

SOCIAL LIFE IN THE VIEWS OF VAN EMMICHOVEN AND LIEVEGOED

The different ways of working upon the social world are clearly recognizable in the perspectives of van Emmichoven and Lievegoed. Both of them were quite cognizant of Steiner's injunction of knowing to which stream they belonged. Van Emmichoven had awakened to the reality of his previous lives, triggered by his first encounter with Steiner. Lievegoed had the courage to introduce a way of working which was quite new, precisely because he wanted to bring the impulses of his stream to the fore. He seems to have been indirectly cognizant of the Platonic stream, and what he says about it closely corresponds to his soul make-up.

How did the two doctors see the different paths or streams? Characteristically, they expressed themselves in diametrically polar ways on the subject: van Emmichoven from the depth of his understanding of the Foundation Stone Meditation, Lievegoed out of his experience with innumerable groups of people, or at the hand of his diverse life endeavors.

In a general sense, van Emmichoven believed that sacrifice is crucial for a healthy social life. In his book *Hygiene of the Soul*, the doctor has many fictitious characters offer ideas on various matters. As concerns social life, it is quite indicatively the character of the doctor who speaks what is closest to van Emmichoven's heart. "Sacrifice," said the doctor, "is the only true basis of social life. It is inherent in the mystery of the human 'I.'" The "I," the core of our personality, does not really come forth until it has made the sacrifice of offering its whole being out of love of mankind."¹ And further, "Just as the 'I' had to grow first *in* and *through* the community, now a new community will have to be born out of our 'I.' That is the great task before which the human 'I' is placed. Like a ferment, the power of the 'I' will have to permeate the whole of social life and guide its vital growth."²

To attain the larger social goal, van Emmichoven asks that more and more conscious individuals take up the development of the I and exert an influence over their fellow men. And this is what can be achieved through exercises and meditation. The calls of the Foundation Stone Meditation outline this very path to self-sacrifice.

The theme of the Christmas Foundation Meeting and the Foundation Stone Meditation occupied van Emmichoven for many years, and he gave numerous lectures on the theme. He was in fact one of the first anthroposophists to draw attention to Steiner's use of the rhythms of the Foundation Stone Meditation. He had meditated on them since 1923. It is worth quoting him at length in the work of his son and biographer: "Practice spirit remembering' not only means that we learn how our own 'I' is part of God's 'I'—no, out of cosmic heights we hear resound: 'From the divine, humanity takes its existence,' the humanity together with which we must come to a brotherly, social community. Thus 'Practice spirit reflection' (Spirit Mindfulness) is a path of schooling for meeting the being of Christ, the cosmic ego, the 'I' of humanity, to which in the far-distant future all human beings can find their free relationship. The third task set us,

¹ F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven, *Hygiene of the Soul*, 177.

² *Ibid*, 177-78.

‘Practice spirit vision,’ is ultimately the path from natural science to spiritual science, from anthropology to anthroposophy.”³

Notice that van Emmichoven recognizes in Spirit Remembering (Recollection) the path leading to “a brotherly social community.” In his book on the Foundation Stone, van Emmichoven further elaborates on this theme and refers to one of the first exercises in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*: looking back over the day’s experiences as a spectator. Then he refers to other exercises, such as looking back at particular phases of one’s life, concluding “it should really be possible, after several years of these exercises, to look back on one’s whole life as a detached observer.”⁴

At the center of Spirit Mindfulness van Emmichoven places everything of the nature of meditation, which centers around meditation itself but is also much more. On one hand, it means recognition of the laws of destiny, through which the individual can feel his own I in the World-Ego of Christ. On the other hand, it addresses the study of anthroposophy, which can start to acquire a more meditative quality and become more than reading with the head.⁵ And Spirit Beholding would be “The whole path of knowledge which Rudolf Steiner described... and, indeed the whole of anthroposophy, is a path of spiritual practice.”⁶

In effect, even though he mentions practices rather than specific paths, van Emmichoven outlines the very same different attitudes that Lievegoed derives from below, as it were. Lievegoed was used to the practice of letting spiritual scientific ideas fade into the background and seeing them re-emerge from experience. He, too, does not refer specifically to Aristotelian and Platonist streams, but to paths. Lievegoed recognizes two paths:

- a path through clarity of thought, through which one can perceive reality more clearly and live according to the insights that are derived from it.
- a “path of intervention in the reality of the world through the will in which man initiates, works and is effective.”⁷

In effect, we have the path of Spirit Beholding in the first, Spirit Recollection in the second. It is the second path that Lievegoed, more than anybody else, introduced into anthroposophy. A third path is also mentioned in the same lectures, to which we will return later.

