

# When Healing Becomes Educating

Selected Articles from the  
*Journal of Anthroposophical Medicine*  
(1986-1998)

**Volume IV:**

**Incarnation and Excarnation**



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**VOLUME 4:**

**INCARNATION**

**AND**

**EXCARNATION**

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# The General Human Condition and Human Individuality Revealed in Standing and Walking\*

KLAUS HOELLER

For creatures to move of their own accord it is necessary for the gravity streaming from the center of the earth and binding them to it to be overcome to a specific degree by the forces of levity. This interaction of gravity and levity varies from one kind of organism to the next. While lower forms of life (e.g., amoebae or jellyfish) have a share in the forces of levity merely because they are less dense and tend to live in water, higher animals have to develop special organs with which to fight free of gravity. Fish, for example, have air bladders to give them buoyancy, land animals have bones and muscles that help them to push against gravity, and the feathers of birds' wings are filled with air and warmth. By developing organs with which to establish a specific relationship to gravity and levity all living creatures also evolve their own particular form of movement. Animals express their species in the way they move; they show something that is founded on instinct and has very little room for variation (a cheetah, for example, runs and feeds like every other cheetah).

## I. The physical aspect

Over and above the types of movement available to animals, human beings also have the ability to move into the vertical.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the way they move comes about as a result of the interplay between their innate levity and the external force of gravity,<sup>4</sup> an interplay that is determined by the way in which ego and astral body are linked with ether body and physical body and by the way they influence one another. Gravity enters into the human being via the material substances of the physical body whence its influence is transferred to the ether body. For clairvoyant vision the ether body of a plant gives the impression of being weightless, but the levity forces of the human ether body are subject to gravity except in those parts that are connected with the brain and the spinal marrow.<sup>41</sup> Ego organization and

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astral body live by nature in light and lightness, but on waking up from sleep they unite with the physical and ether bodies that are bound to gravity; they take hold of them and flow through them and with their powers of lightness make it possible for the upright posture to come about.<sup>5</sup> In the physical body the ego organization presses into the warmth organization and brings about differentiations in temperature; the ego slips into the physical body, takes hold of its gravity and overcomes it. The astral body enters the air organism on which, in a way, it sets its stamp; it penetrates into and through the organs, uniting via the senses with the powers of light and life in the outside world.<sup>28</sup>

In human beings, levity and gravity have to combine in a manner that enables them to unfold their generally human qualities as well as their individual personality. In order to stand and move about they have to have a greater share of levity than does a land animal, yet not so great a one as do the birds. "Mammals are bound to the earth by all four limbs, front and back, while birds are detached from it; human beings free themselves from the earth by letting the spine be upright."<sup>7</sup>

This middle position of human beings between gravity and levity is visible even in the structure of their bones. The skull of a gorilla, for example, has a massive lower jaw that drags the whole head down and appears to pull the whole skeleton forward, so that it is an effort to maintain the vertical position. The same massive structure is also there in the upper arms and the dangling forearms as well as in the lower limbs. In human beings, on the other hand, the jaw is less massive while the cranium is larger at the front, on top and at the back, and the distal parts of the limbs are more finely organized. This balanced proportion of upper head to jaw and of the head as a whole to the limbs is a prerequisite in human anatomy for the mastery of the limb system by the nervous system which prevents excessive domination of the limbs by gravity.<sup>37</sup> We thus see how the forces of levity can work in human beings. These forces originate outside the sphere of the earth. They draw human beings up into the vertical position, "not in the way this happens occasionally with higher animals but in a way that allows the forces working in uprightness to be at the same time forces that bring about shape and form. There is a difference between an ape being upright while still filled with forces that work strongly against this, and human beings who develop even their skeletal system in a direction that allows them to make use of forces originating outside the earth."<sup>25</sup>

These extra-terrestrial, upward-drawing forces work on the human form during the embryonic stage, although part of the embryo has to succumb to gravity. The early stages of development essentially evolve the head, while

legs and feet appear like buds attached to it. If only the inner potential of the embryo were to unfold in the maternal body, these buds might just as easily develop into a kind of ear. But at a certain stage gravity begins to exercise its influence. It weighs on these buds that could grow into ears and reshapes them into the whole of the lower human form. Their position inside the maternal body protects the other organs from being taken over by gravity.”

The arms, too, are taken hold of by the forces of the earth, and the fact that these can affect the limbs at such an early stage has a consequence in later life. When the limbs are moved the levity inside them enters into interaction with the earth forces that engender gravity. This interaction continues on into the depths of the organism where the external exchange between forces is metamorphosed into the exchange of physical matter in metabolism. “In metabolism the forces at work inside the human being interact with the chemical characteristics of physical matter; the forces at work in arms and legs interact with the forces of the earth.”<sup>4</sup> Human beings enter into gravity with every movement they make, so that everything we do with the limbs is tied to the earth; we are dealing with earth forces.<sup>43</sup> The arms, however, since they do not serve locomotion, are somewhat removed from the earth forces compared to the legs through which ahrimanic influences enter into the rest of the organism.<sup>7</sup>

By learning to adopt a posture vertical to the earth’s surface and to move about in three-dimensional space the child’s individuality finds its way into the general human condition. There is much more to this than merely standing up and making the legs move in a pendulum motion. The child has to learn to handle the balance of the human being in relation to the world; it has to be able to stand anywhere without falling over; it has to position its body in space and control its limbs in a way that will ensure the correct location of its center of gravity whether standing or walking.<sup>13</sup> “It has to entrust itself to the world’s system of balance. This means that the whole cosmos has to place itself within the three dimensions of space in the world. That is where the child can find its proper position of balance as a human being in the world.”<sup>17</sup> “Through walking and everything related to it human beings find their orientation within physical existence on earth. The movements of the arms or the head also relate to the mechanism of walking. We position ourselves within the field of gravity.”<sup>12</sup>

When human beings learn to stand and walk and adapt to the dimensions of space they develop specific inner powers and this leads to changes in the most subtle parts of their being.<sup>4</sup> They learn, for example, to emancipate their arms and hands from the movements of legs and feet. “This creates the basis for the whole of human development. Outwardly

this becomes apparent in the way human beings use [standing and] walking to relate to the external, visible world with their own inner rhythm and beat and with the whole inner nature of their being. As we learn to [stand and] walk we seek the position of balance within the universe that is appropriate for the human being; we seek to find the special relationship, unique to human beings, that arises between the use of arms and hands and the use of the other limbs.”<sup>23</sup>

Standing and walking are bound up with the specifically human use of the arms and with the truly human position in relation to the world. “The mobility human beings acquire out of what is given in their own organism leads to the position of balance they find with regard to the solid, liquid and gaseous forms of matter.”<sup>15</sup> Not only do they take up positions with regard to these states of aggregation that come towards them from outside; in order to develop their humanity and individual nature they also have to relate to the “states of aggregation” in their own physical body. The ego, which uses the element of warmth to take its will intent to walk upright into the physical world, has to establish a relationship to the air organism as the physical bearer of the soul element, to water as the physical bearer of the powers of life, and also to the solid parts of the organism. The organism gains this balance of the ego in relation to the three physical states of aggregation by making use of the ability to stand and walk. “The whole gesture manifested by the human being is nothing other than an interaction set in motion between the inner elements of the organism.”<sup>27</sup>

To sum up: In learning to stand and walk, human beings learn to control their physical body as they enter into a new life on earth.<sup>13</sup> This must be done in a manner that reveals not only the general human condition but also the personal and individual aspect. Inability to learn to walk may be described as a “physical problem”<sup>29</sup> not necessarily because the causes are in the physical body but because the symptoms are most likely to manifest at the physical level.

## **II. The etheric aspect**

We mentioned above that standing and walking affects what goes on within the fluid part of the organism. Thus “learning to walk does not end when we can stand on our feet and raise the whole body into the upright position. It brings about internal processes, including the process in which we master glandular functions, and so on. When a child has learned to walk, or even before that, it is not so much a matter of walking as such, but of how that child—whether more phlegmatic or choleric in character, or whether it has particular emotions to excess—learns or fails to learn to control its

glandular functions.”<sup>13</sup> In the process of learning to stand and walk, the ego forces must work on the ether body in a way that prevents it from getting into extremes of wrong relation to the higher aspects and does not allow the temperamental tendencies to become exaggerated into illnesses the physical correlate of which would be specific glandular activities: “Physical illnesses develop when the physical organism becomes spiritual; mental illnesses develop when the astral body or the ego organization take on forms that belong to the physical or etheric world. Between these two extremes lie all the states that may be found in the child’s organism. In one case the astral and ego organization may tend to spiritualize the physical and ether bodies while in another the child might be inclined to take its form more from the physical and etheric world; in between lie all the intermediate possibilities. This fundamental law also comes to expression in the child’s temperament. In cases where the astral body and ego organization tend—not to the same extent as in madness, but to a degree that still allows the person to function normally—strongly and vehemently to accept forms from the physical or ether bodies, we find that we have the melancholic temperament. Where the astral body and ego organization are inclined to impress their own structure strongly on to the physical or ether body we have the choleric temperament. Between these two lie the phlegmatic and sanguine temperaments.”<sup>33</sup>

You could put it like this: Emotions such as anger, pain, joy and so on, expressed by uncontrolled body movements in young children have to be taken in hand to a certain extent by self-control exercised by the ego if standing and walking are to be learnt. If a choleric child, for example, were never to cease throwing its arms and legs about when in a rage it would never learn to stand and walk in the steady manner of adults who are to some extent capable of separating the movements of their limbs from their emotions. Or—to take a less realistic example—a child incapable of overcoming its melancholia would never want to hop and skip.

### **III. The aspect of soul and spirit**

#### *A) Walking and talking*

We have seen that human beings learning to stand and walk seek to find a suitable position of physical balance within the physical world and in relation to the cosmos. Animals have an entirely different position of balance; they have to use all four limbs in a more uniform manner. Even when they do use their front paws very skillfully when searching for food and eating it, their movements tend to resemble those they use for locomotion. Take a squirrel eating a nut or fir cone. It turns the food round and round in its forepaws precisely in the way it climbs up a tree by scrambling round

and round it in a spiral. Human beings are alone in freeing their arms and hands from the movements they use for locomotion: “They use their legs to maintain balance when standing and for walking, freeing their arms and hands to do their chosen work in the world and as a wonderful means of expressing what is going on in their soul.”<sup>13</sup> The fact that our legs remain behind to serve bodily movement while our arms become differentiated and are made available to the inner life “is immensely significant for the whole of our subsequent life. When we develop the upright posture we seek physical balance, but in freeing the activity of our arms and hands we seek psychological balance.” It is part of learning to walk that we must get to know “the physical and psychological statics and dynamics of the human being in relation to the universe.”<sup>23</sup>

“On the basis of the search for balance, this search for a dynamic of life, the next thing that happens is that we learn to talk.”<sup>16</sup> Learning to speak is connected with walking and in particular with the differentiated use of the hands. This search for balance in the speech organism is expressed organically in the fact that in people who are right-handed the speech organ is developed in the left temporal lobe. Learning to stand and walk, placing ourselves as physical beings within the three dimensions of space, and differentiating the way we use our arms and hands—all these are prerequisites for learning to speak. “Physiologists have all but lost sight of this connection between the dynamics of walking and standing and the way human beings learn to speak. The whole range of movements in the legs, arms and fingers, the whole ability of the human being to move and to find a position of balance, all this flashes up into the brain and develops it and then it flashes from the brain to the larynx. Speech grows out of the soil of walking, of grasping with the hands, out of all the gestures of the organs of movement.”<sup>18</sup>

Above we described how together with standing and walking the faculty is acquired of arriving at a relationship between the ego and the solid, liquid and gaseous elements, including those in the body, as well as with the physical, etheric and astral forces at work in these. Speech is able to develop on the basis of this relationship. When we find the balance in standing and walking and learn to use our arms and fingers, all these movements influence the system that underlies speech. “It tenses the muscles, it moves the blood and influences the human ether body, an influence that is transferred to those physical, etheric and astral organs of breathing, and it continues on and moulds parts of the brain. You could say that it is transferred to the organs that bring forth speech from our inmost being through imitation of our surroundings. Speech is transmuted movement and transmuted balance in the human being.”<sup>15</sup>

Remarkable connections exist between the limb movements learnt in walking and the movements of speech:<sup>1</sup> Whether a child walks with firm or light steps is expressed in the beat of its speech, in the stressing of the syllables and power of utterance. You can also notice “how the modulation of words, the contour given to words, to some extent parallels the manner in which the child learns to bend and straighten its fingers skillfully or clumsily. Those who can observe the inner workings of the human organism know how closely the movement of the vocal cords and indeed the whole adjustment of the speech organs assumes the same character as the movements of walking and grasping.”<sup>16</sup> “In the melodious element of speech it is not the competence achieved that continues to have an effect, but the effort the child has to make in order to gain the skills needed for the hands to be able to grasp. The rhythm of the child’s speech is expressed in the way it sets down its feet, in the way it moves when it walks. Much can be learnt from observing whether a child learning to walk puts its heel down first, or the ball of the foot or the toes.”<sup>15</sup>

“Once you have gained insight into all these interconnections, such as how in the process of sentence formation the legs influence speech activity from below, and how the meaning of words enters into the way the sounds are formed, into the inner sensing of the sentence structure, you will discover that it is all connected with the way the rhythmic beat of leg movements impresses itself on to the more inward, thematic meanings of arm and hand movements. If a child’s regular gait is strong and not sloppy, if it steps out firmly, this will be a physical foundation—although it comes from the spirit—or the ability to organize its speech properly in sentence structures. A child who walks sloppily will also fail to pause properly between one sentence and the next; it will run all its sentences together. And a child who fails to learn how to make harmonious movements with its arms will speak in a croaking voice that is unpleasant to listen to. If you cannot enable a child to feel the life in its fingers it will be unable to gain a sense for modulation in speech.”<sup>23</sup>

From the child’s very first day the ratio of sleeping to waking time will influence the way it achieves well-modulated speech once it has learnt proper movement. If it sleeps too much for its requirements it will become inwardly unwilling to walk; it will tend to reign-in the activity of its legs and become sluggish in walking. The effect of this on speech will be to make it slower than should be the case with that particular child; it will find it more difficult to find its way from one word to the next. On the other hand, if a child sleeps too little it will find it difficult to control its legs properly and they will dangle. As a result, there will be a lack of ability in the soul to

control the sequence of words in speech; the speaker lingers on a word that is spoken before suddenly pouncing on the next word. In extreme cases this can lead to a stammer when people are in their twenties or thirties.<sup>23</sup>

*B) The shaping of destiny and the origin of walking in pre-birth existence*

By learning to walk individual human beings adapt their own rhythm and beat and the whole of their own inner being to the earthly world. The child now has the task of coming to grips with its past karma and forming new karma; in other words it must shape its own individual way, and for this the range of movements in the arms and legs constitutes a significant ingredient. By achieving its own coordination and harmony of movement between right and left leg the child reaches the right human relationship with anything that is at a lower level. Leg movements then have the effect of “bringing the whole of physical and soul life more strongly into the realm of the rhythmic beat of life, which has to do with life’s turning points.” When arm movements then become independent of leg movements “a musical, melodious element enters into the rhythmic beat of life. The themes and content of life show themselves in the movements of the arms,” and this is the basis on which speech is learnt. “The relationship you perceive between leg and arm movements leads to the relationship gained with the outside world by learning to speak.”<sup>23</sup>

As it learns to speak the child absorbs the soul atmosphere in its environment. And as it comes to grips with the static and dynamic element it absorbs the spiritual atmosphere that also contains the moral element of its surroundings. The whole moral character of the child’s subsequent life is prepared in the manner in which it walks, putting down heel or toe, stepping out firmly or creeping about.<sup>23</sup>

Although individuality is expressed in gait, the child first learns to walk by imitation. This can be so powerful that it will even imitate walking disabilities such as a limp. The reason for adopting the idiosyncrasies of the way a parent walks lies elsewhere, however. “The reason why a child tends to model itself more on its father or its mother may be discovered by reading between the lines of life and finding out why it is drawn more to one rather than to the other. In the first place love must be felt towards the parent who is imitated; but the choice is also founded on something higher than love, something that later on becomes religious devotion. [If you can distinguish between this religious devotion towards the person whose walk is imitated] and the child’s own individual contribution to the statics and dynamics of walking, you will be able see the impulses of the child’s future destiny in this physical manifestation.

