

## Appendix 18

### Sense of Self and Spirit Birth

Of all expressions that appear in the fall-wintertime of the year, "sense of Self" and "spirit birth" seem closely related. The two expressions emerge sequentially safe for the Christmas mention of the spirit child in verse 38, that already points to the spirit birth. Otherwise we find sense of Self from 26 to 39, spirit birth pointedly in verses 44 and 45.

#### **From Michaelmas to the Holy Nights: Sense of Self**

The expression sense of Self (Selbstsinns, Selbstgefühl or Innern sich fühlen) shows up first shortly before Michaelmas and then inaugurates the wintertime of the year in verse 39 of the Holy Nights. Before the expression emerges in the Calendar it is prepared in the end of the summer in verses 21 to 25 with "selfhood power" or "Self." After the soul has expanded into and received the gifts of the cosmos during the summer, something new emerges that is at first called "strange power" (verse 21) and associated with selfhood power.

The theme of sense of Self is inaugurated in verse 24 at the very end of summer when the soul first becomes aware of the Self:

Unceasingly itself creating  
Soul life becomes aware of self;  
The cosmic spirit, striving on,  
Renews itself by self cognition,  
And from the darkness of the soul  
Creates the fruit of Self-engendered will. [Des Selbstsinns Willensfrucht]

The last line translated more literally would yield "will-fruit of sense of Self." The sense of Self that emerges here calls us in the next verse to counter outer nature's tendency to put us to sleep: "Toward sleep is urging all creation, but inmost soul must stay awake." This renewed exertion of the will appears all the more forcefully in the Michaelmas verse:

O Nature, your maternal life  
I bear within the essence of my will.  
And my will's fiery energy  
Shall steel my spirit striving,  
That sense of self [Selbstgefühl] springs forth from it  
To hold me in myself.

In this verse we see as it were a harvest of the summer. Nature's maternal life (cosmic life) which has nourished us through the summer is now gathered within the sanctuary of the soul, where it becomes Michaelic fiery will.

The future is foreseen as the result and direction of our spirit striving. Sense of Self will emerge from this "fiery energy."

From verses 27 to 32 the light of thinking grows and illumines the soul and our understanding of the world. We then come to the threshold verse of cross 7 (33) that bids the soul find a deeper connection to the macrocosm. The gesture of receiving has last been heard in verse 26, and is echoed in expressions such as "gift of summer sun" (27) or "summer heritage" (29). It points forward as the result of inner activity in "summer of the soul" (30). During the summer the soul has expanded toward the cosmos. From being "receivers" we are now challenged to become "givers." It is no surprise therefore that the memory of what we have gathered is called forth in the next verse, in which past and future stand in balance and pivot around sense of Self.

Verse 34 (November 24-30) reads:

In secret inwardly to feel  
How all that I've preserved of old  
Is quickened by new-risen sense of Self [Innern sich fühlen]  
This shall, awakening, pour forth cosmic forces  
Into the outer actions of my life  
And growing, mould me into true existence.

A quick look at the past in the first two lines propels us into the future. And two other elements accompany this yearning. If we want to fulfill the challenge of verse 33 we will need to give cosmic forces to the world, and thus experience our life more fully in union with the macrocosm.

We can now ask ourselves "To what does this sense of Self correspond?" Everything in the Calendar seems to indicate that it is a step of transition toward the full achievement of the spirit birth. And we can find in Steiner's descriptions of the acquisition of higher knowledge "something in ourselves which appears to the soul as a second being within it." This is a process that can grow before it becomes an actual birth. On the way of spiritual schooling we start to have a retrospective view over the whole of our life and can look at all its events with equanimity, seeing in this second being the architect of our lives. We will then realize that "the conditions of our destiny, already given us at birth, are connected with our own self," that a higher being lives within our ego-being, and we start to *feel* the ego as a creation of this higher being."<sup>1</sup> The rest is worth quoting in full from the same book: "This *feeling* is, in fact, the first step toward beholding the spiritual being of the soul. And if it leads to nothing, it is because we rest satisfied with the beginning only. This beginning may be a scarcely perceptible *dull sensation*. It may remain so perhaps for a long time. But if we

