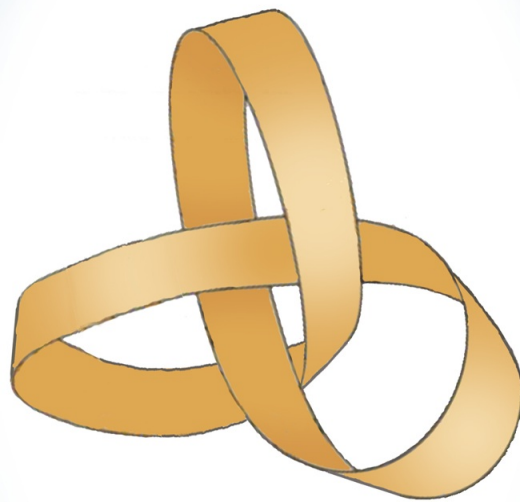


*Social Threefolding in Relation  
to Rudolf Steiner's Mission*



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# CONTENTS

## **Karma and Reincarnation Teachings and the Path of Spirit Recollection**

p. 2

## **German Modern Culture: from Goethe and Kaspar Hauser to Rudolf Steiner**

p. 8

*German Folk-Spirit and German Culture*

p. 9

*German Classical Culture and German Liberalism*

p. 10

*Kaspar Hauser's Biography*

p. 14

*Kaspar Hauser's Death and Its Consequences  
for German Culture*

p. 17

*The Fate of German Liberalism*

p. 21

## **Threefolding and the Impulse of Spirit Recollection**

p. 25

*Fundamental Sociological Law*

p. 28

CONTENTS

*Fundamental Social Law*

p. 30

*Threefolding and Anthroposophy*

p. 33

**History of the Anthroposophical Social Impulse**

p. 34

*About John Henry Mackay and the Ahrimanic Temptation*

p. 37

*Teaching at the Workers' University*

p. 39

*Elaborating the Threefold Social Order*

p. 41

**Threefolding, Spirit Recollection, and Manicheanism**

p. 46

**Notes and References**

p. 53

**Bibliography**

p. 61



# SOCIAL THREEFOLDING IN RELATION TO RUDOLF STEINER'S MISSION

The present essay explores the relationship between Steiner's revelations on karma and reincarnation and his work on threefolding. I want to draw the attention of the reader first of all to the deep connection between these two themes. Following this, I endeavor to show that both teachings had a central role in Steiner's life task, and that his own biography becomes more fully understandable when both are taken into account. Steiner's personal unsparing investment in spreading the ideas of threefolding, and ensuring their realization to whatever extent possible, also becomes more fully understandable.

In the book *Rudolf Steiner's Life Tasks in Relation to World Karma*, I explored Steiner's task in relation to that of Karl Julius Schröer. The book shows that Steiner's life task lay in the reintroduction of the teachings of karma and reincarnation in a Christianized fashion. The book also follows the relationship between Steiner and Schröer, from both biographic and karmic perspectives. Steiner/ Aristotle revealed, just before reaching the end of his lecturing career, that developing anthroposophy was really to have been the task of Schröer, the reincarnated Plato. The whole of the lecture cycle *Karmic Relationships*, volume 4, is a veiled effort to inform the listener/reader of what Steiner's real task had been. The ultimate goal of the lectures is revealed in the architecture of the cycle as presented in *Rudolf Steiner's Life Tasks in Relation to World Karma*. Steiner reveals his own task by pointing to the fate of his efforts to promote the teachings of karma and reincarnation; and by telling us that in 1924 he found himself at the same place in which he had been in 1902, at the inception of the German Theosophical Society. His first lecture then had been titled "Practical Karma Studies." What had not been possible in 1902 was all the more important in 1924, and that is why most of Steiner's lectures that year dealt with very concrete examples of "karmic relationships." I have associated the two tasks—that of Steiner and that of Schröer—with the practices of Spirit Beholding (Schröer and anthroposophy as it should have been developed by him); and of Spirit Recollection (Steiner and the Christianized teachings of karma and reincarnation). The first task is directed toward the macrocosm; it is the education of the

senses through the redemption of thinking; the path that we are most familiar with in anthroposophy. It is the path described in *The Philosophy of Freedom*, through which we attain sense-free thinking and perceive the spiritual in matter. The second is the path to the microcosm, which teaches us to make sense of our life experience, and of our destiny as it expresses itself in our biography. It ultimately leads us to the personal actualization of the understanding of the laws of karma and reincarnation. Let us explore this path in more detail.

### **Karma and Reincarnation Teachings and the Path of**

#### **Spirit Recollection**

In chapters 3 and 4 of *Rudolf Steiner's Life Tasks in Relation to World Karma*, I tried to identify the path that Steiner called "Spirit Recollection," and to show its connection with the more empirically outlined social paths of various anthroposophical authors. The social impulse present in Spirit Recollection is made clear through particular exercises in which we can reverse the flow of time, eventually reaching back in time to previous incarnations; and in future times, arrive at the beginning of the process of incarnation. Here lie the archetypes from which we can derive endless variations in modern practical applications, which were listed and explained in the same chapters.

Why is it important to use these exercises and practice Spirit Recollection? This matter can be viewed from the perspective of what it means to be social in modern times. Steiner articulated the "archetypal social phenomenon" as a dynamic present in all conversations and interactions.<sup>(1)</sup> When two people are in conversation, the speaker is awake and the listener is put to sleep by the speaker. After a time, the listener awakens to himself and becomes the speaker, putting the listener to sleep. We sleep into the other when we listen, and awaken to ourselves when we speak. Our social impulses are strongest in our sleep, when we are least conscious. Thus, somehow, we have to wrest what we acquire in a condition close to sleep, and bring it into consciousness. We have to rescue that which makes us social in the sleep condition, and carry it over into wakefulness. This is so because in our time, we are all developing our individuality in independence from blood ties and external influences. We can accept only what we make our own. And

this inherently anti-social tendency, which makes us human in the present, will continue for many centuries still.

From the description of the archetypal social phenomenon, we are led to understand that after falling asleep in the other, we need to rescue something from sleeping, and bring it into our waking consciousness. In sleep we find ourselves together in the astral body with those with whom we share our lives, but we are not conscious of it. The awakening happens fully only in the life after death, in kamaloka. At that time, we will perceive the effects and consequences of our actions as they manifest in the other person. Social processes are thus “death processes,” and our consciousness normally resists them.

No injunctions, pious resolves, or the content of our knowledge, can alter this basic human condition we have inherited with the simple reality of being human beings at the time of the Consciousness Soul. The anti-social condition cannot be countered, other than through the conscious desire and deliberate effort to create an imagination of the other human being. To overcome our natural antisocial tendencies we must move away from our natural inclination to form concepts about the being of the other; and start developing imaginations instead. This is where Steiner comes to our help with the exercises of Spirit Recollection.

How are we to develop this heightened interest in the other, which renders us able to imagine the other human being as objectively as possible? An answer appears in the lecture where Steiner spoke of what is now known as the “after-image.” To let the after-image reach us:

It is most important of all that the instinct shall be implanted in people to *look back* more frequently during this life; but in the right way. To do that, we need to immerse ourselves with real love in the other person. This has such a germinating power over us, that we really acquire the imaginative forces necessary to confront the contemporary human being in such a way that in him, something is manifest that appears to us only after many years in our *backward survey* of those figures with whom we have lived together. (emphasis added)<sup>(2)</sup>



This is what forms the main concept of the path of Spirit Recollection. Among the various exercises to awaken imaginations of other people (and of ourselves), we can distinguish four levels, although Steiner never classified the exercises in this fashion. Classification is made here for simplicity and clarity's sake: there are exercises of observation; exercises for detachment from self; exercises for taking responsibility for what life offers us; and exercises for recognizing previous life events that play into our present life.

At the first level lies observation of ourselves and our impact in the world. One simple example lies in observing the impact our presence has on other individuals. How is a room of people affected when we enter it? How is it affected when another individual enters it?<sup>(3)</sup> A person may enter the room with hardly any notice and leave it in the just same fashion, "as if an angel had flitted in and out." Another may have such a forceful effect on her fellow human beings that it would seem as if she came "with all sorts of invisible feet." Becoming aware of our impact on the world awakens us to the forces of karma.

A second level is found in that kind of exercise that helps us develop a sense of gratitude and detachment toward our lives. When we look back over long periods of time we can recognize what people have played an influence in our lives.<sup>(4)</sup> What did our parents, teachers, mentors, friends, and even acquaintances contribute to us that left a mark on our lives? How have we been changed in such a way as to be who we are at present? We can thus gain a perspective of how our achievements are made possible through many contributions. Eventually, even those people who may have prevented us from achieving certain goals may have an important part in defining us at present. We may be grateful in hindsight that we did not achieve a certain goal many years ago, because we might not have found our way toward what really matters now. Looked at from a fuller perspective, much of what we were prevented from achieving has allowed us to be more fully who we presently need to be. The whole exercise is meant to offer us a sense of detachment from the importance of our ego and its achievements; a sense for the interconnection of all human lives; and a more sober assessment of ourselves.

With the "Lesser Karma Exercise," we are asked to think back to an event that outwardly appears contrary to any of our conscious intentions; and demonstrate to ourselves that we have actually done

everything in our power to ensure that the event occur in our lives exactly the way it did occur.<sup>(5)</sup> This is because there is a “second man” in us who is the architect of our biography; and who places seemingly disruptive events in our biography, from which we can summon the inner forces to grow and change. When it is repeated often enough, the exercise changes our idea of karma from an intellectual perspective to a deeply existential recognition. We will acquire the sense that we were truly meant to have the experiences we did not appreciate at first; and that our life is under the wise guidance of spiritual beings who impart to us the experiences necessary for our inner growth. And all of this means taking responsibility for our lives; realizing that we can turn only to ourselves for understanding what is happening in our lives; that only we can bring the needed change; and that we cannot place blame on others. Steiner goes as far as asking us to take responsibility even for the feelings of other people that come toward us.

Steiner offered us two exercises for reaching back to the ultimate step of Spirit Recollection: seeing the roots of our present situation, patterns, and challenges in the events of previous lives; these are the “Saturn-Sun-Moon Exercise” and the “Greater Karma Exercise.” Let us look at the second one.<sup>(6)</sup> We are asked to bring to memory an event from our life. It is a matter of “painting it spiritually,” by recreating in greatest detail all the impressions received by our senses. Whatever the setting, people, and objects involved, one re-creates inwardly everything that affected the twelve senses, plus feelings and impulses of will. The same activity is repeated on the two following nights. After the first night, the image is given shape by the astral body in the external ether. After the second night, the image is impressed into the etheric body; and the meditator may awaken with definite feelings, and the impression that the image has grown real and is asking us something. The etheric body continues to work on the image, and after the third night impresses it into the physical body. The image is now spiritualized, and the person may experience something like moving in a cloud; or like living in a vague picture with the feeling of being part of it, but with the realization that our will is paralyzed. Eventually the experience then evolves into an objective image. This will be the imagination of the past life occurrence that is connected with the event in the present incarnation. It may be necessary to repeat the exercise a great number of times before reaching through to its last stages.

Even without surveying all of Steiner's exercises in detail, we can surmise from the above examples that practicing them means acquiring detachment from our everyday ego, not identifying ourselves fully with it. In other words, this also means taking responsibility for our lives; and socially speaking, realizing that we can act only on ourselves, and have to stop requesting that others change. At length we can reach (far from automatically) a concrete experience of the event in a previous life that forms a link to a present situation. These exercises, and many others, are extensions of what is known as the *rückschau*, or daily retrospect, in which we look at the events of the day in reverse order, from the latest in time to the earliest. The examples given here offer us an understanding for the practice that in Steiner's terminology can be called Spirit Recollection.

It is interesting to compare what we have discovered along this path of inquiry with the results of other researchers. In the practice of Spirit Recollection, Valentin Tomberg indicated that we are "concerned with an inward effort to alter the direction of the force of memory." The further we look into the past the more memory loses its strength. We must then move from the horizontal dimension of memory to the vertical direction. "This means that we must no longer be remembering this, that, or the other; but must make our own higher nature, our true Being, the object of our recollection. The light-stream of consciousness is now directed on the highest and deepest principle of our own humanity."<sup>(7)</sup> Another way to express what Tomberg indicated is the attainment of a higher kind of memory: that which connects us with our pre-birth intentions. The most important challenges and opportunities we meet in our lives are those we have determined for ourselves before our birth, and subsequently forgotten. Remembering these is one of the ultimate goals of Spirit Recollection.

