

AN APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY QUESTIONS
IN THE LIGHT OF ANTHROPOSOPHY

The
Golden Blade

SPIRITUAL EMPTINESS AND SOCIAL LIFE

Rudolf Steiner

*A Lecture, hitherto untranslated,
given at Dornach on 13th April, 1919.*

HOW OLD IS THE EARTH ?

G. Wachsmuth

THE WRITING OF THE GOSPELS

Adam Bittleston

MICHAEL AND ST. GEORGE (II)

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THE WIND IN THE TREE

E. L. Grant Watson

RUDOLF STEINER'S 'LETTERS' (Vol 2)

Owen Barfield

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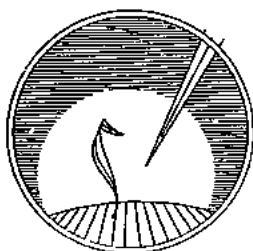
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Anthroposophy, a way of thought rather than a body of dogma, springs from the work and teaching of Rudolf Steiner (1861—1925). He spoke of it as "a path of knowledge, to guide the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the universe".

The aim of this Annual is to publish writings which bring the outlook of Anthroposophy to bear on questions and activities of the present time.

The title derives from a reference by Rudolf Steiner to an old Persian legend. "Djemjdid was a king who led his people from the north towards Iran, and who received from the God, whom he called Ahura Mazdao, a golden dagger, by means of which he was to fulfil his mission on earth..... It represents a force given to man whereby he can act upon and transform external nature".

SPIRITUAL EMPTINESS AND SOCIAL LIFE

Rudolf Steiner

*A Lecture given at Dornach on April 13th, 1919**

FROM the two preceding lectures you will have realised that in finding it necessary to speak at the present time of the threefold social order, anthroposophical spiritual science is not actuated by any subjective views or aims. The purpose of the lecture yesterday was to point to impulses deeply rooted in the life of the peoples of the civilised world—the world as it is in this Fifth Post-Atlantean Epoch. I tried to show how, from about the year 1200 A.D. onwards, there awakened in Middle Europe an impulse leading to the growth of what may be called the civic social order, but that this civic social life of the middle classes was infiltrated by the remains of a life of soul belonging to earlier centuries—by those decadent Nibelung traits which appeared particularly among the ruling strata in the mid-European countries.

I laid special stress upon the existence of a radical contrast in mid-European life from the thirteenth until the twentieth centuries, culminating in the terrible death-throes of social life that have come upon Middle Europe. This incisive contrast was between the inner, soul-life of the widespread middle-class, and that of the descendants of the old knighthood, of the feudal overlords, of those in whom vestiges of the old Nibelung characteristics still survived. These latter were the people who really created the political life of Middle Europe, whereas the bulk of the middle class remained non-political, a-political. If one desires to be a spiritual scientist from the practical point of view, serious study must be given to this difference of soul-life between the so-called educated bourgeoisie and all those who held any kind of ruling positions in Middle Europe at that time. I spoke of this in the lecture yesterday.

We will now consider in rather greater detail why it was that the really brilliant spiritual movement which lasted from the time of Walter von der Vogelweide until that of Goetheanism, and then abruptly collapsed, failed to gain any influence over social life or to produce any thoughts which could have been fruitful in that sphere. Even Goethe, with all his power to unfold great, all-embracing ideas

* The fifth of a cycle of six lectures, *Die geistigen Hintergründe der sozialen Frage*. From a shorthand report, unrevised by the lecturer. Published by kind permission of the Rudolf Steiner-Nachlassverwaltung, Dornach, Switzerland, and in agreement with the Rudolf Steiner Publishing Company.

in many domains of life, was really only able to give a few indications—concerning which one may venture to say that even he was not quite clear about them—as to what must come into being as a *new social order* in civilised humanity. Fundamentally speaking, the tendency towards the threefold membering of a healthy social organism was already present in human beings, subconsciously, by the end of the eighteenth century. The demands for freedom, equality and fraternity, which can have meaning only when the threefold social order becomes reality, testified to the existence of this subconscious longing. Why did it never really come to the surface?

This is connected with the whole inherent character of mid-European spiritual life. At the end of the lecture yesterday I spoke of a strange phenomenon. I said that Hermann Grimm—for whom I have always had such high regard and whose ideas were able to shed light upon so many aspects of art and general human interests of bygone times—succumbed to the extraordinary fallacy of admiring such an out-and-out phrasemonger as Wildenbruch! In the course of years I have often mentioned an incident which listeners may have thought trivial, but which can be deeply indicative for those who study life in its symptomatological aspect. Among the many conversations I had with Hermann Grimm while I was in personal contact with him, there was one in which I spoke from my own point of view about many things that need to be understood in the spiritual sense. In telling this story I have always stressed the fact that Hermann Grimm's only response to such mention of the spiritual was to make a warding-off gesture with his hand, indicating that this was a realm he was not willing to enter. A supremely true utterance, consisting of a gesture of the hand, was made at that moment. It was true inasmuch as Hermann Grimm, for all his penetration into many things connected with the so-called spiritual evolution of mankind, into art, into matters of universal human concern, had not the faintest inkling of what 'spirit' must signify for men of the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch of culture. He simply did not know what spirit really is from the standpoint of a man of this epoch. In speaking of such matters one must keep bluntly to the truth: until it came to the spirit, there was truth in a man like Hermann Grimm. He made a parrying gesture because he had no notion of how to *think* about the spirit. Had he been one of the phrasemongers going about masked as prophets to-day endeavouring to better the lot of mankind, he would have believed that he too could speak about the spirit; he would have believed that by reiterating Spirit, spirit, spirit! something is expressed that has been nurtured in one's own soul.

Among those who of recent years have been talking a great deal about the spirit, without a notion of its real nature, are the theosophists—the majority of them at any rate. For it can truly be said that of all the vapid nonsense that has been uttered of late, the theosophical brand has been the most regrettable and also in a certain respect the most harmful in its effects. But a statement like

the one I have made about Hermann Grimm—not thinking of him as a personality but as a typical representative of the times—raises the question: how comes it that such a true representative of Middle European life has no inkling of how to think about the spiritual, about the spirit? It is just this that makes Hermann Grimm the typical representative of Middle European civilisation. For when we envisage this brilliant culture of the townsfolk, which has its start about the year 1200 and lasts right on into the period of Goetheanism, we shall certainly perceive as its essential characteristic—but without valuing it less highly on this account—that it is impregnated in the best sense with *soul* but empty of anything that can be called *spirit*. That is the fact we have to grasp, with a due sense of the tragedy of it: this brilliant culture was devoid of spirit. What is meant here, of course, is spirit as one learns to apprehend it through anthroposophical spiritual science.

Again and again I return to Hermann Grimm as a representative personality, for the thinking of thousands and thousands of scholarly men in Middle Europe was similar to his. Hermann Grimm wrote an excellent book about Goethe, containing the substance of lectures he gave at the University of Berlin in the seventies of the last century. Taking it all in all, what Hermann Grimm said about Goethe is really the best that has been said at this level of scholarship. From the vantage-point of a rich life of soul, Hermann Grimm derived his gift not only for portraying individual men but for accurately discerning and assessing their most characteristic traits. He was brilliant in hitting upon words for such characterisations. Take a simple example. In the nature of things, Hermann Grimm was one of those who misunderstood the character of the wild Nibelung people. He was an ardent admirer of Frederick the Great and pictured him as a Germanic hero. Now Macaulay, the English historian and man of letters, wrote about Frederick the Great, naturally from the English point of view. In an essay on Macaulay, Hermann Grimm set out to show that in reality only a German possessed of sound insight is capable of understanding and presenting a true picture of Frederick the Great. Hermann Grimm describes Macaulay's picture of Frederick the Great in the very apt words: Macaulay makes of Frederick the Great a distorted figure of an English Lord, with snuff in his nose.

To hit upon such a characterisation indicates real ability to shape ideas and mental images in such a way that they have plasticity, mobility. Many similar examples could be found of Hermann Grimm's flair for apt characterisation. And other kindred minds, belonging to the whole period of Middle European culture of which I spoke yesterday, were endowed with the same gift. But if, with all the good-will born of a true appreciation of Hermann Grimm, we study his monograph on Goethe—what is our experience then? We feel: this is an extraordinarily good, a really splendid piece of writing

—only it is not Goethe! In reality it gives only a shadow-picture of Goethe, as if out of a three-dimensional figure one were to make a two-dimensional shadow-picture, thrown on the screen. Goethe seems to wander through the chapters like a ghost from the year 1749 to the year 1832. What is described is a spectral Goethe—not what Goethe was, what he thought, what he desired.

Goethe himself did not succeed in lifting to the level of spiritual consciousness all that was alive within his soul. Indeed, the great 'Goethe problem' to-day is precisely this: to raise into consciousness in a truly spiritual way what was spiritually alive in Goethe. He himself was not capable of this, for culture in his day could give expression only to a rich life of the soul, not of the spirit. Therefore Hermann Grimm, too, firmly rooted as he was in the Goethean tradition, could depict only a shadow, a spectre, when he wanted to speak of Goethe's spirit. It is thoroughly characteristic that the best modern exposition of Goethe and Goetheanism should produce nothing but a spectre of Goethe.

* * *

Why is it that through the whole development of this brilliant phase of culture there is no real grasp of the spirit, no experience of it or feeling for it? Men such as Troxler, and Schelling too at times, pointed gropingly to the spirit. But speaking quite objectively, it must be said that this culture was empty of spirit. And because of this, men were also ignorant of the needs, the conditions, that are essential for the life of the spirit. Here too there is something which may well up as a feeling of tragedy from contemplation of this stream of culture: men were unable to perceive, to divine, the conditions necessary for the life of the spirit, above all in the social sphere. For the reason why the social life of Middle Europe has developed through the centuries to the condition in which it finds itself to-day is that it had no real experience of the spirit, nor felt the need to meet the fundamental requirement of the spiritual life by emancipating it, making it independent of and separate from the political sphere. Because men had no understanding of the spirit, they allowed it to be merged with the political life of the State, where it could unfold only in shackles. I am speaking here only of Middle Europe; in other regions of the modern civilised world it was the same, although the causes were different.

And then, in the inmost soul, a reaction can set in. Then a man can experience how in his study of nature the spirit remains dumb, silent, uncommunicative. Then the soul rebels, gathers its forces and strives to bring the spirit to birth from its own inmost being! This can happen only in an epoch when scientific thinking impinges on a culture which has no innate disposition towards spirituality. For if men are not inwardly dead, if they are inwardly

alive, the impulse of the spirit begins of itself to stir within them. We must recognise that since the middle of the 15th century the spirit has to be brought to birth through encountering what is dead if it is to penetrate into man's life of soul. The only persons who can gain satisfaction from inwardly experiencing the spiritualised soul-life of the Greeks are those who, with their classical scholarship, live in that afterglow of Greek culture which enables the soul-quality of the spirit to pulsate through a man's own soul. But men who are impelled to live earnestly with natural science and to discern what is deathly, corpse-like in it—they will make it possible for the spirit itself to come alive in their souls.

If a man is to have real and immediate experience of the spirit in this modern age, he must not only have smelt the fumes of prussic acid or ammonia in laboratories, or have studied specimens extracted from corpses in the dissecting room, but out of the whole trend and direction of natural scientific thinking he must have known the odour of death in order that through this experience he may be led to the light of the spirit! This is an impulse which must take effect in our times; it is also one of the testings which men of the modern age must undergo. *Natural science exists far more for the purpose of educating man than for communicating truths about nature.* Only a naïve mind could believe that any natural law discovered by learned scientists enshrines an essential, inner truth. Indeed it does not! The purpose of natural science, devoid of spirit as it is, is the education of men. This is one of the paradoxes implicit in the historic evolution of humanity.

And so it was only in the very recent past, in the era after Goetheanism, that the spirit glimmered forth; for it was then, for the first time, that the essentially corpse-like quality in the findings of natural science came to the fore; then and not until then could the spirit ray forth—for those, of course, who were willing to receive its light. Until the time of Goethe, men protected themselves against the sorry effects of a spiritual life shackled in State-imposed restrictions by cultivating a form of spiritual life fundamentally alien to them, namely the spiritual life of ancient Greece; this was outside the purview of the modern State for the very reason that it had nothing to do with modern times. A makeshift separation of the spiritual life from the political sphere was provided by the adoption of an alien form of culture. This Greek culture was a cover for the spiritual emptiness of Middle European life and of modern Europe in general.

On the other hand, the need to separate the economic sphere from the Rights-sphere, from the political life of the State proper, was not perceived. And why not? When all is said and done, nobody can detach himself from the economic field. To speak trivially, the stomach sees to that! In the economic sphere it is impossible for men to live unconcernedly through such cataclysms as are allowed to occur, all unnoticed, in the political and spiritual

spheres. Economic activity was going on all the time, and it developed in a perfectly straightforward way. The transformation of the old impenetrable forests into meadows and cornfields, with all the ensuing economic consequences, went steadily ahead. But into economic life, too, there came an alien intrusion, one that had actually found a footing in the souls of men in Middle Europe earlier than that of Greece, namely the Latin-Roman influence. Everything pertaining to the State, to the Rights-life, to political life, derives from this Latin-Roman influence. And here again is something that will have to be stressed by history in the future but has been overlooked by the conventional, tendentious historiography of the immediate past, with its bias towards materialism—the strangely incongruous fact that certain economic ideas and procedures are a direct development from social relationships described, for example, by Tacitus, as prevailing in the Germanic world during the first centuries after the founding of Christianity.

But that is not all. These trends in economic thinking did not go forward unhampered. The Roman view of rights, Roman political thinking, seeped into the economic usages and methods originally prevailing in Europe, infiltrated them through and through and caused a sharp cleavage between the economic sphere and the political sphere. Thus the economic sphere and the political sphere, the former coloured by the old Germanic way of life and the latter by the Latin-Roman influence, remained separate on the surface but without any *organic* distinction consistent with the threefold membering of the body social; the distinction was merely superficial, a mask. Two heterogeneous strata were intermingled; it was felt that they did not belong together, in spite of external unification. Inwardly, however, people were content, because in their souls they experienced the two spheres as separate and distinct.

One need only study mediaeval and modern history in the right way and it will be clear that this mediaeval history is really the story of perpetual rebellion, self-defence, on the part of the economic relationships surviving from olden times against the political State, against the Roman order of life. Imaginative study of these things shows unmistakably how Roman influences in the form of jurisprudence penetrate into men via the heads of the administrators. A great deal of the Roman element had even found its way into the wild Nibelung men in their period of decline. "Graf" is connected with "grapho"—writing. One can picture how the peasants, thinking in terms of husbandry, rise up in rebellion against this Roman juridical order, with fists clenched in their pockets, or with flails. Naturally, this is not always so outwardly perceptible. But when one observes history *truly*, these factors are present in the whole moral trend and impulse of those times. And so—I am merely characterising, not criticising, for everything that happened has also brought blessings and was necessary for the historic evolution

of Middle Europe—all that developed from the seeds planted in mid-European civilisation was permeated through and through by the juristic-political influences of the Roman world and the humanism of Greece, by the Greek way of conceiving spirit in the guise of soul.

On the other hand, directly economic life acquired its modern, international character, the old order was doomed. A man might have had a very good classical education and be an ignoramus in respect of modern natural science, but then he was inwardly on a retrograde path. A man of classical education could not keep abreast of his times unless he penetrated to some extent into what modern natural scientific education had to offer. And again, if a man were schooled in natural science, if he acquired some knowledge of modern natural science and of what had come out of the old Roman juristic system in the period of which I have spoken, he could not help suffering from an infantile disease, from 'culture scarlet fever', 'culture measles', in a manner of speaking. In the old Imperium Romanum a juristic culture was fitting and appropriate. Then this same juristic principle, the *res publica* (i.e. the conception of it), was transplanted from ancient Rome into the sphere of Middle European culture, together with the element of Nibelung barbarism on the other side. One really gets 'culture scarlet fever', 'culture measles', if one does not merely think of jurisprudence in the abstract, but, with sound natural scientific concepts, delves into the stuff that figures as modern jurisprudence in literature and in science.

We can see that this state of things had reached a certain climax when we find a really gifted man such as Rudolf von Ihering at an utter loss to know how to deal with the pitiable notions of jurisprudence current in the modern age. The book written by Ihering on the aim of justice (*Der Zweck im Recht*) was a grotesque production, for here was a man who had made a little headway in natural scientific thinking endeavouring to apply the concepts he had acquired to jurisprudence—the result being a monstrosity of human thinking. To study modern literature on law is a veritable martyrdom for sound thinking; one feels all the time as though so many worms were crawling through the brain. This is the actual experience—I am simply describing it pictorially.

* * *

We must be courageous enough to face these things fairly and squarely, and then it will be clear that we have arrived at the point of time when not only certain established usages and institutions, but men's very habits of thought, must be metamorphosed, re-cast; when men must begin to think about many things in a *different* way. Only then will the social institutions in the external world be able, under the influence of human thinking and feeling, to take the form that is called for by these ominous and alarming facts,

A fundamental change in the mental approach to certain matters of the highest importance is essential. But because between 1200 and the days of Goetheanism, modern humanity, especially in Middle Europe, absorbed all unwittingly thoughts that wriggled through the brain like worms, there crept over thinking the lazy passivity that is characteristic of the modern age. It comes to expression in the *absence of will from the life of thought*. Men allow their thoughts to take possession of them; they yield to these thoughts; they prefer to have them in the form of instinct. But in this manner no headway can be made towards the spirit. The spirit can be reached only by genuinely putting the will into thinking, so that thinking becomes an act like any other, like hewing wood. Do modern men feel that thinking tires them? They do not, because thinking for them is not activity at all. But the fact that anyone who thinks with *thoughts*, not with words, will get just the same fatigue as he gets from hewing wood, and actually in a shorter time, so that he simply has to stop—that is quite outside their experience. Nevertheless, this is what will have to be experienced, for otherwise modern mankind as a community will be incapable of achieving the transition from the sense-world into the supersensible world of which I spoke in the two preceding lectures. Only by entering thus into the supersensible world, with understanding for what is seen and apprehended in the spirit, will human souls find harmony again.

The year 1200 is the time of Walter von der Vogelweide, the time when the spiritual life of Middle Europe is astir with powerful imaginations of which conventional history has little to say. Then it flows on through the centuries, but from the 15th and 16th centuries onwards takes into itself the germs of decline with the founding of the Universities of Prague, Ingolstadt, Freiburg, Heidelberg, Rostock, Wurzburg and the rest. The founding of these Universities throughout Middle Europe occurred almost without exception in a single century. The kind of life and thinking emanating from the Universities started the trend towards abstraction—towards what was subsequently to be idolised and venerated as the pure, natural scientific thinking which to-day invades the customary ways of thought with such devastating results.

Fundamentally speaking, this gave a definite stamp to the whole mentality of the educated middle class. Naturally, many individuals were not deeply influenced, but all the same the effect was universal. Of salient importance during this period was the increasing receptiveness of people to a form of soul-life entirely foreign to them. Side by side with what was developed through those who were the bearers of this middle-class culture, which reached its culmination in Goethe, Herder and Schiller, alien elements and impulses were at work.

I am speaking here of something profoundly characteristic. In their souls, the bearers of this culture were seeking for the spirit without a notion of what the spirit is. And where did they seek it?

In the realm of *Greek* culture! They learnt Greek in their intermediate schools, and what was instilled into them by way of spiritual substance was Greek in tenor and content. To speak truly of the spirit as conceived in Middle Europe from the thirteenth right on into the twentieth century, one would have to say: spirit, as conveyed by the inculcation of Greek culture. No spiritual life belonging intrinsically and innately to the people came into being. Greek culture did not really belong to the epoch beginning in the middle of the 15th century, which we call the epoch of the evolution of self-consciousness. And so the bourgeoisie in Middle Europe were imbued with an outworn form of Greek culture, and this was the source of all that they were capable of feeling and experiencing in regard to the spirit.

But what the Greek experienced of the spirit was merely its expression in the life of soul (*Seelenseite des Geistes*). What gave profundity to the culture of ancient Greece was that the Greek rose to perception of the highest manifestation of soul-life. That was what he called 'spirit'. True, the spirit shines down from the heights, pulsing through the realm of soul; but when the gaze is directed upwards, it finds, to begin with, only the *expression* of the spirit in the realm of soul.

Man's task in the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch, however, is to lift himself into the very essence of the spirit—an attainment still beyond his reach in the days of Greece. This is of far greater significance than is usually supposed, for it sheds light upon the whole way in which medieval, neo-medieval culture apprehended the spirit.

* * *

What, then, was required in order to reach a concept, an inward experience, of the spirit appropriate for the modern age? It is precisely by studying a representative figure like Hermann Grimm that we can discover this. It is something of which a man such as Hermann Grimm, steeped in classical lore, had not the faintest inkling—namely, the strivings of natural science and the scientific mode of thinking. This thinking is devoid of spirit; precisely where it is great it contains no trace of spirit, not an iota of spirituality. All the concepts of natural science, all its notions of laws of nature, are devoid of spirit, are mere shadow-pictures of spirit; while men are investigating the laws of nature, no trace of the spirit is present in their consciousness.

Two ways are open here. Either a man can give himself up to natural science, contenting himself—as often happens to-day—with what natural science has to offer; then he will certainly equip his mind with a number of scientific laws and ideas concerning nature—but he loses the spirit. Along this path it is possible to become a truly great investigator, but at the cost of losing all spirituality.

That is the one way. The other is to be inwardly aware of the tragic element arising from the lack of spirituality in natural science, precisely where science appears in all its greatness. Man immerses his soul in the scientific lore of nature, in the abstract, unspiritual laws of chemistry, physics, biology, which, having been discovered at the dissecting table, indicate by this very fact that from the living they yield only the dead. The soul delves into what natural science has to impart concerning the laws of human evolution. When a man allows all this to stream into him, when he endeavours not to pride himself on his knowledge, but asks: 'What does this really give to the human soul?'—then he experiences something true; then spirit is not absent. Herein, too, lies the tragic problem of Nietzsche, whose life of soul was torn asunder by the realisation that modern scientific learning is devoid of spirituality.

As you know, insight into the supersensible world does not depend upon clairvoyance; all that is required is to apprehend by the exercise of healthy human reason what clairvoyance can discover. It is not essential for the whole of mankind to become clairvoyant; but what is essential, and moreover within the reach of every human being, is to develop insight into the spiritual world through the healthy human intelligence. Only thus can harmony enter into souls of the modern age; for the loss of this harmony is due to the conditions of evolution in our time. The development of Europe, with her American affinities on the one hand and the Asiatic frontier on the other, has reached a parting of the ways. Spiritual Beings of higher worlds are bringing to a decisive issue the overwhelming difference between former ages and modern times as regards the living side-by-side of diverse populations on the earth.

* * *

How were the peoples of remote antiquity distributed and arranged over the globe? Up to a certain point of time, not long before the Mystery of Golgotha, the configuration of peoples on earth was determined from above downwards, inasmuch as the souls simply descended from the spiritual world into the physical bodies dwelling in some particular territory. Owing to physiological, geographical, climatic conditions in early times, certain kinds of human bodies were to be found in Greece, and similarly on the peninsula of Italy. The souls came from above, were predestined entirely from above, and took very deep root in man's whole constitution, in his outer, bodily physiognomy.

Then came the great migrations of the peoples. Men wandered over the earth in different streams. Races and peoples began to intermix, thus enhancing the importance of the element of heredity in earthly life. A population inhabiting a particular region of the earth moved to another; for example the Angles and Saxons who were living in certain districts of the Continent migrated to the

British Isles. That is one such migration. But in respect of physical heredity, the descendants of the Angles and Saxons are dependent upon what had developed previously on the Continent; this was a determining factor in their bodily appearance, their practices, and so forth. Thus there came into the evolutionary process a factor working in and conditioned by the *horizontal*. Whereas the distribution of human beings over the earth had formerly depended entirely upon the way in which the souls incarnated as they came down from above, the wanderings and movements of men over the earth now also began to have an effect.

At the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, however, a new cosmic-historic impulse came into operation. For a period of time a certain sympathy existed between the souls descending from the spiritual world and the bodies on the earth below. Speaking concretely: souls who were sympathetically attracted by the bodily form and constitution of the descendants of the Angles and Saxons, now living in the British Isles, incarnated in those regions. In the 15th century this sympathy began to wane, and since then the souls have no longer been guided by racial characteristics, but once again by geographical conditions, the kind of climate, and so forth, on the earth below, and also by whether a certain region of the earth is flat or mountainous. Since the 15th century, souls have been less and less concerned with racial traits; once again they are guided more by the existing geographical conditions. Hence a kind of chasm is spreading through the whole of mankind to-day between the elements of heredity and race and the soul-element coming from the spiritual world. And if men of our time were able to lift more of their subconsciousness into consciousness, very few of them would—to use a trivial expression—feel comfortable in their skins. The majority would say: I came down to the earth in order to live on flat ground, among green things or upon verdant soil, in this or that kind of climate, and whether I have Roman or Germanic features is of no particular importance to me.

It certainly seems paradoxical when these things, which are of paramount importance for human life, are concretely described. Men who preach sound principles, saying that one should abjure materialism and turn towards the spirit—they too talk just like the pantheists, of spirit, spirit, spirit. People are not shocked by this to-day; but when anyone speaks concretely about the spirit they simply cannot take it. That is how things are. And harmony must again be sought between, shall I say, *geographical predestination* and the *racial element* that is spread over the earth. The leanings towards internationalism in our time are due to the fact that souls no longer concern themselves with the element of race.

A figure of speech I once used is relevant here. I compared what is happening now to a 'vertical' migration of peoples, whereas in earlier times what took place was a 'horizontal' migration. This

comparison is no mere analogy, but is founded upon facts of the spiritual life.

To all this must be added that, precisely through the spiritual evolution of modern times, man is becoming more and more spiritual in the sphere of his subconsciousness, and the materialistic trend in his upper consciousness is more and more sharply at variance with the impulses that are astir in his subconsciousness. In order to understand this, we must consider once more the threefold membering of the human being.

