

The Development of the Human Being through the Great Cultural Epochs

by

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The following is a transcription of a series of lectures presented in Norway in 1943 during the German occupation. It has been passed down through rough notes taken by Johann Holtsmark. The editor thought the content would be interesting for readers in North America.

Englert was fluent in Greek and Latin and was a scholar of Greek culture. These talks inspired several young men, such as Dan Lindholm, Karl Brodersen, Jørgen Smit, Torger Holtsmark, and other giants, to initiate the Waldorf school in 1945 at the conclusion of World War II. With approximately four million people and thirty-four Waldorf schools, Norway is currently among the leading countries with regard to Waldorf schools per capita in the world.

The great cultural epochs can be seen as a movement from East to West. We will start with a concentration on the Greek/Latin cultural epoch and examine some simple known facts.

Human Biography and the Biography of a Nation

A biography can be looked at through a description of a personality, his life and work, on the foundation of outer documentation. The biography becomes a description of the person's outer life, his or her façade. It is possible, however, to think about a different kind of biography where we do not examine documents and outer sources but rather turn our attention toward the impact made in the world by an individual's life. How does the memory of this human being live on? Which impulses has he/she imprinted into the world? How is the world different as a result of this individual's life? In order to accomplish this kind of biography, we have to seek out and describe what stands behind the human being. What lives in his/her ideas?

For example, let us consider Aristotle. We can describe the outer facts of his life or we can describe the “world force” called Aristotle which left an indelible imprint on the spiritual development of humanity up to the sixteenth century.

Or, we could consider Goethe. Ideas that Goethe brought forth in life have grown further just like a plant brings forth fruit and seeds. When we first see the plant, there is no sign of the fruit there. In the same way it is with historical personalities: they set out in life ideas, which unfold and give birth to new ideas unforeseen to the originator.

That which a human being brings forth in the world has its own existence and development. The spiritual is an element within a human being that contains its own reality. In a biography we can search for the human being’s spiritual gestalt.

The same holds true for nations and time. The term Middle Ages calls forth a world so different from our time as, perhaps, the tropical rain forest might be for the arctic flora. If we think of a “people” a whole world might arise with particular qualities, a certain mood, a certain atmosphere. What comes to your mind when you hear the words *Italian*, *Scotsman* or *Apache*?

Words and Expressions

We constantly use words which are fundamentally foreign in their origin, but have been adopted into all European languages with specific meanings. Different words cannot quite describe the essence that these foreign words contain layers of time.

Expressions that have to do with a *gallant* world originated in the French language. How would we want to translate *gallant*, *charm*, *bouquet*, and so on? Expressions that are connected with fashion, for instance, *haute couture*, *barber*, and so on, have French origins. Militarism also began in France and spread to other cultures. Military expressions come from France. With this reality came concepts. *Mitrailleuse* is a manually-fired volley gun used by the French Army, something very different from automatic weapons. We cannot quite find better words because we receive the words packaged with the issues themselves. Another example is expressions dealing with the activity of banking come from Italy. The money-changers put up benches for their money piles, and the concept gave birth to *banke* (*bench* in Italian), which is today’s *bank*. Musical expressions, such as *fortissimo*, *largo*, *pianissimo* and so forth, are also Italian. We find them on sheet music and leave them as such; it would be inaccurate to translate them.

By taking these expressions as representative fossils in the same sense as geologist use fossils to determine geological layers of time we can draw wide-sweeping conclusions. These fossils in language are the result of a kind of

sedimentation process that has become part of the development of humanity. In the same way we can study what occurred at specific times, for instance the time of the Romans. Without the Romans we would not know words like *empire*. To call it a *kingdom* would be misleading.

Imperialism has its roots in Roman times. *Auctoritas* or authority is difficult to translate. It is a challenge to find another word that totally represents the meaning. *Dignitas* or dignity is another example. *Discipline* is no longer a foreign word but is contemporary. It comes from the Latin word for *disciple*. Consider the word *pietas*, piety. No word from any European language can convey the deeper meaning of the Latin word *pietas*. *Remorse* is a word that filled the medieval human soul with a force unknown to us in modern times. The same is true for *belief*, *hope*, and *charity*. Spiritual elation, compassion, and mercifulness, are words that live as qualities that have developed in particular people at particular times.

