subtle.' It is this intelligence in the large sense of the word, this taste and critical spirit, that were lacking in Victor Hugo and Seneca, and sometimes in Shakespeare, but never in Virgil or Racine.

A theorist who writes in this way is anything but a genius in a savage state, a wild, brutal mystic, an adversary of reason and balance, as some of his critics have claimed. I believe that the greatest critical error of our century and the most unjust one is the lack of understanding that journalists and professors have shown toward Claudel. To reject him for not being characteristically French, as Balzac and Rimbaud were once rejected, is to misunderstand the true nature of this analyst, this patient commentator, this robust, methodical intelligence, which is one of the finest of our time. If the generation of 1930 to 1940, whose work is so impatiently expected, wants to adopt a programme of order, modest wisdom, and work well done, it could not find among its immediate elders a better master than Claudel.

## Vaihinger at Eighty

*By* Dr. Milo Blach

Translated from the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, Vienna Conservative Daily

THERE are philosophers and professors of philosophy; the former are born, the latter made. 'All thinkers can be divided into two groups,' Schopenhauer said, 'those who think for themselves and those who think for others.' Vaihinger belongs to both categories. For that reason, the derogatory implication given by Schopenhauer to the words 'professor of philosophy' and 'philosophic teacher' when he described the masters of the 'philosophic profession' of his time cannot be applied here. Vaihinger would have refuted Schopenhauer's contention and shown that there can be professors of philosophy in the best sense of the word who are not mere teachers but free investigators and expounders of wisdom and truth.

Fate decreed that Vaihinger should long be known to us as a philosophy professor. Having a philosophic nature, he had to be a philosophy professor for decades. As the son of a Swabian clergyman, he was destined to study theology. But while studying in the Stuttgart gymnasium he became enamored of Herder's *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Humanity*, which led him to believe in evolution and pantheism and to adopt the philosophic attitude of Plato and Schiller. Equipped with these convictions, he attended the University of Tübingen, from which Schelling, Hegel, Vischer, Zeller, and others had graduated. Mastering the doctrines of Kant and Schopenhauer, and greatly influenced by

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Darwin's theory of evolution, the young student first began developing what was later to become his 'as if' theory.

In a conversation with the physiology professor, Hüner, on the question of life force he praised the active doctrines of those who believed in *Sturm und Drang* and attacked the conventional point of view as outmoded and useless. The professor admitted the justice of Vaihinger's objections, but replied that even though his own ideas might be false and theoretically unsound they were useful from a practical point of view and, therefore, necessary. At this point a spark lit in the soul of the future 'as if' philosopher. From then on he had more and more respect for useful ideas. He collected examples from all the sciences, analyzed the language in which such ideas were phrased, and thus discovered the importance of fiction in human thought. He studied the intellectual images and deceptions that we encounter in school, such as when, in order to estimate the area of a circle, we treat it as if it were a polygon with innumerable sides. This is a logically impossible hypothesis, since a curved line can never be straight, but it is the only way we can reach a practical conclusion. Just as man invented tools and microscopes to extend and improve on what he could accomplish with his own hands and eyes, so our intellect creates for itself artificial conceptions, instruments of thought, and various fictions when we cannot come in contact with material directly.

Among these fictions Vaihinger included such fundamental scientific concepts as matter, the atom, gravity, natural law, space, eternity, and so on. We merely act as if all these concepts existed because only with their aid can we arrive at definite knowledge and results. These concepts and the sciences that employ them thus yield us no reality in the sense of absolute truth, but they are means to a practical end. Morality likewise loses its truth, for freedom, immortality, love, friendship, human virtue, are only practical fictions, intellectual pictures, life lies, ideas that make action possible.

MAN ACTS as if these ideas existed. All our knowledge is therefore fictitious and all our world of conceptions is an 'as if' world, theoretically worthless, practically valuable. It serves only to make action possible. 'To err is the condition of life . . . to recognize one's error does not remove it,' said Nietzsche. In the same sense, thought and all spiritual life rest on a biological basis, according to Vaihinger, and likewise according to Avenarius and Mach. Thought is a function of life, it is a means of maintaining life. Man is placed in a chaos of sensations—colors, sounds, tactile impressions, and so on—that rage about him. In order to act, that is, in order to function in the world of sensations, the human consciousness creates for itself those means that are known as

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conceptions and ideas. Thus thought is merely a means and life or action is the end; thought is never an end in itself. But, if we make it an end and believe that we have to discover some truth, we succumb to what Vaihinger once called 'the law of preferring the means to the end.'

Here are some of his aphorisms. 'Applicability in practice is the one measure of the validity of an intellectual conception.' 'Truth is only error with a purpose.' 'A desire to understand the world is not only impossible of fulfillment, it is also insane.' Many people are depressed by these ideas. Many others find they cannot give up believing that certain ideas that have been handed down to them are true. They consciously prefer to live in a world of delusion. 'Only a few,' says Vaihinger, 'only the elect can breathe this rarefied atmosphere. The great mass of mankind needs another, thicker air.'

Between 1867 and 1877 he outlined a philosophy based on the little words, 'as if,' but he did not reveal it until 1911. In the intervening period Vaihinger taught philosophy in Halle. That was the time when he was known as the renowned Kantian scholar who had been keen enough to discover a confusion of pages in Kant's *Prolegomena* that had escaped the notice of all students of the work of Kant for a hundred years. After he had resigned his teaching position because of eye trouble that later reduced him to complete blindness, he published his life work, the *Philosophy of the 'As If.'*

During and after the War, the 'as if' philosophy attracted wide attention. It responded to an intellectual necessity of our time that arose especially as a result of the War, for it was based on the conviction that all human conceptions and manifestations are relative. Moreover, it was both constructive and destructive. Its double character won it the name of 'positive idealism' because it reconciled the conflicting intellectual habits of the realists and the idealists. Thus the blind philosopher became the clear-eyed, intellectual leader of his people.

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Germany's greatest woman spy—Anne Marie Lesser, better known as 'Fräulein Doktor'—had an even more exciting career than Mata Hari and never got caught. Here are some high points.

# Outshining Mata Hari

*By* H. Berndorf

Translated from *Vu*
Paris Illustrated Weekly

More exciting than the most exciting adventure story is *Les Grands Espions* by H. Berndorf, published by the *Éditions Montaigne*. It is a series of true stories by a German officer who belonged to the Secret Service. The most prominent women spies included Mata Hari, dancer and courtesan in the service of Germany who was shot at Vincennes; Edith Cavell; and, finally, Fräulein Doktor, Anne Marie Lesser, the greatest spy in the service of Germany before and during the War. She was expelled from her father's house and shared a life of adventure with her lover, Carl von Wynanky. Von Wynanky, an attaché of the German spy service, died on the way back from a mission. Anne Marie Lesser continued the work of the man she loved. She put all her energy, intelligence, and intuitive power at the service of her country. She became one of the chief heads of espionage and was given dangerous missions in peace as well as war. Known by the name of 'Fräulein Doktor,' detected, pursued, she always escaped her adversaries, thanks to her extraordinary courage.—The Editor of *Vu*.

I

In the spring of 1914 Anne Marie Lesser set forth on one of her eternal travels, this time to Belgium. She was dispatched to study the land around the little town of Saint-Sébastien and the huge camp of Beverloo near the Dutch frontier. But she was also charged with getting figures about the Belgian fortifications. How many guns were there in the fortifications of Liége? What was their calibre? How was the water in the Belgian canals and rivers regulated? What

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