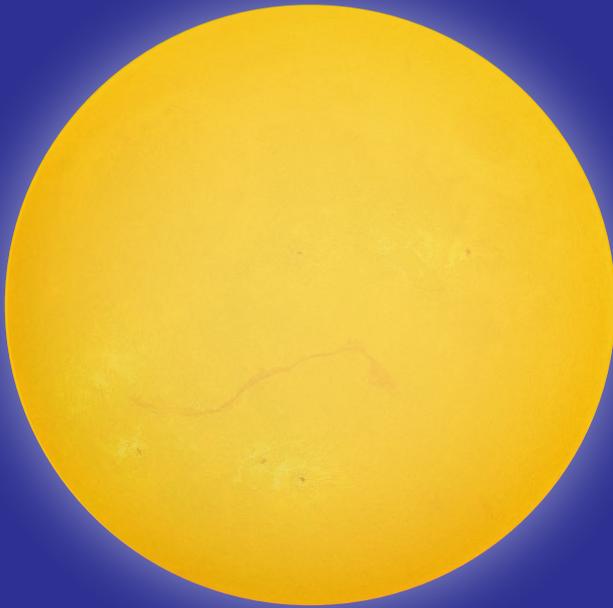


Mysteries and Challenges of Birth, Life and Death

Becoming a new human being



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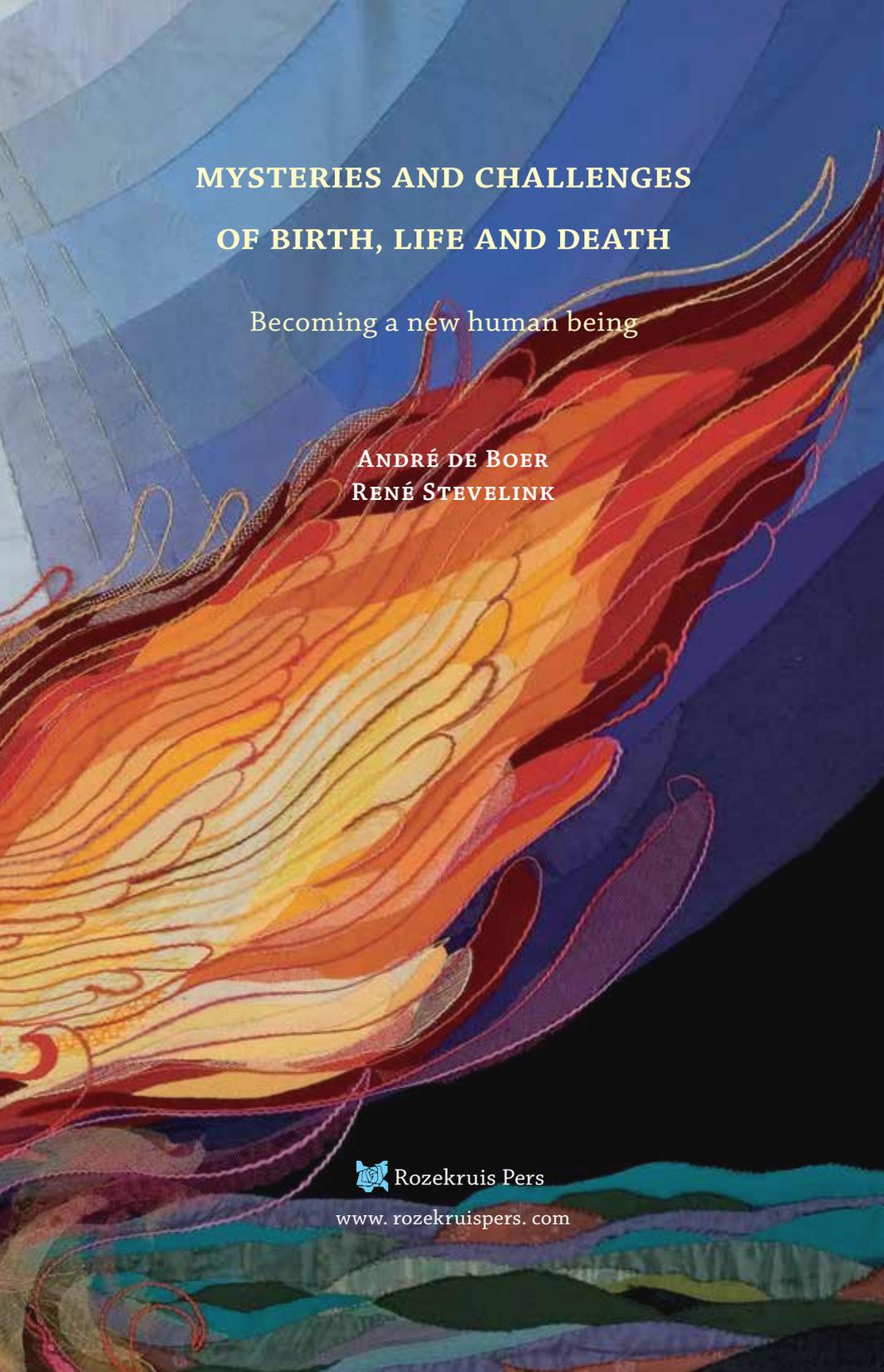
MYSTERIES AND CHALLENGES
OF BIRTH, LIFE AND DEATH

becoming a new human being



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**MYSTERIES AND CHALLENGES
OF BIRTH, LIFE AND DEATH**

Becoming a new human being

**ANDRÉ DE BOER
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preface

For many decades we, as humanity, have experienced tremendous acceleration. What was experienced in the past during the course of several generations, we now experience in just one lifetime. Developments in the technical, medical, economic, social, cultural and political fields are moving at lightning speed. We are continually forced to make choices, both individually and also collectively, because if we do not choose for ourselves, someone else will choose for us. If we want to change our experience of outer circumstances, we will have to start working on our inner self because the world that we experience externally is a reflection of our inner self. The challenges that we face as people of the 21st century cannot be overcome with hard work but by working from the heart. As a human being, we are still far from finished. We are beings in the making, and becoming true and complete human being begins from the divine principle in the heart.

In this way we arrive at what is called the knowledge of the heart: gnosis. That is a knowing from the inside out. Gnosis is not the property of a particular philosophy or religion. It is universal because it is connected with human experience. There are many currents that can be described as gnostic. They all have in common that the human being is regarded as twofold: both mortal as well as eternal. They teach that we can go a road by which we live more and more from eternal inspiration and stimuli through which we will fulfil our inner calling and be transformed into a new person. This book proceeds from a gnostic perspective to examine what is important for every person: birth, life and death.

Birth is the opposite of death, but life has no opposite. Life was, it is and it always will be. It is a mystery. We will never fully understand it, but we may still penetrate it more deeply.

After my death my body decays, but what happens to my consciousness? Does that disappear too? Or does it actually increase? Will I go to heaven or will I return to earth in another body? Why am I living here on earth anyhow? What am I to do here? These are essential questions about life that are asked by people everywhere, regardless of their culture, their education or their religion. If we can continually keep such questions about life active within us, we may not receive direct and definitive answers, but the questions will gradually dissolve within us until we ourselves become the answer.

The essential question is not whether life exists after death, but whether we are really alive *before* our death. Our view on life and death is decisive for the way in which we shape and experience our lives. If we take our lives seriously, we will also have to take death seriously. Life and death are not so much riddles that we can solve, but rather mysteries that we can consciously experience so that our lives become more meaningful, more intense and more valuable.

'Mysteries and Challenges of Birth, Life and Death – Becoming a New Human Being' is the fourth volume in the *Spiritual Texts Library*, a series of guides for 21st-century people who want to follow a path of spiritual awareness and renewal in their daily lives. This series of books is based on carefully selected classical spiritual texts and reflections on these subjects, taken from the more than four centuries old living tradition of the Rosicrucians.

All publications of the *Spiritual Texts Library* are broadly oriented, deeply rooted and spiritually inspired. The books in this series are synchronised so that together they offer a richly varied insight into the mysteries of life, death and rebirth. They contain

many points of interest that foster discussion and are therefore ideal to work with in discussion circles.

This book is a sequel to '*Mysteries and Symbols of the Soul – Becoming a Spirit-inspired person*', which is mainly concerned with the road to unity. On a deeper level, everything is of course connected to everything else. The dispersion that we experience constantly still originates from unity. As human beings, we are called to be living connections between this unity and the multiplicity in which we live by becoming ourselves a unity: a unity of spirit, soul and body.

'Freedom' is the central theme in '*Mysteries and Challenges of Birth, Life and Death*'. When we can release any blocking imaginations and attachments – that is a form of inner dying – then we can reach a higher level of freedom, so that we can make a greater contribution to the unity. Something eternal will also develop in us, something not tied to the earthly cycles that rise, shine and fade.

In the first part of this publication, the discussion of the mysteries of birth, life and death is based on Bible excerpts and inspired by the extensive writings of J. van Rijckenborgh (1896-1968) and Catharose de Petri (1902-1990), co-founders of the International School of the Golden Rosycross. Each chapter is preceded by a quote from one of their books, either '*Elementary Philosophy of the Modern Rosycross*' or '*The Living Word*'. These publications are composed from lectures that were held between 1950 and 1980. Well-known concepts such as hell, purgatory and heaven are considered as well as reincarnation, karma and transfiguration.

The Bible quotations that are included in this book are derived from several different versions of the Bible. Several quotes are also taken from the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas*. Since it is vital that developments in society be viewed from the standpoint of the timeless universal wisdom, practical and ethical questions

are also discussed from the spiritual vision that is unfolded in this book.

The conditions of death can actually enrich us when we no longer cling to physical personal property, but instead open ourselves to influences from the soul. Then we are at the beginning of a path of self-initiation. On this path, an immortal resurrection body is developed through which we may experience enlightenment and liberation.

Rozekruis Pers,
Doride Zelle

introduction

DANIËL VAN EGMOND

*I do not believe in death: I die by the hour, each day
And I have found a higher, better life this way*

ANGELUS SILESIVS,
Cherubinischer Wandermann I, 30a

Life and death are mysteries. What does this mean? A mystery is not a problem or puzzle for which we have to find a solution. A mystery has an unfathomable depth and every time we engage with it, our wonder of it grows. But, as the classical philosophers taught us, wondering leads to wisdom, while solving a problem only means an increase in knowledge. So, if we want to connect with the Sophia, the Wisdom, if we long to be 'loved by it' (which is the literal meaning of the word philosophy), we must turn to the mysteries.

Why would we want to love Wisdom and, conversely, want to be loved by her? Who is she? Jacob Boehme tells us that she shows us the gate that gives access to the Patrimony (Drey Principien – Three Principles XX, 40). Only through this gate can we properly enter the “world of light” and eternal life. If we allow ourselves access to that world on our own power, then it no longer remains a paradise. *'The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross'* relates how, on the second day of Christian's adventure, there were many there who were not invited to the wedding of bride and groom at all, having climbed over the walls to come into the castle. In the end, however they are all condemned and sentenced. This refers to the well-known Bible text: *'Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber'* (John 10:1).

Wisdom must help us find this door. If we force it with our own

hands or on the basis of our own knowledge, then we will become entangled in our own ideas, theories and illusions.

All our knowledge of life and death can only be of a provisional nature. It consists of earthly concepts that are at best a very poor shadow of the fullness of the symbolic reality of the heavens. If we want to fathom them, the mysteries of life and death cannot be translated into ordinary language or through our common thinking ability. If we were to do this, we would turn them into ordinary theories that are powerless to direct our lives. Instead of giving us access to the reality of Wisdom, they would shut us off, because we might think that we have already found the solution to the mystery.

Wisdom points us upwards, but not in a spatial sense because it has nothing to do with chronological time and physical space, nor with evolution or with journeys to distant galaxies. It points to a different reality and a different level of consciousness than that of our daily lives. That reality cannot be captured in ordinary concepts and language but is revealed to us by means of ancient symbols that we can find in all cultures and all authentic spiritual traditions. Each of these symbols is an entrance into the heavenly reality, provided we have learned to allow them entrance into our own lives. And for that we need Wisdom.

Only if this Wisdom loves us, and if we love her, can we learn to realise the depth of these symbols instead of merely understanding them. Our comprehension grasps only an extremely selective part of reality by means of concepts. Our comprehension – termed ‘the passive intellect’ in classical philosophy – receives and includes symbolic reality and reflects this to us as awareness. But first our comprehension must be awakened by Wisdom. After all, this ability has to do with love, receptiveness and the heart. The feverish activities of our ordinary mind and of our psyche, or personality, must first come to rest before the passive intellect

opens to embrace the heavenly, symbolic reality. Then the mysteries will reveal themselves to us more and more – a process that never ends.

We are so fused with our psyche and our thinking that we have forgotten that we are receptive enough to receive Wisdom only when they have come to rest. When we succeed in becoming silent inside, we quickly notice how thoughts, feelings, impulses, fantasies, emotions, etc. come and go, whether we want them or not. Yes, sometimes we manage to create an apparent calm for a single moment, after which thoughts and feelings will breeze through us again in full force. Since it is apparent that we are not able to stop this flow, we have to conclude that we ourselves are not the main source of all those thoughts, feelings, and so on. That is an extremely important observation, because it immediately raises the question of who we really are if we are not the ones who produce all these thoughts, fantasies, impulses and the like.

Most spiritual traditions tell us in a variety of ways that we have to make a distinction between the ‘outer man’ and the ‘inner man’. In virtually all medieval texts, the outer man is identified with the ‘body’, with the result that we interpret this to mean our biological body. With a few exceptions, however, this is not the case. Then they meant what we nowadays call the ‘personality’, i.e. the indivisible unity of psychic, mental and biological processes. The ‘inner man’ was often called the ‘soul’ or ‘psyche’, but under the influence of the psychology of Freud and Jung these words mostly mean the outer man. Therefore it is often difficult to properly understand the old texts!

The outer being is inseparable from the earthly world, which includes not only biological and physical aspects but also the psychic and mental processes. This outer man is dominated by the ‘prince of the world’ and almost all of our thoughts, feelings, desires, and so on find their origin in his world. Because we con-

stantly identify ourselves with all these processes, we believe that we *are* our thoughts, our feelings and our desires. Consequently if we were to become silent, if we were to stop identifying with our ordinary thinking and our ordinary fantasies, then we would feel that we were fading and vanishing.

The inner human being belongs to heaven and therefore continually lives in a symbolic reality that sometimes, very occasionally, permeates our consciousness, for example through symbolic dreams or through certain forms of contemplation. In both cases the outer person has more or less calmed down: either she is asleep, or she has learned to no longer identify with all sensory, psychological and mental processes. Then passive intelligence is able to pass on its comprehension of the symbolic reality to the outer being. Formulated differently: it is as if we went through the gate of sleep or through the gate of contemplation and were allowed to be in paradise for a moment.

However this heavenly reality can pervade the outer being's awareness only when he or she has learned to live with symbols, to live with mysteries, and thus no longer tries to understand them with the ordinary thinking ability. For the concepts that have been developed by us are incapable of rightly expressing the mysteries which are opened, and thus become 'present', through these symbols.

Between the inner and the outer man there is an 'abyss' – at least as seen from the standpoint of the outer being. The inner man includes the outer man, but the reverse is not the case. If our outer man dies, we will therefore not go anywhere, because the inner man already *is* in heaven. It has, however, become impossible for him to express himself on earth through the outer man. Thus it follows that with every transition from the outer to the inner man (and from this world to paradise), we have to pass through

a door. This is a form of death for the outer man, time and time again. That is why Angelus Silesius admonishes us ‘to die every hour’ thereby receiving the celestial life-force again and again.

Nothing is more difficult than this art of daily dying. Like all other arts, this requires continuous attention under the guidance of someone who has already taken some steps in this direction. All authentic religious traditions emphasise that it is not about fleeing from the world and storming the gates of heaven as quickly as possible, because then we are as the thieves and robbers mentioned in the Gospel of John. It is about becoming a gatekeeper, a mediator between heaven and earth, and therefore also a mediator between the inner and the outer man.

Only in this way can we die every day and so be born again. Only then are we able to encompass the Mysteries and present them today in this world, helping others to find the right gate. Then we must be philosophers – a being loved by Wisdom – and be willing to undertake the difficult and perilous journey that Christian Rosycross travelled in ‘seven days’. This journey does not have the purpose of becoming a resident of heaven but instead is one that prepares us for the important task of being a gatekeeper.

For which door or gate?

For the gate of the Mysteries.

Daniël van Egmond

Bithoven, 2017

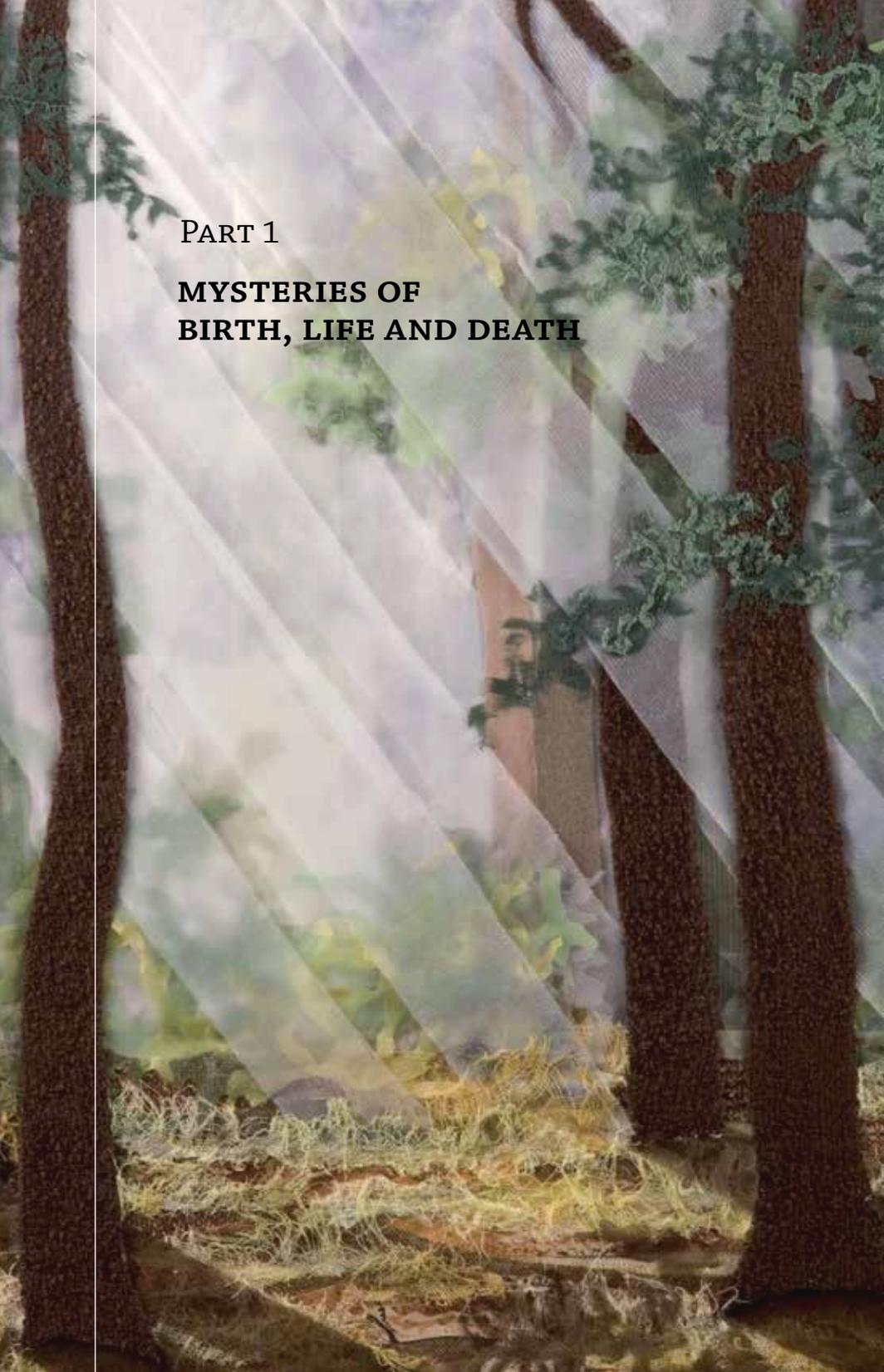
*Come, wake the soul to Life
Follow the Call, oh earthly man
Make this your goal in life.*

*And let the Man who was of yore
Rise now from his grave
For this go down into the pit
Be well-prepared and brave.*

*The Voice that has called out to you,
Demands us to die daily
So that we too, may then ascend
And gain Eternity.*

*After this, our earthly life
We leave this nature's mire:
The ashes of life's fire.*

*So, enter now the Garden-Court,
the Rose-garden go in!
And all souls in that Temple field,
Eternal Now shall win.*

A diorama of a forest scene. Two large, dark brown tree trunks are prominent in the foreground. The background is a misty, ethereal landscape with soft, pastel colors of purple, pink, and green. The ground is covered in a layer of yellowish-brown moss or lichen. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and ethereal.

PART 1

**MYSTERIES OF
BIRTH, LIFE AND DEATH**

The Logos always manifests itself through its creation and its creatures. When one discovers how it manifests itself, one will at the same time understand the divine process of salvation as it wishes to reveal itself.

Such a revelation can never be limited or dogmatic. It can never be recorded in one book or said in one word. That is why he who goes the path of the mysteries always remains a pupil; his knowledge always falls short of the ultimate revelation. When a student chains himself to knowledge and lacks the openness and capacity for revelation, he will be seized by crystallising intellectualism. To approach the wisdom that is with God means to go on eternally from horizon to horizon.

So a divine hierarchy has existed from the beginning of time, manifested in and through man. The threefold divine manifestation is active in this divine-human hierarchy. This hierarchy consists of entities who either remained steadfast in the dim past during the great temptation which caused the Fall of mankind, or rose again to their original destiny.

J. van Rijckenborgh,
Elementary Philosophy of the Modern Rosycross¹, Chapter 2

CHAPTER 1

ACCEPTING THE WORD

SPIRITUAL TEXT: **John 1:1-34**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.

There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. John beareth witness of him, and crieth, saying, This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me: for he was before me. For of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is

in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent unto him from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; and he confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No. They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet.

And they had been sent from the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why then baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptise in water: in the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not, even he that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is become before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water. And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.



CHAPTER 1

ACCEPTING THE WORD

REFLECTION

You are a miracle.

You breathe and you move.

You observe, you experience and you learn.

You think, you feel, you wish and you act.

You desire, you work, you acquire, you enjoy and you develop.

*You dream, you communicate, you create, you harvest,
you evaluate and you laugh.*

*You sleep, you wake up, you become troubled,
you struggle, you lose and you cry.*

You suffer, you seek, you find, you strive and you persevere.

You are amazed, you pray, you receive and you give thanks.

You believe, you hope, and you love.

You die and you revive.

Truly, you are a miracle.

Living your life on Mother Earth in the here and now is truly important. Here, you have received your life in order to prepare for inner breakthroughs, so that the spiritual light may penetrate more and more deeply into you and make you aware that you are an essential part of a powerful divine plan that stretches from eternity to eternity; aware that your deepest being is part of a heavenly symphony, a cosmic dance and a radiant joy.

Why don't you realise that yet? Or only barely realise it? Because you are still closed to the light of the spiritual sun. You may actually be grateful for that, because if the full light would reveal itself within you, it would completely disrupt your current life.

If cracks appear in your auric armour and rays of divine light are then able to enter your system, you may experience them as

inconvenient, even painful. But you may also view them as a gift because you will then see both yourself and the world in a different light. An entirely new and gradual development becomes possible, one that is the unfolding of the divine potential now hidden deep within you, like the proverbial mustard seed. This mustard seed may have already germinated within you, ready to grow into a tree of life. These words are, of course, only images that have been strung together to render something of the great plan that is the hidden purpose in your life, the great plan that actually lies hidden in everything that has been created. This divine plan is a great mystery. We cannot possibly know it, but we may penetrate it so that we may attune our lives accordingly. As soon as a person has reached a certain inner spiritual maturity, then moving along in the mysteries of life is not only possible but even becomes necessary, because it is contained and ordained in the divine plan.

Divine reality

For several millennia and in various cultures there have been persons who testified of a divine reality, encouraging their fellow human beings who were receptive to this message to contact this other Reality and begin living from It. These men and women were named prophets, apostles, gnostics or torch-bearers. The truly spiritual giants among them were called bodhisattva, avatar or messiah. We may think of people like Krishna, Buddha and Jesus, made known to us through ancient sacred writings.

Perhaps you look up to these world teachers with admiration. That is not really necessary because their established biographies possess a large mythical component. We must not forget that such reports – in fact all authentic holy scriptures – have the sole purpose to encourage the divine spark within us to grow ever more powerful. The great world teachers call us to follow them so that the spirit that worked in them can also work in us. Jesus, as

bearer of such a spirit, says to his disciples: *'He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do'* (John 14:12).

On your journey through life you can listen to the whispers of Krishna, of your inner master. If you consistently pay attention to your Buddha-nature in the silent centre, it will become more and more powerful in you. You have been called to an awakening, so that the Christ Spirit can shine through you. The apostle Paul urges people who have come to the limits of their outer life – indicated as Ephesians, dwellers on the border – to wake up to divine reality. He writes to the church of Ephesus: *'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee'* (Ephesians 5:14).

The terms 'sleep' and 'death' are not related here to the rest of our sleeping body or to a dead physical body, but to a state of a constriction of the consciousness in which a person no longer experiences anything of the divine reality. The words 'sleep' and 'death' are meant symbolically here. Thus we can also say that we are deaf even when we hear, because we do not yet hear the divine word and the harmony of the spheres, which sound forth day and night; that we are crippled because we cannot yet move in the rhythm of the divine world; that we are blind even when we see, because we cannot yet be open to the divine light which continuously shines forth.

All of this may sound rather dramatic. And that it is! As humanity, we have made a wilderness of life on earth, even though much of it may look neat on the outside. We are empathetic, intelligent, of good will and civilised. Yet in many ways we do not differ much from mammals, as the Jewish prophet Isaiah suggests in several places in his book of the Bible.

It is confronting when we determine that, but it is quite beneficial, because only by recognising and living through our in-

adequacy can a desire for healing arise that makes possible a regenerative development based on divine power. Isaiah sketches our plight, and at the same time is convinced that recovery is possible when the Spirit comes down from the heights.

'Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city. For the palace shall be forsaken; the populous city shall be deserted; the hill and the watch-tower shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest. Then justice shall dwell in the wilderness; and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever.' (Isaiah 32:13-17)

Great initiates

Isaiah lived around the sixth century before Christ. That was a dark period and precisely for that reason many people in several countries were open to spiritual inspiration. In that time we find many great initiates who gathered followers around themselves to go the spiritual path under their guidance. Buddha worked in India and the Greek Pythagoras, who is best known for his theorem on right-angled triangles, led a mystery school in southern Italy. Several researchers believe that at about the same time the great prophet Zarathustra in Persia and the sage Lao Tzu in China laid the foundations for powerful spiritual impulses that continue to work to this day and which we still gratefully use.

In chapter 40, Isaiah admonishes the readers of his writings to start to make their preparations so that a mighty spiritual development can take place within them. Some seven hundred years later these words inspired the writers of the biblical gospels. They even put the words of Isaiah in the mouth of John the Baptist, the Prophet who announced and prepared the coming of Jesus. Isaiah writes:

'The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain: and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Jehovah bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever' (Isaiah 40:3-8).

This text is not just a statement but rather an invocation, a call. These words, like most parts of the Bible and other holy scriptures, are a formula of power that can awaken something in the human being, which causes the Spirit to descend 'from the heights' into a person. God can thus become active in us. We can recognise this in the inscription on the rim of the Dutch two-euro coins: 'God be with us.' It is a poor translation of the name Immanuel, of which Isaiah writes: '*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel*' (Isaiah 7:14).

A better translation of Immanuel would be: 'God within us.' God is high above us, rising far above us and our world of space and time. As such, he is transcendent. But at the same time, he is also within us – immanent – as a latent divine spark that can flare up within us.

For many theologians who were blinded by the cultural-philosophical and intellectual movement of the eighteenth century known as the Enlightenment, this was by far the biggest heresy. They took the biblical texts literally and constructed via their rational reasoning – symbolically on sand – their houses of dogmatism. Unemancipated listeners slavishly followed the instructions of the preachers and, for this reason, caused great suffering for many generations.

It was taught that we are all conceived and born in sin, unable to do any good, inclined to evil, and that only the grace of Jesus Christ can save us. In a certain sense, they were right, but inner understanding was lacking and truth became more important than virtue. Because their designation of 'sin' was understood wrongly as 'moral evil' and the one necessity – the love that is above all – had a limited presence. A lot of people were saddled with obstructing conditioning and unfortunately also with religious traumas.

To miss the goal

The Greek word for sin (hamartia) is derived from archery and means something like missing the goal and not being well-focused. So, sin is actually not badness in a moral sense, but rather ignorance and lack of practise. The Prophet Hosea therefore writes: *'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge'* (Hosea 4:6). Prophets like Elijah, Hosea, Isaiah and John the Baptist make people aware of their sinful state-of-being so that they will desire to remedy this situation, to make their paths straight and to acquire and maintain proper orientation.

Many people long for world peace and struggle to achieve it. Their efforts will not be fruitful as long as their activity is not inspired by the Spirit. Jesus was expected to solve all problems on earth. However, that is not his job. He is not focused on bringing about external changes in the world, but rather on promoting an inner transformation in people as a result of the awakening of the sleeping divine spark within them. That is why he expressly says: *'My kingdom is not of this world'* (John 18:36).

The churches in many Western European countries have been steadily losing their grip on believers since the sixties of the last century. The currents of Aquarius and the breath of the Spirit wash away the houses built on the sand of obsolete dogmas. The

hills in the desert are levelled into the plains and young greenery will sprout in the fertile fields and will grow into a beneficent orchard. Various studies repeatedly show that the churches in the west are emptying, but that a large percentage of the population is certainly not atheistic and even seeks meaning, spirituality and inspiration based on holy scriptures.

Seekers in the 21st century are certainly open to meetings in which faith is a central subject, but generally have little need to do so within existing institutions. Institutions can be very valuable but have a natural tendency to rigidity and often focus primarily on the maintenance of systems that functioned well in the past. But everything constantly changes, everything flows, 'panta rhei'. As soon as the members of a sparkling spiritual or religious community no longer live and work in the living present, there is no more liberating activity possible in that group. Then stagnation sets in, petrification, due to which the Spirit withdraws.

Jesus did not set up an institution. He gathered small groups of people around him to follow a spiritual path together on the basis of aspiration fed by sacred writings of authentic spiritual traditions, separated from the crystallised orthodoxy of the Pharisees and scribes of his time. Those who do not pay attention to this sacred tradition can easily get lost, because they do not know the map, do not notice – or ignore – the signposts and have not yet learned to work with their inner compass.

The first Christians were referred to as 'companions on the path'. This designation occurs several times in the Bible book, the Acts of the Apostles. Young Christianity is thus associated with going a spiritual path, a way of living with a dynamic element: moving, following a direction, renewing. Jesus even considers himself the way to the Father because he says: *'I am the way, and the truth, and the life'* (John 14:6). And also: *'I and the Father are one'* (John 10:30).

Giving direction to your life

This book is intended to enable you to give direction to your life based on an inner desire for fulfilment. We urge you not just to accept everything that we state here, but to consider it and to find out to what extent it finds resonance within you. Reading or listening without feeling and thinking is like eating without digesting. And just to stay with this symbolic comparison: taking time and rest to partake of these deliberations again and again is necessary to come to spiritual awareness and renewal.

Central to this book is the imperishable Life, with which you can make contact and on the basis of which you can overcome death. Not the death of your physical body, for that is inevitable, but your momentary inability to live from the divine world, the domain of which Jesus says: *'The kingdom of God is within you'* (Luke 17:21) and that Isaiah expresses in the name Immanuel, *'God in you'*.

In *'Mysteries of birth, life and death'*, we used certain parts of the Bible as a framework to elucidate the spiritual way that you can follow. We could have also chosen sections from other holy scriptures, however, such as the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, Lao Tzu's Tao De Ching, the Dhammapada, the Gâthâs of Zarathustra or the gnostic Christian and hermetic writings found in 1945 in Nag Hammadi in Egypt.

Yet we have deliberately chosen the Bible because it is firmly anchored in our culture and no other holy book makes the spiritual path so clear. A significant proportion of the people currently living on earth have lived in previous incarnations within Jewish-Christian traditions. Their experiences are recorded in the microcosms that they now inhabit, so that they now have affinity with Judaism and/or Christianity, consciously or unconsciously. A powerful influence that can be experienced intensely emanates from the Bible. Jan van Rijckenborgh, one of the founders of the School of the Golden Rosycross, writes about this in his book *'The Confession of the Brotherhood of the Rosycross'*.²

'Whether you read the Bible exoterically or esoterically, you will experience the deep fascination of this tremendous magic. Garment and essence have grown into a wonderful unity and you will need to know these things if you are to be able to approach the Christ-mysteries. Even as a mere book, as a phenomenon, the Bible exerts a most mysterious influence, a more exceptional power.

What, then, is a book, a closed book in your bookcase? A lump of dead matter! But your Bible is not! You see that book in the foci of our temples. Is it there purely for decoration, just a pious, mystical symbol, nothing more? No, even as a book, this awesome piece of magic, this focus of Christ's wisdom in the darkness of this world, is capable of purifying the atmosphere of our temples of all evil forces: they do not dare to approach the open book.

Like us, patients who are plagued by astral forces know how the open book can draw a protective magic circle. That is why biblical terminology is one of the preconditions for our teaching, and there is no other holy book in the world that demonstrates such an influence.

Another example we would like to give, a purely exoteric Christian one, is of a simple soul hungry for wisdom, for salvation from some fearful moment, who understands a word, comes under the spell, under the influence of its magical powers, which then bring about one aspect of what we call faith. If you had faith as small as a grain of mustard seed, you would be able to move mountains.

What faith does this mean? Faith in some terminology or other? Of course not. It means faith in Christ, who is not a mere idea, but a force, which governs, dominates the entire essence of our existence. This force has manifested itself to us in a certain garment, a garment made not by us but by the Lords of Destiny, who give what is necessary for everyone's spiritual development. The garment becomes soiled, spat upon, torn to shreds, denied even in its most elementary aspects by many churches, but nevertheless the form continues to go with us, as a divine offer of assistance.'

The quoted Bible texts in this book come, as indicated earlier, from several English versions of the Bible.³ We observe the following nine standpoints with respect to the Bible:

1. The books of the Bible, like other sacred writings, have been written by people who were inspired by the Spirit to promote a spiritual awakening and renewal.
2. Not all passages from the Bible are of equal importance and value to current humanity.
3. Only a fraction of the mysteries of life has been revealed in the Bible. Since then there have been many more revelations, and many more will still follow because man progresses constantly. Jesus therefore said: *'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth'* (John 16:12-13).
4. The Divine manifests itself not only in the holy scriptures of humanity, but also especially in nature and in man himself. Religion can therefore not be viewed separately from science and art.
5. Quite a few biblical texts have been deliberately or unconsciously modified or maimed in the past by copyists and translators in order to achieve certain goals.
6. The truth can never be fully expressed in form and matter. That is why many biblical texts make use of symbolic language that can be understood in several ways. Symbols make it possible to say something about divine reality that is more accessible to our senses and our intellectual thinking.
7. Many biblical texts are not intended as information, but as an invocation or a call. When there is the right focus in speaking and listening, divine powers are called up that can become active in humans. The apostle Paul writes in this connection: *'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life'* (2 Corinthians 3:6).

8. Bible texts can contribute to the growth of our inner understanding on the basis of which one can give direction to one's own life and possibly also to that of others. The psalmist poet formulates this as: *'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path'* (Psalm 119:105).
9. Those who attune themselves to a specific part of the Bible may experience something of the high level of consciousness from which it originates.

A portion of the Bible that emanates tremendous power is unmistakably the prologue of the *Gospel according to John*, specifically the first eighteen verses. It is a compendium: the entire spiritual path is embedded in these words. Read or listen to this summary of the universe every day for a week or even longer and experience what that does to you. You can also limit yourself to the first five verses because those are already of an exceptional depth. Learn them literally 'by heart' so that you always have them with you. If you thus store them in your heart, a transforming effect will take place. Then you will also understand why 'memorising' is called 'learning by heart'.

The divine plan of creation

In the prologue of the Gospel according to John, which is the most gnostic gospel in the Bible, the 'Word' or 'Logos' is mentioned several times; we may understand this as the divine plan of creation. If you accept this Word, it means that you must begin to make an effort to make the human system that you inhabit suitable for the implementation of the divine plan, thus becoming part of the God-human Hierarchy or the universal Brotherhood. This Hierarchy consists of the angelic hosts as well as the human entities that either have never fallen or have successfully followed the path back to the father's house.

In the first thirteen verses of the prologue of the Gospel of John,

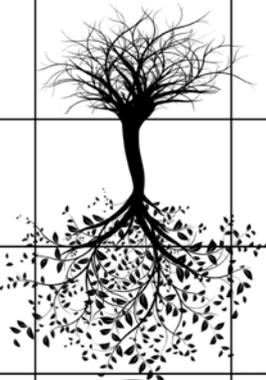
1. Father world of the spirit conception of the divine thought ideality ignis	the Word 1 I am the true vine		children of God 7 I am the resurrection and the life
2. Son world of the soul working with the divine thought vitality flamma	the life 2 I am the way, the truth and the life		the true light 6 I am the light of the world
3. Holy Spirit world of the personality realisation of the divine thought reality materia	the light of man 3 I am the door		John 5 I am the good shepherd
4. world of the body incarnation of the divine thought corporeality mater			the light in the darkness 4 I am the bread of life

image 1: creation and re-creation in the gospel of John

we can recognise the same sevenfold structure as in the creation myth in Genesis 1, and it is explained in Chapter 6 of the book *'Mysteries and symbols of the soul'*.⁴ Both these sections of the Bible deal with the creation and regeneration of your innermost being, of the microcosm that you now inhabit. Something of this is shown schematically in image 1. It also shows the seven 'I-am' statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. It would be overdoing it to explain this further here.

We conclude this first reflection of the book *'Mysteries and challenges of birth, life and death'* with the majestic first five verses of the prologue of the Gospel of John. They summarise the development of the entire human system that you currently inhabit and that is now ready to be regenerated.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things

were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not' (John 1:1-5).



By an earthly birth process a personality is now born and linked with a soul. That personality is in itself another miracle of God's love, for it should be seen as part of an emergency order plan to bring the original fallen human being back to life.

The calling of the earthly personality as a temporary phenomenon is to liberate its soul, its microcosm, from its imprisonment through self-surrender and by merging, through the endure, into the Other One, who must be resurrected.

At present the microcosm is bound to its system of time and space, but when the Spirit, the soul and the transfigured personality are reunited, the microcosm will be fit to re-enter the divine state of omnipresence. Until then the microcosm remains broken and damaged. This is why the call resounds continuously for everyone to accomplish this great work of salvation in and through the great power of the original nature.

CHAPTER 2

INCARNATING ON EARTH

SPIRITUAL TEXT: Exodus 1 and 2:1-10

Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Egypt (every man and his household came with Jacob): Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: and Joseph was in Egypt already. And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens.

And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field, all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigor.

And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other

Puah: and he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the birth-stool; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive.

And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive? And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them. And God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them households. And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch; and she put the child therein, and laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.

And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river-side; and she saw the ark among the flags, and sent her handmaid to fetch it. And she opened it, and saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maiden went and called the child's mother.

And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses, and said, Because I drew him out of the water.



CHAPTER 2

INCARNATING ON EARTH

REFLECTION

The mighty, divine plan of creation is carried out in great freedom, creativity and joy by intelligent and advanced beings that are concrete manifestations of God: a host of angels and human entities that belong to the divine hierarchy and the universal Brotherhood. We cannot perceive them with our earthly senses because they do not have physical bodies but have more diaphanous, immortal vehicles. We can at best experience only a minuscule part of all their works.

In the beginning was the Word, that is the creation plan that comes from God and is one with it: the Word was with God and the Word was God. Without that plan there would be nothing: without this plan, nothing would have become what it did become. Because the participants in the divine hierarchy work to realise the plan of God – because they thus speak the creative Word – they are inspired by the Spirit, the holy breath: in the Word was Life. Thanks to that inspiration, human entities can take a path of continuous development in which they become ever greater, more powerful and radiant: this Life was the light of the people.

But then a big problem developed: man separated himself from the world of Light by identifying with his personality. Because of this ‘fall’, which is described in Genesis 3 in the form of a myth, he distanced himself from the Spirit and thus lost his receptivity to the divine Light. That state of separateness is formulated as: *‘The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it’*.

Yet we humans have the potential to once again become part of the god-human hierarchy and have full disposal of our lost powers. How? By opening ourselves to the true light that shines over every person. Then we receive the power to become children of God again. In this way we come to the true purpose of every authentic religion: to offer people opportunities to reconnect and realign with the divine origin from which we came.

Fortunately, from time to time great souls incarnate on earth with a mission to testify of the light on behalf of the universal Brotherhood. They make people who are ripe for it and hunger and thirst for the lost paradise, aware of their fallen state, and provide them with teachings, methods and power to be healed in the broadest sense of the word.

The living water

John the Baptist was such an emissary, as were Moses, Jesus and Elijah. John was linked directly to the divine origin, standing in the living water of the divine river that springs from the Primeval Source, symbolised by the Jordan. In its waters, he baptised his followers who had decided to become disciples of the soul. Water baptism is a ritual by which, among other things, the soul in a human system begins a process of cleansing and purification as a preparation for receiving the Holy Spirit: the baptism by fire.

In the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke, we read that the births of John and Jesus were anything but ordinary. It is important to realise that stories in sacred writings about the birth of great prophets or world teachers are not just reports of their actual birth, but narratives that tell us how it is apparent from the beginning that the child will grow into an influential person who will undertake a great spiritual mission. Many such birth stories are also symbolic of the inner birth that can take place in ourselves, as has been discussed extensively in the book '*Spiritual Christmas*'.⁶ It is told of the Chinese sage Lao Tzu that he was born from the

left armpit of his mother. According to the story, when he was born he had grey hair and could walk immediately. According to other ancient writings, the birth of Siddhartha Gautama Buddha was also an impressive event: all the worlds were flooded with light, blind people could see again, the deaf could hear again, the lame walked, and prisoners were freed from their chains.⁷ According to the evangelist Luke, angels sang while Jesus was born. This was in Palestine during a period of occupation by the Romans.

Moses probably arrived in Egypt around 1300 B.C. into a state of slavery in Egypt. Like Jesus, his life was threatened by child murderers commissioned by the king. That is why his mother placed her vulnerable baby in a rush basket on the bank of the Nile, where the bathing daughter of the pharaoh found him and subsequently adopted him. She then arranged for the education and training of Moses at the court in Egypt.

I called my son from Egypt

Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus fled to Egypt to escape the violence of King Herod. Later, Jesus taught his disciples how to return to the Father's house they had once left. Moses led the people of Israel through the Red Sea and the desert to the border of Canaan, the promised land. That is why the Jewish prophet Hosea wrote that God said: *'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt'* (Hosea 11:1).

Holy writings can be interpreted in several ways. The most obvious interpretations are the literal and historical interpretations. Many, however, are not interested in these because they concern events from past times that are not relevant to life here and now. It is also very questionable whether these historical reports are factually correct, because most biblical writers were not interested in historiography but rather in the transfer of inspiring ideas.

People today can be touched by Bible stories from way back then if they recognise themselves in them. The question whether the

stories are historical or not is irrelevant because the texts offer recognition, hope, courage and inspiration. The reformer, philosopher, theologian and pedagogue Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670) writes in his book *'Unum Necessarium'*:

'Every time a Christian reads the sacred texts, it is of the utmost importance to pay attention to the fact that he does not regard what he finds there as something that is outside himself and does not concern him, but as something that directly concerns his person, as when he looks in a mirror. He must always put himself in the place of the ones who are addressed in these texts, be they devout or wicked. He always has to apply everything he hears or sees to himself.'

The symbolic journey through the desert is very recognisable to many of us: they have left behind their old lives in which they are trapped – symbolically represented by Egypt – to go to the promised land. For them, earthly life has lost its sheen. They feel lonely and abandoned and suffer inner and sometimes also external hardships. This desert phase can sometimes take a long time – symbolically, and perhaps even literally, forty years – but it will pass if the pilgrim perseveres. Seven sinful tribes must be exterminated in an inner struggle before the land of milk and honey can be inhabited (Deuteronomy 7). Jesus also refers to this inescapable inner conflict and the resulting struggle when he says: *'Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword'* (Matthew 10:34).

For a deeper understanding of the Bible stories, it may be useful to know the meaning of the names used. Moses literally means 'Pulled from the water', symbolising that he came from the divine river of living water, symbolised by the Nile that makes Egypt fertile. The Greek philosopher Plutarch represented the Egyptian name for Egypt as *Khêmeia*, which translates as 'black earth'. This phrase indicates a materialistic vision in which the perceptible reality is regarded as the only reality, as expressed in a verse in

the prologue to John: *'The light shines in the darkness (Egypt), and the darkness did not comprehend it'*.

