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METAPHYSIC OF "ORDET"

A letter from CARL TH. DREYER

The latest issue of FILM CULTURE brings an article by Mr. Guido Aristarco about the Venice Festival. In his article Mr. Aristarco mentions my picture, *Ordet*, understandingly and in detail. However, his concluding remarks are, "Nevertheless, it is disconcerting to find Dreyer in this atomic age synthesized by Einstein's equations, rejecting science for the miracles of religion."

I am fortunate in that I can prove Mr. Aristarco wrong. As early as September 1954, when the film had not yet been completed, I was interviewed by the Danish State Radio, and on that occasion had the following to say.

Questioned about when I first had arrived at the idea of filming *Ordet* I replied:

"It happened one evening 22 years ago, when I witnessed the first performance of *Ordet* at the Betty Nansen theater. I was deeply moved by the play and overwhelmed by the audacity with which Kai Munk presented the problems in relation to each other. I could not but admire the perfect ease with which the author put forth his paradoxical thoughts. When I left the theater I felt convinced that the play had wonderful possibilities as a film."

When next questioned about when the manuscript had been written, I answered verbatim:

"It did not happen till nearly twenty years later. Then I saw Kai Munk's ideas in a different light. For so much had happened in the meantime. The new science that followed Einstein's theory of relativity had supplied that outside the three-dimensional world which we can grasp with our senses, there is a fourth dimension—the dimension of time—as well as a fifth dimension—the dimension of the psychic, that proves that it is possible to *live* events that have not yet happened. New perspectives are opened up, which make one realize an intimate connection between exact science and intuitive religion. The new science approaches us towards a more intimate understanding of the divine power, and is even beginning to give us a natural explanation to things of the supernatural. The Johannes figure of Kai Munk's can now be seen from another angle. Kai Munk felt this already in 1925 when he wrote his play, and intimated that the mad Johannes may have been closer to God than the Christians surrounding him."

As will be seen from the above, I have not rejected modern science for the miracle of religion. On the contrary, Kai Munk's play assumed new and added significance for me, because the paradoxical thoughts and ideas expressed in the play have been proved by recent psychic research, represented by pioneers like Rhine, Ouspensky, Dunne, Aldous Huxley, etc., whose theories in the simplest manner explained the seemingly inexplicable happenings of the play, and established a natural cohesion behind the supernatural occurrences that are found in the film.