It is equally interesting to follow Karl König's line of thought. For him, Spirit Recollection is what leads to the experience of inner peace. "Spirit Recollection can be practiced only in a kind of listening into the Father-ground of all existence. To be able to listen, one thing is necessary: to be calm, to be peaceful."<sup>(8)</sup> Relating these ideas to what has been brought up earlier, we can say that in effect, Spirit Recollection is the precondition along the path outlined in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*, under the heading "Inner Peace" (chapter 1). There Steiner tells us, "We should allow our joys, sorrows, worries, experi-

ences, and actions to pass before our souls. But our attitude toward these should be one of looking at everything we have experienced from a higher point of view." And further, "In the time we have set aside for ourselves, then, we must strive to view and judge our own experiences and actions as though they belonged to another person." And also, "As students of higher knowledge, we must find the strength to view ourselves as we would view strangers." What Steiner offered in the early stages of anthroposophy finds its fullest expression in the exercises of Spirit Recollection. At the time of the writing of *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*, that was all Steiner could have offered without the teachings of karma and reincarnation. The later exercises bring Steiner's efforts further; he could now offer us a methodology, whereas before he gave us only general indications. The exercises could not have been elaborated separately from the teachings of karma and reincarnation.

Since Spirit Recollection helps us develop imaginations, both of ourselves and of other human beings, it leads us to actualizing the concepts of karma and reincarnation in a deeply personal way. In practice, it offers us first, the means to understand the web of destiny; and then the ability to work at reordering and harmonizing these threads. This is the social dimension of the path of Spirit Recollection, which connects the teachings of karma and reincarnation to the more time-bound impulse that Steiner called the "threefolding of the social organism." The Mystery Dramas are an eloquent illustration of what is said above. In the saga that evolves from *The Portal of Initiation* to *The Soul's Awakening*, Maria, Johannes, Capesius, Strader, and others progress on their individual spiritual paths. At the same time, they acquire a growing awareness of their interrelatedness, because they can perceive what events and impulses united them in previous lives. It is these metamorphosed impulses that are shown at work for the good of all in the industrial pursuit of Hillary, for which he enlists Maria, Johannes, Capesius, and Strader. Perceiving the threads of karma, the key individuals (with varying degrees of consciousness and success) can now reorder their karma for the benefit of the larger social circles around them.

Along the path of exploration that led me to write *Rudolf Steiner's Life Tasks*, I discovered a close interweaving between the impulse of Spirit

Recollection and everything that affects social development and change. It is not surprising that many of the exercises of Spirit Recollection were given by Steiner in lectures concerned with threefolding, or with the social question in general. Another link between the topics is that both themes (karma and reincarnation, and threefolding) were offered, quite atypically for Steiner, from his own impulse, rather than as a response to people's questions or yearnings.

Steiner's deep involvement with the social question, and the extent to which he took it on personally rather than delegating it to others, indicate how closely it was connected to his deeper being. This work will ascertain this link in two ways. A first line of exploration will look at the German historical impulse within which Steiner's work lay; it will focus on the key individuality of Kaspar Hauser, and what linked this pivotal figure to Steiner. The second thread will turn to the social impulse of threefolding in Steiner's life, particularly in close association with the other impulse, no less social, of Spirit Recollection. To turn to the first line of inquiry, we will first characterize the place of German culture in world impulses.

### **German Modern Culture: from Goethe and Kaspar Hauser to Rudolf Steiner.**

Steiner was emphatic that one will not find the sources of anthroposophy anywhere in the nineteenth century. "You will find isolated traces of a spiritual concept which it was always possible to use like germinating seeds, though very sparingly, within the great texture of Anthroposophy. But you will find no preparation for it in the earthly sphere. All the greater was the preparation in the suprasensory. You are well aware how Goethe's working (even after his death, though in my books it may not seem so) contributed to the forming and shaping of Anthroposophy."<sup>(9)</sup>

#### *Historic Preparation for Anthroposophy*

In Steiner's lecture cycle *Destinies of Individuals and of Nations*, the influence of the great idealistic German souls is further spelled out. In essence, Steiner made a great distinction between spiritual continuity and historical contribution. Anthroposophy is not in spiritual continui-

ty with German classical culture. However, anthroposophy most naturally flowed within the stream the latter created.

About the historical contribution of German classical culture, more is added in the lecture cycle *Destinies of Individuals and of Nations* "...what was working in isolated spirits of the end of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries was, to say the least, imbued with a strong spiritual atmosphere, even if it appeared in great abstractions as in Hegel, or in abstract pictures as in the case of Schelling." About this Steiner later adds "They [phenomena that appeared in the spiritual life of the first half of the nineteenth century] were lost of sight of; they were obliterated in what came forth as the materialistic spiritual life of the second half of the century."

Steiner spoke in those terms not only of German idealism. He also spoke quite clearly of the vitality of German Liberalism, for example, in contrast with English Liberalism. German classical culture and the contribution it made to the social question through German Liberalism are two strands (certainly overlapping) that we will follow now more closely. To do that we will first look at what German culture has to contribute to world culture through its folk-spirit.

#### *German Folk-Spirit and German Culture*

To approach the question of German culture, we will look at historical developments in relation to the question of the folk-spirit. In his lecture cycle *The Destinies of Individuals and of Nations*, Steiner looked at various interrelated aspects of German culture, and the way in which individual destiny manifests in the destiny of a people and a nation. One first element that Steiner communicated is that the German people present an exception in terms of incarnation patterns. Many souls reenter this stream a number of times. Many who incarnated at the time of Steiner had incarnated previously among the German tribes, according to his spiritual research. He himself had a previous German incarnation in the figure of Schionatulander in the ninth century. Plato/Schröer had incarnated as the nun Hroswitha in the tenth century also within German culture.

Steiner explained that even recent cultural epochs that developed in Germany were as if separated from each other in the historical flow of events. This made continued incarnation possible, because for

the souls to return to their previous scene of existence, there must be a forgetting, a place through which the soul enters a new territory with no reference to previous experiences and cultural background. The soul should not be able to pick up from where it left off.

German culture was a “waiting culture.” Even by the time of German Romanticism, the larger part of the population was still living at a stage that was equivalent to the cultural level of the third to fourth century AD.<sup>(10)</sup> The Germanic peoples had initially been guided by one Archangel, then later came under the guidance of various Archangels in order for the people to differentiate. From among these Archangels rose the Archai who acts as the guiding spirit of the fifth post-Atlantean Age—Michael—and gradually the various Archangels came under his influence.<sup>(11)</sup>

Steiner recognized significant epochs in the development of German culture. He called the period between the tenth and twelfth centuries the “dawn of Germanic culture.” At this time poets such as Walther von der Vogelweide (c1170–c1230) and Wolfram von Eschenbach (c1170–c1220) lived, and the Nibelungenlied was written. This was also the time of Hroswitha, the reincarnated Plato. Other important representatives of this stage of German culture were the mystics who came a little later: Master Eckhart and Johannes Tauler. This epoch of culture flourished and was then covered over.<sup>(12)</sup> It lay as if forgotten.

#### *German Classical Culture and German Liberalism*

By the time the classical German culture arrived on the scene, very little was preserved of its earlier forerunner. Thus, for example, Goethe knew very little or nothing of it. There is a complete discontinuity between the “dawn” in the tenth to twelfth centuries and what arose in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries.

In relation to the particular phenomenon of development of German culture, an important element for its comprehension is the pattern of descent and ascent of the folk-spirit, a pattern that is different from that of most of Western Europe. Around 1750 the Folk-spirit descended; by 1850 it retreated again. In between lay the apogee of German classical culture. For Steiner, no other modern age brimmed with ideas as did the German classical age. The ideas stemming from

Germany were not bound to the blood and the nation; they were truly universal. In contrast, most of the ideas of the early twentieth century do not stem from a search for the spirit; their sources lie hidden in the unconscious; they rush up from the forces of the blood.

The philosophies of Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, and others are still connected with reality because they are the last expression of the old clairvoyance of the north, before the new clairvoyance of our time became possible. This is why the German philosophers could rightly look upon their ideas as realities. Hegel's philosophy is a refined and abstract formulation, in the Consciousness Soul, of what the old Germans saw in spiritual experience in connection with the "I." This also explains how all of Fichte's philosophy takes its start from the idea of the "I," which was a gift from the God Thor to the old people of the North. Based as it is on the substratum of the Northern Mysteries, German philosophy does not fall into empty abstraction.<sup>(13)</sup> The people of the North had received a preparation through their Mysteries, which most naturally allowed their members to connect to a clairvoyant perception of the spiritual world. This is why these people also naturally carry the ability to formulate and understand Spiritual Science. It is also here that we find the most developed faculties for understanding the new Christ Mystery.

The closing time of German classical culture corresponded with the most articulate call for a national identity, culminating in 1848. After that the folk-spirit retreated to the heights, and can now be found only in the spiritual world. The spirit stopped descending before the people became too much identified with the national element, making it possible for them to retain a more universal outlook and more flexible attitudes than most other folk-spirits would allow, particularly in Western Europe. This phenomenon also explains why Germans are more easily misunderstood, and even hated. Steiner predicted that these movements of the folk-spirit would continue. At times the folk-spirit will descend, and at others ascend.<sup>(14)</sup> This dynamic will go on for another 2000 years for the Germanic people.

The movement to and fro of the folk-spirit, from the etheric-physical to the spiritual, and vice-versa, is the inner engine that allows the German to live his world mission. When the folk-spirit descends, he is more closely identified with his heritage; when it ascends, he



finds himself in a fluid state that unites him with what is universally human. It is this fluid consciousness that is most conducive for moving between the sensible and supersensible levels of reality, and therefore, for striving toward a scientific spiritual understanding of the world.

The soul of the German peoples progresses through its very close union with the Christ impulse in modern times. The preconditions for that union have been laid out through the centuries; at least this has been the case with the last two impulses in the tenth to twelfth centuries, and in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. With these preparations having been made, at present the Christ impulse can be received in full consciousness, in the astral and ego, rather than just in the physical and etheric, as was the case in the early centuries of Christianity (up to the eighth and ninth centuries, at least). A most telling example of this new capacity was present most of all in Goethe. Faust, his representative of modern humanity, is the one who wants to achieve this stage of consciousness in the astral and ego.

Michael (who is the current Time Spirit), and the German folk-spirit, are in complete harmony with the goal of bringing the Christ impulse to fruition in our time, toward what evolves out of anthroposophy. A way in which this is specifically done is by penetrating all that Ahriman is bringing about as necessary development in our time. This can be resisted and transformed only by a spiritualization of human culture. This mission was pre-announced by the thinkers and artists of the classical German culture, who accomplished a mission that was truly universal. Through them, all of German philosophy and spirituality form an indissoluble whole.

The unique character of German culture can be illustrated by contrast to the other important culture of the Consciousness Soul, the British. English philosophy and all of its intellectual life has developed on one side, and Theosophy (with its striving after the spirit) emerged independently in 1875. There is only a very superficial overlap between them. The two streams flowed side by side. In contrast, German culture has achieved recognition of the striving for the ascent to higher worlds, as exemplified in Faust. In Lessing, this striving came to the recognition of repeated earthly lives. Steiner added, "If you then also include the stream that led from Goethe's Fairy Tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily to the dramatization of the basic forces of initiation [Steiner's Mystery Dramas] and take the two streams togeth-

er, you will have the inner connection [between the two sides: intellectuality/ philosophy and spirituality].”(15) Not only did German culture manage to bring the two strivings to a convergence. What that culture gave to humanity transcended race; it was truly universal. Goethe said that those who most influenced him (and Steiner agreed) were Shakespeare, Spinoza and Linnaeus—none of them German!

Goetheanism survived in Steiner's time in a “somewhat petrified form,” but it was a form that could be rejuvenated. At that time, Steiner judged it was anomalous to immerse oneself in the Goethean worldview. What German people received from their background (that is, Protestantism) did not prepare them to assimilate Goetheanism. Upon coming to Weimar, Steiner noticed that nowhere was there affinity for the thinking of Goethe, neither outwardly nor inwardly. That was even more the case among those who lectured about Goethe, Lessing, Herder, and the other Romantics.