Referring to the first two paths, Lievegoed concludes: “Thus we have on the one hand the path of the individual who strives mentally and, on the other, the path of the individual who works socially into the earthly foundation process.”⁸ Taking the example of philosophical matters, Lievegoed points out that here things must be precisely defined, and he thus refers to the first path. “However, in the social realm... one will make no progress in such a way; it is impossible and would be a violation of social life. It leads to an overly strict and inappropriate application of principles in which the drive to form [of

³ Emanuel Zeylmans, *Willem Zeylmans van Emmichoven: An Inspiration for Anthroposophy. A biography*, 249.

⁴ F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven, *The Foundation Stone*, 42-43.

⁵ *Ibid*, 44.

⁶ *Ibid*, 45.

⁷ Lievegoed, *Developing Communities*, 117.

⁸ Lievegoed *Developing Communities*, 118.

the cultural sphere] takes precedence over the living reality.”⁹ The above basic attitude is, according to Lievegoed, important in the path of the will, “for will-impulses conflict with each other most drastically of all.”¹⁰

The path of the will is one that cannot be taken on one’s own; it is the path of community. This is the path that brings us to karmic groups and enables us “to compensate for one another’s deficiencies, where each person’s Intuition is protected by the others.”¹¹ In these Mysteries we can decide to form a karmic group, not out of the past, but in view of the future. However, nobody can make progress on this path if they do not make progress on the other (the path through clarity of thought). And he judges that the reverse is true: that nobody on the individual (cognitive) path will make progress unless they work socially and deliberately with others, in listening to what is needed from the future and sensing what is coming from our pre-birth intentions. Here Lievegoed shows himself in agreement with van Emmichoven’s repeated assertion that the soul works as a unity, meaning that all its processes need to be honored to attain a state of balance and health.

Following the contrast between the practices of the first and third panels of the Foundation Stone Meditation that is at the center of this book, we could say that Spirit Recollection is the more direct set of practices towards social change; Spirit Beholding can potentially have the deepest effect when a growing number of people engage in it with full determination. Directness and immediacy in one, depth and intensity on the other: this is how the two paths can complement each other in affecting social reality. This is also how Lievegoed complemented van Emmichoven.

According to Lievegoed, the individual path strives towards Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition, in that order. It is the path that every human being takes after death “in order to participate Inspiratively in the ‘conversation of the Hierarchies.’”¹² The other path begins with Intuition, which one awakens within the other, then moves to Inspiration and Imagination. And this is a process which places us in the stream of karma, and cannot be navigated alone.

In between the two paths, Lievegoed also places the “path of soul-perception,” which is also the artistic way. One who walks this path feels pain whenever a concept becomes fixed. He is also unable to participate in intellectually clever conversations. For a person who primarily follows this path, the soul always experiences new situations, which are fully justified for the individual. And, in the soul, each person is individually unique.

Van Emmichoven was a pioneer, as he shows in his *The Foundation Stone Meditation*, in his understanding of Spirit Recollection. Lievegoed understood the importance of strengthening his own faculty of Spirit Beholding. One can wonder to what degree this work of coming closer to a fuller recognition of the different paths was the result of a long friendship and mutual learning. Lievegoed faced the difficulty of introducing a way of working that was new for the Anthroposophical Society. After all, Platonists were hardly present at the time of Steiner, and what they were going to bring was bound to

⁹ Ibid, 120.

¹⁰ Ibid, 120.

¹¹ Ibid, 147.

¹² Lievegoed, *Developing Communities*, 190-91.

create surprises. No doubt van Emmichoven himself may have been surprised by the way his colleague operated. He may not have fully understood him; but it goes to his credit that he felt the need of moving into the future with trust. Lievegoed fully understood the necessity of integrating Spirit Recollection with Spirit Beholding, and thus deepening the kind of knowledge which he had felt to be “boring” when he first approached *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

What the two doctors offered us in their vision of the sources of social change cannot be viewed as alternatives, as either/or. Once again, it is out of such meetings of minds and integration of perspectives that we can see a fuller picture emerge. The greatness of Lievegoed’s collaboration with van Emmichoven is such that it allows us to form a picture that is larger than that of each individual contribution. It is a both/and rather than an either/or.