Israel is the name which the patriarch Jacob received after he wrestled with an angel of God; it means literally 'wrestler with God' or 'hero of God'. However we should view the people of Israel in a much broader sense than being just Jewish people, the offspring of the twelve sons of Jacob who became the twelve tribes of Israel. Every human being who undergoes the inner struggle to emerge from the dark world – regardless of religion, convictions or nationality – belongs to the people of Israel, the chosen people. Jacob becomes stronger because of the inner struggle he endured. Inner strength is more important than external strength. That is why the author of the Book of proverbs wrote: *'He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city'* (Proverbs 16:32).

The universal wisdom can sometimes also be found in biblical texts, recognised by analysing the numerical values of letters and words. The 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet all have a characteristic numerical value. (20) Therefore a value can be assigned to each word consisting of the sum of the numerical values of the letters in that word. For example, the Hebrew name for Egypt is 'Mitsrajim' which translates as 'land of distress' or 'land of oppression'. It is spelled as m-ts-rjm and has a word value of 380. This word value can first be reduced to $3 + 8 + 0 = 11$ and then to $1 + 1 = 2$. The total value of 'Canaan' (spelled as k-n-a-n) is 190 and can first be reduced to $1 + 9 + 0 = 10$ and then to $1 + 0 = 1$.

Making the two into one

Thus: Egypt stands for 2 or duality, while Canaan stands for 1 or unity. On the spiritual path, the ultimate goal is to make the two into one, to connect time and eternity, the horizontal with the vertical. Jesus expresses this beautifully in Logion 22 of the Gospel of Thomas. The well-known professor of church history Gilles Quispel (1916-2006), the foremost Dutch researcher into gnos-

tic texts, believed that this apocryphal gospel contains authentic words from Jesus that are not in the New Testament. Quite a few colleagues of his opposed this view, but nowadays this is fairly generally accepted. In Logion 22 we read the following.

‘Jesus saw some babies nursing. He said to his disciples, These nursing babies are like those who enter the Father’s kingdom.

They said to him, Then shall we enter the Father’s kingdom as babies?

Jesus said to them, When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female, when you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then you will enter the kingdom’ (The Gospel of Thomas, Logion 22).

In the prologue of the Gospel of John, Jesus Christ is referred to as the Word that has become flesh. We thus see that the natural man Jesus, who was born of Mary, was connected with the Christ Spirit through his baptism in the river Jordan, and that he thereby became fully and completely Man as ordained in God’s plan, the Word. Jesus was ‘anointed’ with the Spirit from on high. The name Christ means literally ‘anointed one’. All who take Jesus Christ as their example and thus open themselves to Christ’s power are enabled to become children of God, therefore creating, eternal and divine.

Moses, Elijah, John, and Jesus were all destined to go and teach a spiritual way – a path of spiritual awareness and renewal. Their lives differed greatly from each other, but there are also similarities.

The famous American mythologist Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) studied countless Bible stories, myths, legends, legends, fairy tales and other stories. In these he discovered a basic pattern that he describes in his standard work *‘The hero with a thousand*

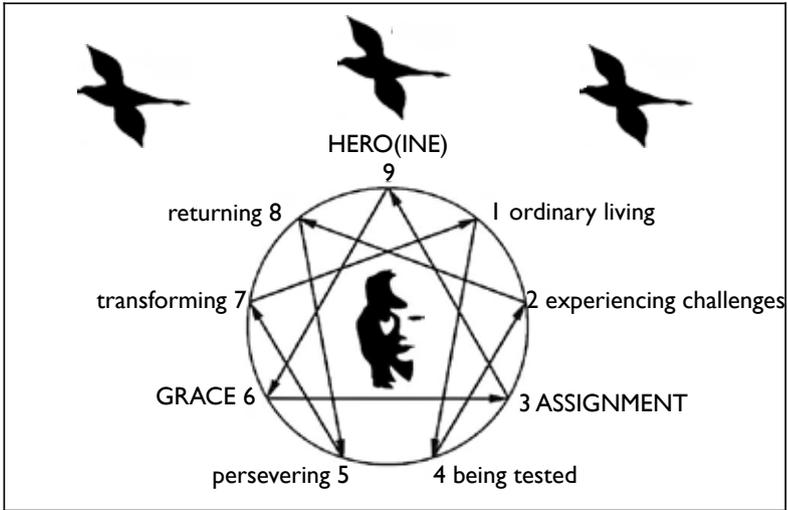


image 2: the universal structure of narratives, based on Joseph Campbell

faces'.⁸ Campbell distinguishes a number of steps and combines them into what he calls *The hero's journey*. He describes the hero as someone who unselfishly gives his or her life to something bigger than himself.

There are many ways to schematically display the steps of the hero's journey. Here we use the tried-and-tested process model of the enneagram, which distinguishes three main elements that are represented in a triangle: the hero or heroine; his or her mission; and the help received from outside, also referred to as grace (see image 2). This approach is cyclical: after a clockwise cycle in time, a new circle always starts in which experiences are on another, possibly higher, level if all has gone well. The six-pointed figure in the circle shows the sequence of thought processes again.⁹

The steps are as follows: the protagonist first leads a normal life but runs into certain difficulties. At one point he then receives the assignment to solve these problems. This assignment can be one given by another person, but it can also be a task that is taken

care of independently of others. For example, Moses learns from a burning thorn bush of his commission by God to lead the people of Israel out of their slave existence in Egypt (Exodus 3:10).

Unexpected salvation

The hero or main character becomes irrevocably involved in all kinds of tests in the execution of his mission. It is important for him to endure these tests completely and to persevere and persist. At a time when the need is highest, he receives unexpected help. For example, in the story about the exodus of the people of Israel, we read that there a way through the sea opens, that food descends from heaven in the form of manna and that living water flows forth when Moses hits the rocks that are obstructing the path with his staff.

People become purified through all these experiences and thus become suited to undergo an inner transformation, after which it is possible to return to his former 'ordinary life' as a renewed person. Then his mission is accomplished and he receives the assignment of the inner Christ: *'Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light'* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Many great stories, such as those about the lives of Moses, Odysseus, Hercules, Job, Jesus, Percival, Dante and in our time Frodo Baggins (*The Lord of the Rings*) and Harry Potter, contain all the themes of this heroic path, but there are also stories with only one step or just some of the steps that were mentioned above. It is very surprising that the structure of the path of the hero(ine) applies not only to such life stories but also to the spiritual path that every person can go.

The way of the hero is also your way. You have received the assignment to live your life on earth. You are free to make your own

choices, but it is good to realise that many choices have already been made for you. We humans are led mostly by the forces of nature, but fortunately also by spiritual beings who are more advanced in their development than we are and are part of the divine hierarchy, of the universal Brotherhood.

It is said that a human entity who wants to incarnate on earth will get an overview of his coming earthly life, of the people with whom he will enter into a relationship and of the life lessons he has to learn through experience. In this context, it is sometimes regarded as a sacred contract that the person concerned signs by connecting his microcosmic system with a fertilised egg from which a completely new physical body is formed.¹⁰ The conscious memory of that sacred contract disappears because the evolving earthly personality must be placed in circumstances he himself would not consciously choose, but ones that are nevertheless necessary in order to be healed as a microcosm.

Light birth

When you came out of the mother's womb as a small human body, you were born into the outer light. As an adult, you can now contribute to the *inner* light being born within yourself. This light birth, this inner Christmas, gives insight, joy and renewal. The term 'light birth' is composed of the words: 'light' and 'birth'. This does not refer to light and birth as we may experience in the sensory world, but to inner perceptions that bear a certain resemblance to what we experience as light and as a birth in the outer world. If the birth of light has taken place within you, then the so-called resurrection body may grow within you as discussed in the book '*Spiritual Easter and Pentecost*'.¹¹ We conclude this reflection with part of a parable by Pablo Molinero about twins in a womb because it reveals something of the mystery of life.¹²

There were once twins in a womb. As the two fetuses matured and their brains began to function, they became vaguely aware of their

environment and their own existence. After a while they also discovered each other. Weeks and months passed. They started to notice all kinds of changes in their bodies and in their experiences. It was clear to them that a big change was in the offing and they started talking about this.

'We are changing,' said the one, 'what can that mean?'

'It means,' replied the other, 'that we are going to be born.' The two shivered and became frightened because they knew that their birth would bring an end to their present existence and that they would have to leave the world in which they now lived.

'Do you really believe in a life after birth?' the one asked.

'Yes, I do. Our life here brings us growth and development in such a way that we will be sufficiently prepared and powerful enough for that existence.'

'Nonsense, I don't think it exists. What must I imagine by such a life after birth?'

'I do not know that exactly. But surely it will be much lighter and brighter than it is here. And maybe we'll be able to walk around and eat with our mouths.'

'What nonsense! Walking around, indeed! That won't work at all. And eating with our mouths, what a strange idea. Don't we have our umbilical cord that feeds us. Moreover: walking around is impossible because our umbilical cord is far too short for that.'

'Still, I'm sure it can be done. It's all just a bit different than it is here.'

'But no one has ever returned from this "after birth experience". With our birth our life has come to an end. And life here is just darkness and a torment. If our conception and all our growing and development signifies nothing else than that it all ends with birth, then this whole existence is completely absurd.'

'And still, even though I do not know exactly what life consists of after birth, we will at least see our mother and she will take care of us.'

'Mother? You believe in a mother? Where is she then?'

'Well, everywhere around us. We are and exist in her and through her. We would not exist without her.'

'What utter nonsense! I have never noticed or seen anything of a mother, so she does not exist.'

'Yet, sometimes when we are really quiet, you can hear her sing for us. Or feel her caressing our world.'



Man (i.e. the microcosm) is tied to the wheel. That is why death is followed, time and time again, by a new manifestation of the personality. That is why every new manifestation of the personality is a new chance of liberation for the microcosm. Not until man has learend to build the heavenly body and made progress in that building does the moment come for him to be liberated from the wheel. Then, his death will be a resurrection in the kingdom of heaven, in the divine order.

The pupil must arrive at first-hand knowlegdge of these things. Only direct, first-hand knowledge is liberation, but the basis must be a rational-moral philosophical insight and pure religious devotion.

An esoteric investigation demonstrates that incarnation is a law of emergency, a consequence of mankind's fall. It is a hard, but nevertheless, very merciful law, because it keeps mankind in manifestation and confronts man with a task which is not to difficult for him.

J. van Rijckenborgh,

Elementary Philosophy of the Modern Rosycross¹, chapter 8

CHAPTER 3

FATHOMING CYCLES

SPIRITUAL TEXT: Ecclesiastes 1 and 2:1-10

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

What profit hath man of all his labor wherein he laboreth under the sun?

One generation goeth, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever.

The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to its place where it ariseth.

The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it turneth about continually in its course, and the wind returneth again to its circuits.

All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again.

All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Is there a thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been long ago, in the ages which were before us.

There is no remembrance of the former generations ; neither shall there be any remembrance of the latter generations that are to come, among those that shall come after.

I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied

my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven: it is a sore travail that God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I have gotten me great wisdom above all that were before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart hath had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also was a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

I said in my heart, Come now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it? I searched in my heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, my heart yet guiding me with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what it was good for the sons of men that they should do under heaven all the days of their life.

I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and parks, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit; I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the forest where trees were reared; I bought men-servants and maid-servants, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of herds and flocks, above all that were before me in Jerusalem; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my

heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced because of all my labor; and this was my portion from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been done long ago. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walketh in darkness: and yet I perceived that one event happeneth to them all.

Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then said I in my heart, that this also is vanity. For of the wise man, even as of the fool, there is no remembrance for ever; seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. And how doth the wise man die even as the fool! So I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun was grievous unto me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

And I hated all my labor wherein I labored under the sun, seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he will be a wise man or a fool? yet will he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.

Therefore I turned about to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labor wherein I had labored under the sun. For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skilfulness; yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what hath a man of all his labor, and of the striving of his heart, wherein he laboreth under the sun? For all his days are but sorrows, and his travail is grief; yea, even in the night his heart taketh no rest. This also is vanity.

CHAPTER 3
FATHOMING CYCLES
REFLECTION

You are called to freedom. Do you already experience that freedom? Or do you maybe feel yourself a slave in a modern world in which slavery has officially been abolished long ago? There are all kinds of forces in society that want you to believe that you are free, that you are entitled to a wonderful and abundant life and that you yourself determine what you shall manifest in your life and what not. At the same time, these forces are focused on sucking up the life energy of their victims so that they will remain unconscious slaves, and on maintaining their illusions so that they will not start looking for the meaning of life either in general or in their own life.

There once was a wise king in Jerusalem who wanted to live a wonderful life. He did all kinds of things that he thought would make him happy. So he had beautiful houses built and landscaped beautiful gardens and parks. This was rather a lot of work, but that did not matter. He collected valuables, ate the tastiest food, did not deny himself anything and had the best artists perform for him. This monarch indeed led a fantastic life, but there was one problem: it did not satisfy him. All the beautiful things in his life gave him some pleasure temporarily, but he experienced these pleasures as extremely fleeting – like everything in this world – and they gave him no lasting happiness.

The king became painfully aware of his mortality and realised that he could not take his works with him when he died but had to leave them to those who came after him. His wealth was, as it were, thrown into their laps after his death, and it was very ques-

tionable whether they would handle it wisely. He therefore developed an aversion to life and went seriously looking for the why of everything.

The above story is a brief summary of the second chapter of the Bible book known as Ecclesiastes, also translated as Teacher or Preacher. It is a rather strange name for the author because he does not really preach but rather airs his doubts about everything in life. His Hebrew name is 'Kohelet' which literally translates as 'predecessor' or 'collector'. He preceded us in accumulating everything that is desirable – possessions, knowledge and fame – and teaches us from his own experience that this life here is transitory, comparable to chasing the wind, and offers no benefit under the sun.

Later Jesus also teaches this to his disciples, but he immediately adds a hopeful assignment. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, for example, he says: *'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also'* (Matthew 6:19-21).

Universal character

You do not have to be a king to understand the thoughts and feelings of the king in this story. His experiences have a universal character. Every person is instinctively looking for meaning and as he grows up, the way he gives meaning to his life changes. Ecclesiastes describes himself as a wise king in Jerusalem who wholeheartedly pursued wisdom but is repeatedly disappointed by everything he experiences and gathers. Chances are that this wisdom teacher was not a king at all – many think it could have been King Solomon – but rather presents himself as such to give his writings more authority. He succeeded because although his

book was probably written in the third or fourth century BC and is contrary to many views within Judaism, it was still included in the Bible despite the hesitation of Israel's scribes.

This Ecclesiastes might not have been the king of a nation, but he certainly was a ruler for his inner kingdom. Jerusalem is both a capital and a holy city. We may see this centre from which the country is governed as the symbol for the consciousness or the soul. Ecclesiastes is aware of his thoughts and feelings and moreover has the courage to ask himself difficult questions and draw utterly painful conclusions from them. He quite rightly states that there is nothing permanent in this world because everything changes constantly, and finally death is the end of everything and everyone. No one will deny this conclusion. Everything that appears will also disappear again. We are all familiar with the endless cycle of rising, shining and fading but do not always find it easy to accept it.

According to Ecclesiastes, it is a misconception to think that man is rewarded for his good deeds and punished for his evil ones. It makes no sense to do the right thing on earth with the purpose to reserve an attractive place in heaven or a nice next incarnation. That would only reinforce the ego-orientation, which now should instead be overcome.

Ecclesiastes denies that man comes into an afterlife after his death. He sees that there is a lot of suffering among people and initially comes to the disturbing conclusion that it is actually better to be dead, and that not being born might be best. This denial of the value of life is a very bleak vision. Perhaps it is the didactic method of Preacher to urge readers to investigate what is right for them. Is life in no way worth the effort? Ecclesiastes clearly does not think so, because later in his argument he writes:

'Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God hath already accepted thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let not thy head lack oil. Live joyfully with the wife

whom thou lovest all the days of thy life of vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all thy days of vanity: for that is thy portion in life, and in thy labor wherein thou laborest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, whither thou goest'
(Ecclesiastes 9:7-10).

Is this advice not very superficial and hedonistic? Not at all! Everyone is fully able to do something with these recommendations. We are shown our own responsibility here and advised not to live according to rules drawn up by authorities. Ecclesiastes urges his readers to use their life as it is intended: to live it! Good listeners, pupils of the soul, may recognise a deeper, spiritual meaning in the counsels of Ecclesiastes. What he actually says is: Live with a happy heart, eat your bread, drink your wine, wear white clothes, have oil on your head, love your wife and toil under the sun; and this advice can also be understood spiritually, in a metaphorical sense.

Ruling the All

In Logion 2 of the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus says to his disciples: *'Let him who seeks, not cease to search until he finds and if he finds he will be troubled, and if he is troubled, he will wonder, and he shall rule over the All.'* In this statement Jesus first appears to be in accordance with the statements of Ecclesiastes, but later in the text the two views differ greatly. Ecclesiastes speaks of the man who dies, enters the grave and finds it all ends there, while Jesus speaks about Man who will rule over the All. Can these two views be reconciled?

Yes, certainly! The big problem in our society is that in general we fail to distinguish between the various dimensions and levels of man. This problem affects not only the average person, but more especially the professionals who are intensively occupied

with people and who should therefore know better, such as theologians, philosophers, psychologists, pedagogues, anthropologists and physicians. Almost all of them have been deluded by the materialistic and reductionist concept of humanity as derived from the natural sciences. This is an outdated paradigm that can certainly be valuable in a given context but is in essence extremely limited.

In the beginning of his argument, Ecclesiastes explains that everything that we perceive externally is extremely volatile. He refers to the four elements and mentions the coming and going of the generations on this world (earth), the coming and going of the sun (fire), the changes of the wind (air) and the constant flow of the rivers to the sea (water). He observes that this cycle is a returning one and that he finds them inexpressibly exhausting. He is a shrewd observer and notices that these cycles constantly need our attention but: *'The eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear with hearing'*.

Ecclesiastes makes it clear to us that a higher form of experience is not possible when we allow our consciousness to be determined exclusively by everything we perceive sensorially. We may on the one hand qualify a sunrise and a waterfall as 'inexpressibly tiring', while we may otherwise experience these natural phenomena from a different perspective as a proof of the divine, as a manifestation of the divine. Ecclesiastes invites people with fullness of experience to let go of their attachments to the world. In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus formulates it as: *'Let one who has found the world, and has become wealthy, renounce the world'* (The Gospel of Thomas, logion 110).

As humans we are subject to many cycles. In our body we possess the respiratory system, the circulatory system and the metabolism. The rhythm of day and night has an enormous influence on our functioning and the orbit of the moon around the earth also has a demonstrable influence on our lives. According to as-

tology there is a clear connection between the movement of celestial bodies such as stars and planets and their influence on our lives. This relationship is not a causal relationship but instead a relationship based on simultaneity, a synchronous connection, a correlation.

Intuitively moving in harmony

The key to the development of the inner being is the realisation that it is influenced by all kinds of cycles.¹³ It is certainly not necessary to know all those cycles, for example by drawing and interpreting horoscopes. This can even be counter-productive. What matters is that man learns to listen to the harmony of the spheres from a new perspective of life and intuitively move with the rhythms in the cosmos. That is why the author Antoine de Saint Exupéry in his small book *'The Little Prince'* has the fox say: *'It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.'*¹⁴

Ecclesiastes experiences that there is nothing new under the sun. This view is indeed true from a limited standpoint of only a few generations in a primitive agricultural society. From the perspective of the inner and outer history of the earth and humanity, however, it is a completely different picture, because the earth and humanity are continually monitored and influenced from the heavenly realms. Ecclesiastes probably knew this very well, and in his poetic text he probably wanted to point to something we call fullness of experience. Maybe in this way he wanted to encourage his readers not to focus exclusively on the sensory world, but to pay attention to what really matters and is imperishable.

Fortunately in our world of space and time there is progression in all kinds of areas. This progress certainly does not happen fully automatically. That would be contrary to the second law of thermodynamics, which states that every closed system strives for maximum entropy or disorder. The earth and humanity can de-

	1. gold	Early Indian A, ḥ 7227 - 5067 B.C.	Chinese G, Δ 5733 - 7893
	2. silver	Early Persian B, Θ 5067 - 2907 B.C.	Slavic F, ♀ 3573 - 5733
	3. bronze	Egyptian- Babylonian C, D 2907 - 747 B.C.	Germanic- Anglo-Saxon E, ƿ 1413 - 3573
	4. iron	Greco - Roman D, ⊕ 747 B.C. 1413 A.D.	

image 3: seven post-Atlantic cultural epochs according to Rudolf Steiner

velop because they continually receive energy from outside, specifically in the forms of consciousness, attention and light-power.

Well-known authors in the field of esotericism, such as Helena Blavatsky, Rudolf Steiner and Max Heindel, describe in their books how the creation of the cosmos and of man (cosmogogenesis and anthropogenesis) takes place in seven cycles over seven spheres in the seven world eras.^{15, 16, 17} According to Heindel, the seven world eras are part of the so-called seventh cosmic domain and are designated by the names of planets from the solar system. Sequentially they are: the Saturn era, the Solar era, the Moon era, the Earth era in which we now live (which is divided into a Mars half and a Mercury half), the Jupiter era, the Venus era and the Vulcan era.

The danger of this approach is that these development are projected over time, while they really concern levels of consciousness which can in principle be experienced at any time and place. The three authors mentioned are influenced by the nineteenth century Darwinian belief that wrongly assumes progress as an au-

omatic evolution. Currently we, as humanity, live in the fifth epoch of the Earth-era, the Aryan era. This period was preceded by the Polar period, the Hyperborean period, the Lemurian period and the Atlantean period. Rudolf Steiner distinguishes seven major cultural periods in this, our current Aryan period of 2160 years, the duration of one round of the precession of the equinox, which is the swirling movement of the earth's axis.

Cultural innovation

Steiner names these seven periods in the post-Atlantic period successively: the Primal Indian cultural period, the Primal Persian cultural period, the Egyptian-Babylonian cultural period, the Greco-Roman cultural period, the Germanic-Anglo-Saxon cultural period, the Slavic cultural period and the Chinese cultural period. These names indicate from which geographical areas the cultural renewal has been and will be shaped.

Image 3 shows these seven cultural periods and the corresponding dates according to the structure of creation and re-creation pictured in image 1. Here, too, a connection can be made with the great image in the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar as it is explained by the Jewish prophet Daniel (Daniel 2) who makes it clear that everything is transitory in space and time. The four levels also correspond to the gold, the silver, and the bronze kings as well as the king of mixed metals in the subterranean temple in Goethe's profound fairy tale of the green snake and the beautiful lily.¹⁸

Image 3 shows that the Germanic-Anglo-Saxon cultural period in which we now live is a kind of mirror image of the Egyptian-Babylonian cultural period. In ancient Egypt there was a lot of attention on material things: large sculptures and buildings were realised and people revered dead bodies by embalming and mummifying them. Materialist science developed from about the fifteenth century onward in the Germanic-Anglo-Saxon cultural period. As humanity we are now faced with the task of spiritual-

ising the materialistic development that began in ancient Egypt on the basis of the Christ impulse, which became active in the Greco-Roman cultural period at about the beginning of our era.

‘And what may be the purpose of my short life in this gigantic and unimaginable development process?’ you may wonder. No general answer can be given to such a question. But you can be sure that it is your task to become an essential cog in the great divine plan of development based on your unique qualities. This task extends far beyond your body and your personality since they are tied to space and time and cannot rule the All.

According to the cosmology of Max Heindel, your deepest essential being comes from the sixth cosmic domain. It is however connected to the seventh cosmic domain where it has undergone countless revolutions of the wheel. Your deepest being, that is the microcosm that you now inhabit with a dormant spirit spark as its core, is called to return to the sixth cosmic domain.

The being that you know and are is subject to decay and death. If your body dies and is then cremated, it is largely converted into water vapour and carbon dioxide. The water vapour becomes part of the water cycle and probably part of a cloud from which rain falls into a river that flows to the sea.

The carbon dioxide is diluted in the air and taken up into the carbon cycle and possibly absorbed by some trees and converted by them, via photo synthesis, into vegetable material which is then deposited in the tree trunks.

The ashes of your body scattered over the earth may contribute to the growth of grasses and earthworms, forms of life that are absolutely essential for biological life as we know it on earth. You are part of the cycle of life on earth, as sung in Disney’s cartoon film *The Lion King* as follows: ‘*It’s the Circle of Life, and it moves us all*’. During our short existence we are constantly seeking until we have found our place in the cycle of life on earth. After you

die, the elements of your disintegrated physical body are given back to a larger whole: *'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return'*(Genesis 3:19). Something similar also applies to your psychic structure, your soul substance. In the course of your life you build up a personality soul from etheric, astral and mental substances that are then strongly expressed in your blood. That is why we speak of the blood soul. This blood soul is part of the nature we know, in which everything moves between polarities, and is therefore mortal.

Blood soul

When the body of a human being dies, the blood soul is dissolved into separate elements. Buddhism speaks of skandas in this context. When the deceased person was a conscious person with a strong individuality, then the blood soul can be transferred as inheritance to other people living on earth who have an affinity with it. And if the deceased was a pupil of the soul, a helping power based on the blood soul may be released.

'Will there be anything left of me after my death?', you might ask. The answer to that question is determined by what you understand as yourself. If you identify yourself with your physical body, it is indeed completely finished with you when you die. In the natural sciences and in the medical world it is wrongly assumed that the consciousness will then have dissipated completely. That is why many researches and developments take place in these fields that are extremely questionable from a universal spiritual perspective.

Authentic spiritual traditions teach that after the death of the body, the consciousness can still be active for quite some time, and also that there is something else in the human being that is immortal. Lao Zu writes in verse 4 of his *'Tao De Ching'*: *'The spirit of the valley never dies.'* In the book *'Pyramander'* or *'Poimandres'* of the legendary Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus we read: *'Of all*

*creatures in nature, only man is twofold, namely mortal as to the body and immortal as to the soul.'*¹⁹

Ecclesiastes also recognises that there is a spirit in the human being who returns to God after the death of the body, after the silver cord—the connection between the etheric body and the consciousness—has been removed.

'Man goeth to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it' (Ecclesiastes 12:5-7).

Jesus refers to the immortal in man when he says, *'The kingdom of God is within you'* (Luke 17:21). That inner kingdom, however, has fallen into disrepair. Isaiah speaks about a palace that has been abandoned (Isaiah 32:14). That is the microcosmic human system that should be a pure reflection of the macrocosm, but is no longer. It has fallen into ruin and needs to be rebuilt from the power emanating from the spirit-spark, so that man can rule his microcosmic All.

We conclude this analysis with a story from a book by Erich Kaniok.

'A man went on a journey to consult a sage. When he arrived in the city of the sage and asked where he lived, they took him to a shabby hut on the outskirts of the city. In the cabin there was only a rickety bed and a table full of books that were being studied by an old man. The traveller looked around in amazement. 'Where is the sage?' he asked the old man.

'I am the one you are looking for,' said the old man. 'Why are you so surprised?'

'I don't understand it. You are a famous sage, with many students, they say. Your name is well-known throughout the country. It does

not seem right to me that you should live in such a shabby cabin. You should live in a palace.'

'And where do you live?' the old man asked.

'I live on an estate, in a beautiful house with precious furniture.'

'And how do you make your living?'

The man explained that he was a businessman and travelled twice a year to a big city, where he bought raw materials that he then had brought to his place of residence to be sold to the local merchants.

The sage listened attentively and asked the businessman where he stayed when he was in town.

'I rent a room in a small inn,' was the man's answer.

'And if someone saw you in that room, would he not say, 'What are you doing here, prosperous businessman, in such a simple room?'' asked the sage. And then you would probably say, 'I'm only on the road for a short time, so I do not need more. Just visit me in my real house, then you will see something quite different.' Well, my friend, the same is true for me, continued the sage. I'm just on my way. The world is no more than a temporary stay. In my real house you would certainly see something completely different. Visit me in my spiritual home, then you will see that I am indeed living in a palace.'



Thus the cross is literally planted in the pupil through the appearance of the Brotherhood in the darkness of this earthly existence. The path of transfiguration, the vertical upward path, is therefore open to every serious pupil. In the letter to the Hebrews it is written: 'For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart' (Hebrews 4:12). The purpose of this is the tearing asunder of the dialectical natural soul. The sword is planted in the natural soul. The natural soul is torn asunder as it were and space is created in the serpent fire for an upward progress in life. The old soul state is destroyed by this thrust of the sword. The space that is left by this allows the new soul to be born. We can see the two-edged flaming sword emanating from the mouth of God as a two-fold activity of the Brotherhood: a vertical and a horizontal inpouring of light power.

CHAPTER 4

COPING WITH LOSS

SPIRITUAL TEXT: JOB 1

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and turned away from evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the children of the east.

And his sons went and held a feast in the house of each one upon his day; and they sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and renounced God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

Now it came to pass on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, that Satan also came among them. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil. Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands,

and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thy hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah.

And it fell on a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, that there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them; and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away: yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have taken them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Then Job arose, and rent his robe, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped; and he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.



CHAPTER 4
COPING WITH LOSS
REFLECTION

As human beings, we are subjected to many cycles. When you accept your spiritual mission, you must prepare for a completely new cycle in your system, namely the circulation of light forces, of the symbolic manna that descends from heaven. Have you ever experienced the feeling that your life constantly moves in circles and doesn't bring you any satisfaction? Maybe it is time then for you to take a different course and move in a direction that better fits with what you inwardly experience.

Characteristic of man is his ability to always start something new – to reinvent himself and, as it were, to be born again and again. This is also how the inner rebirth can take place, the birth of light in the heart of the human being. To be born again requires courage, because in order to be able to unleash something new and inspiring, it is necessary to let go of many old and familiar things and there are no guarantees for success. Starting with something new is a journey to what is mostly unforeseen and unexpected.

The philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1971) called this beginning of something new the principle of natality, and she made it one of the core themes of her work.²⁰ When we step out of our comfort zone by starting something new, we break through old cycles of events, we show the world who we are and we express our uniqueness. This creates a diverse society in which man can flourish as a creative being and which, according to Arendt, is the best remedy against totalitarian political systems. Beginning something new does not have to stem from that which preceded it. That

is why all really original ideas contain an element of surprise.

Hannah Arendt attaches great importance to good stories, because stories have much greater power than facts. She writes that stories reveal meaning without making the mistake of defining it. Stories clarify your existence and offer starting points to give your life meaning and sense.

Catalyst for an inner transformation

A good story can be a catalyst for inner transformation. Since time immemorial, stories have been vital, just like food, shelter and solidarity between people. Even when we are asleep, we are still dealing with stories in the form of dreams. There are many types of stories such as myths, legends, fairy tales, parables and novels. They can come to us, for example, via storytellers, books, theatre productions, operas, images, films and so on.

Stories can be seen as an effective means to allow outer and inner wisdom to enter the defended fortress of our narrow human consciousness. They stimulate us to ask relevant questions and to understand and remember complex ideas. Stories help us to remember important elements that we recognise unconsciously and perhaps have so far neglected.

Hannah Arendt was born Jewish in Germany and was strongly influenced by the Second World War. From her own experience she writes: *'All sorrows can be borne when they are processed in a story'*. The famous American film producer Walt Disney (1901-1966) puts it this way: *'As storytellers we restore order with imagination. We inspire hope again and again'*.

In a good story the characters are faced with difficulties and trials, because that is true in real life also. Buddha found his discovery that difficulties are inherent in life so important that he formulated that as his first noble truth: there is suffering. Suffering in this sense is the translation of the Pali word 'dukkha' which refers to the volatility of existence and the cycles of ris-

ing, shining and fading, which are often accompanied by the experience of pain and grief. Birth is suffering, illness is suffering, despair is suffering, not getting what you want is suffering, being separated from loved ones is suffering, deficiency in old age is suffering and death is suffering.

As human beings we will have to accept this first noble truth. Of course, we can take action to prevent or reduce suffering, but we can never completely banish it because it is part of the nature in which we live. Ecclesiastes had everything he wanted, but still he could not be happy. It is impossible to model our life to our specific requirements. If we deny suffering or oppose it, it will only lead to greater suffering or, in the form of a formula: suffering = pain x resistance.

Why does an almighty and loving God permit so much suffering on our planet? That is an existential question that philosophers, theologians and millions of others have long been pondering. In ancient times the devil and his demons were often appointed as the guilty parties. Today we often hear that humans are free beings who have misused this freedom to make a mess of life on earth. Both visions contain a core of truth, but neither one offers a complete statement that is satisfactory for everyone.

There is one Bible book that is entirely dedicated to human suffering: Job. The Book of Job is not a closed story but more a narrative that – like the book of Ecclesiastes – is largely written in poetic form and is sometimes regarded as an attack on conventional theology. Many readers will recognise something in the story that fits in with their own experience. They can be touched inwardly without unravelling the events intellectually. It is not primarily about understanding life, because that will ultimately always remain a mystery. It is about a transformation of consciousness, making a fundamental renewal possible. And in addition, a book like Job can be very helpful in this process. The name Job actually means ‘persecuted’.

Wisdom literature

The book of Job, together with the Bible books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, belongs to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. These writings are characterised by a deep experience of life that is interwoven in these stories and with which one can do something in one's own life. They are generally of a religious nature but are neither dogmatic nor specifically Jewish. There are indications that the book is of Egyptian origin. The Talmud, the most important book of Judaism after the Jewish Bible, mentions that it is a made-up story that has been written to elucidate some fundamental elements.

In the first chapter of Job, Satan tells God that it is of course understandable that Job is pious, sincere and godly, because he is richly blessed with children (seven sons and three daughters), cattle and possessions. He insinuates that because of this, it is not a true piety. God then gives him permission to test Job on the condition that he lets him live. Then a turbulent storm of disasters breaks over Job. He is deprived of all his wealth, cattle, servants and children. In the second chapter he also loses his health because he is struck by the terrible disease of leprosy.

Job's wife tries to convince him to break with God, but despite his intense grief and pain, he does not part from God. Then three friends come to Job to comfort him. They achieve exactly the opposite because they claim that the misery of their friend is the punishment of God for his sins and that Job must therefore be a hypocrite because he still pretends to serve God. Job then has the deep experience of having been abandoned by God. He is deeply troubled, even reproaches God for being unrighteous.

Then a new figure appears in the story, Elihu. This initiate and representative of the universal Brotherhood on earth appears exactly at the moment when Job and his friends are ready for his words. 'When the pupil is ready and sincere, the master will appear.' Elihu points to the incorrect behaviour of both Job and his

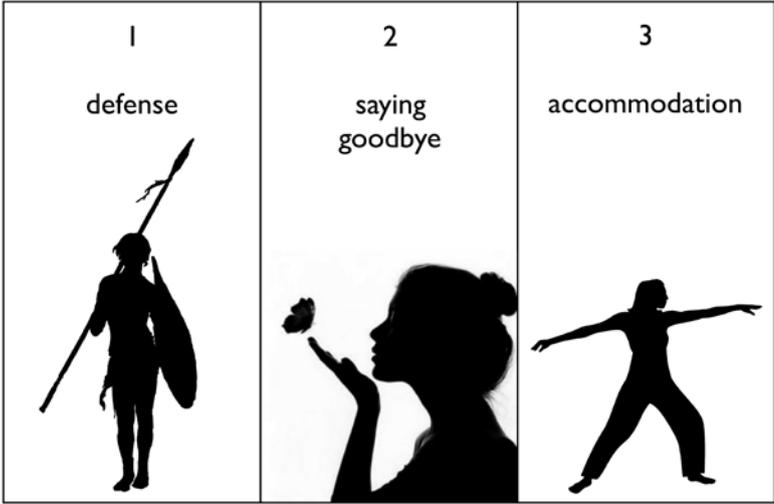


image 4: three phases of loss-processing

friends. He emphasizes the purifying effects of suffering and urges Job to be humble.

Because Job has undergone all sorts of horrors, he is now able to experience God on a deeper level. At the end of the story he says to God: *'I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee'* (Job 42:5). After Job has prayed for his friends, he becomes healthy again and receives back double his lost possessions. He begets seven sons and three daughters again, enjoys grandchildren and dies in old age.

Millions of people find comfort in the richly symbolic story of Job because they recognise themselves in the suffering and the soul conflicts that are so vividly depicted. This leads them to accept that life on earth is often hard and incomprehensible, but that a spiritual progress that originates in God is still possible.

Many distil from the book of Job their practical instructions for life such as: the realisation that one may lose everything, evil also affects good people, take time to mourn when faced with losses in your life, be aware that mourning is hard work and usually lasts

longer than you wish, you may doubt God but never give up even if the situation seems hopeless.

In the story of Job we recognise the three phases of loss processing as they are described in the psychology of coping with loss: defense, saying goodbye and accommodating new circumstances. These insights are of course valuable, but pupils of the soul will recognise a deeper layer in the Biblical book of Job.

The path of initiation

The narrative about Job also deals with the gnostic way, about the path of initiation into the mysteries of living, dying and resurrection that was already taught five thousand years ago in the myth of the Egyptian god Osiris, and which probably served as a model for the gospel story of the death on the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus said to his disciples: *'For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it'* (Mark 8:35).

He did not mean lose your physical life as a result of faith – as some martyrs did – but losing the ego-orientation and conditions that impede your spiritual development. Those obstacles need to be cleared away before an immortal new soul, symbolised in the figure of Jesus, can grow in the human microcosm. If a person chooses the narrow path of initiation, then divine forces break up any obstacle to the germination of the spiritual seed and to the growth of the tree of life.

This may sound frightening and that is how it can be experienced. But the intention behind it is that the person concerned shall be free from fear through this inner death, so that the resurrection body can take shape in harmony and joy. The caterpillar must first die before it can become a butterfly. The pupil of the soul inevitably faces all kinds of challenges commonly related to any apprenticeship but luckily they are usually not as terrible as Job experienced. Winds blow and the storm rises. Those who

persevere in the pathway of the Mysteries will conquer. They lose their old world, but they win the universe.

When Job is healed and reinstated, he again begets seven sons and three daughters. The fallen tree of knowledge of good and evil is thus replaced by the tree of life. The announcement that Job doubly receives his lost possessions back could be an indication that he not only receives a new personality, but also in addition an active spirit-soul. As your desire for fulfilment from the Primeval Source increases, so your desire for things previously important to you gradually decrease. Without forcing, a form of non-attachment is created, that makes this spiritual renewal possible.

Everything that the person concerned needs to possess then comes to him from the universal energy, but he does not hold on to anything, he can easily let everything go. This concept is expressed in the shortest statement known from Jesus: *'Become passers-by'* (The Gospel of Thomas, Logion 42).

The Greek philosopher Epictetus (circa 50-130) formulated this idea a little differently and more extensively. He was at one time a slave in Rome and after his release founded a school in Greece where he propagated the philosophy of the Stoa. He taught that philosophy is not just a theoretical matter, but in the first place a way of life. Epictetus placed great value on integrity, self-discipline and personal freedom, and taught that we should accept everything that happens in a calm and temperate manner. He did not leave any writings himself, but one of his students wrote down many of his teachings, including the following.

'Never say: "I lost it", but rather say: "I gave it back". Has your child died? It has been returned. Has your wife or your husband died? They have been returned. Your estate or possessions have been taken away from you? Then these also are given back. You may say: "But who took it away from me is a villain." But what is it to you, by whom the giver has claimed it back from you? Consider it as long as it is in your possession as someone else's goods, like travellers do in the inn.'

In the book of Job, Satan is certainly not a villain, a deceiver or a devil (as he is depicted for example in arcanum 15 of the tarot), but a full member of the divine hierarchy, an angel or messenger of God who keeps an eye on what is happening on earth and, in consultation, carries out instructions to get people on the right path. The Hebrew word 'satan' literally means 'prosecutor' or 'tester'.

The law of karma

The three friends of Job tell him that the plagues he is undergoing are punishments by God because he has sinned. Apparently they know about the law of cause and effect, the law of karma, the law that the apostle Paul describes as: '*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*' (Galatians 6:7-8).

It is very expedient that the law of karma exists, for that general law of nature binds everything in the entire universe together and makes the plan of God completely safe. The divine plan thus stands eternal, everlasting. It will continue in spite of any deviant or opposing influences. No matter how strong the forces of darkness, the Light will prevail!

If we go against the divine plan, then we or subsequent personalities in the microcosm we now inhabit will be corrected by the law of karma. Then we get to deal with the divine justice known in Greek mythology as the goddess Nemesis.²¹ She judges and sentences without regard to the person and is therefore represented as a blindfolded woman with scales in one hand and a sword in the other. We can recognise this image in Lady Justice and in arcanum 11 (or 8) of the tarot: Justice.

When we meet fellow humans who, like Job, are desperate because they are deeply troubled, it is not charitable nor helpful to point to this law of karma and suggest that their plight is of their own making. In this way we would not help them but only make their misery greater. Moreover, in our state of narrow conscious-

ness, we can never know why something happens to anyone. In addition to individual karma, there is also a collective karma that must be paid out, including family karma, group karma and world karma. That is why it is correct that Elihu reprimands Job's friends when they call Job a sinner and a hypocrite.

In the same vein, we can also understand why Jesus says in his Sermon on the Mount: *'Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you'* (Matthew 7:1-2). And in this light also the answer of Jesus to his disciples becomes clear when they ask him why someone was born blind. In the Gospel of John we read: *'And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him'* (John 9:2-3).

What receives attention, grows

In the story of Job Satan is thus an angel who puts people on the right path and in this sense is certainly not evil. Are there actually evil powers? Oh yes! It is important that we are aware of them, so that we do not fall prey to them. That does not mean that you have to delve into this subject, because then you would directly connect yourself with them with disastrous influence. What receives attention, grows. Or, as the saying goes: 'When you talk about the devil, you tread on his tail'.

In all kinds of images and paintings, the devil and his demons are often portrayed as grim creatures who are more like animals than humans, and who seek to seduce, mislead, frighten and hurt people. Fortunately they do not exist in the sensory perceptible world but in the astral world they can certainly be experienced as such.

In all world religions, evil powers are recognised and designated as a personification.

Hinduism speaks about Ravana. In Buddhism, Mara is the big trickster. Siddhartha Gautama resisted him in his meditation under the bodhi tree, and so transformed into the Buddha. Within Zoroastrianism Ahriman is the god of darkness and evil. In Islam, Satan is referred to as Shaitan. Judaism and Christianity speak of him as a morning star fallen from the sky and as a dragon that was cast out of heaven by angels under the command of Archangel Michael (Isaiah 14:12-15 and Revelation 12). After his baptism in the river Jordan, Jesus resisted the three temptations of Satan in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). In the New Testament there are several passages that warn of evil forces and give practical instructions how to exclude them.

- *The devil was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.* (John 8:44).
- *Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light.* (2 Corinthians 11:14)
- *Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.* (Ephesians 6:11-12)
- *Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* (1 Peter 5:8)
- *Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* (James 4:7)

In *Reflection 7* we will go deeper into this subject. Something that we experience at a certain moment as unpleasant can later be experienced as a blessing. This principle is nicely illustrated by the following comparison of rabbi Abraham Twerski.

'Lobsters are soft creatures in a hard shell. When a lobster grows, this casing will feel uncomfortable after a while, like a too-tight armour. The lobster gets stressed. He retreats under a stone, throws

off his armour and forms a new, larger casing. Until, once again, that new casing starts to pinch again and the lobster starts to feel the stress again and has to hide for a while under a stone to free himself. If lobsters had doctors, they would never grow. Because they would give him a pill and he would feel all right again. We need to realise that times of stress are signals for us to grow.'



When both the radiations of our life wave, the male and the female pole, are united in God's all-manifestation to kindle and make radiate the holy fire of purest intelligence, Eve celebrates her great motherhood. By her love sacrifice she protects the holy fire against all onslaught. Thus she becomes the Priestess of the Holy Fire. This is how the female aspect of the soul human being works in the Kingdom of the Heaven. This is how she bears the world, the world order and the world course.

The male aspect of the soul human being is the obedient one, as he has the knowledge of the plan of God. He knows his dynamism, his higher will, forms the basic key with which and by which the ineffable universal love can be opened up and by it will therefore manifest itself.

What is the great calling of the woman who wants to go the liberating path?

Her calling is: conscious liberation of the heavenly soul on the basis on the universal law of love. If then the man has the urge for manifestation in the universal sense, this can be accomplished only by the universal love of the woman.

CHAPTER 5

MAKING THE TWO INTO ONE

SPIRITUAL TEXT: **John 2:1-11 and 4:3-19**

On the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and Jesus also was bidden, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when the wine failed, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. And Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

Now there were six waterpots of stone set there after the Jews manner of purifying, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast. And they bare it. And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when men have drunk freely, then that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now.

This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

Jesus left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs pass through Samaria. So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph: and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans).

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?

Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saith well, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.



CHAPTER 5

MAKING THE TWO INTO ONE

REFLECTION

When you hear or read about the Christian mysteries and are touched inwardly, it may well be daunting. Maybe you thought you were already quite knowledgeable, had accomplished much and were well advanced on the path of unfolding your true self. The forces of evil in heavenly places make every effort to make you believe this, so that you remain in illusion and a slave to them, just like Cinderella in the fairy tale initially spends all her life energy on preserving her natural state of life, and catering to the pleasures of her stepmother and step sisters.

As soon as you are ready for the Gnostic-Christian path of initiation, you are placed before a simple but not easy assignment: to die inwardly so that an immortal body can be created. This is a threat to the ego, which is naturally centred on self-realisation. Jesus refers as follows to the decline of the ego, that is a necessary phase in a truly spiritual development: *'Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal'* (John 12:24-25).