“If you meet someone in a particular life situation and feel you want to be more closely connected with them than with other people, it is legitimate to conclude that this may not be an illusion but that you have perhaps been looking for that person and that you knew him or her before you actually met for the first time. The most intimate aspects of life are connected with the way a child immerses itself in the statics and dynamics. You can see life’s destinies remarkably well illustrated in the manner in which a child begins to put its feet down, bend its knees or use its fingers. All this reflects the most spiritual part of the human being. We see the ego being of the child at work in the way it unites static and dynamic with destiny.”<sup>24</sup>

Since it is not only the soul element but also the individual ego that takes hold of the body, the karma the ego has brought with it also flows into the physical movements. The child has created this life’s karma when it was with the hierarchies before birth and gained its spiritual capacities, including those needed for building up a new body. These capacities, won in the spiritual world, metamorphose into walking, speaking and thinking on earth.<sup>11</sup> If you watch how a child learns all the things connected with walking you have an earthly picture of “what the human being went through in long centuries spent as a spirit among spirits. In the child’s various movements, in the way it seeks to find a balanced position, you see the earthly consequences of heavenly movements carried out entirely in spirit.”<sup>17</sup>

It is not only past karma that flows into these movements. The movements carried out during life, especially those of the legs, play a part in creating future karma. During life on earth the use of the legs for good or bad deeds is relatively neutral. But some time after death everything moral that has been achieved by means of walking is transformed into musical notes and sounds of speech. Leg movements are imbued with what was moral or immoral and become transformed into harmonious or dissonant sounds that metamorphose into the head organization of the next incarnation. “And the harmonious or dissonant sounds form the words you hear as though spoken by the higher hierarchies in judgement of your actions.”<sup>11</sup>

The moral coloring of the movement of the limbs is also taken out into the cosmos during sleep. Whereas the soul reaches the Angeloi through the after-effects of what has been spoken during the day, the ego is borne to the Archai by the echo of the daily activities of arms and legs. “From the Archai comes the strength to enter into our physical body in a way that not only enables us to will the good but also makes us capable, to some extent, of controlling the urges of our physical body sufficiently to enable us to fulfil the tasks we freely set ourselves in thought as our duty or our aim. In thought we are free but we gain the strength to apply our freedom in life

only if we carry into sleep a right relationship with the Archai.”<sup>13</sup> This right relationship during sleep arises from true human love while we are awake, love that makes us take a genuine interest in every fellow human being we meet. When it is in the keeping of the Archai, the ego judges the actions of the day just past. And our satisfaction or dissatisfaction about them will after death generate the strength to shape our destiny in the right way so that our actions may find compensation. From the Archai comes the strength “we need not only for our progress through the time between death and a new birth but also for our next descent into earthly life. We shall need sufficient strength so that as a young child we learn to walk in a particular way that is based on what we have brought over from our earlier life, learn to find our balance and to distinguish between feet and hands, arms and legs.”<sup>13</sup>

In the effort a child makes as it progresses from crawling to standing and achieving balance we see an echo of the way in which the ego was able to be together with the Archai during the times it was asleep in its former incarnation thanks to its general love for humanity. If a child keeps falling over while it is learning to walk this might be an indication that in its former life it failed to achieve a proper approach to the Archai because of strong feelings of hatred against human beings, or because of insufficient or wrongly-directed love for others. Thus the previous life on earth plays into the process of learning to walk. Indeed, “learning to walk is the very means by which a human being entering upon a new life on earth learns to have control over his physical body.”<sup>13</sup>

The way a child learns to walk can reveal “how actions carried out earlier with tenderness, softly and with a compassionate heart, lead in the present life to a firm step, and how an uncertain, skipping step may be the consequence of brutal actions lacking in compassion in the previous life.”<sup>14</sup> The child’s ability to use its physical body in the service of impulses of soul and spirit depends on the human love it once engendered; its capacity to learn to walk and achieve balance, to be skilful with hands and arms and to control its glandular system depends on that love.

If through lack of interest in our human environment we fail to approach the Archai in the right way we shall be unable to shape our karma for the next life properly. We shall then need further lives in order to compensate. In our present life, meanwhile, we shall lack the strength to bring the conclusions we reach during the night about our actions into our physical bodies. We are given the capacity to do this by the Dynamis. They “bring the strength to do the right thing in the right way into our physical body. Without this we collapse even if we are quite capable of recognizing what the right thing is.”<sup>13</sup>

C) *The occult power hidden in the capacity to walk*

A child needs considerable powers to be able to stand upright, although the effort itself is almost unconscious. These powers are not entirely used up in the process of coming upright; a remnant remains which, however, usually goes unnoticed. This remnant is important for those who approach the spiritual world through meditation. If they succeed in remembering their efforts to stand upright “they will discover in themselves the powers that have been saved up in the ether body, for it is the ether body that has to make the effort. These saved-up powers are present in every human being, and if you search for them you can find a great deal that will enable you to look back into the life that took place between your last death and present birth.”<sup>2</sup> Another way of achieving awareness of the saved-up powers is through eurythmy. Through the movements of eurythmy, which have been taken from the movements of the ether body, “you will gradually become aware of the powers that are still within you. They will be discovered when we make these free dance movements. In this way a beginning will gradually be created which will awaken in you the powers that will help you to look into the spiritual worlds that lie between your last death and present birth. When you discover the powers that remained after you learnt to walk you will be enabled to look clairvoyantly into the worlds in which you live between death and a new birth.”<sup>2</sup>

**IV. Loss of humanness through pathological tiredness and the U-exercise in eurythmy therapy**

In the eurythmy therapy course<sup>29</sup> the gesture for the U-sound is given as a remedy for those who find it difficult to stand properly because their feet are weak so that they tire easily when standing or walking. The U-sound has the effect of revealing the general humanness of an individual human being. “The U-sound reveals the individual human being as a human being.”<sup>29</sup> This general humanness common to every member of the human race is hidden or covered up by the lack of ability to stand properly. This raises the question as to what standing has to do with general humanity and why people who cannot stand properly partially lose their general humanness. Another question to ask is in how far the U-sound can re-unite people with their general humanness so that they can once again “stand in a proper manner.”

It has been shown that standing upright is a specifically human ability. Other aspects may be approached by trying to decipher the subjective symptom of becoming tired.

Everything human beings do, every movement they make, including the internal organic processes that go on when we are inactive in relation to the outside world, involves metabolic processes of consumption, a kind of organic combustion process which is accompanied by the symptom of growing tired.<sup>40,42</sup> With it comes the desire to let the body rest, to lean against something or to relieve the legs of their task of keeping the body upright.

Walking with a stick, leaning on something or sitting down we partly remove our spine from the human attitude of uprightness. When we lie down, which is the customary position for sleeping, we even place our spine in the position adopted by animals. The horizontal position alone makes it possible for the organism to compensate for the catabolic processes in the nervous system.<sup>42</sup>

Every change in the position of the body also means a change in the activity of the other principles of the human being. This is demonstrated by the way warmth is distributed in the body. It is regulated, moved, differentiated into warmer and less warm parts, and brought into flowing movement by the ego organization. This activity of the ego organization makes the body temperature into an organism.<sup>6</sup> Since warmth is exceedingly mobile and volatile the impress ego activity leaves on the warmth-organization is not static; it changes constantly. Thus the warm currents and formations in the head change constantly, especially when the body is active through the will. They are like a counter-image of what the ego organization does in the lower human being when the will is engaged. The impression the ego leaves in the head varies depending on whether a person is standing, walking, lying, swimming or doing anything else.<sup>28</sup>

We may assume that the impression the ego leaves in the head is impaired in a person who cannot stand. The powers of the vowels may be used to work on this, so that ego activity may be brought back into the relationship necessary for a healthy human condition. The vowel powers create temperature differentiations in the organism and thus support the ego organization in the physical body. On the whole they work centripetally from the upper human being downward because their effects radiate from the head into the rest of the organism. "The distribution and differentiation of warmth and air is of greatest importance for anything that molds and shapes."<sup>32</sup> The vowel sounds may be used to shape and correct excessive metabolic activity in the lower part of the body via the ego organization working in the upper part.<sup>40</sup> This may be necessary when the pathological tiredness accompanying standing and walking is a symptom of the ego and astral body making too many claims on the ether and physical bodies in these activities, so that compensation for used powers of life is insufficient.

The motto “You do not sleep because you are tired but you are tired because you need to sleep” can be modified: “You do not sit, lie down or rest because you are tired but you are tired because your higher principles are using too much of your powers and your powers of life are renewed when you lie down and rest.”

Tiredness usually involves some discomfort because it makes you feel your body more than usual. In this sense it may be seen as a precursor of pain. It raises into consciousness the gravity of the body and one’s inability to overcome it. This feeling of being weak and worn, with the will no longer serving conscious aims, is stronger in the evening than it is in the morning. We can extend the concept of tiredness a little so that it includes the using up of powers in the course of a lifetime. Healthy children hardly suffer from a sense of losing their strength because their excessive vitality masks any tiredness. In old age, by contrast, a feeling of frailty is more pronounced and this is accompanied by a feeling that spent powers are not fully replenished during rest and sleep. This tiredness can be accompanied by an indefinable sense of not being very well and as such is a symptom of disease.<sup>26</sup>

Excessive tiredness or exhaustion dulls our consciousness, but when we are only a little tired we can have quite distinct perceptions which in the circumstances are focussed on our own body. In slight tiredness, and also in situations of acute pain, our consciousness is involuntarily extended and awareness of our own body increases. Generally our awareness penetrates not far beneath our skin but when we are a bit tired we have a slight sense of what is going on more deeply inside our body; we experience the inner space of our physical body. An example of this would be a headache through which we learn to feel the inside of our head. In becoming tired we burrow our way into our own physical body which we then feel from the inside. With increasing age this is more and more the case. However, the fact that we are slightly aware of tiredness as a companion in life and thus gradually gain awareness the inside of our body is only the external aspect of the matter.

“Because we grow tired as life goes on and thus learn to be aware of the inside of our body, we gradually acquire a delicate knowledge of the wonderful structure of our inner organs.”<sup>3</sup> As our organs grow tired we become imbued with a knowledge of how these organs are built up out of the cosmos. Tiredness is the gateway through which cosmic wisdom flows into human beings so that pictures, imaginations, enter into them that show how the marvellous work of art of the internal organs has been created. These images separate after death and fill the human being as life spirit.<sup>3</sup> In this connection we may well ask whether the tiredness aimed for with

certain exercises in eurythmy therapy can perhaps also become the gateway through which the organ-forming imaginations of the speech sounds and speech gestures can enter.

The significance of increased awareness of the body brought about by tiredness must be taken into account if pathological tiredness is diagnosed, for example, if there is inability to stand. Every aspect of the situation must be taken into account, including physical constitution, temperament, age, workload, state of the nervous system, and so on, before the conclusion is drawn that the patient's illness is causing a loss of general humanness. Relative to the patient's given situation, one can then assess whether there is too strong a sense of his own body, which would mean, in musical terms, a state of being permanently in a minor mood in which soul and spirit go down more deeply into the body. The patient's experience of his own gravity is therapeutically countered by means of the major mood, or else the minor mood is gradually carried over into major. This helps soul and spirit to overcome their imprisonment in the physical aspect. One of the moods of the U-sound is that of being bound up in something while wishing to be free of it. "A healthy person has a light step and is actually within the U-sound all the time; he tackles anything he likes and can endure anything; he is in the U-sound all the time, he is the major mood incarnate."<sup>20</sup>

If the ego organization is more bound up with the head it is less attached to the organism in limbs and metabolism. It has to be able to breathe in the movement organism, uniting with it and coming free again. Here the ego creates a mechanical, dynamic impress of balance for itself in the element of warmth,<sup>28</sup> so that every human will activity becomes an image of the person's general humanity as well as of his individual ego. For this to be possible, however, the gravity of the physical body must be overcome. The ego achieves this for itself. It takes hold of the physical body, slips into it and pushes its way beyond its bounds so that its gravity is cancelled out. It is possible for the ego to do this because it can bring about for itself a direct, magical, non-physical relationship to gravity.<sup>36</sup> The ego organization fills itself with the forces of gravity when it is outside a limb that is to be set in motion.<sup>10</sup> At this moment the movement organism is in the major mood although beforehand it was in the minor when the ego organization was in the phase of intending to bring about a movement and was thus more occupied inside the organism.<sup>10</sup> We do not achieve a major mood in an easily tired patient by extricating the ego organization from the upper part of the person but rather by making sure that it has enough strength to overcome the lower part of the person in the right way by going out beyond its limits.

The ego also achieves a direct relationship with the forces of buoyancy when it slips into the ether body which lives in the fluid element. Once again warmth is the medium that enables the ego to do this, because its dual character allows it to extend into both the physical and the etheric world.<sup>36</sup>

It can be imagined that in a person who cannot stand, or who quickly tires when walking, the lower ego organization is unable to enter into the physical and ether bodies in a healthy manner and is therefore prevented from overcoming the weight of gravity. In someone who is tired the ego organization is more occupied with the movement organism as such, instead of trying to overcome it. The mechanical, dynamic impress of balance, the image of the ego organization in the lower person, is upset.

When the U-sound is spoken at the beginning of the exercise the mouth is pursed while the lips vibrate and protrude slightly. The external organs of speech are thus in considerable movement; and the U-gesture of therapeutic eurythmy then brings about the opposite physiologically, namely stability.<sup>30</sup> This U-gesture, with hands together and legs together, imitates the gesture created in the air as the sound is spoken, for when we speak the U-sound “we split apart the external air and experience the U in the way the two separated streams of air come together again.”<sup>19</sup> Before working on the unconscious relationship between the principles of the human being, by carrying out the U-exercise in the above manner, the U-sound is repeatedly spoken. This gives rise in the soul to the mood needed by the tired person because when it is spoken the U-sound gives the soul an experience of waking up, or waking up even more than it is already awake, which is a way of tackling tiredness: “Someone who utters the U-sound is indicating that he wishes to wake up with regard to something he is perceiving.”<sup>21</sup>

The U-gestures in eurythmy then act in the way vowels act. They gather together the person’s aura and make it more dense, which is something also achieved by spiritual activity. The organs are thus stimulated to bring the person back to himself.<sup>31</sup> Spiritual activity and agility—which is not necessarily something intellectual—is what the tired person needs, for this drives away the desire to rest. It causes the higher principles to send stronger impulses into the physical body and shape it more intensely. Thus, rather than correcting the symptom of tiredness we correct the relationship between the various principles of the human being which was causing the tiredness in the first place.

## V. The will to face one's destiny and the I(ee)-exercise in eurythmy therapy

By standing and walking upright, human beings manifest the general characteristics of the human race given by heredity and the ego organization which were described above as the achievement of balance in the physical world as well as in that of the etheric forces and of the soul and spirit. Into this general human condition comes an individual ego that takes hold of the general condition in accordance with its karma, thus revealing its own personal signature. Every "normal" human being can stand and walk, yet each displays therein his own personal characteristics.

Coming from pre-earthly existence, the individual human spirit has to seek out possibilities in its own body and in the social environment that will enable it to fulfil itself. Especially during the first three seven-year periods of life it shapes its body into an instrument that can serve the active achievement of destiny, and this body ought to present no obstruction. During the early years of life a battle ensues between the individual spirit and the powers of heredity.<sup>34,35,39</sup> The latter will win either if they are too strong in themselves or if the incarnating ego is too weak to take hold of its body in an individual way. One effect this can have is to bring about a lack of clarity and lightness. The individual becomes dreamy<sup>29</sup> because the ego fails to direct the life of soul. Thought-life lacks will power. Outwardly this shows in the way the life of will develops its own dynamics instead of helping the ego in the actions it needs to realize itself.

