

## **Chapter 9**

### **America, the Transformation of the Will**

Up until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and even some little up to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there still were progressive impulses at work in some lodges before it all came to an end. From then on the Western Brotherhoods have in large part usurped the form of Freemasonry.

*Rudolf Steiner*

The American event as a spiritual reality, as a subtle energy field, is every bit as fresh and new and dynamic now as it was when the founders signed the Declaration of Independence or ... [years] later the Constitution. It may seem like it's not fresh anymore and that's the outer shell you might say, the rind, but the fruit within is still very ripe and juicy and fresh.

*David Spangler*

In the English-speaking people the Consciousness Soul speaks in an instinctive way. As representatives of the fifth post-Atlantean period they are at home in the physical world and therefore in all pursuits that bring transformation of the physical world: science, technology, the economy and politics. They can devise social and political forms that serve the needs of the whole and preserve individual freedom and initiative. This is accompanied with the possibility of turning all of these to egotistical pursuits, of which ample examples have been offered in the previous chapters.

The American lives at home in the physical body, which is what unites us with the physical world, but separates us from each other. In the American continent this manifests with the tendency toward perennial divisions between individuals, factions, segments of population and the polarizations that ensue. The Consciousness Soul posits the choice between the death of the soul which has not found reality in any other ground than the physical, or the possibility of expanding into the macrocosm, getting hold of the spirit. But it can only gain spiritual certainty through experience. In the Consciousness Soul the human being is completely cut-off from the spirit. And yet, Steiner also referred to it as the "Spiritual Soul," because it's only in such emptiness of soul that it is possible to create a new bridge to the spirit out of freedom. This orientation toward the will explains why an American will more likely gain spiritual certainty from reflection upon the exertion of the will than by metaphysical debate or philosophical insight.

We have seen how the Western Brotherhoods act with great determination and accurate, discriminate, long-term planning to reach their goals and hide their tracks, so to speak. In these we see the perverted wisdom of the people of the West, fashioning a future with the sole interest of the people of the West, or rather of the elites who rule over them. As much as we see this phenomenon play out worldwide, we can also recognize impulses that look to the future in line with the Christ-imbued potential of the Consciousness Soul. We can detect these impulses both historically and at present on American soil, and even beyond the purview of the European influences.

### **American Social Impulses at the Time of the Consciousness Soul**

In other works I have brought out the spirituality that lives in instinctual ways within the American continent, and especially in the USA. Here we can give a brief review of some emblematic pursuits over time, from the onset of the Fifth Post-Atlantean Epoch to the present, and look at new ones. We can look at both Native-American and European influences. To the first belong the impulse of the Five Nations, the Haudenosaunee, which blossomed in the finger Lakes Region of the State of New York and neighboring states.<sup>1</sup> To the second the impulses that gave birth to the American nation through the American Revolution and to social impulses of the twentieth century.

The Legend of the White Roots of Peace retraces the change brought among the Five Nations by the initiate who bore the name of Deganawidah, or the Peacemaker.<sup>2</sup> Together with his disciple Hiawatha he ushered in a new civilization and culture. A time of continuous warfare, cannibalism and grey/black magic was followed by the advent of a new form of society based on the threefold message of peace and health. The Legend announces these thus: "There shall be Righteousness when men desire justice, Health when men obey reason, Power when men accept the Great Law."<sup>3</sup>

The message of the Prophet is articulated in the political realm in a new societal compound, the one the Prophet calls the Longhouse. The traditional society led by a chief that fulfils the function of a king, is replaced among the Haudenosaunee by a delicate social architecture of checks and balances. At the basis of it the Five Nations find themselves governing as equals; the Longhouse is both the new form of dwelling of the Haudenosaunee and the structure that shelters the nations as equals. The tribes are not treated equally in a purely democratic way; the system gives importance to their relative sizes and roles. The Longhouse honors as much

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<sup>1</sup> For more detail about Haudenosaunee culture see Luigi Morelli, *Spiritual Turning Points of North American History*, Part 2, Chapter 3: "The Iroquois." Note: the Five Nations later became the Six Nations with the addition of the Tuscaroras in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup> Previously known as the Iroquois, term that was not chosen but given to the Haudenosaunee.

<sup>3</sup> Paul A. W. Wallace, *The White Roots of Peace*.

the roles of men as those of women. Finally, different powers hold prominence in times of war and in times of peace. Lest one believe that this is simply a clever political system, one should remember that not only does it originate from a cultural revolution that swept away cultural decadence; it also holds the external structures in place through what can be called social sacramentalism, through ceremonies such as the ritual of Condolence, the rituals of Adoption or of Atonement.

The ritual of Condolence acknowledged the importance of addressing grief that individuals suffer, particularly when it threatens intertribal harmony. The chiefs had to process their mourning before taking counsel together in order to reconsecrate themselves to the common task in the spirit of union and continuity with the message of the Peacemaker. The ritual of Atonement was equivalent to a form of restorative justice through which the individual who has excluded himself from the message of peace and health can atone, make restitutions and live anew within the cultural norms. The ritual of Adoption was remarkable because it consecrated culture above blood bonds. One could call herself Haudenosaunee if she adhered to the message of the Prophet. In fact whole villages of foreign tribes were adopted when they were decimated or threatened by illnesses at the times of the British colonies. The only requirement was the acceptance of the universal message of the initiate Deganawidah.

At its birth America had signified a loss to the British Empire, not just a territorial loss, but an affront to its spirit, one that Cecil Rhodes still lamented a century later.<sup>4</sup> The birth of the United States itself signified the subversion of the roles that Freemasonry had fulfilled in the service to the British Empire. Thirteen colonies had dared to challenge the reality of economic and political domination and devised a system of government built upon strong checks and balances that kept the three powers—executive, legislative and judicial—independent from each other.<sup>5</sup> It also enshrined a truly federal form of government, balancing the power of the whole with that of the states. Naturally I'm referring here to what emerged at the nation's inception, not to what survives at present.

The Revolutionary War was a process of education in which two individuals of the stature of previous initiates played a crucial role. On one hand was Benjamin Franklin, preserving the best of the spirit of Freemasonry and giving it a new meaning. He mapped out a new way, daring to trust that fallible individuals would be able to collaborate and govern a nation because

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<sup>4</sup> "Added to this the absorption of the greater portion of the world under our rule simply means the end of all wars at this moment *had we not lost America* I believe we could have stopped the Russian Turkish war by merely refusing money and supplies... Why should we not form a secret society with but one object the furtherance of the British Empire and the bringing of a whole and civilized world under British rule *for the recovery of the United States* for the making of the Anglo-Saxon race but one empire" (emphasis added). See footnote 33 in Chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> See Luigi Morelli, *Legends and Stories for a Compassionate America*, Chapters 1 and 2.

of the wisdom of its social forms, not their own innate gifts. The one who followed these ideas most fully was George Washington. He embodied the new Republican ideals by example, fought the war in subordination to a divided Congress without usurping authority and took on the role of President of a Republic at a time in which only kings had preceded him. He relinquished the role in truly Republican spirit offering the world a new example of government of the people by the people and for the people. The ratification of the Constitution was spread over a time of two and a half years and was a process of massive political national education, one hardly equaled to this day. The Constitution was truly accepted by the states and their citizens. Here is an example of what the people of the Consciousness Soul can best offer to the world. At a time in which we are most truly and fully anti-social it is possible to bring wisdom into culture as if from the outside, through the wisdom devised in new social/political structures.

In more recent times I have abundantly followed and documented the case of Institute for Cultural Affairs, which was one of the pioneers of the whole systems approach of education and social action.<sup>6</sup> What stands out about its work is the achievement of tools of social art, which work across cultural divides and bring about the working of the new group souls. ICA devised tools for conversation, deliberation and facilitation through which a model of development close to threefolding could be applied across cultures in all continents. In example after example of the work of ICA it is possible to detect a way of working in which individualities replace personalities. So much so that it is hardly possible to highlight the place of special individuals throughout the history of ICA. When working collaboratively and effectively there is no need to claim the limelight.

What is true of ICA can also be found at work in a variety of approaches that bring about social transformation using the archetype of the seven life processes in relation to transformational and social processes: Nonviolent Communication, Consensus Decision-Making, Conversation Café, World Café, Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space Technology, Theory U, etc.<sup>7</sup> These and many other approaches to communication and facilitation bring out the best out of the individual because they address the whole human being of mind, heart and will on one hand and because they advocate for the integration of the needs of all stakeholders concerned by a common issue. Finally, these approaches work because they closely match archetypal patterns, most of all what we know as the seven life processes in their transformation into the social realm. In fact, this archetype has been at work in American Society in so many ways. Before Consensus Decision Making was developed, there existed the Quaker practice of Consensus, so important in this country. Much of Consensus Decision Making derived in

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<sup>6</sup> See Luigi Morelli, *Legends and Stories for a Compassionate America*, Chapter 2: The Evolving Dream of Equality.

<sup>7</sup> See Luigi Morelli, *Visions for a Compassionate America*, Chapter 3, or *Accelerating Social Change: Impacting Our World While Transforming Ourselves*, Chapters 3 and 4.

fact from it. When seen from the Quaker perspective Consensus is much more than a method; at best it's the ability to listen to what the future wants from the group soul. And the Quakers held another crucial role in the American experiment at the birth of the State of Pennsylvania.

All of the above practices showcase what America has to offer to the world, which is uniquely its own. In all of these a spontaneous, instinctive spirituality is transforming the will that is under the sway of Ahriman into a transpersonal will which can bring spiritual transformation at individual and collective levels, a Christ-imbued will in which the group can accomplish far more than the individual, without in any way curbing individual freedom or constraining individual expression. It is a way to create certain conditions and settings for the best to shine from each individual.