In history we observe that within all authentic spiritual traditions there is division between the large group of people who sympathize with the path of the Mysteries and a much smaller group who actually follow that narrow path of healing. We could also term them the outer church and the inner church. Jesus says in this connection, *'For many are called, but few chosen'* (Matthew 22:14).

The strongly persecuted medieval gnostic-Christian movement of the Cathars in the twelfth and thirteenth century in France for

example, distinguished between ‘believers’ (croyants) and ‘good people’ (bonshommes). In contrast to the church of Rome in that time, men and women of the Cathars were equal, as was the case with certain earlier Gnostic communities such as the Essenes and the Manichaeans.²² Both sexes could go the spiritual path and fulfil spiritual offices because no difference exists between man and woman in the dimensions of the soul and the spirit. Harmonious cooperation between men and women in both practical and spiritual fields is essential for the development of humanity and the unfolding of the plan of God.

Anima and animus

Only in the dimensions of the physical body and in the personality aspects is there a separation between the two sexes. In the dimension of the personality, this separation is less strict than in the dimension of the physical body. Every person has masculine qualities in the form of creative (yang) and feminine traits in the form of receiving (yin) qualities.

The psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung calls the feminine side of the man the anima and the masculine side of the woman the animus. According to him, the animus and the anima archetypes are polarities in the collective unconscious. A well-balanced personality is characterised, among other things, by being able to express both the anima and the animus in consciousness and behaviour.²³

The gnostic-Christian path goes much higher and deeper than balancing the masculine and feminine aspects of the personality because the intention is that the dimensions of the soul and of the spirit are going to express themselves in the dimensions of the personality and the physical body, whereby a total renewal can take place, called transfiguration.

The bonshommes among the Cathars, also known as ‘perfects’ or ‘parfaits’, had to undergo a very intensive initiation course of at least three years, in isolation from the world, often in remote

caves.²⁴ This was part of an inner process resulting in the death of the ego, a process known as the 'endura' (akin to the English verb to endure which means: to bear patiently, to remain firm, to persist to the end) that culminated in the light-birth, which was confirmed in a ritual. Those who were thus initiated in a way befitting the people and culture of that time, were now qualified to go out into the world in pairs to preach the gospel and to heal the sick, according to the commission that Jesus gives at the end of the gospel of Mark.

The bonshommes of the Cathars did not marry, in order to fully dedicate themselves to their spiritual mission. You may not conclude from this however that it is wrong to enter into marriage or a relationship with a life partner if you want to go the path of the inner mysteries and want the inner Christ (Immanuel) to develop. The biblical gospels do not show that Jesus was married, but there are several researchers who, based on studying other writings or reading the akashic records, claim that his disciple Mary Magdalene was his partner. Of course it is interesting to know whether this was really the case or not, but such information is quite irrelevant to following the path of the Mysteries.

In the Christian Mysteries it is primarily about the inner orientation, and it does not really matter whether the candidate is married or not or has a love relationship in any form. He or she does not have to isolate himself from the world, because by dealing with the challenges and resistances that come in daily life, the necessary inner power is freed. It is important that a spiritual wedding will take place, as it is sung in the Bible book the Song of Salomon, and about which we can also read in the last book of the Bible, the Revelation of John.

The most famous work about this spiritual wedding is probably '*The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*' which the mystic Jan van Ruusbroec (1293-1381) wrote on the basis of his personal experiences, probably between 1335 and 1340.²⁵ Contrary to what

people often think, this classic work did not come into being in secluded isolation but in the busy city life of Brussels, Belgium. Jan van Ruusbroec worked there for 25 years as a chaplain, before he completely retired to contemplative life in a monastery.

Jan van Ruusbroec was therefore at the very bottom rung of the hierarchy of the church of Rome. Yet his mystical writings were generally acknowledged and appreciated during his lifetime. He did not experience the stubborn resistance and bad tidings with which many other well-known mystics had to contend. This was due not only to his amiable personality but also because he formulated his findings in such a way that they fitted in with the orthodoxy of his time.

The groom is coming

His booklet '*The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*' is about the development of the love for God in man and is built on a structure derived from the four-part Bible verse of Matthew 25:6: '*Behold, the bridegroom comes, come ye forth to meet him!*' In the language of today we can interpret these four sentences as follows.

1. *Behold*: Make sure that your observation is clear and that you are aware of yourself and are free of judgments and identifications. If you stick labels on something or someone, you do not see what or who it really is.
2. *The bridegroom comes*: experience that the Christ (the spirit) becomes active in you. That is: the completely different Other One (cf. Immanuel: God with in you), who propels you to a completely new development.
3. *Go out*: respond to the invitation, prepare yourself, stay awake and work with the new life force.
4. *To meet him*: trust that the mutual reconciliation leads to the joyful and salutary encounter.

This four-part structure is discussed in the three stages of the spiritual life described by Van Ruusbroec: the working life, the in-

ner life and the contemplative life. For example, in the writings of Jan van Ruusbroec we can recognise an inner path with twelve gates. The Christian way of Jan van Ruusbroec is based on devotion: love for God and devotion to the Other One within the human being. In the East such a devotional way of 'love' is known as bhakti yoga and in the West as 'the way of the monk'. There are of course more spiritual paths.

A path of initiation with more aspects, described in narrative form, is '*The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross*', written in German and published in the year 1616 in Strasbourg, under the title '*Chymische Hochzeit des Christiani Rosencreutz Anno 1459*'.²⁶

Here too, love for God and man plays an essential role, but there is also a great deal of attention placed on knowledge and decisiveness. It is a universal way, which can be called Christian-Gnostic and is pre-eminently suitable for the individualised and intellectual person in western society in the 21st century.

'*The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross*' was conceived at the beginning of the seventeenth century in the university town of Tübingen in southern Germany within a group of Lutheran scholars –the Tübingen Circle–for which Tobias Hess (1558-1614) was the great inspiration. It is the most profound manifesto of the classical Rosicrucians. Historical research shows that this mystery script about the initiation path was written by the man who was also the co-author of the two other Rosicrucian Manifestos that had previously been published in Latin: Johan Valentin Andreae (1586-1654).

In *The Alchemical Wedding*, seven phases are distinguished in the form of seven days. Of course in practice it is not about seven successive periods of 24 hours, because going the mystery path in daily life requires practically a whole lifetime. Guarantees cannot be given. The only thing you can do is to prepare yourself and stay focused. The initiations into the Mysteries cannot be forced, but come as a gift when the disciple of the soul is ready for them.

Although certain milestones are distinguished on the inner road, it is good to realise that the inner development always continues. That is why the book *'The Voice of the Silence'* talks about the endless end.²⁷

Seven days

The seven days in *The Alchemical Wedding* correspond with, among others, the seven days of creation in Genesis, the prologue of the Gospel of John, the seven 'words of the cross' of Jesus and with the seven letters that John wrote on Patmos to the seven churches in Asia (an indication for the sensory world) as they are described in the Bible book of the Revelation of John. The seven stages, or days, in the alchemical wedding can be formulated as follows.

1. Receiving the invitation
2. Making correct decisions
3. Being weighed
4. Letting the old consciousness die
5. Letting the new consciousness grow
6. Realising transformations
7. Being a gatekeeper

The mythical story begins on the eve of Easter, the day before the celebration of the resurrection of the inner man. The protagonist in the story, Christian Rosycross, has deeply pondered the great mysteries and makes ready to prepare a clean, unleavened bread in harmony with his cherished Easter lamb, the symbol of the inner Christ. This unleavened bread is thus the symbol of the renewed state of being that is the result of the transfiguration, and is also called the bread of life.

Then suddenly there is a violent storm that almost causes his little house in the mountain to fall apart. Then he feels someone tapping him on his shoulder. He turns around and sees an angelic, winged lady in a blue robe covered with golden stars. Christian

Rosycross is shocked to the core and receives from this impressive apparition an invitation to a royal wedding. Then the heavenly messenger, with a blast on her trumpet, disappears as miraculously as she appeared. In this fictitious autobiography, Christian Rosycross, also known as C.R.C. writes about this invitation letter in the chapter about the first day:

'It appeared to be so heavy that, if it had been made of pure gold, it could hardly have been heavier. When I looked at it attentively, I found it sealed with a small seal in which, very delicately, a cross was engraved with the inscription "In hoc signo † vinces" (in this sign you will conquer).'

As soon as I had seen this sign I was reassured, as I knew that such a sign would be unpalatable to the devil, nor would he make use of it. Thus I carefully opened the letter. It contained the following poem, written with golden letters on a blue field:

*'This is the day, this day, this
the day of the Royal Wedding is.
Art thou thereto by birth inclined
and unto joy by God designed?
Then thou may'st to the mountain wend
on which three stately temples stand
And there observe the wonder.
Keep to the aim!
In light remain!
Unless thou bathe most carefully
the wedding will do harm to thee.
Woe to him who in sin delays,
he will be found too light in weights.
Underneath was written: Sponsus et Sponsa (Bride and Groom).'*

Conditions

Although Christian Rosycross had prepared himself long and seriously for an invitation to The Alchemical Wedding, he had not

expected that he would have to meet certain conditions to be allowed to experience the wedding. He thought he would just be a welcome guest, but now he doubts seriously that he will meet the requirements. Christian Rosycross is indeed a sincere spiritually aspiring person, but when he examines himself thoroughly, he realises that he is certainly not yet free from sin, because he is not yet completely focused on the divine life and is for the most part ignorant and insufficiently practiced. But that is precisely why he is a suitable candidate. You certainly do not have to first be perfect to go a spiritual path. Going the path is the quest for unification with the spirit from which perfection can manifest itself in the soul, in accordance with the commission that Jesus gives to the soul of his disciples: 'Ye shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48).

We may see the celebration of the marriage between the queen and the king, or between the princess and the prince, narrated in the alchemical wedding and in many other stories and fairy tales as well as the forging of the union between the soul and the spirit, between the renewed consciousness and the divine essence directly connected with the plan of God, the Word or the Father. The two can thus become one, as it is also expressed in narrative form in for example Mozart's *Magic Flute*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*, and Goethe's fairy tale of *The green snake and the beautiful lily*. The soul or consciousness is seen as feminine, receiving, and the mind as masculine, creative.

Christian Rosycross, the symbol of the dedicated personality who is a pupil of the soul, is allowed to witness the above-mentioned process of unification, through which he himself fundamentally changes and ultimately becomes qualified to cooperate in the execution of the divine plan of creation, of the Word that was in the beginning.

Then, as a result of a revolutionary process, the personality, the soul and the spirit form a powerful union to which a state-

ment by Ecclesiastes applies: 'A *threefold cord is not quickly broken*' (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

The universal renewal process of a fusion of personality, soul and spirit can also be recognised in the story from John 2, in which Jesus, at a wedding in Cana following his baptism in the Jordan, changes water into wine. If we would take the story of the wedding at Cana literally, it is a bizarre story, as is '*The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross*'. It would appear as if Jesus wanted to become popular with the merry partygoers in Galilee and amaze them by posing as a magician who could turn water into wine so that they could dull their consciousness even more. He who performs such tricks to prove himself does not make himself very credible as a prophet of the Holy One!

Pure forces with a high frequency

In this story, however, it does not concern toxic drink of poor quality that causes inebriation, but concerns the fresh juice from the fruits of the living vine, symbol of the pure astral substances that can cleanse the human system and renew it: the Holy Spirit. It is these pure forces with a high frequency that Jesus makes available to the guests invited for the spiritual wedding. He has undergone this spiritual wedding himself which is why he can state: '*I and the Father are one*' (John 10:30).

The fact that Jesus achieves the alchemical transformation is the first significant sign that he has reached a new level in his development. That is why it says that this special transformation takes place on the third day. In Jesus, mind, soul and personality now form a harmonious new trinity, comparable to a passenger delivered to his destination in a horse drawn carriage by a coachman. The coachman – symbol for the soul – does what the passenger – symbol for the spirit – wants him to do. And the horse – symbol for the personality – in his turn goes where the driver guides him (see image 5).

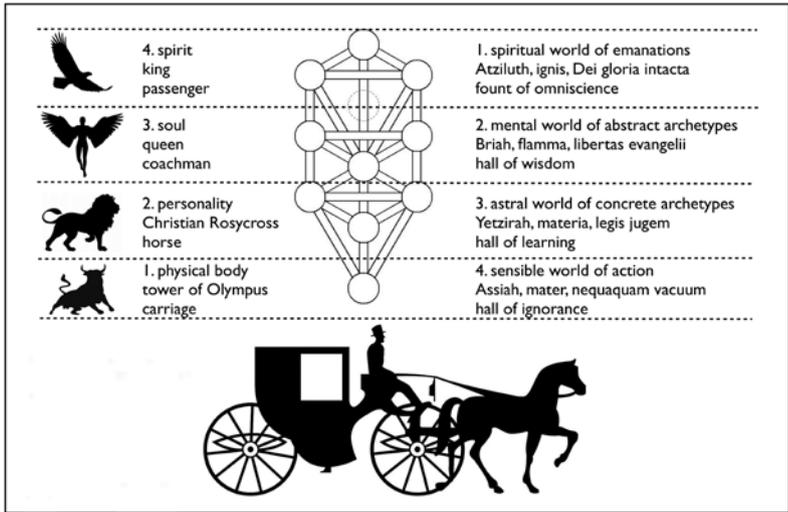


image 5: correspondences between the four dimensions and the four worlds

The six stone barrels can be regarded as the six emanations of the six creation days in Genesis 1, which together lead to the seventh day, the Sabbath, on which God rested and the autonomous renewed man is allowed to complete the creation.⁴ Three substances are mentioned in the story: stone (the water vessels), water and wine. We may view them as the symbols for the personality, the soul and the spirit respectively.

The psychiatrist and author Maurice Nicoll (1884-1953), a pupil of the esoteric teachers George Gurdieff and Pyotr Ouspensky, relates the three substances to levels of understanding spiritual texts in his book *'The New Man'*.²⁸ He links the first level to 'stone' and according to him stone refers to the literal meaning of spiritual texts. Such a literal interpretation can be valuable, but it is very limited. Spiritual texts are spiritual because there is also a higher reality hidden behind them, which is only accessible to people with inner understanding. For them there is not only

the rigid form of the stone but also the flowing water in which everything is not yet clearly seen but still it is a level of understanding in which the outward form retreats. The third and highest level relates to living from a new inner understanding that is constantly expanding. The inner doctrine has then become a possession in the blood and is thus symbolised by wine.

Three stages with a universal character

The three stages mentioned – stone, water and wine – have a universal character and can thus be found in all domains and traditions. We should also bear in mind that not all triads fit together exactly. In nature we know the stages of caterpillar, pupa and butterfly. In bread production there is the grain, the dough and the finished bread. We know water in the three aggregate states of ice, liquid water and vapour.

In the alchemical tradition, the three developmental stages are referred to as *negredo* (black), *albedo* (white) and *rubedo* (red). In the fairy tale of Snow White these three phases are also potentially present: she has hair that is black like ebony, skin that is white like snow and lips that are red like blood. Within the guild system in the Middle Ages, also three degrees were known: pupil, companion and master. In the invitation to the alchemical wedding of Christian Rosycross we read about three temples. The temple tent in the desert of the people of Israel and the Jewish temple in Jerusalem had three sections: the forecourt, the holy and the holy of holies.

The book *'The Voice of the Silence'* by Helena Blavatsky mentions three halls: *the hall of ignorance, the hall of learning and the hall of wisdom.*²⁷ The three wise men from the east come with three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Jesus speaks about the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). The apostle Paul talks about the phases of faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Jan van Ruusbroec writes about the working life, the inner life

and the (God) contemplative life. And the classical Rosicrucians from the seventeenth century summarised the spiritual renewal process in their first manifesto, *'The Call of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood'* (*Fama Fraternitatis R.C.*) as follows:²⁹

We are born of God.

We die in Jesus.

We are reborn through the Holy Spirit.



The development of the new personality is a very lengthy process, in which we can distinguish three principal phases: conception, an embryonic phase and birth. All three phases are guided by the hierarchy according to the words of Christ: 'Without me you can do nothing' (John 15:5). [...]

So we discover that a new Adam can arise within the old Adam. While still imprisoned in the dialectical body, we can be occupied with all kinds of commonplace, though necessary, earthly things such as eating, work and sleeping, while the true growth of the new body is proceeding undisturbed. Alas, there are few who possess this new personality in whatever phase of development. [...]

It is an absolutely necessity for true spiritual workers to be able to work with the new personality.

J. van Rijckenborgh,
Elementary Philosophy of the Modern Rosycross¹, chapter 5

CHAPTER 6

USING YOUR TALENTS

SPIRITUAL TEXT: **Matthew 25:1-30**

*T*hen shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there is a cry, Behold, the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered, saying, Peradventure there will not be enough for us and you: go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.

For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. In like manner he also that received the two gained other two. But he that received the one went away

and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

And he also that received the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter; and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own.

But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents.

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.



CHAPTER 6

USING YOUR TALENTS

REFLECTION

If you are going the spiritual path, the wedding at Cana – that is the unification with the Spirit – can at a certain moment take place within yourself. In the microcosmic system that you currently occupy, many personalities have lived there before you and have contributed to what is termed an experiential fullness that can form a solid foundation for the alchemical wedding and so make a complete healing process possible.

At such a spiritual wedding you are united with the bridegroom, with the divine Spirit within you. You can certainly prepare yourself for this spiritual encounter, for this return of Christ in the auric clouds of your microcosmic sky, but you will not know the day and time when it will take place.

It is out of the question that at a certain moment the spiritual bridegroom will come automatically, as if by chance, in the middle of the night. It is a personal event following an intense preparation process that often begins when one is inwardly touched by a spiritual tradition or teaching. That impulse and the accompanying new knowledge can gradually deepen and ultimately become an inner possession through thinking more and more with one's heart.

In this way a new inner structure is built, slowly but surely; a cornerstone on which to build. In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus speaks in this connection of an oil lamp. Such a lamp can only be ignited by the holy fire of the Spirit when there is fuel in the form of oil, the symbol of soul power. And this oil is obtained only through working on oneself. Whoever buys oil from others

cannot as yet enter the wedding hall. All ten girls in the parable have an oil lamp. Five of them are wise and five are foolish. The number five refers to the soul, to a higher level of consciousness that rises above the number four which is associated with earthly matter as we observe in the four elements, the four directions, the four seasons and the four temperaments, among others. In both groups of five girls, therefore, there is soul consciousness that is symbolically represented as the upright five-pointed star, the pentagram. What then is the difference between the wise girls and the foolish girls?

Sermon on the Mount

We find an answer to that question at the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. This speech has revolutionary practical instructions that are directed not at all people but to those pupils who go the Path and thereby inwardly have grown beyond the general level of consciousness of humanity.³⁰ Because the soul has awakened in them, they have symbolically climbed the mountain. Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount with the so-called beatitudes and concludes the speech with the following text:³¹

'Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof' (Matthew 7:24-27).

Being wise or sagacious is thus equated with acquired spiritual knowledge, while those who do not live in accordance with this inner knowledge are considered foolish. This form of 'being fool-

ish' is nevertheless a stage on the path that every pupil of the soul knows very well from his own experience. You cannot simply bridge the gap between knowing and going the Path. The Apostle Paul also sighs in this respect: *'For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise'* (Romans 7:19).

Christian Rosycross becomes aware of his unworthiness after receiving the invitation to the wedding, because he already knows in advance that he falls short of the mark. And the famous German poet Goethe has Faust say:³²

*Two souls, alas, are housed within my breast,
And each will wrestle for the mastery there.
The one has passion's craving crude for love,
And hugs a world where sweet the senses rage;
The other longs for pastures fair above.*

How can one escape such an inner conflict? By persevering! By continuing to strive for the beautiful, the true and the only good, with the help of an authentic spiritual tradition but without forcing the soul and without clinging to visible short-term results. You will then go straight through the gap: first a descent and then a climb upward. Then eventually the inner light will break through as a result of a full surrender of the self, so that the next passage from the Sermon on the Mount becomes applicable.

'Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 5:14-16).

This is clear and dynamic language, a powerful invocation. Further on in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also speaks of a lamp and a light, but the meaning of that part of the text may be less obvious.

‘The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness!’ (Matthew 6:22-23).

The human body is not luminous and has not one but two eyes. If we were to take this text literally, it does not really contribute to a better understanding. However, if we connect the formulation of this text with the knowledge about the energy centres in the human being, it is clear what is meant here. It is important to realise that in many spiritual traditions the concept ‘body’ means not only the physical body but also the subtler bodies which together form the personality and the aura of the human being, namely the ether body, the astral body and the mental body.

Light vesture

Some clairvoyants can see the human aura, also called the light garment, in the form of a dynamic radiation field with multiple shades of colour in and around the physical body. A person’s character and health are expressed not only in his physical body, but even more so in his aura.³³

When his thoughts, feelings and behaviour change, then a change will also take place in the aura, the anatomy of the brain (because of new neural pathways) and the physiology of the body (including blood and hormone metabolism). The consciousness of a person is not bound to time and space, but it does have an immaterial focus in the body, located in the fourth cerebral cavity, in the open space behind the frontal bone. It is controlled by the human will and is by nature self-centred.

When Jesus says that the lamp of the body is the eye, he does not refer to the physical eyes, nor to the third eye in the forehead between the eyebrows that can be opened for the ego on the basis

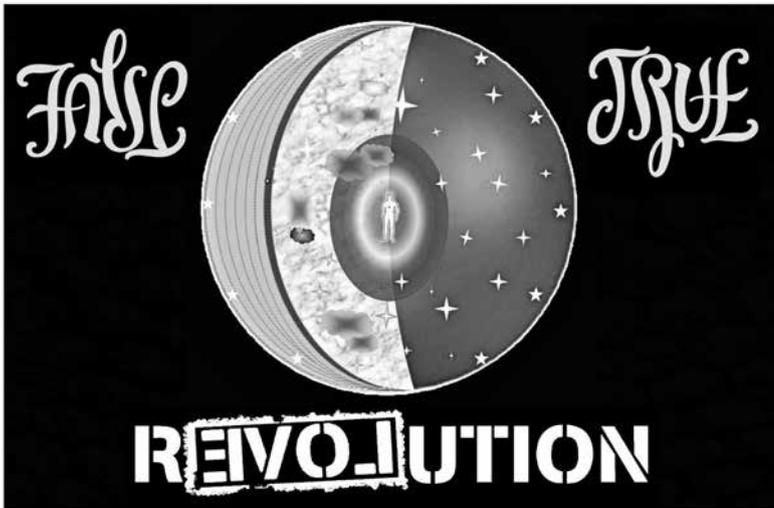


image 6: symbolic representation of the inner revolution –
cleansing and healing of the sevenfold microcosm

of occult training and then leads to, for example, clairvoyance.³⁴

When people develop and abuse occult abilities or otherwise do evil through such training, the third eye undergoes a change that is referred to in the Bible as *'the mark on the forehead'* (Revelation 13:16) and leads to a dark and sombre aura. With the designation *'the lamp of the body'* Jesus refers to the so-called pineal fire circle, which is related to the crown chakra, the thousand-petaled lotus that cannot be controlled by the human will. This *'crown-eye'* on the crest of the head can open only as a result of a noble inner and outer life, in which egocentricity is very much diminished. Some Eastern writings call the *'crown eye'* the giver of divine knowledge, which emanates a light as if many suns shine together.

This makes it clear why saints are often depicted in drawings and paintings with a halo around their head. It is this radiant crown that Paul calls the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17). The apostle James also talks about a crown. He writes in James 1: *'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been*

approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him.' The lamp of the body can burn because there is oil in it, an indication of the light forces that are attracted as a result of walking the spiritual path.

Thanks to these light forces, the aura becomes radiantly luminous over time and emits a golden hue. It is the immortal, glorified body that is referred to in the Bible as 'the wedding garment', the spiritual body or resurrection body. At the end of the Hymn of the Pearl the prince who returns with the pearl receives a radiant robe and a golden cloak.⁴

On the third day of the alchemical wedding Christian Rosycross and other wedding guests receive a golden fleece. Image 6 shows symbolically how the aura and the microcosm are purified as a result of going the path, which we may see as an inner revolution.

Inner alchemy

Thus we can understand why the way of the Mysteries is also referred to as weaving the golden wedding garment and is characterised as inner alchemy. This is a concentrated activity that has nothing to do with the production of material gold, on which countless people have greedily focused in the past.

Alchemy is often seen as a primitive precursor of modern chemistry. That is correct, but that is not the entire story. In addition to the materialistic or outer alchemy that focused solely on the conversion of matter, there has also existed – in various cultures since the beginning of alchemy in the first century of our era – an immaterial alchemy, one that focuses on the transformation of life energies. This applies to the Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, Hellenistic, Roman, Islamic, Medieval and early-modern alchemy.

The preparation of an elixir of life that heals the sick or even gives a person immortality belonged to this materialistic alche-

my. Paracelsus (1493-1541), an important innovator of medicine in the first half of the sixteenth century writes: *'It is the task of man to grow to completeness. This "working for completion" is called alchemy. In medicine, where it was most needed, it did alas not come about.'*

Many natural scientists consider the physical and metaphysical alchemy of yore to be great nonsense. That is understandable because its tenets do not fit in with the materialistic and reductionist paradigms of the natural sciences. Particularly in terms of the physical aspects, alchemy is largely obsolete, because at those times there was relatively little exact knowledge, but there are sometimes deep inner truths in the writings of alchemists. There are famous and successful scientists who have been intensively involved with alchemy.

Isaac Newton (1643-1727) laid the foundations for our present-day classical physics and for infinitesimal calculus. He is generally regarded as one of the greatest physicists ever. In the textbooks on physics we do not usually read that Newton was a deeply religious man and that he spent much more time and attention on theology and alchemy than on physics, because these subjects had his deepest interest.³⁵

The famous Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), just like Isaac Newton, was in possession of an extensive library of writings of alchemists, kabbalists and Rosicrucians. He studied more than two hundred alchemical writings and found his concept of the collective unconscious confirmed there. In his autobiography *'Memories, dreams, thoughts'*, Jung writes:

*'I stumbled upon the historical counterpart of the psychology of the unconscious. The probability of a link with alchemy and thus an uninterrupted intellectual chain going back to Gnosticism, gave reality to my psychology.'*³⁶

Spiritual gold

The classical Rosicrucians of the seventeenth century also dealt with the inner alchemy and were fervent advocates of science and technology on the basis of research and development. In their manifestos, however, they explicitly distanced themselves from making gold, which was in great demand in their time. They were focused on the spiritual gold. At the end of their *Fama Fraternitatis* R.C. from 1614 we read the following:

‘Even men of discretion are of the opinion that the transmutation of metals is the pinnacle and the crown of philosophy, and that God esteems most highly those who can make large amounts of gold; while with their unpremeditated prayers and their smug faces they hope to persuade God, the Almighty, who searches all hearts.

We therefore do herewith testify publicly that this is a deceit and that, to the true philosophers, gold-making is a mere trifle and only incidental; in comparison therewith they have thousand better things to do! And we declare with our beloved father C.R.C.: “Away with all gold, if it is nothing else than gold”. For he to whom the whole of nature is revealed does not rejoice in the fact that he can make gold or that, as Christ said: “To him the devils are obedient”.

But, rather, he rejoices that he sees the heavens opening and the angels of God ascending and descending, and that his name is written in the Book of Life.

We also declare that under the name of Alchemy books and pictures are being published that are an offence to the glory of God. We shall name them in due time and issue a list to the pure in heart. We ask all learned men to be on their guard against such books, for the enemy does not cease to sow tares, until one stronger than he prevents it.’²⁹

The modern Rosicrucian and hermetic gnostic, Jan van Rijckenborgh (1896-1968) gave a discourse in Wiesbaden in Germany in 1952, which he regarded as a new call from the Brotherhood of the Rosycross. In this address he says, among other things:

'The alchemy of the Rosicrucians is based upon the transformation of the blood and with that we mean the blood in the full sense of the word, in a threefold sense by which we are thinking of the serpent-fire, the nerve fluid and the blood-liquid. So the serpent-fire, the nerve fluid and the blood-liquid, this threefold blood, is our life basis; it is our I, our consciousness, our soul. All our past, all our karma, all our character have their basis in the blood. The threefold blood is the kernel, the soul, of our microcosm. This is the reason why alchemy is based upon the transformation of the blood.

You must however, understand clearly that the dialectic alchemy is bent upon bringing about a thorough culture of the blood, the nerve fluid and the organs related, such as the ganglia and the hormone glands.

The transfiguristic alchemy, the alchemy which is proposed to you, commences with the I. That which the dialectic does not touch but on the contrary is used as a basis, is absolutely and unconditionally affected by the transfiguristic alchemy. It commences with the gradual subjugation of the I. Therefore the Brotherhood of the Christ-Hierophants will not make the I leader of the process of transmutation, and will never enter into direct contact with the I of the pupil.'

Does this mean that Jan van Rijckenborgh is an opponent of developing one's talents? Certainly not. He observes in several writings that it is important for pupils in a spiritual school to develop and use their knowledge and skills, because they can thus become sound and effective so that they can be useful instruments for Gnostic service. The essence is to develop the *right* talents and to use these in the right way for the right purposes.

Inner wealth

This brings us to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, which can also be found in a slightly different form in Luke 19, where pounds are mentioned instead of talents. Talents and pounds

were units of money in those days. It is clear that this parable is not about making a financial profit based on smart entrepreneurship, because at the beginning it says that the story refers to entering the heavenly kingdom. Central to the parable is the acquisition of *inner* wealth. Inner wealth means to possess something that can be bestowed upon all, as from an inexhaustible source. For example, it may involve inner knowledge, unconditional love and creative decisiveness.

Three servants each receive a certain amount of wealth from their master: five talents, two talents and one talent. Every human being receives a certain 'starting capital' of which the quality and quantity are determined by karma, heredity and upbringing. As soon as a person decides to go the spiritual path, he will have to make do with it. That is possible, because it is not about whether someone is very talented or not, but whether he is prepared to commit himself completely to something from which he will not benefit himself, but which contributes to all of humanity, to the plan of the master in the parable. Without the sacrifice of one's ego-orientation no resurrection is possible.

The three servants can be seen as the three dimensions of the human being which were indicated in the previous Reflection as the wine of the Spirit, the water of the soul and the stone of the personality. The first and second servant in the parable have worked for their inner master. For this they are paid not in the form of wages, but they experience the joy of their lord. They undergo the alchemical wedding because they have become eligible for it through their work and devotion.

The third servant still fully identifies himself with his body and personality and therefore has not yet conformed his will to the will of his inner master. Therefore he does not receive an invitation to the feast of his lord but is reprimanded at the time of reckoning and cast into outer darkness '*where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth*'. That sounds like a rather heavy punishment

for someone in whom the soul and the mind cannot yet express themselves, but several researchers hold that the remark '*where there is wailing and the gnashing of teeth*' did not appear in the lost original text but was added later. Of course, there can be no question of punishment, and even less of eternal suffering, but upon reaching the end of one rotation of the wheel of life and death, naturally a new course develops through the cycle.

And what could be meant by being thrown into the outer darkness? In the first and the second servant something of the resurrection body has come to life during a long period of dedicated service, something that does not perish at the death of the body, something of the golden wedding garment. The third servant has followed only his own will, so that no immortal qualities have developed. At his death, nothing will be left of him. It thus looks as if he is thrown into the outer darkness. He did not build his house on a rock but on sand. And that's why it disintegrates when death strikes.

Commitment

The parable mentions that the master stays away for a long time. The servants thus have ample time to fulfil their mission. In this we can recognise a clue that going the spiritual path requires time and therefore patience. In daily life we tend to think in the short term because we want to achieve results quickly. In our complex society that is often necessary. Outstanding success in ordinary life is often the result of a succession of many small steps, all of which must receive undivided attention.

As a result of such commitment, unexpected events, occurrences of positive synchronicity, surprising coincidences can occur unexpectedly, either after a period of time or sometimes very quickly.³⁷

Talent in life does not just blow into you. The Swedish psychologist K. Anders Ericson established on the basis of his research

that the top men and women in any discipline have had at least 10,000 hours of training, which corresponds to six to seven hours a day for ten years.³⁸ There are no reasons to believe that this so-called 10,000-hour rule does not also apply to one who goes the spiritual way. Professor Gilles Quispel (1916-2006), the renowned scholar of gnostic scientific research, often emphasised during his lectures: *'There is no shortcut to enlightenment and no instant nirvana.'*

On the pathway of the mysteries it is not the intention that you become a top performer. If you had that ambition, it would work counter-productively because such an attitude comes from the ego. In every authentic spiritual path, it is more about 'being' than 'doing', but the paradox is that you have to take on a full assignment and have to leave behind even more before the intended state of being is realised. The 'doing' consists mainly of 'making straight the paths', as Isaiah and John the Baptist call it; a work of clearing barriers and service to a greater whole. John, symbol of the personality that goes the path, says about Jesus, symbol of the new soul:

'He must increase, but I must decrease' (John 3:30). And Jesus says of John: *'Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he'* (Matt 11:11).

Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) formulated these principles as follows:

'God did not create us to become someone, but to serve as a tool for his miracles, through which he wishes to reveal his miracles. The obedient will trusts in God and hopes for all that is the good from Him, but self-will governs itself, for it has broken free from God. Everything that this self-willed person does is a sin against God. For he has strayed from the order in which God created him, gone into disobedience and wants to be his own lord.

When such self-will dies as to self-centeredness, then he is free from

sin. For this is precisely the right intention in man that he shall die in the aspect of being focused on himself in selfish desires and that he will give all his desires over, in all that he undertakes and begins, to God's will and does not boast of his own deeds, but considers himself in all his actions only God's servant, and realises that all he does and intends to do, he does for God.'



So everyone is in one way or another a medium according to his state of being, for everyone's consciousness is open to influence. Considered from this angle, it can be said of nearly everyone that they are not themselves but are lived by external forces. This applies to everyone in general and particularly to those who have attained culture, so it applies above all to the servants of science, art and religion.

We may call the overshadowing forces and the forces that are invoked by high-sounding names such as Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Light or the Rosycross, but this is still mediumship and on this basis real, concrete liberation of humanity can never be realised. The influence of all sorts of obscure entities on religion and occultism is incalculably great. [...]

We must state emphatically that the Christ forces which emanate from the Holy Spirit and other genuinely sublime influences will never enter a person's life system in such a way. They will never control us or manifest themselves in any form.

J. van Rijckenborgh,
Elementary Philosophy of the Modern Rosycross¹, chapter 5

CHAPTER 7

BECOMING FREE FROM ILLUSION

SPIRITUAL TEXT: Luke 16:10-31

He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him. And he said unto them, Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall. Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth one that is put away from a husband committeth adultery.

Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day: and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; yea, even the dogs come and licked his sores.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted and thou art in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they that would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us.

And he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. But Abraham saith, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent.



CHAPTER 7

BECOMING FREE FROM ILLUSION

REFLECTION

In logion 7 of *'The Gospel of Thomas'*, Jesus says: *'Lucky is the lion that the human will eat, so that the lion becomes human. And foul is the human that the lion will eat, and the lion still will become human'*. This statement is quite remarkable because it was and still is very unusual for people to eat lion meat. Of course, it is undesirable that people are eaten by lions, but why would it be good for a lion to be eaten by a human being?

If we take this logion literally, we cannot do much with it. But as soon as we realise that the 'lion' represents the animal state in the human being and 'man' the incorruptible state, then the solution of the riddle will become clear at once. We were created as human beings, but we are not yet a finished product, not yet a being as it was meant in God's plan. We are half animal and half human, or as Hermes Trismegistus says: 'mortal as to the body and immortal as to the essential man'. This duality is aptly represented by the Egyptian sphinx, a mystery animal with the body of a lion and the head of a man.

When we live from that which is really human within ourselves, from the spirit-spark in the heart, and the god-human nature in us guides our being, then the animal nature will be subordinate to it and thus serve its inner master. Then the lion is symbolically eaten by man. However, when the lion king reigns in us, if he symbolically eats man, then the divine nature cannot grow within us and we remain a cultivated human animal, powerful perhaps but completely earthly.

When you come to think of it: why are there so many symbols,

stories, and parables in the Bible and in all the other sacred scriptures? Why don't the authors just write clearly and directly what they want to convey so that everyone can understand their points immediately? Why all these mysteries and veils?

The disciples had this question, too and asked Jesus why he spoke to the common people in parables. He then answered: '*Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given*' (Matthew 13:11).

People who go a spiritual path learn to tune in to the domain of the soul. That is the pure astral world of the concrete archetypes that will enter our consciousness in the form of symbols, analogies, correspondences, myths and similarities. Our inner understanding will grow if we are connected to this experiential world, called the hall of learning in the book '*The Voice of the Silence*'. Jesus therefore advises: '*Know what is in front of your face, and what is hidden from you will be disclosed to you. For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed*' (The Gospel of Thomas, Logion 5).

Inner understanding

Many assume that they will understand immediately what is conveyed to them, especially when it comes to so-called veiled knowledge. This view is incorrect, because the development of inner understanding and discernment demands perception, sensitivity, meditation and time. If you talk to children about life, you have to do so in simple images and words, because their understanding is still limited. And if you want to understand scientific theories, it requires a years-long preparation.

Many holy texts not only have a conventional meaning, a literal interpretation, but also a higher meaning which reveals itself only when a person is ready for it. Thus the parable of the talents has a deeper meaning than an urge to use our talents for someone for whom we work.

In his book '*The new man*', Maurice Nicoll maintains that all

sacred writings have the purpose to transfer higher knowledge and a deeper meaning on the basis of ordinary knowledge that is only the starting point.²⁸ According to Nicoll, parables were deliberately intended to be understood first at an ordinary level of consciousness but at the same time to influence us in such a way that later, when this ordinary level of consciousness is lifted to another level of understanding, then the embedded message becomes possible. From this point of view, a parable is thus a stepping stone between a lower and a higher level in the development of our understanding. Nicoll therefore calls a parable a meaning-transformer.

How can we now, through this insight, interpret the parable about the rich man and poor Lazarus? The story starts telling us about a rich man dressed in purple and fine linen and enjoying life to the fullest. Thereafter we hear about the miserable state of Lazarus: a poor man who is leprous, hungry and must beg for bread. Both of them die. Lazarus is carried by angels to the bosom of Abraham, while the rich man comes into the realm of the dead and suffers greatly because of the heat there.

This could indeed be a correct sketch of what two completely different people may experience following the death of their physical bodies. After discarding the earthly covering, the microcosm arrives in a location that corresponds to the inner vibrational key. Poor Lazarus experiences the heavenly consolations of the spiritual tradition to which he adhered, one that began with the patriarch Abraham. He cannot as yet enter the kingdom of heaven but makes his abode in a pleasant place in the realm of the dead referred to as 'devachan' in theosophy.³⁹

Unlike Lazarus, the rich man receives no consolation, but instead suffers the pains of the fire of purification. He finds himself in an intermediate sphere known in the Catholic tradition as purgatory or the mountain of purification and in theosophy as 'kama loka'.

In the microcosm which we now inhabit, many residents have lived before us in all kinds of circumstances. Perhaps they were personalities that resembled the rich man or poor Lazarus. Poor people and sick people can draw comfort and hope from this parable about the rich man and poor Lazarus because they know that death will put an end to the miserable condition in which they find themselves because it will bring a deliverance from their needy situation and offer them the prospect of more pleasant circumstances.

Conversely, it would be wrong for rich and healthy people to interpret this parable as if a terrible judgment awaits them after death, because there is nothing wrong with enjoying good things, it is okay to be rich and it is fine to be healthy. When interpreting teachings and parables, it is important to take the context of the narration into consideration. Then it will be easier to discover its deeper meaning.

Hypocritical people

Jesus tells this parable because some greedy Pharisees belittle him. The Pharisees formed a fundamentalist movement within Judaism in the time of Jesus. They maintained a strict observance of the rules of the Torah. For many Pharisees, the laws of Moses were no longer a means, but their goal. They derived their identity and self-confidence from their encyclopaedic knowledge of the Jewish religious laws and the high respect they received from other people. They pretended to be holy, but in reality, they were focused on acquiring more and more property, power and fame.

In chapter 23 of the Gospel of Matthew, we read how Jesus confronts these hypocritical people with their lack of authenticity, their sneering remarks and the resulting evil consequences.

‘Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe the mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters

of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Ye blind guides, that strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel! Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside thereof may become clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity' (Matthew 23:23-28).

The Pharisees should recognise themselves in the rich man in the parable, who lives lavishly, dressed in purple and fine linen. When a person has the colour purple in his aura, it indicates that he or she is spiritual, mystical and harmonious. The Pharisees probably did not have it, but to keep up appearances, they wore purple outwardly, in fine linen coloured with the expensive purple dye that was extracted from certain sea snails, and quite the fashion for dignitaries.

In 'The Gospel of Thomas', Jesus says:

'If a blind person leads a blind person, both of them will fall into a hole. Damn the Pharisees! They are like a dog sleeping in the cattle manger: the dog neither eats nor lets the cattle eat' (The Gospel of Thomas, logion 102 and logion 34).

Most of us are aware that in each of us there is a Pharisee, or for that matter a lion, with a natural urge to spoil the true and higher human being in ourselves and in others. You can master the hypocrite and the lion within yourself by being vigilant and not giving them power. If you have read this book so far, you can safely assume that there is also in you a poor, sick Lazarus who wants to be nourished, comforted and healed.

Poor in Spirit

The name Lazarus is derived from the Hebrew word Eleazer and means: God has helped. Lazarus is the inner man who raises his eyes to the mountains from where his help will come. He knows from within that he cannot walk the way back to his father's house on his own but that his help must come from the Lord (Psalm 121:1-2). He receives help from the Brotherhood because he listens to the soft voice emanating from the spirit-spark.

Lazarus experiences that he is poor in Spirit. He mourns because he feels that his entire human system is severely ill compared to the original man. He is meek because he can empathise with the difficulties of others because of his own experience. He is hungry for the bread of life and yearns for true righteousness. If a man with this signature advances inwardly, despite his dire personal circumstances – or perhaps because of them – he hears the blessed beatitude from the mountain.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled' (Matthew 5: 3-6).

The beautiful consolation of Bethlehem, which are the blessings of the birth of light in the heart of the human being, can be experienced in the here and now. The condition is however that you do not serve Mammon. If you pay too much attention to this god of money, its consequences are comparable to those of committing adultery, as Jesus teaches in Luke 16:18.

There is nothing wrong with money in itself. In our economy it is defined as undifferentiated purchasing power that is used as a means of exchange, means of payment and a unit of accounting. It is in fact crystallised astral power that is important to all of society and with which people may expand their possibilities and develop themselves and others.

In society, and also on the spiritual path, money will become a problem only if all our desire and attention are directed to it. Greed can lead to a person being overshadowed or even possessed by the dark forces of the astral sphere, which also includes the realm of the dead. Unethical practices arising from selfish motives that cause damage to yourself and others are usually the result of such behaviour.

The idol of money and the forces that accompany it deceive us and can therefore be seen as aspects of Satan or Mara – the great trickster – who will do everything to make people live in illusion and delusion, so that they remain slaves of their desires and their divine potential cannot develop within them. Unfortunately Mara, the great trickster, is active in all areas of life.

We speak of illusion when this deception is directed at the sensory perceptible world, and of delusion when this deception pertains to the astral world.

Rudolf Steiner calls these forces Ahriman and Lucifer.⁴⁰ Ahriman is the god of darkness and evil in Zoroastrianism. He sends death and sickness to the people to plunge them into misery in order to remain powerful. Lucifer is the name of the angel who revolted against God, was expelled from heaven and thereby became the devil, the leader of fallen angels or demons who deceive the people.

Ahriman and Lucifer

The Ahrimanic forces promote materialisation and deceive people by guiding them to a fascination with among other things possessions, money, materialism, sensual pleasures, technology, media and systems. Luciferic forces promote dematerialisation and deceive people by making sure that they become lured by fame, art, pseudo-religion, pseudo-spirituality, mysticism and occultism, for example. The urge to defy the world can also be explained by the influence of Luciferic forces. Both Ahriman and Lucifer con-

nect with a person's ego and cause the spirit-spark to be encapsulated as a result of fascinations, conflicts, addictions, depressions, fears and magical powers of the ego.

Ahriman and Lucifer are opposites, but also often work together to steal the life energy from people and exploit them as slaves, for example via the internet and mobile phones. Ahriman and Lucifer "prowl around like a roaring lion" (1 Peter 5:8) to ensnare humanity in illusion and delusion. They kill souls. In recent centuries, we have experienced a shift in attention from theology to technology, from Luciferic to Ahrimanic forces.

The Bible contains many stories in which we can recognise Ahrimanic and Luciferic forces. The Pharisees were intensely occupied with numerous religious precepts, but completely ignored what really matters in faith. This is Luciferic, because it is pseudo-religion. The reference that the Pharisees are greedy indicates that they were also controlled by Ahrimanic forces. The powers of Ahriman and Lucifer are also mentioned in the Bible, but under different names.

Ahriman and Lucifer can be recognised in chapters 40 and 41 of the Book of Job. They appear in the form of two monstrous animals that we do not find in nature. They are referred to as Behemoth and Leviathan. Some Bible translators wrongly replaced these names with hippopotamus and crocodile, because these animals are well-known and somewhat meet the characterisations which describe them. This interpretational error illustrates how successful Ahriman (or Behemoth) is in making people believe that the material world is the only reality.