Germany prepared the ground for modern times in which a reversal of the evolutionary stage of Greece must occur, with Aristotelianism coming first, then Platonism reappearing. But modern times were preceded in Germany with the Platonism of the time of Goethe. Emil Bock saw Platonism not only in Goethe, but in the whole of the Goethean era.<sup>(16)</sup> Many of the characterizations of German Romantics made by Steiner bear this out.<sup>(17)</sup> Bock also indicated that much of Goetheanism, which had died in Germany around 1850, found refuge in Austria; in Germany Ahrimanic impulses completely replaced it with materialistic science and technology.<sup>(18)</sup> Although Austria was Catholic, Catholicism seemed not to directly touch the Austrian soul, as if it weren't relevant. Austrians could still access the heritage of Goethe, Lessing, Schiller, Hegel, and others; and Austria played a role for the German soul similar to the role that Macedonia had played for Greece, in disseminating Hellenism toward the East, in the time of Alexander the Great. Through Austria, the German legacy of Romanticism was passed on to the people of the Hapsburg Empire.

It was Steiner's destiny to incarnate within this stream of modern culture, and carry the heritage of German classical culture a stage higher. His contribution was made at a particular time in history, at the turning point of the end of Kali Yuga. But there is another important influence on the course of history that cannot be detected by outer science. There was an individual who, more than any other historical fig-

ure, played an important part in the history of the nineteenth century in Central Europe. He was prevented, however, from carrying his mission on earth in a way that would have served the furthering of German culture, and would have assured a far more living link between its previous achievements and the birth of spiritual science. This man was the enigmatic Kaspar Hauser, and his spiritual biography is intimately linked to that of Steiner, even though the two would never meet.

*Kaspar Hauser's Biography*

Kaspar Hauser was born in Karlsruhe on September 29, 1812, the son of the Grand Duke Karl and Stephanie de Beauharnais, the adopted daughter of Napoleon. These facts are not acknowledged by outer history. They are solely the result of Steiner's occult research. However, Anselm Ritter von Feuerbach, who was a criminologist and the President of the Court of Appeal of Ansbach, by 1832 had practically solved the riddle of Hauser's origin. But in the same year he fell ill, and he died at the end of May, 1833.

The young Kaspar Hauser was kidnapped soon after birth, after a staged death. Around age two or three, before his memory would awaken, he was imprisoned in a dungeon, in a cage in which he could only sit. He remained there for the next twelve or thirteen years without speaking, walking, or standing upright. He could not see the light of day, the sky, stars, or moon, nor any other human being. Some time during the spring of 1828, he was freed from the cage. The man who had kept him prisoner taught him about forty words of dialect, and told how to write the name he was given, "Kaspar Hauser." After that, the day after Whitsun, May 26, 1828, he was set free into the world. This was to have been his quiet disappearance from the public eye, or his end. The plan backfired, because Hauser drew a lot of attention to himself. This was partly due to a public announcement by Nuernberg's Mayor, Binder, requesting information about Hauser's identity, and help in caring for him. A few days after his appearance in Nuernberg, Kaspar was visited by the twenty-eight year old Friedrich Daumer, who was entrusted with responsibility for the care of the foundling Kaspar, in July of that year. In October of 1829, there was a first attempt at assassinating Hauser in Daumer's house. In May of 1831, Lord Stanhope, a likely emissary of the Lodges, approached the young

man in Nuernberg. In November of the same year, Stanhope assumed guardianship of Hauser and took him to Ansbach. The new captors tried to debase Hauser's character, but always unsuccessfully. Hauser received his confirmation in church with great joy on May 20, 1833. He was assassinated on December 14 of that year. He died three days later, three months after he had turned twenty-one. His death had been decreed because of the risks that his further development presented to his captors. The crime against Hauser came from those who wanted to prevent the unfolding of his earthly mission. The crime was accomplished in two stages. The first one, according to P. Tradowski, bears the Jesuit stamp. Steiner indicated this twice to Count Polzer-Hoditz.<sup>(19)</sup> The second part, achieved by Lord Stanhope, would have been the deed of the Western Lodges.

Steiner asserted that "next to Christian Rosenkreutz, Kaspar Hauser had the greatest feeling for the suffering of Christ."<sup>(20)</sup> When someone like Hauser accepts a destiny that is not his own, he brings about consequences that Christ's opponents cannot foresee. Thus, Kaspar Hauser achieved an important goal for world evolution. He formed a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds that would have been lost to humanity. However, in terms of German destiny, much was lost.

Hauser would have been an important individual who could have offered the chance of a deeper penetration of the German folk-spirit into the German people. The fact that he could not offer that is the reason for the many misfortunes that befell the German people. The German spirit is rooted in the ego; its fulfillment is reached when the ego finds its home in the spirit. Hauser was meant to bring to a blossoming the classical epoch of German culture at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with spirits such as Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Hölderlin, Herder, Beethoven, and so forth.

In a conversation with Count Polzer-Hoditz, Steiner said that Hauser's reign would have meant the coming to birth of a "new Grail castle" in Southern Germany, a place for the rebirth of the spirit in anticipation of the end of Kali Yuga. By "Southern Germany," Steiner meant the area of Baden, Württemberg, Bavaria, and also Austria. Hauser would have been able to bring to life impulses for the path upward from materialism, to prepare for the new age after 1899. As Ser-

gei Prokofieff pointed out, if Hauser had ascended to the throne, he could have counted on neighboring contemporaries who would have lent him a hand: Johann of Saxony (1801–1873), and Ludwig of Bavaria (1854–1886). Johann translated Dante's *Divine Comedy*; Ludwig was the long-time supporter of Richard Wagner, for whom he built the Bayreuth theater. Ludwig's plans included the use of Castle Neuschwanstein in the Bavarian Alps as the modern center of the Grail.<sup>(21)</sup> The united principalities of Baden, Saxony, and Bavaria would have formed a counterweight not only to the rise of materialism, but also to Prussian hegemony. Together they would have placed a check on the Franco-German war of 1870–71. The backlash coming from the plans of the occult brotherhoods culminated in the crowning of the Prussian Wilhelm I as German emperor in 1871. By that time Germany had effectively relinquished its spiritual task, and turned its back on the legacy of Goethe. Over the long run, this led to an unavoidable World War I. Steiner called the accession to power of Wilhelm I "slitting the throat of the German spirit."

More importantly, it was Kaspar Hauser's task to manifest in the social world the fruit of what proceeded from Goethe in particular, and from all of the emerging German culture. This could have gone as far as manifesting a truly new social form. Upon such a social form, the transition to a threefold social order would have been more naturally assured, a century later in the very same region in which Steiner worked. Additionally, we know from Steiner that in Hauser, a feeling for karma and reincarnation lived; an experience of them had awakened in his soul.<sup>(22)</sup> If Hauser had carried out his mission, Steiner would not have started from a void or connected with marginal movements; instead, he would have worked right from the very center of German culture, and from the very center of Europe itself.

Materialism was able to maintain such a stronghold on the social order because of Kaspar Hauser's death; he could not carry the unique social reforms that could have built upon the legacy of German Romanticism. Hauser's task was essentially what both Jesuits and Western Lodges could not tolerate, if they wanted to exert the kind of power they intend to yield over the minds and souls of humanity. The two streams had united in 1802, thrown into each other's arms, so to speak, by the havoc that Napoleon had caused to both the British Isles and the Papacy.<sup>(23)</sup> The Anglo-American Lodges carried out the eco-

conomic concerns; the Jesuits, the spiritual ones. Their alliance set up things so that in the end, there was no other choice than between “black and white,” meaning between false alternatives. Napoleon could have had an ordering effect upon Europe’s history at the time of transition from the old forms of monarchy toward the nascent democracies. However, he forfeited his task; and Hauser’s mission was made all the more difficult in light of the strength reached by the alliance of Jesuits and the Western Lodges.

Hauser freely accepted the enormous sacrifice that was his whole life, and was able to forgive all who had mistreated him, or caused his death. Through his path of sacrifice, Hauser built a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds, by surrendering his personality. Steiner asserted, “If Kaspar Hauser had not lived and died in the way he did, the contact between the earth and the spiritual world would have been completely severed.”<sup>(24)</sup> In the Kaspar Hauser incarnation lies hidden an important secret of earth evolution. In a conversation with Count Polzer-Hoditz on March 3, 1925 (notes were taken by the Count), Steiner let us into the secret of his incarnation. “The individuality who hides behind the Kaspar Hauser-veil is a being who worked inspiringly into the Rosicrucian connection from the beginning; and then, on September 29, 1812, incarnated as the son of the Grand-Duke Karl of Baden and his wife Stephanie de Beauharnais.”<sup>(25)</sup> The central mission of the Rosicrucians was to prepare humanity for the events of the twentieth century. This is what Steiner said in Rosicrucian Christianity: “It is the work of the Rosicrucians that makes it possible to experience the manifestation of Christ in the ether-world. The number of those capable of beholding this manifestation will steadily increase.”<sup>(26)</sup> The perception of this modern event, also, was hindered through the crime against the spirit perpetrated upon Kaspar Hauser.

#### *Kaspar Hauser’s Death and Its Consequences for German Culture*

In order to deepen the understanding of the connection between Kaspar Hauser and Steiner, we could go through the inner historical links between the two as Peter Tradowski has done. For our purposes, however, it is more direct to continue an exploration of German culture in

the nineteenth century as it manifested in the social realm, and its continuation in the twentieth century.

The development of German culture turned around two central foci: Prussia to the North-East, and Austria to the south. In the nineteenth century Prussia progressively gained ascendancy over the core of Germany. The first step in Prussian growth was reached in 1640 under the Great Elector Frederick William who centered the kingdom on absolutistic rule. Later, King Frederick William I (1713–1740) continued to establish a very centralized state. After the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), Prussia further grew to become an important European power. At this point, Prussia and Austria vied for influence and power over the heart of Germany.

Under Napoleon's Empire, the map of Germany changed constantly. After the fall of the emperor, thirty-nine states (thirty-five ruling princes and four free cities) agreed to form a German Confederation under Austrian leadership. The Federal Parliament of the confederation met in Frankfurt. Already in the years 1817 to 1819, there were liberal and patriotic insurrections. The tensions grew to a fever pitch until the time of the "March Revolution" of 1848. The Revolution was clamoring for freedom, democracy, and national unity. Many monarchs bowed to the pressure in an opportunistic fashion. In Baden, an assembly made calls for a bill of rights. Similar steps were taken in other German states. Even King Frederick William IV of Prussia conceded to the demands for parliamentary elections, a constitution, and freedom of the press. In Bavaria a liberal government was formed.

The Parliament in Frankfurt started working on a new constitution. The assembly leaned in favor of Austria rather than Prussia. There was a debate over whether to opt for the Greater German Solution (with Austria) or the Smaller German Solution (without her). Because of historical contingencies, the second solution prevailed. In December 1848, the Parliament, although increasingly marginalized by the pace of events, proclaimed the rights and freedoms of all Germans in the "Basic Rights for German People." When the Constitution was drafted, it was approved by twenty-nine smaller states, but lacked the approval of important players, chief among them Austria and Prussia, followed by Bavaria, Hanover, and Saxony.

To understand what was going on, we have to turn once more to some spiritual underpinnings of the German soul. In Central Europe,

Goetheanism had made a considerable contribution to the future of humanity. However, this leaven became active in only a few individuals. Until 1862, people could not purchase Goethe's writings, and Goethe was known to very few. Ironically, by that time there was no longer the ability to understand what he had pioneered.

At that time the idea of a German identity was struggling to emerge, even in the first half of the nineteenth century. Fichte wrote his Address to the German Nation and prefaced it with, "I speak simply to Germans, to Germans as such." By this he meant that he wanted to reach beyond the regional differences, which were quite real.<sup>(27)</sup> They were so real that in certain areas, at certain periods, it was a crime to call oneself "German." One could call oneself Austrian, Bavarian, Swabian, but not German. This is due, in great part, to the fact that (given the development of the German folk soul), Central Europe was still emerging from a tribal culture. This manifested in the strong regional differences between parts of Central Europe, between Swabians, Saxonians, Prussians, Bavarians, and so forth. The national idea did not take hold sufficiently. Goetheanism remained unknown; instead, the ideas emanating from socialism gained ground.