The Middle Ages is not determined by nations. It is beyond nationality. The languages of that time are enchanting and somewhat childlike—they captivate the modern soul. The medieval way of expressing thoughts has disappeared because we are no longer living in the soul qualities where that qualitative belongs. What is it in our times that still lives on from the classical Greco-Roman times? We look at words such as *period*, *epoch*, or that something is *logical* or *focused*. Here we have expressions which characterize spiritual nuances. *Strategy*, *economy*, *autocracy*, *diplomacy*, *meteor*, *mechanics* are all words of Greek derivation. Within the medical field we have a profusion of words inherited from Greek, which shows that there has been a stream of wisdom down through the ages. Politics originated with Aristotle. *Konpolitikon*, “the human being is a political animal,” said Aristotle. *Democracy*, *monarchy*, *plutocracy*, and so on, are Greek words even though the modern meaning is far removed from the original meaning of the word.

All areas of spiritual and cultural life are the beneficiaries of Greek inheritance. We move within their forms of thinking. We use categories as tools, which we have received through this inheritance. Just imagine if we did not have all these concepts! Imagine if we did not have all these words from the Greeks! Most of our spiritual and cultural life would be condemned to silence.

Through time the human being’s spiritual development has been brought forth from the spiritual/culture of antiquity. We can think of the church and the universities as examples. Through the universities, *universitas*, the student met the whole world, not specialization. The student represented one part and met the whole in the university. With the Renaissance, antiquity touches directly into the human life without the go-between of the church. We found *gymnasiums*,

academies, and Olympic games. In the gymnasium [high schools] the student learned Greek and Latin for eight to ten years so that his inner personality was influenced by the classical educational ideal, first and foremost through the writings of Homer. The European peoples' spiritual leaders represented Greek and Roman cultural ideas, not their own.

This points to a particular problem: what would the Greeks have said if one had come to Pericles and suggested establishing schools in which one had to get to know the old Egyptian and Chaldean writings? He would have been unable to understand such a proposal. For the Greeks it was self-evident that education was founded on Homer.

The classical gymnasium has played a leading role right up to our own times. The leading personalities in European culture have been raised on this classical foundation, yet they are supposed to function in the age of technology. We can see the contrast between the challenges of our time and the kinds of education that these people have received. It is equally impossible in our time to tackle present day problems as it would have been for the Greeks to tackle their problems if their education had been based on ancient Assyrian wisdom.

The crisis in our time, in all areas of life, is due to the fact that the concepts and ideas that we have inherited from the Greeks are no longer sufficient to meet the challenges of our present time. They are inadequate because new elements that did not exist during the Greek times have come into the world.

Inheritance through Language

Let us ask ourselves: does this or that inherited concept fully express what it means today? We will quickly discover that it becomes very difficult and even confusing for our sense of judgment. Take, for example, the Olympic games. Today, we look upon winning in the Olympics as something of great significance. If, for instance, a Frenchman wins a race, this accomplishment will have the same consequence as if France had torn down the Berlin wall. That was what happened in ancient Greece, one tore down the wall because when the race was won, one had in one's midst a god.

To be the winner in Olympia is hard for us to imagine with today's consciousness. An athlete was a human being who was considered perfect in his development. The most famous victors were Pythagoreans, who were also philosophers. How is that today? When an Olympic athlete retires from his sport, he becomes a commentator, opens a café, or sells sporting goods.

Our crisis in education today is that our consciousness is being asked to solve new tasks but we live on ideas and spirituality borrowed from ancient Greece. Therefore, we have to ask what the Greco/Roman epoch is in its truth

and in its essence. If we can discover this, we can then reflect our own being in contrast to what we have inherited and become clearer about our present historical situation. History serves the human being by showing us how to go forward and find our place. The crisis of our time is that we are not standing where we need to stand.

We have tried to show how we stumble over words that have their roots in the Hellenic culture. In a time full of new impulses and new problems, we still continue to use this inheritance. We still build upon concepts and categories that do not originate in our times and, therefore, we lose sight of the fact that they are, in fact, an antiquated vocabulary.

Consider one particular word that forms, perhaps, the foundation for our spiritual and cultural existence—“*logic*.” This expression is derived from *logos*, a word central to Greek existence. In a dictionary you will find page upon page of explanation about what this word can mean: “word,” “thinking,” “the power of thinking,” “insight,” “proposal,” “inspiration,” and so on. Let us disregard all these nuances and seek the kernel of its meaning.

The Blind Poet Homer

When Homer describes his heroes active in thought, where we would have said, “Odysseus thinks (within himself),” Homer says, “Odysseus said to his spirit.” To Homer the human being speaks with his inner self. The thinking capacity for the Greeks was dialectic. To them the human being was active in dialogue with his own inner being.

This dialogue presupposes two parts of the self that exchange *logos*, the word. There is always one part that develops the thought and one part that observes it. When the ancient Greek thought, he spoke with himself in the form of dialogue. We can observe this in Homer’s writing. Conversely, a modern writer would just write: “He thinks.”