Two fearsome animals also appear in chapter 13 of the '*Revelation of John*', in which we can recognise Ahriman and Lucifer: the beast from the earth with the two horns and the beast from the sea with ten horns and seven heads.⁴¹

Ahrimanic and Luciferic beings are not monsters in the sensory world, but in the astral world. It is important that we realise that

the astral world is heavily polluted and that we can be more easily victimised by delusion there than in the physical world.

Misleading forces also use the teachings and symbols from the universal wisdom doctrine but distort and abuse them. In Goethe's fairy tale (The green snake and the beautiful lily), two so-called will o' the wisps, symbols for Lucifer and Ahriman, lick the gold from the walls of the house of the man with the lamp, symbol for an initiate in the gnostic mysteries, and then deal with this spiritual gold in a very careless and irresponsible way.¹⁸

The astral world reflects everything that humanity produces, desires and expects, and is therefore also called the mirror sphere or the reflection sphere. All kinds of elementals, nature spirits, deceased human entities, demons, archons, eons as well as angels dwell in this astral sphere. A range of strata can be distinguished there, from very grim, hateful and depraved to brilliantly enlightened, loving and exalted.

Reflection sphere

It is important to know that everything in the reflection atmosphere is very plastic. Images and impressions are quickly created there that match the awareness of the person who experiences them. Today a huge number of texts containing words from 'the other side', received from an ascended master or even an angel, are being channelled and distributed. They are mostly beautifully phrased platitudes that people like to hear or read but they are all imitations derived from the reflection sphere. Satan presents himself thus as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), but is in fact a Luciferic being transmitting illusions.

The aura of a person offers a certain protection against forces from the reflection sphere that do not match with one's own being. But when, for example, there is fatigue, irritation, anger and depression, then low astral influences can penetrate the aura, causing a certain degree of overshadowing. Those who use alco-

holic beverages or drugs open themselves to disastrous astral powers. Cracks may even occur in the aura through which a person may be captured by astral and etheric scum, which then often cause endless misery. Influence from the reflection sphere takes place at all levels of society, from the bottom to religious leaders, CEO's of multinationals, presidents and monarchs. Usually without being aware of it, they are controlled by archons and eons who hold humanity in their grip and benefit when people cannot think for themselves, are divided, are dependent and weak, sick and anxious. When people live in fear, they are more easily manipulated.⁴²

Undoubtedly you have regularly experienced the influence of the reflection sphere yourself. During sleep for instance your astral body separates from your physical body and your etheric body, and you travel to the astral plane. Sometimes you may remember this in the form of vivid dreams, but you remain unconscious of much of these travels. Sleep is sometimes called the little brother of death, because there, too is a cycle through first the physical plane of existence and then through the reflection sphere. You will probably have had the experience that you entered a room where an uncomfortable atmosphere prevailed, while there were no perceptible indications for this. At that moment you experienced something of the etheric and astral atmosphere there.

Sometimes the surviving partner of a recently deceased person perceives that the deceased is still with him or her at certain moments. That is usually no imagination but a real experience, although not a physical presence but an astral one.

In the Bible, we are advised in several places not to maintain contact with the dead. The dead are in a process of letting go of their earthly attachments and then continuing their journey in the reflection sphere and in some cases even to areas above it.

Image 7 is a schematic representation of the cycle that the mi-

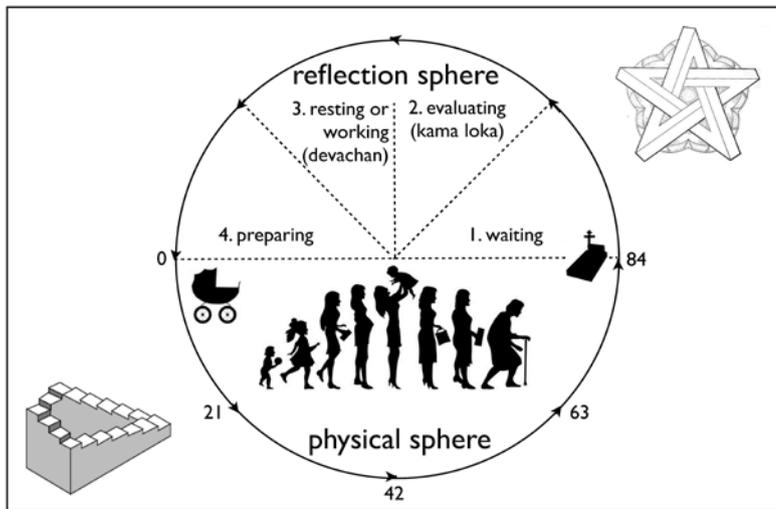


image 7: the cycle of the microcosm through the physical and the reflection sphere

microcosm experiences in the physical and the reflection spheres: from the cradle to the grave, from the grave to the cradle, from the cradle to the grave, and so on. The American researcher Suki Miller conducted extensive scientific research into the human consciousness after death and she distinguishes four stages: waiting – evaluation of the past life (kama loka) – resting or working (devachan) – and preparing for a new incarnation.⁴³

False prophets

Pupils of the soul going a path of initiation already go through these phases to a certain extent well before their death. First of all, they are faced with the task of letting go of their fascination with the sensory world, also known as the hall of ignorance. Secondly, it is important that they develop an intuitive feeling for myths and symbols which are part of the pure astral world of the concrete archetypes, so that they may work there. There is some danger in this because at the same location the contaminated astral reservoir of the earthly plane of existence is also pres-

ent, which can easily be misleading. How can you protect yourself from these delusions? If you detect a response in yourself to what your ego desires, an intention to create a heaven on earth, you can be sure that you are dealing with forces that are far removed from the original divine life field. They may seem to be light but in reality they are from the realm of darkness.

Paul writes *'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good'* (1 Thesalonians 5:21) and in the first letter of John we also receive some pointers.

'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the anti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already' (1 John 4:1-3).

By 'confessing that Jesus Christ came in the flesh' is not meant that you must believe that Jesus has indeed lived and that he was the Christ. Billions of people (and demons) take this as truth! It is quite possible that some person who knows nothing of the Christian revelation and salvation is still "of God", for what really matters is what he or she professes, whether such a person has been transformed into an instrument for the universal Brotherhood or Christ hierarchy, that is, whether he has been born again from water and spirit (John 3:5).

With false prophets, personality, soul and spirit do not form a trinity. Such prophets are not inspired by the spirit but work from their I-centred personality. Jesus speaks about this in the Sermon on the Mount when he says:

'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good

tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 7:15-21).

When a pupil of the soul dies inwardly as to the ego, that is, becomes free from his identifications and obstructing earthly attachments, then the influences of Ahriman and Lucifer become ineffective. This could be the symbolic meaning of the two murderers who are crucified with Jesus on Golgotha, at the site of the skull. In many even older stories about Krishna in India and Horus in Egypt it is also written that they were crucified between two thieves.⁴⁴

Pupils of the soul must distance themselves from the reflection sphere, from the contaminated astral regions, for that is the absolute condition for an effective influence of the spirit-spark, for the blossoming of the rose in the heart. We can certainly learn from the rich visual treasure in the pure astral world of the concrete archetypes, the so called hall of learning, but we are not meant to stay there.

As humanity we have the task to live in areas that lie above the reflection sphere. We have been called to be servants of an illustrious and elevated cause and to enter into the hall of wisdom: the pure mental world of the abstract archetypes. This is beautifully expressed in the verses 21 to 35 of fragment I of the booklet *'The Voice of the Silence'*.²⁷

'Three Halls, O weary pilgrim, lead to the end of toils. Three Halls, O conqueror of Mâra, will bring thee through three states into the fourth and thence into the seven worlds, the worlds of Rest Eternal. If thou would'st learn their names, then hearken, and remember.

The name of the first Hall is IGNORANCE – Avidyâ. It is the Hall in which thou saw'st the light, in which thou livest and shalt die. The

name of Hall the second is the Hall of Learning. In it thy Soul will find the blossoms of life, but under every flower a serpent coiled.

The name of the third Hall is Wisdom, beyond which stretch the shoreless waters of AKSHARA, the indestructible Fount of Omniscience. If thou would'st cross the first Hall safely, let not thy mind mistake the fires of lust that burn therein for the Sunlight of life.

If thou would'st cross the second safely, stop not the fragrance of its stupefying blossoms to inhale. If freed thou would'st be from the Karmic chains, seek not for thy Guru in those Mâyâvic regions. The WISE ONES tarry not in pleasure-grounds of senses. The WISE ONES heed not the sweet-tongued voices of illusion.

Seek for him who is to give thee birth, in the Hall of Wisdom, the Hall which lies beyond, wherein all shadows are unknown, and where the light of truth shines with unfading glory. That which is uncreate abides in thee, Disciple, as it abides in that Hall. If thou would'st reach it and blend the two, thou must divest thyself of thy dark garments of illusion.

Stifle the voice of flesh, allow no image of the senses to get between its light and thine that thus the twain may blend in one. And having learnt thine own Ajñâna, flee from the Hall of Learning.

This Hall is dangerous in its perfidious beauty, is needed but for thy probation. Beware, Lanoo, lest dazzled by illusive radiance thy Soul should linger and be caught in its deceptive light.

This light shines from the jewel of the Great Ensnarer, (Mâra). The senses it bewitches, blinds the mind, and leaves the unwary an abandoned wreck. The moth attracted to the dazzling flame of thy night-lamp is doomed to perish in the viscid oil. The unwary Soul that fails to grapple with the mocking demon of illusion, will return to earth the slave of Mâra'.



When Paul says that one day we shall bear the image of the heavenly human being, he doesn't mean that you, as a dialectical ego, will one day enter that state of renewal. No, he means that after the rebirth of the soul, i.e. after the rebirth of the ego – the threefold I of thinking, willing and feeling – your personality, your vehicles, will temporarily bear the new soul and the new I, just as Jesus the Lord did after his resurrection. In that phase you will have laid aside the image of the physical human being, and you, i.e. your vehicles, will then bear the image of the heavenly Man.

That is why Paul goes on that 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God'. What is sown is perishable, dishonourable and weak, but what is raised is the soul truly living in the Gnosis. That is the great mystery of salvation: your dialectical personality can be the basis for the tremendous initial process of transfiguration. The main thing is that the pupil understands this mystery of salvation, that he enters into the process, and that he breaks through to the goal. [...]

You still have your personality, and although it is one of dishonour, weakness and perishability, you can already partake in the rebirth of the soul in the present, with the rightly focused help of the soul, and you can gain all the advantages of this.

CHAPTER 8

ACQUIRING THE RESURRECTION BODY

SPIRITUAL TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come? Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own.

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also

bear the image of the heavenly. Where O Death is Your Victory?

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stead-fast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord.



CHAPTER 8

ACQUIRING THE RESURRECTION BODY

REFLECTION

As a person you are extremely vulnerable. From one moment to the next you may fall prey to rapid aging, injury, illness and death. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus says: *‘There was a rich person who had a great deal of money. He said, ‘I shall invest my money so that I may sow, reap, plant, and fill my storehouses with produce, that I may lack nothing.’ These were the things he was thinking in his heart, but that very night he died. Anyone here with two ears had better listen’* (The gospel of Thomas, logion 63).

When you are deeply aware of your own mortality, you can discover what you really find important and then give attention to that. It is tempting to repress the thought of an end to your life, because it feels uncomfortable and you want to enjoy the time that you have been given as much as possible. You want to live from the motto ‘*carpe diem*’ (seize the day) or in other words: ‘let us eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we may die’.

It is excellent to enjoy life, but when all your time, attention and energy go in that direction, the soul languishes, because it wants to be nurtured and to grow stronger. From this insight we can well understand the rhetorical question that Jesus poses to his disciples: *‘For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?’* (Matthew 16:24).

In Europe in the Middle Ages people reflected more on the inevitability of death than they do today. People died relatively young than and more visibly, as a result of illness, famine, cold, violence and inadequate medical assistance. Christian faith strongly con-

tributed to the fact that the motto 'memento mori' (remember, you must die) had a prominent place in consciousness in the Middle Ages.

Around the year 1500 the text of the play 'Elckerlyc' appeared in print in the Netherlands which, like the English version with the name 'Everyman', refers indeed to everyone. Death plays an essential role in this morality play, written in rhyme. The important messages in this short but profound story are that we are all mortal, that after the death of our body we have to take responsibility for the life we lived and that we would do well to live a pure life here and now.

At that time, the text of 'Elckerlyc' and theatre performances that were made of it were extremely popular. It touched people much more than a general philosophical reflection on death, because they recognised themselves in the main character of Elckerlyc. In the story we recognise the way of the hero, with his development as described by Joseph Campbell.⁸ The protagonist first leads a normal life, then at a given moment experiences difficulties, next receives an assignment and is faced with trials in which he must persevere. If he accepts this, he receives help which he experiences as grace. Thus a transformation takes place, which leads to a new state of being on a higher spiral of life.

Elckerlyc

The protagonist Elckerlyc – Everyman – represents man in general. He doesn't lead a very morally upright life but rather lives from hand to mouth, perhaps similar to the prodigal son in the parable of Jesus, who also wasted his wealth in a life of excess (Luke 15:11-32). Such a person has become entangled in illusions and is stunned when Death visits him and says that God wants to close his account and that he must prepare to make his last journey.

Elckerlyc does not want to balance his account at all and even less depart from earth. That is why he first tries to bribe Death.

He does not succeed, but he is allowed to take someone with him on his journey. First, he invites Company. She promises to come along, but when it turns out that Elckerlyc is not going to a party but to the grave, she hastily departs. Elckerlyc subsequently receives a similar reaction from Family and from Possession. He then finally asks Virtue to come with him. She would indeed like to accompany him but unfortunately, she is far too ill and weak for the journey. Virtue advises Elckerlyc to ask her sister Knowledge.

Knowledge confronts Elckerlyc with his depravities and urges him to examine himself thoroughly and to turn to God. He does this and because of this, Virtue is cured, which enables her to accompany Elckerlyc.

Virtue then encourages Elckerlyc to also ask Wisdom, Beauty and Power to come on his journey, and Knowledge advises to also invite the five Senses. Elckerlyc makes his will and they all set out together. When they come close to the realm of death, Beauty decides not to continue and goes her own way. Later, Strength also gives up and leaves him. Finally, Wisdom and the five Senses also abandon Elckerlyc, but he is not afraid anymore now and quotes, full of confidence and with complete surrender, the last words that Jesus exclaimed from the cross: *'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'* (Luke 23:46).

Virtue and Knowledge remain with Elckerlyc and are allowed to escort him when an angel comes to fetch him with the words:

*'Come, chosen bride
up here! – and hear the sweet sound of the angels
thanks to your virtue bright.
I'll take the soul out of your body.
Her tally is now pure and clean.
And I shall bring her to the court of heaven's hall.
Where all shall be together seen
the great ones and the small.'*

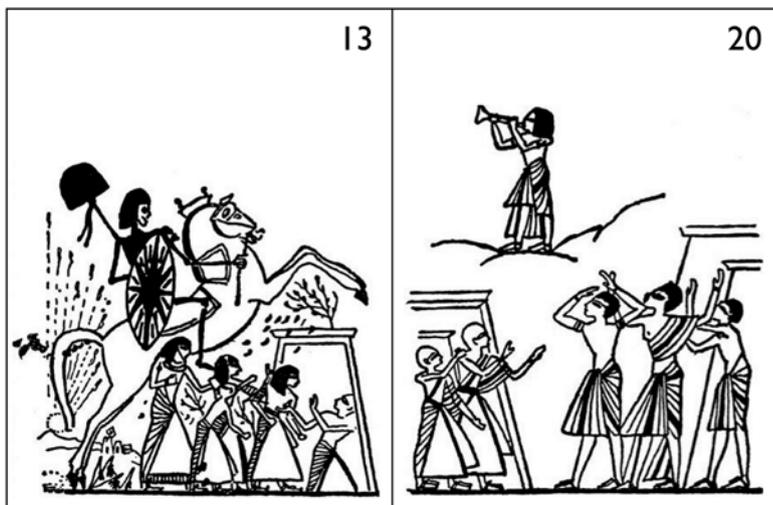


image 8: the arcana Death (13) and Immortality (20) of the hermetic tarot

Thus ends the story of Elckerlyc, a very ordinary person who lives his life just like everyone else. He has no distinction or specialty. At one point he is troubled by Death, personified here, and comparable to arcanum 13 of the tarot. Just as in the tarot, Death in this story stands not only for the discarding the physical body, but specifically for the transformation that will take place when the human being awakens inwardly.

Elckerlyc is frightened by the visit of Death, just as Christian Rosycross is frightened by the angel who hands him the invitation to the royal wedding and leaves with a blast on her trumpet. Elckerlyc must also go on his journey but he wants to take with him everything that he has received or acquired in his earthly life.

However that is not possible. Those who want to enter the new field of life must gradually leave behind all that hinders them on this path.

That is why Jesus said to the rich young man who asked him how he could obtain eternal life: *'If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell*

that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me' (Matthew 19:21).

Virtue and Knowledge

Attachments associated with Companions, Family and Possessions can indeed be hindrances on the Gnostic Christian path. That is why the pupil of the soul, symbolised by Elckerlyc, must let these attachments go, though without forgoing the responsibilities that are bound up with them. Only after these purifications does Elckerlyc meet Virtue: the as yet insignificant glow of the newly awakened spirit-spark. The force emanating from the centre of the microcosm is still weak. Virtue is therefore ailing but can be cured thanks to the advice of her sister Knowledge, meaning inner knowledge, or gnosis. This gnostic Knowledge relates to the deep self-knowledge of which the ancients said 'He who knows himself, knows the All', and about which Jesus said:

*'If those who lead you say to you:
See, the kingdom is in heaven,
then the birds of the heaven will go before you;
if they say to you: It is in the sea,
then the fish will go before you.
But the kingdom is within you, and it is outside of you.
When you know yourselves,
then you will be known,
and you will know that you are the sons of the living Father.
But if you do not know yourselves,
then you are in poverty, and you are poverty'.
(The Gospel of Thomas, logion 3)*

Virtue in the story of Elckerlyc does not refer primarily to certain positive qualities, such as those known as 'the seven virtues', but to the Christ-principle that can awaken in the heart through the Christ radiations, also referred to as the blood of the lamb. When

that happens, certain qualities develop in the personality that can be used on the path and which in *Elckerlyc* are referred to as Wisdom, Beauty, Power and the ability to consciously work with the five Senses. We can see this development as a renewal and dynamization of the personality through successively the mental body, the astral body, the ether body and finally the physical body. At death, those qualities cannot be taken with us over the threshold of death. They will at that moment be released via the dissolved blood soul, which can then become available to spiritually aspiring people on earth. The titles of the reflection texts in this book are themes that we can also recognise in the story of *Elckerlyc*.

1. *Accepting the Word*. *Elckerlyc* is at first fully absorbed in the sensory world and has forgotten his calling. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. Death awakens him from his symbolic sleep and thus he realises that he lives in sin, that he is not sailing the right course and that he therefore misses the true purpose of his life. He is informed that he shortly has to make a pilgrimage because that is part of the plan of God, the Word. Initially he struggles against this because his ego does not want to go at all, but later he realises that it is inevitable and, like John the Baptist, he prepares to straighten his paths for his Lord.
2. *Incarnating on earth*. Like Moses, *Elckerlyc* realises through this extraordinary encounter that he was born to fulfil an assignment, to lead the aspects of his inner being – his people – from slavery in the sensory world to the freedom of the children of God.
3. *Fathoming cycles*. Like Ecclesiastics, *Elckerlyc* experiences through his encounter with Death that everything that begins at some point also must come to an end, and that it is therefore important during one's life to pay attention to that which is eternal.

4. *Coping with loss.* Job lost his children and his possessions. Elckerlyc notices that Companions, Possession and Family cannot join him on his journey and that he has to say goodbye to them inwardly.
5. *Making the two into one.* Elckerlyc goes on his pilgrimage through a threefold process of awareness, purification and renewal. His soul becomes pure and powerful so that he can celebrate his 'wedding in Cana'. His soul is invited as the bride to unite with the bridegroom, the Spirit.
6. *Using your talents.* When the inner lamp of Elckerlyc burns – as Virtue – he receives true Self-knowledge, and on that basis he receives the talents that he must use for his lord: Wisdom, Beauty, Power and the five Senses.
7. *Becoming free from illusion.* Elckerlyc discovers that he lives in illusion and experiences that he can be released from it on the basis of Virtue, by paying attention to the light of the kindled spirit-spark.
8. *Acquiring the resurrection body.* During the pilgrimage of Elckerlyc an imperishable spiritual body develops, he weaves a wedding garment for his spiritual wedding that is detached from the body when it is completed (the inner descent from the cross) so that it can ascend and live in the forecourt of heaven.

Elckerlyc has gone the path through the Mysteries and may therefore look forward with confidence to the death of his physical body, because in him a spiritual body has been raised, in accordance with the joyful vision that Paul paints for us:

'For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory' (1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

In the days when the play of Elckerlyc appeared, the population had great fear of death. The church told them that they should focus on good works, penance and confession, because only then could their sins be forgiven, and could they enter heaven after their death. Anyone who doubted the purity of his soul and was afraid of ending up in hell could buy so-called indulgences at extortionate prices, through which sins were forgiven and a comfortable place in heaven assured.

Reformation

The reformer Martin Luther quite rightly denounced the practice of indulgences in the theses he nailed to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg in 1517, with which he wanted to provoke an academic debate, though not a church reform. However Luther is still seen as the spiritual father of the movement of the Reformation, which arose from the Renaissance era and later became a major impetus for progress. The Reformation stimulated individual responsibility and led to the relationship between God and man being re-thought and re-worded.

The ideas of the Reformation are often summarised in five Latin terms – the Solas – that are presented as a unit since the twentieth century:

- Sola Scriptura – Only through the scripture
- Sola Gratia – Only through grace
- Sola Fide – Only through faith
- Solus Christ – Only through Christ
- Soli Deo Gloria – Only to God the glory

Great truths can be found in these solas. They have contributed to people no longer letting themselves be led by fear of death but receiving strength from a sense of grace. Unfortunately the solas are also often rendered absolute, causing fundamentalism, fana-

ticism, short-sightedness, division and the consequent unpleasant conflicts. The five solas were formulated at that time to answer the very pressing question of when one can be sure that he is saved and when not. From a universal perspective, that question is irrelevant because the primary concern is that, as human beings, we must live in such a way that the inviolable glory of God – Dei gloria intacta – will be manifested in the soul. If that fails in one lifetime, the microcosm will experience as many rebirths and as much guiding help as needed until it succeeds. That is a comforting thought, but it is not intended that we postpone going the narrow path. Procrastinating behaviour does not always have to be negative, because it can also mean that an inner maturation process is still going on.

On the path of the disciple of the soul, it is primarily about being faithful to one's deepest inner self who wants to reveal itself more and more – called Virtue in '*Elckerlyc*' – and to grow to an ever-expanding inner knowing – portrayed as Knowledge in '*Elckerlyc*'. On the basis of Virtue and Knowledge, emanating from the awakened spirit-spark, forces can be attracted that perform transfiguration. That is an alchemical conversion, in which the new, incorruptible human being comes into being, the last Adam in whom male and female are united. In the terminology of Paul, a spiritual body has then been erected and the living soul has merged into the life-giving spirit.

Leadership from above

The healing process mentioned is grand and far-reaching and requires time and attention. Why should we be punished if we cannot accomplish that in one life? Or can we trust in the promise that God will not let go of the works of his hands (Psalm 138:8)? We are known and we are guided! And if we open ourselves to this higher-level guidance, we may experience it as it was once sung by the Psalmist.

'O Jehovah, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, And art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, But, lo, O Jehovah, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, And laid thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, And thy right hand shall hold me' (Psalm 139:1-10).

The Lord is with also in the realm of the dead and are we guided by members of the divine hierarchy. How is it there on the other side of the veil of death? Many people think that this question is not relevant because it is only important what we do with our current life here on earth.

Our life here and now is indeed important, but if we would have some understanding of life after death, we would shape our lives differently and above all more purposefully. Many people who have had a near-death experience live a very different life after this event, according to scientific research. They attach less importance to their possessions, power and fame and become more sensitive, milder and more spiritual.⁴⁵

In ancient mystery schools it was deemed important that the students of the mysteries were informed with regard to life after death based on their own experiences. It was recognised that most people were not ready for this knowledge, and that is why only students who were demonstrably ready for it were admitted to this experience. At a certain high-level initiation in the process of the splitting of the personality, the pupil was put to sleep with certain drugs by a priest, the sleep lasting for three and a half days.

Initiation sleep

During that initiation sleep, the astral body of the student of the mysteries was detached from the physical body and he had, in full consciousness, access to all strata of the astral sphere. He could descend into the hellish levels as well as ascend into the heavenly spheres. When he was awakened from his initiation sleep by the priest after about 84 hours, he was an initiate, who had acquired first-hand knowledge of the mysteries of life and death and understood the phenomenon that we know as microcosmic reincarnation. The teachings on reincarnation were part of the mysteries in ancient times and were taught only to pupils in the mystery schools, who had to remain silent about them.

Rudolf Steiner considers the so-called revival of Lazarus from the dead, described in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John, as an initiation that Jesus performed.⁴⁸

Lazarus had been lying in a grave in a cave for three days, but was not dead as the story suggests, but asleep. According to Steiner, Jesus performed an old-style initiation with Lazarus which would become later become obsolete due to the Mystery of Golgotha. The tearing of the veil in the temple at the time of Jesus' death is symbolic of the fact that humanity can from that time on go the mystery path in self-authority without direct guidance from priests, the way of the cross to the eternal home.

And what about the resurrection of Jesus? His spiritual resurrection body had been ready well before his death on the cross, in accordance with a remark in paragraph 17 of the *'Gospel of Philip'*: *'Those who say that the Lord died first and (then) rose up are in error, for he rose up first and (then) died. If one does not first attain the resurrection, he will not die'*.

Jesus had overcome death long before he was put to death in a humiliating way. In fact, the Christ spirit had already bonded with him at the time of his baptism in the river Jordan. Max Heindel writes that the violent death of Jesus, in which much

blood was shed, was necessary because it enabled the Christ spirit to withdraw swiftly from the body of Jesus without hindrance of the impurities of that human vehicle.⁴⁷

Most biblical historians agree that the death on the cross of Jesus has indeed taken place, but they are divided on the matter of the resurrection. Understandably, because there is no convincing historical evidence that a dead body has ever come alive again. In earliest Christianity, images of the crucifixion are often of a spiritual-metaphorical nature. Paul for instance talks about the crucifixion of the old man, through which the new man can come to resurrection. He writes: *'They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof'* (Galatians 5:24).

And how may we see the appearances of the resurrected Jesus of which the sacred writings speak? Little to nothing indicates that in earliest Christianity the resurrection of Jesus was understood as a physical resurrection. Paul names a number of apostles to whom the risen Christ appeared and is himself the last one in this list (1 Corinthians 15:8). His description of his encounter with Christ leave little room for the concept of a physical encounter with the resurrected Jesus.

Church fathers in the second and third century left room for a belief in a physically materialised form of Jesus. According to them, his resurrection body was densified into a figure his physical body had before his death in which he could thus physically show himself to his disciples. They thought a resurrection in 'the old flesh' to be absurd. Historical research shows that the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice, on which outer Christianity largely relies, cannot be upheld when traced back to the teachings of Jesus and earliest Christianity. This dogma, which teaches that Jesus took on all the sins of humanity through his death on the cross, and that every human being who believes in him is saved by this, was certainly a treasured concept in history, but can now

be an obstacle to a further spiritual development of humanity. Fortunately though, there is such a thing as a forgiveness of debts. Jakob Boehme writes about this doctrine: *'Sin is like a shell, out of which the new man grows, and he then throws the shell away. This is called 'forgiveness'.* This reminds us of the butterfly crawling out of his cocoon, abandoning it to fly to freedom. James writes in his letter: *'For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead'* (James 2:26). And Paul writes to the church of Philippi: *'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling'* (Philippians 2:12).

These statements make it clear that a passive attitude towards faith is not recommended. The expression 'fear and trembling' has nothing to do with fear. Fear means awe and here trembling indicates that the lofty vibrations of grace are experienced physically.

The word 'salvation' refers to the state of being in which the person concerned is a spirit-inspired person and thus transformed into a new person. Other Bible translations use the words 'glory', 'deliverance' or 'redemption' instead of the word 'salvation'. Those indications are also correct provided these terms are correctly understood.

Salvation, redemption and glory do not refer to a deliverance from being thrown in hell, eternally burning, but to the inner liberation from the wheel of birth and death. It is the resurrection of the human being from the grave of nature, of which the Gospels testify, and which is represented in arcanum 20 of the Hermetic tarot.

The essence of this consideration is aptly summarised in the following text by Jan van Rijckenborgh from his book *'The Confession of the Brotherhood of de the Rosycross'*.²

*'Do you know what man's vocation is?
Do you know of what he is capable?
We are of God's lineage!*

We have been created in His image. Within us, the divine spark glows! These are not cheap words, honeyed phrases spoken for your edification, but living flames of the eternal truth. You should free yourself of your limitations, of your spiritual slavery. You must become conscious of your kingship! [...]

The mission of the Order of the Rosycross and its servants is to show the paths to liberation, for all are bowed under the yoke of slavery, as regards body, soul and consciousness. Something of a new, holy yearning must enter into you, the holy need for liberation of which the psalms sing. Something of the true knowledge of God must find a place within you, the daily walking with Christ.

There are thousands of people who say they know Christ. They mouth His words with their lips, but their hearts remain unmoved and their minds do not understand Him. [...]

That is why the mission of the Order of the Rosycross is to tell you who, what and how the Christ is, what this tremendous Sun-Spirit desires for you, does for you, and wants from you: not only the devout folding of your hands in prayer, not only the singing of a hymn, not the negative expectation that He will make everything right. No, you must do it yourself! That is what is so tremendous about Christianity. The flames of the love of the Spirit must burst forth within you. The royal butterfly must break loose in you, so that you leave the pigsty, and return to your Father.'



As the glorious crowning of this work man has become immortal. Once again he possesses a true spirit figure, a soul figure and a bodily figure. He can express himself in all spheres of matter and spirit and joins the ranks of the Christ-Hierarchy as a fellow builder, as a Golden Rosicrucian.

In this way a certain part of humanity will, in the new era, be guided to liberation. The separation is now taking place. The Brothers of the Golden Rosycross are acting as harvesters. The entire process is radiating safely in the Universal Doctrine of all times and can also be found in the Bible.

So we will conclude with a quotation from the Spiritual Testament of the ancient Rosicrucians: “We hope and pray that you will carefully consider this our offer, further examine our art and diligently consider present-day life.”

J. van Rijckenborgh,
Elementary Philosophy of the Modern Rosycross¹, chapter 26

CHAPTER 9

EXPERIENCING THE ETERNAL NOW

SPIRITUAL TEXT: *Revelation 21 en 22:1-17*

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.

And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out

of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcidony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it. And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): and they

shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it: and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angels to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass.

And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.

And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book: worship God.

And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still.

Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.

And he that heareth, let him say, Come.

And he that is athirst, let him come:

he that will, let him take the water of life freely.



CHAPTER 9

EXPERIENCING THE ETERNAL NOW

REFLECTION

The mysteries of birth, life and death are majestic and comprehensive. On the basis of biblical passages and reflections on these texts, we have only lifted a corner of the veil in this book, always from the viewpoint of the living Rosycross of the last four centuries. Although it is only a fraction of what you can know and experience in this area, it is enough to direct your life in such a way that your deepest inner being can fully develop on your journey through life, and that you may experience eternal values.

Jan van Rijckenborgh writes about this journey in 1960 in the preface to his book *'The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis and its call in the eternal present 2'*:²¹

'Man, who are you? Where do you come from? Where are you going? Since the dawn of man's appearance in the dialectical field of existence, these profound questions have been posed by the mysterious sphinx to all travellers on their endless wanderings through the desert of earthly life. The answers, shown in consciousness, directedness and behaviour, are decisive for life and death.

Without true, living, first-hand knowledge of the source of all being and the true purpose of existence, mankind is doomed to perish in darkness, suffering and death, through blindness, delusion and deception.

Countless people are seeking desperately for a solution in the threatening crisis which accompanies the end of the present cosmic day, and once again the Gnosis is raising its voice to show them the way to God's liberating knowledge. Out of the living reality of God, it once

again proclaims man's high calling and shows those who still have ears to hear the ancient way of deliverance, which it has opened again in our times for those of good will. There are those who are deeply disturbed by the self-created social disorganization through which the world and humanity are again approaching ruin, and who inwardly realise the necessity of an immediate, fundamental reversal of life. In the profound wisdom of the Egyptian Arch-Gnosis and its absolute requirements, such persons will joyfully and gratefully recognise the shining light of the Path to the Truth and The Life.'

This book also aims to make the call sound again, as it also echoed in another way in the manuscript '*The Call of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood*' in the year 1614.²⁹ In this manifesto the hope was expressed that the human being will finally realise his nobility and glory and will understand for what reason he is called a microcosm.

The key of the duality

Most people are not yet aware that they are like the Egyptian sphinx: half animal and half human. With that experiential knowledge of the duality in man – a mortal personality that lives in an immortal microcosm – the deeper meaning of many classical spiritual texts can be understood. The great sphinx near the pyramids of Giza in Egypt was for many centuries hidden under the desert sand. In the same vein, the knowledge of the duality in man has been buried for centuries under the thick layers of sand and dust of materialism and theology.

Ahrimanic and Luciferic forces have had great success with their deception but are beginning to lose their power as more and more people awaken inwardly, realise their nobility and glory, and want to walk the narrow path – the way back. Satanic forces have a great sense of self-preservation and will therefore take even stronger action to be able to continue to withdraw vital life en-

ergies from humanity. So we can understand why the horrors in the world seem to increase, and why fear is universally induced to manipulate people and keep them from a spiritual development.

When the light starts to shine more strongly, the powers of darkness start to move in reaction. A polarization then takes place, a separation between the goats and the sheep. We read about this in the parable of the talents: *'For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away'* (Matthew 25:29).

This statement relates to inner treasure and not to material possessions. We find a similar idea in the last book of the Bible where we read: *'He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still'* (Revelation 22:11).

The *Revelation of John* – also known as the *Apocalypse*, which literally means 'revelation' – is a very remarkable book of the Bible written in mystery language which the author received in part from a divine source and to which he added based on his own experience and extensive knowledge of the spiritual tradition of which he was an adherent. Using numerous symbolic representations with elements that we also find in many other books of the Bible, important knowledge is conveyed of the inner processes that a person as well as groups of people experience when they go the gnostic path of inner healing. We might call this advanced Christianity.⁴¹

Individual and group

Up until now we have mainly written about the opportunities for spirit-soul development in the individual human being. This process of transformation or regeneration of an individual can take place in conjunction with a group of individuals who together fo-

cus on such a development within an authentic spiritual tradition.

Nothing is known historically of the author of the *Revelation of John* that was probably written around the end of the first century. He writes that he has visions while imprisoned on Patmos, a Greek island in the Aegean Sea, near the west coast of Turkey.

In the introduction we read: *'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John; who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand'* (Revelation 1:1-3).

Here a man who has received God's grace is spoken about, a man called John, for the name John means: God is merciful. Through his linkage with the Christ Force, concentrated in the god-human hierarchy, the universal Brotherhood, he sees within himself what must soon happen. He records his impressions so that those who read or hear these words will be able to elevate themselves inwardly to the spirit-soul world and also experience the same great ecstasy. From the opening words it is clear that the words of this prophecy are intended as an invocation that a completely new and majestic development is possible.

John experiences ordinary earthly life as oppressive. Therefore he distances himself from it as if he were on an island, all the better to focus and persevere on the way that Jesus teaches. In that attitude of dedicated surrender, he is helped by the Brotherhood. He gains insight into the plan of God – the Word – and becomes a resident of the kingdom that is not of this world. He writes: *'I John, your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and kingdom and patience [which are] in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus'* (Revelation 1:9).

On the basis of such prophecy, people who are ready can go the gnostic path and come to the fulfilment described in symbolic language in chapters 21 and 22 of the Revelation of John. The author sees a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth have passed away. He also notes that the sea is no more. With the latter observation he means to say that he no longer experiences influences from the reflection sphere, so full of illusion.

Billions of people are eagerly awaiting the fulfilment of the prophecy of a new heaven and a new earth, because they experience the great tribulation of these times. Many have predicted when that wonderful situation would become reality. They were wrong because none of the predicted essential changes on earth ever took place. They did not grasp that John's prophecy does not relate to a renewal on a planetary or even cosmic level, but to a renewal on the microcosmic level of the individual and also at the level of a spiritually aspiring group.

When a group of people join together to go the way that leads to true Life, an etheric, astral and mental force field is generated, through which the members of the group are interconnected and from which they live. We can see such a group of spiritually striving people as the first earth and their force field the first heaven.

A new heaven and a new earth

If such a communal force field or group-body becomes stronger as a result of the perseverance of its members, it will generate an ever higher vibration connecting it with the Brotherhood at a certain moment whereby a living bridge is built between the group on earth and the Brotherhood: a heavenly ladder through which divine powers descend and ascend. Then the first heaven has passed away and there is a new heaven through which the group on earth is influenced and renewed. The outcome of this process we may symbolically call the new earth.

	father T, ram chrysoptase Zebulun, south James Yod	fire apóstoles P, archer jasper Gad, west Peter wands	gold Michael A, lion sardius Judah, north Tadeus autumn	
	mother X, fishes amethyst Levi, north Matthias He	water prophets M, scorpion hyacinth Dan, north Simon cups	silver Rafael B, crab topaz Issachar, south James the Lesser summer	man
	son W, water-bearer sapphire Rueben, north Andrew Vau	air evangelists A, scales chrysolite Asher, west Mattheus swords	bronze Gabriel II, twins onyx Benjamin, east Bartelomeus spring	lion
	daughter V, goat-fish emerald Simeon, south John He	earth shepherds-teachers M, maiden chalcedony Naphtali, west Philip coins	iron Uriel C, bull beril Joseph, east Thomas winter	bull

image 9: high priest with breast plate corresponding with the twelve gates of the new Jerusalem and the four worlds

Then a new Jerusalem has descended from heaven, like a golden, crystalline city that radiates in great splendour.

The precious stones and gates mentioned in Revelation 21 are symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles and other symbol systems (see image 9).⁴⁸

The pure connecting field in which the Spirit descends from on high makes it possible for members of the group to become inwardly reborn if they live out of that protective field, which is also referred to as the living body or the invisible temple.

We may compare it to a kind of womb in which the still embryonic spirit-soul can grow. The classical Rosicrucians from the seventeenth century called that field the 'domus Sancti Spiritus', the house of the Holy Spirit.

People with a level of vibration that does not meet a certain minimum level of purity do not have access to this field. The classical Rosicrucians conclude in their first manifesto, the 'Fama Fraternitatis R.C.' from 1614 therefore with the following words:²⁹

And this we can declare with certainty that whosoever wil go with us earnestly and whole-heartedly will enjoy the fruits thereof as to matter, body and soul. But he who is false-hearted or only greedy for our treasures, can in no way cause us harm, but will bring himself to utter ruin and destruction. Thus our Building, even if thousands were to see it from nearby, will forever remain untouched, indestructible and totally hidden from the wicked world. Under the shadow of thy wings, O Jehovah!

The Rosicrucians who formulated these words were Lutheran scholars who were part of the so-called Tübingen circle in southern Germany. Martin Luther (1483-1546) is one of the church reformers who have transformed the rocky thistle-infested field into a fertile arable land, in which the seed of outer Christianity could grow into a harvest for the inner Christianity of the Rosy-cross. The Rose-cross can be seen in the Luther-rose or the Lutheran seal, with which the great reformer gave expression to his theology and with which he authorised his correspondence. In a letter he writes about this seal:

‘There is first to be a cross, black, and placed in a heart, which should be of its natural colour (red), to put me in mind that faith in Christ crucified saved us. For if one believes from the heart, he will be justified. Such a heart is to be in the midst of a white rose, to symbolize that faith gives joy, comfort, and peace. Therefore the rose is to be white, not red, for white is the colour of the spirits and of all angels. The rose moreover is fixed in a sky-blue field, symbolising that such joy in the Spirit and in faith is a beginning of the future heavenly joy. And around this field is a golden ring, to signify that such bliss in heaven is endless, and more precious than all joys and goods, just as gold is the most valuable and precious metal.’

The white, red and golden rose

The seal of Luther reflects the joyful and hopeful beginning of a human who will make straight his paths for his Lord. It refers to

the first mystery of the awakening of the dormant spirit-spark, which the Rosicrucians designate with *'We are born of God'* and which culminates in the blossoming of the white rose: the connection between the personality and the soul on the basis of the spirit-spark in the heart. This is symbolically the feast of Saint John, the commemoration of the birth of John the Baptist, traditionally celebrated during midsummer on June 24.

The rose in Luther's seal is not yet attached to the cross. That cannot be expected as yet from a pupil who has just set out on his way to the first mystery. The pupil of the soul in the second mystery must begin to live from the prayer *'Your will be done'* and as such take up his cross by putting the vertical dimension central in his life. The Rosicrucians formulate this as *'In Jesus we die'*.

In the second mystery, the horizontal bar of the personality is connected to the vertical beam of the spirit-soul and at the intersection of the cross blossoms: the red rose. This is symbolised by the birth of Jesus in the cave, which is commemorated at Christmas. The ego-directed blood soul in the open space behind the frontal bone in the forehead will then dissipate and the pupil voluntarily sheds his etheric blood to propel the yearning Spirit forward on the liberating path, just as the mythical pelican feeds her young with her own heart blood.

'Jesus says to his disciples If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me' (Matthew 16:24). In the person who perseveres in this, at a given moment the golden wonder flower in the head sanctuary unfolds. A lasting bond with the Holy Spirit results, enveloping the cross of nature in a golden glow by the cross of salvation. This is the mystery of the golden rose, the inner Easter of the resurrection, the third mystery that the Rosicrucians express as: *'Through the Holy Spirit we are reborn'*.

Luther was one of many pioneers in the field of religion who prepared for the influence of the Rosycross becoming visible in

society. The doctor and philosopher Paracelsus fulfilled a similar task, but in his case more directed to the domain of science. In the field of art, we may mention the Flemish painter Jan van Eyck (1390-1441) as a pioneer who prepared the ground for the Rosicrucian impulse. Historically, little is known about him but his paintings speak volumes to the initiated.

The red turban worn by Jan van Eyck on a presumed self-portrait of around 1433 resembles a red rose. This in itself does not mean much. His world-famous polyptych (a painting divided into several sections) is more convincing. Originally his formidable masterpiece in Ghent bore the title 'The New Jerusalem', but under the influence of the church it was later called 'The Lamb of God', probably to draw attention to the dogma of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus that for the initiate Jan van Eyck had a completely different meaning than what the church taught at that time. It is said that Hubert van Eyck, the older brother of Jan van Eyck, who died in 1426, began the altarpiece, and that his younger brother Jan later completed it in 1432. The researcher Antoon Vanherpe argues that Jan van Eyck was not only a painter, but a universal man (*homo universalis*) in the Northern Renaissance, as was the Italian Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) in the southern Renaissance.

The Lamb of God

Van Eyck's very realistic and at the same time deeply symbolic masterpiece *The Lamb of God* can never have been made by just one person, according to Vanherpe, among other reasons because only during very few days in the year could he have painted because of the harsh winters. As well, all the details demanded a lot of time and Jan van Eyck also travelled a lot. Vanherpe is of the opinion that a group of Flemish miniaturists have together completed the work, as well as some of his other paintings, under the direction of Jan van Eyck. We know that Jan van Eyck was also the chamberlain of Duke Philip the Good and that he was paid

well to make long journeys. Precisely why this was is not known. It is assumed that he was also a diplomat. The Italian painter, architect and art historian Giorgio Vasari praises Jan van Eyck in his writings for his painting, calls him an alchemist and writes that he is the inventor of oil paint.

The polyptych '*The Lamb of God*' in the cathedral of Ghent, dedicated to John, and was open only during public holidays. The church-goers could then take a look at the colourful mysteries of birth, life and death, comparable to the way in which pupils in the mysteries could come to inner knowledge by studying and contemplating twenty-two images in the now ruined temple of Memphis in Egypt. These depictions were later included in what is called the Hermetic Tarot.

On the twelve panels of the closed polyptych of the brothers Van Eyck we can recognise the state of person who has not yet awakened inwardly. We see three levels: a higher, a middle and a lower level. These correspond respectively to the spirit, the soul and the personality. At the bottom left is the patron of the polyptych and at the bottom right is his wife. They are in a dark room and worship the carved figures of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, because that is where they are at spiritually speaking, they cannot do otherwise. These two well-meaning people are faced with the assignment of making their paths straight for their Lord, for although the light shines in the darkness, the darkness did not comprehend it. They are still strongly influenced by Ahriman but find the courage to continue in the words of the Jewish prophets Zechariah (upper left) and Micah (top right), as well as of the pagan prophetesses called sibyls and of the archangel Gabriel, all of whom announce the birth of the inner Christ. When the polyptych is opened, we see a colourful and radiant scene of twelve panels in which the prophecies have become reality: there is a new heaven, the upper part in which much gold shines, and a new earth, the natural landscape on the lower part.

