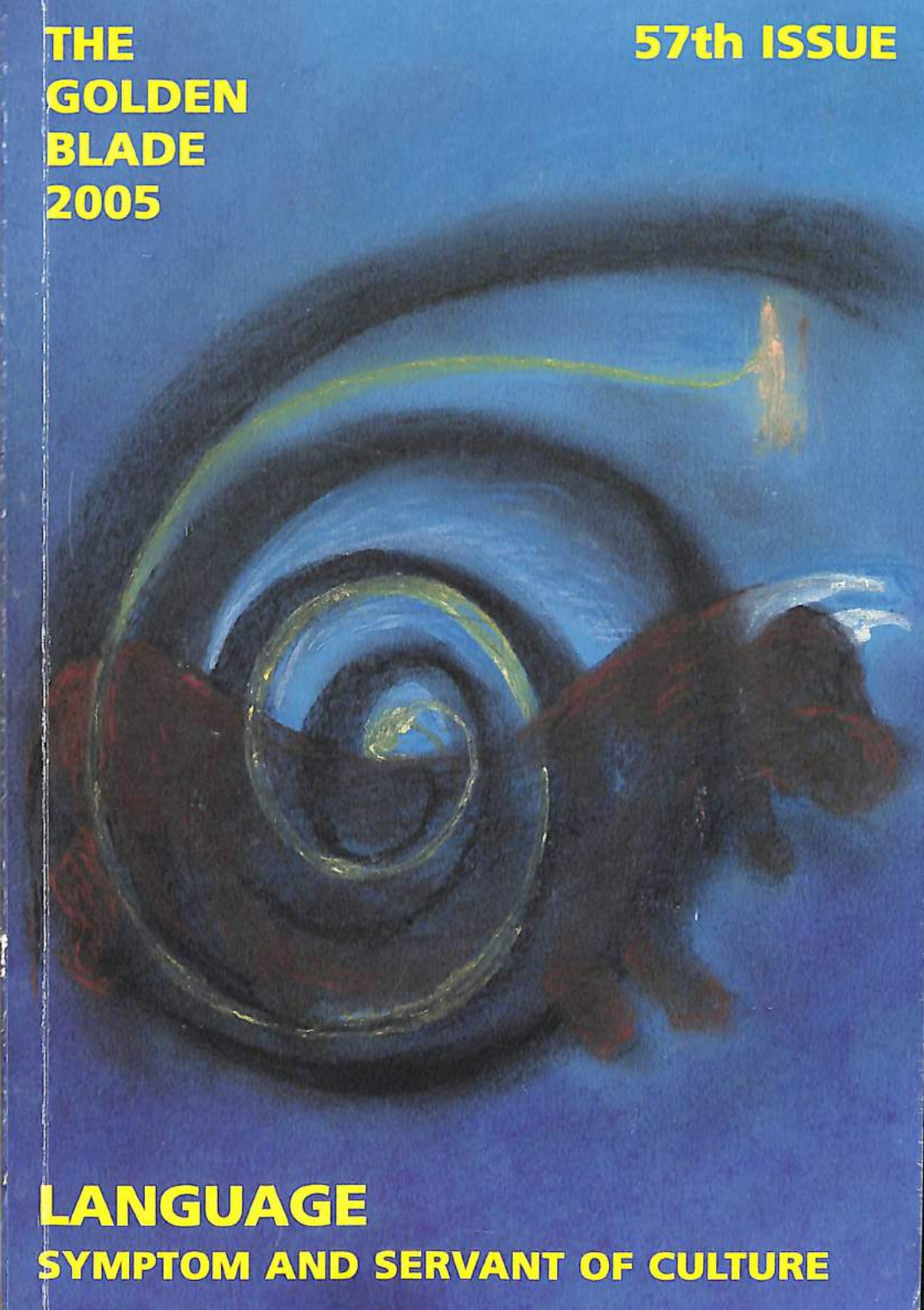
THE GOLDEN BLADE 2005

57th ISSUE



LANGUAGE

SYMPTOM AND SERVANT OF CULTURE

THE GOLDEN BLADE

LANGUAGE: SYMPTOM AND SERVANT OF CULTURE

2005

57th **ISSUE**

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Anthroposophy springs from the work and teaching of Rudolf Steiner. He described it as a path of knowledge, to guide the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the universe.

The aim of this annual journal is to bring the outlook of anthroposophy to bear on questions and activities relevant to the present, in a way which may have lasting value. It was founded in 1949 by Charles Davy and Arnold Freeman, who were its first editors.

The title derives from an old Persian legend, according to which King Jamshid received from his god, Ahura Mazda, a golden blade with which to fulfil his mission on earth. It carried the heavenly forces of light into the darkness of earthly substance, thus allowing its transformation. The legend points to the possibility that humanity, through wise and compassionate work with the earth, can one day regain on a new level what was lost when the Age of Gold was supplanted by those of Silver, Bronze and Iron. Technology could serve this aim; instead of endangering our plantet's life, it could help to make the earth a new sun.

LANGUAGE: SYMPTOM AND SERVANT OF CULTURE

Edited by William Forward, Simon Blaxland-de Lange
Jan Swann and Warren Ashe

The Golden Blade

First published in 2004 by The Golden Blade

c/o Wynstones Press
Ruskin Glass Centre
Wollaston Road
Amblecote
Stourbridge
West Midlands
DY8 4HF

ISBN 0-9531600-7-6
ISSN 0967 6708

Typeset by DP Photosetting, Aylesbury, Bucks.
Printed in Great Britain by Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, Wilts.

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Although *The Golden Blade* is not a serial publication, each issue being – we hope – an appropriate anticipated reflection of the year with which it is associated, there is at times more than a passing relevance in tracing a connection between the themes chosen for successive issues of the journal.

For 2004 it seemed right to focus upon the wider socio-economic circumstances of our time, examining how Rudolf Steiner's threefold understanding of man as a being of body, soul and spirit can shed light upon the politically expressed travails of modern social organisations, not least where the endeavour to take steps towards resolving the problems of these social organisations is deflected into wars which many rightly regard as wholly futile and unjustified. Many will probably agree with the view that, while it would be unfortunate and maybe even irresponsible if one were to withdraw one's participation from these outward events which seem to proceed regardless of one's opinion of what is being ostensibly done in one's name, it is impossible to engage with any real effectiveness without pausing for a moment to ascertain where we are and glimpse a more holistic and more spiritually imbued direction for humanity than the very narrow assumptions governing the consumer-society. In a word, this means a re-examination of human culture; and there is no clearer symptom of its state, or more willing emissary of its renewal, than language. Language is the rainbow-stairway down which we have travelled over centuries and millennia, the vessel of man's unfolding journey of consciousness; but it is also the golden thread that enables us to find our way out of the labyrinth of modern thought into a resurrected light of spiritual consciousness.

These images of the labyrinth and the golden thread are themselves an evocation of a definite period in the evolution of human consciousness. The civilisation of ancient Crete, where the great artist Daedalus formed the mythical labyrinth where dwelt the Minotaur, symbol of the decadent wisdom of the Taurean third post-Atlantean cultural epoch, formed a kind of bridge between the Egypto-Chaldaean age and that of Greece and Rome. But whereas Theseus, the great

Athenian hero who killed the Minotaur, was able with Ariadne's help to find his way out of the labyrinth, he was not able to maintain his loving bond with his rescuer. It was first necessary for mankind to work further during the fourth and early fifth post-Atlantean epochs at the development of the "masculine" qualities of independent, individual consciousness before – as Signe Schaefer puts it in *Ariadne's Awakening* (Hawthorn Press 1986) – the higher "feminine" resurrection qualities, the transformed maternal cosmic wisdom, could be finally liberated from the labyrinthine tomb conceived by the precursors of European civilisation.

A figure who brings this legend of Theseus and the Minotaur into our contemporary cultural milieu – and he is more contemporary than his chronological context might suggest – is John Ruskin (1819–1900). In his profoundly controversial and personal "Letters to the Workmen of Great Britain" or *Fors Clavigera* (1871–1884), there is a letter (number XXIII) entitled "The Labyrinth (24th October 1872) where he writes of his discovery of a piece of sculpture on the southern wall of the porch of Lucca Cathedral incorporating an image of a labyrinth and a Latin inscription which he translates as follows:

> This is the labyrinth which the Cretan Dedalus built,
> Out of which nobody could get who was inside,
> Except Theseus; nor could he have done it, unless he had
> Been helped with a thread by Adriane, all for love.

Ruskin then goes on to relate this legend to one of those rhymes which lie at the heart of English nursery-culture, "This is the house that Jack built": . . . "The cow with the crumpled horn will then remind (your children) of the creature who, in the midst of this labyrinth, lived as a spider in the centre of his web; and the "maiden all forlorn" may stand for Ariadne, or Ariane . . . while the gradual involution of the ballad, and necessity of clear-mindedness as well as clear utterance on the part of its singer, is a pretty vocal imitation of the deepening labyrinth. Theseus, being a pious hero, and the first Athenian knight who cut his hair short in front, may not inaptly be represented by the priest all shaven and shorn; the cock that crew in the morn is the proper Athenian symbol of a pugnacious mind; and the malt that lay in the house fortunately indicates the connection of Theseus and the Athenian power with the mysteries of Eleusis, where corn first, it is said, grew in Greece . . ."[1].

[1] Quoted from *Fors Clavigera*, edited by Dinah Birch, Edinburgh University Press 2000.

Ruskin, as is his wont, further embellishes his descriptive analysis with literary references to Chaucer and Shakespeare, supreme bearers of the creative genius of English poetry.

John Ruskin, most renowned in his own time as an art critic and historian and as a fervent champion of Turner, may justly be regarded as an individual who can fittingly furnish a bridge between our previous issue and this one. His essays on political economy, *Unto This Last* (1860), are a worthy contribution to the modern quest for socio-economic forms that have the potential to serve the ideal of economic brotherhood. But Ruskin also had a vision which can address another deeply felt modern quest reaching to the very core of the culture of the English-speaking world. This quest generally expresses itself, somewhat desperately and, even, pathetically, in sporting contexts, as has recently (June 2004) been vividly evident in the numerous St George's Crosses fluttering from English car roofs. Ruskin, however, had a very different view of St George, neither nationalistic nor politically patriotic, one that may best be described as an expression of that aspect of English culture which – in contrast to the predominant "Bacon, Newton and Locke" element abhorred by Blake and in Ruskin's time represented by such as John Stuart Mill – seeks not death but something mysterious lying beyond it regarding which it does not lightly speak. In this respect, Ruskin seeks to present a view of St George which contrasts sharply with "the enlightened modern American view of him, that he was nothing better than a swindling bacon seller" (quoted from "The Labyrinth": this dismissive opinion was expressed by Emerson in *English Traits*, 1856). Nor did Ruskin confine himself to a purely literary or narrowly cultural impulse in this connection, but sought – with admittedly little outward success – to extend his vision into the practical activities of his St George's Company, an organisation which formed the main focus of his later years (and was strongly associated with *Fors Clavigera)*, when he was struggling to find some way of avoiding being altogether overwhelmed by the storm-clouds and plague-winds engendered jointly by outward events and circumstances of his time and by his inner perception of the threshold of the spiritual world. In his own words (letter number XCIII "Invocation") he writes that "the St George's Guild is a body constituted for a special purpose: that of buying land, holding it inviolably, cultivating it properly, and bringing up on it as many honest people as it will feed . . . My good Companions of the Guild – all that are, and Companions all, that are to be – understand this, now and evermore, that you come forward to be Givers, not Receivers, in this

human world: that you are to *give* your time, your thoughts, your labour, and the reward of your labour, so far as you can spare it, for the help of the poor and the needy ..., that you are to work, so far as circumstances admit of your doing so, with your own hands, in the production of substantial means of life – food, clothes, house or fire – and that *only by such labour* can you either make your own living, or anybody else's ... Food can only be got out of the ground, or the air, or the sea. What you have done in fishing, fowling, digging, sowing, watering, reaping, milling, shepherding, shearing, spinning, weaving, building, carpentering, slating, coal-carrying, cooking, coster-mongering, and the like – that is St George's *work*, and means of power. All the rest is St George's play, or his devotion – not his labour ..."[2]

Ruskin was unable to implement more than a minute portion of his intentions with regard to cultural renewal, and the increasing intensity of his bouts of depression – leading him to be regarded from a certain point of view as an English Nietzsche, who likewise was unable to develop his creative life further in the closing years of his life, both men dying moreover in the same year – was in a very real sense fuelled by the relentless onward march of Victorian industrialisation and its concomitant environment of destructiveness and pollution, together with the overwhelming predominance of a narrowly materialistic conception of man and of the purpose of human and earthly existence. Since the previous issue of the *Golden Blade* was brought together nearly a year ago, confidence in the still fairly widespread assumption that this path of Anglo-American-dominated market-driven egocentricity is the only course available for the future has suffered a very considerable knock through the arrogant and callous disregard for human rights displayed in connection with the invasion of Iraq. It is therefore a propitious moment for the seeds sown by Ruskin in and around his Brantwood home, overlooking Lake Coniston and the Coniston hills, woven so intimately into the hearts of many English children by Arthur Ransome in his Swallows and Amazons books, to extend beyond the mainly anthroposophically based enclaves where his impulse is cherished into the wider world, so that what has hitherto been a very marginal alternative to conventional reality can little by little be recognised as a viable cultural and social path into the future.

[2] Although one might compile on amended list of activities in accordance with life in the early 21st century, Ruskin's central point regarding the essential relationship between our physical human body and the service of our fellows is one that is even more pertinent today.

The articles included in the present volume are presented very approximately in a sequence that begins from a more philosophical analysis of culture, and especially its evolution in terms of historical consciousness, moves on to increasingly exemplify contributions towards imaginative re-creations of language, mainly of a poetic nature, and culminates in articles that look in a somewhat lighter vein at language itself. Rudolf Steiner's lecture reproduced here is one of his most succinct statements of the reality of the evolution of consciousness; and it encompasses not merely a historical overview but a clear conviction that the present phase of consciousness is merely a step towards a more spiritual stage. Martina Maria Sam draws fully upon Steiner's insights in her indication that it is no longer enough to use language passively in the hope that human culture will thereby be maintained. Rather is it now necessary to fashion a new language of human communication which, while continuing to use the medium of words, can go beyond what they alone would be able to convey. Four major literary figures are now considered, each of whom made a distinctive contribution to this overall theme of cultural development as reflected by and instigated through language. Albert Steffen was already well-known in Switzerland as a poet and dramatist when Steiner asked him to become the first leader of the Section for the Humanities (Sektion für Schöne Wissenschaften) in 1924. His work – as exemplified here in his play *The Fall of Antichrist* – deserves to be much better known, not least among those who cultivate Anthroposophy. Owen Barfield, whose original contribution to English literary culture, from the 1920s onwards, was and is warmly appreciated by a small band of (mostly) leading specialists in their field but is ignored, or regarded as incomprehensible, by virtually everyone else, is the chief English-speaking exponent of the evolution of consciousness theme that lies behind this present volume. W.B. Yeats needs no introduction, except perhaps in connection with the fact that, in addition to being regarded by many as the greatest English speaking poet of the 20th Century, he had through his wife fairly intimate associations with the Anthroposophical Society. The American poetess Emily Dickinson is likewise a household name, although her deep interest in etymology – as reflected in Coralee Schmandt's article – is less familiar. We then move on to authors whose work is in one way or another actively related to the word. Roger Druitt speaks as a priest who has in a particular way cultivated what is a very central concern of anyone whose life is devoted

to the word of God. Martyn Rawson offers an intuitional vista over our English literary heritage from the standpoint of child development and the Waldorf Curriculum. Martin Schmandt and Paul Matthews both write as poets, and as such what they write needs no further introduction beyond its significant contribution to the – in Barfield's phrase – "final participatory" aspect of our theme. Emilie Salvesen, Anna Meuss and Rene Querido each offer personal reflections on language and share their very individual commitment to the magic of words as reflected in the authors' background or professional activity. The volume culminates in reviews of three books which make important contributions to the overall theme.

Finally, it should be noted by our readers that this is the first issue of the *Golden Blade* to be distributed by Wynstones Press. We are very grateful to the Humanities Section of the School of Spiritual Science for making a grant available for the specific purpose of funding the costs of distributing the journal. Not only will this make this and future issues (and some back numbers) much more readily and widely available to those wishing to purchase them, but it will also relieve the editors of the burden of marketing and distributing the volumes (to say nothing of dealing with the problem of housing them in the meantime!). Nor should it pass unremarked that Wynstones Press is itself based at the Ruskin Glass Centre in Stourbridge, thus harmonising in a very practical way with the thoughts already expressed about John Ruskin and the deep present relevance of his cultural and social impulse.

We would like to thank all our contributors for their articles, Anne Stockton for designing the cover and Rachel Pereira and Pericles for secretarial support.

Simon Blaxland de Lange
(on behalf of the Editorial Board)

Goethe and the Evolution of Consciousness*

Rudolf Steiner

The views which have to be developed in anthroposophical Spiritual Science in order to comprehend man and the world are more easily understood if we study the changes that have taken place in the mental outlook of man through the centuries. If we tell people to-day that in order really to know something about the nature of man, quite a different outlook is necessary from that to which they are accustomed, their first reaction will be one of astonishment and, for the moment, the shock will make them put aside all such knowledge. They feel that one thing at least remains constant, namely, man's spiritual or mental attitude to the things of the world. This is very evident in the outlook of many teachers of history at the present time. They declare that, so far as his mental attitude is concerned, man has not fundamentally changed throughout history and that if this were otherwise there could really be no history at all. They argue that in order to write history it is essential to take the present mental attitude as the starting-point ; if one were obliged to look back to an age when human beings were quite differently constituted in their life of soul, it would be impossible to understand them. One would not understand how they spoke or what they did. Historical thought, therefore, could not comprise any such period. From this the modern historian infers that human beings must always have possessed fundamentally the same frame of mind, the same mental outlook as they possess to day.—Otherwise there could be no history.

This is obviously a very convenient point of view. For if in the course of historic evolution man's life of soul has changed, we must make our ideas plastic and form quite a different conception of former epochs of history from that to which we are accustomed to-day.

* A lecture given at Dornach, 19th August, 1921. From a shorthand report unrevised by the lecturer.

There is a very significant example of a man who found it inwardly and spiritually impossible to share in the mental attitude of his contemporaries and who was forced to make such a change in his whole outlook. This significant example – and I mention his name to-day merely by way of example – is Goethe.

As a young man Goethe necessarily grew up in the outlook of his contemporaries and in the way in which they regarded the world and the affairs of human beings. But he really did not feel at home in this world of thought. There was something turbulent about the young Goethe, but it was a turbulence of a special kind. We need only look at the poems he composed in his youth and we shall find that there was always a kind of inner opposition to what his contemporaries were thinking about the world and about life.

But at the same time there is something else in Goethe—a kind of appeal to what lives in Nature, saying something more enduring and conveying much more than the opinions of those around him could convey.

Goethe appeals to the revelations of Nature rather than to the revelations of the human mind. And this was the real temper of his soul even when he was still a child, when he was studying at Leipzig, Strasburg and Frankfurt, and for the first period of his life at Weimar.

Think of him as a child with all the religious convictions of his contemporaries around him. He himself relates – and I have often drawn attention to this beautiful episode in Goethe's early life – how as a boy of seven he built an altar by taking a music-stand and laying upon it specimens of minerals from his father's collection ; how he placed a taper on the top, lighting it by using a burning-glass to catch the rays of the sun, in order, as he says later – for at seven years he would not, of course, have spoken in this way – to bring an offering to the great God of Nature.

We see him growing beyond what those around him have to say, coming into a closer union with Nature, in whose arms he first of all seeks refuge. Read the works written by Goethe in his youth and you will find that they reveal just this attitude of mind. Then a great longing to go to Italy seizes him and his whole outlook changes in a most remarkable way.

We shall never understand Goethe unless we bear in mind the overwhelming change that came upon him in Italy. In letters to friends at Weimar he speaks of the works of art which conjure up before his soul the whole way in which the Greeks worked. He says: "I suspect that the

Greeks proceeded according to those laws by which Nature herself proceeds, and of which I am on the track." – At last Goethe is satisfied with an environment, an artistic environment enfilled with ideas much closer to Nature than those around him in his youth. And we see how in the course of his Italian journey the idea of metamorphosis arises from this mood of soul, how in Italy Goethe begins to see the transformation of leaf into petal in such a way that the thought of metamorphosis in the whole of Nature flashes up within him.

It is only now that Goethe finds a world in which his soul really feels at home. And if we study all that he produced after that time, both as a poet and a scientist, it is borne in upon us that he was now living in a world of thought not easily intelligible to his contemporaries, nor indeed to the man of to-day.

Those who embark upon a study of Goethe equipped with the modern scholarship acquired in every kind of educational institution from the Elementary School to the University, and with habitual thought and outlook, will never understand him. For an inner change of mental outlook is essential if we are to realise what Goethe really had in his mind when, in Italy, he re-wrote *Iphigenia* in Greek metre, after having first composed it in the mood of the Germanic North. Nor is it possible to understand Goethe's whole attitude to *Faust* until we realise the fundamental nature of the change that had taken place.

After he had been to Italy, Goethe really hated the first version of *Faust* which he had written earlier. After that journey he would never have been able to write the passage where Faust turns away from the

> "... heavenly forces rising and descending,
> Their golden urns reciprocally lending,"

where he turns his back upon the macrocosm, crying : "Thou, Spirit of the Earth art nearer to me." After the year 1790 Goethe would never have written such words. After 1790, when he set to work again upon his drama, the Spirit of the Earth is no longer 'nearer' to him ; he then describes the macrocosm, in the Prologue in Heaven, turning in the very direction from which, in his younger days he had turned away. When he speaks in suitable language of heavenly forces ascending and descending with their golden urns, he does not inwardly say: "Thou Spirit of the Earth art nearer," but he says: Not until I rise *above* the earthly to the heavenly, not until I cease to cleave to the Spirit of the Earth can I understand Man. – And many other passages can be read in the same sense. Take, for instance, that wonderful treatise written in the year

1790, on the Metamorphosis of the Plants *(Versuch, die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erkennen)*. We shall have to admit that before his journey to Italy Goethe could never have had at his command a language which seems to converse with the very growth and unfolding life of the plants. And this is an eloquent indication of the place of Goethe's soul in the whole sweep of evolution. Goethe felt a stranger to the thought of his time the moment he was obliged inwardly to 'digest' the result of contemporary scientific education. He was always striving for a different kind of thinking, a different way of approaching the world, and he found it when he felt that he had brought to life within him the attitude of the Greeks to Nature, to the World, to Man.

The modern physicist rejects Goethe because he lives in the very world which was so alien to Goethe in his youth. But, when all is said and done, it is more honest to reject than to express hollow agreement. Goethe could never fully find his way into the view of the world which had grown up since the fifteenth century. In his youth he was opposed to it, and after his Italian journey he let it pass, because he had gained something else from his intimacy with Greek culture.

What, then, is it that has permeated man's conception of the world and his view of life since the fifteenth century? It is, in reality, the thought of Galileo. This kind of thought tries to make the world and the things of the world comprehensible through measure, number and weight. And it simply was not in Goethe to build up a conception of the world based upon the principles of measure, number and weight.

That, however, is only one side of the picture. There is a certain correlative to what arises in man when he views the world according to measure, number and weight. It is the abstract concept – mere intellectualism. The whole process is quite evident: The application of the principles of measure, number and weight in the study of external Nature since about the middle of the fifteenth century runs parallel with the development of intellectualism – the bent towards abstract thinking, the tendency of thought to work chiefly in the element of reason. It is really only since the fifteenth century that our thinking has been so influenced by our partiality for mathematics, for geometry, for mechanics.

Goethe did not feel at home either with the principles of measure, number and weight as applied to the world, or with purely intellectualistic thought.

The world towards which he turned knew little, fundamentally speaking, of measure, number and weight. Students of Pythagorean

thought will easily be misled into the belief that the world was viewed then just as we view it to-day. But the characteristic difference is that in Pythagorean thought, measure, number and weight are used as pictures – pictures which are applied to the cosmos and in close relation always with the being of man. They are not yet separated from man. And this very fact indicates that their application in Pythagorean thought was not at all the same as in the kind of thought that has developed since the middle of the fifteenth century. Anyone who really studies the writings of a man like John Scotus Erigena in the ninth century will find no trace of similarity with our method of constructing a world out of chemical and physical phenomena and theorising about the beginning and ending of the world on the basis of what we have learnt by measuring, counting and weighing. In the thought of John Scotus Erigena, the outer world is not so widely separate from man, nor man from the outer world. Man lives in closer union with the outer world and is less bent upon the search for objectivity than he is to-day. We can see quite clearly how all that unfolded in Greek culture since the age of Pythagoras manifested in later centuries and above all we can see it in a man like John Scotus Erigena. During this era the human soul lived in a world of absolutely different coneptions, and it was precisely for these conceptions that Goethe was driven to seek by a fundamental urge connected with the deeper foundations of his life of soul.

We can have no clear idea of what this really means unless we consider another historical fact to which little attention is paid to-day. In my book *Rätsel der Philosophie* I have spoken of this historical fact in one setting and will approach it to-day from a different angle.

We men of modern times must learn to make a clear distinction between *concept* and *word*. Not to make this distinction between what lives in abstract reason and what lives in the word can only pervert our clarity of consciousness. Abstract reason is, after all, a universal principle, universal and human. The word lives in the several national tongues. It is not difficult to distinguish there between what lives in the idea or concept, and in the word.

We shall not succeed in understanding such historical records of Greek culture as still remain extant, if we imagine that the Greeks made the same distinction as we make between the concept and the word. The Greeks made no sharp distinction between concept or idea, and word. When they were speaking it seemed to them that the idea lived upon the wings of the words. They believed that the concept was carried into the word itself. And their thinking was not abstract and intellectualistic as

our thinking is to-day. Something like the sound of the word – although it was inaudible – passed through their souls, sounding inaudibly within them. The word – not by any means the abstract concept – was imbued with life. Everything was different in an age when it would have been considered altogether unnatural to educate the minds of the young as we educate them to-day. It is characteristic of our civilistion – although we seldom give any thought to the matter – that a large majority of our boys and girls between the ages of ten and eighteen are engaged in absorbing Latin and Greek – dead languages. Can you imagine a young Greek being expected to learn the Egyptian or Chaldean languages in the same way? Such a thing is absolutely unthinkable! The Greek not only lived in his speech with his thinking, but to him speaking *was* thinking. Thinking was incarnate in speech itself. This may be said by some to have been a limitation, but it is a fact nevertheless. And a true understanding of the legacy that has come to us from Greece can only consist in a realisation of this intimate union between the concept or idea, and the word. The word lived in the soul of the Greek as an inward, inaudible *sound.*

When the human soul is constituted in this way, it is quite impossible to observe the world after the manner of Galileo, that is to say, in terms of measure, number and weight. Measure, number and weight simply are not there, they do not enter into the picture. As an external symptom only, it is significant that the physics, for example, taught to nearly every child to-day would have been regarded as miracle by the Greeks. Many of the experiments we explain to-day in terms of measure, number and weight would have been looked upon as pure magic in those days. Any history of physics tells us as much. The Greek did not enter into what we call 'inorganic Nature' in the way we do to-day. The very nature of his soul made this impossible because he did not pass on to abstract thoughts as we have done ever since the time of Galileo.

To live in the word as the Greeks lived in the word meant that instead of making calculations based on the results of experiments, they observed the changes and transformations taking place unceasingly in the life of Nature. Their attention was turned not to the world of minerals but chiefly to the world of the plants. Just as there is a certain affinity between abstract thought and the comprehension of the mineral world, so there is an affinity between the Greek attitude to the word and the comprehension of growth, of life, of constant change in living beings. When we conceive of a beginning and an ending of a mineral Earth to-day and build up our hypotheses, these hypotheses are an image of what

we have measured, counted, weighed. We evolve a Kant-Laplace theory, or we conceive of the entropy of the Earth. All these things are abstractions, derived from what we have measured, counted and weighed.

And now, by way of contrast, look at the Greek cosmogonies. One feels that the ideas here are nourished and fed by the very way in which the vegetation shoots forth in spring, by the way it dies in autumn – growing up and then vanishing. Just as we construct a world-system out of our concepts and observations of the material world, so did the Greeks construct a world-system from observation of all that is revealed in vegetation. In short, it was from the world of the *living* that their myths and their cosmogonies originated.

The arrogant scientist of modern times will say : "Yes, but that was all childish. We are fortunate in having got beyond it. We have made such splendid progress." And he will look upon all that can be obtained by measuring, counting and weighing as something absolute. But those who are less prejudiced will say: Our way of viewing the world has developed out of the Greek way of looking at the world. The Greeks formed a picture of the world by contemplating the realm of the *living*. We have intellectualism – which is also a factor in the education of the human race – but out of our way of viewing the world, based as it is on the principles of measure, number and weight, another must unfold.

When Schiller had conquered his former dislike of Goethe and had become closely acquainted with him, he wrote a characteristic and significant letter in which he said: Had you been born as a Greek, or even only as an Italian, the world for which you are really seeking would have been about you from early youth. – I am not quoting literally but only according to the sense. Schiller perceived how strongly Goethe's soul longed for Greece. Goethe himself is an example of the change that can be wrought in a mind by entering into the spirit of Greece with understanding. Goethe's attitude to the thought of Greece was quite different from his attitude to the period since the fifteenth century, and this is the point in which we are more interested to-day. In our age, men live in the intellect and their knowledge of the world is derived, for the most part, from the intellect; the phenomena of the world are measured, numbered and weighed. But this age of ours was preceded by another, when the intellect was far less active than it is to-day, when man's life of soul was such that the word was alive within him ; he *heard* the word inwardly as "soundless" tone. Just as an idea or a concept arises within our minds to-day, so, in those times, the word lived as inward sound. And because

the content of the soul was itself living, men were able to understand the *living* world outside.

We can, however, go still further back than this. Spiritual Science must come to our aid here, for ordinary history can tell us nothing. Any history written with psychological insight will bring home to our minds the radical difference between the mental attitude of the Greeks and our own, but if we want to understand the nature of the human soul before, say, the eighth century B.C., outer history can tell us nothing. Such documents as exist are very scanty and are not really understood. Among these documents we have the Iliad and the Odyssey but they, as a rule, are not considered from this point of view. In still earlier times the life of soul was of a nature of which certain men, here and there, have had some inkling. Herder was one who expressed his views on the subject very forcibly but he did not ever work them out scientifically. In short, the period when men lived in the word was preceded by another, when they lived in a world of pictures. In what sense can speech, for example, and the inner activity of soul revealed in speech, be said to live in a world of pictures? Man lives in pictures when the main factor is not so much the *content* of the sound, or the *nature* of the sound, but the *rhythm,* the shaping of the sound – in short the poetic element which we to-day regard as something quite independent of speech itself. The poet of modern times has to give language artistic form before true poetry can come into being. But there was an age in the remote past when it was perfectly natural to make speech poetic, when speech and the evolving of theory were not so widely separated as they were later on, and when a short syllable following a long, two short syllables following a long, or series of short syllables repeated one after the other, really meant something. World-mysteries were revealed in this poetic form of speech, mysteries which cannot be revealed in the same fulness when the content of the sound is the most important factor.

Even to-day there are still a few who feel that speech has proceeded from this origin and it is worthy of note that in spite of all the confusing elements born of modern scholarship such men have divined the existence of something which I am trying to explain to you in the light of Spiritual Science. Benedetto Croce was one who spoke in a most charming way of this poetic, artistic element of speech in pre-historic or practically prehistoric times, before speech assumed the character of prose.

Three epochs, therefore, stand out before us. – The epoch beginning with Galileo, in the fifteenth century is an age of inner

intellectual activity and the world outside is viewed in terms of measure, number and weight. The second and earlier epoch is that for which Goethe longed and to which his whole inner life was directed after his Italian journey. This was the age when word and concept were still one, when instead of intellectuality man unfolded an inwardly quickened life of soul, and in the outer world observed all that lives in constant metamorphosis and change. And we also look further back to a third epoch when the soul of man lived in an element by which the sounds of speech themselves were formed and moulded. But a faculty of soul functioning with quickened instinct in a realm lying *behind* the sounds of speech perceives something else in the outer world. As I have already said, history can tell us little of these things and the historian can only surmise. But anthroposophical Spiritual Science can understand thoroughly what is meant, namely, the Imaginative element of speech, the instinctively Imaginative element which precedes the word. And when he possesses this faculty of instinctive Imagination man can perceive in outer Nature something higher than he can perceive through the medium of word or idea.

We know that even to-day, when it has become thoroughly decadent, oriental civilisation points to former conditions of life in its heyday. We realise this when, for example, we study the Vedas or the Vedanta philoophy. Moreover we know that this age, too, was preceded by others still more ancient. The soul of the oriental is still pervaded by something like an ethereal element, an element that is quite foreign to the Western mind and which, as soon as we attempt to express it in a word, is no longer quite the same. Something has remained which our word "compassion" *(Mitleid)* can only very poorly express, however deeply Schopenhauer may have felt about it. This compassion, this love for and in all beings – in the form in which it still exists in the East – points to a past age when it was an experience of infinitely greater intensity, when it signified a pouring of the soul's life into the life of feeling of other sentient beings. There is every justification for saying that the oriental word for "compassion" signifies a fundamental element in the life of soul as it was in the remote past, an element which expresses itself in an inward sharing in the experiences of another, having a life of its own, manifesting not only in a process of metamorphosis as in the plant, not only in a process of coming-into-being and passing away, but as an actual experience in the soul.

This inward sharing in the experiences of another is only possible when man rises beyond the idea, beyond the sound as such, beyond the

meaning of the word, to the world where speech itself is shaped and moulded by Imagination. Man can have a living experience of the plant-world around him when the word is as full of life as it was among the Greeks. He shares in the life of feeling of other beings when he experiences not only the world of the living but the sentient life of other beings and when he is inwardly sensitive not only to speech but to the artistic element at work in the shaping of speech.