Thinking is an activity that one becomes aware of, something one can experience. When we know this we are more able to see the intention of Aristotle’s comments that thinking is a particular activity that follows distinct laws. Aristotle was the first person to determine these laws by allowing thinking to reveal its own form free from content.

Logic does not depend on content but rather upon how one thought follows another. Schooled logic is, therefore, distinguished by banal examples, and through this the laws of thinking are more visible. This logical thinking is accessible and is taken up by all of humanity and becomes the obvious vehicle for the cultures that follow it. The force that developed during the course of the Hellenic culture grew into a capacity and a force for all humanity. At their

particular time in human evolution, the Greeks developed capacities that had not been present earlier in humanity. These capacities then flowered and worked further into human evolution.

Cultural Evolution

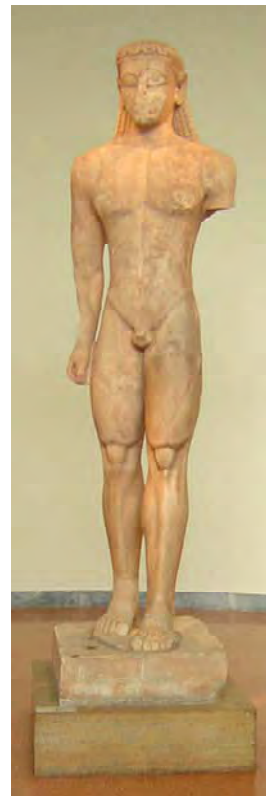
Every culture and every people form a life-organ in which humanity develops at a particular place at a particular time. This organ has a particular function—to develop forces that become available to everybody at every time, at every place. The discovery of this awakens our interests for such an organ-geographical stage. It involves understanding the “sense of place.” What is the landscape? What are the climatic conditions? What is the geology? And so forth. One can study the possible forces that the “place” contributes to human evolution and the people who live in that geographical setting.

The ancient Greeks appeared on the earthly plane at a particular historical moment. They arose out of an aggregate of forces, possibilities, and forms from earlier cultural epochs—just like ice is another aggregate state of water.

Greek Sculpture

Look, for instance, at the oldest Greek sculptures. They remind us of Egyptian sculptures. The figure is not standing freely in space; the limbs are rigidly attached to the body; the face is mask-like just like we see in Egyptian and Far Eastern sculptures. The bodily shape is like a sheath around the human soul, not portraying the way that the human is truly present in body and space. What we expect to find in the human is not there, but exists outside the sculpture. Just like young children who have not yet fixed their gaze, they do not “see” in a regular sense. They look around us, not at us.

Beginning in the 6th century BC, one hundred and fifty years before Classical Greek sculpture was developed, sculptors had almost perfected rendering the male nude in white marble. However, this perfection was largely superficial; the figures were no more than the sum of their parts, accurately sculpted, and accurately assembled. As the sculptures began to look more like real men, artists began to notice that the advantages of the *kouros* form, a product of the rigid Archaic period, posed several disadvantages: the figure,



Kouros

representing neither action nor stillness, looked awkward, and the calculated symmetry made it seem unnatural. When the Greek vase painters and bronze casters began their studies of the human body in motion, the marble sculptors followed with studies of their own. They studied the movement of the body, how weight is carried, and how a shift in stance affects the alignment of limbs, torso, and head. Around 480 BC, the first marble sculpture displaying the qualities of *contrapposto*, or weight shift, appeared in the *Kritios Boy*.



Kritios Boy

In this mature Greek sculpture the human being suddenly stepped forth in such a mighty form that one can understand Goethe's words, "Here is necessity. Here is God." Never has the human form received such perfection as it attained in ancient Greek times. Just like pure crystals can almost represent a geometric archetype—the archetype is present in the material. There has been a huge leap from the first archaic sculptures, that have the character of porcelain dolls with mask-like faces, to this new perfection where the human form stands freely and graciously in space.

This transition can be traced back to one particular sculpture and one particular sculptor and anonymity in world history comes to an end.

Art prior to ancient Greek times was anonymous. Certain families produced painters through generations. Artistic skills were inherited along bloodlines. Even in the earliest Greek times we can see this, but we can see a distinct shift in cultural consciousness with Myron of Eleutherae. He was the first to place the human form freely in space in his sculpture *Discobolus*.



Discobolus

In all art from this particular point, we can observe the emergence of self-awareness. For example, pottery makers began to sign their products, and in very distinctive ways. From about 550 BC we can trace a number of names to pottery that are considered among Greece's most famous. "This vase has been made by Ergotinos. Klithias would not be able to make this." This was not an attempt to put down Klithias, but rather it reflects a competition called "*agon*," which was a type betting-game. Who could promote his individuality the most? This person would then be the master.