Apart from speaking and singing, the nature of the human being is revealed particularly in standing and walking. The degree to which people can stand and walk in the normal way shows the degree to which they have succeeded in achieving general human characteristics. The manner of standing and walking, on the other hand, shows the extent to which individuals have managed to realize themselves within the general human condition. The way they walk indicates the individual manner in which their ego has united with soul, powers of life, and physical body. This individual way of taking hold of the body is essentially a matter of karma and it shows itself in the skilful or clumsy use of the limbs. A clumsy gait, for which the I-sound is indicated,<sup>29</sup> is only one of various other possible forms of clumsiness. It is, of course, important not to take too narrow a view of a person's gait, "since the way I move my arm or head is, after all, also related to the mechanism of walking."<sup>12</sup> Some degree of caution may be necessary in the use of the I-sound with young children, but nevertheless all the skill and coordination exercises go in the direction of the I-exercise. These exercises will also be able to transform excessive "dreaminess"<sup>29</sup> into an eager interest

in the world because “the attention with which we approach the world depends on our spiritual and soul aspect being able to take proper hold of our bodily, physical aspect. People who have not achieved this remain clumsy.”<sup>37,38</sup>

The simplest and most characteristic expression of an individual ego wanting to realize itself is found in the conscious experience of stretching a part of the body such as an arm, a leg or a finger, and so on. People prevented from expressing themselves as individual personalities ought to be frequently given this experience of stretching. To do this the limb in question makes a shape that is identical with that which comes about when the I-sound is spoken: pointed, like an arrow, cutting the air as though with a sword.<sup>19</sup> When the sound is spoken it brings about in the speaker the effect of his spiritual individuality being affirmed within him so that it fills his being entirely.<sup>44</sup>

The intensity with which the spiritual element grasps and fills the body, holding its own against the obstacles it throws up, depends on the person in question. If the person is to shape his or her own destiny, the spirit must find a right relationship to the body. It must neither be caught up too deeply nor given up too much to the outside world; a mobile equilibrium between inside and outside must be achieved. The I-sound has the capacity to achieve this balanced sense of being equally inside and outside with regard to the physical body.<sup>20</sup> In other ways, too, the human being maintains a balance; “the eastern end of our building is to have a central group sculpture, with a Christ-like figure at the center and Lucifer above and Ahriman below, as though trodden into the earth by the representative of humanity who maintains an equilibrium of soul. This group is intended to represent total humanity, for it is the human being who must find the balance between everything that seeks to go beyond him and everything wanting to drag him down to the ground, between Lucifer and Ahriman.”<sup>9</sup>

The upright human being reveals the position of the human species within the whole of creation as being between the four-footed animals weighed down by gravity and the birds who fly above the earth. Out of this uprightness the individual person has to determine his own relationship with:

- what is above him in his devotion to the deity, but also the temptation to flee the earth;
- what is beneath him in the fallen kingdoms of nature, but also his fascination with technology and sub-nature;
- what is behind him as his past and as the karma that determines his life;

- what lies before him and needs to be shaped as his future;
- what comes towards him from right and left in order to help him in his present life.

The I-sound can mediate between these extremes and bring balance in a mercurial way when the eurythmy gesture, the stretching of the limbs, is made in all the directions between which the human being has to maintain uprightness.

In the sequence of repeated I-gestures and in the swinging movement that follows, much can be learnt regarding the responsible shaping of one's own life; the effect is a sensuous and moral one: "Inward composure and quietness signify balance. If a sensible decision requires us to go in one direction we must maintain the possibility of going the opposite way so that despite going in a particular direction we remain in balance. To be able to do this we must always have ourselves under control. Conscious balance is different from sleepy balance."<sup>18</sup>

There is something that must not be forgotten regarding all I-exercises: "There can be a slightly harmful effect with the I-exercises if the children don't enjoy them. You have to try and make the exercises fun for them because this affects their individual personality."<sup>29</sup> Even the speaking of the I-sound is founded on an inner experience of joyful excitement and self assertion.<sup>22</sup> For healthy children joy is the very sense of life. Joy is an echo of the soul's experiences before birth when it lived among the hierarchies. It arises when spirit and soul, the personal individuality, unite with the body in a healthy manner.

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## *An Introduction to the Following Articles*

In a lecture given on November 25, 1917, in Dornach, Switzerland (GA 178), Rudolf Steiner points a way into the future of humanity in various fields—one of these being the field of medicine. He stresses that we need to use those forces streaming in from cosmic heights, and that those forces that stream during the morning and evening hours will be able to bring about the good. Though this is difficult to understand, Rudolf Hauschka and Theodor Schwenk have given proof of the reality of this statement by their research. At the moment, all Wala and the Weleda Rh preparations are made based upon this principle. Here, the plants are gathered at sunrise, prepared and mixed with water. One hour after sunrise they are put into a peat-filled box that closes them off from light and other cosmic forces until one hour before sunset, when the tincture is taken out and exposed again for two hours. This is repeated for seven consecutive days. After this treatment of exposure to only sunrise and sunset forces, watery tinctures will remain stable for years. Some of these tinctures are 50 years old and have not decomposed. This process arose from indications given by Rudolf Steiner.

On December 17, 1906, in Berlin, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the “Midnight Sun.” He described how this is related to the halo-phenomenon, which can be seen at midday, as well as the colors of the rainbow and of the sky at sunrise and sunset. What is seen in the sky at these special times is a process that would remain invisible otherwise, unless one had undergone the process of initiation.

It is an important fact that our anthroposophical medicines are made by methods utilizing the morning and evening forces. What stands behind them is explored in the following series of articles.

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## Aspects of Morning and Evening Processes and Their Application in Pharmaceutics\*

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In a lecture given on 25 November 1917,<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Steiner spoke of the need to use morning and evening processes in pharmaceutics in the near future. He assured his listeners that one could not go wrong if the two processes worked together.

Two other processes in the cosmic order went against this. He called them the midday and midnight processes and characterized them as follows: The midday processes were mainly brought to bear from the Anglo-American sphere, the midnight processes from an eastern direction. Morning and evening processes, which always could work only together, represented the Christian impulse. They were opposed with a kind of Antichrist from the West, whereas the streams coming from the East would try to prevent true perception of the Christ impulse. Steiner also related certain cosmic activities, designated by signs of the zodiac, with the three kinds of processes. Morning and evening processes were said to be due to the cosmic activity of Fishes and Virgin; noon processes were in the cosmic direction of the Twins; and midnight processes were forces coming from the Archer. Rudolf Steiner's actual words were:

For a regular professor of biology it is of real importance today to have a microscope with maximum possible magnification, the best possible laboratory methods, and so on. In future, when science will have become spiritual, it will be a question of whether certain processes are best done in the morning and evening or at noon; if one lets the evening forces influence whatever has been done in the morning or if one excludes, it paralyzes the cosmic influence from morning to evening. Such processes will prove to be necessary in future, and they will take place... People with

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knowledge of the cosmos will fight each other, with some of them bringing morning and evening processes to bear in the way I have indicated; in the West preferably the noon processes, eliminating morning and evening processes, and in the East the midnight processes. Substances will no longer be produced merely according to chemical attraction and repulsion, and people will know that a different substance results if one uses morning and evening, midday or midnight processes... Nothing can go wrong if the power coming from the Fishes and those coming from the Virgin act together...<sup>2</sup>

These words may sound strange, but they have found application within the anthroposophic movement. Anthroposophic medicines are produced by rhythmical methods based on Rudolf Steiner's statements.<sup>3,4</sup> Procedures such as gentle heating, exposure to light, or setting the mixture in motion are applied to the plant preparations in the mornings and evenings. If we ask ourselves if this is really in accord with what Steiner indicated in the lecture on 25 November 1917, one objection arises that can scarcely be invalidated: the fact that it is perfectly possible to treat a plant preparation in the mornings *only*, for the method used does not make it necessary to treat it also in the evening. Rudolf Steiner made it clear, however, that morning processes absolutely demand to be combined with evening processes and that it is impossible to separate the two.

Joachim Schultz and Suso Vetter, who have been working extensively with astronomical and astrological questions, carried out plant growth experiments designed to show that differences occur if the orientation is on a particular sign of the zodiac when working with a special apparatus (Astro-stat).<sup>5</sup> This has been the second attempt to demonstrate the truth of Rudolf Steiner's statements concerning the signs of the zodiac by means of apparatus. Extensive experiments in this field have been done for many years, both in Dornach and at the Engelberg, and Vetter thinks he has succeeded in showing statistically significant differences in the behavior of plants exposed to Virgin and Archer. This is not in accord with Rudolf Steiner's statements, however, and the objection must be raised that nothing forces the experimenter to establish rhythmic alternation between exposure to Fishes and exposure to Virgin. The question is: Does this change in the wording agree with what Steiner meant when he spoke of morning and evening processes and of midnight or midday processes?

To get a clearer picture, let us consider the context of the lecture. During World War I, Steiner frequently drew attention to the fact that people live

with the dead in a very real way. Shortly after the passage quoted above, he said:

We can only see them (things) as they are if we are able to apply the concepts and ideas of our anthroposophically-oriented science of the spirit to the real world. The dead will have a major role to play for the rest of the Earth's existence, and it will be a question of how they do this. Above all, the big difference will be that the attitude of people who are on Earth goes in a positive direction and the dead can then be involved at a point where the impulse to act comes from them, where it is taken from the world of the spirit which the dead experience after death.

### **Speaking to the dead**

One way in which Steiner showed the connection with the dead began with a reference to the different levels of consciousness in our thinking, feeling and will activity—waking, dreaming, and being asleep. If we consider the two extremes of consciousness, we are citizens of two worlds. In waking consciousness we live with the three realms of nature and with the human beings who are born, in sleep consciousness with the spirits of the hierarchies and with the dead. In a lecture given on 5 February 1918, he said:

Anyone who gets to know the life which the human soul has between death and rebirth... will see that in this world, in which we move in our sleep, we live together with the so-called dead. The dead are always present. They are present in a supersensible world, moving within it and relating to it. We are not separate from them in terms of being real or not, we are separate from them only in our state of consciousness. We are separated from them exactly the way we are separated from the objects surrounding us when we are asleep: Sleeping in a room, we do not see the chairs and other objects that may be there, though they are definitely there. In our so-called waking state we are asleep in our feelings and will, right in the midst of the so-called dead—only we do not refer to it as such—just as we do not perceive the physical objects that surround us in our sleep.<sup>6</sup>

He then said with great emphasis: “This knowledge of being with the dead will be one of the most important elements which the science of the spirit must implant in general human culture for the future.”

Surely this means that anthroposophy has the task of making this knowledge part of general education so that everyone will find it as natural

as eating and drinking. The question arises, however, as to how we can recognize the real connection with our own dead. How does the nature of our experiences change when we move from sensory awareness to awareness of the world of spirit, that is, on crossing the threshold? Steiner described this with reference to human dialogue. In the world of the senses, the situation is like this:

Let me be quite specific. If you talk to someone else here in the world of the senses, you talk, and the other replies. You know you produce words with the aid of your organs of speech; the words come from your thoughts. You feel you are creating the words you speak. You know you hear yourself speak, and when the other person speaks you hear him, knowing that you are silent and hearing the other person... Dialogue with the dead is experience in the opposite way: Communion with the disembodied souls is not like this. Strange as it may seem, communion with disembodied souls is exactly the reverse. When you communicate your own thoughts to the disembodied soul it is not you who speaks but he. It is exactly as if you were talking to someone, and anything you wish to think and communicate is said not by you but by the other person. And the replies given by the so-called dead person do not come to you from outside but rise up inside you; you experience them as your inner life. This is something one must first get used to in clairvoyant consciousness.

We can get an inkling of the different quality of dialogue if we pay real attention to the other person. A situation may then arise where we forget ourselves and enter wholly into the individual nature and thinking of that other person. This may also happen with objects that are part of our professional life. Working with a medicinal plant, for instance, we may become absorbed in careful observation of phenomena and go to sleep with reference to ourselves, awaking in the object.

Thomas Goebel discussed the process in 1986.<sup>7</sup> The experiences described below are, in many respects, in accord with his work but, in this case, presented from the point of view that the search for a pharmaceutical process that is right for the object in question calls for a form of communication with spiritual entities who are connected with both the individual doing the work and the object itself. I attempted to describe some of this in 1987<sup>8,9</sup> and intend to take it further in what follows.

### Noting questions—evening processes

Processing flowering male mistletoe plants harvested in Winter to make an aqueous preparation, we always noted a sticky, resinous material adhering to the surfaces of the tools used to mince the mistletoe material. It could only be removed with benzene, which is a fat solvent. Production of this resinous matter was all the greater the more froth developed on mincing the mistletoe. However carefully we worked, it proved impossible to prevent this resinous material separating out. A second, similar phenomenon was the following: When the berries, which contain gum, had to be processed to make an aqueous preparation, they took up plenty of water, but the gum did not completely dissolve. This was seen on filtration: A jelly-like layer formed on the filter which only let a few more drops pass, finally clogging the filter completely.

It is easy to ignore this and carry on as before. Thus, one tolerates the separation of the resinous substance and, in the other case, simply does not make a full berry preparation. Yet if processing mistletoe to produce a medicine really matters to us, the question arises: How can I prevent the loss of this resinous material and what significance does the production of this material have in our understanding of the mistletoe plant?

You become aware that it is not you who asks the questions but that they arise when you consider the phenomenon with wonder and awe. It is as if you see or hear the question. It is important to take this as seriously as a question asked by a revered friend. Steiner always spoke of these two stages on the schooling path: noting the question and taking it seriously. He spoke of developing the inner life by taking the path of reverence.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere, he referred to both steps. The first step—here described as becoming aware of questions—was called wonder and awe<sup>11</sup> and the second step reverence, which is taking the question seriously. Reverence is followed by the feeling that a spiritual entity has made itself known. On the schooling path, it is part of this stage to distinguish the important from the unimportant.

Everyone may make many such observations in the course of a day, and they may show themselves to be questions when we do our nightly review. As a rule, however, we tend to go to sleep over them. In the lecture of 5 February 1918,<sup>6</sup> Steiner said that as we go to sleep we put hundreds of questions to the older people among the dead with whom we have a connection. They have had a long life in the world of the senses and now experience the soul aspect of its situations. This makes them open to questions. Steiner put it like this:

The strange thing is that the moment of going to sleep is particularly good for putting questions to the dead, that is, for

hearing the question we put to the dead person come from him... The older souls among the dead draw us more to themselves, whereas the souls of those who died young tend to draw nearer to us. Because of this we have much to say to the older souls, and we can create a bond with the world of the spirit by addressing ourselves to the older souls among the dead at the moment of going to sleep. Human beings can readily do quite a bit in this direction.

### **Experiencing answers—morning processes**

It has already been said in this quote that we receive the answers from different dead persons, from younger ones, who give us impulses as we wake up. We tend not to notice this very much for the life of the senses, which is then beginning, tends to blot those answers out. Another reason why people do not find it easy to enter into communion with the dead is that if we perceive the answers at all, we take them to be something that comes from ourselves and not something for which the dead have given the impulses. Again, let me quote Steiner:

When we lose children, when young people leave this world, it is essentially true that they do not really leave us but remain with us. This is apparent to clairvoyant consciousness from the fact that the messages which come to us as we wake up are very lively if the dead are children or young people who have died. A connection exists between those who remain behind and the dead, and it would be fair to say that a child or young person is not really lost to us; they actually remain. They remain mainly because, after death, they have a lively need to influence our waking up, sending messages as we are in the process. It is truly strange, but it is true, that someone who has died young has an extraordinarily great deal to do with everything connected with the waking up process.

