

**THE  
GOLDEN  
BLADE  
2007**

**59th ISSUE**

**PERSPECTIVES ON THE THRESHOLD**



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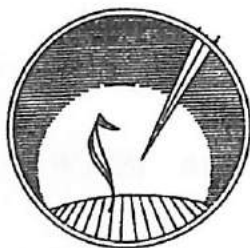
**THE GOLDEN BLADE**  
*PERSPECTIVES ON THE  
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Anthroposophy springs from the work and teaching of Rudolf Steiner. He described it as a path of knowledge, to guide the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the universe.

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 planet's life, it could help to make the earth a new sun.

# PERSPECTIVES ON THE THRESHOLD

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

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### Perspectives on the Threshold – Editorial Notes

There are moments in the development of any enterprise when what is needed is not so much a change of direction as an adjustment of focus. This issue of the *Golden Blade* represents the first fruits of such a conscious step in the life of this journal, one that the editors hope will be developed further in subsequent issues.

Two things have stood out in the editorial planning meetings taking place annually during the Holy Nights between Christmas and Epiphany. The first is that most people nowadays have less and less time to read (mainly because of being overwhelmed by more and more information). This has fairly obvious effects on a journal like this one. The second is that – despite the vast amount of information being circulated, or (perhaps more appropriately expressed) recycled and reconditioned – it is increasingly difficult for any one individual to have an overview of what people are actually experiencing or, more specifically, of such research in the realm of knowledge as is being carried out. Modern information systems are very heavily weighted towards perpetuating what already is, towards what has been handed down from the past. One can have the impression that, paradoxically, the new is not really wanted by the modern age, whether this be in the form of research as to the effect of human activity on the natural world or of the new impulses that children bring into the world from the land of spirit.

The Anthroposophical Society is, at least potentially, a powerful vehicle for “the new”; and the School of Spiritual Science, the body principally responsible for research arising out of the Christian-Rosicrucian path of knowledge pioneered for our time by Rudolf Steiner, is the source whence it derives the higher knowledge that can constantly revitalise it. It is therefore not fortuitous that the considerable wealth of research being carried out within or in connection with it is neither widely known outside the movement nor, even, generally adequately appreciated within it. All that most people with some kind of association with anthroposophy can manage to do is to follow the research paths being developed within their own particular field and attend conferences and meetings seeking to cultivate them. One has only to scrutinise notifications of the many anthroposophically based con-

ferences taking place and books and scholarly papers being written to accept that it is simply not possible either to attend or read more than a small fraction of what one has an interest in, never mind everything else. In order to facilitate (mainly) the more limited aim of enabling those associated with the anthroposophical movement to have a greater appreciation and understanding of the research activity being carried out within the movement as a whole, the editors of the *Golden Blade* have therefore invited the various Sections of the School of Spiritual Science (the equivalent of the departments of an academic body), via their representatives (in so far as these are specifically designated), to share through the journal any research of a more general interest that is currently being undertaken within or in connection with them. The underlying intention is that, in time, this will also serve the wider aim of enabling this research to be shared more generally.

As this issue is something of a pioneering venture, we departed from our usual practice of selecting a theme and inviting contributors to address it. With the exception of the lecture by Rudolf Steiner that we have chosen for publication, we are publishing what has been submitted to us since our initial request to the Sections, as stated above, in the early autumn of 2005 (although the idea now bearing fruit has been under discussion in conjunction with the Council of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain for the last couple of years). In a certain sense, therefore, the theme is the Christian-Rosicrucian path of knowledge itself, in as many of its different facets as could be garnered. It is as such that this present issue is offered to the reader.

As publication of *The Secret Stream* under the editorship of Christopher Bamford (Anthroposophic Press 2000) has brought together in a readily accessible form much of the basic substance of Steiner's indications regarding the Christian-Rosicrucian path of knowledge itself, we have decided to publish a further lecture where Rudolf Steiner gives a very clear impulse towards implementing a change in the cultural direction and leadership of humanity from that pertaining in the 19th and early 20th centuries. While his central aim in this lecture is to emphasise the extent to which transforming impulses in cultural development work through individuals as opposed to originating in them, Steiner reiterates that a trend of cultural development one-sidedly fostered by Britain and America can only end up becoming trapped within the assumptions engendered by the materialistic paradigm. The cultural impulse of Central Europe, with its more holistic experience of life, is the only balancing element which can lead humanity

forward under the inspiration of that initiate who, he says, inspired not only Bacon but also Shakespeare, Boehme and Balde. As the present notes are being written – as is tragically the case with oppressive regularity year after year – under the shadow of a war fostered or initiated (or even merely tolerated) by the political leaders of the United States and Britain, these clear indications by Steiner offer a helpful context for harnessing our energies for the transformatory task of both an inward and an outward nature that we have undertaken.

Andrew Wolpert focuses our attention on that Grail story of Parzival which represents for modern Christian Europe a source of inspiration leading from doubt and despair through to a conscious role of individual responsibility, seeking not to dominate but to serve. The aspect emphasised in his article, that of Parzival's teachers, leads naturally to a contribution from John Burnett, who asks how prospective Waldorf teachers can be enabled to embrace or work creatively with the core insights of Steiner's threefold conception of man, which is so much at odds with the Baconian assumptions of the conventional modern world-view. Nick Thomas writes from the perspective of a scientist working at the frontiers of research into the very essence of matter, opening up new vistas reaching beyond a reductionist view of astrophysics. Christopher Houghton Budd relates that most earth-bound of social sciences, economics, to the mystery of the Sophia, the divine wisdom, and the heavenly being Anthroposophia. Andrew Welburn surveys symptomatically through world literature the changing consciousness of humanity since the development of writing in the ancient Sumerian culture. John and Maggie Salter each in their own different way demonstrate how an artistic discipline can lead to an experience of spiritual realities reaching beyond the threshold of everyday consciousness. With Coenraad van Houten's article, this journey which has begun within the General Section of the School of Spiritual Science and has threaded through the Education Section, the Science Section, the Social Science Section, the Humanities Section and the Arts Section, interspersed by the personal statements of three poets, returns to the General Section quest for self-development, now in the context of adult education within institutes fostering new impulses in cultural life. The issue concludes with a review of a book published in June this year.

One can be aware that each of these articles represents but a ripple in a much deeper pool. The research presented is in every case a reflection of work being carried out, work which is itself but an initial exploration of a vast new research domain where the heart and will have

at least as substantial part to play as the currently overburdened and, hence, desiccated intellect. We hope that those involved in research of this spiritual-scientific nature will, through this volume, be encouraged to send us their further contributions. Ultimately, the project described in these notes has a meaning only if writers *out of themselves* share their on-going research with others, and in this sense unsolicited articles are wholly welcome. A whole issue could, for example, be formed around the theme of therapeutic impulses for our time; and it is more a reflection of the very considerable activity going on at present within the Medical Section than an indication of any absence of research that the work of this Section is not explicitly represented by any contributions in the present volume. In the meantime the editors will continue to act as facilitators and encouragers for what it is hoped our readers will feel is a worthwhile project.

In conclusion, we wish warmly to thank our contributors and to acknowledge with gratitude the recognition of, and financial support for, this new research-initiative from the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain. We also extend our thanks to the Art Section of the School of Spiritual Science for funding the colour illustrations to Maggie Salter's article, which have also been drawn upon for the cover. We extend our warm appreciation to Maggie Salter for her efforts in making her artistic work and article available.

S.B-de L., August 2006

## Historical Characters and Their Place in Evolution: Bacon, Shakespeare, Boehme, Balde

Rudolf Steiner<sup>1</sup>

In what I shall have to say further, in continuation of our recent studies, it must be borne in mind that spiritual science has a quite distinctive point of view in regard to the influence of individual personalities in history. It is usually imagined that an individual of great standing in history – whether distinguished in art, in statesmanship, in religion or in some other way – works through the impulses that he himself consciously brings to expression; it is generally assumed that this is the sole channel of his influence. And one then goes on to consider his activity, and to ask: What did he do? What did he say? How was his work made known? And so on.

As a matter of fact, when we are considering persons of outstanding significance in the evolution of history, matters are not so simple. Whatever has real influence upon the evolution of mankind depends on *driving spiritual forces*, which are active behind history and which come from the spiritual world; personalities are in a sense no more than the channel through which these driving spiritual forces are able to work into and influence the course of earthly history.

This does not preclude the fact that there is at the same time a considerable element of individual subjectivity in the influence of such leading personalities. Obviously that is generally the case. But we shall only acquire a right idea of history when we recognise that whenever a so-called great man speaks, the leading spiritual powers in human evolution are speaking through him, that he is, as it were, merely the symptom of the presence of certain driving spiritual forces. He is the door through which these forces find entry into the course of history.

<sup>1</sup> A lecture given in Dornach on 1st February, 1920. The original German title of the lecture is "Über das Wirken einzelner Persönlichkeiten in der Geschichte", and it is included in GA 196, *Geistige und soziale Wandlungen in der Menschheitsentwicklung*. The translation given here is a slightly amended version of the anonymous rendering in Typescript NSL 108, available from The Library, Rudolf Steiner House, London. It has not hitherto been published in English.

And so when we cite some leading personality of a particular period in history and try to characterise his influence upon the whole configuration of his age, this does not imply – if we are speaking from the angle of spiritual science – that we want to lead you to believe that this human being's influence was to be traced entirely to the force of his personality. Let me give you an example. Suppose we find it necessary in connection with a particular epoch to point to a certain philosopher as possessing in a marked degree the characteristics of that epoch. Someone might come and say: It is quite true that so-and-so wrote a number of philosophical works, but his influence was limited to a small number of people; the great majority of mankind never came under his influence at all.

It would, however, be quite incorrect to make such an objection; for the person in question, even if he is a philosopher, is only the expression of forces which stand behind him, and the wider circles of mankind are also being influenced and impressed by these same forces. In this personality one only sees what is working in the age. In an extreme case the following might happen. Some spiritual stream, some spiritual tendency might be working in a particular direction, perhaps quite subconsciously, among wide circles of human souls. The presence of this spiritual stream might come to expression in one single person in such a way that what the rest only dimly sense, what wide circles of human beings, perhaps whole peoples, dimly sense, he formulates in clear ideas. This person might never commit his ideas to writing and perhaps only speak of them to five or six others – or even never speak of them at all. And it might happen in an extreme case of this kind that centuries later the memoirs of such a person were discovered and were found to contain ideas and impulses which, although they had never made their way into literature, were yet characteristic precisely of his time. When I have attempted to portray the characteristics of an age, it is always in this sense that I have spoken of them. I have never encouraged people to think that ideas work outwards from personalities merely on the paths of ordinary outward dissemination; it has always, on the contrary, been my intention to show how one can find in single individuals the ideas that are alive and working in a certain age. The active influence of such persons may, of course, also intervene; and naturally that comes into consideration. The very opposite case is also quite possible, that a personality may exercise a widespread influence among the people of his age. But it was necessary to put the other side quite clearly and explicitly, to prevent misunderstanding. Someone might say,

for example, that when we describe a person as having significance for a particular epoch, we are giving a description of something that is happening in one small corner of the world, whereas the interest from a human point of view lies in hearing a description of what is taking place among the wide masses of mankind. As you will see, this would by no means be the appropriate conclusion to draw.

This, then, is the point of view from which I will ask you to approach what I have to say to you today.

I have often spoken in lectures of how a sort of big leap occurs in the history of mankind in the fifteenth century. Anyone who makes a study of the life of the soul among civilised humanity discovers that this life of soul is radically different in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from what it was in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. I have frequently pointed out how utterly false is the saying, which is constantly repeated: Nature – or the world, the evolution and history of the world – makes no jumps. Jumps do occur in history and they are to be found precisely at significant points in evolution. Such a jump in the evolution of civilised humanity is the transition from the fourth post-Atlantean age, which comes to an end in the fifteenth century, to the fifth in which we are still living today, and of which indeed we stand only at the beginning. The whole manner of thinking, the very forms of thought have in a special sense become different since the fifteenth century; but they have become different in a different way among the various nations and peoples. What we may call the phenomena of the transition show themselves differently among different peoples.

We can never understand the cultural life of our time unless we have a clear vision of all that has been gradually emerging in cultural development since the fifteenth century. We must select significant moments in history, and try in this way to grasp the nature of this new impulse in cultural development. All we can do, of course, is to select single currents in the stream and characterise some individual points of view.

When we turn our thoughts to the period that precedes the fifth post-Atlantean age, and in particular to the period between the Mystery of Golgotha and the fifteenth century, we find it to be a time when a great portion of civilised humanity in Europe was engaged in the attempt to understand Christianity in a religious sense. Anyone who takes pains to study some of the ideas and conceptions about Christianity which are to be found in Europe from the third and fourth up to the fifteenth century, will realise that the inhabitants of civilised Europe

were during this time applying all their capacity for the forming of ideas, all their power of feeling and perception, all the utmost resources of their soul, to try to understand Christianity after their fashion, to come to an understanding – in such a way as was possible for them – of what the Mystery of Golgotha meant for the world.

But now after the fifteenth century a quite new and distinct state of affairs presents itself. It is perfectly clear to anyone who studies the true course of history – and not the *fable convenue* which is generally called by that name – that after the fifteenth century we begin to find for the first time what is commonly called today the scientific mode of thought. Before this time man's whole mode of thought was quite different. The thinking that we regard today as essentially scientific originates in this fifth post-Atlantean age, when it received a particular form or configuration. The configuration was really the same everywhere, but its characteristics were manifested in a different way in different parts of Europe – for example, in the regions of the West as compared with the regions of Central Europe. And today the time has come when these differences must be considered and studied, without prejudice; it is absolutely necessary that we should learn to study them without letting nationalistic ideas influence our thoughts in the unfavourable way I explained to you before.

If we want to take a characteristic personality of this age and glean from his thought and work the manner in which this new age received its spiritual signature, we may turn to a man who is peculiarly typical of the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century – the English philosopher, Lord Bacon. Among the scientific people of our day, Bacon is regarded as a kind of renewer of human thought, as a pioneer of a new mode of thinking. Bacon is, however, an exponent and a symptom, in the sense I have just been explaining, of that which shows itself now for the first time in history. A new way of thinking has swept over the whole of the Western world like a great wave, and Bacon is the man who formulates it and brings it to clarity. Without people in general being aware of it, this wave lives in each single one of them. Their whole mode of thought, the whole way in which they express themselves when they are dealing with great and important affairs of life is, in the regions of Western civilisation, Baconian, even when individual human beings oppose Bacon, even when what they say is the very reverse of what he asserts. The content a person gives to a world-conception that lives in his mind is of less account; what is important is, first of all, what kind of relationship it bears to his heart,

and then, what place it occupies in the impulses that are at work in world history.

I can make this point plainer by referring to our own time. One person might, for example, be a crass materialist and another a crass spiritualist, and both could quite well express their ideas directly out of our materialistic age. It does not really matter much today whether in the literal content of his words someone professes spiritualism or materialism. What matters is the spirit out of which he expresses the one or the other; for it is not the literal content of his words that has influence and takes effect in the world, but the spirit out of which they are uttered. That has an effect. Nobody but a believer in abstractions would ever set store by the literal content alone.

Now when we come to study and examine the spirit of Bacon's method of thought, we have to note the fact that Bacon made the attempt to employ the new forces of the spirit which had emerged since the middle of the fifteenth century to found a knowledge of man, to found a science. He wanted the forces of knowledge which man has at his disposal in modern times to become sciences. Now the time when Bacon made his appearance – the beginning of the fifth post-Atlantean age – was an important epoch. It was a time when everything was called in question, for it was not possible to go on spinning out ideas about the riddles of the world in the old way, with the help of the old alchemy, and the old astrology and the rest – no, not even with the help of the old religious way of thought. A strong urge was felt towards something new. And wherein does this urge come particularly to expression? It expresses itself in the fact that this was the very time when mankind's true spiritual powers of understanding were at their lowest ebb.

Previous to the fifteenth century it would have seemed an impossibility to expect to comprehend such an event as the Mystery of Golgotha with an intellect that concerned itself merely with the world of the senses. Rather was it taken as a matter of course that an event like the Mystery of Golgotha – the most lofty and sublime of all phenomena – has to be comprehended with higher powers of knowledge than are required to comprehend the natural world that we find around us. These higher powers of knowledge were still active, up to a point, when the Mystery of Golgotha took place. They dwindled more and more as the evolution of humanity proceeded. And when modern times began with the fifteenth century, human beings no longer had any such spiritual powers of comprehension; they had only the intellect that is directed to the world of the senses.

With this sense-directed power of understanding, Bacon now sought to found a scientific mode of thinking. In pursuance of this end, he threw aside all the methods of research which had received recognition hitherto. He was the first to establish *experiment* as the one and only foundation upon which science shall be built. Most people still take this for their standpoint. We must construct our apparatus, they say, and then make experiments; and from the experiments we must deduce our conclusions about nature. Looked at in the light of the spirit, it means simply this. Here I have a butterfly; it is too complicated for me to examine. I will make one like it in *papier maché*, a perfect imitation, and I will investigate this imitation butterfly. Really and truly this is no different from substituting for a true observation of nature an observation of living nature by means of the dead experiment; for the experiment is nothing but a corpse. And when we work in our physics laboratories, we ought to be conscious that we are performing experiments on nature's corpse. We must, of course, make experiments! We must even make investigations on the human corpse! But when we are doing that, we should be under no delusion: we know quite well that we have only a corpse in front of us. In the case of our scientific experiments, on the other hand, we give ourselves up to the delusion that experiment is the one thing that can lead us to the truth. Whereas, as a matter of fact, no one who has not the spiritual intuition to contribute to the experiment something he takes from living nature herself can hope to discover from the dead experiment anything that is true of living nature.

This means, however, that the Baconian mode of thinking sets out from the very start to take something that is dead and use it for the explanation of the whole nature and being of the world. Now the real truth is that in the imitation of the living to which one does attain in experiment, important clues are to be found for the explanation of external nature apart from man, but it will not do to give oneself up to the delusion that by any sort of experimental method of research some conclusion could be arrived at concerning man himself. All experimenting leads away from the real being of man.

Hence it is that in the course of the centuries that have elapsed since that time, while the mode of thought which was developed in Bacon to a marked degree has been gradually extended throughout mankind, all understanding for the real nature of the human being has been lost. There is no longer any understanding for that active and impelling being which resides in the inmost regions of man's nature.

Now we can never hope to find the great impulses of the moral life

of man, the impulses of social will, without looking into the true being and nature of man. This is why all understanding for the impulses of moral and social will has also disappeared in these centuries, it has disappeared out of the Baconian way of thinking. And parallel with the loss of understanding for the world, we have the rise of utilitarian morality. It is a Baconian definition that defines good to be that which is useful to man – either to the single individual or to the whole of mankind.

Thus we have these two things springing from the Baconian mode of thought – and Baconian thinking is far more widespread than anyone imagines today. We have on the one hand a scientific mode of thought, which is able only to grasp the non-human world, and on the other hand a morality which is concerned only for what is useful in an Ahrimanic sense. In Thomas Hobbes, a contemporary of Bacon, this comes still more strikingly to expression than in Bacon himself. And the wave of utilitarian morality flowed over into the thinking in which man engaged for the understanding of the non-human world, it found its way into all the philosophers – Locke, Hume and so on including Spencer, all the natural scientists from Newton to Darwin. If anyone wants to study what contribution has come out of the leading Western world for the formation of the newest wave of European thought, he must carry his question back to Bacon, he must take the Baconian mode of thought for his starting-point.

Now together with this Baconian thinking and this Baconian morality a third thing is also associated. As we have seen, only the non-human aspect of the world can be comprehended, and that alone can be deemed moral which is *useful* to man and to mankind. That is to say, the means with which one here follows science and natural morality afford no access to the realm where religion lives and moves.

What is the result? The result is that an endeavour shows itself among those who are the bearers of this mode of thought to let religion be as it was, that is to say, to let it be carried on and continued in history without bringing to it any new element from a new science of the spirit. Bacon himself represented the typical point of view. Science must not be brought into contact with religion in any way, for science would thereby become prone to fantasy; neither must religion be reconciled with science, for religion would thereby become heterodox. Religion is thus to be kept at a distance from man's scientific strivings. To these strivings man brings the new forces which have been active in him ever since the fifteenth century. To religion no new forces are brought. Religion is to

be conserved with the forces with which it is already supplied, for human beings are afraid of the new forces which *can* be brought into religion. They fear that religion might become heterodox and lose its true content.

What must inevitably happen under the influence of such a mode of thought? What has happened? What has happened is that out of a certain human truthfulness people have striven after a science of the non-human world, and out of a like human truthfulness and honesty have striven after a utilitarian morality; but they have had no desire to carry the same impulse into religion. Religion is not to be touched by it.

According to present-day opinion, religion is to have nothing to do with the scientific striving of man – perhaps only in so far as religion is treated historically. Hence has arisen the distinction between science and revealed religion. The distinction can be expressed more forcibly in another way. Observe, it is only somewhat more forcibly expressed – and on that account less pleasing to people who have no mind to hear the truth! It can be expressed, namely, as follows: man endeavours sincerely and honestly to find science – all the sciences, that is to say, which have for their province the world apart from man. Man also aspires towards a utilitarian morality. But he does not apply this honest and sincere striving to religion. That must remain untouched. To religion science must not come. An honest science of the world apart from man, an honest utilitarian morality – but a religion that is hypocrisy, that rests on untruth and dishonesty. That is but to express the fact a little more forcibly and therefore a little more uncongenially for those who do not want to hear truth unadorned. It is, however, only by expressing ourselves with perfect conciseness and clarity that we come to the heart of the matter. A characteristic mark, therefore, of this mode of thought is that it shrinks from the application of science to religion, that it is not willing to turn the same power of knowledge that is applied to natural science in the direction of religion.

This, be it noted, was the kind of signature that was, so to say, naturally given to Western thought. It is indeed so natural to Western civilisation that a great many people of the West would be at a loss to understand any other point of view. They take it as an accepted thing that one does not apply to religion the same principle upon which one seeks to comprehend nature. That is characteristic of the Western world, it is proper to its nature.

But let us think of the same impulse transported to Central Europe. We can here point to a characteristic instance. It does not

always happen that this mode of thinking is so sharply opposed as was the case in Goethe's opposition to Newton; we can also cite an instance of quite another kind. Observe, for example, how Darwinism, which is directed solely to the non-human in the world, and which can never form the basis for anything but a utilitarian morality, is taken hold of by a man so inherently Central-European, not to say Prussian, in character, as Ernst Haeckel. With Haeckel, Darwinism does not remain what it was with Darwin himself. In Darwin we see the continuance of Bacon's mode of thought. He employs it to study the world of nature; but he remains a believer, just as Newton does. In respect of religion as such, he continues to preserve the old mode of thinking undisturbed. But now what does Haeckel do? Haeckel receives Darwinism into his whole mind and soul. For him there is no possibility of a dualism, no possibility of leaving religion untouched. He receives Darwinism, which can as a matter of fact only be applied for the comprehension of the non-human world, and applies it with a religious fervour to man himself; he makes indeed a perfect religion of it. Darwinism becomes for Haeckel a whole, it becomes a religion.

Thus do impulses, once they are out in the world, extend their influence. The impulses are the same, but they work in different ways, in specialised ways in the various regions of the civilised world. In the West people are quite ready to allow Darwinism and religion to be served up separately, as it were, in world evolution. Ernst Haeckel, the Central European, must stir them up together, he must make a single dish out of the two; for he cannot suffer things to remain side by side. Bacon and his successors right down to Spencer and Darwin were afraid lest, when science is applied to religion, religion should become heterodox. Haeckel was not afraid of this, because – in accordance with his whole attitude to the world – he must carry into religion the same honesty and truthfulness which he demands in science. Goetheanism is opposed – yes, Goethe himself was inwardly opposed – to the attempt to grasp the non-human I the world by itself. Take the prose hymn "Nature", which Goethe at any rate *thought* in the eighties, even if he did not himself write it down (you have seen it performed here in eurythmy), and it will be clear to you that Goethe could not think of nature in the way that Newton or Darwin did; nature is for Goethe inwardly ensouled, he even conceives of nature as working with humour. "She has thought and she reflects ever." And his whole life long Goethe went on building up such maxims as he expressed in "Nature", making them only more and more concrete as time went on. A curious essay appeared recently in a

periodical – and I believe it is contained in this Sunday's issue – where it was said that when I published an essay on "Nature" with some explanation (it was in the nineties, in the *Tiefurter Journal* among the publications of the Weimar Goethe Society) I laid strong emphasis on the fact that the same qualities which Goethe elaborated in the prose hymn "Nature" afterwards play their part in his natural-scientific works. The objection that was made is really quite comic. It was said that in this prose hymn there are no ideas that belong to natural philosophy at all, but only religious ideas, and that one has no right to try to find, as I have done, in the later works on natural science the religious ideas of the prose hymn. There you have a pedant – how shall I say? – finding delight in splitting up man's search for true understanding, trying to make people believe that in Goethe the ideas that belong to natural science are quite different from his religious ideas. The whole argument is throughout so marvellously contrived, it is obvious that the gentleman who wrote the essay is Baconian to the finger-tips!

Let us now ask the question: Is there some other sphere in which we may trace a differentiation of this kind in modern civilisation? As you know, there have been, for example in England, in the land of Bacon, such men as Wyclif; but their presence has not really had influence upon the actual configuration of civilisation. It was different in Central Europe. There an event that had no influence to speak of in the West – in France, for example – counted for a great deal. With the rise of modern times, with the beginning of the fifth post-Atlantean age, an opposition makes itself felt in Central Europe of quite another kind than we meet with in the Western lands. There people view their science in a rather matter-of-fact way and do not allow this science to enter the realm of religion. Religion is to vegetate, is to remain "revealed religion" in the old sense. In Central Europe, however, in the realm of religion itself a sharp opposition is brought about through the event of the Reformation, with results that are disastrous for the evolution of Central Europe – the plotting of the Thirty Years' War by the Jesuits, and all the consequences of that most unfortunate conflict. Thus in Central Europe we see the impulse that works from the age following the fifteenth century making itself directly felt in the realm of religion. In the least as well as in the greatest events of history, the same impulse is present, only its direction is shifted; it wells up out of the human heart in a different way. But the Western world, little by little, gains the lead, and little by little we find something of great significance taking place. The more cultural life develops in post-Goethean time, the farther is it removed from Goethe.