Plato wrote dialogue in which those who spoke set their own power of thoughts against those of someone else. Now one wanted to assert the power of one's own *logos*.

The Emergence of the Individual

The great Greek writers, poets, and musicians considered themselves as craftspeople not as geniuses. Much like the potters, they "signed" their work: "This is said by Phokylicos. Then everybody will know that this is something that he and nobody else has said." Now everywhere we encounter clearly defined personalities. Even though they might still be interwoven with mythology, individual names are set forth in world history. We cannot talk about Greek sculpture without mentioning names. It is the same throughout all the other arts, and, indeed, all other human endeavors.

Thukydides was an unfortunate soldier who was removed from his duties as general. When he described, very impartially, the great civil Peloponnesian War, he said, "I will with this create *ktina esaie*." This means something that both he as an individual and humanity will own forever. He recognized that what he was doing was something new, something that would never disappear. His historical writings became the foundation for all history writing, which we view as scientific, up to our present time.

We read the philosopher in Asia Minor who wrote, "Everything originates from fire." Another philosopher said, "Everything originates from water." And yet another proposes, "Everything comes from the archetypal thought, *nous*." That the human being dared to do this is something immense in contrast to the anonymity of earlier times.

With the force that developed later into logical judgment, the Greek starts to look upon the world: an immense richness in all fields, strength, self-awareness, differentiation, competition, always self-promoting, but also one person always helping to elevate the other. The overall gesture was to elevate everyone.

We can observe that children, at a particular stage of their development, like to boast. "My dad is stronger than your dad." Their humanity lives in the boasting. Through this they express their own existence, much as the early Greeks did.

Another example: Greece was surrounded by other great powers in Asia and Africa, who together with the Etruscans formed a mighty coalition against their small country. The Greek city-states of Sparta and Athens were usually in competition, but when the Persians threatened them, they sent a joint messenger to the west Hellenic settlements on Sicily, an ally of the Greeks, in much the same way as the United States was for Europe in the middle of the nineteenth

century. The Greeks asked the Sicilian ruler Gelon for help, and he answered, “Yes, I shall help you because otherwise we will all be destroyed. But I want to be the supreme commander both on land and on the ocean.” The Spartans answered, “No. We want to have the supreme commander; otherwise you do not need to help us.” Gelon answered, “Then let us share. One will be commander on the land while the other can be the commander of the ocean.” The Athenians said, “No. If it is to be shared, then it will be with the Spartans.” “Well then,” said Gelon to the messenger, “travel home with the greeting that springtime has left the year.” [Sparta and Athens eventually won the battle, nevertheless.]

Greek Culture’s Place in World Evolution

What is the historical stage for the Greeks? Most of Europe was an unknown land mass. Greece was divided into numerous tribes surrounded by Europe, Asia, and Africa. Greece radiates out in all directions—to Russia, to Africa, to Spain—as a central force in a wide circle around it. The Greeks were the first to sail through the Straits of Gibraltar to the south along the west coast of Africa and towards the north to the areas of the Germanic tribes. They did not plunder or ruthlessly exploit the natural resources as the Phoenicians had done. Rather, they founded places of commerce. The Greeks brought culture to wherever they landed. Rome was established because the Greeks colonized Sicily and southern Italy.

Let us consider the configuration of the Balkans. It is quite differentiated: high mountains, long valleys, wetlands, forests, and gently undulating landscape all exist there. This same differentiation is reflected in the people: each group has its own characteristics with its own culture and conditions, its own almanacs and time-chronology, and so forth. The languages are especially differentiated. The god Poseidon, for instance, was referred to in different dialects: *Poseidon*, *Posseidon*, *Poseides*, *Posideon*, *Poseidan*, *Poteidar*, *Poteidan*, *Poteidas*, *Posswoida*, and so forth. The dialects are as different as, for instance, Gothic, Old German, Old Norwegian, and Anglo Saxon. In any given language the consonants come from nature, from the landscape, whereas the human soul tones come forth in the vowels. A dialect reveals both the human being’s relationship to nature and also what the soulful characteristics are for that people.

The Greek language developed as differently as the people developed—different on the low lands from the mountains, and so on. The various tribal groups did not use interpreters. For example, the Attic people never translated their language into the Spartan language. They all felt the Pan-Hellenic spirit so strongly that all Greeks were united. They came from far distances to all participate in the Eleusian Mysteries, and for something really important, they

sent messages to the Oracle at Delphi. They all were united around central experiences.