The year 1848 was an important signpost in German history. It was in the same year that Karl Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto*. Marx and Engels continued the stream of history that was initiated with the Constantinople Council of 869 with the denial of the spirit. Marx and Engels went even further, to denial of the soul. For them there was nothing else than a struggle for economic wellbeing; culture was a mere superstructure. Here an impulse was at work counter to all the values of German Liberalism. Marx was in fact more fitted to British culture, and that is why he worked in England. From now on, the liberal impulse on one side, the Bismarckian central state and socialist impulses on the other side, would vie for ascendancy. Repression of the liberal impulse occurred as early as the year 1850, followed by the restoration of the earlier German Confederation. Bismarck came to power against the wishes of the liberals, who considered him a reactionary. In 1866, the rivalry between Prussia and Austria erupted in the Austro-Prussian War, in which Prussia prevailed. The Confederation was dissolved, and in its place arose the North German Federation (1867–71), enshrining the hegemony of Prussia.



In 1870–71, The Franco-German war ended with the defeat of France and the end of the Second Empire (Napoleon III). Prussia had direct control of twenty-two states to the north, and indirect control over the south. By that time, Steiner judged, the new nation had completely forsaken its true task.

Bismarck felt he had two major enemies. The first was the Catholic Church; the other was the growing Socialist Workers' Party (later Social Democratic Party). The first he fought by expelling the Jesuits. For the second, he used a variety of tactics. At first he outlawed the Party, and in order to win the workers over, introduced social reforms (that is, a social insurance system). In a sense, these actions marked the birth of the modern welfare state. German Liberalism had died against the other two titans vying for dominance: the Prussian nation-state, and an equally centralized view of power in the Socialist or Social Democratic alternative.

In more than one way, the outcome had been unavoidable from the start. Here too, we must refer to the fact that Germany had been deprived by the Jesuits and the Western Lodges of the important contribution that would have been played by Kaspar Hauser, in his bringing to maturation the impulses of classical German culture, and in applying its universal worldview to a new social order.

In referring to Germany's cultural development at this time, Steiner concluded that, while Goetheanism had been attained by the few, the majority of the population still lived at the cultural level of 300–400 AD. This level of soul development in Germany lasted longer than in England, where the Industrial Revolution rapidly changed the culture. The German soul had opposed this development, and retained its old stamp longer. What the German soul absorbed were the abstract revolutionary ideals from the 1840s and the decades that followed. Steiner commented, "The conditions of 400 AD in Central Europe continued, then made a jump, and basically found the connection only in the last third of the nineteenth century, around the year 1875. Whereas the Anglo-Saxon nation already met the year 1840 with a transformation of conditions, with the necessity of receiving the consciousness soul, the German people continued to dream. They still experienced the year 1840 as though in a dream. Then they slept through the grace period, when a bridge could have been built between leading personalities and what arose out of the masses of the people in the

form of the proletariat. The latter then took hold of the socialist doctrine and thereby, beginning about the year 1875, exerted forcible, radical pressure in the direction of the consciousness soul.”<sup>(28)</sup>

Steiner considered that after the forming of the German Empire, “the black and white principle” had taken the lead. The black and white principle presents a forced choice between two equally one-sided solutions. This division arose from the union of Jesuits and the Western Lodges, which took only their spiritual and economic concerns into consideration. In this paradigm, there is no third principle. Ahriman and Lucifer alone play a role, completely bypassing the Christ. The two occult world powers had created this condition by preventing the mission of Kaspar Hauser from playing out in the theater of Europe. In the last analysis, Bismarck fully adopted the “black and white” outlook of clear-cut “yes or no” alternatives set up by the Jesuits and the Lodges, because nothing else was available.<sup>(29)</sup>

#### *The Fate of German Liberalism*

Liberalism proceeded in ebbs and flows until the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century it took the form of enlightenment, mostly in England and France; in the nineteenth century it turned into the struggle for political liberalism. This struggle tended to wane toward the 1860s. Steiner called liberalism “the product of self-discipline”; that is, the attempt to free oneself of personal prejudice and rigid social conventions. “By the middle of the nineteenth century there was no political future for liberal ideas; their representatives in later years give more or less the impression of casualties of political thinking.”<sup>(30)</sup>

Liberalism was born of the mission of the English people, and had found its highest spiritual expression in the soul of the German people. Before the end of the nineteenth century the impulse was practically dead. This near-demise, too, confirms the success of the secret societies, and the importance for them of suppressing the impulse that would have dawned in Southern Germany through Kaspar Hauser. Liberalism was replaced by the impulse of socialism that had turned completely materialistic in Marxism.

When Steiner accomplished his momentous world-task within the heart of Central Europe, Germany was going through another important turning point of its history. Here too Steiner hoped that the

seeds he had laid down would find a fertile ground and find a continuation in the culture. In relation to the continuing task of the German folk-spirit and its connection to anthroposophy, Steiner said, "Now this is also one of the reasons why we may hope that the Folk-Spirit, the Archangel who extends his educative and directing activity over this country [Germany], will permeate with the capacities he has developed in the course of centuries, that which may be called modern philosophy, modern spiritual research, and that from then on, this modern spiritual research will be fertilized in a popular sense."<sup>(31)</sup> Unfortunately, this was the time in which Hitler was paving his way to power.

We do not intend to go further into details of Germany's destiny after this point. Suffice it to point out (as Peter Tradowski does), that Hitler came to power exactly a century after the death of Kaspar Hauser. Hitler was the counter-image of Hauser, and the consequence of the crime against the spirit that led to the latter's death. Hitler was as destructive as Hauser would have been a blessing. Furthermore, Hitler was a tool of the same powers that brought the downfall of Hauser. It would have been Hauser's task to encourage political innovation, moving away from a centralized state. It was the epitome of this very same centralized state that arose in the Third Reich.

From this summary of the impulses that lived in the German folk spirit from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, we see two interweaving impulses emerging. On the one hand, the renewal of culture brought by German Classicism; on the other hand, the articulation of the ideas of German Liberalism, as they yearned to find expression in the social realm. The first impulse had a chance to find realization. The second impulse could come to fruition only if it went from being a thought into a practical realization. That practical realization was more specifically the goal of the "new Grail castle," which Kaspar Hauser could have achieved by virtue of the position in which karma had placed him.

The difference between the two impulses appears at two levels. First of all, Steiner made a clear differentiation between what constitutes true thinking in the realm of knowledge, and what is "true social thinking." He made this clearly understandable in his estimate of Fichte and Hegel, both of whom he found completely unfit to enter the

realm of social thinking, although he naturally hailed their achievements in the pursuit of knowledge.<sup>(32)</sup> In the second place, Steiner recognized those who could have led the way in this direction. Three of them stand out in this context: Schiller (1759–1805), Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) and Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–1896). Among others that Steiner referred to are Eduard Lasker (1829–1884) and Eugen Richter (1838–1906).<sup>(33)</sup>

Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* form a first step in the theoretical elaboration of the impulses at work in the social realm, and offer completely new perceptions of the role of the politician in society. Wilhelm von Humboldt was a friend of Schiller. He elaborated his ideas in *The Spheres and Duties of Government*. The book, written at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, advocates a limited intervention of the state in individual matters. The state should intervene only insofar as it would remove obstacles in the free unfolding of individuality. Steiner calls this work the brother of Schiller's *Aesthetic Education of Man*. Von Humboldt's influence over his time may be judged by the fact that Edouard Laboulaye and John Stuart Mill elaborated their ideas from von Humboldt. However, in taking up the ideas of central Europe, the Anglo-Saxon West impoverished German Liberalism, particularly depriving it of a grounding in the spirit.

Like von Humboldt, von Treitschke spoke about the state in his lectures on politics, which were later published. He always placed the consideration of freedom at the center of the larger questions. And freedom for him meant freedom from the state. He too continued what von Humboldt had initiated through research into the matter of how the state could serve the freedom of the individual. Treitschke was fully aware of the apparent contradiction between the notion of state (based as it is, on the power that it represents) and the impulse toward individual freedom. The German thinker tried to find a way to reconcile them both. He realized that the idea of state is inseparable from that of power. It is therefore important to define and limit the functions of the state. When this limiting is done, the state could become the cultivator and guardian of that very same individual freedom.

In summing up, two impulses were active in sequence in German Classical culture. They certainly overlapped in notable individuals like

Schiller. The first found full expression in figures like Goethe, Lessing, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and so forth. In the second, we have recognized a few key exponents in Schiller, Von Humboldt and Treitschke. The second impulse did not come to fruition. In a deeper view of history, this liberalizing attempt had been condemned earlier, through the fate meted out to Hauser from the adverse powers in Europe. It is no coincidence that Hauser died prematurely in 1832, and the national impulse came to its end by 1850. At that time, Steiner tells us, the German folk spirit ascended anew.

We have followed key developments in German culture and history, which are events that have the greatest import for world karma as well. We could divide the history of the last three centuries into four phases: the development of classical German culture, of which Goethe formed the culmination; the development of the short-lived German liberal impulse; after a discontinuity, the development of anthroposophy; and, finally, the development of the teachings of karma and reincarnation, including everything that is connected with the threefold social order.

Through spiritual science, Goetheanism was brought a step forward toward apprehension of the working of spirit in matter. That was the step that world karma had entrusted to Schröer, and which in reality fell to Steiner. Through the renewed teachings on karma and reincarnation, and through threefolding, the impulse that Kaspar Hauser could not carry through was resurrected by Steiner. Additionally, Steiner's efforts were carried out in Southern Germany, where Kaspar Hauser's destiny could have nurtured the "Grail kingdom of Europe." Tradowski intuits that Hauser's Grail kingdom would have brought together not only a new social organization, but also a new knowledge of karma and reincarnation, knowledge which would have come to Hauser as one of the highest Rosicrucian initiates. This overall course of development was deeply altered by the crime against humanity that was committed on Kaspar Hauser. That course of development suffered a further setback because of Schröer's inability to fulfill his task in world evolution, namely that of elevating Goetheanism to spiritual science. In reality, Schröer's task was carried further by Steiner, and did not suffer significantly. Rather, it was Steiner's task that was delayed and left incomplete because of his premature death. There is a clear thread linking Goethe to Schröer that Steiner amply evidenced;

and another thread linking Hauser to Steiner, that Peter Tradowski has documented.

Could it be the dimension of tragedy affecting world karma that motivated Steiner to supreme restraint in all that concerned the figure of Kaspar Hauser? Considering the importance of this figure in world karma, Steiner said surprisingly little in public lectures. He mentioned Hauser in only two lectures.<sup>(34)</sup> He seemed reluctant to speak publicly about Hauser, and what he said about him in the lectures was not the most important part of the whole. In fact, Steiner confided his deepest revelations to only a few individuals whom he seemed to trust deeply (mostly to Polzer-Hoditz); and he did so more toward the end of his life.<sup>(35)</sup>

Our exploration is already revealing here the close interrelationship of the themes of karma and reincarnation and threefolding as it arose from the life and mission of Kaspar Hauser. Having finished the exploration of the historical thread in Germany's cultural life, we will now turn to the esoteric thread as it manifested itself at the time of the Christmas Foundation Meeting and in the years leading to it; and particularly how the path of Spirit Recollection intersects with the ideas that Steiner elaborated in relation to threefolding. In the process we will also explore the historical elaboration of Steiner's ideas in the social realm.

### **Threefolding and the Impulse of Spirit Recollection**

Spirit Recollection can be envisioned as a path that leads personal development toward social development. Everything that touches on karma and reincarnation moves from a personal aspect to an eminently social aspect. This theme emerged as early as the Mystery Dramas. When the four souls who were most connected in the dramas (Maria, Johannes, Strader, and Capesius) had reached soul maturity and reordered their karma to quite a significant extent, they embarked with the factory-owner Hilary on a new endeavor that aspired to affect the social world. The soul that has grasped important aspects of its own self, and is working at transforming those aspects, naturally wishes to move from the position of being spiritually receiving to being spiritually giving. And, in the last analysis this means contributing to the wellbeing of our fellow human beings. More about these ideas can be found in

relation to the practice of Destiny Learning devised by Coen van Houten; this practice is a way to acquire knowledge about precise, though very limited, aspects of our previous lives. This leads in turn to accepting our destiny, understanding the web of destiny, and reordering it. For more about this see chapter 3 of *Steiner's Life Tasks*.

