

Appendix 32

Excarnation, Incarnation and Initiation in the Calendar of the Soul

The Calendar of the Soul is a whole world of its own, which contains much of what spiritual science brings forth. It does so in a deeply rhythmic and artistic fashion. We can find ever anew interpenetrating and interweaving layers of meaning when we apprehend it as a whole. In this essay I will look at the Calendar as a path from the life between death and rebirth to incarnation and consciously undertaken initiation, that will take us from Easter to Michaelmas, and from Michaelmas back to Easter.

On one hand the time from Easter to Michaelmas retraces the past of human/cosmic evolution; from Michaelmas to Easter we glimpse the next steps of human evolution, the first of which can be trodden in the present. In a similar way the journey between Easter and Michaelmas mirrors the life between death and rebirth, whereas from Michaelmas to Easter the human being first incarnates, then walks the path of initiation on Earth. Since this is a circular/spiraling process and we will start from Easter, we will have to assume at first part of what will be explored and sustained in the second part of this article.

Announcing the theme that will be looked at in more depth, spring and summer mirror the movement of expansion into the cosmic spheres, which takes place after death. The movement is reversed, but in a way that cannot be anticipated intellectually in the fall, just before Michaelmas. Around this time starts the human being's call to "Know Thyself" and stand at the abyss of existence in order to strengthen the forces of the soul, cross the threshold and attain the birth of the Higher Self.

The Path of Excarnation through the Planetary Spheres

If the time of Easter marks an echo of the human being's journey after death, we need to bear in mind that Steiner discovered, even with some surprise, that only the spiritual treasures we have gathered on Earth will allow us to recognize what meets us as spiritual reality on the other side of the threshold of existence. A soul that was only at home in materialistic pursuits and worldviews will feel like a stranger in the new environment. It will not be able to retain consciousness and will act a little like a sleep-walker, not recognizing the spiritual beings around him.

What the Calendar of the Soul offers as possibilities of soul development, therefore, implies a connection to the Christ impulse as a prerequisite to all that is expressed in verses 1 to 20 (mid-autumn) or 1 to 26 (Michaelmas). On the other hand, the prerequisites have been set in the Calendar itself, during fall and winter, recognizable in many ways, most of all in the emblematic expression of the spirit birth—the birth of the higher Self in the soul of verses 44-45 (first half of February).

Embarking on this exploration needs a word of caution. We will not find in the Calendar an exact mapping of the journey of the soul after death; rather the main steps and gestures of the metamorphoses the soul undergoes after death. In fact these stages will not be separated by clear boundaries, rather they form overlapping continuums. We will start from Easter.

Verse 1 (Easter)

When out of world-wide spaces
The sun speaks to the human mind,
And gladness from the depths of soul
Becomes, in seeing, one with light,
Then rising from the sheath of self,
Thoughts soar to distances of space
And dimly bind
The human being to the spirit's life.¹

The verses preceding Easter have shown us the expansive character of the power of thinking. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of the winter time is what makes possible a new participation of the human being in the order of the cosmos. It is thinking in its greatest expansion (“thoughts soar to distances of space”) that allows its reconnection to its cosmic counterpart. What has become thinking in the human being after birth, with all its subsequent limitations, has its origin in the cosmic formative forces. The spiritualized thinking of the Tree of Knowledge—attained through fall and winter—reconnects us to the Tree of Life, even if not fully consciously (“*dimly bind* the human being to the spirit's life”).

Verse 2

Out in the sense-world's glory
The power of thought gives up

¹ For the rest of this exploration the verses used are those of the Ruth and Hans Pusch translation.

its separate being,
And spirit worlds discover
Again their human offspring,
Who germinates in them
But in itself must find
The fruit of soul.

In this verse we are led to understand what happens immediately after death to the human soul. At that time, in effect, "Out in the sense world's glory the power of thinking loses self-confines," in what corresponds to the forming of the "life tableau."

With the crossing of the threshold "... the whole thought-world that the human being has gathered to himself between birth and death becomes an objective world."² The soul perceives the panorama of its thoughts just as in the sense world it saw objects in its field of perception. Thoughts acquire an independent existence. The life tableau progresses and expands over the space of a few days, three in average, and our thought world expands into far-removed spiritual regions.