It seems Goethe had some idea of this. The words spoken by Father Seraphicus in his *Faust II* show how children who died young are able to be with people who are seekers and provide them with impulses:

*Children! Midnight-born,  
Half grown yet in mind and spirit,  
Lost so early to their parents,  
Yet angelic spirits' gain...*

Goethe had five brothers and sisters, almost all of whom died in infancy. His sister, Cornelia Friederike Christiana, died at the age of 26. A close bond had existed between them. His brother, Hermann, died at 6; Katharina Elisabeth, Johanna Maria and Georg at the age of 1 or 2. Four of his own five children also died young; only his son, August, born 1789, lived to the age of 40. One son was stillborn in 1791; Caroline, born in 1793, lived only 10 days; Carl, born in 1795, 16 days; and Kathinka, born 1802, 3 days.<sup>12</sup>

We can get a feeling for the reasons why Goethe considered inspirations that came in the morning so important. Anyone who has seen his study in Weimar, with his bed in the left-hand corner, and read the description of how he would go to his desk still half asleep in the mornings and write down a poem, can see the source of some of his works. He wrote that he preferred pencil to pen because, on some occasions, the “rattle and splutter of the pen” would wake him and “stifle the product before it came to birth.” He always felt great reverence towards this kind of composition.<sup>13</sup>

The following example may be said to come close to those experiences. Working with mistletoe—its morphology, biology and material qualities—and realizing that the gums, being hydrophilic and dissolving easily in water, are the opposite of the hydrophobic, water-repellent, resinous substances, which are more inclined to relate to air, we decided temporarily to abandon our attempts to process extracts of flowering and berry-bearing mistletoe separately and, instead, process the two together. The experience (of deciding) had been as if someone looking over one’s shoulder were saying: “Simply try using the berries together with the flowering mistletoe and its resinous material.” Everyday routine would, however, prevail and the suggestion be forgotten. Yet when we noted resinous matter separating out once again, the challenge came again: “Go on, try; make the experiment...” Four months later, the experiment was made, adding different proportions of berries to flowering male Winter mistletoe material.

The 25% addition gave the most convincing results. No resinous matter was deposited on our tools as we minced the mistletoe and incorporated it in the aqueous solution. To everyone’s surprise, the extract was much easier to filter than any we had worked with before. No fat layer remained on the filter, and the filtered extract was a deep, dark green, indicating that a good proportion of fatty types of substances had also been taken up into the aqueous solution. Chlorophyll, the green leaf pigment, is fat soluble and embedded in fat-like membranes. These now became part of the extract and could be seen as a fine, milky clouding if a bright light shone on the extract from the side.

The outcome of the experiment revealed the character, or idea, of mistletoe in a way that moved us deeply. Years of intensive botanical work had shown one major character trait of mistletoe to be that it always allows opposites to interact to the effect of producing an embryonic, inhibited state.<sup>14</sup> Here, we had the gesture: The fat-soluble, resinous matter, wanting to escape from the water into the air, combined with the heavy gum from the berries that would not dissolve properly and a slightly cloudy, milky solution was obtained. We might call it a resin/gum colloid (Greek *colla* = glue). It was as if mistletoe nature itself had provided the answer.

Rudolf Steiner spoke of two more steps that follow wonder and reverence: feeling at one with the laws of the world and devotion.<sup>11</sup> The first is necessary to prevent us from acting on anything that comes into our heads, the second to enable us to work selflessly for the object. Wonder and reverence are, thus, connected with putting the question, being at one with cosmic laws; and devotion with receiving the answer and acting on it.

What does this have to do with morning and evening processes? Is it not a matter of crossing the threshold in two ways, hearing the question as we go from the world of the senses to that of the spirit and experiencing the answers as we return from world of spirit to world of senses? Rhythmic alternation of the two processes is a necessary consequence for we cannot go to sleep several times without waking up in between, nor can we wake up several times without going to sleep in between. Morning and evening processes, therefore, always go together.

### **Midnight processes**

The next question is: Are there corresponding midday and midnight processes? We find these in the different attitudes the seeking human being has to the two worlds. To seek, for instance, is to develop an interest in which the soul connects with something outside it. In the world of the senses we have to give ourselves completely to the object, leaving self aside as we direct our attention to it. This ideal of genuine science may also be called selfless love, a love which has its origin in the beloved nature of something that is utterly different. Our seeking is, however, entirely different where the world of the spirit is concerned; but this love for things of the spirit must—it is not a question of may-be on our own account. Our roots are in the world of the spirit. It behooves us to make ourselves as perfect as possible. We must love the world of the spirit for ourselves, bringing as many powers as we possibly can from that world into our own essential being. In our love of the spirit this personal, individual element—we might call it an element of egotistical love—is fully justified for it tears us away from the world of the

senses, taking us up into the world of the spirit. It helps us to do what is necessary, which is to make ourselves more and more perfect.

Steiner said it was most important to master the process of moving to and fro between the two worlds. The danger that the change does not take an orderly course may take two forms. On one hand, the seeker may achieve transition to the world of the spirit without first cleansing himself of affects and passions. Luciferic spirits may, then, take hold of him causing his inner life of feeling to be torn away from the world of the senses so that he develops his own illusory world. Such people tend to have pet ideas and rapturous idealisms; they become philosophizing eccentrics. Vanity, ambition and the desire for power are particular qualities that tend to be overlooked when human beings should have come to know themselves before crossing the threshold. A feeling may develop that the state of soul they have known in the world of the spirit should continue forever.

Another, even greater danger is connected with this. The circumstances of life in our time are such that they prevent knowledge of the higher world. If someone nevertheless has desire for higher knowledge, then, according to Steiner, the following may happen:

If he (the human being) brings impulses into the world of the senses which, in the world of the spirit, may take him to the most sublime experiences, they may have the most abominable effect... the kind of love that is justifiable only in the world of the spirit then enters into sensual drives, passions, desires, and so on, making them perverse. The perversities of sensual drives, all the abominable abnormalities of those drives, are the counter image of sublime virtues that could be achieved in the world of the spirit if the powers, which now pour into the physical work, were to be used in the world of the spirit.

The reason for this human attitude is that validity is given only to an attitude that belongs to the world of the spirit. This is the world of sleep, and processes of this kind may, therefore, be said to be midnight processes.

### **Midday processes**

Steiner described the second great danger in his lecture on 25 August 1913. The attitude of mind which belongs to the world of the senses is also applied where images from the world of the spirit are concerned. He referred to this as “nibbling at goodies in the world of the spirit”:

It is possible, therefore, to nibble at goodies in the world of the spirit; it then frequently happens that something experienced in

that world is taken into the world of the senses. There, however, it condenses and contracts. A clairvoyant who, thus, does not follow the laws of the general order of the universe will then return to the physical world of the senses with condensed images and impressions of the higher worlds so that he is not merely seeing and thinking things in the physical world but has the after effects of the other world before him in images as he lives in his physical body. These are very similar to the images perceived through the senses but do not relate to reality; they are illusions, hallucinations and daydreams.

Later in that same lecture he said:

Those nibbled goodies from the world of the spirit are the special prey of Ahriman. Ordinary human thoughts provide him only with airy shadows; but—to put it in ordinary words—he gets rich, dense phantom shadows by squeezing, to the best of his ability, from individual human bodies the false, illusory images that have arisen through nibbling at the goodies of the other world. The result is that the physical world is filled in an ahrimanic way with spiritual phantom shadows that go disastrously against the general laws of the general order of the universe.

Many of the ideas people have today concerning electricity and magnetism and also physiological processes are such phantom shadows. These enable people to intervene in the physical world to a degree that has never before been possible. The evil that goes against the order of the universe lies not in knowing the world of matter but in such knowledge becoming tainted with egotistical drives and desire for power.

The tendency to make spiritual contents materialistic even applies to important human ideals. Three such ideals have been ours for centuries. Goethe called them “god, virtue and immortality.”<sup>15</sup> If we are able to see and admire the divine element in the whole of creation, we are, in the Goethean sense, monists. In Christian terms, this is “God the Father.” The second ideal, that of virtue, points to an attitude of lovingly encompassing anything “other,” seeing the process of becoming in all that has come into existence. The third ideal, that of immortality, means knowing of repeated lives on earth, knowing that the spiritual core of the human being moves rhythmically to and fro between the physical and the non-physical worlds.

Today, those three ideals have become materialistic, which is only too evident if we read the greetings sent to people on their birthdays. It is hoped they’ll have riches and prosperity, gold, in short, and also good health and

a long life. God thus becomes gold, virtue health, and immortality long life. Spiritual contents have been made part of the world of the senses. The inner attitude is particularly common in our western world, and we may equate it with the midday processes.

### **Consequences in pharmaceutical research**

Our inner attitudes are a major influence in the world for they change the realm of matter. Environmental problems are one example, but the manufacture of medicines is also affected. Above, an attempt was made to show, from the example of mistletoe processing, that the application of morning and evening processes influences even the way in which substances combine.

If “midnight processes,” or pet ideas, are used at fantasy level, correction is missing that can be made if our observation and perception include wonder and awe, that is, the experience of questions. Other qualities are abstracted. The conviction that one is doing the best thing possible prevents objective perception of the consequences of one’s actions.

“Midday processes,” on the other hand, will only allow materialistic ideals to have validity. A typical example can be given from recent mistletoe research. The isolation and description of mistletoe lectins, the most important group of mistletoe poisons, has caused many scientists to believe the antitumor activity of mistletoe to be due to those lectins. This does, of course, have an effect on the manufacture of mistletoe preparations, and preparations of isolated mistletoe lectins are now available and put to clinical use.<sup>16</sup>

Ahriman is the spirit who wants to tie human beings to the world of the senses and who always speaks the truth but brings falsehood into the order of the universe by presenting only part of the truth. It is only part of the truth to say that lectins are important active principles. Mistletoe can only be a cancer medicine if those lectins are combined with the other substances in a way that is not possible for the plant itself but which is entirely in accord with its general developmental gesture.<sup>17</sup>

For this, we must enter into “real dialogue” with the plant so that, as pharmacists, we become mediators between the two worlds. Polar worlds come alive in us in regular rhythm if we hear the older, dead souls communicate the questions that have arisen in the course of the day as we go to sleep and experience the answers as impulses to act coming from the younger dead on waking in the morning. This may well be the way the morning and evening processes of which we have spoken may be understood.

The inner questions and answers may also be connected with astrological terms, as Steiner did in his lecture on 25 November 1917. This would not

be a matter of external, physical influences from parts of the cosmos being brought to bear on the pharmaceutical process without involvement of the human being. Quite the contrary, it suggests that the activities of the cosmos must be looked for in the spiritual *and* in the sensory experiences of the human beings who take an active part in the process. This throws light on Steiner's statement that physical and chemical laws are mainly operative when substances are combined or separated today. In future, however, human activity will increasingly influence the way in which substances are combined or separated.<sup>18</sup> To emphasize the importance of this human involvement, with all the need for constant practice and exercises, we conclude with a warning Steiner gave in his lecture on 25 November 1917:

Today, no more can be done than to talk of these things until people have sufficiently understood, that is, people who are prepared to accept them in a selfless way. Many think they can do this; but there are many factors in life today which prevent it, factors that can only be properly overcome if, first of all, we gain increasingly deeper understanding and actually refrain, at least for the time being, from immediately applying these truths on a relatively large scale.

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# The Angels' Morning and Evening Perceptions\*

WOLF-ULRICH KLUENKER

In an ordinary day, morning is the origin of day and evening its conclusion. In this sense, perception of the original entity of things is known as “morning perception.” This prevails insofar as things are in the (divine) Word. Perception of the entity of the created thing, insofar as it exists in its own essential nature, is called “evening perception.” For the entity of things flows from the (divine) Word as from a source and origin; and this flowing out comes to an end in the entity of things which they have in their own essential nature.<sup>1</sup>

This is how St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) describes the angels' two ways of perception. He had taken up the concept of the angels' morning and evening perceptions which St. Augustine (354–430) published in his *Close Exegesis of Genesis*. It is worth noting that this refers to the origin of things, that is, a developmental process (as we would call it today).

Below an attempt will be made to relate medieval views of the angels' twofold perception to Rudolf Steiner's references to morning and evening processes. Armin Scheffler's thoughts on the subject (*v.s.*) may be taken as study for this. The questions arising in this area of research are many, for we have to see how a perceptive faculty of the third hierarchy gradually makes the transition to the human sphere. It may be assumed that Rudolf Steiner's work in this respect does not stand in isolation in cultural history and clearly relates to the evolution of the human mind, even if Steiner himself did not specifically refer to this.

## Transitional phenomena and movement of perception

Interestingly enough, Thomas Aquinas' first explanatory note gives a fuller definition of morning and evening perceptions (*cognitio matutina et vespertina*): These, he says, do not mean a particular “admixture of darkness,” but images representing beginning and end.<sup>2</sup> This shows (a) that he is speaking of a reality in the non-physical realm and (b) that he is

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referring to transitional situations, not completely dark nor full light, as is evident from the phrase “admixture of darkness.”

The mode of perception is also transitional, a process. This becomes evident where Thomas Aquinas says that the “good,” i.e., not fallen, angels must not stop at evening perception: “That would mean to darken and turn to night,”<sup>3</sup> clearly saying that perception of things in their essential nature must be taken forward into morning perception, that is, perception of things in the divine Word. In other words, night has to be left aside or bridged in some way. Perception of the genuine condition of things must be linked again with perception of the seed of their becoming. In this sense, Thomas Aquinas was able to say elsewhere:

Evening is connected with darkness but still has some light. Once the light has fully gone, it is night. Perception of things, by its very nature, also has... something of the divine light and may, thus, be said to have evening nature. Yet if it is not related to God—as in the case of demons—it is called not evening light but night-like.<sup>4</sup> Thus, is it necessary to avoid total bias, which may also be called “staring into the night.”

Thomas Aquinas emphasized that midday, too, should not be taken as a time of day but the “center between two opposite extremes.” It is not a question, therefore, of specific points in perception but of the process as a whole, a movement of perception. He related this processual nature, in complex fashion, to the kind of perception. What holds true for the object sphere must also hold true for the subject of perception: Object and subject must be of one accord in movement character. This is extraordinarily interesting, but space does not permit us to go into it.<sup>5</sup> At this point, we come close to Armin Scheffler’s view when he relates Rudolf Steiner’s statements concerning morning and evening processes directly to the scientist’s attitude. The movement character in perceiver and perceived may be seen as the mediator of perception; or in Thomas Aquinas’ words: “The angels’ evening perception relates to that gained in the morning...”<sup>6</sup>

### **Subject and object**

Thomas Aquinas’ reference to the “threefold entity of things” is particularly remarkable in the context: in the divine Word in our own nature and in the angelic spirit.<sup>7</sup> Here, the relationship between object of perception and perceiver emerges clearly—the entity of things lies not only within them as both seed and end but also in the perceptive spirit.

Logically, this leads to a further thought, which is that the sequence of morning and evening processes must be seen as not only a sequence in time but also a sequence of inner activity in the perceiver. Morning and evening perception is, thus, not necessarily connected with specific times of day but with the perceptive movement and attitude of the perceiver. The reason Thomas Aquinas gave for this was that an angel was not subject to heavenly motion but capable of independent perceptive activity.<sup>8</sup> This would, of course, also apply to the human mind emancipated from the hierarchies. In his lectures on Thomas Aquinas, Rudolf Steiner spoke of the need “for a science of the spirit to bring the realistic elements of high scholasticism into our scientific age.” It was a matter of “making the life of perception a real factor in world evolution.”<sup>9</sup>

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## The Sparkling Droplet\*

WALTHER BUEHLER

As this material is presented to mark a special occasion, I hope I may be permitted to start with some personal comments.

Having decided to study medicine, I chose to go to Freiburg University. I had found out that a group of students was actively working out of anthroposophy there, and Dornach was in easy reach of Freiburg. What I did not know, though perhaps I might have had some idea—I had not been to a Waldorf school and had found anthroposophy at the age of 17—was that now in the Summer of 1932 I was to meet a group of people in Freiburg who were to remain friends for life. Thus, we entered into the new field of anthroposophical medicine which demanded responsible attitudes, and this continued to strengthen the bonds and bring constant renewal.