When the man of the present age, whose attention is directed only to the material and the physical, thinks of this threefold membering, he says to himself: I perceive through my senses; they are indeed distributed over the whole body but are really centralised in the head; acts of perception, therefore, belong to the life of the nerves and senses—and there he stops. Further observation will, of course, enable him to describe how the human being breathes, and how the life passes over from the breath into the movement of the heart and the pulsation of the blood. But that is about as far as he gets to-day. Metabolism is studied all detail, but not as one of the three members of threefold man; actually it is taken to be the whole man. One need not, of course, go to the lengths of the scientific thinker who said: man is what he eats (*Der Mensch ist, was er isst*)—but, broadly speaking, science is pretty strongly convinced that it is so. In Middle Europe at the present time it looks as if he will soon be what he does not eat!

This threefold membering of the human being, which will ultimately find expression in a threefold social order because its factual reality is becoming more and more evident, manifests in different forms over the earth. Truly, man is not simply the being he appears outwardly to be, enclosed within his skin. It was in accordance with a deep feeling and perception when in my Mystery Play, "The Portal of Initiation", in connection with the characters of Capesius and Strader, I drew attention to the fact that whatever is done by men on earth has its echo in cosmic happenings out yonder in the universe. With every thought we harbour, with every movement of the hand, with everything we say, whether we are walking or standing, whatever we do—something happens in the cosmos.

The faculties for perceiving and experiencing these things are lacking in man to-day. He does not know—nor can it be expected of him and it is paradoxical to speak as I am speaking now—he does not know how what is happening here on the earth would appear if seen, for example, from the Moon. If he could look from the Moon he would see that the life of the nerves and senses is altogether different from what can be known of it in physical existence. The nerves-and-senses life, everything that transpires while you see, hear, smell, taste, is *light in the cosmos*, the radiation of light into the cosmos. From your seeing, from your feeling, from your hearing, the earth shines out into the cosmos.

Different again is the effect produced by what is rhythmic in the human being: breathing, heart movement, blood pulsation. This activity manifests in the universe in great and powerful rhythms which can be heard by the appropriate organs of hearing. And the process of metabolism in man radiates out into cosmic space as *life* streaming from the earth. You cannot perceive, hear, see, smell or feel without *shining* out into the cosmos. Whenever your blood circulates, you *resound* into universal space, and whenever metabolism takes place within you, this is seen from out yonder as the *life* of the whole earth.

But there are great differences in respect of all this—for example, between Asia and Europe. Seen from outside, the thinking peculiar to the Asiatics would appear—even now, when a great proportion of them have lost all spirituality—as bright, shining light raying out into the spiritual space of the universe. But the further we go towards the West, the dimmer and darker does this radiance become. On the other hand, more and more *life* surges out into cosmic space the further we go towards the West. Only from this vista can there arise in the human soul what may be called *perception of the cosmic aspect of the earth*—with the human beings belonging to it.

* * *

Such conceptions will be needed if mankind is to go forward to a propitious and not an ominous future. The idiocy that is gradually being bred in human beings who are made to learn from the sketchy maps of modern geography: Here is the Danube, here the Rhine, here Reuss, here Aare, here Bern, Basle, Zürich, and so forth—all this external delineation which merely adds material details to the globe—this kind of education will be the ruin of humanity. It is necessary as a foundation and not to be scoffed at; but nevertheless it will lead gradually to man's downfall. The globe of the future will have to indicate: here the earth *shines* because spirituality is contained in the heads of men; there the earth radiates out more *life* into cosmic space because of the characteristics of the human beings inhabiting this particular territory.

Something I once said here is connected with this. (One must always illumine one fact by another). I told you that Europeans who settle in America develop hands resembling those of the Red Indians; they begin to resemble the Indian type. This is because the souls coming down into human bodies to-day are directed more by geographical conditions, as they were in the olden days. In our own time, the souls are directed, not by racial considerations, not by what develops out of the blood, but by geographical conditions, as in the past. But it will be necessary to get at the roots of what is going on in humanity. This can be done only when men accustom themselves to concepts of greater flexibility, capable of penetrating

matters of this kind. These concepts, however, can be developed only on the foundation of spiritual science. And such a foundation is available when the spirit can be brought to birth in the human soul. For this, man needs a free spiritual life, emancipated from the political life of the State.

I have now given you one or two indications of what is astir in humanity, and of the need to strive for a new ordering of social life. Social demands cannot nowadays be advanced in terms of the trivial concepts commonly employed. Men must have insight into the nature of present-day humanity; they must make good what they have neglected in the study of modern mankind.

Translated by Dorothy Osmond.

HOW OLD IS THE EARTH ?*

G. Wachsmuth.

THE history of men's efforts to discover the age of the earth, and to describe its evolution, has itself a characteristic history, for both the concept of time and the concept of matter have undergone considerable changes. It is significant that in earlier times the entire history of the earth was thought to occupy only a few thousand years. The Biblical story of creation, for instance, allows only six thousand years—although the myth-filled thinking of those days had different conceptions of such time-units—while the Chaldean, Chinese and Indian cosmologies allowed for greater depths of time. In the nineteenth century the figures ran into millions (Lord Kelvin and others), and in the first half of the twentieth century there was a leap into billions (thousand millions), and today the minimum age of the earth's crust is estimated as lying between two and three thousand million years.

All this is closely connected with changes in the ideas of the nature and structure of the world, and of matter. With the appearance of an atomistic picture of the world, foreshadowed in the ideas of Leukippus and Demokritus in ancient Greece, there came an era which applied these concepts in a one-sided way, in terms of fundamental particles, thereby eliminating what is most important in the formation of the world. This approach starts from inorganic events and physical-chemical points of view, instead of from the living whole.

These ideas about the structure and processes of the *smallest entities* were then transferred to cosmology and to the history of the earth. Thus the critical turning-point is the transition to a picture of the world in which the inorganic is regarded as the primary and determining factor in evolution. And here is to be found the problem which future research will have to resolve: whether any true picture of the development of the world can be arrived at by the one-sided application of laws observed in inorganic processes.

* * *

The greatest difficulty in calculating ages and periods of time arose from the fact that there seemed no possibility, until recently, of establishing any *absolute* scale. Only relative values could be obtained from the geological ideas of the last century; that is to say, it was possible to determine only whether a particular geological stratum was older or younger than another, and these calculations

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were often hindered by the metamorphoses, folds and thrusts which had taken place in the earth's crust.

Palaeontology, the study of the evolutionary stages of various creatures, was even less able than geology to furnish an absolute time-scale, since the rates of development in different types of plant and animal, as they made their successive appearances and died out, varied greatly. No single development could be taken as a valid unit in relation to the others, and it was therefore impossible to calculate the total period involved. The recently-developed method of pollen-analysis can give useful results for single periods and strata, but again it can determine only relative time-scales.

A way out of these relative time-scales seemed suddenly to be offered by the discovery of radioactivity, and by the assumption that the *radioactive decay of substances* proceeds regularly under unalterable laws, and that on this basis absolute time-scales could be calculated. It was assumed that this physical process, the decay of substance, had continued steadily and without interruption throughout the history of the earth, and from the present rate of this process, time-scales were calculated for the most distant past.

Even though different workers gave different estimates, the jump into astronomical figures arose from the logic of the method used. Radioactive elements such as uranium and thorium change gradually into isotopes of lead through the splitting off of electrons and helium ions from their unstable nuclei. Thus, from the present rate of decay of these elements, and from the proportion of lead isotope to the corresponding radioactive element, a calculation was made of the age of radioactive minerals, of the rocks of which they are part, and thence of the earth's crust. Schindewolf,* in a survey of the various methods of age-determination, emphasises with some reason that many of these calculations are valid only for the so-called igneous rocks in which the radioactive minerals are formed, and cannot be applied in the same way to sedimentary rocks. Here we encounter the important question of the earlier formation of the earth's crust from outside and inside, which I have discussed elsewhere.* From the isotopes in lead-ores, and using the methods described above, Holmes recently estimated the age of the earth as 3,300 million years, though critics objected that these minerals were found in granite formations and could not be taken as indicating the total age of the earth, since these strata were not formed until the development of the earth as a planetary body had proceeded for some time. Voitkevich, using calculations based on the age of meteorites, estimated 5,000 million years as the age of uranium 235. These will serve as examples of modern methods of determining geological time.

*An asterisk in the text means that the work mentioned is included in the list of references at the end.

However, the fundamental point here is whether these methods start from a valid assumption. What we have first to ask is whether this *decay of matter* has gone on from the very beginning, or whether it dates from a later stage of evolution; and whether the process has proceeded steadily, or has passed through phases of varying intensity. Only when this preliminary question has been cleared up can one ask if the current reckonings of the age of the earth are justified. It is possible that quite different figures may emerge.

The decisive issue at this stage, therefore, is whether modern ideas about physical events in matter (i.e. an inorganic point of view) are applicable to the whole of the earth's early development, or whether this development in fact proceeded according to *organic laws*, within which inorganic processes—especially those of radioactive decay—have operated only over a limited field and a limited period. For reasons of space these questions cannot be discussed here, and the reader is referred to more detailed accounts such as are given in Rudolf Steiner's spiritual-scientific works,* and in the writer's *Erde und Mensch*, and *Die Entwicklung der Erde*.¹ In these works the origin, organisation and living processes of the earth-organism are dealt with in greater detail, and it is shown that the Book of Genesis, the present structure of the earth, the kingdoms of nature, and the dynamic and rhythmic processes working within this organic whole, can be understood only in connection with *organic laws*.²

* * *

In this connection it is necessary to understand a characteristic phenomenon of living organisms—alternating phases of *contraction and extension*, of *concentration and expansion*. In the plant kingdom, for example, this is seen in the metamorphoses from seed-stage to leaf-stage; from fruit-rudiment to fruit, and then again to seed-formation. In the description referred to above (*E.E.*), it is shown how cosmic evolution goes through similar stages of *concentration and expansion*. For instance, in the first stage of development, the whole system became differentiated from the outside inwards, in that a centripetal contraction-process brought about a gradual solidification of the separate planetary bodies from out of the spheres of planetary formative forces, followed by further differentiation, within these bodies, down to the smallest units. Thus the phases which involved the development of independent smaller units out of the whole system were first reached at a relatively late stage of cosmology and earth-history, and can be attributed to centripetal forces. These phases, however, gave way at intervals to periods of extension, when forces with predominantly centrifugal tendencies were at work.

¹These titles are subsequently referred to as *E.M.* and *E.E.*

²See also the works cited in the list of references under Poppelbaum, Grömann, Knauer, and Cloos.

As a result of the Doppler effect (a shift of the spectrum lines of spiral nebulae towards the red end), modern theory supposes the entire universe to be expanding rapidly. Kienle* characterised this with the analogy, all too appropriate to-day, of an exploding shell. Nevertheless, other workers have emphasised that this phase of expansion may be a temporary condition, alternating with an opposite process. Umbgrove* writes: "The discovery that the universe is expanding (which de Sitter first suggested in 1917 on theoretical grounds) is one of many possible solutions of a mathematical equation. One solution is that formerly the universe was considerably condensed, and that since then it has continually expanded. Another solution is that the universe is subject to alternate phases of contraction and expansion, a pulsating movement".

A similar alternation of periods of shrinking and expanding is suggested to explain the remarkable changes of light-intensity in the so-called variable stars. Hinks* writes: "The speeds of increase and decrease of intensity do not arise from movement in a circular path, but from a pulsation of the star, a regular expansion and contraction, the extent of which is about a sixth of the star's radius".

In the cosmos there exist countless possibilities and variations of expansion and contraction phases. In 1923 Rudolf Steiner indicated that the phases can be quite short, and that the spaces between the fixed stars have increased during recent centuries, but that a new phase will follow in which the constellations will draw together.

In my book, (*E.E.*), there is described a "pulsating, breathing movement" of contraction and expansion in which the cosmic system as a whole undergoes *phases of systole and diastole*, an organic development.

At this point we must turn again to modern views on fundamental particles. An analogy is often drawn between the structure of the atom (with its electrons circling at relatively long distances from the nucleus) and the structure of the cosmos; and from the decay of the former are drawn conclusions concerning events in the latter. However, if we start from the whole, out of which these fundamental particles have gradually condensed, the opposite question arises. To what extent can the phases of expansion and contraction, the centrifugal and centripetal tendencies in the cosmic field of forces, give us information, first about the working of these forces in the field of fundamental particles; secondly as to whether radioactive decay is a process continuing uniformly throughout evolution, or whether it arose at a particular point in the development of the whole? In this way the model of the smaller unit can be considered in relation to the laws of the model of the larger whole, and not the other way round.

There is, however, a further point to consider—the transition from chaotic substance to amorphous or crystalline solids. (The distinction between these two is seldom made clearly enough). In this connection, Schrödinger* emphasises that

The fundamental distinction is between the two lines of the following scheme of 'equations':

molecule	= solid	= crystal
gas	= liquid	= amorphous

We must explain these statements briefly. The so-called amorphous solids are either not really amorphous or not really solid. In 'amorphous' charcoal fibre the rudimentary structure of the graphite crystal has been disclosed by X-rays. So charcoal is a solid, but also crystalline. Where we find no crystalline structure, we have to regard the thing as a liquid with very high 'viscosity' (internal friction).

In order to find a connection with the smallest vital entities—e.g., genes—Schrödinger proceeds to the thesis that

we wish a molecule to be regarded as a solid = crystal. The reason for this is that the atoms forming a molecule, whether there be few or many of them, are united by forces of exactly the same nature as the numerous atoms which build up a true solid, a crystal. The molecule presents the same solidity of structure as a crystal. (*What is Life?* pp. 59-60).

In addition to this specialised point of view, a general clarification of these concepts is necessary in relation to the history of the earth. What is often described as a transition to a 'solid' state does not necessarily lead to a crystalline structure. The actual mineralisation of the earth is preceded by important stages which involve considerable solidification, and during these the still plastic masses undergo various transformations. In this way, for example, many of the Caledonian and Armorican folds, and indeed the Tertiary and Alpine movements, occurred while the earth's surface was in a very plastic condition; and in these cases the crystalline structure must belong to a later and final stage.

We must now ask how and when, within the several phases of centripetal and centrifugal movement in the whole system, the point of maximum centripetal condensation was reached, and then how it changed—beginning in those parts of the system where it had gone furthest—to a *centrifugal decay process* such as appears in radioactive phenomena.

If the evolution of the earth be considered as a process in which the inorganic gradually separated out from original organic conditions, we have to determine those phases in which the centripetal process brought about a condensation while matter was still at first in a highly viscous condition. In this condition, plastic amorphous masses could undergo far-reaching transformations, such as occurred in the earth's crust during the Caledonian, Armorican and Alpine phases of folding, up-thrusting and mountain building. These centripetal condensing processes reached one peak during the

end-phases of the Palaeozoic and the beginning of the Mesozoic (i.e. in the Permian and Triassic epochs).

In the work mentioned above (*E.E.*) the writer showed that if the history of the earth is considered from an organic standpoint, the separation of the moon from the earth must be assumed to have taken place at a relatively late period, and that the condensation phase in the Permian (which involved, among other things, ice-ages), represents such a first peak of condensation, although the earth did not then reach a crystalline state. The withdrawal of the moon, (which up to that time had promoted the solidification tendencies in the whole mass) inaugurated a phase in which centrifugal, expanding, loosening forces could become dominant. This is illustrated by various phenomena of the period, such as the clearing of the atmosphere, the appearance of new plants, and the development of giant animal forms, all of which went on during the Jurassic and Cretaceous. Further it was shown (*E.E.*) how this phase of renewed plasticity persisted until about the end of the Tertiary and the beginning of the Quaternary, and then gave way to a period of *maximal contraction*, solidification and mineralisation, leading to the present condition of the earth's structure.

During this phase the elements were first resolved out of their previous organic combination. At the same time, certain portions of matter exceeded the maximum of this centripetal process, and there began that phase of decay which is found in radioactive processes. The general expansion of the universe which is inferred from the Doppler effect, and also the expansive, centrifugal processes of radioactivity in the smallest units of matter, began only with the Quaternary. If an attempt is made to determine a time-scale on the basis of this picture of cosmic and earth evolution, calculations drawn from the decay of radioactive substances can apply only as far back as the early stages of the Quaternary. Even so, it remains an open question whether the process was steady and continuous during this period. Its intensity could have varied without affecting the final result. The conclusions drawn, for example, from discolorations in the immediate surroundings of radioactive deposits are not the last word, if considered in conjunction with organic points of view. For instance, a fruit which has ripened fast and early may be similar in final form and size to one which has ripened late and slowly, although the speeds of the two processes were different. To start from processes of old age, and argue back to processes of youth, may easily lead to mistaken conclusions, where higher organic processes are concerned.

* * *

Finally, there remains the question whether, during the early stages of evolution, the isotopes attributed to radioactivity could have arisen in any other way—perhaps as a result of direct cosmic factors. In any case, absolute time-scales cannot be derived from the present laws of radioactive processes, in the way often assumed to-day.

There is, however, a cosmic time-factor which can be of help in determining time-scales. This is the platonic year and its phases, marked by the movement of the point of sunrise at the spring equinox through the signs of the zodiac in a cycle of 25,920 years. If this cycle is divided into twelve (a division which is not schematic, but arises directly from the signs of the Zodiac), one finds that, as is shown elsewhere (*E.E.*, tables III and XI), the decisive periods in the Quaternary, discussed above, correspond to the movement of the equinoctial point through the signs of Libra and Virgo; that is, in terms of time, to a period lying between 15,000 B.C. (entry into Libra) and 13,800 B.C. (entry into Virgo). During this period the radioactive decay which is observable today, first began.

In a lecture given on 5th October, 1905, Rudolf Steiner said: "In earlier times atoms were progressively hardening; now, however, they are coming more and more apart.. Previously there was no radioactivity. It has existed only for a few thousand years, because atoms are now splitting up increasingly."

In using the term "atom" on that occasion, Rudolf Steiner certainly did not want to confine himself to the present conceptions of atomic structure. The essential point is the short period of time since the beginning of radioactivity. It was shown above that an absolute time-scale can be calculated only in connection with this relatively short phase of centrifugal processes. In considering the "age of the earth" on the basis of radioactive decay, the period available comprises some 14-15,000 years before the beginning of historical time. From this standpoint, the figures for the total evolution which have been theoretically calculated in millions and billions, bear no relation to reality.

In connection with the point of maximum condensation and the subsequent decay-processes, it is necessary to emphasise further a circumstance which the writer has already described—that the phase in which the equinoctial point passed through the sign of Virgo corresponded to a phase in the earth's passage through the ecliptic wherein its axis (or rather the northern tropic) turned towards the sign of Sagittarius. As described in detail elsewhere (*E.E.* pp.132f) many phenomena indicate that specific forces reach the earth from the cosmic field of Sagittarius, (the conjectured centre of the galaxy, where is found the greatest assemblage of interstellar gas and dust-clouds, nebulae, and meteor-swarms etc.) This has recently been confirmed by observations with radio instruments. In the above-mentioned work (*E.E.*), the coming of the Quaternary ice age was associated with the phase in which the earth became orientated towards the sign of Sagittarius. At this point began the subsequent periods during which decay processes appeared in particular substances in the earth (i.e. in those which had passed the point of maximum centripetal condensation), and which expressed themselves in that form of centrifugal dissolution which

is found in radioactivity. Radioactive decay, therefore, must be considered as a process which has developed since the beginning of the Quaternary, and is governed both by cosmic impulses and by the stage of development of specific substances in the earth.

* * *

A further point to bear in mind is that for the earliest stages of the evolution of the earth, the "year" cannot be taken to signify a constant unit of time. The movement of the earth around the ecliptic, which is the basis of this unit, must have been quite different both in shape and in time during the period, for example, when the moon was still united with the earth. From this point of view, also, the theoretically calculated figures of millions and billions of years fail to give a true picture of the evolutionary process.

In the same way, obviously, the platonic year has not always had the same validity as a unit of time. Before the earth had developed its present form, the movement of the point of sunrise at the spring equinox was naturally different. The platonic unit of time can be applied only as far back as the transition from the 'Lemurian' to the 'Atlantean' age,—that is, from the Mesozoic to the Tertiary. Before that, the single evolutionary steps required several platonic years, and in the earliest stages they had a very different character and relation to time. In order not to over-simplify our calculations, which would mean losing touch with actual events, it is necessary, and more in tune with reality, to transform both our ideas and our measurement of time, if we are to form a picture of the early stages of the earth's evolution.

If we attempt a more exact approach, we find that the ostensibly 'absolute' time-scales which appear to be indicated by the inorganic process of radioactivity are of no use to us; and that the knowledge gathered up to the turn of this century, which made possible the determination of relative time-scales from the results of geological and biological research, has still to be improved upon. However, we can considerably advance our knowledge by applying consistently an organic point of view. The phenomena themselves show that the laws of the whole cannot be derived from the smallest entities, or from dead, inorganic processes. Rather is it necessary to consider *higher* systems of organisation, such as determine the development, rhythms, dynamics and different phases of the whole, both in its totality and in its several parts, right down to those which have sunk into the inorganic.

Schindewolf*, after surveying the usual physical and biological ideas, comes to the following conclusion: "There remains the question as to the nature of the impulse, the factor 'x', or perhaps even a factor-complex, 'x, y, z', which steers and controls evolutionary, and perhaps also historical, events." Similarly, we need above all to determine the unknown 'factor', or 'biotropic factor', which has so often been

sought in dynamic and rhythmic processes, and in living nature. In my book, *E. M.*, it was shown how this question may be answered if one takes into account those higher organisations of formative forces which work in the spheres of earth and cosmos, as well as in plant, animal and man, and which form a consistent basis for an organic consideration of the genesis of the cosmos and of the history of the earth.

* * *

On this basis, also, it is possible to consider the future. The picture which arises is not one of dying, decaying processes in cosmos and earth, or of a dead-end of maximum entropy, but rather of upbuilding processes, of directional organic metamorphoses which bring the entire organisation of the system on to new and higher levels of development. Here and there it is already being shown theoretically that we are fully justified in tracing the working of spiritual, soul and life forces right down to the fundamental particles. Thus Whitehead* writes: "Science is taking on a new aspect which is neither purely physical, nor purely biological. It is becoming the study of organisms. Biology is the study of the larger organisms; whereas physics is the study of the smaller organisms.... The concrete enduring entities are organisms, so that the plan of the *whole* influences the very characters of the various subordinate organisms which enter into it. In the case of an animal, the mental states enter into the plan of the total organism, and thus modify the plans of the successive subordinate organisms until the ultimate smallest organisms, such as electrons, are reached. Thus an electron within a living body is different from an electron outside it, by reason of the plan of the body. The electrons blindly runs either within or without the body; but it runs within the body in accordance with its character within the body; that is to say, in accordance with the general plan of the body, and this plan includes the mental state."

What is here said of the animal, that the smallest particles conform to the total pattern of organisation, in which functions of spirit and soul ("mental states") play their part, applies even more to man. Rudolf Steiner often described how within the human organism, whose level of organisation transcends the material processes, there occurs a transformation of substance which will increase in scale, and also in its importance for larger wholes. And even if it is assumed that specific substances and parts of our world system (i.e., those which were subjected to the maximum of centripetal, condensation forces, and are now undergoing an extreme centrifugal process of decay) fall away from the further organic evolution of the whole and undergo a sort of death, or dissolution, process—nevertheless, this cannot by itself determine the development of the whole on a higher level of organisation, where processes of growth and new creative impulses are continually to be seen at work.

Particular laws of nature thus have their beginning, their period of validity, and their end. From time to time the evolution of the whole reaches stages when it undergoes periods of higher, spiritual development and receives new principles. Hence, in investigating the 'age of the earth', we must not take into account only processes of death and decay. They certainly occur, but they are not the sole determinant of evolution and phases of time. Processes of new growth, rejuvenating processes, are also apparent; and in them we can discern how, through countless phases and conditions of form, life and consciousness, a continual rebirth, a development to a higher stage, a living metamorphosis and ascent, are active in the organism of the earth, and in the higher organism of the cosmos.

Translated by John Davy

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THE ORIGIN OF THE GOSPELS

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FOR at least a century, very many who have read the Gospels have done so with deep and complicated uncertainties in their minds. Can we believe these accounts of Christ Jesus, as we have them? Do our translations give an accurate rendering of the originals? And must not the texts on which they are based bear the marks of many alterations and errors during the first centuries? Above all, how faithful to the facts were the Evangelists themselves?

Immense labour has been given to the study of the existing early texts and fragments of texts. For the Gospels, the most valued authorities remain the Sinaitic and Vatican codices, which are ascribed to the fourth century. Considerable parts of the Gospels have also been found on papyri written early in the third century. But thousands of Greek versions, as well as early Latin, Syriac, and Coptic translations, together with quotations from the Gospels found in the writings of early Fathers of the Church, have been studied and their variations compared. The general result of this study has been to show that all four Gospels must have existed, in texts resembling very closely those we have, quite early in the second century. Sir Frederic Kenyon can say (referring to the New Testament): "The last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed."

This does not mean that there are not still significant uncertainties in detail. The greatest of these concerns the ending of St. Mark's Gospel, where it is generally agreed that we have the original Gospel only up to XVI, 8, ending "and they were afraid . . ."; that something unknown happened at this point causing our text to break off; and that alternative endings were added later, though these were already known in the second century. It is also held on textual grounds that the account of the woman taken in adultery, though part of genuine tradition, does not belong where it stands in St. John VIII. Both these passages were already regarded as uncertain by the early Fathers. Otherwise, the variations to be found are many, and are sometimes interesting and illuminating, but in general they alter the sense, even in detail, very little.

We have, therefore, something extremely close to the original Greek texts. There is no room for the extensive re-editing that has often been conjectured. But the question about the reliability of the Evangelists themselves leads into a realm about which there is very much less external evidence. Until fairly recently, it was almost taken for granted, by many learned critics, that much distortion and invention *must* have occurred between the time of Christ's life and the time when the Gospels were written. We often meet the procedure

(found continually in Dr. Barnes' book, "The Rise of Christianity") that the critic takes as fundamental the kind of Christ Jesus in whom he can believe, and of whom he can approve, and then cuts away from the Gospels as unhistorical everything that does not fit in with this picture. Such criticism has had, and continues to have, wide influence, particularly upon teachers.