The once naked Adam and Eve from Paradise are now clothed with glory and power after many incarnations on earth and following the spiritual path through the power of Christ – the blood of the lamb. The upper part thus shows the beginning and the end of the journey of the microcosm: the alpha and the omega, the first and the last letter of the Greek alphabet.

The renewed threefold human

The threefold human reigns from heaven and is regenerated through water and spirit according to the divine will, the divine wisdom and the divine activity. In the polyptych they are represented as Jesus, Mary and John the Baptist. They stand for the spirit, the soul and the renewed personality, who work on earth with the forces of heaven. In the ancient Egyptian mysteries they are referred to as Osiris, Isis and Horus. We can also find them in the first five arcana of the hermetic tarot: the high priest and ruler (arcana 5 and 4), the empress and the high priestess (arcana 3 and 2) and the magician (arcanum 1). Jesus is not represented in the painting as a suffering man hanging from a cross, as was customary from about the sixth century on and still is in the Roman Catholic church, but as a so-called pantocrator: the ruler of heaven and earth. The Latin text in the golden ornamental arch above the throne is derived from proclamations by church fathers and the translation reads:

This is the Almighty in His divine majesty.

The Supreme Being in His mild virtuousness.

Giver of liberty through His immeasurable generosity.

The red garment is symbolic for the fire of the spirit. The papal tiara on the head indicates a fully developed crown chakra. The two ribbons on the tiara are green and have three green tassels at their ends. The colour green refers to new life and the six tassels can be seen as a symbol for the six emanations or six cre-

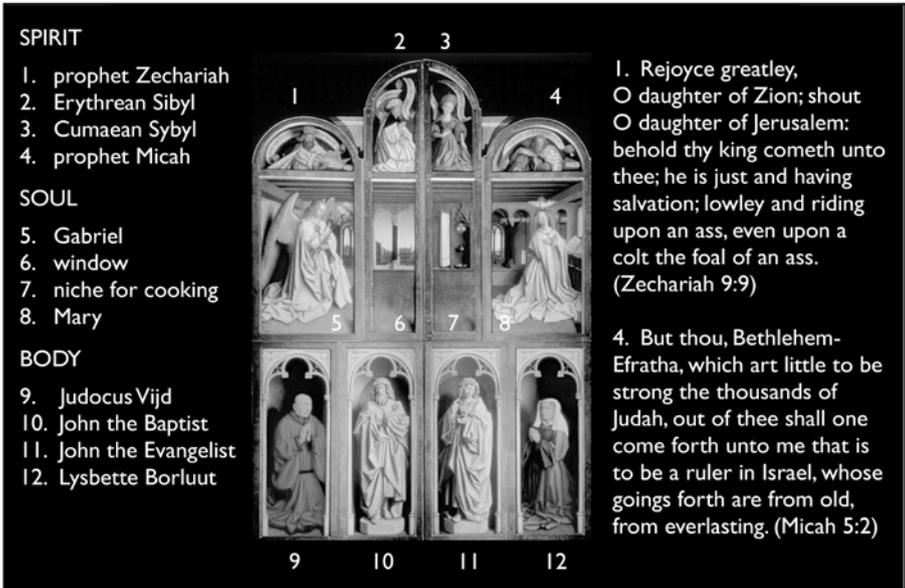


image 10: closed polyptych 'The new Jerusalem' (The Lamb of God) in Ghent (Belgium) by Hubert and Jan van Eyck (1432)

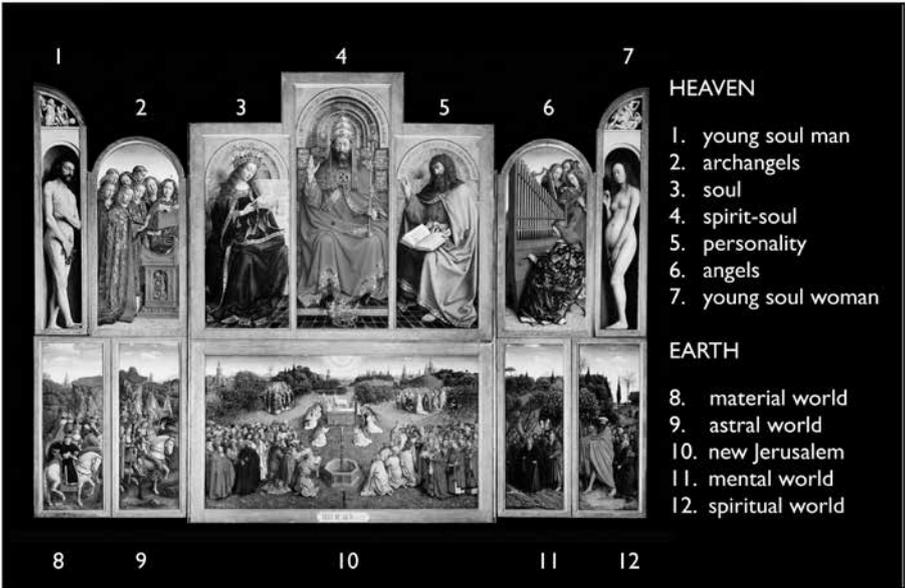


image 11: open polyptych 'The new Jerusalem' (The Lamb of God) in Ghent (Belgium) by Hubert and Jan van Eyck (1432)

ation days. On the green ribbons are rose-crosses composed of pearls, symbol of overcoming pain and sorrow as well as of rubies, the blood-red gemstone that strengthens the heart activity and therefore our life force. The powerful radiation activity of the spirit-spark is expressed in the mandala of pearls and precious stones at the heart sanctuary.

Mary, symbol of a renewed consciousness, wears a crown on which three red roses and four white lilies bloom. This indicates that the soul has been renewed by the seven rays of the Spirit. She wears a blue robe which indicates contemplation, and she is represented here as Sophia, the Greek goddess of wisdom, who was also important to the gnostics around the beginning of our era. The text in the ornamental arch of her throne is taken from verses 29 and 26 of the seventh chapter of the apocryphal Old Testament Bible book of the Wisdom of Solomon and reads:

'Wisdom is more beautiful than the sun and the stars. She is far superior to daylight. Wisdom is like a mirror reflecting the eternal light of God's deeds and goodness.'

John the Baptist, symbol of the renewed personality, is no longer calling in the desert. He still wears his camel's hair cloak, symbol for the physical body, but he is also robed with the cloak of love, the new light vesture, which is represented in green because of the vitality, the hope and the opened heart chakra, all of which are associated with the colour green. The statement in the ornamental arch of his throne is derived from the church fathers and reads:

'This is John the Baptist, greater than man, like the angels a summary of the law, seed of the gospel, voice of the apostles, silence of the prophets, lamp of the world, witness of the Lord.'

It is significant that the Van Eyck brothers have not situated the place of action in the lower part of the polyptych in one of the many churches, of which the prestigious towers are visible on the

horizon, but in a green landscape shown in detail. According to them, the new earth will come into being outside of the established churches. Furthermore, it is significant that the living water from the source in the foreground does not flow towards the churches but towards the spectators who allow the images that the painters made to work within them and influence them.

The four smaller panels at the bottom are known, from left to right, as the righteous judges, the knights of Christ, the hermits and the pilgrims. They correspond to the sensory world, the astral world, the mental world and the spiritual world.

In the tarot, these become worlds and are denoted respectively by coins, swords, cups and wands.

The human being on the path of regeneration, of re-creation, gradually becomes active in all those four worlds. However, it is also possible to go a degenerative path in these areas. Then the Bible text applies: *'Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie'* (Revelation 22:15).

On the degenerative path the righteous judges have become idolaters, the knights of Christ have become murderers, the hermits turned into fornicators and the pilgrims into sorcerers who let themselves be led by false christs and false prophets who do great miracles (Matthew 24:24).

A great multitude that no one can count

Fortunately, there is a great multitude, a crowd that no one can count, from all nations, tribes and peoples and tongues from the four corners of the earth that stands before the throne and before the Lamb. They listen to the hymns and the music of the angels. Together they form the new earth of the body of Christ in which four offices are distinguished (Ephesians 4:11): apostles (front right), prophets (front left), evangelists (rear left) and shepherds and teachers (rear right). John writes about them:

'And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes' (Revelation 7:14-17).

We hope that the texts on the mysteries of birth, life and death have contributed to an appreciation and recognition of your in-born spiritual nobility and glory, and that your name may also be written in the book of life. We thank you for your attention and commitment and conclude with the text which Christian Rosycross reads on an engraved plate at a fountain in a garden on the fourth day of the alchemical wedding.⁴⁹

*After so much harm has been inflicted upon the human race,
I, Hermes, being the primordial found, flow forth here as a healing
remedy, according to divine decree and assisted by the art.
Let him who can, drink of me.
Let him who will, cleanse himself in me.
Let him who dares, stir me.
Drink, brothers and sisters, and live.*



THE MICROCOSM SPEAKS

*I am both past and present,
For all that is has once already been:
Through many incarnations have I lived
But never yet the Victory have seen.*

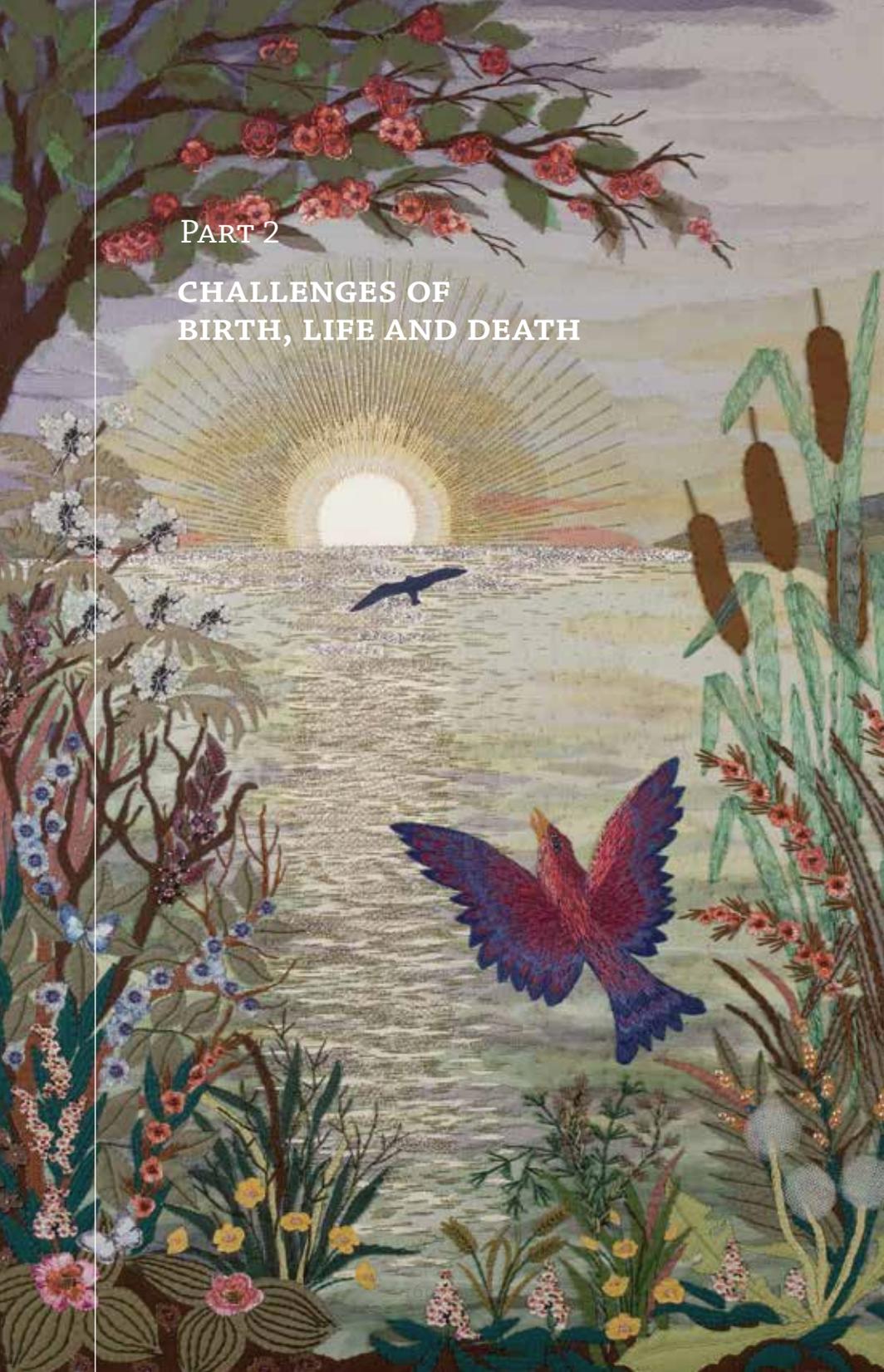
*Does conscience at times reproach you?
Is there a yearning like a burning knife?
Is not this then the essence of your sorrows
in all the swirling of the sea of life?*

*But realise that all your past had purpose –
the wheel of life revolved and shaped your lot.
No one can ever flee the 'self'...
until he understands the word of God:*

*So 'love your neighbour as yourself' –
Observe the selfish songs you sing.
Yes, even more, release the Other in you,
let 'him-within-you' be the King.*

*The 'I' of past and present in the house I was entrusted:
the microcosm fed so long on dross
has now received a glorious new prospect
through the resurrection of the cross.*

*The cross, now planted in the holy centre,
its upright beam right in the heart of our earth reposes
its horizontal beams as outstretched arms. y
The yoke divine – the 'cross of roses'!*



PART 2

CHALLENGES OF
BIRTH, LIFE AND DEATH

The Godhead is both transcendent and immanent, i.e. He irradiates all the cosmic planes, He manifests Himself in all things, while at the same time He is outside the All-manifestation in that which cannot be known. He is therefore both the Knowable and the Unknowable, both time and eternity. If we place ourselves on this reality, it will be clear to us that they who penetrate into the gnostic mysteries, turn to the Godhead in worship, praise and thankfulness in quite a different way. [...] God is everything we are or ever can be.

Thus we sink into the depths of the ocean of Divine manifestation which far exceeds any praise, thanks or worship. For is the Divine manifestation, this ocean of eternal fullness, not immeasurable itself? [...]

For You are whatever I may be.

You are whatever I may do.

You are whatever I may say.

You are everything; there is nothing but You. [...]

There is only deep, deep bewilderment; there is only the submergence into the ocean of the Divine manifestation in speechless veneration and inexpressible joy that it is granted to us to know this manifestation with the eyes of the inner being, just as God knows Himself.

CHAPTER 10

RESPECTING LIFE

ESSAY 1

The universe in which we live is estimated to be some 13.8 billion years old. That is what astronomers conclude on the basis of measurements of the cosmic background radiation, carried out with satellites. The visible universe came into being with a gigantic explosion or big bang out of an extremely hot point with an almost infinite density, and thus time and space came into being. This big bang theory is generally accepted by scientists and is based on the observation of a constantly expanding universe.

The galaxy in which our solar system is located – the Milky Way – took shape about 13.4 billion years ago according to so-called beryllium dating. Approximately 4.6 billion years ago, our solar system with its planets came into being, including our earth, when an interstellar gas cloud began to shrink because of its weight and began to rotate ever faster, after which our sun was formed in the middle of this gas cloud. The chemical elements of the periodic table also developed then.

In the beginning the earth was hot, fierce and empty. The earth's crust was formed and land masses and seas came into being. Probably some 500 million years ago, some form of extremely primitive biological life appeared. No one knows yet how that happened.

Some scientists maintain that life came to earth through meteorites. Others assume that life originated in the oceans in which it rained amino acids, resulting from chemical reactions in the primordial atmosphere due to lightning, ultraviolet radiation and the formation of volcanoes. Life could develop in this primeval soup because amino acids would combine into the macromolecule

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), the most important carrier of hereditary information in all known organisms. Despite numerous efforts by researchers, no one has ever succeeded in synthesising biological life forms in a laboratory.

The history of our earth and the life forms that live on it are often represented on a geological timeline, in which several geological periods are distinguished. That is possible thanks to the work of palaeontologists who study the fossilised remains and traces of early organisms in order to reconstruct the evolution of biological life on earth. Numerous plant and animal life forms from a distant past are now completely extinct. It is difficult to establish exactly when humans came into existence on earth. The oldest known human-like beings seem to have appeared more than four million years ago, but the first representatives of our species, *Homo sapiens*, are dated at about 125,000 years ago.

Creation myths and awe

All of the above information is rather different from the creation story as we can read it in Genesis, the first book in the Bible, and it can fill us with wonder and awe. Albert Einstein, the most famous physicist of the twentieth century, once said: *'If this universe with its millionfold order and precisio, were the result of blind chance, that would be just as credible as when a printing press exploded and all the letters would fall on the ground in the completed and error-free form of a dictionary'*.

It would be wrong to conclude on the basis of scientific observations and theories that Genesis 1 and creation myths from other cultures are incorrect because they are really about realms other than our universe that we experience with our senses and to which the natural sciences limit themselves. Scientific theories about the origin of life forms and creation myths do not exclude each other but can complement each other, precisely because they approach the concepts of creation and evolution from different

experiential worlds. Natural science takes the world of physical matter and the physical body as its starting point, while creation myths originate in the world of the soul; that is the world of the archetypes or the world of active imagination, also referred to as the *mundus imaginalis*. So in addition to the science of nature, of physics, there is also a science that transcends nature: metaphysics. The concept of metaphysics comes from classical Greek philosophy and means literally: beyond physics. Metaphysics does not examine reality as it is experienced via sensory perception but investigates the underlying essence of reality and how it is constituted. The scientist-philosopher Ervin Laszlo postulates in his book *'The Reenchanted Universe'* that our universe is illuminated by an ensouled radiation that he calls a 'metaversum'.⁵⁰ That is a universe that transcends this visible universe. Plato spoke in this respect about the world soul. The gnostic Jan van Rijckenborgh expressed his respect for all that exists as follows:²

'We, seekers of the hidden secret, know that system and order govern throughout the universe, which unfolds from eternity to eternity, with the aid of imperishable laws. We who, step by step, push aside the veils that separate us from the ineffable, discover the plan behind all realisation. We, who investigate the relationships between the macrocosm and the microcosm, see the grandiose equilibrium between all things. [...]

We, who thus increase our knowledge, widen our horizons and broaden our consciousness, filling our faculties with dynamic energy, proceed from astonishment to admiration, from deep wonder to stammering adoration, to service of God. [...]

We bow before God's majesty, because deep examination always reveals God's intervention in all realms.'

What drives a person?

Now let's look at what drives people as we know them. In every person there is an elemental urge for the fullness of life, although

it is not always fully expressed. Children and teenagers are naturally curious, they go out and investigate and have an urge to discover, to experience and to learn. Sometimes they experience at a young age a wide gap between their soul desires and the world in which they live. People in their twenties and thirties are focused mainly on shaping their life with a living space, work, with friends, study, travel, finding a life partner and starting a family. Many pursue happiness by making 'bucket lists' with special things they want to do, to experience and to achieve in order to make their lives worthwhile.

There may come a moment in a lifetime in which the desire to achieve outward goals declines and attention is paid to inner development. Sometimes this can be attributed to a fullness of experiences whereby the achievement of the goals pursued proved to be less attractive than was hoped. It also happens that someone deliberately starts to search inwardly in reaction to a personal crisis due to, for example, a burn-out, an accident, a disease, a divorce or a death in the immediate vicinity.

Life is a gift, but we still have to unwrap it carefully. It is meant to enable us to grow. It holds up a mirror to make an inner awakening possible. When we are not willing to see and take in what life wants to teach us, we will experience greater challenges until we take in what we have to learn. Life is like a rainbow, because to show all the colours of that glorious arc, we need both rain and sunshine. Those who seriously focus on the mysteries of birth, life and death gradually come to a deeper understanding. From that inner knowing the desire grows to live life in such a way that the inner being, the soul, can develop. Such a person may decide to go a path of spiritual awareness and renewal in daily life. He or she is then almost immediately confronted with all kinds of challenges related to birth, life and death. Then, through inner perception, he will find that decisions and actions are required that will often go against the interests of the ego but are necessary to follow this chosen path.

Going a spiritual path is not without obligation. It is a way of life in which you take full responsibility for yourself and your life because you understand that your personal choices have consequences for ourselves, our environment and even for the whole world. Because on a deeper level, everything is connected with everything. That is an ancient wisdom that seems to be confirmed by multiple scientific findings, for example, in quantum physics and parapsychology. In *'Thee Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ'* this idea is referred to as: *'No man lives unto himself; for every living thing is bound by cords to every other living thing'* (The Aquarian Gospel 8:2).⁵¹

More and more people will begin to live from this consciousness of unity, because the human system and the associated consciousness are now capable of that as a result of an unimaginably long development. If we understand that we all carry the large whole within us, and realise that our thoughts, feelings and behaviour affect the totality, we come to live our lives differently. Then we cannot but respect life and all that it entails, and we will understand the background of the so-called golden rule that Jesus formulated in the Sermon on the Mount as: *'All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets'* (Matthew 7:12).

The golden rule

The golden rule is a universal teaching that we can recognise in many philosophies, spiritual teachings and religions, including Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Islam and Bahai. The simplest formulation of this maxim for practical ethics, in line with the text from the Gospel of Matthew, is: *Treat others as you want to be treated by them*. We find a negative formulation of the golden rule for example in the apocryphal Hebrew Bible book of Tobit: *'Do that to no man which thou hatest'* (Tobit 4:15).

Our circumstances as well as our consciousness constantly change. That is why it is important that we respect life and keep observing life to determine our relationship to it. The word respect is composed of 're' and 'spectare', and means literally 'to look again'. If we have the courage to see life from the standpoint of the soul, we free ourselves from prejudice and also from what is called in the booklet *'The Voice of the Silence'*: the great heresy of separation.²⁷

The great heresy of separation is the cause and the root of all evil. It is the delusion that we are separated from others and entirely different from them, whereby the divine in us and in others cannot yet be liberated. When we practice compassion, we gain access to an inexhaustible force and a wisdom that knows no limits.

Then we may drink from the sources of inspiration that rise from the heart of the universe. Contemporary spiritual thinkers almost all emphasize the importance of compassion. Below are seven statements about compassion from internationally renowned spiritual authors and leaders.

- *If we want to create a viable, peaceful world, we need to integrate compassion into the gritty realities of the 21st century.*
(Karen Amstrong)
- *If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want yourself to be happy, then practice compassion.* (Dalai Lama)
- *Enlightened leadership is spiritual when we do not regard spirituality as a religious dogma or ideology, but as a level of awareness where we experience values such as truth, goodness, beauty, love and compassion, as well as intuition, creativity, insight and focused attention.*
(Deepak Chopra)
- *Compassion is the key to life beyond the border of your lower self.*
(Debbie Ford)
- *Our human compassion connects us to each other, not in the form of pitying and patronising, but as human beings who have learned to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.* (Nelson Mandela)

- *We are all made for goodness, love and compassion. Our lives and the world are transformed when we live with these truths.*
(Desmond Tutu)
- *The most powerful thought is 'I am just like everyone else, I am just as wounded as everyone else' because this realisation makes you empathetic. It makes you compassionate.* (Marianne Williamson)

In September 2012 the International School of the Golden Rosy-cross organised a major international conference in southern France in the village of Orniac-Ussat-les-Bains, which in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was an important centre of initiation of the Gnostic movement referred to as the Cathars since 1877, based on the Greek word 'katharoi' meaning 'the pure ones'. In the large temple tent were some 2500 participants from forty countries who were asked to practice compassion from a deep inner knowing.

'The new reality is joyful, glorious, exalted, humane. Such a new reality is brotherhood, in the deepest sense of the word. Such a reality encloses all living beings, permeates all hearts and constitutes unity. And what was formerly quoted in sacred texts as: 'glory, glory, glory', the new reality testifies of: 'unity, unity, unity'.

We would like to inwardly realise together that all is one, emanating from the Creator, the One-in-All, the creator mundi. That all people are one in essence, are one living creation. That everything and everyone you see around you, as well as you yourself, constitute your consciousness as you do theirs. We would like to impress upon you that all previous brotherhoods are a living reality here, are present here, fully connected with us, and that they are trying to raise our consciousness so that their radiations, their living high energies, can touch our subtle bodies.

We would dearly like everyone to experience that the life that you live now is one great miracle, one great opportunity, and that the fatigue, the worries, the fears may be perfectly real, but can also be com-

pletely overridden with that living energy, if one ray of compassion for others can penetrate into your mind and your consciousness. For compassion opens gates; it connects us with others, and thereby also with the One, the Creator, who is within you as well as in us, and of whom we are each a ray. Compassion offers you Love's greatest gift: namely Life, the ever-innovating life, and through this the new soul no longer knows death, but only change, ascension.'

Compassion need not be limited to people in our immediate surroundings or even to humanity as a whole. It can be extended to the other kingdoms of nature as well: the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom and the animal kingdom, and even to those who are not visible to our eyes, such as nature spirits and angels.

The German physician, theologian, philosopher and musician Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) developed a philosophy based on a mystical-religious vision, which he terms *Respect for all life*, and for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. He formulated its essence as: *'It is good to preserve life, to promote life and to bring any life that is capable of development to its highest significance. It is bad to destroy life, to detract from life or to obstruct any life that has the potential to develop'*.

Elemental beings

Elemental beings, nature spirits, are etheric, astral or mental life forms with a certain awareness that have the capacity to help development on earth. They mostly belong and live in one of the four elements: earth, water, air or fire and are therefore also called elementals or nature spirits. For example, there are devas that enable and promote the growth of plants, tree spirits associated with trees, water sprites that live in water and group spirits that guide the life cycles of specific animal species. For most people, these elemental beings are not visible, but some people can feel them or even communicate with them.

Era	Period	Epoch	Million years	Biological life
Cenozoic 	Quaternary	Holocene	0,1	Extinction of many animal species
		Pleistocene	1,8	Further development of humanoids
	Tertiary 	Pliocene	5	Arise first humanoids
		Miocene	26	Arise large mammals
		Oligocene	37	Arise grazing mammals
		Eocene	53	Further diversification and arise grasses
		Paleocene	65	Diversification mammals and birds
Mesozoic 	Cretaceous		136	Extinction dinosaurs New insects
		Jurassic	190	First birds First flying reptiles (pterosaurs)
	Triassic 		225	First mammals
		Permian	280	First dinosaurs First reptiles
	Paleozoic 	Carboniferus	345	First amphibians
Devonian		395	First seed-forming land plants	
Silurian		430	First land plants, jawless fish	
Ordovician		500	Arise reef-shaped algae and corals	
Cambrian		570	First trilobites	
Precambrian				Formation earth's crust, land masses ans seas

image 12: geological time scale with the development of biological life

It is good to know of the existence of elemental beings and to respect them, but mostly we do not have much to do with them. They belong to what we may call the earthly or horizontal dimension and as such they go their own way. If a garden is cared for with attention and love, the elementals present there will greatly appreciate this and will do their best to help things along in that garden. When trees are cut down rigorously for profit or when raw materials are extracted from the earth on a large scale, it is damaging to the these natural creatures and chances are that the balance between the different natural kingdoms is thereby greatly disturbed.

Spiritual hierarchies

In this world, plants live on minerals, animals lives on plants and other animals, and the human being uses minerals, plants and often animals for his food. In the original world, on the other hand, the higher beings offer themselves out of love for the lower. The best example of this is the life of Christ.

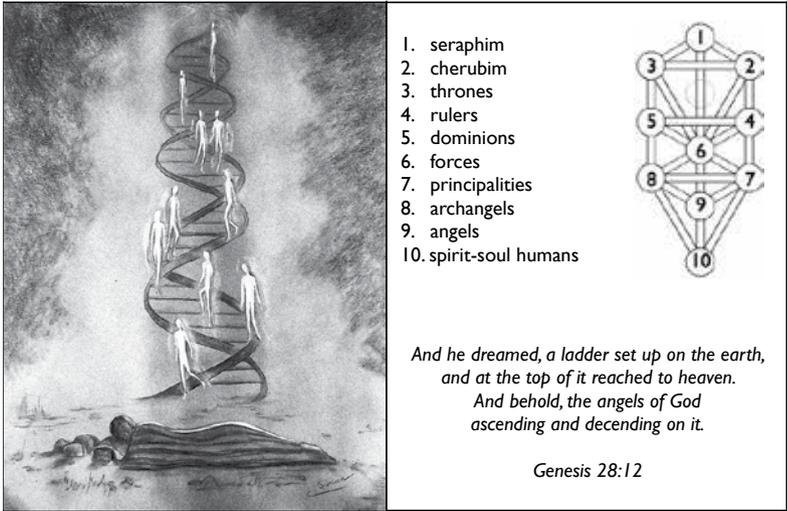


image 13: the spiritual hierarchies according to Dionysius (list), Cati Simon (painting) and Genesis (text)

We may now ask ourselves to whom we should sacrifice ourselves, as members of the human kingdom. It is of course not the intention that we as self-conscious beings sacrifice our physical body. It is all about offering up our attention, love and devotion to our fellow human beings and to the realms that are above us in a hierarchical sense, to beings of the vertical dimension that have a larger field of vision and a larger action radius than we do, without neglecting our normal earthly tasks and responsibilities. These supernatural realms are formed by the spirit-souls of the universal Brotherhood and the angels of the spiritual hierarchies that together form a living connection between the earth and the heavenly abodes. They know much more about the divine plan than we do and work diligently on its implementation.

It is written about the patriarch Jacob that he observed the activity of angels in a dream: *‘And he dreamed. And behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it’* (Genesis 28:12).

The theologian and mystic who became known under the name pseudo-Dionysius wrote in the fifth century the treatise '*On the Heavenly Hierarchy*', in which he describes nine gradations of angels: seraphim, cherubim, thrones, rulers, dominions, forces, principalities, archangels and angels.⁵²

At the beginning of the twentieth century, both Rudolf Steiner and Max Heindel wrote more about this spiritual hierarchy, based on their own psychical research and declared that humanity is destined to become the tenth hierarchy in this line (see image 13).^{16, 17} We may regard all participants in the spiritual hierarchy as concrete manifestations of God, although they are not visible to our eyes. If we build a personal relationship with God, it is actually a relationship with His representatives of the spiritual hierarchy.

The universal Brotherhood and the angelic hosts need people on earth to help with the tasks that they have taken on to realise God's plan. Earthly man who has advanced spiritually through many experiences and through the activity of the eternity-principle within him, the spirit-spark in the heart, will receive the assignment to prepare himself to be part of the divine hierarchy so that creation can be completed. The apostle Paul writes in this connection: '*For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God*' (Romans 8:19).

How can we become children of God and thus join in the tenth hierarchy? By going an authentic spiritual path in self-authority. It is a path of spiritual awareness and renewal. Since every person is unique and has to give shape to his own life, it makes little sense to formulate strict rules for such a path of development. We have to make conscious choices ourselves based on an ever-expanding inner understanding.

The nine essays in this second section of this book are in line with the nine reflections in the first half, in which the Gnostic Christian way is explained with excerpts from the Bible. These es-

says are intended primarily to promote inner awareness and, in this way, provide a spiritual context for the many practical issues that arise in life, like birth, aging, dying, consciousness, relationships, happiness and deception.

Purification and cleansing

After inwardly being touched, the spiritual path begins with clearing the barriers that hinder it. These consist of some necessary purifications and cleansing of which we may become aware by asking ourselves the following questions:

1. Is what I take in the form of food and drink good for me in this respect?
2. With which people do I surround myself, in what spheres do I move and in what way?
3. Are my ambitions and desires in accordance with the spiritual way?
4. What are my thoughts, feelings and behaviour with regard to all living beings?
5. How do I spend my energy, time and attention?
6. Am I willing to give up my truths of today for the higher truths of tomorrow?
7. Does that what I think, feel and want, contribute to my inner development?

In the gospels, this striving for purity is symbolised by the figure of John the Baptist, a kinsman and contemporary of Jesus. Whoever wants to go the path of spiritual development must therefore become as John the Baptist. According to The Aquarian Gospel, the young John was trained from his seventh year for his future as a prophet by the hermit Matheno, an Egyptian priest and master of the temple in Sahara. We conclude this essay with a text in which Matheno prepares his student John for the fulfilment of his assignment.⁵¹

'When John was twelve years old his mother died, and neighbors laid her body in a tomb among her kindred in the Hebron burying ground, and near to Zacharias' tomb.

And John was deeply grieved; he wept. Matheno said: 'It is not well to weep because of death. Death is no enemy of man; it is a friend who, when the work of life is done, just cuts the cord that binds the human boat to earth, that it may sail on smoother seas. No language can describe a mother's worth, and yours was tried and true. But she was not called hence until her tasks were done. The call of death is always for the best, for we are solving problems there as well as here; and one is sure to find himself where he can solve his problems best. It is but selfishness that makes one wish to call again to earth departed souls. Then let your mother rest in peace and let her noble life be strength and inspiration unto you. [...]

Your mission here is that of harbinger; for you will go before Messiah's face to pave his way, and make the people ready to receive their king. This readiness is purity of heart; none but the pure in heart can recognise the king. To teach men to be pure in heart, you must yourself be pure in heart, and word, and deed. In infancy the vow for you was made and you became a Nazarite. The razor shall not touch your face nor head, and you shall taste not wine nor fiery drinks.

Men need a pattern for their lives; they love to follow, not to lead. The man who stands upon the corners of the paths and points the way, but does not go, is just a pointer; and a block of wood can do the same. The teacher treads the way; on every span of ground he leaves his footprints clearly cut, which all can see and be assured that he, their master went that way' (The Aquarian Gospel 15:1-16).



Have you ever felt the longing for a different motherhood, or a different fatherhood than the earthly one? Motherhood as to this nature is the consequence of the fall into this emergency order. If you are really serious about going the path of transfiguration, then this problem will inevitably crop up in you.

For in the human soul life that has been liberated from earthly standards, there is a new motherhood, and every female pupil of a bona fide Spiritual School must begin to long for that new, heavenly motherhood.

It is necessary to know what this motherhood signifies. Only when you know about this inwardly, can you live and approach it, without any strain.

The first woman to be mentioned in the Bible is Eve. To us she is the prototype of the original soul human being in its female manifestation. The name 'Eve' means, 'Mother of Living Souls'. She is the bearer of the human life wave in the all-manifestation. Just as Adam can be indicated by the cabalistic number nine, the number of humanity, so Eve can be indicated by the cabalistic number seven, the number of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 11

WELCOMING BIRTH

ESSAY 2

When does the life of a human being actually begin? Many will say: 'at birth'. Others claim: 'when a pregnant woman feels the child moving in her belly for the first time'. Still others declare: 'at the conception, when an egg and a sperm merge into a new cell, from which a completely new human body will then develop.' All those answers are correct in a certain way, but it is only part of the truth because these answers are limited to the bodily aspect, the biological organism that is so wonderfully organised and about which the psalmist sings:

*For thou didst form my inward parts:
Thou didst cover me in my mother's womb.
I will give thanks unto thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully
made:
Wonderful are thy works;
And that my soul knoweth right well.
My frame was not hidden from thee,
When I was made in secret,
And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance;
And in thy book they were all written,
Even the days that were ordained for me,
When as yet there was none of them.
How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!*
(Psalm 139:13-17)

According to the universal wisdom, the human being is essentially a thought of God, a purely spiritual and eternal being, free of time and space and with the task of cooperating in the execution of the divine plan by assimilating higher energies, to transform them and radiate them. This spiritual being is also referred to as the microcosm and can be regarded as a small universe in itself, a reflection of the macrocosm.

How is it then that we as humans have a mortal, physical body? It is the result of an incident known as the Fall, described as a myth in Genesis 3, in which it is said that man, despite warnings, eats from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and therefore is expelled from paradise. This mythical story does not relate to historical persons who lived long ago, but to the microcosm in which we currently live.

Emergency solution

It was not intended in God's plan that human microcosmoi would receive a mortal physical body like that of the mammals. That is an emergency solution to give them the opportunity through many earthly lives to repair the damage to the microcosm that resulted from the fall. The formation of the biological body is expressed in the Bible as: *'And Jehovah God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skins, and clothed them'* (Genesis 3:21).

The original microcosm lived in paradise, a field of development that is part of what Jesus calls the Kingdom of Heaven, a field characterised by unity, freedom, love and eternal creation. He consisted of spirit, soul and body. It is very important to realise that this was not a physical body as we know it now, but an immortal spiritual body that is hard for us to imagine.

That which is called the Fall can be seen as a shift in focus from the big picture – a concentration on the execution of God's plan – to a focus on oneself. If a microcosm in paradise receives the divine radiations but does not convert them and radiate them be-

cause he keeps them for himself, then a great heat develops in the entire system. As a result, his spiritual body falls apart as it were, and evaporates.

Such a broken microcosm with only a spirit and a soul cannot remain in paradise because it can no longer endure the high level of vibration, and must necessarily descend into an area with a much lower vibration, in which everything constantly moves between polarities and becomes subjected to the cycle of rising, shining and fading.

In this situation, the microcosm must again and again receive a new mortal body and a personality linked to it, to whom is said: *'Thorns also and thistles shall the ground bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return'* (Genesis 3:18-19).

And so the microcosm became chained to the wheel of birth and death that is called samsara in Buddhism and Hinduism, a concept that is associated with illusion, delusion and suffering. Life on earth presents us with many challenges, but that is not without reason. They enable us to gather a fullness of experience and to long for the paradise we lost. It is a spiritual desire for total healing that flows from the core of the microcosm, the spirit-spark.

On the basis of this yearning, this homesickness of the soul, a person may enter a spiritual path on which an immortal spiritual body is woven, a glorified body, a body of resurrection. Only then is the microcosm free from the continuous cycle of being born, living and dying. A fallen microcosm that has returned to its divine origin after many earthly lives is greater and more powerful than the microcosmoi that did not have the experience of the Fall. In *'The Gospel of the Holy Twelve'* we read: ⁵³

Blessed are they who suffer many experiences, for they shall be

made perfect through suffering: they shall be as the angels of God in Heaven and shall die no more, neither shall they be born any more, for death and birth have no more dominion over them. They who have suffered and overcome shall be made Pillars in the Temple of my God, and they shall go out no more. Verily I say unto you, except ye be born again of water and of fire, ye cannot see the kingdom of God' (The Gospel of the Holy Twelve 37:2-3).

Personality and microcosm

In ancient times the idea of reincarnation was fairly common, not only in the Far East but also in the countries around the Mediterranean and among the peoples in Western Europe. Among the first Christian communities the belief in reincarnation was certainly not unusual. There were even Christian church fathers who were convinced of the correctness of the concept of reincarnation, including Hieronymus, Origenes and Clement of Alexandria. Only at the second council of Constantinople in the year 553 was the doctrine of reincarnation, and thus of karma, removed from Christian theology because it was seen as a heretical doctrine.⁵⁴

For many centuries the concept of reincarnation went underground in the West because it was dangerous to profess it publicly. Written comments on this subject were therefore often presented in a disguised form to prevent opposition and persecution. We read for example in the writings '*The Confession of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood*' from 1615: '*Would it not be glorious if one could always live so, as if one had lived from the beginning of the world, and would continue to live until the end of it?*'²

The German philosopher Gotthold Efraim Lessing (1729-1781) poses a number of questions at the end of his book '*The Education of the Human Race*' from 1780 that clearly refer to the concept of reincarnation, also known as metempsychosis or soul relocation:⁵⁵

- Why can everyone not have lived more than once in this world?
- Is that assumption so ridiculous because it is the most ancient?

- Why should I not return as often as I am able, to acquire new knowledge and capabilities?
- Do I take so much with me in one life that it is no longer worth the trouble to come back?
- Is not all eternity mine?

From the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of reincarnation in the Western world received a strong impulse from the writings of Helena Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society. In her work *Isis unveiled* (1877) she writes that the doctrine of reincarnation is incorrect, but in her later book *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) she embraces the concept of reincarnation.^{56, 15}

Did she change her belief in the intervening eleven years? Not really, because *Isis Unveiled* is written from out of the earthly personality and *The Secret Doctrine* from the perspective of the microcosm.

There is no reincarnation for the personality. It gradually dissolves after the death of the physical body and does not return. However the damaged microcosm is an eternal being and again and again reconnects with a mortal body, until it is healed and can continue its development in the realms beyond space and time.

In a popular reincarnation belief your body is compared to a car. Death is the moment that the car has broken down and can no longer be repaired so that you can no longer move. Then you buy a new car, symbol for incarnating in a new body, so you can continue on your journey. This comparison is of course flawed, because reincarnation applies to the immortal and divine microcosm, and not to the mortal personality. The psalmist expresses this duality as: *'I said, ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High. Nevertheless ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes'* (Psalm 82: 6-7).

Resistance against the concept of reincarnation

The concept of reincarnation and the associated law of karma provide insights into all sorts of questions of life. Nevertheless there is traditionally much resistance from science and Western religions to the concept of reincarnation. Why is this?

Carol Bowman, an American regression therapist and reincarnation researcher, writes in her book *'Children's Past Lives'*.⁵⁷

'Why does the church put so much effort into discrediting reincarnation? The most obvious explanation for this is the implicit psychology of the concept of reincarnation. Someone who believes in reincarnation must take responsibility for his own spiritual development through re-birth. He does not need priests, confessions, and rituals anymore to protect himself from damnation (all ideas that, by the way, are not part of Jesus' teaching). His only concerns are his own actions and their consequences for himself and for others.'

'The belief in reincarnation eliminates the fear of an eternal hell and damnation, which the church uses to keep its flock under its thumb. In other words, reincarnation directly undermines the authority and power of the dogmatic church.'

Scientists who take reincarnation seriously will have to recognise that the paradigms which they have been taught, and from which they work every day, are inadequate. This can be experienced as painful and perceived as an attack on their authority. Then it is safer, but very unscientific, to maintain that reincarnation is pure speculation or that consciousness is the result of certain physical-chemical processes in the brain. The Dutch journalist Michiel Hegener took stock of what has been researched in the field of reincarnation in the world and wrote about it in his Dutch book with the translated title *'Living from repetition – proving reincarnation'*. At the end of his book he concludes:⁵⁸

'The big question is of course: does reincarnation really exist? Given that these memories, spontaneously or under hypnosis, are always

about lives that came to an end before the person who now remembers them was born, the conclusion that reincarnation exists seems tenable. If, furthermore, no two people remember the same life, then the conclusion that reincarnation exists is virtually positive. But I also note that there is no definitive evidence that proves once and for all the existence of reincarnation. It is 'almost certain', and that is the limit of my conclusion. Carol Bowman rhetorically sighed: "How much evidence do we need before it is proven?!" The great question is no longer whether reincarnation exists but why Western science, Islam and orthodox Christianity are in a collective state of denial'.

A person who believes in reincarnation and karma is less likely to commit crimes or deliberately harm others than someone who does not believe in it, because he knows that his misdeeds will always turn against him. Yet it is not primarily about what someone believes or not, because his or her state of being is the primary focus. The Dalai Lama agrees with this in his statement: *'It does not matter so much if you believe in God or not, whether you believe in Buddha or not, whether you believe in reincarnation or not. You must lead a good life'.*

Faith, hope and love

Whoever really believes does not depend on a system of teachings but is touched inwardly. The Epistle to the Hebrews describes faith as the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is a mighty power of which is written that it can move mountains (Matthew 17:10). But the power of love is even greater. That is why Paul writes: *'But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love'* (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Many who follow the news conclude that there is not much of this love in our world. Some draw the conclusion that they are well advised not to conceive and raise children because they do

not want them to live in this terrible world. Of course, everyone has the right to his own opinion, but it is good to realise that this starting point is not in accordance with the universal wisdom. The news reports that keep flooding the world give a heavily distorted picture, and it is of great importance that microcosms in the reflection sphere are given the opportunity to experience yet another earthly life because only in this way can they progress on their way back to their divine origin. It is also important that human life on earth be continued.

We do not need to worry as yet about a decrease of the world's population. The number of inhabitants of the earth is expected to rise from about 7 billion in 2017 to about 9.7 billion in 2050. We therefore may welcome these new human entities! Of course this does not detract from the fact that it is at the same time wise to limit births through the possibilities of contraception. Every child has the right to the attention and love that it needs to develop into a more or less harmonious personality. In our current society this is easier to realise in smaller families than in very large families. Furthermore, it is also important that parents not spend most of their life just to raise children, but that they also have time for their own (inner) development.

In prosperous countries fewer and fewer handicapped children are born, because a pregnancy is prematurely terminated when there is a diagnosis that the child has Down's syndrome. That is understandable because it can be difficult to have a disabled child. It is however worth remembering that nothing happens in vain and that a human entity may incarnate in a disabled body because it has to work out a certain karmic lesson. It is also possible that a disabled child enables the parents to develop certain qualities. If they try to avoid their karma, they will still be confronted with it in a different way. Parents can generally learn a lot from their children, and vice versa of course!

Protective field

If a woman and a man have a close loving relationship and both are following a spiritual path, together they form a protective field with a relatively high vibration level that is attractive to those microcosms who have a fullness of experience and who seek a new opportunity to incarnate, because they can then be born in an environment in which they can continue their development in an optimal environment.

When however, there is hardly any love in the relationship between a man and a woman, and the focus is mostly on individual gratification, this will attract a different type of human entity with less attractive soul qualities. We can imagine that a similar mechanism also occurs with in vitro fertilisation or in test tube fertilisation, where the fertilization takes place outside the body and the resulting embryo is then placed in the uterus.

When a human entity wants to be born to a particular woman, it begins to gather astral substance around her. Clairvoyants can often perceive this in the aura of the woman concerned, not only after conception, but also before it. The development of the human embryo is a fascinating process in which we symbolically recognise the outer and inner development that can occur after birth (see image 14).