When Steiner talked about how we are to overcome the predominantly anti-social tendencies of the Consciousness Soul, he directed our attention to two possibilities. The first is consciously transforming natural egotism by developing interest in others, leading to the creation of helpful imaginations about our fellow human beings. This task is carried out through the exercises of Spirit Recollection briefly mentioned above and reviewed in depth in chapter 3 of *Rudolf Steiner's Life Tasks*. The other possibility can be achieved from the outside, through measures aiming at organizing social structures in a "threefold" way. Both possibilities are outlined with greatest clarity in the lecture *Social and Anti-Social Forces in the Human Being*, December 12, 1918. Two exercises appear in this lecture. In the first, we are asked to look at all of those who contributed to our lives (in both a "positive" and "negative" manner from a subjective perspective), so that we can have a more sober understanding of our achievements and failures. The other exercise asks us to picture ourselves with greatest possible objectivity and precision in some moment in the past, so that we can see ourselves from the point of view of a spectator, and thus separate our ego from the events of our past.

As has already been pointed out, what I have called exercises of Spirit Recollection appear for the most part either in the lectures about karma, or in the various lectures about threefolding and the social question. Starting from the other side, when speaking about threefolding, Steiner emphasized how a fuller perception of karma needs to be awakened through the help of social structures. Much of the confusion generated in humanity's karma at present is due to the unitary, centralized, and hierarchical structures at the level of governments, as well as in institutions and organizations.

Our present reality in economic relationships is actually meant to deny any notion of reincarnation and karma. In Steiner's estimate, there is nothing that contributes more to this denial than the idea and practice of providing a wage compensation for an individual's labor.

“In a world order where people believe that a direct correspondence between work and recompense is necessary, and that each individual must earn what is needed for life’s needs through work, so to speak, a true fundamental conviction of reincarnation and karma can never really flourish.”<sup>(36)</sup> To a large extent, the fact that land and capital are considered commodities in the marketplace plays in the same direction as the chaining of labor to market forces.

Basically, we could posit that the ideas of karma and reincarnation, once fully penetrated by the soul, work their way outward from the individual to the larger group. The exercises or tools of moral imagination and moral technique (such as Destiny Learning, or what is presently called “social technology”) support the attainment of the goals of threefolding. The reverse is true, as well. The ideas that find their ultimate expression in threefolding support and nourish the intentions behind the practice of the exercises of Spirit Recollection; they result in a recognition of the forces of destiny in the midst of human communities. Egalitarian structures in the sphere of rights; associative economic structures; and a spiritual arena that can clearly recognize and bring forth individual abilities and gifts, are the external tools through which we can find a way to fulfill our destiny in accordance with our pre-birth intentions. These three spheres cultivate the conditions for the recognition of the links of karma, and allow us to have new clarity about our common goals, at a time in which maximum confusion reigns in these matters.

The interweaving of the motifs of social threefolding with the exercises of Spirit Recollection (leading to a recognition of the forces of destiny at play in our lives) reappears as a constant in Steiner’s life.

Threefolding was defined by Steiner as an “impulse”; the term is a way to distinguish it from a formula for social reform or a program. “I wanted to demonstrate that the solution to the social problem can take place in a real way only by itself—in no way can it be found by discussion; only by events, by action. Conditions for such action must first be established...”<sup>(37)</sup> Steiner spoke of the necessity of social impulses, rather than abstract social ideas or thoughts, but felt that people could hardly understand the difference at the time. People even became angry when Steiner stressed the difference again and again. He was aware that the examples he gave to illustrate what he said, ended



up being taken as the thing itself, rather than the simple examples they were meant to be. In this way, the threefold social order (TSO) risked being seen as another “utopia” among the other ideologies that claimed the people’s attention at the beginning of the century.

Ultimately, the TSO has the ability and flexibility to integrate, at the level of institutions and associations, all historical stages and tendencies. It does not require a homogeneous moving forward to an idealized optimum. If threefolding were realized to any extent at the national level, theocratic associations could coexist next to democratic ones; hierarchical structures next to associative structures.

We will now offer a view of how Steiner’s ideas about threefolding form a natural complement to what has been said about the path of Spirit Recollection. Knowing that a complete exposition of the ideas of threefolding is hardly possible in the scope of this work, we will turn just to the central formulation of laws that Steiner outlined in this field, among them the “Fundamental Social Law” and the “Fundamental Sociological Law.” In addition, we will refer again to the “archetypal social phenomenon.” Much of this is familiar to the author through the work of Dieter Brüll and Harry Salman.<sup>(38)</sup>

The Fundamental Social Law (the very heart of threefolding) explores the relationship between labor and income. It reads: “In a community of human beings working together, the well-being of the community will be the greater, the less the individual claims for himself the proceeds of the work he has himself done; i.e., the more of these proceeds he makes over to his fellow-worker, and the more his own requirements are satisfied, not out of his own work, but out of the work done for others.”

#### *Fundamental Sociological Law*

The Fundamental Social Law forms a natural complement to the law Steiner called the Fundamental Sociological Law, which states: “In the beginning of cultural conditions, man strives for the development of social associations; the interests of the individuals are initially sacrificed for the interests of the associations; further development leads to the freeing of the individual from the interests of the associations and to the free unfolding of the needs and abilities of the individual.” Stei-

ner formulated this law in 1898.<sup>(39)</sup> This is the law that explains that humanity had to be led first into theocracy, then through the rule of kings, finally to democracy; and at present, the highest freedom of the individual is assured by the membering of the social organism into three separate spheres for cultural life, the life of rights, and economic life. This is a law of temporal evolution. In contrast, the Fundamental Social Law, which is more rooted in the present, it was formulated in the years 1905–06.<sup>(40)</sup> The two laws and the archetypal social phenomenon afford a comprehensive survey of the building blocks of social threefolding.

When the religious life still played an important role in human evolution, egoistic and anti-social tendencies were kept in check. At present, humanity is collectively “crossing the threshold to the spiritual world.” This means that the individual forces of thinking, feeling, and willing are going their separate ways, and egotism increases. At the personal level, this separation can eventually lead to a splitting of personality. At the social level, this means that the instinctive threefolding of the preceding centuries has been lost. From this loss, more often than not, is engendered the fusion of cultural, political, and economic life into the unitary state, regardless of whether this state is a tyranny, monarchy, or democracy.

Things changed significantly in modern times, after human rights and labor started to emancipate themselves from the religious sphere. This emancipation gave birth to the striving, the grappling with egotism that culminates in democracy on one hand, and in the division of labor on the other. The division of labor tempers the egotistical impulse, because it consecrates, at least at one level, the need to depend on other people's work for one's subsistence. The very idea of altruism (which is no older than two centuries) was first implanted in the economic sphere. However, the altruistic aspect is countered by the reality that through the wage system, each man labors under the illusion that he is working for himself. So he works “for a living” rather than for the satisfaction of social needs.

The system of labor remuneration through wages opens the door to the exploitation of a person's labor for someone else's gain. What slavery did to the whole human being (his life did not belong to him), is, in effect, still a reality as far as labor is concerned: our labor is enslaved through wage remuneration. Marxism, with a certain accu-

racy, called this wage enslavement “oppression.” Steiner, however, saw no way out of this impasse in either capitalism or socialism. He fought against the idea that a social order could be built upon the glorification of structures that accept man’s egotistical motivation as a basis, no matter how many laws could be devised in order to provide artificially for “right remuneration.” He also pointed to the absurdity of the socialist experiment, based as it was on the exaltation of another anti-social force in the motto “proletarians of the world unite,” implying that the antagonism of social classes could be a force to build social cohesion.

The desire for personal profit is not an inherent tendency of human nature. Rather, it is a result of the dependence of the cultural sphere upon the state and the economic sector. Human beings do not need to be further evolved in order to accept and work under threefold structures. Within a threefold society human beings will evolve, however, to be different from what the economic state has turned them into.

Steiner wanted to separate the idea of working for the well-being of others from the idea of receiving an income. The laborer, paid through the forces of the market, suffers a sort of “clouding of his karma.” He cannot find a way to perceive and live out his destiny, because his sacred task is quantified, reified. To the associations working within a threefold economy, the task would be to ensure that labor is separated from the forces that work in the marketplace.

#### *Fundamental Social Law*

Let us look once more at the law that underlies the working of the TSO, the so-called Fundamental Social Law: “In a community of human beings working together, the well-being of the community will be the greater, the less the individual claims for himself the proceeds of the work he has himself done; i.e., the more of these proceeds he makes over to his fellow-worker, and the more his own requirements are satisfied, not out of his own work, but out of the work done for others.”<sup>(41)</sup> The Fundamental Social Law is a purely economic law, not a political program. This law applies to social life with the same exclusivity and necessity that we would expect from the laws at work in nature. Notice that the focus of the formulation hinges on the idea of

“health” or “well-being,” and that behind this goal is the overcoming of egotism in social structures. As egotism decreases in the workplace, trust is likely to increase. This will naturally increase production and quality. One should not believe that working according to this law implies the sacrifice of income. Rather, there will likely be a shift of needs, when work itself provides personal satisfaction, rather than “free time” and consumption, as is the case in modern society.

For this law to operate, the social body, at every level, must live under the inspiration of spiritual ideals, not just vague, progressive, well-meaning utopian goals. Utopian goals can work only for a short time, through a sort of Luciferic inspiration that enraptures a group of people. A new world concept is needed at each stage of human evolution, and at present the ideas deriving from anthroposophy fulfill this need. The whole community, at whichever level, must have a spiritual mission that is shared by its members. In the spiritual mission, the joy that the craftsman formerly had in making his uniquely individual product, would be replaced by the joy of working for our fellow human beings. The transition between one condition and the other is fraught with many obstacles.

In *Theosophy and the Social Question*, Steiner also indicated that the application of the Fundamental Social Law reflects the fact that individuals will have a feeling that karma places them at a certain place at a certain time.<sup>(42)</sup> This feeling will extend further to an understanding of the place of one's community in the concert of the nation's and world's communities. This understanding will allow the spirits of the communities to interrelate to each other in a meaningful way. Note that in the above description, an understanding of karma does not necessarily mean knowledge of previous lives, but a clear feeling for one's place in the world.

The Fundamental Social Law plays an important role, not just in the economic life; it has long-reaching effects upon the spiritual life of the individual, as well. The archetypal social phenomenon that explains the hidden phenomena at work in our speaking and listening, permeates all the spheres, particularly the rights sphere, in which decisions are reached in respect of full equality. This last point is particularly important. An intellectual or mechanical way to apply threefolding misses its dimension of “impulse,” and turns it into theory and program. A lively understanding of the importance of the archetypal

social phenomenon is what allows the ideas to live in the present; it also allows trust to develop that the impulse will find its forms in the world in ways that the intellect can neither fathom, nor foresee. In other words, a great part of the realization of threefolding rests primarily upon providing means through which our karma comes to life in the encounter with other human beings. The result is the honoring of intentions we carry from before birth, rather than having to live by rigid pre-set models. This explains the efficiency of all of the field of “social technology” of which Theory U, Appreciative Inquiry or World Café are only some examples. Through a new way of practicing conversations and decision-making continuously new frontiers are reached in ways to transform organization and communities, align them with a commonly perceived will, reach decisions that have the consensus of all stakeholders, and educate individuals to new ways of being.

The archetypal social phenomenon is what continuously nourishes our ability to recognize our fellow human beings. This practice of empathy and its outcome must continually be reborn out of situations of the moment. If this does not happen, external justice becomes routine, an instrument of power and of special interests. An inner sense for fairness as a regulating system can arise only from dedication to a true encounter. And the encounter has to be continually recreated in the moment, through acquiring fresh understanding of each other's inner realities. In *Rudolf Steiner's Life Tasks*, chapter 4, we have seen how this encounter is raised to consciousness in the practices of Non-violent Communication, and in the whole of social technology. Exhortation or calls to goodwill rarely suffice.

Why did Steiner discontinue his efforts in the direction of the social question at this first attempt? Steiner had in fact announced that he would continue writing on the heels of *Theosophy and the Social Question*, but nothing ensued. He explained “At that point I stopped because nobody paid any attention.”<sup>(43)</sup> By this he meant that nobody had enacted his ideas at a large enough practical level, which Steiner thought possible. Elsewhere he concluded “it proved possible to give detailed advice in some instances, but again, the circumstances proved inadequate and the right consequences failed to materialize.”<sup>(44)</sup>

*Threefolding and Anthroposophy*

Threefolding is an outgrowth of anthroposophy. But once it is present as a structure, it can completely emancipate itself from its source. It will no longer require support and nourishment from anthroposophy. It will simply provide the framework that people will direct toward completely unique outcomes determined by circumstance, culture, the roles played by important individualities, and so forth. Within that framework, people will be able to develop truly social impulses. Conversely, only within such conditions will the anthroposophic social impulse come into its own. This principle explains why, after the Christmas Conference, Steiner talked about Anthroposophy and Threefolding as being two terms on equal ground. This was not meant to indicate that threefolding already had an existence developed to the same level of anthroposophy. Rather, Steiner meant that threefolding served as an indispensable impulse for the time, one that could stand on its own feet.