During the last twenty-five years or so — a landmark is "The Riddle of the New Testament" by Sir Edwyn Hoskyns and F. N. Davey, published in 1931 — there has been a strong reaction against this method. It has been pointed out that we have the right to describe a "Christianity before the Gospels" only if we can find evidence for its actual existence. And the more exactly the documents of the New Testament have been studied, the more closely knit they have proved to be. "It is now more commonly recognized . . . that it is impossible to drive a wedge between Jesus' own life and teaching and the subsequent interpretation of him by the Church" — thus Professor A. M. Ramsey sums up one of the conclusions reached in this way. We cannot separate out, as was often thought, a Christianity without the Resurrection, without a unique relationship of Christ to the Father, without the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, without healing miracles. All these are so intimately woven into the fabric of any original Christian teaching of which we have evidence, into the discourses of Jesus, and into what we know of apostolic proclamation of the Word, that what is left, if these are removed, can only be the arbitrary product of modern prejudices, a thing without life.

In bold antithesis to this whole school of nineteenth-century criticism, and with the confidence that he has the most careful and open-minded research behind him, Dr. E. V. Rieu can say today (in the introduction to his Penguin translation of the Four Gospels): "Just as Jesus lived in the oral tradition that preceded the Gospels, so he inspired and unified the writings that eventually summed it up. One might almost say that Jesus wrote the Gospels".

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All four Gospels were written, it is now widely agreed, between about 60 and 110 A.D., in circles where there were many who had been in close contact with direct disciples of Jesus, and who preserved abundant detailed traditions about Him. They were written in an atmosphere intensely sensitive about the exactness of any account of events which were seen as the most significant that had ever happened, or could ever happen. For the early Christians, however, it was impossible to separate exactness in description from understanding of the meaning of the events; they regarded the Evangelists as accurate *because* they understood.

Here we come to the fundamental difficulty of modern criticism, and indeed of modern *reading*, of the Gospels. It has long been held, and is regarded as certain today, that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written considerably before that of John. Thus if,

as the evidence of papyrus fragments suggests, St. John's Gospel cannot have been written later than about 90-100 A.D., the others must be not far from the decade 60-70. Now until recent years the first three Evangelists were generally regarded as simple narrators, who put together the traditions and documents available to them rather uncritically, and who altered, if they did alter, for comparatively obvious reasons; in order, for example, not to offend or puzzle Gentile readers, and not to record anything that might seem to diminish the glory of their Master. St. Paul and St. John were seen as theologians, the Synoptists as chroniclers. But it is evident now that even Mark, who seemed to offer the plainest, most primitive account, gave his Gospel an extremely subtle and complex structure, the reasons for which are by no means immediately accessible to us. *Each* Evangelist is an artist-theologian; and we stand as modern men before writers with a profoundly different consciousness from ours, whose every word is shaped by this consciousness.

They have, for example, an ancient wisdom about *number*. In St. John's Gospel it is manifest that the whole is composed in sequences of seven, and that each number mentioned has its significance. St. Mark's Gospel, too, is built up in rhythms of three and twelve. But we shall not understand such numbers simply by recalling what they meant to Pythagoras, or in Chaldaea; for to the Evangelists all ancient wisdom has been radically transformed by the coming of the Christ.

Thus, though the Evangelists wrote indeed in the Greek of the market-place, a language that had become cosmopolitan and trivial, the knowledge that has been accumulated in recent years about the contemporary use of this language is only of limited service in the understanding of the Gospels. We are told what words meant *outside* the Christian stream. But just as the Christians felt themselves reborn through Baptism, citizens of a new world, strangers to the old world about them; in the same way each word, each thing of Nature taken for use as parable, was baptised too, plunged into a new wisdom.

St. Mark describes, as a crucial experience of the most intimate disciples, the event called the Transfiguration. The beginning of this passage is rendered by Dr. E. V. Rieu:

"Six days later Jesus selected Peter, James, and John, and took them up, privately and alone, to the top of a high mountain. There he was transformed before them and his clothes began to glisten with whiteness such as no fuller on earth could achieve. And now Elijah appeared to them, with Moses — they were talking with Jesus. Whereupon Peter said to Jesus: 'Rabbi, it is a good thing that we are here. Let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah'. He did not know what to do or say, for they were overcome with awe. Then came a cloud which enveloped them, and a voice came out of the cloud: 'This is My Son, the Beloved One. Listen to him'.

"The next moment, looking round, they saw no one with them but Jesus".

If we take such a passage seriously, it is full of mysteries. Certain disciples are chosen, in order that they may be led further into the understanding of Christ. On "a high mountain" they pass through an experience, in which it appears that three different levels of consciousness are involved; the everyday level, one in which they see as companions of Jesus men not physically on earth, and one in which they hear the voice of God. The disciples have great difficulty in finding a right relationship to the experience of these different levels; and what Peter says is connected with this difficulty. How can a translation suggest all the implications of the little word *skene*, here rendered "shelter"? It is a tent built of branches — but it is also the tabernacle of God, and the human body as dwelling-place of the spirit; and such implications are not arbitrary additions — they are essential parts of the New Testament use of the word. St. Peter, we might say, is struggling with the problem of how a spiritual experience can be incarnated, brought rightly to earth.

It is the artists, in particular such men as Fra Angelico and Raphael, who have been able to do justice to this scene, rather than the theologians. Raphael, especially, including in his picture the boy suffering from convulsions, has emphasised the contrast between the earthly world, with its chaos and sickness in the foreground, and the exalted world of vision upon the mountain, from which healing must be brought.

In order to approach the Gospels with understanding today, we need therefore some guide to the different levels of consciousness from which the events they describe are drawn. It is to this result that the movement in modern historical study, which tries not to criticise the Gospels away through materialistic prejudice, but to enter into their real mood and meaning as a whole, must lead if it is consistently developed. And the healthiest, most comprehensive account of the transformation of human consciousness, in order that it may become directly aware of spiritual realities, has been given in our time by Rudolf Steiner.

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Again and again, from different points of view, Rudolf Steiner describes how our capacity for thinking can be so strengthened and intensified that it becomes a living in pictures, which is as much more wakeful than our daily existence as this is more wakeful than our dreams. Through such active picturing we share in forces that are really at work in the world, forming all that lives. But beyond this faculty of spiritual Imagination, as Rudolf Steiner calls it, we need a power that can be compared with *hearing*, as the first with *seeing*: true Inspiration, which enters into a prepared consciousness that is able to empty itself of the Imaginations already achieved. Through Inspiration, a much more intimate relationship with the beings of the spiritual world is attained than by Imagination alone — a sharing of

their inward purpose and intention. Through real Intuition, the third level of developed consciousness, the soul becomes capable of uniting and identifying itself at times with the very essence of another being.

In the account of the Transfiguration, we can see that the chosen disciples are momentarily lifted from the Imaginative consciousness, with which they beheld Moses and Elijah beside Jesus, into Inspiration, and then return to the level of physical sight.

Similarly, if we go from the first three Gospels to the Fourth, we find reflected, in the whole difference of style and treatment, the distinction between a consciousness predominantly Imaginative and one that is completely at home in Inspiration. The parables met constantly in the first three Gospels are Imaginative pictures; in the Fourth they disappear almost completely, and we are listening for the most part to Christ speaking directly about his own Being. This is the real contrast between John and the Synoptists, a contrast which has been such an endless puzzle to critics. (How St. Luke himself indicates this, is made clear by Rudolf Steiner in the first lecture of his book, "The Gospel of St. Luke", which has been published in English). We have here a fundamental, far-reaching clue to the origin of the Gospels.

By the developed consciousness, many of the limitations which beset everyday knowledge are overcome. William Blake, for example, or Jacob Boehme, and many others, could claim that figures and events of the remote past lay open to their perception. We need not here examine how far in these cases the perception was exact — only that it was regarded as possible. Rudolf Steiner spoke of a kind of reading in the World-memory, the "Akashic Record," accessible to Imagination and Inspiration. The New Testament points to this possibility in its own way. The early Christians, to whom it had been promised that the Holy Spirit would bring all the deeds of Christ to mind in them, did not feel this promise limited to events at which they had been physically present as individuals, and which they might have forgotten through the normal weakness of human memory. Just as St. Paul says that his knowledge of what happened at the Last Supper is the result of a direct revelation to him, so a number of intimate disciples felt that they were able to look back and *see* events in the life of Christ at which no other human being was physically present, for example the Temptation and Gethsemane.

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In what form did the traditions exist, which were already present among the Christian congregations before the Gospels were written? A great deal of study has been given to this question, particularly by that German school of critics which has taken "Formgeschichte" as its leading principle. But it is by no means only a literary or learned question; it leads us toward the heart of early Christian experience. We can put it now in a different way: for what purposes would the Apostles wish to express their memory-visions of the life of Christ, this holiest realm of their soul, in fixed forms of words? The *written*

word was felt as something of a profanation, in comparison with the living spoken word. The earliest Christian documents, the Epistles, very rarely indeed refer to any particular incident in the life of Christ, or quote any of his Sayings. But the same applies to the examples of preaching given in the Acts, which should give a correct impression in this respect ; they deal with the fundamental fact of Christ's coming, giving no details, and with the practical consequences for the hearers. A good example is the Epistle of St. James, which has very much the character of a sermon. Where, then, would the believer hear something directly about Christ's words and deeds ?

In a lecture given at The Hague on April 13th, 1922, Rudolf Steiner spoke of the teaching given by the Risen Christ to the disciples. Very little has reached us, either through the Gospels or through other traditions, about this. Rudolf Steiner describes as a central element in this teaching the instruction given by the Christ about the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, through the four stages which are still recognisable in the Mass : the reading of the Gospel, the Offering, the Transsubstantiation, and the Communion. The disciples were shown how these four stages lead to the realization of man's eternal being. In the Communion, the spiritual forces which master the material, and usually remain deeply unconscious in man, are led into consciousness. And since the Resurrection man can learn here how he shares in Christ's conquest of death.

The description given by Rudolf Steiner of the place of the Eucharist in the teaching of the Risen Christ is derived from the reading of the Akashic Record, and not from tradition. But Lic. Emil Bock has pointed out the relevance of what we are told about James, the Brother of the Lord.

This James must be distinguished both from the Son of Zebedee, and from the Son of Alphaeus mentioned in lists of the Twelve. James, the "brother of Jesus", had at first during the Three Years a detached and critical attitude. And yet Paul speaks of a particular appearance of the Risen Christ to him, and of his decisive leadership in the Church at Jerusalem. St. Jerome quotes from a lost Gospel of the Hebrews a passage describing how after the Crucifixion James fasts until the Christ comes to him :

" 'Bring ye', saith the Lord, 'a table and bread' ; and immediately it is added : He took bread and blessed and brake and gave it unto James the Just and said unto him : 'My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep'."

From his special experience of the mystery of the Altar after the Resurrection, we may understand James's position of leadership.

Now one consequence of this whole picture of the place of the Sacrament at the very beginning of the life of the Christian Church is this : there must have been words about the Christ's life, spoken during the first stage of the Eucharist, where later a passage from one of the Gospels was read, long before the Gospels we know were written.

There must have been passages describing deeds and sayings of Christ proclaimed in this holiest place, as preparation for Offering, Transsubstantiation, and Communion, before there was a Mark, a Matthew, a Luke, or a John Gospel from which such passages could be taken. It would be here that believers could gradually form a detailed picture of the Life otherwise described so sparingly ; here that they could listen to words spoken by Apostles, or the pupils of Apostles, as Christ's own words living in them, and cleansing as they are spoken all human speech.

From this we may begin to understand much better both the likeness and the unlikeness of the Gospels to each other. No-one could easily alter words that had already grown dear and familiar in this way, over a period of something like thirty years. And yet each Evangelist had also before him his own living, developing vision of the events of Christ's life, towards which he felt himself responsible. In the light of his Imaginative and Inspired experience he must shape the words that had already become traditional and make them into a continuous and harmonious whole, which could serve the needs of the future, sustaining the Church through approaching dangers. In uttermost tension of soul this task must have been fulfilled.

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The origin of the first three Gospels must be connected — whether as comfort given before, or soon after the blows fell — with a series of great losses to the Church. St. James "the Just" was martyred at Jerusalem about A.D. 62 ; St. Peter and St. Paul at Rome in 64 or 65 ; Jerusalem was destroyed in 70. It seems likely, too, that the death of the Mother of Jesus, for which no date is known, fell about this time, or a little earlier. Tradition suggests that the Twelve were already widely scattered through the world, that she had lived for some time with John at Ephesus, and then returned to Jerusalem. She would have been about 87, if she had lived until A.D. 70. The passing of each of these great witnesses, and of the city that was itself a witness and participant, made consecutive written Gospels more necessary.

There seems no strong reason for questioning that St. Mark, the secretary-interpreter of St. Peter, and St. Luke, the physician who sometimes accompanied St. Paul, were the authors of the Gospels attributed to them, and that St. Luke also wrote the Acts. St. Mark is said to have gone after St. Peter's death to Alexandria, and to have been martyred there ; and Rudolf Steiner said that the impression of decadent and materialistic culture, which Mark received in Egypt, helped him to give his Gospel the right, decisive colouring. It is the Gospel which describes Christ in his infinitely courageous power of Will.

A detailed study of St. Mark's Gospel has appeared recently (1952), which confirms the intimate relationship of the Gospels to the Eucharist. It is "The Primitive Christian Calendar", by Dr. P.

Carrington, Archbishop of Quebec. Dr. Carrington suggests that the whole Gospel consists of short passages arranged for each Sunday of the year, with a longer continuous narrative for the time of the Passion. This suggestion is supported by divisions in the text indicated in the Codex Vaticanus (quite distinct from our chapter divisions, which are mediaeval), by ancient lectionaries, and by the relationship of the readings to the Jewish ritual year, at a time when the Christian festivals were only beginning to take shape, and it had to be proved that the Christians held the answer to all the longings which the Jewish festivals expressed. Thus Mark may have had as basis the "Gospel readings", or rather proclamations, used in the course of the year by Peter himself.

St. Luke was under the powerful influence of St. Paul, though the effects of this influence do not lie on the surface. In the gentleness of the Third Gospel, we meet a soul not connected to any one nation either through special loyalty, or special opposition to it. Luke is concerned with the healing power of Christ that is needed by all humanity. It is often thought that he must have sought out the Mother of Jesus; during the Renaissance he was sometimes represented as painting her portrait. His Gospel will have been a deep comfort to those stricken by her death.

The authorship and origin of "St. Matthew" are beset with riddles. The earliest tradition speaks of him writing in Hebrew; the Gospel we have, like the rest, seems clearly to have been composed in Greek. It is argued that it depends on Mark, as the work of an eye-witness, one of the Twelve, would not do.

If Matthew's dependence is not really on Mark, but on formulations having Peter's authority, the case is altered; for Peter, as we have seen, was a member of the inner group chosen out by Christ from among the Twelve. Further, the decisive concern of the Evangelists was not with what had once been seen with physical eyes, but with what can always be seen, looking back, with spiritual vision. "Matthew" would be less occupied with his own physical experience than with the greatest wisdom to which he could find access. His Gospel is like an answer to the question, "How did the whole Hebrew tradition find both its fulfilment, and the uttermost refutation of its errors, through Christ Jesus?"

It is in this Gospel that we find most often that events are said to have fulfilled what was written by the prophets — even that they happened *in order* to fulfil sayings, which to the modern reader appear to have meant in their original context something entirely different. "Out of Egypt have I called my Son," for example, seems to refer quite plainly and simply to the original Exodus under the leadership of Moses; what need to apply it to the boyhood of Jesus? And the further objection can be raised that this view of prophecy renders free human action meaningless.

And yet this Gospel, which is so deeply conscious of the Law, alone records completely the Sermon on the Mount, in which a standard of human action is given that cannot conceivably be achieved by obedience to any external admonition, but only by free self-education.

The key to this difficulty can be found in the story, given by Matthew alone, of the Magi from the East who come seeking the Child Jesus. They have seen it written in the starry script that this child is to be born. The prophets on earth are only secondary; the original writing, which these reflect, is in the stars. There the heavenly archetypes, which can be fulfilled in manifold ways by men, are to be read; and the greatest freedom may be the achievement of deeds by which the starry ideals are realised on earth. This very saying, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son," describes the emergence of the free spirit from a world of external rules and conventions, which has to be accomplished over and over again. Of this, both the original Exodus — for the Mosaic Law is by no means simply external, but intimately connected with the development of individual consciousness and responsibility — and the return of Jesus from Egypt are examples.

The writing of the Gospels themselves was seen in very early times as itself a free fulfilment of what is written in the stars. For the four Gospels were associated with pictures of the four cardinal points of the Zodiac; Mark with the Lion (Leo), Luke with the Bull (Taurus), Matthew with the Man (Aquarius), and John with the Eagle (Scorpio). Naturally, this allocation has seemed very arbitrary and artificial to most modern critics. What has the gentle Luke of a bull?

No interpretation can exhaust the meaning of such pictures, on which the imagination of men has dwelt through centuries. But certain ways of approach may perhaps be suggested.

Through the coming of Christ, the natural forces in man, which work both in his body and in his soul, can pass through a metamorphosis. The stormy powers of his will can be transformed, and become, first, patient acceptance of suffering, and finally the ability to heal. About the time of Christ, many saw the image of this process in the bull sacrificed by Mithras. And St. Luke describes the greatest imaginable example of the natural will-powers sacrificed and transformed.

The natural Lion quality in man shows itself in the alternation of blind courage and panic fear, in all the restless ups and downs of the heart; transformed, it changes into the purposeful service of the great rhythms of the world. St. Mark has been thought clumsy and repetitive, when he says "Evening came, and when the sun had set . . ." But he is concerned to emphasize the mysterious relationship of the Christ to the rhythms of the sun. It is Mark alone who says of Easter morning: "they reached the tomb as the sun rose". From the heart that receives Christ's Sun-power, a new kind of will can spring.

St. Matthew, the Man-Gospel, describes the completest harmony of thinking, feeling, and willing; the condition of freedom. This theme extends from the three gifts of the Magi, at the beginning, to the institution of the sacrament of baptism in the Name of the Trinity by the Risen Christ at the end.

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When Matthew, Mark, and Luke composed their Gospels, we can be almost certain that the Gospel of the Eagle was not yet written. But they may well have known that it would come, since John was alive: that he would one day see that his unique understanding of the words and deeds of Jesus was committed to writing. Can we suppose that the first three Evangelists did not in some sense *consult* John about what could and could not be written by them? Such consultation would not necessarily mean a physical visit, though there would be no particular improbability about this under the circumstances of the time. If St. Luke sought out Mary, he might well have found John as well.

But when the Fourth Gospel was written, something of the effect of the earlier Gospels, at least within the particular Churches and regions in which they originated, could be assessed. Just as the earlier Gospels attempt to correct by the context possible misunderstandings of particular stories — as when Luke lets the story of the Good Samaritan be followed by the incident of Martha and Mary, so that it should not be thought that external helpfulness is enough — so St. John silently corrects and completes the earlier Gospels.

It has long been a crux in the appraisal of the Fourth Gospel that it alone records the raising of Lazarus. If such an outstanding event happened, at a time, not long before the Passion, when there are otherwise very few miracles recorded — why are the other Gospels silent? There is no difficulty about this if we accept Rudolf Steiner's statement — of which abundant confirmation can be found in the Gospel, once we have the key — that Lazarus is really John himself as he passes through an initiation where Christ is the Hierophant. The Fourth Gospel here describes its own source: an event which had to be kept silent until John himself determined the time and manner for it to be made known. Through the detaching of the life forces from their normal adherence to the physical body, when Lazarus is laid into the grave, he can be endowed with the fulness of the power of Inspiration.

The Eagle Gospel has on the one hand the great cosmic width and sweep that we find particularly in the Prologue and in the seventeenth chapter, the High-Priestly Prayer; we hear the language of Eternity. It has also the most intimate and individual personal conversations. Nowhere else do we find extended dialogues between Christ and individual men and women: Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria, the man born blind, Mary Magdalene, Peter. In the rare cases in the other Gospels where Christ is speaking to an individual rather than

to a group, the other seems little more than the occasion for Christ to say what could be said to everyone. But in John we find encounters with strongly marked, distinctive characters: the meeting of the great "I am" of the Christ with the fully conscious — and therefore profoundly lonely and anxious — "I am" of man. In these conversations the personal needs and problems of the speaker lead to the moment when he can be called to *do* something relevant to the whole world-situation. The Samaritan woman fetches her friends to see the one who could read her life and has made himself known to her as the Messiah. The man born blind can put up brave argument in the synagogue. Mary Magdalene goes to the disciples and bears a message from the Risen Christ. Release in action is given in each case — to the weary, or frustrated, or sorrowful self.

Through St. John, the language of the New Testament comes to full maturity; through a man himself the greatest example of maturity in old age, where the essential has been refined from the inessential in the fire of meditative memory. Only from this vantage-point can he describe in such a way his own past actions and relationships. How could any man call *himself* "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? Only one who through reflection over a very long period, seeing himself from outside in the vision of the past that is inscribed in the world-memory, had come to know that this description was justified and necessary. The word here used does not mean "hold in particular affection" (as does the word used by Peter in his answer to the Christ's "Lovest thou me?"), but is the great word of selfless, creative love: *agapo*. John sees himself as one on whom the Christ's redeeming love worked for a particular purpose — the purpose that comes to fruition when he writes the Gospel.

In general, John does not include anything that has already been described in the other Gospels. There is for example no Temptation in the wilderness, no Sermon on the Mount, no casting out of devils, no Transfiguration, no Agony in the garden of Gethsemane. But two omissions seem nevertheless particularly puzzling at first sight. There is no discourse by the Christ about the future of the world, to a small group of disciples on the Mount of Olives, looking across to the Temple, as in the first three Gospels. And there is no Institution of the Holy Sacrament at the Last Supper.

John appears to have been one of the three or four disciples who were present when the Christ spoke of the future, and called them to look with understanding at the Temple of which no stone would be left upon another. This discourse, with its terrible warnings about the future of men and nations, had lived on in John's soul through decades, through the time when the physical Jerusalem was destroyed, and the persecution foretold by Christ had begun on a great scale. And then during his own imprisonment the Christ had come to him once more in cosmic splendour, and led him to look through ages of time to come towards the new, heavenly Jerusalem. Thus for John the whole Apocalypse had taken the place of the prophetic discourse.

From early times, the difference in style between the Revelation of St. John and the Fourth Gospel has been a puzzle. Dionysius of Alexandria, a pupil of Origen, writing about 250 A.D., was prepared to say that they could not have been written by the same man ; and most modern critics agree with him, speaking of the innumerable solecisms in the Apocalypse, and complete difference of vocabulary.

But does this take sufficiently into account that, with John, style was something far more conscious, and penetrated with spiritual purpose, than with other men ? He was prepared to flout the ordinary rules of grammar if he could get nearer in this way to his Inspiration. It has been shown that what appear to be mistakes are often examples of intensely Hebraistic idiom. May not the differences in style between the Apocalypse and the Gospel have been shaped to some extent by the differences in spiritual activity involved — in looking forward, on the one hand, at coming ages, where the unfamiliar pictures could be brought nearer to those who received them only by being clothed as far as possible in the language of the Old Testament prophets ; and on the other hand in looking back at events in the recent past, events felt as eternally present ? Just *because* the world-storms of the Apocalypse had been described in a style that fitted them, might not John have grown better able, years later, to describe the heavenly tranquillity of the Last Supper ?

In the Gospel, five chapters are given to the Last Supper : and in these everything, from the Washing of the Feet to the High-Priestly Prayer, is unique to John. And yet it is puzzling that there is nothing about the event which the other Gospels record as the heart of the Last Supper, the blessing and sharing of Bread and Wine as Body and Blood of Christ.

When he wrote the Gospel, St. John bore in mind the development of the Church through some sixty or seventy eventful, decisive years ; and he saw in vision the dangers and the achievements of Christendom in ages to come. The form and process of the Sacrament had been part of the teaching of the Risen Christ. But, as has been said, this teaching could only to a very limited extent be conveyed in the Gospels. It is one of the paradoxes in the structure of the Gospels that they are continually leading towards the Resurrection ; it is implied in everything, everything prepares for it ; and yet when Easter comes, they can say very little. The Fourth Gospel itself, having long spoken in terms of Inspiration or even Intuition, of indwelling love, putting aside all parable — retreats, as it were, in the last chapter into the language of Imagination, with the miraculous draught of fishes by the lake of Galilee.

In that the teaching of the Christ about the Sacrament after Easter could not be directly recorded at that time, there was the danger, which later had far-reaching effects, that the Sacrament would be connected *only* with the Last Supper, and seen simply as a memorial of it ; and not as an expression, and effective continuance, of the whole Deed of Christ. It is this misunderstanding that St. John

sets himself to correct. The mysteries of Bread and Wine are interwoven, more explicitly than by the other Evangelists, with the whole Gospel. The first of the seven Signs is the Marriage of Cana in Galilee, where water is made wine. The central, fourth Sign is the feeding of the Five Thousand, the only miracle described by all four Gospels : the giving of bread and fishes. And immediately after the fifth Sign, Christ's walking on the sea, we are led into the realm of Inspiration, where the Christ describes his own being in seven Sayings, of which the first is : "I am the Bread of Life". In connexion with this Saying that discourse develops, which strains to the uttermost the understanding even of the disciples : "If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no Life in you". The last of the seven Sayings, like the first Sign, is concerned with the mystery of the blood : "I am the true Vine, and my Father is the husbandman".

Thus intricately is the whole composition of the Gospel concerned with the Christ's giving of Himself through the substances of earth. And the composition shows, too, that there is a long and perilous journey of the soul between the unconscious receiving described at Cana and the understanding to which the disciples are to awake ; in which they are to feel themselves as branches of the Vine. Their task as servants of the Word must not be separated from the transmission of Life.

The thought of the modern world has tended everywhere to divide and analyse, and it has given the same treatment to the Gospels. But the Life that is in them triumphs continually over dismemberment, revealing its unity, and its true home in sacramental experience, among developing communities of Christians. Rudolf Steiner did not only make, as servant of this Life, a far-reaching contribution to the understanding of the Gospels. By making possible a renewal of spiritually illumined Sacraments, through his help to the founders of the movement that has dared to take in particular the name, Christian Community, he restored the stream in which our profaned modern languages need to be baptised, if they are to become right bearers of the eternal, living Gospel.

MICHAEL, ST. GEORGE AND THE HOLY SOPHIA—II

Isabel Wyatt

The first part of this study, which appeared in last year's Golden Blade, unfolded the story of St. George from his martyrdom during the Diocletian persecution, as recorded in fourth century Coptic manuscripts, to his adoption by Constantine as Champion of Christendom, and so to his fighting in the service of Michael's sun-forces against Mahomet's moon-forces from the eighth century to the fourteenth—in Spain against the Moors, in Russia against the Mongol-Tartars, and against the Saracens in the Crusades.