Much can be deduced from the way the embryo changes in its shape. We discuss embryology here by and large from the point of view of phenomenology. This is a philosophical movement that uses direct as well as intuitive experience of phenomena and from these tries to arrive at the underlying and essential qualities of what is experienced. An important principle is that it is possible to discover invisible phenomena through the visible phenomena. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe applied such a phenomenological approach in his scientific studies of plants and colours.

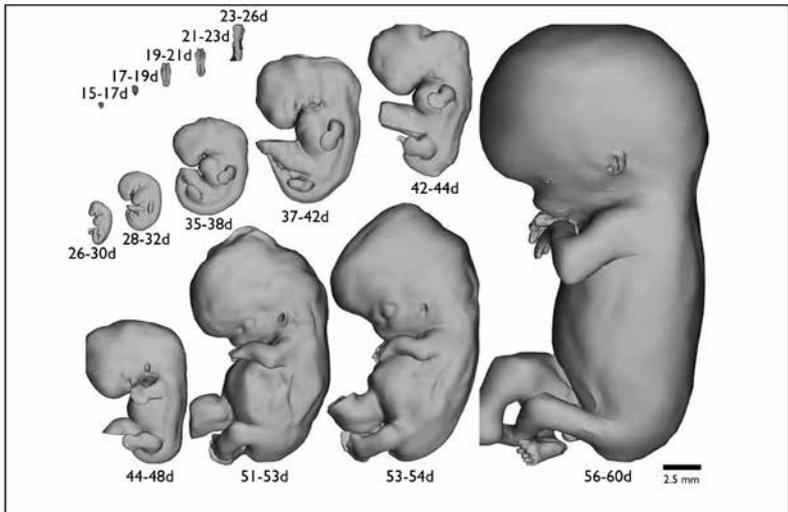


image 14: the development of the human embryo

Embryology

In a zygote or fertilised egg there is already a certain connection with a human microcosm. In the first three days after fertilisation, several cell divisions take place in the zygote as it moves through the fallopian tube towards the uterus. This is called the mineral phase because the embryo does grow but remains the same in size. On the fourth day there is a ball of cells that is referred to as 'morula'. From it grows a cellular structure with an open space called a 'blastula' that settles in the uterine wall around the seventh day. This phase is called the plant phase because it is reminiscent of a growing plant that connects more strongly with the nutrient medium.

The cells in the embryo start to differentiate about two weeks after fertilisation. Then the animal phase starts, where each cell has a certain destination. Cells that later form the skeleton go to the outside of the embryo and cells that will form the intestines move to the inside. An embryo is created that at first does not differ much from the embryo of animals, but which clear-

ly changes into a human fetus some ten weeks after conception. Then everything that is necessary to create a human body is basically present, although naturally much must still change and mature. As the embryo and later the fetus grows, the connection between the growing physical body and the human microcosm becomes stronger.

In the sixteenth week of pregnancy, the child becomes sensitive to light to a certain extent. Around the fourth month it develops basic reflexes and a series of facial expressions. After five or six months, it is just as sensitive to touch as a newborn baby. From the 24th week on, it can hear sounds continuously – and it listens to the sounds in the mother's body and to voices, music and other sounds. Between weeks 28 and 34, the cranial nerves are as advanced as those of a newborn baby, and the cerebral cortex is sufficiently formed for the consciousness to function. A few weeks later, brain waves, including those of REM dreams, are recognisable. From the sixth month the fetus is equipped with most of the physiological capabilities of a newborn baby.⁵⁹

The human embryo develops in a different way than the embryo of mammals. Because it grows from the inside out, it begins to move. In the beginning it is turned inwards, but at a certain moment it lifts its head as a result of its development. This growth movement ensures that the pelvis rotates outwards and the embryo grows upright. We see a similar movement later in a toddler who stands up and starts to walk upright. No mammal naturally stands upright on two legs with an upright spine. The human embryo has already practiced stretching its limbs and spine in the womb.

We are not four-legged animals because we straighten our bodies naturally. From this standpoint we can see that we are essentially souls who are destined to form a living connection between earth and heaven. As humans, we are distinguished from mammals through our thinking. Thinking processes are possible be-

cause of our brain. In order for the brain to function as well as possible, the head of the upright human is supported by the neck and the torso.

Being born

After the foregoing explanation it will be clear that a child does not come into the world as a blank page. The birth of a child is an uncertain and radical event, both for the parents and the child. Immediately after birth, the baby starts to live and breathe in a different world and in a new element. Then some elements are literally left behind that until recently were of vital importance: the placenta and the umbilical cord. The placenta is associated with the mother but in fact it originates from the zygote, the very first cell that carries all the characteristics of the new person. The placenta actually belongs to the fetus.

The physical birth is often seen as a metaphor for a spiritual birth. Just as with a physical birth, something also dies with a spiritual birth: the old man, specifically the ego that was mostly focused on self-preservation and a drive for possession, power and honour. In fairy tales, we recognise the ego in characters like the stepmother, the witch and the wolf who die towards the end of the story. Thus on the spiritual path, man must let go of his old nature so that the spiritual soul can develop. Just as a newborn baby begins to breathe in the sensory world, so the newborn soul assimilates forces from the world of the soul. The parents of a newborn are advised to ensure that it can develop optimally in a way that is beautifully described in the book *'The Prophet'* by Kahlil Gibran.⁶⁰

'And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, Speak to us of children.

And he said: Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

*They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent
forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends
you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
so He loves also the bow that is stable.'*



It would be insane to claim that there is no good whatsoever in the nature of death, but it is a nature in which good cannot maintain itself. It is immediately annihilated in the interplay of change. The values of good of the nature of death are therefore either delusion or they have no fundamental power.

What could in fact be the fundamental principle of good? Nothing other than the Spirit itself. Hence, if the Spirit is lacking in the nature of death, and if this nature is separated from the Spirit, this proves that this nature is not pure and unsullied, in spite of all its goodness.

That also proves that the nature of death must originally have been a totally different nature or must have belonged to a totally different nature and been separated from it due to some incident.

CHAPTER 12

ACCEPTING AGING

ESSAY 3

The French poet, essayist and philosopher Paul Valéry once wrote: *'Inevitably there comes a moment when you look into the mirror and see a ruin in the making'*. This aphorism is confrontational because we know that we will all have to face the inevitable decay of our physical body at one time. In our society it is no problem to be old as long as you are vigorous and still look good. That is usually not said openly, but it is a view that is imposed on us by the media, by the health industry, the cosmetics and fashion business and by everyone who has been brainwashed by them.

The desire to stay young is eternal. It is written that the legendary Egyptian queen Cleopatra, who lived in the first century before the beginning of our era, kept her skin young, radiant and healthy by bathing in donkey milk. Although numerous attempts have been made over the centuries to prepare an elixir of life that guarantees eternal youth, it still hasn't been found. And it is highly unlikely that it will ever happen.

On our journey from the cradle to the grave we are faced with numerous challenges. One of them is accepting the decline of our body. How do you know that you are getting older? If you get more and more invitations for funerals. When people start to tell you that you still look young. Initially, aging can be camouflaged. Some more make-up, a colour rinse or maybe even a new hair-piece work wonders. If you have enough money you can choose from numerous further possibilities: Botox, eyelid correction, facelift, silicone, liposuction... There is something for everyone. And if you're not that appealing in real life, you can always use old

photos or photo-shopped snapshots of yourself to put on the internet and social media.

Almost 100 *selfies* have been preserved from the world-famous Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), starting with the portrait of the up-and-coming 22-year-old artist to the 63-year-old master painter. No photos, of course, because photography would only be invented more than two centuries later, but self-portraits in the form of approximately 50 paintings, 32 etchings and 7 drawings. This Dutch painter who was born in Leiden and lived and worked in Amsterdam from his 25th year onward, is considered the inventor of the self-portrait genre, because there are very few famous artists who have portrayed themselves as often as he did.

Art historians have devised and researched all sorts of reasons for Rembrandt's passion for making self-portraits. These range from pure vanity to trying out new styles and from a marketing tool to a method for self-examination. It remains a guess... Rembrandt certainly did not flatter himself. He draws and paints exactly what he sees in his mirror. The changes and the aging in his face can be closely followed in the series of self-portraits. This is an interesting playground for facial physiognomy experts, who are said to be able to draw conclusions about the inner self based on the outer appearance of a person.

Decline of appearance

Rembrandt shows us the decline of his outer appearance with an almost painful precision in his later self-portraits. In a painting from 1661 he presents himself as an old man with a white turban on his head, an attribute that is unusual in his self-portraits. In his right hand he has a thick manuscript with handwritten texts and he carries a sword on his body with the cross-shaped handle located over the region of his heart, a very unusual place for a sword. Could this have a symbolic meaning?

During a restoration of this self-portrait in the early nineties of the last century a window with bars became visible in the background. As we get older, we may experience our body as a prison of the soul, and perhaps that is the intention because then a desire for liberation through transcendence may grow. All the attributes on this self-portrait indicate that Rembrandt presents himself here as the apostle Paul, who was imprisoned four times in his life and who writes in his second letter to the Corinthians:

'Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal'

(2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

The heart of the work of Rembrandt's extensive oeuvre is not formed by his self-portraits but by his biblical paintings. Rembrandt was 31 years old when in 1637 the authoritative official Dutch translation of the Bible appeared. This first Dutch translation of the Bible had required a labour of almost twenty years and was translated directly from the original ancient texts; in certain orthodox communities it is still being used at present. Rembrandt made over three hundred works inspired by Bible stories: mostly drawings and etchings and about sixty paintings. The surprising interplay between light and dark, which symbolically represents life versus death, is characteristic of his style and is also strongly present in the approximately twelve paintings he made of the Christmas story about the birth of Jesus in which several generations, from babies to elders, are represented.

Rembrandt brings the Bible stories to life in a moving way. He was clearly a deeply religious man with a protestant signature, but he never joined any church as far as we know. Rembrandt lived in

a flourishing cultural city in which several denominations lived in peace with each other: Calvinists, Lutherans, Catholics, Jews and more liberal communities such as those of the Anabaptists and the Remonstrants.

Suit of armour

Rudolf Steiner claims that Rembrandt was a personal student of an incarnated being in the seventeenth century who is known as Christian Rosycross. Rembrandt would have been initiated by him into the mysteries of light and darkness and immortalised his teacher in the paintings *Man in Armour* from 1655 and *Polish Rider* from about the same year. The representation of a spiritual leader in the form of a soldier or warrior is less strange than it might seem at first. This representation is reminiscent of the legend of the knight Galahad who finds the grail and also of the apostle Paul who writes:

'Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places . Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Ephesians 6:11-16).

Rembrandt was also in contact with a man who fought a spiritual battle and literally and metaphorically emerged as the self-effacing victor: Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670). In 1665, he painted this heavily tested Czech pedagogue, theologian and philosopher

who lived and worked the last and happiest part of his life in the 'House with the Heads' on the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam, the canal house where since 2017 the renowned *Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica* is situated.

Comenius was a spiritual leader of the Protestant Moravian religious community and with great zeal elaborated on the spiritual treasure which the Rosicrucians from the German university town of Tübingen revealed at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In Amsterdam, the elderly Comenius looked back on his life and in his 77th year composed his last book with it the title '*Unum necessarium*' (The only thing necessary), with which he encourages his readers to focus only on what is really important. In this book he states that all confusion in the world has only one cause: the human being is unable to distinguish the necessary from the unnecessary. He thereby ignores what is necessary and occupies himself only with the unnecessary, by which he is constantly confused and entangled.

At the end of '*Unum necessarium*' the deeply religious Comenius recapitulates his advice as follows:

'Do not burden yourself with things that are beyond the bare necessities of life but be content with the few that you need for some comfort and praise God. If you lack these, be satisfied with the bare necessities.

If you are also deprived of these, see that you save yourself. If you cannot even save yourself, let go, but be sure that you hold on to God. For whoever holds on to God can lack everything. He still possesses the highest good and eternal life with and in God. And this from all that one can wish the final goal and the culmination.'

Education

Comenius was convinced that a well-guided education contributes a great deal to a feeling of well-being throughout a person's life, and thus also in old age. It is a well-established truth that the poet of Proverbs wrote down concisely from a religious point of

view as: 'Those who seek Me early will find Me' (Proverbs 8:17) and that Ecclesiastes expresses poetically as:

*'Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,
before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh,
when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;
before the sun, and the light,
and the moon, and the stars, are darkened,
and the clouds return after the rain;
in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble,
and the strong men shall bow themselves,
and the grinders cease because they are few,
and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened,
and the doors shall be shut in the street;
when the sound of the grinding is low,
and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird,
and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;
yea, they shall be afraid of that which is high,
and terrors shall be in the way;
and the almond-tree shall blossom,
and the grasshopper shall be a burden,
and desire shall fail.'*

(Ecclesiastes 12:1-5)

Here Ecclesiastes euphemistically sums up all the defects that accompany old age.

The human being grows and blooms until his 30-35th year. From that age on, aging becomes noticeable because the aging process goes faster than the regeneration. It is said that all body cells are renewed in a period of seven years, and also that the quality of the cells decreases with time as a person grows older.

Normal biological aging confronts us with a decrease in the elasticity of the skin, a diminishing of muscle mass, bone decalcification, joint problems and impairment of the senses: seeing

and hearing, smell and taste and touch. Also the brain functions deteriorate and thus the functioning of the personality as a whole. Some people are more sensitive than others to this age-related decline. Of course lifestyle and circumstances also play a role. Heavy physical work, stress and unhealthy food speed up the aging process.

In our time there are countless possibilities to reduce the limitations or loss of function that accompany aging: medicines, nutritional supplements, implants, dental crowns, laser treatments, glasses, lenses, hearing aids, walkers, mobility scooters, and so on. It is great that all these tools exist, but it is no fun of course if you must resort to them. The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) writes that the diminishing of our powers in old age is certainly very sad but at the same time necessary, because otherwise death would be too difficult for us.

Death is physically embedded in our chromosomes. It is literally in our genes. Chromosomes have an endpiece, the telomere, that protects the gene column from fraying and unravelling, just like the plastic end of a shoe lace keeps the lace intact. This telomere becomes shorter with each cell division until it peters out and the chromosome indeed begins to fray. Then the cell dies.

If, during the aging process, we keep hanging on to the image that we have of ourselves and do not adjust to it but want to continue doing what we've always done, then we will probably experience our inevitable aging and its subsequent defects as a disaster.

Maybe we will then start to look forward to a one-way end-of-life clinic. However, we may also see the inevitable aging process as a spiritual opportunity, as an opportunity to discover that life is not about us, that the malleability of life is limited and that we have to rise above ourselves in this period.

We can also experience illnesses as spiritual opportunities. Disease, health and healing are still mainly approached from a purely physical perspective, while it is now common knowledge that

every disorder has both a psychological and a somatic (physical) aspect. In our lives we are most emphatically influenced by illness and an absence of health because both have a huge impact on the quality of life.

Among others we know diseases that are acute or chronic, hereditary diseases, disease symptoms and communicable diseases. Not everyone has to deal with illnesses in his life, some have the privilege of dying of old age. But most people are confronted during their lifetime in one way or another with illness and its impact on our lives as well as the lives of our family and friends.

Diseases, serious diseases, can have a huge impact in someone's life. They can also have a positive influence. We see this with small children when, after a considerable period of illness (childhood disease) emerge from it as 'different', and we observe that somehow an important step has been taken, a step of consciousness. Illness is often accompanied by a healing crisis that can also be called a crisis of consciousness. Illness can force you to reflect on yourself: where am I all the time that I am so busy... In short, illness is not only negative. It can teach us so much! Due to physical and external disharmony or illness, we are sometimes forced to reflect on our inner disharmony. We are forced to take stock of ourselves, and who we actually are. What we really yearn for deep down inside.

Balance

What we really want is harmony, balance. Much of our human struggle is the result of this urge, this search for balance, for healing. Again and again, in reaction to impulses that continually bring us out of balance, we strive after recovery – as an individual, as a group and as humanity as a whole. Gradually we become aware of our fundamental illness, namely our lack of balance. The natural immune system in humans works in two phases: first the battle and then the recovery from it. Both processes

are controlled by the automatic nervous system with the aid of the sympathetic (which stimulates) and the parasympathetic (which constrains) nervous system. In these processes we recognise the duality that is so typical of our earthly field of life in which everything responds to the law of action and reaction, light and dark, inhalation and exhalation, the filling and the emptying of the heart, expanding and shrinking universe...

What actually causes the disturbances in the immune system? Serious infectious diseases that are mainly caused by viruses and bacteria. Environmental influences affecting the capacity of the immune system

An inhibited soul-life

The natural bodily response to an infection is an inflammation of the infected tissue. Inflammation is not a disease, but a reaction to speed the recovery! Such an inflammatory reaction is very useful! Stopping the inflammatory reaction by drugs leads to new infections as a logical result. And because the immune system could thus barely recover, the next immune response becomes weaker. This is the first phase of a weakening of the immune system.

The next stage is introduced when the harmful substances cannot be eliminated. They will then accumulate in the connective tissue. When that happens, it may give rise to disturbances in the metabolism, rheumatic diseases and chronic inflammation of the organs. That is the second phase of the weakening of the immune system. This one too must then be suppressed by increasingly powerful anti-inflammatory drugs. These toxic substances are then again insufficiently removed, and so eventually the connective tissue becomes increasingly damaged.

This third phase of weakening is accompanied by auto-destruction or autoimmune diseases. The body no longer recognises itself and attacks itself. Or the body turns out to be insufficiently able to clear up its own abnormal cells, whereupon cancer can begin,

public illness number one. Usually these are the last symptoms of a long-term undermining of the immune system, which results in a complete passivity and failure of the immune system.

What is the connection between consciousness and body? The first activation of an illness is on the level of the soul. First some disturbance occurs on the mental level, then it proceeds to the astral level, and when the disease continues, it will eventually reveal itself through the etheric body in the physical body. Again it appears: the consciousness (the mental plane) is decisive for the other subtle bodies and thus also for the immune system. When human consciousness is confused, aimless or depressed, it will immediately be translated to all levels, even down to the molecular level. We know from research that this immediately leads to a reduction in the production of new immune cells or lymph cells, and therefore also to a greater susceptibility to disease.

Longer life expectancy

The age at which people die is getting higher. During the past centuries, life expectancy has risen considerably as a result of improved hygiene (sewerage and clean drinking water), availability of good food, living conditions (heating), peace and medicine. At present (2019) the life expectancy at birth in the Netherlands is 78.5 years for men and 82.7 years for women. It is expected that in 2040 this will have risen to 83 years for men and 87 years for women. According to Professor Aubrey de Gray in Cambridge, a specialist in aging processes, the first human to live to 150 has already been born, and half of the girls who are born now will live to be at least a hundred years old.

So we are going to live longer. Through social developments we will have more freedom in organising that life. We have a longer time and are better able to find the meaning of life, to discover the way back, to go that path and assist others along the way.

Thanks to the aforementioned improvements we shall be get-

ting older, but at the same time chronic diseases increases are increasing. It is expected that diseases such as diabetes, stroke, colon and esophageal cancer, heart failure and dementia will grow annually by a percentage between 2.5 and 3 percent. This means that the number of people with these diseases will double in about 30 years. Incidentally it will not necessarily be accompanied by a loss of health because by that time there will also be better and more effective treatment methods.

Dementia is a much-feared incurable brain disease that is expected to increase sharply as a result of the growing age expectancy. Dementia is a condition in which the processing of information in the brain is disrupted. With old age it is quite normal that there is some forgetfulness because the etheric body loosens from the physical body and becomes wider. That is an advantage because it increases the receptivity for spiritual inspiration. But such ordinary old-age forgetfulness is quite different from dementia.

Currently an estimated 1.5 percent of all people aged between 65 and 69 suffer from some form of dementia. Over 20 percent of the people over the age of 80 suffer from dementia and 40 percent of people over the age of 90 have it. According to the Dutch Alzheimer Foundation the number of dementia sufferers in the Netherlands will increase rapidly from 264,000 in 2014 to 426,000 in 2030 to 560,000 in 2050.

Dementia patients gradually lose control over their lives and ultimately become completely dependent on others. The ability to think abstractly disappears, talking becomes more difficult and the memory deteriorates considerably, sometimes so greatly that they no longer even recognise their loved ones. It is therefore understandable that many people with dementia and their family members, volunteer caregivers and healthcare professionals regard this disease as pointless and hopeless. Policymakers stimulate the social debate about a completed life with a view to further

expanding the possibilities for euthanasia. Seen from the standpoint of universal wisdom, dementia can still be meaningful. If euthanasia were to be used at too early a stage, patients would be deprived of the possibility to go through the processing and transformational procedure at the death of the body, or at best this would be much more limited. In a subsequent incarnation, difficulties could then arise from issues from a previous life that were not processed.

Beginning dementia can be seen as the onset of the dying process. The consciousness begins to withdraw from the physical body and is less able to express itself through that body. Because control over thinking can disappear, emotions that were deeply hidden during life can now be processed. If this is the case, a person suffering from dementia may for example get angry, start to cry or walk back and forth aimlessly. If the people involved with the care of the patient realise that this is a means of processing, they can look at the situation in a different way, which otherwise appears humiliating and often requires a great deal of patience from volunteer caregivers and healthcare professionals.

People who were mostly mentally directed and become demented are now given the opportunity to develop their emotional side. Because the thinking process is diminished, feelings become more important and the imbalance that arises in life between thinking and feeling is restored to a certain extent before the person concerned goes through the veil of death.

The writer Mikhaïl Naimy emphasizes the importance of care for the elderly in chapter 23 of *'The Book of Mirdad'*:⁶¹

'A dreadful burden is old age, to man as well as beast. And men have made it doubly so by their neglectful heartlessness. Upon a newborn babe they lavish their utmost care and affection. But to an age-burdened man they reserve their indifference more than their care, and their disgust more than their sympathy. Just as impatient

as they are to see a suckling grow into maturity, just so impatient are they to see an old man swallowed by the grave. [...] Aye, when old age is upon a man, then is the time, my companions, to lend him ears and eyes, and give him hands and feet, and brace his failing strength with love so as to make him feel that he is no whit less dear to Life in his waning years than he was in his waxing boyhood and youth.

Four-score years may not be more than a wink in eternity. But a man who has sown himself for four-score years is much more than a wink. He is the foodstuff for all who harvest his life. And which life is not harvested by all?

Are you not harvesting even this very moment the life of every man and woman that ever walked this Earth? What is your speech but the harvest of their speech? What are your thoughts but the gleanings of their thoughts? Your very clothes and dwellings, your food, your implements, your laws, your traditions and conventions, are they not the clothes, the dwellings, the food, the implements, the laws, the traditions and conventions of those who had been and gone before? [...] An old man whose life you have harvested and put away in granaries is surely worthy of your utmost care.'



The spiritual school does not posit a popular faith, but a clear and positive knowledge; not in the sense of collecting facts, dogmas, phrases, theses, hypotheses and so on, that ultimately leave man empty-handed, but knowledge in the sense of 'comprehending', discerning, an inner possession which is irresistible and absolute.

When the relationship between the School of the Rosycross and the interested person develops on this basis there is no question of authority or mindless docility. There is an inner recognition, a conscious following of a path, authenticated within one's own self. Three latent faculties should reveal themselves in the life of the pupil: the faculty of the new will; the faculty of the new wisdom; the faculty of the new activity. [...]

The new will is developed in the pupil by the spiritual school by means of the spiritual law; the new wisdom by the philosophy of the spiritual law; the new activity by the application of the spiritual law.

J. van Rijckenborgh,
Elementary Philosophy of the Modern Rosycross¹, chapter 2

CHAPTER 13

EXPANDING AWARENESS

ESSAY 4

What in you encourages you to read this book? What in you ensures that you recognise the neatly arranged tiny spots of printing ink on this page as letters and words, and understand which thoughts are represented by the authors? What in you notices that while reading the sentences thoughts come to mind? What in you might turn you to perhaps do something in your life with what you read in this book? You can answer all these questions with: my consciousness! In a certain sense that is correct, because it is indeed about consciousness, a name that is actually more a verb than a noun: to be aware!

However, the question is whether it is actually about your consciousness. As personalities, we are naturally inclined to appropriate everything we experience for ourselves, to identify ourselves with the thoughts, feelings, and activities of the will that arise in us. Consciousness manifests itself in and through the personality, and determines the state of being of the personality, but it is more than the personality.

A correct understanding of consciousness is essential for people who want to follow a spiritual path. All authentic spirituality is especially aimed at widening the consciousness of humans and humanity. Many of the problems we face on earth stem from a lack of awareness. In the plan of God it is indisputable that our deepest being grows in consciousness, unto infinity!

But what actually is consciousness? The internet encyclopedia 'Wikipedia' defines it: *'Consciousness is the ability to experience or perceive, or to have an experience or awareness of yourself and*

the environment. Consciousness is a reflection on impressions from the outside world, for example from people, objects or light, and from the inner world, for example from emotions, thoughts or needs. Consciousness is knowing or experiencing what is both sensory and cognitive within yourself, with the possibility of being able to communicate about it in a certain way'.

In order to give a broader picture of consciousness, seven quotes from spiritual teachers and researchers follow below.

- *Awareness is the most fundamental aspect that exists. The universe and everything in it is created by the energy and movement of consciousness. The microcosm and the macrocosm are nothing more than consciousness that organises itself. (Sri Aurobindo)*
- *Everything in the universe, throughout all realms, is conscious, is equipped with consciousness of its own kind and on its own level of perception. (Helena P. Blavatsky)*
- *If we stop thinking primarily of ourselves and our self-maintenance, we are truly undergoing a heroic transformation of consciousness. (Joseph Campbell)*
- *As we grow in consciousness, there will be more compassion and more love, and then the boundaries between religions and nations will fade away. Yes, we must overcome separation. (Ram Dass)*
- *That aspect in ourselves that we do not let penetrate into our consciousness, appears in our lives as fate. (Carl Gustav Jung)*
- *Every attempt to meditate is its denial. Only being aware of what you think and do is meditation and nothing else [...] Meditation means stripping consciousness of its content. (Jiddu Krishnamurti)*
- *Just let go. Let go of your thoughts about how you think your life should be and welcome the life that is trying to find a way in your consciousness (Caroline Myss).*

State of consciousness is state of life

All those statements are in accordance with the vision that Jan van Rijckenborgh conveys in his books. In the first chapter of his book *'The Gnosis in Present-day Manifestation'* he writes, among other things:³⁴

'Cultivated theory is never practice and becomes practice in the sense of the Gnosis. To the ordinary world practice is always applied theory. One learns something for a while and when it has been learned one puts it into practice. In our field of life the individual passes from the theoretical into the practical. But in the sense of the gnosis practice is always the result of a state of consciousness. And a state of consciousness always entails consequences. For a state of consciousness is a reality out of which one tries to live. The state of life that develops as such and from which one works and strives, is then just as real as the state of consciousness and has nothing to do with applied theory. When your consciousness draws your attention to a particular object and makes you see it as right, it may be that all theorists tell you: "Please do not go that way", but your consciousness places you before it and so you turn your consciousness into a state of life. Therefore we say to you: a state of consciousness is a state of life. One reality must project itself in and through the other. Then there is equilibrium. If the equilibrium fails to come about, man always feels quite wretched, very unhappy, profoundly uneasy. That is a natural law. Therefore, a state of consciousness is at the same time a state of blood.'

The classic Rosicrucians from the early seventeenth century lived in a time when many new scientific discoveries were being made and new denominations were being established. They strived to develop knowledge of science, religion and man on the basis of a new consciousness, to connect human beings with each other, for they experienced that such a renewal was desperately needed because many people were holding on to obsolete concepts and, partly due to that, there were many conflicts.

In the manifesto 'Fama Fraternitatis R.C.' from 1614 man is called a microcosm and three symbolical books are mentioned: the book M (which refers to Mundi, that is: world or cosmos), the book T (that refers to Theos or God) and the book H (that refers to Homo or man).²⁹

The classical Rosicrucians derived this idea from hermetic philosophy, in which the relationship between cosmos, Theos (God) and anthropos (man) is central. At the end of the twentieth century this idea was further elaborated by the Spanish theologian Raimon Panikkar (1918-2010). He is a great advocate of inter-religious dialogue and regards the so-called cosmo-theandric intuition as a good starting point for this. Pannikar builds on the classical idea that the undivided awareness of the totality is characterised by a cosmic dimension, a divine dimension and a human dimension.⁶²

This cosmo-theandric worldview therefore assumes that we live within *one* dynamic reality in which the divine, the cosmic and the human are related to each other and belong to each other. In humans, those three dimensions are respectively known as the mind, the soul and the body. These three dimensions cannot be known separately from each other, but can only be experienced from awareness in their coherence by people with active receptivity.

Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670) incorporates the relationship between cosmos, God and man in his *pansophy* which he describes as 'Universal wisdom, namely the knowledge of all things that exist, of the way in which they exist and the knowledge of their purpose and use, for which they exist'. Comenius writes about this in 1641 in his work 'Via Lucis':⁶³

'According to the Creator's objectives, the world is nothing more than a foreplay to eternity, as it were a primary school where we are sent before we can be promoted to the heavenly college. And that is why he has lavishly equipped his school with his books. Because since it is our

task here to learn, and learning without books or oral instruction is not possible, he teaches us, in the meantime with the help of his books, since the latter is reserved for eternity.

He has given us three books, all three of which are copies of his eternity, that means, of himself, as it were as from an original. The first and largest book of God is the visible world, written in as many letters as there are creatures of God. The second book is man himself, created in God's image. To him, inspired by the breath of divine life, that is, by the reasonable spirit, made according to the measure of all things.

However, God has handed man a third book, as it were an explanation of the outer book of the world and as a guideline for the conscience, which is the inner book: the Holy Scripture, in which he sheds light on some more hidden aspects of both other books, and teaches the true purpose and use of all things. In this threefold book of God everything is included that we humans must know or do not know, and clearly explained for the benefit of all.'

Matter and spirit

The combination of science and religion as desired by the classical Rosicrucians and Comenius did not take place. On the contrary! The two domains grew more and more apart since the seventeenth century, because matter and spirit were seen as two opposing principles. The French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650), who lived in the Netherlands for twenty years of his life, is often seen as the initiator of this dualism. His famous quote is 'Cogito ergo sum' or 'I think therefore I am'.

Descartes thus derived his identity from his thinking, with which he apparently identified himself. He was a convinced Christian and, among other things, wrote a manuscript in which he revealed that he would write a work dedicated to all scholars in the world, but in particular to the brothers of the Rosycross.

René Descartes was looking for a fixed point in a constantly changing world and, very paradoxically, found his certainty in his

doubt. He reasons: 'I doubt, so I think, so I am'. This position gives the impression of being opposite and separate from an objective reality, which is object, the object of his seeing, his hearing, his smelling, his tasting, his feeling and his knowing. He incorporated that idea into his own philosophical system with which he laid the foundation for the stream of rationalism.

Partly thanks to Descartes' method and vision in scientific research, natural sciences and technology were allowed to develop to great heights. But a high price was paid for this: a development that the sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) indicates as 'the disenchantment of the world'.⁶⁴

We could also call it: the desecration of the mysteries of life. After all, within the natural sciences the existence of divine powers is not recognised and it is assumed that we can understand and explain everything rationally if we do enough scientific research.

If we see man merely as a species of animal, come into existence more or less by chance during a long evolution, having a certain consciousness as a result of physical-chemical and biological processes in the brain, then what is the point of life? If there is no vertical dimension that you can have contact with as a person, if there is no divine plan, if there is no grand perspective for humanity, if we know that we will no longer be there in a hundred years and if we know that it will end for all human life on earth, what can still inspire us?

According to Max Weber, modern science cannot solve meaningful problems, but only give rise to them and strengthen them. Since he concludes that there is no way back in this, modern man can do nothing but accept this tragic fate without illusions – to try and persevere in the meaninglessness of existence heroically, without resorting to utopian dreams or promises.

Can science really not offer us perspectives on the basis of which we can give meaning to our lives? The French paleontologist and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was convinced

of the fact that science and religion can absolutely work together and that we, as human beings, have been integrated into a powerful whole that is constantly evolving. Teilhard was a Jesuit and a Catholic priest, and wrote books in which he tried to reconcile the Christian faith with the theory of evolution based on Charles Darwin (1809-1982). His supporters saw him as a brilliant visionary, but he was banned by his order, his church and also by many scientists, because his vision was inconsistent with religious teaching authority and scientific paradigms.

Teilhard de Chardin assumes that nature can internalize, because matter possesses an 'inside' that he refers to as 'psychism'. All manifestations contain this psychic element, but in different degrees and concentrations. According to this view, known as panentheism – not to be confused with pantheism – God is immanent throughout the universe, the universe is part of God, and God is the driving force in the universe. This monistic view we also find in Hermeticism, in some movements of Judaism, in most movements of Hinduism, with the church father Origen (185-254) and with the philosopher Spinoza (1632-1677). The Sufi-mystic Rumi (1207-1273) poetically formulates this principle as: *'God sleeps in the rock, dreams in the plant, moves in the animal and awakens in man'*.

Cosmogenesis, biogenesis, anthropogenesis, christogenesis

According to Teilhard, the internalising energy is the driving force behind evolution that leads to three processes: cosmogenesis (the origin of the universe), biogenesis (the leap in mutation from inanimate to living matter) and the noogenesis (the change to self-awareness). In this way, three spheres can be distinguished for the earth, one evolving after the other: first the geosphere with the matter of the planet, then the biosphere with all earthly organisms and then the noosphere that is related to human consciousness and that is expressed in society.

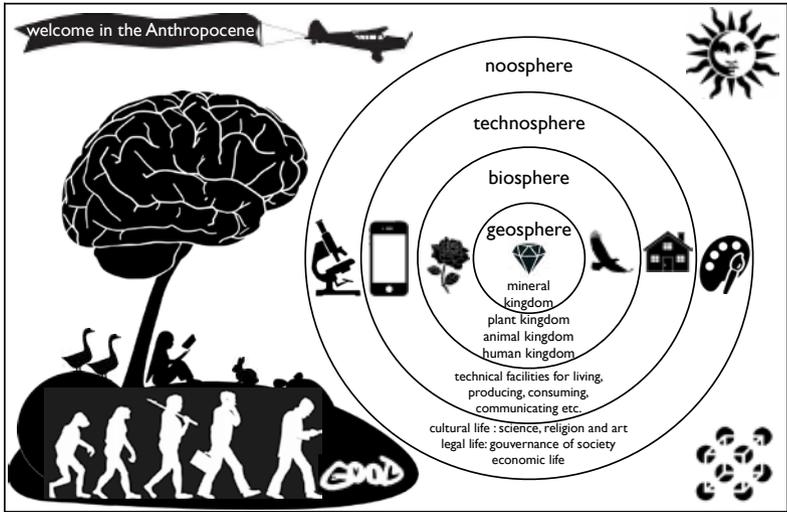


image 15: four spheres of the earth in the Anthropocene

Nowadays, a fourth sphere is often distinguished that relates to technical facilities that man has created, such as agricultural and horticultural land, homes, factories, infrastructure, vehicles, appliances and computers. Human activities have an enormous impact on nature and the environment. So strong in fact that the earth has been changed by man, the anthropos, in such a way that several scholars already speak of a new geological era: the Anthropocene (see image 15).

With the noogenesis, the development of self-consciousness, the biological species known as *Homo sapiens* arises, the knowing human being characterised by self-consciousness that can continuously develop further. Teilhard argues that man has risen above the animal level through the power of internalisation and that he is able to transcend the cosmos and himself through his ability to reflect.

Rudolf Steiner distinguishes three spheres of life in society, known as the social tri-articulation, in which human conscious-

ness is expressed. It starts first of all with the economic life with its production, distribution and consumption. Secondly, there is the judicial life with laws, regulations and agreements in order to lead everything in the right direction. The principle of equality is essential in this domain. And thirdly there is the cultural life with among other things science, religion, art and education, which needs to be seen in the light of freedom.

Radical developments have occurred in those three social spheres of life in the course of history. In economic life, productivity has leaped forward. In extremely primitive societies people hunt and gather in order to provide for their livelihood. With the rise of agriculture just one person might be able to produce 50 times as much food as one hunter-gatherer. Productivity increased again 50 times with the rise of industry using machines.

Enterprises that focus completely on the present era of information may be fifty times as productive as comparable industrial enterprises. So in economic life, man's consciousness has started to play an increasingly bigger role. Several contemporary thinkers are of the opinion that the numerous devices have come into our lives to enable us to grow as human beings.

The big question is where the referred to biological processes will lead.

According to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin the developments will eventually result in something that he calls 'the point omega' or 'the omega point', derived from the Revelations of John. Teilhard sees the point omega as the condition of humanity redeemed by Christ. Then people have internalised themselves in such a way that they have become the mystical body of Christ. That is possible because the Creator makes himself subject to the evolutionary process by becoming human in the form of Jesus Christ as part of a development which Teilhard calls 'Christogenesis', the genesis of Christ.

In Teilhard's vision, Christ, present from the beginning of creation – the big-bang – unfolds himself in the form of consciousness in the universe and reaches explicit consciousness in the person of Jesus. That moment in history can be seen as a new big-bang, starting a development in which people grow and reach fullness in love in the point omega. In his book *'The Phenomenon of Man'*, Teilhard de Chardin writes: *'The success of evolution of humanity will not be determined by the "survival of the fittest", but by our own ability to converge and to unite'*.⁶⁵

Growing in consciousness

As human beings we are called to grow in consciousness. And if our consciousness increases, our responsibility also becomes greater. In the Bible the concept of consciousness as such is not mentioned, but in several parts of the Bible we can read about growing in knowledge, wisdom and grace, which means the same. The process of growth of awareness leads up to automatically letting go of old ideas, because they are no longer functional and even hinder further development. As a consequence of increasing awareness, obsolete paradigms perish and perceptions change. Paul compares growing in consciousness with becoming adult:

'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known'
(1 Corinthians 13:11, 12).

From a different point of view we expand our consciousness by becoming like children who, openly and without prejudice, meet everyone and everything full of wonder and who still are – much more than older people – in contact with the vertical dimension. That is why Jesus said: *'Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. See that ye des-*

rise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven'
(Matthew 18:3, 10).

Growing up, and at the same becoming like a child, is therefore not a contradiction, but an apparent contradiction, a paradox. Paradoxical spiritual statements are often experienced as confusing and threatening by a lower consciousness that is focused on the external level, because such consciousness needs clarity and thinks in opposites, such as good – bad, biblical – not biblical, christian – heathen, we – them, etc.

For a higher consciousness that is focused on connecting and transcending opposites, spiritual citations with a paradox are very valuable because they distinguish the external from the internal level so clearly. The New Testament is full of paradoxes, among which:

- *He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it* (Matthew 10:39).
- *But many who are first will be last; and the last, first* (Matthew 19:30).
- *Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise* (1 Corinthians 3:18).
- *Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong* (2 Corinthians 12:10).
- *But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ* (Philippians 3:7).

Omnipresence

If you go the path of the Christian mysteries, your consciousness changes. In the beginning you can notice a rather rapid growth of consciousness within yourself. There is however a good chance

that after some years this comes to an end. If you then give in to the temptation to give up your spirituality and just continue steadily, a progression of which you are not aware will take place within your system. At a given moment the encounter between the purified soul and the spirit can take place. The new state of consciousness that results from this alchemical wedding is hard to express in words. Jan van Rijckenborgh names its most characteristic property as 'omnipresence'. That means experiencing and possessing of all dimensions: cosmic, divine and human. He writes about this in his book 'Dei Gloria Intacta':⁶⁶

'The pupil sees no space any more, no Logos, no reason and no plan, no creature or appearance. He sees only Light in which he blissfully dissolved; only Power with which he is one, a glorious omnipresent Nothingness with which he is identified without ties.

But this is the first sensation, the first wonder of the new consciousness. It is the prelude, the triumphal entrance of the heavenly man into the New Jerusalem. It is the emotion of Love, into which the candidate is emerged as in a blissful non-being.

And then... .. then the eye of Shiva is opened, the eye of Dangma, the third eye of mythology; then the door of heaven, of which the Apocalypse speaks, is opened.

That eye of Shiva definitely is not related to the binding of the final gland with the activated pituitary body of the dialectic bodily figure, as the union of fire and light, but it is the binding of the heavenly thinking faculty with the dialectic thinking faculty newly become virginal.

And that eye of Shiva, that door to heaven, to the statics of the Divine Order, the Immovable Kingdom of which Paul Speaks, becomes even brighter, opens ever wider, as the pupil succeeds in tearing down his old temple and rebuilding it in three days. He who can understand, let him understand!

Now, as soon as this eye of Shiva gazes clearly and brightly into the new world, after the resurrection on the third day, which is like

ascending a mountain, the omnipresent pupil is no longer a gloriously intoxicated visionary of light in mystic non-being, but he is then, he becomes then, together with him who bears the heavens and the worlds, an executor, a co-heir, a co-builder of the Divine Plan for world and mankind; he is then a living conscious member of the Body of Christ, of the Divine Hierarchy, of the Temple bid without the sound of hammers.

The new consciousness renders the pupil prepared to take part in the mighty plan of creation and purification which has been initiated and is being carried forth in the name of God.'



The law of love, which upholds the entire cosmos, is immeasurably strong and unassailable and so are those who fulfill this law. The words of the Psalmist: 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, what should I fear? Your rod and your staff comfort me' testify of the spirit and reality in which the white builders live and work.

That is why the spiritual school, which proclaims the law of love, does not force itself on anyone. It does not compel anyone because the law of love has to be reacted to spontaneously and in freedom, as the result of an inner awakening, an inner awareness. Only then does love have any value.

Sometimes the spiritual school does create situations or certain conditions to induce people to reflect, to bring them to insight and awakening, but no one will ever be personally compelled. For it is not compulsion, but inner awakening and awareness that lead to liberation.

J. van Rijckenborgh,

Elementary Philosophy of the Modern Rosycross ¹, chapter 3

CHAPTER 14

ACCOMPLISHING THE LAW OF LOVE

ESSAY 5

*'A*n enlightened master once asked his pupils: "Can you tell me when you know exactly that the night is over and the day has begun?"

One of the pupils said, "It's when you see an animal walking in the distance and you can say for sure it's a dog. "

"No, " said the master, "that's not it. "

Another pupil said, "It's when you see a tree in the distance and you can say for sure it's an apple tree. "

"No, " said the master, "That's not it. "

"When is it then?" asked the pupils.

"It is, said the master, 'when you perceive the face of any arbitrary man or woman and recognise that it is your brother or sister. '"

In this story, the pupils are reasoning from their sensory perception and their mind. The master's consciousness, on the other hand, is nourished by the source of inner wisdom, a wisdom that has its roots in the unity underlying all existence and that is characterised by a cosmic dimension, a divine dimension and a human dimension.

As biological beings, we are all residents of mother earth as human beings, we are made up of her elements and we all breathe in her atmosphere. As spiritual beings, as microcosms, we have all come from the Divine Primordial Source, and will return to it again. As a personality, we have the same types of thoughts, feelings and willing as our fellow human beings and, thanks to others, we can develop.

We owe the postmodern society with all its achievements to an intensive cooperation between people, in which the great whole learns from knowledge and experiences gained individually and collectively. Isaac Newton, the brilliant English physicist from the seventeenth century, emphasised this in a letter to a colleague in which he writes:

'If I have seen beyond others it is because I stood on the shoulders of giants'. He thereby acknowledged that others had done important work that he had used.

At a deeper level, we are all united and connected together as people. This is expressed, among other things, in the observation that many scientific discoveries or technical inventions are made almost simultaneously by researchers or technicians who have no knowledge of each other or each other's work. So Isaac Newton (1643-1727) in England and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646-1716) in Germany simultaneously and independently developed methods of infinitesimal calculation. The German Johannes Gutenberg (1397-1468) is generally known as the inventor of the printing press in Europe, but at almost the same time the Dutchman Laurens Jansz Coster (1370-1440) from Haarlem also developed a usable printing technology.

I am because we are

In primitive societies it was extremely important that you, as a person, were part of a tribe, because herewith you increased your chances of survival. Others helped to ensure that you had enough to eat, protected you and your family against predators and robbers, and contributed to your sense of well-being, because people simply are social beings. The great importance of togetherness is strongly expressed in the African philosophy known as ubuntu, which was also practiced by president Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, for example.

Someone with ubuntu is open to and accessible to others, devotes himself to others, does not feel threatened by the abilities of others because he or she draws enough self-confidence from the knowledge that he or she is part of a larger whole. The well-known ubuntu statement 'I am because we are' makes it clear that we can only develop an identity thanks to the community of which we are a part.

These days we no longer need to live in tribes. We are part of a highly individualised society in which we can generally manage well. But the need to be part of a valuable and satisfying larger whole has remained. And that is why we value a life partner, family, relatives, friends and maybe also associations, partnerships and (faith) communities. These are places where we feel comfortable and are nourished internally and/or externally.

It would be so nice if we could feel we were safe, known and appreciated everywhere around the world. Unfortunately that is not the case. A large majority of humanity experiences some form of struggle with other people. The ideal of brotherhood in society as a whole, which was strongly emphasised in the French Revolution (1789-1799), has not yet been achieved. The great political revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, in which the power of the nobility and the clergy was massively reduced, was accompanied by many acts of violence. Since then attention has been paid in the world to the well-known motto *liberté, égalité, fraternité* or: freedom, equality, brotherhood. This saying and the ideas behind it have contributed to the abolition of dictatorship in the Western world and the recognition of human rights.