Taken outside of the particular settings, individuals will show all their personal shortcomings and limitations. We live after all at a time of the greatest anti-social impulses. While we strive to develop our individuality—the most important goal of our time and age—the contrary social impulses can only bring us together if consciously cultivated. Within the given constraints of the examples given above, we can discern what will be possible in future times of human evolution, starting from the sixth cultural epoch in which we will be led by the Russian soul. At present we can, as it were, anticipate the evolutionary future in “laboratory conditions.” All the social forms listed above enable the individual to work from his higher Self, only as long as she is held by the group and the safety of wise social structures and processes.

We turn now to another such laboratory experiment, or rather that aggregate of living processes and living social form that offer an example of what can be done to oppose Ahriman at individual and organizational levels; the purification of the will through the suffering and purification of the lower Self. We choose the following example of transformative fellowship because it saw its birth in the critical decade of the thirties in response to one of the most pressing modern societal needs.

### **The Birth of an American Spiritual Fellowship**

The collaboration of new processes and new social forms can be recognized at work in a spiritual fellowship that has been with us for some seventy and more years. Though it permeates all of American society, it rarely makes the news. And that is because there rarely are major problems, controversies, clashes of personality, splits, etc. I am talking about the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and all other Twelve Step affiliates. In the following it will help us highlight how the will can be transformed at the level of the individual and at the level of the whole, the fellowship. The two aspects go hand in hand and complement each other. In fact, the larger social dimension renders the work of the individual possible.

The birth of Alcoholics Anonymous is quite symptomatic from a historic perspective as well. The fellowship was born in the thirties, very soon after the repeal of Prohibitionism, and it owed its birth to a Near Death Experience, an experience in which the Christ being played a major part in the personal recovery of the founder, Bill Wilson, even though he only partly recognized it. A spiritual response to the problem of alcohol superseded a purely external political, and sterile crusade. It offered an example of what America can offer to the world both spiritually and socially.

What I purport to describe is, I hope, done with great care, since it comes from a sincere awe at the work that has been accomplished over decades in help of the alcoholic and of all of society. I have looked at it from the outside since I haven't been part of the fellowship, and want to portray it with accuracy and respect.

What I rediscovered is that as the Twelve Steps allow transformation at the individual level, so do the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts allow transformation at the group and whole Fellowship levels. In other words these other sets of tools are not only effective; they are deeply spiritual. The Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Concepts, the A.A. Service Manual can be read as how-to instructions, or deciphered as spiritual blueprints. Herein lies the genius of Bill Wilson in developing the whole architecture of A.A.

The last sentence is only partly correct, and I imagine Bill W. would be the first one to correct me. In his relentless effort to set the Alcoholics Anonymous on its own feet, in a way that would ensure a stable future, he could only accomplish the feat of mapping a bold future by subordinating himself to the group conscience. This group conscience is—as anything else when we look at spiritual reality—a being. More precisely it is what Steiner called “the new group soul.” These souls are possible for the first time in modern times, and Steiner offered the General Anthroposophical Society as a manifestation of a group in which such group soul can take residence.

“An emancipated human being possesses his individual soul which is never lost when it has once been attained. But when men find themselves together in voluntary associations they group themselves round centres. The feelings streaming in this way to a centre once more give beings the opportunity of working as a kind of group soul, though in quite a different sense from the early group souls. All the earlier group souls were beings who made man unfree. These new beings, however, are compatible with man's complete freedom and individuality. Indeed, in a certain respect we may say that they support their existence on human harmony; it will lie in the souls of men themselves whether or not they give as many as possible of such higher souls the opportunity of descending to man. The more that men are divided, the fewer lofty

souls will descend into the human sphere. The more that associations are formed where feelings of fellowship are developed with complete freedom, the more lofty beings will descend and the more rapidly the earthly planet will be spiritualized.”<sup>8</sup>

When we put together the parts we find that in A.A. what renders possible healing and the emergence of the new group soul are precise social processes and social forms. The group soul wants at all time to reach its own social body. Processes and forms act as stimuluses or breaks. If we compare the social body to the human body we could say that the group soul wants at all time to reach everywhere from the head to the toes, from the brain to the heart and to all other organs. However, it is us human beings who design this social body. As the human body is understandably complex, so is a social body. Its complexity needs to be wisely integrated so that each of its parts, each of its organs, be connected to each other and to the whole in such a way that there be no roadblocks, gaps, redundancies, duplications, etc. The group soul can then be as radiant in the parts, even in the individuals, as it wants to be in the whole. In effect it can only shine through the whole if adequate attention is given to the parts.

What would this mean in practice? Take a typical top-down organization, although one with a highly moral goal. If the line worker and lower departments are disconnected from the CEO and the board, and all other managerial levels, the group soul can only penetrate so much, probably very little. It is constantly squirming, equipped with a physical/spiritual raiment that is too tight. Most people in the organization would not suspect its very existence. We can find ourselves in the reverse situation, a very democratic and equalitarian organization, but lacking clear communication processes and efficient forms. The group soul may be in a sense accessible to all, but in another way only very little. The clothing that has been devised for it may be beautiful, but nobody has taken the trouble to cut it, sow it, assemble it. It is only an idea at the design stage. The group soul needs something more defined and precise, though still living and flexible. Below we will offer an example of this.

### **Bill’s Wilson Spiritual Experience**

Extreme conditions favoring the break-up of all blood and family ties have naturally favored in America the growth of addictions. In the years before WWII this was mostly alcohol. The adversaries take our attention away from the cares of this world, while at the same time strengthening our perceptions of the physical world. The alcoholic finds himself imprisoned in a world in which all cares, all readings of reality are self-referential. He is imprisoned within a self-constructed image of the Self, and denied access to anything beyond these boundaries. Upon these Ahriman can prey and condemn the alcoholic to a life confined to the boundaries of the senses.

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<sup>8</sup> Steiner, *The Influence of Spiritual Beings upon Man*, lecture of June 1, 1908.

It is quite significant that the birth of Twelve Step came about in 1934. The rise of the Beast from the abyss manifested itself, among other things through other Ahrimanic attacks which tear at the social fabric. One of these was alcohol. Prohibition perceived the importance of the problem, but addressed it in such a way as to completely deny individual freedom. To one problem was added another, and alcoholism continued to grow completely unaffected.

Alcoholics Anonymous owes its existence to a transformative moment in the life of an individual. In 1934 Bill Wilson had what we would today call a Near Death Experience, a moment of revelation, a spiritual gift that changed everything in his life. An individual who had reached dissolution point—having reached the terminal phase of alcoholism—was practically reborn to himself. The effect was such in the physical that a man practically doomed to die of alcohol found a second lease on life, and in time the serenity of a sober life devoted to service. This was a point of emergence at the individual level. The old Bill had literally died; the new Bill had emerged, after what can be seen as a very brief *pralaya*. After a time of involution there had been a change of heart and the possibility of an opening. After that a new evolution took place.<sup>9</sup>

Bill Wilson remembers the stages of the involution that led to the new beginning. Already in 1927 he had recognized he needed the help of Lois Wilson because he had lost control; he signed off all his legal rights to her. It was in 1931 that a certain Ebby Thacher had been seen by C. G. Jung and remained his patient for about one year. He relapsed but later returned under his care. Jung warned him that he was at a hopeless stage and that only a spiritual experience could save him.<sup>10</sup> Ebby had also joined the Oxford Group, an evangelical progressive group intent on practicing personal self-transformation.

In the famous 1961 letter to Jung, Bill confided that after he met Ebby T. he knew "at once I must find an experience like his, or die."<sup>11</sup> The letters are symptomatically signed signed Bill W. on one side, C. G. Jung on the other. Jung recognized the depth of A.A.'s attempt, which he called a "spiritus contra spiritum [alcohol in Latin]" endeavor. He rightly assessed that only a spiritual awakening could offer change to any alcoholic.

There had been another important step before the change; Bill acknowledged with gratitude Doctor Silkworth who had ministered to him before his spiritual experience. Finally, his wife Lois had not given up on Bill.

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<sup>9</sup> Steiner speaks of "Evolution, Involution and Creation out of Nothing" in *Disease, Karma and Healing*, lecture of June 17, 1909 (GA 107)

<sup>10</sup> The AA Grapevine, Inc., *Spiritual Awakenings: Journeys of the Spirit from the Pages of the AA Grapevine*, 14-15.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 16.



In 1934 in desperation over his now deeply organic inability to change Bill turned to God. Here in his own words: "My depression deepened unbearably and finally it seemed to me as though I were at the bottom of the pit. I still gagged badly on the notion of a Power greater than myself, but finally, just for the moment, the last vestige of my proud obstinacy was crushed. All at once I found myself crying out, 'If there is a God, let Him show Himself! I am ready to do anything, anything!' Suddenly the room lit up with a great white light. I was caught up into an ecstasy which there are no words to describe. It seemed to me, in my mind's eye, that I was on a mountain and that a wind not of air but of spirit was blowing. And then it burst upon me that I was a free man. Slowly the ecstasy subsided. I lay on the bed, but now for a time I was in another world, a new world of consciousness. All about me and through me there was a wonderful feeling of Presence, and I thought to myself, 'So this is the God of the preachers!' A great peace stole over me and I thought, 'No matter how wrong things seem to be, they are still all right. Things are all right with God and His world.'"<sup>12</sup>

After the spiritual experience, A.A. would not have been possible without another defining moment; the encounter of Bill Wilson with Dr. Bob Smith made possible through Reverend Tunks of the Oxford Group and Henrietta Seiberling in Akron, Ohio. Bill knew he needed the understanding of and collaboration with another alcoholic in order for his experience to gain grounding. To the dimension of the vertical connection to the spirit was added the horizontal dimension of group work around which all of A.A. will operate from then on. Finally, Bill knew he owed a great debt of gratitude to the Oxford Group as an open-minded Christian approach to change that would not stigmatize the alcoholic; some of its steps to change were incorporated in A. A.'s Twelve Steps.