At Easter the maximum extension and sacrifice of the power of thinking allows the soul to resurrect and expand in the sphere of cosmic life, the Biblical Tree of Life, corresponding to the life ether and tone ether. The Easter resurrection that happens automatically in Nature can only happen to the enlivened human being who has experienced to some degree the reality of the winter's "spirit birth" (verses 44 and 45).

Verse 2 tells us that the soul germinates into spirit worlds, but cannot lose itself in them. It must find its own inner orientation and strength.

Verse 3

Thus to the World-All speaks,
In self-forgetfulness
And mindful of its primal state,
The growing human I:
In you, if I can free myself
From fetters of my selfhood,
I fathom my essential being.

The soul now grows into the consciousness of the spiritual world as the verse aptly indicates with the self-forgetfulness and mindfulness of "its primal state" experienced in the "World-All." The World-All refers to what

² Rudolf Steiner, *Life between Death and Rebirth*, March 19, 1914.

was still known in the Mysteries as the all encompassing activity of the cosmic Word.³ This condition of union with the spirit world was strongest in the state of the human soul at the time preceding the Fall, but it lacked self-consciousness. In its journey after death the soul anticipates the feeling of bliss in which it will partake when it crosses over into the sphere of the Sun.

Just as it does in spring, the soul after death wants to free itself of the fetters inherited from earthly life. After death, upon entering the Moon sphere, we undertake a process of moral purification, bringing back to the soul the experiences of pain we have caused to other human beings. This is a process of transformation of antipathy forces into forces of sympathy, and a further refinement of the latter. Before leaving the Moon sphere, the individual soul unites with the soul world. The whole process of purification is called "Kamaloca" in occult traditions. The catharsis implied in this period is found in the Calendar in the expression "fetters on my selfhood" already present in verse 3, and then the various shades of it in verses 5, 6 and 9 ("narrow selfhood's inner power", "narrow limits", "narrow will of self"). In the Calendar the feeling of purification/catharsis of the Moon sphere, alternates with that of expansion and bliss of the Sun sphere, until the latter prevails (e.g. verses 11 and 12).

In the later part of the spring the soul fully expands, not only into the sphere of cosmic life, but also into the spheres of cosmic light and later cosmic warmth. In the middle passage through the summer it will cross the gate of the Sun and enter into the pure spiritual sphere. In so doing the soul basks in the ethers, freed from the weight of earthly existence.

In the Sun sphere we gain a perception of the spiritual nature of the Self. We become a spirit in the realm of spirits. This is already foreseen in verses 6 (Ascension) and 7 (first "There has arisen from its narrow limits my Self ... as revelation of all worlds", then "My Self is threatening to fly forth"). The spirit world surrounding us desires union with our soul (verse 8 of Whitsun) and to this end the progression in the spiritual world, past the gates of the Sun, needs to happen through our letting go of the "narrow will of Self."

The expansion we experience after death goes hand in hand with our leaving behind our physical thinking, feeling and willing before reaching the threshold to the spiritual world proper. Only the love we have devoted to spiritual reality can accompany us to the other side.

³ See for example lecture of 8 September 1924 in *The Book of Revelation and the Work of the Priest*.

Human thinking, feeling and will surrender themselves to the cosmos during late spring and early summer in order to meet their cosmic counterparts, the ones that lessons 12 and 13 of the First Class of the School of Spiritual Science call the "field of thinking", the "field of feeling" and the "field of willing" that we meet in initiation after crossing the threshold, or after death. These are connected respectively to the First, Second and Third Hierarchies.

Thinking, dispersing itself in the periphery (verses 2, 7 and 8) returns as "cosmic thinking" in verse 14, expressly linked to our human thinking:

Surrendering to senses' revelation

I lost the drive of my own being,

And dreamlike thinking seemed

To daze and rob me of myself.

Yet quickening there draws near

In sense appearance cosmic thinking.