To be sure, Goethe is still studied by literary historians and others; one hears tell even of Goethean research. But Goethe does not live in all this. The impulse that Goethe and his friends wanted to bring into the civilisation of Central Europe gradually ebbs away and is lost in the nineteenth century. And slowly and by degrees there steals into this world of Central Europe the impulse of the Western world, but modified in the same way as Darwinism was modified in Haeckelism. For whilst the Western world carries this impulse very well, the Central European world cannot bear it. It is responsive to it, it receives it, but it cannot assimilate it. We see on the one hand in Darwin a principle at work that in reality holds good for the non-human world alone. True, in his latest work, Darwin drew a conclusion from it for man, but the conclusion is by no means pushed by Darwin to that degree of importance which Haeckel attaches to it. We see, then, on the one hand, in Darwin, the scientific principle limited, roughly speaking, to the non-human element in the world. In Central Europe, on the other hand, we have seen what happens with Darwinism; the endeavour is made to permeate the whole of life with such an impulse. People are not willing to leave the sphere of religion – for example – on one side and let it go unnoticed. It is the same with other spheres of life. Those of you who are older will have lived through the experience of how the custom of parliaments formed and conducted on the English model spread itself over the whole of Europe with the exception of Prussia, and how it, too, was adopted in the same way as Darwinism was adopted by Haeckelism. The parliamentary method, as it lives in England, is quite good for England. But for those countries of Central Europe into which it has been introduced a similar consequence is involved as was involved for Darwinism when it was adopted by Haeckel.

Such are the influences that have helped to shape our modern age.

It is possible also to describe the phenomena that show themselves in history from a much deeper aspect. We have in the Western world, beside Bacon, another personality who exercised a powerful influence on modern civilisation. I refer to Shakespeare. For one who is in a position to study spiritual realities, the work of Bacon and the work of Shakespeare point to the same source – a source that is beyond the Earth, and is yet represented in the earthly realm. Both take the same path into modern evolution, and one recognises that inspiration comes from one and the same source to Bacon and Shakespeare. In modern times, when people take everything crudely, this has led to the foundation of the well-known Bacon-Shakespeare theory – a theory which,

when it is propounded, is, of course, perfect nonsense. But now out of this source whence arises inspiration for Bacon and for Shakespeare, out of this same source and even proceeding from the same initiate, flow forth for Central Europe the spiritual streams of Jakob Boehme and Jakob Balde. People have little idea to how great an extent that which we owe to Boehme still lives in the intellectual life of Central Europe – again, a personality who merely formulates what was in point of fact extended over wide circles of humanity, even if not expressed in Boehme's words. It is important to recognise that a good part of Goethe's theory of metamorphosis can be traced back to Boehme, and that a great deal of Goethe's research and interpretation of organic life has come down, by roundabout ways which one could quite easily demonstrate, from Boehme. And although Jakob Balde lived in the lonely town of Ingolstadt, he also is none the less a personality who brought to expression in a striking manner what was being thought and felt in very wide circles in the dawn of the modern age.

But now mark what depth lies in the things I have been saying! From the self-same source of inspiration comes the work and influence of Bacon, Shakespeare, Boehme and Balde! What Boehme left behind has helped to form the foundation of Central European striving, but it is fast falling away. Bacon's way of thinking, however – whether in the form he gave to it himself, or in the form Darwin gave to it – has acquired a very considerable influence in Central Europe. Shakespeare too has had a significant influence. Think how strongly the second half, or at any rate the later years, of the eighteenth century were influenced by Shakespeare! Goethe in his youth came deeply under his influence, and indeed only from the 1780s onward began to set himself free from it.

Everywhere we can trace the same path. The impulses are similar. Only, they work in different ways. In Central Europe they tend to ebb right away. In the West they flow into the realm of knowledge, but only into man's knowledge of the non-human in the world. And they make the religious life into a matter of hypocrisy, when viewed alongside man's pursuit of scientific research. With this Western mode of thought having been diffused over the whole of modern civilisation, we find that man has not yet come to apply to religion those spiritual forces and that spiritual knowledge and science which are inherent in his nature and which must come forth and take their place in modern life, no less than the scientific forces that are concerned with the non-human world. Christianity has to be understood in an entirely new way; for we can never make anything of Christianity if we set to work out of that kind of

religion that has been preserved as an undisturbed realm. The old forces of the spirit are exhausted, and if we imagine today that we can come to any sort of comprehension of Christianity with the old forces of the spirit such as still find recognition in the West, we are living under a most terrible delusion. This must be said today: a new epoch of humanity must dawn, when the Mystery of Golgotha can be understood afresh with new forces of the spirit. For all the statements that have been made about the Mystery of Golgotha have lost their significance, they have been reduced to an absurdity. They can still go on being beguiled into utterance here and there, they can still be treated by this or that person as a holy "Touch me not" for science; but they can no longer be *life* for mankind. Man needs the power to summon up from within him the new forces of the spirit which comprehend the Mystery of Golgotha in a new way.

Western humanity has come to see that what is required of it now is to familiarise itself with these new forces of the spirit. For the Western world has hitherto limited its understanding to the non-human things of the world. But what is applicable to the non-human world can never be applied to the human being. A new science of the spirit will have the task of comprehending the human being, and will also on that very account open out new ways of approaching the Mystery of Golgotha. That thinking which concerns itself only with the non-human world can produce a utilitarian morality; but such a morality will never bring man to his true worth and dignity. That can only be done by a morality of which man knows that it streams into him through the working of supersensible forces. However, what remains in the West of religious revelation will never be capable of grasping these supersensible forces which play into man's soul. There a renewal is absolutely necessary.

Such questions as these seem perhaps to belong to regions that are quite remote from everyday life. That is, however, not the case. The questions upon which I have touched lie in reality at the foundation of the urgent world problems that face us today. We shall never be able to find an answer to the great question: What is the true relation between East and West, between Europe, Asia and America?, unless we go right back to the things of which we have spoken today. For what we are experiencing today is ultimately the consequence of what has been taking place in human souls throughout the centuries.

It is only man's love of ease that makes him unwilling to give thought to these things. For that reason one can experience terrible suffering and heartache when today one hears people talking about the

great trouble and unhappiness there is in the world, and about present-day conditions of politics or economics or some other department of life, about the affairs of Asia, Europe and Americas – talking all the time as blind people talk of colours, not willing to turn their minds to what is all the time inwardly pulsating beneath these great problems.

## Parzival's Teachers

Andrew Wolpert

In the context of my work in Adult Education at Emerson College, I became aware of the archetypal character of the meeting between Parzival and his uncle Trevrizent in Book 9 of Wolfram von Eschenbach's epic *Parzival*. A perplexed young man has an open-ended conversation with an older, more experienced man, their dialogue presents them both with painful thresholds, and both are given the chance to learn from the encounter. This meeting offers a striking contrast to the earlier encounter Parzival has in Book 3 with Gurnemanz, where a very different style of teaching and learning takes place. In searching for the wider context in which to understand the difference between these two teachers that Parzival has, I came to see the paradigm that is the subject of this article and which formed the main content of a lecture given as part of *The Grail and The Parsifal Narratives* Conference on 19th March, 2006 at Rudolf Steiner House in London.

As a child, Parzival is brought up in the forest by his mother, Queen Herzeloyde. She wants to avoid the risk of her son being slain (as his father Gahmuret had been) in the knightly jousting that would have been inevitable had he grown up as a in the way of life that belonged to his true birth. Away from courtly life he learns to cope with the elements, to manage in the unsophisticated conditions of life close to nature, to hunt, and what it is to be nourished by simple fare. It is his mother who takes him there and who answers his questions and guides his early years, and who gives him the clothes and advice which he takes as he ventures out into the next phase of his life.

After his first meeting with King Arthur and then winning the horse and armour of the Red Knight Ither, Parzival rides on and comes to the castle of Gurnemanz. In the two weeks he stays there he learns everything he would have acquired if he had been brought up at court. Gurnemanz teaches him table manners, social graces, the skills and rules of knightly combat, and all the etiquette that a knight needs to know.

In Book 6 Parzival finds himself with King Arthur for the second

time. His exploits have won him great renown and he is graciously welcomed as a great hero and invited to join the Round Table. No sooner has he accepted this honour than Kundrie arrives and proceeds to publicly humiliate him for his failure in the Grail Castle, and Wolfram tells us that Parzival realises how this shame can be his teacher.

The fourth teacher Parzival has is Trevrizent in Book 9. In the conversation between them, the hermit imparts to his nephew the history of the Grail and the tragic story of Amfortas's wound. This belongs to the personal family history of Parzival, and when in the course of the dialogue they reveal their identities to each other, both are faced with thresholds that challenge them at the core of their being. Parzival is faced with two painful realities: Ither, whom he slew for his armour, was a kinsman of his; and when he left home his mother died of a broken heart. Trevrizent has to come to terms with the fact that the knight who had failed in the Grail Castle was this, his own nephew. Both individuals come through these testing moments with strength for the future and without resorting to recrimination and bitterness. Their journeys have prepared them both for this encounter through which they both grow.

These four teachers of Parzival very clearly serve four different aspects of the young man's being. His mother provides an environment that is formative for his physical existence, Gurnemanz schools him in the customs and habits that belong to the rhythms of life, Kundrie stimulates the self knowledge in his consciousness, and his uncle both gives and receives from Parzival profound threshold experiences that have to do with destiny and individuality. Rudolf Steiner's four-fold paradigm of the physical, etheric, astral and ego belongs so clearly to this constellation of teachers.

However, there is also another sequence of encounters in this young man's development that calls for our attention. Four times does Parzival encounter his cousin Sigune, and these occasions are interspersed between the four learning stages described above. After leaving his mother and before arriving at Kanvoleis Parzival meets Sigune in Book 3 sitting on a rock with the recently slain body of her beloved Schionatulander on her lap. In Book 5 (after Gurnemanz and before Kundrie) he meets her again having failed in the Grail Castle. Now she is sitting in a tree with the body of Schionatulander embalmed. In Book 9 after Kundrie and before Trevrizent he meets her again and now she is in a hermit's cell built over a stream, praying over the interred body of Schionatulander. The fourth encounter is in Book 16, after the conversation with Trevrizent, when he has become Grail king. She has died

and it is his task to bury her next to the body of her beloved. The changing mood and substance of these four encounters between these two cousins is striking.

In the first Wolfram describes our hero as "a simple lad" and he is riding the nag his mother gave him. In the course of their conversation she realises who he is and she tells him his name and about his family, and that her lover had been killed defending Parzival's lands. Fearing for his safety, she sends him in what she thinks is the wrong direction.

When in their the second meeting Sigune realises that the "spirited young warrior" who is now riding the red horse won from Ither had failed to ask the healing question in the Grail Castle, she scolds and curses him unremittingly. There is a strong sense here that this private shaming is an essential preparation for the subsequent public humiliation by Kundrie in Book 6.

In Book 9 the "brave knight" is riding Gawain's horse Ingliart, and when again the cousins recognise each other Sigune is conciliatory and forgives him. This time she points him in the right direction. Finally the "King", now riding a Grail horse, places his cousin's body into the earth next to that of the uncorrupted body of her beloved Schionatulander.

These four events strongly evoke the same qualities as those of the four teachers, but this time in the reverse order. In their first meeting Sigune tells Parzival his name and lineage and of the connected destiny with Schionatulander. Parzival's ego is awakened by this conversation. In their second meeting it is clear that Sigune's anger and bitterness come from an astrality that deeply affects Parzival. The forgiveness and the running water in the third meeting speak unmistakably of the etheric forces, and the interring in the fourth episode brings us to the physical once more.

At first the reader might be inclined to understand these counter-flowing sequences made up of the same elements as a kind of symmetrical balancing technique. However, the powerful development in the narrative progression of the story is at odds with such a notion of crafted, poised balance.

If we consider the relationship that connects Parzival, Sigune and Schionatulander we find a remarkable co-operative serving of destiny. Schionatulander is slain defending Parzival's land, and in a way therefore dies for Parzival, or it might even be expressed as the death of the one ensures the life of the other. We know that Sigune sorrowfully rues the fact that her beloved was slain before she could grant him love's

reward, and all her prayers and grieving devotion to him are the means of maintaining a constant connection to him. If we can imagine Schionatulander's death as being a karmic sacrifice to be able to accompany and support Parzival from the spiritual world, then Sigune can be seen as the earthly companion who offers her cousin what she receives unconsciously from her beloved, who is in a way taking the role of guardian for Parzival's destiny.

The four teachers we identified at the beginning serve the earthly biographical sequence of the growing young man, and they play their roles in the chronology of earthly time. If we consider Sigune as the earthly instrument that serves the destiny of Parzival, then we recognise a stream of time coming towards him from the future. At the beginning, he is awakened by Sigune to who he is, and at the end, having achieved the Grail, he has a task connected with the physical body and the earth. When Parzival becomes Grail King, Schionatulander's task as destiny guardian is completed, Sigune can now also cease her vigil, and be placed horizontally next to the body of her beloved. The reality of the two dead physical bodies now lying next to each other in the earth evokes the complementary image of the two companions now living together spiritually in a way that truly overcomes the sacrifice of death.

This final image is unmistakably connected to the inspiration that lived in Michelangelo when he sculpted his fourth Pieta. Readers are invited to pursue the connection between the four Pietas by Michelangelo and the four encounters Parzival has with Sigune in an earlier article on this theme that appeared in volume 47 of *The Golden Blade*, published in 1995.

Although Parzival learns profoundly from his recurring encounters with his cousin, it seems somehow inappropriate to think of Sigune as one of his "teachers". It is more of a destiny companionship that connects them, and maybe that illustrates a truth about life in general and adult education in particular: some of the most significant learning takes place through the events and companions we have chosen in our destiny that come to meet us from the future.

## Making Sense of Steiner: working with *Study of Man* in a university environment

John Burnett

During the late summer weeks of 1919, prior to the opening of the First Waldorf School in Stuttgart, Rudolf Steiner gave an introductory course for a small group of pioneers who were to be the teachers when the school first opened its doors in September. Side by side with daily sessions on practical teaching and seminar discussions, he gave a series of 14 lectures, commonly known to English readers as "Study of Man" (Steiner 1966) or, in its new translation, "Foundations of Human Experience" (Steiner 1996). The lectures, challenging in their complexity and unusual conceptual language, have provided core study material for generations of teachers and for students preparing to work in the classroom. No-one has described these lectures as easy: many have commented on how deep study of the texts has proved immensely valuable for their practical work as teachers and in deepening their understanding of the human being. This article reflects on the continuing significance of some of the ideas Steiner introduces and the problems the text can present to modern day students reading it as part of a university degree course. It looks at ways people relatively new to anthroposophy can work with challenging subject-specific content so that it remains relevant, accessible and practical, not only for the would-be teacher but for all readers interested in understanding the soul-spiritual aspect of the human being and its complex relationship to the body. Given the limited scope of this short article, the focus will be on the first two lectures of the course, with only passing reference to the later chapters.

Michael Stott observes that he and many of his teacher colleagues "reacted with confusion, irritation, despair or similar signs of incomprehension when we read *Study of Man* for the first time" (Stott 1999) His comments highlight the difficulty many readers have in accessing these particular lectures although he goes on to show how this changes when the person begins to work intensively with the text. He makes the point that a central challenge the novice reader has is to "come fully to terms

with the picture of a universe with man at its centre and to approach everything we teach with a sense of the validity of this picture". For most of the original circle gathered around Steiner when he gave the lecture course, this was not a problem. Anthroposophy was something they had been immersed in for years; they were a committed audience with a potential for deep understanding of the ideas presented. For contemporary readers with a limited experience of anthroposophical concepts, initial meeting with such a text is likely to be far more problematic, raising questions in some minds as to whether the lectures should be studied at all by undergraduate students. Students need time to "unpack" many of the ideas they have brought with them and re-orientate if they are to make a meaningful relationship to Steiner's anthropocentric cosmology without compromising their healthy critical faculties. Reading Steiner in a university, particularly unrevised transcripts of lectures given to a particular audience nearly ninety years ago, means being continually mindful of the historical, situational and social context in which the author was speaking. There is, of course, a danger that this sort of academic approach merely reduces the text to a series of intellectual constructs in which nothing of the original spirit is living. It is the author's experience, however, that engaged students are unlikely to fall prey to such a danger and can gain significantly from in-depth study of this challenging book, provided they and their tutors have a readiness to work together in a spirit of discovery and open-mindedness. If they are able to do this whilst maintaining high standards of criticality, the very effort in sustaining such a perspective on Steiner's work is likely to be a powerful factor in enhancing the quality of their learning.

Before embarking on a text like *Study of Man*, students are normally expected to have acquired some familiarity with texts such as *Theosophy* (Steiner 1994) and the *Philosophy of Freedom* (Steiner 1992). Since first making contact with anthroposophical texts at the start of the course, they will have been encouraged to pursue their studies as critical readers, looking to their own autonomous experience as the basis on which propositions can be understood and verified. In their essays they will have been encouraged to link their understanding of anthroposophical ideas to their broader reading and knowledge of the world, analysing and discussing core concepts wherever possible whilst developing sensitivity for the particular style of Steiner's lecturing, its overtones, cadences and the "threshold character" which permeates the recorded words spoken many decades ago.

One of the striking aspects of *Study of Man* is the wide range of

ideas and concepts introduced by Steiner which appear at first reading to have limited relevance to education. Some of these ideas demand close analysis and discussion if they are to prove accessible to the novice reader. For example, after reading only a few lines of the first lecture, the student is immediately confronted with the term, "*fourth post-Atlantean developmental period*" (Steiner 1996 p.35). Within the following five pages, the student also meets, "Sentient Soul"; "Intellectual Soul"; "Consciousness Soul" as well as "Spirit Self"; "Life-Spirit" and "Spirit-Human Being" (Robert Lathe's translation). Steiner does not introduce or explain these terms but takes it for granted they are part of his audience's conceptual vocabulary and develops his complex narrative from these ideas. Details of the nine-fold constitution of the human being may not be entirely new to the student reader but, for many, complex concepts of "soul" and "spirit" and the subtle, three-fold organisation of the "bodies" will still need working through if the group is to feel secure with them. References to "Atlantis" and "post-Atlantean" evolutionary periods are likely to generate demanding questions if they are to proceed as readers committed to critical enquiry. Students are faced with the option of either exhaustively interrogating the basis of the spiritual perception from which Steiner described apparently unverifiable historical events such as the destruction of Atlantis – accepting or rejecting statements which cannot be readily corroborated through conventional research or opting, open-mindedly, to "park" difficult ideas with the resolve to return to them at a later time. The modern critical reader naturally (and rightly) feels the need to analyse and discuss terms like "Life-Spirit" or "Intellectual Soul" and will not be prepared to make them their own until tested and proven, either logically or through autonomous experience. Without such critical activity there is a danger that such ideas may become assimilated without having been closely scrutinised. This can happen all too easily if insufficient time is available for the student-teacher to "wrestle with Steiner", battling with the concepts until they have made them their own and testing them on the "chalk-face" of the classroom.

As the student engages critically with *Study of Man*, dialogue with an experienced tutor is likely to be important. The tutor, having worked through the text many times, should be in a position to help the student, like Odysseus, steer a middle path between becoming drowned through uncritical immersion in a whirlpool of partially understood anthroposophical ideas or losing one's head in a fruitless attempt to narrowly analyse each point through the application of conventional logic. In

addition to the challenge of helping the student obtain a secure grasp on unfamiliar ideas, the tutor also has the task of relating the text to practical work in the classroom. Steiner did not present his fourteen lectures as mere philosophical-psychological exercise; he gave a parallel *Practical Course* at the same time and ran daily seminars (*Discussions with Teachers*) in which the ideas are taken up and worked with by the teachers-to-be. It is clear that the concepts of the nature of the human being developed at that time were to provide the basis for a methodology for teaching quite different from that in traditional schooling:

"If we had not spoken here in preparation for what shall guide you into a reforming activity, then you would have had to assemble all the present pedagogies, psychologies and logics, as well as teaching methods, and take from them what you wish to practice in your teaching. You would have had to bring into your teaching what has become common."

(Steiner R. 1996 p.104)

Steiner's methodology, as developed in *Study of Man*, is derived from a profound insight into the nature of soul, spirit and body: the relationship between lower and higher senses in the lecture on the *twelve senses* (Steiner 1996 pp134-146); the link between limb-movement reflective of cosmic forces and the interiorised consciousness of the brain and head with the intermediary function of the rhythmic system in the trunk (pp194-203); the sleeping, waking, dreaming tri-unity of consciousness (pp106-119). These and a range of other remarkable ideas provide the basis for an approach to teaching grounded in the teacher's gradually awakening capacity to read the needs of each child according to their physical, soul and spiritual constitution.

In the second lecture of the series, Steiner begins to build up for his audience a concept of the human "soul". Later in the series, he outlines the nature of "spirit" and finally, the nature of the "body". Beginning in Lecture One, he argues that "the task of education conceived in the spiritual sense is to bring the Soul-Spirit into harmony with the Life-Body" (Steiner 1996 pp19-20). In Lecture Two he defines the soul in terms of:

"two conceptual systems: cognition, antipathy, memory, concept - willing, sympathy, imagination, living pictures; two systems that, through their specialised use, can further our practice of education"

(Steiner 1996 p.62)

Here again, the language and terminology of the text can be problematic for the contemporary reader. "You can find definition after definition of thinking or willing in various psychological and pedagogical works but such definitions can give you no real picture of thinking and willing", says Steiner at the opening of Lecture 2. This statement would have held good for 1919 but can today's students actually find definitions of "*willing*" in modern journals and text books? An internet search using the words "willing" and "the will" in various combinations yielded articles on Schopenhauer, Kant and Heidegger but nothing of significance by contemporary writers. Modern education text books have extensive sections on learning theory and cognition, on "behaviour" and "performance" but nothing on *will*. For the modern critical reader it remains a somewhat anomalous term, used extensively in anthroposophical circles but little in the wider public domain. In Steiner's dialogue with his audience, he is clearly drawing on their common familiarity with Schopenhauer's classic work, "The World as Will and Representation" (Schopenhauer 1999). No-one in Steiner's audience would have had difficulty with the polarity of willing and thinking with which he characterises the "soul" but this is not the case with the modern student for whom the term "*Will*" is likely to be an unfamiliar, if not alien concept. Since 1945, literary references to "The Will" are few and far between. Nietzsche's doctrine of the "Will to Power", itself a rejection and reformulation of Schopenhauer's "Will for Life", was misappropriated by the National Socialist movement. The legacy of the Nazi regime has meant that the term, "Will" is now rarely used in psychology or education, other than in anthroposophical circles where the tri-unity of *thinking-feeling-willing* remains a defining principle of the human constitution. Despite being an unfashionable concept, the idea of "educating through the will" is one of the most interesting and contemporarily relevant aspects of Waldorf pedagogy, deserving of further research, particularly in a society experiencing ever greater disconnection between the life of ideas, the affective life and what is actually done in the world. Disinterest in modern politics; despair over the management of climate change, the rising tide of terrorist activity – problems like these can be linked to global disconnection between the cognitive, affective and practical life in society. As a practical response to such difficulties, there is a clear need to evolve contemporary pedagogies able to foster harmonious development of the "three soul forces" in the growing child. This is a primary research task for Waldorf educators, especially students and their tutors in higher education.

For the contemporary student, nurtured on mechanistic models of human consciousness, the term "soul" is likely to have poetic rather than psychological associations. Since the Fifteenth Century, thinking has been increasingly defined as merely the consequence of physiological processes. Steiner, in a Letter to Members, characterises pre-modern thinking as a state of consciousness in which the human being

...did not have the feelings that he himself was producing the thoughts that lived within his soul. He looked on them as promptings, instilled into him from a spiritual world. Even when he had thoughts about what he perceived with his senses, these thoughts were to him revelations of the Divinity, speaking to him out of the things of sense.

(Steiner 1956 p.9)

In his *Philosophy of Freedom*, Steiner presents and rejects the materialist view of the French physiologist, Cabanis (1775-1808), who states that, "the brain secretes thoughts as the liver does gall or the spittle glands spittle, etc". Such ideas were gaining popularity through the influence of the Enlightenment but they were nothing like as pervasive a notion as is the case today where widespread computer technology provides an analogy for the development of convincing mechanistic models of human consciousness. An extreme example of this way of thinking, *memetic theory* (Blackmore 1996), provides a picture of the human mind as no more than a system of virus-like units of information - "an artefact created when memes restructure a human brain in order to make it a better habitat for memes" (Dennet quoted in Dawkins 1999).

The work of popular writers on science like Stephen Hawking (1988) and Richard Dawkins (1999) affirm theories of the "Big Bang" and map out a universe populated with "Black Holes".

By comparison, the picture Steiner paints of the physiological-psychological aspect of consciousness appears more balanced. He depicts the soul as living in the polaric extremes of sympathy and antipathy with feeling as a balance point between the two. For Steiner, "antipathy-forces" (striving to be apart from the wholeness of spirit) have their seat in the nervous system and are experienced through thinking as mere "mental representations" (*Vorstellungen*); on the opposite pole, "sympathy-forces" (striving to unite with the wholeness of spirit) work as will in the blood and metabolic system. These forces are "more than real" with the qualities of imagination and life. Steiner related thinking-antipathy forces to *pre-birth* experience; sympathy-

willing are related to *after-death*. Predictably, it takes time for a student, raised on neo-Darwinistic notions of consciousness, viewing persuasive evidence provided by neurological science, to feel at home with language which speaks of the soul as "an interior, involuted world that contains within itself all the qualities that reveal themselves in the universe." (Zeylmans van Emmichoven 1982.)