Of course, freedom does not mean that we can just do anything, because there are cosmic laws that we must respect. True freedom obey the law. And if we break moral laws, we are corrected by the law of cause and effect, the law of karma. Real freedom also has nothing to do with avoiding all bonds. Bondage to pure autonomy is the worst form of bondage.



image 16: mosaic 'One blood, many nations' by Lewis Lavoie, inspired by Michelangelo

We live on earth to fulfill a life mission, and that is not possible if we persist in the great heresy of separation. That is why the voice of silence speaks to the student of the soul: *'The selfish devotee lives to no purpose. The man who does not go through his appointed work in life – has lived in vain'* (*The Voice of the Silence*, II:52). Paul formulates this principle slightly differently: *'For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants to one another'* (Galatians 5:13).

There are major differences between people. The principle of equality means that we recognise and appreciate the enormous varieties regarding for example gender, skin color, nationality, social position, possession, fame, health, age, sexual orientation, religion, education and level of consciousness, and consider all fellow human beings as equal. The Canadian artist Lewis Lavoie depicts this in an intriguing way in his mosaic 'One blood, many nations' inspired by Michelangelo's famous fresco about the creation of man (see image 16).

It is a waste to try to achieve unity on a large scale in the sensory world. Plurality is fine. Let many flowers bloom! There is already unity in the dimensions of the soul and of the spirit, and it is about learning to live from those dimensions.

Equality can be perfectly combined with hierarchy. Most domains of society maintain a hierarchical structure in order to be able to manage the larger whole. The people who are in a higher position in some hierarchy do not differ fundamentally from people lower in the hierarchy, merely functionally: they have a broader field of vision, a broader scope and therefore bear greater responsibility. The quality of an organization is determined by the quality at the top.

Unfortunately it is still quite common that it is not the wisest people who work at the top of organizations, but the people with the biggest egos. The fact of hierarchy has therefore received a bad name, while it is nevertheless a logical order that can also be recognised in nature. The human body is also constructed through the hierarchical structure of atoms, molecules, cells, organs, body. In chapter 10 we already talked about the spiritual hierarchies and the universal Brotherhood.

Saint Germain

Rudolf Steiner has repeatedly pointed out that the famous three-fold phrase '*Freedom, equality, brotherhood*' was given as a universal principle for human relationships by the eighteenth century initiate who called himself Saint Germain. This European miracle man, who probably lived from 1696 to 1784, has, as a representative of the universal Brotherhood, made great efforts to promote the principle of brotherhood.

Max Heindel writes in his book '*The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*' that the count of Saint Germain was one of the later embodiments of the individual Christian Rosycross, the legendary founder of the Brotherhood of the Rosicrucians. The count al-

legedly could speak all languages and would have achieved unification with the holy spirit.¹⁷ The image emerging from other written sources is that Saint Germain talked about history as if he had been there himself. He composed good music and painted beautiful paintings. Moreover, he knew a lot about medicine and natural sciences. He was able to cure many with his medical knowledge, was an alchemist, promoted trade and industry and was a diplomat for many princes.⁶⁷

It is said that Saint Germain's meditation slogan '*freedom, equality, brotherhood*' was given to King Louis XV (1710-1774) in order to stimulate him to positive acts.

However, this king at the decadent French court was more interested in women and parties than in his empire, and had his own motto that led him: 'after us, the flood'. This is strongly reminiscent of the inharmonious mixed-metal statue of the king in the subterranean temple in Goethe's fairy tale that says to the man with the lamp, the initiate, '*Why would I care!*'¹⁸ Saint Germain, despite his efforts, was not able to prevent the political revolution in France at the end of the eighteenth century. An initiate can only give the light of his wisdom to those who are open to it.

The French revolution was primarily a struggle for freedom and equality. The ideal of brotherhood has been neglected in society as a whole, but it flourished in certain groups. It involved not only about religious organizations such as monastic orders, but also so-called lodges that originated from remnants of stonemasons' guilds, the builders of cathedrals from the Middle Ages. People gathered in lodges to be inspired by the knowledge of mystery from the former stonemasons' guilds and temple orders, among others, in order to relate them to the demand of the time.

Saint Germain visited countless lodges of freemasons, rosicrucians, kabbalists, humanitarians and temple knights, among others. There he gave lectures and tried to bring unity. His self-chosen name is meaningful. *Sanctus Germanus* means holy brother.

We are because Thou are

Most fraternities with pure intentions will recognise the Ubuntu statement 'I am because we are'. This relates to the relationships among people at the level that is also called the horizontal dimension. A truly holy brotherhood will also recognise an aphorism that is at odds with it, yet at the same time coincides with it, and refers to the so-called vertical dimension: 'We are because Thou are'. Herein 'Thou' refers to God, Allah, Brahma, Ahura Mazda, Ra, Tao, the Holy One, the Eternal, the Source or whatever name we want to give to the holy supreme authority. A holy brotherhood on earth maintains a living connection with the Supreme through the universal Brotherhood and the celestial multitude.

An individual can also connect the vertical dimension with the horizontal dimension and thus become a cross of light. Jesus gives a clear indication of this when a lawyer asks him what the greatest commandment is. Jesus then answers:

'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets' (Matthew 22:37-40).

The love to which Jesus refers extends far beyond the romantic love for your life partner, far beyond your love for your children and much farther beyond your love for the place or the country where you live. The apostle Paul has succeeded in putting something of the mysteries of love into words:

'If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and

is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth (1 Corinthians 13:1-8).'

If we examine ourselves honestly, we should probably establish that we are still limited in our love. That is okay, because this is precisely why we are here on earth. We live on this planet in order to expand our consciousness. And growing in consciousness goes hand in hand with growing in love. We may never have been told that, but as soon as we know it and recognise it inwardly as true, we can consciously work on it. That is anything but easy, because we are still fragmented internally. A new harmonic unity can arise from that division within the human system, based on the ignited divine spark in the heart. We can understand something of that unity on the basis of the three parts of our brain that determine our identity together with our hormonal system and our immune system: the reptile brain (the brainstem and the small brain), the mammalian brain (the limbic system) and the human brain (the cortex).

Reptile brain, mammalian brain and human brain

The reptile brain developed around 400 million years ago and controls the most primary functions associated with safety, food and reproduction. This system is an involuntary system that functions independently of our consciousness and is characterised by instinctive behavior such as breathing, eating, drinking, mating, fighting and fleeing. As the name implies, the form and function of the human reptile brain resemble the brain of reptiles, cold-blooded animals without any form of affection. The human reptile brain corresponds to the pelvis sanctuary (the sanctuary of life) and also to the principle of equality.

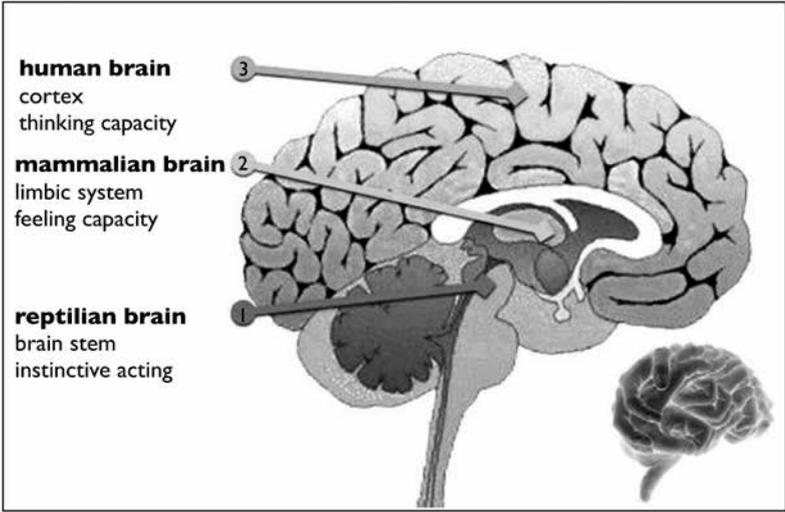


image 17: : three parts in the brain of human beings

The mammalian brain appeared in mammals between 150-300 million years ago. It is located above the reptile brain, inside of the two brain halves. This emotional brain regulates affective relationships in a family group and records whether experiences are pleasant or not. It has no logic. This part of the brain registers the experiences and converts them into automatic reflexes; everything is stored for a long time. The mammalian brain ensures our survival through good adaptation to the social environment on the one hand, but on the other hand-because the emotional brain is unattainable for logical thinking – past experiences have a major impact on our lives and actions. The mammalian brain corresponds with the heart sanctuary of man and with the principle of brotherhood.

The human brain, also known as cerebral cortex or cortex, appeared 2 to 3 million years ago with primates and the human species. It lies above the reptile brain and the mammalian brain and comprises 80 percent of the total brain mass. Thanks to this ‘new’ brain, we are aware that we are here and we know ourselves. It

plays an essential role in our medium-long-term memory and in remembering the meaning of words, for example.

The neocortex forms the functional basis of the imagination and is the seat of our logical and rational thinking. It dampens and thereby filters the automatic responses of the other two parts of the brain, allowing us to live more or less harmoniously with each other. But, although it has the power of imagination and is able to anticipate, it is also vulnerable and dependent on its judgments, which are always relative and sometimes completely wrong. The cerebral cortex corresponds to the main sanctuary of man and to the principle of freedom.

In a person who goes an authentic spiritual path, consciousness changes. This leads to the three parts of the brain coordinating their workings, thus releasing a great inner strength. In this way our heart sanctuary, our head sanctuary and our pelvic sanctuary are connected by new high frequency energy flows with and a fundamental renewal takes place that is also referred to as the alchemical wedding.

That spiritual process cannot take place solely on the basis of the intellectual intelligence of the human brain, not solely on the basis of the emotional intelligence, which originated initially in the mammalian brain, and also not exclusively on the basis of physical intelligence, which resides primarily in the reptilian brain. Barriers on the road between the reptilian brain and the human brain must be cleared through awareness and a new inspiration that originate from the divine spark.

In all cultures, methods were developed to straighten the neural pathways between the cerebral cortex and the brain stem, even though people were not aware of it in this way. We can think of music, literature, dance, the visual arts and architecture.

There are strong scientific indications that our musical capacities are most concentrated in the limbic system. These capacities are therefore difficult to damage. For dementia patients, musi-

cality lasts the longest. The oldest music we know dates from the fourth millennium BC and had a sacral function. Spiritual turmoil takes place largely in the brainstem.

Spiritual intelligence

If we want to go a spiritual path, we are not supposed to suppress the impulses emanating from our reptile brain, nor to let them go free, but to sanctify them on the basis of awareness. That requires that something within us develops, something that we can call spiritual intelligence and that Catharose de Petri characterises as:⁵

- purified holy spirit power;
- the divine compulsive power to use reason and feeling, will and love in the plan for redemption for humanity;
- the magical staff of Moses (the serpent fire with the spinal cord and the two strands of the sympathetic) and the liberating power of Mercury that shifts consciousness to spiritual realms.

Spiritual intelligence makes external laws superfluous because the inner law is followed. The classical Rosicrucians have made clear that the challenge is to take the leap from the yoke of the law – that is the dimension of the personality – to the freedom of the gospel, that is the dimension of the soul. And that can be done by starting to listen to the impulses emanating from the divine spark.

The German poet Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805) wrote about this in his 1785 hymn ‘Ode to Joy’. This Ode is especially well-known because the composer Ludwig von Beethoven (1770-1828) used it in 1823 in the choral finale of his ninth symphony. In 1985, this music was chosen by the heads of state and government as the official anthem of the European Union because of the aphorism ‘All men shall be brothers’.

Might they have fathomed something of the rich, spiritual depths

of the grand, cosmotheandric assignment that can be recognised in the following lyrics?

*Joy, beautiful spark of the divinity,
Daughter from Elysium,
We enter your sanctuary, burning with fervour,
o heavenly being!
Your magic brings together
what custom has sternly divided.
All men shall become brothers,
wherever your gentle wings hover.
Whoever has been lucky enough,
to become a friend to a friend,
Whoever has found a beloved wife,
let him join our songs of praise!
Yes, and anyone who can call one soul
his own on this earth!
Any who cannot, let them slink away
from this gathering in tears!
Every creature drinks in joy
at nature's breast;
Good and Bad alike
follow her trail of roses.
She gives us kisses and wine,
a true friend, even in death;
Even the worm was given desire,
and the cherub stands before God!
Gladly, just as His suns hurtle
through the glorious universe,
So you, brothers, should run your course,
joyfully, like a conquering hero.
Be embraced, you millions!
This kiss is for the whole world!*

*Brothers, above the canopy of stars
must dwell a loving father.
Do you bow down before Him, you millions?
Do you sense your Creator, o world?
Seek Him above the canopy of stars!*



Rising and falling can be discerned in this world. There is a rising that can give you joy and gratitude, but in your wanderings here in matter have you ever known a joy, have you ever known a gratitude with was unqualified and was not followed by an inevitable decline?

How is all this suffering experienced? Why is it borne and fought? Why does it carve such deep traces in the human being?

It happens through fire. All your experiences, every single experience, comes about through astral fire. It is that astral fire that enables the human being to live. It is also that astral fire than enables the mortal soul to live. The astral fire maintains the human I. If the human being takes pride in his I and places his I in the centre of everything he does, he proves that he lives by the infernal fire. The day will always disclose it.

CHAPTER 15
PROMOTING HAPPINESS
ESSAY 6

It is nice to be happy. Countless surveys show that happy people are healthier, have better relationships, have a higher income, cope better with stress, recover faster from illness and major events and live longer. You can do a lot to promote your own happiness. Sonja Lyubomirsky, one of the world's leading happiness researchers, concludes from studies that the differences in happiness experienced by people can for be explained 50 percent from hereditary factors, 10 percent from circumstances and 40 percent from the activities that they undertake.

What is happiness actually? And what can we do to be happy? Such questions have long been the subject of intense thought, by “common people”, by great philosophers, by enlightened prophets of all kinds of religions, and by scientists who have made human happiness their field of research. Traditional psychology has formerly been aimed at discovering, managing and healing psychological difficulties related for instance to personality disorders, depression, burnout and relationship problems. In the last decade of the last century, the trend of positive psychology came to the fore strongly. The emphasis therein is laid on positive experiences that people can have, such as happiness, hope and love, and on positive traits such as perseverance, vitality and wisdom.

The American psychologist Martin Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology, distinguishes the following three domains of happiness that are also considered aspects of the art of living (see image 18).⁶⁸

1. the pleasant life: experiencing positive feelings and satisfaction;
2. the involved life: personal fulfillment experienced by developing and using talents;
3. the meaningful life: experiencing joy by contributing to something that transcends one's own person, to a larger whole.

Where these three domains overlap one could speak of the optimum experience. However, practice also teaches that people who lead a pleasant, involved and meaningful life can be unhappy. We can think of the author of the Bible book of Ecclesiastes. That king of Jerusalem had everything for which a human being could wish, he used all his talents to contribute to the well-being of his countrymen. Yet he was not happy. Our thoughts can also go to famous and successful artists, who had everything they wanted but were not happy, and some of them even ended their lives prematurely.

Personal search

Perhaps we should be grateful if we don't feel happy even though we have everything, because that feeling can encourage us to give meaning to our lives in a different way: not aimed primarily at changing external circumstances, but at changing of our own inner self. The feeling of existential discontentment can be the driving force for a quest, a personal search for sense and meaning that can reach fulfilment in a connection with the vertical dimension, with the universal Brotherhood or with God, in accordance with the promise: *'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you'* (Matthew 7:7).

Knowledge and information can certainly be valuable on that inner journey, but you can also drown in it, as is conveyed in the following narration.⁶⁹

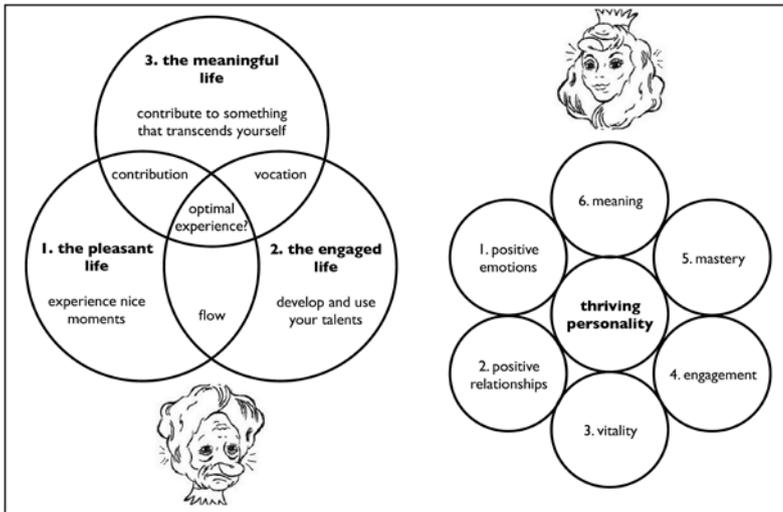


image 18: three sources of happiness and six aspects of a thriving personality derived from Martin Seligman

Full of pity he inquired about the disasters that happened to me and said: “Happy are you, whose fate it has been, after being thrown to shore after such a serious shipwreck.” I only answered: “Thank God! Glory to God!” Then I asked what luck had settled on the island, and got the answer: “That which is usually very unfortunate in this world.”

This text is a summary of the beginning of the work named *Christianopolis* written in 1619 by Johann Valentin Andreae, co-author of the manifestos of the classic rosicrucians. The I-figure suffers because he is trapped in the web of fate, a complicated network of cross-linked karmic threads that originated in previous states of existence of his microcosm and many other microcosms. Everywhere he experiences exploitation, untruthfulness and deception. This seeker for liberation is full of desire for a human being: his deepest self. He wants to know who he is, for what reason everything exists and what he can do best. He has experienced that he does not get to know himself by just meditating, but es-

pecially by acting consciously. Acting effectively in a world that is constantly developing, constantly changing, requires new knowledge and skills: lifelong learning. The I-figure has already sailed and wandered a lot on the Academic Sea of limited human knowledge, which has frequently caused him damage. However he does not give up and embarks on the vessel Fantasy, where the crew and passengers base their creative fiction on incorrect assumptions.

Once on the Academic Sea, therefore in the karmic web of fate, everyone tries to improve their own position in that web at the expense of others. It does not occur to them that they can find their true happiness elsewhere, outside of the web in which they are trapped. That is why violent storms of envy and slander start, causing the ship to capsize and sink. Only the I-figure manages to reach the beach of a small island with a city where imperishable happiness can be experienced: Christianopolis.

Christianopolis

Christianopolis is the city of Christ, a metaphor for a community whose members follow the path of the Christian mysteries in interaction with the universal Brotherhood. People who have suffered a symbolic shipwreck in their lives and, after fiercely floundering to keep their heads above water, arrive dripping wet and dead tired in Christianopolis, are surprised and delighted with the happiness they encounter and experience there. It is a happiness with a completely different signature than the happiness of the world.

That happiness is something other than just pleasure, something other than extraordinary pleasant coincidence and something other than success. It arises from a certain state of consciousness and a corresponding state of life. On the island, the I-figure is confronted with his own imperfections and therefore writes: I liked everything here, except myself.

The most important building is located in the center of Chris-

tianopolis: a round temple. In the city there is no struggle for personal acquisition of possessions, power and fame, but a joint effort is made for the sanctification and spiritualisation of oneself and humanity. Attention is not focused primarily on self-maintenance and external matters, in accordance with the instruction from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount:

Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof' (Matthew 6:31-34).

The happiness experienced by the inhabitants of Christianopolis is considered extremely boring and unattractive by many other people; it is about a happiness that is seen in the world as very unfortunate. What kind of happiness is that? The psalmist begins his text with a poem about the joy that is experienced by the person who attunes to God and is often incomprehensible to others:

'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper' (Psalm 1:1-3).

We are dealing here with a beatification : a promise of joy is made to someone who maintains a relationship with the divine hierarchy after having first gone through many struggles. In Matthew 5, the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount – also called the Constitution of Happiness – we read eight beatitudes from Jesus.³¹ The first six of them are fairly easy to understand, but the last

two are paradoxical because on the one hand there is a great inner joy and on the other hand a strong rejection by fellow human beings is experienced. The seventh and eighth beatitudes of Jesus are:

'Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you' (Matthew 5:10-12).

Great spiritual teachers such as Socrates, John the Baptist, and Jesus expressed love and wisdom that gave them and their students much joy, but were experienced as threatening by people who were not yet inwardly ready for it. Through the work of these spiritual giants, the errors and untruths of the listeners were unveiled. Some of them were jealous of the humble exaltation, the inner power and the great public interest in these prophets, and therefore they began to persecute them.

Socrates had to drink the poisoned cup for his service. John the Baptist was beheaded and Jesus was crucified. Fortunately in our humane society we need no longer fear such horrendous executions as a result of faith, but there is a good chance that we will face friction, struggles and conflicts with loved ones as we go the spiritual path.

We can be thankful that in our society we are allowed to believe, do and propagate what we want as long as we do not harm others and abide by civil laws. Your faith and your beliefs will not bring you into conflict with government organizations or other authorities, but if you follow the path, it will undeniably affect your relationships with your life partner, family members and friends.

If you are heading in the direction of the lost paradise, you change. Past interests diminish or disappear and you make time,

for example, to read, to be silent and to visit gatherings where your inner self is nourished. You might stop using alcohol and other drugs because you know that they are darkening your consciousness and contaminating your body cannot possibly go along with expanding your consciousness in a spiritual sense. Maybe you stop eating meat, poultry and fish because you do not want to keep your vibration unnecessarily low and you do not want fellow creatures to be fattened and killed for your culinary preferences.

Life partner

If you have a life partner, he or she might be surprised by the changes in you. It is possible that they will be experienced as a threat to the relationship. That can lead to collisions, especially if your partner has no interest in going the road you have chosen. There may also be jealousy with your partner and fear of losing you to another partner in the circles you are entering.

As soon as a thriving relationship in whatever form is no longer maintained, it weakens and withers. Of course it is beautiful if two partners can go the same spiritual path together, but experience shows that it is quite possible that one of the partners will go the path and the other will not. A prerequisite is that the partners continue to love each other, communicate openly and honestly, make time for each other and both adhere to joint agreements.

In a large majority of love relationships it is about male-female relationships because we are biologically programmed to propagate ourselves. There is also the power of attraction between men and women because they discover qualities in the opposite sex that they themselves have to a lesser extent, and can thus realise a fruitful cooperation. This cooperation between men and women of course extends far beyond the preservation of the human species and is not limited to love relationships. The interaction between men and women enables them to grow as personalities and

to develop soul qualities. At the highest level, joyful cooperation between men and women leads to the restoration of the cosmic duality in their own microcosms and thus it also contributes to that unification in other microcosms.

The distinction between men and women exists only in the dimensions of the body and personality. In the dimensions of the soul and the spirit, there is no separation of the sexes. Both sexes are equivalent and both have male and female traits. Masculine is understood to mean creative, positive, yang; feminine is characterised with words such as receiving, negative and yin. The male and female aspects are usually distributed according to a general pattern over the different views of the personality. This is known as the inversely proportional polarization and is shown schematically in image 19.¹

The physical body of the man is positively polarised and that of the woman negatively. A male body is usually better suited for doing heavy physical work, and men are almost always better in strength and endurance sports than women.

With the etheric body, the situation is reversed: the etheric body of the woman is positively polarised and that of the man negatively. Women are generally better able than men to gauge feelings of themselves and others. This is understandable from an evolutionary point of view because it is important for a mother to sense the condition of her children, also from a distance. For men who in the distant past had to defend their families against robbers and predators, empathy for the intruders was a less desirable characteristic.

The man's astral body is positively polarised and that of the woman negatively. In the practice of life we recognise this in the perception that men are often guided by one specific desire that they cherish and from which they live, while women can experience multiple desires at the same time, also indefinable ones.

The woman's mental body is positively polarised: she bases her

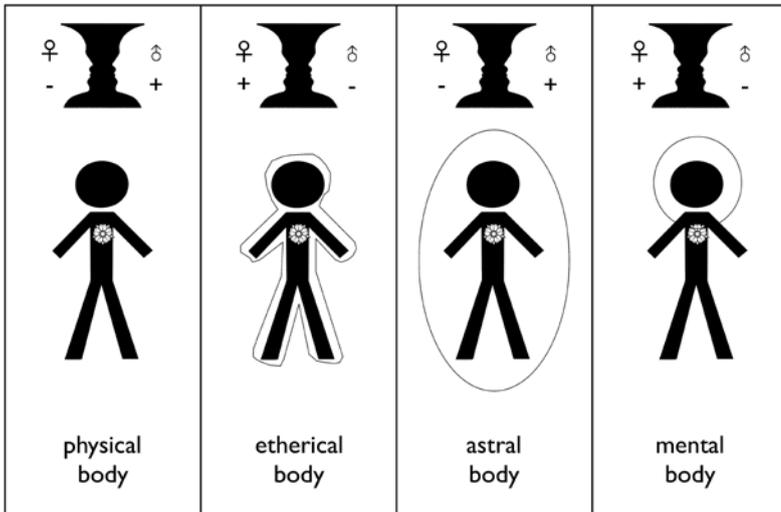


image 19: the fourfold personality and polarisations

thoughts mainly on combining existing thoughts and concepts. The mental body of the man is negatively polarised. This means that he is generally more open to receiving new and original thoughts than women. In natural science we see that it is mainly men who come up with completely new theories.

In society, relationships between the so-called LGBT persons become increasingly accepted and acknowledged. This abbreviation refers to lesbian women, gay men, bisexual persons and trans-gender persons.

A love relationship in whatever form can contribute to the happiness of the partners and offers them opportunities to polish each other, to grow and develop inwardly together, to be each other's guru. If a third partner is added with whom a sexual relationship is started, energy will leak out of the original relationship, sadness will often arise and it will be hard to repair the breach of trust. Moreover, with every sexual contact a strong energetic bond is created that has a disruptive effect if there is no question of a lasting love relationship.

Conflicts in a love relationship are not wrong in themselves because they make things clear. Relationships can be deepened by such conflicts, because if all goes well, 'fighting is stitching'. It is a misconception to believe that you need someone else to be happy. As soon as you realise that you don't need anyone else to complete you, everyone makes you complete. It is not another person's job to love you. That is your own task, and that applies to all dimensions of yourself: body, personality, soul and spirit.

Love relationships can deteriorate and become prisons in which the life energy no longer flows and the two partners block each other's development. Then it is important to bring new life into the relationship, possibly with some support in the form of relationship therapy; or continue the relationship in a different form, for example as a friendship; or to break it up completely. Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) wrote in this connection: *'One must respect marriage as long as it is a purgatory, but dissolve it if it becomes hell'*.

It is written about the philosopher Socrates that he was married to Xantippe, an awkward and moody woman who was constantly nagging and made life difficult for him. Some researchers claim that this twist is unfriendly to women and that Xantippe might actually be an intelligent and self-confident woman, worried about her husband who talked to everyone in Athens, thus neglecting material care for his family.

Work

So we come to another important domain in life that can also contribute to happiness: work. Work is needed to guide social life in the sensory world in the right direction. It gives structure to the day and offers people many opportunities to develop themselves further. The French philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778) wrote that labor frees us from three major disasters: boredom, vice and poverty. People are working in order to:

1. be able to live from the income;
2. have fun and be able to do nice things;
3. build and strengthen a personal identity;
4. maintain contacts with fellow human beings;
5. be active creatively;
6. gain new insights and knowledge;
7. contribute to the whole.

In general, people are happier when several of these aspects are applicable. The seven points correspond to the chakras and can definitely also be experienced outside paid work. It is best if the work is based on an intrinsic motivation, if it is done by someone who likes to do it from within. Then work becomes visualised love. Unfortunately, that is not always the case.

Some employers and managers seem to have misunderstood the moral of the goose with the golden egg. In that fable, a poor farmer has a goose that completely unexpectedly lays a golden egg. The farmer is overjoyed because suddenly he is rich. After that gratifying event, the goose then lays a golden egg every day! The farmer begins to get used to it and gradually his impatience and greed become stronger. At a certain moment he cannot restrain himself and slaughters the goose to be able to remove all the golden eggs at once. However, he finds nothing and has killed his most valuable unit of production.

In some organizations, the targets and the workload are so high that employees, symbolised by the goose, suffer from physical or psychological work-related disorders that cause them to be less valuable, as symbolised by the golden eggs. Of course there are also many more causes for dissatisfaction at work, such as poor management, alienation, conflicts and in certain professions confrontation with human misery.

Another frequent problem is that employees have too many different tasks, causing them to fragment their attention and thus

constantly experience anxiety. They experience very little flow in their job. Flow is a pleasant state of consciousness in which a person is completely absorbed in his or her activities. This concept of flow has been developed and worked out by the American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who is also a founder of positive psychology. According to him, we can speak of flow when a total of eight characteristics formulated by him apply.⁷⁰ A person experiences flow when he:

- has a clear purpose
- can focus and work attentively
- is completely absorbed in the activity and forgets himself
- loses the sense of time
- receives direct feedback, so that success and failure become immediately clear and one's own actions can be based on that
- experiences the activity as a challenge that is just not too difficult to execute successfully
- has the feeling of personal control over the situation or activity
- likes the activity, intrinsically rewarding

Pitfall

Such a list can be valuable to promote personal happiness. But there is, as with other methods of promoting happiness, a pitfall, because the pursuit of happiness does not make a person happier, but rather unhappy. Happiness cannot be enforced. It is a 'by-product' that comes and goes. If it is there, we can rejoice in it. If it is not there, we must accept that, because we know that changes between polarities are inherent to the world we live in and that they are driving us towards spiritual awareness and renewal. The British poet and visual artist William Blake (1757-1827) formulates this idea as follows: *'He who binds to himself a joy does the winged life destroy; but he who kisses the joy as it flies lives in eternity's sun rise'*.

We can experience that happiness does not make us grateful,

but that our gratitude makes us happy. Our sense of well-being is largely determined by the contents of our consciousness and by our ability to control our thinking. Positive thoughts, concentrated thoughts and thoughts in which our self plays no role make us happier than negative thoughts, erring thoughts and thoughts about oneself. The less we care about our own happiness, the more happiness we can experience. Catharose de Petri puts it this way: *'Self-forgetting service to others is the safest and happiest way to God'*.

If you wish to be an artist of life in a Gnostic-Christian sense, then you need to let the raw stone that is you be turned into a cubic stone through the power of Christ. Then you can be inserted as a living stone in the collective, spiritual temple, in accordance with the Bible text: *'Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'* (1 Peter 2:4-5).

We can use the results of scientific research on happiness during our spiritual journey. At the same time, it is worth realising that all such knowledge relates exclusively to the personality and is therefore very limited. In authentic spiritual traditions, happiness has always been and still is associated with the soul. Even today we can be guided by knowledge about happiness that was already known in ancient mystery schools.

The guidelines that Pythagoras formulated in the fifth century B.C. for his students of the mysteries are a good example. That is why we conclude this essay with the following section from the verses of Pythagoras, verses 11 to 46.

'Do nothing evil, neither in the presence of others, nor privately; but above all things respect thyself.

In the next place, observe justice in thy actions and in thy words.

And accustom not thyself to behave thyself in any thing without rule, and without reason.

But always make this reflection, that it is ordained by destiny that all men shall die.

And that the goods of fortune are uncertain; and that as they may be acquired, so may they likewise be lost.

Concerning all the calamities that men suffer by divine fortune, support with patience thy lot, be it what it may, and never repine at it.

But endeavour what thou canst to remedy it.

And consider that fate does not send the greatest portion of these misfortunes to good men.

There are among men many sorts of reasonings, good and bad; admire them not too easily, nor reject them.

But if falsehoods be advanced, hear them with mildness, and arm thyself with patience.

Observe well, on every occasion, what I am going to tell thee:

Let no man either by his words, or by his deeds, ever seduce thee.

Nor entice thee to say or to do what is not profitable for thyself.

Consult and deliberate before thou act, that thou mayest not commit foolish actions.

For it is the part of a miserable man to speak and to act without reflection.

But do that which will not afflict thee afterwards, nor oblige thee to repentance.

Never do anything which thou dost not understand.

But learn all thou ought'st to know, and by that means thou wilt lead a very pleasant life.

In no wise neglect the health of thy body; but give it drink and meat in due measure, and also the exercise of which it has need.

Now by measure I mean what will not incommode thee.

Accustom thyself to a way of living that is neat and decent without luxury.

Avoid all things that will occasion envy.

And be not prodigal out of season, like one who knows not what is decent and honourable.

Neither be covetous nor niggardly; a due measure is excellent in these things. Do only the things that cannot hurt thee, and deliberate before thou dost them.

Never suffer sleep to close thy eyelids, after thy going to bed,

Till thou hast examined by thy reason all thy actions of the day.

Wherein have I done amiss? What have I done? What have I omitted that I ought to have done?

If in this examination thou find that thou hast done amiss, reprimand thyself severely for it; and if thou hast done any good, rejoice.

Practise thoroughly all these things; meditate on them well; thou oughtest to love them with all thy heart.

Tis they that will put thee in the way of divine virtue.'



There is a sea of light, but humanity cannot see it because its consciousness is obscured. Impulses come to humanity from the light, but humanity reacts negatively. People are induced in a thousand ways to waste their thoughts on useless aims, so they can be shut off from the flow of soul-liberating impulses that are continuously being sent to humanity.

Intelligence is needed to recognise the attacks of the darkness that turn the pure atmosphere of your environment into a dark, troubled and stifling atmosphere in the wink of an eye. Did you know that the powers of darkness preferably speculate on your pure, but nevertheless extremely dangerous kind-heartedness if this is not irradiated by the light of pure reason? [...]

Catharose de Petri, *The Living Word*⁵, chapter 29

CHAPTER 16

PREVENTING DECEPTION

ESSAY 7

As human beings we all have to deal with illusion: what we perceive or experience occurs differently in our consciousness from what it is in reality. Going a spiritual path means that certain erroneous perceptions disappear so that a receptivity is created for the sacred that brings about a cleansing, a purification and a renewal. This is not simple, because there are many active forces who want to keep people trapped in delusion to prevent them from going an inner path as then they could no longer be exploited as a slave to the powers of darkness. Seven statements about illusion and delusion follow to introduce the topic 'preventing deception'.

- Illusions: the pneumatic tires on which one drives over the rough road of life, and which slowly deflate as one progresses further. (J. V. Teunissen)
- Deprive the average person of his life illusion, and you deprive him from happiness at the same time. (Hendrik Ibsen)
- Modern man lives with the illusion that he knows what he wants, while he actually wants what he is supposed to want. (Erich Fromm)
- There is an optical illusion in every person we meet. (Ralph Waldo Emerson)
- Lost illusions are found truths. (Multatuli)
- Many settle for living easily without truths, but few are strong enough to be able to do without illusions. (Gustave Le Bon)
- Initiation is the result of the ability to overcome delusions and

illusions that veil the truth and limit consciousness.

(Alice Bailey)

Many are of the opinion that science is capable of dispelling illusions and delusions. However, that is the case only to a limited extent. Scientists are certainly capable of bringing certain errors to light, but sometimes they create new illusions and so maintain delusion.

On May 28 in the year 585 BC, a special event took place: according to the legend, the sun was darkened exactly on the date that was predicted by the philosopher Thales (624-545 BC), who lived in the city of Milete on the west coast of present-day Turkey. That was a milestone in the development of the thinking of humanity. Until that time, natural phenomena, including eclipses of the sun, were seen only as manifestations of capricious gods to whom the people had surrendered. Thales van Milete showed that there are laws of nature, that in a solar eclipse the moon slides in front of the sun and that, with the right knowledge about the movement of celestial bodies, you can simply calculate when a solar eclipse will occur.

Thales reflected upon the changes he observed. If there is change, he reasoned, there must be something that changes and also something that does not change. He assumed a unity that is hidden behind the multitude that we observe. Thales was of the opinion that there is a primal principle, a nucleus of life, from which everything we know is built up. He pondered it and concluded that it must be water, because water shows the clearest changes of all elements.

Nowadays almost everyone knows that Thales was not right with his statement that water is the primary substance. The chemical substance that we know as H_2O is essential for life, but it is not the building block for everything. In the material universe as we know it, more than a hundred chemical elements are

distinguished, and everything is built up of atoms of those elements. Yet Thales was perhaps right in a symbolic sense with his statement that everything comes from water. We can see water as we know it as a reflection of the primordial principle 'water' that is written about in sacred writings.

Ocean of primordial substance

When we read in the creation myth of Genesis 1, verse 2: *'The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters'*, water is not meant literally here, but symbolic water that in alchemy is also referred to as primordial substance or *materia prima*. The concept *materia prima* or *prima materia* does not refer to matter manifested in the ordinary sense, but to a potential for matter, matter that is not yet manifested. When the divine idea – also referred to as the divine Father – becomes active in *materia prima* – also called the divine Mother or the matrix – forms arise in the ocean of primordial substance; then order comes into being in the chaos. Creation takes place through the interaction between the Father and the Mother. Then symbolically a Child is born, a new form comes to revelation.

Thales van Milete is often seen as the first natural scientist and also as the founder of reductionism, which states that complex entities can always be traced back to more fundamental entities. In a sense, that is correct, but it is worth remembering that Thales did not go as far as contemporary reductionists, who view a person merely as an organism governed by biological and physiochemical processes. For example, Thales did not deny the existence of gods. Holism is opposed to reductionism, stating that although each whole derives its characteristics from the component parts, it also means that the whole is more than the sum of the individual parts, and moreover that everything is inseparably connected with each other.

Advancements in the natural sciences have led to the development of a materialistic view of humanity and the world, which has led to the society in which we now live, with among other things valuable technologies, formidable communication systems and infrastructure, and advanced medicine. Partly due to these impressive successes, most people have begun to see the materialistic view of humanity and the world as the only correct representation of things. That is a big mistake of which more and more people will gradually become aware.

In the materialistic view of humanity, man is seen as a biological being with thoughts, feelings and will, also referred to as personality and body. However, that is only the time-spatial, cosmic dimension. However, man is also potentially soul and spirit. The soul is related to consciousness and is part of the truly human dimension (anthropos), a living connection between body and spirit. And the spirit is connected with the divine plan of creation and is part of the divine dimension (theos).

According to the universal wisdom, not only man is a cosmotheandric being, but everything that exists has a cosmic, a divine and a human dimension. So we can say that also all universes, all galaxies, all stars, all solar systems, all planets, all moons, all animals, all plants, all minerals and all atoms are cosmotheandric. All of these are in different stages of development and are being propelled towards ever further perfection.

Shadows on the rock wall

If we consider material reality as the only reality, we live in illusion. The philosopher Plato clarifies this idea beautifully with his allegory about the cave. He compares us, earthly people, with a group of persons who are bound hand and foot, sitting next to each other in a dark underground cave with the possibility to look only straight ahead. All they can see is the rock wall in the cave,



image 20: living in illusion and liberation according to Plato's allegory of the cave

while behind them, on a ledge, burns a large fire that illuminates the wall.

This wall is right in front of the chained persons. Unseen behind them, people are walking and talking to each other, holding above them tall sticks with flat images of objects, plants and animals on top. In image 20, which depicts the allegory in the form of a drawing, the images are a tree, a bird and a jug. The prisoners are completely fascinated by the shadows of the objects on the wall in front of them. They believe that the shadows move and speak independently, and give names to them. The most intelligent ones of them may try to discover a certain regularity so that they can calculate when certain shadows appear. For the chained ones, what they perceive is the only reality.

Now if one of the chained ones succeeds in freeing himself from his shackles and starts examining his surroundings in the cave, he will discover that what he thought was reality are only shadows of images that are carried past, and that the voices he

hears do not come from the shadows on the wall but from fellow human beings who are not chained, who carry the images. If he then leaves the cave, his eyes will first have to get used to the overwhelming light. He then discovers a reality that is much greater and more radiant than the reality he knew until then, and he also finds out that there are more dimensions than he had realised. What he first knew as black shadows and pale, two-dimensional images, he now sees as colourful, three-dimensional objects and creatures.

This liberated person probably longs to return to the prisoners in the cave with whom he has lived for so long, to tell them that they live in illusion and that there is a much greater reality of which they have no idea. If he does so, the prisoners will not believe him, they will consider him a deceiver and want to expel him from their midst.

From around the seventeenth century, natural sciences developed strongly in Europe. This led to the cultural-philosophical and intellectual movement of the Enlightenment based on a materialistic view of man and the world. All kinds of mathematical and natural science formulas, models and concepts were drawn up based on research that reflected some part of reality. They are also considered part of the so-called *materia secunda*, which is seen as a distorted reflection of the world of the spirit, that is the world of abstract primordial types (see image 21). In fact, it is about second-hand knowledge and not about first-hand experience. It is therefore an illusion to believe that formulas, models and concepts are reality because reality is only reality when it is lived through and known.

The romantic period

As a reaction to the Enlightenment, which unilaterally emphasised the human mind, a movement with an opposite character developed in the 18th century: Romanticism. In this movement,

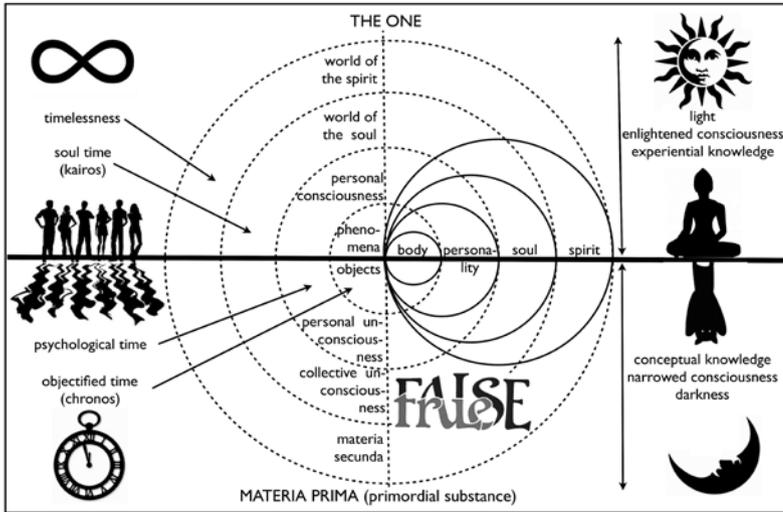


image 21: cosmotheandric development model with the dimensions cosmos, God and man (anthropos)

objective perceiving was not the starting point, but experiencing the subjective. Romantics attach great importance to feeling, imagination and intuition. Their image of nature and people, unlike the vision of Enlightenment representatives, is not mechanical and reductionistic, but organic and holistic. They attach more value to art than to science; they put quality above quantity and instead of the material they take the spiritual as a starting point. Romanticism was in particular expressed in literature, visual arts and music. Well-known German Romanticists from the nineteenth century are the poets Goethe, Friedrich von Schiller and Novalis, and the composers Ludwig von Beethoven, Johannes Brahms and Richard Wagner. In France the philosophers Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Éliphas Levi and the composer Hector Berlioz were well-known representatives of Romanticism around that time. Examples of English Romantics in the nineteenth century are the poets George Gordon Byron, William Blake and Alfred Tennyson. In the United States, the so-called transcenden-

talists were strongly influenced by English and German Romanticism in the nineteenth century. This list includes the names of famous poets and writers such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. Furthermore, there is interest in fairy tale collections such as that of Mother Goose by the French writer Charles Perrault, and the German brothers Grimm clearly emerged from Romanticism.

In the Romantic period there was also a wide interest in occultism. The word occult means 'hidden.' Occultism is related to studying or being preoccupied with the hidden. Since time immemorial, methods have been practiced that can be classified as occultism.

In primitive tribes, medicine men and shamans maintained contact with the invisible world to advise, guide and heal the members of the tribe. In ancient Greece one could consult the oracle of Delphi, dedicated to the god Apollo. The magician Merlin from the Arthurian legends furthered developments in Brittany and Great Britain. Between 1450 and 1750 there are tens of thousands of women accused of witchcraft in a large part of Europe, condemned and executed in a horrible way by people who called themselves Christians.

There are warnings in various places in the Bible against engaging in occult practices: the people of Israel, who can be seen as a symbol of the people who are following an authentic spiritual path, are told: *'There shall not be found with thee any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, one that useth divination, one that practiseth augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer'* (Deuteronomy 18:10-11).

By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries there was a great interest in occult matters. Many spiritualistic seances were held, in which messages from the deceased were received, new complementary medicine such as mag-

netising and hypnotising were developed, and the interest in theosophy and anthroposophy grew considerably. All those developments have contributed to the fact that scientists began to investigate phenomena related to human consciousness which cannot be explained from, or are even contradictory to, the contemporary scientific worldview.