They all experienced themselves as “Greek” and spoke the Hellenic language. All others were considered uncivilized and spoke unrecognizable “bar-bar” (hence the word *barbaric*). The Greeks considered only themselves to be truly human—this was not the nationalism in our modern sense of the word. They felt that the people who spoke Greek in this epoch were called to carry the epoch’s central task. They felt that the life of humanity was in them. Aristotle said, “In the East live the ‘bar-bar’ who are very pious, but their power is past. In the North live powerful ‘bar-bars’ who will once come. We Greeks combine both. We are the center of the world.”

Look at Europe’s geographic shape on a map and you will observe that the finely chiseled little Europe is surrounded by continents that were the carriers of earlier cultures. India has tremendous plateaus between great mountains. The Near Eastern cultures were geographically undifferentiated. The old cultures were massive collectives without an inner mobility—without those qualities that we meet when the predecessor to the modern European is born in Greece.

The Greeks felt that humanity at that time had its center in Hellas. Their land was the world’s central life organ, Delphi was the navel of the earth. After the culmination of the culture of Mesopotamia, the Greek culture appeared as a new blossom. Just as Europe today, consciously or unconsciously, relates to third world countries, Hellas related to other peoples. Hellas was a microcosm of Europe. Today we try to identify the exact genesis and logical direction of an historical occurrence. For example, we cannot imagine that the “Dream Song” of Olav Asteson just happened spontaneously; the details would have to be prepared, organized, and then constructed. This is nothing else but Darwinism at its worst, a desire to identify the origin of things and then assume that one has found the whole connection. What the Greeks received from the non-Greek, they transformed to a higher plane of consciousness and manifestation in the physical world.

Plato admired the other cultures of his day, and he sought out the old mystery places to gather wisdom. When Odysseus was traveling home to Ithaca he came as an unknown guest to an island and was entertained by their king with songs about what had



Odysseus' Journey

happened in Troy. Odysseus heard his own destiny told to him by a singer, and he started to cry. The king asked who he was, and why he cried.

Odysseus answered, “I am Odysseus, the son of Laertes, who by his wise temperament am able to perceive all other people and whose destiny is in the hands of the care of the gods.” This is something that we today would look on as megalomania, but the Greeks felt that an individual’s awareness should be made visible. This awareness, which one experienced as a Greek, always strove for the highest and, therefore, one was expected to acknowledge it for oneself. Pride was part of one’s self-awareness.

King Darius hired the Samian architect Mandrokles to build a floating bridge over the Bosphorus. A builder today would ask for a percentage of the cost of the construction as a payment, but Mandrokeles asked only for a painter to make the bridge immortal with a picture of the king on his throne inspecting the army marching over the bridge. He dedicated the picture to Hera: “Mandrokeles has build this bridge over the Bosphorus, fish-rich flood, and has dedicated this picture to the exalted Hera. He has himself put the wreath on his head and thereby crowned all his fellow citizens because this will fill King Darius with pride.” This was payment enough.

Plato thought that what passed through the human eye transformed consciousness. Pictures became thoughts. The Greek culture took the steps for humanity from picture to thought and concluded with Aristotle who freed thought and established its autonomy in the world of logic. Plato, who himself never managed to consistently transfer image into thought, described Aristotle’s process. Aristotle was able to fully take the step consciously. His thoughts contained, from the point of view of thinking, the whole and then the parts.

The great philosophers like Plato, Solon, and Pythagoras, traveled to Africa, Asia, Babylon and India, where they met other wise teachers. What they brought back as knowledge became transformed. If we want to understand the developmental process of humanity we have to study these transformations. That something can exist on one plane and then be lifted up to another plane and therefore be transformed was a new experience. The Greeks were first and foremost Greeks, or more specifically, Athenians, Spartans and so on, each was a representative of the place from where he hailed. For instance, Plato is first a Greek, then an Athenian, and finally Plato, the individual.

In the Renaissance it became the opposite. First was the person—Michelangelo or da Vinci—and secondly it was about a Florentine or an Italian. During the time of Michelangelo, sculptures from antiquity were excavated and admired. But during the Renaissance, the individual human being stepped forth, and artwork became the creation of a particular individual. For example, Michelangelo wondered to himself how he could show that he was a Master,

that he could create the same quality sculpture as had been created during the antiquities. So he sculpted the image of a god and buried it. When it was found by a collector and identified as antique, Michelangelo knew he had passed the test. He had produced as a single individual what the Greeks had produced as a people.

Tico della Mirandola philosophized during the Renaissance, but his philosophy was his own, not like Plato who philosophized on behalf of all Greeks. We can see the difference when we observe how the Greeks inherited something compared to how the people of the Renaissance inherited something.