Gisbert Husemann, 25 at the time, was the senior and main initiator of the extremely active group. The main task was a systematic study of Rudolf Steiner's basic works and lectures on the theory of knowledge and medicine. Considering the mass of material presented in the lecture theaters, eurhythmics and speech exercises helped us not to become too intellectual. No relevant secondary anthroposophical literature being available at the time, we had to probe the mysteries of nature for ourselves. Seeing deadly nightshade plants of more than a man's height on the Kaiserstuhl hill, for instance, we were able for the first time to see why this medicinal plant with its many actions must be poisonous, with the flowering impulse coming in much too early, penetrating the whole shoot system prematurely and filling it with astrality. The strange shift in shoot development, with the harmony between vertical and spiral tendencies upset, became a real experience to us.

We'll all be grateful to this day that the senior students managed to get special permission for us to visit the metal ore mines of the Schauinsland mountain, which is also known as the "ore box." We had often stood on the top and seen the whole range of the Swiss Alps magically illumined. Now, we experienced the opposite extreme when we saw the long veins of lead glance and zinc blend with their accompanying quartz veins in deep-down

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Neue Lehre  
von den  
**Proportionen des menschlichen  
Körpers,**

aus einem bisher unerkannt gebliebenen,  
die ganze Natur und Kunst durchdringenden  
**morphologischen Grundgesetze**

entwickelt  
und  
mit einer vollständigen historischen Uebersicht der bisherigen Systeme

begleitet  
von  
Professor **Dr. A. Zeising.**



Mit 177 in den Text gedruckten Holzschnitten.

LEIPZIG,  
N. D. WEIGEL  
1854.

clefts. We needed to connect intensely with these medicinal substances produced by mother earth, going beyond abstract chemical formulas. But the high points were the courses given under the personal supervision of Dr. Ita Wegman at the Clinic in Arlesheim at the end of every semester. There, we worked above all on the courses given for medical students and junior physicians. We were also given an introduction to eurythmy therapy by Dr. Kirchner-Bockholt and made our first attempts at painting with Dr. Hauschka-Stavenhagen, which provided us with a basis for understanding art therapies and, later, prescribing them.

Within the medical group, I took courage and gave my first talks on the Golden Section and the significance of the pentagram in the human organism (we had already worked with the pentagram in eurythmy). After all, the very first thing I had done in Freiburg had been to go to the University library where at last I got hold of a copy of a book by Prof. A. Zeising.<sup>1</sup> As a boy, I had known of its existence from forays into my father's bookcase. To my surprise I found that the word "eurythmy" had existed as early as the 19th Century.

Zeising's discovery is not given the recognition it deserves. He found that the Golden Section was the key to the human form sought by so many artists. Anatomically, this is a truly Goethean approach that enables us to see every part in the light of a greater, ideal whole. This is a classical example of taking the purely analytical method, in which things are taken apart, a method that also has its justification but takes us away from the spiritual and creative aspect, and being able and compelled to bring in a different, holistic approach. Then, the image of man that sustains us will not be wholly lost. On the other hand, realization that the human form is wholly organized and differentiated in the "divine proportion" can make us aware of this as a direct expression of the work of creative etheric powers. The life body as "architect of the physical body" (R. Steiner) has five main currents running through it that combine in a pentagram. "These five currents lie hidden in the human being; the healthy ether body presents in such a way that they are its skeletal structure, as it were."<sup>2</sup> The pentagram is the archetypal form of the Golden Section, an important bridge linking the study of physical objects with an approach in which the etheric aspects are considered at the level of images.

It is only recently that I heard from Hermann Ehret, author of the newly-published biography of Immanuel Hermann Fichte, that Prof. Adolf Zeising was among the friends of this eminent, spiritually-oriented son of the philosopher, Johann Gottlieb Fichte. He was one of the individuals in the forgotten stream of German cultural life who sought to preserve Goetheanism when darkness fell in 1840 so that it might live on until the age of light would come. Their writings had been "buried" (R. Steiner).

The question as to the nature of the Golden Section as it presents in the realms of nature, in the planetary system and in the human organism has occupied the writer's mind throughout life. With a certain inner inevitability, it ultimately led to the question of the measure of the rainbow. The answer will be pursued in what follows.

In the 4th lecture of his *Course for Young Doctors*,<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Steiner gave a meditation that encourages us to consider the threefold plant and trace

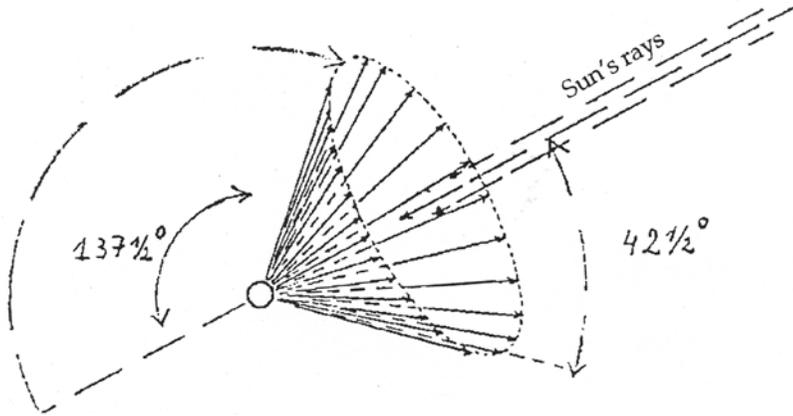


Figure 1. Refraction and reflection in a droplet of water. Fan-like color cone seen in dew drops and raindrops. Slightly amended from the author's book on Northern lights, lightning and rainbow,<sup>4</sup> with kind permission of the publishers.

the three fundamental processes known as Sal, Mercury and Sulfur. These create a link between medicinal plant and threefold human organism.

As we consider the mercurial processes that mediate the polarity between light-related flowering impulses and earth-related root powers, we discover a connection with the morning hours. The meditator is asked to pay special attention to the dew drops that line the margins of leaves like bead necklaces, catching the light of the sun. The observer has to find exactly the right position relative to the incoming ray of the sun if the glitter is to change into the enchanting sparkle of all the colors of the rainbow, bringing to mind the pure colors of precious stones. Often, the whole color spectrum will shimmer in the carpet of tiny droplets covering the surface of the leaf.

Every drop is a reflection on the small scale of the macrocosmic world and its spherical bodies. In terms of physics, it reflects part of the light which is passing through it in the form of a circular cone of color, which is due to diffraction, refraction and reflection (Fig. 1). This delicate "light flower" holds all the colors of the spectrum. Deviation from the central sun ray is always approx.  $42^\circ$ . The observer, his back to the sun, must be within this angle, looking at the droplet from the left, the right or from above if his pupil is to capture the play of colors.

Here, we see on a small scale a process that happens thousands of times as a rainbow is created. When the tremendous abundance of streaming raindrops crosses the stream of light from the sun, millions of those color cones combine to form a flowing sea of color in the atmosphere. The human eye takes from this the great arc of color that rests in itself in majesty. A kind

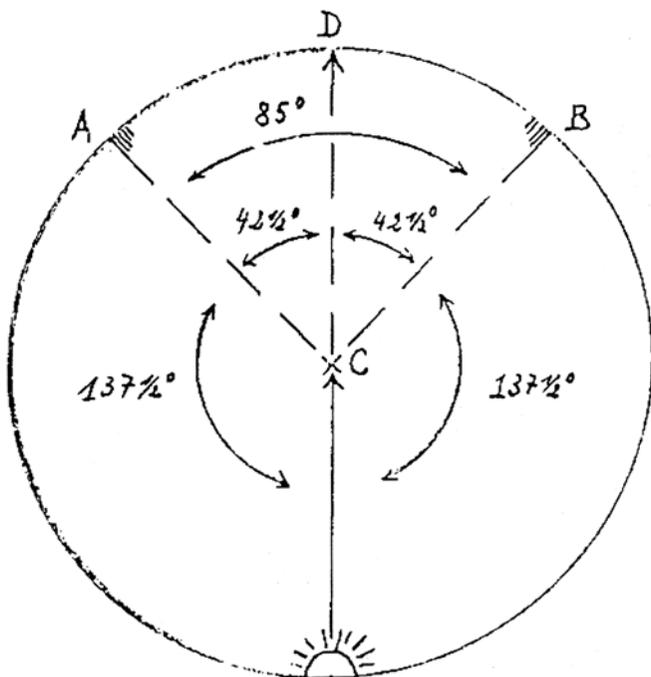


Figure 2. Angles in rainbow seen from C and projected on to horizon at sunrise and sundown. D marks the center of the arc, exactly opposite to the sun, A and B the points where the rainbow meets the horizon. The  $85^\circ$  angle between CA and CB subtends the arc of the rainbow.

of reversal occurs, creating a “macrocosmic” counter image of the small droplet flower which is its polar opposite. If this reversal of rays reaching the human eye were visible to us, a half cone of color would appear, its tip touching the eye. Every human being sees only his own rainbow, which belongs to him, and this shows the special relationship we have to this marvelous natural phenomenon.<sup>4</sup>

The relationship to the colors that develop in tiny droplets can also be seen in the proportions of the rainbow on the macrocosmic scale. From the center of the arc, which is always directly opposite to the sun, every point on the outermost red margin is at an angle of  $42^\circ$  to the central line. If the sun is relatively high up in the sky, we do not, of course, see the whole semicircle but only part of it. The fact that the rainbow only appears in its full glory at sunrise and sunset reveals its special relationship to the hours of morning and evening. What follows must, therefore, have its beginning in these ideal moments.

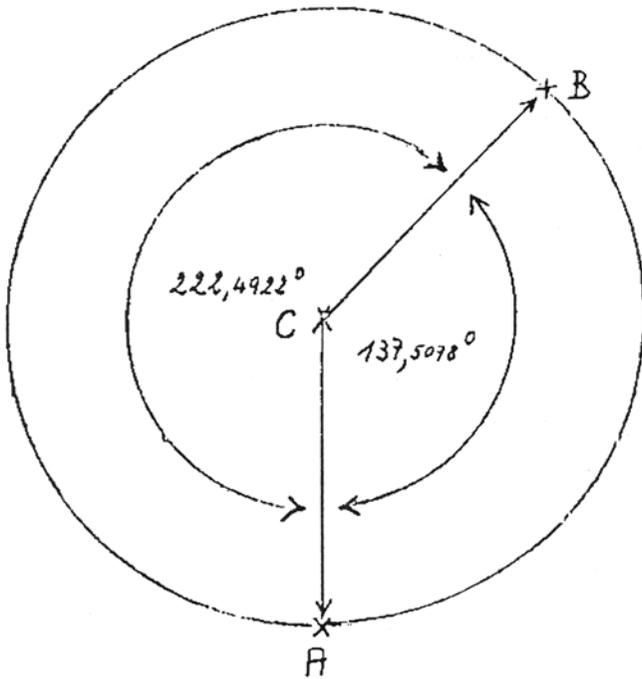


Figure 3. Zeising's division of the circumference of a circle in the proportions of the Golden Section.<sup>6</sup>

Fig. 2 shows the points on the  $360^\circ$  horizon where the rainbow meets the earth at sunrise or sunset. The observer would be at the center C. The proportions are the same as for the small color cone seen with the droplet (Fig. 1). The arc is  $85^\circ$ . The angles from the sun to the points where the rainbow meets the earth are  $137\frac{1}{2}^\circ$  each. *Is this chance, or does it reflect a higher order indicating a relationship to the universe as a whole?*

Phenomenologically, the rainbow may be seen to play a mediating role in many natural processes. It appears between light and darkness, needing both the cloud which obscures and the brightening blue sky. Belonging to the hours of morning and evening, it is essentially connected with the sun when it is in the East or the West. The chapter on northern lights, lightning and the rainbow<sup>2</sup> shows in detail how the harmonious sequence of colors and the whole mysterious phenomenon of the rainbow hold a middle position between the vehemence of lightning striking the earth and the evanescence of the northern lights. These arise in the hours of noon and midnight respectively and relate specifically to Summer and Winter. This takes us to the threefold light organism of the earth, where the flashing

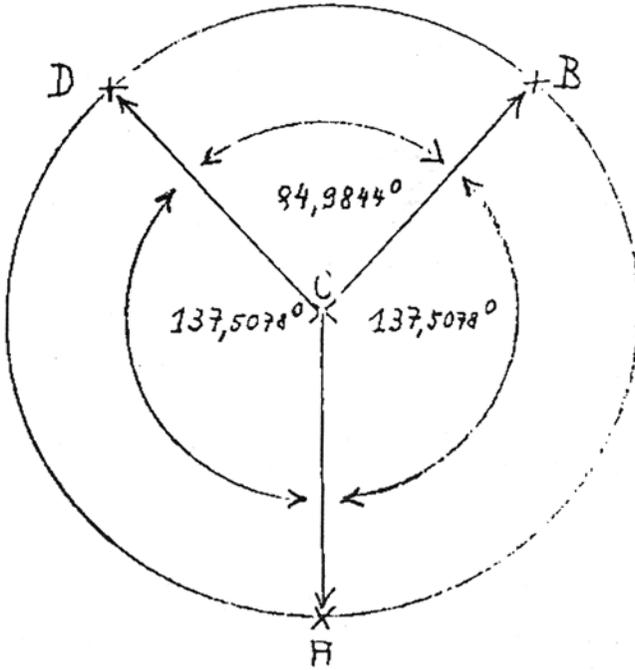


Figure 4. Further proportional division of the major in Figure 3 gives a new minor of  $84.9844^\circ$ .<sup>7</sup>

belt of tropical thunderstorms is connected with the northern light crowns in the polar regions through the two semicircular bands of color that span the globe at dawn and dusk. The day-side of their mercurial zones is the home of all the rainbows; these vanish as the sun rises higher towards noon.

The next step was to see if a relationship exists between the rainbow and the unique ratio of the Golden Section. We know that however much this is divided, every part retains its proportional relationship to the whole. In abstract mathematical terms and relating to a line segment, this means that on asymmetrical division, the smaller part (the minor) shows the same proportional relationship to the greater part (the major) as the latter does to the whole, undivided segment. The same relationship may be seen in areas and in angles. Works of art—buildings, sculptures, paintings—created in these proportions always look harmonious and well balanced.

In the natural world, we find the Golden Section in the arrangement of the leaves on the stems of many plants, i.e., in the mercurial region of the shoot. Zeising was the first to point this out. Even in Goethe's day, botanists had noted that the spirial sequence of leaves moving up the stem and their

rhythm involves specific angles that are always greater than  $90^\circ$ . At the Sorbonne in Paris, the Bravais brothers measured the angles of divergence in hundreds of plants and found the average to be  $137^\circ 30' 48''$ . This seemed a chance result, requiring no further discussion.

Two German botanists, Braun and Schimper, studied the spirals and rhythmic arrangements of scales on the cones of coniferous trees. They found a geometric sequence of "leaf cycles" which governed all kinds of different plant species. If phyllotaxis was in the  $3/8$  cycle, for instance, the denominator of the fraction tells us that eight leaves make a cycle, with only the ninth leaf pointing in the same direction as the first. The numerator indicates that the leaf spiral goes three times round the stem. The whole fraction shows that the next leaf on the stem will never appear after one eighth (i.e.,  $45^\circ$ ) or two eighths ( $90^\circ$ ) but only after three eighths of  $360^\circ$  (=  $135^\circ$ ) around the circle. This holds true for the cress family (Cruciferae), for example.