Feeling relates us to the otherworldly "beauty of the world" that we can divine behind the maya of sense appearances in verse 11 ("surrender to the beauty of the world" to be "be stirred with new-enlivened feeling.") in verse 12 ("radiant beauty of the world") and most of all in verse 15 ("I feel enchanted weaving of spirit within outer glory").

The will is what transforms the "narrow selfhood inner power" (verse 5), the "narrow limits [of Self]" (verse 6), or the "narrow will of Self" (verse 9) in such a way that the human I can come to experience the cosmic I. This is most of all expressed in verse 11:

In this the sun's high hour it rests

With you to understand these words of wisdom:

Surrendered to the beauty of the world,

Be stirred with new-enlivened feeling;

The human I can lose itself

And find itself within the cosmic I.

The sphere of the Christ/cosmic I forms the prelude to the realm of the creative principle of the cosmic Word, the Logos, most strongly of all in verses 17 in which it speaks to the soul, and in verse 18 in which the soul expresses the yearning to unite with it.

In the Sun sphere the soul meets with the Christ Sun forces and enters a realm of pure moral relationships. It has left behind its karmic baggage, the consequences of all evil deeds in its life on earth, everything that was connected with its lower nature. This translates into a feeling of bliss.

In the next spheres, those of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, the human spirit connects with deeper intentions and sets goals for future life on Earth. Here the reality of the Higher Self becomes something more, it becomes

knowledge of the entity that goes from one incarnation to the next. This inkling of the higher Self is brought a step deeper in the immersion in the realm of the cosmic Word, in approaching the cosmic Midnight at the limit of the planetary spheres.

The realm of cosmic Word takes us roughly from verses 10 to 17 and 18. At first it is dimly felt, as in the words "you shall in future know: a godly being now has touched you." (verse 10) Gradually this exalted presence calls us to "take wing from myself and trustingly to seek myself in cosmic light and cosmic warmth" (verse 12 of Saint John). This thrust becomes a step more conscious in verse 13: "There flames up deep within my soul out of the spirit's fiery worlds the gods' own word of truth." The ego freed of its lower nature can touch its eternal essence at the Midnight Hour, whose reflection on Earth we sense at Mid-Summer. The cosmic Word finally speaks to the soul more fully in verse 17 (August 4-10): "Thus speaks the cosmic Word that I by grace through senses' portals have led into my innermost soul." This is the realm we cannot experience in full consciousness but in "dullness of the senses." From it we receive the strength, "which in its narrow bounds my I is powerless to give itself" (verse 15).

The soul feels spurred to exert strong activity to find the strength to fashion itself worthily "as fitting raiment for the spirit" (verse 18). The experience of the cosmic Midnight, past the sphere of Saturn, does in effect require an extraordinary effort on the part of the soul that tends to traverse it in a dimmed state of consciousness, which is something also expressed in verse 15 ("in dullness of the senses [the enchanted weaving of spirit within outer glory] has enwrapt myself). The resolve created at this time comes from seeing the abyss between the perfection of spirit worlds and shortcomings of individual incarnations. We are offered insights into future human evolution, which set in motion forces of the will. The contrast between the potential and the actual strengthens resolve to do better in the coming incarnation.

The expansion into higher spiritual realms is gradually interwoven with the movement of descent to incarnation in a couple of ways. We find it in the themes of intensification of the will, which prepares us for the earthly settings of our choice, and a tendency to forget the experience of the spiritual world.

In verse 15 the "enchanted weaving" prepares us for the movement of descent toward the physical world and in verse 17 cosmic Word speaks to the soul enjoining it to remember its origin once in incarnation. Verses 17

to 19 echo the movement of preparation of the soul for its earthly incarnation. The soul can carry into incarnation a faint memory of the cosmic Word's "wide world horizons" Then it can fashion its earthly bodily sheaths "as fitting raiment for the spirit" (verse 18). In verse 19 is "encompassed with memory" the richness of the experience in the world after death in preparation for the earthly journey. These are the experiences the soul will tend to forget once in its earthly garments.

In our journey of return we pass through the Sun sphere again, where the soul takes on the earthly karmic burdens it left in its movement of ascension to spirit realms.