The Greek culture burst forth from the blossom quickly to a fully developed flower that existed for a relatively short time—between three to four hundred years. We tend to think that everything develops evenly but in reality this is not so. In the history of mankind growth spurts occur. Suddenly a new culture can appear with no visible bridge from the previous. Every culture is stylized in such a way that we can recognize it in the smallest details. The Greek culture did not exist earlier and did not exist later.

Our ideas today around culture are misguided because we have applied the laws of natural science with its uncertainties to other arenas. The old saying *natura confacit saltus* (nature does not make leaps) is not accurate. Nature can make great leaps, and the same can happen during historical development. We can, for instance, observe that great religious impulses have happened spontaneously. The Greek impulse is formed from the beginning not out of barbaric chaos.

Mythical Pictures

From ancient history it is not documents, but rather mythical pictures that have been passed down to us. These pictures contain names of god-kings or kingly-gods. The old Egyptian name for *kings* can only be translated with a whole sentence, “Amon led the people through me.” The king was a supernatural being, God’s representative on earth, just like the Pope.

In the papacy we encounter an ancient oriental ghost. A cardinal keeps his name but the Pope receives a new name. His personhood disappears. He becomes a functional representative of the Church. This is the last remnant of ancient practices.

“Ahura Mazdao has changed the people through me” is the Persian inscription. The king was the handyman of the gods. With the Greeks, the single individual becomes the carrier of history, even though the old traces still linger in the sense that everybody originated from one or another god, perhaps just a few generations back.

With his deeds the individual confirmed his own origin by referring to himself as “the son of the son of the son of Heracles.” A Spartan king, a descendent of Heracles, behaved in accordance with his heritage. When King Lysander behaved differently, he was challenged, “How can you, as a descendent of Heracles, falsely swear?” He answered, “My ancestor’s lion skin is not large enough. Therefore, I have to add some fox skin.” Through this example we can see how the human being began to emancipate himself from his heritage and to establish his own personality.

Could we, today, consider a political resolution like this: “Five thousand years ago Odin came on one of his wanderings to you and he was received in a friendly fashion. As a thank you we will now make certain concessions.” This was the style of the ancient negotiations. Or, one would tell a famous man that he was, in fact, not his father’s son, but rather the son of Apollo. The mythical was still part of everyday life.

Regardless of our opinions about these past interchanges, we must admit that our historical destiny was determined by impulses from mythical images. This is the documentation of the people. History grows out of mythology.

We read in old Egyptian inscriptions that a people called the Norse people or the Sea people burst into the old cultural world around 1600 BC to 1200 BC. The Norse were described in a similar fashion as the Vikings were described by the French a thousand years later. They plundered and made their way to Egypt. Here they were stopped and consequently they settled on Crete. The Greek culture developed rather suddenly. It followed the culture of Crete and Mykonos. Although we can read the written language, we might not comprehend its deeper meaning except for individual words such as: *labyrinth*, *hyacinth*, *narcissus*, *cypress*, and so on.

In the course of just a couple hundred years, the Greek culture comes into being and already around the year 800 BC Homer exists, just like a supersaturated salt solution can precipitate at the slightest shaking or the addition of a single grain of salt. It is the same with migrations. One world sinks into oblivion and barbaric conditions and a couple of hundred years later we have the Middle Ages with all its riches. The Greek folk soul performs in three differentiated qualities, and then we arrive at one of the most fascinating phenomena in history—the threefolding merges into the one.

We can observe three types of Greeks: the Ionians, the Dorians, and the Aeolians who can each be traced back to different ancestors: the Doros, Aiolos and Aion. A secret is hidden behind this threefolding. These three parts were not only visible in style (for example, the Ionic column), but were specific organs for the soul organization of the Greeks. The three are quite different but, if one is

removed, the whole would become lost. Let us look at what lies behind this principle of threefolding.

Threefolding

According to Hebrew legend, humanity has descended from Noah's three sons Japheth, Shem, and Ham, and until fairly recently we divided humanity into Jafites, Semites, and Hamites. Egyptians and Ethiopians were Hamites; Jews, Syrians, and Arabs were Semites; and all other Aryan peoples were Jafites. In other words we have the same ancestors who were connected to God through Noah.

We can discern the same pattern in other peoples. The Babylonians had the same legend of one man who had three sons who became the ancestors to all humanity. In ancient India there was Manu, which means "human," who had three sons Ingo, Isko, and Ermito. The same legend exists in Persia and also with the Slavic people. The Germanic tribes evolved out of one of these groups.

If we look upon the world as it manifests, we will see that secrets are revealed through particular number configurations. It so happens that the number three plays a fundamental role. We encounter the number three when the highest level of perfection has been reached in a culture. Everything has a beginning, middle, and end, or a past, a present, and a future. With these three forms of existence time is fulfilled.