That is why it is so wonderful to find reference in certain mythological poems to this primeval phenomenon in the life of the soul. It is related in connection with Siegfried, for example, that there was a moment when he understood the voice of the birds – who do not utter words but only bring forth a confluence of sound. That which in the song of birds ripples along the surface like the bubbling of a spring of inner life, is also present in everything that has life. But it is precisely this element which imprisons the living in an interior chamber of the soul and in which we cannot share when we are merely listening to a word that is uttered. For when we listen to words, we are hearing merely what the *head* of another being is experiencing. But when we inwardly grasp what it is that flows on from syllable to syllable, from word to word, from sentence to sentence in the Imaginative shaping of speech, we grasp that which actually lives in the heart and mind of another. As we listen to the words uttered by another human being, we can form an opinion about his capabilities and faculties; but if our ears are sensitive to the sound of his words, to the rhythm of his words, to the moulding of his words, then we are hearing an expression of his *whole* being. And in the same way, when we rise to a sphere where we understand the process wherein sound itself is moulded and shaped – although it is a process empty alike of concept and of word, unheard and simply experienced inwardly – we experience that from which feeling itself arises. When we thus begin to realise the nature of an entirely different life of soul in an age when audible speech was accompanied by living experience of rhythm, measure and melody, we are led to an epoch more ancient than that of Greece. It was an epoch when the mind of man was not only capable of grasping the process of metamorphosis in the world of the living, but of experiencing the sentient life connected with the animal creation and of beholding in direct vision the world of sentient being.

If we study the civilised people in the age which stretches back from the eighth century B.C. to about the beginning of the third millennium B.C. we find a life of soul filled with Imaginative instinct, prone by its very nature to experience the sentient life of all beings.

Modern scholarship, with its limited outlook, tells us that the ancients were wont to personify the phenomena of Nature. In other words, a highly intellectual element is attributed to the human soul in olden times and the comparison often drawn is that a child who knocks himself against the corner of a table will strike the table because he personifies it, thinks of it as being alive.

Those who imagine that a child personifies the table as a living being which he then strikes, have never really gazed into the soul of a child. For a child sees the table just exactly as we see it, but he does not yet distinguish between the table and a living thing. Nor did the ancients personify the phenomena of Nature in this sense; they lived in the element by which speech is shaped and moulded and were thus able to experience the sentient life of other beings.

This, then, has been the way in which the souls of men have developed during the period beginning about the third millennium B.C. and lasting until our own time: from *super-speech*, through speech, to the age of intellectuality; from the period of experience of the life of feeling in other beings, through the age of sharing in the processes of growth and "becoming" in the outer world, to the time when attention is concentrated on the principles of measure, number and weight. Only when we picture this process quite clearly shall we be able to realise that in order to penetrate into the nature of things in an age when we try to probe everything with the conscious mind, we must deliberately adjust ourselves to an entirely new way of viewing the world around us. Those who imagine that the constitution of the human soul has never fundamentally changed but has remained constant through the ages, regard it as something absolute, and think that man would lose himself irretrievably if the essential nature of his soul were in any way to undergo change. But those who perceive that changes in the constitution of the soul belong to the natural course of evolution will the more easily realise that it is necessary for us to transform our attitude of soul if we are to penetrate into the nature of things, into the being of man and into the nature of the relation of man to the world in a way fitted to the age in which we are living.

Crisis of cognition as a language crisis
On the 100th anniversary of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Chandos Letter

Martina Maria Sam*

A hundred years ago, in 1902, Hugo von Hofmannsthal published his famous Chandos Letter. This is considered one of the most important documents in showing how 'the cognition crisis of the modern age takes the form of a language crisis'.[1] The text shows in an exemplary way how world view and understanding of language, thinking and speech, are bound up with each other, may indeed determine one another, and how this relationship was experienced as a problem in the 'language crisis' that came at the dawn of the twentieth century, when a new interpretation was sought.

Lord Chandos' letter to Francis Bacon

Dating the letter back to the seventeenth century, Hofmannsthal addressed it to Francis Bacon, one of the most significant philosophers of the early modern period. His Lordship apologises to his friend "for having left literary work completely aside"[2] in the last two years. To explain this in more detail, he was first of all going back to his young days when everything connected with art and literature was as alive to him as was the world of nature. In the meantime, however, he had changed inwardly, developing something which he himself called a "strangeness". This, he said, showed itself in that now an "unbridged abyss" lay between him and his literary work: "In short, my case is such

*German original entitled 'Die Erkenntniskrise als Sprachkrise' published in *Das Goetheanum* **40**: 734–736 (2002). English by A. R. Meuss, FIL. MTA.

[1] Vietta, Silvio. *Die literarische Moderne*. Stuttgart 1992, S. 147.

[2] Quotes from *Ein Brief* (a letter) refer to *Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Prosa II*. Frankfurt 1959, S. 7–20.

that I have completely lost the ability to think or speak about something in a coherent way." The "abstract terms which the tongue must naturally use in order to voice some opinion or other, fell apart in my mouth like mouldering fungi."

Initially religious concepts were lost to him, then abstract terms and finally moral judgement. At best he was still able to put names to physical objects—"a watering can, a harrow left in the field, a dog lying in the sun" and so on—and language would still serve to deal with everyday things such as talking to tenants, officials or an architect. Yet the big things, concepts of an abstract kind which are therefore remote from physical reality—these Lord Chandos could no longer put in words.

Instead, a new sphere opened up that had previously been unknown: Everything in the world of objects "which the eye would otherwise naturally pass over without taking notice, may suddenly, and at a moment which it is not at all in my power to initiate, assume a sublime and moving character where words of any kind seem inadequate for giving expression." Lord Chandos saw "presence, the fullest and most sublime presence" in this, sensing a "tremendous empathy, flowing across and entering into those creatures, or the feeling that an essence of life and death, of dream and waking state, has for a moment entered into them"; the "putting together of nothings" could create for him a frisson of the "presence of the infinite", as though we might enter into a new, intuitive relationship with the whole of existence as we began to think with the heart." This "heart thinking" was "a kind of febrile thinking", "in a material that is more immediate, fluid, incandescent than words"; the language in which it might come to expression would be "a language of which I know not a single word, in which dumb things speak to me, and in which I may also one day, in the grave, justify myself before an unknown judge."

Away from words – to the thing

Francis Bacon (1561–1626), for whom the letter was intended, is considered the father of empirical science. According to the philosopher, human beings are initially caught up in various prejudices. To get to know the reality of the sense-perceptible world they must free themselves from those "idols". One of the idols which prevents true insight into the world was language: "for words plainly force and overrule the understanding, and throw all into confusion, and lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies";[3] for "they are either names of things which do not exist [such as Fortune or Planetary Orbits], or they are names of things which exist, but yet confused and ill-defined, and hastily and irregularly derived from realities."[4]

In the light of this we can understand why Rudolf Steiner spoke of Bacon above all people as a witness for the crown with reference to the changes that had come in the way in which people used language: In the original, old human way, ... spirit was present in the word. The spirit would flow into the word, was the power of the word, ... In the idea of idols which we see with Bacon of Verulam, we have the great change that came with the sixteenth, seventeenth centuries – away from the word. Where did people want to go? To the thing, which is something given for the senses. The thing, which the senses can perceive, is to be the basis for everything human beings go by."[5] Elsewhere he phrased it with even greater acuity: "with this, Bacon ... brought in, also at the behest of the spiritual world, the failure to perceive language fully in our more recent post-Atlantean era, with humanity deprived of the feeling that there is a spiritual element in speech and language."[6] The concept of the idols was, according to Steiner, "a getting rid of the old Aristotelian prejudice that words have to do with categories that mean something for the real world."[7] This, he said, led to "turning away from the Logos and towards things perceived through the senses."[8]

Putting nature on the rack

Now if Lord Chandos, having lost the faculty of words, addressed the letter to none other but Francis Bacon[9] – may we not assume that there would be similarities in the way they both approached language and

[3] Bacon, Francis. *Novum Organum*. Book I, Aphorisms 38 – 68. Translated by R. Ellis and James Spedding. London: George Routledge and Sons. [From the translators' Preface, pp. 26–6: "It is to be remarked that he uses the word idolon in antithesis to idea, ... He nowhere refers to the common meaning of the word, namely the image of a false god. Idols are with him 'placita quædam inania', or more generally, the false notions which have taken possession of men's minds."]

[4] Loc. cit. Aphorism LX.

[5] GA 307. Lecture of 9 August 1923.

[6] GA 170. Lecture of 3 September 1916.

[7] Ibid.

[8] See ref. No. 5.

[9] At the time of the fictitious date of the Letter (22 August 1603) he was not yet widely known as a literary figure, having published only some essays on social morality.

speech? Did Chandos not fundamentally see words, too, as idols? Did not he, too, want to get away from words and to sensual things and direct experience? How did Lord Chandos' experiences relate to Bacon's theory of empiricism?

Bacon took everything which could not be experienced through the senses to be idols,[10] illusions that must be seen through if one was to arrive at a reality which alone was valid, existing only for the senses – to the world of nature. He saw the world of nature as a whole complete in itself recruiting itself out of a limited number of data; it was also an adversary that had to be overcome and controlled. To gain insight, the investigator should first do violence to nature, putting her on the rack and applying pincers and screws, so that – conquered by the human will – nature would reveal her secrets. Individual things learned in this way would then make it possible to rise to the process, to judgements of increasing generality, using induction as a method, and from this abstract the laws.

Flowing into those creatures

If we envisage this relationship to the world, to nature, and then go back to describing the experiences which Lord Chandos described, distinct differences may be seen between the ways in which the two "friends" sought insight. Chandos was increasingly unable to "discuss a higher or more general subject"; he came to abhor any generalisation, any abstract term. The "simplifying view of habit", the comprehensive concept rising above the individual case in generalisation, was lost to him. Instead the individual phenomenon, the actual object, became a vehicle for revelation to him. In individual phenomena he found "the most sublime presence", he felt a "tremendous empathy" with everything, the "presence of love", "moving across" into everyday creatures and things, he felt the frisson of the "presence of the infinite". On the other hand he also went through feelings of isolation, suffered torment, felt inwardly empty and frozen, his existence without thought and meaning – and yet all this somehow took him "somehow into myself and into the most profound harbour of peace". "Dumb creatures, sometimes without life, rise towards me with such an abundance, such a presence of love that the eye, given such happiness, cannot find any place all around where there is death."

[10] See note 6.

Bacon on the other hand saw nature as an adversary to be overcome and controlled. The individual phenomenon was of interest only as a rung on the ladder to generally valid insights – he was looking for the general which had been abstracted from the specific. Chandos developed a feeling for things, on the other hand, a loving relationship, a kind of ecstatic union where there is no longer any distinction between I and world, subject and object, only "the most sublime present and presence" – he felt himself to be wholly within things. And this all-encompassing present and presence arose specifically because an individual was directing his attention to the world.

Chandos and Bacon were thus diametrically opposed in the way they related to the natural world and therefore also in their approach to the gaining of insight. Both wanted to overcome language, but their motives were entirely different. Chandos suffered because language had grown abstract, generalised, old and therefore conventional and alienated from the objects, no longer able to capture specific reality. Bacon found language too randomised, lacking system in establishing the link between object described and describer; it did not serve the purposes of cognition.

Words had come between

Hofmannsthal gave a trenchant formulation to the pain suffered by Chandos, though this was not by direct reference. "Words have come in between things and us. Hearsay has swallowed up the world. The infinitely complex lies of tradition, of officialdom, the lies of individuals, of the sciences – all this forms a blanket over our poor life like myriads of deadly flies. We possess a horrific method of wholly stifling our thinking with concepts. ... When people have grown weak and words very powerful, the spectral complex of words gains the upper hand over the human being's naïve power of speech."[11]

Considering these words in relation to Lord Chandos we might also say: He found it possible to establish a relationship to things again by letting go of conventional usage; he would no longer allow the "spectral complex of words" to have the upper hand. He stepped outside language in so far as it had grown remote from things, become mere form or sought to define the individual phenomenon using general and

[11] Hofmannsthal, Hugo von. Eine Monographie. In *Hofmannsthal, Prosa I.* Frankfurt 1956.

abstract concepts and judgements. He did not, however, let go of language "as such". Words referring to specific things that could be grasped in a real, specific way continued to be available to him. He even had a feeling that there was a new kind of language where things expressed themselves and in which he might also "one day, in the grave, justify myself before an unknown judge. ..."

In this sense, the Chandos Letter was not so much evidence of its author's "language crisis" but rather a document which showed that a new era had begun at the end of the nineteenth century which would demand a different relationship to reality, nature and the world. We can understand why Hofmannsthal dated the Letter 300 years earlier if we consider that this was exactly the time, the age of Bacon, when the foundations were laid for a perception of world and nature that would only lead to the crisis of cognition we are concerned with, doing so in around the year 1900.

In 1899, Rudolf Steiner wrote a review in which he specifically ascribed to Hofmannsthal a sense for the inner, higher truth of things: "With Goethe, this view of art and reality shows itself as the fruit of a life rich in experience; with Hofmannsthal, reality divested itself before his eyes in utter naivety of its ordinary, everyday qualities and showed him what there was in it at a higher level, at the level of ideas. Hofmannthal's works do not appear mature and wholly complete, therefore. Yet his longing would everywhere point to the land of ideas, and his brush did not draw things as they were in their everyday way but in their inner, higher truth."[12]

To think in words is not the way to Michael

Hofmannsthal had a subtle feeling for the fact that an approach to the world that sought the inner, higher truth also demanded a different approach to language. In our time, however, the scepticism clearly shown in the Chandos Letter towards a particular usage – where one gives oneself wholly to this and hence also to the whole thought-ballast which it lends to one's words, to the generalisation that lies in the background of abstract concepts – is wholly appropriate. Hofmannsthal put this scepticism in poetic terms; Rudolf Steiner drew attention to the same phenomenon in many lectures: "Today we can only progress if we

[12] Steiner, Rudolf. Ueber die Dramen "Die Hochzeit der Sobeïde" und "Der Abenteurer". Review in *Magazin fuer Litteratur* Nr. 13/1899. In GA 29.

are able to emancipate from language in our thinking and sentience. Language runs like a mechanism today, as it were, and we are inside it; it is really Ahriman rather than we ourselves who is progressively living in language development. ... Yet since language – every civilised modern language – has gradually evolved syntax, sentences, indeed whole theories that are immediately inherent in the language, we need only make minor changes in the elements inherent in our language and we have something which will appear to be our own creation; in reality and basically we have, however, merely jumbled up a little what was already there."[13]

From this point of view it is possible to understand that emancipation from language is necessary and indeed essential today: "A most lively spiritual conflict is in fact in progress today in this direction. The state of affairs which has come upon a large section of humanity is such that there are no thoughts but people think in words. To think in words is not the way to Michael, however. We only come to Michael if we get through the words and come to true inner life in the spirit. It is indeed the secret of modern initiation that we must get through the words and come to genuine inner life in the spirit. This does not in any way go against a sense for the beauty of speech and language. For it is exactly when we do no longer think in the language that we begin to get an inner sense of the language and have it flow within us and from us as an element of sentience."[14]

Lord Chandos was in a way seeking to "go beyond words and gain living experience of the spiritual" – doing so in a peculiar way, however, that was still unfree and therefore not without its problems, isolating him from his social environment. Yet his Letter documents in an interesting way that a hundred years ago, when anthroposophy was just coming into the world, people like Hugo von Hofmannsthal who thought more deeply sensed that there had to be a new relationship to the world, a new cognitive approach. His Chandos Letter showed in an impressive way that this must inevitably also have considerable influence on our attitude to and use of language.

[13] GA 192. Lecture of 17 January 1920.
[14] GA 233a. Lecture of 13 January 1924.

Awareness of the Time as a Perception of Reality: Albert Steffen's Dramatic Sketch "The Fall of Antichrist"[1]

Christiane Haid

How the play came into being

When at Michaelmas 1928 – three years after Rudolf Steiner's death – the second Goetheanum was to be opened, Albert Steffen offered, as his contribution to this event, three compositions which have a very close connection with one another: the dramatic sketch *The Fall of Antichrist*, a six by eight meters large painting of the Representative of Humanity as a stage set and his opening address *The Goetheanum as a Spiritual Home*. All three contributions arose out of a symptomatological perception of current events and a fruitful and enlightening relationship with what was going on in the world at the time. The present article will focus on the dramatic sketch *The Fall of Antichrist*.

The Fall of Antichrist derives from the summer of 1928. It was completed in barely more than a month. Steffen had written the first lines on 20th July and on 31st August it was already finished. At the time he was living in Samaden in Engadine. The clear, impressive mountain world with its rich interplay of colour formed the inner foundation upon which the play began to unfold. Steffen looked down upon Europe from the high vantage-point of the Engadine Mountains and noted as he reflected upon the wartime years:

"It was to me as though the earthly contrasts between West and East, which became ever more clearly apparent, were reflected in the colour spectrum at sunset: the technology and mechanisation of Western Europe, comparable to yellowish red; the decadent spirituality of the East, the proliferating sects and cults, akin to a violet that was becoming ever more darker. I saw salvation in the spiritual impulse of Goethe, as it has been further developed by Rudolf Steiner, but would the night not swallow up the light green of the middle? And who gazed at

[1] Translated from the German by S.B-de L.

the stars which appeared – at that wisdom which is attained not through sense-perception but through spiritual knowledge?"[2]

The contrast between West and East comes to expression in the play in the two figures of the Engineer and the Priest, even though Steffen does not explicitly refer to this. During the East-West congress of 1922 in Vienna, in which Albert Steffen had also participated, Rudolf Steiner had made the contrast between East and West the central theme of his considerations. In the 1920s Steffen worked intensively with this contrast in several of his writings. This is exemplified by the volume of essays entitled *Der Künstler zwischen Westen und Osten (The Artist Between East and West)* (1925). Around the middle of the 1920s Steffen had the intention of writing a Western (English) and an Eastern (Russian) play – supplementing his play of Central Europe, *Der Chef des Generalstab* (The Chief of the General Staff) (1927) – for the members of the Anthroposophical Society. In this connection Steffen focussed upon the English statesmen Gladstone and Disraeli and the Russian monk Rasputin. However, his burdensome duties as Chairman of the General Anthroposophical Society did not allow him to express this material in dramatic form.

His opening lecture *The Goetheanum as a Spiritual Home* likewise deals with the theme of the polarity between Western and Eastern spirituality, though from a somewhat different thematic viewpoint, in relation to the figures of Ghandi and Lenin. In Ghandi's philosophy of non-violent resistance, Steffen could see signs of Eastern-inspired spirituality which, in addition to being drawn to old craft traditions, has the tendency of withdrawing from the world and reverting to the past. Whereas Lenin's impulse, which promoted technology on a huge scale (every Russian village was to have its own generator for electricity), bore the mark of the cold, technical aspiration towards progress and the death-bringing machine-culture characteristic of the West. As one can see from the respective characterisations, East and West are not to be understood geographically here; rather do they denote certain spiritual qualities which are related to a more Eastern or Western-coloured kind of spirituality. The qualities which Steffen characterises, for example, in the impulse of Ghandi are not to be understood as an evaluation of this activity; rather is Steffen trying to make the spiritual forces that come to expression in Ghandi's work visible.

[2] Albert Steffen. Programme notes for the Goetheanum Stage Production of *Der Stürz von Antichrist* (1933)

It is significant that Steffen generally centred his historical studies around concrete historical personalities. The play that he wrote in 1919, *The Chief of the General Staff*, has to do with the destiny of Field Marshal von Moltke. In the case of *The Fall of Antichrist*, there is, strictly speaking, no connection to a historical personality. The dramatic sketch embraces a wider horizon. It does not describe the destiny of a single historical personality but is, as Steffen himself wrote, "a play of the entire Earth"

Synopsis of the Dramatic Sketch "The Fall of Antichrist"

There are five main characters in the drama. A Priest, 49 years of age, an Engineer, 35 and a Poet, 21. As their antagonist Steffen creates the figure of a Regent of unspecified age; his face is of a well-proportioned beauty, but also governed by cleverness and coldness. An additional figure is a 90-year-old man, the prison Jailor. He serves the Regent, in the background of events there is an undefined multitude, the subjects of the Regent.

The Engineer and the Priest embody polarities of viewpoints and their actions are strongly inter-related. The Poet and the Jailor (the old man) form the greatest contrast as regards their ages but are spiritually close to one another, as becomes apparent in the course of the play. The aspect of age is significant in that both the Engineer and the Priest are in mid-life, at the height of their powers, whereas the Poet and the Jailor (old man) are respectively at the beginning and the end of their lives. In the case of the latter two, this gives rise to a special moment of freedom. The Poet is at the age of the birth of his ego and is the closest to the realm of ideals.

According to the stage directions, the principal figures and the old man manifest physiognomically the same spiritual origin. Through their community of destiny they have overcome the characteristics of their folk. Steffen points here to an evolutionary goal which can be attained in future through the path of schooling of Rudolf Steiner.

The action is, furthermore, moulded by problematic spiritual beings who are directly associated with the characters in the play, in that they embody their sub-sensible counterpart. In this way, Steffen brings the spiritually inspiring element standing behind the actions of the characters visibly to expression. He relates this pictorial dimension – not visible to the purely physical eye but influential in the drama as an imaginative element inwardly perceived by the poet – to the events on

the stage and brings it to manifestation. In the section *The Style of "The Fall of Antichrist"* these distinctive aspects will be examined more closely.

The first Act takes place in a prison cell. The prison lies on the outskirts of a metropolis. The action begins as the Jailor leads the three principal figures into a cell that directly adjoins an airfield.

A dialogue develops between the Priest and the Engineer. Both are unable to understand that the Regent has taken them prisoner and hope that because of their capacities they will have significance for him. In the course of the conversation, however, a huge gulf between them becomes visible: the Engineer is in his activity wholly inclined towards the Earth, he frees man through the inventions of technology from his dependency on the forces of nature, separates him from the divine and creates an ever stronger bond with matter and its laws. In the play he represents the technical know-how, the machine-nature, which the Priest, who embodies the opposite view, ultimately refers to as earthly craving. The Priest, in contrast, stands for a veneration of the Divine that denies the world and matter, that releases itself in heavenly love from the battle with the adversaries of existence and seeks to flee to heaven in eternal bliss. The quarrel between the two leads to their completely falling out with one another. The Poet seeks to bridge the conflict. He points towards the common goal which should result for all three through their belonging to a community of the spirit. This is not initially defined more precisely.

> Poet: "Keep well in mind the common goal. The task of our community is to overcome contrasts. If we are unable to bridge the chasm between outer and inner life, we fall into the power of the usurper".[3]

It is, however, not possible to achieve a mediation between the opposite views. Now the Regent appears, demonstrating his power through an outwardly vaunted omniscience and an extended praise of his own powers: he has brought peace, established a unified state, introduced a security service and preserved law and order. His goal is to create for man an existence separate from God and the cosmos. Two new projects are intended to serve this goal : the overcoming of the laws of the higher

[3] The English translations from the play are by Dora Baker, and are taken from the published English version, Folder Editions, New York and Dornach, Switzerland, 1978. This excerpt appears on p.13.

Gods through *space-travel* and *making bread from stones*. Through the latter the lower Gods are overcome. In this way space and time would cease to be of significance. He demands that the three collaborate with his project, renounce their individual nature and merge into the community of the state. Resistance to the goals established by him will lead to destruction. The Engineer and the Priest join with the Regent's project, both hoping that through their deeds the Regent's power will in future be overcome. The Poet is silent. So the Regent asks:

> Regent: "Will you work with it [the Word] as my will dictates? I redeem mankind from the needs of the body and the laws of the Gods. Man has come of age and requires a new language. Yours, the task to create it! You will write the history of my deeds in words unheard till now. You will proclaim me as Earth's redeemer; – you – my Evangelist!"[4]

The Poet fearlessly opposes the Regent. He recognises in him the Antichrist, who opposes human freedom and the creative power of the ego. The Sun as an image for the power of Christ, who makes the development of human freedom possible, appears to the Poet as darkened and robbed of its glory through the being of the Regent:

> Poet: I see you in the garment of the stolen gold of the Sun![5]

Now that the Poet has recognised the angry Regent's true nature, he is – alone of the three – banished to the prison cell. In his introductory words to the play Steffen observes that the first Act describes how a *super-sensible element enters human thought*. In the cell the events on the stage move onto another plane of reality. The Poet is now battling in his inner vision with the spiritual realities that have hitherto remained hidden behind the main characters. In place of the Regent, the *Regent's Demon* is now speaking, in place of the Priest there speaks the *Imperfect Angel of the Priest*, and in place of the Engineer there speaks the *Ghost of the Engineer*. The three beings expound to the Poet the aim of *their* mission. The Regent's Demon speaks of the creation of a new realm wholly separate from the Gods. Through the Engineer there speaks the spirit of the machine nature which celebrates the solidarity of the Earth; matter, sundered from all divine connections, is his element. He proudly turns

[4] Ibid. p.18.
[5] Ibid. p.18

away and remains locked up within himself. He embodies the power of death, which entices man to abandon his divine purpose and – by giving himself up wholly to matter – increasingly to resemble the animal kingdom. Through the Priest there speaks the Imperfect Angel. He refuses to resist evil, turns away from the Earth and ascends in glowing love to other regions. He would like to waft away into the universe in a dance of blessed spirits, free from the burden of the earthly domain. A similar fiery glow did indeed inspire the old mysteries, but in our present age this signifies a temptation that works against human evolution, a return to the past.

A collective mass of humanity bears witness to these phenomena, which battle out their mutual opposition and which the Regent's Demon seeks to unite. The prison wall has meanwhile opened up, it becomes transparent and the enslaved subjects of the Regent can be seen one head above the other like a grey mass. Sirens wail, red flags are waved on rooftops, an ear-splitting mechanical noise starts up. The Poet raises his voice to the forces seeking to disappear into, respectively, the heights and depths:

Poet: "Hear what I say for I have kept the Word:
(to the Ghost) I know what has made you hard
(to the Imperfect Angel) and loosens you in fevers!
(to the Ghost) You grow hard in pain!
(to the Imperfect Angel) You dissolve in bliss!
(to the Ghost) How your skeleton cuts me!
(to the Imperfect Angel) How I faint in your heat!
Though I may suffer fearful pains and torments,
I do not leave you: take you up in me.
You are at one again within my heart.
Thus it shall be – although I lose my life
for mankind's sake. O brothers, do not part!"[6]

A scene now appears before the Poet's inner eyes. Deep in meditation, he sees himself kneeling before a catafalque, on which stands an urn full of ashes. At his right is the Engineer and at his left the Priest, both also kneeling. Even while they are kneeling, an argument begins between the Engineer and the Priest. Each wants to keep the ashes of the great teacher with whom they were closely connected in a different place. As they quarrel, both Priest and Engineer stretch out their hands for the urn,

[6] Ibid. p.24.

which then falls to the ground and breaks.[7] When the Poet bend down to pick up the broken pieces, the Regent's Demon appears as a winged being and tries to steal the ashes. The Poet recognises him as Antichrist. Awakened by the creaking of the prison door, he is stirred from his vision. The Jailor enters to conduct him to another prison.

The first Act in which – according to Steffen's indications – "a supersensible element enters human thought"[8], manifests the situation of crossing the threshold. The inspiring beings of the characters in the drama become visible as Luciferic and Ahrimanic entities. Man's inner nature in the form of the Poet struggles to achieve a state of equilibrium between the two poles. In this way it becomes possible to experience the Group of the Representative of Humanity. The extent to which this motif was significant for the writing of the play is also apparent from the fact that Steffen returned to Dornach between the 12th and the 17th of August – while the play was being written – and within the space of five days painted the Group of the Representative of Humanity on a 6 × 8 meter canvas. The picture was intended as a backdrop for the Sun Temple scene of *The Guardian of the Threshold*, which was performed at the opening of the Goetheanum. However, it was never used for this purpose, as Marie Steiner evidently considered its expression to be too strong. She suggested hanging light-yellow gauze in front of it, whereupon Steffen had it taken down.

The second Act is set in a stone cell made of granite blocks. It is so narrow that only one person can be accommodated there. The action focuses on the Poet and the old man. The Poet hungrily languishes in the narrow cell, as in a coffin. This torment of hunger is the price he has to pay for not surrendering the Word to the Regent. Then the Jailor enters. In the dialogue with him the Poet muses about death. Already in his youth, death was to him inwardly experienced as a quality that manifests itself in the power of thinking. The originally vibrant life of the spirit was killed and paralysed in the prison of the body, where it becomes shadowy and superficial. The Poet now suffers in a living body the torments of the dead in Kamaloka. While feeling their proximity in suffering, he recognises that there are also dead people whose bodies are

[7] The historical background of the motif is discussed more fully in the Heinz Matile's article *Die Urnenstreitszene des "Sturz des Antichrist" und der Urnenstreit von 3 April 1925*, which follows the present article in the volume from which it is taken.

[8] There is a relationship here to the three spheres of Christ's Temptation in the wilderness. See also Matthew ch.4, Luke ch.4.

still alive, who are spiritually already dead, because they have lost their ego. This is how he has to view his two companions. In their devotion to the project of the Regent, they had wholly turned towards the Earth and thereby killed in themselves the life of the spirit. Filled with compassion, the Poet now asks how he might help his brothers. In answer to his question, the Jailor tells of the dead Teacher whose goodness was manifested in earthly deeds and whose wisdom extended to the starry world. After his death people played dice and quarrelled over the sheaths that he had left behind.[9] With a shock, the Poet recognises through the Jailor's words the beings who are inspiring his two companions: the Ghost and the Imperfect Angel. The broken urn stands before his inner eye.

The Jailor now calls upon the Poet to conquer these two forces in his brothers. He teaches him how he can overcome the imprisonment of his body and create for himself through the power of the words "I AM" a spiritual existence which enables him to master the heaviness of the body and the weakness of his soul. If guided in this way, the Poet is able to ascend to the realm of the Gods. He sees death, which was overcome by Christ, as the gateway to life. Acknowledging his body as a gift of the Gods which has however, been spoiled, he asks the Jailor for healing. The Jailor speaks:

> "Keep safe in you the Word: I AM – and look
> with courage at yourself in world-wide spaces.
> For the divinity which built your body
> Has placed its own divine seed in yourself.
> You'll wake it, when you've formed the stone to star
> – to star which still is Light and Sound and Word
> and – Destiny. These piles of stones primordial
> were heaped up by the gods who rule the stars.
> You will arise from out this sepulchre
> If you'll keep safe, in dead and formless depths,
> What lives in your own heart."[10]

Having spoken these words, which convey the mood of the Guardian of the Threshold, the Jailor dies. The Poet finds himself living in community with the Gods. He beholds the Sun at midnight. The physical death

[9] This is a further reference to the quarrel over the urn. But one can also sense an allusion to the events of the Golgotha.
[10] *The Fall of Antichrist*, p.35.

of the Jailor is related in a polar-opposite way to the spiritual birth of the Poet.

Steffen indicates that the second Act takes place in the *sphere of feeling*, into which an *inspirative element* enters. The grave-like cell in which the Poet has been placed at the beginning of the Act can be understood as a symbol for the process of initiation in the modern sense. In the old mysteries, initiation was preceded by an entombment whereby the neophyte has undergone a death-like sleep. The Poet, as an initiate of the age of light, has to overcome the imprisonment of his bodily nature, in that the living spirit-reality of thinking succumbs naturally to a death process. Through his inner development, which enables him to live as a spirit among spirits, the Poet endows the existence of the dead person with colour and vibrancy, the threshold of night between this world and the next is illuminated – a conversation between the Gods arises.

The third Act takes place immediately beside the airfield mentioned at the outset. The jail where the Poet is imprisoned can be seen in the background. A crowd of people is hurrying to the airfield. In the centre of the stage is a platform, occupied by numerous dignitaries. A blood-red sun is setting on the horizon. The crown stands waiting expectantly. The Engineer is shortly to return from his flight around the world in less than 24 hours. A new world-record is anticipated. Representatives from industry and the world of sport are assembled. March music rings out, convoys of policemen walk up and down, film-crews are at the ready. The noise of an approaching aeroplane can be heard. At this moment the Regent appears and reads a proclamation: The Engineer's flight is indicative of a conquest of the laws of the Higher Gods, of a victory over the Sun. Man has now finally been freed from the Gods and is able to live wholly out of earthly laws. The noise of the aeroplane gradually becomes deafening as the Regent continues: the conquest of space through the spaceship makes it possible for humanity to be endowed by these newly-won cosmic substances with eternal youth, even immortality. The substances have, he says, already been tested on frogs and it is only a matter of time for these arts to bring benefit to man. After the space-ship has landed, the engineer is brought on the shoulders of the crowd to the Regent on the platform. He can stand upright only with difficulty and speaks with great inner emotion to those assembled:

> "Sun; you sacred constellation,
> be with me also in the night which comes.
> O be my leader in the growing darkness."[11]

[11] Ibid. p.39.

During the flight around the Earth – on towards the Sun – a transformation had come about within the Engineer. From his space-ship he was able to behold the Earth with the eyes of the stars. Full of compassion he saw the true reality of the desecrated planet – barren regions, deserts, clear-felling, over-exploitation of nature. In the colours of a rainbow extending over two great columns, he had seen the grief-filled countenance of Christ. His gaze widened, he saw Him working in all elements of the cosmos as a Living Being.

> "The Sun's own Son, the God who rose from death
> and joined Himself once more to earth and water
> and air and light, the lifeless elements,
> thus animating them with His own spirit.
> I saw it, and I wish to say to all:
> Throughout my flight around the Earth, in every
> direction, East and West and Centre,
> I've seen the Christ, the Christ as Living One.
> And led by Him, my flight has been fulfilled."[12]

At the Engineer's words, the Regent is gripped by a blind fury. Possessed by magical powers and with lightning flashing from his clenched fists, he rushes upon the Engineer wanting to kill him. The latter sinks unconsciously to the ground. The crowd is paralysed with fear.

In the silence the Regent reads a second proclamation. By means of a synthetic process, bread is to be made out of stones. The Regent proudly boasts that through this invention mankind has been freed from bondage to the powers of nature and has overcome time. He now orders the Priest to consecrate the synthetic bread. The Priest performs this act and asks that the effect of the bread be made visible in himself. When he breaks the bread and eats it, he is possessed by a fearsome beast and succumbs to madness. He gallops neighing through the crowd. The Regent has him fettered and thrown to the dead Engineer.

In the tumult the gates of the prison open and the Poet emerges. He loudly proclaims that he has come to sing a hymn to the prince of the world. The Engineer's death and the Priest's madness have revealed the acts of the Regent as deeds of the power of death and the power of the beast. The dark evening sky is illumined by the light of a comet. In the face of this sign the Regent raises his voice:

[12] Ibid. p.41.