From the ground of present experience in anthroposophic groups, one can see that much of the present difficulty with applying threefolding comes from the fact that it is devised intellectually, rather than evolved organically from a common understanding and a group dynamic. Improving that dynamic (ultimately through the individual exercises, or through social practices revolving around dialogue and the enhancement of the archetypal social phenomenon) is a way of strengthening a living application of threefolding.

Looking at threefolding and Spirit Recollection, we can fathom an interweaving gesture. Threefolding obviously does not apply at the individual level; it works its influence from macro and intermediate social levels, finally touching the individual. Spirit Recollection and the karma exercises are eminently meant to work at the individual or small group level first, and from there extend to the social level. The social structures needed in our time will not spontaneously evolve from an intellectual understanding of the TSO. Only threefolding in concert with extended practices of Spirit Recollection can help human beings evolve structures in which egotism is kept at bay.

Threefolding can be rightly seen as the goal, the objective knowledge. The threefold view of the human organism that Steiner

gained in 1917 was a culmination of a new natural spiritual science. Threefolding of the social organism is an equivalent culmination in the social realm, and it was reached soon after the first one, the three-fold view of the human organism. Thereefolding could be defined as the Aristotelian part of the equation in the social realm, the needed scientific component. Carrying the practices of Spirit Recollection into the social realm introduces a more experientially artistic element. Those practices may be called the Platonic dimension of social reality. To transform social reality, both the Aristotelian and the Platonic elements are needed.

We will now look further at the interweaving motifs of Spirit Recollection and threefolding, this time from a historical perspective.

### **History of the Anthroposophical Social Impulse**

Steiner offered another important indication about the nature of the impulse of threefolding. He explained that this impulse is very important for the present; but that other forms, or a wholly different way of looking at the social question, will be needed relatively soon. "Now the demands of our time have made the threefold order necessary. And again there will come a time when the threefold order must be overcome. But this is not the present time, it is the time three to four centuries from now. At that time one will have to think of how to replace it."<sup>(45)</sup> At the turning point of this coming development, the state's importance will recede into the background. The state will be solely the promoter and guarantor of conditions of freedom within the institutions. In the future, social forms will emerge (at the intermediate level, at least) through which groups of people will sustain other people's karma (e. g.: those who have committed a crime). The members of such communities will decide to give up part of their freedom for the interest of the other members. This is because we will feel the despair of our fellow human being's soul as our own. This phenomenon will usher in the development of Manichean Christianity.

The teachings of karma and reincarnation, which were central to Steiner's task, were supposed to follow on the heels of the development of Anthroposophy, which originally had been the task of Schröer. The intersection and conjunction of these two Mysteries form the prelude to the Manichean Mysteries yet to come, which will gain

importance in the next cultural epoch. The practice of Spirit Recollection is central to the development of the Manichean attitude of soul. It remains for us to place the path of Spirit Recollection and threefolding in the larger time perspective of the Manichean Mysteries of the future.

To orient ourselves, we offer here a timeline of the main steps Steiner offered for the social impulse, along with the teachings he gave on karma and reincarnation.

- 1884: presented article, "A Look into Present Time."
- 1898: formulated the "Fundamental Sociological Law" in the *Magazin für Literatur*.
- 1898–1902: underwent the "Ahrimanic temptation" in relation to John Henry Mackay and the social question.
- Fall of 1899 – January 1905: taught at the Workers' University in Berlin.
- Oct 19–20, 1902: gave a lecture entitled "Practical Karma Studies" at the conclusion of sessions inaugurating the German Section of the Theosophical Society.
- 1903: article "*Theosophy and Socialism*" in *Lucifer-Gnosis* advocating that Theosophy had to contribute to healing the social body.
- 1905–1906: published "Theosophy and the Social Question" as articles in *Luzifer-Gnosis*; formulated the Fundamental Social Law.
- 1910–1913: directed performances of the four Mystery Dramas. Gave the lecture cycles *Manifestations of Karma, Reincarnation and Karma, Secrets of the Threshold*, and so forth.
- 1912–1919: offered Spirit Recollection exercises throughout various lecture cycles.
- 1917: wrote Threefolding Memorandum addressed to heads of state.
- 1919: published the "Appeal to the German Nation and the Civilized World," followed with the book *Toward Social Renewal*. Gave public lectures on threefolding.
- 1919: founded the Union for the Threefold Social Order in Germany and in Switzerland; founded the Kommende Tag (the Coming Day) for cultural initiatives, and Futurum Konzern



A. G. for research laboratories; lectured further on the social question.

- 1922: lectured publically on anthroposophy in Germany. This was brought to an end with attempts to Steiner's life in Munich and Elberfeld on May 15 and 17, 1922.
- End of 1923–beginning of 1924: conducted Christmas Foundation Meeting.
- 1924: gave *Karmic Relationships* lecture cycles.

Steiner's immersion in the social question had modest beginnings. To begin with, in his childhood he grew up in a geographical location that was privileged, in a sense. It allowed him to experience the confluence of the German, Hungarian, and Slavic cultures. Steiner's first essay on the social question was an article written in 1884, "A Look into Present Time." From January to July 1888, he was the editor of "The German Weekly." Keeping away from partisan politics, he tried to promote interest toward spiritual renewal. This editorial task felt like a burden to him, and it was a relief when the newspaper went under because of the owner's financial difficulties.<sup>(46)</sup> Around that time, Steiner came to know Victor Adler, the leader of the Austrian Socialist Party, and other socialists. This led Steiner to the study of Marx, Engels, and Rodbertus, but he could not find any bridge to their ideas from a spiritual perspective. However, he fully apprehended the importance of the social question, and perceived all the more the tragedy of the uniquely materialistic perspective that was offered to the working class.<sup>(47)</sup>

Dieter Brüll has studied at length the evolution of the threefold social impulse in Steiner's life and in the development of the Anthroposophical Society. He arrives at the conclusion that while the path of cognition continued as one ongoing stream of revelations, the social impulse flowed intermittently; it disappeared and reappeared at different times in Steiner's life. This phenomenon is equally apparent with the karma impulse, as we have documented in *Rudolf Steiner's Life Tasks*. We will refer to Brüll's work in correlation to what has emerged here about Steiner's teachings on reincarnation and karma.

I first came to intuit the relationship between both impulses through reading a remark Steiner made in 1914; he stated that the teachings of karma had to be discontinued on the eve of World War I.

A few later lectures still brought karma revelations, but they took a minor place, overall.<sup>(48)</sup> What most prominently replaced karma in Steiner's lectures was the first proclamation of the TSO in 1917. Thus, here is a clear instance in which the social impulse moves from its inner underpinnings in the question of karma and reincarnation to the outer ordering it finds in the TSO. On the basis of this first instance, I resorted to following the intertwining of the karma and TSO motifs in Steiner's biography.

Dieter Brüll's research about the gestation of Knowledge of Higher Worlds reveals the following. The contents of the book first appeared as articles published in *Lucifer Gnosis*. There, Steiner described the path of knowledge up to the encounter with the "Greater Guardian." He had planned to continue the series with a much longer book, *Theosophy and the Social Question*. That effort was interrupted because of the lack of interest from the people around him. That path would have been presented in the reverse from the one we know in Knowledge of Higher Worlds, starting with the encounter of the Greater Guardian first, then moving to the encounter with the Lesser Guardian. Note here again that the twin themes of this present book are reverberated in yet another of Steiner's attempts. Knowledge of Higher Worlds would have been rendered complete with the complement of the social path.

*About John Henry Mackay and the Ahrimanic Temptation*

With the publication of *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity: A Philosophy of Freedom*, Steiner wanted to give a form to the impulse of freedom that is so important for the development of the Consciousness Soul. Freedom is a condition that can be lived by all individuals, and by a culture at the same time; that is explicit in Steiner's vision. "To live in love of our action, and to let live in the full understanding of the other's will is the fundamental maxim of free men." Contrary to what he had hoped, the book had little favorable reception. In a lecture dedicated to the history of the book and the impulse of freedom, Steiner showed that in his time in Berlin, neither the people around the *Magazin für Literatur* (bourgeoisie), nor the Workers' University (working class), nor the Theosophists took up the impulse of freedom.

The only ones who took up the challenge of a morality of freedom were Benjamin Tucker and John Henry Mackay, even though their political movement did not follow suit.<sup>(49)</sup> Steiner had met Mackay before leaving Weimar. He was one of the philosophers of humanist anarchy, and had been a follower of Max Stirner, whom Steiner also held in high esteem. Mackay served as witness when Steiner married Anna Eunike in 1899; and with Mackay, Steiner recalled having “spent many an interesting evening.” It was the very same Mackay who introduced Steiner to the Workers’ University, of which more will be said below. Through Mackay and other channels, Steiner immersed himself in the social question from which he had hitherto kept himself aloof.

The *Philosophy of Freedom* primarily lays out the foundations for the redemption of thinking as the tool for the recovery of spiritual perception. Inasmuch as it leads to the formulation of ethical individualism it also concerns social thinking. “If there had been any understanding of the purpose of this book (to lay the foundation of ethical individualism and of social and political life)...the worst possible path that one could follow would be to inveigh against the revolutionary parties, to grumble perpetually and retell anecdotes about Bolshevism.”<sup>(50)</sup>

In the Autobiography, Steiner explained that he underwent an important period of testing from the time he left Weimar in 1897 until the time of presenting the lectures *Christianity as Mystical Fact* in 1902. Stewart C. Easton said that this time in Steiner’s life seems to stand apart from the rest of his life.<sup>(51)</sup> However, if one keeps in mind that this was also the time in which he started teaching at the Workers’ School, then a whole coherent direction is understandable: Steiner may have wanted to play a role in impressing a new direction into social reality. What Steiner told us about the breadth of Mackay’s vision supports this idea. Mackay called for the best in the individual, and therefore sought to create the conditions for a distant future. He saw his own ideas as a spiritual path to be trodden by enough sufficiently developed individuals. “Consequently, his social ideas wished to work only through spiritual means.”<sup>(52)</sup>

Steiner and Mackay reached similar conclusions in the idea of ethical individualism, as they are expressed in *Philosophy of Freedom*. The danger consisted in using the ideas developed in the *Philosophy of*

*Freedom* as the basis for Mackay's political platforms; and that even happened for a time. This is spelled out in the Autobiography, where it is described as a temptation: "But at the time (around 1898) my soul, along with pure ethical individualism, was dragged into a kind of abyss. From being a pure human experience, it was made external. The esoteric was to be diverted into the exoteric."<sup>(53)</sup> And more specifically, "About that time, around 1898, this purely ethical individualism had, as it were, dragged my soul down into an abyss. Something that was purely and intrinsically human was about to become externalized. The esoteric was about to be turned aside into the exoteric." In other words, the temptation came for Steiner to present his ethical individualism as something that could be reached simply through common sense, rather than through inner schooling and spiritual striving.

Easton claims that this temptation came to an end through Steiner's experience in which he beheld the Christ in 1899; that experience enabled him to talk about Christianity for the first time in lectures given to an audience of theosophists. The lectures were later included in *Mysticism at the Dawn of the Modern Age* and *Christianity as Mystical Fact*. Easton's claim is confirmed by Steiner, who said that after writing his first books on Christianity, "ethical individualism again stood, after the test, in its rightful place."

Soon after this pointed incursion into the social question, Steiner made the first attempt at introducing a whole new approach to reincarnation and karma, and the practical exercises, at the inauguration of the German section of the Theosophical Society in 1902. He had little success and had to desist.

#### *Teaching at the Workers' University*

Further steps of the social path were formulated at an important stage of Steiner's life, particularly the time in which he taught at the Workers' University, which was a very significant step for world karma. At that point, Steiner was inserting his efforts at a very nodal point of a world significant question: What will be the fate of the proletariat? Will the workers be able to nourish their souls only from scientific-materialistic Marxism, or can another view of things offer an alternative? Steiner had accepted the invitation to teach, emphasizing that he would be able to offer only his view of things. For the workers, the

teacher had to devise a completely different way of reaching their souls. Steiner experienced firsthand the proletariat's thirst for knowledge, a thirst that usually had been quenched from the most materialistic sources. His work was successful, and at the school's request, it expanded into the teaching of natural science.