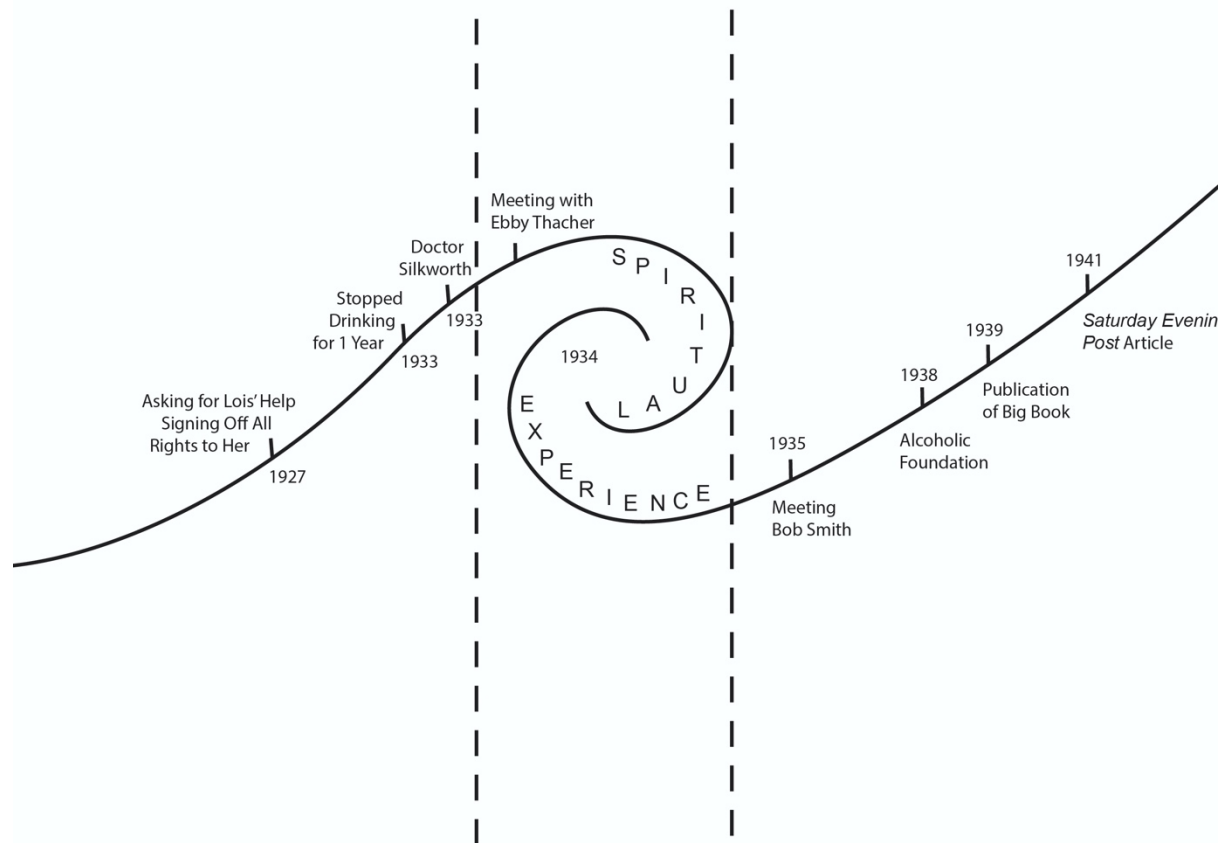
We can summarize the whole as an involution: a pralaya and an evolution. Bill's involution took place while on the downward spiraling of alcoholism. He had accepted Ebby T's change, he had opened up to Dr. Silkworth reference to William James *The Varieties of Spiritual Experience*, and he had turned himself to God for help, just before the defining spiritual experience. The spiritual experience was an end and a beginning: a pralaya. A pralaya is a real time of choice. Without Bill's turnaround the pralaya would have been a mere ending. Bill W. would have died shortly after and remained one of thousands of Bill W.s succumbing to alcohol over the years. Instead he lived another thirty-seven years.

On the other side of the *pralaya* stood the work of the Oxford Group, the meeting between Bill and Bob, the initial work with the alcoholics at Bill and Lois' house, the writing of the Big Book, the forming of the Alcoholic Foundation. All the steps leading to the birth of A.A. after the spiritual experience form the evolution steps (right side) of the cancer symbol on

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<sup>12</sup> *Alcoholics Anonymous*, The Big Book, 1957 edition, 63.

figure 3. Up to this stage A.A. was still in what Bill Wilson describes as its infancy.



**Figure 3:** Bill Wilson's transformation through the spiritual experience and the birth of A.A.

### **A. A. and a New Group Conscience**

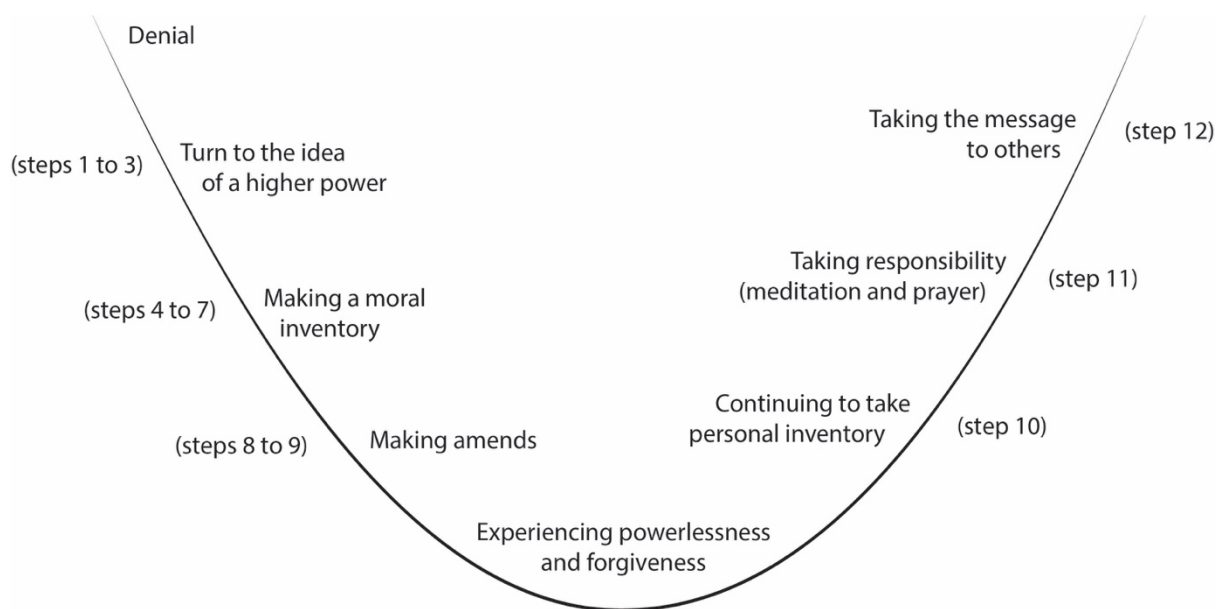
A.A. is able to work effectively because it recognizes that alcoholism as a disease of body, soul, and spirit. Being sober in the body is no solution; other symptoms can become activated, and the result is very precarious. The progression from spirit to soul and body mirrors the stages of Open Mind, Open Hart and Open Will and what we know from spiritual science as the meeting with the three beasts: doubt, hatred and fear, albeit in a limited fashion.<sup>13</sup> Confronting the 'Double of alcohol' doesn't mean overcoming the fullness of the Double.

In other places I have shown the connection between the twelve steps and the seven life processes.<sup>14</sup> Below they are represented anew (see figure 4).

<sup>13</sup> This is the terminology made familiar by Otto Scharmer in his book: *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*.

<sup>14</sup> Luigi Morelli, *Karl Julius Schröer and Rudolf Steiner: Anthroposophy and the Teachings of Karma and Reincarnation*, Chapter 7: Chapter 7: "Exploration of the Impulse of Spirit

At the stage of the Open Mind the alcoholic has to face denial; he has to make room for a concept of the divine. He first has to overcome the beast of doubt (steps 1 to 3). At one stage deeper, the beast of hatred arises in the realms of feelings. (steps 4 to 7) To gain the Open Heart the new member has to look at her feelings in relation to all the people she has hurt and acknowledge the pain that she has caused to self and others. At this stage a moral inventory is taken. At the later stages the beast of fear is faced by doing that which in fact requires the utmost courage: making amends to all those we have hurt through our actions (steps 8 to 9) The Open Will is the prelude to a rebirth.



**Figure 4:** Twelve Step and the Seven Life Processes

Such is the difficulty of facing the three beasts that it could not be done without the help of the group, but also the closest accompaniment of a mentor, someone who has already gone through the process. To move to the experience of a new beginning there must first be a space of letting go and letting come. This is what many now call 'presencing.' Only when we have felt completely powerless can we let go of old ways of thinking, relating, being. Presencing is both an opening of the individual to his Higher Self and of the group to its group soul. After the humbling/exalting experience of presencing we can experience a new beginning that leads to true power and spiritual awakening. This is one side of the picture.

The full secret of A.A. and its spiritual nature lies the other side of the curve. Only vigorous work—and vigorous letting go—allows the alcoholic to overcome the beasts of alcohol in body, soul and spirit. Physical sobriety alone cannot be maintained without what AA calls 'spiritual awakening.' The initial spiritual awakening is just a glimmer. To have permanent effect the

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Recollection."

person in recovery needs constant application of the will. This corresponds to 'Continuing to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.' (Step 10); '[Seeking] through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him.' (Step 11) '... Carry this message to alcoholics, and ... practice these principles in all our affairs.' (Step 12)

Spiritual awakening means experiencing a sense of purpose, and finding the ability to face all gamut of feelings and life experiences with one's inner resources. Bill W. wrote: "When a man or woman has a spiritual awakening,... in a very real sense he has been transformed because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he had hitherto denied himself. He finds himself in possession of a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, Peace of Mind, and love of which he had thought himself quite incapable."<sup>15</sup>

Bernard Smith, chairman of AA's General Service Board from 1951 to 1955, saw that Twelve Step is a demanding, but rewarding path to spiritual health: "We in A.A. Have learned that the life of the spirit is not one that can be rejuvenated by a few hours of worship one day a week. For we have learned that man as a physical being cannot be separated from spiritual man. For man must live the life of the spirit twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and that in my judgment is what the twenty-four-hour principle [of A.A.] really means."<sup>16</sup> And further: "We claim rather that the patterns of living implicit in our Twelve Steps and in our Traditions will spiritually enrich our lives on earth. And, as an incident of this enriched existence, sobriety is achieved and maintained."<sup>17</sup>

What Twelve Step has achieved is highly indicative of the American soul and of the descent into the realm of Ahriman that it has to face. The problem with alcohol in the twenties and thirties, and the parody solution of Prohibitionism, were forerunners of the later use of marijuana, cocaine, mescaline, LSD and other hallucinogenic drugs, and at present methamphetamine, etc. Through these Ahrimanic tools the soul is offered a return to atavistic consciousness in a body-bound fashion. The body-bound imaginations contrast the attainment of imaginative consciousness for which human beings can strive in our time.