The comet is the symbol of his power. It demands that the crowd acknowledge him as the redeemer of the Earth, in the place of Christ. The power of the comet shall now govern everything that lives on Earth. Once he has achieved this liberation from the laws of the cosmos, the planets and the wandering stars, the Regent promises to seek substances of a still higher power and to inject them into humanity. His speech culminates in the words that he is casting off from himself all human qualities, that he himself is the Godhead and is as such immortal. He demands that the crowd pray to him, whereupon the people kneel before him. The Poet alone remains upright and answers:

> "So that the third
> may be renewed in you: namely, the Tyrant.
> Destroy me too, the youngest brother; then
> all men on Earth will see with their own eyes
> your deeds:
> *Death, Beast* and last – *the Tyrant*.
> Three crosses once stood upon Golgotha,
> they have been overcome by Jesus Christ.
> You strive however to destroy His work.
> Threefold is the destruction which you plan;
> three gallows were set up again by you.
> Aloud I therefore call you: *Antichrist*!"[13]

As at the Regent's behest the crowd throws the Poet in fetters between his companions, the Regent sets off into the cosmos in the space-ship. Although shaken to the core, the Poet is conscious of his path. His two brothers have been rescued, their ego having been protected through unconsciousness and madness; while the crowd has succumbed, ego-less, to the Antichrist. In his imagination the Poet sees apocalyptic pictures in the heavens: windows to the universe open up, he beholds the dragon in battle with Michael, the Virgin steps down with the yellow corn sheaves, the Child who holds the scales comes in her wake. The cosmic situation of the time of Michaelmas – the transition from the Virgin to the Scales – is here pictorially represented. The deeds of his brothers are weighed by the child. At this moment his two companions regain consciousness and recognise the Poet. When asked who has awakened them, they both answer: "Jesus Christ". Now a mighty explosion is heard in the distance, rays of smoke stream in all directions and slowly dissipate. The space-

[13] Ibid p.48.

ship bursts into pieces and burns up. All three cry out in freedom: "The fall of Antichrist!" This concludes the plot of the drama.

In the course of the action it becomes clearly visible that the events have been reduced to the necessary elements. The first Act manifests in a twofold respect the clash between polarities: the Engineer, as the representative of an ahrimanically-inspired spirituality, stands over and against the Priest, the representative of a luciferically-inspired spirituality. When the Poet tries to harmonise the polarity between Engineer and Priest, a clear division occurs in the course of the first Act: the attempt to bring harmony fails and instead Engineer and Priest succumb to the Regent, while the Poet must pay for his resistance with prison.

In the second Act the Poet and the Jailor, while only being apparently opposites, outwardly represent the poles of youth and old age. At the beginning of the Act the Jailor is still acting as a representative of the Regent's power. This does, however, change at the moment when he perceives in the Poet a will for redemption. He now becomes the hierophant who accomplishes the Poet's initiation at the end of the Act. The death of the Jailor concludes the Act, in which the Poet attains a higher life.

The third Act shows the consequences of union with or resistance to the Regent. The Engineer and the Priest succumb through their actions to unconsciousness or madness, while the Poet, strengthened by the power of Christ, remains upright and resists the Regent to the very end. The egos of his two companions are protected by unconsciousness and madness, whereas the crowd succumbs ego-less to the Antichrist. When the Regent ascends into the cosmos in the space-ship, the Engineer and the Priest are awakened through the power of Christ from unconsciousness and madness. The play ends with the fall of Antichrist.

In conclusion, Steffen formulates an epilogue with the following text:

> Seeking relief from pain, I sat down musing
> before a crystal – deep dived in my sight –
> (indeed I know of nothing else more soothing!)
> until I slept. – Was it a fall, a flight,
> to the Beginning, to the Chasm, losing
> myself? A ball in what dread demon's might?
> But steadfast in myself, mine was the choosing
> To find myself in these words' sounding might:

> "Behold, God's body in the first beginning:
> Tis light: O but now it dies to form and shape,
> and stone-imprisoned is its love o'erbrimming.
> Behold your corpse before the great abyss:
> Decay its fate, from which it can't escape;
> foul, rotten food for worms, that's all it is."
>
> And as I looked, the stony walls were rent.
> The One who died and lives, gave me his hand.
> "I am in thee: Beginning and the End"[14]

Some aspects of the play's language

The text of the play is unusually short even in relation to Steffen's other plays. Steffen also once called *The Fall of Antichrist* a "drama in diagrammatic form" In an introduction he indicated that strict form arises out of material that is clear and unambiguous. Phonetic qualities are strongly emphasised, but there are no rhymed passages. In certain places the language is condensed, it acquires an almost lyrical character and even at times takes on the qualities of a mantra. Thus in the speech of the Poet to the Regent, who in the final Act makes manifest the working of the Antichrist, the consonant D occurs at the beginning of the last seven lines. This can be experienced whether onomatopoeically or eurythmically – as an inner gesture of rejection or creating a distance. The effect is increasingly intensified thorough the sequence:

> "Damit das Dritte
> In dir sich offenbare: Der Tyrann.
> Vernichte mich, den jüngsten Bruder, auch,
> dann wird der ganzen Menschheit sichtbar sein.
>
> dein Tun:
> Der Tod, das Tier und der Tyrann.
> Drei Kreuze standen einst auf Golgotha.
> Der Christus Jesus hat sie uberwunden.
> Du aber willst sein Werk zu nichte machen.
> Dreifach ist die Vernichtung, die du planst.
> Drei Galgen hast du wieder aufgerichtet.
> Drum nenn ich dich bei Namen:
> Antichrist"[15]

[14] Ibid p.51.
[15] Ibid p.48 (the translation, where the alliteration is lost, is quoted above).

Similarly an intensification of sound can be seen in the three concepts "Tod, Tier und Tyrann" (death, beast and tyrant) associated with the effects of evil. (These concepts are also characteristic of Steffen's later work.) At the same time a definite meaning is proclaimed in these concepts, which Steffen himself shortly afterwards highlights in the play. The three Ts become a symbol of the Cross and symbolise in their threefoldness the three crosses on Golgotha. Steffen is employing here an unusual stylistic device which appears several times in the context of his work as a whole: the dead letter – an abstract sign, combinable in any way one wishes – becomes the image of the most central event of spiritual history, the Mystery of Golgotha. In Steffen's literary work the T becomes a symbol and a signpost, a different plane of reality, which contains within itself the moment of the redemption of the superficially evil. Thus in that the abstract plane of the sign, the realm of dead thinking, is overcome and one penetrates to the level of living reality, the central Christian motif, the Crucified One, appears between the two malefactors. Thus is an image which, as a spiritual reality, contains in itself the germinal power of overcoming. This imagination forms the inner background of the action and at the same time points the way towards redemption.

One finds the motif in an intensified form in the second Act. Thus after the Jailor has written the word TOT (dead) with his hand in the air, he says:

> "The O is there, wedged between two crosses.
> At both sides, right and left, were the two sinners,
> But in the very middle, in between them,
> Life passed its steady way through Death, and lo!
> The sound of Death became the Word of Life.
> Death is no more."

The T serves as a sign of the cross and the vowel O as a gateway to life, as an image for Christ. It is of significance in this connection that Steffen is not concerned here with the sound qualities but is taking the letter as a pictorial sign. Through this stylistic device the transition from one plane of reality to another is achieved. This step could be characterised as a means of expressing something in concrete terms, in the sense that the inner process that is taking place at these two points of the play through the pictorial interpretation of the word from the sign – and thence to an imaginative picture – enables the essential quality of the events to come to manifestation. Moreover, this act of the Jailor is reminiscent of another passage in the Gospels, namely, the story of the woman who has committed adultery. Christ inscribes a sign in the earth and forgives her, taking the objective aspect of the guilt upon Himself and thereby transforming the destiny of the person concerned.

Some Aspects of the Style of the Play "The Fall of Antichrist" in the Context of the Literary Creativity of its Time

If one considers Steffen's relationship to language itself, there are several levels to take into account. One of those is the question as to how his language relates to other literary productions of his time, for example the works of the expressionists: another is the question of his relationship to the word and to language itself. From a modern standpoint one may sense the linguistic style of the play to be odd, even perhaps melodramatic, pretentious or hymn-like. In expressionistic religious drama, however, this particular style is not unusual, and in so-called "messianic expressionism" it is thoroughly normal. With respect to the literary output of Franz Werfel the concept of "O man of pathos" was even coined.

However, Steffen's literary approach at the time when he was writing *The Fall of Antichrist* cannot be regarded as "expressionistic". In the first place, the "expressionistic decade" had, strictly speaking, already come to an end in 1920 and, secondly, Steffen's relationship to language is altogether different. All the same, certain related stylistic elements and problems can be found there. Thus, for instance, there are motifs in Fritz Martini's characterisation of expressionism which are also valid for Steffen's approach: "As distinct from naturalism ... a total transformation came about in expressionistic drama. It sought to rediscover the emotional and the ideal, the intellectual and the allegorical, the absolute in both an ethical and a tragic sense, the elements of pantomime and the chorus, the cultic-mythical and the symbolic, hence a lofty, tragically decisive style where values are concerned; and it renewed thereby the old religious model of the mystery play, including the element of puppetry and the theatricality of the bizarre and the grotesque. With the activation of the theatre around what was directly provocative and seeking a world-transforming moral or political effect, went its withdrawal into the sphere of the trans-real, the visionary and the supernatural."[16]

[16] Fritz Martini, "Der Expressionismus", in *Deutsche Literatur in 20. Jahrhundert* ed. Herrmann Friedmann and Otto Mann, Vol. I, Heidelberg 1961.

The inclination towards the intellectual and the ideal is, without doubt, a quality that one can perceive in the dramatic sketch *The Fall of Antichrist*. Similarly, the attitude of the Poet conveys something of the absolute in both a moral and a tragic sense. Cultic-mythical and symbolic elements can be seen, especially in the initiation scene in the second Act. That the characters in the play do not embody individuals but types, corresponds to a characteristic stylistic device in expressionistic drama. "To the expressionist, the individual seems to have a random existence; he reduces it to a type or to the bare essentials. Just as individualisation can lead to the poetically random, so does focussing on type lead to abstraction. Instead of a type there remains only a generic type. Personal names are avoided; there is the father, the mother, the son, the young man, the sailor and so on. Such types have become mouthpieces for expressive human nature, ultimately for the creative spirit of the poet himself. All expression shall come together in speaking."[17]

Related motifs and stylistic devices do not, however, as already said, make Steffen an expressionist. He differs above all through his inner orientation to an existentially Christian world-view, which he found confirmed and deepened in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy and which contrasts with the disparate spiritual background of expressionism, with its tendency to dissolve into nihilism and nothingness. In his volume of essays *The Artist Between East and West*, he takes issue in the title essay with the problems of expressionist and contemporary writers. Proceeding from the conflict between Western and Eastern inspired spirituality, which, in their one-sidedness, lead to an Ahrimanic and a Luciferic tendency, he formulates the following questions as the existential initial questions and dangers of the modern poet:

> "Is there any insight into fate? Is there any sacrifice that is significant? Is there any stay of desire? Is there any safeguard from hallucinations? Is there any possibility of redeeming mankind?
>
> The poet of today is confronted by all these questions. Who is to be his guide?
>
> Not natural science, which depends only upon the senses and the sense bound intellect. It continues to find only the miasma of decay and behind that, nothingness.

[17] Otto Mann, *Geschichte des deutschen Dramas*, Stuttgart, 1963.

> Not dogma, which teaches obedience by compulsion. It would rob man of his free will. Who could guarantee that some demonic power did not hide behind the alien will?
>
> Both lead to the void and to irrationality ...
>
> Writers will, of course, continue to present murder and suicide, insanity and crime, sickness and death, yet in such manner that 'The Way, The Truth and The Life' is brought to expression in their works. The reader who takes their words into himself will, by this means, undergo a catharsis. There is at present scarcely a writer who accomplishes this.
>
> The path of the poet is today more difficult than ever. Right and left he is lured from his path. Never before did he stand in such danger of being swept away. A twofold tempest approaches, ever more terrifying, threatening him from both directions."[18]

Albert Steffen's Conception of Drama and Its Significance for the Forming of the Anthroposophical Society

In an essay on the nature of drama which Steffen wrote in 1934 in connection with the performance of *The Fall of Antichrist* in the Stadttheater in Bern for the Bern *Tageszeitung* (daily newspaper), he declares his allegiance to Aristotelian drama theory and shows himself to be committed to the basic categories of unity of place and action. In expressionistic drama these categories are often abandoned and the events of the drama are conceived as a disconnected series of pictures akin to the newly emerging medium of film. For his part, Steffen also engaged in theoretical debate with the Aristotelian conception.[19]

> "In drama the action is predominant. To be sure there is a thought element. But it manifests as deed. Feelings become gestures. Love and hate urge towards fulfilment and destruction. Conversations are expressed in victories and defeats. Life is permeated with will. Admittedly, the dramatist also engages in reflection and feeling, like the writers of epics and the lyricist, but

[18] Albert Steffen, *The Artist between West and East* (Eng. tr. by Reginald Raab, published Adonis Press NY, 1946.

[19] See also: Albert Steffen, *Über "Die Technik des Dramas"* in: *Dramaturgische Beiträge zu den Schönen Wissenschaften*, Dornach 1935.

this engagement is of the nature of an act of will, rather as a painter who uses passive colours in order to bring out the active ones more vividly. Slowing down and analysing (as in *Hamlet*) are for him pre-eminently artistic devices. They are dropped immediately when they have fulfilled their purpose of creating tension."[20]

Here too the emphasis of the ideas points towards expressionism. However, a diary entry of 1st January 1928 documents that Steffen wanted drama – in the way that he shaped it – to be understood in yet another way. He starts by explaining the relationship that Shakespearean drama had to the spectator and then writes:

"Today we no longer have the possibility of progressing further while we are spectators. For we are all inwardly bound up with these plays. We take part in them. This is the destiny of our society, that these plays have us as co-participants. Indeed, they cannot any longer be called plays – rather are they events in which we join as co-participants. And it is necessary that everyone sees what part he has in these world events, in these immense world dramas, that he recognises his role. If someone takes part in the events and he does not have the right role, it will be noticed immediately. And if a role is imposed on someone, such a person is judged without anyone needing to move a hand."[21]

If one compares Steffen's description with the naturalistic conception of drama, with the adherents of the new objectivity or also with the epic theatre of Brecht, he adds to these views a more inward, one might say almost a soul-spiritual pedagogical conception of drama. The spectator becomes a *co-participant*. This could also be said of Brecht's epic theatre; nevertheless, in the form of his plays, Steffen creates no alienation effect which outwardly requires an element of distancing on the part of the spectator. The spectator is, rather, intended to become a part of the whole of what is being enacted on the stage. By perceiving his actions and the consequences of these actions in the context of the events in which he is thus a co-participant, he is able to accomplish an act of self-knowledge. Thus Steffen's conception of drama goes beyond the classically Aristotelian, in the sense that the spectator is not only led into a

[20] Albert Steffen. *Über das Wesen des Dramas*, in the daily newspaper *Der Bund*, 17th January 1934.
[21] Albert Steffen, Diary of 1st January 1928.

cathartic process through the events on the stage, but rather experiences himself as a part of these events and is able to observe the consequences of his actions. It is perhaps not too far-reaching to suggest that an element of *karmic preview* is also called forth here, arising out of an observation of the consequences of one's own actions in the overall context. These connections are indicated – albeit only implicitly – in the last passage of the above quotation from Steffen.

The motif of the quarrel over the urn and its artistic treatment in the play acquires a further meaning on the basis of this premiss. The polarity of the two brothers should *not* be related explicitly to the two individuals who were involved at the time, that would be too simple. What Steffen is trying to do is, rather, to make the forces working in the individuals concerned as an inwardly rooted potential for danger so visible that they become a mirror and touchstone – one could also say a yardstick – for the spectator/co-participant. As the themes were considered by Steffen to be not unfamiliar, far removed from the processes within the Anthroposophical Society, but a situation of personal and social knowledge transformed into an artistic picture, a further step can be added: the recognition of destiny in a community encompasses also the possibility of the transformation of the individual destiny and the destiny of the community. The therapeutically Christian dimension is thereby addressed by Steffen's artistic creativity. In order to make this aspect somewhat more comprehensible, a further step shall be made with respect to the example of the quarrel over the urn: the motif of the quarrel over the urn does indeed go back to the actual events of April 1925, but nevertheless, in the drama this situation is lifted up into an archetypal dimension. One could also say that, through its transformation into a dramatic work of art, the archetypal ground that every event has as its essence is sought. When this dimension of reality becomes manifest in a *picture* and is received in recognition by the observer, every event becomes a didactic play. The one-sidedness that manifests itself in the spiritual orientation of the Engineer and the Priest as an Ahrimanic or Luciferic temptation does not remain an event which, as spectator/co-participant, one can merely look upon from without but becomes, rather, a problem that engages one's inner being and dramatically takes hold of one's personal existence. One is as "observing co-participant" oneself placed in the situation of being torn between the two extremes and called upon to form the middle within oneself. One can see here how the motif of the Representative of Humanity defines the entire play as an archetypal theme. This Christian-

therapeutic orientation formed the centre of Steffen's conception of himself as an artist.

> The wisdom of the Gods in the stars. The therapeutic element in the warmth, the air, in the stones and metals. The creative urge that becomes free in death, so that it may engender fresh life. This whole ruling power in the cosmos can be recognised by the human spirit and inscribed in words, in order that breath and pulse may be renewed from this side and a world engendered which will outlast the one that is falling apart. Anyone who does not carry this certainty in himself is not called to be a poet and should not avail himself of poetic forms. The highest meaning of literary work is to receive the world-word into the human heart and to impart it to humanity... True literary creativity must be able to heal the human heart, which is broken in the misery of our time.[22]

Although Albert Steffen was giving expression to his task as a poet, the eminently artistic quality of his conception of himself with respect to the leadership of the Anthroposophical Society was frequently not understood. Many publications on the history of the Society have raised the question as to how and in what Steffen saw his task as leader. That he felt himself also here committed in the first instance to his task as an artist, and intended to exert his influence precisely through art, remained unknown to some and unacceptable to many. In order to judge Albert Steffen's legacy in this respect it is, however, necessary to include his literary and also his artistic work as an indispensable overall part of his work in the Society. In accordance with his inner ethos of freedom, Steffen wanted to shape the conditions and problems of the Society above all through the medium of art; in the artistic picture the individual was to recognise what he was able to grasp in this moment.

"The Fall of Antichrist" and the End of the Millennium
Observations on Extracts from Notebook Entries during the Play's Conception

Notes and previous drafts for the dramatic sketch *The Fall of Antichrist* were found among Albert Steffen's personal effects, which give a far more unambiguous and concrete version of particular passages of the play. He did not use this material, as he did not want to influence future

[22] Albert Steffen, *Auf Geisteswegen*, Dornach 1942.

events in advance through firmly established pictures. Thus the action of the play emphasises more the archetypal events of a spiritual conflict and hence necessarily remains sketchy in the development of certain themes... In what follows only the most important passages will be cited, those whose relevance – as is strikingly clear from world political events – has now increased to an explosive degree. Through the succinct formulation and the context in which Steffen saw the events, much will perhaps become somewhat clearer.

From a conversation between the Theologian (Priest), the Engineer and the Youth (Poet) about the rulership of the Regent:

> "The teaching is openly represented. Everyone is free to accept it or not. The beast is overcome, and all know it. Nevertheless, a cynicism pervades the world. A scorn and a way of life to go with it. Lies and slander are deliberately disseminated. This is a stronger power than the beast, it is Satan."
> "He is bound."
> "Now he is free, I saw how he tore the bonds through which he was chained to the abyss and rises up. In the morning I read of the epidemic that has taken hold of humanity. The epidemic is the consequence of all the lies, if the Gods allow it, and they have given the enforcer his rein.
> I saw a cloud spread out over the whole region.
> This is the sickness which has descended."

In prison a Commissioner characterises the effects of the Regent's rulership:

> "With one stroke the spirit-communities of the Earth (the branches of the Tree of Wisdom, which is at the same time the Tree of Life, grown forth from the heart of Christ) were abolished. As with you in this place, all the leaders have been taken.
> You as opponents of the centralised state. The Ministry of Technology. Our organisation has proved its worth. No-one has escaped. It was highly dangerous. The picture of life was alive in each one."

In a conversation with the Priest the Regent says:

> "Control is exact.
> Happiness which derives from the bodily functions is there, nourishment, food, drink, procreating of children.

The benefits of technical perfection are inexhaustible. Everyone has his airship.
A network of people who furnish the means of production and make possible the consumption and production and exchange of goods. A centralised economy holds sway.
Oversight over the authority that I wield is of course accessible to everyone. It is required. Through a network of observers who watch over one another. But supervision is not necessary, as everyone supervises himself. Just as I do it.
In certain schools instruction will be given in thought reading, through certain machines thoughts will be controlled. It is impossible that our intentions will fail.
Everyone looks into another's brain as he would a ledger. And so divine providence is just as pointless [and] superfluous as divine judgement.
We practise mutual control."

And to the Engineer the Regent says how he understands himself and his rulership:

"I am the State, the cultural life, the social order, the source of healing.
Everything *is* ordered.
When I am cruel, do I punish? I? No I, the humanity in me eliminates the decay in the organism.
I myself am abstemious, kind, wise and, therefore, because I am infallible, death can work through me, I can be judge and plaintiff. In me prophecy is fulfilled. Should I surrender what has been won?
I am myself an apparatus, not free. I am a machine, who governs both myself and you wisely.
I acknowledge the godly heavens, but I am now a new epoch, independent from them. We are of the world. The Gods are distant. We have a place of our own. What we do will be, not what they do. Machines.
There is no model for what we do.
We fetch what we need [...]
The Earth is my property, the Moon will be too, that is my programme.
The order of many millennia is collapsing because man knows a better one than the Gods.

This was dastardly, but I will take away sickness and hunger.
A world economy borders on the heavens. The end of history has been reached."

And again to the Priest:

"I am the Lord of the Earth. No other name may rule over me.
Philosophy is an affair of the state. It must be recognised that for the first time the Earth is free from Gods, from the authority of the Gods, from dreams and from lies. My kingdom dates from this day.
Cultural life also flows through my person. I am the economy, rights and culture (or, as an old myth puts it, Father, Son and Spirit). This is united in me, verifiable, justified through deeds, grounded in logic."

If one compares these passages with the final text of the play, it turns out that Steffen has reduced all the more detailed information to a minimum and has developed only a small amount in broad strokes as a symptomatic indication. It is striking for us now, when we read his notes of many years ago, that so much of what he wrote is clearly apparent in present political realities. One needs only to enumerate a few keywords, such as centralised state, regulatory state, man as machine, eternal youthfulness, world economy, end of history and so on.

The Regent expresses the goal to which his rulership is dedicated even more precisely in the following passage than in the final version:

"I have found another meaning, the meaning of man, who is independent from God. It is in his meaning that my friends act, and they will at the end of the days create a new man, the mechanistic man, who walks to the sound of speech, raises himself up, opens doors, does things for us, and how he walks and stands, and if he walks, depends on our voice, our thinking – a beginning has been made.
I take work away from you through machines. I make bread from stones. I shall endow you with immortality, you shall not die, you shall remain on Earth. When you die, when you are old, I shall rejuvenate you with the glands of animals.
I shall resurrect you when you enter the grave. I have tried it with a frog. I am carrying out experiments with a heart of a dead person. We can bring light to the brain of a dead person and then

make his heart beat. We are carrying out experiments, soon man will resurrect in his entirety. We are working on it."

Here can be seen a broad spectrum of the present scientific and economically oriented research endeavours on genetic technology, brain research, learning research, bioethics, research into robots, pre-natal diagnostics, extending to the generation of artificial life and so forth. The mechanistic and economically motivated anti-human and anti-environmental tendency of all this research is perfectly obvious. Thus cocooned within himself, man would lose all connections with cosmic and divine relationships or develop such a relation to the cosmos that – in an over-evaluation of his own power – he makes this an instrument for his own purposes alone.

Regarding the Origin of the Play

In addition to the play of colours inherent in his Engadine natural environment, whose sensorially mediated moral influence is made manifest in the characters of the play (Engineer: yellow-orange, Priest: dark violet, Poet: green, Old Man: blue, Regent: scarlet), Steffen was battling while writing the play with the intellectual legacy of Nietzsche, who had in his time formulated the idea of the eternal "recurrence of the same" in Engadine. *The Fall of Antichrist* embodies a counterforce to Nietzsche's doctrines of "eternal recurrence of the same" and "will to power".

As Steffen wrote in his notebook, the lecture-cycle on the Book of Revelation, given by Rudolf Steiner in 1924 for the priests of the Christian Community, was a significant eyepiece through which he was able to view the events of his time. Steffen was a participant in this course. It is evident that he was able to respond fruitfully to Steiner's demand that one look "with apocalyptic eyes" on contemporary events. *The Fall of Antichrist* is a particular witness of this.

Were one to enquire after the literary precursors of the Antichrist theme, Solovyov's *A Short Story of the Antichrist* and the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" from *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoyevsky come to mind. Moreover, Steffen also made a direct connection with his own perception of world events. As the motif of space-travel may be a reference to Lindbergh's recently successful trans-Atlantic flight, so the figure of the Regent manifests a prophetic premonition of the events of

1933, even though the play – according to Steffen's indications – takes place only at the end of the 20th Century.

"The Fall of the Antichrist" and National Socialism

Steffen's diary entries during the advent of National Socialism, extracts of which are quoted in what follows, show how precisely and to some extent how prophetically he was able to discern the events of his time. The work on *The Fall of Antichrist* formed the immediate background of those entries from the year 1933. In this connection the play's performance-history speaks an expressive language. Although the themes were so contemporary, Steffen had to wait five years until a first performance came about. The rehearsals ran almost simultaneously with Hitler's seizure of power. The first performance finally took place on Easter Saturday 1933. The actor, Hans Weinberg, wrote retrospectively: "Quite inadvertently it turned out that the first performance came about in the Goetheanum in the Spring of 1933. People came to see it from many European countries. An especially large number journeyed from Germany. But through the combination of the play and the audience something took place here whereby everyone was opened up and shaken beyond their national boundaries in a way that I have never experienced before. The curtain fell, there was a long, long silence – then a thunderous storm of moving hands. Should this be called an applause? These were people who were directly experiencing the terrible tragedy of their destiny situation in the images of a work of literature and who found in it also forces of redemption."[23]

Steffen derived his perceptions of contemporary events mostly from daily newspapers and jotted down his impressions mainly in his diary. This then served him as a sort of sketchbook for literary motifs. It can be observed from the characteristic style of these entries that Steffen did not note the events and processes merely as purely historical facts, but formed the events themselves into pictures.

Albert Steffen, Diary of 12th March 1933

"The ban on the Berlin *Tagblatt* has, as it itself announced, been lifted after it had given a satisfactory explanation with regard to avoiding such misdemeanours in future and had brought about a change in editorship.

[23] Hans Weinberg, in: *Das Albert Steffen Buch*, ed. Paul Bühler, Basel 1944, p.116.

One no longer learns how things really are from German newspapers. There is censorship, as in wartime. The free cultural life has been abolished. To be sure one can say: was anything worthwhile fostered day by day? Certainly not. And in and for oneself one doesn't lose anything. But the principle is maimed. And one may be perfectly sure that the ban will affect the anthroposophists as the most consistent representatives of the free cultural life. The lambs do not yet realise that they will be slaughtered.

The swastika flag has (alongside black-white-red) been declared the Reich's flag.[24] It was a race between the two flags as people hoisted them on their houses. Such symbols have an enormous effect.

It is as though the spirit of mankind were being broken on the wheel. Parades.

Columns of motor cycles.

This symbol speaks volumes.

It is the propagation of a mood of madness. (Already when I travelled to Berlin a year ago, it occurred to me how suggestively this sign works, all the more when one has brought it into connection with dead people of the Party (with murdered sacrifices).

On 12th March there was a national day of mourning for those who had fallen in battle. The flags were at half mast. At that time members of all parties gave their lives, all ranks and professions, workers and employers, Jews and Aryans.

But the young people who wave swastika flags today were not there.

The nappies in which they lay were made of paper, it says in a newspaper.[25]

The dead are called on, with old incantations as in primitive cultures.

That is not the Germany of Goethe and Schiller, but the one of the berserkers from the age of the Nibelungen, imbued with the worst and bloodiest instincts.

How prophetic it was of me when I designed the flag scenery for the third Act [of *The Fall of Antichrist*].

It is now 33 years since the beginning of the century [...].

Formerly 'blood relationships were to be the signature for earthly order'

[24] The swastika flag – since 1920 the official Party banner of the NSDAP – was on 12th March 1933, together with the black, white and red flag, declared the flag of the German Reich and on 15th September 1935, with the Reich flag law, made the sole flag of the Reich.

[25] The article in question, "Das ganze Volk-Gedanken zum heutigen Volkstrauertag" from the *Berliner Tagblatt* of 12.3.1933, is pasted in the diary.

(Yahweh), 'races, peoples, tribal groupings, inheritable qualities. Legislation followed suit. (Those who aspired to individual freedom were the rebels). Reversal of this situation since 1879. Now the spirits of darkness are at work in blood relationships, so that they tempt people to emphasise inherited qualities on the basis of blood. And so we see that in the 19th century there begins an emphasis on tribal, national and racial relationships, and that people speak about this emphasis as of something idealistic, whereas in truth it is the start of the manifestation of a decline of man, of humanity.'

'That is again a point regarding which one must be wakeful.'

Christ 'is not moved by those ideals'.

'Decline is natural.'

'As though from people's blood, there will bubble forth the reactionary conviction – because faith will hold sway – that this reactionary conviction is the pinnacle of idealism. Things of this kind – whether on a large or small scale – must be able to be observed. One must not allow oneself to be disturbed by what passes through the world today as cliché judgements.'

Hitler says in an appeal to his 'Party comrades': 'You must, my comrades, see to it that the national revolution of 1933 cannot be compared in history with the revolution of the rucksack Spartacists in 1918. Moreover, do not for one moment diverge from our motto of death to Marxism!'

But he can prevent decline only if he uses forces from the spiritual world. Not those emanating from the blood, otherwise blood fights against blood. Yahweh against Odin or whatever.

I fear that he will turn altogether against the Spirit."

Albert Steffen, Diary of 21st March 1933[26]

"The entire Folk-Spirit has been subjected to him [Hitler]. He has acquired a superhuman power. [...]

The women collapse in powerlessness and the men shout Heil [salvation] and the old Field Marshall cries.

[26] A comparison by the author with Sebastian Haffner's *Erinnerungen eines Deutschen* (Memories of a German) may be found under the title *Die Begegnung mit dem Bösen als Prüfstein der Bewusstseinseele – Albert Steffen und Sebastian Haffner – Skizze einer Gegenüberstellung* (The Encounter with Evil as a Touchstone of the Consciousness Soul – Albert Steffen and Sebastian Haffner – Sketch of a Comparison) in the journal *Das Goetheanum*, No. 1/2, 5th January 2003.

A pathological business. But the representatives of the people have lost their heads and their hearts, which are no longer in the right place, sink into their boots.
It is just as it is when a war breaks out – there is a robbery of consciousness. At that time there were few who experienced such a dimming. Today all are blinded.
The dead kings were summoned and the devils entered into the crowd. Hindenburg, who in the war – out of a sense of duty – had to send millions to their deaths in battle, has become a tool, who is being used to allure the living. A pitiful sight, the way he sits there after giving his speech, which shows him to be the most defenceless of people – his Prussian sense of duty is no longer a barrier to these ghostly activities which now rise up and which no-one can any longer halt (the word is in bondage!) when catastrophe comes."[27]

Albert Steffen in his Diary, 1st –4th April 1933

"One must look upon these brown-uniformed columns of marchers, these sentries in front of shops and lawyers' offices, these messengers on bicycles etc. How they display red posters or placards. . . . What does one see? Not human beings. They are all the same. Beneath the brown exteriors is there a resemblance to insects, butterflies? No. Such wings have too many heavenly colours and patterns. Beetles? They would be too plump. Bees that gather pollen. Locusts is the only name that fits. It is the time of the plague of locusts. And no-one can believe that we still have to do with human beings. But these insects can only eat fields bare. On rare occasions, one allows oneself to be enthused by the loudspeakers and the films which propagate these activities. But who spoke in them?
These words are wafted by Ahriman's wings over the streets, which teem with crowds of people."

It was indicated at the outset that for Steffen the historical events become a picture. This means that they can be read in their essential nature through a meditatively heightened mode of perception. It seems that this thesis can be proved in the *manner* of Steffen's presentation. The historical event that has been taken into consciousness from the newspaper becomes in the writer's soul a phenomenon which, when

[27] See note 3.

contemplated inwardly, comes forcefully to expression. This process is well illustrated by the diary-entry quoted above about the connection of the men in uniform with grasshoppers. The interpretation can also be taken a step further. In addition to his perception of the forces at work behind an event, Steffen makes a connection with certain archetypal pictures, in this case those of the plague of locusts and the Apocalypse. This awareness of the time becomes a perception of reality through imaginative knowledge.

Finally, it should also be indicated that the theme of the quarrel over the urn brings clearly to manifestation a highly pertinent problem area for the development of the Anthroposophical Society today. If one views the present preoccupation with Rudolf Steiner's legacy in the light of this picture, one may recognise in the two brothers of the Poet the polarities of an illusory emphasising of independence with regard to Rudolf Steiner or a formula-culture bound to rigid inherited forms.

The poet's compassion forms the mid-point with respect to this dilemma in the play. Compassion as a reaching out towards the tendency to go in the one or the other extreme direction. In the case of an illusory emphasis on independence, the existential link with the source is lost; in the case of a rigid formula-culture, there is the threat of empty routine and dead form, without a living spirit. The Poet points in the play to the fact that the aim of community is to overcome opposites and to bridge the abyss between inner and outer life. We stand today before this challenge.

Owen Barfield: Harbinger of the 21st Century[1]

Simon Blaxland-de Lange

In 1995 a book was published by the American firm of O'Reillys who, by publishing *The Whole Internet User's Guide and Catalog* by Ed Kroll in 1992, were the first to draw the reading world's attention to the Internet. However, this book, *The Future Does Not Compute: Transcending the Machines in our Midst* by Stephen Talbott, was no celebration of this new technological innovation but a very balanced and measured analysis of its limitations, drawbacks and dangers. And the book's hero, the thinker and writer whose ideas were reckoned by its author as having a deeper relevance to future cultural and social developments, was the subject of this talk, a 96-year-old Englishman who had been born at the end of the previous century, Owen Barfield.

