

Acknowledge Polarities but Avoid Polarisation: Young and Old Souls by Albrecht Hemming

(NOTE: this is a very insightful article that covers much of the ground *Aristotelians and Platonists* has explored)

Nowadays it is not easy to maintain relationships in any kind of community. The splitting forces are paramount in our time where people become more and more self conscious and quite often less conscious of other's needs.

It is obvious that everybody is different because of bodily constitution, gender, temperaments, attitudes, world views, biography. There is also a much more hidden factor which comes up through our karmic instincts of which we are mostly unaware.

Each of us has lived a number of lives in the past. It makes a great difference whether we had many of them before the time of Christ or only a few. Those who descended early and often one could name "old souls" and the others "young souls". This terminology is used by R.Steiner 1). He also equates the old souls with Plato, one of their main representatives, and the young souls with Aristotle. Plato was still able to experience the spiritual world; Aristotle connected to it in his thinking and he also laid the foundations for natural science.

When I say that Plato was still able to experience the spiritual world, then the word still encompasses the history of a loss, the loss of a direct connection with it. In early mankind the gods like Demeter, Wodan or Rangi were amongst the people, later they showed themselves through their manifestations, then through their working and now only their work in the world of the outer senses 2). This is a perspective from outside.

How did that feel? From incarnation to incarnation that sense of loss was experienced as a suffering, a pain to be left alone and not being in touch with the sources of life any more. This was the fate of the old souls in relation to the spiritual world. That created a deep longing to reconnect, to communicate or better to be in communion with it again. On that basis they developed a deep sense for religion and an inner understanding for other human beings in their feeling life.

The situation for the young souls was different. They came from cosmic colonies and dived down to the earth to get hold of it – like Aristotle. They were still filled with memories of the cosmos and thus far from longing for it. They were keen to connect with the world and act in it. Science and technology were close to their heart and thus to their thinking and will.

When I look around me, young souls see the old souls as much more sensitive to inner soul experiences than they are themselves – if they see it positively; otherwise they judge them as sentimental or not real. For the old souls

the young ones are – positively seen – decisive and straightforward. Very often the young souls appear to them as brutal with no understanding of people at all.

It is a real effort for each of these groupings to find the positive sides, otherwise they are at war. In speaking about the struggles in a community, R. Steiner admonished the members of the Anthroposophical Society 3) to recognise from which strand each one comes and work together on that basis. Acknowledge polarities but avoid polarisation.

When I mentioned our relationship as people to the spiritual world then I have to say that this is an abstract term, even though it can lead to its realities of beings that dwell and act in it like the angelic hierarchies and the holy trinity. The latter is represented by Christ on the earth who has himself united with Jesus. Christ is of cosmic origin, Jesus of human origin.

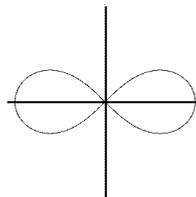
The young souls were much more able to relate to the cosmic Christ than the old souls because of their longer stay in the spiritual world 4). It was then a redemption for the old souls on the earth when HE appeared in Jesus as Christ Jesus, so that they could reconnect. That makes a difference in the inner relationship to this being for those of us who are young or old souls.

On the background of this, I can understand the heartfelt communion with this being in the time of early Christianity which still continued into later incarnations. The young souls were, and most often still are, penetrated with HIS cosmic will which gives them the appearance of spiritual engineers with the semblance of objectivity. When I put this into a schema than it looks like this:

Old souls —————
connecting with their
hearts: Warmth

Young souls
connecting with
their minds: Light

We are now in a time where both have to learn to cooperate and to gain some of the qualities of the other. Young souls need to develop their inner life to be able to relate truly with people (horizontal) and old souls need to gain access to the cosmic light (vertical), even though they might experience it at first as chilly. In the end there will be no warmth without light and no light without warmth, which may appear in the following sign where both these aspects are interwoven:



Non-profit organisations (another term would be cultural organisations) which have an educational, scientific, artistic, religious, *healing or caring* task need money as a free gift. People who are working there have to be aware that it will only flow if warmth and light are raying to those who are prepared to give. I meet situations where representatives of old souls see the young ones as “tanks” and the young souls describe the old ones as “sensitive flowers”. If this is the case no one ought to be astounded that this kind of a “community” receives neither respect nor money.

The basic task for the young and old souls is at a turning point at present 5).

Natural science needs to be complemented by spiritual science. This is what young souls with their scientific attitude have to do so that they are able to give orientation to others out of a greater context. This context only makes sense if it is connected to human realities – here and now. Human realities are the area where old souls are coming from. Young souls need to listen to them.

The richness of human and social experiences of old souls ought to be translated into social initiatives. I see that happening – but there is a challenge. In the instincts of the people with old souls are (unconsciously) the memories of sufferings, even to be burnt at the stake in the past by representatives of young souls. Protecting their “precious” initiatives creates a thick skin around them with the tendency to be remote from the world. Here they need the young souls for guidance.

There is a good chance to oppose the splitting forces so that these two groupings are able to work together – on the basis of individual striving and sharing experiences with one another.

Literature:

- 1) R. Steiner, lecture
- 2) R. Steiner, Letters to the members
- 3) R. Steiner, lectures 6/7/1924 and 8/7/1924 in Karmic Relationships
- 4) As in 3.
- 5) Manfred Schmidt-Brabant in a lecture given in Dornach 9/11/1979, not published.