What Bill Wilson and AA offered is a resistance of the enlivened and purified will for a problem that started with alcohol and has deepened in the fifties and especially in the sixties with new drugs. This approach does not lay

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<sup>15</sup> Bill Wilson on the Second Tradition, January 1948 in *Spiritual Awakenings: Journeys of the Spirit from the Pages of the AA Grapevine*, The AA Grapevine, Inc., 86

<sup>16</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc, 2019, *Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1970*, 224.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 219.

solely in the Twelve Steps; it is continued in the working of the whole of the Fellowship of AA and it is made possible by it. It is because something larger is at work in the whole—The General Service Conference—that the healing of the single alcoholic is possible. This is the second quantum leap to which we will turn next.

### **A.A.'s Early Steps**

At present A.A. works at three levels, each successive one larger than the previous one: Legacy 1 of Recovery, to which correspond the 12 Steps; Legacy 2 of Unity with its 12 Traditions; Legacy 3 of Service with the 12 Concepts. The success of A.A. obliged the fledgling Fellowship to move from its infancy to adolescence and adulthood in quick succession, according to Bill's estimate: from the form of the Alcoholic Foundation to the World Service Conference.

The Fellowship is a spiritual brother/sisterhood. At the beginning, not only were the alcoholics anonymous. The group itself did not have a name. This only came when the Big Book was written. The name Alcoholics Anonymous was suggested by a future Class A trustee, Frank Amos, who devised it as an authorship name, hence the official title of the book in 1939.

In its early infancy stages the roles of Bill and Bob were necessary: "That was our claim to parenthood, and this was a natural and proper state of affairs."<sup>18</sup> Soon after, Bill was rebuffed in his hope to become a professional therapist at Charlie Towns, and he understood that his peers were right. He realized, though reluctantly, the importance and wisdom of the group conscience.

Things changed dramatically in the years 1938-41 with the following steps:

- 1938: establishment of the Alcoholic Foundation with five nonalcoholic and four alcoholic trustees.
- 1939: publication of the "Big Book." Even little sentences were hashed out for precision, added or deleted from the book after ample debate. The contributions of agnostics and atheists were essential in steering away from religious language and in rendering A.A.'s appeal more universal.
- 1941: publication of an article in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Bill calls this a likely transition from infancy into adolescence.

The publication of the article in the *Saturday Evening Post* generated sudden interest and a flow of new requests for membership, putting a lot of pressure on the service capacity of A.A. This also meant a public relations challenge of presenting the face of A.A. to the wider world.

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<sup>18</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc, 2019, *Our Great Responsibility*, 64.

From 1938 to the mid-1940s AA grew from about a hundred members to some 30,000. In 1941 alone it had gone from 2,000 to 8,000. The 1940s also saw the endorsements from the Medical Society of New York and of individuals, such as psychiatrists Dr. Harry Tiebout and Dr. Kirby Collier, or neurologist Dr. Foster Kennedy. A.A. was also introduced in the hospitals of St Thomas in Akron and Knickerbocker in New York.

The year 1946 saw the publication of the Twelve Traditions by Bill Wilson in the May Grapevine. These were essential for guaranteeing the principles of the guidance of the groups through the group conscience and the "trusted servant"; in preserving anonymity; in enshrining the idea that the groups be self-supporting and non-professional; in ensuring that groups refrain from endorsing other organizations or pursuits; in preventing A.A. from being dragged into politics or controversy.

In writing the Twelve Traditions Bill Wilson knew something had to be done to preserve the health of the spiritual pursuit. On the way to formulating the Traditions A.A. collectively awoke to the realization that there shouldn't be any 'musts' in its philosophy. This is why the ideas expressed by Bill became instead Traditions, the sum of what was learned from experience and advised as the best middle course. Bill realized "... every single one of these traditions was a contradiction of my natural inclinations. But the group conscience was wiser than me ..." <sup>19</sup> It can be said in effect that, although much of the Traditions originated in Bill Wilson, the trusted servant, they were constantly improved by the group conscience. The Traditions are those safeguards that ensure that social impulses balance out natural anti-social tendencies of our time.

The direction for all service aspects of A.A. came from the Alcoholic Foundation, forerunner of the General Service Board. Soon Bill realized that Bob and himself were the main links between the Foundation and the groups, and in the late forties Bob's health was already taxed. He died of cancer in 1950. The movement was getting more and more severed from its service aspects entrusted to the Foundation. The link between Foundation and groups did not lend strength, nor reality to Tradition 2: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." A.A. had to render this Tradition reality, by formally passing on authority and responsibility from Bill and the Foundation to the members of A.A. Bill essentially wanted the groups to become the consciousness of the Foundation and later the General Service Conference.

### **The First General Service Conferences**

When Bill first proposed the idea of the General Service Conference most of the trustees did not embrace the proposal or see the need for changes.

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<sup>19</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc, 2019, *Our Great Responsibility* , 128.

Leonard Harrison, then chairman of the board, resigned in response to Bill's pressure for the Conference. It was a greatly serendipitous event that led Bernard Smith to succeed Harrison, for he understood the importance of Bill's vision. He was a visionary in his understanding of the meaning of A.A. and of what the Conference could bring to it.

The first Conference took place in April 1951 in Cleveland. From his dying bed Dr. Bob gave his consent to the Conference in 1950. It was further agreed that the Conference would be used as a prototype from 1951 to 1954, and be evaluated in 1955.

At the Cleveland Conference (1951) there were thirty-seven delegates, and fifteen altogether between trustees, staff members of G.S.O and Grapevine, plus Bill. The predominant place the delegates occupied in the first conferences confirmed their role as the guardians of the group conscience of A.A. In agreement with the feeling of others Bill W. concluded " as I watched all this grow, I became entirely sure that alcoholics anonymous was at last safe—even from me."<sup>20</sup> Bill had in effect engineered the transition from Dr Bob and himself to the group conscience. But his educational role had just begun.

At the Second General Service Conference of 1952 Bill outlined a five-year writing and research project about how to preserve and strengthen the unity of the Society so that it could reach all alcoholics who needed it. The project ultimately yielded the books *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. The Twelve Traditions formed another timely and important step of education. Bill no doubt wanted to strengthen the second legacy of unity before consolidating the Conference itself.

At the completion of the experiment in 1954 Bill recognized that A.A. finally belonged to its groups and members. He called the Conference 'A.A.'s great experiment in self-direction."<sup>21</sup> The Conference Charter was adopted at the 1955 General World Service Conference in St. Louis, which purported to "assure continuation of A.A.'s Third Legacy of World Service." Here another milestone was reached: the adoption of the Twelve Traditions. Bill W. formally resigned from his role as leader of A.A. and the Conference voted "to adopt the resolution authorizing the General Service Conference to act for Alcoholics Anonymous and to become the successor to its co-founders ..."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., *The A.A. Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service* by Bill Wilson, 12.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>22</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc, 2019, *Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1970*, 193, footnote 2.

It is very touching to read Bill's comments about a very unusual experience—which subtly hints to the strength of the spirit in relation to the same Conference—titled "Bill and the Night Visitors". In his article Wilson talks of "a meeting that was never considered for the agenda of the Fifth General Service Conference. If it deserves a place in the record, that is because it suggests, more eloquently than any formal vote or advisory action, the responsibilities inherent in the Third Legacy of Service,..." This was an evening of open time for Bill. "It was an evening when Bill, facing a week that was sure to drain emotional and physical resources, might have been forgiven for seeking the companionship of a small gathering, or the deeper comfort of solitude itself. These intimate privileges were not to be his that evening. Instead, unknown to most, Bill was a participant in a meeting at which no notes were taken, no rules of order invoked, no decisions solemnly recorded."<sup>23</sup> Bill sat in a little room with "perhaps ten or a dozen men who cannot be identified except to indicate that they were men of disciplined minds, questing and compassionate hearts, and high status in their community." As to the way of their arrival it is curious to notice that "they did not all arrive in one group, but singly, and by twos and threes." The first visitors arrived by 9 pm and in the following hours others arrived still, while some left. "Midnight came and passed. Moving down the deserted corridor, and Watchmen tested the door gently and then withdrew, perhaps perplexed by the strange scene. For this must have seemed an odd meeting." And he concludes that this meeting without pens and papers "was a meeting of minds and hearts, and giving and taking of experience, a tentative search for deep truths that may one day be shared by all who would heal themselves and others so that the greatest purposes of life may be realized."

The stage of A.A.'s adulthood had been reached through the intent of the Conferences, of having the whole membership take charge of its movement. Other milestones soon followed. Bill's Twelve Concepts were accepted at the 1962 Conference, the twelfth conference. In 1966 came the adoption of a fourteen alcoholic to seven non-alcoholic trustees ratio on the Board of Trustees, the first time the alcoholics were given a majority. The non-alcoholics officially became associates.