At the time it seemed a bold step to publish a book questioning certain fundamental aspects of the so-called Information Technology revolution (although Talbott is no computer-Luddite). What Talbott is essentially doing in his book is, however, to examine this whole phenomenon from the standpoint of the evolution of consciousness, a field which Barfield made his speciality. Drawing extensively upon Barfield's books, articles and lectures, Talbott makes an extremely good case for the idea that this much-trumpeted Information Technology revolution is, in terms of the evolution of consciousness, not really a revolution at all but is, rather, the reflection of a determined attempt on the part of modern humanity to avoid taking a step beyond the present narrowly individual, spectator-consciousness which is assumed by modern reductionist science to be not merely the culminating point in human

[1] What follows is the draft which formed the basis for a lecture given in the English Auditorium at the Goetheanum on Thursday 7th August 2003. The actual lecture took into account what had been expressed during the preceding days of the second "English Week" conference, and was strongly based on Barfield's remarkable text of the modern mysteries, *Unancestral Voice*, from which several quotations were taken. However, the general drift of the argument remained as given here.

evolution but one beyond which it is impossible to go. If this is so, it becomes clear that, far from paving humanity's path towards the future, Information Technology systems are stifling or even actively inhibiting the endeavour to develop new supersensible faculties of knowledge and, in particular, social insight.

Referring thus to Stephen Talbott's notable book – and it was warmly welcomed by Barfield himself when it appeared – may serve as a means of introducing the theme of the present lecture; for in many ways what follows will be an attempt briefly to append a personal up-date to what Talbott has presented in the pages of his fairly lengthy study. I shall endeavour first to say something about my own thoughts and feelings regarding life at the beginning of the 21st century. I shall then speak in general terms about Owen Barfield, bearing in mind that there may be some of you who know very little about him. Finally, I shall attempt to convey why I have chosen to refer to Barfield in my title as a "Harbinger" of this new century, as one who – while he did not live to see it – prepared the way for it in a manner that perhaps few others have done.

At first sight this latter thought would seem to be a somewhat daft and certainly misguided notion. How could an English lawyer with a spare-time interest in etymology and semantics, who – quite apart from his overriding preoccupation with the ideas of a thoroughly heterodox Austrian-born philosopher and seer – was not even a member of an academic body and of whom, moreover, hardly anybody has heard possibly be regarded as one who has paved the way for a century seemingly dominated by technologies and mechanical artifacts largely irrelevant to, and quite probably antithetical to, his life's work? The eight years that have elapsed since the publication of Talbott's book would appear to confirm that the computer, Internet and mobile phone are, whatever one may think of them, here to stay and that we should at best regard Barfield as the quaint representative of a bygone age.

But is Information Technology really what our age is about? Is the driving-force of the modern world indeed the general wish to have more and more sophisticated machines to replace the human element in our lives? Of course, there are individuals whom one might describe as genuine computer enthusiasts; but I doubt that there are any more of these than there are of enthusiasts for many other forms of human activity. What tends to happen much of the time is that people are told that they need to accommodate themselves to new technologies or new versions of the same technology. This is currently being driven very

strongly by governments, for whom Information Technology is an essential means of trying to keep control of their citizens. But the source of this unprecedented need for such sophisticated systems of information, monitoring and regulation does not lie with government either. The true driving-force for this entire scenario lies in the ethic of individualism, of personal autonomy, of the cult of the separate self; and it has been fuelled especially strongly over the last few years by the assumption that there is nothing further that human beings can aspire to other than this goal of becoming increasingly autonomous, separate and governed by a spectator-consciousness which gives rise to what is in plain terms a monstrously egotistical relationship towards one's human and natural environment. The information machines that impinge their influence so forcefully into our lives are, therefore, not in themselves the cause of anything but are the symptom of very powerful forces deriving from each one of us.

The next step is to ask whether people in general are content with the manifestations and tangible expressions of this narrowly individual moral and social stance. It is not difficult to see – in Britain, at any rate – the extent of the longing that a great number of people experience to do something to change the way we behave individually and how we live socially with others.

I was recently present at a very well attended meeting in Forest Row Village Hall about GM crops in Sussex. Every individual but one of the 300 or so people present (plus one of the three speakers) was firmly opposed to GM crops and was completely unconvinced by the scientist speaking in favour of them. There is throughout the country an overwhelming sense that this new technology represents a degree of clinical manipulation of nature that exceeds even the very tolerant standards of Britons in this respect. Equally, big corporations of all kinds, with their typically aggressive profit-making ethos, are increasingly resented, in that what they are doing ostensibly on our behalf no longer represents our inner aspirations. It is a similar story with governments, whose assertions that they alone know what is good for us are less and less appreciated. The most striking recent example of this resentment has been the vehement protest against the Iraqi War. I took part in both the big London Marches (in February and March) myself, and felt that something had fundamentally changed in my country's relationship with its government.

But whereas the shackles of separate selfhood are wearing thin amidst the growing aspiration towards individual responsibility or

ethical individualism, it is difficult in a world where there is a surfeit of information but precious little insight to engender sufficient cultural vision to penetrate the binary fog of computer-thinking. Most especially, many of us find it difficult to see what alternative vision there could be for a cultural and social future. That is, I firmly believe, where Owen Barfield could help us to a far greater extent than he has been allowed to do so hitherto.

Owen Barfield, born in London in 1898, died in his hundredth year in December 1997. Already during his undergraduate days in Oxford shortly after the First World War, he had become fascinated with words and their origin; and in 1922, in a short article on the historical journey of the word "ruin" from the cascading activity inherent in its Latin meaning to the fossilised metaphor of modern times, he gave a foretaste of what was to become his thesis on the great mystery of poetic inspiration *Poetic Diction*, published in 1928. Barfield's starting-point is the delight that one may derive from poetry (in his case it was pre-eminently the work of the English Romantic poets). He then explores what lies behind this delight, while never losing sight of it. What emerges from this quest is the realisation that, through language, we have a last fading connection with the spiritual world of our origins, an insight which – both during this highly creative period in his twenties and subsequently – Barfield found vastly illuminated by the spiritual-scientific research of Rudolf Steiner. Barfield subsequently developed these thoughts about words and their meaning into a treatise on the evolution of human consciousness, *Saving the Appearances* (1957). Here we find an evocation of mankind's journey from the distant past to the present, expressed in terms of the ways that human beings have perceived or experienced the world around them. Building solidly upon the insights afforded by his studies of words and languages, Barfield describes this story as a journey from "original participation" (or paganism), where man was to varying degrees united with the gods and their creation, to the spectator-consciousness of modern times, brought about by man's growing self-consciousness and aspiration towards individual freedom.

Barfield expended a colossal amount of energy on challenging the assumptions and prejudices of reductionist materialism or positivism, the solidly protective armoury of separate selfhood. Nor was he unaware of how entrenched these dogmatic assumptions are, as is evident from his coining of the terms "unresolved positivism" and "residue of unresolved positivism" or RUP. At the very heart of his endeavours to

challenge these assumptions of scientific materialism lies Rudolf Steiner's insight – as expressed pre-eminently in his *Philosophy of Freedom* – that whether we know it or not we participate in the evocation of the phenomena around us, that we are their co-creators and are, therefore, co-responsible for them.

In this respect, he differed from the other members of the Inklings circle, that group of Christian mythmakers (including C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien) who shared his reservations about modern scientific reductionism but not his solution. As has been pointed out by more than one student of these inspirational writers, Barfield's answer to the modern dilemma was far and away the most original and far-reaching; for rather than seek to create a new mythology or, indeed, fiction of any kind (he himself disliked novels), his answer to the romantic longing for a world other than the one we have was to enable this longing to come of age by bringing it to actual earthly reality.

Far from hearkening back to a lost mythological age, to what he termed original participation, Barfield's solution was to reach forward to an entirely new kind of relationship between the free and fully self-conscious individual human being and the Gods, namely final participation. In a lecture that he gave in 1972 called "Participation and Isolation: A Fresh Light on Present Discontents", he came about as close as he ever did to giving a brief definition of his way of understanding how the narrow dogmas of the spectator-consciousness of the present can and must be replaced by a new form of participation on the part of the individual human being with the world around him:

"How I should like to see [the cosy old twentieth-century image of history as the meaningless and absurd, and therefore of life itself as meaningless and absurd] beginning to be replaced by the image of history as a process of transition form original to final participation: from the individual being shaped by the community to the community being shaped by the individual, just as evolution for me is a process of transition from man being shaped by nature to nature being shaped by man. I should like to see, before I go the way of all flesh, the beginnings of both an ecology and a sociology based, not on ingenious abstraction, but on the concrete realities of nature and human nature", a vision whose fulfilment depends on "infring[ing] the taboo... on admitting that the so-called inner world of human consciousness is as real and as old as the so-called outer world of nature".

But this is merely a brief summary in Barfield's own words of a whole wealth of instances in his writings where he evokes a picture of

how a spiritual-scientific consciousness might work in a radically transforming way upon our cultural and social environment. It is impossible here to do more than refer briefly to some of these. His book *Unancestral Voice* (1965) is his most sustained evocation of a modern cultural landscape as seen by one who is following an anthroposophical path of knowledge, and in the context of a sustained dialogue with the supersensible being Anthroposophia – including a debate on sexuality in the aftermath of the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* appeal case, a discussion about the relative merits of punishment and psychological understanding as a means of dealing with crime and delinquent behaviour, debates about evolution, the study of history and modern physics, and an analysis of the antecedents of materialism – all of which elements are couched initially within a framework of opposites and then resolved through the mediatory and ultimately redemptive quality of a third transformatory, supersensible power in the form of the being referred to above. (The book needs to be read in its entirety to do it justice.) His lecture on "Evolution" (1980) is one of several instances where he seeks to prise us apart from the so-called scientific prejudices which prevent us from engaging in an open-minded, spiritual-scientific relationship to the natural world. While his essay "Equity between Man and Man" (1932, revised 1961) reminds us of the true significance for human social affairs of what was gradually happening in England over the years prior to and immediately subsequent to the beginning of the fifth post-Atlantean epoch, namely, the transition from land-based property relationships to equity relationships between one individual human being and another. Barfield makes it particularly clear in these latter two examples how our relationships in both the dimensions of time and space are subverted by delusions that incarcerate us in a prison of our own making. Finally, and perhaps most pointedly for our present context, Barfield clearly indicates in his extended essay "On the Consciousness Soul" (1928/29) that the particular genius of the English mind's contribution to the age of the consciousness soul – whose challenges the 21st century should be taking us forward in an endeavour to fulfil to the best of our ability – lies in its inability "to write well and truly of death without suggesting the Resurrection". This essay culminates in a moving description of "two divinely tall spiritual forms" engaged in a graceful dance. This description represents Barfield's earnest impulse to build a bridge of mutual understanding and interaction between the cultures of England and Germany, with the object of enabling the spiritual impulse of Anthroposophy, as the crowning fulfilment of Central European

culture, to inspire and awaken the full potential of the economic activity arising out of the distinctive genius of the Anglo-Saxon race.

I was recently privileged to experience Sergei Prokofieff leading a workshop day at Rudolf Steiner House, London, on the Foundation Stone Meditation in eurythmy. If this meditation, with its threefold call to the soul of man to awaken its connection to the divine-spiritual hierarchies and to forge a transition from the five (pentagram) of our present epoch to the six (hexagram) of the ensuing one, can represent for us the essence of what we would seek to nurture in these initial years of the 21st century, we can indeed find in Owen Barfield's legacy the insight that we need to form an alternative vision for our cultural and social future, a vision which, moreover, addresses very explicitly the English-speaking peoples of, or affiliated to, the European West. Whereas what we may observe vaunting its hegemony in the cultural and political trends ostensibly dominating our modern world would appear to me to be wholly stuck in the narrowly egotistical spectator-consciousness which has already long achieved its very necessary culmination. If we were organising a cultural and social order to be a suitable vehicle for "final participation", computers and Information Technology would have only a very limited place in it. As Stephen Talbott rightly attests in the title of his book, "the future does not compute".

Finally, it is necessary, I think, to ask what has become of the stately dance imagined by Barfield as taking place between the cultures of Central Europe and the Anglo-Saxon West. I personally believe that this image – as with so much that was conceived in the period between the two World Wars of the 20th century – continues to be a valid picture of the relationship between these cultures, and that since the Second World War America has been allowed – and now insists or assumes that it has the right – to subvert this dance into a sort of marionette show operated by the puppet-masters in Washington, who are in their turn propped up by Hollywood and Disneyland. It is in this context impossible to evade the urgent necessity at this conference for, as I put it in the Editorial Notes of the current (2003) issue of the *Golden Blade*, "the English-speaking world as a whole to make up its mind whether to work collaboratively with the rest of the world to foster a true economic brotherhood or to allow the American imperialist spirit – masquerading as Michaelic internationalism – to perpetuate a 'sickness and death of culture' where man is but the plaything of machines".

'O, for a Muse of Fire'
The Imaginative Language of W.B.Yeats

Sean Byrne

*

I went out into the hazel wood
Because a fire was in my head.....
W.B.Yeats.

Language presents us with a great paradox: on the one hand it is the fundamental vehicle for the acquisition or transmission of knowledge, while on the other hand it seems to erect a barrier between knowing and *direct experience*. For instance, we all know, after a little reflection, that a tree is not *really* "a tree"; for "a tree" is but a sound we make, whether imaginatively in our mind, or actually with our mouth, and the "tree" – whatever it is – is never either in our mind or in our mouth! We have, in other words, only an extracted or abstracted *image* of the tree; but an image of it is not the tree. It is in this way that language allows us to build up a knowledge of self and world, through mental pictures. But we are entitled to feel frustrated in this situation. The problem we have with can be likened to seeing before us, say, a beautiful castle. We are able to know and admire many aspects of it, its architectural beauty, even its faults, and so on. But, much as we may wish to, we have no knowledge of how to get *inside* it, to get to know it inside-out. Our knowledge, no matter how linguistically refined it may be, in the end always seems one-sided.

But we can also justifiably ask: Is there not in fact a way into this castle?

With language, especially the way it is used in our highly technical and scientifically-based culture, we merely abstract something from our general experience and name it, as with the tree. But we can begin to make our way out of this dilemma if we ask questions like: what would we see if we had no language to conceptualise the tree in? And, for simplicity's sake we can say that we would then see "the spirit of the

tree". We know for instance that in cultures, ancient or modern, where language is used in a far less abstract way than ours, it is the spirit of the things perceived that is much more apparent and accessible to the consciousness. The primitive consciousness, especially of Nature, is filled with the perception of spirits, as anthropology and mythology show. And in such data we have a good indication of how to get beyond the dilemma indicated above, to get beyond the abstracted image of what is real and arrive at the source. Here we can see indicated the way, the path to knowing that what is *really real* is actually spiritual, and anything other is simply not the full shilling! "For when something that is real in the spiritual sense communicates itself to the soul, one never has the feeling: 'There is the spiritual perception, and I myself am developing the thought with which to understand it'. But one *sees* the thought which the perception contains, and which is given with it, no less objectively than the perception itself." (1) The point is that thought itself, out of which the language develops, or at least through which it is refined, is or has an objective reality. Confronted with this fact (2), we must let go completely of the idea that we ourselves are fully producing the thoughts about the things perceived, and replace it with the concept that there is surrounding us as or in our environment a normally unseen ethereal reality, a "thought substance" if you like, out of which the whole of the natural and material world, as we know it, densifies. But it is this latter that we mistakenly take to be the only reality because we are in a sense asleep to our own and the world's deeper spiritual nature. When the spiritual nature awakens however, as the Leading Thought indicates, we come to the full *real*ization that our physical bodies, all physical bodies, bear only a relationship of confinement to the free, expansive and ethereal spirit, much in the same way as a canvas does to an oil painting. Our senses or sense perceptible experience, in other words, may be looked upon as merely the confining walls of the aforementioned castle, or temple. But in order to know the spiritual reality we have to go through, pierce, this dividing wall, this curtain or veil of the senses. Thought sharpened through concentration, meditation, etc. can do this. Then a new magical, pattern-based and picture-filled light world of pure ethereal thought is revealed. Only in *this* way can the dilemma or paradox of language be ultimately overcome, for then we reach the "holy of holies", can begin to know the pure "beingness" of things and not merely their named appearances. And is it not true that an awareness, a knowledge, or even an admission of the *possibility* of such a thing changes everything?

But how are people to be convinced of such a reality without experiencing it first? Concentration, contemplation, and meditation are, of necessity, part of such a path. But equally important is imagination and art, and especially here, in the context of this article, the artistic or imaginative use of language. For the subtle and demanding way in which language must be used, if a correct feeling for an intended spiritual meaning is to be gained by the listener or reader, necessarily implies a usage that may often have to be more inclined towards the poetic than any other linguistic form. Thus, there is a real art to be developed here if language is to continue, in our era of abstract scientific materialism, to be a vehicle, which it always has been in the past, for the cultivation and dissemination of spiritual knowledge and experience. This is a hugely important task in our time. "The adaptation of our language, which is fitted for sensory perception, to a more delicate spiritual conceptualisation and to a concrete picturing of even the extra-sensory, was something at which Dr. Steiner worked unceasingly." (3)

In the post-modern world we everywhere see and hear of things that are under threat; from the common worm up to the very planet itself, all is or seems threatened with either corruption (pollution) or extinction. But we do not hear much in this regard about language. It doesn't "make the news'. The debasement of it doesn't frighten people enough to make selling headlines! Perhaps it should. In any event it is true to say that language too is severely threatened with great pollution from many sources, not the least of which is the ubiquitous computer, or microchip.

For those who are awake to the increasingly apocalyptic nature of our post-modern dilemma, comfort can be taken and human pride upheld through the correct usage and development of our language. For, as the anthroposophical Leading Thought quoted above indicates, the heightened consciousness that a correct use of language (or speech) points to, easily reveals it to be that which is "grander than gold and more precious than light". Or to paraphrase a well-known saying: what profit is there in it for us if we gain or conquer the whole world but lose our correct use of language? Also from these precious words: "Heaven and Earth may pass away, but my words will never pass away". (4)

The naive person or the philistine may find all of this hard to grasp, of course. Mere words for him or her are far too ethereal things to be taken seriously and accredited real value in our body-based, greed-driven and money-manipulated world. Such people will quite simply fail to see the essential dilemma, the paradox.

Language is a paradox because on the one hand – if correctly used – it draws us into a profound awakening, ultimately to the loveliness of the healing spirit-Being of Knowledge herself, as the above words may also indicate; but on the other hand language also contains an abstract power to separate us off not only from Nature, but very sharply and often antagonistically from one another: no figures are more formidably certain of their knowledge than those book-waving spiritual leaders demanding or declaring war! In view of this danger (an ever increasing one in our time), we must therefore make great efforts to learn to distinguish between the "babble" of language, and the pure *music* or the art of it. And it is within this latter realm that perhaps the greatest strengths of the paradox of language shine through. For, important as they are, grammatical, syntactical, and other fundamental aspects of language are not those through which the essential paradox can be resolved. Deeper processes at work in the soul need to be enlivened. And the kinds of pressures that the modern academic and scientific mentality create in and for the human soul, are in fact detrimental to the development or awakening of these deeper, delicate processes. We can find excellent proof of this.

For there are many individuals whose lives or karma illustrate how a backwardness early on in language and learning may prove in later life to be a path to a real mastery of language and learning. Rudolf Steiner himself is a good example of this. He wrote and spoke often in his life of those exalted men and women of learning and knowledge whom he called the Initiates. But when he was once asked where they all were – for truly we do not see or hear much of them today – he said that the educational system was at fault – "it is torture for the soul that wants to develop and unfold in accordance with its own nature" (5) under the conventional educational system of the western world, he said. For, here there is little or no understanding of the soul and spirit of man or the world, and the soul suffers most of all through ignorance of it. Thus it is only the greatest of souls who have some hope of winning through to a full or even partial expression of their karmic possibilities in our time. In his own particular case, in which he managed to accomplish much great work for mankind as one of the Initiates, Rudolf Steiner said that this was largely due to the fact that even "when I was twelve years old I was unable to write properly. For the capacity of being able to write, in the way that is demanded today, kills certain qualities in the human being." (5)

Another, though less exalted example of the same phenomenon,

is the Irish poet W.B.Yeats (1865–1939), who has been dubbed a "mage" by his most recent (and official) biographer. (6) Yeats is widely acknowledged as one of the finest poets in the English language. But as a youth he was very backward. His performance at school was so poor in fact that he was taken out of it altogether and various personal tutors were employed to educate him, but without success. His irascible father, a painter and free-thinking cultured man, who was able to spot his son's potential early on, eventually decided to try to teach the young lad himself. After much consternation he succeeded to some degree. Yeats duly learned the basics. Once going however, he quickly became a voracious reader. But he did not attend university like most of his peers, for fear of the humiliation of failing the exams. And he remained a woeful speller all his life. Even in 1910, when he was already an established and widely acclaimed poet, and thus stood a good change of being appointed to the chair of English Literature at Trinity, he failed to be short-listed because his letter of application contained two "f's" in "professorship"! (7)

W.B.Yeats and Rudolf Steiner were almost exact contemporaries. And the problem that the young Yeats had was similar to that experienced and expressed by Rudolf Steiner. It had to do with gaining a balance between the outer sense-perceptible world – and especially how this was interpreted philosophically, scientifically and pedagogically in his time – and the rich, inner, imaginative world, or life of the soul. From the moment Yeats did begin to get his feet on the ground however, and had acquired the ability to articulate his experience, he felt compelled to draw particular attention to the dreaming nature of the soul, but more especially of what was then called the Oversoul. The individual self and soul was, he reckoned, intimately bound up with the larger self or soul. He grappled with this problem all his life. This Oversoul we can more easily identify nowadays as the folk-soul; and true to the poetic traditions of his country, Yeats imagined it as a beautiful woman. Moreover, emerging as he was out of the great European Romantic tradition (Yeats considered himself one of the last of the Romantics) he felt compelled to project all of his creative aspirations upon his earthly beloved, i.e. the embodiment of his Muse. In the following famous lines he give a most beautiful expression to this feeling:

> Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
> Enwrought with golden and silver light,

The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

But even from the first moment of his artistic awakening, Yeats was aware of the battle that lay ahead with language if he was going to remain true to both the spirit of his time and the Muse of his own artistic vision. The following lines are from one of the very first published poems:

Of all the many changing things
In dreary dancing past us whirled,
To the cracked tune that Chronos sings,
Words alone are certain good.

Yeats has been called a "mage" because all his life he meditated, studied and practised magic, investigated the occult, etc. But his intentions in this regard were quite specific: his primary interests in life were always connected with the artistic and the aesthetic. For he wished to forge from spiritual types of experience a poetic language that could reveal spiritual truth. He never had any doubt about the reality of the spiritual world. But he was continually trying to get beyond the barrier or the paradox of language to be able to express it. He was deeply aware of the creative power of the pure spirit, especially in its relationship with speech, with the mystery element of language, the Word. In the latter part of his life he would write:

Death and life were not
Till man made up the whole,
Made lock, stock and barrel
Out of his bitter soul,
Aye, sun and moon and star, all,
And further add to that
That, being dead, we rise,
Dream and so create
Translunar Paradise.

Whatever precisely he may have meant by Translunar Paradise, there can be no doubt as to his conviction of the power of the dreaming imagination that was at work in his soul. He wanted to represent the

"spirit of things" in his poetry, using the language to get beyond its sense perceptible limitations and evoke a deeper imaginative world, one more real than the mere "lock, stock and barrel", the abstracted image, of what has already been conjured up, to enter, in other words, the "Translunar Paradise" of a higher kind of imagination, a divine one even.

In one of his earliest poems, *To The Rose Upon the Rood of Time*, Yeats sets out his poetic stall, as it were. His future life as a poet was going to be lived in a very purposeful manner indeed. He set about looking for a form of expression bordering on the inexpressible, precisely because of its spiritual ambition. He wanted to:

But seek alone to hear the strange things said
By God to the bright hearts of those long dead,
And learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know,
Come near; I would, before my time to go,
Sing of old Eire and the ancient ways:
Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days.

He was bound to be frustrated! But he enjoyed the effort, and wrought great poetry into the bargain. Though always a powerful dreamer, Yeats also lived life to the full, engaging himself in various activities, both in Ireland and Britain. He had much success, but even his failures he turned, without sacrificing his ambition, to endearing and enduring verse, a verse into which he always tried to inject something ineffable, ethereal, a verse that was more than mere words printed on a page, but had the taste of the very earth itself in it. In one of his last poems he looks back over his life and says:

John Synge, I and Augusta Gregory, thought
All that we did, all that we said or sang
Must come from contact with the soil, from that
Contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong.
We three alone in modern times had brought
Everything down to that sole test again,
Dream of the noble and the beggar-man.

To wrought a poetic language that would help bridge the gap between knowledge and experience, between wisdom and work, between the realm of the king and that of the shepherd, or here between the noble and the beggar-man, was the task. For this he must learn to "chaunt a new tongue". This "new tongue" however could never rest for its

efficacy on abstractions, but on spiritual realities, beings, the dead, God. Here the work *has* to be a refinement of the language, a delicate process of playing with and on words as if they were strings of a lovely musical instrument, and not merely the nuts and bolts of yet another poetic work of which the world was perhaps, he sensed, growing weary also, as of everything else. But for this poet, poetry at its best was pure magic, and the magic had to be brought back into it for the modern world. In such a soul, in such a work, an ethereal, alchemical process has to take place, a process in which words dissolve their abstractions. This borders on a visionary power, a process in which pictures will have to take the place of words, and music the place of mere sound. This of course is the work of imagination and art, *par excellence*. Moreover it is a work of the *heart* far more than that of the hand or the head.

Yeats has bequeathed to posterity a rich body of work wherewith we can hear such rich and lovely-textured music. Even better than this perhaps, through the work we can even learn to play and enjoy this wonderful musical game ourselves. For that ultimately is what the mage, the poet, or the Initiate really wants us to do always. Like the saint, the impulse to *serve* is what drives him on. He wants a better deal for Everyman; but he is alas also a realist. He knows that the real seekers are always something of "a chosen few". And whereas for these true seekers he provides the means by which they may indeed find, for the rest he can only issue instructions to pray, or pity them:

> A pity beyond all telling
> Is hid in the heart of love:
> The folk who are buying and selling
> The clouds on their journey above....

Struggling to bring to fruition the manifold and far-reaching impulses and imaginations of his soul Yeats immersed himself in multifarious activities: the quest for national independence in Ireland; the establishment of poetic and literary groups; the founding and managing of the Irish National Theatre (The Abbey); even at one stage the setting up of a kind of new Hibernian Mystery Centre in a lake island in the northwest of the country. In old age he was appointed a senator to the Upper House in the new free Irish state he helped establish. He also designed the beautiful set of Irish coins that have only very recently gone out of circulation with the advent of the euro.

Yeats went through many and various phases in his life and they provided the raw material of a profound, far-reaching, subtle, and most

of all musical poetry. His work charts the developmental struggle of a personality whose great soul straddled a vital transitional period of modern history, that between the 19th and the 20th century. He dreamed warmly and wildly but always kept one eye at least on the cold solid earth, for he loved the Irish soil dearly. This, from which he came, he knew to be holy stuff, and he endeavoured to turn it into great art, primarily because he sought to speak the language of the heart. The following lines are the last verse of one of his very last poems: *The Circus Animals' Desertion*. In the earlier verses he recounts all the activities, artistic and otherwise, he had engaged in during his life. This important poem is one in which a single human life is wonderfully compressed into a profound and enduring work of great, true, and pure art:

> Those masterful images because complete
> Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?
> A mound of refuse or the sweeping of a street,
> Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
> Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
> Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,
> I must lie down where all the ladders start,
> In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

Notes

1. *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts*, Rudolf Steiner, p 51; Rudolf Steiner Press, 1973.
2. This becomes "a fact" of course only in or through meditation, or in similar altered states of consciousness produced by meditative work.
3. Marie Steiner in the preface to Rudolf Steiner's book *Cosmic Memory*. She refers not to the German language, but to our human language generally as it has evolved up to the present time.
4. Mark 13;31.
5. *Karmic Relationships, Vol. 1*, Rudolf Steiner, p 192; Rudolf Steiner Press, 1981.
6. *W.B.Yeats – A Life*; volume one, *The Apprentice Mage*; R.F.Foster, Oxford University Press, 1997.
7. *George's Ghosts*, Brenda Maddox, p 20; Picador, 2000.

Emily Dickinson and the Living Word

Coralee Schmandt

This was a Poet—It is that
Distills amazing sense
From ordinary Meanings –
(P. 448)

A little overflowing word

Nineteenth century American writers and poets had a passionate interest in the re-invention of the English language. They were fired by the urgent need to melt down and re-forge the language of the old world to reflect the dynamism of the new nation. Interestingly enough, their re-shaping of language led them deep into the sources and history of language. For Emily Dickinson and her contemporaries, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, etymology contributed to a renewed, vital, imaginative speech. The first American dictionary, *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, which was published in 1847 by Noah Webster, a thorough-going scholar and eminent personality of the time, was of great assistance in their research.

Various sources indicate that a key to unlocking the subterranean reservoir in words in Emily Dickinson's poetry lies in philology or etymology, the study of the roots of words and their history as they unfold in the course of time. In a letter to T.W. Higginson, Emily Dickinson tells him that "for several years, my Lexicon – was my only companion –"(1) Her "Lexicon" was Webster's 1847 Dictionary which on its own provides abundant resources for a philologist or "lover of words". Moreover, according to her niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, "she read it as a priest his breviary – over and over, page by page, with utter absorption."(2)

Emily Dickinson certainly had an immense appreciation for the potential in a single word as a few sentences to a friend of her early years, Joseph Lyman, confirm: "*We used to think, Joseph, when I was an*

unsifted girl and you so scholarly that words were cheap & weak. Now I don't know of anything so mighty. There are (those) to which I lift my hat when I see them sitting princelike among their peers on the page. Sometimes I write one, and look at his outlines till he glows as no sapphire."(3) The vivid experience of the word described here borders on the mystical as she meditates on the latent possibilities within a word awaiting the kindling spark of an active imagination. Then words become individual beings, with lineages, some more aristocratic than others. They possess shape, colour, dimension, and an inner source of vitality that glows through their facets.

On the one hand, this intense experience of the living word arose because Emily Dickinson was attuned to the unique qualities of each speech sound and the affinity between the sounds in words and the meanings they convey. On the other hand, words were also living beings for Dickinson because they had "biographies" which she could imaginatively reconstruct from their roots in the deep unconscious past through metamorphoses in form and meaning up to the present incarnation of the word.

> A little overflowing word
> That any, hearing, had inferred
> For Ardor or for Tears,
> Though generations pass away
> Traditions ripen and decay,
> As eloquent appears – (P.1467)

The original impulse that created a word continues to speak, to be "eloquent" (from "to speak out") down through the ages. When words are consciously re-attached to their roots, they cease to be empty or abstract because the original spark that inspired the word, the creative deed of naming, bubbles up afresh from the living source of the word. Richard Chenevix Trench, whose book *The Study of Words* was in the Dickinson library, takes his metaphor for the living quality in words from the plant world: "*(Words) are not merely arbitrary signs but living powers ... growing out of roots, clustering in families, connecting and intertwining themselves with all that men have been doing and thinking and feeling from the beginning of the world till now.*" (4)

In Dickinson's poems, the whole is expressed in each part as in this poem where the overall structure reflects the theme. Grammatically, the main clause, which begins in the first line and finishes in the last line, "contains" the subordinate clauses which fill out the middle of the

poem. The words "overflow" (line 1) and "eloquent" (line 6) also mirror each other in the sounds /o/ and /l/ and in their etymologies. The earlier root of "eloquent" is "to burst out", so both "eloquent" and "overflow" suggest an abundance that cannot be contained and bursts out or flows over. Finally, notice that the subordinate clauses are disproportionately bountiful in comparison to the main clause and the last line has an open-ended quality that does not really hold back and contain. In this way, the little poem overflows as does the little word.

Though critics have suggested that the little word in question is the word "love", any word can potentially "overflow". Each word has within it an undeveloped content that we might even experience as a burden if we were fully aware of the implications in the words we speak:

> Could mortal lip divine
> The undeveloped Freight
> Of a delivered syllable
> 'Twould crumble with the weight. (P.1409)

Each word in a poem of Emily Dickinson is precisely chosen. The forms of her poems may be simple and similar in all her poems, but the suggestiveness in each individual word is profound and original. Her poems exploit the poetic potential in sounds and etymological pictures. For example, in this mini-poem about how much a little word contains, the word "freight" from *fero*, "to bear or carry", or literally, "to be pregnant", connotes this hidden living cargo within the word. Further, the root of the word "develop" is "to unfold", or "display", from the noun meaning "a packet or bundle". This "Freight" is "undeveloped" so it is like a package (or a pregnant woman or a seed) with something living within it. That living being folded up in a word is another metaphor for the living word like the "glow" in the heart of the sapphire or the perpetual spring in the "little overflowing word". If we could "divine" the truth (with the implication that what lives there is "divine"), we would be staggered by the "weight" or gravity, importance, power in the word.

Longing is like the Seed

The study of word roots is actually a kind of training in metaphoric thinking because every word is rooted in gestures or pictures from our primal experiences of the world. All subsequent figurative uses have arisen out of a literal experience. As Emerson says, *"The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is*

fossil poetry. As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin." (5) Words originate in an activity that is similar to poetic creation, in the apprehension of reality that is, at the same time, the creation of reality. The "brilliant pictures" which are waiting to be reawakened in words also capture the poetic moment when sound and meaning were one and grasped by human consciousness. Etymology tracks down these "brilliant pictures" and brings them once again before our conscious minds.

According to Webster, the picture in each word was not a static "picture" but a quality of *movement*. He enumerates thirty-four basic varieties of motion or action in his introduction. However, he says that all of them can be comprehended in one verb: *to move*, the fundamental experience of Life. If these fundamental gestures are accurate, it means that, at the primitive level of language, processes which may appear unrelated actually have a gesture or movement in common. In his introduction to his dictionary, Webster says, "When we understand the *primary* sense, we find this to unite words whose ... *customary* significations appear to have no connection". To give an example from his extensive presentation, "desire" and "irrigation" are connected through the root sense of "reaching or stretching toward" because desire is a reaching toward something in the life of feelings and irrigation is a spreading of water out over the fields.