The complete Schimper-Braun series is  $1/2, 1/3, 2/5, 3/8, 5/13, 8/21, 13/34$ , etc. It remains valid to this day as the main series in phyllotaxis. As medical students, we gained much satisfaction from seeing it in the botany book we had to use for our studies. With the  $2/5$  divergence, seen mainly in the rose family, the angle is  $2 \times 72^\circ = 144^\circ$ , with the  $5/13$  divergence (dandelion, daisy, mullein)  $138^\circ 28'$ . The angles in the series, which is like a "spiritual thread" going through the whole plant world, moves around an irrational figure that appears to be the ideal. It is  $137^\circ 30' 28''$ . Zeising realized "that this angle is no more and no less than the minor of the circumference of a circle divided according to the law we are considering; this embraces...  $137.5078^\circ$  and, thus, differs only minimally, by about  $20''$ , from theirs" (the angle found by the Bravais brothers – WB). He wrote:

*The laws of phyllotaxis may thus also be put as follows:*

- 1) *The number of turns in a leaf cycle always relates to the number of leaves as minor to whole;*
- 2) *The same proportion is seen between the angle of divergence for two consecutive leaves and the whole stem circumference;*
- 3) *In their number of leaves per cycle, the different plant species present a regular series relative to each other, with every less complex one showing the minor:major relationship to the next higher in order of complexity, thus uniting with it in a proportionally-ordered whole, and being part of a continuous scale of proportional stages with all that precede and follow it.<sup>5</sup>*

Zeising put an end to a scientific dispute when he made his fundamental discovery. Until then, German botanists had accused those at the Sorbonne of having fallen into mathematical and intellectual abstraction. The scientists at the University of Paris, on the other hand, felt that the cyclic system used by the Germans was a hypothesis, rounding up to whole numbers, with romantic overtones, relating to angles that were within the range of the variation seen in the sphere of life and its sources of error. The Golden Section provided the bridge that united the two factions. With its inner mercurial quality it proved a peacemaker. Zeising went on to explain:

To grasp and understand the truth and living reality of the natural world, we must above all find a law that offers the transition from one opposite to the other and allows us to see that the law itself is the source-spring of freedom, with deviation from it merely a consequence and further effect of a law that takes manifold forms. This requirement is, however, met in a better way by our law than by any other. As has been shown in the general part of this book, the forms arising from it range from those showing strict regularity to those that show free expression. The law reconciles the idea of unity and uniformity on one hand with that of variety and manifoldness on the other, taking us from the realm of the finite into that of infinity, where it bases itself on the firm measure of a whole that has definite limits and by an infinitely subtle division of the whole which is capable of being continued to infinity, shows that within this finite element, infinity, too, is to be found.

The discovery of the Golden Section function in the sphere of the plant shoot thus shone like a ray of light in the midst of the darkness of the 19th Century, a presage of the age of light that was to come.

To illustrate his approach, Zeising produced two drawings, among other things, in which the  $360^\circ$  of the circumference are divided to show the main angle of the leaf sequences. In Figure 3, the  $136.5078^\circ$  angle ABC represents the minor relative to the circumference; it is the angle of divergence the plant seeks to achieve in its phyllotaxis. The larger residual angle of  $222.4922^\circ$  is the major. If the leaf spiral goes in the opposite direction around the stem (Figure 4), the leaf at D, which follows A, is, again, at an angle which is in the Golden Section relationship. It is in the nature of the Section, however, that as soon as the minor is positioned within the major, this is, in turn, divided in the same proportion, with no need for tedious construction. The new third  $85^\circ$  angle DCB is the minor of  $222^\circ$ .

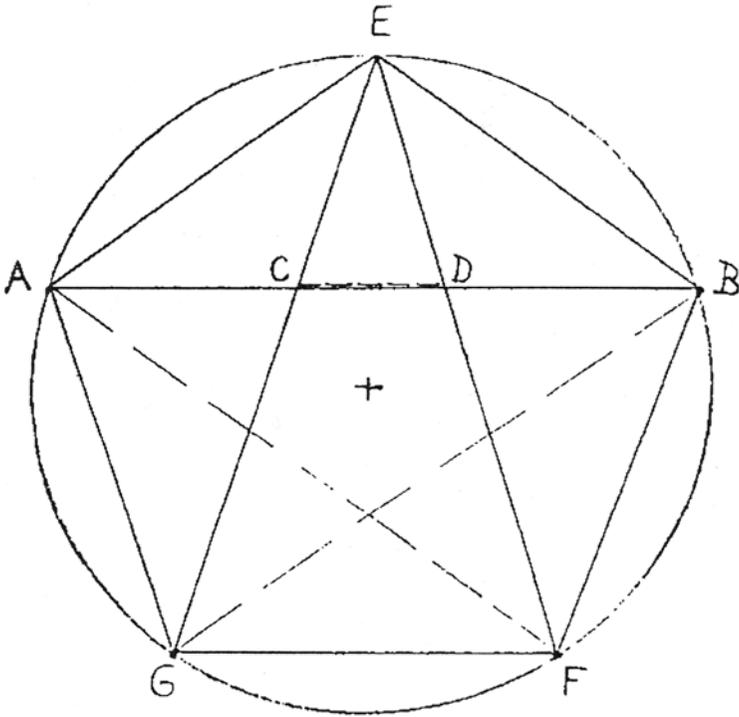


Figure 5. The proportions of the rainbow within the pentagram. Side AE of the large pentagon relates to the diagonal AB as minor to major. The diagonal EF divides AB at D in the Golden Section. The resulting major AD, equal in length to side AE of the large pentagon, is equally divided by the third diagonal EG, creating the new minor CD. This corresponds to the size of the rainbow if diagonal AB represents the horizon shown as a straight line.

Readers will have realized that the proportions that determine the rainbow are also appearing in the plant world. Figures 3 and 4 show a distinct relationship to Figure 2. Zeising actually produced the key to the rainbow more than 130 years ago, though he was not aware of this. Think of a leaf growing towards the rising sun on its shoot. The next leaf, feeling its way around the horizon, as it were, seeks the point, in its angle of divergence, where the rainbow meets the earth. We might also say it grows into the world around it following the laws that are reflected a thousand times in the beads of dew which adorn the leaf.

The same proportions appear if we consider the circumference or horizon as a straight line AB and divide this so that AC and CD are in the Golden Section ratio (Figure 5). The smallest new minor section CD would mark the measure of the rainbow. This division occurs at the intersections

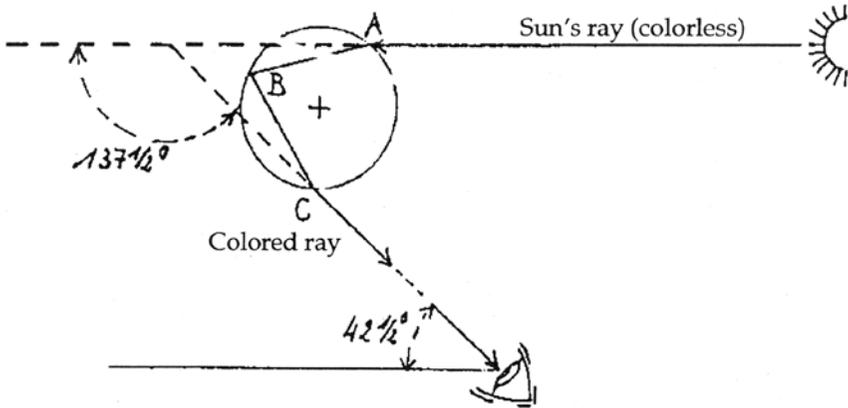


Figure 6. Trajectory of light ray and its processing, in terms of physics, in a droplet of water. Entering at A, the ray is diffracted and refracted, and then reflected as in a mirror at B, emerging as a colored ray at C. It has gone through a total angle of  $137.5^\circ$ .

of every diagonal in the pentagram. The intersections recreate the original pentagon in inverted form, the length of its sides corresponding to the diameter of the rainbow.

The rainbow develops when opposite extremes come together in the elements. In width and height, it is a mercurial, natural mediator; its proportions relative to the periphery are indissolubly bound up with the laws of the “divine proportion.”

This can be seen very clearly if we progress from a study of the whole to that of its parts and look up, for example, to a droplet at the uppermost periphery of the rainbow.

The sunbeam stalking the drop and entering into it at point A (Fig. 6) is reflected at point B at the back of the droplet, emerging as a colored ray at C. It is refracted by a total of  $137^\circ 30'$ , i.e., the minor of the circumference, as it meets the eye. The eye, on its part, must be looking up at an angle of  $42^\circ 30'$ . The same applies in suitably-adapted form to every one of the millions of water droplets that make up the rainbow, changing all the time as they fall. The sea of color we spoke of is filled with the laws that govern the Golden Section. As the mystery of the proportions shown by this natural phenomenon, which is complete in itself, is revealed, the observer experiences, at first unconsciously, the balancing quality of its archetypal function, which harmonizes and relates all parts to the whole in accord with this. The rainbow was, therefore, rightly felt to be a sign the divine spirit made shining out in the sphere of the elements when the devastating floods had receded, a symbol of reconciliation and peace for mankind.

In conclusion, let us consider the meditation we spoke of earlier. Rudolf Steiner created the word *Blaettermorgen* (leafy morning) for it, which relates to the whole secret of mantric texts, light is processed in every dew drop as it is in a raindrop. Quietly observing the play of colors, we unconsciously experience the same laws in the interplay of the elements that also govern etheric activity in the plant, letting leaf slowly follow leaf up the stem in rhythmic sequence.

This unique interaction between circumference and center, the fleeting play of light created by the sun and the organic forms created in life, stirs the human heart and mind at its very depths. It addresses the same laws in the meditator that out of the ether body organize him in terms of the pentagram. The sensual and moral feeling corresponding to the “leafy morning” loosens the body of creative etheric powers. It prepares the way for new faculties of imaginative thinking, taking hold of the secrets of nature. “We must find ourselves again and again in the rhythm of nature if we want to gain living rather than dead knowledge.... If you thus direct your constant attention to these wonderful secrets of nature, you enliven your medical knowledge in a practical way.”<sup>8</sup>

A German proverb says that the morning hour has gold on its lips. Perhaps the Golden Section has been given that name for good reason. The sun is the cosmic source of the metallic gold process. In the 6th lecture of the *Course for Young Doctors*, Rudolf Steiner referred to its mercurial harmonizing function. In the planetary system, where the Golden Section is one of the constituent principles, the sun creates the balance between spirit and matter by virtue of its position which goes beyond all physical phenomena. “Because of this, the sun is a cosmic body both maintaining order in the planetary system and establishing order among the forces that enter into our material system.” This cosmic heart function may be seen as reflecting the activity of the Spirits of Wisdom who endowed the developing human being with an ether body during the Old Sun stage of earth evolution, thus raising him to the plant level of existence. In the cosmic intelligence and the activity of the Kyriotes, we get a sense of the original source of the process that relates the part to the whole, a process we can perceive wherever the “divine proportion” presents itself.

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## Two “Problem Children” – Individual Destiny and Karma of the Age\*

GISBERT HUSEMANN

For a long time now, the problem child has proved a fruitful topic in education, in educational advice given to parents, in many books and newspaper articles. The concept has been known for years in homeopathy, with a number of homeopathic medicines available on the indication.

When we, as physicians, hear of a child who does not come up to parental expectations, and when certain symptoms suggest that this is not just a matter of impatience where one party is concerned and disobedience for the other, but a genuine medical and educational problem, such a child will not infrequently make us think back from the present situation to the threshold of birth, which involves tremendous changes, externally and in the internal organs. I am sure this is something every physician who works with parents and children knows from experience. Such experience was taken into account when the decision was made to consider the two cases observed by Rudolf Steiner, basing ourselves on existing notes. The actual data are quickly presented, but if we wish to gain real understanding, we are faced with challenges that go much further, though only brief mention can be made of them in the present paper.

The first case was reported to me by Sofie Bauer, Bad Cannstatt, on December 14, 1941, and again in 1947. Mrs Bauer was a painter by profession. She had done wood-carving on the First Goetheanum and later been asked to make the eurythmy costumes in Dornach and look after them, getting them ready for rehearsals and performances. She also gave painting therapy to patients sent to her by Dr Ita Wegman from the Institute of Clinical Therapy. One was a boy of whose history she knew only as much as Dr Wegman told her. The first child in the family, a girl, had died. The second child was this boy, who had a talent for painting and was now of primary school age. He was a problem child and was therefore presented to Rudolf Steiner who said words to the effect that the girl had died (literally) “because

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\*Original title: Zwei “schwierige Kinder” – Einzelschicksal und Zeitenkarma. *Merkurstab* 1994; 47: 410-13. English by A.R. Meuss, HL, MTA.

she could not gain her mother's acceptance." According to Mrs Bauer the mother was "somewhat unusual." Please note that the girl had lived for a time, but the obstacles that arose in the relationship to her mother proved insurmountable, so that the child withdrew from life. The individuality who had been the girl was then born again to the same mother as this boy. He was the difficult child in question. Rudolf Steiner identified the child's particular nature in the above terms. His advice was to let the boy paint, and this is why he was sent to Mrs. Bauer.

Light extends into the body via the eye. The painting hand takes hold of colors, and mind, soul and body enter into the harmonizing activities of the colors. The boy willingly took up the examples given by Mrs Bauer. He was now ready and able to imitate, showing no resistance, and this had probably been the heart of the medical and educational problem. Through imitation, growth principles are incorporated in the body. The child's physical and emotional relationship to his mother predominated. He had to overcome resistance when imitating anything relating to his mother, but encountered no resistance with the colors. We look beyond the threshold of birth and into reincarnation and learn that there is a rational treatment involving art and medicine that will overcome obstacles to incarnation.

We have considered the psychological situation of a child with "behavioral problems" and then gone beyond birth and death. We came to assess the role played by the mother and as physicians were required to clearly understand the profound significance of colors both in the sphere of the senses and beyond it. The medical and educational aspect of the case extends the physician's and the teacher's horizon beyond birth and death. The creative powers of colors were used to strengthen the boy's own powers, just as we may prescribe other, medicinal roborants, or baths, perhaps. The color element has a breath that extends far back, and it addresses the soul directly. The painting hand holds the will of the individual to let the I find its way into the body.

The notes concerning the second case were made by the undersigned in 1936, the occasion being a visit to a cancer patient, 2 months before his death. He spoke of his life, and this included a reference to his now grown-up son. He had been a rascal as a child—what boy does not go through that stage? When he had to get used to regular attendance at school, however, it became apparent that as time went on he was increasingly irritated by something in his environment as a whole, and his conduct would be problematical. He was not overchallenged intellectually but was not able to adopt the manner expected of young people within a school and classroom. His teachers did not know how to deal with this. Rudolf Steiner was finally

consulted when the young miscreant had actually attracted the attention of the police. His advice was to set the boy tasks that went beyond his age, and they should be such that in working on a task he would feel responsible for finding the solution. It sounds rather easy, doesn't it? Surely this was more by way of general advice? It gains significance, however, and wisdom-filled meaning, if we realize that the cause of the problem actually lay elsewhere in the boy. Steiner told the mother, "He was prevented." The parents confirmed that this was so. Not once in his life had the boy been able to experience his innate I-development age to be properly in agreement with his environment. The older he got the greater the lack of harmony between himself and his environment. The I was forced to cope with a time shift of several years, and that was the reason for his refractoriness and centrifugal disruption and chaos. The method proposed, to set tasks prematurely, caught up with the boy, as it were; those tasks let him be older, they addressed a boy older than he was. The feeling of responsibility was to be a sheet anchor for the I when time was thus anticipated. He would then be momentarily more mature, and this was the crux of the matter, the educational therapy. The shift in the boy's life plan was balanced out.

The teacher is given a wonderful task here, something quite outside the sphere of a physician's way of seeing things. On the other hand a physician works to quite a different degree with the set of causes indicated above than a teacher does. If we use such cases to broaden our medical and educational horizons and at the same time see education as a field of permanent study for both teachers and school physicians, we need not despair or make it a (convenient) excuse that Steiner, of course, knew everything. The challenges offered to us generally also produce the ability to meet them.