---

<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *A Road to Self Knowledge*, "Sixth Meditation: In Which an Attempt is Made to Form a Conception of the Ego-Body or Thought-Body."

strongly and energetically pursue the course which has led us up to this beginning, we shall at last arrive at beholding the soul as a spiritual being” (emphasis added). Notice how in both quotes this is an experience we have in the realm of feeling rather than in full awareness.

### **The Crossing of the Themes: Christmas and Holy Nights**

Many important things intervene before we hear the expression sense of Self again. Week 35 of Advent is a pointer to the reality of Christ in our soul, the cosmic Self to which we want to belong in all humility. And it is not surprising that after this the all-encompassing cosmically creative dimension of the Christ being appears as cosmic Word in verses 36 to 38. Our determination to pour cosmic forces in our deeds is deepened through the cosmic Word in an attitude of willing sacrifice (36).

We then come to the turning point of the Christmas verse in which the spirit birth is announced through the presence of cosmic Word fostering the experience of the spirit child, for which we have prepared a place in our soul with newly awakened innocence. At this stage it still appears as something bestowed upon the striving soul as a gift of Christmas time.

The spirit child within my soul  
I feel freed of enchantment.  
In heart-high gladness has  
The holy cosmic Word engendered  
The heavenly fruit of hope,  
Which grows rejoicing into worlds afar  
Out of my being's godly roots.

In this way the theme pointing to the spirit birth is announced just before sense of Self reaches its climax in verse 39.

Surrendering to spirit revelation  
I gain the light of cosmic being;  
The power of thinking, growing clearer,  
Gains strength to give myself to me,  
And quickening there frees itself  
From thinker's energy my sense of Self [Selbstgefühl].

This time sense of Self is actualized and we are told that it is the gift of “thinker’s might.” That to which we aspired around the time of Michaelmas is what we have strengthened through the refinement and potentizing of the power of thinking. It is thus rendered a step more conscious and closer to the full fruition of the spirit birth.

### **From Christmas to Easter: Spirit Birth**

Once more we witness an intensification and transformation. What lives in the soul is strengthened by the cleansing power of the cosmic Word (40).

The Self is once more approached by the soul that lives in earnestness the calling of the spirit. And the transformation that follows is visible because a fiery impulse pervades the soul in weeks 40 to 43. Warmth of heart kindles our inner fire. It awakens our courage and consecrates our co-creative presence in the world. We then come to the final turning point.

Verse 43 indicates an important transition. The spirit birth has long been prepared, in effect since summer, with the soul's faculty to awaken the sense world to beauty of appearance, an intimation of the etheric that works behind natural manifestations. Now this is taken a step forward by giving the "world of appearance through forces of the heart the power to be," summoned by the being/essence of the spirit, fired and transformed by the heart. This being of the spirit present in the macrocosm draws closer to the human soul, where it nurtures the spirit birth in verses 44 and 45:

Verse 44 (February 2-8)

In reaching for new sense-enticements,  
Soul-clarity would fill,  
Mindful of spirit-birth attained [Geistgeburt],  
The world's bewildering, sprouting growth  
With the creative will of my own thinking.

Verse 45 (February 9-15)

My power of thought grows firm  
United with the spirit's birth [Geistgeburt].  
It lifts the senses' dull attractions  
To bright-lit clarity.  
When soul-abundance  
Desires union with the world's becoming,  
Must senses' revelation  
Receive the light of thinking.