Furthermore, he gives various examples to show the "similarity of manner in which different nations appropriated derivative and figurative senses," with the purpose of showing the uniformity among languages, as they "make use of the same visible physical action to represent the operations of the mind and moral ideas". Metaphoric correspondences go beyond the conceptions of an individual culture and language, and thus point to relationships that are "constant and pervade nature". (Emerson) Different languages, as well as poets in different languages, have ascertained the same or similar metaphorical relationships between inner and outer experiences, the mind and the natural world. Some very fundamental examples from Webster are the following: "wonder" or "astonishment" are usually expressed by some word that means "stop" or "hold"; "pain", "grief", "distress" are usually expressed by "pressure" or "straining". "Joy", "mirth", is from "rousing, exciting, lively action"; "hope" is probably from "reaching forward"; "longing" is a "reaching toward".

There are then two kinds of metaphor: one disclosed by the etymologist and latent in every word (the "fossilized metaphor") and the other "created" by the individual poet. Max Muller calls the former a "radical" metaphor as "when a root which means to shine is applied to form the names, not only of the fire or the sun, but of the spring of the year, the morning light, the brightness of thought, or the joyous outburst of hymns." The latter he calls "poetical" metaphor: "for instance, when the rays of the sun are called the hands or fingers of the sun". (6)

Emily Dickinson not only creates poetical metaphors but she also juxtaposes words in such a way that the radical metaphor sleeping within a word is aroused. In the following poem, a poetical metaphor corresponds with a radical metaphor:

> Longing is like the Seed
> That wrestles in the Ground,
> Believing if it intercede
> It shall at length be found... (from P. 1255)

The radical metaphor in the word "longing" is a reaching toward something and the same gesture is in the adverb "long" ("extended; drawn out in a line") and the noun "length" which measures both space and time. ("It shall at length be found.") ("Lag" is another word from this root in the sense of drawing out and hence delaying.) The root of this word is found in both Anglo-Saxon (*long, lang*) and Latin (longus) indicating that there is a "phonetic metaphor" in this word. Latin and Anglo-Saxon are two different language streams and either the word is one that existed before these two streams divided or both language streams found the same sounds for the same experience. In either case, the sounds /l/ and /ng/ with a long open vowel between them are appropriate to the experience of extension, of stretching toward.

The poetic metaphor for longing in this poem is the seed, whose whole nature is one of stretching out, elongating, straining upward to the source of warmth and light or downward into moisture and the nutrients in the soil. How apt the verb "wrestles"is in this context, both for the longing of the human soul and for the muscular life force manifest in the seed!

The radical metaphor in "joy" is rousing, exciting, lively action. Poetically, Dickinson's "push of Joy" is the exhilarating thrust from beneath which is the physical sensation accompanying an uplifting feeling that upsets one's equilibrium.

But the least push of Joy
Breaks up my feet –
And I tip – drunken – (from P. 252)

In the above examples, poetical metaphors and radical metaphors suggest one another. However, according to Emerson, this is to be expected since the poets do not invent metaphors out of thin air but rather reclaim relationships that pre-exist in nature. "*It is easily seen that there is nothing lucky or capricious in these analogies, but they are constant and pervade nature. These are not the dreams of a few poets, here and there, but man is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects.*" *(7)* Thus, in poetry or language itself, these mysterious relations between what appears separate in the world around us, or between internal states and outward realities, are not inventions, but exist independently as archetypes apprehended by individual thinkers.

This was a Poet—

Not only do etymologies draw together words that seem to belong to quite separate realms of experience, but investigating the roots of words can also disclose differences in words that appear to be synonymous. In Emily Dickinson's poems, subtle juxtapositions and contrasts between words set off their distinctive qualities. Words that seem to be equivalent in ordinary usage split apart and reveal their unique identities and lineage. The first few lines of the following poem demonstrate this:

This was a Poet – It is that
Distills amazing sense
From ordinary Meanings – (P.448)

This poem is a poetic "definition" like the previous poem, "Longing is like the seed". But here, she is defining what a poet is; in other words, how she views her own poetic task. The essence of the poet's activity is captured in the word "distills" as she transforms one "gross" kind of language into another: the volatile, living language of poetry. What the poet does can be compared to the process of extracting the essence or spirit from substance through a process of distillation. In other words, she discriminates between words which are superficially similar but belong to essentially different orders of experience. In this poem, for example, the synonyms "sense" and "meaning", are often used interchangeably to refer to the "import" or "signification" of a word, but they are distinctly different from one another when we take the

etymologies into account. First of all, the word "sense" is from the Latin *sentire,* "to feel, perceive". It is the root of "sensitive", "sensual", etc. We can also use this word to refer to the faculties with which we perceive reality as when we speak of the five senses. "Meaning", on the other hand, is derived from the Anglo-Saxon, *men,* to think, from which we also derive the word "mental". Etymology discloses a clear difference between these two seemingly similar words: whereas "meaning" implies an intellectual or mental understanding, "sense" implies a feeling apprehension. Thus, those who view the world primarily through the eye and intellect see "ordinary meanings". The Poet, on the other hand, integrates the senses, seeing with the feelings, and thereby derives "amazing sense" from those "ordinary Meanings".

The distinction is heightened by the adjectives: "ordinary", from the same Latin root as "order", and "amazing", from the Arabic, "to perplex, confuse", perhaps from the same root as "maze", the labyrinth. Thus the "ordinary Meanings" express themselves in a regular, predictable way like columns of marching Roman soldiers while "amazing sense" has an astonishing, exotic quality like a sinuous oriental dancer in provocative veils.

Say it again, Saxon!

In the poem above, we see that not only the root of the word but also the language stream from which it comes contribute to the character of an individual word. Emily Dickinson, like many poets before her (including Shakespeare), had a fine ear for the distinctions between words from the two main language streams in the English language: the Anglo-Saxon (Old English) and the Latinate which entered the language through the French after 1066. A unique feature of English is that it is composed of both a "mother tongue" and a "father tongue". Anglo-Saxon is the "mother tongue" because the simple everyday expressions we learn as infants are Anglo-Saxon and we therefore have the most profound preconscious associations with them. DeQuincey calls Saxon the "aboriginal element" that "comprehends all the ideas which are natural to the heart of man and to the elementary situations of life". Trench offers some concrete examples: *"The great features of nature, sun, moon, and stars, earth, water, and fire, all the prime social realities, father, mother, husband wife, son, daughter, these are Saxon. . .(T)o the Saxon we owe far dearer names, the house, the root, the home, the hearth." (8)* The nouns expressing our elementary experiences of the world, our first verbs like

sit, run, eat, etc, as well as the grammar of English itself and therefore its function words (prepositions, auxiliary verbs, etc.) are all Saxon, so in a true sense, the Saxon element is the matrix of the language. For the native speaker, sound and meaning are married in the Saxon element and sounds of words *move* us, even physically.

If Anglo-Saxon is the ancient substratum of the English language in which the "flashes of genius" of which Emerson spoke are embedded, Latinate words are the "father tongue", acquired later in life and the mark of the mature, educated English speaker. Whereas Saxon is the heart and the genius of the language, Latin is the head or the intellect. However, this "father tongue" offers possibilities that the Saxon element does not. The origins of Saxon words are buried deep in the subconscious and the emotion of the race, but Latin words can be "translated" and traced to the original analogies of the figurative to the literal, as when "expire", to die, is traced back to "breathing out". The picture springs to life when we discover it, lighting up in our understanding and making sense of apparent abstraction. As any student of foreign languages knows, learning a foreign language helps us to see the outlines of our own language more lucidly. Latin vocabulary performs this function for us within English because it has always retained its "foreign" air. We see ourselves more clearly through Latinate words and hence the vocabulary of philosophy, observation, and generalization is of Latin origin. In Emily Dickinson's poems, these two elements are played off against each other to reinforce her poetic intent.

Emily Dickinson found a direct link back to when "the poets made all the words", to the primal union of sound (letter) and meaning, or the thing itself, in the Saxon element. In a letter to T.W. Higginson, she used the name "Saxon" for her mentors whom she felt were in touch with the being of the language and could guide her. "The Sailor cannot see the North – but knows the needle can – The 'hand you stretch me in the Dark,' I put mine in, and turn away – I have no Saxon, now –"(9) Dickinson's first "Saxon", Benjamin Newton had died, and later she turned modestly to Higginson as her new "Saxon". In the following poem, "Saxon" appears as the personification of the guiding genius of the language itself.

> Many a phrase has the English language –
> I have heard but one –
> Low as the laughter of the Cricket,
> Loud, as the Thunder's Tongue –
>
> Murmuring, like old Caspian Choirs,
> When the Tide's a' lull –
> Saying itself in new inflection –
> Like a Whippoorwill—
>
> Breaking in bright Orthography
> On my simple sleep –
> Thundering its Prospective –
> Till I stir, and weep –
>
> Not for the Sorrow, done me –
> But the push of Joy –
> Say it again, Saxon!
> Hush – Only to me! (P. 276)

In this poem, the genius of language has many "phrases" but sweeping through them all is a universal sounding, a single source that metamorphoses into a variety of manifestations. Human sounds and words originate in a "voice" that speaks through all nature, both in the "low" voice of the cricket and in the loud roar of the thunder. The source of their names in the letters (or sounds of the words), their "Orthography", is in the things themselves; it "murmurs" in the songs of the distant seas ("Caspian Choirs") and in the bird-song of her native "whippoorwill". That is, the sounding may be "bent" (the root of "inflection") so that it is as vast as the Caspian Sea or as delicate as a bird, but nonetheless, the same source is still speaking or "Saying itself" through all things.

From the distant to the nearby, from the ancient past to the present, this universal sounding persists, all things "speaking" their own beings. Dickinson chooses words that make this clear: the "whippoorwill" which is named for its song and the "cricket" likewise. "Thunder" is not perhaps recognized immediately as onomatopoeic, but the similar sounds in the noun in a variety of languages confirm that this combination of sounds resonates with the same quality of hollow grandeur as the rolling thunder itself: Saxon *thunor*, Dutch *donder*, Latin *tonitru* from *tono*, to sound, French *tonnerre*, Persian *thunder*. In "murmur", the sounds seem to imitate the low indistinct repetitive sound it refers to. Poets have always intuited and exploited the innate connection between sound and sense because sounds as "natural phonetic metaphors" reflect the significance attached to them. Nature's voice also lives in human speech and all the individuated words and phrases are but fragments of this universal singing, of that one phrase that is the essence of all sound.

In the third stanza, the phrase that sounds through all nature wells up and "breaks" into visible form, into "bright Orthography", (or "right writing", the correct letter for the sound) like a wave crashing on the shore. From its original wholeness, the universal language breaks into letters and words that are intelligible to human consciousness. When that rush of meaning overwhelms her, she responds emotionally: "Till I stir, and weep –". However, she does not weep for what she has lost, for "Sorrow", but for the "push of Joy": the genius of language, "Saxon", has spoken to the poet. Although it seems to "thunder" its message, the subtle voice of inspiration is as intimate and personal as the inmost language of the heart: "Hush – only to me!"

Himself – to Him – a Fortune –

The poet's capacity to tap into the vital spring of language, to "distill amazing sense/From ordinary Meanings", cannot ultimately be explained by their "tools": their dictionaries, background, historical circumstances, or "influences". All of these may contribute to the particular way their genius unfolds, may nourish or guide the developing imaginative faculty, but they do not *make* someone a poet. Moreover, even the imaginative capacity alone does not make a poet without that inexplicable element: the poet's own fire of enthusiasm for the vitalizing reality of imagination and the recognition that the Logos, the Word, is the genuine food that can sustain the souls and spirits of human beings. This faith in the truth of beauty as the revelation of the divine Word in the world, and in the potential for language itself to be a revelation of divine truth is at last the mark of a poet.

This was a Poet – It is That
Distills amazing sense
From ordinary Meanings –
And Attar so immense

From the familiar species
That perished by the Door –
We wonder it was not Ourselves
Arrested it – before –

Of Pictures, the Discloser –
The Poet – it is He –
Entitles Us – By Contrast –
To ceaseless Poverty –

Of Portion –so unconscious –
The Robbing – could not harm –
Himself – to Him – a Fortune –
Exterior – to Time – (P.448)

What the poet at last "distills", the "Attar so immense" ("attar" being rose essence) is not simply a superior poetic language but spiritual, essential meaning using the common words that have currency in everyday life: "From the familiar species/That perished by the Door –" The Poet "discloses" or opens up to our view the truth that lives in "Pictures" and in doing this "Entitles Us – By Contrast/ To ceaseless Poverty –" When we "contrast" one thing with another, we "set in opposition different things to show the superior excellence of one to advantage".(Webster) This is Dickinson's method in this poem: to show by contrast the transcendent nature of poetry which is in fact the spiritualized essence of the ordinary language and a medium for arresting unconventional truth. In the Bible, Jesus Christ conveyed the truth of the spiritual world in parables that likewise show up spiritual value by contrast with the material: "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal*". (Matthew 19–20) In this context, we can understand how the Poet's legacy of "ceaseless Poverty" is superior to any other possession. Whereas earthly "treasures" can be stolen or destroyed, the poet "Entitles Us" to a spiritual "Portion" that is unknown to our ordinary minds and that cannot be taken from us. "Of Portion – so unconscious –/ The Robbing could not harm –" At the same time, the Poet is his own "Fortune" because his "estate" is his own spirit and is not of space and time. "Himself – to Him—a Fortune –/Exterior to Time –". For Emily Dickinson, the true Poet is the one who "distills" a language of the spirit, "discloses" the truth of the spirit within the garment of outer reality, and "entitles" us, the readers, to a portion of the divine truth that his potentized words reveal. Ultimately, for Emily Dickinson, the study of etymology was not only her guide to the original "brilliant picture" within a word, but to the spiritual essence, to the Word itself.

Epilogue

The preceding is a revised excerpt from my doctoral thesis on Emily Dickinson's language, completed in 1979, and recently published under

the title *The Poet: A Testament to Emily Dickinson* by Urban Press in Boston. At the time of writing this, Dickinson's powerful, enigmatic language and love of words evoked in me a longing not only to grasp poetry with my understanding but to enter more fully into the life and being of language, to let it sink down out of the head into the life of feeling and into the will. At this point in my biography, I met the art of eurythmy which I recognized as the way to gradually become one with the source of speech, the Word. After two decades as a eurythmist, I would perhaps express myself differently now. Nevertheless, my experience has confirmed what I wrote then and what Dickinson expressed when she said:

> Between the form of Life and Life
> The difference is as big
> As Liquor at the Lip between
> And Liquor in the Jug –
> (from P.1101)

Footnotes

All quotations from poems by Emily Dickinson are from *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company,1960).

(1) Letter 261, *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson, Theodora Ward (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,1976)
(2) Martha Dickinson Bianchi, *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson*, p.80.
(3) Richard B. Sewell, *The Lyman Letters: New Light on Emily Dickinson and her Family*, (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1965), p.78.
(4) Richard Chenevix Trench, *The Study of* Words, (New York: Redfield, 1852), p.73-4.
(5) Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet", *Selected Prose and Poetry*, ed. Reginald L. Cook (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p.327-8.
(6) Max Muller, *Science of Language*, p. 451, quoted Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction*, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press,1973), p.75-6.
(7) Thomas DeQuincey, "On Wordsworth's Poetry", *Essays on the Poets and Other English Writers*, (Boston: Ticknor, Read, and Fields,1853), p.5.
(8) Trench, p.77.
(9) Letter 265.

Language and the Priestly Task

Interview with Rev. Roger Druitt, 27th April 2004
(the questions were asked by Simon Blaxland-de Lange)

SB Can you say something about the relationship of your work as a priest with the whole sphere of language, also indicating the difference between the written and the spoken word?

RD Yes. The ordination starts with a picture of the priesthood as being the servant of the word; so this is a very relevant question. One feels really that one is a sort of guardian for the whole realm of language and speech, not only in the sacramental realm but for life in general. I think, therefore, that the spoken word comes first, and I look upon the written word as in a way more of a challenge, because it needs to be a bit more perfect than the spoken word: you can be a bit more elastic and repeat yourself with the spoken word. If I ever do write something I try and get the sentence structure correct, avoid repeating words. The spoken word is more of a work of art and the written word has got a bit more science in it, I think – for my feeling, it's got to be more exact. I'd allow myself a split infinitive now and then in the spoken word, for effect but I wouldn't write one.

SB It's quite a powerful phrase or concept to be a guardian of the word – it's very potent. Could you maybe say a bit more about this?

RD Yes – I suppose I mustn't stretch the picture of servant, which is quite clear and is repeated in the Ordination Ceremony. Guardian is a strong word. A guardian is someone who watches and if necessary takes action. But that action might be to inform somebody else of a situation. One of my extra jobs is working on translation issues in the sacraments, and there I do feel a certain guardianship – mainly because I feel the word is so much under attack all the time. I think most people are aware of that. But I don't think anyone is able to escape it. The effect of the media is part of it; and the whole political use of the word is also intri-

guing. So I do notice – I suppose I'm all the time listening to the way people speak: not to feel superior or to get at them, because sometimes people bring innovations. I'm walking this tightrope, this knife-edge, between hanging on to old language and not accepting any new innovations, and seeing which innovations are helpful.

SB It's interesting because in working in the Humanities Section (of the School of Spiritual Science) I find I'm doing much the same thing. In any case I know that's what I'm involved in it for, so it's fascinating to find this very clear correspondence coming from a different side... Could you maybe say a bit more about the mysterious relationship between words and the Word with a capital letter? Is this something which figures in your thoughts?

RD Yes, certainly. By word with a capital letter, are you thinking of something like the Logos?

SB Yes.

RD I suppose there's a hierarchy. You could be listening to Radio 4 and you might hear somebody speaking about the word without meaning anything spiritual – it might just mean the essence of speech. In which case you'd be looking at a kind of archetypal word. I suppose that would mean a spoken form that can convey meaning and the other things that the word can express...

I'm puzzled – it's one of the things I keep meaning to look up again: there are some early lectures in which Dr Steiner speaks of the three Logoi, a Logos belonging to each member of the Trinity. Whereas later, so far as I know he's only ever used the Logos in connection with Christ – it's not identical with Christ – I think the Logos comes out of the Trinity. Christ is after all really a title, same as Messiah. I imagine under that title perhaps one of the highest hierarchical beings who has become a vessel for the Logos, and I can see the Logos travelling down through the hierarchies to the human hierarchy, the hierarchy of man. I think its highest form is in the ritual word or mantric word, on the one hand – but I am tempted to say that its highest form might be the way a mother speaks to her new-born infant, which might not be in a recognisable language. I think that one has two poles of the Logos in the human realm – one that sounds to the outsider like utter nonsense but which means everything to the infant hearing it, and the other which is a very articulate thing. And then it goes on down into ordinary sorts of language...

When I'm speaking to an audience I try to connect into the soul of the audience, and usually I find myself saying things which go beyond what I've prepared. The opposite phenomenon is that people come later and say, well that was an interesting thing you said, and then you ask them what it was – and you can be pretty sure you hadn't said that. All lecturers experience that. I think that can just be bad listening, people hearing what they want to hear; but I think it can also be an operation of the Logos – that what you say is made to work on in a certain sphere. You must know this as a teacher as well. People will hear what the Logos wants them to hear, what their destiny wants them to hear. I don't know if it's clear what I mean.

SB Yes. I suppose what prompts the question is particularly the words at the beginning of St John's Gospel,

en arche ēn ho logos

But obviously this is something immense in the mind of St John, it's a complete mystery – the connection between the word, the Logos and words.

RD It's a wonderful word, because all the words that have the suffix "-ology" should be about the operation of the Logos in a particular area of work. That's the Creator. Thus biology should be about the creative aspect of living things, but the "logy" falls into logic – it becomes a bit more dead.

SB I should also like you to say something more about this aspect of attacks on the word, particularly how in your work you try to maintain the integrity and dignity of the language appropriate to a religious act of worship from, for example, political correctness and other uses of words in political contexts and the media.

RD Yes, this is a broad issue. I've pondered a bit on this. The trouble is that political correctness sometimes becomes a legitimate part of the language, and then it's probably right for the ritual text to move with it. We have a strange situation in English. Rudolf Steiner said that the German texts wouldn't be altered for some long time, but we can't claim that kind of immunity for our English texts because they are translations. My first feeling of guardianship here is that because we don't have that veto on change we shouldn't rush to the opposite extreme and chop and change. There is that tendency, that people don't mind making a change and then making it again a few years later; and I can't think that that's quite right. There are one or two instances where

Rudolf Steiner seems to have supported a usage even if it might not have been the best: when a text has been used, when it's gone out into the ether, it's better to keep it than change it for something that is only slightly better.

I'm always looking out for where language is shrinking. I remember hearing an English teacher on the radio a few years ago saying that English is one of the most precise languages, that you can express exactly what you want in English. It would have been good for her to have got into conversation with some of our continental colleagues who think English isn't very good at expressing what we want! I also remember at school that there were a number of words that meant the same thing. I've come to disagree with that in the course of my life. I don't believe that any two English words mean the same. We were also taught that certain words have the same sound – like bow and bough. I think that with the bough of a tree the "gh" is somehow giving you the sound of the wind in the tree. I think that these two things that we learnt at school are both wrong. I am always listening out for that, and try for example to pronounce the "gh", even if ever so little; or the "w" in the word "wrest", how to distinguish "r-e-s-t" from "w-r-e-s-t". I believe you can train yourself to pronounce the "w" ever so slightly. Theses words must sound different. I think that is a case where language is dying away and where one can revive the language quite a lot without being a fuddy-duddy or eccentric. I also see a tendency to shrink from grammar quite a bit, from declensions. Most people nowadays never use the word "whom", nor do many newspapers. There are also catch-phrases I particularly dislike (it's difficult here to avoid being a bit right-wing), I personally try to avoid the use of popular phrases – it's a bit of a hang-up really. I think it must have been Heidenreich or Harwood in my early years in anthroposophy saying that this was a real adversarial tool; because people spoke things without filling them with meaning. I think that's how I would sum up my thoughts about attacks on the language.

SB Phrases like "OK", I suppose – that is one of my best examples – everyone says it of course!

RD Yes, everyone says it. I tried to train the children not to say it on the phone.

SB It doesn't actually mean anything, so far as I can see – I mean,

people argue about its origin. If you look it up in *Modern English Usage*, Fowler tells you that it has a certain origin but whatever it is, it doesn't actually mean anything.

RD Did you write about this once in an article? I remember someone disputing the military origin – yes, I think one can get lost in researching these things!

SB No, I've never written about that. I've written a bit in defence of the word "man".

RD Yes, I remember. That's an interesting point, which we could discuss; because I also am a great defender of "man". I think another of your questions referred to culture, and this sort of question is very much linked up with that one. In my experience, a large majority of people, also my colleagues, aren't really interested in this word. One recently said that this isn't a word worth defending. So I countered by mentioning that I consider this word to be a title, a name. It's now often reproduced as "human", or you have "human being", which is a description, for my language world – it is a description rather than a name. A number of people that I respect feel that this is becoming a name, and that if it could be made into a name it would be quite a noble name. Then we have a third thing which I think is just beyond the pale, and that's when "human" is made into a noun, which is pretty widespread now, especially in scientific circles, becoming "a human". There I think we've been influenced largely by science fiction – "human" as opposed to a "alien". I'm afraid "a human" is pretty alien to me! "Man" has these linguistic backgrounds which don't interest people who want to move forward. Much as I appreciated your article, it didn't really cut much ice with people who wanted to move away from there, I don't think it did and I'm sorry about that. But I am sticking up for "man", at least until we find another word, which I don't think we will. But you see the cultural side of all this is that men will have to learn to behave differently; and I think it would be far more worthwhile for men to behave differently and remove the stigma from this word rather than lose the word "man".

SB I very much agree.

RD One of the things I've quoted recently is a woman writer, a prolific writer on beekeeping, who points out in a footnote to the words "early man..." at the start of her recent books from 1999: "For ease of reading, here and elsewhere in the book, the word

'man' is often used in place of the more literal 'human being' or 'humankind'. In the context 'he', 'him', and 'his' also encompass 'she', 'her', and 'hers'." So I thought that is rather interesting. The only time I ever listen to the radio much is on a motorway; and I often hear on literary programmes that this word is still quite alive and well. Someone even astonished me recently by using the word 'men' in a way that I wouldn't have expected that person to have used it. So I'm defending, I'm fighting for these words. But I mean you and I in this cosy room can have our private battle. As I say, I would rather take the trouble to make social changes than lose a good word.

SB I very much like your solution, because I see that to be the point. To me, it's always seemed to be an utter tragedy if we were to lose the name of our species because we refuse to make these evolutionary changes. Of course, we pay lip service to making the change, but we don't really do it. It's not just a problem for males but also for females, of course....

RD Yes, exactly.

SB ... this reinforcing of a gender stereotype. It's always easier to blame an unfortunate word, or attack the wrong villain with everything....

RD Yes!

SB ... and I think it's a very good example of that.

RD I've come to feel that the word "man" is easier to use now than it was five years ago. But I'm still open-minded about the word "men". We certainly have some places in our ritual text where the word 'men' does sound a bit odd. It's not clear enough.

SB Yes, I was brought up with a broad understanding of the word "men", but it is difficult to use, I wouldn't generally do so except in certain circumstances, when it does seem to be the right word. I wouldn't dogmatically not use it, but nor would I generally use it. I do agree with you that it's more possible now to use the word "man", however.

RD I think the reason is that maybe men *have* tried a bit harder over the past few years, and that people have felt the lack of a real substitute for this word.

SB Maybe you can expand a little bit on this theme. In some lectures given to English speaking participants in December 1919, Steiner spoke about an impending 'sickness and death of culture' should the Western world achieve the hegemony which it undoubtedly has in our time. Would you say that in this respect it is justified to speak of a modern cultural crisis, or, to put it another way, a breakdown in human communication? If so, how does modern language usage manifest it symptomatically?

RD I think if language isn't learnt, communication has got to suffer. It's quite touching when you hear people who've not had an education trying to express a deep feeling or a deep need. And you have to be fairly intuitive. I think that's a simple phenomenon. I've never considered my own vocabulary to be as full as a lot of people that I've kept in mind from my tertiary education. I think this is an important cultural situation, that people's vocabularies have diminished because not so much reading aloud is done; children are not exposed to as wide a vocabulary as they used to be. And even people who weren't in special fancy schools did have reading in the home – not just the Bible but other things would be read aloud. Even 100 years ago there was this wealth of vocabulary, also a wealth of usage. I was listening to someone recently speaking about whatever it was, using the word "thing". Well, it's a funny little word; but it used to mean something that *was* something, then it was called a "thing". Nowadays it's used instead of whatever you wanted to say but you couldn't think of the word.

The problem with communicating is that we need to listen as well as speak. Most of the listening done by young people is to radio or television or records/tapes – that's a generalisation which some people might want to challenge, but certainly it's an awful lot. As one knows, that has to be geared to the lowest language denominator. In the same way as we spoke about the Logos earlier, if you do picture seriously that man is created out of the Logos, with different parts of the body being created out of different sounds, then if you shrink language you are going to shrink the human being, especially the soul. And I think people's souls are shrinking in part because the language is shrinking. There isn't the warmth, the wings, the light that there can be in language. Now some politicians are noble people who are doing a difficult job. I believe every profession has a shadow; and I think the shadow of the politician is to speak in such a way as to persuade the listener to a certain attitude or action. In recent months one has noticed how people slip in the word "terror" in order to galvanise the listener to a certain point of view, a

particular policy to be adopted; and often, when you look at it coolly, the policies had nothing to do with terror. But it's used as an emotive word to convince you that the policy's good. A number of words are used like that. So I would say that, in our language, these are words that don't have Logos in them, they are detached from the meaning. I think in the school here, I seem to remember Thomas [his son] being taught how to read a newspaper, so that you see the reality behind the words that are used. So in many areas of life it is not just that the words don't mean anything, but that they mean something other than what they are saying.

I remember the other day being on Brighton Pier, we were looking for some chips; and in the fun-fair we passed one of these games that said "Battle between the demons and the human race has begun". I pointed out that this contraption was employing a certain number of demons to make it function. The whole imagery was demonic come to that, and I pointed out that the adversary somehow or other always has to tell the truth. One thinks of this phrase also used by St. John, "the 'Father of Lies' "; but I've become quite intrigued by this reality that the adversary has to tell the truth, there always has to be his visiting card somewhere. The issue in this case was that it *had* begun, it wasn't just a fantasy – it was presented as a fantasy game, but it was actually telling the truth; because if you were to sit down and start playing that game, that is what you would be doing, battling with demons. So I think there are those areas – there are words used which don't mean anything, they are just used to fill in the time; and there are other words which do actually tell a spiritual truth but they are not what most people would interpret it as. These are just some thoughts which come to me at the moment to do with communicating. And I think then it's probably a learnable skill to just keep a bit still in some ways and look at words to see what they are really meaning. What are they really saying, what do they want to say? I don't know whether that makes any sense.

SB It does. Now obviously one could think of this in terms of a bleak picture, but you obviously wouldn't be doing what you are doing if you thought that was the end of it. I wonder if you could say something about how your work as a priest represents a significant aspect of a regeneration of language. Or you might also envisage that other vessels of communication can be, and are being, created through such work.

RD I think being a priest is about speaking. You can't do any priestly work without speaking, even though a lot of it is listening. And you have to speak in such a way that people can listen. People try and train us to use our organs of speech, our instrument of speech, properly – so that it can carry the spiritual dimension. We are also endowed with an amazingly rich content to speak: there's the ritual and there's the Gospel. And we are also helped to learn how to understand the Gospel and original texts and to translate them in a way that they mean something. Most priests, even if they are not Greek scholars, do something in terms of Gospel translation, even if it's more on a hobby level. Even those who do not feel able to compose a Greek sentence still know the right meaning for a few words. Most of us can read Greek, though we don't know all the words we are saying. So with this effort we are engaging with the listener on quite a profound level.

One of the things I've realised quite recently is how much the children who come to the Children's Service take in the way we speak and the words that we speak. I've recently become aware of this as a very important tool for keeping language alive in children; and not only the way one holds the service or reads the Gospel, but also the way one talks to them, tells them stories – that's a powerful cultural-improvement factor, I see a great rescuing of culture through that area. Then in the discussion groups we have – in fact nearly all our congregational activities – much has to do with speaking and listening. We can also help people find their own words as well, in a conversation or in a discussion. There's a lot there, because we've got a lot of stuff that's worth reading. In the larger congregations an enormous amount of cultural work happens to do with modern culture, in artistic or literary realms. So quite a lot of substance is brought out which is a cultural factor. And I think we do really look upon ourselves as having a responsibility to raise culture. I think it's more direct – I can't immediately think of ways in which our work brings about other cultural factors.

SB I find it interesting just to be aware of the close relationship between the word "culture" and the word "cult", of which, quite honestly, I hadn't been fully conscious before.

RD Well, as far as I understand it, in the Egyptian Mysteries, the whole of human life was directed from the cult of the Pharaoh. Another thing which is not so much now directly concerned with

language but which we do foster, as a very powerful cultural factor, shared by schools and other parts of the movement, is the celebrating of festivals. When festivals are celebrated there is nearly always a Logos factor, a religious and cultural side. People can be encouraged to be artistically and culturally productive. I think that's important, we can help people find the spiritual life, the religious life, by encouraging them to be spiritually and culturally productive. I think a congregation really starts to take off when its members have the ability and freedom to put on a cultural thing or two.

SB Perhaps I could ask you to extend this thought about cultural regeneration. I just wonder whether your studies of Steiner's thoughts about linguistic development have prompted you to envisage, or discern, fruitful developments in this regard in other areas, that is, not exclusively connected with the priesthood but in other cultural domains? I think we have agreed that we are living in a period of cultural sickness and we're looking quite obviously for ways of bringing regeneration.

RD One of the things that encourages me is to see that there are large numbers of people in the world – at any rate in Britain – who have become aware of this fact and, through their own being, their own character, their own creativity, have chosen to take hold of it and try to lift culture up again. You can have people who are quite untrained. I heard an educational assistant speaking about her work in the classroom and, because she's been a mother and had brought up children, even without any education or training whatsoever, she was able to engage with a child who was having difficulty and simply encourage and open him up so that he felt it to be fruitful. I think that's got to be one of the most important things that can happen. And then there's the work that people are doing harnessing the energies of people who would otherwise be wasting their time in vandalism, people who've got a heart, people who've got some integrity. Perhaps those are the missing Platonists, perhaps they are the missing Michaelites, who are so busy getting on with it, providing culture, that they haven't found the Society! I'm deeply impressed – these are the people I want to hear – they are dotted all over the place. I mentioned an educational assistant, but the same goes for teachers. There are teachers out there in the State sector who have a wonderful picture of human beings. I was so heartened when a

senior teacher said that these children's exams amounted to child abuse! I remember as a schoolboy really thinking that the world was about to come to an end. During the Suez Crisis we really thought that the world was going to blow up. And who would have thought that Communism would have come to an end? And now more and more the dark areas are getting darker, but there are more and more individuals with inner light and power who are going out to transform their own realm. So things have got bigger and bigger and bigger, as we have moved from tribes up to nations; but then you can start again with individuals, small teams of people, people who have got courage and a vision. And that is what is happening today.

SB I find that very heartening. It reminds me of the words of Christopher Fry in *A Sleep of Prisoners*. "Affairs are now soul size..."[1]

RD This is a brilliant use of language: soul size. It unites two opposite meanings, really. Soul size is great, but it's also small enough to be manageable. I don't know if you agree. But in this simple phrase this man has been able to combine two pictures. Because the soul *is* great, it's also manageable.

I have to say that some of the things that are said in the public domain are really quite outrageous – what politicians say about the various wars ...

[1] The human heart can got to the lengths of God
Dark and cold we may be, but this
Is no winter now. The frozen misery
Of Centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move;
The thunder is the thunder of the floes,
The thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring.
Thank God our time is now when wrong
Comes up to face us everywhere,
Never to leave us till we take
The longest stride of soul men ever took.
Affairs are now soul size
The enterprise
Is exploration into God.
Where are you making for? It takes
So many thousand years to wake,
But will you wake for pity's sake?...

(*A Sleep of Prisoners* was first performed at the University Church, Oxford on 23rd April 1951)

On this question of culture, there are, I think, two major threats. One threat is that culture seems to be running out of energy, except for these people we've talked about. There's another dimension where there seems to be a powerful urge to stamp out culture in order to bind people, to control them. I don't want to go into political areas in this context, but some of the things spoken by major political powers are so transparently manipulative and just destructive, wanting power over people. I would hope that the people out there who do believe in the human being and the individual can find a way through. It's only through integrity of word that some of these things can be refuted. I'm just puzzled, because every American you meet and talk to seems to be a totally cultured and intelligent humanitarian person. But how all these people can have such a regime ... maybe one can say the same thing about the British, or any other nation! I was talking to a Frenchman recently – a student I encountered in the seminary – and we agreed that, while we both thought the English and the French to be wonderful individuals, the nation as a whole was terrible! This is a riddle to me, a factor that needs resolving. Maybe individuals are finding renewal, and not yet the nations. And here and there you get a nation who takes a step of renewal because of their leader. There's this situation in the Philippines now. I always think of Gorbachov, and the stand he took. He may not have lasted politically. There are people who reach situations which become powerful – I don't know his name, but I praise the man – I think he was a Dane or Swede – who brought the Israelis and the Palestinians to the conference table some years ago. But there are some whopping lies being passed off as truth.