FROM the Crusades onwards, St. George begins to grow into the spiritual leadership of England. Perhaps more than any other nation she needed those forces of St. George which could defend her true being from the forces of Mahomet. For England was to suffer in a quite special way a resuscitated reverberation of Haroun-el-Raschid's culture. She was to penetrate quite specially deeply the rigid realm of the intellect.

St. George returned to England with England's soldiery; and although Coeur-de-Lion did not redeem the vow made outside the walls of Acre, the same impulse came to birth in Edward III on the battlefield of Crécy. Before giving the signal for attack with Coeur-de-Lion's now famous battle-cry—*Upon them, St. George*—Edward reminded his knights of the "blew thonges" bound by that king about his Crusaders' legs, and promised that if Crécy were won he would himself redeem Coeur-de-Lion's vow and re-found Arthur's Order, adopting St. George as its patron and the "blew thonges" as its badge.

Crécy was won. Edward built the Round Tower at Windsor, enclosing the British Table-Mound which had been one of the "stations" at which Arthur's Table Round was held (the Table-Mounds at Winchester, Camelot and Caerleon-on-Usk were others); and here, on St. George's Day, 1350, the Most Honourable Order of the Knights of St. George and the Garter was instituted, "in honour of God, Our Lady and St. George", and the first twenty-five Knight Companions, in blue mantle, blue thong and collar of roses with pendant of St. George fighting the dragon, were solemnly consecrated.

Side by side with this placing of the highest Order of Chivalry under the patronage of St. George, Edward continued to foster the saint's protection of the common soldiery. "Edward III", says Camden in his *Britannia*, "gave to every one of his soldiers a white coat or cassock with a red cross on each side, so that it was a seemly

and magnificent thing to see the armies of the English to sparkle like the rising sunne, soldiery of other countries having no habit either to distinguish or adorn them". So arose the George Jacque (forerunner of the Union Jack), which Richard II, invading Scotland in 1388, made obligatory—"that every man, of what estate, condition or nation he may be, so that he be of our party, bear a sign of the arms of St. George both before and behind. And that no enemy do bear the said token or cross of St. George".

With the clergy's petition in 1399 that "the feast of St. George the Martyr, who is the spiritual patron of the soldiery of England should be observed throughout England as a holiday", St. George begins to expand into patron of her whole populace, till in 1415 his day becomes a national festival ranking with Christmas Day and Easter, kept with guild processions, mumming plays and city pageants, with St. George riding on his white horse, the princess leading her lamb, and the jerking jaws of Snap-Dragon scattering hilarious terror. In 1413 a new epoch had begun. It was barely born before England knew who was to guide her in that epoch.

Then came the Reformation. Luther spoke of St. George with contumely; Calvin called him a hobgoblin; the shadow of George the Arian loomed large, blotting out his bright namesake. In England the Feast of St. George ceased to be kept as either holy day or holiday. Its Gospel and Epistle were struck out of the Revised Prayer Book; and there was no longer any jolly Riding of the George. Upon such evil days had St. George fallen that the sixteen-year-old Edward VI, the Office of the Order of St. George and the Garter having just been read before him, is able to enquire of those about him: "My lords, pray ye, what saint is St. George that we have so honoured him?"

* * *

But the Reformation could not kill St. George of England. It merely drove his cult into new, more native forms. Though St. George's Day was no longer a holiday, its celebration could be moved to days which were. So, from the sixteenth century onwards, we find his name being cherished in the May Day Songs, as in the Helston Hal-an-Tow Song:

*As for St. George-O,
St. George he was a knight-O.
Of all the knights in Christendom,
St. George he is the right-O.*

Or as in the Padstow Hobby Horse Song:

*Awake, St. George, our English knight-O!
For Summer is a-come, and Winter is a-go;
And every day God give us His grace,
By day and by night-O.*

*O where is St. George? O where is he-O?
He's out in his longboat all on the salt sea-O.*

And the St. George Day Mumming Plays still lived on in the robust dialects of the country-side, transferred to Christmas Eve :

*Here comes I, St. George, that worthy champion bould,
And with my sword and spear I winned three crowns of gould.
I fout the dragon bould, and broft un to the slaughter ;
By that I gained fair Sabra, the King of Egypt's daughter.*

St. George has remained the great Martyr of the Greek Church, his life, his passion and his miracles still held in memory. But in England all that survived the bowdlerising of the Reformation was the dragon and the princess and the Turkish knight, and the fact that St. George was "our English knight-O". And so there grew up a whole new literature, springing direct from the English folk-soul itself, which signed and sealed him English.

One story in this stream, by virtue of the enchantment of its poetry, has lived to become an English classic. In *The Faerie Queene* Spenser gives expression to this new development by boldly annexing St. George as native to the country of his adoption. Heavenly Contemplation, expounding to the young Red Cross Knight the secret of his lineage, tells him :

*Thou spring'st from ancient race
Of Saxon kings . . .
From thence a fairy thee unwitting reft,
And in a heaped furrow did thee hide,
Where thee a ploughman all unwitting found,
And brought thee up in ploughman's state to bide,
Till, pricked with courage and thy force's pride,
To Faery Court thou cam'st to seek for fame
And prove thy puissant arms . . .
Now thou among those saints whom thou dost see
Shalt be a saint and thine own nation's friend
And patron : thou St. George shalt called be,
St. George of merry England, the sign of victory.*

But it was *The Most Famous Historie of the Seven Champions of Christendom*, by another Elizabethan, Richard Johnstone, which found most favour with the folk themselves. This tells how, in the time of Uther Pendragon, the father of King Arthur, the new-born son of Lord Albert of Coventry is stolen by Kalyb the Enchantress, who gives him the name of George and brings him up in the forest ; how he rescues six knights whom she has turned to stone, and with them journeys to the East, where he fights against the Saracens and saves Sabra, the daughter of King Ptolemy of Egypt, from the dragon of the stagnant lake ; how Almidor, the dark Prince of Morocco, desiring Sabra, prevails upon her father to send George to the King of Persia, with a letter asking him to put the bearer to death as a Christian ; how George breaks out of his Persian prison, returns to Egypt, rescues Sabra from Smooth Almidor, brings her to England



ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
by RAPHAEL

This painting, showing St. George wearing the Garter, was presented to Henry VII by the Duke of Urbino on the occasion of the latter being made a Knight of the Garter.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (Mellon Collection).

and weds her ; how they have three knightly sons, Guy, Alexander and David ; and how they live happily together until, thrown while hunting, Sabra dies from the pricks of a thorny brake.

This was the story which, in divers versions, was told at English firesides for three centuries, and which even in our own survives as a nursery tale. From it sprang countless seventeenth century ballads, some of which Bishop Percy collected in his *Reliques* ; from it sprang also that eighteenth century Chapbook which ran into many editions. The English people had identified St. George as their patron saint by making him of their own blood and bone.

* * *

But as true-born Englishman George still confronts the forces of Mahomet in Almidor, the dark prince of Morocco, and in the Turkish knight whom he kills and brings to life again. And in his conquest of the dragon he still follows the same path of purification of man's animal nature. The very name of the city near which the dragon has its lair—Silene—holds a secret ; for it means "moon". It was during the Moon-evolution of the earth that man received that astral body which already was worked over and brought a step forward in that Egyptian period which preceded the Graeco-Latin ; and the present period, in which England has a leading part to play, is one in which many Egyptian impulses come into recapitulation. But they have a legitimate place in contemporary culture only if they have been permeated by the Christ-Impulse.

So, in English mediaeval folk-lore, St. George kills the King of Egypt, whose astrality, good in its own age, would be evil because decadent if taken untransmuted into this ; but the King of Egypt's daughter, who is young, pure, beautiful and willing to become a Christian, he rescues from the peril of a union with the dark prince of Morocco, and brings her—and with her the astral forces of Egypt in a cleansed and Christened form—to her new rightful home.

The King of Egypt's daughter has three different names in these English stories—Sabra, Elya, Cleodolinda. In Cleodolinda, which means "glory, height or manifestation of beauty", we see, as in St. George's own beauty, the cleansed astrality portrayed. Elya (her name also in Scandinavia), which means "olive", we can see in a twofold aspect—as the peace-bringing olive-branch, indicative of the holy serenity into which George brings the turbulent forces of the soul ; and as that power of living, brain-free thought which makes the olive the emblem of the wise Pallas Athene. Sabra, speech, connected with both "seven" and "Sabbath", meant originally "rest" ; and so, along the same path as Schollastike, came also to mean "learning". She is rescued from the scorpion sting of Almidor in the East, only to succumb to its Western metamorphosis in the pricks of the thorny brake. But before this happens she has given birth to three sons, who are trained to be true knights and also to be

craftsmen, one in stone, one in wood, one in metals—to work upon the three earthly sheaths of the mineral physical body, the plant-related etheric body, and the astral, drawn (as its name reveals) from those starry realms whose gifts the metals are to the substance of the Earth.

Because in this princess live the pure, innocent forces of the soul, her girdle tied about the neck of the dragon, when once St. George has subdued it, has the power of turning it into "a meek beast and debonair". Therefore it is always stressed that she is a pure virgin. Thus, in one of the seventeenth century ballads, when "two hungry Lyons fierce and fell" appear and tear to pieces the lascivious eunuch in whose care St. George has left her,

*Down by the ladye then they layd,
Whereby they shewed she was a maid.*

Even more complete is the transmutation of the animal nature into the chastity of love in those versions wherein St. George lays his cross-shaped sword upon the dragon's head, and so turns it into a lamb. The rejoicing populace ask how this transformation has been wrought, and St. George replies that only Christ is able to bring it about. Here in the clarity of supreme simplicity we see portrayed how the union of Christ with the cross of the three lower natures begins to work transmutingly upon them. That the dragon was seen as destroying both innocence and true manhood is indicated in its devouring daily one lamb and one man. In old paintings of St. George fighting the dragon, a lamb frequently nestles beside the praying princess; and in the guild processions and the Riding of the George, Sabra and her white lamb went together before him. It is significant in this connection that in Russia St. George is known as the Guardian of the Flocks; and it would seem that from the beginning the Eastern Church associated with him the white lamb of a purified astrality, for both at his church at Lydda and among the Persian Nestorians (who dedicated many churches to him) it was long customary to sacrifice a white lamb on his feast day.

* * *

How far can we think of England as having been, in the period since she took the red cross as her emblem, concerned with this transmutation of dragon into lamb? Confronted with our own contemporary faults of national character, we are not perhaps sufficiently aware of how the sphere in which these lie has changed since the English folk-soul first became clearly conscious of St. George's hand invisibly but powerfully guiding her destiny. The replacing on the English throne of the volatile, outflowing Richard II by the solid, self-contained Henry IV at the end of the fourteenth century prefigures and ushers in deep changes in the soul of the nation itself.

All chroniclers of the fourteenth century agree in speaking of the restless temper, quickness to wrath, unpredictable unreliability of the English at that time; and Chaucer apostrophises them in the same vein:

*O stormy people, unsad and untrue,
Aye indiscreet, and changing as a vane!*

From when, in 1416, the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund brought St. George's heart to England, and Henry V laid it up in the Chapel of St. George at Windsor built by Edward III for the Order of the Garter, it is as if that heart begins to work like a spiritual leaven within the character of the nation, preparing it for its new task in the new age which had just dawned.

That task was to be the elaborating of the Consciousness Soul. The new British phlegm, the new onlooker quality of detachment, the new sense of isolated selfhood, the new respect for another's individual personality—all these were to be aspects of that elaboration. And the Consciousness Soul itself is a necessary preliminary to the growth of Spirit-Self; it is into its vessel of solitary self-awareness that the new principle waiting to be added to man's being can descend. Nor does this epoch's task end with the shaping of this chalice. Not until the next epoch will mankind as a whole be ready to receive Spirit-Self; but that this may come about there must be those in this epoch who, hastening ahead of the main tide of evolution, by themselves following the red cross path of purification, are working at the preparation of this moral transformation of the future.

* * *

This next epoch will be a period of Slavonic culture; so that it is in complete accordance with the spiritual facts that Russia also claims St. George as her particular patron and protector; that side by side with the battle-cry, "St. George for merry England!" sounds "St. George for holy Russia!" The gravely radiant St. George wearing the English Garter, painted by Raphael to be given to Henry VII of England by the Duke of Urbino on becoming a Knight of the Order, and sold by Cromwell to Russia, has passed like an ambassadorial gift from the aristocratic Chivalry of one protectorate of the Red Cross Knight to the Chivalry based on brotherhood of the other. For the legendary heroes of Russia with whose names St. George's is associated are of the folk—Ilya the peasant's son, Alesha the priest's son, Dobrynya and Ivan the merchants' sons, and Vaska from the free city of Novgorod. Michael the Archangel and St. George the Valiant are the heavenly helpers of these folk-heroes in the great cycle of *byliny* (heroic lays) in which, at the evening gatherings in the peasants' huts, all through the Middle Ages and down into our own time, has been handed down the memory of Christian Russia's defence against the Mohammedan Mongol-Tartar nomads.

The concluding *bylina* of the cycle—*Why the Heroes have vanished from Holy Russia*—tells how the heroes, having at last overcome the Tartar hordes, are so blinded by pride that they attack their two heavenly helpers, then seek refuge in the mountain caves, and there, in their dark stone prisons, fall into an enchanted sleep. Again, as in the wars against the Moors in Spain and the Saracens in Palestine, it is indicated that although the heroes have vanquished Islam, they nevertheless have suffered its scorpion prick; for the *bylina* tells that the boasting which led to their blindness arose from their turning away from "their guardian, the call of the heart, good, quiet and wise", and instead "trusting only to their reason".

The Russian folk-soul, like the English, makes St. George her own by claiming him to be of her own blood and lineage; but to compare her expression of this claim with England's is to see deep into the differences of national spirituality. Beside England's hearty earthiness, there is a breath of the mystical, even of the cosmological, in Russia's shaping of her St. George's story. He is born of a beautiful Slav princess, Queen Sophia the Wise; and he has three sisters, Faith, Hope and Charity. Where the English folk-ballads recount of the English babe that

A blood-red cross was on his arm.

A dragon on his breast;

A little garter all of gold

Was round his leg expressed,

the legs of the princely Russian babe are silver up to the knee, his arms pure gold to the elbow, and his head is covered with pearls.

Pasikrates' account of his young lord's martyrdom lives again in the Russian story of how St. George came to Jerusalem, which had just been captured by an evil king, who desired to put the saint to death. He tried with swords and axes, but they refused to wound him; he had him drowned, and he returned to life; burned, and he returned to life; pounded in a mortar, and again he returned to life. In a last attempt, the king immured him in a coffin and caused this to be buried deep in the ground. The Earth folded itself back, the coffin rose and burst asunder, and St. George came forth, while from the aura of the Earth there resounded a Resurrection Hymn.

Again the red cross path is pictured with imaginative vision in the story of how St. George set out on a long journey to bring to Russia tidings of the Risen Christ. First he came to a mountain so high that he could not climb it; but at his bidding it lowered itself and spread itself abroad over the Earth. Then he came to a forest so dense that he could not penetrate it; but at his bidding the trees took up their roots and set themselves in fruitful groups about the land. Then he came to a multitude of ravening wild beasts; but at his bidding they grew docile and opened their ranks that he might continue his journey. Lastly a human army barred his way; for three days he fought and at last overcame it, and so passed over

the river into Russia, where the people thronged the river bank, awaiting with great longing his tidings of the Christ. In the cross of the threefold shoot from the Tree of Life are represented all three kingdoms through which human nature strives—in the physical, the mineral; in the etheric, the plant; in the astral, the animal. So in the mountain, the forest, the wild beasts, St. George has to confront and command all three, and lastly the fallen Luciferic ego in man himself, before he can deliver his tidings of Christ's redemptive forces.

In her picture of the royal child, the Russian folk-soul points to a threefold purification of thought, feeling and will—the moon-forces in the earth on which we tread, in the refined silver; in the arms which serve the feeling heart, the sun-forces of refined gold; in the pearly head, the thinking filled with light born out of earthly tribulation. She divines St. George's kinship with the three theological virtues which are not gifts of grace but have to be striven for—Faith, Hope and Charity, whom the Gnostics knew as three Virgin-Saints, daughters of St. Sophia. In perceiving St. George as the son of Queen Sophia the Wise, she touches a deep secret, one which Pasikrates also indicates in his name for St. George's mother—Kira Theognosta, the Lady of the Knowledge of God—and out of whose last echoes Justinian, building his church where Constantine's in honour of St. George had stood, dedicates it to San Sophia.

* * *

Rudolf Steiner has called the moon the cosmos of wisdom, for it was during the Moon-evolution of the Earth, which gave man his astral body, that the unconscious wisdom which we call instinct was built into the animal world. Man has been torn out of this; but when his astrality is redeemed into Spirit-Self, he will enter again this harmonious sphere of wisdom, but on a higher, conscious level. Moreover, the knowledge of the head will have been warmed and interpenetrated by the wisdom of the heart; man, who judges now out of the limitations of his sense-nature, will, in John Scotus Erigena's phrase, then cognise as an angel. He will have found again the lost Sophia.

The Holy Sophia was the Cosmic Wisdom, "concerned with World-Thoughts, World-Ideas". Of the Gnostic knowledge concerning her, by the aid of which the Early Christian Fathers strove to understand the Mystery of Golgotha, little has come down to us apart from the *Pistis Sophia*, which tells how Sophia, the Virgin of Light, descended into the darkness of earth and, after sojourning there in sorrow, was brought forth again by Christ into the light. This descent, which the *Pistis Sophia* describes in a series of Imaginations, Dr. Steiner also describes in terms of changing human consciousness. In the days of the divinely ordered king-priest States, mankind was still guided by Sophia, the Heavenly Wisdom. When man began to think, no longer out of the revelation given from above, but out of

himself, Sophia suffered a contraction, a diminution, into Philosophia. As man continued to draw the nature of thinking more and more down to earth and to bind it to his own brain, those forces of the Sophia which on the first Christmas Eve had brought angelic tidings to the shepherds, dried up into sense perception of the mere surfaces of things; those forces of the Sophia by which a still sacred astrology had revealed to the Magi the approach of the Christ dried up into the faculties of mechanics and mathematics. In the sixth century after Christ came an increase of darkening, which continued with the growth of material thinking, until by the nineteenth the last rays of Sophia's light had been obliterated.

Dr. Steiner tells the story of this descent from another aspect, also—in terms of Michael's working. For Michael himself was born of the Heavenly Sophia—as Marduk, his Babylonian reflection, was of the Heavenly Ea—and for long cycles of time was the Regent of the Cosmic Intelligence, pouring it meetly into the evolution of the universe and of mankind. But little by little man sequestered it, until in the eighth and ninth centuries it fell from Michael's hands, to become completely human. Not for a thousand years, not till in 1879 that new Michael Age began in which Michael guides man not only as an archangel, as in former short sun-periods, but as Time-Spirit, leading the whole epoch, could this intelligence begin to pass again into his hands.

* * *

If we bring together these supersensible events with the course of outer history, we find that the increased darkening of Sophia's light in the sixth century is coincident with the extinction of Gnosticism, the rise of Mahomet, and the Arabianising of Aristotle. We find that the eighth century, in which Haroun-el-Raschid spreads the Arabic culture in the East from Baghdad while the Moorish conquerors spread it in the West from Cordova; and the ninth, in which, the first doubts concerning the reality of the Transubstantiation appear, and in which Haroun works after death to bring about that denial of the spirit framed in the Council of Constantinople's decree that man consists of soul and body only—we find that these are the centuries in which the regency of the Heavenly Intelligence falls away from Michael.

And now, with each further leap in the life of humanity away from the living knowledge of the supersensible towards rigid intellectual concepts, Sophia's light grows feebler. The Moslem world-conception which, with the wide-spread influence of Avicenna in the realm of medicine and of Averroes in the realm of philosophy, continues in decadence to flourish in Europe right into the seventeenth century, receives in that century a fresh impetus and direction with the return to earthly life of Haroun-el-Raschid in the personality of Francis Bacon, whose *Novum Organum* launches a new natural

science confined within the realm of the purely sense-perceptible. So the ancient spiritual wisdom of Sophia goes gradually down into total darkness.

The Schoolmen's imaging of Averroes in the form of a devil being trampled underfoot by the "Angelic Doctor", Aquinas—Christianised Aristotelianism triumphing over Arabianised—finds a certain echo in some of the Northern representations of St. George during this period. Thus, in the fifteenth century group in Stockholm by Bernt Notke and Hindrich Wylsynck, the dragon, a gigantic loathly larva, is armed with long, sharply pointed sea-urchin spines, and its fanged jaws are most fittingly closing on the head of the child St. George's horse (the symbol of earthly intelligence); and in Dürer's engraving the eye is caught immediately by the curious lobster case and claws of the dead dragon stretched beneath the sturdy, soldierly St. George on his lusty courser. The same symbol speaks in the crayfish shells—empty, dried up, brittle, devoid of nourishment—with which, in *Hansel and Gretel*, the witch, the hardened sense-nature, feeds the tender soul newly come to earth. And it would seem that the common folk of England sensed a need to be protected from these crayfish forces in book-learning; for, like the George Jacque which guarded the soldier both before and behind, the hornbook alphabet—known in the dialect as the Crissycross (Christ-cross) Book—bore on its front the Red Cross of the Christ, and on its back St. George subduing the dragon—the holy powers of Lydda invoked against Silene, the holier powers of Golgotha against Gondishapur.

So the forces of the Crescent in modern natural science laid Sophia in her coffin until, with the dawn of the new Sun-Age, Michael could unite once more with the forces of man's intelligence. For man has to find and follow the way back from dead to living thinking, re-quickening the mathematical-mechanistic faculties into pictorial Imaginations, the sense-perceptions into Inspiration. When in this way he has carried a stage higher all that he has learned in the purely sensible, the purely physical, the lost Sophia can be found again.

But she is no longer the Divine Sophia; the intelligence with which Michael again unites has passed through the realm of man. "What has come to development with the preparation of Spirit-Self", says Rudolf Steiner, "is the presence of a new Sophia—Anthroposophia, the Sophia who, after passing through the human soul, through the being of man, henceforth bears within her that being". So we see St. George mounted still on the horse of human intelligence, but it is the white horse of that intelligence purified. And we see in him, under Michael, the finder and protector of the Being of Anthroposophy herself.

* * *

This finding of the lost Sophia of the angels in the new Sophia of man, this coming together of souls in a freely willed brotherhood, this redeeming of the astral shoot in the cross into Spirit-Self—for humanity at large these achievements lie in Russia's distant destiny. Meanwhile she, like her heroes, has also succumbed to the prick of

the scorpion's thorn. For the Soviet regime is based on an abstract ideology, and strives out of the realm of "reason" to bring to birth by force a robot and regimented monkey-reflection (to use Dostoevsky's transparent phrase) of that community of brotherly love which will in the far-off future unfold livingly, like a flower, out of the quiet, wise "call of the heart".

But to the attentive ear there come from time to time murmured intimations from the Russian folk-soul that St. George still fights in her defence against these scorpion forces. Such an intimation finds expression in the modern *bylina*, *How the Mountains let out of their Deep Caves the Mighty Heroes of Russia*. One evening in 1925, an old Russian peasant reciter—over eighty years of age—having just recited the traditional closing legend, looked beyond her listeners into spaces where its spiritual sequel unfolded in powerful pictures, out of which she spontaneously created this new heroic lay. It tells how one-eyed Falsehood, with muzzle of hound instead of face and hanging tongue a verst long, stalks Russia, devouring her people, and how the heroes, waking from their sleep, pray to be released from their prison-caves to fight her. But when they stand face to face with her and her black army, they find that an invisible guardian makes her invulnerable. St. George the Valiant comes to their aid, "young, vigorous, ineffably beautiful", and with him the Archangel Michael. George is swinging his sword to cut down Falsehood when "his silver-clad legs trembled, his gold-clad arms went numb", for it seems to him that it is Christ who stands beside her. But when Michael with his sword of fire steps forward, George sees the figure beside Falsehood begin to become "wild, loathsome, cunning, foul as some unclean creature of the marsh". He knows it then for Antichrist.

Antichrist turns into a terrible black raven, two thousand versts from wing to wing, its eyes a fiery hell, its bill and claws of iron:

*That black raven holds in its grip the holy land of Russia.
With its iron beak it pecks it and drinks its hot blood.
Holy Russia groans. The black raven rejoices.*

Now Michael, by Christ's command, joins battle with the raven:

*Antichrist the raven spread his black wings.
He rose all enormous, dark with eyes of fire.
With his darkness he covered the bright sun,
He darkened the clear sky.
On the Archangel like a stone he fell,
With his black wings overwhelmed him.
Cold went the heart of the heroes.
"Tell us, tell us, St. George, tell us the truth. Can it be?"
Smiling, St. George the Valiant shook his pearly head.*

An English translation (now out of print) was published in this country in 1935 by the Centenary Press, under the title of "A Heroic Legend—A Modern *Bylina* taken down by N. Misheyev from an Old Peasant in the Extreme North of Russia, and translated by Gleb Struve and Bernard Pares".

He gives the heroes "his true, invincible word" that although "not yet is come the time to cut off the head of Antichrist", the time will come when Michael will cast Antichrist forth from Russia and to her people there shall come "grace and comfort".

* * *

So the Russian folk-soul shows us St. George's activity continuing, till the time is come "for the Russian people to do their work, to accomplish their labour, to cleanse themselves from their sins". But ancient Eastern tradition, looking still further into the future, links the forces of St. George with Antichrist's final downfall. For it tells that Christ will take away Antichrist's past dominion ("cut off his head") on the Last Day, and that the place where this will happen will be the gate of Lydda.

Lydda, like its classical name, Diospolis, means "the city of God". George's connection with this city, like his whole genealogy, speaks of a descent from spiritual heights. Of his two grandfathers, one, Dionysius, is "divinely touched"; the other, John, is "the bearer of the dove"—the dove which is the symbol of the Divine Sophia as well as of the Holy Ghost, with Whom she is intimately connected. The name of George's father, Anastatius, "raised to life again", suggests that he has gone through the three days' mystic death of initiation; his mother's Kira Theognosta, the Lady of Divine Knowledge, suggests that the Heavenly Wisdom has already taken a step earthwards, and this is borne out by the name of her brother Andrew, from *andros*, "a man". George's own name means "earth-worker" (from *ge*, "the earth", and *ergon*, "work"). The Old Covenantant had had the task of making the three lower natures, which ensheath the seeds of the three higher and are as it were an external and imperfect image of them, at home upon the Earth. Now, under the New, St. George tills these earthly natures to bring forth from them the fruit of the heavenly ones. St. George works on Earth, but his face is set towards Heaven. The Lydda at whose gate Antichrist's dominion will pass away at the end of the Earth-Age is a new City of God, the "holy city, new Jerusalem" of St. John's Apocalypse; and the forces of St. George have laboured at its building.