### **The Fellowship's Social Form**

The Conference has been called an "upside down organization." The groups stand at the top; the trustees at the bottom. Ultimate responsibility stands with the groups through the delegates. Working their way up from the group, as part of their Step 12, group members can take on larger and larger areas of responsibility of service. At higher levels they need to

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<sup>23</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc, 2019, *Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1970*, 237-41.



acquire a deeper knowledge of A.A.'s history and philosophy and, in general though not fully strict terms, longer spells of sobriety.

The groups let their will be known through the G.S.R., or General Service Representative. They let the group voice be heard first at the district and area levels. Likewise they make sure that information flows the other way around, from the Conference to the area and the district.

The service structure of the group organically connects to the whole that we will explore below. Members of a single group occupy service roles that form connections to other groups, to the Grapevine, to the literature or the archives provided by the World Services Board, to treatment facilities, to the collaboration with professionals and anything that has to do with public outreach. In other words the group becomes a microcosm of the whole of AA and its interactions with the wider world.

As pointed out, above the group are the District Committees and the 93 Area Assemblies of US and Canada, each corresponding to a state or province or part thereof, depending on the density of the groups. A delegate is chosen at the Area Assembly to represent each area at the Conference.

A typical Conference lasts a week. It includes presentations, workshops, new trustee elections. Each delegate works in one of the standing Conference committees, in which members are drawn by lot. Examples of the committees are agenda preparation, cooperation with the professional community, or with corrections, finance, Grapevine, literature, policy/admissions, public information, report and charter, trustees, etc. The committees bring their reports to the whole Conference, and these are generally voted on in the last two days.

The Conference is not incorporated, unlike the General Service Board (trustees), A.A. World Services Inc., A. A. Grapevine Inc. The board oversees the two corporations. A.A. World Services Inc. staffs the General Service Office. and manages G.S.O. services as well as publication of A.A. approved literature. A.A. Grapevine oversees likewise all personnel, editorial and publishing aspects of the Grapevine monthly publication.

When one looks at the service structure of the groups and the structure of the conference (see figure 5), one cannot fail to notice the levels of mutual integration. In this lies part of the success of A.A. as a Fellowship. But great importance is also laid in social processes, the expression of the group conscience, rights and responsibilities and other sets of polarities. We now turn to these.

### **A.A. Governance: Encompassing Polarities**

The Twelve Concepts were adopted at the 1962 Service Conference. In these Bill, working in concert with the group conscience, managed to

reconcile many polarities. The Concepts enshrine four important rights; right of decision, right of participation, right of petition and right of appeal. Bill pointed out that, save for a couple of exceptions, provisions of the Conference Charter could be amended. He also proposed the idea of prototyping important changes for a period of time, to allow room for experimentation. This is in keeping with the four-year prototyping of the World Service Conference itself.

In addition the Concepts aim at developing clear leadership guidelines, clearly defining rights and responsibilities that minimize conflict, and setting of checks and balances that distribute power and limit it. "Authority should be equal to responsibility" is an oft-repeated principle. Let us now look at the four major 'rights':

- Right of Decision. The trusted servant must be left free to act according to her conscience; she responds first and foremost to the conscience of A.A. as a whole, then to her respective groups. This concept is key to ensuring empowerment, trust and accountability. It is part of ensuring leaderfulness.
- Right of Participation. This is seen as a corrective of ultimate authority because it mitigates its possible misuse. An important element is the inclusion of all possible types of stakeholders; e.g., the management of A.A.W.S. is distributed between trustees, volunteer experts, paid office executives, in such a way that no group prevails over another. Traditions that recommend consultation and inclusion play a powerful role; they are better than regulations. An example is the inclusion of members of one corporation in the decisions of the other corporation, and, as we saw, Conference committees are linked to a corresponding committee of the General Service Board.
- Right of Appeal and of Petition. These twin concepts encourage minorities to consider choices they feel would threaten A.A. as a whole to file a minority report, echoing Bill's concerns that "the well-heard minority is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority."<sup>24</sup> The concept also applies for the filing of personal grievance without fear of reprisal. These two rights are also a safeguard to the limitations of group conscience of A.A. With deep insight, and the wisdom of hindsight Bill comments: "... during a time of great disturbance the group conscience is not always the best possible guide. When, therefore, the group conscience cannot or should not act directly, *who does act for it?*" And further "These [trusted] servants must always be in readiness to do for the groups what the groups obviously cannot do or should not do for themselves. Consequently the servants are bound to use their

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<sup>24</sup> Bill Wilson, *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, 22 in Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., *The A.A. Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service*.

own information and judgment, sometimes to the point of disagreeing with uninformed or biased group opinion.”<sup>25</sup>

Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts have built Alcoholics Anonymous’ social architecture, one which encompasses every possible set of polarities. Such are the contrast between group conscience and trusted servant, between rights of leadership and rights of participation or petition, between powers established in tradition or in law, and other, various checks and balances. From the above we can detect in the AA Fellowship some of the wisdom we have outlined in the Haudenosaunee Longhouse or in the ideal form of government of the US at its beginnings.

The form of the Fellowship converges toward both governance forms known as sociocracy or holacracy, in which the phenomenon of emergence (involution/pralaya/evolution) can be sustained continuously. These social forms encompass the apparent opposites of top down (hierarchy) and bottom up (equalitarian forms) without succumbing to either. They form a synthesis in which such polarity is encompassed and transcended.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Qualitative Leap of the General Service Conference**

Just like Bill went through his own pralaya at the time of the spiritual experience, we could say that the Fellowship underwent a pralaya of five years at the time of the first five conferences, the years 1951 to 1955. Let’s recapitulate the steps of involution preceding the Conference (see figure 5).

#### Involution

- publication of the Twelve Traditions in the Grapevine of May 1946.
- Bill’s writing of “The Alcoholic Foundation of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” in which he introduced the idea of a “General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous.”
- 1950: Bob Smith giving his assent to the Conference idea.
- The first Conference of April 1951 in Cleveland, greatly encouraged by the new chairman of the board, Bernard Smith.

#### Pralaya: years 1951 to 1955:

- 1952: Bill outlined a 5-year writing and research project that yielded *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. He proposed a four-year prototyping of the Conference.
- The Conference Charter was adopted.
- Bill Wilson formally resigned from his role as leader of A. A.; the Conference voted “to adopt the resolution authorizing the General

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 23.

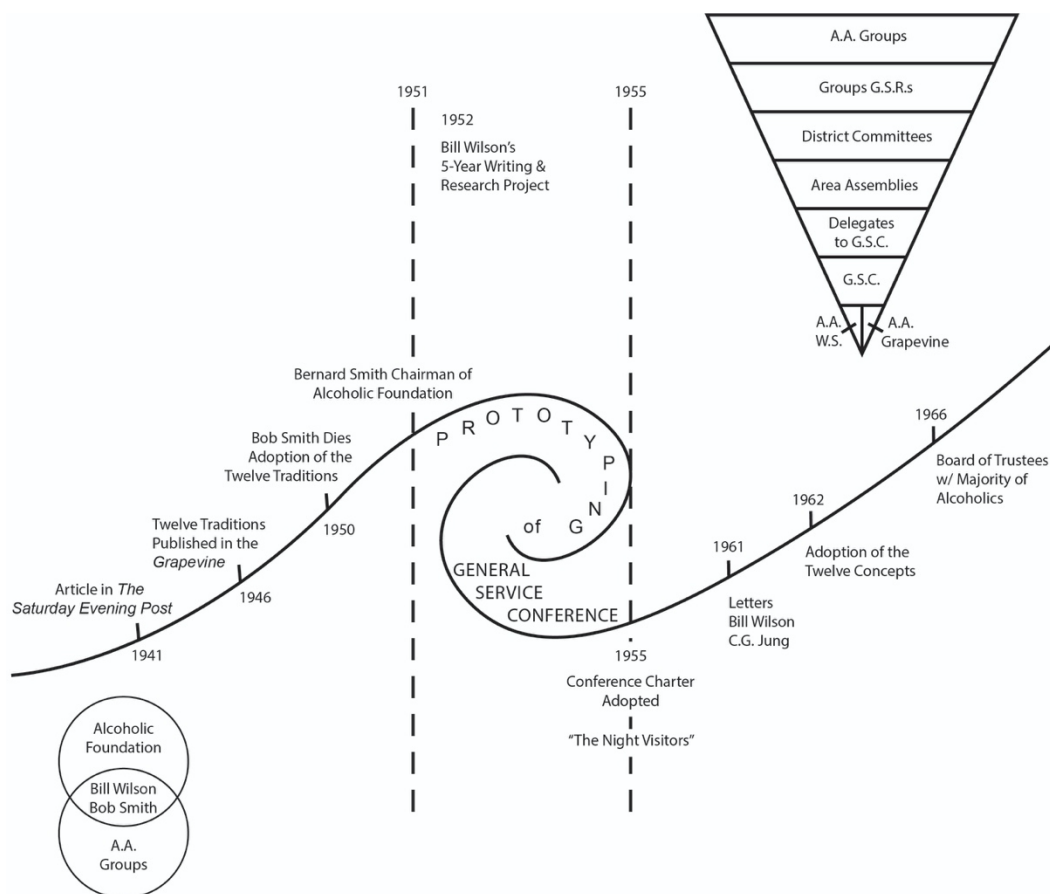
<sup>26</sup> See Luigi Morelli, *Accelerating Social Change: Impacting Our World while Transforming Ourselves*, Chapters 3 and 4.

Service Conference to act for Alcoholics Anonymous and to become the successor to its co-founders.”

- “Night Visitors” event at the 1955 Conference.

### Evolution

- Bill’s Twelve Concepts were accepted at the 1962 Conference
- In 1966 the General Service Board proposed to change the balance of trustees from 9 alcoholics and 10 non-alcoholics to 14 alcoholics and 7 non-alcoholics. AA came of age.