SB I find it incredible. You almost can't bear even to waste energy being annoyed with them...

RD Yes. You really wonder how they think they'll get away with it. But I've taken these on board. I can see that the adversary is absolutely tireless, but he's so lacking in culture, really. But I think that these grotesque things that are said and done really will wake people up. And since I was younger there are these political parties which try to address these things. So I'm optimistic; but there are these few battles for the word that I'm determined to fight on with.

An Improvisation on the Theme of Educational Intuition

Martyn Rawson

Introduction

At a foreign language teacher's conference recently the question was put, how do we develop intuition in our teaching by which was meant: how do we know how to do the right thing at the right moment?[1] It seemed an unreasonable question so I tried to give it a reasonable answer. This improvisation arose out of discussions between myself and Peter Lutzker conducted over about seven years.

The story

It is not known where William Shakespeare was on the morning of the 5th September 1607. We know he was on tour with the King's Men. On the 7th of September they played Oxford. Perhaps he was sleeping or writing in a room above a tavern in Oxford.

Far away on that same morning a swollen estuary rimmed with dense tropical forest opens into a wide bay. The water is oily and chocolate brown with sediment. The swell rolls in from the Atlantic, rocking the three-masted caravelle on its anchor, the sails furled, heavy and grubby. Timbers creak. On the quarter deck an awning has been rigged up. Although it is still morning, the sun burns down, casting intense shadows on the bleached deck boards.

A crowd has gathered including an English naval officer and several Africans in blue cotton robes, heavy gold anklets and chunky necklaces, ritual scars on their gleaming faces. The Europeans present are sweating under their linen shirts and woollen doublets. Across the bay comes the howl of Colobus monkeys in the forest canopy.

[1] This answer assumes a background of modern language teaching methodology such as outlined in Johannes Kiersch: Foreign Language Teaching in Waldorf Schools, SSF Publications

Two men come up the deck hatch with halberds:
Who's there?
Nay, answer me: stand and unfold yourself
Long live the King!
Bernardo?
He
You come most carefully upon your hour.
'Tis now struck twelve, get thee to bed, Francisco.
For this relief much thanks-'tis bitter cold, and I am sick at heart.

After a few minutes the sun rises higher and a flock of grey parrots screech downriver, the hero appears,

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

In many ways the foc'sul of a Jacobean warship resembled a stage. A few days later they performed Richard 11. The Dragon was anchored off Sierra Leone on route to India. As well as officers, sailors and marines, the crew (or passengers) included a troupe of actors. Perhaps they also performed to the Great Moghul when they got to India. It was after all world theatre.

The Process

This story comes from Michael Woods' recent book *In Search of Shakespeare*, the book of the BBC TV series and remarkably, it is true. This fragment of cultural history, like an archaeological find, begins to tell us something about Shakespeare, about Jacobean drama, about early English colonial history and navigation and perhaps also something about actors. What circumstances persuaded this troupe of actors to set sail in 1607 for India, with a tour of West African harbours thrown in? Was poverty, ambition, foolhardiness, the need to escape or simply the need to work? Had they any idea what they were letting themselves in for? Or perhaps this was far more common than we realise. Perhaps they were seasoned travellers, an international touring company. Hamlet, on a ship in 1607, translated into Portuguese... The play was only written six or seven years before. The phrase 'Heart of Darkness' drifts past on the tide; just how far apart were West African and West European cultures in those days? Questions emerge from the murky layers of cultural sediment. What was going on and how much have we lost?

The point is, these images, filled out with sounds and scents and colours open up the imagination. They make one think and imagine. They trigger memories and associations; it stimulates the will to know. The very process hints at new discoveries, new insights and new levels of understanding. Personally I find the story inspiring, not least because it brings together the only two subjects that most engaged my youthful mind at university, Shakespeare and West African history.

Shakespeare gave us the image – *all the world's a stage*. Over the stage at the Globe Thetare on the gabled lantern could be read: *totus mundus agit historionem*. Now here off the coast of Sierra Leone was the stage down the surface of the globe, out in the world!

The plot thickens

Shakespeare gave us Hamlet, the prototype of the observer who both stands back from the world and watches but also acts. The romantic view of Hamlet as the melancholic uncertain and unable to act is a poor reading. He could act and act and call upon actors to act but he could also observe. Hamlet's ambiguity, his existential tragedy anticipated the modern and post-modern condition. He (Hamlet and perhaps also Shakespeare?) was a man perched on the edge of the condition, the state of mind Rudolf Steiner described as the consciousness soul. Hamlet was a man in whom the world stage was already partly internal. Hamlet may have studied in Wittenberg, Luther's alma mater but the Ghost takes us right back into the old World of spirits. Young Hamlet looks from his world of doubt back into a spiritual world of certainty – Old Hamlet has no doubt. Shakespeare, like Hamlet, stood with one foot in the world of spiritual certainty, the old faith and one foot in the uncertainties of rational doubt. The former we see as insubstantial, the latter as terra firma, but that does not delude us about the nature of certainty.

William Shakespeare (of whom Jorge Luis Borges memorably said: before or after dying he found himself in the presence of God who told him, "I have dreamt the world as you have dreamt your work, my Shakespeare, and among the forms in my dreams are you, who like myself are many and no one.") was many things and yet invisible to us. He was ambiguity personified – as the sonnets beautifully illustrate. He was an individual whose roots remained profoundly embedded in the Old Religion and English folk soul yet whose mind roamed far into the universality of humanity. From what little we know of his biography it appears he went to great lengths to be a nobody whilst being moderately famous. That is understandable. In his day the theatre of the public

execution rivalled and pricked the conscience of the public Theatre of drama.

A culture of time

The medieval world picture had been erased by Henry V111's Bildersturm. 99% of all pictorial images and statues were destroyed in less than a generation. It was not just the religious persecution, though that was bad enough; it was the brutal end of a society with a collective consciousness and a faith as tenacious as strip linchets in the landscape. It was not only about Catholicism, it was also about a folk identity linked less to the nation than to the landscape. What replaced it was nationhood and individuality. And Shakespeare contributed more than any single individual to both, in his way as an artist. Instead of the individual awakening to selfhood in a culture embedded in a place, in a particular landscape, individuality began to grow in time rather than space. The re-birth of English culture through the language coincided with the birth of the nation as an idea rather than a quality limited to a geographical place. English culture grew outwards with the English language and became a state of mind superimposed upon history. That is essentially why it is the world language. It has obviously little to do with the culture of Bush and Blair which globally could not be less unpopular.

Shakespeare belonged to the new generation of the Word. He was its greatest inspiration and creator. What medieval art had iconically portrayed was metamorphosed into an art in time, into words and of course music. And with it came visions of New Worlds, reaching even into the oldest parts of Warwickshire. But that was then and this is now.

The shiftiest paradigm of all

"*The human being is not simply an observer of the world. Rather the human being is the world stage upon which the great cosmic events continuously play themselves out.*"

Rudolf Steiner tells us that. All the world may still be a stage but that stage has become internalised. It lives within us. We are the stage upon which cosmic events unfold, not simply our own biographical dramas but those of humankind at a cosmic level. Steiner slipped that revolutionary idea into the third lecture of The Study of Man (also known as "The Foundations of Human Experience" or even once more

"Study of Man" as the new *Classic Translation* edition asserts in revisionist mode) at about the stage in the proceedings that one would add salt to dough- not too soon to inhibit the yeast but not too late that the whole thing can metamorphose.

A vital clue

This is a vital clue to understanding how we come to pedagogical intuition.

The theatre of childhood

Let us for a moment consider the pedagogical implications of this new situation. Imagine a child who experiences an extreme form of being a public theatre with a cosmic stage in her own soul. Every thing in the child's environment is experienced as soul, as inner experience, as happening to her. Heroes strut and fret their hour upon this little stage, lovers die in each others arms, webs of lies are spun to trap jealous heroes, elves and fairies sprinkle magic, Hal turns his kingly back on poor Jack and so on and so forth. There is no theme that children are not capable of playing out in their play.

To some extent this condition is common to all people under the age of six years old, though without the exaggerated "I" consciousness. The little stage of their souls resounds to a continuous programme, some profound and some trivial, some tragic and some comic and sometimes cosmic.

The Spirit of Language, for example lives in the child's soul, comes to expression through the child's soul and enables the child to acquire her mother tongue and thus acquire the potential to recognise and learn other languages and not just verbal languages – also body language, text language, symbolic language and the language of ideas. Language becomes an organ that not only shapes the brain but the mind too. The Spirit of Language, a cosmic being if ever there was one, makes good use of the stage the small child's dreaming soul provides. So too unfortunately does the Spirit of Anxiety, among others.

But the child who experiences cosmic events in her own soul can respond in different ways; too much action can provoke her to hyperactivity. We may diagnose this as attention deficit disorder. There is too

much programme and none of it anchored in meaning (a condition similar to having too many TV channels to choose from, none of which offer any kind of satisfying nourishment). Meaning is partly gained from grownups, not so much in what they say as in what they do. But it is also absorbed from life. If the drama of the soul is drawn directly from life, however ghastly, it at least has meaning, because life is the basis for meaning; it is the context or medium within which meaning is continuously and endlessly created. We swim in the sea of meaning. Once that was enough to give life meaning. Now we have to step out of the sea to see it. But as Michael Rose put it: too much swimming in the sea of life keeps us asleep; too much consciousness and our vitality is drained, desiccated and shrivelled up. The child immersed in the sea images, like an inverted form of drowning can have the opposite response; overload, crash and shutdown. The individual draws the curtains, pulls down the shutters, or allows only selective participation. We sometimes call this condition autism.

In less extreme circumstances we can experience this world openness in the form of empathy, that wonderful female quality without which the rest of us would be reduced to train spotting. Though, even train spotters fall in love, sometimes, apparently. The male autistic tendency has been positively characterised as the tendency to systemise, which we also need if we are not only to dream.

I and you

When we open our soul to another – and they open their soul to us – we can meet in empathy. Empathy is the invitation to perform on my stage. Empathy is a quality which makes it possible for cosmic events to be experienced in our souls. Perhaps equally important it is a quality we *need* to be able to deal with that experience. The opposite gesture of autism leads us to fold in around ourselves. It is not that the outer world cannot enter; it is more that we prevent ourselves from uniting with it.

The higher merger of these two polarities, extreme empathy and autism, appears to me to be something like what Steiner called "the perceptive power of thought" (anschauende Urteilskraft). This enables me to grasp the structures whilst experiencing the qualities. Subject and object merge yet consciousness can identify each when the need arises. I need not be lost or swamped by the drama in my soul, though usually I am.

Are we

"The forces which are at work within my body are the same as those which exist outside. Therefore I really am the things – not, however, 'I' in so far as I perceive myself as subject, but 'I' in so far as I am part of the cosmic world-process." Steiner developed this basic idea from Goethe and it neatly describes our fundamental modern condition. The energy that makes the world go round makes me go round too. That is easier for philosophers to deal with than say neurosurgeons – though mostly even philosophers have baulked at the thought. It probably literally gave them stomach-ache. If they had paid more attention to the stomach-ache, they would have grown wise.

Luckily for me this condition arises in only a modified way. If I were actually to be exposed to the cosmic events going on I would burn up or burn out. I cannot experience the world directly otherwise I would lose myself in visionary hallucinations or nightmares. Such hallucinations are not unknown to us today, but are usually overlooked in polite conversation.

Does it matter?

Which brings us to the mind-matter problem ("I don't mind and it doesn't matter" as Spike Milligan put it). Despite tons of paper having been printed on the subject of the mind's relationship to the brain's matter, we are still no nearer understanding the relationship (that 's what Professor Steven Pinker concluded after 600 pages explaining *How the Mind Works*). Brain scientists to a man (and Drs Susan Blackmore, Catherine Lutz and Rita Carter) see consciousness as a brain state – thus rendering the cosmic events on the stage of our consciousness mere figments of our imagination, or more likely figments of the computational algorithms they say underpins what we call mind.

Nevertheless in the spirit of our master William Blake (in the battle against materialism, philistinism and general reductionism – which Blake and also Steiner somewhat unfairly held Bacon, Locke and Newton responsible for) let us proceed along the path known as "*if the fool were to persist in his folly he would become wise.*"

Does it mind?

Let's say there are a variety of brain states. William James the American philosopher and brother of Henry noted that waking consciousness is

only one type of consciousness "*whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness, entirely different. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these forms of consciousness quite disregarded.*"[2] These filmy screens have proved pretty opaque to science, despite Freud's best attempt to establish a role for the unconscious, at least until recently.

The cognitive scientist Colin Martindale describes *six* types of consciousness, which I have expanded to include the follow experiences:

- Waking consciousness, problem-orientated thought, directed directly towards our present situation
- Realistic imagination; problem-solving, visualising, remembering, mental picturing
- Autistic fantasy, train of consciousness detached from immediate external context, inner voice internal dialogue
- Reverie, day dreaming, undirected fantasy
- Hypnagogic states (falling asleep), visual and auditory (even tactile) hallucinations, threshold consciousness
- Dreaming including non-visual experiences, out of body experiences
- Unconsciousness (my addition because it is an active state of mind even if by definition we cannot know it directly without being clairvoyant), activity of will
- Spiritual consciousness in various modes: imagination, inspiration, intuition as Steiner describes them

These states overlap and form a continuum from our attention being outward directed to being inward directed, from waking consciousness to sleep; from consciousness in act of perception to process-consciousness, "the perceptive power of thought" (Steiner). The states of consciousness below "realistic fantasy" (in the above list) can be induced in many ways, such as through tiredness, depression, sensory deprivation, psychotropic drugs, paranoia, dance and chanting and meditation. Modern Western society tends to value the first two types of consciousness and regard the others as inconvenient at best and at worst pathological. That does not alter the fact that altered states are pretty common.

Such states have always played a very significant role in human culture but rationalism has consistently tried to suppress them or brand

[2] Quoted in David Lewis-Williams, 2004, p. 121.

them illness. However, instead of, as it were, simply drifting into the lower reaches of consciousness one can attempt to take a second pathway "within" which leads to altered states of consciousness.

The journey over the threshold of consciousness into the lower realms was always a dangerous way to go and the Mystery schools of all times have tried to guard the entrance and prepare the traveller. Anthroposophy offers a variety of guidance for those wishing to consciously follow the path "within". Rudolf Steiner described such preparation in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*. With the right preparation the soul faculties of thinking, feeling and willing can be metamorphosed into the higher spiritual faculties Steiner called imagination, inspiration and intuition.

Art and inspiration

Rudolf Steiner also spoke of the close connection between the spiritual path "inwards" towards direct spiritual experience and artistic activity. Artistic activity comes from the same source as spiritual experience. Deep in unconscious strata of our minds there are impulses which bubble to the surface like spa waters and express themselves in artistic activity – which metaphor no doubt half recalls an atavistic awareness of the link between the source and the wellsprings of the soul. To these depths the spiritual seeker must consciously (not to say boldly) go to seek the truth.

We can describe this process as one in which the relationship between our inner nature and that which the world reveals of itself (on the stage of our soul) finds new expressions in the form of activity (doing the right thing at the right time). Steiner describes the creative world in art as its analogue. As the world's inner forces and activity meet my own intentions, which consist of the individualised form of these very same forces, I act in a meaningful way. We call that intuition.

What Steiner called *seeing consciousness* (schauende Bewusstsein), an ability that can be schooled and developed through spiritual training, draws on the same sources as artistic creativity. Steiner emphasises that it is not *what* the artist produces but the source from which the artist literally draws inspiration that is common to both spiritual seeing and artistic activity. That means the *process* of creativity rather than its outcome. Real art, Steiner says begins where nothing in the outer world of sense experience is imitated, nothing sense-perceptible is taken as a model but rather something new is created. What I perceive

with my senses, what images I make in my mind, what I absorb in my activity (through imitation) melts, thaws and dissolves into an essence – a quintessence – and leaves not a wrack behind. Art and intuition arise from the activity of my "I" within this nothingness. At the highest level art is created that assumes a life of its own, retains and gains its relevance long after the immediate cultural context has faded. In Shakespeare's work such figures as Hamlet have this quality.Hamlet appears to have acquired a life of his own that can no longer be confined to the text in the Folio. Intuition is like that too. It creates new situations. An educational intuition creates a moment in which the other – the child – can reveal more of her potential.

More consciousness

But let us return to the question of consciousness again. The modern cognitive sciences and neurosciences have even more to tell us. Gerald Edelman (who first decoded the human immune system for which he was duly awarded the Nobel prize) has made the helpful distinction between primary and higher-order states of consciousness. Primary consciousness (Antonio Damasio, another key researcher calls it *core consciousness*) is the state of being aware of things in the world and being able to form some kind of mental images or representations in the present. We share this capacity with animals. This form of consciousness lacks an awareness of time and therefore also a notion of self, the one who is aware. "*Creatures with primary consciousness, whilst possessing mental images, have no capacity to view those images from the vantage point of a socially constructed self.*"[3]

Higher order consciousness, on the other hand, involves a consciousness of consciousness. It knows it is conscious of something whilst being conscious. It enables the construction of a socially based selfhood, "*long–term storage of symbolic relations, acquired through interactions with other individuals of the same species, is critical to self-concept.*"[4] That is important to note. Higher order consciousness may not be a function of relationships to others but it certainly helps us to become personalities through our relationships with others.

Core or primary consciousness is a property of our experience of having a body. It is also brain bound, an expression of neural activity.

[3] Edelmann, 1994, p. 112
[4] ibid.

Higher order consciousness is a property of primary/core consciousness – as long as there is someone to experience it. That someone anthroposophy calls the "I". *The Ghost in the Machine* (Gilbert Ryle's phrase made famous by Arthur Koestler) is only really necessary to invoke at the level of core or primary consciousness, which is why neuroscience can dismiss it as yet another homunculus. However, the Ghost or the "I" in the "machinery" of core consciousness that is conscious of being conscious is not *separate* from the consciousness and thus avoids being a dualistic phantom. I and my consciousness are identical, one is not the property of the other. One does not watch over the other, it just seems like it. The medium of higher order consciousness is naturally language, and not just spoken language. Language structures higher order consciousness and enables us to communicate. The basis for this is our sense of language, our language organ.

I and I

But what gets really interesting is the relationship of self to other. This Vygotskian linkage between meaning, self-concept and other people in a social context is, if not a product of language (usually verbal but not exclusively) at least facilitated by language and language development. It's good to know. The philosopher (who chose to characterise philosophy as a "knowledge of love" rather than a "love of knowledge") Immanuel Levinas taught that our sense of self only really awakens when we realise that someone else recognises *us* as someone else. This recognition of self is the basis for a knowledge of the world. I realise I am when I observe that you relate to me as another "I" – usually referred to as "you". I feel with and for you. Therefore I feel what it is to be you and therefore discover what it is to be me. Empathy is the first stage to self-knowledge.

To know someone, to understand who they are, where they have come from and where they are coming, demands empathy, the selfless opening of the soul to what the other has to say, without loss of our own identity (otherwise we would get washed downstream).

Let us look at language again. Language learning; what is that? Learning a language is learning to dwell in the medium of that language. It is a skill and as such is a property of a whole system of relations between an individual (the learner) and her environment. Theoretically it may be possible to learn a skill such as language in solitary confine-

ment (should this ever happen to me I shall ask to have one luxury, a teach-yourself Russian book so I can try out this theory and stay sane) but one would have to *imagine* at least one other person in some kind of other context to communicate with – much as Tom Hanks did as the FedEx Castaway with his volley-ball deity – a notion which elevated the film beyond one's amazement at Hank's ability to put on and lose weight during the course of the filming.

The skill of language

Skills are generated; they are grown organically in context. A skill, such as language ability, continuously adapts to the nuances of the practitioner's relationship to the material as the task unfolds (which is true of pottery, stone tool making, piano playing – remember the Piano in the jungle?) I live in a context where German is spoken so I have to learn to swim in this sea (with my head up of course). I learn the German I need for the tasks that arise in my work. Skills are also not learned through transmission of rules (if only foreign language teachers would trust in this fact!) but develop through a mixture of improvisation and imitation in the setting of practice. Learning through doing really is a far more effective method of learning than any other method known. This applies to language learning but also to any skill. The word *improvisation* is similar in meaning to the word play, except that it is slightly less open and is slightly more goal orientated. A play (i.e. written to be performed) is another set of rules to guided improvisation – the play enacted anew at each performance.

To improvise one has to enter a space (the stage, whatever that may mean in a given situation) willingly (trepidation is also allowed and may even be helpful) and ... then what? Well, from a certain rational point of view one tries various things out, experiments, goes through the motions. No, that will not do. To improvise is to act in empathy with what comes, with what reveals itself within us. The quality of this will obviously relate to the degree of openness we allow. Improvisation certainly does not mean thinking something up and acting it out. The clown improvises out of the audience's response. The actor improvises out of the playwright's script (the same could be said of the musician). The teacher improvises out of what the children bring. In each case we bring learned skills and knowledge to bear.

Speaking

"Speaking" wrote Tim Ingold, "is not a discharge of representations in the mind but an achievement of the whole organism-person in an environment: it is closely attuned and continuously responsive to the gestures of others, and speakers are forever improvising on the basis of past practice in their efforts to make themselves understood in a world that is never quite the same from one moment to the next."[5]

That goes for understanding too. Understanding in practice is a process of enskilment, in which learning is inseparable from doing and in which both are embedded in the context of a practical engagement in the world – in other words understanding is also a form of dwelling.

What happens when I engage my imagination? I am active inwardly. I dwell in my inner experience. When I reflect on my experiences and plan my future actions (as a teacher for example) I am rehearsing my actions. However in the classroom, in life when I do something, I am not simply enacting the plan – I hope – but rather I am recreating in situ, in context something new. Even a piece of music that has been played before and is notated in notes on paper has to be re-created anew. Each pot on the potter's wheel has to be thrown, each sentence spoken. Even when the script has been rehearsed a good actor still has to recreate the role anew each afternoon (or hot morning off the coast of Sierra Leone) on the stage before the live audience.

The Translators

Let us return to Sierra Leone and the performance of the touring company on board the Dragon. Let us imagine that there were translators, whispering the translation of the players' words, probably into Portuguese, for the African dignitaries. Anyone who has ever done this will know that it only works if the translator totally immerses himself in the flow of language *and* the listening of the audience. The good translator takes in the words whilst observing the listener's response and then subtly responds himself to their response. Like Hamlet. Unlike Hamlet observing the courtiers observing the self-conscious King, watching the play in which a King is murdered in the play within the play, the translator participates, becomes a player but one who serves not his own ends but those of the matter in hand – if it is well done. This

[5] Tim Ingold, 2001, p 401

requires a great level of empathy and selflessness, yet requires equally great presence of mind – "I" strength – to understand in doing. Without understanding the translation will be incomprehensible at any depth. In this sense it is a skill.

The act of educational intuition, when it occurs is like participating in a dialogue in which the language consists of the intentions and needs of the participants, the players. Observing and acting in tandem.

Icons
A sequence of poems

Martin Schmandt

Introduction

Painted icons focus and support that intense inner activity in which spiritual energy infuses the soul. These poems, which first arose out of receptive silence following active prayer, share something of the same devotional mood. They are also formed, despite the radical difference in medium, out of a feeling for some of the compelling characteristics of painted icons, such as an intimate scale embracing monumental forms; the dark, finely modelled details caught against the bright, a-spatial gold; and the ecstatic, churning music that might pattern a drapery. To me, it is largely such qualities which, in a master's hands, give the best icons their power.

Painted icons are images of a venerated being, most often the Christ, in poses prescribed by tradition. If these poems evoke something of the presence of Christ, they do so not through a countenance but through a voice, through language, which, before and after all, is of Christ's own nature as Logos. The "I" of the poems should not be read as a personal I, any more than the face a Novgorod master depicts should be considered a self-portrait.

Admittedly, the poems are not at all "iconic" in the sense of having a conventional formulaic style. But it is the challenge of the poems that daily experience in its unique specificity can have a devotional dimension. The sequence is in this sense both biography and a spiritual journey.

Such a journey involves meeting many thresholds, crossing some of them and kneeling helpless for a time before others. I do not know if the present age is unique in its opportunities at the thresholds between sense and spirit, inner and outer, potential and actual, or in its resistance before them. But because vital poetry can not only reveal and articulate, but enact the drama occurring at these thresholds, the present is cer-

tainly a stimulating as well as a desperate time for one concerned with poetry.

Language does not have to be poetic to effect on some level a crossing of the threshold between one consciousness and another – it would not be language at all if it failed to do that. But the drama of evolution, like the spiritual growth of the person, is played out at the border between the unconscious and the conscious. This is where poetic language emerges and works most potently, not chain-fashion in time but by the mutual infusion of whole and part. Poetry integrates, and its immediacy, its rhythms, evocations and paradoxes arouse the reader's or listener's own imagination. It thus offers ways of perceiving and communicating that can lead us, or at least point us, beyond the isolation brought about no less by our apparent knowledge than by our apparent ignorance. Poetic perception is a deed – and this is perhaps true whether or not pen ever touches paper. It does not transcend the living of life, but enriches it with the awareness of its spiritual motion. Poetic utterance is a further deed: as it opens new possibilities in language, it redraws, for all who encounter it, the boundaries of experience.

ICONS

Icon *i*

You wrest a rippling current into cord;
you knot it into net, then
rasp against it, fashion scale
refractory and silver, and gasp
till you inhale by shallow gill.

To pray, you slap your tail.
To answer you, I fuel
the cooking fire; but still
you call me cruel.

Icon *ii*

At no safe distance,
over no hill to south and east,
suspended red in no mist
this radiance breaks.

Man of winter,
hinting high desires out of season:

our truthful earth,
her shoulder to horizon,
dead husk heavy,
and fervent for a song the birds return

will burn through
will seethe at no safe distance when
a cracking seed committing to the seam, you speak
releasing so a summer's green heat,
your back
in flames (the sun is terrified
each time it is new)

and she, erupt with poppies, hosannas in the trees

makes a bright and screaming god
of you.

Icon *iii*

Arms wide,
the carrying air
fingers a lightning-blackened twist
of oak on the hillside, where
you spoke to her, and whitely
the birch at your side;

and fold your hands in prayer,
for I am flight, and flight's grace
making a single bird
of here and there.

Icon *iv*

I am the door ajar
and the robber grows fat;
I am the door ajar
and the rough wind riots;

I am the door ajar
and the black stray claws,
the rawness bites.

You send for the thief,
the claw, the wind

that
no matter who blow in

you, you go out
through the door I am.

Icon *v*

I scrape sand
off an Andean rock
and blend it in Turkish glass.
I dry an Alaskan tear
by smiling in Egypt. Friend,

every opening eyelid lifts
a blade, green, from my plain;

but surest, vivid,
is love I deliver
by sowing it into the soil that covers
any one
of your thousand quiet graves.

Icon *vi*

You whose supplications come
as, coiled on summer stone, an adder
supplicates the sun,

I have no ear
but your voice, I am
no dram to heal you, save

what streams from the bite
when your side is pierced
by the fang in a sister's fate.

Icon *vii*

A reflected gaze, a leaf afloat
contend with
transparency's depth;

and the grip of the detailed grain of the bottom
fails to convey

how constantly the spring renews

a constant surface
constantly flowing away.

Icon *viii*

Life and death, yes,
and worm-hold on the vein.

Distance I avow.
Sea-lurk, the trekking sand, and cirrus-veer
high in the sheer ice wind.

Lands erupt between,
cities maze, lives intervene.

Moraine-slow or lightning,
I am each traverse.
Each cannot but cross.
No stasis and no severance I abide.

Breathe, speak. Let

the summersun rage – it will not rule
the winter;
and see
how all of the little children
leap into the pool.

Icon *ix*

The story you are telling now breadcrumbs the train
you'll always tell, grey *you've always told:*

a lover you're not holding now
you never held, rain lavender a melody
the pattern on the pane – these miser
to memory and hope *you'll never hold:*

and not that hawthorn-turn is false
and the round red berry
preclude the snowy-blossomed May be true;
no longer image
but a bearing the mind's hurl
scythe-curve of a wing

now is deep as death. It draws up
all the root of you.

Icon *x*

(therefore

I propose nothing, offer no pursuit
but a rose's, which, as you pass,

blossoms the plant of your passing,
enroses

the grey, crunching petals of gravel
beneath your sepaling steps.

Poor thorn, to think of other things,
while your breathing is leaves, for the rose

so, to your passing, surrenders
your essence.

Poems and Poetics

Paul Matthews

UM

Um is a good word
to begin a sermon with

though my friend says
there isn't a place for it
within the flow of speech.

Erm...OM...I'm
humming my way back
into that quiet syllable.

It murmurs behind stars.
All babies mumble it.

Please, friend, permit
this tingle on my lips
before I speak. Amen.
My sermon's ended.

THE ALEPH

It is ten o'clock on a Monday morning, and as I hesitate with my pen in the air I feel the stream of what I mean to write gathering in the muscles of my arm, and I can trace it further to a tension around my heart that has no words yet.

*

All the spellbound sounds that formed me before ever I could trace an alphabet are flooding back to me this morning: the clink of milk bottles; blackbird on the silver birch; Jack Spratt; Little Jack Horner; Jack-I'm-Off-To-Seek-My-Fortune jiggety jolt upon the old carthorse that was

my mother's knee. And stories of course: The Fierth Bad Wabbit; Jason and the Golden Fleas; the Lion the Witch and the time when far too advanced for me but my ear was open my mother spoke Milton's words by heart of Satan tumbling headlong into Hell because at that time and a long time after she felt damnation was her own condition. Or in London with my father back from the war we would go down to the river looking for Saxon harps in the mud when the tide was out. He read me the story of the Great Fire which destroyed the old St. Paul's in the very place of its burning, yes, and what about all those Bible stories that got stocked up in my bones when I was a choirboy so that now as I write I expect everyone to know them? And as my pen gathers momentum I find myself within the resonances of a shell, not knowing among the sea-sounds that surround me whether I speak or listen or how to hold the thread of what I am trying to say when all these inflections and innuendoes and embedded metaphors from childhood and half-forgotten books and back to Babylon keep meaning themselves through me.

What better place to begin than with the letter "A"? *The beginning of learning* and the door of heaven, is what that madman Christopher Smart called it. Its shape comes from the head of an Ox, they say, and "Ox", according to my dictionary, is, 1: "Any bovine animal." 2: "Castrated male of the domestic species". It was Smart's strong conviction that there is life in language, a generative power. The prevalent view of the matter, however, would go along with the gelded version, holding that language is a domestic arrangement, an information technology which in itself is devoid of life and mystery. I suppose that ever since people began to think about language, instead of simply living inside the spell of it, a tension has existed between these two views – the magical and the rational. Perhaps the very act of thinking about words is what severs the Ox from its magic potency. That; or in encountering some untamed element of the Aleph we do indeed stand in jeopardy of being tossed into a madness.

The French poet, Arthur Rimbaud, suffered this tension within himself. *Weak-minded people,* he wrote, *beginning by thinking about the first letter of the alphabet, would soon rush into madness.* In the overweening confidence of his youth when, by his own confession, he considered himself *Magus or Angel, exempt from all morality,* he made that famous sonnet in which he claims that each vowel has a colour, and that

the sounding of them conjures up images in the mind: *A, black velvety jacket of brilliant flies which buzz around cruel smells, gulfs of shadow.* Following a deliberate path of poetic initiation, he battered at the conventions imposed on language by *the one-eyed intellect* until its vowels became for him five Hallelujahs heralding a change of consciousness. *One must be deader than a fossil,* he wrote, *to finish a dictionary in any language.* And yet only a couple of years later, at the point of renouncing poetry altogether, he dismissed his *Alchemy of the Word* with its rules for *the form and movement of each consonant* as one of his *follies.* I can understand why he did so. He was, for sure, rushing into madness through his *rational disordering of all the senses.* But I am not prepared to admit that he merely "invented" this relationship between words and movement, sound and image. Was it folly when he wrote, *The first adventure on the path was when a flower told me its name*? I don't believe so, even though, in leaving his tormented adolescence behind, he felt the need to spurn such magic. Such a communion is what I, too, seek through language, and this is served by attending to the cadence of each line and sentence and to the colour of every sound in context (including, of course, the person we are talking to) until language becomes a substance shared as well as a communication about a subject.

How could I dismiss it when, in the depth of their craft, some of the poets I most admire admit to a sense that the sap of language streams within the veins of nature and sustains it. The American poet, Robert Duncan, for instance: *As I came needing wonder as the new shoots need water/to the letter A that sounds its mystery in Wave and in Wane/ trembling I bent as if there were a weight in words.* Or, going further back, there is Samuel Taylor Coleridge with his dream vision of Kubla Khan's garden *where Alph the sacred river ran/Through caverns measureless to man* – the images, he claimed, rising up before him as things, *with a parallel production of their correspondent expressions.* Or I think of William Blake's description of the innocent poet who, plucking a reed to use as *a rural pen,* dips it in the stream for ink, as if to allow Nature herself to trace her alphabet.

The further back we go, in fact, the more we find that the very sounds and rhythms of the language give voice to the elemental qualities of the landscape in which they are written or spoken. No doubt Dr. Johnson, in the C18th, felt justified in his attempt to have the meanings and spellings "reduced to alphabets" within the confines of his famous dictionary, for how, *with a wild and barbarous jargon* that refused to lie down in its stall, could the scientists of his time record the results of their

experiments? I, too, love lexicons. Yet how savourless my measured words seem compared to the Hey Diddle Diddles and Hopscotch rhymes of childhood, or the rocks and cliffs that utter themselves through the consonants of those Anglo-Saxon Scops and Gleemen who first forged our language.