The above case is highly symptomatic. It presents a vast number of questions that go far beyond the work of teachers and physicians and are quite daunting for our thinking and understanding, let alone our ability to take action. This shows itself the moment terms like "contraception" and "legal abortion" are mentioned. 300,000 terminations per annum in Germany (Prof. J. Pechstein, 1992). We have to realize that human beings have themselves brought about this and many other situations which they are no longer able to cope with. These situations have long since assumed a life of their own, and people can no longer find the active will to deal with things which they know only too well ought to be tackled. At bottom, humanity is bound up with all that happens on earth and in the cosmos. The non-physical world is part of human nature and part of the world. Human beings generate tensions and reactions in the world of the elements and fail to see that they are responsible. The parents of that boy had no idea

as to why they had such a problem child. Today we cannot avoid external disasters in the chemical industry, in physical energy production, even if we take responsibility. Our own products are turning against us. We have to ask ourselves how many people are still born at the right time, at their *kairos*, and allowed to live. Many have been deprived of what their karma had laid down for them.

The following words of Rudolf Steiner, historically very much to the point, can show us how profoundly the conditions of life have changed. The question as to how far this applies outside western civilization may be left open. On 8 August 1924 Rudolf Steiner spoke of hidden trends in modern history, at a time when humanity has for centuries turned entirely to the sphere of matter:

In the time between the founding of Christianity and the age of the spiritual soul, which is signalized above all by the 9th Century and the year 869 AD, the karma of human beings came into disorder. This is one of the deepest and most important statements that can possibly be made with regard to modern history. Chaos has entered into the history of recent times.<sup>1</sup>

Those words were preceded by a lengthy exposition on the relationship of human beings to the third hierarchy. A certain spiritual balance has to exist between the human sphere and that of the spiritual entities. It was upset, and this has brought disorder into historical life. Every individual has a genius who belongs exactly to the hierarchy, the relationship to whom is out of balance with humanity. This genius stays with the individual through births, incarnations, and life after death.

How does the modern practice of keeping or driving the human individuality away from the birth threshold affect the relationship to the spirits who guide us? Does it serve to harmonize the spiritual balance? Or does it in fact do the opposite? The case reported above provides an excellent example of how today it is often only possible to perceive a problem that exists for thousands by considering a single instance. The emergence of the new problem also shows very clearly that we must have new knowledge concerning the threshold to the world of the spirit and the gates of birth and death if we are to awaken a feeling of responsibility and the ability to take responsibility in an effective way. The further away we are from the reality of the spirit the greater must be the inevitable chaos. New knowledge will bring concepts to the conscious mind that enable us to perceive the karma of our age and find the right therapeutic measures. The significance an individual case holds for creating a healthy situation can only be judged by considering the whole.

Apart from their medical and educational aspects, the stories of the two children also point to more profound spiritual realities. Rudolf Steiner referred to these in the chapter on Details from the Domain of Spiritual Science in his *Occult Science*. He refers to the decision to incarnate, which precedes physical birth by a long way. Wishing to reincarnate, the core of the individuality's being must have a sufficient "thirst" for a new existence. When that thirst has "reached its full intensity" there may be no possibility of finding an incarnation that is "well adapted," with physical conception not providing a suitable body at the time. These problems of adaptation, which are quite general, will after birth result in "the prevailing mood and attunement to life" of the individual. The core of being may be said to be anchored in its own right moment in time.

For the two children, their moment in time had resulted in an unfortunate mood and attunement to life. Their physical birth had made the problem of adaptation highly problematic. The moment of birth had shifted in time, with the result that the development program may be said to have broken down after birth. The adults connected with the child found themselves helpless.

What can we learn from these two childhood parables? The core of the human being has its karmic moment of incarnation. When we perceive a spiritual reality that lies outside the world of the senses, in the present case concerning a human being, we can only see it as something sacred in the earthly world. In other words, parents, teachers and physicians perceive a sacramental idea of occult maintenance of health.

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### **The prevailing mood of an individual in relation to the time of incarnation**

The re-entry of the human being into earthly life is an outcome of these two factors: the inner thirst of the soul for incarnation, and the cosmically given possibility of finding a suitable bodily

nature. Two factors therefore have to work in conjunction. Hence in one instance incarnation may result even before the “thirst” has reached its full intensity, a well-adapted incarnation being within reach; while in another it may have to wait till the thirst has outlived its normal culmination, since at the proper time no opportunity was given. Insofar as it is due to the whole character and quality of his bodily constitution, a man’s prevailing mood and attunement to life will also be the outcome of these conditions.

– Rudolf Steiner, from *Occult Science, an Outline*.  
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Tr. G. and M. Adams. London: Rudolf Steiner Press,  
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## The Excarinating Human Soul: How Can We Provide for the Last Phase of Life?\*

“And first of all it comes, and differently,  
- secondly, as one would think.”  
– *Wilhelm Busch*

FLORIS REITSMA, MD

### **Are we not shutting our minds to the process of excarination?**

Whoever approaches retirement in relatively good health is likely to occupy himself with thoughts of how this phase of life *is to be* spent, but rarely does he ponder what sort of experience this will be. With a kind of matter of factness, one assumes that one’s work in anthroposophy will go on in much the same way as before, as long as it is at all possible. One does not retire from such work as this. One is certainly aware of a dark passage in one’s life, which is likely to precede the actual crossing of the threshold, but one is very reluctant to think about that. To dwell upon postmortem existence—well, as an anthroposophist, one can look forward to that with a certain amount of respectful anticipation or even pleasure, but the sinister phase which precedes it, during which one is frail, weak and in need of help, that is something by which we are usually repelled. One would prefer not to think about it at all, even those of us who move in anthroposophical circles. There is a strong reluctance apparent in the soul, which could be a sign that something of importance is being concealed from us, which the dark spirit of our age possibly wishes to keep hidden from the light of our consciousness.

Are there not fruits to be gathered from this culminating phase of life, which could be prevented from ripening or stolen from us? We shall return to this question in the course of this article. The tendency, which we mentioned, of excluding from our minds the thoughts about the last stages of our earthly pilgrimage is not by any means the result of a lack of

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\*From *Das Goetheanum: Wochenschrift für Anthroposophie*, Nr. 43, 27. Oct. 1991, Die Exkarnationsphase des menschlichen Lebens als Aufgabe (translated by J. Wood).

information on this subject by Rudolf Steiner. He certainly has not provided us with such a comprehensive or detailed account of it as he has done in the case of early childhood or youth. Nevertheless, scattered throughout the whole of his life's work, there is a mass of important material to be had, such for instance, as in the book by Gisela Gaumnitz: *Vom Altwerden* ['About growing old'], published by 'Die Pforte,' Basel 1987.

The abovementioned tendency to exclude from our mind the last phase of our earthly life could also be explained by the fact that man has fulfilled his karmically imposed objective tasks in the world and that there now only remains for him to settle what are his own personal affairs such, for example, as matters of personal hygiene, before advancing further to real life. A picture lives in the soul, usually not thought about and only half conscious, that the phase of *life* in old age is difficult and in the main unimportant.

### **The importance of the middle phase of life.**

It is easy to demonstrate from Rudolf Steiner's indications that the middle phase of life is of the greatest importance for the fulfillment of personal karma. In his lecture from 18 May 1924 (GA 236), Dr. Steiner speaks about a phase in childhood and youth, a phase of the so-called 'karmic demands,' in which the still-distant future tasks are prepared, even down to the physical form of the body, but especially of the nerves-and-senses system. Then there follows, from about the twenty-first year onwards, the stage of 'karmic fulfillment' in which man is actively engaged in carrying out his karmic tasks. That may even last throughout adult life. But already at an early stage it becomes evident that a part of the karmic tasks will have to remain unfinished: '... [S]o from the 28th year onwards it is the Seraphim, who also speak in the unconscious realm of the soul, saying: All this remains with thee because thou canst not fulfill it, because thou art unable to reach up to us; this remains with thee and thou must bear it into the next life; thou canst not balance it, because thou hast not the strength.' The task of 'karmic fulfillment' is certainly the most individual thing of all and it continues right up to the seventh decade of life. But it remains with us as an unfulfilled part of destiny. And that which the Seraphim whisper into our souls from the 28th year onwards becomes audible to us, even for our everyday consciousness, towards the end of the middle phase of life: Much of what one wishes to do, or would have liked to carry out, must remain unaccomplished. With the seventieth year we are released from the archetypal, predestined life-cycle and what comes later is what Dr. Steiner calls 'grace.'

### **The release from individual karmic duties.**

That part of life leased to us by the leading powers of destiny and designated 'grace' is not, however, to be looked upon as a kind of 'pocket money,' which we are allowed to spend on irrelevant objects, but is a mandate which puts us under an obligation to carry out something worthwhile with it as free and independent human beings. To begin with this situation presents itself to us as a kind of 'trial by air,' in which one has to decide out of one's free initiative what course of action to take. Because one is used to the idea of being fully occupied with 'doing the right thing,' especially in an anthroposophical context, one often does not realize that one is now faced with a totally new karmic situation, and one continues, as if by matter of course, to carry on as before. What was actually 'the right thing' previously, however, now becomes more and more misleading, because it conceals the fact that the real life-situation has become radically changed. One would like to continue as before in one's daily tasks, one's lifestyle and in the surroundings to which one is accustomed. Through that, one's attention is diverted from the fact that one is entering a new phase in life, in which the fulfillment of individual karmic tasks is coming to an end and a new social task is beckoning. What sort of task is this?

### **The final phase of life—a reflection of the early phase of life with regard to social environment.**

One gains a clear picture of this by considering the difference between excarnation and incarnation. As an infant one is born into an environment consisting of one's parents and all those who are a part of the family and its social life—brothers and sisters, neighbors, the religious community and so on. It is true that one is physically naked at birth, but this is not true of the individuality. The newborn human being resigns itself trustingly to the care of a predestined social community, whose primary task is to attend to its nourishment and other physical needs. It is only by degrees that the human being can attain to relative independence from this protective sheath. This independence can mislead one in the course of further development into thinking that one has now become free of all social ties. In actual fact one remains firmly embedded in a larger social community in which one is dependent on the work of others, even though one may have attained to financial independence through one's own labor. However, this is often not so obvious as in the case of the child, because the circle of people by whom one is supported has become so large that it has disappeared beyond the horizon of one's consciousness.

This is reflected in old age. It is an accepted fact that the retired person lives entirely from the work of others, even though it may appear that he

is living off the interest from capital which he has earned himself. As the bodily strength diminishes one becomes ever more dependent on those in one's vicinity to whom one is most closely attached. In practical life a good neighbor is of more benefit to one than a distant friend. The ebbing of the life forces does not mean that the daily chores of shopping, cooking meals, cleaning and physical hygiene become any less. In proportion to the diminishing strength the work becomes ever more strenuous until one reaches the stage where one cannot do it anymore and neglect begins to creep in. In earlier times it usually did not reach that stage because one was included as a matter of course in the three generations of the family and in the village community. A closely knit society stood ready at hand to receive one into its care during the last phase of life, even as it had received one into its community at birth. The community of the family has disappeared, or does not function anymore efficiently in its present state. Social help for the elderly and Old People's Homes are supposed to fill the gap. But do they really meet the needs of the very old?

The members of the communities of most Old People's Homes and Nursing Homes are divided into two quite separate groups; those who are being cared for and those who do the caring and are supported in their work by the facilities of kitchen and other domestic amenities. In this situation most of the residents in care share the common destiny of having expended too much of their life-force to be able to develop any socially productive activity now—either of an outward kind or in the realm of soul and spirit. Everything—or almost everything—has to be provided for them by those who look after them. But, in the first instance, the latter are fully engaged in the practical task of attending to the physical needs of those in their care, and secondly, with few exceptions, the members of staff are young people who—in a most valuable way—throw the whole enthusiasm of their hearts into the work in hand, but have little of a socially-upbuilding content to offer. The situation often produces a gap in the social and cultural arrangements which one all too frequently seeks to fill by a recourse to sedatives or the television.

The elderly person thereby comes into a void, which he can only fill by his own strength if he cultivates a very active inner life. A mediating middle group is therefore required, between staff and residents, to carry out the important task of creating a social environment for the elderly. This can only be performed by slightly younger, but still vigorous, older people.

Why is it so important for the elderly to have a community of people to support them in soul and spirit activity in old age? An insight into this question reveals another aspect of the mirroring of the first and last phases of life.

### The 'mirroring' from the aspect of individual development

As Rudolf Steiner points out [e.g., in *The Spiritual Guidance of Mankind*], the little child receives its basic faculties of upright walking, speech and thought through the mediation of the higher ego, the spiritual essence of man connected with the Christ Being. The higher-self, although individual, is nevertheless essentially something which belongs to the whole of mankind, a component part of humanity as a whole, of which Christ is the essence or ego. This innermost nature of the higher self can only be expressed by means of a contradiction in logic, for how can that which is isolated and indivisible (the individuality) nevertheless contain within it and be identical with the 'whole,' without disappearing into nothingness, into non-existence? Now this universal-human individuality works in the young child until the third year. After that the child becomes step by step more earthly and leaves its higher self behind in the spiritual realm from which it has descended. It sinks, as it were, into earthly development and becomes more and more estranged from the direct influence of the spirit. But it bears within it the gifts of the spirit which enable it to retain its full humanity—upright walking, speech and thought—throughout the rest of life!

How is that reflected in old age?

The understanding of this is made more complicated by the fact that only very rarely is this ideal state achieved in old age. In the case of the small child it is different: There the ideal development is the norm and a deviation from this is the exception. It is a rare ideal occurrence if the human being develops that mysterious quality which we call the 'wisdom of old age.' Whoever has the good fortune to experience an example of this will be able to recognize it when he sees it, but to put it into words is hardly possible. By way of indication one might say that it has to do with a warmth of heart akin to light shining into the riddles of human existence, making it possible for us to have an inkling of how the individual-human and the outer appearance have their connection in man. It is just this 'universally human-individual' element active in the small child which shines through the frail sheaths of an older person. Often, just before the laying aside of the bodily sheath at the end of life, something of the grandeur of this goal of old age can become visible. The young nurses frequently vie with one another to have the privilege of looking after such a person. But, as was said before, it is only very few who become transparent for the spirit to such a degree as this.

In the foreground of events stands the thorny road leading towards the ultimate goal, a sacrificial pathway of the earthly ego. And it is precisely the three great achievements of early childhood which are put in jeopardy; it is as though a devolution were taking place on a spiritual level. Walking and

standing erect become unsteady and finally can be carried if at all, only with support. The earthly intellect dwindles away. Insofar as we can still speak of 'thinking,' it has become a thinking with the heart-forces, radiating a wisdom borne by love. But dealings performed out of earthly concepts, necessary for affairs of practical life, which often go by the name of thinking in present-day terms, are no longer a thing to be relied upon. One's own practical position in life is often not correctly assessed and judgements are arrived at which are divorced from reality. Gradually, and with only a few exceptions, a mild or total dependence on others comes about. Anthroposophical work performed over a long period can help to alter the picture, but it cannot avoid it altogether. Inevitably the power of verbal expression is affected too and can in some instances lead to almost total dumbness. All this can be regarded as the expression of the fact that the ego is gradually withdrawing from the earthly realm.

But the astral body too is becoming loosened from the physical body. Just as the sucking child is unaware of its excretory functions and is unable to control them, so these faculties slip from the consciousness of the incarnating astral body of the elderly person. Thus elderly people are often faced with the embarrassing phenomenon of incontinence. The gradual withdrawal of the main sense activities such as sight, hearing, smell and taste, cuts off the ego from a pleasurable participation in the activities of the world around. There is often very little left of all that daily life has to offer in the way of satisfaction and pleasure. To this is added, according to individual circumstance, all kinds of special infirmities and diseases of old age, which may also bring with them the burden of pain. This is a difficult experience for the earthly ego, which is often acutely aware of the situation. And if the qualities of soul and character have not been fully worked upon and tamed by the ego during life they are liable to break forth with uncontrolled force and one is reminded of a state akin to *kamaloka* occurring during lifetime. The conditions here listed do not necessarily, or indeed actually, take place with such vehemence, but in lesser or greater degree they will all be experienced in some form by the very old.

Joyful as are the great achievements of the first three years, especially for the developing child itself, so is the mirroring at the latter end of life equally painful.

