read for a thousand years, bear the name of an Athenian converted by the apostle Paul, though they were written centuries later. A whole library of Egyptian revelations bears the name of Hermes Trismegistus. Someone who wrote this way considered himself an instrument of the one whose name he signed and dissolved his own name in another's. In the Russian dispute over the Name this was called spiritual adoption.

The pupils of Pythagoras attributed all their discoveries to the Teacher and answered every dispute with one thing: "He himself said it." The Gospels too circulated unsigned, and the names of the evangelists were given to them later, when the books needed to be distinguished.

An anonymous book is made differently. It gives its name to no one and takes no one's name. The Latin book of the Corpus is unsigned, there are two hands in the Paris notebook, and the Doctor never once wrote his own name in his notes.

A signature is a sign, and by signing the letter I would give you a sign in place of what I am writing. There is also a simpler reason, which N. writes about, though it is secondary here.

Conclusion

I hope I have clarified for those who seek what was unclear or obscure. I will stop here.

The Mother leads away from the vine. Where to, the Corpus does not say.

Sister C. will circulate this letter by the usual route. Please copy it and pass it on.