The spirit birth is attained after spirit child (38) and sense of Self (39) and after the heart-warmth verses 40 to 43. Notice also that both verses 44 and 45 are associated with the power and light of thinking, as was 39. Our thinking has been refined through the crucible of the heart. What was intuited and felt in sense of Self, becomes a reality in the spirit birth, the birth of our Spirit Self. And warmth of heart is a quality that is needed for the emerging of the spirit birth, as we will see shortly.

The spirit birth is the objective realization of the yearning reached with the sense of Self. This is then the time of the year in which the Spirit Self can come to birth, or approach the human being more than at any other time of. Steiner reminds us that when the higher Self takes residence in the soul "This birth is not just an image. It is a literal birth in an absolutely real sense: a birth into the spiritual world."<sup>2</sup> At the spiritual birth the higher self

---

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Steiner. *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*, Chapter 6, "Some Effects of Initiation."

is united with high spiritual beings. At this stage we are able to differentiate the lower self in the present incarnation from our more permanent self. "In other words, we come to understand, by our own power of vision, the doctrine of the embodiment (or incarnation) of the higher self in the lower self."<sup>3</sup> With this stage comes a new relationship to the lower self, an analogy of which in the physical is the way we feel in relation to a tool or a vehicle.

We can also realize why the birth has been preceded with the strengthening of the sphere of warmth and of the heart. In effect a new force of perception arises through an organ that forms in proximity of the heart, and with this one we will perceive spiritual objects and beings through the ether body. "And the heart organ is precisely what the higher I uses to make the sensory self its instrument so that it can use it."<sup>4</sup>

The cultivation of the sense of Self has brought forth the birth of the Spirit Self. When we start to grow into the spiritual world we emancipate ourselves from the guidance of higher powers. This means we can avail ourselves of new forces and beings we previously could not see, but also face the temptation of using them for egotistic purposes.<sup>5</sup> This temptation develops along with the loss of the interconnection of thinking, feeling and willing. The splitting is reflected in the supersensible separation of the brain into three parts, something like a thinking brain, a feeling brain and a willing brain, which of course are visible only to supersensible perception.<sup>6</sup> Notice in passing that this is the risk mentioned in the warning verse 46, coming immediately after the achievement of the spirit birth: "The world is threatening to stun the inborn forces of my soul."

Because of the separation of the soul forces the human being must herself connect one soul force to the other. Otherwise she runs the risk of remaining indifferent to what previously brought strong reactions of love or hate. She may not find the inclination to react in the way the situation would require, and she must find the strength solely out of her own will. Once this situation is overcome our separate soul forces find a connection with their spiritual counterparts in the universe and are held together by the Spirit Self.

In the Calendar of the Soul the separation of the soul forces calls for the growth of the power of memory (threshold verse 46), which reconnects the human being with his personal and cosmic past, and with the Christ impulse drawing nearer in its fullness with the yearly recurrence/reenactment of the Mystery of Golgotha at Easter.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Chapter 7, "Changes in the Dream Life of the Esoteric Student".

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, Chapter 9, "The Splitting of the Personality in Esoteric Training."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

We can now determine the seed by its fruits, so to speak. Verses 47 to 49 bring back the light of thinking after the warmth of heart of the preceding verses. In the middle is verse 48 in which cosmic thinking finds a place in the soul, and the ready and willing human being can speak of love as an objective soul force. Thinking, cultivated in freedom in the soul, can achieve an understanding of love to which it has been previously warmed up. Cosmic forces have called forth cosmic thinking and our higher Self.

As we prepare for Easter and the rising of the forces of growth, the spirit birth and the presence of cosmic thinking render possible to feel our being akin to the forces active in the life and sound ethers (cosmic life) of verses 49 and 50. Cosmic life reveals itself to our soul, and we can then receive the blessing of the renewed sphere of the etheric, in which Christ is present, as we approach Easter and the power of thinking recedes (51 to 1). Something dies while something new appears. This is the human being's modern experience of the resurrection, made possible by uniting ourselves to the Christ impulse through the Calendar of the Soul.