Useful work, complementary to an understanding of the first section of *Study of Man* has been done on the anthroposophical understanding of the soul by Karl König (1986) F.W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven (1982) and Robert Rose (1999) whose detailed study of Lecture Two of the *Foundations of Human Experience* provides a close philosophical analysis of the ideas presented by Steiner. Addressing the often vexed confusion between translations of the words *Vorstellung* and *Imaginationen* and penetrating the somewhat opaque associations English-speaking readers often make with the concepts of *antipathy* and *sympathy*, Rose makes a compelling case for the importance of *pure thinking* in the development of capacities needed by teachers of the future. His important article, which requires close and sustained reading, will yield valuable fruits for any student of *Study of Man* but it is, essentially, a philosophical essay suitable for experienced academic readers and may not be immediately accessible to the novice student of Steiner's works.

What can a novice reader with a limited experience of philosophy make of Steiner's picture of the two conceptual systems in the human soul? Are there any pictures he or she can find in their everyday experience which corroborate the polarities Steiner depicts of *nerve-blood*; of *cognition-willing*; of *concept-living pictures*; or of *memory-imagination*? Experience shows that students readily find associations in their own lives and quickly apply these to pedagogical situations. They are familiar with a world of virtual imagery: dvd's; computer games; digital images on mobile phones and all-pervasive recorded music. They have largely been educated in school environments where a significant aspect of the pedagogy has involved the use of technological imagery. They know, only too well, an education culture where memory and the nervous system are over taxed and a world where "virtuality" and representation over-rides "actuality". For most, joining a Waldorf course offers a pathway on which they can develop forces which might redress what they see as an imbalance in the current education system. They are drawn by the opportunity to take part in artistic activities, immersing themselves in "feeling" and "will" activities where imagina-

tion is cultivated: working as painters with flowing, mobile colour; singing in choirs, reciting poetry and acting; doing eurythmy. For some, the "hands-on" experience of weaving baskets, felting or firing hand-made pots in a self-made kiln have something of a "born again" experience, awakening the student to deep currents in themselves which they may not have experienced before. The above activities clearly incline in the soul towards the "blood"; "willing"; "living pictures" and "imagination" pole. They have the potential to mitigate the one-sided consequences of an education which has traditionally over-emphasised the development of "cognition"; "concept-building" and "memory" – all activities which students also need to engage with as critical learners. Between the two poles of soul-experience lies the middle ground of the affective life, the feeling aspect which holds the balance between the two poles.

For many students the above activities are profoundly therapeutic and give students renewed confidence in their capacity to exercise imagination and to work practically and meaningfully with their hands and hearts. At the same time, a university is an environment where mastery of conceptual, cognitive capacities is deeply embedded in the teaching and learning culture. The "antipathy" pole is traditionally dominant. Students working with *Study of Man* are challenged to articulate as clearly as they can their *understanding* of the ideas but have, also, to bring them to practical realisation in a school environment. They begin to understand Steiner's enigmatic remarks that our feeling life, "develops in us as a continuous interplay – systole, diastole – between sympathy and antipathy".

So, should the teacher-educator keep "*Foundations of Human Experience*" on the high shelf and only allude to it as future study after graduation? Is there time, even on a three year full-time course, to have in place all the pre-requisites for being able to read such a challenging text, given the need for students to practise painting, music, speech, engage in living observation of the natural world, learn to make baskets and test themselves on month-long teaching practices? Experience shows that students are ready and willing to work through Steiner's lectures, developing remarkable insights as they stumble through and over the ideas he presents. A group can easily spend weeks working through the concepts embedded in the first few pages. After two years of working through all fourteen lectures, both tutor and students acknowledge that they have only been able to sketch out a few core ideas and need to go back and work through the text again. This is, perhaps, the best possible

outcome of such a programme of study. A newly qualified teacher who arrives at a school enthusiastic about the fourteen lectures has a key to a source of continuing inspiration. The lectures are mere transcripts of a dialogue Steiner had with a circle of colleagues nearly nine decades ago but the dead words on the page have a seed force which spring to life when an individual or, even better, a group begin to work with them. Steiner was clear that he was pointing the way to a source from which a new pedagogy could be derived. An infinite range of methodologies can be derived from the imagination of the three-fold human being embodied in the lecture course.

Steiner presented challenging goals for the teachers of the First Waldorf School. The success of that school and the model it has presented for the now world-wide Waldorf movement is a testimony to the ability of those original students of anthroposophy to make the ideas embedded in

*Study of Man* their own and to apply them practically in the classroom. In an increasingly global world, can such a level of understanding and commitment be feasibly sustained in a movement embodying over a thousand schools with many thousands of teachers? This is a key question for the Waldorf school movement. The level of understanding demanded by Steiner in the *Study of Man* lectures was very high but the context in which this seminal course was given was also unique. One can ask, Is it possible for a school to be truly a Waldorf school without the core of understanding demanded by Steiner in the *Study of Man* permeating each teacher circle? No authoritative answer can be given to this question but there is clear evidence that the current generation of students, those in their twenties and early thirties who will be carrying schools in several decades time, have an innate capacity to absorb at a deep level the content of these remarkable lectures and a readiness to work with them at a profoundly practical level.

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## Flame Song of the Summer Sun: Five Fragments for St. John's Tide

John Salter

### I

In dreaming meadows deep embalmed,  
Leaf shade shields the midday might.  
By air's great laziness all wits becalmed  
And high volumes of the sky steal sight.

In the last whisper of evening light  
Immense webs slip through the woven air,  
Tremble on the brink of Heaven's stair,  
Burnish dusk's gold in the greening height.

### II

Old Sun, who daily rolls around the height,  
Wearies of unregarded toil,  
Mutters in his beard of flame:  
They relax there below too much –  
Deep dreams eat up all their fruit.

Two shoots from my stock I send:  
One molten limb shall sear their land.  
The other's fierce fangs in storm cloud rage.

### III

Flame's tongue licks up the Earth.  
Tree torches in procession burst.  
Leaping lust of fire  
Feasts off leaf and stump.  
Fire's fierce breath in awful motion  
Propels the forest tribe.



peace  
beyond the wheeling rim of the world  
star song woven  
beneath the hammer's thump  
peace  
in heart's deepest chamber  
peace

## Counterspace Research

Nick Thomas

Rudolf Steiner produced about 50 written works and gave nearly 6,000 lectures. It is important to work with them as research reports rather than "bibles". Indeed he urged us (Ref. 1) not to treat him as an authority because in the spiritual realm that approach to a spiritual teacher is today not just inappropriate but damaging. Research in the physical realm is relatively easy as we are free there, and a wrong thought remains abstract and soon shows itself to be false. But in the spiritual realm that is not the case, two sources of illusion being important. First a wish can colour what we experience, misleading us, or worse a wrong concept can drastically alter what is perceived and obstruct the truth (Ref. 2). This perhaps indicates the importance of the research mood, which treats the reported findings of a researcher impartially, seeking to understand them first and then to check them. Wishes are controlled and concepts are carefully checked before being accepted.

Rudolf Steiner spoke about the threshold of the spiritual world, a most important feature of the modern path of spiritual training and development. Research is only truly spiritual when it is related to what lies on the other side of that threshold. For the threshold separates our ordinary consciousness from the kind of consciousness needed to live in the spiritual world. Here we live a partly illusory existence in the sense that we only experience a part of the full reality of the cosmos, which is calculated to give us freedom by making it possible to think as we will without incurring the two types of illusion referred to above. Fortunately our thoughts do not drastically change the physical world in a direct manner e.g. thinking that a chair is a table does not immediately change the chair, and equally our wishes for the weather, for example, to conform to our convenience have no effect. The threshold separates that state of affairs from the one where every unguarded wish or thought has immediate consequences. That is why our consciousness on this side of the threshold is objective and non-participatory, while on the other side

it is fully participatory. Indeed to cross the threshold requires a kind of inversion of consciousness, for our everyday objective consciousness is not serviceable on the other side -- worse, it is destructive. The research of the author concerns that inversion of consciousness in relation to counterspace (see below) for application to science and the possibility of finding a non-materialistic paradigm for it.

How can we aspire to do spiritual research, given these strictures? Clearly the threshold must be involved in some way. To acquire modern clairvoyance accompanied by suitably enhanced thinking would be the ideal, but that is not readily achievable by all of us. Merely to combine other peoples' spiritual findings in new ways certainly leads to new insights but it is perhaps at the bottom of the scale. I have used three methods to approach this research on counterspace: working with the dead, the transformation of study of conventional work, and using Emerson's idea that "every wall is a door". Clearly a cooperation with the dead involves the threshold, but some explanation of how to do that is required, and also of the other two methods. Using Emerson's idea, one looks for "walls" in one's work. Now a "wall" here means an aspect of the work that one cannot see through, or a problem in the work. A wall is a door in the sense that it shows just where development is needed which leads to something new when accomplished. Have you ever asked yourself why you find a new concept difficult to grasp? In the last analysis it is because something in you *will not change*, for you have to change to grasp a concept. When you have grasped a new concept you are to some degree a new person. Inability to grasp a concept points to a "wall" inside you, but which is also a door in the above sense. A concept is best grasped when several diverse examples are given involving it, for then thinking weaves between them to grasp it. Thus the concept "triangle" is best grasped if many different kinds of triangle are seen rather than only one.

One very fruitful approach to such walls is to carry them into sleep. I was working on scientific questions with friends who have since died. Working now on those questions and carrying the results of the effort -- the "walls" -- into sleep can enable something to come back across the threshold from them. Indeed it is clear to me that the progress originally made in a short time was hardly within my own capacity alone! Some self-knowledge is needed here, and some modesty, as it is easy to think that every idea is one's own. That is, however, the hallmark of what it is like to receive an answer from the dead, for it appears as if we are speaking the answer to *them* (Ref. 3), and it is easy then to think that we have thought of it.

The third method is to take some conventional work, study it really hard, and offer it to the Archangel Michael who may then return it in a spiritualised form (Ref. 4). I have tried this by studying relevant mathematical and scientific subjects that were well beyond my engineering training and natural ability. One must not be presumptuous here, but it was noticeable that after such work ideas flowed more freely in relation to the research.

What is it like inside the Sun? Rudolf Steiner discovered that it is not "burning gas" (we would say a nuclear fusion reactor today) but rather there is less than nothing there, that space itself is negative (e.g. Ref. 5 lecture 15). Furthermore he indicated that it is in such a space that the ether is to be found (Ref. 5 lecture 4). In Ref 6 he describes the inversion of consciousness when we cross the threshold. George Adams followed this up and did seminal work on the nature of what is now often called counterspace, and Louis Locher Ernst independently worked on the subject too. I have attempted to stand on their shoulders and take the work further, with three objectives. First to see how to develop a paradigm for science that is Michaelic in the sense that it is as accurate as conventional science, but is not based on materialism. Secondly to re-think the Sun, as it is our common spiritual heart on the other side of the threshold. What effect must it have on the social life to think of that in materialistic terms as a nuclear fusion reactor? This is then also a social aim of the work. Thirdly to see if a way can be found to treat nuclear waste. Progress has been made on the first two, but much work remains to approach the third.

The best way to understand counterspace is, of course, to cross the threshold and experience it directly! However that is not yet readily available to all. The other way is to use projective geometry, which Rudolf Steiner recommended as a very good *start*. Much more is in fact needed. That also may be felt not to be readily available to all, but it is within the compass of serious study and work. The reason it is valuable is that it involves a qualitative dimension of mathematics, and most importantly contains the notion of *polarity* which enables the inversion that is involved on the other side of the threshold to be described. Imagine three points in space forming a triangle. The triangle lies in a plane i.e. in a completely flat surface extending indefinitely outwards in all directions. In fact any three points determine a plane provided they do not all lie on one straight line. Now imagine three planes that do not contain a common line i.e. they must not be like three pages of book. They meet in one point. For example two walls and the floor of a room

meet (ideally) in a point at one corner of the room. These two pictures are *polar* to one another, as three points determine a plane, or three planes a point. Interchange the words "point" and "plane" and you pass from the one to the other. Now this idea applies quite generally in geometry, for every statement about points and planes can be replaced by an equally valid one where points and planes are interchanged. Our current science has concentrated exclusively on the role of points e.g. in thinking of minute particles making up atoms and matter generally. But in the last decades it has become increasingly clear that holistic aspects cannot be ignored, indeed the very particles themselves have become "fuzzy". The polar aspect needs to be recognised, which has not happened.

We will now use this idea of polarity to approach counterspace. Imagine you are standing outside on a starry night. The widths of the cosmos are apparent, and it is as if you occupy one point in space and look out towards infinity in all directions (at least above the horizon). Infinity is physically unreachable, and because an infinitely large sphere becomes flat there is an infinitely distant plane outwards. The polar imagination is to suppose your consciousness is located in a plane in the periphery and you are looking inwards toward an unreachable point. For this experience there is an infinite *inwardness* rather than an infinite outwardness. You see how we have interchanged point and plane to arrive at this picture. The kind of space it represents is what is called counterspace. It is inextricably bound up with a change of consciousness as clearly our ordinary consciousness does not normally extend over a whole infinite plane. In Ref. 6 Rudolf Steiner describes how, when we cross the threshold, we look down upon our body as our outer world, and the planetary system is felt to be inside us. In other words we look inwards from that perspective towards that "point" we started from.

My research started with the question: what if something is in both spaces at once? It would have to obey simultaneously the laws of two worlds at once. The sort of laws involved concern how objects behave in space when they move. Certain important properties remain unchanged. Thus a moving car does not, fortunately, become shorter or wider. If I move a box around its volume remains the same, the areas of its faces do not change, the lengths of its edges are unaltered and the angles between them are invariant. Now in counterspace there are quantities analogous to volume, area, length and angle. An object that is moved in that space retains its *polar-volume* and other polar dimensions the same. For example the polar-volume of a sphere is made up of all the

planes in space which do not intersect it i.e. it is what in ordinary space is the *outside* of the sphere. If the object exists in both spaces at once then there are eight types of quantity that should remain the same. But that is only possible in special cases, such as rotation about an axis through the infinitely inward point. Otherwise it cannot "obey both masters". Now in physics we call a forced change of shape *strain*. Extend an elastic band to twice its natural length and we say that it suffers a 100% strain. So if we have a box in both space and counterspace and then move it, the quantities in one or other space will be forced to change, leading to strain. Furthermore, the elastic band exerts a force on our fingers trying to restore it to its natural length, which is the result of what is called *stress* in physics. It is reasonable to suppose that the strain suffered by the box will also result in stress. Notice that stress, unlike strain, is not a geometrical concept. We make the important transition from geometry to physics when we pass from strain to stress, an aspect which Rudolf Steiner also emphasised in his lectures on light (Ref. 7).

If space "wins" and ordinary volume etc. is conserved then strain and stress will arise in counterspace. Because the box is *linked* to both spaces that stress may be expected to react back on it physically, just as if I keep one hand still and extend the elastic band with the other, I nevertheless experience a force on the hand that does not move. Thus forces in space could arise from stresses in counterspace. For the engineer this is interesting because etheric forces could nevertheless result in physically measurable effects, leading to the possibility of a form of etheric technology. This idea was first used to try to understand a very mysterious force: gravity. The result was successful, and the correct formula for gravity was deduced, implying that gravity can be understood as a special kind of stress between space and counterspace. It is important that we not only imagine the thing in principle but also obtain a result in agreement with scientifically verified results. The idea was then refined and applied to the behaviour of gases and liquids, also successfully.

But it is also possible that the strain and stress occur in space instead of counterspace. Application of that idea led to a comprehensive new understanding of light which correctly describes the phenomena of reflection, refraction, diffraction and scatter. The stresses and strains involved are more subtle than for the four elements, and a new approach to time was needed. It is also possible to understand Steiner's finding that light does not have a velocity as is supposed in physics, but crucially also why we think it does. The light has been "demonised" by our

modern approach to it (Ref. 8 lecture 10), and it is important to overcome that. More recent work has shown that the supposed electrical aspects are not intrinsic to the light itself but only arise when it is absorbed or emitted by matter. All experiments with light in physics necessarily study its interaction with matter, which has led to the "demonised" view of light. The chemical and life ethers were then approached, and the reason for Rudolf Steiner's different names for the chemical ether became apparent i.e. the number ether and tone ether as well as the chemical ether. This also makes contact with quantum physics. In the case of the life ether the action of membranes appeared as a significant interface between the physical and etheric realms. A living body is full of them, from the plasma membranes round the cells outwards to the skin itself.

Stress and strain may also be involved in both spaces, which applies more to the warmth ether which acts as an important interface between the physical and etheric. This aspect still needs much more work, as in fact does all of the enterprise! The first phase of the work has been to see if these ideas agree with what is already known in science and to keep in touch with phenomena, which has been a long job, and seems to be the case. The next phase will be to find practical applications. It is too incomplete as yet to be taken seriously by mainstream science, and for example *The New Scientist* declined to review the book about it (Ref. 9). The latter is now out of print but still in demand. A pictorial approach is contained on my web site (Ref. 10), which has been taken seriously all over the world.

Finally, a further word about the spiritual aspects. This level of the work concerns the nature of force. We only know of force through our direct experience, in lifting a heavy object for example. When we see a tree swaying in the wind, say, we assume that the air is exerting a force on the leaves and boughs. But we do not observe that, we only observe motion. Of course it is reasonable to suppose force is being exerted, but nevertheless it is not observed other than by direct intervention e.g. I could oppose the swaying of a bough. Force is experienced by *opposing* motion (also that of the earlier elastic band to its natural length). We know of force, in other words, through the exertion of our will. The stress postulated between space and counterspace is envisaged as arising from the will of the spiritual beings giving rise to the world of appearance. Our ordinary space is Ahrimanic in character, being the space of separation and discreteness. Counterspace is Luciferic, being a space in which there is neither separation nor discreteness. The Christ aspect

suffers on the cross of these two where the stress arises, and Steiner even spoke of the activity of Christ penetrating into physics (Ref. 5 lecture 16). Goethe spoke of the "deeds and sufferings of light", and St. Paul wrote that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth" (Ref. 11). Thus Goethe's words may be extended to the whole of physics.

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## Anthroposophia and Economics

Christopher Houghton Budd

What has Anthroposophia to do with economics? The answer to this question depends on what one understands by these terms: What or who is Anthroposophia? And what is economics?

An intuitive response to these questions is that economics, as the study of economic life, is concerned with the field of karmic relationships, in which domain Anthroposophia is our guide.

Such an intuition is relatively easily come by, in this case while waiting to be interviewed at Canadian immigration after an 18-hour journey. But how is it come by? What is its substance and how can one be sure of it? In this essay, the substance of so simple an idea will be explored by the twin means of first writing about it and second offering it for readership review. For it is in the nature of such research to seek multi-dimensional corroboration in other people's experience. In such matters proof does not inhere in self-supporting logic but in the resonance one finds in other souls – the more the merrier, both in terms of numbers and cultural diversity.

As a field of experience, karmic relationships necessarily comprise something humanity shares in common. They have to be something we can all "own", to use American terminology. No one person or one person's doctrine can prevail. In this domain we have to manifest the deepest respect for and recognition of one another's unique qualities and tasks. In fact, of course, the two go together – respect follows on from recognition.

Such things, however, also characterise the nature of modern economic life. The more economic life becomes a single worldwide affair, the more it, too, cannot be owned or dominated by only a part of humanity. Or – to say the same thing in politically more delicate language – those who find themselves in positions of leadership need to make special efforts to ensure they do not control those they lead, but do their utmost to promote their autonomy and enlightenment. This is true of all forms of leadership today, for this is true elitism – to be in service

to humanity's education, to foster the ability we have to transform our baser nature through giving expression to our nobler side.

This is especially true of writing, where our guiding principle ought to be that of a leading thought, an idea so crafted and so considered that other human beings can rely on it. When reviewed by the author or by an editor or by a reader, does it hold up? When looked at again after lapses of time, does it need reformulation?

Concerning leadership, given the popular idea that we are all individuals now and that we lead ourselves, the fact that we are led by powerful individuals is one of the major paradoxes of our time. But the image should not be one of autarchy versus the false elitism of those who use their leadership to serve themselves. It should be one of individualised human beings taking great care not to allow their private biographies, as it were, to intervene between humanity as a whole – of which they are a part – and their fellowmen. In anthroposophical terms, we need to become instruments of our Spirit Selves.

Again, to speak in this way is also to describe economic life, for what is the economy other than a medium for learning to give expression to one's Spirit Self and the domain in which thinking only of oneself (narrow egoism) gives way to thinking on behalf of humanity as a whole (enlarged egoism)? To think, let alone act in this way is the next step asked of humanity, precisely now when so much narrow egoism is in evidence. Narrow egoism has its place, of course – one cannot eat for others – but it is not *the* principle of economic life. That honour should be accorded to the division of labour, for there would be nothing to eat if others had not provided it. This, the driest of economic categories, hides the greatest of phenomena, namely, that the more individualised human beings become, the more they become reliant on one another.

With its relentless celebration of individualism and, in the extreme, its repudiation of altruism, modern economics would feign deny this. But it thereby utters only half a truth. To be sure, the individual is the key actor in modern economic life, but he does not act unto himself. Though we do not see the fact because our language and our institutions mask it, economic life is one giant cooperative endeavour. Consisting of separate individuals working together. The challenge is not, therefore, to create brotherhood in economic life as if it did not exist, but to see that it is mere illusion to think one serves or works for oneself.

Admittedly, the illusion is extremely powerful because it is near perfect. But this is only because it is reinforced by the idea of "homo economicus", namely that the individual need only have regard for his

narrow interests because they amount to an overall socially beneficial outcome thanks to the wisdom inherent in market forces and the "fact" that an invisible hand makes of our selfish behaviour a social good.

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What is it that gives this illusion its power? For one could as easily say the individual needs to trust to the greater karma of humanity, for it is in serving a higher purpose that our lone actions become socially meaningful. And that where economists refer to an omnipotent invisible hand and the supreme wisdom of the market one would equally speak of the Lord of Karma and the unfathomable mystery behind a deeply atomised humanity gradually creating a unified community out of itself.

The question is whether one trusts more to the one image or the other. For example, if one were to make market forces a real experience, what would that experience be? If one were to make the invisible hand visible, what would one see? In short, is not the concept of the market merely a crude form of recognising karma, meaning the making good over long periods of time of what one knows to have been wrong, that is to say, injurious to oneself because a trespass on others?

Sadly, however, to talk only of markets leads us deeper into individualism, not beyond it. Talk of the market therefore needs to give way to a recognition that "market forces" is a reference to karmic relationships, but that submitting to the market is not the same thing as cohering one's karma with that of the world as a whole. The difference is between using economic life to extend one's will – and therefore one's ego – out into the world and learning to align oneself with a greater good. Market economics trains the will to serve itself, not the world as a whole. To overcome this affliction one needs to know of, take seriously, and give expression to one's Spirit Self. One needs to look with the eye of humanity on one's own economic behaviour.

In this way, one can begin to divine the esoteric nature of modern economic life. But thereby, too, economic life throughout time. The economy has always been a spiritual affair, a realm in which the deeper strivings of human beings – whether for good or for ill – find their expression. No wonder, therefore, that Rudolf Steiner did not describe it as a world apart from human spiritual life, but the shell of a nut, a precise expression of our spiritual life.<sup>1</sup> In other words, economic history traces our spiritual evolution.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Abstract Nature of Economic Life*, in *Rudolf Steiner, Economist. Articles and Essays* by Rudolf Steiner and Christopher Houghton Budd. (Available from [cfae.biz/publications](http://cfae.biz/publications).)

To speak of the Spirit Self is to allude to the anthroposophical understanding of man. In particular, it refers to the stage of development that follows that of the Consciousness Soul, itself the successor to the Intellectual Soul. Modern economics, at least in its strongly Anglo-Saxon form, belongs to the Consciousness Soul, to a time in which human beings become conscious of themselves as such, as beings independent of the gods. This is why modern economics is underpinned by Enlightenment philosophy and by what prides itself as rational reasoning.

Modern economists like to think that human beings have outgrown external spiritual and moral guidance. Had they not done so they could not become free. But we are not thereby made free. We are not free because we have emancipated ourselves from the gods. We are only thereby capable of freedom. Whether we become free or not depends on what we do. Freedom does not exist in merely following one's will forces wherever they lead. That is why "free trade" and the "free market" are such dangerous precepts.

To be free is to not trespass, but this has to be learned. We need to experience trespass, undisciplined will forces, if we are to learn to master them and thus to remedy our karma. That means, however, that the Consciousness Soul needs to be seen in context, as the stage in which human beings become emancipated from external moral guidance but before they undertake this guidance themselves. Thus modern economics has its beginnings in Greek times with Aristotle, becomes quickened from Aquinas' time onwards, but has its moment of truth only now. "Now" meaning the Michael time. In this sense, the Consciousness Soul and the economics that goes with it is on the one hand an overcoming of ancient mores instilled from without, and on the other a preparation for the discovery of new, shared values within. In other words, just as the Consciousness Soul eclipses what went before, so it becomes outshone by what is coming from the future, by the dawning of Spirit Self. The emergence of the Spirit Self necessarily underlies any overcoming of the illusion of economic individualism. Wherever human beings become concerned about the effects of their economic conduct, it is the Spirit Self speaking from the future into today's behaviour.

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By now it should be clear that this essay so far is a reflection in economic terms of the story Rudolf Steiner tells about Anthroposophia, whom he

described as "the being of the anthroposophical cause" and as "ultimately connected with the being of our time."<sup>ii</sup>

He gave a powerful picture of the way this being – Sophia or wisdom – is related to humanity, describing her first, in Greek times, as if outside, as "an elemental force ... who intervenes in existence through action." From the 5th century AD, she begins to be seen as Philosophia, as a being with whom one can fall in love; a being, in other words, who enters into us, with whom we unite. Steiner particularly draws attention to the height of this experience in the case of Dante after his loss of Beatrice and in Rafael's Sistine Madonna – "the exalted Lady Philosophia floating towards us on the clouds."

But then humanity entered into its present "temporary and very deep entanglement in a material kind of perception" and philosophy came to an end, playing itself out in German Idealism. As a consequence, Wisdom or Sophia passed through the human soul, bearing it within her, in which form she will confront enlightened human beings, becoming known as Anthroposophia, knowledge of one's humanity, as Prokofieff puts it.<sup>iii</sup>

In this sense, Anthroposophia appears ahead of us as an image of what we could become. In this sense, too, the anthroposophical conception of man is not a dogma about what should be, but a description of what could be.