The Path toward Incarnation

During the descent journey we re-experience the pain and sorrow of our previous life. These feelings permeate our soul and generate new will forces and an intense longing to reincarnate. In this we strive to carry into incarnation the intentions generated during the cosmic Midnight through the cosmic Word (verses 17 and 18).

As we approach the Earth via the inner planets, a profound metamorphosis of consciousness takes place. The soul separates more and more from the creative beings and forces of the spiritual world. The whole is brought to a close with an effort of recollection, similar to what is expressed in verse 19: "In secret to encompass now with memory what I've newly got" that will give strength to the ego on Earth: "selfhood's forces shall be awakened from within." The soul tries to hold on to its pre-birth intentions, even though it knows they will go through a blotting out and will need a reawakening. At last, even memory of the spiritual world recedes first at birth, and then more fully after the threshold of the third year.

The individual starts to feel like a separate Self, isolated from the surrounding world, alienated from the cosmos. The soul returns to experience sympathy or antipathy toward its surroundings and thus goes through the inner planetary spheres in a strongly individual fashion.

With verse 20 we are moving to the threshold of incarnation in which we are called to unite "with the world's existence" and to "build on its foundation." This verse marks the descent of the soul to a new incarnation. To this end, in the last stages of its descent the soul has developed a deep interest in the circumstances of its future earthly life, from decades to centuries before birth. At last these, or many of these, are confirmed at birth.

Verse 20 marks the transition into a new task for the human being. After tending to the gifts received from the spiritual world it will turn to the growth of the Self and the needs of Earth. Verse 21 shows with surprise the soul's awakening to selfhood.

I feel strange power, bearing fruit
And gaining strength to give myself to me.
I sense the seed maturing
And expectation, light-filled, weaving
Within me on my selfhood's power.

In the same verse the Self is experienced as something new, a "strange power" but then also recognized for what it is (Selfhood's power) and celebrated therefore with keen expectation. This lays the foundations for the conscious undertaking of the path of self-knowledge in the coming three verses.

Verse 24 will mark the transition between just living on Earth with an obscured memory of our spiritual origin, or reconnecting to our pre-birth intentions through a consciously undertaken path of spiritual development. We could say that verses 20 to 23 mark the time of growth as citizens of Earth before we can consciously return to becoming citizens of the cosmos.

Verses 21 to 23 mark the steps of life on Earth previous to the conscious decision to cultivate self-knowledge. Two movements overlap: the extinction of the light and the emergence of selfhood. The light gradually withdraws from the external world (most of all in 23 where it "is dulled by hazy veils of mist") and is starting to be felt as a light within ("light of soul" in 22). In the same way the light of our conscious spiritual awareness is progressively dimmed in the spiritual world by the desire to turn to life on Earth and the conditions of our coming incarnation.

The gradual emergence of consciousness of Self becomes "selfhood power" in 21 and a call to the human Self born out of the "Self of worlds" in verse 22. Verse 23 points to the mid-life point in which the gifts of the spirit retreat and the human being can decide whether or not to live from the light that she has generate within, "the summer" that "has given itself to me." This puts us on the threshold of an important decision. We have exhausted our spirit inheritance from before birth, as it were. The only alternative to a further descent into matter is a path of initiation.

The Path of initiation

The call to self-cognition (Selbsterkenntnis) is first heard in verse 24.

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

In the preceding verses the light has retreated from Nature (23) and has become light of soul (22). Now the soul becomes aware of the Self and of its inner darkness. In verse 24 the call to Self-cognition—"Oh Man Know Thyself"—of the Mysteries resounds as a call to transform thinking and will, which in their original, given condition cannot penetrate beyond the thresholds of space and time.

Verse 25

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

Just as we do in the first steps of self-knowledge, the soul has to realize that the vastness of space and the stream of time cannot offer an answer to its yearning. The strength of the power of thinking and of the senses can do nothing to dispel this reality. It is only the light of soul inherited from the summer/spiritual world that can lead us further into our own path of self-knowledge at the meeting with our personal abyss. The coming darkness of the fall is mirrored in the darkness experienced by the soul in the realm of Earth. But it is also through the cognition activity of the human I that the "cosmic spirit" itself can cognize itself (verse 24).