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So St. George stands before us as comrade and servant of Michael; as champion of the Holy Sophia, knightly opponent of the scorpion from whose pricks she died, finder and protector of the new Sophia born again in man. He stands before us as the glorious bearer of the standard of the Cross of Christ; as leader, beneath that standard, of England in the epoch of the Consciousness Soul, of Russia in the epoch of Spirit-Self.

In the first stages of the cross's transmutation, we see him clearly as the Son of the Widow, the partaker of angelic bread; and as in a

glass darkly we glimpse the further stages beyond. We see him as King Arthur's ideal, as the prototype of such knights as won the Grail ; for the Grail King also was that knight who, riding ahead of human evolution, had already inwardly transmuted his threefold human nature. His name becomes transparent for a tiller of the Earth, not as Spenser's literal ploughman, but as one who transubstantiates the Earth with his own transubstantiation. We understand why the Coptic tradition makes St. George the only martyr to be carried to heaven not by an archangel but by Christ Himself ; for George, through his deaths and resurrections, has unfolded the fulness of his nature in a protracted sacrament, and has become the great earthly pattern for that completed picture of perfected man as true human image of the threefold Godhead whose heavenly archetype the disciples were permitted to behold on the Mount of Transfiguration.

As we contemplate St. George's spiritual deeds, his championing of all that lies on the rightful Michael-path of evolution, his battling against all that constitutes an impediment on that path, and the consequent threefold birth in him of that Higher Man who is destined to be victorious over all lower human elements, he increases in stature and sublimity until the majestic vision of him seen by Abba Theodotus flowers again in us :

"And I saw one coming forth from within the veil like unto a king wearing a diadem of gold with seven crowns upon it, and he was riding upon a white horse, and he was many times brighter than the sun, and was equipped with sword and armour and the apparel of a king : in short, his kingly dignity was immeasurable".

LAMENT FOR THE MAKERS

Where are the Hampshiremen toiled at the tillage
 hundreds of years till this green county grew
 splendid in spilth ? . . . all gone, village on village,
 under the yew :
 in lost grey churchyards old,
 they, now, beneath the mould,
 since Time their tale hath told,
 lie in the lew.

Where are the shepherds who by their strawed hurdles
 nightlong, knelt, lanterned, by some gasping ewe :
 silent men, tallies stuck in their smock-girdles ?
 under the yew,
 they, though far-hied their sheep,
 heed not now where these creep ;
 for they, at last, asleep,
 lie in the lew.

Where they who baulked the clays down to the dingles ?
 High on stamped headlands the long ploughs would slew :
 deep breathed the tired teams, and slow slapped the
 swingles :
 —under the yew,
 under the brooding bough
 no more they know the plough ;
 they, lapped in quiet now,
 lie in the lew.

They, where the great glebes their undulate acres
 heave like swept seas where the wind is a mew,
 rolled home their harvest-loads down the long breakers.
 Under the yew,
 now, wild though winds may blow,
 they neither care nor know,
 they, who by Time laid low,
 lie in the lew.

They oft were down in the meads with scythes swinging
 when day first slashed diamond-edged on the dew ;
 they set the steel with their hones roundly ringing ;
 under the yew,
 to them no more is known
 sighing on steel of stone ;
 they, under grass unmown,
 lie in the lew.

They were the stuff on which gods build their glory ;
 they, true as stars in their courses, were true.
 Time that ends all things, has ended their story
 under the yew.
 And at the close of it,
 Silence hath FINIS writ
 where they, and as is fit,
 lie in the lew.

Kings have mere thrones to leave : these left a county ;
 gave all to earth, and went. Some hour I, too,
 will give as they gave, these bones as last bounty,
 and 'neath the yew,
 in some lost churchyard old,
 go down beneath the mould
 and with those hearts of gold,
 lie in the lew.

H. E. BRADING.

H. E. Brading died last August. While on active service as an officer in the Royal Artillery, during the last war, he was blown up by a land-mine, and for several years up to his death he endured a crippling illness with great patience and fortitude. In his youth he had worked on the land, and his feeling for the Hampshire countryside was a frequent source of his poetry. Much of it was written within a quite short period, during a holiday in Austria directly after he left the Army; he recognised that in some respects his later outlook was not fully reflected in it. He was first led to an interest in Anthroposophy through its bearing on agriculture, and he became a member of the General Anthroposophical Society. His poetry has appeared in every issue of 'The Golden Blade': a friend, as well as a valued contributor, has left this life.—C. W.

THE ART OF EURHYTHMY

Owen Barfield

THE new art of Eurhythm, which Rudolf Steiner inaugurated about forty years ago, was, in his own view, one of the most important contributions made by Anthroposophy to the civilization of our time. For an anthroposophist well instructed in the history of consciousness, it is fairly easy to show in theory why this should be so. But since Eurhythm is not itself a theory but a practice, I prefer to begin this article not with an historical approach, but with the present moment in which that practice is being carried on. The first question then, is not, how and why did Eurhythm come into being, but what sort of things go on in the minds of the audience when a public performance is given?

Human beings must perforce proceed from the known to the unknown. Confronted with something new, they instinctively compare it with the nearest—or what seems to them the nearest—thing to it in their store of experience. In 1954 the spectator of a Eurhythm performance—and I am purposely assuming that it is his first venture and that the literature of Anthroposophy is a sealed book to him—will inevitably begin by comparing it with ballet. We need not linger on the resemblances, but as time goes on, he is likely to note the following surface differences. That the movements on the stage are accompanied about as often by the spoken word (usually poetry) as they are by music; that much less importance appears to be attached to legs and their movements than is the case in ballet-dancing; that the arm movements, on the other hand, are much more varied and subtle. There are, of course, other differences; but let us assume that our spectator begins—as he is likely to do—by noticing these three. What can be done next by way of trying to appreciate the different and the new?

I think it possible that, if he relates the first difference with the third, and particularly if he has noticed a peculiar shape-making quality in some of the arm movements, he may come to the point of saying to himself: "It seems to be a sort of attempt to *talk* with the whole body, especially the arms". And he will probably add, in a bewildered sort of way: "But in that case, why do they do it to music as well?"

At all events, if he does get to the point of saying this to himself, he will be doing pretty well; will perhaps have advanced about as far on the road to understanding Eurhythm as desultory speculation will take him. How far appreciation, and its concomitant delight, must *depend* on understanding, is a question it is better to defer. The point is that, for anyone who started, as it were, from scratch and wanted eventually to reach an understanding of the true nature

of Eurhythm, this notion of "talking with the body" would be a good first step. It was so that Rudolf Steiner himself developed and presented it. It is true that he once referred to it as "a metamorphosis of dancing", or as a sort of attempt to restore "temple-dancing"; which was itself, he said, an attempt to reflect the movements of the stars and planets, whose creative forces streamed into and fashioned man; and there is no need, in order to enjoy Eurhythm, to belittle the art of dancing and its possibilities. But Steiner also pointed out that Eurhythm is not dancing but 'visible speech' and 'visible song'. Moreover, when Eurhythm was born, dancing in the form of ballet was still a comparatively rare and exotic plant. Now that it has become so familiar and ubiquitous, it is the distinction rather than the relation between the two, which requires emphasising.

Since, however, it is an ignorant (though open-minded) spectator whose self-education in the understanding of Eurhythm we are imagining, let us for the moment leave Steiner's own exposition out of it. Let us suppose that, having reached this vague but pleasing fancy of "talking with the body", he decided to investigate it further and see where it led him. Presumably he would first ask himself what, in some deeper sense, happens when we 'talk', and he would begin to examine theories about language and the origin of language and the nature of utterance and the word.

Unfortunately, nearly all that has been written on this subject, especially when it attempts to deal with the sounds as well as with the meanings of words, is either pedantic or shallow or both. It is just a fact that the Darwinian theory is totally incompatible with an understanding of the true nature of human speech. And it was in the nineteenth century, when the Darwinian theory held almost undisputed sway, that the devising of theories on the origin of language became a sort of popular sport. The speculative nature of these theories—variously nicknamed the "Bow-wow", the "Pooh-pōoh", the "Ding-Dong" theory and the like—was quickly apparent to all and, well before the turn of the century, the subject of the origin of language had by a sort of tacit consent been ruled out of the province of scholarship and relegated to the mystics. Since that time occasional attempts have been made to base, if not the origin, at all events the nature of language on some kind of "sound symbolism", and to relate the semantic element in words to the movements of the organs which produce them, and of the muscles generally. These attempts, however, have attracted very little attention, and it was only by accident that I heard of a book, published as recently as 1935, which might help a little further on his path our imagined spectator; who, by the way, has now, I think, served his purpose and may be allowed to retire.

Sir Richard Paget's *This English* begins with an attempt to consider the whole nature of human speech and its relation to gesture. He bases his approach on a certain observed parallelism—and sym-

pathy—between the movements of the limbs, particularly the arms and hands, and the movements of the vocal organs. This parallelism was indeed pointed out by Darwin himself in his book *The Expression of the Emotions*. Sir Richard Paget then goes on to mention that the gestures of articulation—or, as he elsewhere calls them, "mouth-gestures" and "mouth-postures"—which are made by the vocal organs in uttering the series of sounds which go to make up a particular word, repeat on a small scale the sort of bodily gestures man would make—and once did make—when he was trying to convey the same meaning by gesticulation:—

"Thus, as man developed a gesture language with his hands and body—namely, by making natural pantomime—he also, unconsciously, developed a more or less corresponding gesture language of jaw, lips, tongue, etc., that accompanied it".

To give only one example, this author describes the mouth-gesture which produces the vowel *u* (*oo*) as "an elongated tubular mouth, nearly closed at either end", and suggests that it may be expected to mean "something enclosed, or hollow, or full or tubular . . . something projecting forward". The eurhythmist expresses the sound *u* by stretching out both arms to their full length, keeping them close together and parallel.

I am not, however, advocating this book as the best introduction to the study of Eurhythm. It is obvious from my quotations that it will not take us very far. What is interesting about it, with all its crudity and limitations, is that by approaching the subject with a warmth of enthusiasm but in a strictly empirical way, and with no preconceived view of the spiritual origin of man—or rather (for the author assumes the Darwinian hypothesis) with a preconceived view which is inimical to the whole trend of his conclusions—he does, nevertheless, arrive at a conception of speech as being originally and essentially—gesture.

* * *

To those who reject the Darwinian picture of evolution, a fuller explanation of the gestural nature and potentialities of language is available, and it is one in which the element of pantomime plays a very small part. Those who make a habit of going to Church are told of it every Christmas morning, when the opening verses of St. John's Gospel are read, but it is doubtful if many of them take it very seriously. It is the view that man is able to speak because in the beginning, he—and his world along with him—was "spoken". Because they were spoken into being.

Since the Reformation, the mental picture which men have entertained of creation has become increasingly one of a single act of manufacture by God the Father. But, according to St. John, the world "came into being through the Word". The Greek word which

has been translated "was made" is the ordinary one for "becoming" or being born, while the Hebrew word used in the opening verses of the Book of Genesis has the meaning of cutting or carving as well as that of creating. It is clear that a "Word" which produced not only the audible but also the visible or tangible world which we see around us, must have been gestural as well as phonetic. "What then would the gods do", said Steiner in the first of his lectures on *Eurhythm as Visible Speech*, "if they really wished to form man out of a lump of earth? The gods would make movements, and as a result of these movements, capable of giving form to the dust of the earth, the human form would eventually arise". The human being, he continued, as he stands before us, is the product of the eurhythmic movements which correspond to the sounds of the alphabet. And he adds the rather startling sentence:—"God eurhythmizes, and as the result of His eurhythm there arises the form of man". Perhaps the first rule for understanding and appreciating Eurhythm is never to lose sight of its cosmic origin, never to forget that, even in its lightest moments, it is trying to "restore primordial movement" and in so doing to make us aware of the relation between speech and the genesis of man, and therefore between cosmic being and human being.

This process of 'cosmic Eurhythm' is moreover reflected in the archetypal forms of the Zodiac which stand about the Earth and the planets which move around it in their endlessly varied creative dance. Each sign of the Zodiac and each planet is shown by Rudolf Steiner to correspond with a particular sound of the human alphabet. And here we notice a significant difference between the cosmic 'Word', out of which man originated, and the human speech and human Eurhythm which he himself originates in response. The movements in Eurhythm which directly represent in this way the signs of the Zodiac and the planets are *not the same* as the movements for the sounds which 'correspond' to these signs and planets.

Indeed, there is a certain contrast or opposition between the two series of movements. Paget spoke of 'consonant gestures' and 'vowel postures', and this arrangement holds good for what one might call the 'alphabet movements' given for Eurhythm. Whereas for the 'zodiacal and planetary movements' as such, though the Zodiac corresponds with consonants, and the planets with vowels, it is the Zodiac which is represented by postures and the vowels by gestures. Thus the sound *b* may be associated either with the 'b' gesture or with the Virgo posture; the sound *o* either with the 'o' posture or the Jupiter gesture. It is as though in the one case the eurhythmist were called on to restore the primordial movement by a sort of recollection in imitation, while in the other he is to do so by means of his own, directionally opposite, response.

One might expect—there were times when Rudolf Steiner himself seemed to expect—that the fact just indicated, namely, that the movements of Eurhythm are based, at all events in intention, on the

gestures and movements which underlie their own being, would be enough to ensure an instinctive and enthusiastic response from any audience. Experience, however, has shown that this is far from being the case. And if we investigate the difficulties in the way of such an instinctive response a little further, I do not think we shall find it so very surprising. There are, first, the difficulties of the audience and, secondly, the difficulties of the eurhythmist. In order to understand and sympathise with both of them, it is necessary to consider for a little what has happened to language, and man's relation to it, since the time of its origin.

* * *

We live in an age in which it is customary to distinguish sharply between factual statements on the one hand, and poetic or fanciful statements on the other. It is a very necessary distinction; and the power to make it is one of the faculties which all sane adults must acquire in some degree as they grow up. At the same time a strict analysis of language—that is of the medium through which *all* statements are made—discloses that the number and nature of purely factual statements is so very limited as to exclude from their subject-matter almost everything that immediately concerns the human being as such—and a great deal else as well. We find, when we investigate the nature of language, that, if by 'factual' statements we mean statements from which *all* that can only be called the 'poetic' element in language has been eliminated, there is very little we can do with them—beyond making machines and recording and operating what is mechanical in nature. From one point of view, naturally, that is very much indeed. *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice!* Nevertheless, we shall find, if we add to logical analysis an historical study of words and their meanings, that meaning itself, including 'factual' meaning, is the offspring, not of the logic but of the poetic in language.

Furthermore, if we approach the historical study of language with no preconceived notions borrowed from some other science, we are forced to the conclusion that the poetic in language is not necessarily man-made. On the contrary, a man-made art of "poetry" appears as a comparatively recent phenomenon in human evolution, appears perhaps not much older than Homer. Following the poetic being perhaps not much older than Homer. Following the poetic farther and farther back into the dimness of the past, we find, instead of that, a state of affairs in which man's consciousness was, as it were, immersed in the spirituality of the world about him, and in which his language expressed this condition. It was this condition which gave rise to the poetic in language—but it was the *emergence* of man from this condition which made possible the art of poetry. For the art of poetry can arise only when man, having awoken into individual existence out of the spirit which gave him birth, deliberately tries to restore the unity in which he first slept and later began to dream. The art of poetry develops (or rather the conditions for its

development are given) as the poetic inherent in language declines. But, of course, for the same reason it becomes more difficult to practise.

For the gradual disappearance of the poetic—that is, of the inherent or “given” poetic—from words is both cause and effect of another, parallel process. This is the divergence between the sounds of words and their meanings. Just as in the course of the ages sound, as carrier of meaning, became separated off from gesture, so, as the ensuing stage of the same process, meaning itself began to be felt as something separate from the sound which expressed it. It is much easier in a language such as Greek—and still more Hebrew—to feel an inevitable and often wonderful unity between the sounds of certain words and their meanings than it is in any modern European language; for the complex processes of physical migration, phonetic sound-changes, transliteration and translation have brought it about that, for instance, the same Greek or Latin word has often to be expressed in different modern languages by totally different sounds.

People sometimes speak as if this were wholly deplorable. It should not be forgotten that most of the beautiful variety of the human landscape has grown from it. Nevertheless it is a tragic consequence of the process that in our own time we take, instinctively, a view of words which regards them, not as the carriers or garments of their meaning, but as tickets or labels which merely “refer to” the things or ideas they are said to “mean”. We distinguish cautiously between the emotive and associational effect of a word and its “reference”. I doubt whether this would have been possible even as recently as the 14th century. I doubt whether it would have been possible for St. Thomas Aquinas.

The poets, of course, continue to be aware that the sounds are carriers of, as well as referents to, *their* meaning; but even here the divergence between sound and meaning has gone very far. Dr. Johnson, a fine critic and himself the maker of two or three admirable poems, ridiculed the idea of any valid connection. Things have now gone so far that it is possible to write a book about the language of poetry, deliberately ignoring the sound-element and treating poetry simply as a system of meanings. Indeed, it is only about twenty-five years since I wrote such a book myself.

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One begins then to appreciate the difficulties of a modern audience confronted with a performance of Eurhythm. We are asked to make the transition from sound back to gesture. But we are not even at the starting-point for such a transition. We are simply not *used* to experiencing words as sound; we are used to regard them as labels—labels of some character no doubt—melodious, jagged, and the like—but still as labels. And incidentally, when poetry is

in question, we are much more used to reading it in silence than to hearing it clothed in physical sound. It looks as if we shall need a very inspired and perfect performance indeed, if we are to be lifted out of ourselves.

Yet the difficulties in the way of the eurhythmist's producing such a perfect performance are even greater. For he—or more probably she—has to do the “restoring” not only with the mind but with the whole body, and so that it is apparent in the subtle quality of least movements. Moreover, what precisely does it signify, this “restoring of primordial speech-gestures?” Some kind of archaeological research perhaps—or a careful conning of descriptions given by Steiner followed by accurate reproduction—as the smart recruit reproduces the instructions of the drill-sergeant? Very far from it. It is not simply gestures that are to be made; it is gestures with meaning incarnate in them, gestures that are semantic in the way that words are. And this means that the gestures will not really be there at all, and there will be nothing for the audience to see—or rather there will be nothing it can “read”, for a true spectation of Eurhythm involves not only seeing, but also the kind of seeing *through* which we call reading—there will be nothing the audience can “read”, unless the performer not only reproduces the gestures, but also experiences them. In other words they must be, not reproduced, but *produced* each time out of the very self of the performer—a self which is, as we know, a somewhat forlorn proposition; which has emerged from the cradling spirit; which has fallen out of the word; which is accustomed to divide meaning not only from gesture, but from sound itself.

Man is, however, not yet entirely disinherited. The poet still has his words, many of them with overtones of meaning that blossom from ancient roots far back in the past. And somehow or other he must use them, so that his poetry at once receives life and meaning *from*, and gives or restores life and meaning *to* them. (I may interpolate here that the principal object of the book to which I have just referred was to demonstrate this). In the same way the eurhythmist has his bodies, physical etheric and astral. They also were “spoken”—in the beginning. As words are the poet's, so these are his “given” material, rich with the spirituality of an ancient and dying past, at once giving and receiving the spirit which is present life and meaning. But, for this delicate reciprocity of receiving and giving, the poet has at least the leisure of his ponderings and his erasures. Whereas the eurhythmist must somehow receive and give in the same instant of time, in a single movement.

It seems like demanding the impossible, and—let us not beat about the bush—there is one thing, and one thing only, which has made it possible. It is possible, because the inwardness, which we call “meaning”, came out of heaven and into earth. The movements of Eurhythm can be true and effective only in so far as they arise

from the activity of an Ego possessing that 'emptiness' into which the Christ impulse can penetrate. I do not say this for vague and general uplift. The deeper one enquires into the detail and practical application, the more clearly it appears. Something of the sort is, of course, in a measure true of all the arts, and will become truer, but in the old-established arts there is a rich inheritance from tradition which can be lived upon as a sort of spiritual capital, and this helps at present to conceal the fact. Eurhythmies is by the date of its birth, a Christian art, and in that sense it is the only one.

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In practice, musical Eurhythmies meets with a readier response from the public than speech Eurhythmies. This was a disappointment to Rudolf Steiner, who regarded it as showing a lack of real understanding of what Eurhythmies is. I think it is due also to the absence, where music is concerned, of the particular obstacle I have been stressing. In music there is no obvious duality between the sound in itself and a "meaning" conceived as separate from it. Whereas in speech Eurhythmies the overcoming in some measure of this dichotomy is a condition precedent to its appreciation. And this is something which the eurhythmists cannot do for themselves. They should be able to begin about where it leaves off. It is for the poet to re-unite meaning and sound, and for the reader or reciter to restore to sound some of its "gestural" quality. These are problems into which I cannot enter. It may be that the future of the art of Eurhythmies depends on their solution.

It is certain, however, that, if we wish to understand and appreciate Eurhythmies, we ought not to approach speech through music, but *vice versa*. This is also in accordance with the course of evolution, for there is little doubt that primordial language was richly varied in tone and pitch, that song came before instrumental music, and that instrumental music is really a comparatively recent separating off, or abstraction, of what was once only an element in the totality of utterance. In the first two lectures in the book, *Eurhythmies as Visible Song*, the broad lines of such an approach are laid down. The alphabet and the diatonic scale are not just a heterogeneous aggregation of unorganised units. We can, if we will, get principal bearings and begin to find our way about in their interrelations, as we can, if we will, begin to find our way about the starlit sky by learning to recognize, first a few, and then more and more, of its wheeling constellations. In speech we distinguish first and foremost between the vowels and the consonants, the vowels expressing the inwardness, the feelings of man, while the consonants seek to represent, by gesturally reproducing them, the forms which create and uphold the outer world. But music as a whole is to speech as a whole rather as the vowels of speech are to its consonants. For while it is the function of speech to bring man into relation with the outer world, music is there to relate him to himself.

Taking the vowels themselves, it is not so very difficult to acquire a feeling for the very great qualitative differences between them, if we allow ourselves to dwell on them inwardly. Bring yourself to meditate a little on *a* (English sound *ah*) and *u*, letting them well and truly resound and sing in the place where unheard melodies 'pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone', and you will come to feel how, in an almost literal sense, they differ from each other *toto caelo*. A large part of the two lectures to which I have referred was concerned with the contrast between the "forward" vowels *o* and *u* on the one hand, and the "back" vowels *a* and *e* (*eh*) on the other; and with the fact that this polarity—not of the vowels themselves, but of the *experience* of them—is found again in music, in the experience of major and minor. I can really do no more than indicate, for the benefit of those who may be minded to read them, the sort of thing that is to be found in these two books, *Eurhythmies as Visible Speech* and *Eurhythmies as Visible Song*. It is characteristic that some of Steiner's most precious observations on the subject of *speech* are to be found in the latter.

The combination of extreme fineness with unfathomable depth of much of the thought in these books is simply overwhelming. On a hasty reading superficial contradictions will appear by reason of that very fineness. For instance, the sound *o* expresses essentially an outgoing of the human being from himself, even of his astral from his physical—and yet the *gesture*, like the shape of the letter, is an enclosing one. Or, again, Dr. Steiner remarks that the uttering of *a* implies the plunging of the astral right down into the physical and with that a sense of well-being. (*Wohlbefinden*). Yet two pages later we are told that *a* (and the minor in music) implies the mood or experience of sickness (*Kranksein*). There is a key to these apparent contradictions, and it is precisely that delicate reciprocity of giving and receiving to which I have already referred. We shall make nothing of these books, or of Eurhythmies, unless we keep firm hold of this key. But if we do keep hold of it, we find it opening the door of eternity. It is what I had in mind when I emphasized, earlier in this article, the close relation between the art of Eurhythmies and the Christ impulse.

But this very relation makes it all the more necessary not to confuse aesthetic judgments with moral judgments. If we do fall into that error, we shall find that in one respect art is very unchristian. For Christianity looks to the intention rather than the deed, whereas the artistic merit of a work of art lies not in intention but in achievement. The point is, not, has it done the artist a lot of good, but, did it *come off*? Not, what was he aiming at, but, did he hit it? There is no substitute, in fact, for artistry. Nothing of all that has been said here proves that Eurhythmies is suitable for presentation to an audience by performance on the stage. That can only be proved by presenting it, and presenting it with artistry.

If, however, the critical complain *on principle* that there *must* be a lack of variety in the movements they see; if they suggest that the whole mode of expression is unfree, *because* it accepts certain established correspondences between sound and gesture; or again, if they say that Eurhythm is *unnecessary*, because the poem or the sonata was written to stand by itself and is sufficient (why therefore add Eurhythm?), then they invite replies.

The sounded consonants and vowels in a single English pentameter may be something like fifty, but there will not be time to present more than 2 or 3 of them eurhythmically. This seems to me to allow, plenty of room for artistry in selection and combination; and as to freedom, the material in which an artist works, the notes of the scale, the metre of verse, or the qualities of marble and pigment, are as much his opportunities as they are his limitations; indeed they are opportunities because they are limitations. The other objection—that Eurhythm is an unnecessary, because merely ancillary, form of expression—appears to me to be based on a misconception of its nature. Eurhythm should not be thought of as re-expressing what the music or words are expressing in another way. The music or the poem should rather be regarded as its subject-matter, which it then uses, as the poet or painter uses nature or man directly, and out of which it fashions a fresh work of art altogether. It is a creative art at one remove, not an executive art.

Here it is borne in upon me that the actual performance on the stage is not in truth, as I said it would be, the point from which I started, but the point at which I have at last succeeded in arriving; that I have written much more about language than about Eurhythm and that I have really only succeeded in *setting* the stage for most of the things I wanted to say. Perhaps it was necessary, and, for the rest, perhaps there will be another opportunity, or somebody else will say them better.

Note: It is a pleasure to acknowledge the heavy debt which this article owes to Miss Marguerite Lundgren, of the London School of Eurhythm. I remain the sole author of its deficiencies.—O. B.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE E.E.G.?