We can recognize the principle of threefolding everywhere. The Middle Ages had three significant orders: the priests, the knights, and the farmers, and three significant habitats: the church, the castle, and the city. We find three forms of society: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy; three forms of poetry: epic, lyric, and dramatic; three basic meters in poetry: iamb, trochee, and dactyl. During the Middle Ages one referred to love, hope and charity, and these three virtues carried the existence of the medieval human being.

We can acknowledge the interesting principle that three forces can work within one. This perspective is difficult to find in modern historical literature. However, in earlier times important research was done in this regard. German historical researcher Lassaux describes in *Neuer Versuch einer Philosophie der Geschichte* how three sons have repeatedly been the foundation for the division of tribes and these tribes, are divided into three, and so on. In the beginning we have the ancestor or god and then three sons, or heroes, or half-gods. For the Germanic people these were the Ermiones, the Iskevones, and the Ingevones. This was not an outer or bureaucratic division, but there was an inner difference among the three groups. They lived in three different areas—one to the east, one to the west, and one in the middle.

In more contemporary times, we saw the French Revolution put the goddess of “common sense” on the throne, but the old threefoldness is repeated in their battle cry, “*Liberté, Égalité, and Fraternité*” (Freedom, Equality, and Brotherhood).

We see threefolding in the philosophy of Hegel: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. As to human consciousness, we recognize the three higher soul qualities of imagination, inspiration, and intuition.

The Nordic People

Now, let us take a closer look at the Nordic people. Even during the Middle Ages when the creative mythology was waning, a real piece of history is enacted in Europe. Three men—a youth, a full grown man, and an old man—created the united cantons of Switzerland. And then someone came from the outside—Wilhelm Tell. We often refer to Tell as a legend, but it is also an historical fact. Old sayings refer to the people who settled around the Vierwaldstättersee (Lake Lucerne) in Switzerland as originating from the north, from Sweden. Again three brothers brought these settlers down from the North.

In the oldest documentation, these people from the North worked like an undifferentiated mass that then separated into Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes. Behind these nationalities are not only three differentiated geographic regions, but three different gods were worshipped. Odin was especially revered in Denmark, Frey in Sweden, and Thor in Norway. [Thinking, feeling, and willing are characterizations of these respective gods.]

In other words, it is not an outer trinity, but different gods who ruled over different landmasses, and each country had a different historical destiny. Even so there is a unity to the overall gesture. Just like in Hella where there was a trinity within the whole, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark make a whole with three fundamental nuances. If we reconsider the three main gods, the question can be: What do Odin, Frey, and Thor represent? These gods were not abstractions but powerful icons that shaped the three Nordic people, their history, and their future possibilities. It is an unshakable law in history that the same forces that shape the mythology of the people also form its historical destiny and all its cultural ferment in relationship to humanity as a whole.

Then a level of irresponsibility came about in the world. We can never quite find the man who will stand for a point of view; no one will take full responsibility for one’s thoughts. It was the old ones who were always referred to as the archetype and were responsible for the origin of culture. One used to say, “Here we can see the work of Thor, or Frey, or Odin.”

The forces of thinking are most visible in the Danish cultural life. We can study how it manifests in all its nuances of their spiritual life. With the Swedes

what comes forth is much more connected with the life of feeling, and in Norway the force of will is predominant.

The three Nordic countries create a whole like the Greeks. You cannot study Norwegian literature without studying Danish and Swedish literature as well, because together they constitute a whole. If we can understand this it will throw light on the reality of other peoples' existence.

The Aeolians

We can see this same threefolding in the Greek culture, and we will first examine the Aeolian, the least well known of the three. The Aeolians carried the quality in the Greek world that immediately represents the warm, passionate, feeling life. They have given humanity the lyrical aspects and the qualities that move the human soul, such as hatred, courage, love, hope, trust, joy and sorrow—the forces of passions. All of this was formed in a richness of words, which for the Aeolians were like their ornaments. Their verses were accompanied with lyre music.

The art of song was more encompassing than our poetry today. During antiquity the poet Terpandros for Lesbos enjoyed the same renown as Homer. None of his work has survived; we can only trace the impact of his work. That he was a most creative spirit we can see through his followers, the great Sappho and Alkaios.

Our language today has rhythm, but Latin and Greek have an additional musical quality. The translation of a Greek verse is therefore really impossible. If one were to recite a poem by Sappho in the original Aeolian language, one could hear how the sound is shaped like sound ornaments.

Everywhere we meet the creative Greek spirit we might have the same feeling we get when we stand before nature. We encounter something that is complete and perfect in itself. We meet the human spirit's creative capacity in a higher state. In the poetry of Sappho, one of the few known female writers in antiquity, it is as if the human soul encounter with nature is transformed into sound; however, this cannot be translated or recreated. The Aeolians traveled around with sword and harp, and their poetry was filled with the sounds of the clashing sword and the sweetness of the harp.