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Such imagery will mean nothing to those who do not take the practice of self-knowledge seriously, for whom, to use modern parlance, such an idea is not even on the radar. But for those to whom self-knowledge is important and who see it as the fulcrum, as it were, of change in the external world the idea of an image of how we could be is crucial. It can become a concrete tool, a way of assessing oneself.

But now one needs to ask whether, in this day and age, one cannot find the same instrument replicated, or at least reflected, in the central challenge of modern economic life? For what do the need to see through the illusion of individualism and to accept the principle of service to others require if not an inversion of will forces and the means or context in which to experience this?

<sup>ii</sup> *The Essence of Anthroposophy*, 3 February 1913, Berlin.

<sup>iii</sup> *The Heavenly Sophia and the Being Anthroposophia*, Sergei O. Prokofieff, Temple Lodge, London, 1996.

While one hesitates to say categorically that Anthroposophia and economics are two sides of one coin, they are clearly linked through the transformation and training of will forces that both presuppose. The development of brotherhood right into the way we do business is a measure of our relationship to what we could become. Whether and how we engender capital and release it from our will into the will of others is the essence of both. Giving effect to what in outer terms is called the circulation of capital is tantamount to passing through the eye of the needle. The way in which, after Steiner's analysis, purchase money becomes loan money and is then converted (or should be converted) via gift money into purchase money again – this is a measure of Spirit Self activity.

But to achieve this we need to escape the confines of our entanglement with matter. And this in turn will be found to entail two experiences above all. Firstly, an awakening to the reality of karma and especially reincarnation, because it is in precisely the absence of such an idea that materialism consists. Secondly, recognising our true natures – that is, ourselves as we could become – provides our essential orientation in life once the combined illusions of materialism and economic individualism lose their meaning. For it is to these that we cling with great tenacity in order to give ourselves a sense of identity. We think we are what we possess, that our deepest identity consists in our material achievements and acquisitions, even though, as the saying goes, we can take none of them with us when we die.

Insofar as Anthroposophia shines a clear light on our truer natures, helping us live up to our true selves, she is evidently a guide on this path. The landscape through which this path winds its way is the economic life of today. For, unlike in Greek or Renaissance times, today's economic life rests firmly on the individual human being, on his day-to-day actions, and on whether these are informed by a deeper sense of what it means to be human. In previous times, moral guidance came from outside, from gods, from the church, even from governments and central banks. But in the future, beginning now, we have together to create a moral order that has no outer origin, no compulsion in it, yet is one we can all subscribe to. The "place" in which humanity experiences this event in its full force is what we otherwise call the economic life.

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To the extent that what has been said above is linked to Rudolf Steiner's work in economics, it is an attempt to give that work a more overt

spiritual scientific basis. In the English language, little, if anything, has been said about the esoteric nature of modern economics, at least not in regard to its more technical aspect. Most commentaries tend to express moral concerns or seek to bring about what one might call an add-on spirituality. Looking to spiritual concerns to lessen stress, meditative practices within the World Bank's management or even essays on what is called by some "anthroposophically-extended economics" – these all tend to apply spiritual considerations to economics rather than discover its *inherently* spiritual nature. Such critiques also tend to be prescriptions of behaviour that we think ought to take place, rather than descriptions of the experience we can have when we do act in these "better" ways.

Inasmuch as those who seek to elaborate Steiner's contribution refer to it as "associative economics", this approach needs to be rooted not in how we should behave but in our experience of the difference between an economics that obviates the I of man, as market economics does, and one that arises out of the I, out of making conscious what happens when our will forces are seconded to higher aims than our private ones.

Steiner's lectures on economics<sup>iv</sup> do not do this directly because they respect the need to describe economic life in more everyday terms. But when he says, for example, that "egoism should be extirpated root and branch," we need to understand what the human being has to undergo if this is to be achieved. For modern economic life by its very nature confronts humanity with an experience of the threshold and it needs to be accompanied by an understanding of what this entails for the individual human being. Merely to admonish egoism is a questionable thing to do. We need to know the context in which it arises and thus discover in our own souls the ground on which we need to stand – and can in fact stand – if we would lessen the egoism of our economic conduct.

The Anglo-Saxon community in particular needs to beware the temptation of merely celebrating the Consciousness Soul as the signature condition of our times. Its true purpose is to enable us to see directly the harm that ensues when we become overly self-centred and thus to take a further step in our general development. In this sense, market economics can be said to result from becoming wed to the Consciousness Soul rather than passing through it. By the same token, associative economics is born of the Spirit Self.

<sup>iv</sup> *Economics – The World as One Economy*, New Economy Publications, Canterbury 1996. (Available from cfac.biz/publications.)

## Gilgamesh, Homer and Robinson Crusoe: Changing Consciousness in World-Literature<sup>1</sup>

Andrew Welburn

Imagine a world with no books. To some it might seem quite an appealing idea – and actually there is no lack of respectable authority in its favour, whether it be classical, as in Aristotle's remark that "a big book is a great evil"; Christian, as in the apostle John's spiritual preference for "the living and enduring word"; or, of course, there is always the famous anecdotal response of a King of England, when he received his dedication-copy of the latest volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, "Another damned fat square book, Mr. Gibbon."

Everyone – or almost everyone – agrees that the experience of reading is fundamentally different from the living encounter and dialogue between people, and that something, inevitably, is lost when we substitute a written text.<sup>2</sup> Yet the act of writing is also one that has engaged the passion and deepest commitment, perhaps, of almost any human activity. Jung noted that for a writer little apart from writing may matter at all of the things which most people seek to make their lives tolerable.<sup>3</sup> George Chapman, the brilliant Elizabethan translator of Homer, rather unconventionally opened his dedication to a noble lord with a sudden startling rant against the crime (nay, the "irrational and brutish . . . impietie") of exalting the body in place of the soul, which is none other than to "murther and burie her in it" (i.e. in the body), and shed her "intellectual blood", since she is "too pure and illustrate to be discerned with ignorant and barbarous sense". How can the soul be captured then, and given earthly expression? There is a way, he says, to evoke at least her outer form and "appareance", "with unspeakable

<sup>1</sup> The following article is based on lectures given at Emerson College, Jan. 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Only the followers of Jacques Derrida's far-fetched work *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore 1976), which argues that written language is primary, might disagree.

<sup>3</sup> C.G. Jung, "Psychology and Literature" – outstanding in Jung's work and usefully available in D. Lodge (ed.), *20th Century Literary Criticism* (London and New York 1986).

profit, comfort and life to all posterities – and that is this poor scribbling” – this despised and neglected art of writing. For in a poet’s words the soul lives on, in a form we can conserve and treasure, “wherein we walk with the survivals of all the deceased worthies” of the past, and enter into their very life: every “sentence, figure and word being a most bewtiful lyneament of their soules’ infinite bodies”.<sup>4</sup> It is an impassioned defence, and Chapman has himself entered that exalted company of literary worthies, since his translation of Homer has a vitality and immediacy few others have attained.

So the art of writing (“this poor scribbling”) also touches some of the highest aspirations, and its effect in deepening and strengthening the soul-life has been immense. The modern sense of the ego is inconceivable without it. All of modern writing (apart from the classical, Graeco-Roman heritage, that is) actually stems from the private religious diaries of the Puritans, who from the seventeenth-century began to keep intimate records of their spiritual struggles from day to day, the moments of God’s grace shining through to them, the phases of self-criticism and near despair, the need to forgive and be forgiven. From them all our “confessional” modern literature, with its personal perspective and introspective self-exploration, springs. The Bible was made available to everyone around that time, too, in cheap pocket editions. From one point of view it was the first “best-seller” (and is still a mainstay of the Oxford University Press, which holds the copyright). In it people found stories of individuals, from patriarchs and kings to shepherds and outcasts, who played a part in the moral-spiritual ordering of things, even the humblest sometimes fulfilling God’s great purposes. They also felt justified in writing about their own lives, or imagining individuals in morally and emotionally interesting situations, as a result.<sup>5</sup>

Writing has dramatically affected the inner life, the very consciousness of humanity, as we can see, at several decisive points. But the

ability to capture the essentials of the soul, to tell our own story in moving and significant words, was not easily won. The carving out of literature as a record of the human experience was actually a lengthy and difficult struggle which is close to the heart of the story of man’s changing consciousness. So we may return to that initial thought – a world without books, as was the world some four thousand years ago. From that time there speaks to us one of the greatest and still most moving human stories, the Sumerian masterpiece of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

### The Coming of Gilgamesh

Of course there were stories, hymns to the gods, creation-myths, spells, invocations, and even whole oral “epics” before there was literature in the strict sense. But these are all something different from the conveying of human experience, real or imaginative, in the form of an authentic record. For that means an author has the right, not only legally and financially but in a sort of natural justice, that his text stands as he has written it, because if it is meddled with it cannot be taken for what it is supposed to be – an authentic document of human experience. All those other things (and wonderful poetry, drama, personal confession, thanksgiving, etc. they may have been) which were chanted as hymns in festivals, outpourings addressed in times of need to gods or other spirits, or handed down as story in national traditions were subject to factors outside that purely “literary” criterion of being an authentic record. They were shaped, re-used and modified accordingly over ages of time. Masterpieces they sometimes were, but they are not devoted to articulating the human experience in the sense we mean when we speak of literature.

One must remember that in the days when there were no books, many practical instructions had to be handed on by memory as well as everything else. Even Homer (c.1000–800 B.C.) was still read by the Greeks as a great practical manual, not just as literature. Just consider: it was not possible to look things up in a (permanent) book, so everything was passed on only so far as it remained memorable, or was associated with remembered things. Homer still serves many functions besides purely poetic ones. It has lots of excellent instructions. If you get involved in a serious dispute, as was that between the supreme commander Agamemnon and the hero Achilles, before speaking out make sure that you have sufficient backing to keep you out of the hot water

<sup>4</sup> Dedication of 1598, in A. Nicholl (ed.), *Chapman’s Homer: The Iliad* (Princeton 1998) p.503. The final version of Chapman’s translation was first published in 1611, the same year as the King James Bible (Authorized Version).

<sup>5</sup> One important ancestor of the novel is of course Bunyan’s much-loved *Pilgrim’s Progress*. This spiritual allegory of the Christian journey is also crowded with vivid characters and realistic conversations. A suggestive account of the huge impact of biblical influence in Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (Harmondsworth 1993), pp.335ff. The confessional poetry of modern times, starting perhaps with John Donne, where the personal element predominates over the aim to emulate a classic form, also has its roots in this milieu – cf. Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*.

you may stir up (*Iliad* I, 74–83); taking back-handers may work at first, but is certain to be trouble later on – and this from the god of tricksters himself (XXIV, 432–6)! Or even (because cookery-books too did not exist): when entertaining heroes to a haunch of wild boar, note how to cook the meat thoroughly over the flames, then damp the fire down so as to brown it nicely over the embers without singeing it (IX, 206–14). Sound political and culinary information was all part of the Homeric wisdom that was handed down. And the poem grew over many centuries, taking in all sorts of material before it attained its canonical, final form.<sup>6</sup> There may have been a genius who fixed its eventual definitive text (c.800 B.C.), but the poem grew up and was remembered for many reasons, all long any poet could claim it as “his own” statement.<sup>7</sup>

There is no doubt that the *Epic of Gilgamesh* too crystallised out of stories that had circulated in oral transmission. The study of this background is indeed the central focus of those who are trying to understand the work and its place in the history of culture.<sup>8</sup> On the face of it, the *Epic* is about myths and heroes, gods and monsters. Behind it however there is now a measure of agreement, valuably confirming spiritual perspectives, that there stands a real figure, – Gilgamesh was a king of Uruk in Mesopotamia, perhaps around 2700 B.C.<sup>9</sup> And that sense, despite the haze of stories and myths, of a real figure, may turn out to be just as important a factor in understanding the work, as the oral forms. For actually it is through the way his story developed both in oral tale and written epic form, quite as much as by what he himself actually did, that Gilgamesh comes to denote a defining period in the emergence of literature – which is to say, of the human experience itself.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. A. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (New York 1965). From Lord's work, and similar ideas of Parry, consideration of the oral-background to Homer is often known as the “Parry-Lord” approach.

<sup>7</sup> The issue here is not just between personal and collective. Though knowing what we know, we treat Homer as literature. A novelist might rewrite a story from Homer, but he would not throw away the original. We still want to know how people thought and felt in Homeric times, and value their (collective) authentic record in its original form. But the ancient bards constantly superseded all previous versions, inserting, chopping, rearranging the material – and replaced the forms they inherited.

<sup>8</sup> See Robert Forsyth, *The Old Enemy* (Princeton 1987) pp.21–43. (This splendid book gets its name from its theme of mythical and epic combats, from the ancient Near East to Christian times and beyond.) The best translation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is probably still that of N.K. Sandars (Harmondsworth 1964).

<sup>9</sup> The Sumerian epic is attested around 2100 B.C., and in Akkadian (Babylonian) around 1600 B.C. Spiritual perspective: Rudolf Steiner, *World History* (London 1977) pp.37ff.

For it appears that what his tale preserves "is not only the first combat-narrative but also the first use of a conventional folk-tale plot-structure to produce a heroic poem of different, even tragic implications."<sup>10</sup> The specifically human dimension comes to the fore and claims to be worthy of record.

For in many ways the story rapidly diverges from the typical narratives of mythic exploits like those of the Mesopotamian gods, and its focus is distinctly human in emphasis, even though there are supernatural elements like the Bull of Heaven, the horizon-dwellers, and so on. The great man Gilgamesh is imperfect, indeed wilful and even petulant like a child at the beginning until he gains his friend and confidant, Enkidu – the need to be able to share experiences, to be understood and to reach out to others, is thus central to the story. The imperfect and fragmented lot of humanity is contrasted in many ways with the power and absoluteness of the gods – and not only negatively. Gilgamesh may still be part god in his ancestry, but it is the man not the god in him that interests us as we read his tale. It is this sense of someone who is to be remembered for his failings as well as heroism that makes him an authentically human figure. Indeed, in the Babylonian version (for Babylonia inherited much of the culture of the Sumerians), there is a remarkable statement concerning Gilgamesh. It still makes much of his godlike achievements, but it adds a note on the source of the version it is to tell:

This was the man to whom all things were known; this was the king who knew the countries of the world. He was wise, he saw mysteries and knew secret things, he brought us a tale of the days before the flood. He went on a long journey, was weary, and returning engraved on a stone the whole story.

At this distance in time, obviously, we are hardly in a position to confirm or deny that Gilgamesh really did write his own story. But what is important is that the story lays claim to that authenticity; it purports to be the story as Gilgamesh himself saw it, to convey what it meant to him, and not just great things which are worthy and necessary to be remembered as part of the pattern that affects others – the starting-point not of myth, but of literature.

For consider yet once more that world without books. Stories could certainly be handed on by oral tradition. That was the meaning

<sup>10</sup> Forsyth, *op. cit.* p.23.

of a hero – someone who lived on after his deeds, who was remembered for what he had done and whose tale was ever and again retold. But because it was never written down and given a fixed form, as it would be if someone gave an account of their life in writing, the elements in the story which were handed on would necessarily be the ones still found interesting by later audiences. Some features important in the early version might drop out because they no longer interested people; new factors might come in to colour the story that had not actually been there in the original. Also any good story-teller would naturally, while remaining broadly faithful to the tradition he inherited, embellish the story with vivid touches and telling phrases of his own. And those who heard a rendition of the saga would be impressed by those moments, and when one of them told the tale in turn the good story-teller's fine touches would become part of the tale from henceforth. Duller renditions of the story would die out because people did not remember them, while effective ones would be adopted into the way the story was told. Yet it would be impossible to compare present with past versions of the story. It existed only in memory, and in the continuing interest of audiences, without which even the most committed traditionalist story-teller would simply find no occasion to relate it. So the gradually accumulating good-story features would evolve into a highly effective saga of heroism, while any details that did not fit with the audience's interest would fall away. No fixed version of events could hold back the blossoming of the story (if it turned out to be a good one), since no access to the "authentic" original was possible. Nor could any story-teller insist on only *his* version being told (i.e. assert authorship). Since it was completely dependent on the wish of people to repeat it, the tale could never belong to any one teller. Even the most brilliant reciter's contribution in terms of telling phrases or dramatic touches would be silently adopted, and immediately made part of the tale. Everyone hearing it would simply regard them as an intrinsic part of the story, and (implicitly) suppose they were always part of it. But adaptations and changes would keep occurring as well.

Myths and heroic sagas are indeed handed down in this way. And the result is that any features of particular experience and emphasis are thoroughly absorbed and all individuals, from the hero through all the bards and reciters who continue his "afterlife" in storytelling, merge into the tale. It is shaped by the long-term values and interests of the culture to which it belongs, not by an author. The forces shaping it are arche-

typal and unconscious, supra-individual ones.<sup>11</sup> The people of ancient times actually felt that the gods and heroes were really present and lived on in these recitals. The events are not events of a specific past, a time gone by, but of an unfading "time of the gods", or of the ancestors, of which ordinary life is a partial and lesser reflection, dominated by the great archetypes of the myths in which everything that can be said about our own little struggles, victories and aspirations is already there, writ large – dwarfing the merely human.

Without those resources, which we take for granted, of books and records which enable us to compare later with earlier accounts, it was not even possible to become conscious of an individual standpoint. Life was profoundly meaningful. It echoed the divine fullness of the myths. But one's own experience could never be more than an echo of the glorious life of the gods. There could be no ego-consciousness. Any individual perspective was swallowed up in a greater pattern. People did not only think differently about the world from ourselves. They experienced it differently – with a different consciousness.<sup>12</sup> Mythology has no means of separating out the aspects of experience that belong to any individual. Part of Rudolf Steiner's importance is his making us aware just how differently people experienced the world in those past

<sup>11</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Christianity as Mystical Fact* (New York 1997), pp.63–6.

<sup>12</sup> I do not say that the archaic way of thinking and handing down traditions caused this mode of consciousness. When people needed to express greater ego-awareness as time went on, they naturally developed new forms, e.g. writing a personal account. But while they lived in the mythological consciousness, such awareness could not even be thought of. That the transition is not externally caused (e.g. by the non-availability of the writing medium) may easily be seen. For in fact the means of writing long antedates literature and actually was available, but people in the mythological stage did not see its potential. Thus letters were early used to send instructions or to comment one way or another on events. But the earliest letter-writers have not yet grasped that possibility of *identifying oneself* with the content – of putting oneself into writing. The letters are written to the *messenger* rather than the people to be addressed, and often begin "Say to the governor..." or whoever it might be. Later, when a new stage of consciousness develops, the potential of writing for embodying one's own view is taken up. In much of the Near East, however, the older pattern long survived. Instead of clearly putting himself into a letter to be conveyed, a king or some such person important enough to send his instructions would rather merge identities partially with the messenger, who became his "countenance", or in some way was his presence where the message was to be delivered. See John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford 1991) pp.314ff. He rightly warns that this was not just a convention of diplomacy but a "way of thinking" which also has a religious dimension (p.315) – it belongs to a stage still connected to those ancient, pre-ego times. It is, as we would say, a stage of consciousness.

times. To understand it is enriching and humanising, freeing us from the limits of one standpoint as if it were the whole truth. But we also need to understand how we got, so to speak, from there to here – to literature.

So now let us compare this with an episode from the *Gilgamesh Epic*, where the two companions go to cut down trees to the great cedar-forest which is owned by Enlil, the king of the gods. It is a wonderfully evocative piece, describing their journey and their overwhelming awe when they come to the cedar-forest, the vast extent and hushed tranquillity of the deep woodland. (Anyone who has been into deep woodland, such as the Black Forest, will instantly recognise that sense of inviolable grandeur.) Yet they have come to cut down the trees, and stand ready. Mythological themes now make their appearance, however, since Enlil has furnished his cedar-forest with a formidable guardian, Humbaba (Sumerian Huwawa). He is described in several ways but is fundamentally the sort of dragon-monster who guards Nibelung-treasures, Hesperidean apples, the Golden Fleece, etc. in many a well-known myth. Accordingly the great scholar of Mesopotamian religion and myth, S.N. Kramer, approaches the episode from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in the light of oral tradition. He takes as primary those mythological tendencies to shape an archetypal battle between hero and dragon, a dramatic combat which can come to seem like a symbol of all our struggles to keep out evil, destruction and malice and attain some "great good thing". For him, Gilgamesh is a valiant dragon-slayer and in view of the early date of the *Epic* a candidate to be called the "first Saint George".<sup>13</sup>

Now in this he is probably not wrong. The story undoubtedly is a variant on that theme which emerges as repeated tellings produce an archetypal tale. It is only that we may also wish to read the work as literature, i.e. as recording a particular view that stands preserved in its own right. And if we do so we find other resonances emerge. For in the *Epic* Humbaba is no pantomime fire-breathing dragon, but a more subtle presence in the cedar-forest. Ultimately, he is nothing other than that hushed awe of the deep forest which makes the would-be tree-cutters feel that to lift their axe would be a violation, a sacrilege against the grandeur and holiness of the place. Interestingly the early Greeks, reflected in Homer's *Iliad* once more, still share the same powerful sense that to change and desecrate the environment for merely human purposes is to offend the gods. Though they must hur-

<sup>13</sup> S.N. Kramer, *History begins at Sumer* (New York 1959) pp.170-81.

riedly throw up defence-works in their siege of Troy, the Greeks feel (and the poet relates as truth) that by doing so they are committing a sacrilege, and the sea-god whose shore they are maiming is angered at their ditches and walls; he is only calmed by the assurance from Zeus himself that soon enough his waves will wash over them and obliterate any mere human construction (*Iliad* VII, 433-463). Humbaba is that same divine anger, which will be caused when the companions come to cut down the trees of Enlil. Humbaba also manifests as a terrible bright light. As the companions force themselves to strangle their reverent awe and do the deed with their axe, the human perpetrators feel as if caught in a bright spotlight, their guilt exposed and shone upon by divine anger. (The cliché image of the escaping prisoner highlighted against the wall by the searchlight has survived to this day, epitomising fear of discovery and the realisation that there is no way to escape visibility.)

But the worst and most interesting is yet to come. For Humbaba proves all too easy to kill. We moderns know all too well how once we have violated our first awe of the forest, or any aspect of the world we must come to use and manipulate, the repetition of our deed quickly becomes blasé and we become hardened. Gilgamesh and Enkidu lay into Humbaba and the trees. Divine reverence soon lies dead.

The piece is of a pattern with the victories in other episodes of this remarkable epic – breaking the horn of the Bull of Heaven, dishonouring the goddess, Ishtar. These are tremendous human victories in that they at once rival the strength and glory of the gods, yet somehow remain all-too-human and leave a bad taste in the mouth. Now Enlil comes to rebuke and shame the pair, and redistributes the light of his guardian into other parts of nature. This is a dragon-slaying that resists assimilation to the mythic pattern, to the repeatedly sifted storyline in which it echoes the archetype of divine victory, always absolute and morally clear. Yet in the process, the two companions, Enkidu and Gilgamesh become deeply realised human characters who must stand before the angry god and own up to the half-achievement, half-outrage they done. Myth has failed to sift out the unsatisfactory and uncertain in the deeds of mortals. An immense step has been taken in putting their flawed greatness before us. Myth has become literature – at what a tragic cost. In this literary afterlife, perhaps, even more than in his great deeds themselves, lies the final world-historical significance of Gilgamesh for humanity.

### Homer: The Three Thousand Year Reign

Homer's characters also emerge out of the mythical sagas of half-forgotten times, and wars half transmogrified by constant retelling of their heroic exploits. His heroes become human in much the same tragic way as Gilgamesh, by measuring their greatness against the archetypal greatness of the gods, and failing, in a way that moves our pity and awe. But in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* the boundary line was between a time when the gods do everything significant, and humans are their servants, which was just being crossed. The two flawed companions establish the interest and poignancy of their struggle, even if it does not emerge with the absolute, archetypal quality of myth; but more often the gods still predominate in that phase of what Rudolf Steiner has called the Sentient-Soul Era (c.3000-750 B.C.). In the Assyrian version of the *Epic* (c.1000 B.C.), Humbaba actually reverts to being a predatory dragon laying waste the forest - myth has reabsorbed the tale into archaic patterns. The companions are old-fashioned heroes, but less moving and complex than the flawed and tragic figures we have seen. In the Greek culture following Homer (the Intellectual-Soul Era, c.750 B.C. onwards), the defining of the human condition has become established, it is systematised and codified in the canon of literary types. Now the human is fully established in literature - but it stands in equal balance, essentially, with the world of myths and gods. The human condition is highlighted, in fact, through the parallel awareness of human and divine. Tragedy is the highest type, and echoes the central story of the *Iliad*. There Achilles in his towering, superhuman wrath goes too far: refusing to help in the siege, he lets the Greeks be driven back and slaughtered by the Trojans until, too late, he agrees to let his bosom-companion Patroclus go and fight - only to be killed. The pattern will be often repeated. The embittered Achilles is shown by the poet as a deeply human figure, yet moving among the half-understood presences and purposes of the gods.

In other circumstances however, human claims to greatness could be revealed in their ridiculousness: the task of comedy. Greek comedy is farcical and absurd, and nothing is spared its jibes, not even religion or the great god of the theatrical art himself - mocked at his own dramatic festival in Aristophanes' *The Frogs*. Yet this is no debunking: the framework is the same as with tragedy, a simultaneous awareness of man's claim to greatness, his affinity with the gods, and his falling short whether in the tragedy of his death or in the less dignified and ridiculous view of his tendency to strut in comedy. Between these poles was a well-

mapped spectrum of possibilities, and so convincing was the framework in presenting the many sides of the human paradox that it lasted virtually unaltered for near on three thousand years.<sup>14</sup>

### The Stranding of Robinson Crusoe

Literary art was still defining its "truth to nature" by the canons of the classical ideal well into the eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Alexander Pope could wily tell the tale of a writer who wanted to be "natural" and scorn the classics, till experience taught him better: "Nature and Homer were, he found, the same." But forces were already at work that were soon to break up the dominance of the aristocracy, with its classicism and its pyramidal, hierarchical social order. This would bring, among other things, a literary style engendered far from the English public schools where future writers swotted Homer and learned Latin. Those forces of change cohered around the greater individualism evolving among the wider population. If it were not for this new consciousness, the literary *ancien régime* would no doubt have contained the disturbing, "revolutionary" tendencies. There have been bread-riots often enough, but it was the new awareness of the potential in the situation which would make of the French Revolution a chance to rewrite the very structure of society – and everything else. Long before the dramatic showdown across the Channel, however, England had quietly started to evolve some new, very un-classical art-forms to express the changed consciousness of the period. And nothing encapsulates the new individualistic spirit more strikingly than the shipwrecked, isolated yet ingenious Robinson Crusoe, with nothing more provided on his island than a cask or two of liquor, planks for some home-made furniture and the fortunate availability of a good native manservant.