Parapsychology

The German Max Dessoir (1867-1947) introduced the word 'parapsychology'. The famous American psychologist Joseph Banks Rhine (1895-1980) adopted this term and considered it a better name than the original British term psychical research. Parapsychology is the academic discipline that investigates paranormal phenomena. In the Encyclopedia of Parapsychology, the Dutch theoretical psychologist Titus Rivas distinguishes five areas. This concerns research into:⁷¹

1. paranormal forms of perception and communication that are not based on sensory processing of information. This area is sometimes also referred to as ESP or extrasensory perception related to telepathy, clairvoyance, clairsentience, clairaudience, clairalience (smell), clairgustance (taste);
2. paranormal forms of psychic influence on the value of the perceptible, physical world, which is not based on neurological processing of nerve impulses from the brain; this area is also known as psychokinesis or PK (an old-fashioned name is telekinesis);
3. a multiple physicality that interacts with the soul or the spirit, and can be used to leave the physical body and gain experience in another area; this area includes topics such as the aura and leaving the physical body;
4. the survival of the soul or spirit after the death of the physical body; this includes themes such as near-death experiences and reincarnation, but also communication with the deceased;

5. 'synchronicity,' meaningful coincidences that are related to one's inner self or one's personality but do not rely on ESP or psychokinesis.

Such paranormal experiences appear to be 'more normal' than most people suspect. In a certain way, every person is 'para-normal', one more than the other. Joseph Rhine demonstrated this with his parapsychological experiments that he carried out in his laboratory at Duke University in North Carolina from the late 1920's until about 1965. He and his colleagues used five sets of five different cards every time. These cards are known as Zener cards (named after Zener, a colleague of Rhine who proposed the five symbols) or ESP cards. The symbols that were used were: a circle, a plus sign, three wavy lines, a square and a five-pointed star.

The procedure, which was applied to large groups of test subjects, started with shuffling the 25 cards. After that, a person who acted as the sender was allowed to turn a card from the pile each time. The 'receiver', a person who could not see the 'sender', had to indicate which symbol the 'sender' was viewing. This procedure was repeated until all 25 cards had been dealt. Statistical calculations can be applied to the results.

If there were only coincidence in the game, the proportion of correctly guessed cards would always be exactly 20 percent in a large number of experiments. However, the number of hits was always around 21 percent, so just above the level of chance. Because the number of tests ran into the hundreds of thousands, this was nevertheless very significant statistically! Other researchers who repeated the experiments also always achieved more or less the same result.⁷²

Rhine and his colleagues sometimes worked with exceptionally sensitive test subjects and then achieved spectacular results. The scores of even the best test subjects became lower as the number of repeated tests increased. This was called the decrease effect

and was attributed to increasing fatigue. Another interesting conclusion of the researchers is that some subjects had scores that were significantly below the probability of 20 percent. It turned out that they were not believers in ESP and were skeptical about the research.

In the field of paranormal phenomena, cheating was and still is applied. Worth mentioning here is the world-famous American magician and buoy king, Harry Houdini (1874-1926), who was already a legendary figure during his lifetime.⁷³ He was considered a hero because he kept triggering the desire for freedom from his audience to succeed in an inexplicable way in escaping from boxes, straitjackets, prisons, crates, tubs of water etcetera.

Spiritism

Houdini was genuinely interested in life after death and, after his mother passed away in 1913, he went to a medium to communicate with his mother. He noticed quickly that the medium used principles of magic that he himself knew well. He visited several mediums and discovered that they all used tricks. Then he saw business opportunities for a tour of theater shows in which he would demonstrate and explain the malicious practices of mediums. So he did. To arouse interest in his shows and as a source of ancillary income, he wrote the book '*A Magician among the Spirits*'.⁷⁴

At that time a new form of entertainment emerged known as mentalism, the foundations of which were in particular laid by Theodore Annemann (1907-1942) and Tony Corinda (1930-2010).^{75, 76} The artist (mentalist) then creates the illusion that he has extraordinary mental skills and abilities. This may involve influencing, predicting and mind reading, but also exceptional skill in performing arithmetic operations and remembering data. Mentalists use psychological, physical and theatrical principles and also the art of magic.

Another fascinating figure who has investigated occultism at a much higher level than the persons mentioned above is the Austrian writer Gustav Meyrink (1868-1932). This individualistic and skeptical artist became wise through damage and disgrace. Meyrink was raised as a Protestant, but could not agree with the Protestant ideology and with its related civil practices. As a 24-year-old, he wanted to take his own life, but his inner voice kept him from doing so. He left behind all religious and philosophical dogmatism, started to search, read countless books on philosophy, esoteric alchemy, mysticism and kabbalah, and attended many meetings of all kinds of esoteric groups and movements.

Initially, Meyrink made the mistake of intervening with his ego in the processes of self-knowledge and purification, something that is impossible because only divine grace or spiritual light can bring it about. As a result of wrong meditation exercises, he had a disorder in his spinal cord. We can see him as a prototype of today's searching human being. In his novels he wants to touch the reader with specific images, feelings and thoughts. The spiritualisation of the human species is always the central focus in his books. Jan van Rijckenborgh writes about him:

'The work of Gustav Meyrink forms a connecting link between occultism and transfigurism. Many, stuck in the occult grip of many groups, can discover through him the intended connecting link and find the way to the transfiguristic path of liberation. As one of the few, he traveled along many paths of the esoteric field of life to eventually end up as a finder. He paved the way for seekers who could so save themselves a lot of time and suffering.'

The occultist strives for the expansion of his ego, while the transfigurist strives for the divine to become active in him by letting his ego die, that is, by releasing identifications and attachments. The occultist uses his magical powers to realise what he wants

while the transfigurist prays: 'Your will be done' and 'Lord, what do you want me to do'.

Gustav Meyrink warned from his own experience against spiritualism that threatened to flood the world like a plague wave. Rightly so, because spiritualistic practices do not bring happiness and certainly not liberation. In many spiritualistic seances, a group of people or an individual makes a connection with deceased, earth-bound human entities with a low level of consciousness that still have partial access to a violated etheric body. They want to prevent the further loss of their etheric body because they are afraid of the purification fire that awaits them in kama loka or purgatory. To this end, they extract life energy in the form of ethers from those involved, who are then exhausted after the seance. Spiritism, where the practice of turning a glass belongs, can lead to possession by an entity that in some cases even incites suicide.

Even if we are not at all concerned with spiritualism, we can be deceived by forces that want to prevent us from following our deepest calling. Usually these are not deceased human entities, but unholy power formations called archons and eons. They are part of the collective unconscious, the astral receptacle, and are partly created by incorrect thoughts, feelings and actions of humanity (see image 21). In paragraph 11 of the *Gospel of Philip* it says:

'The rulers (archons) wanted to deceive man, since they saw that he had a kinship with those that are truly good. They took the name of those that are good and gave it to those that are not good, so that through the names they might deceive him and bind them to those that are not good. And afterward, what a favor they do for them! They make them be removed from those that are not good and place them among those that are good. These things they knew, for they wanted to take the free man and make him a slave to them forever.'

Everywhere around us we can now see humanity being enslaved. In our society we are exposed every day to around three thousand commercial slogans that want to tempt us to buy what we don't need. We are occupied by torrents of useless digital information from our devices, and are just as fascinated by it as the shackled ones in Plato's allegory are enthralled by the shadows on the rock face. In this way we neglect the one thing necessary.

If we are lucky, we realise that Comenius is right when he writes in his book *'Unum Necessarium'* that three forms of misfortune accompany the entire human race: *'First, intellectual knowing is not free from delusion, error and cheating. Secondly, acting is often hesitant, wrong and unstable. Thirdly, enjoyment brings disappointments and an ever new, unbearable hunger and thirst for new objects of our desire.'*

Fortunately there is a way out of the maze! The knowledge, the love and the power needed to walk the spiritual path are available to all who truly long. Goethe portrays that idea beautifully at the end of his fairy tale of the green snake and the beautiful lily.¹⁸ The hidden underground temple of the mysteries then rises from the earth, thanks to the sacrifice of the serpent, and can be entered by those worthy of it. On the basis of their own experience the students of the mysteries agree to the testimony that Gustav Meyrink writes down in his novel *'The Green Face'*.⁷⁷

'The people who have surrendered their destiny to their indwelling spirit are under a spiritual law. They have been declared emancipated and released from the patronage of the earth that they will once rule over. Whatever happens to them in outer life only still has meaning in an inwardly driving sense: everything that happens to them happens in such a way that it could never happen better.'



When you die according to your natural being, the whole of your personality will volatilize and only the fundamental fire-principle that gave you life will return to the higher self, to the aural being. Just as the being of a dog volatilizes within a few days after death, so it is with us after a somewhat longer period, if we continue to exist out of this nature. [...]

There is no reincarnation or re-embodiment of the personality. Nothing remains of the mortal soul after death. The mortal soul, your I-being, volatises completely. Nothing is left of you, as a mortal soul. Just as the material body returns to dust and ashes, so it is with the mortal soul, for the soul that sins must die and something that is dead in this sense is absolutely dead.

When your soul has become immortal through rebirth out of water and spirit, through transfiguration, you will reincarnate only if it is useful. Then it will be voluntary and in the service of the Universal Brotherhood's great never-ending work of liberation on behalf of the whole of humanity.

Jan van Rijckenborgh,
Elementary Philosophy of the Modern Rosycross ¹, chapter 11

CHAPTER 17

UNDERSTANDING DYING

ESSAY 8

Certainly the time of death of the physical body can in many cases be postponed, for example by living a healthy life and through medical intervention. However complete cancellation of this breathtaking event is impossible, because death built into our universe according to a certain plan. That is why it is said that death is the only certainty we have in life. Whoever is born will die without doubt.

Death is frightening for many people. Those who are truly spiritual are generally less concerned about their personal encounter with the Grim Reaper than those people who are not very spiritual. Death is often depicted in old images as a skeleton with an hourglass and a scythe. The hourglass indicates that the end has come, the skeleton shows what remains of the person who dies and the scythe is a symbol of bringing in the harvest of the lived life.

Pythagoras taught his students *'Fear not to lose life, because death is only the alteration of your dwelling place'*. And the German poet Goethe at the age of 75 said to his secretary: *'I remain very calm at the thought of my death, because I am firmly convinced that our spirit is a completely indestructible being; it continues from eternity to eternity. It is similar to the sun that only apparently goes down in our earthly eyes, but which in reality never sets, but shines continuously'*.

Incidentally, it is not necessary to be quite old to perceive this. At the age of 31 the composer Mozart (1756-1791) wrote to his father that he thanked God to have learned that death is the key to

true happiness and that he made himself familiar with *'that good and faithful friend of man'*. He writes: *'I never go to sleep without realising that (young as I am) I might not be there when the next day dawns. And yet no one who knows me can say that I am ever grumpy or melancholic. Every day I thank my Creator for my happy mood and from my heart wish it to all my fellow creatures'*.

Perhaps this clear sense of his mortality has also made it possible for Mozart to create playful and light-hearted musical compositions with great depth.

The composer Johann Sebastian Bach also had a special relationship with death. Although his music swings, death is omnipresent in his life and work. Bach aptly expresses the duality between the fear of death and the desire for death in a number of his cantatas. Based on personal research published in 1994, the musicologist Helga Thoenes believes that Bach was strongly influenced by the rosicrucian saying *'In Jesu morimur'* ('In Jesus we die'), and that he incorporated that theme numerically and into content in compositions.

The central idea here is that attachment to the outer being must die to enable the inner Christ to become active. This is consistent with Paul's statements: *'I die daily'* (1 Corinthians 15:31) and *'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me'* (Galatians 2:20). It is also reminiscent of a statement by Angelus Silesius: *'Whoever does not die before he dies, perishes when he dies'*.

By the way, Bach was not striving for an immortal name. He was well aware that he could compose only thanks to divine inspiration. That is why he signed many of his compositions with SDG, the abbreviation for Soli Deo Gloria, which means: only honor to God. In addition, he incorporated the tones of E, D and G in many musical pieces. His St. John's Passion begins with this, for example.

Dying with dignity

Every person has the right to a life of dignity as it was laid down in 1948, for example, in the Universal Declaration of Rights of the United Nations. In this way every human being should be entitled to die with dignity. But what is dignified dying? To make meaningful statements about this, it is important to realise what happens in the process of dying. Within medical science there is still great ignorance about this because this science is still largely based on the materialistic premise that when the heart stops beating and the brain activity disappears, the consciousness is no longer present. That is a huge misconception.

Dying is also called excarnation and is in fact the reverse of incarnation. Upon death, the connection between the more subtle vehicles and the physical body is broken off and the consciousness can no longer express itself in the physical body. That consciousness is still there, but it then resides mainly in the etheric body. During the first three days after death the so-called retrospection takes place, during which the soul oversees the past life. That overview passes by like a panorama, so that the soul can take stock of the past life. What was good in it? What lessons still need to be learned? After that the soul can move on to the area that suits her and is most appropriate for her further development. Even the more subtle vehicles are gradually decomposed and dissolved, until only the essence of the person in question remains – that which connects multiple lifetimes – is left.

After an indefinite period of time, new parents will be attracted and a new quadruple vehicle will be conceived, born and built up: physical body, etheric body, astral body and mental body. All of this is surrounded by a spherical magnetic system called the microcosm. In fact, the microcosm is what remains and reincarnates. The cyclic process of incarnation, life on earth and excarnation is repeated until once, through the process of transfiguration, this cycle is broken and the microcosm, after very

many life lessons, returns to its divine origin. Because the soul is still closely connected to the physical body during the first three to three and a half days after death, any post-mortem examination or any other damage caused to the physical body will be felt by the soul and could possibly hinder the process of retrospection. Also bustle or the loudly uttered misery of family members who want to keep the dead person near to them can be harmful for the undisturbed completion of the life panorama.

Even unspoken thoughts or strong emotions can draw the soul back into the atmosphere that it is trying to leave. That is why peace, understanding and love are needed in the immediate vicinity of the dead person, all of which can be extremely helpful in the profound process that the soul goes through then. Appropriate care (taking) and respectfully doing what is part of this care will certainly not be a nuisance, but rather will promote the sacred rest that is desired for the deceased.

Bury or cremate?

According to the universal wisdom, it is preferable to cremate a dead body well after the aforementioned review instead of burying it. Why? When the moment of death has come, a split takes place in the personality. The physical body, with part of the ether body or life body, remains behind in the material sphere. The rest of the personality, with the consciousness, leaves for the reflection sphere or, if there is already a new-born soul state, for an area beyond that.

Since the entity in question has lived for so long in the now-abandoned physical form, and since that body was attuned to the entire being, there is a strong polarity between the part that has already died and the part that is still living. This polarity can be maintained by the molecules of the dead part with the substances of the still-existing part of the personality. If this happens, numerous unwanted situations can arise, both for the

person concerned and for the relatives. In 1909 Max Heindel writes about this in his book *'The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception'*:¹⁷

'Just as in sleep, at death a division is made between bodies, but with this important difference, that though the vital body returns to the dense body, it no longer interpenetrates it, but simply hovers over it. It remains floating over the grave, decaying synchronously with the dense vehicle. Hence, to the trained clairvoyant, a graveyard is a nauseating sight and if only more people could see it as he does, little argument would be necessary to induce them to change from the present unsanitary method of disposing of the dead to the more rational method of cremation, which restores the elements to their primordial condition without the objectionable features incident to the process of slow decay.'

Kama Loka and Devachan

Max Heindel also describes in his book what the consciousness experiences after the aforementioned life panorama of a few days, whereby the experiences are imprinted on the astral body. After the first retrospect, the silver cord that connects the lower vehicles with the higher ones breaks and the physical body is really dead. Consciousness then retreats into the astral world where a purification process takes place, an area that in theosophy is referred to as the kama loka. Then again a panoramic retrospective takes place that, according to Rudolf Steiner, usually takes about a third of the number of lived years. In that period, a person experiences all the pain and suffering that he has inflicted on others and so learns the grief that he has caused to others. This purification process is aimed at learning to love the world and humanity.

The experiences in the kama loka will be forgotten in later lives, but the feeling remains. That is the 'silent conscience', the weak whispering voice that warns people when they think, say or do something that is not pure. The purification period can be

shortened considerably by living consciously now and cultivating the longing to be truly good. An important help herein is the so-called evening exercise that the initiate Pythagoras gave to the students of his mystery school as early as the beginning of the fifth century before the beginning of our era, and which is described as follows in the historical document known as *'The Golden Verses of Pythagoras'* (40-48):

'Never suffer sleep to close thy eyelids, after thy going to bed, till thou hast examined by thy reason all thy actions of the day. Wherein have I done amiss? What have I done? What have I omitted that I ought to have done? If in this examination thou find that thou hast done amiss, reprimand thyself severely for it; and if thou hast done any good, rejoice. Practice thoroughly all these things; meditate on them well; thou oughtest to love them with all thy heart. Tis they that will put thee in the way of divine virtue.'

When a deceased person has passed through the kama loka and the last remains of the astral body and the thought forms associated with it have evaporated, the emptied microcosm enters into a more heavenly region. This region is also part of the reflection sphere, but has a pleasant character and is called devachan in theosophy. A certain peace and joy is experienced there until it is time for a new incarnation on earth.

The process and the time between two incarnations can take a short time, such as with young children or with a premature death, but can also take a long time, said to be as much as three thousand years. The length of time between two lives can vary greatly per microcosm and per occasion. Moreover, in the reflection sphere time is experienced in a completely different way than on earth in a physical body.

Organ transplant

On the basis of the aforementioned information, it is easy to understand that donating and receiving organs through organ

transplantation can cause considerable chaos and disharmony in the immaterial areas. The dying processes of a person who donates an organ or several organs to serve others are seriously disrupted. So much so that the result of the past life of an organ donor is not fully harvested. Organ recipients benefit from the damage the organ donor in ignorance has allowed to be caused to his process of dying by being listed as a supplier of 'spare parts'.

Donating an organ to a dying person is a humanitarian act. It is certainly also a sacrifice. For respect for everyone's decision in this regard, it is important that all those involved experience it in that way. The sacrifice made by the donor is often much greater than he or she realised at the time of signing up, because the advertising for the recruitment of organ donors is very one-sided. It is stated that after your death your body is of no use to you anymore and that there is therefore no harm in donating your organs, in order to give sick people a better life. The things that are *not* said are that you, as a 'brain dead' organ donor:

- die on the operating table as a result of removing organs because you have given permission for this yourself;
- are limited in harvesting the results of your life because the operation disrupts your retrospection/review;
- enter into a karmic bond with the recipients of your organs and the surgeon in question, which can be a hindrance for the development of the microcosm that you inhabit;
- have to deal with disruptions in the dying processes of your personality because parts of your body live on in others.

Suffering and dying from an untreatable disease is part of life. Of course it often comes unwanted and inconveniently, but in fact it is normal. In advertising campaigns, it is often suggested that people die as a result of a shortage of organ donors. The technique of organ transplantation is a serious violation of the human body

because all kinds of medication must be used for a long time to prevent rejection of the foreign organ by the organ recipient. The immune system of the recipient is hereby affected, making him or her more susceptible to infectious diseases, for example. Psychological problems can also arise because it is experienced that there is something in the system that does not fit with one's own individual being. We may wonder whether, from the perspective of the development of the whole, the means of organ transplantation is not worse than the ailment.

Driven by compassion, continuously sustained by the harsh reality of the sick with failing organs and the declining supply of organs, donor recruitment comes to us with promotions again and again. We are addressed at our feelings of compassion, charity, social duty and moral duty. In some countries there is a national action week every year in which you are requested to ask everyone in your area whether he is already registered as a donor. You can just be persuasively approached. Young people can receive a donor registration form on their eighteenth birthday. They are invited through youth-oriented projects to discuss and reflect on this topic.

The practice of transplantation medicine states that it handles the body of a dying person and his family with care. Nevertheless those involved in transplantation are transplant-oriented, based on the world in which they live and work, and their ethical objections will be minimal. They regard emotions as human, inevitable and understandable, but these can be dealt with by an adequate approach by the transplant team. They also believe that better information should be provided to let people know how carefully doctors proceed in determining death... and to assert to the population that brain death is actually dead.

Brain death

After the first successful organ transplants in the 1960's, it soon became clear that two conditions had to be met: there must be

living organs and deceased donors. To solve that impossible contradiction, the concept of *brain death* was introduced. Brain death means the complete and irreversible loss of brain functions, including the brainstem and the extended marrow, due to a fatal brain injury, the cause of which is known and which cannot be treated. The criteria differ by country. The method of determination also differs by country. There are regular discussions about the manner of determination.

A brain dead person would no longer have consciousness, but the entire biological system functions completely normally. There are brain-dead women who have given birth to children after many months; dozens of brain-dead have returned to a 100 percent normal life. The best-known example is the American neurosurgeon Eben Alexander for whom brain death was established 2008 due to brain inflammation. After waking up from his brain death and after he eventually fully recovered, he confirmed the clinical diagnosis of brain death after having examined his medical record. He wrote the book *'Proof of Heaven: a Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife'* and gives interviews worldwide about his seven-day brain death period and journey to the hereafter, where he met the deceased sister he had never seen before.⁷⁸

There is a long list of other people who were declared brain dead and came back to life. Many of them describe how they clearly experienced what was happening around them and with them and what was said, but how they were literally paralyzed and unable to give any sign of life. For some of them, these experiences extend to just before the moment of the intended organ removal. There are no reports of those in whom organ removal actually took place.

A brain-dead person who has signed up as an organ donor is therefore declared legally dead, but in reality he dies later, on the operating table, as a result of the removal of his organs. He is

dead when returned to the family. The Brazilian neurosurgeon Cicero Coimbra (publications 2009-2013) has determined that in the event of a brain death, the brain stem no longer functions demonstrably, but is still alive. Due to the failure of the hypothalamus, a number of glands with internal secretion are no longer controlled. At this stage the patient can be saved from death with substitution of the deficient hormones. Coimbra has succeeded in doing this on several occasions.

Brain death is not a diagnosis but a prognosis. After the determination of brain death, the patient is no longer treated. He has then become an organ donor. At the start of organ removal, heart and blood pressure rise, just as with a normal patient who is insufficiently anaesthetised. At the start of the organ removal it can occur that the brain dead one rises and makes repelling gestures: the so-called Lazarus reflex. To prevent this, anaesthesia is administered prior to organ removal.

Material medicine is aimed at maintaining life; it has little understanding of what 'death' means. Without understanding and without evidence, life and consciousness are linked to the brain in order to make organ donation possible. Decisions on whether or not to receive or donate organs should not be imposed. Every person should be free to make these choices according to their own conscience.

Palliative care

Returning now to the question about dignified dying. Doctors often notice that the preparations for the very last trip seem poor compared to the preparations for a random holiday trip. Palliative care can offer a solution through guidance in the very last phase of life. The goal is then no longer to cure the patient – that is no longer possible – but to offer the patient and his environment the highest possible quality of life in the last part of life.

Palliative care is aimed at controlling and keeping pain and oth-

er discomfort under control. Attention is also paid to how incurable illness affects the family and the immediate environment in a psychological and social way. Furthermore, space is created for spiritual aspects associated with questions about the meaning of life and death. The term palliative care is derived from the Latin word *pallium*, which means mantle. Just as in the fourth century Saint Martin gave part of his cloak to a beggar in the cold, palliative care can give people warmth and attention just before they die that can be helpful to proceed peacefully to the other domain of life.

Dying is a sacral process. It is an individual event, but a person is rarely alone in the dying process. Usually care and guidance are needed. The question is whether that help is in accordance with the state of consciousness of the dying person. During the final phase of life it is possible that all masks, ties with the old life and the urge to maintain oneself lose their compelling power and are discarded. It is often a period in which the spiritual person takes important steps. The state of consciousness is the state of life, but also the state of death...

If the person has been able to place a truly different accent in life during his active existence, then this is the time that he will come to real surrender; not to death, but to the new soul that gives life. The faith, trust and tranquility of the new soul are then indispensable aids to bear and endure the pain associated with dying.

The fixed, most material aspect of the organism is often the first to be released. The sick person becomes bedridden and does not eat anymore. The element earth is released and leaves the body. The dying process will then take a few weeks at the most. The next step is that the person concerned no longer wants to drink. The element water can be seen as a symbol for the etheric body: the last days have begun. No longer being hungry and thirsty means that the human being, but also the material body,

is no longer interested in the physical-etheric. The human being, the soul, is busy releasing all that.

During the last hours, it is usually the respiration that responds to the process of release. Breathing becomes irregular until, when the last respiration is blown out, the astral vehicle, the ether body, and the soul truly release from the physical body. The elements air and heat disappear from the body. Then, if the heart no longer beats, the person is freed from the material body.

If pain is too intense during the dying processes, there are aids that relieve the pain. This can cause the consciousness to diminish or it can no longer be maintained. The process of transition can then be continued in artificial sleep. Dying is an essential part of life, and it is a certainty that what has been lived through in a human life and the soul power that has been built up are protected in the final phase.

The dying process in relation to karma

The entire process of letting go of life and turning to what comes after this life is one of the most intense and profound experiences that a person can have in his life. Consciously going through this phase of life can therefore be very valuable, especially for people who know that physical existence is part of a much more comprehensive process.

In this sense, we may question the broadened possibilities of stepping out of life when life is supposedly 'complete'. Everyone is of course free to make their own choices, but it is important to realise that the dying person denies his microcosm an important experience when he or she commits suicide for fear of physical or psychological suffering or to avoid being a burden to the ones who surround him. The person who has lived a valuable life and faces the end of his life may be inspired by the following poem by Rumi:

*'I died as a mineral and became a plant
I died as a plant and rose to animal
I also died as an animal and I was Man.
Why should I fear?
When was I less by dying?
Yet one day I will die as a person
to raise myself up with the angels,
but even then I have to go further.
Everything except God perishes.
When I have sacrificed my angel-soul,
I will become what no spirit ever contained.'*



The human being of today is called to build a new temple that, although it has to resemble the original human tabernacle, is fundamentally different. What is the reason? The human being is no longer a complete human being! True, he is in principle, but in practice he is in a very mutilated state.

The spirit figure and soul figure function almost automatically. There is no longer any question of conscious guiding, building, ordering and prompting by the spirit. The soul-state is in accordance with this total aridity, this spiritual sleep of death. Of the original divine creation there remains only a biological, mechanical person, in a heavily crystallised bodily figure. There is no longer any question of a binding with the Logos, with God; man is a broken reality. [...]

When you want to do good, you either do evil or unchain it. Such is the law of dialectics, the law of opposites, which keeps good and evil linked with each other in a constant rotation. You are imprisoned in a borderland. So the question can be asked: how do I reconstruct the original man?

J. van Rijckenborgh,
Elementary Philosophy of the Modern Rosycross ¹, chapter 11

CHAPTER 18

BUILDING THE INNER TEMPLE

ESSAY 9

For thousands of years humans have been building temples all over the world that enable him to experience and strengthen the connection with his deepest inner being and with the spiritual world. When the temple work is performed properly, participants receive nourishment for their souls so that they can be re-created into new human beings. The word temple is derived from the Latin word *templum*, meaning sacred space or sanctuary and can be described as ‘house of becoming-whole.’

Many of the earlier temples have disappeared, but in some places ancient and impressive buildings are still standing that previously had an important sacred function, but nowadays are mainly tourist attractions. Think for instance of the megalithic monument Stonehenge in southern England, the pyramids of Giza in Egypt and the many medieval cathedrals in Europe, of which the cathedral of Chartres in France perhaps appeals most to the imagination. It may surprise us, as people of the 21st century, that in earlier centuries our peers were able to realise such magnificent structures with very simple tools.

The mentioned shrines had to be a reflection of cosmic laws with regard to their dimensions, proportions, structures and location. That is why the master builders were expected to know those laws first and foremost and could apply them. The condition for that was that they realised them in their own lives: that they were students of the mysteries or were closely connected to a mystery school.

In the past, ritual gatherings were often held in nature. In those

days nature was, much more than now, seen as a reflection of the sacred. For example, the priests of Celtic populations, called druids, considered trees to be sacred. The word druid is derived from the Celtic word *dair*, which means oak. In Western Europe, druids held services in places with powerful energy such as open spaces in the forest and places near running water. Once Christianity arrived, churches were often built at those locations.

The Celts had many gods and also knew a divine trinity. Taranis was the father god, Lugos the son god, and Brigid the divine virgin who would give birth. Rudolf Steiner writes that the druids were very willing to let go of their old religion and to focus on Christianity because, after the mystery of Golgotha, they could experience the Christ spirit in the astral sphere. That could explain why there was already Christianity in Ireland in the first centuries of our era, even before missionaries arrived there from Rome.

Caves

Other natural sanctuaries that were used all over the world were caves. In many cultures, a cave is an ancient symbol of a shelter for people and for cattle. A cave is also an image of birth and re-birth. It is written about both Krishna and Jesus that they were born in a cave.

Caves were important for Catharism, a large Gnostic-Christian movement that had many followers in the 12th and 13th centuries, especially in southern France. The caves in the vicinity of Ussat-les-Bains were an important initiation center for the Cathars. Believers who requested admission and were found suitable received an intensive training of at least three years, during which prayer, work and reflection were their core activities. After this process of education they were initiated as a *parfait* (perfect) in the so-called cave of Bethlehem in the holy mountain (*montagne sacré*). Through that ritual it was confirmed that the person concerned was re-born within.²⁴

Caves also played an important role in the so-called Mithras mysteries. Mithras was a Persian god who was worshiped during the Roman Empire. He was supposedly born of a rock and was then worshiped by shepherds. There was one central myth in that cult in which this sun god kills a bull, symbol for the death of the animal instincts in humans, and afterwards ascends to the sun with his chariot. The worship of Mithras initially took place in caverns and natural caves and later also in constructed temples. There were benches on either side of the room and the walls were decorated with scenes from the Mithras myth.

Supporters of the Mithras religion knew high-standing ethics, professed the return of their savior, believed in the resurrection of the dead and in a final judgment of the good and the evil. The Mithras religion as such also knew the forgiveness of sins through baptism, a sacred meal, Sunday celebration, and a birth celebration on December 25, three days after the winter solstice. In the fourth century, the date of December 25 was declared an official Christian holiday to commemorate the birth of Jesus. Historically nothing is known about the actual year and date of birth of Jesus.

There were clear similarities between Mithraism and young Christianity. That is why several investigators conclude that the Mithras mysteries provided fertile ground for the development of young Christianity. In the first centuries, Mithraism and Christianity competed with each other. Christianity came out as victorious. We can read in history books that this came about because Mithraism was intended exclusively for men, while Christianity was for both men and women from the very beginning. However, there are also more hidden reasons why Christianity gained power over the people.

At the initiative of Emperor Constantine the Great, the foundations of the Roman Catholic faith were established at the Council of Nicaea in the year 325 and under Emperor Theodosius 1,

Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire in the year 380. The Romans were masters of organization. Partly because they started to record and organise the Christian faith, inspiration disappeared and crystallisation and calcification appeared. That led to the decision made during the council of Constantinople in 869 where it was decided that man has no spirit but consists only of a body and a soul. As a result of the reductive scientific thinking that arose in the seventeenth century, even today millions of people are convinced that man has no spirit *and* no soul and that he is only a body that lives as a result of physio-chemical and biological processes.

Egyptian roots

Several places in the New Testament of the Bible make it clear that man is composed of spirit, soul and body. As the apostle Paul writes in his first letter to the community of the Thessalonians: *'And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

We also find the concept of tri-unity of mind, soul and body in Greek philosophy (in particular neo-Platonism) and in Judaism. Jan van Rijckenborgh, one of the founders of the School of the Rosycross, writes in his book *'Dei Gloria Intacta'*, published in 1946, that the liberating values from previous philosophies and world religions have been merged and renewed in original Christianity, and its essence – renewal of spirit, soul and body through transfiguration – has yet to be proclaimed.⁶⁶

It is well known that Christianity is firmly rooted in Judaism. Much less known is that Christianity is also largely based on the Osiris myth from ancient Egypt. In his book *'Ancient Egypt: Cradle of Young Christianity'*, the Dutch theologian and researcher Tjeu van den Berk maintains that the great stories of Christianity originated in the first century from a group of liberal Jews in

the melting pot of Alexandria, the Northern Egyptian port city where the Nile flows into the Mediterranean Sea.

The first Christians in Alexandria derived their identity, albeit mostly unconsciously, from the then more than three thousand year old myth of Osiris. In this way we can understand where the typical non-Jewish themes in the Christ epic come from, such as a triune deity, a child born of a virgin, who is both god and man, dies, descends into the underworld and rises from the dead after three days.

We can see Christianity as a gift from heaven, the seed of which was laid at the banks of the Nile. That already starts with Moses who was pulled out of the water of the Nile as a baby, later on is initiated into the Egyptian Mysteries and becomes a leader of the people of Israel, leading them from slavery in Egypt to the promised land.

Moses probably lived around 1300 BC. He was the one who introduced the tabernacle, a movable temple tent that was made and furnished according to the instructions that Moses received from God on Mount Horeb. In this tent for religious gatherings, three parts can be distinguished: the court, the holy and the holy of holies. We see the same triplets later on in the Jewish temple. The holy of holies of the tabernacle and later of the temple was shaped in the form of a cube and was separated from the rest of the tabernacle by a curtain or drape.

Much later the need arises in Jerusalem for a permanent Jewish temple for ceremonial Jewish worship. Around the year 1000 BC King Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem in cooperation with the master builder Hiram. He was king, priest and magician of Tyre, the area nowadays called Lebanon. This initiate in the gnostic mysteries comes with cedar wood and workmen to build the new temple. The leader of the believers of the people of Israel, in this case King Solomon, therefore asks for help from an esoteric worker in founding the temple and the associated com-

munity. A representative of the outer religion therefore requests and accepts the help of a representative of the inner religion.

Jewish temple

The first Jewish temple, along with the city of Jerusalem, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. They deported the Jews to Babylon and during the Babylonian exile, the Jewish people developed the Institute of the Synagogue, in order to be able to celebrate the Jewish feasts and rites.

Immediately after the Babylonian exile, the foundations were laid in Jerusalem for the second Jewish temple, which was completed in 520 BC. According to the Gospels, this temple is the one where Jesus was on several occasions; it was destroyed in the year 70 by the Romans under the leadership of Titus. In the gospel of Luke we read that the baby Jesus is dedicated to the temple of Jerusalem by Joseph and Mary, who meet old Simeon and Anna there. Luke further tells us about the 12-year-old Jesus teaching in the temple, greatly impressing the listeners through his wisdom. In their gospels, the evangelists Mark and John describe the story of the cleansing of the temple, in which Jesus harshly drives out the traders and money-changers from the court of the temple because they have turned the place of worship into a robber's den. In the past, this story has often been cited to justify violent and aggressive behavior. 'Jesus acted relentlessly, so we are allowed do that too,' was the reasoning.

But when we apply the inner key, a completely different picture emerges. We can see our entire human system as a temple that has fallen into disrepair, has been desecrated and has become powerless. That is why we can recognise the invitation in the Gospels to demolish that old temple and to build a new temple in a threefold process: the temple man. That is inner temple building.

In the oldest known writings of Christianity, the apostle Paul's letters that he probably wrote between the years 52 and 58 AD,

the importance of the inner temple is already emphasised.

Paul writes in his first letter to the community of Corinth about the individual inner temple: *'Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?'* (1 Corinthians 3:16). He also wrote about a collective invisible temple that can be constructed by all community members. He writes to the community of Ephesus: *'So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit'* (Ephesians 2:19-22).

In this context, Paul also speaks about the body of Christ. The classical rosicrucians name it in their manifesto from 1614, *'Fama Fraternitatis R.C.'* (*The call of the Brotherhood of the Rosycross*) as the *domus sancti spiritus* or the house of the Holy Spirit. They conclude their invitation to the rulers, statesmen and scholars of what was then Europe with the following text about the invisible collective temple: *'Our Building, even if thousands were to see it from nearby, will forever remain untouched, indestructible and totally hidden from the wicked world. Under the shadow of thy wings, O Jehova.'*²⁹

Focal point and powerfield

In building both the inner individual temple and the invisible collective temple, an outer temple can play an essential role. There the pupil of the soul receives the insights, powers and materials needed to raise the temple man. If all goes well, an outer temple is much more than a building where religious gatherings are held. A true outer temple is a reservoir of spiritual energies that make spiritual awareness and renewal possible. Those present in the temple can absorb the light power that is present and constantly being released there, and so be healed inwardly. The res-

ervoir does not get depleted because the light power is constantly attracted and vitalised through the focus of the participants in the temple services.

In this way an outer temple can become a focal point of what is sometimes referred to as the universal Brotherhood, which consists on the one hand of human entities who have gone the gnostic path, who no longer have a physical body and are liberated from the wheel of birth and death; and on the other hand, people on earth with a physical body who provide insights and powers from heavenly realms with which the liberating path can be walked.

The quality of the powerfield of a temple is most importantly determined by the intensity of the services that are held there and by the inner development and directedness of those present. A temple building can function as a spiritual focal point only if it is kept clean and pure in every respect. Noise, material and etheric dirt, destructive or wounding thoughts, a disharmonious accommodation and earthly orientations disturb the extremely sensitive temple field and weaken it, or even cause it to withdraw completely.

From these insights we can understand why Jesus was rebuking the livestock traders and money changers whom he sees trading in the temple. When the Christ Light becomes active within us, supposed certainties are, as it were, taken away from us. Greed, symbolised by the merchants and money changers, is driven out of our degenerated inner temple so that there will be room for the development of serving love.

We may wonder to what extent church buildings can still be considered temples. We have seen in Western Europe that church attendance has been declining strongly for a long time. Many church buildings have been demolished or given a different purpose. For example, there are church buildings that have been converted into apartment complexes, multi-company buildings, school buildings, libraries, bookstores, health centers, neighborhood centers and wellness centers.

At the same time we also see that more mosques are being built, that the migrant churches are growing, and that the more conservative churches are building large new churches because the existing buildings have become much too small.

Furthermore, we can establish that certain church buildings can be maintained only because they are used for several different purposes. Then there are celebrations on Sundays and Christian holidays and, during the week, there are activities such as fairs, exhibitions, congresses, receptions and film evenings. It will be clear that all these activities do not contribute to the development of a power field that promotes spiritual awareness and renewal.

School of the Rosycross

Within the School of the Rosycross, the temple work has played an essential role right from the beginning in the year 1924.

Important large temples in the Netherlands are located in Haarlem, in Bilthoven (at the Renova conference center) and in Doornspijk (at the Noverosa conference center). Furthermore, there are thirteen centers in the Netherlands that have a temple. All these temples are used exclusively for spiritual activities, for the maintenance and further development of the inner individual temple and the invisible collective temple.

The classic Rosicrucians from the seventeenth century wrote a mystery story titled: *'The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross'*.²⁶ At the beginning of this story, the main character, Christian Rosycross, is invited to go up a mountain where three temples stand, to attend the wedding between the queen and the king. We can see Christian Rosycross here as the personality that strives to become one with the queen, symbol for the soul, and with the king, symbol for the spirit. We can see the three temples as the three sanctuaries of the body: head, heart and pelvis. They correspond respectively to the holy of holies, the holy and the forecourt. However, we can also interpret them as the temple of the

spirit, the temple of the soul and the temple of the personality. These three can be united by ascending the mountain in a symbolic sense. That is going the path of spiritual awareness and renewal, the way of the Christian mysteries of being born, dying and reviving.

We conclude this book with a part from Chapter 20 of *'The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ'* in which the twelve-year-old Jesus compares walking an inner path with the building of a temple.⁵¹

'One day as he was bringing forth the tools for work he said, these tools remind me of the ones we handle in the workshop of the mind where things were made of thought and where we build up character.

We use the square to measure all our lines, to straighten out the crooked places of the way, and make the corners of our conduct square.

We use the compass to draw circles round our passions and desires to keep them in the bounds of righteousness.

We use the axe to cut away the knotty, useless and ungainly parts and make the character symmetrical.

We use the hammer to drive home the truth, and pound it in until it is a part of every part.

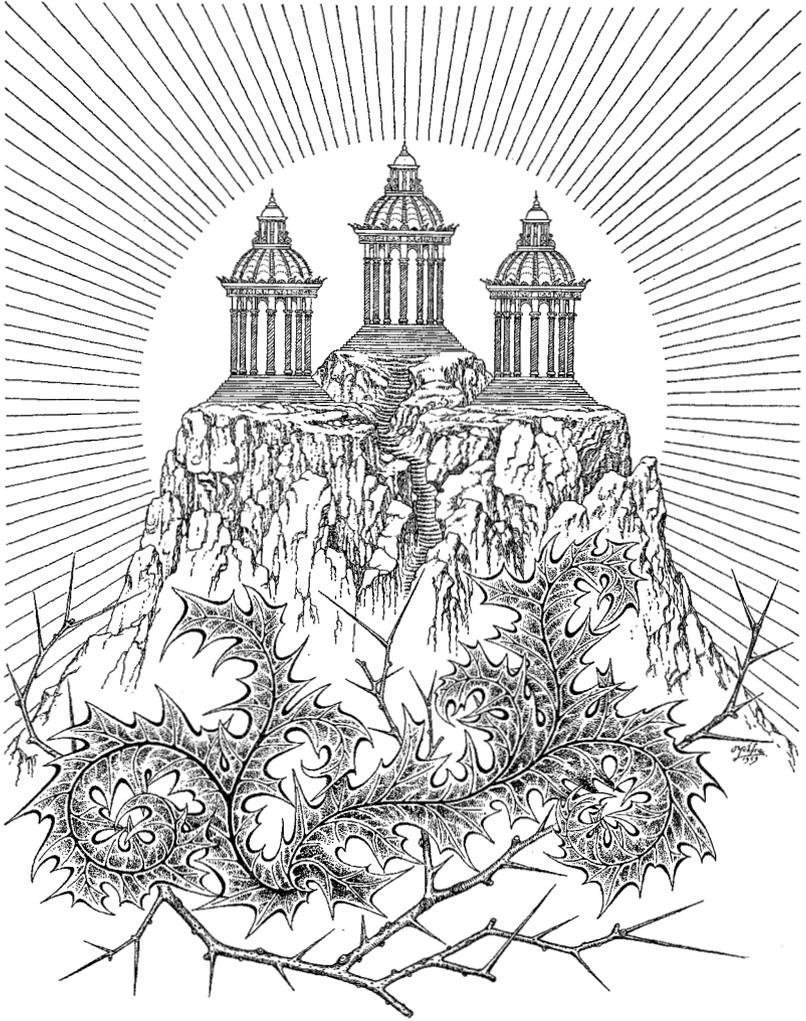
We use the plane to smooth the rough, uneven surfaces of joint, and block, and board that go to build the temple for the truth.

The chisel, line, the plummet and the saw all have their uses in the workshop of the mind.

And then this ladder with its trinity of steps, faith, hope and love; on it we climb up to the dome of purity in life.

And on the twelve-step ladder we ascend until we reach the pinnacle of that which life is spent to build the Temple of Perfected Man' (The Aquarian Gospel 20:12-21).





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THE GOLDEN ROSYCROSS

The book, 'Mysteries and Challenges of Birth, Life and Death', is developed within the School of the Golden Rosycross. We invite you to have a look at our Golden Rosycross Global Social Network, and maybe watch a video-lecture, listen to a podcast and scan some articles. If it appeals to you, we recommend you to register. As a subscriber you will receive regular e-mails with meaningful content. When you absorb the content attentively, you enroll in process of growing in spiritual awareness.

The Rosicrucians are devoted, symbolically speaking, to strengthen the connection between the cross and the rose, between the temporary and the eternal, between the natural and the divine. This work contributes to the regeneration of man and society. The teachings of the Golden Rosycross are universal and Christo-centric at the same time. It is possible to come to inner knowing, to gnosis, by going a path of initiation within the School of the Golden Rosycross.

In all authentic wisdom traditions there is the idea that there is one source of life, wisdom and love. This source has many names: Tao, Brahma, the One, the Unknown, the Creator and the Father-Mother. The School of the Golden Rosycross consists of people who discover this source in themselves, allow themselves to be refreshed by it and want to share this joy with other people who resonate with it.

The School of the Golden Rosycross is a non-profit organisation for promoting spiritual awareness and renewal. It was founded in 1924 in Haarlem in the Netherlands and has now more than 200 locations in about 40 countries. This spiritual school has its roots in an ancient tradition of mystery schools, is connected with the impulse of the classical Rosicrucians from the seventeenth century and relies primarily on gnostic Christianity and Hermetism that is in tune with people of the 21st century.

We undertake many initiatives around the globe to offer seekers possibilities for becoming a spirit-inspired person: books, magazines, video-lectures, podcasts, online-programs, contemplative meetings, temple-services and live conferences. Would you like to follow us online? Then, register for free with our Golden Rosycross Global Social Network.



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Why was I born? What am I supposed to do here? After my death my body decays, but what happens then to my consciousness? Does that disappear too? Or does it increase instead? Will I go to heavenly spheres or will some part of me possibly return to earth in a different body? How can I deal with practical and ethical dilemmas about life and the end of life?

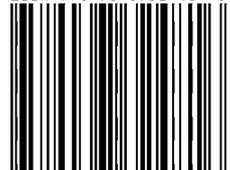
These are essential life questions, posed everywhere by many people, no matter what their culture, religion or social position. If you keep these questions truly alive in your heart, you do not receive precise answers, but those questions dissolve and you yourself become the answer. The true question is not whether there is life after death, but whether you are truly alive before death. Your vision of birth, life and death are determining the way in which you experience and shape your life now.

Birth is the opposite of death, but life has no opposite. Life has always been and life will always be; it is a mystery. You will never fully understand it, but it is possible to penetrate deeply into it, so that you are filled with the true, the good and the beautiful.

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- 1 accepting the word
- 2 incarnating on earth
- 3 fathoming cycles
- 4 coping with loss
- 5 making the two into one
- 6 using your talents
- 7 becoming free from illusion
- 8 acquiring the resurrection body
- 9 experiencing the eternal now

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