**Figure 5:** Stages of the A.A.’s Transformation leading to the General Service Conference (G.S.C.)

The above stages form a landmark for A.A.’s reaching what Bill called its adult stage. A new form was adopted through which the group soul could better penetrate the whole of the society. The A. A. Service Manual can be read just as a drab “how-to” manual. If one tries to immerse oneself in the struggles and iterations from which such work emerges, it can be seen as an integration of what Bill called in 1958, the “constructive use of trouble.” Bill summarized what a time of pralaya and new emergence look like thus “For ten long years nobody could say whether the forces of destruction would prevail or whether the educational value of trouble would bring the

right ideas."<sup>27</sup> Then the manual becomes indeed a spiritual document, just as much as the Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts. One can see this further even in the bylaws, redacted by Bernard Smith, unique among documents of a strictly legal nature to incorporate Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts. Even a legal document can thus shine with the light of the spirit.

### **Social Forms and Group Soul**

In the social body of A. A. the group soul needs to be as alive in the local groups as in the General Service Conference. The blood of this social body is the information and concern that travels from the groups to the Conference and back. The heart is the tissue of harmonic cooperation that unites the various levels without stresses that undermine one at the expense of the other. The heart beats because 'principles have replaced personalities.' The mind of the Fellowship is the shared awareness of the whole that permeates each and every part. The active limbs of this body are found in the thousands of recovering alcoholics that embody leadership devoted to service.

It is easier now to understand Bill's appreciation for the achievements of the Conference and its effects on the Fellowship: "And strangely enough—and this is the paradox—we have been able to do this because of God's grace working through a sober but still defective people who, in his Providence, have been able to bring into being a society seemingly not only sound in principle, but of great beauty and great perfection as a whole." And further: "The Society itself is beauty and perfection. And it stays that way, despite the fact that we each take our turn in being destructive—in being juvenile and generally acting like hell. Is this not a great gift of Providence?"<sup>28</sup> The General Service Conference truly integrated social and anti-social impulses.

A comparison of the Service Conference Structure and the structure of the groups shows how at the level of the group the whole is reflected. Consider the roles that the individuals can take up in the group in relation to the whole structure of the General Service Conference. When one looks at the Service Conference structure what is most visible of all is the prominent role of the groups through the delegates. The groups form the top of the reverse pyramid. Such correspondence of the parts in the whole and the whole in the parts lends weight to the social motto as a reality embodied in the life of an organization: "The healthy social life is found when in the mirror of the community each individual finds its reflection and when in the whole the virtue of each one is living."

Ultimately, that the group soul penetrates the whole is easy to figure out in a Fellowship like A.A. whose goal is so eminently measurable. A.A. has

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<sup>27</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc, 2019, *Our Great Responsibility*, 128.

<sup>28</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc, 2019, *Our Great Responsibility*, 160.

been exempt from public controversy, schisms, great internal struggles and, therefore has been able to constantly grow from year to year in the numbers of alcoholics that it serves, the ease with which they can seek and find access to existing groups or form new ones. Bill Wilson was justified in devoting his life to seeking to recognize all the points of tension, dangers, opportunities, needed social processes that would render group conscience and the working of the group soul a reality.

Penetration of the group soul through a diffused group conscience and effective work go hand in hand. A.A. has operated with a very low and effective overhead. In 1945 it counted 1 paid worker for every 98 groups; in 1955 already 1 for 230; in 1960s 1 for 7000. By 2010 the ratio was of 1 for 17,000.<sup>29</sup> As of 2013 A.A. was spread over 170 countries.<sup>30</sup> Estimated global membership have gone from around 907,000 in 1980 to 2, 138,000 in 2020.<sup>31</sup> The alcoholic worldwide can find access to any existing AA group with relative ease. This is the yardstick through which we can measure the effective working of the group conscience and the presence of the group soul.

Alcoholics Anonymous was developed at the crucial time of the thirties through a Near Death Experience in which the Christ drew near to an individual; Bill Wilson did not recognize Him fully, but he became greatly open to His inspiration.<sup>32</sup> Since the thirties the renewed attacks of the Adversary have taken many more forms in more and more drugs. Twelve Step addresses at present not only drugs but all substances and behaviors: codependence, gambling, overeating, accumulation of debt, etc. It could be applied to all forms of technological addiction as well.

A.A. has been chosen as an example in this chapter because of its scale and the length and breadth of its experience. It is not a stand-alone example or an exception. Much of the same kind of work of cultural renewal is being carried out in which the new group souls can shine at larger levels of integration. In fact what is true of individuals and departments/groups within the A.A. fellowship can even be the case of an array of organizations within a network. Examples of these have been brought forth in *Accelerating Social Change: Impacting Our World While Transforming*

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<sup>29</sup> Sources: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., *The A.A. Service Manual*, 10, 75.

<sup>30</sup> See A.A. around the Globe:

[https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/smf-165\\_en.pdf](https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/smf-165_en.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> See *Estimated Worldwide A.A. Individual and Group Membership*:

[https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/smf-132\\_en.pdf](https://www.aa.org/sites/default/files/literature/assets/smf-132_en.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note that Bill Wilson speaks of the incarnation of Christ as a matter of fact, witness the following statement: " Everything considered I feel that proof of survival [after death] would be one of the greatest events that could take place in the Western world today. It wouldn't necessarily make people good. But at least they could really know what God's plan is, as Christ so perfectly demonstrated at Easter time. Easter would become a fact; people could then live in an universe that would make sense." From Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc, *Pass It on: the Story of Bill Wilson and How the A. A. Message Reached the World*, 374.

*Ourselves*.<sup>33</sup> One broad example can be brought forth here, that of social innovation or socially generative networks.

While it is true that the old paradigm of divide and rule, which we have seen spelled out globally in this book, paralyzes much of the country through right-left political antagonism, under the surface much is happening that is responding to a new and deeply transformative paradigm. Organizations of one, two or all three sectors can come together to tackle complex social problems and convene a large variety of stakeholders to create solutions regardless of personal political affiliations. The diversity encompassed within the A.A. Service Conference is vastly expanded in complexity and handled with elegance and efficiency through a delicate and continuously evolving integration of polarities.

Examples of such networks are RE-Amp (Climate change and energy policy in the Midwest), Campaign for Free College Tuition, US Green Building Council (LEED), US Water Alliance, Opportunity Finance Network, Financial Health Network, Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance, Energy Efficiency for All, Health Care Without Harm, Nebraska Community Foundation, etc. In complex and very consciously devised structures supported by clear social processes, a great diversity of organizational players can show at the table, bring the best of themselves and let the whole be more than the sum of its parts. Many of these networks are often little known to outsiders for the simple reason that they let their members shine and attract little attention to their collective achievements.

Socially generative networks have emerged from a systems-thinking that welcomes complexity, and they mirror complexity themselves. They want to become self-organizing living systems. At the center of the network are those who excel in process and social form leadership. They are used to navigate at the edge between chaos and order, to lead while encouraging diffuse leadership and distributed control. Since all this work is based on voluntary collaboration the visionaries who lead the process have to manifest a keen ability to listen to all the stakeholders and beyond the boundaries of the network; to intuit in which way the organizations needs to change and evolve; to anticipate and guide while integrating the needs of all; to lead while retaining and enhancing the trust of the member organizations. In essence the trusted leader role of a Bill Wilson is now the trusted leadership role at the core of the network.

The system needs to operate between similarity and diversity and encompass both at all moments. The similarities at the core of the network impel its motivational force; they give it strength and direction. The diversity at the fringes assures that the system can sense the whole of its

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 4: Multiscale Logic: Emergence and Self-Organizing, heading "Socially Generative Networks."

larger environment and is open to ideas of renewal; it gives the system adaptability and resilience.

Networks, like other complex, self-organizing systems, continuously balance and re-balance themselves between order and chaos. In the case of such radically decentralized systems chaos is what happens when individual members exercise their autonomy and each goes in a different direction; order is established when members engage in collective action and come to share an identity. Instead of squelching chaos, network builders have to recognize it as a source of vitality. Out of the chaos comes an order that is never permanent. Over time order erodes and out of the chaos of autonomous members a new order will emerge. As a network matures it continuously balances chaos and order. Peter Plastrik concludes that the challenge of a socially generative network is “the paradox of combining intentionality (that comes with the development of a common agenda) and emergence (that unfolds through collective seeing, learning and doing). This edge-of-chaos tension requires a balancing act: too much planning can reduce the network’s openness to emergence, while too little planning can reduce the network’s capacity for cohesive, collective action.”<sup>34</sup>

Even without going further into the specifics we can see what a balancing act of sets of polarities is at play, which allows social change to emerge organically and the new group souls to become a flexible and pervasive reality in the work of social transformation. Consider that at present the accumulated experience allows networks to slowly evolve toward being networks of networks.<sup>35</sup>

### **The rebirth of the Freemasonic Impulse**

What A.A. shows in elegant and effective fashion is a newly resurrected Freemasonry impulse; it fulfills the intentions that lay behind the building orders. This is not to claim a historical continuity, rather a rebirth through completely new forms.

In the lecture of December 23, 1904, Steiner speaks of the great building orders of the Middle Ages—the builders of cathedrals—and of their continuation in later times. Here he underlines that everything we do in promoting the development of other people’s consciousness and improvement “helps preserve our consciousness for future evolution.” Two concepts go here hand in hand: anonymity and immortality.

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<sup>34</sup> Peter, Plastrik; Madeleine, Taylor; John, Cleveland, *Connecting to Change the World*, 136.

<sup>35</sup> Peter, Plastrik; Madeleine, Taylor; John, Cleveland, *Connect > Innovate > Scale Up: How Networks Create Systems Change*, see Chapter 5: “Designing Networks of Networks.”



In the building of the great cathedrals the masons contributed anonymously to the spiritualization of matter: "... the Freemasons' aim is this, as far as possible, to do their work in the world in such a way that it is concealed in the cathedrals, *in social institutions and organizations, in charitable foundations*. For selfless deeds are the real foundation of immortality—the latter is the reflected image of selfless deeds in the outer world."<sup>36</sup> The cathedral introduced a new dimension of social life in the place where it was built, first through a financial and technical/artistic effort that lasted years and decades, secondly through the raying out of culture that connected such places to the stream of the School of Chartres and a new Christianity.