<sup>14</sup> When Rudolf Steiner relates the genres to the members of human nature, higher and lower, therefore, he is entirely in the spirit of the Greek conception: see for instance *Sprachgestaltung und dramatische Kunst* (Dornach 1969) pp. 58ff. The genres which emerged from Homer were catalogued by Aristotle in his *Art of Poetry*, and remained amazingly fixed both in theory and practice for some three thousand years, so that the influential Northrop Frye could comment that "the critical theory of genres is stuck precisely where Aristotle left it": *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton 1957) p. 13. He himself offers the same classification with additions. But Rudolf Steiner, by taking us back to the human centre, also brings in a new perspective – an evolutionary one as yet hardly applied to literary studies.

<sup>15</sup> Though perhaps the programmatic shrillness of its claims to "Augustan" perfection (that of the greatest Latin writers like Virgil and Cicero, who lived under the cultured Emperor Augustus) betrays it as something of a self-conscious, last-ditch stand.

Suppose that you were cast up on a desert island. . . . It is a starting-point utterly different from the classical question: How do I tell a story that involves values and situations of concern to everyone in our cultural heritage. Secondly, such art could make clear what these matters mean to the author, and the individuals (real or not) involved. But now people started to protest at starting with a recognised model of what they should be. Instead of taking a theme, social and objective in its implications, and actualising it imaginatively in a personal way, the emerging early novel quite often picks on people in intense isolation and under pressure, lonely or victimised: there is Crusoe stranded on his island, but also Samuel Richardson's domestic heroines Pamela and Clarissa, kept prisoner by their families and pressured to submit to marriage-arrangements, with no friend to support them; and there are those early thrillers the "Gothick" novels, the original blockbusters, where people (especially young women), are routinely whisked off to remote castles and dungeons and never know what will happen to them next, or why.<sup>16</sup> The fascination of these works is that of being thrown strictly, even frighteningly, on one's own resources – the Consciousness Soul.

It is not just the physical dangers. The sense is often of a character trying desperately to work out what is going on, and what it all means. That is the real "terror" and anxiety behind the Gothick stories too, for all their occasional spooks. Most radically disturbing is the quite new dimension of the uncertainty. It is not just that Crusoe cannot tell how his story is supposed to end – we have to wait and see, without the advantage of knowing as in comedy or tragedy. And apart from its empirical uncertainty, we soon become aware that the story does not start with any fixed meaning at all. The writer/narrator has to find or make its meaning. Yet when things "just happen" to me and I tell my story, like shipwrecked Crusoe, I cannot really know whether the events will mean the same (or mean anything) to others. Does his father's several-times-quoted warning, not to be too adventurous but content with a middling lot, hold the key? On the other hand Crusoe often claims to have found God and contentment from his island. What are the criteria by which we could decide? The narrator can only reach out, and hope to find a listening ear, to convince first himself, and then others of the significance he found in events. In a well-known episode, Crusoe is heartened by the wheat which springs up by his stockade – a miracle, providence! until he remembers

<sup>16</sup> Compare my discussion in Welburn, *Power and Self-consciousness in the Poetry of Shelley* (London and New York 1986) pp.46ff.

shaking out that old sack. Yet it may still be God watching over him. How can he decide? Do we believe him? Or how can the writer convey what it really does mean? Since the story is not shaped after pre-set mythic patterns, but depends on the unfolding of events and their personal significance to character, writer and reader, there is no clear way to establish the truth. Yet the sense of immediacy from such a narrative, with both possibilities psychologically analysed, is wonderful and strong.

There are no classical techniques for this – which explains the extreme clumsiness as well as the abiding interest of the first novelists. They are quite unbelievably clumsy, because there is no established framework of communication in place. There was no clear idea of “a novel” for a writer to write. (There are not even chapter-divisions in *Robinson Crusoe*. It just goes on with the story as long as there is anything left to tell.) Classical works are “representation”: they measure what is told against an ideal (a genre, a set of expectations, the values which have previously been felt to attach to a theme), and we admire the stylish handling, the artistry of a clearly defined project (a tragedy, a satire, or whatever), and maybe a new qualifying personal note. But the early novelists had not yet found what they were supposed to be doing, because their work did not arise out of “literature” in that defined mode at all. Defoe was a prolific political journalist, controversialist, interviewer, hack-writer, author of manuals like *The Complete English Tradesman*, books on the history of devil-worship; Richardson started off by writing sample-letters for pen-tied young people to use as templates in real-life situations. It was this pressure of things people actually needed to know which focussed their individualism, their separate consciousness, and which is reflected in the novels. The pressure was among other things economic. Finding one’s own life meant finding how to support that life financially. This absolute necessity when breaking with hierarchy, patronage, etc. applied to authors too. And in a wider way, the better (but by no means extensive) education of the rising middle class meant that they were branching out into all sorts of ventures and responsibilities: they needed to find out how things were done, how society worked, why it was like that, what if it were changed. Hitherto, a smaller highly trained class who probably all went to the same school and who carried on “how it had always been done” had not faced these uncertainties and strains. The change to making sense of life for oneself was indeed opening a Pandora’s box.

Of course working people had often been under pressure. But it was their new consciousness, the ability they had acquired to imagine and

articulate what was going on, that changed things – and brought nature's happy assimilation to Homer finally to an end. Their world was a new place, in which they felt frequently lost, but which had to be crystallised out of individual questionings and struggles. This consciousness was cut off from the collective patterns to an unprecedented degree, and centred on what people made of their own lives. It was the Consciousness-Soul phase, in Steiner's terms, first discernible from the fifteenth century A.D., now coming rather distinctly to a head.<sup>17</sup> We have gone deeper and deeper into its abyss of relativisms ever since. The issues which now opened up about the meaning of "what happens" and whether anyone else can share it, or on what criteria, turned out (as we know) to be formidable ones. The early novelists were indeed shipwrecked on the shores of the Consciousness Soul. As a result, the world of the first novels is not only clumsy in fact, from lack of polish, it is still more unclear in principle about the status of its fictional world, and about how to unfold a meaningful narrative just from experience without a set type of pattern like tragedy or comedy. Achilles' achievement, whatever his flaws, was heroism, saving the Greeks, avenging Helen's rape – and judging his greatness is done by Homer with three-thousand-year-old finesse. But nothing essentially depends on Crusoe's narrative except whether he convinces us it was worth reading. Thus the early novelists were often perplexed about how to evaluate their characters, or the role of the author.<sup>18</sup> Should the author simply *tell* us what to think? When the cruel plantation-owners are closing in on the heroic slave who gives his name to her *Oroonoko*, that still earlier pioneer Aphra Behn cannot resist inserting in brackets: "(Damn 'em!)"<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> On the preparing of the Consciousness-Soul age, with the role of England (and a mention of Chaucer) in it, see Steiner, *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts* (London 1973) pp. 112ff.

<sup>18</sup> As a parallel, one might mention the difficulty caused by Turner's landscapes. People were perplexed about which part was background and what the artist meant us to see as centrally significant. The answer was that of course Turner had broken with that idea of how to look at the world.

<sup>19</sup> This is crude enough – but Fielding with his constant narrator's intrusions in *Tom Jones* (1749), joking about events and about authoring, giving us what other people said about them, ironising himself for telling them as he did, so as to give the sense of a social web of viewpoints, is only a refinement of it. It was he who socialised the novel, balancing out its original solitary immediacy. Jane Austen (in the early nineteenth century) more subtly steps in, insisting on telling us in indirect speech what her characters said, rather than letting them say it themselves – and adding her own subtle tones of mild amusement, irony, sarcasm. Again, social many-sidedness comes strongly back into the picture to balance raw experience – though as well there is ample further development of immediacy and insight into character direct.

But the portrayal of Oroonoko is unstable in every way: sometimes she adopts high heroic language about him, at other times he is a barbarian; a tragic figure; a grotesque with his tattooed body. No evaluation is possible e.g. that he shows the cruelty of slavery, or whatever. The early novel drew attention to the difficulties of interpreting others, and even oneself. And it created the most extraordinary illusions about itself even while it seemed most down-to-earth and close to life.

It was unclear first of all about the line between fiction and reality.

The journalist Defoe had interviewed and reported on numerous fascinating, real-life characters. It is still not clear that he met Alexander Selkirk, but he certainly knew about him and his solitary years on a desert island (1704-9). Selkirk's story attracted widespread interest and, in the spirit of the new epoch, Defoe cashed in by writing *Robinson Crusoe* – and *Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* and similar matters not now much read. Generations of readers took Crusoe for a real person, and perhaps had a notion that Defoe had had access to Selkirk's journals and just had to change the names slightly. Defoe disingenuously encourages the reader to guess in this direction by numerous little hints. Why should his hero change his name from Kreutznaer to Crusoe except that the real-life character had changed his from Selcraig to Selkirk? Aha! thinks the reader.

On the literary level, his readership was encouraged to believe in Crusoe because the narrative tries hard to be just like an account of what happened to a real individual – and here is Defoe's most brilliant success, a compelling if clumsy and stunningly vivid tale which few have put down once taken up. Defoe almost certainly wrote it starting at p.1 and working steadily forward. (So too did Aphra Behn (1640-1689): her suitably impressed social circle could actually watch her progress, pausing sometimes for repartee over the manuscript, at her *soirées*.) There is no reason to think that he went back and changed anything, or had thought in any but the most general terms about what would happen. This makes for many minor inconsistencies. But much more importantly, indeed overwhelmingly so, it enabled Defoe to throw himself imaginatively into Crusoe's situation and speak in his voice. There is no sense of prior patterning, of asking the import of his actions for others (heroism or whatever) against which to measure him, but only of the very man telling us what he alone can convey of his solitary life. Rather than seeming chosen to represent anything, he seems – just to exist. He feels utterly spontaneous and unique. There had been nothing

really like it. It is a huge step forward of literature into modernity. In this kind of writing Defoe is a towering genius.

Yet what kind of reality has this simulacrum of a person, this apparently flesh-and-blood evocation, Crusoe? There is a paradox here. His very "reality" makes it hard to know, because we have no access to events except for what he tells us. Short of a fact-finding voyage to his island, we cannot check up on anything.<sup>20</sup> And so we cannot tell whether he is right about events. If he had made it all up (as in fact Defoe did) how could we know? Defoe's technique gives us no way of finding out. On a more internal level, for example, how can we tell whether we should question matters such as the Christmas Day entry in Crusoe's journal? 25th December passes without any but the most humdrum record. Is this a pointed observation – that Crusoe's life has nothing distinguish high days from any other? Should we be shocked that the sometimes sententiously pious Crusoe fails to take note of his Saviour's birth? Is it a matter internal to the story at all, or a mistake of Defoe's, for he never makes anything of the incident? He might have just scribbled dates for the fictional entries without himself noticing what he was doing. And in the end this means that there is after all a disappointing lack of depth. We can never get a perspective on Crusoe, because there is nowhere outside him. No other character has anything like the stature to be more than "someone mentioned by Crusoe"; there is none to speak up and say how he came over to the boy Xury whom he sold, or to Friday whom he rescued and to whom he gave the name and identity he chose so as to commemorate the day. And the result is that we lack a rounded view of the central figure too, for all his forceful presence. Later, novelists would realise the difference between "real" and "realistic" writing, and in the latter using more sophisticated methods of showing different sides of a character, to create what is ultimately a still more life-like impression. Defoe is actually constrained by the strange quasi-reality of his work.<sup>21</sup> It is more like one witness's account than a jury's final balanced assessment of what took place. However, the realisation that "realistic" writing is rigged and artificial caused later writers only to deepen their anxiety.

<sup>20</sup> One of Defoe's editors undertook one, and was shocked at the discrepancies he found! And see now T. Severin, *Seeking Robinson Crusoe* (London 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Realism is thus a quite complex and artificial affair: see the brilliant account in Stephen Prickett, *Words and the Word* (Cambridge 1986) pp.76–7 and further reflections pp.186–9.

And they were right. For connected with this extraordinary one-sidedness of a consciousness, new in its intensity and which stepped outside shared assumptions to capture the immediacy and uncertainty of life, is its proneness to the most gaping delusions. Myths are shored up by the myriad contributions of tellers and hearers, putting their implications unconsciously to the test in the transmission. But a man thrown on himself, like Crusoe, and trying to make sense of his experience may fall into the most extraordinary wishful thinking – and in other ways into hopeless misrepresentation. Defoe took up the thought of a shipwrecked Selkirk, and gloried in the happy imagining of his Crusoe struggling to cope with his DIY-island, building his palisaded home, knocking together tables and chairs; ingeniously patching his clothes together to protect him from the sun; capturing and enclosing the island's wild goats for milk, cheese and meat; inwardly subject to difficult emotions but winning through to a kind of religious serenity. Yet Selkirk's experience was horrifyingly different. Put ashore (at his own request after a quarrel with fellow-buccaneers) on a deserted island, Selkirk had changed his mind even before the boat was out of sight. In all the years he was on the island he never dared to leave the shore for a moment in case he should miss a ship passing by to hail. He was paranoid about closing his eyes even for an instant. He scraped a miserable existence by living on shellfish clawed from the rocks with his bare hands. He was haunted by a deep terror of the forested interior of the island. Like Shakespeare's mariners in *The Tempest* he heard demonic voices calling and taunting him, from the darkness of the forest and from the beating of the waves. He reverted in vivid hallucinations to his childhood in Fife. In his disturbed state he "was scarce able to refrain from doing himself violence". When eventually he was found, scarcely able to speak, and brought home, he achieved for a time a semblance of normality. But he soon found ordinary life difficult and scraped out a sort of cave for himself in the garden to live in. Despite all his traumas at sea, he was unable to settle and was driven to sea-faring once more.

Human beings do not master their world by the solitary cleverness of Crusoe, nor by the practical solutions of ensuring plentiful food and clothing. On this level *Robinson Crusoe* is a fantasy of egoism and materialism. Never for an instant is Crusoe struck by the beauty of his wild island. In his determination to be master of his situation, never once does he feel the need to love or to be loved. It is no feather-in-his-cap that Karl Marx took *Crusoe* rather seriously and rather straight; Rudolf Steiner's severe remarks, on the other hand, go

straight to the point.<sup>22</sup> And in so far as the shipwreck is a metaphor for the individualism of the modern soul, *Crusoe* is likewise deficient – and downright misleading. People were evolving a greater sense of individualism by developing themselves, finding their potential, their special talents: they were more entrepreneurial by the eighteenth century, notably in Britain. And as they followed their special line, they relied increasingly on other specialists. In a village or a cottage, making bits of one's own furniture was commonplace; keeping goats or sheep was normal, and pigs remained surprisingly popular even in nineteenth-century cities. But, as Ian Watt perceptively observes, what made *Crusoe* an interesting figure to his middle-class readers was the half-conscious realisation that, living in suburbia with its early service-industries blossoming, no-one would have known any longer how to make cheese or put together a table and chairs if the need arose.<sup>23</sup> The half-perception of this truth with its threat to their independence is wonderfully catered to by the fantasy that we could all do everything, like *Crusoe* on his island. But Defoe's self-congratulatory fiction is a denial of the truth: we can become more ourselves, in the Consciousness Soul epoch, only if we learn that this involves inextricably a web of relations to others, and recognition of their special qualities too. We cannot be ourselves at all without relationship; we cannot be deeply ourselves without giving ourselves in love.

The attempt to uphold *Crusoe* is not just an affair of literature. It is the fantasy-theme of modern society in the West that with our material resources and our ingenuity we can shape our happy-island existence. But in the horrors of urban alienation and violence, where so many inflict self-harm on themselves because they do not have the goods which are felt necessary to identity and self-respect, what we actually see is the other version of shipwreck – the nightmare of Alexander Selkirk's loneliness, trauma, self-destructive urges and restless demise.

In short, then, Defoe stumbled – or was cast up – on a new domain of imagination and writing. All our great novels are hugely indebted to his pioneering work. But they have had to struggle to understand the temptations to self-aggrandisement, and the haunting terrors, of the islanded soul which he first exposed. It is a threshold experience, between the tempter and the fear of the void, that the novel brought. Cut loose from the apron-strings of shared constructs, past

<sup>22</sup> He spoke of it on a number of occasions, especially around 1915 e.g. GA64 and GA65.

<sup>23</sup> Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth 1972) pp.78ff.

mythologies, the novel's commitment to exploration of personal experience has given it central place in modern literary culture. And it has risen to the challenge of understanding the real forces shaping its themes in many profound and fascinating works, through the great French and Russian novels to Andrei Bely, and in English through George Eliot and Henry James to James Joyce or Saul Bellow. In the Russian symbolist Bely, and the dazzling tapestries of Saul Bellow, the novel of the Consciousness Soul has made direct connection to the insights of Rudolf Steiner – that, however, would for now, for this article, be a voyage too far.

## Cactus Flower

Martin Schmandt

Green bumps, undustable, impervious to love,  
porcupining up in little terracotta pots,  
imperceptibly blown up to doubled, tripled size  
since you first, for sheer mercy,  
trundled them from flat to flat,  
and propped them up in an eastern window.

And now, just now, if you happen to be passing  
just at that blip in the decade  
when one bulbous succulent,  
spiked, turbine-flanged into thirteen wedges,  
already bursting here and there with needle-crustled bundles,  
spurts its fierce pimple, furred wolfish grey,  
and the little beast – who knows what ghost this gargoyle scares  
away –

stretches three days, till the trumpet of its coming  
breathes itself out, flares itself open,  
and the whole ceremonial geometry commences,  
the white anthers choiring as the stamens ring the elevated stigma,  
while pointed petals, glossy and pale, rush upward in a  
fountaining of prayer,

then, if you are there, the bloom before your eyes,  
you can gasp, sniff the perfume, exclaim, fetch the neighbours,

or you can blossom, too, swaying into symbol,  
find the horn of Joshua at Jericho extolling  
the tumble as the walls of the invisible cave in,

or, more secret, let it draw you down  
to the stir before the stem,  
pure hunch,  
let it trawl you deeper, unsuspectedly alive,

along the crowded sill, afloat in dusty sunbeams,  
probing imperceptible foci of rebirth  
in the other green lumps, sniffing for vermillion,  
some whiff of provocation in the neighbour heap of dreadlock,  
in the stump-armed panic of the green Damned  
thick aboard their terracotta barge,

and so draw further in

to where the air  
belies its blank staring, and its vacant poet-ear  
already buzzes black and gold, startles with the suddenness  
of the urgent, fertilising  
bee.

## **The Fishes Zodiac and the Present Age**

**John Salter**

### **1. SUMMARY**

The Zodiac handed down from Greco-Roman times has been traditionally related to the human form from the Ram (forehead) to the Fishes (feet). Rudolf Steiner's spiritual research points to a different configuration of the constellations in relation to the human being as being applicable in the current epoch of civilisation now under the sway of the Fishes. Following experience of working artistically with the traditional (Ram) Zodiac the attempt was made to elucidate some aspects of the present, Fishes Zodiac using artistic means.

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

Whilst working artistically on the traditional Zodiac (described in Section 3) I was struck by Steiner's description of the Zodiac applicable now which resulted in a quite different general picture of the human being without, however, going into specific detail (1). What could this mean for us now? Did the qualities of the traditional Ram Zodiac no longer apply? Intellectual speculation led nowhere. Could the question be explored artistically, using artistic means for research purposes? Before that process can be described some minimal background is necessary. Section 4 outlines the relation of the different ages of civilisation to the constellations. Section 5 and Figs. 1 & 2 summarise the differing characteristics of the Ram and Fishes Zodiacs, whilst Section 6 discusses some aspects of the Fishes epoch. The working method and the means used are described in Section 7. The process is evaluated in Section 8 which appears to reveal a close relationship between the qualities of the Fishes Zodiac and the practice of the six basic soul exercises which should accompany esoteric work. Some positive and negative dynamics relating to this epoch are noted in Section 9.

### 3. PREVIOUS ZODIAC PROJECT

This exploration of the Fishes Zodiac grew out of and was founded on a previous project on the Zodiac. The earlier work was related to the traditional Ram Zodiac handed down from classical times. Starting with 12 sculptures in resin bronze it eventually also included 12 black and white drawings and 12 paintings.

The impulse for this work was not drawn from traditional images of the zodiac, however, but from the modern art of eurythmy developed by Rudolf Steiner from 1912 on (3). This is an art of movement expressing the dynamics of speech. The consonants are related to the different constellations of the Zodiac; in some cases two closely related sounds belong to one constellation. The sculptures and drawings were developed from the movement for a particular sound and were taken through a seven step process. This started with the expression of a simple dynamic in the clay or drawing, setting it aside and then developing further in a second, a third version and so on until a viable composition appeared in the sixth, seventh or sometimes an eighth attempt. Other factors were allowed to play into the process, such as the relationship of the constellations to the parts and functions of the human form. The paintings went through a similar process but based in each case on a chord of three colours given by Steiner for each sound.

Each work session was preceded by carrying out the relevant eurythmy movement and also by inwardly contemplating the dynamic to be explored. The sevenfold process proved invaluable in resolving discordant elements and producing an inwardly consistent composition.

### 4. EPOCHS AND CONSTELLATIONS

The development of human civilisation as characterised by Steiner goes through major changes in a rhythm of 2160 years. This is indirectly related to the movement of the vernal point, where the sun rises at the spring equinox, against the background of the zodiacal constellations. The recent past and immediate future can be briefly summarised as follows:

| Vernal Point enters<br>Constellation approx. | Cultural Epoch         |                                  |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                                              | Post-Atlantean Periods |                                  |
| Bull                                         | 4400 B.C.              | 3rd. Egypt/Mesopotamia 2907 B.C. |
| Ram                                          | 1800 B.C.              | 4th. Greece/Rome 747 B.C.        |
| Fishes                                       | 100 B.C.               | 5th. Present Epoch 1413 A.D.     |
| Waterman                                     | 2600 A.D.              | Next Epoch 3573 A.D.             |

The cultural epochs start around the midpoint of the period that the vernal point is in each constellation. Thus the Greco-Roman period begins in 747 B.C., the traditional date of the founding of Rome, about a millenium after the sun at the vernal point has moved into the Ram and ends after the Middle Ages in 1413 A.D. The vernal point moves into the Fishes around the time of Christ but our own epoch does not begin until the fifteenth century, the time of the Renaissance, and runs through to the middle of the fourth millenium. This according to Steiner is the true beginning of the Waterman (Aquarian) Age, although the vernal point will actually enter the constellation of Waterman around 2600 A.D.

The change from the Ram epoch to that of the Fishes points also to a more far reaching change in evolution. The last Ram epoch marks the end of a great cycle starting with the previous Fishes epoch which took place before the beginning of Atlantis in the last period of Lemuria (1). There is, in addition, a very much greater cycle of evolution starting after the sun had separated from the earth. This cycle also started under the direction of the Fishes when the cosmic forces working from the constellations over immensely long periods of time fashioned the human form from the feet up (2). Still an etheric form in late Lemuria the human being gradually took on physical form, becoming by Greek times fully at home on the earth. This last Ram epoch was also the time when the being of Christ incarnated upon earth to give a new impulse to the development of the spiritual individuality of man. From the new Fishes epoch on we have to begin the process of freeing ourselves from the danger of entombment in the physical and increasingly share in the full unfolding of our spiritual being.

### 5. CHARACTERISTICS OF RAM AND FISHES CONSTELLATIONS

The traditional Ram Zodiac was related to the human being from the head (Ram) to the feet (Fishes) and was characterised at one time by Steiner as follows (Fig.1) (1).

| <i>Constellation</i>                       | <i>Qualities</i>                       | <i>Part of human form</i> |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Human being formed out of the cosmos: Head |                                        |                           |
| Ram                                        | Taking in the universe                 | Forehead                  |
| Bull                                       | Looking out into the universe          | Larynx                    |
|                                            | Taking in the mobility of the universe |                           |
| Twins                                      | Taking hold of oneself (touch)         | Shoulders, symmetry       |
| Crab                                       | Enclosing oneself                      | Thorax, skin              |

Human being formed from within: Chest

|          |                                                   |                        |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Lion     | Actively filled from within                       | Heart                  |
| Virgin   | Ripening                                          | Organs below diaphragm |
| Scales   | Becoming part of inorganic world, seeking balance | Pelvis                 |
| Scorpion | Poison sting (of ingested matter)                 | Reproductive organs    |

Human being formed in relation to the earth: Limbs, Occupations

|          |                    |           |
|----------|--------------------|-----------|
| Archer   | Hunter             | Upper leg |
| Goat     | Animal breeder     | Knee      |
| Waterman | Tiller of the soil | Lower leg |
| Fishes   | Trader             | Feet      |

In contrast to the Ram Zodiac the Fishes Zodiac of the present time has a radically different orientation to the threefold human being (Fig.2). The upper part of man, the head region, now runs from the Fishes to the Twins whilst the lower part, the limbs, runs through the

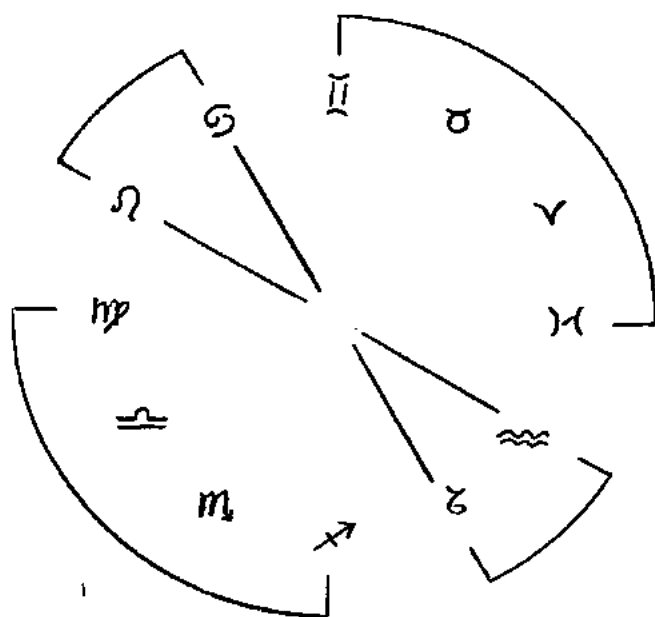


Fig.2

FISHES ZODIAC

polar opposite constellations, from the Virgin to the Archer. The middle man, the rhythmic system, now comprises the remaining opposite pairs of Crab/Goat and Lion/Waterman (1).