In the next stages the Michaelic will (verse 26), aiming at the attainment of a fuller sense of Self, allows the soul to build the armor and find the courage to steel itself and be guided into the darkness of space and time and the emptiness of modern external culture. The aspiration to a "sense of Self" forms an important milestone, as we will see shortly.

Verse 26

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

To the earnest dedication to self-knowledge expressed in verse 26 follows in verse 27 an immediate confirmation of its object of yearning. The Self emerges as "gift of summer sun, a seed that warming lives in autumn mood as germinating force of soul."

Verses 28 to 30 mark the ascent of the power of thinking; this is announced together with its sunlike qualities: the "radiance of my thought" (28), the "spark of thinking" (29) and "the ripened fruits of thinking" thriving "in the sunlight of my soul" (30). In these verses thinking and will grow in parallel. The latter manifests at first as "the wishes ... lamed by hope" (28)⁴, then as "the cosmic spirit's fount of strength" (29) or "the autumn's spirit-waking" (30).

While these themes continue, in the interval 30 to 33 they are intertwined with the emergence of feeling. The growth of the soul is articulated around the differentiation and integration of its forces. Feeling accompanies the growth of the Self as "self-awareness certitude" in verse 30, then the will in 31 ("I feel my own force") and offers a new relationship with the macrocosm ("I feel at last the world's reality") in verse 33, worth quoting in full:

I feel at last the world's reality
Which, lacking the communion of my soul,
Would in itself be frosty, empty life,
And showing itself powerless
To recreate itself in souls,
Would in itself find only death.

The readiness expressed in verse 32 lets us perceive the call of the world to the human being. It is no longer just the need to connect to the world and the cosmos of the previous threshold verse 20. Rather, the human being can take the resolve of assuming an active role in the process of world evolution. She can become an active partner with the hierarchies.

⁴ The translation "lamed by hope" is problematic. Other translations differ significantly, such as the one by John Riedel, which says: "Whose wings of hope were clipped before."

The Self now takes on a new, qualitative step at the turning point of the winter season (verse 33 of cross 7).

Two steps form the prelude to the next important transformations of the meeting with cosmic Word; they concern the Self and the transformation of the soul forces. The Self comes closer not just to an aspiration (as in verse 26), but to a realization of the "sense of Self." With this the soul strengthens a sense of belonging to the macrocosm called forth in verse 33. In feeling it partakes of a larger, "true existence" (verse 34), and senses its belonging to the higher Self of humanity, the cosmic Self (verse 35).

The sense of Self forms an important milestone and it is the springboard to the attainment of the "spirit birth." The soul comes at first to realize a new presence, something like a second being within, first of all in the realm of feeling. It feels naturally drawn to survey the whole of earthly life. In so doing it comes to the unequivocal conviction that a higher being is the architect of its biography, that our earthly ego is but a reflection of this higher being. In Steiner's words "This *feeling* is, in fact, the first step toward beholding the spiritual being of the soul. And if it leads to nothing, it is because we rest satisfied with the beginning only. This beginning may be a scarcely perceptible *dull sensation*. It may remain so perhaps for a long time. But if we strongly and energetically pursue the course which has led us up to this beginning, we shall at last arrive at beholding the soul as a spiritual being" (emphasis added).⁵

In the verses that follow we will witness an enhancement of the transformation of thinking, feeling and will, starting with the meeting with cosmic Word in verses 36 to 40, spanning from the second half of Advent to Epiphany. The voice of cosmic Word turns our attention outwardly, first through willing self-sacrifice (36) then in the desire and ability of "transfiguring all life" (37) and finally in the joyful "rejoicing into farthest worlds" (Christmas verse). Cosmic Word, turning inward in verse 40, spurs us to "fill the vain delusion of my Self."

The metamorphosis of feeling and will reaches the intensification of warmth and gladness of heart from verses 37 to 43. The heart is first called to "carry spirit light into world winter night" (37) then to "rejoice into farthest worlds" (Christmas verse 38), finally to "fill the vain delusion of my Self" (verse 40 of Epiphany).