We encounter in the Aeolians the great poets who wandered the earth and settled in outposts where they shared these riches of their soul. Even the heavy insular Spartans were affected by them and something became loosened in the Spartan's soul.

The Ionians

In contrast to the Aeolian qualities stands the Ionic element. The Athenians were Ionians *par excellence*. Many more words are required to describe the Ionians. They possessed openness towards the whole world. They experienced everything with intensity and with strong sensory enjoyment. They were awake, alert, and even nervous. They had a good sense for reality, they observed detail, and also had a clear sense for the whole. Other qualities they shared were a critical sense, a spiritual courage, a biting sense of humor, and a capacity for the fullness and beauty of life.

Homer was born into this world in which everything was alive: the starry world was the skin of the goddess. The Ionian spirit was relentlessly seeking truth, had a need for investigation, and possessed an immediate joy over the multiplicity in life. Ionians could extend themselves beyond their own sphere and connect with foreign impulses. They lived their lives outside of necessity. Life took its course like nature, like the wind.

Henrik Ibsen said, “We talk about freedom, but mean freedoms.” What the element of freedom was for the Hellenic people becomes visible in the destiny of Achilles. His mother was a goddess and his father was a hero. His mother predicted his destiny, “If you stay at home you will have a long and happy life—if you go to Troy you will die early but will win immortal fame.” Achilles chose the latter. The same holds for his opponent Hector who, in freedom, carries out his predetermined destiny. When Greeks used the word freedom, they did not refer to banalities, but to the fact that “in freedom” they chose their tragic destinies. The Ionians were, therefore, the only Greeks who could tolerate being under foreign occupation. They were subjects of the Persian king but were still able to maintain a sense of themselves.

The Ionians were immensely gifted with the power of ideas and at the same time possessed refined and sensitive qualities. They did not stand still—in a certain sense they even vibrated! They expressed themselves in all directions and all dimensions. They loved glory, greatness, and splendor. They had a capacity to enjoy life, but also a tendency toward hubris. We see in them that the human being can forget his limitations, burst from his own boundaries, and be like a god. “He is like a god,” was the highest compliment one could say about an Ionian. This trait, of course, could also lead to anarchy and social conflict. They were excellent seafarers and even traveled through the Straits of Gibraltar. The city of Marseilles, for instance, was an Ionian city from 600 BC. With their almost incomprehensible courage, they were willing to bet everything when it was required.

In the arts it is no longer the lyric which is dominant but the epic. Herodotus tells us about the entire world. He has seen everything, all the details, and

Homer's work will follow humanity for all times.

Historian Jacob Burkhardt wrote, "The Greeks wanted to observe the world—to deeply behold it." The Ionians were the first to record history accurately and became the founders of this as an objective discipline. History could come to birth when someone could ask, "How did this happen?" It was then precisely described without pretext. The Ionians also produced the natural philosophers Thales and Anaximander. The Ionian quality appeared again in Europe with Goethe; he was related to the Greek spirit in a very profound way.

The Dorians

Finally, some words about the Dorians: everything was connected with the tribe. The ownership of land was the foundation—one was both a farmer and a warrior. We do not meet many personal aspects in the Dorians, but rather a sense of a collective life and manhood as a way of being. There was a certain heaviness, uprightness, and seriousness about them. They abided no luxuries or art but had a strong morality. For them the god-given laws stood above everything. In the arts they created the chorus, which corresponds to the Doric building style in which the impressive qualities also had a carrying force. The Dorians imported the art created by the Aeolians and the Ionians. In Attica the poetry was written in Doric, which was a dialect quite different from the Ionians. It was similar to the difference between the Swedish language and the Danish, but more extreme.

The greatest national poet among the Dorians was the crippled teacher and general Turtaios who was born an Athenian. He composed all his war songs in Doric. The famous postscript about the three hundred Spartans who fell at the battle of Thermopylae is composed in Doric by an Ionian. The Spartans did not contribute in the realms of art or science, but they did create one art piece—the Spartan society.

With the Ionians and the Aeoloians, we are always meeting something new and individuated. But when we talk about a Dorian, we know all of them.^o

Conclusion

The number three represents perfection: the Trinity is the highest Christian symbol. Three Kings came to greet the Christ child, each with his own gift: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We can recognize three stages of life: youth, middle age, and old age. Wherever a group of people manifests a trinity, the highest level of development has been reached for that people. The Hellenic culture shows what the characteristics of such a culture can bring forth.