Karl König, M.D. (Vienna).

"The Living Brain", by Grey Walter, (*Duckworth* 15/-)

A REVIEW of this book in *The Observer*, last June, opened with the following words: "This is a fascinating book, but a difficult one to review, for the ground it covers is wide and varied and often new, deriving largely from the researches of Dr. Grey Walter and his colleagues at the Burden Neurological Institute, Bristol, during the last ten years. They have been working with the electroencephalograph, recording and studying the rhythms of electrical activity which sweep through the 10,000 million cells of the human brain".

Though it is a brilliantly written book, full of intelligent sparks and witty remarks, it is so full of wrong statements and haphazard thinking that it is difficult for a reviewer to do justice to the positive qualities of *The Living Brain*.

Dr. Grey Walter writes in his foreword: "This book will be found a gentle book. There is no immodest exposure, no baring of the soul . . . thus it is also a pious book if measured by standards of habitual reverence for the known as well as the unknown in face of successive revelations". I must confess that I found this book one of the most overbearing products of the modern mind; filled with sweeping statements without adequate foundations; a book written with a pugnacious accent and mental pride.

The very first chapter, "Lords of the Earth", is a big piece of nonsense. From the start, Dr. Walter seems incapable of distinguishing between brain and mind, and although he hits, at the beginning, on some truth, when speaking of the "deep physiological division between man and ape" (page 2), he soon begins to wade through very shallow and muddy waters. He describes the evolution of plants and animals in a way which I can only compare to the manner of a television announcer demonstrating the "secrets of evolution". For example, "What happened so scandalously was that, with a millennial shudder of awakening not unlike our minor post-war rhapsody of a generation ago, the plant world discovered sex. The vegetable kingdom, hitherto blossomless, was swept by a delirium of public lovemaking into the fantastic exhibitionism of the flowers". (p. 6). These are the "scientific" modesties which Dr. Grey Walter calls pious.

He passes quickly from the vegetable kingdom to the animal world, and proceeds: "Then comes the moment—or the hidden process of many million years—in which the inherent mobility of animal cell and organism exploits the next evolutionary jump". This miraculous jump leads to the elaboration of sensitivity. I shall again quote the writer's own words: "We have to visualise an

elementary system of control by which the forward part of an organism can obtain information and feed it back internally for guidance of its operative motor nerve centres. . . . Feedback as the first act of creation, or as the process of continuous creation, is a pretty subject for the metaphysician". (p. 9).

Evolution continues further, and in Dr. Walter's view it looks as follows: "Some distant cousin of jellyfish or starfish, spawned with a deformity of its nerve-net, steered its way a little more safely through the crowded primordial sea. The abnormally congested forward units of the nerve-nets provided a dominant group of food-and-danger predictors, overpowering with their local majority the unorganised influence of the remaining few nerve-filaments. So, profiting by the accident of its congenital deformity, the worm-to-be survived a little longer than its normal fellows and begat a race of creatures inheriting the tangled knots of nerve in head and belly". (pp. 9/10). Now we know where we come from: a cell grew into a nerve cell in order to become an electrical conductor; feedback intervened as a miracle of creation, and an accidental congenital deformity gave rise to the further evolution of animals. So far, I think, these examples are enough to show the fundamental thought-qualities of this part of the book. Dr. Walters continues in this first chapter with further feedback-statements of similar quality, until at the end the human brain appears as a tremendous computing machine which is worth while investigating.

2.

If the first chapter is mainly an attempt to cover the prevailing ignorance on the true facts of evolution, the second chapter, "A Mirror for the Brain", contains some fundamental mistakes. It deals with the development of electro-physiology and its last attainment: The electro-encephalogram (E.E.G.).

Dr. Walter mentions the foolish Greeks, who did not even have a word for brain, and then starts to ponder: "Was there, among the mysteries behind the altar, concealed perhaps in the Minerva myth, a suspicion of something more in the head than a thing, and that the organ which had to do the knowing of itself must be an organ of reflection?" (p. 21). He quotes Shakespeare, Descartes and Hobbes until he reaches the statement of Dr. David Hartley, who in 1749 suggested that "mental phenomena are derived from rhythmic movements in the brain—vibrations, he called them". (p. 22). And here Dr. Walter sees the first dawn of his present belief. A belief which is nothing but the superstition that mental phenomena have their source in the electric energy of nerve cells. Why this superstition is made and held throughout the book as a kind of dogma is un-understandable. Continuously, brain and mind, electric energy and mental activity, are mixed up or interpolated for one another.

The question of how electric energy arises in animal tissue is not answered: "There is still controversy about the origin and nature

of animal electricity . . . there is no evidence that the electric energy in nerve cells is generated by electro-magnetic induction or by the accumulation of a static charge". (p. 24).

Dr. Walter then tells, in his fascinating way, of the first discovery of the E.E.G. by Berger in 1928, and the gradual acceptance of his experiments, with their further development, in this country especially, and in America. Dr. Walter compares the brain with Cinderella, because "workers in the English laboratories had not permitted themselves to explore further than the top of the spinal cord. One took an anatomical glance at the brain, and turned away in despair". (p. 27). This is a very subjective statement, and does not conform to views generally held. And then: "Berger waved the fairy wand in 1928; the transformation of Cinderella was a process of years". (p. 29). The result of this process is the new electro-physiology of the brain, revealed by the findings of the electro-encephalogram.

The outcome of all this is described in the following way: "The electrical changes which give rise to the alternating currents of variable frequency and amplitude thus recorded arise in the cells of the brain itself; there is no question of any other power supply. The brain must be pictured as a vast aggregation of electrical cells, as numerous as the stars of the Galaxy, some 10,000 million of them, through which surge the restless tides of our electrical being, relatively thousands of times more potent than the force of gravity". (p. 33). Here Dr. Walter speaks of something which is in fact nothing, because to picture the brain "as a vast aggregation of electrical cells" is in itself nonsense. The brain does consist of millions of nerve-cells, and a nerve-current running through these cells and their appendant filaments and fibres can be measured by electrical means. But nobody, so far, has proved that this nerve-current is in itself electrical; it is probably not; yet Dr. Walter speaks confidently of "our electric being". What is this electric being but a wild television of something which is of an entirely different nature? Indeed, Dr. Walter confesses: "What makes these million cells act together—or indeed what causes a single cell to discharge—is not known. We are still a long way from any explanation of these basic mechanics of the brain". (pp. 33/34).

Then he describes the way in which an E.E.G. is read, and especially the ingenious device of the toposcope, which helps to decipher the language of the E.E.G. "E.E.G. records may be considered, then, as the bits and pieces of a mirror for the brain, itself *speculum speculorum*". (p. 35).

3.

The following chapters of the book are still more speculative in character than the first two. It is sometimes astounding to see what kind of thought-forms can develop if there is no proper understanding for the difference between brain and mind.

The third chapter deals with pattern, and comes to the conclusion that: "Man seeks patterns for his comfort and, in English at least, can boast himself a pattern-making animal". (p. 41). This leads to further conclusions in chapters six and seven, wherein ideas on "Learning about Learning" and "Seven Steps from Chance to Meaning" are computed in such a way that Pavlov's conditioned reflexes, behaviourism and electro-physiology are permuted in order that a "cybernetics" of the human brain may emerge as the final result.

To trace all the errors and mental mistakes in these chapters, one would have to write a new book. On the other hand, in the course of the fourth chapter, "Revelation by Flicker", the first proper facts are described, and here we should start to observe and try to understand.

There is no doubt that we owe a tremendous debt to Dr. Walter, and all those who have worked in the field of electrophysiology, for their continuous efforts in trying to establish the fundamental laws of the E.E.G. No praise is high enough for their devoted labour, but no scorn and anger are strong enough for the fancy of their theoretical elaborations.

One of the first facts is that the main electric rhythm discharged from the head (not from the brain) appears only when the eyes are shut; as soon as the eyes are opened these rhythms disappear; they also disappear at once when the subject is asked to solve a mathematical problem or to concentrate on some visual mental process. Thus a very subtle indication of mental activity is found within the records of an E.E.G.

Later it was discovered that this rhythm, which is interrupted by opening the eyes or by mental visualising activities, has a frequency of 8—13 cycles per second and can be clearly distinguished from other rhythms. The former rhythm is now commonly called the alpha-rhythm.

A new step was made when a light-stimulus with a similar rhythm (8—13 cycles per second) was applied from without. "It was found, as expected, that each flash of light evoked in the brain a characteristic response . . . strange patterns, new and significant, emerged from the swift scribbling of the pens in all channels of the E.E.G." (p. 58).

These light stimuli were called flickers, and could produce seizures in certain people; but the flicker had also another effect: "This effect was a vivid illusion of moving patterns whenever one closed one's eyes and allowed the flicker to shine through the eyelids. The illusion is most marked when the flicker is between 8 and 25 flashes per second and takes a variety of forms. Usually it is a sort of pulsating check or mosaic, often in bright colours. At certain frequencies—around 10 per second—some subjects see whirling spirals, whirlpools, explosions, Catherine wheels". (p. 64).

The explanation which Dr. Walter holds ready for these phenomena is interesting, because he formulates his problem very clearly: "The light is stationary; the eyes are shut and do not move; the head and the brain are still. Yet something must move to produce moving patterns". (p. 69). If Dr. Walter would remain at this question, and not fall back into the preconception that such phenomena must arise "in the brain" (p. 70) he would have to state: As the eyes do not move, nor the brain, nor the outer light, there must be another realm which either creates these phenomena or is of such a nature that "flicker" can evoke these strange reactions. Dr. Walter deduces that a "scanning mechanism" must be "contained in the human head", and is able to visualize this scanning only in the guise of television, "where a space pattern is most economically converted for transmission into a time sequence of impulses by the scanning mechanism of the camera". (pp. 69/70).

Such a mechanism, however, would never be able to convert rhythmical flicker stimuli into these manifold moving forms, which are experienced in all kinds of shades and degrees. If Dr. Walter, and all those who have experienced the great power of flicker-stimuli, followed the logic of the case, they would be led to consider that neither the eye nor the brain is touched by the flicker test, but that these physical organs are by-passed, and that rhythmic light-impulses contact a realm which is so far unknown to us: a realm wherein moving patterns are stirred into active images which present themselves to the human mind. Everyone who suffers from migraine has sometimes experienced, during the onset of such an attack, these strange phenomena of colour-patterns. The realm wherein they are created is the realm of those living forces which Rudolf Steiner described as the ether-body of man. Flicker has the power to cause direct reactions in this ether-body, and, as the ether body is a living entity, it creates moving and swirling images.

The wrong approach to explaining the miracle of the flicker-test, in applying only ideas of feed-back to it, led to the conception of an electrical scanning mechanism; but, as I said before, nobody has so far been able to prove that nerve-activity is electrical in nature; this nerve-activity reveals itself by electrical means, but in itself is not electrical. It is of the same etheric nature as the etheric body; that is why subtle electric means, such as those of the E.E.G., can indicate the flow of the ether-forces.

These forces are irritated by the flicker test to a rather high degree, and produce what was described above. At this point the science of the E.E.G. has made the great discovery of the supersensible sphere of the living forces in man. The scientists will have to acquire the courage to acknowledge this fact.

4.

The really important parts of the book are contained in chapters eight and nine: "Intimations of Personality" and "Beyond the

Waking Scene". In these two chapters proper facts are given, which are of great significance for further studies.

Here the four different rhythms, which can occur in the records of an E.E.G., are described :

The delta-rhythms with 0.5 to 3.5 cycles per second.

The theta-rhythms with 4 to 7 cycles per second.

The alpha-rhythms with 8 to 13 cycles per second.

The beta-rhythms with 14 to 30 cycles per second.

It took a comparatively long time and many thousands of records before, in a single E.E.G., the differentiation between these four cycles was worked out. Now the science of E.E.G. is so far on as to ascribe to each one of these cycles a distinctive connection with special mental activities.

The delta-rhythm. This is "the normal and indeed dominant rhythm in the first year of life and in sleep". (p. 54). "At birth, and for some months after, the main feature of the E.E.G. is still irregular delta rhythms. The more passive and somnolent the infant, the more prominent are the delta rhythms". (p. 137).

The presence of delta-rhythms is also met with in a great variety of brain-defects, such as vascular lesions, neoplasms, atrophy of the cortex, etc.

It is therefore justified to describe the delta-rhythms as an indicator for lack of day-consciousness—as in the little baby, or in an individual with a severe brain defect who is dulled in his day-consciousness, or in an adult during sleep. This condition of a considerably lowered day-consciousness can be indicated by the appearance of the delta-rhythms.

The theta-rhythms. "Theta activity is usually dominant in records of the 2—5 years age groups; it is approximately equal to alpha activity at 5—6 years; it is smaller above 6 years, and very small or intermittent at 10". (p. 140).

Whereas in the small infant only the delta-rhythms can be found, they are later replaced by the theta-activity, which is at first the dominant record but is gradually superseded by the alpha-rhythms. This gives a rather clear indication of the gradual development of the E.E.G. records during childhood.

"It soon became clear that theta is associated in some delicate fashion with pleasure and pain. It is easily evoked in a young child, for instance, by frustration, by snatching away a proffered sweet . . . In some children the theta activity is clearly associated with affective changes of any sort; in some it is linked only with pleasant feeling; in others only with unpleasant ones". (p. 140).

"In ordinary circumstances the theta rhythms are scarcely visible in good-tempered adults; but they may be evoked even in them if the subject feels himself deeply offended". (p. 142). "In bad-tempered adults, especially in those with an unusual tendency to aggressive behaviour, the theta rhythms are often prominent". (p. 144).

"Visual stimulation at the frequency of the theta rhythm evokes, even in a normal subject, a feeling of annoyance and frustration . . . the mood changes completely without any external emotional stimulus".

Here we find an entirely different picture: the theta-rhythms are connected with a person's more or less uncontrolled emotional life, whether painful or pleasant. This life of feelings is less conscious than our ordinary day consciousness, and we know from Rudolf Steiner that all our feelings are intimately related to our dream-consciousness. Thus the theta-rhythms indicate their connection with the existence of our dreams. This is further substantiated by the fact that these rhythms show a very marked connection with the thalamic regions of the brain, of which Rudolf Steiner spoke in his first lecture on "Occult Physiology", stating that this thalamic region is responsible for evoking our dreams. This is borne out by the following fact: "The resulting correlation of the theta rhythm with the thalamus and structures around the third ventricle has been elaborated by Denis Hill in connection with aggressive psychopathy". (p. 141).

The alpha-rhythms. So far, these rhythms are not only the alpha, but also the omega, of all electro-encephalograms. They show certain fundamental qualities related to the mental condition of the subject, and it is especially interesting to learn about their gradual appearance during childhood. "For some time it was thought that the alpha rhythms of adult life are rarely found in children less than 8 years old; later analytical technique was more revealing . . .". (p. 137). After the third year, "rhythms of the alpha type begin to appear in short bursts, often at considerable amplitude. In some children of 4 they are even the dominant feature of the record, although the typically infantile rhythms are still visible". (p. 139). "When the alpha rhythms first appear in very early childhood, they are scarcely responsive even to arresting visual stimulation; they begin to show an unmistakable connection with vision only after the age of 3—4 years . . . but the classical blocking reaction appears clearly at the age of 6—7 in some children. Statistically, adult responsiveness is not found before the age of 10—11". (p. 139).

With all these findings it is clearly shown that alpha-rhythms make their appearance only gradually during the course of childhood, and are firmly established at about the age of 10 years. They do not appear before the third year; only after the age of seven do they begin to show what Dr. Walter calls so justifiably, "the classical blocking reaction"—the reaction which, from the days of Berger on, showed them to be affected by the opening and shutting of the eyes and by concentration on some mental problems.

What is now in fact this classical reaction? We should be very clear about one point: Each of the different rhythms is an indicator of some mental activity; it points to the quality of this mental

activity, which can be described as a grade of consciousness but not as an electrical force in itself. If mental activity which is related to the alpha-rhythms is interrupted at the moment when the eyes are opened, or while a visual mental problem is being solved, what kind of quality can it have? We remember that alpha-rhythms disappear during sleep, and are best obtained when the waking mind is at rest. Therein lie the most important discoveries of electrophysiology, because these facts clearly indicate that the alpha-rhythms are related to a state of consciousness which can be described as "quietly awake". The mind is not yet engaged in seeing the outside world or concentrated on a mental problem; a kind of wakeful "dolce far niente" is present, which the alpha-rhythms indicate.

Dr. Walter takes great pains to show (especially in the third chapter) that a "scanning-activity" of the brain, as he calls it, is revealed by the alpha rhythms. I believe it is just the opposite; not a scanning activity, but the restful quiescence of day consciousness, is the background of the alpha forms. Like the even, plane, mirror-surface of a lake, undisturbed by any moving boat, just slightly touched by a gentle breeze, so is our waking consciousness. As soon as a boat cuts through the waters, or a falling stone creates a pattern of ripples, the even surface is disturbed. In the same way, as soon as our eyes are opened, or our mental activity is fixed on a problem, the alpha-rhythms disappear, because the even mirror of our day consciousness is interrupted by mental activity. Nothing else can show more clearly that every one of the three rhythms, caught in the records of the E.E.G., indicates one of the ordinary realms of consciousness:

The delta-rhythms are related to sleep-consciousness.

The theta-rhythms are related to dream-consciousness.

The alpha-rhythms are related to waking-consciousness.

It is not the mental content, contained within each of these three stages of consciousness, which is indicated by any electric waves; it can be pain or pleasure, light from outside or thinking activity from within; it can be sleep brought on by fatigue or a special drug. It is the condition itself, not the content within the condition of consciousness, that the E.E.G. reveals.

The following statement is noteworthy: "In no two people are the alpha-rhythms the same. Not even identical twins have quite identical alpha patterns. But in any one person the pattern is remarkably constant from year to year, once cerebral maturity has been reached at the age of 14 or so". (p. 136). Every one of us has his own special and individualized "lake of peace", giving him the foundation for his day consciousness.

The beta-rhythms. These very special rhythms are associated with epilepsy, and they "are well known to be common in tension, whether acute or in the form of chronic anxiety states" (p. 102). These rhythms are being widely investigated, but to discuss their significance is beyond the scope of this short article. Nevertheless,

a closer examination could relate them to a special state of consciousness, which in the terms of spiritual science is called "Imagination".

5.

We have now come so far that we can understand the true meaning of the different rhythms within the E.E.G. records. They give us a picture-pattern of the various stages of consciousness related to the subject who is investigated. No E.E.G. reveals anything about the content of mental-activity; it describes only the sphere or spheres in which a mental process happens.

Therefore Dr. Walter "must confess at this stage that no study of brain activity has thrown any light on the peculiar forms of behaviour known variously as second sight, clairvoyance, telepathy, extra-sensory perception and psychokinesis". (p. 175). And he has also to state that "hypnosis has little or no effect on brain rhythms". (p. 174).

Altogether, the so-called brain-rhythms have hardly anything to do with the brain itself. This is borne out by the statements of other scientific workers in the field of E.E.G. Denis Williams writes in *Clinical Electroencephalography* (Modern Trends in Neurology, London, 1951): "Recent work has confirmed the earlier finding that cerebral lesions themselves do not give rise to abnormal rhythms. The disturbances which are seen in the E.E.G. in such cases are the result of abnormalities in the surrounding brain, so that the E.E.G. simply reflects the response of the brain to the abnormal state". Even this statement is a half-truth, because it is not the surrounding brain which reacts to the cerebral lesion, but the changed condition of consciousness, due to this lesion, which creates the disturbance in the E.E.G. records.

We should also note what Denis Williams has to say in the same paper about the diagnostic value of the E.E.G.: "It is unusual for the test itself to provide absolute evidence in support of a single diagnosis, and it should certainly never be used with this end in view. A large number of normal people have abnormal records, and many epileptics have normal ones; the degree of abnormality varies greatly, and many disorders which have a profound effect on the patient may be unassociated with any abnormality in the E.E.G.". This statement describes quite clearly what I have pointed to above; it is not the content of the mental activity, but its condition of consciousness, that is represented in the findings of an E.E.G.

Therefore, also, mental illness "is usually accompanied only by the most subtle and evanescent changes in the E.E.G.". (p. 154)

6.

Should we now be satisfied with our findings, or still try to go one step further? Do we know anything about our conditions of consciousness? Have they at all been described and investigated? To modern psychology a good amount of their contents is known, but only Rudolf Steiner has described them as conditions *per se*.

They reveal themselves to the clairvoyant eye of the seer, and to him they make their appearance in the form of the human aura. This human aura is described by Rudolf Steiner in some detail in his book *Theosophy* (Kegan Paul, London, 1922). There he states: "The aura varies greatly according to the different temperaments and dispositions of people; it varies also in accordance with the stages of spiritual development. A man who yields completely to his animal impulses has an entirely different aura from one who lives much in the world of thought. The aura of a religiously disposed nature differs essentially from one that loses itself in the trivial experiences of the day. In addition to this, all varying moods, all inclinations, joys and pains find their expression in the aura".

Now we can understand that, in varying degrees, the forms and patterns of the aura are detected by the devices of an E.E.G. It is not an electro-encephalogram at all, but an aura-gram revealed by electric means.

When Rudolf Steiner then continues to describe certain aspects in the changing conditions of the aura, he says, for instance: "Feelings of injured dignity which expend themselves in a sudden welling up can be seen appearing in dark green clouds . . . If one observes a man in a fit of terror one sees this for instance in the aura from top to bottom as undulating stripes of blue colour, suffused with a bluish-red shimmer . . . Persons who are greatly excited by every external impression shew a continuous flickering of small reddish-blue spots and flecks in the aura . . . So-called 'absent-mindedness' shows bluish flecks playing over into green and more or less changing in form".

These phenomena, which are so precisely described here, are similar to the phenomena which are recorded by the E.E.G. A closer study of the human aura and the various charts of an E.E.G. will show their intimate relationship. What the clairvoyant eye describes in vivid colour-experiences is in a more abstract way depicted by the writings of an E.E.G. record. This record is the shadow, the electric shadow, of the vivid, colourful life of the human aura.

This aura, however, is in immediate interplay with our ether-body, and receives from it its colours and patterns. The aura, as a phenomenon of human soul-activities, is clothed with ether-forces. These ether-forces are revealed by electrical means, and as they are the intimate veil of the aura, the E.E.G. becomes an aura-gram. Electric potentials detect the ether-forces; the ether-forces are the garment of the aura; hence the moving and changing patterns of the aura appear via the ether-body in the rhythms of the E.E.G.

7.

Never are the brain-cells swept through by electrical activity. Electrical forces permeate the whole physical structure of man and have a special place of resistance and concentration around the skull; therefore, they can be most easily traced there. It is a similar

phenomenon to the one of the northern lights, which are best seen in the polar regions of the globe; there they appear around and above the earth and correspond to the weather-conditions of the surrounding atmosphere. No-one would think that the earth is nothing but a body for creating the aurora borealis. So also is the brain not in the least a structure which is nothing but a tremendous electronic computing machine. The aurora borealis is an indicator of the atmospheric conditions in the same sort of way that the E.E.G. is a record of human conditions of consciousness.

When Dr. Walshe, one of the most eminent neurologists of our time and a very clear thinker, gave the Hughling Jackson Lecture in December, 1952 on "Thoughts upon the Equation of Mind with Brain" (*Brain*, Vol. 76, part I, 1953) he said: "We must abandon the assumption that the human person is nothing more than a focus for the hurrying to and fro of molecules, or his mind no more than a bloodless dance of action potentials . . . and finally we have to accept the ancient concept of the soul again: as an immaterial, non-corporeal part of the human person, and yet an integral part of his nature, not just some concomitant aspect of man, but something without which he is not a human person".

At the end of his lecture, Dr. Walshe describes quite justifiably the modern representatives of the electric-computer school of psychology in the following words: "This is the Peter Pan school of science, the exponents of which do not grow up, but are now always popping up before the footlights, beseeching us to believe in their electronic fairies, lest their naive hypotheses die untimely".

The same words hold good for this book, *The Living Brain*. The title is entirely wrong. What it presents is a ghost-like spectre of the real brain, a structure so little known, yet so intricate and beautiful, that only in some centuries to come will man be able to start understanding it.

Dr. Walter's book is a most dangerous piece of writing, simply because the layman who reads it will be fascinated by its brilliance and the subtle way in which facts and fancies are mixed together and replaced by one another.

If men such as Dr. Walter cannot resist computing their ideas into unfounded statements, the public should be educated in order to be able to distinguish between right and wrong. It is more than dangerous to utter the following defamation: "Wherever two or three nerve cells are gathered together, a seizure may occur". (p. 61). This is sheer slander, and I should like to end this review with the words used by Dr. Walshe in concluding his above-mentioned lecture:

"For me, the chill physico-mathematical concept of the human mind is a muddy vesture of decay in which I am not willing to be enfolded. It is unworthy of the dignity of Man. Man was not made for science, but science by man, who remains more and greater than his creations."

THE SIEGE OF THE SENSES

Michael Wilson

WHATEVER may prove to be the political rights and wrongs of commercial television, it is evident that the Englishman has a canny fear that if it were allowed in this country he might well find that he had thrown open the gate of his castle to a kind of Trojan Horse.

We do in fact regard as slightly unfair the kind of attack which is planned to catch us off our guard by confronting us with an advertisement just at the moment when our attention is occupied with something else. As we travel on foot or by train it is the poster or the flashing sign which catches our eye; as we read our paper or journal it is the advertisement in the margin or between the pages of text which claims our grudging attention; while the prospect of being enticed to open our susceptibilities to a musical performance only to have detergents or deodorants hurled at us, is altogether too nauseating to contemplate. Of course it would not be as crude as this—so we are told—but the fact remains that if the advertiser were compelled to say, "Now I am going to advertise at you", before he displayed his wares, then it would no longer pay to advertise.

Even apart from advertising, our senses, particularly those of seeing and hearing, are the targets of a constant barrage of manufactured or reproduced information in the form of written matter, drawings and photographs, telephone, films, radio and now television. Let us take a closer look at the way in which some of these things work.

* * *

Many people who watched the televised Coronation found that they were unexpectedly moved by the dignity and solemnity of the whole occasion. It was therefore surprising that the two subsequent full-length films in colour dealing with the same event, for the most part with the same sights and sounds, should have left one with such a sense of emptiness and disappointment. Evidently the usual methods of film production and editing demanded that the general tempo should be increased and that on no account should our interest be allowed to flag. But flag it did, for what we found ourselves watching was not the unfolding of a great historical event, but the film makers' idea of what is good entertainment. Through having to condense five hours into one, the very quality which should have been conveyed was lost, and the spectator was unable to reconstruct it for himself.