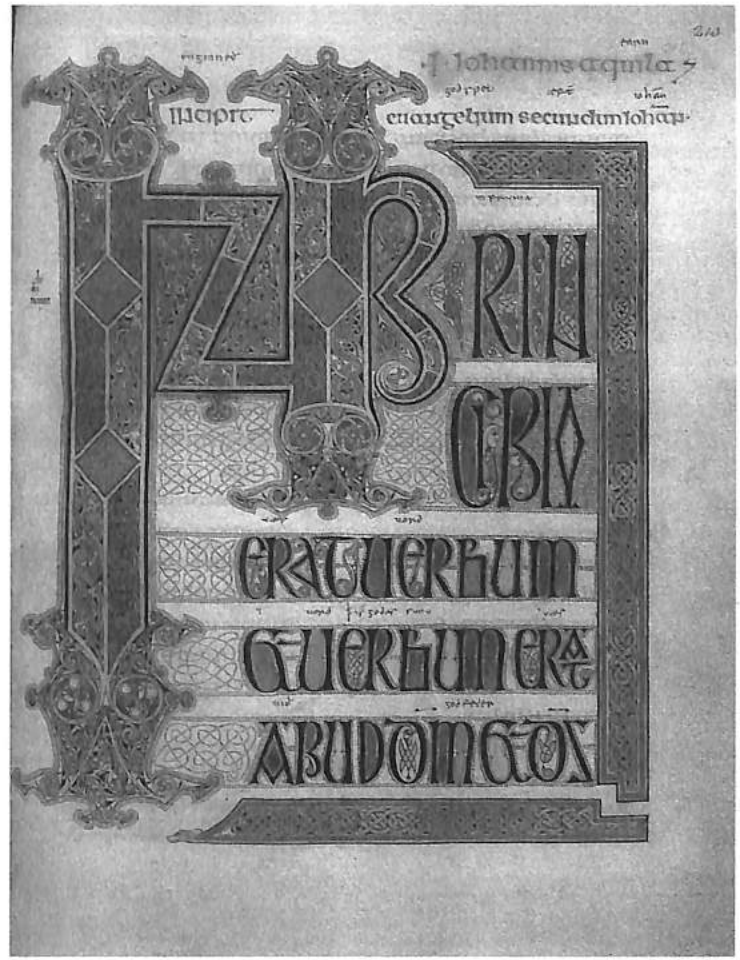
THE WORD IN THE BEGINNING.

I am looking at a page that Eadfrith made thirteen centuries ago on the island of Lindisfarne. It is the opening of St. John's Gospel – *In Principio erat verbum* – except that in the way he wrote it all the words run into each other, making the reading difficult. *In the beginning was the Word.* He made it in honour of his friend, St. Cuthbert.

When I was a child I often stayed with relations just across from "Holy Island", as we called it. At low tide, when we drove over the causeway, my grandmother, who had a high regard for words, would remind us not to say *pig* lest we shocked the natives. We had to call them *articles* instead. Why? Maybe St. Cuthbert himself decreed it when he was Bishop of Lindisfarne.

There aren't any pigs in the book that Eadfrith gave us. But I do see that the letters are woven about with all kinds of other animals: dog's heads, sea snakes, a bird nestled into God's own Name, yes, and long green cormorants twining their necks into every cranny of divinity. Bewilderment is my first response; these Celtic knots and DNAs embroidering this Saxon page whirl me away, make me giddy. Clearly, in the beginning, God's creatures are not yet settled inside their skins! But, if I dare to keep looking, I see that the patterns do eventually resolve themselves, holding some order within this chaos. Why does he turn the 'N' of the first word on its side? I suppose it's to say that clarity of communication is not his only purpose.

In the beginning was the Word. St. John was his favourite saint, I think. This is my favourite page. How beautifully he incorporates the creatures of the island into the 'In' that St. John begins his gospel with. St. Cuthbert ate only one onion and one leek a week. My grandmother told me that he stood every morning up to his neck in the cold water until the seals came to lick him warm and dry. But this wonderful book that Eadfrith made for him shows little sign of such renunciation. It is true that, to humble himself before his Maker, he leaves corners of the work unfinished. But look how Creation is held there within the Word and the Word is resonant in every veil and spiral of Creation. That is



what I long for – this seemingly impossible thing – to speak a language that is not hitched on to nature, not just words about the world, but one with it.

Skill alone does not achieve this. I do not envy Eadfrith his cold hands. I am glad that the North Sea storms can't reach me in my Scriptorium. Yet it was only through such a courageous dedication to his craft, sustained by his great love for the Logos revealed in the least of God's creatures, that he achieves this union of word and image, allowing the rhythms of the waves, the cries of the Kittiwakes, to wash over the margins of his page and into the blues and greens that he was shaping.

Years later, when he was in his grave and his island desecrated, his book got lost in the sea. Then somebody dreamt to look for it on the beach when the tide was out and there it was, miraculously preserved for us. With so much sea associated with the thing no wonder it keeps shifting away from my attempts to read it.

It was a fine inspiration to portray *Johannis aquila* as the one Gospel writer without a pen in his fist. Placing his hand upon his breast he looks out of the page and speaks the beatings of his heart directly. Eadfrith tried his best to sustain that flow in his writing – by running some of the words together as speakers do, by leaving it to us readers to

aspirate the unwritten vowels of *D(eu)m* and *D(eu)s* at the bottom of the page. Yet as his scribe even he could not stay entirely in the realm of the living. Many Oxen of the Aleph had to die to provide the vellum for him to write on. Some of the hairs still cling to it today. Probably his many coloured inks came from the sap of plants or from insects. Did he write with a dead bird's feather? We should never forget that about writing; it involves a death. In this case, however, the scribe redeems the butcher. *The hand that writes the Lord's Word acquires the ability to heal and to bless.*

Some 200 years later another writer, Aldred, took the spaces that Eadfrith left between the lines as an invitation to add his Anglo-Saxon version to the text. He too knew the power of words. Calling himself an *unworthy and most miserable priest*, he offered his glossing of St. John for the good of his own soul. Some of the old Rune magic is still present in his alphabet. But Johnny Eagle never agitated his quill the way he did with Eadfrith, I fancy. Ignoring the lovely elisions of the script, Aldred divided word from word, vowel from colour, taking the inevitable step towards a more informational language.

Since then, of course, we have taken this crucifiction of the Word much further. How could language make us giddy now that every word comes processed through our fingertips? *In the beginning was the Word?* It was a Big Bang, surely. Utterly loud and loveless. But who is the fair-haired person that stands beside the second "I" of *principio?* It is (apart from the portraits of the Evangelists) the only human figure to appear in this whole rendering of the Lindisfarne Gospels. Wide-eyed, gazing beyond the right-hand margin of the manuscript – it could be Eadfrith, I suppose. If he could see me now – all my dictionaries and spellchecks – checking his spells and banishing my bewilderments.

It is a death, alright. So he wouldn't understand me if I said that some part of me is glad of it. It is good to sit here in my own sunlit room and not to have the Great Word of the Cosmos sounding through me. Let it rest for a while. Having typed my words I am free to look at them as marks on white paper. It is only through a language looked at that I become conscious of myself as thinker. If it is Eadfrith there, leaning against that "I" with the corners of his mouth down-turned, then maybe he did have an inkling that in my day it would come to this. All the hieroglyphs and Godspells come to an end in us. We are free. To begin

again. He was still inside the Beginning, held within its grace. Now, for good or ill, the Beginning is inside us and we must speak it.

WHAT POETRY SERVES.

It serves community. It serves the quality of our relationships. When I stand in the presence of somebody I love the fullest destiny of my words is poetry.

Today, writing this, it is language I stand in the presence of. It, too, needs to be loved.

A language that is merely used will soon turn desolate.

Poetry is one way of loving language. It gives words a context whereby lost roots are stirred, new meaning potentized.

It reminds me that *com-pan-ions* were once bread-fellows, and that a Grace well spoken makes fellow communicants of those who share my table.

Such a loving and caressing of words works homeopathically. Though only a few may read it, a word quickened within a poem filters down till it is found even in the mouths of those who despise poetry.

The Japanese call this *Kotodama* -- the Spirit of a Word. That Spirit needs to be cared for. Otherwise, it abandons its earthly vehicle.

A graceless word is not a neutral thing. Husks of meaning work destructively – not bread enough to serve communion with.

In the act of writing poetry we stand at a verge of consciousness. Past language momentarily comes to an end in us and then – as dew on the wheat – is given back to us. As frost on a knifeblade. Is given back to us.

And the act of reading a poem? It serves perception. One way of keeping shine on a stone is to leave it where you find it. Another is to hold it in the wash of poetry.

My Japanese friends told me another thing – that the Larynx is shaped like the Buddha, and that *Buddha-Throat* is actually their name for it.

How happy and terrified I am to learn that my every utterance passes through Buddha's place. There he sits – close as I am to myself – witness to what truth or beauty rings in the words I speak.

It was *Right Speech* he advocated in his Eightfold Path – a love-filled language and a language loved. Poetry is the practice of it.

This piece first appeared in *Caduceus* in 2001 (issue 52).

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WHY BIRDS SING

(in written conversation with Ingunn Iveson)

What's language for?

For meeting, for seeing, for sorting out.

Yes; but so often it gets in the way of meeting and seeing.

When it becomes habitual it dies in a way; but still it has the potential to come alive again.

That's it. It could even come alive as we attend to each other across this table.

Probably. How would you do that?

I would listen to your questions. I would try to speak into your listening. Can you hear that bird singing?

Which? There are many – particularly two that seem almost to be answering one another.

Or is it just one? – listening to itself, then answering.

Could be – but I think and want to think that there are two of them.

They are sorting themselves out by singing.

Will they manage?

You know best. You studied such things.

I wish I had. But now they are quiet. Does that mean they managed and that we should all be singing? Or that they didn't and will never sing again?

I read in the newspaper the other day that the London sparrows are dying out because they can't hear each other sing above the noise of the traffic.

So life depends on singing or language.

I sometimes have the feeling that the birds are weaving homes for themselves out of song (not just claiming territory, I mean).

Like filling the air around them and making it familiar and warm.

Yes, and they do it for us, too. We would dissolve into boundless space without them.
And they do it without having read a word of Chomsky!

Oh, we need scholars like that – who delight in language and build such houses with it.

WALKING THE DOG.

Confident in what we mean to say, we choose words carefully; but even as we do so some ancient pedigree, refusing to lie down in its dictionary, tugs at the leash, sniffing among the roots a syllable intent upon its own mythologies.

Long buried bones this dog digs up. We are dogged my metaphors and doctrines that howl to us from the strataed mouths of ten millennia back – fearful images marrowed in seemingly dry abstractions.

And, digging down through the last lettery detritus, it's Cerberus himself we find – three-headed hound of Hades who must be appeased with a crust if ever our words are to mean what we mean them to mean.

Throw him a word, and he'll crack it open with his teeth and spew etymologies out which threaten to bewilder us with multiple meanings when only one was intended.

I'm a little afraid of this three-tongued mongrel straining there beneath the crust of language and, at the same time, I am excited to be both walked and walking on this path of unpredictable arrival.

A version of this was first published by 'Walking the Dog' Theatre Company.

AS IF.

This window
where nettles
shake. This
noise of rain
fretting the ivy.
I could keep
telling. This.
And then this.
While someone
in the distance
hammers on stone.
Keep naming
as if to snare
in my book
one moment.
Make it history.
That a nettle
shook. That ivy
trembled
in November rain.
I'm writing it down.
As if to test
is this any less
momentous than
towers falling
in a far off town.

Thinking around the Mother Tongue

Emilie Salvesen

Speech is one of the most intimate parts of our being. It is one of the principal ways we reveal our inner life to our fellow human beings. The language we speak defines our thinking habits, and to the extent that it allows us to name it, our feeling life. So which language we speak has a certain importance in defining who we are and how we present ourselves to the outside world. It also determines who we can communicate with.

There is much argument on language as it relates to young children and the formation of their identity. Some advocate the importance of one language for the child, at least until the age of three. Others emphasise the importance of using the child's extraordinary flexibility at an early age to introduce at least one other language. In an increasingly globalised world, languages meet in partnerships, in couples. Where children ensue, the question will always surface "and how will we tackle the language issue?"

Thinkers may consult theorists and decide accordingly. Many more will base their decision on instinct, and on what is most practical. My and my family's story with languages is not exemplary – it simply seeks to illustrate the depth at which language is rooted in our being and an individual's relationship to it.

My Dutch parents, rooted in butch culture and language like clogs in mud, were part of the huge immigrant wave to the New World in the 1950s. Consequently I was born a US citizen in New York. But with two butch parents, there was no doubt that my mother-tongue and family culture, and that of the two sisters that followed, would be butch. At the age of three I was well on my way to speaking – butch at home, American English with the little playmates in the park. At that juncture my parents moved to Holland where butch took the lead and English disappeared. Within a few years we had relocated again, this time to the Swiss Alps, and I started primary education in a German language Waldorf school. Now Sermon became the dominant language, though

butch was of course still the mother tongue at home. English was part of the curriculum, and to my parents' astonishment I learned it like all the little Swiss: "The three little kittens had lost their mittens" with a heavy Swiss German accentuation.

Aged 12, there were reasons for moving school, and it was decided that I should attend an English girls' school. It was one train stop from my home, and as all our family held US passports, it was deemed that I might as well learn English. I had to move swiftly from three little kittens to Charles Dickens. This I did in time, but to my English teachers' astonishment and possibly slight dismay, once English did start to flow from my lips, it flowed in an unmistakable American accent. English now became my language of learning and intellectual exploration, and has *forever* since been the language I dominate best. But butch continued as the mother tongue at home.

During the summers we often spent time in Holland for family visits. As young teenagers my sisters and I became increasingly aware that while we understood perfectly, and could make ourselves understood too, the language we spoke differed from that of our contemporaries. Our Dutch was the language of our parents, pre-war vintage, and on home ground the language was evolving, changing.

A couple of decades on and I found myself married to a Scot, living in England and mother of twins. But twins with a twist, as our boys hailed from Colombia and came to us aged almost one, pre-verbal, but of course with Spanish in their ears. Though the adoption process had been lengthy, the notice of their arrival was precisely three weeks, so that the new parents had not given much thought to "the language issue". No wonder, as there did not seem to be much of an issue. The language of our couple was English, and our future, and that of the boys, would certainly be in and around the UK. But no sooner did I have the twins in my arms than the question of language asserted itself forcefully. The dandling, the rocking, the comforting – it all flowed out in Dutch. An accelerated run-through of the language debate was required, and for me it had a clear outcome: the adult should have one language with the child and stick to it. If there were other languages around the child that was no matter, but language and individual should be one for the child. So I opted for Dutch – if that was the language that flowed so readily and naturally, so be it. My children had not had the flow of mother's milk from me, but they should have the flowing of my innermost being, in Dutch if needs be. My husband would speak English with them, and he knew enough Dutch to understand the children and

me in conversation, so that there would not be a "divided family". I have never regretted that decision.

This practice settled well in our family life, and a number of Dutch friends ensured that the twins heard the language from others than me. When the boys were five, a move to Argentina added Spanish to their repertoire. They picked up the language in the Argentine Waldorf Kindergarten with startling rapidity and a strong River Plate accent. Clearly the language was growing on a fertile soil inside them. It suited them, right down to their physical being, and for us as their parents it was a wonderful challenge to immerse ourselves in the linguistic heritage of the children who had found their way to us. During our three year in Latin America Spanish established itself as the language the boys spoke most, English as the one they spoke least (Daddy, main purveyor of English, had a busy job), but Dutch remained firmly the mother tongue.

In time, when we had moved to New Zealand and the children were about eight years old, struggling with reading and writing, the family language shifted to English. For our practical twin this was a coherent step – Daddy spoke English, his mates spoke English, he learnt in English: why complicate life with Mum's foreign language? But it did stay alive for him in the background, and as the common link to his cousins in Europe, who all grew up bi-lingual but with Dutch as a common language. For his gregarious brother Dutch stayed on as his "language with Mum". In linguistic terms the level of his Dutch is well below his physical age. His Dutch is by now also something of a hand-me-down – his adopted grandparents left the Netherlands in 1952, his mother only ever lived there between the ages of 3 and 6, and he, Colombian born, never lived there at all and has only visited it once. His most functional language is happily an accent-free English. But there is no doubt that his mother tongue is Dutch.

In our family language has been closely bound up with the building of identity – a personal one, a family and a cultural identity. But multi-lingualism can mean more than that. It can give us an experiential understanding of language as a medium, of the fact that language can only ever be an expressed approximation of a *deeper*, non-verbal reality. For us this finds expression in the fact that we may inject a word outside the linguistic context because it describes something so well. The use in English of words like Angst or Zeitgeist exemplifies this. By knowing words for the same or similar things in different languages allows us to become attentive to the "interval" between meanings expressed

differently in different languages. As this interval begins to resonate it deepens our appreciation of the spirit of each particular language and our awareness of the spirit out of which all language originates. A multiingual context can thus have the potential to become a path towards non-verbal thought and the de-materialisation of language. Our world is often perceived as linguistically shrinking and conceptually materialistic. But for very many people it is also opening up the practice of living with several languages, and hence several corresponding identities at once. This reality prises open the possibility of looking through and beyond language to the universal whence all languages originate. Multi-lingual family contexts, or the early language teaching in Steiner schools give children the possibility of "learning by doing" languages from a young age. This may help them to develop a strong yet flexible sense of self and give them the experience that while there may be many ways of looking at something here on earth, these many points of view originate from one unseen truth. I believe that we need the security of a mother tongue. I also believe that by opening up ways of perceiving the world by naming it in different ways we can counteract the prevalent materialism of language and allow the "intervals between concepts in different languages" to resound with the spirit that gives birth to all languages.

Notes on translation with special reference to the works of Rudolf Steiner

Anna Meuss

It happens quite often that someone who knows that I am a linguist comes and asks: "What does this German word mean in English?" The only answer I can give is: "I don't know." I really don't, for the meaning of a word is to a great extent also determined by the context. This holds true for all languages. Thus I may be fit, but I may also have a fit – with the word "fit" having almost the opposite meaning in the two statements.

We do not translate words, but the ideas and images presented by a speaker or a writer. Translators and interpreters ask themselves: What does this writer/speaker want to convey to the readers/audience, and which is the mood in which this is done? These three things – content, intention and mood – come above all else. The means we may use to convey them in another language may be different, depending on the spirit of that language and the people who speak it.

The longer I have been working with the books and lectures of Rudolf Steiner, the more has my respect grown. Sometimes it would be easy to say, "Well, he's put this rather awkwardly, maybe he had an off-day." Yet if you give it some time and really feel your way into exactly those awkward bits, you often get a sense of the tremendous work he did in putting things perceived in the spirit into words we can hear and see, using the language of earthly human beings. Sometimes there are passages where you do get a feeling that the exact words for what he needed to convey could not be found. This happens, for instance, with events in the earlier stages of Earth evolution, above all the Saturn and Sun stages. When you begin to sense this, it can also be a help in finding words in another language that will convey these things to readers and listeners, at least to a degree.

Rudolf Steiner was immensely truthful in presenting the results of his investigations. We have to take phrases like "as it were" or "so to say" very seriously. They are often indications that he was coming to the

limits of what language would allow him to do. Sometimes you truly feel that you are treading on holy ground, if I may put it like this (also finding it difficult to put things precisely), and it behoves the translator to be as infinitely painstaking and truthful as Rudolf Steiner was, even if it may mean that readers think that it is you, the translator, who is being awkward (something we seek to avoid like the plague with "ordinary" texts).

St Jerome (Eusebius Hieronymus, c. 342 – 420 AD), patron saint of translators who translated the Hebrew Bible into Latin, wrote:

> What can be more grave than Solomon's words? What more finished than Job? ... When we read these in Greek they have some meaning; when in Latin they are utterly incoherent. But if one thinks that the grace of language does not suffer through translation, let him render Homer word for word into Latin, I will go farther and say that, if he will translate this author into the prose of his own language, the order of the words will seem ridiculous and the most eloquent of poets almost dumb ...[1]

In a letter to Pammachius in AD 395, he wrote that the right way to translate is "keeping the sense but altering the form by adapting both the metaphors and the words to suit our own language. I have not deemed it necessary to render word for word but I have reproduced the general style and emphasis."

When I was still teaching and in the years when I served The Institute of Linguists as Principal Examiner for German, I would always maintain that Dictionaries are Dangerous. And they are if people use them without knowing how dictionaries are produced and where their limitations lie. In the case of anthroposophical texts, those limitations are enormous, as the body of texts on which dictionaries are generally based do not include anthroposophical texts. I would not allow students to use dictionaries in the first year or two, and this made them much stronger in discovering the meaning of words for themselves. It is surprising how much the context tells, especially with languages and cultures that are still relatively close, like English and German.

Dictionaries are, however, very helpful as memory aids. I would never resort to one for a word or phrase that is new to me. If I did, I'd have no business to call myself a translator. For new words or phrases I either go back to the author or the publishers of the original and ask (this is quite a common occurrence with scientific papers, for they are always about the latest developments), or, failing this, read up on the

subject in my nearest university library or through the internet. The other way in which I find dictionaries useful is to help me from getting into a rut in my choice of words. Although I know the meaning of a word or phrase in the given context, it is good to see what the dictionary offers and say to myself: "Ah, I'd forgotten about that synonym, and it would fit rather well in this case."

A translation is never the original. Legally it is in fact a new literary work, and the translator automatically holds the copyright, which may be assigned to someone else, or permission to print may be granted. The fact that a translation is not the original does not mean that it is less good than the original. With scientific works it is quite often the case that factual contents or poor phrasing in the original are corrected in the translation (particularly as editing tends to be poor nowadays). I have also known authors of literary works to say that they felt aspects of a translation to be an improvement on the original. It is important to discard the idea that a translation is always second-best. Just consider the King James Bible (Authorised Version). George Bernard Shaw made Professor Higgins tell Eliza Doolittle that "your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and The Bible." In Shaw's day, people had an enormous appreciation of the transparency of language in the Bible. "Demands for revision of the translation were met with the highly significant retort: 'If the King James Bible was good enough for St Paul, it's good enough for me.' "[2]

Not knowing Hebrew, I compared the pentateuch, the first five books in the Old Testament, in the Authorised Version with Martin Buber's and Franz Rosenzweig's truly excellent translation into German[3] and found that it was full marks for accuracy. Something which cannot be said of every Bible translation.

Roughly speaking, a translation may be done in two basic ways. One is as a "historical translation", where you are absolutely faithful to the style and manner of the time when the work was written. This is important with works of historical interest and usually calls for a lot of footnotes. The other is to convey the writer's intention and the content, but do so in a way that is accessible to the potential readers of the present time. In this case, footnotes would be kept to a minimum. The decision as to which kind of translation it is to be has to be made in agreement with the publishers of the translation.

There is a scale when it comes to the forms and idioms of the original language – as distinct from the author's content, intentions and mood. At one end of the scale are the literary works, at the other the

scientific, and it is always helpful to consider where a particular book one is translating should be in this scale. A literary work, let us say a novel by an Italian author set in Italy, will have many references to that language and country. They are an essential part of the novel. A translator will therefore do everything possible to render this in the other language. At the other end of the scale, that of scientific works, content is all and the idiosyncrasies of style and phrasing count for nothing. When I translated the *German Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia* into English, for instance, I got a copy of the *British Pharmacopoeia* and used its style. English-speaking pharmacists need the style which is familiar to them when using a pharmacopoeia in their work. The German style is to use the passive a lot, the English to use the imperative:

> German style: 50 g of the minced plant material are weighed out, placed in a vessel containing 500 ml of distilled water and heated to x degrees.
> English style: Weigh out 50 g of the minced plant material, place it in a vessel with 500 ml of distilled water, and heat to x degrees.

For us, the question is, of course, where does a work by Rudolf Steiner come in that scale?

Translating a text from the works of Rudolf Steiner is a long process.

Let us take it that the publisher who is commissioning the work has acquired the necessary rights from the copyright holders.

Step one is background study to learn as much as possible about the historical, spiritual, cultural, social and general background. Some of this may become part of an introduction written by the translator or someone else. Not only the culture gap but also the growing time interval really make it necessary to write introductions nowadays, and enjoy sharing some of the discoveries I have made directly with the readers or indirectly if someone else actually writes the introduction.

It is important to know what was happening politically and socially in Germany and the rest of the world at the time.

You ask yourself questions like the following. Where were the lectures given and to what kind of audience? When translating *From Elephants to Einstein*, for example, I got intrigued with the question as to what kind of "building workers" they were with whom Rudolf Steiner had those marvellous sessions. I felt that they were bound to be very different from the builders who wolf-whistle from scaffolding in London today. The friends looking after Rudolf Steiner's Literary Estate in

Dornach very kindly sent me copies of articles written in German by someone who had been one of the workers and I was able to include translations of these in the book. Those "building workers" (mostly male but there was at least one female among them) were skilled craftsmen and local people, many with their own house and a piece of land. It is fascinating to see the questions they asked.

You also try and find out where Rudolf Steiner was before and after giving his lectures, for this can have a considerable bearing on what he said in them. Which group of people – e.g. teachers, farmers, doctors, eurythmists – was he particularly involved with around that time?

So you read the text, study it in depth, sometimes reading it aloud so that you may hear it; you "taste" it, try to sense the atmosphere – in short bring as many of your senses to bear as possible as you seek to gain real insight into what Rudolf Steiner was saying. Essentially you are again asking yourself: What did he wish to convey to his listeners or readers and what is the mood in which he did this?

You take what the author says out of the sphere of words and into the sphere of ideas and images. I think you take them into your heart. Like Mary, in Luke 2: 19, you take them into your heart and let them come alive there. In the English Bible it says: "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." I first met these words in German, and the Luther Bible has "moved" instead of "pondered", which makes me think of a process. In the Greek New Testament the two verbs translated as "kept all" and "pondered" are συνήτερει and συμβάλλουσα (*syneterei* and *symballousa*). Syn- or sym- is the prefix for "together, all together". In the first verb it is combined with the verb for "to watch, guard, preserve, not lose", in the second with the verb for "to throw". So we get a picture of Mary keeping all those words, preserving them in her heart, but not just letting them lie there but "pondering", i.e. "weighing" them, "moving them", and the "throwing" idea from the original verb gives me the picture of a juggler keeping the balls in the air, or the scales always moving in a living balance. As the Fox said to the Little Prince, "You only see well with the heart." (A. de Saint-Exupéry)

Many translators have to do work where their hearts can't really be in it, things that have to be done in the commercial field, for instance, for they have to earn a living. I have no dependents and my needs are modest, and so I could afford the luxury (after the early years in the profession where one just has to get known and established) to take only the kind of work that my heart could also live with. I very much hope that the colleagues who have to do the routine stuff will also find

something to feed the heart now and then, or perhaps find it outside their work.

Interpreting at Goetheanum conferences is very demanding work, for they ask an awful lot of us and often don't even know what they are asking. But my colleagues and I are able to do it and survive because our hearts are in it. We certainly notice the difference when we have to interpret on formal occasions like Society AGMs.

The author's communicative intent, the order in which thoughts are presented, the "line of argument", are supported by the syntactic structures used, i.e. by the word order. Thus I can say: "Today the sun is shining. A bird is singing its heart out at the bottom of the garden." Or: "The sun is shining today. At the bottom of the garden a bird is singing its heart out." Can you feel the difference?

All of us do this all the time. We want to say something, or write something, and have the sequence of key words in mind. The grammatical forms and sentence structures (syntax) offered by our language are generally chosen more from habit than by conscious intent. Look at a letter or something else you have written. Every sentence could have been put in a different way and different order. But your communicative intent made you put it the way you did.

Here are two examples taken more or less at random from my bookshelves. See how the authors' intentions are supported by the word order. The first describes a dramatic sequence of events with great economy yet richness of expression.

> In May 381 Theodosius summoned a large "ecumenical" council to Constantinople, and it is a sign of the sea-change in his understanding of the problems that he made Meletius its president. No representatives came from Rome. The new bishop of Alexandria, Timothy, arrived reluctantly and late. The council had to decide about the succession at Constantinople, where the Arian Demophilus had withdrawn before the Theodosian wind of change. At first the council appointed Gregory of Nazianzus to be bishop of Constantinople, and it seemed a suitable appointment: he was an eloquent preacher and an intelligent defender of the Nicene cause. But during the council Meletius died, and when Gregory advocated the recognition of Paulinus as his successor at Antioch on the ground that it would conciliate the West, a storm followed to which Gregory was unequal.[4]

Note the variable length of the sentences and feel the dramatic impact of short ones. Taste the "No representatives came from Rome." The author might have written "Rome did not send any representatives." A very different "taste". And look how the key words indicating the sequence of events are positioned.

My second example comes from a popular text in the field of zoology:

> The immunity of the slug to the nematocyst in the act of eating is but the prelude to a yet stranger story. The unexploded nematocysts are swallowed by the slug and from the gullet they pass down into the stomach, where the other tissues of the coelenterates are digested. Not so the nematocysts. They pass into narrow ciliated channels, and are swept by the working of the cilia up into tiny pouches which lie near the periphery of bright coloured papillae. They are here arranged the right way up in asymmetrical rows in such a way that they discharge against any intruder that comes in contact with the sea-slug.[5]

Dramatic events again, and I just love the "Not so the nematocysts."

We see, therefore, that syntax and choice of grammatical forms are important in making clear the author's communicative intent. Another language will, of course, have different grammatical forms (some more so, others less) and above all a different syntax. In translation, one must not allow grammatical forms or the syntax of either language to predominate over that communicative intent. That way lies confusion for the reader.

In the years of my work as a translator, I have really come to appreciate the potential given by the English gerund, for example, by the modal verbs and the continuous tenses. It is remarkable how they come to one's aid when one is looking for a way of following that communicative intent. You are deeply caught up in the struggle to do justice to the author's intentions, but now in another language, where the tools, the grammatical and syntactic possibilities, are different. Rudolf Steiner has described how he used to struggle with the spirit of the German language to bring the fruits of his spiritual investigations to expression in it. With all due modesty, those of us who translate his German texts into other languages seek to follow in his footsteps. But for us, too, long struggles may lead to moments where the language suddenly yields and it proves possible to put something in exactly the right way.

Rudolf Steiner showed tremendous skill in giving a spoken or

written text infrastructures that would help to present matters in the way he intended. I may not translate a text using word equivalents to what he said, but I do take careful note of these infrastructures and endeavour to render them in a way appropriate to the target language. An example follows, from *Leading Thoughts*, page 120.

Existing translation:

> Historical experiences of men, such as were laid bare at the Councils of Constance and Basle, may be said to reveal: – in the spiritual world above the downpouring of the Intellectuality seeking to find its way to men, and in the earthly realm below, the working of the Intellectual or Mind-Soul, no longer in accordance with the time. The Michael forces are hovering between, looking back to their own past union with the Divine-Spiritual, and down upon the human realm.[6]

In the original, the words "above", "below" and "between", and then "back" and "down" were carefully placed in positions that gave them natural emphasis, and we might try and do the same in the translation (I am staying very close to Rudolf Steiner's phrasing):

> We can truly say that the historical experiences which people then had, and which were in evidence at the Councils of Constance and Basle, show that up above, in the spirit-world, an intellectuality was streaming down that wanted to come to human beings, and down below the earthly sphere with an intellectual or mind-soul that was no longer in accord with the time. Between them hovered the powers of Michael, looking back to their past connection with the divine and spiritual, and looking down to the human realm.

The original translators also added in some extra words and left out other things, and this can distract from the structural key terms. An example would be the "looking down to their own past union", where the "own" lends more weight to that particular phrase, to the detriment of our key words.

The greatest care is needed to discern structures in one's study of the original. Where did Rudolf Steiner, or whoever the author may be, place the key words? Confusion arose in a group reading a lecture Rudolf Steiner gave on 4 October 1918 in Dornach over the following sentence:

> we are not alike merely in the shaping of our outward form, but we bear inner forces of heredity within us.[7]

Rudolf Steiner was discussing inherited physical features and traits on the one hand and inherited inner moral impulses on the other. The latter go against the former. The problem was the placing of the "not merely" (and perhaps also the choice of "merely" rather than the more familiar "not only"). Following the original more closely we get:

> not only are we alike in the form principle that leads to our outer appearance, but we bear in us inner powers of heredity.

It might even be permissible to add an "also" between "we" and "bear".

It needed a real master of the German language to find ways of presenting the fruits of spiritual investigation in it. Rudolf Steiner was such a master.

We also know that he had some struggles with his publishers, especially in the earlier years.

One aspect in his use of the language is that he would vary terms slightly, sometimes even using two variants in the same paragraph. And we all know that publishers, and above all publishers' readers, are trained to go for consistency of terminology. Steiner's texts must sometimes have been anathema to them.

Why did he do it? In my view, and that of others I have consulted, he wanted to prevent people from getting too fixed in their terminology. For you really cannot do this with things of the spirit. The variations may thus be seen as a help in learning not to get too fixed on particular terms.

Quite characteristic variations used by Rudolf Steiner are between "ether body" and "etheric body", which can be reproduced in translation, and a similar pair for "astral body" which it is difficult to match in English, unless one were to put "star body" and "starry body", but that would create a new problem, since it takes us into another register in the language. Another example is "spirit-world" and "spiritual world".

Singular and what we may call "combined" terms were also used alternatively by Rudolf Steiner to prevent getting fixed on a word. Thus we may have "physical body and ether body" or "physical and ether body". The latter puts an emphasis on the oneness of the two when seen in the light of the spirit.

Here we come to another area where translators need to take great care. Pairs like "left and right" are customarily in a particular order in any given language. If the two words in a pair are of equal rank, it is the inherent rhythm of the language which generally determines the order. In German, standard usage is "right and left", for instance. A very nice example is Goethe's autobiography *Truth and Fiction*. The German order is Fiction and Truth. I think one can feel how rhythm determines the order in this case.

So what do I do if Rudolf Steiner starts off with "right and left" and then changes to "left and right" (more unusual in German), and so on? Do I reverse every pair to mark the step from the one language to the other? Very likely, though I must also take note of the context as a whole, which may indicate other reasons for the variation in a given situation. It is therefore never wise to fall into routine in such things. And it certainly contributes to making translation such interesting work!

It is interesting to note how Rudolf Steiner would often put the one first and then the other when using a pair of words, e.g. "body and soul", or "soul and body".

Translators have not always reflected these elements (or perhaps the publisher's reader changed them, which is known to have happened). Nowadays we ask publishers not to make any changes in texts without consulting us. Ideally a dialogue develops between translator and publisher/reader, so that explanations may be given and knotty problems resolved. I certainly had to explain my reasons to the publisher when I first translated works by Rudolf Steiner and wanted to reflect these elements wherever possible.