## 6. THE FISHES ZODIAC

Steiner's remarks concerning the Fishes Zodiac do not go into any detail regarding the part played by individual constellations. He refers to the development of the intellect and to the growth of industrialisation as processes of abstraction and to a kind of "dissolution" which will increase into the next Waterman age. This is in contrast to the earlier evolution of the human form out of its purely etheric condition in the previous Fishes epoch towards physical embodiment on the earth. The head region (Fishes to Twins) has a dying quality that forms the basis for the inner life of ideas and images. The limb or will pole (Virgin to Archer) is imbued with undeveloped life, is embryonic. The constellations in between (Crab/Goat and Lion/Waterman) relate to the rhythmic aspect of the human being which swings to and fro between image and embryo.

It seems clear that – whatever perspective one adopts – the human being had, after immensely long periods of evolution, fully arrived within his physical organism and was fully at home upon the earth by the time our present age opened in the fifteenth century. As man lost his earlier spiritual faculties his etheric body shrank closer to the physical form. References to "abstraction" and "dissolution" seem to imply that the whole process is going into reverse. The etheric body will now start to expand and mankind will be faced with developing new faculties. It will have to take an increasingly more conscious part in its own evolution. The present age of the Fishes inaugurates another great cycle of development.

With this as background, how can one start relating to this new configuration of the Zodiac? I was still working on the earlier Zodiac project at the time and any speculation about its significance tended to be in terms of traditional ideas about the working of individual constellations and did not lead anywhere. However, I did briefly wonder what it would be like to place the forms of opposite constellations against one another.

When the earlier project had been completed I began to look at the Fishes Zodiac without having any real line of approach. The Zodiac seemed to be all polarities or opposites: the "head" constellations ranged

against the "limb" constellations and those relating to the "middle" man were split into opposite pairs. There seemed to be a pulling apart in all directions.

Then I remembered my earlier intuition to bring together the opposite forms belonging to each axis. This would be too complex a task to do sculpturally, at least initially, but it gave rise to the thought that one could explore two specific movements in drawing and hope to come to some sort of resolution. The idea evolved of relating opposite pairs of constellations together in a series of drawings. But before proceeding to do this I felt the work needed underpinning with a comprehensive picture of the whole. This led to the concept of Wholistic Imaging with a descending order of relationships:

1. The Upper and Lower Pairs (Fishes to Twins and Virgin to Archer) working together in cooperative tension and harmonised in this by the remaining Middle Pairs (Crab/Goat and Lion/Waterman): the whole Zodiac regarded comprehensively as an organism bearing the threefold being of man as an active principle.

2. Three sets of Crosses, two of which have Upper, Lower and Middle Pairs (Ram/Scales with Crab/Goat and Bull/Scorpion with Lion/Waterman). The third Cross (Fishes/Virgin and Twins/Archer) are the first and last of the Upper and Lower Pairs (taking Fishes/Virgin as the first). Two of the crosses have the harmonising qualities of the Middle Pairs as it were built in, whilst the third lacks this support and remains within the Upper and Lower duality. It will be seen later that this has an important consequence.

3. Pairs of opposites or axes across the Zodiac; these are the smallest subdivisions of the whole and would be the subject of the sequence of six drawings. But it was felt important to bear in mind throughout the more inclusive relationships outlined in 1 and 2 above.

The actual working process was based on experience with the previous Zodiac project. In this case the eurythmy movements for two consonants, relating to the two constellations concerned, would be brought together in a sevenfold process aimed at producing an artistic composition as a result. The human form as something completed would no longer be relevant as a factor playing into the process as before. However, an awareness of the "Twelve Moods" by Rudolf Steiner, a compactly expressed poem on the twelve constellations, was present during the work (5). The process had both eurythmic and meditative aspects, as preparation for the actual drawing. Each work period was preceded by the following steps:

1. Performing the eurythmy gesture for the relevant pairs of constellations followed by
2. The eurythmy movement for the corresponding pair of consonants,
3. Dwelling inwardly upon the dynamics of the two movements that had to be brought together without, however, imagining a pictorial outcome. At a later stage of the sequence of seven drawings some aspect of the relevant poems of the "Twelve Moods" was allowed to play into the process.

In the first sketch both movements were expressed in the simplest terms; a second then played with the possibilities that emerged. As the interaction became more complex it often grew confused and it then became necessary to simplify and/or harmonise the working of the dynamics which had been set in motion. In most cases an artistically satisfactory composition resulted in the seventh attempt, although sometimes final adjustments required a further drawing. This process resulted in the six drawings described in the next section which relate to the six pairs of opposite constellations working together. Each pair of opposites will be referred to as an axis.

(Note: it is obviously desirable to have had experience of the basic movements in eurythmy in class work with a trained eurythmist to carry out the above. However, descriptions of the relevant movements are given in Steiner's lectures on eurythmy (3) and are further explored in Margarete Kirchner-Bockholt's book on curative eurythmy (8). Werner Barfod's booklet (7) which brings together many different levels of experience of speech sounds in connection with the constellations and planets proved an invaluable companion in this and the former Zodiac project.

## **7. FISHES ZODIAC: Working together of Opposite Dynamics**

The development of the drawings for each axis will be described in turn but not in number order.

### **1. FISHES/VIRGIN Axis: N/B**

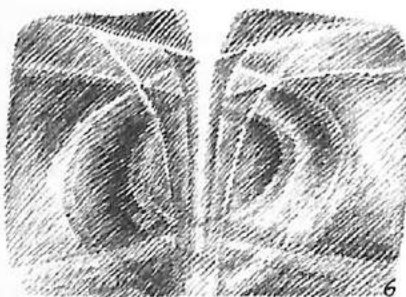
Below, the dynamic activity living in the movement for B leads into the dark, warm, enclosed realm of the Virgin. In this realm below the diaphragm the transformation of substances takes place to build up the human form. The enfolding, embracing movement leads into the realm



3



5



6

of human will. Shielding, protecting a precious inner activity is the gesture which B brings from the realm of the Virgin.

In this composition the lower, enclosed realm of the Virgin is to be related to the dynamic of the Fishes expressed through the movement for N. This has a lightness of touch, a touching and withdrawing, indicating something grasped in a flash before moving on quickly to comprehend something else. Several attempts which tried to penetrate too far into the realm of B had to be abandoned before arriving at the Fishes/Virgin composition. The enclosing movements which above have a looser relationship to the inner B realm have taken on the N quality of touching and leaving so that a zigzag path of light begins to permeate the hidden realm. The warm, dark space below receives a gentle awakening to new possibilities. Through the touch of the Fishes a new dimension awakens in the depths of the Virgin. The Twins/Archer axis which completes the Fishes/Virgin and Twins/Archer cross will be dealt with after the other relationships have been described.

## 2. RAM/SCALES Axis: V/C

The weaving, welling, on-flowing movement of V streams across the upper part. In eurythmy this wave movement streams unendingly but provides a warmth shield around the human form. As a movement in drawing or modelled in clay it can well into a holding form. In the wave or rounded form are reflected different aspects of thinking: concepts which are clearly defined in the rounded form (top left), thoughts which express movement in the weaving wave forms (top right).

From below work the dynamics of the Scales, experienced in the movement for C (as in dance) which can be felt as if one went to pick up something heavy and finds that it is quite light and flies upward with ease: gravity mutates into levity. The skeletal organ of balance (pelvis) allows movement across the earth and freedom of movement in the upper part of the body. In the physical world balance is a state of rest; spiritually one feels it as continual movement balancing out imbalances. The movement wells up from the base and rises in continually balancing sweeps to meet the weaving of the Ram until a conversation arises between them.

## 5. CRAB/GOAT Axis: F/L

This axis belongs to the Middle Man and can be seen as particularly supportive of the Ram/Scales axis. Working into the dynamics of this

axis led after some attempts at vertical compositions to prefer a horizontal format (which was also followed for the other "middle" axis of Lion/Waterman). The realm of the Goat is filled with the flowing dynamic of L, sweeping down, embracing, rising up. From small beginnings it can grow rhythmically to great enclosing arcs, filled by the buoyant forces of growing things. In the ancient mysteries the force of L was felt in the creative and formative element in all things which can overcome matter.

Now the fleeting movement of F belonging to the Crab has to find its relationship with the expanding, flowing L. In this image the deeply breathing, flowing movement is woven into the L so that some Crab streams unite with the sweeping L and some preserve the in and out gesture of the Crab. The experience of F in the breath connects the wisdom inherent in the ether body with the source of wisdom in the cosmos, a relationship understood in ancient times through the being of Isis. The mystery of the Word was explored at Ephesus through the intimate experience of human speech upon the breath (4). Werner Barfod points out that the place name embraces F with the vowel E before and after the F: EF-FE-SUS (7).

The unaccustomed position of the Goat in the middle system of the human being, compared to its role in the former Ram dispensation of the Zodiac, becomes clearer when the rhythmic life-sustaining flow of the L is allied to the rhythm of the breath in F. Combined they provide a powerful basis for harmonising the soul life and, in the axis comprising the other arm of the cross, enabling the rising will of the Scales to play into the weaving thought life of the Ram in tranquil conversation.

### 3. BULL/SCORPION Axis: R/S

Now we have to reconcile the rolling dynamics of R, for the Bull, with the powerful sweep of S, belonging to the Scorpion. In this drawing a simple wheeling movement embraces a light filled centre, recalling the Bull's role in the human being of moving with everything that flows from the cosmos: a gesture between surrender and standing firm.

The powerful movement of S, like the sweeps of the magician's wand calming what is in turmoil, is focussed into the point of the sting. The earlier image for this constellation, the Eagle, speaks of the heights whilst the sting, which relates to the incorporation of matter into the human form, creates a tension between above and below. A powerful ambiguity can be experienced where the strong movement of S stands

between good and evil, between the use or abuse of power. In the combined dynamics of R and S, the latter is drawn into the circling, upholding quality of R. The light realm of the Bull, which in this instance is functioning within the upper region of the human being, now streams down, illuminating the sting of the Scorpion. Whereas in the Ram/Scales axis a conversation is inaugurated, here in the Bull/Scorpion axis something more like an interaction appears to take place.

#### 6. LION/WATERMAN Axis: T/M

In some ways this was the hardest to bring to a satisfactory artistic conclusion. The powerful vertical of T streaming down from above into the depths of the human being is allied with the Lion's joyful, expressive gesture of enthusiasm. The dynamic of the Lion moves through the rhythmic pulse of the circulation, harmonising head and limbs. In T lives a feeling for the TAO, indicating all that radiates from heaven to earth behind nature and pointing to the upright posture of man within creation.

Finding the right expression for the movement of the Waterman and M in a horizontal composition in which the dynamic of T had to be central presented some problems. M has the quality of penetrating everything with understanding together with the dynamic of a reciprocal forming movement. This reciprocal activity appears in the human form particularly in the forearm where the radius and ulna have their "knobs" at opposite ends (formed under the sway of the Waterman). Eventually two horizontal interlocking movements appeared that stream from infinite distances and move around the central T gesture. The constantly flowing reciprocal movement forms a shape like the standing wave which forms above a submerged rock in a flowing stream. The image arising from combining the movements of T and M, Lion and Waterman, has a certain inner strength in the midst of constantly harmonising movement, reconciling the distant periphery with the centred posture. This strongly supports the dialogue of R and S, of Bull and Scorpion, which constitutes the other part of this cross in the Zodiac.

#### 4. TWINS/ARCHER Axis: H/G

The darker, surrounding gesture grew out of the movement for G, belonging to the Archer. This movement presses back a surrounding world that is felt to be oppressive or creating revulsion; in fending off the

outer world a protected space arises within which the soul's inner forces are consolidated.

The shining awareness of H, belonging to the Twins, has been drawn into the inner space of G. After a number of experiments the gesture for the Twins came to rest within the protected space of the Archer. The movement for H has a dual character: initially contracting, a gathering together of forces which are released in joyful expansion. The symmetry of the Twins in the human form allows the hands to touch each other, awakening the sense of self which is enhanced by the focus of the eyes on an object.

The combined dynamics of this composition brings the sequence working through from the Fishes/Virgin axis (which forms the third Zodiac cross with Twins/Archer) to a certain conclusion. From the gentle awakening in Fishes/Virgin (Drawing 1), through the thematic conversation of Ram/Scales (Drawing 2) and the more interactive gesture of Bull/Scorpion (Drawing 3) we now arrive at a complete integration of the Twins/Archer motifs. The shining radiance of the H streams out from the inner space of G (Drawing 4).

## 8. EVALUATION

The Ram epoch marked the end of a long period in which the human form was fully developed as a physical organisation on earth. The forces associated with the Ram Zodiac obviously continue to support the human form and work into every embryo that is conceived but different influences are called into activity by the configuration of the Zodiac in the Fishes epoch. This age is concerned with the loosening of the soul from the physical and the development of new spiritual faculties. It therefore appears appropriate to concentrate attention on soul faculties and their development. In this case the upper motifs would apply to the faculty of thinking, the lower to the activity of will and the middle motifs to the harmonising and purifying of the realm of feeling. In this context the way in which the upper and lower motifs increasingly interact makes one aware how thinking and willing play into one another; thinking requires a certain amount of will to keep it on track and willing needs the clarity of direction given by thinking. This perception soon leads one to recall the six basic inner exercises which should accompany the life of meditation as described in several of Steiner's basic books. The next section outlines how these six exercises can be related to the six drawings and the relevant constellations. The book by Florin Lowndes entitled

"Enlivening the Chakra of the Heart" (9) is invaluable in deepening one's understanding of these exercises, both individually and as an organism. It also throws up an interesting relationship between the six exercises and the six positions of the basic eurythmy exercise "I think speech".

In the ensuing discussion the theme of the 12 Virtues which relate to the 12 constellations is introduced. Each of these lead on to the development of a new ability. This is recorded in "Reminiscences of Rudolf Steiner" by Ilona Schubert (10).

### The Six Basic Exercises and the Fishes Zodiac

1. Control of Thinking: dwelling for a few minutes upon a particular object without deviating from it trains one to think consequently. The accent is mainly on thinking but requires the steady support of the will to do it. In drawing 1 the upper motif lightly touches the lower which provides quiet support. The upper motif relates to the Fishes whose Virtue is Magnanimity; this quality is required to bring into the thought process manifold aspects of the object of contemplation. Practice of this Virtue leads on to Love. The lower motif relates to the Virgin and the Virtue of Courtesy leading to Tactfulness of Heart. This inner tact helps order the different aspects brought together through the Magnanimity of the Fishes in shaping the exercise towards clarity and coherence.

2. Control of Will: the carrying out at a specified time of a simple act which is not required by the normal demands of life. The will is called into action by a thought that tells it what should be done. This helps develop the ability to carry out one's intentions. In Drawing 2 the upper motif formulates its gesture quite clearly and hands it down as it were to the lower. The "conversation" brings a formative element into the lower motif; the thought provides a motif for the will, calling it into action. The Virtue of Devotion, belonging to the Ram which in time leads to the ability for Sacrifice, is a necessary ingredient in the education of the will whilst the Virtue of Contentment, belonging to the Scales which becomes Calmness, also supports the will exercise.

3. Control of Feeling: this is not the suppression of feeling but the disciplining of emotional displays and the cultivation of sensibility; an inner composure and balance is gradually established. Now we move to Drawing 5 relating to the Crab/Goat axis. Here, in the middle realm, the two motifs work together bringing harmony into the flow of breath and the life of feeling. The Crab points to the development of Selflessness,

which can become Catharsis, whilst the Goat can give us Courage, leading to the power of Redemption. These are the very qualities that can strengthen and purify the life of feeling.

In a certain sense these three exercises mutually support each other in bringing about a basic inner discipline. The first two need the help of the third and the Crab/Goat axis can be regarded as lending its support to the first two axes.

The remaining three exercises can be experienced as transformations of the first three; the fourth of the third, the fifth of the second and the sixth of the first (9).

4. Positivity: looking out for the positive qualities in what appears at first sight to be destructive or unwholesome, seeing some aspect that is beautiful in what otherwise at first appears completely ugly. This brings a certain liberation from the constraints of sympathy and antipathy and an education of the life of feeling in relation to the world, a turning outward of the equanimity gained through the third exercise. Now we turn to Drawing 6 for the other middle axis, Lion/Waterman. Here there is an opening out, as it were, from the realm of the heart towards the world around. The realm of feeling takes on a wider and deeper resonance. For the Lion the Virtue of Compassion leads most interestingly to Independence, a quality supportive of the judgment which grows out of the exercise of positivity. This is further enhanced by Discretion stemming from the Waterman and leading to the power of Meditation.

5. Openness: establishing the faculty of openmindedness, not immediately dismissing something because it appears impossible, and developing an attitude of trust toward the future. This has an inner connection with the second exercise but now through the application of will, good will, towards the world and the future. This brings us to Drawing 3, the Bull/Scorpion axis, where the lower motif is drawn into the movement of the upper, strengthening it, whilst the upper motif pours its enlightening energy into the lower, clarifying it. The Virtue of the Bull is Equilibrium, producing a sense of Progress, whilst the Scorpion contributes Patience which can become Insight, all qualities which seem to go along with the development of openness and a trust in the future.

6. Balance or the harmonisation of the preceding five: this means carrying out exercises 1-5 in different groupings and becoming

aware how each can support another and how gradually they form an organism of self-sustaining thought. This not only integrates all the separate exercises but becomes the fulfilment of the first exercise, control of thinking. We now come to Drawing 4 where the upper and lower motifs are completely integrated. From the Twins we gain the Virtue of Endurance which can become Faithfulness; from the Archer we should learn Control of Thinking which leads in time to the Sense for Truth.

If this process through the six exercises is grounded in reality it outlines a path which grows out of Love (Fishes) and ends with the Sense for Truth (Archer).

### 9. POSITIVE (Fishes/Virgin) AND NEGATIVE (Twins/Archer) DYNAMICS

There are a few instances where Steiner refers to the positive influences emanating from the Fishes and the Virgin together; this seems to indicate that there is validity in working with the opposites together. The most extensive description occurs in the last of three lectures given in November, 1917, and collected in the volume "The Reappearance of Christ in the Etheric" (6). These three lectures deal mainly with occult brotherhoods whose work takes different forms of opposition to the being of Christ.

In the third lecture Steiner points to the possibility of research in which scientists take the spiritual world seriously even when working in the laboratory. Experiments could be conducted in such a way that cosmic influences of morning and evening (dawn and dusk) are accepted whilst those of midday and midnight are excluded. Forces emanating from the axis Fishes/Virgin are favourable and would assist work being done with sunrise and sunset conditions. He did not distinguish between the influences of these two constellations.

In the case, however, of the other pair of constellations (Twins/Archer), which make up this cosmic cross, a distinction was made. Influences from the Twins would bring negative forces relating to the poles of magnetism which would be effective at midday and would be of use to certain western brotherhoods in their opposition to the being of Christ. In the case of the Archer with its traditional picture of a centaur, the upper part human and the lower an animal form, the as yet untransformed animal nature of man is portrayed. This latter negative

element is effective at midnight and would assist the activity of eastern occult brotherhoods.

From these indications it seems that the favourable forces of Fishes/Virgin operate mainly at sunrise and sunset; perhaps from the evidence of the first drawing one could ascribe the Fishes to the sunrise (light increasing) and the Virgin to the sunset (darkness increasing). The Twins and the Archer have their negative effect at midday and midnight respectively. At sunrise and sunset there is a transition between the realms of day and night, between waking and sleeping. Midday and midnight present a strong polarity, the extreme of each condition. It is, therefore, interesting to note that the Twins and the Archer both display polarities or dualities. Of the Twins, Castor and Pollux, one is mortal and the other immortal. In the human form the symmetry of left and right is displayed. The eurythmy movement for H shows both contraction and expansion. In the Archer the duality of the human/Animal form is vividly present in the centaur, whilst the bow he holds is strongly drawn back to project the arrow forward.

It may be that the strong internal tensions represented by these dualities relate to the negative aspect of this axis.

As already noted these four constellations comprise a cosmic cross. This is not in itself a negative relationship as witness the cosmic cross formed by the two axes Bull/Scorpion and Lion/Waterman. With the Scorpion considered in its earlier image of the Eagle, it appears as the totality of the human being in the Sphinx and as the fourfold characterisation of the Gospel writers. In the configuration of the Zodiac that we are here considering the axes of Fishes/Virgin and Twins/Archer form the beginning and the end of the sequence represented by the four drawings (1-4) relating to the working together of the upper and lower motifs connected to thinking and will. Whilst hindrances and adverse forces can make their mark from any direction and at any time, the complete integration of thinking and willing posited by Drawing 4, which requires the most effort to achieve, indicates the point of greatest vulnerability. In addition, the other pairs of upper and lower axes (Ram/Scales and Bull/Scorpion) have as their counterparts in cosmic crosses the middle axes (Crab/Goat and Lion/Waterman) and their directly supporting activity. The Fishes/Virgin and Twins/Archer cross do not have this direct support and have only their participation in the harmonising effect of the middle axes as part of the dynamic of the whole Zodiac. It seems as if the whole process might come unstuck from the Twins/Archer axis.

## 10. CONCLUSION

The attempt to work artistically on the dynamics of the Fishes Zodiac was an open-ended exploration. Carrying out the artistic activity required to produce six compositions and the reflections arising out of and subsequent to the work led to the perception that the six basic inner exercises appear to have an intimate connection with the present configuration of the Zodiac and that the 12 Virtues associated with the constellations have a role to play. This would indicate that whatever is working from such cosmic regions is growing more dependent on human activity for its fulfilment. The forces may stream towards us but can only be really fruitful through our own efforts. The human being is increasingly called to be an active partner in evolution. Of course, what has come out of this study is but a small fraction of a much greater potential which would include very different processes and influences.

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## Moving Within the Picture: Questioning as a key into karmic pictures, artistic research and to an exchange with elemental beings\*

Maggie Salter

As a painter and teacher of painting, my work immerses me in the realm of picture, the realm of image. In painting, you paint pictures in two-dimensions, on a single plane, the surface defined by the paper or canvas. Rudolf Steiner describes the process of painting as where the astral is pushed down into the etheric. It is a very different world from the three-dimensional reality of sculpture, where the etheric is pushed down into the physical. In its two dimensionality, painting is akin to the inner realm of the imagination and the etheric world, where there are pictures and beings, but no 3-D substantiality as we are used to it in the physical world. And yet we use physical substance, the pigments, which have to go through a process of transformation if a finished painting is to work artistically. The real work of this alchemy is between the soul of the painter and the changing colours and forms on the paper – it is always, for me, a soul process, almost of listening through my eyes, to try and sense more of what the colour relationships want of me. For they are really colour beings, who speak if you listen long enough and stay within the rhythm of repeated practice. And in this sense I feel the process of painting can have close links to our inner esoteric work.

In this article, I am going to approach the activity of *picturing* on both an inner and outer level, as aspects of research into the World of Imagination. And I'd like to open up the question of how we can work on using an inner posing of questions so it might be possible to move

\*The following was originally presented orally to the General Section Research Group in Rudolf Steiner House in September 2005. It falls into three sections, the first dealing with research into a past life or karmic connection, the second with the Mystery Art of the Goetheanum, and the third with a meeting with elemental beings who approached in order to help with inner research. It will probably help the reader to imagine they are hearing the words spoken, especially when they come to passages which require inner picturing or visualisation.

within the picture in order to learn more when inner images arise. Firstly, I'd like to share a sequence of karmic pictures; then something of how the etheric can be brought into movement in the process of painting through experiencing two images simultaneously; and finally to attempt to communicate a developing exchange with elemental beings, both in nature and in artistic works.

### Sharing Inner Experiences

In order to speak of these sort of things, most of us have to overcome what has been called the shadow of our Folk Soul – reticence! I have only recently ever spoken about these inner experiences. But I believe it is important that we make the effort and begin to find ways of expressing some of the spiritual work and research which goes on quietly within anthroposophy behind the scenes. If we continue to remain as silent as has become habitual, even if out of an understandable modesty, those who are looking for an experiential path into direct relationship with the beings of the spiritual world could well assume that what we offer is merely theory, even if an excellent one. I am convinced that Rudolf Steiner's inner path is pre-eminently a practical path. Each of the lessons of the Esoteric Schools inaugurated by Rudolf Steiner<sup>1</sup> is a very practical esoteric workshop – if you do what is suggested, then sooner or later you come to real experience of the esoteric, real experience of the spiritual world.

When speaking directly with people one of the ways to ease the sharing of what are by definition intimate experiences is through the qualities of listening and trust, especially when they are built up in regular working together. This prepares the substance, the ground, to receive and hold what is spoken into it. In this way the group can perhaps become a vessel which in its warm listening can allow spiritual beings to approach and communicate – this is I think in the nature of what Steiner called the Inverse Cult – and we need this if we are to be able to share research on meditative levels. I always think the German word *Erkenntnis* means so much more than just “knowledge”, it is more an active *knowing* where the prefix “er” takes you into an inner opening out into experience, an involution into a living thinking – in other words: spiritual experience, a spiritual finding out, which is what spiritual research is. To try and communicate in writing about such things presupposes a similar trust in the receptivity of the reader.