The building of "social institutions, organizations and charitable foundations" is the aim of the new Freemasonry. What was indirect work through the spiritualization of matter, becomes here the spiritualization of our relationships through a very wisely devised social architecture. I would go as far as to call it a spiritualized social architecture, because it is one that encompasses every possible term of any set of polarities. Such are the contrast between group conscience and trusted servant, between rights of leadership and rights of participation or petition, between powers established in tradition or in law, and other, various checks and balances.

Another important dimension of the work is service done anonymously. In this regard Steiner's words speak for the future: "The fact that some particular thing is kept secret is of less importance than keeping one's own share in the work secret. Everyone who keeps his own part secret thereby secures immortality for himself. The rule is therefore clear and unambiguous: as much as you yourself put into the world, that much consciousness the world will give you back." And further "For selfless deeds are the real foundation of immortality—the latter is the reflected image of selfless deeds in the outer world."<sup>37</sup>

In the future all the beauty and harmony thus developed by the individual, what stood outside of the individual, will become the inner landscape of the soul. The social architecture we have built in one life will be carried within our being in a next one.

The above are the goals of a Freemasonry, whose external empty forms can be revived. Always in the same lecture Steiner adds: "The secret of secrets is this, therefore: the human being must learn how to keep silence about the paths along which his ego unfolds, and to regard his deeds, not his ego, as the criterion. The real heart of the secret lies in his *deeds and the overcoming of the ego through action*. The ego must remain concealed within the deed. *Elimination of the interest of the ego from the onstreaming flow of karma*—this belongs to the first degree." (emphasis added). In A.A.

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<sup>36</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Temple Legend*, lecture of December 23, 1904.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

this approach to social transformation is enshrined in the dictum “principles above personalities” and in the tradition and practice of anonymity. A.A. does incredibly effective work because no individual can claim the limelight. Indeed the structure of A.A. is such that the possibility is precluded.

The work done within organizations like the Fellowship of A.A., the Institute of Cultural Affairs<sup>38</sup>, or the Society of Friends, among others, have done for American culture, are the embryonic forms of the future rebirth of Freemasonry, which is in effect a manifestation of the Manichean impulse.

What AA has accomplished from the 30s to the 60s, What ICA, Theory U and many other approaches to social change—such as the whole field of social technology—have developed since that time, finds innumerable new forms at present. For this suffice to look at the work of the new socially generative networks.<sup>39</sup>

The art of transforming work within organizations can now be extended to vast sectors of social/economic initiative. New forms emerge continuously. What these render possible is a convergence toward the realization of social threefolding in America. The individual associations of Herbert Hoover are now articulated in manifold ways. America can be helped toward the realization of threefolding through the initiatives that honor work in community in respect of integrity, authenticity and efficiency, The new group souls can find new ways of working and new presence when larger and larger cross-sector collaborations are made possible in which each of the three sectors—t government, business and Civil Society—are honored, places in which each can speak their language and start to formulate a common language.

The secrecy that is anonymity in the new Freemasonry is mirrored in the secrecy of deception in the decadent Freemasonry of the Western Brotherhoods. To a Bill Wilson on one hand corresponds a Benjamin Strong or a Montagu Norman on the other. The new striving for true immortality is mirrored in Ahrimanic immortality, striving to keep the dead captive within the domain of Earth and enlist them for nationalistic or hegemonistic earthly goals that run counter to Earth evolution.

Norman Montagu kept his life secret so that he could yield more power than any human being on earth, without having to be held to account. Bill Wilson spent a life of service without claiming to fame. His power lay only in persuading, or in adapting to what was possible and desirable, not to his personal wishes Even as a youth, he displayed tremendous gifts that were finally drowned by alcohol, before he was as if resurrected. In everything

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<sup>38</sup> See Luigi Morelli, *Visions for a Compassionate America*, Chapter 2, or *Accelerating Social Change: Impacting Our World While Transforming Ourselves*, Chapter 2.

<sup>39</sup> See Luigi Morelli, *Accelerating Social Change: Impacting Our World While Transforming Ourselves*, Chapter 4: “Multiscale Logic: Emergence and Self-Organizing.”

he did he was a self-made man. To be sure Montagu also had great gifts, though connected with understanding of the negative esotericism of money and manipulation of the world markets. As a youth only his family connections saved him from drifting endlessly. When he retired from public life and lost access to power, his life practically lost all meaning (See Appendix 2).

We have seen a figure of the caliber of Bill Wilson in these pages, one that it proves fundamental to rehabilitate at the cost of whatever maligning is possible in these circumstances. In President Hoover we saw someone who operated beyond the dictates of party and power coteries. He strove to preserve what was best of the American spirit, when it was facing the abysses of World War I, Great Depression and World War II. He did what can be wrongly interpreted as a Don Quixotic attempt to turn the wheels of time. He nevertheless managed to sow seeds of great value for the future, delay the inevitable and remedy to untold misery, both after WWI and WWII. To this we can add his effort to set the record straight in historical matters.

That a modern Freemasonry is striving to bring to birth new forms is hardly surprising since we can see the perverted example of it writ large all over America and the West. It is this kind of freemasonry that the Western Brotherhoods have used at length to reshape the world to their liking. This is what all previous chapters have explored. Great part of Herbert Hoover's path of initiation lay in preserving a purity of will, in continuing to fight Ahrimanic intentions without appropriating its means, in being continuously vilified and still continue to speak for the truth and find ways to mobilize the collective will in other than personal or blood-bound goals.

### **The Taming of the Witch of the West**

The Wizard of Oz shows us in Dorothy the force of the innocent feminine, which preserves the pristine forces of the will for later times. The Witch of the West has asked the winged monkeys to destroy all of the party, except to capture the Lion. The Tin Woodman is dropped off from the heights; the Scarecrow's is scattered and all of his clothes gathered into a ball and made into a bundle that is placed atop a tall tree. However, they cannot harm Dorothy "for she is protected by the Power of Good, and that is greater than the Power of Evil." They see the mark on the forehead of the kiss of the Witch of the North. The Witch of the West herself is worried upon seeing the mark on Dorothy's forehead and her Silver Shoes, but she realizes the girl is naïve about her own power.

The Lion scares the witch who wants to harness him, and she decides to starve him. Dorothy secretly feeds him at night. It is this feeding of the Lion at night that we have portrayed in many ways in this work and in others. Twelve Step serves to feed the will and render it transpersonal. The Lion has to first be humbled by the mice when he fell asleep in the

poppy fields. Dorothy has to indicate to the Wizard of Oz that she is "Small and Meek." In a further step the will has to be humbled in the captivity with the Witch of the West. In the example of Twelve Step it is only when the will is humbled through powerlessness that true power can be experienced in the moment of presencing.

The Witch of the West concocts a plan to get hold of the Silver Shoes. Dorothy only takes them off at night and when she takes a shower but the witch is scared both of the dark and of water. She tries to trip Dorothy with an iron bar but she only manages to snatch one shoe. Dorothy picks up a bucket of water and throws it at the witch, who immediately dissolves. For the second time Dorothy unintentionally kills a witch. The witch announces that Dorothy shall have the castle to herself.

Dorothy feeds the Lion at night. She feeds the will secretly to preserve her own strength and innocence. Dorothy has strengthened the etheric, that of which the Witch has deprived herself through the use and abuse of the forces of the Double. This is why the Witch fears Dorothy. Through the power of imagination and the transformed will Dorothy will be able to vanquish Ahriman.

### **The Spirit of America and Its Redemption**

What appears in the quintessentially American story of the Wizard of Oz is reinforced and deepened in the High Tor legend. What has been so far characterized in symptomatic fashion can be deepened from spiritual scientific research. For this we turn to the High Tor Legend and the work of Jesaiah ben Aharon.

High Tor is a mountain located north of New York on the western bank of the Hudson River. The legend, originating from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century connects North America with the the Mystery of Golgotha, the Rosicrucian and Manichean Mysteries. The Archangel of [northeastern] America, in the legend, is that 'Angel of Fire' sent down to help humankind, but who has been corrupted by evil spirits, becoming a Salamander, one of the highest elemental beings.

The High Tor legend is articulated around two points in time: the first refers to the time of Christ, the second to the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century, to events relating to the mining industry seen through the eyes of German immigrants who brought with them the Rosicrucian impulse.<sup>40</sup> A version of the legend, brings together a number of spiritual impulses.<sup>41</sup> It is here retold very briefly.

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<sup>40</sup> A certain Peter Hasenclever owned iron mines in the region of the Ramapo Mountains; his land extended toward High Tor Mountain which overlooks New York City.

<sup>41</sup> The original legend can be found in Jeshaiahu Ben-Aharon, *Spiritual Science in the Twenty-first Century: Transforming Evil, Meeting the Other and Awakening to the global*

On the summit of High Tor, a certain Amasis—who had received in vision the secret knowledge of the ores in the mountain—built a temple. He had married a native woman who gave him a daughter. The magus, who refused to take up the Sun worship, had been threatened by the natives. He was saved because an earthquake broke, which brought everybody to their death, except Amasis and his daughter.

Centuries later the leader of the German colony, a certain Hugo, of noble origin formed a German colony in the area. He is surrounded by his wife, a son also named Hugo and a daughter, Mary. Hugo runs afoul of his workers who want to respect a German tradition of extinguishing the forge fires every seven years, at a time in which a Salamander grown to large proportions can cause havoc.

Having refused to stop the fires he witnesses with his men the disquieting presence of the Salamander in the fire. His wife decides to cast holy water into the fire and recite an incantation. A storm arises and the rain extinguishes the fire, but Hugo's wife lay dead.

Seven years later the children are to be baptized, and on that occasion there is a flash of light and the child Hugo is spirited away. Another seven years later, Hugo takes his daughter Mary, who has retained purity of soul to the top of High Tor Mountain. He leads her to see the caves of the Earth Spirits who promise to offer their jewels to Hugo if "he could pronounce the word that binds the free to the Earth forces and bars his future for a thousand years." There he beholds the Salamander again and his soul is rescued by the prayers of Mary's pure soul.