Shortly before starting to work at the school in 1899, Steiner had formulated the Fundamental Sociological Law. Such a law already formed an important alternative to capitalistic or Marxist viewpoints. Steiner's courses generated such a response that the number of students went from approximately fifty to two hundred by the second year; and he ended up giving five parallel courses, occupying five evenings of the week. By 1905, he had given more than four hundred courses. In 1900 he had given a talk for the Berlin Society of Printers and Type Founders, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Gutenberg, the inventor of the printing press. Some 7,000 printers and type-setters attended. In Spandau, at a date that it has not been possible to determine historically, Steiner spoke to the workers for over an hour in response to a very materialistic address by Rosa Luxemburg. Her topic had been "Science and the Workers." He began by agreeing with her discourse, stating that science was important; he continued that science could also offer a basis for a spiritual understanding.<sup>(54)</sup>

Although he was popular with the students, Steiner met with ongoing opposition from the party leadership. At a meeting in which all his students participated, he was opposed by only four representatives of the school. All the students supported his presence. The party cadres' reasoning was stated in opposition to Steiner's ethical individualism: "In our party and its schools we place no stock on freedom, only on reasonable constraint." Steiner specified that this happened three years before he was forced to resign, with the leadership using the pretext that he was too busy with his Theosophical pursuits. It is revealing that Steiner considered this important enough to explain it to Schuré in the so-called *Barr Document*.<sup>(55)</sup> This is further confirmed in what he wrote to Marie Steiner "You know that I saw a mission in my activity in these circles. Here something has really been destroyed that I did not want to see destroyed."<sup>(56)</sup>

Steiner's teaching at the Workers' University, as it is mentioned in most of Steiner's biographies, and as it presented itself to this author, at first appears to have been mostly an interesting detour into

some new territory, or a general humanitarian concern. When it is placed in the context of Steiner's stated life task, however, one cannot help but reconsider, and evaluate this commitment in a new light. It seems to have been part and parcel of what he perceived as a necessity of world karma, and something not too distant from the heart of his core mission. The personal investment he carried in the matter of the threefold social order was a natural continuation of this initial impulse, to which we will return shortly. One could argue that Steiner would have hardly had the credentials he needed to later speak to proletarians on various occasions had he not taught at the Worker's University.

It is becoming clearer (in accordance with the conversation he had with Walter Stein), that most, if not all, of Steiner's biographical choices can be understood in relation to one or the other of the two world tasks he was carrying in parallel. "Two forces hold sway in his life. On the one hand, there is all that he took on as his destiny by accepting Schröer's unsolved task as his own. On the other, there is everything that was included in his own destiny. Whoever reads the descriptions in his Autobiography with an awareness of this duality will frequently find references to it." Steiner's teaching at the Workers' University becomes then an important milestone in his life mission.

#### *Elaborating the Threefold Social Order*

The next pivotal step was presented by Steiner's introduction of the Fundamental Social Law in the journal *Luzifer Gnosis* of 1905–06; he developed it further in the years that followed. Note here that it closely follows Steiner's involvement with the Workers' University, and that it must have naturally followed by the maturation of that experience.

The Mystery Plays followed in the years 1910 to 1913. In the same years, he gave the lecture cycles Manifestations of Karma, Reincarnation and Karma, and others. Much of this effort was interrupted by World War I. Steiner indicated that world karma did not allow for further revelations about karma to stream down to humanity at that time. Still, even during the following years, limited efforts appeared. While the karma impulse lay underground, the threefold social order saw its birth shortly after.

Another world turning point was reached in the years of World War I. At the time of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, and the later

publication of Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points," the Ahrimanic social impulse had established itself at the historical level. Steiner had to counter that impulse with the ideas of the TSO. Its first public formulation appeared in the memorandum he offered to the Austrian and German governments.

In 1917 Count Otto Lerchenfeld of the Bavarian State council (and an anthroposophist) approached Steiner asking him what could be done to ensure a lasting peace in Europe. Lerchenfeld was the first to receive from Steiner an outline of his ideas on threefolding in a memorandum. He worked for three weeks with Steiner at addressing these questions of greatest import. On July 10, the count telegraphed an anthroposophist friend of his, Count Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz (brother of the Chief Councilor of the Austrian Emperor). Polzer-Hoditz joined the other two in Berlin, helping them to finish the memorandum in the last week. It was Count Lerchenfeld who asked Steiner to incorporate the main ideas in a memorandum that could be distributed to European leaders. Without being overly optimistic, Steiner responded to the request. Following this effort, on January 20 or 21, 1918, Steiner spoke to Prince Max von Baden about the Threefold Social Order. He was hoping that the prince would have the courage to take up these ideas and present them to the German people in his inaugural speech as Imperial Chancellor of the monarchy. However, von Baden did not, and by his failure to do so, he implicitly accepted Wilson's Fourteen Points.

By 1919 Steiner went entirely public with his social teachings. Having now renounced any effort to work through the agency of government representatives, he wrote the "Appeal to the German Nation and the Civilized World." Even though the Appeal sold more than 80,000 copies, that door too was closed. The Appeal was followed in April 1919 with the book *Toward Social Renewal*, which spelled out the ideas that had already been presented in the Memorandum.

The book *Toward Social Renewal* was read all over Europe, and it was reviewed by the main European newspapers. Even the New York Times and The Journal of Political Economy of the University of Chicago turned their interest to it. This publicity raised increasing opposition, particularly in German nationalistic circles and in the rising Nazi movement. One of the papers that addressed Nazi interests was

the *Volkischer Beobachter*, which in 1921 carried an article against Steiner, written by Adolf Hitler himself.

In the years after the war, Steiner campaigned ceaselessly to make his social ideas known. He had enthusiastic supporters like Emil Molt and Roman Boos, but neither of these men had the experience or sufficient understanding of the matter to be able to lead the movement. So the task fell upon Steiner. He gave a first public lecture on April 22, 1919, and received a very warm response. In the same month he addressed thousands from the Bosch, Delmonte, and Daimler corporations in Stuttgart, in their work councils and workers' committees.<sup>(57)</sup> He stayed in Stuttgart until August with deep dedication to this new task, and speaking to diverse groups ranging from chiefs of industry to unionists. In May the Union for the Threefold Social Order in Germany was founded. The Swiss Union for the TSO was created in Switzerland, headed by Roman Boos. In July, a German periodical was put in circulation to which Steiner contributed more than thirty articles, while Boos opened another one in Switzerland. A last result of Steiner's efforts was the establishment of two corporations intended to generate capital. *Kommende Tag* (the Coming Day) was for cultural initiatives, and *Futurum Konzern A. G.* for research laboratories.

The founding of the *Kommende Tag* took place at the end of the year 1919, and Steiner accepted taking the chairmanship of the Supervisory Board of the share company.<sup>(58)</sup> He did this reluctantly, knowing that it was the only chance for the initiative to succeed. The whole name of the company meant "The Coming Day: a share company for the promotion of economic and spiritual values."

The goal of *Kommende Tag* was to include both economic enterprises and cultural institutions, and bringing the two together in an example of associative cooperation. Those involved in the work of the single initiatives were to keep themselves informed about both economic and cultural ends, so that they could experience the whole. The profits from the businesses would not work as they do in the market economy – benefit the owners, finance expansion of the same enterprise, or fund new, similar initiatives – but sustain scientific and medical research. This research in turn was meant to benefit existing or projected new economic initiatives. The institution counted a Clinical Therapeutic Institute, a publishing company for Steiner's *Threefold Social Order* and the work of Goethean scientists, Del Monte Box Fac-



tory, a book bindery, a small mop factory, a fruit juice and essence enterprise, a chemical factory in Schwabisch Gmund, and the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette factory. The Kommende Tag had also instituted its own insurance office in Stuttgart. Among the research projects conducted were, at diverse stages of development: optical investigations, study of peat fibers for use in the textile industry, production of plant dyes.

Unfortunately, the initiative was liquidated in January of 1925. Though it failed, in the years of its existence the Kommende Tag had been of vital importance and support to the Stuttgart Waldorf School. The Swiss Futurum AG, which had been founded in June of 1920 with similar intentions to Kommende Tag, also failed. However, it helped to set up the pharmaceutical corporation Weleda A. G., which survives to this day.

Despite these various efforts, very few, even within his circles, understood what Steiner intended to bring to birth. In regard to Kommende Tag, the most important anthroposophic initiative, he commented: “numerous misunderstandings were brought about during the years when we were promoting the idea of the threefold social order....The impression was frequently given that anthroposophy wanted to become involved in the political affairs of the world—something that has never been, and never can be the case—because many of our friends approached the political parties regarding the threefold idea. This was an error on their part, right from the start.”<sup>(59)</sup>

Outside opposition mounted too. Once again Steiner found powerful adversaries in the stream of Marxist thinking, just as he had at the Berlin Workers' University. The leaders began to bar their members from attending Steiner's lectures, fearing Steiner as a threat to their political aims. Still, Steiner managed to have some effect among them, and to encourage the formation of economic associations, supported both by management and labor. The principle of these associations was to better provide for the needs of their workers, and to create extra capital for cultural initiatives, especially in education. Relatively soon it was understood that the movement would not bring the expected results; energy was then directed mostly to organizing a small number of industry associations, and in forming Cultural Councils. None of these survived for long, except what came out of Emil Molt's initiative at his Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory.

The decision to found the Waldorf School was made by April 1919. Steiner had lectured to the workers in Emil Molt's factory, and they had asked how they could grow, and move out of their current cultural deprivation. Steiner acceded to their requests, and the workers responded with enthusiasm to the idea of a new kind of school, and so did Molt. Steiner played the role of "guide and spiritual adviser" of the initial school, which was intended for the one hundred and fifty children of the workers, plus about fifty children of Stuttgart anthroposophists. The opening was planned for September 1919. In the same period, Steiner offered the lectures on *Education as a Social Problem*, in which he underscored the necessity of a free cultural life. The school provided a first example in Germany, and in the world, of a completely free cultural endeavor in education—free from both State and business dictates. Here, once more, Steiner picked up the thread and renewed the inner commitment he had assumed when he taught at the Workers' University.

Steiner's public visibility reached a peak in 1922, when the Wolff concert agency organized his lecture tours in Germany. In many places, even the largest auditoriums were not able to fit the crowds that came to hear him. When he went to lecture in Berlin, the police had to intervene and cordon off the street that led to the philharmonic concert hall. Steiner was looked upon as a prophet, but he did nothing to incite sensationalism or sway people to his ideas. On the contrary, some thought he bored his audience. In reality, he was speaking to the few who could understand him, in order to awaken them. Little by little audiences decreased in number, but opposition mounted to his deeply Christian message. Eventually there was violent organized opposition to Steiner's activity in Munich and Elberfeld on May 15 and 17, 1922. On both occasions, Steiner was lecturing on "Anthroposophy and Spiritual Knowledge," and there were attempts on his life. Both times he was obliged to exit through back streets. At that point, the Wolff agency realized it was no longer able to ensure Steiner's safety. The events of 1922 directly set the stage for a culmination in the burning of the Goetheanum; that was also the time in which inflation reached a peak in Germany. About the failure of his public attempts with the TSO Steiner reputedly said: "I knew that mankind was not yet ripe for this, but it had to be tried because I might have been mistaken."<sup>(60)</sup> This

book has explored some aspects of the matter. The lack of readiness may be due in part to the blotting out of Kaspar Hauser's task, and Schröer's failure in fulfilling his own life task. In effect, most people were coming to threefolding with no ground under their feet, so to speak, and that explains why Steiner took it upon himself to personally direct most of the work.

After the Christmas Foundation Meeting, Steiner's emphasis on threefolding receded, and the teachings of karma and reincarnation gained full strength. This time, through karma and reincarnation, the impulse of Spirit Recollection threw light on the fate of the Michaelic movement as a whole and on world history. In this light, the necessity of the threefold social order acquires greater meaning. Threefolding is the Michaelic alternative to the Ahrimanic unitarian state.