For there is always the possibility of experiencing something

spiritually if we speak of spiritual beings. Speaking of them can hardly be done as a mere description in words, they need certain soul qualities in us, our respect and reverence, and when we feel this for them, then they can actually be present, drawn by the quality of our feeling. As you will hear later this applies to elemental beings too: to speak of them is to invite them to be with us, but whether we are conscious of this, I've come to realise, depends on our attitude, on whether we are open, receptive and quite unprejudiced in our souls.

### Medieval Pictures

This brings me to the first aspect of picturing I would like to share with you. It is an example of how inner pictures of a karmic situation can arise. It is not so easy to choose a suitable example of karmic images as so many are naturally related to the people still living whom we find around us in our various karmic groupings. So I have settled on a sequence which came to me on the third day after my brother-in-law died, when I feel he made me the gift of awareness of my karma with him from the Middle Ages. I also have the feeling that he would now be quite comfortable with my speaking of it.

My brother-in-law was a schizophrenic, who loved stories, poetry and drama, but was unable to live independently because of suffering terrible anxiety states. He spent most of his adult life being cared for in mental institutions, where latterly he was much appreciated as chairman of the weekly residents' meetings for keeping their duration to a maximum of ten minutes. We used to visit Graham regularly, spending the time immersed in poems and stories. He took easily to his new sister-in-law. I knew him for five years or so before he died.

It was a blessedly natural, though drawn out, death in his own bed in his room in the hospital. In the hour afterwards I was aware of his etheric expansion until his being was like a cloud spread out over the whole small hospital, able to see the other residents padding along the corridors in their dressing gowns and in their rooms, preparing for bed. Eventually, his body was brought to our living room and lay surrounded by flowers. By the third day we noticed a great change in his features, there was a poised finely-chiselled nobility. In the evening, exactly three days after he had died, I had just placed a black metal, three branched candelabra with lighted candles at the head of his coffin and sat down beside him, when the scene suddenly changed before my inner eye.

I was seeing a candelabra with three candles in the middle of a

long wooden table, with the remains of a meal on it. Behind the table, standing with one arm leaning on the table, was a man of about thirty five, strong and well-built and of medium height, with a short reddish beard and wavy mid-brown hair and freckles, whom I knew to have been Graham. The space seemed to be a medieval hall with what I took to be "fire" on the walls, in other words lit by flaming torches. He was the lord of this small castle and the surrounding lands and there were two or three other men around him.

At this point, aware of his isolation in the life just ended, I wondered, "Did he have a wife?" The scene then shifted to further down the hall, my consciousness being now from a point high up to the left, looking down. I could see a woman with a long fair plait, wearing a simple but gracious gown of greyish blue, with two small children playing at her skirts. There were several hunting dogs also around the rush-strewn floor and in the middle of the floor of the hall was an open hearth and fire. I was pleased that he had had a family.

Then abruptly the scene shifted again, this time without any question from me, to outside the castle. Now my vantage-point was looking from fairly far away, across rolling green, grassy countryside, towards a curtain-walled castle with round, castellated towers either side of the portcullis. I could see "Graham" – that is, the knight – in full armour galloping out of the castle across the drawbridge and over the land. His horse was festooned in the same colours as he was wearing over his armour, golden yellow on bright green. I watched him charging on and on, over a great distance it seemed, while I asked inwardly, "What country is it?" Immediately came the answer sounding in me, "France or England."<sup>2</sup>

Then a third question arose within me, out of a quite different kind of consciousness from my ordinary consciousness now; it was: "What is his standard?" Straight away, I could see close-up the standard he was holding in his left hand: it was three golden yellow lions, horizontally, in the position known as "passant" with one foreleg slightly raised, curly manes, and tails held up high, on a green background, with a gold-yellow edging all round. It was similar to the shield of Richard the Lionheart except that the background was green not red. Of course in those days, the standard would have identified the knight, but I have so far not had much time to find out if there is evidence that such a device did exist, beyond looking with interest at the details in pictures of the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth centuries, which is the period of the architectural features of the castle

## MOVING WITHIN THE PICTURE

and hall. So in that older time, I would probably have recognised the standard and known who he was, but in my present consciousness, it was not so.<sup>3</sup>

Immediately after seeing the standard, the scene changed again and I realised that the knight was almost upon us. I was crouching down behind a large rock, with craggy land rising steeply behind me and I was not alone. Beside me was my companion, a younger man than I with a brownish upper garment and a bag slung over his shoulder. I was wearing a long dark garment and had a beard and longish dark hair, a weather-beaten face and an aquiline nose. We knew each other very well, having been travelling together for a long time and we trusted each other implicitly. I know this person to be a woman who is a true friend of mine today. At this stage, my awareness was as if looking out of the older man's eyes.

The knight was charging, with lance outstretched, straight towards our hiding place and it was inevitable that we would be found. At this point the picture faded, and I was left with the feeling that we had been rounded up and taken to the town for interrogation, there being flung into a dungeon, where the end was not all that far off. This was part of the life we lived, we were quite used to the dangers.

Afterwards, I felt warmly grateful to Graham as he was transforming in the great process that dying is. Or at least, I felt profoundly grateful to his greater being, for I could no longer see him only as the Graham he had been in this life, nor as the episode when he had been a knight. I felt the sequence of pictures was a gift he had given me, that I should have the key to another piece of the karma of that medieval time. The pictures fit with others I have as far as the period, and the sort of life and connections I may well have had then, in the later times of the Cathars.

What interests me here is the role that questioning had in the unfolding of the sequence of pictures, and how the questions seemed to arise out of different states of consciousness, modern and much older. Often an inner picture that we know to be karmic remains an isolated and static picture and for years we may accumulate such single scenes and not know how or in what way they are connected. This leads to a certain inner tension, which – if you can withstand it and hold on within the tension – is what leads I think to its own resolution in the dawning awareness that you only have to have the courage – and presence of mind – to ask ... "Ask and it shall be answered" ...

I have been working with the four-day karma exercise, sometimes

more concentratedly, sometimes less, for more than twenty years now and with the idea of asking questions within the picture, so to speak, in karma research for the last six years or so. I've read all the books I have had access to on this theme published in anthroposophical literature and in the last few years also tried to survey the field again in other contemporary esoteric and alternative literature. I've connected to Coen van Houten and his colleagues who have done a lot of work over the years on karma research, and other people's processes have helped me to see things where I might otherwise have had karmic blind spots. Though I must admit, I find in the end that my way is my own. One of the people who generously shared many of his methods when he visited Britain five or six years back, was Jostein Saether.<sup>4</sup> Heide Oehms' book on karma research published in German I found very good, her title is "Karma... Erkenntnis Warum?"<sup>5</sup> (Why Karma Research? Inner Development as a Foundation for Spiritual Capacities.) Interestingly, both of these last authors are painters.

I have come to value using questioning as a tool within karmic experiences, so that the Akashic pictures can be used as an instrument to find things out during the experience itself, ie. as a means of spiritual research. But I am left with the question of where are my particular colleagues in this field of research. I feel there needs to be a common ground for a sharing as colleagues investigating the field spiritually, rather than a more therapist - client or social process orientation to the work, which we find in some of the literature.

### Multiplicity in Mystery Art

In moving on to the second part of this presentation - the art of the Goetheanum and artistic research - I would like to begin with some of Steiner's many attempts to wake us up and jolt us into inner activity, as he expressed it, in the artistic handling of the First Goetheanum. Maybe now we could each pause for a moment and think of the inner space of the First Goetheanum. Imagine the columns of the auditorium ... and inwardly visualise the wooden pillars ... stretching high up towards the architrave area. [See Illustration 1] You are probably all aware of the fact that the capitals and bases were carved even if it is not so easy for some of you to imagine precisely what they were like. You may well be conscious that the capitals of the pillars formed a metamorphosing sequence, related to the planetary evolutions, and that the bases also formed a sequence, this time more organic. But there is another aspect that we often overlook ...



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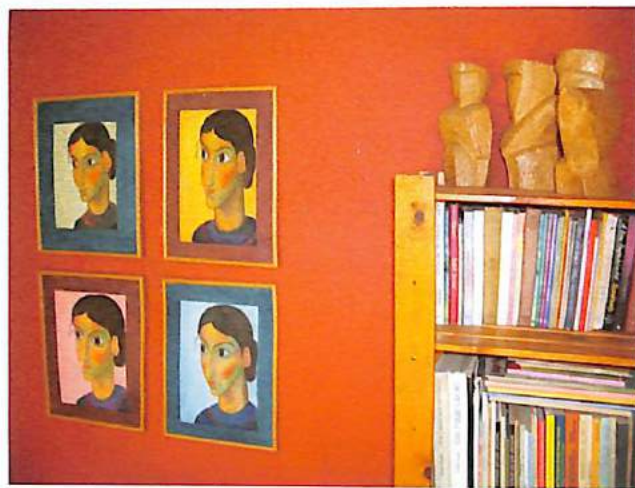








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If we do this inner exercise slightly differently and this time actively imagine not just the columns in themselves, but that you are actually standing within the auditorium of the Goetheanum. Feel yourself to be standing there, and then inwardly turn and look all around you. Then you become aware that there are columns curving on *both* sides of you – the sequence is doubled – all the seven pillars appear twice, on either side of you.

Then you might also notice that you are standing within a sea of coloured light, streaming in through coloured windows from behind the pillars ... and that the colours also are doubled – there are two sets of green windows in their threefold form, two sets of violet and blue and two sets of rose windows closest to the stage opening. You realise that the windows are in pairs opposite each other, and if we take the time, we gradually become aware that the motifs have something slightly different about them – at first this is probably on the level of feeling, we sense it rather than see it. There is a softness and roundedness in the motifs engraved in the windows in the South, while those in the North tend to be more angular, pressing in on us more. This consciousness of the differences nearly always creeps up on us, it gives us a slight shock, we turn, not quite trusting our perception, and look more intently from one to the other. Only then do we start to see the physical differences in the motifs and perhaps begin to wonder what it all means, but we can note here that the effect on our souls happens in the perceiving, some time before we get to the stage of forming any concepts about it.

This underlines the importance for the human being of the architecture and the artistic forming of the spaces people live and work in, never mind the great importance of the art and architecture of our spaces for spiritual work.

All of this can be experienced in the present Great Hall of the Goetheanum, thanks to the artistic work completed last century by Assia Turgenieva in the carving of the windows in the thirties and of Christian Hitsch and colleagues in the recent redesign of the Hall, including the carving of the new pilasters, which enhance the experience of the coloured shadows from the windows. In the present building the stage provides a grand and wonderful space for drama and eurythmy, but in the First Goetheanum the stage was a mystery space and you were prepared not only for entering it, but even for the preliminary looking into it, by the way the artistic forms and colours worked upon you, and loosened you a little from everyday consciousness.

Imagine once more entering the Hall of the First Goetheanum

from the West in the winter with the sun low in the sky and streaming in through the windows. You will pass through all you imagined before, as you begin to make your way slowly through the play of coloured light. At first you are bathed in a cool, almost sharp, green light with some unexpected warmer tones from the shadows which you notice are reddish – here you are immersed in a clear polarity. As you walk on, you move in wonder into new colours, now deep blue and soft orange, and the soul mood changes to something easier – and you may notice that the red and green still echo on within the new experience. Then comes the greatest complexity as you move into the sphere of the violet windows: in mounting intensity the deep violet light draws your soul into it, demanding of you a certain moral mood, warmed by pools of gold wherever the pillars or other people cast shadows in its path. This stern violet light shines in powerfully and mingles with the lingering remnants of all the preceding colours – a shimmering sea of shifting, moving colour. Approaching nearer to the stage, the ocean of colour is suddenly quietened, soothed by the sphere of the rose windows with their delicately pale bluish-green shadows and we become inwardly stilled and receptive, ready for what is to approach us.

We are taken through enormous and tumultuous soul experiences through the play of colours. But we can only experience this fullness if we actually do something: we have to *move* within the building. Great as it may be to stand on one spot and gaze about us, our perspective will remain limited. We find an immeasurable difference in richness of experience as soon as we bring ourselves into activity – whether physically in the present Great Hall [See Illustration 2] or inwardly in our imagination as we have been attempting here. And here we can sense distinct correlations with the progress of the soul through the early stages on the path to self-knowledge, the danger being to remain rooted to the spot admiring in wonder the works of the initiate, and forgetting that the real work is to tread the path yourself.

Now, if we return to the point we have reached in our imagining of being inside the First Goetheanum, we find we are close to the stage opening and we are able to look into the mystery space of the Small Cupola. There we see again a doubling of the columns supporting the carved architraves on either side. This time there are six slender pillars with imposing wooden thrones at their feet. A sense of awe and anticipation is aroused by these thrones, each with a different form, as if reflecting the great beings to whom they belong. The pillars and thrones enfold and protect the niche where the sculptural group of the

Representative of Humanity was to stand at the back of the stage in the East.

On the ceiling, high above the stage, you find painted the same motif of the Representative of Man holding the balance between the forces of Lucifer and Ahriman. [See Illustration 4] On either side of the central motif there is a multiplicity of beings, who each appear twice, on the right in the South [See Illustration 5] and on the left in the North. Steiner wanted these motifs to be painted in the North in what he called "Gegenfarbe", counter colours, and indicated how it could be done by painting the Red Angel in the North with a different form and gesture from the Blue Angel in the South. This is another of the indications for research Steiner gave, which was not taken up at the time. The painters could not understand what he meant and the North was painted as a mirror-image with the same colours and gestures as the South. I have felt the enigma of the counter-colours to be a seed-question for my artistic researches since I first came across pictures of the Goetheanum.

Very few painters have painted the Small Cupola paintings as a whole with a complete exploration of the counter colour question since 1919, I know of only Daniel van Bemmelen who returned to the theme of blue-red in different versions<sup>6</sup> and Elisabeth Oling-Jellinek who painted the North in complementary colours, published in her book on Eurythmy and the Goetheanum.<sup>7</sup> I had thought that Hilde Raske, whose fine book on the "Colour and Language of the Goetheanum"<sup>8</sup> has done so much to preserve awareness of Steiner's artistic heritage, might have painted the Small Cupola motifs as a whole, but on having the opportunity to look through her artistic estate in the archives at the Goetheanum, it was clear that she had not gone beyond individual sketches.

We have each taken a different approach to the counter-colours and there was – and continues to be – varied and strongly held opinions about what Steiner meant by the term counter colours. So it remains a fertile field for ongoing research. I have learned a great deal from both of these painters and feel I have something of an ongoing conversation with them through our common work on this theme.

My path has been the Englishly experiential way of finding out through doing, through the process of painting itself. Having lived deeply with images of the Small Cupola since the early eighties, in 1997–1998, I was finally able to spend a whole year working solely on this, as my diploma theme. Eventually I produced a large painting, 15' wide by 4' high [See Illustration 3], which reconstructs the South Side and Centre

where I tried to sense what the qualities of the colours<sup>9</sup> and the relationships of the beings might have been. I also attempted a new approach to the North Side in counter-colours using the fundamental etheric colour polarity of red and blue and the magenta spectrum, or inner rainbow, in which green, the colour spread out over the earth is entirely absent. [See Illustration 6] There is a great deal to say out of this experience about how the painting process can take the painter into inner realms of research into the colours and the spiritual beings who compose the motifs of these paintings, but that would take too long now.

I will give just one example of how I approached painting a motif in counter-colours. In painting the final painting, the first figure I attempted after putting in the two Angels was the one I had struggled most with: Faust. Out of my English consciousness, I could find no easy relationship to this figure that is so meaningful to Central Europeans. So I had to work very hard in my preparatory studies to even draw him and begin to understand the outer form Steiner had given him, never mind his significance for mankind – when I watched Faust on the Dornach stage, I must admit at first my sympathy lay with Gretchen. The concentration on him helped of course and I have gradually come into relationship with Faust, realising where he is echoed in my being – a bit like a teacher can find herself forming the deepest inner relationship with the child she finds most difficult. The original Faust in blue in the South has the inward soul quality of blue, enfolded in on himself. He encloses a lighter space within, and is unaware of what is outside and around, as if focussed entirely inwards. Pondering, he is concentrated on this elusive “Ich” just outside his heart sphere and hand.

Once I had come to the conclusion that I would be working with a red-blue polarity, I had painted the right hand board red all over as a ground, lending a mood which would subtly shine through all the subsequent colours as I painted the motifs. And similarly, I had grounded the left hand board in blue. So when I came to the point of starting painting on the North side, all I had was the blue area where he should appear in some form of a reddish colour. So I held the question meditatively, “If Faust is to be in red, what *kind* of a red would it be?”

And there arose in me the feeling of a slightly dulled but strong rose red, I could inwardly see the quality of the colour quite clearly. I began to paint a small surface of Carmine on top of the Prussian blue ground, which dulled the red sufficiently. I painted slowly, building up overlapping layers of Carmine and trying to sense gradually where the

boundaries of the figure were. What was important to me was that it should be recognisably the same being, even though showing a different aspect of his character.

Quite what that aspect was, I didn't know yet, and only began to discover as I worked on in thin veils of paint. It was soon apparent to me that in that kind of red, which has a still steady strength, he would be more outgoing in his gesture. But I didn't want to arbitrarily decide on the new form. As I painted, I soon had the feeling that in red, Faust's sense of self would be more internalised, making him more upright. And this I could see beginning to come about. In my version the Ich transformed into my own language, and it is now nearer his heart region. His hand appeared eventually as a fist (no pun intended<sup>10</sup>) a much stronger form than the shielding curve of the blue figure's hand.

You can see something of what resulted in the illustration. [See Illustration 7] It is interesting to look at his relationship to the beings surrounding him in each case. It wasn't until the whole painting was finished that I put the two outside boards together to photograph the two Fausts side by side. Then I noticed clear differences in form and gesture that had been unconscious till that point. You can see how the child on the right in red-yellow surges towards him from above, but Faust does not see it. In blue, the child floats up from below hands upturned, looking up into the eyes of the red Faust, who is clearly now aware of it. The skeleton, whether icy or burning hot, shows how close the death forces always are in the Faust story: there is no knowledge written down in books, or otherwise, without passing through some kind of death. And finally note the gentle protecting beings hovering over the two versions of Faust – perhaps shades of poor Gretchen's devotion.

Though we have corresponded a little, I have not yet been able to meet Fr. Oling who lives in Dornach and is now in her eighties, or see her work first hand. But I did once meet a painter from America while showing my work in Botton, who had also worked with the Faust motif using a red-blue polarity and who said he had come to a very similar quality of red for the counter-colour. This was for me an important correlation from the research point of view.

Another very interesting reaction to my red Faust was when I was visiting an old aunt of mine and showing her photos of what I was painting. I have fond memories of her as a child when she had a fish and chip shop in Liverpool. She is a Catholic, who knows nothing of anthroposophy. I had told her I was painting these pictures to find out more about the images on the ceiling of the building that had been

burned down in the twenties. And she then started reading the pictures to me, telling me who and what she thought the figures were. Immediately on seeing the Central Figure, she said, "Oh, I've never seen Him without a beard!" with no doubt as to Who He was. About the gesture of the up-stretched left hand, she exclaimed, "That's the Trinity!" And when she came to look at the red Faust, she said, "That's Cardinal Wolseley!" This was highly interesting. For Wolseley could be seen in many ways, as a more worldly and outward-looking English counterpart of Faust. Again, a sense of the direction I had been going in being confirmed from outside.

To the aspect of the doubling of figures in the Small Cupola paintings, suffice it to say here that, with the notable exception of the Christ Being, all the main figures are painted twice, with Lucifer and Ahriman three times each – in all there are fifty countenances! So in looking at these paintings, the viewer is constantly confronted with double images. Steiner's intention was clearly that the forms should also metamorphose, as we see in the Blue and Red Angels in the central area. In my work I tried to allow the forms to metamorphose in so far as I could feel it at the time I painted the picture, when I could not, I left the form on the left more similar to Steiner's original, as with the Apollo in blue.

I do not feel I have reached definitive answers, nor do I consider the painting art as such, rather it is an ongoing research project and an attempt to come a little nearer personally to the great mysteries of the spiritual relationships portrayed by Rudolf Steiner on the ceiling of the Small Cupola. In 1998, it was a conscious decision to work within the strict composition of the original ceiling, in order to show what the paintings had been like as they are still little known, even within anthroposophical circles. But in future attempts at painting the Small Cupola, I hope I might be able to arrive at further developments of these counter-colour metamorphoses, and also to loosen the strong composition, and let the forms transform more freely within each side of the painting.

I think the act of consciously perceiving two contrasting but closely related images has the effect of giving us another inner nudge to open us up to a perception beyond the physical – it splits our consciousness slightly. It is especially when we look at polar images like these for a long time in a meditative frame of mind, that they can help take us into the two-dimensional space of the etheric and imaginative worlds, and we can glimpse the picture world that is the reality of being

there. And it is noticeable how often we find pairs of polarities in the training sketches Steiner gave for painters and to the students of the Friedwart School – Sunrise and Sunset in two variations; Rising Moon and Setting Moon, Growth and Decay; Trees in Sun and Trees in Storm; Spirit in Man and Man in the Spirit.

**Italian Ladies and Finnish Elementals**  
[See Illustration 8 – The Italian Ladies]

I would now like to go further with the theme of looking at more than one image at the same time, by recounting the story of this series of small paintings, which are variations on a theme that Jawlensky painted in 1918. I am also going to outline their role in a kind of communication with elemental beings who first encountered me in Finland in 1996.

First, how I came to paint the pictures in the spring of 1992: I was living in Dornach, a student still, and champing at the bit a little in the third year as students are wont at that stage. I had been to an extensive retrospective exhibition of Jawlensky's paintings in Locarno two years earlier and the impression of this particular painting of a young Italian woman had remained vividly with me. I was longing to paint her, but to do so would mean to step outside the parameters of my training as far as style was concerned. Eventually, the impulse to do so won out and I sat down at half-term and spent a few hours painting her from the one small postcard I had. The result was the lady with the green background (top left in the illustration).

When I had finished, I looked at her, and realised that in my memory the original was much more golden, so I thought I would have another go at it. I began that evening by painting a strong golden yellow background all over the page and went to sleep with the afterglow of this experience of gold in me. The next afternoon I sat down without looking at the first painting and began to paint, building up the planes of the face in exactly the same sequence of colours as the day before and working from the same postcard.

When I had finished (top right in the illustration), I compared the two paintings and was struck by the differences of mood and gesture. The golden one is bright and alert, strong and outgoing, whereas the green girl is inward, still and quiet – and both are fairly like the postcard. I was intrigued, and prepared another background, this time blue all over, and went to sleep having been immersed in blueness.

The next afternoon, I set to work, consciously trying to follow

just the same processes as before – still only looking at the original postcard – and the rather sour looking blue lady appeared (bottom right). At one stage the background colour had seemed to pull the planes of the cheek in so strongly, that her nose had to be bent to stay within the cheek. And when I set her beside her two sisters, I was struck by the tension in her small mouth and tight lips. With blue I did have some idea it would make her depressive, but I had no idea at all what would happen on red. Again I painted the background, medium strong all over the paper, before going to sleep.

And the next day, I started to paint for the fourth time, and the rosy lady was born to set beside her siblings (bottom left). Now a different kind of stillness emerged: a gentle, compassionate nature. And I had a family of four in as many days. They would have had an older dark-skinned sister, on violet, but due to some inadvertent drips of water she didn't survive the ordeals of birth.

From these paintings, in 1992, I learned for myself the truth of much of what Goethe says about colour and soul mood and they were an important stage of my research into Steiner's basic premise that "Form arises out of colour."

A couple of years later when a child in my kindergarten class asked me if I knew all those people. I realised that I knew them very well indeed, and could easily tell the children their names, where they lived, and how they each spent their days... Sylvia, Gloria, Tristesse and Rosalie were their names...

The Italian ladies have hung in a group together in my living room for 14 years now, only travelling occasionally, and always together, for exhibitions. Now, I would like to speak of something that took place last New Year's Eve, when I had the urge to bring some of my husband John's sculptures out of storage [See Illustration 9] and put them on top of a bookshelf just above and to the right of the four painted ladies. John refers to these three as "Tribal Figures" based on a three-chunk principle. The three sections out of which each figure is composed have varying proportions. It is clear that they are artistic metamorphoses of the human figure, as are my paintings metamorphoses of the human face. Children visiting a studio exhibition recently gave them the grander title of "The Three Kings".

But back to that New Year's evening... When I had positioned the three figures, I sat down across the room to look at them, [See Illustration 10] and suddenly became aware of what seemed like a flutter of *life* in the ladies, they were animated, somehow. The perception was

unmistakeably that of something living, of *being*: there was a stirring of interest in the new arrivals, almost a buzz of interest, especially from around the golden one. It was as if they were murmuring to themselves, trying to sense who had come so near to them. And there was a hint of a corresponding, though damped down, reaction to this excitement from the more solid wooden figures.

I sat quietly becoming aware that this life quality had to do with an elemental being or group of beings which was somehow attached to my ladies – dwelling within them, so to speak. And there was also another being in the wooden figures. I wondered how they had got there, had they attached themselves to the paintings and sculptures or were they created out of the artistic process when they were made?

I was musing on these questions and still sensing the life and inner activity of the beings, when a memory picture arose in me. It was from seven and a half years previously, in a garden in Finland where I was sitting having just finished meditating in the morning. John and I had just finished holding one of a series of workshops on "The Spirit of the Goetheanum", which brought together The Foundation Stone Meditation, the Streams and the Goetheanum and it was the day after, the Monday. Part of my meditation sequence every morning is to say the Daily Rhythm from the Foundation Stone, which on Mondays is:

*O, Light Divine,  
Sun of Christ!  
The elemental beings hear it,  
In North, South, East, West.  
May human beings hear it!*

The atmosphere around me in the garden was thick and velvety in the summer warmth. And I was suddenly conscious of presence: I was aware that nature beings had approached me. I could feel them in a huddle all together behind and around me, different shapes and sizes. I was aware they were vitally interested in what I had been doing and they came nearer, sensing me. I stayed still and quiet, and let them do so without intruding anything from my consciousness. And after a while of mutual peaceful perceiving they slowly began to withdraw, one by one. Then the picture faded and there remained only a warm afterglow.

