

THE 'METAPHYSICAL' FRACTION.

The Western City, in the form produced by the variously cameralist administrations of Continental Europe's Dynasties, has been, for me, personally, man's greatest creation. It is so because it is in these cities, of all those around the globe in both space and time, that the largest fraction of their physiology may be found that could be called "metaphysical" ie. beyond the positively material. Almost nothing of this fraction can be found on the English side of the Channel. Not much of it in North America either. The British Empire left few traces of this sort of Urbanity in the trail of its mighty history. Lutyens' New Delhi is a Bungalow Planetarium. His whole design should, after 1947, have been summarily redeveloped. But the knowledge of how to effect this had been, and I use the word deliberately, "tabooed" by the 20C.

Virtually nothing of this metaphysical fraction has been built, anywhere, during my own lifetime, that is to say in the latter two thirds of the 20C. Nor, even in the lands of the best examples, was this period benign. Indeed one can argue that what little knowledge remained of this 'metaphysical' urbanity was betrayed by the simple-minded politics of 20C Socialism, of both the Red and the Black varieties.

I can say, therefore, with some confidence, that it will be safe to study this curiosity: the metaphysical fraction of 'Urbanity', in this marvellous metropolis of London, the fount and origin of Britain's departed Empire, and now the origin of the global language of parlance. The natives of these island will not know what we students discuss. They will not want to know. They will not trouble to enquire. They have done without the "metaphysical fraction" for the whole of their magnificent history and one may be sure that they will do very well without it as it continues, probably with less magnificence, but quite all right anyway. The latest evidence of this disinterest, though never conclusive, is the English decision to part from Europe, the only place in which these cities were built and may be studied. The English prefer to walk another path. But London remains, as it has been for 500 years, greater than the islands that harbour it. In London one may study anything even if one must practice it elsewhere. How long this will continue is as unclear as the future must be.

I should, I suppose, at this point in my little essay, outline what it is that this Course will reveal to you. What skills will it encourage you to acquire? Sadly, for us both, I am disinclined to invent a 'potted' version of what took me 17 years to script and what will take you a year to even grasp, let alone master. A whole year may seem 'hyperbolic'. But my little essay "Into the Void" may lead you to understand that while this subject has been practised for several millenia, yet so poorly theorised as to die during the 20C, a few months to resurrect it may not seem too great a punishment. I have done my best to introduce it in the little essays on this page, the first three of the 44 Lectures, their "Afterwords" and the "Index to all three volumes".

Remember, only, as you read this, that you will find these ideas nowhere else. I hope that you will understand that this is one of the reasons that you must pay me to learn of them. The other reason is that my roof needs fixing, for, although I will teach you of the metaphysics of the Western City you will know that the city is material as well - a fact that my metaphysics never ignores. I will teach you, for example, how a solid wall can be waterproof by sucking rain into itself like a sponge. No mere Engineer, even the clever ones of the 19C, would ever think of that trick!