### **Threefolding, Spirit Recollection, and Manicheanism**

As we have seen, the TSO remains key to the social question, and will continue to do so for a few centuries to come. It is barely in its infancy at present, and this partly explains the difficulties experienced even by those deeply committed to its realization. The impulse of Spirit Recollection will continue further into the future. And the Manichean Mysteries will enter in full strength in the next cultural epoch. Social threefolding is the natural development which followed Steiner's 1917 discovery of the threefoldness of the human body. It can be considered the Aristotelian part of the understanding of the social question, its basis in knowledge. The path of Spirit Recollection lays the foundation for being social, for apprehending the other human being in freedom, in imagination. It can be seen as the Platonic counterpart to Aristotelian threefolding. The themes of social threefolding and the exercises of Spirit Recollection reappear as a constant motif in Steiner's later years. They also lead us to a recognition of the forces of destiny at play in our lives.

Spirit Recollection and TSO will form the preambles of the future social question in the future Manichean Mysteries. These Mysteries can only be touched upon in the present, not fully unveiled.<sup>(61)</sup> Suffice to say here, that a time will come, relatively soon, in which human beings will be able to forego the role of the state in favor of a lawfulness deriving from awakened human relationships. That is the future

of which the economic associations form the prelude. “How can companionship become real? By associating, by truly uniting with the other person, by no longer fighting people with different interests but instead combining these different interests. Associations are the living embodiment of companionship.”<sup>(62)</sup> In the same lecture Steiner traces the realization of this possibility to the approaching Christ in the etheric “Human beings will only come to this if they let the Christ, who is now approaching in the ether, enter into their hearts and minds and souls.”

Reviewing what we have just explored we can sense a line of development from Schröer to Steiner and beyond. Schröer was supposed to reawaken the new Aristotelianism. His was the task of bringing what Goethe had achieved in his time to the next evolutionary stage. Goethe had announced the way but he had been unable to reflect on what he had done and to tell others how to do it. This is what corresponds to the task of elevating Goetheanism to a spiritual-scientific understanding of the world. And this is what Steiner did for humanity when Schröer failed at his task. The path of individual development that takes its departure from the transformation of thinking through the will, needs to be continued and complemented with the path of social development, in which we transform the impulses of our will through thinking. The strengthened ego attained from the first path can now offer a sacrifice of consciousness in Spirit Recollection, the new Platonism. This is what Steiner was meant to achieve in two ways: through the reintroduction of the esoteric teachings of karma and reincarnation in modern culture—leading to Spirit Recollection—and through the articulation of the threefold membering of the social order. All of this also gives a plausible explanation for the amount of energy that Steiner personally invested in the realization of both goals in the last years of his life; and it explains why they were so closely interwoven. The two Mysteries together are essential in light of the preparation of the sixth cultural epoch.

In the Manichean Mysteries of the next cultural epoch, being “social” will be natural for the part of humanity that follows a rightful development. The next age, the “Philadelphian” sixth cultural epoch, is also called the “Social Age.” The Spirit Self will enter, not only in a few, highly developed individuals, but in the whole of the portion of humanity who will have followed a normal development. The act of

being social corresponds to a sacrifice of consciousness. Likewise the whole of Christ's fifth sacrifice of the present, which Steiner called a Manichean sacrifice, is a sacrifice of consciousness.

The reappearance of the Christ in the etheric in our time forms a prelude to the growing importance of the Manichean Mysteries in their first manifestations. Christ died in the etheric sphere, through the influence of materialism and the impenetrable region of darkness it had formed around the earth by the last third of the nineteenth century. This darkness would have artificially preserved the Kali Yuga beyond its time. Christ received within his being the "black sphere of materialism" in his Manichean sacrifice, in order to transform it. It was His second crucifixion. Humanity experienced a resurrection of consciousness starting in the twentieth century; therefore, a growing number of people are presently able to experience His presence in varying degrees. Prokofieff's studies on the occult significance of forgiveness lead him to believe that the path of forgiveness is the most direct path toward experiencing the forces of the etheric Christ, and bestowing their effects into modern culture. The transformation of the laws of karma through forgiveness, and of evil into good, are united in the new Christ experience. Threefolding and the practice of Spirit Recollection will lead us in the future towards the new Philadelphia of the Sixth cultural age.



# NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1) Rudolf Steiner, *The Challenge of the Times*, Social and Anti-social Forces in the Human Being,” December 6, 1918 lecture.
- 2) Ibid, December 7, 1918 lecture.
- 3) Steiner, *Earthly Death and Cosmic Life*, “The Cosmic Thoughts and Our Dead,” March 5, 1918 lecture.
- 4) Steiner, *Inner Aspect of the Social Question*, February 4, 1919 lecture, and “Social and Anti-social Forces in the Human Being,” December 6, 1918 lecture.
- 5) Steiner, *Karma and Reincarnation*, January 30, 1912 lecture. See also: January 29, 1912 and February 8, 1912 lectures in *Esoteric Christianity and the Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz*.
- 6) Steiner, *Karmic Relationships*, volume 2, May 9, 1924 lecture.
- 7) Valentin Tomberg, *Studies on the Foundation Stone Meditation*, 1936, 5-6.
- 8) Karl König, *The Foundation Stone, Contributions by Karl König*, lecture of Newton Dee, September 29, 1957.
- 9) Steiner, *Karmic Relationships*, volume 4, September 16, 1924 lecture.
- 10) Steiner, *Materialism and the Task of Anthroposophy*, April 30, 1921 lecture.
- 11) Steiner, *The Mission of Folk-Souls in Connection with Germanic-Scandinavian Mythology*, of June 12, 1910 lecture.

- 12) Steiner, *Destinies of Individuals and of Nations*, January 19, 1915 lecture.
- 13) Steiner, *The Mission of Folk-Souls in Connection with Germanic-Scandinavian Mythology*, June 16, 1910 lecture.
- 14) Ibid.
- 15) Ibid.
- 16) Emil Bock, *The Life and Times of Rudolf Steiner: Volume 1: People and Places*.
- 17) Steiner speaks of Goethe's working out of a Platonic Spirit at a time when the Rosicrucian stream was coming to an end, and was working more through the feelings than through thinking. In the life between death and rebirth, Goethe had absorbed from the Jupiter-sphere the transformed essence of what he had absorbed from Platonic philosophy. He evolved it further, and it permeated everything that Goethe undertook in his life. (*Karmic Relationships*, volume 4, September 23, 1924 lecture). In *Karmic Relationships*, volume 2, lecture of April 26, 1924 Steiner refers to two students of Plato, closely connected to each other. One tended not to incarnate fully; the other had anti-social and solitary tendencies. The first, Holderlin, returned to his body a little too early, because of not having built enough earthly strength in an earlier life, to live in his body. The second, Hamerling, reincarnated somewhat late because he was too deeply connected to his body. Finally, speaking about Schelling, Steiner said, "Then we see almost a kind of Platonism springing up in Schelling's soul. He writes a philosophic dialogue which is truly reminiscent of Plato's dialogues, and deeply penetrating." He also writes the *Philosophy of Revelation* (*Karmic Relationships*, volume 4, Sept 16, 1924 lecture).
- 18) Bock, *The Life and Times of Rudolf Steiner*, volume 1, 99.



- 19) Peter Tradowski, *Kaspar Hauser: The Struggle for the Spirit; A Contribution Towards an Understanding of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 107. The conversations referred to are those of November 1916, and March 3, 1925.
- 20) *Kaspar Hauser und das schicksal Mitteleuropas im 19 jahrhundert*, Karl Heyer (Stuttgart: Kressbroun, 1958), quoted in Tradowski, *Kaspar Hauser*, p. 64.
- 21) Sergei Prokofieff, *May Human Beings Hear It*, 711.
- 22) Tradowski, *Kaspar Hauser*, 108, 155.
- 23) Ibid, 108. The theme of the convergence of Jesuits and Weterm Lodges is treated in Steiner, *Karma of Untruthfulness*, volumes 1 and 2.
- 24) From Karl Heyer, *Kaspar Hauser und das schicksal Mitteleuropas im 19 jahrhundert*, quoted in Tradowski, *Kaspar Hauser*, 66.
- 25) In answer to Countess Keyserlingk, Steiner said he had not been able to find either previous or later incarnations of Kaspar Hauser, (*Koberwitz 1924, Countess Johanna von Keyserlingk*, published by Count Adalbert von Keyserlingk, part I) quoted in Tradowski, *Kaspar Hauser*, 255.
- 26) Steiner, *Esoteric Christianity and the Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz*, September 27, 1911 lecture.
- 27) Steiner, *Materialism and the Task of Anthroposophy*, April 30, 1921 lecture.
- 28) Ibid, April 30, 1921 lecture.
- 29) Steiner, *The Cosmic New Year*, Jan 1, 1920 lecture.

- 30) Steiner, *Materialism and the Task of Anthroposophy*, April 30, 1921 lecture.
- 31) Steiner, *The Mission of Folk-Souls in Connection with Germanic-Scandinavian Mythology*, June 17, 1910 lecture.
- 32) Steiner, *Inner Aspect of the Social Question*, March 9, 1919 lecture (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1974).
- 33) Steiner, *World Economy*, July 24, 1922 lecture.
- 34) Steiner, *Spiritual Science, Christianity, and the Future of Mankind*, March, 23, 1923 and June 17, 1908 lectures.
- 35) Recorded conversations with Polzer-Hoditz in 1916 and 1925 in Tradowski, *Kaspar Hauser*, 74 and 107.
- 36) Steiner, *A Western Approach to Reincarnation and Karma; Selected Lectures and Writings by Rudolf Steiner*, February 21, 1912 lecture.
- 37) March 9, 1922 lecture, not translated, quoted in Dieter Brüll, *The Mysteries of Social Encounters*, 87.
- 38) Brüll, *The Mysteries of Social Encounters*, and Harry Salman, *The Social World as Mystery Center: The Social Vision of Anthroposophy*.
- 39) Steiner, *Articles on Contemporary Culture (1887-1901)*, not translated, GA 31.
- 40) Steiner, *Spiritual Science and the Social Question: 3rd essay*, originally published in *Lucifer-Gnosis* 1905-1906, translated by E. Bowen-Wedgwood.
- 41) Ibid.
- 42) Ibid.

- 43) GA 338, *How Does One Work for the Threefold Social Organism*, cycle of lectures not translated, quoted in Peter Selg, *The Fundamental Social Law: Rudolf Steiner on the Work of the Individual and the Spirit of Community*, 47
- 44) Steiner, *Challenge of the Times* quoted in Selg, *The Fundamental Social Law*, 47.
- 45) Steiner, GA 192, not translated, quoted in Brüll, *The Mysteries of Social Encounters*.
- 46) Steiner, *Autobiography*, chapter 22.
- 47) Ibid., p. 101.
- 48) Examples of these are the *Karma of Untruthfulness, Destinies of Individuals and of Nations, Karma of Vocation*.
- 49) Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality*, October 27, 1918 lecture.
- 50) Ibid.
- 51) Stewart C. Easton, *Rudolf Steiner, Herald of a New Epoch*, 90-91.
- 52) Steiner, *Autobiography*, chapter 58.
- 53) Ibid. In a letter to Mackay dated of September 30, 1898 we can have an idea of how close Steiner felt to the views of Mackay. "For I have the conviction that we agree, with respect to our views, every bit as far as two natures fully independent of one another can agree. We have the same goals, even though we have worked our way through to our world of thought on quite different paths." And further "I myself have no need to name my way of thinking with a customary word. If, however, I were to say, in the sense in which such things can be decided, whether the term 'individualist anarchist' is applicable to me, I would have to answer with an unconditional 'Yes.'" (Source: *Magazin für Litera-*

*tur* 30 September 1898; Translation according to text in volume 31 of the Complete Edition D H Revised February 2007).

- 54) Steiner, *From Symptom to Reality*, October 27, 1918 lecture.
- 55) Steiner, *Notes for Edouard Schure in Barr, Alsace* ("Barr Document"), September 1907, typescript.
- 56) Correspondence and Documents: 1901-1925 (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 2003) quoted in Selg, *The Fundamental Social Law*, 13.
- 57) Johannes Hemleben, *Rudolf Steiner: A Rudimentary Biography*, 117.
- 58) Christopher Houghton Budd, "A Brief History of 'Der Kom-mende Tag'" in *Articles and Essays by and about Rudolf Steiner Economist*.
- 59) Steiner, *The Christmas Conference for the Foundation of the General Anthroposophical Society 1923/24*, 59.
- 60) Brüll, *The Mysteries of Social Encounters*, 290.
- 61) Steiner, *Building Stones for an Understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha*, April 19, 1917 lecture.
- 62) Steiner, *Polarities in the Evolution of Mankind*, November 22, 1920 lecture.



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