Considering this pain it is understandable that the outside world puts the question: Why all this? Is there any sense in such a thing? And the materialistic world-conception is bound to draw the logical conclusion that it has no sense and that those people who seek to avoid this pain through a supposedly painless self-chosen death, are hailed as heroes worthy of

imitation. But even an anthroposophist, faced with such a painful process, has to wrestle with an often strong desire for death. Quite apart from the special circumstances of individual karma this period of life is the most difficult of all. And even though much has to be borne by those in the immediate surroundings, relatives, neighbors, nursing staff, nevertheless the chief burden still falls on the elderly person concerned.

### **What is the significance of the retrograde development in old age?**

The question of the significance of the difficulties encountered in old age is a most pressing one for both the old people themselves and also for those in their surroundings. The spiritual research of Rudolf Steiner sheds much light on this subject.

By incarnating into a physical body man's soul is inevitably bound up to a certain extent with Ahriman. The latter is then able to exert an influence on the soul after death if the person concerned has not gained sufficient strength in his passage through the infirmities of old age to challenge him at the gate of death. "Whereas premature aging in the life between birth and death can actually make us evil, it is quite different after death. Then the aging process is of benefit to us in our fight against Ahriman." Rudolf Steiner then continues: "The inner kernel of the soul and spirit, at the point where it is at its highest intensity, is controlled entirely by progressive forces. What is not included in this, what dies away outwardly, is that in which the forces of Ahriman reside." (GA 150, 14.3.1913) Thus the soul is able to free itself from the attacks of Ahriman by means of the aging process.

But the retrograde development in old age has an importance for humanity which extends far beyond the range of the individual, as Rudolf Steiner indicates in the following passage: "From a certain age onwards we begin to infuse our own being into what is spiritual on the physical earth just as we carry what is physical into the spiritual world when we die young. We squeeze out spirituality when we grow old—I cannot express it otherwise. Seen from a spiritual point of view, we can say that spirituality is squeezed out here on earth. Through that the intentions of Ahriman are crossed; through that Ahriman is unable to persist so intensively in his endeavors to completely eradicate the opinion in man that ideals have a certain importance." (GA 183, 2.9.1918)

In other words: An old person rescues for the whole of humanity the possibility of working for spiritual goals in the first and middle ages of life, of holding real ideals and not being hemmed in by philistinism from the very start. Just as the small child enables the Spirit-Ego to work on earth, so do the struggles of the old person gain for the earth, and therewith for

the whole of humanity, access to the spirit, so that the human beings do not fall completely into the grip of Ahriman. But Rudolf Steiner adds to this statement a word of warning: 'We are, however, very, very close at the present day, to falling into most terrible error, just with regard to what I have here said. Even well-meaning people easily succumb to such error in connection with the foregoing. And these errors will become ever greater and with the advance of civilization will become enormous.'

That was said in 1918. A television program on Nov. 21, 1990, recommended potassium cyanide as an antidote for old age! The errors are certainly enormous already!

In the light of what has just been quoted it is a significant fact that since 1950 the number of people in the USA over 80 years old has risen by 900% and the number of those over 95 by 1500% The figures for Europe are comparable in size. Many people tread the path of old age these days.

### **A supportive community for old age.**

#### **A task for the not so elderly.**

Even though the elderly person, tested by suffering, has to walk this path as a single individual, he does not travel it alone. As already indicated he must of necessity become more and more dependent on a supportive community for this particular journey. This is sometimes supplied by the family, but that is becoming ever more rare. Usually it is an Old People's Home or a Nursing Home which is called upon. But because of the usually abrupt division between over-burdened staff and equally helpless fellow sufferers the things pertaining to soul and spirit cannot receive their fair share of attention. The process which Dr. Steiner refers to in the last-quoted passage may occur apart from everyday consciousness and without its participation. But the readiness to stick it out to the end is surely a matter of consciousness. It is a matter of the greatest importance that he who embarks upon this final pilgrimage should be supported by a community in which there lives an understanding for the aspect of soul and spirit. It can provide the supportive motive for enduring to the end, also among members of the family and nursing staff. (The question of active euthanasia is usually raised by people who belong to the social surroundings and not by those most concerned). It is very hard work which is demanded and the encircling help of understanding people is of great benefit in that respect, even when no words are spoken.

The creating of a community for shaping life in old age is a very worthwhile social task from a human-spiritual point of view. We could get a little closer to answering the question asked at the beginning of this

article: Are there not fruits to be gathered from this culminating phase of life which could be prevented from ripening or stolen from us? And this 'preliminary' answer already makes it clear to us that the dark spirits of our time rebel most strongly against everything which supports the last phase of life in a meaningful way. One would like to ask oneself if one's reluctance to become involved in this phase of life is not just a part of the picture we have described. In the numerically great class of the over 65s gerontology makes a sensible distinction between a younger class who are usually still active and an older class in which the number of those in need of care rapidly rises. There is naturally no hard and fast dividing line, but there is a transitional stage somewhere between 75 and 85 years. Below this age most of the people are still independent, above it most are either partially or totally dependent on help. It is just the younger of these groups which clings to the belief that the life of the middle years must still go on as before. The abovementioned community task is not perceived or is considered too difficult to tackle until one day one's own life unexpectedly ceases to function as before. When that happens one expects to be carried by the community, but one is often disappointed to find that one is only provided with professional assistance which, owing to a shortage of nursing staff, can only give a purely outward minimal amount of care. In this situation no place is provided in which one can proceed towards the crossing of the threshold in a dignified and spiritually appropriate manner. It would, however, make a great difference to the whole of civilized life if centers were available to prepare people in a proper and serious way to face the threshold and to regard death in the light of being a spiritual birth. That would radiate out into cultural life as a spiritual fact, but also as an educational example for the younger generation which is involved through kinship or nursing activity in the events at the end of life.

Is that not a task with which our movement should get involved much more strongly?

## Editorial

# A Matter of Life and Death

N.C. LEE

The mystery of death is one which has engaged the attention of philosophers since time immemorial. We do not know, and cannot know through ordinary methods of cognition, what happens when the individual crosses that "bourne from which no traveler returns." Natural science can go just so far when considering the mystery which occurs when what had been a sentient, living human being undergoes the mysterious transformation whereby the individual leaves the physical body. Although a matter for fascinating philosophical speculation across the centuries, it was not until the latter half of this century that the question concerning the exact definition of death attained the practical urgency which it now possesses.

The reason for this urgency has mainly been brought about by advances in life support techniques which have gone hand in hand with advances in transplantation surgery, whereby the organs of one person living or recently dead can be surgically transplanted into a recipient. In technical and material terms, these were great advances, but they have brought in their wake a host of ethical and moral dilemmas which still have to be resolved if, indeed, they can be resolved at all. They also highlight the age-old philosophical question as to what constitutes right and wrong action, whether such a distinction is valid in any absolute rather than relative sense, and whether good results can ever follow wrong action, assuming that such a distinction as to 'right' and 'wrong' can be made at all.

Until relatively recently, death was diagnosed by the cessation of the rhythmic action of the heart and respiration and the failure of the peripheral circulation, disappearance of muscular tonus, loss of reaction to external stimuli, and neurological reflexes—particularly the pupillary reflexes—and dullness of the cornea. However, the need to harvest organs for transplantation heightened the awareness for more precision about the diagnosis of death which, in turn, led to the currently-used concept of "brain death" as demonstrated by cessation of electrical activity of the brain as measured by electroencephalogram (EEG). Although widely accepted as evidence of death, a question remains as to the extent to which apparent

cessation of electrical activity can be taken as absolute proof of irreversible death of the brain and whether spontaneous recovery might occur, given sufficient time on suitable life support systems.

Another question is whether “life support system” is the correct term to use. Is it really life that is being supported? And, if so, the life of what—the total individual or the organs of that individual?

Although current medical technical advances were made long after his death, Rudolf Steiner gave some valuable insights into these matters. Considered from a purely material aspect, the dilemmas appear insoluble. Seen from a spiritual scientific point of view, however, a different picture emerges. Rudolf Steiner drew the vital distinction between the death of an individual and the death of his or her organs.<sup>1</sup> He said:

You see, if we perceive the organs in the way that it is possible by taking the initiation path, the inner eye perceives not birth and death but something entirely different. When organs are truly perceived, birth and death actually lose their usual meaning for, in fact, it is only the whole human being who can die, not the individual organ. The lung does not die, for instance. Modern science has got some notion of this, realizing that when the whole human being has died, individual organs can be vitalized on their own in a specific sense. Individual organs do not die, irrespective of whether the person is interred or cremated. Each individual organ finds its own way out into the cosmos according to its nature, even if the human body lies buried in the earth, with the soil covering it after burial, the organs find their way in the cosmos through air, water and heat. They dissolve but do not die; only the whole human being dies.

The ethics of prolongation of “life” by artificial means was brought sharply into focus by a case<sup>2</sup> which was managed at the Filderklinik, Stuttgart, in 1991. The patient was a 33-year-old woman who was 17 weeks pregnant when she suddenly collapsed in a park in Stuttgart one day. A passing medical practitioner instituted cardiopulmonary resuscitation which was continued when the emergency medical services arrived and, in the course of which, she was defibrillated twelve times. She was placed on life support systems at the hospital but never regained consciousness. On the 14th day after admission, a 30-minute EEG showed no indication of any electrical activity in the brain. However, gynecological examination showed that her pregnancy was still proceeding apparently normally. The husband repeated his wish, expressed earlier, that her pregnancy should continue.

Thirty-five days after her initial collapse she was transferred to the Filderklinik where she had previously been booked for her confinement. Life support measures were continued, but as the pregnancy was progressing normally no further investigations were made to establish the cause of cerebral failure, and the aim of life support was now focused on the need to continue the pregnancy to the point where the unborn child became viable. On the 84th day of treatment, because of recurrent episodes of profound hypotension, a boy was delivered by caesarean section in the 29th week of pregnancy. After a stormy start to his life involving intensive care, he recovered and is now alive and well at the age of three years.

After the caesarean section, the mother's condition deteriorated, and the husband eventually gave his permission for the life support systems to be discontinued. She died in asystole 86 days after her initial collapse.

Having to manage a case like this had a profound effect on all the medical and nursing staff who became a therapeutic community in the full sense of the word.<sup>3</sup> Central to their efforts was the attitude and determination of the husband who, in spite of EEG evidence of brain death, was convinced that his wife was still in some way alive and "able to take care of our child in the spirit;" and it was largely due to this conviction that the decision was made to continue life support until the unborn child was viable. The same feeling pervaded the staff who had the strong feeling that she was somehow still present in spite of the technical evidence to the contrary.

The management of this case was, however, not without its critics, notably the authors of an article in *Info 3*<sup>4</sup> which, *inter alia*, described those responsible for the decision to continue life support "white-coated anthroposophic demigods" and suggested the establishment of a hierarchy of responsibility and a protocol for the management of cases such as this one.

Debate will doubtless continue about this case and others like it, and the question of intent must surely be taken into consideration. In this case, the intent was to save the life of an unborn child by keeping the mother artificially "alive"—surely a morally good thing to do. Could the same judgment be made about a person kept artificially "alive" until a need arose for his or her organs for transplantation?

These are difficult questions. However, in the ultimate analysis, no matter what rules and regulations are made, decision-making ultimately, finally falls on the shoulders of the individual. Anthroposophical insights may well help the inner development of the individual to a point where those insights can form a firm basis for good decision making, but they never can make the decisions for him or her.

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## “It Is Only the Whole Human Being Who Can Die, Not the Individual Organ”\*

RUDOLF STEINER

Saying that everything has to be proved by using the external senses and the system of modern science is like someone who says: Without a large peg to support it, the earth must fall down. Anthroposophic truths are such that they support each other, *like the stars*. This is something that has to be realized. Once we have realized this, using our common sense, we really begin to grasp the ideas presented in anthroposophy, including such concepts as the drawing together of birth and death. Let us take this further, however.

Let us consider how someone who is well prepared in terms of modern science, but who also has a mind that is alive and receptive, comes to recognize not only the whole human being, but also the organs as I described them yesterday.

You see, if we perceive the organs in the way that is possible by taking the initiation path, the inner eye perceives not birth and death but something entirely different. When organs are truly perceived, birth and death actually lose their usual meaning, for, in fact, it is only the whole human being who can die, not the individual organ. The lung does not die, for instance. Modern science has got some notion of this, realizing that when the whole human being has died individual organs can be vitalized on their own in a specific sense. Individual organs do not die, irrespective of whether the person is interred or cremated. Each individual organ finds its way out into the cosmos, according to its nature, even if the human body lies buried in the earth, with the soil covering it after burial; the organs find their way to the cosmos through water, air and heat. They dissolve but do not die; only the whole human being dies.

We can only speak of death with reference to the whole human being. In the case of animals, we have to say that the organs die. The difference between humans and animals is that human organs dissolve. They dissolve

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\*Original title: Das einzelne Organ stirbt nicht, sondern es stirbt der ganze Mensch. *Der Merkurstab* 1994; 47: 465-7. English by A.R. Meuss, FIL, MTA.

quickly, rather like an unripe apple goes through the cooking process faster than a ripe one. Burial is the slow process, cremation the fast one.

It is possible to study the specific nature of organs as they go out into infinity. Once out there in the cosmos they do not go out into limitless infinity, however, for there the macroscopic, the cosmic human being comes to meet us.

Following those organs with initiate consciousness, we therefore see what really happens with the organs after death: According to their kind, they go out into different regions of the cosmos. The heart goes somewhere different from the lungs, the liver to yet another place. They scatter throughout the cosmos. It is possible to see this if one goes through initiation and develops the consciousness that relates to the organs. Then the human being is revealed as truly part of the cosmos. And when we behold this human being, who is part of the whole cosmos, we are able to see, for instance, the basis of successive incarnations...

On the other hand we come to realize something in connection with this which, I would say, is extraordinarily tragic. For if the human being were just the human being we see within his skin here on earth—ah, this would be such a good, gentle, noble creature! Just as we are unable to investigate death with our ordinary consciousness—we can understand it in the sense indicated above, but not investigate it—we are also unable to discover with our ordinary consciousness why people with their guileless faces—how guileless they all look—can also be so evil. The fact is that we do not grow evil as whole human beings. The skin is extraordinarily well behaved. We grow evil through individual organs. The potential for evil lies in the organs. And realizing the relationship between organs and individual parts of the world we also come to recognize the parts of the world from where obsession with evil comes, for essentially it is a matter of obsession even with even the least bit of evil.

Perceptive recognition of the whole human being, thus, first of all shows us birth and death, and then, as we perceive the way the human being is organized, the relationship to the cosmos in health and disease: evil.

The human form that went through the mystery of Golgotha, therefore, can only appear to the human soul if we are first of all able to see the cosmic human being on the basis of human organs. For Christ as a cosmic human being came from the Sun. He had not been an earthly human being before. He approached as a cosmic human being. How are we to recognize a cosmic human being if we have not prepared ourselves first to understand the cosmic human being as such! A true Christology can arise if we thus understand the cosmic human being. And you can see, therefore, that the

true paths take us into the world of the spirit, guide us to perceive the nature of birth and death, the way human organs relate to the cosmos, guide us to recognize evil, and to recognize the cosmic human being: Christ.

All this can be understood if it is presented in a way where everything supports everything else. And to gain such understanding is the best way of entering into the world of the spirit ourselves. We need to understand and to meditate on where we are in our understanding. The other rules given for meditation provide further support. But that is the proper way into the world of the spirit for modern people. All experimentation with different paths, paths not based on normal consciousness and preserving normal consciousness, all experimentation where the conscious mind is left out, as in the case of mediumism, somnambulism, hypnosis, etc., all exploration of such processes which exist in the world, processes that cannot be accessed by the conscious mind in a caricature of modern science, all these are false paths, for they do not lead to the world of the spirit.

*Rudolf Steiner*

From *True and False Paths in Spiritual Investigation* (GA 243). Lecture given in Torquay on 22 August 1924. Earlier (and better) translation edited by H. Collison (London: Anthroposophic Press 1927), later translation by A. Parker (London: Rudolf Steiner Press 1986).

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