

Appendix 23

The Turning Points of the Equinoxes in the Calendar of the Soul

The scope of this short essay is to look at the transformations at the turning points of the equinoxes, which in the Calendar of the Soul are more marked than at the solstices. The crossing points of the lemniscate—the figure which aptly describes the nature of the course of time in the Calendar of the Soul—indicate the times of greatest change and discontinuity of the Calendar. These places of crossing between the two halves of the year imply a passage from involution, to a time of pralaya, and an ensuing evolution. They are the moments of the year between Nature-consciousness and Self-consciousness or the reverse. We will look at the simpler transformation first, the one of Michaelmas, then at Easter.

Michaelmas: from Cosmic Life to Self-Engendered Will

The nature of the metamorphosis that takes place at Michaelmas is one in which the four ethers—three in the Calendar—into which the soul has expanded during the summer are now transformed into soul forces at the beginning of the Fall. The first one is cosmic life (life and tone ethers together) that transforms into the self-engendered will. When the human being underwent the Luciferic temptation, death penetrated the physical body's lower ethers, those of light and warmth, not the life and chemical/sound ethers, which in the Calendar are collectively called "cosmic life." This is what is meant in the biblical "Of the tree of life [the human being] shall not eat." In occult terms what is called "tree of life" can be differentiated in its two components, and the above could be restated: "Of the tree of life [the human being] shall not eat and the Spirit of Matter [Harmony of the Spheres] he shall not hear!"¹

Warmth and light are accessible to the human being through sense-perception; not so the chemical and life ethers. The workings of the sound ether only manifest themselves within the life processes. The life ether cannot be perceived, only its effects on living beings. This is why for conventional science life itself remains a mystery.

The autumn transformation is heralded in verse 23, one of almost complete pralaya. We could call it the dying out of the life, light and warmth ethers.

¹ Rudolf Steiner, *Christ and the Human Soul*, lecture of July 16, 1914.

There dims in damp autumnal air
The senses' luring magic;
The light's revealing radiance
Is dulled by hazy veils of mist.
In distances around me I can see
The autumn's winter sleep;
The summer's life has yielded
Itself into my keeping.

The verse, coming just before mid-September, marks a strong contrast with the qualities of summer. In essence, life, light and warmth have decreased, and we are left with the enigmatic "The summer's life has yielded itself into my keeping." It is this simple statement that needs to be qualified on the basis of everything that has preceded it in the Calendar in order not to appear as a near emptiness. With the mention of summer the verse is referring to everything the soul has experienced in the expansion into the spheres of cosmic life, cosmic light, cosmic warmth, and also the meetings with the cosmic I, cosmic thinking and cosmic Word. Suddenly the verse is no longer what it appears to be at first sight.

What Rudolf Steiner offers us in relation to the Michaelmas festival will add depth to what happens here. "For if a man *becomes more sensitive to the secret workings of nature*, and thus *participates actively in nature's germinating and fruiting*, it follows that he will livingly experience also the effects of autumn in the outer world."(emphasis added)² This explains how much lay hidden at first sight in the simple expression "The summer's life has yielded itself into my keeping." Further in the same lecture Steiner captures the nature of the necessary change of consciousness that beckons us at Michaelmas: "In the time when external nature is dying, he must oppose nature-consciousness with the force of self-consciousness."

The hidden fullness of verse 23 is demonstrated in the following verses in which the soul, armed with inner determination, can start the first metamorphosis, that of cosmic life.

² Rudolf Steiner, *The Four Seasons and the Archangels*, "The Michael Imagination," lecture of October 5, 1923.

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.

In lines 1, 3 and 6 of verse 24 we find expressions of the will, with an enhancement and culmination in the "self-engendered will." Here is then the first step of transformation of cosmic life into the self-engendered will. The following verse explains that the human being must accomplish something that Nature alone cannot help him do.

I can belong now to myself
And shining spread my inner light
Into the dark of space and time.
Toward sleep is urging all creation,
But inmost soul must stay awake
And carry wakefully sun's glowing
Into the winter's icy flowing.

To the world that calls us to sleep we respond with an exertion of the will to remain awake. And finally the essence of this metamorphosis is rendered evident in verse 26.

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 springs forth from it
To hold me in myself.

The first two lines show us that within the essence of the will is enclosed the cosmic life, which manifests as a maternal power. Note that this idea has already been expressed in the first verse of the ascent of cosmic life/joy of growth in late winter. This joy emerges from the "world's great womb." (verse 47)

In the verses that follow, cosmic light is metamorphosed into the light of thinking—as in "The force and radiance of my thought, coming from soul's sun power" in verse 28).³ And warmth of heart emerges at the time shortly preceding Christmas, from the sphere of cosmic warmth, witness, among

³ The same transformation of cosmic light into thinking is deepened in verse 30's first two lines: "There flourish in the sunlight of my soul, the ripened fruits of thinking."

others, verse 40: "There streams from love-worlds of the heart ... the fiery power of the cosmic Word". In this latter expression cosmic Word emerges from the sphere of cosmic warmth.