A little later, I began to talk to my husband, John, who was sitting reading, and shared with him what I had sensed about the feeling of elementals connected to the artworks and the questions it had given rise to. I went on to sum up some general aspects of elementals and art that we

had talked about in the past, mentioning Marco Pogacnic's descriptions of elementals he has seen living in works of art in museums.<sup>11</sup> John had drawn this passage to my attention, as he knew of a strong experience I had had a couple of years before of the great elemental living in and animating the Charioteer in Delphi. I also mentioned the more everyday, yet quite distinct experience of a sense of depopulation, of presence vanishing, when large pieces of art are moved out of a studio or an exhibition room where they have been for some time.

And I said to John that the strongest experience I had had before the Charioteer was of the elemental beings in Finland in 1996. And went on to comment that although I was aware of the volume each one took up and their relative sizes, I didn't know their colours: I hadn't actually *seen* them. As I was saying this, I realised that I did know their colours, for I could tell him and began describing them, conscious in that moment of all the nuances of colour. It dawned on me that in a way I was seeing them. I was simultaneously sitting in our living room, telling John what they looked like and also within the experience in Finland, with the huddle of elementals coming closer to me. It was as if time and space had quite disappeared. It was all taking place here in the present and somehow it was connected with the being of my Italian ladies.

Now I knew that the tall thinnish elemental, inclined towards me and enquiring eagerly, sensing who I was, was a greenish yellowy brown. The shorter, voluminous one in front, who was definitely female, was a dull, brownish violet, she was plump and shaped like a pear. And pressing closer from behind were two or three others, one not as tall as the first, a bit fatter and more brown, a slightly warmer orangey brown, another was greyish-brown and thinner, and yet another more squat and darker brown. They were almost jostling each other, wanting to come closer to me. I could hear myself, as if from outside, continuing to describe them to John.

I had finished the description and to help him understand, I was just adding that they didn't have any arms or legs, when all of a sudden the violet-brown nature being in front of the huddle stretched out from each of her rounded sides two thin, arm-like appendages with wide-displayed fingers, as if to say: "You want arms – you can have them!" It was so funny I burst out laughing and knew then how easily elementals can appear to human beings in whatever form they think we want. At the first meeting in Finland I had had no expectations whatever, my consciousness had remained empty, except that I knew I was perceiving the beings and they me.

With this mischievous interruption to the experience and my laughter, my awareness of them slowly faded, but I was left very conscious that the being of my painted ladies had somehow mediated the communication with the other elementals. And in the course of the evening, this being, now that I had recognised her, continued to mediate insights into other questions I had been carrying through the Holy Nights. And I feel most warmly grateful to her.

There are very many questions arising from this description. To me it is clear that I know little about how to interact with such beings. I haven't read much at all about elementals, though I am well versed in Fairy Stories. I didn't have the presence of mind to ask them if I could help, nor did I ask their names as some do. They asked nothing of me, though I received tremendous help from them inwardly via the being of the Italian ladies in developing thoughts I was working with during those Holy Nights, for which I am very grateful. It was as if the whole experience was to make me realise the tremendous power of the Foundation Stone Meditation as a call to the elemental world as well as to human beings and that what we think of as "seeing" elemental or other beings, may not be quite what we think it is. There is something fairly sceptical in my Yorkshire nature, and I am capable of holding as a question for a very long time things that others might have accepted from the outset as self-evident. I need pretty convincing evidence to accept experiences such as I have just related. But all I can say is that now it *is* so for me.

Some months later I came across a description by Arthur Guirdham of his very similar awakening to the realisation that he could in fact see beings who were not incarnated. He at first protested that, though he was aware they were there, he could not see anything. But when his friend suggested he describe what they were wearing, he found that it was quite clear to him and could do so with ease. To which his friend said, "So you *can* see them!" To read this was the first important confirmation of how it had been for me.

Then, in the summer of 2004 at the Art Section Conference in Järna, we met a Norwegian sculptor, Arild Rørdal, who had made a life sized sculpture of a Black Madonna, which commanded a most powerful presence. I was aware of it pervading the atmosphere, as I mounted the stairs before even entering the eurythmy room in the Seminariat where she stood, back to the door. John also felt the presence of this being strongly. You felt sure there was someone in the room, yet when you went in, there was nobody there but the Madonna. I felt she

was fundamentally connected somehow to the Charioteer. We had wonderful long conversations with the sculptor in the light of the Swedish Midsummer night and it turned out that he had also had a profound personal experience of the being of the Charioteer. In passing, the fact that I was still holding it as a question in what way elemental beings could be connected to works of art had come up and he was very surprised. He simply said, "But why is that a question? Steiner said that we create elemental beings in everything we make." For him it was quite self-evident that human beings can give birth to elementals in creating art. This meeting held the second confirmation from outside.

We also find echoes of the role of the human being in creating elementals in what the Spirit of Johannes' Youth says to him in the Fourth Mystery Drama, and we can note that Johannes was also a painter, someone steeped in the realm of the World of Imagination. As for me, I now trust my inner experience more, and have eased up on the doubting. A further help has also been to order my notes and write it all down systematically, which seems to be an important part of objectifying any research.

In this presentation I have touched on only one example of how inner pictures can arise in karma research; then I shared just some of the many possibilities of using the process of painting to explore pictures of spiritual archetypes by an initiate; and thirdly my inner consciousness of these particular elemental beings is so far on only a very small scale. Nevertheless, I hope that this article can be a contribution to our finding the ways to share with each other some of the more spiritual elements of research and to our speaking more openly about our spiritual investigations, as I sense the times are calling for just that.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> These were the Esoteric School, 1904–1914 [see Rudolf Steiner, *From the History & Contents of the First Section of the Esoteric School, 1904–1914: Letters, Documents, and Lectures*, ed. Hella Wiesberger, tr. John Wood, (Hudson, N.Y.: Anthroposophic Press, 1998)] and the first of the classes of the School of Spiritual Science, which was inaugurated in 1924 and continues to the present day. The Goetheanum, in Dornach, Switzerland, serves to further the work of the School of Spiritual Science.

<sup>2</sup> In the period, much of present day France was ruled by the English King.

<sup>3</sup> Some years later, the being of Graham made clear to me that he had been in the employ of the King of England. So it is possible that the true colours were red and gold. Why I saw green remains a mystery, it was very distinct.

<sup>4</sup> Jostein Saether, *Living with Invisible People* (London: Clairview, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Heide Oehms, *Karma-Erkenntnis Warum? Innere Entwicklung als Grundlage geistiger Fähigkeiten* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus Verlag, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Daniel van Bemmelen, *Rudolf Steiner's New Approach to Colour on the Ceiling of the First Goetheanum* (Spring Valley, N.Y.: St. George Publications, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Elisabeth Oling-Jellinek, *Vom Wesen der Farbe in der Eurythmie und Malerei Rudolf Steiners* (Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Hilde Raske, *The Language of Colour in the First Goetheanum* (Dornach: Walter Keller Verlag, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> I feel that none of the published versions of the four colour reproductions of the paintings are true to the original plant colours, and therefore took the quality of each colour as a research question. The only colours used in the First Goetheanum were red, yellow and blue.

<sup>10</sup> The German word for fist is "Faust".

<sup>11</sup> Marco Pogacnik, *Nature Spirits & Elemental Beings. Working with the Intelligence in Nature*, (Findhorn: Findhorn Press, 1996; repr. 1997, 1999).

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## Research for Developing Institutes of Cultural Life

Coenraad J. van Houten

In collaboration with Shirley van Houten-Routledge

This article is dedicated to two separate research impulses which come together in a third research question. In the third part the research process itself is also outlined.

The first is dedicated to a manuscript by Bernard Lievegoed for a new kind of social community, for spiritual cultural life. It was at the end of his life that the manuscript was re-composed and finished and produced in the Dutch language. By reading it today I was deeply impressed by the future-oriented intuition that lived in it.

The second part of this article will be dedicated to quite a different impulse, which has to do with new ways of initiating new forms of adult learning, now called the NALM – the New Adult Learning Movement.

The third part poses a fundamental question, namely how these two impulses give rise to a third question concerning spiritual research and creativity, and how to make the results of research operational in the institutes of cultural life. The first part is a draft, the second an initiative in its second phase of development, in the third these two impulses encounter each other.

Lievegoed's intuitive design for a form of institute had hardly been born yet, although first features of it were practised in the original NPI Institute, as a form for colleagues working together for a common aim. Here are a few indications of what this draft aimed at: The first is the opinion that such institutes cannot be started by one pioneer alone, but only together with others who have similar questions and can grasp a similar impulse, and in that way form a first phase of a group of people dedicated to an aim that paves the way to the future. In the first place it was meant not for organisations of economic life nor organisations with a social aim, but those with a spiritual-cultural aim. Its composition would be radically different from the first two. Lievegoed described three phases of development, quite different from organizations of

economic life. The first phase already mentioned was an integrated group life, continuously working together and promoting continuous creativity in all its work – since creativity was its main aim.

The second phase required people working together to build an organism, with different persons or groups entrusted with particular functions. The activity was permanent initiative, continuous initiating on the basis of a permanent spiritual path of schooling. Supporting the development of the people involved and their creative potential was a central aim. Of course the question of leadership also demanded a very new form. It was hierarchical like any institute of spiritual life but the hierarchy was built from below upward – not in the form of a democracy, neither in the form of departmentalised differentiation, but in a form of aristocracy which means gaining the trust of others and placing trust in co-workers who were the best for a specific task – recognised, accepted and trusted. It gives the impression of permanently changing, different forms of leading and of supporting leaderships. A third element was that to be creative at least 120% effort was necessary for 50% result, which is the opposite of modern efficiency which wants a minimum effort with most high results.

The three phases he indicated were called 1) the seed phase, a group of people inspired by a common impulse, working together to try to initiate a first phase; 2) the growing phase, where the second stage came about as a stage of growth and differentiation and would need complicated and changing forms of integrating each others efforts, which needed a permanent schooling path of each participant; 3) the third phase Lievegoed calls the stage of blossoming, which was not a conclusive phase but would have moments of the highest creative highlights and moments of dormancy. It was not to be seen as a permanent achievement. In this respect he wanted to call them moments where the future spirit self faculties of such a group would appear from time to time. That is why one could call this new vision also (in my words) social communities serving the permanent renewal of the spiritual cultural life.

Of course these are brief indications, which show a very deep background if one tries to perceive what is meant here. These few words are only an indication of it. The further history of this far reaching impulse was that it lived a short while in 1988, was distributed as a manuscript of about 48 pages, translated out of the Dutch into German and English (by William Forward), and perhaps in other languages too, but I am not informed of this. On investigating what further con-

sequences followed from this draft of Lievegoed's, you would hear those who read it or tried it in the different branches of work say in different ways that the personal faculties needed to realise such an organism could not be achieved. Therefore if one wants to find this document, one has to go to second-hand bookshops. The question arises what changes in attitudes and what faculties would be needed to make it operational, and how would these be developed in people?

Now let me describe the start of a totally different initiative. It was the initiative that is now called the New Adult Learning Movement. Its roots interesting enough came about in the Centre for Social Development at Emerson College. The aim of the Centre was not organization development but the aim was developing people to take new initiatives for social life, which were badly needed. This demanded quite new ways of teaching and of working together. Endless different forms of developing new faculties in people were practised. At the end the idea was born to develop an Anthroposophical Schooling Course, which was dedicated to engendering those faculties which people in anthroposophy needed to bring the life of anthroposophy into our culture. It was a whole new challenge that also needed permanent creativity, and learning by doing, showing something that the NALM movement still does today – which means teaching the human will, learning to be spiritually creative in carrying things out in practice. An interesting discovery was that while focussed on individual spiritual development, a new social bonding came about among the participants.

This article is not meant to describe the history of the Centre for Social Development and its somewhat sad ending, but only to continue the line of adult education further. In 1998 a group of people carrying this "new learning" education impulse met in Peredur, East Grinstead to look for a first form to knit together the many individual initiatives that had been taken in various countries. There were about 35 participants present. The name was chosen, to call it a "movement" – New Adult Learning Movement. They decided to entrust a Care Group that would take care of all the things others did not do – not a board of directors or a group with defined special responsibilities. Interestingly enough the six people chosen consisted of a Canadian, a Dane, an English person, two Dutch people and a German. Looking back, it is interesting how international this impulse really was.

To the astonishment of the increasing group of co-workers, the new forms of learning that were developed became ever deeper and more extensive. There was a constant research process, on the way through the

work. The way of work was an integration of lectures, artistic work, group work, day and night learning, reviews and many other forms with close cooperation with every co-worker. Even if the first beginnings were not very professional, these working methods produced a new attitude in people that later led to awakening the slumbering individual spirit that ignited a flame in people's souls.

It would take us too far to describe all that has been developed up to this moment, but it must be mentioned that three new ways of learning emerged, all three on the basis of the life organism of the human being, the seven life processes. When these are taken on consciously by the human ego, they are transformed into three new learning processes: learning to learn as an adult, learning to learn from and with one's destiny forces, and – as a culmination – learning to practise creative spiritual research.

Because we are now in the time of the self-consciousness soul and the individualizing of the spirit, accompanied by strong threshold experiences, a strong social need became evident: a need for a new social art among people. This led to the great deep mystery of human encounter that seems to become more and more difficult and therefore needs to be consciously developed as one of the key issues for our social life today. Now the basic faculty of human encounter as well as the new faculties of learning to learn as an adult are meeting each other and created the "karmic conversation". This can give a new dimension and understanding within a conversation, even to the point of replacing the need for traditional counselling or psychotherapy. It asks for a new language, a new level of speaking and listening to one another. The karma perspective can become a faculty for all consultants also and develops a new kind of consulting for organisations, out of a new understanding for the existential problems of the people. The basic impulse was and remains developing new answers in adult education for the challenges that modern life presents to people in their life and daily practice. It is therefore to be seen as a movement for creative spiritual and social renewal of our cultural life, something we believe the whole of anthroposophy is striving for.

Just at this time, re-discovering the draft of Lievegoed became an astonishing encounter because NALM seemed to have had a development that looked rather similar to what he called the first phase. But what is more astonishing is that NALM was urgently looking for a form for its second phase. Colleagues wondered whether the new faculties needed to realise the second phase Lievegoed described would now be

Possible? NALM is looking for a form that is non-institutional, dedicated to the free spiritual life, integrating individual initiatives in trust and confidence among the network of colleagues.

Anyone wishing to work for the future must try new things that seem impossible. Things seem impossible because one has not done them yet; but if one tries new things they might in the course of events teach us how they could become possible. This attitude engenders future possibilities and will demand the intuitive development of our individual slumbering creative will forces – and this is what NALM has continuously tried to put into practice.

The core of creativity was fostered radically by learning to learn as an independent person, as a form of individualisation. As people learn from each other through events and experiences of life, the practice of creativity was developed in a threefold way in learning from our destiny. Through the work of many colleagues, and through a new book (the third arising from the work of NALM), entitled *The Threefold Nature of Destiny Learning*, this is continuously being deepened and developed. The last and most important field of this research is to awaken the faculties in every human being to become a creative spiritual researcher. *This involves the integration of science, art and morality.* The assumption that this ability lives dormant in every person proved correct. What a waste if that is not practised in every training course! A publication about this learning path is shortly to appear.

Now let us move to the third part to this article, where I give some hints of the creative spiritual research path itself, which has arisen out of research into adult education, and is based again on the seven life processes. All research begins from a question, but a question of a special kind. It usually comes out of one's work in the world, out of an intuitive will sense: something new is necessary. For instance, Lievegoed had developed phases of the economic organisation used for many years by the NPI consultants. However when these principles were applied in an institute of spiritual life, they did not work. This demanded new research, which reached as far as an expression in a written manuscript. The research question becomes the guide and anchor for the whole process, even if its formulation changes on the way.

The second process is to deepen one's own motivation for and relationship to the question, since the human being itself is the instrument for the research, mediating between earthly and spiritual worlds. One's inner spirit fire, love for the task and karmic relation to it have to be clear and strong enough to sustain and carry one through to the end

regardless of obstacles and temptations. In the third process you embark upon a path toward finding the new answer. You meet every possibility and limitation of your own development plus a wide field of related matters which could be investigated. One's path is guided by the being behind the question and not by one's own favoured method. There is no fixed method for this. Sometimes new inner faculties must be schooled before going further. Your inner path takes on a new significance and purpose. Meanwhile you watch for leading signs that take you towards the being of the question, and you can realise that invisible forces are working with you.

Then comes the moment (fourth stage) when you receive a large breakthrough, or many small insights; you encounter a new reality. You stand on the threshold between worlds; for instance, the threshold where developed human intelligence encounters cosmic intelligence. "I see it now"! This is greatly satisfying. But beware – it is not the end of the process. The most difficult part of the research process now begins, to translate the "vision" from beyond the threshold into understandable language, to incarnate it back into this world. The fifth process shows that a spiritual insight is fleeting and easily lost; it needs to be maintained, nurtured, kept alive, worked through until its new message becomes clear. Then comes the next step, the sixth: a testing time begins in order to verify it against the environment where the need lies, and with the spiritual world that knows if it is ripe enough, rightly timed and placed and morally appropriate, with human beings ready whose task it will be to carry it out, free of personal ambitions, etc. It is another kind of knowing and growing, a process which is partly invisible because it is done at night in the sphere of the Hierarchies. Only after all this can one arrive at the seventh process of placing a new impulse, giving it away into the world. By now it is clearly selfless, spirit permeated, a creative deed in full freedom and responsibility.

The creative research process needs new faculties at every step, developed out of the seven life processes. Each step has a basic attitude of encounter in it. In fact spiritual research begins as an inner attitude, which is possible for everyone.

The result of a true research process will be creative. Creative means here something new that was not there before, not just a change or variation of the same. It is born out of nothing, via a human being. Rudolf Steiner called this "schaffen aus dem Nichts" (creating out of nothing). The artist Joseph Beuys also speaks of nothing being given anymore; the human being must create out of nothing; and that we can

only connect to real creativity by understanding and calling upon the force of resurrection. This is a true force that lives in each human being, slumbering and yearning to be awakened. Lievegoed adds, "creativity can only be through a person who works out of extra etheric forces".

Thus we come full circle and can say that the encountering of two research impulses, as described herein, leads to a new research direction. From Lievegoed: institutes of spiritual life are dependent on the creativity of all co-workers and on the permanent creativity of the total institution. From NALM: creativity finds its source in the individualised human spirit. The task to practise this in and throughout the work is the leading impulse. Constant research in NALM is how to teach and practise creativity out of spiritual activity, in the field of adult learning.

This article barely touches the surface for a potential social and spiritual life of the future, which can truly begin now because the spiritual world is becoming ever more present, insofar as we can make ourselves available. It is not a matter of knowledge any more but of heart and will.

It seems now possible that the human faculties necessary for the development of institutes of spiritual life can be realised in practice. First tentative steps have already been made in this direction.

## Untitled Poem

Peter Morris

Full as the whole heart  
Trembling in prayer,

Full as the full arch of man  
Leaning out to all  
That is holy and rare.

Full as the air  
With no space for dreaming,

All that fills the space  
We breathe,  
Fills the space  
With all there is to breathe,

And our breath  
Is a deepening Lion  
Of the Now

**Book Review**  
***Owen Barfield: Romanticism Come of Age***  
**A Biography by Simon Blaxland-de Lange**

Publisher: Temple Lodge

Among the authors inspired by Rudolf Steiner, Owen Barfield (1898–1997) occupies a special place. Barfield's main themes are the evolution of consciousness and the paradigm shift which that evolution now demands. These he elucidates with an intellectual rigour that has gained him a hearing among many who might be otherwise wary of the spiritual vistas thus opened up. With unfailing generosity of intention he leads the reader to accept the reality of our increasingly conscious participation in evolution and to understand what is at stake in the conduct of our lives. Crucial is to find a way through the supposed either-or of subjective and objective approaches to human activity and recognise in what ways our spiritual life might do justice to its role in forming the future.

Simon Blaxland-de Lange's ground-breaking biography of Barfield, undertaken with Barfield's blessing, is itself a navigating of these bountiful, treacherous waters: how deep and how truthful can a biographer be in representing the quest of another psyche? While Blaxland de-Lange is candid from the outset that many completely different accounts could and should be given of Barfield's life, his own account is an attempt to respect Barfield's expressed wishes, not for a conventional biography but for what Barfield called a psychography. To bring the generous, erudite, modest, witty, trenchant qualities of Barfield's soul-life before the reader, Blaxland-de Lange lets Barfield speak for himself in abundantly quoted letters as well as conversation that the biographer was uniquely placed to share in Barfield's last years. There is also, inevitably and most often helpfully, a considerable dose of interpretation by the author. But as Barfield was determined that his own book on Coleridge should be "Coleridge through Barfield" and not "Barfield through Coleridge,"<sup>(1)</sup> so the present volume is Barfield through Blaxland-de Lange and not the other way round.

For the reader who wants a straightforward overview of Bar-

field's life, this is offered at the outset, largely in the form of Barfield's own recollections. We encounter the bookish child, the conscript of 1918, the budding writer, folk-dancer, anthroposophist, solicitor, lecturer and prophet.

The demands of psychography as Blaxland-de Lange understands it, however, result in a "ruckschau" structure for most of the book, following the life backwards from the years of Barfield's semi-retirement, through later-life correspondences (most notably with Saul Bellow), through his eminence as a lecturer on the North American university circuit, and the emergence of his unique, penetrating books (including *What Coleridge Thought*, *Saving the Appearances*, *Worlds Apart*, *Unancestral Voice*), to his friendship with C.S. Lewis, his encounter with Anthroposophy, and the early explorations into depth of language. The general chronological reversal, with some counter-currents, is at times stimulating, at times disorienting, as is the mobility with which the text moves among many literary modes: professional and personal correspondence, recollection, narrative, and passages from essays, poetry, fiction, and conversation. The overall impression made on this reader is that although Barfield modestly insists that it is the direction of his thought and not his person that matters (2), it is salutary to experience how the intellectual achievement is inseparable from a life of the deepest honesty and devotion.

One of Barfield's griefs, discussed in the book, was the general failure of the intellectual community to acknowledge the contribution of Rudolf Steiner. He saw the value of his own work partly in terms of how effectively he could gain a hearing for Steiner, whose insights he saw as crucial for the future of human endeavour. In making a case which he intended for the ears of any thinking person, the widely-read Barfield drew on whatever currents of contemporary thought might offer a foothold. He pointed emphatically and often, for example, to how the accepted findings of physics implied, if one thought them through, the kind of participatory reality which a complacently materialistic culture habitually failed to recognise. Today he might see a similar bridge in neurological research that shows how the physical human body, right to a hormonal, cellular level, responds to vivid imagination as well as to physical stimuli. Such research, with profound implications for education and healing, substantiates Barfield's compelling arguments that we should take imagination very seriously.

Because Barfield is so far-reaching and turns so many commonly held assumptions on their heads, there is a danger that we will fail to

sustain the challenge of his ideas long enough to realise in our hearts the opportunity they offer. Blaxland-de Lange has done us a great service by keeping Barfield's profound and potentially liberating insights in view.

(1) pp. 72-73.

(2) p. 46.

Martin Schmandt

## Notes on the Contributors

*Andrew Wolpert* has worked for many years in Adult Education and most recently at Emerson College, Sussex, where he led the "Spirit of English" Course.

*John Burnett* was a Class Teacher at Wynstones School before inaugurating the Degree Course in Waldorf Education at the University of Plymouth, where he continues to work.

*Nick Thomas* was until recently the long-serving General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in Great Britain. An electrical engineer by training, he has published *Science between Space and Counterspace*, which contains the results of his extensive research into the science of the spirit as illuminated by the methods of modern projective geometry.

*Christopher Houghton Budd* has spent many years studying Rudolf Steiner's contribution to economics. He has a doctorate in finance and is convenor of the Economics Conference, part of the School of Spiritual Science ([www.economics.goetheanum.org](http://www.economics.goetheanum.org)).

*Andrew Welburn* is a Fellow of New College, Oxford. He is the author of many books, including *Myth of the Nativity: the Virgin Birth Re-examined* (2006), *Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy and the Crisis of Contemporary Thought* (2004), several studies of early Christianity and books on leading exponents of the Romantic tradition.

*John Salter* had a long career in business and has since devoted many years to working as a freelance sculptor and painter.

*Maggie Salter* is an artist and teacher of painting. She gives workshops, lectures and courses on Colour, Past Lives and Reincarnation, and the Mystery Art of the Goetheanum.

*Coenraad van Houten* was initially a business manager and then founded and directed the Centre for Social Development. He has developed

- programmes and seminars for educating adults and advised organisations on training schemes. He is the co-founder of the New Adult Learning Movement.

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

*Peter Morris* is a poet and storyteller.

# THE GOLDEN BLADE 2007

## PERSPECTIVES ON THE THRESHOLD

It can be difficult to survey as a whole the full dimensions of modern knowledge.

On the one hand it is possible to specialise in depth in a particular field, to the exclusion of others; on the other, there are manifold journalistic overviews to choose from which, however, are not only superficial but also tend to be fashioned in accordance with the requirements of reductionist materialism. The present issue of *The Golden Blade* represents an attempt to begin to bring together some of the fruits of spiritual-scientific research arising currently from the various Sections of the School of Spiritual Science founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1924.

Historical Characters and Their Place in Evolution

**Rudolf Steiner**

Parzival's Teachers

**Andrew Wolpert**

Making Sense of Steiner: working with Study of Man in a university environment

**John Burnett**

Flame Song of the Summer Sun: five fragments for St. John's Tide

**John Salter**

Counterspace Research

**Nick Thomas**

Anthroposophia and Economics

**Christopher Houghton Budd**

Gilgamesh, Homer and Robinson Crusoe: changing consciousness in world literature

**Andrew Welburn**

Cactus Flower

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The Fishes Zodiac and the Present Age

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Research into the Development of Institutes of Cultural Life

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