Warmth of heart accompanies us in verses 41 to 43 to form a very important prelude. At first we are called to "kindle and inflame God-given

⁵ Rudolf Steiner, *A Road to Self Knowledge*, "Sixth Meditation: In Which an Attempt is Made to Form a Conception of the Ego-Body or Thought-Body."

powers to right activity" (41), then to "anticipate the sense-world's revelation" (42) and finally to "give the world appearance the power to be" (43). It is worth noticing that the word love appears for the first time in terms of "human loving" in verse 41. It will be mentioned again in verse 48.

Through all these stages of enhancement the power of thinking has been growing, even though it is hardly mentioned: only in verse 39 do we hear "the power of thinking growing clearer gains strength to give myself to me." When this power reappears it underlines a profound turning point in verses 44 and 45, the one known to the Calendar as the "spirit birth," the birth of the higher Self (Manas) in the soul. The clarity of thinking helps us relate to the forces of growth that we first anticipate (42) then want to foster (43). Now we can meet these forces of growth without being overwhelmed and without losing ourselves in the pull of the senses (44). We fulfill the call and promise of verse 33 (warning verse of cross 7) to "recreate [the world's reality] in [our] souls."

Verse 44

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

Verse 45

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

The culmination of the process is reached in the attainment of the "spirit birth," the birth of the Spirit Self in the sanctuary of the soul. This is what grants the soul "union with the world's becoming" (verse 45). In the two pivotal verses the power of thinking appears both in its power aspect ("the creative will of my own thinking" of 44) and in its light aspect ("the light of thinking" of 45).

Immediately after the "spirit birth" the human being runs the risk of the splitting of the forces of the soul. What can keep them together is the force of the earthly Self, which the soul can only preserve in memory. Memory

allows us to withstand the annihilation of the sense of Self in the stream of time.

Verse 48 amplifies what we set out to do in 28 ("solve the mysteries of life, and grant fulfillment now to wishes..."). Our spiritualized thinking leads us not only to true freedom but to the awakening of the power of love through which we can reach other souls.

Verse 48

Within the light that out of world-wide heights
Would stream with power toward the soul,
May certainty of cosmic thinking
Arise to solve the soul's enigmas
And focusing its mighty rays,
Awaken love in human hearts.

This marks the overcoming of the Ahrimanic temptation by turning our newly gained powers away from selfish aims and toward the needs of Earth and of our fellow human beings. Verse 48 indicates that through the fuller transformation of thinking and the birth of our higher Self the soul attains complete freedom and in this way reaches a condition in which it can know true, objective love, not just the human loving of verse 41.

In verses 49 and 50 thinking, completely redeemed, participates directly in the world becoming. This marks not only the approach of the spring of external Nature, but the cosmic day of the Easter transformation. The human being, become co-creator, can free the elemental beings from their "enchanted bondage" in matter.

Verse 49

I feel the force of cosmic life:
Thus speaks my clarity of
thought,
Recalling its own spirit growth
Through nights of cosmic
darkness,
And to the new approach of
cosmic day
It turns its inward rays of hope.

Verse 50

Thus to the human ego speaks
In mighty revelation,
Unfolding its inherent powers,
The joy of growth throughout the
world:
I carry into you my life
From its enchanted bondage
And so attain my truest goal.

The cycle is closed in verse 52, which marks on one hand the restoration of the realm of the Tree of Life ("cosmic life" in the Calendar) from which

the human being was severed at the time of the Fall. The strength received from this approach is expressed in "... out of heaven's distances streams strength of life into human bodies, uniting by its mighty energy the spirit's being with our human life." The attainment of the goal marks at the same time the waning of the power of thinking: "Out in the sense-world's glory the power of thought gives up its separate being" (verse 2).

We have come full circle to the beginning. In relation to the cycle of incarnation and excarnation, Easter marks the beginning of our life in the spiritual world, the journey of life after death. Verse 20 inaugurates the cycle of incarnation, whereas the intent of pursuing a path of spiritual schooling takes its start around verses 24 and 25, shortly preceding Michaelmas. The birth of our higher Self is marked by verses 44 and 45. After these verses, in the approach to spring, the Tree of Knowledge approaches the Tree of Life until the time of Easter, when a new cycle takes its start.