Easter: from Cosmic Thinking to Cosmic Life

The change that we witness around Easter is, in my opinion, even more dramatic. Something quite unique happens by virtue of the fact that thinking achieves its highest development during the end of winter and early spring, then completely turns around at the time of Easter, the fulcrum of the Calendar.

For a complete evolution of the power of thinking I refer the reader to Chapter 2 of *Exploring Themes in the Calendar of the Soul*.⁴ Here I want to focus on the particular transformation that thinking undergoes when it meets with the emerging of cosmic life. This first happens in the verses 47 and 48 in a sort of call and response

When the soul senses the arising of cosmic life (as "the joy of growth" in verse 47) the inner response is "may it find my strength of thought well armed by powers divine." This is the first step. The most definite step comes from the achievement of verse 48: "may certainty of cosmic thinking arise to solve the soul's enigma and focusing its mighty rays, awaken love within the hearts of men." Thinking that has achieved complete spiritualizing, cosmic thinking, can then naturally "feel the force of cosmic life" in verse 49. Thinking in effect reconnects to the source of the cosmic formative forces which manifest on one hand as "forces of Nature" and on the other are internalized in the human being as thinking.

The power of cosmic life arises with the approach of the fullness of the Christ impulse, as it is only possible at the time of Easter. The sphere of the Tree of Life from which the human being has exiled herself at the time of the Fall is brought back on the wings of the Christ deed at the turning point of time, in the measure that our soul connects fully with "not I but Christ in me." And all of this is accomplished through the power of thinking.

Normally this is a movement of expansion that would keep on going. At least this is what we expect in a personal biography. Not so, in the ebbs and flows of the rhythm of the calendar. Once cosmic thinking is achieved we go back to square one, as it were, to becoming beggars in the spirit, when throughout the spring we grow into Nature consciousness. Key to this

⁴ See <https://www.millenniumculmination.net/boding-intuition-thinking-feeling.pdf>

transition is an understanding of verses 1 and 2, where thinking appears under a new light.

Verse 1 expresses something that naturally derives from what we can expect.

When out of world-wide spaces
The sun speaks to the human mind,
And gladness from the depths of soul
Becomes, in seeing, one with light,
Then rising from the sheath of self,
Thoughts soar to distances of space
And dimly bind
The human being to the spirit's life.

While cosmic life draws near to the Christ-imbued human being, the glow of original participation in the sphere of the Tree of Life touches the soul. In the Calendar Steiner calls it "Nature consciousness." And this is possible because our transformed thinking draws us near to its own source and the source of the cosmic formative forces from which flow the life and tone ethers, the cosmic life or "spirit's life" in this verse.

It is the next verse that allows us to understand what has happened in the reversal that takes place at Easter.

Out in the sense-world's glory
The power of thought gives up
its separate being,
And spirit worlds discover
Again their human offspring,
Who germinates in them
But in itself must find
The fruit of soul.

Here is a death and a resurrection within the human soul. What takes place when "Out in the sense world's glory the power of thinking loses self-confines" is something we can understand from the transformation the soul undergoes immediately after death.

Once an individual dies he perceives his thoughts as if outside of him and in front of him, in the same way as objects are outside the human being in daily life. "... the whole thought-world that the human being has gathered

to himself between birth and death becomes an objective world.”⁵ These thoughts assume independent existence.

What is described above corresponds to the time of the life-tableau which lasts only a few days. As the experience progresses this thought world distances itself from the human being, as if it were going to far removed spiritual regions. And with this comes the feeling that we must pursue our thoughts.

Thinking and cosmic life show us the two sides of Easter. The sacrifice of thinking is what renders possible the soul’s expansion and resurrection in the sphere of cosmic life, which corresponds to the life and chemical ethers. Thinking ebbs, our Nature-consciousness rises. Easter can truly bring a resurrection. What happens automatically in Nature can only happen if we, human beings, have the courage to die to ourselves.



The resurrection into the original sphere of the Tree of Life, not surprisingly, is echoed in verse 3 immediately following. Here the soul which has experienced death and resurrection, reemerges as if made new and innocent in the experience of full participation in the “world-all” and “in

⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *Life between Death and Rebirth*, March 19, 1914.

mindfulness of its primal state." The re-entry into the sphere of cosmic life brings us an echo, a memory of what the human being was meant to be before the Fall, when he ate of the Tree of Life, and what he is meant to be in future states of Earth evolution, long after choosing to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. To this end we must "free [ourselves] from fetters of our selfhood" in order to "sound the depths of [our] true being." This marks in effect a new beginning, a great change from the stage of the "spirit birth," or emergence of our higher Self, in verses 44 and 45.

The author is indebted to Karl König's drawing, above, in getting closer to an understanding of verse 3.⁶

⁶ From Karl König, *An Inner Journey through the Year: Soul Images and the Calendar of the Soul*.