In ordinary film-making it is accepted that the selecting, cutting, timing and piecing together of the numerous sequences that have been photographed is quite as important as the work of the actors, often more so. It is in fact perfectly possible to show a sequence of

pictures in such a way that the impression built up in the minds of the spectators is a train of thought which has nothing whatever to do with the actual events photographed. What, then, is the essence of all that is conveyed to us by cinema screen, television tube and loudspeaker?

When we look at a movie, whether in the cinema or on a television set, we owe the appearance of movement to an unconscious function of our own organism—the instinct to put successive pictures together into the idea of continuous movement. If there are less than about ten pictures per second, we shall see them as separate pictures and there will be no impression of smooth movement. As the number of pictures per second increases we become unable to see them as separate, but they join up into the appearance of continuous movements. This is due partly to the comparative slowness of our eye in perceiving changes, and partly to certain forces in us which tend to join up the separate parts of our experience into an intelligible and continuous pattern. The usual number of pictures is twenty-four per second. If we could perceive the actual movement of the pictures as they flit by in succession, with a dark interval between each, then the cinema would become an instrument of the most exquisite torture.

This inborn faculty of joining up, or integrating as we term it nowadays, is fundamental to the whole illusion of the moving picture and is mostly quite beyond our control. It is intimately connected with the forces of growth which hold our body together year after year in the same recognisable shape. But that it is we ourselves who do it is clearly shown in such instances as when a film is taken of a two-bladed aeroplane propeller in motion. Let us suppose that in the first picture the blades are in the "twelve o'clock—six o'clock" position, and by the time the second picture is taken they have moved around clockwise nearly half a revolution to the "five o'clock—eleven o'clock" position, and by the third picture to the "ten o'clock—four o'clock" position. The true movement of the one blade is from twelve o'clock to five o'clock to ten o'clock, but we cannot help taking the easier course and connecting the successive positions of alternate blades, namely twelve o'clock to eleven o'clock to ten o'clock and integrating them into a much slower movement in an anti-clockwise direction. This effect with turning wheels and propellers will be familiar to all cinema-goers and is mentioned only for the involuntary way in which our integrating takes the easiest course, regardless of whether it is the correct one or not.

Another piece of integrating which is almost as involuntary, and which we are continually doing in our waking life, is to combine the views from different viewpoints into the idea of three-dimensional space. First we do it with the views from our two eyes, and then in addition we do it with the different views we get as we walk about. Indeed, so long as we can change our viewpoint even if only by moving

our head, we can perceive "depth" of space almost as effectively with one eye as with two. This is what the film cameraman does when he gently wheels his camera sideways or winds it up or down to a different level while he is actually shooting a particular scene, and it enables us to integrate the different viewpoints into a very good idea of the three-dimensional space of the whole scene. After seeing the film which was recently advertised as "3-D as it should be seen" the writer observed that his memories of the various scenes depicted were neither more nor less spatial than they would have been after seeing a well-photographed two-dimensional version of the same thing. Only for conveying impressions of space which are too unusual or too dangerous to be common experiences, does the inconvenience and expense of the strictly stereoscopic system seem to be really justified. It will be interesting to watch this development when once the novelty has worn off.

* * *

In television, the picture is still further broken down, and correspondingly we are called upon to do still more integrating in putting it together again. We are in fact watching the antics of a single bright point of light smaller than the head of a pin. If we imagine an artist with a soft pencil drawing a picture by ruling straight lines across the paper very close together and making each line lighter or heavier as he goes along it according to the demands of the picture which is to appear, (many advertisements are drawn in this kind of style nowadays), and if we further imagine that it requires just under four hundred lines to fill up each picture, and that the artist has to draw twenty-five such completed pictures in each second, then for a moving picture the size of an average television screen his pencil will have to rush back and forth across the paper at a speed of the order of ten thousand miles an hour, without getting tired and without making mistakes. But this is just what the pin-point of light is doing all the time upon the television screen, and we are sitting comfortably in our armchair allowing the life-forces of our body to integrate the antics of this spot of light into the scenery of Westminster or Wimbledon. What is actually transmitted "on the air" is a form of electrical energy whose strength varies in a continuously changing pattern—a pattern which in essence could be represented by a single wavy line—and this pattern when translated into light and dark, chopped up and correctly fitted together again like a jigsaw puzzle, enables us to reconstruct the original scene with its splendour or its thrills.

The reproduction of music and of the human voice, though technically much simpler than television, is in itself an even greater miracle or perhaps an even greater sin. Edison's invention of the phonograph showed that not only could the human voice make its own impression upon a rotating cylinder of wax, but that this impression could be transmitted back to the air in such a way that a recognisable imitation of the original voice would arise. What

is actually recorded is nothing but a wavy groove in the wax surface, or a wavy boundary on the sound track of the film. To-day every schoolboy knows what a sound-track is and what it does, and we have quite lost all sense for the wonder that it contains. For is it not truly miraculous that the expressive power of the human voice, the individual colours of all the instruments of the orchestra, and in fact the whole world of emotion and magic of a Beethoven or a Wagner should be imprisoned as if by a spell into the pattern of a single wavy line, ready to be conjured up again whenever and wherever we choose to make the wavy line impart its pattern to the movement of the air? Here indeed the music and the word undergo a kind of death and resuscitation, in that they vanish altogether from our ken until the gramophone or loudspeaker calls them up again into a semblance of being. Of course our ordinary scientific explanations do not describe it like this, but nobody whose inner being receives new life through the experience of music really believes that music is nothing but a lot of mechanical vibrations which can be recorded on wire, wax, or film, any more than the recording engineer really believes that actually locked up in the confines of his wavy line is all the spirituality of a Beethoven quartet.

The question is a real one, but we mostly do not trouble to face it squarely. What can be *preserved* is a pattern impressed into matter; what can be *experienced* is the whole range of human understanding and emotion. The two things are in different worlds, worlds which meet only on the level of rhythmical movement. When the pattern can be made to reveal itself as rhythmical movement, it is able to become the vessel for the immaterial inner qualities which we experience in the world of tone—the qualities of music and of the human voice. Whereas pictures deal mostly with the external appearance of things, sounds take us at once to the inner nature of the thing that utters them, and it is a great question whether the gramophone is not a much more infernal instrument of deception than the camera and all that has followed from it. For even the best photograph or 3-D colour film will not deceive us into thinking that we are witnessing the original scene, whereas we can easily meet with conditions where it is very difficult to tell whether we are listening to a real voice or to its reproduction.

This raises a cardinal question: Is the invention a better one for imitating the reality more closely, or is it for that very reason less stimulating to the imagination and therefore more deadening in its influence? Here it seems necessary to distinguish between sights and sounds, for whereas the barest thumbnail sketch can convey a wonderfully living impression, a crude imitation of the human voice would strike nobody as having artistic value. All pictures, in so far as they are representational, are shadows of a greater reality, and in thinking us incomplete, leave us a certain degree of freedom, leave something for us to do for ourselves. Sounds on the other hand

are always real. There is no such thing as a picture of a sound which is not itself a sound of some kind. Therefore the mechanical reproduction of the human voice is a piece of deception at a far deeper level than any reproduction of visual impressions can reach.

* * *

Let us try to clarify this relation between the mechanics of communication and the content of what is communicated. Here is a simple experiment with some small dots punched out of black paper and then arranged in various ways. There are just a hundred of these small pieces, and the same pieces have been used in each of the four figures in the illustration. [see overleaf]

Fig. 1 The arrangement is irregular and the dots tell us nothing but their shape and size.

Fig. 2 The arrangement does not convey much at first sight, but when turned upside down and viewed from a distance of a couple of yards, it will probably convey a meaning which is quite irreconcilable with the shape of the dots themselves. (Most of the photographic illustrations in books and newspapers make use of this principle).

Fig. 3 The arrangement is all that matters, for we jump at once to the meaning of the sentence, regardless of whether the letters are made up of lines or round dots or any other shapes.

Fig. 4 A combination of three rhythmic spacings. If the black dots were air-holes in the revolving plate of a siren, this pattern would produce the sound of a major chord in music.

It will at once be evident that it must be a matter of complete indifference to any dot whether it represents part of a mere jumble, or part of a human face, part of a word or just an air vibration. It is in every case the pattern that is significant, and the pattern could be just the same if the dots were crosses or stars or of any other shape or colour. In fact the *meaning* of the arrangement is not on the material level at all. The material arrangement serves only to give us the cue for calling up a certain pictorial image in (2) and certain abstract thoughts in (3). In the case of (4) our intellect can only extract from the arrangement the rhythmic proportions 4-5-6, and it is only when these proportions are embodied into rhythmic movements of the air that an actual musical sound arises for our sense of hearing.

Everything therefore that can be recorded by means of writing, drawing, photographing, etc., contains this truth: that the material record which is preserved is no more than a kind of cue or reminder which prompts us to set our thinking, our imagination, to work. If we are familiar with the conventions employed—the language, the style of drawing, the laws of perspective and the conventions of drama or film production—we shall have no difficulty in constructing

for ourselves the kind of inner experience which the author wishes us to have. If we are unfamiliar with the conventions, then we shall be able to make little or nothing of the records. *Our perception of the content of these things is not a physical process at all; it is our thinking ego that does the perceiving, and this is already the beginning of supersensible activity.* What comes to us through our bodily senses is only a substratum; the *content* is of a purely spiritual character.

* * *

Like most of Man's inventions, these processes of communication and recording are a kind of unconscious projection of what takes place within himself. In the external world rhythmic patterns are transmitted, usually electrically; in Man the nerve impulses are also rhythmic and are able to generate minute electrical currents.¹ In neither the external nor the internal process is the actual *content* of our perception to be found, although without the rhythmic patterns there is no perception. What is more remarkable is that the brain physiologists tell us that the nerve impulses can go to one part of the brain and give rise to sensations of light, and that impulses of precisely the same kind can go to another part of the brain and produce sensations of sound, or even of touch or taste.² What is conveyed by the nerves bears even less resemblance to the *content* of the perception than the wireless waves bear to the finished television picture.

It is becoming clear that an altogether different approach to the problem will be necessary. Here there is great temptation to abandon the current cumbersome theories and to make a grand leap to the simple conclusion that all perception is direct and clairvoyant, and that our sense-mechanism is only for the purpose of limiting and directing the channels of our attention. Such a theory was published a couple of years ago.³ It certainly brings fresh air into the whole problem and is a stimulating new departure. But the danger of oversimplification is very great and one of the most important factors is liable to be left out altogether: namely, our own share of responsibility for the visual and mental images which we make, and which we use again and again in our efforts to integrate and comprehend the world. It is on the one hand a completely erroneous notion that the eye "takes in" the view, in the same way that the camera appears to do in a fraction of second. Though there is undoubtedly an optical image thrown upon the retina of our eye, we are never aware of it as such. Our awareness is entirely "out there" in the space around us. (Up to the time of Leonardo da Vinci, the idea was still current that we have tentacles of vision coming out of our eyes. Indeed, our direct experience of seeing can still support this view, and it is only our demand for materialistic formulation that rules it out). If on the other hand we say that whenever we see some-

thing "out there" we are in immediate, direct and even clairvoyant contact with the thing we are seeing, then we are at once tripped up by what we see in a mirror.

This looking-glass-world is a completely consistent one for our seeing ; we can survey it with measuring instruments, we can photograph it, we can see that it has the correct perspective. For our seeing, it is just as much "out there" as the real world. But if we try to enter this world with our bodies we soon find that it has no real existence. Our seeing has in fact invented a space which simply does not exist where we see it. We cannot say that we are in direct clairvoyant contact with the people, the flowers and the trees of the looking-glass-world. What our experience tells us is that when we use all our senses and concentrate our attention upon, say, a living flower or plant, we begin to enter more and more deeply into the plant's essential being. Our whole attention and consciousness is within the plant and not at all within ourself. But to do this we need the evidence of most of our senses taken together and integrated by very active and intense thinking. With a single sense used alone we are liable to great error, as with the mirror image, and may easily build for ourselves an idea of the plant which does not at all correspond to the plant's real nature. If we build up the idea which *belongs* to the plant we shall be brought into intimate communion with it. If we build up an idea which is *foreign* to the being of the plant, then we shall achieve no such intimate communion. But in every case it is *we* who do the building up of the idea or mental picture with which we approach the plant. Any theory of perception which ignores this factor will be dangerously misleading.

It is surprising how incomplete is the evidence which we collect from our single senses at any one moment. As long as we can pick up just enough to guide us to the general idea of what is around us, we are probably satisfied. Referring once more to Figures 2 and 3 in the illustration, our first reaction on seeing these is to be satisfied as soon as we have grasped the meaning and not to pay any attention to the way in which the features and letters are built up from standard units. It is interesting to watch how some features, such as the cross-stroke of the letter A and the eyes in the face which seem clearly visible when viewed at a distance, are no longer to be found when examined at close quarters.

The subservience of our actual sense-perceptions to the grasping of the underlying *idea* goes so far that if our preconceived ideas are very strong we can be convinced that we have seen and heard things which have not happened at all. In this connection professor Menzel's recent book on Flying Saucers makes interesting reading. He records how certain atmospheric optical phenomena have been observed many times during the past century, and how the observa-

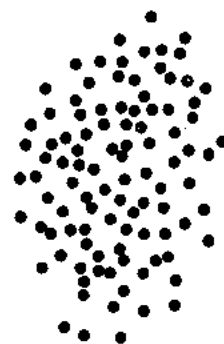


FIG. 1



FIG. 2

WHAT DOES THIS SAY?

FIG. 3



FIG. 4

tions by trained scientists are similar over a long period of time. But in 1897, when the possibility of airship flight was much in men's minds, the popular observations which filled the newspapers contained many features which could belong only to the current ideas of the behaviour of an airship. Fifty years later, the same basic phenomena are described with features which reflect current notions about space travel and the possible inhabitants of other planets.

* * *

The future of civilisation will be very largely influenced by the mental pictures which Man makes for himself. The pure discovery of Nature's secrets is giving place to the wilful creation of a new world which was not there before. So far, this new world looks like being one in which the forces of disintegration will play a leading part—disintegration not only at the material level, as for instance in the liberation of atomic energy, but also at the level of human thinking and human feeling. For the bonds of race and religion which formerly held human society together with such force are beginning to weaken, and if a man cannot find his own inner foundations for life he is either conscious of being a lonely soul or else is content to drift with the stream. This kind of moral disintegration is a challenge—even a necessary prelude—to the development of fully responsible individuality; for it is just in this inner chaos and uncertainty that freedom is to be found—in the realm where Man consciously builds his mental images, his inner idea-pictures, by bringing together what he abstracts from his sense perceptions and what he finds as impulses and ideals at the core of his innermost being. It is here that the battle for possession of the human soul is being fought, and here that Christ's words, "I will make you free", can have real meaning.

The Siege will continue. We shall have more films, more television, and still more complete illusion. There will be more plausible reasons for it, and indeed there will be many ways in which these inventions can be of real service to mankind, such as we found in the handling of the televised Coronation. There will also be sincere artists trying to express themselves in these media, though their freedom will become more and more curtailed. But the bare fact remains that the more complete the illusion—with panoramic views, three-dimensional space, sound, colour and movement—the less will be the scope for our imagination and for anything to do with true Art. For the task of the artist is to set our fancy free, not to imprison it on all sides with perfection of detail. That is perhaps the greatest menace of this world of counterfeit sense-perception which is being steadily built up. Our greatest need is to develop the power of imaginative perception with which we can penetrate the sense-appearances and awaken to the spiritual realities that lie beyond. The Lords of Darkness would not have us succeed, and with their

counterfeit world they seek to dazzle us with ever-new effects and thereby to lame this imaginative power before it is born, for should we penetrate the glittering facade we would find little more than grey shadows groping blindly in a dim and poverty-stricken world.

But the prospect is not entirely gloomy, for it is precisely in this man-made world that we can most readily awaken to the true working of our senses and our process of knowing, once we have brought ourselves to make the necessary effort.

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THE MAN AND THE MOLE

'Where are you going, immaculate mole,
 Burrowing deep?
 How shall your coat in that crumbly hole
 Still sable keep?'

'I go where servants have tended me
 Since soil began,
 To the luminous place where I like to be,
 O poor blind man'.

Sylvia Eckersley.

RILKE'S WAY

Rudolf Lissau

AN acute observer of the contemporary scene, the author of *Lifemanship* in fact, testifies to the great vogue of Rilke. It is a surprising fact; for in this country his reputation rests on his last poetry, an intensely personal and spiritual account of the world, strangely out of touch with many contemporary trends and fashions, and yet in some respects very close to Rudolf Steiner's picture of the world.

Many readers of the *Golden Blade* will remember Herr Steffen's article in the 1949 issue, in which he dealt with Rilke and Cézanne. He stressed the differences in outlook between himself and Rilke, and Rilke's cool, rather non-committal reaction to a lecture by Rudolf Steiner; and finally he pointed to certain features of Rilke's view of man and the world, at which he, as an anthroposophist, looked askance. We were also given an impression of the striking personality of Rilke, whom Steffen met during the war of 1914—18.

Another account of meetings with Rilke is given by Hans Carossa, who first saw Rilke at the very same time and place as Steffen had done. Carossa is Germany's most important contemporary writer; he has had personal contact with anthroposophists and is a medical doctor and Goetheanist. His account and criticism of Rilke take up 18 pages of an autobiographical book, *Führung und Geleit*. We are concerned with one passage only, which is, however, not isolated, but the climax of Carossa's whole argument. He is quoting Rilke, though not in the latter's own words, as saying:

"He had learned from Rodin to look so often and so penetratingly at a tree, an animal, a statue, a man or an historical figure, until suddenly there appeared within him an essential vision (*eine wesenhafte Erscheinung*) of the object contemplated".

Carossa continues:

"This method was not completely unknown to me; a small anthroposophical essay which had come to my notice stated the same; but I considered such spiritual training much too difficult and lengthy to think myself capable of it".

These two statements seem to suggest that Rilke's method of cognition and creation was not identical with Rudolf Steiner's approach; and yet that the two had so much in common that a very sensitive observer thought they were, essentially, in agreement with each other.

In this essay I shall have to refrain from treating Rilke as a poet in order not to overrun my limits, and must keep to a discussion of

his spiritual development. Nor do I feel qualified to pronounce on the question—discussed by Steffen and Rilke—whether the poet gains or loses by an accumulation of precisely formulated spiritual knowledge.

* * *

The time when Steffen and Carossa met the poet was the darkest period of Rilke's life. The war had shattered him, deprived him of the places which had become his home, and cut him off from the main-spring of his imagination. While conceivably Rilke might have reacted more positively to Rudolf Steiner at another period of his life, there was a second, more fundamental obstacle in his way. All his life he had been frightened of receiving knowledge, a revulsion from the typical nineteenth-century education he had had at school. His contacts had to be personal and intimate to bear any fruit.

Indeed, it is one of Rilke's claims to greatness that in this age of intellectualism he never dealt in other men's experiences and ideas. Here is a poet who once shocked his friends with the confession that he could not remember having read either *Hamlet* or *Faust*. What Rilke had to say is the fruit of his own insight into the mysteries of existence, and he speaks his own, unique language. It is tragic that because of these peculiarities Rilke did not recognise the genius of Rudolf Steiner; it is inspiring to see Rilke in his own struggling and independent effort come so near to Rudolf Steiner's method and to some of the latter's discoveries.

This is why an understanding of Rudolf Steiner's work is so valuable an aid for the study of Rilke's later poetry. Usually Rilke's critics take one of two lines. If schooled in French symbolism, they are inclined to treat Rilke's poetry as an imaginative and poetic creation which contains no 'message'; while the German-trained scholar tries to discover a definite philosophy which he goes on to test, finds untenable and therefore discards. It is the burden of this essay to treat Rilke as a 'teacher', as distinct from a philosopher or an artist in an ivory tower.

Rilke's development led to a conscious preparation for artistic creation which is closely bound up with moral and spiritual values, the general significance of which Rilke was able to perceive. Rilke's importance as a teacher lies in the fact that, as already stated, he achieved a unique and personal vision and then realised that he had found a new and universally valid approach to life. Here he is in obvious contrast with such outstanding men as Thomas Mann or C. S. Lewis, whose imaginative life (20th century) is sharply divided from their conscious intellect, which harks back, in the one case to the late nineteenth century, in the other to the Middle Ages. Rilke's vision arises out of a unique interplay of imagination, intellect and meditation, and ought to be of great interest alike to the anthroposophist and to the general reader.

We must try to find in Rilke's poetry not so many ideas, but spiritual processes: in fact, active meditation or the fruit of meditation. Subjective as the imagery is, we again and again enter a region which is common to us all. A region which contains no static ideas, but growth and development, a truly dynamic life. To take as an example the eleventh poem of the second part of the *Sonnets to Orpheus*; if read as a logical statement, this poem seems to condone cruelty and drew a very bitter comment from an unusually sensitive critic, J. B. Leishman. In reality, the poet takes us through three stages of dealing with an experience, three stages which are clearly demarcated by three dots which separate one from two, and again two from three. The first stage describes an unusual and rather unsportsmanlike form of shooting birds, evidently most repugnant to the sensitive poet. So, as an inner exercise, he forces himself, in the second part of the poem, to take this chase into pure vision, to have it before the inner eye in all its details without allowing the emotions to rise up and interfere. This pure vision crystallises into the intuitive insight that killing, destruction, is an essential part of our existence on earth. But then the poet rises above this insight and redeems it. In his meditation he no longer views the slaughter from without, he experiences it from within, and himself becomes the object and victim:*

*Many a rule of death rose with deliberate rightness,
onwardly-conquering man, during your hunting past:
better than trap or net known to me, fluttering whiteness,
you they were wont to hang down in the cavernous Karst.*

*Gently letting you in, as were you a token
publishing peace. But then: vassal would twitch at your
thong,
Night would cast from the caves pallid handful of broken-
flighted doves to the light . . .
Not even that, though, was wrong.*

*Far from the gazer remains every emotion but gladness,
not from the hunter alone, gathering, watchful and keen,
that which his suns have matured.*

*Killing merely is one form of our wandering sadness . . .
Pure in the spirit serene
Is all we ourselves have endured.*

* The English translations of the poems used are by J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender, (Hogarth Press). They produce the atmosphere of the original and could hardly be improved upon. But we ought to note that in line 12 of the following poem, 'merely' is not suggested by the text of the original and diminishes the emphasis of the line. In line 9, 'every emotion but gladness' seems unwarranted when the German demands something like 'any suggestion of regret'. And it ought to be added that the word translated beautifully by 'gazer' suggests in German 'beholder', one contemplating a vision or meditation.

This element of meditation permeates much of Rilke's later work, and is the subject of the last of the *Sonnets* :

*Silent friend of so much distance, feeling
how your breath goes on enlarging space,
fill the darkest belfry with your pealing.
You are gnawed by something growing apace*

*stronger than the feeding strength it borrows.
Wander through transforming shade or shine.
Which has grieved you most of all your sorrows?
Turn, if drinking's bitter, into wine.*

*Be, in this immeasurable night,
at your senses' cross-ways magic cunning,
be the sense of their mysterious tryst.*

*And, should earthliness forget you quite,
murmur to the quiet earth : I'm running.
Speak to the swift water : I exist.*

Rilke's work falls into three periods : search, awareness, fulfilment. The first period is no longer of compelling interest, and attracts the biographer and psychologist more than the lover of poetry. It culminates in two works, *The Book of Hours*, and *The Lay of Love and Death of Cornet Christopher Rilke*, both outstanding among contemporary poetry, yet not on a level with Rilke's later work. To understand the latter, we need know very little of what happened to the poet before his twenty-eighth year. He was born in Prague in 1875. The psychologist might dwell on his unhappy and frustrated childhood, on the boarding school reminiscent of a nineteenth-century English public school, with its lack of privacy and its insensitive masters and boys. For us it is important merely to notice his mother's sentimental religious life, which destroyed for ever Rilke's belief in Christianity, and the unimaginative teaching at school, which made him question for ever the value of education as he had seen it, handing on established standards from generation to generation. From now on Rilke was engaged in a lonely search in which no organised church, no traditional belief in the classics or other permanent values, could support him.

His first creations were rather unpromising attempts in verse, prose and drama : sentimental, vague, often lush. Two journeys to Russia, a lasting experience, increased his native tendency to mysticism. The decisive influence, however, was to come from the West. A journey to Italy and a prolonged stay at the artists' colony at Worpswede had aroused his interest in the visual arts and the artist ; and thus prepared, he met Rodin in Paris. The impression which the great sculptor made on him was so profound that Rilke went to live in Paris

and acted for some time as Rodin's secretary. Under the impact of Paris and with a new-found vision of the artist's task, three great works were completed : *New Poems*, *Requiem*, and *The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge*.

The title, *New Poems*, was chosen with great care, and in its matter-of-factness contrasts with the somewhat flamboyant titles of Rilke's earlier work ; it means what it says ; for these poems spring from a new creative attitude. The language has become more austere, the rhyme less exuberant and sensual, and for the first time Rilke attempts great poetry without rhyme. These poems spring from a new source. For soon after the turn of the century he realised that the artist ought not to float happily along until a moment of inspiration broke upon him, but that he ought consciously to give form to his whole life, and to school his spirit.

"In former years (he writes to his wife) nature was for me a general stimulus . . . I did not sit in front of her ; I let myself be enthused by the soul which radiated from me . . . I walked along and beheld, not nature, but the visions which she inspired".

To achieve this new vision, new faculties had to be awakened. In another letter he describes how one day he was unable to appreciate the pictures in the Louvre. He was tired. But what was this tiredness ?

"That I allowed all sorts of things to come into my mind ; that all sorts of things went through my mind like water through a mirrored image, dissolving my contours into something fluid. And I said to myself : I do not want any longer to be the mirrored image, but that which is on top. And I turned round so that no longer I stood on my head, and closed my eyes for a short moment and contracted myself all around and tightened my outlines as you tighten the strings of a violin until they are taut and resonant".

He now approaches the picture once more and finds it more revealing than ever before.