Hugo tries for many nights, but fortunately fails to read the words on the Salamander's back, and is left enraged. Meanwhile a knight has arrived to the mines and love has grown between him and Mary. It is this knight who rescues Mary when a panther attacks her. When she is about to yield to his love he declares to her that he is under the spell of the **Earth spirit**. He reveals that he is the Salamander who first had power over the Fire element and now over Earth and Water. Recognizing Mary's purity he places a crown of gems over her head; when her tears fall into his hands they turn into lilies that he places on her brow.

The Salamander lets Mary know of his story; of how he came from heaven for the love he bore to human beings. When Mary's mother cast him out of the furnace he took the form of a child, but encountered trials in the world of the senses so foreign to him. He retells of his temptations through the wish for power and how he forgot the love he bore to human beings. He declares this to be his last trial. At that moment the young man faces the

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*Initiation of Humankind*, lecture 12: "The Transformation of Evil in America and the High Tor Archangel."

irate Hugo who orders he be thrown in the furnace. Here, through the love of Mary he is transfigured, wearing robes of silvery light. Mary knows he is safe and feels serene.

In the legend the one who comes to America is the youngest of the Magi, Amasis, whom Ben Aharon identifies as the initiate Mani. And Mani's task is continued by Hugo and his family; Hugo alone cannot bring the task to its completion. Ben Aharon comments: "Then other people came to Manhattan. They were the ones who set the evil spirits free. They were the ones who came here and used the Earthly power of the depths in order to rule the world. This is basically the story of the rise of the financial and industrial powers of the East Coast. But this also extends to America as a whole." These are the spirits of Mammon. "They take universal, free, cosmic energy from the stars, from the planets, from the universal ether, and they are continuously condensing it into jewels, money, gold and silver."<sup>42</sup>

The spirits that are kept bound in the legend, are no longer bound since the end of Kali Yuga. So the beings whom the legend describes are those who unleash the power for world domination. These Earth spirits work through the powers of gold, jewels and precious metals to hold human consciousness under their spell and further the Ahrimanic impulse throughout the world.

The Salamander has succumbed to the beings that serve Mammon. In the legend she can be set free by the one who reads the symbols on her back, and in so doing the one who frees her has access to great powers. To read means to raise to consciousness so as to be able to make use of the gained knowledge. As in the Temple Legend Mani is set to master the earthly forces, to learn the secrets of the Earth without letting these corrupt him.

In America only the feminine can overcome the Ahrimanic forces; this is the daughter Mary in the High Tor legend—but so is Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz. Mary is initiated in the will after twenty-one years. The Archangel that inspires America—the Salamander—is a fallen angel, an abnormal archangel, one who did not finish his evolution on Old Sun; he did not complete his human stage. That the archangelic being fails is connected with the Manichean knowledge of evil: if you are to transform evil you have to know it. The Archangel is connected with the stream of Cain who is the master of everything earthly: metals, science, technology, art, which can be used for good or evil. Mani and Rosenkreutz are the healers of the Cain mysteries. In America these express themselves as death forces, electrical, atomic energy, magnetic forces. These forces push us to the extremes; this means you can either move completely into their dark impulses, or you can work at redeeming them.

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<sup>42</sup> Jeshaiahu Ben-Aharon, *Spiritual Science in the Twenty-first Century*, lecture 12: "The Transformation of Evil in America and the High Tor Archangel."

The Archangel that inspires America falls even lower than the human stage, to that of elemental, becoming an ahrimanic being. Through Mary's initiation, after her twenty-first year, and through her love, he is able to reach the human stage.

### **Fallen Angels**

The Angels who reached their human development in Old Moon are now true Angels. Those who did not are 'retarded Angels.' They have the power of Angels, but not their qualities. These retarded angels have developed a kinship to our ego consciousness. "... they are trying, through us to make up for what they missed out in the human stage. ... they are selfish angels. They don't care about our karma."<sup>43</sup> They can experience egohood through us.

Those beings who are retarded from the Moon Stage are the Luciferic beings, those whom the Bible calls the Serpent. In the High Tor legend we are dealing with archangelic beings, the Fire Spirits. They are even more retarded than the Luciferic beings, but they also want to reach their human stage through the human being. "Now these twice retarded archangels have double the power of angels. These fallen archangels also want to make up their ego evolution through us." Whereas the fallen Angels animate human beings through individual competition, the Archangels inspire the leaders of nations, corporations, soccer teams, etc. They inspire a selfishness that is no longer individual but corporate. This is how these beings can express their ego through us. In the High Tor legend one of these beings is sent down to help humankind, but because he is a retarded being he is corrupted by the evil spirits.

A Salamander is an elemental being of the element of fire, one of those who are closest to the ego element; they are the highest category of elementals since they have a sense for the ego. Hugo does not read the script in the back of the salamander. The salamander then does the bidding of the evil spirits in destroying Hugo and his family. Finally, the Salamander becomes human to tempt Mary. After his redemption through Mary's love this archangelic being has a particular knowledge of evil. He is brought back to his original Archangel purity, and acquires new faculties at this particular level. Through Mary's love he has become a redeemed Archangel, and the one who fosters a specific kind of Manichaeian initiation. He is an archangel who knows the secret of the depths, whom Ben Aharon believes to be the guardian being of the American East.

Apart from the Ahrimanic beings there are also the Asuras who did not attain egohood on Old Saturn. These are what ben Aharon calls the "Titans bound to the Earth" who incite destruction and nihilism. They invoke planetary egotism. People who think at this level are the likes of Bill Gate,

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<sup>43</sup> Jeshaiahu Ben-Aharon, *Spiritual Science in the Twenty-first Century*, lecture 13: "High Tor Part 2: The Fallen Angels and the Alchemical Processes in Initiation."

Jeff Bezos, George Soros, Elon Musk, those global visionaries, who aim at global transformation and global power. The Asuric beings are of the same rank as Michael; they belong the realm of the Archai. It is to this being, of a higher order, that the retarded archangelic being fell prey.

In the legend Hugo is pure enough not to fall into the temptation of reading the script on the back of the Salamander, but not pure enough to transform it. He is followed seven years later by the sacrifice of the wife; the sacrifice of the son fourteen years later. Mary attains the maturity to transform the Salamander with the attainment of egohood at the end of the third seven-year cycle. She is able to connect "the fire birth of the 'I' with the fire of the depths; "the fire of heaven and the human fire join together, consecrated by the purified ego element embodied in Mary."<sup>44</sup> This is because the Ahrimanic and Asuric powers are powerful masculine powers that can only be met from the feminine within. They can only be transformed with the deepest and purest feminine qualities. At this point in human evolution we can fight at the level of the institution or group, even at the national level. The global level is something that humanity will have to face for quite some time.

The American Manichean initiation of the ego through fire that Ben Aharon recognizes corresponds to a rhythmical process regulated by the activity of the will. It has to do with a purifying of the will impulses. Of these we have brought forth the example of the AA Fellowship and referred to a host of others which have been explored elsewhere.

It is worth pointing out something that Dorothy and Mary have in common: the power of innocence. The American nation was an example of what Steiner would call a "creation out of nothing." Out of the death of the old forms of Empire something completely new had emerged after the birth pangs of the Revolution and the travails of the Constitutional Convention. The new nation was able to absorb and transform much that was a given from the Old World with the enthusiasm of new ideas. David Spangler sees the "Flame of Innocence" as that which gives America the power to deal successfully with the regressive shadows of the past.<sup>45</sup> He also sees this as one of the distinguishing qualities of its guardian being, which he calls the Angel of America; a young hierarchic being able to welcome and transmute the collective shadows. Though battered in the last two hundred years American innocence is still present spiritually both in its positive qualities of hope, goodwill, goodness, openness to the new and the possible and in its shadow side of immaturity and naivete.

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<sup>44</sup> Jeshaiahu Ben-Aharon, *Spiritual Science in the Twenty-first Century*, lecture 13: "High Tor Part 2: The Fallen Angels and the Alchemical Processes in Initiation."

<sup>45</sup> David Spangler, *An American Path: A One-Week Exploratory Forum*, June 3-10, 2017, transcribed and edited by Annabel Chiarelli; see June 8 presentation.



The place of the divine feminine is otherwise well-known in folklore and tradition that represents the American soul. The Goddess of America, known as Columbia, was represented as a Native American woman, thus echoing the two themes of feminine and innocence. Columbia of course echoes Columbus but also the theme from which his name derives, the Latin "columba," meaning 'dove,' which once more underscores feminine and innocence. The divine feminine in relation to the nation's destiny is present throughout Washington DC where statues of the goddesses of freedom, justice, peace and fertility adorn the city's buildings and public spaces. This goes together with another symbol of the goddess of freedom that is known all over the world, not in the capital but in New York City: the Statue of Liberty. Up to the 1930s everybody knew who Columbia was, after which her place in American consciousness receded.

Returning to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy's innocence is underlined in many ways. The Winged Monkeys see that "she is protected by the Power of Good, and that is greater than the Power of Evil." At the castle, the Witch of the West also recognizes the mark on Dorothy's forehead of the kiss of the Witch of the North, which protects her from evil; she also realizes that she is naïve about her own powers. In the end it is only quite casually that Dorothy picks up a bucket of water and throws it at the witch, thus dissolving her. For the second time Dorothy unintentionally kills a witch.

Later Dorothy sees the Golden Cap, tries it on and realizes it fits her perfectly, though she still doesn't know about its charm. It is the Queen of the field-mice who tells her about its power. At the end of her travels it is the witch Glinda who tells Dorothy that her Silver Shoes can carry her over the desert, that in fact she could have gone back to Kansas from the very first day in Oz.

At the present stage of world evolution the American spirit cannot face global challenges alone. For this end it has to work in concert with the spirits of Central Europe and Eastern Europe, most strongly represented by those of the German and Russian people.