It is painful, I find, to hear people say that one language is more expressive than another, or that it has a bigger vocabulary, and so on. This is as bad as the BBC wanting viewers to decide on which was the best classic sitcom shown on television. Each has its own merits, a language has evolved in the course of the history of the nation or nations who speak it and reflects their way of thinking. Translation has to do with moving from one way of looking at something to another, moving through an angle of vision, as it were. And this different angle is also why it is so good to learn other languages. Each presents a different point of view, and there can be wonderful "ah!" moments when you see the other way of looking at something and can add it to the one your own language has given you. Idiomatic phrases offer a rich harvest here. In English, for example, you may "pull someone's leg", whilst a German will "carry someone in his arms". Both reduce the other person in size – by bringing them down or reducing them to a "babe in arms". And just think of the picture you get when someone is difficult to get on with and a German says: "It's no fun to eat cherries with him".

The use of the tenses (times) of verbs varies enormously between English and German. I think it is reasonable to say that in English we generally use the tenses to indicate the time when things happened, are happening or will happen. No so in German. A German speaker or writer uses the tense, and this means particularly the present tense, to place the reader in the situation as it happens, though this may have been in the past. An example is the following paragraph from *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts*, page 121:

> Thus Nicholas of Cusa is a personality who, feeling in his own soul-life the disturbance of the cosmic balance by Michael, would like intuitively to contribute as much as possible towards the turning of this disturbance to the welfare of humanity.[5]
> (Nicholas of Cusa died in 1464.)

Essentially this goes against the spirit of the English language and of English-speaking peoples. We are the "onlooker nation" and do not feel comfortable if taken into a situation by the scruff of the neck. Dealing with the tenses is therefore always part of translation from German into English. Again it is important not to fall into routine. The translator must give proper consideration to this aspect. Sometimes Rudolf Steiner the seer is taking us with him in a vision of the past, and then the present tense is appropriate also in English, providing the context makes the situation quite clear. It may be right to leave the German-style tenses, or it may be better to change them. In some texts it can be as bad not to change them as it is to omit the "Once upon a time there *was* . . ." security code when you start to tell fairy tales to children and then use the present tense, taking the children directly into the murder and mayhem rather than letting them look at things calmly, sitting safely with dad, mum or a grandparent.

Some years ago I was working with a group of members and friends. They told me that they found Rudolf Steiner's *Occult Science* difficult to read. Puzzled at first, I then thought it possible that they were subliminally reacting to the tenses, which had not been changed in the translation. I therefore took a section from the George Adams translation, which I held and still do hold in high regard, and retyped it, changing nothing but the tenses. When the others read these pages, they

said: "Oh, have you done a new translation? This is most interesting." Well, I hadn't done a new translation, but changing the tenses made it easier for these friends to read the text and gain access to its content.

English is said to be a world-language, and there's a price to be paid for this. Like any other author, a translator must have a clear image of prospective readers. With English, this is extremely difficult, for the translations of Rudolf Steiner's works are read not only in English-speaking countries all around the world but also by people who have learned English and not German as a foreign language. I know French, Italian, Scandinavian, Russian, Romanian and Czech anthroposophists who read the English translations, and am aware that people in many other countries around the world also do so. This does affect the translator's choice of words and phrases.

Some simple examples are the following. On the booking form for the 2004 Faust Summer Festival I can book 5 "lunches". One person's lunch is, however, another person's dinner, i.e. there is a class connotation to "lunch". It is better to put "midday meal", therefore. I am also asked to put my "post code" on the form. Here "/zip code" should have been added. For a long time, Goetheanum booking forms stated that you could book a "parking ticket". Yet there are people in the English-speaking world who would not be keen to have a "parking ticket". Here "parking permit" is the term of choice.

This is just the everyday level of the language, but readers may well imagine how many more such problems arise when we speak of things of the spirit.

Political correctness must also be taken into account. Everyone will by now be familiar with the "man" issue. I myself do use the term to refer to the human race as a whole, but do so only to a limited extent, mainly where the rhythm really is better if I use "man" rather than "humanity", "the human race" or "human beings". The plural "men" is always a mistranslation, quite apart from the issue of political correctness.

Translating or interpreting for professions particularly in the social sphere, one has to keep up to date all the time on current changes in terminology. Thus people were called "handicapped" not long ago. This changed to "disabled", but now the most acceptable term is "people with disabilities". [My colleague Christian von Arnim writes: "It appears that 'disabled' is coming back into use again on the basis that people are disabled by their situation/others/etc., i.e. the 'disabled' is not used in the sense of a personal attribute but is a consequence of outside influences." – So you see, dear reader, that we have to keep on our toes at all times.]

Changing usage needs to be taken into account. Personally I think it needs a bit of a long breath, however, not following every fashionable trend. As always, the translator must make judgements. Sometimes this takes quite a bit of courage.

Perhaps the most striking example is the use of biblical images. In Rudolf Steiner's day, his readers and audiences would have identified them as such. Today we have to realise that the greater part of the population are not very familiar with Bible texts and stories. Added to this is the fact that the English translations are also read by people who have English as a foreign language and do not know German. A typical example is the use in German of "womb", or possibly "lap", for a protected place. It is a reference to Luke 16: 22, for instance, in the Authorized Version: "... the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." So in German we have "womb" or "lap", and in English "bosom". I had a look at the Greek New Testament and found that the term used is κολπος (*kolpos*), a space, a kind of pouch, created above the belt in the loose garment men used to wear in biblical times. They would keep their valuables safe in there. I suppose it depends on where the Bible translator visualises the belt, and therefore the space to be, so that we have "bosom" as against "womb" – both relating to men! It is interesting to note that the New English Bible says: "to be with Abraham". I rather liked the phrase in A. C. Harwood's translation of the *Oberufer Shepherds' Play*, where one of the shepherd kneels before the Jesus child and says: "I give me in thy keeping". It might be a good idea to put that something or someone is "in the keeping" of someone. Yet considering our wide-spread readership, with different kinds of English, this notion had to be let go, regrettably so.

I remember translating something on the story of Tobias. The bird droppings that blinded Tobit, the father, are said to be from a "sparrow" in one language, and from a "swallow" in the other. Here I had to get outside help, being no expert in Aramaic. Fortunately I knew a professor of Hebrew who lived locally and she told me that the original said "small bird".

It was more of a problem when the author of the text on Tobias made a special point of the fact that father and son had the same name: Tobias. Well, they do in the German translation but not in the English, where the father is called Tobit. Fortunately the names are not that far apart, so it needed only minor adaptations in the text.

An important part of the translation process is something I like to call the "reality check". Working on the English translation I have produced, again using all the senses I can bring to bear, I know I must go back to the original (having, of course, done a paragraph by paragraph comparison before) if anything does not sound or "taste" right. Let us go back to Goethe's *Truth and Fiction* again. The title is almost always given as "Poetry and Truth" in English. Yet surely it is immediately evident that this makes no sense? Anyone knowing Goethe's writing style, and surely it behoves anyone who undertakes to translate him to do so, must be aware of this. So you have to look at the original again. A good dictionary will actually tell you that the primary meaning of the word Goethe used, *Dichtung*, is "composition, imagination, fiction". Well, you know that you cannot wholly put your trust in dictionaries, but it is a pointer. It is, however, possible to know what Goethe himself said about his choice of title in a letter to Ludwig I, King of Bavaria, on 17 December 1829: "Concerning the admittedly somewhat paradoxical title of confidences about my life, this was chosen because experience had shown that the public always harboured certain doubts about the truthfulness of such attempts at biography. In response to this I declared myself to a kind of fiction..." [Goethe here used the word *Fiktion*, a foreign word in German]. Proper research is essential in such situations.

Yet there is also another level at which we must apply the "reality check" and see if the translation rings true. It did not ring true to me to read in the curative education course that Rudolf Steiner spoke of a ten-year-old boy who stood next to him as a "the little boy". Surely, he was far too tactful to do such a thing? Looking it up in the original, I found that he had in fact said "the boy". The translator had added the word "little", making Rudolf Steiner sound tactless. This became one of the corrections made in my revision of the lectures, published as *Education for Special Needs. The Curative Education Course.*

It is part of the translators' code of ethics that we do not add things unnecessarily, nor leave anything out.

I started translating anthroposophical texts in the 1950s, when Ursula Gleed had asked me to translate some texts for Karl Koenig, and have been trying ever since to find the right language level, or register, for anthroposophical texts. The search continues.

Words in the mainstream of the German language are full of images and life. Let us consider the two main words for "idea" as an example. The kind of idea that pops into your head is called an *Einfall* in German, something that "drops (or pops?) into your head". The kind of idea that comes on thinking about things is called a *Vorstellung*, something "put before" your mind's eye. German verbs in particular are full of vitality. This makes it difficult to present more reasoned, abstract lines of thought, and one way in which this is done is to subdue that vitality to some degree by making verbs into nouns.

English vocabulary includes a high proportion of words that derive from Latin. The images are there, in the Latin, but not for most English-speakers, as they do not know Latin. English verbs like "to position", "to obtain" and so on, are therefore more image-free, which makes them inherently more abstract. If we now make them into nouns as well, we get a double abstraction. A translation will therefore often come much closer to the German original if one makes the nouns into verbs again, which may also make it more comprehensible (typical Latin-based word!) for the English-speaking reader.

Working on a translated text I continue to be amazed how much the English comes to life if one 1) uses verbs rather than verbal nouns, and 2) uses fewer Latin-based words. Thus "to position" may become "to place", or "put", to obtain a simple "to get", and something "comprehensible" may also be said to be "understandable".

Over the years, I learned a lot by listening to anthroposophists giving talks or talking with others. They would often start with the heavily latinised and "nounified" terminology we have in many of the old translations of Rudolf Steiner's works. As they warmed to their subject, however, they would put things in their own words, and that would be real English, which is what I am always looking for.

W. G. Sebald, author of *Austerlitz*, translated into English by Anthea Bell, said

> ... translation is an extremely demanding and extremely difficult business. You don't only have to be completely competent in your native language, you also need an enormous historical and general linguistic resource in order to be able to understand the registers that you are dealing with. And so in my view it's a profession which cannot be regarded highly enough and which very frequently does not receive the credit which it should get.[8]

Denis Jackson, translator of works by Theodor Storm, writes:

> Much is written on the "science" or theory of literary translation, often highlighting competing viewpoints and the need for new systematic approaches to the subject, but what is often less dis-

cussed is the paramount need for the translator to be an equal "part of the story", a creative and active subject immersed *alongside* the author, not only in his text, but also in his life and times which are an integral part of his work. What lies "between the lines" of text, the unconscious associations, is equally important as the actual text itself.

I certainly believe that translators of the works of Rudolf Steiner must also do this.

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Words and their many guises – a brief sketch of comparative languages

Rene Querido

Many peoples all over the earth consider that there was an Original Tongue to express both everyday things and the greatest mysteries of life and death.

The legend of the tower of Babel as we find it in the Old Testament expresses clearly the shattering of the original language. It relates how, in Babylon, due to the evil, powerful ambition of men at that time, they set out to build a huge tower that would reach up through the clouds to the very Godhead. This act of incredible defiance was punished harshly by the gods. Enormous thunderstorms destroyed the structure and, as a further calamity, the gods decreed that the One Original Language should be fractured into innumerable pieces so that groups of human beings would no longer be able to understand one another.

It is often said that Hebrew and Sanskrit are still closely related to the One Tongue. Indeed Sanskrit possesses a remarkable characteristic: that one word can have many meanings. As an illustration let us consider the famous mantram: "Aum mani padmeaum". Here the word "mani' means the heart of the lotus flower (both botanically and spiritually as an organ of spiritual perception). "Mani also means a pure crystal, the essence of..., the heart of... The many meanings of a word can present a serious obstacle to translators, because they have to intuit at what level the Sanskrit text was written, literally from the most sacred to the most every day.

It is interesting to note that Sanskrit has also slipped into modern languages. In English the word "man" (meaning both male and female) is a derivative. In French we have "la main" (the hand); both of course via Latin.

What is perhaps most remarkable is that every "fraction" of the original language has its genius, its special mode of expression and its own musicality. The poets worldwide have mainly contributed in

fashioning and forming the language, over the course of time, from its original roots.

We can attribute modern English to the creative impulses of Chaucer, Shakespeare and the translators of the Bible under James I. A wealth of words are also added later. One is also reminded of the contributions of the Romantics, Charles Dickens and of modern poets, such as T.S. Eliot and Dylan Thomas – to mention but a few.

The growth of German was largely due to the works of the Idealists, to Goethe, Schiller and Novalis.

The growth of French took a very different turn, because in the 17th century, as a result of the Academie Française, strict rules on grammar and expression were introduced, lasting into our own time. An error in French would receive a severe condemnation: "Ce n'est pas Français"! As a result, the flexibility of the language is much impaired, though certain poets such as Mellarmé, Rimbaud and a few others broke through the stricture of their language. It might be interesting to note also that Dante is the father of modern Italian, though he lived some 700 years ago.

Every language displays a combination of vowels (the singing part) and consonants (the forming aspect). We can become easily aware of the fact that Czech is strongly consonantal, whereas Italian for instance is very musical. Hence, the latter lends itself particularly well to singing. Dutch and German have more of a guttural quality. Hawaiian has an enchanting vocal quality, for instance in "Hula hula" (dance) and "Haleakala" (the name of the volcano on Maui), "Honolulu" (the principal city).

Let us now compare a few words in different languages.

In English the concept of a tree is expressed through the word "tree" which emphasizes so to speak the sturdy trunk as we find it in an Oak. The French "arbre" reflects much more the tallness and the slender form of the Poplar. The German "Baum" emphasizes the richness of the foliage. In Dutch the word "bom" underlines its roundness. Each language offers a particular facet for expressing the concept.

Another illustration can be found in the words "head", "tête" (French), "Kopf" (German), "Kop" (Dutch). In English the countenance is expressed; in French the intellectual and legal activity is expressed, as in "to testify" and "testament". The German "Kopf" and the Dutch "Kop" both emphasize the cranial, skull-like part of the head.

These differences are more easily experienced in speaking than in writing.

In English it is characteristic that two words "awe" and "mind" are actually untranslatable or at least, they cannot be exactly translated. "Awe" is actually a very remarkable word in our language. We can be in awe at the beauties of nature. We can also be in awe at what an individual has been able to achieve, eg. a writer or a poet and of course we can be in awe of the Deity. We also have "awestruck" and "awesome" and yet, on the other hand we have: "what an awful day!" in its negative connotation.

"Mind" is a most characteristic word. We have "great minds think alike", "he has a wonderful mind". It is interesting to note that mind is not just of the intellect. It has a heartfelt component. We also have "mindful", but for instance "it was mindless of you to drop that precious Chinese vase!" On a more mundane level, we have "mind the step" or "mind your 'ps' and "qs' ". Also, "mind you, I'm not going to say it again". A "childminder" is someone who looks after the child.

English has a richer vocabulary than any other modern language. This is due to the way in which it has developed since its origin in Anglo-Saxon. As it evolved, it acquired a propensity for assimilating words from some twenty or so foreign sources, such as Celtic, Scandinavian, French (via Latin and Greek), Teutonic, Dutch and others. Such words are called "borrowed" words or "loan" words and it has been established that there are more such words than in the native tongue. In the course of time, the grammar of the English language has been simplified. Although English possesses a wealth of words, it is well known that English can be learnt with a small basic vocabulary.

Whereas French was a diplomatic language of the world until before the First and Second World Wars, English is now supreme internationally as the business and diplomatic "common tongue" of the world.

One could even distinguish between the Queen's English, the American English and the English spoken in India and South Africa. The very opposite is the case with French. Even until recently, by government decree, foreign words have been eradicated, such as "weekend" and "beefsteak". If foreign words are found, e.g. in advertising or in public places, a fine can be imposed.

It is interesting to note that, whereas in English one often finds two words meaning the same thing, in French and in German there is usually only one word (with very few exceptions). To illustrate this point, we might look at the words "sleeplessness" and "insomnia". The first is more common and the second is more technical. In German we

have "Schlaflosigkeit" which means sleeplessness. In French we only have "insomnie" and no other word to express that condition.

It is also interesting to consider "false friends" (in French "les faux amis") that is to say, words that sound similar in both languages but mean something quite different e.g. "déranger" means "to disturb" and has nothing to do directly with the English "derange". "Déranger" in French can never refer to a person. "Demander" does not mean "to demand" but "to ask", whereas to demand is "exiger"; this can cause, as one might imagine, many misunderstandings.

A further example, is "le pont"; it means "the bridge", but on board ship, "le pont" means "deck". ("Une passerelle" is the word for a bridge on a ship). Again, the French word: "librarie" means "book-shop" and not "library". A "library" in French is "une bibliothèque"; "un éditeur" is a publisher, an editor is "un rédacteur".

This has also lead to many misunderstandings among translators who had an inadequate knowledge of both languages.

Let us now consider a few interesting examples in German. "Die Stimme" means "the voice". "Stimmen" is to tune a musical instrument. "Zustimmen" means to agree"; "Abstimmen" means "to vote on"; "verstimmt sein" means to be in a bad mood – it can also refer to an upset stomach: "ein verstimmter Magen". "Das Stimmrecht" is "the right to vote"; "bestimmen" means to decide". "Die Stimmung" means the "mood" or "atmosphere". It is remarkable that "die Stimme" and its various derivatives all come from the German word "voice".

An interesting example in Dutch is the word "zoeken" – to search. "Versoek" means "attempt" or "a request". "Onderzoeken" means "a medical examination" and/or "a police or official investigation".

A final note: if one really connects oneself deeply with the foreign tongue and is well acquainted with its literature and idiomatic expressions, one finds that in the process, one becomes quite a different person when speaking. It is as if another part of one's soul is opened. One becomes more tolerant in relation to other people. The French would say, for example on meeting someone "je suis enchanté de faire votre connaissance". The literal translation would be stilted: "I am enchanted to make your acquaintance". In English we would simply say: "Pleased to meet you". Once we know French, the above expression does not seem strange. The more languages we master, the more we become conscious of and appreciate other peoples and their particular way of life and culture. This is indeed an important social challenge.

Review of *Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy and the Crisis of Contemporary Thought*

By Andrew Welburn

(Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2004) O-96315-436-0 288pp (hardback) £25.00

Rudolf Steiner's philosophy is quite rightly regarded as a comprehensive attempt to understand both the world and the role of human knowledge within it, an aim which is expressed nowhere more explicitly than in his three early works, *A Theory of Knowledge based on Goethe's World-Conception* (1886), *Truth and Science* (1892) and *The Philosophy of Freedom* (1894). It was in these works particularly that Steiner wanted to do justice to the individual's search for knowledge in the world, without referring to metaphysical worlds in the process. These three books thus have a central part to play in Andrew Welburn's *Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy and the Crisis of Contemporary Thought* which is the subject of this review. Since Steiner's death there have been some developments, as Welburn shows in his analysis, which bear similarities either to the way in which Steiner developed his philosophy or to the particular perspectives he adopted (amongst others philosophical phenomenology, evolutionary biology and developmental psychology). What is more, many contemporary theoretical positions take as their starting point the ideas of thinkers who also exercised an important influence on Steiner, Nietzsche being the most obvious example. Where then do motifs from Steiner's philosophy live on? Where has his approach been adopted and developed further? What is the standing of his philosophy in today's intellectual climate?

Steiner himself wondered in his preface to the second edition of *The Philosophy of Freedom* in 1918 whether he should engage with the new philosophical ideas which had emerged since the first appearance of the book. In fact, he made the decision to do so in the second volume of his *Riddles of Philosophy*. Steiner obviously considered it essential to

keep abreast of the philosophical publications of his day alongside the spiritual research which seems to have consumed much of his energies at the time. Contrary to what is sometimes believed, spiritual investigation and philosophical debate go hand in hand throughout Steiner's career. Like Steiner, Welburn is not concerned with rewriting *The Philosophy of Freedom*. He is much more interested in showing that, in the various philosophical and intellectual positions which have emerged since Steiner's death, essentially the same problems preoccupy thinkers now as those that inspired the author of *The Philosophy of Freedom*. However, Welburn also discusses newer philosophical developments which mark a step forward, or at least half a step as is the case with Husserl's phenomenology. His main aim is to demonstrate the continuing relevance of Steiner's philosophy by measuring it both against the shortcomings and simplifications inherent in contemporary theories and views and against the psychological consequences of alienation and despair to which these give rise.

Here Welburn proceeds in two stages. Firstly, he reconstructs Steiner's analysis of certain philosophies, in particular those of Nietzsche and Kant, an analysis which then functions almost as a model for Welburn's discussion of other philosophies. Welburn then gives a survey of a variety of viewpoints which continue to determine contemporary philosophical and intellectual debate, with Steiner being resurrected as a participant in this debate responding and reacting to the arguments put forward by philosophers and scientists since his death. It is perhaps worth stressing Welburn's reason for beginning his discussion with Nietzsche and Kant. This is because Steiner had agreed with Nietzsche's destruction or dismantling of the metaphysical certainties and principles underpinning human judgment and behaviour and indeed saw his own philosophy as explicitly anti-metaphysical. Welburn shows very clearly how Steiner consistently maintained this anti-metaphysical position in all his writings. In the case of Nietzsche the destruction of metaphysics had led to the experience of nothingness. This is the horror felt by the self when confronted with its own seeming rootlessness and instability. Nietzsche's concept of the superman was intended to offer a way out of this experience of horror. Steiner, by contrast, proposes his idea of the right understanding with which the free spirit positions itself in the centre of the world. The individual, according to Steiner, does not need to dress up as a superman but rather to have faith in the moral power of his/her own understanding and knowledge, a faith which is strengthened by Steiner's analysis.

Questions about human freedon and morality are thus unanswerable without an epistemological analysis, a theory of knowledge. Welburn's own investigation is therefore organised in such a way that he, firstly, attempts with Steiner's help to reveal the nature of human understanding and, secondly, through critical analysis exposes and refutes the lapses into metaphysical presuppositions and ethical expectations to be found in philosophical debate since Steiner. Neokantianism is a case in point here since it represents precisely that position which seeks to bind the autonomous individual once again to principles which can only remain external to him/her. Where someone like Bentham placed the individual who is free and thus perceived by many as dangerous under the control of society (the Panopticon), Kantianism ties him/her to a regulatory principle which is alien to his/her own moral intuition. Kantian thinking imprisons the individual who has been set free by Nietzsche's radical philosophy. Welburn then goes on to examine how Husserl adopts elements of a philosophical phenomenonology which Steiner had traced in Brentano's philosophy. According to Welburn, despite the substantial advances made by Husserl (freedom from metaphysics), he does not succeed in articulating a concept of the individual which does justice to his/her dynamic development. Instead, the self is confined to the position of an observer surveying the world from outside and from above, a distorting perspective which Welburn also identifies in a number of other philosophical and scientific worldviews. This onlooker perspective is contrary to Steiner's central insight that the individual – in the very act of understanding – places itself as a moral being at the centre of the world.

But if it is true that, for example, empiricism, physical realism (Einstein), phenomenonology (Husserl), Platonism in mathematics (Penrose) and structuralism in sociology and history (Durkheim and others) all fail to do justice to the freedom and the dynamic development of an evolving individual, be it as a historical agent or as a researcher in quantum physics, it is also true that the critics of these movements (new historicism, poststructuralism, psychoanalysis) are guilty of a certain one-sidedness in their judgments. For example, Welburn succeeds brilliantly in taking up Lacan's criticism of phenomenonology, developing it further with Steiner's insights and using it to illustrate the limits experienced by a modern consciousness which is thrown back upon itself. Lacan's "Hall of Mirrors" is indeed an image which can be seen as one of the archetypes of the consciousness soul. Highly illuminating too is the way in which Welburn brings Piaget's psychological epistemology

into the discussion since this scientist's developmental theory sheds a fascinating light on Steiner's anthropology.

Welburn's book is a stimulating and insightful analysis which, in its penetrating discussion of modern theories and intellectual movements, follows Steiner's lead in making the individual its central focus. Meticulously and logically Welburn's thought-provoking study moves from an investigation of human understanding and the development of the individual self to the question of the individual's relationship to history and of its self-understanding in the world of modernity. It is, however, in the nature of such a book that it cannot be definitive. In conclusion a few points could be mentioned that would perhaps merit further consideration.

Steiner's relationship to Kant and German Idealism is dealt with largely in an appendix because Welburn claims that Kant (and German Idealism in general) no longer plays a significant role in today's world. However, it must be said that Kant is experiencing something of a revival at the moment. He has had an important influence on, for example, the widely-discussed discursive ethics and theories of justice (John Rawls) and his name often comes up in discussions of human rights and of international law and jurisdiction. Interestingly enough, the Kantian way of reasoning also plays an important part in the conceptualisation of the development of individual moral judgment. This conceptualisation (by, for example, Lawrence Kohlberg) follows on from Piaget's developmental psychology which, as we have seen, is positively evaluated by Welburn. However, it raises the question as to how far the theories of Piaget and his school could support Steiner's anthropology.

Welburn presents a number of the important modern intellectual movements, as we have seen. However, there are at least two other areas which are of considerable significance to Steiner's philosophy. Firstly, there are a number of holistic theories (e.g. Capra, Bateson and Lovelock) which, like Steiner's, claim to be comprehensive analyses of the world. Secondly, there are the representatives of the Frankfurter School and associated philosophers (e.g. Benjamin). Adorno's critique of Kant and Hegel (the critique of Verdinglichung), but above all Habermas' and Apel's consensus theory of truth, have many similarities with Steiner, as well of course as a number of revealing differences. Further attention could also be paid to the centrality of Hegel. Welburn makes a few references to differences between Hegel and Steiner, but it is perhaps worth remembering not only that Steiner referred to Hegel all his life but

also that his first esoteric investigations were accompanied by intensive reading of this philosopher. As late as 1920, on the occasion of Hegel's 150th birthday, Steiner was insisting on the absolute necessity of assimilating Hegelian logic. If Kant and Kantianism belong in an analysis of the twentieth century, as Welburn claims, then the same is true of the reception of Hegel which indeed only came to full fruition at that time. What would have become of Lukács, Bloch, Heidegger, Adorno, Marcuse and, to name a younger philosopher, Taylor, without Hegel? Sartre, Merleau-Ponty und Foucault also learnt from him through the teaching of Kojève. Many thinkers freed themselves from Kant under the influence of Hegel's critique of Kant. (And many other philosophers, e.g. Russell and Popper, defined their projects in opposition to Hegel.) What is more, some anthroposophical authors have written lengthy studies which bring together Hegel's philosophy and Steiner's research.

One final point concerns the status of meta-reflexive statements in Steiner's philosophy. Welburn summarises Steiner's position as follows: "Knowledge is always somebody's knowledge from somebody's determinate point of view" (p. 43). This statement about knowledge is itself obviously excluded from the definition, but what then is its standing? Human knowledge, states Steiner, takes the form of twelve distinct worldviews, but what are we to make of Steiner's statement which, by its nature, stands apart from these different positions? Has Steiner shied away from these questions perhaps in the same way that the later Wittgenstein refused to discuss the status of his own philosophical statements? Or would asking these questions mean to fall back into the old traps which Andrew Welburn has taken such pains to avoid?

Fritz Wefelmeyer

Book Review
In the Belly of the Beast

By Sevak Gulbekian
Hampton Roads Publishing Co. Inc. (2004)

Whether looking out into the world or within into the workings of one's mind, it is always a surface one has first to deal with. There are both inner and outer appearances, and to the inquiring mind the challenge is to penetrate through to the forces at work behind these appearances.

Tune in to any conversation, whether in pub or club, and you are likely to hear "what's really going on is..." followed by an analysis of events that often says more about the speaker than about the subject. Our need for analysis and interpretation of events and phenomena is fed by the very media which present them to us, yet it is a feeling which leaves us hungry, as any Sunday paper reader will testify.

Sevak Gulbekian's book *In the Belly of the Beast* invites us to engage with popular culture, the surface presented by the media, in a different way. Over years of being fascinated by popular culture (he now works in publishing himself), Gulbekian has developed a meditative approach, a phenomenology of the zeitgeist, to the pop culture, whose aim is not only to enlighten, but ultimately to transform both the observer and events themselves. A Manichean impulse underlies this: bravely (and freely) entering the belly of the media beast and transforming it from within.

Briefly this involves accepting co-responsibility for all the phenomena of our time; engaging with them in a spirit of interest and love; deepening our understanding of them by research; shedding our prejudices and developing objectivity; acquiring a new power of judgment focused on process rather than product; bringing spirited concerns to bear in a symptomatological way and ultimately making a transformative contribution to the ethos of our time by a form of " moral breathing" – taking in the decadent phenomena and giving out healing thoughts.

In the middle part of his book, Gulbekian regales the reader with a series of essays on contemporary phenomena resulting from this work, ranging from the apparent low-life of Beavis and Butt-head and Gangsta rap to the outwardly more lofty themes of MalcolmX and the Nation of Islam or a comparison of the fates of Kaspar Hauser and the Panchen Lama. In each case one is left, not with a packaged interpretation, but with an urge to take a new look, to find out more. I was particularly struck by Gulbekian's treatment of the New Age cult figure David Icke and his extraordinary re-orientation from the common place to the comprehensively bizarre.

The book is attractively and accessibly presented with a good store of notes and references for those who do wish to follow up any of Gulbekian's stories or sources. If it goes into a second edition, there are a few minor errors which would warrant attention, but it really has been made user-friendly in the sense of enabling the reader quickly to find that elusive "bit" that caught one's interest, or arose in conversation.

Throughout the book Gulbekian emphasizes the free choice of the individual in engaging with the task he outlines and the book is organized so one can read it forwards, backwards or in random dips. It works, I've tried. One section I felt in retrospect could have done with omission, or a more thorough-going approach, was that in the "background bit" at the end which dealt with the unconscious crossing of the threshold of conciousness by humanity as a whole in the 20th century. The changing role of the physical body in relation to the soul forces needed more emphasis and clarification to pinpoint the emergency of our time.

Speaking from experience, as Sevak Gulbekian clearly and refreshingly does in this book, he says early on, "It is my conviction that any sincere person who is seeking true spiritual guidance will be given the book which is *right for them at the time...*"

May it prove to be so with many readers of this book.

W.F.

Book Review

Who Wrote Bacon? William Shakespeare, Francis Bacon and James I
A Mystery for the Twenty-first Century

By Richard Ramsbotham, Temple Lodge Publishing (2004)

James VI of Scotland and I of England was a monarch who moved within two worlds. One the world of power politics, financial insolvency, factions and favourites; the other, a world of hidden influences, secret brotherhoods, the occult and Masonic lodges. It is this latter world that this book addresses with James the 'initiate' standing behind and influencing many of the leading writers and philosophers of the day, such as William Shakespeare and Francis Bacon. What makes this book important for the twenty-first century is the author's engagement with the whole authorship controversy around the works of William Shakespeare. Today various scholars argue that Bacon, among others, was not only the author of Shakespeare, but also the rightful heir to the British throne, Christian Rosenkreutz and an avatar of the 'Aquarian Age'. Using a range of evidence and a synthesis of Rudolf Steiner's remarks about James, Ramsbotham presents a laudable and convincing argument against these claims by demonstrating that King James worked behind the scenes to inject something into the spiritual fibre of Central Europe. This 'spiritual substance' would counter the influence of those powers seeking 'to draw other cultures into their own sphere of influence and to paint everything, as it were, with their one brush.' James was, therefore much more than just the inept, spendthrift and dribbling monarch as presented by Anthony Weldon in the mid seventeenth century, and Ramsbotham's book adds to, and brings a wealth of new material, to the rehabilitation of James's reputation carried out in recent years by modern historians.

The author, by his own admission, is aiming this book at a much wider audience than just those with an interest in Rudolf Steiner's works. It is therefore unfortunate that Ramsbotham overlooked some

important works that would have given his analysis more historical depth and breadth. For example William Tate's book *Solomonic Iconography in Early Stuart England* (2001) would have been an essential resource and would have provided him with a different perspective in his chapter on James as Great Britain's Solomon. Moreover, from an academic viewpoint, a more rigorous methodology, less reliance on secondary sources in some of the chapters and a more consistent cross-checking of those sources with the original, would have given the book a wider appeal, especially in the academic world.

This does not, of course, diminish the importance of this book. As the author himself recognises, his research is only the beginning and much more could be written about James VI and I in this way. It is an exciting book from someone with a deep commitment to the works of Shakespeare and a talent for combining Anthroposophical orientated spiritual research with conventional historical findings. Much more needs to be done and Richard Ramsbotham provides us with the starting point and everybody with an interest in Shakespeare, Bacon and King James should buy this book.

Kenneth Gibson

Notes on the Contributors

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work he established the foundations of a new approach to teacher training and professional development which he has subsequently implemented, not least through the innovative annual English Week.

Martin Schmandt has worked in the visual and speech arts and is now a Class Teacher at Michael Hall Steiner School in Forest Row, Sussex.

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Emilie Salvesen was born in 1955 in New York of Dutch immigrant parents. She attended Waldorf schools in Holland and Switzerland and later changed to the English traditional school system. After taking a BA in modern languages at Cambridge University and a Master of Social Work in the United States, Emilie worked in Social Work in Switzerland and Germany. In 1982 she attended the Seminary of the Christian Community in Stuttgart and later moved to Emerson College where she completed the Education year. By now married to a British Diplomat, Emilie lived and taught languages in Waldorf schools in Berlin, Bonn, Buenos Aires and Wellington, New Zealand. Emilie and her husband adopted twin boys from Colombia in 1988 and a Colombian daughter in 1992.

Anna Meuss is an incorporated linguist by profession (Fellow of the Institute of Linguists), working as a translator and interpreter. Formerly also taught in adult education, including scientific German and translation at Kingston University.

Rene Querido, has been involved in Steiner education for the past fifty years as a teacher, lecturer and founder of adult training centres. He has lectured widely in four languages throughout Europe, the USA and Japan and has written some ten books. The present article, probably the last thing that he wrote, was written in April 2004, shortly before his death in June.

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THE GOLDEN BLADE 2005

LANGUAGE: SYMPTOM AND SERVANT OF CULTURE

Amidst a political climate regarded by increasing numbers of people as socially dysfunctional and marginal to their needs and aspirations, there is a tendency today for semi-autonomous cultures to emerge. Language, however, represents a common cultural thread that both illumines our present situation and enables us to transform it. The articles assembled in the present volume examine our modern cultural predicament from the standpoint of Rudolf Steiner's research on the evolution of human consciousness.

Cover Design:
Anne Stockton

ISBN 0-9531600-7-6
ISSN 0967-6708

£10