The letter continues : "Do you see, this is what one will have to be able to do one day". Not to wait for inspiration and to be at the mercy of one's moods, but to work on oneself, and then let the objects (*die Dinge*) speak out through the newly-found powers with which you confront them. Poetry, which for Rilke had been so easy, now becomes a tremendous task which needs complete surrender :

"Not counting two short interruptions, I have for weeks not spoken one word ; at last my solitude closes, and I am in my work as the stone in the fruit".

* * *

During the last two or three generations, four views of the artist in our society have been given prominence. First, the romantic, or better, pseudo-romantic view—the interesting, sensitive man, the man who articulately cries, "If I might say so"—; secondly, the bringer

of pleasure and joy—a sequel to the art-for-art's-sake movement, and still believed in by Sir Osbert Sitwell and Somerset Maugham; thirdly, the mouthpiece of society; and finally, the mouthpiece of the world. Unconsciously, Rilke began somewhere between the first and second attitude, but once awakened to consciousness, he decided for the last possibility.

To give utterance to the essential quality or virtue of a thing is no new task for an artist; it meant only re-discovering something that had almost been forgotten. But during the nineteenth century the scientific spirit of objectivity had spread far afield. And Rilke realised that it was necessary to forgo even the privilege of selection if the poet was to fulfil his highest function in the new age. To select means to be led by one's personal bias; it is, in Rilke's terminology, tantamount to judging. The artist's task is, to use another word beloved by Rilke, to *say*; that is, to lend sound to the mute creature and to the objects so that they might testify to their own nature. In this connection Rilke quotes Baudelaire's poem *La Charogne* and says (the translation is J. B. Leishman's):

"Artistic observation had first to make such a conquest of itself as to be able to see even in the horrible and apparently only repulsive that existence, which, together with all other existences, *counts*. Aversion from any kind of existence is as little permitted to the creator as selection: a single withdrawal at any time thrusts him from the state of grace, makes him wholly and entirely sinful".

It might be good to pause here for an instant and realise that Rilke's conception of the poet is of universal moral and spiritual significance. He strengthens his powers of concentration, confronts nature in an act of meditative beholding and persists until the object confronted reveals its essence. Thereby he puts his powers of cognition at the service of the world of mute creatures; and, later, at the service of the dead.

* * *

Having established his method, Rilke might have gone on to explore the world of *Die Dinge*; and, indeed, this aspect of his work never ceased completely. But something quite unlooked for happened: he realised that this method of cognition opened up for him an utterly different world—the supersensible, the world of the dead and the world of the angels. They could not be consciously focussed, as the objects could be meditated, but Rilke experienced how they were able to enter the mind, if only it was properly prepared and ready. From now on the intuitive element plays again a larger part; but always it has at its basis a conscious preparation.

Requiem consists of two most remarkable poems; a third, shorter poem, was added at a later date. They do not praise or commemorate the dead, nor do they lament man's mortal state. They are

meant as a help to two dead people: one, the best friend of Rilke's wife and an artist whom he himself highly respected, the other, a young man whom he had never met. By this time Rilke had been used to conversing with the dead.

*I'm not afraid
to look upon the dead. When they return
they have a right to hospitality
within our gaze, the same as other things.*

He never took death as the negation of life. Yet he felt that in the deaths of these two particular people something in their destinies had gone wrong. The young man had ended by suicide; the artist, a woman, in childbed exclaiming "What a shame!" The two poems are discussions between the poet and the dead in order to help them on their way. The first was written one year after the woman's death. She alone among his dead friends kept on coming back.

*.... I'm sure you're wrong,
if you're disturbed into a home-sick longing
for something here.*

So he tries to give her peace by gently suggesting to her a different attitude and by promising to take on certain tasks which she had been unable to see through. And he ends:

*Do not return. If you can bear it, stay
dead with the dead. The dead are occupied.
But help me, as you may without distraction,
as the most distant sometimes help: in me.*

The second poem ends in a mood of quiet comfort. But its main burden is to give the dead a realisation of what he had missed by taking the step which ended his life. Here occurs the memorable passage:

*O ancient curse of poets!
Being sorry for themselves instead of saying,
for ever passing judgement on their feeling
instead of shaping it; for ever thinking
that what is sad or joyful in themselves
is what they know and what in poems may fitly
be mourned or celebrated. Invalids
using a language full of woefulness
to tell us where it hurts, instead of sternly
transforming into words those selves of theirs,
as imperturbable cathedral carvers
transposed themselves into the constant stone.
That would have been salvation. Had you once
perceived how fate may pass into a verse
and not come back, how, once in, it turns image,
nothing but image, but an ancestor,*

*who sometimes, when you watch him in his frame,
seems to be like you and again not like you :
you would have persevered.*

Parallel with the writing of *New Poems* and *Requiem*, went *The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge*, a novel, Rilke's purgatory. It deals with a sensitive young Dane in Paris who undergoes the same experiences as Rilke himself, but succumbs to their terror. Here Rilke delves deeply into his own existence, and learns to rise above it. All that held terror for him is here gone through again, tasted to the full and experienced once more—and left behind for ever, hardly to occur in his work again.

* * *

Great as the *New Poems*, the *Requiem* and *The Notebooks* are, Rilke's fame rests on the work of his last period, and by these it will stand or fall. To this period belong the *Duino Elegies*, the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, and *Last Poems*, collected posthumously. The history of the *Elegies* and *Sonnets* needs special mention ; for here we can study the part which the conscious and the unconscious play, preparation and inspiration.

In January, 1912, Rilke stayed at the beautiful old castle of Duino, built on a rock which falls steeply into the Adriatic over 100 feet below. He stayed there alone, and one morning was walking in the park thinking of a reply to a business letter he had just received. A strong southerly gale was blowing. He suddenly stopped, for out of the wind a voice called to him :

Who, if I cried, would hear me among the angelic orders ?

He took out his notebook which, like Beethoven, he always carried with him. A few more lines followed. He realised that he stood at the beginning of his greatest work. Yet he went to his room and wrote his reply to the business letter. By the evening the *First Elegy* was finished. The *Second Elegy* followed soon after. A few fragments were also written down indicative of the large proportions of the work he had undertaken. The next two years saw only the completion of the *Third Elegy*, while the rest of the work hardly progressed. Yet now he became conscious of the task he had taken on. The poem *Turning* speaks for the first time of limits of seeing, and realises that the more the world is seen in its essence, the more does it need love from the beholder to acquire its fullest stature. And then the poem concludes :

*Work of sight is achieved,
now for some heart-work
on all those pictures, those prisoned pictures within you !
You conquered them ; but do not know them as yet.
Behold, O man within, the maiden within you !—
creature won from a thousand natures, creature
only just won, but never,
as yet, beloved.*



RILKE IN MUZOT—

"au pied de ma tour forte".

Reproduced from "Rilke: Man and Poet",
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He was convinced that this work would not only be his greatest, but constitute his life's mission; and when soon afterwards war broke out and shattered Rilke's creative genius, the experience was the more terrible as the poet realised now for the first time what was demanded from him, and saw at the same time his inability to achieve this task. In the four years of the war he was able to write only one more elegy, the *Fourth*.

After the war he looked for a place where he could give himself completely to his supreme task, and he finally settled in the Château de Muzot. He lived alone in this little keep in the Valais, and consciously formed his life so that through concentration he might be led to another poetic inspiration. That great moment came in February, 1922, ten years after the inception of the *Elegies*. For some time Rilke had felt he was approaching a period of artistic creation, when the letter of a bereaved mother and an engraving of Orpheus in a shop window set his mind afire. In four days he wrote a cycle of twenty-six sonnets without having to correct a single word, sent them to the mother, and two days later posted one more sonnet in exchange for one which was not considered good enough. On the same evening work at the *Elegies* was resumed, and two days later they seemed complete with the jubilant *Ninth*. But the end had not yet come. Two days later he wrote the *Tenth Elegy*, which leads us beyond death into a world where there is no longer any difference between what so far had been internal and external; three days later another elegy followed to replace the former *Fifth*, and during the next five days there were written twenty-nine more sonnets, the *Second Part of the Sonnets to Orpheus*. All this poetic activity was confined to less than three weeks, a climax of intense creation, unparalleled perhaps in literature, though not in music.

Rilke showed a completely different attitude to the *Elegies* and to the *Sonnets*. The former were the natural conclusion of a ten-years' struggle; the later were a surprise given to him, a by-product for which he was not responsible, perhaps even a trifle. His critics do not share this view. For them, the *Sonnets* and the *Elegies* are twin products, explaining and illuminating each other. The *Elegies* look at human existence predominantly in a strain of lament; the *Sonnets* have resolved the tensions and contradictions of our life, and their main theme is praise.

On the whole, critics are inclined to rate the *Sonnets* even higher than the *Elegies*. Rilke, however, who had consciously prepared himself for this great climax, realised he had reached his goal. He authorised his publisher to prepare his collected works, as he knew he could add little, if anything, to what he had said already.

* * *

About the contents of these two works many volumes have been written. The best interpreter of Rilke's work is, however, Rilke. With a knowledge of the work of his middle period, his letters, and in particular, the letter to his Polish translator, which English readers

can study best in Leishman's introduction to the *Sonnets*, the poetry itself will not be forbidding to the sympathetic reader. I shall only be able to touch upon a few points regarding the experience of the world which underlies these two works.

Behold, O man, the maiden within you!

What then is the world to him who beheld the maiden within? First, there is revealed a vast sum of 'correspondences'. What used to be seen at the time of the *New Poems* as an isolated object, is now experienced as an objectivisation of an inner possession of man. Everything 'seen' is revealed as part of man himself. And so man learns to feel himself as a citizen of two worlds, an inner and an outer, of life and death; but they are not two worlds divided by a pre-ordained and rigid boundary; rather they constitute a whole, The Whole.

On this experience Rilke bases himself firmly; he attacks on the one hand this machine-age which wishes to deny the reality of the other half of experience, and the Church on the other hand which tries to shake man's confidence in the reality and goodness of the here and now, and emphasises the other-worldliness of an unexperienced realm. Our task is threefold: to see and praise the object in its fulness, to realise that ultimately it is part of ourselves; and finally, and most important, to receive it into us with all the power of love of which we are capable. In doing so we transform the world and build up a new heaven and a new earth, where everything is invisible and fashioned out of the stuff of our meditation and yet contains the 'thing' in its full reality. Transformation in this sense is man's supreme task. Yet other beings have already accomplished what we have hardly begun. To the Angels the past is present and existent, because for a long time it has, to them, been invisible; that is, it has changed into inner experience. Their existence is far above ours:

Early successes, Creation's pampered darlings,
ranges, summits, dawn-red ridges
of all beginning,—pollen of blossoming godhead,
hinges of light, corridors, stairways, thrones,
spaces of being, shields of felicity, tumults
of stormily rapturous feeling, and suddenly, separate,
mirrors, drawing up their own
outstreamed beauty into their faces again.*

Compared with the Angel, man is transient, and again and again stands before the riddle of his own nature. Yet while this might elude him in meditation, it is revealed in active life. The twelfth sonnet of the first part maintains 'we act in true relation', and praises the spirit which gives meaning to our life and joins it with the lives of others.

The view of life to which the *Sonnets* and the *Elegies* testify lives also in all Rilke's other utterances of the last period of his life. The *Letters to a Young Woman*, published posthumously, are particularly interesting, for in these letters he gives advice to a person in need of comfort and guidance, and what he says there is in full agreement with the vision expressed in his poetry.

* * *

We now can summarise: Rilke is the modern poet who creates out of his own vision and meditation, and whose last and greatest works are the product of a conscious meditative life and intuition bestowed by grace. More than any other modern poet, he exhorts us to love this world and train our senses to a full and valid experience of the object. Yet he insists that man must do something for the object as well; he must meet it with loving understanding and spiritualise it. Thus man realises his mission. All this makes us understand Carossa's statement, quoted at the beginning of this article, that Rilke's approach seemed to him related to Anthroposophy. Leishman, who apparently does not know of Rudolf Steiner, has two passages in his introduction to the *Sonnets* which are immediately arresting to the student of Anthroposophy. They show Rilke's impact on our time. Leishman says:

"No other writer is so full of the future; no other gives us such thrilling intimations of that inheritance on whose threshold we are standing, and which our civilisation may be about to enter, if it does not perish through its own destructive forces".

And further:

"For Rilke, as for Aristotle, what Aristotle calls happiness and what Rilke calls 'reality' is an activity of the spirit, and the highest kind of activity is that impassioned contemplation where thought becomes resolved into the thing it contemplates".

Without a guide or the help of a tradition, Rilke attained to a part of the essential vision of the twentieth century, and therefore his work may be of particular interest to students of Rudolf Steiner, whom Rilke himself refused as his teacher. There are a good many points where the ideas of these two contemporaries agree, while the two most fundamental differences between Rudolf Steiner's teaching and Rilke's view concern the questions of man's eternal individuality and of Christ. However, these differences are not quite as fundamental as they appear to be. The Christ Whom Rilke denied was the God of the Roman Church Who steps between man and the experience of reality. Would Rilke have denied Christ the Transformer of earthly existence? Not knowing of Him he turned to Orpheus, in whom he revered the transforming powers of the adept who had tasted of death as well as of life. Similarly, the question of the Angel. In a letter to his Polish translator, Rilke gives a clear and precise description of the beings he addresses as Angels; but when he continues to plead with unnecessary emphasis that these

* I cannot help feeling that these words are too colloquial and effeminate for *ihr Verwöhnten der Schöpfung*.

Angels have nothing to do with their Christian namesakes, he sounds unconvincing. The only thing Rilke knew about the latter were sentimental stories of his nursery, and he could not look up to beings who had been presented to him in such a fashion. Again, it is possible that his reaction to the descriptions of the modern investigator of the spiritual world might have been quite different.

And the question of the eternal individuality? Steffen points out that Rilke felt here on shifting ground. He could speak of reincarnation, and yet in the *Ninth Elegy* went out of his way to stress the fact that we live on earth but once. Rilke's references to reincarnation are few, while the passage in the *Elegy* is unusually emphatic. But we must see it as occurring just in the *Elegies* which lament man's transitory state and accept it, and balance against it one of the *Sonnets to Orpheus* (ii, 27), in which destructive time is recognised as an illusion and man appears eternal when viewed by the great Powers that remain for ever.

Rilke was neither a philosopher nor an aestheticist; nor was he the pupil of any master. As he was, he went a long way in his lonely quest of truth, and many a reader, entranced at first perhaps by his noble language and incomparable imagery, may have been given an insight into the world which he could have received, more precisely and completely, only from Rudolf Steiner:

*Breathing, invisible poem! That great
world-space, at each inhalation
exchanged for this human existence. Counterweight
of my rhythmical realisation.*

*Single wavelet, whose slowly
gathering sea am I;
you, of all possible seas most frugal and lowly—,
space laid-by.*

*Of all these places in space, how many a one
has been within me already. Many a wind
seems like a son.*

*Do you know me, air, still full of my dwelling-places?
You, the one-time smooth-skinned
rondure and leaf of my phrases.*

THE WIND IN THE TREE

E. L. Grant Watson

SOMETIMES when I look down from a cliff-top on sea-waves and watch their continuous movement as they gather and break and retreat, I find myself drawn out of my ordinary kind of life. If I allow myself to look long enough, and if I yield myself to the spell of the sea, then I find that the longer I look, the deeper I go into the wave-motion, and the more surely will the wave-motion awake inner, unsuspected impulses.

In a kindred manner wind-movements that are made visible among tree-branches can also charm me out of myself, so that I seem to go in slow and equal paces between outer perception and inner feeling, and back from inner to outer. According to the species of the tree and the varying, invisible impulse of the wind, so the branches move, oak, ash, beech, or fir, each in their fashion, and in the movement tell how the wind moves. What is not seen takes on the quality of the seen. The two: wind and tree-branch appear as one single, undividable expression. To watch the constant, yet never exactly repeated liftings and swayings and flutterings and subsidings is to submit the soul. As the branches bend and the leaves glint in light, or vanish in shadow, so the magic, which is neither in tree nor wind, awakes.

Give up all that you have known. Forget all cares. Watch how the wind blows. Guess how it is with life, the wilderness, the wheel on whose perimeter blood meets with nerve . . . and be alone . . . and be a child, held by enchantment, without tears or smile.

Wind and tree present the perfect image: for most men always present, though often unnoticed: always present the perfect image of the inner, unsuspected movement, so often unnoticed, though always present—restless as the sea, hither and yon, dwelling nowhere.

Withdrawn into my inner solitude, I find the contradiction: the something-other that is neither myself, nor tree, nor wind, but all-enfolding.

With what abandon the branches lift and toss, with what submission bow! What gaiety, what joy! All that has been forgotten is here remembered. The form that is always emerging from-out the invisible, the ungraspable, the never-quite-completed is of the life that accomplishes all things, the Alpha and Omega, from the beginning until the end. Leaves ever-fluttering in invisible winds, ruffled and rustling, winking at one another, as the mood slides over; subsiding and sleeping for a second, waking again with lifted branches, as the soft air speaks of the fullness: grace given and grace received.

THE DEAD BUTTERFLY TO THE SCIENTIST

O hear, white-coated one, and know
What mayn't be proved by holding so
That spy-glass in your hand.
Look far away and long ago,
Even to sun beneath the snow,
If you would understand.

In the sun the seeds are lying,
Some for growing, some for flying—
Look, and find them there.
Then through the window of that world
Watch the pinions huge unfurled,
All in the glittering air.

Though they soar, and wink, and hover,
No drop of dark can you discover,
No weight of wood discern—
No weight—and now uncloseth your eyes,
White-coated one that should be wise,
Look back on me and learn:

Wings never could endure, so bright,
Were they not dusted with the light
From planetary fires.
Nor colour such as this be born
Unless by that one creature worn
Whom heaven itself attires.

Sylvia Eckersley

RUDOLF STEINER'S "LETTERS"

Owen Barfield

*Briefe von Rudolf Steiner. Volume II. (Selbstverlag der Rudolf Steiner Nachlassverwaltung, Dornach, Switzerland).**

THE first volume of Rudolf Steiner's Letters, which was reviewed in the 1950 issue of the *Golden Blade*, covered the period 1881—1891. The second volume covers the period 1892—1902, but is prefaced by a small collection of letters belonging in time to the earlier volume. We are not told by the editors whether this is because they have come to light since the publication of Volume I, but it may well be so. Among them is a letter of the 29th August, 1891, which English people in particular would be sorry to have missed, as it includes some valuable remarks on Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and a comparison of it with Goethe's unfinished poem. It is addressed to Helene Richter, who had sent him an essay on Shelley:

"I have read the essay several times, and my opinion remains that it is not only *not* an ill-bred child, but rather a particularly promising one, needing only a little refining and polishing to make it quite excellent. You have developed the basic idea of Prometheus in a very striking way. The one feature of your interpretation which seems to me a little doubtful is your criticism of Goethe's treatment of the Prometheus saga. With Goethe, the human nature embodied in Prometheus appears not at all as one that asserts itself in endless pride against the Creator of the world, but rather as one impelled to create out of its own self the highest that the world can offer, and which therefore rejects every divine principle that works upon it from outside.

"Directly man becomes aware that the highest potency of existence has offered itself up in endless love in order to come to life again in the human soul, and there to accomplish deeds of freedom, in that same moment he is bound to regard every god that stands outside him as a pseudo-god whose tyranny he must resist. Fundamentally, Shelley's Prometheus agrees with this, for in the last resort the freeing of the fettered figure through wisdom and love means only that the fettering ceases at the moment when the highest potency of being which is slumbering within him, and is in fact wisdom and love, is set free. Then Man realises that the fetters which he has been wearing are only the fetters of a pseudo-god, and that they fall from his limbs at the moment when Zeus, the god of the man who is not yet awakened to full self-consciousness, dissolves into nothingness. Had Goethe completed his Prometheus, he would certainly have embodied in it this basic idea.

*Obtainable from the Rudolf Steiner Bookshop, 35, Park Road, London, N.W.1, or from the Rudolf Steiner Book Centre, 54, Bloomsbury Street, W.C.1, Price £2 0s. 3d.

"There is no doubt, however, that the ageing Goethe no longer believed in the same way in the power of this self-consciousness—a power which would have enabled him to complete the poem. What happened, rather, was that in his inner being he drew nearer to Jupiter, and with this a withdrawal from Prometheus necessarily goes hand in hand. Whether we should regret this, I do not know. It seems to me, however, that the deepening insight into the real world of appearances, to which we owe the later poems of Goethe, impelled him to attribute to nature a quality of divinity which goes uneasily with any idea of man's freeing himself absolutely by his own efforts".

I should like to quote also a reference to Emerson, in a letter to Pauline Specht dated 24th December, 1893:

"I strive with all my might, in contrast to the German philistine style, to be human and individual in my writing. The Germans write no style at all. I see this best now I am reading the English essayists—in particular, Emerson. No German could construct a sentence such as this, in Emerson's essay on Goethe: "I find a provision, in the constitution of the world, for the writer or secretary, who is to report the doings of the miraculous spirit of life that everywhere throbs and works. His office is a reception of the facts into the mind, and then a selection of the eminent and characteristic experiences". If you want a real pleasure, then read *Representative Men*, by Ralph Waldo Emerson. I am convinced you will derive the greatest satisfaction from it".

This second volume now appearing does not pretend to reproduce more than a selection of the letters written during the period it covers. Steiner was not a prolific letter-writer—again and again he begins by accusing himself of *Schreibfaulheit*, *Saumseligkeit* and other epistolary sins—but even so, the Introduction speaks of many letters still presumably hidden among the effects of their deceased recipients, and of others known to have been destroyed during the war.

As the first volume included, besides the letters, a lecture of the writer's on his early life, so the present volume includes an interesting lecture, given in 1918 and consisting mainly of reminiscences of the time (1894) when the first edition of *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* was published. It was an excellent idea to preserve these two lectures in this way, and it is to be hoped that the practice will be followed in subsequent volumes, if similar lectures are available.

The ten years up to 1902 were full of very varied activities, and were perhaps those in which Steiner was most directly in touch with the intellectual and political world about him. In 1897 he left Weimar for Berlin and began almost immediately editing the *Magazin für Literatur*. The letters suggest a whirl of lecturing, journalism, proof-reading, and eager argument. At one moment he is striking a blow for Dreyfus, at another speaking from the same platform as

Rosa Luxembourg. There is a last, curious glimpse of him applying, on the advice of a friend, and unsuccessfully, for the post of "feuilleton editor" on a Viennese daily paper: "I followed all your advice as to externals—i.e., the sort of collar you said, stiff hat, gloves. I felt you were absolutely right (it has left me completely broke)".

And then in 1902 he attends a meeting of the Theosophical Congress in London, and a few months later is appointed General Secretary of the German Section of the Theosophical Society. The by now familiar names of Rosa Mayreder, Pauline Specht, Edouard von Hartmann, Ernst Haeckel, vanish from the page, and the last twenty-five of the hundred and sixty-one letters covering the period are almost without exception addressed to Wilhelm Hubbe-Schleiden, who was associated with him in the founding of the German Section. They disclose, sometimes between the lines and sometimes more frankly, his views of the leading personalities in the Theosophical Society—Annie Besant, the "Buddhistic dandy" Jinjaradasa and others—his awareness of the risk he was taking, and his determination to develop German theosophy from a basis of Western philosophical thought.

The lives of most men become more crammed and complicated as they grow older, and Rudolf Steiner's was no exception. Consequently the figure which the letters in this volume disclose lacks the clear and sharp outlines, and the simple, vivid glimpses, which made the peculiar charm of Volume I. In quantity alone, Volume II is nearly half as long again. What did he himself remember in later life as the deepest impressions and experiences, or the greatest excitements, of these ten years? If the letters—and they are not necessarily a safe guide—are to be believed, I would say there were three things. The conclusion and publication of *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, to which he attached such importance and in which he did not fear to display his own confidence; the impact of Nietzsche ("Have you seen Nietzsche's *Antichrist*? One of the most significant books that has been written for centuries... I hear every nuance of the *Nietzsche-Sprache*..."); and the decision to work with the Theosophical Society.

On the 4th November, 1894, about a year after the publication of *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, he writes from Weimar to Rosa Mayreder:

"I know exactly where my book belongs within the stream of contemporary culture; I can show precisely where it joins on to Nietzsche's line of thought; I can say with confidence that I have expressed the ideas that are lacking in Nietzsche. I may admit to my friends—but only to them—that I feel very sad that Nietzsche was never able to read my book. He would have taken it as what it is: in every line a *personal* experience.

"To you I must say the following: if you had rejected my book, it would have been incomparably painful for me. You tell me the

book is too short, and that a whole book could have been made out of each chapter. I cannot contradict this remark in as far as it is objectively meant. The explanation lies in my own subjectivity. I don't *teach*; I relate what I have inwardly experienced. I relate it as I have experienced it. Everything in my book is personally thought out. Also the form of the thoughts. Anyone with a teaching disposition could extend it. Perhaps I could, too, at the right time. For the time being I want to describe the biography of a soul wrestling its way up to freedom. One cannot do anything for those who want to accompany one over cliffs and abysses. One must get oneself over. Too great a yearning for the goal burns within one for it to be possible to stop and explain to others how they can get across most easily. I believe that if I had simultaneously tried to find a suitable way for others, I should have fallen. I went my way as well as I could; it was *this* way that I described. After that I could perhaps find a hundred ways which others might take, but I did not want to put down any of them on paper immediately. Haphazardly and quite individually, I have jumped over many cliffs, and have worked my way through thickets in my own fashion. It is only when one reaches the goal that one knows that one is there. Perhaps the time for teaching in these matters is over. Philosophy interests me now almost exclusively as the experience of the individual".

The Notes, which comprise nearly a quarter of the 440 pages of the book, are beyond praise, and with their full and carefully selected illustrative quotations from Steiner's own writings, those of his correspondents, contemporary periodicals, and other sources, are as interesting as the letters themselves; in many cases more so, for more of these than one could wish are mere business communications to his publishers and perfunctory notes about his movements and appointments.

The plates include a frontispiece photograph of Rudolf Steiner in 1922; two (bearded) photographs taken in 1896, and a particularly attractive one of him addressing a Workers' Education Class in 1900. There are also photographs of his father and mother.

I feel impelled to conclude this brief notice by quoting the *Geleitworte* by Marie Steiner, printed on the flyleaf:

*Die Erdenwege,
Sie einen sich,
Der Schein will sie trennen,
Vermag es nicht—
Im Seelengebiete,
Da finden sie sich,
Im Geiste geeinigt—
Durch Erdentreue.*

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